

ARMY MOUNTAINEER



The Journal of The Army Mountaineering Association

- **Climb South Africa**
- **Mind Games, can you cope?**
- **Kangchenjunga Success!**
- **Girls on top**
- **Are you a GCGOEW?**

Summer 2000

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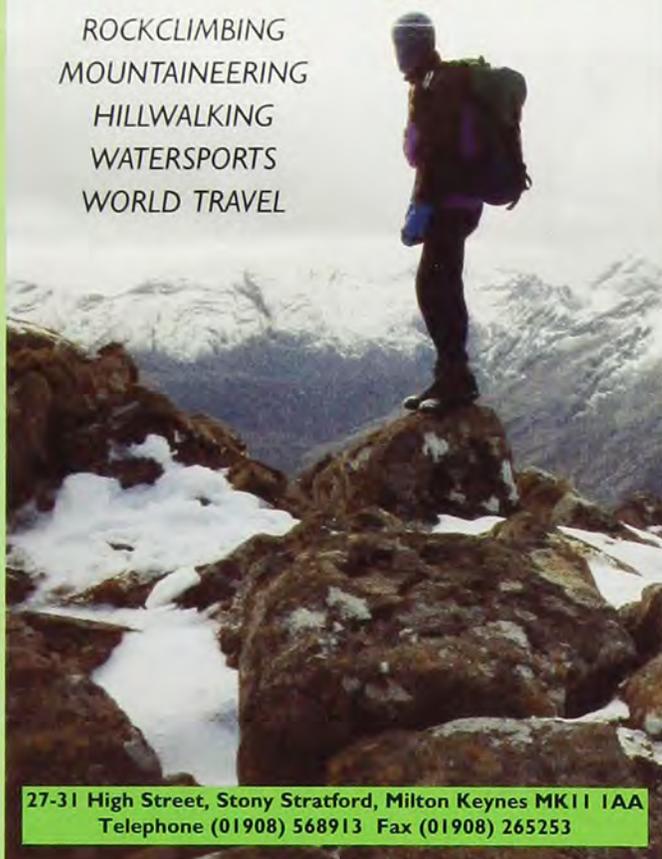
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ARMY MOUNTAINEER

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Foreword

By the Chairman
Brigadier N J Cottam OBE



Almost four years into my Chairmanship of your Association, I would like to start this foreword by congratulating your Committee on the way it has moved so successfully with the times. Great efforts have been made to provide you with the right kind of newsletter, website and better information exchange in order to keep pace with your demand for rewarding mountaineering activity. At the same time considerable imagination has gone into the kinds of rock climbing meets, expeditions and other ventures you want to have provided for you or on which you seek advice. My thanks go on your behalf to the Vice-Chairman (who does all my work) and to all the committee.

I hope you all realise what a successful move we have made to the Joint Service Mountain Training Centre, HMS Indefatigable, as our new spiritual and administrative home. The centre is on Anglesey and is an excellent base from which to go mountaineering in North Wales. We have been made very welcome there. We will hold our annual meeting there again this year on the weekend 23/24 September. All our AMA administration is now running from Indefatigable as a new permanent point of contact for membership and other Association matters. Do please take account of this change, particularly while the new arrangements settle down and we say farewell to Aldershot as our former home.

Climbing activities, not administration, are of course our purpose, and I have been so pleased to see how much has been achieved and is planned for this year. The Himalaya Dragon Expedition was the highpoint of last autumn. This year's Army Sports Climbing Championship went very well but the crowning success has to be BSKE 2000 conquest of Kanchenjunga in May. Well done to everyone involved. We still have AMA Alps 2000 to look forward to. Then there is the Joint Services Summer Alpine Meet and in September the first Joint Sports Climbing Championship. Get climbing!

Winter 2000 edition

Please send your contributions for the Winter 2000 edition to the editor by the end of Oct 2000

Articles should be free standing and ready to go to the publishers, preferably on disc with a printed copy. Please include a word count. Photographs and slides, with a suitable caption, should be submitted along with the article.

Any queries regarding preparation may be made directly to the publisher.

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ON THE COVER

Lt Andy Howell RA on the flake pitch of 'Bludges Revelation'
HVS 5a Buachaille Etive Mor. By Capt L Callaghan.

This edition was edited by SSgt Steve Willson and Amy Willson

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www.theama.org.uk

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FASTRAK

Are you looking for mountaineers and climbers with qualifications that could be of help to you when planning a trip. Use the Fastrak data base to get in touch. Contact the Meets Coordinator for details.

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EDITORIAL

By SSgt Steve Willson

What a year so far! There have been highs and lows for the AMA in this new millennium. The low point came, for me, in a phone call from one of Allison Willoughby's sons informing me that she had passed away. Allison's obituary is below.

As for high points we have been swamped with success in the greater ranges over the last few months. John Doyle and Ady Cole topped out on Kangchenjunga after an outstanding team effort lead by Comd Steve Jackson of the RNRMMC. An article and photos have been squeezed in at the last minute for your enjoyment, it can be found just before the centre fold. Soon after 22 SAS made a successful ascent of Mt Everest after a great deal of hard work and perseverance. I will try and get hold of an article from them for the next journal. Will Manners also topped out, with a small team, on the challenging Mt Logan in Canada and their story will also be in the next edition.

As I sit writing another large project has just taken its first steps is the shape of AMA Alps 2000. I wish Mac McKay and all the other climbers the best of luck and I look forward to hearing of their experiences in the roof of Europe. And don't forget that they intend to produce a book of all the routes on the 4000m peaks they climb.

Talking of books, Bronco Lane's book 'Military Mountaineering' was released on the 18 Jul at the RGS. The book will be reviewed in the next journal and an order form will be in the next newsletter. As you can imagine AMA members and their exploits fill the pages of this historical publication.

This leads me nicely on to my favourite subject, articles for the journal. As you read through this edition I think you will pick up on the two styles of article present. One that tells you what the climbers did, where they did it, and if they got to the top and the other that it not so much about climbing but about 'life as a climber.' There is a place for both types of article, but the latter are the ones that catch the readers' interest. I am often asked by AMA members that are writing an article, 'What style should it be in?' My answer is, write about how 'you' felt and what 'your' experiences were. We are not all fearless superstars that climb the World's highest mountains and hardest routes but we do all share a common love of the thrill of climbing and hill walking. So however you get your kicks let us all read about them by putting pen to paper, or should that be finger to key? Once you have taken that leap of faith and produced some material please send it to me at:

SSgt Steve Willson, 8 BFS, 29 Cdo Regt Wksp REME, Royal Citadel, Plymouth PL1 2PD. Tel: 01752 236099

Finally, before you get stuck into your reading, I have to let you know about the AMA Annual Weekend. It's going to be a gathering to remember at JSMTc between 22 - 24 Sept 00. See the newsletter and flyer for details. I'll see you there!

Cheers Steve Willson

ALLISON WILLOUGHBY

1939 - 2000



In the last edition of Army Mountaineer a tribute was paid to Allison Willoughby on her retirement as our Membership Secretary and she was thanked for all she had done for the Army Mountaineering Association over many years. She had our good wishes for a happy retirement and a speedy return to full health.

Sadly this was not to be. She died in February. The affection in which she was held and the appreciation for all that she had

done was clearly evident by the attendance at her funeral of our President, Chairman, Vice Chairman and several of our members.

Allison Carter, as she was then, first became involved with the AMA at the end of 1973, twenty seven years ago, as Membership Secretary, when the Army Sports Control Board moved from the Old War Office in London to

Aldershot. She later also took on the duties as Treasurer. As the years passed and our membership increased so did her workload. She accepted this willingly and always seemed to have a soft spot for the AMA. She soon became our indispensable point of contact and devoted more and more of her time to us. She attended Committee Meetings regularly and was always happy to travel to North Wales to attend meetings there.

By now she had remarried and become Allison Willoughby as most of our members will have known her. Much of the work she did for us was carried out voluntarily in addition to her main job as accountant for the Army Sports Control Board, an appointment she had also held for twenty seven years.

Allison was a strong character who did not tolerate fools gladly. She was always ready to help our younger members but, quite rightly, got angry with them if they took her for granted or did not treat her with the respect she deserved. Having made her point, she would become their friend. She became important as our continuity person as officials and Committee Members came and went.

It was clear at her funeral just how much she was loved and appreciated by her large devoted family. We send them our sincere condolences and join with them in mourning the loss of a close friend who had worked so hard and shown such devotion to the Army Mountaineering Association over many years.

AMA New Year Meet 1999 – 2000

This years New Year meet was held at Norwegian Lodge, nr Aviemore in the Cairngorm region of Scotland over the period 27 Dec 99 – 4 Jan 00. This meet is traditionally aimed at 'like minded individuals' working hard, and more importantly, playing hard in a relaxed atmosphere away from the worries of work. This year was no exception to this rule and was extremely well attended by 28 hardy folk who had nowhere better to go over the Millennium period.

Thanks to the Stu MacDonalds excellent write up from the previous year, numerous red blooded males turned up expecting the Lodge to resemble a lap dancing bar! I would like to say that there was an excellent turnout from the females of the AMA but even an extremely bold Dougie Farquhar drew the line at asking Rachel Semple to provide this basic service. Maybe next year Dougie!

Once everyone had arrived and settled in, plans and counter-plans were laid for the opening forays into the corries. The weather over the Christmas period had been excellent and a good dump of snow had ensured that the scenery looked exactly as it should. All that was now required was for the Cairngorm breeze to abate enough for us to do the business.

Winter novices went through an introduction to ice axe arresting, digging, belaying and the wonders of winter nav in the areas of Corrie Cas and Sneachda, Ciste Mhearead and Corrie Domhain. Thankfully everything went well and everyone was then ready to head off into the hills. The con-

ditions were such that climbing, ski mountaineering and general mountaineering was able to go ahead without to many changes to plans. Climbing on Fluted Buttress, Central Gully, Spiral Gully and the Runnel in Sneachda and The Milky Way and The Vent in Lochan. All went well (if not a little chossy).

The only incident was when Ian Coxan tripped and fell whilst descending the Fiacail of Corrie an t Sneachda. His leg injuries were quite severe and thankfully the Mountain Rescue Team, who were climbing near to where he fell were able to come to his assistance very quickly. His climbing partner Dougie Farquhar ensured he was kept safe until the big yellow taxi was able to lift him to Inverness. Ian then went on to enjoy an excellent Hogmanay in Raigmore hospital and is currently convalescing from his broken leg. Dougie Farquhar earned the nickname 'son of MacDonald' and struggled to find a climbing partner for the rest of the meet.

New Year's eve found nearly everyone heading for the bright lights of Aviemore and a few quiet pints in the Winking Owl followed by a few extremely loud ones in the Karaoke bar at Red MacGregors. John Belsham and Ian Roberts led the way and managed to sing in just about every group that stood up even if they weren't wanted. The 'sad Signals' contingent headed by Ski Sharp decided that the only way to spend the Hogmanay was to be in a snow hole! So a damp night was spent in the area of Garbh Coire, intending to climb Angel Ridge the next day. Unfortunately the climb was called off due to high winds. Maybe next year Ski!

More successful climbing, walking and bothying by AMA Chris Allewell and Andy Gallagher went on for a further 3 days until it was time to call the Ceilidh to a halt.

The New Year meet is essentially a very low key meet that allows people to carry out early season winter mountaineering. It is very informal and allows AMA members to climb and walk with old and new friends and just as importantly relax in the environment that we all hold dear.

Next years meet is to be held over the same period at the old JSMTTC hut in Kingussie. Meet leader is:

Maj Alun Thomas
Dental Centre
Goojerat Bks
Colchester
Tel: 94651 2814

A proforma with all the details is in the summer newsletter.

AMA Expedition Radio Set For Hire

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

1. The radios must be insured by the expedition for the replacement cost.
2. A hire fee, to cover maintenance and renewal, of between £50 for part of the set and £150 for the whole set paid to the AMA on collection.
3. The expedition must book their own frequencies through which ever country they are visiting and then inform the radio manager to program the radios prior to collection.

The equipment is very good and it will improve the command and control of any expedition not to mention the increased safety cover. If you have any questions about the radio set or its availability please give Steve Willson a call on Plymouth military 6099 or 01782 236099, or by fax on 6069. Please make use of this kit!

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Rock Climbing in the Falkland Islands

An update for 2000. By Lt Felix Hearn RLC

There has been an increased amount of climbing activity in the Falkland Islands. It may be unfair to compare the crags with those found in England or Wales, but the Islands do hold a variety of coastal and inland climbing opportunities. Bouldering is prolific, and quality crags requiring the use of traditional climbing aids are available, but harder to access.

The austral summer there (our winter), despite the commonly associated winds, hosts the prime climbing season. Crags in the lee of the wind and facing the sun can often be chosen, but often only with local knowledge and limited choice. The rock itself is mainly quartzite but changing to a more sandstone texture on the West Side of the islands. The areas outlined below do not form a comprehensive list, just those areas visited recently.

West Falkland.

The best area is Tower Rocks (Grid 156736) 8km north west of Shag Cove. Situated

within a naval bombardment area, this mountain top bastion is safe from wandering locals but subject to direct artillery hits! With access solved by helicopter 'down-time' superb multi-pitch routes can be followed, many of starred quality. Routes include: Shell Shock ** S 35m, Shrapnel Arete** VS 4b 50m, and Illuminating HVS 5a 50m. Generally the rock quality and protection is excellent.

Further to the north is the collection of crags known as Turkey Rocks (Grid 093923). Situated 10 miles east of Hill Cove and 2 miles north of Warrah House, these crags can be accessed by vehicle. Many quality routes can be found here, only a shade lower in quality when compared to Tower Rocks.

The bays and zawns south of Mount Alice offer a mediocre selection of routes often on poorer quality rock, heavily weathered by the fact it is a headland. Cape Meredith is still worth a visit if in the vicinity.

East Falkland.

The east-west Wickham Heights mountain range contains nearly all the recorded areas to date. Table Rocks 2km southeast of Mt. Osborne boasts a superb miniature south facing buttress with seven single pitch routes of S to HVS standard.

Closer to Mount Pleasant is Bluff Cove crag lying 75m north of the Stanley road and opposite the Bluff Cove settlement. It faces south and comprises of a compact quartzite crag 9-12m high. It actually forms the lower slopes of the hills between Smoke Mountain and Mt Challenger. The rock is generally sound, though a crust like lichen can make progress a little difficult on the slabs.

Mt Harriet contains several classic routes including Vostock*** VS 4b 45m on its main slab.

More serious crags of note can be found southwest of Estancia House and also on Mt Tumbledown.



Only a selection of the known worthwhile and main crags have been indicated in this update. It must be stated that all land is privately owned and requires the landowners permission. On the weather 'front' the climbing is best during January to April when the wind abates slightly and anti-cyclonic pressure systems occasionally pass overhead creating the still, warm peaceful days ideally suited to rock climbing.

For further details contact:

felix-hearn@excite.com

Felix Hearn on King Hussein HVS 5a, Bluff Cove Crag, East Falkland.



Terry Moore on Sea Cliffs, Cape Meredith.



Climb South Africa... head for the sun

By Julian Fisher



A wet windy Sunday morning in Petes Eats in Llanberis and I am trying to marshal some will power not to cave into another flapjack to accompany my industrial sized mug of tea. I pick up on the conversation of two climbers at the next table. "The guide books are brilliant but the weather is so bad you can never climb the routes, it will be great to get back to the Cederberg". They then started to reminisce about sun kissed rock, beaches, wine farms and camping in the wilderness. Hey, I thought where the hell is this place? I leant over "so where is this paradise?" "Cape Town," came the answer, so March '96 saw me haul a sac brimming with kit boarding a flight to Cape Town. That was four years ago. My idea for this article is to give you a whistle stop tour of climbing in the country,

inspire you to visit and pass on some practical tips for your trip. Although the flights are more expensive when compared to the States, the plus side is that there is no jet lag (only one hour time difference with the UK), the pound has three times the buying power here and you can see lions, elephants and rhinos, fortunately not at the crags! So suffering from E.S.A.D. (European Seasonal Adjustment Disorder) and want to see the SUN then head south to South Africa. South Africa has a huge variety of traditional and sports climbing venues and also a vast potential for the development of new crags and routes. The varied climate allows visitors to explore and climb in different areas virtually all year round.

The country has a long history of traditional climbing, sport

climbing burst onto the SA scene in the late 70's. Clive Curzon at 'The Restaurant' outside Johannesburg, Guy Holwill in the Western Cape and Roger Nattrass ZwaZulu Natal were prominent in pioneering many of the country's best sporting areas. Cape Town and the Western Cape is blessed with some of the most spectacular scenery and also has probably the best concentration of sport and traditional climbing in the country. At night the huge north face of Table Mountain is the skyline of Cape Town, its solid ramparts illuminated by huge searchlights, dwarfing the city's bright lights. By day the size of the mountain plateau becomes evident as it stretches down the Peninsula to Cape Point. Africa and Fountain ledges below the Upper Cableway station have been the setting of some of the country's groundbreaking climbs. Mike Mamacos dropping the rope and continuing solo on the first ascent of 'Cableway Crag' in 1949, Mike Scott and party on the famous traverse pitch of Roulette in 1969 or the quiet solo of 'Captain Hook' by a young Andy deKlerk despite having repeatedly fallen off the route while seconding the week before. More recently in 1999 Jeremy Wilse Samson pushed the oft eyed line through the 'Roulette' traverse to give 'Double Jeopardy' at grade 29.

Driving out of town on Chapmans Drive or the Blue Route takes you past many of the Peninsulas traditional and sport climbing areas. The three sport crags in the Silvermine Nature Reserve give a good range of routes, with the 'Mine' and 'Hole' crags home to some of the Peninsulas hardest sport routes. Bouldering can be found in the small forest above Kalk Bay and the cafes of village have great local fish menus and evening entertainment. The traditional crag of Elsie's Peak home to the Andy de Klerk test piece 'Dream Street Rose' stands over the nearby neighbourhood of

Fish Hoek. There are good campsites in Noordhoek and Kommetjie with easy access to the two-mile beach at Noordhoek and the short sport routes of Peers Cave. On the West coast of the peninsula, the village of Llandudno which has a small amount of bouldering but is also a great place to relax and body surf or just watch the sun go down with a bottle of wine. Hout Bay has an excellent fish restaurant at the harbour and its crag Skoorsenskop is another good mid-grade sport venue. The main national road north, the N1, will take you out of Cape Town and into the mountains. The town of Paarl is about 45 minutes drive from CT and the huge granite dome of Paarl Rock, (slab climbing with the classics 'Little Drummer Boy', 'Blue Diamonds and White Ice'), is clearly visible from the road. Further on you can either take the Tunnel or the old Pass Road to drive into the spectacular Du Toits Pass with its 1500 metre peaks towering up either side.

On the flanks of Du Toits peak is Hellfire crag, which has a good mix of sport and traditional climbing. It was developed by mountain guides Ross Suter and Malcolm Gowens in the 1980's and often glows a fiery orange in the evening sun, a local 'Llanberis Pass.' Now emerge from the pass into the wine growing areas of the Western Cape. The thriving town of De Doorns with its vast sea of vineyards lapping against the steep valley walls is one of South Africa's premier bouldering areas. Its active climbing community is developing more sport crags and the town hosts the annual Agama Atra bouldering competition. Over the top of mountains and you reach Montagu, a tranquil spa town which is the main sport-climbing venue in the Western Cape. The De Bos farm, (home to the Montagu new routes book), has a clean campsite, bunkhouse with cooking facilities, self catering chalets and is a good place to meet local

Climber on 'Hey Jude' Blaauwberg, Northern Province.



climbers. Bad kloof on the edge of the town is a picturesque valley and contains the majority of hard sport crags. Easier sport routes can be found at the climbing areas of Legoland and The Steeple. The crags in Keurkloof, in particular The Vision, and Cogmans Kloof offer fantastic sport routes in a mountain setting. For traditional climbers the Lost World crag three kilometres outside Montagu has climbs at all grades and once again an Andy de Klerk test piece in the shape of 'Technicians of the Sacred'. The other main climbing area in the Western Cape is the Cederberg Mountain Reserve about four hours drive north of Cape Town. The last 30 kilometres to Wolfberg/Tafelberg /Rocklands climbing areas is on gravel road so it is advisable to go early and avoid driving at night! Access is extremely sensitive and climbing permits are mandatory with the areas regularly patrolled by park rangers. However the superb traditional climbing area of Wolfberg is on private land (permits issued from the Dwarsrivier Farm) and 200 metre routes such as 'Celestial Journey', 'Energy Crisis', 'Alone in Space', will give you a feel of the gripping exposure.

Tafelberg is a three-hour walk from the valley and offers a

"There's a rhino at the bottom of the route but hey this is Africa!"

true mountaineering experience with 'Maidens Prayer' one of the great classic very severes of the crag. Further north in the Cederberg above the small town of Clanwilliam is the sport area of Rocklands famous for its bouldering. However the large numbers of visiting climbers have caused problems in this environmentally sensitive area, so climbing permits are mandatory and strictly enforced. The Rocklands experience is not complete without a visit to the seashore fish restaurant in Lamberts Bay. By now the fingers are trashed so a good rest on the wine farms of the Western Cape, and you are ready to head back to Cape Town and home, or take to the road and move on up country. A trip

down the coast from Cape Town takes you past the surfing Mecca of JB (Jeffries Bay) to the quiet university town of Grahamstown and the provincial capital, Port Elizabeth. Follow the 'pig' signs to discover the traditional climbing on dolerite cliffs of Hogs Back, try the lines on the cliffs of Mary and Martha, sample SA's best sea cliff climbing, or cruise the many sports venues around Grahamstown itself.

Roger Natrass' guide is a great way to discover the climbing at Monteseel and its satellite crags. For hard sports routes try the Wave Cave crag - Barricade (grade 32) / Paragon (grade 30) and Rasta Cave crag - Supernova (grade 30) / Hubbly Bubbly (grade 32) in Shongweni Resources Reserve. For real adventure climbing and trekking there is the 2000m high 900km long Drakensberg mountain range. In winter the cliffs above Giants Castle are a popular ice-climbing venue while the summer rock routes are extremely serious undertakings.

"There's a rhino at the bottom of the route, but hey this is Africa!" The sport crag of Harismith is situated in a game reserve and was developed by Eugene Beetze, Mike Behr and Glenn Harrison. A rapidly

expanding area with a good guidebook, it is also a great chance to see some of the wild animals of that used to roam the South Africa veld. The crag at Potgietersus at Thaba Pashwa is another growing sports climbing area with a 'prize' multi-pitch sport route. En route to Johannesburg or Cape Town and need a fix of climbing then stop off in Bloemfontein and delve into the 'Delusions of Grandeur' guidebook.

If you are on a quick trip to Jo'berg then visit Stribbins Valley. Access to the krantz' of the Magaliesberg is very sensitive and the climbing areas lie on land owned by the Mountain Club of South Africa. (Climbing is restricted to Mountain Club Members).



Climber on Cattle Rustlers, Rocklands Cederberg, Western Cape.

The Restaurant at the End of the Universe at Waterval Boven is a strange place to find the biggest sport climbing area in South Africa but it's there! The campsite is 10 metres from the top of the routes and you can rappel to the base of the climb. The route Snapdragon (grade 28) is a must. For traditional climbers there is Manoutsa near the Strijdom Tunnel, first explored by E. Haber in the 70's, which has seen a great deal of new route activity in 1998.

Long time activist Charles Edelstein describes Blouberg, the Blue Mountain of the Northern Province, as the true

African climbing experience. Getting to the base of this serious 400m traditional cliff is usually an epic adventure in itself. However, routes such as 'Last Moon', 'Scatterlings', 'Hey Jude' and the world standard big wall routes of 'Wall of White Light' and the 'Delicate Sound of Thunder' complete with African vultures flying past make it a very special place.

Well that is a quick look at climbing in South Africa. So look forward to seeing you here!!

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Coping with the Mind Games

By SSgt Mark Hedge APTC

*In general most climbers can perform at a higher grade on bolt protected routes. "I'll have a go at anything as a second."
The hardest moves are done whilst bouldering, why? Because we don't have to deal with mind games.*

The statements above undoubtedly hold a great deal of truth, it all boils down to one key factor - the fear of falling.

If you are constantly trying to improve your grades and climb harder or wish to establish yourself well and truly at a grade, then read on. The following information is not to educate individuals on climbing techniques, good runner placements or training methods. These will quite obviously enhance anyone's climbing armoury. It should, however, provoke or enlighten you on the subjective issue of 'mind games' (climbing psychology). Not everyone will readily accept these issues or even put them into practise, but a little knowledge may be useful in a time of need should you choose to apply it. "Knowledge dispels fear."

Firstly we should understand the consequences of falling. A fall could cause damage to life or limb. The damage is not necessarily caused by ground impact, it may be caused by hitting objects on the way down or by swinging in towards the rock face. None are particularly pleasant and do not bear thinking about. Now we are able to envisage the worst scenario, being the happy souls we are! The problem is this image tends to linger in the mind especially when fatigued or in a precarious position that is aggravating the situation.

Therefore, before embarking on a difficult route or new grade it is vital that we actually have the potential to ascend the line. That we are competent against the challenge, and can actively cope with the situation. Have you the potential? There are two main methods of coping, behavioural and cognitive. Let us not worry about these two mind-numbing titles as their meaning is explained in brackets in sensible language

Behavioural Coping. (Things you can do prior to the climb that will 'best prepare' yourself for the challenge).

1. Study the guidebook, read and digest the route description every night whilst tucked up in bed with your cocoa. Once on the rock you should then have no doubts as to which direction the line follows particularly if a photograph or topo has also been memorised. This allows you to visualise the route and rehearse the images conjured up.
2. Speak to people who have completed the climb. This can result in gaining some top tips such as, what gear to take (perhaps specialist items), good rest / shake out stances, or hidden holds etc. Their experiences can assist you with your aims.

Re-assurance of a soft landing! Soap on a Rope E5(6a) Llanberis Slate, Climber Mark Hedge by Geordie Wood.



3. Familiarity, although perhaps not ethically sound it has become increasingly common on routes these days to have a certain amount of inside information. This information may be as simple as an abseil inspection to clean the route whilst having a sneaky look at gear placements (thus providing some re-assurance) or holds. You may decide to climb the route on a top rope prior to a lead ascent and even rehearse the crux moves again and again. Therefore when on the lead you will know where the holds are enabling you to work hard and concentrate until the sanctuary of a good hold, resting ledge or bombproof runner may be reached.
4. Ensure that you are physically prepared before attempting the climb. i.e. that you are fit, currently climbing well and that food and fluid intake have been taken on board at the relevant and appropriate time.
5. Employ a belayer who you are familiar with, there cannot be any doubt regarding your belayer's competence when striving for new levels. If doubt occurs it will have a major effect on your mind games later.
6. Common sense perhaps but ensure your equipment is correctly prepared. Shoes should be clean and sticky ready for the moment that you step on to the rock, step off a mat or rucsac rather than the muddy floor. Your lead rack should be organised for optimum use, essential items of protection need to be close to hand and racked accordingly. The route may be sparsely protected or only accepts certain types of gear so do not take extra kit that will only serve to weigh you down. Short sport routes allow the bolts to be counted prior to climbing and guidebooks often give out this information, so take the correct amount of quickdraws for the job in hand.
7. Whilst on the route be economical with your effort (energy expenditure) on the easier sections as you are likely to need as much as you've got later. Try for a rest or shake out prior to the crux although I appreciate that this may be optimistic and a rare luxury! Physical techniques are well documented and coaching articles abundant but simple things to remember like locking off on a straight arm or leg and trying to stay in balance are of great importance.

Cognitive Coping (thought processes or mind names - to us mere mortals).

Above all else when encountering and dealing with problems on our selected route we must only think positive thoughts, dispel anything negative that comes to mind. Quite naturally several factors may crop up during the route's duration that will be of concern. Examples such as runner placements or more likely lack of placements! Lack of foot or hand holds, rock condition and even our own physical condition may occur. When or if these concerns arise an attempt must be made to reconstruct them in a way that will give these thoughts a more positive outlook or outcome. Lack of protection is one of the major worries to us as climbers and indeed this is one factor that can give a climb a greater adjectival grade such as a worrying E5 5c. I know of a couple of E1 4c's where a slip does not bear thinking about and what about those sandstone or gritstone solos. After all it is these high and hard grades that

so many climbers strive for. So if it necessitates climbing beyond poor runner placements or no runners we must actively avoid thinking of the consequences. This requires the removal of thoughts regarding the consequences from the mind or creating thoughts of a more comforting outcome. Focusing on the problem of the actual climbing and concentrating on the moves and the job in hand achieve this. Again, do not allow negative thoughts to develop as they are likely to overwhelm you. To prevent this from happening 'self talk' is a method of quelling negative thoughts. Re-assure yourself by thought, whisper or at the top of your voice! It occupies the mind, allows you to talk things aloud in a logical sequence and provides a tool for self-motivation.

Emotionally sensitive climbers (people who work themselves into a right old pickle) may find breathing control exercises beneficial. By regulating your breathing until it returns to an easy pattern allows your body to settle to a more composed state. As with 'self-talk' breathing control gives the mind additional matter to focus on.

Examples of 'self talk' in action:

Leading after top rope practice - *"I have done the moves, I know I can do the moves again."*

On a grade previously climbed - *"I know this grade, it cannot get any harder. Just a few moves and I'll be on better holds."*

"I have the strength and the skills to overcome this grade, I've done it before."

After training specifically for the route - *"Even if my feet slip I can still hold on with my hands and re-establish myself."*

"I'm strong."

In the words of Ron Fawcett filmed in action whilst employing his own 'self talk' *"C'mon arms do your stuff."*



First Ascent of 'Choose Life' F7a Abercynolwyn. Climber Mark hedge by Terry Taylor.

If all else fails! When the King is in the house and you are shaking all over, try singing 'Jailhouse Rock' and pretend you are doing these movements on purpose!!

Whatever the technique or method employed on your route it should be followed up with a rational analysis or evaluation of the situation and of the climb itself. During this review attempt to gain a true perspective of the situation but let it favour the more positive aspects. This permits you as an individual to store these points away for use on a later climb and start it with a strong positive attitude.

Glencoe 2000 - a good start

By Mike Cookson

"It looked horrible by head torch, the black pit of the gulley plunging away to oblivion."

January it had to be, the month for us to go to Glencoe in 2000, Ian and I set up the motorway in his mini. He may have seen sparks in his rear view mirror, he wasn't sure, however he didn't say "I think the exhausts come off". That is not Ian's style, he said "Mike, the exhausts HAS come off, oh no!

I always remember another climbing journey to Dovedale in a racing mini, the only difference was that Ian's mini had seats. We stopped, unhooked the exhaust pipe and bundled it into the car then Ian raced back, waking the whole of Birmingham, whilst I tried hard to avoid a face full of hot exhaust pipe. Ian's dad worked for a car hire firm and we caught a bus, with all our kit, to the firm, where we were treated to a smart little grey car to go away in.

After the long haul up to Glencoe we plodded up to the Coire Nan Lochan tents and all, arriving just after dark. There was an amazing canopy of stars, it felt great to be there, the soaring cliffs behind the coire were lit by the half moon, creating shadows that carpeted the snow-covered slopes.

We pitched camp and made our tea, I could hear Ian's home made chilli con carne bubbling away on his Primus stove whilst I did something with pot noodles and pitta breads. At

about 8.30, I heard a breathless panting outside the tent, "Oy mate," said an Australian accent, "Are you climbers?" "Yes we are" said Ian. "What's up?"

"There are two guys stuck in a gully up there and they can't get out because of the cornice, they've been there for four hours, can you help me to get them down?"

Ian sprang into action, packing his rope, donning harness and quickly boiling up a flask of cocoa. "Okay, we're coming," I said, trying hard to mask my own selfishness and thinking, "oh no, I hope they don't want a bed for the night!"

Sean, the Australian, set off first and we set off ten minutes behind, going as fast as we could. I was on the verge of puking onto the snow as the pot noodles, pitta bread, chocolate and tea all fought for possession of my stomach. Ian's chilli con carne had a similar territorial battle in his innards, but we made it to the top. There we stumbled upon Sean and sure enough about fifty feet below him there they were. It looked horrible by head torch, the black pit of the gulley plunging away to oblivion below them and a weighty cornice, poised like the sword of Damocles, above them.

"Throw plenty of rope down can you?" shouted one of the stranded pair, called Alex.

We threw down a good length and soon a girl called Haley was on her way up. We hauled her up through the cornice, where she half dug and half flailed her way through. This made a good hole for Alex. Once they were both out Ian's award winning cocoa went down a treat. They were fine and glad to be out after a lengthy stretch on a tiny ledge in the freezing cold and darkness. We said our good-byes and set off down. The tents were fine, but the cold has a way of creeping through the ground. This was the fourth time that I've camped here but it never gets any warmer, in fact once in the eighties I went down with hypothermia at this camp but Jim, my mate, looked after me. Strange that, him a paratrooper and me a guardsman!

In the morning poor Ian had just emerged to take a photo, when his stove fell over and set fire to his sleeping bag. "Oh no, the bags on fire," he yelled. The hole was as big as a football, things just weren't going to plan this century! The day had dawned murky and grey and the coire cliffs looked sombre, we set off late, ten o'clock, for Twisting Gulley, that already had two parties in it. Ian belayed me up the first pitch, I brought him up and we waited, dodging the inevitable showers of ice fragments. I set off on the crux pitch, where I promptly came off. Both my ice screws ripped out and I slammed into the gulley bed on my side and slid for forty feet. Ian held the fall and quickly took control, there is no one else that I would have asked for as a second at that time.

"You blithering idiot," I said to myself. "You've ruined a great weekends climbing!"

The trouble was my rib cage hurt and the muscles over it kept going into spasm. Ian lowered me for 150 feet then abseiled down to me as I lay on a snow ledge wincing and apologising. Ian was having none of that and quickly organised another 150 feet lower to another ledge in the snow. From there I stood up. The pain in my ribs was really bad. Ian walked me down to the tent and quickly organised help, including of all people, an orthopedic surgeon. He took me into the tent, prodded and poked me in a surgeons inimitable way and told me that nothing was broken but that I was going to hospital anyway, I didn't argue.

Everyone that Ian had organised helped carry my kit to the valley floor where Ian whisked me off to Fort William. I was whizzed into a casualty department and given morphine. "You've got a good slow pulse, but your BP's a bit haywire," said a nurse. I finally got round to ringing my understanding, forgiving, amazing wife, also a nurse, who said, "Get back to bed now!" I felt horribly sick and said goodbye, hung up and struggled back to bed. Then a nurse came and said that my wife had rung back to find out if I had made it from the phone back to the bed. I said that I had and almost said that I was as



Ian Fletcher in Twisting Gulley.

skilled at not puking onto the snow as I was at not puking onto hospital floors but decided that after saying all that I would have been sick anyway.

Ian spent the night in a B&B after a heroic day's work. In the morning he came back and a nurse said to me, "Your wife's on the phone and wants to speak to Ian." "I expect she wants to hear the truth", I said.

I've never met kinder and more generous hearted people than those we met in Scotland that weekend. Ian and I drove back, trying to make sense of everything. He kept making me laugh, recounting our great start, the rescue, the burnt bag, the fall, my rescue and of course that was the only time that my ribs hurt, when Ian, who had looked after me through it all, made me laugh!

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Lowering Off - are you safe?

By Major Paul Edwards

Crags in much of Europe and increasingly large areas in the United Kingdom are "equipped" for climbing. To you and I that generally means that the route is bolted. Many of these routes, especially at places like Boux, Volx, and Cima in France, Finale in Italy, or on our own native limestone crags involve climbing a single pitch of about 25 meters and then lowering off back to the floor. This is very much akin to the practice used on most indoor climbing walls. However unlike climbing walls many of these routes do not have a large fixed karabiner at the top, instead there will be two bolts connected by a chain and a steel ring. If the route is poorly equipped this may be a single bolt, or the bolts may be linked by a rope!

Over the past 10 years I have observed a variety of tactics being employed to allow lowering off without the requirement to leave a karabiner at the top. These have varied from excellent use of a recognized system to literally balancing untied on a tiny ledge whilst the rope is untied from the harness, threaded through the belay and then retied to the harness! More commonly I have observed climbers hanging from a single quickdraw whilst untying from the rope system. All of this is completely unnecessary, as long as the climber has at least one meter of slack and a screwgate karabiner the belay can be threaded without the leader exposing himself to unnecessary risk. This is clearly demonstrated in the cartoon series below. (Courtesy of MAMMUT).



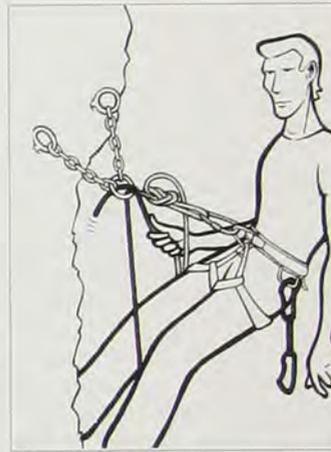
Having reached the belay the climber initially clips in using a quickdraw. The belayer then pays out some slack but DOES NOT take the leader off the belay.



The leader is now able to pull a bight of rope through the belay ring and tie a figure of eight in it.



Using a SCREWGATE karabiner the leader can now clip into his harness. (He is now effectively on a top rope through the top belay).



The belayer can now take the leader onto a TIGHT ROPE. This will allow the leader to undo the original knot from the harness and enable him to recover his quickdraw. The leader can then be safely lowered to the ground.

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Girls on top

By Capt Rachel Semple

"You are having a Giraffe!" – cried Rachel Semple as she was spammed by Maj Dave Baggaley to lead a team of girls to climb Island Peak as part of Ex HIMALAYA DRAGON. After all, I'm normally dragged along by the blokes as tail end charlie. I've never been to the Himalayas and I didn't know there were enough women in the AMA to make a female team!

Island Peak, also known as Imja Tse, at 6189 m is a fairly popular peak situated in the Khumbu region of Nepal. It requires little technical ability under normal conditions when climbing the tourist route from the south. Just as well really since our team didn't seem to be very experienced. However that was 18 months prior to the expedition and a lot can change, and it did!

During the course of the next 18 months a random mixture of girls from both the regular Army and the TA applied for the team and carried out the necessary training. Most were not your typical mountain gladiators but had been inspired by the idea of this expedition to give mountaineering a go. The final team consisted of 9 girls and a token bloke (MEDIC!). Capt Leigh Roberts RLC, Lt Louise Chandler RLC (V), Capt Bridget Smyth RLC, Capt Kath Palmer ETS, Capt Vicky Wentworth RLC, 2Lt Vic Norman BUOTC, LCpl Lorna Jackson AGC, Pte Sarah Lewis RLC (V) and LCpl Chris "Tina" Addison RAMC joined me as the intrepid adventurers destined for Island Peak. Guess who got no end of stick - not the duty chick this time! Luckily for Chris we travelled with another team, 3 Cheshire Regt (V) (known as the blokes' team). Their original plan was to traverse the North ridge but due to lack of sufficient technical leaders they decided to climb the same route as us.

The plan was to fly from Kathmandu to Lukla, walk into base camp, set up a high camp on the traditional South



Steel Bridge across Dudh Kosi. By Rachel Semple.

ridge route and go for it. Sounds easy, but even getting to Lukla is a serious hassle. Only 2 of the team made it there on the first attempt, the remainder joining them 24 hours later. As for the airstrip – near death experiences all round on impact! Thankfully our kit arrived intact; the blokes waited for 24 hours for theirs to show!

The trek to base camp predominantly follows the Everest Base Camp trek, turning off just before a village called Dingboche. We had arrived early in the season, which meant that the weather was poor and we spent the first few days surrounded by cloud, which made it a bit cold and depressing.

The average day on the trail involved the following; eating a high quality (not!) breakfast at the Tea House, strolling at a sedate pace for a couple of hours (note the terrain was not sedate), spending a couple of hours waiting for lunch and then not eating it. This was followed by a further two hours of walking to the next Tea House. The daily ritual of squabbling over what we were going to eat for dinner would then ensue. Apparently, if you all order the same food it comes quicker? I couldn't eat the stuff whatever flavour it was. Force-feeding was obviously the way forward. Bedtime was anywhere

between 1930 and 2100 hrs depending on how much of the blokes' cheating at cards you could stomach.

On day 2 of the trek we arrived at Namche Bazaar, home of cinnamon rolls and cups of hot chocolate. It was wet, miserable and a couple of us were beginning to feel fairly grim – lots of coughs and dodgy stomachs. After a rest day we reached Tengboche Monastery, a famous Buddhist Monastery. During the trekking season there are daily guided tours of the Monastery and it was definitely worthwhile taking the time to visit it. The following morning the clouds cleared at long last and we were rewarded with outstanding views of mountains all around us. Morale rose significantly and there was renewed energy in our steps. For the next few days we walked up the valley alongside Ama Dablam which surely has to be one of the most spectacular mountains in the world.

All of us suffered at some stage with the increased altitude but we saw our first real victim to it a couple of days later at Dingboche at 4300 m. Overnight Leigh had developed a bad chest cough and was feeling generally rough. Within 30 mins of the medic's diagnosis that Leigh's condition was deteriorating she was on her way to the Himalayan Rescue Association's medical

post at Pheriche, approximately 30 mins walk away. Coincidentally, we bumped into Chris Allewell with an ill member of his team and the two flew out together by helicopter to Kathmandu the following day. It was a sad loss as Leigh was one of the liveliest and most experienced members of the team and also a timely reminder of how quickly altitude can affect people with potentially devastating effects.

A subdued and fairly ill team trundled off towards Chukkung, the last settlement before the mountain at 4700m. Fatigue, the trots and vomiting were all making their presence felt, not always at an appropriate moment. We spent 3 nights at Chukkung attempting to recover before base camp. Meanwhile, the blokes also lost a team member. The weather was glorious and we were getting stunning views of the surrounding peaks including our peak - Island Peak.

We walked into base camp on day 10. It was a barren valley set on glacial moraine and damn cold. The porters flung up the tents and we all squeezed into the mess tent; a position we were to spend most of the next few days adopting. Fortunately it wasn't quite big enough for all 17 of us so it gave us a valid excuse to huddle closely together. We'd even begun to decide that the blokes were worth

knowing – not as good looking as the yaks admittedly but they'd do for central heating! Of course, the usual close proximity relationships were beginning to develop by this stage; Lorna with chocolate, Vic and Vicky with any available food, Kath and her tweezers and Bridget's with the loo tent! STOP FLIRTING! Sadly, Chris the medic was the next to fall ill and he had to descend to the medical post after one night at base camp, either that or he couldn't hack the pace of sharing a tent with Kath!

The most important event to occur at base camp was the Puja – a ceremony to appease the Gods (or good excuse for a booze up). Pasang, our Sirdar, led the ceremony which consisted of stringing our prayer flags across the valley, burning some juniper bushes, eating some food and, most importantly, drinking Chang, the local brew. We didn't get much done after that! It's amazing how easily you get pissed at altitude!

After 3 days at base camp waiting for the weather to improve we were definitely getting on each other's nerves. The blokes set off for high camp on 15 Oct. They had hired Pasang as a climbing sirdar to assist with fixing ropes on 120 m of steep Head Wall. The plan was that they'd leave the ropes in place for our climb – blokes have some use after all!

The following day we moved up to high camp after lunch. The weather was pretty bad and snowing quite a lot. The blokes passed through high camp on their way back down to base camp. They looked completely exhausted – not good for our morale but at least all seven of them had made it. We waited a further day for the snow to settle and then set off for the summit on 18 Oct. That day's wait nearly cost us the summit.

0200 hrs came around and it was amazing how no one wanted to get up in the cold to leave a warm doss bag, put on cold kit and attempt to force feed bacon and beans – yuck! (We've all had that feeling before!) One hour later and we were off, moving slowly up the steep rock band that became a disconcerting scramble in

places. Dawn saw us reaching the start of the glacier. At long last we had a view of the route ahead – and the hordes of other people ahead of us! By this stage the weather had begun to worsen, it was very cloudy and beginning to snow. Route finding wasn't difficult – just follow the team in front. At least the terrain was flatter and easier going. We roped up for the glacier with Louise and I leading teams of an equal mix of ability.

We eventually reached the bottom of the fixed rope; the head wall looked MASSIVE! The ascent was exhausting and all of us struggled to make it. Unfortunately, the rest of the world seemed to be descending at the same time and were kicking huge volumes of snow over us in the process – it's amazing how many languages you can find to swear in! It took us one hour to climb 120 m and at the top one of the girls was convinced she could go no further, decision time. The summit was only approximately 200m away with only a little bit of height gain. Half a Snickers Bar revived her spirits and 40 mins later we reached the top via a bucket seat belay. Hang on, this is supposed to be the Himalayas – big views etc, not bucket seats and buggers all visibility – sounds like Scotland to me! It was nearly 1300 hrs – we'd been on the go for 10 hours.

By this stage it had been snowing for some time and the emphasis was to descend as quickly as possible whilst it was still light. After a quick photo session where Vic just clicked 8 times with her camera, I lowered people down the last steep section and we moved slowly to the top of the head wall. Even abseiling down the head wall was a huge effort and it took us 45 mins before everyone was down. 'Man of the Match' for me was definitely Bridget who managed to have the rope sorted on every occasion so that there was no delay in moving off. At the bottom of the wall the light was fading and snow was covering what had previously been a motorway of a track! With some difficulty we made our way back to the top of the rock band where we were all relieved to see high camp far below with a couple of Sherpas making their way up to meet us.

We stumbled into camp at 1900 hrs, 17 hours after we'd started! The blokes were relieved to see us as we hadn't radioed since the summit – not enough time to stop and put the radio together. Even the simplest tasks took at least three times as long at altitude. Despite having eaten virtually nothing all day none of us could stomach much more than soup after which we crawled into bed looking forward to a long lie in.

No such luck! It continued to snow all night and the porters came round shaking the snow off the tops of our tents so that we wouldn't suffocate! base camp has been avalanched in the past and we woke up at 0600 to worried mutterings from outside. Yes, it was a prompt reveille followed by a quick retreat from Moscow to leave base camp. We were away by 0800 hrs, marching steadily, adrenaline keeping our weary bodies going before we reached Chukkung and relative safety. The march had been completed in nearly total white out – just following the train of climbers, porters and yaks as over 200 people made a mass exodus from base camp. All team members wore sunglasses and masses of sun cream. Not so the porters, some of whom suffered quite severely with snow blindness the following day.

A few days later saw all the team members reunited and celebrating a successful expedition back at Kathmandu. Appetites recovered and our insides reacted again – this time to good food! There was a strong feeling of achievement amongst the team. The relative inexperience of the team had led some of them to think that they would not make it. However, the old teamwork cliché pulled us all through and proved that we were capable of being part of a strong team – and we were GIRLS!



Exhaustion! Bridget climbing at dawn. By Rachael Semple.

KANGCHENJUNGA

There is no doubt that those who first climb Kangchenjunga will achieve the greatest feat in mountaineering, for it is a mountain which combines in its defences not only the severe handicaps of wind, weather and very high altitude, but technical problems and objective dangers even higher than those we encountered on Everest". John Hunt, leader of the 1953 Everest expedition.

Introduction

The British Services Kangchenjunga Expedition 2000 was the latest in the now well-established four-yearly major expeditions to 8000 metre peaks. The expedition comprised two teams of climbers who left the UK for Nepal at the end of March to climb Mt. Kangchenjunga (8,586 metres / 28,169 feet), the third highest mountain in the world and Ramtang Peak (6,700 metres / 22,000 feet), which is situated on the North side of Kangchenjunga.

Kangchenjunga – History

Kangchenjunga is rarely climbed due to its remote location and the fact that it has no easy routes, all of its faces being objectively dangerous and its ridges long and hard. After the first ascent of Kangchenjunga in 1955, by a British team via the South West Face, it was 22 years before the 2nd ascent by an Indian army expedition in 1977 via the East spur of the North ridge and a further 2 years before Doug Scott and party made the third ascent in 1979 from the North side of the mountain. Since 1955 around 60 ascents have been made of the main summit of Kangchenjunga, mostly from the North. This is on a par with success rates on K2 and far fewer than on Everest.

The Teams

The 14-strong Main Team was led by Lieutenant Commander Stevan Jackson (46) and was made up of 1 other member of the Royal Navy, 5 Royal Marines, 4 Soldiers and 3 members of the Royal Air Force. The team was exceptionally strong and well prepared following training in Scotland, Wales, Bavaria and the Swiss Alps during the last two years. At the same time a second team, the Junior Team, of 8 young Servicemen and 1 woman, led by 2 experienced mountaineers would attempt to climb Ramtang Peak, which had not been climbed since the first ascent by E. Schneider and Frank S. Smythe in 1930. The Ramtang team was led by Major Andy Edington (39) a Royal Engineer and included, as a mentor, Royal Marine Brigadier David Nicholls. This was to be the first experience of the Himalayas for most of these young people, from whom, it is hoped, would come the next generation of Service Himalayan climbers and leaders.

Finance and Support

The expedition cost about £150,000 in total, £50k for the Junior Team and £100k for the Main Team. 90% of this was raised from personal contributions and Service "non-public" funds.



Communications

The expedition website at www.bluedome.co.uk was updated regularly by both teams and proved to be a great success with over 80,000 hits. The email facility was brilliant for our morale and proved particularly popular with schools in UK and abroad asking questions about what we were doing. Being so contactable has its down side with one member receiving a "dear john" email and another a demand for increased alimony but on balance I would suggest that it would be irresponsible not to have the capability on future expeditions of this size and nature. The AMA radio set was also used.

The Approach to the Mountains

Both teams flew to Kathmandu on 27th March 2000 and then on to Suketar (altitude 1,800 metres) in the remote east of Nepal from where the walk-in to their respective Base Camps would start. After two weeks of walking through the beautiful and remote mountain scenery of north-eastern Nepal the teams reached Oktang where they separated to go their respective ways. The Main Team faced a hard day's trek (it became known as the "march or die day") to their Base Camp at Pache's Grave (5,400 metres) and the Junior Team a further weeks walking via the Mirgin La and Ghunsa to Pangpema. The walk-in was tough but enjoyable and started the physiological process of acclimatisation to high altitude and also improved fitness and further developed team bonding.

The Junior Team on Ramtang

The Junior Team were the only occupants of Pangpema for the 3 weeks or so that they were there. From Pangpema they headed south along the Kangchenjunga Glacier towards the northwest face of Kangchenjunga and established Camp 1 on the North side of the Glacier. They then turned west and established a camp at a height of about 6200m on the Mouse Glacier, below the south face of Ramtang. From that camp they climbed up to the East Ridge and intended to follow it to the summit. They failed by a whisker after being rebuffed at 6400 metres by hard blue ice, deep snow and deteriorating weather conditions and in the end they ran out of time. The following is the text of the message sent from the Main Team leader to Andy Edington, the Junior Team Leader on Thursday 4th May:

"Congratulations on putting up such a sterling performance on Ramtang. It was never going to be easy; it wouldn't have been worth forming a Junior Team if it was. This year has seen a lot of snowfall in the Kangchenjunga Himal and we are experiencing similar problems on this side of the mountain to those which have caused you to run out of time. However, I have no doubt that the whole of your team will have benefited enormously from the experience gained and that some of their names will feature again in future major British Service Expeditions".

The Main Team on Kangchenjunga

Because of its position at the extreme east of the Himalaya, Kangchenjunga experiences unique weather, which includes extreme



high winds and heavy snowfall. As the monsoon approaches it is preceded by high pressure that usually arrives over the mountain by the middle of May. This produces a couple of weeks of settled weather during which an attempt to reach the summit can be made. The expedition would need to be in a position to launch a summit bid when this brief weather window arrived. We arrived at Base Camp on 11th April after a desperately hard day's walk along the Glacier from Oktang and where we met for the first time our 4 Sherpas. Unusually, there were other expeditions on the mountain; a small Korean Team, a large Into-Tibet Border Police expedition, four Swiss Guides and eventually Alan Hinkes. The Koreans had arrived 10 days ahead of us and had established the route to Camp 1 on the top of "the hump" at 6200m. Using their fixed ropes saved us a lot of time and effort in getting our Camp 1 established. We got Camp 2 established at about 6700m just as quickly despite persistent heavy snowfall. The mountain certainly lived up to its reputation for bad weather and it snowed most afternoons and it was rare to get two decent days consecutively. Despite the weather and the loss of Neil Greenwood due to illness that resulted in having to evacuate him from the mountain by helicopter, which was a real blow to our morale, the team continued to forge ahead. Camp 3 proved more difficult to establish as the weather was persistently bad with a lot of high wind that made sleeping at Camp 2 almost impossible and the going was very tough but eventually we established the Camp at about 7300m on the edge of the great shelf. The lack of sleep and constant wading through deep snow was sapping the strength of the teams. On 11th May the weather was, if anything, even worse and Dan Carroll and Ian Venables finally decided to retreat to Base Camp leaving John Doyle, Ady Cole, Nima Dhorje and Pemba Norbu at Camp 3. On 12th the weather improved as predicted and during the day John and Co moved up to Camp 4 where they rested and prepared for a summit bid the next day. They left Camp 4 at 0200 whilst at Base Camp Pema, the Sirdar was burning juniper on the chorten (altar) and was chanting prayers to bring good luck to the summit team. The day had dawned crystal clear, very cold and with virtually no wind - ideal summit day conditions. However, there was still a great deal of deep soft snow on the mountain that would make the going very tough for anyone on the mountain. With the exception of Alan Hinkes, we were the only expedition on the mountain as the remainder had retreated in the face of the snow conditions and were intent on fixing the route from Camp 4 to the summit.

Andy Hughes reported in at 0600 that he was about to move up to Camp 3 and that he could see John's team making good progress and that they were about halfway up the "Gangway". At 0637 John and Co became visible from Base Camp and the rest of the team gathered to watch their slow but remorseless upward progress. All of the other expeditions also became aware that there was a summit bid on and the Base Camp area was soon alive with people watching the progress of our four climbers and the Koreans rushed out their camera crew who recorded the ascent. The other teams also rushed climbers back up the hill a day earlier than planned to take advantage of the track we were putting in. Streams of tiny figures appeared with big loads on their backs heading back up to Camp 1.

By 1000 the four had reached the top of the "Gangway" and turned right towards the summit. A little while later they radioed Base Camp to report that they had reached an altitude of 8250 metres and had been wading through waist deep snow for most of the way and that there was a lot more to come. They very tired and were about to start descending back down the mountain. However, after a couple of minutes they had a rethink and decided to give it another final push and off they went again.

By 1200 they had made excellent progress and were on the summit slopes and at 1403 we received the call we had been waiting for from John Doyle "Base Camp this is Kangchenjunga Summit". The Indians and Koreans were whooping with delight and the Swiss radioed to give us their congratulations. Not to be left out Andy Hughes called up from Camp 3. The whole mountain seemed to be alive with people jumping for joy. Being British we celebrated with a cup of tea.

This was the first ascent of the mountain and any other 8000 metre peak this year (and therefore this millennium) and the first of Kangchenjunga since spring 1999. We were the first British expedition to summit on Kangchenjunga via the South West Face since the first ascent on 24th May 1955 by George Band and Joe Brown. The summit was achieved without oxygen and without fixed ropes from the Gangway. John and Ady are the first British Servicemen to climb



Kangchenjunga since Tony Streater on 25th May 1955 and (we think) are the 10th and 11th Britons to summit on the mountain by any route. John Doyle is the only British Serviceman to have climbed 2 8000 metre peaks and Ady is the first serving Royal Marine to climb one of the 8000 metre peaks. Ady Cole had replaced the incapacitated Dave Bunting on the first summit team and may be the first ascensionist of Kangchenjunga who won his place because he correctly guessed which hand a 'midget gem' sweet was in.

Over the next few days the remainder of the team move up to Camp 4 to try and follow in their footsteps but unfortunately the weather window closed and all were defeated by deep snow and high winds. The Koreans and Indians managed to put one member each on the summit, using oxygen but the other expeditions failed.

Conclusion

Success came because we had a tremendous team of very talented and dedicated individuals who worked extremely hard for each other on the mountain. The Sherpas were a great help with load carrying and left us to concentrate on the task of putting the route in and we were in the right place at the right time when the weather window opened. I believe that our success was founded in Bavaria in February 1999 during the two-week training package arranged by Dave Bunting that welded the team together extremely well. For me personally it was an enormous privilege to have been allowed to lead such a great team.

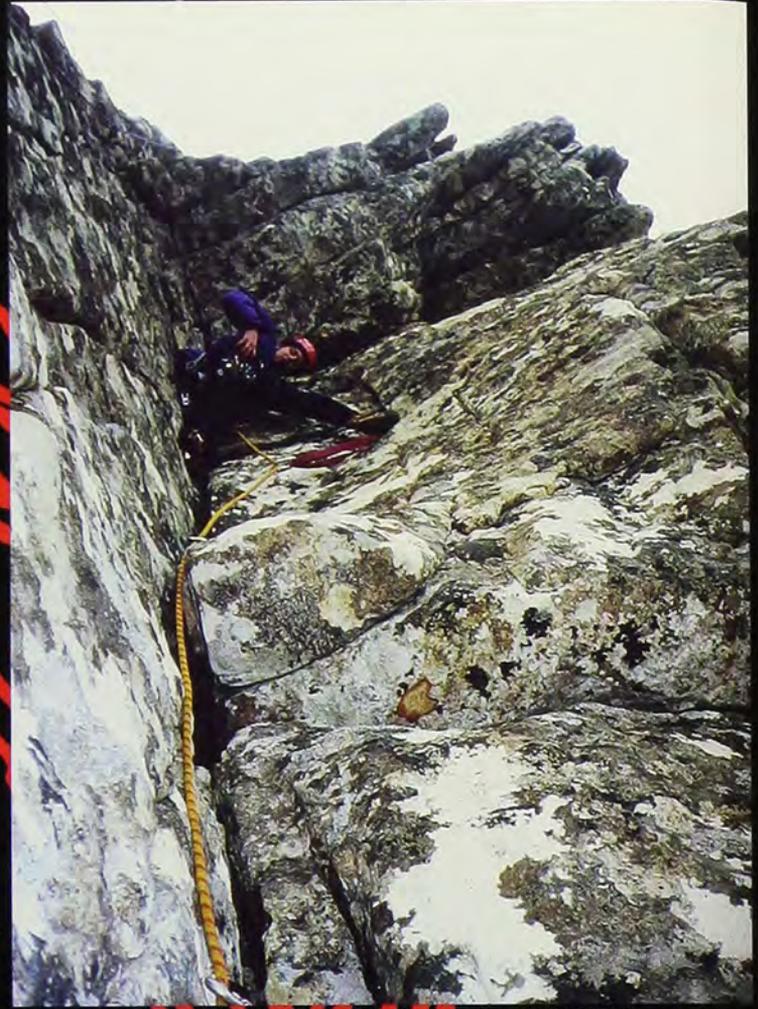
The Future

So what does the future hold? Planning for 2004 has already started and the expedition Higher Management Committee will form up soon and start the process of finding a leader and agreeing an objective. My own view is that the RAF should provide the leader, as they have never led one of the quadrennial expeditions. As for an objective I would look at attempting another one of the 8000 metre peaks in Nepal but that will be up to the leader. There is one thing though of which I am absolutely certain, it would be very difficult to surpass our achievements on Kangchenjunga so I am not available. I probably couldn't get into the team anyway!





LCpl Ross on Espolon Central (Grade 4). Puig Campana. By Lt T M Noakes



W. Falkland. Tower Rocks. Felix Hearn on Illuminating HVS 5a.

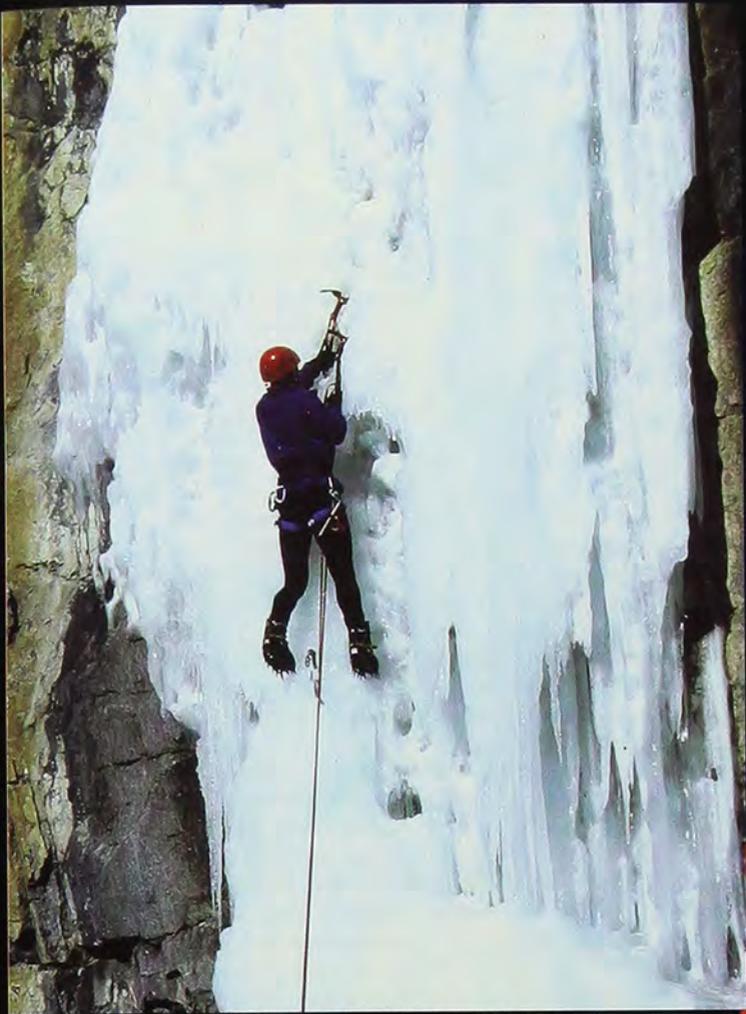


Nigel Shepherd climbing in Rocklands, Cederberg, Western Cape. By Julian Fisher.



Guy Holwill on 'Super Model' Gordens Bay.

AM Climber ACTI



SSgt Mark Hedge on 'hers' WI 4, Grotto Canyon.

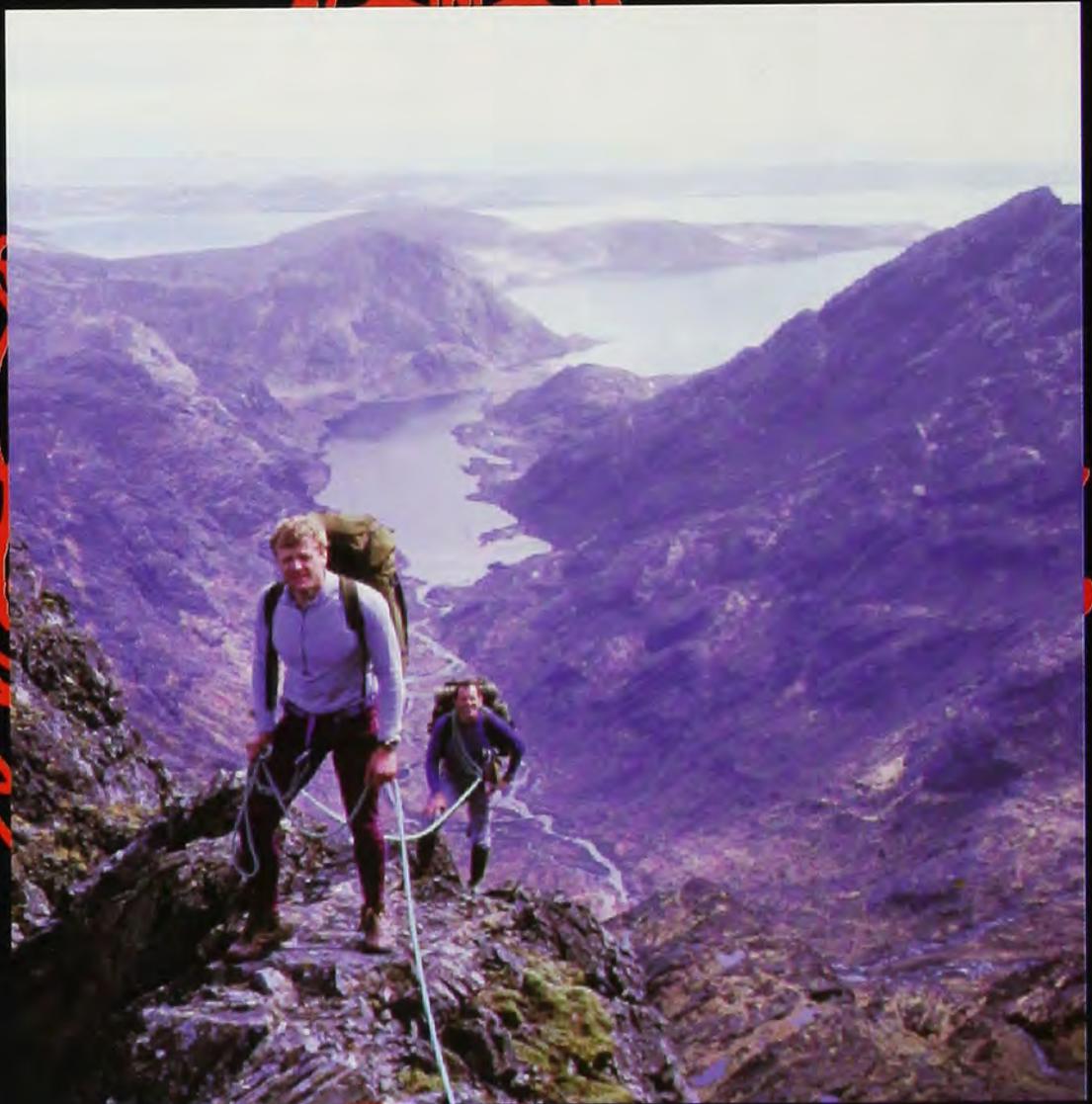


Steve Willson being put right again! By his Son Joshua. By Tim Bird.

MA ers in TION



s Bay, Western Cape. By Julian Fisher.



Spring on the Cuillim. By Paul Edwards.

Waterfall Ice of the Canada

By SSgt Mark Hedge APTC

This article is compiled from information and personal experience gained whilst on Ex Ice Dragon the Army Mountaineering Association's ice climbing trip to Canada. The expedition was organised and led by Capt Kevin Edwards, APTC. We based ourselves at Trails End, home of AT for BATUS. Superb facilities and hospitality, thank-you. The biggest thanks goes to Capt Edwards and the eleven other athletes for their teamwork, humour, enthusiasm and giving me the motivation to ascend the vertical without a piece of slate in sight! This article will hopefully enthuse and provide a guide for your future expedition to this wonderful part of Canada. Give me a call you need instructors!

The native rock climbers of the Canadian Rocks have a very short season, comparable to that of our snow and ice climbers in the U.K. They can suffer up to seven months surrounded by frozen gullies, waterfalls and iced up mountain routes. Bad news if you hanker for rock, heaven if you live for ice. Let me take you on a whistle stop tour of the popular routes in the Banff / Canmore area, the main region for Canada's convenience ice. Bear in mind this is just a brief selection in a concentrated area and there are hundreds of quality routes to choose from.

By booking a flight from London to Calgary (eight hours) then travelling by vehicle West from Calgary to Canmore (two hours) you could in theory be on the cold stuff in little over ten hours. Acclimatise on the plane by taking ice with your gin and tonic whilst reading the guidebook and you're quids in! Twenty minutes on from Canmore is the much larger town of Banff home of the many mountain-sport related festivals. Both of the venues have copious amounts of accommodation, shops and pleasant bars. Indeed it would be foolish not to sample the

latter and miss out on all forms of local culture, beer is roughly the same price as dear old blighty and eating out is extremely cheap. A vehicle is essential to try the varied climbing locations, fortunately fuel is very inexpensive. Another thing that is also essential in a park is a motor vehicle permit, these can be purchased from any park information centres.

Guaranteed climbing conditions are from November through to April with probably February / March being best due to the warmer temperature, softer ice and trails broke to the base of routes. Cheers easy! The warm Chinook wind creates these ideal ice climbing conditions, this is a natural wind native to these parts not the downdraft from a chopper! Whilst on the subject of choppers, Banff national park has a free helicopter rescue service but don't use this as an excuse to launch yourself, the service is purely for Banff and the airborne do not bounce well. Temperature plays an integral role in deciding whether a route is in or out of condition. The possible effects are: Thickness of the ice, reliability of screw placements, melting ice blocks and avalanche threat. Avalanche is a very real danger on mountain waterfalls, virtually all routes have large accumulation bowls near the top pitches. So put your Scottish winter heads on and think about snow pack, rising temperatures and large snowfalls. Fortunately cornice collapse and exits do not come into the equation.

Virtually all routes have a walk off. Some involve bashing through trees and wading through thigh deep snow but with no dangers and the others are simple yomps. The area

has a high grizzly bear population but at this time of year they won't bother you as they've all pigged out and got their heads down for winter. Waterfalls located in deep sided channels and hard to exit canyons have fixed bolt belay stations or trees equipped with abseil points, so descent is relatively straightforward. On wide curtain-like falls carry some tat or thick prussic cord and familiarise yourself with the construction of Abalakov threads (simply known as ice screw threads). Many of these are in-situ once the season is underway, check them thoroughly but in general the sun has little effect on these anchors unlike metal in ice.

Before jumping onto a route, first it would be sensible to understand the local grading system, which is not an awful lot different from our own. Routes have a technical grade and a commitment grade. The technical grade has the prefix WI (waterfall ice) and has degrees from 1 to 8. Guidebooks hasten to add that as yet no-one has dared to claim the first ascent of a WI 1 so don't waste time scouring the guidebooks trying to locate one of these as a warm-up. This technical grade accounts for the pure nature of the climbing, locals and expatriots reckon these grades to be roughly one grade down from the British system. i.e. WI 5 is equivalent to British VI. On reaching WI 4 a plus sign is added between grades: 2, 3, 4, 4+, 5, 5+, 6 etc. To complement this relatively simple system is the commitment grade indicated in Roman numerals, I through to VII. This takes into account the length and difficulty of the approach, descent, length of climb, sustained nature and

SSgt Mark Hedge on 'Hers' W1 4, Grotto Canyon.



Canadian Rockies

objective hazard. Before you become too disillusioned virtually all walk-ins are on flat easy ground with a short ascent to the base of the route. I would love to accompany a Canadian to Stob Coire Nan Lochan in the middle of a Scottish winter and ask what grade they thought that might be. Boomerang Gully with a commitment grade VI?

Kananaskis Country: This is the closest climbing area to the lights and streets of Calgary and has a choice of both creek and mountain based routes. Chantilly Falls is found in Evan-Thomas Creek and requires a forty-five minute walk to reach its base along flat forest trails. Chantilly is given WI 2 and is a very good introduction to waterfall ice although the upper sections may be as steep as Scottish III / IV depending on conditions. At 100m in length, the ground is reached in two simple abseils from equipped trees getting you home in time for tea and medals! Mount Kidd's lower to mid section is the home to the 350m long Sinatra Falls. This must have been one of Frank's early routes as the difficulties are low, in fact the more height gained the easier the pitches become. Also graded WI 2 and generally at quite an amenable angle it pleasantly meanders up the hillside. The Falls have some avalanche danger but would require the release of large snow accumulations to reach the top pitch. Walking off is straight forward, pick any line in the direction of your vehicle and off you go.

The Bow Valley: Named after the river that runs from beyond Lake Louise in the North-West to way past the town of Canmore in the South-East. The Bow is kept topped up by an array of waterfalls and lakes. Canmore Junkyards provide the ultimate in convenience ice, virtually sited in the town itself but if you are lazy enough to drive to the parking

spot the walk-in will take but a couple of minutes. Ideal as a top roping area, it is made up of several tiers of ice bulges allowing you to pick a line as easy or difficult as required. Junkyards is home to only one true route, Scottish Gully (WI 2/3) which is very Celtic in appearance apart from the abundance of ice! A full rope length is required to top out, the first few feet provide the only difficulties and walking off provides no problem at all.

A few miles North-West of Canmore just off the Trans-Can highway hiding behind one of the many mineral processing plants is the magical Grotto Canyon. By following a symmetrical laid pavement of ice through a steep sided gorge lined with sport climbs a T junction is reached. This junction houses the routes His, Hers and Grotto Falls. Grotto Falls at 55m in length is the longest route here. A relatively straightforward WI 3, fully equipped for the simplest of descents and requiring but a handful of ice screws for adequate protection on the way up. The most visually pleasing climbs originate as seepage lines oozing from a vertical limestone wall. His and Hers go at WI 4 and although a step up in technicality, problems last for just 12m. Hers, the right hand pillar often forms a tube at mid height allowing a perfect rest spot before heading out towards the lower-off chain. His is prone to suffering from a breakaway of ice at the base making it a bit tricky to ascend and structurally unstable on occasions.

North-West of Canmore lies Mount Rundle home of many high tech and futuristic routes but also home to the classic Professor Falls one of the Rockies' top twenty climbs. Most lines can be viewed from the highway, the blue ice of Professor's positively shines through the trees. Parking at



Pitch One, Professor Falls. By Mark Hedge.

the golf course road in Banff allows a one and a half hour walk-in, most of which is on metalled road and forestry track. First glimpse of the falls is very impressive it is common to see a climbing party on every pitch such is the popularity of this line. Most of the pitches are a full rope length at WI 4, with approximately eight true pitches from start to finish. The first and last being both steepest and longest. At most belay stances bolts and chains can be found so abseil retreats are an option however most folk opt for the walk-off. Considering the fall's 280m climb, the descent takes but a short while. Also seen from the road just before entering the town of Banff with a very short walk-in is another top twenty classic, Cascade Waterfall. The condition of this waterfall may be judged from the road, be warned avalanches are commonplace given the right factors. Cascade is a grade down from Professor Falls but still a reasonably long route so

the day should be combined with a meal and a few beers in Banff to round events off nicely.

Lake Louise is situated at the North-Westerly end of the Bow Valley and is a mecca for tourists and climbers alike. Tourists go mad for the beautiful mountain scenery, the chateau, lakeside walks, ice sculptures, skating, sleigh rides and so the list goes on. Climbers head for Louise Falls, 110m of WI 5. The first two rope lengths lead to a large shelf below the crux pitch. This next pitch requires a decision of whether to run it out or place a few screws to avoid a potentially nasty fall. Success brings sanctuary in the form of an ice cave, its size depends on the conditions. Framed by chandeliers of ice on all walls bar the keyhole entrance it should normally house a party of three comfortably. Once inside the horrors of the previous pitch are erased from the mind and a calmness descends over the body. Don't relax too much as at least one

more pitch must follow including a tricky exit on thin ice and tree roots, but for now chill out and bring up your second.

A trip to Haffner Creek just West of Banff via the Radium Highway (Highway 93 South) is very worthwhile. The first view of Haffner after the short walk-in is impressive, although the ice never exceeds more than 25m in height the entire venue is a frozen amphitheatre. As with most creek and canyon areas it contains many summer limestone sport routes which look good quality entertainment. Because of the off vertical nature of the crag many of the lines take the form of vertical curtain climbs hanging clear of the walls. Where the rock is overhanging and the ice does not reach the floor locals have taken to dry tooling to reach their precious material, utilising the summer

clips until it is time for ice screws to come into play.

Yoho National Park: Heading just a few miles West of Lake Louise takes us out of Alberta and into British Columbia and Yoho National Park. Before reaching the town of Golden the road travels through Kicking Horse Canyon where roadside ice can be found. From the parking bay you could belay in the comfort of your vehicle on Pretty Nuts WI 4, although not advised. Take a walk down the rail track and the 100m high Riverside comes into sight. This friendly waterfall goes at WI 3 and is best climbed in three pitches. Being quite a wide formation there is room for several parties on the route, only the last pitch should be devoted to a single climber due to it being quite narrow. On the same road from Golden to Lake Louise is the tiny village of Field, please

ensure you don't blink! Above this small hamlet beyond the worrying avalanche signs is Mount Dennis and a veritable beer festival. Carlsberg Column, Guinness Gully, Labatt's Lane, Pilsner Pillar, Heineken Hall, Guinness Stout and Cascade Kronenbourg. Feel intoxicated yet? An entire week could be devoted to this area alone, but note that most routes are of a high grade. We decided to sample Guinness Gully. Of its 245m course the final pitch provides the biggest surprise, 50m of WI 4 raises its head and laughs just as fatigue sets in. At first glance the wall looks enormous and doubt springs to mind as to whether our British length ropes will reach the tree belays. Doubt prompted a hanging belay at 10m to avoid any margin for error, the subsequent abseil made a mockery of this decision. If the other lines of the venue live up to

this gully's quality (the guidebook tells us they do) then Field could be home for a while.

So there we have it, the ultimate winter playground? There are few places around the world where the ice is on tap, virtually guaranteed and such a large concentration of routes in an accessible area. Also the ethics and etiquette of the climbing itself are similar to that of the U. K. Plus, plenty of scope for getting scared. Whilst on the last pitch of Guinness Gully a friend commented that his fingers were becoming very cold but he knew the reason behind this. His reckoning was because of fear; all the blood was rushing to his sphincter!! Of course a trip to the Canadian Rockies does not necessitate pushing the grades there are plenty of classic routes to enjoy without having to insulate your fingers.

Army Sport Climbing Championships 2000

By WO2 Mike Smith REME

This year saw the Army Sport Climbing Championships move to the biggest location to date, the Welsh International Climbing Centre (WICC) near Cardiff. The centre is the largest purpose built climbing wall in Europe and was a perfect venue for the championships. Entries were up on last year with a record number of advance entries. On the day there were 97 Regular Army, TA and OTC individual climbers and 8 teams taking part in what continues to be an extremely friendly and good natured competition.

As usual the Championships were well supported by our principal sponsor Cotswold Essential Outdoor who donated trophies and £200 worth of Cotswold vouchers. Ropes and several prizes for the event were provided by High Places. HB provided belay devices and prizes for the team competition. Entre Prises, builders of the WICC

supplied a number of small prizes for the fun events. We are always indebted to our sponsors as without their support the Army Championships would not take place - please reciprocate and purchase their gear whenever possible. All sponsors deal with HM forces at contract prices.

The VS category was slightly oversubscribed and required the use of two elimination routes. This proved to be a controversial move as although checked several times by the route setter one route was slightly easier than the other. The cut was made and sadly several competitors who reached the top of the right hand route were eliminated on time. A short list of 17 competitors went through to the VS final. This was on a slightly overhanging wall which had a few well spaced holds. A difficult move at half height ejected half of the field,

then another long reach for a medium sized hold ejected the rest - despite this large amounts of grit and determination were in evidence throughout the final. It was Sig Peter Goddard of 11 Sig Regt who was the only male competitor to top out on the VS route. This was an excellent effort on a grade 6a+ route.

The HVS category is always a hotly contested event and this year was no exception. It took several hours to thin out the 35 competitors, which produced a short list of 10 competitors. Time constraints were the reason of such a savage cut. Amazingly for the second year running several climbers managed to climb the final route. This weaved

Rachael Kelsey in the E2 Final



its' way through two massive overhangs. The six climbers who topped out went on to climb the E2 elimination route. None of the Super Finalists managed to top out on this demanding route but Cpl Woody Woodhead managed a move more than that Cpl Ewan Whitmey and is now the HVS champion.

Numbers for the E2 category were down on last year, notable omissions were, Capt Steve Blake, Capt Mac MacKay, WO1 Graham Carter, SSgt Mark Hedges and yours truly even more surprising was the absence of the 1999 Champion Tpr Nathan Pike. Hopefully they will be available for the Interservice Championships later this year.

The elimination route took a direct line through the double eight metre overhanging wall which has to be seen to be appreciated. Although most of the field cruised past the first overhang it was the second that caused most problems. Rope drag and awkward moves on the lip contrived to eject all but two climbers. Pte Rachel Kelsey (who elected to climb E2 and not in the female category) gave an impressive demonstration of strength, fitness and control as she made easy work of both overhangs and the final headwall. Rachel was looking good as a possible Championship winner at the end of the elimination round.

Six competitors made the cut for the final. This was an unrelenting brutal 7a+ route which overhung from the floor to the top. Unfortunately Rachel Kelsey was unable to reproduce the same form as in the elimination round. LCpl Laurence Owen climbed comfortably past the previous high point and was only four moves from the top when he ran out of steam. He was beaten to the Cotswold shield by a second impressive display of climbing by OCDT Tom Parsons who won by one move. Third place was Capt Richard Baker and fourth was Pte Colin Marsh. A full set of results will appear on the AMA website: www.thema.org

The first of two changes to this years competition was the introduction of a separate

Female competition. This event was won by LCpl Jackie Spong, she was the only female to climb the VS final route. It is hoped the separate category will encourage more females to enter the competition.

The second change was the new Team Competition. This produced an exciting and challenging event. A team of four climbers raced against the clock to complete two separate routes. A simplified scoring system negated the need for set routes with teams free to make up their own choice of holds. To complete the route disks (to simulate protection points) were touched in numerical order - a bit like vertical orienteering. The numbers equated to points. Frantic communication ensured a sense of urgency was maintained throughout the 18 minutes. Manchester & Salford UOTC, which consisted of 2 males and 2 females collected the most points and were clear winners, 4 Regt AAC were second with Wales UOTC third.

Several big changes are planned for next year; the VS Category will be replaced by a Novice Category. This will be designed for young soldiers, ATR's etc and those who have only recently started climbing. The emphasis will be on introducing personnel to Sport Climbing without the competitive pressure. VS climbers will be absorbed into the new HVS Category. This will have a larger spread of prizes and will be ultimately for those who climb well but do not have access to a training facility. The E2 category will be expanded to encompass the E1 category and will be renamed OPEN Category. It is hoped that in future the Army team will be drawn from this category each year. The spread of prizes will be increased to separate classes of Regular, TA and OTC. The Army Champion will receive the Cotswold Shield irrespective of service engagement.

Finally, a big thank you to all the AMA members who assisted on the day, without your selfless efforts the event would not be the success it is.



Tackling the first roof on the E2 Eliminator.

PTARMIGAN LODGE

NEWTONMORE, INVERNESSHIRE, PH20



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Seven go mad in

By Lt T M Noakes

In November of last year I was fortunate enough to lead a rock-climbing exercise to the Costa Blanca in Spain for three weeks. Exercise LIZARD-ROCK BACKSTOP aimed at qualifying three successive groups of six soldiers in the rock-climbing proficiency award. The participating soldiers were all from 7 Signal Regiment, most of whom had only recently returned from Operations in Kosovo. Some of the soldiers returned early from their post operational leave to take part in the exercise. The previous rock climbing experience of the soldiers varied considerably from novice to indoor lead-climbers. All of them were to find the multi-pitch limestone crags of the Costa Blanca an eye opening, and challenging experience.

The original idea was born from the knowledge that under the remodelled adventure training system a unit JSRCI is encouraged to supervise and instruct rock climbing proficiency courses for soldiers within their unit. Thus encouraging young soldiers to participate in AT activities early in their career and foster development towards becoming an instructor. This opportunity was like a red-rag to a bull. Having recently passed my JSRCI during my R&R from Kosovo in May upon my return from Operations in August I set the wheels in motion to enable Lizard-Rock Backstop to be born. Many of you will recognise this as a 'Hot-Rock' style Exercise for the soldiers of a particular Regiment.

This was the first full scale Adventure Training Exercise that I have organised through the military system and in hindsight I hope it will not be the last. I have certainly learnt some lessons that will make such a task in future less draining. Like many other Exercise organisers there were moments when I swore 'never again', when my instructors pulled out days before kick-off and had to be replaced at the last minute. That said, the appreciation of the eighteen soldiers involved and the quality of the memories that I take away were more than worth the effort.

The Exercise was organised so that the instructional team was based in Spain for the whole period whilst three groups of six soldiers flew out successively from Germany to participate in their one-week course. Each course ran Monday to Friday allowing the weekends free for instructor training! Our permanent base was a Villa called 'Casa Mabení' in La Fustera on the outskirts of Calpe. The Villa not only provided a hard base from which to conduct evening teaching sessions and lectures, but the self catering

aspect provided the flexibility required to make the most out of the time available.

The instructional team consisted of WO2 Mike Holman MIC, Lt Tania Noakes JSRCI and Course Provider, 2Lt Richard Vowles JSRCI currently at RMAS, ably assisted by Cpl Ewen Whitney a JSRLT with experience above many active JSRCIs. My thanks have already been extended to them all for stepping in at the last minute in the knowledge that without them this excellent opportunity may have been lost. I know that they all enjoyed the experience and hope that there will be many a reunion in future!

The Costa Blanca is renowned amongst British climbers for providing an excellent winter-sun climbing experience on both bolted and traditional routes. Three weeks are barely enough to scratch the surface of what is available. There is a wealth of venues of very different character all within one-hours' drive from Calpe. These varied from small, difficult but bolted sport crags, to single and multi-pitch roadside crags and sea cliffs. There are also plenty of long multi-pitch crags with straightforward access and very long Multi-Pitch Mountain Routes for the full-on Mountain Day experience. If you haven't climbed at Puig Campana whilst in the area where have you been? (See photo for a rock-climbing haven)

The variety of climbing sites available allows most weather to be dealt with. If it is raining in the mountains it is usually dry on the coast and for those rare days when it is raining everywhere some specific routes stay dry. Out of twenty-one climbing days only two were rainy. On the first the corner route of Povlos Magicos on the Penon D'lfach was found to be dry and on the second the rain had cleared sufficiently by midday to visit Toix Oeste and conduct Lead Climbing Instruction. The areas, which we used during the course of the three weeks, included, Toix Este and Oeste, Candelabra Del Sol, Mascarat and Aguja Inferior, Penon D'lfach, Gandia, Sella Cul Del Rino, Sella The Divino and Puig Campana, (a pretty busy three weeks!)

The area lends itself very well to teaching a group of reasonably strong novices. The courses that were run covered in depth the multi-pitch climbing system and introduced all the students to leading their own climbs by the end of the week. I would mark out two particular elements which were key to the success of running these rock-climbing proficiency courses in such a challenging environment. The first was an element of selection and training of the candidates before the Exercise proper. From the start it was emphasised that the exercise was aimed primarily at identifying potential future instructors and the level would be pitched as such. By far the most important element however

Puig Campana

Spain!



Hanging about in Spain. By Tim Noakes.

was the fact that all four instructors are currently active rock climbers at a level above British HVS/E1 and all had a true commitment to their sport. This allowed the students the chance to draw on over forty years worth of climbing experience, and gave the instructors an opportunity to introduce newcomers to the sport on a very personalised basis.

Although the number of easy climbs in the area is low, those that exist are of high quality and require placed protection throughout thus allowing the students to learn traditional climbing skills. The quality of the bolted protection on most climbs 6a or above was found to be excellent, however on routes of a lower grade a climbing rack was taken and invariably used. Unless you get a perverse thrill out of some of the

Sig McClaren at Foix Este.



coat-hanger heads that we found instead of bolt hangers. The level of climbing difficulty meant that the students were significantly challenged from day one and that the pace of the course was unrelenting. Their learning curve was necessarily steep and for the most part all the students coped very well. I cannot deny that the Costa Blanca is an area that forms a deep impression on inexperienced and experienced climber alike. (All of the instructors plan to return.)

Some of the longer routes subjected the soldiers to a level of exposure akin to nothing they had experience before. Some found this a humbling experience and others found it liberating. The students were thoroughly challenged and in hindsight all participants enjoyed their course without exception. To add a further insight into the rewards of such a challenging introduction to the sport here is Signaller Clare Davies, aged 19, who joined 7 Signal Regiment in the Summer of 1999 in her own words.

"As a Novice climber I found this 5 day course in the Costa Blanca extremely inspiring. I learnt a lot in the five days, more than I imagined I would, from basic rope techniques, to ethics in the mountains. The multi-pitch climbs were amazing, even though the weather was not perfect on the first couple of days the views were spectacular. I didn't realise there was so much opportunity for novices like myself. A few of the pitches were very challenging and some of us coped better than others, but all of our climbing skills had improved by the end of the week and all of us had thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. I would be extremely pleased if I was to see more Adventure Training Exercises like this in future. I gained a lot from the five days training and would like to see others given this experience also."

It was particularly encouraging that the feedback at the end of the course was so very positive. Of seventeen students who attained the award sixteen said that they would continue the sport in one form or another, with at least ten who were keen to do more multi-pitch climbing and learn to instruct others in the sport. For each course an instructor was allocated two students for the duration of the week, and some of these RCP partnerships have endured to continue rock-climbing in their own time. This is after all what we all hope will happen after attending an RCP course!

I am with 7 Signal Regiment at least until the summer months of 2000 and plan to use the time to foster the continuation training of these budding rock-climbers. Some of them are ready to take their rock-leader training already and will be visiting one of the Joint Services Centres for the first time later this year. Although I am planning further Expeditions for the Regiment later this year I hope to run additional RCP courses for the soldiers who missed out on this opportunity over several weekends at my current local crag- Freyer!

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Ice Magic

By Lt Diamond RA

When the idea was introduced for the YO's course at Larkhill to travel to Chamonix and carry out adventure training in the area, including an attempt to climb Mont Blanc itself, competition for places was fierce. Operational requirements of our new regiments and difficult financial situations for a few meant that the numbers were eventually brought down to five YO's and the Senior Instructor, Major Cameron RA. The groups experience in all things mountaineering was varied, from winter mountain warfare commando trained to rock climbing instructor down to myself who had previously only managed the tourist route of Mt Kinabalu and some miserable attempts on a few climbing walls at school.

Unfortunately the commitments of the British Army were such at that time that trying to get hold of any Army qualified Alpine mountaineering instructors was nigh on impossible plus everyone was going away to the Himalayas for some reason? So it was decided that we would find some local French guides once the expedition arrived in Chamonix.

With all the equipment collected from the Thatcham depot (brand new North Face kit!) the expedition set out by minibus to Chamonix. After an uneventful but incredibly long drive we arrived in Chamonix early in the morning at a time far too early to be awake at, so we decided to take a nap in the minibus. At a far more civilised hour when the rest of the world had decided to get up we awoke, and were greeted by the first of many fantastic mornings. After a cafe au lait, we wandered into town to find the Office de Tourism and the Maison de Montagne. With the aim of the expedition being to experience mountaineering at altitude with

the ultimate aim of ascending Mont Blanc via the Goutier route we were all disappointed to find that the Goutier hut was fully booked until the end of August, despite having 116 beds apparently! However things improved when we were lucky enough to find two very experienced, very friendly guides Bernard and Gerard. Although Gerard's English wasn't great his

been, and Andy Howell and John Catto impressed us all with their spider like climbing ability.

The second day was an early starter for the group as it had been decided to blow out the cobwebs with a nice long and steep walk. A non-technical ascent up Plan Praz and Les Brevant (2525m) got

"As we climbed, the intermittent breaks in the cloud revealed the true exposure."

enthusiasm was, and it was eventually decided that we would make an attempt on Mont Blanc du Tacul (4248m) from the Aiguille de Midi as well as an introductory day of winter mountaineering ascending the Petit Aiguille Vert (3512m).

Having confirmed the most important points of the expedition we then set off to find our accommodation for the week. Located in Les Bossons beneath the Bossons glacier and Mont Blanc we found our log chalet. With a fantastic view of the mountains the chalet had an idyllic setting for the week.

It had always been decided that before any serious mountaineering was undertaken the team would carry out some rock climbing and a day of mountain walking to get us mentally prepared and acclimatised. So the first afternoon found us rock climbing at Servoz training in single pitch techniques and basic climbing skills including belaying and knot tying. Major Cameron found out much to his disgust that his grip and balance were not what they had once

the blood pumping. At the very top of the walk the group reached the beginnings of the snow line. After having lunch at the summit we descended from Refuge Bel Lachat and Plan Lachat. All in all it was a good taste of the physical effort needed on the constant uphill struggles that were to come later in the week. It also led to the author going out and buying a set of walking poles. Having never experienced using them before I have now come to the conclusion that they are the 4-wheel drive for the human body. Day three found the group rock climbing at Le Gaillards, Chamonix on the L'echelle area starting with single pitch routes, but by the end of the day even the least experienced of us (namely myself) had the confidence to have a go at multi-pitch routes of 150ft. Some of which required abseil descents which I personally found the scariest of all.

Day four was an incredibly early start (considering we were on leave), but was necessary to catch Les Grands Montets telepherique in order to ascend the Petit Aiguille Vert. This was, for most of us, an introduction to ice and snow as mountaineers and was an excellent introduction to alpine/winter mountaineering. This was in fact our training day for our future ascent of Mount Blanc du Tacul. Throughout the day we had brilliant sunshine and we didn't care that our calves were burning and the sweat was pouring because it was such new and fantastic experience on a clear mountain day. Our guides took us through all the necessary practices and techniques we would require for later on, including moving roped together, use of crampons and ice axes and the group's favorite, arresting methods.

After so much hard work the previous day, we decided to do something slightly less strenuous and went bouldering for day four. Most of the day was spent in the sun at Le Col de Montets with the last few hours climbing routes at La Joux. Day five was the main day of the expedi-

Climbing at Col des Montets. L to R: Matt Penney, Andy Havel, Jules Diamond, Jon Catt.



tion an early morning found us kitted up taking a ride up the telepherique to the Aiguille de Midi for our attempt on Mount Blanc de Tacul. The ride itself was great but unfortunately the weather was not when we arrived at the top. To those who have never experienced it a 'white out' is a strange phenomenon, and at the same time unwelcome on the mountains by would-be Mallory's and Hillary's. With the prospect of the weather deteriorating further the group made it's way across the Col to the Cosmiques Refuge. As storm clouds slowly gathered and the conditions failed to improve it was decided to opt for plan B (was there a plan B?). Plan B was to climb the Cosmiques arete. This, I am informed, was not a cop-out in any shape or form since this route actually involved individuals using a higher level of technical ability on what is a grade 3/4-winter route. As we climbed, the intermittent breaks in the cloud revealed the true exposure of the mixed snow and rock route and its' knife edge nature. The route itself finished back at the Aiguille and we were treated like great conquering explorers by the tourists, as one by one we climbed over the safety railings with ropes and climbing gear hanging off us and stamped the ice and snow off our boots. Having finished slightly earlier than expected we all jumped into our minibus and drove to Les Gaillards to get a bit more climbing in. This time the guides, came with us and showed us how the locals climb. If Andy and John were spiders these guys were lizards, able to hold onto ridiculous looking overhangs without a care in the world. The fact that they had probably been climbing these routes since they were children did little to console us that we still had an awfully long way to go in the climbing world.



Ascent of Petit Aiguille Vert. By Lt Diamond

Following our snow and ice day, we decided to have one last, long walk around the local area and day six found us taking a route to the Col de La Terrasse (2651m) from Vallorcine via Le Buet. The long gradual ascent to the Col provided us with tremendous scenery and a look over the border into Switzerland.

Our expedition finished with one final day of rock climbing close to the Swiss border on a crag at Vallorcine. It was the most demanding rock climbing of the whole expedition, involving excellent technical multi-pitch routes (5/6 pitches) with outstanding exposure and views and was probably one of the best crags in the area we only wished we had found it earlier on in the week.

Throughout the expedition we had excellent weather in the valley but unfortunately not quite on the tops but the whole trip was a great success, and even though we didn't get up Mont Blanc, for many of us this introduction into alpine/winter mountaineering was a great experience. I am sure that all of us will be back just as quickly as we can persuade our regiments to let us go!!

Expedition members were:

Major A Cameron RA (SI YO's)
 2Lt's A Howell (Exped leader, JSRCI & JSMEL)
 J Catto (MEL)
 M Penney (MEL)
 J Diamond
 M Webb (RLT)

BOOK REVIEW:

by Tim King

MALLORY AND EVEREST

Ghosts of Everest – The authorized story of the search for Mallory and Irvine by J Hemmleb, L Johnson and E Simonson (The Mountaineers and Macmillan, full price £22).

The Legendary Everest expeditions of George Mallory by D Breashears and A Salkeld (National Geographic at £25).

I received the latter book from Gina Sussens Associates, who market it in this country. I found a remaindered copy of the Macmillan edition of *Ghosts of Everest* at about the same time and thought that I would compare the two. The problem with this idea was that I found them both utterly fascinating! *Ghosts* is principally about the 1999 expedition that found Mallory's body (and later a 1924 oxygen bottle below the First Step) but weaves the 1999 story skilfully round the 1924 events. By carefully building up evidence for and against, it gives a well reasoned and lucid account of what might have happened to Mallory and Irvine and the detective story reads like a Hercule Poirot. Sometimes the story is so fascinating that one forgets that it could not be told without the extraordinary achievements of the 1999 expedition itself. *Last Climb* is in its way equally satisfying. Clearly, *Ghosts* says almost all that can be said about the 1924 conjecture but *Last Climb* manages

somehow to add another significant contribution by concentrating on the historical aspects, especially Mallory himself. It was started before the 1999 discoveries and is typical of Audrey Salkeld's meticulous research work and engaging style. It uses the 1999 discoveries to ask the same tantalising questions. For example: was the absence of a photograph of Ruth, Mallory's wife, or a letter from her among all the bits of paper that were in Mallory's pockets, an indication that he had, in fact, been able to honour his vow to leave them on the summit? Did Odell see the two men at the top of the Second Step or the Third Step at 12.50pm on 8 June 1924 and is it significant which step it was? Both books leave open – as they must – the possibility that the two Britons made it and I suspect that the Mallory story will run and run. I hope so if it continues to fascinate us in the way that it has for 75 years. Whichever of these books you buy, you will not be disappointed.

Are you a GCGOEW ?

By Lt Col (Ret'd) John Muston MBE

Most readers of this magazine will be aware that there is an honours system and that now and again some people put a bit of coloured ribbon on their uniform and, on formal parades, dangle a bit of metal. Some get an award for gallantry and others for what might, loosely, be called 'good services' i.e. happening to be in the right place at the right time. Many awards have an unofficial, as well as the official, title e.g. the CMG is Call Me God while the MBE is for Mainly Base Experience.

The astute junior rank will have noticed that generals get more 'gongs' than they do. There is a good, but little publicised, reason for this and it is all to do with our old friends - Sergeant Majors. These people could be described, amongst other things, as 'diaries on legs'. They take it upon themselves to remind junior ranks when their hair needs cutting or they offer friendly, avuncular advice to a junior rank that he should take a pace closer to his razor when shaving. To make such a reminder more friendly and personal the sergeant major likes to use the junior rank's name and so prefaces his remark with 'Brown' or 'Smith' or whatever is the soldier's name. It needs to be something short and easily enunciated. Now pity even the most loquacious sergeant major trying to address LCpl Sir Prendergast Muddingly-Buxworthy KBE, CB by name on the matter of the length of his hair. When sergeant majors talk to generals it is, of course, very simple; they only need one (especially if they come from the Brigade of Guards) word and that is 'Sir' - shouted loudly and aimed two feet above the general's head. Sergeant majors do not talk to generals about the length of their hair although they may sometimes be sorely tempted to do so.

However I digress from the real purpose of this article. Very few awards are made for mountaineering although plenty of lollipop ladies seem to get them so a few years ago I decided to institute the Good Chap to Go On an Expedition With Award - the GCGOEW. Now in these days of total sexual equality I must hurriedly point out that the term 'Chap' must be deemed to be unisex. I have never heard of a 'chapess' or a 'chapette' so rid you mind of any idea that 'chap' is only a masculine term despite what the Oxford English Dictionary might say. (As this article is likely to be read by ladies I will forbear any mention of cowboy's chaps - those leather things they wear around and between their legs). When I have informed ladies of their appointment to this Award non of them have demurred at being a 'chap', but then perhaps I have only appointed ladies who would not fuss about such things anyway. Incidentally there is no ribbon and no medal for this Award, I just tell people about their new status.

What sort of people get the award and how is it done, you will ask. The first requirement is to go on an expedition with me. Those of my so-called friends who think of saying, 'that alone deserves a medal', can pipe down. When I say 'expedition' I do not mean a quick nip over the Glyders on a fine June day. I am talking about a thoroughgoing trip to some rugged part of the world for at least four weeks and preferably with a high morale sapping content. You must never occupy more than your share of the tent and preferably a bit less. In addition you must be a disciplined camper. The sort of person who, all in the space of the first twenty minutes in the tent, knocks over my brew, spreads jam all round my sleeping bag and bums a hole in the groundsheet with the stove does not even get to first base for the Award. Technical skill is acknowledged; after all, at my age, I need someone to get me up things harder than V Diff but I attach no special merit to those who climb at E-something awful. The mere thought of E grades gives me sweaty palms. On the gatepost of this award you should picture the sign 'no whingers need apply'. Any grumbling about the weather, the terrain, our companions and most of all ME will delete you immediately from my list of possible

awardees. The nearest to whinging that is allowed is to say, after trudging for 14 hours through a howling gale with driving rain or snow, 'That was an interesting experience'. I like the over worker. By that I mean the person who does at least his share of the camping chores and preferably some of mine as well. No murderers need apply. That may seem an obvious remark but, in fact, I am not bothered by the chap who stuck a knife in his partner last week, or who drops arsenic in your tea. The murderer I am concerned with is the one who says, at five-minute intervals, 'I could murder a pint' or 'I could murder a steak and chips'. It is, however, permitted to say 'I could murder my porter' when he is consistently the last into high camps and he is carrying your warm clothing.

Smokers can qualify for the award provided they perform their arsonical activities a hundred yards downwind from my tent and then only in at least a Force 9 gale. Drinkers can qualify provided they remain, at all times, coherent and continent. People who have Swiss Army knives, needles and thread, spare spoons and other similar things for me to borrow will enhance their chances of the Award.

Candidates for the award need to exhibit a high regard for my health and comfort. They are the sort of people who, when we are confronted with a polar bear, will reach for the rifle rather than the camera. Likewise the chap who, when we are faced with a steep and dodgy looking snow slope, says 'Wait here while I go on and see if it is likely to avalanche' is enhancing his chances no end. Candidates will improve their chances even further if they are capable cooks and enjoying cooking. Over many years I have developed the art of dozing in a warm sleeping bag to a very high degree but, nevertheless, will be instantly attentive when the cook announces 'soup's ready'.

'Techno-nuts' alert my suspicions. The person who says, while we are camped on the side of some Himalayan monster, 'Don't worry, I'll satcom that modem via the VHF email' or some such jargon when all that has happened is we have run out of honey is not enhancing his chances of a GCGOEW. Some even want to talk to their wives/girl-friends/partners (delete whichever is non-applicable) via this technical hocus-pocus. Let us be quite clear. God put mountains on this planet to allow the favoured few to get away from her (or, I suppose, him) indoors, the other half, my dearly (yuk!) beloved etc.

Noting that ladies are equally eligible for this award some low-minded members (no names, no libel action) of the AMA might suggest that ladies could avoid some of the above requirements by offering certain personal services to me and, as it were, 'buying' their way to the award. Sadly I have to report that in 40 years of membership and despite being tall, dark, handsome, debonair, charming and any other adulatory adjectives you can think of, no lady has yet made any such offer. My wife would say that is because I go on expeditions with the right sort of lady. I think it is because I go with the wrong sort of lady.

Most of our honours have an ascending order of value e.g. MBE, OBE, CBE and KBE. This is straightforward and simple but rather unexciting. The French do it with a bit more dash. They have the Croix de Guerre and also the Croix de Guerre avec Palme. I realised that, to single out the real Chaps to Go on An Expedition With from the slightly run-of-the-mill, I had to do something similar. So you can be either a GCGOEW or a GCGOEW with Crossed Messtins. Only a very few of the highest capability reach this latter exalted status.

Well, that is the outline of the award. If you are interested further just invite me onto your expedition and, provided you cover all expenses, I will assess your suitability for the possible award of a GCGOEW.

BOOK REVIEW: by Tim King

EVEREST – The Mountaineering History – 3rd Edition. Walt Unsworth, published by Baton Wicks at £25.

This is a new addition of the Unsworth classic reference work that brings us up to date from the 1989 edition. It is extraordinary value and there is really no alternative if you want an authoritative, well laid out account of Everest history without buying a whole library of separate books. The facts are melded with story, to provide a good read that does not drift into 'faction' and conjectural points are identified and opinions cited without losing objectivity.

The nineties included success (at last) on the NE ridge and the rise of commercial expeditions; the 1996 debacle and subsequent finger-pointing; Alison Hargreaves' ascent; the finding of Mallory's body and all the new conundrums that this has generated. At nearly 800 pages it is a massive tome, guaranteed to keep you enthralled for days. For those with older editions, there are nearly 200 new pages. You can dip in anywhere and find something interesting and you get the feeling that the factual information really is definitive – I went straight to the details of our 1976 trip and you could not wish to have a more accurate, succinct record.

No book is perfect (especially my review copy, which has completely mashed up photos between pages 270 and 271) and even a book this long cannot hope to cover all the history, myth and lore surrounding Everest. Here I digress! The implications of the new Mallory find are necessarily given brief treatment – perhaps too brief to be a sufficient summing up of the evidence. For example, it is entirely possible that Odell saw M&I at the

Third Step on the morning of 8 June 1924, just about to change to their third and last oxygen bottle and going very strongly for the top. It is also possible that he saw them at top of the Second Step 'going strongly' (sic). In either case there is every chance that they made it to the top – they had the time, the main difficulties were passed and by all the evidence they had a third oxygen bottle each. Yet Conrad Anker, a brilliant rock climber, does not think that Mallory could have climbed the Second Step, given the trouble that Anker himself had with it on the 1999 expedition. What most modern commentators miss is the fact that Mallory was hard, hard, hard – he could balance on a pin and routinely pushed himself well beyond what most modern leaders would do unprotected. He was used to climbing unprotected and fast. He simply did not have the ironmongery and, more important, the psychological baggage that we have today. Those who say that he could not have climbed the Second Step need to do a few of his routes and also understand just how determined he was not to be robbed of the summit on his fourth attempt in 3 expeditions. But back to the book!

Buy it. It will probably be at least another ten years before the next edition and Walt Unsworth is not getting any younger. Fascination with Everest continues but we may find that by 2010 the interest has waned to a point where the impetus for a fourth edition is just not there. Jermyn Street shirts now cost twice as much as this book and it will last you far longer.

Shisha Pangma, The Alpine Style Ascent of the South-West Face,

by Doug Scott and Alex MacIntyre, published by Baton Wicks (and available from Cordee direct) at £13.

'Ground-breaking' is becoming a hackneyed phrase but this climb, done in the far off days of 1982 was truly remarkable for its bold approach to big mountain climbing – no sherpa support, intermediate camps or supplementary oxygen for these boys on an unknown face on an almost unknown mountain; just a straight three-day push to the top and down by another new route. It is right of Baton Wicks to want to raise the profile of this achievement, to remind us that the ground-breakers are certainly not the large commercial expeditions repeatedly plodding their way up well worn routes in the Nepal Himalaya. It also provides a fascinating summary of the history of climbing exploration in that area of Tibet and of attempts on Shisha Pangma itself. The book's style seems a little dated now – it is surprising how quickly we, the fickle readers, move on – but no less entertaining for that, and its tendency to pad out the action with some pretty uninteresting dialogue. A third of the book is Postscript but perhaps that is the problem when you want to write a 300 pager about a 3 day climb! £13 may seem a little steep for a trade paperback but the production is good and the first edition is now quite scarce. For anyone interested in this particular 8000er it is a good buy.

Nanda Devi, Exploration and Ascent by Eric Shipton and HW Tilman published by Baton Wicks. This is one I overlooked at the end of last year – sorry! It is an extremely valuable edition to good mountaineering books in print, as both of the original Nanda Devi books that it combines are now in the realms of the very collectable (ie expensive). Also, as these two gents knocked around with each other on so many delicious adventures, it is good to have their different but complementary accounts of the Nanda Devi story under one cover. It has always puzzled me how the 'marriage' worked but it did and their style of exploration was remarkable for its elegant simplicity – basically take a big bag of rice and start! Of course it was the thing in those days to understate every difficulty and indulge in plenty of wry humour but I have to admit I love their whole approach – a lost age but we can still enjoy it vicariously. The books themselves are supplemented by a new history of climbing in the area and other snippets hitherto unpublished so the compendium as a whole will appeal to those already familiar with the thirteen Shipton/Tilman mountain books as well as those who are not. Good value at £11.



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Annapurna Blue ... a diary from M

By SSgt A Forbes

At the beginning of June I was sitting in my office when a call came through from RHQ to say that there was a signal in from Cambridge University Officer training Corps (CUOTC). It was requesting assistance with their Expedition to Nepal, good old chief clerk keeping my best interest in his mind, so I jumped at the chance of gaining some experience overseas as part of an exped.

Prior to departure I began to get some admin done, I had all my jabs to get and my visas to sort out. I also had to try and arrange some extra funding for myself as the expedition was not being funded and the price had just been increased for the second time to £1350, which was still a good price for the opportunity to trek in the Himalayas. It was greatly appreciated when some extra funding came in from various agencies and all I can say is keep at the letter writing if you are planing an exped as if you write enough someone will hear your pleas in the end.

Being based in Scotland gave me a very good opportunity to train with extra hill walking with all my kit that weighed a mere 49kg! A serious sorting out of the rucksack was in order. That done I was now ready to deploy to Nepal, I think...! After reading up on Nepal and realising that we would be travelling during the monsoon season I was a little apprehensive of what we would encounter and how altitude would affect me.

After the initial briefing at Cambridge UOTC, I was then introduced to the team of young students that I would be walking along side. The people in the group were Saku Saha, Robert Page who was more commonly known as Ruppert, Phil Ivens i/c Security, Angela Tyrrell language co-ordinator, Donna Burrows Public relations and Tom Saffell resident swimming instructor. It was now time to check all personal and team equipment, repack and then get out of Cambridge and mobile for Nepal. We flew from LHR Airport to Doha, where I was glad to have had my shorts and a T-shirt as it was soaring above 100 and then transferred to Nepal Airlines and flew to Kathmandu.

WOW what a shock! Make sure you have your Visa before you enter as it takes forever at the airport as some people found out. On leaving the airport we were attacked by about forty locals with only one task in mind, that was to get some form of currency from us. They also carry as many bags as possible; they are very persistent and will even get on your bus and continue to beg for rupees. Do not be fooled by the way

they look they are a very organised team. The Culture Shock had begun!

Well, the trip on the bus to the Hotel was like something from wacky races, there didn't seem to be any sort of traffic control. So we were glad to have a local driver I think! The hotel was situated up a small lane from one of the back streets of Thamel District and was of a good standard. I was quite surprised. Then there was the smell of Kathmandu City, which is never to be forgotten. Lots of things to do in the City, visit Durbar Square where elephants cross daily, the Monkey Temple or barter with the locals for items on sale. And for the ride of a lifetime get on a rickshaw.

"The weather was atrocious and one member of the team had symptoms of AMS"

After two days I was now getting adjusted to the fact we were in a third world country and the locals have a totally different way of looking at life. It was now off to Pokhara, 8 hrs on a local bus and my first of many tastes of Dahl Bhat. The scenery on this bus trip was excellent and gave us a feel for what was to come. Well Pokhara is a totally different town, no smell, very touristy and lovely scenery with a large lake very prominent to the west of the town.

After resting up in Pokhara it was time to move onto something better, so I thought but to no avail as the local Mafia had set up road blocks to prevent buses leaving the city so our start was now to be delayed by at least 2 days. After a little consultation with the rest of our team, off we went to attempt some of the local hills that could be seen across the lake. So it was packs into a boat and across the lake we went off for a little walk, which was harder than we originally thought it would be. On returning to the boats we were attempting to load them and the boat moved from the moorings and SSgt Forbes decided he could swim with his pack and walking kit on, not one of his better ideas.

We had decided enough is enough we will do the Annapurna circuit in a clockwise direction and walk out of Pokhara its only 27km to push along tarmac road to Pheide and then onto Damphus and WOW! The temperature is only around 29 degrees. Its only the first day and the heat produces our first

casualty (mild heat exhaustion) Quickly cured by 1 hours rest, some diorolite and some more fluids and we were off on the final leg to Dhamphus. Well no prisoners taken a good sharp rise at the end of a long hard day. All that we looked forward to was a nice hot shower and now the realisation came that not all tea-houses come equipped with showers, YEP you're right there was none. So after a quick strip wash outside in the dark it was time to get some food, YEP you guessed it was Dahl bhat and then sleep.

It was decided that most days we would leave at 0630 hrs and have breakfast on route, this plan took a little time to work as some members of the team had minor admin problems I.E. Taping up there feet, filtering water and re-packing kit. It was to be our second day on the hills and we were going from Dhamphus 1170mtrs to Gandruk 2110m that at first sounded quite simple, if only it was. Off we went for breakfast as planned at Pothana 1850m in 1hrs 15mins. After departing we got our surprise monsoon weather change and it rained and rained and rained time for a lunch stop I think.

During today we were attacked by some slimey little creatures called leeches, I thought I'd never stop bleeding But as the rain cleared and the clouds lifted all was forgotten as we seen the whole of the Annapurna Range, awesome! What a spectacular sight, I now felt I was going to the top of the world, this scenery is the main reason for me being here. I will sleep in my bed content tonight.

Easy day today, 5km in five hours and to top it, I attempted to fall off the edge of a narrow path not once but twice but Subba our trusty Guide was at hand. Phil is having a problem with his walking poles as they seem to move at different time to his feet and hands and he has decided at least four times today that they can be left behind for someone else to use. Team 2, that's us, have picked up a mancky dog as a mascot whilst travelling through the forest today as well as some extra leech bites. Now in Tadapani.

I can now say I was glad that I brought a book with me, as it is definitely a requirement along with a deck of cards and some form of music to keep you sane. Today was a hard day with wondrous sights of 300-400 ft waterfalls cascading down the surrounding cliffs and to feel this good at 3135m was an achievement as we were now standing higher than 3 Munro's stacked on top of each other.

Nepal



The Team on top of Forbes Peak (4000M)

Some bright spark decided that we would play the locals at basketball, bad mistake they can at least breath at this altitude. Remembering this is a friendly we decided not to show our opponents up as if we could! As we started our heart rate doubled and we finished before you could blink and it was the perfect way to recognise some small injuries that people had.

Day five, the strain seems to be telling on some of the young members of the team as a few minor injuries are beginning to raise their ugly head. A 14km walk downhill with all their kit will sort their joints out. Whilst crossing the river today we followed some porters carrying humongous loads of enormous weight which would normally be carried on a 38 tonne vehicle, without exaggeration I've never seen a man no higher than 5 ft carry so much. Even though I religiously brush my teeth after every meal and filter all of my water I seem to be getting an infection in my throat, maybe the first sign of things to come.

Today whilst walking from Gorepani to Ghasa along a cliff path with the river raging below, two cows who I suspected to have mad cows disease attempted to mate with total disregard for my safety. I was now glad to have had some experience in climbing as I clambered upwards and around them. After arriving in Ghasa the team decided to visit the hot springs and also cool down in the Kali Gandaki.

I spoke too soon yesterday, now I've got a cold and diarrhoea as have several others

in the exped. The first attempt at a river crossing went well, I think! This is the second time that I've tried to swim with all my kit on, this procedure is not recommended. After walking up a magnificent steep sided valley it was decided we would conquer a hill. So of we went tramping up this hill as though we were in Scotland and totally forgetting what altitude we were at (3100m). Some 200m later we had started to blow and by the time we had reached the top, 2 hrs later, we had realised we should have taken it a lot slower. It was worth the struggle to see down both sides of the mountain (4100m). Back down and on to Mucktinath

Well acclimatisation day, up for porridge at 0700 hrs and off for a walk to 4300m which gave us a look at what we would be like on our attempt to cross Thoroug La (pass). The weather was pretty atrocious and one member of the team had symptoms of acute mountain sickness (AMS). So we descended back to Muctinath for a late lunch. The next day the decision was made to ascend to a campsite at 4620m and lay-up there for the night.

After pitching the tents and a quick lunch a further walk to 4900m to acclimatise was carried out. Today being one of the clearest days the views from this position were spectacular with Thoroug, Mucktinath and Gorung Peaks surrounding us (see slides 2&3). After descending, one of the team members became ill with AMS. So team two in their entirety packed up camp and descended in the dark to 4150m to help acclimatisation.

The following day the team got up early and off they went on their attempt at the Thoroug La (pass).

A very slow ascent to the pass with different symptoms of AMS in team members like sickness, dizziness, headaches and back pains. So it was a quick photo at the top. As the weather was pretty bad and we didn't think it as a good idea to hang around off the team went towards Thoroug Phedi, were we would stay overnight.

After completing the pass everyone seemed to be only wondering what the rafting would entail and seemed to forget that we still had another 6 day of walking left. The walking within the Annapurna Circuit was fairly easy going and my feelings were that the leadership skills gained by the group were minimal. The walks following the ascent and descent of the path opened up some spectacular views of the mountain ranges above us, high cliffs, waterfalls, the glacier at Manang and the raging Jarsang Kola. The final days walk reminded the whole team why we carried all this equipment on our backs. As we were travelling thorough Besi-sihar two Nepalese cyclists decided that certain team members were not carrying the recommended weight and attempted an airborne strike on their bergens which lead to some serious wounds to both civilians. These were patched up by the use of the team medical kit and an over enthusiastic vet.

A different finish to an excellent walk.

Lowland Fling

By Maj Cath Davies

On 1 July 1999, the 52nd Lowland Regiment was formed, with companies affiliated to The Royal Scots, the Royal Highland Fusiliers and the King's Own Scottish Borderers. To start off the new Regiment in style, it was decided to mount an expedition to carry out high altitude mountaineering in the Cordillera Blanca, part of the Andes mountain range, in Peru. This was to be followed by a trek in the mixed cloud-forest/high grassland terrain of the Inca Trail, finishing up with a visit to Machu Picchu.

A team of seven, reflecting cap badges across the Regiment, was selected. It was led by Maj Cath Davies, with CSM Arthur Neil, Sgt Gibby Anderson, Sgt Dougie Byrne and Cpl Derek Scally, all of A (Royal Scots) Company, and 2 Lt Taylor of C (RHF) Company. Pte Kennan, a member of the KOSB detachment of C Coy was the final team member.

The flight to Peru was via Miami, from whence the expedition leader's rucksack was sent to Panama (sounds like Lima, I suppose) which meant spending an extra day in the huge, frantic metropolis that is Peru's capital city. It was unanimously agreed that crossing the 6 lane principal streets there was the most dangerous thing we did in Peru.

Having recovered the rucksack, we moved up to Huaraz, the main town in the climbing region. From here we undertook an acclimatisation climb on a mountain called Pisco, some of us reaching 4800m, others suffering altitude sickness in varying degrees and not getting quite so high. Pisco also happens to be the national drink, so we sampled some on our return.

We then trekked in some 14 km (with the help of donkeys to carry the kit) to a high camp



Sgt Dougie Drown takes a break during the ascent of Ishinca.

Second rope party crossing a snow bridge on Ishinca at 5000m



on Ishinca, a 5530m or 18000' peak which was to be our main climb. After a rest day of eating and packing and a forward route recce, we set off at 4am the next morning. We kitted up at the edge of the snowline and daylight saw us ascending the steep snow slope to the first col. There we met the sun and stopped to remove warm clothes and slap on sun screen. We also got a good look at how steep and long the next slope was! The whole team eventually summited in the early afternoon, a great achievement given that all apart from

the expedition leader were novices, and were back in high camp at 4pm. It had been a long, hard day, during which everyone had had to dig deep. Therefore a well satisfied team moved down the next day to the Ishinca base camp to wait for the donkeys, due the day after at midday.

However, on the way Maj Cath Davies spotted a 5420m peak, Urus, just asking to be climbed, so next morning she, 2Lt Gary Taylor and Pte John Keenan left at 4am to climb it. Not only were they back in time for the donkeys, they were back in

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time for breakfast, an ascent and then descent of 1120m and 4 km in 5 1/2 hours. It was the grand finale to an excellent climbing phase.

Because the team consisted largely of novices, the routes tackled were straightforward PDs. However, from the Ishinca Base camp, a more experienced party could have bagged 6 peaks, ranging up to almost 6500m, on routes going up to TD. The amount and variety of mountaineering available in this area is amazing, especially when you consider it is only a \$20 dollar, 8 hour coach trip from Lima to Huaraz, then a 4 hour minibus ride up the valleys to the drop off for the one day walk in. Compared to the time it takes to get to the mountains in Nepal, Peru is a much better bet for those who want to blunt their crampons rather than improve their trekking skills. Plus you don't have to talk to any government officials - for all its third world reputation, Peru is remarkably free of bureaucracy. Those wishing to climb a lot in a short time,

with minimum travel and hassle, could do a lot worse than take a look at the Cordillera Blanca.

The action then moved south to Cusco, the colonial town of the conquistadors, built on Inca foundations. The team flew there from Lima, having re-visited in one of the large, modern supermarkets. Having cached all the high altitude equipment in Lima, it was a relatively light weight team who struggled off the crowded tourist train at the 80 km marker (8 km earlier than all the other visitors, which caused consternation amongst the locals who naturally thought the stupid foreigners had got it wrong!). The walk along the Inca Trail was variously fascinating, (through cloudforest, past interesting ruins) uncomfortable (you try descending a thousand feet on a stone staircase) and stunning (the view of the ruins of Huinay Huayna, a fort built on a nose of ground rising from the rainforest, with behind it an amphitheatre of terraces curving round the fold of the land in perfect



First stop before catching the sun on the ascent of Ishinca at 0700.

symmetry). And finally we came to Machu Picchu itself, a huge, impressive ruined city, but almost dwarfed by the majesty of the huge rock faces and tree covered mountains surrounding it.

It was time to go home, after four weeks of new sights, new experiences and new challenges, all of which had affected us in different ways. That's what adventure training is all about.

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AMA Spring Meet

By Capt Sal Ahsan RAMC

Totley Range' bunkhouse was definitely the place to be over the last bank holiday of May. This was the time for people to become reacquainted with the unique gritstone feel of the Peak District. It was of course the AMA Spring Meet.

Word had spread, or maybe folk were just at a loss for something exciting to do over the 26-29 May 00, but the numbers had doubled from last year's attendance. Thirty AMA members plus friends and family gathered into the excellent facilities of Totley Ranges to participate in another AMA weekend which is establishing itself as an annual event well marked in the AMA calendar. Although the official start time was not until Friday night, some keen types had already got a full day's climb done before the first pint was supped in the local pub on Friday night. The rest of the arrivals congregated in the Cricketer's, conveniently situated 5 minutes away from the bunkhouse. It truly is a perfect venue in all respects.

The weather held out for Saturday, with sunshine

interspersed with showers. Everyone managed to get stuff done, polished off the gritstone climbing techniques and had happy tales to tell in the evening.

To give a little something different to the punters, a BBQ was held on the Saturday night after a couple of presentations. Maj. Dave Baggaley gave a talk on his experiences in mountaineering days gone by, with excellent slides featuring a younger Dave and friends-from only just a few years ago!! Inspiring tales were told of ascents and avalanches and SSgt Mark Hedge gave an atmospheric amusing account of rock climbing as it is today, complete with groovy tunes and artistic slide shots. Both presentations were much enjoyed and added an extra touch to enhance the weekend, so thanks guys!

The BBQ was a success although it nearly wasn't and visions of thirty climbers going down with strange food ailments did flash into my mind. The evening was saved, not to mention the enormous amount of food by the excellent



A Shivenham young'un doing something hard.

teamwork and culinary efforts of Capt Stu MacDonald and Capt Andy Gallagher. Jamie Oliver watch out. The majority of people settled for a quiet night catching up with friends from expeditions past or in the case of Capt Kev Edwards of expeditions to come. However there those young Shivenham lads who still were beckoned by the bright light of Sheffield's nightspots and off they went in search of alternative fun. Bless 'em! So the message there is that there was something for everyone.

Most folk stayed for Sunday, but the beauty of such a laid back, non-official event was that you could do whatever you liked. Families took advantage of this fact and relationships were enhanced (I hope) by a perfect day of climbing. I get a warm glowy feeling knowing that someone who could go on to become a lifelong climber had his or her first day on rock at the Spring Meet. But I'm an old senti-

mental type and small things like that inspire me.

Climber areas were plentiful, with every climbing spot in the Sheffield area only 15 minutes drive away. The AMA climbers visited the majority of them, and even the Foundry got a look in on Saturday, when rain set in for a period. As is traditional over the last two Spring Meets.

The teamwork, the friendly atmosphere and the positive attitude of all that attended definitely has inspired me to do the same again for next year. I'll no doubt wonder why but then I'll remember elements of this year and crack on. Some had come from Northern Ireland; SSgt Martin Kenyan had used the time as an instructional period for some of his colleagues and others had made the journey from Ballahuilish. As long as people are willing to put themselves out like this, these meets will continue and go from strength to strength. And next year, I'll not be so elusive!



Ben McInnes doing something else hard!



A selection of happy AMA types enjoying a day on the crag.

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