



ARMY MOUNTAINEER

THE JOURNAL OF THE ARMY MOUNTAINING ASSOCIATION



Winter 1994

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SUMMER 1994 EDITION

Please send your contributions for the Summer 1994 edition to the editor by the end of May 1994. Photographs and slides (which will be returned) should be accompanied by a suitable caption.

Sketches, maps and cartoons are also welcomed and article subjects can be off-beat as well as main stream climbing / mountaineering.

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CONTENTS

CALIFORNIA SUN	2
ANNAPURNA: An account of the British Joint Services Annurpurna II & IV Expedition.	4
JOINT SERVICES ANNURPURNA 2 & 4 EXPEDITIONS	8
WHITE MOUNTAIN	9
CHASING THE DRAGON Rock Climbing in Hong Kong	10
Ex. SAVAGE HIGHLANDER 1992	11
Ex. ULTIMATE CHALLENGE	14
ASTRAL REACH	16
VICKINGS ON THE MOUNTAIN	19
Ex. CHAMONIX CHALLENGE	20
GORTEX WORLD CLIMBING FINALS	21
BOOK REVIEW <i>MIXED EMOTIONS</i> By Greg Child	21
Ex. HINKU HEAVEN	22
BOOK REVIEWS <i>THE CLIMBERS</i> By Chris Bonnington <i>PEOPLE IN HIGH PLACES</i> By Audrey Salkeld	23

on the cover

The Head of the Hinku Valley

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California Sun

It was hot, damn hot, the temperature in the shade was just below 100 degrees F. We were in the shade, but the route was in the sun and it would be throughout the 2 days we planned to take to climb it. So this was Yosemite in July, it was cooking now as the guide book had promised.

We had been forced out of the valley earlier on in our trip when the tail end of Hurricane Darby had swept up the west coast bringing with it days of low cloud, dramatic thunder storms, and torrential rain which reduced Camp 4 to a really squalid state. Yes it is possible for that shanty town of climbers, bums, dropouts and confused tourists who wished they had booked into a nice hotel to degenerate into a greater level of chaos.

With the arrival of the rain John and I had headed east to Owne's River Gorge. We made the 4 hour car journey on the strength of a magazine article. The Gorge is in the desert near the small town of Bishop to the east of the Sierra Nevada and is promoted as a sports climbing area. What we found was an industrial waste-land in a long deep trench in the desert. The routes are 20-45m long and protected by bolts at 3m intervals with 2 lower off hooks at the top which allows the 2nd to be belayed from the bottom. The climbing is steep and fingery and lacks any real variety or character. It was hot and dusty and most certainly very different. The Gorge did however provide us with 3 days of climbing when the only activity available in the valley was drying out kit and drinking. (There is a free camp site nearby, but take your own drinking water. Bishop has good facilities, especially the hot springs 4 miles to the south of the town.) En route back to the valley we stopped off at Dexter's Canyon. At 8000' over-looking the desert and with views of the high Sierras the camp site is spectacular. The climbing at Dexter's Canyon cannot be commented on as we did not find it!

Before the rains in Yosemite we had a week of climbing in the valley with Rich Winfield. He had been there for two weeks before our arrival, climbing with anybody short of a partner. (He had headed back to UK in the middle of July to be a best man. He was taking his duties very seriously by actually going to the wedding.) In that week we completed the following: The Central Pillar of Frenzy, a 5 pitch 5.9 Yosemite classic. The Log Arrow Spire was a traverse back to the main cliff from the top. This was a superb expedition involving a totally committing 300' abseil down a 1800' crag followed by a pendulum to get to the climb, a 3 pitch 5.10/A2 introduction to mixed free and aid climbing (without any of the correct aid kit), a short theory lesson in juggling taken on the top of the

spire and the practical confirmation carried out on the mind-blowing 150' Tyrolean traverse from the top of the spire back to the top of the main cliff. We also jammed our retreat ropes for a couple of worrying hours, but this is optional and certainly not recommended.

The first pitch of Outer Limits was completed as a bit of a team effort. This 160' of sustained 5.10a and 5.10b jamming and laybacking has an effect on the human body similar to being strapped in a multi-gym for a couple of hours of beasting followed by some heavy-duty circuit training. It is a great climb but very physical. We also completed some shorter cragging routes of which the following are to be recommended:

Bummer, 5.10c, and Lazy Bum 5.10d, on Sunnyside Bench Shuttle Madness 5.9, and Synapse Collapse 5.10a, on the Glacier Apron.

The 3rd pitch of AKA Right Side of The Book which involves a 5.10d endurance finger layback was too difficult for us and we had to bail out. The 1st 2 pitches of the route are to be recommended though.

Following the desert trip, John and I took a couple of days to re-establish ourselves in the valley. We had to go through the rigmarole of booking into Camp 4 again as 2 people due to the park rules limiting the number of nights you can stay. (\$2 per person a night.) We climbed the brilliant 3 pitches of Serenity Crack (5.10d) and revisited Outer Limits to work out.

We then made the 4 hour trip to San Francisco to pick up Dave Bunting and

'Robbo' Roberts from the airport. Our £100 a week (including 3rd party damage waiver) compact hire car just took the 4 of us and the shopping. There are big advantages to be had by buying as much food as you can in supermarkets outside the valley. Back in the valley and onto the rock. The weather was now more settled and we took the chance to grab some longer routes. Robbo and Dave followed our initial routine of the Hidden Pillar and then Lost Arrow. They then did the outstanding Snake Dike on Half Dome (8 Pitches of 5.7). John and I raced up the equally good Crest Jewel (9 pitches, 5.10a) on North Dome in a couple of minutes over 2 hours. It was at this stage that big wall fever bit. It did not take John and myself very long to talk ourselves into The South Face of



Engineering on the Kor Roof

Washington Column, after all it is only 9 pitches over 2 days and half of it is free at 5.9. The aid is A2 but there is no pinning to be done and there was no way the Kor Roof could be as difficult as people said, not on the 'most popular grade 5 in the valley'. We spent a day borrowing kit and had a bit of a practise with it on a 5 bolt problem in the valley.

The haul bag weighed the most, but only just. 3 gallons of precious water sealed in protective containers, our pits, rain gear, bivy kit, food, two 50m ropes, first aid kit and a bolting kit we were not really sure we knew how to use. The sack had another 2 ropes, a rack of 20 friends, 100 crabs, 40 nuts on wire, and then there were the aiders, jugs, slings and pulleys. This was not climbing as we knew it, this was more akin to engineering. The final part of the walk-in is steep and was in the direct glare of the early afternoon sun. The start of the climb was marked by a scrap of familiar paper, the issue instructions for Petzl jugs. Our confidence soared. The 1st pitch was climbed free by John. As he started to haul, the bag jammed so I started to climb. After another hour of toil we had established ourselves at belay 1. Pitch 2 was a straightforward aid crack. 2 hours later after a protracted fight with aiders, slings, bits of string and 40 nuts that were too big or too small, I had belayed. It only took 3/4 of an hour to haul (1 jam) and clean the pitch of jugs, we thought we were getting the hang of it. Pitch 3 told us we were not, but it was only a 1 hour fight with the haul bag. Dehydrated and tired we stood at the top of pitch 3. The Dinner Ledge. This is the bivy ledge. The plan was to use the remaining 4 hours of daylight to fix the next 2 pitches. The Kor Roof, and then return to this ledge for the night.

We looked up, our necks craned backwards, 'that is a big overhang.'

After 2 and a bit hours sitting on the ledge, I was bored. Aid climbing is not a spectator sport and the Awanee Hotel pool is not close enough to make it interesting viewing. I should have brought a book to read. Eventually John had belayed and the ropes were fixed over the initial overhang. I pushed the jugs up and stood to take the gear out. I would then take a small involuntary swing and then repeat the process. The swings get bigger as the rock went through vertical and back to horizontal with me hanging under it in free space.

'Christ, how did he get over this? How do I?'

Push up, reach, must gain another bit of height, try pushing up the jugs, they will not move. A frantic fight follows:

'Oh **** I am stuck on the lip, the rope is in tension and the jugs are chock-a-block against each other and a crab, I am going nowhere.' I yell upwards at John.

We abandoned any hopes of fixing the next pitch and retreated to the bivy ledge. John cleaned the pitch and recovered the pieces of my discarded harness from the rope. After a disturbed nights sleep we quickly but painfully re-established ourselves at the previous night's high spot. I also discovered 1st hand that it is impossible to free yourself from a body harness a 100' up a free hanging fixed rope. A small consolation is that my stomach only gave me 30 seconds warning, so I did not have time to dwell on my predicament. John tried to tolerate the smell and haul up the rope. The rope was having none of it. We looked down and 150' below we could see the end of

the rope snaking into a crack. We left the rope there and climbed the rest of the roof for the experience. Bailing from a route is never an easy decision to make, but bail we did. Six hours later we had recovered all of our kit and retreated to the sanctuary of the valley floor and Haagen-Daz ice cream. It was with much amusement that we sat and watched another suspended 2nd hang without moving from the lip for a couple of hours.



Getting the hang of it on pitch 2

Robbo and Dave had decided to go for the trade route on Half Dome in a day. The route is only 26 pitches long! On completion of the 4 hour walk in, they fixed the 1st 2 pitches after a small epic, only to be told by a Korean party that they were not on the route. Back on the ground the Koreans tell them that they are now standing on the very spot where 'their senior' was killed the previous year. There was no need to enquire how, as 2 coffin sized rocks and a figure of 8 crashed into the ground next to them courtesy of another Korean party on the rock. Undaunted, they ate a small snack, cached the rest of their limited food and water in a tree and hit the sack. Bears like tinned sardines and they will go to the trouble of climbing a tree and opening a tin to get them. All their food and water was trashed. They had no option but to return to the valley only to find that John and I had done a runner up to the relatively cooler Tuolumne Meadows at 8000'.

Two days later we met up again. We recommend the following routes at the meadows:

South Crack, 5.6, 6 pitches
Footnote, 5.10c, 1 pitch
Table of Contents, 5.10d, 4 pitches
West Crack, 5.9, 4 pitches
Regular Route on Fairview, 5.9, 8 pitches

It was time for John and I to return to UK via the shops of San Francisco. Robbo and Dave still had another 2 weeks of California sun but that is their story.

ANNAPURNA

By S R Wilson

"NO SANCTUARY"

An account of the British Joint Services Annapurna II and IV Expedition.

The rhythm of the jumar rattling up the rope followed closely by a heave and a step began to lull me into a sense of security. In the darkness of night the fixed rope up to Camp One was like a railway line, and as a train trusts its rails to guide it through the night, I relied upon the rope to lead me safely to my destination. Around me the gray tones of the snow fields had no scale, only shades. The sky like a dark curtain drawn across the horizon, pierced only by the multitude of stars covering the heavens. The air was crisp and cold as it entered my lungs, giving up its oxygen reluctantly to my gasping body. But among all this there was peace and calm that reached my very core. I began to think of the events that had led me to this point.

A year earlier I had been trying my best to acquire a place on the British Services Everest Expedition. When I first heard of an expedition to climb Manaslu (8163m), I quickly sent a climbing CV to the leader, Maj Mick Trueman of AMTC Silberhutte. To my delight I was soon a member of the twelve strong expedition. In late September the objective was changed to Annapurna 2 and 4, due to the massive increase in 8000m peak fees. By mid March we had arrived in Katmandu and after a weeks preparation we departed for Bessesahar, where the road ended. From there we began the walk in via the Annapurna circuit. On March 31st we had established a base camp to the North of Annapurna 4 at a height of 3700m.

The location of base camp was breathtaking, surrounded on three sides by massive snow covered walls of rock. With the mouth of the valley opening out to the North and Tibet. The North East face of Annapurna 3 towered over the whole area, and with its regular avalanches it constantly reminded us of its presence. After settling into the pace of expedition life and acclimatising to the thinner air we began to push the route up the mountain. The paired teams worked in turn to put in one camp at a time. All went well and by April 17th Camp 3 was established. The lead from Camp 2 to Camp 3 was the most technically difficult. Climbed with a pioneering style by Brian Tilley and Mark Samuels.

Once stocked with supplies Lothar Kuehlein and myself occupied Camp 3, with a view to pushing on to Camp 4. That was not to be! After climbing to the final burgshrund before the rounded dome of the ridge top, we found ourselves forced back to our tent by an incoming storm, that pinned us down for the next three days. Late on the third day we received a radio call, from base camp. It had been decided to clear the mountain total to rest at base. We took no time in clearing Camp 3, and in heavy snow we made our way down. Picking up each supporting group as we passed through the lower camps. Finally making lower base by midnight, and only then by luck in the total whiteout of the continuing storm.

The next morning could have been the very first morning. A thick blanket of snow covered everything in view. There was no sign of our tracks, in fact there was no sign of life at all. The clear blue sky and still air made it seem as though the mountain gods were resting after their anger. We spent the next three days resting and preparing our kit for the next push. The weather held out, and we were teased by crystal clear views of the mountain throughout the days. After being re-arranged into new teams it was time to head back to the mountain. I was now climbing with Nick Arding and Dave Evans, the two Royal Marine officers that had

shown outstanding fitness in the effort to load the camps with stores. We were the first to leave Base Camp, and after sitting out the hottest part of the day at advance base, we then set off into the night heading for Camp 1.

I pushed the jumar up the rope for the infinite time, but as I pulled back there was no resistance. As if in slow motion I fell backwards, a total prisoner of gravity, with my hand still clutching the failed jumar I found myself looking skyward. Luckily for me, my heavily laden began had sunk into the soft snow and halted me immediately. I looked down to see the ice covered jaws of the jumar sparkling in the moonlight. Quickly righting myself I was reminded that there was a very thin line between relaxing and being careless in this alien environment. After clearing the jumar I continued, with the others, to Camp 1 without any further incident.

Over the next two days we made our way up through the higher camps. Then past the previous high point up onto the ridge line. Unfortunately, by now Nick was very weak due to a stomach bug he had not managed to clear. At 6500m the body does not recover from even the

most minor infection. Chest coughs and headaches were our permanent companions. We had to stop short of the site of Camp 4 on the first night because Nick was moving so slowly. He was making a gallant effort, maintaining his sense of humour all the time. The next day we moved the camp about 600m horizontally to its correct position. Nick was getting worse and it was soon obvious that he would have to descend to recover. Dave and I formulated a plan to give him a shot at the summit. When we woke the next morning the weather was very changeable and our concerns turned to Nick's

health. Luckily we were joined by Sammy and Brian by midday. This left Dave clear to escort Nick down the hill to safety.

By this stage all the camps below us were loaded with the other teams. During the next few days, while the others moved up to Camp 4, we made several recces of the ridge above. The way to the next camp was not going to be as straight forward as we had hoped. To the left there was a heavily crevassed area that prevented us climbing the face. To the right hand side, the ridge dropped steeply into the Annapurna Sanctuary, making the climbing very exposed. The way to the more rounded upper section of the ridge was barred by a series of aretes and vertical steps.

Camp 4 was first occupied by us on April 29th. By the morning of May 3rd we had re-arranged the teams back into pairs, as the groups of three we had been put into did not fit logistics. The tents, rations and ropes all worked better when divided by two. Glyn and myself set off first followed by Rod and Lothar then finally Brian and Sammy. The two girls, Vicky and Gail, were to be our backup from Camp 4. We climbed onto the ridge with a sense of uncertainty in our minds. Taking it very carefully to begin with, until we found the confidence that only comes from prolonged exposure to danger and your own fear. Then as fast as our bodies could cope with the rarefied air, we made good time and were soon well ahead of the others. From the top of one crest we could see the route stretch out below us. The other teams were still moving up behind us, but not with the same speed.

By now there was a slight breeze blowing from the South, pulling wisps of cloud off the Sanctuary and hurling them high over our heads. Machapurchre (6993m) stood alone above a sea of cloud that spread to the



The Team at Base Camp

horizon. The fish tail peaks of the mountain giving its identity away from any angle. We seemed to be level with the summit, or were we? It did not matter, the panorama that rolled out in front of us must be one of the most beautiful in the world. The rasping pain of high altitude climbing being the accepted price of viewing.

We made good time, and before long broke out onto the upper part of the ridge. By now the wind had picked up to gale force. Our body temperatures were beginning to drop. Luckily at about 1500 hrs we found a small sheltered niche just over the cornice to our left. Out of the wind we put on our down clothing without hardly saying a word. Soon we were joined by Rod and Lothar who took the opportunity to gear up and rest. We were all very tired and the topic of whether to stop in the location we were, or to continue arose. I personally wanted to push on, to make the summit day as short as possible. The others decided to climb for one more hour and then find the first good camp site. As we moved back onto the crest we could see Brian and Sammy approaching. The next hour was a blue, each step taking all our resolve to continue. Finally we found a scoop that was just big enough to take our Super Nova tent. Above us towered the summit, and after a quick glance at the altimeter our height was 6990m. We dug a small ledge between the four of us, and erected the tent. It was good to feel ourselves finally getting closer to the top. That night we all fell into our bags exhausted. The plan was to go for the summit the next day. This decision was made all the easier due to the extreme discomfort of the cramped tent. The night passed slowly with the storm raging outside as severe as the one in our heads.

When the morning came there was no change in the weather. Pinned down in the tent our only link to the outside world was the radio. We spoke to Brian and Sammy, who were being buried under a constant shower of spindrift. Then to base camp, to give a sitrep. The six of us decided to sit it out until the next day, but we all agreed that another night with all four of us in the tent would have to be the last. I will always remember that night as the worst of my life. Cramped into the door, unable to lay flat on my back. The sleeping drugs (tamazipan) only making me feel worse. I can still remember waking from a drowsy state to find myself screaming, to be released from this captive hell. Rod was awake beside me and offered some pain killers to help me sleep.

The morning broke clear and still, perfect conditions for the final push. We could not believe our luck. This was the break we all needed. Brian and Sammy were on for the summit attempt from their slightly lower camp, once they had dug their way out. Now it was time to find that inner strength that all mountaineers require to push themselves past the limits of reason. Into the fragile state where your mind is your worst enemy. It constantly weighs up the odds between success, failure and death or injury. Against all this you must keep you cool, because as each link in a chain is vital so is each member of the team.

Glyn and I were ready first, and began to move along the rounded ridge. It felt good to get away from the tent and to be free. the freedom that you only feel when you are on the edge, in total control of your own destiny. We moved well together and made good time up the increasingly steeper slope. Looking back down to camp 5, we could see the other two

pairs moving up behind us. So we continued a few steps at a time, gasping for breath to feed our oxygen starved bodies. During another rest we saw that there was now a party of three below us, instead of four. Someone must have turned back, we later found out that it was Lothar. We pushed on and soon broke out onto the summit ridge.

To the South, Nepal opened out below us. I'm sure I could see all the way to India. The summit of Annapurna 2 (7937m) had no rivals, still two miles away it looked as fearsome as ever. The rocky pyramid looked to be a real sting in the tail. To the right was our goal, Annapurna 4 (7525m).



Kuehlheim and Willson resting on load carry to Camp 2

The route was via a very narrow snow ridge with large drops down both sides. We dumped our packs at the point where the ridge steepened and then I led off up the crest on a full rope run out. The white diamond beneath my feet became smaller with each step, until I could go no further. Was I there? I turned a full 360 degrees, soaking up the atmosphere, before dropping to the snow. I pulled the rope in hand over hand until Glyn appeared. He moved towards me slowly, with Annapurna 2 as his backdrop. I could see him smiling all the way. He took my hand and shook it, then said "Thanks Steve". With a lump in my throat, and tears in my eyes, I replied: "Well done mate, we started the climb together and we've finished it together."

It was 1245 pm on the 5th May 1992 a true high point in my life. We took a few photographs and then the cold forced us to descend. Passing the other team as we left the crest and dropped back onto the face, we wished them luck and told them it was not far to the top. The descent was hard, and after a rest with Lothar at camp 5, we continued down to camp 4. We were glad to see Gail and Vicky there with some hot food and a tent ready for us. We needed their support, as by now exhaustion had taken its toll and we were ready to collapse.

Over the next three days everyone made their way down the mountain but not without injury. Rod had suffered frost bite of his nose and fingers during his summit bid. Lothar had also been slightly frost bitten on his hand and had begun to show symptoms of High Altitude Cerebral Oedema, that fortunately cleared as he descended. Glyn and I had developed severe chest coughs that only responded to antibiotics after a few weeks. Everyone had returned and that is what really mattered in the end.

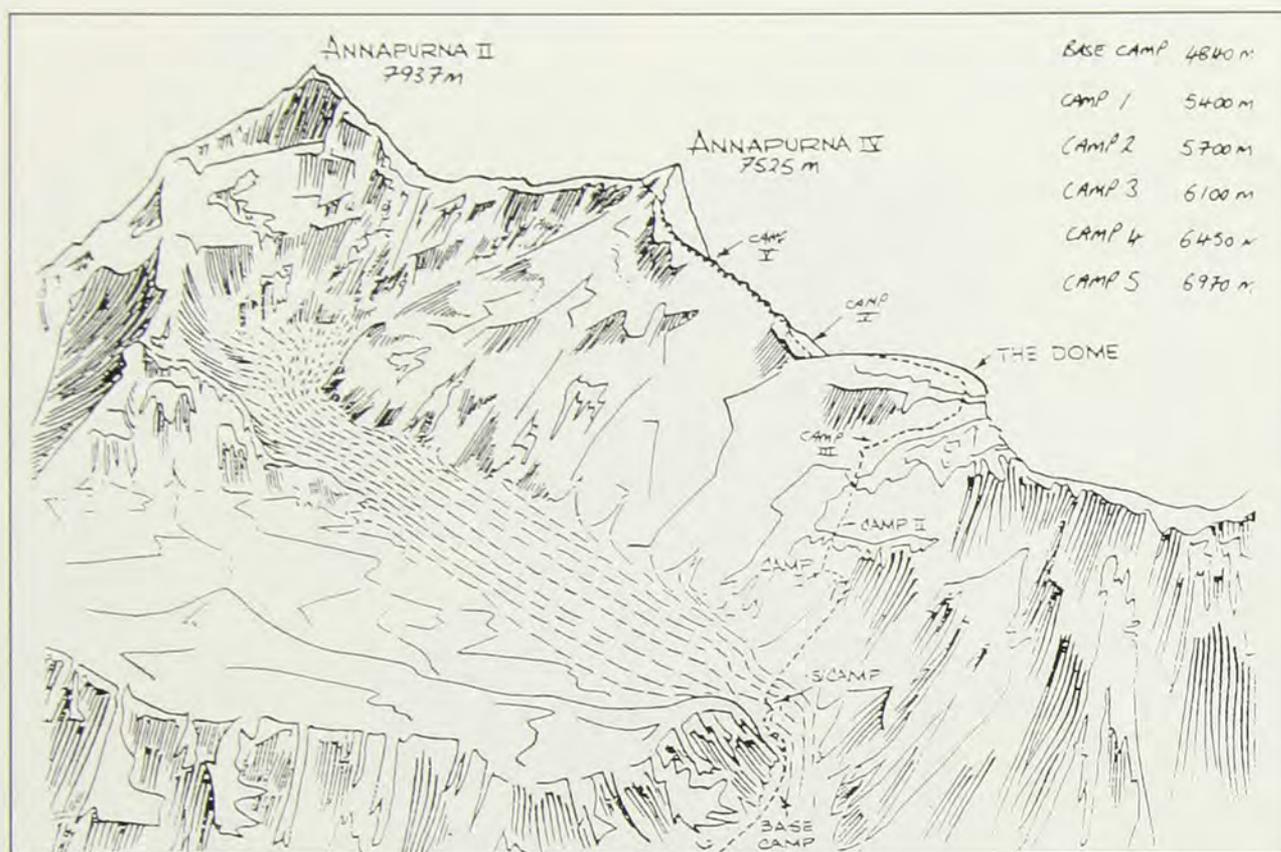
The expedition had set out to climb two of the great Himalayan peaks of the world. We had found ourselves faced with more than we could handle and a compromise had to be made. By no means an easy option, but a logistically better gamble Annapurna 4 had become our sole goal. Through hard work, by every member of the team we had been successful. The mountain had by no means been conquered. The real conquest had been that of our own weaknesses.



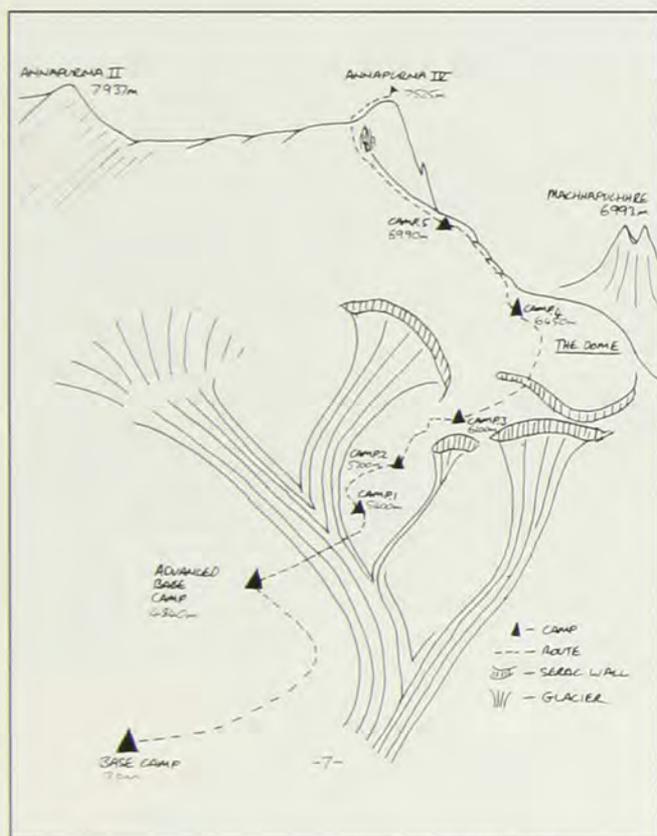
Climbing the fixed ropes upto Camp 4

The Team was:

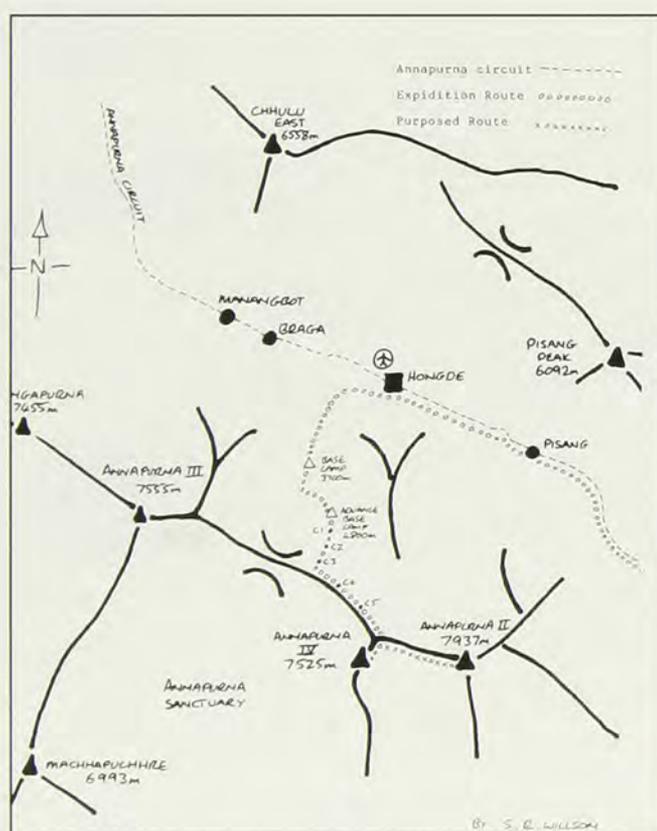
- Maj Mike Trueman Leader GR**
- Capt Nick Arding Deputy Leader RM**
- Capt Helen Robertson Exped Doctor RAMC**
- Surg Lt Rod Dunne Project Doctor RN**
- Capt Dave Evans Communications RM**



The Location of the Camps

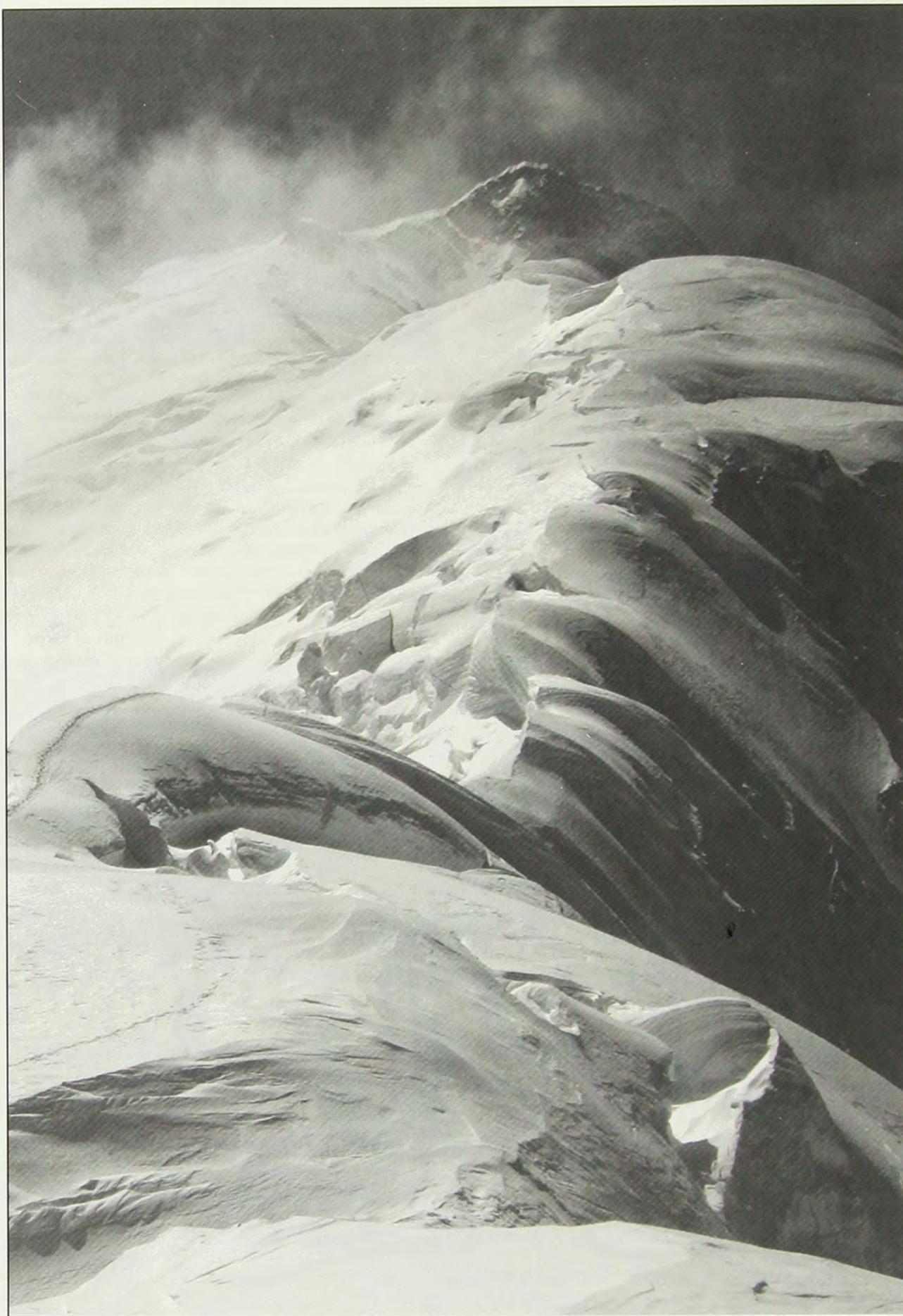


The Route from Base Camp to the sum-



Ridge Map of Expedition Route

ANNAPURNA IV FROM CAMP 4



JOINT SERVICES

ANNAPURNA 2 AND 4 EXPEDITION 1992

by QMSI Glyn Sheppard APTC

The Joint Services Annapurna 2 and 4 expedition was to be Maj Mike Trueman's final expedition prior to leaving the Army. As the commandant of the Army mountain training centre in Silberhutte he had spent the past year planning and choosing his team for this major Himalayan trip. Finally, tempting fate the team list of 12 was put together and flight tickets to Kathmandu booked:

Maj M Trueman Leader GR

Capt N Arding Deputy Leader RM

Capt H Robertson Exped Doctor RAMC

Surg Lt R Dunne Project Doctor RN

Capt G Waller QACapt D Evans RM Capt V Barraud TA

QMSI G Sheppard APTC Sgt M Samuels RAF

Cpl B Tilley RM Cpl S Wilson REME

Mr L Kuehlein AMTC

Annapurna 2, a 7937m peak was climbed by Lt Chris Bonington of the British Forces expedition in 1965. The mountain has had 30 previous attempts but only 4 of these were successful. It was last successfully climbed in 1983 and last attempted in 1985, unfortunately 2 Koreans were killed on that expedition. So we all knew to attempt this mountain would be a major undertaking. We also know to attempt Annapurna 4 at 7525, which although has had more ascents, is still no easy mountain to climb, as we were to find out.

We arrived at lower base camp after a seven day walk on the 31st March. After weeks of climbing we were ready to push for the summit. Camps had been placed strategically up to 6450m and load after load carried up the mountain. It had been decided from an early stage that we would climb the mountain without oxygen or high altitude sherpas. A decision at times that some of us regretted. None of us had any idea how exhausting the monotonous load carries would be. If only we had hired a few high altitude sherpas. Fixed ropes had been fitted on all steep sections which helped and made the climbing a lot safer, but the climbing was still extremely arduous.

We awoke on the morning of the 4th May and packed our kit. The plan was to climb Alpine style the rest of the way up the mountain (carrying all the equipment we would need). Six of us would move up in all and try and establish camp 5 at about 7000m. Steve Wilson and myself would lead with Lothar Kuehlein and Rod Dunn second. Brian Tilley and Mark Samuels would then come up last. As we set off the support team Gail Waller and Vicky Barraud wished us luck and watched as we slowly moved off.

The route at first was a delicate snow ridge leading to a series of small walls. To our right, a steep slope disappearing a few thousand feet below. We moved on making relatively goo time taking turns in leading through after each rope length. In the distance we could see the impressive north face of Machapuchre standing at nearly 7000m. Its presence made the exposure even greater as its fish like tale of snow and ice towered steeply over us. It must surely be one of the worlds most beautiful mountains.

The snow seemed to get deeper as the last wall broke out under an enormous overhanging Cornice (a tongue of overhanging snow and ice). As I roped Steve up the wall, he crawled up over the lip desperately gasping for breath. I looked at him and then the cornice and reminded him that it was his lead next! It was decided to traverse under the cornice along a snow terrace and exit hopefully out onto the top. At last we were finally climbing the mountain with our sights firmly on the summit. As we climbed onto the plateau we looked down the steep section at the others. They were well spread out and seemed to be moving very slowly. Or was it us moving very quickly?

The wind had really picked up by now and it had a ferocious bite to it. Our bodies had chilled to the bone and we were in desperate need of some shelter and something to eat. We moved on up very slowly, five steps at a time and resting until eventually finding a cornice to shelter



Cpl Wilson looking down to Tal on the Annapurna Circuit

under. Without talking to each other we instinctively reached into our rucksacks and started to change into our down suits. The altimeter showed a reading of 6800m and Steve was adamant that we should move on to at least 7000m, this would give us a better chance at the summit the following day. Rod and Lothar slowly climbed into the little shelter area, extremely exhausted they took off their sacs and sat in silence for a moment getting their breath back. After discussing the situation we agreed to move on for another hour up the steep wall behind us.

We climbed out onto the face. The wind still blowing ferociously. Sammy and Brian had now joined us and decided not to go on. They would try and put a tent up on the shelter of the cornice. Not being able to take much, we pushed on. After 2 hours of sheer pain we arrived on a small plateau and collapsed before digging our tent in for the night.

The altitude was affecting us all. With a combination of lack of oxygen and the horrendous storm which was going on outside, none of us slept that night. The four of us squashed together not being able to move, all with headaches that just wouldn't go away. The storm persisted all through the next day and everyone agreed that if the weather didn't improve by the morning we would make our way back down. Our strength was deteriorating rapidly and we prayed for a few hours sleep.

We awoke to a clear sky and radioed Sammy and Brian to inform them that we were going to make a summit bid on A4. They also decided to go for A4 and not A2 as originally planned. The weeks of hard climbing had taken far too much out of us and the storm was the final straw. The six of us would push for the summit of A4.

We dressed slowly and after vomiting repeatedly Steve and I moved off very slowly. Painstakingly, one step after another we moved further up the mountain. Steve and Lothar followed shortly after with Brian and Mark close behind them. After 2 hours we seemed to have made a lot of ground but the altitude was affecting us even more now. As I looked behind I could see that one of the climbers on the second rope had turned back. We learnt later that it was Lothar, I wondered if we should be doing the same thing. The other 3 seemed to be looking up at us as they roped themselves together.

After almost 6 hours we rounded our final corner and could see the summit in front of us. A spectacular snowridge led up for about 200m, as Steve climbed on we knew that in a short while we would be standing on the top of this magnificent mountain. At 1245 hrs Steve pulled me up onto the summit. We had done it, the expedition was a success. Almost 2 hrs later the others climbed the ridge and sampled the delights of the fantastic views of Tibet and Nepal.

WHITE MOUNTAIN

by Capt M Watson

An account of an Australian Army Alpine Association expedition to climb Dhaulagiri I (8167m) in Central Nepal, Apr-May 93, by Capt M Watson, Exchange Officer to 3 RAR. Base Camp, Chonbarang Glacier 6 May 93:

Six climbers stand round the Buddhist prayer alter. They look wild and strange in their fleece salopettes, scruffy boots and outlandish headgear. Each man squints in the sunlight, looking up at the coloured prayer flags fluttering from the Juniper-sprigged mast. The scented aroma of the burning shrub swirls upward from a stone bench before the altar, and then dissipates rapidly downwind. An Accentor reels out its liquid trilling song from a rock nearby. Pasang Sherpa explains the ceremony in his own special style to the Gurkhas:

"Each Sahib walk three times round altar and throw this rice three time to the sky. Leader must tie this white silk high up on flagpole and then pray own special prayer inside."

He stands, small-framed, slightly hunched, chanting "om mani padme hom" with fearful intensity. The climbers clutch rice grains tightly in their fists, with dirty, unshaven, dishevelled heads bowed, eyes tight shut, lips flickering in sub-vocal prayer.

We have been here for 3 weeks now and reached 6,930m. Daily the roar of icefall and rock collapse has conditioned anxiety. The route up the glacier has changed often to bypass avalanche debris and new crevasse danger. Work on the route has been limited by incessant driving winds. Each man looks inward, asks the mountain to be merciful and asks for strength to endure its fearsome mood changes. Pasang bids us throw the rice upwards 3 times. It is a piece of our heart in meagre offering to the God.

Vaporous cloud swirls up the glacier, masking sunlight and obscuring the yellow and olive rock towering thousands of feet above us. A half burst of Accentor song is torn away on icy wind. Orange threads are passed out by the sherpas and tie around the neck. This is a blessed charm to bring good luck on the mountain.

The ceremony is over, the climbers turn to go about their base camp tasks. One man pauses to look up at the steep snow slopes and ice ramps 8 kilometres away. His blue bloodshot eyes cloud in grey resolve.

The 11 climbers were now working in 2 teams of 5, with the 11th man having lost his nerve electing to remain in Base Camp. Our strategy was in the classic style of establishing a series of camps progressively further up the route until we were close enough for a summit bid in a lightweight, 24-36 hour push. For the early phases alternating lead pairs fixed line on the different pieces of ground followed up by load carriers. Each camp had to be stocked with sufficient fuel, food and tents to sustain the next team for their period of work. While one team was climbing, the other would be resting at Base Camp.

By 18 May strong winds and heavy snow falls had hampered progress to the extent that a number of climbers had exhausted themselves in the effort to gain a foothold on the lower part of the mountain. Time was running out and a summit team of 3 men was waiting at Camp IV, 7500m, in the hope that the wind might ease sufficiently for a final attempt. After 3 days they retreated, their physical resources dangerously depleted. One of their tents had been ripped from the mountain in strong winds, resulting in the loss of all one man's equipment and two were suffering from frostbite.

For myself I had reached Camp III at 7100m and remained there for 4 days, assisting in fixing line to Camp IV. On 17 May I completed a desperate descent, suffering from frostbite to the fingers and the effects of altitude. I arrived back at Base Camp on 19 May, exhausted but lucky to have got away so lightly in the prevailing conditions.

The walk-out degenerated into a nightmarish struggle. Already injured and physically wasted, the team had to force march in order to regain lost time and meet our flight schedule.

Although it was a crushing disappointment not to summit, this was a thoroughly rewarding expedition and a satisfying, first bleeding in the Himalayas.

Author Please contact Mem. Secretary for Prize.

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Sue Clarke

CHASING THE DRAGON

by Capt Andy Stevens

Rock Climbing in Hong Kong

In December 1991 I was desperately trying to find out if there was any rock climbing in Hong Kong. A friend at the Army School of Ammunition said that he remembered seeing some slabs on Kowloon Peak. That would do for me; the rack, rope, boots and helmet made it into the final MFO box.

I could not believe my luck in being posted to Hong Kong, but to live below the imposing Lion Rock! It is almost as good as living in Langdale Valley in the Lakes. 3 weeks before my gear arrived my luck ran out, while playing volleyball I managed to rip all the ligaments in my ankle. The next 5 months were a period of frustration, physio, gym work and swimming.

I soon realised there was no Services Climbing organisation so I set up the Hong Kong British Forces Climbing Club. The membership, like the area to climb, keeps on growing. The HKBFCC is currently assisting Brian Heard, a local climber, in the re-write of the 1968 guide book which should be ready early in 1993.

Where do I begin? I think with Kowloon Peak, this is one of the 'Dragons' dominating Kowloon peninsula. It has over 20 crags spread over it, the top one, Kowloon Main Peak, offers over 25 climbs of up to HVS and over 480 feet in length (should I have gone metric by now?). The routes on the various crags are a delightful mixture of classic cracks, slab routes, exposed overhangs and almost everything else. Continuing along the chain of hills is Lion Rock, the most distinctive crag in Hong Kong. It has some of the longest extreme routes in the Colony, some of which were recently vandalised by a visiting Austrian climber with his Bosch and a bag of bolts.



Capt Andy Stevens half way up "Got It" at Stanley Fort

The next crag along is Beacon Hill Buttress reached by hacking along a path through the thick undergrowth. After dodging enormous spiders, a hornets nest and the odd wild dog the base of the climbs are reached. The climbs are under 50 meters (there's metric for you!) but with names like King Cobra, Sidewinder and Python a look into the crack before shoving in the old fist jam will ease the worried mind of those with a snake phobia.

Moving quickly over to Hong Kong Island and Stanley Fort. How I'd love to have a quarter there, away from the constant noise and increasing pollution. I would however miss the inspiration of Lion rock. Stanley offers easy access to short walls and an immense slab. I had the pleasure of telling Brian about a superb corner of easy climbs I'd found below the old pill boxes. The next weekend Brian and partner put up 4 new routes, the robber! I have had the thrill of putting up a charming 75 foot (I know I'm doing it again!) HV DIFF "Got It" and "Storming Stevens" a 70 foot severe. I hasten to add the name was not my choice, but will appear in the Guide Book. One of the most atmospheric climbs has to be Brian Heard's "Zawnophobia" 70 foot Hard Severe. The climb is reached by abbing down a zawn and beginning on a boulder with waves crashing round your feet. It's more akin to potholing. The first paid to do the climb nearly drowned



Maj. Martin Pope placing pro on "Scalting Crack" Stanley Fort

and had to cut one rope as it got caught by the undertow and jammed under a submerged boulder. The wall at the bottom of the 320 steps also offer some delightful climbing and some snakes!

Moving to the South Eastern side of Hong Kong is Shek O. A beautiful coastal village location with all sorts of climbs from well bolted sheer walls to a hard jamming paradise. Again like Stanley the climbs are limited to single pitch.

I will finish with the "Mouth of the Dragons" or Tung Lung Island which is reached by one of the most worrying 30 minutes ferry crossing I've ever experienced. The ferry is a combination of a floating Black Hole of Calcutta and Mary Rose look alike (the Mary Rose is less likely to rot away).

The climbing is everything to everyone, and all within a 5 minute walk of a "cafe" (I use the word in its loosest sense).

The local magnet is "Technical Wall" with short climbs from VDIFF to E5 (ish) most of the harder routes are bolted with more metalwork than the Ravenscraig Steel Mills! The locals have an awful habit of putting a rope up one of the 20 or so climbs on Technical Wall spending the day top roping or climbing with pre-placed extenders in the bolts. The cry is get there early! Does this remind you of the German national pastime of reserving holiday sun loungers with towels! 150 metres away are Sea Gully Cliffs with some huge slabs (200 feet plus) with delicate cracks hinting at routes and tight corners with springs leaking water to add panic to desperate climbs. On the other side of the boulder strewn gully is a wall covered with overhanging mini slabs offering numerous routes. The cave will offer some extreme routes far beyond my reach. This area is deserted and only Western climbers seem to go to this Mecca for slab climbers.

I've only been back climbing a month now but I feel this is probably the best posting I've had from the Army to allow me to get out on the rocks. Hong Kong should be looked at in a serious way by groups of mixed ability looking for a rock climbing location. If anyone would like any further information please contact me at Comp Ord Depot, Hong Kong, BFPO 1, tel: 3517507.



Jerry Souza seconding on Zawnophobia " Stanley Fort "

EXERCISE

SAVAGE HIGHLANDER 1992

Back in January 1992 some members of C Company of the Black Watch were taken to Victoria Barracks in Ballater to spend ten days skiing at Glenshee. Unfortunately, not a drop of snow was worth skiing on although the odd person was seen trying to make a day of it on the 100m long snow machined slope, upon which school kids from all over Scotland were vying for a space.

However, deep in the Corrie of Lochnagar some teams were hacking ice up Parallel Gully A, Raeburn's and so on. The Jocks involved in climbing thought that balancing precariously on thin ice at great height was real fun and wanted more. This set the wheels in motion for a trip to the Mont Blanc Massif.

Thus in July a very old, but newly painted blue landrover pulled into Camping Les Rosieres in Chamonix after a non stop 25 hours journey from Clive Barracks in Shropshire. The wide eyed Jocks having seen Mont Blanc, firstly on a postcard and now on the approach road were suddenly wishing they were on guard back in Shropshire.

On the first evening Lt Bushby took the team down to the town for a familiarisation visit. The normal haunts were rather full of British soldiers all intent on having a good time. As the days went by our orange Force Tens acted like beacons attracting other landrovers and remarkably similar tents. However, on the next day 14th July, we moved up the hills en masse to the Albert Premiere Hut to languish in the sun and prepare our equipment for a snow and ice-craft day on the glacier. A reasonably early rise on the following morning gave us a good few hours on the glacier, covering all the normal areas such as ice-axe arrests, crevasse rescue and so on. We then walked up to the Col du Midi just to the west of the Aiguille du Tour to practice roped walking over the glacier.

Early the following morning we arose and drank a bowl of hot chocolate, in our bivvy site amongst the rocks and then headed up the well worn path over the glacier to the base of the Table Couloir on the Aiguille du Tour. By dawn we were half way up the couloir and broke out of it to sit astride the Table du Roc which gave us a superb view over the east of the Alps. The summit was covered in tourists who used the easy walking route on the Swiss side to bag their one and only Alpine peak. We then raced down the hill back to Chamonix and just gained the sanctuary of the telecabines before it began to rain heavily by the bucketful. Over the following days the rain kept up and our Force Tens required frequent bailing, as they were floating in the large puddles.

The bad weather in the mountains didn't preclude some excellent crag climbing in the valley which we managed each day until the afternoon thunderstorms. We visited Vallorcine which gave everyone a good introduction to bolted rock climbing. Whatever

anyone says about climbing ethics concerning bolts, it must be regarded as an excellent aid to climbing, especially for the beginner. Other visits included L'Aiguillette d'Argentiere, La Joux, Col du Brevent and Le Chapeau. The latter gave some excellent slab climbing, however, our favourite place was La Joux. By the end of the crag climbing LCpl Gibson and Pte Dyce were confidently ascending about 5a/5b (British Grade) routes. Unfortunately, Pte Anderson had badly cut his hand which required several visitations to the hospital and put him out of action for a few days.

As the weather slowly improved we took on higher routes and on 26th July Lts Bushby and Wallace took LCpl Gibson and Pte Harrison up L'Index, which is a nice little V Diff graded route marred by very shiny holds, especially on the first pitch. Pte Harrison insisted on leaving half of Lt Wallace's rack behind which must have delighted the following parties in their easy acquisition.

Once the weather had cleared we made an attempt on Aiguille du Moine via the South Ridge route graded as AD. Unfortunately, a minor blip in the weather forced us to retreat by abseil down the route in nine long abseils. Pte Dyce staved his thumb on a rock whilst glissading down the glacier at the base of the face which precluded his participation for a couple of days. Due to the time spent abseiling we arrived late at the Mer de Glace train station and faced walking all the way back to Chamonix. The leather alpine boots from Thatcham ensured some very red raw feet by the end of the walk out.

On the 28th July having gone into Italy and taken the lift to Hellbronner we ascended the SE ridge of the Tour Ronde the following morning. Lt Bushby had left his alarm clock in preference for taking a beer in his rucksack thus everyone had a 'sentry' stag that night to ensure our alpine start. LCpl Gibson's crampons disappeared into Italy on the route up, but it didn't hold up the ascent. We

achieved the summit at about eight o'clock in the morning before motoring back into France and preparing for the ascent of the Mont Blanc as a culmination of our climbing 'holiday'. We stayed overnight outside the Gouter Hut in two snow pits. Pte dyce elected to stay in the Officers Mess Snow pit much to the amusement of the other Jocks. Our finances were such that we either took telecabines up the hill or slept in the luxury of the huts. We chose the former and sweated up the hill in the style of the British with large pack and little wallets as opposed to the Europeans who romped by with little packs and large wallets. Anyway we managed to gain the summit before sunrise at 0530 ahead of the masses which we could discern in the gloom by their headtorches, following behind us.

All that remained was to pack up the tents and hop into the landrover which served us well, even if it would only do 30 mph up the slightest of inclines. In 1993 we are posted to Hong Kong so hopefully we will be able to aspire to even greater things in the Far East.



Pte Dyce crosses a river on the Mere Du Glace



Exercise Savage Highlander



Lt Bushby on the Dent du Geant



*On Top of Mo
Left to Right . Lt. Bushby, Lt. Wallace, Pte. Ander.*



*Near the top of the Aiguille du Tour
Pte Dyce (foreground), Pte Anderson (background)*



*Pte Dyce on the "Table
of Aiguille du*



*Top of Mont Blanc
Pte Anderson, LCpl. Gibson, Pte Harrison, Pte Dyce*



*Pte Harrison on the top of Mont
Blanc*



*"Table du Roc" route
Tour du Tour*



On the SE Ridge of Tour Ronde . Pte Harrison (foreground)

ULTIMATE CHALLENGE

29 March - 20 May 92

by Ross Ashe-Cregan

THE TEAM

WO2 Ross Ashe-Cregan RGJ Organiser and Leader
 Capt Charlie Beardmore RAMC Doctor
 Sgt Graham Rees RE Rations
 Sgt Andy Gallagher RAMC Medic
 Cpl Paul Jiggins RAF
 Popt Kevin Arnold RN
 Mr Malcolm Davies RN Sponsored civilian
 SSgt Steve Jones APTC

THE TREKKING TEAM

Capt Peter Trythall LI Trekking Leader
 Capt Patricia Hirst 5LI
 Sgt Pete Bullard RGJ Equipment
 Pte Joe Ramof LI
 LC Mark Baker 6LI

Exercise Ultimate Challenge was a Tri-Service attempt on AMA DABLAM 6,856 metres in the Solu Khumbu (Everest) region of Nepal.

Dave Orange and I had both been on separate expeditions to the Khumbu in 89/90 and as the same as numerous expeditions/trekkers that walk past this amazing mountain, we looked in awe, took many photographs and thought longingly about climbing it. Getting together in Tywyn (where we both live) we discussed the possibility of mounting an expedition in the present economic climate. Dave made contact with Golden Wonder (famous for crisps and pot noddles) through a contact, who agreed to be the major sponsor, and planning started in late 91 after a 6 month postponement.

Why Ultimate Challenge you may ask - we wanted to do something different with a real buzz and make it a first for the Services. ATFA'S were submitted to IPAT in London with the following aims:

1. To climb AMA DABLAM by the South East (normal) ridge.
2. To parapente from the summit.
3. To Canoe the DUDH KOSI.

Once submitted we then started on a team who would have the necessary skills for such an attempt.

The team, as everyone who is involved with mountaineering knows, changed frequently, and finding people from all 3 services who would be free became increasingly difficult.

The original ATFA was submitted by Dave Orange as Leader and myself as Deputy in January 1991. On the application we asked that 2 civilians (who were "expert" parapenters as well as climbers) could be given permission to attend.

The expedition dates would be AUG - OCT 91. By the end of January we were one of three expeditions selected by HTV to take part in The Scott Society Award, a sort of mini Mick Burke Award.

In April 91 it was becoming clear that we had a few major problems arising, these were:

1. Withdrawal of Dave Orange - due to personal and private reasons.
2. Failure by IPAT to grant approval for the parapente phase. This was a major blow, as this was a big selling point for potential sponsors - as HTV were interested as well.
3. Withdrawal of Golden Wonder due to para 2 above.
4. Failure by IPAT to grant civilian participation.
5. Lack of time to complete the planning for such a major undertaking.

(A word about Para 2 and 4 above. ATFA'S are designed to give clearance and protect participation for overseas expeditions - if servicemen are to be able to take part in more challenging expeditions, they must be given more support by MOD/IPAT. - hurdles, cancellations or just plain objections will very soon stop Leaders planning such worthwhile expeditions. It is very difficult gaining sponsorship in a very adventure orientated population. Even up to the point of landing in Kathmandu I was faced with objections, even abuse by VSO's who disagreed with the Aims of the Expedition.)

A new ATFA was submitted with myself as Leader with new dates (29 MAR - 20 MAY 92) and the following aims:

1. To climb AMA DABLAM by SE Ridge.
2. To introduce Officers, NCOs and soldiers to Adventure Training in a foreign (Nepal) country.

A team of 9 climbers (with varying degree of experience) and 5 trekkers were selected and real planning started in earnest.

We had lost the HTV contract, and a few minor sponsors, but we managed to persuade Golden Wonder to stay mainly because we "adopted" The Spastics Society as a charity. Planning continued and we were soon in a position to collect all equipment and rations in Winchester. Mention here of Lt Col Kefford and Majors Richard McAllister and Bronco Lane of BSEE 92, and special thanks to their generous assistance, outward and inward in helping us.

The advance party of myself, doctor, rations and equipment members left on 29 March and arrived in Kathmandu after a very pleasant and uneventful flight by PIA via Karachi.

On a previous expedition I had used Highland Sherpa (who's Managing Director Ang Zhumbu is married to Diana Penny of BUFO VENTURES - who organise the Everest Marathon) they were to handle all in country arrangements and provided us with all trekking staff etc, as well as an excellent Sirdar, Dawa "Balau" Sherpa, himself from the village of Jumbesi (in the Khumbu).

They were at the airport to meet us and help us through the infuriating Customs at Kathmandu and help to the Hotel in Thamel. After a beer and shower it was good to be sitting in KC's again eating one of their sizzling steaks.

A week was spent repacking and distributing loads, checking itinerary and routes, visiting tourist attractions, even meeting old friends unexpectedly - walking through Thamel (the tourist region of Kathmandu) we bumped into Bob Churcher, using trekking for groups as an excuse to be in Nepal.



The "Team" at breakfast at Jiri

The main group arrived on 6th May, and after many catching the infamous "Kathmandu Quick-Step" in the first couple of days, it was time to depart for the first objective which was to be Namchee Bazaar where the team were to split.

We followed the traditional Everest walk-in and for the first timers it was an excellent introduction to customs and culture in Nepal. The 10 day walk-in was fairly uneventful, apart from the high forest fires that raged in the area of KoraKola, it gave everybody time to get acclimatised and get to know each other.

When we arrived in Namchee it was a very hot 100° and a welcome beer was waiting for us. Time to re-organise now into 2 separate expeditions - the walkers (5 in number) would go to Gokyo over the Cho-la pass,

visit BSEE 92 in Base Camp and then join the climbing team in AMA DABLAM base camp, the climbers would move to Tyanboche and up to Base Camp (2 days).

Porters paid off, yaks arranged, visit to Namchee's Saturday market and the climbers departed.

(I have to confess to be selfish now because I am only going to write about the climbing team, however I can supply a full route description of 10 days duration in the Khumbu should anyone require it.)

Our base camp was to be in a beautiful meadow at 14,500 ft under the West Face (what a sight - awe inspiring to say the least). We shared out camp with a Basque team and a commercial team with Himalayan Kingdoms. We arrived fairly early and spent the day making camp as comfortable as we could - the following day was to be the 'Puja' ceremony (to wish us luck and safe climbing). After just getting into my sleeping bag at about 1900 hrs a lad from Himalayan Kingdoms arrived to say that there had been an accident and one of the Basque team had fallen to his death, after a 4 man successful summit bid. Contact had been made with the other 3, the fallen climbers partner was in a crevasse/bergsrund about 600 ft down from the summit, the remaining 2 were to stay on the summit for the night.

A plan was made and I offered any assistance necessary to help them, (bearing in mind we had just arrived). Steve Monks and the Himalayan Kingdom clients did a fantastic job and after a tense 3 days they managed to get them down safely, and Charlie Beardmore and Andy Gallagher our medical team treated them for frost bite before they were casevac'd to Kathmandu.

Camp 1 was at 19,000 ft, at the start of the ridge on a very exposed shelf, and it was to be a long and laborious load carry to this site, made many times by all members, we managed to get 2 tents here (a third was added later) and a good view was had of the remainder of the route. Various sources and references have said that with a good snow covering it is technical but fairly straight-forward. This was not the case, loose, frost-shattered rock, lack of snow, rock-hard ice and spindrift avalanches made it a very different prospect.

Camp 2 was established 500 ft higher at the end of the rocky ridge which was fixed the whole way because we shared the route with the HK team and as space was limited we only got one tent here.

After 10 days everything was going pretty well. Camp 1 and 2 was occupied and well stocked and at least 6 of the team were going fairly strongly, we had our share of snow showers but the sun would burn it off and upwards progress was being made. (A mail runner arrived from the trekking team, they were now in Lobuche having crossed the Cho-La Pass and were fit and happy). On the 29th April a very heavy snowfall prevented any movement - high winds were developing and the pressure was dropping - it was a good opportunity to bring everyone down for a rest.

The snowfall lasted for 2 days and many a crash of an avalanche was heard pouring down the West face.

After resting and reorganising the teams to give us the best possible change for success it was time to move up again, and Team 1 consisting of Steve Jones, Paul Jiggins, Taff Rees and Kami Sherpa moved up to Camp 1 at the same time that the HK Team decided to abort their attempt - but their rope fixing and support made us grateful for their efforts and we felt their disappointment. The teams slowly progressed up the mountain, always 2 men leading, 2 in support and 4 more in support lower down so that eventually we had:

Camp 1 = 19,000 ft. Andy Gallagher, Malcom Davies,
Martin Oakes, Phuri Sherpa.

Camp 2 = 19,500 ft. Steve Jones, Taff Rees.

Camp 3 = 21,600 ft. Paul Jiggins, Kami Sherpa

In base camp, myself, Charlie Beardmore, and
Kevin Arnold who both moved into Camp 2 later on.

On the radio call on 3rd May, Paul and Kami announced they were strong and would make a summit bid tomorrow. On the 4th the weather had closed in and the view was obscure. I talked to Paul at 0500 hrs and they were just about to set off (radio contact was then lost).

Leaving Camp 3 in nil vis, route finding through crevasses and seracs was not helped by the high winds and very soft fresh powder snow, after a couple of hours they both decided to return to 3.

It was now early morning and the trekkers had arrived having had a very good time and maybe it was appropriate that they arrived on

Summit day.

I could talk to 1 and 2 and they could not see any movement at all and were sitting tight (in fact Steve and Taff were considering moving up, but I persuaded them otherwise). Charlie and Kevin left for 1 and it was a very tense leader waiting with the trekkers in Base Camp. At about 3 o'clock the sun burnt through and we could see the upper snow field and exit gully (what else) - there in the centre 2 figures going strong for the top - quick radio call (I told them to stay on open net) no answer, then the damn cloud closed in. What a tense time, all sorts of things going through my mind. Should I move Steve and Taff up - no, only 1 answer "Wait". At 1705 hrs on 4th May - Paul on the radio - "We are up, we are on the summit (the 99th and 100th persons).



View From Valley

Camp 1 is high point on ridge on right.

Camp 2 is large tower in middle of picture.

Camp 3 on top of first hanging glacier.

What a relief, hugs and kisses (why are mountaineers emotional) - a couple of minutes to compose myself and then a long chat to Paul (our RAF member) - weather conditions were not good - no view - cornices everywhere (in fact they nearly walked through one on the other side). I asked Paul to be extremely careful and to give me a call when they reached Camp 3. Needless to say no call arrived and I was very glad when dawn arrived and I could scan the route/face with my bino's - was that 2 specks there? - we hadn't seen them there before - where are they? - speak to me Paul, please.

Steve and Taff were chomping at the bit ready to take off, but no the conditions were not good, I couldn't take the risk. There a figure by the mushroom ridge, another, both moving down slowly - they were safe, thank God. Steve and Taff moved up to help them and all arrived safely in 2.

The following day I spoke to Paul who advised me that weather conditions and the route were not favourable for another summit bid at that time.

I agonised over making the decision, but eventually announced that due to the weather we would not be making any further attempts on the summit, and all our efforts would be directed at getting everybody down safely, with as much equipment as possible. By the 6th May everybody and equipment was safely back in Base Camp - and we were all grateful for Matthew Gloag for providing us with Famous Grouse Whiskey to celebrate.

A couple of days were spend cleaning up before the yaks and porters arrived to carry us down to Namecho and on the Lukla.

3 days later we were sitting on the airfield awaiting, no, not the STOI aircraft, but a SUPER PUMA helicopter which we chartered to fly us and equipment back to Kathmandu, what a pleasure. 2 weeks of walking and sweating took us 40 minutes to fly back.

We actually planned on 3 days in Kathmandu, but it turned out to be nearly a week, 2 members going off to Chitwan for a few days, the remainder sightseeing and shopping - and it was in various groups that the team flew back to UK, the last ones arriving back on 20th May.

Ex Ultimate Challenge proved to be a very exciting and successful trip - at one stage I considered changing the name - but after overcoming many hurdles and objections my wife made me keep the name, because that's what climbing AMA DABLAM proved to be.

ASTRAL REACH by DJ Shoemith

June 92 "What do you mean you're off to Belfast this weekend? And you'll be back in October? Well, that's bugged our plans for the summer."

So ran our telephone conversation that afternoon. Our plans to polish off the remaining E2/E3 classics in Cornwall had obviously not been a major factor in the MOD's appreciation. What could we salvage from this climbing year?

July 92 "The only place with any sort of predictable decent weather in October or November is the Himalaya. No. I've never been either. If you deal with the military bits, I'll choose a peak and do all the civilian bits."

Thus emerged a hastily-conceived two-man attempt at a small Himalayan peak called Paldor. We called it Exercise Astral Reach, because we knew that would give us access to various pots of cash, not to mention quite a bit of goodwill.

We chose Paldor because it was well off the beaten tourist and trekker's track in Nepal, yet, according to Bill O'Connor, it could be reached within a week from Kathmandu. As one of the Nepal Mountaineering Association's "trekking" peaks, less research was necessary and, more importantly, the peak fee was affordable. Whilst we wouldn't actually be pushing back the frontiers of Himalayan endeavour, Paldor offered a choice of routes with some technical challenge, ideal for a two-man team. It would be immensely satisfying if we could pull off an ascent in the meagre three weeks we had available.

September 92 "You get back from your Italy exercise on 2 November, courtesy of the Italian air Force? We fly from Heathrow at 7am on the third. Make sure you take your plastic with you; if you want to make our flight, you'll need it. And give me all your gear, I'll pack it. See you on the second."

I should have added "and your passport" but that was unnecessary, since I already knew I would have to drive from Folkestone to Exeter and back in a day to get it from Richard's house. I departed on my two-week Brigade Exercise wondering whether we would actually pull everything together in time. A heap of unsorted kit grew, craving attention. All we had to do now was meet up on 2 November, and get Richard's passport, and the visas, and the CILOR, and other bits of kit, and sort out the trekking agency and

2 November - 2130 hrs "Hello Richard. Good, you're back. We've got bags of time. See you in a couple of hours."

We met at Aldershot at about midnight, spend the next four hours packing and sped off to Heathrow at four in the morning.

"What did you say our baggage allowance was?"

"Not sure - must be about thirty kilos."

"We should be OK then."

Our plan was to carry everything out with us less a few items we knew we could get in Kathmandu. Thus clad in Koflachs and down jackets, we spend our first hour at Heathrow repacking, fill-

ing terminal bins and our pockets with dried food as we connived to avoid the £16 per kilo charge on our 35 excess kilos. Somehow the nice 'fraus' of Lufthansa allowed us aboard and we were soon airborne, and asleep.

"Which bag were your crampons in?"

"The one that's not here."

"What else was in that bag?"

"My ice axes, some dried food, some clothes."

Maybe Lufthansa had the last laugh on our excess baggage by not putting our last holdall aboard, I was thinking as we sat sweating in Delhi. Two hours later, somehow, it appeared. We took the hint, jettisoned some more food, put on another jacket and filled the remaining pockets.

Thirty hours later, the passengers on the ageing boeing 727 burst

into spontaneous applause as we bounded into Kathmandu. We headed straight for our trekking agency, Sherpa Co-op, who, amazingly, were not only expecting us but even had a file marked up with my name on it. I was impressed. We couldn't wait to get out of Kathmandu, even though we had only been there an hour. We wondered whether our plan to have only one admin day would be feasible, but we had so little time we had to start for the mountains as soon as possible. The next day saw us haggling for peanuts

(almost literally) as we tried to get the best price from the Nepalese in every market stall, shop and bazaar we went to. We must have covered a good few kilometres, but did all we had hoped to do, and that evening sat down to a self-satisfied beer, our last for three weeks.

Our plan stayed on track as next morning at seven we were saying "namaste" to our porters, and farewell to Kathmandu as we bumped out of town in our very own hired bus. One of our early team decisions was to hire a bus for the outward trip to the road-head, expensive, but aimed at saving us valuable time. Anyway, the porters liked it. We stopped at Dunche that night, relieved to be on the trail at last. Another early decision was to employ a cook; our bellies' satisfaction from the evening's delicious dhal-bhat was tempered only by concern over our cook's personal hygiene and cooking techniques. We reviewed our meagre supply of iodine and vowed, should we survive the night, to lecture our sirdar about food hygiene in the morning. We both had new sleeping bags (thank you, car thief and Norwich Union), and we settled down that night like two kids on the night before Christmas - eager anticipation and a churning in our stomachs.

Although the usual time for the walk in from Dunche is five days, we were keen to cut it by a day if we could. We would have only seven climbing days from arriving at base camp, which allowed very little time for acclimatisation or bad weather. Any time saved on the walk in would be useful. We completed the easy first stage in three hours, but our porters were carrying over thirty kilos and



Richard Holt and David Shoemith on the walk in. Peaks of Gamish Himal beyond

we knew we would be lucky to get them to base camp ahead of schedule. So we hatched a plan to select the next day's destination ourselves, present it to our sirdar as immutable, then speed away as fast as we could so he and the porters would have to catch us up. This worked, although it meant some very hard days for the porters, who would frequently not arrive until after dark, and a perplexed sirdar who couldn't fathom why we were doing his guiding for him, why we didn't want to stop for lunch and why we didn't want to spend the afternoons lounging around.

It was dark when the porters arrived at the base camp site, having climbed solidly for eight hours up the final five thousand foot pull with their massive loads. Thankfully, the mutiny which I felt couldn't be far below the surface never materialised - I think they were too tired to complain. spirits rose as they warmed themselves, fed and rested. We relaxed, mindful of the non-ornamental kukris in their waist-bands. To say they had done well to get us to base camp a day early was an understatement.

"I suppose it could be the food."
"What does -(retch) - the book say?"
"It says take care with the food and don't climb too high too fast."

Richard was rediscovering that altitude didn't agree with him, so next day I set off to recon the route up Paldor east glacier, on top of which we were planning to put a high camp, prior to going for the top. I was feeling the altitude and the effects of our gut-busting effort to date, and dawdled up to about 16000 feet, from where I could see the route. The snowline was surprisingly high and there was a lot of loose, unstable scree and moraine. I was soon back at base camp, where Richard was still busy on his crash diet.

Next morning he managed to keep his porridge down (albeit complaining about the kero content) and we headed off up the ridge opposite Paldor, where we had a good view of our route's approaches and the other Ganesh Himal peaks, before the afternoon clag blotted out everything. We spent the rest of the day moving base camp another half a kilometre and five hundred feet up the moraine, to shorten our approach to the mountain. that it gave us extra sun morning and afternoon also had some bearing on the decision, although the hour's slog with heavy packs was not high on our list of preferred activities that afternoon.

That night, as the temperature plummeted, we lay in our bags thinking of sun and South-West rock, and failed to finalise our list of top ten sunshine climbs. There were just too many contenders, so we settled for a top twenty. We made a plan to do a dump to high camp the next day, move up the day after that and go for the top the day after that. Although Richard favoured waiting till our last possible moment to go for the top, to allow maximum acclimatisation, I was able to exploit his weakened resolve by arguing that we should go for it sooner rather than later. We didn't know how long the weather would hold, and I thought we should have a crack whilst we were still fairly fresh (and keen). Besides, it wasn't me who was suffering, and we were beginning to pay the price for not bringing out more amusements (and headtorch batter-

ies) to pass the long nights incarcerated in our no-longer brand new dossbags.

We trudged up the lateral moraine the next day, seracs and crevasses yawning to our right. We persuaded two porters to help us carry some kit. The moraine blocks got bigger and more unstable as we gained height, and we were eventually forced onto the glacier about five hundred feet short of where it flattened out, beyond which we hoped to put the tent. At that point Richard said "enough!", and I trudged on up with our kit, dumping it under a large boulder. I had a brief glimpse up the rest of the glacier to Windy Col, which was a possible route if our first choice of the south-east ridge proved problematical. It then started to snow, the wind got up and it was definitely time to go.



David Shoemith resting (gasping) at 1700 ft on Paldor East Glacier, just below High Camp

It was my turn to suffer the next day as we trudged up to high camp, the sun sapping my strength and removing the skin, layer by layer from my nose. By the time the tent was up it was too cold to do anything but seek sanctuary in our down cocoons. We were beginning to regret bringing a kero stove rather than a gas one, but by the time we had eaten and drunk some of our excess baggage life was looking up. the upturn didn't last long unfortunately, as the little men with the hammers inside Richard's head got into their swing once more. Neither of us slept well that night - Richard with the headaches, despite almost overdosing on Diamox, and me laying awake not giving him any sympathy.

The inevitable late start followed, and it was almost nine by the time we were away, me leading, Richard mood-swinging between depressions and deep depressions following reluctantly behind. Despite all, we made good progress until soft snow slowed the pace and prompted one or two choice words as I plunged in, up to my thighs in places. we ploughed up the middle

of the glacier, and after two hours trail-breaking decision time came - either break left, through deep snow to a tenuous-looking gully which may take us onto the south-east ridge, or carry straight on through deep snow and climb the south face of Tilman's Ridge to join that route. The gully onto the south-east ridge looked feasible but lacked the depth of snow we had expected, and once on the ridge it would still be a long haul to the top. The face in front of us offered a more direct way, despite us having to weave our way through numerous crevasses. In view of the time, we plodded straight on, the snow improving as we at last got onto the face, to be replaced by rotten ice exposed by the dearth of snow. We hacked up the ice, moving together, following as direct a line as possible, picking a route between incipient seracs which formed ledges where we could double up, pant for breath or throw up, depending how we felt. After almost two hours, I at last gained the ridge, and could look across into Tibet and at the sea of peaks stretching to infinity.

It was a relief to be on the near-horizontal, and we moved rapidly along the ridge to a pinnacle of rotten rock, where we rested, properly, for the first time and had a brew. The summit had disappeared behind its shroud of cloud and it was now quite cold. I didn't like the look of the pinnacle - it was absolutely rotten, and we

both felt sure that all this choss would normally have a reasonable covering of snow. I prospected round to the right, on the few meagre patches of snow remaining, but found nothing but death potential. There was no hope of a route round to the left, either; it was loose blocks, piled on top of rubble, all tilted at an uncooperative angle. The only way was up the spine of the pinnacle, which was steep and equally loose. We both tried and found the experience gripping and unhealthy. Loose blocks cascaded from prospective footholds, to reveal more loose blocks underneath. Without saying anything, we both knew we weren't going to get up. We turned tail and headed back the way we'd come, as the cloud enveloped us and the temperature dropped still further.

We were back at the tent in two hours, feeling pretty tired and a bit cheated. Of all the things which could have defeated us, we hadn't anticipated loose rock like that. We decided to bail out back to base camp that day, and got down just as it was getting dark. Welcome gallons of "sherpa tcha" made the world seem a little better, and even Richard managed a half-smile, but it may have been a grimace.

We had three days left at base camp. Fortified by hugh plates of dahlbhat we decided to gamble all or nothing on finding a route up the west glacier the next day. Neither of us were keen to repeat the slog up the east glacier to try the gully route onto the south-east ridge if we could find a more direct way onto the ridge from the other side.

Moving slowly, we were both very tired the next day as we climbed onto the west glacier. We were treated to magnificent views of the west wide of the south-west ridge, snow-capped flanks of rubble without a single line of continuous white offering a breach. The head of the glacier was equally uninviting - choss stripped bare of any snow. Even if we could gain the ridge beyond we couldn't be sure of a continuous line to the top. We slid despondently back down to base camp, and pondered our options, which weren't many. We both felt tired; Richard still wasn't acclimatised, and although one last crack at the gully route may have been possible, neither of us felt physically up to the effort without a good rest, having now been continuously on the go for over two weeks. As we now had only two possible days left, three if we gambled on getting back to Kathmandu in time, we had little choice but to admit defeat.

Decision made, we packed up next day, having decided to walk out along the Tiru Danda ridge, according to O'Connor the finest ridge of its kind in Nepal. The only problem was, it needed a week to walk it, but we figured that, since it must eventually go downhill, we could do it in four days. I felt very tired, but Richard seemed to recover some of his strength, and we were rewarded with three incredible days sky walking, suspended at fourteen thousand feet with the seven Ganesh peaks, the Langtang Himal and Annapurna and Manaslu for company. The porters, who had

had their chance to desert, had little time to enjoy the scenery as they again warped under heavy loads, their each day becoming longer as we descended into thicker air, and pushed on still further.

On the fourth day out we returned to "civilisation" at Trisuli, having finally lost the porters and our sirdar, maybe for good, we thought. Next day they appeared, smiling, and we caught the local bus back to the noise and grime of Kathmandu. Three days later we were back at work behind our desks, memories of the real mountains receding before the paper mountain of



Richard Holt Suffering at High Camp on Paldor East Glacier

reality. Paldor was added to the list of unfinished business.

Afternote:

Despite its relatively low altitude Paldor should not be viewed as an easy snow plod. Groups aiming to get maximum numbers of novices to the top of a Himalayan summit should pick one of the trekking peaks that are. We knew we were being optimistic in having a mere seven day "window" to do the climb; a few extra days would have given us longer to acclimatise and rest, allowing a second summit attempt by the other route. Paldor is an ideal objective for a reasonably experienced and competent small party. If you can't get enough time off work to give you two weeks at base camp, go anyway. There is always the chance everything will fall into place, and even if you don't succeed, you will never regret the experience.

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ROCK WORKS

VIKINGS ON THE MATTERHORN

by Capt Henry Simpson

In July this year 11 members of The Vikings took part in Exercise Hornli Viking to the challenging environment of the Swiss Alps. The aim of the expedition was to introduce novice mountaineers to the excitement of Alpine mountaineering and to climb the Matterhorn, probably the most spectacular peak in the Alps.

Planning for the expedition began in February and a sponsorship appeal to local East Anglian companies produced some financial backing, and an enormous box of mustards and sauce mixes from Colmans of Norwich. This contribution was gratefully received and led to some culinary wonders during the expedition. The team was selected mainly from Support Company with Captain Nick Nottingham and Cpl Kev Carpenter from the training wing joining Captain Henry Simpson as the instructors. None of the team had climbed a major Alpine peak before and the expedition set off from Colchester with a real sense of adventure.

The team travelled by minibus down through France and up into the Swiss Alps where base camp was established in Zermatt. Our orange Force 10 tents stood out distinctively amongst the dome tents of a multi-national brigade of climbers and we soon became quite a tourist attraction. Cpl Ian Cox, the base camp manager, was quick to launch into heroic tales of our climbing feats whenever the opportunity arose.



*The Team on the Hobntallingrat (3286)
(Matterhorn in background)*

The first three days were spent teaching basic rock climbing and abseiling skills to the novices, and on altitude acclimatization treks up into the surrounding mountains. The weather was perfect with glorious views of the great rock pyramid that is the Matterhorn. On our fourth day in Zermatt the team took the famous Gornergrat train up through the mountain side to the snow covered ridges above to practice snow and ice safety techniques. The hordes of Japanese tourists looked at us in amazement as one by one we threw ourselves off the ridge to practice ice axe breaking and rescue techniques.

Preparations for the attempt on the Matterhorn were now complete and a team of five was selected to attempt the summit. The next day the team walked up to the Hornli hut at the base of the Hornli ridge,



*At Solvay Hut (4000m) L to R Cpl Carpenter, Capt Nottingham
Pte Smith, Cpl Watson.*

our start point for the real climb. After a sleepless night in the hut dormitory we set off in darkness at 0420 hrs to begin the climb. Several other groups parted at the same time creating a thin snake of torches flickering up the mountain side. Fortunately, there was also a full moon and the team made good progress up the ridge. It was not until daylight that the full enormity of what we were attempting became clear. On our left the snow covered east face dropped steeply down to a glacier 1000 m below, and on our right the almost sheer north wall rose up the summit 1000 m above. The route varied from steep scrambles to snow traverses and was some times difficult to follow. Accidental variations tended to be loose, steep and very unpleasant.

The team, roped up for safety, worked well but our cautious approach meant the going was often slow. With the sun beating down, the snow quickly began to melt and water could be heard cascading down under the snow fields. Stone falls and small avalanches also became more frequent although many were caused by climbers above. By the time the team reached the Solvay hut just 400 m short of the summit some climbers were already returning from the shoulder above having failed to reach the summit. They warned of treacherous snow conditions and with time pressing we reluctantly decided to descend. It took us ten hours to abseil and climb back down to the hut where the rest of the team were anxiously waiting. Earlier a helicopter had rescued a climber who had fallen from the ridge and they had no way of knowing if it had been one of us. Of the forty or more climbers who attempted the ridge that day only five made it to the summit.

Despite not reaching the top all the team felt a great sense of achievement and we left Switzerland with a greatly improved confidence in our abilities. It is hoped the Vikings will return to the area again next year and all the unsuccessful summit team have already volunteered. Watch this space.

CHAMONIX CHALLENGE

21 AUG - 4 SEPT 1992 by WO1 Kevin Edwards APTC

Team: S/Sgt Graham Carter - Team Leader
WO1 Kevin Edwards
Sgt Ewan Martin
Sgt Martin Jerrard

Chamonix is the centre of alpinism, where mountaineers become myths and legends. The main theme of this adventurous training exercise was an extension of our trip the previous year to Yosemite. For two of the members of the team the idea was to transfer our experiences on the long rock routes of Yosemite to the Chamonix Aiguilles, our ultimate aim being to climb the Central Pillar of Freney. We had within the team, this year, two relative newcomers to the Alpine scene for whom this would be a learning experience.

Chamonix certainly lives up to its reputation for Alpine adventure. You can feel the atmosphere created from the triumphs and tragedies played out on the largest stage of rock spires and monoliths in a mould of ice. Mountaineers' names adorn the signs for hotels etc., men who gave inspired performances and became the idols of generations of climbers. Many of them have been preserved in the pages of mountaineering history, O G Jones, Whymper, Mummery, Bonatti and Rebuffat, to name but a few.

Home for the next two weeks was at the Glacier Blanc campsite in Argentiere which was very reasonable in both cost and facilities. It in fact turned out to be a miniature British village, with at least half the Glenmore Lodge temporary staff working towards their Guides qualification. It proved very useful having someone's brains to pick on conditions and recommended routes.

The plan of attack for week one was to concentrate on acclimatisation and climbing to assess the Alpine standards of grading and difficulty. Week two was to be an assault on a difficult high level alpine route.

Week One - Routes achieved by Martin and Jerrard (aspirants)

Petit Couchers 2840m AD rock pitches IV
Pyramide du Tacul 3468m D+ rock pitches IV+

Mont Blanc du Tacul 4248m PD snow and glacier
Aiguille du Tour 3544m PD glacier and scramble
Routes achieved by Edwards and Carter (old guys)
Tour de Couchers 2502m SW Face Voie de Gilbert rock pitches V+
Pyramide du Tacul 3468m East Ridge D+ rock pitches IV+
Epron des Cosmiques Voie Rebuffat D+ rock pitches V+
Cosmiques Arete to Aiguille de Midi 3842m Voie normal
AD mixed pitches IV
Aiguille du Peigne Papillons Ridge D+ rock pitches V+

Week one finished as planned with many good routes accomplished and the team becoming well acclimatised to the altitude. The weather had been excellent. The two aspirants were brimming with confidence and climbing extremely well. Graham Carter was firmly established as the campsite 'Dot Cotton', knowing what everyone had done or was about to do. I, meanwhile, was promoting the AMA generally being looked upon as an old guide with my ski sticks, especially after being caught exaggerating my stories of mountaineering achievements in the campsite toilets to an audience of young tigers!!!!

Week two opened up with 80cms of fresh snow, high winds and constant rain storms in the valleys. Only one of the days did the weather relent enough for us to snatch a pearl of a route. We took along the aspirants with promises of a lowered rope if required. They replied with mutters about dragging the old boys up the route!

Aiguille Nord Est Praz de Torrent 2473m Voie des Dallas TD rock pitches V+. Although a superb route, it only partly sated our frustrations. All was not lost though as we managed to snatch routes on the way between the rain. Les Gaillands is a valley crag just outside Chamonix. It is the epitome of the posing climber's area - tight shorts and shirt plus deep tan are mandatory! We each managed to snatch twenty or so lead climbs from V+ (HVS 5a) upwards. Graham Carter was particularly impressive here leading routes of French 6b/6c/7a. I myself just held up the guide book and pointed at routes of extreme difficulty using the best Scottish ploy - "I'm a snow and ice man myself"!

*Week one finished
as planned with
many good routes
accomplished and
the team becoming
well acclimatised to
the altitude.*

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GORTEX - CLIMBING WORLD FINALS

11-13 DECEMBER 1992

by WO1(SMI)KP EDWARDS

Quite by chance, whilst sitting at my desk flicking through the climbing magazines, I came across an advert for the World Climbing Finals to be held at the National Indoor Arena, Birmingham. This was too good an opportunity to miss, its only up the road from Shrewsbury. Well the climbing season has drawn to a close, so if I can't get on any routes I may as well go and watch the professionals doing it. I didn't particularly want to go on my own so I came up with a cunning plan. I bought two tickets and sent one to a friend and then put the guilt on him about not letting me down.

I remember all the hype surrounding climbing competitions in the '80s about how it would sink the climbing world into disgrace, a betrayal of the purism of the sport. Since then of course climbing competitions have become a firm part of the sport fully supported by the UIAA and BMC.

We arrived at the NIA on the Sunday for the finals of the competition which had been going on all weekend. I was surprised to see so many spectators, some 4000 in all, such a variety of people as well, from families to the freaky dressed climbers of the local crags.

The mens semi-finals started at 10am. There were 31 competitors and a running commentary on each performance was provided by the formidable duo of Jerry Moffat and Paul Williams. It was disappointing to see only three British competitors, there may be a story to tell. Only three of the men topped out but it had been a route of technicalities and wildly steep. At the end of the mens semi-finals, out stepped the under 16 yrs British Champion who is only 12 yrs (made me sick) to try out the route. He hung on in there, his lack of reach being his only downfall.

The womens final was by far the most exciting part of the competition. There were six finalists which included Isabelle

Patissier and Lynn Hill. The route was very technical in the first half with a wicked overhung section near the top. Most of the women were getting pumped on the lower section leaving them with very little power for the top. Isabelle who was third on the list showed her experience and graceful style almost completing the route to the top failing only on the last three moves. she was looking good for the title (in more ways than one). Lynn Hill was the last to compete, faltering in the lower section she then proceeded to power her way to the top. This was nail biting stuff (I was down to my wrists) and the crowd enjoyed every minute. Hands were now raw from clapping and the throat dry from oohing! and aaahing!! The two ladies were swamped with autograph hunters, yours truly was too embarrassed to join the queue.

The mens final was a little disappointing by comparison. There were eight finalists who were well and truly put to the test on a really sadistic looking route. The overhanging section at the top would need plenty of power and raw determination. This route was a definite do or die the winner being the one who could hang on his finger tips longest. the man that triumphed was Jean Baptiste Tribout who although he didn't manage to top out hung on in there to within one move of the top.

And so there it was, I had witnessed my first climbing competition. No, the earth hadn't moved for me but it came very close, in fact next time I'll take my chalk bag just to keep a grip on the edge of my seat.

ED - How about an Army Indoor Climbing Championships ?

*From Ed. Your wish etc.... St Werburgh's, Bristol, 20th April '94!
Read Area / District / Div. / Unit orders or contact Lt. Edwards.
His number appears on page 3.*

BOOK REVIEW
by Tim King

Mixed Emotions by Greg Child

Greg Child does not know whether he is a writer who climbs or a climber who writes. Who cares as long as he can go on producing such well written books.

This book is a collection of 19 essays written over a span of ten or so years covering all aspects of climbing. They are grouped into subject areas with a short commentary on each group. Without exception they are entertaining and thought provoking. I particularly enjoyed the portraits of Voytek Kurtyka, Doug Scott and Jim Beyer. Having idolised Don Williams in my youth I found the piece on him pretty myth-shattering but a good read for all that. The accounts of some of Greg's climbs are gripping and because they are in essay form the action is closely packed. The more philosophical items make you sweat less but think more.

Greg Child is a great climber by any standards but the magnitude of his own achievements has not dulled his natural humility or his ability to get to the heart of a subject. He is ruthlessly honest, sometimes controversial and always enlightening. Modern climbing writing is not

renowned for its literary qualities but here is someone who can write. In this book you will not find the boring ascent synopsis ("I tied off. I said to Fred ... Fred said to me ... Then he blacked out ..."), nor will you find rock ape psychobabble ("I stood there on the edge of all things, humming a mantra and enjoying the pain waves as they washed through me ... etc ..."). What you will find is a jewel box full of climbing gems and an insight into what drives those at the forefront of modern mountaineering (including him). I discovered that we may all be feeding the same kind of rat (or 'worm' as he calls it): it is just a question of how big and voracious our personal rodent is!

If you ever wonder what makes you climb, buy this book - you might find out. It is sure to strike many chords and I thoroughly recommend it. Mixed Emotions - Mountaineering Writings of Greg Child. Published by The Mountaineers, Washington. ISBN 0-89886-363-5 Copyright Greg Child 1993. Available from Cordee direct or at good bookshops price £9.95. Cordee's address is 3a De Montfort Street, Leicester, LE1 7HD. Tel 0533 543579 FAX 0533 471176

HINKU HEAVEN

by Maj Tony Rudall
AGC(ETS)

The Nepal Himalayas seemed to be everybody's dream, but not mine. Stories about the "tissue trail" and huge numbers of "pilgrims" heading for Everest Base Camp had put me off. If I'd been a more talented, experienced, Exped. Leader - oh, and a great deal braver - I might have contemplated tackling the "big stuff". Then I heard of Mera Peak. Everybody is going to head that way in the future I reckon, so perhaps it's just as well we went there when we did. Its remoteness appealed, and the fact that it was over 21,000, made it sound not quite so "wimpy".

Can I say now we failed to get up it so what's coming next is a taster for future expeds not an account of us scaling the pointed bit at the top.

I'd also like to sprinkle this with advice and thanks to those who helped us. First, the AMA. Thanks for giving my last exped (Ex Czechmate) 'centre-fold' status (I've 2 Royal Marines on celluloid which will make an even better centrefold!) The AMA mag is a brilliant little journal and knocks spots off most Army mags. And thanks for the grant. Exped Leaders! Make your team join up asap - then the AMA will give you loads of dosh! Read Bill O'Connor's book and squeeze "Hims Vets" for every detail. Trouble is they often don't know too much about how it was all done. Cpl Jim Ross RE had recently returned and knew all about the climb & kit etc but hadn't a clue about the money side. PXR's are often a disaster. I suspect most Exped. Leaders are so fed up with the whole 18 months or 2 yrs or more of admin. they want to get their PXR out and over with as quickly as possible. Some use the pages of their PXR to disguise a holiday on the taxpayer. Well ours was no holiday.

A helluva trip which the team will remember for ever. It could have been even better if it had been smoothed on its way with more local info. The DA Kathmandu could have been more helpful but we were only one of 20 minor expeds. visiting Nepal each year and there is so much other Embassy business to deal with!

I must mention my sponsor, Carl Throgmorton, Westward Developments, Totnes, Devon. It's the THIRD time he's helped the Services out. Our 13 person (2 ladies) team was a real mixture and we were all short of the readies. Ian Price, our Garrison Youth Leader had a bright idea for lightening the financial burden. Sell postcards! Done before? Not our way. We designed our own cards

and sold them in UK. People coughed up a quid, wrote a message to a friend and we posted them in Nepal. Saved actually writing hundreds of cards. I wished we'd started the scheme earlier. As it is I reckon we made about £800!

We set off in mid-April - pre-monsoon we thought! Three of the team, Capt Alan Blackwell, R SIGS, Marine Robin Mann and lecturer Martin Hastings had been in Kathmandu for a week liaising with Sherpa Co-op. trekking. They'd tied down the agents so we thought we had everything covered. Food was ready and stacked in their storeroom, the cost of porters, cooks, guide, transport all there in black and white. Future expeds beware! Our Sirdar (guide) Salakpa, confronted us with bills for fl.500 two days into the trek! This was supposedly for porters' food and return wages. Who was conning whom? (The complex details of how we solved this problem and many others can be discovered in my PXR from 16 AEC, Bovington, Dorset).

We boarded our bus and counted 45 porters. The Sirdar had hired them all in Kathmandu rather than en route. More reliable apparently. Soon our two girls, both PTIs, Judith Swinden and Louise Bond were sunning themselves on the roof with our RAF rep. Chris Rawlins.

We were dumped at Jiri where we stayed in a lodge rather than pitching tents after dark. We camped from then on. Things were relatively luxurious with a Mess Tent of sorts and excellent food prepared by our cooks. However I wonder if it might all have been a lot easier if we'd stayed in lodges (rather than basic tea houses which can be very smoky).

The trek to Lukhla did acclimatise us well but it was an awful lot of walk walk walk walk walk. If I ever go again I'll fly in and clamber around the surrounding hills to get fit.

Before we left we were very worried about the water! we had water purifiers with us which were never used. Puritabs

are no good. Our cooks boiled everything and we could buy bottled all the way to Lukhla. (We suspect that even bottled water could be contaminated though. Giardia bugs have been found in it, but Kathmandu is the real nightmare for dysentery. It's generally safer in the hills as long as you are sensible).

"Conditions should be just about perfect" I was told. Well if its hailing "golf-balls" in Lukhla what the hell is it like for the !SEE!! From Lukhla onwards every day ended in rain and snow. We watched in dismay as the 15,000 Zatrwa La (La = Pass) went white. We got over it alright but our campsite at Tuli Kharka, the



Peaks above Tangnan

other side, was very miserable especially for the porters. On the way we met 2 Americans who had cracked the peak in good



Khare Campsite

weather and a French team who had failed - mainly, I feel, because they'd started their bid from the High Camp at 6 not 3 am. This was nevertheless quite worrying as they looked pretty roughie-toughie with "all the gear"! The Yanks reported that two Educator friends of mine from Hong Kong had got there before me, Malcolm Wieck and Dave Cuffley. Well done lads! (swines!)

The valley was magical. A dripping mysterious rain forest! Further up the "Hinku" it turned into "Dartmoor" and then the "moon". Only when the clouds cleared did it feel like the "Hims" as Kusum Kanguru, Peak 43 and the Mera Himal appeared, soaring above us. The moonscape of glacial moraines began at Tangnag. A few very basic huts with eccentric yak herders cluster there, but, frighteningly, a tea-house is under construction! We



Prayer Flags at Lamjura Pass 1000 ft. during trek in

were the only Europeans in the valley but that ain't going to last for long!

Another day took us to Khare and another to our base camp on the glacier. I say 'our' rather than 'the' as our porters dumped our gear above the snout to the left about 1 km from the proper site at the Mera La. We couldn't get up the right-hand side as the crevasse conditions were dangerous and the weather deteriorated so the porters scarpered. Not like a grim spot hanging off Everest, but wedged between two crevasses - grim enough!

Poor old Cpl Roy Walker REME was pretty ill and we were all as weak as kittens if the truth were told. The weather cleared pm and the ring of snowy peaks raised morale and made us hopeful of

a move the next day.

The following morning the clouds rolled in unusually early. Some of the team left feeling ill and despondent and six of us remained hoping for a break. By midday we decided to retreat and dragged our lethargic bodies, and a pile of kit wrapped in a survival bag tied up with climbing rope, off the glacier.

The climb can be "like a motorway" I was told, but like motorways, mountains can soon become deathtraps!

On the way back over the pass we were given a hint of our vulnerability when a porter slipped and slid down towards grey oblivion. Marine



Yak Herder at Tangnag

Tony Tennant leapt after him and slowed his descent. They both dodged a rock fall and climbed back safely.

The Hinku Valley is - as Bill O'Connor will testify - very remote and a minor injury could turn into a major problem. But to visit it is to feel really adventurous and I'm sure parties following us will make a better job of it.

I wish I'd known that Nima Sherpa of the Danphe Cafe, Lukhla could work such miracles with the flights (as long as you're a British Serviceman!) We might have waited for better weather on the glacier. I'd have liked to have worked directly with our Sirdar and cut out the



Mera viewed from our High Point on the Glacier

middle-men. I also would have liked to have known that the porters definitely prefer to bung everything in their wicker baskets and that many of the lodges were cheap and comfortable. I knew to avoid freighting kit out but I didn't foresee the problems getting it back. Please contact me for our PXR and be just that little bit better prepared but of course if you go in the "trekking season" in the Autumn it could all be very different! Better weather perhaps but probably far more tissue paper!

The Climbers A History of Mountaineering

by Chris Bonington

Writing about a recent biography of another soldier-author named John Masters a reviewer remarked on his "passion for clarity and organization, and determination to carry the job through", qualities that mark a well-trained officer and which our esteemed Vice-President clearly has in full.

Among the illustrations is Norman Collie's photograph of Fred Mummery sitting beside Lieutenant (later Brigadier General) C.G. Bruce and "wearing two hats with snow packed between to keep a cool head". Chris similarly appears under his two hats as mountaineer and prolific author, wearing them stylishly and extremely well.

Histories of this kind have - at least in part - been published before: notably by Kenneth Mason in 1955, J.R.Ullman 1956, Showell Styles 1967, and Eric Newby 1977. Some of these cover a wider field but are not so useful, for none of the illustrations in the earlier books, striking as they are, are so clear or well-chosen as those that accompany *The Climbers*. In the Author's Note at the beginning, Chris writes: "I have followed the mainstream development from its birth in the Alps through to the giants of the Himalaya, leapfrogging past those superb mid-height ranges of the Americas, Antarctica, Scandinavia, New Zealand, concentrating on the major innovative climbs of each era going on to Tomo Cesen's amazing solo ascent of the South Face of Lhotse".

This epic story is filled out and rounded off with a Brief History of Mountaineering, almost year-by-year, by Audrey Salkeld. For the World War Two years she notes that the Services "intensively developed certain areas, such as the Cornish sea cliffs by the Commandos and Sonamarg in Kashmir by the RAF".

There follows a glossary and a bibliography. In the 5-page index military names emerge - apart from Brigadier Bruce there are F. Spencer Chapman who served three and a half years in Malaya, was captured and escaped; Ian Clough, of RAF Mountain Rescue; Siegfried Wedgwood Herford, killed at Ypres; John Hunt; Colin Kirkus, killed in action with the RA Gunner Lieutenant George Mallory; Captain John Noel and Major E.F. Norton; A.M. Slingsby; Frank Smythe, a wartime Instructor; Col. Streater and Col. Strutt, both Presidents of the Alpine Club; H.W. Tilman, who fought with the Balkan partisans; Geoffrey Young, who lost a leg with an Ambulance Unit but still continued to climb, and Sir Francis Younghusband "who had led the British Army to Lhasa in their expedition of 1903". Enough said.

The television series complemented the book and brought it to life most vividly. Taking this into account, together with Chris's article "The Ghosts of Everest" in the BBC's World Magazine (Sept. 1992, £2), I feel I have learned more of what has gone on in the past than in any other way.

What of the future? As the article remarks, "The Himalaya, youngest of the Earth's mountain ranges, is still being pushed up". So are climbing skills and achievements, within limits. Man will always want to go 'A Little Further.' The fact that they do so for complex reasons does not take from "the satisfaction of goals achieved and the strength of shared friendship". That is what the book is about.

Men want to climb mountains because they are there, as Mallory said in what has become the classic response. But *The Climbers* reveals that there is more to it than that. Joe Brown's view is that "Climbing is about overcoming difficulty and not just overcoming difficult situations with magic equipment". Sigi Hupfauer declares his own disquiet about what is happening to the sport he loves. "There are other changes: the commercialisation of expeditions. I am really sad to think what might happen". Together with Chris and Charles Houston, they are concerned about "the thoughtless desecration of the places we love". All is not well, yet something is being done about it, like John Barry's clean-up operation at Base Camp on Everest and the good work of the National Trust nearer home. Even so, some vigilance is needed to counter the casual indifference that our friends have spoken about. "Mind where you go" I think is what they are saying.

288 pp., including 7 pp. maps, 40 colour and numerous b.w. illustrations (BBC Books/Hodder - Stoughton, 1992, £16.95)

People in High Places: Approaches to Tibet

by Audrey Salkeld

This is in two parts: the first an account "To Walk on Mount Everest In Search of Mallory and Irvine" about the by now rather futile search for the bodies with Tom Holzel, told not for the first time; the second describing a journey, just for its own sake, into Mustang, the little visited part of Nepal projecting into Tibet.

What makes it more interesting is that there seems to have been, concurrent with the former expedition, a British one accompanied by Brummie Stokes and Ronnie Faux; perhaps it was the North-East Ridge attempt of 1986, when SAS support was withdrawn, leading to Brummie's resignation from the Regiment. He is roped in to make "rissoles enough to feed a battalion" (sic), and encountered again going for help and oxygen for one of his cameramen.

There are a few macabre paragraphs devoted to Maurice Wilson, "war hero, mystic, and in touch with the Beyond", who tried to go it alone, "perishing from cold and collapsed hopes", in 1914.

Nothing else of particular note except a reference to a Lt Col Martin of Sleat who proposed a device "in the nature of a parachute, with breeching under the armpits and the engine pulling vertically upwards". That might get you up the hill; presumably coming down again would be no problem!

The jacket shows Joe Brown and Mo Anthoine on the East Rongbuk Glacier, umbrellas up on a sparkling day. General Bruce's pioneer map of the Rongbuk Glaciers and Everest from Major Wheeler's surveys of 1922 is reproduced on p.18

256 pp., 2 b.w., 55 colour illustrations Jonathan Cape, 1991, £15.99

Contributions to the Journal

The advent of quick computer-based DTP means that the Publishers are keen to receive all copy either on disc or in a format that can be scanned.

The former means most popular MS-DOS word processor packages. (If a Windows package, export in Wordperfect 5.1). The latter means clear type set with no manuscript annotations.

Whilst we will never turn away articles we have limited facilities to re-type, your efforts to assist the publishing process will be most welcome.

Two thirds of articles routinely received are already scannable so most authors should be able to cope.

Thanks for all your articles so far -- the pen and the piton go hand in hand!

**The Deadline for the next Journal
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CIVILIAN RECOGNITION OF MILITARY MOUNTAINEERING AWARDS

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

Mountainwalking Leader Award

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

Single Pitch Supervisors Award

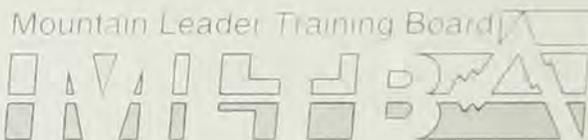
The Single Pitch Supervisors Award, introduced in 1992, is available to anyone with a genuine interest in climbing and group supervision. While the military and civilian awards are not yet harmonised, JSRCI, Rock Leader or even Top Roping & Abseiling awards would be considered as part of an application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

Mountain Instructor Award

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

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

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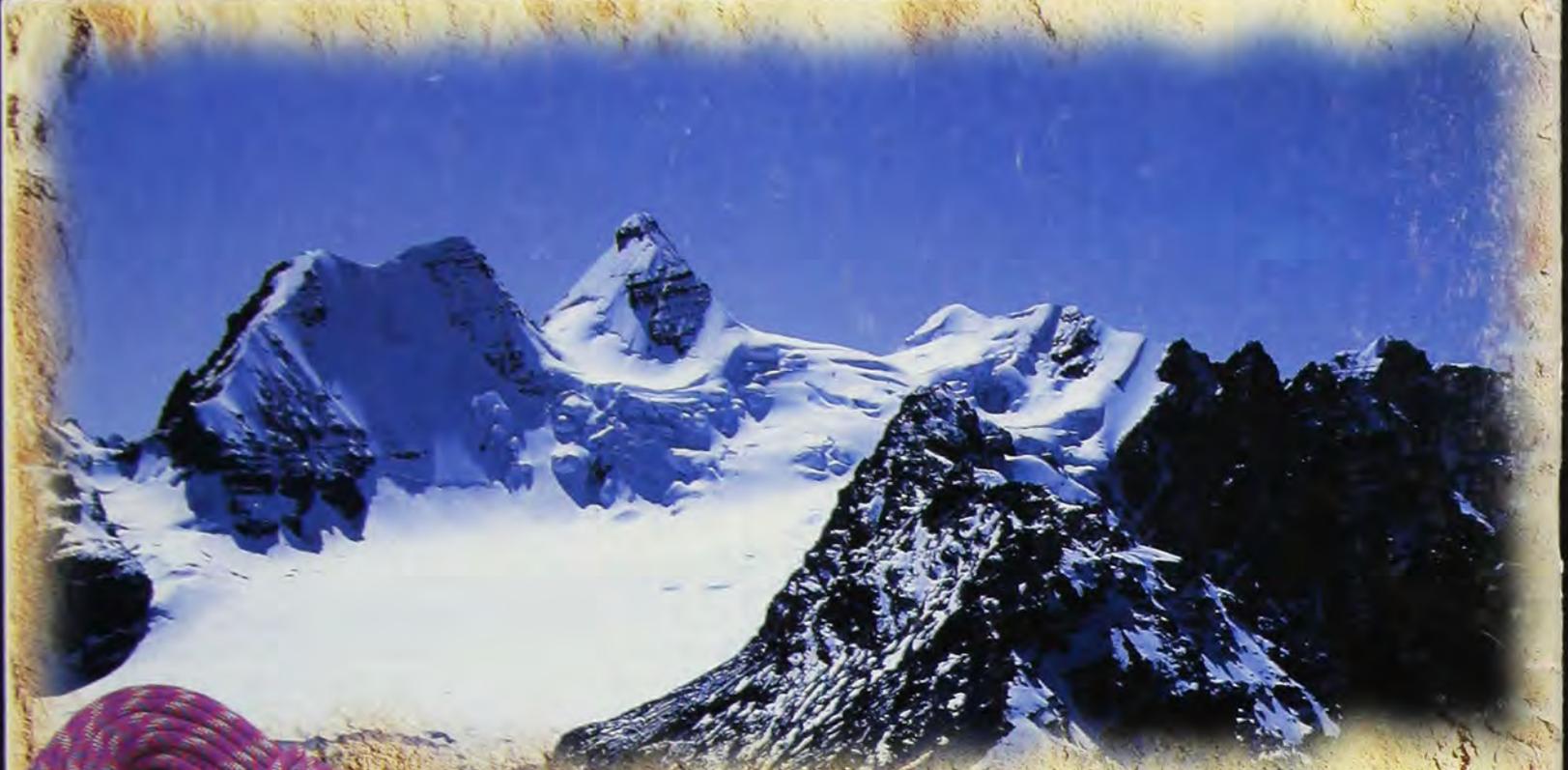


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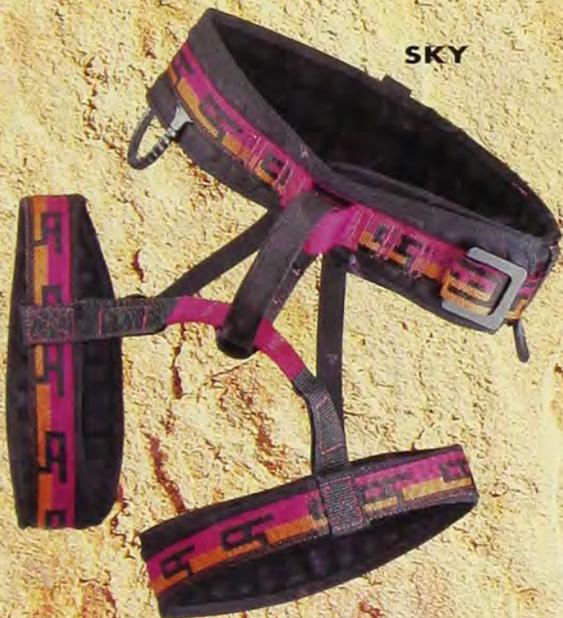
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