

ARMY MOUNTAINEER

The Journal of The Army Mountaineering Association



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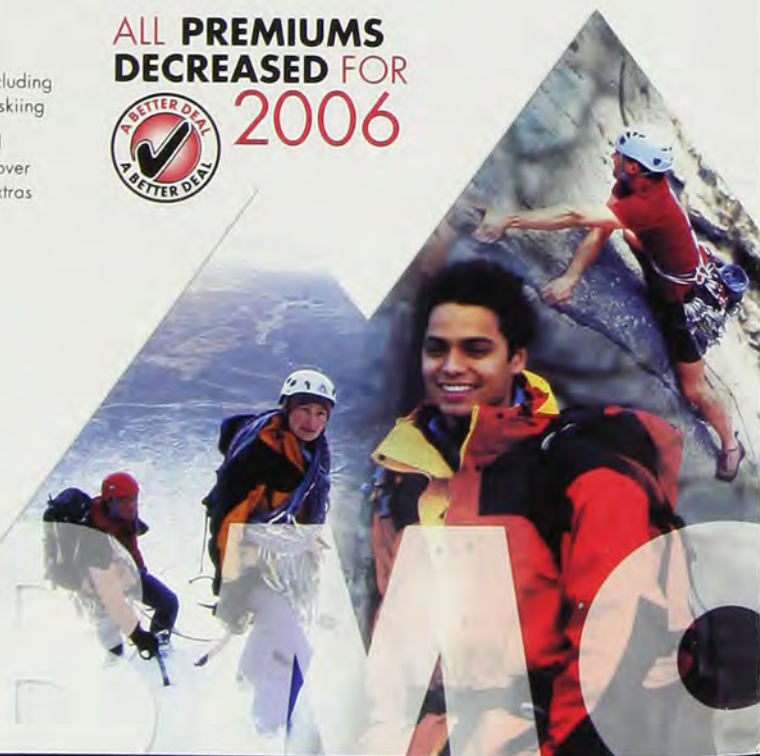
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ARMY MOUNTAINEER



The Journal of The Army Mountaineering Association

Foreword

by Major Paul Edwqards

Vice-Chairman (Mountaineering)

I am very pleased to be writing this foreword in my capacity as Vice Chairman (Mountaineering) of the Association. Although this is a broad portfolio I am able to take over with confidence as my predecessor Maj Cath Davies has done a Sterling job for a number years.

I believe that I am very lucky to be assuming these responsibilities at a time when the Association is thriving. When I first joined the AMA committee some 16 years ago the Association's membership had fallen below 500 and there was a feeling that we concentrated largely on "big boots" mountaineering. We now have a diverse Association of over 2,200 members that is active in all aspects of rock climbing, ski mountaineering, hill walking, trekking and of course expeditions.

We continue however to face many challenges. The continued high tempo of operations means that releasing officers and SNCO's for the time necessary to plan and attend major expeditions continues to be hard and of course we are faced with the ever tighter burden of Adventurous Training regulation. This is combined with the ever increasing cost in third party liability insurance; a symptom of the litigious society within which we all now live. The AMA has continued to adapt to these challenges in an attempt to remain relevant to modern Army Mountaineers and this has brought about many changes in how we conduct our business. The largest of these is as our increased use of the internet and websites, although our ability to obtain nearly £4,500 each year from the Inland Revenue by reclaiming income tax paid on your subscriptions as Gift Aid is another good example.

Your committee continues to have a number of veteran members, however this year has seen an influx of new members with Mick Kayser taking on the publicity portfolio, Paul Chiddle becoming meets co-ordinator and Clive Whitson taking over as Journal Editor. There are however always either vacant posts on the committee or meet/expedition leaders required. Anyone who feels that they would like to become more involved should contact me on vicechair@theama.org.uk and I can discuss what opportunities are available.

2006 promises to be another busy year with a busy season of meets and competitions and of course the Everest West Ridge expedition. We will also be planning a series of expeditions and events in celebration of our 50th anniversary in 2007. Keep an eye on our website for details in due course.

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Editorial

By Steve Willson - Communications Officer

Finally it is here! For those of you that thought the AMA had binned the Journal this will come as a pleasant surprise. On a more serious note I must apologise for the lack of the Winter 2005/06 Journal and offer an explanation and a plan for the future.

Clive Whiston took over the editor's job in November 2005 at the same time as taking up his post as a troop commander, unfortunately his day job proved to be all consuming leaving him no time to carry out his voluntary work for the AMA. Eventually he called for help and the journal material was sent to me. Thanks go to Clive for volunteering in the first place when he was at such a key stage in his career and I wish him success in the future.

Now for the future, there will be no Winter 2005/06 Journal. In its place we plan to produce a special edition for the AMA Everest West Ridge 2006 Expedition on the lines of the Alps 2000 special we produced. It will contain accounts of all three parts of the overall expedition and will be out in autumn 2006. The Winter 2006/07 Journal will also be a special to commemorate the AMA 50th anniversary.

Now to this edition. The Journal is packed with some of the best articles I have seen for many years. The mountaineering, adventure and exploration that you the members are undertaking never ceases to amaze me. Arctic Blue, Sam Marshal's expedition to Greenland and Walking in Wyoming's Wilderness by Becky Coles are both the kind of trips that embody the spirit of the AMA, mountaineering adventures for the pure love of it! South America has received some attention this year and Boris Blackband's Avoiding the Void is well worth a read. Still further south the beauties of Antarctica are explored in the Forbidden Plateau Expedition article.

Closer to home Glen Bloomer's account of the AMA Cornwall meet is again the kind of stuff we like. A group of motivated climbers risking their biscuit in search of adventure, developing their own climbing skills in the best way possible, by doing it!

As you read this Journal I would like you all to consider the difference between the articles that have been amended from the obligatory PXR's and those that have been written by climbers and mountaineers because they have had experiences in the mountains that they just can't keep to themselves. I am now taking over as the editor and my love for climbing grew out of adventure and comradeship with like minded people not out of a G3PAT branch or JSP 419. We are an association that can mount expeditions to Everest or bag a route on a Wednesday afternoon at Harrison's Rocks, all I ask from you during my editorship is that you let me know what you have been up to and always write from the heart!

See you in the mountains...

Steve Willson

Journal Submission

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. 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 in the format above.

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:

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AMA Website Update

Those of you who were at the AGM last year will remember the plan to move the website over to the ArmyNet site during 2006. This would give us the ability to maintain the site better with information being updated faster thus increasing the usefulness of this method of communication. Unfortunately we have encountered a stumbling block at present related to access to the site. The association, by its constitution, is not only open to serving members of the Army but to retired members and civil servants and families. With this range of membership we must ensure that no one is excluded as the website migrates. Currently we are in negotiation with the Army Internet managers to resolve these issues. News updates will be posted @ www.theama.org.uk.

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JSAM 2005

By Crassley McEwen

JSAM 2005 was run by the RNRMMC so it was off to Lauterbrunnen and the Bernese Oberland region of Switzerland. This was my first trip to this area of the Alps and guide book had the following comments on the Bernese Oberland "whilst not having the highest hills in the Alps it does have the most spectacular North faces, which in turn combine with the weather to create especially heavy precipitation which feeds the enormous glaciers".

My arrival on JSAM was slightly delayed so that I could complete an AML course run by HQ ATG(A) in Sonthoffen. The delay was worthwhile as the course proved to be a great fun and meant that I arrived acclimatised and relatively refreshed after a 9hr train journey. On arrival in

Lauterbrunnen I was greeted by glorious sunshine and my spirits were raised, no sign of the guidebook bad weather. From the station it was a very quick taxi ride to the camp site, Camping Schutzenbach.

The rest of the day was spent trying to find a decent weather forecast, sorting my tent and waiting for the rest of the Army contingent to come back to camp after a day of climbing. A quick meeting followed to decide on groups and routes for the next 5 days. It quickly became apparent that everyone was keen to get up high, however the weather forecast was pretty vague as to the conditions.

So the next morning we purchased a group ticket for the Jungfrau train and wound our way up through green alpine pastures and into the tunnel that took us through the Eiger and Monch. The railway was quite incredible and its construction was a real achievement and had it not been for WW1 the top of the Jungfrau

could have been reached by an internal ascent! On the way up to the Jungfrauoch there were a couple of stops to view the North face of the Eiger and drop off David Latimer and Matt Hammond, who headed off for the Mittellegi hut and the classic ridge route.

The rest of us continued up to the surreal Jungfrauoch station. On leaving the station the different groups went their own ways. With Four of the groups heading off into the mist and drizzle to find the Konkordia hut and subsequently to the Finsteraarhorn hut try to summit the the Finsteraarhorn and Fiescherhorn. The remaining 2 groups had a quick walk up to the very comfortable and suspiciously deserted Monchsloch hut. That evening the Swiss nightly weather forecast revealed the reason behind the lack of occupants.

The next day proved the weather forecast to be correct with more drizzle, wind and cloud. So we decided on a half hearted trip up to the Eiger South Col in the cloud, lots of tea drinking, a few hours of the settlers of Catan board game and an anxious wait for David and Matt to turn up. Eventually Matt and David did turn up and that night the weather looked like it would change for the better.

The next morning the stage was set for a traverse of the Monch, 4099m. The start was quite leisurely and the 3 groups arrived at the foot of the route as the sun started to

clear the verglass off the rock. Unfortunately a misread route choice and stuck rope for one of the groups cost a bit of time and proved to be interesting to release. All the groups then made good progress up the AD ridge, and we were able to look down on the first load of route day trippers pouring out from the Jungfrauoch station. The rest of the route was uneventful and was great fun with only the occasional small rockfall. As we reached the summit the nature of the route changed and the mass of humanity distracted from the very fine views of the Eiger and Jungfrau. The route finding to go down was very straightforward, with a slushy trail carved in to the mountain and the occasional piece of metalwork to guide you down. The actual descent itself proved to be more interesting than anticipated even with the fixed poles. So several slips, an emotional ice axe break, a push by a falling Italian incompetent OAP and some more rockfall later we reached the rainmeter and headed back for a big pot of tea at the hut.

The next route we tackled was the classic route up the Jungfrau, 4158m. This time an early start was called for to avoid the slushy snow and crowds on descent. Once again the route finding was straight forward and good progress was made. The route actually turned out be better than was expected with a bit of a rocky scramble to start followed by a steep ice bank to climb and a final exposed 35 degree slope to

the top. We summited within guidebook time and were treated to an empty summit, a spectacular view of the Monch, an icy wind and an ominously building cloud bank.

After a quick bite to eat we started back down on hard ice rather than slush and passed numerous groups slowly toiling up behind frustrated Swiss guides. On reaching the plateau the temperature had climbed steadily and the clouds continued to grow. We then decided that we should head back to the valley to check the forecast.

Eventually we arrived back in the valley in time for Swiss National Day and the start of a rain storm. This storm proved to be the start of what turned out to be 3 weeks of very poor weather and major flooding.

Over the next couple of days the rain continued to fall and even Alex Martin-Bates' lecture on altitude related illness could not fill the time in the campsite. So it was off to Interlarken for breakfast at Hooters, a "free session" on the climbing wall and a fondue. The rain continued to fall and on the third day my tent gave up the fight and I arrived back to find an in tent pool (unheated). After failing to find a promising forecast the other 2 services had decided enough was enough and started to abandon camp. Ah well, with the Alps and weather you win some and you lose some. With 2 more 4000m peaks completed I called 2005 a draw.



10 Alpine tips for 2006

1. Photocopy guide book pages of the route - it saves time trying to find the page when on route and it also saves weight.
2. If your decent passes close to the approach route, stash excess gear in a bright bag / marked with a ski pole. Some people have suggested that you can use a GPS to mark the stash but if the batteries run out be warned..
3. Check your gear before you head off, try to get information on the route so you do not take more kit/weight than required.
4. Use your pockets to position equipment on stops that you may need when you are moving e.g if you stop prior to dawn make sure you have sunglasses ready to put on without having to stop.
5. If the route looks too hard for the grade check around the corner and look for signs of upward progress.
6. If possible recce route start

point in daylight the day before, if this is not possible then borrow look photos friends or search online for photo of the route.

7. Make a decision on the balance of hydration verses weight to gain optimum speed. This very much depends on your own physiology.
8. Take useful a note of useful Alpine web pages on paper, so that you can save time when in the valley and trying to get information. Below are a couple of useful links:

Meteorological site -
www.wetterzentrale.de/topkart/en/fsfaxsem.html

Routes -
www.alpinisme.camptocamp.com

Translation -
www.babelfish.altavista.com

9. Seek out the JASM Defence Instruction Notice (DIN) under Personnel section of the January DIN and hit the French Alps this summer.

10. If you wish to start Alpine climbing use the JSP 419 and book on to an AMP course.



On route to the Eiger

EVEREST WEST RIDGE EXPEDITION ALPINE TRAINING

By Major Ian Comber

I awoke to a sodden sleeping bag - "Oh no not again", I thought, "I only had a couple of beers last night!!!" However, the sound of torrential rain battering against the outside of the tent startled me out of my dream-like state. The rain had been continuous for three days and my tent had flooded.

However, rather than this being the start of yet another high altitude survival story, this episode was actually mid-way through the Everest West Ridge

training meet and was taking place in a previously benign campsite in the village of Lauterbrunnen in the Swiss Alps.

The valley was cut off with the only escape route being by helicopter at a cost of £100 per person. This precluded all but the highly paid doctors on the team from leaving the campsite. The telephone lines were down, there was no electricity, no mobile phone coverage as the

mast had been washed away, and we were hearing reports of deaths and destruction across the whole of Switzerland.

There were also rumours that the water level had reached neck height in our valley after the river had broken the banks - however this was qualified as being measured against Dave Bunting, so the rest of us were okay at this stage. Yet again, the weather conspired to dash plans and aspirations of bagging

the huge range of peaks that surrounded us in the Bernese Oberland.

Training had started with our normal routine of revision of crevasse rescue, belays and ascending techniques at the nearby Sustenpass. The weather at this stage was poor; we witnessed a cycle race en route to the glacier with sodden, lycra-clad bikers





Rock Training.



Ice Training.



Mountaineering...

hurting past our minibus. As we had a break in a local hostel, we fought our way past a number of the rear markers who had decided that their times could suffer further by drying out against the radiators. Lance Armstrong would have been so ashamed!! We stopped on the way back for some single-pitch action on a crag situated on a rock face above a road tunnel - luckily it was bolted. A fall is bad enough without then having to contend with being run over.

Our first foray was up through the north face of the Eiger on the local train to the Jungfraujoch top station to carry out further training. The train fare also bankrupted half the participants - it certainly concentrated the mind into the exchange rates between pounds and Swiss Francs. "How much? That's double my air fare out here from the UK" was one comment. We made our way along the tourist track on the glacier to the Monchjoch Hut. This is normally pisted, wanded and full of trainer-clad Japanese and overweight Germans but today, there were white-out conditions and knee-deep snow, and only the British were out. At this stage, one of the teams of photographers accompanying us decided that action photography was not their bag and that they would

rather prefer to do the studio shots. They descended on the next train. It was a kit carry for the remainder with much of the training gear being carried up - oxygen systems and fixed rope being the main loads.

After the typical Monchjoch Hut first night headaches (it is at 3627 metres after all!) the following day dawned clear but with a biting wind. Training was carried out in two areas; one group trialed the oxygen system whilst the other fixed ropes on a nearby snow slope. The original plan to fix the south face of the Monch was foiled by the fresh snow, making for dangerous avalanche conditions. Instead, we ascended the normal PD route up the south ridge which was an excellent acclimatisation peak, and a good introduction to Alpine mountaineering for the Leeds University team who were conducting physiological trials on us. This involved waking up, collecting your pee in a cup, assessing its colour, estimating how much weight you had put on the night before after beer and pizza and having various needles stuck into you - I never realised that my ear lobe holds about a pint of blood after a particular feisty test in the Monchjoch Hut. It took an hour to stem the flow although I am now a certified blood donor at my new unit.



Team briefings.

We also trialed food for the hill. This ranged from the simple Jelly Babies to some rather odd nutrition bars called "All the Way" which had obviously been designed by some US Airborne/Ranger freak. Apparently if you eat them, you are not allowed to turn back on a route.

As the weather window was closing again, we all ascended the Jungfrau in teams of three before making our way back to the Sphinx top station at the Jungfraujoch and the descent back to Lauterbrunnen. Whoever thought of putting a 'Bollywood-themed' restaurant at the top station must be an absolute genius, because I am sure no-one else would have been so radical!! The smell of curry when you have a bit of an altitude stomach is worth

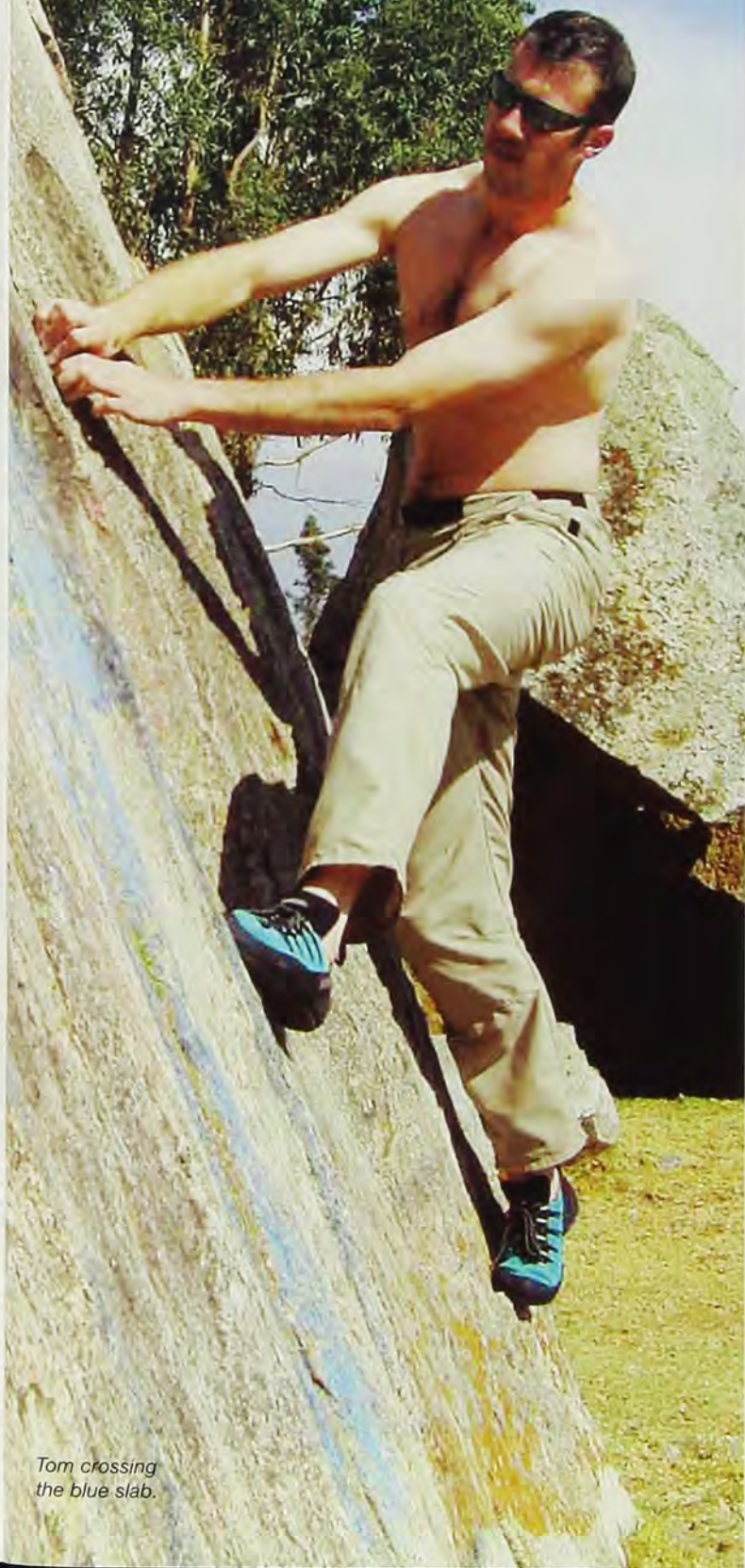
noting in your list of things you never wish to experience in life. On returning to the valley the weather had started turning and further technical training was carried out with Mike 'Twid' Turner including stretcher lowers, mountain plans were discussed and amended as required and Dave Wilson demonstrated to everyone why he is a purely G3 operations type soldier, as he explained his logistics plan for the ascent. He will now be known as "Son of Bonington" forever more, with the detail that he put in. Other cragging days were conducted but the rain precluded any further forays up into the high mountains, although many were relieved that a second train journey did not have to be made, as they were about to fall behind on their mortgage repayments.



The team practising their mountaineering skills.

PERUVIAN BOULDERING

By Mike Smith



Tom crossing the blue slab.

In September I took a small unit trip to Trek in the Cordillera Blanca. While acclimatising in Huaraz myself and Tom Millward went to explore some of the local boulders. I had read about the Huanchac boulders on a website prior to leaving UK so I was keen to give them a go as they had been described as "the centre of the local scene". I was also determined to remain climbing fit while in Peru and planned to climb every day if possible!

A short taxi ride from Huaraz (£0.15) gets you to the small hamlet of Huanchac. My initial reaction was one of disappointment – I am not a boulderer – I much prefer big long routes requiring lots of shiny gear! These granite boulders are big but after wandering around one for five minutes and not being able to even get off the ground I was beginning to think it was a wasted journey. Of course the altitude didn't help (3200m) and we had just completed a marathon journey just getting to Peru. We persevered and eventually got off the ground and on top of the first boulder, just to the right of a blue slab, only V1 ish going up – V5 ish coming down. The lack of a big mat was certainly restricting our enthusiasm for bouldering even with the landing areas reasonably flat.

We wandered over to another cluster and found lots of chalk marks but very little in the way of hand holds! Although we did another few laps around the base, walking that is.

A little further on and the best of a bad bunch. A huge



A knarly crack going at approx V4 - no bouldering mat!

boulder which offered an easy scramble up and down and the best of the achievable problems. The large crack, although difficult to start, gave an amenable V2. Further right there were some very interesting looking lines but just too high to even attempt.

Discretion being the better part of valour, we left after only two hours of exploration, our tails well and truly between our legs. My aspirations for the coming weeks certainly dampened.

As for the rest of the trip we managed to complete the Santa Cruz trek and a lesser know trek across the Passo Huapi 5090m. All self supported. In addition we experienced earthquakes, avalanches and every type of weather imaginable. As for my climbing shoes, they remained in Huaraz for the duration of the trip!



Boulders at Chacas

WALKING IN

WYOMING'S WILDERNESS

By Becky Coles



Mike and Jo on the summit of the grand Teton, 4200m.

Throughout time the term 'Wilderness' has meant different things for people. One settler in the early 1600s stated, 'Wilderness is a dark and dismal place where all manner of wild beasts dash about uncooked.' Today, with the comforts of modern life to return to, we have learnt to value what is left of the world's wilderness areas. America's 1964 Wilderness Act defines wilderness as,

'A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.'

Wyoming is a state that stands at the forefront of conservation

and preservation of the world's wilderness areas. Yellowstone National Park, covering the Northwest corner of Wyoming with its steaming geysers, was, in 1872, the first national park in the world to be established. Since then many more areas have been given National Park status throughout America, not least in Wyoming which is the least populous state in the Lower 48. Does, however, the National Park Service, with its tight controls and rigorous management, undermine the wilderness qualities that people value in these areas?

In late August and early September Leeds UOTC, led by Tania Noakes, ran a climbing and trekking expedition in Wyoming, USA. I was to lead the trekking group on two 8 day treks in the Wind

River Mountains, a designated wilderness area, and Grand Teton National Park, a mountain range that is only 40 miles in length and situated just south of Yellowstone National Park. In the beginning, National Parks, such as Yellowstone, were set up to preserve wildlife for hunting. Although now an out of date wilderness management objective, much of what we understand of conservation today was borne from this.

Aldo Leopold, one of the fathers of conservation in America, understood that in order to preserve hunting stocks, the landscape in which these species lived had to be preserved. Importantly he understood that by definition *'wilderness is a resource which can shrink but not grow... the creation of new wilderness in the full sense of the word is impossible,'* and therefore he realised that areas needed to be protected. Protection of UK wilderness came far too late; despite appearances the UK has no true wilderness. Even in the remotest parts of Scotland the landscape has been permanently altered by the crofters who used to populate the Highlands. The high moorlands that we value as

some of our wildest places in the UK are, in fact borne from human alteration of the ecosystem. Once stripped of trees a combination of grazing and the soil becoming too waterlogged and acidic, meant that the trees could not return, and therefore a new ecosystem, from mainly introduced plants, evolved that could cope with this environment.

In America however, not having sustained the population that the UK has had for centuries, true wilderness remains, the preservation of which is left in the hands of the National Park Service. Trekking through the Grand Tetons, an area that is of such natural beauty that it has National Park status, we were met with constant evidence of human impact, but not by the careless camper as you might think, instead by the National Park Service itself. Signs telling us what activities we could and couldn't do, pointing out to us where to camp, where to collect water and how far we had to go. Pristine paths led to shiny new bridges, everything appeared so 'safe'. To me the park seemed over managed to the point of the destruction of its wilderness qualities. R. Yorke Edward, a Canadian



The cirque of the Towers.



Jo on Guides Wall 5.9+



Cath Stephens on west face variant, 5.10b



Mike Fearn on Direct Exum Ridge, 5.8+

conservationist, echos my thoughts; *'when all the dangerous cliffs are fenced off, all the trees that might fall on people are cut down, all of the insects that bite are poisoned... and all of the grizzlies are dead because they are occasionally dangerous, the wilderness will not be made safe. Rather, the safety will have destroyed the wilderness.'* It is however not as clear cut as this and the opposing argument is that of access. After all why should only those that can read a map be the ones that can experience such natural beauty and is not making the wilderness accessible to wheelchairs discriminating against the disabled? I would argue that there needs to be moderation, some areas should be made accessible to all but it must be remembered that those areas will then be lost forever as wilderness.

The appearance of wilderness from a personal experience perspective is as important as preserving wilderness from a conservation perspective. A signpost in the wilderness in reality is not a permanent structure and can be removed as easily as it was placed there without any lasting damage. It does however destroy the wilderness experience for those who pass it as it is a reminder that someone else has been there before them. A signpost destroys the ideal of self sufficiency and reliance on personal skills that would be necessary in true wilderness, or an area that

appears to be wilderness to the person that is experiencing it. This of course depends on the person, and their knowledge of wilderness and the history of the landscape.

A further component of America's National Park system that, I believe, devalues the wilderness experience is the need for a permit. In the Grand Tetons the permit system was particularly draconian, stating the exact location of each nights camp. I go trekking to escape schedules and deadlines. In the wilderness the only schedule that you should have to adhere to is that which the environment inflicts upon you and the compelling need to see what is in the next valley. In the Tetons groups of only 6 are allowed to trek together. I was leading a group of 8 in accordance with the boundaries of my JSMEL qualification. We had got around this problem by having two permits in the group. Despite requesting for campsites in the same locations when applying for the permits, this had not been granted on a couple of occasions. On our second night I had a decision to make, to abide by the permit and split the group, sending half to their designated campsite 2 miles further along the trail on a high pass, or keep the group together and therefore within the qualifications held by the group. I chose the latter, however the Park Ranger patrolling the area did not

agree. I was cited under section 10.2c for violation of my permit conditions (actually Tania was as the permit was in her name). This was despite discovering the next day that there was no water on the pass where we had been directed to camp, which I had suspected.

The previous trek, in the Wind River Mountains, was a more enjoyable experience with a far higher wilderness value. There were very few signposts and bridges, and the trails were often barely visible. My group had to rely on their map reading skills and route selection to negotiate the terrain and were rewarded with stunning views shared with few other people.

I admire the heritage of the American National Park System and its ideals that have been recognised by the rest of the world. I believe that the National Park Service does a fairly good job of preserving wilderness from a conservation point of view. It is not, however, so successful in preserving the wilderness experience for those who are privileged enough to visit these areas. I feel that the National Park Service has lost touch with what it is trying to achieve and in the process is destroying the wilderness it is

trying to protect. The Grand Tetons was particularly bad and this was perhaps due to it being one of the smaller National Parks. If you want to experience the true wilderness of America, I would advise avoiding the National Parks, or only going to the larger ones with fewer restrictions. Instead do your research and go to the less well known places, like the Wind River Mountains, and you will have a far better wilderness experience.

'We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children.'

Haida Indian Saying



Rapping off Pingora in the rain.

Avoiding the

WORLD from Zero to Hero in 6000 metres

By Boris Blackband

188 kilometres trekked, 11 thousand 3 hundred and 10 metres climbed, and 101 hours and 15 minutes of mountaineering, and by God did we feel it!

I refer to Exercise Peruvian Eagle (Tiger), an Army Air Corps / AMA sponsored expedition to the Peruvian Andes undertaken in June 2005, the aim of which was to climb 2-High Altitude peaks in the impressive Cordillera Blanca Mountain Range.

Why Peru? Well for starters Peru offers the best equatorial climbing in the world, with 25 peaks over 6000 metres, and another 35 above 5700 metres. Above 5000 metres practically the whole range is glaciated and the weather is warm and reliable, imagine the European Alps being raised up 1500 metres and cable cars and overcrowding banished overnight, couple this with affordable park fees, low cost living and centuries of history and culture, and you have the perfect Alpine climbing destination.

Peruvian Eagle was the culmination of 2 years planning, with training expeditions to Wales and Austria, covering Summer Rock and Mountaineering Proficiencies, and in Austria; Alpine Mountaineering Proficiency and Ice Climbing

training, not to mention all expedition members completing Winter Mountaineering and Climbing Proficiencies courtesy of JSMTW Ballachulish,

It was not the easiest of tasks in today's far-flung-world of Army Aviation; non-the-less, it was achieved and our 4 Division expedition clearance was granted with relative ease.

Our arrival at Lima airport was a relatively painless one, due to the professional service provided by the trekking/guiding company that we had whole heartedly placed our trust in; 'Peruvian Andes Adventures'. (www.peruvianandes.com) Hiring a trekking company to assist with all logistics and administration is a 'must-do' in developing countries, and believe me Peru and in particular Huaraz; our forward operating base was definitely that!

Our first task was to acclimatise, and with Huaraz tucked in between the Cordillera Blanca and the Cordillera Negra at 3000 metres we were already feeling the strain in the scorching equatorial sun.

After much research and professional advice we had opted to use Acetazolamide (Diamox) to assist in our

acclimatisation training, taking the minimum dose as advised in the Surgeon Generals policy letter, we had also designed a gradual trekking programme that saw us spend 10 days slowly acclimatizing in the local valleys before struggling up our first peak; Ishinca at 5550 metres, a lung busting, chest straining Alpine PD of a route to a rather splendid summit cone, and a personal high for the majority of the team, and with the short technical back climb required to descend the reverse slope, just enough technical difficulty to make the team grateful for the previous days ice climbing training and the time spent hacking up frozen Austrian waterfalls and Scottish gullies.

The teams next objective was to be an attempt on Alpamayo 5947 metres and a sweat inducing Alpine grade AD+, an impressive peak often described as the most beautiful mountain in the world, hardly deserving of its translated name of 'Muddy River'. Unfortunately our expedition 2IC and base

camp manager would not be joining us on our next objective, having inverted his ankle on the descent from the Ishinca valley, he was subsequently x-rayed and plastered and before we could pillage his rations, flown out on the next flight to blighty. A sad loss to the expedition.

Our attempt was not going to be easy, the usual route up Alpamayo 'The Ferrari' was blocked by a massive ice mushroom shaped cornice that hung dangerously over the top of the whole South West face and had thus far prevented any team from gaining its lofty summit. We decided that we would still trek into the Santa Cruz valley and take a look at the face and hope that the cornice would collapse and reveal a chink in its seemingly impenetrable summit ridge.

The route into Alpamayo base camp is part of the Santa Cruz trail, and is possibly the most popular trek in the whole of the Blanca, beautiful scenery, fantastic back drops and hardly a tent pitch left un-trodden.

We spent 2 days trekking into Alpamayo base camp and a further day conducting technical training, which included scaring all of the team members with an introduction to the Hyper Baric bag, an important tool in the treatment of Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS).

The usual attempt on Alpamayo is facilitated by a sleepless night at an intermediate camp between the grassy base camp and the summit ridge col, this camp breaks up the long approach of 3-4 hours of punishing '1st gear' scree scrambling, and a



On the slopes of Alpamayo.



Enjoying success.



Richard Scott on Ishinca.



Darby Allen on Ishinca Glacier.

further 4 hours of steep ice climbing, we however had unwisely opted to climb this route in a single push from valley camp, a decision made; to allow us time to recover and get a good nights sleep before climbing, this recovery necessitated by a unanimous declaration of the dreaded 'deli-belly' every travellers nemesis.

We had managed to purchase some broad spectrum Antibiotics from the local chemist and were all just recovering from the afore mentioned illness when we set off on our Alpamayo attempt, leaving base camp at a leisurely half past seven with the scree climb still in the welcoming shade of Nevado Pucajirca 6039m across the valley, a short lived luxury however as we toiled up the never ending scree some 3 hours later, baking in the sweltering heat.

After eventually reaching the relative comfort of the glaciers toe we geared up and set off in 3 ropes for the Col, it was at this point that we really started to feel the heat, coupled with the altitude and recent illnesses we were soon reduced to a creeping mess, loitering on the side of a truly majestic mountain and with one member suffering mild AMS and the remainder becoming liabilities it was decided at 5500 metres to abandon our climb and head down whilst we still had the strength to. A sad day for all, but that's mountaineering, and everybody was reminded; the mountain will still be there for another day.

Pisco was to be our next climb, 5752 metres Alpine PD+ by the South West Ridge, and a peak that was reputed to offer the best views of any peak in the range, located at the end of the scenic Quebrada Llanganuco valley. Our trek to Pisco base camp was not to be without drama though as one of the team was to suffer a suspected attack of Pleurisy and was immediately taken to the local hospital for checks, it later turned out to be a muscle injury aggravated by the altitude and exercise.

The remaining team eager to revenge their previous failure were keen to put Pisco under their belts, and spirits were high as the team moved up to high camp, crossing a truly awesome boulder strewn

glacier on route, eventually arriving at high camp located at the foot of a large glaciated cirque, the tranquillity only interrupted by the unnerving crashes of multiple ice avalanches echoing around the surrounding peaks.

0200 came and the unpleasant task of forcing sleeping toes and freezing fingers into plastic boots and woolly gloves, whilst sampling the 'boil in the bag' delicacies of freeze dried Chicken Curry or equally yummy Sweet and Sour, however this breakfast humour was not to last as all were keen to get the blood pumping and some warmth in their extremities.

The first 3 hours of the climb were completed in darkness, arriving at the crux 60-metre grade 2/3-ice climb as the first rays of sunlight were just breaching the neighbouring mountain crests. The climb was completed in two x 30 metre pitches on good frozen snow, allowing simple axe belays to be banged into the snow, and the speedy use of a well placed snow picket to top out onto the summit ridge.

What followed was a relatively straight forward slog up a meandering crevasse strewn ridge, eventually topping out on a deserted summit and the chance to take in a truly breathtaking vista, and a wonderful cloud inversion which hid all but the shapeliest of peaks, leaving Chacaraju 6112m to the North, Artesonraju 6025m to the West, Chopicalqui 6354m to the East and Huandoy 6395m to the South, not to mention the ranges highest peak; Huascaran 6768m to the South East and Alpamayo peeping out behind Artesonraju to the West.

Our summit was to be a truly rewarding experience, a good 'pick me up', with technical climbing and fantastic views,

an ideal primer for the next climb which was to be the 6034 metre peak of Tocllaraju, and Alpine 'D' route of significant technical difficulty and a peak that sees an equal amount of success and failure.

The final peak also had its moment of drama, with a satellite phone call bringing bad news from England of a compassionate nature, necessitating the immediate return of yet another expedition member, a call which was received as the team struck out for Tocllaraju.

Tocllaraju was to be the icing on the cake of a truly memorable climbing adventure, technical climbing at 5900 metres, 2 x 60 metre pitches of grade 3/4 ice dispatched with good form and technical expertise, a summit reached in freezing conditions and bone chilling winds, requiring an arm-pit massage for one team members feet, and as if the going wasn't tough enough, an icefall avalanche ripping down the mountainside narrowly missing the descending team, making it the epitome of a 'quality mountain day', and the fitting climax to an expedition that saw several members from the Army Air Corps and Army Mountaineering Association go from 'Zero to Hero' in 4 enjoyable weeks in the Cordillera Blanca, and hopefully fuel the fires of future ambition.

To summarise; The Cordillera Blanca is the perfect High



In the Crevice!

Altitude Mountaineering destination, convenient, affordable, demanding and beautiful. There are treks and climbs for all abilities, and all budgets, with affordable trekking companies, interesting days off, and guaranteed weather, it is no wonder it is rapidly becoming the preferred destination of adventurous mountaineers wishing to summit mountains, and not watch thunder storms, and for those wanting to take in some culture after

a couple of weeks adventure training, I believe there's a pile of bricks called 'Machu Pichu' that can be reached by plane and train to the south of Lima that makes for some interesting R & R.



Success on Pisco 5752m 0800 Wed 22 June.

MOUNTAINEERING IN THE INDIAN HIMALAYAS

By Nicky Bell

The expedition to climb Satopanth (7,075m/23,000ft) in the remote Indian Garhwal Himalaya Range was undertaken by the Royal Engineers Mountaineering and Exploration Club (REMEC) in Sep/Oct 05. The expedition had 2 aims: to give soldiers with significant previous mountaineering knowledge, the experience of high altitude mountaineering (to go on to apply for a major Joint Services 8000m expedition) and to introduce a number of less experienced climbers to expedition mountaineering. It was planned and led by Chris Allewell with support from 2IC Paul Golding, Jon Evans, Dick Gale, Mac Mackenzie, Phil Scott, Jamie Hall, Dan Reeve, Nick Connell and myself.

Satopanth is a magnificent Himalayan mountain and a formidable undertaking. The route includes a complex glacier approach, high angled snow slopes and knife edge ridge, before the final section to the summit. At just over 7000m, the effect of high altitude is a significant factor, as is the remote location and possibility of extreme weather. Frustratingly, weather proved to be the greatest constraint on reaching the summit.

The team had trained together in Scotland and N Wales and completed the detailed planning and preparation to ensure we had the best equipment, rations and medical support to cope with the conditions that lay ahead. As the expedition did not include a doctor, Mac completed additional medical training, including training with the Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue Team. Once in Delhi, diplomacy was vital to ensure a smooth run through the visas, permits and licences required to expedition in the Indian Himalayas – this was down to Chris and Dick and they spent 2 long days

with the necessary authorities. The expedition used Shikhar Travels, a Delhi based trekking company who provided a liaison officer to assist with clearances on route from Delhi to Base Camp. The Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF) also provided a liaison officer, 'Yogi', who stayed with us for the entire journey - he climbed to Advanced Base Camp and returned with us to Delhi. As we also crossed paths with one Indian Army expedition, climbed alongside another and met several trekking groups, it was of huge benefit to have him with us.

The journey through the Indian State of Uttar Pradesh, north to Uttarachal and the Himalayas was hugely impressive. It began by road from New Delhi and took 3 days to travel through Rishikesh and Uttarkashi before reaching Gangotri at the end of the increasingly rough (and sometimes blocked) road into the mountains. The route was breathtaking and exhilarating, as the wheels bounced off the dirt road over the drop, hundreds of feet above the Bhagirathi (Ganges) River below. At Gangotri, we unloaded equipment and under Jon's direction, re-packed this as loads to be carried by the porters to Vasuki Tal with food and gasoline for Base Camp.

From Gangotri (3048m), the route by foot began. It traced the pilgrim route along the banks of the Ganges River to Bhojbasa (our camp at the end of our first day), passing its source the following day at the snout of the vast Gangotri Glacier at Gaumukh, named after its shape (gou-cow, mukh-mouth). Many make the Hindu pilgrimage to the shrine at Gangotri, (dedicated to the Goddess Ganga) and on to Gaumukh to bathe in the Ganges icy waters. We met

many people making the Pilgrimage – several also continued across the Gangotri Glacier to meditate at Tapoban, on the ablation valley at the foot of Shivaling. Our route across the Gangotri moved over difficult moraine with a steep wall towering over us to our left. There seemed to be a perpetual movement of boulders and earth with unnerving thundering crashes onto the glacier. The final section moved across a large ice notch at the confluence of the Gangotri and Chaturangi (meaning 4-coloured) Glaciers.

The glacier itself was impressive – one of the largest in the Himalayas at 30km long and up to 2.5km wide, with numerous tributary glaciers along its length. We reached our camp at Nandanban (4337m) in the early afternoon. Nandanban was beautiful – sitting at the base of the Bagirathi Massif, we were treated to breathtaking views of the Bagirathi peaks, including the impressive, tooth-like Shivaling and Kedardome (our secondary objective). At Nandanban, we met the first Indian Army Satopanth expedition – the group we met were understandably elated, having successfully reached the summit after around 18 days and claiming a record ascent time from Camp 3 to the summit. The Indian Expedition Leader spent time with Chris going over their route in detail before they moved past us towards Gangotri.

Having reached Nandanban at over 4000m, some of the expedition began to feel the effects of altitude. A Pulse Oximeter was used to help monitor acclimatisation. It uses a light source from a device that fits on the finger to record the % of haemoglobin in the blood saturated with oxygen as well as pulse rate. We used this at the end of



Camp 1 as we started to dig out after eight days of heavy snow.

each day and the following morning - most of our sats increased to between 80 and 95%, although we all acclimatised at varying rates. Unfortunately, both Jamie and Mac developed signs of mild AMS and recorded significantly low saturation levels (below 70%), that didn't improve after a days rest at Nandanban. This forced them to descend in order to recover and acclimatise more steadily. However, Macs condition worsened whilst descending – he experienced a bubbling noise in his right lung, indicating High Altitude Pulmonary Oedema (HAPE) (resulting in evacuation by donkey!). Frustratingly, there is no way of predicting who will suffer effects of altitude or any link with fitness (both Jamie and Mac were extremely fit) or previous altitude experience or acclimatisation (usually, less than 2% of those with AMS develop the more serious form HAPE between 4 and 5000m). Mac descended to Uttarkashi (below 3,000m) and took 10 days to fully acclimatise to 5000m before he joined us at Base Camp. Jamie experienced mild AMS joined us again after 6 days. Both were

acclimatised and fully fit.

Following a day acclimatising and waiting for missing porters, the remainder of us went on to establish Base Camp at Vasuki Tal. The route moved along the ridge, parallel to the Chaturangi Glacier and across a glacier eroded valley to a vertical section. From the top of the climb we could look down over the Vasuki Tal (4850m) - a plateau bounded by glacier on 3 sides. For most of the time spent in Base Camp, we shared it with a second large Indian Army Expedition (arriving a few days after us and also planning to climb Satopanth), a number of trekking groups and 2 yoga teachers moving between Vasuki Tal and Tapoban or E towards the Kalindikhal Pass. We also encountered Himalayan wildlife, including a Snow Fox and Leopard (a close encounter by Jon at night at the pee cairn!).

From Base Camp, the expedition conducted further training and moved up to establish Advanced Base Camp (ABC) at ~ 5100m on the Chaturangi Glacier. The route to ABC followed the edge of the glacier until it reached a point where it dropped sharply onto the moraine (named 'Heartbreak Hill'). From here we had our first sight of Satopanth. It took our breath away - it is an impressive mountain, standing over 2km above us.

ABC would act as a staging point, before a difficult route across the wet glacier to Camp 1 (~5400m) and upwards through the icefall to the ridge and further 2 camps before the final summit stage. It took several days to acclimatise and load carry the tents, food and fuel required to stock ABC and to establish Camp 1 at the foot of the icefall. Disappointingly, we spent hours collecting and removing rubbish before we could set up tents at the camp - mostly food tins, but also gas canisters and kerosene left by the previous Indian Expedition. Over the following 2 days, the route through the icefall to the second glacial plateau was led and fixed by Chris, whilst we continued to mark the route and load carry equipment. Unfortunately, at this point the

weather, which had been becoming increasingly unsettled, now brought heavy snow and poor visibility. Despite our prayers, the snow just became heavier. Our progress any further beyond ABC was stopped for 8 long and restless days spent digging out and mending tents, trying to keep clothing dry and my (bad) attempt at mending Jon's broken tooth with emergency filling (minus instructions). The weather also had an effect on the re-supply of food and gasoline to Base Camp (over this time, we expected to be above Base Camp using rations and gas). Morale had a boost when our expedition medic returned and Mac was given a chance to diagnose frost nip and piles amongst the expedition members and treated slight snow blindness in 3 porters who arrived alone and ill-equipped at Vasuki Tal.

At the point that the weather cleared slightly, we were excited and optimistic, but our window to attempt the summit was closing fast. Chris adjusted the summit plan to a lighter weight alpine style ascent and altered the team composition. We then ventured back to ABC and on to Camp 1 to assess the route and any damage to the tents. Moving up to Camp 1 was painfully slow and exhausting due to the depth and softness of the snow (for me it was the toughest day of the expedition). We moved as 2 pairs, taking turns to break track for as long as possible and moved across several large crevasses. Although it was possible to jump these (with help on the far bank), I found it hugely difficult to land without being constantly pulled over by the weight of the pack - I seemed to spend a considerable amount of time face down in the snow, cursing, pinned down by my rucksack - before Dick helped me up again.

Although the large 6 man tent at ABC appeared to sustain little damage (once dug out and reshaped), the 2 man tents at Camp 1 took several hours to dig out and were very badly damaged under the weight of snow and ice. As we dug out and rebuilt the camp, the sun was blisteringly hot and we had to constantly



Dick and Nicky at the top of the icefall.

melt snow to keep hydrated. Once Camp 1 had been re-established, a colossal effort was put into clearing the fixed ropes through the icefall - Chris and Mac were joined by an Indian team, but although significant progress was made, the team had not moved on to the fixed ropes to the upper plateau. The snow conditions made progress painfully slow and extremely tiring, but most critically, the snow had not consolidated and presented a Cat 5 potential for avalanche. With time running out, the route was explored early the following morning by Dick, Jon, Phil and I - but it continued to snow overnight and because it was relatively warm, the snow had not compacted. Conditions on the ridge were poor and as feared, the avalanche risk was unacceptably high for a summit attempt. At this point, the expedition had to formally abandon its attempt on the mountain and we faced the strip out of camps and route off the mountain.

It was a great sadness that we learnt that one of the Indian Expedition members had died in a crevasse fall on mountain only a few hours after we made the decision to abandon our attempt at the summit. The team had passed Dick and I as cheerily as they always had as we moved down through the icefall that morning, before they went on to explore the route to the upper slopes. When we returned to Base Camp, we learnt that a porter from the Austrian Expedition that had passed through Vasuki Tal earlier had also perished. Stripping out still proved a significant effort in poor visibility;

freezing temperatures and deep snow. Once equipment was recovered to Base Camp, the decision was made to make the extended trek from Vasuki Tal to Gangotri in one day. It took a huge effort to cross the 30km back to Gangotri and we were extremely glad to see the town after 18 hours on our feet. Our expedition porters were still unable to reach us at Base Camp due to conditions below Vasuki Tal and therefore the heavy cooks equipment and base camp tents/mess tent remained with our 3 Cooks until the conditions cleared to allow the porters up from Gangotri. We left Gangotri by road after 4 weeks in the Himalayas and I felt hugely sad to be leaving the mountains (of course, the thought of a hot shower and clean clothes helped!).

Having looked back at the expedition photographs, they show the startling change in conditions from the first clear view of Satopanth from the edge of the Chaturangi Glacier to the conditions just 2 weeks later that prevented us reaching beyond the slopes above the icefall. Despite having not reached the summit, the expedition was enormously inspiring and rewarding and for those of us who had not been on a major expedition to a remote high altitude mountain range, we learnt a huge amount from it. REMEC also proved that it can successfully plan and mount an expedition to a remote 7000m+ peak using experience and instructors from within the Corps and now plans to go on to mount its next major expedition to climb Denali in 2007.

ARMY SPORT CLIMBING CHAMPS 2005

The chalk dust has just settled on this year's Army Sport Climbing Championships. The AMA returned to the Welsh International Climbing Centre in South Wales using the now tried and tested two day format. One hundred and eight competitors traveled from Germany, NI and most corners of the UK to take part in the 12th Championships.

Although many were attending

the competition for the first time there was also the regular band of AMA Sport Climbers. Sadly missing this year was Steve Blake who has recently retired from the Army. Steve had competed in every competition since 1995 and was Army Champion at least once and usually in the top three at most competitions. Hopefully Steve will return next year to contest the 'AMA retired' trophy.



Spectators watch every move.

The competition started at 0830 on the 5 May 05 with demonstrations of the six elimination routes. These had been masterly crafted by Rob Lamy and Andy Long. There was some initial concern as the first climbers appeared to cruise easily up the first four routes. The chain reaction had started and it would have been impossible to stop the competition and change the routes. However, there was no need to worry, the fifth route soon started spitting climbers off. The double stepped overhang had two crux's and a crimpy finish. This had the desired effect and produced a steady stream of swinging climbers.

During the day the competitors were also able to try the 12 problem bouldering circuit, next year this will also be part of the team competition. By 1800hrs all climbers had completed the six elimination routes. This gave the organizers the task of splitting the field into three categories: Elite, Open and for the first time Top Rope Open.

Day 2 started with a demo of the Elite semi final, Open semi final and Top Rope Open routes. The Top Rope route started easily up a gently overhanging wall, but then soon entered a set of sequenced moves that forced climbers to continually lean in opposite directions until a semi rest could be gained on the arête. The top third of the climb involved a long traverse that got steadily harder until a final hard move to reach the top was made. Only two competitors Cpl Duxbury and OCdt McClusky managed to get to the top.

For the Open comp the wall was slightly steeper but again a very devious sequence of

moves forced climbers to keep changing direction on progressively smaller holds. Although only two managed to top out; Tpr "Sven" Stephenson and Maj Crossley McEwen, ten climbers went through to the final.

The Elite semi final was even steeper and harder. The route weaved its way up a corner then out onto a leaning wall. Fierce moves gained a unique "swiss roll" hold before moving back into the corner for a semi-rest. This was followed by a desperate traverse on tiny holds to the finishing pocket. Six climbers were able to top out and ten were selected for the final.

After the semi finals the Team Speed Climbing Competition took place. With 12 teams competing and the initial leaders from day 1, 35 Engr Regt, were only one place ahead of RMAS. They were followed closely by RMCS and then DCAE. The Speed relay was a simple event; each team had to complete four routes in the fastest time, no points for style or technique! Everything could have been won or lost on a badly timed lunge for a hold or the top. The surprise winners of the event were 17 Port & Maritime Regt with an amazingly fast time. Unfortunately their combined score was not enough to beat 35 Engr Regt who were second in the speed relay by 1 second. This means 35 Engr Regt are the new Army Team Champions.

After lunch the main finals took place. First was the Top Rope Final. This was between Cpl Duxbury and OCdt McClusky. They climbed the Open eliminator on a top rope. OCdt McClusky managed to climb two thirds of the route and just managed to beat Cpl Duxbury.

Next was the Open Lead Final, which was another very steep and complex route requiring a cool head and a sense of humour. A Tufa hold low down caused some difficulty and this led to an even stranger inverted spike. From there a long reach to a small hold then another hard move to a hidden hold behind the arête. This route was a serious challenge and produced several falls. Eventually two climbers managed to top out, this required a Super Final!

The climax of the event was the Elite Final. This was a monster 40 move stamina test piece on the left hand leg of the main climbing wall. It involved precise footwork and skillful route reading to piece together the complex sequences. Efficiency and quick climbing was the key. Ten competitors, eight Elite finalists plus two Open Super Finalists were given the opportunity to view the route. It was then into the isolation area.

One by one each competitor came out of isolation in reverse order from the semi final results. There were a few surprises with some not climbing as well as expected and others doing better. The crowd was treated to an amazing display of climbing skill and determination by Lt Simon Whitcher, the eventual winner.

Director Army Sports Control Board Maj Gen Elliot and Col John Peacock AMA Vice President kindly presented prizes.

Many thanks to all those who helped out with the running of the event, too many to mention. The Sponsors this year again made an outstanding contribution, with Cotswold Outdoor donating Trophies; High Places & HB Climbing donating equipment and vouchers, Climb Magazine donated free subscriptions and Trinity Insurance supported the VIP lunch. Without the support of the sponsors the competition would not be possible.

www.cotswoldoutdoor.com
www.hbclimbing.com
www.high-places.co.uk
www.climbmagazine.com
www.trinity-ins.com

Next years competition will be on 27/28 Apr 06 at the WICC. Details can be found on the website www.theama.org.uk.

FINAL RESULTS

AMA RETIRED
 Maj (Rtd) Richard Baker

GUEST
 Cpl Lee Croft – RAF Odiham

VETERAN
 SSgt Rees – 34 Fd Hosp

SUPER VETERAN
 Maj Steve Marsh – SPSTS

TEAM
 1st 35 Engr Regt
 2nd 17 Port & Maritime Regt

OPEN TOP ROPE
 1st OCdt McClusky – RMAS
 2nd Cpl Duxbury – 17 Port & Maritime Regt
 3rd LCpl Herbert 27 Regt RLC

ARMY VS TA
 Army

JUNIOR (U21)
 1st Cfn Jouan – 7 Bn REME
 2nd Cfn Gunn – DCAE
 3rd Cfn Fulford – DCAE

LADIES REG & TA
 1st OCdt Morgan – Sheffield UOTC
 2nd Lt Gallagher – 27 Regt RLC
 3rd LCpl Finnie – JARIC

OPEN TA
 1st Tpr Stephenson – HAC
 2nd OCdt Edwards – Sheffield UOTC
 3rd Sgt Hill – BSTT

ELITE TA
 1st OCdt Morgan – Sheffield UOTC

OPEN REG
 1st Maj McEwen – DSTL
 2nd LCpl Blackman – 35 Engr Regt
 3rd WO2 Best – HQ 5 Div

ELITE
 1st Lt Whitcher –
 2nd Sgt Owen – Coldstream Guards Band
 3rd Capt Stevenson – AHIPT



On the Elite final route.



Climber on route three.

ARCTIC BLUE

By Willa Straker-Smith

Ex Arctic Blue was born from Sam Marshall's desire for a serious challenge. From the planning through to the execution, the exploratory mountaineering expedition to the east coast of Greenland was just that. Having conquered all the trials and tribulations posed by the expedition, from gaining political clearance to organising transport to the remote region of Liverpool Land, three instructors and nine students flew out of Heathrow on 12 July 05 in great anticipation.

Don't Fall.

With an initial stop overnight in Reykjavik, Iceland, we flew on to Constable Point in Greenland - a gravel airstrip on the western edge of the Hurry Inlet, which had to be crossed to reach Liverpool Land. This was done via two open-top speed boats, but complicated by the fact that the fjord was full of pack ice. Having disembarked on the aeroplane in nothing more than t-shirts, this was just the sort of bracing experience we needed to remind us we were in the Arctic Circle.

The first few days were spent in one large group, moving inland and establishing a base camp, whilst trying to find our bearings with only some pretty poor maps to help. It took us longer to establish ourselves at the foot of the mountains in the Nokkedal Valley



Nice camp site. Camping on the Hans Glacier at the base of the Tvillingere Massif.

than anticipated, due to terrain and relief which was not conveyed by the original planning map. However, this was taken in our stride and gave the instructors more chance to assess the abilities of their groups before tackling more technical ground. The mosquitoes in the low ground were hell and the terrain in the high ground was entirely scree and a nightmare to traverse, but the weather was fantastic and we all quickly formulated plans for the weeks ahead.

Having split down into three groups, our first day mountaineering was a long day that covered the land mass that ran along the northern edge of the Hans Glacier. This involved the negotiation of a steep, rocky ridge, interrupted by several buttresses which were made up of horrifically loose and unpredictable rock. I freely admit that, combined with the strong north-easterly cross wind, the ridge took me out of my comfort zone, but I tried to console myself at the time that it was perfectly normal to feel a

little nervous when perched over a 500m drop and the only thing to cling on to just came away in my hand.

Once over the ridge, the going became decidedly easier with typically Scottish flat hill-tops to cross, scattered with a few snow fields, from where we gained our first glimpse of the Arctic Ocean to the east. Our sights, for the day, were set on the summit at the far end of the land mass (the majority of the peaks in Greenland are



nameless) and by then the only real challenge that lay in between us and our goal was a knife edge ridge – a damned fine place to choose for a “Basic Crampon Skills Course”. Luckily, we all lived to tell the tale and the view from the summit was truly breath-taking. We had the mountains of King Christian X Land on the edge of the ice sheet to the west, the ice-filled fjords to the east and the characteristically alpine Tvillingerne massif to the south, at the head of the Hans Glacier.

Tvillingerne is the highest peak in Liverpool Land and significant research went into discovering whether it had been ascended prior to deployment. As far as we were aware, no expedition had launched a successful summit attempt, so Stu Macdonald's group, the most technically able, became focussed on it quite early on. After a not entirely uneventful climb, they thought they would commemorate their achievement by building a cairn. It was at this point that John Dodds suggested that they placed the tin can he had just found on the top. If anyone is aware of any previous ascents, we'd be interested to hear from you!

Our group spent another day traversing the land mass on



One of the many large crevasses encountered whilst traversing the Hans Glacier

the southern edge of the Hans Glacier, which was a very straight forward day, but involved quite a lot of steep ascending. From the summit of the highest peak (1362m), we could see that Scoresby Sund – the largest fjord in the world – to the south west, contained several large icebergs which were no less impressive for their distance from us. Our route back followed the path of the melt water and we made our way back down to the Hans Glacier by means of a gorge scramble. This really highlighted the variety encountered in Liverpool Land and, despite wet feet, we thoroughly enjoyed it.

A couple of nights were spent camping on the Hans Glacier, at the foot of the Tvillingerne massif, which was a lot more comfortable than expected



The author nearing the top of a 'rock spire'

due to the dry and benign nature of the glacier. From there we explored to the east and south. We attempted to go from coast to coast on the Liverpool Land peninsula via the Hans and Age Niensens glaciers, but the enormous seracs that had formed where the two glaciers merged were impassable. On our route back to the tents, Sam became very excitable at one point, convinced he was on the tracks of a polar bear. However, after much giggling, it didn't take him long to realise he was not looking at the marks of rather savage claws, but in fact at the scars left in the ice by our crampons on the way out.

Each group had to carry a rifle (models of a 1917 Winchester .306), to be prepared for the unlikely event that we would come across a polar bear. However, the only sizeable wildlife encountered were a few musk ox which tended to give us a wide berth before going on their way. They were rather wonderful animals that had a pre-historic air to them that seemed well suited to the isolated and barren nature of the area. There were a few arctic foxes near the Hurry Fjord coast that were quite mischievous and definitely showed signs of kleptomania, making off with my sun cream and someone else's inner boot.

After two weeks of spontaneous climbing and seclusion from the outside world, the expedition came together



Coming down from rock spire.

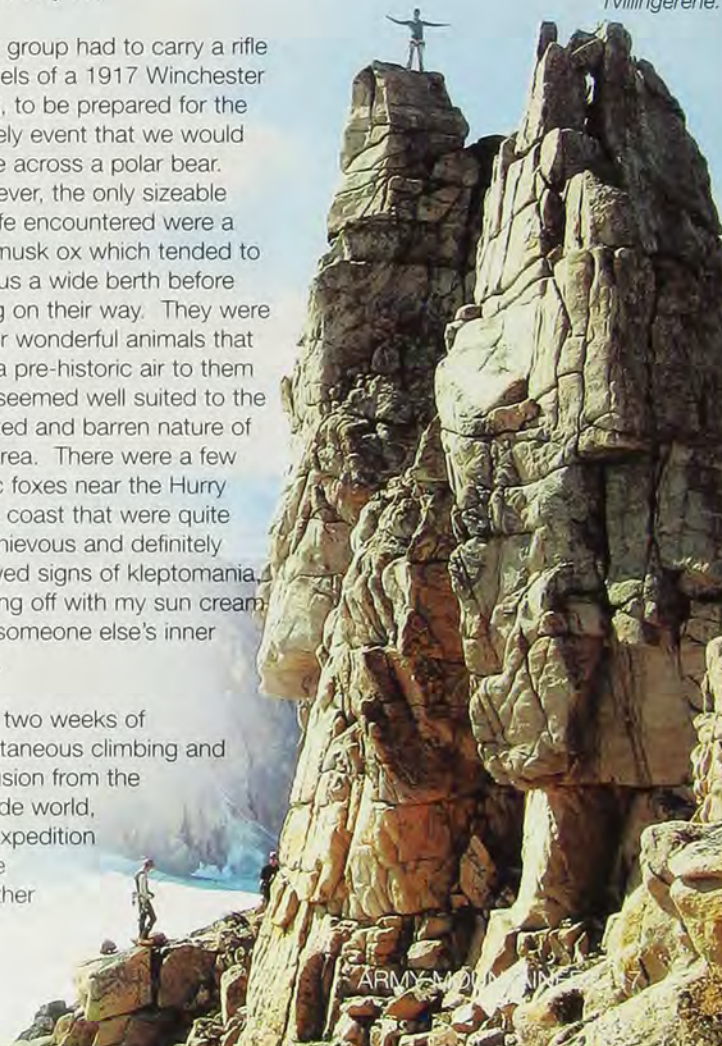
again at the foot of the Nokkedal Valley, sharing great stories of sticky situations and extraordinary sights. As we sped across a now virtually ice-free fjord back to Constable Point and people's minds were already on the few days ahead in Reykjavik, I do not think one person avoided a nostalgic look back at the peninsula that still has so much left to discover.

Thanks go to all the organisations that provided financial support and also to the instructors, in particular Sam Marshall, without whom the expedition would never have happened.

Climber on summit of Tvillingerne.



Stu MacDonald and group returning from a day on the hill.



ARMY BOULDERING CHAMPS 2006

Report by Mike Smith, Sport Secretary.

Over 110 competitors gathered at the Nuffield climbing wall for this years "Boulder Bash" at JSMTCL. The compe format followed the standard 3 round, 30 problem competition. Each competitor was allowed 1hr per round with half hour break between rounds.

The comp was organised by WO2 Mark Hedge and SSgt Paddy Logan. JSMTCL provided accommodation with the kind permission of Lt Col Hodgkinson OBE. The problems were set by the Nuffield wall team including Dave Nodden. All competitors had a tiring day attempting the 30 problems, some with more success than others.

Eventual prize winners were:

Open

1st= Spr Karcoutli & Lt Simon Whitcher
3rd Lt Tom Odling

Female

1st Lt Judith Gallagher
2nd Cfn Ruth Matuska

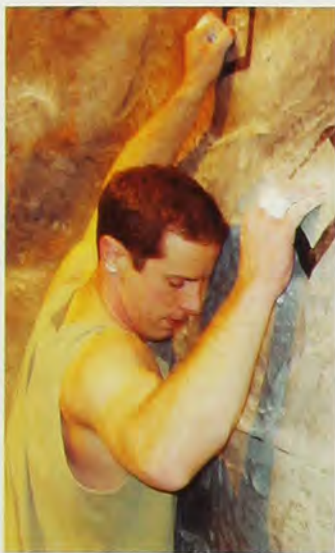
Vet

1st SSgt Geordie Ellis (4th)
2nd Capt Mike Smith (5th)

Team

1st 35 Engr Regt
2nd SEME
3rd ATR Pirbright

The prizes were present at a social gathering in the eve and those present got a preview of the forthcoming Ex Tasmania Dragon DVD - due in the shops soon.



Concentration.



Working it out.



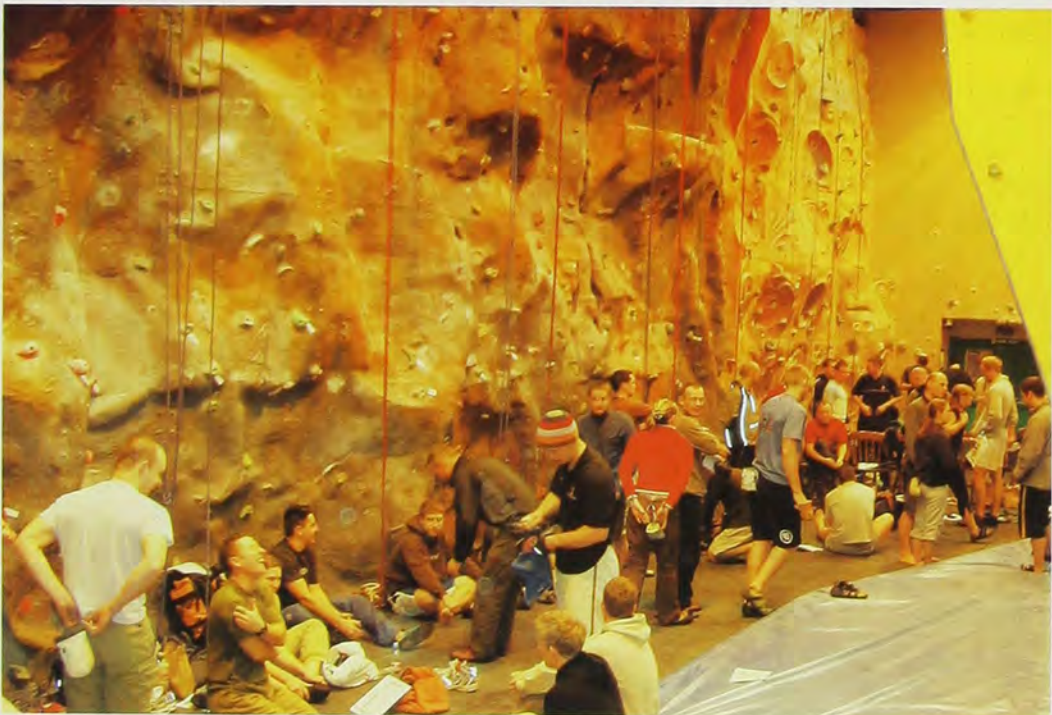
Leanne Callaghan AMA.



Cfn Ruth Matuska



Competitor warming up.



The massed spectators and climbers.

Another fantastic comp - check the AMA website for further comps.

AN ALPINE APPRENTICESHIP

By Roger Smith

The aim of the exercise was "to give cadets the opportunity of introductory mountaineering in the alps under qualified instructors" – and that's exactly what our ten-strong party did for two weeks at the beginning of August while based at the traditional Savoyard Gite Auberge 'La Bagna' in Les Praz de Chamonix. Mixed weather conditions prevailed throughout our stay but by careful planning we were able to carry out purposeful activity every day.

The blend of activities – high mountain mixed (snow/rock/ice) routes; rock-climbing on valley crags; via ferrata climbs on steep limestone faces – combined with a mountain bivouac and a sleepless night in a mountain hut gave party members a comprehensive introduction to alpine mountaineering in its many forms.

We kicked off with a day of training on the Mer de Glace just below Montanvers which provided the opportunity for everyone to master the art of safe movement on glacial terrain as well as the rudiments of crevasse rescue.

Next came a full day mountain walk from Le Buet station (just above Argentiere) to the Col de Salendon. This gave all the party ample opportunity for finding their mountain legs while also ventilating lungs at a modest altitude altitude.

The two via ferrata days – one at Samoens and the other near the Col de Columbiere – gave us breath-taking exposure on steep and overhanging limestone, Himalayan style wire bridges with nothing but air below our feet, aching biceps muscles to 'die for' and a real sense of achievement whilst always safely "clipped in" to harnesses by way of short "Zypher" leashes!

On the days when the weather was unpredictable we were unable to venture high so honed our rock-climbing skills on the "bolted" valley crags. La Chavants, at Les Houches, provided a welcome introduction for all the party to the delights of lead climbing whilst at the Vallorcine slabs everyone sampled multi-pitch climbing and abseiling.

Approximately half-way through the trip we abandoned the comforts of the Gite 'La Bagna' for a night and took an afternoon cable-car and charlift up into the heart of the Aiguilles Rouges where we found a suitable bivouac site just below the Aiguille de Belvedere, our objective for the following day. The settled weather that had been forecast was slow to arrive and not before we'd been liberally peppered with hail! The sky did eventually clear and the temperature dropped to -5 celsius! But what a magnificent dawn and sunrise over the Chamonix Aiguilles perfectly reflected in the Lac Blanc.

We had the route up the Aiguille de Belvedere completely to ourselves – pleasant rock scrambling took us in a 'round-about' way to the summit where a complete 360 degree panorama awaited us.

It took us three attempts – owing to the vagaries of the weather – to get up to altitude in order to try our hand at some "mixed" climbing. Perfect conditions accompanied us up the Grand Montets telepherique to 3297 metres. Conditions under foot were surprisingly icy especially on the bergschrund and all the way up the East face requiring ice-screws for protection and flexible ankles and resilient calf muscles for upward progress!

No trip to the alps is complete without experiencing a night in a mountain hut. We chose to



Via Ferrata du Mont, at Samoens



Scrambling on Aiguille de Belvedere

visit the Albert Premiere refuge (2702 m) on a particularly busy night. Sleep was hard to come by in the very stuffy, cacophonous, dormitory and the 4.30am wake-up call came all too soon! The party slowly came to life and the final stages of the route up the Aiguille du Tour lacked snow and resulted in a "Readymix" slurry pouring down from our first roped party onto our second!

The high point – literally and metaphorically! – came in the form of the first half of the Midi-Plan traverse which we started in total cloud in the early hours of the morning. Slowly the cloud cleared revealing amazing expanses of exposure and some spectacular knife-edge snow ridges in the very heart of the Mont Blanc mountain range. Everyone felt the effects of



Ice climbing on the East Face of Aiguille de Grands Montets

altitude up here at just under 4000 metres!

The aims of the exercise were met in full and the experience gained by the cadets was immense. To have the opportunity to enable cadets

to have this type of mountain experience is certainly very special and it is pleasing to have cadets of the standard to be able to cope with such high-level training.



On the ladders below monstervers.

Participants

Instructors: Roger Smith, Bob Turner, Simon Lister, Sarah Lawrence

Cadets: Nick Stafford, David Ponting, Alex Pilditch, Oliver Helm, Jack Lister, Jonathan Hawes

Santa Cruz

a diary from Peru

Neil and I depart for Bulford to collect the team equipment. We miss the turn off for Bulford like the intrepid explorers we are! Despite three phone calls no room set by in the mess, we squat in a random room on a yellow stained mattress. Are standards falling in the British Army?

The team all meet at London Heathrow and we reshuffle over 350kgs of equipment into loads that meet the weight requirement. We start as we mean to go on and drink large amounts of tea and discuss the next three days. The first mystery of the expedition is found on the USA customs form. What is Turpitude and have I ever done it?

After two long flights via JFK we arrive in Lima at 06 30hrs. The countless e-mails to our Trek agent have paid off as a man meets us with a placard and a minibus. The transfer takes us through the grimy

grey streets of Lima to a bus station. After a healthy breakfast of crisps and tea we settle on our next mode of transport and try to relax for the next 10 hours. Almost exactly halfway the bus dies. It is hot, we are tired but this is all part of the big exped experience. We wait. At last we find ourselves shaking Alberto's hand, shown to our simple rooms and back to his restaurant for traditional Peruvian Pizza.

Caraz is a very pleasant town, no hassle, full of character and yet to be spoilt by the flood of tourists. We are woken by an artillery practice in the local Army barracks, chickens, dogs and the wolf whistle horns of three wheeled taxis. Our task today is to shake out the kit, prep the rations and rest from the journey.

Our acclimatisation program starts today; we go on a local day walk with the aim of reaching roughly 3500m. Even

though we are mid winter it is hot and the countryside is green with large cactus, plants and flowers. I am reminded of parts of Cyprus. The altitude kicks in at 3000m and as we reach 3400m most of us are happy to call it a day

We catch a bus up a wonderful valley to Lake Paron at 4000m. The walk to the end of the lake is flat and gives us the chance to let our body's further acclimatise. The afternoon is spent prepping fuel, food and winter kit resup bags. It all takes a little thought as a donkey can carry 40kgs.

Buy 100 bread rolls for £3. Hope the money lasts. Load our considerable amount of luggage onto a Japanese minibus and drive to the trailhead. Buy what later turns out to be useless tickets for the trail and start a stiff 900m climb. Four hours of walking brings us to our site, two Aspirin take care of my

headache and I am able to enjoy the wonderful surroundings. A "Stone Age man" has a hut close by; the contrast of our tents, water pumps and cookers is stark. The first of many tedious water-pumping sessions begins. Fit people panting from pushing a small pump! A long night with strange dreams.

Two hours on the flat to wake up the body then a monster climb to base camp of Alpayayo. We are thrilled to have the place to ourselves. Once our tents and "admin is squared away" we go on a further acclimatisation walk, this time our target is 4480m. The weather is misty but we achieve our aim. Back down for soup and noodles. Mark has cramps and the obvious; his wind could kill the donkeys.

Break a wet camp. The Punta Union Pass at 4700m is a stiff climb but all team members fare well, the last 200m



Checking out the route.

everyone retreats within themselves "enjoying" their own climb. We take a few pictures and enjoy the stunning view and no mean sense of achievement. Everyone is fit and well, and the day's toil is over. We can see almost our entire route. It is a wonderful place to be. As we cross the pass through a notch in the rock we feel as if the scenery, light and mood has changed. Someone commented it felt like a scene from Lord of the Rings.

The walk out is long and easy but the finish has a sting, we are tired, hot and thirsty but we climb on and reach our campsite. We build a fire, while some wash in the river and provide a meal for the biting flies. In true tradition we sit around the fire, slag each other off and tell tall tales. A quiz has been prepared; there are winners and bad losers in life! Much hot chocolate is quaffed. A wild, wild night!

A busy day! A minibus arrives on time (we are now taking this excellent service as standard) and we start a classic mountain pass journey that will transfer us to the bottom of Pisco our next objective. The bus is jammed

as we are giving locals a ride as well. The pass road is at times exciting or for some terrifying! We joke that this is the time we will meet the Grim Reaper when the driver skilfully hits a rock, smashing the suspension in the process. The bus is no more. All this takes place with a fantastic drop to the valley floor and the wreck of a flattened bus and ten crosses to mark the dead. The crash site is only ten days old. It doesn't take long to figure out what to do next, a truck on its way to market is our new lift. It has a sheep, a bag of guinea pigs and a toothless old man, as all proper market trucks should. We sit amongst the crops and bags and enjoy the random nature of the day. The rest of the day was spent climbing to Lake 69. This is a wonderful spot and has a group of very attractive girls draped as if readying themselves for a photo shoot over the rocks. We of course pay them no attention and look at the mountains. Leanne our only Female member is amazed at our maturity!

That night the stars are incredible, no man made light to spoil them. It is a privilege to be in the mountains.

A cold night leaves the tents frosty. Some of the team are tired; tomorrow is a rest day and will help recharge the batteries. Our climb to base reveals Pisco; the climbers focus on it and discuss the route they hope to take.

We have a refresher lesson on the SAT phone and discuss our communications plan and "actions on" in the event of an accident. We drink our last brew before retreating to the warmth of our sleeping bags.



A rest during the heat of the day.

A gentle start to the day with us looking like tramps from Down and Out in London and Paris, the only thing missing is the copies of The Big Issue.

The morning is spent training, crevasse drills and movement on the rope. We pack for the move to high camp. The weather looks stable, we are ready.

It is good to be moving and I am proud to see the whole team working to get us to the top. Half of the team who are not climbing help us with our load carry to high camp, this support saves us a days carry and is truly appreciated. The remaining pair cover the radio and SAT phone at base. The climb to high camp is two and half hours long and it is unpleasant crossing of the moraine lip and boulder field with a heavy load. Our campsite has the murkiest water we have had to filter. Every litre pumped means taking it apart and cleaning the

filter making a long job worse. Pitched next to us are some Americans. A short climb takes Neil and Gaz to 5009m and gives the climbers the chance to see the first part of the approach. Bed for 18 30hrs, we strengthen Anglo/USA relations by making them laugh with our high altitude farts.

We are awake by midnight, the Americans are excited and are due to leave before us. We doze as they prepare. 02 30hrs we start brewing and eating and last minute kit adjustments. We are expecting cold temperatures and dress accordingly. Eating at this time of day at this height is hard work but must be done. 03 50hrs head torches on, last check and we are off. From the word go it is hard work and I for one feel sick. Forty minutes later we reach the glacier snout and gear up. I retch and regret forcing a flapjack and breakfast down earlier, Ian helps with the more awkward straps and buckles and I am very grateful.

We are climbing proper now and are roped up, climb to the saddle and turn right. This is a pervert's game, climbers are not normal. We reach the 45/50m "technical" section it is a wall of approx 55 degrees and for some reason proves to be my nemesis. I slump at the top like a fish just caught. Everyone bar Mark (who does this for a living and just gets stronger the higher we go) has their moment and that was mine, not pleasant. We are high now and are slowing down, still doing well but slowing. The others are having their moment and we play a "game" of how many steps shall we take before resting. I start the bidding at 30 and try to squeeze 35 before we rest. This goes on and as we reach the steeper sections towards the top we are down to 5 steps. Mark is the master of mind games and we have been friends a while now, so when he says, "it's in the bag", I always expect him to be joking. Not this time. The summit is visible and in real scale. At last I allow myself the luxury of knowing I am going to make it, it is emotional as I have dreamed and planned this trip for over three and a half years. It is 10 00hrs and all four of the team

stand on the summit. The view is spectacular, the summit is flat ish but requires care, fall and it is a very quick route back to base! We shake out the rope check kit, one last look - The summit of Mount Pisco 5752m. My diary tells me "the trip down was awful"! This does not in any way convey the truth of it. When we dressed we could not have predicted how hot it would later become. The altitude was replaced by heat as a tormentor. We plod on. Mark works hard and gets us down the steep bit without any problems. We remove some clothes when the ground allows us; we get comms with the gang at base and pass on the news. They will climb to us and assist us with the heavy loads back down to base. We eventually hit the glacier snout, de kit and make the short walk to high camp. Three of the support team are there to meet us (they too climb to 5009m), it is 14 00hrs it has been a long ten hours. A cup of tea, strip and pack the tents and do battle with the boulder field. It is a trudge and I am hungry and tired, I have had a bag of cereal, one and a half flapjacks, a bar of chocolate and two litres of fluid. We reach base as the sun goes down at 17 00hrs, the guys are kind and provide

water for soup and noodles and endless cups of tea. My kit is a mess but I don't care. Bed. What a great days mountaineering.

During morning routine one of our issue cookers catches alight and requires an act so heroic (the citation will read "handsome, daring WO2 pays no heed to personal safety and hurls cooker") that it is sure to get a VC. The Herder arrives on time and we start a wonderful walk down to Cellcabumba. Gaz works hard and snaps away with the camera. Life is good. Transport takes us through the Park rangers checkpoint and after some confusion we part with Dollars for our use of the park. Once again we joke how the cliffs to our right could dislodge a huge rock at any moment and crush us in the bus. As we turn the next corner a boulder the size of our bus is in the middle of the road. We must stop doing that! We arrive back at Caraz and I make the mistake of saying we are hungry. We are served enough wonderful pizzas to feed an army. I'm in charge therefore everything is my fault. The loneliness of command!

A bus ride from Hell. The past 11 days is catching up with us and the 8-hour journey seems much longer. Old ladies wet themselves (we use pee bottles) and one passenger uses a plastic bag for a function best left



unsaid. We are met at Lima bus station and taken to a haven of a hotel/hostel. It is a little more expensive than our norm but it is good to have this treat. Pizza is ordered (when in Lima) it is called a "dominator" and it didn't come with batteries! Yes I order too much this time as well.

The Team also completed the Inca Trail, but you have read about that before.

Good luck to the Everest AMA team who we shared the summit with on Mount Pisco.

Thanks to all who helped with grants and commercial sponsorship, especially: Smith & Nephew Fannin Health



The team high in the mountains.



Mark Bancroft on top of Grubb.

BRITISH ARMY FORBIDDEN PLATEAU EXPEDITION ANTARCTIC

Antarctica gets under the skin. Either the cold seeps in through your fingers leaving you numb, or the awe draws you through its majesty and you fall under its spell, hopelessly smitten, and you know that nothing will ever be the same again; it's love. For some it's both. As the yacht "John Laing" sailed north and Antarctica slipped astern, I nursed my frost bitten thumb and knew that it was an affair that would not die. I had unfinished business and would "come again my love though it were ten thousand mile".

In 2000/01 the British Army Antarctic Expedition (BAAE) spent 10 weeks mountaineering, sailing and carrying out field studies on the Danco Coast of the Antarctic Peninsula. They climbed 8 mountains including 2 first ascents and some notable seconds. They also ascended the 16 mile long Reclus Peninsula Ridge to reach and stand upon the edge of the Antarctic Peninsula Plateau (see the Summer 2004 AMA Journal). Richard Pattison now describes some unfinished business...

Photos by Mark Wyldbore, Steve Ayres and the author

In January 2001 the BAAE had become the first expedition to retrace Sir Wally Herbert's 1957 descent route of the Reclus Peninsula. In doing so we had stood on the edge of the Forbidden Plateau, the last circa 100 mile uncrossed section of the Antarctic Peninsula and home to the highest unclimbed peak in British Antarctic Territory. The urge and bravado to try and cross it there and then gave way to the considered reality that circumstances were not right, "better a live donkey than a dead lion" (Shackleton's explanation of why he turned around less than 100 miles from being first to reach the South Pole). It must wait for another day, perhaps another team. But back in Northern Ireland the flame refused to die and like a slow match it smouldered awaiting rekindling and a chance to burst into flame. All that was needed was a seized opportunity, I started to engineer it. The Scott Polar Research Institute offered encouragement and together we developed a glaciological field studies programme to dig pits to examine layer structures and take samples. A sympathetic brigade commander and desk officer at APC paved the way for the critical approach to HMS Endurance. An initial enquiry met with enthusiastic interest from the captain and held out the prospect of a lift south with the necessary support ashore. But celebration was premature; unease in Fleet HQ was given succour by FCO priorities and what ever hope was left succumbed to the extended refit programme. In desperation I clutched at straws, time was now short and prospects of a return this season fading. And then a life line, well like buses, two came along together but I needed them both. First the offer of passage on board a yacht, at far below a commercial price and second the offer of sponsorship from FlyBe, the regional airline. Drawing the remaining strands together was a challenge, deployment dates changed, team members were recruited and then forced to withdraw. From the BAAE team S/Sgt Steve Ayres and Capt Harry Scrope were quickly recruited. Fresh but enthusiastic blood was recruited in the shape of Capt Mark Wyldbore, Lt Chris Wright and L/Sgt Marcus Harriott. Then 10 days before departure an unwelcome text from Harry announcing a broken leg, great timing mate!! His place was taken by Lt-Cdr (Rtd) Clive Waghorn, who was the only person I knew who could join at such short notice, even then he had



On top of Grubb.



The locals.



The start of the plateau.

to resign his job, now that's commitment... Well actually he had just started as a temporary Christmas postman so may be not that difficult a call! Clive had been the deputy leader of The Joint services Brabant Island Expedition in 1984. On 15 December HQ Adventure Training Group (Army) gave the final approval for the expedition to proceed. There was only a week before the freight flight to the Falkland Islands; time was definitely not our side.

Christmas took a back seat, equipment was hastily packed and moved to RAF Brize Norton. On Boxing day the 6 man expedition departed for the Falkland Islands. In an act of public atonement I must retract 20 years of derogatory thought and sarcasm of Army and RAF movers, nothing was too much trouble and despite the last minute nature of our requests at the start of the Christmas ground rush everything fell into place, thank you. In the Falkland Islands we completed final preparation and equipment checks. Peoples' willingness to support us far exceeded anything we might reasonably have hoped for and without their efforts we would have found final preparation far more challenging. There then followed some frustration as we waited for the yacht Gambo to arrive, eventually she did and after vitalling and loading eight people and their stores for 8 weeks into just 47 feet, we slipped with high hopes in perfect conditions from Mare Harbour on 10 January. Twenty four hours later we were back, with a sheered engine water pump

shaft. Our frustration was in direct proportion to the willingness of the workshops to make a new one. Forty eight hours later we were once more pointing out to sea but we had squandered the weather window and faced a hard lumpy sail to Windward. The crossing of The Drake set the tone for the expedition, (almost) flat calm to gale force winds and high seas. Gambo weathered it rather better than some of the crew! With no concession to comfort; she is a southern ocean expedition workhorse showing the wear of 5 hard seasons in the ice. Her indomitable spirit and steel hull is matched only by her skipper's ingenuity, experience and stout heart. Together they form a well matched team. We clawed our way south towards the Recluse Peninsula and our landing point. Landing is always difficult and uncertain but we were lucky the weather held and late at night on 22 January with mixed emotions we waved Gambo off. Six would be explorers looked at each other and unspoken excitement and trepidation in equal measure gripped us as Gambo slipped away. What ever mess we got into (or I made!) it would only be the confidence and trust in each other which would get us out of it. Despite the enormity of our aspiration we slept soundly and woke with anticipation and enthusiasm for the start of the ascent of the sixteen mile ridge.

Eighteen hours later and half way up the first major obstacle, we collapsed into our tent. Two weeks sailing is less than an ideal build up for hard pulking (sledge dragging).

There is no easy way to acclimatise to the demands of a 200 Lbs load but in order to finish you have to start. The next day feet were pushed back into the unfamiliar shell of plastic ski mountaineering boots, aching legs and backs once more strained in the harness as we completed the upper reaches of the steep icefall to reach the airy dangerous traverse below tottering ice seracs and through crevasses and iceslopes. A thousand feet below lay the broken surface of the Bailey Glacier. Three years ago this mile and a half crossing had taken little more than an hour. This time it took more than 2 days. The frustration of completing a days route finding, crevasse avoidance(?), hauling and hoisting to discover that progress was less than 500 meters saps the will, but little by little we made our way across the traverse. Whilst we still had some steep slopes and crevasses to cross we were through the worst of it. Or so we thought! After eight days we topped out on the Peninsula plateau. Under a perfect blue sky and sun we reached the summit of Mount Johnson. Ahead of us lay the Forbidden Plateau or "the promised land of milk and honey" and easy pulking. Far away to our east we looked down on The Larsen Ice shelf and beyond The Weddell Sea. In high spirits we descended to our tents.

A day is a long time in the mountains! The following morning we packed up in high winds and moved off in white out on a committing and steep slope around Mt Johnson. Progress was slow and

methodical but gradually the slope eased and that night for the first time we pitched camp on the Forbidden Plateau. Over the next three days we honed our "blind" navigation. In whiteout armed with a 1 in 250,000 map, with 200 m contour lines, a Silva compass, a GPS, time and distance calculations and a great deal of cross referencing and caution we edged our way south at not much more than an average speed of 1 mile an hour. The Gods smiled on us because on the fourth morning we woke to clear blue skies. We raced away across a frustratingly difficult snow surface and after caching our pulks moved on in light order to make the first ascent of Mount Walker, the highest unclimbed point on British Antarctic Territory. Climbing Mt Walker had never been our formal aim, more a (not so) secret desire. The mountain is named after the First Officer of the Ship Discovery, from the 1934-37 Antarctic Discovery Expedition. However the significance of the name was not lost on me - General Sir Michael Walker had been the military Patron and a tirelessly supporter of The British Army Antarctic Expedition and Flybe are owned by The Jack Walker Trust. It is both a privilege and a humbling experience to be in the mountains and the hour spent on the summit passed too quickly, reminding us of our ephemeral nature and experience. Back at the Pulks we rehitched our burden and moved off. Over 30 miles to the south lay the edge of The plateau and our proposed descent route. The days merged into each other as we progressed south. And then

the (next) sting; unusually dense ice had prevented Gambo from making the planned pick up point in Waddington Bay.

We had to rethink our proposed descent, the only certainty being that it would be less straight forward and more committing than anything we had yet encountered. Still that lay ahead as we progressed south. By now we were off the published map and navigating on little more than a sketch map. A break in the weather allowed a brief glimpse of a possible descent route, one that three years ago we had dismissed as unworkable but now represented our best and perhaps only chance but from this distance looked reasonably straight forward. To start with it would involved a three mile descent of a previously unexplored glacier with steep icefalls and crevasses. This would be followed by an unseen route over a series of glaciers and ice falls. However it was still more than twenty miles around the upper reaches of the Bagshaw Glacier. Five days later, the celebration of completing the crossing was tempered by the reality that the greatest difficulties lay ahead but even at this stage none us appreciated their magnitude and challenge. On the two days that we would have liked clear weather (Mts Johnson and Walker), we got it. For the start of the descent we needed it, and the Gods continued to look benevolently on us. The descent was not just physically demanding but the mental pressures of route finding, uncertain ground and the prospect of collapsing snow bridges with no certainty of success were enormous. It took two days to get down and reach the coastal ice cliffs and I really started to believe that we had cracked it, all that remained was a straightforward traverse along their tops.

This false sense of security was reinforced by a gentle two mile slight down hill ski but after gaining another rise over a headland we found ourselves in a yet more difficult and dangerous ice field. This

further challenge was committing and involved crossing some very tenuous snow bridges over deep crevasses. Not for the first time team members felt the unnerving sensation of freefall acceleration as bridges collapsed and we confirmed the inadequacy of a pulk as a makeshift parachute. The whiteout returned and we were again pinned down by another blizzard. Unable to find an obvious route out we recced our way across crevasses and ice blocks the size of large houses. We moved tantalisingly closer to safety. The final day held more drama, a steep rising traverse in appalling snow conditions was followed by a steady climb to gain a saddle ridge. As we gained it the cloud descended and once again we were back in whiteout for one last time. The descent was dramatic, a steep unrelenting ice fall with avalanche debris and more precarious blocks above. It flattened out into a crevassed



Camp at the start of the plateau.

bowl but half a mile from the coast we suffered our last crevasse incident. Above Waterboat Point we took a chilled(!) bottle of champagne from a pulk. The relief was palpable. Behind us lay unforgettable experiences and memories; blizzards, high winds, aching muscles, stunning views, hardship, humour, danger, exhaustion, elation and friendship. All had left their mark. We shook hands and moved off.

Our contribution to polar exploration and field studies will never be more than a footnote in the annals but for us the Forbidden Plateau will always be special. It had lived up to its name but conceded its borders to A British Army team. Honour had been satisfied; I hope it considers us worthy because the love affair is far from over.



Traversing open water.



The team and success.

From Aphrodite's Isle to the Ring of Fire

by Andy Amies

Two AMA members were employed as instructors on the trip: WO2's Andy Amies RSigs and Shuggy Wilson RHF. I was involved from the initial planning stages (in the bar) when it was decided we should go to Peru! Sober reflection led us to change to New Zealand to utilise the fact that we were already 5 hours into the flight plan rather than 5 hours behind it! Because of time away from work limitations a plan to go only to the North Island was conceived – giving us a full two weeks on the ground. The plan was for a 6 day trek in the Tongariro National Park, a 2 day rafting trip and then a further 3 day trek in the Mount Taranaki National Park.

Pre-deployment training was carried out in the Troodos mountain range – the hot, dry and dusty conditions proved to be nothing like NZ but enabled us to select 5 Army and 5 RAF personnel to make the trip.

After a mammoth flight the team arrived in Auckland and after negotiating the worlds toughest immigration desk (seriously) picked up our transport for the drive south to Tongariro. Tongariro is an area of vast contrasts: active volcanoes, deserts, forests and rocky crests mix to form a wonderful playground. We were to tackle Mount Ngauruhoe (2291m) before setting out on a 5-day trek around the park. We made use of the Mountain Huts available throughout the park in order to avoid carrying tents – very sociable bunkrooms with central cooking areas. The climb up Mt. Ngauruhoe (as seen in Lord of the Rings) proved memorable for all. The slopes were as steep as the instructors could remember actually walking up rather than using a rope and made of

loose volcanic material (last eruption in the 1990s). The first inter-service issue immediately became apparent halfway up when the process of natural selection revealed the RAF half of the team were not quite as fit as the Army men and women. However the ML's ensured that all but 2 made the summit and feasted on the wonderful views of what appeared to be most of North Island and also what the inside of a volcano looks like – plumes of smoke revealing it's lack of dormisity. The descent proved far easier than the ascent – it was possible to ski down the loose ash run offs all the way to the saddle where we met the track to the hut. This track led us for 5 km across the main crater of the now extinct larger volcano to our accommodation where the 13 hour day finally ended.

The next 5 days saw the group re-cross the crater, cross a desert, plough through a forest, cross volcanised lava flows and climb minor peaks before returning to our stating point at the park HQ. The total distance covered was in excess of 135km, including 1 day of 30km. The area proved an ideal training ground for the SMP course and despite being New Zealand's most popular National Park it was virtually deserted. In fact the only other trekkers seen were when one of the party fell into a river during a crossing exercise – the New Zealand sense of humour immediately coming to the fore!

The exped then moved to Taupo for a rehydration exercise before the rafting phase. We rafted for 2 days in remote wilderness terrain, running grade 5 rapids for hours on end. The finale was a 7m waterfall which was taken direct – the highest



Mount Ngauruhoe viewed from the desert.

commercially rafted drop in the world. This got the adrenaline running – and in one case the blood (one of the RAF guys broke his nose after it connected with a loose paddle!). Survival was duly celebrated with an overnight stay at a Maori village, where after failing miserably at the Haka we spent a happy few hours lounging in the hot springs.

A short drive (well it would have been if the OIC had not taken control of the map) led us to Mount Taranaki. Our coastal locality meant that the good weather we had enjoyed thus far disappeared and a depression settled overhead. Day 1 was a rainforest tramp circumnavigating the mountain and the weather was not too much of an issue. However overnight the storm developed into a serious blow, including snow, and the summit attempt the next day was aborted when still 400m from the top due to increasingly high winds and ice underfoot. Nevertheless the experience of traversing a mountain in this weather proved a good test of the SMP skills previously taught – ensuing that everything that you remove from a pocket is attached to

you in some way is best practised on a blowy hillside than a warm classroom.

The early withdrawal meant that we now had an spare day – and NZ being the playground it is a day of blackwater rafting – wet caving in our terms – was enjoyed by all. Another short drive returned us to Auckland for our R and R and to prepare for the short hop to Cyprus (via Australia, Singapore and Dubai). The ever-efficient immigration people who so reluctantly admitted us then had the temerity to try and stop us leaving because we did not have a visa for Cyprus – it is in the EU now boys!

New Zealand proved to be a great place for an easy to organise no frills exped. The people are extremely friendly and outdoors mad. A month down under would still be to short – especially if taking in the South Island as well. However one word of warning – get a comfortable minibus – it is a big country with small roads.

Ring of Fire? – local name for the traverse of Tongariro National Park

AMA CORNWALL MEET

26-29 MAY 2006

By Gen Bloomer

When the AMA meets co-ordinator asked me if I could run a spring climbing meet my mind immediately thought of somewhere a bit more off the beaten track but still abounds with national classic climbs. A place where you can go multi-pitch and single pitch within the half a mile all the while with the Atlantic Ocean thundering in below and around you, giving what many people call "atmosphere", a place where real adventure climbing exists along side fantastic introductory climbing and all this on perfect golden / pink granite. That place is the West Penwith peninsula in Cornwall.....the Lands End.

Having already discussed a "hobo" climbing trip with Cpl Nobby Clarke (RLC) earlier in the year, we both took leave in the week prior to the proposed meet and loaded up my camper van and headed west...into gales for a week. No bother, big boots, wet proofs and soggy sarnies saw us through many low grade classics of the region. All the time our minds were hoping for a break in the weather to coincide with the Meet.

Unfortunately the response from the AMA website diary page and the group forum pages was incredibly disappointing and as such on the first day of the meet we

met the only other climber to express an interest, Cpl Mike Stephenson (HAC). After a quick fry up, a plan was formulated to try and beat the tide to the base of a greenstone sea cliff named Tater Du. The guide book description gave us the impression that there was adventure to be had and after a long (by Cornwall standards) walk along the coast path we came to the descent path. Adventure is what we were after and that's what we got in the descent, epic would be the word. But we were rewarded by some amazing looking and intimidating cliffs. Although called greenstone it is a basalt type rock, jet black in colour and lent itself to steep climbing on small incut holds, gear however was good and as the tide was already on the turn we cracked on and managed to bag a few routes on this strange and forbidding rock.

On returning to the van at Lomorna Cove we received some welcome news, Cfn Ollie Noakes (REME) having just returned from EWR was up for sea cliff action. "No dramas, Ollie just get on the M4 then the M5, then the A30 and keep driving". I obviously neglected to tell him just how far to keep driving, especially from central London on a Friday evening! Anyway when we awoke the next morning in a lay-by, there was Ollie fast asleep in the back of a Polo, comfy!

Another council of war was called in a Sennen Cove café. Unfortunately the weather was poor at Lands End so after consulting the guide book, we decided on more exploring, this time towards the Lizard Peninsula at a crag high on the cliffs named Trewavas Head. What can we say, another inspired choice, great lines on solid granite. After some exploratory climbs, Mike met the beast head on and started smashing the E grades. Myself and Nobby did the same but after meeting at the beast head on, it looked and felt nails and I did what all good

APTCL's do...fell off and decked out! After I lying still for a bit, contemplating life, I got up, had a word with myself and dogged my way to the top.

Sunday morning dawned clear and bright and gave us the weather window we were looking for, Chair Ladder was on. Chair Ladder is the jewel in the Cornish climbing crown. With long abseil approaches to tidal ledges and three star routes from Diff to E9, it has a phenomenal concentration of classic climbs, names like Diocese, Pegasus, Seal Slab and South Face Direct make this cliff a national treasure. Mike and Ollie's objective, Bishops Rib E1 5b, 5a, is another famous classic as was mine and Nobby's, The Terriers Tooth, HS 4b,---. After getting to the tidal ledges we just missed the first climb of the day on the Tooth but still managed to get in front of the other 4 teams, it is THAT good. As we ascended we kept pace with the other team, shouting encouragement to each other as the Atlantic had finally calmed to a lazy sloshing, way, way below our feet. Both teams topped out in style within minutes of each other but feeling the effects of the fall from the previous day and knowing I had an eight hour drive ahead, I bailed out on more climbing, Nobby headed to Newquay for a shower and "comfort" from his missus and Mike and Ollie found out not to mess with

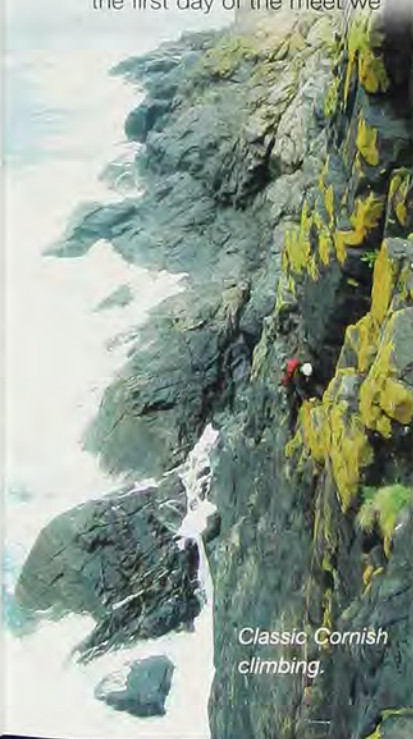


Exposed belay.

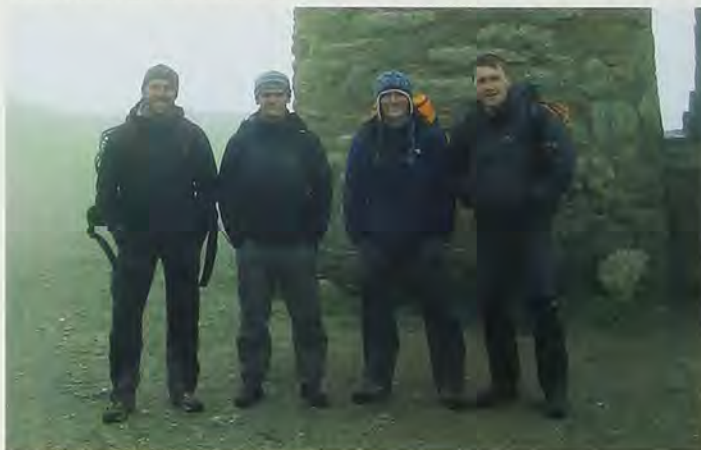
seagulls and more importantly their nests.

Mike and Ollie stayed on for the Monday and headed for the beautiful and peaceful Sennen, where Ollie did the famously photogenic Demo Route HS 4b,4b and then got sandbagged on the classic "hard mans" route, Genge's Groove HVS 5b.

All those who attended agreed that the weekend was a fantastic success and that the only down side was a lack of other AMA members to be introduced to the unique delights of Cornish Sea Cliff climbing. Come on guys support the meets, they are there for your participation and without attendance they will drop of the calendar. Do we really only want to meet up once a year at the AGM and squeeze in a couple of climbs in the Pass? Adventure climbing is out there, find it!



Classic Cornish climbing.



Glen (left) and the members of the meet.

HIMALAYAN TIGER

It all started at quarter past one in the morning at our local friendly National Express Coach Park. There we were, all 14 of us (excluding of course crying loved ones and very tired friends kind enough to drop us off) ready for the experience of our lives, although it was going to take a further 22 hours of travelling until we could start to enjoy it!

The first full day in Peru included a whistle stop tour of all the sights and sounds of Lima that we could fit into 24 hours. Some of the group had to fulfil final admin arrangements, such as booking in with the British Embassy, whereas the rest followed specified tours of the city.

The next day we had an early start and our first long haul bus journey to Huaraz at height of over 3000m. The twelve hours passed relatively quickly, aided by some rather dated films and a good game of Peruvian Bingo. Upon arrival in Huaraz, we met up with the owner of our welcoming hostel, a loveable Brit by the name of Jonathon 'Jo' Parsons. Not only did he prove to be an excellent host, but was also a source of invaluable knowledge and local information. The next few days were spent trying to acclimatise whilst fulfilling other important tasks such as buying the food and liaising with the support team. We did manage to squeeze in a few games of football and volleyball against the locals, however the lack of altitude fitness was evident as we were soundly beaten. The climax of the acclimatisation period was an 8 hour day walk to Laguna Chirrup at a height of 4450m.

By this time everyone was raring to go and the following morning we got on another bus to take us to the start of the trek at a small village called Llamac. Our trek of the Huayhaush circuit took 12 days including 2 rest days. Each day consisted of a similar routine; we would wake at

around 0600 to the smell of breakfast being prepared by our guide and superb chef 'Sabino'. Most mornings we would start with a climb up to high pass, the highest being 5058 m and then after lunch, drop down again to the next campsite which we would usually reach by 1430. All our food and supplies were strapped to our 14 donkeys with the help of Sabino's 3 sons who formed an excellent support team. Each morning they would set off after us, normally catching us at the top of the pass, and then reaching camp early enough that more often than not a nice warm brew was waiting at the end of each day.

The weather was spectacular for ninety per cent of the trek, with only a couple of day's rain and snow at the start. The walking was tough and at 4500m carrying a 20 kg bergen, it is amazing how much of a toll the lack of oxygen takes on your body.

On the last day of the trek we walked into a small town called Pacllon. Here we said our regrettable goodbyes to Sabino and his family and reflected on what had been a trip of a lifetime. The bus journey back to Huaraz was interesting, and after more than one near death experience and 3 hours of the journey on extremely bumpy tracks, we were glad to be back at Jo's alive! We spent the next two days at Jo's relaxing and cramming as much food down our necks as humanly possible. Finally we said goodbye to Jo and his wife Vicky and got on our first overnight bus from Huaraz back to Lima.

None of us quite knew exactly what to expect with a 7-hour overnight bus journey but as it turns out we all managed a good few hour's sleep and arrived in Lima at exactly 0444. Perhaps the spectacularly rubbish film they chose to play helped us get to sleep a little faster, but if not the late night snack and hot drink did! In Lima we went

straight to the airport and waited for our internal flight to Cusco scheduled for 0845.

The short internal flight got us safely to Cusco (3400m) at just gone 1000, although there was a moment when we had to drop into the valley floor that a few people held their breath!

Cusco is a lot more tourist orientated than anywhere else we had yet been, immediately obvious by the pan pipe band playing at the airport baggage collection area. Cusco is a lovely city and we spent the afternoon looking around the side streets and even watching a bit of football in a local bar. We spent the next few days visiting the delights of Cusco including the local market and local Inca ruin sights.

After coming all the way to Peru there was no way we were not going to see the famous Inca ruins of Machu Pichu. So, at 0500 on the 1st October we set off to get the 4 hour train to Machu Pichu town at 2000m. Franco, our guide for the next few days, showed us to our hotels and then took us on a day walk up a mountain that overlooked the sight of Machu Pichu. The climb up was much more exciting than we could have imagined and the view from the top was out of this world!

The next day, our trip to Machu Pichu didn't start well.



The expedition party feeling small in comparison to their surroundings

We had got up very early in view of seeing the spectacular sunrise over the ancient city, however mother nature decided that until 0700 it would be pouring with rain! You couldn't help but smile! The rain quickly stopped and by 0900 it was bright sunshine. Franco gave us a superb tour of the city going into great detail everything 'we' know about the Inca's and we topped it all off with a climb up Waina Picchu to take some post card worthy photos!

The trip to Machu Pichu (or Old Mountain as it roughly translates to!) was superb and a brilliant way to end the expedition. We spent that evening back in Cusco preparing ourselves for the four days of travelling ahead! A day in Arequipa, two overnight buses, two flights and a coach journey later we arrived back into Southampton, shattered but with enough memories to last a life time!



On top of the world at 5050m.

PANTHERS VOID

Cordillera Huayhuash Circuit, Peru

By Lt Paul Whillis

Preparation for possible future operations in mountainous conditions was the compelling excuse that spurred 19 Light Brigade Headquarters and Signal Squadron (209) into mounting an expedition to circumnavigate the Cordillera Huayhuash in Peru. The range, infamous as the setting for Joe Simpson's traumas in *Touching the Void*, is billed by innumerable websites as 'one of the world's greatest treks'. It fulfilled the criteria of being arduous and exotic, as well as being far enough from Catterick Garrison to entertain some hope of sunshine.

Of necessity, the trek was made in summer conditions, as the Squadron contained insufficient personnel to venture above the snowline. This constraint, however, opened participation to all Squadron members. A careful selection procedure scrutinized the physical and mental resilience displayed by soldiers on exercise and in other arduous events throughout the previous 12 months. The final expedition team comprised 8 members: leader and JSMEL(S) Lt Paul Whillis, with 2IC 2Lt Marie Hunston, Cpls Greg Cairns and Jim Gallagher MLT(S), LCpls Al Davis and Mike Middleton and Sigs Kev Neilson and Rob McGuire.

The expedition took place from 3-25 August. The plan was for a period of acclimatisation to precede the trek, and for the group to travel and experience more of Peru afterwards. The acclimatisation would take place in the town of Huaraz, situated at 3000m in the Cordillera Blanca, the country's most popular climbing and trekking range. Thereafter, the 10 day trek would circumnavigate the Huayhuash range, 100km to the south. Passing through river valleys, over high plateaux and finally up to passes and peaks, the route was largely non-technical but lofty. Following the well-worn 'climb high, sleep low' maxim, nightly campsites were

planned between 3300m and 4400m. The maximum altitude attained each day was to be between 4600m and 5060m.

After a relatively smooth planning process, during which the 2 Division Physical and Adventurous Training staff gave excellent advice and displayed praiseworthy foresight and flexibility, the group flew to Lima via Houston Intercontinental Airport. Wide eyes aplenty greeted the USA, as the soldiers, some of whom had not previously been abroad, realised that the girth of many Americans was not simply a distortion of cinema widescreen. Not lingering in Lima, we boarded transport for Huaraz and endured the first of several interminable bus journeys. Huaraz was wonderful, offering delicious steak meals for acclimatising mountaineers alongside nightly power cuts. Memorably, it was in Huaraz that we found Jesús. Living comfortably in crisply pressed shirts with his wife Jansy, Jesús now works as a travel adviser. Old habits die hard, however. Informed that we planned to climb in the Huayhuash carrying all our kit, Jesús smiled and informed us that he'd never experienced anything but misery carrying heavy burdens up steep hills. Predictably, he suggested donkeys as a reliable mode of carriage. The expedition doubled in size when we welcomed 5 mules and a couple of miniature horses to our team as a result of Jesús' advice.

Having saved our soles, Jesús then volunteered his services as our personal shopper. Buying 10 days worth of food for 8 surprisingly fussy soldiers was a task Lt Whillis had been dreading, so he was more than happy to do it by proxy. Fresh meat was culled, disembowelled and hacked to pieces in Huaraz's sprawling market. Cereals, pastas and tinned Bolognese sauce were bought for the latter days of the trek. They vied with the



The Huayhuash Range and Laguna Siula from Punta Siula

omnipresent egg, four dozen of which Jesús assured us would survive if carried correctly. He urged us to have faith, which seemed as good a planning tool as any.

Eager for the off, the group completed another acclimatisation day. At 0430 hrs on 6 August, we sprang enthusiastically onto a miniscule bus for the journey into the wilderness.

The first day of the trek progressed smoothly. We climbed from 3100m to the target of 3500m in 90 minutes. This seemed a ridiculously short amount of time to walk for a day's adventurous training, and as no one felt anything but a sense of wonder at the increasingly lofty and jagged peaks around, we

decided to continue. Lunch, taken outside an incongruous Japanese zinc mine, was invaded by a voluble foreman who seemed unoffended by our covert attempt to hijack his vehicles for our onward passage. 'Against company policy', he informed us gravely. This, it turned out, was unfortunate. Jolver, the donkey driver who would become a close friend over the following days, came close to ending his career by his actions in the afternoon. Having agreed to continue to a nearby farm called Matacancha, Jol charged off with his donkeys to set up camp. When the group caught up with him, 300m higher and 5km further on, we were distinctly unamused, not to mention suffering noticeably from the effects of altitude. Jol, grinning and waving atop a



Donkey jam at 4500m on Cacanampunta



Punta Cuyoc.

distant bluff, was treated, to an outburst from an irate Lt Whillis. When the Peruvian failed to stop grinning, the heroic subbie attempted to charge up the hill to give him a proper bollocking, hopefully in Spanish. Alas! due to the sparsity of oxygen in the vicinity, the gallant officer came heaving to an embarrassing halt at barely half the distance, and, winded, of necessity covered the remaining ground at a less-than-menacing stagger. The telling-off, more sound and fury than substance, was scarcely comprehensible. Jolver, to his credit, understood sufficient of this drivel to have at least the politeness to stop beaming and look concerned. Lifting two bergans and a donkey in an attempt to regain some dignity, the expedition leader slewed on his heel and set off down the hill to return to a lower campsite, which in the meantime had been invaded by a group of French sexagenarians and a large marquee. So ended the first day.

The familiar diurnal pattern of the expedition was established the next day. Awaking in ice-rimmed tents to a chilly dawn, coffee and Cpl Cairns's rice pudding, the group contemplated the first serious climb of the trek. 650m of steep ascent to the pass of Cacanampunta promised to ensure that the aims of adventurous training would be fulfilled. While this would not have presented a problem at sea level, altitude rendered such a hill a considerable challenge for the group. The group moved slowly to reduce the risk of altitude sickness. This was a strain on Lanyard Trophy heroes Sigs McGuire and Neilson, who professed

themselves more used to running in the hills. Haste was precluded, however, by a noisy throng of donkeys belonging to another group congregated at 4500m. One animal had thrown its load and the handlers were frantically retrieving bags and boxes of food from the mountainside while their beasts mischievously bit and kicked each other. Scrambling past this obstacle, and taking several breathers, the group attained the summit of the pass at 4650m after 2 hrs climbing. Cacanampunta is notable for being the watershed between Peru's Amazonian and Pacific river systems, and the weather was worse on the far side. Fine days inevitably turned into cold, rainy nights. After a brief congratulatory break, the party continued down the slope to Janca, with most people indulging in a little horse riding, well satisfied that they were equal to the challenges that the circuit would bring.

The most impressive trekking day came in the middle of the expedition, on ground east of Siula Grande. Climbing past meltwater lakes restrained by glacial moraines, we were treated to stunning vistas of cloud swirling around 6300m peaks a mile to our west. The pass, at 4809m, was reached after a severe climb that LCpl Middleton professed to be 'harder than the Lanyard Trophy', a 40 mile, 40lb R SIGNALS marching competition. Compensation was provided in the form of some of the world's most awe-inspiring scenery.

Even in the wilderness of the Huayhuash, the group was able to be comfortable. Women in isolated farmsteads could occasionally be persuaded to sell trout and soft drinks at bargain prices. Additionally, day 5 found the group at some hot springs, which eased some aches and pains prior to a severe climb. The trek's highest point, Punta Cuyoc (5059m), was reached the following day. Ascending above 5000m was an important psychological achievement for the group, made difficult by the proximity of the snowline and the technical inexperience of the trekkers. The area was a



The group at Carhuacocha. Top Row L-R: Lt Whillis, Cpl Gallagher, Sig Neilson, Sig McGuire, LCpl Middleton, 2Lt Hunston. Seated L-R: LCpl Davis, Cpl Cairns.

strange, blasted moonscape of steep sandy rock and slate scree, not lending itself to photography, but utterly memorable nonetheless.

Three further arduous days of trekking followed Cuyoc, through hugely varied terrain. In particular, a day of 1000m descent followed by at least as much ascent over 25km tested the entire group. Lake Jahuacocha provided the final vista on the trail, and was the venue for a nocturnal game of 'take down the officers' tent', which provoked great hilarity. The final day's trek was spent in the company of an impeccably bred Australian woman who opined that we were a long way from Iraq and should be employing ourselves more gainfully. The sheila's impression of our group was doubtless tinted by her having surprised 2Lt Hunston in her ablutions, which had been a regular feature of the trip for the young officer. It is only to be hoped that RSS Blandford can add lessons in camouflage and concealment into the Troop Commanders' Course.

No visit to Peru would have been complete without a visit to Cusco and Machu Picchu, so we decided to spend the 'cultural' element of the trip in Peru's tourist mecca. Those inclined towards historical studies amused themselves among the ruins of the old Inca capital, and were entranced by the overwhelming majesty of Picchu on its mountain fastness. The others dedicated themselves to supporting the ailing Andean brewing industry. In this they acquitted themselves

admirably.

The journey home was unremarkable except for LCpl Davis attracting the attention of Interpol at the Peruvian customs desk. Sadly, it was a case of mistaken identity, although Al's panicky expression did little to allay the suspicions of the lugubrious policeman. 'It's not about that fountain in Cusco, is it?' asked the nervous Mancunian. Indeed it was not, and what happened to the fountain in Cusco will remain forever a mystery. 16 hours later, we landed at Gatwick and ghosted through the typically lax immigration procedures at London's least pleasant airport. We completed the rendezvous with the coach to Catterick Garrison in the grimy underground bus station were asleep in minutes. Waking only to refuel nutritionally at Leicester Forest East Services, we snoozed in synchrony until Gaza Barracks, dreaming of brigade exercises and high readiness year preparation that was suddenly once more our lot.

The expedition was a memorable and challenging experience that proved to be a highlight of the year for all involved. As an exercise in organisation and leadership it was stimulating and demanding. Self reliance, determination, endurance and good humour were required and provided by all participants. The Cordillera Huayhuash proved to be an ideal introduction to high altitude work, and undoubtedly deserves its reputation as one of the world's finest treks.

TRAINING FOR CLIMBING

Training for climbing is not a new concept, however it has not followed the same progressive development as training for many other sports has since it was first introduced by the Livesey-Fawcett partnership back in the Seventies. I knew Pete Livesey very well as he tutored me at Bradford University and what impressed me about Pete was that he was always ahead of his time in training and skills acquisition as well as being very focused on the many sports at which he excelled. The methods of training back in the Seventies were in comparison to later developments fairly basic and to this day climbing training tends to remain so.

I am sure if Pete was still alive he would be well ahead of training for climbing and using the advancements in sports physiology and psychology which are used by mainstream Olympic sports. A career in endurance sports coaching has enabled me to develop practices that I now use in coaching for climbers including hypoxic training, pliometrics and imagery as well as cross training using methods from gymnastics, swimming, cross country skiing, yoga and boxing.

The start point with any climber is to gain a genetic profile. Information from this is studied with the support of physiological testing which identifies maximal and percentage oxygen uptakes, lactic tolerances at given intensities, specific muscular strength inside and outside optimum ranges, core strength and stability and peak finger and tendon tolerances. Screening is goal orientated as the individuals' aims may be as diverse as climbing Everest, doing an on sight ascent of Left Wall or maybe as Pete Livesey did, setting about releasing the full potential of your climbing ability in all aspects of climbing and mountaineering.

Returning to the fundamentals of training for climbing: firstly, you will not climb Everest unless you have a very strong aerobic

and endurance base; you will not climb Left Wall in style unless you have good strength endurance; you will not boulder well unless you have power, flexibility and balance.

An optimum balance of all of the above is ideal but generally your genetic background often determines the type of athlete you are and normally you favour the type of climbing that suits your strengths rather than weaknesses. Nevertheless, the balance can be redressed with a training programme which is progressive, balanced in volume and intensity and is focused on the individual. As with most other training programmes, the basis for further development is a strong aerobic base, which develops what I call the plumbing i.e. an increase in capillarisation, free fat utilisation, mitochondria proliferation and oxidative enzyme activity, all of which make for efficient use of oxygen.

These areas can be developed to give up to five times the efficiency of an untrained individual and can be gained through enjoyable, diverse activities such as swimming, yomping on hills with ski poles whilst using finger trainers as well as low intensity sessions on the climbing wall of up to 20 minutes at a time, or even something as simple as 20-30 minutes early morning runs or cycles.

I recently coached an extremely talented Services climber who had an identified weakness in this area that was affecting and limiting his performance. Once this was addressed, his climbing potential developed in line with the work he put in, resulting in him cruising sustained climbs which he had previously found difficult and climbing harder grades in better style.

When planning for climbing training consider these principles:

Overload – carefully considering the mixture of stress and rest.

Adaptation – the length of time it takes an individual to adapt.



Indoor climbing.

Specificity of the training – how much must be specific to climbing.

Intensity and volume – carefully balanced to avoid injury and over training.

Progression and periodisation – to suit the individual's needs and lifestyle.

In most sports, intensity is often determined by percentage heart rates, using 4 levels in which to train. It is used in the non-climbing specific training for climbers using the following levels:

Level 1.
60-70% of maximum heart rate
= aerobic capacity

Level 2.
70-80% = lactic threshold

Level 3.
80-90% = anaerobic threshold

Level 4.
90-100% = speed and neuromuscular coordination

As you may gather from reading the attached general training programme, climbing intensity is often hard to gauge using heart rate, and a more effective method during specific climbing sessions is to use technical climbing grades appropriate to the individual which mirror the 4 above mentioned intensities:

Level 4. Your current hardest on sight climbing grade.

Level 3. One climbing grade below that.



The real thing!

Level 2. A grade below level 3.

Level 1. Easy climbing and traversing for long (10 min and over) periods.

Supporting all this of course are the psychological training aspects, without which all physical training performance may come to nothing, along with advice on nutrition (you are what you eat). Then a few innovative training methods, such as hypoxic training (training with reduced oxygen), pliometrics (rebound strength), yoga (balance and focus like a gymnast) and core stability (you can't shoot a cannon from a canoe).

Climbers who are very talented and therefore need very little other than to climb are few and far between. To reach your full potential in any sport requires the vision and focus that Pete Livesey had, that is what set him apart. However, now the knowledge and training methods are readily available, why not be proactive and release your full climbing potential. You may surprise yourself.

Chip Rafferty was a coach on AMA Everest West Ridge 2006 teams and can be located at:

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Six Week Climbing Training Programme

Notes:

1. All reps on equal time of recovery.
2. Warm up by continuous wall traversing.
3. Swim as much as possible after climbing session.
4. Levels:
 1. Easy climbing but stay on wall.
 2. One below level 3 climb.
 3. One below level 4 climb
 4. Your hardest on sight climb.
5. Do finger pyramid exercises on a fingerboard e.g. 50 reps then pyramid 10-20-30-40-50 x 3 sets a day.

WEEK 1			WEEK 2		
Ser (a)	Day (b)	Training (c)	Ser (a)	Day (b)	Training (c)
1	Mon	10 minute warm up 3 x 5 minutes at level 1 3 x 5 minutes at level 2 5 minute warm down	1	Mon	10 minute warm up 3 x 5 minutes at level 1 3 x 5 minutes at level 2 5 minute warm down
2	Tue	Swim or 2 x 10 minutes at level 1 on wall or roller climb	2	Tue	Swim or 2 x 10 minutes at level 1 on wall or roller
3	Wed	10 minute warm up 3 x 5 minutes at level 1 on wall or roller 5 minute warm down	3	Wed	10 minute warm up 3 x 5 minutes at level 1 on wall or roller 5 minute warm down
4	Thu	Swim or 2 x 10 minutes at level 1 on wall or roller	4	Thu	Swim or 2 x 10 minutes at level 1 on wall or roller
5	Fri	10 minute warm up Pyramid level 1234321 at 2-3 minutes Warm down	5	Fri	10 minute warm up Pyramid level 1234321 at 2-3 minutes Warm down
6	Sat	Cragging easy climbs level 1 or 2 or climbing wall	6	Sat	Cragging easy climbs level 1 or 2 or climbing wall
7	Sun	Rest	7	Sun	Rest

WEEK 3			WEEK 4		
Ser (a)	Day (b)	Training (c)	Ser (a)	Day (b)	Training (c)
1	Mon	10 min warm up 3 x 5 minutes at level 2 3 x 3 minutes at level 3 10 minute warm down	1	Mon	10 min warm up 3 x 5 minutes at level 2 3 x 3 minutes at level 3 10 minute warm down
2	Tue	Swim or 3 x 10 minute at level 1 climbs	2	Tue	Swim or 3 x 10 minute at level 1 climbs
3	Wed	Roller warm up or wall session 10 min warm up 3 x 5 minutes at level 2 3 x 3 minutes at level 3 10 minute warm down	3	Wed	Roller warm up or wall session 10 min warm up 3 x 5 minutes at level 2 3 x 3 minutes at level 3 10 minute warm down
4	Thu	Swim or 3 x 10 minute at level 1 climbs	4	Thu	Swim or 3 x 10 minute at level 1 climbs
5	Fri	10 minutes warm up Speed climb 6-8 at level 2 for 2 minutes on fan	5	Fri	10 minutes warm up Speed climb 6-8 at level 2 for 2 minutes on fan
6	Sat	Cragging easy climbs level 1 or 2 or climbing wall	6	Sat	Cragging easy climbs level 1 or 2 or climbing wall
7	Sun	Rest	7	Sun	Rest

WEEK 5			WEEK 6		
Ser (a)	Day (b)	Training (c)	Ser (a)	Day (b)	Training (c)
1	Mon	15 minute warm up 3 x 3 minutes at level 1 3 x 5 minutes at level 3	1	Mon	15 minute warm up 3 x 3 minutes at level 1 3 x 5 minutes at level 3
2	Tue	Swim or 2 x level 2 for 10 minutes	2	Tue	Swim or 2 x level 2 for 10 minutes
3	Wed	15 minute warm up 6 x 2min at level 4 fan	3	Wed	15 minute warm up 6 x 2min at level 4 fan
4	Thur	Easy swim or as per Tue at level 1	4	Thur	Easy swim or as per Tue at level 1
5	Fri	As for Wed on roller climber	5	Fri	As for Wed on roller climber
6	Sat	Cragging easy climbs level 1 or 2 or climbing wall	6	Sat	Cragging easy climbs level 1 or 2 or climbing wall
7	Sun	Rest	7	Sun	Rest

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