

# ARMY MOUNTAINEER



**40**  
PAGE  
SPECIAL  
EDITION

The Journal of the Army  
Mountaineering Association

Summer 2009

Makalu  
**Greenland**  
Abseils  
**Gear Giveaway**  
Afghanistan  
**Adrian Berry**  
The Cascades



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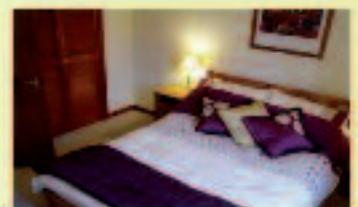
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# ARMY MOUNTAINEER



The Journal of The Army Mountaineering Association

## LIFE ON THE LEDGE

So, these two PT Corps Berghfuhrers meet up at the base of a route and one notices that the other has new ice axes. "What ya pay for those?" he asked. "Nothing, I was climbing the other day and this beautiful woman walked up, threw down her new tools, stripped off her clothes and said I could have anything I wanted" "Oh, Good choice," said the other flexing his biceps. "Her clothes would never have fitted you."

A PT Corps Bergfuhrer is leading a young MLT up a challenging first ascent. Every time the muscle-buster gets to a particularly dangerous section he stops and puts on the same red muscle vest. Hauling up pitch after difficult pitch he finally stops to bivvy for the night and allows the nearly destroyed MLT to rest. "Why do you keep stopping to put on that vest?" the MLT asks, "If I had fallen," says the PTI whilst admiring his guns, "this vest would disguise the blood, and you would not be frightened and loose heart." 'Amazing' thought the MLT, marvelling at this forethought. The next day as they neared the summit, a section more difficult than any before loomed above them. The Corpsman started up, then downclimbed and started rummaging in his pack. "What are you looking for?" asked the MLT. "My brown pants" he squeaked.

You go to a party, how do you know if there is a HBF in the room? He'll tell you!

What is the difference between a HBF and God? God doesn't think he's a HBF!

With thanks to PTIs everywhere!

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*On the Cover: Tania Noakes, Pitch 4 Liberty Bell Crack,  
The Cascades. V.5.10. C3*

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# APPOINTMENTS



It's good to be back. Spending 300 days in the foothills of the Hindu Kush without being able to explore the mountains was about as close to the definition of frustration as it's possible for a climber to get, unless you include trying to light a multi-fuel stove in a high wind. Encircling Kabul city at heights up to 11,000 feet, the hills are dry, barren and imposing, but also laced with land mines, a legacy of decades of conflict in that sorry region of the world. And yet there are plenty of mountaineering opportunities to be seized, even in Afghanistan. Whilst there I was handed a copy of the new guide to the Afghan Hindu Kush entitled 'Peaks of Silver and Jade' (only available at [www.wakhan.org](http://www.wakhan.org)), which contains a tempting menu of routes and hints at a thousand other undiscovered valleys and unclimbed peaks near the border with China. This strikes me as just the sort of area, full of opportunities for discovery and adventure, that the AMA should be interested in pioneering.



# Foreword

*AMA President  
Brigadier JF Watson MBE MA*

But first, a quick look over the shoulder. The year 2007 saw a major climbing effort around our 50th anniversary and last year was therefore somewhat quieter, with no specific expeditions sponsored by the AMA. However there was still action aplenty, with many members managing to achieve their mountaineering ambitions despite the punishing operational tempo in Afghanistan. The excellent 7 SCOTS expedition (generously supported by 51 (Scottish) Brigade) to follow in the footsteps of Nansen by skiing across the Greenland icecap from West to East was a notable achievement, and you can read about this exciting venture in this edition of ARMY MOUNTAINEER. Here again is an example of the kind of challenging expedition, out of the ordinary and off the beaten track, which puts the 'adventure' back into Adventurous Training and should be the staple of the AMA.

Also in this edition are excellent accounts of the highly successful Joint Service expedition to Makalu, as well as other exploits of our members all over the world. You will find some striking photos submitted by our members as well as interesting and informative pieces on equipment and techniques that the Editor has been introducing to give the Journal more of the look and feel of a proper magazine.

With the Alps being a bit difficult in the summer of 2008, we were all hoping for something better from our home-grown winter season, and we have not been disappointed. The ever-popular Winter Meet was finally blessed with excellent snow and ice conditions, enabling members to get out and get far more done than in recent warm, wet and lean years. The meet was once again superbly organised by John Belsham, who I take the opportunity to thank, on behalf of the

Membership, for his many years of dedication in making the Winter Meet the most popular of the annual programme.

Other AMA stars include Geordie Taylor who, following ShishaPangma '07, is now in harness as the Development and Training Officer and on the rampage in pursuit of novices to develop. His busy programme includes technical training, distributed training and logbook experience delivered on AMA meets, leading to alpine experience and the chance to graduate to high altitude mountaineering in the Andes. This is a tremendous opportunity to gain experience and develop your skills; I urge you to take a look at the advert/poster on the centre pages and to give this as much coverage as possible at your units.

Looking forward, I have invited your committee to apply some imagination to their selection of AMA goals for the coming years. While expeditions to climb 8000m peaks in the higher ranges will always represent the pinnacle of a mountaineer's ambitions, it is also important to ring the changes and leaven the mixture by always seeking and incorporating that genuine element of exploration and adventure. Given our dependency on central grants for many of our larger expeditions, it is also important to demonstrate that we are neither stuck on 'repeat' nor coasting on increasingly questionable – and increasingly expensive – commercial trends. We should aim to take the less travelled path; and to that end, plans are now well under way for a Joint Services expedition to Antarctica in 2012, with the aim of carrying out exploratory mountaineering in a remote and challenging environment. So if it's true adventure you seek, here's your chance.

Finally, on a personal note, I hope to be able to take part in more AMA meets this year, including JSAM, which will be based in Tasch between the 17th of July and the 2nd of August. I look forward to seeing you there.

## Editorial

This has been the most difficult edition of ARMY MOUNTAINEER to put together in my limited tenure as editor. It has taken a lot of work to bring you the mix of information and inspiration that I hope is contained within the following 40 pages. I have to say however that it has also been one of the most satisfying.

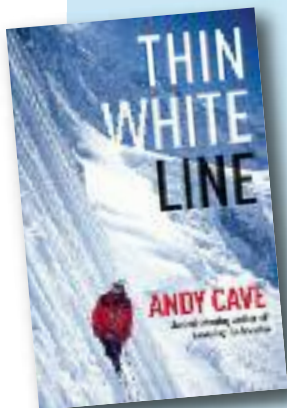
As a mountaineer I am into having fun, that is ultimately why we go and put ourselves in ridiculous situations (you do enjoy wet, cold and scary belays don't you?!). As a writer and editor I am also into bringing those situations alive through the written word. In this edition you are going to find some great examples of both disciplines (fun and writing). The AMA has been busy over the last six months or so with some truly adventurous and challenging undertakings. Greenland, the Scottish Highlands, Corsica and not least of all the Himalayas have all been visited and climbed by our members and have made such impressions to prompt some great writing by Tania Noakes, Scott Roberts and Mark Gregory, all of who will be receiving a financial writing incentive from the Treasurer for their unsolicited(?) efforts.

If you have anything that you would like to add for future editions then please e-mail it in. Content can be informative, inspiring or just plain entertaining. This is your association; the magazine is here to serve you.

By the time you read this I will be gone. Well, not quite gone, but certainly out of circulation for awhile. I will I hope, be having an adventure of my own, half way up the magnificent South-West Face of the Lotus Flower Tower, perhaps even at the top. I might even, nay, will be scared out of my wits. But, somewhere between the moments of fear, hard work and discomfort I will be having fun, and that is what climbing is ultimately all about. I hope that this edition of ARMY MOUNTAINEER inspires you in some way to get out there and have some of your own.

**Regards,  
Sven  
[amajournaleditor@armymail.mod.uk](mailto:amajournaleditor@armymail.mod.uk)**

# The Thin White Line



Thin White Line picks up where Andy left off with his last book, Learning to Breathe. Reeling both mentally and physically from his ascent of the north face of Changabang and the tragic death of his climbing partner, Andy's honest account of his struggle to recover from the

impact of these events and rediscover his love for the mountains makes compelling reading.

During this book we travel from the Peak District to the Himalayas, from Norway to Patagonia and from the European Alps to Alaska, in the company of many of today's leading mountaineers and climbers. Andy reveals the personal challenges he had to overcome to return to extreme climbing, following the death of his climbing partner Brendan. Through various expeditions into the mountains, Andy starts to challenge himself again and slowly starts to develop a new appreciation for the environment he has loved for so long. Slowly he is pulled back to the challenging routes that have always been his favoured lines and with the likes of Mick Fowler and Leo Houlding, to name but two, Andy takes the reader with him to some of the worlds most beautiful and remote mountain locations.

Andy has very kindly donated a copy of his latest book to the readers of ARMY MOUNTAINEER. All you have to do to win a copy is e-mail the editor at [amajournaleditor@armymail.mod.uk](mailto:amajournaleditor@armymail.mod.uk) with the answer to the following:

How old was Andy when he climbed the North Face of the Eiger?

For those not lucky enough to win a copy, you can buy Thin White Line direct from Random House for £18.99

You can find out more about Andy at his website <http://www.andycave.net>.

# Beat the Credit Crunch

Run by climbers for climbers, Zero-G Climbing is 5 years old this year and continues its commitment to be THE great value, no nonsense British climbing brand. They produce an innovative range of karabiners, belay devices, wires, ropes, helmets, harnesses, T shirts and much more. Through the efforts of the equipment manager, the AMA has secured a discount of 10-20% on all their gear as well as free delivery on orders within the UK. Additionally they have offered a very generous discount of 25% for all group and expedition orders. Check out their gear on [www.zerog-climbing.co.uk](http://www.zerog-climbing.co.uk) or call Cathy on 01768362782, remembering to quote your AMA number.



Fifty years ago this year, Frank Davies opened The Climber's Shop – the first outdoor shop in Ambleside! Nearly half a century later, Climbers Shop still thrives in the centre of Ambleside and is a focal point for climbers, walkers and holidaymakers wanting to kit themselves out for the outdoor lifestyle.

Embracing the new era of shopping the store also has an on-line shop at [www.climbers-shop.com](http://www.climbers-shop.com), along with a blog, gear guides and special sale items.

Their range is constantly changing to meet the needs of the modern outdoor enthusi-

ast and include ME, Haglofs, Montane, Lowe Alpine, MSR, Black Diamond, Petzl, Scarpa, Meindl amongst many others. If they don't stock what you want, they can also order it in asap. Their expert staff have the knowledge to help you with any enquiry in every type of mountain activity and for all seasons, from mountaineering to rock climbing, fell running to backpacking and every variant in between.

The AMA would like to wish Climbers Shop well in their fiftieth year.

Climbers Shop is proud to support the AMA, and they have very kindly provided a £50 voucher for one lucky AMA member to spend on kit in their shop.

Simply email the AMA Journal Editor at [sven@summitmountaineering.com](mailto:sven@summitmountaineering.com) with the answer to this simple question:

*'What year did the Climbers Shop open?'*

## Discount Alpine Chalet

Ruth and Andy Parry are offering the use of their luxury chalet in Les Houches at a significant discount for AMA members. Beautifully positioned with spectacular views of the Mont Blanc Massif; the chalet can sleep up to 10 in multiple bedrooms and is a few minutes from the ski slopes and town centre. Large gardens, drying room, modern and comfortable living room and kitchen are just some of the features of the sensitively restored chalet. Pets are also allowed.

Details of the chalet along with prices and availability can be found at [www.selfcateringhills.com/property-142](http://www.selfcateringhills.com/property-142) but to book with the AMA discount you need to call Ruth or Andy on 07709 424127.



# New Llanberis Guide

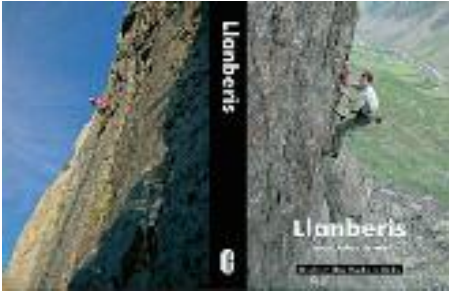
The Climbers Club's new Llanberis guide is about to hit the shops. The book is printed in full colour and is lavishly illustrated with 65 photo diagrams, and a fine selection of action photos, including one of our very own Tom Odling.

The text has been comprehensively updated, with details of over 50 new routes climbed since the last guide and revised

assessments of the popular classics where necessary. The resulting changes, as well as the origins of various crag names, are fully explained. A two page glossary of climbing terms in Welsh has been given, both to aid climbers whose first language is Welsh and also to promote an appreciation of the Welsh language among English speakers.

The guide also contains descriptions of the most popular bouldering areas in the Pass written by local bouldering guru Simon Panton, and illustrated by 14 of his own photo topos and a number of action photos.

SUMMIT MOUNTAINEERING have kindly donated an advance copy of the guide for one lucky winner. For a chance to win please e-mail your name, and that of your favourite crag to [info@summitmountaineering.com](mailto:info@summitmountaineering.com)



Cotswold Camping continues to be a great support to the AMA; they offer up to 20 percent off purchases in the shop and online, more for group purchases. They have asked however that from now on, members be prepared to show their membership cards at the shops or quote their AMA number when ordering online. The Committee asks that you respect their continued support and do so accordingly.

When ordering you will also be required to quote the discount code A3000. Remember – the more you spend, the more you save!

## DIARY

**Mark and record the following dates and get involved. Further details through the Meets Co-ordinator (Daz Doyle) and on the website closer to the time.**

### **(23–25th May 09) Spring Meet**

*Ambleside, Lake District*

With the hut full to capacity and with great weather, the 2008 Spring Meet was a huge success. 2009 will see an increase in capacity with camping and additional accommodation being researched. Please book early!

**Contact: Marc Reynolds 01248 718 364**

### **(28–29th May 09) Boulders, Cardiff**

*Army Sport Climbing Champs*

The Army Sport Climbing Championship will be held at Boulders Climbing Centre in Cardiff. The Championship will consist of individual and team competitions. The competition is open to all Regular Army, TA and UOTC. The competition will be supported by Cotswold Outdoor, Entreprise, High Places and the Orange House.

**Contact: Henry Crosby Tel: 07904105467**

**10th June 09**

### **Inter Services Climbing Championships**

*Ratho Edinburgh*

One of the biggest competitions in the calendar will this year take place at the huge Ratho wall. The team will be selected from the Army Championships.

**Contact: Team Manager Pete Skinsley Tel: 07742 194128**

**(26–28 Jun 09)**

### **AMA Annual weekend**

*Anglesey, North Wales*

JSMTCL will again host the AMA Annual Weekend. This year there will be a barbeque on the Saturday night and workshops on the Sunday for those who want them. The barbeque will be preceded by the Annual General Meeting.

**Contact: Daz Doyle [amameetscoord@armymail.mod.uk](mailto:amameetscoord@armymail.mod.uk)**

**18–31 July 09**

### **JSAM**

*Chamonix, France*

Tri-Service mountaineering week. An opportunity to gain valuable Alpine experience as well as to qualify in Alpine Mountain Proficiency or Alpine Mountain Leader (subject to prerequisites).

**Contact: Daz Doyle [amameetscoord@armymail.mod.uk](mailto:amameetscoord@armymail.mod.uk)**

**29–31st Aug 09**

### **Summer Bank Holiday**

*Hathersage, Peak District*

Grit, a high chance of sunshine and oh, Grit. Do you need to know anything else?!

**Contact: Geordie Taylor Tel: 94711 4260**

**25–27th Sept 09**

### **South West and President's Dinner**

Details TBC. Please keep an eye on the website.

**6–16th Sept 09**

### **ATC Rock Climbing Symposium**

*Bavaria*

The Adventure Training Centre Bavaria will be hosting a Level 4 Rock Symposium (No cost to students) aimed at RLT, RCL and those wishing to build up logbook experience and climb the JSAT ladder. All applications however will be considered.

**Contact: Paul Chiddle at [climbersrus@hotmail.com](mailto:climbersrus@hotmail.com)**

**25th Sept 09**

### **Executive Committee Meeting**

*TBC*

The committee will meet to steer the future management of the association. If you have any issues you would like to be discussed. Please discuss the details with the relevant committee member.

**Contact details at the front of the magazine.**

**19–23 Nov 09**

### **Autumn meet**

*Costa Blanc, Spain*

Rich Mayfield will host fellow AMA members at his 'Orange House' on the Costa Blanca this year. A great venue at any time of year, it will be especially popular in November; great rock, easy access to the coast, a pool and Rich on hand to advise on the best of the local rock (and there is loads of it!!) you just have to make this one!

**Contact: Rich Mayfield [rich@theorangehouse.net](mailto:rich@theorangehouse.net)**

**Nov TBC**

### **European Military Climbing Championships**

*Zurich*

The team will be selected from the Inter Services results. If you're interested then get your name down and read all about last year's event in this edition.

**Contact: Team Manager Pete Skinsley Tel: 07742 194128**

Details at  
**[www.armymountaineer.org.uk](http://www.armymountaineer.org.uk)**





# Army Bouldering Championships 2009

The Army Bouldering Championships took place at JSMTCL on 7th Feb. 67 competitors managed to struggle through blizzards and icy conditions across England to reach what turned out to be idyllic sunny conditions on Anglesey! With a new sponsor, DMM, on board and lots of prizes the conditions were set for an challenging and exciting day.

The format for this year's competition had changed to bring it more in line with civilian competitions. 24 problems, ranging from VO up to V8, were attempted over 4 hours followed by a head to head final for the top few in both the male and female categories. Jon and his team from the wall had managed to conjure up some 'interesting' problems including the obligatory long reach or two, plenty of upside down climbing and even a monkey bar swing! All designed to separate the men from the boys it certainly

achieved the aim. As ever there was something for everyone and even the novices and first timers managed to throw themselves at and succeed on things that looked impossible.

The competition at the top was fierce and 5 men went through to the final, all having scored 200 points or more. The climb-off consisted of 3 problems to be attempted in any order, on sight and all in less than 5 minutes. OCdt Ollie Lewis from Sheffield UOTC triumphed, but only by the narrowest of margins from Capt Tom Odling and Cpl Tom Moulder. The women's event was even closer. Capt Kitty Court and OCdt Katie Harrop had tied in the eliminators and tied again in the final! A super-final was needed and Jon conjured up a special problem in a couple of minutes which Kitty got closest to completing. In the other categories Cpl Gary Reed won the Vets (over 35s) and

OCdt Dowling from Northumbria UOTC won the male U21. The team event was won by Sheffield UTOC. The best of the guests were Surg Lt Steve Glennie from the Royal Navy and Cadet Hannah Beresford from the Defence Sixth Form College.

Thanks must go to Commandant of JSMTCL for allowing the competition to take place and to DMM for their sponsorship. The greatest thanks go to SSgt Daz Williams for organising the event. Without Daz's hard work in securing the sponsorship, coordinating the entries and all the behind the scenes admin there would be no competition. 2009/2010 will hopefully see the introduction of an Army Bouldering League with a number of events throughout the winter culminating in the Army Championships back at JSMTCL early in 2010. Full details will be published on the AMA and Army Sport Climbing websites.

## AMA TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT PROJECT 2009

- What?** – Ex Northern Altitude
- When?** – 10–29 Aug 09
- Where?** – Cordillera Blanca Peru
- Who?** – A team of 8 AMA Members
- Contact?** – WO2 Geordie Taylor  
94781 2780

*The closing date for applications to WO2 Geordie Taylor is 1 Jun 09.*

Applicants should ideally have an Alpine Mountaineering Proficiency award and some alpine experience or be able to attend JSAM to gain AMP 18–25 Jul 09. There will be a personal contribution of approx £500.

The aim of Exercise Northern Altitude is to further develop AMA mountaineers by carrying out alpine mountaineering at higher altitudes in the Cordillera Blanca Mountains of Peru. The experience gained will prepare the participants to compete for places on future AMA and JS expeditions to the Greater Ranges.

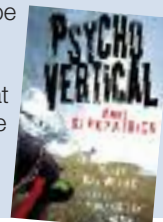
## Congratulations

Congratulations go to the winners of the Winter 08 Gear Giveaway; the names you will be pleased to know, were drawn out of a very smelly and battered climbing helmet!



Steve Turner and Roy Swales from Hamble have both won the MULTIMAT competition, winning an IceMat 1.8, a self inflating IceMat 100 and a fleece cover worth £225. They both got the correct answer of 15 Tog and will be sleeping very comfortably. [www.multimat.uk.com](http://www.multimat.uk.com)

Howie Barnes, now living in New Zealand and Lisa Golova knew that Andy Kirkpatrick could not spell Aconcagua and get to curl up with the latest winner of the Boardman-Tasker award for mountain literature. [www.psychovertical.com](http://www.psychovertical.com)



## New AMA logo



Although the prize money has been awarded, we are still receiving submissions for the new AMA logo. If you'd like to have a go and perhaps see your design on future publications and AMA merchandise then please submit them to the journal editor. The new design will be selected at the AGM in June.



# Emergency Descent for the hill walker

By Mike Laing, MIA

Careful planning, realistic objectives, accurate navigation and ongoing monitoring of the prevalent conditions should allow the hill walker to stay out of trouble; sometimes however, life isn't quite so simple and despite your best efforts you may be faced with the need to descend hazardous terrain safely. It is for this reason that many mountaineers now include a 30m walking rope on their standard packing list. This article looks at the options available for the safe descent of steep ground using this type of lightweight rope.

Let us consider a scenario where you find yourself on an exposed ridge traverse that is proving trickier than you expected due to



Photo 1 – Angel Wings.



Photo 2 – The Classic Abseil.



Photo 3 – The South African Abseil – The rope is fed around the waist, through the legs from the front and then out to the brake or braking hands.

high buffeting winds. Faced with fading light you decide that you need to descend down onto the leeward side before you get blown off the ridge.

The most critical factor is the selection of a reliable anchor from which to attach your rope. The anchor should be well defined in that it will not allow the rope to slip off once your weight comes on. The anchor will also need to be strong enough to support your weight by a significant safety margin. This means either a very large boulder that is embedded in the ground or a substantial rock spike that is still fully attached to the parent rock. I.e. On close inspection there should not be any visible cracks or faults nor should it sound hollow if you give it a tap. Any sharp rock edges could cause rope damage or severing on loading and should be negated. The best way to do this is by padding such edges either with spare clothing or by ripping up turfs and using these.

Your walking rope will be 30m in length which means you have a maximum reach of 15m descent (plus a small amount of rope stretch) if you are to retrieve the rope for further use. Ensure the rope is carefully laid around the anchor to achieve maximum 'rope capture' and that it is balanced for length to maximise your descent. If there is a choice of suitable anchors then try to find one with smooth sides to ease retrieval. Do not do this however if it is at the expense of anchor strength and safety.

There are now three options for descending the rope; Angels Wings, Classic Abseil and South African Abseil. Angels Wings (photo 1) is the simplest option but suitable only for gently angled slopes. Both upper and lower hands should grip the rope with the rope wrapped around the lower arm for added friction and hence control. The Classic Abseil (photo 2) is suitable for all slope angles including the vertical. A more popular option is the South African Abseil; this is less painful than the Classic and can be controlled with one or both hands (photo 3). Like the Classic Abseil, the South African is suitable for steep and vertical descents. Gloves and a steady descent

rate will maximise your control whichever system you opt to use.

If you have opted for a single strand (non-retrievable) roped descent then the South African will not be an option as both strands are required. Both Angels Wings and the Classic Abseil are suitable for single strand rope descents.

Single strand descents should be avoided if possible as they necessitate the rope being abandoned. Such descents may though be the only safe option in certain circumstances such as when faced with a sheer 25m rock face between you and the safe exit path below. Clearly a sheer rock face will have no intermediate anchors and a retrievable set-up will leave you stranded on the rope. In such a scenario a single strand descent is the only safe option. For single strand descents, the rope should be attached to the anchor by a loop in one end of the rope created using a figure-8 or overhand knot, tightened and secured with a stopper knot to prevent slippage (photo 4).



Photo 4 – The Overhand and Stopper Knot.

It is worth mentioning that rucksacks can make life difficult for this type of descent and it is often worthwhile to wrap the rope around and then put the rucksack back on. Once down, you can drop the rucksack and then remove the rope.

As a final word, never be tempted to hand over hand in descent as intrinsically safer options exist. Practise of these descent methods in a safe environment will stand you in good stead should the need for an emergency descent ever arise.

**Footnote:** Whilst carrying a walking rope is undoubtedly sensible and good practise, it should be emphasised that pre-planned use of the rope is outside the scope of the ML scheme and that the rope is carried for emergency use only.

Mike Laing, a former regular infantry officer, is an MIA and freelance outdoor instructor based in Snowdonia, North Wales. His company, Snowdonia Climbing, offers a range of mountaineering courses which are available to AMA members at a 10% discount. The website can be found at [www.snowdoniaclimbing.co.uk](http://www.snowdoniaclimbing.co.uk)

# COMMON CLIMBING INJURIES: £150 ARTICLE

## THE ANKLE

£150  
ARTICLE



By Andy Lewis(MHPC)  
and Rob McAfee(MHPC)

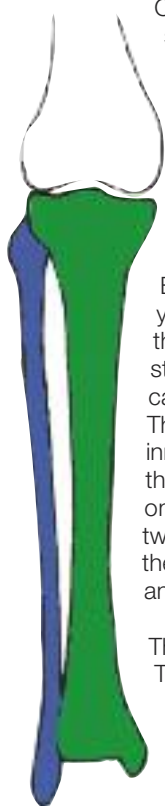


The ankle is a very commonly injured site in climbing, particularly bouldering. As the damage is often relatively minor, the injury can be one of the most frustrating and is rarely given enough time to heal.

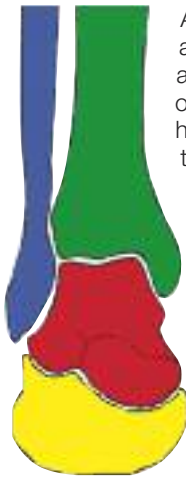
### ANATOMY

The ankle is made up of four bones which come together to allow all the movements.

Of these four the largest is the shin bone or Tibia (green in all pictures) which carries the weight of the body and forms the bottom surface of the knee (see left – a front view of right leg). The second largest bone is the Fibula (blue) which sits on the outer side of the Tibia. Both Tibia and Fibula end at your ankle and form the bony parts that stick out of the sides called your Malleolus. The Tibia forms the inner one (medial) and the Fibula the outer one (lateral). These two connect to form the upper part of the ankle joint.

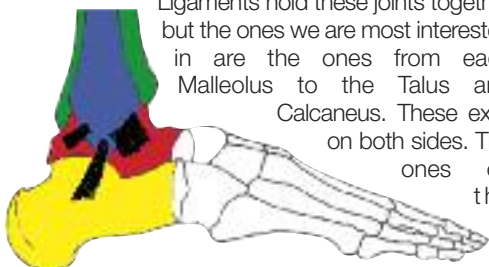


The next bone is the Talus (red) which sits between the Tibia and Fibula (see right), here the only movements possible are from up on



tip toes down to a calf stretch in a straight line. The Talus sits on the Calcaneus (yellow) which is the heel bone. The Calcaneus can move sideways under the Talus, together allowing a circular movement at the ankle. If you turn your feet and ankles so that the soles of you feet face each other that is called inversion, if you turn so they face away that is eversion.

Ligaments hold these joints together but the ones we are most interested in are the ones from each Malleolus to the Talus and Calcaneus. These exist on both sides. The ones on the



medial side are so strong that ankle twists into eversion are more likely to break off bone than snap the ligaments. The other side is very different. Here three ligaments (black) stop your ankle from going into inversion (see left) and these are the ones most commonly injured.

Also related is your foot arch. A low arch or flat foot means that when you are standing still almost all of the sole of your foot is touching the floor. A high arch means the opposite, only the balls of your feet and your heels are touching and a thin bit on the outer side of your foot (called your Lateral Border). The higher your arch the more weight you put on your Lateral Border and biomechanically the more likely you are to twist into inversion.

The main reason climbers are so vulnerable is that when you crank on tight climbing shoes your toes are bunched up pushing you into an unstable high arch. Try it and see for yourself, you'll probably feel as if most of the weight is on the Lateral Border (outside) of the foot. When you fall in stickys your foot is fixed in a high arch and so you are much more vulnerable to spraining your ankle by inversion. Add to this the force of falling from a boulder problem and it's no wonder inversion injuries happen so often to climbers. The other common cause is a fall when inside edging, this twists the ankle into a vulnerable position to start with so inversion injury is even more likely. In the photo you can see how the foot with the sticky is already very inverted compared to the other foot.

### REHAB

The good news is that inversion type ankle injuries respond very well to the right kind

of treatment and rest! As with all soft tissue injuries, the acronym RICE should be applied. REST, ICE, COMPRESSION and ELEVATION will all help to reduce the swelling and encourage a good start to healing. This should last about 48 to 72 hours and advice on how best to use ice can be found in previous articles.

### Deep Frictional Massage

This is a good way to encourage healing in damaged tendons, ligaments and muscles as well as reducing pain. Try to put the ligaments on a gentle stretch; this can be done simply by bending the ankle over the edge of a bed, sofa, the other foot etc. The first picture shows the ligament positions in black. As described in previous articles





apply pressure to the ligament in one direction only so as not to obstruct blood flow. Use a rhythmical pressure through the fingers or thumb across the fibres, not in line with them. This means roughly in the direction of heel to toe, as shown by the 2nd and 3rd photos. The area will soon feel numb, continue for a few more minutes. Do this twice a day.

### Stretching & Strengthening

An ankle inversion injury may also suggest your muscles that resist inversion are weak. Also common is that those muscles tighten as a protective measure against re-injury,



unfortunately this alters your biomechanics. The best way to address these problems is with a theraband / resistance band which can be bought cheaply for a few pounds in Argos or the bigger supermarkets. Try and buy the heaviest resistance you can. Loop the band over the outer side of the foot (Lateral Border) and add tension by pulling both ends of the band across your body, away from the foot. First allow the ankle to stretch slightly in this position (top photo) for 10 seconds. Then move your foot into eversion (twist sole outwards) against the resistance of the band (bottom photo) and hold for 5 seconds to increase strength. Slowly allow your foot to be pulled back into a stretch as you relax the muscles. Do about 10 reps of stretch then strengthen, this will only take 2 ½ minutes. To make it harder pull the band further across the body, to make it easier do the opposite. Doing 2 sets a day for two weeks will dramatically increase your strength and control. Always make sure you are working hard by adjusting the tension in the band as needed.

### Proprioception

Ligaments and tendons contain structures which send information on the position of the ankle (and all joints) to the brain. The brain will then signal relevant muscles to contract or relax to correct that position. This happens constantly when you are on your feet. When a ligament is damaged this sense, called Proprioception (PC), is reduced. The brain no longer receives as much information and what tends to happen is that a stronger signal is needed to cause the same response. A stronger signal is caused by a more severe stretch. An over-reaction then takes place and the muscles cause the ankle to be forced too far past the desired position into the opposite direction. The cycle then continues from the other side. Not only does decreased PC mean the correct response is slower, it over-compensates making your ankle quite unstable and likely to re-injure. This re-injury then further reduces PC and you enter a long term vicious cycle that can lead to instability and over stretched ligaments that require surgery. Specific training is vital to break this cycle and it can be progressed as follows:

- 1 Once the pain has settled start the PC training by standing on just your bad leg and trying to balance with no support (1 minute sets).
- 2 Stand on one leg and get someone to nudge you while you try to keep your balance – don't get too violent, a gentle nudge! (1 minute sets).
- 3 With a friend, both stand on one leg and throw something like a ball / helmet / sticky to each other without losing balance (2 minutes).



4 Start making it harder by throwing to their knees, wide at arms length, above their head etc whilst both trying to keep your balance (2 minutes).

5 Finally repeat stage 4 but standing on a pillow or, if you can get one, a wobble cushion. These are uneven so make it even harder (2 minutes).

Doing this twice a day for the suggested times, making it harder over two weeks will massively improve your PC and help reduce your chance of another ankle injury.

### Return to climbing

We advise you not to climb until the pain has mostly gone. We would also advise not to boulder until you have done at least a week of PC training after this time. Initially avoid small edging, particularly inside edging as this places huge stress on the healing ligaments. Use this time to develop good smearing technique. Also this is a good time to lead overhangs; if you fall you should fall into space and not slam into a wall. Take whatever steps necessary to safely make the third clip so that if you do fall after this you should not hit the ground and damage your ankle. The best results will always come from an individual tailored treatment plan from a physio, particularly one who climbs.

### SELF TREATMENT SUMMARY

RICE (see above) for 48 – 72 hours with no climbing.

Start deep friction massage after 72 hours, twice a day until the pain is only minor.

One week of just stretching and strengthening with the band, after this week start easy top roping or leading.

Do another week of stretching and strengthening but begin PC training, after this week start easy bouldering.

Continue with both PC and strengthening, as your confidence improves gradually climb harder while reducing PC and strengthening as necessary.

This is only a very generalised timeline suggested for a typical inversion injury. If you are in any doubt see a physio.

### PHYSIO

If the pain doesn't pass after a couple of weeks, or if the ankle is stiff compared to the good side it is well worth seeing a physio. They will assess your ankle and treat it accordingly. This will probably include some kind of manual hands-on ankle mobilisation with some specific stretches and strengthening exercises amongst other things. They will probably look at your walking pattern too which may highlight a need for other exercises or insoles to make your ankle and foot more stable.

# Calling from the Cascades....

£100  
ARTICLE

“It looks like it gets a little thin here Joe” I called down, as I tried to figure out how to aid through the next section where the crack shallowed and petered out. Although the first three pitches of Liberty Bell Crack are normally aided, we’d not really come prepared for it. We had hoped to ‘make do’ with minimal gear and travel faster on the easier free section above. The pitches go at C3 (C2 Yosemite Aid!), but the sections are short enough to concentrate the mind without turning it into retrospective enjoyment.

I could see a perfect hook placement that would get me through to the next section, but had no hooks. I tried an open karabiner, no joy, I even tried the hook on the end of my nut key, but something told me to try harder to find a better way. Thank God for brass offsets.

“Ok I’ve got a good piece now” Good nut in place, into free climbing, a few moves then onto the bolt ladder... 4 quick bolts swinging

wild and fast from one to the next, top step to clip, then on... easy aid... “2 meters Joe”, now a quick high step onto a good ledge... “I’m at the belay”.

Third pitch down and most of the aid done on Liberty Bell Crack, one of the 50 climbs listed in Steve Roper and Alan Stecks’ Classic Climbs of North America.

We were on Liberty Bell crack at the end of a long month of work; finally getting to climb something for ourselves, to our own tempo and rhythm. It seemed somehow fitting that our trip should finish in the same area that it had started. High on the crest of the beautiful North Cascades National Park in Washington State.

Whist in the Yosemite Valley the previous year several climbing friends had inspired me with tales of their adventures further north in the Cascades, and it wasn’t long before I designed an expedition to take four young climbers and two instructors on a month

long climbing trip to sample the best that Washington had to offer.

For those of you who have never ventured into the Pacific North West there is a wealth of climbing opportunities awaiting you. There are routes to satisfy every taste, and I suspect that a winter adventure would be every bit as good if not better than our summer one. We used the Nelson and Potterfield Selected Climbs in the Cascades Volume 1 and 2 to help guide us through the area. Although their route timings are a little suspect there is a wealth of great information and they were generally bang on about the quality of the various routes we climbed.

There are routes on isolated glaciated volcanoes with views across the desert to the east and the ocean to the west. From easy snow plods through to challenging and committing mixed routes and there is Granite climbing at least the equal of the High Sierra further south in California. In addition to this there is the entire North Cascades mountain range. It





is reminiscent of Switzerland, only without the huts and with some fairly thought-provoking approaches. Think of an alpine playground of precipitous summits linked by serrated ridges stacked on top of rainforest and you would not be far wrong.

Our guidebook describes the approach to one particular peak as follows: 'The Mountain is guarded by long rugged approaches that inflict real hardship on the climber.' The approach involves 'notorious and unsavoury bushwacking sections'.

This honest description did not inspire us to step up to the mark and we generally opted for less arduous approaches. With only a month in the State we concentrated on ticking off the classics that Washington had to offer.

That isn't to say we didn't experience those tough approaches. In fact we chose two mountains that involved approaches through the dense jungle-like forests that cloak the lower flanks of the Cascades. Thanks to their

popularity well-established climber's trails lead safely through to the easier alpine ground above. A quick glimpse either side of the trail was enough to convince us of the supreme hardness and determination of the climbers who pioneered these routes.

Mount Baker was the first snow climb we chose. As the most northerly of Washington's Volcanoes it can be seen very clearly as you drive from Seattle towards Bellingham and the gateway to the Cascades. It is also the third highest summit in the State. Our route along the gentle Eastings Glacier involved a bivvi perched high on rocks at the tip of a moraine. It proved excellent acclimatisation and a chance to shake out our lightweight camping skills.

The mountain itself is very beautiful and the route although easy has a lot to offer an inexperienced team. You start from the trailhead and weave up through old-growth rainforest for a couple of hours until you leave the tree-line and follow the sharp crest of a moraine to

excellent bivvi sites about 1500m below the summit. The approach is short and the potential for training and acclimatisation is good. The route itself ascends the easy south side to reach the crater rim about 300m below the summit. Baker is considered one of the more active volcanoes and it was suggested that like its more southerly counterpart Mount St Helens, it may come dramatically back to life in the not too distant future. You can peek over the crater rim and smell the acrid sulphur prior to the final push up slightly steeper slopes to the summit plateau.

The one thing that should be in the back of your mind on these Volcanoes is their featureless and sometimes heavily crevassed nature. In good visibility the route is simple and obvious, but in the dark and in poor weather there are no distinct features from which to navigate. All climbers are advised to wand their routes out if poor weather is anticipated.

The West Ridge of Forbidden is another of the 50 Classic Climbs of North America and





*Descending Mount Rainier on the Emmons Glacier.*

achieves the kind of popularity rarely encountered in Washington's mountains, except perhaps further south in the Enchantment range.

We were unable to get permits to bivvi at the normal high camp in Boston. Instead we decided it would be good training for our students to experience a fast one-day alpine style push. Forbidden Peak was the perfect route for it. Starting at 4am from the trailhead after camping in one of the Forest Service sites on the Cascade River road we set off into the night.

The forecast was good, but the previous day the sky had unleashed such heavy rain that it was hard to believe blue skies could ever return. The forest was amazing in its untouched and natural state. Moss and vines draped around the thick dense undergrowth, slippery tree roots and near vertical mudslides where the path should have been. Within minutes of starting in the dark, the whole team was soaked to the skin and we spent some time later debating which position in our small procession was the worst effected. First to push through the wet foliage, or those behind who were drenched as all the branches and vegetation snapped back, quivering into place. One thing is for certain, I got off lightly bringing up the rear of our team!

Once through the Pacific Jungle we left the tree-line and headed out across alpine moraine into a perfect pink alpine sunrise.



*Group beneath Liberty Bell Group, Washington Pass.*

The clouds were beginning to break up and there was a sense that the weather was thinking about improving. We paused at the glaciers edge to put our crampons on and to try to force warm blood back into our hands and feet. The sun teasing us as it crept inch by inch across the snow towards us.

There was almost a mutiny amongst the ranks. Cold hands, wet feet... a sense that if we didn't warm up soon the climb would end there and then... and then the sun arrived!

Now moving sure and steady up the glacier to the couloir that would access the upper portion of the West Ridge. Notes in the Ranger Station in Marblemount had suggested that the couloir was in fragile condition, in danger of melting out soon and making accessing the ridge a more time consuming affair. We were surprised to find the snow almost eight meters deep and in solid, fun condition. Within an hour of setting off across the Glacier we were established at the notch on the ridge where we could cache our glacier gear.

The ridge itself is a very exposed but straightforward 5.2 rock route. Most is class 4 and it is ideally suited to moving together. Some parties elect to traverse the mountain, coming down the slightly easier East Ridge. Since our crampons and axes were at the top of the couloir we were committed to descending the same way. In

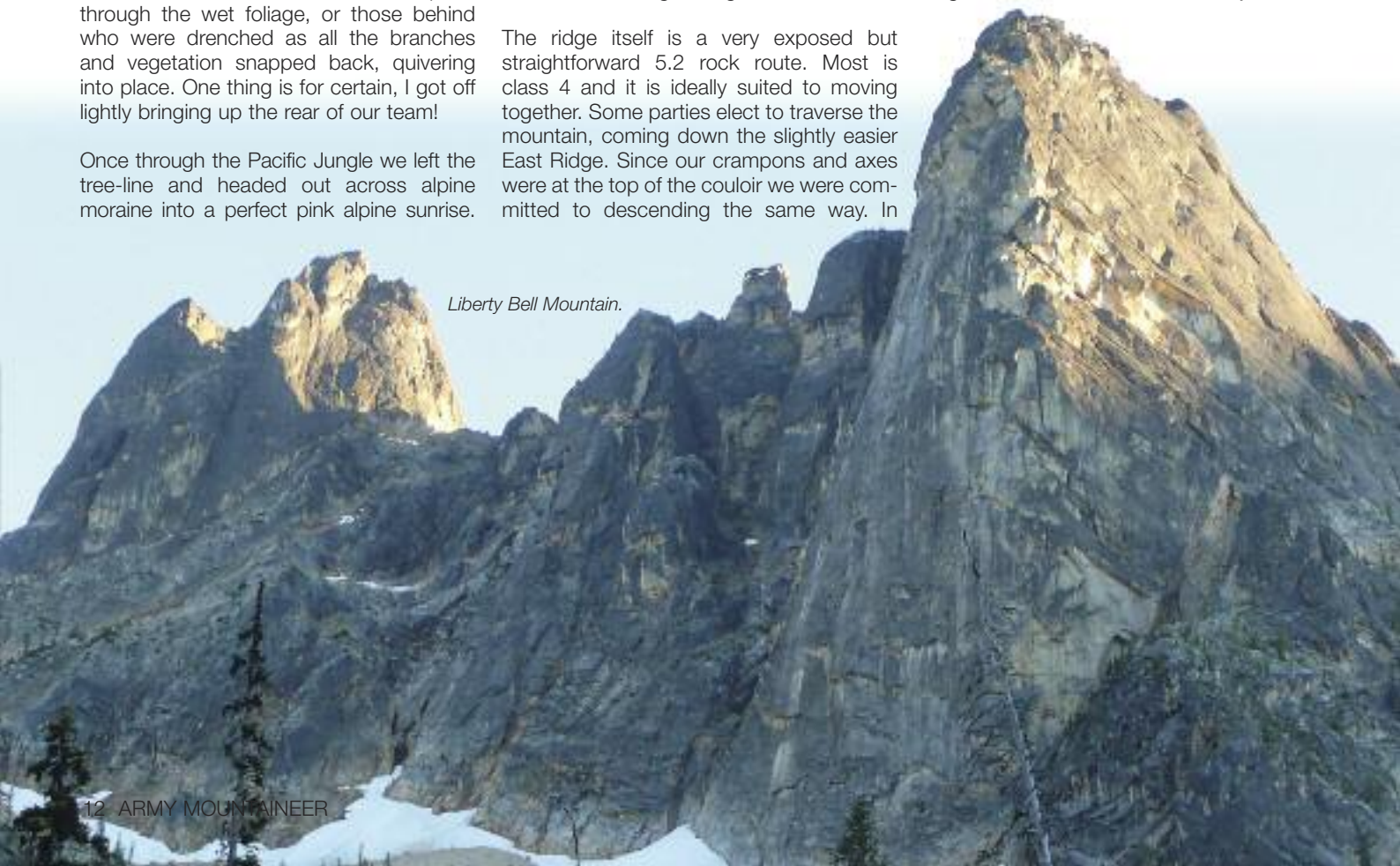


*High on West Ridge of Forbidden Peak.*

hindsight, a traverse of this fine little alpine peak is the way to go.

The descent of the West Ridge is a mixture of down climbing and short rappels. A fast team can do the route comfortably car to car in a day, but you should be prepared to manoeuvre around slower groups as the route is one of the most popular in the range. The fine town of Concrete, a short way out from the national park hosted our team's celebrations that night. At \$5 a pitcher of beer you can't really go wrong... or can you?

One of the things that I found most remarkable about Washington is that from every summit that we climbed you could see almost every other mountain we either had climbed or planned to climb. In the magical playground of the over-loved Enchantment range, on Prussik peak we could scope out the descent from the serrated summit of Dragontail. A few days later whilst savouring our lunch on a spacious sandy ledge just shy of the summit of Dragontail we were able to marvel at the dramatic north ridge of Mount Stuart, our next objective.



*Liberty Bell Mountain.*



I should mention at this stage that several routes on Snow Creek Wall make an excellent way to break up the long approach to Prussik Peak. Outer Space and Orbit, both at 5.9 (The former considerably more sustained than the latter) are worthy of a quick outing. The approach is fast and easy, the descent again fast but a little more engaging. Both routes are super fun absorbing climbing on perfect granite and it doesn't get much better than that. Outer Space in particular stands out in my memory.

However, my favourite climb of our Cascades adventure was to be the North Ridge of Mount Stuart. This is the highest non-volcanic peak in Washington and is essentially a giant plug of Granite. It rises like a serrated saw on its southern flanks whilst being guarded to the north by dark foreboding cliffs. It is a truly beautiful mountain. Our plan had us bivving at the notch half way up the north ridge where a couloir links it from the west to the shrinking Stuart Glacier. We walked in from the North Fork of the Teenaway River and camped beyond the still ice bound Ingalls Lake. The whole team made an early ascent of Ingall's Peak prior to our smaller Stuart Summit-Team setting off that evening for Goat Pass and a traverse of the Stuart Glacier before sunset.

Goat Pass spits you out easily onto the Stuart Glacier, which although steep to traverse at first, eases considerably before you reach the base of the couloir. The ridge itself is mostly 5.4 with some short sections that are a little harder. You are forced to climb on or near the crest of the ridge for the first two thirds of the route, at least until you reach the great Gendarme. The climbing is so much fun and so exposed that you simply don't want it to be over... yet if you move together it is over too soon.

The Gendarme forced the first ascent party to traverse west across a gully and onto easier angled slabs that lead in a couple more hundred feet to the summit. The Gendarme can now be climbed direct at an amazing looking 5.9 hand and fist crack but we not to attempt it, simply as it was out of character with the rest of the route. In did look like amazing climbing though and is perhaps worth a return visit, perhaps in order to climb the whole ridge from Stuart Lake in the north, in a single push with a fast partner. Hmmm... future plans....

This time the summit was ours in good style just after lunch. Leaving us plenty of time to complete the loose and dusty Cascadian couloir descent and the final grind over Longs Pass and back to the car before the afternoon was out.

Ironically Mount Stuart is one of the few first ascents that the infamous American Climber Fred Becky just missed out on. In 1956 he set out with John Rupley and Don Claunch to attempt the North-East face. After traversing the Stuart Glacier the men realised that the traverse around the immense base of the north ridge would be extremely complex so they decided instead to try an ascent of the North Ridge. Becky at this stage was not feeling well so turned back to their camp on Ingalls Creek and thus missing out the first ascent of this now classic and sought after route. Not that Becky is short of first ascents in the area. Having first surfaced in the Northwest climbing community in 1938 he has racked up an impressive list of first ascents all over the continent. Now there is one man I would love to meet!

Visible for distances in excess of a hundred miles no trip to Washington could be complete without an ascent of Mount Rainier. It is your constant companion on the horizon. The second highest peak in the Lower 48 States of the USA after Mount Whitney and the most heavily glaciated outside of Alaska. Routes range from committing and objectively dangerous ones on the Willis Wall, to relatively benign glacier walks. The local Indian name for the mountain is Tacoma, but unlike Denali further north the name given by English explorers in 1792 seems to have stuck.

Six major glaciers flow down the peak directly from the crater rim to well below the timberline. Eight others originate in vast cirques, fed by Washington's heavy snowfall and ice avalanching from steep slopes above. We chose one of the easiest lines on the mountain since we were attempting Rainier with eight relatively inexperienced mountaineers. The Emmons Glacier route starts from the North side of the park at White River Campground and usually involves a high camp at the tip of Steamboat Prow, Camp Scherman. It is an oft guided route, but sees not nearly so much traffic as the more popular Disappointment Cleaver on the southern flank.

From White River you ascend towards the tree-line past washed out sections of the trail. Perhaps as we were, you'll be lucky enough to see a Black Bear and her cub. In July you'll reach the snowline just before the small Inter-glacier which leads you in moderate slopes to a small col allowing access to the Emmons Glacier. It takes about two hours to walk to Inter-glacier and a further two and a half to get to high camp. It's worth getting there early to secure good bivvi spots. Our first night there was relatively quiet and there were few other groups on the mountain. Perhaps in part due to the recent snowfall and residual cloud cover on the mountain and consequent poor visibility.

We set off at one in the morning in order to get to the summit around dawn. The route is very straightforward and takes the best line up a ramp weaving around some very large crevasses in order to reach a rising traverse around a bowl just below the summit plateau. The views are breathtaking and worth every bit of the effort. Our first summit day took us up above an inversion, clouds stretching out in all directions to the far horizon. The isolated tops of Washington's other volcanoes the only other peaks to be seen. Twenty-two hours later Joe and I stood on the summit again with a different group of students and this time there wasn't a cloud in the sky. The ocean seemed only a step away... the desert likewise to the east... pure magic.

Our month in Washington State has left me with such a wealth of positive memories that I can't imagine not returning. In fact even as I write this article I have already gone firm on plans in my head to fly back next April. For Mount Rainier's Liberty Ridge, Mount Skuksans Price Glacier, Mount Slesses' NE Buttress, Mount Furrys' North Rib, the Yokum Ridge on Hood and the North-East Buttress of Mount Goode... Oh my goodness... the list grows longer not shorter!

I can begin to understand what so clearly inspired Fred Becky to become the most prolific of mountaineers and what has sustained his energy and enthusiasm to the present day. If you ever need reminding of your love of adventure then I encourage you to visit the Cascades!



Joe Williams at the top of Pitch 2 Liberty Bell Crack.



Joe, Chris and James on top of the West Ridge of Forbidden Peak 5.2 II.



On way down Emmons Glacier route of Mount Rainier.

# MUNRO BAGGING

£50  
ARTICLE

By Mark Gregory

It had been a long time since I last undertook a long haul venture into the mountains and even longer since I visited the Highlands. That was during 2005 and my first and over-ambitious expedition to Scotland; the home of Sir Hugh Munro and the 284 summits named in his honour. Back then I had certainly set the bar a little too high, intending to walk 10 miles a day for 5 consecutive days with full kit, an emotional experience! This time round, with the benefit of experience I focussed my planning not on distance but on time, aiming to complete 7 quality mountain days whilst bagging a good number of Munros for the effort. Breaking the trip into day walks & rest days, this outing proved far more manageable and enjoyable. Approaching mountaineering in this fashion is by no means taking the easy option as you still gain all the challenge, excitement and exercise that you would with a full blown expedition. In fact you can push a little harder with the reassuring knowledge that there would always be a hot shower and a beer to greet you at the end of the day.

I had stayed at the Glen Nevis Campsite near Fort William in the past and was automatically drawn back. Although the cost can quickly escalate, it is a great location as a base camp, with showers, laundry, bar, restaurant and easy access to many great walks around Fort William, Spean Bridge and Tulloch.



Fine Scottish weather on the summit of Stob a' Choire Mheadhoin

I set off on my first Munro 'bagging' session from Loch Treig, aiming to tick off Stob a' Choire Mheadhoin and Stob Coire Easain. Despite the track that was more defined than my OS map suggested, accurate navigation was still necessary as the ever present Scottish weather made itself felt; consistent showers enveloped the area and I sat on top of my first Munro surrounded by cloud threatening to soak me. The route on to Stob Coire Easain was simple, rocky ground descending a pleasant decline and then an easy rise to the second summit. Cameron McNeish in his book 'The Munros' describes a more circuitous route down the North West Spur and on towards Tulloch Station, but I opted to retrace my steps through the cloud and rain, descending steep ground down to the river and then North east between the woods and to my start point. The hot shower at Glen Nevis was very welcome indeed, as were the laundry machines that slowly removed the moisture from my waterproofs, in preparation for the next day and the hard work that they were going to do.

As day 2 slowly dawned over the valley it was clear that there would be little in the way of sun to warm my ascent of Aonach Beag. Zig-zagging up through the trees that grow above the Fort William Ski Centre was easy underfoot and the overcast climate ensured that the mountain bikers that often swarm over this area,



Stob Coire Sgriodain prior to ascent.





*On the summit of Stob a' Coire Easain.*

stayed at home. As I veered left and right to avoid the downhill run, I tried to fathom why anyone would hurtle down there at break-neck speed risking life and limb. My bewilderment was further exacerbated as I continued uphill to see padding strapped to rocks and trees! I imagine that they probably say something similar about mountaineers!! Emerging from the trees I left the familiar sight of the gondola behind and headed over to the Allt Daim and followed it upstream. The dreary gloom worsened, now bringing persistent showers that would dominate the rest of the day. Progress was slow gaining the saddle between Carn Mor Dearg and Aonach Mor; the wet sodden ground beside the river bringing additional challenge. I tried to identify the grade 2 scramble recorded in Trail Magazine on the way up but to no avail and so I continued on, looking forward to resting on the saddle and taking a moment to enjoy the view; the outline of the ridges that surrounded me. This saddle links the Aonachs Mor and Beag with Carn Mor Dearg and Ben Nevis and makes it possible to walk these 4 Munros in a single outing.

With the assistance of the occasional knee I went on to reach the mid-ground between the 2 Aonachs before deploying map and compass in pitiful visibility to find the ridgeline track that would take me to the summit of Aonach Beag. It was here that I met my first mountain companions after they traversed the Grey Corries to join me on this 4000 footer. After swapping stories and advice I turned

*View on route to Beinn a' Chaorainn; Loch Treig, Stob a' Coire Mheadhoin (left) & Stob Coire Easain (right)*

back and descended Aonach Beag to continue the simple journey to Aonach Mor. It was here that I was finally rewarded with a break in the weather; it was wonderful! To be able to view the magnificence of the Highlands from this platform is a privilege that is reserved for the few who make the effort to attain it. Most who gain lofty heights here are tourists struggling the great distances from the car park to the Ski Centre and then riding the gondola up the mountainside. Although I would not condemn anyone to choosing this option, there is just no comparable alternative to summiting on foot, with lungs fit to burst and a smile that only hill walkers and the insane possess. With camera smouldering from quick-fire snapping I turned my attention to the mountain restaurant on the decent, (where many passing pleasantries were exchanged with those sane tourists who I have only just chastised). From here you can follow the track down or hand hand-rail the gondola cable and fight your way through the scrub for the amusement of those hanging above!

Stirring in the twilight hours I wondered what the next day had to offer. Would it be another rain incessant ordeal? Would the weather against all the odds show a stark improvement? Or, more likely, was high winds and thick cloud going to make summiting unattainable? All I knew as I laid under my canvas refuge drifting into sleep was that no matter what the Highlands threw at me, that I would meet it head on. Thankfully, the need to prove my manhood did not transpire and as I set off from Loch Laggan in weather that defied all predictions and I cautiously looked forward to a dry and sunny day.

A steady pace over fairly uniform gradients soon delivered me on the summit of Beinn Tealach. This low-ranking Munro standing at 915m was visited with a little something to spare. With fine views back towards Loch Treig and the summits of day one, I was simply happy to sit in the company of Glen Spean nibbling my lunch as the world passed me by. The energy reserve that was maintained during the earlier ascent was to prove very beneficial as the easy descent was then balanced against a steep and quick climb up neighbouring and slightly more impressive 1052m Beinn a' Chaorainn. There was no reserve to rely upon from this point forth; the culmination of these first 3 days was fatigue mixed with jubilation and the knowledge that the 6hr drive from Catterick had been well worth the effort. As I strode down the steep hillside at an ever increasing pace I looked forward to a hearty meal and the rest day that would follow. The Grog and Gruel in Fort William has a varied menu and good ales and proved to be a great venue to replenish energy levels in preparation for days yet to come.





The route that followed was one I had been contemplating for over 3 years. To summit Ben Nevis was always going to be a treasured moment, but by which route? In 2005 my attempt via the tourist trail had been thwarted by snow; back then with no experience in the winter environment, discretion was indeed the better part of valour. This time around I was determined that the objective would be reached in fine weather (I was adamant that I would have a view) and that it would be by one of the lesser travelled paths. Days of inaccurate forecasting had left me frustrated but I promised myself that if the morning was even remotely promising that I would 'go for it'. I would head from Torlundy, over the 3 Carns Ridge<sup>1</sup> and then tackle 'The Ben' from the South East via the Carn Mor Dearg Arête. As it happened, my frustrations subsided with the rising of the sun and a hint of a cracking day ahead. This would be not only my first ascent of Scotland's most renowned peak, but also my first Bike-Hike; little did I know this would end in misery. Pedalling from the higher car park in Leanachan Forest the route was pleasant and gradual until I rounded the first corner and the seriousness of the challenge suddenly dawned. By the third corner the desire for a third lung was bordering on obsession, legs were on strike and cycling became pushing. There was solace though – it would be an awfully fun descent! Discarding the bike by the Allt a' Mhuilinn I headed off on foot shadowing the river and then later heading direct to the 3 Carns Ridge. Dripping in sweat and gasping for breath I traversed the ridge to Carn Mor Dearg the shortest of Scotland's 4000 footers, once again in the companionship of the Aonachs across the eastern valley.

I took a deep breath as I finally strode upon the Carn Mor Dearg Arête. I had read many accounts of this section of the route, many of which has left me a little apprehensive. which, which, as it would turn out, was completely unwarranted. For the wary or inexperienced there is no requirement to stand aloft the granite slabs because a narrow track weaves its way comfortably beneath the North Western knife-edge; however for those of you who do like a bit of exposure then the arête can be walked loudly and proudly only centimetres from the abis. This balancing act ends at the boulder field that eventually gives way to the cairn, war memorial and ruined observatory that marks the cluttered summit of Britain's highest point. Until this point I had been blessed with clear skies, but irony was preparing to have its say as a ghostly veil of thick cloud engulfed my vantage point high above the glens and just refused to budge. I sat there on my perch with the other mountaineers, tourists and climbers for an age but despite the occasional, brief parting, I was to remain taunted. Finally accepting the inevitable I took a handful of misty photos and trotted down the tourist path to the Lochan and east to the Allt a' Mhuilinn and my waiting bike. It is here that the day took a turn for the worst. The bike descent was not the fun-filled carnival ride that I had imagined. Slipping and sliding down the frictionless dirt track, my attempts to remain upright proved fruitless, despite the expletives! Halfway down some sharp breaking saw the rear wheel kick out violently; all thoughts turned to 'this is probably going to hurt', and it did. Unceremoniously I found myself face down on the floor, tangled in metal, hands cut and bleeding and resembling something like a beached whale. Thankfully there were no witnesses and pride was quickly restored. A battered and bruised Mark Gregory finally rode back into Torlundy.

Haggis? A sheep's stomach full of those parts of an animal that are not good enough to make it into a kebab; with 'Neeps N Tatties' though it is the fuel of Munro Baggers and I enjoyed it once more on the return journey to the campsite. It almost felt like a homecoming, I was getting to know this area pretty well now. Numerous towering giants surrounded me, reminders of earlier accomplishments.

Bike-hike was again to be the theme of the following day, my final day ticking off those names on Sir Hugh's list. Today in the company for a time of a real Munroist, indeed one who had summited them all! A better map study concluded that the trail up The Lairig in the Grey Corries was actually within my biking grade. One fall

was enough and I had no intention of repeating the acrobatics that heralded my return from Ben Nevis. With two wheels rotating their way over excellent tracks, walking was a rarity and my rendezvous with the Allt Leachdach came all too quickly. Chaining the bike to a tree I broke track and headed sharply uphill without any respite over Stob Coire Gaibhre and the 1177m crest of Stob Choire Claurigh; all uphill, all on rough and trackless land, all in light rain and thick cloud and all too tiring. After navigating over rock and boulders to the summit the cloud momentarily cleared to tell me I need more practise. What I thought was the summit cairn was merely a way marker with more rocky heights behind. Realising the error and with cloud as my friend I found the true summit with difficulty. More photos of a rain soaked, Gore-Tex clad Devonian shrouded in misty vapour and then on to checkpoint Stob Ban at 977m. The crest of Stob Choire Claurigh hid the route down and marching on a compass bearing was the only solution. The route was steep at first, but gradually levelled out to a Bealach and small Lochan, which surprisingly was to provide one of the finer views of my trip. I took great pleasure in photographing this magical landscape of water, bog and rock in all its rugged beauty. A little more rock hopping and a grassy descent down to the Lairig Leachach Bothy and 4 km of track quickly reunited me with my bike for the final leg home. Swooping down the valley bottom avoiding many other walkers I arrived unscathed and rejoicing in the knowledge that I had bettered every previous visit to this area.

Meandering through Fort William, clutching a £45 bottle of whiskey (which was something else I have gained a fond appreciation of) and building myself up for the long drive home I mulled over the preceding days. I had seen some old craggy faces and many new ones engraved upon the towering pinnacles of Western Scotland and it was with great regret that I had to depart. In total I had walked for 7 days, eaten a fair bit of Haggis, drunk some good Highland Ale and Whiskey and bagged 12 Munros. With Iron Maiden and Slipknot shaking the insides of the car, destroying the peace and tranquillity of Glencoe I realised how exhilarating the experience had been; leaving me with a reinvigorated taste for adventure that will surely draw me back to this far flung corner of the UK in the not too distant future.

<sup>1</sup> Carn Beag Dearg, Carn Dearg Meadhonach and Carn Mor Dearg.

## KNOW YOUR BEALACH FROM YOUR BUIDHE?

The Scottish language is a mix of Gaelic, Norse and Scot. Like any language, it varies from place to place and sometimes so does spelling. Here are some of the more common names and spelling you might come across on your next romp in the hills:

Common Spelling	How to say it.	Meaning
Allt	All-t	Stream
Aonach	Ou-nach	Ridge/hill
Beag	Bay-k	Little
Bealach	B-yal-ach	Mountain pass
Beinn/Ben	Bay-n/Ben	Mountain/Hill
Brae	Bray	Top/Summit
Buidhe	Boo-ya	Yellow
Cairn	Kayr-n	Pile of stones
Creag	Kray-k	Rocky/Cliff
Dearg	Jer-ak	Red
Dubh	Doo	Black
Garbh	Garv	Rough
Lagan	La-gan	Hollow
Lairig	Lar-ig	Pass
Loch	Loch	Lake
Lochan/Lochain	Loch-an	Small lake
Meall	Me-yal	Hill/Lump
Mor	More	Big
Sgurr/Sgorr	Skoor	Peak
Strath/Srath	Strath	Broad valley
Stob	Stop	Peak



Immense beauty, a pure white landscape and the unexpected privilege of total solitude was what greeted me as I followed the footsteps of the great explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton along his historic traverse of South Georgia.

Two years previously I had received an email from a colleague telling me that he was planning to sail to South Georgia from the Falkland Islands to complete the Shackleton Traverse and asked if I would be interested in joining the team. I remember thinking why on earth did you have to ask me; doing such a trip had never crossed my mind, it was beyond anything I had done before and quite frankly I was apprehensive. But, I also knew that I couldn't turn down such an opportunity and that I had to say yes.

Arriving on the Falkland Islands in mid October 2008, my fears were rekindled when the pilot made us wait on the plane once it had landed as it was too windy to open the doors – and I was about to board a yacht! but, eventually we were off sailing across the Southern Ocean for 750 miles, crossing the Antarctic Convergence into colder waters with the danger of icebergs, and riding the storms that thrashed the boat and soaked us if we went forward to adjust the sails. Five days later we saw land and anchored in Elsehul Bay to recover from the journey (the majority of the team had been quite sick) and wait for a weather window to allow us to start our overland journey.

South Georgia can only be reached by boat and we had hired the Pelagic Australis a 74 foot yacht, robustly built for the Southern Ocean. The isolation of the area is significant, as if something goes wrong you are on your own, there is no rescue service and no medical facilities for at least 750 miles with one of the roughest oceans in the world in-between. The other significant fac-

# BEYOND ENDURANCE

By Ingrid Hall



tor is that the 'weather rules' and usually blows; there was a danger we wouldn't even be able to get to the start of the Traverse and even if we started, we could find ourselves stuck in our tents or in a snow hole for days waiting for the wind to drop. We also expected to have more bad days than good.

We were lucky, after two days waiting we sailed to the South of the Island and up King Haakon Bay to Peggetty Bluff where Shackleton and his colleagues had landed. Strapped into our skis and pulks we began the slow ascent to Shackleton's Gap in the clouds; now roped together in a team of three and another of four. Several hours later we were on the level of the Murray Snowfield and we could feel the sun trying to burn through, as it did and the mountain tops slowly became visible in front and to the side of us, it was quite magical and soon we could clearly see the Trident Ridge – our destination for the night. We camped just above a wind scoop a hundred meters from the ridge summit and the next day woke to a glorious weather. Crampons on, we made a quick ascent of the ridge and saw the most spectacular view of the Crean Glacier. It was at this point that Shackleton slid down the ridge on his

backside linked together with Worsley and Crean – complete madness and a desperate attempt by the exhausted men to descend. We took the descent more leisurely and five and half hours later reached the bottom. We had to lower our pulks down one at a time on two ropes tied together, building a ledge for them to be stacked before repeating the process three times. We were further delayed when one of the pulks slid down a crevasse, luckily with no one attached. But, it wasn't a bad place to be hanging around on a blisteringly hot day, with the mist in Antarctic Bay to our left clearing as we worked. The climb up the Crean Glacier was steady but hot, the clear skies and sun reflecting off the crystal white snow took its toll and having been only really worried about the cold before I set off, I now found myself struggling in the heat. We camped near the top of the Glacier with wonderful distant views of the ridge we had just descended.

The next day it was decided to move off the traverse route and to climb the apparently unclimbed peak, Mount Nicholls (named after the late Brig Nicholls RM). It was sunny and bright, but, as we headed South up the Fortuna Glacier the wind got stronger and by the time we were at the mountain foot, we could see little and were being frequently blown over. We got to the top of the col and then made the sensible decision to turn back and actually had a wonderful ski slope to descend back to our tents. We broke camp that evening and headed across Fortuna Glacier. Mount Nicholls was still on our minds and the next day we tried again. We got as far as the initial slope dug a shelf to sit on in an ice wall and waited to see if the clouds would clear.





Two hours and many bad jokes later we were frozen, there was no sign of the weather clearing and we headed back.

Our final day on the ice shelf took us to Break Wind Gap, where we dragged our pulks on ropes up onto the watershed and peeped over the top to see Fortuna Bay; the anticipation of seeing the view over the next ridge was always really quite exciting. We now had our first steep descent with pulks on skis; it was carnage, those with pulks with fixed shafts had a great advantage but were pushed swiftly down the slope and had to do enormous turns, those with pulks with straps and no shafts found that their chariots went faster than they did! We all somehow survived the journey unscathed and arrived at the stony beach on the edge of Fortuna Bay surrounded by the Antarctic wildlife. Fur Seals snarled at us, Elephant Seals did what they do best – nothing (unless there is a fight!) and King Penguins paraded past our tents all night, moving up the valley to their colony – it was marvelous. On our final day we abandoned our pulks and tents (our yacht came into the Bay to collect them), and we walked around along the water's edge, crossing a freezing Glacial Stream in our bare legs, ooh la la it was nippy! At the top of the final ridge we saw Stromness Whaling Station in the distance. Pretty soon we had arrived to toast Sir Ernest and with an even greater respect for his accomplishment and those of his companions; we are indeed very proud to have completed his traverse

**Additional information:**

There were 7 of us who completed the Traverse, 5 team members accompanied by Stephen Venables (the first Brit to climb Mount Everest without oxygen) who we had taken along as an experienced mountaineer and Skip Novak of sailing fame, who is also an experience mountaineer, Skip owned the Pelagic Australis and had done the traverse twice

before. In addition the yacht had a crew of 4 professional sailors.

We were very lucky with the weather, which made the Traverse relatively straight forward and afforded us beautiful views. Anyone wishing to do this route should give themselves enough time to wait for good conditions. We went South in October which is Spring in South Georgia, the snow then still had a good cover over the crevasses which greatly aided our passage, although there was an obvious hidden danger. Any later and the trip would have been much harder.

South Georgia is truly beautiful and we made the most of our days either side of the Traverse to do additional walks and watch amazing wildlife. For such a trip including travelling time you need at least a month.

To get myself ready for the trip as well as my own personal training, I attended 3 Joint Services courses; Advance Ski Proficiency and Tour Leader Training, Winter Mountaineering Proficiency and Alpine Mountaineering Proficiency, all were excellent and exactly what I needed – all thoroughly recommended.

This was a civilian expedition for which I was given permission by the Army to join. It was great, but I was pleasantly surprised at the contrast between this and military expeditions I had been on. The military are very good at training, administration, organisation, leadership and communication and surprisingly, take fewer risks. I was also shocked at the cost of the trip and it brought home to me just how lucky we are to be able to go on military expeditions all over the world costing next to nothing – it's a real privilege – make the most of it.

We never got up Mount Nicholls, but I learnt on getting home that it had already been climbed!

The whole trip was a marvelous once in a life time experience and I was so glad I had said yes when I got that initial email.

Lieutenant Colonel Ingrid Hall raised over £1400 for 'Help for Heros' from this expedition.





# **ARMY MOUNTAINEERING ASSOCIATION** **TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT PROJECT 2009/2010**



- Are you a Subaltern, Pte or JNCO?
- Are you interested in Mountaineering, Climbing or Ski Mountaineering?
- Do you want to learn some new skills?
- Do you want to organise an Overseas Expedition?
- Are you willing to commit to a project spanning the next two years?
- Are you willing to work to make the project happen?

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## **GET IN TOUCH NOW!**

ONLY LIMITED PLACES AVAILABLE – CONTACT DETAILS BELOW.

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Interested personnel should be prepared to attend the following meets to undertake mountain training and start the planning process for the expedition.

- AMA Spring meet, Army Hut, Ambleside, Lake District (22-25 May 09)
- AMA Annual meet, JSMTIC Indefatigable, Plas Llanfair, Snowdonia (27-28 Jun 09)
- AMA President's Dinner, (venue, tbc) (25-27 Sept 09)

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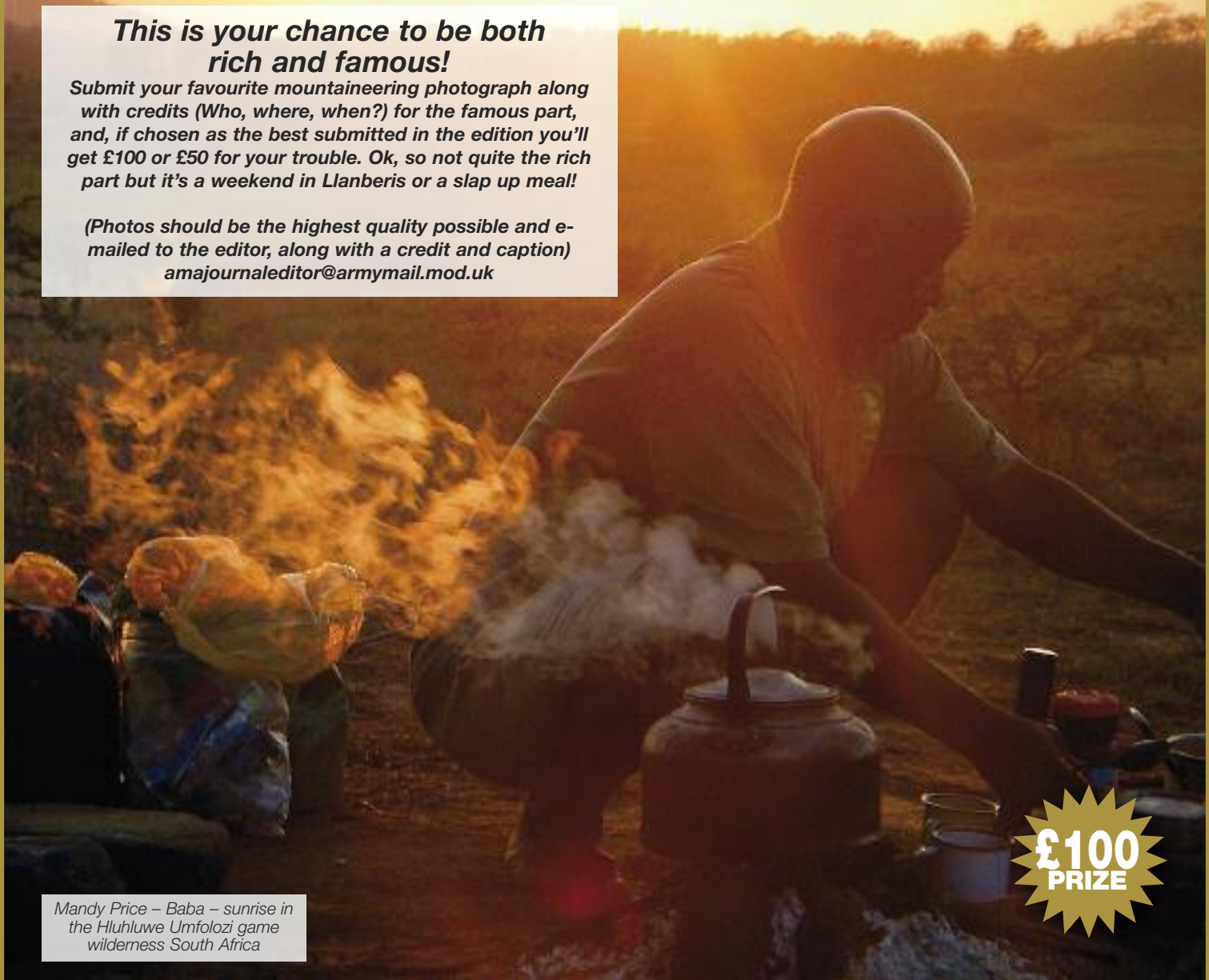
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# PHOTO COMPETITION

***This is your chance to be both rich and famous!***

*Submit your favourite mountaineering photograph along with credits (Who, where, when?) for the famous part, and, if chosen as the best submitted in the edition you'll get £100 or £50 for your trouble. Ok, so not quite the rich part but it's a weekend in Llanberis or a slap up meal!*

*(Photos should be the highest quality possible and e-mailed to the editor, along with a credit and caption) [amajournaleditor@armymail.mod.uk](mailto:amajournaleditor@armymail.mod.uk)*



**£100 PRIZE**

*Mandy Price – Baba – sunrise in the Hluhluwe Umfolozi game wilderness South Africa*

*Skye and Angel Cowerne take Dad for a spin in Sweden*



**£50 PRIZE**



*Joe Garton JSAM 08*



*Pete Skinsley on  
REPTILE SMILE Portland*



*Tania Noakes on  
The Giant North Face of the  
Droites Oct 2009 taken by  
Roeland Van Oss*



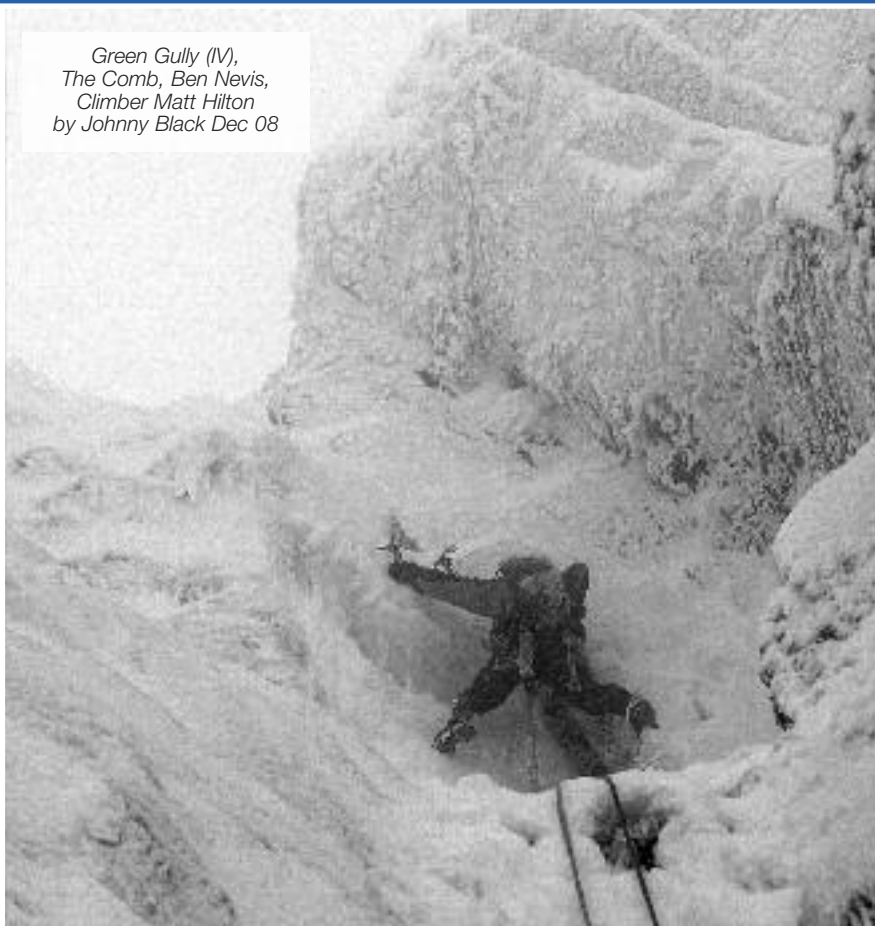
*Tom Odling about to  
catch some big air  
by Mark Stevenson*



*When it all goes wrong!*



*Green Gully (IV),  
The Comb, Ben Nevis,  
Climber Matt Hilton  
by Johnny Black Dec 08*



*Tania Noakes also wins a £25 prize for the  
excellent cover shot on this edition.*



# WINTER CLIMBING PROFICIENCY COURSE

By Scott Roberts

**Y**ou know those inspiring photos in the glossy climbing magazines? The ones where some twin-axe-wielding maniac is running it out up a perfect white sheet of vertical water ice under an eye-piercing sky? Well, I was doing my best to summon their motivating power in the Aviemore pre-dawn as I attacked the almost equally large icefall on my windscreen, using the rather less impressive 'ice tool' that came free with my RAC membership. There had to be some reason why I had dragged my long-suffering girlfriend up to Scotland for New Year (Hogmanay, even) only to experience the sort of temperatures that made even her Canadian blood freeze. It was day two of the Winter Climbing Proficiency course and I was still limping from day one! Combine that with the facts that I knew that my hill fitness, quite frankly, left a lot to be desired and that the previous day's 'introductory' winter climb on a Grade III horror had scared the bejesus out of me and I will admit that my morale was not at its highest point at this moment!

A few hours later, though, I was stood at the base of Lurcher's Crag in the Lairig Ghru with instructors James Woodhouse and Geordie Taylor and fellow student James Annear. As we examined the options, a short-ish ice and rock route on the left or a longer, mostly ice route on the right, the enthusiasm flowed back into my bloodstream. Geordie and I tackled the mixed route on the left which turned out to be choss-tastic but nevertheless thoroughly enjoyable.

Things continued to improve, and by the final day of the course I was happily seconding James W up five pitches of grade III water ice – not quite in the league of those magazine

pictures, perhaps, but close enough for me. The 'thock' of the axe embedding itself securely into a sheet of ice is a uniquely satisfying sound, one that gives you the confidence to trust your weight to it (and that's a considerable amount of trust in my case).

So if you have ever had a hankering to put your weight behind two swinging axes without fear of being taser-ed by the local constabulary then the WCP course could be for you. Students need to already have some general winter mountaineering and summer rock climbing experience: WMP and RCP are stipulated and I would recommend adding a few multi-pitch rock routes to your logbook before trying the same on ice and snow. Oh, and a dollop of the proverbial humour helps at times, too.

Big thanks are owed by me to both James W for his time, expertise and tolerance and to Geordie, who knows how to motivate those whose spirit is willing but body weak. Our WCP course was run as part of the AMA Winter Meet, and once again John Belsham deserves special recognition as the driving force behind an excellently run meet. If you haven't been to one yet, you are missing out not only on some great winter climbing, mountaineering and walking but also on a fantastic chance to socialise with like-minded lunatics in a wood cabin in the middle of a snow-covered wonderland. In a good way, not in a Jack Nicholson way.

**1 Top Tip:** if your boots feel too small on day one, they aren't going to have miraculously expanded by day two. The doctor says that my big toe nails will grow back eventually.





# TALES OF HIGH ADVENTURE

## THE BRITISH SERVICES' MAKALU EXPEDITION '08

**M**akalu is without doubt one of the most beautiful and challenging mountains on Earth. It is also, at 8463m, the fifth highest mountain in the World. In the fifty-four years since it was first climbed, it has had less than 250 ascents and has taken over 22 lives. An ascent, by any route, is a real challenge and the perfect objective for a tri-Service expedition.

The joint services mounts an expedition of this nature every four years and as 2008 was the 50th anniversary year we decided to go big; we picked multiple objectives and gave over 40 people the opportunity to tackle them. The objectives were:

- a. **Main Team** – Makalu via the Makalu La and the North East Ridge.
- b. **SE Ridge Team** – SE Ridge of Makalu, descent via the Main Team route on the North.
- c. **High Altitude Development Team** – Pethangtse and Island Peak.
- d. **Junior Team** – Mera Peak



## The Makalu La And The North East Ridge

by Matt Hing

**M**att Hing, the 6th Briton to reach the summit and the 8th Brit overall. Matt summited on 18 May 2008. This article is based on a blog entry dated 21 May 08, the day after he returned to base camp.

The last seven days have been the toughest emotional and physical days I have ever had. This may appear overly dramatic, but is the reality of high-altitude mountaineering. Everything else I have done before has now paled into insignificance. So what to make of it? Why do it? Why should the public purse contribute towards it?

There are so many questions running through my head at the moment. There is, after all, a lot of time to think on the mountain. The answers,

however, are slow to come. Even a small, medicinal, bottle of whisky has failed to start the flow. Maybe I need to increase the dose?

Perspective and time should, I hope, provide the answers to my questions. In the meantime I will try, in my own way, to give a narrative of the last few days.

The first three days were pretty uneventful. The move to Camp 1 was an easy walk as we were acclimatised and it was a happy, if apprehensive, group that gathered there. The Sherpas followed later and met us at Camp 3. The next day we moved up the fixed ropes to Camp 2. That night Matt S was on poor form. A mixture of

constant coughing and vomiting helped him to conclusion that he was in no shape to attempt the summit and he went down; the right decision.

The rest of us moved up to Camp 3 which involves gaining 800m. Most of this is on fixed rope over difficult ground. This is physically demanding and a little nerve-wracking. At the top of the ropes is the wind funnel of the Makalu La, it did not disappoint. It was the coldest I had ever been and we scrambled for the tents at Camp 3 to warm up. Eating at 7400m is a trial. Calorie intake is reduced to energy drinks,

*You know that you are high-up – Lhotse (left) and Everest fourteen miles away to the West*



8.38 am – Lara moving up the fixed ropes towards the NE Ridge – approx 8000m

and sweets. The body doesn't metabolise food well beyond 7500m, from here we would be on reserves. This may sound simple is a large mental step to take. From

here to the summit and back we committed ourselves to existing on the bare minimum of food and water whilst working in the most difficult environment in the World.

Day four was straightforward as we moved to Camp 4 at approx 7600m. Stu, however, decided that he was not fit enough to continue and started his decent. The remainder of us arrived late in the day; Lara, Molly and I squeezed into one tent whilst the Sherpas went into the other. The routine here was hydrate, eat what we can and rest for a few hours before starting the final push. It was at Camp 4 that we first used a low dose of Oxygen in order to rest for a few hours.

Day five, 18th May, summit day. Strictly speaking we left Camp at 2300hrs the night before and stepped-off into the dark and breaking trail across the glacier leading to the couloir and the summit ridge beyond. This is tiring and time-consuming in the Alps, in the Himalayas it is exhausting; not helped by the fact that due to a leaking hose I had run out of oxygen!

I dumped my sack containing the now redundant oxygen bottle, turned smartly to the right and climbed on. Also in my sack was the small Corps flag I had with me, so no flag on the summit shots I am afraid.

At the base of the couloir we reached the fixed ropes and started the climbing proper. It was light by this point but bitterly cold. I kept warm and importantly the circulation flowing by flicking my hands, kicking my feet and scrunching my face, a routine almost automatic as breathing as I made my way higher. At some point Molly and Lakpa had turned back. Several hours later

we hit the knife edged summit ridge and turned right.

On the summit is a small carved post with prayer flags attached. The feeling on reaching the summit is hard to describe. I had mixed emotions. I was, on one hand delighted to be at the summit. On the other I was very conscious that I had only done half of the job and still had to make my way down. At this point it would be normal to show summit views. For us, however, there were none - It was completely clagged-in! There were no views of Everest and Lhotse to the West or Kanchenjunga to the East. Oh well, maybe next time! After a quick photo shoot we started down.

It is often true in mountaineering that most accidents occur during the descent. With



3.54pm - On Top! Lara Herbert behind is now the 2nd British woman to climb Makalu



1.56pm – Just short of the false summit – approx 8400m



this very much at the forefront of my mind we moved downwards towards Camp 4. For me the descent was much more physically and mentally demanding than the ascent. The effects of altitude, dehydration and lack of food combined with tiredness were debilitating. I clearly wasn't alone and we took turns collapsing after abseils and resting when we could. I had also run out of water, bad planning on my part, but thankfully only a cause of discomfort as I moved on with a dry throat. It went dark at some point and we moved on, initially by twilight and later by torchlight. Eventually we got off the end of the ropes and gained the glacier. As four we staggered, exhausted in to Camp.

At Camp 4 we met Dave, Kate, Ang, Dawa and Nwang who were preparing to start their summit attempt. It was great to see them on good form. After a quick summary of the route, we wished them well and off they went into the dark. For us, we had been on our feet for twenty-four and a half hours. We were all exhausted and dehydrated, but strangely not hungry. Stomachs had long-ago shut down as an unnecessary organ. As a man not shy of food this was a strange feeling; I ate nothing until Base Camp. What was left of the night was spent dozing, only interrupted by Ang who, after starting for the summit had decided that this was the limit of her high-altitude mountaineering. We were awoken in the morning by Dayula, who had hot water for us and tried to get us moving. Ang had already gone to join Molly at Camp 3 with the plan of moving further down the moun-

tain. Lara and I were very lethargic and took some shifting, Lara, in particular, was suffering. We decided to head to Camp 3, get some oxygen for Lara and then head over the Makalu La and as far down as possible.

With Lara on oxygen we headed up to and then over the La. Molly and Ang were just ahead as we descended the fixed ropes and snow fields that lead to Camp 2. Even after a rest, descent by fixed rope is still emotionally tiring and continues to sap what left of your patience, energy and strength. It was also very cold. By this point all of us were drawing on reserves that were nearly empty; to finally get to the safety of Camp 2 was a huge relief. I reached Camp 2 with Dendi at approx 1700hrs. It had been another long day. The rest staggered-in over the next few hours. Dayula and Dendi decided to head-off to Base Camp and the comforts it would provide, whilst Ang, Lara, Molly and I bedded down for our sixth night on the mountain. Moral was high but we still could not eat, concentrating instead on hydrating. Thoughts were with Dave, Kate, Lakpa, Dawa and Nwang high above us. We heard later on that we were forced to turn back, only 200m from the summit, disappointed but safe and well.

Sunshine and hot drinks started off our final day above Base Camp, but then it all went wrong. First, Blair, an Australian climber, poked his head, complete with purple, swollen and frost bitten nose into our tent.

He had failed to summit and was clearly upset and soon headed down. Second, Joel, from Portugal, poked his head in; he had already lost his nose and much of his fingers to frost-bite and now his new nose had also suffered; he had at least reached the summit. He told us of a dead Sherpa, one of the French Team at Camp 4. This was extremely sad news for all of us. We had had become pretty friendly with the French Team and the death was a loss. Third, we finally made Base Camp and Molly took his boots off; apart from the smell, which would have killed lesser people, he had frost-bite to both feet. Although not serious, it is bad enough to require treatment beyond what can be done here and we will move him out tomorrow down to the SE Base Camp, from where a helicopter can move him to Kathmandu and a treatment of champagne (apparently).

Dave, Kate and Lakpa are now also safe in back to Base Camp although frost-bite has claimed another victim in Dave. His feet are in a bad way and we will again move him out to Kath in the morning. Tonight our team is once again complete and safe, if not a little battered.

Slightly oiled by whiskey and the longest I have written for a while; I hope this has given you an insight into what the last seven days have been like for me. For the other team members, I will let them speak for themselves. They are likely to have very different memories. A lack of oxygen can have a strange effect on the brain.

## The South East Ridge

by Toby Haughey

The rasping crackle of dry, tired lungs punctuated the bitterly cold night air. With effort I tried to shift my cramped limbs from where they lay contorted amid the oxygen bottles and coiled ropes, the congealed mass of humanity that crowded our tiny shelter meant such actions were futile. Across the tent I could just make out Colin's hunched form as he was briefly illuminated by the inky pool of light emanating from his watch. The hands sweeping languidly across its face announced that barely three hours had passed since the sun had set and it would be a further seven until it would rise once more. Our Sherpas shifted restlessly and sought in-vain to find a comfortable position in which to pass the silent vigil. With sleep proving to be ever elusive my mind began to wonder; in my current predicament a hundred questions sprung forth and galloped across the pastures of my mind. How much longer would the oxygen last? Would my numb head and fingers ever thaw? Would I ever know civilisation again? And above all, how on earth had I landed myself in this pickle?

It was in fact the second of two nights we had spent on the ledge which boasted pro-

portions no larger than the average writing desk. With weight-saving being the dictum of every mountaineer we had decided that sleeping bags were a luxury we could do without and so they had been left at Base Camp along with the food, spare rope and, it would appear, our morale. Thus, clad solely in down suits and stiff upper lips we had braved a similar night on our way up the ridge the day before. Sited at 7500 metres the camp was justifiably proud of its panoramic views and a 2000 metre drop on three out of its four sides. In addition it faced squarely into the Himalayan wind which roared off the flanks of Everest some 20km to our West and as such was a touch on the exposed side. I may well be wrong but I have my suspicions that it's a campsite that won't necessarily be listed in the YHA's Backpacker's Guide 2008.

But I digress; I should perhaps start from the beginning and describe how a chance phone call in early March put a rather abrupt halt to my plans of enjoying the English spring gallivanting about Wiltshire with my regiment. Hitherto the notion of the Makalu expedition was entirely unknown to me and whilst every mountaineer has aspirations of

having a crack at one of the infamous 8000 metre peaks, I could not have known that in just four weeks I would be sat at Base Camp squinting up at the horrifying reality of the Greater Ranges, a tight lipped smile of determination set on my face whilst my bowels dissolved inside. And so it was whilst plonking away at my keyboard one evening in the troop office I received the fated call from a friend who idly observed that the South East Ridge team were in need of climbers as several had pulled out due to operational commitments. Intrigued, I cautiously made a few light enquires and within a staggeringly short amount of time found myself on both the flight manifest and 1st XV team sheet. I was told that I would need to get myself measured for kit and equipment pronto, make sure my passport was in date and oh, by the way, the flight leaves in two weeks time!

Sure enough, just twelve days later I found myself at Heathrow airport surrounded by mountains of climbing paraphernalia and greeting my team mates for the first time. We would be attempting to make the first British ascent of the South East Ridge and the first ever traverse of the mountain. A

hive of frenetic activity saw us land in the jostling chaos of Kathmandu before embarking on the eleven day trek to Base Camp. Words alone cannot do justice to the utter cultural whirlwind of Nepal and despite it being my second visit to the country I was still unprepared for the complete sensory assault which awaited me. Walking through the paddy fields and tiny rural villages festooned with Buddhist prayer flags and religious monuments, the mind and soul went through a tremendous purge. Day by day and as we grew closer to the mountain, we were slowly stripped of all the materialistic baggage which clutters up our world in the hum-drum of western society. Walking along baked earth tracks as they wound through plantations of maze and precariously perched fields of corn, we began to bond in our teams. In the evenings, as the rain would rattle on the tin roofs of the tea shacks, our conversations turned more frequently to the subject of the mountain and the climbing plan as it became the single focus of our lives.

By the time we reached Base Camp a distinct change had taken place and the collection of individuals which had gathered on that drab, grey morning at Heathrow two weeks previously had now been replaced with a single, determined team focussed on forging a line up the notorious South East Ridge. At over 10km in length, the ridge was described by Sir Edmund Hillary as one of the greatest propositions of all and one which had not been climbed for over 32 years. After a rest day the Main team moved on to establish their own Base Camp on the north side of the mountain and a certain tranquillity descended. Our team comprised of six climbers, four Sherpas and four camp

staff all of which suddenly looked very small in the shadow of the mountain which loomed starkly above. On the 10th April we held the 'Puja' which saw a local holy-man conduct a religious ceremony to placate the Gods that dwell on the mountain and to ask that they might grant us safe passage. A complex ritual which I must admit slightly confused me, especially the part where spectators are invited to start slinging rice about by the bucketful; it was however tremendously important for the Sherpas who would not set foot on the mountain until it was completed.

The following day the climbing began with earnest and once we had slipped the lead on the Sherpas there was simply no holding them back. The first task was to establish Advance Base Camp (ABC) and begin the massive uplift of stores, rations and tentage which would be required higher on the mountain. Within three days we had established not only ABC but also Camp 1 and by the end of two weeks over four kilometres of fixed ropes had been placed en-route to Camp 2. It was at this time that we were given our first real glimpse of the upper sections of the ridge and what was in store for us. The scale of the problem only really began to dawn when, after three weeks of hard slog and lung busting effort, we stood at the wind battered plateau of Camp 2 and gazed up in awe at the thousands of metres of climbing which still remained untouched above.

Some of the most breathtaking climbing lay between Camps 1 and 2. The ridge, rising from the clouds in a razor sharp dorsal fin, cut through the rarefied air as it soared ever upwards. The ground plunged off to great

depths left and right of the fragile arête and culminated in immeasurably deep crevasses and bergshunds. Traversing this treacherous terrain was an experience in itself, inching along the fixed lines one experienced the sensation of flying as the yawning emptiness below seemed to tug at our feet. As all the team members acclimatised at different rates much of our movement across the mountain was done in pairs or on our own and the long stretches of solitude provided time for contemplation as each man fought his own inward battle of physical fatigue and the mental strain of the committing nature of our surroundings. No helicopter rescue up here and a twisted ankle or broken leg high on the mountain could have fatal consequences. And yet, rather than detracting from the enjoyment of the climbing these factors added a certain distilled lucidity to the expedition. Each man had his part to play; the days turned to weeks and slowly the line of ropes and camps crept ever higher up the flanks of the mountain.

After six weeks of continuous effort the conditions had been set for the first of our summit attempts. Dick, Rupert and two of the Sherpas departed from Base Camp and after four days of climbing found themselves at the front of the fixed ropes and looking up at the Black Gendarme which stood as a huge rocky sentinel to the upper section of the ridge and was to be the technical crux of the route. Passing the Gendarme had taken a Japanese team 16 days back in 1970 and we hoped to pass it in two with a quarter of the man-power. A tall order and yet radio communications with the team two days later confirmed that the route had been found and ropes fixed

*Tricky climbing high-up*







*Sherpas climb from Camp 3 (seen below) towards Camp 4*

across the crux. Alas however, the first signs of fatigue and strain began to show and both Dick and Rupert were so exhausted after their effort they had to abandon their summit attempt and return to Base Camp. We had all by now each lost in the region of 10kgs and our sinewy limbs had begun to cry out after so many weeks of misuse. Each muscle holds only so many miles and whilst the reserves of mental strength will keep our frames moving further still we are by no means infallible.

The baton thus passed to Colin and I and the two remaining Sherpas to start where Dick and Rupert had finished and so after five days of tugging up the ropes we were treated to our first night at the outrageous bivouac of Camp 4. The next day dawned breathtakingly cold and because of a large rock buttress which overhung our perch the sun remained ever out of reach. Frozen fingers tried to tinker with frozen stoves and even making a single lukewarm cup of tea proved agonisingly slow. Finally, by half past six we set off having prepared our oxygen bottles and supplies for what would prove to be a very long day. Our plan was to climb to the end of Dick and Rupert's fixed ropes until they ran out. We would then fix a few lengths of our own before hopefully reaching less precipitous ground and thus continuing on un-roped to the site chosen for Camp 5 and the final summit ridge. Shortly after departing Camp 4 Nima Dorje, our head Sherpa, began to complain of sore eyes and after consultation with our doctor, Sundeep, over the radio was diagnosed with possible retinal haemorrhaging. Being impossibly strong, however, he insisted on continuing though he did agree to go onto supplementary oxygen.

Progress continued until at around midday we reached the end of the fixed ropes and began to lead out some of our own. It quickly became evident that far from becoming less precipitous, the ridge began to take on a new level of difficulty the higher we climbed. A final rope length across a series of crevasses covered in a thick layer of sugary snow saw us arrive at a small ledge just in time to see the sun start to wane. At five o'clock I banged home the final piton, tied off our last length of rope and invited Colin to join me at my perch.

The decision was not a difficult one; it quite quickly became evident that at least one more camp was required, not to mention more rope and fixings, if we were to arrive

at the final summit ridge with enough energy to push not only up to the summit but then down the North East ridge. Nima Dorje's condition was deteriorating and having spent a cramped night exposed to the elements at our bivouac our energy levels were woefully low. A final discussion confirmed everyone was of the same opinion and so in the growing dark as a packet of four weary climbers we made our way back to Camp 4 and the cramped delights of yet another sleepless night. Disappointment was tempered with the thoughts that we had, as a team, given all there was to give and that on reaching a height of 7900 metres we had climbed higher than any British team had managed to do before us.

It is difficult indeed to try and provide any kind of rational answer as to why climbers would want to suffer this kind of ordeal in the name of sport and adventure. I think it could be said that most of the enjoyment gained from high altitude mountaineering is of the retrospective kind. The venture is often best looked upon from the safety of Base Camp or at best the comfort of a fire-side armchair. For my own personal account I am left with a feeling of deep contentment. The rat which gnaws inside me ever questioning my fibre and goading me into new challenges has been fed and will remain satiated, if only for a little while. I feel as if I have been stretched, both physically and mentally, and whilst in the short term this leaves me run down and exhausted, in the long term I will return tougher and more resilient than before. The expedition for me embodied true adventure and camaraderie, never before have I been so reliant on those around me. The utter selflessness of the team all working for the same ultimate aim is something that I will not forget.

And still the South East Ridge stands, silent and brooding, her flanks cloaked in the shrouds of mist that swirl relentlessly about her. And still she stands, aye, until next time....



*The final day at Base Camp (l-r: Toby Haughey, Rupert Capleton, Colin Scott & Dick Gale)*

# Pethangste II and Imja Tse (Island Peak)

by Nick Beighton

Cloud swirled around Everest and the South Col and Makalu crouched brooding in the distance, where our colleagues on the main team toiled so hard. The final 50m to the Summit of Pethangste II was hard blue ice lying at an angle of 40-45°. Andy, Dan and Alba were ahead, covering the last few meters to the domed summit. Chris and Ben were gasping their way up behind me, 20 steps at a time, as I took the rope in through cold hands.

At 6580m, the top of Pethangste II was a new height record for many on the High Altitude Development Team (HADT) and the culmination of 18 months of commitment for all as part of the British Services Makalu Expedition 2008 (BSME08). From the top we gazed in wonder at the wide vista before us, Tibet to our front and views of Everest and Makalu to our left and right. As a cold wind blew around us, quick hand shakes and photos were rapidly replaced with thoughts of descent as we shivered our way down the top few abseils. Several hours later, having re-crossed the glacier and avoided the crevasses we reached our Assault Camp and collapsed exhausted as the 6 members of the second summit party made us brews and listened politely to our stories.

The road to Nepal began in late 2006 as aspiring team members collected at 'Indi' for a selection weekend, the principle test being to survive the interview with Surgeon Captain Andy Hughes RN, the HADT leader. Having answered probing questions about our experiences in the hills we were free to enjoy the mountains nearby. The following 18 months were spent on various weekend meets

and 2 weeks in the Swiss Alps covering all the winter skills we would require and gelling as a team. By the end of the Alps we were down to the final 12 who would go on the trip, as much by natural selection as anything else. After a final week in Scotland and lots of kit packing, the HADT were raring to go as we met at Heathrow on 24 April 2008.

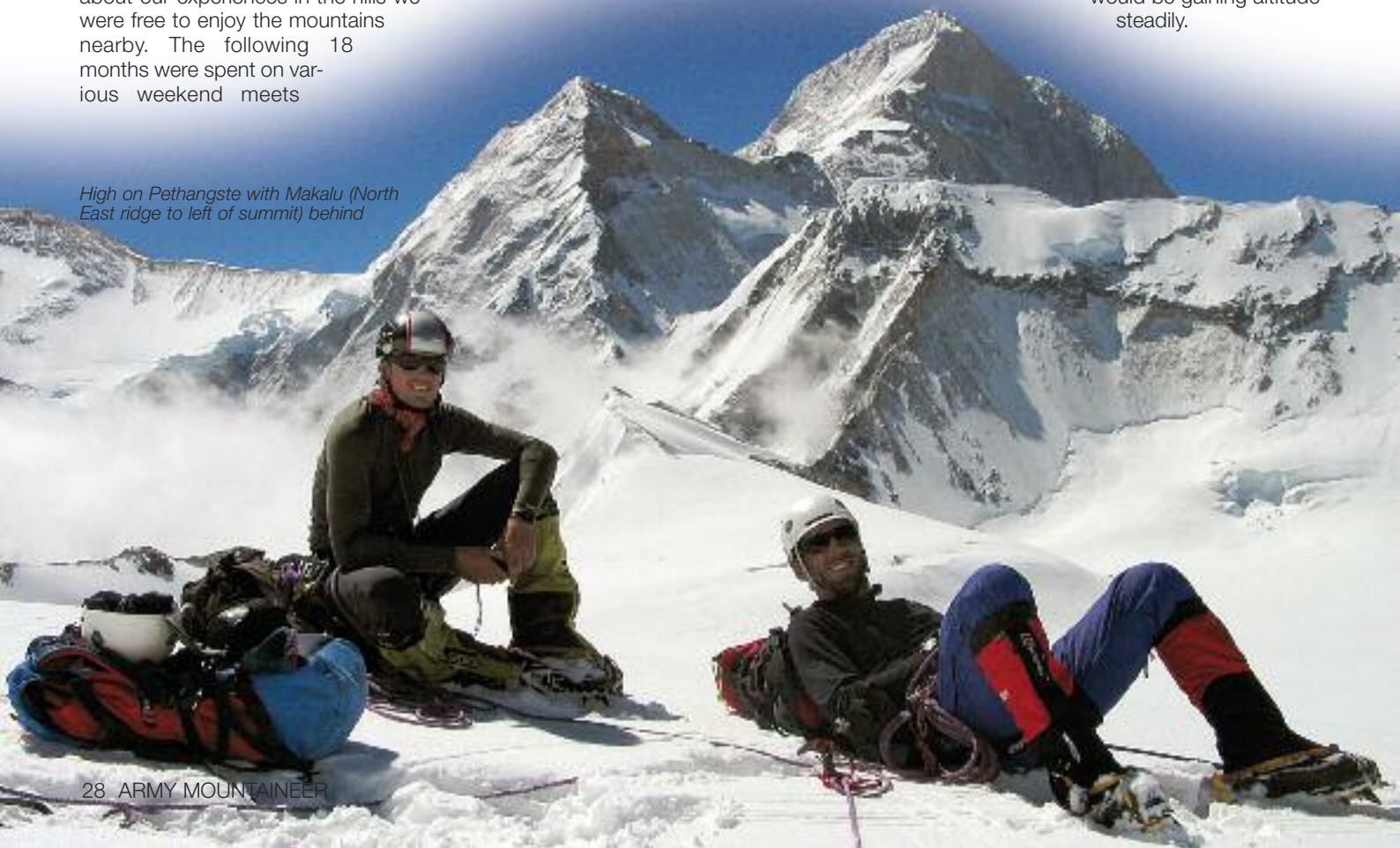
At this point it is probably worthwhile explaining both the Joint Service and HADT concepts. All the teams on BSME 08 were made up of a mix of all three services, the HADT being no exception. This offers an excellent chance to share experiences and cultures outside of a work environment and provides a priceless base for, 'banter'!! The HADT is intended as a stepping-stone for relatively inexperienced Alpine mountaineers to move into the Greater Ranges and the intricacies of being part of a larger exped.

The driving idea behind our trip was to be as mobile as possible, walking in to our objectives with all our equipment, ascending two Himalayan peaks and crossing three 6000m passes before finishing up at a different point. This offered a unique journey and a sense of adventure throughout, as you never knew what was round the next corner. On the flip side, it meant the strain of constant movement with a new home every night. After 6 weeks it begins to take its toll on equipment, body and mind!

After a day in Kathmandu getting our bearings (drinking beer!) and recovering from jet lag, the team took an early flight to the village of Tumlingtar in the east of Nepal. After our first, and defiantly not the last, introduction to Daal Bhat we piled into 3 beat up 4x4s for the drive to the road head, 3 hrs away. From there it was a short 3hr walk to our first campsite where our porters waited with the remainder of our kit, which had gone on ahead. The weather on this first day settled into a pattern which it would keep up for the next week, with clear mornings and gathering cloud in the afternoon, leading to heavy rain and thunder, luckily usually just as we arrived for the night's camp.

We quickly settled into the routine of the trek, woken daily by the smiling faces of the two Dendi's with bed tea, followed by a breakfast of eggs or porridge (I hate both!) and then walking by 8am. Our route took us through some of the most unspoilt villages you will find in the Himalayas, with our arrival heralded by the local children for at least 1km both before and after. To see the poverty and yet the huge dignity of how these Nepalese people lived their lives was truly humbling and one of the highlights of this trip. On the seventh day of the walk in we crossed the Shipton Col at just over 4000m and so crossed from the Arun to the Barun River valleys. This signified a change in landscape from the jungle and sweat of the lowlands into the fresh air and soaring peaks of the mountains. From here on in we would be gaining altitude steadily.

*High on Pethangste with Makalu (North East ridge to left of summit) behind*







*High on Pethangste*

By this point in the trek the banter was developing nicely, with the Army holding its end up. Although grossly outnumbered by the light blue, the sparing team of Sapper Ben Sherwood, TA representative, OCdt Jon Ayton, and myself had them on the run with endless Top Gun quotes and horror stories of Crab Air.

After 11 days of hiking we arrived at the base camp of Colin Scott's South East Ridge team. This was our first taste of the breath taking scale and majesty of the 5th highest mountain in the world, which dominated the whole skyline. It brought home the huge endeavour being undertaken by both of the teams on Makalu. At nearly 5000m, base camp was a good place to take a days rest to allow further acclimatisation before we went higher. During our time there a number of people from Dave Tait's NE Ridge team came down in order to rest, including Percy, recently return from a successful summit bid. It was fantastic to be able to hear stories from the other teams, and be included in these experiences, despite the relatively modest objectives of our own HADT.

On leaving the SE Ridge base camp we entered the chaos of the lower Barun Glacier with a nightmare of boulder hopping, most of them moving! The scenery around us was truly stunning with the bulk of Makalu to our right and Everest and Lhoste directly ahead of us. The further up the valley we travelled to less trodden the path until there was no path and we had to make things up! Lakpa, our tireless Sirdar, went on ahead to recce a route to our own base camp below Pethangste. After 18 days we had finally arrived at our objective and the excitement within the group was tangible. Our home for the next week was a vast gravel flat below the snout of a

glacier. At 5400m it was an effort just going to the toilet, and probably the only place in the world where you wouldn't get a funny look coming out of the toilet tent panting!!

The next problem was how to actually climb the mountain, as there was no information on approaches or routes. The first day was spent in various reces to find the best route and a site for our assault camp. The best option was a line up the side of the glacier to an exposed campsite on the end of a huge whaleback feature at 6000m, which gave access to the upper glacier and Pethangste. From here was our first real view of the difficulties that lay ahead. Andy Hughes, the exped leader was concerned about the objective danger that we would face on Pethangste. Alternative routes coming along the ridge to the west were also considered but would involve at least one more camp above our current one. With the limited time and equipment we had available, Andy wisely decided it was out of our reach and so our focus shifted to Pethangste II, the next peak along the frontier ridge, which was more accessible and for which we were ideally positioned. Although disappointed, everyone understood the reason behind the decision and threw themselves into the new objective. Having established our high camp, all 12 members of the HADT summated Pethangste II over the 16-17 May, which was a great achievement and a truly memorable day.

After the exertions of the past few days everyone was tired but we had to press on as we were less than half way through the trip and had many miles still to go. Over the next five days we crossed 3 high mountain passes, including the East and West Col of the Upper Barun Glacier and the Amphu Laphsa. All were over or near 6000m and provided a real test of endurance, with many people feeling drained after 4 weeks of effort. As we passed over the Amphu Laphsa, we entered the upper Khumbu Valley and the associated luxury that comes with proximity to Everest. Everyone on the team had been craving the treats of this land of milk and honey and our conversations had turned more and more to talk of imagined feasts!! In true capitalist style the first act for many on arrival was to down a can of Coke.

After a well earned rest day our thoughts turned to our next and final objective, Imjatse. Also known as Island Peak, this popular mountain lies near the head of the Khumbu valley, isolated on 3 sides by glacier and crouching below the imposing Nuptse Wall.

Our summit attempt on Imjatse (6189m) had been delayed by a day in the hope of clearer weather, and maybe even a view from the top. So as we woke in our high camp to bed tea at 0300hrs, the broken high-level cloud was a welcome sight – maybe the gamble would pay off. Getting

up at that time of the morning always feels wrong. However, following tea, porridge and hot chocolate, heroically delivered to the tent door by the two Dendis, we got ready in good time and left at 0400hrs.

The first part of the route followed a steep gully, climbing loose rock to gain a ledge system that traversed to a face. We climbed this to the foot of the glacier. As it got light, the sky continued to clear. We had spectacular views of the North face of Baruntse, the Amphu Laphsa pass, which we had crossed in mist several days ago, and Ama Dablam, with the sun clipping its chiselled summit. After about two hours, we arrived at the foot of the glacier, joined shortly after by a group of 3 Czech climbers. Jon enquired whether they had climbed any other peaks in the area, immediately, one of them reeled off a list of past conquests, "Makalu, Everest, K2, Kanchenjunga..." – he clearly didn't want anyone to get the impression that Island Peak would be a challenge for him!

Suitably in awe, we roped-up and made our way up the glacier. Negotiating crevasses and seracs with no problems, we arrived at the base of a headwall that would lead to the summit ridge. The headwall was about 150m high, consisting of a series of small ice ledges with a mean angle of about 60°. The two Dendis had already gone ahead to start fixing rope up the face and along the summit ridge beyond, we followed behind them, ascending the ropes to gain the knife edge ridge. Following this to the summit was an exhilarating experience; the ridge dropped sharply away on both sides – the steepening headwall to the right, and on the left, a long drop to a glacier at the base of the imposing Nuptse Wall, which sat to the north.



*Below glacier on Island Peak*





*On the summit with Ama Dablam behind*



Between 0900hrs and 0930hrs, all 10 remaining members of the HADT, accompanied by the two Dendis arrived on the summit. The mood within the group was very upbeat – not only had we achieved the second major objective of the expedition, but the route to the summit of Imjatse had been varied, challenging and very enjoyable. The weather had held and the views were stunning – Nuptse, Lhotse, Makalu, Baruntse, Ama Dablam, Cho Oyu – all seemed within a stones throw, and bathed in sunlight. We were in no hurry to leave the summit, taking time to get some good photos.

Our descent down the summit ridge and the headwall was very swift – when you are abseiling down a single 7mm static cord, the decision to go quickly is pretty much taken for you. We sat at the foot of the

glacier during our descent, waiting to regroup with the Sherpas when, in a moment of inspirational wisdom, Nev piped up, “the mountains have been climbed, the passes have been crossed, the pub is open”...wise words.

Our summit of Imjatse marked the end of the climbing phase of the expedition. The remaining six days before we flew back to Kathmandu were spent walking (downhill) south to Lukla, taking in the ‘bright lights’ of Namche Bazaar on the way, and gradually edging back towards civilisation. The weather in Lukla decided to keep us from the comforts of the Shanka Hotel for three tense days as we waited for the mist to lift. With everyone’s patience stretched, the HADT finally arrived back in Kathmandu (amazingly still talking to each other!) and a

day of souvenir shopping in the back streets of Thamel. 45 days after leaving the UK we returned, leaner, fitter and contented.

The HADT of the British Services Makalu Expedition 2008 was an unequivocal success, with all 12 members of the team reaching the summit of two 6000m plus mountains and covering some of the most stunning terrain on the planet. As with all of these things, it is the people around you who make a trip and the HADT was blessed with a group of people who got on amazingly well from start to finish. Many of the happiest memories of the trip are of the people not the places.

After 200 miles and 8000m of ascent this has truly been the Himalayan adventure of a lifetime.

## Mera Peak

by David Jones

It is well known is that the British Services’ Makalu Expedition 2008 (BSME 08) succeeded in putting the 6th, 7th and 8th Briton on the summit of the world’s highest mountain, Mt Makalu (8463m). Perhaps what is less well known is that the expedition also succeeded in introducing a whole new generation of service mountaineers to the joys and challenges of high altitude mountaineering by sticking 8 of them onto the summit of Mera Peak (6480m).

The Junior Team comprised of 12 service personnel drawn from across the 3 services. The criteria for application was that they were to be in their first 3 years of service by the time of the expedition (May 08) and have the willingness and aptitude to learn the necessary skills to operate in the high and remote Himalaya. Previous mountaineering experience was not a pre-requisite.

There were 60 applications for the Junior Team which, after an initial paper sift, was whittled down to 30 candidates invited to attend a practical selection weekend at

JSMTC Indefatigable in Apr 2007. As a result of their performance on this weekend 16 successful applicants were chosen to form the Makalu 2008 Junior Team Squad along-side the team leadership that had already been pre-selected at the BSME 08 main selection in Oct 2006.

With the other 3 BSME 08 teams the junior team embarked on a progressive training regime that was designed to furnish all of the participants with the necessary skills and confidence they would need to tackle the world’s highest trekking peak. Training meets took place bi-monthly and utilised the Cairngorms, the Lake District, Yorkshire Dales, Snowdonia and the Alps. Each session was designed to equip the squad with a particular set of skills and all those who attended were awarded the SMP, RCP, AMP & WMP. What this meant, and this is a crucial element of the Junior Team concept, was that all of the squad including those that were eventually deselected, gained the entry level mountaineering qualifications that would allow them to build on

their skills long after Makalu 2008 had passed.

The Junior Team followed exactly the same route into Makalu Base Camp as the 3 more senior teams. A challenging and arduous trek that in itself was a world away from anything else the majority of the team had undertaken or experienced before. At the South East Ridge Base camp the Junior Team took the opportunity to see at first hand the huge organisational and logistical requirements of a large scale mountain expedition and take on board the teams experience on the daunting Makalu SE Ridge. Again, for me it was a hugely important part of the concept that the junior team should be exposed to the activities and workings of the more experienced teams as often as possible in order for them to gain as full an understanding as possible of mounting big expeditions.

Once past Makalu the team swung west over the East and West Col’s of Baruntse before heading south down the Hunku val-



Summit Team 1 reach the Summit of Mera at 0800hrs on the 25th May 08. L-R-SAC Karl Taylor, Pte Craig Januszkievicz, Capt Jo Ingold and WO1 Sam Marshall.



Summit Team 2 reach the Summit of Mera at 0830hrs on the 25 May 08. L-R Pte Dusty Miller, LCpl Nick Taylor, WO2 Colin Harding and Major David Jones.



The Junior Team taking a break on route to the East Col of Baruntse. Note Mt Everest in the background.



The Junior Team taking a breather at the SE Ridge Base Camp.



Mera High Camp once the weather broke. A cold and exposed rocky ledge.



Final ascent to the summit of Mera negotiating the large crevasse running left to right.

ley to the Mera La (5415m) and Mera Peak. The trek to Mera High Camp (5780m) from the Mera La was a short yet sustained climb through deep slushy snow to a narrow rocky ledge on which our tents were precariously balanced. Abysmal weather drove us quickly to our shelter and it was only as the evening set on that that the skies cleared sufficiently to afford the team some spectacular views of Kangchenjunga, Chamlang, Makalu,

Baruntse, Everest, Lhotse, Ama Dablam, Cho Oyu and Kangtega.

At 0330am the team set off on two ropes for the summit of Mera. Essentially it was a long steady trudge that required a degree of skill and dexterity to avoid the plethora of small but plentiful deep crevasses that littered the mountainside. After 4 hours the 50 degree slope eventually turned to a 70 degree slope and we knew we were approaching the top. To negotiate this safely there was a brief pause to fix ropes before both teams huffed, puffed and spluttered their way to the top. Team 1

hauled themselves to the top at 0800hrs followed closely by team 2 at 0830hrs.

Although cloudy it was possible to make out several of the world's highest mountains from the summit and I have no doubt that as the Junior Servicemen and women sat there feasting on these views their appetites will have been whetted for bigger and grander things.

The BSME 08 Junior Team was a huge success and it would be remiss of any future Service endeavour not to include a junior element of some kind. If the services are to continue to put their people on to the top of the world's highest peaks in 2018 and even 2028 then it is crucial that junior teams, such as this, come as standard with any big exped. For relatively little extra effort it is possible to grow and nurture our future talent and provide them with the fledging skills they need to catch the selector's eye for other bigger endeavours. Although 2 of the team had to be returned to Kathmandu for altitude related illness and another due to sickness I have no doubt the overriding aim of the expedition was achieved. This expedition has given the next generation of service mountaineers the skills, personal attributes and confidence they need to sit comfortably in any future single or joint service team and hopefully to one day feel able to lead their own expeditions.





# CARBS AND PEAK PERFORMANCE

Author of 'Moveable Feasts' Amy-Jane Beer talks hill food, facts and myths.

Your body is an engine, and you want it to perform at its best, you must give it the right fuel. For any short term physical challenge like a big mountain day, this means carbohydrates.

The amount of energy stores in carb-rich foods is astounding. A morsel of sliced white bread the size of a first class stamp contains approximately one kcal. Burned in a super efficient stove, this would be enough to boil 10 millilitres of ice cold water. Two full slices will boil a kettleful. Weight for weight, table sugar contains about four times the energy of dynamite – there's enough in a small chocolate bar to blast you over a kilometre into the air, if it could be harnessed efficiently enough. Fortunately the only way to do this is to eat the thing then walk up a mountain or climb lots of stairs. With this much energy available in carbs, it's hardly surprising that for most living organisms, they are the fuel of choice.

If you don't eat carbs, your body has to obtain them from other sources, such as reserves of glycogen, fats or even, in extreme cases, by breaking down muscle tissue. Not only is this a

very inefficient way of getting fuel to your cells, it'll make you feel lousy. Trendy low carb diets mess with your internal chemistry, big time.

## Glucose

Whatever type of carbohydrate you ingest, there is only one form that the body actually makes use of, and that is the simple sugar glucose. All other useable forms of carbohydrate are first converted into glucose before being used to fuel your essential body processes. Some sports drinks boast 'glucose polymers' – these are sugars made up of several linked glucose molecules – they pack a big punch in terms of energy but are less sweet and thus easier to take when exercising. Other simple sugars, such as fructose (fruit sugar) are useful sources of energy but because they have to be converted to glucose first they don't 'burn' as fast.

## Glycogen

When your body encounters a surplus of glucose, it converts some of it to a compound called glycogen. Glycogen is stored in your muscles and liver so that when you start working hard, there is a ready store of fuel right there. An average 70kg man has about 1700

kilocalories of fuel stored as glycogen in his body before beginning exercise. Of this, about 82% is in his muscles, 15% is in his liver and the remaining 3% is circulating in his blood. It can be mobilised quite easily once the muscles start working and will allow him to perform steady exercise such as running, biking or walking uphill, for about 90 minutes. When glycogen runs out, you'll experience the unpleasant phenomenon known as 'Hitting the Wall.'

## Hitting the Wall

Even a fit individual will find themselves flagging after about an hour and a half of strenuous exercise. This is the time it takes for reserves of glycogen stored in the muscles to begin to run out. If the muscles are to carry on working, they must find another source of fuel. This is what our muscle protein and fat reserves are for – in a normal healthy individual, these will be enough to keep things ticking over, but because protein and fat cannot be mobilised as quickly as glycogen, performance will be reduced. If the athlete continues to push hard without taking on more carbs, he or she will soon reach the point where the demand for fuel from the muscle cells simply cannot be met. The result is the sort of jelly-legged helplessness that became familiar to participants and spectators at endurance events such as marathons in the 1980s. It's not so common now – marathon runners suffer in plenty of other ways, but with the aid of energy







drinks and gels, sweets, bananas and plenty of water, most avoid total collapse.

### **Bonking**

Bonking is a condition familiar to most people that have attempted endurance sports. It is a feeling of dizziness and overall weakness – perhaps blurred vision or faintness – that occurs when insufficient glucose is delivered to your brain. You get fuddled and clumsy. If this happens on a race track, it's pretty unpleasant. If it happens while you're trying to negotiate a tricky descent on a mountain bike or concentrate on navigation in adverse

mountain weather it's potentially dangerous. It can turn a normally sure-footed, clear-thinking individual into an accident waiting to happen. Fortunately it's easily avoided and simple to fix ... just put some fuel in. By continually topping up your blood sugar levels you can stay sharp and avoid ever having to rely on your glycogen stores. As long as they stay intact, you will never bonk! Of course refuelling isn't a cure for exhaustion; even the finest athletes have their limit. Nor is it a substitute for training, but it helps.

### **Glycaemic Index**

The Glycaemic Index (GI) ranks foods according to the effect they have on levels of glucose in the blood (blood sugar). The system was originally developed to help diabetics control their blood sugar levels. It was adapted by sports scientists then by the mainstream diet industry, and most nutritionists subscribe to it as an important part of healthy eating. Many food manufacturers now provide GI information on packaging. The higher the GI number, the faster and bigger the sugar hit. Pure glucose has a GI of 100.

GI is not simply a reflection of which foods contain the most glucose or sugar. GI is related to the accessibility of the sugar, and this can be affected by all sorts of factors, including fat and fibre content and methods of preparation. High GI foods (those scoring 80–100) include sports drinks, sweets such as jelly babies, no surprises there – but also cornflakes and potato. Gram for gram, a baked potato will give you a considerably more abrupt rush than the same weight of honey, and rice cakes, crackers, most bread and couscous all score higher than table sugar. This is great if you want a sudden boost that will take effect right away, but not so great if you want the effect to last. Glucose never stays in the bloodstream very long because cells that need it extract it right away and burn it off immediately. Any excess will be converted to glycogen for storage. Either way, the sugar hit is over as quickly as it began, often leaving you feeling worse as the sudden rush will confuse your body into suspending the mobilisation of stored reserves of glycogen and fat. You can use high GI foods to top up your blood sugar during exercise, and to





restore energy reserves afterwards, but little and often is the key to avoiding big highs and huge crashes.

In the medium to high GI category, with scores in the 60s and 70s are things like oatmeal, Mars bars, couscous and raisins – these start releasing sugars quickly, but the ‘high’ is rather longer than for the high GI foods. Again this makes them great for refuelling on the go. Medium to low GI foods include baked beans, white rice and pasta, and the super low category includes things like pulses, low fat yoghurt, skimmed milk and barley, as well as some surprisingly sugary things like apples, bananas, apricots and various sports bars. These foods won’t give you much of a lift during heavy exercise, but eaten in advance – for example for breakfast – and grazed on during the day, they’ll keep you supplied with a steady flow of energy.

## Carb-loading

Carb-loading is a technique used by endurance athletes to maximise the amount of stored glycogen in their muscles before an event. It allows them to work harder for longer before they hit the wall. The improvement isn’t spectacular – research has shown that increasing glycogen levels in muscles by half can improve performance by two or three per cent at best. This might not sound much, but over a long endurance event, a two per cent margin could amount to several minutes and might make an enormous difference.

Not surprisingly, the process of carb-loading is not as simple as cramming yourself with pasta the night before an event. When the process was originally developed, it was a week-long programme that began with a gruelling four day ‘depletion process’. During this phase, the athlete would train very hard, on a low carb diet, to the point where their reserves of glycogen were reduced to a minimum. This, it was thought, would create the physiological conditions most conducive to rapid accumulation of glycogen stores. During phase two, the athlete would rest and embark on a high carb diet. Most athletes found the depletion phase a miserable experience, and the sudden switching of diet from one extreme to the other was hardly ideal. These days, most have dispensed with the low carb depletion phase. They still train hard, but eat normally. Then, three or four days before the event they begin to ‘taper’. They ease off on the training, doing less each day and usually nothing on the last two days, while eating a high carb, low fat diet. Good foods for carb-loading include syrupy tinned fruit, honey, jam and sugary drinks. High volume complex carbs like pasta, bread and rice are important too, but not enough on their own – their high fibre content makes it difficult to eat them in sufficient quantity. The Australian Institute of Sport recommends their athletes consume 7–12 grams of carbohydrate per kilogram of body weight per day when carb-

## Flapjacks

Makes about 16

Equipment: Home oven heated to 180°C, gas mark 5 or camp oven over moderate heat, 20 by 20 cm square baking tin, sheet of greaseproof paper  
Prep time About 40 mins

200g oats  
100g self raising flour  
100g golden syrup  
150g butter  
100g soft brown sugar  
100g mixed dried fruit  
50g sunflower and sesame seeds  
Heat the oven to 180°C, gas mark 5. Melt the butter, sugar and syrup together in a pan over a low heat. Add all the dry ingre-



dients and mix well. Tip into a grease baking tray, lined with greaseproof paper. Bake for about 30 minutes. Remove from the oven and cool for five minutes before turning out upside down onto a wire cooling rack and allowing to cool completely. Use a sharp knife to cut into slices. Wrap them in greaseproof paper and pack in plastic bags for carrying.

loading. For a lean 65kg runner, this means the *equivalent* of half to three quarters of a one kilogram bag of sugar.

It should be obvious that carb-loading is not an excuse for just pigging out. If you do the loading and fail to do the exercise afterwards, guess what? You’ll put on weight, and fast. And even if you do go out and burn off every last calorie, it’s not a process that can be repeated week after week because the repeated ‘tapering’ would impact on overall fitness. It’s only worth doing for the occasional big challenge for which you’ve already been training consistently. That last part is important because muscles of a trained athlete can store three times as much glycogen as those of a couch potato. So again, if you’re not already fit, carb-loading is a pretty meaningless exercise.

## Carb intake – what to eat and when

So, carbs are essential, we’ve established that. But how much carbohydrate do you need? Really this depends on what you intend doing with it. For an average moderately active person, carbs should account for a little over half (approximately 55%) the daily energy intake. On a day that includes an hour or so of formal strenuous exercise (such as cycling, running, aerobics or footy practice), carbohydrate intake should be in the region of five or six grams per kilogram of body weight. Taken as complex carbs, this would be a near-impossible volume of food, but once you start replacing some of the bulky carbs with concentrated ones like jam or sugary drinks, the volume required rapidly diminishes. For very highly trained athletes, especially lean, muscular ones whose body weight doesn’t include a few chubby bits, the requirement is higher – up to seven grams per kilogram of bodyweight.

Under certain conditions, carbohydrate requirements can increase dramatically. These include days of strenuous activity such as hill walking with a pack, fell running, or any outdoor activity in which the cold is a factor – winter mountaineering for example. Your intake of carbs should

reflect the increased demand, rising to between 7 and 10 grams per kilogram of bodyweight for a moderately fit individual. Of this, a proportion should be taken before, during and after the activity concerned. During an endurance activity lasting several hours you should aim to get down 60 grams of carbs per hour, or one gram a minute. Do this and you’ll avoid periodic dips in energy levels and finish the day in good mental and physical shape.

For many teams the end of the day is crunch time, when grumbles and petty irritations rise to the fore. The temptation to just lie down or crawl into your sleeping bag is enormous, and the tougher the day has been, the harder it can be to get motivated. Snacks on the move are at least as important as the evening meal, leaving you with energy spare to do what needs to be done. If you’re convinced, use this simple recipe to make some multi-carb flapjack for your next big day out. The mixed GI combination of oats, flour, fruit, seeds and syrup give it enormous nutritional clout. And it tastes pretty good too.



*Moveable Feasts* is a guide to optimal nutrition and camp cooking for anyone who needs to cook or eat outdoors. Whether you’re a seasoned mountaineer, backpacker, mountain biker,

adventure racer or completely new to outdoor life, whether you’re competing, hanging out with friends or exploring with the family, there’s something here for you. The book is presented in two parts – the first crammed with information and practical advice on everything from the best energy-giving foods to building a fire pit or avoiding water-borne illnesses. Part two contains nearly a hundred easy-to-follow recipes for nutritious, mouthwatering camp meals that will fuel you well into the next day’s action, whatever it may be...enjoy!

# Nansen's Endeavour

By James Woodhouse – MIC

In August this year a team of nine drawn mostly from the TA in Scotland left to travel across Greenland by the route first pioneered by F Nansen in 1888. After 27 days of hard work pulling and carrying loads of 85 kgs in temperatures as low as -35 they succeeded; the first British crossing of the Nansen Route and the first crossing for 20 years. It was a magnificent success for the British Army; Sir Chris Bonnington said in his congratulatory letter to the team on return "a crossing of Greenland via this route rates higher and is more difficult than an Everest ascent by one of the standard routes".

Nansen's Endeavour set out to travel East - West across Greenland. The remote nature of the starting point required a flight into Kulusuk and then a 200k ocean boat journey south in something that would have looked more at home in the Norfolk Broads. From there the team carried their loads over moraine to the start of the ice



*The Team at Nansen's Tentplace. From (L to R) Stuart Knight, Phyl Scott, Richard Elder, Fraser Phillip, James Woodhouse, Nigel Williams, John Coogans, Jonjo Knott, Magnus Jeffrey.*

cap where they could start to pull. A technical ascent of the ice was managed by some good route finding. Once established on the ice the team got into a routine of 12-15 hours of work a day with the balance spent melting snow, resting and eat-

ing. Memories of 200g of butter, salami and cheese a day to complement more usual dehydrated rations will stay for a long time.

The team moved fast. By moving to night routine they were able to cover 120k in three



*Sunset over the ice. Jonjo Knott checks the tent*



*James Woodhouse leads over another crevasse*



*The team prepare to move at night*



days, until their arrival at the West Coast was impaired by crossing through a major icefall. This took upwards of three days moving through very close, technical glacial country, the team moving un-roped for speed and agility. It was by far the most testing and difficult terrain encountered during the expedition and is a considerable credit to those who took part. The expedition leader felt guided and confident in his team and the route chosen. There were some big smiles when they exited the crevassed zone and arrived at the first land for 25 days.

The route did not give up. After thinking that each day was the last hard day, the next would be harder. The journey across the foot of the ice sheet and around the Mitt Lake was hazardous and challenging. Rivers that were supposed to drain towards the sea were now draining under the ice sheet, 180 degrees the other way! Global warming had changed the route beyond any recognition from that of

Nansen's time. A river expected to be deep wide and powerful had a trickle that might have come from your bath running in the middle; a weird and strange place. After a final 18k walk out through dwarf birch and alder, itself a challenging journey in its own right the team were at Nansen's Tentplace. They had achieved the aim and shared celebrations with a Norwegian team who had arrived about 20 minutes before.

After this they walked the 5km or so to the pick up taking some of the Norwegian heavy kit with them as they had an arranged a boat pick up. The vessel seemed something like a cruise liner and we settled back with beer, fruit, crisps and chocolate to enjoy the ride to Nuuk.

What then? The team enjoyed trying to replace some of the lost weight and worked hard at the all you can eat buffet breakfasts in Copenhagen. Upon return they were met by TV cameras at the airport

and again at a press-call the next day. They have been featured in media and press and have attracted the praise of Sir Chris Bonnington, and there is even a planned Channel 4 documentary based on the footage shot by the expedition cameraman.

This was a major overseas expedition of the like not often attempted and it was extremely successful. Despite the difficult terrain and the constant danger we only lost one shovel and three ice screws and managed to conduct some major scientific research for the Universities of Edinburgh and Bangor. As always though the real measure of success is somewhat closer to home – all of the team returned, returned well and returned friends, or friendly! There were some outstanding personal performances during the expedition; the level of physical, mental and spiritual demand is sadly beyond the capability of this writer, so I shall say in short, "We nailed it".



*The team move through some close country*



*James Woodhouse steps onto rock for the first time in 25 days*



*The view from the bottom of the ramp down to Austmandalen and the route out*





# MOUNTAIN UNITY

## CLIMBERS RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN



“Perfect,” that’s how Everest legend Doug Scott describes climbing conditions in Afghanistan. In 1967 he chose it as the destination for his first high altitude expedition because of the consistent good weather, great climbing conditions and the lure of unclimbed peaks. Members of his expedition made seven first ascents and established new routes on Koh-e Bandaka (6,843m) and Mir Samir (6,059m), the mountain made famous by Eric Newby in his book ‘A short Walk in the Hindu Kush’.

Lindsay Griffin, the Chair of the BMC International Committee, climbed in Afghanistan in 1977 and thinks that Afghanistan’s highest mountain Noshahq (7,492m) could become the most commercially successful mountain in the world. Why? It is a non-technical seven and a half thousand metre peak with almost no risk of storms in the climbing season, a very short approach and surrounded by numerous other objectives accessible from the same base camp. An ideal introduction to very high altitude mountaineering.

Stephen Venables, the first Brit to climb Everest without supplementary oxygen also chose Afghanistan for his first high altitude expedition. In his 1977 expedition report he wrote: “The traverse of Koh-i-Sahkt was a delight from beginning to end—three days of continuously absorbing climbing, up buttresses, along crests, over pinnacles, always on perfect solid granite. There was the satisfaction of finding a route where no-one had ever been before and the selfish pleasure of having a whole mountain range to ourselves.”

In the 1960’s and 70’s Afghanistan was becoming an extremely popular destination for mountaineers. They were attracted by the almost guaranteed good weather, excellent climbing, short approaches and the prospect of numerous first ascents in a single trip. The Soviet invasion of 1979, the subsequent civil war and ensuing Taliban era sadly put an end to it all and the mountains have remained undisturbed for quarter of a century.

In 2003 Carlo Alberto Pinelli, an Italian mountaineer who in the 1960’s climbed

extensively in the Afghan Hindu Kush, organised an expedition he called Oxus: Mountains for Peace. The objective was to climb Noshahq (7,492m), Afghanistan’s highest mountain and let the Afghan’s know that they hadn’t been forgotten by the climbers who had benefited from their generous hospitality. This successful expedition effectively marked the beginning of a new era for climbing in the Hindu Kush and Pamir mountains of Afghanistan.

Since 2003 a small cadre of Afghans selected from across the country have undergone training as mountain guides under the instruction of predominantly Italian mountaineers. They have since led treks and participated in climbing expeditions in the Wakhan Corridor which is the thin finger of land that points towards China in the far northeast of the country. In support of these activities the Aga Khan Foundation has established a series of guest houses and campsites along the valley floor, as well as training cooks and establishing rates for porters and pack animals.

As the security situation in the rest of the country has deteriorated, mountaineers have still been travelling to the Wakhan Corridor. They have been able to do this safely by flying into Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan and driving to the Wakhan, crossing the border at Ishkashim, a small frontier town at the mouth (west) of the valley. The Wakhan Corridor itself has remained completely free of the violence that has marred the rest of the country. Even during the Taliban era the local people peacefully went about their lives protected by the remote, mountainous terrain and the fact that the Northern Alliance dominated all possible approaches.

The hope now is that the trickle of mountaineers will increase to a sustainable number that will provide the desperately poor local people with a chance to better their lives. The province of Badakhshan where the Wakhan Corridor is located, suffers the highest recorded maternal mortality rate in the world. One in three children die before the age of five. Extreme poverty is perhaps the biggest cause of both these shocking statistics. Tourism has been recognised as the only viable option for sustainable development in this harsh mountain terrain. As





well as trekking and mountaineering there are projects to investigate the potential of re-establishing the commercial hunting of the wild Marco Polo sheep.

The vision is for this safe and easily defended corner of Afghanistan to become a beacon of hope for the rest of the country. As part of this vision later this year four Afghan's will attempt to climb Nushaq along with a French documentary unit. This will be the first time any Afghan has climbed their country's highest mountain. With good media coverage these four climbers will become national heroes and

be a positive talking point throughout the country. One foreign correspondent said "2009 is going to be a very busy year for me and this is the only good news I'm likely to cover."

The more people climb in the Wakhan, the more people will be returning with positive stories about the country as well as bringing back photographs and importantly Afghan souvenirs. It is hoped that mountaineers could be the pioneers for exporting Afghan produce such as carpets, gemstones and jewellery. This could open the way for businessmen to use the infrastructure devel-

oped for and by the mountaineers to safely access Afghanistan and allow Ishkashim to become a major hub for trade between Afghans and the rest of the world.

As the international community struggles to find a new and effective approach to Afghanistan it just may be that the answer to the enigma lies in the Hindu Kush mountains. The war in 2001-2 was won from the secure northeast, so why not the peace?

**To find out more visit  
[www.mountainunity.org](http://www.mountainunity.org)**



## MOUNTAIN UNITY

Mountain Unity International is a Community Interest Company (CIC) set up by former British soldier David James to promote and develop the mountaineering and trekking industries in northeast Afghanistan. A CIC is a not for profit organisation set up for the benefit of a nominated community, in this case the people of the Hindu Kush and Pamir Knot mountains. All profits and assets are legally locked into supporting the Afghan people.

By the time you read this article David and his family will be living in the Wakhan Corridor providing support to climbers and trekkers by acting as a first point of contact and arranging guides, vehicles and accommodation. He will also be writing articles for climbing magazines, updating the [www.mountainunity.org](http://www.mountainunity.org) website and encouraging the media to cover good news stories from the Hindu Kush. David James was awarded the QCVS for his analysis work in Afghanistan.

So far the work has been almost entirely self-funded; if you would like to help out then any donations would be welcomed.



# THE EUROPEAN MILITARY CLIMBING CHAMPIONSHIPS 2008



Early doors 19th Nov 2008 saw 7 pairs of bleary eyes bound for Gatwick airport. The Combined Services Sport Climbing Team had been training hard for the past 4 months since the Inter Services Climbing Champs in July and were now psyched for the challenge that had finally arrived: representing Britain at the 3rd European Military Climbing Championships. The full complement of Services were represented in the team with 5 Army (Pete Skinsley the Team Manager, Mike Smith, Tom Odling, Loz Owen and Cristal Crooks), one Navy (Steve Glennie) and one RAF (Stu Harth), all selected from their performances at the Inter Services Championships.

The British team, along with the best 99 men and 13 women of 8 other nations, including the double World Bouldering Champion Kilian Fischhuber of Austria, gathered at the Ecole Militaire de Haute Montagne in Chamonix. The team were greeted with warm welcomes from the French and from familiar faces of other nationalities from other previous climbing events. The annual competition is held over 2 days with lead climb eliminators (Fr 6a-7b) and a fun bouldering competition (18 problems Fr 5-8a) on day 1 and the semi-finals, finals and speed climbing element on day 2. The venue, in the heart of Chamonix under the gaze of Mont Blanc, is impressive and better than any military facility in the UK!

Demonstrations of the 5 qualifying routes on the first day commenced at 0730 sharp – an ungodly hour to climb for most! The format of the event meant that competitors could only climb 3 of the 5 with their hardest route counting. Great deliberation had been made over previous weeks as to which of the routes might be attempted and in what order, in the knowledge that all routes had to be climbed on the first-attempt, and once a given difficulty had been failed, a harder route could not be climbed. Adrenaline was coursing through veins as the team warmed up using boulder problems which had been set for this purpose, and other routes in the facility, but knowing all the while that nothing could truly prepare any of them for that unknown they would encounter on each of the routes. Mistakes were made by many, with sequences forgotten, and limbs becoming mysteriously wrapped around one-another, but at the end of day 1, 4 of the UK team had managed to progress through to the semi-

finals the following day, including our only female, Cristal; Loz Owen narrowly missed out by a single move on the hardest qualifier. Veteran Mike Smith was so convinced he had not secured a place he took the difficult decision to hang-up his boots and retire from competitive climbing, only

to bounce back out of retirement just 2 hours later when the successful competitors were announced including him - surely the shortest retirement in history!

Day two of the competition brought feelings of disappointment from some, and further anxiety for others. Despite this, the team support was evident as full tri-service representation stepped into isolation at 0700. Competitors now needed to climb both the semi-final and final routes on-sight to succeed. 27 nervous male faces desperately tried to use the limited bouldering available to prepare them for the men's Fr 7b+ route they would now need to climb in order to become one of the 8 who would progress to the final. If the previous day had seemed stressful, it was nothing compared to the minutes that ticked by as energy was used to warm-up, but balanced with the need to feel fresh for climbing. The UK team were called out in reverse order and attempted the semi-final route. Unfortunately despite their best efforts, none of the male team managed a place in the final, but all did themselves proud. Cristal fared much better qualifying direct for the ladies final (Fr 7b) and finished a very creditable 5th in Europe. The men's competition went the distance with 4 men toying the final route (Fr 7c) and 2 managing to complete the super final (Fr 8a+) on sight!

For those not climbing on day 2 the reputation of the UK still needed to be upheld in the speed climbing competition, with the sole target of beating the Belgians! For 5 long minutes Team UK stood on the podium only to be eventually piped by 0.60 seconds into 3rd place by 2 French teams. They did manage to beat the Belgians so all was not lost!

Well done to all the team members for doing their best and thanks go to all those who helped in the preparations for the competition, especially the sponsors, BFBS, the 3 Services Mountaineering Associations and the 3 Sports Lotteries. The look forward for the team is to the next European Military Climbing Championships in November 2009 in Zurich, Switzerland.

## Results

### Men

- 1st Gfr Kilian Fischhuber, Austria (double world bouldering champion!)
- 2nd Sdt Cristoph Zaugg, Switzerland
- 3rd Sch Cosmin Scoreta, Romania
- 18th Surg Lt Steve Glennie
- 21st Maj Mike Smith (second best veteran overall)
- 24th Fit Lt Stu Harth
- 29th Sgt Loz Owen
- 43rd Capt Tom Odling
- 58th Maj Pete Skinsley

### Women

- 1st Sdt Christine Schranz Austria
- 2nd Cha Marion Poitevin France
- 3rd Gna Alice Coldefy France
- 5th Pte Cristal Crooks

### Team

- 1st Switzerland 111 points
  - 2nd Italy 31 points
  - 3rd Belgium 55 points
  - 4th Austria 58 points
  - 5th UK 64 points
  - 6th Germany 89 points
  - 7th Spain 147 points
- (France were not given a team placing as they organised the event but would have scored 23 points putting them second).



# “That’s me!”

E10 climber, author and leading climbing coach **ADRIAN BERRY** talks to **ARMY MOUNTAINEER** on near death experiences and not so fast cars.

## Please briefly describe your life and job description now.

I provide climbing coaching to individuals motivated to improve the level at which they climb – when I’m not doing that I’m writing, photographing, and producing books for Rockfax – and the odd magazine article. I spend a lot of time travelling, and I’m mostly motivated by developing new routes, going new places, and am looking forward to some more ice climbing next winter.

## Your top tip for climbing?

Not trying something is the surest way of not doing it.

## One experience you wish to have or route you wish to climb before you die?

I’m not patient enough for such wishful thinking, if I want to do something I just do it, so right now, I want to save some money to pay for my winter travels, finish my Winter Climbing book and that’s exactly what I’m doing. If I had a burning desire to free climb El Cap before I die, I’d have done it years ago. Anyway, what’s all this about death? All very morbid...

## What experience should everyone have before they die?

Thinking they’re maybe going to die. Preferably not followed by death. It’s not something that you want to experience frequently, but it does serve to put the rest of life’s trials and tribulations into context.

## Where and when did you first start climbing?

A friend dared me to spend the night in an allegedly haunted church. Everyone doubted that I had the balls, but I did it (no ghosts to report). Enjoyed it, and got into wild camping, I would organise camping trips with mates from school and get into trouble with their parents (who weren’t as trusting/indifferent as mine). On one camping trip I found an old hemp rope, and learn to abseil – from that I met climbers and found climbing was not nearly as hard as they all seemed to find it, hence I liked it.

## The essence of climbing?

Using your mind and body together to overcome a natural obstacle. Having said that, I like to actually get to the top of something and look down, I think there is something primitively satisfying about getting to the top.

## What one thing should every man know about women?

They haven’t changed in ten thousand years, despite what the media might say. Of course, neither have we.



## Any Scars that tell a story?

Perhaps my most impressive is the scar on my upper thigh. I caught a guy trying to steal my mountain bike in broad daylight outside a sports centre in Sheffield. I was so crazy angry I just walked up behind him and got him in a headlock and squeezed for all I was worth, I just wanted him to turn blue and die. Unfortunately I must have done it wrong because despite making a lot of awful noises, he didn’t die and somehow managed to take the bolt-cutters he was using on my lock and inserted them into my leg. I must have lost at least a litre of blood before I realised, he tried to get me in the head, but freaked out and ran. I hopped back into the sports centre, lay on my back with my leg in the air, squeezed the wound and informed the rather shocked woman behind the desk to call me an ambulance. I recovered pretty quickly; I was walking later the same day, and went back a few days later to collect my bike. The police didn’t charge him despite me identifying him. Next time...

## What was your first car?

A peugeot 306 Estate. It’s parked outside.

## Ever have a recurring dream?

A dream I have had a few times is one where I’m climbing these world-class routes of the very highest levels of difficulty but they feel really easy – like 9bs that feel like Vdiffs, in my dream I’m not convinced. I have had days like that, unfortunately in



real life that usually means they’re ego-boostingly under-graded.

## What is the greatest honour you ever received?

Being interviewed for Army Mountaineer, of course.

“Climb when ready!”





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