

ARMY MOUNTAINEER



The Journal of The Army Mountaineering Association

- *Exercise Denali Diamond*
- *Everest - A Deadly Playground*
- *Mera Peak*
- *A Hell of a Rock in the Sun*
- *Photo Competition*

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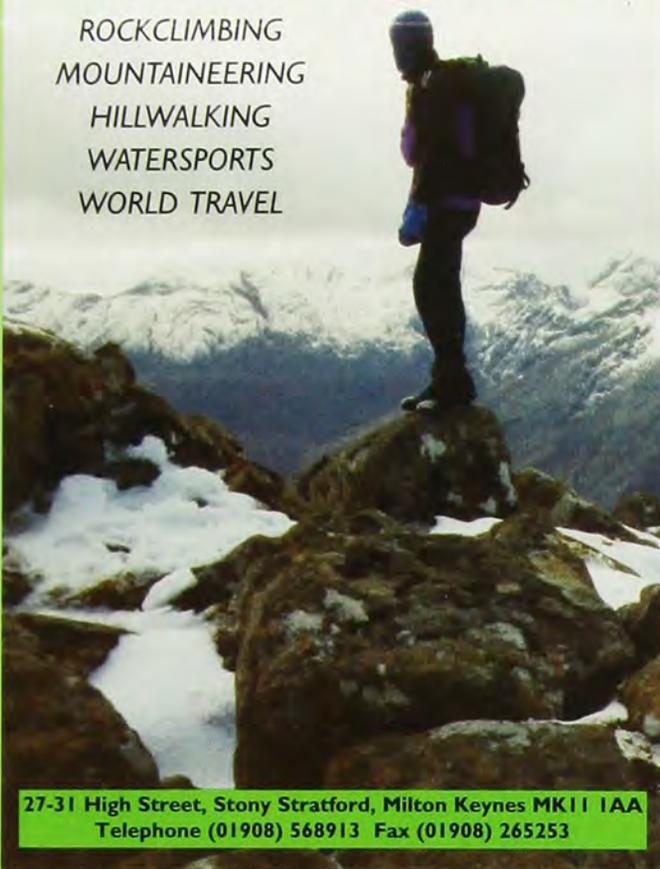
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THE JOURNAL OF THE ARMY MOUNTAINEERING ASSOCIATION Summer 1998

Message from The Vice Chairman Major M H Bazire MBE RLC

In the last Journal I looked back, all too briefly, to the early days of the AMA and the variety of mountaineering activities that are taking place today. Some of these are reflected in articles inside this edition, and contributions are always welcome. Recent Newsletters contain useful reference material. I believe the formula of two Journals and four Newsletters each year works well.

The recent Army Sports Climbing Competition, held at The Foundry, Sheffield, was another success. The AMA continues to run this annual event on behalf of the Army, and thanks go to Captain Paul Edwards, W02 Mike Smith and all who helped to organize the event. There are several climbing meets in UK to look out for, and it is hoped that Exercise HOT ROCK can take place later this year.

Regarding the Alpine scene, details for JSAM this year may be found in Joint Service DCI 50/98. The late publication is regretted. SSgt Paul Duke is acting as the AMA point of contact. An AMA Representative will be needed for next year's JSAM (under RNRMMC leadership and probably taking place in the Bemese Oberland): please consider volunteering. The AMA Millennium Expedition Alps 2000 was publicised in the April Newsletter, inviting applications for Exercise Leaders.

On the expedition front, planning for Exercise FINALIS DRAGON proceeds apace, with a tremendous number of applicants undergoing recent selection and training. Preparations for the British Services Kangchenjunga Expedition 2000 are also underway: further information on this venture may be found inside. Meanwhile, many individual members are taking part in mountaineering expeditions to Alaska, the Andes, the Himalayas and elsewhere, and are benefiting from financial support from the AMA.

The Committee recently approved the purchase of an expedition radio set, which should provide valuable assistance over the coming years. A new set of recruiting leaflets has been produced. Thanks go to all on the committee and elsewhere who contribute to AMA activities, whether behind the scenes or on the hills. Please approach any committee member with suggestions for further ways of supporting climbing activities in the Army.

I hope to see many members at the AGM weekend in September. Please put together your top ten slides to show on the Saturday evening. It will be good to hear of a variety of mountaineering exploits. Onwards and upwards!

Contents

A message from the Vice Chairman	1	AMA Photographic Competition Winners 1998	16
Officers of the Committee	2	The Aiguille Rochefort - A 4000 Metre Peak Before Lunch	18
Ten Steps across the Monte Rosa Massif	3	Avalanche Information Web Sites	19
"Tradz" or "Radz"	5	Snow Fun on Mera Peak	20
One Hell of a Rock in the Sun	6	AMA Millenium Expedition Alps 2000	22
New Year Meet	8	British Services Kangchenjunga Expedition 2000 (BSKE 2000) ...	23
Exercise Denali Diamond	9	L'Eté est Malade	24
The Rjukan Experience	11	Only Maddogs and Scotsan	26
Book Reviews	12	Exercise Island Peak	28
Survey 250 Expedition. Caught up in a National Disaster	13	Bolivia 97	30
Mount Everest. A Deadly Playground	15	Expedition Planning	32

This edition was edited by SSgt Steve Wilson in Major Barney Barnet's absence.

Winter 1998 edition

Please send your contributions for the Winter 1998 edition to the editor by end of October. 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:

The Meets Co-ordinator, Tim Bird, enjoying the evening sun and looking for inspiration on Holly Tree Buttress at Stone Farm (Southern Sandstone).

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APPPOINTMENTS

Ten Steps

Across the Monte Rosa Massif

By Maj Will Manners

Having spent a very pleasant 10 days climbing in the Chamonix area, (mainly rock climbing due to the tropical conditions), it was time to head to Switzerland for JSAM. Before the arrival brief, (be in time or be skint!), I squeezed in a day in paradise, climbing the Lenspitze and the Nadelhorn from Saas Fee; probably one of my most enjoyable mountaineering days ever. I made it to the campsite in Tasch where a small community of Quasars was multiplying rapidly. This was to be my first JSAM, despite having been a member of the AMA for over 10 years. Poor show really.

After initial forays into the hills, a small party was taking shape in Camp Quasar. Pete Aldwinkle had started canvassing support for a traverse of the Monte Rosa Massif. Eventually he pulled together a group of 5 who proceeded to spend the evening totally underestimating the scale and implications of the selected route. In fact another couple of bottles of beer saw us ready for a Karrimor Mountain Marathon style skip along the ridge top in time to return for tea and medals. The route needed little discussion as far as we were concerned; start at one end and finish at the other end when all the 4000 metre peaks in the way have been climbed! Pretty simple really. Having decided that the hardest section of the route offered little more than D- climbing we opted for the lightweight approach. In addition to bivvy kit we had two 9 millimetre ropes, half a dozen assorted nuts and a few slings, more than enough. Needless to say like the average Brit in the Alps all the emergency kit went in, sleeping bags and a few 'just in case' items. We scrutinized the contents of every sack, compared weight, axes, straps, creams and had another bottle of beer.

After the initial shock of the price of a one way ticket to the Stockhorn, we boarded the train much to the amusement of other passengers who clearly had not seen men with beards and rucsacks before. Several stops would see us transformed from being side show freaks in the busy streets of Zermatt to glacial gladiators ready to face the hidden terrors of the Stockhorn Glacier! Imagine our surprise then when on closer inspection by Simon Weatherall, the guidebook revealed that our easiest route of ascent up our first peak was a 700 metre TD- / V mixed!! As the one instrumental for our super lightweight rack I took an unfair proportion of the abuse, Pete kept quiet! (I owed him one!!) With an already expired one way ticket our only way was up, or more specifically across to the spectacular bivvy "Citta di Galarote" perched on a badly managed slag heap on an unfeasibly narrow ridge at 3970 metres. It was in fact one of the best bivvy huts I've ever stayed in. No larger than a camper van it provided beds for 8 and a hut log that made very interesting reading. We read of the first ascent of our chosen route and of the visit by Royal Engineer climbers some years previously. Interestingly there were no entries in the log since spring!

In the morning Pete, who had been suffering with the altitude, (on account of the fact that the rest of us were well acclimatized and had been unkindly beasting him along) made the very sensible and "Oates" like decision to descend. The intrepid Andy Longman and Matty Wells (of Mount Kenya's Ice Window fame - "hey are you THE Andy Longman and Matty Wells?") took the lead and set off up the "Cresta di Santa

Simon Weatherall leading on steep ground on the start of the Citta di Galarot



Catarina" on the NE Ridge of the Nordend. Simon and I followed in hot pursuit on our very own variation taking a Scottish III/IV mixed line and breaking into glorious sunshine and a breathtaking alpine day.

As we watched Pete become a speck in the distance our two ex-9 Para Squadron (turned new age travellers) took on the first few mighty rock pitches. Burdened by big boots and sacks, the excessive puffing and panting was excusable considering our altitude of around 4000 metres. Progress was slow by any normal alpine standards although with our limited selection of gear, time was saved deciding what to use! Progress was watched by 3 helpful 'mates' as technique was commented on, the gear was criticized and complaints made about the time taken. In fact the quantity of hot air generated by the 'mates' probably gave the respective leader just that little bit of extra lift. It would however have been most unusual for all four of us to be quiet at the same time. The route was not exactly sign posted but had sufficient in-situ gear for Andy to be able to swing on then discard the odd peg. The word of warning was meant to read 'Hey, catch that peg and snap will you?' but came out as f*** and resulted in Simon calmly ducking as ten percent of our rack plummeted towards the now pin sized Pete.

The band of beautifully compact rock gave way to more mixed ground fortunately breaking right underneath an enormous overhang which had dominated our thoughts for the last 18 hours. A spider's web of static white rope on the next few pitches appeared to indicate that not all attempts on this face had resulted in a planted flag and a team photograph on the summit. After a confusing rightwards diversion followed by an unfeasibly long and unprotected traverse back leftwards we found ourselves on large slabs bounded on the left by an unwelcoming drop into Italy and immortality! By now it was early afternoon and our hopes for a comfortable mountain 'hut' for the night had slipped by a day.

Several more steep pitches saw us break through another rock buttress and onto a Frendo Spur style snow ridge. The final rock step considerably foreshortened and certainly underestimated, initially saw us pressing through moving together but caution led us to place protection as we broke through the last difficulties. The final steps of the route were framed by huge seracs and cornices marking the lower end of a glacier, and highlighting the fact that there was still some ascent before we could plant our summit flag.

In swirling mist, occasionally snatching views of Italy and Switzerland, we joined a rocky ridge that led steeply to the summit of the Nordend at 4609 metres. The thoughts of a chilly mountain bivvy spurred us into action, the flag planting and back slapping were left to another peak as we made a rapid descent of south ridge of the mountain. A democratic debate at the bottom of the ridge saw us racing on up the North Face of the Dufourspitze into the dusk and the first flakes of snow. Simon blasted on up the AD face with the rest of us in his wake on superb blue ice and neve. Had we had more time the route would have been one to play with and enjoy a little more but by the time we reached the summit ridge the snow was swirling around and making navigation a little interesting. After heading down a dead end ridge into Italy, (it would be fair to say that I was in fact at the front), we halted and the second round of the debate was staged in dwindling daylight and by the light of head torches. Bivvy it was, after a 3 to 1 majority and so we did, somewhere beneath the summit, in what we assessed as roughly the right area. A warm drink and hibernation looked favourite on our rocky perch. Firstly the snow stopped then the clouds parted with increasing regularity revealing our

glowing distant destination but by now we were settled down, (and tied in!).

In the morning another beautifully clear alpine panorama revealed all. We were in fact on ledges leading to our descent ridge and an abseil; probably best approached in daylight after some rest. As we packed up, the first guides characteristically barged their way onto our ledges. In about minus 4 Celcius my numb fingers fought with laces and buckles and juggled with slippery mugs. We resembled a group of guilty looking students having woken up in a busy campus hedge as our visitors clattered past.

We descended the ridge to a col and made the pleasant climb to the relatively easy Zumsteinspitze, (try saying that with a mouthful of dried pitta bread). We arrived at the Signalkuppe Hut ready for a mighty omlette and anything else we could lay our hands on, sod the expense. Unfortunately breakfast had finished quite a few hours previously and despite our pathetic begging we were offered only bread and the most expensive cheese outside Paris! The remainder of the day uneventfully saw us bag another 3 sand bag peaks before arriving at the smelly, crowded but adequate Balmenhorn bivvy. Five 4000



Will, Matty and Andy celebrating dawn on Liskamm.

metre peaks before tea time seemed like a good enough day. We met some interesting other Brits, some Italians and blokes from the East (?). In an outrageous example of bone idleness an Italian 'thing' walked round to the back of the hut and essentially crapped on the roof of the hut, only yards from a quality lounging spot. The arrogance and short sightedness of some mountaineers never ceases to amaze me.

The final day of our traverse started with the characteristic chorus of flatulence, (it's OK, we can mention it, it's a high altitude condition!). Moving quickly and unroped we ascended the E Ridge of Liskamm guided only by head torches and those ahead. Swinging the beam from side to side did little to aid navigation and even less for the balance. High on the ridge we were rewarded with incredible views of our route, the Matterhorn, in fact pretty much the whole of the Alps. The air was still and we were alone. Whilst wishing it, that moment would not last, although priceless we tried to capture it on camera film. What

a fantastic experience to share with good friends but what a moment to savour alone and in silence. The effort and money were a small price to pay for such indescribable, immeasurable pleasure.

The remainder of the ridge was equally spectacular and after 'collecting' Castor and Pollux (with an unorthodox descent route) we had run out of ridge and 4000 metre peaks. We reached the ghastly commercialization of the Klein Matterhorn and its summer skiing groupies. I had this overwhelming urge to bump into characters who resembled 'Coco the Clown' sliding through the slush. 10 peaks was a good bag but above all the last 4 days had contained the complete alpine experience; technical rock and ice climbing, an unplanned high bivvy, lazing on a sunny rock in the afternoon, trudging through deep slush and the most perfect alpine sunrise imaginable. All this with the wit, dry humour and camaraderie so perfected by the military. This is Adventurous Training.



Scrambling up Pollux.

"Tradz" or "Radz"

By Major Phil Brown

Much has been made in recent climbing press of the difference between yesterday's traditional climbers (or "Tradz") and today's modern climbers (or "Radz"). For amusement, I thought I would throw in my interpretation of the distinction between these very different breeds, based on my own (extremely British) perspective:

A **trad** climber is usually over 35, has been brought up on real rock, using hemp ropes, possibly bowline knots, wearing unstretchable tweed breeches, RAF style orange ventile anoraks overlaid by a waist belt or Whillans sit harness. Shoes worn are Army 'daps', PAs or the ubiquitous EBs (blue and white). Head-gear used: possibly a grey flat cap or a Joe Brown helmet.

A **trad** is someone who understands a jug to be something out of which you drink beer.

A **trad** is someone who hitchhikes to climbing areas, possibly uses buses or rides pillion on their mate's motorbike.

A **trad** is someone who believes that chalk is justified on only really hard routes such as HVS (F5B or F6A) and upward.

A good post climbing meal to a **trad** is anything fried, preferably egg, bacon, chips and tomato washed down by a pint mug of tea. All this as a precursor to an evening at the bar drinking ale, ensuring a snug fit in the harness the following day. Talk revolves around motorbike races around North Wales, far away mountains (like Rum Doodle) and what Bonington (now Sir Chris) has just done.

A **rad** climber is under 35, has been brought up on plastic climbing walls, using kernmantle ropes, figure of eight knots, wearing Goretex jackets, lycra tights overlaid by any harness as long as it is not a Whillans. Shoes worn are anything super sticky (Boreol) and shaped like a banana. Helmets are not cool (and since when have they stopped a fall).

A **rad** is someone who understands a jug to be a massive handhold on which one arm pull-ups are demonstrated.

A **rad** is someone who travels to climbing areas in vans, normally somebody else's.

A **rad** is someone who does not think twice about using chalk for a V. Diff (F3) and upwards, even on holds only 15 cm above ground level.

A good post climbing meal to a **rad** comprises anything whole-meal, lots of salad and yogurt, probably veggie style, washed down with semi skimmed milk or high energy drinks. All this as a precursor to an early night to ensure total anorexism the following day. Talk revolves around move sequences on any climb above E8 in the Sheffield area, and the proliferation of bolted routes in the British Isles.

One Hell of a Rock

or have I got that the wrong way round?

by SSgt Tim Bird

One Hell of a rock in the Sun. After the first three hours in the saddle my buns were aching and it was starting to cool off the higher we got, just one decent to go to Kithasi, a small hamlet in Cyprus with no tavernas and a population of 250 sheep! Madness, after all it was 33°C and we'd cycled 32 miles most of it uphill. Kithasi did have a top rock formation called Jamieson's rocks though and we'd planned to meet a mini bus packed with climbing equipment and beer, and we would spend the weekend working through the routes and reviewing the existing guide, 1968 edition.

Eleven of us had left Akrotiri on a Friday afternoon on mountain bikes travelling up past Episkopi village and continuing towards Arsos, then finally dropping over the ridge to Kithasi. Finally we arrived at 1830. Dutifully the minibus had beaten us there and we moved the contents up the steep slope (aren't they always) to the intended campsite amongst the wild thyme. A bit of careful planning meant we had a prepared pasta feast ready to eat and during the evening we all tucked hungrily into this and rehydrated on Keo at 4. 5%Vol !!. OOOops.

[The devil's mother dropped in at about 2am, lured by the smell of alcohol and good pasta, and handed out headaches, good job we were all squaddies because rumor had it two civvies had copped it in the next valley.]

The morning came all too quickly and the temperature started to rise. Tea was handed out in buckets and by 9am the last of the devil's work was starting to fade away.

Jamieson's rocks lie east from Paphos in Grid 7250. They're easy to find as long as you're on the right road. They form a natural narrowing and intrude onto the road. The first record-

ed climbing was in 1968 by a chap called Archie Jeffry and was included in his second book. The passage of time since the first and subsequent writings mean that the descriptions of the climbs have changed a bit and some time was spent hunting for the small tree that died in 1979 etc. etc. but by 10 am we had all started climbing something at least.

Jamieson's rocks are in three parts: The Tower, The Slabs and a Boulder over the road with just one route on it. We'd started on the Slabs and started ticking off the routes having now found the original lines. The climbers, now paired, started climbing the existing lines and trying new lines, experienced people were leading the less who were following the line of sweaty hand and footprints. During lunch the temperature hit 34°C a rest period was required. The frantic climbing activity continued afterwards with a couple of the harder routes being led and subsequently top roped by all who wanted to. Finishing this by 5 in the afternoon we mellowed out, catching the last of the day's UV rays adjourning to the nearest taverna for the obligatory messe and Keo. Here I took the chance to get everyone's views on the routes and grades before the world and his dog was put to rights. Some of the newer climbers couldn't tell a V Diff from their front cog on the way to the taverna, 5 Keos later, you could have been mistaken that they'd just climbed the north face of the Eiger, such is the effect of Keo. Finishing the beer we'd brought with us the remainder of the night at the campsite drifted into a pleasant haze of joke telling and lantern swinging as most top evenings around a campsite only can. Note: no fires please.

[Later that night Beelzebub himself was waiting, and crept silently around the campsite handing out black killer death headaches and 3,

4, 5 and 6am water stops to anyone who smelt remotely of alcohol. Suffice to say that no one escaped the cursed hangover that is associated with chemical brewing, hot sun and social climbing.]

Tea, tea and more tea started the next morning, sandbags and sleeping bags were emptied and breakfast happened in the usual subdued way. Temperatures rose and the last couple of routes were completed by the more aware watched by the more unaware.

At about 1pm when people had managed to take their dark glasses off and collect their lives together, the mini bus was repacked and the last rubbish collected we turned our bikes back towards Akrotiri. The first 6km was uphill, climbing 600m in 45 min in 35°C F Hot, for some it was close to the limit but we all managed to get to the top.

[There was nothing like a good bit of sport on a Sunday morning. There he was sitting atop the hill blowing boiling air at the cyclists on the rough track opposite, knocking them back with every breath. It was one of those days that Beelzebub had promised himself for a long time.]

If there is a good thing about going uphill for almost 4 hrs on a Friday afternoon it's going back the same way on Sunday afternoon. Top speed for the day was 51mph, not bad for a mountain bike with knobbles, too fast for the devil and before we knew it we were spinning along the Plantation road on the way back into Akrotiri 3hrs from leaving Kithasi.

All of us had a top time during the weekend and some have returned to the rocks to use the new Topo, which is included afterwards for your own use. With a bit of imagination a good weekend's climbing can be had, even in Hell!



1. Intro and Access

Jamieson's rocks are a Crag Rat's Dream, no doubt about it. Out of the car onto the rock. Handbrake to climbing now can, for the practiced, be only 5 minutes. Jamieson's rocks consist of three individual large rocks the first and the largest is known as the Tower. The Tower hides the Slabs, and Scythe Rock is across the road. The rock is pocketed limestone and is by far the most sound limestone rock on the Island. There exists a walk off route from the top of the Slabs and the top edge is riddled with threads and spikes. This means its great for instruction and tuition as well as personal climbing. Most of

Rock in the Sun



Jamieson's rocks (L to R) the slabs, the tower and the boulder.

the routes in the low grades rarely exceed 25 m in length but almost unlimited variations exist giving pleasing climbing to all.

Six miles past Aphrodite's Rock on the way to Paphos turn right before Asproskremmos Dam. Travel about 13 miles passing through the villages of Nikoklia, Mamonia and Ayios Yeryious. The road passes between the Scythe Rock and the Tower 3km after Ayios Yeryious.

2. The Climbs.

The Tower. On all my visits there has been considerable

activity with nesting birds all over the rock and I have been unable to climb on the tower. There are some routes already documented although the accuracy of these descriptions is doubtful they were included just in case the rooks and hawks ever disappear. Climbs are described standing between the Slab and the Tower, from left to right. See diagram.

1. Project 1:

A line of old bolt holes can be seen following the thin seam/crack that appears in the centre of the wall. The route seems to finish at the top of the crack, just below a pair of nesting hawks.

2 Project 2:

5m to the right of Project 1 appear another series of bolt holes which have since rusted, the line above seems a more feasible bet than project 1 but again finishes near to the top of Project 1.

3. Ruthven Crack: HARD SEVERE 25m

Climb the tower up the obvious crack just left of the corner (bulging start). Near the top the crack runs in to an overhanging corner which is passed to the left. This brings you onto the top of the tower where care must be taken to avoid knock-

ing loose rocks off the top. Descend by Corner route.

4. Curly's Corner: SEVERE 25m

Start at the same place as for Ruthven Crack but follow the arete on the right to the top where care must be taken to avoid knocking loose rocks off. Descend by Corner route

5. Scar Wall. A1 25m

3m to the right of Ruthven Crack is a crack designed for pegging and any one wanting to start an aid climbing career is to try this one.

6. Corner Route: V/DIFF 25m

Start in the corner right of Scar Wall climb between the block and the tower and climb the corner on the left to the top of the tower. This route is also reversed and used as a descent route.

The Slabs. The next set of routes are on the slabs hidden from the road by the tower. This is about the best rock on Cyprus and because it faces southeast it stays clean and dries quickly in the sun. The routes (See Diagram 1) are listed from left to right when facing the rock.

1. Ladies Route: DIFF 15m

Climb the large fallen block at the left hand end of the slab then climb the obvious crack above tending right at the top to finish

2. Two ladies route: HARD V/DIFF 22m

From the same block climb the blunt nose immediately right of ladies route. Move up and right at mid height across the sloping crack system to belay from the tree. A good lead

3. **The new line:**
V SEVERE 24m

Start 3m right of ladies route, climb the lower half to a small flake at half height, climb to the top weaving left then right and use the tree to belay. Scary protection on the lower half.

4. **Cilla's Groove direct:**
SEVERE 22m

Start 4m to the left of Cilla's Groove Climb direct on small holds crossing the groove and climbing to the top.

5. **Cilla's Groove:**
HARD V/DIFF 25m

Start in the centre of the slabs in the obvious crack. Climb 5m before moving left to follow the groove. Make a tricky step across left and then climb straight to the top.

Plenty of protection in the lower half makes up for a little in the top half!

6. **Hearty: V SEVERE 4b 25m**

From the same start as Cilla's Groove Climb the thin crack in the centre of the wall tricky moves at half height lead to a pleasant finish up steeper rock.

7. **Virgin's Climb:**
V/DIFF 20m

Take the right hand branch of the centre crack system follow this up the flake and straight across a small slab again leading to a pleasant finish up steeper rock.

8. **Virgin on the ridiculous:**
SEVERE 4b 20m

Takes a line 3m right of Virgins climb climbing directly to the slab and finishing in the same way

9. **The Teaser: V/DIFF 18m**

The Teaser takes the line 6m right of Virgins Climb and follows the line of flakes up to mid height where an awkward step up leads to more definite holds and a secure finish on the short headwall above.

10. **Hellish: HVS 5b 20m**

Takes the line 4m to the right of the Teaser climbing straight to a downward pointing flake where no protection is available.



Akrotiri climbing team prior to the ride home.

From here delicately traverse right to a small broken corner and up to join the top half of the Teaser and the security of easier ground.

11. **Gadgets Variation:**
HARD SEVERE 20m

3 m right of Hellish is Gadget's Variation. Climb Hellish and follow the thin ramp right up to the thin crack, follow this until it peters out. An awkward mantleshelf gains the sloping ledge and then the easier ground above. Can be climbed starting from the ledge halfway up Directus and move left to gain the crack.

12. **Directus:**
HARD SEVERE 18m

As the name implies the route follows a direct line through the shallow scoop. The centre is without protection (crux) but an easy escape can be made into the crack system on the right, where a chock can be placed to protect the crux.

Scythe Rock. Across the road is a stand-alone block with an obvious line across the front face.

1. **The Scythe:**
A1 /V/DIFF 20m

A Straightforward peg route with the last 4m being climbed free. Descend via a broken corner at the back of the block.

The New Year Meet

By Lt Stu MacDonald

Twenty-three members of the AMA gathered at the Tulloch adventure-training hut to perform the annual ritual of Hogmanay mountaineering. There were representatives from Cyprus, Germany, Northern Ireland and all over Great Britain in attendance.

Due to the unusually warm winter, ice climbing was not an option, much to Stu MacDonald's disappointment. As a consequence, we were gently eased into the hardships of winter mountaineering as the weather gradually deteriorated.

Major Duncan Strutt sacrificed personal ambition and spent the week with the less experienced members, passing on his knowledge of the hills to them. More adventurous groups managed routes such as the Aonach Eagach, but the closet Munro baggers probably had the most successful week with ascents of many hills in the area.

New Year was celebrated in several locations varying from a party in Aviemore to an isolated bothy, with all concerned having an enjoyable night!

Next year's meet will be based in Norwegian Lodge, near Aviemore, from 27th December 1998 to 3rd January 1999. It is open to all members of the AMA, irrespective of rank, sex, Regular or TA. You are required to bring your own equipment and must have participated in winter mountaineering prior to the meet. It is an excellent opportunity to gain more winter experience with other members of the AMA. For further details call Lt Stu MacDonald at 1 RSME Regt on 726 3624

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Exercise...

By Major Martin Kitson.



Mark, Yorkie and Paul climbing up from Motorcycle Hill towards Windy Gap at 11,500ft.

Diary Entry: Sunday 1st June 1997
0900 hrs 'We have finally managed to get down from the camp at 17,200 ft. Where do I begin to tell the tragic tale of the last few days?'

Our four-man expedition had spent 15 days moving kit up this huge, cold mountain and now, we were devastated. Only Yorkie and I were left to pick through the kit and decide how much that we could reasonably manage to carry out between us.

The 1997 AMA Mount McKinley Expedition began as the result of the enthusiasm and work of Lt Stuart MacDonald RE and W02 Andy Gailagher RAMC, who unfortunately both had to drop out at the last minute. The remaining team consisted of Major Mark Trevillyan RADC, Lsgt Paul Holmes Gren Guards, Cpl Yorkie York RE and myself.

At 20,320 ft Mt McKinley is the highest mountain in North America. Lying at 63 degrees North and just 200 miles South of the Arctic Circle it has a reputation for being one of the coldest mountains in the world. The vertical distance between base camp and the summit is 13,000ft, which is greater than that of Mt Everest. Our chosen route was the West Buttress.

We took the spectacular flight out of the small town of Talkeetna to land on the Kalhiltna Glacier on May 15. Our first challenge was to get to grips with moving over the glacier roped up, towing a loaded kiddies sled with a mind of its own and wearing snow shoes. Climbing McKinley is not a lonesome affair; base camp resembled a small multinational village and at the time of our ascent over 300 people were reported to be attempting the West Buttress

route! Most people end up, climbing the mountain twice - carrying a load up one day and then moving camp the next. This was the tactic we chose, as it also helps the body to acclimatise. Conditions can be severe with the temperature inside the tent reaching -20°C on occasions. We built substantial snow castles to protect the tents from the wind.

The climbing improved once we had left the dreaded snowshoes behind at our 11,000ft camp. The views start to open out as the Kalhitna glacier is left behind and the impressive Mount Foraker and Mount Hunter can be seen rising above the clouds. Arriving at the 14,200ft camp we spent an exhausting four hours building a shelter from the blasting wind. On a rest day everyone watched some poor soul's tent blown off the top camp 3000ft above us! It was these conditions which had so far this season prevented anyone from making it to the summit. The move to the top camp contains some of the most interesting climbing although this was tempered by the queues of people on the fixed ropes of the head wall.

On our summit day Yorkie was suffering from mild altitude sickness and therefore stayed at the camp at 17,200 ft. Mark, Paul and I roped together and set off, following a guided group of six Americans up to Denali Pass. Above Denali Pass I found it increasingly hard going, the altitude making every step a supreme effort. At about 19,000 ft I made the decision to turn back, Mark and Paul were going strong and they continued to the top.

As I descended the weather closed in and by the time I got to the tents it was a whiteout. Throughout the evening a vicious storm blew up, threatening to take the tents away and burying them

in 3 ft of snow. Deep concern grew for Paul and Mark as the night wore on. They did not return.

At 0800 the storm had stopped and the CB radio crackled into life. the guided American team was missing, one Englishman was dead and the other had frostbite. My heart sank and my mind raced - what the hell had happened? How had Paul got down to the medical tent at 14,200 ft? Had they walked past us in the whiteout? The answers had to wait while the radios were used to co-ordinate the search for the missing Americans. During the afternoon they appeared at the Denali Pass slowly making their way down. All had frostbite, one man's hands were black to the wrists but they had all survived.

Finally I got on the radio to Paul. The storm had hit them as they reached the summit and they lost their way on the descent, eventually they fell into a steep gully. They managed to arrest their fall but whilst trying to traverse out of the gully they lost their footing and this time they had both fallen a long way. They had come to rest in the Orient Express couloir 5000 ft below the summit. Paul regained consciousness after an estimated 4 or 5 hours. Mark lay motionless next to him. Lost in the whiteout with frost bitten feet Paul was still in grave danger. He had a miraculous escape. An American climber who had been looking for his climbing partner had become lost himself, he found the cold and disorientated Paul in the lower reaches of the Orient Express. Together they made it back to the 14,200ft camp.

Paul was flown to Anchorage by helicopter for treatment 2 days later and

D E N A L I D I A M O N D

Mark's body was recovered the day after that. Yorkie and I got off the mountain as fast as we could but were hampered by poor snow conditions after the storm. We teamed up with a RAF/Navy team led by Lt Cmdr Nobby Clarke who were a great support to us.

We descended to base camp from 14,200 ft in a 17 hour push through the night. Being so close to the Arctic Circle we watched the sunset and sunrise within two hours of each other. The light showed these majestic mountains at their best. The beauty of the mountains reaffirmed why we had come and for this Mark had paid the ultimate price



Climbing the fixed rope up the headwall at 16,000ft. Mark in the foreground

Obituary

Major Mark Charles Trevillyan RADC 1961 - 1997

Mark Trevillyan was killed in a fall whilst descending from the summit of Mt McKinley, Alaska on 29 May 1997.

Born 2 October 1961 in Upney, Essex. He studied dentistry at University College London and in 1986 joined the Royal Army Dental Corps.

He had a passionate interest in Mountaineering since first visiting the Lake District at the age of 14. He gained a solid base of experience in the UK and the Alps and obtained his JSMEL Winter in 1990. Always very fit, he was a competitive cross-country runner and gained his parachute wings just before arriving at 23 Parachute Field Ambulance as Dental Officer in 1987. From 1993 to 1997 he was OC Airborne Squadron during which time he deployed to Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina. He also found time for sailing and sailed back to England from Cyprus on completion of a tour there.

Mark rarely talked of his achievements and was modest almost to the point of secrecy. During his post Bosnia leave he joined a commercial expedition to climb Mt Aconcagua in South America and was considered more as an assistant guide than a client. On Mt McKinley he was noted for his resistance to poor conditions and for superb fitness.

He is a great loss to his family, friends and the Army mountaineering scene. The words to be placed on his headstone are a quote from Mallory. "The greatest danger in life is not to take the adventure."

Mark lived that adventure.



Major Mark Travillyan at high camp on Denali.

The Rjukan Ice Experience

By "Back of a fag packet expeds Ltd"

(Lt Stu Macdonald RE and Lt Mark Charles RE)

.....It all began with a firm plan to go climbing in Scotland over Christmas. We had arranged to meet in Scotland on 15th December. A quick 'phonecall to Ballachulish revealed that all was not well, in fact the message I got was "It's 10 degrees, it's raining, and there's no snow or ice anywhere." - This called for a rapid change of plan!

I called Mark in Germany and suggested Norway as an alternative venue. Mark dug through his climbing mags and found an article on Scandanavian ice. The Rjukan valley was to be our destination. Three days later we met at Oslo airport and crammed an unfeasible amount of kit into a Mazda MX5 Tardis. 2½ hours of sliding around on UK tyres saw us in Rjukan, and without any planning we parked next to the climbing shop.

Knowing nothing about the area we decided that the purchase of a guidebook was a wise move. This quest led us to meet Jon "We're not worthy" Haukasveen who, as well as being the guidebook author is the local Jedi Master ice climber. Jon eyed us with suspicion as we both climbed out of Mark's sports car wearing brand new jackets and Chelsea boots. Apparently this is not the clothing worn by the standard Scandanavian ice climber! Jon's initial questions such as "Do you have any ice screws?" suggested a lack of confidence

in our ice climbing abilities and he recommended a nice grade II to start on.

As the days went by we gained experience and confidence requiring several changes of underwear. The ice was generally of superb standard and there are many routes thoroughly deserving of their *** rating. We tended to alternate between 1 and 2 pitch valley climbs and long mountain routes.

There were many highlights to the trip, including a first ascent and some high quality climbs. Whilst climbing at Vemork we spied a truly perfect climb. 2 pitches of grade III/IV ice up a striking gully - it just had to be done. We didn't have the guidebook with us so we decided to climb it and look it up later. We topped out after two very enjoyable pitches of climbing only to find an enormous tunnel disappearing into the hillside - "How odd," we thought.

After talking to Jon it was established that we had climbed "Trollfossen". Guidebook description:

TROLLFOSSEN Grade
XXXXX XXXXX

This waterfall must not be climbed. It is part of the powerplant and is subject to uncontrolled water emissions. The sudden starting of the pumps will bring certain death to any climbers underneath. "

- Oops! Ours was reckoned to be only about the eighth ascent in history, but Jon agreed that it is an awesome route!

Other great routes worth a mention are Fabrikfossen III/IV *** (7 pitches), Tjonstadbergfossen IV *** (7 pitches) and Svaddefossen IV *** (6 pitches). Unfortunately, due to warm temperatures and poor ice conditions a complete ascent of Svaddefossen wasn't possible; however it must be said that it is the most beautiful and striking route that either of us had ever seen.

Jon's confidence in us grew as we steadily knocked off local classics. That said, we were a little taken aback when he recommended "Lipton" to us. Lipton is recognised as being the hardest ice route in Norway and goes at grade VII. To quote Jon "It's a perfect route. The first pitch is 30m of unprotectable dry tooling to a belay. After that you climb three hanging ice pillars to the next belay. This is followed by another 20m of dry tooling to the exit. What do you think?" - We paused for a moment, looked at each other and then made some mumbly about washing our hair.

Our time spent in Rjukan can only be described as the Dog's-Bxxxx's. Minimal organisation was required for an outstanding trip. The only downside to Norway is the cost - it is probably the most expensive country in Europe. This can be offset however by bringing your own food and by selling your duty frees in the local bars - 1. 5l of Famous Grouse goes for Kr 350 (£35) and 200 Marlboro easily shift for Kr 300 (£30) - allegedly!

Rjukan Fact File

Getting there: Gatwick to Oslo £166 rtn. Ferry Kiel to Oslo or Newcastle to Stavanger. Bus Oslo to Rjukan Kr 220 each way. If you take your own transport it must be fitted with studded winter tyres. "Rent a Wreck" car hire in Oslo may be able to offer cheap and basic vehicles - Tel No form International Enquiries.

Getting around: Local bus service is good and gets you all around the valley. If using your own transport there are roads and car parks close to all the climbing areas.



Stu MacDonald leading the final pitch of Vemorkfoss Ost IV.



Stu MacDonald leading the first pitch of Svaddefossen IV.

Rjukan has everything the modern ice climber could possibly desire including a multitude of superb routes, good weather, a kebab house, and women who look like Ulrika Johnsen. We will be back, oh yes, we will be back.

Location: Southern Norway, 100km west of Oslo.

Accommodation: Rjukan Hostel (Vandrehjem) Kr 100 per night. Tel/Fax +47 45 090527. Very little English spoken (may be wise to book through tourist info). Other accommodation such as guest houses and chalets are available. Contact Tourist Info for more information - Tel +47 35 091290, Fax 47 35 081575, E mail Tinnur@Telnnett. No.

Facilities: 2 supermarkets, 1 late night shop, Cinema (English films with Norge subtitles), Climbing shop, Hardware store, 2 banks (with ATMs).

Nightlife: 3 bars, 1 nightclub. Beer Kr 40 for 0.5L ! Nightclub entrance Kr 60 Saturday night. Beware of drinking games with the Rjukan ladies handball team. Fri/Sat the only busy nights in town.

Other attractions: Industrial Workers Museum at Vemork. Includes exhibition of the sabotage raids on the German Heavy Water plant there made famous by the film "The Heroes of Telemark" starring Kirk Douglas.

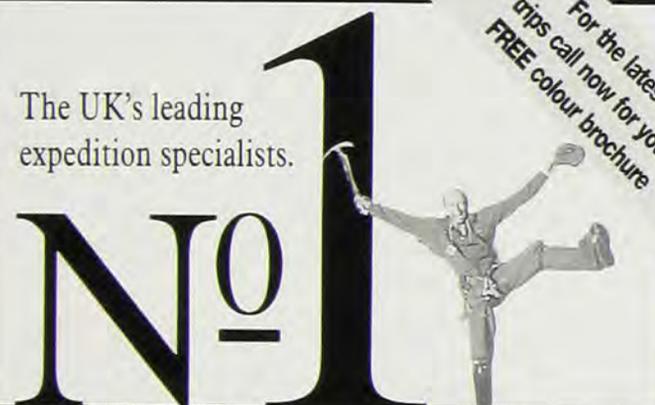
The Climbing: Mainly frozen waterfalls. Routes from 1-9 pitches. Both mountain routes and valley climbs. All have short walks in (< 1/2hr). Scottish grading system used in the local guidebook. Majority of routes grade IV-V but all grades available. Season Dec-Apr. Rjukan is becoming a strong rival to Hemsedal as the ice climbing centre of Norway.

Further Info: Climbing info from Jon Haukasveen (local ice guru), guidebook author and owner of Rjukan Fjellsport (climbing shop) Tel +47 35 091999.

Tourist info
Tel +47 35 091290.

Guidebooks available from both of the above. Lt Stu Macdonald
Tel Hawley Mil 3624 and Lt Mark Charles Hameln Mil 2414.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Paul Pritchard's

Deep Play a climber's odyssey from Llanberis to the big walls

BATON WICKS ISBN 1-898573-14-X £ 16.99

For those people interested in dedicating their life to pursuit of adventure in the vertical this Boardman Tasker Award winning book is essential reading. This compilation of essays leaves you in awe of Paul Prichard's climbing abilities and his dedication to his personal beliefs. He writes with a sharpness that can only have come from his profound experiences at the sharp end of a rope. Members of the armed forces will admire the strength of character that he demonstrates during the many life threatening situations he finds himself in as the common ground of experiences is shared. His playground is truly global as he describes climbing the world's greatest rock walls starting with Garhwal, Patagonia, Yosemite Valley, Baffin Island and ending up with the Trango Towers of the Karakoram. The book contains 16 high quality photographs to tempt you out of your armchair and into your harness. The overriding feeling that you are left with as you read, is one of astonishment that there are people out there living the life that we all, as climbers, dream of. I highly recommend this book, and the following short excerpt is just to wet your appetites.

"There is no more protection. I begin to shake, then I go beyond shaking and once again my mind enters that realm of depersonalisation. I move away from the rock and come back with a crash, at the end of the difficulties, retching about to puke. "

Mountaineering in Scotland/Undiscovered Scotland

By W. H. Murray

BATON WICKS ISBN 1-898573-23-9 £ 9.99

This book is a combination of the author's two Scottish mountaineering classics. There are no high tech ice tools to be seen in this timeless piece of literature. Bill Murray is one of the true pioneers of climbing in Scotland and his love for the hills floods out of the pages. The quality of his mountain day is not measured by the height of the grades nor the speed at which a route is completed but by the pure pleasure of adventure, and friendship, in the highlands. Whether it is ice climbing on Ben Nevis or scrambling on the Cuillin Ridge the description in his writing transports you into his world. If you have enjoyed any of the short articles by Paul Duke, the AMA's resident explorer of hidden Scotland, then you would love this book. There are several black and white photographs that make you feel as though you are the first person to have the privilege of seeing the route being pushed out. Equipped with your plus fours and tracoones all you need do is open the pages to share in the adventure.

Survey 250 Expedition Caught up in National Disaster

By WO2 (SSM) M.G. Jenkins FRGS RE

The drama and uncertainty of exploratory adventure caught us all by surprise when the effects of "El Nino" unleashed itself in terrifying fashion during our expedition to Chile. This weather phenomenon, which only occurs once every ten years or so, caused absolute chaos to the infrastructure of Chile during August last year and almost ruined our expedition before it really began!

Celebrating our 250th anniversary, Exercise CHILE APOGEE was a joint nation Military Survey mountaineering and surveying expedition to the remote Atacama desert in northern Chile. Endorsed by the Joint Service Expedition Trust, the 13 man Royal Engineer team planned to climb and survey Mount Ojos Del Salado (6884m), the highest active volcano in the world.

The team, led by WO2 Mick Jenkins (14 Indep Topo Sqn RE) were joined by freelance film cameraman John Miles, who was filming a documentary for discovery channel, and by two surveyors from the Chilean Army equivalent of Military Survey. The broader aims of mountaineering, surveying and exploring in the Atacama desert were all achieved but it was a very close call as we became stranded in the middle of Chile's worst national disaster for years! One of the major aims was to carry out an accurate survey of Ojos's summit to determine it's height which had been disputed for many years. A controversial claim by Argentina in 1994, stated that Pissis (6875m) was higher and therefore number 2 to Aconcagua in the western hemisphere. They had demoted Ojos to 6864m based on a satellite survey despite accurate theodolite readings by famous American mountaineer, Adams Carter in 1956, who confirmed 6884m. Seems to be a tad of nationalistic bias to me!

Devastation

We began our 1300km journey from Santiago in Toyota vehicles during the very beginning

of the deluge of torrential rain that hit Chile. It had been raining for some 60 hours and flooding was already evident as we drove north on what we expected to be a 14 hour journey to the town of Copiapo on the fringe of the desert proper. "El Nino" was of course to scupper our well laid plans formulated over the last 18 months. We had gone no further than 150 Km north in driving rain when we were halted by the "carabineros" (local police) at a checkpoint. Victor, our resolute Chilean associate, informed us that a bridge had collapsed and it would be two days before it was fixed. Effectively, the whole nation was cut in two as Chile has only one main "artery" road that joins the whole country - we of course were frustratingly in the wrong half!

Not to be deterred, we spent the next 7 hours searching for a bypass to this obstacle and felt sure our trusty 4 x 4 vehicles would get us through. Wrong! - Our reces lead us to precarious mountain roads whose fragile bridges had been washed away and landslides had caused devastation country wide. It became apparent that this was no ordinary storm and that we would be hard pushed to travel the next 1150km if the damage was countrywide! We slept and pondered our frustrating position alongside hundreds of other vehicles who were in the same "flooded" boat as ours. The police, convinced of our international film status, allowed us to view the dilapidated bridge which was now witnessing a temporary repair using a good old "bailey" bridge. Only one problem, the last of the decking had not arrived and was not due until ten that night. The expedition leader, and his deputy, WO1 Craig Burns (Competent bridgebuilder!) thrust themselves into negotiations with the site manager in the hope that they would allow us (as expert engineers!) to complete a makeshift finish to get our trucks over. Not a chance of course as the legal connotations of our actions ensured a swift denial!



Devastation on route.

We continued on our journey in the early hours next day joyous that we might just make it to the desert. The journey did not prove to be that simple and it was to play with our emotions for the next 48 hours. Our next obstacle was the sight of a tragic disaster where a bridge had been washed away, taking with it a lorry and their passengers who unfortunately died in the incident. We were again held at a checkpoint where we diligently convinced the authorities to allow us through. The rain and floods had by now subsided and we were able to negotiate a path through the flooding river to continue our journey - others had tried but failed and were now bogged in the banks of the swelling river. We eventually reached Copiapo 3 days after leaving Santiago witnessing complete devastation. Roads were simply washed away, railroads destroyed and landslides had caused destruction everywhere. The red cross and Army

were prominent throughout our journey assisting a stranded public. Some were trapped on the high mountain passes and some areas had seen more rainfall in the last 3 days than had fallen in 10 years. We were only one of a handful of 4x4 parties that had made it to the north, the rest of the population had to wait a further three days before temporary repairs were effected.

Desert and volcanoes

Already 3 days behind a very tight schedule, we drove from sea level to 3400m, passing through stunning panoramas of the world's driest desert. The extreme altitude took it's toll and we were forced to do everything at a very slow pace because of the debilitating thin air. We were now within striking distance of the Argentine border but still some 100km short of Ojos. The very low snow line caused us concern and it was evident that "El

Nino" had deposited vast dumps of snow on the Andes chain. Our Military Survey forefathers had previously visited this remote and inhospitable area in 1902. They had undertaken the massive task of delineating the Chile / Argentine border which had been, and still is, disputed. Under international remit Maj Hills RE carried out the topographic survey work in this, the remotest part of the Andes chain.

We set about our own survey tasks immediately as a means of acclimatisation. Our aim was to carry out geodetic GPS schemes to allow us to produce a rectified image map of the area using SPOT imagery. Cpl John Leighton and the two Chileans, Victor and Orlando, supervised the survey work which allowed us to establish an exchange of working practices and techniques with the Chileans. The small teams travelled far and wide across the desert whilst the leaders explored avenues of approach to Ojos only to be faced with 4/5 metre snowdrifts. Despite exploring every possibility, with vehicles constantly being "bogged" in the snow, it became obvious that the team would not reach Ojos. Throughout all this time, LCpl Dave Mothershaw (Digital Dave!) had been transmitting real time images and text onto our website. Our Expedition sponsors, Norsk Data of Newbury, designed the internet site and acquired a British telecom "Mobiq" satellite phone which allowed our viewers and sup-



Surveying in the Atacama Desert.

porters to monitor our daily progress throughout.

The survey and exploration was soon followed up by acclimatisation climbs on the nearby mountains and the team climbed three volcanoes in superb winter surroundings. It was a privilege to be climbing in one of the remotest of mountain terrains with no one else in hundreds of miles and right on the Argentine border! The mid winter of the southern hemisphere, coupled with the extraordinary weather of the time, caused us to change our major objective to the famous high altitude volcano of Copiapo peak (6,100m) some 50 Km away from our base at salar de la maricunga. This mountain was

famed for its inca remains and history of human sacrifices at its base. An exciting and nerve wracking battle against the harsh terrain saw us drive to within 15km of the summit and the initial view was one of enormity as we realised that this would be no easy ascent! "It is a magnificent mountain draped in its full winter coat giving a sense of apprehension"

Summit Fever

We only had 5 days in which to climb and survey the height of the peak and it was obvious that we would have to establish a number of camps on the hill from our base at 3800m. The mountain gave excellent winter

mountaineering albeit with its objective dangers of avalanche and rockfall. Two high camps were established at 4400m and 5000m and the 5 man summit team began their ascent on the 30 Aug 97 at 0500 hrs. They were battling against the driving Atacama winds in temperatures down to -25°C when the youngest soldier on the team had to be evacuated to the high camp because of the effects of hypothermia and frostbite. In true style, Victor cancelled his summit bid to unselfishly assist him off the mountain. LCpl Carl Burkes, LCpl Dave Mothershaw and John Miles reached the summit at 1450 hrs after a gruelling 10 hour climb. A GPS height survey was initiated and the team left the desert jubilant in achieving a great deal against all the odds.



Expedition team at Copiapo base camp.

The expedition was a huge success and gave dramatic adventure in one of the world's most remote regions. The excellent relations developed with the Chilean Army, who offered immense help and assistance, gave us particular satisfaction. The bond developed with the Chileans has resulted in an invitation to return to the Atacama in 1998 to finish off the business with Ojos and to prove once and for all that it is the 2nd highest in the Americas. The team celebrated the 250th anniversary of pioneering survey exploration in true tradition and the benefits gained by the soldiers will be there for years to come. That was our Drama in the Atacama!

Mount Everest

Submitted by Colonel Tim Finnegan MB FFOM L/RAMC, originally published in the *BMJ* Volume 316 January 1998, and reproduced with the kind permission of the *BMJ* Publishing Group.

A Deadly Playground

On 11 May 1997 five climbers died during their descent from Mount Everest on north ridge. Exactly one year and one day earlier eight people died during a storm below the summit. Seven more died later the same year, making 1996 the worst ever on Everest. As a doctor on a Norwegian Everest expedition, I partly witnessed and partly took part in rescue operations on the north side of the mountain where four climbers died. This was my sixth expedition to the Himalayas and my 12th to mountains above 5000 m. The incidents illustrate important medical and ethical aspects of high altitude climbing, and should be considered carefully by expedition doctors.

On 10 May 1996 three Indian climbers were overtaken by bad weather close to the summit and did not make it back to the camp that night. Early the next morning five climbers from another expedition headed for the summit. They met the first Indian climber alive on the north ridge below the most difficult part of the climb - the second step. He was reported to be moving slowly downwards. Despite obvious need for help, the team continued and met his two fellow climbers above the second step, still alive, but suffering from altitude sickness, exhaustion, and hypothermia. They were considered more or less beyond rescue. The team continued and reached the summit about 10 am. On their way back they verified the death one of the Indians. They could not see the second man, but assumed that he had fallen down the north face. The third climber was still alive further down the ridge. Too exhausted to give any help the climbers passed him by for a second time. A few hours later he died alone.

At the same time two members of a mixed expedition - climbers from different countries who did not know each other beforehand - left a third member alone in his tent at 7800 m. He was suffering from cerebral oedema, but his fellow climbers

did not realise his condition, and they themselves were exhausted and suffering from frostbite and severe retinal haemorrhage after an unsuccessful summit attempt without supplementary oxygen. The condition of the climber in the tent deteriorated and a rescue operation had to be arranged. The members of his expedition were, however, reluctant to help him, probably because such an exhaustive operation would reduce their own chances of reaching the summit. After being urged by our expedition leader, they brought him down. He was now also suffering from pulmonary oedema and severe frostbite, and was lucky to survive.

One week later another climber tried to climb without supplementary oxygen. Early in the morning on 18 May he had felt fine in his tent at 8300m. However, at noon he was unable to walk. His condition deteriorated rapidly and he was unconscious a few hours later. I was contacted immediately after my return from the summit and diagnosed severe high altitude cerebral oedema. He was given dexamethasone injections and our oxygen, but his condition worsened. Having been on the summit the same day, our group of four were too exhausted to carry him further down during the night. So we had to spend one more night at an extreme altitude without supplementary oxygen, thus increasing our own risk. The patient died in the early morning.

The problems that occurred were caused by a set of factors that together may be fatal. Hypoxia, hypothermia, hypoglycaemia, dehydration, and exhaustion may all occur at very high altitudes and may impair the climbers' ability to behave and think appropriately. Acute life threatening mountain sickness may follow. In addition, climbers often tend to underestimate symptoms and signs of acute mountain sickness. Scaling Everest without supplementary oxygen, which has become

more and more common, increases the risk considerably. The large number of climbers on the mountain may lead to a false feeling of safety and create bottlenecks on difficult parts of the climb. Group solidarity, which is important when rescue is needed, may be lacking on mixed expeditions. Some climbers pay up to £50 000 (\$80 000) to take part in commercial expeditions, making them more willing to push for the summit and perhaps take risks. The experience of some of these climbers is sometimes questionable.

But the most striking factor is the developing narrow mindedness of some climbers. During the preparations back home the climbers get more and more engaged in their expedition. Family and friends get less attention as the "day of departure" approaches. Then they move to a remote and isolated area concentrating only on one single objective - reaching the summit. If they meet other people, these are fellow climbers with the same goals, undergoing the same psychological changes. Their appearance may confirm the normality of the climbers' absurd behaviour, and a typical subculture is formed. The perspective of life may change, and some climbers become obsessed by their task. High on the mountain, the only things that matter are reaching the summit, keeping warm, and having enough oxygen. During such a mental change climbers may avoid helping each other, they

do not see descent as an alternative, they push to the summit too late, and eventually they die. It is explainable, but not acceptable, what we experienced on Everest in 1996. What can we expect from other climbers? To what extent should we as doctors risk our own and our fellow climbers' lives to rescue people high on the mountains by giving away our own oxygen? It is our tradition to help and do our best. In our case we were lucky, but one of our team had to spend three nights at 8300 m. We did not know if he would wake up the next morning. I felt that I had no choice, but if one of the others had suffered from severe mountain sickness the following day I would have been proved wrong.

When passing climbers who are sick or in danger on your way to the summit, you should always try to do something, even though it might seem hopeless and your own summit attempt has to be abandoned. To keep on climbing to the summit under such circumstances shows lack of humanity. It should not happen.

By Morten Rostrup, senior research fellow in emergency and intensive care medicine, Oslo.

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First Place: Descending from Mt McKinley at 12000ft. Martin Kitson



BEST MOUNTAINEERING CATEGORY

Third place: Looking cool climbing glacial ice! By Mark Hedge



The Rochefort Arete. By Paul Edwards



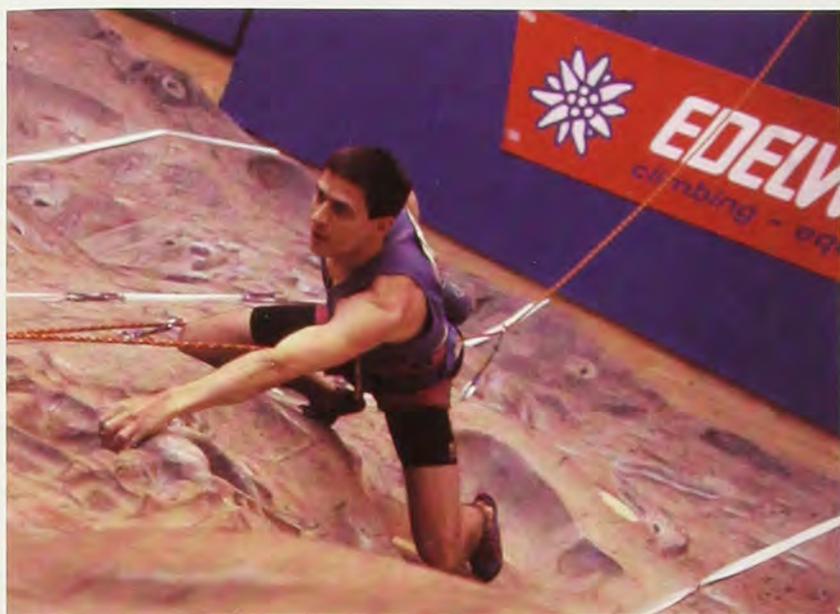
Mac MacKay guiding a rescue helicopter in to the casualty.
MacKay collection



BEST ROCK CLIMBING

Winner: Nathen Pike on Flying Buttress
From Nathen Pike

phic Competition rs 1998



Competitor under pressure in the 1997 Army Sports Climbing Competition. By Martin Kitson



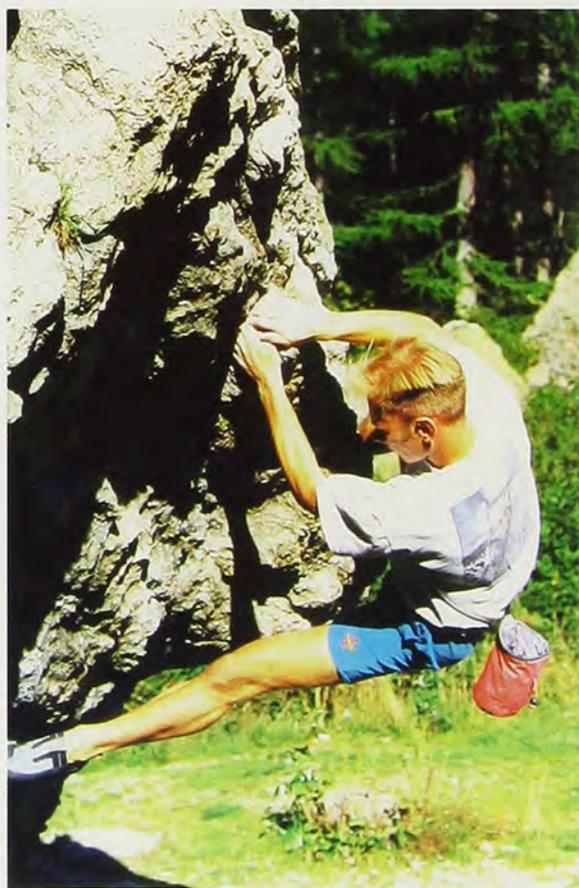
BEST BLACK & WHITE CATEGORY

Winner: *The Cioch Nose, Apple Cross, Torridon.*
Hand printed by Leanne Callaghan.
Also took 2nd and 3rd place in category.



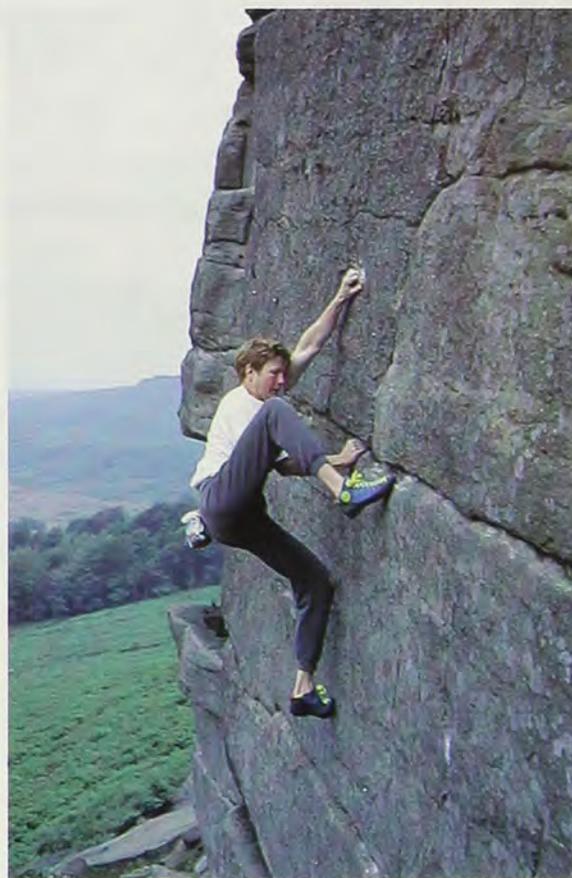
BEST ROCK CLIMBING CATEGORY

Buttress Direct HVS 5b, Stanage Edge.
Ben Pike collection



BEST ROCK CLIMBING CATEGORY

Third place: *Bouldering in the Chamonix valley.* By Mark Hedge



Richard White soloing *Desperation E2 5c Stanage Edge.*
Steve Willson Collection

The Aiguille Rochefort

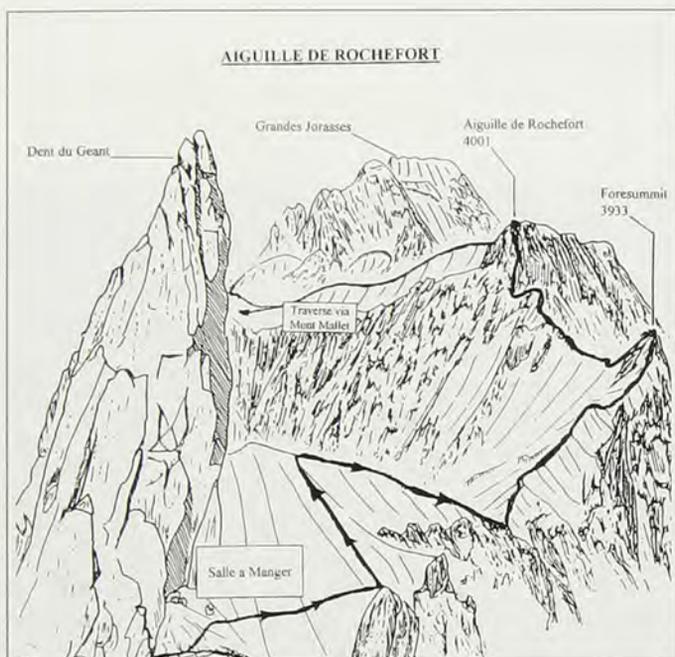
A route review by Capt Paul Edwards

Being a mere 4001 metres high, and graded "Facile" the serious alpinist would probably hardly give the Aiguille Rochefort a second glance, except perhaps if he has to "tick it" in his quest to complete all the 4000 metre peaks. It is however an outstanding peak for veteran and novice alike, and makes an excellent excursion whatever grade you aspire to climb at.

Similar in style to the Midi - Plan traverse, although shorter and easier, the Aiguille Rochefort is a splendid proposition. The quality of the route combined with its accessibility make it one of the most popular routes in the French Alps. If you are seeking solitude on the ridge however, you must make an early start from the Torino hut and aim to complete the approach to the Salle a Manger before dawn.

The approach itself is straight forward, and a brisk walk across (hopefully) frozen ground will lead to a small cirque below the Dent du Geant. Above it a short couloir on the left marks the easiest line. The bergschrund is rarely difficult and the rocky ground above the couloir is not too steep, although it is somewhat loose, giving rise to considerable danger from stone fall if there are many parties above of you.

If you have started early and made good time, hopefully you will arrive alone at the Salle a Manger at dawn. From this large flat spot the Rochefort Arete stretches away in breath taking magnificence. This is not the time to stop for long however, and a short snack and a picture should suffice as the hordes from the first cable car will be hot on your heels.



In good conditions the ridge will consist of a long, snaking, knife edge ridge with somewhat gripping drops on either side.

Inevitably a well-trodden path will mark the route and if snow conditions allow it the foresummit will be underfoot in a

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Paul and Stu at the Torino Hut for tea and medals.



- A 4000 Metre Peak Before Lunch

little over thirty minutes. The second and equally inspiring section of ridge soon leads to the rocky pinnacle of the Aiguille Rochefort. One modestly difficult move (I would be reluctant to solo it in big boots!) allows access to the shattered rocks above and thence to the summit.

Unless you have planned to traverse the mountain, (by far the most aesthetically pleasing option) you will now face the somewhat dismaying prospect of retracing your steps. I say dismaying because the throng of people coming in the opposite direction makes the experience somewhat akin to crossing London Bridge in the wrong direction at rush hour. Do not delay your departure as the situation only gets worse with many parties attempting the traverse quite late in the day.

With luck, patience and an iron nerve you should find yourself back at the Salle a Manger between nine and ten O'clock. Many parties now combine the



Capt Paul Edwards on the summit of the Aiguille de Rochefort.

Aiguille Rochefort with the Ordinary route on the Dent du Geant, which does not come into the sun before ten in the morning. However if this is not your intent it is probably best not to linger here for too long. The majority of parties will now

be traversing the ridge and this is an opportunity to descend to the glacier with little danger from climbers above you.

During the short downhill plod across the glacier you get an excellent view of the other

peaks that are easily accessed from the Torino hut such as Tour Ronde, the Grand Capucin, Mont Maudit and Mont Blanc du Tacal. You should reach the hut in time to plan your next summit over a long lunch

Avalanche Information Web Sites

Weissfluhjoch-Davos

<http://www.slf.ch/slf.html>

Swiss Avalanche Institute.

University of Calgary

<http://casual.enci.ucalgary.ca/users/facuity/johnston/arps.html>

Scottish Avalanche Information

<http://www.sais.gov.uk/>

Avalanche forecasts and weather.

British Mountaineering Club

<http://www.thebmc.co.uk/>

Scottish Mountaineering Club

<http://www.smc.org.uk/smc/>

Cyberspace Snow and Avalanche

<http://www.csac.org/>

Links to many info centres.

Canadian Avalanche Association

<http://www.islandnet.com/snow/>

Nova Online

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/avalanche/>

Public television documentary on avalanches.

Northwest Weather and Avalanche

<http://www.nwac.noaa.gov/>

Colorado Avalanche Association

<http://www.netway.net/caic/>

Good statistics, weather, forecasts, links.

Westwide Avalanche Network

<http://www.avalanche.org/>

Weather, links, accidents.

Electron Microscopy of Snow Crystals

<http://www.lpsi.barc.usda.gov/emusnow/>

Couloir Magazine Online

<http://www.couloir-mag.com/>

Many good links to Avalanche Centres.

Meteo France

<http://www.meteo.fr/>

French Ski Information

<http://www.nsl.rmcnet.fr/gazoline/accueil>

Snow Fun on Mera

By Major Tim Watts

One of the most morale sapping remarks which can be made on a long mountain walk is, "come on, lads, just over the next ridge and we'll be nearly halfway". It may sound a little grander, but, "... and from there we'll have clear views of Everest" turned out, on Exercise Mera Mercury, to be a phrase from the same stable - it works once; after that, the foolhardy optimist is better served by a shut trap. The aim was to climb Mera Peak, one of those 'trekking peak' beasts, whose category suggests something taken in one's stride en route to nobler things. Mera is the highest of these in Nepal, at 6476m/21,247ft (or 6654m depending on which account you believe, or the bluff needed in the bar at the time). It is, also, genuinely straightforward, in that ropes and ironmongery are only really needed in the

unlikely event of amusement at crevasses, or, occasionally where a fixed rope would help confidence. But it is fairly big and remote, and the weather remains in command throughout. This was a joint venture between 210 Signal Squadron from Colchester, and 218 Signal Squadron from Londonderry and took place in late October to early November 1997.

Our team of twelve (nine young novices, one youngish novice and two ageing confidence tricksters) stared, wide-eyed, down the central aisle of the Twin Otter and out through the cockpit, wondering whether the pilot intended landing the aircraft using wheels, or sticking it into the ground like an errant dart. Somehow, a few seconds later, we stumbled out, buttocks still tightly clenched, on to the gravel surface which is Lukla airstrip, perched some 2000ft

above the Dudh Kosi, and into the adjacent Yeti Lodge. There then followed an industrial-grade kit reorganisation, a bowl of noodles, and straight on our way.

We only had 16 days, and we wanted to acclimatise as well as possible, and still have enough energy to ensure everyone had a good chance of reaching the summit. So we were 'fully supported' by a platoon or so of local staff, led by the charismatic Sirdar, Dorje Sherpa. Dorje had been one of 'Chrissy Bonny's' climbing Sherpas on Everest in 1975, and had lost the last 2 knuckles of all his fingers to frostbite on Dhaulagiri in the 80s, but could still work an axe pretty well. The remainder of the staff cooked, carried and cared for us, making sure that we were well and hygienically fed, and able to benefit from the challenge as much as

possible. There are two other good reasons for taking on staff on an expedition like this (aside from the rules): first, tourism is just about Nepal's only source of income and at an individual level, the choice is often between lugging loads around the hills or begging in the smog of Kathmandu, and, second, the cultural link is made through chatting with the Sherpas, Rais, Tamangs and so on, and the true difference between the Hinku valley and Langdale can be milked. A cup of tea in bed in the morning is pretty welcome too. But trek staff bring responsibilities; the expedition leader is their leader too and, with the Sirdar in support, is responsible for their safety and health.

For the following 5 days we trekked with one rest day South to a 3200m pass, down into the quiet and pretty empty Hinku Valley, up the other side and



Photo: Andy Cave

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Peak



Ropework practice at 5100m, the camp at Khare far below.

North along the high Surkie ridge to an impressive valley close to one of Nepal's many 'Panch Pokhri'. Panch Pokhri means Five Lakes, but the name seems to be assigned to any collection of puddles and lakes. Many have religious significance; this one is the site of an annual Hindu Shivaite pilgrimage and is consequently festooned with rusting tridents. The surroundings during this approach march comprised forests of rhododendrons, pine, and at the lower elevations, thick, lush, damp jungle. Very occasionally we were rewarded with glimpses of snow capped peaks. The weather had been changeable but comfortable hitherto, aside from the odd hail storm and, now at 4300m, everyone was strong and well.

Throughout this time, we were in genuinely remote country, and saw almost no-one. The only means of effecting any form of air evacuation would have been to have walked back to Lukla, at least 2 days away, and 'phoned for a helicopter; assuming, of course that a suitable landing site and weather were available. Another form of 'evacuation' was much easier and quicker to achieve, indeed difficult to stop, as one of the team discovered having consumed some stream water, albeit puritabbed, in preference

to waiting another half hour for the boiled stuff.

The following day we descended back to the floor of the Hinku and camped in an eerie clearing with a pre-historic feel. A few braves dipped in the icy Hinku river, there was the normal frenzy of sock washing, and the second appearance of the traditional trek frisbee. That night the skies opened, and we woke up to a thick covering of wet snow which was still falling heavily. This made for a fairly miserable day for 'members' and porters alike (and a number of grazing yaks whose dank, matted coats were caked in ice), and it was with some relief that we eventually crowded into a smoke-filled cattle shed cum tea-house at the small village of Tangnag which marks the boundary between the benign valley environment and the glaciers beyond.

We awoke the next morning in a different place. The sky was blue, the air clear, and we were among dramatic, snow covered mountains. Blue-tinted hanging glaciers, ice falls, dramatic, soaring, black rock pyramids and sweeping ridges of moraine dominated the views. Morale elevated, we set off through the snow, against the background of the towering Tangnag peak and Kusum Kanguru, to the small

collection of huts at Khare (4900m) and spent the next day there acclimatising, reorganising, repairing and fitting equipment. Thankfully the snow covered what was is undoubtedly an 'area-effect' khazi. In the afternoon we climbed up to a ridge at 5100m for some practice with axes, ropes, harnesses and crampons in spectacular surroundings.

One team member who was not acclimatising well, descended the next morning to Tangnag and fully recovered within 24 hours. The rest of us set off, again in fine weather to the foot of the Mera Glacier, donned crampons, and steadily climbed to the Mera La, a glaciated pass at 5415m, with the South-East face of Kang Taiga behind us as we walked. We resisted the

temptation to use the popular, flat, but very exposed saddle itself as a camp site and descended the other side, with views towards Chamlang, to a sheltered spot, where we again set about clearing niches of snow for the tents. Having decided to rely on sherpa support throughout, it was becoming clear that their welfare and ability to operate in poor weather, uncharacteristic of the season, were becoming the principal factors affecting our progress.

Alto Cirrus that evening heralded a return to poor weather the following morning, and we regained the La, wreathed in low cloud and a freshening wind. The route, so clear the previous day to a high camp at 5800m (from which there would

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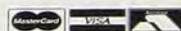
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have been grand views of Everest. . . .), was buried under soft snow, and we called a council of war at the centre of the La to decide the next steps. Four members descended from there to Khare. The remainder roped up and set off through the featureless white, only just able to see the man in front, with the horizon lost to the snow and cloud, and the frustration of sinking every few steps into thigh-deep drifts. Despite the number of other groups on the hill, all of whom seemed mysteriously to have disappeared, and its technical straightforwardness, no-one had climbed Mera in the preceding 10 days because of the heavy snow and avalanche danger above high camp. And we weren't about to break the duck. After an hour, during which we had gained less than 50m, in conditions where the porters, who would have assisted as far as High Camp, could not safely have followed, we called it a day and trudged miserably back to Khare. There was now real, although as it transpired unfounded, concern over the state of the pass we would have to cross to return to Lukla, and whether flying would be possible in and out when we got there. With only one day in hand the decision was taken to descend the following morning.

On the way down we picked up stories of other groups' adventures. One team, following our route a few days behind us had suffered a porter mutiny; they had done a bunk with all the team equipment including tents and sleeping bags. That team eventually reformed and spent 4 days fighting through pathless jungle to avoid the exposed path the porters had refused to follow (and one fellow was air-evacuated having been struck on the head by a rock). Another team had been stranded in the snow for several days at the Amphu Lhabsa, again with no food, and we passed another who were marching up the hill, stout of heart and happy - we met their porters with all their equipment a whole day later. We also chatted with a very tall New Zealander, with a debilitating chest infection, who was being carried, Penny-for-the-Guy-like, with his legs dangling over the rim, in a basket on a porter's back. Sad I suppose, but this was all pretty good for our morale, and no-one from

these incidents came to any harm. But two porters had died because of the conditions within a few days in the same area, one on the Amphu Lhabsa, and one on the same route as us. Dorje received an enthusiastic reception when we returned to Lukla; word had reached the town, and as far as Kathmandu, that he too had died on trek.

After a day of sleet, we broke through the cloud to cold clear conditions and a fine sunset just under our last pass, the Zatr-wala, at 4600m. We crossed the La the next day, and descended steeply through the snow on the other side, having fixed ropes for the porters, and made Lukla by about 5 pm. After ensuring we had sampled all the local forms of liquid sustenance and had danced with, sung with, narrowly avoided fighting with, and tipped the sherpa crew, we settled into some of Lukla's finest 50p per night rooms. Exploring Lukla is well worth it, but does not take long, and we soon laagered up, so to speak, by the edge of the airstrip the next day, watched people, planes, cattle and Russian surplus helicopters come and go. We climbed, or rather were shoe-horned into a 'Hip' ourselves the next afternoon and were soon back in Kathmandu for a shower and a day of temples, stupas, saddhus, burning ghats, snake charmers, rickshaws, souvenir shopping and over indulgence. Then back on to one of PIA's finest and back to Blighty via an overnight stop at, and tour of the delights of, Karachi.

We did not make the summit, and there was no hearty back-slapping. But mountaineering and travelling in Nepal, coping with the cultural and sensory invasion which defines perhaps the most open and colourful of third world countries, the extremes of crossing rope suspension bridges and climbing the plunging, jungle-covered valley sides, striking out across barren moraine and glaciers in the heart of the highest mountain range there is, and sampling the richness both of quiet, medieval villages and the shout of Kathmandu made for a challenging and affecting time.

AMA MILLENNIUM EXPEDITION ALPS 2000

By Capt 'Mac' MacKay APTC

INTRODUCTION

Exercise AMA ALPS 2000 is the official AMA MILLENNIUM EXPEDITION to be held during the summer of the year 2000 which will be relatively inexpensive, easy to set up and execute. It will also offer the opportunity for high membership participation and allow less experienced members an introduction to alpine climbing.

The Alps have 61 individual summits above 4000 meters which have been climbed in one summer season by the same individuals, so this proposal will not be a first but nevertheless will be a worthwhile and achievable project with current available resources.

AIM

The aim is to complete all 61 summits between June to September of the year 2000 and compile a record of the routes undertaken which will be published as an official AMA guide book.

OUTLINE PLAN

The exercise will be set-up and co-ordinated by Capt Mac Mackay and will be organised into 3 teams who will operate independently in the following areas:

Mont Blanc, to include Grand Paradiso & Barre des Ecrins.
Bernese Alps, to include Piz Bernina.
Pennine Alps & Monte Rosa Group.

THE WAY AHEAD

Planning is well underway and the next stage is to form a Sub Committee comprising of the Co-ordinator, Guide Book Compiler and 3 Exercise Leaders who would take on the role of OIC of the following exercises and work independently under their own ATFA clearance:

Ex AMA 2000 Monte Blanc.
Ex AMA 2000 Bernese.
Ex AMA 2000 Pennine.

TEAM SELECTION

When the Sub Committee has been established an application form for team members will be published in the next AMA Newsletter.

LEADER SELECTION

Applications are invited from qualified and experienced leaders (must hold minimum of ML winter) who wish to become part of this millennium project and should be sent to; Capt Mac Mackay (AMA ALPS 2000) HQ Coy, ATR (Lichfield), Whittington Bks, LICHFIELD, Staffs, WS14 9PY.

British Services Kangchenjunga Expedition 2000 (BSKE 2000)

BSKE 2000 takes place pre-monsoon in the year 2000, and will comprise 2 teams of climbers: a Main Team, who will attempt Kangchenjunga (8568m) via the South West Face; and a Junior Team, who will attempt a less demanding peak in the same area.

The Expedition. The expedition will provide Servicemen or women with the opportunity to develop their self-reliance, endurance, courage, teamwork and self-respect by experiencing the excitement, the fear and the exhaustion of climbing in the world's highest places. Kangchenjunga, the 3rd highest mountain in the world, is one of the most challenging of the fourteen 8000m peaks. It has had relatively few ascents, and has never been climbed by a British Services Expedition - although it should be noted, of

course, that our President, Tony Streater reached the summit in the first successful expedition. Its position at the extreme East of the Himalayas ensures that it receives more precipitation than the other major peaks, and it bears the full brunt of the monsoon. It has no easy routes, all its faces being objectively dangerous and its ridges long and hard. The expedition will undoubtedly be the most gruelling test for the participants. The expedition will comply with a code of conduct to minimise impact on the environment.

The Teams. Lieutenant Commander Steve Jackson FRGS RN, CHAIRMAN RNRMMC, will lead the expedition. Successful applicants for both teams, drawn from across the services, will be fit, have a sense of humour and demonstrate

resourcefulness, commitment, dedication and, above all, compatibility.

The Main Team. For safety reasons, the Main Team of 14 climbers will consist of a cadre with previous experience of extreme high altitude mountaineering. To this cadre will be added climbers of proven climbing ability in the European Alps or other greater ranges. Accordingly, experienced mountaineers of either sex with proven mountaineering ability and who are AMA members are eligible to apply for a place in the Main Team

The Junior Team. The Junior Team will have a leader and a deputy, who will be qualified as above, plus a minimum JSME(L/W) / ML(W). The Junior Team will be involved in the same training and prepara-

tion as the Main Team and will be led by suitably experienced leaders. Young servicemen or women with limited mountaineering experience will be eligible to apply. If not already members of the AMA, Army personnel will be expected to join.

The Programme. The Programme for the expedition will be based on an assumed 10 weeks for the Main Party and 6 weeks for the Junior Team. Departure from UK will be in late March 2000. The provisional programme is shown below.

Main Team		Junior Team	
Day 1	Fly to Kathmandu	Days 1 - 17	As Main Team
2 - 3	Kathmandu	18 - 32	Climb peak
4	Fly to Taplejung	33 - 39	Walk out to Taplejung
5 - 8	Commence walk-in: Taplejung to Ghunsa	40	Fly to Kathmandu
9 - 16	Ghunsa to Base Camp (Yallung Glacier)	41	Spare in Kathmandu
17 - 57	Climb peak	42	Fly to UK
58	Return to Base Camp		
59 - 65	Walk out to Taplejung		
66	Fly to Kathmandu		
57 - 69	Spare in Kathmandu		
70	Fly to UK		



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L'été est

By Roger S. D. Smith

I decided to break with routine in the summer of 1997 and instead of organising my usual annual AT expedition with CCF cadets I planned to indulge myself, in the company of my son Richard, with a 'private' trip to the Alps instead. Following the excited anticipation of a "hassle-free" journey into Europe we were reliably informed on our arrival in early July that the Valais area of the Pennine Alps was experiencing its worst weather of the century! The Swiss meteo frequently issued the statement "L'été est malade" which summed the situation up admirably.

Not surprisingly the routes we'd been dreaming of in the preceding months were not in condition and were unlikely to become so in the time we had available. The day after our arrival at Les Hauderes in Val

d'Herens was forecast to be fine until mid-afternoon so we chose the short West-South-West Ridge of the Petite Dent de Veisivi as a "warm up". It gave us eight hours of pleasant acclimatisation and some grade II climbing. However our descent of the summit rocks coincided with the arrival of the electrical precursor to the afternoon storms. This gave us an alarming moment or two when the ski poles, attached to the side of my rucksack, hummed and discharged into my lumbar region with a pronounced shock! All around us the rocks of the summit ridge crackled into life and even raised fingers tingled and noisily attracted charge. Our descent to open flatter ground two rope lengths down the ridge was remarkably rapid and was followed by drier and brighter conditions which stayed with us until we reached the car at 3.00

pm when the heavens really opened.

In the week that followed the skies seldom cleared save for a thirty-six hour window in which we attempted the Original Route on Mont Blanc. We were poised at the Grand Mulet Hut on the evening of 22nd July with a forecast predicting the arrival of another front the following afternoon. We were one of the three parties that set out at 1.00 am in extraordinarily warm conditions. Six-and-a-half hours later we reached the Col de Dome (4237m) at precisely the same time as the premature frontal system. I have never experienced such instantaneous 'white-out' conditions anywhere and with little delay we retraced our freshly covered tracks with difficulty - the similarities to the Cairngorms in February were uncanny!

It was obvious from this experience and two more wet days that we were more likely to be successful with rock routes and that is how we found ourselves back in the Val d'Herens in the next 'weather window' attempting the 'classic' West face route of the Aiguille de la Tsa (Assez Difficile) which dominates the east side of the Valley high above the village of Arolla.

The morning was damp and overcast and spent in camp at Les Hauderes; the brighter and drier afternoon was spent 'warming up' on some of the grade V and V+ routes on the commendable road side Section Pont crag just below Evolène and the glorious evening that followed provided ideal conditions to complete the one-and-a-half-hour walk to the Cabane de la Tsa (2607m). At 6 am next morning we started hopping

Richard Smith on WSW ridge of Petite Dent de Veisivi



Malade

over the moraine boulders adjacent to the water pipe towards the base of the western flanks of the Aiguille which we reached in two hours. We roped up and for the next couple of hours moved together placing occasional pieces of protection until we were beneath the 'slender gendarme' referred to in the guide. We were pleased with our route finding hitherto and so were startled when our progress was checked when the seemingly sound rocks that were supporting all my weight decided to give away. Fortunately, I stayed put but a couple of large "suitcases full" of rock set off with gravity towards Richard 25m below. After establishing he had escaped this intrusion into his life unscathed I rapidly tied myself into a multiple belay of Friends and nuts, detected that I had an extreme 'adrenaline-dried' mouth and throat and brought him up to the relative safety of my recently excavated stance! I recollect that from this point onwards we climbed in pitches!

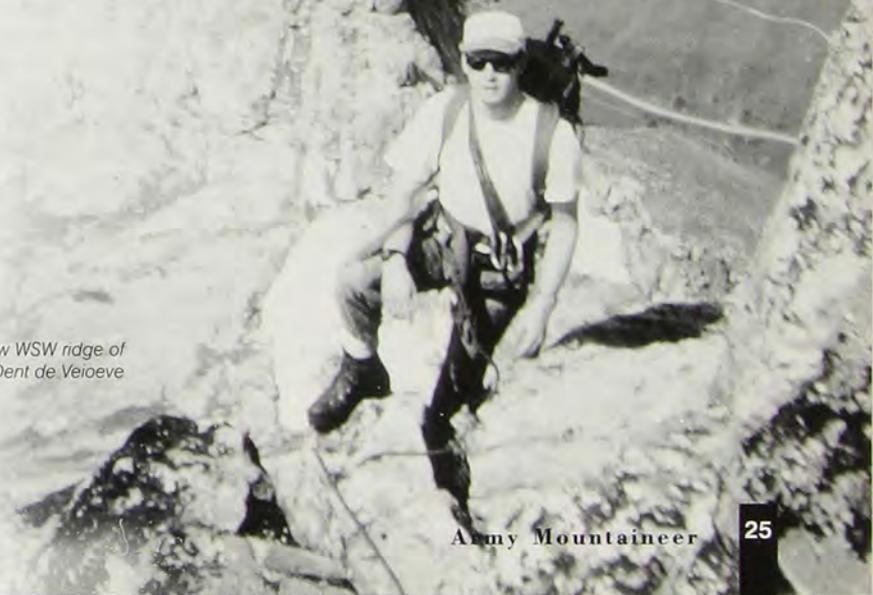
Just above this point the route traverses beneath a small snow patch which over previous days had melted. However, in this morning's shade it presented Richard with a entertaining pitch of iced-up holds which heralded the start of the 'good' climbing. We shared the leading of the half dozen quality pitches that followed, the most memorable were the 'brown chimney' (a shallow groove!), the 40 metre 'staircase', the exposed but straight forward 'Passage de Cheville' - which really did resemble a row of wooden pegs, and the very exposed traverse - at about severe standard - to the relative safety of the top pitch of the East flank route complete with magnificent vies of Dent

Blanche and the Matterhorn. We 'topped out' at about 4 pm - eight hours after leaving the Hut. Memories of multiple anchor belays, lumps of airborne rock and exposure faded as we abseiled down the East face route in two rope lengths and reached the relative safety of the sun warmed wet and very soft snow trail leading off to the Bertol Hut. After two hours of walking through slush and over a number of fresh avalanche debris piles we took a short break at the hut before descending by impromptu glissades and high speed boulder hopping to our car parked in Arolla.

The next morning we woke to overcast skies and more rain! That weather window was now closed ... and unfortunately we had run out of time to wait for any more to open!

Lt Roger S. D. Smith is an MIC holder and CCF Officer at Malvern College with responsibility for Adventurous Training. He has led expeditions to Iceland, Greenland, Scandinavia, the Andes and Himalaya and has made frequent visits to the Alps since 1964 - including twelve seasons in the Val d'Herens in the Pennine Alps.

Richard Smith on Col below WSW ridge of Petit Dent de Veioeve



Only Maddogs &

By SUO Alasdair Steele & OCdt Terry Carr

Those of you that have either worked for, or been part of, a UOTC will be well aware of how the rigors of student life lends itself to expeditioning. It was with this in mind that, late in July, a group of OCdt's set off for the wilds of the Cote d'Azur!

Ex Tartan Toulon consisted of nine members of City of Edinburgh Universities Officer Training Corps (two instructors and seven students). We were also extremely fortunate to have the help of Major Fergus Murray (Fettes College CCF) MIA and Lt Boyle (RRW) RLT. This meant we had an excellent student/instructor ratio and as the fortnight progressed, this allowed us invaluable flexibility.

Of the seven students on the exped, only a couple had any experience and that was limited to indoor wall sessions. Broadly speaking therefore, the aims of the expedition were to provide the students with the necessary experience and interest for them to continue climbing. Our objectives were therefore four fold:

- To teach students the basics of safe belaying and rope management.
- To help students improve their technical ability.
- To give all the skill and confidence to lead single pitch routes.
- Through multi-pitch climbing, give individuals an insight into the management and exposure of longer routes and multiple abseil descents.

Having driven constantly for 28 hours we finally found our campsite somewhere between Ollioules and La Seyne-sur-mer. A look of horror swept over our neighbours faces as we arrived. A chorus of, 'football's

coming home. . . ' probably would have finished it for them, but they soon relaxed. Naturally, the first thing anyone wanted to do after such a long journey was to go swimming. . . which we did! By the time we'd discovered that the pool was strictly off limits after nine it was too late... we'd made our entrance!

The position of the campsite was ideal for the areas in which we'd chosen to climb in the first week since they were all within half an hours drive. Due to the strong July sun we initially took a 'siesta' approach to our climbing, with morning and evening sessions. However it didn't take long to realise that 'only maddogs' venture out in the morning sun! After that we decided to stick to climbing between 1400 hrs and dusk.

The first area we went to, after numerous wrong turnings, was Baou. A limestone sports climber's paradise, with enough jugs and cracks to keep you aroused for days! Baou is a split level crag, with well over 200 routes from F3c to 7a, all in a mountain setting looking out over Toulon and the Mediterranean. This proved an excellent introductory crag and it wasn't long before the students had grasped the basics - such as how to pose properly for photos!

The setting of the second area visited, while only fifteen minutes away, was entirely different. In a valley behind Toulon, the vast limestone walls of Cimai soar out of the trees. The climbing too is very different. With the rock smoother than at Baou, Cimai tends to offer more technical climbing. Nevertheless there was still enough of the lower grades to allow us to run an introduction to leading. The sheer height of the crag also means that it offered several classic multi-pitch routes up to about VS F5b/c. Because of the variety at Cimai we spent



OCdt Carr (JSRL) at Buoux.

the majority of the first week there. By then it had almost got to the point where the students abilities had come on so much that the instructors were soon going to have to find alternative ways to set up routes - like a big ladder!

On the day off the Instructors went climbing, while the remainder when to the beach. Although the WOCdts weren't quite as 'liberated' as the locals, apparently the scenery was still great!

The second week brought more multi-pitch and lead work and a whole new area. While some distance from Toulon, Buoux was an excellent outing! In the 80's a mecca for extreme sports climbing, Buoux lies in the heart of the Luberon valley and while there are comparatively few 'lower' grades there was still

plenty in the F5c, 6a, 6b grade to keep a group occupied. Because the rock is calcareous molass (limestone with a sandstone covering), the style of climbing here was once again very different with delicate balancy moves the order of the day. The number of classic routes combined with altitude and shade given by the trees that line the valley, made the area well worth the drive.

By the end of the fortnight we were literally driven out of camp by the only rain of the whole exped. Justly proud of our exploits. It should be said not all involved climbing!

Scotsman...

South of France - Summary notes

The Areas

- Campsite** Mer des Pierrdon
Campusun
83110
Sanary-sur-Mer
Fax: 04 94 74 2502
- Baou** 245 routes; F3c-7c, 25-90m, the majority are single pitch.
Rock: cretaceous limestone.
Style: different sectors, some pumpy and over hanging while others are delicate.
Distance to road: 10 min walk.
- Cimai** 200 routes; 50 of which F4b-6a, some classic 4 pitch climbs.
Rock: limestone.
Style: bold and technical.
Distance to road: 5 min walk.
- Buoux** 300+ routes; only about 15 are less than F6a, 20m-100m
Rock: calcareous molass.
Style: technique rather than power!, very delicate.
Distance from road: 5 min walk.
Distance from Ollioules: 1&3/4 hour drive.

As well as these three principle areas; Faron Lierres, Destel and Coudon are also worth a look if you have time.

Other Areas

Les Calanques

One area we had planned to visit but didn't (due to the extreme heat) was En Vau, in the Calanques Massif. This Massif boasts 15 km, between Marseilles and Toulon, of white cliffs and rocky coves (some of which require 40 min walk-in's or passage by boat). The number of bolted routes varies depending on the specific area, allowing scope for many more traditional lines. Because of this and the restrictions in the summer (see below) this is perhaps not as popular as other areas, however it does offer some fantastic atmospheric multipitch climbing (as high as 500m). The most notable areas are Socle de la Candelle and Le Cret St. Michel.

Around Aix-en-Provence

Those intent on staying inland for harder climbs may consider Verdon and Montagne St Victoire - both easily reached from Aix-en-Provence. Together with the Callanques, these are the three largest low-level limestone massif's in France.

Other points

Climate - Most of the crags we visited face SE, and hence got the full heat of the morning sun. This meant climbing was only really possible from 1400 hrs onwards. Indeed some entire areas are closed for the summer months e. g. Coudon, Montaigne St.



Major Murray and SUO Steele (JSRL) high up on a belay stance at Cimai

Victoire and much of the Calanques due to the risk of fire. Advice from the Tourist information suggested that climbing was possible all year round apart from February, however it may be best to avoid mid June through mid September as well if you rather visit some of the larger areas.

Travel - Having driven, we feel there are a number of points worth making:

- toll's: for the drive down and travel around the area for two weeks our total expenditure on tolls came to £267 for a minibus and van (the latter attracting a higher commercial rate).
- theft: our window was smashed once, the thief looking for keys, be very careful about this.
- the French drive like nutters!!!

Useful references

Internet

For those planning Exped's to any area a very useful starting point for initial info and further references is the Cotswold Camping Internet Site. This has links to pages all over the world (this can be accessed at; <http://www.cotswold.co.uk/>). Of particular use there was the French Climbing Federation (FFME) page (<http://www.lps.u-psud.fr/cosiroc/>).

Guide Books

Buoux, Duret P

Escalades autour de Toulon, Delpy J: ISBN 2 - 9510409 - 3 - 8 - Ed 1997/1998

Les Calanques, Bernard G et al; ISBN 2-909132-02-1.

Exercise Island

By Sgt Dave Bunting APTC

Exercise Members: WO2 Ewen Martin APTC - Leader, Sgt Dave Bunting APTC, Sgt Keith Jenns APTC, Mr Andy Bunting, Civilian

We all have ambitions and just like any dedicated runner would want to run a marathon, so any dedicated mountaineer would want to go to Everest and, if possible, climb it to its summit. For our small 3 man team from the British Alpine Centre (Bavaria), plus one attached civilian, this, however, was not realistically possible. As we only had one month off, we decided on the next best option, going to see Everest from the base camp area and attempt a more realistic peak. Island Peak was chosen at a height of 6195m.

The idea sprang from an enthusiastic conversation, but by the time a plan was outlined and the Commandant had said yes, we had left it too late to apply, so were refused a military expedition status.

Undeterred, we decided to go without military backing and attempt to raise sponsorship money. Many letters were written with little comeback received, until close to our departure date when several companies agreed to help us in some way, mainly with equipment, with a little money forthcoming.

So with 2 last hectic weeks we were packed up and ready to go.

Top Tips for Planning

- a. Transit through India requires a full visa.
- b. Book flights to Kathmandu well in advance.
- c. Choose your team firstly for their character, not ability. A month or more in each others pockets is a long time.
- d. Contact a trekking company in Kathmandu prior to leaving. They can start arranging a guide, permits and internal flights etc.
- e. Avoid overland India prior to Nepal, it's stressful!
- g. Oct/Nov is a very busy month in Nepal.

Kathmandu

After an eventful trip via Bombay, we were over the moon to reach Kathmandu. Outside the airport taxis galore offered to lead you automatically to a suitable hotel. Hotel Harharah was our choice and we recommend it, cheap and cheerful!

The following two days were spent in Kathmandu organising our adventure, purchasing last minute essentials and soaking up the amazing atmosphere of this unique capital city. We

teamed up with the guide from my last trip to Nepal and on mountain bikes went sightseeing.

The two days gave us time enough to organise things and all was ready to leave for our adventure.

Top Tips for Kathmandu

- a. Best way to get around is mountain bikes.
- b. The Monkey temple (Pasuptinath) is a top attraction. The monkeys are however becoming increasingly violent due to locals annoying them. Our guide was attacked and bitten badly.
- c. Tour guide of Kathmandu is useful and cheap.
- d. Do not eat at just any roadside stop. Be aware of meat and only eat it in the better restaurants, e.g. Yin Yang.
- e. Let the trek company do all the organising for you. It's easier for them, cheap for you and frees you to see the city.
- f. Nepal visa can be obtained on arrival in Kathmandu.

The Trek

A 40-minute flight in a twin otter plane delivered us to Lukla in the Everest Region of

Sola Khumbu. Shortage of porters to carry our mountain kit was no problem with hundreds on call. Our guide, Ang, chose 3, including 2 females.

The following two days of trekking would take us through some superb landscapes and shake out the lethargy of the journey. On trail we chatted with many people, including people returning from Everest expeditions. Namco Bazaar, trading place for the region, at around 3600m

was our destination and a place we would spend 2 nights to begin our acclimatisation to the altitude. The day was not wasted though and a slow walk up to view Everest from the Everest View Hotel at 3 870m is a must. The area opened out to us this day with spectacular views to mountains we had so often heard about or read about. Ama Dablam at almost 7000m, stood alone to one side, while

directly in front the awesome face of Lhotse where Tomo Cesen had done his remarkable solo ascent and from behind the ridge there it stood; the highest point on earth, Everest. We sat for 40 minutes in our own little world, just soaking it all in. Dropping back down to Namche for our sleep started the routine of climb high sleep low, and although not too high yet, prepared us well for later in the trip.

2am, 1 Nov 97, breakfast on summit day with Ewen Martin wearing one of the Marmot sponsored suits.



Peak



Summit of Island Peak 6195m, Andy climbing the last few metres

The next day was superb, opening up with fantastic views and passing through Tengboche monastery. The next day we were however, reminded to be aware when a snowstorm came in and turned Sola Khumbu into Scotland. We reached Periche without problems, but the same day a porter in the region died in the storm, in his inadequate clothing he had got lost. Periche at 4283m was our next acclimatisation point and with our rucksacks in the village, we climbed 250m up the hillside to a point where we could view our main objective: Island Peak. The peak, somewhat dwarfed by Llotse its neighbour, still stood alone and looked brilliant. We thought back to its first ascent during the successful British Everest Expedition in 1953, when two members climbed it testing oxygen equipment. By coincidence, one of these men now lives in my local town. Again we dropped down to sleep in Periche.

The following two days were important and a test of how we would all cope with the altitude. Going first up to Lobuche at 5000m, where we all slept badly, and then on to view Everest from Kala Patar. It is truly amazing with the mountain so close (yet so far!). The famous South Col and Hillary step clearly in view. Our attraction for a while was averted to a 3 man Slovenian team attempting to put a new route up a suicidal face on Nuptse. On return to UK 1 was to read that two made the summit with one backing down. Of the two, one fell to his death from the top. We were feeling good and did the long walk out back into place ready to do our mountain in Dingboche at 4358m (the air seemed easy to breathe).

A step up the following day to Chukung at 4763m where we spent the night, saw our morale plummet as we woke to 50cm of new snow and people returning from our peak unsuccessful. We hung on and decided to move to base camp the next day at 5000m where we would set up camp and prepare to climb the next day. The conditions appeared to have settled, so after a short evening climb of 200m, we ate, drank, played cards and attempted to sleep.

Top Tips for the Trek

- Set a comfortable pace to allow yourself to properly acclimatise. Racing off will make you suffer later.
- Drink loads. Not beer! Helps acclimatisation.
- Carry Daime, a recognised altitude medication.
- Don't carry heavy sacks, it takes away the fun. Porters are not expensive.
- Take a good camera and we recommend strongly Fujichrome Sensia film, which produces brilliant shots.

The Mountain

Climbing in the Himalayas, surrounded by stunning scenery is a must for any aspiring mountaineer. We felt our peak was a great choice, having risen at 2 am, and left an hour later, we found ourselves, at sunrise, in the most amazing landscape we had ever seen. To our disappointment Keith had

to go down due to stomach problems he had throughout the trek. By 7 am we were fitting ropes and crampons to cross the high glacier. Andy, my brother, fitting them for the second time in his life, the other being in my flat in Sonthofen! This was going to be a steep learning curve for him and a good guiding test for Ewen and myself.

The glacier was crossed without problem and we now stood at the bottom of a 100m 50° snow and ice face. Ewen soloed ahead, whilst I short roped our Andy and watched him placing his axe up to his shoulder and kicking steps up to his knee for security. I giggled to myself, but couldn't help admiring him and wondering what was going through his mind as he climbed his first ever mountain.

The top of the face revealed a knife edge ridge with two steep committing steps to gain the summit. The slope took it out of Andy, but with such a short distance remaining, we were not turning back. Exposure was the biggest problem with big drops both ways, but at 10 am we reached the summit, 6195m. We were overwhelmed. A few summit shots and shaking of each others hands signalled the start of our careful 4.5 hour descent back to Base Camp. Keith had picked up during the day and climbed high up alone to meet us. We rested a while, ate, stripped out and left for the nearest village. At 7pm, 17 hours after the day began we crashed into Chukung, our main aim complete.

Top Tips for the Mountain

- Island Peak is a trekking peak, but do not be misled by the name. These peaks range from around 5500m to 6500m and vary in difficulty. I was fortunate enough to be on Pisang Peak in 1990 and 1993 and this is also a trekking peak and this, along with Island Peak, needs to be taken seriously. They are far from a trek and this was proven when 11 Germans died in one accident on Pisang in 1994. With all that said, these peaks are totally achievable with the correct training and mountain experience in your group.
- Island Peak has a high camp at 5300m. You will sleep better and acclimatise almost as well by using base camp and going straight to the top, if you have trekked in steadily.

Trek Out, Jungle, India and Home

The remainder of our trip was brilliant, trekking out, Kathmandu and 3 days chasing Rhino on elephant in the jungle of Southern Nepal. Travelling through India to fly out of Delhi was a little stressful, but we were now such a well-bonded team we took it as an experience and laughed through it. This, however, did emphasise what we considered the "TOP TIP":

Choose your team members for their attitude and character, not their climbing ability.

Bolivia 97

I suppose it was a little like Oliver asking for more when I went up to the Coy Office. I walked the length of the corridor and as I passed each doorway, the people within avoided eye contact with me, pretending that they had paper work to do and nonchalantly shaking their heads and tutting. When I got to the end office where all the heads-of-sheds were having a conference and gorging on a gluttony of policy making and important decision, which were all washed down with a fine vintage of delegation. I stood with hat in hand and ready to tug a forelock or two (that is if I had one to tug). Well the request went in a little like this "Please Sir, can I have eight weeks off to go back out to Bolivia to climb a few more mountains, please. . . Sir?" The usual period of silence occurred and the shocked look of complete disbelief flashed over everybody's face, jaws were dropped and eyes were widened as the request started to sink in. "What?" was the only reply, not an awful lot to work on and so I repeated the request. Unlike poor Oliver who was thrown into a dark and dank cellar and dined on cockroaches that night, I did not get a "Yes" but I definitely did not get a "No." Some chuckled and checked their calendars to see how far away 1 April was but a "Put it in writing" was offered and duely excepted. After a little bribery and corruption the request went through the system without any problems and the big thumbs up was given.

What was Bolivia 97? Well Bolivia 97 was a civilian expedition and my second expedition to Bolivia. The first was a JSE in 95 which launched two handed gliders off a mountain just over 21,000 feet. This time I wanted to go back out to the Cordillera Real area of the Bolivian Andes which is home to a range of 5,000m peaks with 9 reaching over 6,000m. The intention was not to bag peaks as some do to Munros but to climb mountains in different areas, those were: The La Paz area, Condoriri and the Illampu Massif.



High Camp on Jankahuma

Civilians being what they are were unable to get the full eight weeks off unless of course they are unemployed, then they would moan about expenses, which is very similar to students I suppose, but none-the-less we all managed to get out there. The expedition started on Sat 12 Jul 97 with a casual meeting in terminal two, Heathrow Airport. Our first major task was for each of us to get 40kg of baggage through the check-in as 20kg. The French, who were running the check-in desk for the Portuguese seemed pretty happy about our "just a little bit over the access baggage weight" and without having to pay any extra costs. So on the plane it went. Our epic flight took off from London and we changed at Lisbon (Portugal), Sao Paulo (Brazil), Santa Cruz (Bolivia) before finally arriving two and a half days later in a sunny La Paz.

For those who have not had the pleasure of landing at La Paz International Airport it can be quite a little experience. It sits at an altitude of about 4,000m which is towards the top end of the Alps. So when you arrive you have an immediate battle with the altitude. When you walk off the plane you suffer from a shortness of breath and a brain which is trying to do an impression of a spinning top. Just when you believe you have mastered the old breathing technique, your memory is jogged about the rather heavy 20kg you managed

to bluff on to the plane and to the fact that you are just about to hump it through customs.

Having arrived in La Paz, we managed through a variety of contacts to arrange accommodation with a British Mountain Guide called Youssi Brain. He had rented out a flat where a number of guides, expeditions and climbers / trekkers - and a number of twitchers who spent a lot of their time in the jungle - had found a place to call home. The first week was spent doing nothing. This was to give our bodies a chance to adjust and adapt to living at 3,500m plus. A conducted tour of the route to a bar called 'Mongos' was carried out by Youssi and one of his guides Pete. The reasoning behind having a few scoops on the first night is that you will feel pretty rough the next day due to the altitude, so the effects of a few beers would not really matter. Mongos is an ideal place to set up base camp as the bar staff have a smattering of English and the burgers were definitely something to write home about (No BSE scare in Bolivia). It was not long before itchy feet syndrome was upon us.

The talk in the group was centred around what, where, when and how? In the following week all these questions and more were answered. The mountain was Hainya Potosi standing at a glorious 6,088m (27 ft short of 20,000 ft). We had planned for 5 nights out on the mountain so

that if anyone suffered from the altitude they had time to chill out and come up to the next camp in their own time the following day. Well that was the plan. It started to go a little wrong the next day for me as I was discovering how many times in the hour I could run to the toilet and let what seemed to me, was my life drain away through the hole in my bottom. The rest except my partner carried on and we would RV with them on the mountain.

Four of us started the mountain and after a day at Zongo Pass which is a base camp site, Andie was suffering and had to return to La Paz. Three in a tent seemed quite reasonable and off to high camp at 5,700m we yomped. Arriving there in the late afternoon gave us sufficient time to brew up before it got cold. By this time the other two with me were suffering from the effects of altitude and a hard day on the mountain carrying heavy bags. That evenings entertainment was spent counting how many times Archie could puke and Graham could dash out for a dump.

An early start next day resulted in Graham opting for the lie-in and a "See you when you get back". Archie followed me along, marking our route with little cairns made of puke. Not long after starting Archie decided to bin it and head down. Seemed a pity to walk down on such a nice day without seeing

the view from the top and so I pushed on. Having crossed the glacier, climbed a ridge I gained a high plateau which leads to the summit face. This was a 60 degree slope of about 300m, an alternative route up from this point was the north ridge, but I decided to use this as my walk off. At about 1147hrs with cold fingers and toes, not to mention a pulse rate that would have impressed a cardiac surgeon, I topped out. All that was left to do after a drink and a mouth full of raisins was to head back down to high camp. My route down along the north ridge was at times a little "knife edged" along a slender platform of snow. To my left was the awesome west face, a mere 1,500m drop whilst to my right was a sedate 300m plunge. This was only made more interesting with very little areas which offered a good placement for an ice axe, 1-t alone a secure crack for a piton. High camp at 5,700m was a welcome sight and although Archie and Graham had started the walk-off, the arduous process of re-hydration was to begin for another day.

Once the team had assembled to its fullest we all pushed off to an area called Condoriri. The mountains are named after the condor. When approaching them the shape of the outstretched condor wings and the head can easily be made out. The two mountains that we aimed to climb were Alpomayo (5,410m) and Kabaza (5,648m). The later forms an exposed ridge route up the head of the condor.

Base camp was located on the edge of a lake amongst a number of Llama pens. The only down side to this area, are one or two locals that have set up a little protection racket. Their aim in life is to charge climbers a number of dollars to stand guard and watch their gear so it does not get stolen when you are up on the mountains. We nicked named one of them whose name was never ascertained "Clint." This was mainly due to his cowboyish hat and the poncho he wore, however what clinched it for us was when he rode into base camp out of the sun on a fine and majestic donkey. You can make up your own minds who may do the stealing if it goes on. We opted for a bargain-

ing technique which worked very well but some Argentinians opted for threats of violence and this seemed to work just as well. Alpomayo was climbed in a long day from base camp. An early start at 0200hrs lead to a push up the glacier and the idea being that most of the hard work would be completed before the sun got to us. Having gained the high ground we crossed a rather interesting thin ridge. The odd snow stake was hammered in for piece-of-mind. The ridge led to a snow pyramid which was the final push up to the summit. Once the customary photographs were taken and the length of the Cordillera. Real was viewed the route to base camp was started.

Kabaza was taken in a couple of days rather than one long day. A luxurious bivi site on a rocky outcrop was our home for the night. It faced west and caught the sun until quite late or at least until 1900hrs before it disappeared behind a ridge, with it the temperature plummeted.

All that night an electrical storm flashed in the next valley. The sky was continuously lit up as if some distance bombardment was taking place with low growl of thunder to accompany it. After a 0200hrs get up, followed by a mouthful of water and raisins we trudged towards our goal. Having crossed a glacier, climbed a ridge, crossed another glacier, climbed the hidden gully, followed a ridge up to a rocky obstacle before pushing up another steep ridge to gain the summit. Whilst all this was happening the weather was starting to change, the wind was getting stronger and the clouds getting bigger and closer. The last thing I wanted was to race the clouds. I had never experienced an electrical storm from the inside. I certainly have not experienced one carrying loads of metal around with me and nor did I really want to. Our summit visit was brief before the decent. Needless to say the condor was on our side that day, our flight home to base camp was fast and sure-footed.

With the dramatic build up of weather we decided to leave Condoriri for the safe haven of La Paz. From here we would plan for our main effort of travelling up to the Illampu Massif to have a crack at the south west

ridge of Jankahuma (6,427m). I had already put a flag on top of this mountain in my previous expedition but I was quite happy to do it again but from a different angle.

When we arrived at the over night camp it was like a summers day in Scotland. The cloud was down and all around us. The rain had turned into sleet, then hail and finally snow. Our clothes were either wet through with snow or sweat. The air temperature had fallen and everything had started to freeze. There was only one place to be - tucked up in my bag. The next morning proved to be quite interesting trying to get out of the tent. The zips and the fly-sheet had completely frozen and once I had burrowed my way out I was able to lift the fly-sheet off in one. Back on with the damp clothes then onwards and upwards.

The glacier camp was gained by mid-afternoon where we had eventually come out of the clouds and into bright sunshine. The base camp is an ideal location, surrounded on three sides by Jankahuma or Illampu whilst on the fourth you looked out for miles only to see huge anvil shaped clouds slowly drifting towards you. For the next four days this is all we did, watch clouds travels towards us then dump their unwanted contents on us. I have never heard of El Neneo before, but I was quickly introduced. For some reason, every 5-7 years the currents in the Pacific Ocean change for a few weeks. So strong are the currents that it causes havoc all along the coast of South America and it has a direct effect on the weather. What is supposed to be crystal clear blue skies turn into something similar to Scotland mid-winter.

All night long the camp was hit with strong winds which buffeted and bashed the tents, large amounts of snow and hail were also carried on the strong winds making sleep impossible. The tents held out through the storms and at times our only view of day light was when we off loaded snow or brewed up. Through the gusts of howling wind we could hear a slow and aggressive rumble, not thunder, but avalanches. It was time to make a move and the next morn-

ing a decent was made to get off the mountain. This was a very good decision as that night base camp had a meter of snow. El Neneo had affected the whole of South America causing millions of pounds worth of damage to industries throughout the continent. It also put a stop to any long term plans of staying in the mountains. Effectively the climbing stops here.

In both my times that I have visited Bolivia I had only seen mountains and never really looked into its cultural and historical aspect. For the last two weeks I did the cultural thing and visited museums in La Paz, ancient historical Inca sites in and around Sorata and the ruined city of Tiwanaka which lies near the shore of Lake Titicaca. A four day visit to the city of Potosi which at one stage boasted of its history and its importance of silver mined from its hills. I also bought a stick of TNT, detonator and burning fuse for 75p along with a small bag of coca leaves for a pound. Presents for the miners . . . so on the visit to the mines you can make a small donation to the over worked and very much under paid miners.

All to quickly I came to the end of yet another brilliant and successful expedition to Bolivia. In the two year gap between my first and second expedition it has become notably obvious that Bolivia is becoming a regular visiting place for mountaineers / trekkers. It offers easy and quick access to the mountains without any peak fees. Relatively cheap cost of living and virtually no crime. Combine this with a stable Government amongst so many unstable neighbours then it is an ideal location. The only down side to the climbing, is that certain mountains are visited quite regularly and the ecological effect of "crap" in both senses of the word, is being left strewn around the base / high camps, an all to frequent complaint from around the world. I should imagine that this will get worse before it gets better so if you do have an intention of going to Bolivia, go sooner rather than later.

Expedition Planning (AFTA)

By Capt 'Mac' MacKay APTC

WHAT'S TO BE DONE?

Do your homework!

In order that your expedition can be staffed as quickly and efficiently as possible, with a minimum of work for others, it is essential that you do your homework well in advance.

BEFORE YOU FILL IN YOUR ATFA READ - AGAIS Vol 1 Chap 11, and the Army Adventurous Training Compendium (AATC). These contain all you need to know about the philosophy, aims, procedures and conduct of expeditions. You will find guidance on such aspects as timings of applications for the various countries, funding, instructor/student ratios, insurance, civilianisation of vehicles, documentation, and lots more. There are also some DCI's relevant to adventurous training.

For more specific information about the area or the country that you will, be visiting, you can consult the Royal Geographical Society, libraries, Standfords Map and Bookshop in Long Acre London, tourist bureaux and travel agents.

Your HQ G3 PAT branch has guidelines for adventurous training issued by the DAs of various countries and a selection of PXR's which can provide useful information and advice from those who have been there before! You can also arrange a visit to Upavon to view our selection of PXR's.

USE THE CHAIN OF COMMAND EFFECTIVELY

If your unit has an adventurous training officer, then you should go to him/her for any initial advice: they should be able to provide any adventurous training publications you may need.

Should you find that there is some aspect of which you are not sure, and which your ATO is unable to clarify, the G3 Adv Trg branch responsible for staffing your adventurous training application (ATFA) will be able to help you. However - do not approach G3

Trg, EQT Plans PAT, the Foreign Office, or the Embassy staff for information that can be obtained from tourist information and other sources.

If you don't have the qualified individuals you need, then trawl for them right away: the shortage of qualified personnel is often a delaying factor, and your application will be turned down without them.

When you have done your homework, fill in your ATFA as clearly and accurately as possible, with a day-to-day itinerary. The best maps are those that are simply drawn on a sheet of A4 paper with main place names and the route clearly marked: photocopies from your atlas are invariably useless. Remember that your ATFA is a multipurpose form that not only goes to MOD departments, but is also copied to the Foreign office and to Defence Attaches in the host country.

Once your ATFA has been submitted, all correspondence concerning your expedition must go through the G3 Adv Trg branch, with copies to those concerned - eg HQT Plans PAT for countries on Table 2 in AGAIS.

To avoid any delays or confusion, be sure to address signals/letters/faxes correctly - if you are not sure of any part of an address, ask.

THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR EXPEDITION LEADERS

The adventurous training grant allocation is distributed at the discretion of G3 Adv Trg branches depending on such criteria as, the calibre of the expedition, the cost of travel etc. If this allocation is not increased commensurate to the numbers applying, many expeditions may find themselves with less money than they had hoped. This could also create a possible 'knock-on' effect of the increase in numbers: affecting the procurement.

At the Regional Depot RLC Thatcham the staff work hard

to repair and re-issue a full range of items. The depot invests in new equipment to meet demands, when funds are available. However, it is likely that if Thatcham finds it increasingly difficult to cope with the high turnover, units may have to provide some of their own kit and equipment which will, of course, involve more money!

EASING THE FINANCIAL BURDEN

First, the sooner an ATFA is submitted to the G3 Adventurous Training branch at your Divisional HQ/Command, the more likely you are to receive the most that can be obtained from the funds available, appropriate to your expedition. This will also help the HQ Division/command to forward plan and allocate funds fairly. Secondly, when planning an expedition, it is worth alternative routes to the training area,

alternative methods of travel, and alternative airlines (if appropriate): this could considerably reduce the travel budget. (See article on Air Trooping and effect on CNFP travel).

Thirdly, forward planning you can reduce the cost to your expedition with members by planning fund-raising activities and by obtaining sponsorship. Fund-raising through such activities as jumble sales, sponsored swims or runs is not too difficult to organise. However, applying successfully for sponsorship is a far more difficult and sophisticated process.

Finally, if expedition leaders all do their utmost to return kit and equipment in good condition to Thatcham at endex, it will be ready sooner for re-allocation, thus perhaps preventing someone else having to purchase the items. This will also help Thatcham in their endeavour to provide a good service.

CHAMONIX

In the shadow of Mont Blanc lies Chamonix, at the heart of a valley that stretches from the hamlet of Les Houches to Le Tour. The area is dominated by Europe's highest mountain, Mont Blanc, some 4807m. Chamonix is a traditional resort that attracts visitors from all over the world. Its history as a mountaineering and skiing resort has evolved over the last two centuries.

Mont Blanc is thought by many to be one of the most beautiful mountains in the world. Glaciers can be found as low as 1200m and it has many ridges and faces, each with its own features and characteristics. In summer, the Gouter Hut, an overnight stopover on the popular Saint-Gervais route, is well used and booking is essential. A combination of high altitude, relatively unstable weather and the glacial terrain makes this a serious project. The ambitions of 50% of those attempting to reach the summit are dashed. The assistance of a professional mountain guide is a must and the office of the High Mountain Guides is based at Chamonix, where information on mountain safety and current conditions as well as the booking of guides can be obtained.

Good accommodation in Chamonix can be difficult to find. Why not enquire about renting the writer's private apartment that is situated overlooking the Mont Blanc range and the lakes at Les Gaillands, Chamonix.

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