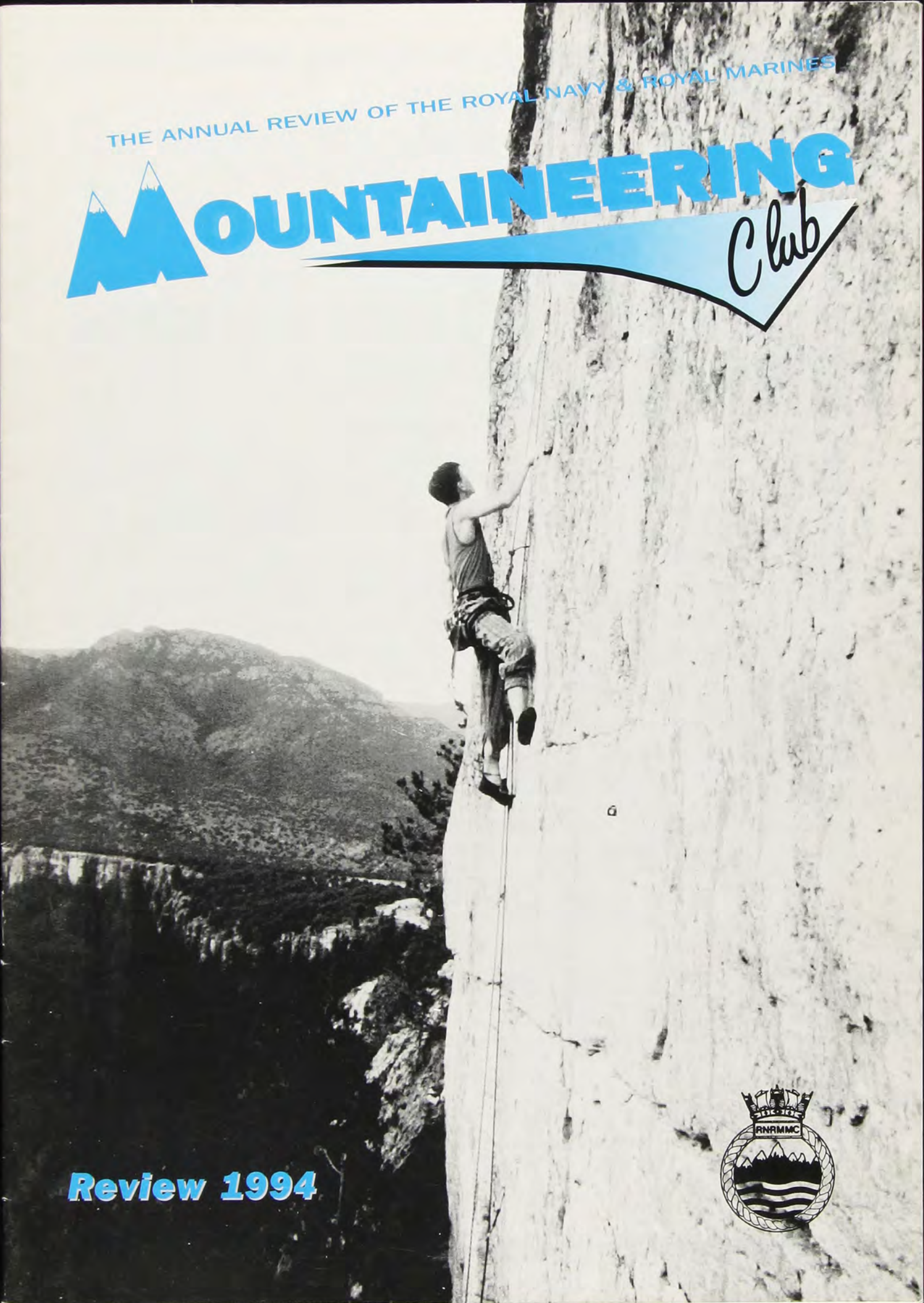


THE ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE ROYAL NAVY & ROYAL MARINES

# MOUNTAINEERING Club



**Review 1994**







# THE ROYAL NAVY AND ROYAL MARINES MOUNTAINEERING CLUB COMMITTEE

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BMC SE Rep: Lieutenant Commander K KING RN, HMS DOLPHIN  
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BMC WALES REP: POPT C BREMNER, JSMT(C) WALES, TYWYN  
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R D MOULTON



## Chairman's Corner

Since having taken over as your Chairman in February I have been most impressed by what I have seen. The Club has enjoyed yet another very successful year. In particular we have mounted a number of successful expeditions which have included such places as Ecuador, Iceland, Yosemite and the Himalayas. The 7 meets we ran throughout UK were all well attended. It was a particular pleasure to see so many club members attend our AGM during the October weekend of fine weather in North Wales. JSAM, a particular success, held this year in Bregalia, South East Switzerland had yet again a very strong club contingent of 42 club members. Club membership remains very healthy at around 500.

As you all know, our President, Vice Admiral Malcolm Rutherford, suffered illness earlier this year which prevented him attending the AGM for the first time in some 35 years. We are all very pleased to see he has made a most remarkable recovery and wish him every success for the future. The committee on the club's behalf offered our President Honorary Membership, which he graciously accepted, in recognition of his unstinting loyalty and leadership of the club.

Our club would not have achieved the successes I have described above without the "behind the scenes" hard work which is done by Committee members. Each and every one of them gave up much time and effort towards the well being and development of the club. I would like to take this opportunity to give them all a public "thank you".

At the AGM we decided it would be a very good idea to establish a new committee member's appointment which would be responsible for sponsorship, recruitment and advertising. In other words he would provide the focus for the recruitment of new members, civilian sponsorship (raising cash and maintaining records of past Sponsors) and the use of advertising in our Bulletin to defray costs. If anybody would like to volunteer for this post please get in touch with our Secretary.

Looking ahead to the future, as I said at the AGM in my capacity as Chairman of your club I would like to focus on three



*Dave Nicholls in the Dauphine*

areas. First to encourage club members to recruit new members to the club. The greater the membership, the more resources are available to support club activities which in turn means we can organise and support more of them to meet the membership's wishes. There are a number of mountaineers, climbers and ski mountaineers in the RN + RM who are not members of the club. Second, to encourage club members to organise, run and participate in challenging and interesting mountaineering expeditions to remote areas of the Globe. Third, to introduce and to encourage the younger membership of the club to participate in major expeditions and the annual JSAM. In particular the British Services Gasherbrum Expedition -1996 has a youth team which is still looking for members.

Finally, you will wish to be aware that my investigations so far suggest that 1997 is the Club's 50th Anniversary. I will be discussing with the Committee how we can mark and celebrate that anniversary. If you have any good ideas on that issue or any other please let me or any committee member know about your idea so that we can consider it at our next meeting.

Best wishes to you all - and I hope you all have an excellent climbing and mountaineering season during 1995.

*David Nicholl*

## Secretary's Corner

1994 has proved to be another busy year judging by the comments from my civil service colleagues who are becoming increasingly vocal in their suggestions that the Club provides its Secretary with an answering machine.

The task of keeping track of members remains ongoing with the Club Membership remaining steady at around 500. This does not mean that we are failing to recruit new members (some 70 or so joined this year), but that the numbers joined are equalled by the number of Members who had paid their subscriptions by cheque and who did not renew them when they fell due in August. However, in an effort to boost recruiting Pat Parsons has produced a poster which I hope many of you will have seen around your establishments/ ships.

Attendance at Club meets last year has been varied. The winter meet at Balmacara was well attended as usual, the Snowdonia

meet proved particularly attractive and JSAM saw over 40 RN & RMMC Members making up nearly half the entire meet. At the other end of the scale the Arran meet was cancelled because of lack of interest and the Peak District Meet very nearly didn't happen until there was a last minute surge of interest. The Meets programme for 1995 can be found elsewhere in this Review and contains some new venues such as North Devon, Wye Valley and the CIC hut on Ben Nevis.

It was rewarding to see nearly 100 at the AGM again this year and to see that the Club's enthusiasm remains as high as ever. See you all next year - but beware I'm on the look-out for a volunteer to take over the reins as Secretary as I suspect my days ashore are numbered.

*Dave Ward*



# RN & RMMC Club Meets 1995

Venue	Dates	Leader
Winter Meet (Scotland)	06 - 12 Feb 95	Lt Cdr Jane Grimley Faslane ext 3592
Ben Nevis	05 -10 Mar 95	Lt Cdr Neil Hicking Gannet ext 4309
Peak District	28 Apr -1 May 95	Lt Dave Mackie Portsdown ext 3548 (BT: 0705 333548)
Wye Valley	27 - 29 May 95	S/Lt Dave Barrett DAEDALUS ext 4105
Snowdonia	16 - 18 Jun 95	POPT Billy Bremner JSMTC (W) Morfa Camp TYWYN Gwynedd
Baggy Point	14 -16Jul 95	Lt Tim Reynolds BRNC ext 7163 (BT: 0803 837163)
JSAM	Jul/Aug 95 tbc	Lt Cdr Steve Jackson Portsmouth ext 41884 (Details to be published by DCI)
Lundy	25 - 28 Aug 95	AB(D) Kevin AMAIRA Devonport ext 65386
AGM Snowdonia	06 - 08 Oct 95	Lt Cdr Dave Ward Foxhill ext 83769

## Treasurer's Report - October 1994

The overall wealth of the club has increased by over £450 in the last year to total £9435. The in-year balance of income and expenditure also reflects an encouraging trend although there is a potential problem for the future which requires managing. Last year the Club was £700 overspent, but this year has seen a substantial increase in subscription income of £700 wiping out that deficit. The addition of other items results in a surplus of Income over Expenditure of £239 for 1993/4.

The potential problem lies in the fact that the Club contributed only £2200 on grants to expeditions out of a planned total provision of £3000. If the full £3000 had been granted expenditure would have exceeded income by £560. To avoid shortfalls in 1994/5 the Bulletin Editor will endeavour to reduce the spiralling

costs of producing the Annual Review, and the Committee has decided to request an increased grant from DNPTS for Expedition Support.

Finally a plea: Those Members paying by Direct Debit please keep the Treasurer informed of any changes in their banking details - a quick note would be much appreciated. Also, those who find they have overpaid subscriptions by both Direct Debit(DD) and the old Standing Order (SO) *please* instruct your Bank to cancel the SO - the Treasurer does not have the authority to do this and returning money is a chore that can be avoided.

HR BUCHANAN  
Honorary Treasurer



# Income and Expenditure Account

For the Year Ended 30th September 1994

1993	INCOME	1994
3002.00	Subscriptions	3710.00
1650.00	RN & RM Sports Control Board Grant	1650.00
830.00	DNPTS Equipment Grant	850.72
	DNPTS Equipment Grant (ex JSAM)	80.00
26.00	Sale of sweaters, woollen hats, & badges	2.50
34.01	Building Society Interest	30.75
	Bank Interest - Nat West	0.14
8.50	Photographic Competition(1993) entry fees	
72.00	Hut fees collected	66.00
221.00	Profit on AGM Dinner Meet 93/94	279.91
275.00	Sale of advertising space in Journal	50.00
200.00	Leasing out of Club equipment	
<b>6,318.74</b>		<b>6,720.02</b>
	EXPENDITURE	
57.45	Chairman's Expenses	17.50
311.88	Secretary's expenses	393.98
141.13	Treasurer's expenses	82.56
1289.90	Journal Editor's expenses	1496.51
59.88	Expedition Secretary's expenses	0.00
672.00	BMC Subscription	840.00
125.00	MC of Scotland subscription	137.50
100.00	Insurance	
	Grants to expeditions, climbing parties etc	
	A. Ski Mountaineering 1994	450.00
	B. Expedition Yosemite Sam	400.00
	C. Mount Kenya	100.00
	D. JSAM	450.00
	E. High Corsica 94	70.00
	F. John Muir Trail	50.00
	J. El Chorro 94	100.00
	K. SULTAN Vikings 94	200.00
2,725		2,220
830.23	Purchase of equipment	850.72
242.05	Purchase of computer software	
	Purchase of Club Jumpers	192.00
157.00	Hut booking fees	66.00
	Retirement gift - Treasurer	25.27
200.00	Bank charges - National Westminster Bank	29.16
132.74	- Royal Bank of Scotland	129.75
<b>7044.76</b>		<b>6480.95</b>
<b>726.02</b>	Excess Expenditure over Income	
	Excess Income over Expenditure	<b>239.07</b>

## Balance Sheet

As at 30th September 1994

1993	ASSETS	1994
33.87	Cash held by Treasurer	34.22
120.00	Cheques held by Treasurer	420.80
420.80	Money at Bank - National Westminster	478.01
1747.91	- Royal Bank of Scotland	534.67
5160.69	Halifax Building Society Account	6366.44
6.00	Stocks of: Malta Guide Books (14 @ 25p)	3.50
72.00	Sweaters (17 @ £12)	204.00
50.00	Badges (104 @ 50p)	52.00
1002.00	Climbing Equipment (at cost less depreciation)	1304.93
700.00	Computer System (at cost less depreciation)	482.63
<b>9,313.27</b>		<b>9,460.4</b>
	LIABILITIES	
8979.27	Accumulated Funds	9435.40
259.00	Unpresented Cheques - National Westminster Bank	
75.00	- Royal Bank of Scotland	25.00
<b>9313.27</b>		<b>9460.40</b>



# Expedition Scene

by Lieutenant Commander Steve Jackson FRGS, RN RN&RMMC Expedition Secretary

## INTRODUCTION

1. Since the last Bulletin a year ago Club members have been active in climbing, ski-mountaineering, trekking and canoeing expeditions which have taken them to the French Alps, Spain, Corsica, Norway, the Lofoten Islands, Yosemite, California and Ecuador. Club members are currently in Iceland and the Antarctic whilst other expeditions are planned to Switzerland, Bolivia, Nepal and Pakistan. RN&RMMC attendance and performance at the 1994 Joint Services Alpine Meet in Switzerland was, once again, highly impressive. All this activity leads to the inescapable conclusion that the Club is in a very healthy state. What follows is a brief summary of all of this activity.

## EXPEDITION UPDATE

2. Steve Jackson - JSAM 94. - Bregaglia region of Switzerland, based at Vicosoprano, a few Kms South of St Moritz. Very successful, 90 plus attendees, 42 from RN&RMMC. The Bregaglia offered excellent climbing at all grades on rock, snow and ice or mixed ground. A good number of high grade routes were climbed by RN and RM attendees.

3. Dick Tough / James Grant - Ski Mountaineering in the Vanoise, based at Bonneval sur Arc, 18 Mar 2 Apr 94. Party of 9. Personal Contribution £150, awarded £50 pp (max £450). Very successful, excellent report from James Grant.

4. Sep / Oct 94 - Dave Pearce. Yosemite, Nose on "El Cap", 6 personnel. PC £250, awarded £600 in recognition of extreme technical difficulty and sustained nature of planned routes. Very successful, report elsewhere in this bulletin.

5. Sep 94 - Mike Yates - John Muir Trail from Yosemite to Mt Whitney - highest point in contiguous USA. Start 21 Sep for 16 days. 218 miles, 10 walkers, 3 support party. Total budget £10k, PC £300, awarded £50 per club member paying by direct debit to max £400. Despite severe weather and deep snow managed to complete over half of the planned distance and made a concerted attempt to climb Mt Whitney but were beaten by the conditions. Excellent report received.

6. High Corsica 94. Lightweight expd. in mountainous area for Ships Co's. of BULLDOG, BEAGLE & ROEBUCK 90 Km in 8 days inc climb Monte Cinto (8887') & Monte Rontondo (8611'). 10 personnel but only 2 RN&RMMC. Asked for £70. Approved.

7. SULTAN Vikings 94. Led by Rob Finch. 8 - 14 Aug. 9 Personnel PC £160. Objectives were Rulten, Store Higravstind, Svolveaer Goat; all done on RN&RMMC expd in 1978. Awarded £700.

8. Ex Always Westward 94. Mne N Davies, Cdo Log Regt. Aug 94. Climb Chimborazo then paddle in Andean river. PC £500 asked for £50. Approved.

9. Spanish Fly 94. During last week in Apr 94. 4 personnel from SULTAN climbing in El Chorro area. PC £200. Awarded £25 per club member paying by direct debit.

## OTHER EXPEDITION NEWS

10. Jan to Mar 95 - Alastair Dinmore. Originally going to Huascarán (22,205 ft) the highest mountain in Peru. Now going to Ancohuma in the Cordillera Real, Bolivia which was the focus of the 1990 club expedition. There are still two places available on the team.

11. Icelandic 500 - Dec 94 to Mar 95. Cpl Sean Chapple 40 Cdo RM. Previously mentioned. High profile, very arduous, very impressed with the preparations. Awarded £400.

12. British Services Gasherbrum 1 Expedition 1996. DCI JS 33/94 gives details. Exped Sec is currently acting as Deputy Leader with specific responsibility for the research project. There will be two teams, a senior to tackle Gasherbrum and a junior (age under 23 on date of departure) to tackle a lesser peak in the vicinity. Team selection will begin in Jan 95.

13. Himalayan Experience. Les Yeoman. 10 personnel. Trek from Katmandu to Langtang Valley, ascend Tsergo Ri (16,592'), Kyangji Ri (16,500'). Climb Naya Kanga (19,180') (formerly Ganji La Chuli) by NE ridge. Requested £200, approved.

14. JSE to Antarctica 1997/98. Probably Dec 97 to Mar 98 (8 to 10 weeks in the field) in the area of the Antarctic Peninsula, ski-mountaineering and scientific work. Joint Services Team of up to 12 personnel including attached scientific staff. Stores to Falkland Isles by ship. Team fly UK to FI. From FI to Peninsula and return by Ship. Understand that Leader will possibly be John Kimbrey.

15. Kinabalu Fallout. DNPTS' B4G 120911Z APR 94 stated that MOD remains committed to AT. However, as a result of the Kinabalu rescue mission, and publicity attracted, future "high risk" expeds will receive additional and expert scrutiny.

16. DIPCLEAR France. Two and a half months notice is now required for Diplomatic Clearance for AT expeditions to France.

## AND FINALLY. A WHINGE

17. Expedition Reports. Once again I would like to remind everyone that those who receive a grant from the Club must provide me with a report on their activities. The official expedition report is preferred but if that is not possible then a personally produced report will suffice. An illustrated article for the Bulletin is also required. The Bulletin Editor will gladly advise on the format.

## JOINT SERVICES ALPINE MEET

22 July 5 August 1995

18. It is the turn of the RAF Mountaineering Association to lead the Joint Services Alpine Meet in 1995. A DCI publicising the meet is expected soon. The location of the Meet will be the Pennine Alps of Switzerland and is planned to take place during the last week in July and the first week in August (probably 22 Jul to 5 Aug) and will be based in either Saas Fee or Tasch. This is the same location as JSAM 1988.

19. Whilst previous alpine experience is not a necessary precursor for attendance on the Meet, previous mountaineering experience is. JSAM is not suitable as an introduction to mountaineering. JSAM 95 will offer Alpine Novices the opportunity to gain alpine experience under the tutelage of properly qualified mountain guides during the first week.



20. The mountains of the Pennine Alps provide some of the most spectacular climbing in the Alps, with the highest peaks being the Matterhorn 4477m and Monte Rosa 4634m. The mountains are heavily glaciated and there are many excellent snow and ice routes as were as big rock routes. This is a good area for alpine novices with easily accessible routes on such as the Breithorn 4164m, Castor 4226m and Pollux 4091m.

21. The overall Leader will be Flight Lieutenant Laurie Skuodas and the RN&RMMC Leader will be the Expedition Secretary. Recent years have seen record levels of attendance at the JSAM from the Club and it is hoped that this will be repeated for JSAM 95.

#### ELIGIBILITY TO ATTEND JSAM 95

22. Attendance is open to full members of the Service Mountaineering Clubs, subject to meeting the minimum climbing and experience standards which are:

- Rock Climbing: must be able to climb routes of at least Very Difficult standard.
- Rope Handling: must be able to handle ropes safely on multi-pitch climbs.
- Abseiling: must be able to abseil competently and safely and should have experience of multi-pitch abseils.
- Snow and Ice: must be competent in the use of ice axe and crampons.

23. Travel. Personnel are responsible for making their own transport arrangements to the Expedition area.

24. Base Camp. Details of the JSAM Base Camp site will be promulgated to all those attending the Meet when known.

25. Equipment- Selection of equipment is a matter of personal preference and is dependent on the choice of routes. A list of the minimum kit considered to be necessary for a safe and comfortable meet is enclosed. Personnel are responsible for providing all the equipment that they need. No equipment is available at the meet.

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

#### GUIDE BOOK

27. The following Guide Books are recommended and are

Cordee Books

3a De Montfort St, Leicester, LE1 7HD

or

West Col Productions,  
Goring

Reading RG8 9AA

a. Pennine Alps East (ISBN 900523131)

b. Pennine Alps Central (ISBN 0 90052314 X)

#### APPLICATION TO ATTEND

28. An application form for those wishing to take part in JSAM 95 is enclosed. It should be forwarded to the Expedition Secretary by 1 May 95.

## PEAK DISTRICT MEET 29 APR - 2 MAY 1994

Present:	Dave Ward	Liz Lodge
	Ian MacMillan	Dave Mackie
	Dave Barrett	John Burnip
	Justin Bealey	Phil Clarke
	Maureen Barrett	Chris Lodge

I left for Easter leave believing that there was minimal interest in this meet and had therefore decided not to pursue any arrangements. In fact I had told the one or two Members who had expressed interest that I wasn't going to bother with the meet. I was therefore somewhat embarrassed to return to the office 4 days before the proposed meet to find my civilian colleagues suggesting that the RN & RMMC might like to consider buying me an answering machine. After many phone calls the meet was then cobbled together and a campsite identified that was prepared to accept a late booking on a bank holiday weekend.

The word campsite is used generously. It consisted of a run down farm on the side of a hill. The facilities amounted to one tap and one toilet which was rather airy and exposed and appeared to have originated from the set of Aracnophobia. The site was, however, within easy walking distance of the Plough Inn.

Following the trend set last year the weather dawned bright and sunny and the meet split into separate groups, some heading for Stanage and the remainder for Froggat (via the Grindleford Cafe). At Froggat Phil Clarke chose to ignore the guidebook which described Broken Crack as a test-piece layback preferring instead to demonstrate a range of body and head jams before realising that his friends were still in the rucksack at the bottom. I suffered the ignominy of being hauled up Trapeze Direct having declared that it was a one move route that didn't present any difficulties to the competent VS leader. The day was completed at Froggat when Dave Mackie was talked into leading "Holly Groove" and found the ascent of the left hand crack somewhat hard for the grade - it's much easier if you use both cracks as the guidebook suggests!

Meanwhile at Stanage Dave and Maureen were once again out to break the world record for the number of routes climbed in a day, and we have it on good authority that Justin, our self declared El gritstone climber, failed to get off the ground on a Severe.

Sunday saw everyone at Gardoms Edge in an attempt to avoid the crowds. "Elliot's Buttress Direct" saw a couple of early ascents before Dave Barrett ventured onto what he thought was "Elliot's Buttress Indirect" graded at VS 4b. In fact he did his own variant of "Eye of Faith" at HVS 5b. Whatever the route, it demonstrates the advantage to be gained by spending the winter training on the many climbing walls now available to those in the Portsmouth area. Many routes were climbed, many falls were taken and much skin removed from knuckles and forearms but everyone professed to having enjoyed the day. Highlights (or low points, depending on your point of view) included an unknown climber clipping and then falling onto my gear as I was leading and nearing the top of the VS Apple Buttress, and Justin removing an entire finger nail while stopping Phil's fall off something that looked pretty extreme.

On the Monday everyone was back at Stanage, aiming to bag another few stars before heading off back to wherever they had come from. Hargreaves Original route, Robin Hood's Right Hand Buttress Direct, Apple Crack and Christmas Crack were just some of the routes climbed in a morning that saw most people's battered bodies declaring that enough was enough.

A successful meet that proved a good start to the season for all those who attended.

*Dave Ward.*



# 1994 SKI MOUNTAINEERING EXPEDITION TO THE PARC NATIONAL DE LA VANOISE

Created in 1963, the Vanoise National Park occupies an area of some 53,000 hectares, and is bordered by the valleys of the Isere to the North and West (Tarentaise) and the Arc (Maurienne) to the South. RN&RMMC ski mountaineers have visited the Vanoise on three previous occasions in 1989, 1990, and 1991, and have built up considerable experience of this area of outstanding natural beauty. This year, heavy snowfall in January and February, but little in March ensured adequate cover in the valley when the team arrived, and good depth at altitude. The avalanche risk was 2 throughout the period, and the snowpack was characterised by a suncrust of variable strength over a moderately consolidated, but dry, powder. No particularly weak layers were detected, and while some wind-slab was encountered it was thin and presented no significant risk. A strong team and outstanding weather conditions throughout the two week period combined to make this year's ski mountaineering expedition the most successful for several years. Led by Cdr James Grant OBE from the Directorate of Naval Manning, the team comprised Lt Cdr Richard Stokes of FOSM's staff, Lt Dick Tough the Deputy Leader from HMS NEPTUNE, Lt Russ Com RM from CTCRM, A/Surg Lt Andy Gibson attached to RNH Plymouth, S/Lt Edward Hurford studying Engineering at Cambridge University Cpl Neil "P" Peacock from BPT, AB(D) Kevin Amaira from PCDU, Devonport, and Mne Martin Hallett from Comacchio Group, Faslane.

## THE HAUTE MAURIENNE ONCE MORE

A smooth and uneventful drive through the night of Friday 18 March found the team in the Maurienne with good snow cover, brilliant sunshine, and a cloudless sky. The key was drawn from M. DELAPLACE, owner of the Auberge Le Pre Catin, and we moved into the Club Alpine Francais (CAF) dortoir, our home for the next two nights. A quick visit to the shop opposite, a snack lunch, and the group headed for the slopes. Bonneval is not an extensive downhill resort, but the tows reach up to about 2950m, and there are some good steep runs with plenty of opportunity to "pick your own route". The lack of sleep was quickly forgotten, and with caution thrown to the wind bodies hurtled downhill, unimpeded by rucksacks, risk of avalanche, or indeed anything else! Some interesting free style techniques were demonstrated and remarkably, everyone returned to the dortoir in one piece for a decent meal and a (relatively) early night.

Sunday was spent practising ski mountaineering techniques, including avalanche and crevasse rescue training, and on Monday the party moved up to the Refuge des Evettes high above the village of Bonneval sur Arc. After an altitude acclimatisation and training day spent climbing Pointe Tonini (3327m), (the first alpine summit for 2 members of the team), the party spent Wednesday tackling the steep and difficult slopes of L'Albaron (3637m), and reaching a height of 3500m on the final summit ridge before deteriorating snow conditions forced a retreat.

Five days into the expedition and the weather was still perfect! An 05.30 start, and Thursday saw the party setting off in moonlight to cross the three glaciers and three Cols that comprise the Glaciers de la Haute Maurienne. Described as "une des plus classiques des Alpes, est aussi une des plus belles", this glacier traverse covering some 12Km with over 1,000m of ascent and descent, and involved climbing down the steep Col de Trieves. An outstanding day! and we were well pleased to reach the Refuge du Carro, at 2759m the highest hut in the area.

Friday dawned with clear blue skies again, and we made a late 07.30 start to climb near-by Levanna Occidentale (3593m) on the French-Italian border. The summit ridge was exposed but not technically



Looking back over the Glaciers de la Haute Maurienne from the Col des Pavoites

difficult, and everyone reached the top. Kevin Amaira dug into his rucksack, and with the aid of a ski pole the White Ensign flew high above the Maurienne.

The gardienne shook us at 0445 the next morning, ready for the long ski back to Bonneval, but it soon became evident that a return to bed was indicated! Overnight the weather had closed in and snow was still falling steadily, and drifting in moderate winds. The chosen route would be difficult in the poor visibility now prevailing, but the gardienne had obtained a forecast and promised good weather the next day. With some relief we decided a day of rest was called for and there were prizes to be won. The Deputy Leader gained the Golden Blanket Award by a significant margin!

The bad weather long gone, Sunday dawned crisp and bright. Clocks were advanced an hour overnight, and so the day began at 0530 (0430 really!) with the team heading West towards the Glacier du Montet amongst perhaps the most stunning scenery of the entire tour. A long, steady climb through fresh snow up the glacier to the Col de l'Ouille Noure (3329M) was rewarded by quite spectacular views of the entire Glaciers de la Haute Maurienne, and the route followed three days before. From this perspective the Col de Trieves looked more like a vertical wall!

Once over the Col the group was horrified to be joined by some twenty or so down-hillers who had come up by ski tow from Val d'Isere. A few in the party were English and explained that they would be helicoptered back from Bonneval. The three ski instructors were the only ones in the party carrying any spare equipment at all, and it was quite evident from the diminutive size of their packs that this didn't amount to much. Quite evidently, no one carried a shovel. The party had been promised virgin powder. Sadly for them, they were not as fast as we were, despite the size of our packs, and so were obliged to follow in our not inconsiderable wake! During their descent, they managed to start at least two small avalanches. With no rescue equipment and such cavalier leadership the Col du Pelet tragedy in February is unlikely to be an isolated incident.

In spite of the carnival behind us, we enjoyed a superb ski down the Vallon de la Lenta, via Pont de l'Oulietta and Pied Montet. The snow just held out as far as the village, and we arrived back in Bonneval at 1430, having covered a total distance of 13.8Km. We sat in front of the refuge, enjoying a beer, as the "heliskiers" trooped past and got into a coach. We hoped they thought it was worth it; the drive back to Val d'Isere would take them the rest of the day!



## INTO THE VANOISE

It was evident that we would have to fend for ourselves for the remainder of the trip, and after buying food for the next  $3\frac{1}{2}$  days we set off for the Refuge du Plan du Lac. To our surprise and delight we discovered that Mme Amle-Marie Palliser, the gardienne who had looked after us so well in 1990, had arrived that morning. Indeed, it was just as well she had because a previous occupant had turned the Winter room gas supply off at the bottles, and the bottles themselves were under three feet of snow! If she hadn't been able to show us where to dig our evening meal might not have been quite what we planned.

The following day we skied up to the Col de la Vanoise in preparation for an attempt on La Grand Casse (3855M), the highest mountain in the Vanoise. Staying in the Winter room of the Refuge Felix Faure once again illustrated the high standards of both the CAF and PNV huts in the Vanoise: gas cooking, comfortable bunks and a wood-burning stove.

Wednesday. Another moonlit departure at 0615, and the party made its way on skis to the foot of the Grands Couloirs, one of the most demanding ski mountaineering routes in the Alps. The couloir is long with a sustained 45° slope, and punctuated with crevasses and serracs. With the snow as it was it would have been foolish for a party of our experience to attempt it on skis. So, roped up in three parties of three, and wearing crampons, we made our way up the steep glacier to the Col des Grands Couloirs. Behind us, a Frenchman and his wife tried to ski it, but we were not surprised to see them turn back on the crusty, wind-packed snow.



*Descending the Grand Casse*

From the col at 3750m easily angled snow fields lead to the corniced ridge overhanging the North facing Couloir des Italiens. After skirting the top of the Couloir des Italiens a short snow wall led to an extremely exposed and narrow snow ridge to the highest point. This was no place to hold a party and with the wind blowing as it was, certainly no place to fly any flags! To avoid congestion, each rope of three took it in turns to climb and descend the final section. It was a great achievement for all team members to reach the summit of this spectacular and demanding mountain, and a great privilege to be able to do so under such outstanding weather conditions.

Still roped together, the three parties set off down the mountain at 12.15. By this time, the crusty snow of the ascent had started to soften in the strong sunshine, and going was hard and demanding. Great care had to be taken with crevasses, indeed one of the group popped a leg through at one stage much to his consternation! At last we were all down to where the skis had been left, and an easy return saw us back at the refuge by 1500. It had been an excellent day, and everyone was well pleased. A distance of 8Km had been skied/climbed with a height gain of 1371m.

Unfortunately, the good weather had brought the French out in droves, and the Winter room facilities were now stretched to the limit. There was a good spirit in the refuge that night, in spite of the congestion, but the high cloud building from the West did not bode well. The guide with the newly arrived French party carried a radio, and he had heard on it that the forecast was not good.

## A RACE WITH THE WEATHER

There were three alternatives: to return the way we had come; to follow the intended route over the Glaciers de la Vanoise; or to start over the glaciers, but drop down to the Vallon de la Rocheure from the Col du Pelve (roughly half way over the glaciers) and then return along our route in.

The lack of stars indicated that cloud had built up overnight, but in the gathering light visibility still appeared good. To return the way we had come would have been tedious in the extreme, so at 0615 it was decided to go for it, knowing that a viable escape route existed if necessary. In spite of the two weeks of fine weather, the snow cover up to the Glacier de la Rechasse was still satisfactory, and good progress was made in the cool of the dawn.

With cloud thickening from the West, the light had an ethereal quality as we hurried towards the Col du Dard and then negotiated the awkward drop down to the Col du Pelve. We were now at the break point in the route, but the summits were still visible in spite of the worsening weather. Moving on as fast as we could we started up the long grind towards the Dome de Chasseforet (3586m). At about 3370m the cloud level dropped suddenly, and we had lost the race with the bad weather! Snow started to fall, and with compass and altimeter now firmly in play, we headed for the Col de Chasseforet (3507M), rather than climb the Dome as originally planned. Held on course by Dick Tough checking bearings from the rear, the party peaked out on the broad saddle of the col and continued South towards the rising Glacier de l'Arpont.

Skiing is difficult in a white-out at the best of times, and with "Pee" PEACOCK, the strongest skier in the party, out in front we traversed, side-slipped, and kick-turned our way down a steep, broken, and barely visible snowfield keeping a careful eye on the altimeter to avoid dropping too low too quickly. However, as we lost height so the visibility improved and sighting the rocky peak of the Dome de l'Arpont above and to our right confirmed that it was now time to swing East. Snow conditions and visibility continued to improve, and we were soon on the snowline, at about 2200m, looking down into the valley where the vehicles were parked. The weather was now clearing, and with skis again on our backs we followed a well defined path back to our starting point four days before.

Arriving back at the vehicles at 1530, we had covered a distance of 19Km, climbed a total of 1151m, and exposed those who had not done it before to another side of ski mountaineering, the side that requires navigational skill and the confidence to continue in spite of bad weather.

## A PERFECT END

Departing at 0930 the next day, it was evident the long spell of good weather had broken. Indeed, it was a stormy journey back across France and we arrived in Le Havre at 2215. Fortunately the overnight ferry had been delayed by the bad weather, and we arriving back in Portsmouth at 0630 to part our separate ways.

Thanks to the generous sponsorship from the RNWSA, RN&RMMC, DNPTS, and the RN&RM Sports Control Board a strong team, and outstanding weather conditions, this year's ski mountaineering expedition to the French Alps was the most successful for several years. In all, a total distance of some 110Km was covered almost all on skis, with combined ascents and descents totalling over 17,500m ... tremendous fun, but no holiday! Next year we depart 31 March and return 15 April... I'm collecting names!

*James Grant*



## JOINT SERVICES SWANAGE MEET

### JUL 15 - 17 1994

## Members Attending:

Keven Blake	Dave Mackie
Tracey Blake	Paul Goldman
Gary Jackson	Ian Macmillan
Nobby Clarke	Scotty (RAF)
Mike Fawcett	Brian Pancott
Dave Barrett	Colin Mason
Maureen Barrett	Chris Lodge

The meet was, as usual based at Tom's Field in Langton Matravers. The fine weather had brought out a good crop of climbers and the tents began sprouting on Friday evening. A pre-climbing brief was held in a local hostelry before a night navigation exercise back to the site.

On Saturday most of the meet mustered at Cattle Troughs for some refresher training. It was clear that some of us had been away from the rocks for some time and this proved a very useful session. The extreme heat forced us off the cliffs early and while some left in

search of ice creams others went for a dip off the rocks. Returning to the camp site we were dismayed to observe a New Age Travellers encampment which turned out to be Dave Mackie's mobile museum piece.

Sunday was another glorious day and we all appeared at Subliminal for some more interesting routes. The most interesting was Avernus which starts in a dawn and climbs across the roof, exiting by a small hole in the cliff top. Many of the team climbed this if only to get out of the sun. Double Chockstone gave some people problems completely out of proportion to its VD status. Notwithstanding, it was obvious that the Portsmouth climbing wall team had been working hard on their techniques and there was some elegant movement on the higher grade climbs.

The meet fizzled out on Sunday evening as we all went our separate ways. It had been a weekend of glorious weather, dry, steep rock and enjoyable company. Swanage is a very useful area for beginners with some challenging routes for the rock jocks. Perhaps it is not suitable for a JS meet but we should return next year.

*Keven Blake.*

## SNOWDONIA MEET

### 17 -19 JUNE 1994

## Attendees:

POPT Billy Bremner, Lt Steve Taylor, Chris Lodge,  
Lt Dave Mackie, Col(RM) Dave Nicholls,  
ADM Malcolm Rutherford, Lt Pete Sellers, Cdr Brian Pancott,  
CPO Phil Clark, S/Lt Dave Cummings, Lt Richard Kendrick,  
S/Lt Dave Townsend, Lt Dave Barrett, Lt Kev Blake,  
Lt Dave Ward, CPO Trev Newport.

Firstly let me give a warm hearted thank you for a good early start on Sat 18 - from BRNC who just happened to be using the cottage the same weekend and got up at 0530 (Nightmare!!) After this initial shock the meet members split themselves between climbing at venues ranging from Tremadog to Cloggy and the walking ranging from Tryfan - Moel Siabod - Nantlle Ridge and to, of course, Snowdon. After a reasonably quiet evening (very rare!!!) we managed to climb in several more areas as Llanberis, Carreg Alltrem (near Betws-y-Coed) with others on the Carneddau.

The weekend would have been just a typical weekend "except" for just one or 2 "hiccup", would you believe from the our very own

Club Bulletin Editor Lt Steve Taylor and his sidekick Lt Dave Ward. The story goes as follows:

Sat 18 - somewhere on Cloggy. Wrong Route/Dodgy Compass - need I say more!! (Not quite right- Ed.)

Sun 19 - Now myself not being a believer in gossip found myself on Carreg Alltrem, a steep crag area near Betws-y-Coed. Would you believe it, but guess who was there. I was looking up praising their efforts as I could see Dave Ward having quite an ordeal on Fratricide Wall HVS 5A. When I shouted up to congratulate Dave on such a good start to his season, he replied "This isn't an HVS 5A this a VS 4B. 'Sorry' I replied, 'that is definitely an 5A - I did it yesterday'. Low and behold Dave started quivering but managed to get up with gritted teeth. I would love to say that was all but half hour later I saw our intrepid heroes attempting Lavaredo Wall VS 4B (but I can tell you it must be the most exciting VS I've ever been on). Dave's last words before becoming superman were 'Steve I think I'm going to fall off!' - oops.

*Billy Bremner.*

## WINTER MEET BALMACARA

### 7 - 13 FEBRUARY 1994

Another good Winter Meet at Balmacara, well attended by club members from all over UK, with good routes covered on Skye (Sgurr nan Gillean and Pinnacle Ridge), Forcan Ridge, South Kintail Ridge, Five Sisters, Torridon (Liatach, Beinn Alligin) and Beinn Fhada, to name but a few.

There were a couple of epics - of course. One group set off for the Falls of Glomach and never found them (the tourist trail ran out!); a nameless duo reported losing a credit card somewhere in one of many gear shops and had to spend at least 2 days (and subsequently a small fortune) searching for and finding it. ("Was it really in my pocket all that time?"). The prize, however, went to Elaine who attempted to nose dive off the Hill on day one of the meet. Any excuse to be tucked up in a warm hospital bed for the

week with her arm in a bandage when the weather forecast was .... seasonal.

We all welcomed three new club members to our midst; Elaine Limb (stay longer next time, please!), Pete Okopski and Dave McMenemy from Portland, and Louise Chandler, climbing partner of Matt Porter from Glasgow Careers Office. The old stalwarts who could get time off turned up as usual, with only a few cancellations due to last minute operational requirements like "She wouldn't let me have the car for the week". (Not that old trick!). Make a date for 1995, 6-12 February, at Balmacara. Hope to see you there.

*Jane Grimley*



# THE SPANISH FLY

Andy Wright Chris Clayton Jones  
Gary Jackson Andrew Mansfield

The party arrived at Malaga Airport mid morning on 22 April, and decided to stock up on the week's supplies before driving out to our final destination, El Chorro. This proved to be more difficult than expected as none of our party spoke a single word of Spanish and nobody in the supermarket spoke English. After a great deal of sign language and pointing at different cheeses we left, pleased with the amount of goods we had bought for so little money. The prices are very reasonable, especially for alcohol.

Our navigator had little trouble finding the villa, Finca La Campana, as excellent directions were supplied. We arrived in the early afternoon deciding, since the weather was dismal, to settle in and plan the next day's exploration. Andy suggested a walk around the various local crags to familiarise ourselves with the area.

The village of El Chorro is surrounded by breathtaking scenery and a number of excellent bolted crags within walking distance. We headed off towards the largest of these with a sense of awe and wondered why British rock is never this spectacular. The weather had cleared up overnight and we stripped off to work on the suntans.

We had a slight problem with rockfall but soon reached the top of a large gully scramble to superb views across the valley, down onto the large dam and hydroelectric power station in the village. Instead of returning down our ascent route, which we had deemed unsafe, a dusty trail led us eventually to the railway line, a short way out of the village. A little further along this track we discovered the Los Cotos slabs. The routes were easy to find as they are well bolted but are also quite polished at the bottom. None of our party climb anything above HVS regularly, so we were all a bit nervous about warming up on a VS 4c! The rock boots stuck well to the warm rock so the route provided an exciting but safe start to the week. It was decided to return the following day to try something a bit more difficult.

There are actually three crags at Los Cotos. Altos and Medios are above the railway, Bajas is below and less well protected. Medios is by far the most popular of the three and contains the most polished of the routes. Altos is the highest and sports some good two pitch climbs, all well bolted on solid but finery rock. On Monday evening we took a relaxing drive to El Torcal, an out-

standingly beautiful area about an hour's drive from El Chorro. After a short walk round we were hooked and El Torcal was chosen as Tuesday's destination.

This place make Brinham Rocks look like Legoland! The routes are quite difficult to find even with a guide book and a lot of time was spent just looking and saying WOW! Eventually the first E number was climbed, to everyone's delight, and a couple of HVS

5a leads were logged to boost the confidence. It can be quite cold at El Torcal as it is located in the mountains, so some warm clothing is advisable, although a lot of the climbs are out of the wind.

Wednesday was treated as a fairly relaxing day in preparation for our individual 'projects' the following day. Andy and I wanted to attempt El Amprax, a spectacular 590 ft multi-pitch mountain El overlooking the lake. Chris and Gary planned to walk the King's Way, which has to be seen to be believed. Suspended 400 ft above the lower Gorge of El Chorro, the Kings Way is a walkway only 2 ft wide in places and partially fallen away in others, and part of an 8 km walk into the upper reaches of the gorge.

The attempt on El Amprax failed at the top of the third pitch as both climbers decided that was quite high enough for one afternoon, and the King's

Way went off without a hitch. The day's outings were discussed over a bar-b-que that evening with much use of the words 'unbelievable' and 'spectacular', so the following day the tasks were swapped over.

Since Friday was the last day, a proper meal in a Spanish restaurant was called for. The two of us who had neglected to take our cameras along the King's Way had decided to try again and meet the others at El Kiosko. We had eaten here before and found the food to be excellent and reasonably priced. We bade our farewells to the crags and scenery with a couple of drinks on the veranda that evening and left reluctantly on Saturday morning silently vowing to return.

We couldn't believe the Spaniards stop climbing in the summer because it was too hot and decided to start planning our trip here for next Easter. Of course, Benidorm is supposed to have good climbing at this time of year.

Andy Mansfield



The Los Cotos Medios slabs.



# The 1994 British Barri Shigri Expedition

by Paul Hart (based on the expedition diary)

**G**ari Jenkins and Paul Hart left UK, Stanstead on the 11 August 1994, flying Romania Air, via Bucharest to Delhi, India.

We arrive in Delhi light-headed with jet-lag and the remains of an alcohol induced headache, (five hours spent in the transit lounge of Bucharest airport would drive anyone to drink!). We are obliged to finalise details of the expedition with the IMF. As this should have all been completed prior to our arrival we are not overly impressed we become even less impressed when we are required to stay overnight in Delhi as it transpires our Liaison Officer (LO) is not ready to proceed.

All climbing expeditions to India require registration with the Indian Mountaineering Federation, this can be found in Delhi at Benito Juarez Road, Anand Niketan, New Delhi-110021. A fee is payable in advance of permission being given to climb and a LO being appointed. (It is the concern of the expedition to equip the LO adequately so that he can perform his duties).

On the morning of the 12 August 1994 we finally depart Delhi for Manali by taxi. Not cheapest method, and far from comfortable with the quantity of kit we are carrying, however we want to arrive in Batal as early as possible to build in acclimatisation time to our fairly hectic program. After only a short time on the road we are aware that the most dangerous phase of the whole expedition is likely to be this journey - it appears that right of way goes to the vehicle with the biggest horn. A plethora of accidents confirm our worst fears and we settle back and wait to become just another unfortunate Indian road statistic!

We arrive at Batal, having met the third member of the expedition, some four days later. The delay is due to problems with the Liaison Officer (LO) and not an intended break in the journey. The problems arise due to our requirement to equip him for the expedition to the same standards as the rest of the team, this has been done, but completely inadequately, by Adrian. However, the blame does not lie completely with the expedition leader. The LO arrived without any personal equipment whatsoever,



The Camp below Shign Parbat.

and in consideration of his size 5 feet, it is unlikely that any expedition without forewarning could have supplied him with footwear to suit! After much wrangling Gari, Bob and myself leave the LO and make our way to Batal over the Rohtung Pass (12,000 ft) by hired jeep.

Between Himachal Pradesh (India) and China there exists a single road, which follows the course of the Chandra River. This river is sourced at Chandra Tal (Lake) high on the border. The road is little more than a dirt track liable to rock fall, subsidence and collapse. In its lower regions, where it lies adjacent to the river, it is due to severe flooding. As the road enters and exits the Chandra valley via two high passes, it is open for limited periods only, usually from May to late September, before the passes are closed by snow. Travel on the road is both dangerous and highly uncomfortable. Batal lies some 150 km along this road from Manali

(The Chandra River has never been kayaked and has great potential for future canoeing expeditions).

Arrival at Batal coincides with the initial effects of altitude - headache, nausea and lack of breath! Here, we are first introduced to the senior porter and horseman, Sada. After a very uncomfortable overnight respite at Batal, we depart for the expedition Base Camp some 10 km along the valley. The horses carry

much of our equipment, but due to our lack of acclimatisation, both Gari and I are extremely slow. We are fortunate in looking particularly ill while passing some local goat-herders, their sympathy extends to a very welcome cup of tea despite the goat milk used. We make a particularly impressive crossing of a swollen tributary of the Chandra, using only a stretch of wire, a karabiner, and a sling-Stallone, eat your heart out!

The entrance to the Barri Shigri Glacier lies on the Soumem side of the Chandra River, it is necessary therefore, to cross the river at Batal and then double back on the road to reach the entrance on foot. In the course of doing this it is likely one will encounter many of the tributaries that feed the Chandra. Despite their appearance these streams are extremely dangerous. They are fed by the glacial melt water from high on the mountains, are extremely cold and extremely powerful. Crossing of the streams is recommended in the early morning before they reach full strength. However, due to the number of lives that have been lost during attempted crossings of these tributaries, the 'high-line' method is recommended, *A safety rope should always be used.*

Arrival in Base camp coincides with pretty awful weather and so Gari and I take the opportunity to rest and try to recuperate.



The heights marked on the Government published maps are at present under review. All altitudes appear to be 'low' and they are presently being reassessed. All figures given in this report are based on the Government published maps, though recent German satellite based maps indicate considerably higher figures. On the basis of their findings so far, the Indian Government have advised that the Rohtung Pass is over 13000 ft high rather than 12000 ft as denoted on maps at present.

Thursday the 18 August 1994, a day to remember, for Gari at least. It's his 30th Birthday! In celebration the cooks prepare something very special, goat and rice, its not until we start eating it that we find out where the goat came from. Despite our high hopes, the goat is not one purchased from the goat herders we came across on the journey up - no its one that was found drowned in the river ... three days ago. Horror and disbelief, its all we can do to retain what we've just eaten so as not to appear impolite to our happy hosts!!

The following morning we make our way up to Camp 1 to drop off kit, Sada is our guide and despite his smart stature he disappears off in a cloud of dust while we attempt to crawl up the snout of the glacier on hands and knees. Its incredibly tough going. Everything is much higher and further away than it looks and when we finally arrive at Camp 1 we are both exhausted!

Judging distance is very difficult in this region due to the scale of features and the inaccurate maps available. Its not uncommon for a feature that appears 4 km away to be up to 10 km away.

Luckily Sada is there with a cup of tea already prepared. After tea, Sada departs for Camp 2 and we begin a weary descent back to base camp. The descent is much longer, hotter and difficult than we expected, not least because we lose the route on several occasions! On arrival back at base camp some 14 hours later we are dead on our feet. Luckily our dedicated porter Turman is on hand to revive us, it's not to be the last time he is our saviour!

The glacier is heavily crevassed and fractured. Its ice surface has a loose covering of boulders and scree, all of which is particularly unstable. Constant avalanche and rock fall crash onto the glacier, creating huge depressions and rises, often up to 30 m and more in height or depth. To advance up the glacier, one must negotiate these obstacles as well as the falling

ice and rock. Where possible it is best to meander around them as otherwise the process involves climbing and descending them. Whichever method is used progress is invariably painfully slow and always exhausting!

The next few days see us beginning the process of lifting all our kit up to the highest camp. Despite his remarkable physical capability Turman is still only capable of lifting one rucksack, and between myself and Gari we have five packs. To compound problems Gari is suffering not only with the altitude, but also with the after effects of our goat meal! As a result we are forced to ferry the kit up through the camps in stages, with Gari resting as we achieve each new camp. After our second lift to Camp 2, we are told the next camp is the Advance Base Camp, where we will meet up with Adrian.

Altitude affects every individual differently, and even affects individuals differently at different times. It is a direct result of the reduction in the level of oxygen (or thinness of air) at increasing height above sea-level. The effects of altitude are symptomised by headaches, nausea, loss of appetite and difficulty in 'getting one's breath'. *Altitude sickness* can be extremely dangerous and is potentially fatal, vomiting, mental incoherence, blood-shot eyes, and loss of consciousness are all symptoms of altitude sickness.

Before we can go on I have to do a final lift from Camp 1 and Turman has to return to Base Camp to join us some days later. By now Gari is very weak, his acclimatisation is not as quick as mine he is also not eating. Since our arrival our diet has consisted of rice and dahl. At the best of times this would be a pretty unimaginative diet, but after several days it's almost inedible (unless you are Indian), I am force feeding myself and Gari has given up eating! The situation becomes even more desperate, when I take over the cooking for the evening, using the kerosene burner Turman has left for us. Gari questions my competence with the appliance and I allay his fears by almost incinerating the cook tent and replacing my eyebrows and stubble with a fine coating of charcoal! The cooker gives up the ghost but after investigation I declare I can fix it, Gari gives up the ghost too and settles down to cold rations.

After several minutes I inform Gari there's no problem, and the cooker will work now that I've taken it apart and

cleaned it. Gari declares the piece "well and truly broken then", and retires from the tent in anticipation of my relighting it. The small explosion that occurs as I put the flame to the cooker confirms Gari's suspicions and I join him outside for cold rations! Luckily all is not lost and using an old tin, some kerosene, and colossal initiative, I manage to jury-rig a Trangia cooker - at least we can get hot drinks, though cooking rice is out of the question (much to Gari's pleasure).

Eventually we make it to what we believe is ABC and meet Adrian and the rest of party. After seven days lifting we are ready for a rest, however, Adrian informs us that there is still more kit to bring up and that myself and Gari will be doing that for the next few days, along with Turman and Bob, who will meet us at Camp 2. The following day Adrian departs for Manali to purchase more provisions and as Gari is still very weak. I descend alone to meet Bob and Turman on the first of our ferrying stints to ABC.

As Gari regains his strength he again becomes involved in the lifting of equipment. Despite a conversation with Adrian before he departed on the inadequacy of the meals, we are still getting very little to eat. Turman is quite happy with his rice and dahl, but the single tin of tuna, and few potatoes that Gari, Bob myself are sharing each day is not enough to keep us going! Adrian informed us that the majority of the rations are for when we begin the ascent proper. Both Gari and I are under the impression that he's misjudged the quantity of food required just like the number of porters required! We had expected to do very little lifting on the mountain, certainly nothing like we have done, even Turman has been unhappy about the amount he's been carrying. The rest of the porters refuse to carry more than 18kg, while we struggle along with sometimes more than 40, and always more than 30kg.

Porters can be hired in a number of ways, but in this instance they can be hired locally at Manali. Porters will provide their own equipment for general duties, but it is necessary to equip them with specialist clothing, and boots and replacement boots should their own wear out. They are paid according to the number of seasons they have portered and their age and experience. A typical first year porter will expect 150 Rps/day (=£3.00), rising by 50 Rps/day for each season fulfilled.



Eventually Adrian returns and the following morning we move up to 17000ft and make up a new camp at a position Gari and I have previously identified. We took the opportunity of Adrian's absence to move our kit up above the camp Adrian had incorrectly called ABC. The route up to this camp takes us on to the glacier proper, as we now have to cross open ice. There are numerous crevasses and Gari and I take the opportunity to set up a photo/video shoot, alternatively lowering each other down into a crevasse to take pictures while the other one jumps it. The porters think that we are crazy and wander off shaking their heads, we are one step ahead of them, we know we're crazy!

From this point we split up. There are six of us going onto the next camp which is at 18000ft. Bob (who will not be attempting the peak), Adrian and Turman (who are one climbing pair), and Gari and I (a second climbing pair), and finally Gupter who is carrying food and will not stay at the next camp. Unfortunately, the question of food now rears its ugly head and senses of humour begin to wear thin! On a breakfast of two milky cups of oats we make the ascent. No one (Adrian aside) is happy with this, and this leads to disagreement between the group. It's a particularly taxing climb, quite steep, with considerable meandering to avoid the crevasse, and at the end we climb wearily into our tents and awake the following morning to a heavy snowfall. It's a rather lucky set of circumstances that allow us a days rest before we make our way even higher!

This far north it is usual to expect the Indian Monsoon to be finished by Mid August at the latest. The winter snows do not usually start until October.

We have now been joined by Sada and we begin our ascent to what we now judge to be our final camp before an attempt on Shigri Parbat. Adrian is leading and as usual, having discussed where we will rest and what the intentions for the day are, he does his own thing! The culmination of this is that we find ourselves crossing a particularly dangerous crevassed slope, in white out conditions. I discover to my horror that Turman doesn't know how to belay, and I am forced to secure myself, Gari and Bob, while Adrian disappears off to find a suitable spot to camp. Bob is in danger of becoming a cold casualty, and we lead him up onto the ridge and set up his tent, before fixing Adrian's and then finally our own tent as the others bring up the rest of the bergens. I have words with Adrian about safety but he is adamant



*The route up the Shigri Glacier*

that everything is fine. I resolve to ensure that Gari and I remain climbing partners as I do not trust Adrian.

From the ridge we have a commanding view (when the weather breaks) of the whole of the Barri Shigri Glacier, we can also see across into China (Tibet). There are two things of note that we discover from our vantage point. First, there exists a previously unknown pass (19,000 ft) between India and China. Second the single successful previous recorded attempt on Shigri Parbat, could not have used the route they suggested they had. The route they used involved following the Upper Barri Shigri Glacier to the back of the mountain, this is impossible, because the Upper glacier does not begin at the back of Shigri Parbat. It is also obvious that the maps are massively inaccurate, showing mountain ridges where they don't exist.

After 48 hours the weather breaks and we make an attempt on Shigri Parbat. We part with Bob and Sada, who are descending, and the remainder of us head off through deep snow to the summit. We do this on five spoons of 2 minute noodles each. We make good progress for two hours then I become concerned with the weather, and more importantly Turman's safety techniques. We have combined to traverse a particularly difficult slope, with Adrian leading, however, Turman fails to secure us properly and puts us all in danger. I climb to Turman and take over but we have wasted a considerable amount of time. I climb past Adrian and bring in the rest, but from our vantage point which is only 700ft from the summit I judge the weather about to break and suggest we evacuate

to the camp. After much heated argument Adrian agrees and we descend. Gari and I make a further comment about lack of food and this causes a bitter disagreement between myself as Medic and Adrian as leader on the quantity of rations required.

At altitude, dehydration is a considerable problem. It is important that food-stuffs are water based and easily digestible, however, they must also be high in calories to allow the body to combat the effects of cold and strenuous physical activity. Furthermore, they must be appealing to counter-act the loss of appetite that occurs at altitude. The service issue Arctic Ration Pack, is a perfect solution to all these problems!

Adrian decides to descend to the last main camp while Gari and I decide to remain on the ridge, hoping for a break in the weather and a further attempt at the mountain. We are left with the remainder of the food which consists of several packs of low calorie dehydrated soup, two minute noodles, and a couple of pasta choice meals. These provisions keep us going for the next 5 days as the weather fails to improve. We remain trapped in the tent at 20,000ft with continuous heavy snowfall, strong winds, and extremely cold temperatures. It's a very uncomfortable period as each time we light the cooker the condensation inside the tent melts and makes everything wet, as soon as the cooker's extinguished it all refreezes -on us!

Eventually the weather breaks, thankfully just before we do (nine days of Gin Rummy, and Crib, can drive you insane!). During the days in the tent we've been planning what to do should



the weather break. We decide that Shigri Parbat's out of the question as the ski route down isn't feasible, however, the un-named peak is. Very weak and once again carrying heavy packs, we make our way to the summit of the un-named peak. Because of our weakened state and the depth of the snow we make slow progress. There is a very steep ridge leading up to the final almost vertical face before the summit, the ridge cannot be crossed towards its higher edge because it is an overhanging face and I believe the heavy snowfall has made it likely to collapse. The lower edge is also unstable in my opinion due to the pitch of the slope, therefore we decide to cross the steep slope centrally. Using snow pickets Gari belays me across the slope. There is one particularly worrying section where the slope becomes steepest and the danger of avalanche becomes extremely high. I make my way across this section as quickly as possible and thankfully it doesn't give way. At the far side of the slope there's a protrusion of rock and I manage to hammer in some secure protection. After I have brought Gari across, I make my way up the final face which is very steep but only 50ft high. It's very deep snow on ice and has tremendous potential for disappearing off into oblivion but luckily it holds (I am now thankful I've lost so much weight!).

At 1300 on 13 September 1994, I lead us onto summit of the peak which we decide to call *Tikha Parbat*.

"Tikha" is Hindu for "Fine". Therefore Tikha Parbat means Fine Mountain. This has been submitted to the IMF for recognition.

Among the reasons that we named the mountain Tikha were; that it sounds like Tigger - my nickname; it was the most common word used by our friend and guide Turman, and because Tikha means "Fine", which is what the weather was when we got there!

But our victory is short-lived as once again, the weather closes in. Having led us up, it's now Gari's turn to lead us down. We make a very rapid descent on skis from just below the summit where Gari judges the snow conditions stable. The heavy packs, poor light and deep crusty snow all combine to make it extremely difficult. After numerous tumbles and one very scary out of control incident close to the ridge edge Gari decides that it's unsafe to continue (or rather I am) and we set up camp and wait for the weather window to re-appear.

With heavy rucksacks it is very difficult to downhill ski in deep snow as the bouncing action required is impossible

unless you have legs like the Hulk. For this reason the preferred method was to telemark on the deeper snow sections, and then downhill on the steeper slopes that had less snow. Ski-mountaineering bindings allowed both modes of operation, however, they are not as comfortable, nor as effective as true, ski-specific bindings.

Another uncomfortable day spent in the tent. Then finally we have the break in the weather we've needed all along, typical that it comes on our way down. We break camp as quickly as possible and begin the last 3000ft of our ski descent. As we approach the most dangerous slope, complete with huge crevasses, we pause for a rest. Gari decides that this bit's too dangerous and suggests we cross the slope on foot before skiing down at a different point where the slope is less than 45 degrees. I disagree, I'm in a hurry to get down and think it's easier to simply traverse the slope on skis! I get my way and almost get killed - trust Gari to be right again! I begin the traverse and cover about 60m, when I hear Gari yelling at me. I stop and look round, thinking I've dropped something, however it's slightly worse than that and I watch the whole region I've just skied wiped away by an avalanche!

The worst thing about the whole incident, apart from the fact that it brushes past the back end of my skis and knocks me over (more humiliation in front of Gari), is that it's completely silent. The side of the mountain to a depth of about 9ft of snow sweeps down and bypasses the area I'd identified as a natural safe run-off, instead it takes a sharp left and disappears over the edge of the cliff - "Hope the camp's not underneath that lot" I think!

Gari does his bit and gets rope to me so that I can make my way up the slope and then traverse it on foot, meanwhile, he's stuck at the point I began my ski descent. While I sit in a nervous huddle, he self-belays himself across the slope. Despite our close shave Gari has the presence of mind not to say "Told you so", realising that he can still be incorporated into the disaster and there are no witnesses. The gleam in his eye suggests that he's merely saving it for when there's a better audience!

As we descend further the snow field becomes more and more heavily crevassed. Initially they are small enough to jump, but they gradually become wider and deeper. We cross them on ice bridges which span the crevasses at irregular intervals. Its pretty un-nerving - we have to keep up the speed to reduce the

pressure on the ski surface, but the distance between crevasses is so short that if we fail to stop immediately on crossing the ice-bridge we'll disappear down the next chasm anyway!

After several nerve-wracking hours we spy two figures in the distance. It's G2 (as we call him) and Gupter. They tell us that they saw our initial descent from the mountain through the telescope, but then saw the avalanche sweep down across our path and off the mountain to land just east of the camp. Fearing the worst they were on their way to try and dig us out! Re-assured by this concern for our well being, we immediately give them half the weight in our rucksacks and ski off back to camp! Gupter and G2 return some hours after us, muttering darkly about wishing the avalanche more success next time!

Luckily, good will is restored by the offer of whisky to celebrate our successful climb of the un-named peak and safe (?) ski descent from the summit. Even Adrian is happy to see us and our differences are forgotten as we hand around the whisky (which is fortunate as it's Adrian's whisky!). After our enforced diet we rapidly consume everything that's placed in front of us, which is quite surprising as most of it is goat of one form or another!

The following morning we have to make our way back to Base Camp. It's a sad parting as we have grown quite close to the porters. Gari and I have agreed to share the tipping, which is customary, paying half the porters each. It's not until we've paid them that I realise Gari has duped me again and I've paid the expensive half! As we finally depart we hope that Adrian doesn't realise his whisky's gone and that the handshake we both receive is genuine.

25km later, and with another 25km to go just to get to Base Camp we realise he's had the last laugh! Having left the medical stores with him (as he intends to continue another phase of the expedition), we are slightly lighter than on the way up. However, it is only slightly and on this occasion we have to do the trip in one go. I am more than 20kg lighter than when I started the expedition, and Gari is even more depleted than me. Gari and I are carrying more than 35kg each and poor old Turman more than 40kg. We had asked Adrian to let G2 and Gupter help us carry the stuff down, but he refused, saying that more porters would be on their way up and that they could help us - we have yet to see them!

At Camp 1 we finally meet the



porters, but only one is assigned to help us. Gari is on the point of exhaustion and the porter takes half his load and sets off to Base Camp. The three of us follow at a far slower pace, even Turman is beginning to show the strain (hardly surprising as he's still wearing plastic boots because his others fell apart). As night falls we still have 10km to go over the worst of the moraine. It's particularly risky as there have been a considerable number of landslides since our journey up and the route is now unfamiliar. Several falls later we are on the point of giving up and settling down for the night, luckily the Gods smile on us and the moon comes out. This gives us just enough light to see by and makes the rest of the journey possible. To have continued in complete darkness, hopping from slippery rock to slippery rock, with the heavy rucksacks, would almost certainly have ended in a broken leg or something worse. As it is we all stumble, exhausted, into Base Camp some 13hrs later, where we take a well earned break.

The final 10km from Base Camp to Batal prove to be just as difficult as the last 50km. Both Gari and I are suffering with huge blisters on our feet, I have lost the toe-nail on my right big toe, and Turman is so bad he had to ride a horse. Luckily the horses are taking most of the load but Gari and I are still required to carry light loads. We split up, Turman forging ahead with horses, and Gari and I limping along in the rear. When we come to the main tributary we crossed by high-line on the way in, we find we've forgotten the karabiner and sling - nightmare! This entails us crossing by foot, Gari's successful but I slip and lose my footing. In order to regain my footing I remove my rucksack, keeping hold of the strap. "No-problem", I think, as I manage to stand up, then I lose my footing and submerge again, as I put my hands out to break my fall I realise that the rucksack's on its own!

While I wring my clothes out on the banks, and Gari searches for the rucksack, Turman comes up to tell us that we'll miss the transport if we don't hurry. We thank Turman for his advice and once again limp off in the direction of Batal. Fortunately, it's hard to keep our spirits low for long, especially as when we arrive at Batal we are able to purchase two omelettes, a dozen bars of chocolate, and a bottle of illegal whisky. To show our appreciation I treat the lady store owner who's suffering with an inflammation of her finger joints (probably due to arthritis), with Vokerol. She's ecstatic with the prescription, as they are unable to obtain

drugs here and I narrowly miss becoming her adopted son.

Finally the transport arrives and we depart for Manali. It's an even more terrifying journey than the one in. The transport is completely overcrowded with people making the last journey out of the valley and so we have to sit on top. As we bounce around on top of the truck we are forced to lie flat with the luggage to avoid being swept off by overhanging rocks (the driver obviously forgot we were up there). Despite the dangers of losing our heads, we are probably in the safest place on the outside. At least here we can jump off if the truck decides to disappear off down the side of the mountain, which is exactly what it threatens to do at every turn in the road.

Some 10 hours later we arrive back in Manali. After de-mounting and kissing the ground, Gari and I make our fond farewells with Turman. This time Gari pays the tip, which is considerable, as Turman has been our personal cook, porter, and more importantly friend for the duration of the expedition. Happy that we are now even, Gari and I head for the nearest hotel, where we do our best to become human again...

There is no doubt that the expedition suffered both successes and failures. We failed to reach the summit of Shigri Parbat, coming within seven hundred feet of the top before being forced down by bad weather. However, this was not our biggest failure! Our biggest failure was to utilise the time we had to achieve properly far greater results. Too much time was wasted in ferrying equipment up the glacier. This could have been accomplished by sitting camp before the ridge. A residual number of porters could have remained with the expedition to set up the glacier camps. Concurrent with this is the failure to provide correct dietary requirements, thus weakening expedition members and reducing their capabilities. It was intended that during the acclimatisation period we (Lt Jenkins and Lt Hart) would have time to explore some of the glaciers entering into the Great Barri Shigri Glacier. During these exploratory forays we also intended climbing some of the lower slopes of the adjacent peaks such as "White Sail", "Tiger Tooth", and "Snow Dome", and practise our skiing. Due to the time spent ferrying kit and our general poor state we could complete neither of these exercises. Blame for this failure can be laid squarely at the feet of the expedition leader.

On the positive side, we have the fact that we climbed an un-named and previ-

ously un-climbed peak of 21,050ft (altimeter reading), achieved after 9 days spent on a ridge at 20,000ft in white-out conditions, with little food. We skied off the peak and made a total ski descent of approximately 4000ft, over difficult and sometimes extremely hazardous terrain. This is the first time (as far as we are aware) that this has ever been done in this range of mountains. Further to this, we were able to utilise a solar panel to provide a power source for recharging Hi 8mm video batteries (again to our knowledge the first time that this has been done), and were able to film the entire project. Finally, we discovered a previously unknown pass between the Kullu District of India and the Spiti Region extending into China.

One further success of the expedition, but one which is un-quantifiable, is the benefit to ourselves on a personal basis. We had the opportunity to test ourselves in an extreme and unforgiving environment, we had the chance to develop and improve specialist climbing and skiing skills and finally, we had the chance to learn how to, and how not to, run such a venture. We are both now confident that we could undertake and lead a similar expedition in the future!

In many of today's adventure activities, the ability to fall back on the safety net of advanced medical facilities and rescue services allows a considerable degree of flexibility in planning. In the "British Bari Shigri Expedition" no such medical facilities or rescue services existed therefore, every decision was potentially a matter of life or death. Such knowledge places those who make the decisions under considerable stress, stress that is difficult to recreate in any other environment. Personal safety is balanced against concern for the team, and the desire to achieve the goal. Such interplay of considerations can lead to remarkable demonstrations of courage and fortitude, and conversely, displays of self-consideration at the expense of others. Whatever the outcome, such testing will cause individuals to re-evaluate their personal ideals, their strengths and weaknesses, and their abilities in the face of adversity. Such self-evaluation, can only be considered good not just for the person involved but for their comrades and the Service in general. In this context, we submit this expedition can only be judged to have been a success!

*Lieutenants Hart and Jenkins are now exploring the possibility of leading an expedition to either the "Nun" or "Kun" peaks of Kashmir.*



# Yosemite Sam

Six members of the RN/RMMC this year spent three weeks climbing in what has been called the most beautiful valley in the World." Its discovery by 'Whiteman' in the last century effectively ended another harmonious relationship between Native Americans and the land they lived off. Quickly news of the valley spread and was rewarded by an ever increasing number of people entering and roaming unchecked. With the intervention of John Muir and his lobbying of Congress, Yosemite was finally designated as the first National Park, an act for which we all should be grateful and for which he is rightly famous.

Dave Pearce, now instructing at JSMT C Wales had the idea, did all the organisation and led the expedition, a fine effort!

Right, with the preamble over, we can talk YOSEMITE CLIMBING. Made famous in the climbing world during the sixties by the conquering of the Big Walls, Yosemite however can easily keep the VS to E1 climber more than occupied for a long time. The thing to remember is that if a pitch is graded 5.9 for instance then it will be HVS climbing, but due to the uniformity of the rock features it will be sustained often for a full 160ft. Thus it pays to suss out the grades to begin with. This is true for any new area, but doubly so for Yosemite.

Pete Johnson, who had climbed there in the thirties, was along on the exped. He gave us the benefit of his not inconsiderable knowledge and we began our sussing-out phase at Swan Slabs just a short walk from the campsite where all the famous climbing adventures had been hatched and where, incidentally, we weren't staying.

Dave Pearce and Rory 'Roger Whittaker' McCallum cruised up Lena's Lieback 5.9, which wasn't bad considering they thought the climb was in fact a form of jetlag relieving massage they could get for nearly six dollars.

Chris Butler and Ady Cole spent half an hour clipping the first bolt of a 5.10 and then the next 15 minutes trying to unclip it! They too then scaled Lena's Lieback while round the corner Pete and Steve Jackson swarmed up Swan Slab Gulley, a good intro at severe standard. After a couple of other routes we all made our way back to our accommodation with spots of rain splashing at our tyres.

The next day saw us still jetlagged climbing on Manure Pile Buttress and The Five Open Books. Routes such as

Nutracker, the classic three star Royal Robbins climb. Six pitches of 5.8 and Munginella 5.7 all helped in finding the delights of great cracks and scary face climbing.

Up a gear on day three after finally resetting the body clocks. Pete and Steve over to the awesome slabs of the Glacier Point Apron. Here they did The Grack 5.6, classic slab climbing in a truly enormous setting. During the exped we all climbed there and agreed that this was the mighty 'sea of stone'. We realised this after using everything from backstroke to butterfly to make upward progress.

Dave and Ady meanwhile were skirting the base of El Capitan on the way to the start of their route when they came upon their first sighting of the famous American Wall Rats. Two crazy dudes nailing their way up The Zodiac VI 5.11.A3. (The VI meaning it normally is a route that necessitates more than one night on the wall) They were on the first pitch and the belayer greeted over the blaring of his full sized vibes box. AD layed back lines and skull-and-crossbones baseball cap. Ady and Dave did East Buttress of El Cap, 13 pitches, 5.9 with a point of aid and just managed to finish the descent down the East Ledges as darkness fell. Chris and Mac meanwhile tackled The Commitment 5.9 on The Five Open Books.

Plans for the rest of the exped now began to solidify. Steve and Pete wanted to continue doing long free routes working up to Snake Dike on Half Dorne. Dave and Ady wanted to attempt the Nose on El Capitan after a practice two day wall route on Washington Column and Mac and Chris were looking at a one day ascent on Half Dome by the Northwest Face Regular Route.

Tuesday the 27th saw Chris and Dave on the classic and highly recommended Central Pillar of Frenzy on Middle Cathedral Rock. Pete Johnson was to do this also and all three said that it was five excellent, exposed full length and unrelenting HVS/E1 pitches on what is definitely an inspiring piece of granite. Mac and Ady were swimming in the mighty sea of stone on Point Beyond (Glaciff Point Apron), and afterwards tried their hand at some of the boulder problems at the back of Camp 4 where we had taken up residence.

Here they met Greg Couch, once a US Army Officer and now a full time climber who worked when the need arose. He was to prove extremely friendly and the

source of enormous amounts of encouragement and information. Walk-ins, walk-offs, what rack, how much water, the best handhold you named it, Greg knew it.

The rain came. Be aware it doesn't come in halves. We rigged up a tarpaulin over our table and watched the campsite change into the film set where they shot 'A River Runs Through It'. Some took the wagon and did some postcard gathering. Dave, Mac and Ady used the Le Conte Boulder as shelter. A bolt ladder runs up the steeply overhanging face. They had practised their aiding techniques there once before and this was the final time before the first wall route. That night, amongst the rivers of mud Steve Jackson secured an entry in the annals of culinary genius by serving up steaks that would have buckled ordinary men, such was their tenderness and taste. What could have been a miserable evening turned out to be a feast of red meat and naval stories loosened from the memories of Steve and Pete by torrents of Coors, Budweiser and red wine. Not all the neighbours agreed that we should have finished when we did but we didn't remember that until the next morning when we were suffering too much to care. As punishment the rain decided to keep falling and we took the hint and drove out of the valley and over to Senora. Greg was our guide and we spent a few hours in the quiet antique shops and cafes of this town that had seen its heyday in the goldrush of 1849. On our return the trees were dripping but at least the rain had stopped.

Friday saw Dave and Ady start the South Face of Washington Column V, 5.10 A2, a standard workup climb to The Nose, getting their first taste of sack hauling, long aid pitches and sleeping on a ledge. (Although it was a big one!) The others continued to hit the free routes.

Saturday and Pete and Steve went off to do the classic Overhang Bypass, 850ft of 5.7, doing what its name suggests up the Lower Cathedral Rock. After a flake the size of Wales dropped six inches when Pete was on top of it they decided not to tempt fate further and to get the hell off! As they picked their way gingerly down a steep descent they came upon the sting in the tail. Literally! What had been a loose, steep slope turned instantly into an Olympic 400m track when the hornets from Hades struck. Steve Jackson was horribly stung all over the face and upper body causing massive swelling, or so he said but nobody could actually tell the difference!



That evening *Ady* and *Dave* had another race against time trying to reach North Dorne Gully before the light failed. A horrendous and far from obvious descent route in the light was a little harder in the gloaming with a haul sack each on their shoulders. Once into the trees the angle decreased but correspondingly the chances of meeting a hungry bear by the light of a headtorch increased. Sometimes you just can't win!

The Sunday saw *Pete* and *Steve* tackle The Royal Arches, another massive granite feature, by the route of the same name. 18 pitches and a descent of the treacherous North Dorne Gully as previously described in a day! Can't be bad! *Chris* and *Mac* drove up to Tuolumne Meadows and returned in the evening to tell tales of hard routes, great beauty and a complete lack of other climbers. They both were to climb there again later in the exped.

The start of another week and a rest day for all which included a trip to the base of The Nose with *Greg* along to finalise plans for *Dave's* and *Ady's* attempt at El Capitan the next day. At half past four the next morning however the rain again had other ideas and having been through that before we jumped in the van and drove straight out of the valley. The storm followed up to Senora giving a demonstration of some of the most torrential rain seen by the fellas outside of the monsoon. With no hope of the storm being a one day wonder we took up an offer of some cheap accommodation. Denied access to a petrol stove and his pots *Big Steve* saw it as his duty to fix the boys up with a meal another way. He skilfully obtained an invitation to dinner, for six, from a local family which turned out to be a thoroughly enjoyable evening. The generosity of our hosts was more than repaid by a free exhibition of solo 'stone

fire surround' climbing laid on by *Chris Butler* and *Steve 'Stone Leech' Jackson* himself. *Rory McCallum* finished off the evening with a heart (and ear!)-rending performance of a classic Gaelic folk tune and with these contributions the family were suitably impressed!

Returning to a steaming valley the next day *Steve* and *Peter* had a spot of drying out to do. Their tent had managed to take on board at least half an inch of free surface water during the storm. As *Dave* and *Ady* checked their preparations for their big wall attempt we heard that several parties had been airlifted off El Capitan unable to carry on after the storm. Good job their attempt had not begun a day earlier than planned!

Thursday saw them start what was to be a five day climb with help from *Pete* and *Steve* on the first day, carrying the haul sacks to the foot of El Capitan and later hooking them up to be hauled to the first bivvi ledge.

The next five days saw intense activity all round. Five 5.7 routes for *Peter* and *Steven* on Knob Hill one day. The classic Braille Book on Higher Cathedral that *Mac* and *Chris* had done previously. Church Bowl Lieback and *Lena's* Lieback *Peter* did with his Swedish friend (male of course!) and Central Pillar of Frenzy. Meanwhile *Chris* and *Mac* walked into the base of the Spectacular Half Dome and bivvied there ready for an attempt on the Regular Northwest Face Route, VI, 5.9 A2 or 5.12 the next day.

Travelling light and climbing with only a small bergen they ascended a rope length they had managed to fix the previous night and began an all out attempt to finish the route in a day. However with nearly 17 of the 24 pitches complete they were forced to make the heartbreaking decision to descend by abseil when deep

snow on the ledges meant to continue with the equipment they carried impossible.

Back on the other side of the valley still on the Big Stone, *Ady* and *Dave* were having their own adventures on the vertical world Big Pendulums, tension traverses, hidden unprotected chimney climbing, strenuous sack hauling, night climbing, a fall and some distinctly sloping bivvy ledges.

Tuesday 12th was the last climbing day of the exped. While *Dave* and *Ady* were for the second time negotiating the East Ledges Descent *Chris* and *Mac* climbed Serenity Crack 5.10d on the Royal Arches which was the hardest free climbing any of us had done on the exped.

Finally two days in San Francisco capped a top-of-the-range exped off just right. A dancing exhibition by *Peter* in 'Johnny Love's', a couple of sit down meals and a trip to Alcatraz plus the 'Carl Malden' tram rides made for a great end to a fantastic expedition. Congratulations must go to *Dave Pearce* for the organisation.

All that remains to be said is that Yosemite is well within the ability of most service climbers. A sensible approach and the seeking of local knowledge is the key. Free climbs of severe standard upward abound in incredible settings with opportunity for massive exposure. Also with sound homework and a little practice some of the bigger wall routes could be climbed clean i.e. without pitons. Definitely think about it and certainly read *Dave's* post exped. report available from DNPTS. It's all there amongst the big stone in the vertical world of Yosemite!

*Ady Cole*

## Climbing on the Adriatic Deployment With HMS Invincible

An Adriatic Deployment is no reason to give up climbing and the aim of the mountaineers onboard is to climb in every port. Progress so far is shown below. I will gladly supply additional information to anyone who wishes to climb in any of these areas.

### GIBRALTAR

An unexpected call at Gibraltar allowed a quick dash out to Buffadero Bluff, permission to climb having been obtained by signal while the ship was en route from UK. We bagged 4 routes: Sweet Homes

VD 110 ft, Lighthouse Rib VD 220 ft, Trimmings Folly VD 110 ft and Flying Tiger VS 4b 120 ft. The latter was not in our guide book so we have named it in honour of 814 Naval Air Squadron until we can find out the proper name. Can anyone help - the route starts immediately on the left of the metal porch roof and goes up steep rock sustained at 4b until climbing over a 6 foot wall to finish?

### CORFU

Advance enquiries resulted in the local rock climbing instructor (*Aleko*

*Damaskinos*) being invited to the Cocktail Party. We arranged to meet him, three days later, at a pub on the far side of the island so he could guide us to the cliff and up some routes. When we got there he apologised profusely but said that the rock was not in condition because it had rained in the morning and would be very slippery. Against his better judgement and following our protestations that we were only going to "take a look" (that well known euphemism that means "we will climb everything in sight"), he gave in and showed us where the cliff was. Once



there we bagged three routes, later discovering that the first two were: Curry Powder HVD 340 ft and Hangover S 85 ft. The third which had been climbed but was unnamed, is a girdle traverse which has to be climbed in both directions. We named it after our kind but reluctant Greek guide: Grecian Retreat HS 200 ft.

For the benefit of future RNR-MMC visitors to Corfu, the cliff is a quarter of a mile South of the coastal village of Ermones on the West side of the island. It cannot be seen from the village but is approached along the shore line past a yellow sign which says "Keep Out" in Greek, (erected by Aleko to protect his patch). The cliff is an easy angled slab with numerous huge crack lines, abundant holds and excellent protection. It is safe at the bottom and suitable for novices, although retreat from the top is by abseil (various rope slings in place).

#### NAPLES AND CIVITAVECCHIA

An article in the October High magazine inspired me to mount two expeds to the Gran Sasso area



Ben Adams approaches the summit of Corno Grande, Vetta Orientale, 9524 ft, with Corno Piccolo behind.

of the central Apennines. It contains craggy peaks reminiscent of the Dolomites and a small receding glacier. Like the writer of the article, we climbed the highest peak, Corno Grande with separate summits of 9554, 9524, and 9491 ft and Corno Piccolo 8573 ft.

In short, on the first trip, we spent 3 nights camping at 8000 ft, climbed in day time temperatures of minus 10, and bagged all the summits. Routes were up to PD in standard, with some abseils and some short sections via ferrata. The weather was clamped in for the first two days with superb views on the third day. On the second trip we climbed Corno Grande by the so called "direttissima", stayed in a bivvi hut at 8756 ft and completed an exciting via ferrata to finish our exploration of the peak. Weather this time was perfect - air temperatures below freezing but glorious sunshine above cloud filled valleys.

Brian Pancott

## High Corsica '94

*A trek in the Corsican Mountains - HMS Bulldog, Beagle and Roebuck.*

Having been involved in Exped/trekking for the past few years, 1994's diary was looking rather empty, so what better chance than to organise one myself, not always an easy option on a sea-going ship with distractions such as COST and pre-refit preps.

It didn't take long to decide the area, spending most of the previous 18 months surveying the dull and damp waters of the UK coast, somewhere hot and sunny was high on the list of priorities, and due to a tight ship's programme somewhere easily accessible. Having been to Corsica before, I decided a return was necessary as this seemed to fit the requirements.

It was with some relief and trepidation that I found myself waiting for the early morning flight from Gatwick to Calvi with a team largely consisting of novices, most of whom had never back-packed before. The idea was to complete the northern half of the Corsican High Level Route, the GR20, reputedly the hardest of

the GRs. I was to be assisted by my deputy Les Yeoman, leader of many previous expeditions.

We were met at Calvi airport by Phil who had left HMS Beagle in Italy the day before. We spent the afternoon in the campsite at Calenzana, discussing the coming two weeks and making some inroads into the cheese and 'few' bottles of wine Phil had acquired. A good start!

Next day saw us all get up early to clear skies and typical Mediterranean heat. Those members of the team who had expected the trip to be a holiday had their ideas changed by the end of the day; the 5000ft climb to the Refuge de L'Ortu di Piobbu took 9 hrs. and also took its toll on the party, with the most serious incident being a damaged knee sustained by Bungy. One valuable lesson learned on this first day was the need to carry more water and less food. After a fitful night sleep in the refuge Tony, Andrea, Brum and Bungy decided that the rest of us were right to sleep under the stars.

A change in the weather in the morning robbed us of what should have been splendid views, but the lower temperatures were welcome. As a result there were fewer problems on this second day and the steep descent to the Refuge de Carroezu was rewarded with a few bottles of wine supplied by the Refuge Warden.

We were now into our third day on the hill; the novices were gaining confidence and after a steep climb involving the use of fixed cables we arrived at Lac Muvrella (6000ft) where a lunch break was enlivened with some very cold swimming in the Lac. The objective for the night was the Refuge at the base of the Island's highest peak, Monte Cinto; however after some discussion I decided the ascent of the peak would have been too arduous for the majority of the team and so we continued along the ridge to a good campsite below the Col Perdu in preparation for the transit of the 'Cirque de Solitude' the next day.



Our decision was justified by the sight of some extremely tired trekkers passing our camp site in the early morning. The traverse of the Cinque de Solitude was certainly the crux of the route, and without the fixed protection it would have presented a serious obstacle to those encumbered by heavy packs as we were. Unfortunately Rattler took a bad fall which forced him to drop out from the remainder of the trek.

Once back on the route the growing confidence of the team was evident in the much better pacing, and we reached the Refuge de Manganu without further incident, although we did encounter some of the wild pigs which range the mountains in the area.

The route to the Refuge de Pombie required particular care with snow and ice making footing somewhat hazardous in places, and regrettably the low cloud obscured the reputed fine views of dramatic rock scenery. However the team took all this in their stride and we reached the refuge in deteriorating weather; Sid was resourceful in diverting the surface water which would otherwise have inundated our tents toward an encampment of Germans! Our route for the next day was the ascent of the second highest peak on the island, Monte Rotondo. The weather conspired against us and we awoke to low cloud and drizzle, and so we continued toward the next refuge, splitting the party to enable a resupply of food.

We did manage the ascent of Monte D'Oro, which at eight hours and a grade one scramble represented a first mountaineering achievement for many of the team. The long descent was through pine forests and past waterfalls and pools in which we took our final swims before reaching the town of Vizzavona, and thence to Calvi by rail, an impressive journey itself. Once in Calvi we were rejoined by Rattler, whose knee had been impressively and expertly bandaged by the local hospital, and Tony who had accompanied him back to Calvi. Andrea couldn't understand what the fuss about the topless beach was all about!

The rugged terrain and remoteness of the Corsican Mountains makes the Island an accessible region for an (arduous) holiday in the sun.  
*Dave Warman*

## The John Muir Trail

Lt Mike Yates (*Leader*),

CPO Terry Carew, LWAEM Sue Colborne, CPO Paul Harvey, POWPT Val Hodgkinson, PO Iain McCallum,  
Lt Tom McAuslin, Lt Cdr Barry Stonham, WCK Ailsa Weir, LWSTD Cheryl Wilkinson

*Support Party;*

Lt Cor Chris Painter, CPO Don Pritchard, CPO Barrie Whitehead.

**T**o walk the length of the John Muir Trail, in the Sierra Nevada of California, from Yosemite Valley to Mount Whitney. (This is the opposite direction to that suggested in the guide book). The trail is some 215 miles long, at heights varying from 8000' to 13000', with Mt Whitney at 14495' the high point, and involves more than 75,000 feet of ascent and descent. We planned to complete the trail in 13 or 14 days, which would have meant averaging between 15.3 and 16.5 miles per day. When the weather threw us off after 7 days, we had covered 111.5 miles, 15.9 miles per day, so we were already bang on schedule, and getting fitter daily.

*(Note: Where height & mileage are shown in brackets, height refers to point mentioned, mileage is a cumulative total from the start of the trail).*

### Monday 19 September

Air New Zealand from Gatwick to Los Angeles 2030.

### Tuesday 20 September

LA to Yosemite by road; overnight in Camp Curry.

### Wednesday 21 September

We started on the JMT at 0900 at Happy Isles (4035'), and followed the Panorama Trail to Nevada Falls (6100', 4.6m), rewarded on the way with dramatic views from various angles of the first objective, Half Dome. After a flat stretch through Little Yosemite Valley we climbed steeply again through conifer forest to a trail junction (7015', 6.1m) where we left our rucksacks. We eventually emerged from the forest on a shoulder to the east of the summit; from our start point at Happy Isles we had come through an arc of almost 270° to this point, where we were now left with a climb of about 800' to the summit, firstly up a steep rocky path and finally, with the aid of the "Half Dome Cables", 11 of us pulled ourselves up to the top (8842', 9.3m). We made our way back to the trail junction and set off north-eastward again, continuing on to a junction with the trail to Clouds Rest (7210', 11.8m). Here we camped for the night, Don and Barrie, who were in bivvy bags, being disturbed in the middle of the night by an inquisitive and hungry bear.

### Thursday 22 September

The trail climbed gently for 2 or 3 miles through glacial moraine and huge granite boulders and then much more steeply over the eastern slopes of Sunrise Mountain before dropping down to Long Meadow (9340', 19.1m), which gave us a couple of miles of very pleasant flat walking before we climbed quite steeply again beneath Columbia Finger to a superb viewpoint on the eastern flank of Tresidder Peak. From here we pushed on to Cathedral Pass (9730', 22.6m), and a quick breather at Cathedral Lake. Then it was down a very dusty path past Lower Cathedral Lake and then more steeply down to Tuolumne Meadows (8595', 28.7m). After a quick food stop, we set off eastward down towards Lyell Canyon, getting a few more miles under our belts before camping.

### Friday 23 September

We got in several miles of fast walking in the early morning cool along the relatively flat bed of Lyell Canyon to Lyell Fork Camp (9000', 38.3m). Here the





Paul, Ian, Terry, Ailsa and Cheryl at the top of Half Dome.

trail climbed steeply up sharp switchbacks to Upper Lyell Camp (10220', 41.9m), and then up a twisting rocky path to Donohue Pass (11056', 43.7m). Although we had all left Upper Lyell Camp together, there was a gap of well over an hour between first and last arriving at the pass, as we all found the long, steep path a bit of an endurance test, and one or two who had not been this high before were also feeling the effects of altitude. Next came several miles of knee-wrenching descent to Rush Creek (9600', 48m) and then a short steep climb to cross Island Pass (10200', 49.8m). We descended quickly to and finally pitched camp at Emerald Lake (9850', 51.3m).

#### Saturday 24 September

There had been a dramatic thunderstorm during the night, and we had to clear ice off the tents before packing them away. We climbed up a bare granite ridge before dropping down again to Garnet Lake (9680', 52.8m), and then sharply up another ridge to meet Shadow Creek and follow it down for almost 1000' to Shadow Lake (8750', 56.3m). Turning southeast we now climbed steeply, via 20 sharp switchbacks, to Gladys Lake (9580', 58.5m). Downhill again now, to Minaret creek (9120', 62.3m), and on to Reds Meadow (7600', 64.3m). Here we met up with the support party, and topped up with food and fuel. The plan now was that we would be re-supplied with food and fuel by Don and Barrie who were going to pack huge loads in to us at Bishoo's Pass and again at Kearsarge Pass.

#### Sunday 25 September

We climbed gradually upwards through scenes of devastation - the aftermath of the terrible forest fires which ravaged the area in 1992. From Deer Creek (9120', 67.4m), we climbed steeply up to about 10200' and then contoured along for several miles with superb views down into cascade Valley some 2,000 feet below us, to Duck Creek. From here we climbed steeply again, with the trail at one stage hanging precariously on the edge of a considerable drop and giving superb views off to the south again. The trail continued along at well above 10,000' for some way, before dropping via steep switchbacks to Purple Lake and then up a short, sharp ridge to Lake Virginia (10314', 77.6m). It then switch backed violently and very steeply 800 feet down to a grassy area at Tully hole (9520', 78.7m), where we pitched camp for the night alongside the headwaters of Fish Creek.

#### Monday 26 September

Once over Fish Creek we climbed steeply through pine forest and then through a rocky gorge up to Squaw Lake, and eventually up to Silver Pass (10900', 84.4m). From here we dropped quickly down to Mono Creek (7750', 91.4), and then slowly and painfully to the top of Bear Ridge via 53 switchbacks (9980', 96m) and then down to Kip Camp (9040', 98m).

#### Tuesday 27 September

Our target for today was to reach the hot springs near Blaney Meadows by mid

afternoon so that we could have a hot soak and an extra couple of hours of daylight in the campsite. On leaving Kip Camp the trail climbed relatively gently for a couple of miles up Bear Creek Canyon and then steepened to pass to Marshal Lake and Marie Lake before a last short climb up to Selden Pass (10900', 105.1m). From the pass we dropped down to pass Heart Lake and the two Sally Keyes Lakes. After crossing Senger Creek the trail starts to switchback steeply down the wall of the San Joaquin canyon, the views down into the canyon and across to the other side were beautiful but more worrying was the sky, which was giving off all sorts of warning signs. Racing mares' tails soon gave way to heavier cloud, and the first nagging doubts began to appear. The lure of the hot springs was still uppermost in our minds, however, and we quickly got to the valley bottom having waded across the San Joaquin River, to camp (7840', 111.5m), before soaking in the warm but rather mucky hot spring.

#### Wednesday 28 September

We were woken just before 0500 by a sound which yesterday afternoon's sky had warned of torrential rain. At 0530, when we would normally be thinking of stirring, it was still bucketing down, so we lay and listened to it until it was light, so that we could get some idea of whether it was a shower or here to stay. First light came but there was no sign of the rain abating and we festered in our sleeping bags for another hour listening to it, peering out occasionally to cast worried eyes at a very low cloud base of no more than 9000'. We were at a height of just below 8000', and our planned route for the day was up to Evolution Basin where we would have to camp that night at about 11500' before heading over Muir Pass (12000') on Friday, to meet up with Don and Barrie who would be waiting for us at the Bishop Pass trail head with our food and fuel re-supply. We talked to two American backpackers camping nearby, who were convinced, as were we, that it would be snowing very heavily not much higher up. Having kicked around the options for a couple of hours, at 0930, we crammed soaking kit and tents into rucksacks, forded a rapidly swelling river with some difficulty and set off on the Florence Lake Trail, heading towards a road head on the west side of the Sierra. The down-pour increased in volume as we walked out, and in places the trail was totally



obliterated as it had turned into a river. At about 1400 we arrived after a very uncomfortable trek, at a dam construction site. It was a little clearer here, and we could see the tops of some 9000' hills across the lake which were quite evidently being snowed on heavily. Our fears about the high passes had obviously been well founded. With a little gentle persuasion we talked a dam worker into giving us a lift and with the rain still pouring down, we travelled 50+ miles down wild mountain roads, crammed into the back of a pickup truck, with those who could fit sheltering under a tarpaulin. We eventually arrived at the small town of Shaver Creek, where we stayed for two days trying to find a way to get back to civilisation, and make contact with our support party on the other side of the Sierra. The plan had been that Don and Barrie would leave Bishop on the Monday and walk in to the junction of the Bishop Pass Trail with the John Muir Trail. They expected to arrive there on Thursday, and we were scheduled to be there early on the Friday. The arrangement was that they would wait there until Saturday and if we had not arrived by then, ditch much of the re-supply and walk back off. From the TV we heard that the storms had been widespread over the northern and central Sierra Nevada and had caught the weathermen totally napping - there had been no warning whatsoever. It was also confirmed that above 9000' there had been very heavy falls of snow.

#### Friday 30 September

Two locals, for a fee, drove us in their trucks down to Fresno, where we caught a Greyhound bus to Merced and then on to Yosemite.

#### Saturday 1 October

Six of us climbed up to Upper Yosemite Falls, arriving at the top opposite Lost Arrow as a couple of climbers were doing a Tyrolean traverse from the top of the pinnacle back to the main face. Back in valleys Mike had finally got in touch, with Chris, who confirmed that Don and Barrie were safely back down and that they were on their way back to join us. Don and Barrie, as expected had been true



Lyell Peak from the trail.

to the plan and had stayed up at Bishop Pass Trail, in appalling weather, until the deadline ran out. From where they were bivvied they had seen avalanches on Muir Pass, so our decision not to try to go over it was vindicated. They had been flooded out of their bivvy, had trees fall around them and generally had an epic time. As soon as the deadline arrived they had abandoned some of the gear to lighten their very heavy loads, and sprinted back down.

#### Monday 3 October

Having decided to try for Mount Whitney before heading back to UK, we travelled to Lone Pine, and went straight up to Whitney Portal (8361'). We settled down for the night in fairly low temperatures, contemplating the news that the weather forecast for the next day was not good.

#### Tuesday 4 October

We woke to find a light dusting of snow and small flakes blowing in the wind. At 0330 all 13 of us set off up the hill. The plan was to get as high as we could today, hopefully to Wotan's Throne (11843') or maybe even higher, leaving all but a small amount of kit there next morning, making a lightweight dash to the summit, and then picking up the rest of the gear on the way back down. However the higher we got, the worse the weather became, until by Outpost Camp (10080') it was snowing hard. We found a British couple camping here, who had only just succeeded in making it to the summit yesterday morn-

ing. They confirmed that it had been marginal, with a lot of ice on the upper switchbacks, and suggested that to be thinking of trying it today, after several hours of fresh snow on top of the ice, was crazy. We agreed particularly as we had no winter gear, but decided to carry on upwards for a while. Although it was snowing hard it was not especially cold, and the trail was getting steeper, more dramatic and much more enjoyable (to some!). Paul, Tom, Terry, Iain, Ailsa and Barry pulled some way ahead of the others, and by 1130 had reached a point, at about 12000ft where we stopped for a while to let the rest catch up. After a while hanging about in the increasingly heavy snow, it became apparent that no-one was following us. After a little longer, we assumed that the others had stopped because of the weather, and retraced our steps to see if we could find them. We came upon Mike, Don and Barrie at Outpost Camp, which was as high as the others had got before it was decided to call it quits. Somewhat reluctantly, we agreed that Whitney was probably not going to be accessible for at least a couple of days, so set off down.

#### Sunday 10 October

After a couple of days making the most of LA's shops and beaches, we flew back to Gatwick, having had a superb, if rather frustrating trip, busily plotting how and when we could have another go at it.

Mike Yates



# Transylvanian Trek

**T**ime. A commodity that is becoming progressively harder to find in today's over-stretched, increasingly front-line, Fleet Air Arm. A between-appointments activity seemed the only way to indulge in adventurous training challenges, particularly my goal to lead a mountaineering expedition to relatively untried territory. With the whole world to choose from, I had to select an area of mountains for a three week expedition which was financially and politically accessible, yet still required an element of pioneering spirit. I decided on the Carpathians of Romania which provide Alpine conditions, a modest altitude (up to 2544m, 8345ft), and, until recently, have been relatively inaccessible to Westerners. Without being too negative my Senior Pilot wryly observed "It will be interesting to see if you ever get there," thereby firing my ambition still further!

So it happened that an eight strong team with wildly varied experience set off from HMS HERON last Summer to meet the challenge of the unknown. Quite unexpectedly, our first challenge was met only half an hour from Yeovilton when a VW Corrade pulled across us on the A303, so inviting collision. Fortunately we made it to the airport just in time and unhurt. In due course the VW driver was fined £300 and awarded 5 licence points, tut, tut! Strangely enough we were involved in no road accidents in Romania where driving standards are abysmal with deep, unmarked holes appearing even on the few dual carriageways, as do numerous ox and horse carts at night and without lights!

Romania can undoubtedly be a very frustrating country to visit. It lacks any recognisable form of infrastructure and being a contender for the poorest East European nation, has a very third World feel. This, together with the advent of free trading, means that with a little negotiation and foreign currency, most items can be obtained. Few Romanian goods are of use but those which are come very cheaply. Imported goods are available if you can be bothered to hunt for them, but they often command Western prices. Similarly with food: "If you see it, buy it!" is the watchword, as there is rarely a second chance. Throughout the Summer months, however, each town has a fresh fruit and vegetable market. Private kiosks have sprung up by roadsides everywhere, selling a small quantity of imported goods and more appetising foodstuffs, e.g. Mars/Snickers bars which attracted much interest from certain group members.

Public transport is cheap but erratic; a whole day may have to be set aside for relatively short journeys. We took the option of a minibus with a Romanian speaking driver which saved an extraordi-

nary amount of time and hassle, and made possible speedy access to deep within the mountains, re-supply en route and pick-ups that were miles from the nearest village. With petrol queues that can be half a day long, a Romanian driver can not only find the best place to go but will rise at 3 to 4am to be early in line.

It is all very sad to observe considering Romania was relatively prosperous nation during the 1970s which spiralled downwards as Nicolae Ceausescu insisted on paying for the national debt. His policies of exporting oil and leaving nothing for the Romanians, coupled with the outlawing of contraception and "incentives" for having more children were not popular. In the mid 80s, with chronic shortages, daily power cuts and an imposition of a 7 day week, political unrest grew, the end result being the 1989 Revolution and Ceausescu's execution on Christmas Day.

Though a dilapidated nation, Romania has plenty to offer in terms of a thoroughly interesting cultural history, growth potential for Western investors and a remarkable chain of beautiful, unspoilt mountains. We fully exploited the latter with major traverses of the Bucegi, Piatra Craiului and, most daunting of all, the Fagaras range. Our trekking totals over ten very active days were as follows: distance covered 124km, time 67 hours, and total ascent 8750m. Our proudest day was also the most exciting, that of the final ascent of Romania's highest peak, Moldoveanu, 2544m.

We were into our third day on the Fagaras, an East-West range of some 100 km after one day of eight and one of ten hours walking, much of it in ascent. The weather had been steadily worsening throughout the period and we awoke to witness a light covering of snow, though the poor visibility precluded the opportunity of breathtaking views. With packs made heavier by camp tents, we commenced a very steep climb from 1400m which took us, 2 hours later, onto the main ridge. We caught the odd glimpse of scenery, but very soon we were into thick cloud and strengthening winds. With increasing altitude came increasing precipitation and the whole gamut of sleet, hail and snow was sent to test us. It was probably the thunder and lightning which gave rise to the most apprehension: for a ten minute period we were subject to lightning flashes, sometimes discharging only yards away from us. There is very little you can do in these mountain situations except keep away from exposed ridges and pray that your body presents a higher electrical resistance than surrounding rocks (in theory, it does!). We survived with only 2 team members experiencing the novel tingling sensations when touching near-by rocks.

Although the thunder dissipated the winds remained very strong and the last half hour of the ascent provided a most memorable experience for all of us. The main, relatively easy, ridge continued West but our route turned for the final ascent of the peak itself. This proved unexpectedly narrow and somewhat fortunately, the full extent of the drop was hidden by the fog! The combination of high winds, spin-drift in the face, exposure and heavy packs understandably gave rise to a feeling of vulnerability. We came close to getting the ropes out to raise the confidence of the novices, but as it turned out, they collectively threw caution to the wind and spurred on by jackjack pressure, plucked up courage to climb a very tricky snow-covered scramble. Ten easier minutes later (six hours so far that day) we found the post marking the top and held onto it for a couple of "we've been there photos", sadly missing the once in a lifetime opportunity of excellent views.

However, the inhospitable conditions gave rise to a much greater sense of achievement, which probably helped us on our 3 hour descent to a wonderfully welcoming mountain refuge at 1850m (we were given a tot of rum from a plastic coke bottle!). The whole day's experience must have been reflected in our dreams as one lad was heard to sleep-talk: "Yes, my name's Steve. I climbed Everest in 16 days with new boots...!!"

Visits to both Romania and its mountains are highly recommended. The Carpathian system is part of the Alpine-Himalayan chain, formed relatively recently in the Tertiary alpine orogeny. It is as long as the Alps (1300 km) and for the most part, is 35-40 km wide. The expedition was based in the Southern Carpathians which consist mainly of crystalline rock and areas of karstic limestone. The mountains provide a huge number of excellent climbs and scrambles and there is much potential for pioneering work in both Summer and Winter.

Romania's climate is transitional continental-temperate and although this means hot Summers and cold Winters, the mountains are high enough to warrant 3 to 4 season equipment throughout the Summer. Snow and hailstorms are possible at any time; the expedition experienced drought just three days before the wintry ascent of Moldoveanu. Broadcast weather forecasts are never specific, but apply to the whole country. Apparently September traditionally offers the most stable mountain weather conditions and there is no permanent snow.

As an alternative to the tourist orientated Alps, the Carpathians offer a cheaper, wilder expanse of unspoilt mountains where you can see bears, wild boar, chamois, eagles and red squirrels: but very few people. Try it...

*Raff Russell.*



# Exercise Denali Quadrant

## Diary of events.

### Mon 26 Apr- Tues 27 Apr

Travel to Talkeetna via Houston - Seattle - Anchorage. Arrive Check-in to National Park. Organise food.

### Wed 28 Apr- Thu 29 Apr.

Wed. Fly in to airstrip on SE Fork Kahilna Glacier at 7,200'. Establish camp. Load carry ski to 8,000'. (4 hours) return to SE Fork camp. Thu. Leave airstrip camp and move up to 8,000' camp. 4 hours.

### Fri 30 Apr

Make a cache at 8,000' and leave at 1201 hours. Move up with 10 days food/kit for West Buttress. A hot ski up a steep hill. Camp at 9,700'.

### Sat 1 May

Leave 9,700 camp at 1100 hours. Move up to camp at 11,100'. Going well. Start Diamox. Temp: -0C.

### Sun 2 May

Leave camp and ski up Motorcycle Hill - 45 degree slope. Cache skis and crampon up to 12,000' and Windy Corner. Warm (-5C) Make a cache. Climb up to 13,350' to acclimatise. Ski descent of Motorcycle Hill! A good day. Camp at 11,100'. Almost 24 hours of daylight.

### Mon 3 May

A cold start. Leave 11,100' at 1230 hours; arrive at 13,000' at 1600 hours. Nick and LB make a carry up to 14,200' and return. Problem with tent poles. Camp at 13,000'. Temp: -22C.

### Tue 4 May

A very cold and windy morning. Move up at 1230 hours to recover cache at Windy Corner - well named with gusts of 50 mph. Make a carry to 14,200'. Pat, Al and Garry descent to 13,000' to recover tents (and Chris) and return to 14,2000' at 1800 hours. Feeling good.

### Wed 5 May

A rest day. Camp site filling up. Nick and LB go down to clear cache and return to 14,200'. Temp: -35C.

### Thu 6 May

Cold. Down suits. Leave at 1030 hours. Climb the headwall to 16,000' - 4 hours. Then move along the ridge to 17,000' - 2

hours. There is just one team of 2 American climbers here which makes us one of the highest teams on the hill. There is no one higher up as it is still early in the season and desperately cold and windy. Make a cache and descend in deteriorating conditions. Snowing hard Garry and Chris feeling rough - headaches. Arrive back at 14,200' at 2000 hours.

### Fri 7 May

Rest day, Council of war, Garry has mildly frostbitten fingers and Chris is still feeling rough. They decide to descend to 8,000' tomorrow. Mixed weather forecast

### Sat 8 May

Planned on an early start - eventually left at 1215 hours! -40C. Brass Monkeys! Chris and Gary descend. Nick, LB, Pat and Al move on up. A fast pace made an exhausting start! At 16,000' the weather deteriorates. Pat and Al feeling knackered. Moving slowly. Arrive at 17,200' at 1900 hours and recover the cache. Cold feet but not quite frostbitten. Establish a camp. A team from Seattle return from the first summit bid this year at 2330 hours exhausted and frostbitten. Turned back just short of the summit because of conditions on the summit ridge. A bad night.

### Sun 9 May

A planned rest day, however, Pat and Al both suffering from AMS and feeling suicidal. Popping Dexamethasone, Brufen and Paracetamol. Contacted the Rangers on the radio to enquire on conditions. A big storm is due to hit us tonight. Decision made to descend ASAP. Strike camp in increasing winds - 50 mph gusts - and leg it down Rescue Gulley. Arrive back at 14,200' at 2015 hours.

### Mon 10 May

Plans for a quick ascent of the West Buttress followed by more ambitious climbing proposals seem increasingly unrealistic as the day progresses. At this rate we will be lucky to get up at all. No radio contact with Chris/Garry. A clear and pleasant day - the storm forecast is delayed.

### Tue 11 May

Tent/Snowhole bound all day. High winds and snowing. Spindrift everywhere. Al's birthday. Not much to celebrate. Bad forecast.

### Wed 12 May

The storm continues. Spindrift stops play. (Chess in the Snow hole).

### Thu 13 May

The weather continues bad with no sign of improvement. Decision made to descend. Leave at 1230 hours with 4 on a rope. Windy Corner lived up to its name. Met Garry and Chris who are staying at 11,100' where we recovered skis. Ski down, unroped, to 8,000'. A stunning ski! The last 1,000' was a straight schuss taking no more than 5 minutes. Life at 8,000' is so much more comfortable despite the continuing bad weather. No improvement in the forecast. Lapping up the oxygen and warm temperatures. Bliss! Snowing heavily.

### Fri 14 May

Awake to find tents completely snowed in. About 2 feet fell during the night. Dig, dig, dig. Snowing heavily all day until 1500 hours when the weather miraculously clears offering stunning views of Denali's southern aspect. Nick and LB decide to immediately move back up to 11,100'. Pat and Al to go up tomorrow.

### Sat 15 May

Stunning weather down here. Still some evidence of high winds on the summit. Many more people appearing on the mountain.

Leave 8,000' at 1230 hours and arrive at 11,100' just before 1730 hours. Going well. Camp at 11,100'. Nick, LB Garry and Chris moved up to 14,200' in very windy conditions.

### Sun 16 May

Pat and Al moved up to 14,200'. No wind very warm and sunny. Took 4 3/4 hours. Good to be back here despite the significant increase in the number of residents. Heard that the first team to summit this year made it at 1700 hours. Nick and Al moved up to 17,000'



**Mon 17 May**

Nick, LB and Garry went up to Denali Pass for a recce. On arrival they decided to go for the summit which they reached at 1600 hours. Pat and Al left 14,200' at 1130 hours and arrived at 17,000' at 1600 hours and met Chris. There are about 30 people here. Excellent weather and no wind. Summit team returned to the camp at 1930 hours.

**Tue 18 May**

Nick, LB and Garry take a rest day at 17,000'. Pat, Al and Chris leave for the summit at 0930 hours. A perfect day with no wind. By the time we reached Denali Pass we had overtaken about 30 people (mostly guided parties). Continue up the ridge past The Archdeacon's Tower and across the "football pitch" to the final summit slopes which are exhausting. A spectacular ridge leads to the summit at

1500 hours. Not a cloud in the sky and no wind. It was all worth it! Leave there after 30 minutes. Returned to 17,000' at 1730 hours. A stunning mountain day.

**Wed 19 May**

All descended down to 14,200'. Met USMC team.

**Thu 20 May**

Descend from 14,200' to 7,200'. Left at 1330 hours with heavy packs and sledges. Pick up skis at 11,100'. Another spectacular descent down the hill. The mountain is becoming very crowded and many more crevasses are appearing - some quite big. I took only 30 minutes from 8,000' to just below the airstrip. At the airstrip Al assists a US marine who has been helo casevaced down. At 2330 hours, Nick, LB, Garry and Al ski back up to 8,000' to recover the remaining cache.

**Fri 21 May**

They return at 0230 hours with all the kit. Strike camp, pack up and wait for the aircraft to pick us up. Weather closes in and the pilot is forced back. Heavy snow for the rest of the day. Spend a second night at 7,200'. Learn that the record wait here is 17 days - a hiccup in morale is noted!

**Sat 22 May**

Tent bound until 1500 hours when the weather clears. Fly out at about 1600 hours. Run ashore in the Fairview Inn. No morale problems.

**Sun 23 May-Wed 26 May**

Return UK via Talkeetna. Anchorage, Seattle, - Houston.

*Nick Arding.*

## Exercise Always Westward 1994

The team assembled at Heathrow Airport on the 29th July. We were about to take up a challenge on the other side of the world. The aim was to ascend the biggest bulge on the Earth's Surface, Mt Chimborazo, because of its location its the nearest point on the Earth to the Sun. The snow-capped volcano stands at 6310m. The second phase was to then find the nearest river source and canoe to the sea.

After a tiring flight and a glimpse of Mt Chimbarazo at dawn we landed and made our way to the old half of Quito. We unpacked and settled in at the Hotel Grand Casino, run down by our standards, but somewhere to stay. Due to an administration disaster at this stage we had no winter JSMEL, but luckily we hired one and he was to fly out and meet us 24 hrs later. Tim was to prove himself invaluable not only by being an ex-Royal Marine but also by knowing his job inside out. We were situated already at approximately 8000ft, and within 24 hours were on our way above fourteen and a half thousand feet, a jump that was to prove too much for our fourteen strong Joint Service Team.

Everyone suffered, a classic case of too

much too soon. We spent the next four days waiting for the canoes to arrive and taking daily trips to the Newtown to complete administration. It meant quite a lot of time travelling, an idea for future expeditions would be to have themselves in the Newtown. We then moved to Banos, a bit more of a tourist town, to take on our next objective Mt Tungurahua, 5016m, again a volcano this time with a snowcap.

The drop off point was at the bottom of a knee deep mud track which I took over two hours to negotiate; walking poles proved very useful. After a pan full of food and a few hours sleep at a refuge we attempted the summit. The weather was bad, with strong winds and rain, then less than half an hour into the attempt one of the team went down and L/Cpl Love, and MNE Farrington unselfishly volunteered to escort him down, their hopes of the summit shattered.

We finally reached the summit in almost white-out conditions, then on our descent bumped into the other four man team on the snowline, unfortunately they had not been wearing sunglasses and some were suffering from mild snowblindness. Coloured sunblock would be another idea as you can see if it

come off. After a couple of days recuperation we headed for Mt Chimborazo, nearly everyone had headaches after a night in the lower refuge. After a nights sleep and a useful revision period on the night of the 12th of August we headed for the summit. The six man team was chosen and we gave it our best shot, unfortunately between nineteen and twenty thousand feet myself and one other started to show signs of altitude sickness. I felt strong, out of breath but with a pulse rate of 180 bpm. When ice in the wind smashed Tim's goggles, his evaluation was to turn back. We returned to Riobamba and rested a couple of days. Then while Tim and three others made a second attempt getting a lot nearer, the rest started the canoeing phase. For future expeditions, field rations might be an idea as the local food was expensive and its calorie content dubious. Also people would be less prone to diarrhoea as standards of hygiene in Equador leave a lot to be desired. Most importantly of all though is that a thorough altitude training program should be maintained. All in all quite a good experience from which a lot was learnt.

*Nick Davies*



# Sultan Vikings '94

## HMS Sultan Mountaineering Club Expedition to Norway



*The Eastern Lofoten Islands*

In August 1994 a group of 4 officers and 5 ratings, principally from HMS Sultan, travelled to Svolvær in the Lofoten Islands of Norway to rock climb, mountaineer and trek over the islands. The district is famous for its sheer mountains with long difficult ridges and for a twin-peaked pinnacle of rock called the Svolvaergeita (the Svolvær Goat). The expedition was split into a climbing party and a trekking party.

The first part of the expedition was spent in the northern region of the main island of the group, Austvagøy. The reasons for this initial period were for the group leaders to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of their parties and for familiarisation with the terrain. During this phase the climbing party led by Rob Finch ascended Store Higravtind, the highest peak on the island and the trekking party, led by Chris Clipsham, made an ascent of Sautindin, in less than ideal weather.

The two parties met in the valley for tea and stickies and decided on what was to happen for the rest of the week. It became apparent that what was good terrain for the climbers in their Boreal Lasers and Lycra bodysuits was a bit too adventurous for the walkers in their Pusser's walking boots and foulies. The two parties made their farewells and parted; the climbers moving to the Vagakallen range and the trekkers established camp at Knutmarka, outside the main town, Svolvær.

During the rest of the week the trekking party walked over 40 km of arduous and wet terrain including the notorious Kongstindan ridge and Blatinden. Due to the fishing (poaching) expertise of the FAA contingent they also managed to supplement their diet with fresh cod!

The climbing party ascended many climbs around Vagakallen including Piano Turners Handle ( a rough translation from the Norwegian). An attempt at reaching the summit of Vagakallen was made but this had to be abandoned due to the severity of the route and unsafe conditions.

The last day was spent climbing the 330m high Svolvaergeita and the customary 7 ft jump between the two peaks which form the goat's horns was made by all the party. The cold conditions and high winds made for an interesting jump between the horns and a mind focussing landing!

It must be noted that this expedition was only a week long and that only a fraction of what the Lofoten Islands have to offer was experienced by the team. However this fraction provided the expedition with outstanding views on exhilarating ridges routes and peaks.

*David Baines*



# The Alpine Club

**The Alpine Club** is the only UK based mountaineering club catering specifically for those who climb in the Alps and the Greater Ranges of the world.

It was founded in 1857 for "the promotion of good fellowship among mountaineers, of mountain climbing, and mountain exploration, throughout the world, and of better knowledge of the mountains through literature, science and art". Throughout its existence the Club has included in its membership most of the leading British mountaineers of each generation, and now has members in more than 30 countries. Membership includes climbers of all abilities and most active climbers are qualified to join.

The Alpine Club promotes its aims through an active programme of climbing meets, lectures and publications, and through the maintenance of a unique library and archives. The library is staffed by a full-time librarian and is one of the most comprehensive collections of mountaineering literature in the world with over 25,000 books, journals, guidebooks and expedition reports. In addition the Club's archives comprise a unique collection of literature, letters and artifacts which record the history of mountaineering. The Club is based in Charlotte Street on the edge of the City of London. The premises contain a lecture hall, the library, offices, archive and a real ale bar.

There are three levels of membership:

- Full Membership** Candidates should be competent alpine climbers who show a continuing interest in mountaineering. The normal requirement is the completion of at least 20 respectable alpine ascents over at least 3 seasons, or their equivalent in other regions. Other qualifications in the form of contributions to mountain literature, science or art may also be taken into account.
- Aspirant Membership** This category is for climbers who currently lack the experience for Full Membership, but are expected to qualify in due course. They should normally have at least one alpine season.
- ACG Membership -** This is a section of the Alpine Club which caters for active climbers with a record of ascents of hard alpine routes.

The Honorary Secretary has applications forms for those who may be interested and can advise as to Club members who can be approached to act as proposer/seconders.

## Guidebook Review

### Lundy (1994) by Gary Gibson and Paul Harrison

£12.95. Published by the Climber's Club. Plastic Covers, 280 pages, Photographs in black and white and colour.

The Club has a long association with Lundy and climbing there is an "experience". Although there are climbs below VS they are well scattered and the descents are generally awkward with some being serious. Therefore to get the most out of a visit you need to be climbing at least Severe, preferably VS. On my four trips (the fifth was aborted when the Landing Craft was swamped) there has always been the chance of being stranded on the Island and twice I have been "rescued" by RN helicopter when the ferry didn't sail. The new guidebook is very attractive and captures the spirit of climbing on the Island.

Previous Lundy guidebooks were published by the RNRMMC. The new book is about twice as long as the last one, reflecting the large number of new routes put up over the last ten years. There are 17 photo diagrams and 15 clear maps which will help you to find your way around. One of the problems with Lundy is that most of the routes cannot be seen from the tops so good maps are essential especially on a first visit. The photos do not, fortunately, only concentrate on the epic hard routes; there are some excellent shots of the classic Very Severs.

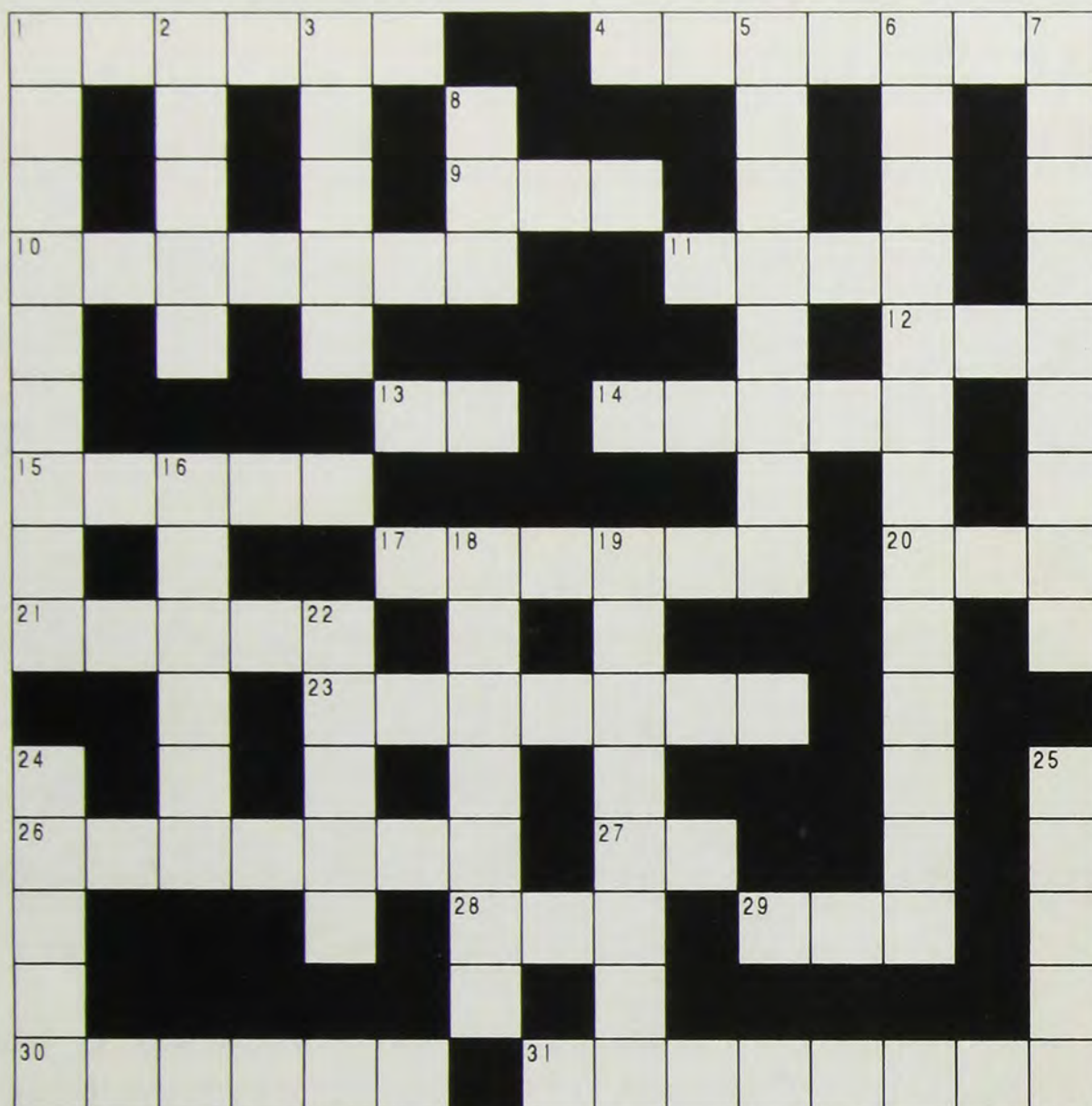
Similarly, while many of the new routes are well up in the E grades, there are about 80 in the HVS/VS grade with another 30 or so in easier grades. Most of the new routes with quality stars are up in the Epic grades. Surely there must be some high quality routes still to be found in the lower grades? The classic Devil's Slide area (the Slide was first climbed by our own Admiral Lawder in 1961) is well covered and there are 8 stars on the slab alone. Satan's Slip remains E1 and is "a lonely lead" on the big 5a pitch. "Star baggers" will be pleased to see that quality stars now appear in the index.

There are quite a few grade changes, many without explanation, even on the classic routes. For example Shark goes from E1 to HVS and Devil's Spine HS to VS (both in the Devil's Slide area). Peimets of Delirium and Indy 500 go down from E2 to E1. Banana Crack and Twelve Bore go up from S to VS. If I have one disappointment it is that "Holiday in Cambodia" HVS 5a, 4c has not been upgraded to E1 despite numerous comments in the new route book in the Tavern. I've done it and found it desperate. It is possible to hit the deck on both pitches so beware. The route description says it all: "the top pitch could offer some worrying moments to a nervous leader".

If you think you will be going to Lundy in the next 10 years buy this excellent book now. It will probably disappear off the shelves quite quickly and I can't imagine the next issue will be out before the turn of the century.

Brian Pancott





### Clues Across

- 1&4. Author of 'Scrambles amongst the Alps' (6,7)  
 9. Gaelic word meaning waterfall (3)  
 10 & 19 Down. Scottish cliff in the Cairngorms area which features the White Elephant, Vertigo Wall, Goliath, Mousetrap and Labyrinth Direct (5,2,4,4)  
 11. The snow slopes of a mountain above the Bergschrund (4)  
 12. Fawcett or Hill perhaps? (3)  
 13. The Alpine Club, in short (1,1)  
 14 What Bonnington chose to do, according to his 1966 book (5)  
 15. & 17. Where it all began, in 1886 (5,6)  
 20. This is drier and warmer on the leeward side of a mountain (3)  
 21 & 22 Down. Exponent of competition climbing (5,5).  
 23. Rope Dancer or tumbler, Isabelle Patissier maybe? (7)  
 26 Building, a challenge for the inner city climber perhaps (7)  
 27 Tibetan word meaning a pass or col. (2)  
 28. In short the 'city' of Sugar Loaf Mountain (3)  
 29 & 31. Mancunian plumber who reached summit of Annapurna in 1970 (3,7)  
 30. Surname of the leader of the 1931 expedition which succeeded in climbing Kamet (6)

### Clues Down

1. Climber, cameraman and cafe proprietor (4,5)  
 2. A bet, or Lawrence of the 1933 Everest expedition (5)  
 3. English arete (5)  
 5 Valley in California through which the Merced River flows (8)  
 6. Tragically he disappeared with Joe Tasker (5,8)  
 7. The 'Mountains of the Moon' (9)  
 8 & 24 Highest mountain in Great Britain (3,5)  
 16. Mountain at the head of the Khumbu Valley (6)  
 18. French stirrups (7)  
 19. See 10 across  
 22. See 21 across  
 25. John, American member of the eventful International Expedition to Everest's South West face in 1971 (5)