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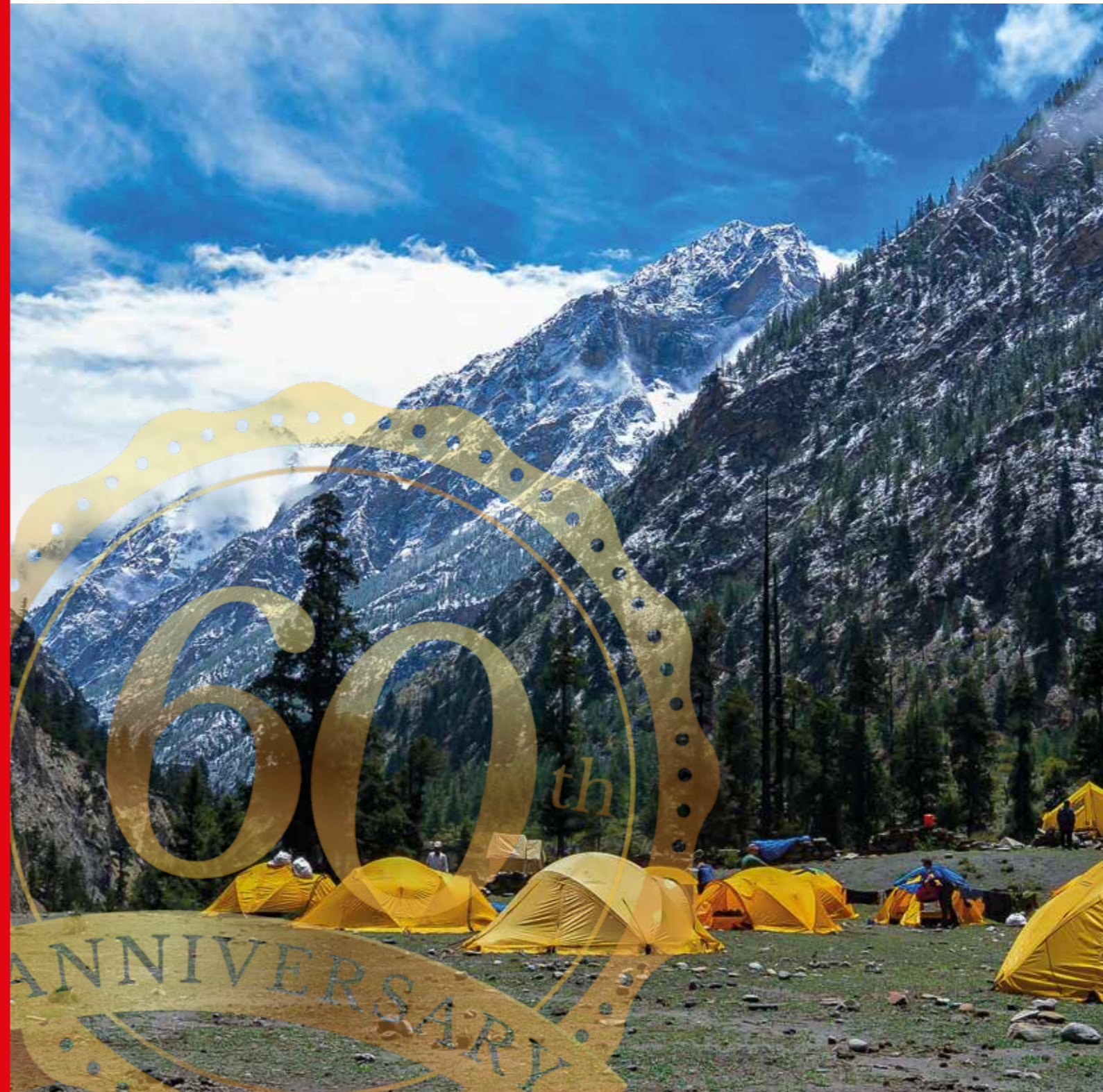
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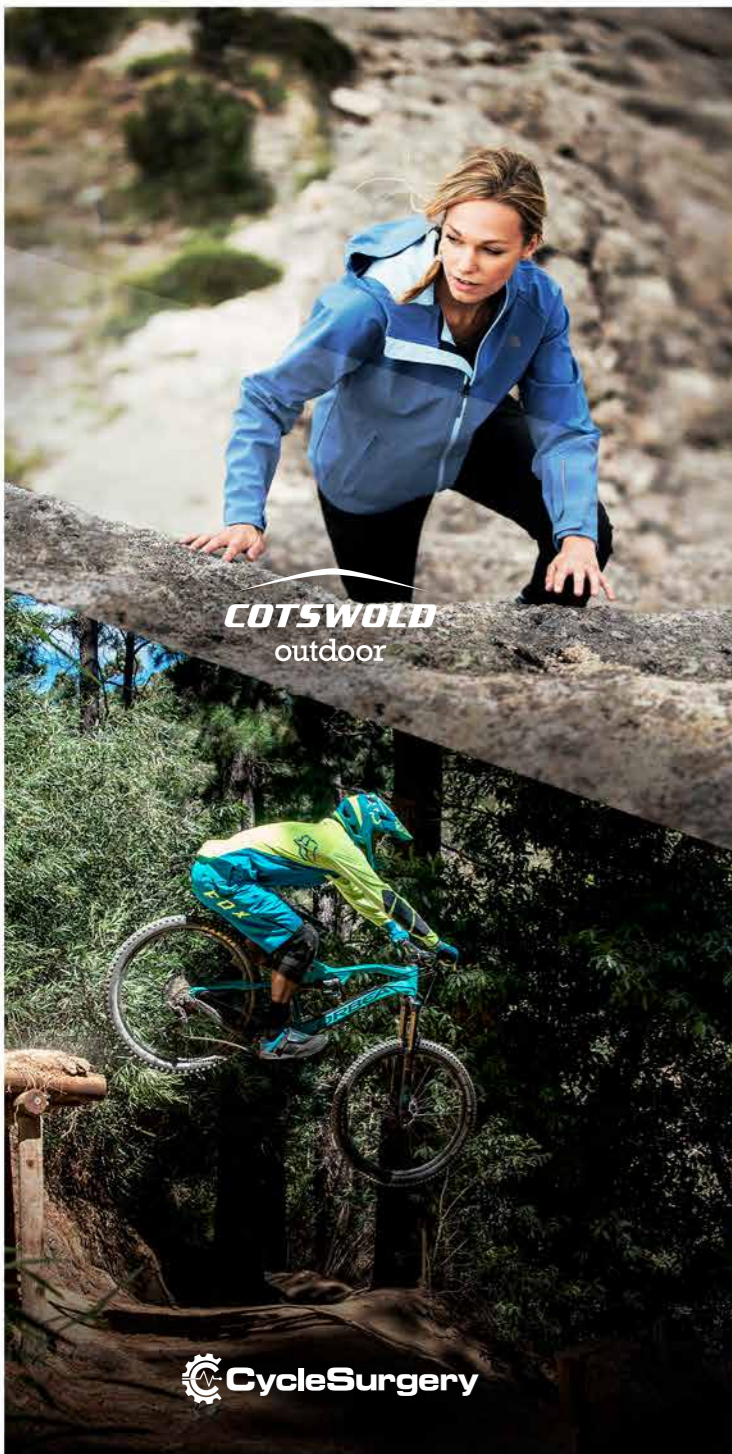


Winter 2017

AMA'S 60th ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL EDITION



THE JOURNAL OF THE ARMY MOUNTAINEERING ASSOCIATION



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ARMY MOUNTAINEER

The Journal of The Army Mountaineering Association



PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

The AMA recognises that climbing and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions.

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Cover photo: Looking out on Putha Hiunchuli for the AMA 60 expedition



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Chairman's Foreword

Lt Col Pete Skinsley RLC



Here's to the next 60 years

It is an honour to take over as Chairman of the Army Mountaineering Association. Having spent over 35 years on the crags and hills and over 12 years on the committee it is a privilege to be able to guide the AMA into the future. I intend to get out and meet you, the membership, at our various activities throughout the years ahead.

My mountaineering experience started aged 7 when my father took me for an overnight wild camping expedition to Little Sprinkling Tarn in the Lakes against my mother's advice. One long walk over Great Gable, a wet soggy night later and a walk down the hill in a bin bag with holes cut in it to stop me getting hyperthermia did not deter me! I was hooked. More walking holidays in the Lakes followed, then Outward Bound at Towyn, rock climbing in Avon Gorge as a school boy and at the newly opened wall in Bristol (UCR in the early 90s), Loughborough Students Mountaineering Club trips, getting struck by lightning at the old Gouter Hut on Mont Blanc, competing in the first bouldering comp at the Foundry in Sheffield when it opened, teaching soldiers to climb in the US and Spain, plenty of skiing and ski touring and encouraging our best climbers to compete against the best from across Europe - all these experiences have convinced me that mountaineering, climbing and walking are all activities that challenge us, keep us fit and put a smile on our face. Long may the opportunities continue.

The AMA 60 celebrations this year have been a success. We have had members deployed high altitude mountaineering in Nepal, bolt clipping on the island of Kalymnos in Greece and chasing the dry rock across North Wales on the Festival of Climbing celebrating the anniversary. We have also hosted our supporters and sponsors at

the annual President's Dinner in London and the Army Climbing Team swept the board at this year's Inter-Services Championships. The final AMA 60 event, the Army Climbing Team bouldering training camp to Fontainebleau in France, will take place next Easter.

Throughout the 60 years of the history of the AMA, soldiers have taken the opportunity to explore the world and indulge their passions for climbing and mountaineering. This 60th anniversary edition of the journal looks at just a small portion of what has happened over our history and over the past year hopefully to inspire you to do more. The first AMA journal was published in Winter 1988. The membership then stood at 1200, annual subs were £4 per year and the memorial fund, at the time in its infancy, awarded £1160 to expeditions. In 2017 the Association is in good health - 2500 members, £25,000 a year to invest in expeditions, a re-invigorated UK meets programme, numerous indoor climbing competitions annually, GB and Irish national junior climbing team members in uniform and competing for us, competitive Ice Climbing and Ski Mountaineering now supported, very attractive equipment manufacturer discounts through our sponsors and the ability to link up with like-minded climbers and come up with the plan for next year's big trip; which for the AMA is to Tajikistan in 2018. There will always be a serious side and climbing carries inherent risk. Learning to identify it, embrace it and deal with it produces stronger more capable soldiers. Keep it up and don't be afraid to give it a go - when you are older you will reflect on and regret the things you never did but always wanted to.

Editor Foreword

60 years of the Army Mountaineering Association... having only been alive for just over half this milestone I find it difficult to comprehend the mammoth efforts achieved within this timeframe: expeditions all over the world, thousands of soldiers inspired, developed and motivated by the pursuit of adventure.



I was fortunate enough to attend a talk by Sir Chris Bonington on his tour of the UK in late 2016. Sir Chris, if you don't know, is an Honourary Colonel and founding member of the AMA from his days in the Army in the late 50s to early 60s. His early adult years feature tales of how he regularly battled with his employers' wishes and was forever going against the grain in pursuit of adventure. Ultimately, this desire to be outdoors has paid off for him having left the army and then the banking world in to go on an expedition. Whilst it would be wrong to advocate you

all to protest to your chains of command that you're not going anywhere other than on an expedition abroad, I would suggest you turn to page 21 where the new AMA Chairman, Lt Col Pete Skinsley looks to inspire the next generations of Bonningtons.

In this special edition I've done my best to cram in as much as I can - there's an introduction to the Lattice Training System, expedition reports from our own

AMA 60 trekking and summit teams in Nepal as well as all the usual favourites.

If you've got an idea for an article, have been somewhere or have done something unusual, even if you want to contribute but don't know how, regardless of rank, send me an email at Journal@Army-Mountaineer.org.uk.

Membership Secretary Foreword

Currently we have over 2500 members. It is very important that I am informed of any changes to members details such as address, e-mail, bank details etc; all you need to do is drop me an e-mail to the address below.

If you have any questions, concerns or anything at all please contact me on 01248 718364 or Mil 95581 7964 or by e-mail to secretary@armymountaineer.org.uk. The office hours are Monday to Thursday 9.00am to 15.45pm.

AMA DISCOUNTS & MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS



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As members of the AMA we continue to enjoy excellent support from leading manufacturers and retailers of equipment and clothing.

Please see details below and note that these businesses do have access to the AMA membership database to validate membership; they will request your AMA number when you order. All of these businesses retain the right to refuse, amend or withdraw these discounts.

An added bonus of being a member of the AMA is the discounts that some

manufacturers and retailers provide our members. The details of the discounts (including required discount codes and ordering processes) are available in the Members Area of the AMA Website. You will need a password to access that part of the site.

Alongside the long standing discount on climbing equipment from DMM, you will also find the recently negotiated Montane discount, and the Cotswold Outdoor, Snow and Rock, Runners Need and Cycle Surgery discount code too. There is a load of other discount information in there also. Additionally,

the Membership Benefits Officer is in negotiations to try and bring a rather well known boot and shoe manufacturer in to the fold, as well as many of the companies within the Beyond Hope stable.

If you have any issues with the various discounts scheme, or know of any other companies willing to offer discount to the AMA, please contact the AMA membership benefits secretary.

Finally, please use these discounts for personal purchases only!

COTSWOLD OUTDOOR, SNOW & ROCK, CYCLE SURGERY & RUNNERS NEED

A 20% discount is now available in-store and online for products sold by Cotswold Outdoor, Snow & Rock, Runners Need and Cycle Surgery. Purchases in store will only be approved on production of a valid AMA membership card. No card, no discount. For online orders, the AMA discount code is available on the secure section of the AMA website.

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andy kirkpatrick

The essential climbers' guide: from rock, ice and big-wall climbing, to diet, training and mountain survival.

BASICS

24. When tying in, treat your partner like a complete idiot, and check they have tied in properly. This is the approach used in skydiving and scuba diving, so why not in climbing? Also tell them to treat you as a fool too, although saying so will mean you're not.

MOUNTAIN

559. Trust your map and compass, not your gut feeling or intuition; the former will always be right, the latter – when overruling the former – will always be wrong.

STUFF

972. Always carry a piss bottle and make sure it's well marked!

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Letters to the Editor...

Did you know, before Army Mountaineer was first conceived there was a newsletter... a somewhat low budget affair but it was all the membership could afford. Since then, things have changed. Two of our long standing members give their thoughts below on how it came to be and the changes they've witnessed since.

I have a Spring 1989 Army Mountaineer, with a cover shot of Dente del Gigante – a fine climb of both tops as I recall from Ex MONTE BIANCO in 1986, which I led. The article on Everest '88 by Nigel Williams plus photographs also brings back vivid memories. I also have the Spring, Summer and Winter 1990 editions and loads since. The Summer 1992 issue, still under Marcus Hawthorne as Editor, is the first that I would describe as having a 'glossy' cover: the previous ones were a matt finish, or possibly silk emulsion. That edition was also the first to include a price for non-members (£1.60): I think this was introduced to give members a sense of even greater value from their membership fees, though I don't know if any magazines were ever actually sold. The font, size, location and orientation of the 'Army Mountaineer' banner on the front cover seemed to settle down from the late 90s: until then it had bounced around in various permutations.

I don't know if there were any earlier magazines, but I do have a few AMA Newsletters between 2/79 and 2/83. Newsletter 2/79 contains a poignant listing by Jon Muston of those AMA members known to have died while

climbing between 1957 and 1979. AMA membership had risen from about 350 in 1969 to over 600 ten years later, and the membership fee was raised to £2 that year. An advertisement in the 2/83 Newsletter reminds me of the days when wearing the AMA tie at AGMs was still de rigueur, and anorak badges featured strongly in the schedule of AMA assets.

We ran the Newsletter on for a while after the start of the magazine. Ian Drew was noted as Assistant Editor (Newsletter) until at least Winter 1994. It proved interesting directing information to one or other publication, each with their deadlines, with quarterly newsletters aiming to coincide in a timely manner with the less frequent magazines. At some point it all became too difficult, so we saved on postage, time and effort, and tried to get out more.

Sometime after Allan Thomas retired as magazine editor following the Spring 1991 edition, the AMA ran its Wintour's Leap meet, from 12-13 October that year (according to the Spring 1991 journal). I say "ran" in a very loose sense. I turned up on the Saturday with my father (who got me into this game), Tim King was there with his son, and each pair enjoyed their day's

climbing. However, periodic shouts up and down the Wye Valley of "anyone from the AMA?" while in mid-route proved fruitless, so we were none the wiser of each other's (or anyone else's) presence. Tim will vouch for this, with lack of mobile phones being our excuse for remaining incommunicado. After our last climb, my father and I then drove on to see Allan Thomas at his home nearby, where I presented him with a book as a token of very warm thanks from an appreciative AMA for his many dedicated years as Editor. As for the climbing, I later wrote an article titled something like "Wye Knot? A connoisseur of V Diffs". The Wye Valley had been where I started rock climbing: despite witnessing a 60-foot fall just feet away and the subsequent rescue, I returned many times since, not least from Shrivensham.

The magazine really has continued to advance, each editor building on the efforts of their predecessors. All can be proud of their part in developing such a brilliant mouthpiece for the AMA. Keep up the good work!

Lt Col (Retd) Martin Bazire MBE
(Hon) Vice President

FINGS AIN'T WOT THEY USED TO BE

In the late '60s and early '70s I was the AMA Equipment Member and used to put the odd item of interest into the Newsletter. Here is a small selection. Obviously comments and recommendations of near 50 years ago should not be acted upon today.

Newsletter 2/69. I have recently tried various items of mountaineering kit and the following comments may be useful. Hawkins 'Caringorm' boots at about £9 a pair are excellent as all-round mountain boots. (Oh that boots were that price now). For anyone wanting a good but cheap rucksack for carrying full kit the BB Tripax is excellent at about £3. The Vango Force 10 Mk IV tent seems a very sound bit of kit. I used it for a week and it was as good as the 'Arctic Guinea' as an all-weather tent and it is about £10 cheaper at £19. On the other side of the coin I cannot recommend the Marachel Pedestra. It leaks. A British Standard BS 4423:1969 is being published and it is expected that helmets to this

standard will shortly be available. If you are buying look for the familiar 'Kitemark'. About 95% of the AMA's equipment is currently on Tirich Mir but will be available to borrow on return.

October 1969. If you are using HIATT pitons do not, on any account whatsoever, use either the No 9 or the No 10. These are dangerous and should be destroyed immediately.

Newsletter 1/70. A new book 'Mountain Leadership' by Eric Langmuir, published by the SCPR at 10/- (50p in modern money) is a useful addition to your list of books. (In 1970 this was the hill-walking Bible). The Army is experimenting with disposable briefs. Is this the answer to expedition hygiene? Has anyone any experience of them? Come on, ladies, your chance to burst into print. (six years later on Everest we had 200 pairs of briefs – not ladies). The Karrimant, a ½" thick foam pad, has been tried recently on an expedition to Iceland

and users spoke of it in glowing terms. Depending on size it costs between 20/- (£1) and 29/- (£1.45p). It does not absorb water and it does not puncture. For the really elderly climbers you will be pleased to note that avalanche cords and now back in fashion after a lapse of 20 years. They are now the "in" thing according to Langmuir (see book above). (An avalanche cord was a length of red cord only about 2 mm in diameter which one trailed behind one on a glacier. The theory was that if one was avalanched part of the cord, which was about 30 m long would remain on the surface and one could be dug out)

Newsletter 2/70. Messrs Blacks have added a nylon tent to their range this year. Can anyone offer comments on this or any other nylon tents? (Up to this time all tents were made of cotton). One of the most dangerous places for suffering from exposure is to be caught halfway up the Caringorm chairlift when it breaks down. (a chairlift preceded the

current funicular railway). 75% of failures in Mountain Leadership scheme are due to navigational inability. Being a soldier does not imply that you can automatically use a map and compass to the standard required. (No GPS in those days).

Newsletter 3/70. I believe the time has come to cease the use of a waistline as a means of tying onto the climbing rope. A climbing harness, be it specially designed, or a 4 metre length of rope spreads the load over a part of the body more capable of withstanding the shock of a fall. (A waistline was made of hemp cord long enough to make seven turns around one's waist. Into this you hooked a karabiner and attached this to your climbing rope which in those days might as likely be hawser-laid rather than kernmantel).

Newsletter 2/71 This year's expedition to West Greenland will endeavour to bake bread in a small oven on a Primus stove at basecamp. The prospect of biscuits for six weeks does not appeal. (The experiment was a success. The oven was a burnt out 5 gallon oil drum with a steel shelf dug into an earth bank).

Newsletter 3/71. Crispin Agnew (now an eminent member of the Scottish legal profession but no longer climbing) has recently been wearing a prototype of a new boot which Robert Lawrie (an upmarket London alpine boot maker. You did not just go and buy a pair of boots, you went and had a consultation and the boots were made for you not just off the shelf) is producing and alleges it is the best climbing boot he has ever worn. Known as the East-North-East it is in reversed hide, elastic round the ankle, very comfortable and warm. The cost is high, £18, but if you want a good boot this could well be it.

Newsletter 4/73. Well-designed packframes are now available with the American Camp Trails Astral and Cruiser models at about £9 leading the field. Karrimor are a cheaper (and poorer) alternative. The current idea seems to be



to use a frame with a nylon sac to move into an area then take the sac off the frame for actual climbing. It had to happen. There is now a school of thought that thinks that people should not wear orange clothing on the hills. The idea is that orange is a distress signal which is only displayed in an emergency. An extension of this idea is that orange is an environmentally bad colour. I forecast that in a few months time ex-WD Smocks, Windproof (which a few years previously could be bought for

about 7/6 (37½p). I know because my first anorak was such) will be the 'in-thing'. In the next paragraph the Newsletter Editor (then an irascible officer by the name of Gavyn Jenks) wrote: What rubbish. Two points: Firstly the casualty may not be able to wave things about and secondly I have just bought a nice new orange anorak!

Lt Col (Ret'd) John Muston
(Hon) Vice President

Contributor deadline for the AMA Summer 18 edition is 6 April 2018. Submissions should be sent to Journal@ArmyMountaineer.org.uk

HOW IT ALL STARTED...

by Tim King

It all began with a rugby tackle. I was playing for Shrivenham against the Royal Navy and as a rather lightweight flanker I decided to take on an enormous matelot winger who looked like scoring. I made the tackle but came off worst.

The MO said: 'This is the second time you have damaged that ear playing rugby and there won't be a third, otherwise you are out of the Army.' I was miserable. Rugby had been my life. My old Airborne pal Baz Dickson took pity on me and suggested that I might like to try rock climbing with the RMCS club on Sundays. So on a cold February day in 1968 we made our way slowly (no M4 then) down to Avon Gorge.

Our first climb was Idleburger Buttress followed by Nightmare, both V Diff's. Baz led and I struggled with the exposure, the techniques and the whole concept but before long I was hooked. A fortnight later we returned and I led Idleburger. Soon we were leading through on most of the climbs and working our way up the lower grades. We tried North Wales that March (17 routes) and the next few months made a sustained series of visits there, returning to Avon Gorge when we did not fancy the long journey to Llanberis.

In the summer of 1968 I went to the Alps with Meryon Bridges and Taffy Morgan and we followed that up with a week on the Black Cuillins in September. Hugh Wright also persuaded us to join the AMA and it became central to all our climbing and exploration activities. By the time we had reached Christmas I had clocked about 80 climbs, 'done' Mt Blanc and was leading VS fairly confidently. That concentrated start was paying off and my life as a climber had really begun. At 72 I still can't quite leave it alone



King and Friends Summit Mt Blanc 27 Jul 1968

Our kit was incredibly basic by today's standards. Most climbers went bare-headed or wore a woolly hat. The only helmet on the market was the Compton and the only rope was 120 feet of hawser-laid No4 nylon. For footwear we had PAs, EBs and, later, Gollies, all ankle length and based on a light walking boot but showing signs of morphing into the footwear used today. At least the soles were rubber: some of us were still climbing in nailed boots on mountain crags.

Hawser-laid rope was notorious for twisting after being in tension and if the twists were really bad they would jam in a karabiner, often at the worst possible moment on a

long run-out. Abseiling was even worse and it was a relief in the early 70s to be able to obtain the braided ropes developed on the Continent.

Runners were becoming popular but we did not carry many. Until tape arrived they were made from an 8 foot length of No3 hawser-laid nylon spliced into a loop and carried round the neck by doubling the loop through a karabiner. Krabs were steel and very heavy. A typical screwgate weighed over 200 grams. Compare that to a modern DMM Spectre wire-gait at 35grams. Anything more than 4 or 5 runners was considered a little excessive but when tape and alloy krabs came in

we embraced the chance to carry more gear. Runners were placed on spikes or threaded through suitably shaped holes. The stiffness of the hawser-laid rope meant that spike runners frequently lifted off, often before the next good placement had been reached.

Nuts were literally nuts. Often they were big lorry nuts, drilled out and threaded onto a length of 9mm Perlon tied with a double fisherman's knot. This was a very safe system but the knot would not pass through many lightweight krabs and this had to be considered when placing protection. Tapes also had to be tied but with a tape knot (basically two interlocked overhand knots), the only one that would prevent slippage. Again there was the problem that the knot would not pass through a krab.

The MOAC Chock revolutionised protection. It seemed to fit an enormous number of cracks. Soon nuts were being offered on swaged wire loops and in other shapes and so the whole modern protection game took off. Camming devices were still years away of course.

Guidebooks were literary masterpieces - the 1938 Clegg guide to Great Langdale is a thing of beauty, with illustrations by Heaton-Cooper - but they were often short on real information. Descriptions such as 'follow the obvious line of weakness to the top' and 'the climb wanders between the East Gully and Terrace Route' were not very helpful and there was no indication of the true difficulty of individual pitches. As an example my 1949 SMC Guide to Ardgor and Glencoe describes the 200 foot Crest Route as follows: 'climb the crest by the north edge of the west face. Much variation is possible. The rock is excellent and gets evening sunshine in summer'.

Eventually we Avon climbers had Ed Drummond's 1972 guide to Avon Gorge - a vast improvement in every way and still pretty reliable. Guidebooks today are superb by comparison but I love the look and feel of the old ones and my 1950 re-issue of the Great Langdale guide even has a hand-written description inserted in it by the first ascensionist, N F Brooks, of



Old-Style Gear



Old Rope

Honeysuckle Crawl on Scout Crag, made on 5th May 1958. It is not in the modern guidebook so it could be that he never bothered to report it.

Grading was always subjective but has become much more consistent. Many of the original grades have changed, usually upwards. Polished rock, missing holds and the natural reluctance of the pioneers to over-grade their achievements have all contributed to the need for regrading but the grading systems themselves have converged too. When Charles Hebert and I strayed onto Bastinado from Cioch Grooves in September 1968 both were graded (Scottish) VS. We found Bastinado utterly desperate and were very perplexed by the difficulties. It is now graded E2 and even Cioch Grooves has been elevated to HVS.

Pitons were frowned upon but sometimes tolerated, eg for Piton Route at Avon. They had been used on the Continent for years but were soft steel and heavy: 100 grams plus. New high tensile steel or alloy shapes from the USA; Leepers, Bugaboos, Lost Arrows, Bongs, etc - they all had wonderful names- made piton protection much safer. Once pitons had become accepted on crags like Avon Gorge we all carried a few but rarely found a real need for them. Piton hammers in a little holster were also de rigeur for the aspiring hard man. As always the 'look' was important and Taffy Morgan even employed the Don Whillans

flat cap and fag-in-corner-of-mouth while climbing.

There were women climbers of course but they were very rare and we were not sure of how to treat them. We started with all the usual male misconceptions about the fairer sex but once we realised that their high strength-to-weight and far greater flexibility might actually make them better climbers than us, we dropped all the patronising nonsense and treated them as equals. Morgan fell in love with his second, Maggie, and they have been happily married for nearly 50 years so there was romance as well.

I look back on those years with great fondness and bags of nostalgia. It was a very different world with no mobile communications, where self-reliance and a certain boldness was the key to everything. On Axel Heiberg Island in 1972 we were at 83 degrees latitude and completely out of touch with the rest of the world but we also had the privilege of making as many first ascents as we fancied in an unexplored part of the planet. Throughout that time the AMA has brought me the opportunities, friendships, achievements and downright fun that I could not possibly have had in civvy street. So whoever that sailor was that crushed my head as I tackled him in 1968 he did me a massive favour, one that has provided me with a lifetime of adventure and so many happy memories.



King leading Pharoahs Wall 04 Apr 1969



Gamba 1968



Morgan leading Noahs Warning 04 Apr 1969



Morgan following King on The Corpse Avon 1969



Old Gear



Good As New

EXERCISE AMA60

– a personal perspective of a summit near miss

by Peter Barr

8 Sep 17

This was my first Army exped, after nearly 10 years of trying, and 20 years since I'd first read about military mountaineering in a journal, which in turn got me thinking about joining the Army to be Frank. This was also my first big exped in a personnel sense - all my previous trips had been as a civilian with at most two civi friends, this exped was on a rather different scale.

9 May 17

Fast forwarding to the arrival to base camp, 5,000m. I'd carried some of the food barrels with Miles around camp but then suddenly felt rough and went to lay down in the tent. I had a 67% pulse oxymeter reading and told our medic Eddy, he reckoned that I should probably miss the planned acclimatisation walk the next day. Inwardly I could feel an elephant sitting on my emotions. All this time invested, voluntarily away from

family, and this might be it, I may not even get beyond base camp.

10 May 17

The sherpas had their massive packs ready to go but first the puja ceremony had to be completed. They'd rebuilt a stupa cairn and strung out prayer flags across base camp. Alcohol was offered to the spirits and then each of the team was required to throw grain onto the stupa and walk around it three times. The sherpas did the round followed by ten members of the team who then set off up the hill. I was to stay behind that day, helping Miles pack rations. He'd been laid low with the dreaded trots for some time but was now trying to gain strength from western rat packs. I looked at him and said "Well, shall we walk round too?", wondering if we deserved to, as this height may be the end of our exped - would the mountain spirits see us as unworthy frauds?

11 May 17

The whole team set off for a light load carry up and acclimatisation day to Camp 1, 5450m. The heat in the narrow valley was stifling with the occasional glimpse of what we guessed was the summit teasing us on. Imagine a sadist chamber in a gym; the treadmill, sorry treadmill will consist

of crumbling scree, shifting from side to side, the odd sliding block with polished ice underneath, dry glacier, and the odd snow patch, oh and a 5kW UV/infra red lamp in your face and more than half the atmospheric pressure sucked out the room = fun. After a brief moment of sorting tents and gear we were off back to base camp.

12 May 17

A rest day due with the inclement weather and snowfall that we'd experienced since the our arrival into the valley.

13 May 17

We moved up to Camp 1 with the kit that we'd need all the way to the summit, we wouldn't return to base camp until the summit dice had been thrown.

14 May 17

Super keenly we did a light load carry up to camp 2, 6100m, dropping loads and helping the sherpas build tent platforms and erect the tents. It had been a while since I've spent more than one night on snow...later I wished I'd invested more time in smoothing the platform and carried a second sleeping mat.

Approach to Climbing Base Camp



Birthday on summit day

15 May 17

We moved up carrying only sleeping bags and personal gear, the super tough sherpas carrying the camping gear and most of the rats. The tents had been disturbed by the high nightly winds, so a bit of adjustment was required before we moved in. 'Sleeping' at this height unsurprisingly was not pleasant. That night Jonesy and I thought that the tent might collapse in the wind. Indeed, a pole had broken, so the next day we moved into other tents.

16 May 17

The whole party of 12 had a rest day, but sadly Will and Shaun showed increasing signs of AMS and descended to base camp....and then there were 10. The rest day was spent largely confined to the tent in high winds. As the days passed we wondered if the monsoon had come early and we'd lost our chance for the top. I spent a truly miserable night jammed under Toms trekking poles, wedged diagonally across the tent in an effort to stop it collapsing, in c.15% of the tents volume. If there is a purgatory or hell I sampled it that



Climbing Base Camp

night - a shell scrape would have been a five star bed in comparison.

17 May 17 – Towards Camp 3

The respective rope parties moved off in the morning for an acclimatisation walk, hoping to see if we'd get as far as a prospective Camp 3 site, possibly around 6500m.

Unfortunately everyone turned round before this height, with the sherpas caching fixed rope etc at c.6250m, and hoping set up the camp there, as there didn't appear to be a good camp site above. Jonesy had felt funny on the way up, and on returning to camp made the really tough medical decision to go no higher, I'd lost my long term tent mate and rope mate...now there was nine.

The summit plan was refined, with the tempo being forced on by an apparent weather window - we were not going to bother moving to Camp 3 as the site of the dump seemed too low to offer much advantage, and the sherpas thought that it was not possible to establish a camp on

the angled slopes above. Therefore the next day we would set off for the summit in a single push.

18 May 17 – Summit attempt

We assembled outside the tents at 0300, with the plan to depart at 0330. With characteristic kindness, the sherpas had baked and carried an iced birthday sponge cake from base camp for Liz. After a slightly muted rendition of 'happy birthday' (it was early, cold, and breathless to be fair) the candles were blown out and we started roping up. Eddy, who was one of the AMLs, told Al that he felt too rough to go for it....and then there were eight. Al quickly re-organised the ropes.

He took on two pax who weren't feeling great, effectively sacrificing his chance for the top by wanting to give the two the opportunity to go as high as possible knowing that they'd likely have to turn round. I was ejected from Al's rope into what was left of the 'Blades' rope, along with Liz from Eddy's rope. The 'Blades' had received their name from the high near SF content, and general thrusting up the hill.



Ex AMA60 full team



Load carry



Local interaction



Kathmandu Airport greeting

I was somewhat alarmed as; a) they'd be thrusting at high speed and I worried (as the least fit person on the exped) that I wouldn't be able to keep up, b) Duncan, the groups AML, had the tactic of near running for x distance then panting, then running again - my tactic when I'd been high before was super slow and steady, one breath per step and aiming for maximum blood oxygen saturation, as altitude and its potentially dire effects on the body is terrifying. We roped up, had a discussion and set off after the sherpas.

Duncan went for the tactic of ten steps and then breathe HARD. The sherpas seemed to be operating on a similar tactic, but going further and stopping longer as they broke trail. When it came to trail breaking, Duncan was still going deeper with each step than the sherpas with his heavier frame but giant feet, then I was going to half calf depth with my midget feet and probably the same weight, damn that localised heavy gravity. The hours passed and Al seemed to be gaining on us when he radioed in the late morning to say that his group (and ours) was only gaining 100m altitude per hour, and he was turning round.

We carried on until c.1400 and 7,022m where a debate took place. We could see that two of the sherpas were about to summit. Two of our group had been slow with combined recurrent gastric problems and altitude, whilst a third had mentioned his vision etc was narrowing (it later turned out that he was on the spectrum between AMS and HACE and had taken Dexamethasone - understatement eh!). Duncan and I briefly contemplated pressing on, possibly leaving the three on the slope, conditions were fine, we had GPS waypoints if it clagged in or it turned dark in decent - this wasn't summit fever, this was an acknowledgement that five weeks had been invested in this enterprise, five weeks away as our children grew and missed us, it would be mightily gauling to turn around before becoming conquistadors of that bit of useless snow just above. Duncan and I knew from the beginning that we couldn't really separate from them, even if our selfish egos tried to stoke reason into us as to why we could. So we turned from uphill to downhill.

Bugger. Within the first 20 mins or so of the decent I started to feel nauseous and asked for a couple of moments. As I'd felt

fine on the way up I think it was psychosomatic, feeling the kick in the danglees. I recovered in about half an hour but then another member of the party slowed right down. We reached Camp 2 at around 1700. The dull flat light reflected my mood but the guys at camp came out with brews to meet us, it's amazing how a bit of human kindness can suddenly transform your day, even your exped, I certainly appreciated the effort the guys had went to in making a brew at that height.

19 May 17 - Decent from Camp 2 to Base camp

We packed up the tents and gear, and reformed into our original rope parties. Off we trundled down to Camp 1, putting the rope away for the last time as we came off of the snow slope. With the bond of the rope broken, we packed more gear and bimbled down the scorchio treadmill to basecamp. Tenzing, our Sirdar, was happy to see us as ever, and what did we have for dinner that night, well pizza overload for all, even for Tom - winner! Maybe AMA trips aren't so bad after all. I'm glad that I picked up that journal 20 years ago. Conquistadors of the useless assemble!



Trek refreshments



Trying a porter load

Thanks...

I'd just like to personally thank all those who worked extremely hard to realise the exped.

Countless people worked super hard, Col Paul and Al Mason stand out as living and sleeping the exped from conception to fulfilment and beyond.

And thank you to Jonesy for putting up with me in a tent for five weeks.

Thank you all.

DIARY 17/18

2017

Date	Location	Event	Organiser	Remarks
6 Dec 17	Bloc, Bristol	AFBL Round 4 and RN & RM Competition	Sgt Kenny Geoghegan	Open to all. DIN to follow.

2018

17 Jan 18	Arch, London (TBC)	AFBL Round 5	Sgt Kenny Geoghegan	Open to all. See DIN. UKAF bouldering team selection after this event.
17-18 Feb 18	Indy, N Wales	AFBL Round 6 (also counts as Army Bouldering Competition)	Sgt Kenny Geoghegan	Open to all. DIN to follow.
TBC Feb 18	TBC	AMA President's Dinner	Col Paul Edwards	
25 Feb - 3 Mar 18	Roybridge, Scotland	AMA Winter Meet	Capt Martin South Capt Sean Mackey	Open to all. Contact details on AMA website
TBC Mar 18	TBC	AMA Meet	TBC	Open to all. Contact details on AMA website
TBC Mar 18	The Climbing Works, Sheffield	CWIF (Climbing Works International Festival)	TBC	By invitation. 2 x UK Armed Forces Teams selected based on AFBL performances.
TBC Mar 18	Tielen, Belgium	Bouldermania	TBC	By invitation. UK Armed Forces Team selected based on AFBL performances.
6 Apr 18	Various	AMA Journal Summer 18 Contributor Submission Date	Capt Al Topping	Submissions of all kinds requested. For info email Journal Editor at Journal@ArmyMountaineer.org.uk
9-15 Apr 18	Fontainebleau, France	Army Climbing Team training meet	Sgt Kenny Geoghegan	By invitation. Replacement for the cancelled trip in 2017. To take place around Easter. Aiming to take 12-20 and stay in a Gite. Focus will be training outdoors in the Forest but will include comp at bouldering wall in Paris.
TBC Apr 18	TBC	AMA Meet	TBC	Open to all. Contact details on AMA website.
18 Apr 18	Bristol	Regional Command UK South Climbing Championships 2018	TBC	Open to all. DIN to follow.
25 Apr 18	TBC	RAF Climbing Championships 2018	TBC	Open to all.
7-11 May 18	Aldershot	ASCB Festival (climbing inclusion is TBC)	Lt Col Skinsley	Details TBC.
TBC May 18	TBC	RN & RM Climbing Championships 2018	TBC	Open to all.
16-17 May 18	TBC	Army Climbing Championships 2018	TBC	Open to all. See DIN.
TBC May 18	TBC	AMA Meet	TBC	Open to all. Contact details on AMA website.
TBC Jun 18	Various	AMA Journal Summer 18 Edition Delivered	Capt Al Topping	Submissions due to AMA Editor NLT 6 Apr 18.
TBC Jun 18	TBC	AMA Meet	TBC	Open to all. Contact details on AMA website.
TBC Jul 18	TBC	Inter-Services Climbing Championships 2018	AMA	By invitation. Army Team of 30 selected from the Army Championships
TBC Jul 18	TBC	British Bouldering Championships	TBC	UK Armed Forces Team representation by invite
TBC Jul 18	TBC	AMA Meet	TBC	Open to all. Contact details on AMA website.
TBC Aug 18	TBC	AMA Meet	TBC	Open to all. Contact details on AMA website. Doubles as Army team training event.
TBC Sep 18	TBC	AGM	TBC	Open to all.
TBC Oct 18	TBC	AMA Meet	TBC	Open to all. Contact details on AMA website.
TBC Oct 18	TBC	AFBL (Armed Forces Bouldering League) Round 1	TBC	Open to all. See DIN.
TBC Oct 18	TBC	BMC Women's Climbing Symposium	BMC	UK Armed Forces Team representation by invite
TBC Nov 18	TBC	AFBL Round 2	TBC	Open to all. See DIN.
TBC Nov 18	TBC	European Military Climbing Championships	TBC	By invitation. UK Armed Forces Team selected from the Inter-Services Championships. Pending invite
TBC Dec 18	TBC	AFBL Round 3	TBC	Open to all. See DIN.

Hole In The Ground 68

By Col (Ret'd) Meryon Bridges OBE – (Hon) Vice President

We were all members of both the RMCS Climbing Club and the AMA and in early 1968 decided to apply for Exercise Monte Bianco. This exercise had been started in 1966. It aimed to convert relative novices into 'first season' alpinists through an intensive programme of instruction in North Wales followed by basic snow and ice techniques in the Italian Alps under the Alpini, the Italian mountain troops.

Taffy Morgan, Tim King and I were selected, and since we already had some expertise, we were each put in charge of a section of six or eight soldiers. We had no formal qualifications but hardly anyone had them in those days. The training in Wales went well. The weather was fine, the rock was dry, and the soldiers were keen to learn.

The exercise that year was led by Major Tony Hazel and the deputy leader was Capt Gerry Owens who would become a mountaineering legend before being killed on Nuptse in 1975. We flew to Turin and were driven up the Aosta valley to a tented camp in Val Veni, immediately under the south face of Mont Blanc itself. The main building was being refurbished and the toilets were out of use. Our hosts suggested, "If you can hang on till Monday, they'll be open then". This was a Saturday.

Climbing techniques in 1968 were primitive. Instead of harnesses we had a length of hemp line that we wound round our waists about six times and tied off with a reef knot. We clipped the rope onto that. In the event of a fall it provided almost instant asphyxiation or a broken back, so falling was discouraged. Long run outs were the norm and belays were dependent on natural features or pitons. Tony was wearing rubber soled boots for the first time in his life - he'd previously relied on nailed boots. The whole concept of running belays was in its infancy but the use of nuts for securing runners in cracks had just started in the UK. These were literally hexagonal nuts whose threads had been filed out and a piece of line tied through them. The Italians and French were fascinated with the examples we brought with us. We still climbed on cable-laid ropes, though braided ropes were just coming in.

The Alpini instructors ranged from genuine mountaineers who were keen to impart real knowledge, to PTI types who were only interested in impressing foreign soldiers with how fit they were. One team endured a week of being towed uphill by one of these fitness freaks until, during an ascent of Monte Dolente, they successively untied from the rope and joined other groups.

Finally the Italian turned round to discover he was dragging 150 feet of empty rope behind him and burst into tears.

A few days after the Monte Dolente ascent we climbed Mont Blanc via the West ridge from the Gonella Hut on the South West side. The Gonella was our first experience of an Alpine hut, of communal sleeping platforms and of getting up to climb in darkness and bitter cold. We left the hut at around two in the morning and reached the final ridge just before dawn. The view from the top was breathtaking but by then there wasn't much breath left in us to take. Beneath us a cloud sea stretched away to the Grandes Jorasses and other big mountains while hiding the ordinariness of the rest of the world beneath a blanket of pearl. I have reached the summit of a big mountain many times but as with sex that first time is still the most memorable

When the formal exercise period ended, Tim King and I decided we would stay out a bit longer and make our own way home. There were plenty of rations left over so we carried a stock down the valley for a mile or so and set up a bivouac in the woods. We found a huge boulder, the top of which looked a great place to sleep out under the stars, fools that we were. At about midnight on that first night the rain started and we scrambled to gather our kit and find shelter. Beneath the boulder we found a hole we could just squeeze into and forever after this week became known as 'Hole-In-The-Ground-68'. For reasons that neither of us can now remember we also took to calling each other Luigi, a habit that has lasted for 50 years.

In the hole-in-the-ground lived a mouse but this was no ordinary "I'm-minding-my-own-business" sort of mouse, but one with both a passion for Army biscuits and a detection system that allowed it to attack the packaging at precisely the right point for easy entry. Fortunately this adaptable rodent didn't feel tempted to take up the challenge of anything in a tin. We became very fond of it.

Over the few days the rain only let up for short spells. The mountains remained lost in the cloud wrack and we only managed to do one low level rock climb. This became something of an epic as on the one hand we had no guide book and on the other we were not yet skilled at judging the scale of things Alpine. One afternoon we set off to climb a promising rock face above Courmayeur. Pitch followed pitch and soon we were executing VS or HVS moves with no immediate prospect of reaching the top. After four hours of this we began to realise that we had taken on a cliff nearly 2,000 feet high and it would be past midnight before there was any likelihood of topping out. The rain was fast approaching again so we beat a very scary retreat down the face to Courmayeur, pizzas and several large cappuccinos.

We have both dined out on the tale of our journey home, which relied on hitch hiking as we hadn't enough money to buy a rail ticket all the way. Most nights were spent lying out in cornfields. There was the French couple who picked us up outside Chamonix and were very concerned that we might be Germans. Persuading them of our British credentials had to be taken to extremes. Then there was a sweet

nun on a motorised tricycle who drove us for about 5km to her village. There was a charming elderly couple who took us into their very smart house in Geneva and gave us lunch before showing us on our way. There was also the young man with a strangely vacant expression who kept following us and spoiling our chances of a lift. He did not seem to speak any French but was eventually told to 'F... Off!' which he seemed to get. There is nothing like a bit of Anglo-Saxon to make things clear.

And then there was the German business man in the Ford Mustang. When he showed up on the third day we had covered just 25km in the last five lifts and as we were still within 100km of our start point we were pretty depressed about our prospects. His cheerful greeting, "I am going to Paris!" was music to our ears. We could have hugged him.

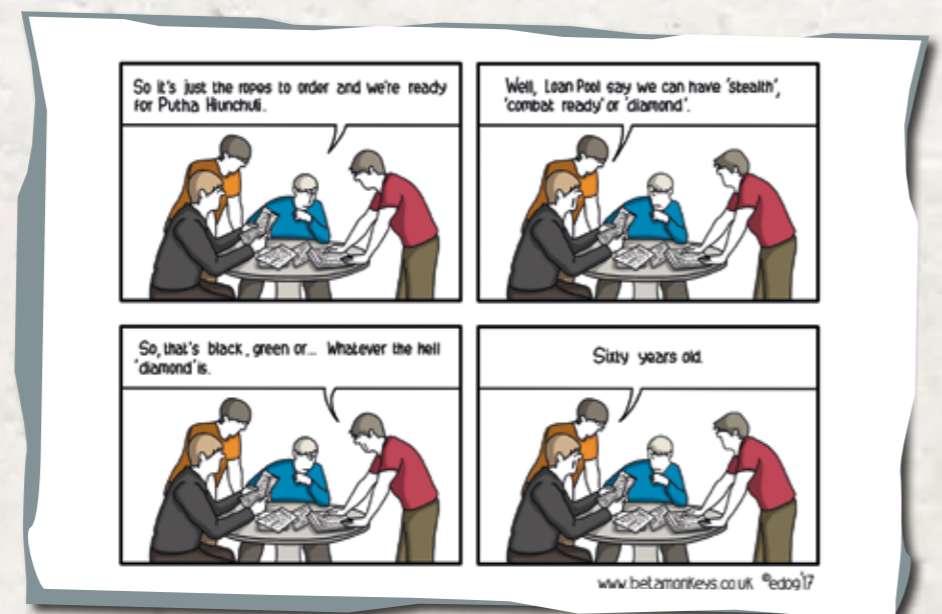
It transpired our chauffeur had come from Rome, and two days before that he had been in Istanbul. He was most unhappy with the Mustang, complaining it was nothing like as good as his Mercedes, which was in for servicing. We stopped only for coffee and fuel. That is to say, he

stopped for coffee and we stayed in the car, and the car stopped for fuel when the tank was empty - literally. Our driver simply could not cope with a Ford fuel gauge and we ran out of fuel soon after joining the motorway. This was an offence under French motorway law. When "les Fliques" tapped on the window it also became clear that if our German friend had minimal English he had no French whatever and it fell to Tim and me to get him off the hook. The cops obligingly gave us a gallon of fuel to reach the next service station. Three hundred kilometres on we repeated this exercise, still on the motorway and just 2km past another service station. Explaining that away was a bit more challenging but we managed and I think our German appreciated the help. Anyway at around six o'clock that evening he dropped us off at the Pont Neuf in Paris - in pouring rain.

Unsure of where we could stay, and not wanting to spend any money on it, we nipped down under the bridge to take shelter and consider our options. We were surprised to find others sheltering under the bridge with clear intentions of spending the night there, so we decided to join them. Most were bums like us from a variety

of countries but there were a couple of French lads as well. We all contributed to a common kitty and a couple went off and got some food and wine and all in all we had a very jolly evening under the bridge in the rain. The place smelled of urine as many good pitches do but we were warm and dry. Next morning the Gendarmes came round to check up on the vagrants. We were classed as 'tourists' so allowed to stay put. The French boys were put in the van..

After no success with hitching the next day, we decided to cut our losses and take a train from the Gare du Nord. The next Calais train didn't leave for a couple of hours so we figured no-one would mind if we brewed up on the platform. It was very unfortunate that the stove should choose that moment to malfunction and soon we were contemplating a growing fireball. I looked at Tim and Tim looked at me: "Let's bugger off, quick!" So we kicked the stove onto the tracks where it wouldn't do any harm and legged it. We crept back a couple of hours later just before the train was due, slipped on board without being recognised and so made it to Calais and home.



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The Army Festival of Climbing 2017

by Pete Skinsley

As part of the AMA 60 anniversary celebrations the Army Festival of Climbing took place in North Wales in September. Last held in 2015 it was designed to coincide with the AMA AGM and the first round of the Armed Forces Bouldering League. Based out of Capel Curing Training Camp the Festival catered for both climbing and walking and for the 47 who attended (including one member of the Irish Defence Force) it was a test in endurance of the delights of Welsh weather! The aim of the Festival was to improve personal climbing techniques, skills and awareness; introduce novice climbers to indoor competition and outdoor climbing; network with other Army and Services climbers; celebrate the Army Mountaineering Association's 60th Anniversary; and conduct the AMA AGM.

Seven days of climbing across the full variety of North Wales venues saw AMA members head out to Holyhead, the Orme, Tremadog, the slate quarries and the Conwy sport crags chasing what there was of the sun and the dry spells. The mountain crags were drenched so there was no need to stop in the Llanberis Pass but groups of determined and ultimately drenched walkers savoured the experience of Snowdon, Tryfan, the Glyders and Carnedd Llewelyn in driving rain and low cloud. Despite being battered by storm Eileen, groups managed to climb on dry rock outdoors

every day even if it was for just a couple of hours. The Indy Wall and the Beacon Climbing Centre became our second home and the cafe staff got to know which brews we liked by the middle of the week! Some participants also succumbed to temptation and sampled a spot of mountain biking, the toboggan run at Zip World and even a sauna (Kenny!).

The AMA AGM took place on the Saturday night with a nearly full room and we were joined by Honorary President Tim King. The membership received reports on the Association's mountaineering and sport climbing activity as well as the general running of the AMA and the budget for 2018, which is easily able to support meets in the UK, competitions and overseas expeditions next year. The new committee were voted in and the AMA publicly thanked Col Paul Edwards, as the outgoing Chairman, for his 27 years of dedication and loyal service to the AMA and presented him with a framed print.

Round 1 of this year's Armed Forces Bouldering League took place at the Indy Wall and saw additional climbers from the Army and RAF come along for just the day. Centre manager John and resident bouldering ninja Dave delivered a set of problems to test all abilities and styles of climbing. Dynos, crimps, slopers, volumes

and Jenga blocks were deployed and many a climber ended up on the matting looking puzzled or dismayed. Spr Andy Mawhinney RE, ex-Irish junior bouldering team member, pulled it out of the bag at his first ever Army event cruising all the hard problems and scoring 247 out of 250. He only failed to flash one of the easier problems which cheered the setters up no end. Capt Amy Johnstone RAMC took the honours for the women with 171.

Each evening throughout the week we re-located to the Swallow Falls Hotel to listen to guest speakers or watch a film. Oli Torr from

Lattice Training gave a very engaging talk on climbing performance and training and DMM sponsored climber James 'Caff' McHaffie delivered a talk on his life in climbing, from instructing to new routing and on repeating many of the hard test pieces across the country and the world.

The Festival was kindly supported by Lattice Training, who delivered two coaching sessions for members of the Army Climbing Team, and DMM, who ran a discounted gear sale. DMM also laid on a fascinating tour of their Llanberis factory. The Llanberis Mountain Rescue Team also opened up their Nant Peris HQ and gave us a tour of their facilities and explained how they conducted rescues across the Snowdon range. A big thanks must also go to 165 Port & Maritime Regt RLC who provided the admin for the week.

Snowdonia once again proved that it is one of the premier UK destinations for climbing offering all styles and environments from sport to trad, sea cliff to mountain. It also proved possible to climb for a full week in September despite the weather – just! The AMA Festival of Climbing will return to North Wales again in May 2019 and include the Army Climbing Championships.



Sunshine on Poor Man's Peuterey on Craig Pant Ifan, Tremadog



Round 1 of the Armed Forces Bouldering League at The Indy Wall



Smiling faces on Sticky Mix Wall on the Orme – but who is belaying?





Author climbing delta dagger at ShipWreck Cove (Photo: Elie Rees)



The Lattice Training Programme

by Ollie Tor – Owner of Lattice Training

Breath, stay calm, your fine, just relax. There was no relaxing, despite tired forearms beginning to de-pump and the thumping sound of my heartbeat beginning to slow, my mind was racing with little sign of slowing down. My belayers distant shouts of 'come on' faded into the silenced background of all good red points. I released the knee bar and followed that all too familiar foot sequence that had baffled me months earlier. Side pull, twist, reach, got it! I haven't been here before, despite the moves being ingrained into my inner most thoughts the feeling of that slopey edge after 20 other moves felt somehow unfamiliar. Breath, weight the foot, come on you can trust it, rock over, reach for the jug and clip...

Regardless of any journey we take in climbing, whether it is your first trad lead, a local competition or the red point of you life there are always two parts to the story. The first part is the mental game, which is an undeniably huge component of climbing performance. Most of us seek to push our mental capacities in climbing through adventure, danger or dedication. As we become more invested into the process of pushing ourselves, the physical demands of climbing tend to play a larger role and preparing our bodies to meet these demands can sometimes take us to places we had previously deemed impossible. The paragraph above describes the last few moments of a 6 month process in which a climber who trained with us over the course of one winter season completed his dream sport route.

As a bouldering specialist the climber in the story above had deemed a specific route

in the peak district an unreachable goal, writing it off as far too long and sustained to be possible for such an unfit individual. In order to understand what it would take to climb such a line, he sought help with Tom and I at Lattice Training. Using our profiling methods we highlighted what area's of climbing performance he needed to improve in order to reach the required level based on our collected data. Once the relevant information was gathered we created a training intervention which would allow the climber to adapt to meet the demands of the route for the following spring season. As with any individual process in sport there were teething issues, exercises and loads were evaluated and changed on a regular basis but in the end adaptations were made. The climber successfully red-pointed the route in May that year.

Working with people like this to achieve their personal goals is often a complicated process of analysing, implementing, experimenting and evaluating. Each individual will require their own unique formula and method of practice to fit into a busy schedule which often puts climbing performance somewhere around the middle to bottom of life's priorities. With each process we see moments of victory and learning, but it's something myself and the guys at Lattice can't get enough of.

The Lattice team and how we started
Lattice Training is a company which aims to help climbers improve their personal performance as well as increase the scientific knowledge of physiology within the sport. The Lattice team is a group of highly motivated individuals who were

brought together through a passion for their own climbing and it all began in a far from normal back garden in Sheffield.

Tom Randall the creator and crack master. Tom built the first Lattice Board in 2009 using a very questionable structure in his back garden. The original motivation behind this board was based around his work with the GB junior team, who were at the time, training under his command. As an obsessed trainer and coach himself he decided to not only read about profiling and sport science methods being used in other 'well-funded' sports but create something specific to his needs and those of the climbers he worked with on the team. After periods of trial and error the Lattice Board was built and testing protocols designed, allowing each user to see if their physical attributes had improved regardless of the success during the competition season.

Ollie Torr, a partner in crime. Several years into Tom's development of his new system we started working together whilst I was coaching at The Climbing Station in Loughborough. Our initial friendship was catalysed by a strange circumstance in which I was able to reach maximal scores on one of his testing protocols whilst in an extremely drunken state. I was fresh out of a degree in Sport science and had continued my love of training since retiring early from a junior career in gymnastics. As we got to know each other more through work and training, Tom realised that I had already began my own journey into profiling and training climbers. With conversations becoming ever more technical, science based and down right geeky Tom asked me to team up and create a combined

company to push the knowledge of sport science and training within climbing.

As our data base and client lists grew, we were constantly reminded of the need for science based training knowledge within climbing. Our protocols seemed sound and the results we were getting in both testing and training were reliably good, showing us that we had found a formula that worked. This showed us that we had enough interesting and powerful data to indicate a good methodology but neither the know how or time to maximise it's use. Concurrently, the thought of creating a global product to be used by other coaches started to creep into meetings between Tom and myself on a more frequent basis. During a bleak and harrowing trip in Switzerland to climb the Eiger North face, my climbing partner provided the solution to both my issues. As a professional design engineer and avid climber Dale Comley would be the perfect person to develop Tom's original banister design into a marketable product. He also provided me with the person to take hold of our data base, which by this point consisted of around 4 messy excel sheets spread across 3 laptops. Remus Knowles joined us soon after and has been crunching numbers for us ever since, splitting his time between his house in Sheffield and the back of a transit van at any amazing climbing destination of your choice.

With a working formula for profiling climbers, a tried and tested training methodology and now a team to help us handle and share this idea the concept of our Lattice system was becoming more widely spread. With a keen climbing community ready to take on any new information heading their way we began to accelerate our plans for a wider reach. However, with all this enthusiasm and motivation came general chaos, a disregard for working hours and chronic levels of fatigue. Kim Randall a.k.a the boss a.k.a Tom's better half has now been working with the team for the last year in order to stream line our operation and keep

us on target. Another recent member to the team is Oli Grounsell, who as a prodigy of Tom's earlier coaching years has become an extraordinary climber and is now under an apprenticeship in training plan design and profiling write ups.

Performance Profiling

Regardless of any expansion for Lattice Training as a business we still see the development of performance profiling as a central part to our operation. Training for climbing has been happening for decades, however the use of profiling methods to determine how to train is still rare today.

Performance profiling has been used in other sports for a very long time. Rowers will be put on Ergs, runners on treadmills and rugby players in the weights room. Despite each of these methods not necessarily being a direct replication of the sporting event, the controllable aspects of using equipment and a gym environment will mean testing can be replicated. This means results can be compared between athletes. Despite performance in most sports being reliant on a multitude of factors, such as team dynamics, psychology and technique, understanding the physical attributes of an athlete can mean that at least one very important aspect of performance is being monitored. Tom and myself first saw this in our clients who would spend seasons training hard and seem fitter than ever and yet somehow not apply this ability to their chosen goal on rock climbs or in competition. Physical profiling allows us to see if the hard work has paid off and physical improvements made. If this is the case and success still hasn't occurred, we can look into other area's to work on instead of just focussing on something which is already good enough.

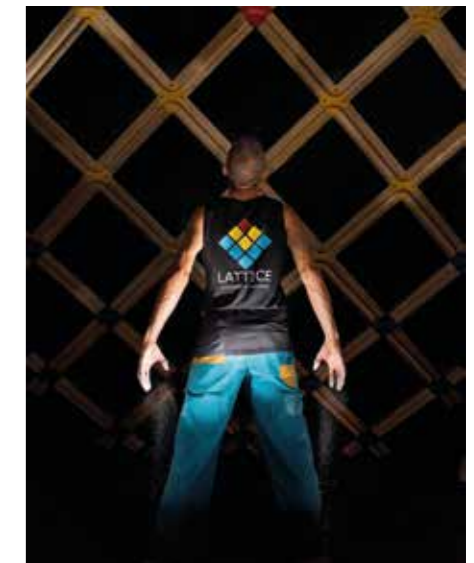
Lattice assessments aim to stress a climbers strength, energy system conditioning and muscle function in a way that is specific to the demands of climbing. We use set protocols of dead hangs, body

weight exercises and circuit climbs in each assessment which can be repeated with a climber of any ability in any location that has a Lattice board. An assessment will require a climber to work through several maximal protocols whilst being observed and guided by a coach. The repeatability of these assessments has meant we can collate scores for climbers from 6a to 9b from all over the world. With this greater data set we can now compare aspects of performance within the testing to aspects of performance within real climbing scenarios. This means that a potentially ideal physical profile can be built for any destination, any specific route and any individual athlete.

Unfortunately, as humans our ability to perform in sport is never quite as simple as this. As coaches we understand the nature of pressured sporting performance and therefore use the Lattice assessment data as a tool from which to use our insight. The results of an assessment will help inform the process of working with an individual but it will never be able to directly produce an interpretation without the knowledge of an experienced coach. This is a very important thing to remember if you are ever profiled in anyway, data and science can predict an outcome but it cannot guarantee it. A great example of this is when comparing the performance between many of the top climbers we have worked with. Several of the UK climbing stars such as Ben Moon and Steve McClure have not always scored as highly during our testing protocols compared to their equally performing peers. We are now able to see how much of their experience, movement skills and tactics have allowed them to perform at such high levels with lower physical capabilities (relatively speaking). On the other hand, climbers such as Alex Megos and junior athletes like Will Bosi, are managing to tick off some of the worlds top routes BUT from what we can see, neither of these athletes has really applied themselves in the same way and



Tom and Ollie debating data (Photo Peter Kneen)



Steve McClure getting ready for Lattice testing (Photo: Keith Sharples)



William Bosi during the Munich World Cup
(Photo: thecircuitclimbing)



John Redshaw, a Lattice assessor working with a client
(Photo: John Redshaw)

have therefore not reached their maximum potential.

Lattice boards and our profiling methods are now being used across the UK, in Europe and America. Each coach who uses this system has been taught by myself or Tom to complete testing protocols in exactly the same way, so data can be collected and compared throughout all locations. Being a little OCD on the matter we've ever data input to make sure the quality is kept high and database clean. Our vision is to make this methodology an industry standard and allow more coaches to learn how to use this system to better inform their coaching practices. We have also begun to team up with several academic institutes such as Derby University to formally report our findings in academic literature.

Training plans

Along with developing sport science knowledge within the sport our other reason for putting time into our profiling methods is to better inform our training interventions. Training is a passion of mine and Tom's and we cannot get enough of it. Apparently neither can a lot of climbers! Climbing is such a physical sport, allowing us to use a huge complicated range of movement patterns and muscles functions. Whether you believe we have inherited this desire to climb walls from evolution or office boredom the desire to test ourselves physically in climbing seems in popular demand.

Physical adaptations to stress on the body comes in several stages. Firstly, our reaction to new movements or loading results in soreness and discomfort. A first run after a long period off springs to mind... The next stage comes a reduction in reaction, we adapt to the stresses enough to cause less damage to the structures within the body, i.e. your not as sore the next day. The third adaptation is the one we all love and is the reason for many boom and bust training plans; neurological adaptations. As

we begin to regularly stress our bodies in a certain way, our brains learn to fire muscles in a more efficient manner, resulting in better movement patterns, strength and even endurance. These adaptations often occur with the first 4 weeks and are often why a change in training method produces quick results. Be wary of anyone selling short term training plans as the quick gains you may feel at the start are easy to lose without continued work. The last stage is long term adaptations which occur from progressive overloading. This is much harder to get right, as there is a fine art between causing enough stress to keep the body adapting but not enough to overload structures and cause injury.

Lattice creates long term training plans with a wide variety of individuals, from GB para team climbers to world class alpinists. Our main client are the psyched enthusiast whose love for climbing is only matched by an annoying lack of time to do it. Even at an elite level climbing is still a very humble sport and therefore all but a few of us will be spending most of our time working or with family. Through working with individuals with a variety of time pressure we have been able to better understand how to get bang for your buck and effectively cause physical adaptations with a greater range of methods and equipment. Despite the harder work, this challenging aspect of coaching is one of the most fun. Anyone can train a retired millionaire with everything available and no time commitments. It's far more interesting to train the rope access worker who completes 12-14 hour shifts for days on end in the north sea and then expects to make the most of a 3 week weather window in the UK. Now that's a challenge!

The future

I believe the future for Lattice Training is filled with long hours and excessive motivation. Our enthusiasm for sharing our product and methodologies is being matched by an increasing number of climbers who

are keen to embrace it. Our profiling tools will hopefully continue to develop and be shared around the world and will hopefully be used to help the development of future Olympians. More close to home, we will continue to work with climbers of all abilities in order to help them complete their dream lines in the safest, most enjoyable and quickest way possible.

How to work with Lattice, have an assessment or find a coach

To complete a Lattice assessment visit www.latticeclimbing.com/partnerwalls/

This will allow you to see where your local centre is with a Lattice board and who the trained assessor is. An assessment will usually cost around £100, but please check when booking. Alternatively you can contact myself and Tom directly at coaching@latticeclimbing.com.

For training plans and coaching sessions you can use the email above to get in touch with our team. We require any new clients to complete an assessment with us before starting a plan which lasts for a minimum of 6 months. A plan costs £40 per month throughout the duration of training. Individual coaching sessions are rated at £40 per hour.

To keep up to date with our research and development, follow us on facebook, Instagram and visit our websites blog.

<https://www.facebook.com/latticeclimbing/>
<http://latticeclimbing.com/category/blog/>



INSPIRATION

Noun: 1. the process of being mentally stimulated to do or feel something, especially to do something creative; 2. a sudden brilliant or timely idea.

Are you reading this alone in the block or in the Mess? Or at home avoiding doing the washing up? Or are you sitting in front of Dii procrastinating over work and staring out of the window on another wet afternoon? Are you wishing you could be elsewhere? Would you rather be on the sharp end of a rope or cutting steps up a Névé field? What about waking up in a wild bivvy in the mountains? Would you rather be anywhere else than heading out on exercise on the Plain again?

"Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it."

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe,
1749-1832

Thumbing through a guide book the chances are that the AMA has been there before. The Himalaya, the US and Canada, Africa, Greenland, Europe, Antarctica, South America, New Zealand, the Alps, the Arctic and across the UK. Soldiers from all capbadges, all ranks, male, female, novice and expert have ventured across the globe in search of

the challenge, the thrill and the fun of the mountains.

In 1982 39 Engr Regt and Cambridge University succeeded in re-tracing Hannibal's march over the Alps. They completed the route and mapped the area.

In 1985 a small team from 17/21 LANCERS attempted to climb Mt Blanc, the Matterhorn and the Eiger in a week travelling between each attempt in Series 3 Landrovers. They managed one out of three but had no regrets.

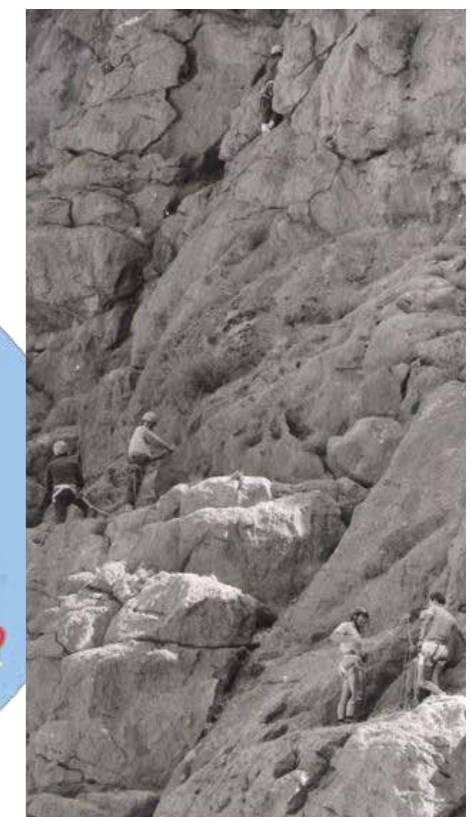
In 1995 a trooper from Hereford attempted a solo unsupported trek to the geographical North Pole after Ranulph Feinnes failed in his attempt. He got close but was eventually recovered having endured temperatures as low as -54 degrees C.

"Those who need to ask, will never understand the answer - Those who understand the answer, will never need to ask!"

Wally Herbert, British Trans-Arctic Expedition, 1968

What would you do? It could be new routing in Greenland, bouldering in the US desert or French forests, trekking in the Greater Ranges, climbing sea stacks in Tasmania, exploratory mountaineering in hard to reach places, traversing the upper slopes of Everest or just climbing a familiar route with a good friend or a new one. The challenges of adventurous training will always make us yearn for more. Mountaineering develops leaders and creates memories that last a lifetime. The AMA holds a massive PXR library dating back over 60 years in the membership office at JSMTIC Indefatigable. It is a gold mine of information, experience and inspiration. Use it and then add to it.

Now stop sitting down and go chase your dreams.



ARMY SPORT CLIMBING

- a quick update

by Patrick Snow – Vice-Chair Sport Climbing

This has been another busy and successful year for Army Sport Climbing. The highlight was the Inter-Services lead climbing competition in July, in which the Army won every category: both team and individual. The RAF and RN have a mountain to climb if they want to be competitive in 2017! The forecast of events for 2018 is just as packed as previous years and I strongly urge you to join us at one of the many events, which are designed to be enjoyable and accessible to all.

A look back at the year (Sep 16 – Sep 17)

As usual, the annual Armed Forces Bouldering League (AFBL) dominated the winter months, with rounds held monthly across the UK, from October through to February. Despite being part of a league, each round of the AFBL is designed to be a standalone competition accessible to everyone in the Army from relative novice through to V8 superstars. AFBL 16/17 was a resounding success both as a sporting competition and financially. A record number of competitors entered and each round attracted upwards of 60 entrants. The Army did well in the overall league, with the junior men's and the women's categories won by Army climbers: LCpl Tim Read and Lt Emily Palmer respectively. The Open Men's and Master's categories were taken by strong performances from the RAF's Ft Lt Dan Heath and Sgt Paul Easton, although the Army Team manager, Kenny, was close behind Dan Heath for the top overall score.

The UK Armed Forces (UKAF) team was selected based on AFBL performance, and the Army was well represented within the team that travelled to Sheffield in March to compete at the Climbing Works International Festival. The competition was sufficiently fierce that none of us progressed to the semi-finals, although that is a failure we shared with some of the GB team! With fellow competitors including Alex Megos and a host of other world cup superstars, it was a fantastic opportunity to climb alongside and learn from some of the world's best athletes – an amazing experience! Sadly, the annual European military competition, Bouldermania in Belgium, was cancelled this year due to the terrorist attacks on the continent.

The AMA AGM in September resulted in a number of changes to the Sport Climbing section of the AMA committee. With Lt Col Pete Skinsley now AMA Chairman, Maj Patrick Snow has stepped up to Vice-Chair Sport and Capt Rachel Gibbs to Sport Secretary. Sgt Kenny Geoghegan remains Army Team Manager, whilst SSgt Andy Stewart and Capt Stacy Oliver will continue to run the Army (South) and Army Lead Championships respectively.

With the end of the AFBL came the start of the lead season in April, kicked off by the Army (South) competition held in Bristol, and a team training camp in Kalymnos (described in the last journal). For those looking to be competitive for the Army Champs in May, training plans switched from power to endurance. Army team members were supported in this transition by a series of training weekends run by Sgt Kenny Geoghegan throughout the year. A successful Army Championships in May was followed by the selection of an Army team to do battle with the RAF and RN at the Inter-services on 12 Jul 17.

The soldiers who travelled up to Sheffield to represent the Army comprised the strongest team in a number of years. It was always going to be a challenge for the RAF and RN to win; the Army ranks included a current member of the GB Mixed Climbing Team and three former national and international youth athletes (GB, Eire and Nepal). The route-setters, which included a certain Steve McClure, did their magic. A series of brutal and unforgiving technical routes had the competitors sweating and puzzling their way up some viciously steep terrain. The field was effectively split, and the podium was completely dominated by Army climbers. The Army won each of the team events: Junior men, Open men, and Women. With a single exception (3rd place in the Open Men) every single podium place was won by an Army climber. It was an astounding performance by the team. With the gauntlet thrown down by some strong new members of the team, the rest of us began training in earnest for the AFBL 17/18 season on 13 Jul 17!



The successful Army Team with their haul of trophies



The Women's champion, Lt Amy Johnstone, collecting the team trophy on behalf of the team



The Men's champion, WO1 Will Woodhead, collecting the team trophy on behalf of the team



The Junior Men's champion, Spr Andrew Mawhinney, collecting the team trophy on behalf of the team



Capt Ian Conlan puzzling his way to the top of the first Men's qualifier



Capt Rachel Gibbs warming up



LCpl Tim Read on a previous Army training camp to Fontainebleau

A look ahead (2018-2020)

For specific details, the forecast of events for 2018 is available in the secure members' area of the AMA website. In broad outline, however, the AFBL 17/18 will run as usual from September 2017 to February 2018. It will culminate at Indy over the final weekend in February 2018. This AFBL round will double as the Army bouldering competition. It is a great opportunity to test yourself against some cunning and challenging bouldering problems, not to mention the rest of the UKAF climbers! The team will conduct a training camp in Fontainebleau in spring 2018, with the best going on to represent the UKAF in CWIF and the European Boulderma-

nia in late April. The lead season will mirror 2017, with the Army hoping to improve (!) on the 2017 performance in the Inter-services in July 2018.

The next Army Festival of Climbing will be held in May 2019. Excitingly, 2020 will see Sport Climbing included within the Tokyo Olympics, with each athlete competing in three disciplines: Speed, Lead and Bouldering ('faster, higher, stronger'). Co-incidentally, the UK is due to host a European Military Climbing championships in 2020 – watch this space for the format!

Cadet Centre For Adventurous Training (CCAT)

Dragon Venturer Yosemite Rock

Wow, what a trip! I am sitting in the airport at San Francisco, waiting for the flight home, reflecting on the last two weeks. It is hard to know where to start. I could run through the 'stats' (everyone climbing between 50 & 60 pitches or 2500 to 3000m of rock over the course of the trip, picking up around 50 'stars' from all the quality routes at 14 different venues etc.), but this does not really tell the full story...

It was very much a trip of two halves, with the first week based at Hodgson Meadows campground, just inside the Yosemite park boundary. The team of 5 cadets, 5 adult volunteers and 5 instructors used this as a base to explore the climbing in the Tuolumne meadows area. The scenery up here is breathtaking, with a series of granite domes offering accessible multi-pitch climbs and larger 'alpine' type peaks requiring full mountain days for an ascent. All of this set in a stunning landscape of pine forest, rivers and lakes.

We had quite a lot to adjust to; firstly there was the climbing style, with Tuolumne offering delicate (and sometimes 'run-out') slab climbing where good footwork is essential. This proved a useful foundation, and it was noticeable how much more confident the students were by the end of the trip. The altitude also took some adjusting to, we were operating between 8000 & 11000' in Tuolumne and had to allow time to acclimatize; initially we all noticed how out of breath we were just walking up to the bottom of a roadside crag! Finally, there was the heat; this was a bit of a shock after UK temperatures. Consequently, there was much perusal of guidebooks and maps to try and work out where you could climb in the shade.

We soon slipped in to a happy routine of early starts so that we could get off the routes before the worst of the heat. This had the added benefit of being first at the crag, so we had our pick of the routes and did not need to queue on the more popular lines. Once off the route, often feeling hot and sweaty, we would stop at lake Tenaya for a 'bracing' swim on the way home. This was a chance to wash and was great for morale as our campsite only had basic facilities; it was lovely to head back to the tents feeling clean!



As the week progressed, we enjoyed exploring new venues and progressing to longer, more challenging, routes. We had big mountain days with ascents of the SW buttress of Cathedral Peak and the NW ridge of Tenaya peak. This required a 4am start, forested approaches, lots of climbing and lengthy/complex descents; making for memorable experiences. Other venues, such as Dozier Dome (bear sighting!), with high quality 3-4 pitch routes and a beautiful walk off beside a waterfall, also made an impression. We used this time to develop



essential techniques, such as lay-backing flakes and climbing off-width/finger cracks. You come across these in the UK, but they do not go on for so long! The instructors certainly found themselves using plenty of camming devices, essential protection when lead climbing in Yosemite.

The scale and beauty of Tuolumne had a big impact on the team, and we all appreciated quiet moments where we could just sit and absorb the vista before us.

The second 'phase' of the expedition saw us move from the campsite to a bunkhouse just down the road. We certainly appreciated having access to showers, flushing toilets and a fridge (all our food had been stored in 'bear bins' at the campsite). The washing machine also got a hammering as we laundered clothing impregnated with a weeks worth of dust!

For this second week, we took a 'deep breath' and launched ourselves into the joys of the Yosemite valley climbing. Broadly speaking, this is steeper and has less friction than the Tuolumne climbs, so it requires a change of mental approach. However, with a week's worth of climbing under our belts, and careful venue selection, we made this work. By now the rope-work and stance management was getting pretty slick, so we progressed by moving onto harder routes or giving students opportunities to 'lead' routes themselves. The latter being a bit of a 'reality check' for those who had been happy on the back end of the rope!

We really enjoyed the variety and quality of the climbing venues in Yosemite valley, and picked off lots of 4* and 5* classic routes. We continued our routine of early starts,



allowing us to be first on the routes. The heat, however, was much more intense here (4000' lower than Tuolumne) so staying hydrated became critical. Routes with shaded corners or trees at stances were much appreciated! During this phase, we took a break from climbing and spent a day hiking the Mist Valley trail. As well as affording amazing views of the valley it was a chance to 'switch-off' and relax, spend time together as one group (instead of small climbing teams), and have some quiet time to enjoy our surroundings as well as the breath taking waterfalls.

So, now that our expedition has drawn to a close, what have we achieved? I think the best way to answer this is to quote some responses of the cadets and adult volunteers when asked 'what have you learned about yourselves on this trip?'

'To be more confident in my ability - I was worried that I would not cope so this has been a confidence boost.'

'There is life in the old dog yet!'

'Make the most of every opportunity. I want to apply this when I get back.'

'I was apprehensive before that I had started climbing too late. But now I am thinking what I can do over the next 15/20 years.'

'There is nothing like this in the UK. My fear of heights has gone, barrier removed.'



'It is easy to make excuses not to do stuff at home. But here I have seen what can be achieved, Hope I can now focus on more positive stuff.'

'Trusting people - I only climbed with close friends before, but here I have learned to trust people.'

'Taught me to be more mindful about supporting the whole team - before this I was focused on stuff that only affected me, now I more aware of doing things for the benefit of group.'

What more could you ask from an expedition? Two memorable weeks of varied and challenging climbing and 10 cadets and adult volunteers taking all that enthusiasm and learning home to inspire and motivate others.

'If you work for the expedition, the expedition works for you'

How to win the AMA Photo Competition!

Photography Tips from the AMA Journal Editor

Having been in this job (officially) since the AMA AGM in 2016, I have wondered about creating a how-to guide to help readers to take better photos of their expeditions and adventures. With the Christmas rapidly approaching, and more opportunities on leave to get away, this mini-guide aims to add a bit of flare to your photography and hopefully make the AMA photo competition more competitive.

This is by no means an exhaustive how-to guide but should be enough to give you directed reading on the internet, via Google or YouTube. There's a tonne of info out

there and clearly, everyone's got their own ideas, however, here are some of mine.

*So what makes a good photo?
"You've got a good camera..."*

This is often the signature statement of a novice who doesn't understand how to use the kit. Owing a reasonably large Digital SLR camera with lenses and flash modules, I have often been dragged into a conversation with someone looking for me to take their pictures without really knowing what they are letting themselves in for. To put this into perspective, in 2016, the camera

most used to take photos uploaded to the website Flickr was not a DSLR, not a point and shoot, but an iPhone. Now I appreciate quality of camera does not always give quality images, however, it does say that you are just as likely to find quality images taken on lower capable devices as you would on top-end full frame cameras. The single greatest contributing factor to better images is composition.

Composition itself is a large subject and is very much subjective. However, as this is a guide, I will pull out specific topics I believe will assist with your expedition shots:



1 WHAT'S THE STORY BEHIND THE IMAGE?

If you are hiking in unforgiving terrain with bad weather and even worse conditions under foot, the story for your image will probably include just that. Having glorious rock at your hands and feet, awe-inspiring backdrops and 1000m of exposure below you would give another. Images tell stories, what story does yours talk about? If you have no story, whoever looks at the image

will not make a connection between what you, the photographer saw and what they see.

If you read the stories behind famous images, particularly documentary images seen in the news, sporting events, or of wildlife they will all be conveying a story to the reader. The average shot received

in recent submissions do not tell stories; they're just digital representations of life. So, what do you need to do?

Identify the story you want your image to convey. Locate the content in your view to tell the story. See subsequent points below

2 POSITIONING

Getting in the right position to the subject is often the hardest part. Sometimes this can be down to timing but more often it'll be down to where you locate the camera. Forget the zoom lens, move your feet and get to a position that allows the image to be captured as it should be.



Move to remove unwanted content from the image. Removing this in Photoshop may be an option but it's a throw away comment which can take significant effort and time. Do yourself a favour, take the shot right first time. Front-page images need 'white space' around the outside and allows for titles, text and suitable positioning on the page. Give your images



a good size gap around the outside of the main content to give it a chance for being used on the front page. I will crop excess white space to make the image fit but not having it in the first place makes things more difficult.

3 RULE OF THIRDS

This is a point which most might already appreciate but makes a massive difference. Essentially, a photo with the main interest point in the centre-centre of the image (and thus adheres to my previous point) is boring.

If your photo has the lines from an imaginary noughts and crosses board overlaid onto it and the image is positioned



off-centre, more specifically on one of the crossing points it will naturally draw your eye towards the detail. This is particularly the case for the eyes in photos of people or wildlife.

- Locate one of the eyes on the crosses and you'll draw the viewer into it. Photos with the eyes in the centre look like they're following you around.



- Position horizons on one of the horizontal lines. This will give good perspective to the image
- If your photo is of a pair of climbers, putting them behind one of the vertical lines allows for some context to the image being seen from the backdrop.



This photo also has good white space which made it a good image to being used in the last edition of the journal as a recruiting photo. (Photo: Jack Munnings)

4 LEAD IN LINES

For images where the terrain is the story – perhaps you're conveying the severity of the ground travelled, having depth in it brings the photo to life. How many images have we seen in the photo comp recently that are of snow capped peaks but look flat and un-interesting? A lack of depth is the reason and one way to achieve it is with lead-in lines. These can be natural or manmade features that continue through reality towards the horizon.

For instance, fence lines, knife-edge arêtes (think Crib Goch etc), tracks up hillsides or a line of mountaineers attempting to summit a peak. Although not always joined together, the image is given depth by the presence of multiple features which draw the eye in.



- Find your lead in line feature
- Position this off centre (see the Rule of Thirds)
- Although they do not have to finish at the key element in your photo, e.g. a peak, they work best in this way, so try to position the image so this works in your favour



5 FOREGROUND INTEREST

With big landscape shots, a dominating backdrop can be made even more impressive by finding suitable foreground interest. This also adds depth to your photo and can be as simple as positioning the camera so it shoots a few rocks in a tranquil pool below snow covered peaks or the side of a person's face to add the human element.



Locate your big background image, then find something which will add some foreground interest. Examples include: Rocks, people (looking at, or away from the

camera), small buildings... anything, really!

Ensure that if your image is of the background that the foreground interest does not overpower it! If so, perhaps rethink your shot.

And that's all there is to it! Well, not quite, however, it's a start. The key to all this is practice – so get out there, put yourself in the right place and frame your shots.

It'll give your photography the boost it needs and, you never know, you might even win yourself a prize for your efforts!

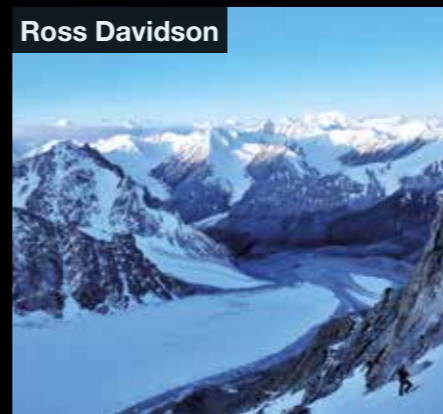


PHOTO COMPETITION

This is your chance to be both rich and famous!

Each edition of Army Mountaineer contains a photo competition. Whether you've been out with friends, deployed abroad to nice places or have participated on a large scale expedition your photos can win you some cash! Prizes range from £50-£100 and will be paid into the winners' bank account as soon as possible. If you haven't yet received your winnings, please get in touch with the Editor.

Photos should be at the highest quality possible (not less than 2MB) and emailed to the Editor with the filename: AMA_Number-Forename-Surname.jpg



AMA Scotland Meet – June 2017

By Mark Gregory

In late June, a small group of intrepid explorers descended on Crianlarich for a 3-day venture across the Loch Lomond National Park. The fine weather that preceded arrival at Inverardran Cottage created a false sense of security for those who, possibly through blissful ignorance, avoided the weather forecast for the coming days. The chosen venue came as a consequence of a desire to exploit Scotland's vast mountainous landscape; building on the success of prior summer & winter meets but located more favourably for those travelling from England. Inverardran Cottage was a lucky find as the event looked in jeopardy as the availability and cost of accommodation in the region looked precarious over the chosen weekend. The cottage itself, owned by the Ochils Mountaineering Club, provided everything required of an AMA Meet; cooking & dining facilities, accommodation for 18, a lounge with log fire, boot/drying room and hot showers. More important than all this, was the Ben More Hotel with its bar and restaurant which is situated within spitting distance of the cottage for that well-deserve post-crag beer. After all, isn't it that cool succulent pint of local ale that truly makes a quality mountain day? The intent was to offer walking, scrambling and climbing and this was only achieved through the employment of civilian instructors to complement the MLT and RCS qualified members of the association. Over the weekend their training and experience proved invaluable. Aside from guaranteeing the delivery of all three activities, their experience and local knowledge further developed the instructors in attendance and opened minds to the existence of Bog Asphodel, common orchid and butterwort amongst other flora and fauna.

The first day started with the climbers heading off to the Narnain Boulders for single pitch climbing in what could only be described as 'moist conditions' with low cloud and high winds making 'topping



out' an interesting conclusion to some challenging routes. The scramblers circumnavigated the climbers to move further up Glen Croe for their attempt on the pinnacles of The Cobbler and to 'thread the needle', a route known well by the accompanying MIC. Despite the excitably blustery conditions the team of three steadily made their way up the ridge before descending back to Glen Croe with pulses racing and an air of satisfaction akin to summiting one of the great peaks. The story was somewhat different for the walkers though who, further to the east, made their attempt on Ben More ('Big Hill', 1174m). Although fine at first, the new front that had earlier moistened the climbers eventually arrived in the east bringing with it rain and high winds greater than that experienced on the crags. A long but steady slog up the Ben More Burn from Benmore Farm was greeted by a sudden surge in wind speeds that forced the team to turn around a mere 100m from the summit. A disappointing but wise move. A short descent over the neighbouring saddle permitted a brief rest-bite for lunch before the wind was confronted again to retrace their steps back to base.

The temperamental conditions continued on Sunday however fortunes were to take a turn. On this occasion it was the climbers who faced the greatest challenge. Their search for a better venue saw them follow in the footsteps of the scramblers as they too headed further into Glen Croe, into the shadow of the Cobbler for their day's outing. Despite their best efforts the venue proved particularly difficult in the prevailing conditions with wet and slippery rock increasing route complexity by at least a grade. Some time was spent sheltering from the wind and rain as belays were established but morale was maintained by Sophie's travelling sweet shop. It truly was a lunch box to behold. An early retreat was beaten by the group; however the scramblers soldiered on under Nick's watchful eye. Up the pinnacles and through the needle again but this time with a new team in tow. The walkers headed west and down to Loch Lomond for their attempt on Cruach Ardrain ('Stack of the High Peaks', 1046m) and Beinn Tulaichean ('Hill of the Hillocks', 946m). A fairly long walk in before the final push to the summits made for a long day but the feel-good factor that came with standing astride



those great peaks was worth the effort (even if the views were not).

The few that remained for day three were not disappointed as the weather improved. The clear skies, excellent visibility and dry conditions were in stark contrast to the preceding 48 hours. Scrambling was put on hold; however the climbers were relieved by the favourable conditions and set about making the most of their final day. On this occasion they found improved climbing on the crags above Ardvorlich just off the western shore of Loch Lomond. As with previous days, single pitch climbing was conducted whilst the walkers commenced their journey to Beinn Chabhair ('Hill of the Hawk', 933m). A short, sharp ascent from Beinglas Farm and campsite in Glen Falloch gave way to a more gradual incline alongside the banks of the Ben Glas Burn to reach Lochan Beinn Chabhair, their launch pad for the final ascent. Another sharp slog zig-zagging up the southern flanks of the mountain was rewarded with fine views across the Crianlarich Hill to the high peaks of An Caisteal ('The Castle', 995m), Beinn a' Chroin ('Hill of Danger',



940m) and Stob Binnein ('Hill of the Anvil', 1165m).

Despite the stereotypical Scottish weather that endured the bulk of the meet, the outing proved another success for the association. 11 members of disparate abilities converged on Loch Lomond and collectively bolstered their log books by 28 QMDs on new and exciting routes whilst bagging three Munros (nearly four) for good measure. The walking opportunities in the area are abundant and well known. As for climbing, the association should consider re-visiting the area as there remains plenty of untapped potential that could not be realised over the course of this meet. All-in-all, a successful and enjoyable meet for all those in attendance. To finish on a personal note, I would like to thank those group leaders (military and civilian) who found the time to come and instruct. Without you, events such as these cannot take place. Your contribution was and will continue to be appreciated and gratefully received.



MALTA & GOZO

By Al Topping

One of the great things about Service life is often the opportunity to go to places that are found off the beaten track. You may question my choice for this opening statement with regards to Malta, but as a lover of the national parks in the UK and with some QMDs in the Alps to my name, I have rarely ventured further afield.

Then I was given the responsibility to take on an expedition to Malta and its neighbouring islands – Gozo. Not originally on my radar for being a hive for climbing but a little research on UKClimbing.com soon expanded my, clearly naïve, perspective of climbing geography. I was soon very impressed by the sheer quantity of crags identified and the hype it was given in the associated forums.

A little more research further educated me in the history of the islands that were home to several of our Services within the Second World War and held particular strategic advantages for our forces in both mainland Europe and into Africa. In essence, Malta provided a logistical hub for expeditionary incursions into North Africa and was the staging point for naval activity in the area for much of the North African campaign by Field Marshal Montgomery Slim. Consequently, it was sieged by the Germans throughout the war and suffered heavy losses of both lives and infrastructure through a sustained Blitzkrieg.

As part of these actions the Royal Marines established themselves on the island and whilst not preparing for war, endured it by exploring the copious quantities of limestone cliffs, inland crags and caves throughout Malta and Gozo. The result, by the time they left, was a climbing scene that has survived over the last 70 years and has indeed flourished. Now established with two climbing clubs: the Malta Climbing Club and Malta Rock Climbing Club, they have built a local membership who have embraced a, predominately sport climbing scene (with an abundance of trad waiting to be documented). Throughout the exped

MONOLITH BUTTRESS

Small number of climbs on a crag near to the main road. Good for doing initial belaying practice in a secluded area that has a reasonable amount of flat ground at the base of the crag to do demonstrations but with not too much beginner-friendly

I spoke to a couple of members of the Malta climbing scene who I later learned were some of the co-authors of the main guidebook for the area, 'Sport Climbing in Malta and Gozo' – Simon Alden and Jeffrey Camilleri. They were in the process of bolting a cave near Melleiha which didn't feature in the current edition.

What I did learn was that on the Facebook groups for the Malta clubs are PDFs of the routes that have been pioneered and will probably feature in a subsequent print; unfortunately, no indication was given as to when this might happen.

Initial map and guidebook recce's provided the basis for selection of each of these crags, along with conversations on UKClimbing.co.uk and Facebook groups with climbers who had been there before or lived in the area. Our plans for ground-based recce upon arrival were thwarted by delays at immigration getting our Nepali climbers through. Note to potential planners here: British Army Gurkhas require visas to enter the country as do travellers from some other foreign and Commonwealth countries despite consulate approval being received. Unless you wish for a delay to your exped (10 hours in our case!), I'd advise you check and if required, acquire the 60 Euro visa before arriving. NATO travel orders are not accepted by the Maltese officials, as the country isn't a NATO member, however, throughout negotiations to keep our Nepalese climbers in the country, they said that one would have substantiated our claim that they are on official duty.

Throughout our exped we visited a number of different crags for the delivery of the JSAT RSF course to two groups of 10 novice climbers. Our instructor team consisted of 1x RCI, 1x RML and 1x RCS. Our aims were to deliver the course and progress into multi pitch climbing with a select few who might be ready for the opportunity depending upon prior experience. The areas we chose to visit were as follows:

climbing. 6 lines put up over the day and soon exhausted.

There are other cliffs to this crag but were overgrown at the time visited.



WEID BABU – SEASIDE

A good crag in the gorge leading out to the Blue Grotto. We spent a reasonable amount of time trying to find the entry point into the gorge that was safe as the guide book to lacked the detail necessary to pinpoint access. However, if you can find the red dog-poo bin in the middle of the straight section of the main road then there's a small ladder beyond the fence to the gorge and a path leads down to the gorge floor. This is not the kind of walk-in which can be done in flip flops! If wet this would be treacherous and not advisable with groups with questionable common sense. A decent first aid pack and lightweight stretcher is also a must for this crag as a slip or other injury down here would be an epic to get someone out with injuries.

The climbing in the gorge depends on the previous weather that's passed by. As the gorge is steep sided on the easterly side, it doesn't get much sun until late afternoon. However, if you're looking for good intro-



ductions to multi-pitch climbing in an atmospheric area or can climb above 6b then this is a good place to go. Towards the inlet at the mouth of the gorge there's a few multi-pitch climbs at the end of the obvious track. Three routes lead to a substantial boulder overhanging the route at the top of the first pitch. Descents are bolted for abseils at this point and at the top of the next pitch for multi length abseils. All bolts were found to be suitable but carrying a length of 'tat' is always advisable.



HAMRIJA TOWER SLABS

A fine area that is under-developed. Park at the Hamrija Tower car park and museum. In the winter months (January when I was there) there was no requirement to pay for parking, however, it seems paying a local to not scratch your car while you go climbing seems to be a wise move to support the local economy. Arguably, not paying them and paying your rental company more money upon drop-off may actually be more beneficial to the economy but ill-advised. Anyway, I digress.... Unfortunately, I cannot give you more detail as there was no-one there when we were and no signs were present but the guidebook suggested this was common practice. This may be a question for the Malta Rock Climbing Facebook group.

Proceed as the guidebook suggests. Walk past the two dome tents covering historical caves and statues and into the distance towards the sea front. There are some rather sketchy bolts at the top of the cliff that we didn't use for anchors, however, provided a good marker for seeing where to ab-off the cliff. A bit of bush whacking was required to establish somewhere to change shoes and rope up but the rock is razor sharp and appears unclimbed in

a lot of places. Grades are relatively easy and some vegetation was present when we climbed, however with some effort searching for the best lines this is an enjoyable location when the weather inland



is a bit rough. Like Commando Rat Lines, this crag enjoys the benefit of the sea breeze from the south that prevents a lot of the rain seen inland from being a problem.

The island as a whole is covered by a thick thorny thistle, which is frankly, brutal! If you are going to go bush whacking or go to a crag off the beaten track then I'd strongly suggest taking a pair of trousers and some reasonable shoes to fend off the thorns. Flip-flops and shorts, or worse, swimmers are not the brightest ideas you'll have on your visit.

For an interesting escape route back up the crag to get to the car park head west along the face of the crag and before you reach a re-entrant separating this part of the cliff from that of Commando Rat Lines there is a disused quarry which provides an interesting route back to the top and doesn't require ropes. Some brute force upper body strength and / or a bit of team work and it makes for something different to interest a group. A word from the wise here though, don't wear any expensive clothing doing this as I ripped a new jacket on this climb after 2 weeks of wearing it in Malta – gutted!



COMMANDO RAT LINES

This is by far the most established of the crags we visited and probably the largest too. We parked for free in the nearest car park in Ghar Lapsi and made the short walk to where we wanted to climb. Obvious features include the skull shaped feature in the rock which you cannot miss but depends upon having the larger Malta guidebook that is no longer in print. This is one crag that should be available in the new edition being printed in the future.

In Ghar Lapsi there are two café's. The nearest, an expensive seafood restaurant has good views of the sea front and serves hot and cold drinks in the daytime. We

frequented the larger restaurant slightly further away from the car park and had some good food here but if going I'd go at the start of the lunch/dinner period as it gets particularly busy, even for late January.

As a trad venue there's an abundance of routes with a good selection of bolted climbs too. I personally had my favourite climb of the exped here, which follows the line of a crack under an overhanging flake. I used tonnes of cams and large nuts for this so take a good sized rack with some good length extenders or your options become splitting it into two pitches or running it out. There's a pair of good bolts at the top for

an abseil and you can just do it with a 50m rope.

There are other obvious tracks across the shoreline from the car park and some lead down to sea level. For access to the top of the cliff, particularly at the western edge of the cliff, there's a set of steps cut into the rock adjacent to the pipeline that splits the crag. Although you could walk off the top of the crag in most places, I'd say there's often not a huge amount of confidence-inspiring gear locations at the top so you'd most likely abseil back down off flakes and threads. Tat is a must!

GOZO

The last crag we visited was on the island of Gozo. If only we'd been able to spend more time here! Gozo's climbing seems to be more refined and free of vegetation in crucial areas – a problem often witnessed on the mainland. As we were a group with the main aim of delivering RSF a huge sea cliff adventure was low on the list of priorities. However, if we were able to find a route which permitted all 10 RSF students an opportunity to climb a pitch or two before having to get back on the ferry to get home in time for dinner it would have been much higher. Consequently we



went to a small cliff called Flakeout Walls at Mgarr ix-Xini that can be accessed from the western side of the gorge. Follow the guidebook instructions for the route (the map is quite accurate) and then the red/blue spots on the ground to navigate down into the gorge. It's quite polished rock and so care must be taken after rain as, like Weid Babu, would give Team Medics and REC First Aiders an opportunity for some quality CPD.

The area we wanted to climb on was in the shade initially but became lighter after

lunch. This was enough time to do our intro to sport leading in the shade before 'sun's out gun's out' when climbing. The rock is not as sharp as other locations experienced, however, was at the right angle, height and difficulty to end a good week for this group that were ready for their first lead climbs. On the whole there were good quality bolts on each line, excluding two at the top of a pair of adjacent climbs that we reported on the Malta Climbing Club Facebook group. In any case, we could top-out onto the approach route into the gorge to avoid if necessary.

On the whole, Malta and Gozo are in their infancy for supporting a climbing expedition. There're very few climbing gear shops, little in the way of information available in print and the quality of the rock in some places is less than confidence inspiring although this is better seen on Gozo than the mainland. As the sport is progressing, however, with a good number of local and travelling climbers coming to the islands there is a strong chance that winter climbing in the country will become another strong favourite of British climbers.

If you're after somewhere different to go outside of the summer months and have over-indulged in Spanish, Italian or French climbing locations, Malta might be somewhere new you might want to investigate.



THE ARMY SPORT CLIMBING CHAMPIONSHIPS 2017

by Dougie Stein

The Army Sport Climbing Championships was held this year on 17-18 May 17 at Awesome Walls in Liverpool.

Sandwiched between the regional competitions and the inter-Services championships, and after the bouldering league has finished, the Championships is the main opportunity for many climbers to experience competition climbing in a welcoming and all-inclusive environment.

The event was well attended as usual, with climbers of all abilities and all capbadges getting together in the name of their sport. As a lifelong climber, AMA member and UATO, I had always intended to attend, as it is a great event and a fantastic opportunity to catch up with old friends, network, and make new ones.

This year I had some interest from some of the novice trainees at my unit, so we managed to get some training completed at Redpoint in Birmingham to get the basics learned; before we knew it we were off to Liverpool. They all performed well as novices and quite possibly have been bitten by the climbing bug! Here are some their thoughts and impressions of the ASCC 2017:

"I had done some rock climbing during Phase 1 and I had really enjoyed it; I wanted to continue training and learn more but was unsure where to start. I met Capt Stein on an exercise and we got talking about climbing and he offered to train myself and two others to climb at the local climbing centre. After a couple of times climbing Capt Stein mentioned about the army climbing competition in Liverpool; we were nervous, but keen to give it a try! The day arrived of the competition and it seemed a little daunting, but everyone was helpful and kind. On arrival we got checked at tying in and belaying to make sure we were safe to climb. We then warmed up on some of the smaller walls and were given some helpful tips from other climbers at the competition. When it was my turn to climb I did my best and attempted every climb. On the second day I attempted my climb, and then while waiting Capt Stein taught me to lead climb, which I enjoyed. I really enjoyed myself at the competition and watching the better climbers compete, I found watching them climb an inspiration and I want to progress with my climbing in the future because of them, and for the love of the new sport I have found." Pte Karen Roberts DMS(W).

"During Phase 1 I was given the opportunity to rock climb. I thoroughly enjoyed it, so decided to pursue it during Phase 2.



Getting Warmed up!



AMC competitors together!

After a few attempts climbing, me and few fellow rock climbing enthusiasts decided to enter the Army Sport Climbing Competition. During the competition I gained a lot of confidence in myself and in my team. Rock climbing is a thoroughly enjoyable experience everyone needs to try at least once; it's built both my strength and my self-confidence." Pte Lauryn Bland DMS(W).

The climbing was gripping, especially in the latter stages, with some outstanding moves being pulled by some very talented climbers in the finals. Scores were tight, and the RAMC ladies did well with both first and third place going to Lt Amy Johnstone and Capt Emily Palmer respectively.

Lt Johnstone had the following to say about the competition:

"The Army Climbing Championships proved to be a very enjoyable couple of days. As it was my first Army climbing competition, I was pleasantly surprised by how friendly and supportive everyone was. The route setting was fantastic and overall the competition was great fun with some interesting boulder problems and good company." Lt Amy Johnstone MDHU (N)

I have been going to the championships for many years as an enthusiastic amateur, made many friends over time, and it has never failed to encourage and inspire me to stick with this great sport.



ASCC 2017 Ladies Winners: First place, Lt Amy Johnstone RAMC, Second Place, Cpl Jade Cooper RLC, Third Place, Capt Emily Palmer RAMC

Ex Dragon Toubkal 2017

“High Altitude Journal”

By Ellie Hayes

To look at us, you would not have thought that by the end of our adventure, twelve out of the thirteen of us would have made a successful summit of the highest peak in North Africa. Led by Captain “Dutch” Holland and Sergeant Simon Hall, the gaggle that would eventually call itself a team consisted of personalities from multiple sub units from 6 Regiment Army Air Corps. 678,675 and 679 Squadrons were all represented on Exercise Dragon Toubkal, which was the first of its kind for 6 Regiment Army Air Corps, with the participants unwittingly exposing themselves to a real life remote challenge that would exceed all of their expectations.

Our adventures started in the UK, we climbed the Glyders in Snowdonia as pre training, over two training weekends before Captain Holland and Sergeant Hall approved us to come on this High Altitude Remote Trekking 10 day Expedition. After a rope rescue, a phone casualty and a large infestation of mosquitoes in Wales, the seal of approval for us all had been stamped. We were issued final instructions to report to John Howard Barracks in Milton Keynes on Sunday 2 July. Excited and apprehen-



sive we arrived in good time, and after more mountain lessons from Sergeant Hall on all the various subjects required for the Summer Mountain Foundation (SMF) qualification, some pizza and sleep were next. Before we knew it, in the early morning we had managed to clear Luton airport security without causing too many major international incidents and had boarded the easy jet three-hour flight to Marrakech.

Once landed in Marrakech, we were greeted by our local support team from Tour Dust – who, by the way, provided the most delicious biscuits on the planet! We chivvied onto the (air-conditioned!) mini-bus

for the wearied commute to Imllil for our first night on Moroccan Berber soil. After being dropped at the bottom of the village of Imllil with all of our bags, we originally tried to persuade the locals that we could carry our own kit to the Gite. We were promptly laughed at. Let’s just say that not even halfway up the unexpected 50m almost-vertical walk we very quickly realised how important our personal mini-herd of mules would end up being!

On our first walking day, we hiked from the comfort of the Imllil Gite at 1,740m to our first campsite in Tiziane, via Aguersioual and Matate. This was our first introduction



to the Moroccan terrain, heat and culture, all of which took us by surprise. None of us were expecting to have a freshly cooked, three course lunch on the top of what would be classed as a mountain back home, at 2,219m, in 30° heat. Walking days three and four were quiet a struggle for a few of us, with a number people taking it in turns to enter the hurt locker, and not much sleep because mother nature had different plans!

Over the two days we walked From Tiziane to Around, stopping over in Azib Tamsoult (2,250m) for one of the windiest nights of the trip. All of the tents were technically standing in the morning; just some were not quite tent shaped any more. However, as painful and challenging as these two days were, they were not without their memorable moments. Lunch on day three was in one of the most peaceful spots I have ever had the pleasure to visit, next to a stream under a natural canopy of leaves. We also had our first experience of walking along the side of a cliff face on a very narrow mountain path.

Following an early night and a (much needed) hot shower, we climbed back up to our highest altitude stop yet, at 2,700m. We camped on a plateau about three kilometres from the Les Mouflouns Refuge. I think this was personally my favourite night in the tents, as we met the first Moroccan women to summit Mount Everest in 2017, Bouchra Baibanou, who was an inspiration to us all, and listening to her talk about climbing 6 of the 7 summits was enlightening. Leaving us with her top tips – “be patient” and “it is not a successful summit without a successful descent” we all found new motivation to reach the summit of Toubkal. After finding a deep plunge pool to bathe in and wash the dust out of our kit out, we were ready for the next three

days. They would be the hardest and most challenging part yet of the Exped.

After acclimatising to the altitude, most of the team climbed up to 3,600m, leaving a few behind who were still overcoming some illness or mild injury to rest and be strong for the summit attempt. Once the climbers had returned from their day trek (3,684m), we spent the rest of the day making use of the Refuge’s coffee shop, power and basic facilities, getting ready for the 0300 start the next morning. To encourage us on our way, we were in for a treat at dinner, when the Berber support team men who had been keeping us fed, watered and sheltered, treated us to some traditional Moroccan music. Their music may not reach the UK top ten any time soon, but a very enjoyable hour or so was spent getting to know more about the culture we were spending so much time surrounded by.

Summit day came all too soon after, yet another, exceptionally windy night atop the mountain. However, we kept our chins up, put one foot in front of the other and clambered up to the final high altitude ascent of Mount Toubkal, our acclimatisation over the past days and the rest periods had worked well for us all. I can honestly say that I have never been prouder of myself or of a group of people, than I was in the moment we stepped foot on the 4167th meter summit. It was a culmination of effort, emotion and ebullience. On the descent the mood was lighter, because, even though summiting was not our primary goal – we had set out to build team skills and leadership qualities – those of us that had summited had achieved our own personal goal of reaching the top of a high altitude mountain. We all made it back down to Imllil within twenty-four hours of summiting, just in time for an epic game

of, cards against humanity whilst sheltering from an electric storm raging over a stunning back drop of the Atlas Mountains we had been trekking in.

Sadly, this was the end of our mountain adventure; we ended the trip on a high, with a stunning meal in Marrakech and a day walking about the city, making yet more memories to take home and look back on for many years to come. All who attended Exercise Dragon Toubkal has taken different lessons away with them, but we all came away with a summer mountain foundation qualification, a sense of achievement and a camera full of memories. It’s with great appreciation that the whole team thank Captain Holland and Sergeant Hall for making this High Altitude Exercise happen, and I can honestly say that none of us will ever forget it. We are also extremely grateful to all the various funds that supported us in this Exped. Without your generosity we would not have developed our leadership and mountain skills which some are transferable into our civilian world.



Ex **DRAGON** CANADIAN ALPINE

By Paul Davies

At 0700hrs on Monday 10 July, 10 members from 170 (Infra Sp) Engr Gp set off from Chetwynd barracks, en route to the Canadian Rockies as part of Ex Dragon Canadian Alpine. The aim of the exercise was to conduct arduous and physically demanding altitude mountaineering in a remote environment by undertaking the Wapta traverse and reaching the summit of Mount Athabasca.

After a long journey, the team arrived at Trails End Camp (TEC). Tuesday was to be a full admin day to ensure all kit was packed and ready as well as stuffing 5 days' worth of food into our bergans. The TEC Camp Warrant Officer gave his final briefs including a bear safety video (rather entertaining) followed by PowerPoint Alpine Mountaineering Foundation (AMF) lectures by the instructors.

Wednesday was the beginning of the Wapta traverse and at 0730hrs the team left TEC in 2 minibuses and drove to the Peyto Pass car park. Half the team disembarked here and waited while the others dropped one of the vehicles by Wapta Lake; the end point. Unfortunately, the group left waiting were in a mosquito hotspot. Fair to say plenty of repellent was used! Once the team was reunited we began down a tourist track then descended down to the flood plain of Peyto Creek and once there started to follow the glacial river. Soon after we discovered that the bridge which was meant to be there had been washed away earlier in the season and after a debate of options, the team decided to conduct a river crossing.

The river crossing technique was demonstrated – the 'group wedge' being the preferred method. Just as the team were preparing to cross the glacial waters, a perfectly timed hailstorm hit us with similar effects to being pelted by a paintball gun. We were not deterred and pressed on braving the freezing water bare foot while LCpl 'Commando' Webster went for the full commando approach. The other side was a welcomed sight!

We continued ascending over a moraine ridge and after a few hours of walking (a few breaks in-between) we came into view of the Peyto Glacier. At the glacier, it was time to kit up with crampons, harnesses, helmets, axes and ropes. The team was split into 2 rope groups; one led by Capt 'Damo' Warren and the other by Maj 'Climber' Crosby. A few steps after the first rope team had set foot on the glacier, Spr 'Rope Carrier' Praygan fell knee deep into a crevasse. Not the best of starts but a great example of the importance of roping

up. Glacier travel continued and eventually both groups reached the Peyto hut at 1930hrs. Water was collected from a small lake below the hut, dinner was cooked and after the long day the team was ready to turn in for the night.

Day 2 soon came around and both groups set off from Peyto Hut at 0730hrs. We began ascending the glacier in the direction of Mount Rhondda, a peak of 10,046ft. We approached from the Eastern flank and reached the summit mid-morning. The team all felt glad to summit the first peak and the views of the surrounding mountains and glaciers were spectacular.

Once we had descended back down to a snow slope we stopped for lunch. The instructors then taught a lesson on constructing an ice axe anchor and demonstrated crevasse rescue hauling. Both were key techniques and provided each member with the skills to employ in case of an emergency. After the lessons, we continued traversing across the Bow Glacier heading towards Bow Hut. Upon arrival, we followed the same routine as the previous day as well as some knot tying practice and were shown different types of prussik techniques.

Day 3 consisted of more glacier travel to reach the Balfour Hut where we would stay for 2 nights. Each rope group conducted a crevasse hauling practice then later in the afternoon discussed aspects of the AMF syllabus. In the evening for some entertainment the team had a rope rucksack making competition to see who could make a fair quality rope rucksack the quickest from a back coiled heap. Sgt 'One Crampon' Smith was the eventual winner of the knockout competition with the instructors conducting an exhibition match at the end.

Day 4 was a more chilled out day with time to recover before attempting to climb Mount Balfour. The team was out the door by 0700hrs to make the most of the early morning conditions. Spr 'Mountain Skills' Engelbrecht taught cramponing techniques and used a snow slope at the base of Mount Balfour to teach ice axe arrest (a very enjoyable lesson) while the instructors carried out a route recce. Upon the instructors' return we were taught avalanche transceiver search before

returning to the Balfour Hut and preparing for an early start the following day.

Day 5 was the earliest start so far leaving the hut at 0400hrs and ascending quickly to Mount Balfour's Northern Glacier. By 0630hrs we had reached the col and were greeted by the sunrise. We arrived at the Scot Duncan Hut shortly after 1000hrs and after a short break, soup lunch and water refill, made a group decision to walk the further 12km to Wapta Lake. The first 2 hours of decent were across Niles Glacier softening with height until we reached a steep rock face. Zigzagging our way down, we then came to an area of alpine meadow land. It was clear that an avalanche had struck the surrounding area with knocked over trees and deposits



of rock. An impressive force of nature! We proceeded to navigate the way down before being channelled into a gorge with fast flowing water. Carefully, we climbed down along the edge before approaching woodland. It soon became apparent that we would have to follow the stream flowing into Sherbrooke Lake to find the well-used trail and way to the car park by Wapta Lake – that was wet feet for all of us!

Finally, after the 12km descent we arrived at the car park at 1730hrs. We all felt relieved and glad we had completed the Wapta traverse but mainly because it was time to enjoy some pub grub at a nearby motel! Soon after we had finished our filling meal we headed back to TEC ready for the next part of the exercise.

The following Tuesday we set off for the Columbia Icefields campsite where we would stay before the climb up Mount Athabasca. On route, we stocked up extra food required from Cochrane before arriving at the campsite at 1130hrs. The team then set up tents and prepared all the equipment needed for the next day. Pat, the Yamnuska guide, arrived at the campsite at 1700hrs for a cross brief with the instructors on weather, rope groups, recent forest fires, routes and the all-important start time. Forest fires to the West in British Columbia had affected air quality throughout the day. Pat was concerned that it could be worse at higher elevations while we ascended Mount Athabasca depending on wind direction therefore would keep a close eye on conditions.

As it was decided on a very early start the team tried for an early night however

this proved difficult due to the noisy woodland creatures and other campers who seemed to be having a Metallica rock party! Reveille was at 0100hrs and the team had begun the climb by 0130hrs. The route followed a service road where the 'trail' broke onto the moraine. It was vital that Pat was leading because the path would have been extremely difficult to find in the pitch black even with multiple head torches. It took nearly 3 hours of navigating the faint trail until we reached the snow where we put on our crampons and roped up into 3 selected teams. The start of the glacier was gradual however the gradient soon increased making it slower and more difficult to ascend. Soon after a very steep snow slope stood before us. Here we had to shorten ropes and put everything we had learned into practice. On the way up, steps were cut using ice axes to help with footing and after an arduous climb the slope at the top of the col eased onto a rock ridge. From here the journey to the summit was much easier with only a snow ridge between us. The team reached the summit of Mount Athabasca (11,453ft) at 0800hrs. The summit views were incredible, being able to see various mountain ranges for miles around. After a few high fives and a moment to reflect on our achievement it was time to begin the descent.

The way down seemed much easier with all members eager to get back for food and drinks. To avoid the steep snow slope Pat opted for a different route and descended via a scree slope. By 1130hrs we had reached the bottom and looking back had a clear view of the summit and what we had just conquered.



We had achieved the main aims of the exercise by completing both the Wapta traverse and reaching the summit of Mount Athabasca; overcoming numerous challenges in an alpine mountain environment. The Rocky Mountains of Canada, while being based at Trails End Camp, were an excellent location for alpine mountaineering. There will be a DIN coming out to enable future expeditions to undertake adventurous training from there – this is highly recommended. In all, this was a truly unforgettable experience and hopefully there will be many more adventurous training adventures in the future!



Trekking in Dolpa, Nepal 2017

by Adam Hugill

The plane violently banked a steep left. Below us we could see aircraft parts, strewn all over the magnificent mountainside just before the runway appeared. A safe landing was far from guaranteed. Vomiting was running through the aisle on the cramped 15 seater aircraft. This was not the most comfortable way to start a 13-day trek in the Dolpa Region but it sure was exhilarating.

Upon landing, we were greeted by crowds of locals from the nearby village. We stood in awe of the snow-topped peaks as porters ran around, collecting our bags and preparing to move from the runway to the town of Juphal. A meal awaited us in a local community centre. I had to wait for my stomach to settle before consuming the first of many portions of dal bhat (rice and lentil soup) that would follow throughout the expedition.

Dolpa is the largest district in Nepal but also one of the less famous areas. We were told that we were the only tourist group that had booked permits to trek in Dolpa through our tour agency in 2017. We were truly in a remote part of the world. During the expedition, we only saw one other western tourist.

Life is simple but tough in the isolated settlements of Nepal. The majority of the local population work the land. Farming crops and managing livestock to survive the harsh weather conditions. Hoping to produce a little bit extra food to sell and exchange for other goods. They have little of the modern "necessities" we have become accustomed to in the west. Even our guide and porters had the most basic equipment. Whenever it rained or snowed, they would use a large plastic bag to protect themselves from nature's elements. These men were as tough as they come. One of the porters was found to be suffering from trench foot but still carried on with little

fuss. Luckily we had two doctors on the team to help him.

Our trek from Juphal to Kagbeni was 158 km long with a total climb 10,848 metres. Our highest point of the expedition was 5200 metres above sea level. All this sounds impressive but in reality, means very little. What was important, was the experiences we gained through the hardship, challenge and teamwork of being part of a close-knit group. The AMA had brought together 12 strangers. Our only common connection being our shared love for the outdoors and that we were all serving members of the British Army, be it regular or reserve. The group was a diverse mix of personalities, trades, ages and experience.

There were moments of tension. Our Nepalese guide released the donkey handler a day earlier than was needed. With him went the 15 or so donkeys that carried much of the food, cooking equipment and heavy communal tents. This was likely a way of saving some extra money for the guide. When the guide ordered the porters to carry loads weighing 50kg+ on the final 23km long day, a heated argument broke out. The head guide ended the discussion with a harsh slap to the face of the leading protester. Not quite the style of leadership I would aim to emulate but it proved effective.

Walking through the epic valleys, snow covered peaks and along lush flowing rivers was an experience that will stay with me forever. I have never been to a place as beautiful as Nepal. The scenery and weather can change in an instant. We would often retire for the night with clear skies and dry conditions to then wake up to a blanket of snow around our tent. Regardless of the weather, it was impossible to get bored of the view.

One of the highlights of the expedition was meeting the friendly Nepalese people. Dolpa is heavily influenced and linked to Tibetan culture. Tibetan is widely spoken and the small settlements and religious monuments are very similar to what would be found in Tibet. The people were the kindest and happiest I have ever met. By saying the greeting "Namaste!", followed by the joining of the palms in an upwards prayer motion, we were always made to feel welcome. Learning just this phrase made a huge difference to how the local people approached us. Never before have I seen people with so little, willing to give so much.

This was a fantastic expedition that involved a lot of hard work in the background. To all of those that made the AMA 60th anniversary expedition possible, thank you. It was worth it.



Book Reviews

By Tomo Thompson

Slightly different format this month, with only two books to review. Both of them have been shortlisted for the prestigious Boardman Tasker Mountain Literature Award and, in my humble opinion, either would make a worthy winner.

THE MAGICIAN'S GLASS – ED DOUGLAS (VERTEBRATE PUBLISHING)

'How much risk is worth taking for so beautiful a prize?'

This is a collection of eight essays that have previously graced the pages of several American climbing publications. This essay structure of the book, along with the clipped, concise writing, and the contemporary nature of much of the subject matter, make the book quite unique in the current sea of mountaineering literature. It reads easily (in the sense that the essays are relatively short, and no great knowledge of mountaineering is required to really enjoy it), but the no-holds barred, bright white light that is shone on the fragility and risk of mountaineering at the upper limits of the possible, lend the book a dark side too. Any student wishing to psychologically understand the 'why' of extreme mountaineering would do worse than consider this as an essential text. Mountaineering history anoraks will have more than their fill in these pages too!

It is probable that a book by Ed Douglas already graces your bookshelf. He has written biographies of Tenzing Norgay, Ben Moon, Alison Hargreaves and Ron Fawcett. Something for everyone there. His biography of Fawcett (Rock Athlete) won the Boardman Tasker award in 2010. He sticks his vey sharp pencil in to the

countryside nerve regularly in The Guardian and The Observer, and is the current editor of The Alpine Journal.

Throughout all those books, Ed doesn't shy from opinion or comment, however unpopular, but lays out his store with comprehensive research and a deep well of subject matter knowledge across all facets of mountaineering. This willingness to address the challenging issues and events of contemporary climbing and mountaineering, and the characters therein, is what makes this book very very good. Characters that get caught in the white light of Douglas's interrogation include Cesare Maestri, Tomaz Humer, Kurt Albert, Ueli Steck, Patrick Edlinger and Andy Parkin.

The book offers something to a very wide readership. Commentary, story telling, analysis, detective work, thriller, opinion, and more. Its wide appeal, and the broad subject matter will appeal to many, and may just persuade a few Boardman Tasker judges too.

It's a shame that mountaineering journalism, in following climbing and mountaineering itself, has often followed the path of the quickest, media driven, fix. These essays, adapted for a British readership, from their original long-form publication



in the American mountaineering media (notably Rock & Ice and Alpinist), deserve time and deserve proper digestion.

There's something ever egotistical in mountain tops and towers, and all the other grand and lofty things...which like a magician's glass, to each and every man in turn but mirrors back to his own mysterious self – Captain Ahab (Moby Dick by Herman Melville)

ART OF FREEDOM – THE LIFE AND CLIMBS OF VOYTEK KURTYKA – BERNADETTE MCDONALD (VERTEBRATE PUBLISHING)

'Voytek Kurtyka is an artist and his art is alpinism' – Barry Blanchard

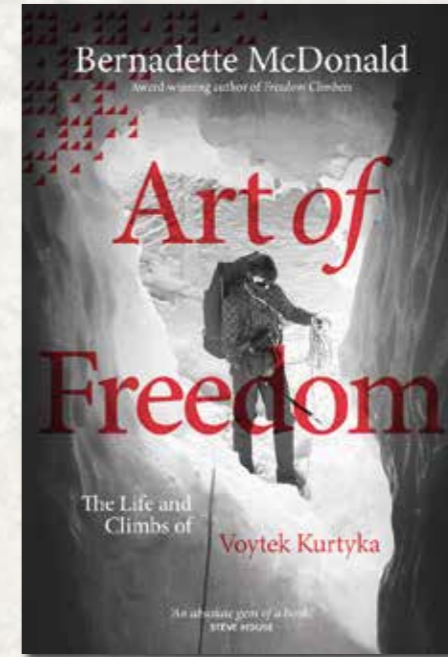
Where to start in a book of very significant mountaineering cultural and historical value?

How about at the start in which Bernadette McDonald recounts the efforts of Christian Trommsdorff, mountain guide and Chair of the Piolets d' Or Awards (essentially the Oscars of the mountaineering world, recognising the boldest and most innovative climbs) writes, repeatedly, to Kurtyka, to invite him to the Awards ceremony. The initial invitation is as a member of the Jury, and latterly, as a recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award. The extracts from the emails that Kurtyka wrote in response to the invitations give a glimpse of the psychology, shyness and character of the man. The finest alpinists in the world are desperate to induct Kurtyka in to the Piolets d'Or Lifetime Achievement Award hall of fame, and he refuses, confused by the attention and objecting to any form of competition or hierarchy in mountaineering.

It would be fair to observe that mountaineers can be a) idiosyncratic, b) averse to rules, and c) have a penchant for suffering. It would be fair to opine that Polish mountaineers generally, and Kurtyka in particular, led the mountaineering world in these qualities. From raising the grade of hardest known winter climb by a Polish climber in the Tatras in 1970, aged 23 (from VI to VI+), to climbing The Empire Strikes Back (8a) aged fifty six, Kurtyka did things very much his own way. The hard way. The very hard way. His 'CV' includes eleven of the hardest greatest walls in the world, six of them on 8000m peaks. However he didn't log his climbs, he only logged his bivouacs, seemingly the more unplanned and hideously inhospitable the better.

The book follows the 'traditional' route of a biography from childhood, via the 'first climb', to the progression through grades in Poland, Europe and the Greater Ranges, and on towards the latter years of Kurtyka's life. Notice I never used the phrase 'slowing down'.

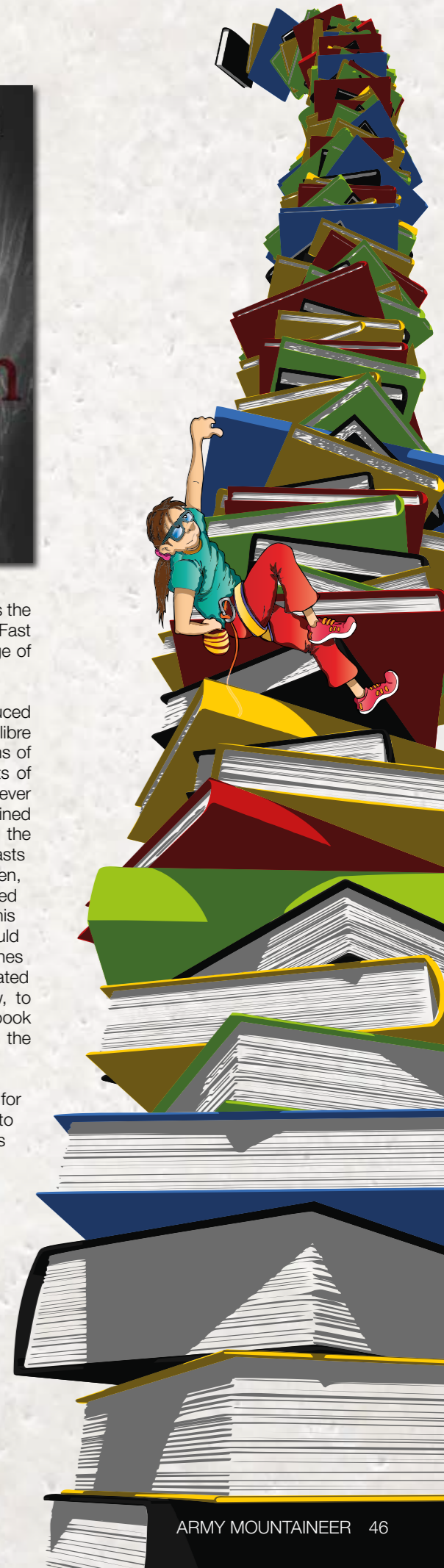
Stand out bits of the book for me include: the resourcefulness of Eastern European climbers in the 1970's, his first winter ascent of Trollveggen (the Troll wall), and, in particular, the 'night naked' ascents of Cho Oyu and Shishapangma ("on this second 8,000er they would again climb night naked – one single push with just four chocolate bars, three bottles of liquid, thirty metres of seven-millimetre rope and four pitons. They even left their harnesses behind"). Additionally the chapter on the 1984 ascent of Gasherbrum IV illuminates




why that climb is still often regarded as the stand out ascent of the last century. Fast and light alpinism at the very very edge of the humanly possible.

In the 1970's and 1980's Poland produced a significant number of very high calibre mountaineers, particularly in the realms of super fast ascents and winter ascents of the world's highest mountains. However the line, the style and the ethics remained more important to Kurtyka than the summit. Additionally, the book casts light on a number of occasions when, for whatever reason, Kurtyka returned to base camp to sit out an ascent. This spiritual awareness, intuition and, it could be argued, elitist approach to unique lines on the worlds biggest walls ingratiated him in different ways, then and now, to the mountaineering community. The book goes a long way to situate Kurtyka in the hierarchy of greatest ever alpinists.

The book closes with a success for Christian Trommsdorff in managing to persuade Kurtyka to attend the Piolets d'Or Awards in 2016 and receive the Lifetime Achievement Award. Of course Kurtyka tweaked the choreography of the event, and invited his fellow climbing partners from his major ascents up on to the stage during the ceremony. Still doing things his way.





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Ever wondered who's out there but didnt know where to look?

The AMA has started a database of army climbing and mountaineering clubs. See the Database page within the Members' area for details. Add your clubs' details by emailing the AMA Webmaster at Army.Mountaineer.Webmaster@gmail.com

Something for the Winter?

An overview of a few of the DMM Winter products for 2017/18.

Freedom Leash

Enjoy the benefits and freedom of leashless climbing without the risk of losing your tools. Perfect for both beginner and advanced climbers tackling long committing routes and all round winter climbing.



At one end, the oversize attachment loop allows easy larks-footing to your harness. The loops at the end of each tether allow a small connector to be used to attach the leash to your axes. Half way down each tether you will notice a small clip in point, so what is that all about? Even though these leashes are not rated as PPE, and only have a marked breaking strength of 2kN, we have witnessed them hold small body weight 'slumps': Think crampon points sneaking off that edge and the climber's weight coming on to the axes, whilst the hands come off the handles... now you have a fully extended leash and you cannot reach your tools. Rather than hand over hand up the slim tether, simply place a quickdraw in the mid point loop and gingerly pull up to reunite yourself with your axes, gather yourself, and push on.

Top Tip- Leashes are more likely to accidentally part with your axes if you have a metal-on-metal junction. We'd recommend using a small section of 5/6mm cord securely tied into a loop through the spike of the axe to allow rotation and decrease the chances accidental unclipping.

DMM Cirque Axe

DMM's classic walking and mountaineering axe. The popular workhorse walking and mountaineering axe is now even sleeker and stronger. The new handle provides superb grip and the fully T-rated pick and shaft provides ultimate security in self-arrest and belay building. Now also available in a hammer option for when the going gets steeper and two axes are required. A perfect pairing for lightweight semi technical mountaineering.



DMM Raptor Axe

Probably one of the most versatile tools available for mountaineering, winter walking and classic climbs.

Developed in conjunction with guides and mountaineering



instructors, the Raptor is a classic tool that is built to last. The aggressive alpine picks deal easily with steep couloirs, ridges, glacier work and yet are still effective at self-arrests. The full size hammer and adze can cope with everything from cutting steps to chopping ledges, from bashing pegs to digging out belays. The gently curved shaft allows extra clearance whilst swinging and daggering, yet does not hinder hammering, step cutting, or plunging the tools.

Reviews

"A refined design makes this a superb all-rounder, with plenty of technical juice in the tank for classic mountaineering, yet without being overkill for hillwalking on less steep terrain" – UKC

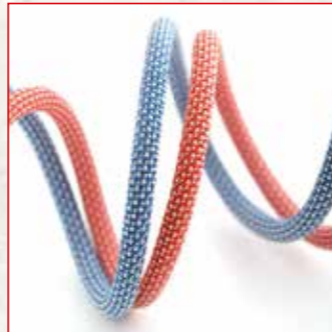
DMM Vault

Applying their metalworking experience to a product traditionally made of plastic has enabled DMM to maximise torsional rigidity and security, creating a racking carabiner that keeps your ice screws safely in place and easily accessible.



DMM Couloir Rope

UIAA Dry treated, light, and with low impact forces, the Couloir is an ideal half rope for alpine and winter climbing. The handling characteristics are exceptional – supple and conforming, but with a reassuring firm feel to inspire confidence. The tightly woven sheath helps longevity and also keeps things smooth for belaying, abseiling and clipping. Winner of the Alpinist Mountain standards award.



Reviews

"What gives these ropes five stars is their exceptional water repellency and abrasion resistance. They work great in below-freezing temps and for alpine climbing."—Alpinist Mountain Standards Blog

BOA HMS Screwgate

This is the 'Big Daddy' of lockers – the ultimate rigging biner and one which is super strong and super tough.



It is large enough to accommodate several knots and has a very wide gate opening – just what you need in a rigging situation. All of which makes it a great centre use biner, but the story doesn't end there.

Despite its name, the Big Boa is surprisingly light; by giving it an I-Beam construction we've reduced the overall weight by almost 25%. Add in the fact that it is easy to handle in gloves and the appeal to winter climbers is obvious. Also available in DMM colour packs for easy identification.

Super Couloir Harness

Need a harness for winter sports – well, you've come to the right place. The Super Couloir is designed for ice climbing, alpine climbing, mountaineering and ski touring; you could even use it for rock climbing but we'd probably recommend something a bit more padded for that.



It's light, easy to put on (even when wearing crampons, skis or snowshoes) and has plenty of racking for gear and screws. The 'diaper' pull through leg loops design allows you to put it on without undoing any cumbersome buckles (a task especially difficult with gloves on) or standing into the leg loops.

We've used 'supported' 44mm webbing on the waistbelt – this is surprisingly comfortable on hanging belays, it's also low profile so it will fit snugly under your rucksac.

This harness has proved a firm favourite with the DMM team of winter gear testers, which includes top alpinists such as Nick Bullock

DMM Grippy Grip Tape

Last but by no means least Perfect for keeping your axe in your hand for that bit longer, also adding insulation from the cold on technical mixed routes where hot aches are only a matter of time.



Customise any axe in the DMM range by wrapping this round the shaft, increasing the hand position options for any sort of winter excursion.

All DMM products are available at significant discount to AMA members. Please see the Members Area of the AMA website for further details

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Garmin Vivo Active HR

Reviewed by Sean Mackey



For many years my go to watch for exercise and outdoor activities has been the Suunto Vector. I've had three of them and they have always had exactly what I have wanted. This has mainly consisted of a large clear face that is easy to read and an altimeter function that is simple to work even with thick winter gloves. My move over to the Garmin Vivoactive HR was partly for a change and to see what other Garmin watch owners were raving about. I have been impressed.

Straight out of the box its felt like a step up from my old suunto, whose design hasn't changed much in the past decade or so, with easy to navigate features and a slim-line, light weight design. Standard attributes such as stop watch, waterproof to 50m and backlights can be personalised via its intuitive program as it interacts with other devices via Bluetooth. It has a battery life of around ten days before needing a single hours recharge, which I thought would annoy me as a limitation, but hasn't so far. However, if I had little or no access

to a charging point while on expedition or in a remote location the whole system would fall down and I'd be wearing an expensive bracelet.

The built in training apps allows you to track your running, cycling and strength training (to name a few) and analyse your performance against your heart rate, once registered online against others too. While this might not appeal to every outdoor enthusiast its does mitigate the need for other training watches and allows to you work or train in a heart rate zone.

The built in GPS will track your walk or run and overlay them onto a map either on your phone, computer or tablet. This is in itself useful but with a simple download it will display a ten figure grid reference of your location in a variety of formats (Lat/Long, BNG or MGRS grid for example) on your watch face and another similar download will display your altitude. As suunto owners are aware the altimeter function on their watches works off atmospheric pressure

via a built in barometer. As you ascend a slope the pressure will change and you'll have to keep updating your precise height from a map every so often to keep the watch calibrated. The vivoactive HR doesn't have a barometer and therefore this isn't an issue as the altitude is taken from the GPS and not the air pressure around them. While this does make the altitude function much more user friendly the Garmin's lack of a barometer means you'll rely on weather reports or a separate barometer for sudden storms or weather changes.

Overall, I would recommend the vivoactive HR as a basic GPS and training watch. It doesn't have all the functions of a complete outdoor watch but its 80% there. If I wanted more features and better training analysis (and I had the money) I would go for a Garmin Fenix 5 or if I didn't want to be charging the watch every 10 days I would stick with a Suunto.

An AMA reflection and an ACF look forward

I have worked for the last seven years as a leadership consultant developing and delivering a Senior Leadership course for the NHS. We develop individuals through experiential learning, carrying out tasks in teams and using video to review their interactions and the dynamics within the group. On the second module, one DS works with a group of eight on an iterative cycle of doing and reviewing. The DS observes the process as the members work together on a wicked problem from their work place, then helps the group give each other feedback on their process. It requires great concentration over extended periods.

At the end of the first week, after our hot wash up, all my colleagues were talking about how shattered they were and how much they were looking forward to their weekend. I wasn't feeling that way at all, I was just looking forward to getting on the train and enjoying my first gin and tonic! I decided I must not have been working as hard as them and resolved to work harder next time.

Next course came and I concentrated on process, picking up the verbal and non-verbal interactions, highlighting the ones members didn't and challenging individuals on their behaviours, just as I had on the first course. Because I was consciously thinking about it, I knew I had worked as hard as I could and still I did not seem as exhausted as my colleagues (the majority of whom were ex military). I reflected long and hard on what this might be about.

At the end of one of our third modules, during which we get some members to act as observers for one exercise, one of the members who had been in my group for the second module came up to me to thank me and to say how hard he had found being an observer. He concluded by asking how I managed to do it for four whole days on Mod 2! I told him the story above and add my conclusion:

'When you are at altitude, on a rock ridge, climbing in big boots at the limit of



your own ability (I was never the greatest rock climber!) with two young novices on your rope, there is no way off, you are committed, you watch them as much as you can because they are young and can switch off and you are still responsible for their safety, you are concentrating on your own climbing, concentrating on your rope work, and it is physically demanding too and it goes on for ten hours or more, that's what I find exhausting - sitting in a room with eight other people, not so much!

I think we undervalue the transferable skills we gain from our involvement in climbing and mountaineering. I know we talk about the reasons we carry out AT and extol the virtues of team work, operating in challenging environments and managing dynamic risk. AT does develop all of these skills, but from a psychological view point climbing and mountaineering develop above all the ability to focus, to cognitively manage stress and develop the mental resilience to keep going.

These are key abilities for personnel at every level of our organisation and the great thing is through climbing and mountaineering, we develop them while we think we are having fun! In this seventy year anniversary of the AMA, we should take some pride in the thought that we have made guerrilla contributions to military capability through out all these years and will continue to do so for many years to come.

Before I took over as Chairman, I was Project Officer responsible for the expeditions we carried out to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the AMA and my reward was to participate in the best mountaineering expedition I have ever been on; it was not the highest, nor the most technical climbing, but it was probably the most gruelling. We carried out exploratory alpine mountaineering in a totally uninhabited and

unexplored area of NE Greenland. The terrain was unremittingly hard, the scale of the glaciated valleys was huge and the maps were Johnny aged two with a crayon and a good imagination once you left the valley! The only thing in our favour was we could not get benighted; it was summer and we had twenty four hour daylight! That did make for some long, long days though. But it was a unique experience and one I would not have had without the AMA.

I have now been appointed as ACF National Adviser for AT & Other Challenging Pursuits (OCP) and although it is taking some time to move from being a Reserve Officer to an ACF Officer (the computer systems don't talk to each other!) I am luck enough to have instructed at the Cadet Centre for Adventurous Training for some years now and through that have met many CFAVs and senior cadets. I have therefore been able to test the water as it were and work out things are awry. Despite 73% of cadets saying AT is the activity they most enjoy of their cadet experience, it is not a core curriculum subject at any of their star levels, whereas for instance physical training is. Whilst everyone recognises that of all the activities cadets do AT is the one that develops most of the personal attributes the Cadet Charter purports to develop (teamwork, loyalty, resilience, self confidence, dependability etc), much AT is bought in from civilian organisations who concentrate on hard skills and whose instructors may not be able to develop the soft skills we value.

There are systemic and cultural reasons for this which I hope to be able to help address in order to ensure cadets gain the advantages they can from AT, because not all of them will go on to be able to enjoy the opportunities we in the services have for AT. I am sure the AMA will play some part in this endeavour in the future as well.

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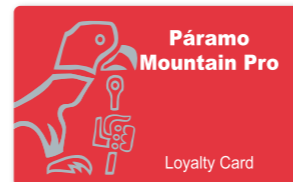
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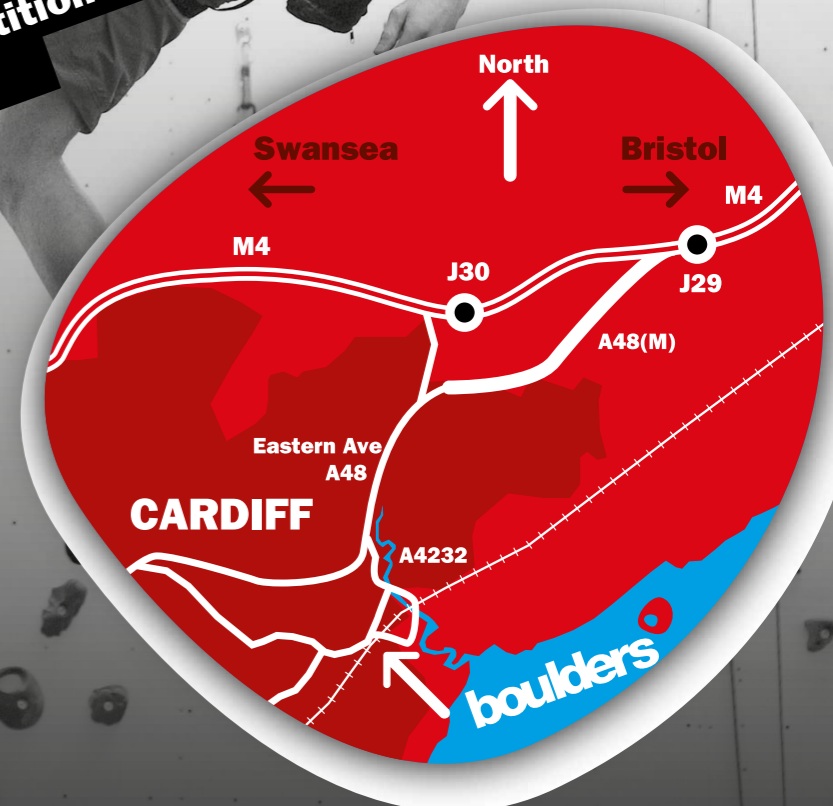
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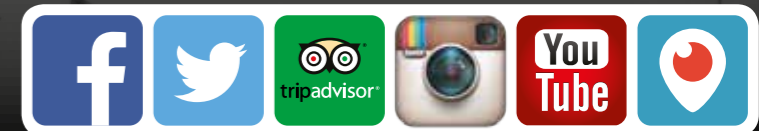
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