

ARMY MOUNTAINEER

The Journal of The Army Mountaineering Association

- *Alpine Tips*
- *Denali - The Full Story*
- *Kanchenjunga - North Face*
- *MacKenzie Trans Arctic 2000 Expedition*

WINTER 98-99



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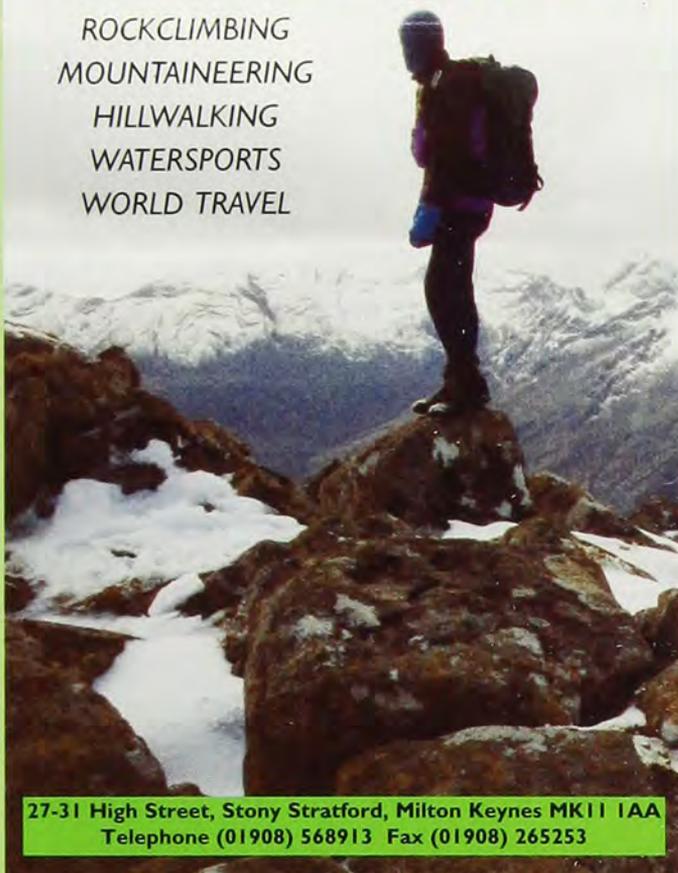
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ARMY MOUNTAINEER



THE JOURNAL OF THE ARMY MOUNTAINEERING ASSOCIATION Winter 1998-99

Message from The Vice Chairman Major M H Bazire MBE RLC

This year's Annual General Meeting reflected on a year of varied activity (see my report on page 3 in this edition), and looked ahead to a range of plans that will have a number of consequences for the AMA.

The financial support that the committee has already given to Ex FINALIS DRAGON, for example, required a close look at our finances, which resulted in the AGM approving an increase to the annual subscription to £15. While this figure should be held for a few years, it will allow the AMA to maintain financial support to members on worthy mountaineering ventures, and to carry out various supporting functions.

Ex FINALIS DRAGON can be seen as an investment for the AMA. It is hoped that many participants will continue to conduct climbing activities in a range of groups and situations.

Ex AMA ALPS 2000 should also appeal to a wide audience. While Mac MacKay has already outlined his plans, both in the last Journal and at the AGM, please be aware that any AMA member who makes a qualifying ascent will have their name recorded.

The plans to hold next year's AGM weekend at JSMTIC INDEFATIGABLE have been mentioned in the Newsletter. While a small amount of "business" needs to be done at the AGM itself, this should not be seen as dominating the weekend. The emphasis should be on mountaineering activities, both on the hills and crags during the day, and hearing more about them, particularly where AMA grants have been given, on the Saturday evening. It would be good to have 99 members there in 1999. Please make every effort, and bring others if you can. I look forward to seeing you there.

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This edition was edited by SSgt Steve Willson.

Summer 1999 edition

Please send your contributions for the Summer 1999 edition to the editor by end May. Photographs and slides, with a suitable caption, should be submitted along with the article (all will be returned).

Articles should be free standing and ready to go direct to the publishers, preferably on disc with a laser printed copy. Please include a word count. Any queries regarding preparation may be made directly to the publisher.

ON THE COVER:

Surg Lt Peter Davis on the mixed ground below the Knife Edge Ridge, on the Cassin Ridge, Denali, Alaska. 4500m.

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APPPOINTMENTS

Editorial

By SSgt Steve Willson

The cover picture on this issue is of Surg Lt Peter Davies on the mixed ground below the knife-edge on the Cassin Ridge of Denali, Alaska. I took the photograph in 1990 whilst hanging in a belay stance. The climbing was hard and steep and after my experiences on that route I put pen to paper and let my feelings flood onto the page. I heard later that this style of writing is good therapy for post traumatic stress, and I'm not surprised. The article I wrote was later published in the AMA Journal and I found it an extremely rewarding experience. Now, as the editor of the journal I realise that it is your work that makes the magazine what it is and we are always in need of articles.

As an incentive to push all the budding authors out there over the edge the sports climbing committee member, Paul Edwards, has offered up a prize for the best article in the next issue. The prize will consist of an Edelweiss adjustable climbing harness and a 30m /11mm rope along with a HB screw gate crab and belay device. All these items were gratefully provided as sponsorship to the sports climbing competition. The editor will choose the winner. Remember you do not have to be climbing the World's highest peaks to produce a good article, a route guide of your local crag could just as well win.

Contributions for the summer 99 journal should be sent to me by the end of May and be provided on disk, Word 6.0/7.0, as well as hard copy as a backup. Good quality photographs are always welcome, either on their own or with an article, and should

preferably be prints. Slides are acceptable but negatives are not. If you are a keen photographer do not forget about the AMA Photographic Competition that will be held along with the 1999 Sports Climbing Competition. The address to send your winning articles to for the next journal is:

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It has been great fun putting together this issue and my thanks go out to all those that made contributions. That's about all from me. I hope you all have a good Christmas and some exciting days in the hills. I look forward to reading about your exploits in the next journal. Steve Willson, Journal Editor

ERRATA

The Summer 98 edition of Army Mountaineer on page 23 contained an error in the itinerary of the British Services Kangchenjunga Expedition 2000. The walk-in from Taplejung to the southwest face does not go via Ghunsa, but approaches the Yalung Glacier via Tseram. For further details, see "Kangchenjunga, the Untrodden Peak" by Charles Evans.

Annual Report to AMA AGM 1998

By Maj M H Bazire MBE RLC, Vice Chairman

INTRODUCTION

Over the last year, AMA members have taken part in the usual variety of activities, from UK meets to expeditions overseas. There has also been much planning for future mountaineering ventures.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership stands at just over 1500. This represents an increase of some 200 on last year, due in part to Ex FINALIS DRAGON. Finances are reviewed formally through the AFN 1514, a copy of which can be obtained from the Membership Secretary on request.

EXPEDITIONS

The steady flow of grant applications continues for expeditions world-wide, with many to the Alps. The continued commitments of units do not seem to dampen the enthusiasm for adventure, which is very apparent from young and old members alike. Mountaineering challenges were varied, and it is good to see new faces getting involved. Ex ICE MONKEY was again a success, despite the poor climbing conditions encountered, with 10 taking part in this AMA trip to the Canadian Rockies. This may become an annual event, so long as leaders come forward. Most expeditions have been very successful: the incidents surrounding Ex SUMMIT TO SEA was widely reported in the national media. Since Sep 97, there has been a steady flow of grant applications. The few unsuccessful cases were due to non-eligibility or low mountaineering content. It is important that applications continue to be presented in the format required.

There has been healthy funding for AMA members on expeditions and the flow of information between giver and receiver is generally working well. A total of some £5000 was granted over the year, with a further £200 from the AMA Memorial Fund. Members still seem to be doing well on their relatively low subscription fee. PXR's have been received for most of the supported expeditions, including many more from other members, and these provide plenty of up-to-date information on the country visited. PXR's are available to members of future expeditions to use for planning. Funds may become tight over the next 2 years with Ex FINALIS DRAGON, BSKE 2000 and Capt Mac MacKay's AMA ALPS 2000 heading the "bill". The balance these present over the next two years is pleasing. Planning for BSKE 2000 proceeds apace, with both the Main and Junior Teams now selected: the Junior Team objective will be chosen soon. Many calls were received seeking advice on availability of leaders, instructors etc. FASTRAK could play a big role in the future, and more should be made of this system. While enthusiasm for expeditioning continues, the issue of qualifications will not go away. The Committee will need to monitor this closely on behalf of the membership, whether regarding novices on expeditions, or in support of members who aspire to higher awards.

RADIOS

The AMA has invested in a set of Motorola radios, as already advertised. Initial feedback from use in South America is favourable. The RNRMMC and RAFMA may add to these in the future, possibly for JS Expeditions such as BSKE 2000. Thanks go

to SSgt Steve Willson and Capt Andy Parsons for bringing this to fruition - these radios represent a most valuable AMA asset.

MEETS & AREA REPS

SSgt Tim Bird took over from Maj Duncan Strutt: we thank them both for helping to maintain momentum. A total of 12 meets were planned, with 10 taking place from Scotland to Pembrokeshire and the South Coast. Attendance at most was, sadly, on the whole poor, perhaps due in part to poor weather and winter conditions. Suggestions for encouraging greater participation are welcomed. The meets list for 1998/99 was in the last news letter, for the latest information contact the Meets Co-ordinator. All members are encouraged to look out for and support these meets. Four new Area Reps were recruited, covering Northern Ireland and Colchester, and giving support in the South East and in Germany. Anyone interested should contact the Meets Co-ordinator. Clearly much more activity takes place than covered by Meets and Area Reps. There may be scope for less formal meets to be advertised through the AMA Web page, as well as in the Newsletter. JSAM this year was quieter than usual, with relatively few attendees due to the late notice. JSAM 99 will be in the Bemese Oberland, while JSAM 2000, possibly based in Chamonix, will be the AMA's turn to run, so an AMA leader is needed.

SPORTS CLIMBING

For the 5th year running, the AMA has undertaken the organisation of the Army Sports Climbing Competition, masterminded by Capt Paul Edwards and W02 Mike Smith. Some 120 competitors from both regular and territorial units took part, with a rank range from private to brigadier. The event was planned to be financial-

ly self-supporting: in fact, it showed a small profit. Overall, the championships were considered to be successful. The AMA intends to organise the 1999 competition at the "Rock Face", Birmingham, on 7 May 1999, when more publicity will be given to the photo competition. The status of sporting aspects of climbing, as viewed by the Army, is still being debated.

JOURNAL

The Journal continues to be a high quality publication. Grant recipients and others are submitting more reports, but articles are always needed. The twice-yearly publication in the Summer and Winter will continue. SSgt Steve Willson is now the Editor.

NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter continues to act as an important means of communication for the AMA. It does, however, take time to prepare, with difficulties of delays to submissions of articles, compilation, photocopying, collection and distribution, all conspiring to prevent publication until about one month after committee meetings. Efforts are being made to speed up the process.

PUBLICITY

A revised Recruiting Leaflet has been produced. The Internet site was recently updated, but further revisions are due soon.

SUMMARY

The AMA remains very active in many areas, despite numerous other commitments, and it has a reasonable financial base to provide support. I would like to record my thanks for the work of Committee Members who find the time and energy to assist in the running of the AMA.

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AMA Expedition Radio Set

The AMA has recently purchased a set of radio equipment for use by its members and others. The set consists of four hand held Motorola GP68 VHF sets, one GM350 VHF base station, solar panels, video battery charger and all the ancillaries. This service has been provided by the AMA from the contributions you make as members of the association, therefore the equipment is yours and you should make full use of it. The set has been tested in Europe, South America and Nepal. The hand sets provides a good line of sight service up to 5km and more with the base station's 25W output. The set, or part set, is available by booking it through the Journal Editor, Steve Willson, with the following conditions.

1. The radios must be insured by the expedition for the replacement cost.
2. A hire fee, to cover maintenance and renewal, of between £50 for part of the set to £100 for the whole set paid to the AMA on collection.
3. The expedition must book their own frequencies through which ever country they are visiting and then inform the radio manager to program the radios prior to collection.

The equipment is very good and it will improve the command and control of any expedition not to mention the increased safety cover. If you have any questions about the radio set or its availability please give Steve Willson a call on 773 4355 or Civil 01748 874355. Please make use of this kit!

Forty Eight Hours on Kanchenjunga

Maj Roddy McArthur joined a civilian expedition to climb the North Face of Kanchenjunga in 1997. Although a novice at high altitude, first time over 5000m, and having had HAPE earlier in the expedition, he found himself climbing higher than expected and learning quickly. The following is an account of what he experienced and an insight into high altitude mountaineering.

Where are you? Either the dream seemed real or reality still felt like a dream.

As my mind tried to put the pieces back in order I thought back over the last 2 days. Forty eight hours ago I had been trudging up the North Face of Kanchenjunga as myself and two Americans, Bill and Troy, endeavoured to reach Camp 5. We had 2 teams of 4 on the mountain only 2 days apart. The other team had spent one night establishing Camp 5 before descending. Our job was to consolidate the camp and have the first potential summit bid. Our third team would follow in 3 - 4 days. Our fourth climber, Mike, reached his limit at Camp 4 (7400m) and that morning chose to descend. He would be missed as he was not only the most experienced but also a doctor.

Bill and Troy were younger (late 20's) and fitter but the altitude started to take its toll on all of us. As we climbed the number of steps kicked in between rests diminished and the rests grew longer. The lack of oxygen was not my only concern, my urine seemed to be blood coloured. Camp 5, at 7800m, was cut into the slope in the lee of a massive rock but flat ground was at a premium. One of our 2 tents was so precarious that it would only sleep one. In addition the Korean expedition had a tent there with 2 Sherpas inside. I was the last to arrive and drew the short straw of the single tent. The evening as usual was spent collecting and melting ice or snow and attempting to rehydrate. You can never drink enough and I certainly hadn't.

Living at high altitude is the ultimate test of 'admin in the field'. Any mistake can have consequences out of all proportion to lower level camping. It is now more of a case of survival. This is highlighted when you are on your own. The wind on 'Kanch' can be horrendous, and even without the wind-chill factor the temperature is slightly chillier than Aberdeen. At base camp it had dropped to -25 C at night. Life in a tent comprises plugging the holes (where people in crampons failed to see the tent), constant brewing, snacking, and sleeping when possible. The latter 2 are not that easy. It is diffi-

cult to maintain ones appetite above 7000m, and even favourite chocolate bars were unpalatable. The best solution was soup or drinking chocolate. Calorie counting became obsessive as I tried to eat more than 1500 per day, knowing I was burning closer to 6000. Sleep patterns were also disrupted and cat napping became more common. As torch batteries were heavy and at a premium everything was done in the dark or to stove light. It is not as uncomfortable as I have made it sound but don't make the mistake of believing the pictures from high altitude documentaries about how warm and comfortable it looks. When you wake up everything is covered in a layer of snow not just from hard wind driven blizzards but from your condensed breath.

The day routine was almost the same as night with the maximum time spent cocooned resting for our summit bid. Occasionally we shouted messages to each other but generally it was a solitary existence, with the climate too hostile for standing around outside, and the tents too cramped for group comfort. We had decided on a departure time of 2200hrs but fate was not with us. At 1730hrs we received a radio call from the Koreans to say that one of their Sherpas was injured and believed to be only about 50m from us. They had been watching him by telescope as he descended from their highest camp about 300m above us. As speed was of the essence we dressed quickly and set off with one of their Sherpas in the general direction. Night was closing in and a cold layer of cloud had reduced visibility further to 10m.

Eventually we found the Sherpa, but it was no 50m walk. He had wandered off route with no crampons and broken his ankle. I gave him one of mine but the process of having to take off protective mitts to fumble with crampon straps would later cost me the inconvenience of

frost-bitten fingers. The hero of the hour, or in this case 3 hours, was Bill who almost single handedly supported the Sherpa whilst the remainder of us were pushed just to route find and get us back. We finally made it back at about 2030hrs but any hope of a summit attempt was now history. The weather had stripped most of us of our reserves and our priority now was to get fit enough for the mornings descent.

It was an effort to get the stove lit and go through the process of brewing up when all the body wants to do is sleep. One half of my face had frozen with the eye iced up, but luckily the effects were temporary. The real adventure, unbeknown to me, was yet to start.

In the morning we set off after checking the state of the injured Sherpa. He was stable with the other 2 Sherpas caring for him in their larger tent. I wished Mike had been with us. The Sherpa would be evacuated later when more support came up from the Korean expedition, but it would take 2 weeks and his ankle would have set wrongly. There was little more we could do for him as his life was no longer threatened and we did not have the means or energy for the CASEVAC. Bill and Troy made good progress to Camp 4 but I struggled and found myself resting too often. I knew my body was not functioning at its best as the descent became more painful than the ascent. Four nights at Camps 4 and 5 had taken their toll, combined with limited food and not enough fluids.

I reached Camp 4 about an hour after Troy, and 2 after Bill. The crux of the climb was still ahead of us - the 900 foot

rock band down to Camp 3. It had taken us 2 weeks to fix a route up it, and a good 5 or 6 hour jumara to climb and scramble it. To reduce the chance of rockfall and limit the load on the rope we decided to leave at 1 hour intervals; Bill, then Troy, and finally myself. Although it may have seemed more sensible to put the slower ones first, Bill was ready to go and we needed the rest. This gave me 2 hours to melt more ice and continue the process of re-hydrating. I guess I didn't leave until about 1500hrs. We had never thought about how difficult the descent could be so a time appreciation had not been fully considered. We did know staying at Camp 4 was not a healthy option and so had committed ourselves to reaching the more protected and habitable camps. Bill and Troy had been fortunate to hit the rock band in the afternoon and have the luxury of a daylight descent. The walk to the top of the rock band is at best difficult, with numerous steep descents on pitches of rock hard ice. The need for rests was worse with ones mind wanting to wander and just sit and enjoy the view. It would have been far too easy to drift off and never return until too late. Never underestimate hypoxia.

The fixed rope appeared as the last of the daylight disappeared. With the night came not only the cold but another blizzard. I clipped on and started the descent. The next 5 hours would be spent learning rope techniques the hard way. The ropes had been fixed for climbing and were tied onto whatever protection we had established, tied together, or crossed with the Slovaks ropes who were using the same route but not the same rope. As both teams were at best using 7mm and sometimes only 6mm ropes, then the minimum people using ones rope the better. Ours were already showing signs of wear. If in doubt clip onto the better looking rope.



Kanch from Base Camp.

The narrowness of the rope did not help with braking techniques, and I found that the improvised use of my ascender reversed, which seemed a good idea at the time, managed to hurl me down the rope and have the cartoon effect of pulling me back in for the full body splat on the face. I stuck that one in Tommy Cooper's book of rope tricks.

Ropework was not helped by the spindrift descending onto you, the darkness since the headtorch battery had long since expired with the cold, or the fact that every knot or rope junction required me to remove mitts to fiddle with refitting my system. The damage to fingers gradually increased. At least I was spared the wind due to the sheltered rock face. I consid-

ered stopping on the descent under a rock shelf and resting until daylight but the lack of a stove (these remained in the tents) meant a cold motionless stay. At least movement kept the circulation going. I touched down at 2330hrs and immediately felt safer back on the face. The deposit of soft powder snow had accumulated at the base and was at least 3 feet deep. Underneath it my crampons could just feel the hardness of the ice. Camp 3 lay about 400m away along the narrowest and trickiest of paths. This was now well obscured even if I had had a torch. The path was irrelevant as barely 20m along it my crampons shot off down the mountain with me following closely behind. I remembered many warm up lessons on ice axe arrests and thought that those who had instructed me would have been proud of my near perfect position (for once) but the steep powder snow was not intimidated by my axe pick and for the second time that evening I found myself airborne in the dark as I reached the bergshund.

They say a slice of bread with butter on it always lands butter side down. The same could also be said about landing head first in deep powder snow. I suddenly found myself more awake and in no mans land. The snow was now between 4-5 feet deep and each pace forward required me to clear first at chest level, then waist and then knee. In addition I now had the problem of crevasses to negotiate around. I knew the tents were within 400m and tried my whistle but, as I would find out later, Bill and Troy had pushed on desperate to make the lower camps. I was alone on the mountain with the nearest people at least 2 camps away. I did not feel alone however. One of the benefits of hypoxia was that I believed myself to be 2 people, my body and my mind. Thankfully we didn't argue.



Just after the rock fall.

The darkness hid the relief of the ground and the crevasse edges until the last meter causing my cleared path to zigzag up and down the slope as new obstacles loomed out of the darkness. Body warmth did little to resurrect my torch batteries. As the first glimmers of daylight appeared I reached the tent. It was almost 0600hrs and it had taken me over 6 hrs to cover the 400m. My feet were numb from the slow plod. With the realisation I was alone confirmed I knew I had to descend as soon as possible. The high altitude cough and strained lungs, that we all suffered from, were not any better after the previous nights cold air, and the fear of HAPE was always too real. My spare kit was here along with a plentiful supply of food and gas. I was now only at 6750m and already the oxygen level felt better.

I honestly didn't know if I would come back up or not. There was still enough time to recover before a final summit bid. Bill and Troy had organised, from Camp 5, for Sherpas to be waiting for them at Base Camp for their further descent. I could not carry all my kit and make best speed so whilst my brew was melting the Scottish side of me packed my most expensive kit and abandoned heavy food etc. The lower tents had sufficient supplies if I couldn't make Base Camp. At 0930hrs I set off and got about 20m before I went through the first crevasse of the journey. It certainly hadn't been open before. Luckily sheer fright was enough to let me grab the sides and I pulled myself out. I now surveyed the route carefully. I could see the larger crevasses clearly but I didn't trust our old route as several of the wands had disappeared. I decided to pick a new route down for the initial stage, heading for the more prominent snow bridges.

Unknown to me, Base Camp had me on telescope and were following my every step. The change in direction caused alarm and fears of hypoxia until they would later see me return towards the path. As they prepared for their next bid I perfected the art of crevasse crossing without a rope. With an ice axe in one hand, and walking pole in the other, I would probe the bridge to find the last safe spot. I would then throw my sack and pole over, hoping they wouldn't go too far, and then I would leap. If the jump was too far, and no alternative bridge was near, I would throw my equipment over then walk about 15m uphill, lie down like a log, and roll downhill over the bridge as fast as I could on the premise that my weight would be spread enough. This worked well apart from the dizziness afterwards and the worry of going off course in mid roll. That aside, I felt invincible.

I had just crossed my fourth crevasse and could see the path wands about 30m to my left. I knew that I had to rejoin the path as I was almost at Camp 2 (6500m). It was 1230hrs and I had been on the move for almost 30 hours. It was then that disaster struck. I had thrown my pack over the last crevasse but it had refused to stop on the other side. I remember walking in the direction of my pack. Base Camp watched me approach the sheet of black ice and then I went. The slope only lasted about 40m, but it was enough to give my unresisting and unconscious body the velocity required to clear the large crevasse as it left the cliff edge and landed on a shelf on the other side 30m below. By not having a pack on when landing on my back I probably saved myself a snapped neck. To say I was lucky was an understatement, the ledge I landed on was where we had pitched Camp 2. I landed 4 feet from the tents which had the further fortune of having our third team, including a para-med, brewing up.

Where are you? the voice of Dan Mazur asked again. I'm on Kanchenjunga I happily replied.

Roddy's body imprint, or 'snow angel' was still there a few days later when Scott McKee, one of the team watching his fall, summited. Roddy miraculously escaped any injury from the fall and was able, with assistance, to walk down to Camp 1 where a helicopter casevaced him. He learnt a lot in the time he spent with Jonathon Pratt and still believes that this was the best 48hrs of mountaineering ever. He looks forward to seeing the summit one day.

Book Review

Ice World - Techniques and Experiences of Modern Ice Climbing

By Jeff Lowe

Questions: How do you make a completely safe abseil from a vertical wall of thick ice without leaving any gear behind? What is dry climbing? How do you "torque"? When should you rig ice screws in series and how? How should you modify the pick of any factory-made axe to give you the best possible performance? Answers: Read Ice World.

No amount of eulogising by me is really going to do justice to this book. It is all things to all men and by all men I mean all women too. To make the point most of the "instructional" photos are of women climbers or mixed teams. It is more than a just manual of technique, more than a history of ice climbing or the Jeff Lowe diary and more than a well written guidebook; in fact it seems to be in a genre of its own. There is one thing very definite about it, though: it is utterly inspiring, even to old alpenstock-and tricouni buffers like me.

So what do you get for twenty quid? First a brief history of ice but a better one than you have read before and full of surprising facts such as downward pointing curve on Anderl Heckmair's 1938 Eigerwand axe that was 30 years ahead of its time. Then, through The Ice Experience, you are given an insight into what makes icemen tick. Although the tales are told in straight forward style and with impressive humility you are made more and more aware, in these accounts of the desperately difficult and highly eventful, of the considerable contribution of the author to world ice climbing.

By page 90 you have already enjoyed two books of packed 9-point print - but read on! The next book is all about what its all about: what to wear, what to use, what snow and ice are, food, training, basic and advanced techniques and hundreds of other tips. You have to buy it for the sheer range and clarity of these hundred tightly written pages. The author then launches into his final book: a survey of pioneering possibilities- yes folks, still plenty to do out there- and a survey of 16 of the world's best ice climbs, leaving you with a feeling that there is possibly nothing more you can say on the subject. Which could be true. Four brilliant books in one. Can't be bad, eh?

254 pages with numerous plates, mostly in colour. Although the print size is small it is in two-column format so very readable. Published by The Mountaineers ISBN0-89886-446-1 paper; ISBN0-8988-471-2 cloth; Available from cordee, 3a de Montfort St., Leicester or in all good book shops, price £19.95 (softback)

Review by Tim King



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Alpine Mountaineering

By: Capt Mac Mackay

This article was first produced a few years ago and was well received especially by the younger members. As we are getting close to the AMA ALPS 2000 expedition, perhaps it is appropriate to repeat the article and update the text with Top Tips. Alpine routes can be climbed in many different styles, this article aims to discuss some of the planning issues that need careful consideration prior to attempting a route.

It all started with a discussion I had in a snow bound alpine hut with Dave Farquar, who at the time was the AMA secretary. The discussion immediately brought to mind a day on the Frendo Spur, a classic mixed route at D+ in the Monte Blanc range. Norman Jones and I had left the Midi-Plan Station at about 0630 and after two hours on the route we came across two young British climbers (not AMA I might add). I asked them, when had they started climbing? "8 o'clock yesterday" they answered. Little wonder I thought, with runners every 5ft and sacks that would not be out of place on the backs of Sherpas, heading for some high peak. But never the less in 'True British Style' they were trying to push out the route. We never saw them again that day. We were on the top by 2 o'clock and there was no doubt that our light packs had enabled us to move fast.

I've come across such situations many times on alpine routes, having done exactly the same myself 'in True Scottish Style'. Alpine routes are exhausting enough without spoiling the enjoyment by humping the kitchen sink along with you. Routes in alpine terrain differ considerably from all rock, rock/ice/snow, ice/snow only, difficult glacier crossing and multi-day with planned bivouacs. Every route should be planned meticulously, including what goes into the rucksack. This will hopefully prevent the often heard saying, "I'll just throw in an extra thermal just in case", that increases the weight to be carried and makes it seriously hard work when climbing. If you aspire to feats such as the Matterhorn in 5 hrs by one of the easier routes then one has to move fast, and to do this you must travel light. The question I ask myself is could I survive an emergency night out with the kit I'm carrying?

Could you survive a night out, not necessary in comfort, with what you are carrying? This is the question that could lighten or increase the size of your sack. A cold night makes sure that you don't sleep-in and gives you that early start you definitely need! So what should you carry in an emergency bivi kit. The minimum is:

- a. Bivi Bag - (Full gortex)
- b. Insulation Mat - (Built into some rucksacks)
- c. Down or synthetic Duvet/Gortex jacket - (down is better in the Alps)

Top Tip:

Put on everything you have in your sack: hat, gloves, long johns etc and shiver the night away nibbling your emergency rations as fuel. Drink as much as possible especially at altitude, over a long period of time, to fully rehydrate your body.

If planning to Bivouac then some extra kit can give you a good nights sleep. This gets you ready for the next days activities, but don't forget you may have to carry it on the route unless you intend to return the same way, then it is preferable to cache the extra gear and pick it up on your return. The recommended extra items are:

- a. Small stove and fuel. (Light weight Gas is very popular.)
- b. Sleeping bag and/or duvet.
- c. Rations.
- d. Water (If not available at bivi site; check it out in guidebook or through local knowledge)
- e. Walkman/radio/mobile phone (for weather report)

Top Tip:

Generally in the alpine countries local climbers do not carry sleeping bags on day tours. The aim is to be back in the hut or valley by night- fall and they only carry minimum equipment for emergency purposes.

CHECK OFF LISTS

The following check off lists can be used as a guide if you feel you need one, or as food for thought for the more experienced members:

ALPINE ROCK ROUTES

INDIVIDUAL

- Climbing Sack - (50 ltr MAX)
- Bivi Bag - (Full gortex)
- Water Bottle
- Waterproofs - (Full gortex)
- Harness - (Adjustable) Thermal Top
- Hat/gloves - (Thermal lightweight)
- Helmet
- 2x8ft Sling
- 2x8ft accessory cord 5 or 6mm - (Better known as prussic loops)
- Belay device - (HMS Karabiner popular with Europeans)
- Abseil device - (Fig of eight recommended)
- Head Torch - (For early start or arriving back late, put it in!)
- Rations - Day and Emergency
- Sun Glasses
- Sun Screen - (High factor)

GROUP KIT (2 PERSON)

A few pitons - (Can be left out but is very handy should you need to abseil off or get into trouble)

Lead Climbing Rack - (Most common routes have enough pitons in situ so keep it small, read route description carefully)

Rope 2 x 10mm, 50 m - (The twin ropes are becoming popular in the Alps)

Map
Compass
Altimeter - (Optional)
Mobile Phone - (Optional)

ALPINE MIXED ROUTES INDIVIDUAL KIT

Climbing Sack
Bivi Bag gortex
Water Bottle/Flask
Waterproof jacket - (Synthetic or duvet)
Thermal Top
Hat/gloves - (Thermal lightweight)
Long Johns and Vest
Socks
Harness
Helmet
Wool hat and Balaclava
Gloves Dachstein
Ice Axe
Ice hammer
8ft Sling
2 x 8ft 5/6mm accessory cord
Belay Device
Abseil device - (Fig of Eight is recommended)
Crampons
Gaiters for deep snow
Sun glasses
Sun screen (High Factor)
Day rations and emergency.
Head Torch with spare batteries and bulbs.

GROUP KIT (2 PERSON)

First Aid Kit
Rope 2 x 10mm 50mtr

Spare Sun Protection - (Lightweight goggles, Fly's Eyes type)
Ski Goggles (For blizzard conditions, without them it is almost impossible to navigate)
Lead Rack - (Keep it small)
Map
Compass
A few pitons
Ice screws x 2 - (Many climbers use only screws due to extra strength and ease of placement)
Ice pitons x 6 - (See comment above)
Altimeter - (Optional, good watch type now available)

ALPINE NORMAL ROUTES INDIVIDUAL KIT

Climbing Sack
Bivi Bag gortex
Water bottle/flask
Waterproof jacket (Synthetic or duvet)
Thermal Top
Windproof trousers
Balaclava and gloves (Thermal lightweight)
Long Johns and vest (thermal lightweight)
Socks
Gloves
Wool Balaclava
Harness
Ice Axe
8ft sling
2 x Prussic Loops (For Crevasse Rescue)
4 x karabiners
Crampons
Gaiters
Sun glasses
Sun screen
Day Rations and Emergency
Head Torch and Spare Bulb

GROUP KIT (2-4 PERSONS)

Rope 1 x 10mm 50mts
Map
Compass
2 x Ice Screws
First Aid Kit
Group shelter

Background : The Tacule Face of Mont Blanc, packed full of climbing.

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Kang Yissay

By Major Duncan Penry

It was during two months spent, on and off, in a particularly austere Base Camp in Pakistan that I began to fantasise about small-scale, comfortable expeditions in the lower altitude bracket. We were surrounded by monochrome views, eating food that was universally brown in colour (and, if it were possible, in taste) and faced the prospect of mind-numbing bureaucratic effort securing permission to buy beer once we were back in the capital. A more comfortable alternative, I reasoned, would require a country with an established brewing industry, a Base Camp accessible enough to get in a re-supply of fresh food. A mountain that wasn't too high, but with enough technical interest to keep us amused, and, ideally, the cachet of making a British 'first', either on the route or the summit.

It was a tall order, but after some searching through expedition reports in the Alpine club and back numbers of the Himalayan Journal I found a little-explored 6400 metre mountain in the Ladakh range of the Northern India Himalaya called Kang Yissay I. Three other peaks in the massif bear the same name, two of them 'discovered' only three years ago. The mountain was still waiting for a British ascent of its North East Ridge and for a full exploration of the glacier systems surrounding it. Aims thought important enough for the expedition we put together to secure endorsements from the BMC, the Mount Everest Foundation and the Joint Services Expedition Trust. Six of our eight-man team were long-term AMA members, giving us access to a generous grant towards costs from the Association. Unusually, too, in this day and age, we managed to score some commercial sponsorship. As ever on trips like these we were used as scientific guinea pigs, this time by Dr Craig Currie, one of two reservist soldiers on the team who, in his civilian capacity as a medical research scientist, conducted a series of experiments while we were on the mountain on behalf of the Royal Defence Medical College and University Hospital Wales.

The climbing season in Ladakh usually fails between July to September, at the time the monsoon is soaking all points south of the Himalayan barrier. We arrived in Delhi in late June, and after four days clearing a series of bureaucratic hurdles in gross pre-monsoon humidity it was a relief to board the internal flight to Leh, ancient capital of the Ladakh. Thanks to some persuasive talking by our Liaison Officer we took with us our sixteen heavy barrels of equipment at only a nominal charge. Leh is now firmly on the tourist

circuit, and deservedly so. The colourful bazaar town is set in stunning semi-desert fringed by snow-capped mountains, and hosts a bewildering mix of Indian, Chinese and Central Asian peoples. We spent two days here preparing equipment, meeting with the Leh authorities and enjoying the dry climate and good food before setting off on the week's walk to Base Camp.

Unlike many other Himalayan peoples, Ladakhis do not work as porters. We hired a caravan of twenty two pack ponies to carry our gear, and although pack animals don't strike or demand baksheesh, their drivers do, and keeping them on-side became mission critical. This wasn't always easy, as we chose to use a little-travelled approach route that cut between the Stok and Matho Kangri massifs on poor, unmarked trails that were difficult for the heavily-laden ponies to negotiate. There were no other groups on the route and few local people, but the views from two 5000 metre passes across the Indus Valley to the Eastern Karakorum were spectacular. In a successful bid at lowering our high morale Craig Currie began measuring our absorption of sugars at various altitudes, insisting we lance our own fingers for blood ten times or so before breakfast on each of several occasions. Our eagerness for self-mutilation never matched the visible enthusiasm shown by Craig as he administered each experiment. We also found time for recreation: on the fourth day we were challenged at cricket by our LO, camp staff and pony drivers, and believe that we may have set an altitude record for an international match. Happily the home side was convincingly beaten, despite some inspired fielding from a co-opted collection of goat herders and an itinerant Tibetan monk, complete with prayer wheel, cunningly drafted as wicket keeper

by the opposition. Our unconventional route now rejoined a more major trail for the final two days to Base Camp. Crossing the 5200 metre Kongmaru La on the final day of the approach we got our first look at the dominant North Face of the mountain we had come to climb, spending some time huddled by the cairns and prayer flags with binoculars trying to work out promising routes.

Base Camp, at 4900 metres had running water and grass and was as comfortable a site as we could have wished for, although the thin air and cold allowed for no easy effort or unbroken sleep. As a team we were suffering from the usual collection of expedition ailments, so after a recce of the North Glacier and the placing of a gear dump it was just Gryff, Rob, Craig and I who eventually set off with all we needed for an alpine-style push on the North East Ridge. The route ascended the reasonably uncomplicated glacier then cut towards the ridge over an ice face steep enough to slow us down and force us to pitch it in places. The ridge itself was much safer, but slogging up it took many long strength-sapping hours in soft snow. We climbed past the point used as a camp by some previous expeditions, aiming instead for a flat plateau above some seracs at about 5800 metres. After digging out tent platforms that evening Rob and Craig crashed, but Gryff and I stayed up to admire the sunset behind the pointed peaks of the Karakorum stretching westwards into Pakistan. The other pair were feeling the altitude badly, so dawn the following morning found just Gryff and I pitching up unexpectedly rotten ice on what had turned from a steep but straightforward ridge into a narrow and unstable East Face at about 6200 metres. As the light grew we screwed ourselves in as best



Expedition

we could and took stock. Looking up we could make out a large cornice and a good deal of wind-slab waiting to come down, something we judged may happen quickly once the sun hit the face. Discretion won through and we backed off to try another route, Gryff catching some air time on decent to add insult to injury.

The other side of the mountain was still a closed book, and we knew there was a chance of finding alternative routes and opportunities. Delicate negotiation with the pony drivers led to agreement to carry our gear on four ponies over dangerously narrow trails to the far side of the range towards the South Glacier. Rough ground prevented the animals from making the whole route, so a hard load carry was needed to move the kit over the moraine wall to the bottom of the glacier at about 5000 metres. Gryff wasn't well and returned to Base Camp later the next day, but Rob, Craig and I, accompanied by the LO who was along for the experience, all made an alpine start up the moraine and along the glacier. Craig and the LO descended before first light with acclimatisation problems, but Rob and I carried on to the headwall forming the South Ridge of Kang Yissay I and the North Ridge of the unclimbed Kang Yissay III, then moved together over an easy bergschrund and up steep snow to the ridgeline. Here we found classic alpine mixed climbing as we followed the ridge south to emerge on a sharp snow arete leading to the summit of Kang Yissay III. Snow conditions were good at the start with firm cramponing, but they deteriorated rapidly halfway along, parts of the ridge sloughing off alarmingly to the glacier floor on either side. Protection was negligible. Some 200 metres from a summit estimated at approximately 6200 metres, we reluctantly made the decision to turn back.

Fresh food brought in to Base Camp on a re-supply run made Base Camp a disarmingly pleasant place to be, but we forsook it all for one final push for the summit of Kang Yissay I, this time along the South Ridge. A one-day load carry up the East Glacier stocked an ABC on snow at the bottom of a long scree slope, which we occupied the following day. At 0045 Gryff and Rob set off towards the ridge despite unsettled weather. Andy and I, ready an hour later, decided that the weather was against us and chose a retreat to our bags. The first pair continued, finding a line by head-torch over mixed ground to make the ridge by dawn. The rest of the day was spent moving together over increasingly difficult ground to a final gendarme 40 metres from the summit. There was no obvious route around. Faced with unexpectedly hard climbing late in the day and the certain onset of bad weather, the decision was made once again to make a tactical withdrawal.

Expeditions to the big mountains tend to be characterised by a lot of effort put in by the many but glory, should it be won, only for the few. Running small-scale Himalayan expeditions can mean that the whole team has the chance for glory but also shares responsibility for failure. In this case it was the latter, but although we had not bagged our route or reached our summit we knew that the decisions to withdraw had been the right ones. Of course, we all got lots from it personally, and managed to add to the corporate knowledge of the mountain system and produce a scientific result worthy of publication, something that pleased the BMC, JSET, MEF and our sponsors. Peaks in the Kang Yissay area are ideal objectives for small groups of mixed ability looking for interesting and accessible climbing during the Indian monsoon with scope for branching out to little-explored country on either side. If you relish austerity, there's plenty of choice at 8000 metres. Personally, I can recommend sticking to mountains with green Base Camps!



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An Icy Wilderness

By Neil Laughton

The red and white Twin Otter skied off the virgin pack ice and gently disappeared between mountainous peaks. As the sound retreated the silence swept in. We had come to climb Mt. Vinson, the highest mountain in Antarctica (16,067 ft).

My climbing companion was Mark Lewis (Royal Engineers) and between us we had 280 lbs of equipment which was distributed between two sledges and a rucksack each. We planned to be on the mountain for up to two weeks. Apart from 7 other climbers, we would not see another living thing including plants and penguins until pick up time. The nearest bar stool was approximately 1800 miles away.

We set out the following morning, the 19th January. Time was meaningless. We were in the realm of White Nights, 24 hours of daylight. There was no natural respite from the glare of the sun. No day, no night. Just continuous time.

We were not the only ones to suffer with the weight of kit. We came across piles of stores, abandoned en-route, including an incongruous looking metal case that contained a satellite telephone. When we paused to catch our breath, we looked up at hulks of snow and rock protruding through the vast white billiard table. Not a sound. There was a tranquillity here that I had never experienced before. We turned left at the foot of a 6,000 ft mountain face and scurried on for fear of falling seracs. Despite our increased urgency, it still took us a further hour to pass underneath the worst danger of these avalanche prone slopes.

We stumbled upon the four tents of our fellow mountaineers from France, USA,

Denmark and Ireland, an experienced bunch of Everest summiteers. They had lost three of their four stoves and were a little dehydrated so we spent several hours melting snow and boiling water for them. I remembered having seen some black dots further down the glacier. These spots on the ice turned out to be the missing stoves that had fallen off a poorly secured sledge. Their \$98,000 expedition was back on the road thanks to "shape, shine, shadow etc".

The rest had given us some strength. We continued our journey towards camp two. Without warning a white mist rolled in across the frozen plains and enveloped us to the point of complete disorientation; like blinded divers we had no sense of forward or back, up nor down. We staggered on using compass bearings and following the taut rope between us until at midnight we reached camp two. It was an ice gully marked with a bamboo stick. The final slopes leading to the camp were very slippery and we were forced to abandon our skis, still hauling our sledges behind us. Warily two tents were erected in the still evening air.

At 3.00pm the sun broke through. Setting out for Camp Three we traversed through the rubble of an avalanche then zigzagged our way up an icefall section. It took five hours. We found ourselves on a massive col between Mt. Vinson and the elegant, pyramid-shaped Mt. Shinn.

The weather was still clear above the thickening cloudbase 8,000 ft below us. The final day to the summit consisted of 4,000 vertical feet over eight kilometres. Every inch of our flesh was buried in layers of insulation. Our thermometer had given up at minus 40 degrees.



Twin Otter coming in to land at base camp

Out here we had the opportunity to evaluate the quality of life whilst suspended in thin air, literally between earth and sky. The will was strong but the body was beginning to weaken. After six hours we had negotiated the barren nursery slopes of the glacier's hidden crevasses and began climbing the 50-degree snow slope of the final headwall. This led on to a broad summit ridge with one last ten metre steep section. I slammed my ice axe into the plateau and heaved my body over the lip, stood up and raised a silent clenched fist. I pulled in the rope that was attached to Mark and together we surveyed an icy wilderness.

Neil Laughton (Ex. Royal Marine and Army Reservist) is nearing the completion of his 7 SUMMITS conquest. He led a young team of British servicemen to the summit of Mt. Everest in May 1998, which raised £50,000 for Great Ormond Street Hospital and will be heading for the North Pole next April

View across to Mt. Shinn from Mt. Vinson



Neil Laughton on summit of Mt. Vinson



Joint Services Rock Climbing Scheme

By Lt Col G S Nicholls

As a result of working group studies earlier this year, some changes have been made to the Rock Climbing courses run at Centres. The main change is that the old Top Roping and Abseiling (TR&A) Course has been discontinued. Members should note that the TR&A qualification has been withdrawn and that individuals wishing to supervise these activities should attend the Rock Leader Training (RLT) Course.

The notes below give an outline of the current Rock-Climbing Scheme. All courses last 5 working days.

Rock Climbing Proficiency (RCP)

Basic rock climbing techniques for beginners.

Pre-Course Standard:- Nil.

Civilian Equivalence:- Nil.



Rock Leader Training (RLT)

Teaching and assessment of single pitch techniques.

Pre-Course Standard:- Have attended RCP.

Civilian Equivalence:- SPA.

Note: The qualification to supervise single pitch activities is valid for only 3 years. Individuals must either be reassessed or attend the next level course (RCL).



Rock Climbing Leader (RCL)

Assessment of single pitch techniques, and leading multi-pitch climbs up to Severe with 1 student.

Pre-Course Standard:- Have attended RLT, supervised 20 single pitch sessions, and have logged 60 pitches of climbing. **Civilian Equivalence:-** SPA (Permanent qualification).



Rock Climbing Instructor (RCI)

Assessment of single pitch techniques, and leading multi-pitch climbs up to Severe with 1 student.

Pre-Course Standard:- Have attended RLT, supervised 20 single pitch sessions, and have logged 60 pitches of climbing. **Civilian Equivalence:-** SPA (Permanent qualification).

There is now a system of "fast tracking" whereby competent climbers can enter the scheme at a point appropriate to their experience. However, proof of experience, normally in the form of a logbook, will be required. Full details of courses may be found in JSP 419 and DC1s.

Any questions? Phone the JSMTTC Courses Clerk on Civil 01248-715635 or Military 781581 Ext 7905.

AMA Photographic Competition 1999

Want to win some climbing kit?

Then don't forget to enter the competition this year with your best shots.

Entry Categories

- *Best Mountaineering*
- *Best Rock Climbing*
- *Bets Black and White*

The competition will be run in conjunction with the Army Sports Climbing Championships in May 99, so look out for the entry forms in the next News Letter.

Mackenzie Trans-

"Millennium postcard from the North Pole?"

"Now what's this all about?" you may ask. It is to be one man's incredible solo trek across the frozen Arctic Ocean, from Siberia via the North Pole to Canada. A journey expected to take the experienced Polar traveller Oag MacKenzie about 15 months.

"Whatever for?" I hear you query. Why would a seemingly sane man volunteer to place himself in a desperately cold and inhospitable landscape, potentially life-threatening, for a prolonged period of time. Seasoned explorer Wally Herbert, who in 1968/69 led a British team on the first successful Trans-Arctic crossing, has always maintained:

"Those who have to ask - will never understand the answer"

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

Let me introduce this man to you - Oag MacKenzie, 38, Highlander and ex-REME, served 11 years with 22 Special Air Service Regiment, during which time he made several solo Arctic expeditions. I managed Oag's 1995 attempt to trek solo and unsupported to the North Pole "against the flow" from Canada, which was not completed due to a back injury necessitating medical evacuation after 42 days.

"Against the flow?", your next question. Much of the 5 million square miles of the Arctic Ocean is frozen. The ice cap varies seasonally in size and thickness, breaking up and melting during the summer, and re-forming during the long, bitterly cold and totally dark winter. The tides, winds and effects of the major rivers flowing into it constantly influence the Arctic Ocean current and therefore the drift of the ice pack.

This seasonal drift was the basis of an expedition 100 years ago by the famous Norwegian explorer and humanitarian, Fridtjof Nansen. He reasoned that if he sailed "*The Fram*" into the ocean in the summer, the ship would become trapped in the ice and drift across the Arctic, eventually sailing out into the Greenland Sea. Nansen's 2-year journey proved his theory correct, and for the first time the Arctic Ocean currents were charted.

What is our plan?

- A solo crossing of the Arctic Ocean via the North Pole to celebrate Polar exploration in the millennium.
- Oag MacKenzie will start his unsupported man-haul from the New Siberian Islands in March 1999,
- Following a 2-3 month trek he will locate a suitable ice floe for the airdrop of his millennium drift camp.
- This camp will slowly drift towards the North Pole over the next 9 months. Oag will depart for Ward Hunt Island in March 2000 and by June will have completed the first solo man-haul crossing of the Arctic Ocean.
- All clothing and equipment is sponsored by 'BIG PACK'.

"This time I will go with the Flow!"

In early March 1999, Oag MacKenzie will set forth on a solo, unsupported journey, man-hauling a 200kg sledge from Siberia, and head for a destination close to the North Pole. On arrival in the area, he will select a large, strong and stable ice floe, which will provide a suitable site to receive an airdrop of all his food, shelter and fuel needs for the following year. He will set up camp on this ice floe, which will spend the 3-4 summer months drifting, before the ice pack re-freezes in the autumn. By October 1999 the ice pack will have re-formed, and it will be dark 24 hours a day. The fol-

lowing five months will be spent in total darkness with temperatures dropping to -80 degrees C, excluding wind-chill factor. It is in this unique location that Oag will be celebrating the arrival of the new millennium. As day breaks towards March 2000 he will set out on the final 2-3 month trek to Ward Hunt Island in Canada, thus completing the first solo man-haul crossing of the Arctic Ocean.

Progress will be closely monitored by experienced expedition personnel at base camps in Siberia and Canada, who will maintain close communication links, including an inter-active web-site. They will also act as guides and mentors for visiting teams of selected young people who will be sponsored by the expedition's main beneficiaries: (1) The Clan MacKenzie, (2) The Royal British Legion (especially its youth section), and (3) Scotland Against Drugs - which initiates remarkable work against the ever-growing evil that threatens to devour our young people. These teams of youngsters will take part in structured programmes of personal development and leadership orientation. This will prepare them, upon return, to help those less fortunate than themselves within their sponsor's area of interest.

Whilst on the ice pack, Oag will be carrying out important scientific research and data collection projects for the Scott Polar Research Institute at Cambridge University.

To help Oag MacKenzie achieve this unequalled event and positively influence the minds of young people, we offer you now the opportunity to celebrate the millennium in a unique and positive way by purchasing a signed Expedition Postcard, which would make an ideal gift. The postcard will feature Oag man hauling on the frozen Arctic Ocean, and will be airmailed from the expedition base in Canada to your chosen recipient's address. To order your postcard(s), simply fill out the enclosed form and send it with a cheque or postal order for £10 per postcard. You will be sent an acknowledgement of your order, and the signed expedition postcard(s) will be issued to the recipient(s) of your choice. For any further information, please contact Oag & Sasha MacKenzie at:

Pier House, Fort Augustus, Inverness-shire, Scotland.
Tel: 07050. 217878 Fax: 01320. 366770

Many thanks in anticipation - Major Bronco Lane

A note from the editor.

The feat that Oag and Bronco are about to undertake must be one of the last great challenges. By supporting this expedition you are providing the stage on which a true adventure can be lived out. I will certainly be ordering my postcards to help out in their endeavours. For those of you that do not know Oag or Bronco the following passages will give you an insight into the type of people that take up such a challenge.

Oag MacKenzie.

Now aged 38, Oag was born into the fishing community of Wick, in the Scottish Highlands. Following school, (where he was an active member of the Army Cadet Force) he completed a Bakers Apprenticeship, before joining the Royal Electrical & Mechanical Engineers (REME) as a Vehicle Mechanic. His first posting was to 3 Commando Brigade where he was introduced to arctic warfare in Norway and completed a parachute course. In 1987 he joined 22

Arctic 2000 Expedition

Special Air Service Regiment, specialising within a Mountain Troop, serving with distinction in Iraq, following their hideous occupation of Kuwait. Upon return, he evolved a plan to attempt the first solo, unsupported trek to the North Pole, from Canada. In April 1995, despite clearing the major difficulties of intense pressure ridge activity of the first hundred miles - after 42 days man-hauling - he unfortunately tore his back muscles, requiring a medical evacuation. The distance achieved remains unbeaten. Oag decided that his next expedition would be a millennium celebration of Arctic Exploration, going "with the flow" and aiming to assist organisations such as, Scotland Against Drugs, The Clan MacKenzie and The Royal British Legion (in particular their youth sections). This necessitated leaving the Army. Oag recently married Sasha from Fort Augustus, Inverness-shire, where she combines managing the expedition PR and fund raising, with guest performances as one of the UK's leading Gaelic Harpist's and Singer.

Bronco Lane.

A native of Manchester and aged 53, Bronco was a summit member of the second successful British ascent of Mt Everest in 1976. His

interest in mountain exploration began seriously as a member of the Army Mountaineering Association Axel Heiburg Expedition in 1972, during which he ascended thirty-three virgin peaks over a six-week period. Since then he attempted the Southeast Face of Nuptse in 1975 and led an SAS attempt via Tibet on the Hornbeim Couloir of Mt Everest in 1984. This had to be aborted following a massive avalanche of the advance base - resulting in one death and four injured. Bronco re-visited Mt Everest again in 1992 for a Services attempt on the West Ridge. Despite the team reaching 28,300 feet, the summit was not gained due to poor weather conditions. This was to be his Service mountaineering swan song, then retiring from 22 SAS after 25 years continuous service. Oag asked Bronco to manage his attempt to trek solo to the North Pole from Canada in 1995. Following this epic journey, Oag again asked him to be the operations manager for the MacKenzie Trans Arctic 2000. Over the past two years Bronco also was the Director Young Explorers programme for Robert Swan's One Step Beyond Expedition to Antarctica - that demonstrated his belief... "It is better to light a candle than complain of the dark"





Looking down the West Rib from 18,000 ft on summit day, by Justin Featherstone.



The view from camp 4 on the North Face of Kanchenjunga, by Roddy Macarthur.



The Rochefort Arête by



Gordie Allen abing down from a climb in the Joshua Tree National Park, California, by Steve Willson.

Army Mount in Ac



Mac Mackay on the first British free ascent of like 400m grade VII-(A2) on the South East pillar of Gross Töppentarslein, Dachstein area. Mackay collection.



Sunrise over Mowenzi from the summit



...rête by Simon Weatherall.



A party on Papillions Ridge by Simon Weatherall.



Mark Watson belaying at the top of an ice fall on Ex Ice Monkey 98, Watson collection.



Tim Bird high in Corrie nan Locken getting to grips with the ice! By Steve Willson.

Mountaineers Action



Summit of Mt Kilimanjaro, by Wayne Willson.



Dave Bunting and his brother on the summit of Island Peak, Nepal, showing off some of their sponsors gear. Bunting collection.

Dark Shadows on Denali

By Captain J B Featherstone

The slope was stepped and interspersed with car-sized boulders which meant that I could not see the front rope. "Martin's rope has fallen", the shout broke the concentration that I needed to haul myself up the slope at 19,000 feet with the effects of hypoxia slowly draining me; the chain of events that followed would take the expedition from the edge of success to a four day trial of endurance on North America's highest peak.

On the 1st of June 1998 a ten strong team, led by myself, were complete in Alaska. Most of the team came from the 1st Battalion The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment, although it included members of the Parachute Regiment, the APTC and 22 Engineer Regiment. Their aim was to climb Denali, also known as Mt McKinley, and then to descend it by three interconnecting white water rivers to the sea. With an altitude of 20,320 feet, Denali has one of the most extreme climates of any mountain in the world; it lies in the sub-arctic zone and regularly experiences temperatures down to minus fifty degrees above 17,000 feet. This is exacerbated by severe storms that sweep in from the Bearing Straits and Gulf of Alaska that can be accompanied by winds in excess of one hundred miles per hour. In this environment the team were to climb fourteen horizontal miles and over thirteen thousand feet in ascent. Once this was complete they were to fly out by float-plane on to Chelatna Lake where they would raft and kayak one hundred and ten miles of rivers, including many stretches of rapids, before arriving just short of the coast at Cook Inlet.

The first two weeks of the expedition had gone entirely to plan. The advance party had obtained all the necessary rations and smoothed an easy passage through the final



Sgt Johnston (L) and Sgt Spooner (R) bask at 18,000 ft on summit day, 18 Jun 1998.

preparations before the rest of us arrived. This meant that we flew on to the Kahiltina Glacier on the 3rd of June, the white-knuckle flight by Doug Geeting's ski planes was still as terrifying the second time round. Over the next week the team hauled loads of up to ninety pounds up the glacier. These were carried by bergan and sled across the heavily crevassed terrain, the exertion of the days only lessened by views of the stupendous peaks that bounded our route like sentinels to both the East and West. The end of a leg signalled the frantic activity of digging pits and building walls of snow blocks to protect the tents before cooking could begin. Even then the inviting sleeping bags had to be ignored until the evenings training with the group, usually done by Sgt Spooner and Sgt Johnston, had been completed. Only then could one retreat in to downy

luxury, sometimes to stare out of the tent opening at the views lit by the never fading Alaskan summer light.

It was whilst moving up to 10,200 feet that a sudden blizzard engulfed the team; the wanded safe route was obliterated from view and the biting wind chilled our sweating bodies instantly; there was no option, we had to dig in where we stood at 9,800. For four days from the 6th we were storm bound. Tent life was monotonous, the dull regime was only broken to get dressed in order to dig out snowdrifts around the tent that sometimes reached four foot in height. We all chatted in our nylon worlds, sharing precious books and intimacies that few of us would normally divulge outside of such a situation. It was a great relief when the storm had abated on the 10th, signalled by the warming rays of the morning sun heating up our cocoons. With minimal delay the whole team set off to make a cache at 10,900 feet where our next camp would be. The lack of exertion for all of the team, bar five, meant that we reached the site within two hours - we were back on track. Over the next three days we pushed our camp up to 14,200 feet passing below the end of the West Buttress route and traversing across an abnormally becalmed Windy Corner, so named because of its exposure to the ferocious winds that are channelled down the southern side of Denali. As we pushed on against aching muscles late on the 13th the Upper West Rib at last came into view; the effort had been worth it as it arched out away from us, ever-present for the rest of the expedition. Over the next few days I co-ordinated preparations for the summit bid. This included discussing the route with the Rangers permanently camped here, ensuring our tent pits were secure, checking on the team's acclimatisation and



LCpl Cora on steep ground at 17,300 ft on summit day - 18 Jun

making a carry to our next site at 16,200 feet. Step kicking up to this camp was hard work and this made cutting a platform in the ice, big enough for three tents, that much harder. However, by the evening of the 15th we were returning to our tents at 14,200 with a cache left above us and a site secured for our tents. We now rested to maximise our acclimatisation and to wait for a weather window, whilst the excitement within the team built up.

By early afternoon on the 17th we were moving up to 16,200 feet, following the forecast of a three day break in the weather. The going was hard with bulging bergans and recent snow had covered our previous steps, so fresh ones had to be kicked. By the time we reached the site hewn out of the forty degree slope it was clear that Cpl Keep was suffering from the altitude gain. I gave him Diamox and hoped this would alleviate the need for him to abandon his chance for the summit when we all left the next day. The three tents were brimming with expectation as all settled noisily down in preparation for an early start on the 18th which was to be summit day.

The harsh alarm from my watch awoke me at 0430 and soon all three tents were alive with dressing bodies and purring stoves; by 0630 I had lead off with the other two ropes waiting their turn. After only two pitches it became obvious that Cpl Keep was still suffering from the altitude and so I brought him down, leaving Cpl Bougourd on a flat promontory, as Sgt Spooner carried on the lead. Having ensured Cpl Keep was fine at the tents, I roped up with Cpl Bougourd again and followed the others as they gained the crest of the rib. The temperature was minus thirty as we moved up the shadowed gullies towards the climbing sun. Soon we had passed Balcony camp at 16,900 feet and moved on to the technical section of the route. As the odd chunk of ice skittered down from the ropes above I was glad that we were all wearing helmets. The climbing was all absorbing but easy; sometimes up to fifty degree ice, sometimes on snow on crusted granite. Belays came naturally wherever needed and soon we were basking on a flat rock above the difficulties, toasting the warming sun with frozen cheese and brews. Ahead lay snowfields and then the bifurcated exit couloirs that would take us to the plateau at 19,000 ft and then the summit.

Eagerly we set off and soon found that the top few inches of snow remained unstable. Sgt Spooner suggested that we keep to a rib of rock to the right, as this would take us to a breach in the cornice at 19,000ft. I agreed, as this would give us the security of granite for most of this section. It was late in the afternoon when I heard Sgt Johnston's shout. I moved up to where Sgt Johnston had gathered his rope and those who had fallen. He had already administered first aid to Sgt Spooner who had torn all the ligaments in his ankles and to LCpl Brown who had a large gash in his head

and was semi-conscious. It was clear what needed to be done. I told Sgt Johnston to bring down the rest of the team and to organise a rescue, whilst I would remain with the two casualties: at this time Cpl Bougourd selflessly to remain with me. As Sgt Johnston began to take the others down Cpl Bougourd started brewing and building a low snow block wall as protection. Concurrently I saw to LCpl Brown, wrapping him in the spare duvet jackets the others had left us and placing him in his bivvy bag. Open bivouacs are pretty unpleasant affairs at the best of times, but at 19,000 ft with only bivvy bags and a stove to guard against the elements the obvious dangers were clear. As I spent the night trying to calm the now delirious LCpl Brown none of us were aware that Sgt Johnston had descended safely with the others, having saved the lives of two American climbers who had fallen past them as they made their way down.

On the morning of the 19th it became clear that a front had moved in on the hill and there would be no rescue. As LCpl Brown had been drifting in and out of consciousness throughout the night I felt that another bivouac would be highly perilous, there was no option but to get him down that day. Cpl Bougourd again offered to stay with Sgt Spooner as I began to take LCpl Brown down. For over six hours I belayed and lowered him down the fastest route available, the notorious Orient Express. LCpl Brown fell four times and repeatedly collapsed into the snow, each time I held him on the belays I had set up. At last I heard the shouts of Sgt Keep a few hundred feet below, we were nearing our tents. As we descended I turned to see LCpl Brown falling towards me, within seconds we were hurtling over one thousand feet down the gully, bouncing off rocks and ice. I felt my leg smash as we free fell on to the prow above 16,900 ft and in no time the roller coaster ride had stopped. Dazed, gloveless and still concussed, LCpl Brown cut the rope and started off towards the Ranger camp, ignoring my shouts to go up to our tents or to follow the wanded route. I would later discover that he had suffered frostbite to all his fingers having clawed his way barehanded out of two crevasses. After what seemed an eternity Sgt Keep and Pte Hayward were with me. They administered first aid, offered comfort and guided the rescue party to my position by radio. The rest of the night was long and events are still confused. During this time the Ranger-led rescuers hauled the sled up to me and lowered me down the 1,000 ft to the medical tent, Sgt Keep and Hayward also helping to haul me down the iced slope as the weather worsened. Two others had already brought LCpl Brown down to 14,200 ft and soon all members of our team followed us down.

We were both subsequently airlifted off Denali, but the true test of endurance continued at 19,000 ft. For four days and three nights Sgt Spooner and Cpl Bougourd

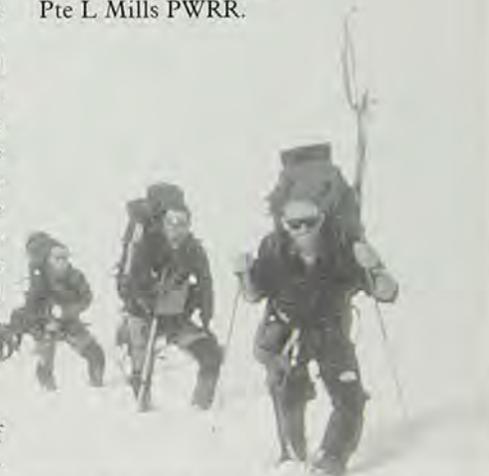
remained at the bivvy ledge without food, sleeping bags or shelter. After two days the winds grew so strong that their stove would not remain alight and they were reduced to sucking ice to try to hydrate. At last on the 22nd they were lifted off by Lama helicopter in the most technically demanding high altitude rescue on Denali. They had survived longer than any other man at this altitude in an enforced bivouac as a result of which Cpl Bougourd's toes were all lost to frost bite.

It is clear that the expedition did not succeed in its aims and two of its members suffered terrible cold injuries, but it is too easy to forget the three weeks of unforgettable climbing the team enjoyed before the accident. These events are a salutary reminder of the inherent risks of mountaineering, without which much of its challenge would be lost. However, during the expedition all its members acquitted themselves in the finest traditions of Army alpinism as their actions, courage, stoicism and endurance in the extreme face of adversity bare witness. Every individual gained so much and grew to know himself so well, allowing at least some benefit to be drawn from this drama that unfolded under the dark shadows of Denali.

There have been joys too great to be described in words, and there have been griefs upon which I do not dare to dwell; and with these in mind I say, climb if you will, but remember that courage and strength are nought without prudence, and that a momentary negligence may destroy the happiness of a lifetime. Do nothing in haste; look well to each step; and from the beginning think what may be the end.

Edward Whymper,
'Scrambles amongst the Alps', 1871.

The Team was:
Capt J B Featherstone
PWRR, Capt P Whitfield RM,
Sgt M Spooner APTC,
Sgt J Johnston PARA,
Cpl CH Bougourd PWRR,
Cpl (now Sgt) G Keep PWRR,
LCpl N J Cora PWRR,
LPL S Brown RE,
Pte I Hayward PWRR,
Pte L Mills PWRR.



Moving from 14,200 ft to 16,200 ft. Cpl Bougourd (front), Cpl Keep, Sgt Johnston, Pte Hayward, LCpl Coar, 18 June.

Karakoram Trek

By WO2 Mike Smith

I am not a great fan of trekking in fact I'm not even totally sure what trekking is. I was tasked with organising a level 3 expedition for a large group to some remote part of the world. I thought that a trekking expedition would be considerably easier to organise than a climbing expedition. This was not so, however, I don't plan to bore you with the reams of paper work and bureaucracy that is today's adventurous training. The workload in getting 14 men and kit to a faraway land is not something that should be taken lightly.

Trekking is probably thought of as less adventurous than climbing or canoeing. However trekking has many facets and can be as mundane or exciting as you want to make it. We didn't plan for any danger but we certainly found some. Some of the participants looked worried when I started introducing them to ropes, harnesses, crampons and ice axes. Don't worry I assured everyone, we will only be on the glacier for a couple of days. For the rest of the time the kit will be in the bottom of the rucksacks.

We started the trek from Hispar, a green oasis at the end of a 46km roller coaster bus ride, on 2 June. We were carrying over 37 kg (80 lbs) of rations, fuel, tents and associated trekking hardware. Our first sickener was only 5 minutes away after we descended 150m down a steep gully to the rickety suspension bridge across the Hispar River. It was then into low ratio for the climb up the opposite side of the valley. We were now leaving civilisation, heading for the Hispar La and then Askole some 130km

away. Morale was high as we plodded along the right bank of the Hispar Glacier. The track was initially good, being the main thoroughfare for the Yak herders that used the high altitude pastures. We managed to cover about 8 km and reached a height of 3600m, this was a 300m gain for the day.

At the end of the first day Billy was showing some signs of discomfort, but was keen to press on the next day. The younger members of the team were in awe as several huge peaks; Makrong Chhish 6607m, Gandes Chhish 6346m, Kunyang Chhish 7852m plus many other minor peaks surrounded us. The older members of the team seemed aloof to it all.

Crossing the Kunjang Glacier was our next objective. This was the first of four large glaciers that force their way into the Hispar Glacier from the north. Unfortunately Billy was struggling as soon as we started to the point of not being able to keep up even without his rucksack which was being moved in relays by Olly, Taff and Jonah. This was mainly due to his frequent visits to the nearest large rock to squat or lean forward. He was a pathetic sight with his bog roll in one hand and his water bottle in the other. I'm sure he can laugh about it now!

Drastic action was required; the pass was still six or seven days away so although painful at the time I decided to go back down to the previous night's camp. Pete, Olly, Moctor, Taff, Kev and Jonah would continue across the Kunjang Glacier to

Bitenmal our next intended halt. The next day dawned and was gloomy. There was only slight improvement with Billy so Nick agreed to accompany him back down to Hispar. We made arrangements to meet at Askole on 14/15 June. The trog up to the previous day's high point was much easier as we had dumped non-essential kit and food 150m above the edge of the glacier. We half hoped the others would be there to meet us, we soon found out why they weren't. The Kunjang Glacier looked deceptively flat and easy to cross. When we got down to the glacier, however, it became a huge maze with ice cliffs for walls and loose moraine and huge boulders for a floor. We spent four hours stumbling through the jumbled mass, which forced us away from our chosen exit point at every opportunity.

The other group watched our painful progress from high above, unable to offer any advice. As we arrived at the edge of the glacier they descended the 150m talus slope to help us up to Bitenmal, now that's team work.

Things now started to get tough!

The next objective was to cross the second glacier, the Pumari Chish Glacier. This was slightly easier than the Kunjang but the track to it was giving an indication of things to come. In many places old and more recent landslides had swept the track away. Although generally tedious some boulder fields offered good sport as we wobbled our way further up the glacier. Thankfully we all had trekking poles



Navigating through the labyrinth of crevasses and ice cliffs. Kev Hawkes in the foreground

... a trek too far

which provided essential additional support. We crossed the Pumari Chish in two hours, again being forced in every direction except the one we wanted to go. This time the climb out was even harder than the previous glacier. We pressed on for another hour to find a decent campsite. While climbing the talus we missed a crucial side path which would have saved us a lot of time the next day. Most of the cairns have been placed by groups travelling in the opposite direction, making them almost impossible to see. The next day was to be the hardest yet.

The guidebook indicates that there might be problems on this leg but does not give any indication as to the severity of the problem. We walked for an hour before reaching a massive landslide area. The whole side of the mountain had disappeared and had left huge vertical gullies, which seemed uncrossable. We reced both up and down and at first it appeared that there was no way to across. Just as hope was fading a number of small cairns were found descending extremely steep moraine slopes. A small path zigzagged down to the edge of a vertical moraine cliff. Again it seemed as though there was no way across and no way of descending to the glacier below.

Then a short way back up the edge of the first gully we found a large boulder. This allowed us to descend into the bed of the gully. This provided a few exciting moments as huge boulders were dislodged from the powdery moraine. We all survived the 70m abseil and continued down the gully bed over more massive boulders to the edge of the glacier. Once again we only just missed a thin trail which would have taken us back up and past the landslide. Instead we attempted to navigate along the glacier.

The first problem was a huge ice cliff which barred our way. We turned right, left being vertical moraine, and headed towards easier ground! It was only a few minutes before we realised that our next few hours were going to be tough. This time our way was blocked by glacial pools, ice cliffs, ice caves and crevasses. We worked our way around the obstacles as best we could, this was a laborious process. At one point Moctor slipped while trying to get past a glacial lake, he immediately disappeared up to his shoulders. We tried to find another way around but to no avail. The rest of us then had to run the gauntlet of the pool. After what seemed like hours we faced another glacial lake. This time there was no way around the vertical wall



The moment just before Moctor DeVos fell into the moraine pool

of moraine preventing further progress. We pondered the problem for a while and decided to try and leave the glacier by climbing above the cliffs. Pete went up to recon an escape route but could only find more vertical moraine.

I went up to where Pete was and after removing my rucksack I was able to climb a short pitch of the moraine. It was time for the ropes again. I climbed back down, picked up the rope and set off back. Each time there was even less to climb on and it was getting steeper. After arranging a belay I started bring the team across. I told them to use their ice axes. Moctor came first and proceeded to demolish the rest of slope. Oly managed to repair some of the damage by hacking a few footsteps. As the remainder crossed Moctor set off to find a way out. This he did and we all made our way up the moraine to an area we believe was Ullum Burum Bun. This final section seemed to take forever and by the time we dropped our rucksacks we had been on the move for over nine hours.

During the early hours of the morning I was woken by the pressure of the tent on my face. It was snowing heavily and the tent was threatening to collapse. I quickly knocked the snow away and told the others to do the same. In the morning we awoke to half a metre of snow so I decided we would have a rest day. By lunchtime it had stopped snowing and we were able to get on with some much needed admin. Taff, Jonah and Robbo even built a snowman.

Our next objective was to be the Jutmo Glacier that was reputed to be worse than the previous two. The track out of Ullum Burum Bun was good to start with and followed a narrow ridge. Progress was good but then slowed down as we crossed vari-

ous landslide areas and slopes of loose boulders. Then we reached the edge of the glacier, it looked a real mess with a thick covering of snow. Again we tried to spot a route through the shambles but knew that we were in for a hard time. The mandatory loss of 150m in height to get to the glacier was very steep having recently been swept by a landslide.

Four hours later we were on the opposite side of the glacier. Robbo was feeling extremely fit and broke trail for the climb out of the glacier. The track was intermittently covered in snow or disjointed through landslides. There were occasional cairns to follow but we generally found ourselves gaining and losing height every fifty or so metres. Since crossing the Jutmo we had not found a suitable campsite and we had been trekking for over ten hours. It was past 1800 hrs and it normally got dark at 1930 hrs. Just as I was considering a bivi we approached a small campsite which was partially covered in snow. There was just enough room to squeeze our six tents in. By 2000 hrs we were all fed and closed down for the night.

More snow plodding was to follow the next day and it was getting very tedious. Every couple of steps would end in a body-jerking drop as the snow gave way and it was an exhausting battle to recover the standing position and composure. We could see where we were heading but it was taking ages. Our route was constantly losing and gaining height and it seemed as though there would be no respite. Approximately 3 km from where we planned to stop we had to cross a wide valley. This was covered with a thick layer of deep snow, which had several streams hiding underneath. This leg was even more exhausting than any previous section and



Pete Shearer abseiling into the boulder filled gully

there was constant floundering as individuals disappeared up to their waists. After crossing the valley we had a 100m climb again up a snow-covered slope. This final climb destroyed any will we had for reaching the next campsite. Instead we found a small strip of ground below the ridge we had just climbed.

An hour was spent flattening out the snow and planning for the next day. Despite another long tiring day the team was in surprisingly good spirits. However, we were not making good progress. There was far more snow than expected and we hadn't even reached the proper glacier yet. My feet as well as everyone else's were soaking and we weren't getting enough sun to dry out our boots and socks. I was also concerned that our planned three days on the glacier would probably take five and a lot more crevasses would be hidden than nor-

mal. This increased the chances of someone taking a big fall.

I decided to introduce the team to alpine starts and announced a three o'clock reveille the next day. At 0300hrs I dressed quickly and stepped outside my tent to check the hardness of the snow. I immediately sunk up to my armpits. It was zero degrees and it had not frozen. We went back to bed.

It was crunch time. I knew that to press on would mean the potential for an epic would increase and that with only 6 days of rations left we did not have any room for error. I decided to turn back.

The rest is history as they say. Fortunately due to our new found knowledge of the route it only took us four days to descend, but even that wasn't without incident as a few more landslide areas were crossed. The final day into Hispar was memorable for the amount of rain which fell. Up until now it had snowed almost every day. The last haul up to Hispar was a painful one even with much lighter loads. The hammer blow, however, was when we arrived at Hispar we found out the jeep track was closed. That meant another 30 km to walk the next day. We decided on the luxury of a few porters.

The next day we set off at 0600 hrs and with only two porter disputes on the way we reached Nagyr at 1500 hrs. That was the end of our trek.

Being a climber I'm a bit more used to short walks and long climbs but this was a long walk with a very short climb (15m of very powdery moraine). Fortunately the expedition was with an excellent team so the time passed remarkably quickly. It was a shame that we didn't make the pass but



Turning back is never easy, especially when it's over ground like this. Pete Shearer followed closely by Stu Terrell with shear drop just to their left

that's the way it goes. With a unit as busy as mine we only had one window of opportunity for a level three Expedition so it was June or not at all. I'm still not completely sure what trekking is, however, if it is always this exciting and challenging I might try some more.

NOTE:

Karakoram Trek (Tiger) was a level 3 expedition with the aim of traversing the Hispar La via the Hispar Glacier and Biafo Glacier, a total of 130 km. The added factor was the omission of a guide and any porters. The Expedition was mounted by 10 AB WKSP REME. The team was, WO2 Mike Smith, Capt Jonathon Treharne, SSgt John Oliver, SSgt Mocror DeVos, SSgt Nick Carter, Sgt Pete Shearer, Sgt Billy Kidd, Cpl Taff Anderson, Cpl Kev Hawkes, LCpl Jonah Jones, LCpl Sid Kahn, Cfn Robbo Robertson, Cfn Karlos Booth, Cfn Stu Terrell

Book Review

Into the Blue - A Climbers Guide to Deep Water Soloing in Dorset

By various gents (General Editor John Willson)

And now for something completely different. This is a cracker and it is heartening to think that it is a Climber's Club guide - a far cry from their usual, somewhat stolid, if solidly sensible, offerings and immensely appealing to all mavericks. So what is deep water soloing? As a native I am proud to announce that it is a Dorset development. You pick a route, preferably on rock that overhangs deep water, and solo it. If you fall off you go for a swim. It's pure, it's free and it is for complete headbangers. Actually that is not quite true because old favourites such as Paradise Street and Subnutcracker Traverse are included so that we can all share in this brave new adventure. However, most of the climbs are for XS leaders.

There is plenty of advice on how to get started and what to climb: equipment, tides, grading, tactics, etc. There are full descriptions

of the hundred or so deep water solo routes done up to early 1996, with comprehensive diagrams and lots of inspirational photos. For some routes it would also be a help to have the new CC Swanage and Portland guide to hand. Great fun to read and sure to be the foundation for more deep-water soloing activity.

Copyright The Climber's Club 1996; 99 pages; 20 maps/diagrams; 29 colour photographs; available from, Cordee, 3a DeMontfort Street, Leicester, LE1 7HD

Review by Tim King

Butch, Scotty and the Sunburnt Kid

By Captain R A Stone AGC & Sergeant U MacDonald HLDERS

The primary aim of the expedition was to climb at least two peaks over 6000m in the Bolivian Andes with the possibility of a first British ascent of a peak in the Cordillera Apolobamba. A secondary aim was to introduce novices to high altitude mountaineering. Fund raising was a serious concern until Rosie Stone 'happened' to sit beside the only millionaire at a Regimental Dinner Night. Over coffee and port the expedition gained an official sponsor, PDi/IntraNet.

Acclimatization 18-22 June

The first navigational test was finding our way around the heaving airports in Argentina and Brazil. We felt like extras on the set of *Evita* as we pushed forward to book onto the next flight before we emerged into the thin air of the airport at El Alto situated 4058m above sea level. We spent the next five days in La Paz, the capital of Bolivia, getting used to living at the same altitude as the top of the Alps! Everyone coped well on arrival and the carefully calculated food budget was severely dented as appetites increased rather than decreased. We sipped disgusting coca tea, the local antidote for altitude sickness, and wondered when the next CDT team was due to visit ATR Winchester!

Marcus Harriott did his Mr Benn impersonation and managed to appear in a different 'smart but casual' outfit every night (he did have the reputation of the Honorable Artillery Company to uphold). Caroline Sutton kept BT in business chatting daily to her fiancée while Rob Evans kept Kleenex in business as he picked up the first stomach bug of the expedition.

Altitude training began with a visit to the archeological ruins of the Tiwanaku Civilization, a pre Inca settlement on the Altiplano at 4200m. The next day we travelled by tourist bus to Chacaltaya, the highest ski resort in the world at 5400m. The views were spectacular and we had our first taste of South American snow. Unfortunately the Media Ops video camera failed the robustness test when Rob gently dropped it down the side of the mountain. Rosie's cry of dismay was quickly followed by the assurance that human life is more important than a camera (difficult to say through gritted teeth). The team began to understand how debilitating it is working at altitude as almost everyone developed headaches and experienced fatigue. Wullie

Johnston provided the quote of the day. As he bit into a revolting sweet curry pie called a *saltena* his face changed colour and he blurted out "There's a lot going on in these pasties!" So much for adapting to the local culture!!

Huayna Potosi 6088m 23-27 June.

The morning of 23 June was spent getting all the supplies for the hill and driving up to the refugio, an alpine style hut at 4600m, below the peak of Huayna Potosi. After a hasty lunch we climbed through terminal moraine to the glacier for some more snow and ice work on front pointing, belaying and ice screws.

Charquini (5400m) was the next target in our acclimatization training. After a grueling hike up to 5100m the team decided that the quality and angle of the snow was good enough for more practice. We threw ourselves, literally, into ice axe arrests and crevasse rescues before returning to the refugio along a spectacular high track that followed a water viaduct cut sharply into an almost vertical cliff. Uisdean MacDonald ('29') and Wullie treated us to a magnificent chicken stew that night and everyone seemed to be coping better than expected with the altitude. Rosie was feeling lousy but it was self-inflicted because she had failed to protect the top of her head during the heat of the day and was suffering from mild heat stroke. Unfortunately Hugo Berrios, the owner of the refugio, had invited what looked like the mountain troop of the Peace Corps to stay. As a bus load of French Canadians pulled up to squeeze in with the group of drunken Czechs already well ensconced in the corner it appeared that the evening could not get any worse. And then they brought out their guitars!

We were fed, packed and ready to move by 0900hrs next day. Camp Argentina was a heartbreaking 1000m higher and approximately 4 kilometers distance from the refugio. With a weight of around 35kgs on our backs it felt like an impossible task. After a final steep pitch we arrived tired but triumphant at the camp after six hours of concentrated effort. Wullie described this walk as reminiscent of the retreat from Moscow, and Rob said it was the hardest days work he's ever done in his life (but then he is Cavalry). As the sun went down, the temperature plummeted to -10 centigrade and with the wind at about 20mph everyone was soon battenning down the hatches in their tents.



The mule train on the old pre Incan road

Up at 0330hrs for the summit bid the temperature was around -15 centigrade and the lights of La Paz and El Alto sparkled in the distance below us. Mac McBride was feeling ill and returned swiftly to his tent. The team plodded slowly out of camp and about 200m later Caroline and Rob had to return to camp. 500m further on the remaining five roped up and climbed a pitch of Grade II snow onto the ridge line at 0630hrs we sat watching the sun come up but as we neared the summit ridge half the team realized that their energy levels were nearly in the red. The priority was a safe descent to the refugio (over six hours away) therefore, although the summit was only just over 100 meters above us, the decision to turn back was made. 29 quoted from Rob Hall (a New Zealand Guide), "with enough determination any bloody idiot can get up a hill. The trick is to get back down alive." The team turned back with this thought in their minds to comfort them during the descent.

On the way down we met up with our Bolivian guide Hugo Berrios and Rosie jumped at the chance to rope up with him. She retraced her steps back up the ridge line and completed the final tricky 350m along a knife-edge to reach the summit at 1145hrs. This was her first peak over 6000m and suddenly the weariness lifted for a few minutes.

Cordillera Apolobamba and the first British ascent of Chaupi Orco 6044m

The two vehicle convoy left La Paz driving past a traffic accident with a body lying by the side of the road - an ominous sign of the journey ahead. The 14 seat 4WD bus carried most of the team with Hamish and Rosie in Hugo's land cruiser. Morale seemed low on the bus until we discovered that 29 and Mac were suffering from severe wind. The road was too dusty to keep the windows open for long but even the local driver, Marco, soon learnt what the phrase 'Shot Over' meant. Every time the phrase was uttered his expression changed and he silently wound down his window. After 11 hours driving on appalling dirt roads we reached Pelechuco, a small town in the north of the Apolobamba we were tired, hungry and glad to lay our sleeping bags out on the floor of a small dilapidated house off the main plaza. Miriam, our cook, proved invaluable and produced a meal in minutes. We were in country similar to the classic last stand of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid as they sought refuge in Bolivia.

The first day of July saw us heading into the wilderness with only the vaguest idea of our destination and a sketch map to show the lay of the land. Everybody was glad to be away from civilization (there was nothing civilised about our group!) and over the three day trek we saw some breathtaking scenery as we climbed over three high passes and washed in crystal clear lakes and streams. Condors floated in the thermals above us and herds of llama and Al Paca's watched with interest as we trekked through the valleys. On the afternoon of the third day we set up base camp at El Rincon, directly below a huge glacier that spilled out of the valley leading up to Chaupi Orco. The next day dawned very cold, with frost on all the tents. After a good breakfast, we bid farewell to Miriam and headed up the left-hand ridge of moraine. Once again the heavy packs slowed our progress as we worked our way up above the glacier through the rocks and scree slopes, stopping at 4800m for lunch. On reaching high camp (5100m) at

1600hrs, we quickly settled by the small lake and started preparing for the summit bid in the morning.

During the night we were kept awake by the noise of falling seracs. With some anxiousness the team emerged from their tents into the darkness and set off towards the main ridge. After about an hour we heard and felt a huge serac falling just off to our right. We stopped for an impromptu team meeting and the sight of Caroline's face in the beam of a head torch was like a rabbit caught in the beam of an oncoming juggernaut. At this point 29 made the decision that it was not safe to proceed, as there were some large cornices above the route. Waking at a more civilized hour we decided to move up to an advance high camp just below the scree, two hours closer to the summit. At 0430hrs we were up again in the dark, this time there was a good frost. We were quickly on the move and the feeling in the team was very positive, we were all getting to the summit this time!

It took just under one hour to get to the rock band, where we stopped to watch the sun rise before scrambling through the rock buttress covering "Moderate" graded ground. We reached the snow ridge and then faced a 50% snow wall. 29 led up and two pitches later we were on to the summit ridge. As we walked towards the summit we gingerly crossed a huge covered crevasse before it leveled out and then the sight of the final slope stopped us in our tracks. We faced a steep snow wall, in some areas up to 70% in angle, with at least two vertical crevasses to cross.

After another team meeting it was decided that it would be safer if only 29 and Mac made a bid for the summit. The first pitch took them to the edge of the first crevasse. The snow was so poor it was impossible to lay any protection on the way up. The next pitch involved kicking big steps and using the ice axes like daggers up to a second crevasse using the full length of the rope. By this point 29, a big lad from pure highland stock was visibly tiring (and the verbal comments were thankfully out of earshot). The belay point was inside the



Rest stop at the first high pass beside a 'Apochea', a stone shrine in honor of Pacha Mama, the symbol for the Mother of the Earth.

crevasse on an old collapsed snow bridge using an ice screw to provide some protection. Sphincters tightened. One final pitch of almost vertical snow took the pair onto the final summit approach and after bravely leaping a third crevasse they reached the summit at 1130hrs. After a quick celebration it was back to base camp as quickly as possible with a first British ascent of the highest peak in the Cordillera Apolobamba achieved in good style. We struck camp the next day and made it back to Pelechuco in two days on the trek out.

Conclusion

The last phase of the expedition was carried out in the shadow of an impressive mountain called Condoriri. After several days climbing on frozen ice cascades the last morning on the hill dawned and it was freezing cold as we walked up to the glacier at the foot of Paqueno Lucien. It was a long plod up to the ridge and after a short rest we moved up the final steep slope with only a short knife-edge to the true summit. With a little hesitation since it was windy and exposed (a reference to the weather this time) the team finally got to the top of a mountain together. Caroline was especially pleased to get to the top because it was her first mountain, and at 5300m a real achievement to go into her logbook. We turned for home with smiles on our faces and some excellent memories. The descent was easier - funny how it takes four hours to get up and only 47 minutes to get down!

It had been a long, physically and mentally demanding expedition but everyone felt that they had achieved a great deal in such a short time. Our thanks go to the expedition sponsor PDi/IntrAnet who provided both financial and technical support. The satellite phone, laptop computer and digital camera they provided were used to create an Internet web site as well as acting as a safety net on the mountain. Flights were booked through Journey Latin America.

Rosie, Caroline and Wullie fly the AGC flag at high camp on Chaupi Orco.



Exercise Tharpu Saltire

By Capt D C Masson

Exercise Tharpu Saltire was an HQ Scotland expedition which aimed to climb Tharpu Chuli, 18,445 feet, in the Annapurna Himal. Capt Masson, Capt Shipley and Sgt Painting, AMA members, were part of the team. The team was of mixed ability, there were 2 ML(W), 2 JSME(L) and 5 mountaineering novices. During the 8 month build up there were training days on the Cuillin Ridge, in Glencoe and Lochnagar which helped identify individual strengths and weaknesses.

On arriving in Kathmandu the team spent 2 days purchasing kit, collected rations and stores, before driving to the village of Dhampus to start the walk in. The trek lasted 5 days, during which the route followed the Modi Khola valley via Langdruk, New Bridge, Jhanu and Chumrung. Accommodation and rations during this phase were purchased locally. By day 4 the weather took a turn for the worse and low cloud brought fresh snow to altitudes above 9200 feet. In October and November a snowline of around 16,000 feet would be normal. Photographs from AMA Ascent showed that the snowline on Tharpu Chuli, at exactly the same time of year, had been above the summit with snow only on the glaciers and ridge lines. On day 5 the trek left the vegetation and moved upwards through moraine fields to the Machapuchare Base Camp (MBC), 12,000 feet. Some 12 inches of snow had fallen here during the previous 36 hours.

On day 6 a group of 7 headed up to the Annapurna Base Camp (ABC) to break trail through 18 inches of snow and were rewarded by the first view of Tharpu Chuli which was covered by an alarming amount of snow. On day 7 the whole team moved to ABC however, as the snow was failing to consolidate, a further night was spent at the huts in ABC. During the afternoon a team of Capts Masson, Shipley, Leighton, Sgt Painting and Cpl Boyce descended onto the South Annapurna Glacier and crossed the moraine field to

the foot of the boulder gully. This route was very tough going with waist deep snow covering large boulders. The boulder gully was very loose and would have to be crossed in the early morning. The weather was fine and sunny all day but the north facing slopes remained clad in powder. On day 8 the team moved across the glacier to the base camp. On arrival Capt Masson and six, set off to climb the grassy buttress and start establishing the trail to high camp. This was one of the deceiving pieces of terrain that any of the members had climbed upon. The grassy banks, despite incongruous appearance, proved to be unpleasantly steep. After some experimentation it was found that the best method was climbing with crampons fitted. However, the slush, mud and grass balled up the points very swiftly. By mid afternoon the weather was deteriorating and the snow started. The descent was, if anything, more unpleasant than the way up. It snowed all night and by first light, with no signs of improvement in the weather, it was decided that there should be no progress during the day. The morning of day 10 promised marginally better weather than previously and the team set out early to capitalise on a clear spell. A team of 8 set off with loads prepared to establish a tented high camp. Worryingly there were thick clouds moving up from the gorge of the Modi Kola. Despite this the team made good progress, breaking a new trail upwards along a series of ridges and open slopes above the buttress. The terrain was not difficult however drifting snow had created deep drifts of powder, some of them 4 feet deep. By mid afternoon the intermittent snow became heavy, visibility dropped and conditions became unpleasant. The lead climbers were moving on gentle slopes only 50 yards an hour. In white out conditions and with no chance of making the shelter of the buttress 600 yards further on, a high camp was made and the team retreated in blizzard conditions.



L to R Back: Shipley, Masson, Boyce, Garrick, Crockett. Front: Anderson, Brien, Bruce, Leighton, Painting.

The next day a climbing team set off to re-establish the high camp, reaching it by mid day. At this altitude all semblance of the trail had gone. The leaders started with renewed vigour to push forward through the 4 foot deep powder. However progress was dreadfully slow and after 2 hours, with only 100 yards further, the weather suddenly worsened as thick clouds and heavy snow blew in from the Modi Kola. At 1430 hours, having reached 16,500 ft - some 1,500 feet short of the summit, Capt Masson took the decision that no further progress was possible until the deep powder had consolidated. There was certainly no possibility of moving onto steeper slopes until the avalanche risk had significantly decreased. The retreat was conducted in treacherous conditions.

Dawn of day 12 broke to even heavier snowfall. The tents were more than half buried, some partially collapsed. Initial explorations around the camp site area found drifts of up to chest deep. It was now that any chance of climbing Tharpu Chuli was over, the winter snows had set in. The expedition was abandoned. By about 0730 hours the team set off with

about 2/3 of the equipment. The group took it in turns to lead for 150 feet, a distance which exhausted everyone. At the top of the boulder gully the group split in two. Capt Masson, WO2 Crockett, Sgt Painting, Cpl Boyce and LCpl Garrick started to break a trail across the glacier while Capts Shipley, Leighton, Sgt Anderson, Cpl Bruce and Pte Brien went to consolidate the trail back to the camp and collect the remainder of the equipment. The weather continued to be difficult with thick fog, blowing snow and bitter temperatures. Capt Masson's group found the descent of the gully difficult. Every move triggered slips of windslab. At the bottom the conditions were much worse with drifts of up to 8 feet in the lee of the moraine hills. Capt Masson's team spent an exhausting 3 hours fighting their way across the 600 yards to the south wall of the glacier. By now the snow was blowing hard and the track, although in some places 4 feet deep, was filled in with blowing snow. Capt Shipley, carrying some heavy equipment, eventually reached the bottom of the stone gully to find the track had completely disappeared. In white out conditions he had no option but to navi-

gate a new track across the glacier dragging a kit bag of tents on ropes behind him. At 1400 hours Capt Masson's group started the ascent of the south wall of the glacier, a bank of moraine 300 feet high and completely banked out with powder up to 6 feet deep. Capt Masson, ditched his pack and "swam" a channel through the snow, digging it down with hands and consolidating it in order to make a groove. The next men, W02 Crockett and then Cpl Boyce, further compacted the snow with their hands before a trail was open for others to follow. Cutting this 3-4 feet deep groove up the 55° slopes was tortuously slow and it took 4 hours to reach the top. At about this time there was a break in the fog and Capt Shipley's group, who had been making slow progress through the moraine field were spotted some 300 yards off the track. They altered course to where the track up the moraine was being made. The porters, who were very cold, dumped their dhokos and climbed the gully using the fixed rope. The last men got to the top by about 1700 hours and, in clearing weather, the team recovered the gear from the bottom of the glacier using a haul system. It was generally agreed that the day had been one of the most unpleasant in memory.

The descent down through the gorge of the Modi Kola was uneventful apart from the constant avalanche threat. In the gullies where the risk was greatest the team crossed one at a time, rucksacks on one shoulder, with scouts watching the higher slopes. Capt Masson, half way across, spotted a powder avalanche some 3,000 feet above. As a result of the high level of expertise and the prior briefings the team did exactly the right thing, those forward ran to the shelter of a large buttress some 60 yards from the centre whilst those to the rear were able to take cover behind a number of large boulders. Fortunately the avalanche hit a buttress some 800 feet above and exploded into the air. After the gorge the descent of the valley was uneventful, the team arriving at the road end after 17 days in the hill on the 30th of November.

The next 2 days were spent relaxing in Pokhara before

embarking on a 4 day raft descent of the Kali Gandaki, one of Nepal's last wildernesses. This was an excellent trip with dozens of rapids up to Himalayan Grade 4. For the final 2 days in country the team travelled to Chitwan. Staying in the national park was quieter, warmer and more relaxing than Kathmandu but no more expensive. Accommodation was in tents and the park rangers laid on simple Nepalese food, nature tours on foot, elephants and boats. The team rapidly got into the mode of wildlife watching and were fortunate to see rhinoceros, rhesus monkeys, gharwal crocodile, spotted deer, barking deer, mongoose and countless birds. On the 11th Capt Leighton and Cpl Bruce flew home while the rest of the group occupied themselves with the disposal and freighting of the equipment. The remainder left on 12 Dec. The flight involved a two day stopover in Karachi. This was not a wonderful experience however a guided tour of the city was interesting.

Summary

Although the majority of the team were sickened by the failure to reach the summit there can be no doubt that the single contributory factor was the repeated cycle of deep, fresh powder and overcast weather. An ascent of Tharpu Chuli is a very realistic and worthwhile climbing objective. Assuming future groups were not subjected to similar weather problems there is no reason why a team of 4 or more climbers, competent to climb on Scottish Grade 2 ground should not succeed. The supporting trekkers, whether climbing novices or junior ranks, had an equally demanding and rewarding expedition. This is an ideal objective for a mixed group.

The conditions highlighted that although Tharpu Chuli is one of the easier trekking peaks, offering only moderate difficulties and with a Grade of Alpine PD, the dangers posed on the mountain were serious. The 3 AMA members, 2 of whom are ML (W), were certainly challenged by the conditions and it would be folly to consider that 1 JSMEL with some novices could attempt this climb.



Somewhere near the top!
L to R: Back: Masson, Shipley, Painting (AMA Member)
Front: Leighton, Bruce

Expedition Team

Capt Clive Masson	3 RHF	Expedition leader
Capt Tarquin Shipley	36 CTT	Expedition 2IC
Capt Helen Leighton	205 Fd Hosp	Medic
W02 Ian Crockett SG	22 CTT	Equipment manager
Sgt Richard Painting	21 CTT	
Cpl Ronnie Bruce	3 RHF	
Cpl Richard Boyce	170 Pro Coy	
Sgt Gilbert Anderson	Lowland	
LCpl William Garrick	1 RS	
Pte Keith Brien	1 RS	

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Alpine Winter Mountaineering

and your skis, in the German / Austrian Alps

By Capt "Mac" McKay

Winter alpenists are generally few in number, for many reasons, not least that it is a serious undertaking to climb in the Alps during the winter months (Dec - Mar). Avalanche dangers are many and physical demands on the mountaineer are great. Cold temperatures, limited daylight hours and heavy rucksacks all add to the extra hazards so there is little leeway for poor planning. Acclimatisation in winter is perhaps more important than in summer as the weather could leave you high up in a bivouac or mountain hut for days, due to the amount of snowfall and the risk of avalanche making movement hazardous. On the other hand if you get good stable weather that allows the snow conditions to settle you will be able to get the routes in.

Ski mountaineering has become a very popular activity in the Alps. Done at various levels from low altitude Ski Touring, the most popular form of winter alpine mountaineering, to skiing/climbing taking in some serious high altitude peaks. In this category we find extreme skiing where the likes of Ansele Baud and Sylvain Saudan (French) first climbed and then ski descend routes like the Gervasutti Couloir on Mt Blanc du Tacul. Other mere mortals are content to attempt Mt Blanc from the Grand Maulet hut by the normal French route and enjoy the long ski back to the valley. Another activity that falls into the category of alpine winter mountaineering is frozen waterfall climbing. I have included this activity in this section because most climbers use skis to get in and out to the route. These routes can vary in remoteness and seriousness. They may only be a couple of hundred meters away from the road or a high alpine waterfall with a long ski in and difficult ski out, like the new route Die Kronung 400 meter 90+ done in the Zillertal area of Austria in winter '87. Today many routes of "Kronung" difficulty and quality have been completed worldwide. The best guidebook for the southern area of Germany is Klettergarten and Eiswasserfalle by Rudi Mayr.

Winter routes in the conventional style do not always make it practical to use skis whilst on route. Or maybe the climbers do not ski, although this is rare as nowadays most of the winter climbers I know are able to use skis to quite a good standard. It is considered that routes done in the West Alps are the more serious: all the 4000m peaks lie in this area. Included in the East Alps are the Allgau Alps which, for obvious reasons, are accessible to the AMA Members in Germany, affectionately known as the grassy alps, this type of terrain is a par-



ticularly good starting place for the budding winter alpinist. After all, Heckmair (Eiger Fame) started off in a similar way. Deciding which routes are most suitable for winter ascents can be very difficult. The easy summer routes could be more hazardous than the steeper, higher grade one. Also the way off might not be possible due to the risk of avalanche. Generally the guidebook will tell you the suitability of a winter ascent, but from year to year the conditions vary a great deal. In 1989, due to the scarcity of snow we completed several winter routes not normally possible in most years because of the build-up of snow. Great climbing is possible on Klettersteigs / Via Ferratas when snow is scarce. They are generally safe and belays are easy to arrange due to the in situ protection. A good example of such a route is the North face of the Alpspitze (Wetterstein Range) but a word of warning, the routes have not been serviced since the heavy traffic of the previous summer climbers, so check the in situ protection before you use it. Also for the descent they are extremely handy. Should you need to abseil, good anchor points are easy to find. True winter ascents can only be claimed between 21 Dec and 20 Mar, although it can be better winter conditions before and after these dates, so if you want to put up a new winter route do it between these dates.

Recommended Routes in one Winter Area

These routes are in the lower degree of difficulty and include style of ascent and descent. They are also within easy reach of AMA members in Germany. The harder, more serious routes I shall not mention as the climbers undertaking these expeditions need no prompting from me.

Wetterstein Range - Alpspitze 2629m

Valley Base: Garmisch
Mountain Hut: Stuben Hutte
Guide: Wetterstein und Mieminger Kette

North Face (via Ferrata) Gd I/II 3-5 hrs from Osterfelder Berg Station
Via Schone Gange East Ridge Gd I/III 5-7 hrs

Skis can be used for approach and descent; all the way back to Garmisch.

Zugspitze - Alpspitze Traverse (Jubilaums Grat)

A two-day route that can be completed in one day by a fast, experienced party. There is a small hut on route and quite a lot of in situ protection. The lack of escape routes makes the route very committing and serious but not technically difficult. This is the classic Wetterstein winter route. The descent is via the north face of the Alpspitze to the Osterfelder Berg station. It is possible to complete the Jubilaums Grat in 10 hours by a fast, experienced party. Avalanche hazard can be great due to the route going onto the steep north plank at one stage Gd III+.

Allgau Range - Heilbronner Weg

In winter with or without skis is an excellent training route before heading for the western alpine routes, as it states in the guidebook. Although not technically difficult, but long, it does have a lot of avalanche hazards that require careful planning and weather watching prior to starting. Huts must be booked to ensure that the winter rooms are available.

Reference: Heilbronner Weg (Gd II/III)
Kleiner Fuhrer by Heinz Groth.

In summary, alpine mountaineering during the winter months is no light undertaking, but I hope that this article gives the 'experienced summer alpinist' a few ideas and the confidence to venture into the Alps in winter. The commitment is without question much greater but the challenge of planning, weather watching and learning about snow conditions makes the achievement very satisfying indeed. The accessibility of the German Alps has been highlighted for the AMA Germany members. The importance of skis to the winter alpinist cannot be emphasised enough and it is definitely the way to get around in winter. So, if you do not ski, a few weeks this winter learning will be time well spent. It will open new horizons to you and let you enjoy the Alps in winter to the full.

Useful references

Ski Mountaineering : Peter Cliff

Avalanche Safety for skiers and climbers:
Daffern

Handbook of Climbing : Fyffe and Peter.

Alpinism: Peter Cliff.

The Alpine 4000m Peaks: Goedeke

Alps 4000 : Video

Book Review

'ALPINISM'

An Introduction to Safe Alpine Mountaineering!

By Peter Cliff

The move from British mountaineering to Alpinism can be a daunting experience. The routes are longer, the mountains are higher, there are glaciers, crevasses, thunderstorms and rockfalls. How many AMA members started, as this reviewer did, from a position of rank amateurism, if not down right ignorance as to the realities? This book addresses the crucial issues which are essential to safe Alpinism, whether walking or climbing. It does not claim to be the authoritative work on all issues - rather, it reflects Peter Cliff's long experience as a guide and as Director of Training for the Jonathan Colville Trust, which provides subsidised courses in the Alps and in Scotland.

Those who are familiar with Peter Cliff's other publications - 'Mountain Navigation', 'Ski Mountaineering' and his excellent guide to the Haute Route - will know what to expect: clear and unambiguous advice on all aspects of Alpine mountaineering, from abseiling, acclimatisation, areas to go, through to rescue, safety

and weather. The diagrams and illustrations are easy to follow and anyone fortunate enough to have skied or climbed with Peter will have experienced much of the instructional content at first hand. This is an essentially practical book and as such, it is an ideal introduction to Alpinism. At £10 it provides excellent value and is strongly recommended for those AMA members who might be about to embark on their first Alpine season. 1998 - ISBN 1-871890-09-8 Highland Printers. Review by Lt Col David Bernest

Footnote

by Capt D J Plant AMA South West Rep:

As a relative Alpine novice I found this book an excellent familiarisation with all the basic skills. Unlike other books that can be off-putting by their detail and complexity, Peter Cliff's 'introduction' is very much that. It does assume a degree of prior knowledge, but nothing beyond the capabilities of a competent UK climber.

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AMA Virgin

By Sgt Chris Stafford

It all started this April when I returned from your typical Royal Engineer's course of beer and bridges and some more beer to find that the long awaited new next door neighbours had moved in. "What are they like?" I asked her indoors who should be obeyed, "nice," replied the said aforementioned wife, "and he likes to climb," she informed me.

Having just been bitten by the climbing bug I thought it would be a good opportunity to impress him with my feats on the regimental climbing wall. So after a few pleasantries over the garden fence like, "what's your lawnmower like cos mines bugged," we soon got down to the nitty gritty about climbing. It soon became apparent that he was as impressed about my climbing experience as Bill Clinton is about jokes involving cigar smoking. We arranged to go climbing and I promised I wouldn't cry too much when we went. I must also tell you at this stage he casually forgot to tell me that he was also para-commando trained until the fifth or six hill rep, when I was sucking air through a piece of tube inserted into a certain part of my anatomy, and that he has also climbed a few mountains!

The fateful day arrived when we were to go to Brimham Rocks for my first proper climb. So after explaining the kit and the art of belaying it was time to get amongst it, again what he didn't explain is that climbing on Yorkshire grit is like putting your hands into a food processor and that finger prints aren't important anyway. My education had begun! So after bagging a couple of V-diffs it was back to Ripon for tea and medals and a quick blood transfusion.

What then began was many a weekend and a few weekday evening's up at this fledgling climbers paradise of Brimham with Steve Willson the ever patient coach with such encouragement as, "you can do it you spud sucker and your arse does look like 120 lbs of chewed bubble gum," to help

me on my way. I now know what Luke Skywalker felt like with Yoda, except Steve is considerably taller and I haven't got a princess for a sister. Summer was rapidly drawing to a close, as if it had opened at all, but at least we had managed to form an escape committee on a few occasions. The two day silence was worth it when one forgot to take previously aforementioned wife shopping and the previously aforementioned coach / mentor and oppo bubbled me to aforementioned one who must be obeyed, cheers Steve mate! So next time you see him ask him about route marking!!

On one of our many escape bids he had talked of this mythical organisation, usually when I was trying to recover bits of flesh to have grafted back onto my fingers, and the more he talked the more I actually became interested in joining. I had already experienced a taste of the AMA when I went to the Army Sports Climbing Championships earlier in the year as a spectator and found it to be a refreshing change, compared to some other Army sports, plus you get a natty tie, so I decided to join. So one sunny Saturday afternoon while trying to get up the Central Crack on the Cracked Buttress whilst in the mean time trying to stop the arterial bleeding, that I was now experiencing, after hand jamming most of the way up Steve shouts, "do you like Wales?" To which I replied, "yes and I like dolphins to!" To which he just replied, "no you spudsucker the place because I have put your name down for the AGM," to which I replied, "is that like a tetanus jab?" Needless to say I can't put down on paper what he said next but I can assure you most of it was quite rude! My fate was sealed.

Summer leave came to an end and it was back to work so I busied myself telling all of those that were interested, and a good few who were not, that I was going to Wales. As somebody had sloped of on exercise the pre AGM admin was left to me like booking the

hire car etc, well Steve arrived back off of exercise cleaner than when he went on it, "where's the car mate?" he asked, as I want to load my swag?" says he. "Err it's out the back," I replied, so of he went to load his kit. "You must be joking," he exclaimed, "what's the Padre doing for a car now that you have nicked his?" Well at least it's got a radio, although we can only get BBC radio 4 and 5, I replied in a rather hurt tone and off we set. For any of you who have been to Ripon before it has its own rather natty weather system it is either raining or it is windy or more than likely it is a combination of both. So imagine our surprise when we started the engine of the 'Pope' mobile and behold a ray of sunlight did appear and stayed with us all the way to Wales. However we did get a little concerned with the cars unnatural tendency to pull towards any place of religious interest, spooky!

We arrived and after some scoff we found that GI Joe Willson with the kung fu like grip had forgotten his sleeping bag, yet again! Tim everything you said was right!! So after a dhobi (at least he remembered something). It was time for the committee meeting, it is at this point where I would like to thank the committee for allowing me to sit through the meeting, as I didn't know any bugger else and it was interesting to hear the plans for HMS Unpronounceable and the AMA's plans for the year 2000. One thing I did learn is either not to drink to much before you go in to this sort of meeting or to take a colostomy bag as there was a lot of business. After the meeting the rest of the night was spent being introduced to everyone and again I was impressed with how informal and relaxed and friendly the whole affair was.

Saturday morning dawned and Steve was already up and dressed, "your up early," I queried. "No" he replied, "I got that cold sleeping in the mattress covers I had to put my fleece on," he explained gibbering away. Oh how I doth giggle!

So after packing the Pope mobile we headed down to the Llanberis Pass, "where is the crag?" I asked not seeing much at ground level. "Up there," say's Steve, "but that's half way up the side of the mountain," I exclaimed to which he just replied, "that isn't a mountain it's just a big hill!" And anyway trust me I'm a gynaecologist to which I replied, "no your not, you're a VM" having heard this statement a few times before." No difference really you both use your hands and they....." needless to say I am quite sure you can imagine how the rest of the conversation went! With Dives/Better Things and Zig-Zag, on the Gribin Facets, in the bag and with the weather not getting any better we, or should I say the Jedi master, decided to call it a day. This was a relief as I was losing blood through loads of cuts and grazes all over my hands which is quite a feat I am told considering we were climbing on schist and not on grit!! So it was back to Capel Curig and the AGM.

Having learnt my lesson from the night before and with the fluids if safe rule not standing in my way I was able to sit through the AGM in relative comfort, pint in hand. The slide presentations were very interesting and a good insight into the big boys sport of mountaineering and the beer and banter and a nice bit of scoff rounded off the whole evening. Sunday came and all we could pray for was that the pope mobile wouldn't start, so that we could get back on the rock, but I am afraid it wasn't to be. So with sad hearts and smelly bums it was back to sunny Ripon to thrill and astound her in doors who must be obeyed with my feats of much clumsiness on the crags of North Wales.

So until next year's AGM bye for now, and if you are ever in Ripon pop in for a brew we are dead easy to find, just look for the trails of blood around 38 Engr Regt's guard room.

OBITUARY

Captain Alexander Stuart Fairey The Gordon Highlanders and The Parachute Regiment

8th May 1971 - 5th November 1997

Captain Alex Fairey was tragically killed in a motor bike accident last November whilst travelling to his family home from Aldershot. He was killed instantly.

Alex was an enthusiastic rock climber and alpinist whose zest for life and adventure was fully realised when he was in the hills. He was an active member of the AMA who would attend the JSAM and winter meets whenever he could, indeed I was looking forward to climbing with him at the 97/98 new year meet and had just been discussing the routes we were going to do in Glen Coe and on the Ben the week before he died.

I first met Alex on Ex Monte Bianco in 1995, this was his first taste of alpinism, an activity he took to instantly. As a patrol leader he enthused those in his charge and provided the catalyst for adventure to which they readily responded. As an instructor he was patient and able to push his students to their potential. Monty Bianco introduced him to what was to become his passion, big routes, be they rock, mixed or ice. His strength and determination being an asset that would ensure success in all that he attempted.

After returning from the Alps Alex was posted to PARA Training Company at ITC Catterick. He was determined to capitalise on the abundance of crags in North Yorkshire hence many a night was spent on the local gritstone, or if the weather was bad on a local wall. I am very thankful of my time in Catterick with Alex, as his enthusiasm for the hills opened up a new approach to climbing for me, this being one of staying in hotels and bagging routes fresh and initially dry compared to staying in tents. In this way we mounted raids from Catterick to Glen Coe with one especially notable adventure on the North Buttress of the Buachaille Etive Mor where we ended up inadvertently soloing a grade 4 mixed pitch before deciding it was best to gear up and get some crampons on.

Alex continued this idea of living well in the hills when we went to Chamonix in 96, there was to be no mucking around with

long walk-ins or lugging huge sacks. Telephriques and huts were the order of the day and in this way we were able to bag a large number of routes with the minimum of rest days. For Alex the highlight of this trip was the day we had the Dent Du Geant to ourselves, we were able to play to our hearts content on this most spectacular piece of rock, with Alex literally running up and down the in situ ropes. It is this and other days that summer I will cherish the most when I remember Alex.



The following summer we were unable to go to the Alps due to work commitments, however, this did not stop Alex taking a run to Chamonix on the train for a couple of days in order to climb the Frendo Spur. He was hardly back before he was phoning me to tell me about it, rubbing it in as I have always wanted to climb this route. The style in which he went to France with the sole intention of only climbing one route was typical, his spirit of adventure and his wish to be in high and exposed positions being his driving force and passion.

I will miss Alex both as a friend and climbing partner, he had many aspirations that I had wanted to be involved in, these were in no way out of his reach as he was strong in body as well as mind and given his determination he would have surely achieved anything he attempted.

Happiness shall always be found by those who dare and persevere.

Wanderer, do not turn around - March on and have no fear

Book Review

Valais Alps West - Selected Climbs

Lindsay Griffin

This is everything that one might expect of an Alpine Club guide: clearly laid out, well written, knowledgeable, illustrated with good quality colour and B&W photographs and, despite a price of nearly £20, good value. Remember, though, it is only a selection and can only cover in detail a fraction of the available routes. Having said that, over 400 climbs are described in its 450 pages.

Remember also that you will not be able to use this guide without the appropriate CNS 1:50,000 series maps - but that is true of any alpine guidebook these days. Despite the need for 'proper' maps there are some excellent sketch maps by Rod Powis, generally at the start of each section. These help 'cut the clutter' so that you can see the basic topography clearly. There is no index to these sketch maps - you have to hunt for them a bit.

I found the guide refreshingly easy to use. The route diagrams are drawn on the photographs at the back of the guide, often appearing on more than one photograph depending on the point of view. The graded list is useful for quick and easy reference. There is even a separate general index. Where the climb is considered of high interest or quality, descriptions are comprehensive and in some

cases quite long. Other climbs - the horrors, the curiosities, the straightforward and the dull - are dealt with succinctly. This allows Lindsay Griffin to jam well over 400 climbs into the 346 pages that actually contain route descriptions.

There is plenty of accurate, general information in the guidebook, including very necessary remarks about changes in conditions. This raises an important point. Many of you may have been taking your old guidebooks to the Alps and hoping that they will see out your climbing days. Well, the way that things have changed in the past ten years I would say that is a dangerous game. You need to be carrying a really up-to-date book like this one that, for example, takes into account the massive amount of ice ablation that has gone on and reflects the impact of that in the route descriptions. When we did the Gallet Ridge in 1974 it was a brilliant little mixed route - now it is considered to be "600m of poor rock throughout, with some dangerously poised blocks!"

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Reviewed by Tim King

AMA Spring Meet 1998

This story begins for me, Bdr John Farrer, back at the beginning of the month of May in RHQ 26 Regt RA whilst tip-toeing past the Adj's door when to my shock and horror I was called in and handed a piece of paper. The Adj then said "There you go Bdr Farrer this is right up your alley." Looking at the piece of paper I nearly marked time until my feet bled. I had never heard of the Army Mountaineering Association within my eight years of service, nor had I ever been to Scotland. But I was about to embark on an adventure that would introduce me to both. So I had some homework to do as well as get home start packing and give the wife the good news.

A couple of weeks later after receiving numerous faxes from Capt Kevin Edwards APTC it was time to go. Before leaving my Regt I made all the usual comments to everyone as well as promising to write them all a post card and bring them back a stick of rock. I was finally on my way from Gütersloh Germany to the Joint Services Mountain Training Wing in Ballachulish bonny Scotland a one way trip of about eleven hundred miles. By now I was sure I had done all the right homework. I had read Brave heart from cover to cover, watched Rob Roy and Highlander after one another and learnt how to say it a braw mun lick nick tonick Jimmy. All that was left was to read mountain craft & leadership on the long train ride from London to Scotland.

Having spent two days travelling around purchasing more of the right sort of equipment, as well as map sheet 41 it was 22:00 hrs 21 05 98 before I arrived at Fort William train station. I still had a Further 13 km walk south Paralleling the shore of loch Eil, before setting camp for the night.

On the morning of the 22nd I awoke to a



highland terrier licking my face and a huge black cloud of midges, that had just had breakfast on me. Needless to say it was time to break camp and find some place for a good English fry up before walking the last 8 km to Ballachulish.

On arrival at the JSMTW I was greeted by the friendly face of Chief Instructor Capt Glen Shepherd APTC, who went out of his way to ensure that my stay at his centre was a happy one. And may I say a very big thank you to him and his team for all their efforts. Capt Shepherd then gave me the good news that I was almost a day early and did I know that I was covered in midge bites. Rather than wait around the accommodation all day it was time to take in some of the scenery that ballachulish had to offer followed by my first time taste of Haggis. By this time other members of the AMA had turned up and it was time for a pint or two!!

The next day the dozen or so of us that had turned up had a quick introduction session and pared off into climbing and walking partners. My climbing buddy was Sgt Graham Taylor APTC who very soon put me at ease after I explained I only had 35 or so single pitch climbs up to grade E1 under my belt and had never done a multi pitch climb in my life. "Don't worry mate you will be OK" he said in a very Geordie accent. After much hasty packing of day sacks we were ready for my first multi pitch climb, but first we had to get there. Having teamed up with a further three Rock Gods squashed ourselves and our gear into a tiny little red Noddy car we were off, as intrepid as you like. We drove East out of Ballachulish to Glen Coe, parked the Noddy car and headed for the Rannoch Wall. The route that Sgt Taylor and myself were going to climb was Agags Groove, a three star VD in all of its length and glory. After what I can only describe as A1 coaching from Sgt Taylor we were climbing, and I was on my first multi pitch. Now I felt like a real mountain goat and there was no stopping me. Graham instructed me in all I needed to know and I felt extremely safe in his hands, and as the weekend progressed so did my confidence. At the top there was lots of congratulations and patting of backs and a couple of compliments to the nature of no longer a Multi pitch virgin John! After taking in the view it was time to descend meet up with the others and head back for some well made scoff and a very welcome shower. Followed by some banter down at the local and some even more welcome beer.

The second day we were out on the Cairn Dearg Buttress opposite Ben Nevis climbing a 215m route called Route One.

This proved interesting especially for Graham since the centre section of the route in the chimney was soaking wet.



Having got to grips with this new feeling termed as exposure I was really enjoying every move of this route and its whole ethos. The guidebook said this route took eleven pitches but we completed it in nine. Then descended on snow back to our equipment, a real buzz. At the bottom myself and Sgt Taylor awaited the return of Captain Kevin Edwards APTC and Capt Glen Sheperd APTC who were bashing one of the more arduous routs across to our west. On the way down the two Captains entertained Sgt Taylor and I with tales of expeditions gone by, an extremely memorable day.

To finish my weekend off perfectly a very old friend of mine turned up to begin a rock leader course. And so needless to say we went out and bashed a route together up at Poll Dubh this time Bdr Mick Lloyd and myself completed a 75 m three star HS in two pitches. Now it was time to say fare well to all my new & old friends and head back to Germany.

In summary the AMA weekend for me was an extremely memorable experience that I'll carry with me for the rest of my days. Like-minded people doing like minded activities. May there be many more Gatherings and may the spirit of the Army Mountaineering Association live on!

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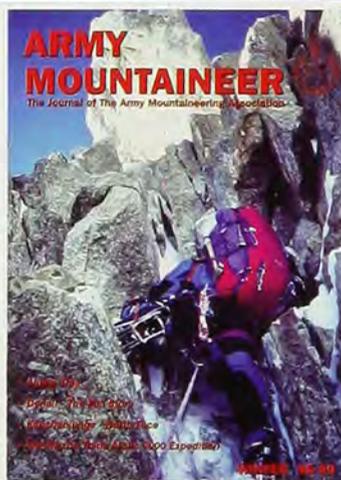
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The brief for the Boulder Park was multi-faceted. It had to appeal to novices and competition climbers alike, it had to replicate the features and texture of the local crags, and it had to work as a piece of sculpture that would appeal to the non-climbing eye. Sited on the edge of the A1 the Boulder Park has to compete with its neighbour the 'Angel of the North' as a striking monument.

The Boulder Park was officially opened by the Mayor of Gateshead on 31st October 1998. Alan Hinkes was immediately drawn in to give his 'official' seal of approval and Neil Carson, the 1997 British Climbing Champion, spent the day setting routes and battling with problems.

For Details, Contact:

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