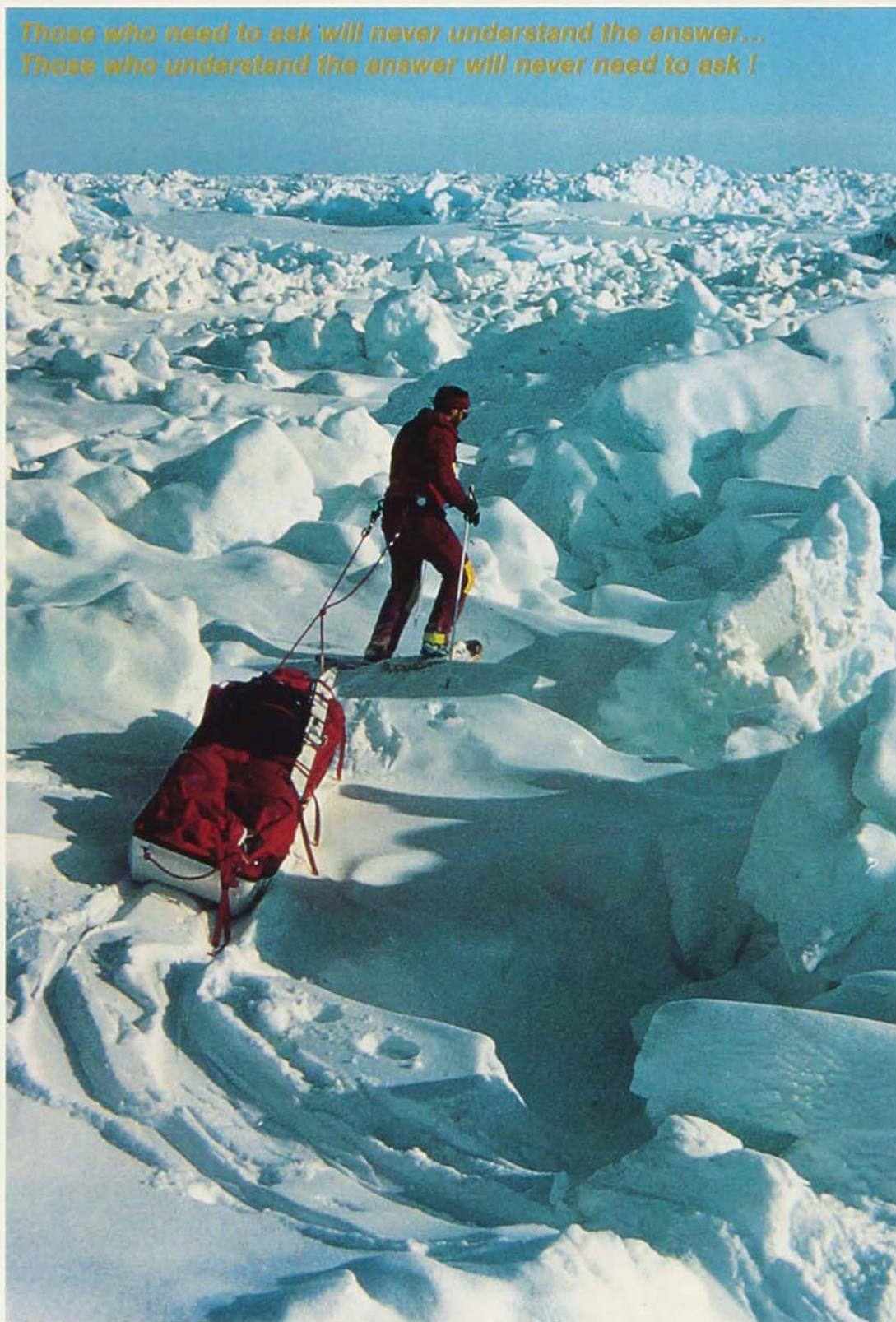




# ARMY MOUNTAINEER

*THE JOURNAL OF THE ARMY MOUNTAINEERING ASSOCIATION*

*Those who need to ask will never understand the answer...  
Those who understand the answer will never need to ask!*



Autumn 1995

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# DR Climbing Walls International

## Capturing the spirit of the mountains



A contoured-resin climbing wall at Leeds University, designed and built by DR Climbing Walls

Increasing demands from climbers are pushing climbing wall manufacturers to keep breaking new ground in design flair and technical skill.

"Climbers are always on the look-out for new challenges, and this applies just as much to the artificial surface as it does to the real thing," said Don Robinson, chairman of DR Climbing Walls, leading installers of climbing walls for the armed forces, and founding chairman of the newly-formed Climbing Wall Manufacturers' Association.

"With hard rock, the pressure is on the climber to find the new challenge, whereas with man-made walls the pressure is on the designer to meet climbers' demands and provide the new challenge for them," he explained. "The climbing wall industry therefore is truly customer driven, and that is why it is so important that people who design and build walls fully understand what climbers want.

"Fortunately the industry has moved on from the early days when some architects, who knew nothing about climbing, thought they could get away with fixing a few random blocks to a well-constructed wall. We have also moved on from some alarming instances of well-meaning climbers designing superb pitches without recognising the importance of structural engineering!

"Climbing walls are becoming more and more innovative as designers strive, not just for technical climbing excellence, but also for aesthetic appeal. Modern techniques of contouring and sculpturing mean that the latest walls seek to capture the spirit of the mountains while providing exciting challenges for the novice and expert climber alike.

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# ARMY MOUNTAINEER



## THE JOURNAL OF THE ARMY MOUNTAINEERING ASSOCIATION

Autumn 1995

### Message from The Editor

*Major PL Fish RLC*

If the mountain will not come to Mohammed, Mohammed must go to the mountain. Those words were true enough prior to the days of printing and photography. Today it is true to say, "if we cannot, through pressure of work or other ties, go to the mountain, we must make it come to us".

One way - and it is the best - is to summon our mountain back with the help of those who have special powers of doing so, the companions who have climbed with us. If mountains have filled hours of your life in which body and spirit were at their best, the friends who have shared those hours always bring with them something that restores the freshness, however distant your adventures seem. All sorts of memories are invisibly present when you greet them; the anxieties and discomforts endured in mist and storm and in the gathering darkness; the times of stress on steep rocks or ice and the relief of triumph that followed; for some the sudden intrusion of death. These are the best of forces that join people together, the communion in silent contemplation of things so great that the differences that separate us from each other are as nothing.

If you can neither go to the mountain nor have a friend beside you whose mere presence brings them back, there remains another way, third best only, but often a pleasant and effective way, that is to read of adventures however great or small that have been undertaken. With your feet before the fire, or safe in bed, you may let those who have been under the enhancement of the mountains try to describe to you the nature of their spell.

I hope that some at least of these pages may prove a magic carpet that takes you to the places where you would be, whether the local crags and mountains or the great ranges of the world.

It is a year since I became the journal editor and I do not intend to commence an editorial, however, I have to mention one specific area. Over the last year I have been fortunate to meet many members and they have commented that too many articles on the greater ranges are included in the journal and few on small exercises and local adventures. The answer I always give is simple, I can only publish the articles I receive. Therefore, you are all asked to put pen to paper about your adventures, include some slides and photographs, and send them to me.

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#### On the cover:

*Expedition North Pole. Article page 4*

*Quote: Wally Herbert*

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# Appointments

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**Sport Climbing:** Maj S Derban, HQT, Upavon, SN9 6BE

**Elected Members:** Maj C Davies, Capt A Richards, Wo2 D Neery

# Annual General Meeting

*Capel Curig 16 September 1995*

The 1995 AGM took place at Capel Curig Training Camp on Sat 16 Sep 95. The event was attended by approximately 60 members. The weather was reasonable and on both Sat and Sun members teamed up and departed to various areas to climb or walk.

A notable event occurred as it was Maj Robin Watts final meeting prior to his retirement as commandant of Capel Curig Training Camp. It was apt, therefore that he was presented with a picture produced by a local artist of Moel Siabod (the mountain familiar to all visitors to the camp) by Maj Gen Pett our Chairman. Robin was also made an Honorary member of the AMA. In the last ten years he has made welcome all those with an interest in the mountains and has been particularly kind in allowing us to hold our AGM in his camp.

Maj Watts has climbed in most areas of the world and a short slide show produced by John Muston and narrated by Col Chris Field showing some of his expeditions was enjoyed by all. We take this



*The Snowdon Horseshoe, from Nant Cyunndd*

opportunity to thank him for his support, wish him well for the future and undoubtedly our paths are bound to cross again.

A picture showing Robin in more familiar surrounding can be found in the centre section.

## Welcome to Member No.5000

A landmark has recently been reached in the AMA with membership reaching the 5000 mark.

Membership number 5000 has been given to Cpl 'Woz' Beasley, a telecommunications technician in the REME. Cpl Beasley joined the AMA after gaining an interest in rock climbing whilst on a trade course at The School of Electronic and Aeronautical Engineering in Arborfield.

Since joining the climbing club at SEAE he has climbed on several indoor walls, including The Bristol Climbing Centre, The Foundry in Sheffield and at Bruner University in Uxbridge. Most of his outdoor climbing has taken place on the sandstone of Harrisons Rock in Kent where climbs up to grade 5c were completed.

Cpl Beasley and several other members of the SEAE climbing club attended the recent AMA MEET at Hathersage in the Peak District. Unfortunately the weather wasn't good that weekend so the group spent the time practising indoors at the Foundry.

Whilst relatively new to the rock climbing world he has been an active Trekker for a few years. Recent trips include 6 weeks in Kenya, which included climbing the well beaten trail up Mt. Kenya. Another recent trip was as a member of a team from 1Bn REME in Osnabrueck which teamed up with mountain troops of the Moroccan Army in the Atlas region of Morocco. This expedition included reaching the summit of Mt Toubkal.

As a new member of the AMA Cpl Beasley hopes to improve his rock climbing skills and would like to take part in mountain expeditions in the future. He looks forward to meeting many more members of the association at future meets.



*Our 5000th member: Cpl Beasley.*

### AMA Winter Meet Xmas 1995

The annual AMA pilgrimage to Scotland is set for the week 27 Dec to 3 Jan, at the Newtonmore Training Centre. The meet coordinator is Major Graham Tanner, School of Electronic Engineering, Arborfield, Berkshire RG2 9NN. Tel: 01734 763336. Fax: 01734 763335. This change of scene provides easy access to the Cairngorms and hopefully some colder (and drier?) weather. Further details on applications for places will follow but note the dates now to avoid those last-minute Xmas family tears as you attempt to leave the bosoms of your loved ones. These meets have also turned into culinary challenges with the move to self-catering, so brush up on your kitchen skills this Summer or your "plat de jour" may receive a thumbs-down!

# Expedition *North*

**I**n 1989, Special Air Service soldier Oag Mackenzie learned that Ran Fiennes had failed in his attempt to make an unsupported trek to the Geographical North Pole. Researching both this and other Arctic exploits, he decided to try and make the first solo, unsupported man haul to the Pole from Ward Hunt Island in the Canadian High Arctic.

Once allocated a MOD name - Exercise Poles 95 - political clearances and preparations began in earnest. The relevant MOD Adv Trg guidelines were adhered to and much assistance with the Government Departments of Defence, Parks and Agriculture Canada was obtained. A vital two month build up training and orientation period, based at the Canadian Forces Station at Alert, was undertaken in the spring of 1994. This period resulted in the confirmation of rations, clothing, equipment and communications, and it helped forge the links with Kenn Borek Air, the air support company.

The following personnel took part in the attempt:

Sergeant Oag Mackenzie - Solo walker

Major Bronco Lane - Manager/Recovery

Staff Sergeant Ray McKenna - Equipment/Recovery

Sergeant Jock Hutton - Communications

All movement was undertaken by civilian airlines - British Airways to Montreal and Canadian Air North to Resolute Bay. Expedition freight was moved by GEFCO Ltd of Coventry airport and West Drayton. The freight was forwarded a month prior to the teams arrival. Fuel was procured locally on arrival at Resolute.

The original plan called for the base team to live as guests of Kenn Borek Air. Unfortunately a fire at their Resolute Bay accommodation meant we had to move to Narwal Lodge which except for the expense proved excellent.

On 8 Mar the weather forecast was favorable for a flight to Ward Hunt Island. The highest latitude on Canadian soil. Making a perfect landing on an ice runway the pilot remarked that it was -43C. Following a exchange of pleasantries and photographs, Oag set off on his attempt to be the first Briton to travel solo and unsupported to the Pole.

Setting off with 445lbs of food, fuel and equipment meant Oag immediately had to shuttle quarter loads forward, then return and repeat the process. Therefore to travel one nautical mile he would be forced to walk seven. Some of this was over pressure ridges, boulders of ice lying at different angles. Some would rear up 30 feet and hours each day was spent finding away to surmount the objects. Once at the top it was down the equally steep reverse slope, the sledges found their own way, hurtling down before shuddering to a stop at crazy angle, nose into a hole.

The cold also had to be overcome, just to say it was -54C does not even begin to describe how that magnitude of cold affects human

life, regardless of the intense work being undertaken. The cold completely dominates all thoughts and actions. Before the simplest of mundane activities, for example getting started in the morning, is the need to have a well trialled systematic method which has every essential action carried out in a sequence to ensure that the body heat gained in the sleeping bag does not get wasted. It means being conscious that as the head moves out of the bags warmth it will be assaulted with tendrils of hoar frost created from exhaled breath and clinging spider web style to the tent walls. Trying to stay dry is the hardest task of all, with a human naturally producing moisture twenty four hours a day, without which the bodies metabolism would cease to function effectively. A purring MSR stove is the centre of survival. Having spent three hours getting the body and soul ready for the days toil, with all the gear stowed in the sledges, the solo Polar traveller begins the days haul.

Oag left Ward Hunt Island on the 8 Mar 95 and was picked up on the 17 Apr 95. Extracts from his diary follow:

## *OAG'S DIARY ENTRY FOR THE 21ST MARCH, DAY 14. TEMPERATURE -25 C*

"Not a very pleasant day today. I've had to go through an active area where the sea is just jostling the ice around a lot. Cloud and wind as well"

## *OAG'S DIARY ENTRY FOR THE 28TH MARCH - DAY 21. TEMPERATURE -39 C*

"Well, no move today because of the wind. The tent has been bending and flapping around my ears all day. However the storm might clear the air a bit and give me a clear week in order to get some distance in. My health is good, morale is high and I feel in good fighting spirit."

## *OAG'S DIARY ENTRY FOR THE 4TH APRIL - DAY 28, TEMPERATURE ?*

"With my thermometer broken I cannot now tell the temperature. However the body getting out of the sleeping bag in the morning is a good indicator. It is definitely less cold. As I got out this morning a big cloud of steam escaped as I opened it. Moisture is a polar traveller's worst enemy. Two minutes ago (1846 hrs) my tent and everything in it shook and there was a loud rumbling. I jumped out of the tent and the whole area to N, E and W was rumbling to the sound of the ice moving."

## *OAG'S DIARY ENTRY FOR THE 15TH APRIL - DAY 39, TEMPERATURE ?*

"Started breakfasts again a few days ago because I felt the power deficiency as the day wore on from not having any. Today I was able to play my ace card - the Shark immersion suit - it is what I am to wear when crossing open stretches of water and pulling the sledge behind. However as the sledge and I entered the water and began swimming, my thighs and behind started getting wet so I swam back, got up on to the ice and walked back to where I start-

# Pole 1995

ed, then took of the suit. My trousers and underwear were drenched as the immersion suit was letting in water at a vast rate around the groin area. All I can do now is put up the tent and wait for a freeze. More time lost.

## OAG'S DIARY ENTRY FOR THE 16TH APRIL - DAY 40, TEMPERATURE?

"Well, I got across the open water by the skin of my teeth or good luck. Whilst on an ice bridge the sled started to slip to the left and was about to roll into the water. So I stepped over and over-stretched and put my leg in the path of the sliding sled and my upper body was twisted awkwardly round to the right. Here was the sled on the edge of the moving ice ridge and myself, I couldn't move. So it then became a test of strength, me against gravity - which I won. However it cost me. I managed to get the sled to the other side only to find my back was in agony.

So the dilemma I am faced with now is - do I go on with my back in agony only to be rescued later on and then have treatment for the rest of my life, or do I save myself and everyone else a lot of bother and call in the aircraft tomorrow. Either way it's going to be agony. The first my back, the latter the feeling that I have let everyone down - i.e. myself, Bronco, Tanky, The Colonel, Merv, The Regiment, Sponsors and everyone else who expected me to get there and of course my family and friends and lastly my little boy. I'll see how my back is tomorrow morning and make the decision then. Tonight I will play some tunes on my personnel stereo wonder what is in store for me when I get back to Hereford. Everyone likes a winner - no one likes a loser."

## OAG'S DIARY ENTRY FOR THE 17th APRIL - DAY 41

"Well, here I sit my tent all packed and ready for pick-up. The aircraft has already flown over a few hours ago and has gone away on a refuelling task. The pilot said he will be back at 2 o'clock or there about. A bit of a wind has got up, I hope he can land or it will probably mean another day here. I still have the back problem as I thought I would. Not exactly an honourable way to finish the expedition. I suppose I could have got myself killed, got my name on the clock tower as an alternative."

## THE RECOVERY

Recovery of Oag from the ice in any scenario called for the fullest co-operation of Kenn Borek. When the message was received on the morning HF radio schedule with Resolute, a pilot was about to depart and position a fuel dump forward for another Twin Otter loaded with North Pole tourists. Oag had activated his emergency beacon and the location provided by the Rescue Co-ordination Centres at Plymouth UK and Trenton Canada proved accurate to a mile and VHF communication was quickly established over the Motorola PRC 112 Sarbe. As the pilot was returning from his fuel drop he located Oag, made a pass and then executed a perfect landing to pick up Oag after forty days on the ice.

## FINANCE

It was our aim to fund-raise the expedition without resort to any commercial sponsorship and their understandable requirement for media exposure. This was successfully achieved, due in part to the involvement of individuals who, on the best traditions of the SAS, wish to remain anonymous.

## RATIONS

6000 calories a day. Assistance was sought from the MOD ration specialists at the Directorate of Naval Stores, Bath. Consisted of the following:

Breakfast: 3 70g Rolled Oats Mix - 2 85g Hot Chocolate Mix - 1 Capsule Cod Liver Oil

Snacks: 1 250g Fudge Bar (6 flavours) - 1 25g Lemon/Orange Drink Mix - 1 Vitamin C supplement

Main Meal: 3 75g either; Macaroni Cheese/Vegetable Noodle - Smoked Fish or Vegetable Pilaff - 2 60g Mash Potato Powder - 1 80g Ghee Butter Fat - 2 85g Hot Chocolate Mix - 1 Measure Grants Whisky - 1 Capsule Cod Liver Oil

To obtain his daily minimum of 8 pints of fluid, Oag would firstly identify and collect chopped-up pieces of old ice, before melting them down to reconstitute the ration. To finish the day he would use a tot of Grants whisky "The Gordon Highlander", which was consumed mixed with the final hot chocolate drink. This was Oag's one luxury and as whisky is both a muscle relaxant and an aid to circulation, it was justified on both medical and morale grounds.

## COMMUNICATIONS

The high Arctic is a notoriously difficult area for dependable HF communications and satellite coverage is limited. Oag required a simple, robust and reliable system to indicate progress and if necessary, to initiate an emergency recovery.

## SUMMARY

The aim of Army Adventurous Training is to develop some or all of the qualities of fitness, physical and moral courage, initiative, and powers of endurance that will enhance the soldiers ability to withstand the shocks and strains of war and operations. This expedition, although unsuccessful in its attempt to be the first Briton to arrive at the North Pole solo and unsupported, has most certainly achieved its aims stipulated by the Army. Oag's bold concept was undertaken not for career advancement or fiscal gain, but to answer its inherent challenge.

The forty one days he endured, undertaking the cold and perilous toil of hauling sledge loads on the frozen ocean, was remarkable proof of his courage and endurance - which is inspirational to us all.

# A 'Back of the Fag Packet'

Imagine your utter disappointment, having climbed Mont Blanc and feeling terribly pleased with yourself, to discover that it was in fact not the highest Mountain in Europe, but merely the highest in Western Europe and that the highest in Europe was called Mt Elbrus and that it was in Russia. Having ascertained where both the Caucasus and Mt Elbrus are, some hasty research was then carried out.

In an early August Edition of "The Economist" there was a highly encouraging article: "France's Henry IV promised every family a chicken in the pot. In the Caucasus, local warlords seem to be promising a tank in every garage." Annex O to the Army Leave Manual was then filled out, and miraculously a week before we were due to depart authorisation was granted. This let us with stacks of time to jack up the trip!!!

Through the friend of a friend we were met at Sheremetevo Airport at Moscow by the Defence Attache's suitably black and impressive car, which then whisked us through the Moscow traffic which has to be one of the best free for all driving experiences going!! The night was spent with the DA and his wife who very kindly put us up and gave us some sound tips on what to do in Russia. The following day we then flew from Vnukovo Airport on an Internal Aeroflot flight to Mineralnye Vody, which was not quite the "White knuckle Airways" experience that we'd anticipated, but travelling "Cattle Class" has a charm all of its own.

From Mineralnye Vody we headed to Pyatigorsk - home of the author Lermontov, where we were to stay in the Intourist Hotel. The Hotel was certainly an experience, complete with compulsory Cabaret and a few quiet Vodkas, followed by several noisier ones. A four hour Bus journey up the Baksan valley took us to the Village of Terskol. The guide books written during the heyday of Communism enthused about Terskol, describing it as the "Chamonix of the Caucasus". The demise of Communism has had a profound effect on Terskol. On stepping off the Bus we were confronted by a bombed out burnt out building and three shops, all of which sold eight different types of Chewing Gum and nothing else.

The following day I went off for a recce of Mount Elbrus, whilst Charlie nursed an infected toe. It was a little disconcerting to see piles of Chairlift chairs running the length of the Chairlift, where they had negligently become separated from their cable, I took this for as high as I was allowed to go, where I was shown the appropriate spot to drop off the Chairlift whilst still in motion. From then on it was a gentle walk for two hours up to the Prijut 11 hut (4200m) over a glacier. From the Prijut 11 one can see both the East(5621m) and West(5633m) Peaks of Elbrus that look tantalisingly close, but are in fact several kms away laterally, and 1500m vertically.

The route back down was fairly straight forward, and less hazardous. Having talked through the Recce, I asked Charlie what success he'd had in getting hold of any food - very little. It appeared that the Locals went to a Market Town called Tyrnauz which was 15km down the Valley, or they grew, bred or captured their food. Fortunately we'd had the foresight to bring eight day's Compo with us (total, not each), which was to be a lifesaver, although repetitive.

The following day we started a two day trip with our sights set on climbing Mt Dongosorun (4452m). This involved walking back down the Baksan Valley for an hour and a half, before heading South and following the track towards the Besto Pass. We spent about an hour climbing up the side of a steep gorge, out of the Baksan Valley, when a Russian Soldier appeared from behind a rock waving his Kalashnikov in our direction. I'm not sure who was more surprised, him or us. We both sat on our Bergans and the Soldier was then joined by the rest of his Section. We were then asked to produce our "authorisation", this was duly produced, but clearly only "authorisation" from their Officer would suffice. At this stage we should have done the acceptable (and possibly expected) Western thing - to have bribed them, but having no funds and a concern for their moral integrity, we decided to make them a cup of tea instead. It was revealed that their Officer was back down in the Baksan Valley, from whence we had just come!! We were then invited to return to the Valley, but we were both adamant that their Officer would come to us.

An hour and a half later a huffing and blowing Lieutenant, pistol packing and Rayban clad emerged out of the Baksan Valley. We showed him our "authorisation", which he graciously accepted. He then asked us if we knew that we were 2 km away from the Russian/Georgian Border, we did. He then asked us if we were about to invade Georgia!!, we weren't. Having convinced him that we were in fact Mountaineers and not Freedom Fighters he allowed us to continue.

The rest of this journey was relatively incident free as we went upwards following the course of the Jusengi River and from there



Capt Smith, with the East & West Summits of Elbrus visible behind. Also visible is the Prijut 11 hut.

# Tour of The Caucasus

By Capt A M Smith PARA and Capt F C Sykes R G J

up moraines to the Eastern Dongusorun Glacier. It was incredible to be in such fantastic scenery and to be the only people in the Valley to enjoy it, in glorious conditions. That night we bivvied and continued with our acclimatization, listening to the avalanches and the thunderstorm crashing around outside us. Due to the avalanche threat we decided that discretion would be the better part of valour and moved off route. How close we got to the Russian/Georgian Border remains to be seen, as we were the only people in the Valley, no one else need know.

We returned back down into the Baksan Valley, having had a good initial blow out and acclimatizing trip. In the Baksan Valley, we were fortunate to be given a lift to Terskol by the same Russian Soldiers who'd stopped us the previous day. We then spent the night in Terskol, sorting ourselves out for our ascent of Elbrus itself.

A 5 km walk up the Valley from Terskol took us to the bottom of the Azau Alm Cablecar (2300m), which then took us to Alter Rjndblick (3900m) and from then it was a steady walk to the Prijut 11 Hut (the only Alpine style hut in the Caucasus) over the Lower Azau Glacier. It is from here that one can easily understand the reason that Elbrus is known as "Little Antarctica", as all that can be seen above 3900m is nothing but snow and ice that leads gently up the Southern flanks of Elbrus.

In spite of having been warned that we'd be fighting for bedspace in the Prijut 11 (it sleeps 200) we were the only people there (not even a warden). We had a good night cooking compo and listening to the BBC World Service, the reception was enhanced through the adroit use of a "dead man" to improve the antenna. The following day, after a leisurely start, we went off to explore the Pastuchov Rocks (4700m) and inadvertently one of the crevasses further up from it. This gave us a good idea as to what route we'd take on the way up to the summit of the West Peak of Elbrus.

We were up at 0200 hrs the following morning and started our ascent. We were at the Pastuchov Rocks in just over an hour and from there headed in a westerly direction to the saddle between the East and the West Peaks. We got to the saddle at about 0700 hrs and stopped for a brew, sheltering in what was left of an old bivouac shelter. From there it was a fairly steep climb up a snow and ice slope for just over an hour to the summit of the West Peak. We stopped long enough to take photographs, admire the view and get our breath back.

It took two hours to get back to the Prijut 11 hut, and from there a further hour back to the cable car. We then spent the night in Terskol, before returning to Pyiatigorsk the following day. We then spent the following night exploring the Pyiatigorsk nightlife, and replacing lost calories. The following day we travelled back to Moscow courtesy of Aeroflot, who go to great lengths to look after their Foreign Customers - ensuring that they are shepherded around and actually get on the right plane. That night we stayed at the Traveller's Guest House which is very good value and highly cosmopolitan. We managed to then explore the Moscow nightlife which was superb; this included the World's most infamous Big Mac, an Irish Pub, a Mexican Restaurant (with blistered lips this was a hot and painful bit of cultural juxtaposition) and a Russian Nightclub (the Tropicana).



Capt Smith and Capt Sykes on the West Summit of Mt Elbrus.

To conclude there are several do's and don'ts for anyone considering climbing in the Caucasus:

Do fill out Annex O to the Army Leave Manual as long before the trip as possible.

Do take as much lightweight food as you can carry.

Do try and book things through Intourist, as this will take a lot of the legwork out of planning the trip.

Do book in with the Mountain Rescue in Terskol. The British have a bit of a bad name in the Caucasus, after a party of 7 came off Elbrus by an unexpected route, without telling anyone.

Do try and take a Russian speaker (or hire one if you can afford one), alternatively German is reasonably widely spoken.

Do be obsequious and charming to any Russian in uniform, they are not being overinquisitive, just friendly!

**Do go! as getting there is as challenging as climbing Elbrus.**

Don't go in September, go in August (it's safer).

Don't pay for things in Dollars (which most will ask for), as you will get better value from Roubles.

Don't believe everything it says in the Guidebook.

**Don't try and cram it all into two weeks.**

Don't be put off by events in Grozny.

Don't forget your sense of humour-you'll need it.

# Sport Climbing Championships

## 28 April 1995

Last year sport climbing burst onto the Army scene with the first Sport Climbing Championships. The event was a great success and, by popular demand, a second event was organised for 28 Apr 95.

Planning for the '95 event started as soon as the '94 one ended. Once the venue had been selected, the process of publishing DCIs, attracting sponsors, raising funds, organising accommodation, bullying people to be belay and begging people to be judges got under way. In true military style this process ended with the last hold being made specially overnight and being bolted to the wall minutes before the competition started.

The venue was the new centre at Hull "Rockcity", which was in fact so new that the competitors were the first climbers to use the wall, and all the routes were set specifically for the competition. These routes were set by two local hot shots from Hull helped by myself and Mac Mckay, with Paul Craven making the fine adjustments.

The event was again divided into three categories:

- Up to and including VS.
- HVS to E1.
- E2 and above.

Each category competed against all comers regardless of age or sex. The heats were hotly contested, as those who did not make the cut knew that they would not get to climb again. The steepness of the wall causing some climbers difficulties with the massive eight meters of overhang requiring either a tuggish strength, or excellent power and stamina.

By mid afternoon the cut had been made thirteen finalists in the E2 and above category and 12 in the HVS to E1. In the VS category being a little more friendly, everyone got a second climb. Whilst preparation for the final took place event staff mercilessly sold event T shirts and raffle tickets to anyone unsuspecting enough to



WO2 Mike Smith REME, E2 & Above, 7<sup>th</sup> Place



OCdt Nathan Pike Sheffield UOTC, 1st Place Overall, with the Cotswold Shield

come too close. The motto was "If they won't buy one, then sell them one". After all we had to make the event pay for itself or entry fees would be higher next year.

The final of the VS category ended in a dead heat with Lt Andy Harmer and LCpl Jim Davidson both climbing the final route in 2 mins 21 secs. A tense super final left Lt Andy Harmer the category winner. Meanwhile the best lady was won decisively by 2Lt Callaghan of Sheffield UOTC.

In the harder categories the routes were graded in the French manner which is becoming the norm for sport routes indoors and out. The grading for the HVS to E1 category were Fr 6b for the eliminator and Fr 6b+ for the final. The twelve finalists fought a close battle with five of the twelve coming within three holds of the top. It was however a spirited performance from LCpl Martin Whitbread that allowed him to be the only competitor to top out on the route and win the category.

The fiercest competition was however in the E2 and above category. The seriously steep eliminator had been a tough Fr 6c, and the thirteen qualifiers knew that they had something even harder to come. This was by far the most closely fought category with all competitors hoping to win the champions trophy. The final route was graded Fr 7a and defeated all but the favourite OCdt Nathan Pike from Sheffield UOTC, who was the only competitor to top out on the route. His superb display of climbing ability beat WO2 Stephen Blake into second place (As well as taking the veterans trophy) and WO2 Graham Carter into third place. The reigning champion Sgt Dave Bunting came sixth overall.

The event was again an overall success with thanks to Cotswold Camping for providing both the trophies and the substantial prizes, as well as Edelweiss for providing the ropes and Petzel the hardware. Thanks also to Paul Craven for Judging, route setting, and providing sponsorship and prizes from Powerbar and Isostar. Finally if any one wants a competition T Shirt let me know I still have a few left!

# Results

Posn	Rnk	Name	Competitor Number	Heats Placing	Finals Placing
<b>E2 &amp; Above</b>					
01.	OCdt	Pike	11	Top	Top
02.	WO2	Blake	16	Top	30- (1)
03.	WO2	Carter	22	Top	28+
04.	OCdt	Little	12	19+	27+
05.	Pte	Jones	26	Top	27+
06.	Sgt	Bunting	21	Top	27
07.	WO2	Smith	15	19-	27
08.	Cpl	Gale	24	18+	26-
09.	Sgt	Marshall	25	Top	25+
10.	Maj	Derben	03	Top	25+
11.	Ocdt	Howell	14	19	25
12.	Spr	Franklin	32	19-	24
13.	Capt	Campbell	33	18+	24-
14.	Sgt	Hedge	17	15	
15.	Lt	Barker	19	15-	
16.	Cpl	Douglas	06	15-	
17.	OCdt	Edwards	09	15-	
18.	OCdt	Franklin	13	15-	
19.	Lt	Crowson	31	14+	
20.	Pte	Powell	28	11	
21.	Sgt	Bird	18	11	
22.	Sgt	Willson	20	10+	
23.	Maj	Aldwinckle	01	8-	
24.	LCpl	Coff	05	5-	
25.	OCdt	Adams	08	4+	

**HVS to E1**

26.	LCpl	Whitbread	55	Top	Top
27.	Cpl	Hall	61	Top	30-
28.	Cpl	Painting	62	Top	29-
29.	2Lt	Asquith	67	Top	28+
30.	Cpl	Mitchell	42	Top	28
31.	SSgt	Baker	4	Top	26
32.	SSgt	McConnochie	43	Top	25-
33.	Pte	Braid	73	Top	24
34.	Cpl	Miln	58	Top	24-
35.	LCpl	Chinnery	41	Top	24-
36.	Sgt	Henderson	52	Top	17
37.	ATpr	Crowther	45	Top	15-
38.	Maj	Smith	51	44	
39.	2Lt	Callaghan	50	43	(2)
40.	Sgt	Pugsley	70	43-	
41.	SSgt	Fowle	56	43-	
42.	LCpl	Brown	69	40+	
43.	Lt	Smyth	72	40	
44.	OCdt	Russell	49	40	
45.	SSgt	Muir	54	40-	
46.	LCpl	Calcutt	59	39-	
47.	Cpl	Richards	8	36-	
48.	ATpr	Patel	48	36-	
49.	Cpl	Blair	35	34-	

Posn	Rnk	Name	Competitor Number	Heats Placing	Finals Placing
50.	ATpr	Lean	39	33-	
51.	Sgt	Mutch	60	18+	
52.	Capt	Fahey	47	18-	
53.	LCpl	Burgess	71	17	
54.	Sgt	Shorten	53	17	
55.	LCpl	Eddington	57	17	
56.	SSgt	Bateman	46	17	
57.	Cpl	Kelly	66	17-	
58.	Capt	Waller	36	17+	
59.	OCdt	Warren	37	17+	
60.	LCpl	Barker	65	17-	
61.	OCdt	Neiper	63	16+	
62.	LCpl	Lawson	68	16	

**UP TO & INCLUDING VS**

63.	Lt	Harmer	100	1.51 (3)	2.21 (4)
64.	LCpl	Davidson	78	2.04	2.21
65.	Sgt	Howe	91	2.27	2.37
66.	WO2	LLoyd	99	2.02	2.40
67.	Sgt	Redfern	93	3.25	2.45
68.	Cpl	Van Rassel	101	2.15	3.12
69.	Spr	Heightly	82	2.33	3.21
70.	Pte	Seager	105	2.03	3.53
71.	ATpr	McCaffrey	104	4.17	4.37
72.	Gnr	Dyson	98	3.41	19+
73.	Cpl	Foskett	97	4.55	18+
74.	LCpl	Jones	103	2.43	12+
75.	Maj	Stevens	86	3.11	12+
76.	WO2	Whitley	92	3.04	12+
77.	Cpl	Easthill	90	15+	12+
78.	LCpl	Sekula	79	2.43	12-
79.	LCpl	Clark	94	3.49	11+
80.	Cpl	McCarthy	87	15	11+
81.	Maj	Cowling	89	15+	11+
82.	Cpl	Bowman	83	2.57	11+
83.	Cpl	Hannis	81	3.30	11+
84.	Capt	Hoff	88	17++	4+
85.	Cpl	Roberts	80	12+	4+
86.	Capt	Weir	85	13+	
87.	LCpl	Millard	102	7+	
88.	Cpl	Cowie	84	7	
89.	Cpl	Taliku	95	7-	

**Notes:**

- (1) Best placed veteran (Above 35 years)  
 (2) Best placed lady  
 (3) When many competitors Top Out, positions are ranked by time (4) Won on a head to head superfinal.

**Key**

- Touched Hold (Holds numbered)  
 Held Hold  
 + Made upward progress using hold

# Gasherb

*"Never volunteer" the old sweats advise, as you never know what it will get you into. I ignored them, volunteered, and got myself into Gasherbrum Gunner.*

The Mountaineering expedition to Gasherbrum 3 in the Pakistan Karakorum (7956 metres/26,090 ft, the highest of the 7 000mts), hit turbulence with 9 months to go when the leader had to withdraw. Another leader having been found, the FCO then declined to give political clearance. Enlisting the assistance of the Defence Section of the High Commission in Islamabad, the decision was challenged and eventually common-sense triumphed and clearance was granted.

Then one of our main sponsors withdrew, pleading Lowes Gully Syndrome. Despite this but still short of cash, we (me, Pat, Pete, Oz, John M, Mark and Chris) assembled at Heathrow on July 2nd. After an embarrassing half an hour posing around Heathrow having photos taken by Data Sciences (one of our remaining sponsors) we leave. Gasherbrum Gunner is go.

However, the curse continued. Arriving in Islamabad we discover that our paperwork had disappeared into a Black Hole in the Ministry of Tourism and had to be redone. To its credit, officialdom moved quite quickly, and we were only delayed 3 days, enabling Kev to catch up with us and complete the party.

To get from Islamabad to the Karakorum you drive up the Karakorum Highway. Following the Indus Gorge, the "Highway from Hell" is twisty, bumpy and possibly the most dangerous part of the whole expedition. We traversed it without incident, buoyed up by the failure of the buses on-board music system.

It used to be said that all roads lead to Rome: but ours led to Skardu and the Raj-like delights of the K2 Motel. There we sorted our loads - all 96 of them (you can get 15 24 hr Arctic ration packs in one blue barrel to make one 25 kg-ish load). The following day we load it all on to jeeps and away we go.

But the Curse of Gasherbrum 3 continues. Just after a tea break we pause where the road has slipped into the river. Without the help of a single Sapper we rebuild the road and carry on. The next roadblock is impassable so we manhandle our loads past it to where some more jeeps are waiting and carry on with Jehu-ish driving to the camp site.



The next morning brings the Mystery of the Multiplying Loads. Setting off with 96 we now have 103. A couple of hours reduces this to 99 and off we go. Finally, 14 days into the expedition and 433 words into the report, it all becomes worthwhile. Walking through beautiful mountains, camping each day a little nearer the objective. Not that it was a gentle stroll. It was hot semidesert and a long way between camps. Between Korophon and Jola we (and the porters) had a scramble down a rock face as well as the famous Jola Pulley Bridge. And walking up the Baltoro glacier past Masherbrum, Trango Towers, Mustagh Tower and K2, whilst awe-inspiring, was hard on the feet.

But all good things come to an end and on 21st July we pitch up at Base Camp City on the moraine below the Gasherbrum cirque, fitting in neatly between the Americans and the Japanese, with the Bosnians, Spanish, Italians and an international expedition close by.

We still hadn't seen Gasherbrum 3, but this was remedied the following day. It's not a particularly imposing mountain from this angle, but it's all ours, with none of the crowds you get on Gasherbrum 2 next door.

But now the 'jolly' was over and we got down to the reality of Himalayan mountaineering; not swanking up steep rock or ice, but getting up in the early hours to move a load of rations or gas or rope up the mountain. The route through the First Icefall above Base Camp - and, indeed, most of the route - had already been marked with wands by the other expeditions before we arrived. There were eight in our party (nine if you count the Liaison Officer, who, to be fair, did assist with a couple of carries), but at no time during the thirteen days we were based in Base Camp did we have everyone carrying loads on the same day. This was mainly due to intermittent illness of the gastro-intestinal variety.

Generally we would leave Base Camp in the early hours (0200 to 0400) to carry the loads up; aiming to be off the glacier by mid-morning or so. Not because it was especially dangerous, but because it was so unpleasant in the heat.

At the top of the First Icefall there's a flatter area before the Second Icefall further in the cwm. In the upper reaches of the flatter area there was a cache/camp - Camp Half. Initially kit was left here for further upward movement later but as we

# rum Gunner

By Lt Col JC Allen FRCS

got fitter and more acclimatised we could go all the way to Camp One.

It's tedious, this part of Himalayan mountaineering, but after 11 days humping the general assessment was that we had transferred enough kit to Camp One, 3 000 feet up and several miles away (but still a mile short of the mountain). Consequently, we planned to move all eight members en masse up to Camp One on August 3rd. But not on Gasherbrum Gunner you don't. John M, Oz, Kev and Chris were unwell, so Pat, Pete, Skelly and me picked up extraordinarily heavy rucksacks and set off in the early morning light. We plod up on automatic pilot, apart from fixing my crampon on an unpleasantly steep traverse, and set up our own little enclave at Camp One, just separate from the Japanese, Bosnians and Spanish. Extremely hot in the sun, it becomes very cold very quickly when the sun disappeared behind Gasherbrum 5. But at last we're on the mountain; or, at least, off Base Camp.

The path from Camp One to Gasherbrum 2 and 3 was well marked with wands, but that didn't worry us, and soon after setting out at first light we found ourselves well on the way to Gasherbrum 1. An interesting detour across the glacier eventually brought us to the bottom of Gasherbrum 3. Up the lower snow slopes we went for several hundred feet until we found ourselves at the bottom of the fixed ropes - thoughtfully placed by one of the other expeditions. Out with the jumar, clip on and up we go. The way went up some steep snow, round a nice little corner and up some gentler slopes to a flattish resting place at the bottom of the Banana Ridge. Here you can rest and look at the view down to Camp One, or look up at the way to go. This is a 1200 ft or so ice ridge with an elegant curve, leading up to a rock pinnacle.

With the fixed rope it's not particularly difficult, just long, slow, and tiring. At the top of the ridge there's a traverse across a snow slope and then the sting in the tail - a narrow ridge with a steep 150 ft face beyond up to Camp Two. Pat, Pete, and Skelly grind up this, but it's all too much for me, especially as, right next to the track, there's a friendly Bosnian outside his tent brewing up.



A brew and some nuts later it seemed a lot easier just to doze looking at the magnificent flank of Gasherbrum One. After an hour or so of this I was girding myself to do the last bit when the others started coming down. So I dumped my load and we began The Descent.

No fun this. In soft, sugary snow, collapsing through the crust, it was hard work back-climbing the fixed ropes and lower slopes, followed by the exhausting trek across the glacier breaking through up to our knees regularly.

The following morning it was gently snowing so we had a rest day, although the younger element (Pat, Pete and Skelly) fetched some kit up from Camp Half later in the afternoon after the snow stopped. The next day, the 6th August, Chris, John M, Oz and Kev made it up through the soft snow to Camp One.

The plan for the 7th August (a carry to Camp Two), as usual on Gasherbrum Gunner, went a little awry: instead Pat and Pete collected what gear there was at Camp One and a Half whilst John M, Skelly and me raced down to Camp Half and brought up the rest of the kit quickly and pleasantly in the early morning shade.

The next day, the 8th August, we did it. For the first time all 8 members set out to climb and carry on the same day across the glacier, up the slopes and fixed ropes to Camp Two. Oz, John M and Chris left their loads at the top of the Banana Ridge and

went down, suffering from the altitude: the rest of us made it to Camp Two, where Pat, Pete and Skelly stayed whilst Kev and I did The Descent again. It was the same as before - soft snow and breaking through - and we were utterly exhausted by the time we got to Camp One, where we declared the next day a rest day.

The only movement on August 9th was Pat and Skelly going down from Camp Two to pick up the stores dropped lower down by the others the day before. John M and Oz were still not feeling well and, early on August 10th, they set off down to Base Camp in gently falling snow. They had an interesting trip down but did it without serious incident. The rest of us stayed in our tents listening to the snow, apart from Pat and Skelly who trudged up to Camp Three with a load of kit.

On the 11th we carried on lying in our tents listening to the snowfall. By the 12th it had stopped snowing but the conditions were too bad for climbing; although they were good enough for the Pakistan Air Force to fly in a helicopter to evacuate John M and Oz back to Skardu. Me, Kev, and Chris made plans to move up to Camp Two the following day. But this was Gasherbrum Gunner, and at 22.30 hrs on the 12th we were woken by an agitated Bosnian "English friends, you must come and help my friend: he is paralysed". Not very enthusiastically we rise, gear up and pack kit (tent, sleeping bag, stove, etc.) and

set off in the wake of an anxious and hurrying Bosnian. After a helter-skelter race across the glacier, we find the sick man sitting on a rucksack on the lower slopes of the route. A platform is dug and the, rather tatty, Bosnian tent put up. We give him hot drinks and help him into the tent. He seems more hypothermic than anything else. Leaving the other Bosnian to look after him, we leave and trudge rather more slowly back to our sleeping bags.

Rising late on the 13th, we rested in the morning, but in the afternoon me, Kev and Chris packed up and moved across the glacier to Camp One and a Half, nearer the bottom of the climb. I paid a visit to the Bosnian, who by now had clearly suffered a major right-sided stroke. On the radio that evening I tactfully suggested that his compatriots should arrange his evacuation. Sure enough, at 22.30 hours we were woken by cries of "Any Bosnians here?". Politely informing them that we were British, we went back to rest, hearing them go past at midnight taking the sick man down. (He was casevaced in a helicopter to intensive care in Islamabad later that morning). Whilst this was going on, Pat, Pete, and Skelly got on with a load carry to Camp Three.

On the 14th me, Kev and Chris moved up to Camp Two to stay whilst Pat, Pete and Skelly moved up to Camp Three to stay. The weather was glorious and things were looking good, but, just to remind us it was Gasherbrum Gunner, about this time the radios ceased to function, effectively isolating the different parties.

On the 15th me, Kev and Chris trudged up the snow slope above Camp Two in the early morning light to the bottom of the fixed rope, situated below an impressive serac. Then clip on and plod up. An interesting route, it wriggled through the crevasses and seracs until the pull up the final steep slope to Camp Three. Magnificently situated on the ridge we could now see out of the Gasherbrum cirque to the peaks of the Karakorum around. We could also see Pat, Pete and Skelly working their way up the rocks of the ridge above us on their way to Camp Four to leave a load there.

Eventually we had to leave and slide down to Camp Two. It had been a deeply enjoyable, optimistic day. It was too good to last, and, sure enough, being Gasherbrum Gunner, it didn't. That evening the monsoon clouds blew up from the south and it began to snow.

It stopped snowing on the afternoon of the 18th August. For the best part of three days we had all been sitting in our tents listening to the baleful sound of snowfall. At Camp Two we had taken most of our rations up to Camp Three expecting to move there the day after. The food we had left didn't last long, and after 36 hours of soup and tea I descended in the snow to the abandoned Bosnian tent below. After

digging it out I found food enough and to spare, so, after struggling back, we had a bit of a feast.

On the afternoon of the 18th those at Camp Three had a good view of the avalanches coming down off Gasherbrum 2 across our route to Gasherbrum 3. That, allied to deep unconsolidated snow on the ridge, gave us little choice but to abandon the climb. Pat, Pete and Skelly came down to Camp Two in the evening of the 18th, arriving tired and depressed.

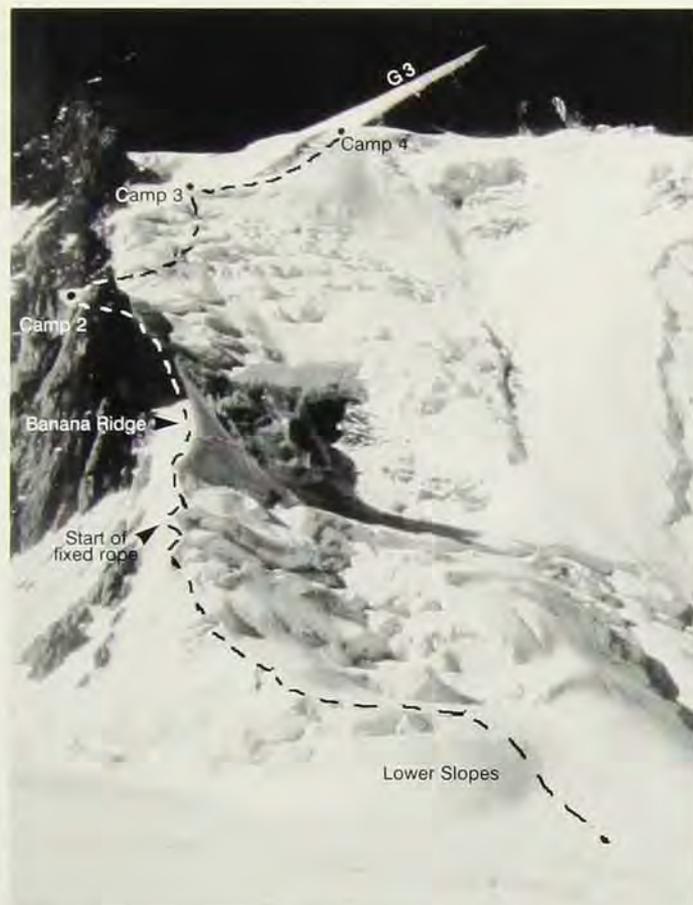
The 19th dawned clear and bright: a good day for The Descent. After clearing up we dug around and found the fixed rope; we descended this and across the traverse in soft, thigh-deep snow to the top of the Banana Ridge. There we dug another trench to find the fixed rope down the ridge and slowly abseiled down in a regretful descent, arriving at Camp One with just enough light left to dig the tents out.

In the morning of the 20th we loaded up and set off. The old route down had disappeared in deep snow and new crevasses, so we roped up and struggled down, making a new route as we went. At Camp Half we picked up some tracks from another expedition and slowly trudged down to Base Camp.

On the 21st me, Pete, Skelly, Kev and Chris strolled up to Camp one with empty rucksacks, getting sunburnt tongues on the way. Collecting the rest of the gear we wanted, we set off down, buoyed up by the fact that we didn't have to go up again. Pat had stayed to sort out the porters.

Rather than flog down the Baltoro again, we had opted to go back via the Gondogoro Pass. But the Curse of G3 wasn't over yet. Some of the porters weren't to happy with our choice and we found ourselves at lunch with one party (Kev, Chris, the cook and some porters) across the glacier on the right path and the rest of us were on the wrong side, didn't know where to cross, and couldn't find an alternative crossing place.

But perseverance paid off and eventually a way across to the right path was found. After a long pull up the side glacier we arrived at Ali Camp as the night came. We set off again in the dark the next morning after some Islamic hymn-singing.



The Gondogoro is a magnificent snow pass - 5 600 feet with superb views from the top. Bidding a last farewell to K2 and the Gasherbrums there was a tricky descent on loose scree. At the bottom we found, as promised, grass. With flowers, insects and birds; in short, life.

It was downhill all the way from here, through increasingly green country to the fertile fields of Hushe. A slap-up feed from our cook (a native of the village) preceded the arrival of the jeeps. Loading up the next morning, it was sweet to know there would be no more walking. An uneventful trip to Skardu was followed the next day by the trip down the Karakorum Highway to Islamabad - a trip enlivened by a nasty bout of gastro-intestinal disease.

We may have got away from the mountains but not from the Curse. Our flight dates had not been altered as we had requested, leading to the mini-saga of our escape from Pakistan. But that is another story.

The expedition maintained its interest to the end. Personally, I had been higher than ever before on a bigger mountain than I had tackled before in a new (to me) part of the Himalayas. In retrospect, it was an achievement for a team composed mainly of Himalayan novices to get so many men so high, especially after losing a quarter of the team when two members were casevaced.

*We also learnt a lot.*

# Indonesian Adventure

*Gunung Agung (3200m) on the island of Bali*  
by Col Ivar Hellberg, DA Jakarta

In April, Lucy (my 21-year-old daughter) and I climbed the local volcano of Gunung Agung (3200 metres) which dominates the beautiful island of Bali. The climb turned out to be quite an epic, lasting for 12 hours, crashing through jungle and climbing volcanic shale which was very sharp. The view from the top was brilliant but the return journey was rather desperate, with tropical downpours, flooding and masses of leeches! You certainly need very tough boots for volcanoes! Since then I have also been to Sumatra, firstly to help in the search for a young Englishman who went missing on the jungle-clad volcano of Gunung Api (sadly he is still missing, presumed dead; it is also tiger-country, and there are many rather nasty snakes, so anything could have happened to him). Then last week I visited an airstrip in a very remote corner of Northern Sumatra - real missionary country!

Rinjani (3750m) on the island of Lombok

We have just seen off another VIP party at the airport - they all seem to love to come to Indonesia! Susie and Tom (my 16-year-old son), have been visiting the lovely island of Lombok for the last week where they met up with some old friends of ours - Robert and Di Fellows and their daughter, Celia. I was able to join them for a long weekend after I had despatched the VIP party. Lombok is quite a large island, roughly the same size as Bali, but the whole landscape is dominated by an enor-

mous, relatively dormant, volcano called Rinjani. It has a huge crater, about 15 km across, with a lake and a small volcano in the middle puffing smoke! At one point in the lake there is evidence of another volcano which is bubbling under the surface. The highest point of the mountain is a point on the rim, which rises to about 3750 metres (12,250 ft), which marks the present summit of Rinjani. Way back, thousands of years ago, there must have been the most enormous explosion to have created this quite incredible landscape - far larger than either Krakatoa or Tambora or Santorini. The whole spectacle is on a giant scale, with breathtaking views and amazing scenery. The richness of the jungle, with the very fertile volcanic soil, the animals and especially the monkeys, the deep blue of the sulphur lake, the very cheerful Sasak tribesmen of the area and the incredible mountains themselves, makes this whole area one of the wonders of the scenic world.

Inevitably the aim was to have a go at climbing this wonderful peak! By the time that I managed to get myself to Lombok, both Robert and Tom had already started their climb so, after a night crossing on a little ferry from Bali, I had to race across the island by car to the start-point (stopping briefly en route for breakfast with Susie, Di and Celia). The first day was a terrific hike for about 19km from a village at about 500 metres, through splendid primary jungle, to the rim of the massive old crater at about 2200 metres and then down

to the lake-shore, where we made camp. I managed to catch up with the others before I got to the rim but found the going very tiring - I was really only fit to drop when we made camp about 10 hours after I started the march in. Fortunately Robert had hired some brilliant Sasak porters, who helped carry our loads and even more brilliantly produced some fantastic food for all our meals. The next day we started out at about 2am, in the dark, to have a go at the summit. The problem was that we were all very tired from the previous day and progress was rather slow. None of us actually got to the top, although Robert and I got up to the final shoulder.

I stopped at that point as I had unfortunately sprained my left knee whilst stumbling around in the dark on the way up. Robert went on a bit further, and got to within about an hour of the top, but turned around as the porter with us was suffering with a bad headache from the altitude. Tom had sensibly decided to call a halt further back. The views were quite stunning, and a lot of photographs were taken, but the way is still open for another attempt on the summit at a future date! Next time we must have at least 4 days for the adventure, with a day to recover at the lakeside on the way up! Just near the campsite at the lake there are some absolutely brilliant hot baths to soak in. We made full use of these on the way back down. The final day was a bit painful for me as my knee injury was telling me that I am getting rather old and that in future I must get myself into better shape before starting off on such endeavours!

## AMA at Oxford Wall Opening

On 11 March 1995 Tim and William King joined a handful of other Oxonians for the opening of the Oxford Brookes University climbing wall at the University's new sports centre. No more treks to Uxbridge, Reading or Bristol but there are a couple of drawbacks.

First, it costs £3.50 a session with no reduction for children or over 50's! You can join the Sports Centre for £40 per year and this reduces the session charge to £2: you break even after 26 sessions.

Secondly, if you are looking for a steady progression from easy bouldering to hard leads you will not find it here. The main problem seems to be the lack of longish top-roping and leading routes in the VS-HVS bracket before the leap to E1-E5 leading routes.

Now for the good news: the wall packs a lot into a small space. There is an extensive bouldering area offering the chance to practise most techniques including back-and-foot chimneying, bridging, hand and foot jamming, and lay aways (although no offwidths

or arm bar cracks). A twenty foot wide arch sports the usual hand traverses and toe hooks for rock apes, and of course there are "impossible" overhangs. All these are Bendcrete "rock" constructions but there is a short top-roping wall of bolt-on holds and The Tower.

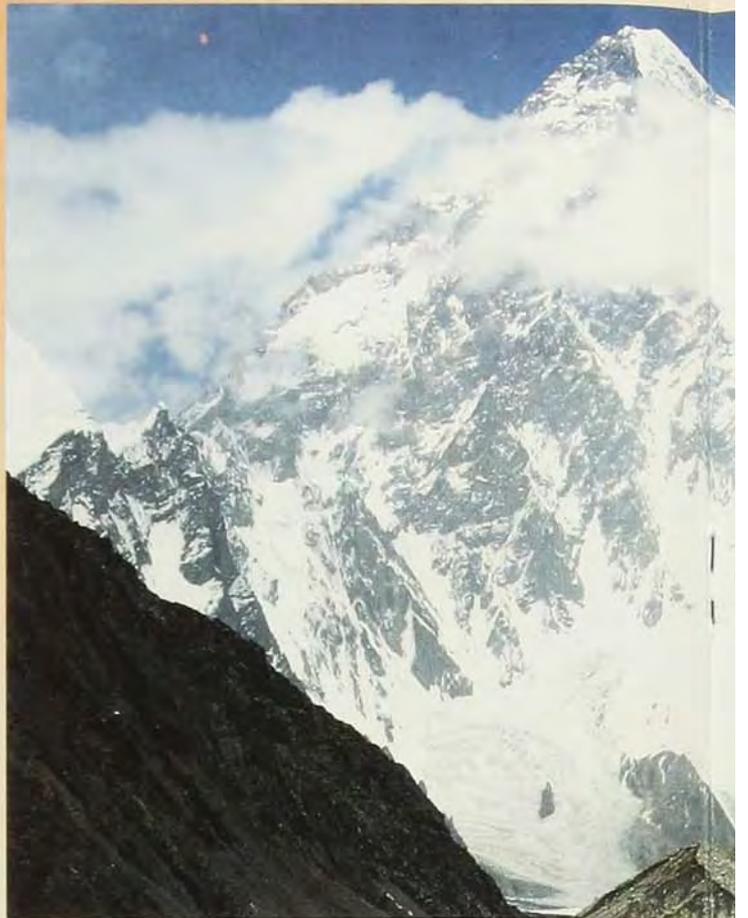
The Tower is 40 feet (make that 12 metres) high and provides all the leading routes. All holds are bolt-on and are changed from time to time. We tried the 5a/5b routes and found them very strenuous: all the leading routes arch out towards the centre of the tower and some overhang 15 feet (5 metres) at the top. There are bolts on the leading walls but no gear other than a massive in-situ krab at the top of each route.

The wall is now gaining popularity and should be avoided at the peak student time - early evening in term-time. It is open from 1 Oam to 1 Opm. Brookes is off the London Road between Headington and St Clements.

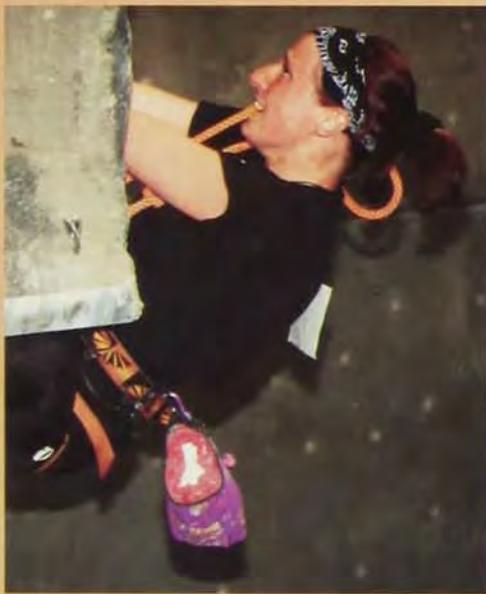
## Images of Expedition



Banna Ridge, from Camp2.



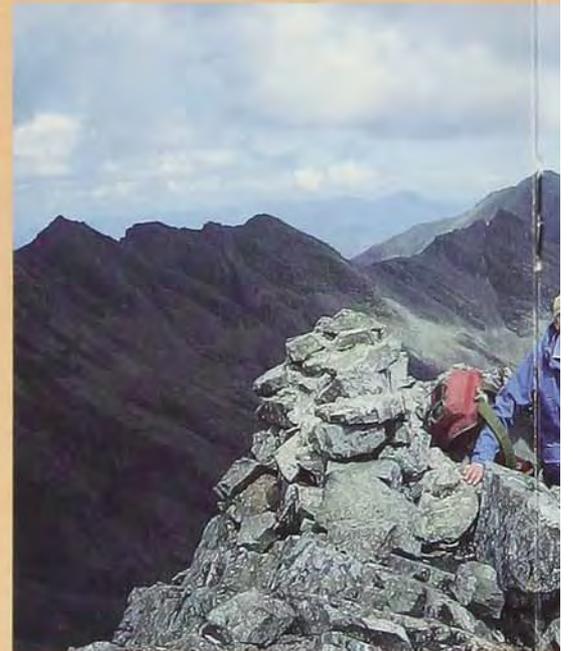
K2, from C



Cpl Hanis, 21<sup>st</sup> VS category



Pte Braid 8<sup>th</sup> HVS to E1



Major Robin Watts, Comm

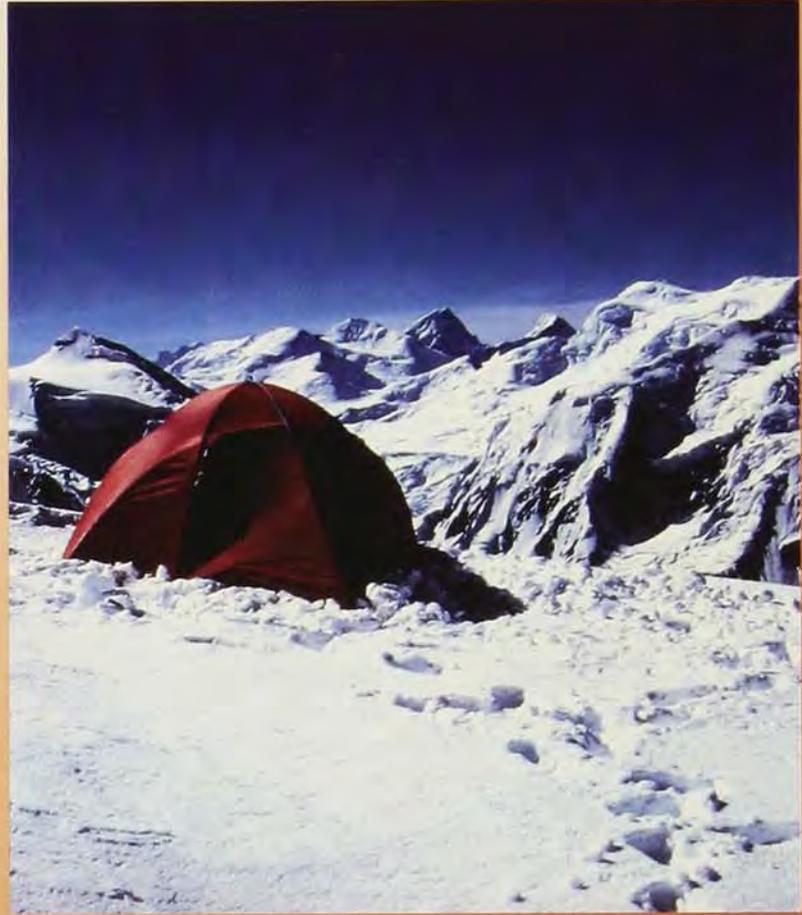
## Sport Climbing Championship

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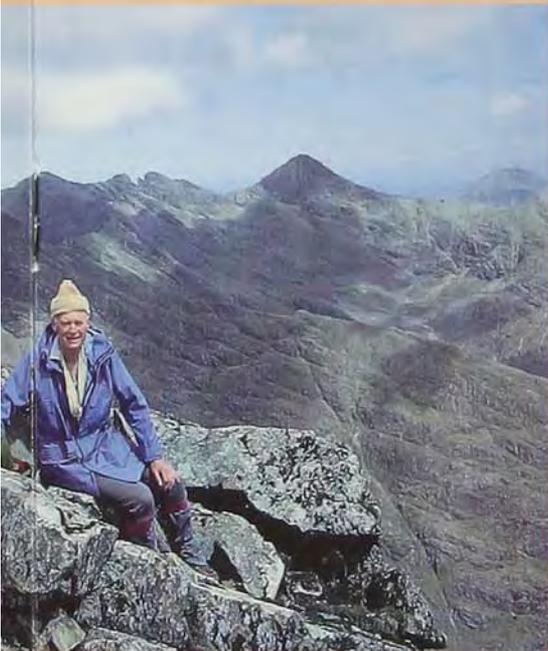
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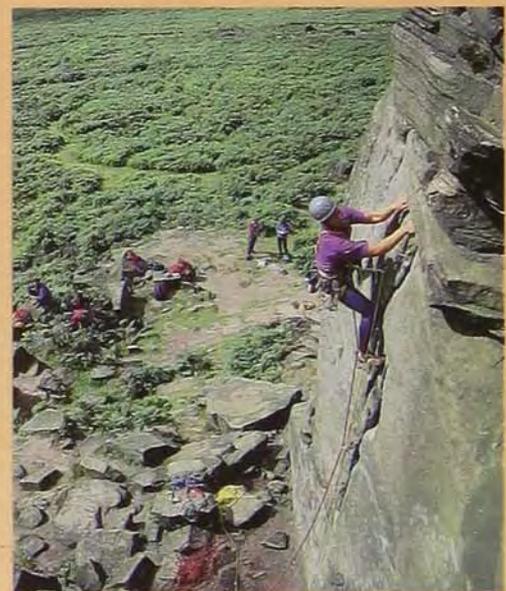
Camp3, Baltoro Kangiu in background.



Commandant Training Camp



Soloing HVS at sunset on Stanage Edge.



Steve Willson climbing Sogines HVS, High Neb, Stanage Edge. On a sunny day.

# l Curig

## Sunnier Days at Stannage

## Food for thought

# Adventurous Training Expeditions

By Capt Will Manners - AMA Expedition Advisor

The aim of this article is to offer some advice and provoke some thought. It is prompted partly by the ever increasing requirement for potential expedition leaders to take one pace forward and partly by the obvious requirement to clarify the AMA's policy on AMA expedition grants. Don't look for all the answers here, you will be disappointed. An expedition on a plate would take away half the challenge, enjoyment and benefit of actually organising an adventurous training exercise.

Organising AT expeditions has, is and probably will remain a challenging, testing and frustrating experience for those bold enough to take it on. Bold because the leader will have to commit him or her self to setting wheels in motion that halt only when the expedition returns with the correct number of sun tanned smiling soldiers, rejuvenated and ready to face the forthcoming mental and physical challenges of Army life..... Hopefully your adventures have not featured in the tabloids for several weeks and the PRI minibus has not been sold to pay the bail!

The Army General Admin Instructions (AGAs) Volume 1, Chapter 11 offers invaluable advice and really is the authority. It is THE guide on organising AT in the Army and should not leave the side of the expedition leader during the planning phase. It will not be long after the globe has stopped spinning and the pin is conclusively stabbed into the coldest part of Lithuania that funding becomes the big issue. Many may, off the record of course, admit to checking where the empty seats are going on RAF aircraft and pick the destination as an AT venue. An expedition leader could do a lot worse than consider an aim first or is that being a little old fashioned and traditional? The alternative is the relatively predictable and possibly more comfortable, money up front, flight with Sudan Airways~

As, under duress, the first of the personal contributions trickle in as small change and post dated checks, airline companies start requiring deposits. The problem is frequently that whilst businesses, (understandably) require money up front for flights, accommodation, guides etc, service sources of funds can be less forthcoming; indeed some funds arrive only on completion of the exercise.

Two courses of action can help to alleviate this seemingly chicken and egg situation; firstly start planning early, easier said than done with the current world requirement for DPM knights in shining armour, at rather short notice; and secondly try and convince your unit PRI to underwrite the expedition. In addition to the above, selling the idea of the expedition to your boss with a quality slide and map presentation could do a great deal for the cause. He or she may offer the PRI's support if there is a worthy, glamorous and high profile cause.

Amongst many other sources of funds is the AMA. You are, at last, up to date with your standing order payments and you have been to one AGM in the last ten years. If the AMA offered grants to every expedition that applied the annual subscription would equal this year's car tax. The AMA expedition grants are now awarded to AMA sponsored expeditions or deserving individuals that are undertaking expeditions that contain a high mountaineering content and are particularly adventurous and challenging. The AMA is a mountaineering association, not a trekking, hill walking or white water rafting association. The proposed expedition may well

achieve all the aims of adventurous training but it may not necessarily meet the criteria to merit an AMA grant.

Who decides if an expedition gets a grant anyway? The AMA Committee meets roughly every three months and during the course of the meeting will consider the latest grant bids. If you need advice on what you should do to secure a bid then speak to yours truly, or someone else on the committee.

Once you have secured an AMA grant there are many other sources of funds. Ideas for both fund raising and short cuts can be found in old PXR's. A good idea is to pay a visit to Army Training 1, at Hq Training. Mrs Cathy Davenport holds an extensive PXR library that covers virtually every expedition destination. Contact details can be found on the back page of 'Army Adventurous Training News' which comes out periodically. There are now 3 levels of Army Adventurous Training

Level three adventurous training exercises can vary from only a few days to some months and can involve as few as two or three persons. It is probably the most rewarding and satisfying side of adventure training and it certainly does not necessarily need to be organised and run by an officer or SNCO. So give it a go. As Showell Styles said some years ago "all the reward from an adventure comes from having the courage to take it on in the first place".



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# Real Ice Climbing for beginners

By Sgt Tim Bird

**R**eal Ice Climbing, for beginners..."I was fortunate to join friends in Granton on Spey as they finished their Winter Mountaineering Exercise and I started my leave. Paul Duke, Geordie Allan and I had decided to climb on the final Saturday while the other guys enjoyed their 'free-day' on the piste. Geordie had said earlier that he had wanted to do some 'Real Ice Climbing' and wanted to get some air beneath his feet.

We had decided to go to Hells Lum on the southern end of the Cairngorm Plateau, and we were going to climb a route called ESCALATOR graded III. We were going to ski from the top of Cairngorm down and across Coire Raibert and over into Coire Domhain. Climb, and then ski back across Coire Raibert and down the pisted slopes of the White Lady Ski Area.

As we arrived at the Ski Lodge the next morning, the weather on Cairngorm's summit was completely closed-in and so we changed the route in, the plan now was to 'Skin'\* up to the spot height (\*1141m) on top of the Fiacail Ridge and then continue as before across Coire Raibert. To the amusement and to the many unheard comments of the piste skiers, we set off, skinning up the drag lift routes later to arrive at the bottom of the Fiacail ridge. The wind hit us and as we struggled up the exposed ridge, facial temperatures fell as body temperatures rose.

Arriving at the top of the ridge the view before in front was breathtaking. Breathtaking yes, view not, an estimated 35ft if we were lucky. Blindly we skied, rock-hopped and slid across the wind-blown icy top until we dropped into the Coire and some softer snow where we were able to make more rapid progress towards Coire Domhain sheltered by the ridge to our right. We arrived in said Coire shortly after and swapped skis for crampons as the weather started to lift.

Taking the essentials and wearing the 'ish' we descended to the base of Hells Lum only to see the rock daubed with fresh snow and climbers both jostling with each other for the best positions on the routes.

After watching the fighting above Paul noted that the ice on over on Stag Rocks looked as good and as steep and that there seemed to be plenty of it, admittedly it did and there was, so I jested that we should do it and he should lead it. He told me to nick off and it was my lead anyway. Being noseey we made our way over to the bottom for a further Pitch inspection and we found the route in the 'Good Book', it read;

"CASCADE V - 150ft Climb the deceptively steep ice, always very strenuous . . .

I didn't need the guide book to tell me that and during the first pitch I had re graded and rewritten the description using understandably more floral terms much to Paul and Geordie's amusement. The ice was vertical and in fantastic condition with no signs of it being climbed before, it took me some 30 minutes, taking breaks only to place protection and pose for photos, to ascend the 85 vertical feet to a large platform where I could place a suitable belay. Arriving at the top I had regretted my rather hasty choice of

gloves, wearing only the inners I had sacrificed warmth for dexterity and by now I'd had the bitter cold and the hot aches were just starting and I was rapidly approaching the crying phase of freeze dried fingers.

When I had recovered and sorted my life out Paul was ready to climb. Puffing and panting he came into view some fifty feet up the pitch and after a rest he followed my tracks up to my now smug position, the hardest move being the last mantleshelf onto the belay platform.

"Well done mate," he breathed, arriving on top and grabbing my hand, shook it vigorously and made himself safe into the belay. Leaning over the edge I invited Geordie to join us, in his own time of course. Some time later and after a lot of thumping and kicking he came into view, a trickle of blood running from his forehead where ice sharding had bitten him. Paul was asking how he was getting on and the conversation moved onto Geordie's experience or rather lack of it as this was his first time on vertical ice.

Leaning over the edge again I shouted down some 'Corrective Coaching' and armed with this new knowledge and much to his pleasure Geordie fairly flew up the top 25 ft to where we were awaiting his imminent arrival. A big smile arrived shortly followed by Geordie who, much to our amusement, tenuously mantleshelved onto the platform, not really believing that moves like that should be done without 26 points of contact. After grinning and smiling for a while Geordie said "How do all those old guys make it look so easy?", Paul and I just laughed. The ice on the upper section was in perfect condition after the recent freeze-thaws and meant that Paul had no trouble leading the 40ft upper Ice funnel, a good Grade III, which just left me to run out the last 150ft across the mixed ground to the top of the rock.

As we retrieved the half-buried skis and rucksacks the weather started to close in, temperatures dropping even further. From our upper terrace we could make out parties across and below retreating off Hell's Lum, as opaque clouds hurried the onset of night, filling the sky. We skied out of the Coire and followed a bearing to the top of Alladins Buttress, Coire an t-Sneachda (\*1176m). Reaching the ridge we followed this right to the top of the Fiacail Ridge (\*1141m) and descended into the White Lady Ski Slopes, skiing these by light of head torch to the bottom, which is by far the best and quickest way to get off the hill, arriving in the Car Park at 1910 hrs (\*630m).

That night in the pub Geordie told the others of My first grade V lead, Paul's first grade V 2nd and his first bit of 'Real Ice Climbing'.

\*Skin - By attaching a strip of brushed moleskin to the bottom of each ski, and by releasing the heel of each binding skiing uphill becomes possible, though whatever possessed anyone to develop such an energy sapping way of going uphill, I shall never know, look out for the follow-up article 'Ski-Touring, for beginners...' in the next Journal.

# Sunnier Days on Stanage

by Steve Wilson

Is it just me or is the weather really getting worse in the UK? Has the time come to pack our climbing gear and emigrate to Australia? Just so we can feel the evening sun on our backs whilst we solo around on the local crag. Or should we sack our gortex clothing that cost us a small fortune, and retire permanently into the climatically controlled world known as "THE WALL".

I lay considering all of these options, and a few others, on the Peak District meet in June this year. Go down the pub and get wrecked, and end up boring each other to death with accounts of old routes. Gesticulating wildly so that on lookers in the pub would think the local day care centre was having its annual outing. By now the driving rain had started to find its way into my hiding place. The cause texture of the rock, slowing down the ingress of water. I watched as inch by inch the entire rock surface around me blackened with the wet.

That's it, you instinctively know when its not going to get better, and you just have to make the best on what is on offer. Clawing my way out of my hole and back onto the face to finish the route in the rain. I was not going to lower off, not out of some ethical suicide trip, but because I did not trust my gear. I really should learn how to use it all some day! Luckily for me it was only a couple of moves to the top. Were I swapped the slow dripping of the water in the cave. For the wind tunnel that is know as the top of Stanage Edge.

When I looked down to Paul Duke, who was belaying, he could not be seen. He had managed to dive into a cave and shelter with a girl. Who I latter found out was from Manchester. This made it hared to gain his attention.

Standing on top my mind churned over the numerous other days I had spent here. It has to be one of the finest crags in the hole of the UK. Sometimes over crowded, sometimes wet and windy but always challenging. There is truly something for everybody on the edge. In the setting sun, after a hard days climbing, you can wander along the bottom of the crag and dream of climbs that would take you a life time to complete.

For now my problem was to get my gear back and get down to the



Richard White on the crux of Telli E3 6a, Wall Buttress, Stanage Edge.

Long Lands in Hathersage for a brew and some good hot food. While Romeo hid in the cave I fixed a line and absailed down. There was a small stream now running down the face. Handy really, as most of my gear needed a wash, just as I did. I paused momentarily as I reached a friend. What a peace of gear. How many of us would wind our necks out on the gritstone if it was not there when we needed it. When placed quickly on the lead it can mean the difference between eating in the Long Lands or eating through a tube in Sheffield Hospital, and we all know where the food is better!

Decking out onto the wet gravel at the bottom of the route, the rope almost hidden in the mud. I felt glad that we had used Paul's rope. That's a point, were is he, EvaAll the silky smooth mouth of the Duke boy could not have picked up a girl in this location? But no, a muffled voice came from the cave to the left. I peered in to find Paul half way up in side the cave. Bridging between the only to dry peace's of rock in the whole Peak District. There was no sign of the girl, and that made me feel better. We gathered our gear and made our way back down towards the car.

The mind is a wonderful thing, is how the saying goes. It only remembers the good times. Climbers must have this mixed up because we remember the really bad times with such vigour and enthusiasm. To us, they are the good times, the more there is to over come and endure the more we like it. This must surely be one of the challenges of climbing. We are play on the rock and in mountains that the weather has created and we should remember that we are just visitors.



Sunset on Stanage Edge.

# Hot Rock '95

## Alias Exercise Tartan Chameleon

by Maj Davies

The success of Hot Rock '94 meant Hot Rock '95 had a lot to live up to. This, now to be annual, March meet takes place somewhere hot and dry, ie not Britain. This year was a return to Costa Blanca, albeit only for a week.

The mixture of bolted, single pitch sports routes, longer, semi protected multipitch routes and remote mountain routes offers something for everybody, although due to the dispersed nature of the climbing, all personnel must be competent multipitch climbers.

The rock is limestone and varies from getting towards polished in the popular Sella area to so untouched at Gandia it is sharp enough to shred your stickies.

The 15 Army and RAF team members made good use of the time available, climbing like demons and notching up some good routes, unlike the expedition leader who wimped out after 3 days by falling and breaking her leg. However, leaderlike duties were continued from the side of the swimming pool by the apartment building, so the show went on.

The areas used and routes climbed included:

Penon de Ifach - The mini rock of Gibraltar 10 minutes walk from the apartment offers a variety of superb semi-protected multi-pitch routes:

Via Valencianos - S - 820ft  
 Diedro UPSA - HVS - 5a - 890ft  
 Via Gomez-Cano - E2 A1 - 5c - 1110ft



Sun, sea, and Rock, at Toix South.



Sapper Dave Franklin pulls up on a 'small' hand hold.

Barranco del Mascarat - Steepwalled gorges rising above a winding road with various tunnels and bridges provide a unique atmosphere to these climbs. This can be noisy at times, especially if the bridge jumpers are out in any numbers.

Via Sulfada - E1 - 5b - 730ft  
 Via UPSA - HVS - 790ft

Toix West and South - These escarpments on the edge of Calpe offer a mixture of cragging and sea cliffclimbing, mainly well protected.

The Green Route - E2 - I 50ft  
 El Dorado I - E2 - 5b - 280 ft.

Puig Campana - This mountain, whose impressive profile is clearly visible from the coast road, is definitely worth the walk in.

Espero Sur Central - S - 1200ft

Sports climbing was carried out at Sella, a popular valley area with numerous single pitch routes and forays were made further afield to explore the lesser known areas of Sax and Gandia. Both the latter comprise of 1 to 2 pitch bolted routes on excellent rock, but are little, and at times, conislingly documented.

All in all, a good time was had by all. Next years meet will be run by Lt Richard Baker, location to be confirmed; probably France. What is confirmed, however is the popularity of this meet. If you wish to attend, get your application off as soon as the forms become available. He who hesitates is lost, in this, as in many other things. There can be no better way of limbering up for the summer season than by exposing those ghostly pale bodies that have been crawling up climbing walls for months to a bit of sunshine and warmth, long before such items become available this side of the water.

# Exercise Vanoise Trek

*EXERCISE VANOISE TREK was a trekking expedition, to the French Alps. It took place between 13 Jul 95 and 22 Jul 95.*

France is etched with a network of footpaths that cross many varying types of terrain. The more challenging long distance trails are prefixed GR, Sentiers de Grande Randonnée, and one such path crossing the French Alps, running from Lake Geneva to Nice and the Mediterranean, has become a classic walk. It is known as La Grande Traversée des Alpes, or GR5/55, and passes through alpine scenery which is amongst the best in western Europe. Fifty kilometres (30 miles) south of Mont Blanc the trail reaches an exceptional walking area, the Vanoise National Park.

The Vanoise is an archetypal alpine landscape situated between the upper valleys of the Arc and the Isère, touching Italy to the East. It is a substantially mountainous area with 107 summits over 3000m (9840 ft) with La Grande Casse rising to 3852m (12,635 ft). The park is rich in high peaks and glaciers, meltwater streams and gorges, ski slopes and their accompanying resorts all connected by numerous way marked paths. To experience the best of the Vanoise region it is recommended to cross the Park using the high level route, the GR5/55. It is not the easiest variant, requiring some previous experience of mountain walking and a high level of fitness. Depending on the group, weather and the time of year the walk will take from four to six days.

The aim of the expedition was to walk the 'Tour de la Vanoise' section of the La Grande Traversée des Alpes from Landry to Modane.

We departed HQ QMG Andover by minibus at 0830 hrs for Southampton finding time to visit McDonalds prior to boarding the ferry for Cherbourg at 1000 hrs. The crossing was around five hours with the team taking the opportunity to throw themselves fully into the entertainment offered on board. Capt Guy Moverley and Cpl Graham Keary tried their hand at cards, unsuccessfully, with Pte Alfie Turner attempting the ships quiz. Despite the vast intellectual presence of numerous holidaymakers he emerged triumphant to claim first prize and an instamatic camera. Other members preferred to sing along with the cabaret and a number of well known stories from Walt Disney's Jungle Book!



*Members of Ex. Vanoise Trek at the first nights refuge.*

Having left Cherbourg, and with the driver now reverting to his glasses, as opposed to his contact lenses which only hindered his sight, we headed for Landry deciding to drive throughout the night. The time did not pass without incident. South of Paris, in driving rain, we witnessed an accident involving three cars on the autoroute. As other motorists dawdled we took command of the situation. Adrian Metcalfe administered first aid to one casualty suffering from shock with the remainder of the party directing traffic and helping where needed until the arrival of the emergency services. At this point we suffered our first casualty of the trip as Cpl Graham Keary chipped one of Capt Guy Moverley's teeth while throwing his arms around directing traffic.

We arrived at our initial camp site at Landry at 0630 hrs on Sat 15 Jul. We had left the rain behind but the weather was damp and cloudy. Following some much needed sleep the day was dedicated to conducting a short recce and the packing of expedition kit. It was already possible to see that a number of mountains still had more snow than we had envisaged. Maj Sid Knell was due to join us, having made his own way, but failed in his mission, his luggage having gone astray in Paris.

The main body began walking at 1000 hrs on the 16 Jul from a small village just north of Landry, Peisey Nancroix (1264m, 4147 ft). The GR5 is joined here and fol-

lows a melt stream passing the Glières camp site before the snow peaked mountains of the Vanoise come into sight. The walk passes the first Refuge, the Refuge de Rosuel at 1556m (5105 ft). From this point the Col du Palet should be around 4 hrs walk. Capt Guy Moverley denies he had the map at the time, although the finger of fate points at him, but he became geographically embarrassed causing the walk to be extended. This, coupled with Cpl Julie Ferris disappearing up to her knees on an unplanned river crossing and a fire problem during the lunch break, extended the day a little. From the Refuge de Rosuel the path followed a route through the Ponturin Valley and into the Vanoise National Park. The GR5 continues past the turning to the Chalet de la Grassaz, past the Lac de Grattalen from where the Col du Palet becomes visible to the Refuge.

Maj Knell joined the party at 1215 hrs and walked with Maj Marcus Gartside and Pte Turner in the second group. All members of the party met at the Refuge du Palet at approximately 1700 hrs.

Cpl Keary began the day in the hot seat, he was to lead. A rather inauspicious start had us heading in the wrong direction, to which his answer was "I was contouring?". Having climbed the Col du Palet (2652m, 8701 ft) the path dropped down towards the Télésks de Grattaleu (2400m, 7874 ft) before entering the ski resort Val Claret. At this point we temporarily left the

# 13 - 20 July 1995

by Maj M Gartside

Vanoise National Park. We stopped for a short break in Val Claret before joining the GR55 and climbing to the Col de Fresse (2531m, 8304 ft). It was at this point that we came across a number of snowfields that were lying late in the season. They became more prevalent as we approached the Col de la Leisse (2487m, 8159 ft). This point of the walk provided stunning view of the Grande Motte Glacier. From the Col we followed the right hand edge of the lake Plan des Nettes before arriving at the Refuge de la Leisse. The days walking totalled approximately 7 hrs.

The 18 Jul began somewhat slower than the previous two days as the walking had taken its toll on the feet of some members of the group. All set off in good spirits envisaging a walk of approximately 4 hours following a comprehensive briefing from the expedition leader. Morale was temporarily dealt a massive blow when he realised he had missed a page in the guide book and that the day would be well over 8 hrs! From the Refuge we followed the Leisse torrent along the Leisse valley. After 1hrs walking we crossed the Pont de Croé-Vie (2099m, 6886 ft) before climbing again to 2439m (8002 ft) and a small blockhouse positioned at the head of the valley. Much of the path on the upper reaches of the climb was under snow and one section required a snow traverse before reaching the main path.

The last part, down to Pralognan - La - Vanoise, was estimated at around 2hrs walking. The steepness of the descent proved to be too much on some of the blisters people were suffering with, extending the walk by a further hour. The GR55 skirts Pralognan and continues through the Isertan forest, however we stopped overnight at the Refuge de la Valette camp site and enjoyed a refreshing dip in a melt stream. Hot showers for the girls and a wonderful pizza supper ensured that morale was restored. Pte Turner had established the camp site prior to our arrival.

On the last day one or two Members of the party were now suffering quite badly from blisters although none wanted to miss walking on the last day. The decision was taken to walk without packs, with only small day sacks carried for first aid kits and emergency rations. This was voted to

be an outstanding decision. We rejoined the walk at the Pont de Gerlon and slowly wound our way up the valley passing the Pont de la Pêche (1764m, 5787 ft). Judging by the number of people on this section of the walk it is obviously a very popular area. We entered the Doron de Valpremont valley finally reaching the Refuge de Pécelet - Polset (2474m, 8117 ft) after 4 hours walking. Lunch was taken before crossing a number of large snowfields to reach the Col de Chavière at 2796m (9173 ft) the highest point on the GR trail. On leaving the Col we were able to toboggan down to the Lac de la Partic using a number of improvised methods.

Morale was at a high! We remained on the GR55 following it until we reached the Refuge de l'Orgère and the road D106. Here we met the transport and the walk ended.

That night was spent at the Camp site "Le Bois Joli" in Saint Martin Sur la Chambre. The opportunity was taken to sort out the equipment.



Cpl Keary and Capt Metcall.



Maj Gartside, Capt Moverly and Cpl Keary.

The expedition proved to be an overall success, introducing a number of novice participants to high altitude European trekking. The expedition was of benefit to all members; both as a result of the experience gained and the challenges presented.

# Not as far as

*The title of this article is not typical of AMA magazine articles. The aim is really to attract your attention; and perhaps out of curiosity or sympathy for the author you will read on. Either ways, enjoy!*

**M**y inspiration for typing away on 14 February, (when most real men are taking their wives out to dinner), is twofold. firstly, I confess to have been one of many who sat at the last committee meeting nodding when the Journal Editor commented on the lack of articles, having not submitted one myself for a good five years. Secondly, I was also inspired by my climbing partner's dedication, and his wife's tolerance!) This article is not aiming to 'blow one's own trumpet' but to give a simple and light hearted account of a pretty blooming good weekend - against all the odds!

Had I not rambled on, this article would have started as many do: "Well it all started with a phone call on the Thursday night". Well it did! I'm sure you all remember the stormy nights of late January, when you looked at the forecast on Thursday night and thought that perhaps this was the weekend to put that shelf up or cover up those holes you've made in your married quarter walls. So did I. Pete Aldwinkle rang me as planned and I dutifully gave him and Carrie all the bad news which amounted to, "don't leave the safety of your house unless you have to, it's going to be a snowy hell out there". So like any logical couple would they paid absolutely no attention to what I said, packed their kit in the car and headed north from Oxford to Fort William through a fairly ferocious blizzard! They arrived at about 1.30 am quietly and collected the key from under the bin. Yes I know it's obvious and no it's not always there.

As planned I leapt out of bed at 6.00 am ready to face a brutal Ben Nevis classic (and of course an unticked 'Cold Climb'). Unfortunately for us the huge dump of snow meant that not only had Pete and Carrie failed to get up the hill to park the car in the small hours, but climbing was not a good option due to the avalanche hazard. All was not lost! Skiing needs lots of snow so we unpacked the climbing kit, packed the skis and headed towards Aonach Mor. The conditions were good although we all got the duty soaking when the chair lift broke down during a soggy Scottish sleet shower! That said, the snow was soft and deep, and when you ski like I do on telemark skis you need a certain depth of snow for the 'Scottish head plant'. A plate of sausage, beans and chips (sorry Jill) and a cup of hot chocolate was enough to fuel us for another couple of hours of piste bashing before heading for home. The evening needed minimum effort; a carry out curry from Fort William's one and only 'Indian Garden' and a few cans left over from the Hogmanay party.

For the second morning the alarm broke me from my beauty (!!!) sleep at 6.00 am and I crawled out of bed receiving precious little sympathy from my wife Ali. I woke Pete and began the morning ritual of eating lots and throwing tons of ironmongery into an expedition sized rucksack. We left in reasonable time with a view to skiing up the Alt a Muilin on firm snow and passing the CIC hut before the occupants had finished their Scots oats. When we left the vehicle though we decided that there was not enough snow and left the skis in the vehicle. After about four hundred metres we realised that we had made a wrong decision and life would have been much easier with them. We did pass the CIC hut where insult was added to injury minutes later as the occupants who had finished their Scots oats passed us on skis.

Although there had been a dump of snow in the night it had been cold so the dreaded bog to the CIC hut was firm. The dawn revealed a typically cloudy day on 'The Ben' and as we gained height light snow carried on a gentle breeze reminded us of the dramatic climatic difference between Fort William and the high corries of Ben Nevis. As we climbed past 'Zero' and 'Point five' the excitement and nervous anticipation grew. Would our route be 'in', was this mammoth walk in going to be rewarded? Had we chosen the best route under the conditions?

A quick snow profile revealed surprisingly stable conditions as we pressed on. The mountain occasionally revealed tempting cascades of blue ice surrounded by snow plastered rock. After several attempts 'Smith's Route' high on Gardyloo Buttress revealed itself from behind its misty curtain. It looked short and not too steep although it lacked the blue of good solid

As we chopped a ledge beneath it and geared up the weather continued to improve. I set off on the first pitch up a steep groove which proved awkward as the ice was plastered in about half a foot of rotten ice and snow. Only a good battering with the side of the axe had any significant impact on this unpredictable and unwanted protective layer. Progress was painfully slow as I carved a vertical furrow through the mass. One last bash and I was in a small bay with a square roof. It had belay written all over it and even offered a size 3 rock placement. After placing a long screw which looked and felt as sound as I could have hoped for I lied and shouted that I was safe! Pete came up puffing and panting, muscling his way up my shoulder width furrow. He looked exhausted and threw some apprehensive glances up at the next pitch which seemed to reveal acres of steep snow covered ice.

After sorting things out and deciding that the left hand, (and less steep) ramp line was the one for us, Pete left. It must have been hard leaving the relative security of the belay, which despite the increasing breeze and minus eight celsius, felt pretty good to me. Pete burrowed for about ten feet upwards then returned exhausted leaving me the excavation duties for the next pitch. After an awkward exchange of lead, I enjoyed the short clean patch then broke up and through new ground making a rising and airy leftwards traverse. The screws I battered in looked good and served to boost my confidence. The ice once cleared of debris improved and after a couple of a steep moves I found myself on the lower ramp, less steep and more forgiving. Things started to look up when after a good scratch around a rusty peg appeared. The ramp continued upwards until blocked by a steep broken wall. Having lost communication with Pete the little belay bells started clanging. "There must be something in this corner", I repeated to myself. I battered away like a blacksmith, (maybe some connection with the name of the route), sending sparks in all directions. Eventually a rusty wire lead to a moulded piece of soft metal unfeasibly jammed into a corner.

A sling lead downwards into ice and...who knows? It was enough for me.

A back up of hooked axes saw me lying to Pete again about the relative security of my position. There was no reply.

# you think

by Capt Manners

For some reason, as Pete set off, I tortured myself with thoughts of self rescue. Not enough rope to reach the bottom, don't fancy abseiling on screws, free falling is even less attractive. Why can't I think of something more cheerful? My daydream was shattered as Pete reliably pulled over the bulge onto the ramp enjoying the excellent placements. "I hope you're feeling strong mate" I said as I pondered our only exit from the corner. I tried not to catch his gaze and held an exhausted and finished looking pose. A rightward traverse to get us back onto the upper ramp was the obvious answer. Pete set off on rotten and thin ice tiptoeing on a hidden ledge. After a couple of frighteningly unstable looking moves he placed three pieces of protection using a hammer to bluff me. All three later pulled straight with minimum effort. With a final effort Pete heaved himself onto the steep upper slab with two firm placements and romped up to a corner and belay.

The move from my belay up to the three placements and on to the ramp were probably the hardest moves on the route, placement were least secure. When I arrived on the upper ramp and saw a pleasant looking grade three gully leading to a welcome cornice, again I lied to Pete about the security of his placements, "they weren't that good", I said. The last pitch was a lovely way to finish what was on the whole an exhausting but very enjoyable "Cold Climbs" grade five. I have since learnts that it can be climbed direct in two pitches! Not with half a foot of rotten snow, me thinks.

We returned to our sacks down Tower Gully. The sky was now clearing and the air was crisp and cold. After a snack we headed off down the mountain only stopping to collect the gear that had been dropped, (thrown away??) during the climb. A long and rewarding bum slide did little for the p.l.s. but made the journey to the CIC hut just that little bit quicker. Our friends on skis had kindly carved a route to the CIC hut by now, again rubbing salt into the wounds.

The sunset was fabulous and the skies were clear. The elation of a fabulous day on the mountain was only marred by the fact that we



*Technical Crux of Smith's Route*

had to leave it in such good conditions. My weekend finished when I got home to Fort William but Pete and Carrie had one last chapter to complete; it's not as far as you think!

## LEAVE NOTHING BUT FOOTPRINTS...

There is a small sheet of water called Loch nan Eun situated in the Cairnwell hills, it's about nine kilometres from the Spittal of Glenshee and it makes a pleasant campsite.

The presence of three man days worth of 'compo wrappers' found and collected on my last visit did not however enhance it's appearance.

An isolated incident? Unfortunately not. In the Lairig Ghru and even Lochnanar the presence of Services groups over the past few months has been all too obvious.

Unlike the humble Mars bar wrapper 'boil in the bag' is not anonymous:

I realise that mentioning this subject in the AMA Journal is preaching to the converted but perhaps the conservation message needs selling to the organisers of Unit expeditions.

It would be a sad day if Services groups were denied access by private landowners because a minority have given us a reputation as litter louts.

# Skve at its Best

It was late May and the forecast was good. Skve was destined to be at its best and could not be missed. Ali, my wife, and I had planned to get up to Skve sometime in the spring, regardless of the weather, and at the very least capture some of the atmosphere of the island, while it was still an island!

With BBC assurances of a gleaming Saturday we set off, through the rain, for the 'New Inn' in Carbost. for an entry in the 'Good Pub Guide' it was surprisingly unsurprising; neat, tidy and functional with good ale and the Talisker distillery as the next door neighbour!

We were up as early as could be expected for a Saturday morning and after a hearty, full fat, cholesterol frenzy we packed. The Cuillins were cloudless and beckoning. Our objective for the day was the Pinnacle Ridge of Sgurr nan Gillean. first climbed in 1880 by the Pilkington brothers the ridge gives a good solid days mountaineering. The ridge is justifiably one of the most popular outings in Skve. Climbing rarely exceeds 'Difficult' although this grade appears out dated in one or two places. The Ridge contains four main pinnacles with the summit of Sgurr Nan Gillean being the fifth and final top.

We set off from the Sligachan Hotel at a respectable time, (the Victorians would have approved). The walk in was in clear, cool and midge free; although the earth was only days away from releasing its airborne infestation, and we were to be honoured by its absence. There was still a considerable amount of snow in the high corries and with our traditional approach, (no harnesses or guidebook) I began to question my wisdom. The fact that Ali had 'Lowe Powerstretch' and not a long flowing dress put us one step ahead of the Victorians. Also the weather for the Pilkingtons in 1880 could not have been much better.

We arrived at the base of the ridge to the sound of snapping gates, clipping helmet straps and rattling racks. We all seemed to set off at the same time and in the same direction, them probably knowing where they were going and me guessing. We made it onto the ridge via a damp and chilly chock stoned gully. In stark contrast the ridge was bathed in late morning sunshine and the clear air revealed northern Skve and the outer Hebrides.

Apparently until the top of the third pinnacle the route is 'little more than a walk'. Does this therefore mean that it does not involve hands? What is the difference between an easy walk and an 'easy' rock climb? ... answers on a postcard. It was easy but most definitely not a walk, very enjoyable and sometimes exposed scrambling. Shortly before the top of the third pinnacle a narrow icy gully barred the way. Several last members of groups now looked worried and became separated from their friends. Much shouting and message passing almost clarified things! The gully was a slippery affair requiring a conscious lack of ethics. I belayed at the top and brought Ali up. The next hurdle was a descent of the

'Knight's Peak'. Some abseiled to the left and some to the right. We headed to the right and with the security of a sixteen foot sling I lowered Ali to the ground down half a rope length, on a not particularly comfortable Thompson knot!



The Cullin in June.

(Improvised rope harness). I abseiled on an Italian Hitch into the snowy bealach leaving the queues to grow behind us.

The initial pitch from the bealach was awkward to say the least; sloping ledges and a short, steep corner. I reached a large ledge and Ali came up only after a Fort William mountain instructor sporting great looking alpine glasses and a Colgate smile steamed past. In his wake and an obvious burden were two exhausted looking clients blowing steam from

their ears and probably most other orifices. To gain the top of number four required the axe and cramponless ascent of a rather fine and crusty snow filled gully. Reasonable steps in the snow made things easier although yet another orphaned 'climber', (I hasten to use that term), had to be negotiated. Once I was belayed both clove hitched 'lost soul' and Ali made their way up. The descent into the next bealach before the final push whilst being exposed and covered by plenty of soggy snow was straight forward.

On looking up at the final section of the ridge it became fairly obvious that we had met our match. The climb to the summit was regularly shedding large lumps of ice and was still laden with deep soggy snow; no match for summer equipped mountaineers with minimal gear. We dropped into the west facing gully and I lowered Ali down a full rope length. The slope was not steep but if you have never been asked to arrest a fall with only a rigid index finger now was perhaps not the best time to learn. As I climbed off the bealach with a group above and below me the not unexpected, (sorry about the split infinitive), cry of "below" rang out. I dodged the rock which struck a rather large, unhelmeted and very bald head. To my relief the rock on its erratic and unpredictable journey down the snow slope kindly chose not to pick off Ali for seconds.

Once on terra firma we joined the tourist route up the south west ridge. Although it was disappointing not to finish up the Pinnacle Ridge the summit views erased any feelings of dissatisfaction. The skies had remained clear all day with no breeze, a perfect spring day. The eye could wander from the Old Man of Storr to the north, to the Outer Isles and from Lochaber to Wester Ross. No photograph or video can capture such views, its almost worth not bothering with them in the first place.

As we packed to leave the summit having exhausted our 'vast' food supplies a Berghaus Goretex jacket revealed itself looking dejected and abandoned. With no one else on the summit it was helped into my rucksack and escorted off the mountain. I hope the owner reads "High" magazine. The descent down the south west ridge was pleasant scrambling then the path swung north and led us

after what seemed like an eternity to the Sligachan Hotel and a fully deserved pint.

The day had been done with all credit going to the weather. Skye had offered its best and we had been in the fortunate position to accept it; dropping everything to dash up. I could not have asked for a more perfect day to introduce Ali to scrambling on Scotland's

mountains, although if I had remembered to check all the gear before leaving the Fort things may have been a little more comfortable. If we had planned the weekend weeks in advance the weather would have been horrendous on the day, as it was I planned Sunday's route, Clach Glas and Blaven 24 hours in advance and it rained and blew! C'est la vie!

## JS Mountaineering and Climbing Qualifications

By Capt Will Manners

**T**his article is aimed at attempting to keep at least the AMA up to date on current Joint Service Mountaineering qualifications and courses. By the start of the winter 95/96 season the mountaineering and climbing Course Training Plans (CTP), for all courses should be complete; in fact at the time of writing the winter CTP is nearing completion. What this means is that all the centres running these courses are at last 'singing from the same song sheet'. What it also means is that the number of courses and the syllabi are pretty much, (caveat!) set in concrete. We hopefully therefore will not be springing any more sneaky clauses or even courses to trip you up on your star studded route to qualification heaven.

As a member of the AMA who has read this article or indeed been lucky enough to sneak away to a course at Ballachulish you will probably find that you are in fact the unit expert on JS mountaineering courses. Do help us by spreading the word. Some of this article is cut short as it was the subject of a previous article in this magazine. I will briefly look at the 3 areas of courses:

### Summer Mountaineering

Two courses; UEL and JSMELE equating to ML(S) training and ML(S) assessment respectively. If this means nothing to you then read either JSP 419 or the Army Adventurous Training Compendium (AATC). If you want the UEL to be your ML(S) training as well then ensure you are registered with the MLTB or SMLTB before you arrive, otherwise it is too late.

### Summer Climbing

There are now 5 courses in the scheme designed to ensure that when you arrive you are prepared and likely to pass any assessment. The courses are as follows:

**Rock Climb Proficiency (RCP)** The first level and only requiring a head for heights. By the end of the week you will as a minimum be seconding multipitch 'V Diff', you could however be further than that.

**Rock Leader Training (RLT)** This week is busy! By the end of it you will be able to supervise TR&A, (the TR&A award ceases to exist on 1 April 1998), and climb with a partner of equal ability where you may be lowered to the ground. If after 3 years you have not been assessed for RCL then you lose RLT! RLT equates to SPSA training. For details contact the MLTB.

**Rock Leader Assessment (RCL)** this week involves an element of training but at least 3 days of assessment. You should by now be a competent leader at 'Severe' although the requirement is currently 'V Diff'. If you are being assessed also for SPSA you must be leading at 'Severe'. With RCL in addition to TR&A you may lead a novice multipitch climbing at a grade compatible with your log-

book, (and compatible with the novice's!).

**Rock Climbing Instructor Training (RIT)** Covers advanced leading skills, self rescues and instructing all levels. RIT can practice skills with another RIT.

**Rock Climbing Instructor Assessment (RCI)** By now you should be a committed climber and not far off leading 'VS' although the requirement is 'Severe'. RCI can fly!

### Winter Mountaineering

**Winter Mountaineering Introduction (WMI)** As a minimum applicants need a UEL and a logbook including 20 winter QMD. The course covers all the personal skills eg, ice axe arrest and use of crampons.

**Snow and Ice Climbing Training (SCT)** This course is for rock climbers with some winter experience and for personnel working towards their JSMELE(W). Candidates should:

- a) Have completed WMI and be a qualified JSRCL or b) Provide evidence of 8 multi-pitch 'V Diff' climbs and 10 winter QMD or
- c) Have completed the WMT course

**Winter Mountain Leader- Training (WMJ)** The title stands for itself. Students on completion of the course will be able to train for their JSMELE(W) with other equally experienced personnel. This course equates to the SMLTB ML(W) training course. Arrive registered!

**Winter Mountain Leader- Progression Course (WLP)** This is not an instructional course as such. All training is carried out, without supervision, by groups of personnel who have completed WNT. The JSMTCC centre is used merely as provider of food, accommodation and transport.

**Joint Service Mountain Expedition Leader (Winter) (JSMELE(W))** this is a 5day assessment course and equates to the SMLTB ML(W).

### Final Note

Don't be alarmed. You don't necessarily have to do all 5 rock climbing courses if you already have rock climbing experience. If you have been leading past Severe for the last few years RCP's value to you may be limited. That said RLT/RCL may teach you how to belay and how to get out of those embarrassing messes without making a hasty mobile phone call. Equally if you already have plenty of winter mountaineering experience and happen to climb WMT and JSMELE(W) may well suffice. If you have plenty of experience sell yourself to JSMTCC's Chief Instructor by sending a nice letter and a phenomenal logbook. Good luck~

# Exercise Bregalia Flash

by Capt R Duxbury

The chance to escape the sun may seem to be a peculiar idea, especially if you are living and working in the UK, but in Cyprus the sun shines virtually all the year round and the chance to escape the September heat, coupled with a climbing expedition in the Italian Alps was too good an opportunity to miss. Ex Bregalia Flash was a British Forces Cyprus sponsored climbing expedition to the beautiful alpine valley of Val di Mello, situated in the Bregalia region of northern Italy, approximately two and half hours drive north of Milan. The aim of the expedition was, for the less experienced climbers, to practise multi-pitch Alpine climbing and for the more experienced climbers to climb some of the classic rock routes of the Italian Alps and to develop their overall climbing culture, in preparation for a climbing trip to Mount Kenya in Jan 95.

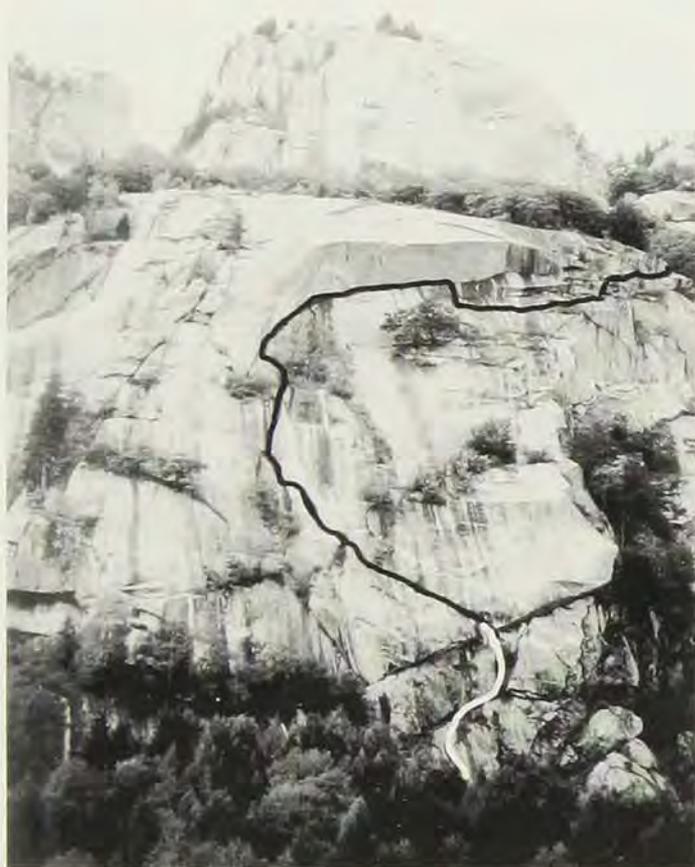
The climbing area is famous for its steep granite walls and surrounding high altitude routes on the Piz Badile and Piz Cengalo. The area has been described as Europe's Yosemite.

The expedition team comprised of Capt Steve Bostock QLR (OIC), myself, Cpl Seard RAMC, LCpl Jones I RGJl JT Mathew RAF and Pte Elley RGJ and flew to Milan via Budapest on the Cyprus red-eye - 0400 hrs, which was a worthwhile stop-over and certainly worth a second visit. Budapest is one of Europe's oldest major cities and displays magnificent examples of architecture which are built on the banks of the River Danube. Despite the fact that Hungary is going through a massive upheaval, since the collapse of the Eastern Block, she is coping well with the changing economic swing from communism to capitalism and provides the visitor with a wonderful mixture of a quest for western democracy and an old style communist rule.

The expedition took off to a flying start when on arrival in Milan it was found that the mini-bus, which had been previously booked, did not exist. The OIC, Capt Steve Bostock QLR, was quick to react with his "plastic" and managed to find two hire cars, at a price and 3 hrs later. The six man team arrived in the Val di Mello at 0300 hrs and were soon asleep in the cool quiet atmosphere of the alpine valley. As all climbers do, who are anxious to start climbing on new rock, woke early and peered out of our tents to see the magnificent granite walls of the numerous buttresses in the valley. The crags had marvellous names such as the 'Il Precipizio degli Asteroidi and Lo Scoglio della Metamorfosi, which described their appearances perfectly and after a short time we had identified the crags in the guide book and pin-pointed the routes to be climbed first. With hearts throbbing and fingers and toes itching to climb, we negotiated breakfast in silence with eyes staring upwards towards the over-hanging cliffs of the buttresses surrounding the campsite.

All the climbs in the Mello can be described in one of two categories first we have the short climbs. These are normally friction routes on slabs in the lower areas of the valley, with short approaches. Second we have some World-class crack climbs, of eight pitches or more, on the steeper crags.

The area for a long time was dedicated a no bolting area and consequently hard routes were being put up with little or even no protection. But since the eighties this attitude towards bolting changed and now we see some excellent friction routes with good protection. There are climbs ranging from severe up-wards, but in order



Kundalini, E15b, 400m.

to achieve the most from the valley and to climb the finest routes, one has to be climbing at least Hard Very Severe (HVS) and above.

The valley is notorious for its long crack climbs such as Via Il Isveglio Kundalini Via l una Nascente Via Poliamago and Oceano Irrazionale all being graded at E1 5b E2 5c E2 5c and E3 5c respectively - 5a equates to I-IVS. The climbs are all over 400m in length and are all sustained. There's no slacking in the grade and very few places to abseil off so once you have started you are committed. Descent routes from the long crack climbs are as notorious as the climbs themselves and on one occasion two soldiers spent a cold night on a very small ledge, after running out of light. Caution must be exercised at all times, especially on big routes with unmarked descents, but due to good training and discipline, the soldiers made a sensible and sane decision and stayed put until the Mello rescue team came albeit at dawn who saw the pair abseiling down the route after a very cold night out on the crags at about 0500 hrs. September is a good month to visit the Mello as the tourist season is coming to a close the weather is still warm enough to allow climbing and the first snow falls of winter have not yet reached the Badile, or the Cenalo.

Myself and Capt Bostock after polishing off the classic slab and crack routes of the valley decided to finish the week with an ascent of the SE Ridge of the Piz Badile, a French Tres Difficile (Scottish

## 22 Sept-2 October 1994

Ice Grade II) ice route in winter, or a rock Very Dif'cult (VD) in summer. VD is not a technically difficult grade, especially after completing the routes in the Mello, but like all high altitude routes, they possess their own unique problems. The Piz Badile is 10,000 feet high and snow often remains in the gullies presenting the climber with broken snow and ice pitches. We climbed the Badile in normal boots because it was too cold to wear EBs (climbing shoes) and also because of the amount of snow still lying on the ground, which meant that we had to climb more carefully and slower than usual, as the friction and security of EBs was absent. The route starts at about 9500 feet and finishes on the summit. It is a relatively straight forward route and winds itself past the south face of the Badile, where some of the most extreme high altitude routes in Europe can be found. We made the climb after a 5 hour ascent to the foot of the mountain and then a 4 hr climb on the route itself. Stone falls are a major worry as with all these routes of the same nature as the rock is often shattered through freeze thawing. Fortunately we escaped having encountered only a minor rock fall. After the obligatory bar of chocolate was eaten on the summit and a quick photograph taken, we made 20 abseils to see us safely off the route and on to the scree slopes below. A 3 hr descent saw us back in the Val di Mello amongst the green valley sides and alpine cows whose constant clanging cow bells are actually quite soothing after the winds on the Badile. The South East Ridge is a relatively straight forward route and is recommended to anyone who wishes to start an Alpine climbing career on the Badile itself. There are a number of classic rock and ice routes which take the



Kundalini: Maj Bostock leading 6 pitch E15b.

main ridges. There are also some superb rock routes on the south face, and if that is not enough, there is the fierce North Face, which deluded many climbers of the summit for a number of years. There are plenty of guide books available on the region, which are in both Italian and English. All in all it was an excellent trip which catered for all climbers who could climb Very Severe and above, or anyone who has climbed in Skye and prefers somewhere which is a little drier, has less midges, and is in search of some big exposure, then the Val di Mello is a must. Monte Bella.

### Spring 1996 edition

Please send your contributions for the Spring 1996 edition to the editor by the end of March '96. Please supply articles on disc if possible (any leading word processor) accompanied by hard copy. If only hard copy is available please try to supply **clear well spaced laser quality text**. Photographs and slides (which will be returned) should be accompanied by a suitable caption. Sketches, maps and cartoons are welcomed and articles may be off beat as well as main-stream climbing/mountaineering.

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# New Zealand

## Climbing in

by S A Bassnett

In January 1995 I spent four weeks in the New Zealand Alps. The mountains and scenery are excellent, but the area bears little resemblance to the European Alps, being much more rugged and remote. It is a cross between an American Wilderness area and Greenland. The climbing season is November to March, though winter climbing is also becoming popular. Even in summer the weather is poor, dominated by North Westerlies which bring heavy rain and wind for several days at a time. Windows of good weather occur when the North Westerlies blow over and these windows last between 24 - 48 hours. Like any weather service the New Zealand one can be horribly wrong! New Zealand has lost 20% of its ozone layer and sunburn and sunstroke are a real hazard.

Walk ins/outs are generally long and rugged, particularly on the West coast where the vegetation is a temperate rain forest, with beech as the predominant tree; movement off-tracks without a chain saw is slow and difficult. Some rivers are bridged but many are not and a combination of heavy rain, steep mountains and thin soils ensures a rapid run-off and streams can rise several feet in a few hours. A particularly unpleasant insect called a Sandfly makes stopping/camping in the forest an experience to be missed.

The mountains (once reached) are heavily glaciated with dangerous glaciers and much loose rock. Most rock we encountered was a form of schist which sloped outwards, downwards took little protection and fell apart when touched. The snow and ice conditions were excellent but vary greatly during the season. Rock climbing on coastal cliffs tends to be safer as the weather on the East coast is better and the rock is volcanic. There are a number of good rock climbing areas some of which are bolted.

New Zealand huts are more primitive than European huts and are generally smaller. Few have guardians and some are very basic indeed. The more popular huts are equipped with stoves, fuel and smelly blankets and all are connected by radio to the Department of Conservation (DOC). The DOC broadcast a daily weather service, charge hut fees and, in some instances have information on climbs. They usually know the occupancy situation in huts and, importantly, whether the hut has been damaged by weather. Maps are good, but guide book descriptions are short of detail leaving much to the imagination and spirit of adventure.

Rescue and medical costs are currently free to everyone though this is under discussion following some expensive rescues of yachtsmen. A hire car is essential as many walk-ins begin at the end of remote trails. We did not have a 4WD but they are preferable, though expensive. We rented a car locally in Christchurch at half the cost of a Hertz Fly-drive arrangement. This still cost £15 per day. Despite all the advertisements my return flight from U.K. cost £1,100 and if you want to climb at the height of the season you will be lucky to find any sort of flight for much less. However, if you have the time, a "round-the-world" ticket with stopovers costs about the same.

There are two methods of getting up to the huts. The cheap option is on foot carrying huge rucksacks with enough food for up to ten days. Having arrived soaking wet at the hut you wait for the weather window and hope. We chose the second option which is to live in the sun at a valley campsite and fly in by helicopter or ski plane at the start of the good weather, bag the peak and walk out in the rain. This can be an expensive option. Our helicopter with three passengers at Mount Aspiring was £150 one way, though the ski plane at Mount Cook with five passengers was £80.

Allowing for travel time, jet lag, administration and a few days of practice climbs, four weeks goes by very quickly. Three weeks is probably the minimum time to plan for if starting in the U.K. We had time to attempt Aspiring twice and Cook twice.

Mount Aspiring is rightly called the Matterhorn of New Zealand. Twenty kilometres from anywhere, at 3033 m it dominates the surroundings. The South West ridge is the classic route with about 3000 feet of narrow ridge of little technical difficulty, topped with a gully of about Scottish II/III and two to three pitches of

non-technical but very steep ice, overall about grade AD. The descent (normal ascent route) is the North West ridge which is a mixture of loose rock and good ice, though the route finding can be tricky. Our first attempt was aborted after I went down with sunstroke during the weather window, but our second trip was successful on a cloudless, windless day. A magnificent route with stunning views.

Mount Cook at 3754 m is a more serious proposition and on our first rain soaked visit we did not leave the valley. Returning to Cook a few days later, we caught a weather window and climbed the East Ridge route which is almost 6000 ft long with a very steep last 600 ft. It's about grade D, but much depends on the ice conditions which can make the route very serious. From the junction of the East ridge with the middle summit we then completed the Grand Traverse to the main summit. A spectacular traverse and one of the world's famous routes. The descent of Cook is not straightforward. There are two so-called easy routes - the ZURBRIGGEN ridge or the LINDA glacier. The former is a shattered loose heap of rubble, whilst the latter is a glacier of enormous crevasses swept by stone fall. We chose the glacier and were fortunate not to join two climbers who had vanished on it the previous week.

If climbing gets rained off there are excellent other sporty things to do: white water rafting, bungee jumping, hunting, sailing, mountain biking, horse riding and walking (known as tramping). I have never been in a country where virtually everyone is a sports person!

In conclusion, I recommend a trip to New Zealand for those with the time and money to make the effort of getting there worthwhile. A mountaineering trip is much more of a mini-expedition than anything available in Europe.

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## Expedition Leaders Required



*World Challenge Expeditions Ltd requires experienced, qualified male and female leaders for Summer 1996 schools adventurous training expeditions to Central and South America, Africa, Himalayas and South East Asia.*

The ethos is one of development / leadership training for young people of both sexes from schools or colleges, between the ages of 16 and 18. Expeditions last for one month and depart during June, July and August. All expenses paid including training and briefing.

Assessment of candidates 14th -21st December 1995. For more expedition information see copy of J.S.D.C.I. 66/95

For an application pack apply soonest to :  
Ms Ros Chenery,  
World Challenge, Black Arrow House,  
2, Chandos Road, London NW10 6NF or  
Telephone 0181 961 1122 or Fax 0181 961 1551

## CIVILIAN RECOGNITION OF MILITARY MOUNTAINEERING AWARDS

The Mountain Leader Training Board has been providing training for leaders, instructors and supervisors for thirty years. Its awards are recognised by the Department for Education and by many other civilian organisations. While the services have always maintained strong links with the MLTB, the two organisations have recently been working towards harmonising military and civilian awards.

### Mountainwalking Leader Award

It is now possible to attend Unit Expedition Leader and Joint Services Mountain Expedition Leader courses as an MLTB candidate. Provided you have already registered with the MLTB, the UEL course will count as training for the Mountainwalking Leader Award and the subsequent JSME course as assessment. Even if you didn't register with us but have got a UEL or JSME award then you could be eligible for exemption from training for the ML scheme.

### Single Pitch Supervisors Award

The Single Pitch Supervisors Award, introduced in 1992, is available to anyone with a genuine interest in climbing and group supervision. While the military and civilian awards are not yet harmonised, JSRCI, Rock Leader or even Top Roping & Abseiling awards would be considered as part of an application for exemption from training for the SPSA scheme.

### Mountain Instructor Award

If you already have a Mountainwalking Leader Award (Summer) and substantial rock climbing and instructional experience then you can apply to register with the MIA scheme.

For registration details and further information on any of these awards, complete the coupon below and send to:

MLTB, Capel Curig, Gwynedd, LL24 0ET.



Please send me details of:

- MOUNTAIN WALKING LEADER AWARD
- SINGLE PITCH SUPERVISORS AWARD
- MOUNTAIN INSTRUCTOR AWARD

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....



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