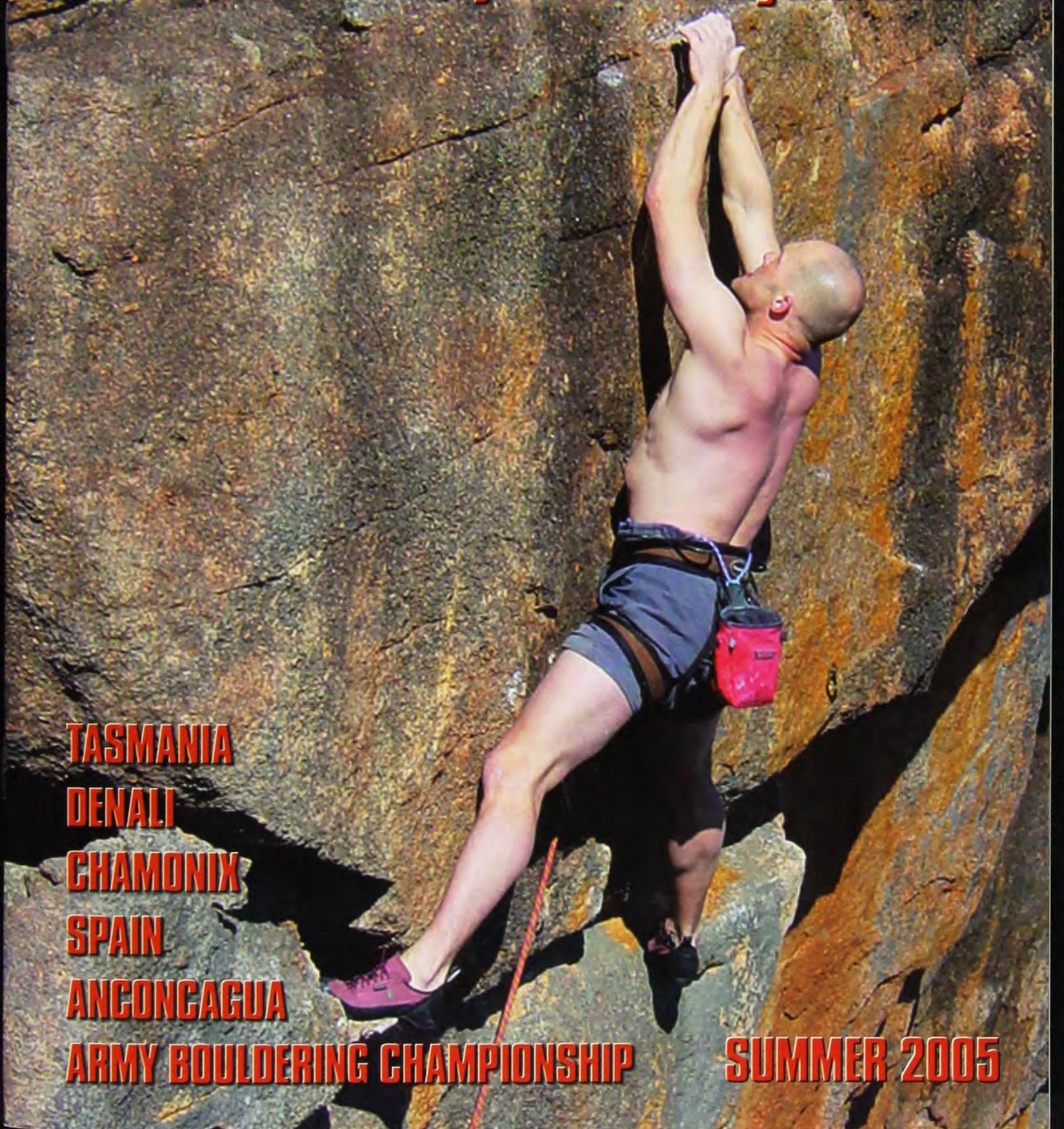


# ARMY MOUNTAINEER



The Journal of The Army Mountaineering Association



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# ARMY MOUNTAINEER



The Journal of The Army Mountaineering Association

## Foreword

by Cath Davies, Vice-Chairman (Mountaineering)

Once more, the Journal showcases the wide variety of activity AMA members are involved in. Exercise Tasmanian Dragon, Mark Hedge's rock climbing trip 'down under' is covered in detail. This is one of the most ambitious rock climbing expeditions the AMA has supported, as Mark modestly told me! Rab Black covers his trip to Alaska with potential candidates for the Everest West Ridge (EWR) expedition, gaining valuable experience at altitude. Our General Secretary Mike Laing recounts his adventures on Aconcagua, now a popular objective for service groups and obviously much changed since I last visited in 1993. Sport climbing Secretary Mike Smith continues to introduce soldiers to rock climbing by running another trip to Spain, highlighted in the following pages. Another article highlights a new AMA innovation, Training and Development weekends for new AMA members. These are headed up by Geordie Taylor, a co opted member of the Committee who, helped by other experienced AMA members, is offering Proficiency level distributed training over a number of weekends. The aim is not only to offer the opportunity to gain qualifications, but encourage new members to feel part of the Association and take part in its activities.

Looking forward, I hope those members who can, will attend the Annual Weekend 23- 25 September at JSMTIC Indefatigable. As well as a great opportunity to catch up with old friends or make new ones, the AGM will include a presentation on Shisha Pangma, one of the expeditions planned to celebrate the AMA's 50th anniversary year. The Anniversary year will start while the AMA team are still on Everest, but we are hoping to mount a number of further expeditions throughout the year to highlight the diversity of activities we undertake in the mountainous environment, as well as the broad reach of our expeditioning in geographical terms. The Annual Weekend is also the members chance to have a say in the running of the Association, by taking the opportunity to make their feelings known to the Committee, be it publicly at the AGM or privately at the bar!

Training and planning continues apace for EWR 06, with the website up and running at [www.armyoneverest](http://www.armyoneverest). The Army Recruiting Group are showcasing EWR 06 in their recruiting material, including commissioning a company to produce a documentary on the expedition itself, so look out for fellow AMA members on the silver screen!

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"Iain Scott on Dead Can't Dance, Ex TASMANIAN DRAGON".

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Sir Christian Bonington  
Col (Retd) M Bridges OBE  
Lt Col (Retd) AJ Muston MBE

## **OFFICERS OF THE COMMITTEE President**

Maj Gen NJ Cottam OBE

## **Chairman**

Lt Col MH Bazire MBE

Andover Mil (94391)  
Ext: 3553 Fax: 3434  
Civil: 01264 383553  
bazire@tiscali.co.uk

## **General Secretary**

## **Expeditions and Training**

Maj KP Edwards

JSMTc(I)  
Plas Llantair  
Mil: 95581 Ext: 7904  
Civil: 01248 718304

## **Meets Co-ordinator**

Maj D Gartland

Mil: 9491 66722  
Civil: 02989 2266722

## **Communications Officer**

WO1 SR Wilson

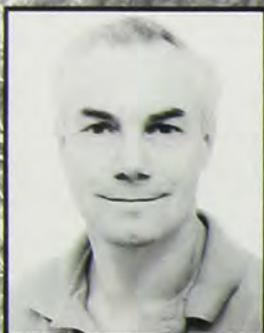
Mil: 94731 5120  
01748 875120

## **Journal Editor**

Volunteer Required

## **Membership Secretary**

C/o JSMTc(I)  
Mil: 95581 Ext: 7964  
Civil: 01248 718364  
membership@theama.org.uk



Volunteer Required



**AMA FASTRAK**  
contact WO1 Steve Willson on  
Mil: 94731 5120 01748 875129

### **Vice Chairman (Mountaineering)**

Maj KP Edwards  
JSMTc(I)  
Plas Llantair  
Mil: 95581 Ext: 7904  
Civil: 01248 718304

### **Treasurer**

Major M Láing  
Mil: 94355 8280  
Civil: 02920 781280

### **Sport Climbing Sec**

Capt MI Smith  
Mil: 94211 5545  
Civil: 01483 473424

### **Publicity Officer**

Maj GB Cunningham  
Glasgow Mil: (94561) Ext: 5273  
Civil: 0141 224 5273  
blair.cunningham929@mod.uk

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# Editorial

Another extremely busy and productive six months for the AMA set against the continuing high tempo of operations. We have some excellent articles detailing the variety of AMA activities that are conducted throughout the year and throughout the world. We have reports of Mark Hedge's rock climbing expedition to Tasmania, Rab Black on Denali, a fair splattering of Alpine adventure and Mike Smith in Spain (again) and this time the rain did not fall mainly on the plain! I even managed to drag myself out of the office and write a few paragraphs.

Thankyou to all that have submitted articles; as always strong representation by members of the committee and members of the APTC – please keep the articles coming. What is particularly pleasing about this edition though is the number of articles submitted by, dare I say it, more junior members of the Association. Despite what they may claim at the bar, the old and bold cannot keep going forever. Without the sterling efforts of Geordie Taylor and others freely giving their time and experience, the development of younger members would simply not be possible.

With the publication of this Journal I am forced to stand-down as Editor due to a likely forthcoming commitment to a certain hot place followed by a transfer to Civ Div. Thankyou to the committee for your help and support and more importantly thankyou to the membership for providing the articles, without which the Editor's job is somewhat difficult. If you are interested in the job please touch base with the Comms Officer, Steve Wilson.

## Cash Prizes

This edition's cash prizes are awarded to Rab Black, Mark Gregory and Kenny Ross 28? (although I suspect Kenny that you are now nearly 28?!). If you could all let me know your current address the cheques will be in the post.

*Howie Barnes*

## Journal submission requirements

Deadlines for submission are 1st January and 1st June.

Text should be sent electronically (floppy, CD or e-mail).

Photographs can be prints, slides or digital, where possible, always include captions for your photographs.

The editor's position is currently vacant, should you require to post your submission, please send it to the out-going Editor who will forward it when a successor has been appointed. Check the website for updates.

Maj H C Barnes (Howie)  
SO2 CSS  
CAST(S)  
Warminster  
BA12 0DJ

Or electronically to: [journal@theama.org.uk](mailto:journal@theama.org.uk)

If you want your discs or photos back please let me know at the time of submission.

Remember that the AMA is a mountaineering club whose members are either serving or have served in the Army; it is not a military organisation. As such try to avoid the use of ranks and military TLAs (three letter abbreviations!) in your articles – you are not writing for your Corps or Regimental Journal.

Try to avoid tables in your articles.

Finally please do not regurgitate your PXR.

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# Exercise DRAGON'S VOLCANO

By Graeme Bone

On Saturday, 7 May 2005 eight members of JSSU Cheltenham departed from RAF Innsworth at the ungodly hour of 4.30am in order to catch MT to Ashford. From Ashford it was the Eurostar to Paris where we changed train and eventually arrived in the city of Clermont Ferrand in the Massif Central for the start of a 200km trekking expedition which began in the bottled water village of Volvic and ended in the pretty town of St Flour on 17 May. The members of the team were made up of seven Intelligence Corps and one RAF personnel.

The aim of the exped was to walk one of the long distance paths called Grandes Randonnees (literally 'Big Walks'). We were to walk the GR4 for 200km at various distances, of between 16km and 26km per day, staying on a plateau over 1000m and climb to a number of peaks over 1800m. The route would take us through volcanic scenery, which had been left, from millions of years of eruptive activity.

After a pleasant night in Clermont Ferrand we caught the short train journey to Volvic, which would mark the start for the trek. With maps at the ready we all happily walked off following the navigator. Throughout the exped everyone would take it in turns to be lead map reader or check navigator although usually a big red mark on a tree, a stone with a red arrow on it or occasionally an arrow made up of branches constructed by Rob Page, receiving ahead would inform you if you were

going in the right direction. After 15 minutes of investigating the wrong path we returned to the start and started again, only this time it was straight into a forest and a very steep incline up onto a volcanic ridge. Today was a distance of 27km and the highlight for some was climbing the 1464m summit of Puy de Dome, which is one of the top ten things to do in France. The ascent at the end was quite steep but the spectacular views and the cup of coffee and cake at the top made it worthwhile. We then carried on down to Laschamp and after trying to register at the first 'false peak' gite we arrived where we would be staying the night. Jacqui Browett was in need of some feet reconstruction here as the majority of her skin had fallen off from her ankles and heels but luckily due to the vast amount of compeed we had, the skin graft operation went ahead successfully.

The next day was from Laschamp to Pessade and after heading off at a near CFT pace we saw sense and reduced it to a more respectable pace. Again this was another longish day of about 21km, although the 2-hour lunch break at the French equivalent of Fawley Towers added some fun to the day. The chef or 'Basil' would come out from the kitchen and stand in front of your table mimicking eating and making funny faces. It was also at this time that Wazeeha Laher found out that being a vegetarian in France is not a good situation to be in. Once



Second morning climb from Laschamp.

lunch was over we carried on to finish the day's walk at the Gite in Pessade. The hunter-gatherer's collected some logs and we sat beside a roaring fire drying off our washing. After dinner it was a game of cards with matches being the local currency. All I can say is that if you ever play cards against Al Jeffs then either make sure you have a lot of matches or you find out which Casino House rules he is playing with.

The next day we set off for a thankfully rather shorter day of 16km from Pessade to Le Mont-Dore. Rob Page decided it would be a good idea to put a telephone directory in my rucksack. His plan did backfire slightly as just before we left I noticed the book so as Rob was cleaning up I made the delicate book transfer swap into his rucksack. We then headed off with a comment by myself about how heavy my rucksack was feeling today and a small snigger could be heard from

Rob. After a 2-3 hour walk we stopped for lunch and as I went to get my lunch from my rucksack I could hear Rob quietly laughing to himself with his camera at the ready. His face did drop a bit when he couldn't see the telephone book and then uttered the words "it's in mine isn't it". Once lunch was over we headed to Le Mont-Dore by traversing the 3 peaks of Puy de Monne, Puy de Barbier and Puy de l'Angle before steeply descending past a waterfall cascade into Le Mont-Dore. We then checked into the accommodation and had dinner and the decided to venture to the local Casino, where flip-flops and track-suit trousers were allowed in the dress code and Al Jeffs's rules didn't come into play.

In the morning we started off on another short but steep day, across the Sancy range to Super-Besse. Shortish in distance along the ground but steep in going upwards. This would



View of Puy de Dome on way to Pessade.

take us over the highest point on the trek called the Puy de Sancy standing at a height of 1885m. Although the fit fools, Al and John Asslinger decided to run up this from the valley floor, the sick and injured others decided to go by cable car as this was a mode of transport which none of the team had travelled in before and not because it only took 4 minutes to get to most of the way up instead of an hour's climb. Once we had all met up, we made the final ascent to the summit where we had a lunch break at the top, and took in the tremendous scenery. We then headed down to Super-Besse where we would stay the night. This is a ski resort town, but unfortunately in May there is nothing open, including the campsite which we had brought our bivvy bags for, except for one hotel, which tonight was catering for what seemed like the whole of France's O.A.P's. During dinner John Asslinger decided to try out his Del Boy Trotter French sayings like 'bonnet de douche' and somehow managed to chat to a waitress for 5 minutes although she did think he was suffering from heat exhaustion.

The next day was the last of the shorter stages from Super-Besse to Eglise-neuve d'Entraigues which was 14.5 km. After arriving here at about 1.30pm it dawned on us that Super-Besse was not the only place with nothing open. The gite we had booked into was spacious and clean so after the shop had opened we cooked for ourselves a feast fit for kings or tuna pasta if you were a vegetarian.

Friday 13 May would be a long day of walking to Lugarde, which was 27km away. Once

we had walked to Condat we stopped for a quick lunch and again this would prove a poor day for vegetarians in France as the 11-euro special consisted of pate followed by pork, which was about all they had on the menu. After lunch we headed on through the forest of hell, which had very steep slopes and very hungry mosquitoes, but luckily we all survived and carried on to the Gite de Lugarde. This was an old gite with a friendly bar across the road, which would deliver some croque monsieurs to add to our own culinary delights. The only other place in the hamlet was called Aladdin's Cave and this was indeed a shopper's paradise as long as you only wanted to buy some bread, eggs or a tin of haricot verts, so we did. I think they are currently waiting for their next stock to arrive. The night was spent watching a rugby match in the bar.

The next morning was another long day from Lugarde to Le Claux, which was a distance of 26km. Today, although unknown at this point was to mark the start of a bad couple of days for Jock Marshalsey. After arriving at Le Claux and having no cigarettes left, Jock decided it was time to restock up. The local cafe owner, with signs of no smoking all around her cafe informed Jock that the nearest place to sell tobacco was 6km away. Jock took this rather well and decided he could wait until the following nights stop which Al had described as the 'Big Smoke' and surely cigarettes would be in abundance. We stayed in another gite tonight, which was of excellent standard and after a superb meal we had an early night in readiness for the steep ascent

the next day out of the valley. The first stop we came to was a 'buvet' (refreshment stall) at the col where we stopped for a quick brew but no cigarettes. We then climbed up to the Puy Mary which stands at 1793m and traversed across the ridge to Puy de Peyre Arse (nothing to do with your anatomy but actually means 'burnt rock') up to a height of 1806m which gave us great views across all the valleys and forests with snow capped mountains in the distance. It was then a steep decent down to the ski resort town of Super Lioran or the promised 'Big Smoke'. Unfortunately much to Jock's annoyance Super Lioran, out of season, consisted of one open bar and many closed bars. The bar that was open didn't sell cigarettes and the owner informed Jock that the nearest place, which did, was now 16km away. Jock didn't take this news quite as well as the previous night but luckily at the gite where we were staying, the Madame was kind enough to sell some of her own cigarettes and would be able to get some more for Jock in the morning.

The next day was a steep day to cross to the Col de Prat de Bouc and would involve climbing 3 peaks over 1800m. Jock was walking with a spring in his step and Al who had experimented with the wine too much the previous night was not. Al was the local flora and geology expert and usually always willing to answer questions but on this day was finding it hard to speak and walk at the same time. Finally, after climbing Puy de Rocher we arrived at the last peak for the trek called Plomb du Cantal at 1855m. Again after some photos and sarnies at the top



Jock Marshalsey looking lost on Puy de l'Angle.

we headed down to the gite at the Col de Prat de Bouc. The last day was a lovely descent down the valley before the towering rock of St Flour came into sight.

Once in St Flour we headed up to the centre of the town which involved walking up a large number of steps up a very steep slope. St Flour is a medieval fortified town built on top of basalt rock. Throughout its long history it was never captured by its many invaders.

The short stay in St Flour was mainly spent relaxing in the sunshine, catching up on any shopping or local sight seeing trips to the Cathedrals and many churches. This was rounded off that night celebrating with a very nice meal of regional delicacies in a local restaurant, which had been recommended to us by some French walkers. This was followed by a thorough debrief session before falling into bed.

In the morning it was the train journey back to Ashford via a 2-hour stop in Paris and Eurostar. Then the last leg from Ashford back to RAF Innsworth by MT.

Although most peoples feet or other parts of their bodies were sore at some stages I think I can honestly say we all had a great time and thanks go to Al Jeffs and Nicola Collins-Brown for organising the trek and all the organisations (Intelligence Corps Association, Army Mountaineering Association and RAF Lord Trenchard Fund) which gave us financial and other support to enable this expedition to go ahead.



Heading off to lunch at Fawly Towers.

# AMA DEVELOPMENT WEEKEND

By Helena Waite-Shores

My Basic Training in the Army enforced voluntary adventure training (AT) as a highly encouraged (compulsory) PT session on big hills wearing odd clothing often seen in the Swedish countryside. The emotional scars healed and 5 years on as a Nursing NCO, AT has provided me with various life experiences and challenges, set in places I would never have gone as a civilian nurse. On my first experience at the foot of a mountain, I took in the views and I knew that my weekends would hold more adventures for me than the escapades at Cheeks nightclub. Norway was where my passion for the hills was confirmed. The stunning scenery and landscapes filled me with awe and a sense of awareness, while at the same time offering me fresh challenges and excitement. After talking about how I felt with one of the skiing instructors, they suggested that I subscribed to the AMA. For some one like myself who was looking for some where to start developing in the area of mountaineering this was ideal, and would providing me with adequate guidance.

Three months later whilst in Iraq, I received a letter from WO2 Taylor (The training and development officer for the AMA). The Letter informed me of the development weekend for mountaineering and rock climbing in June. I was particularly interested in pursuing the mountaineering, but not knowing the level of competence that would be needed I made it clear that I was a complete novice. At a later date I learnt that all areas of experience could be catered for and it would be a perfect opportunity for me to get started. June arrived and it was time to get up to Wales. WO Taylor and another member of the AMA were actually travelling by hire car from Aldershot, so they kindly offered me a lift which happened to save me a pricey train ticket (more beer tokens for me then!). We set off early on Friday morning and had a smooth journey to North



Left to right Geordie Taylor APTC, Jamie Craik RLC, Helena Waite-Shores QARANC, Denni Le Croix RADC, Gav Thomas RE and Ollie Noakes REME.

Wales arriving in good time at Indefatigable. After a few cups of tea at the climbing wall café on camp we took over our accommodation. Being the only female meant that I had no problem bagsying the top bunk in my room by the window, to get the gorgeous view of the Menai Strait.

The rest of Friday then consisted of lessons involving our introduction to Indefatigable, mountain safety and the weather, this was definitely all new to myself but merely revision for the other members (in my profession all you'd expect from a cold front is two paracetamol and a hot water bottle!). Prior to arriving everyone had specified where they wanted to develop, either rock climbing or summer mountaineering. Therefore the groups were simply split into their different skill mixes. I was in the novice mountaineering team, which consisted of myself and one other member, and of course our instructor for the weekend (WO Taylor). We discussed the layout of our weekend, what to expect, and also what we needed to achieve as part of our Summer Mountaineering proficiency. With the initial formalities and lessons dealt with, in true Army fashion on a Friday night we took it upon our selves to

make sure that the local brewery was up to scratch.

A strong coffee and a good breakfast were first on the itinerary Saturday morning, allowing us to confirm the day's activities for the different groups, and decide exactly where everyone would be heading off to. We received our weather report for the day which promised us sun shine and warm temperatures, then, with our vehicles packed the three of us set off for the hills of Capel Curig, (personally a good start as I could actually pronounce the place).

First things first, we familiarised our selves with a compass and a map by talking about the basic rules of navigation. We were then taught how to plan a route effectively by breaking it down into sections and following the principles of pacing, distance, direction, bearing, and the use of the surrounding features and terrain. This progressively made us more proficient in relating the ground to the map and throughout the course of the morning and afternoon we practised what we had been taught using the various methods (having a peek at the GPS!). We also learnt various things about mountainous environments and took the opportunity to savour the beautiful scenery, I personally

developed a greater understanding for the respect that it is due. The day had been really enjoyable and a good success, the weather stayed fine and the tutoring was excellent, especially with our one-to-one teaching. After our exertion we all felt the need for a good cup of tea and home made flap jack, over which we discussed the day's events before tackling the climbing wall at camp before it shut. My experience of rock climbing equated to that of my mountaineering, and so my use of technique and skill was quite sparse, but it left me wanting to do more. True army comradeship prevailed once again as we all went to the local to quench our thirsts.

Once again up early on Sunday, good breakfast and pot of tea to put us instead. Our trio's plan for the final day consisted of introducing us to technical work on steep ground. Again after the weather report and loading the vehicles we were off once more. On Saturday we established a good seat at the Capel Curig café and so we felt obliged to pop back for another cuppa before we got started. Since we were there a quick look around for the odd sale item wouldn't hurt either. One lesson that I shall remember from the weekend is that there's always room for

a bargain! Back to business and we made a short walk to find some appropriate ground for the technical work. We spent the time learning how to manage a group on potentially compromising ground with and without a rope, and various ways to utilise a rope

if we needed. For example, using a rope to build confidence in individuals who needed it, how to attach the rope to ourselves and to someone else, and using it in ascent and descent with improvised harnesses and abseiling.

I travelled back to Aldershot that day having achieved far more than I had ever hoped to, and with the definite intention to get back up to work on my log book. In some ways I feel annoyed that I hadn't taken full advantage of the AMA before, but I never

really knew that there was so much opportunity out there that was so easy to organise. I hope to continue to explore the mountains and to become proficient enough to be able to share this experience by taking out others in the future.

## ROCK AND RIDGES WEEKEND - 24-26 JUNE 2005

*By Henry Methold CIO1, JSMTW Ballachulish*

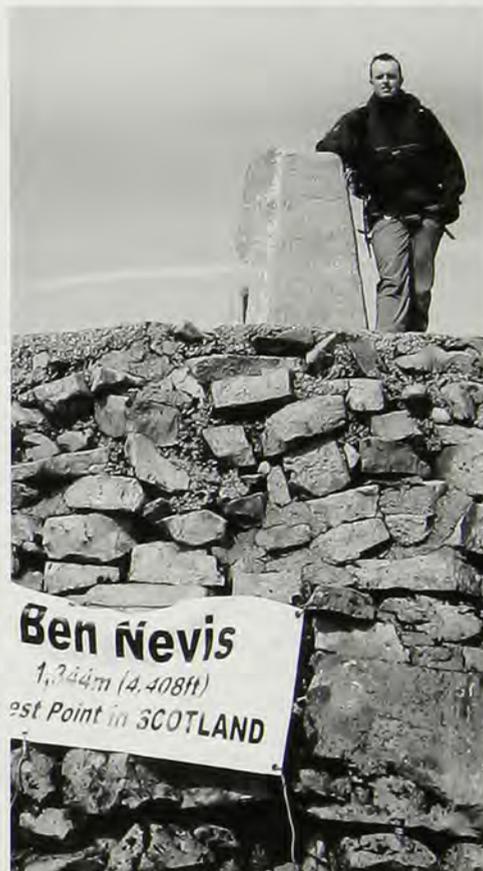
The select few who made it to the Joint Service Centre in Ballachulish for this AMA meet were rewarded with an excellent weekend's climbing and great weather.

Climbing on Saturday was in Glen Coe with the whole party heading for the Buchaille. Routes climbed on Buchaille Etive More were North Buttress (300m moderate), Shackle Route (Severe), Engineer's Crack (E1 5b), Satan's Slit (VS), Red Slab (VS), Fracture Route (VS) and Brevity Crack (VS 5a).

Saturday evening entertainment was dinner at the Centre plus a few pints of Atlas Ale in the local hostelry. Sunday morning saw an early start for those going to Ben Nevis while Ritchie Painting and Dick Gayle headed to Etive Slabs to climb the Hammer (HVS). The Ben Nevis party climbed Observatory Ridge in traditional style and arrived at the summit by mid-afternoon with brilliant sunshine and stunning views.



*Sgt. Ritchie Painting and WO2 Dick Gayle on Satan's Slit, Buchaille Etive Mor.*



*Sgt. Jim McGroy after completing Observatory Ridge and summiting on Ben Nevis.*



*The approach to Observatory Ridge on Ben Nevis. Captain Andy Fowle, Captain Chris Charnock and Henry Methold (CIO1)*

The weekend proved to be very successful although poorly attended. The plan is to run this event again next summer when hopefully some more of you will be able to

come along. Perhaps a transfer bus from Glasgow Airport would make it easier for those of you from further South?



*Captain Chris Charnock and Captain Andy Fowle exiting Observatory Ridge, Ben Nevis.*

# Army Bouldering Championships Sat 29 Jan 05

On Saturday 29 Jan 05 the Army held their fourth Bouldering Championships, the third consecutive championships to be held at the Joint Service Mountain Training Centre (JSMTC) Indefatigable.

The Indefatigable Climbing Centre now boasts one of the best bouldering facilities in the country with the recent addition of a freestanding boulder similar to that used in World Cup events. These facilities combined with a massive floor space easily accommodated the 80+ competitors that attended and a whole host of spectators.

During the course of the competition each competitor had to attempt ten problems in each of the three sectors. The grades of the problems ranged from easy to 6c/V11, ensuring that after thirty attempts many folk could not lift their arms! All boulder problems were set during the days leading up to the competition by Hugh Williams, Jon Ratcliffe, Dave Noden, Mark Hedge, Patch Hammond and Chris Davies. Judging from the competitors efforts all routes were pitched at the right standard for a challenging day.

The ethos behind Army bouldering is a relaxed enjoyable event with competitors marking each others score cards, spotting each other on difficult moves and above all.... honesty regarding the rules! With just thirty minutes rest between sectors and some meaty problems every single competitor was challenged.

The Championships grow in stature every year; this was reflected in the prizes provided by some very generous sponsors. The Main sponsor for this year's event was Mountain Works Ltd providing equipment predominantly from Zero-G, Spencer McLeod was on hand all day providing advice on the company's products and dishing out the prize goodies! More details available through [feargear.biz](http://feargear.biz). HB Climbing, DMM and Blizzard were also very generous towards the cause. Sincere thanks to all sponsors.

All categories had clear winners this year, no super finals required.

Lt Simon Witcher won the men's event with 271 points from a possible 300 and is back to good form after a year off to negotiate the rigours of Sandhurst. Capt Haydn Gaukroger was in second spot with 254 points closely followed by Capt Tim Legge with 236.

In the Women's event Capt Tania Noakes easily swept up leaving her nearest competitor over 50 points behind.

SSgt Dave Ash has been on the Army climbing scene for a while now and secured the Veteran event with 179 points. In the Team event composed of three climbers and their total scores, SEAE B easily led the field with 511 points. But second place provided a draw between the home team

of JSMTC and 1 RSME both on 458 points.

Keeping it local, Ocdt Oates from Bangor University came top in the Under 21 event.

This year's



All in all a cracking weekend, look forward to seeing you all next year.



Championships also provided a prize for guests from the Royal Navy and the Air Force. POPT Dave Murphy RN came out on top pushing rival POPT Jan Matthews into a barrel.



# Exercise ROLLING ROCK 13 MAY – 8 JUN 04

By Rab Black

Exercise Rolling Rock was an Army Mountaineering Association expedition to climb Denali (20,320ft) in Alaska - the highest peak in North America. The aim of the exercise was to provide all team members with high altitude experience, develop sustainable routines and provide an opportunity to summit one of the significant mountains of the greater ranges. The expedition was the brainchild of Ian Rivers, our expedition leader. Other team members were: Pete L, Dave E, Dave P, Brush, Malcolm, Adam, Ben and myself.

Denali is a serious undertaking, and in the words of R J Secor, a veteran mountaineer and author of the Denali Climbing Guide, 'there is no other mountain in the world like it'. It is bigger (but not higher!!) than the great peaks of the Himalaya and the Karakoram Ranges. Mount Everest, for example, has a vertical rise of 12,000 feet from the Tibetan plateau but Denali is 18,000 feet above the Alaskan tundra. Mount Everest is approximately 4½ degrees latitude north of the Tropic of Cancer whereas Denali is 3½ degrees below the Arctic Circle. This northerly position makes Denali bitterly cold and the atmosphere thinner than that encountered at similar elevations in temperate or tropical latitudes.

Consequently the partial pressure of air on the summit is equivalent to a 7000m peak in Nepal. Added to which, the Aleutian Islands that lie off the coast of Alaska are credited to be the birthplace of storms and account for the extreme weather associated with the region.

The exercise began when, after a long flight via Chicago and Seattle and then a bus journey from Anchorage we finally arrive in Talkeetna – the Chamonix of Denali. Talkeetna is described by the locals as 'a quaint little drinking village with a climbing problem'. It has a general store, basic mountaineering equipment shed, some tourist shops and restaurants... oh yes and the odd bar/saloon. From here we would catch our fourth and final flight on the outward journey to land directly on the SE fork of the Kahiltna Glacier. Unfortunately, bad weather prevented us from flying and forced a 2 day delay. However, other groups had been waiting much longer.

The first part of the flight passed over wet looking tundra saturated from the recent rain, interspersed with woods and a bear, startled by our low passage under the cloud base, was seen running across a clearing before disappearing in to the scrub. As we approached the uplands the cloud cover began to break, and without warning, our eyes were



Denali - top left

treated to an alpine paradise on a grand scale. 4,000 ft of knife-edged ridges towered from the glaciated floor; jagged peaks cloaked in snow punctuated the skyline and the foreground – yes, the foreground!! We were now on a collision course with a ridge and no time to take evasive action. The aircraft began to climb – slowly, and after a period, we flew over the ridge with little more than a tad of turbulence to mark the spot. My gaze continued to explore in all directions and just when I was beginning to apply some sort of scale to my new surrounding it was immediately shattered. The sight of Denali for the first time was truly breath taking. This bean-stock of a mountain simply dwarfed its neighbour as it sat alone in great majesty above the clouds. I could imagine that seeing the mountain from a greater height would provide a better appreciation of its size but, for now my, focus quickly switched to the

more pressing issue of landing.

Once at base camp we pitched our tent on the snow. After the formalities of booking-in with the Rangers, we collected our fuel and pulks (Sledges). There was a certain relief that we were now at the start point. As we quietly customised our pulks with bungy and cord, we became acutely aware that many of the commercial groups that had flown in earlier that morning were already on the move. They did not have the luxury of time and had to get on the trail immediately to claw back the extra days lost in Talkeetna.

That night we made our first cache, which included 5 days of rations, fuel, and any item not required on the mountain. We sorted into 3 rope-teams of three and over the next four days we progressed up the Washburn route to 11,000 ft. The going was steady and



Departure lounge south east fork, Kahiltna.

afforded us the opportunity to 'single carry' everything with us. With 24 hours of daylight there was no need for torches or a set time to move. We chose to start at about 0200 hrs and were usually settled at our new camp before it became too hot. We were constantly amazed at the volume of people who travelled when the sun was at its hottest.

Campsite routines were quickly established. Potential sites were first checked for crevasses using avalanche probes, and then clearly marking boundaries with wands. Reoccupying a recently vacated site was a bonus but often we had to start from scratch. As a rule we endeavoured to construct a wall around the tent that provided 360 degree protection from the wind and normally exceeded the height of the tent. Excavating a platform was the first priority then utilising the spoil to start the wall. A clear plastic bag was placed in the constructed toilet (you were permitted to dump this bag into the next open crevasse on route) and a wand marked the spot to pee.

Melting snow to produce water is a central theme in this environment. Brush and I were lucky to have one of the spare cookers and although a tedious task, this was achieved in half the time. Mornings were always accompanied by hoar frost encrusted on the inside of the tent. Every movement seemed to disturb the frost which slithered and dripped everywhere. On the fourth night we decided to double our nightly dosage to a whole tablet of Diamox. On previous trips to the Himalayas I was always reluctant to use Diamox because of the side-effects, and as a result, suffered badly from sleep apnoea. However, on this trip I had no problems sleeping nor felt the need to increase the dosage further. The only side effects I experienced were the occasional tingley fingers.

For the next 3 days we were going to stay overnight at the 11,000 ft camp. This was part of our acclimatization programme and allowed us to ferry some of the kit forward (double/triple carry) toward the next camp at 14,200 ft. This was necessary as the terrain had become much steeper and more awkward. The down time was enjoyed by all and Malcolm, our doctor, demonstrated his love of Turkish architecture by constructing a great arch (with an obligatory key-stone) to mark the entrance to our campsite. It was christened the Denali Arch and officially opened with great pomp and ceremony. We cashed more kit here, including our skis.

The climb to 14,200ft was for me the toughest day of the entire trip. Motorbike Hill followed by Squirrel Hill then a misbehaving sledge on Windy Corner compounded the effort. It was a great relief to reach the next campsite. One member of the group had mild Altitude Mountain Sickness (AMS) and another was urinating blood. We had consumed all our fluid getting here; melting snow was now a priority.

Having established camp and in the throes of re-hydration, I looked up suddenly to see 2 figures standing on the bank enquiring after our health. I soon realised this was John and Chris. Before leaving UK I was aware that Chris Onion, a member of the Ogwen Mountain Rescue (and resident of Llanrwst) was going to be on Denali at the same time. We were also informed at Base Camp that John Evans, a Denali Park Ranger, (from Capel Curig?) would be pleased to see us Brits!! Although I retained an awareness of their existence, I thought with over 600 climbers on the hill, I was unlikely to meet them. John has an unconventional background and has been providing a Ranger service on Denali for many years. For the past two days John and Chris plus 35 volunteer climbers had been involved in the rescue of a South Korean climber who

retuned the mug with little more than a nod of appreciation. He was French - nuff said!!

The next 4 days had a similar routine as the previous camp; rest, acclimatisation and the carry stores up to 17,200ft. This involved scaling the headwall on fixed ropes, then continue up the ridge, past Washburn's

took a 60 ft fall just above Denali Pass (18,300ft). They carried him down to 17,200ft, before implementing a classic multi-stage lower, down the steeper terrain to 14,200 where he was evacuated by helicopter. We were to meet John and Chris again in the West Rib Bar in Talkeetna.

The camp at 14200ft was by far the biggest and felt less transient. A medina of white walls separated the various climbing groups and extended towards the Rangers tent with its large antenna. As at base camp, 2 toilets sit at the forward edge of the camp, closed on 3 sides about waist height. From the toilet the outlook towards Foraker was impressive with a carpet of clouds bridging the valley below. Next to us a female Alaskan Mountain Guide was nurse-maiding 2 exhausted clients, to the right, a group we had watched descend the headwall then stagger into camp, were now recomposed, jubilant and posing for the 'I climbed Denali' photograph. Two new arrivals from the lower camp collapsed in the snow next to me. I offered my freshly brewed mug of tea to the first guy. After several slurps my gestures to pass the mug onto his mate were ignored. He finished the entire drink himself then

Thumb, onto a plateau where the next camp was located. This camp was much smaller and split into 2 halves, a lower and higher section. We continued to the higher camp as Ian had heard that it received an extra hour of sun in the morning and evening, which proved to be correct. Bad weather had prevented any summit attempt for the past 4 days and as a result the camp population was growing daily. There was no chance of re-occupancy and the realisation that we were to build from scratch was an unpleasant one. Over the next 2 days, with no let-up in the weather, groups began to retreat off the mountain. However, on the third day good news was received (via sat-phone) from the weather station at Fairbanks. The forecast for the next day detailed a 12 hours break in the weather about midday. This was good news indeed as Denali Pass is a notoriously cold place due to it



Hard Labour at high camp - 17200ft.

remaining in the shade until about 11:00 hrs. We did what we could in terms of preparation and went to sleep in the knowledge that we had a leisurely start in the morning - or did we...?

Malcolm was awake at 07:00 hrs and when he emerged from his tent he was greeted with a blaze of blue sky. Under normal circumstances this would not be a feature of concern, however, it represented the early arrival of our 12 hour weather window and the need to get moving was now a priority.

We were the first group to depart that morning and, despite the blue sky, there was a scything wind. We calculated that the temperature was minus 65 degrees with wind-chill. Progress up the pass was slow as the track had long since disappeared with zero traffic over the past 6 days. In these conditions the margins are slim. You need to keep moving to generate sufficient heat to maintain the balance against the penetrating cold. Unfortunately the extra effort required for breaking trail slowed progress significantly reducing heat production for those that followed. Despite each rope-team taking their turn to lead by the time we stepped aside and waited for the others to pass, the chill had begun to take grip. After an extended period trail-breaking and the subsequent pause Dave E's feet were like

blocks of ice. There was no choice but to remove each boot in turn and attempt to reheat his feet in my armpit. The two other groups continued slowly. As we reached the pass we contoured round without stopping, hoping there was somewhere to shelter from the unrelenting wind and take stock but the terrain offered no such luxury as a windbreak. Dave's feet were no better and Pete's were just as bad and both Malcolm and Brush had frostbite on their face. Their only option was to descend. We decided to continue hoping the weather would improve and slowly it did.

I have no idea how long we'd been going since the group split, 4-5 hours? but the gods were on our side. Not only did the wind slacken, but the rarefying air was compensated by a decline in the gradient. We rested at Archdeacon's Tower before crossing the Football Pitch - a long, flat featureless area. We were confident that the good visibility would hold and decided there was no need to deploy wands to mark the route. A further 45 minutes push up Pig Hill before we reached the summit. At 17:25 hrs Ian, Dave P, Ben, Adam and I were standing on the highest point in North America - a thought to savour. After many photographs we started our descent. The fragile wind blown slab snow condition



*A carpet of cloud in all directions - 5 minutes from the summit.*

demanding our full attention. After two innocuous but potentially disastrous slides on Pig Hill, each subsequent foot placement was made with great precision. The same level of physically draining precision footwork was required again as we descended Denali Pass. However, the weather remained stable and we were back in camp in just under 5 hours.

The following day the weather had closed in again with a forecast of a big storm coming through in 3 days. With no further opportunity for a summit bid, the priority now was to get off the mountain and back to Talkeetna before all air traffic ceased again. We were back at Base Camp

in 2 days and were pleased and surprised to be on a flight back to Talkeetna within the hour.

Exercise ROLLING ROCK was an excellent experience and a great success. All nine members of the team reached Denali Pass at 18,200ft and over 50% of the team stood on the summit. The frostbite injuries were superficial with no lasting damage. Most gained a new altitude personal best, especially Adam whose previous high point was Tryfan. Finally, I would like to thank Ian for all the hard work involved in making the Exercise happen and the entire team for making it such an enjoyable and memorable expedition.



*The Summiters - L to R: Ben, Rab, Dave, Adam, Ian.*

# Exercise ALPINE DRAGON

## Infantry Battle School - Haute Route (sort of)

By P M Boschi

Four weeks in the bush in Malawi, seventeen hours sharing a minibus with Guns 'N' Roses and 'a couple of quiet ones' in a bar in Chamonix were not the best way to acclimatise for an attempt on the Haute Route. Still, you've got to go with what you've got, and there were some good points to the trip; tri-Service in the finest sense (Royal Marines, no RAF) and a large supply of issue long johns.

The first two days were a chaos of kit and incompetence. We regarded ourselves as fairly reasonable skiers; however, the finer points of staying upright in mountaineering boots with no support completely escaped us. The employment of skins was another fairly precipitous learning curve as the bold claim, "you can go anywhere on skins, can't you?" was shown to be instantly incorrect on a steep and icy slope.

Things began to come together in time for the wheather to get

very much worse. The bad weather coincided with a huge dump of snow, which improved confidence dramatically as it became clear that the frequent pastime of face planting no longer hurt as much. In addition, motoring uphill became faster and slicker, with mandatory kick turns no longer requiring the fall in the middle. The difficulty was a complete inability to see further than 50 yards or so coupled with much floundering in waist-deep snow. Avalanche flags started appearing, became blacker and finally went very black indeed. It was not looking good.

On day six our guide Mac McKay joined us, took one look and sent us all to get different boots; he then took another look at the weather and the snow depth and told us we weren't going to do the full Haute Route. We then proceeded to dig snow pits to check the avalanche risk, and they



collapsed entirely on us. Two days later we heard that four groups had started, three turned back and the other had been caught in an avalanche. There are times when professional advice can be rather valuable.

Our new itinerary took in a four-day ski tour in the vicinity of Arolla, taking in the Pigne d'Arolla at 3790m along with a great deal of climbing and two particularly glorious



downhill off-piste powder runs of 6km and 8km. We did cause much confusion in the huts as our early starts and rapid climbing saw a good lead established over all the civilian groups, who clearly thought we were a fairly professional bunch, helped by Mac's wild claims that we were the British downhill ski team. Of course, once we took our skins off it was a different story, with some good but mostly very average skiing. Our strong belief while

skiing through crud was and remains, "Parallel for show – Snow plough for the pro". Our final two days were attempts on the Allilinhorn and Breithorn, both 4000m peaks, and both were superb. High wind forced us and the other groups off the Allilinhorn on the summit col: the Breithorn was a great day with a hard climb and summit followed by the frankly terrifying experience of a long and fast schuss through crud down and across the bowl beneath the ridge. At this stage jump

turns had gone from an impossible dream to a huge source of amusement, and piling through thick powder was now done mostly on skis and not on our faces. By some margin it was the best skiing most of us had ever done. The final run on piste down to Zermatt was hugely disappointing after our days on the mountains. If only there were some way to throw away the lift pass, put skins on, find climbs and runs that good and still get down to Dick's T Bar every evening...



And on the last day we finally learnt to ski.....



Capt Sam Humphris forgetting never to look down.



Back in Arolla after the four-day tour.

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# CLIMB NOW – WORK LATER!

Exercise VENTURER DRAGON – BAVARIA 6 – 23 June 2004

Roger Smith - RATO Malvern College CCF

In June 2004 I was fortunate enough to join some friends and colleagues at the Joint Services Alpine Centre in Sonthofen. Our intention was to climb anything that was in condition – rock, snow, ice, klettersteig – during the best part of two weeks in the mountains of Bavaria and Austria, and if all else failed we would watch the spring snow melt and see the alpine flowers emerge for yet another season.

Our 'warm-up' was spent completing numerous single-pitch routes on a number of limestone outcrops close to Fussen. A pre-dawn start next day enabled us to get to Langenfeld (Austria) in time for breakfast after which we completed the two "well known" roadside klettersteigs of the valley. First the Lehner Wasserfall Klettersteig in the early morning sun. A great little route with some fine steeper sections, long exposed traverses and a classic little roof to "round it off". After a caffeine boost at the MPreiss in Langenfeld village we tackled the Reinhard Schiestl Klettersteig - a much steeper proposition with significant exposure in places. This route was physically quite demanding and surprisingly sustained. Both of these routes should be on any klettersteig devotees list and are typical of the modern crag klettersteig routes that take the climber into situations normally the preserve of those that venture onto harder rock routes.

The weather precluded us from venturing on the high hills next day so we took the Nabelhorner cable car to the top station, watched numerous hang-gliders take off and then descended on foot to Obersdorf with camera at the ready to catch snowbells emerging through the melting snow margins and the super-abundance of the early-flowering gentians and primulas.

I had agreed to put on a "Single Pitch Award (SPA) syllabus course" as part of the AMA climbing meet scheduled for 11–14 June. That was the reason why eight AMA members were to be found in a frenzy of knots and rope manoeuvres for two days at Tiefenbach and Fussen Crags and discussing etiquette at crags and learning about rock-climbing history while viewing slides and video footage back at the centre. Seven happy souls "escaped from the system" that week-end and came away much the wiser and with some useful log-book experience.

Frustration set in next day as the party tried to find the base of the elegant looking Burgberg-Hornli rock ridge on the Grunten which overlooks Sonthofen. Our efforts ended amongst the forest undergrowth and resulted in taking the footpath (?) to the summit cross!

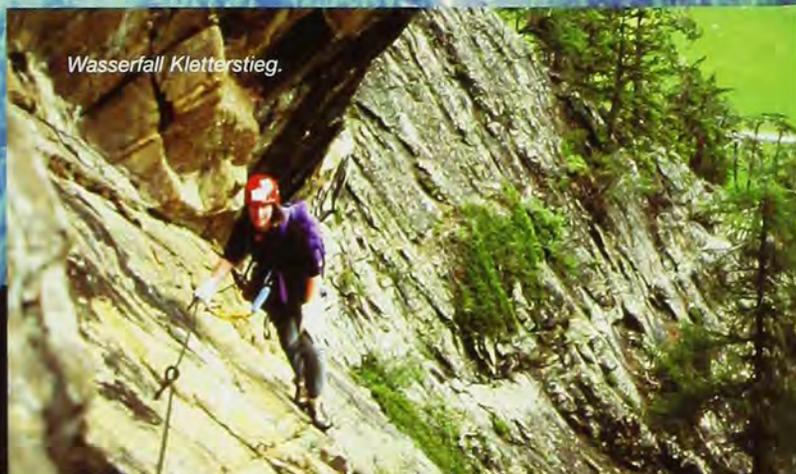


*Escaping the system*

Fortunes were better next day as we caught the first cable-car up the Nabelhorner and geared up for an early season crossing of the classic Hinderlanger Klettersteig. The exposure on this ridge is considerable and in places patches of hard neve made progress slow and interesting! Progress on much of the return route required the use of crampons and rope and was reminiscent of the Cairngorms at Eastertime!

It was a wet drive over to Garmish next day but the clouds did lift in the afternoon revealing snow-capped peaks galore as we set about pitching tents at the PX campsite. We caught the first cable car up the Osterfelderkopf next morning and well before 0900hrs were walking out over snow patches towards the base of the Alpstiz-Ferrata that weaves its way impressively up the broad expanse of the north wall of the Alpstiz. We soon joined the cables and ladders working their way through the rock

*Reinhard Schiestl Kletterstieg.*



*Wasserfall Kletterstieg.*



Hinderlanger Klettersteig.



Burgberg-Hornli Ridge



Fussen Crag - SPA Syllabus work.

architecture with great views of the Zugspitze and the Jubiläumsglat ridge still plastered with snow. Higher up snow and ice covered the cables and ladders and it was necessary to climb two or three entertaining "conventional" Scottish Grade 1/2 pitches before topping out on the snow covered summit of the Alpstizpe (2629 metres) at about 1315hrs. Descent down the east ridge

and across the Oberkar was principally on snow as far as the Bernardeinwande saddle. From there the route to the Kreutzeck cable car was followed and we made the last car of the day to the valley with just a few minutes to spare!

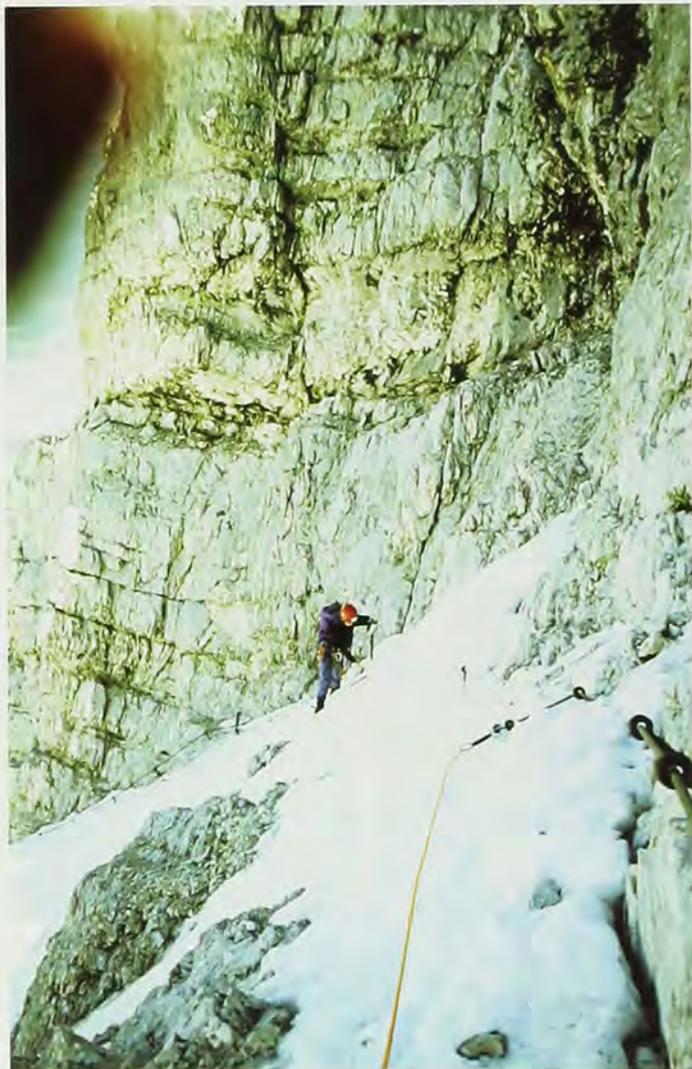
Return to Sonthofen next day was made via the Orzstal and Langenfeld where another ascent of the Lehner

Wasserfall Klettersteig was made - but with different team members.

The final challenge of the trip was to revisit the Grunten - this time we did find the route to the base of the Burgberg-Hornli ridge. Six pitches of vegetated limestone up the exposed ridge - most of it at about Difficult (UIAA grade 2 or 3) standard with one step of Severe (grade 4) - led us

in under three hours to the summit cross. It turned out to be a route that looked better than it really was owing to its commanding position.

The team managed to complete a busy programme of climbing rock, snow, ice and klettersteigs as planned and is most grateful to the AMA for the grants given to the individual participants in membership of the association.



Alpstizpe-Ferrat a Grade 1-2 pitch.

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# Chamonix on a

By Kenny Ross Aged 28 1/4

Oli and I decided to make a trip to the Alps together one evening when we were pulling on plastic at the Westway in London. The question was where? We decided on Chamonix again as we both knew the area well and there are a lot of routes there that we both wanted to do. We have known each other for a couple of years but had hardly done any climbing together apart from an icefall a couple of winters

ago and some indoor stuff. I knew Oli well enough to know that we would have a good time and do plenty of climbing. We decided to go for three weeks in June straight after I finished my end of year exams.

We flew to Geneva and arranged an airport transfer with a chalet company based in Les Houches. Andy, the driver was a friendly guy and filled us both in on the state of the valley and what the winter had been like. He even agreed to stop in

Sallanches so we could buy some more food in addition to the stuff we had got

from the cash and carry back in the UK. We also stocked up on gas and fuel for the stoves. After getting dropped off at the end of town we quickly walked to the gite where we had arranged to leave our extra stuff we didn't need up the hill. Packing didn't take too long, the plan was to walk up to near the Argentiere hut and camp for a week and climb routes from there. With all the rock and ice gear, sleeping bags, tent, stove and food our sacs felt pretty heavy.

A couple of hours later, after hitchhiking to Argentiere we found ourselves slogging up the scree treadmill that is the pierre ric ski run. As it was getting late and starting to rain we bivvied at the lognan cable car station for the night. Early the next

morning we set out and walked the rest of the way up the glacier. We found a reasonable campsite at the bottom of the glacier de Milieu and cooked the first of many meals of noodles, smash and cheese, flavoured with packet soup. Our main objective for the week was a climb on the north face of the aiguille d'Argentiere called the Messner route. As a warm up for this we decided to climb a route called the Petit Viking, an ice climb up the side of the frontier ridge that runs between Mont Dolent and the Aiguille du Triolet. All the belays were in place according to the guide book enabling an abseil descent. For ten pitches we worked our way up the route which was like a big Scottish gully. Mostly neve and ice, the last two pitches being tricky mixed climbing on loose rock. The warmth of the rising sun was also starting to soften everything up so we didn't waste any time at the top but decided to head down straight away. The ropes on the first abseil refused to budge even with both of us pulling them.

After a lot of cursing we settled who would have to go up and free the ropes by the fairest



At the top of the ice slope on the Messner route



Our bivvy on the Cordier pillar



A worms eye view of the Frenco spur



Oli leading on the Petit Viking.



The top section of the Cordier Pillar on day 2.

# Shoestrung

method - stone, paper or scissors. I lost so I had to prussic back up the stretchy 60m ropes and sort out the abseil anchor so the rope ran freely. By the time we made it back to the glacier the sun had started beating down in earnest and it seemed to take forever to wade through the slushy snow back to our tent.

We spent the next day getting ready for the Messner route. We decided to take about the same amount of gear. Six ice screws, ten nuts, a few blade and angle pegs, seven extenders and a load of slings made up our rack. Our system of leading in blocks of four pitches worked well. We also took only one sac between us which the second carried. This meant that the leader could climb much quicker. We set out at midnight, it was a long walk to the foot of the face over the col du Chardonnet which took about three hours. We managed to cross the bergschrund and reach the start of the mixed ground before sunrise. What we failed to appreciate was that as soon as the sun came up it was going to hit the face.

Immediately I felt too hot and the

snow and ice covering the rock started to melt. We had to dig down through the sugary snow to find every handhold which slowed us down a lot. Eventually we reached the big snow/ice slope that made up the middle part of the face. This turned out to be easy, a good layer of snow over hard ice. We moved together up this to the bottom of the gully that goes through the top rock band. We reverted to moving one at a time as the slope steepened and turned into bare ice. Eventually it relented and we reached the crest of the North-east ridge. All that remained was to climb up the remainder of the ridge and pull over the cornice that barred our way to the summit. We hadn't seen a soul all day apart from a helicopter performing what must have been a rescue on the Chardonnet. We were now rewarded with amazing views of the massif, the Courtes, Droites, Verte chain rose up in front of us and beyond that the Jorrasces and Mont Blanc itself. Behind us the peaks of the Valais were obscured by menacing looking clouds which looked to be moving our way. Time to start heading down. The descent was an easy plod down the glacier to our tent where we had a

much needed brew.

We only had enough food for another couple of days and the weather was due to break over the weekend so we decided to do an easier route to finish the week off. The Fleche Rousse ridge fitted the bill. The guidebook time was four and a half hours from the hut and we managed to stick to that. Kicking steps up gullies filled with snow and scrambling around the gendarmes on the ridge we made fast progress and were on the summit by nine o'clock. After walking back down the glacier de Milieu we packed up our tent and spent the rest of the day on the veranda of the Argentiere hut chatting with two Polish guys, Adam and Chris who were going to climb the Aiguille Verte. They had hitchhiked all the way from Poland to get to Chamonix taking several days.

Due to the weather being so warm we decided that we would have to set off very early the next morning to ensure that the snow bridges on the glacier were frozen and would be at their safest. After a night spent at the hut we headed off back down to Argentiere. A week spent eating noodles meant we were both desperate for some proper food.

After the experience of the previous week it was obvious that the weather was too warm to attempt more ice

climbs. A rock route that I wanted to do was the Cordier pillar on the Grand Charmoz. At twenty four pitches long it was by far the longest rock climb that either of us had done but we felt confident and reasoned that it wasn't too committing as we planned to descend by abseil. Because of this we would leave our mountain boots and ice axes at the bottom of the pillar and climb in rock shoes carrying only bivvy gear in one sac.

After a night spent in Chamonix we repacked our stuff for another week up in the mountains. Next morning we plodded up the path from the town to the grand balcon nord. The sounds of traffic and other noise receded the further up the track we got until finally peace and quiet reigned. We found a brilliant site for the tent on a grassy alp above the track. There was even good bouldering nearby on the huge blocks of granite scattered around. As a warm up for the Cordier we climbed the Couzy route on the Aiguille l'M. This was a great rock route on perfect rock which was very enjoyable. The climbing was never desperate and there were plenty of pegs in place. After a couple of days spent waiting for the weather to improve we set out for the pillar. The climbing was amazing, steep and exposed. Pitch followed pitch on lovely rough granite which was a pleasure to climb. We made a few errors in route finding due to misleading bits of tat in the lower section but generally, it was easy to follow the line. We reached the big ledge system at two thirds height where we planned to spend the night. The cloud which had obscured the view the whole day lifted after dark and we were treated to a wonderful view of the valley by night. The next morning we started early to finish off

Sunrise on the Fleche Rousse ridge.



Finished the Frendo.

the last ten pitches. These were even better than the bottom section. Lovely jamming cracks and chimneys and even a weird tufa-like section. The view had been getting steadily better with each rope length. We were now high up and could see past the Blaitiere towards Mont Blanc. The Tour Ronde and the Grande Capucin were in plain view. Laybacking up the final crack I heaved on to the summit ridge and found myself looking down onto the north face and the Aiguille de Republic. We sat on the summit for a while and enjoyed the view and the sunshine. However we had a long way to go before we were home so we didn't wait too long before setting off on the laborious business of making over twenty abseils back to the glacier. On the second rappel Oli dislodged a massive block which unfortunately chopped ten metres off my rope. This and the fact that the ropes felt like they were going to get stuck nearly every time we pulled them made the descent pretty nerve-wracking to say the least. I was very relieved when I could see the rope ends touching the glacier where we had stashed our boots. We couldn't hang around as it was the afternoon by this point and the snow around the bottom of the pillar was peppered with the debris that had been crashing down the adjacent gully since about noon. We

quickly gathered up our stuff and glissaded down the glacier and back to our plastic palace.

The weather, which had been pretty good up until now broke, and there was nothing for it but to head for the valley. We spent the next five days hanging out in the gite and cragging in Vallorcine and the Galliards waiting for the weather forecast to improve. Eventually the outlook improved enough to make another trip feasible. We both wanted to do another big, mixed route before going home and a line that we both agreed would be fantastic would be the Frendo Spur. We had just enough time left before we were due to return home. We headed back up to our previous campsite and got our gear ready. Five ice screws, ten nuts, two pegs, three cams, seven extenders and some slings made up the climbing gear we took with us. On top of that we had the ropes, the stove and pan, the bivvy sac, water bottles, some food, our ice tools and crampons and our duvet jackets. For this climb we would take a rucksack each as we had to carry our ice climbing gear on the bottom rock section of the spur.

Early the next morning we walked along the balcon nord towards the Plan de l'Aiguille. A thick scum of cloud hung in the sky obscuring the mountain. We waited by the

deserted cafe next to the cable car station for a while, undecided whether or not to continue. We reasoned that we might as well walk up to the foot of the spur and see how things turned out. Thankfully as we were walking up the glacier des Pelerins the clag lifted and we had a good look at the route. The bottom section of the spur is an easy scramble. What would have been loose rock was still covered in well consolidated snow. We kicked up this unroped for the first couple of hundred metres until a tricky pitch brought us onto the crest of the spur. The climbing was still not very difficult so we moved together now, roped up, along the crest, climbing short walls and cracked slabs until we reached a small col. The spur now got steeper, I got the other rope out of my sac and we tied on to it. Oli led on up the start of the difficult rock climbing. The rock pitches were not too difficult but my boots felt clumsy and in some places the rock was wet. There were plenty of pegs in place however and the route finding was fairly easy. Oli made short work of the crux rock pitch, an awkward layback corner crack. Another two pitches of easier rock followed and we were on the large shoulder at the top of the rock section. There were several bivvy sites on the large ledge and we selected the most palatial, a cave formed by an overhanging boulder. A previous occupant had built a low wall around the entrance. I busied myself excavating the snow that had built up inside while Oli rigged up a rope balustrade that we clipped ourselves and all our gear to. We then started the sustaining ritual of tea, noodles and cigarettes. We had planned to take two days to do the route as the top section is all snow and ice and would be safest in the cold of early morning. We carpeted our bed for the night with our foam pads, empty rucksacks and ropes. Pulling the tent sac over ourselves we settled down for the night. After about half an hour we began to hear voices, people

shouting. They were definitely getting louder. Presently we were joined by a pair of French climbers who were surprised to see us. They were then followed by another three parties. They were all aspirant guides with their assessors. We sat up for a while longer and chatted away to them in our terrible French.

Eventually we managed to snatch a bit of shuteye but at last dawn was starting to break on the horizon. We got up and made a brew and ate a packet of semolina. I racked up, putting the ice screws to the front of my harness, strapped on my crampons and set off up the thin snow arête that leads the way to the rock rognon. Rebuffat describes the route in his book 'The 100 Finest Routes' as going up the rognon but we were following the description in 'Neige, Glace et Mixte' which recommends going round to the left.

The guides seemed to be waiting for us to go first so we didn't waste time and moved together up the arête. As I got nearer to the rock the slope steepened and the snow got less and less secure. It was a thin crust over a layer of sugary corn snow, under this was the hardest ice I have ever seen. I was relieved when I managed to get a runner in a rock sticking out of the slope and moved off round left to skirt round the rognon. The snow started to get firmer and turned to ice as we climbed further up. On two occasions I found bolted belays and happily made use of them. The last three pitches were the crux of the second day with an average angle of about sixty degrees and one ten metre section of eighty degree ice at the very end. Once on the Midi-Plan ridge all that remained was to plod up to the ice tunnel fighting our way past the guided hordes. I felt elated at having completed such a fantastic route which was a great way to end such a successful holiday.

# Exercise FRENCH MIST TIGER

by Mark Gregory

Exercise FRENCH MIST TIGER was a summer trekking expedition to the French and Swiss Alps and was undertaken by members of 4 Bn REME. The exercise was designed to provide members of the Battalion with a physically demanding venture across remote and mountainous terrain whilst providing them with an insight into the difficulties and challenges faced by the population who live within the boundaries of the Alps.

Prior to undertaking this venture late in August 2004, the nine participants from the General Support Company and RLC Stores Troop began their pre-expedition training with hikes over Dartmoor and Snowdonia National Parks. These hikes provided team members with an insight into what would be expected of them on arrival in France. The sessions themselves consisted of a long and undulating trek over Dartmoor before progressing to a shorter yet steeper ascent of Mt Snowdon and Yr Aran. Incorporating navigation, first aid and mountain craft training these sessions proved of great value for those who attended.

A relentless 18 hours of travel preceded our arrival in the Rhone-Alps region of France, which greeted us with scenes of immense beauty with the lush greenery of Alpine forests contrasted against the backdrop of mountainous, snow covered peaks and sunlight glistened glaciers. At valley level, all were enticed by this amazing landscape and this enchantment could only improve as we progressed higher into the range. Base camp in the Les Bossons district of Chamonix was reached around mid-morning on the 21st August and all were eager for a period of rest outside the confines of the minibus. Refreshed and ready to make the most of the remaining day and a half, the team ventured into



The team at Le Tour (L to R): Cfn Gary Price, Paul Reed, LCpl Al Wilson, Pte 'Curly' Colbridge, Cfn Steve Toland, Lt Mark Gregory, Cfn Darren Smith and Dan Booth.

Chamonix town centre to purchase any final luxuries and to sample some of the local customs. Not surprisingly these customs were merrily continued in the evening as the team descended on the only English theme bar in the town. When in Rome?

Day one of the expedition was to prove a real eye-opener for some. As with any expedition of this nature it is always vital that the participants are given personal challenges to overcome and the ascent from Le Tour to the Tete de la Balme provided just that. The going was easy under foot but steep and arduous and it was clear from the start that some would struggle. However, this was a challenge and all rose to the occasion and achieved many personal goals.

Having narrowly avoided a series of downhill mountain bikers we arrived at the Refuge de Col de la Balme, out of breath and dripping in sweat, but following a short breather the journey continued to the Tete. To lighten the load, rucksacks were left at the refuge in favour of an easier climb. This was to be the highest point of the day, literally. From our elevated position

upon the summit, the panoramic views of the Chamonix valley and Switzerland were a reminder to us all as to why we had volunteered to leave the mundane routine of barrack life. It also gave us the opportunity to recce the route and landscape ahead, and if this natural beauty was not enough then the adjacent rock face crowned by the Lac D'Emission dam most certainly was. From a purely REME point of view, this was an impressive feat of civil engineering. Following the customary happy snaps, it was back to the refuge for over-priced coffee and then on our way into the Alpine woodlands of the neighbouring valley. As the descent progressed we could see our intended, but now

questionable campsite at Le Prise de Bisse on the far side. Having had a close encounter with an agitated wasp nest 'en route', which saw George Hughes amongst others move a little faster than usual, we reached the Swiss valley base of Le Trient. With daylight fading we pitched camp early, which with the benefit of hindsight proved to be a sensible if not fortunate decision.

Laying awake in the early hours of the morning, listening to the rain lashing the outside of our tents, although soothing, was to be the ominous premonition of things to come. As darkness turned to light, the sound of rain on canvas remained, and as a few brave souls plucked up the courage to venture



Ascending the Col de Tricot.

outside it was clear that the prospect of commencing the second day's hike was diminishing. The decision was taken not to continue. Due to the inclement weather and reduced visibility, to proceed along the narrow and exposed tracks that dominated this leg would have been foolish. This is not to say that the day went to waste. In between frequent visits to the local Café, the team were tutored further in basic mountain craft including map reading, rope work and evacuation procedures.



View of Glacier de Tour from Le Brevet.

With dawn the next day came the sign we were all awaiting. As sunshine broke through cloudy skies there was no doubt that the route ahead was there for the taking. This was to be the longest day of the expedition, further than planned and taking a full ten hours. There was still the need to make up what had remained from the previous day, and added to this would be a segment of the next day's route due to a missed checkpoint later that evening. The team left Trient after a healthy continental breakfast and made their way back towards France, but this was not without it's episode. If narrowly avoiding mountain bikers wasn't heart-racing enough, then narrowly avoiding boulders and tree stumps was. As the first ascent of the day began, a large thundering crash was heard up ahead. As the team rounded the corner on their final approach to La Prise de Bisse the evidence was there, convincingly spread across the track. Although by no means a large incident in mountaineering terms, anyone who had been caught

by this breezeblock sized rock or accompanying tree stump would have sustained serious injuries. Fortunately all survived this moment of excitement and continued as they once had – onwards and upwards. Le Prise de Bisse was reached with no further dramas and on review, this location did offer a suitable, but small campsite next to a newly constructed refuge (not shown on current maps). Having checked-in with the warden to inform him of the earlier incident we continued to ascend higher into the mountains. Navigating our way along narrow, winding and rocky tracks the team arrived at yet another unexpected and unmarked refuge, this time near the uninhabited hamlet of Dessus. A short rest and light refreshments were taken and on plodded this drained, but surprisingly spirited group. As the route eventually levelled out and the border with France crossed, the welcomed sight of the Refuge de Col de la Balme had us all reminiscing our last visit. By now the team was tired and some had

found the final leg from Dessus a real struggle, but 'not far now' was the subconscious thoughts of many. Regrettably this was not to be the case as our intended campsite at the Lac de Charmillion was convincingly overshot because this lake (as it was mapped) turned out to be nothing more than a large, but well-hidden puddle. The error was noticed shortly afterwards, but taking into account our position, the collective decision was taken to proceed with the first leg of the next days trek.

The Refuge de Albert 1st overlooks the Le Bosson glacier and was to be the highest part of the trek, but it was not to be. Just like the day before, about 1km from the refuge the skies again darkened as black clouds engulfed the region and with the accompanying rain the team retraced their steps back to the Lac de Charmillion. Camp was established just south of the lake next to one of the many cable-car stations in the Alps.

Following a night of heavy rain and high winds the team arose to a dull, miserable and misty morning. The final leg of this circuit, which was to return us to Le Tour took us through the Chalet de Balme and up over the Aiguillette des Posettes. The mist that would stay with us the whole day made navigation difficult and after some standing around at the Chalets the climb to Posettes was slow, mainly because the culmination of the previous two days was taking its toll, but none-the-less the summit was reached. With the knowledge that what remained of the day was all downhill, moral took a sudden turn for the better and so did the accompanying pace. Le Tour was reached with ease, but there would be no time to reflect as we all huddled into the bus for the short drive to our next start point in the town of Les Contamines-Mont-Joie. The early end to day three gave the many weary legs and sore feet a chance to relax in the pleasant surroundings of this Alpine township.

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The 36 hours of poor weather that preceded our move to Les Contamines was to be the last of its kind. From this point onwards there was to be nothing but continuous sunshine. The two-day circuit that we were about to commence was to have some of the most fantastic scenery and toughest routes that the Alps have to offer. From our start point at La Frasse on the North Eastern edge of Les Contamines, the revitalised team began another long and arduous ascent into the mountains. The climb was short and sharp, but by no means as difficult as that experienced when scaling the heights of Le Tete de Balme. The path wound its way out of the lower Alpine valley and traversed beneath the summit of Mt Truc and then down to the Chalets de Miage where lunch was taken by the river. What came next will stick in the memories of all participants for years to come, however it was not to be the excitement of mountain bikers or boulders, but just another uphill slog. Earlier that day the team had split in two with the expedition leader and Cfn Dan Booth taking the minibus to the finish point and then walking an alternate route to the Chalets de Miage. Rounding the northern side of Mt Tricot they met up with a local who took a keen interest in this little venture. Following a short conversation in broken French, the duo left their French cousin with a booming smile on his face. His parting gesture was to imply that we were mad to even attempt to climb the Col de Tricot, but that was exactly what we did and he was right, it was certainly an act of insanity. The height of 1389m over 1.6km took approximately 2 hours and drained most of the endurance that was left amongst the team, but as before, a steady plod and frequent breaks ensured that the saddle was reached in good health and high spirits.

The Glacier de Bionnassay was evidently in decline as we crossed an hour or two later. The crossing point over a 'rope' bridge of wires and

planks was in good repair giving the impression that it was a new addition to the area, and the idyllic views of the towering glacier above and valley below was awe-inspiring. From the glacier the Mt Blanc tramline was reached and followed to the Col de Voza. The final uphill stint led us to our campsite at the Hotel-Refuge Prarion. Presented with the possibility of hotel accommodation and freshly cooked food the thought of another night under canvas did not appeal to all. Luckily for the troops, George Hughes successfully buttered up Mark Gregory into choosing the more comfortable option, much to their relief.

The final day's hike was to be a roller coaster adventure as we passed from village to village and valley to valley, but despite the overall loss in height we still had numerous steep gradients to overcome before the bottom was reached. Experience has taught that should I venture to this region again, I would not include this element of the expedition at the end of a five-day trek; it was perhaps asking a little too much of everyone considering what had been achieved to date. This aside, each individual drove themselves on and dealt with the difficulties in their own way, but it was to be Mark Gregory who was to leave a lasting impression on



Crossing the Glacier e Bionnassay.

this day. At one point on his descent to the Col de la Forclaz, he was seen to be sprawled out over the edge of the track, having had a section come loose under foot. Following a few confused looks, a bit of panicked worry and some dusting off, the now slightly embarrassed Expedition Leader continued on his way with a bruised and swollen hand for his efforts.

The story of Exercise FRENCH MIST TIGER ended several hours later in the village of La Gruvaz in a heap of rucksacks and bodies. The expedition had taken its toll on every individual, but all had gained notable benefit from the

challenges presented by the Alps. For Al Wilson and Paul Reed the trek had been a test of their characters, always enthusiastic and motivated they encouraged their team-mates from start to finish; Steve Toland and Dan Booth demonstrated the finer arts of mountain craft with their high quality navigation setting a good example to all; Physically robust, Darren Smith and Gary Price set the pace and led from the front and for 'Curly' Colbridge, she proved that through mental determination any physical demands can be overcome. With that said, a weary group of nine explorers headed back to Chamonix for one final night of foreign frolics.



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# BOG TROTTING ON THE ISLE OF MULL

## THE LOWE ALPINE MOUNTAIN MARATHON

By Howie Barnes

The weekend of 18th / 19th June saw me participate in my first (and last, maybe?) mountain marathon, the LAMM. The LAMM has been held since 1994, always in Scotland, and is in many respects similar to the KIMM. I suspect that many AMA members (and military personnel in general) are no strangers to these events, but it was an eye opening and quad burning experience for a thirty-something staff officer from Warminster and his team mate, Jon Chorley from the HAC. Along with experiencing our first mountain marathon I was also raising money for research into a rare muscle disorder, Juvenile Dermatomyositis that has afflicted my son for the past two years.

In the true spirit of mountain marathons the location of the event was not released on the website until the Thursday before the event. Turn left after the second Shell

station in Oban was about the sum of information provided. On arrival in Oban you were issued a return foot passage on the CalMac ferry to Craignure and directions to the event centre on Mull. Oh, and of course the ferry terminal was a good half mile from the car park! It was a barmy Friday evening in Oban, the sun shone and sea was calm. The town was full of obvious competitors waiting for the next ferry. Lycra, Gore-Tex, plenty of "I've done loads of mountain marathons before" T-shirts and the occasional dodgy beard. The chip shop owners appeared ecstatic, the coach tours bewildered and the locals oblivious as several hundred competitors gathered for the 45 minute crossing.

With a queue several deep it took a while to reach the ferry bar for some crucial pre-race hydration products and little more than a litre could be taken on board before the ferry passed Duart Castle and docked on the Isle of Mull. The event centre was a further mile from the pier and was reached by a brisk walk or a trip on the Mull Light Railway. We opted for the walk for that final bit of training, and, having visited Mull before I already had the train's number! The Event Centre was in the grounds of

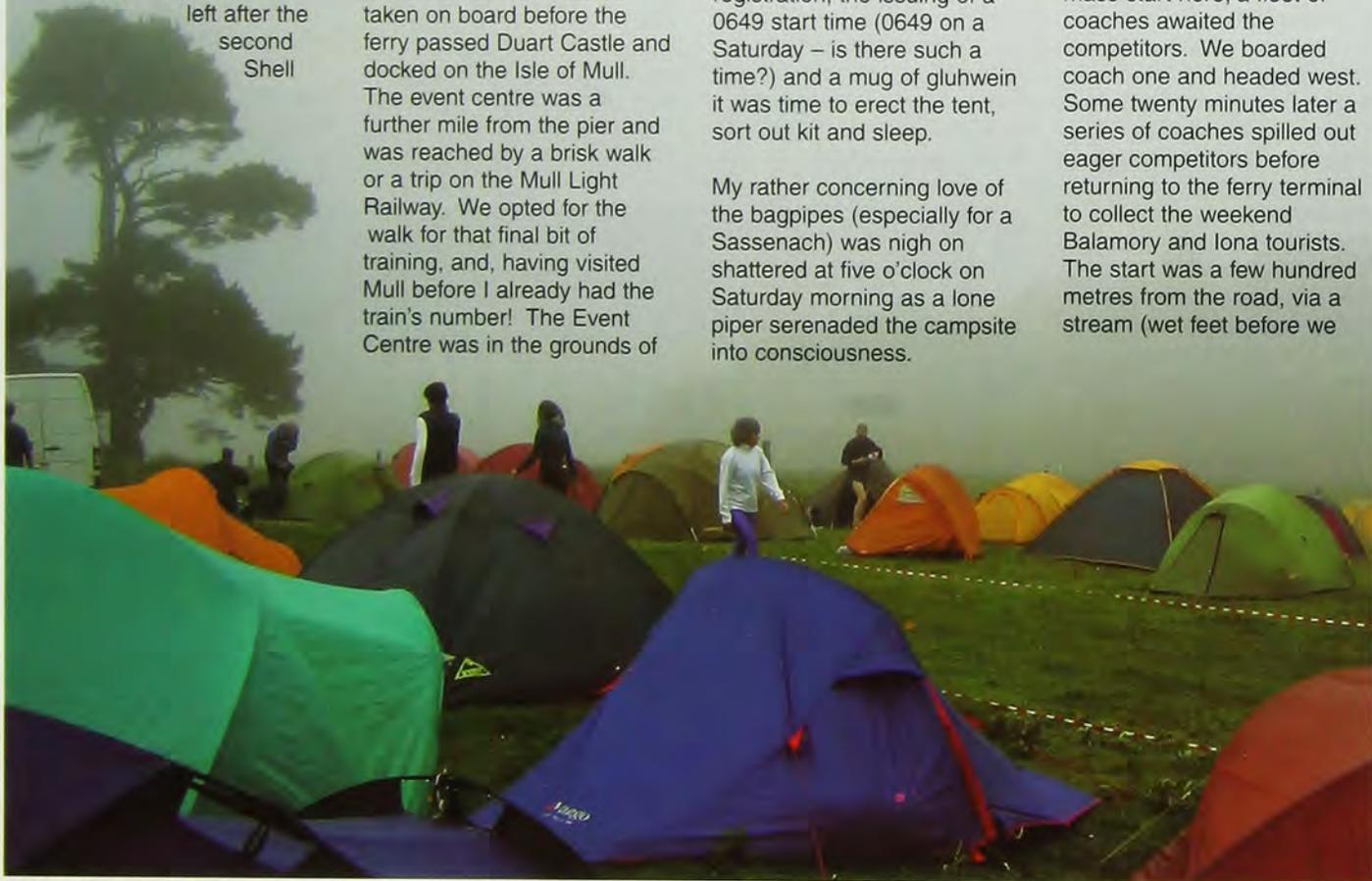


Howie Barnes at 700m somewhere.

Torosay Castle and provided the local midge colony plenty of evening tucker. After registration, the issuing of a 0649 start time (0649 on a Saturday – is there such a time?) and a mug of gluhwein it was time to erect the tent, sort out kit and sleep.

My rather concerning love of the bagpipes (especially for a Sassenach) was nigh on shattered at five o'clock on Saturday morning as a lone piper serenaded the campsite into consciousness.

Breakfast, a final check of kit, collect event maps and report to the start. No impressive mass start here; a fleet of coaches awaited the competitors. We boarded coach one and headed west. Some twenty minutes later a series of coaches spilled out eager competitors before returning to the ferry terminal to collect the weekend Balamory and Iona tourists. The start was a few hundred metres from the road, via a stream (wet feet before we



Clear views at sea level



Sea level

started) and nestled in the shadow of Ben Buie in Glen More. This start was for the C, D and Novice courses and hearing an intrepid B course competitor asking where the B start was, was an early morale boost. Wrong coach mate and a good twenty miles from the start!

We were competing on the D course, ten checkpoints (that must be visited in order), approximately 26 kilometres and 1000 metres of height gain on day one. It was mid June and the barmy weather of Oban had gone, cloud, clag and drizzle had set in. So much for admiring the Highland vistas. We set a steady and almost sedate pace which slowed as the day progressed. Running on Salisbury Plain does little to prepare the body for peat bogs and real mountains. It was soon obvious that many of the 1,000 or so competitors had done this before as several teams passed us. The route headed South to the sea at Moy Castle, all that height gained in the coach journey now lost before turning North and plenty of height gain. The clag was now down to 300 metres, there may have been

several hundred other competitors in the hills but we saw few of them and even less of the spectacular scenery. The great early cries of "we'll do this without referring to the compass" were conveniently forgotten as we searched for the western tip of the northern lochan in a group of six lochans in visibility of no more than fifty metres. Some good navigation, especially by Jon, enabled us to locate all the checkpoints, but one in particular had taken close to an hour of micro navigation. The winners' podium was now fading from our dreams (as if it had ever been there).

We reached the overnight campsite in just under ten hours, several hours off the leaders but still satisfied with the achievement. Having squeezed in the tent on a remotely flat piece of ground it was time for some well earned food, a hot drink and some admin. Comfort camping it was not. Literally hundreds of tents were squeezed in with guys overlapping and standing room only in between. The stream nearby was transformed into a laundry as socks, shoes and bodies were cleaned in the

crystal clear and cold water. The deer fence that surrounded the campsite was strewn with wet kit resembling a Highland variation on Tibetan Prayer flags. We retired early in an attempt to sleep. My race partner may well be a long standing and very good friend, but two grown men in a one-man tent is a bit too cosy.

Day 2 again started at five with the bagpipes, all part of the experience! Having not ended Day 1 within the first fifty we did not qualify for the chasing start. Our chances of winning were less than slim, so, having been woken at five we were able to start at just gone 6.30 as a free-running team concurrently to those on the chasing start. We checked through the start point, were handed the control descriptions and then proceeded to be eaten alive by the midges as we marked the maps. Checkpoint 1 was up. A climb of 400m over about 2 km does not sound too bad but the quads were screaming. Visibility was atrocious and down to about 30m above 400m. Searching for a checkpoint on a stream, amongst many streams proved challenging to say the least.

Although much easier to locate, as there were racers converging on it from several directions, the route to Checkpoint 2 was emotional. Firstly our 400m of height gain was lost and then in excess of 3 km through bog ranging from ankle to knee depth. I struggled to make progress forwards without either a face-plant or ankle damage. I can only take my hat off to those racers who literally flew past us running at a pace I would struggle to maintain on the



Moy Castle

flat. Without doubt I was in a different league. Day 2 continued, bog, climb and no views, but with a few less checkpoints and in the region of 8 km less to cover. Some eight hours after starting we crossed the finish line, the clouds cleared and the sun came out. After a well earned meal we packed up and trudged back to the ferry terminal to catch the 5 o'clock back to Oban. No race to the bar this time, find a seat and sleep. A twenty minute power nap set me up for the nine hour drive back to Warminster.

Over two days we had covered close to 50km, climbed over 2000m, spent nearly eighteen hours on the move and been woken twice by a mad piper. Not once did we threaten the winners, but was that ever the intention? Who needs the Atkins diet when you can lose 6 lbs in a weekend, although half of that was probably in blood to the midges. The aches have passed, my feet have dried out, my socks are still the colour of peat and we raised over £2000 in sponsorship, so all in all not a bad weekend. Was this my first and last mountain marathon? I don't think so.



Route selection at the start.



Jon Chorley enjoying the view.

# Raleigh International Mountaineering Phase

By OCdt Waring

After graduating from RMCS I was able to defer my entry to Sandhurst by several months to allow some additional time for mountaineering and travelling. The main part of my travelling plans was a Raleigh International Expedition to Chile. For the mountaineering phase of the expedition I applied for and was awarded an Army Mountaineering Association grant.

The location for the mountaineering phase was the Lago Tranquilo area of Chilean Patagonia. It contained a huge variety of unspoilt mountains up to a height of 2000 metres, many of which had not been climbed for decades.

The group consisted of a real variety of characters and was jointly led by an EML and WML.

After being dropped off, in the middle of nowhere, our first priority was to establish a base camp for our attempts on the surrounding mountains. Once established we began two-day trips to find a suitable location for an advanced base camp. This however proved far more difficult than anticipated as very few paths existed and much of the land at the base of the mountains was covered in dense almost impenetrable forest vegetation.

Fortunately, after several days, we managed to find a way through the forest to a plateau at some 1500 metres in height which was sheltered on all sides by trees and had a stream running near by. This was an almost perfect location to spend the next two weeks with an outstanding view of the surrounding area.

We began to conduct basic winter mountaineering skills training, the majority of the group having never been winter mountaineering before. After this we began, in earnest, our trips into the great unknown, most of the area not having ever been mapped due to the almost daily presence of heavy cloud.

Over the following days we summited various peaks in the surrounding area, usually opting for alpine starts so that we could return to our high base camp each evening. Nearly a week of single day trips passed and after a rest day we began work on a snow hole which would enable us to proceed further into the mountain range than previously possible from the existing base camp. I was very keen to construct and sleep in a snow hole as although I had constructed one in Scotland I had never had the opportunity to stay the night in one.



That evening, after a great deal of work completing the snow holes, we returned to base camp to allow some members time to dry out before attempting a mini expedition planned for the following day. Late the following day we headed back to our snow holes ready for an early start the next day.

After a surprisingly comfortable nights sleep we awoke to a sky filled with stars made even more impressive by the absence of any ambient light, suggesting clear sky's for our day ahead. We headed off into the darkness and by mid day reached a huge exposed saddle, which sadly marked the end of the trip. Due to a combination of the groups ability and exposure of saddle combined with a large cornice meant we had only one option but to return

This mini expedition acted as the finale to our trip and over the following days we slowly shuttled all our gear back to base camp ready for pick-up. There was no such luxury for us as the vehicle picking us up could not reach our location leaving us with an 8 mile hike to the local town of Lago Tranquilo.

Our return to Coyahique marked the end of the mountaineering phase of my Raleigh Expedition, leaving only a community project before a period of independent travel followed by my return to the UK, an attachment to 8CS Coy REME and then the delights of Sandhurst.



# Tasmanian Cragging

## Hobart to Launceston via the East coast.

By Mark Hedge

In March 2005 the Army Mountaineering Association took an expedition to Tasmania. The aim, to bang out a few hard routes!

Hobart finally greeted us, twenty-seven hours of flying time later! Via Singapore and then the two hour hop from Melbourne to Tasmania. After that much flight time my clothes felt almost part of me!

Ten minutes of hassle free paperwork at the airport provided a vehicle big enough to accommodate our party of six, all the equipment, expectations and our egos. Thankfully Tasmanians for the most part drive on the same side as their Pommie counterparts, no mental conversion course required. A further thirty minutes later found us in our apartments and the first base camp in downtown Hobart. Time to surgically remove the clothing problem.

Listed below are the crags visited in order, from our trip this year.

*\*From a Hobart Base:*

### Proctors Road Quarry

Hobart plays host to many suburban crags. The majority are mere tasters of what Tasmania has to offer, we chose the most accessible.

Proctors Road Quarry was a superb little evening venue for a touch of sport climbing, a roadside venue controlled by the university. This shake out pumped away the remnants of deep vein thrombosis and allowed a first chance to familiarise ourselves with cameras and sound equipment for the proposed documentary. New U bolts protect the routes; those with hangers are in the process of being replaced. A few lines require 'carrots' to protect. This phenomenon unique to Australia consists of a bolt stub with a hexagonal head that allows a keyhole shaped hanger to slot and drop on to it. By clipping a quickdraw to the hanger the entire unit

becomes stable. Carrots are generally carried in one's chalk bag.

With over forty climbs documented our team headed for the three star Natural High 23/F6c+, technical rather than strenuous but deserving of its status. Other routes worth a bash include Transformer and Solid State both 10m high and graded at 20/F6b.

The rough volcanic rock talked to the fingers and warned of an abrasive seventeen days to follow. Exertion and an introduction to Tasmanian beer aided the first night sleep process.

### Kempton Quoin

Next day's drive to Kempton Quoin not only enhanced our feel for dolerite but gave an introduction to the plentiful supply of off road driving to be found on the island. Fortunately we were in possession of the fastest and finest off road vehicle on the market, a hire car!

Kempton is set deep in the outback and for a cliff of such significant stature is very underdeveloped. The rock structure, style of climbing and cliff size is reminiscent to Tremadog, North Wales however does not have the same proliferation of wallabies. Our team hit the trad crack lines of Seventh Day and Star with the bolt ladder of Vagabond ending the day's proceedings. Double ropes are recommended for this venue,



Nick Tarmey on Star (19),  
Kempton Quoin.

they not only provide alternate crack line security but aid with abseil descents.

### Lark's Edge

In order to sample the varied climbing venues on offer in Tasmania a sea cliff venue was next on the agenda. Once again, North out of Hobart cross the river and head for the Cape Deslacs Coastal Reserve. A pleasant half hour stroll along the meadow cliff top and easy walking descent finds you placed on a tidal platform. Lark's Edge is home to about thirty single pitch routes averaging ten metres in height all vertical in nature. Some lines possess small roofs at the crag top giving the finishing moves a sting in the tail. An idyllic setting on a sunny day. The closest British comparison would be the Dancing Ledges at Swanage though it is rude to compare. A word of warning, a breezy day combined with a swell can create chaos. But... it trains individuals to

solo 2 metres in seconds few! Our favoured route at this trad only crag was Nexter 21/E3 (5c). Most routes are crack orientated and of very good quality, giving a sea adventure feel to them.

### The Pipes

Hobart's premier venue has got to be the Mount Wellington Organ Pipes. The Pipes can be seen from anywhere in town thus making the drive to the cliff a sinch. These dolerite columns are of similar construction to the Devil's Tower in Wyoming though not as regular and pure as the US or Tasmania's own version, Ben Lomond.

Our team hit Third Bird a multi pitch classic but to describe further routes would be an injustice as there are literally dozens of lines to hurl yourselves at.

### Sphinx Rock

A superb little sandstone crag nestling in woods below Mount Wellington. This outcrop is gained by following a flat well manicured footpath to the tourist vantage point on the crag top, a further short walk is required to lead down to the routes. Total approach time, 20 minutes. Virtually identical to the consistency of our own Southern sandstone, although most routes climb through massive roof systems and are bolt protected. The easier grades follow rounded vertical crack lines and are protected by traditional means.



Nick Tarmey on Transformer (20),  
Proctors Road Quarry.



GI Joe @ Sphinx Rock.

Phoenix is without doubt the line of the crag. Follow the massive honey combed sandstone jugs through the biggest roof at the venue. A soft touch 24/F7a for those strong in the arm but weak in the head (well bolted!) Other recommended climbs: Warm up on the trad protected Duckpond 14/V. Severe. Then, hit Fear Factory a new addition bolt ladder harshly graded at 23 but easily F7a. Decide yourself, but I told you so!



Mark Hedge on Phoenix (24), Sphinx Rock.

*\*From a Coles Bay Base:*

### Coles Bay

This holiday venue has a 'Summer Bay' TV soap appearance to it, for those who watch - get a life!

One of the most idyllic spots a climber is likely to visit. It has two styles of venue, the Coastal Cliffs and the Hazards (inland outcrops). To top it off the granite is the coarse gnarly variety (that's the technical term!) completely sound but unforgiving to poor hand or footwork.



Mark Hedge on Elvis Goes Metal (22), Gracelands.

The Hazards are predominantly glacial boulders perched upon a bedrock apron. Routes are not solely bolted; most of the crack lines still rely on traditional protection. Our road trip chose the crag Gracelands, to work some projects. A mere 20-minute walk from the road, past some quality un-tapped bouldering. Size and rock appearance looked very much like Peak grit, soon our hands were also reminded of friction properties very similar to back home. Apart from the scenery, enormous spiders and the glacial bedrock!

Elvis Goes Metal though small in stature (9m) was one of our finest quality route experiences in Taz. This slender pinnacle succumbs to laybacks up alternate arêtes whilst padding on crystals for the feet. Folk of average stature will agree with the grade 22/F6c/. Ah, if only it was not bolted Gracelands would possess a beautiful E6 (6a). People who have the legs of a pantomime ostrich can span the two arêtes and squeeze the grade considerably!

Five metres right of Elvis is the technical Dead Can't Dance. An overhanging face climb, well protected with 4 U-bolts and packs a fair few moves into its 24/F7a grade and 12metres of height. The crag is north facing and has the sun all day (Southern hemisphere, remember) so friction can rapidly disappear under grease, chose your conditions carefully.

Coles Bay coastal cliffs. First and foremost the granite here is immaculate, almost



Iain Scott on Dead Can't Dance (24), Gracelands.

identical in texture and features to our own Cornish sea cliffs. In addition to main cliff faces, tidal ledges provide lines on detached cubic blocks. Visiting climbers will invariably visit Alchemy Wall to sample the many starred routes. Try the crack lines of Blue Eyed Blonde 19/E1 (5b) and the classic Alchemy 21/E2 (5c) from where the cliff gleaned its name. Eventually the cracks and walls disappear into new bays thus forming arêtes, grab one they're mostly bolted.

We visited a couple of detached block areas; Travel Land and Rubik's Cube. The latter so named because it is exactly that, a symmetrical cube. Because of the Cube's uniformity most routes are of similar vertical grades. Soft Grit 21/E2 (5c), Spirit Of Place 21/E2 (5c) Fractional 21/E2 (5c) and Digit 20/E2 (5b).

Travel Land presents slightly off-vertical slab climbs. Get your crimping fingers out and go for Ekeko 21/F6b and its reachy left hand neighbour Tribute 22/F6c.

### Taz Sea Stacks

Fortescue Bay is home to



Tania Noakes on Dead Can't Dance (24), Gracelands.



Nick Tarmey on Tribute (22), Travel Land.

Tassies sea stacks and is about a one and a half hour drive from Hobart. Take the Tasman Highway and drive towards Port Arthur, 4km past Taranna turn-off for Fortescue Bay and hit the 12km of unmetalled road. From the Bay camping area walk East for The Totem Pole and Candlestick or North around the Bay for The Moai, both directions require a one and a half hour walk to your objective.

Unfortunately the premier stacks such as the Totem Pole and Candlestick may be affected by the sea state, if there is a bit of a swell both monoliths are unclimbable for the full route length. Phone the Bureau of Meteorology before embarking on the three hour round trip! We opted for the safe bet.

The Moai (pronounced 'mow-eye') is the safe bet due to the fact that it sits upon its own pedestal and only gets a wash in the roughest of seas. The stack has four lines to pit your skills against. All two pitches long, even though the column stands at a lowly 35m in height. Sacred Site is the



The Moai.

trade route and is climbed at a steady trad 17/18 or equivalent E1 (5b), great fun and easily leaves time to tackle one or more of the Moai's other flank yielding lines. Ancient Astronaut is the hardest, a bolt ladder graded 24.

*\*From a Launceston Base:*

### Hillwood

A bizarre collection of buttresses. Imagine the basalt column formations of the Giants Causeway turned 90 degrees from horizontal to vertical, thus creating a crag covered in hexentric-plated scales. From a distance it appears as though one has stumbled upon a sleeping dinosaur resting in the outback. Hard to believe, this unusual site has only recently been rescued from beneath a coat of moss and ferns. It's hidden nooks and crannies add to the whole prehistoric feel of the place. Due to the jigsaw construction of the rock platelets very few placements for hand placed protection exist, it is therefore a sport climber's paradise. Local guru Gerry Narkowicz led us to the best buttresses and lines. Approximately 77 routes belong to Gerry as first ascents; we keenly captured on film his re-enactments for the benefit of our forthcoming documentary. Recommended routes at this unique venue from the horse's mouth: Ancient of Days 23/F6c, Ghost Rider 19/F6a+, Yuddy Boody Noo 21/F6b and Wrath or Revival 23/F6c.

### Cataract Gorge

The Gorge is extensive and has many sub-areas; it is hard to paint a picture of its beauty. Imagine a river whose dimensions allow a sight-seeing boat trip to journey and comfortably turn, rock routes rise from water level in tiers through dense bush and a flat manicured visitor path hugs both banks. The paths alone provide immediate access to a proliferation of climbs allowing vocal support from passing commentators.

As with so many of the Tasmanian climbing sites



*Psyching up for Brazen Serpent (the arête) @ Cataract Gorge.*

your entire stay could be spent here. The rock although still volcanic takes on a dark, coarse and grit-like appearance. The lines are a 50/50 mix of trad and sport. Once again it is a shame that so many arêtes have succumbed to the drill rather than allowing a major traditional tick. My personal favourite was the fantastic three star Brazen Serpent 25/F7b, despite being a sport route the arête has two very necky clips to make. Without these intrusions we would be psyching up for an E7 (6b) solo, despite its demure stature of 10m.

Once again Gerry guided. Lost In Space a 21/E2 (5c) graded gorge classic. He demo'd, we followed. Left to our own devices in full view of the main tourist vantage point, the attractively named You Don't Look At The Mantelpiece When You Poke The Fire 19/E2 (5b) was dispatched. The dolerite buttress in this particular area would not have looked out of place if teleported to Tremadog, the climbing styles were equally as similar.

### Ben Lomond

Australians quote Ben Lomond as a world-class crag, I don't doubt them. Dolerite columns soar skywards, providing symmetrical and regular rock formations. Some climbers may find the lines somewhat boring, so unchanging is its nature. The climbing is virtually all finger and hand crack climbing; the fashion for taping the entire hand is probably down to sense rather than vanity. Camming devices are essential to protect the lines, bring as

many as you can muster. It is not uncommon to use four pieces of identical protection, so perfect are the cracks. Don't expect to find fixed protection there is a strong anti bolting policy at the cliffs; you definitely don't want to upset the locals. Double ropes are the order of the day; some routes are up to 200m high.

Our team climbed with guidebook writer and local legend Bob McMahon hence the chosen routes were absolute classics (local knowledge cant be beat). Barbe Di Vendetta graded at 18/E1 (5b) and Ramadan fell at 19/E2 (5c), gems.



*Ben Lomond*

Most crags are reached in less than an hours walk, some require up to two hours of sweating.

## The Gen:

### The Personnel:

WO2 (QMSI) Mark Hedge, APTC. Expedition Leader  
 WO2 (QMSI) Iain Scott, APTC.  
 Sgt Will Woodhead, RLC.  
 Capt Kev Page, REME.  
 Capt Tania Noakes, R SIGNALS.  
 Capt Nick Tarmey, RAMC.  
 All personnel climbed a minimum of 24/F7a

### How To Get There:

Ultimately one can fly to Melbourne (Australia) from any destination via many permutations of stop-offs on the way. From Melbourne the choice is yours, an internal flight to Hobart for south or Launceston for north of the island. The final choice is a ferry from Melbourne to Hobart, quaint, as it may seem this will write off a day each way of your trip.

### Guidebooks:

Specific guidebooks are available for most major climbing areas. One general guidebook for the whole of Tasmania exists; it contains all minor crags and a selection of routes from the bigger venues. The local cragging community generally shuns the general guide due to obvious plagiarism and renaming of routes that previously existed but didn't research the information prior to making a fast buck! We accessed all books, and then sided with the local big boys!

### Gear shops:

Both Hobart and Launceston have several gear shops. Tasmanian climbing retailers do not have the most comprehensive selection of gear but unless you're a complete kit freak there's enough here to get you up most routes reasonably well protected. Remember to purchase at least six carrot hangers to prevent potential mishaps and make more routes available during your stay.

### Climbing Season:

The Tasmanian climbing season starts around November and ends in April. The best conditions are usually found from December to March and are similar to a good British summer (I know, don't go there!).

# NOT WHAT I CAME TO SPAIN FOR

By Mike Smith

'This can't be happening' I thought as I sat in a smoke filled café on the main street of Calpe. Another cold and wet day. We had set off early from the Orange House in the vain hope of finding better weather on the coast, wrong, it was worse. We killed half an hour in the café but eventually the acrid smoke from a dozen Spanish smokers got to us. At least the climbing shop would soon be open, wrong. Ten o'clock came and went but no staff turned up. In desperation we wandered into a charity shop in the hope of finding a bargain fleece or waterproof, wrong! Only junk! Although Ian did buy a fetching woolly hat! The weather still wasn't showing any signs of improving; the temperature gauge in the car had read 20C so it was certainly snowing higher up. As we approached the cars the shop finally opened, we pilled in to maul the kit and clothing. This killed another half hour. Once we had exhausted the shop we drove to the harbor below the Penon. It seemed brighter

and the rain had eased but it was still very cold. A vicious wind was tearing around the Penon threatening to rip any climber from the face.

We decided to walk to the start of Via Valencianos and make a decision from there. As we walked around the base of the Penon the wind dropped and the rain stopped, it was at last looking better. Once we were at the start of Valencianos the rock appeared dry and we were completely protected from the cold northerly wind. The route was climbed without incident until the top of the slab was reached. From just below the slab the wind could be heard screeching like an express train over the narrow ridge. I gingerly peeped over the ridge and got a blast of icy wind in my face. Not what I'd come to Spain for!

I thought back to the previous day. We had delayed going climbing because of the threat of rain. After a few hours of rope work in the Orange House Garden we

drove to a deserted Sella. At sector Final we got the cars as close to the rock as is physically possible. It was cold but dry. I quickly set up two ropes but just as the first climber tied on it started snowing! This was enough to send all but the real diehards scuttling back to the Orange House. Despite the snow three routes were climbed, including a cheeky 5+, before the rock became too wet and cold. That afternoon a foot of snow settled at Sella. Not what I'd come to Spain for!

Back on Valencianos I was pondering sitting on the top of the ridge for half an hour while my two seconds climbed up the slab. I decided to

move "a cheval" along the ridge to find some protection from the wind. This was achieved but at the cost of communication being totally lost. A frantic ten minutes were lost taking in a rope still being belayed and the ensuing confusion despite well practiced drills. My pair finally joined me totally aghast at the change of conditions. I had climbed VV three weeks previously and knew that the next pitch was not easy – except in normal conditions.



Author somewhere on Dierdre UBSA, Penon.



Cpl Morley and Cpl Bev Beverley on the slab, Via Valencianos.



A serious bunch, ready to climb Via Valencianos – Cpl Chris Morley, Cpl Bev Beverley & Capt Mike Smith.

Cpl Morley on the traverse of Via Valencianos.



With a reminder to Chris and Bev to "climb when the rope went tight" I set off. This was the coldest and therefore the hardest pitch. Every move was agony as I tried to warm my hands between each hold. I made the stance just before I lost all feeling; all I could think of was the pair of gloves buried in the depth of my bag. I struggled desperately with the buckles of my bag, and eventually, fumbling around hopelessly I found the gloves. Instant relief! I also took my helmet off and replaced it with my fleece hat. Despite the welcome warmth I was still being blasted by the wind. Fortunately the pair climbed without any problems and soon joined me at the stance.

The remainder of the route was easy scrambling to the summit.

The route was completed but in conditions more akin to North Wales than southern Spain! Looking back to the Bernia ridge the snow was down as low as 400m and gave a distinctly wintry backdrop to the scene! Not what I'd come to Spain for.

Despite the weather the team managed to climb every day of the nine day Exercise DIVINO TIGER. Forty nine separate named routes were climbed including a finale on the huge Puig Campana, now that's what I went to Spain for!



Another route in the bag. Team at the top of Epsolon Centrale. At last some decent weather!



Cpl Morley on Epsolon Centrale, Puig Campana.



Cpl Beverley and Cpl Chris Morley prepare to freeze at Sella.

## Leader Decision Points Explored

### The Royal Welsh Regiment on Aconcagua 2005

By Mike Laing

Aconcagua has become a regular and popular destination for services expeditions over the last few years and articles have abounded. This article will deal with just one aspect of the expedition; the decision to turn back when it was possible to have gone on but, to have done so, would have been unwise – always a difficult decision for any leader.

The plan was to approach via the Vacas Valley and ascend via the Polish Glacier Route. Our party was eight in all which included two JSME(L)W in the party, one of

which was also an AML, both JSME(L)W had summated together in 2002 via the Normal Route. The other six were of mixed ability from novice upward. The training week in Scotland in December 2004 had gone well enough but there had been insufficient snow to accomplish the WMP as intended and those elements not delivered would have to be covered once on the mountain.

Just when you think everything is set, the worst happens. Ian Blackwood, the other JSME(L)W contracted

pleurisy over the Christmas break and was not allowed to fly let alone climb. With the 17 January departure date looming it was too late to source another leader. With little option other than to proceed, I realised that JSP419 would not allow all to summit with only one JSME(L)W / AML in the group but also reasoned that the effects of mild AMS would forlode the entire party from being in a fit enough state to make the summit anyway. Technically this is a sound presumption but in reality, other factors erode the soundness of such reasoning.

All seven of us acclimatised well and having conducted a load carry to Camp 1 (5000m), we were set to proceed up the mountain. The Polish Glacier was out of condition so we aimed for the False Polish which essentially joins the Normal Route between White Rocks Camp and the Independencia Hut.

Fully laden, we returned to Camp 1 in clear weather and pitched the tents, all looked very favourable. By midnight the weather had completely changed character with a storm blowing up rapidly. I don't think anyone slept much



*The final stages to the climb to Camp 1*

that night as the tents received a battering which was deafening. The situation remained unchanged throughout the next day and we remained tent-bound save for two members of the group who I sent down with a group of Italian guides. One had severe headaches, the other had struggled to reach Camp 1 and I did not think he would get much higher. By the second evening, the wind was stronger still and I feared that one of the tents would fail. This was the nightmare scenario as the group was relatively novice, I had visions of equipment being blown away and exposed skin being frost bitten quickly in the high winds – a forced descent in the dark was just not in my plan. I just lay there all night being

battered by the tent's side and waiting for a call from another tent signifying the worst had happened. By first light the wind had not abated at all and I was left with a simple option. Did we try and sit it out but risk having to abandon the camp at a time and circumstance not of our choosing or did we make a controlled descent in daylight? It was a difficult decision as we had come a long way to get here. Then again, I was responsible for the safety of the entire group and I just wasn't happy with the current situation. It was a 'no brainer' really and I decided to abandon Camp 1. I went round the other tents and issued them instructions to pack everything ready to emerge in ninety minutes time

when we would collapse the tents and make our way down. Ninety minutes later I re-emerged as did the others. One sight confirmed my decision, one of the others shivering as he desperately struggled to put on his plastic boots with bare exposed hands which would, of course, not do as he bid. I shudder to think what it would have been like uncontrolled in the dark!

We baled out and descended the steep scree below Camp 1 where matters eased. Three hours later we were back in base camp at Plaza Argentina. We re-pitched the tents and within an hour, one of the tent poles snapped and ripped open the tent! We later learnt that during the same storm, two Frenchmen were blown off the South Face to their deaths and that higher up in Camp 2 (5900m), another climber had severe frostbite and was certain to lose fingers. We also learnt that weather reports at the time had put the winds at 100mph.

So what of my decision? It felt like a very difficult call at the time but once made I was resolved to that course of action. I also realised how exposed as a group we were with only one leader in the group; all other guided parties on the mountain, however small, had two leaders. Some of our group were disappointed to have to descend though I think understood why I had taken the decision. The next

morning we woke to a foot of fresh snow at base camp and though it cleared during the day, it underlined to me, the unsettled weather pattern on the mountain.

The AT ethos accepts that a perceived threat to life is to be encouraged and adds to the overall AT experience. Once the threshold is crossed where the leader feels that the perceived threat has become, or is about to become, or has the potential if unchecked to become a real threat, then the leader has a clear mandate to do but one thing, eliminate the real threat. Sometimes, the decision point will be easily identifiable but more often than not it will be blurry, hidden or confused by other factors. I would attest that a successful leader has the ability to identify the approach of a real threat decision point and make the correct judgement before it is reached? The Catch 22 for leaders is that their timely decisions probably preclude the real threat being obvious to the rest of the group. Leadership can be a lonely old business!

Maj Mike Laing RWR  
 Capt Rob Manuel RWR  
 Cpl John Mitcalf 101 Bn REME  
 Cpl Richard Coley 157 Log Sp Regt RLC  
 LCpl Dusty Philbin 101 Bn REME  
 Fus Anthony Lingard RWR  
 OCdt Katy Cuckston Exeter UOTC



*Fresh snow at Base Camp.*

# DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EPIC-FUN ADVENTURES

By Paul Chiddle

EPIC, four harmless letters which, when strung together in the mountaineering world, conjure up images of hair-raising adventure, bone-jarring havoc or teeth-rattling excitement. At times we are forced to wait patiently (or not so patiently!) as an "epic" unfolds, yet we are never, entirely sure why things take so long, and never fully understand why people are going to be so late. Yet we are all too quick to discuss the "epic" day that so-and-so had on such-and-such a route, or during such-and-such a day. But we never seem to worry, wonder, pace, sweat, or contemplate doing anything about it, unless of course we know things are seriously wrong. Why? Maybe, because by word of definition "epic" is usually the achievements of some hero, that are narrated in an elevated style, or the epic treats of one great, complex action, in a grand style, with fullness of detail to surpass the usual or ordinary, particularly in scope or size". Surely by definition alone, "surpassing the unusual or ordinary in a grand style" is a normal day in the mountains. Therefore by probing our boundaries, we can encompass "Epics" with "Fun", that can provide us with the ultimate experience, from which we can develop and progress.

As mountaineers we participate in mountaineering and

climbing for various reasons and rewards, which at times, we may not fully understand or even be able to explain, but we all feel something when we climb, and feel compelled to go on climbing. As varied as it is, climbing shares numerous skills and avenues of self-expression and accomplishment, which comprise the foundation of fun. Climbing encompasses the gamut of physical and mental prowess, with the added dimension of potentially life-altering consequences to ones decisions, this separates it from other, more common, endeavours. Yet it is still fun!

Physically, as in all sports, one simultaneously develops, uses and tests skills. Good climbing utilizes the most delicate movement possible, with balance and grace; a ballet on rock to scale terrain where Schwarzenegger-like strength is no advantage at all. On the same climb, however, one might encounter moves that will require pure power, and the ability to perform with a finely tuned combination of brute strength and delicate movement which is, ... well ... fun! But in climbing, physical skills alone not enough. One must apply hard won skills, to the mental problem of linking moves through a continuous sequence to accomplish the climb. Two physically equal climbers may be very unequal

in ability to recognize and execute that sequence. In addition, there is the thoughtful and creative challenge of finding rest positions during that sequence to avoid the dreaded forearm pump. It is a three dimensional, physical chess game that is very satisfying to accomplish, thus - fun.

The next dimension, that of commitment and consequences, ties the physical and mental aspects together in a way that elevates climbing beyond any ordinary sport and ordinary fun. Very clear, self-evaluation is necessary to puncture that surface tension boundary between the wimp layer and the bold layer, while maintaining a reasonable margin of safety. One must be humble enough to recognize their true weaknesses, and accurate enough to know their true abilities, in order to make survivable decisions on commitment to hard moves or choices of climbs. Lacking requisite or judgement, one may quickly find themselves whimpering in fear; on terrain they cannot handle, possibly in danger of injury or worse. Yet, to experience the thrill of commitment and the satisfaction of accomplishment, one MUST probe the boundary to some degree, but intelligently, with honest self-assessment and acute self-awareness. If all the component skills are employed with care and competence, one will be successful. Not neces-

sarily successful in completing a given climb, but successful in staying healthy and having fun. Falling or retreating is not failure. A climber who never falls has not probed the boundary and has not experienced the depth and dimension that raise climbing beyond the ordinary.

In addition to the physical, mental and aesthetic components of our deep, multi-dimensional sport, is the profound social aspect involved. Not only does one meet many great friends who share a passion, but also they must form a working partnership; a partnership which is unlike that of other sports in which a partner is merely another player. In climbing, each partner shares a commitment and responsibility for the others life, thus forming a deep and meaningful bond that often transcends the limited boundaries of the climbing game, and may last a lifetime, with profound, satisfying. FUN!

So go climbing. Use that power! Use that grace! Use that brain!

Make friends. Push boundaries. Be bold! Be safe! But most of all ... HAVE FUN!

## Book Review

### PROJECT ALPHA by Bronco Lane.

Reviewed by John Mutson

Few novels get reviewed in *The Army Mountaineer* so it is pleasing to review a one by one of our best-known members. Having cut his literary teeth with *Military Mountaineering*. A History of Services Mountaineering Bronco has now turned his hand to fiction and with a very satisfying result. This is a tale of covert oil exploration in South Greenland intertwined with an ascent of one of the vertical walls which abound in that area. However Bronco is not content with just telling a tale, he interweaves a lot of the history of that magical island and an 'idiot's guide' to big wall climbing including a complete list of the gear needed is at the start of chapter 15!

Like most of us I have read a lot of climbing novels and I usually cringe at some of technical inaccuracies introduced by the authors. In this book I could find none - as one would expect from an AMA member. The hero is ex Royal Marines (but we will let that pass) and the climbing and military dialogue rings very true. Again a plus point for the book.

As I got to the last few pages I began to worry as to how Bronco was going to finish the story. Let me just say that I was almost struck dumb by the subtlety of the ending. As I have a cameo part on page 20 I could be accused of bias but I hope not. The title of the book uses the first letter of the phonetic alphabet so by my reckoning that gives Bronco another 25 books to write. I look forward to *The Bravo Link*, *The Delta Connection* and *Mike the Mountaineer* or similar titles.

# AMA AGM WEEKEND 23-25 SEP 05

The AMA AGM will once again be held at HQ JSMTC, by kind permission of the Commandant. The outline programme and administrative arrangements are as follows:

## Fri 23 Sep 05

1430 AMA Committee Meeting.  
1800 No arrival before time.  
1930 Bar open.  
2300 Bar closes.

allocated on first come first served basis and attracts no cost. Sleeping bags will be required.

Personnel wishing to bring family or to extend their stay beyond Fri and Sat nights should book into the Nuffield Centre, which is collocated within JSMTC.

## Sat 24 Sep 05

0800 Breakfast.  
0845 Mandatory opening brief.  
0900 – 1800 Mountain activities. Groups to book out.  
Individuals who need climbing partners are allocated. Navigation workshop\* Rope techniques workshop\* (\*demand dependant)  
1800 Dinner.  
1900 Bar opens.  
1930 AGM  
2200 Prize Draw.  
2359 Bar closes.

### Messing

Messing is of a high standard and is provided at JSMTC (I). Members of the AMA who are still serving will not be charged for messing. Retired members will be expected to pay for their meals (Approximately £6 per day). All payment will be collected on arrival.

### Transport

Applicants are responsible for all personal transport arrangements.

### Application

An application form is attached. AMA members wishing to receive a hard copy

## Sun 25 Sep 05

0800 Breakfast.  
0900 Depart JSMTC (I) Mountain activities.

Admin Instruction should enclose a SAE on return. Alternatively a copy of the Admin Instruction will be posted on the AMA web site.

### Accommodation

Shared, dormitory style accommodation is available for approximately 60 pers at JSMTC(I). Accommodation will be

## APPLICATION

### PERSONAL DETAILS

Service No		Name	
Rank	M/F	AMA No	
Veh Make	Veh Model	Veh Colour	VRN
Unit Address .....			
Tel .....			
Fax .....			
Delete as appropriate:			
I require a copy of the Admin Instruction to be sent to me by post and have included an SAE.			
I will down load the Admin Instruction from the AMA web site.			
I require the Admin Instruction to be sent to me at the following email address:			

### ACCOMODATION REQUIREMENTS

Meal/Date	Breakfast	Packed Lunch	Dinner	Accommodation
Fri 23 Sep	Not available	Not available	Not available	Y/N
Sat 24 Sep	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N
Sun 26 Sep	Y/N	Y/N	Not available	Not available

Accommodation is for AMA members only in shared dormitory style rooms in the Main Block. If you wish to bring family members or stay longer, contact the Nuffield Manager Mr Ian Cowton on Tel: 01248 71362.

Delete as appropriate:

As a serving officer/soldier I am entitled to food and accommodation at no additional cost.

As a non entitled AMA member I agree to pay a messing fee on arrival at the AGM

### MOUNTAIN ACTIVITIES

I would like to attend the Navigation workshop on Sat 24 Sep Y/NI	I would like to attend the Rope techniques workshop on Sat 24 Sep Y/N
I would like a climbing partner on Sat 24 Sep Y/N	I would like a hill walking partner on Sat 24 Sep Y/N

## BUFO VENTURES

- Tailor made trips to Nepal and India for groups and Individuals
- Treks, trekking peaks and expeditions
- Everest Marathon November 2005
- Adventurous training for service groups

### New destination - Namibia

#### Bufo Ventures

3 Elim Grove, Windermere, LA23 2JN

Tel: 01539 445 445

Fax: 01539 447 753

email: [sherpa@bufoventures.co.uk](mailto:sherpa@bufoventures.co.uk)

[www.bufoventures.co.uk](http://www.bufoventures.co.uk)

[www.everestmarathon.org.uk](http://www.everestmarathon.org.uk)

### the outdoor shop

[www.theoutdoorshop.com](http://www.theoutdoorshop.com)



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“

*I have just come back from a course at the Joint Services Mountain Training Centre on Anglesey where I was most surprised to be issued with your clothing for use during my ML assessment.*

*Having not come across your system before I was a bit reluctant to give up my tried and trusted membrane jacket. However, I gave it a try on day 2 (security on steep ground) and by the end of the day I was converted. That night I packed away my old jacket and wore your system for the 3 day expedition, only taking it off to sleep (9 hours of rain day 1, sun and showers day 2 and rain day 3)*

*I have been in the Army for 27 years and a Joint Services Mountain Expedition Leader since 1986 and I have never been so comfortable outdoors in either military or civilian clothing than I was during those 4 days.*”

*Mike Donnelly*



At Páramo we have a direct line to some 30 teams within the UK Mountain Rescue Community, who routinely use our products day in, day out. We're constantly talking to outdoor professionals and enthusiasts to refine our products, improve their effectiveness and develop new garments.

You get the same Páramo benefits whether you're buying for a team or just yourself:

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- Intelligent design features
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Páramo is different – if you need convincing, ask any Páramo wearer if they'd ever give up their Páramo! (quote ref: M.AJ.02/05)

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