

ARMY MOUNTAINEER



The Journal of The Army Mountaineering Association

Canada

Spain

Norwegian ice climbing

Ski mountaineering

Antarctica

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Summer 2004

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The Journal of The Army Mountaineering Association

Foreword

by AMA Chairman

In the last edition of Army Mountaineer (Winter 2003-04), Cath Davies outlined several mountaineering expeditions that had taken place, and mentioned some future plans as well.

Thanks go to those who continue to organise meets, especially to Sgt Johnny Belsham for those at New Year and Easter. This season of sport climbing has been very successful, with thriving Army Championships in May at the WICC, near Cardiff: thanks go to Capt Tim Legge and team for organising this. We welcome back those AMA members involved in the Joint Service expeditions to Makalu and Baruntse, and we look forward to hearing more details of their valiant efforts.

Turning to the future, selection weekends for the Everest West Ridge (EWR) expedition in 2006 have resulted in two large squads, for Everest and for Lhakpa Ri. A third team is due to form, including a number of young soldiers, to tackle Island Peak. This trio of expeditions neatly covers a range of Himalayan climbing, from a challenging introduction through to exacting high altitude mountaineering. The whole project therefore appeals to a wide range of climbers at various levels, and provides aiming marks for future exploits. The build-up phase will see plenty of opportunities for training, both to gain wider experience as well as appropriate qualifications. From early 2005, teams will be selected from the squads, together with two sets of reserves who will gain from both the training and the prospect of filling vacancies.

Further ahead, 2007 sees the 50th anniversary of the AMA. You may be aware of the broad intention of seeing AMA climbing activity in many parts of the world, ideally in all continents. Given EWR the year before, we are not envisaging any one major expedition, but would hope to see activity covering the spectrum of climbing, again to encourage wide and varied participation. However, such expeditions require leaders, and I appeal to those interested to contact Cath Davies. It would be great to hear more detailed plans starting to develop during the AMA Annual Weekend from 24 to 26 Sep 04 at JSMTIC Indefatigable. There will be time to discuss ideas on the crags, in the bar, and during the expedition planning session on the Sunday morning.

I look forward to seeing you there.

Martin Bazire

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On the Cover:

Members of 21 Signal Regiment on Exercise MULAS DRAGON to Aconcagua.

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Editorial

It may be the Summer Journal but there is a distinctly cold feel to it with several articles covering the exploits of our members across the globe from Norway to Argentina and Turkey to Antarctica. There is of course a splattering of sunshine from Spain aswell! As always your articles for your Journal are of the highest quality and are accompanied by some truly awesome photographs – please keep them coming.

The Journal is intended to provide a record of AMA activity. Principally it is for the benefit of the members; but do not forget that it also serves as a medium by which the profile of the AMA can be raised amongst some very influential individuals. I reiterate my sentiments above – keep the high quality articles coming as they help to reflect the high quality of the AMA and what it stands for.

I will continue to strive to produce what I believe to be an excellent publication, I owe it to you the members and to my predecessors who set the standard. I urge you to continue submitting articles covering expeditions and meets. But what about some letters? What about comment on the JSAT scheme? Kit reviews? Advice? Poetry?

Enjoy the summer.

Howie Barnes

Note. From time to time our publishers, Crest, may wish to use articles provided for the AMA Journal in other publications. This will obviously raise the profile of the AMA and the individual author. If any member submitting an article does not wish for it to be used elsewhere please make this clear at the time of submission.

Journal submission requirements

Deadlines for submission are 1st January and 1st June.

Text should be sent electronically (floppy, CD or e-mail).

Photographs can be prints, slides or digital, where possible, always include captions for your photographs.

Submissions should be sent by post to:

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Or electronically to:

Journal@theama.org.uk or on the military net to: LWC CAST(S) - SO2 CSS

If you want your discs or photos back please let me know at the time of submission.

Remember that the AMA is a mountaineering club whose members are either serving or have served in the Army; it is not a military organisation. As such try to avoid the use of ranks and military TLAs (three letter abbreviations!) in your articles – you are not writing for your Corps or Regimental Journal.

Try to avoid tables in your articles.

Finally please do not regurgitate your PXR.

5 Division Top-rope Climbing Competition 2004

SSgt (SSI) Sinclair



The 5 Div Top-Rope Climbing Competition took place on Saturday 17 April at JSMTTC (I) Climbing Centre, by kind permission of the Commandant, Lt Col K Hodgson OBE. The aim of the competition was to cater for personnel who were just starting out in climbing as well as some harder routes for the rock-gods. There was a good spread of grades, with routes ranging between French grades 3 up to 7a. Although there were not as many competitors as was originally hoped for, it still made for an exciting event, with competitors climbing up to French grade 6c. The event officials were: WO2 (QMSI) Mark Hedge APTC (Technical Advisor), S/Sgt (SSI) Gary Logan APTC, S/Sgt (SSI) Ian Scott APTC, Sgt (SI) Gary Craig APTC. These personnel are thanked for making the competition a success. Competitors came from as far away as Blandford in Dorset and are also thanked for their commitment to the event. Personnel travelled from the following units to compete: RSS Blandford, HQ Hereford Garrison, ATR Lichfield and HQ 3 Div.

The climax of the competition was the battle for 1st and 2nd place in the open competition between Maj Peter Skinsley (RLC) from HQ 3 Div and L/Cpl Frank Ramsey. L/Cpl Ramsey was triumphant in the end, winning on a height gain, based on a 7a route. The overall results are as follows:

LCpl Ramsay	HQ Hereford Garrison	1st Male
Maj Skinsley	HQ 3 (UK) Div	2nd Male
SSgt Hatch	RSS	3rd Male
Sig Cookson	RSS	1st Female
Sig Rankin	RSS	2nd Female
Sig Chisholm	RSS	3rd Female
SSgt Gainey	HQ Hereford Garrison	1st Veteran
Sig Hodson	RSS	1st Junior

Ex Sella Diamond – Unit Hot Rock

by Mike Smith

The trouble with Unit AT is that the soldiers do tend to get in the way of personal goals. In between getting charges through the RCP syllabus; climbing the Peñon; watching England beat Australia; conducting additional training for RLT instructors, I had to find an amenable 7a to flash. As well as this there is the general wet nursing of the soldiers; do you have your helmets, harnesses, rock shoes, rope etc. Ensuring that they all get fed, time off, preferably in Benidorm. How is it possible to fit in your own climbing? It is possible and you the instructor must make the effort, or what is the point of all that effort and pain to get there in the first place!

My Hot Rock exercise to the Costa Blanca had the usual AT aims, but I didn't document my aims, I now believe this to be a serious omission, for what drives us the instructors/leaders of AT to jump through the JSATFA hoops without some form of reward for our efforts. My own personal goal was to climb 7a onsight by the end of the week. I was extremely lucky in that I had an RLT instructor (Cfn Graham Miller – newest AMA recruit!) and as a last minute addition SSgt Chris Mitchell (JSRCI/Army Team). Without these it would have been more difficult to achieve most of the aims. But it did mean I was able to juggle the needs of the soldiers, aims of the exercise and personal goals of myself and the other instructors.


Highlights of the exercise included; a simultaneous ascent of the Peñon d'Ifach by ten soldiers on three different routes (this was achieved



by Graham leading Via Pany under very close supervision and a fleeting appearance by Loz Owen (IS climbing champion) who assisted for three days; England beating Australia; six RCP certificates were awarded and a night out in Benidorm achieved, although we did forget the odd rope and harness! As well as this the team climbed 50 named routes which totalled 2085metres of rock climbing. Chris climbed Tai Chi on Oita (see page three of Rockfax guide) and Graham gained more multi-pitch experience that he thought possible, including Marion 5+, Via Pany 5 & Via Valencianos 5+.

Oh I forgot did I get the 7a nailed? Well that would be boasting wouldn't it?





It was not perhaps with the greatest enthusiasm that bodies began to move out of the warm minibus onto the snow-covered ground. The temperature was -10°C and it was snowing. Bergans were loaded onto backs and we staggered out to conduct our initial acclimatization in a foot of freshly fallen powdered snow. November is one of the most unpredictable months in the Canadian calendar and we had just got lucky, really lucky.

by Ian Posgate

A steady, progressive training programme saw a busy first week of walking, ski training and lectures. Under experienced instruction we quickly developed our walking skills and rope work. The skiing was tough. Uphill was a pleasure! But trying to turn going downhill in 2 foot of powder snow with bergans on (although it sounds bliss) was in fact exceedingly hard work. After many frustrations, much swearing and a good few face-plants we began to produce the necessary skiing skills.

The majority of evenings during the first week were spent in lectures or skills periods. Cold weather injury, avalanche lectures and bear aware (a riveting video) provided us with a sound theoretical background. The skills periods of knot tying, rope coiling and roping up proved invaluable at a later date when we required these drills rapidly in sub-zero temperatures.

The first week proved invaluable as a teaching tool. We conducted basic training gradually building up the altitude, the distances and the difficulty of the routes. Towards the end of the week we were turning turtle (falling onto our bergans with legs up in the air, skis everywhere, utterly unable to move) less frequently. We ensured that we varied the training to have one day walking and the next skiing so as not to overtire any particular muscle group.

EXERCISE FROZEN TIME



A young officer's dream, the mapping of the Kananaskis Park was poor (the perfect excuse), contours did not accurately represent the ground and there was the slight oversight that cliff faces had not been marked on the map! We had numerous surprises finding severe features blocking our path that should by rights have been clearly indicated on the map. Detailed map recesses in conjunction with a visual check solved most of these geographical surprises but not all.

The weather was on our side throughout the entire expedition. Despite days when the temperature was brought down with wind chill to -30°C we were generally aided by bright blue skies and fresh powder snow. Although the snow proved great for skiing it did preclude us from conducting ice axe and crampon work at the lower altitudes.

We had three days of ski training, despite everyone having skied before we still struggled enormously with the downhill backcountry skiing, a very different discipline from on-piste skiing. Towards the end of the week we were combining walking and skiing. We had a successful, arduous ascent of Olympic peak and then a short descent down the Olympic run at Nakiska. The ascent was hard going in part due to a never-ending tree line that we could not get above. The trees in turn kept dumping huge

mounds of snow on us every time a ski or bergen brushed a branch.

Fortress Ridge provided another excellent day of ski mountaineering, despite a significant amount of sidestepping and traversing. The descent from the ridge, which looked wonderful, was in fact through a heavily wooded area (not marked on the map!), the ground under the snow being littered with partially buried, felled trees. A few choice words from expedition

members and a couple of hours later and we arrived back at the bottom of the mountain covered in bumps and bruises.

A half day of rest and an opportunity to purchase provisions and we were off to face a week on the icefield. The Wapta Icefield provides a fantastic skills ground to conduct further training whilst allowing an expedition to bag some magnificent peaks. For more adventurous teams with a little more experience the Columbian Icefield

would be a more remote and interesting challenge. The Bow ascent is reasonable despite the fact it took us 2 hours to climb the last 800 meters (with 7 days of rations, skis and climbing kit, all in 2 foot of powder snow). There were some exhausted individuals that night when we thankfully reached the inviting steps of Bow Hut.

Further training days on the mountains provided a flavour for glacial mountain skills. Crevasse rescue drills provided



a couple of hours of entertainment as selected victims were lowered over and then slowly recovered from a deep wind-scrape. Ice axe arrest drills, when we finally found a suitable spot, provided a chuckle as people were launched down the slope, in various contorted positions, making every effort to stop before hitting the bottom of the selected run. An enjoyable few hours were spent with crampons on the only exposed piece of ice for miles, on a glacier!

Skiing was our real nemesis. Having demonstrated to our guide that we were competent in all essential mountain skills he took us for a ski. He was enormously impressed by the manner in which we roped up, put skis and skins on and set off up the toe of the glacier. It was inevitably that our descent was to let us down. As we were scattered, prostrate across the foot of the glacier in contorted positions deep in powdered snow, our guide cheekily declared, "You ski like Brits".

To pause for a moment on the guide, they are essential and beneficial for teams that have not been on the Wapta Icefield before. Any instructor who has been up the Wapta Icefield should consider how worthwhile a guide would be, considering the cost. Our ACMG accredited guide was superb and significantly enhanced our training both with his local knowledge

and his occasionally differing perspective on mountaineering.

The real highlight of the week on the glacier was the peaks. We bagged Mount Gordon, a simple but large ski mountaineering peak. The challenge on this day was not the technicality of the peak but the weather. It was an awful day with visibility poor and the wind really howling about. To have achieved the peak by 2pm was a great pleasure although there was little hanging about, only the briefest of pauses for the customary photo.

The second peak, in my opinion, was the most satisfactory achievement of the expedition. We skied to the bottom of Mount Peyto, walked up the frozen scree and then in -30°C temperatures had to climb the last 30 meters on a fixed line. Climbing is normally not a particular problem but with an acute drop of several thousand meters it does become rather more challenging. To successfully bag the peak applying all these skills, in the cold, clear but windy conditions was the culmination of two weeks intense training.

The final obstacle prior to the descent was a night in a snow hole! There was a noticeable reluctance for any of the students to begin the day. The environment outside of the hut looked rather unfriendly, the wind was up and the snow was coming down. Having spent the early part of the morning running

through the theory we began to construct the piles of snow for our Quincy's. There was not the depth of snow required to build a snowhole. The early afternoon saw us refreshing transceiver drills before we at last began to excavate our snowholes. It was well after last light that we settled down in the damp but warm shelters to a hot meal and a night of interrupted sleep.

The guidebook describes the route down from the Peyto glacier as either a pleasant walk or a death march! Beware, under no circumstances, even in the height of summer, is that route remotely pleasant especially if you are carrying even the tiniest fraction of weight. Needless to say after a night in the snowhole a group of wet, cold individuals emerged with a single desire to get off the mountain. A difficult and long descent saw us at the bottom of a final 1000ft climb. Awaiting us on the other side lay a fresh bowl of hot soup and the minibus home. The last photographs I took on the expedition show a group of bearded, exhausted but jubilant men reaching the top of that ascent having each successfully overcome their own individual battles over the last 2 weeks.



The only way is up (and down again)

Three civvies and a Royal Engineer at the World Ski Mountaineering Championships

by Nigel Mockridge RE



Interested in representing GB at the forthcoming World Ski Mountaineering Championships? went the small article in Summit No. 32, the club magazine of the British Mountaineering Council. More out of curiosity than genuine hope, I responded with a 'yes' and 2 months later found myself meeting up with the 3 other British Team members (Jon Morgan, Roland Sinkler, and Nick Wallis) at the Spanish town of Salardú in the Val d'Aran region of the Pyrenees, for the 2nd UIAA World Ski Mountaineering Championships which were taking place between 2-7 March 2004.

Ski Mountaineering Racing –

Never heard of it! For the uninitiated, ski mountaineering racing involves fell-running on skis using ultra-lightweight (and therefore expensive) gear, over arduous terrain that you would not normally tackle without the help of a mountain guide, with much more equipment, but in half the time! We are talking skis weighing less than 1300 g each, boots less than 1200 g, and everything else (shovel, probe, helmet, clothing etc) stripped down to the bare minimum. As for normal ski mountaineering, mohair or synthetic 'skins' are stuck to the base of the skis for the ascents, which are then stripped off for the descents.

Vertical Race: The event consisted of 4 separate Championships; the Vertical

Singles, Team, and Individual Races plus a Relay Race on the last day. Taking a spectators role on the first day due to a restriction on the number of team competitors, I watched as 118 men and women tackled the severe beasting that is the straight 950 m of ascent to the Cap de Baqueira (2466 m) in the Vertical Race. Having descended then ascended the course in slow time later in the day, I can testify that the winner's time of 40 minutes was an outstanding performance, particularly as it was minus 19°C! Jon, Nick and Roland finished in 49, 62 and 65 minutes respectively, and with a clearer idea of how painful the rest of the week was going to be!

Team Effort: Day 2 was the Team Race for teams of 2, with Great Britain fielding 2 teams. The race consisted of 5 ascents totalling 2128 m and taking in the Tuc de Beret (2590 m) and Tuc de Baciver (2644 m) as well as a few dodgy couloirs and portages over knife-edge ridges. After an amusing false start, the leaders were soon a speck in the distance and we got down to the business of getting ahead of as many nations as we could. Finishing 37th and 38th respectively out of 43 teams, these were decent performances given the strength of the field, albeit over an hour behind the winning time of 2 hours.

Individual Race: With Day 3 reserved for junior races, Day 4



was Individual Race day. With no team tactics, and Roland having returned to the UK for work commitments, this was a straight blast to get ahead of the other 2 Brits in the race. After a slip on ice in the first 5 minutes then a spectacular slide back down 30 m of piste that I had just skinned up, which was most unhelpful, I was always going to struggle to catch the nearest Brit (Nick) despite being slightly faster on the ascents. Nevertheless, the 4 ascents totalling 1720 m made for a thoroughly enjoyable race and allowed me to refine my famous 'double-cartwheel with rock-impact finale' descending technique on one of the steeper descents.

With one team member short, we could not take part in the Relay Race so departed the night before. A check of the overall results a few days later revealed that Britain were placed 17th out of 29 nations. Not bad for a first attempt! Winners honours were generally shared between the French, Swiss and Italians, who take it all very seriously. The Swiss had a team of over 20!

As the least experienced member of the team in terms of ski mountaineering racing, and at 41 the oldest (in fact, I was

told by the organisers that I was the oldest competitor there!), I put myself as the fourth runner who would provide the inspiration for the others to stay ahead of. Generally, this theory was proven! Out of our depth? In hindsight yes, but you have to start somewhere. The British Team that goes to the next World Champs in 2006 (in Cuneo, Italy) should number at least 8 and include females, and be fitter and better sponsored and equipped. If I have to compete in 2006 aged 43, something is wrong! Ideal candidates are those with a nordic skiing background that possess good descending skills, or fit competent ski mountaineers.

Summary: The Championships provided a wonderful opportunity to compete alongside the world's ski mountaineering elite in a stunning environment. I shall certainly be returning to the area, dragging others with me and calling it adventure training if I have to! I extend my thanks to the Corps Treasurer at RHQ RE and the Army Sports Lottery for financial assistance. For more information on the Val d'Aran area, and ski mountaineering racing, contact me on 94451 2390 (civil 0115 9572390) or via e-mail at nigel.mockridge@btopen-world.com.



'One winter'.... Norice, February 2004

A joint account of the AMA Exercise NORICE

by CIO Andy Nelson and Boris Blackband AAC

It's a chill February afternoon at Royal Docks Newcastle, and there is a quiet murmur of excitement as 18 winter warriors gather like a clan summoned to battle: Exercise NORICE, organised and lead by Captain Graham Carter, has begun...

The overnight ferry to Kristiansand allows time to get re-aquainted with familiar faces and hatch plans with new-found brothers in arms. It's a "driech" morning in Kristiansand. We meet Brian "The Fixer" Desmond of Destination Setesdal, fit winter tyres to our vehicles, and drive 1 hour north, to Evje, our home for the next 10 days in a former Norwegian army camp. We establish

ourselves in comfortable accommodation, feed hungry bellies then head out for a recon of local climbing venues. Several roadside options present themselves despite unseasonably warm conditions... namely Hedderviksfossen and Kviteflogi. Wednesday dawns warm with occasional rain showers and bright spells...

Our first days climbing, and intro to 'hard ice' was to be a roadside venue along the Setesdal valley. Aspirant leaders, and novices were co-located on this superbly convenient slab of frozen water, to re-visit or to be introduced to the hard skills of ice movement and ice protection, or in myself

and my partner Dave Bellamy's case, the 'arse twitching' experience of 'Andy Nelsons ice school' (Ballachulish's best looking MIC). My first introduction to grade 5 water ice seemed a far cry from bashing my way up out of condition Scottish grade 2 gullies, and the experience certainly focused the brain, (the others commenting that it was the first time Dave and I had stopped jabbering all day)...

The exhilarating, rhythmic "thunk and judder" of first time placements in plastic water ice is interrupted by a thunderous roar...I halt. A charge of adrenaline thumps through my veins as I scan for "incoming". Around the corner Rysefossen, a classic

Grade IV waterfall is deposited into the forest; the thaw is taking its toll...

As the week evolved, so did the exploits of the NORICE team, popular locations were visited and established routes fell, whilst new locations and routes were also discovered and bagged, the grades seemed to steady out and climbers seemed to find their niche. Dave and myself consolidated our grade III leading, whilst occasionally fannying up the odd grade IV, and after the odd blatant lie of encouragement by Andy 'The Machine' Nelson, maxed ourselves out on the odd 'soft touch' grade V, the other climbers and leaders also

realized their potential, with some happy to lead grade IV, whilst others eager to second grade V.

Evenings buzz with stories of epic ascents, near misses, and video evidence of dodgy leading techniques! Classic Setesdal ice routes being ticked include; Central Line III+, Kraken Wake III+, Slot Machine IV, along with some 1st recorded ascents such as "Mile End" III+ and "Sprachle" III+ (it's a Scottish word and it's to do with the approach!)

One or two special looking lines are spotted near Besteland: "A few good men" VI+ and "Code Red" VII. Both 300m long, these routes caught the eye of a handful of the big game hunters in the party! They are to remain on the "most wanted list" 'til next time as we persevere with the job in hand.

With aspirant Winter Climbing Leaders gaining confidence and icefalls falling fast (in every sense of the word!), Monday sees us heading north to assess

the guys on "Gloppefossen" a large grade IV in upper Setesdal. John starts to ab in to find very little ice and very large volume water flowing...We saddle up again looking for other venues, but find nothing complete, we drive to Rjukan (the 2.5 hour drive, being 4 in reality, makes for a long day). This recce proves the huge wealth of routes available in Rjukan, excellent conditions and perfect teaching/assessing venues.

Rjukan was the wartime location of Hitler's 'heavy water' plant, a vital component in the development of nuclear fission, and therefore a priority target for the allied forces in the race to develop the atomic bomb and end the war. On February 27 1943 Allied and Norwegian saboteurs succeeded in blowing up the heavy water plant, and this was depicted in the Kirk Douglas film 'The Heroes of Telemark'. Rjukan is now more famous as a world-class ice-climbing venue, and is probably the most reliable place in the world to enjoy guaranteed ice climbing in a convenient location. After being propelled north for four and a half hours by

John Doyle to Rjukan in our JSMTTC mystery mobile, equipped with non slip studded tyres, we were grateful to dump our bags and our bowels in our new chalet accommodation, and to head out into the ice playground that we were desperate to sample. The ice was to be plentiful, accessible and more to the enjoyment of everyone, in perfect nick, if a little brittle, the rest of our stay in Rjukan was to be spent gracefully bashing our way up numerous grade III, IV and V ice routes, from single pitch routes to 17 pitch classics. We all managed to pass our assessments here and perfect our techniques, with the only casualties being a self inflicted hammer wound by my partner Dave, and a lucky escape by Paul Chiddle involving a large block of ice, a smashed helmet and some brown trousers.

Rjukan provided the climax to our trip with all parties qualifying at their various levels and spreading wings to climb independently or lead others on chosen routes in the valley.

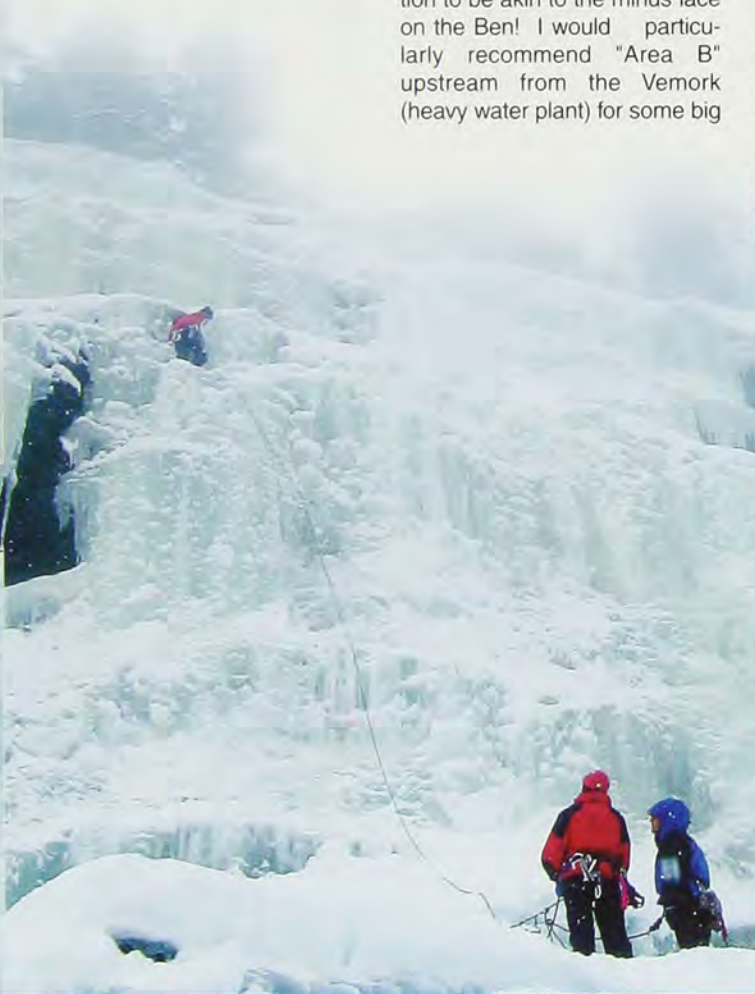
The scale of the routes in this valley was very deceptive, some appearing to be around 2 pitches whilst on closer inspection to be akin to the minus face on the Ben! I would particularly recommend "Area B" upstream from the Vemork (heavy water plant) for some big

routes... However, on time, eighteen invigorated bodies climbed into two vans to head back to Evje for a celebratory Chinese meal, a pleasant culmination to a fun and successful trip.

There remains some quality climbing in Setesdal given the right conditions and a little time driving. In addition to this, at his base at Destination Setesdal, Brian Desmond provided very comfortable accommodation and a wealth of local knowledge.

Rjukan, it is fair to say is Norway's ice climbing Mecca, with hundreds of roadside routes in a variety of venues, providing a change of scene and standard, all within a 10km radius. Clearly there is a healthy interest in NORICE type exercises where almost guaranteed conditions provide a great balance of gaining mileage and experience with qualifying the leaders of tomorrow... Long may it continue, as much as anything, because I suspect there are several new pairs of "whack and dangle" spanners lurking in the closets of the winter warriors...

"...with the recent success of Touching the Void and Ryanair offering £1 flights to Norway, I think my shiny new axes will be getting a christening sooner rather than later."



Rjukan revisited

by Stu MacDonald



Above: Stuart Macdonald running it out on an unnamed and ungraded mixed route

Below: Stuart Macdonald about to climb the crux of "Topp pa Toppen"



I first went to Rjukan in Norway in 1997. It was a last minute trip to escape a desperate Scottish winter and was a fantastic success. Huge icefalls filled the valley and the place was deserted. Things have changed a little since then. Most climbers have now heard of Rjukan, with some regarding it as one of Europe's premier ice climbing resorts (as good, if not better than Cogne and La Grave!). You will also now see other climbers in the valley, but don't expect to queue for the routes!

The decision to return was a simple one. Me and a group of friends wanted to go somewhere over Christmas and New Year for good climbing, and we didn't want to pay the earth. The beers went down easily as we sat in a Llanberis pub discussing options. Scotland was ruled out immediately due to

almost guaranteed rain, sleet and slush. Chamonix would be too expensive at that time of year, and the ice falls might not have formed. Valdez in Alaska was too far for a short trip. Rjukan would have the best conditions, rapid access to climbs, and for a group of six would be a good price.

Flights, hire cars, a log cabin, and all our food worked out at about £500 each for a ten day trip. The decision made, we then took all the money we had "saved" and bought lots of shiny new gear. This taken into account, we probably could have stayed in the Ritz and just watched climbing videos for the same price!

Suffice to say, Rjukan was awesome. We climbed ice. We climbed mixed. We climbed on lead. We climbed on top ropes. But most of

all, we climbed! Over a ten day period we climbed as many pitches as you would in a season in Scotland (a good season at that!). We never queued. We never got out of bed before 7.30. We never got off the hill after 5pm. We ate smoked salmon (by the tonne!). We drank duty free. We had a white Christmas. We lived in a great cabin. But most of all, we climbed!

Rjukan is simply brilliant. If you haven't been, you should go. There's nothing more to say than that.

Footnote: Stuart Macdonald is now the RATO for Wales OTC and is available for unit expeditions. Qualls: ML(W), SGL, JSRCI, JSSI(A), STL, AJSMEI+Klettersteig Ldr, WCL. TA units will have to pay MTDs. Regular units will have to pay a negotiable fee. Contact: stumacdonald312@hotmail.com

Hot Rock Dragon 04

by Paul Chiddle



Paul Chiddle and Matt Armstrong on Seduction 6a+



Matt Armstrong and Al Witcombe topping out on the Penon

I was beginning to feel as though I was in a tiny minority of climbers who had never visited the climbing hotspots of the Spanish isles. That was until I was given the opportunity to organise this year's HOT ROCK expedition, which was held from 24 Apr-01 May 04 and was run in the Costa Blanca region of Spain.

Apart from one expedition member and the 2 instructors from JSMTTC we were all new to this area of Spain, and the excellent climbing it had to offer. The quality of climbing venues became apparent on the journey from the airport to the hotel in Altea, and if the climbs were as good as the scenery then hopefully we would not be disappointed.

The expedition began with all of the members having a broad variety of experiences, which meant the majority of people; all had different goals that they were hoping to achieve by the end it. These goals ranged from total beginners, that either wanted an introduction to rock climbing or to improve their current standard, with the ambition to begin leading

routes. To other members that were either hoping to gain their Rock Climbing Leader (RCL), or develop their logbook experience to apply for Rock Climbing Instructor (RCI) or Sun Bathing Instructor (SBI) (please note the Course Training Plan for SBI is still under development (for further details please contact Cpl Claire Nolan)).

Throughout the duration of the expedition we had the use of 4 hire cars, which allowed each group the flexibility not to be tied down to the same timings and locations. The first day all of the groups headed off to Sierra de Toix, for an introduction /refresher on the safety requirements of sport climbing. Once this had been covered the RCL groups headed off to Toix Lower to cover the single pitch requirement of their syllabus whilst the RCP groups went off to Toix Oeste to begin on some 4/5+ multi-pitch routes with the aim of returning to the single pitch area later that afternoon and by the end of the first day some of the group members had had enough time to sink their teeth into at least 6 or 7 quality routes.

Over the next few days the groups visited a number of locations such as Sella, Toix TV and the Jalon Valley, all of which have a variety of single and multi-pitch routes with varying grades. Which was ideal for all of the groups with their different syllabuses. These venues allowed a number of topics to be covered in the same area and gave the RCP members the opportunity to juggle around their instructors to try and learn different information. Once certain parts of the syl-

labuses had been covered it also gave us an excellent opportunity to climb some of the classics routes available, such as Pequecos 4+, El torronet 5+, Marion 5+, Two nights of love 5+ and Anglomithecus Britaniensis 6a+. By the end of the first few days the RCP groups had now covered enough ground to allow some of them to begin lead climbing, which was done at Sella on the routes Dime Dime 3+ and Pequecos II 4, once the RCP members had the bug their lead climbing then went from strength to strength and venue to venue.

Later in the week the weather took a bit of a turn and the groups decided to jumble around a bit, Sella saw another visit by the RCL groups, whilst others visited crags such as Puig Campana and Jalon Valley, one afternoon saw the rain come in from the coast, which either allowed for an afternoon off for a much deserved rest or a trudge around some rain covered crags to carry out recess for the rest of the expedition. By the next day the weather had cleared up and various groups were either under assessment or heading off on 8-9 pitch routes, such as Polvos Magicos 6a+ on the Penon in Calpe.

By the end of the week all of groups were now under their own steam heading off in all different directions to climb their



Various groups at Sella

own personal goals or develop their own experiences and by the final day of the expedition this had hopefully been achieved. For those that it had, they drove into town, to grab some last minute shopping, or relaxed by the pool. For those of us that it had not we went off to Toix TV to cram as many routes into 9hrs as physically possible, during which Universal 6a, Seduction 6a+ and Gaudi Max 6b were all climbed. By the end of the day all of the groups, with logbooks fully topped up, had began to make their way to the airport for the RV to catch the flight back to UK, and apart from the 6hrs delay and arriving back 7hrs late everything went according to plan.

This year HOT ROCK was ran with huge amounts of flexibility, to firstly allow its members to meet their own individual requirements, but mainly to allow those members to control their own itinerary. For the AMA this exercise will continue to provide its members with an excellent opportunity to either develop their personal climbing, logbook experience and/or gain JSAT awards. For future HOT ROCK expeditions it should possibly be run with one of those aims in mind

A novice's introduction to mountaineering

By Jules Ratcliff



From 9th May to the 15th June 03 I was fortunate to be part of the AMA DMX Expedition to the Denali National Park in Alaska. The aim of the expedition was to provide 3 teams, the main team to summit Mount McKinley, the support team (made up of a less experienced group) to climb in the very remote little Switzerland area and also the vast Ruth Gorge area of the National Park. And the supply team, to supply the essential supplies to Alaska. I was a member of the support team.

The experience was an awesome one, firstly because I was totally inexperienced in winter mountaineering and had done little climbing and secondly, because I was unable to do much of the preparation for the expedition, having been in the Middle East from February through till May.

It all started 12 months before, when during an MLT course at Indefatigable my instructor Stu Macdonald told me of an expedition he was leading to Alaska and I showed an immediate interest. At the end of the course a place for me was offered on the support team, and through many training meets which consisted of weekends and a New Year week up in Scotland I was accepted for the team. Then Op TELIC happened and in the whirl wind of activity I was unable to do the cold weather training in Norway but was told by my CO that if there was a chance to go I would be able to. After much effort and luck I was able to

make it back to Colchester on the 8th May, and that night managed to drink large amounts of much needed beer before turning up for the expedition the next day. Several days later I was flying into this vast black and white mountain range in a little Cessna with skis fitted. I was in awe at the sight that confronted me, and indeed the fact that the aircraft stayed in one piece as we touched down. The rest of the day was spent digging, and I realised no matter what you do or where you go in the Army, you'll always be digging in. Next day I told our team leader Tania "Big T" Noakes that I hadn't done any avalanche, crevasse or ice axe rescue techniques before and a short intensive training programme was arranged for myself and for the others as revision.

Then the mountaineering came. Within a couple of days I found myself tabbing everywhere, with huge bergens pulling heavy pulks and wearing snow shoes that were the size of my legs. That took a bit of getting used to; the others must have thought I was practicing getting into fire positions all day. The first time I walked over a crevasse snow bridge it was as bad as my first parachute jump, and it got worse. I found myself hanging off a rock face on an unclimbed route with loads of poor condition ice and snow with a bergen, thick gloves and due to my inexperience thought this was certain death even though I was roped up (I'm sometimes a bit funny with heights). I admitted to the gang that I was ten times more "concerned" than I ever was in Iraq that day.



Once I was collapsing with exhaustion after a 2 day trip to the summit of Mount Dickie ended up being five days after being stranded in a storm on our way up. After successfully summiting, tabbing back across the Ruth Gorge my body gave up on me, having been on little rations for days and volunteering to beast myself breaking trail for far too long. At the end of one particularly scary day during the beginning of the trip I had a bet on with one of the team members, Martin Hoather, that I would never mountaineer again, and he assured me I would be hooked by the time we left.

He couldn't have been more right, after 26 days of tabbing, climbing, crossing crevasse fields (and my leg falling through a bridge on one occasion much to my "surprise"), avoiding avalanches, shedding loads of weight, loosing many card games, and gaining a big beard I was addicted. I found myself just feeling that this was where it's at, and when it was time to fly out I was gutted, promising myself this wouldn't be the last time.

I'd experienced the most amazing, awe inspiring place I've ever seen on the planet, had a month of playful banter with people from totally different ranks and parts of the services, managed to fit in a few long blurred nights cutting shapes on the dance floors in Alaska's unusual bars and clubs, and thanks to "Big T" was probably the first person to have summited an un-named peak,



which surprised me when I was told whilst on the summit.

I've written this article because I think it will help encourage potential mountaineers who have little or no experience to GET STUCK IN, no matter what your rank. I can honestly say to anyone interested in mountaineering or indeed any adventure training that the opportunities are there but they will not be given to you on a plate. Be as pro-active and energetic as you can and hopefully you will be as lucky as I was. I would also like to say a huge thanks to the people who helped and were behind me going to Alaska, both in 3 PARA and in the AMA. I am currently looking forward to much more climbing and mountaineering, and this will probably be for the rest of my life.

The British Army Antarctic Expedition

By Richard Pattison

Participation in any expedition is a unique opportunity and most expeditions are a compendium of opportunities. The British Army Antarctic Expedition was certainly that. The concept was simple; to sail from The UK to Antarctica, land mountaineering and field studies parties on the Danco Coast area of Antarctica. But not even its formal aim, "To explore the Danco Coast by sea and by ski in order to record historical, wildlife and geographical information", encapsulates its entirety.

There is nothing very original about combining mountaineering and sailing – Tillman for one was famous for just that and in 2000 a very successful RE expedition sailed to South Georgia and made the first ascent of Mt Roots. But it is perhaps surprising that we – the Army – don't do more of it. The synergy between the two activities is startling; not just that you need to be able to tie a bowline for both. The potential adventure is doubled and it personifies the justification of, and benefits from military adventure training. It's not my intent to berate you for not doing both; I've sailed with enough sea sick mountaineers to know that it's not every mountaineer's dream and I wouldn't pretend that combined mountaineering and sailing expeditions doesn't come at a cost.

Like so many good ideas, expeditions included, BAAE began with a chance comment, but it was enough to plant the germ of an idea, an idea which just would not go away and we toyed with idly for nearly 5 years before deciding to get serious. Even then it took a further five years of planning to bring the expedition to fruition. There are no short cuts to preparation and it's vital to the deployed phase. These years were a medley of euphoria and

setbacks but sheer bloody mindedness or do I mean "selection and maintenance of the aim" paid off. General Sir Michael Walker agreed to be our military patron and when the going got tough reaffirmed his support for "as long as it took". Enlisting the Patronage of HRH The Prince of Wales attracted wider support; critically Commercial sponsorship of about £100K. Later, in the presence of Sir Wally Herbert and over 200 guests, he honoured us by formally launching the expedition at The Painted Hall in Greenwich. We cultivating contacts in the Polar community; defined projects for our field studies programme and developed options for mountaineering objectives. We shamelessly sought the advice and experience of as many polar experts as we could find. Then there were our own Fund raising efforts, team selection and training and equipment trials. But perhaps the most daunting was finding a suitable yacht at an affordable price – a recurring challenge throughout the history of polar exploration. After many false dawns we found the an ideal boat, a 72 foot steel sailing ketch called John Laing usually used for sail training by her owners The Ocean Youth Trust.

On 31 August last year at The International Festival of The Sea General Sir Michael Walker, The British Army Antarctic Expedition's (BAAE) Military Patron, surrounded by our principal financial Sponsors, cast off the last mooring line as the 72 foot "John Laing" began her long journey south to Antarctica. Two months later she arrived safely in The Falkland Islands, already over 40 soldiers had joined the venture and helped sail the yacht nearly 10,000 miles via The Canaries and Rio. Space precludes a detailed account of their adventures but most had had their first experience of sailing and to boot had made their first ocean passage. Salty tales (and tails) abounded but all participants had a right to feel proud of both their contribution and their achievements.

The Falkland Islands was our forward mounting base. Here the 16 man team assembled. The team had been selected from across The Army. They included some experienced mountaineers and sailors but determined to "encourage le autres", there were 5 novices who had demonstrated aptitude and potential some 3 years earlier over the hills of Glen Coe during a novice selection camp, although after 2 winter training camps in the Alps, novice was a relative tag! They including 2Lt Sarah Piesse – sadly our only

female team member - and Sam Greenhill a journalist from the Press Association. Already our Antarctic equipment had been delivered by air and sea freight and now John Laing was stowed and prepared for a 70 day cruise into The Antarctic. The Falklands is already at the end of a very long supply chain but once cast off we had to be self sufficient in every respect, no admin run here or nip to the shops for forgotten or broken items. Everything had to be stowed and secured at the same time as being readily to hand when needed. The enormity of this task alone is illustrated by the stowage of over 1000 man days of rations. Add to this the mountaineering equipment, including pulks (sledges), outboard motor spares, map making equipment, first aid equipment (we were later to treat a case of appendicitis) to name but a fraction of the stores list and the scale becomes clear. Finally and with out undue ceremony John Laing slipped quietly out to sea bound for Antarctica.

As we sailed through the island group known as The South Shetlands we took in our surroundings. The beauty of Antarctica defies superlatives; my words fail to adequately describe the beauty, scale, harshness and moods of the place. For most this was their first experience of such a land and seascape. The beauty, the tribulation, the experience of Antarctica casts a spell that I can not adequately describe.

A brief visit to the active volcano of Deception Island where you actually sail into the crater, gave an early opportunity to practice mooring, our small boat drills, map making skills and other operating procedures. Then it was off and another 200 miles further south. Icebergs abounded



Antarctic Expedition



and along the coast line we were dwarfed (at the operational level) by the loft plateau summits thousands of feet above us and (at the tactical level) by the glaciers and ice cliffs that plunge hundreds of feet into the sea. In a small bay called Portal Point we were able to land a small recce party lead by Major James Harris, their task was to push a route up a narrow spine called The Reclus Peninsula. Events on the second day of this recce, just below the ridge crest were to catapult Major James Harris into a crevasse and, thanks to


Sam, the expedition onto the front page of the national newspapers. Did we mind the use of words like "bottomless abyss or deadly plunge"? Not a bit as long as they were accompanied by phrases like "dramatic but text book". Fortune had smiled kindly and we were none the worse but the reality of our environment and enterprise was driven home. A succession of media interviews followed and at one point we considered installing an answer phone message; "Thank you for calling the British Army Antarctic

Expedition, I am sorry but all our explorers are busy . . .". We had however identified a route and established a cache of food at the foot of the ridge.

We now headed further South, pushing to the very limit of the pack ice, indeed becoming ice bound for a couple of days as the ice gripped us, and receiving other potential ascent or descent routes. Despite a week of searching we found nothing that gave us confidence that our party would be able to make a secondary entry or exit point and agreed to return to Portal Point. On December 22nd we landed a strong mountaineering party and over the next week successfully pushed a route on to the Antarctic Peninsula Plateau. It's always dangerous to make claims but we think that this was probably only the second time this had been achieved. On 31st December when most of the (sane, I hear you cry) world was celebrating the dawning of the new year with revelry, music and even a glass or two!, we stood on the summit of Mount Johnson, the highest peak in the immediate area and ahead of us for a brief

moment stretched the snowy plains of the plateau. The cloud closed in on us and we returned to a hastily established camp-site. An early morning ascent the following day held the promise of a view but once again the clouds closed in. The mountain had now had 3 ascents in 50 years and two in the last 15 hours! The next few days were spent in frustration as the winds and snows raged outside our tents and when the weather did finally clear it gave us the briefest of opportunities to make the 16 mile descent to the coast. It was a long hard day exacerbated but enhanced by an ascent of Mount Harris – well it seemed silly not to!! By 0300 in the morning we had reached comparative safety beyond the "Dreaded Traverse" and "Deadly Cwm". The next day in complete white out we completed the descent to the coast and an RV with John Laing, whose crew had conducted survey and hydrographical work in the Melchior Islands and else where on The Danco Coast, including a significant 80 mile exploration by inflatable. I think we drank some whisky that night; all part





of the build up to our late Christmas celebration.

Over the next few days we enjoyed a suitable R&R period and using the original 1922 whalers chart continued a survey of the abandoned whaler's harbour of Sven Foyn and the abandoned partially submerged wreck of the whale transport ship Governoran, lost to fire in 1916.

We again probed further south. Finding the pack still impenetrable but now receded sufficiently far south for us to reach the first permanent British base in Antarctica, established in 1943 as part of a then secret wartime operation called Operation TABARIN and now manned by 3 guardians. We set about exploring the immediate area, in total we climbed 3 more peaks and enjoyed the local's hospitality with a memorable night of live music, singing, a wind up 76 gramophone, and a coke fire with unique camaraderie in a hut that has changed little in nearly 60 years. All too soon it was time to head south once more but after 5 years of planning we had arrived in the very year that informed sources described as the most ice choked for more than 10! Our attempts to get significantly further south were frustrated but despite this there was no shortage of things to do! We made a further anchorage in a Bay known as Paradise Harbour. Here again we set about as detailed an

exploration as time allowed. Amongst other activities, we climbed two further mountains both of which we believe may be first ascents. The second of these Mount Hoegh was perhaps the most demanding but equally the most rewarding. From the summit we were treated to the most incredible views across and beyond Paradise Harbour.

It was now time to head north as we had one more major port of call 300 miles to the north, the renown Elephant Island made famous by Shackleton's remarkable survival epic. Here we climbed Mount Pendragon, not only the highest point on the island but also named after our Patron, HRH The Prince of Wales. We also made a light-weight crossing of the island including a particularly difficult crevasse field which almost proved impassable but provided a thorough test of every variation of rescue technique. This journey allowed us to investigate and survey wooden wreckage on one of the more inaccessible shorelines. A previous Service's expedition had discovered this wreckage

and for a while it had been suggested that it might have originated from Shackleton's Endurance, however dech-turemetry had disproved this and our investigations were in support of an alternative hypothesis suggested by the archivist of The Scott Polar Research Institute. In addition we were able to complete bird surveys as well as circumnavigating the island and completing a detailed geological survey. Whilst on Elephant Island we were hit by a severe storm exacerbated by its exposed position. One of our inflatables was unceremoniously capsized, throwing the four crew into the sea and surf together with the large ice blocks that were being thrown around by the swell.

They swam and clambered ashore but an attempt by a second inflatable to recover them had to be abandoned and they were left stranded ashore to fend for themselves. They recovered what they could but not their cooker. So they made a Bengazzi burner and spent the next 36 hours waiting for weather and sea to abate - now that's a survival exercise!!

At each of our landing points we had completed an ambitious field studies programme that had involved map and chart making, historical surveys, geology, micro biology and wild life surveys. These programmes had been drawn up in





triumphs, the personal victories and from them come the confidences that underpin success as our soldiers walk just a little taller with that inner self pride and belief to face the uncertainty of tomorrow.

It served as a stark reminder of the uncertainty of today's world and the role of our Army but perhaps too it will serve to remind why and how expeditions like this one invest in the participants and the qualities that allow us to face these uncertainties with confidence. Shackleton wrote; " In memories we were rich . . . we had . . . grown bigger in the bigness of the whole. We had seen God in his splendours, heard the text that nature renders. We had reached the

studies programme. These programmes had been drawn up in conjunction with The Scott Polar Research Institute, The University of Brighton and scientists from The British Antarctic Survey, and although not experts ourselves, we had attended sufficient training to enable us to take appropriate samples. We also undertook some survey and hydrographical tasks. These included historical surveys of whalers and sealers sites, in one case using a 1921 whalers chart, geological sampling, the collection of mosses and lichens and Mites and Springtails, and wild life surveys. Analysis of these samples will feed into large programmes and is on going.

The internet and a still active web site (www.baae.org.uk)

conjunction with national research programmes from universities and the British Antarctic Survey, and although no experts we had attended sufficient training to enable us to take appropriate samples. We had seen the most fantastic wildlife including seals, whales, sea birds and, of course, penguins.

Of course that was not the end, ahead lay 4 months and 10,000 miles of sailing with another 40 soldiers joining the expedition.

On 14 May with General Sir Michael Walker at the helm, John Laing slipped into Southampton, to a night of celebration and partying. We had been away for 9 months sailed

about 25000 miles, involved 100 participants, visited 3 continents, climbed 8 mountains, collected about 170 field samples, have a library of more than 5000 photographs and added to the data base of map and chart data, collected 126 geological samples and nearly 50 samples of mosses and lichens and Mites and Springtails, had over 28000 hits on our web site (www.baae.org.uk), generated press coverage for The Army at international, national and local level on TV, radio and in magazines and newspapers. These were the tangibles but they are bland because behind these statistics lie the real successes; the human stories, the setbacks, the fear, the

naked soul of man". The beauty of Antarctica defies superlatives, words fail to adequately describe the beauty, scale, harshness and moods of the place, the privilege is unique and we are left with a medley of images and experiences. We climbed mountains, we made sledging journeys. We retraced Sir Wally Herbert's descent route from the Peninsula Plateau. We explored the coastline in inflatables visiting remote and infrequently visited sites. We endured blizzards, ice and cold; revelled in cloudless skies, still days and sunlit panoramas and we marvelled at the wildlife and the natural surroundings. At each of our landing points we completed an ambitious field

allowed a much wider audience to follow and share in the expedition (there were more than 28000 hits) with several schools establishing close links and running projects.

Return to the UK and the end of the deployed phase does not mean the end. Report writing, presentations, commitments to sponsors and encouraging others to realise their expedition continues. Participation in any expedition is a unique opportunity and most expeditions are a compendium of opportunities. Don't delay; seize and develop them!



Exercise Mulas Dragon

by Angus MacPherson

Exercise MULAS DRAGON was a High Risk and Remote level 3 adventurous training exercise planned in Argentina over the period 28 Jan – 21 Feb 2004. The aim of the exercise was to reach the summit of Mount Aconcagua via the Horcones valley approach following the normal route. At 6960m Aconcagua is regarded as the highest mountain in the Americas and the highest in the Southern Hemisphere. Outside the Himalayan mountain range it is the highest mountain in the world.

The exercise aimed to challenge both novice and experienced mountaineers and tested all individuals to their personal limits. Although the Normal Route posed few

technical challenges, the extreme altitude and weather patterns associated with the mountain made the undertaking extremely demanding for all members of the exercise.

The group was made up of a mixture of abilities, six personnel from 21 Signal Regiment (AS) and two attached instructors from 14 Sig Regt (EW) and the Honourable Artillery Company.

We deployed from the UK to Mendoza via Santiago in Chile, which is the heart of the wine region of Argentina. After many hours shopping in the local supermarket Capt Lindsey Courage and Capt Kate Hannaford did us proud by arranging all the rations for the



Above: Capt Lindsey Courage on the summit 6960m

Below: Our mules arriving at Confluencia 3330m to take our loads to Plaza de Mulas 4350m

mountain phase ahead. The next day we travelled by minibus to Puente del Inca at the bottom of the valley that lead to our objective. At Inca

we organised some mules to take our heavy loads along the 24km route to base camp (4350m).

Climbing a mountain of this altitude requires a different strategy to, for example climbing Ben Nevis. Time has to be spent at altitude, gradually acclimatising along the way otherwise individuals can become extremely ill from simply climbing too high too soon; this can ultimately lead to death!

The outline plan was to spend three days walking into base camp; have a rest day before starting a process of carrying rations and additional equipment up to the next higher camp. The



group would then sleep at the lower camp prior to moving up to the next higher camp that had been stocked up the previous day, sticking to the theory of climbing high and sleeping low. Once we were at camp 4 Piedras Blancas (white rocks, 6060m) the plan was to prepare for the 6hr climb to the summit.

Whilst at base camp on the 8th March 04 it was time to eat with a small ceremony in the field with Lt Kate Hannaford being promoted to Capt, with a kind letter and bottle of Champagne courtesy of the Commanding Officer. The alcohol quickly went to our heads enabling us to drift off into a peaceful night of sleep.

As progress was made up the mountain from base camp to camp Canada, Canada to Nido, Nido to Berlin and finally up to Piedras Blancas, everyone found that the thin air and lack of oxygen was making the progress harder and harder. By this stage three members of the team Capt Kate Hannaford, Cpl Julie West and Cpl Cheryl McMurray had called it a day and returned to base camp. Above 5500m the body doesn't acclimatise any more and, unless you're a 'Yeti', a good night's sleep is rare.

As summit day approached, although the winds were extremely fierce it was decided to go for it. After about 30 minutes into the summit attempt myself and Tpr John Howie (HAC) decided to turn back as we could not feel our fingers and toes. It would take John over an hour to get the feeling back in his toes, and this really scared us. At 1330hrs on 15 Feb 2004 Capt Lindsey Courage reached the summit of Aconcagua, together with a French mountain guide. With most of the group now safely back at base camp Flt Lt Bren Dunn and SSgt Mark Morgan decided to stay at Confluencia (6370m) and have another summit attempt. As we waited nervously at base camp we found out that Bren had made a successful attempt the following day. On arrival at base camp Mark had to be treated for frostbite on all his fingers by the camp doctor, it also turned out that he had suffered from High Altitude Pulmonary Oedema (HAPE) whilst up the mountain. The group then moved down the mountain to Puente del



Above: Hot Springs at Puente del Inca 2700m

Below: Promotion at 14,270 ft for Capt Kate Hannaford



Inca. The walk back was further than we had remembered and took several hours, despite maintaining a rapid pace. The long winding valley seemed to go on for ever and ever!! After 'booking out' from the park entrance and collecting our kit from the mule company we bought a well deserved burger and beer! We all then returned back to Mendoza for the R&R phase of the expedition.

Two members of the party reached the summit of

Aconcagua which is no mean feat. On a more favourable day with the weather, two or three other members could have also reached the summit; this was mainly due to the acclimatisation programme that worked extremely well. Some members of the group had the occasional headache each morning and this was normally treated with a few paracetamol tablets and a litre of water.

Ex Mulas Dragon was an extremely challenging under-

taking, arguably the most ambitious adventurous training exercise the Regiment has attempted in recent years. Although all the members of the expedition did not reach the summit, a 25% success rate is a commendable result. The exercise achieved the aims which had been set, but most importantly, all team members enjoyed the adventure, worked close to their own personal limits and felt a real sense of achievement.

Rescue from White R



Our route to the summit



Carl ready for evacuation



The American doctor



Strapped in the barrel stretcher

On the 7th February 2004, a group of NW Soldiers from 103 Regt RA (V) in St Helens, supported by the Liverpool College CCF and 207 Gen Hospital RAMC set out to climb Mt Aconcagua 6962m in Argentina. This is an account of how things can go wrong, and dedication, friendships and teamwork

by Ian Blackwood

Waking up at our high camp (camp 3 – 6243m) at 4 am, I peered out of my tent to check the weather for our summit (day) attempt. The air was clear and calm, whilst the stars danced in the cold crisp air of the night, and the snow hard packed. It seemed perfect conditions for our summit bid, I thought as I zipped up my sleeping bag, and settled back down to sleep.

It was H's birthday, but as morning broke I was suddenly woken by the sound of uncontrollable, violent retching and vomiting from the next tent door which housed Carl and H.

Immediately, I said to the Boss (Lt Col David Iffland) that I would stay behind (as I had summited 2 years previously) to look after whoever it was, and if necessary short rope them down the hill to base camp at 4300m. On dressing, and visiting the tent with the Boss, Ru our Expedition Medic was already in attendance, and we quickly established that it was Carl who had been vomiting, and he should be taken as soon as possible down to base camp.

Returning to our tent, I busied myself packing, whilst the Boss made a breakfast of porridge and tea. However we were never able to enjoy such a hearty breakfast. As we glanced over at Carl's tent we saw that H and Ru were dragging Carl from the tent in a comatose state with suspected Cerebral and Pulmonary Oedema.

So at 0810hrs a full scale rescue swung into action, Ru immediately gave Carl 8mg of Dexamethasone (orally), whilst I fired up the Sat Phone to contact and alert the Park

Rangers of our situation and request a helicopter rescue due to the severity of Carl's condition, only to be told that the helicopter was unable to fly due to the bad weather lower down the mountain. (We were enjoying a beautiful clear morning but could see that a layer of thick cloud shrouded the lower valleys). The rest of the team members busied themselves making a rope stretcher, to start the long haul down to base camp almost 2000m below.

As we prepared Carl for evacuation, other climbers and an American climbing doctor appeared to give assistance. On checking Carl, the American doctor immediately gave Carl a further 4mg of Dexamethasone 1/m and 10mg of Nifedipine sublingual. However, Carl was out for the count, and unaware of all the fuss and concern being shown by all. On further examination it was found that Carl's blood / oxygen saturation levels were less than 40 percent and falling, which added further cause for concern; he was dangerously ill and would deteriorate rapidly without immediate evacuation.

Starting our descent, we were initially joined by 2 Americans (one being the American doctor), an Australian and a Spanish Climber who had summited the day before. As we carefully picked our way down the scree slope the team regularly changed position as Carl was carried, lifted, pulled and shouldered down the hill for approximately 200m.

As the rope stretcher showed ever increasing signs of wear and tear Carl was transferred into a plastic barrel stretcher

White Rocks Aconcagua

(which is unique to Argentina) for the remainder of our journey to base camp.

Once Carl was securely strapped into the 2 half barrels, the Americans and the Australian returned back to White Rocks, leaving the Spaniard and us to continue our descent via the most direct route. With 6 of the team, 2 on either side, and two acting as brake men, we continued our slide, as we pushed, pulled, crawled and fell our way down the hill towards Nido de Condores – without Carl regaining consciousness, and still oblivious of our efforts. Thank goodness. Half way down our torturous scree slope between Berlin (5933m) and Nido de Condores (5560m) we were joined by two members of the Park Rangers from the Mountain Rescue who immediately joined the rest of the team on our way to Nido.

Reaching Nido one of the 3 Mountain Doctors we met that day took control of Carl and his condition administering Oxygen, and carrying out a full body survey whilst we looked on, with Carl still unaware of all our efforts, after some 2 and a half hours of toil and strain, aches and pains. Looking round the team they were exhausted through their efforts, and the lack of food, and fluids (we had not had time for breakfast). Thankfully the Rangers at Nido had prepared black sweet tea, and handed out breakfast type cereal bars to the group, in encouragement for what they knew was to come – still no helicopter so a further 2 hours of the same in prospect.

After some 20 minutes at Nido, we were off again, by-passing Camp Canada heading straight down the treacherous direct route to base camp. As we left Nido the Doctor handed me the Oxygen bottle, telling me that it should be administered for 3 minutes every time we stopped.

Finding room on the top of my Expedition Bergen, I strapped in the Oxygen bottle, ensuring it was safe, and raced after the rescue team heading rapidly

down towards the base of Camp Canada (5043m).

Approaching Camp Alaska at 5371m, the group were forced to stop as several of us fell whilst trying to control the barrels as we hurtled down hill almost out of control, and without any run out or escape route open to our small band of tired, yet unbowed team. We all had one focus, and one thought uppermost in our minds – bringing Carl to safety off the mountain as quickly as humanly possible, irrespective of any cost to ourselves.

As we picked ourselves up, Carl was again administered Oxygen, at which point he jolted back into consciousness. After being examined again by Ru, Carl settled down and drifted off again, allowing us to continue our helter skelter race towards base camp.

Whilst our journey from base camp (4300m) up to camp 3 (6243m) had taken 7 arduous hard fought days to achieve, our retreat was swift, and furious, and at this stage looked like being over in less than 7 hours.

Cascading downwards almost out of control of our own bodies, we raced onwards, then we glimpsed our first sight of base camp and hopefully sanctuary. Reaching base camp some 4 and a half hours after departure from White Rocks, and surrounded by many helpful hands we ushered Carl into the base camp Medical tent.

As Carl underwent a further medical examination, I again requested Helicopter evacuation, only to be told that it was impossible due to the weather conditions, and that our casualty would have to be taken out by Mule to the park gate before transporting him to Hospital in Mendoza. This was disastrous news.

However, within the hour a pony and horseman arrived to carry out the evacuation, with Ru our Medic, myself, and an Argentinean Army Sergeant to accompany him on foot out of the valley and thence to Hospital in Mendoza.



Scree running



Nido and rescue team



Out of control



Base Camp and safety



Helping hands

Once the base camp Doctor was satisfied, we lifted Carl into the saddle, settled him down and started our 24km march down the arid inhospitable Horcones Valley towards the park gate. We left base camp stopping frequently to let him rest. Once rested, Ru and I supported, assisted, lifted and carried Carl down the steepest part of the route to the waiting pony and horseman at the abandoned Refugio some 500m below base camp.

After catching our breath and taking on some fluids we moved off across the ever present moraine, never able to get fully into our stride as we tried to keep pace with the pony to offer Carl support whenever needed.

As the hours passed and the terrain changed we entered the valley floor with the innumerable river crossing and the prospect of wet feet for the remainder of our journey. Wading directly through the first of the many tributaries to keep up with the mule, the weather closed in with the sleet coming in horizontal making our journey

much more difficult as we tried to keep Carl warm, whilst he sat motionless in the saddle.

Eventually the sleet eased as we stopped for one of our many rests to ensure that Carl was fed, watered and warm before moving nearer to Confluencia and the park gate. Almost 5 hours after leaving base camp approaching Confluencia we were met by two further Rangers and a Doctor who had walked out of Confluencia to meet us. A short stop was called, whilst the Doctor again carried out a full Medical examination of Carl, and gave him Oxygen which was to accompany him for the rest of our journey out of the valley. At this time I again fired up the Sat Phone and informed the Boss of our progress and Carl's condition.

Looking back up the valley the sky was grey, with the snow was falling ever more freely on the mountain. Our weather window on the mountain was closing rapidly. Once examined, and rested we again lifted Carl back into the saddle as dusk fell, and



The long ride out

with still 3 hours walking ahead of us we made our way towards Confluencia and our last river crossing, before a long steep climb and our final run towards the gate. Leaving Confluencia as night closed in we groped and fumbled our way along trying to keep pace with the pony and support Carl at all times.

Eventually we reached the foot bridge crossing the Horcones River, and turned left towards the gate. Carl by this time was showing increasing signs of fatigue. With visions of him falling off the mule we continued our journey in pitch black freezing conditions that seemed never ending, aching and fatigued we trudged on, secure in the knowledge that Carl was on his way to Hospital and safety.

Finally after nearly 8 hours keeping pace with the pony we reached the Rangers Station showed our permits and completed the formalities of the day before transport arrived for the next 4 hour leg of our journey.

As we approached the village of Punta del Inca, Carl was taken into the Argentinean Army Base Hospital to be checked over before starting the final leg of his journey to Hospital in Mendoza. At 0400 hrs cold, tired and hungry we arrived at the Hospital Espanol Mendoza – some 20 hours after starting our rescue.

In all it took a team effort of 27 Climbers, Doctors, Mountain Rescue Rangers and members of the Argentinean Army to bring our efforts to a successful conclusion, and ensure Carl's safety. After 3 days in hospital Carl was released and has now made a full recovery and is back at work.

Finally, it was only with good pre training, correct and speedy diagnosis of HACE and HAPE and team work that such an incident was brought to a successful conclusion. Our thanks go to the Aconcagua Park Rangers for their courageous assistance and the many other people that ensured that Carl survived.



The inhospitable Horcones Valley



Weather window closing



Tragedy in Turkey...

by Alun Davies

Do you want to use the bathroom first or shall I?" It was early on Friday 5th March 2004 and a group from the Alpine Ski Club were in Turkey to make the first British ski ascent of Mt Ararat 5137m. I was sharing a hotel room with Alasdair Ross, a good friend whom I had known from an earlier expedition to Iran. That night I slept in the room alone. We had both been avalanched, and for a reason that I will never know my life was spared, his tragically was not.

We had flown to Istanbul from England and after the customary day of sightseeing in that astonishing city we had taken an internal flight westwards to Erzurum. This unremarkable town of 250,000 people straddles the Silk Road between Iran and the Black Sea. It is the economic and cultural capital of Eastern Anatolia and 700 miles east of Istanbul. It is said to be subject to precipitation (rain or snow) for over 200 days a year; and you thought Llanberis was bad.

Just 4 miles south of the town is a range of mountains the Palandoken Daglari rising to over 3000m. This resort with a decent lift system, and a clutch of large but tasteless hotels, was apparently developed with Austrian advice and hardware. The proximity of the main town made it a useful place for the first few days of the expedition as we acclimatised and tested our various skills on the mountains.

The first few days were spent on simple day tours, which meant skinning up with adhesive skins on our downhill skis, before removing the skins and skiing back down to the valley and our transport.

In fact the weather was poor with much cloud and very high winds. But it was useful training and the pleasures of the hamam (Turkish bath) and the odd –

hard to find – cold beer were compensation.

On our last day we were due to drive East at midday to a further range of mountains which meant a short morning tour only. We drove up to the roadhead at Palandoken and set off in three groups. One group decided to stay low and avoid the wind while two groups of four and five respectively set off up Sultan Seki Mountain. I and Alasdair my room mate were in the second group.

As we skied up we passed a small peasant home built to be under the snows. With mud walls and a front door visible the remainder was completely buried with a small chimney sticking out of the snow. The very friendly family, with toddlers running about in the snow, beckoned us in for tea (chai) but we thanked them and moved

on. Given the bleak conditions we discussed turning back but then opted for a short skin up, and a simple ski back to the minibus at the bottom lift station.

After about an hour and a half we took skins off for the quick ski descent. The leading group of four set off first and in reasonable, but wet, snow they moved quickly and gracefully downhill. My group followed in the rough direction of their tracks. In the front about 50m ahead was Robert Mulder with Richard Cowper. They had arrived the day before and this was their first outing with the main party. Behind them was Alasdair Ross a very able and experienced mountain man and first class skier. Then just behind him were David Hamilton the expedition leader and myself.

From where I was I could now see the first group taking skis off

... and Ararat achieved

and walking towards a café. They were about 250m away and I was weighing up the best route to follow. The snow was wetter and heavier as we descended. My eyes were on the middle distance when David – just to my right – shouted AVALANCHE! The word sends shivers down any skiers' spine, and having survived an avalanche before I knew how frightening they were.

Looking quickly down at my skis I saw cracks opening up in the snow. It was a full-depth avalanche and the whole area around us was moving. There is always a chance of the

avalanche starting on, or below, your position. So I looked up quickly in the hope that the snow above me was firm, in which case I could have jumped backwards and let the snow below me fall away. But no – sadly the whole hillside was moving down and I felt for a second rather excited at the prospect of riding down on top of this magic carpet of moving snow.

I did try to ski off to the side – but while that is a well known survival option – it does not work if you are already in the moving avalanche. So next I desperately tried to undo my

rucksack at the waist and chest while fighting to maintain my balance. I failed in that and by now was falling fast and the only remaining option was to try swimming to keep my head above the snow. It was not a matter of swimming as in water, but more like the motion you make when striking to the surface after touching the seabed. The trouble is that with skis still attached it is virtually impossible to make any upwards movement.

As I was swept down the slope I began to slip under the surface. This is bound to happen as your

skis are moving more slowly below the snow, while the faster moving mass of snow hits the upper body and effectively rolls you over. Within seconds I felt everything come to a stop – but then like a train stopping – the snow kept landing on top of me and each thump seemed heavier than the last. Each thump compressed me more so that I could hardly expand my lungs. My face was firm up against the snow, and my sun glasses had been pulled by their retaining cord firmly into my mouth, which would have been wide open as I was fighting for air in the last seconds before it all settled.

No need to try the well known ruse of spitting to see which was is "up" because with a mouth forced open by sunglasses I was dribbling involuntarily and it was running down my chin – so the good news, if there was any, was that I was head up and feet down. That means the transceiver is nearer the surface and rescuers and more quickly reach the victims head and mouth.

Within 30 seconds everything was really quiet. My first reaction was to fight hard to get my hands to my face to clear an air pocket. I had been able to do this in an earlier dry snow avalanche; but this time I could not move a finger, let alone a hand. My arms had been locked at full horizontal stretch as I was struggling to reach up to the surface. And the wet snow, unlike dry powder, was impermeable so no air came through it.

I was warm and in no pain, but I really could not breathe. I gasped and panted and tried hard to slow down. I did not shout – even if I could find the breath – as it is well known that

Personal thoughts on avalanche survival are:

The best tip is to avoid avalanches through education and experience.

Check avalanche transceivers daily and practice their use before setting out.

Every member of the party to carry a spade and one set of probes between 2.

If caught in an avalanche on skis – jettison skis as a priority.

A large rucksack may act as a cork and keep you near the surface.

Try swimming doggy paddle / breast stroke to stay on the surface.

As the avalanche settles try to keep hands near face to clear space and airway.



sound does not travel through snow and it would be a waste of energy and air. I did not feel any panic but a sense of foreboding that things were really not good. I knew that three of us had been involved in the avalanche and the two of our party who had avoided the avalanche had just arrived in Turkey, but had they come out equipped with transceivers and spades and probes?

My trusty Autovox transceiver was strapped to my chest and I had to assume it was transmitting on the two recognised frequencies. I thought of my three children and accepted that they were all in their twenties and old enough to get on without me. I thought of no one else. After what seemed like fifteen minutes I saw blue and nothing but blue – and felt that I might be best to relax and drift off. Perhaps to be dug out unconscious and resuscitated, or perhaps lifeless.

As a young officer in the Royal Regiment of Wales I had taken part in a Mountain Rescue course in Glenmore Lodge. There in the early seventies I learnt about avalanche theory. Some years later in Bavaria I had attended a first class Avalanche Course run by Walter Kellerman and life long lessons had been learnt. As I now lay under the weight of tons of wet snow I remembered that those who are found within 30 minutes have a good chance of survival. After that the graph dips alarmingly, as does your chance of living.

So I fought off the desire to give up and relax and go to sleep – and I determined to stay conscious and struggling for breath for another ten minutes. Then – soon after that decision – I heard a voice and not far away. My heart shot up and I convinced myself that I would live if I could hang on in there. The voices were getting closer and I could make out some words. They were conducting a transceiver search around me and within a minute or two were above me. Then I shouted and shouted like hell. I wanted them to know I was alive and to encourage them to dig fast.

Very quickly they had found my head and freed my airway and the sense of relief is hard to exaggerate. I was just thrilled to

know I was going to live. But they did not dig any more, rather they reached down into my clothing and turned off my transceiver and then shot off with increased fervour to find Alasdair. At that stage I realised that my legs were in great pain. The pain had been masked by the greater problem of asphyxiation, but now I was breathing normally the pain in my ankles was excruciating. My skis had not released and my legs were in a very awkward position. Fortunately Alasdair had now been located a few metres away and as they dug down to him one of the party was able to continue digging me out and released my bindings.

As I emerged from my tomb I could see Alasdair's head and he was being given mouth to mouth resuscitation as best as they could. By good fortune one of our party was a doctor and he was on the scene straight away. Streams of Turkish soldiers were now coming to the rescue with spades and stretchers. They soon had Alasdair on a stretcher and his lifeless body was taken swiftly to an ambulance and on to hospital, where despite all the attempts of sophisticated resuscitation he was pronounced dead within the hour.

I stumbled down and, after a shower back at the hotel, was obliged to spend the rest of the day making statements to the Jandarma (Gendarmes). The Turkish authorities were kind and helpful. I remember taking a call on my mobile within a couple of hours of the accident from a friend who had heard about the avalanche on a news flash on Radio 4. Given that we were in a relatively remote part of Turkey the speed of news in the age of electronic communications was still surprising.

That night people made up their own minds about the way ahead. The next day seven left for home and six of us went on to climb Ararat. Everyone had their own reasons and I respected each one of them. The Ararat party spent the entire next day driving almost all the way to the Eastern border of Turkey with Iran.

We based ourselves in the small town of Dogubayazit and after a couple of days shaking out we

hired a 4x4 to reach the roadhead at Eli Village – which consists of one hut where we spent a cold night. The next morning we arranged for four thin horses to carry out tents and skis and equipment up to Camp 2. Unfortunately the snow line was below Camp 2 and we soon learnt that horses will not walk with loads in the snow. So with the help of the porters we carried the loads and set up Camp 2 at about 3200 metres.

The third day on the mountain was a long slog up what was almost a single steep snowfield to Camp 3 at 4100 metres. We had one Turkish civilian mountaineer who had been hired for local knowledge; he was not a skier but earned our grateful thanks for carrying our three tents up between Camp 2 and 3. Camp three was a small area with just about enough room for the 3 x 2 man tents side by side. And after a good deal of digging and site preparation we settled down for what turned out to be a very cold night. We were using locally purchased gas and the mix was entirely unsuitable for altitude. This meant six of us sharing the one burner and resulted in a real inability to melt snow in sufficient quantities for drinking.

We rose at 5 am for a 6 am departure and the temperature at that time was very low indeed. Water bottles were freezing inside sleeping bags, and fingers were well numb after putting crampons on at that time of day. The six of us set out carrying skis this time shortly after 6 am. The initial rocky slopes, partly covered in soft snow, were steep and hard work. I found the going very tough and before losing sight of the orange tents I decided to turn back – knowing that I could make my way back safely on my own. I had "bottled out" – my energy and courage seemed to have run out together. (In retrospect I suspect one factor was that I had been taking Diamox to fend off the effects of altitude and after a good day to Camp 3 I had stopped taking the tablets – thinking I was in great shape. When actually it was possibly the drug that was making me feel good and without it I now felt awful. The debate about the value of Diamox continues!)

Back at Camp 3 I made a brew

and soon was joined by a second person who had succumbed to the cold and affects of altitude. He brought news from the expedition leader that the four of them would press on to the summit but we should move off the mountain as fast as possible as the weather was worsening. (We had a great link with the Cardiff based website www.snow-forecast.com who were able to give us very accurate daily, even hourly, weather forecasts for Ararat which we could access in internet cafes in the valley or on mobile phones on the mountain.) The summit party reached the large cairn that marks the peak of Ararat at 5137 metres by midday and in increasing wind and cloud retraced their route. They had cached their skis on the ascent and now had real trouble finding them – and realised that they should have way-marked them with GPS at the time; an ideal use of GPS.

Finally with skis on their backs they found their way back to the top camp – cleared it and successfully descended to Camp 2 where our two Turkish travel company hosts were waiting with hot food and drinks. It had been an epic day on the mountain. The next day the party returned safely to Dogubayazit.

Ararat lies uncomfortably close to the border with Armenia, but it is a closed border and relations between Turkey and Armenia are strained. From the summit on a clear day, as well as looking into Armenia, you can look north to Georgia and South into Iran. For centuries the area has been politically sensitive and the whole area is under the control of the military. Given good planning and the right clearances from the Turkish authorities Mt Ararat would be a good expedition peak for an AMA or unit party.

The success on Ararat was a sweet ending to the bitter and tragic episode the previous week. Those of us who tackle mountains know that there are risks attached. Training and experience minimise those risks, but it is those very challenges and dangers that make mountaineering what it is.

For any further information on Mt Ararat Alun Davies can be contacted at alun@cardiffbay.fsnet.co.uk

Application Form

Name: _____
Christian name: _____
Rank: _____ Number: _____
Unit address: _____

Telephone number (daytime): _____

Telephone number (evening): _____

AMA number: _____

Passport number: _____

I competently lead at:

(route name and grade)

My hardest lead is:

(route name and grade)

Reasons why I should be considered for Exercise
Tasmanian Dragon

I understand that the personal contribution for Ex TD
is approx £675 and I will be required to
participate/organise in fundraising.

Applicant's signature

Signed: _____

Rank: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Commanding Officer's Signature

1. I Agree to release this individual for the duration of
Ex TD

2. I agree to grant £_____ from unit funds if this
individual is accepted.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Rank: _____

Date: _____

Tel: _____

Fax: _____

All Returns To:

WO2 (QMSI) Mark Hedge,
APTC

Exercise Tasmanian Dragon
JSMTTC Trg Wg, Indefatigable,
Llanfair PG
Anglesey LL61 6NT

Unit date stamp:

Exercise



Tyrolean from the Totem Pole back to
the mainland



Adamsfield

Exercise TASMANIAN
DRAGON is an AMA
expedition to the unique
island of Tasmania. Part of
the 'Hot Rock' series. The
aim of the expedition is for
competent climbers to gain
experience and if necessary
qualifications enabling them
to lead their own future
projects.

Exercise TASMANIAN
DRAGON particularly
welcomes climbers keen to
improve their personal leading
ability, in order to make this the
most technically competent
AMA expedition to date. The

proposed coaching meets
will advise on training programmes,
methods and tactics to enable
us to achieve this goal and
return home as rock gods! At
present I am looking into the
logistics of making a video doc-
umentary of the exped with the
producer of 'Between the Rain'.

Tasmania lends itself to diverse
climbing on a variety of rock
types, sea stacks, crags and
mountains. Therefore the party
will be selected on climbing
merit, team compatibility, moti-
vation and commitment to the
expedition. Prospective team
members are required to



The Candlestick

Tasmanian Dragon

7 – 24 Mar 2005



Tasman Peninsula



Ancient Astronaut on the Moai



complete the attached proforma. On receipt, a weekend selection and coaching meets will be hosted at JSMTW (Indefatigable) to find the best-suited individuals for the exercise.

Now, a bit about Tasmania: A small Island to the south east of Australia. Hobart is the capital and looks to be a buzzing little city; this is where we will land either by ferry or plane.

Hire vehicles are the order of the day; the Island is of a size that every area could be visited during our stay. On collection of the transport off we go to find our beds. Two base camps for the trip, north and south of the Island the split coming halfway through our tour. Accommodation will take the form of self-catering lodges allowing the team to prepare thoroughly in the pursuit of excellence.

The weather whilst in Tasmania should be the equivalent to a good British summer with the temperature likely to be in the mid 20's. With good high-pressure systems we will take the opportunity to tackle some of the famous sea stacks and sea cliffs many of which start on the sparkling, white, sandy beaches.

Listed below is a selection of areas to be visited along with a few famous routes. So hop on the Internet and have a look.

The Freycinet Peninsula – Light Fingered Madison, Alchemy and Offender of the Faith

The Tasman Peninsula – The Totem Pole, The Moai (Ancient Astronaut)

Mount Wellington – Sky Rocket, Space Cowboy, Beaten and Abused, After Midnight and Pleasant Screams

Ben Lomond – Danglerman, Master Blaster

Frenchman's Cap – Conquistador, The Great Flake and De Gaulles Nose

Still interested or even more so? Exercise TASMANIAN DRAGON looks forward to your application.

Army Bouldering Championships

Over the weekend 13 – 15 February the AMA staged the third annual Army Bouldering Championships at JSMTW(I). Over ninety participated in the event ranging from private soldiers to lieutenant colonels. The results are as follows:

Individual	OCdt Simon Witcher OCdt Jon Roberts Capt Mike Smith
Female	2Lt Judith Duffus OCdt Kerry Barton
Veteran	Maj Steve Blake
Under 21	OCdt Tom Dingwall
Team	RMAS A

AMA Spring Meet 05

Dates: 27 – 31 May 05

Location: Ambleside Hut

Meet Leader: Sgt Darren Doyle APTC
The Gym 5 Bn REME
Gazza Bks Catterick
Tel – 94731 3904
Email – darrendoyle@ntlworld.com

Trg Theme: TBC

AMA AGM weekend

24-26 September 2004

The AMA President, Major General NJ Cottam OBE welcomes you to attend the AMA AGM 24 – 26 Sep 04.

The AMA AGM will once again be held at HQ JSMTc (INDEFATIGABLE), by kind permission of the Commandant. The outline programme and administrative arrangements are as follows:

Fri 24 Sep 04

1430 hrs AMA Committee Meeting.

1800 Earliest arrival time.

1800-1830 Dinner (only for those pers who have pre booked).

1900-2300 Bar open.

2130 Expedition presentation - MAKALU.

Sat 25 Sep 04

0730-0800 Breakfast (collect packed lunch)

0845 Meeting in main foyer. Groups to book out. (Individuals in need of partners and/or instruction will be allocated partners).

1800-1845 Dinner

1900-2300 Bar open.

1930 AGM

2200 Prize Raffle.

Sun 26 Sep 04

0730-0800 Breakfast (collect packed lunch)

0900 Depart JSMTc (I) Rock climbing / mountaineering activities.

0900-1200 JSMTc Expedition Planning Symposium.

Accommodation

Accommodation is available for approximately 60 pers at JSMTc(I). Accommodation will be allocated on a first come first served basis and attaches no cost. Sleeping bags are required.

Personnel wishing to bring family or extend their stay beyond Fri – Sun are to book Nuffield Trust accommodation through Mr

Iain Cowton on 01248 718362. A small charge will be raised for those choosing to use Nuffield accommodation.

Messing

There will be no messing charge raised for entitled members. Non entitled members who require messing will be billed:

Breakfast - £0.96

Packed lunch - £2.24

Dinner - £ 3.21

Application

An application form is attached. AMA members wishing to attend are to complete an application form and submit it, along with a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Administrative Instruction

Applicants will receive a full administrative instruction following successful receipt of an application.

Application form

Service No	Rank	Name	M/F
Unit Address			
Post Code			
Tel No	Fax		
Veh Reg	AMA No		

Accommodation and messing requirements

Meal/Date	Breakfast	Packed lunch	Dinner	Accommodation
Fri 24 Sep	Not Available	Not Available	Yes / No	Yes / No
Sat 25 Sep	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No
Sun 26 Sep	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No
Vegetarian	Yes / No			

Meal rates for non-entitled personnel have been identified. Payment for non-entitled meals should be submitted with this application. Cheques should be made payable to 'AMA Central Fund'

ACCOMODATION: Please identify which type of accommodation you wish to book. Please note that applications for Nuffield accommodation should be made directly to the Nuffield manager (Mil 95581 Ext 7962 or Civ 01248 718362.

Nuffield1	Nuffield Family1	Main Block
Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No
Instruction (Sat only)	Yes / No	
Climbing Partner req	Yes / No	

Applications should be submitted (not before 12 Jul 04) to: Maj Damian Gartland AMA Meets Sec, 2IC 6 RMP, Thiepval Barracks, BFPO 801
Tel: Mil – 9491 66722 or Civ - 029892266722

¹ Requires to be booked directly with Nuffield Manager.

GREENLAND

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