

ARMY MOUNTAINEER



The Journal of The Army Mountaineering Association



EWRO6

AMA 50

EGRIN ICE

CHO OYU SUMMIT

COMMITTEE CHANGES

THE ALPS – A VENUE FOR ALL SEASONS

WINTER 2006/7

EVEREST WEST RIDGE 2006 SPECIAL EDITION

**We have a mission....
Quality Products,
Affordable Prices and
Customer Service
Second to NONE**



**Create an account
with feargear today
and receive 15% off
your first order**



Receive an AMA Discount of 15% when purchasing Online

(Use code AMA07 at Checkout)

At Fear Gear we offer outdoor clothing and equipment from a wide range of well-known brands. Our team members have many years experience of the Military and it's involvement in Outdoor Adventure Sports throughout the world, enabling us to provide the best specialist, independent advice possible.

We offer clothing and equipment from only the World's premium brands and guarantee consistent excellent service, making Fear Gear the U.K.'s premier suppliers of the most dynamic, durable and technically up to date products available for the military and all outdoor adventure/extreme sports enthusiasts.



www.feargear.biz

'COME AND VISIT US AT OUR SHOP'

**FEARGEAR
UNIT 5 Croft Court
Kirk Sandall
Doncaster
DN3 1QL**

Tel / Fax: 01302 885566

ENTRE-PRISES

Complete design and costing

Fitting and after sales service

Annual maintenance service

Walls built to European Standards

Entre-Prises (UK) Ltd

Tel. 01282 444800 Fax. 01282 444801
www.entre-prises.com/uk info.ep-uk.com

**BMC Partner & British Climbing Team Sponsor
Official Sponsor of the Inter-Service Climbing Championships**



Bouldering Walls



Leading Walls



Towers & Boulders

ARMY MOUNTAINEER

The Journal of The Army Mountaineering Association



STOP PRESS! NEW CHAIRMAN ELECTED

I would like to introduce myself to those who do not know me. I am Maj Cath Davies and I have just taken over as Chairman of the Army Mountaineering Association. I have been involved on the Executive Committee for 12 years, latterly as Vice Chairman and then AMA50 Project Leader, but more of that later. As well as climbing and mountaineering all over the world for over 25 years, I have been a leader on a number of large AMA projects, most recently as one of the leaders of the Development Team on the Everest West Ridge expedition. As Vice Chairman responsible for the development of mountaineering, I supported the appointment of a Training and Development Officer to encourage young members joining the AMA to make the jump from Sport Climbing to walking and climbing outdoors. I am committed to developing opportunities for our members to participate in adventurous mountaineering expeditions and as Chairman; I will endeavor to promote exploratory mountaineering both in the AMA and a Joint Service context. I am conscious that the increased tempo of ops has meant that the time required to plan, fundraise and carry out an adventurous overseas expedition is rarely available to personnel in the Field Army. To alleviate this problem and to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the founding of our Association, we have put together a project of five exciting expeditions, with the Executive Committee assisting the Leaders in selection, fundraising, planning and providing continuity for those Leaders on ops. Selection is complete for Shisha Pangma and the Atlas Mountains expedition is for Junior Soldiers, but otherwise the expeditions are open to all suitably experienced AMA members. An outline of AMA50 is below.



Before finishing, I would like to say what an honour it is to serve the AMA membership as your Chairman and I look forward to meeting more of you than I already have on the hill, on expeditions and at the Annual Weekend when we hold our AGM.

AMA on-line! Recently Updated

Why not visit our web site at:

www.theama.org.uk

Officers of the Committee	2
Foreword	3
Ecrins Ice	4
Farewell Letter from Major General Cottam	7
AMA 50th Anniversary Expedition 2007	8
AMA Training for Tibet	11
The Alps – A Venue for All Seasons	13
Everest West Ridge 2006	15
EWR 2006 Development Team	20
EWR 2006 Junior Team	23
The Cho Oyu Affair	25
Jan Baalsrud Expedition	28
AMA Annual Weekend 2006	30
51 Go Large in the Rockies	31
IBEX Dragon	32

On the Cover:

On the summit of Cho Oyu fully masked up against the elements.

© Copyright. Any opinions expressed in the articles in this magazine are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policy and views, official or otherwise, of the MOD, Army or Association. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the permission of the editor or publisher. No responsibility for the quality of goods or services advertised in this magazine can be accepted by the editor, publishers, Association, Army, MOD or printers and all advertisements are included in good faith.

GO
Z
T
E
Z
T
S

OFFICERS OF THE COMMITTEE



(Hon) President

Lt Col (Retd) RA Streater OBE

(Hon) Vice President

Lt Col (Retd) AJ Muston MBE

Sir Christian Bonington CBE

Col (Retd) M Bridges OBE

Col (Retd) J Peacock

Lt Col MH Bazire MBE

President

Brig JF Watson MBE MA

Chairman

Maj Cath Davies MBE TD

Civil: 0131 624 1265

cathmm_davies@hotmail.com

Vice Chairman

Lt Col Paul Edwards

Mil: 94391 Ext: 3101

Civil: 1264 383101

vicechair@theama.org.uk

General Secretary

Capt Mike Treffry-Kingdom

Mil: 94627 Ext: 2479

Civil: TBC

miketangokilo@yahoo.co.uk

Expeditions Secretary

Maj Kev Edwards

Mil: 95581 Ext: 7904

Civil: 01248 718304

expeds@theama.org.uk

Communications Officer

Post Vacant

Contact Vice Chairman

Need an Instructor

AMA FASTRAK

contact membership Secretary for details

Equipment

Post Vacant

Contact Journal Editor

Treasurer

Maj (retd) Mike LAING

Mob: 07784 707599

Civil: 01766 832120

treasurer@theama.org.uk

Journal Editor

WD1 (ASM) Steve Willson

Mob: 07932 035764

Civil: 01423 528133

stevewillson@msn.com

Sport Climbing Sec

Capt Mike Smith

Mil: 94251 Ext: 2348

Civil: 01483 473424

Publicity Officer

Post Vacant

Contact Vice Chairman

Membership Secretary

Mrs Ann Davies

Mil: 95581 Ext: 7964

Civil: 01248 718364

membership@theama.org.uk

To join the AMA visit our web site: www.theama.org.uk

APPROXIMATIONS

Foreword

by Brigadier Jon Watson MBE

Late D and D



It is with a mixture of emotions that I prepare to take over as President of the Army Mountaineering Association at the beginning of the New Year.

There is more than a hint of pride there, certainly. My involvement with the AMA dates back to 1981 when I was introduced to the organisation by a fellow climber on a JSRCI course, and my membership number - 2206, I think - has followed me around ever since. I briefly acted as General Secretary as far back as the early 80s and, in the intervening years, have been a regular if distressingly infrequent attendee at meets and AGMs. In that time the AMA has grown and prospered, increasing in size, reach and vision to become the largest, and possibly most adventurous, climbing group in the UK. And in common with most of armed forces - indeed most of the country - I was enthralled by the high altitude exertions of our team on Everest West Ridge 2006. In short the AMA really is a great organisation, and I feel proud and privileged to be associated with it.

None of the achievements of the AMA would be possible without the willing and voluntary efforts of its members. From Honorary Vice Presidents to ordinary climbers-on-the-craggs, every member of the AMA past and present has a hand in the success of our joint endeavour. We all stand on the shoulders of our predecessors, who ever since the founding of the Association have led it from one milestone to another, navigating a sea of change with great skill and focusing resolutely on the extraordinary games that climbers play. It is therefore with great gratitude and respect that we say farewell to the remarkable double act of Maj Gen Nick Cottam and Lt Col Martin Bazire, who over the last 10 years have done so much to keep us pointing in the right direction. They, supported by their committee, have ensured that the AMA has thrived despite the distinctly lean service environment that now pervades. But there is plenty more work still to be done, and we continue to need members to step forward and put their shoulder to the wheel. Is it your turn?

Surrounding all this there is a definite sense of excitement as we look forward to what the future holds. Aside from the numerous expeditions that are being planned, and among the many challenges that lie ahead, there are two thorny issues that seem particularly to stand out. First, how are we to ride the relentless wave of H & S legislation that threatens to engulf all outdoor activities and remove from mountaineering the thrill of true adventure? If ever there was an excuse for doing nothing, it's that dreaded word "elfinsafety". Perhaps it's all over for the free spirits among us who long to step off the beaten track and into the unknown. Personally I don't think so, but we must face up to and take ownership of the culture of risk management, appreciating its undoubted value but moulding its mechanics to suit our unique requirements.

Secondly, we would do well to pay attention to the precise relationship between mountaineering - that original and quintessential adventurous training activity - and indoor climbing, which is emphatically a sport. It is entirely right that we should embrace both within the Association, but we should examine and define the relationship between the two more clearly, and by doing so locate sport climbing - which sits at the cross-over point - more explicitly and securely on the Army's training map. I would like to think that there is more than enough room in the Army for climbing in all its forms, and I am delighted to note that the Festival of Climbing planned for April next year at Capel Curig intends to bring it all together at one time and in one place.

So what will I bring to the party as President? More questions than answers I suspect, especially in the early days, so I hope that you will bear with me. But I do claim to be a climber - and still a keen and active one though never particularly good - and where better to find the solutions than in the hills among fellow members of the AMA? I very much look forward to seeing you there.

Editorial and Journal Submissions

Just a quick note from me this time. The AMA is having a few changes, a new President, new senior committee members and the full colour journal is back! But the quality of climbing is consistent, EWR06, Cho Oyu and loads of winter stuff to get you going. I must mention Stu Macdonald's outstanding contributions to this journal and for his efforts he will receive an article incentive award of £150. If you fancy getting in on this act put pen to paper!

You will also notice from the Appointments page in this journal that the committee is still in need of motivated volunteers. I joined the committee as a Corporal over 15 years ago and it was an incredible opportunity to make a difference for junior soldiers. Where else in the Army can you question a Colonel, disagree with a hand full of Majors and have your views supported by a General all in one meeting. I have enjoyed every minute of my time on the committee and would recommend it to any climber who wants to make a difference, irrespective of rank.

If you would like to submit an article for publication on any mountaineering subject, fact or fiction, or you are required to

provide an article as part of the AMA Expedition Grant system please note the following.

- Articles should be provided in hard copy and electronic format as a MS Word document (doc) on floppy disk or CD. Articles should not be in diary or PXR format and should be punctuated normally.
- Pictures are to be provided as separate files, not imbedded in the articles, and named with the picture title and credit. The electronic file types that are preferred are jpg, tif or bmp. Pictures can also be provided in print or slide format with attached credits.
- You can provide pictures only, if you prefer, with a suitable credit.

Your contributions are essential to maintain the quality of the Journal. If you need any further advice contact Steve Willson direct on 01423 528133 or at stevewillson@msn.com Journal submissions should be sent to the following address:

Steve Willson, AMA Journal Editor
C/O AMA Membership Secretary JSMTIC Indefatigable,
Plas Llanfair, LlanfairPG, ANGLESEY, LL61 6NT



Stepping back onto ice on "monopassy".

Living on top of Ben Nevis might sound like fun, but it has its drawbacks. Like today we had snow almost down to our garden, and it's only the beginning of October! Actually Vallouise is only 1,200m., more than 100 meters lower than the summit of the Ben but right now it feels like we are perched on the UK's highest top; cold Westerlies stream in and the bullet-blue sky is full of autumnal reds, gold's and browns. A good time indeed to look forward to the winter season and review what icy fruit this amazing area will soon yield.

Ever since climbing "Holiday on Ice" in the Ecrins Massif's famous Ceillac Valley, I was hooked. Let's just be clear we are not talking about Scottish ice. Nor are we talking about alpine mixed. Icefalls, or as the locals call them "cascades de glace", are a particularly euro thing and as per our Government many of us have still not joined in the fun. Despite many expeditions from the wilds of Patagonia, to the extremes of the Himalaya, this form of climbing had completely passed me by, and once embarked I was keen to make up for lost time.

The whole pure ice thing is in fact very new, even here in the Southern French Alps, where local climbers have been active for centuries and the region's highest peak, The Barre Des Ecrins (4,102m) was first climbed as far back as 1864. Ice climbing in the Ecrins Massif, central to the Southern Alps, officially started in 1984, with the publication of Godefroy Perroux's "Cascades de Glaces" covering ice climbs above Bourg d'Oisans. Since these early days the local talent such as the Troussier brothers (Stephane climbed 8a this year aged 50!), Pschitt Perrier and Christophe Moulin began opening up icefalls on their doorstep. Ceillac Valley was the first to fall with its 5 minute approaches, bolted belays and easy footpath descents. Then the boys moved up into the Fournel Valley above L'Argentiere-la-Bessée and the creation of France's "Ice Mecca" was begun. The launch in 1991 of Europe's largest and most successful ice climbing meet "ICE", now in its 17th year, together with the brilliant website www.icefall.com detailing the condition of local climbs throughout the season, were the other two vital ingredients that have

INFO BOX

French Ice Grades

Climbs in the Ecrins use the usual classic WI (Water Ice) grading system for icefalls in combination with a grade of danger. So basically the overall grade is split into 2 sections, a Roman numeral grade and a numerical grade. The Roman numerals refer to the overall difficulty including length, approach, how sustained it is, the descent and objective hazards like avalanches. The numerical grade gives the technical grade of the hardest pitch, the WI number, and takes into account the angle, the complexity of the moves, and the usual quality of the ice. Very roughly add one to the WI numerical grade to get the Scottish equivalent. WI 2 = Scottish III and so on.

Ecrins

By
Jerry Gore

resulted in making the Ecrins Massif the No.1 icefall destination across the EEC.

Ceillac Valley

Out of the 20 different ice crags and cliffs in the Massif, the three principal valleys are Ceillac, Fournel and Freissinières. For beginners and mid-range activists without doubt the place to start is Ceillac, located in the Queyras Regional Park, about 50 minutes drive from the Ecrins centre of Vallouise. Access to the ice climbs is 2km beyond the centre of Ceillac, and parking is right in front of the ski lifts. Tool up by your car, walk ten minutes and you'll find climbs between 70m and 250m long, with bolted belays and grades from WI (Water Ice) 2 to 5+. Descent is either by abseil (not recommended if busy) or via the footpath that runs along the top of the climbs. Try *Easy Rider* (70m - WI 3) to warm up on and then *Holiday on Ice* (250m - WI 3+) yielding seven pitches of pure gully fun including an exciting 85-degree section to provide fuel for the evening's banter. And if you are into long WI 4's (around Scottish 4 to 5) the best ice gully in France at the grade is *Formes du chaos* - sans doubt!

Route tick list - Ceillac:

- *Easy Rider* (70m. - WI 3);
- *Holiday on Ice* (250m. - WI 3+);
- *Sombre Heroes* (100m. - WI 4);
- *Formes du chaos* (300m. - WI 4)

Fournel Valley

The Fournel Valley has arguably the greatest concentration of quality ice routes in the Ecrins. Since 1981 climbers have been developing its rich pickings and this

ten km long valley now boasts over 100 routes of all grades, and from 30m to 700m in verticality! Access is easy from L'Argentiere-La Bessée where it is well sign posted, and it takes only five minutes by car from the town's centre to gain entrance to the first sector "Hiroshima" or "Secteur Du Bas". Above this it just depends on how much snow has fallen and how far the road has been cleared. In a normal season you can drive (with snow chains) right to the car park at the far end, just past the Basse Salce chalets. At the beginning of January, the road is almost always cleared up to these chalets for the annual international ice festival ICE (Ice Climbing Ecrins) in L'Argentiere. To find out about road conditions phone the Mairie (Mayor) of L'Argentiere on +33 492 23 10 03.

Route tick list - Fournel:

- *Sexy Gully* (180m. - WI 4);
- *Capitaine courageux* (200m. - WI 4);
- *Hiroshima* (150m. - WI 5);
- *La vision de Marco* (100m. - WI 3);
- *Colosses de Rhodes* (700m. - WI 4+);
- *Iznogood* (60m. - WI 3)
- *Double Scotch* (80m. - WI 5);
- *Davidoff* (200m. - WI 4+).

Freissinières Valley

Freissinières Valley is a magical place with well over 100 pure ice, mixed and dry tooling climbs at literally every grade up to WI 7 and M10. There is even an "Ecole De Dry" for the dry debutante. Freissinières is the next valley over from Fournel, running parallel to it, and only 15 minutes drive from L'Argentiere. To access the valley take the

NEED TO KNOW STUFF

A) GUIDEBOOKS AND MAPS:

For the majority of routes in the Ecrins the bible is "Glace et mixte en cascade" by E. Fine and P.Turin. ISBN: 2-914466-01-3. This latest edition (October 2005) covers the Briançonnais, Argentierois and Embrunais sectors - over 500 ice and mixed routes. The popular icefalls around La Grave, still within the Ecrins Massif, and less than an hour's drive west, have their own guide *Cascades de Glace Oisans aux Six Vallées* written by F. Damilano and G. Perroux and covers the ice climbs in and around La Grave and Alpe-d'Huez.

The only guidebook in English is John Brailsford's "Ecrins Massif" - an Alpine Club guide printed in 2002, ISBN 0-900523-63-8. This useful guidebook provides details on the ice valleys in the Ecrins with a selection of the best ice routes.

The Ecrins Massif is split into five IGN maps at 1:25,000 and these can be bought on line at www.ign.fr or locally at newsagents and supermarkets.

The best website for information on ice climbing in the Ecrins is without doubt www.ice-fall.com

B) ACCOMMODATION:

The two most convenient areas to stay are L'Argentière-la-Bessée and Vallouise. L'Argentière has numerous hotels and gîtes, but a popular one is Le Moulin Papillon, which is open all year:

E: michelfrison@aol.com

T: +33 (0) 4 92 21 85 14 OR +33 (0)6 83 25 27 95

In Vallouise, Gîte L'Aiglierie is very good and just a few minutes from us:

E: gite.aiglierie@wanadoo.fr

T: +33 (0)4 92 23 52 52

For further details on where to stay locally check out the author's accommodation website www.AlpBase.com It provides details on self-catering apartments and chalets for climbers in the Vallouise valley, plus information on skiing, and ice climbing in the Ecrins. Jerry offers free use of local maps and guidebooks, and is always on-hand for advice and local knowledge. You can also contact Jerry by email for route conditions and information at jerry@alpbase.com

C) FOOD:

Things are generally cheaper in the Ecrins compared to the Northern Alps, so eating out is not a bad option. Be aware this area of France is very laid back. Shops shut between 12 and 2pm (often to 3pm) and are often closed all day Sunday and Monday. Most villages have local markets but consult your local Tourist Office for details.

D) FESTIVALS AND MOUNTAIN GUIDES:

The 17th annual ice festival is planned for January 10th-14th 2007 and is based out of L'Argentière-la-Bessée with the focus on climbing in the Fournel and Freissinières valleys. For those new to this amazing sport the festival is the best opportunity on the planet to get acquainted with the frozen stuff. Free guiding on ice, equipment halls, nightly climbing videos and best of all hot gluhwein (mulled wine) waiting for you on descent to the valley floor after a day on the ice! The festival organiser is Gerard Pailheiret, one of the area's local mountain guides, and his website is www.ice-fall.com. Jerry Gore at www.alpbase.com can also arrange everything from one to one guides through to full ice climbing and accommodation packages.

E) SEASON:

The Ecrins' high mountain gullies may come into condition as early as mid-October, after the first snowfalls. For the icefalls you will have to wait till mid to late November in an exceptional year and from mid December in a normal year. By the second week of March the first signs of spring are noticeable and we generally

stop climbing low level ice by then. But ice climbs have been done as late as mid April in high valleys such as Ceillac.

F) AVALANCHES:

Avalanches are an ever present danger for ice climbers throughout the winter season as they often follow natural gully lines where many routes go. North facing slopes can hold deep powder and South facing ones are obviously affected by direct sunlight. Wind slab is also a common occurrence especially after a long, dry spell and they must be watched especially when descending. Often it is better to abseil your line of ascent and hence most of the popular routes are well equipped for this. Always get a local forecast as heavy snowfalls can occur at any time during the season.

G) WEATHER FORECAST:

Usually posted up daily outside village tourist offices, and mountain guide bureaux.

Or try the following:

Telephone: France Telecom - +33 (0)8 36 68 10 20 or Meteo France - +33 (0)8 92 68 02 05

Internet: www.meteofrance.com or www.avalanche-net.com

AlpBase.com: Just ask Jerry - he gets it via the internet and TV

H) RESCUE:

Mountain Accidents: +33 492 22 22 22

La Grave: +33 492 21 10 42 (Gendarmerie)

Briançon : +33 492 21 36 36 (PGHM)

L'Argentiere: +33 492 21 10 42 (PGHM):

OR if you have a French mobile ring 112

N.B. PGHM = Peloton de Gendarmerie de Haute Montagne

I) TOURIST OFFICES :

Place de l'Eglise,

05290 VALLOUISE

Tel: 04.92.23.36.12

Email: lavallouise.ot@wanadoo.fr

Website: www.paysdesecrins.com

J) OTHER ATTRACTIONS:

The Ecrins Massif is in the middle of the Hautes Alpes, one of France's major ski areas. The closest resorts include the small but un-crowded Pelvoux (only ?14 for a day pass) and Puy St Vincent, a sizeable resort ideal for families, which includes a cross country ski centre. Serre Chevalier, next to Briançon, is a large resort with 77 lifts and over 250 Km's of pisted runs, and less than 50 minutes drive away is La Grave, the off-piste capital of Europe.

K) TRAVEL/ACCESS:

Calais to the Ecrins is a solid 10 to 12 hour journey by car and via expensive French motorways. So the advice is to fly to Turin via EasyJet or Ryanair and car hire from there. Transfer by car from Turin to Briançon is two hours and your own transport in the Ecrins is a distinct advantage if you really want to see the area. Don't forget to hire those snow chains.

Travel companies and nearest airports / airlines:

The nearest and easiest airport is Turin International Airport (EasyJet/Ryanair/BA/KLM). 130km away and takes 2 hours to drive.

Other nearby airports:

Grenoble (EasyJet/Ryanair) - 140 km: 2 hours 15 minutes

Marseille (EasyJet) - 251km: 2 hours 45 minutes

Milan (Ryanair/EasyJet) 279 km: 3 hours

Lyon (EasyJet/Ryanair) 234km: 3 hours 30 minutes

Nice (EasyJet) 240km: 4 hours



Rogier Van Rijn climbing.



Leading on no more vermicelli.



Rogier on perfect ice.

And finally... Don't forget the Ecrins Massif hosts a huge amount of alternative ice cragging in the area (25+ individual venues and valleys) not to mention the alpine climbing possibilities. And on sunny days it's even possible to combine rock cragging on the numerous sport climbs around L'Argentière and the Vallouise Valley. With only 10 minute walk-ins, I have managed to do 5 pitches of ice in the morning and then gone bolt-clipping in the afternoon!

main road towards Gap (RN94) and just before La Roche De Rame look for a small turning on your right (D38) sign posted to Freissinieres. Shortly after passing the main village of Freissinieres you'll see the first ice climb of the valley, the classic Fracastorus, on your left.

The routes extend all the way on both sides right up to the car park at Dormillouse at the head of the valley.

The narrow approach road is almost always kept open as people live year-round at Dormillouse, a tiny alpine hamlet which feels more Nepalese than French. Be

warned though, snow chains are normally essential if you want to get right to the end. This is a worthwhile excursion though, because the huge 650m ice walls of the Tete De Gramusat have to be seen to be believed.

So forget that long slog up north this season, come down and experience a slice of ice-euro style. But remember wherever you're climbing, always treat this fragile medium with the respect it deserves. When ice breaks it takes no prisoners. Always seek local advice, talk to guides and fellow climbers about the current conditions, and find out what has been happening to the area recently.

Have fun and climb safe!

Jerry Gore
AlpBase.com

Ex. AMA member and RM Officer Jerry Gore, moved to the Ecrins Massif in the heart of the Southern Alps in 2002. He lives year round in Vallouise (centre of the Ecrins), with his family, where he runs his company AlpBase.com for climbers, skiers, and walkers.

INFO BOX

GEAR SPEC

ROPES – use two half ropes (8-8.5mm are recommended with dry finishes). I use a Petzl Reverso, saving time and energy for the leader when belaying.

CLOTHING – as per Scottish winters but generally go light. This game is about movement not inactivity.

RUCKSACK – often I leave mine at the bottom of the route, but if I take one it's small (20ltrs.)

FOOTWEAR – personally always full mountaineering leather B3 boots

ICE GEAR – use C3 crampons, ice screws (like Grivel 360's), and technical curved picks (I use Grivel Taa-koon's)

Miscellaneous - learn how to make abalakov abseil points and bring appropriate gear. Otherwise normal Scottish winter kit. Remember if you need equipment you can pretty much hire anything you want from ice axes to snowshoes at local climbing shops in Briançon, L'Argentiere and Vallouise.

Route tick list - Freissinieres:

- Frenesie Basquaise (280m. WI 2);
- Fracastorus (200m. - WI 3+);
- Paulo folie (180m. - WI 3);
- Torrent de Naval (450m. - WI 3);
- Happy together (120m. - WI 4);
- Cascade des Violins (150m. - WI 6);
- Geronimo (550m. - WI 5)

OBITUARY

Major-General Michael Forrester
CB CBE DSO* MC*



Silhouette of Dave Pearce on EWR06 expedition.

"Major-General Michael Forrester CB CBE DSO* MC* was President of the AMA, whilst Director of Infantry (DINF), from 1968 to 1970. In those days the Presidency of the AMA was part of DINF's remit. Although not a climber he took his duties as President very seriously. In 1969 the AMA mounted a successful expedition to Tirich Mir in Pakistan and in 1970 to Annapurna I in Nepal. General Mike demanded of himself the highest possible standards in everything he touched. He expected and usually got, nothing less of those he commanded. The AMA benefited and grew because he encouraged young soldiers and Officers to join in challenging, adventurous mountaineering pursuits.

At an expedition briefing he would bubble with enthusiasm at the excitement that the team were about to

enjoy in new and foreign parts. This eagerness was infectious. He, himself, was a brave, inspiring Leader. At the age of 21 he won his first MC in Palestine; at 24 in Crete in 1941 he was awarded a Bar to his MC; at 26 he won his first DSO on the breakout from the Salerno beach-head (Italy); later while commanding his battalion in 1944 in Normandy he won a Bar to this DSO. After World War II he commanded 3 PARA, then 16th Parachute Brigade Group, 4th Division in Germany and retired from the Army as DINF. Retiring to his beloved Hampshire General Mike died in Alton on 15th October 2006, aged 89. The AMA was represented at his Thanksgiving Service at St. Nicholas Church in West Worldham on 26th October 2006."

By John Fleming

FAREWELL LETTER FROM MAJOR GENERAL COTTAM

To all Army mountaineers,

I have greatly enjoyed my ten years as President of the Army Mountaineering Association and feel I owe all of you a short, farewell letter. So much of my time as AMA President has been spent simply enjoying the reflected glory of all your successes and excitements in the world's mountains. The AMA is a fantastic success story and you, through your enthusiasm and courageous mountaineering on rock and ice, in big and small ranges, have made it so. At the same time, by maintaining your aim of bringing in new and young members, you have grown a lively and active young membership which increases year on year. I like the way, above all, you remain a very inclusive organisation which enjoys the huge respect of the Army because you represent the whole Army, regulars, territorials, other reserves and all ranks.

During the last ten years you have doubled the active membership which now stands at well over two thousand. One of the means by which you have done this has been the establishment of indoor rock climbing, including competitive indoor rock climbing, as a major army sport. This has proved a very successful way of bringing new climbers into contact with the full range of outdoor mountaineering opportunities which the AMA can offer and into contact with the vibrant and friendly atmosphere of the AMA. You have established a new home for yourselves on Anglesey at the Joint Services Mountain Training Centre and this has given great benefit to the climbing activity and the day to day running of the AMA. You have, in addition, directly affected and improved the Army's adventurous training support organisation, now grouped at HQ Land Forces

with a single adventurous training staff coordinating everything and answering to a three star general for the maintenance of all levels of adventurous training activity across the Army. Without the AMA's prompting this would not have happened.

You have conducted a whole series of large and small, successful mountain expeditions including numerous North and South American mountain ventures, the big Alps 2000 project, Himalaya Dragon which took so many novices to the big mountains, two notable expeditions into the Canadian Rockies which delivered so much distributed mountain training, to name but a few. On top of this there has been consistently high grade involvement in large Joint Service and Army Alaskan and Himalayan expeditions such as to Denali, Kanchenjunga, Makalu and the Everest West Ridge. At the same time there have been many, many rock, ice and mountain meets and forays in UK and abroad, encouraged and supported by the AMA. In other words you have put the AMA on the Army map in a big way.

I would therefore like to thank the many expedition leaders, instructors and mountain enthusiasts in the AMA who have helped to make all this possible. You have shown the way for so many soldiers of all ranks who have wanted to have a go at mountaineering and just needed the opportunity and encouragement to get started. I must therefore also thank your AMA committee who have given so much time to the organizing and running of AMA events on

an ever increasing scale over the last ten years. This has been a hugely important means by which the AMA has been able to grow in effect and influence for the good of adventurous training across the Army. I am keen that the AMA continues to challenge the Army to keep the adventure in adventurous training, to use mountaineering as a way to test courage, leadership, teamwork and determination. Mere recreation is fun but it is not enough to justify the commitment of our scarce resources. I hope the unclimbed peaks of Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Tibetan Alps, Greenland and elsewhere still beckon the adventurous spirits of the AMA and of the Army.

Finally, I extend a personal thank you to your Honorary President and AMA founder, Tony Streather and to your outgoing Chairman Martin Bazire. They have both given long term support to the AMA and deserve your thanks. Martin has been your Chairman for ten years and many of the

AMA's recent achievements have come as a result of his vision and energy. I have thoroughly enjoyed my involvement with them both and with all of the AMA. I wish you all well for the AMA's 50th anniversary year 2007. I know there are ambitious mountain plans laid to mark the anniversary. Good luck and good climbing.

Yours ever

Nick Cottam



AMA 50th ANNIVERSARY EXPEDITION 2007— The Master Plan!

By Cath Davis

The aim of AMA50 is to celebrate 50 years of Army Mountaineering Association achievements by showcasing the range of activities undertaken by AMA members, the geographical spread achieved by AMA expeditions and our ability to offer new challenges to our members, no matter at what stage of mountaineering experience they may be. Each individual expedition has its own objective and an outline appears below. Overall, AMA50 will achieve the following:

Cover all activities currently undertaken by our members:

Trekking
Rock Climbing
Big wall climbing
Ice climbing
Alpine mountaineering
Ski mountaineering
High altitude mountaineering
Exploratory mountaineering

Achieve a broad geographical spread:

Europe - Greenland
Americas - Canada
Africa - Morocco
Asia - Tibet

Involve wide membership participation:

22 experienced members (including leaders).
18 intermediate members.
16 novice members

56 AMA members will be involved in the expeditions in total. It is important to note that even of the 22 experienced members, by the nature of the projects chosen, bar the leaders, the majority will be operating at a level or in an environment that is new to them, and thus they too are being challenged.

Rapping off during the Shisha Pangma training exercise this summer

The Expeditions

The individual expedition outlines are as follows:

Shisha Pangma, 8012m, Tibet.

Ski mountaineering at high altitude in Asia, incorporating distributed training during the training phase. This has included training weekends in the Harz Mountains in Jan 06, the Cairngorms in Feb 06, a ski training week at Easter 06 and alpine training in Aug 06. Up to 12 team members are relative novices and STP, STLT, STL, and AMP qualifications have been carried out as distributed training. Selection has taken place and 21 AMA members will take part in the expedition setting off in Aug 07 for 6 weeks.

Objective – Summit the middle peak of Shisha Pangma

on skis.

Leader – WO2 Geordie Taylor.
Patrons – Sir Chris Bonington, Maj General GCM Lamb, Doug Scott.
Outline costs - £162K

Greenland.

Exploratory alpine mountaineering in Andrees Land, carried out by 4 experienced and 4 less experienced alpinists who will gain access to this remote region by chartered plane. The expedition will take place in Jul 07 for 4 weeks. The area has not been visited by a climbing expedition since 1953 and contains many peaks of up to 2350m, the majority of which are unclimbed. The possible landing area identified by map recce has been confirmed by the air operators as viable and the JSATFA is now being prepared. The application form is on the website.

Objective – Summit previously unclimbed peaks in Greenland.

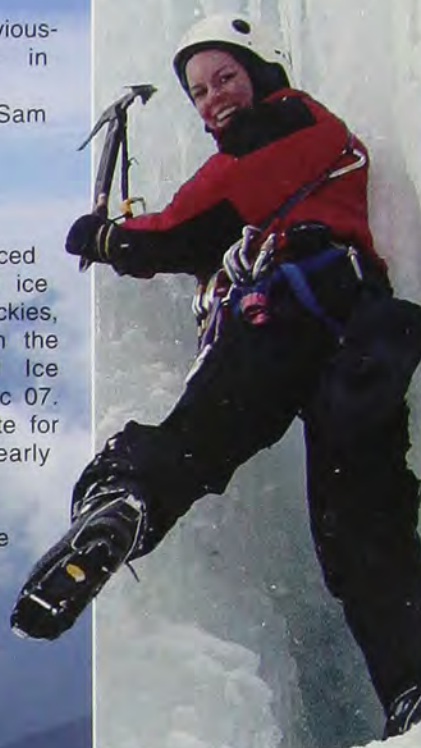
Leader – WO2 Sam Marshall.
Outline costs - £25K

Rockies, Canada.

Ice climbing. 8 experienced climbers will carry out ice climb training in the Rockies, and then participate in the Canmore International Ice Climbing Festival in Dec 07. Look out on the website for the application form early next year.

Objective – Increase AMA ice climbing experience and AMA exposure internationally.

Leader – WO2 Brian Parry
Outline costs - £10K



Ice climbing in the Canadian Rockies, one of the best ice climbing venues in the world!



Phil Maddox and Raj Nathwani making the most of the alpine training.

Cirque of the Unclimbables, Canada.

Big wall climbing. The expedition will involve 4 climbers experienced in big wall techniques and 4 climbers with no experience, but climbing at a good grade. Climbing development and big wall technique training will be carried out to prepare for big wall ascents by the experienced climbers. The expedition area is the Cirque of the Unclimbables, near the border of the Yukon and Northwest Territories in northern Canada, with the Lotus Flower Tower as the climbing objective. This 22 pitch route takes 2 days and the expedition will take place between Jun and Aug 07. This expedition will be advertised on the website in due course.

Objective - Achieve an AMA first ascent on this adventurous big wall route.

Leader - Capt Rob Lawrence
Outline costs - £30K

Atlas Mountains, Morocco.

Altitude trekking in North Africa on 4000m peaks, culminating in an ascent of Jebel Toubkal, at 4167m the highest peak in the Atlas Mountains.

This expedition is aimed at novice development and will involve 8 junior soldiers from Harrogate plus leaders in Feb/Apr 07. In addition to the leader, another experienced instructor has been selected and a Harrogate staff member will act as point of contact at the college and participate in the expedition.

Objective - Introduce junior soldiers to AMA activities in the mountainous environment.

Leader - SSgt Daz Doyle.
Outline costs - £10K



Lotus Flower Tower

A word on adventurous training

The Army supports adventurous training because of the exceptional opportunity it gives to prepare service personnel for operations. The AMA considers climbing and mountaineering in particular are ideal adventurous training vehicles for this purpose, because they can involve decision making in high risk environments and operating under stress for extended periods. The range of expeditions selected for AMA50 encapsulate the breadth of adventurous training opportunities the AMA can offer and will give all the participants the opportunity to experience the profound personal and professional development adventurous training can offer.

The AMA's fiftieth anniversary year follows the mounting of a large and demanding expedition to Everest West Ridge (EWR) in 2006. The EWR project received much support and publicity from the Army, not least because it involved a slice through the organisation in terms of length of service, experience and rank. AMA50 seeks to replicate this slice, indeed to improve on it by creating a wider-bottomed pyramid, and to capture the imagination by the sheer variety of the activities and environments involved in the different expeditions.

Geordie Taylor leading the way during the ski mountaineering training for the Shisha Pangma build up.


Training for Tibet – AMA50

Capt Raj Nathwani RAMC

The 1st July 2006 saw the start of the first alpine meet as training for the 2007 AMA's 50th Anniversary expedition to Mount Shisha Pangma (8041m), Tibet. Twenty regular and reserve members crammed themselves and their copious amounts of kit into three minibuses and headed out from all over the UK to Saas Fe, Switzerland, aiming to meet up with other expedition members there. I for my sins was attempting to make things simple by meeting the minibus at Folkestone, having watched England get knocked out of the World Cup. However, with the usual disastrous touch from British Rail and then an unhelpful taximan, I found myself marching the last mile to the Channel Tunnel link with more kit than I should have had to arrive just in time for the train across in a nice sweaty mess. Twelve hours later we were at the campsite looking up at the towering surroundings eagerly awaiting our first ascents and

people already starting off their summer tans. Tent sizes were generally bordering on the size of Buckingham palace, and the only thing which had been missed off some people's list was the indoor Jacuzzi. Geordie Taylor, the expedition leader had even managed to bring his family heirloom, the copper kettle.

Under the guidance of our instructors, the first two days served as an introduction for many of us in Alpine mountaineering skills and ethos. Early morning fat burning runs with Chip 'Richard Branson' Rafferty got wiped away the early morning cob webs and got everyone into the training mode. After a night in the Britannia Hut learning from Terry how students 'spank' their loans and trying to catch what little sleep we could, we were ready for our first 4000m peak, the Allalinhorn. By the time we started, it was already very warm outside, and the day saw multiple steps ending



Kerry at rock step Allalinhorn



Demo rescue to practice rope systems and rescue techniques.

up with people waist deep in snow. However, everyone made the ascent to be rewarded by a beautiful view across the Alps including the Matterhorn and Monte Rosa. The next two days unfortunately were decidedly Scottish in nature. Poor visibility and cold wet weather meant that any summit bids were off. So we spent our timing honing our avalanche / probing searches, learning to prussik up and down ropes with special hip thrusting action from Ollie Noakes, digging snow holes (some definitely more comfortable than others) and continuing with crevasse rescues. We were rewarded for our efforts by our jolly hut warden awaiting our return with Schnapps to warm us up. The evening was spent recalling our own few mountain tales, a couple of games of cards and everyone generally being 'Bloomered' by Glen's, "can you name the 'x' hundred movies with actor 'y' in?" No I can't! We ended up with little bit more Schnapps as a night cap.



Phil Maddox guiding expedition members through crevasse rescue.

A week had already passed, and Saturday was meant to be our expedition admin day. It was then spent splitting up

into groups, trying to dissect down what groundwork would be needed for the summit bid of Mt Shisha Pangma. From finance and sponsorship onto medical, nutrition and training; future plans were thrashed out along with a cold beer at the pub across the road. A BBQ later in the evening saw all the team members discussing what needed to be done, like what night club we should go to...

The hard part of ski mountaineering!



Sunday was spent sampling the delights of the Slovenian Ski Team as they zipped past us on the ski slopes and then we made our way up to the Hohsaas Hut for our next summit. The hut which would have been more at home in a film set in 2050 had every convenience and we even managed to find a room especially for the snorers. The next day was to turn into epics on nearly every account. Two sets of groups headed out to climb the Lagginhorn and the Weissmies. Whilst Sven and Colin did manage to 'leg it' up the latter in the recommended 6 hours, everyone else was closer to double that and two groups ended up descending down a steep couloir without summiting. On the Lagginhorn things were no better when we summited after 18 hours and then made it down in a further three and a half! The next day was hence turned into a much needed rest day. The groups were then once again split into two. One group headed round to the Rothorn hut to climb the Zinal Rothorn, whilst the AMP group headed up the steep snow face back up the Allalinhorn. This was proceeding with few problems until I decided to make the day more taxing by sending some of the summit hurtling down the slope at the following groups which earned me the name of Harold Shipman. Our final day was spent completing a glacier skills assessment, and then it was time for us to head back to reality and home.

By all accounts the exercise had been a success and enjoyed by all. The team had some laughs, achieved some worthwhile training and identified the direction we need to move in, to make the dream of climbing and possibly skiing from Mount Shisha Pangma a reality. There is lots to do before our final training expedition in the Canadian Rockies at Easter, by which time the team for Tibet will have been selected. Look out for the launch evening at the Royal Geographical Society mid 2007, and keep your eyes on <http://sp07.expeditions.com/> for further expedition details. As Geordie would say, "Bring it on!"

THE ALPS

A venue for all seasons

By Stuart Macdonald

It was the early 90s, and I was just dipping my toes in the water of mountaineering for the first time. The guy in the pub saw it as his duty to educate the youngster with his words of wisdom - "In the winter you go to Scotland. In the summer you rock climb, and you go to the Alps." That was the way it was. If you were a Brit and considered yourself a climber, then there was no other way. Skiing wasn't even mentioned - that was definitely for continentals only!

And so it was for quite a long time. I made pilgrimages to Scotland every winter, and only went to the Alps in July and August. It was great. But late 90s, things in the Alps seemed to change. Mixed and ice routes were no longer possible in high summer due to climate change, but I was finally ready to get on those routes.

Then in 2003 I made the big jump into civvy street. The plan was pretty simple really. I'd been saving hard and I just wanted to go climbing for at least a year. I'd bought a place in Chamonix, got some shiny new axes, and was going pretty well in winter conditions.

Over the year that followed, I learned a hell of a lot. I learned what kit worked for which situations. I learned that un-planned winter bivvies at 4000m are not very pleasant. I learned the value of skis in deep snow. I learned that having a partner you can trust on a route is far more important than having one with a great climbing CV. But most of all I learned that you can climb in the Alps year round. And I don't mean that in the same way as you can probably climb in North Wales year round - you can find amazing conditions in the Alps no matter

what month it is. As long as the weather is settled, and you pick the right routes, you can swing your axes every month.

So for what it's worth, here is my guide to the Alpine year:

January-March. Ooohhh winter! Valley ice climbing - a great way to get good at the steep stuff. You'll need strength, confidence, and sharp screws if you want to get on some good continental water ice, but it's well worth it.

In the high mountains things will be very cold, very icy, and may have a lot of snow on them. Pick your routes carefully, and accept that anything remotely big is going to be a multi day trip. Take a good head torch, a warm jacket, lots of spare gloves and mitts, and bivvy gear. If the huts are closed, the winter rooms are open, so use them. Also, consider your approach care-

fully. You'll almost certainly need to ski in and out (trust me, it beats walking!). This is a serious time to be in the high mountains.

And if the weather doesn't allow climbing - go skiing! Get off piste and practise skiing in marginal terrain and conditions. One more thing - don't even think about camping in the valley. Spend some money and either rent an apartment, or stay in a bunkhouse. When you're down in the valley, you need to rest and regain your strength.

March-April. Longer days and warmer temperatures mean that high routes are a lot more fun now. There's still going to be a lot of ice around in the high mountains, but it might not be as brittle as earlier in the year. The lifts will be running, so it's quick to get out of the valley.

Paul Cordy strikes a pose on the top of the Moine. A 3 star classic route that he climbed in perfect condition and complete solitude in the Autumn. In the summer this route is packed.





Getting caught in a major storm at 4000m in January is not pleasant. It took another 24 hours of hard graft to get down to safety. Always carry spare warm clothing and make sure you're fit enough to get out of sticky situations by yourself. In the off season you have to be completely self sufficient.

Ski touring is generally at it's best this time of year. The huts are open if on a ski tour route, and it means you can carry a light day sack.

May-June. This is very much a transitional phase in the

Alpine calendar. Sometimes you'll find great ice high up, but at other times it will be rotten. Select your routes carefully. South facing rock routes are now getting good, and there still isn't anyone around! Lots of daylight and nice temperatures make this a great time to venture into the hills. Only the major lifts might be running for sightseeing tourists (e.g. Midi lift).

July-August. Peak season. Almost overnight, the Alps are mobbed by crowds of people on summer holidays. All lifts are open, and the popular huts are booked up early. Ice routes are almost certainly a no-go, so it's either rock routes (any aspect) or snow routes. Try and pick routes to stay away from the crowds. Save the classics for mid week (or June/September), and don't climb near a lift on a weekend. Try and get in to the more remote routes, and multi day enchantments. Beware the heat, and try and get any snow routes done by late morning. Leather boots make this a comfortable experience, and bivvy doesn't make you age ten years!

September-October. The quiet time. By mid September many of the lifts are closing down for maintenance, and most of the huts are shut. So it's long walks up from the valley and winter rooms in the huts. However, the days are still warm, and there isn't a soul around. Nights are cold however, and bivvy gear is needed. Choose footwear carefully (generally leathers for day routes, plastics for anything else). Storms caused



Fantastic mixed climbing high on the Grandes Jorasses North Face in October. Great weather, conditions, and a steady partner made this a memorable climb.

by passing fronts will often plaster faces with good neve, and mixed routes can be found in great condition.

November-December. The twilight zone of Alpinism! Is it Autumn, or is it winter? This is the domain of the opportunist. The days are short, and only one or two lifts might be running. There isn't usually enough snow for skiing, but it may be getting difficult to get around on foot. Plastic boots

are essential as is a good head-torch.

This article is by no means definitive, and conditions may vary. I've walked in to high routes in January, and I've skied in June. If you go to the Alps "Off - Season" you need to make your own judgement about the conditions, and be prepared for anything. There aren't the crowds to ask or to follow. Most of the time it's just you, so it's much more of an adventure. But then, isn't that why we go?

So there you have it. Why not try something different this year? Go to the Alps outside of high summer, and experience the pleasures of fresh tracks, solitude, ice and decision making. Alpinism how it probably was in the summer thirty years ago!

After note: Stuart Macdonald is the AMA Chamonix Rep. He is a trainee IFMGA guide, and loves Alpine climbing, whatever time of year it is. He is available for advice and for guiding/instruction.

The year at a glance:

Period	Ice	Rock	Huts	Lifts	Boots	Bivvy kit	Approach	People
Jan-Mar	Valley, Mtn	No	Winter rooms	Few	Plastic	Yes	Ski or snowshoe	quiet
Mar-Apr	Mtn	Poor	Some	Most	Plastic	Yes	Ski or snowshoe	quiet
May-Jun	Mtn	S Facing	Winter rooms	Some	Plastic/leather	maybe	foot	quiet
Jul-Aug	Poor	Excellent	All	All	leather	maybe	foot	Busy
Sep-Oct	Mtn	S Facing	Some	Some	Leather/Plastic	maybe	foot	quiet
Nov-Dec	Mtn	No	Winter rooms	few	Plastic	yes	Foot/ski/snowshoe	quiet

THE EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME

EVEREST WEST RIDGE

By WO1(SMI)
Dave Bunting APTC

2006

Having just taken up my new post at Trails End Camp in Canada my feet are just coming down to land after the most amazing 3 years of my life and it all started when I became hooked on the Himalayas and was then inspired by the leader of the British Services Kangchenjunga Expedition in 2000, of which I was part.

The Himalaya is the most amazing arena for adventure, challenge, development of character and many other personal attributes but most of all for bringing together a team of men and women in pursuit of one of its many glorious goals and few other undertakings can fit the aims of our Adventurous Training better than an expedition to its mountains.

The inspiring person I mention is now Capt Steve Jackson RN, then Lt Cdr and Steve was not the normal run of the mill leader who you may expect to find central to the physical climbing on the mountain, he chose to leave that to the array of accomplished climbers within the team and focus his attention

on firstly getting together the very best team he could and then steering them towards success. His character, the words he said and actions he took sunk deeply into my memory with one comment sinking deeper than others – 'pick a team considering compatibility over ability'. I left his expedition already decided in my own mind that one day I would lead my own big expedition to one of the world's 14 8000m peaks.

With the hook now firmly in place I bided my time and waited for the right moment and mountain and that came when a good friend from the Marines, Warrant Officer Dave Pearce, summited Everest in May 2003. The next morning I went into work and declared to my then boss Maj Nick Challinor that I was going to organise an Army Mountaineering Association (AMA) expedition to Mount Everest as the regular army having not climbed the big hill for almost 30 years. His reaction was key to getting the project off of the ground when

he said with excitement 'I will support you all the way if you do this', I knew the door was opening to something special.

My initial focus was around making a solid plan which would survive anything and everything so I spent the whole summer researching and probing ideas. I decided that in order to get the AMA, Army, right people and key sponsors inside I needed to design something that was

The main team at the end of a hard expedition





The final look at the summit of Everest.

challenging, diverse, ground breaking and inclusive of not only the hard core gladiators but the young, both men and women. At the same time I quickly needed to surround myself with a small core of impressive and committed people who I could rely on throughout the most difficult of ordeals both during the planning period and on the side of the world's highest mountain. Interested was one of my closest friends John Doyle, now a civilian instructor having served 16 years and leav-

ing as the most accomplished high altitude mountaineer in the services having summited 2 8000m peaks without oxygen and still a keen AMA member. Once he showed interest I knew there would be no stopping us and was confident we could make these first steps together and influence enough support to make this work. The huge finance mountain was my next consideration and I needed someone with a head for figures, intelligence, contacts outside the military, the ability to sell the

expedition to anyone but above all I needed to have absolute trust they would pursue their task relentlessly. In addition to this the person needed to be able to hold their own as a team member. No one fitted that bill better than my life long best mate who was now serving as a pilot in the Air Corps, Woody Woodhouse.

Pete Longbottom and Ian Rivers completed the initial core and the involvement of this group from the start allowed me many more nights of sleep

than I may have had without them over the next 3 years!

Over the next few weeks and months the idea developed and my core of supporters was in place and growing. John drew my focus to the West Ridge route on Everest, a line unclimbed by any Brit, although attempted by JS in 88 and 92, and a fitting challenge for the type of team we wanted to assemble. This route would fit exactly what we wanted with hard technical climbing, isolation from other teams and it would demand a huge team effort to achieve it. The other elements of the project unfolded and as wished from the beginning a Development and Junior Team grew into the exciting projects which are described in separate articles within this journal.

Due to high quality support from other members I was luckily able to stay heavily involved in all 3 teams



Camp 1 at the foot of the French spur.



On the approach to advance base camp.

throughout but will now focus on the Main Team which was quickly attracting some very high calibre talent. We had decided, mainly through John's suggestion as Training Manager and Climbing Leader, that our selection process, in order to gain the very strongest and most 'compatible' team, would not just involve personal climbing CVs and a short interview but it would also have a period where we would select a squad from our applicants and train together before making the final team selection – this

proved to be absolutely key to pulling together what proved to be the most incredible team and meant that no one was selected purely on their climbing background and ability to impress in a 20 minute interview.

From the birth of the idea to departure of the expedition was just short of 3 years and proved to be the right amount of time to organise the high quality expedition we aimed to achieve. The ground breaking element came with the 'attention to detail' we were able to



Lead climbing on the French spur.

apply to everything and was achieved by selecting the right quality person to each task. This long period required huge commitment from those selected and from the many people who lay on the periphery supporting us and for anyone wishing to undergo such a large project I would emphasise the importance to not underestimate what you are going into.

With 3 busy years behind us everything was in place and off we flew to Kathmandu then Tibet and Everest North side base camp where we spent a few days acclimatising prior to pushing forward to our own Base Camp at Tilman's Camp where we would operate from for the next 8 – 10 weeks. The logistical movement of the equipment and team, which now included Sherpa's, members and a film crew, was complex and required some diplomacy with the local authorities but worked well. We had chosen to make life at our base as comfortable as possible for the times we were resting and whilst on the

mountain our equipment needed to be the best available to give us the best chance of success – hence 3 yak moves of approx 70 yaks each time to get us established at Tilman's Camp.

The first few weeks on the mountain then became a period of exploration and truly hard graft rotating the lead and pushing forward through Camp One and on up the first major obstacle of the 1300m steep French Spur. A new star came to light under the guidance of John Doyle as Paul Chiddle on his first Himalayan trip powered up many of the technically hard sections laying ropes for the other members to move the huge amount of equipment into place. This period saw setbacks with extreme weather which lost us some days of forward movement but ultimately the team leapt forward at every opportunity making up for the loss even when the weather was marginal. With the Spur completed we gained a major confidence boost having comfortably



Juggling up the fixed rope on the French spur carrying a heavy load.



Slow progress along a windswept west ridge between camps 3 and 4 just below 8000m.



Moving across the diagonal ditch on steep ground.

operated and acclimatised on this difficult section.

Once the Spur was fixed with Camp Two at its centre and Camp Three towards its top at 7300m we were set to step foot onto the West Ridge itself, a moment many of us had looked forward to with a whole new country and vista opening out in front of us. I had this moment alone on a blue sky day and the feeling will stick with me forever as it became clear many of the peaks around us were now below. The teams were all going strong and very quickly completed the easier angled but long West Ridge section and Camp Four was in place at 7600m and our launch pad for committing to the North Face.

The difficult decision now began, reorganising teams, deciding who should fit where and whilst I had always wanted it to be tough to decide, as it would mean I was spoilt for choice, it was a task to which I lost a couple of nights of sleep to. So many people were performing incredibly well, but not everyone could go for the summit as we still had sections at extreme altitude to fix and loads to move which would waste those individuals who did it and ruin any chance of them going to the summit. Long discussions took place with Maj Dave Wilson, my trusty Deputy Leader who entered the project shortly after the initial stages, and John to decide the plan as well as talking to individuals about their own personal aspirations. After many hours of deep thought

and discussion and having watched performances over the last few weeks the final decision was made to create a support team who would clear newly buried ropes, after the recent storm, as well as restock camps. Then there would be a second team who would push out onto the Diagonal Ditch to fix ropes on this very unstable section of mixed rock and snow before establishing Camp 5 at 8000m. These leading teams would be making the ultimate team sacrifice of laying the route for the next two teams to come through for the summit. The first summit team was made up of 4 extremely strong performers physically, technically and mentally, who would set out up the Hornbein Couloir from the newly established Camp 5 and fix as much of this steep section as possible with lightweight 7mm rope and then push on for the top. The second summit team would come 24 hours after the first and push straight for the summit.



Load carrying on the fixed line high on the French spur.



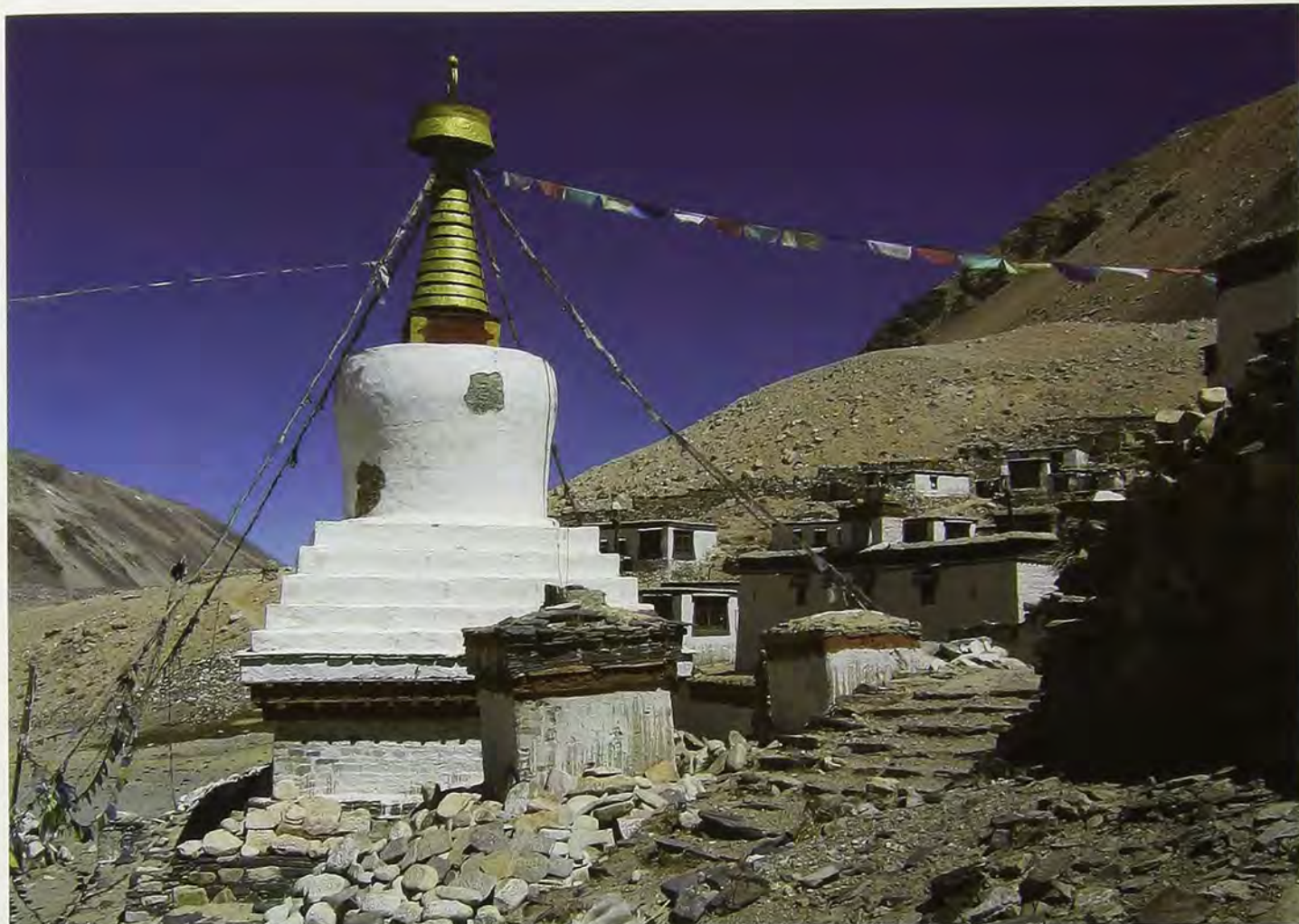
Clear night at the Road Head camp.

It was around this time when the stark realities of our situation were highlighted when a fellow climber from Sweden, who had earlier spent the night at our Base Camp, was killed as his belay failed and he fell 10,000ft down the North Face to his death. He was with his best friend pushing the envelope as they had summited and were then trying to ski the amazing Great Couloir. We also started to hear that a large number of people were dying on the normal routes, probably caused by the somewhat large numbers drawn by the generally good weather that season.

Behind our second summit team would be our final support team with the essential task of helping those returning safely back down from the North Face and to the relative safety of the lower camps.

Everything was going like a dream - the support team had done an amazing job digging out and uncovering the deeply buried ropes, including a 12

hour day along the West Ridge in thigh deep snow, whilst the Diagonal Ditch team performed superbly pushing out this unknown section in the shortest time we could have hoped for and then went on to set up and stock Camp 5 with some members without oxygen and all of them breaking new altitude records. These 2 teams were now wasted as the first summit team plugged into oxygen and left Camp 4 late in the afternoon arriving at Camp 5 to brew up and take a short rest late at night. During this move and whilst the Ditch team were working it had become apparent that the snow conditions underfoot were far from ideal with deep snow and a considerable avalanche risk, however members had battled on and endured. The team left Camp 5 late that night after a short period of taking on fluids and within minutes it became obvious that it was going to be really tough going - the snow was ranging from below the knee to thigh deep and when the profile of the snow was tested it was becoming clear that the stability was a huge risk. After 2 ? hours of the most horrendous of physical effort, sinking and stumbling up to 8100m and now at the bottom of the Hornbein Couloir they stopped to construct an avalanche pit by torchlight to fully assess the danger. In confirmation of what they already feared a 2ft slab of snow slid without effort from the layers underneath with which there was no bond proving the mountaineers worst nightmare was all around and entry into the Couloir was going to be



The Rongbuk Monastery with prayer flags flying.

impossible due to the risk of being avalanched down the huge North Face below. The incredibly difficult decision was made for the small team to descend all the way to Camp 4.

Once this decision was made the only choice was to withdraw all teams from the hill back to Tilman's to allow a period of consolidation and to discuss further plans. When the discussions began and we observed the film footage taken of the conditions it became apparent that giving it another go right now was unfeasibly dangerous and that due to the altitude of the problem the chances of the snow pack significantly changing was unrealistic. I, along with my leadership group now lay in the terrible position of weighing up all of our options but quickly realised the realities that we were not going to make it. Sending anyone back up into those conditions would have been inexcusable knowing what I now knew and I was completely unwilling to do that and things were not going to

improve in the short time remaining. With huge regret and after deep debate the decision to abort the attempt was made and the moment I told the team will stick with me for ever. My announcement was completed by asking if anyone had anything to add – There was a clear minute of complete silence followed before John stood to shake my hand and the team then fell into a blur of handshaking and embracing for what we had achieved and for the spirit which continued throughout – a fact that I believe we can all be proud of. Not only had all 20 climbers reached 7300m and over but our team was still fully intact, in control, without injury and the atmosphere that followed that day was another example of what an amazing group of people I went to Everest with and that will be the proudest part for me because never did they falter and never was the moral or drive to succeed lost at anytime.

The whole 3 year experience for me was unforgettable. I

had learnt so much about expeditions, challenge, teamwork, people and myself that I don't regret a single moment of it. Although there is some disappointment it is only for one reason and that is the team I went to Everest West Ridge with could have comfortably succeeded on the route had the conditions been safe for passage.

To finish I will mention a key point that sinks deep with me after this amazing experience and that is the people you involve is the key. Create an initial highly supportive and totally trustworthy core around you, bolster that with very careful selection of a hard working and reliable team but don't forget that gaining wide support both internally and externally will guarantee smooth passage throughout the expedition especially in the planning period. EWR has many people to thank for its success and this includes our Patron's Lord Slim and Gen Delves, our President Gen Nick Cottam and the HMC of Meryon Bridges, Nick Arding

and Martin Bazire, the whole of the Adventurous Training Group (Army) under the command of Col Paul Farrar, 2 and 5 Div G3 PAT's Dougie McGill and John Larkham, as well as considerable financial advisory support from Col Robin Eccles at the Army Central Fund and Col Claypoole from Land. For our training location Lt Col Kevin Hodgson at JSMT, Chips Rafferty, Mark Woodhouse and Twid Turner for drawing our focus to attention to detail with training preparation and Lt Col Pete Davies, FS Bill Batson and Flt Lt Dave Howie for their hugely valued experiences from the West Ridge. High level support from a number of high ranking officers in particular Gen's Jackson, Viggers and Graham, as well as Brummie Stokes, Bronco Lane and Al Hinkes. Two incredibly helpful Embassies in Kathmandu and finally Brig Andrew Jackson and members of the Army Recruiting Group for exposing the whole of the EWR project, AMA mountaineering and its value to worldwide audience.

EWR2006 DEVELOPMENT TEAM - LHAKPA RI 7045m

By SSgt D Doyle APTC

I had not been to Nepal before and Kathmandu was a bit of a culture shock. We had arrived a week before the Main Body and spent the first few days sorting out all the X number of tonnes of kit that had been flown out thanks to Expo Logistics. We also had time to do a bit of sight seeing around the hustle and bustle of Kathmandu. We even had the honour of accompanying the Sherpas and being blessed by the Dalai Lama. Who'd have thought, a crack on the head with a wooden club would be such a privilege!

The Main Body arrived on 23 March 06 and were formally welcomed to the hotel and Nepal with traditional malla (flowers around our necks), tikka (red blob on the forehead) and raskie (Nepalese alcoholic drink). We then hosted members of the British Embassy and British Gurkhas Nepal who had assisted us with the expedition before some members headed into Thamel for a few beers. (Not a good idea after a twelve-hour journey from the UK and little sleep!) A few sore heads appeared the following morning for our first team briefing from Maj Kev Edwards APTC, our leader.

On Sunday 26 March 06 we were off at 0500hrs for the Nepalese-Tibetan border known as the Friendship Bridge between Kodari and Zangmu and on to Nyalam in Tibet for a few nights in a small 'hotel'. The roads twisted and turned away from the hustle and bustle of Kathmandu through lush green agricultural landscape as we headed for the border. As dawn broke and the sun rose over the Himalayan foothills the road conditions became more apparent together with the driver's driving skills and the constant honking or horns. I prayed we would get to our destination in one piece. The border crossing was relatively easy considering all the hype we had been given and we were soon on our way, now in 4x4s, heading up through Zangmu on a very bumpy road. We then unfortunately got stuck in a four-hour horn honking filled traffic jam before ascending to Nyalam at 3800m or so. It had been quite a jump in altitude for the day. It was considerably chilly too and it was time to break out the fleeces and down jackets. The accommodation was certainly not fancy. Although we had beds and rugs, the toilet facilities were limited and water

icy cold. The odd rat could be seen at nighttime if you were lucky. The next two days were spent conducting acclimatisation treks in the local area in order for our bodies to get used to less oxygen and we even came across our first yaks! We also shared Maj Glyn Sheppard (APTC) birthday with him in Nyalam and our cooks even managed a tasty cake for the occasion.

After three nights we were happy to escape the misery of Nyalam and set off for Tingri (4200m) by bus (as the Main Team had pinched the 4x4s!) and reached over 5000m on a high pass as we moved further into Tibet. The views from the pass were stunning and we could see Shisha Pagma in the distance in all her glory. En route we also got our first glimpse of Everest that ignited our excitement for the expedition even further. On arrival in Tingri it was evident it was a complete sh**hole and the thought of spending three nights in the place was not very appealing. The stench of burning yak dung did no favours to the lungs and people began to get sore throats and coughs. The rooms again were basic, very dusty, with walls lined with colourful material and I was

even lucky enough to have a puppy sh** in my room twice, which amused the group immensely!

The landscape around Tingri was considerably lunar like, dry and brown. Nothing seemed to live there and I wondered how on earth the locals survived in such a harsh environment. We trekked up the same hill for two days on the trot reaching just under 5000m, maintaining the philosophy of high altitude mountaineering of 'climb high, sleep low'. By this stage I felt very strong and my body seemed to be coping well with the altitude. I was taking to the hills with speed but was later warned by Maj Glyn Sheppard (APTC) to slow down a bit and keep some energy in reserve for when we got much higher! I even took on the role of cameraman for a day and Guy Clarkson, our team cameraman, gave me a quick guide to the camera and filming. Surprisingly he was impressed with my results!

Our next road trip took us to Everest Road head Camp at 5100m and we noticed the jump in altitude immediately on getting out of the transport. We had to take everything very slowly or we'd suffer the



SSgt Doyle Leading the way to the summit.



Cath Davies looking south towards the West Ridge of Everest.

consequences later. The reality of being there was quite something. For over two years we had been planning and preparing for this trip and now I was actually looking up close at Everest, in the flesh as it were, still 22km away, but impressively huge. She looked stunning in the clear blue sky and you could see the French Spur, West Ridge and Hornbein Couloir quite clearly.

The next few days were spent resting at Road head Camp, exploring the immediate area and carrying out acclimatisation treks on nearby hills. We wandered around to see the various memorials to climbers gone by including Joe Tasker and Mallory's. A Lama from the nearby Rongbuk Monastery carried out a Puja, traditional mountain ceremony, to bless our equipment and us on our second day. Yaks turned up in droves with their herders to carry barrels and supplies up to Tilman's Camp, the Main Team's Tilman's Camp (Advanced Base Camp), and WO1 Pete Longbottom (Base Camp Manager), was busy negotiating payments! Sadly during our first few days we learned of the death of a Sherpa cook boy from the Korean Expedition. He had died of High Altitude Pulmonary Oedema (HAPE) due to ascending too high too



The Lhakpa Ri ascent.

quickly. The Korean Expedition lacked a doctor, and was too proud to ask for help. Little did they know that we had all the equipment at Base Camp with us that potentially could have saved his life? Learning of this event really brought home the reality and risks of high altitude mountaineering.

The next phase of our expedition was to move to Tilman's to assist the Main Team load carry to Camp One. We had no yak support and it seemed a big jump from trekking with light packs on not particularly strenuous acclimatisation treks to carrying full expedition packs all the way to Tilman's at 5600m. By the time we arrived at Tilman's sore throats and coughs were taking their toll on some members of the team and some of the team members arrived

utterly exhausted. Thankfully the Main Team had erected tents for us and was eagerly awaiting our arrival with hot tang, fruit squash.

We then needed to rest and acclimatise again to our newly gained height before we could move on to Camp One. Days were spent shifting barrels and re-sorting equipment and food for the Main Team. We also helped make their home for the next three months more comfortable while the film crew erected their satellite and established their 'ops room'. Camp was buzzing as members of CIO John Doyle's climbing team were making exceptionally good progress on the French Spur while other members were trekking backwards and forward to Camp One load carrying. The weather was great, scenery spectacular and even the loo was better than the ones at Road head Camp! Sadly on the day we were supposed to load carry to Camp One the weather turned and we woke to a heavy snowfall in camp. The weather failed to improve over the next few days and we returned to Road head Camp disappointed

that we were at the mercy of the weather and had failed in our mission. Personally I was disappointed that I had not seen my good friend SSgt Paul Chiddle (APTC) as he had remained further up the mountain throughout our stay at Tilmans. I had wanted to wish him in person all the best for the rest of the expedition and to stay safe but had to leave a note for him instead PT Corps style!

After a few days rest, packing of equipment and loading of yaks at Road head Camp we were finally off to Lhakpa Ri. The next phase of three consecutive days trekking to Lhakpa Ri Base Camp was ambitious considering the height gain. Sadly Capt Heidi Sparks (RLC) had suffered with an upset stomach the day before our departure from Road head Camp, weakening her somewhat, and her condition worsened as we moved up the mountain. Glyn and Kev instructed me to walk at the back with Heidi to support her and also Anna Williams who was suffering with a chesty cough. Our first night was spent at the Japanese Camp (5600m), which was pretty disgusting with the serious amounts of human effluent that littered the camp, but generally spirits were high. I also remember chasing after a tent at breakfast that the wind had caught and blew down the glacier! Needless to say Capt Phyl Scott (RE) caught this on camera and Lt Andy Simpson (REME) made some great comment about girls and tents which was funny (for the lads anyway)! The next day Heidi was tired and weak from a sleepless night due to numerous trips to the loo however she soldiered on, not wanting to get left behind, and I stuck with her for the duration of the day joined later by Capt Debbie Coslett (AGC) and Capt Mike Rodger the Doc. By the time we arrived at Changzeng Base Camp (6100m) we were all shattered. Apparently there had been confusion with the Sirdar and we had meant to stop at Changtze Base Camp some distance earlier! I felt dehydrated and tired and headed straight to bed.

The following morning I was

Glyn Sheppard not playing on a stormy day.





Cath during the alpine training.

feeling strong but my sore throat was getting worse. We set off shortly after breakfast for Lhakpa Ri Base Camp and continued to move up the glacial moraine admiring the stunning penitents in the sunlight. On arrival we fought it out for good tent pitches knowing we would be there for some time. It was hard work doing anything at 6350m. My sore throat was taking its toll and I was losing my voice. From our new Base Camp we could see Lhakpa Ri across the glacier and I began to plan on how we were going to get across to the other side before heading up the steep slopes of our peak. At dinner it was decided that Glyn and I would do a recce of the glacier and search for a route across the following day.

Most of the night I was coughing up blood and green phlegm, which was not good. That morning Glyn and I headed out over the glacier to mark the route for our summit day using snow stakes and luminous tape. On return I had a chat with the doc about my coughing, which ended with me having Aspirin and Ibuprofen; all I needed now was tuber grip! It snowed loads in the night and a white

blanket had spread itself right across the brown moraine but, even more worryingly, all over Lhakpa Ri. Due to the weather, Everest ABC had shut down and no yaks, trains or porters would be making their way up or down. It was still snowing the following day and the avalanche threat was now very high on the mountain. It had been decided that the summit day would be Friday as it was forecasted to be a good weather window. It's a hard game that the Himalayas play on you; you spend years planning it, weeks or even months getting to the point where you are in a position to make an attempt on the summit, and then health or the weather can prevent you from doing so. It's not like the Alps where if the conditions aren't right then you just turn around and go back, ready to tackle it another day when it's better. In the Himalayas you only get one chance. Hopefully Friday would be ours.

In the afternoon the weather cleared for a few hours and most of us went out onto the glacier for a recce. It was good to finally get out onto the ice and snow and feel we were really getting to grips with our mountain. On the way



Snowed in after a storm.

back the weather began to close in and the wind picked up. It showed everyone what a hostile place high altitude can be, as the cold was like nothing previously experienced and made everyone rethink as to what clothing to take on the summit day.

Summit Day. Another bad night's sleep preceded an anxious morning. I was one of the first up and had hardly slept. Physically, I felt the worst I had been since falling ill. I felt bitter disappointment and for the first time I had real doubts about summiting. I soon became aware of the apprehension in the team and realised that for their own reasons, many of my teammates were dealing with their own demons that morning. Within the hour, we were crossing the glacier and my old self came rushing back; I was in my element. Phyl, Capt Jonny Taffs (AGC) and I set off to break trail and route find across the crevasse fields. At about 6800m, I was feeling tired due to my poor night's sleep and my throat and chest were very tight. The whole team rested at this point but even though I should have welcomed the break, I just wanted to keep going and after about 20 minutes, Phyl, Jonny and I set off on a passable but precarious ice bridge over a wide and dry crevasse. Sheer stubbornness was now driving me on. Thoughts of the last 3 years of training and the need for my friends and family to feel proud of me inspired me to keep going. Head down and on autopilot we trudged on. The euphoria of reaching the summit was overwhelming and despite the spectacular views of Everest,

my first thought was I desperately wanted a picture to be taken of me holding a photo of my son.

Before we knew it, handshakes all round; group photos and we were on our descent. The promise of food and rest made the descent fly by.

The next day, it was a relief to get back to Roadhead Camp. The lower altitude meant warmer temperatures, a healthier appetite, clean clothes and hopefully a good night's sleep. We spent the next week at Roadhead Camp sorting out kit and equipment and getting some well-earned rest. I was still feeling ill and after a good check up from the main team doc I found out that I had been suffering with a chest infection. By the time we left Roadhead Camp we were all fantasizing about food, hot showers and proper loos!

Back in Kathmandu there was time to reflect on the past weeks', and indeed last few years, EWR 2006 experiences. For me I have learned a great deal about expedition planning which I will carry forward to my own future expeditions. It's reassuring to know that I acclimatised well to the altitude and was confident with my abilities and decisions on the mountain, despite having a chest infection. I have enjoyed bringing on less experienced mountaineers on the team and feel satisfied that I have added value over the past years. I feel now that I am in a strong position to apply for the Joint Services Makalu Expedition in 2008 and hope one day to stand on the summit of an 8000m peak.



The essential yak train making it's way up the glacier.

EWR2006 Junior Team – Views from the Himalayas

JS Rob Varey

The expedition was made up of three teams who had taken part in one of the Army's toughest ever Adventure Training exercises.

The Challenge for the Junior Team was immense. The team, which included men and women, only joined the Army in September 2005. We all had little or no mountaineering experience and we fought our way through a tough selection period.

The expedition developed key qualities that will be useful throughout my army career. For example, physical endurance, strength, team building and performance

under pressure. It was definitely a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Abi Dalling

Nepal was indescribable; it was just amazing, even before the trek got underway.

The people, culture and food were lovely. We met so many new personalities who we are all staying in touch with. The culture couldn't have been any more different to life back home. I'll never take life for granted again! The Nepali people are the happiest people I've ever met.

The best part of the expedition was the first views of Everest. Even though it was from miles away and you could only just

see it through the clouds it was breath taking. We were all amazed at the sight of it. Not many 16yr olds can say that they've seen that! Also, when we were halfway up a mountain we found a pool table and the lads and I challenged the Sherpas to a match. I won one game and lost the rest. One of the Sherpas (Lakpa) officially classed me as his younger sister.

From Kathmandu to Base camp it just got better and better. The disappointment of not reaching our objective was definitely over shadowed by the achievement of all the others.

We all hope to go back to Nepal, it's an experience none

of us will ever forget.

Zak Dunnings

I had been looking forward to the exped for months, all of the preparation the team did together and the individual training we all did was about to pay off.

The reality of it all hit me when I arrived in Kathmandu. The atmosphere and environment was intense! The way these people lived and go about their daily lives was incredible.

Once in country, it was just a case of waiting for the flight from Kathmandu to Lukla, which would take us out of the city and into the hills.

I woke on the morning of

EWR Junior Team





Everest and Nuptse from near Island Peak.

departure to Lukla. I was excited to be flying to such a beautiful part of the world and could not wait to get started on what would be the most memorable thing of my life.

The most memorable moments of the exped for me and ones that I will certainly remember for a long time were the little villages along the trail and the way that they ran their simple lives. The Sherpas looked after us so well. They treated everyone with respect and were genuinely concerned that we were happy and content.

For me the exped brought me round to realise my bad points and my good points. I realised that to be in a team in

such a remote place you need to rely on the qualities of the team.

In the future I wish to carry out mountaineering and explore other parts of the world. I'd also like to re-visit island peak and complete some unfinished business!

Peter Thomas

On 1 April 06 I started to get butterflies in my stomach as I realised the scale of the expedition that we were part of. When I got to the airport I managed to get lost because I'd never been to one before, in fact, I'd never flown anywhere before!

When we got to Kathmandu

airport, there were scruffy policeman around with rifles, not really illustrating any professionalism! We stayed at a hotel in Kathmandu for one night, which was pretty luxurious. They even had toilets that flushed which were about to become a rare commodity.

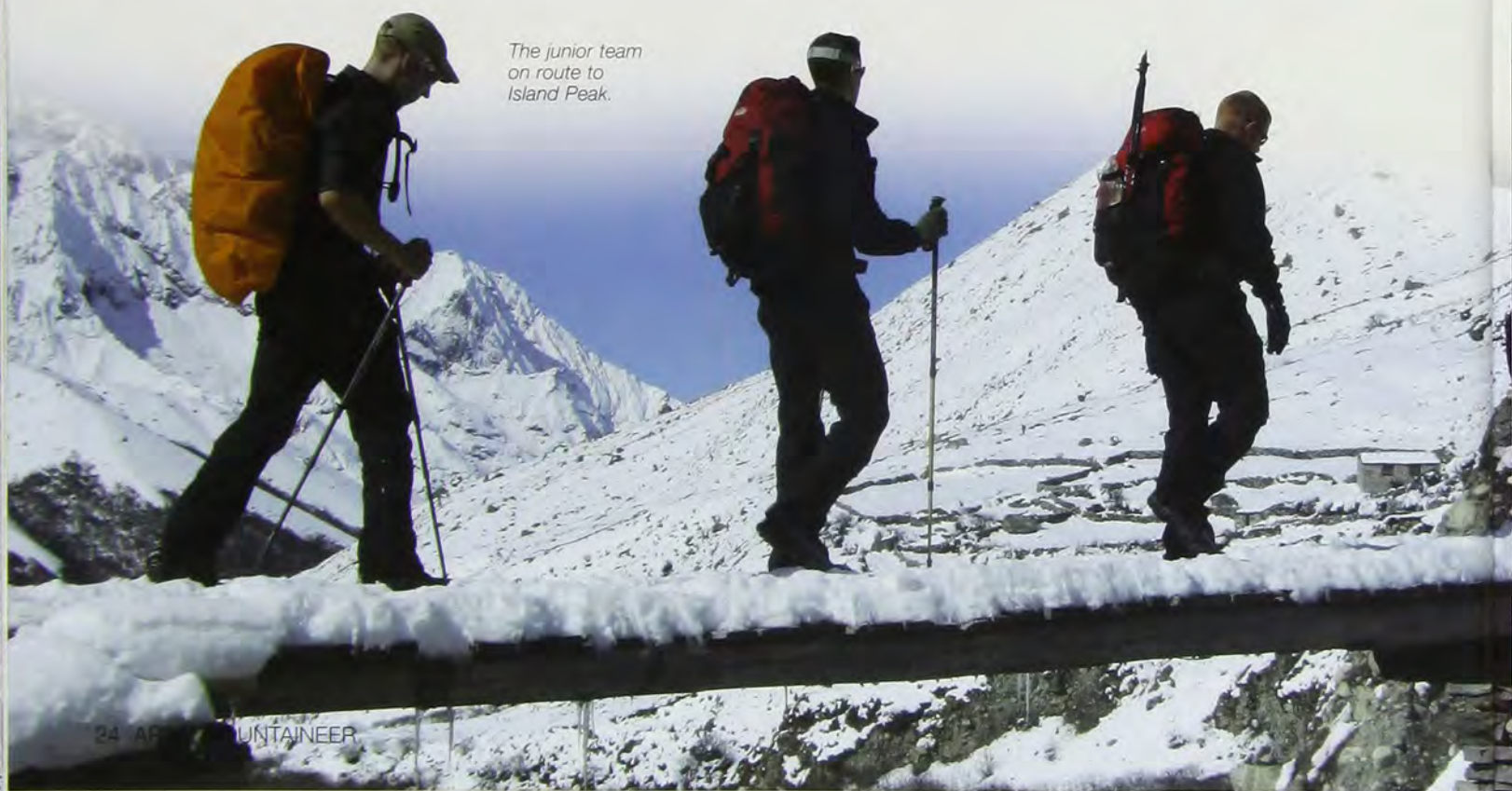
The scenery, the culture and the atmosphere up in the hills were amazing. I developed a chest infection and was left behind a couple of points along the trail in order to stay at a lower altitude and recover. Leaving the team was quite hard, but it was one of those things.

When we got to our base camp the whole team was buzzing and couldn't wait for our departure time for the summit. In preparation we completed some technical training and we all went to bed that night feeling confident and buoyant.

That night it started snowing, and it snowed for over 36hours. After digging our tents out of the snow, numerous times, the team leader finally called endex due to dangerous conditions. The trek back was disappointing. However, the scenery was just as amazing as it was on the way up. It was an excellent exped, a once in a lifetime opportunity.



Prayer flags in the Nepal sun.



The junior team on route to Island Peak.

THE CHO OYU AFFAIR

By Stu Macdonald

Cho Oyu, the 'Turquoise Goddess' is one of the world's fourteen peaks exceeding 8000m and at 8201m is the sixth highest mountain in the world. It straddles the Tibet - Nepal Border just 30 km west of Everest. The mountain first attracted interest from British mountaineers when an expedition including Edmund Hillary, George Lowe, Tom Bourdillon and Eric Shipton attempted the Northwest face in 1952. Despite their considerable experience they were unable to find a route through the formidable ice cliffs at 6600m and settled for an ascent of the more modest objective Palaung Ri (7012m). After the British success on Everest in 1953, K2 and Cho Oyu were the two highest unclimbed mountains in the world and a strong Austrian team led by the accomplished mountaineer and writer Herbert Tichy turned their attention to the latter. In contrast to other Himalayan expeditions at the time Tichy operated with the minimum of support choosing to utilise just three climbers, seven Sherpas and 3 dozen porters. On the 19 October 1954 Hebert Tichy, Sep Joechler and Pasang Dawa

Lama Sherpa reached the summit exhausted and frost-bitten. In recent years the mountain has been utilised by many parties as a suitable objective prior to attempting Everest. Ex PRECIOUS AIR DRAGON 2006 was a joint expedition, with members of the TA and RMR that aimed to make an ascent of Cho Oyu, North West Face prior to attempting Mt Everest in 2007.

The expedition comprised of Simon Hall, Andy Wilkinson, Gordon Clarke, James Lancashire and Dominic Porter. Although none of the team had attempted an 8000m peak before there was a wide range of experience from seasoned Alpinists to various excursions to the wider ranges including Mt McKinley (Alaska) and Aconcagua (Argentina). Mindful of the original tactics adopted on the first ascent, the expedition adopted a somewhat minimalist approach in sync with the concept of 'small is beautiful'. In practise this meant that any kit that did not fit into personal rucksacks or North Face kit bags was deemed a luxury item and therefore unneces-

sary. Gulf Airlines may have indirectly saved our lives by granting us a 40kg kit allowance at the last moment! A combination of mountaineering ethics and budgetary constraints allowed for just two High Altitude Sherpas (Kristna and Sundoo) to provide local knowledge and Asian Trekking were employed to provide minimalist Base Camp facilities for the duration of the five week expedition. Whether by accident or design, the military's smallest expedition to ever attempt an 8000m peak eventually crossed its line of departure and began to move albeit rather shakily into 'uncharted waters.'

After arriving in Kathmandu there followed the usual panic buying of kit and food whilst fending off the enthusiastic youths trying to sell us copious amounts of dope. We soon flew to Lhasa and began the overland journey to Base Camp. On 15 September we were treated to our first view of the mighty bastion of Cho Oyu - the North West face clearly visible with its seemingly impregnable ice cliffs and rock bands. We arrived at Chinese Base Camp where a

military base monitors the border and the old Nangpa La trade route across the Tibetan - Chinese border. A recent Italian expedition has been disrupted when a lorry had been parked up without the handbrake being applied and had rolled down the incline crushing tents and equipment. Fortunately the tents were not occupied, but the damage was sufficient to send an expedition straight home without actually getting to grips with the mountain! From there, yaks were the only transport, and there was never a dull moment with the beasts! Despite these challenges we arrived at Advance Camp at an altitude of 5700m and established our Spartan home for the next 4 weeks. A Buddhist blessing sought permission from the Mountain Gods to climb Cho Oyu and English, Scottish, Welsh, Sherpa and Tibetan search for a spiritual equilibrium was assisted by good humour fuelled by Chinese Brandy and Lhasa beer.

Further acclimatisation followed at Advance Camp and gave us the opportunity to liaise with other expeditions and commercial firms that had

Cho Oyu from base camp.



arrived earlier in the season. With close to four hundred occupants Advance Base Camp resembled a cross between a United Nations summit and a refugee camp! Weather and snow conditions had to date inhibited any summit attempts and the majority of commercial firms were nurturing restless and impatient clients as time windows began to wane. A plan seemed appropriate - High Altitude climbing involves a long and sometimes painful apprenticeship and adequate acclimatisation is the key to success. Our plan comprised a graduated approach that involved load carrying to Camp 1 (6400m) and Camp 2 (7100m) prior to returning all the way to Advance Base Camp (5700m), to rest prior to making an attempt on the summit. To ease logistics we planned not to establish the normal Camp 3 at 7600m, but would make our summit attempt from Camp 2 at 7100m. This strategy would involve a long summit day, but offered the benefit of moving fast and light for the last 1100m having slept at a relatively lower altitude. Cho Oyu can be climbed without supplementary oxygen, however, owing to the short duration of our expedition and its primary purpose as a dress rehearsal for Everest in 2007 we elected to utilise bottled oxygen during the summit attempt.

We made our first foray to Camp 1 at an altitude of 6400m on 22 September and were surprised by the number of tents located on the narrow and exposed ridge. With forecasts of bad weather imminent we cached tents, gas and food and beat a hasty retreat to ABC. Four days of severe weather followed with the North West face raked by high winds and heavy snowfall. Activity on the mountain was at a standstill with all parties retreating to the shelter of their Base Camps. Life at base camp in bad weather becomes a monotonous routine of eat, drink, sleep interspersed with the ritual of awaiting the daily forecast from the UK Met Office by sat 'phone. Days are spent bantering with the international climbing community over tea with evenings spent exchanging mountain stories to ward off pessimism and depression. As the bad weather drew to a close we had covered much ground - top five climbs completed, top five climbs for the future, top five songs, top five movies, top five female celebrities (I defended Julie Christie being of pensionable age). Migration to top five yaks raised some eyebrows and may have been indicative of the need to return home if it has not been for a change in the weather.....

Fine weather triggered a wave



Setting off in a summit day.

of activity at Advance Base Camp - all expeditions were keen to make summit bids as time marched on. There was some concern regarding snow conditions since the predominantly south winds had deposited a considerable accumulation of snow on the North West face with potential to avalanche. Having arrived at the mountain late we still had to fully acclimatise before we could even contemplate a summit bid. We made our second heavily laden journey up the scree of 'Killer Hill' to Camp 1 and erected our tents and spent the night. James Lancashire continued his historic trait of retching over or as close as possible to the most senior rank in his vicinity, further curtailing his promotion prospects. The next day was spent relaxing at Camp 1 to acclimatise and hydrate prior to moving to Camp 2.

in full weight down suits despite the blazing sun and relatively modest temperatures - each to their own. The second set of ice cliffs were soon upon us and provided a similar level of difficulty before we emerged to confront a final heartbreak hill leading to Camp 2 at 7100m where we erected our tents and settled down for the night. This was a new height record for all of us and it was clear that the careful acclimatisation plan had paid off as we encountered only minor symptoms of AMS. The next morning it was with mixed emotions that we returned to Advance Base Camp to rest whilst many of the other expeditions started their summit attempts, however, this was not the time to undermine our careful acclimatisation plan and risk failure or casualties.

The run of good weather and surprisingly stable snow conditions facilitated considerable summit success on the mountain followed by a general exodus from the mountain by the plethora of international expeditions. In sync with weather conditions normally associated with the latter part of the post monsoon period, temperatures dropped and the winds picked up - the race was now on. After five days rest and daily courting of the ever helpful UK Meteorology Office staff we set out to make what we hoped would be one last successful journey to the mountain. We reached Camp 1 to find this was no longer a congested affair and spent an uneventful night resting and hydrating in anticipation of the challenge ahead. The next day we romped up the ice cliffs enjoying the benefits of acclimatisation and lighter

After a windy night we set off for Camp 2 and the challenges of the two ice cliffs that barred potential progress. Loaded down with personal equipment and oxygen cylinders I harboured doubts that we were attempting to carry too much for what would be our first ever venture to above 7000m. We followed a narrow ridge to the foot of the first ice cliff and ascended the steep slopes to where a rising leftwards traverse breaks through the cliffs. Whilst never greater than Scottish Grade 2, the combination of altitude and heavy 'sacks made this an arduous exercise and intermittent fixed ropes of variable quality required continual caution. Exit from the ice cliffs lead to a relatively straight forward section and a chance to rest. We were amazed at the number of people overheating



Cho Oyu summit.

loads! On arrival at Camp 2 we learnt that our Oxygen supply had been interfered with and one of the precious cylinders has been stolen and replaced with an empty bottle - a despicable act. Unfortunately this is a sad but increasingly common incident caused by more and more people without the traditions of mountain ethics being drawn to high altitude climbing. A mediocre weather forecast, increasingly high winds and fatigue from the climb to Camp 2 caused doubt regarding our intended summit bid that night - we therefore decided to delay a day.

Summit Day

"It's 2300 on the 8 October. We emerge from our tents, shoulder our 'sacks, and turn on the valves on our oxygen sets. A steady hiss confirms they're working and we set off into the night. The hours pass by and we steadily move ever upwards - a slow convoy of head torches in a sea of snow and ice.

Steep cliffs bar the route, and we clip our jumars onto a fixed rope. Hauling ourselves upwards at just less than 8000m is exhausting work. Some of the ropes are barely worthy of yak tethers, and we exercise extreme caution. The stops are becoming more frequent and longer as we reach the summit

plateau, but the sun is rising and a huge panorama opens in front of us. Another twenty minutes and we're there. 8201m! Photos follow back slapping and we take a few moments to savour the view,

Exhausted, we descend to Camp 2 at our own individual pace to rest and spend the night. It is during our descent that by chance James Lancashire identifies the lone figure of an Italian mountaineer, Roberto Marabotto. He is alone and has all the symptoms of severe Altitude Sickness and frostbite. James assists him to Camp 2, makes him comfortable in his own tent and monitors his progress throughout the night. The realisation that we have a complex casualty evacuation of our hands begins to dawn.

After an uncomfortable night with interrupted sleep at Camp 2, we awake to the prospect of evacuating an incapacitated mountaineer down a complex face. The team embraces this challenge in the same matter of fact way it has dealt with all of the challenges over the last few weeks. Roberto is short roped down the first set of ice cliffs and some imaginative rope manoeuvres speed progress. He is still suffering from the effects of altitude and remains incapable of independent movement. It is here that Gordon Clark's civilian

skills as a mountaineering instructor come to the fore as he embarks on a tandem abseil with the incapacitated, but increasingly exposure aware (!) Roberto - a commendable feat of mountain rescue. We are soon safely ensconced beneath the ice cliff and en route to the relative sanctuary of Camp 1. There, a prearranged rendezvous with Tibetan Porters ensures that a now more composed Roberto is safely evacuated to Advance Base Camp and is reunited with his fellow countrymen. "

The Journey Home

Our journey back to Nepal across the Friendship Bridge was uneventful until we were stopped by "Maoist" rebels who politely requested a donation to refurbish their local school. We diffused the situation with smiles, handshakes and McVities chocolate digestives. Politics and principles aside they were awfully polite and even gave us a receipt from the Revolutionary Council of the Tamang Province. Dying for the sake of £2 was dismissed as a potentially over-zealous option! On return to Kathmandu we were invited to Kathmandu's finest Italian restaurant 'Fire and Ice' to celebrate the 'return of Roberto'. Mountaineers, Sherpas, Tibetan cooks were all

invited - nobody escapes the generous hospitality of our charismatic hosts. Stories are told and retold, frostbite injuries inspected and addresses exchanged. At the request of our hosts the evening ends with a resounding chorus of the National Anthem with much humming to replace key words where hypoxia or age has eroded the relevant memory banks! We were delighted to have achieved our objective and Roberto was grateful to be alive.

Despite numerous expeditions in the last 30 years, less than fifteen people have reached the summit of 8000m peaks on service expeditions and the successful ascent of Cho Oyu by five military personnel serves to enhance military credibility in the Himalayas. The Services have much to learn from civilian and commercial ventures that enjoy considerable success in the Himalayas. Exercise PRECIOUS AIR DRAGON 2006 is the smallest military expedition to attempt an 8000m peak and demonstrates that such aspirations are achievable within the confines of a small cohesive team with a light logistic footprint without compromising safety. All team members are very grateful for the AMA's support for this challenging and rewarding opportunity.



Flying the flag on the summit.

JAN BAALSRUD EXPEDITION

23rd March – 13th April 2006

By Alun Davies

It was about 5.30 in the morning and we were standing on a wet windswept quay in Scalloway, Shetland waiting for the arrival of a one hundred year old boat which would be the key to a Scandinavian odyssey on skis. The sturdy *Straumnes* arrived out of the mist and soon we were shaking hands with the Norwegian crew that had brought this 56 foot "Shetland Bus" to take us to Norway. It was the 25th March and exactly the week in which, 63 years before, a band of Norwegian saboteurs has set off in an identical boat to attack the airfield at Bardufoss from which the Luftwaffe were very successfully bombing the Allied convoys that were sailing from Iceland to Archangel and Murmansk in Russia.

After months of training by the British SOE (at Glenmore Lodge and elsewhere in the Cairngorms) the operation was compromised by a traitor on the day they arrived in Norway. Their boat, the *Brattholm*, was blown up by the crew and eleven of them were killed or captured as they swam ashore. Only Jan Baalsrud a 26 year old soldier escaped the Germans by setting off across the snow covered hills, swimming the fjords. His heroic journey over 150 miles of very difficult ter-



The Jan Baalsrud expedition team.

rain, with unsuitable clothing and nothing but an old pair of wooden skis, was recorded in a book by David Howarth "We Die Alone". It was this book, and a more accurate sequel "Defiant Courage" by Tore Haug that were the inspiration for our expedition in which we set out to follow the route taken by Jan from Shetland and then across Norway and Finland to Sweden.

Jan Baalsrud is a national hero in Norway and when the Norwegian Army heard that our expedition was going to celebrate the heroism of one of their men General Grandhagen, the Army Commander North, offered us a ship to cross the North Sea as well as fast patrol boats to cross the fjords, splendid waterfront accommodation in Tromso, and even vehicles to move the party about. They could not have been more helpful and that generosity was a hallmark of the expedition.

The members of the expedition made their own way to Shetland from where many operations were launched during the war. Flights to Edinburgh by *bmibaby* were

remarkably cheap - £15 from Cardiff, but the relatively short crossing to Shetland was more like £200 though we did prize a modest concession out of British Airways and avoided paying excess baggage. We laid a wreath on the new memorial to the Shetland Bus crews who ferried refugees back from Norway and then returned with raiding parties. Many such boats were sunk, by German bombers, and more sank in the treacherous North Sea.

After meeting up and visiting Lunna House, which had been the Headquarters of the

wartime Shetland Bus organisation, we made our way to Scalloway and to meet the boat, load it with stores and set off in foul weather for Norway and Tromso.

It actually took three attempts to cross the North Sea as we were twice turned back in storms. On each occasion the band of locals who kindly gathered to see us off became noticeably smaller. The third time we were lucky, but it took a full five days to motor up across the Arctic Circle to Tromso. This part of the trip was memorable for the stark beauty of the fjords with their colourful painted wooden houses, and the massive peaks that soared up, often on either side of our small boat. The transit through the sheltered fjords was a real pleasure after crossing the savage North Sea.

On our first day we swam in the fjord as the crew of the *Brattholm* had done in the war; it proved a chilly experience, and after that it was long days on skis. We tried using Telemark skis with wax which proved fine on the flat and reasonable going uphill; but our lack of skill at free heel skiing made it pure comic



Jan's memorial.



Perfect skiing conditions on a crisp Norwegian day.



Sea King touchdown.



Taking on the view during a short rest.

relief on the downhill. After that we mainly used our alpine ski mountaineering skis.

To avoid leaving tracks in the snow Jan had walked for many kilometres from Mikkelvik along the boulder strewn beaches and we doggedly followed his path. With skis attached to bulging rucksacks it was less than fun

leaping from boulder to boulder but thankfully we came to Engenes, put our skis on and followed his route up over the plateau of Jonas-aksla. It was a cold passage at only 366m but for the first of many times I lost touch with the fingers of my right hand, and that was to become an increasing problem.



A local with his traditional transport system.

On day seven we crossed the Lyngen fjord from Furuflaten to Revdal, and here we found the small reconstructed wooden hut, nicknamed Hotel Savoy, in which Jan had laid-up for 13 days during which time painful and progressive gangrene was poisoning him and he was forced to cut off his toes with a penknife.

Our days were made longer by meeting octogenarians who had helped Jan Baalsrud in the war. It was good to hear their stories and they were eager to hear our progress.

After the late start from Hotel Savoy we were still on a high plateau above Manndalen at midnight and struggling to find a way down on skis to the valley. By 2 am we were on a steep slope in deep snow. It was dark so we decided to dig in and wait for daylight. With four shovels between six we soon had two decent snow holes and shivered till dawn. At 4.30 am we heard a helicopter and it transpired that our base camp party had contacted the police who, fearing the worst, had called out the rescue services. We watched as this massive Sikorsky followed our ski tracks along the plateau until it hovered above the snow holes. Flashing its light for recognition it flew off and landed above us. We were quick to point out that "we are fine thank you" but the offer of a lift was too good to refuse and, rather than another ten hours on skis, we flew down to the valley in about five minutes.

That night we had a prearranged meeting with the Sami, the native tribe of the north, and we spent three days in their company, sleeping in their round Lavva tents, using reindeer to pull sledges and eating reindeer meat at every opportunity. It was a great experience but they have embraced the skidoo culture closely and sadly the veneer of tradition is wearing thin. Those days were characterised by our slow progress across the massive open plateau, the love the Sami have for skidoo travel, and the sheer cold which defied all expensive goodies from Snow & Rock. One day for lunch I was given a plate of reindeer

stew and by the time I had eaten a third of it the remainder had frozen on the plate. The accompanying potatoes which the Sami had cooked in the coffee kettle we put in our gloves as the original hand warmers – and excellent they were – allowing the option of eating them later.

To make up time we took advantage of a skidoo lift, but in simple terms each skidoo takes one passenger sitting, and so with a party of seven we had to be ingenious. This meant, on one occasion pulling three skiers behind one skidoo. To our surprise the drivers set off at 40kph rather than the fast walking pace we expected. This was fine when going along a straight line but going around corners made for exciting skiing for the last on the rope who benefited from a whiplash effect. On this occasion all skiers stayed on their feet until we ran downhill to a footbridge, preceded by a cattle grid. This was just too challenging for our lead skier who took one look at the snow free cattle grid and then made a spectacular fall on his shoulder.

On day eleven we crossed into Finland on ski and skidoo and we soon came to the highway that marks the border with Sweden. On the last day we ceremonially skied across a lake into Sweden from where in the war Jan was put into a canoe and paddled down river to a small lake at Sarikoski. From here he was airlifted in a seaplane of the Swiss Red Cross to hospital and freedom. Jan recovered well and returned to Shetland before the end of the war to train other Norwegian soldiers. After the war Jan moved to Spain where he lived happily until his death in 1987. His ashes are buried at Manndalen in Northern Norway as a tribute to a village whose inhabitants risked their lives for him.

Those taking part were John Andre - Richard Cowper - Alun Davies - Anthony Evans - Knut Oscar Fleten - Chris Paul - John Elis-Roberts - Mike Wright - Iain Dalzeljob (sea journey only).

Stepping Up and Stepping Down at the AMA Annual Weekend 2006

by Lt Col Martin Bazire

During this year's AMA Annual Weekend, in the time available, I felt I covered much ground, in more ways than one, since I was able to stretch my legs as well as tackle some AMA issues. My physical activities were modest but enjoyable. I will attempt to summarise them here, and then look back briefly on the AMA's fifth decade.

Amphitheatre Buttress

Paul Edwards and I had a spare half day to get to the hills before an AMA Committee Meeting. After the remnants of Hurricane Gordon the previous day and a poor forecast, we were surprised at the still, clear morning. The long drive into the Conwy Valley took us towards Cwm Eigiau on the relatively unfrequented north east side of the Carneddau. The walk in to Craig yr Ysfa was most pleasant, with hardly a soul in sight. Amphitheatre Buttress had been on my 'to do list' for a long time, and we had the rock to ourselves. With time pressing, Paul led off with great aplomb, and I was happy following. This was a genuine 3 star route (at the V Diff end of the scale), in a splendid setting. I was so pleased to ease my way up in

big boots, regaining confidence on the rock, and progressing past the 'awesome drop'. By the time we reached the Garden Path and the Pinnacle Traverse we were moving together, and we emerged onto the skyline to appreciate the views, have lunch, and reflect on a most satisfying climb. A couple of hours later I was back at Indy chairing my last AMA Committee Meeting.

Llech Ddu Spur

The following day I headed again to the Carneddau, this time with Meryon Bridges and Geordie Taylor. From Bethesda, Cwm Llafar provided another secluded walk-in to the high hills. The headwall appeared, with no obvious weakness, but the right hand slope led to a leftward traverse to gain the Llech Ddu Spur. This was a fine scramble indeed, and we relished picking our way over and round the obstacles. In poor visibility and strengthening winds, we gained the top of Carnedd Dafydd for refreshment. The clouds soon lifted to give us intriguing views across the Ogwen Valley: Tryfan and the Glyders look quite different from this vantage point. We headed for Carnedd Llewelyn, just a frac-

tion lower than Snowdon, but so much broader. Visibility improved towards the coast, and Holyhead Mountain could be seen. Descending the north-west ridge past Yr Elen made for a most satisfying circuit. At that evening's AGM I handed over as AMA Chairman to Cath Davies.

The Last Ten Years

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as AMA Chairman. Over the years, I have seen our Association develop in many ways. There have been large enterprises, such as Himalaya Dragon, Alps 2000, Everest West Ridge, and Joint Service expeditions and Alpine Meets. There have been smaller scale ventures which have also allowed members to feel that buzz and sense of purpose when working together as part of a team, or just moving smoothly on rock, or simply appreciating the mountain environment.

Some of the highlights in recent years include:

- a growth in size to well over 2000 members;
- establishing the AMA's home at JSMTC Indefatigable, where Mrs Ann Davies serves us so well as Membership Secretary;
- the recognition of Sport

Climbing as an Army Sport, with annual Army Championships and Bouldering Competitions;

- the developing role of the website as a means of conveying information;
- healthy and well-managed finances;
- a good relationship with the ATG(A);
- and maintaining climbing activity at a time of high operational tempo.

None of this happens by chance, and I must pay tribute to those key AMA activists who have contributed so much in recent years and have made such a difference to the effectiveness of the AMA, whether as exercise leaders or as committee campaigners. Among the latter, I would particularly like to thank Cath Davies, Paul Edwards, Kev Edwards, Paul Fish, Mike Laing, Andy Parsons, Mike Smith and Steve Willson for all their efforts over many years. I have also enjoyed the company of those who have been prepared to undertake some gentler routes with me around Snowdonia and further afield. Finally, I must also thank Maj Gen Nick Cottam who, as AMA President, has given me valued support and guidance, and has given the AMA sound direction and a prominent profile over a sustained period.

The Future

I believe the AMA approaches its 50th anniversary in good shape. There is the exciting prospect of a variety of exploits under the banner of AMA 50, and beyond. The AMA Committee is in good hands, and leaders of expeditions and meets are stepping forward: do consider your potential role to keep the AMA moving forward. I certainly remain drawn to the hills, so I look forward to seeing you there.



Geordie and Meryon leading the way up the Llech Ddu Spur.

51 Super Size Me! – Go large in the Rockies

By James Woodhouse

This was an adventure training exercise to the Canadian Rockies organised by 7 SCOTS, 51st Highland TA. Our base for the expedition was the Fortress Ski Centre that is in Kananaskis country, about two hours west of Calgary in the foothills of the Rockies. There were fourteen exercise participants, four instructors and an admin team of three. The aim was for all participants to rotate around various activities: alpine mountaineering, walking expeditions, single pitch and multi-pitch climbing. Before the exercise began all participants were required to do a Winter Mountaineering Proficiency course and also a Rock Proficiency Course so that there was a basic skill level when we arrived in country. The first challenge the expedition had to deal with was when we lost the expedition leader on the first evening: he became ill and had to be admitted to Perth Hospital and so was unable to participate. Despite this due to the hard work of the expedition 2IC the rest of the expedition was a big success.

The alpine mountaineering phase involved a day of training on the Athabasca Glacier

followed by an expedition to the Ten Peaks area near Lake Louise. Teams walked up to the Neil Colgan Hut (elevation 2840m) and stayed there for 3 nights climbing the local mountains: Mt Bowlen (3072m), Mt Perren (3351m) and Mt Little (3140m). This involved crossing a wet glacier and grade 1 winter terrain to each of the peaks. On two occasions we had to utilise recently learned crevasse rescue skills when the nominated 'crevasse-finder' suddenly disappeared from view! Just staying in the alpine hut was a new experience for the troops including meeting a few of the other eccentric climbing personalities also staying in the hut.

The expedition utilised the many sport climbing crags that the Rockies have to offer. These proved to be excellent training grounds for the harder and more committing multi pitch climbs that were tackled. One party climbed on the impressive mountain crags of Yamnuska. They climbed Grillmair Chimneys (5.6 290m) that involved popping out of a hole in the ground at the top of the climb much to the amusement of the hikers at the top. In total the expedition climbed over 300 pitches

of rock, which is about nine km of vertical ascent!

We completed two mountain walking expeditions: The Ribbon Lake Trail (2 days, 30km) and the Sunshine Trail (3 days, 65km). The troops carried all their own kit and bivvied out in back country campsites along the route. There were several challenges not found in the British Mountains from avoiding the local grizzly bears to climbing chains with expedition packs. In addition we did several day walks from the Fortress Base: Mount Allen (2819 m), Elbow lake and the ascent to the Rae Glacier and a circuit of the Kananaskis Lake.

The R&R was an important part of the exercise allowing troops to recover from the relatively lengthy and demanding schedule. The last 2 days of the exercise the troops did a variety of activities from drinking tea and eating pasta to playing on the renowned Kananaskis Golf Course.

The expedition 2ic commented: Adventure training in Canada enables troops of all abilities to achieve their personal best. The programme of events was designed to be both progressive and challenging. Not only did the troops develop their own personal fitness but also skills such as team work, personal administration and confidence in their own abilities. These skills are not only essential on active duty but also

in their own civilian careers. Six soldiers from this expedition are due to serve in Iraq and start in theatre at the beginning of September, and I am confident that these experiences in Canada will stand them in good stead for any challenges in the future.

The expedition was a huge success mainly due to all the hard work Captain Woodhouse put into planning and applying for the many grant applications. Without the generous help of so many regimental organisations so many young soldiers would have not benefited for this fantastic opportunity.

Rock climbing training.



The team high in the Rockies.



IBEX DRAGON

By Maj R S Metcalfe

The European Alps are reasonably close to UK, and can offer a good mountain challenge for those with little time and a limited budget. The Haute Route was established almost a hundred years ago as a high mountaineering route that linked together two of Europe's premier mountaineering centres, Chamonix and Zermatt. It was then developed into a ski route and more recently a high-level mountain hike. Few long distance hikes offer the variety and grandeur of landscape as this route. Beginning in Chamonix at the foot of Mont Blanc, Western Europe's highest peak, the Haute Route winds its way through the Swiss canton of Valais. Taking in what could be the greatest collection of four thousand meter peaks in all the Alps, it culminates at the foot of the Matterhorn in Zermatt.

Our Alpine trekking expedition covered the western half of the Haute Route, from Trient to Arolla in the Valais canton of Switzerland from 9-13 Sep 06. The prospect was for a demanding but spectacular Alpine route, and we were not disappointed. We covered a total distance of 55.5km with 5,810M of ascents.

We found that the hut wardens had access to highly reliable forecasts, but we also used <http://www.meteoswiss.ch/web/en/weather.html> and <http://www.wetterzentrale.de/topkarten/fsfaxsem.html>

www.wetterzentrale.de/topkarten/fsfaxsem.html

The French mountain rescue services are provided by mountain police (the CRS), gendarmes and fire officers. By contrast, the Swiss mountain rescue is private and reimbursed by visitors' insurance fees. You therefore need proper specialist mountain insurance.

Our first day took us from le Peuty (1328M) to the Chalet du Glacier (1583M) on a deceptively easy leg. Then the harder work started, on the climb via Vesevey (a tiny deserted stone refuge at 2096M) to the Fenetre d'Arpette (2665M). We were just getting our mountain legs, really, and were grateful that the altitudes were not too high, too early. We met about 30 other mountaineers – a reflection of the popularity of Champex, just beyond our destination. We enjoyed mild weather and spectacular views of the Glacier du Trient, and the Aiguilles Dores to the south. The ice was making a lot of noise for us. The Arpette Hut had more of everything than your average Swiss mountain refuge – we would recommend it for a base location.

The buses in Switzerland run like their watches. We took the bus from Champex to Liddes. We started at 1300M and climbed steadily to the Cabane Col du Mille (2472M) – by which time we had all admitted to aspiring to property ownership in the pretty village where we had started our ascent. There were plenty of

navigation and route selection lessons to be reviewed that morning. We ate a quick lunch near the Cabane Col du Mille, and donated an apple core to the mule that had brought supplies in to the refuge that morning. A straightforward walk in to the Cabane Brunet (2103M) was punctuated by views of Verbier (for the very rich) and Sarreyer, with the next day's destination, Cabane du Mont Fort, clearly visible below the Monts du Cion.

Our third day was the hardest, with a total of 3 hours 57 minutes added for ascents and descents. We walked down 670M to the intermediate hydro-electric installation at Fionnay, and ascended from there to Lac Louvie. The record (set in Jun 06) for the 880M ascent was 34 minutes – we did it in 1.5 hours! On the Col du Termin (2648M) we encountered the protected ibex – a herd of 30 or so of these majestic animals. We completed the route to Cabane du Mont Fort (2457M), and met 77 year-old and 65-year-old Americans doing similar routes to us – you're never too old... From the refuge we were able to take in the view of the whole Mont Blanc massif, with Europe's highest peak clearly visible from over 40km away.

The next day would see us breasting 3 cols over 2900M. A little beyond the first, Col de la Chau (2940M) we saw more ibex (just 5 bachelor males). Beyond Col de Louvie (2921M) we found that the marked route had recently been amended, to take the walker further north from the foot of the Grand Desert

glacier; this was clear on the ground from the eastern approach, not from the west. However we got on with no problems, and climbed on to Col de Prafleuri (2987M) to enjoy spectacular views of the Aiguilles Rouges d'Arolla. At the Cabane de Prafleuri, much of the space on the tables was occupied by stuffed animals; we shared our simple supper watched by beady eyes.

On the final day of our trek we crossed the Col des Roux (2804M) to take in a stunning view of the Lac des Dix, above the tallest dam in the world. The Dix supplies 18% of Switzerland's electricity requirements in winter. The marmots (as well as the prized cows) looked on as we made easy progress south and east towards Arolla. Our last col, the Col de Reidmatten (2919M), was ascended by two iron ladders fixed to the rock face. All of us had to concentrate – and avoid the temptation to look down – as the choughs were laughing at us all the way.

This was a good introduction to Alpine hut-to-hut trekking, and all done on a limited budget and in limited time. The eastern half of the Haute Route is on the "to do" list, but there is so much more (higher and onto more technical ground) on offer – we could have 4 volunteers for Alpine Mountaineering Proficiency training next year...

The Fenetre d'Arpette (2665m)

mountain adventure

- Winter mountaineering skills
- Climbing courses
- Mountain bike guiding/expeditions
- Caving
- European mountaineering
- Professional qualified instructors will guide you safely on your chosen activity



Phone Chris on 07868735865
www.mountainadventure.biz

COMPETITION

X<< SOCKS®

High Tech for your Feet

WIN a pair of X-Socks Army Long
16 pairs to give away!! (Normal RRP £12.00)

Experience the comfort and freedom of X-Socks

Anatomically Shaped Feet (clearly marked Left & Right)

Air Conditioning® – keeping your feet warm and dry

X-Cross® Bandage – giving you support where needed

Let X-Socks concentrate on your feet whilst you get on with your job.

QUESTION:

What is the website address of the official MoD discount website?

Send your answers to:

feedback@crestpublications.com marking the subject as AMA answer and including your name, full address and foot size.



Contact (01250) 873863

Ardblair Sports Importers Ltd
Yard Road, Blairgowrie
Perthshire PH10 6NW

For more information visit www.x-socks.com



Your official Defence Discount Directory

FREE to access

Updated daily

No membership fees

- Travel
- Sat Nav
- Equipment
- Holidays
- Sport and Adventure
- Clothing

and much much more...

log on to:

www.forcesdiscounts-mod.co.uk

the only fully endorsed MoD website

the outdoor shop

www.theoutdoorshop.com



Benefits available to A.M.A. members

20% discount off normal SRP prices
Mailorder service to BFPO addresses
Efficient online ordering system

stony stratford >> milton keynes >> tel: 01908 568913



CRYSTAL

what will
your next
challenge be?

Crystal Active are specialists in organising mountain and beach activity holidays for individuals, groups and families.

Our mountain holidays offer everything from hiking up Mount Blanc, biking the Haute Route in France and Switzerland, riding the rapids in Slovenia, to a whole host of other challenging land and water based activities.

Book a Crystal Club Active holiday before the end of January 2007 and everyone in you party can go Canyoning for free. Quote AM01 when booking by phone.

*Brochure term and conditions apply. Price based on 2 adults sharing. Staying 7 nights in Club Active hotel. Subject to availability. Room/Flight supplements may apply. One free canyoning session per person on any duration. Cannot be combined with any other offers (excluding online discounts), Founders Club and applies to new direct bookings only.

call or book online and
get a **£50pp** discount
crystalactive.co.uk
0870 165 0130