

# ARMY MOUNTAINEER

SUMMER 2008



**MT Cook  
Safe Risk?  
Haute Route  
Free Money!**

**The Journal of The Army Mountaineering Association**

# INSTRUCTORS WANTED

By Lt Col (Retd) Bob Tonkins



I've always been involved in Adventure Training, but only late in my career did I gain any formal qualifications taking advantage of the proximity of JSMTCL when I commanded Liverpool University Officers Training Corps. Adventure Training is quite correctly identified as an excellent vehicle for training for operations and the results are self evident in the confidence and ability of our service personnel.

But adventurous training has the same effect on young people from all walks of life. As Joseph Conrad in 'Lord Jim' tells us; **It is necessary for a youth to experience events which 'reveal the inner worth of the man; the edge of his temper; the fibre of his stuff; the quality of his resistance; the secret truth**

**of his pretences, not only to himself but others'.**

Since leaving the Regular Army, I have been involved in the Army Cadet Force running the Adventurous Training activities of Cambridgeshire ACF - a thoroughly rewarding activity that contributes to the development of young people as individuals and as members of the community. The small (but growing) team of AT Instructors in Cambridgeshire run the usual round of multi-activity weekends in North and South Wales as well as the Peak District, but we have also undertaken some Level 3 expeditions to the Allgäu and to Namibia in the last 2 years. We are also moving more

towards water-based training as we are surrounded by the stuff here in East Anglia - otherwise it's a long drive to the nearest hills and crags.

That's the guff... here's the appeal! Cambridgeshire ACF will be at Barry Buddon for annual camp this August and we need a hand to run an Adventure Training package for the cadets. There will be three, 2-day multi-activity and expedition packages on 12/13, 14/15 and 18/19 August and our aspirations to provide an exciting experience for the cadets exceeds our internal resources. Can you help? If you are free for any or all of these dates and would like to give something back, please contact me by email at [cambsat-team@aol.com](mailto:cambsat-team@aol.com) or call me on 07758 340554.



**ARMY CADET FORCE  
MAKE YOUR MARK**

# ARMY MOUNTAINEER

The Journal of The Army Mountaineering Association



## LIFE ON THE LEDGE

### YOU MIGHT BE A MOUNTAIN CLIMBER IF....

*You own a £75 dress suit and a £1000 Gore-Tex one.*

*You have ever used an ice axe to chop weeds in the garden.*

*A Mexican bus driver has ever had to open his window because of the way you smelled.*

*You have more summit pictures than wedding pictures.*

*You've ever fallen so far that you've run out of adrenaline before you ran out of rope.*

*You say "Namaste" instead of "Hello".*

*What you call cold is not on the thermometer scale.*

*When you hear the words 'nose', 'captain' or 'aid', your hands start hurting and swelling.*

*You see a girl in the street and you think: "Hmmm, she's a TD+/5.11...".*

*Your definition of a candlelight dinner is: "Thaw the ice with the candle and put it in the bag of freeze-dry".*

*You hear the name "Hillary" and think of Everest instead of Mrs. Clinton and White House scandals.*

*You've used an ice axe to clean off the front steps in winter.*

*You like the smell of burning yak dung first thing in the morning.*

Thanks to [www.walkhigh.co.uk](http://www.walkhigh.co.uk)

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On the Cover: Chris Abbot high on Mt Almyer, NZ.

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To join the AMA visit our web site: [www.theama.org.uk](http://www.theama.org.uk)

# APPPOINTMENTS

# Foreword

Major Cath Davies MBE TD

Due to our President Brigadier Jon Watson's recent deployment overseas, we are departing from the normal format of taking turns to write the foreword; so it's the words of Chairman Cath again I'm afraid! The 50th Anniversary celebration (AMA50) continued in the period covered by this Journal, with the ice-climbing trip to Canada taking place last December. Despite expecting to be out-climbed by the local 'ninja' ice climbers, the team managed to get one member placed fourth in the speed climbing at the Canmore International Festival of Ice, a very creditable result and as the exped leader said, if he'd thought they were in with a shout they would have practised! So there's a challenge for someone for next year. Remember, the big wall expedition is still to come and Capt Mike Smith will be looking for volunteers, so keep an eye on the website.

Unit expeditions with AMA members on them during this period have not been so numerous, nor so adventurous; no doubt this has been due to the pressure of ops. That means fewer of our younger members have had the opportunity to venture beyond the Alps to the Greater Ranges. In an endeavour to bridge the gap, we will be initiating a programme to develop High Altitude mountaineers, which will start with attendance at JSAM this year and continue next year with an expedition to the Andes. If that meets your aspirations, get yourself on JSAM.

We in the AMA are sometimes accused of being elitist 'gladiators' who are only interested in furthering our individual moun-

taineering and climbing aspirations. As evidenced by the amount of distributed training our qualified members carry out in their own units and on our AMA meets, nothing could be further from the truth. For example, the Shishapangma team of 18 did not contain one person who had previously climbed an 8000m peak, and during the training phase over

70 JSAT qualifications were awarded. Nor does this take into consideration the opportunities we facilitate for experiential learning and the acquisition of quality mountain days during our activities. By assisting personnel in amassing the experience that enables them to be suitably prepared for the next qualification level up, we actually provide an important part of the JSAT scheme not available within the system elsewhere. This then enables AMA members to lead unit level expeditions and carry out distributed training.

Thus we have created a 'virtuous' circle of benefit to all. We are preparing personnel for operations by developing their mental and physical robustness and helping retention by providing opportunities for different challenges, and yes for helping personnel meet their mountaineering aspirations. Long may this valuable contribution to combat effectiveness (and fun!) continue.



## Editorial

Early February, sipping tea and nursing my head in my Herefordshire kitchen I passed Ollie, my half hung-over climbing partner a glass of orange juice and read him a quote I had just picked up in my study. The idea was to justify to ourselves the amount we drunk last night and to motivate ourselves into getting out into the cold and the ambitious climbing plans we had dreamt up hours after a sensible bed time:

***'One day your life will pass in front of your eyes; make sure it is worth seeing.'***

As I took my fourth fall of the day high up on the route, those words came back to me, along with "Get a move on Nugget, I'm freezing!" drifting up from somewhere below. I contemplated them for a while and considered having another go and then an equally frustrated voice (this time from within) shouted, "Come on Nugget it will still be here next week." Anyway, a long story short, too cold and too scared, we backed off and guess what? It was still there the following week, it still is. But, and here is the rub.....so am I.

In this edition you will find a mixture of some great adventures balanced by some careful and not so careful planning. You will also find an excellent study on the concept of risk and it's importance in personal development. Hopefully this balance of education and inspiration will enthuse you to go out and enjoy the summer.

You will also notice some changes to this edition; as an incentive to get involved we have now included a photo competition with a £50 prize and a £100 incentive for the best article. What better excuse have you got to go climbing?! The lucky winner this edition is Nick Ord, for his fantastic and unsolicited article on his Haute Route adventure.

I hope you enjoy it.

Sven.  
sven@summitmountaineering.com

***"Take risks, but gamble nothing!"***  
General Graeme Lamb CMG DSO OBE.

# Farewell To Ann Davies – AMA Membership Secretary

**A**MA Membership Secretary Ann Davies retired in October 2007 after 3 years dedicated service in the AMA Office. Ann took over the post following a long period of instability and soon brought order and efficiency back to the organisation. On behalf of all members of the association she was presented with a Rob Piercy print, and our best wishes for her retirement. Ann was also the guest of honour at a farewell lunch hosted by JSMT(C).I).

We are pleased to report that the good work that Ann started is being continued by an equally enthusiastic and capable incumbent. Indeed most of the committee already have Helen on speed-dial! I would like to take the opportunity to welcome her on board and thank her for the good work she has done already.

Helen is available as the first point of contact and enquiries for most AMA activities and can be contacted during office

hours on 01248 718364 or Mil 95581 Ext 7964. Alternatively via e-mail on [amamembership@armymail.mod.uk](mailto:amamembership@armymail.mod.uk)

Mike Laing. Treasurer.



Ann Davies is presented with a Rob Piercy mountain print in recognition of her excellent work as AMA Membership Secretary.

## THE 2008 H4H ULTRA-MARATHON CHALLENGE

**I**n 2007, the charity Help for Heroes was set up by Bryn Parry to raise urgent funds for the development and expansion of the Defence Rehabilitation Centre at Headley Court. The centre urgently needs a swimming pool and a refurbished gymnasium to provide the best possible rehabilitation for injured service personnel.

In the summer of 2008, I am pitting myself against three of the hardest ultra-marathon footraces in Europe to raise funds for Help for Heroes.

In June 08 I will return to the West Highland Way, a non-

stop 95-mile race from Milngavie to Fort William, runners must finish within a cut off time of 35 hours.

In August 08 I will pit myself against arguably the hardest race in Europe. The Ultra Tour du Mont Blanc; this consists of a 165km mountain run through the 3 countries around the foothills of Mont Blanc, including 9000m of ascent; all against the cut off time of 46 hours.

In September 08, the first ever running of the Cleveland Way footpath (the Hard Moors 110 ultra) takes place. Crossing moorland and coastal cliffs, runners have 36hrs to finish.

I appreciate that ultra-marathon running doesn't necessarily sit within the remit of the AMA, however the runs are all mountain based, and I am doing my bit to help those less fortunate. Would the readers of 'Army Mountaineer' please consider sponsoring me?

Please dig deep and donate online at [www.justgiving.com/H4Hruns](http://www.justgiving.com/H4Hruns)

Tomo Thompson  
Communications Officer  
[amacomms officer@armymail.mod.uk](mailto:amacomms officer@armymail.mod.uk)



## CALLING ALL BUDDING ARTISTS

**C**urrently the AMA does not have any branded clothing or products. A need has been identified and the committee is looking for a new design of logo for such merchandise; T-shirts, mugs and mouse mats etc. The aim is not to replace the official crest as this will remain for official use. Rather, the intent is to create something that is instantly identifiable and brand-able. Something that YOU would want to wear.

To stimulate interest, a £50 cash prize is being offered to the designer who comes up with the most suitable, catchy and fun design.

It should capture the essence of the AMA and military mountaineering (depending upon your personal interpretation), but not be instantly identifiable as a military logo.

The design will likely see its debut on the T Shirts of the Army Climbing Team later in the year and on branded merchandise available for sale shortly afterwards.

Designs can be submitted to the journal editor, with the winner being announced in the next edition.

# FREE MONEY! FREE MONEY!

By Mike Treffry-Kingdom, AMA General Secretary

Like all good titles, this one has a very tenuous link with the truth, what we are talking about here is Gift Aid; No it's not a concert involving Bob Geldof, but it is free, yes FREE, money for the AMA. So, what part do you play? As the AMA is a registered charity there is a scheme that allows us to increase our income each year direct from the Inland Revenue! A scheme known as Gift Aid has been running for the last few years allowing charitable benefactors to reclaim tax (you may have already signed up for this if you donate regularly to other charities). By agreeing to Gift Aid you increase the value of your membership from the £15 you currently pay to a total of £19.20. With our membership at the moment comfortably above 2000 this is worth £8400 to the association. That means more money to support YOU on courses, meets and expedition grants. Unfortunately however we are currently missing out on £6000 of this each year due to the low number of people who have signed up to the scheme. Please read on.

## How do I know if I can Gift Aid my donations?

The only condition is that you are a UK taxpayer.

## How do I know if I am a UK taxpayer?

If you have a salary, savings in a bank and/or building society, investments or a pension you may well be a taxpayer so you can Gift Aid your donations.

## What do I have to do?

All you have to do is complete a simple Gift Aid declaration when you join; this confirms that we can claim back the tax on your gifts.

For those of you who joined before we achieved Gift Aid status, we urge you to please call Helen the Membership Secretary on

01248 718364 or Mil 95581 7964 (Mon-Thu 0900-1300hrs) and make your declaration over the phone. A verbal agreement is all that is required and it does not affect your own personal tax in anyway as long as you meet the conditions above. Please do consider giving us your Gift Aid pledge. Remember, this is money to support you and costs you nothing.

## Will this affect my tax status?

No. As a taxpayer any donations you make to the AMA have already had an element of tax removed from them, usually by way of income tax. What the Gift Aid scheme does is give back to us some of that tax as a boost to your gift.

## Do I have to tell the taxman about my donations?

Only if you are asked to complete a self-assessment tax form by the Inland Revenue.

If £6000 wasn't enough free money for you then the Expeditions Secretary, Kev Edwards is making an appeal for more grant applications to be made. Although a staggering 70,000 people took part in some form of organised Adventure Training last year, the majority of (AMA) grants available in 2007 again went unclaimed. The procedure for applying was published recently in the journal so I won't repeat it here, essentially though as long as what you are doing constitutes AT then there is something you can claim, and all you have to do for the majority of them is to write an article for the journal and provide a few photos. Hardly tough and a much better way of watching the pennies than abbing off the bit of tat that someone else left behind!

**Mark and record the following dates and get involved. Further details through the Meets Co-ordinator (Daz Doyle) and on the website closer to the time.**

**2 APRIL**

**2 Division Sports Climbing Champs**  
(Newton Aycliffe). Contact Glen Bloomer.

**23 APRIL TBC**

**REME Sports Climbing Championships**  
(Guildford). Contact Mike Smith.

**23RD TO 26TH MAY**

**Spring Meet (Ambleside)**

A great chance to meet other members, share tall tales and enjoy the world famous climbs of England's beautiful Lake District. Limited instruction available.

**29TH TO 30TH MAY**

**Army Sport Climbing Champs (WICC).**

**12TH TO 27TH JULY**

**Joint Services Alpine Meet (Saas Fee)**

Tri service mountaineering week, this year hosted by the Army. An opportunity to gain valuable alpine experience as well as qualifying for the Alpine Mountain Proficiency and the Alpine Mountain Leader awards (subject to prerequisites).

**27th - 29th June**

**AGM Weekend Meet (N Wales)**

The association's Annual General Meeting. Your chance to have your say on how the Association is run. The weekend will involve a BBQ with access to the bar and facilities at JSMTC Indefatigable. And of course the crags of North Wales.

**July TBC**

**Inter Service Climbing Champs (TBC)**

**TBC**

**Annual Dinner night (TBC)**

Volunteer required to organise. After the success of the 50th anniversary dinner night at Woolwich, the committee has decided to make this an annual event and are looking for a volunteer to take this on. Location and timings TBC.

Details at [www.theama.org.uk](http://www.theama.org.uk)

DIARY

# A RISKY Business

*The Base Camp Manager for the AMA 50th anniversary attempt on SHISHAPANGMA, Roger Smith has been a professional educator and outdoor instructor for 30 years. An MIC and member of the Alpine Club, his mountaineering exploits have taken him to all four corners of the globe.*

**W**ith the number of servicemen deployed on operations at an all time high, the importance of Adventure Training (AT) to the individual and the unit is greater than ever. The value of AT as an arena for operational decompression has also long been recognised. In the current climate of J1 paucity, the opportunity to focus on skill acquisition is unparalleled.

The objectives of AT are to offer realistic and demanding training through outdoor activities, creating opportunities for both personal development and growth in operational capability. A challenge indeed in today's litigious society, where the risks are too often considered to outweigh the positive benefits. In this article we shall attempt to reset the balance by offering a reinterpretation of the concept of 'risk', in particular its possible benefits. It is intended to be generic and can be applied to all Adventurous Training activities.

AT presents a number of opportunities for students to be challenged and stimulated by the outdoor environment. Contrary to most training, lessons and exercises which tend to educate only the quickest in the group; AT presents problems that are posed directly to the individual and yet, for the most part, demand co-operative activity for their solution. Unlike conventional training which prepares us for possible future scenarios, a great deal of the educational value of AT lies in its immediacy. Skills learnt are put to use and tested as they are taught. Whether it is basic instruction or advanced skills training, the effects are the same, the participant is entirely responsible for his/her actions and the consequences of these are often instantly apparent. Scotty cannot beam you up past the crux move of the climb, you simply have to climb it. This degree of physical and mental commitment is almost impossible to simulate outside of the operational environment; here-in lays its greatest potential.

## THE RISK DYNAMIC

Danger is everywhere. What keeps us from becoming a victim to it are our nervous and hormonal systems as well as the decision-making process that we, as a species, have developed. It is these systems that give us the ability to react in seemingly impossible situations and mitigate the risks during the less extraordinary ones. The risk-taking process follows a clearly identified pattern:

A **Hazard** is present. This is something with the potential to cause harm. **Objective hazards** are naturally occurring dangers such as rising temperatures, cornice failures or even animals. **Subjective hazards** are introduced by human influence, such as navigational errors.

The hazard gives rise to a **Risk**, which is the chance of loss or injury; the probability of harm occurring.

The hazard and risk then stimulate the emotion of **Fear**.

A **Challenge** is identified. (Something that tests one's capabilities, e.g. to climb the rock, to run fast, to lift a heavy weight).

**Motivation** kicks in (an incentive that excites one into action). E.g. hunger, thirst or the desire not to die or not to lose. This is too big a topic to be covered here and will therefore be the subject of a future article.

The **Pay-off** is then received (reward or punishment. The outcome of attempting to meet the challenge). This may be food, shelter, raised self-esteem or social recognition, in the event of success; ridicule or even death in the event of failure. Some of these pay-offs may be perceived rather than real but they are always keenly felt by the individual.

### TRAINING Vs ADVENTURE TRAINING.

Whilst an essential part of our survival mechanism, our 'fight or flight' responses in the presence of danger, can also limit our ability to react to situations that are unexpected or unwelcome. Sympathetic overdrive can send one into blind panic. Excellent when running from dinosaurs but obstructive when paddling grade 5 rapids or advancing to contact on operations! In addition to learning hard skills such as navigation, the main purpose of AT is to harness the adrenalin, acclimatising ourselves to the feeling of **Risk, Fear and Challenge** and thereby optimising our performance in their presence. Aside from getting in the ring with an opponent, it is difficult to see how conventional training can provide the same environment with which to hone these life-preserving skills. It is important therefore to note that without these risks and challenges, AT becomes conventional!

Obviously when we set out to deliberately introduce risk into training we are faced with the need to balance it with safety:

- a. Too much Risk and the dangers become unreasonable.
- b. Too much Safety and the Pay-off becomes trivial and negligible.

AT must involve challenge, risk and fear if it is to be effective. These must be titrated to the training objectives, the individual's competencies and their perception of risk. This is where the effective instructor earns his or her money. By introducing perceived risk whilst identifying and managing the real hazard, the instructor can intensify the experience for the individual without introducing unconscionable risk. If the training cannot be conducted without the pay-off outweighing the risk then conventional training is perhaps more appropriate.

### INTRODUCING RISK

This article is not offering a means of measuring the **Pay-off** as each situation and individual is different. This is for the instruc-

Pay off	Low Risk (1)	Medium Risk (2)	High Risk (3)
Low Challenge (1)	1	2	3
Moderate Challenge (2)	2	4	6
High Challenge (3)	3	6	9

Table 1. Challenge/Risk interactions

tor or course director to decide. The pay off however must always be equal to or greater than the risk. Table 1 demonstrates a model of how this can be calculated. Let us say for example that you wish to achieve a pay-off with a value of 6. A high-risk activity (3) may be conducted with a moderately difficult challenge introduced (2). This results in a value of (3x2) 6.

*"The pay off however must always be equal to or greater than the risk."*

Clearly, high-risk training may not be acceptable. However, using the model, one can see that the same result can be achieved with lower risk if the challenge is harder. The level of challenge is determined by the individual's level of capability. E.g. Medium risk (2) with a high challenge (3), a result of (2x3) 6. But two sessions of low risk (1) with high challenge (3) still add up to 6 (2x(1x3)). Of course to reach the score of 6 the participant must satisfactorily complete the challenge; hence the common avoidance of high risk – no personal development occurs if your student dies on you!

In this study, we are of course referring to risk pertaining to a physical hazard. However, the risk/pay-off relationship may also operate at a personal level. For example, the risk of shame versus the pay-off of esteem or the risk of failure to be selected v the camaraderie of being in the team. This may be referred to as motivation. Motivation determines if the Pay-off is attractive enough to make it worth accepting the Challenge of the Risk and it is this that we will be looking at more in depth in future editions. Do not be fooled by the plethora of technical manuals available and the emphasis put upon their application, the 'real' core business of any outdoor instructor is in the stimulating and nurturing of motivation. This along with the subject of competency training will be addressed in a later article.

### SUMMARY

Concerns over how health and safety guidelines and restrictions may encroach into the freedom of our sport have received a lot of coverage in recent editions of ARMY MOUNTAINEER, as well as the remainder of the outdoor press. Regardless of how you feel about this at a personal level, it has to be acknowledged that almost every rule that the HSE and MOD have implemented has come about because some unfortunate has lost his/her life or been left seriously injured; most likely because the training was considered prior to the pay-off.

Although still seen by many as just a useful adjunct to conventional training, in a culture increasingly risk averse Adventurous Training is coming of age, it presents a unique opportunity to identify and manage risk and our varied responses to it. Nothing will prepare the individual for the realities of operational life in quite the same way as the commitment and immediacy experienced during it. This is only true however if it is conducted in the correct manner. When considering a day's training or an expedition, you should be thinking of nothing other than "why?" All other considerations such as where, when and how will follow (Table 1).

R Smith & G Hassall

**£100**  
PRIZE FOR THE  
BEST ARTICLE

Skimming up the  
Otemma Glacier.

by  
Nick Ord

# HAUTE ROUTE THE HARD WAY?

It was freezing in the Vignette hut. I was gradually thawing myself out with a hot chocolate after a bitterly cold day on the Otemma glacier when a friendly American ski mountaineer struck up a conversation with us. He was exactly what you'd expect; tall, chiselled jaw, good looking, played in his college American Football team for a few years, ran his

own highly successful company, that sort of guy. I've forgotten his name, but it might have been Troy. He asked where we had come from, so presuming that he didn't really care that we'd come from the Chanrion hut, we replied that we'd come from Scotland. I was expecting him to say he had a load of relatives in Scotland. Funnily enough he didn't say that.

Instead he told us about another team from Scotland attempting the Haute Route who were a few days behind us. He added that he was not surprised that they'd baled out after a few days because they didn't have enough experience. Almost as an afterthought, he added, "After all, they had only done about ten days ski mountaineering".

Silent communication flickered between me and my mates, Rob and James. We said nothing, not really needing to look, just a small glance at each other. He continued, incorrectly suggesting that for us to be one day away from Zermatt and with a successful traverse of the Haute Route within our grasp, we must have more than a paltry ten days each. Again we said nothing. A pattern was emerging by now - he would say something, we would avoid answering, so he would speak again. Filling the silence he asked us how much touring we'd done. "Well...er...", I shuffled about uncomfortably on the seat, "I've done a few days in

Scotland and the Alps..... Rob here did a day in the Cairngorms a year ago..... and James here, well, his first day touring with skins was four days ago". To this day I can't work out who was more surprised; our friendly American hearing that despite our relative inexperience we were a day away from finishing the Haute Route, or us a day later in Zermatt, realising that somehow we had actually done it.

The truth of course is that we were lucky, and we knew it. I have met ski mountaineers who have tried it a few times, but been storm-bound in huts and forced to abandon it. Folk arrive in Chamonix well prepared to do it but are faced with the wrong conditions, so end up going home earlier than planned. But I can't help thinking that you can make your own luck by reducing the odds against you, at least to a point. I had been on the Haute Route back in 1991 on my first trip to the Alps as a summer glacier tour, so knew the Swiss part of it. Between us we had seasons of Alpine and



Another Alpine adventure about to start.

Scottish winter experience, and Rob and James (unlike me) could cope with any off piste skiing. We had a reasonable chance.

So I hope to dispel a myth about attempting a ski tour like the Haute Route. It has a substantial reputation, but this should not put you off. The American guy had a point that more ski mountaineering experience would be preferable; but cumulative Alpine experience and thorough preparation can compensate. Hours spent reading the route description, re-reading books about avalanches, practising transceiver searches and crevasse rescue were not wasted; they loaded the dice in our favour and gave us the confidence to try it on our own without a guide. If conditions are good and the weather reasonably favourable (by which I mean good and favourable enough by your standards of experience and how much discomfort you are prepared to put up with), it is within the grasp of a competent team of alpinists who can ski. Thousands of alpinists who ski would quite happily go over exactly the same route as a walking tour; doing it on skis is not particularly different.

That's not to say it was a doddle. Of course it was difficult and challenging at times, but so are loads of routes that loads of climbers do. As the 'differently-able' skier in the team, I knew I would struggle with some of the descents, and I definitely did struggle at times. On skis I resemble a newly born giraffe at the best of times. At the top of the long descent from the Col du Sonadon I spent more time laying facedown in the snow than floating over it, getting up again only to wipe out again and again. But after a few days, even a poor skier like me could not fail to get at least slightly better at it. In a good team each brings particular strengths; Rob had less winter mountaineering time under his belt, so didn't care much for the delicate icy traverses on crampons. He couldn't comprehend how I'd happily crampon across exposed slopes but not sideslip on skis down steep

icy stretches, opting to take off my skis and descend with axe and crampons instead.

If there were a long ascent on skins, Rob would take the lead. James would link effortless Telemark turns on steep descents to go ahead of Rob and I. As long as the team collectively has the experience and no one individual is the dunce at all the disciplines, then it is reasonable to expect the team to do well overall. I would be wary of trying this with total strangers, but I'd been in some tight situations with Rob and James before and figured we would get through it even if we had a good old mountain epic on our hands.

Nevertheless I found myself feeling distinctly uncomfortable about it all on the cable car up to the Grand Montets Col. Nagging thoughts spun in my head. Would I cope with the off piste skiing? Would we be stormbound in a hut in the middle of nowhere for days? Was I fit enough? Should we have done more acclimatisation? As I looked round the cable car at other parties setting off on the Haute Route, I realised that I had taken the time-honoured British approach of taking too much kit with me. Skiing off piste down from the Grand Montets Col with too much kit in my rucksack was a brutal introduction to what was ahead. I simply couldn't get used to the altered centre of gravity and found myself immediately on harder off piste terrain than I had previously experienced, but somehow I ended up unscathed on the Argentière glacier.

There is a lesson here, one we all hear but often ignore – go light. You know what technical gear you will need (and it isn't much), and how much clothing you need to look after yourself in the Alps. So once you've packed that, if you are unsure if you should take a particular piece of clothing or equipment, then the chances are you should leave it behind. Don't even think about taking a technical axe as your only tool – It will spend virtually all the time on your rucksack anyway. Borrow a mate's lightweight



*The Plateau du Couloir traverse*

axe instead. I feel qualified to say this because I took too much clothing and a heavy technical axe!

We took our time to get to the Argentière hut, savouring the view and adjusting to skinning along. We had considered going for the Trient hut in one long push from the Grand Montets, but I would advise taking the first day easy to get used to it, and then get a good night's rest at altitude before the long climb up to the Col Chardonnet. Why put yourself under unnecessary pressure so early on?

Like most mountain cols, the Col Chardonnet looked relatively close but never seemed to get any closer. The skin up from the Argentière glacier was hard work, as my ropey technique worked against me and as our lungs worked overtime at altitude. By the time we reached the col we were practically in a white out. We could have been anywhere really; abseiling down an Alpine gully in a white out

is exactly the same as abseiling down a Scottish gully. It's no worse in the Alps than anywhere else. Again, no need to be put off trying.

A compass bearing then lead us to the atmospheric Col de Saleina. It is a small col with imposing towers of rock peering down at us through the mist. We could glimpse the Trient hut occasionally through the clouds. Again we had the same illusion, it looked ten minutes away but took over an hour. Other teams of ski mountaineers appeared out of the gloomy half-light from different directions, silently skinning along. Our paths converged as we approached the final climb to the hut. No one said anything, no one needed to; a silent expression of mountain camaraderie. After several hours of skiing over fresh damp snow, the glue on my skins finally gave up on me and the last 100 metres to the hut were sheer purgatory as I waded through the thigh deep snow. I felt pretty ill that



*The author cramponing up to the Col Brule*

evening in the Trient hut, tired and depleted. Fortunately the third day is almost completely down hill.

The next morning we attempted to ski roped up to avoid crevasses. We realised very early on that the best way to avoid crevasses was to look ahead and avoid them rather than skiing in a clumsy roped up team where you concentrate so hard on staying up that you do not concentrate on picking a safe line. Perhaps we should have practised this before we set off on the Haute Route! The rope went back in the rucksack and we wound our way to the steep descent along the side of the Trient glacier. Looking back now, I'm not really sure why we did this; there was nothing wrong with the visibility. We misjudged the situation, so wasted time, but learnt the lesson from it.

James and Rob confidently side slipped down a very steep icy slope with yawning crevasses to the side; I opted to crampon down it. A short steep ascent took us to the Col de Saleina above Champex. The long run to Champex descends over 1900m, initially with a steep descent, followed by a long gentle shuss then some fun skiing in the woodline to join a pisted run. After a slog of a

day before, this day comes as an exhilarating rest day with the prospect of a large meal in a restaurant to keep you going. Bearded and smelly, we walked into the nearest restaurant and pigged out on Rosti and beer. With three days down and four to go, it seemed achievable by now.

After an overnight stay in Bourg St Pierre and a much-needed shower, the day to the Valsorey hut is a day of contrast. The valley heading east from Bourg St Pierre does not catch the sun early on in the day, so for a few hours the route consists of a gentle walk on frozen ground up towards the snow line. You enter a shady gorge then emerge into the boiling sun where it is time to put on the skins. The view is incredible; Mont Velan dominates on the right, with fresh tracks in deep powder from cols high up giving you something to take your mind off the uphill slog to the hut. Emerging around a corner the view to the Grand Combin is breathtaking, and tracks can be seen on the traverse to the Plateau du Couloir. It does look intimidating, but that's partly because it's so high above you at this stage. When viewed from the Valsorey, it doesn't look so bad. Don't be put off; it is exposed but if you are considering the Haute Route, I'm sure you have

cramponed across steeper or more exposed slopes elsewhere. It's like the Eastern traverse on Tower Ridge, not the Hinterstoisser Traverse on the Eiger.

The guardian in the Valsorey mentioned that there was a French pair of tourers who were attempting to go from Chamonix to Zermatt in under twenty-four hours. A support team was in the Valsorey, waiting to hand axes and crampons over to them for the next day. Shortly after setting off from the hut the next morning, we saw two figures several hundred metres below the hut. They were clearly fast, but we figured we would get to the plateau before them. Despite a head start of four hundred vertical metres, we were wrong. They burnt past us on the exposed final traverse and disappeared off down towards Chanrion. They were using the super lightweight approach, and were efficient in all that they did; whereas we could happily while away twenty minutes changing from crampons to skis, they took a minute and just disappeared. We never saw them again.

I have already mentioned the heavy porridge conditions so I will not dwell on them again. We wound our way past the icefalls then schussed gently

towards the wide ledge that leads round the snout of the ridge. I had been here fourteen years ago and could see how much the icefall had receded due to global warming. Skins came on again for the traverse, then off again for a great descent to the riverbed, then on again for the final climb to the Chanrion hut. The descent from the top col had gone on for about seven kilometres. In the hut that night we heard the French speed merchants took twenty minutes to do this. I was probably still faffing around with my bindings by the time they had finished!

We opted for the easier option of skinning up the Otemma glacier to get to the Vignette hut rather than going over the Brenay. There's probably only an hour's difference, but we felt like taking it easy for the day. As you curl left and up towards the Vignette hut, there is a steep concave bowl at the head of the Vuibé glacier. I paused there; feeling certain that it would be no place to fall in the morning.

The next morning, I predictably took a tumble and fell down the very same slope. One second I was up on my skis, the next I was windmilling down hill, then the next second I had somehow come to a stop. I had paused



Ahead lie the valeorey hut and the steep ground of the Plateau du Couloir traverse

for thought at the top of it, contemplating whether to crampon or ski across it. I had taken the idle option of avoiding changing from skis to crampons and back to skis again within the space of fifty metres. I chose poorly and

the lesson is so obvious that I don't need to spell it out. With only my pride dented I continued to the Chermontane col.

A succession of long climbs lead to a series of cols which give exhilarating down hill

runs to the next climb. This is a long day, but one to be savoured. We eventually stood on the Col Valpelline; I was dumbstruck, completely lost for words, laughing with relief. The panorama of the Zermatt 4000ers was breathtaking and we realised that there was no more ascent between Zermatt and us. In fact, that's an understatement. What lay ahead was without doubt the best ski run of the whole Route. You only need to look at the number of skiers who come up here by helicopter for this run to realise its quality. We expected wet slushy snow but found perfect conditions and a series of terraces leading to a long schuss under the face of the Matterhorn. We found the piste and skied right down into Zermatt, and headed straight for a pint before the train back to Chamonix.

Chamonix had gone mad while we were away. It was the last night of the ski season, and town was full of chalet girls having three-legged races, chalet boys dressed up as chalet girls and everyone drinking hard to delay the inevitable end of season. After so much space high up in the mountains with so few people, it did feel strange being thrown into a town full carnival mode. As we walked through town with skis and rucksacks on our backs, everyone looked at us as if we had just landed from

another planet. But clearly we soon got over it and went out for a drink in Goofy's.

We got talking to a group of girls at the bar, one of which particular intrigued us. I've forgotten her name; so for the sake of the story let's call her Kate. Kate asked us how long we'd been in the Alps, and what we'd been up to. We casually referred to a few days touring here and there, trying to be evasive. The experience in the Vignette hut made us wary, keen to dodge the inevitable. Something was not quite right, but I couldn't put my finger on it. Was she one of the French speedy merchants? No, they were both men. The questions came inevitably and quickly, asking us which tour we had done, where we'd been, what snow conditions were like, how crowded the huts were, where we had just come back from. Kate had clearly done a fair amount of touring; this wasn't just idle skiing chat. An idea was forming in my mind, but I still couldn't place it. At first we dodged giving specific answers, but we gave in and mentioned that we'd returned that evening from Zermatt. Immediately she asked "Haute Route yeah?" "Yes". What she said next cut us down to size and put us well and truly back in our box. "It's great isn't it? The last time I did it I enjoyed it more than the previous times!"



The timeless feel of ski mountaineering

THE ALEX FAIREY MEMORIAL EXPEDITON

# PEGASUS KIWI

By Jules Ratcliffe



I paused, planned my move, took a deep breath, and then swung out onto the huge east face. 'F#@king hell, Jules, this is outrageous!' I thought to myself. Somewhere between my feet and more than a kilometre below were our tracks made 8 hours before in the moonlight. We were tired but our enthusiasm remained. We knew we had to move fast, there was still a big climb ahead and time was tight. Another brief pause. "Get the feet right, is the axe in proper? Right let's do it!" I headed on up towards the summit.

Expedition Pegasus Kiwi, mission - to climb Mt Cook, in the New Zealand Southern Alps, and to teach and encourage mountaineering

within the Parachute and Scottish Regiments. It was undertaken in memory of Alex Fairey, the Parachute Regiment Officer who sadly died ten years ago and who's mother, Ann, created the Alex Fairey Memorial Fund (AFMF), which has greatly contributed to adventure training within the Parachute Regiment, Scottish Regiments and young people in the Test valley area.

We did not manage to summit Mt Cook but the experience was rich with camaraderie as well as hard climbing and personal stretch.

Most of the team met for the first time at Heathrow, however, we did get to know each other better on the flight

to LA, taking advantage of the free booze! Landing in NZ we were met by Ann, who had organised food and accommodation in Mt Cook Village. She also worked tirelessly, backstage, along with her Husband David (Col Ret), throughout the trip.

During our 36 hour stay here we covered remote emergency first aid under the tutelage of trainee doctor Lt Chris Abbot, crevasse and avalanche rescue techniques and rope work with Maj (ret) Phil Ashby, followed by equipment distribution and additional team building in the time-honoured military method of 'getting on it'. The highlight was Mark from 1 Scots (V) trying to dance in time with the Brazilian gui-

tarist to the bewilderment of the locals and the joy of our team - he looked like a puppet from Team America in a fight scene!

For the next 6 days we had an excellent training package, located at the Kelman hut; a venue with awesome views at the top of the Tasman Glacier. This was organised by Tony Johnston OIC of the trip and proved to be a well-judged preparation for what lay ahead. The team climbed several summits in and around the area, including Mt Almyer, the Hochstetter Dome and Mt Abel.

It was a typical initiation to New Zealand alpine climbing, characterised by unstable maritime weather, unconsoli-



View of the southern alps from Kelman hut.

*Avalanche rescue practise. Once an area of probability has been worked out using transceivers, a probe is used to pinpoint the exact position of the casualty.*



*'I thought you bought the air sickness pills!'*

dated snow, exposed ridges, regular avalanches and incredibly loose rock. Conditions that add a darker dimension to the easy accessibility of the range, beautiful views, awesome climbing and skiing and excellent hut facilities. During this time, Bob was christened 'Bouncing Bob' after a slab of snow on which 18 stone Zac was perched, gave way initiating a superman slide for Bob who was belaying. It ended ungracefully, but safely, in a heap several metres below.

I will always remember the colours of the sunsets at the Kelman. It became a ritual to don the down jackets, pop onto the balcony, admire the views and sip hot brews whilst chatting over the day's events. Surely the ideal debrief after an excellent day.

The next two days were spent in Mt Cook village with hearty meals and discussions of rope and summit teams. Fast forward three days and we're

now landing on the grand plateau underneath Mt Cook for the big attempt up the Linda Glacier route. After getting all the kit to the Plateau hut, Phil and party skied to the glacier to recce a route up. Meanwhile, we deployed ourselves on a sunbathing cadre.

And then the weather turned.

Now we had some decisions to make. We had approximately 7 days to attempt the summit before flying out. The next day five of us ascended the north side of Anzac peak in poor weather to practice climbing and communication in the high winds and spin-drift. With a little experience and the trust we now had in each other, we found ourselves climbing fast and efficiently.

Imprinted on my memory that day is the figure of Phil Ashby bounding around on the exposed summit ridge like a mountain goat, telling us to "Hurry up!" Luckily the wind was blowing hard enough to drown out the sound of me



*Jules staying out under the stars.*



Mick Booker enjoying the front seat on the flight in.

trying to get a grip of myself, and speed up to generate some heat; the wind-chill was becoming a concern.

The weather report improved and two days later we attempted the summit. I remember the feeling the evening before we set off as I lay in my doss bag; it wasn't so much fear as anticipation. I

am pretty familiar with this feeling, but it's never a comfortable one....

All too soon it was 2 am and we were in our kit, scooped and brewed and ready to step out into the blackness. Two hours later we had reached huge crevasses. I was intensely aware of my mortality as we walked past one you could drop a jumbo jet into. Five insignificant ants wandering around the huge vastness, our worlds shrunk to blobs of light turning grey into a glistening white.

As dawn approached, we quickly ascended the 'gun barrel', a funnel that travels steeply up to the Linda shelf; aptly named due to the ice blocks that avalanche down from the hanging glacier above. We climbed quickly, two years previous, four local climbers had lost their lives here. We reached the massive east face, swung out up the rocky northeast ridge, constantly tapping and wiggling suspicious rocks; more than once the shriek "BELOW!" pierced the gentle breeze.

I panted loudly pushing my pace, trying to find a balance between speed and safety. I was seconding and doing my best not to slow my rope buddy down; all too aware that earlier my crampon had twisted off my boot in a slot, taking precious time to sort out.

Up we went, snatching something to eat or drink on the hoof. Eventually it became clear we were still too slow. The decision was made, Phil's team, (Beefcake and Mike) moving alone would be faster to the summit. Even they



Wipeout!

weren't going to make it before dark, though. A radio discussion ensued between our two ropes and David, back at the plateau hut. Kind words from David, "just make sure you get back safe" will stick with me as the three abseiled down to meet us. We sorted a belay point, and organised ourselves to get five guys off as quickly as possible, aided by the full moon.

As the 20th hour approached, we were welcomed into the light of the hut with familiar smiling faces. We were disappointed but relieved to be back safely. We wrapped our cold hands around mugs of hot sweet tea and laughed.

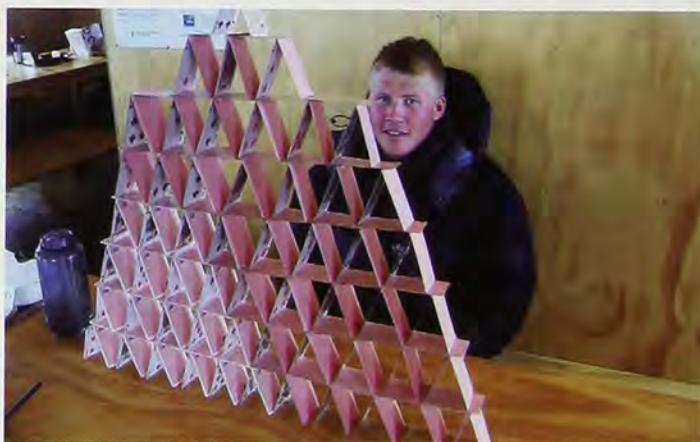
Three days later we walked out. With only one plane flight able to get in, most of us set off down the Freshfield and Tasman Glaciers. We abseiled, down climbed, picked our way at first through the crevasses, then the ice, and by torchlight, the miles of moraine that eventually led to a track and towards civilisation. It was a long, tiring, and at some points dan-

gerous retreat, yet spectacular, bringing alive all those school Geography lessons and reminding us how good judgement is the key to keeping alive in these harsh environments.

Two days R&R followed in Christchurch with equally bad judgement on how much we should live it up! We flew home sleep-deprived but with grins on our faces.

Although the hazards of loose rock in certain areas do require particular attention, I would thoroughly recommend mountaineering and skiing in the Southern Alps. The region is accessible from the rest of the island and has excellently maintained hut and emergency facilities. Also available in Mt Cook village are heli and ski planes, cheap accommodation, mountaineering shop, great food and great people; it is a fine place to stay.

Massive thanks to Ann and David Fairey for their kindness and excellent company, and big cheers to the blokes on the team. It was an awesome trip.



Zac Dunnings killing time in the plateau hut.

# PHOTO COMPETITION

***This is your chance to be both rich and famous!***

*Submit your favourite mountaineering photograph along with credits (Who, where, when?) for the famous part, and, if chosen as the best submitted in the edition you'll get £50 for your trouble. Ok, so not quite the rich part but it's a weekend in Llanberis!*

*(Photos should be the highest quality possible and e-mailed to the editor, along with a credit and caption)  
Sven@summitmountaineering.com*

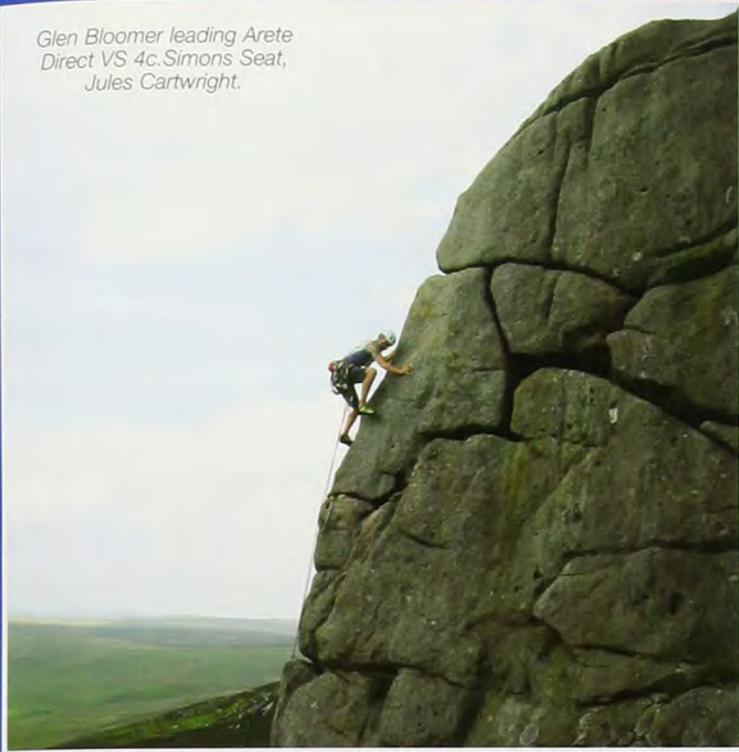


*Phil Maddox and Raj Nathwani, Allalinhorn, Switzerland.*

*Weissmeiss ridge, Switzerland, Collin Leggit.*



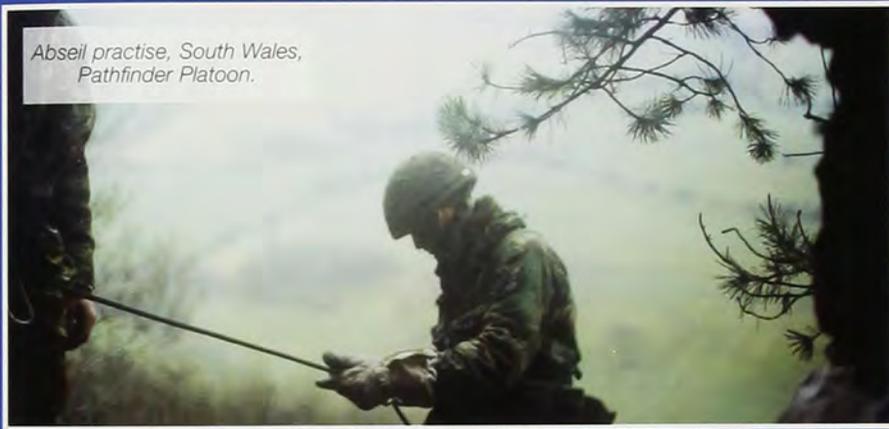
Glen Bloomer leading Arete  
Direct VS 4c. Simons Seat,  
Jules Cartwright.



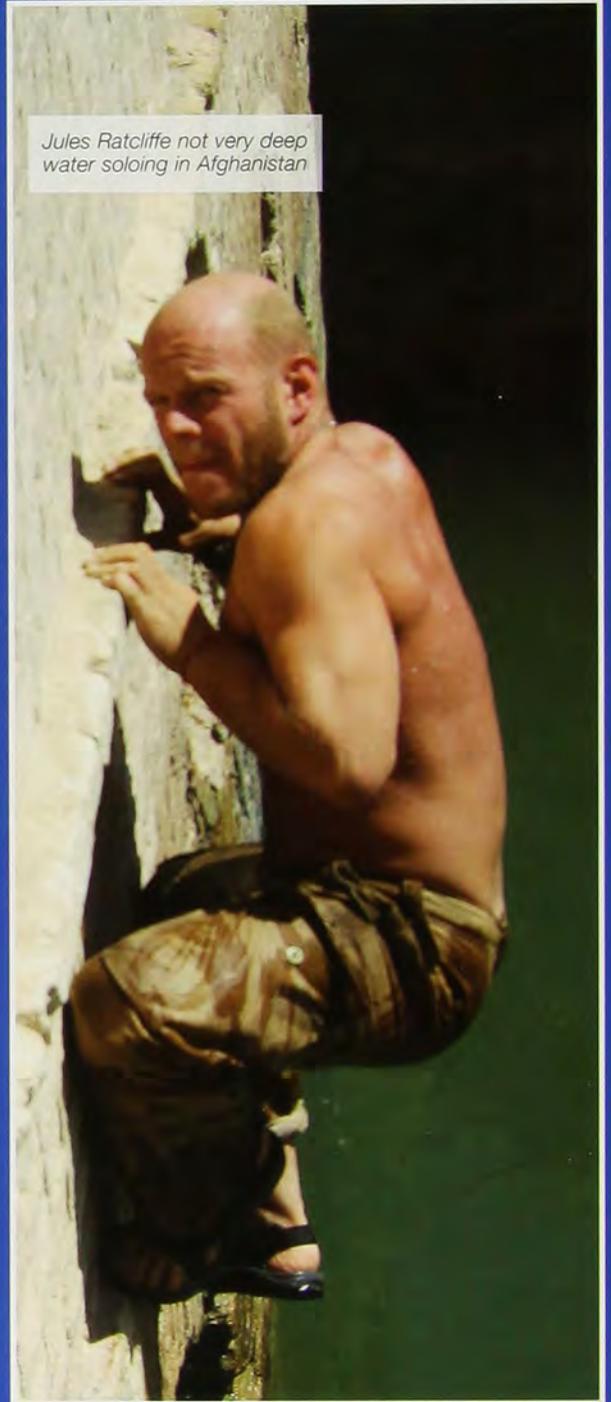
After a long days 'work' in  
El Chorro Spain.  
Rob Owen



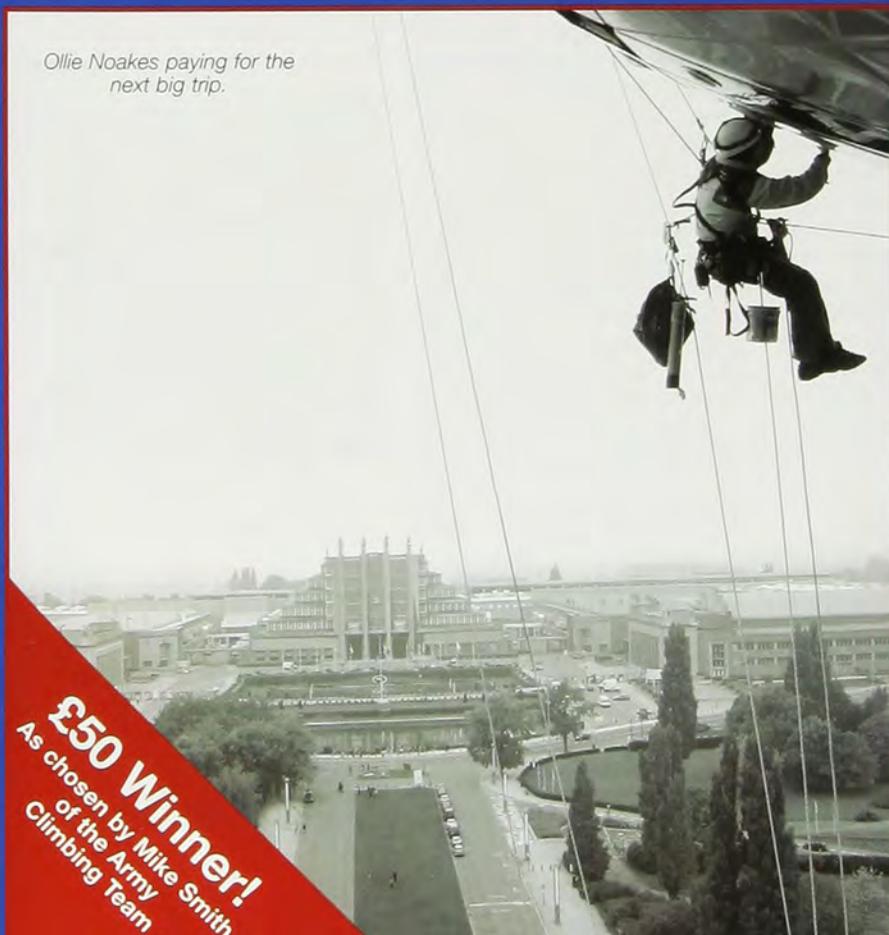
Abseil practise, South Wales,  
Pathfinder Platoon.



Jules Ratcliffe not very deep  
water soloing in Afghanistan



Ollie Noakes paying for the  
next big trip.



**£50 Winner!**  
As chosen by Mike Smith  
of the Army  
Climbing Team

# Common climbing injuries: the hand

By Rob McAfee and Andy Lewis (RM Reserve)

The most common injury site for climbers is obviously the hand. The stresses and pressures transmitted through our hands when crimping, finger jamming, twist locking or monos are immense. This has led to a type of injury that is almost exclusively seen in climbing. The dreaded 'finger pulley rupture'. We appreciate that few climbers are prepared to wait long enough to allow a pulley injury to fully heal and for that reason we will suggest the minimum guidelines for safe, if not optimal recovery. As always it is important to see a Physiotherapist for an accurate diagnosis and tailored treatment plan. We must emphasize these are only guidelines and longer rest is the best approach.

## Anatomy

The forearm muscles exert their pull on the fingers by a series of long tendons. To enable the tendons to pull efficiently when the fingers are bent and protect them from damage, the tendons travel through thick ligament type tunnels. These tunnels are

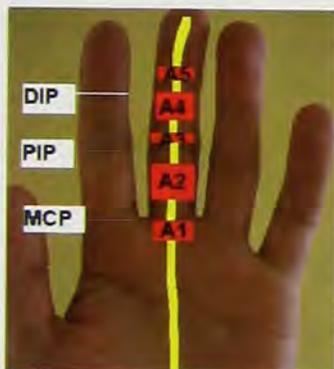


Photo 1

called annular pulleys and there are five per finger. They are numbered A1 (nearest the hand) to A5 (nearest the finger tip). The tendon itself is encased in a sheath (tenosynovium) that helps to nourish and protect it from friction caused by the finger bones or pulleys (see pic 1). Pics 2 & 3 show the location of the pulleys (red) in the hand, the tendon (yellow) and the abbreviated names of the joints. For clarity this is also reproduced in Photo 1.

## Mechanics

As can be seen from pic 3 of a normal flexed finger, the only real change of direction in the tendon is between A2 and A3. It is where the direction change occurs that most force (F) is generated on the pulleys. This clearly puts most strain on the top of A2 and bottom of A3. When you add to this hyperextending DIP, as in a crimp, you increase the stretch to an already tight tendon, multiplying the force on the pulley system. This increases the loading of force F making pulley damage or rupture (pics 4 & 5). This is why crimping is almost always the cause of a pulley tear. The ring finger is

more commonly affected as it is shorter so when a shock load is applied that finger is loaded first and so fails first.

If you do not get this seen to by a professional you could then start to overload pulleys A1 and A4 putting them at risk too.

## Diagnosis

This is usually from the history of the injury. Often the person will be crimping at or beyond their limit when a foot slips. This immediately puts a greater percentage of your bodyweight through that finger. The pulley will tear or just partially rupture and you may hear a popping sound. Pain will be over the MCP to PIP area on the palm side of the effected finger. It may swell slightly compared with the same finger on the opposite hand. You can also expect pain. The only way to truly diagnose it is with a scan and few hospitals will bother due to the expense. Some private and NHS physio teams now have ultrasound imaging machines that are the best diagnostic tool for this injury, however, the clinical picture is usually enough for pretty accurate diagnosis.

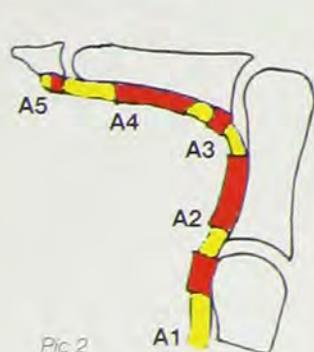
## Self Treatment

We will suggest only general advice to follow until you see a physio or surgeon. As soon as you suspect that you have damaged your pulley you must stop climbing at once. If you try to do just a couple more problems you WILL make the damage worse, quite possibly causing a partial tear to become full. If that is the case those few extra moves could delay your return to hard climbing by a full month, DON'T BE AN IDIOT!

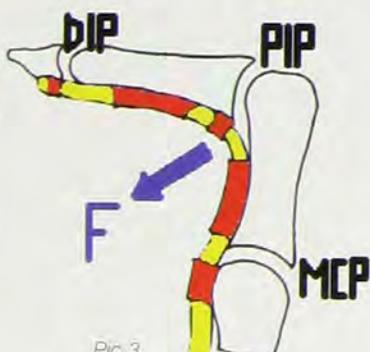
To give the injury support you should immobilise it by taping it to the next finger. Don't tape to the little finger for support as it is fairly weak and the difference in length would mean you are taping over joints, which restricts movement. When taping you should support each bone between the joints with tape so that limited movement is still possible (photo 2). If the fingers become warm, numb or very red remove the tape at once, its too tight. See the table below for how long to keep it immobilised.



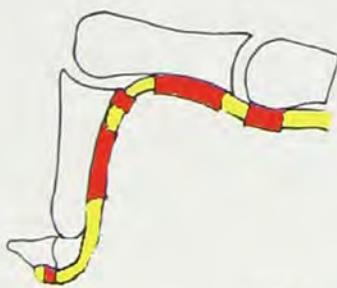
Photo 2



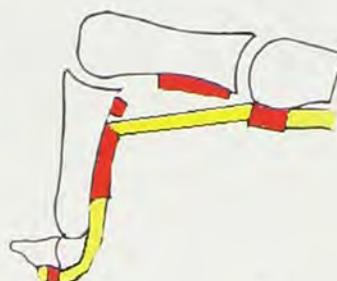
Pic 2



Pic 3



Pic 4



Pic 5

## GRADING SYSTEM FOR PULLEY DAMAGE AND TREATMENT

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
Injury	-Pulley strain	-Full A4 tear -partial A2 tear -partial A3 tear	-Full A2 tear -Full A3 tear	-full A2/A3 tear -full A2/A3/A4
Incidence	40%	30%	25%	5%
Surgery?	NO	NO	NO	YES
Physio?	OPTIONAL	RECOMMENDED	DEFINITELY	DEFINITELY
Immobilisation?	NO	7 days	10 days	Until professional assessment
Treatment time	2 weeks	3 weeks	4 weeks	See surgeon
Pulley support	tape	tape	Thermoplastic or soft cast ring	Thermoplastic or soft cast ring
Easy climbing	1 week	2 weeks	4 weeks	See surgeon
Easy crimping	2 weeks	4 weeks	2 months	See surgeon
Full climbing	As pain allows	2 months	3 months	6 months post-op
Continued taping	3 months	3 months	6 months	+12 months post-op

The **'incidence'** refers to the percentage of all pulley injuries that fit into that grade. **'Easy climbing'** means just that, if you insist on climbing early on you must take it easy. Absolutely do not crimp at all in this period. Use jugs or slopers, no crimps, no pockets, no campus board work. Easy means easy. This is a good time to work on either slopers or your footwork. Slopers are useful as they support the pulley and reduce the stress a tendon places on the pulley. Just ask a climbing centre instructor for ways to work your feet while either holding jugs or slopers. You should not be in any danger of falling off anything at this stage. This is simply to keep you moving and stop you getting frustrated.

**'Easy crimping'** means very easy crimping. There should be no real difficulty in the movement and it must be introduced very gradually, then progressed as long as it is pain free. At this stage do not ruin the time you have rested by pushing too hard and

re-tearing the pulley. Start with open crimps and towards the end of this period introduce the closed crimp. Still no pockets or campusing at this stage. Introducing gentle crimping will gradually prepare the pulley to take load and slow down the loss of strength.

At **'full climbing'** stage you should be able to do all you could before. You will have lost strength but do not get silly and jump straight onto a hard crimp route. I would still suggest waiting a little longer before campusing but pockets and monos are fine. If you follow this program the long-term prognosis is pretty good. You must appreciate that it is still a reasonably long process of recovery and the times suggested are only guidelines for a typical tear of that grade. These times are also the absolute minimum you should wait. Taking more time would allow better healing.

As soon as possible cool the area, either with ice through a tea towel or put your hand in icy cold water. Cooling will help reduce the swelling and after 10 to 15 minutes cause a massive increase in blood flow which helps the healing. This should be done several times a day for about 15 minutes, at least for the first 3 to 4 days after the injury.

Hot & cold therapy is an excellent way to encourage blood flow and reduce stiffness. Get two bowls of water, one as cold as you can comfortably manage, the other as hot as you can comfortably manage. First place your hand in the cold for 3 minutes, remove, dry, then place in the hot water for 3 minutes repeating as many times as possible but always finishing with the cold. While in the hot water try and gently move your fingers through the pain free range, this can be done whilst still

strapped to the other finger. You must not start this until at least 4 days post-injury as it could cause further swelling.

A good way to keep the fingers mobile is to gently squeeze a soft ball like a squash ball or a pet's toy. Start this after the finger is no longer immobilised. This is excellent for encouraging movement and optimising scar tissue formation.

Massage is the final way to encourage healing. When a ligament, muscle or tendon is injured it is replaced with scar tissue. If the scar is laid down correctly, in good alignment, only minimal reduction in function is caused. If however it is allowed to form in any other orientation it will cause severe restriction. Massage helps to align that scar. Use the thumb of the opposite hand to massage towards the hand along the length of the finger. Only

press in one direction otherwise you will reduce vital blood flow.

### TAPING

This is very important in your safe return to climbing. As the table suggests even if you suffer a simple pulley strain you should use tape for as long as 3 months afterwards. It may be surprising to hear that tape provides very little support to your pulley, research suggests between 8 and 15% of the actual intact pulley strength. It should not therefore be used to cover an injury but help support a healing one. Think of it more as gentle support than a short-term cure.

To support pulleys A2, A3 and A4 use the 'figure of 8' approach. Wrap tape firmly twice around the A2 pulley (photo 3). Then take the tape diagonally across the PIP joint so that, as far as possible, the tape covers the side of the fin-

ger joint. This helps maintain freedom of movement. Then wrap twice around the A4 pulley (photo 4). Next bring the tape back towards A2, again going on the outside of the PIP joint but on the opposite side (photo 5). This means not only do you support the pulleys but also the other important ligaments we have not mentioned. Use the remaining tape to secure A2 to finish (photo 6). Check finger movement, you should have a reasonable amount of movement but not be able to completely bend the fingers. If at any time the finger tip becomes very warm, numb or you feel pins & needles remove the tape, as it is too tight.

With all injuries your best chance of full recovery is to seek advice from a Physio or doctor as soon as possible. This article is designed to give general advice only, not replace a Physio assessment.



Photo 3



Photo 4



Photo 5



Photo 6

# THE EUROPEAN MILITARY SPORT CLIMBING COMPETITION

NOVEMBER 2007, CHAMONIX

By Nick Bennett

In recent years the French army have hosted the European military climbing competition. In classic French style this is an indoor sport-climbing event and has been growing in popularity. This year nine nations submitted teams and even though it is slightly unorthodox to consider the Chileans and Indians as members of Europe, their attendance and performance gave a welcome global bent to the whole event.

In true British style we managed to scrape together a small contingent of rock climbers from across the Army and on the 6th November headed out to L'Ecole Militaire de Haute Montagne (EMHM). Nestled in Chamonix at the foot of the Mont Blanc Massif, this school is the pride of the French Army's mountaineering wing and like our JSMTC is their centre of excellence for training the Troops de Montagne.

It was a two-day competition; day one was all about qualifying on the leading route but also included an impressive bouldering competition. The semi-finals and finals take place on day two.

To qualify all we had to do was top-out on a French 7b route! Our humble leader and long serving chairman of Army sports climbing, Capt Mike Smith, climbed well but didn't complete the 7b. The other members of the team also climbed well below par and our future in the competition seemed doomed when Capt Rob Laurence unexpectedly popped off the 6c before toping out. Our ray of shining light came in the form of Capt Mark Stevenson - when not talking for Britain he can usually be found climbing Britain's

hard rock. Mark made the 6c route look tricky but then romped up the 7b and topped out; we were saved from mediocrity! Fortune was not with us for long and this ray of light was soon eclipsed when minutes later Mark badly twisted his ankle falling from the bouldering wall and was carried off by three burly smiling French soldiers. That was the last of our participation in the 2007 competition and our morale reflected it.

Nevertheless, we were in for a treat. On the second day of the competition we sat amongst the large audience and watched the power and skill of some of the best climbers in Europe. We were highly amused to find out that the Swiss team was densely packed with members of their national team; they were professional climbers first and military by default, since all Swiss nationals belong to the Swiss militia!

Watching these world-class athletes perform at their limit was a joy. Thirty people qualified for the semi-final at grade 7c. Half of those made it through to the final at grade 8a and the event culminated in a quality piece of exhibition climbing. We lapped up the spectacle of the top five climbers tackling an epic 50 - 60 move 8b route that took a convoluted and imaginative line across three walls. Only one man topped out! Considering the hardest sport climb in the world is 9b+, which only a handful of individuals have red pointed after a lot of work, these guys were flashing 8b and climbing close to the limit of the possible.

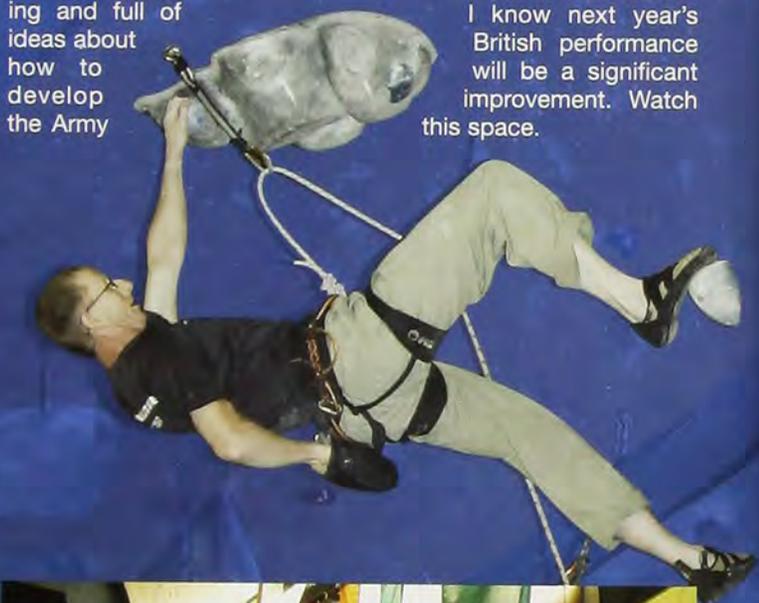
Although we were clearly out-classed by our European counterparts we did manage



Nick Bennett & Rob Laurence talk tactics

to come fifth out of the nine competing teams. We left France bubbling with enthusiasm for sport climbing and full of ideas about how to develop the Army

sport-climbing world. Having been part of this cracking event we have been galvanised into action and I know next year's British performance will be a significant improvement. Watch this space.



Nine countries competed in Chamonix this year.

# EX RIPON ROCK

NOVEMBER 2007

By Sally Brown

**W**e've all been there: Wicy rain dripping down the back of your neck; fingers so cold that you can't figure out where you left them, whilst half way up leading something in which they'd come in pretty handy. Bundled up in a balaclava, mitts (not the best for climbing) and a jacket that makes you look more Michelin man than rock gymnast.

All this for a classic rock route that you were determined to do that weekend, regardless of weather; because if you were put off by the weather, you wouldn't ever get off that sofa and peel yourself away from Strictly Come Dancing.

Well, this Exercise was nothing like that! Picture blue sky, blazing sunshine and stunning limestone cliffs everywhere you look, with the sea glittering crazily into the distance. A barrelful of top notch sport climbing, plenty of traditional climbing routes to play on, a veritable feast of excellent multi pitch routes and a bevy of gnarly single pitch crags to get the blood pumping and the fingers aching.

Sounds tempting, doesn't it? A bit of winter sun to chase away those doldrums, remind you why you love climbing so much and get a rock climbing qualification at the same time. All on an Exercise developed by the Joint Services Mountain Training Centre (Indefatigable) (JSMTC (I)) in order to give those budding instructors the chance to gain their qualifications and valuable climbing experience to consolidate their skills. And let's face it; it's usually pretty difficult to build up this essential experience when you spend 6 or more months of every other year in far flung places across the globe. Ex RIPON ROCK is a fantastic opportunity for climbers of all calibres to work on their

instructor skills and push their personal limits.

So, where was I? Oh yes, the Costa Blanca, Spain, November 2007, in the glorious sunshine. We were on Ex RIPON ROCK, 10 perfect long days of climbing, instruction and lectures galore.

There were 18 students (11 for Joint Services Rock Climbing Leader, 7 for Joint Services Rock Climbing instructor). The students came from every service, and rank range, with a wide variety of climbing experience.

The days were packed full with learning and perfecting technical aspects of climbing instruction; and the evenings were spent revising those techniques in preparation for the assessment. Finger tips were worn through, Climb On wedged into cuts and disco leg made a regular appearance. There were a few noisome displays of individuals thrashing up some God-awful climb. And if and when they were eventually lowered off, they usually discovered they hadn't read the guidebook correctly and had just aided themselves up a 7b+ finish. A few (not many) screw gate karabiners were sacrificed in the name of pushing the

grade, and most of us managed to lead a grade or two above what we had done before. Big smiles and puffed out chests all round.

The sublime; four of us spent the final day of the Exercise on a classic 13 pitch long Severe. A stunning, satisfying and great culmination of the efforts of the last 9 days, even if it did rain a little...

The ridiculous; the accidental 7b+ finish to a 6a+ climb. Oops.

To sum up Ex RIPON ROCK; it was 10 days of studying hard, climbing loads, practising into the night and learning plenty of new techniques you hope you'll never need, and meeting a bunch of guys who enjoy climbing as much as you do. Not bad really.

And it's in Spain. 'Nuff said.

If this sounds like fun and you have sufficient logbook experience and you are looking to get your JSRCI or JSRCL, this is an awesome way to get those qualifications. Look out for the advert on the ATG(A) website [www.army.mod.uk/atg](http://www.army.mod.uk/atg) or just get in touch with the JSMTC Training Officer and start sweet talking your boss!



How did I describe it 'blue sky, blazing sunshine and stunning limestone cliffs with the sea glittering in the distance'.

It's not that far down - 'don't worry, the single piece of gear I managed to get in, is pretty well um bomb proof.



# AMA TELEMARKE HEROES

## WORLD CUP TELEMARKE SKIING CHAMPIONSHIPS 2008

**T**his year two members of the AMA competed in the WORLD CUP Telemark championships. The author, Philip (Telemaddog) Maddox and Andrew (Nobby) Clarke.

What is Telemark skiing? Have you not heard of 'Free Heelers'? Dude where have you been all this time? Never mind your alpine downhill or snow boarding, try the original art of skiing.

Telemark skiing was developed as early as the 12th century in the Telemark region of Norway. Developed for getting about during the long winters, it's primary feature is versatility. The heel is left free, allowing full range of movement of the leg and the turn is executed with one foot in front of the other adding another dimension of directional stability. Thus one pair of skis can allow you to ski down hill, alpine or free heel style, ski

tour, and for the proficient, ski mountaineer. The only decision is whether to go with lightweight Nordic gear (great for covering distance but less robust in steep terrain) or with downhill Tele gear, much akin to Ski Mountaineering kit.

The army conducted it's first Telemark Ski Championship in January. Held in the picturesque village of Rauris, Austria, seventy-five soldiers entered the event with all skiers being provided with some form of advice on how to Telemark beforehand. It was a great trip which has sparked an interest that will, no doubt, snow ball in the future. It was also an ideal training period for the recently selected British team consisting of five army personnel, one royal marine, one RAF and one civilian, preparing for the World Cup.

The World Cup events were to be held in Slovenia, the Czech

Republic, Norway, Finland and USA. Each location would hold Classic, Grand Slalom and Super Classic races. Each race comprises of two heats, with accumulative times and penalties, and a prize-giving ceremony each evening.

Telemark events require the participant to demonstrate jumping and skating, in addition to downhill skills. The Classic race – a series of slalom gates, a compulsory jump (with a set distance to clear and split leg landing to be achieved), followed by more slalom gates and a short 'Nordic' style skate section to finish. Super Classic – as above with a longer, uphill skate section to finish and the Grand Slalom – like an alpine slalom race with a jump half way down the course.

Technique judges are placed at each slalom gate and penalties awarded for

improper Telemark technique (as I found out). Each penalty is worth one second. The jump penalty is worse - falling short, three seconds and not landing correctly, one second. Speed is the only answer!

After Rauris, we drove to Slovenia and turned up at the Amityville House of Horror Hotel on the hill! Those on the early Bosnia and Kosovo tours would not have felt out of place. Fortunately the locals were friendly and not intent on ethnic cleansing.

Even though rain persisted and the snow shrank up the slopes, the races took place and at least this year there were other competitors finishing behind the GB Team. We raced four times, a GS and a Classic. The weather was so Scottish, we felt quite at home.

From Slovenia to the Czech Republic the rain cloud fol-

lowed us. Here we managed to do just two races, but with each descent of the hill, our ability to stay on our feet, and complete the course rocketed and confidence swelled.

Next stop Rjukan, Norway. Not the gorge of 'Real Heroes of Telemark' fame, but the event was held on top of one of the mountains that those brave Norwegian Commandos covered in their successful mission.

The first race, a GS was cancelled due to poor weather and high winds, such a shame, as this is the place where it all started. The following day the winds died down and the Classic was on. The first fifteen ranked skiers get drawn together, and then the next fifteen followed by the rest of the field. So this season we were used to being drawn towards the back of the pack. "That's ok, we will just have to change that for next season" In Norway and in Finland the lads put in some brave races and were placed just outside the top 20, with positions ranging from 21st - 30th out of a possible fifty. Although the Rjukan event was televised in Norway, it unfortunately never made it to the big screen in the UK, we are hoping that Ski Sunday will oblige next season.

The last destination was just inside the Arctic Circle. En-route to the final location in

Finland we actually drove past the home of Father Christmas. Sadly, he was too busy to compeer the prize giving so the village mayor stood in. Finland is awesome for on-site skiing, step out of the apartment and straight onto the slopes. The snow was in perfect condition due to the low temperatures and high precipitation. Again some great performances were produced by the GB team and it was exhilarating to be cheered on by the other teams, knowing, as they did, that we are all self-taught, self-funded and not from a winter sport country.

With the final race of the season being held in the USA and work and family commitments calling, this was the last race for most team members. Fortunately for me, there is a race being held in Hafjell, Lillehammer during my short work deployment to Norway this Spring...!

Over all this has been an amazing way to earn a British vest; a dream of mine since I first picked up a rugby ball aged eight. The whole Telemark race circuit was a great experience and one that I am looking forward to next year.

Keep your eyes peeled for the advertising letters in Army publications for dates and applications for next year's British Army Championships. There will be a team event as



The author. Note the free heel of the Telemark binding

well as individual races. We are hoping to entice the Royal Marines, Royal Navy and the RAF to make the 1st Inter-Services championships. If you want to make history, be there.

The British team will also be holding a selection camp some time in June 2008, so if you fancy being a 1st team

member or part of the development squad then come along and have a go and earn your GB vest.

For any further information contact me at JSMTW (I) Indefatigable. Mil: 95581 7916

Email: [si-indefatigable@jsmtc.mod.uk](mailto:si-indefatigable@jsmtc.mod.uk)

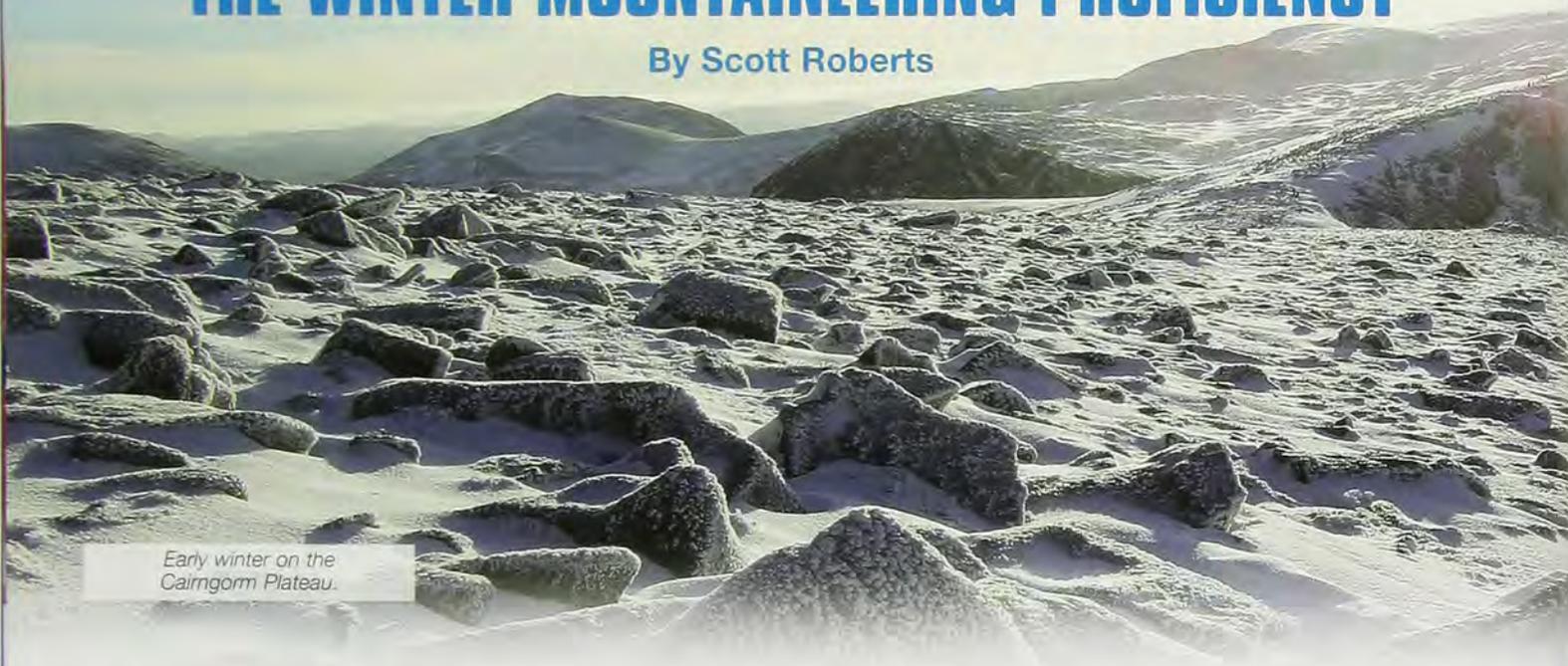


Working hard on the Pyra World Cup Run, in Finland.

# MAN FLU AND MOUNTAINS

## THE WINTER MOUNTAINEERING PROFICIENCY

By Scott Roberts



Early winter on the Cairngorm Plateau.

New Year's Day 2008. A wet dusk deepens into a rain-sodden night around a tiny Scottish Bothy, cowering under the brooding presence of *The Devil's Point in Lairig Ghru*. Inside, a young couple settle in for the night, unaware that their no-doubt very welcome solitude is about to be shattered by the arrival of eight wet, smelly and hungry AMA mountaineers. Clearly unable to conceal their delight at the prospect of sharing a hut the size of a ping-pong table with such esteemed company, they check (somewhat pointedly) that we are not about to desert them for any tents that, (they hope) we may have brought with us. We make ourselves indispensable to our new friends by offering to light a fire using the wood that we have carried in with us, only to set alight parts of the bothy that aren't meant to be set alight as one of our number<sup>1</sup> 'encourages' the damp wood to burn with the contents of his multi-fuel stove. Eventually, two of our party fall on their swords and make some room by setting up a bivvy outside during a partic-

ularly unpleasant Scottish winter night (thanks, guys) whilst the rest of us play sardines inside.

The whole thing had started on 27 Dec, when eight budding winter mountaineers converged on Norwegian Lodge at the foot of the Cairngorms National Park, ready to undertake the Winter Mountaineering Proficiency Course (WMP). This was run by John Belsham (suffering from a nasty cold as we arrived) as part of the AMA Winter Meet, which the tireless John has also organised for as long as anyone can remember.

The first day was sedate enough, with lectures, equipment inspections and a run into Aviemore for those essential last-minute kit purchases. By Day 2 we had been joined by a second instructor, Chip Rafferty, and were on the hill (in *Corrie Cas*) in two groups scouring the slopes for patches of snow big enough to practise kicking steps, cutting steps, ice axe arrests and walking in crampons. John's cold had now progressed to flu, but he manfully persevered with the instruction as some much needed snow began to fall on

the mountains. That evening we received a talk on winter mountain navigation from a guest lecturer, Nigel Williams (the Chief Instructor at Glenmore Lodge), whose advice to ignore the military methods of teaching map reading and to learn how to orienteer instead may need to be pushed to the back of my mind next time I have to complete MATTs.

Day 3 dawned bright and clear (the only day that did so). The ranks of our instructors swelled further with the arrival of Sven Hassall, which is just as well given that John's ailment had now progressed to pneumonia and he had to reluctantly take the Doctor's orders to rest up. Sven led Aiden, Jimmy and I straight off up a snow gully, something which employed all the skills with boot, axe and crampons that we had learnt the day before. I clawed my way over the top of the gully and emerged panting onto the ridgeline above, only to meet the rest of the students bimbbling up the easy but less exciting footpath under Chip's guidance. Both instructors then treated their respective groups to navigational challenges all day, which were to prove their

worth later in the expedition phase of the course.

New Year's Eve saw us out once again in one big group, learning to dig improvised snow shelters, assess slopes for potential avalanche hazards, use avalanche transceivers and build basic snow anchors on steep ground. A running debate on best and worst bits of mountaineering kit provided some diversion, with Harry Black Tape getting most votes as the most versatile and best value for money. Otherwise known as 'The Force', it has a dark side, a light side and it holds the universe together!!

Being in Scotland for Hogmanay meant that, however much we were dedicated to being up early for the expedition the following day, we all felt compelled to partake in a little cultural activity on the 31st. Some were so enthusiastic in their participation<sup>2</sup> that the next day's drive down winding roads to the expedition drop-off point had to be interrupted on several occasions for some of the passengers to 'take a little fresh air'.

<sup>1</sup> Name withheld to protect the guilty, but available for the price of a beer.

<sup>2</sup> You know who you are. Same rules apply.

John, now officially diagnosed with the first case of Bubonic Plague recorded in centuries, waved us off from a soggy car park and we found ourselves on the wet and windy walk-in to the bothy where we found ourselves at the start of this article. The second day of the exped was altogether more adrenaline-charged, as we hacked our way up a steep, long, frozen slope to the summit of *Cairn Lochan*. I will admit to being taken out of my comfort zone and well into 'stretch' during this ascent, but fortunately stayed on the correct side of the 'panic' threshold! Ryan Perry did a first-class job of cutting steps up the hill and navigating through increasingly hostile elements.

Up high, the rain and wind of the valley was transformed into a howling gale carrying horizontal driving snow with visibility being cut to a few metres at times. These are not



*Aiden and Jimmy take a nav check, the altimeter is one of your most useful tools in winter, providing a navigational landmark when most are buried below the snow.*

the sorts of conditions that man is designed to survive in, and it was very easy to see how several groups of mountaineers have died on this

piece of mountain. Fortunately, the navigational training paid off and we eventually emerged from the clag into *Corrie an Lochain* and to

a welcome hot brew in the ski centre café!

If you want to take your summer mountaineering skills and add to them the basics of surviving and operating in harsh Scottish winter conditions, test your own limits, make some new like-minded friends and have a lot of fun into the bargain, then sign up to a WMP course now. Eight students from a wide variety of units, cap-badges and ranks qualified on our course: Aiden Carbutt, Sarah Cooling, Henry Crosby, Rich Hannam, Ryan Perry, Jimmy Vaudrey, Nick Watson and yours truly. Our thanks go to John Belsham, Sven Hassall, Chip Rafferty and Nigel Williams who all gave up time that they could have spent on leave or doing their own climbing to pass on their experience to us.

*P.S. John is looking much better now.*

# AMA 50TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER

By Mike Treffry-Kingdom, AMA General Secretary

The 9th of November 2007 saw the first annual AMA dinner night in order to celebrate 50 years of the association. Open to all members, past and present, the only thing flowing faster than the wine was the banter and the only thing taller than the mountains in question were the stories! I remember well how much higher the Ben was the first time I did it .....

The story tellers in question included Lieutenant General Graeme Lamb CMG DSO OBE, along with the AMA President Brigadier Watson and AMA Honorary Presidents: Colonels (Retd) John Peacock, Meryon Bridges and Lt Col (Retd) John Muston, as well as representatives from organisations that have provided generous sponsorship to us all in recent years, namely: SAAB; Cotswold Outdoor and MAN. Ollie Noakes and Jules Ratcliffe supplied entertainment whilst Collin Legget, the official photographer, bal-

*"For good food, wine and company,  
For a firm hold, clear skies and solid rock,  
To honour those who have climbed before us  
and in whose footsteps we follow,  
For the AMA and 50 successful years,  
For looking after us in times of danger and  
giving all mountaineers the courage to continue  
in the face of fear,  
We give thanks, O Lord, Amen"  
(Opening words from the AMA dinner)*

anced on chairs and tables in search of the 'perfect shot'.

The Officers' Mess of the Royal Artillery Headquarters in Woolwich supported us splendidly with excellent service, food and surroundings celebrating our first 50 years in style. As well as several awards being presented, Geordie Taylor, the leader of the recently returned 8000m expedition

to Shishapangma, also took the opportunity to give an account of their exploits, confirming the value of adventure training, and its continued relevance to us all. The remainder of his team later presented him with a Nepalese album containing photos and writings from the mountain.

The AMA dinner night will now be an annual event to be held



*The President, Brigadier Watson toasts the AMA.*

at a location and time yet to be decided. The committee are asking for a volunteer to take this on for 2008 and perhaps subsequent years. Any volunteers should contact myself for details. In the mean time however I would, on behalf of the committee and all attendees like to thank Marc Reynolds, the AMA Publicity Officer for organising such an excellent evening.

# WHAT DID THE ROMANS EVER DO FOR US?



*Mike Treffry-Kingdom on  
summit of Lhakpa Ri 7045m*



*Basking in sunshine as a storm blows off Everest's west ridge high above*

The last 10 meters of so were more crawls than steps. I did at one point totally wrap on the whole idea, the pain in my head and difficulty breathing took over and I sat down on the loose shingle committed to going no further. Content that enough was enough and the whole idea was barking mad. One team member and another went past, each giving their encouragement and support. Eventually one of the leaders (cheers Glyn) supported and encouraged me the last few meters to reach the summit. For me there was no triumphant step onto the summit, with high fives and waving a flag merrily. I crawled on my hands and knees to the top of a small snow ridge and I was the last of the Army Everest West Ridge development team to reach the 7045m summit of Lhakpa Ri in the Himalayas. I didn't feel happy, I didn't look at the view and I didn't think of anything amazing to say – I was just too exhausted. I took my camera out from under 2 inches of snow and managed to snap a few photos of my mate, Sam, and she took some of me (including the one

you see here). Apparently the view was awesome, the vista of the Himalaya and the result of 3 years of hard work laid out in front of me but I never saw it. All I saw and all I wanted was the route down.

Six weeks of Acute Mountain Sickness had taken its toll; continuous headaches, dizziness, lack of appetite, diarrhea and difficulty sleeping had whittled my bodyweight down from 80kgs to 69kgs! I was in a mess. When I somehow managed to reach our goal of Lhakpa Ri, a mountain just off the North-East Ridge of Everest. My hands were frozen (I doubt I could self arrest is I really had to), my head was banging like a bass drum in a rock band and I really REALLY wanted to get down ASAP!

3 years previously as a Sapper Troop Comd in Germany I saw a notice advertising an expedition to Everest and places available on a high altitude development team. Apparently the AMA were organizing it and they were looking for novice/intermediate climbers. It sounded good and though I

was not a member of the AMA, I thought I would give it a go. I'd been climbing in the UK for a few years (nothing harder than HVS, or grade III winter) and a couple of trips to the Alps had ticked off a few easy classic routes. I was by no means a highly skilled mountaineer but I knew I wanted to get to and see the Himalayas and so put my application in. Joining the AMA was a prerequisite for getting on the expedition so I duly signed on the direct debit line and thus 2.5 years later with several training trips to the Alps, Scotland and Canada and with physical training and testing courtesy of Leeds Met University, the team was ready to depart for Tibet. Our story can be found on [www.armyoneverest.mod.uk](http://www.armyoneverest.mod.uk) and I won't repeat it here. In my last few days at base camp, still somewhat unwell, under the encouragement of Cath Davies I managed to find myself volunteering (!) to become the next General Secretary of the AMA.

Knowing that many copies of the Army Mountaineer end up in the hands of non-AMA

members, what can I say to encourage you to join? Well I managed to reach 7045m entirely due to the AMA support, technical advice, financial support and simple encouragement of fellow AMA members (cheers for sharing your goodie barrel Ollie!).

So, are you dreaming of the Alps, the Himalayas or perhaps further to Antarctica or many of the other great mountain ranges? Well the opportunity is right here, join the AMA, the largest mountaineering club in the UK, and you never know where you might find yourself. Every year there are challenging exciting and adventurous expeditions throughout the world with AMA members leading and participating. Next time it could be you! Though I do strongly recommend Diamox (drug for AMS) if you are anything like me at altitude!

May you reach the heights you aim for.

TK

AMA General Secretary

# Kicking Assiniboine

## IN THE CANADIAN ROCKIES !

BY Doug Harper

Ex Assiniboine Diamond was a summer mountaineering expedition located primarily in the Canadian Rockies but also included several days walking around Whistler. Scheduled to take place immediately after my Royal Engineers' Squadron deployment on Ex MEDMAN, it provided seven members of 26 Armoured Engineer Squadron with the opportunity to take a well deserved rest from Regimental life after the rigours of a demanding training year.

The expedition itinerary was relatively straightforward with

an initial training phase consisting of a series of progressively more demanding treks around Banff, followed by an expedition phase around Mt Assiniboine. Sandwiched in the middle was a day spent white water rafting on the Kicking Horse River and the trip concluded with an R & R phase in Calgary. As ever, the plan became the first casualty. To start with sage local advice about weather conditions, bear activity and trail restrictions resulted in a reshuffle of the training phase objectives and secondly an unexpected flight delay led to a week long extension in-

country that had to be authorised and planned on the ground.

We were to camp throughout the expedition, and found early on that the campsites were of a very high standard – affordable, clean and with decent facilities. Future expeditions should note, however, that many of the campsites close between mid and late September leaving only the few winter ones available and open. Wild camping is not permitted and campgrounds are to be used in the National Park. These vary in style; those outside towns such

as Tunnel Mountain Campground, about two and a half kilometres from Banff, provide full facilities including showers. Some of the more remote sites such as Lake Magog are a little more austere, providing only bear proof food storage and a latrine if your lucky.

Two treks during the training phase proved particularly noteworthy. Cory Pass is described in the guidebook as the most spectacular and strenuous day hike near Banff and proved to be just that. An easy mile through typical pine forest was a deceptive start



Beating the retreat – 2 foot of snow fell overnight.



*The long trek up the 'Matterhorn of the Rockies'!*

as the route started to ascend, gradually at first then relentlessly steep. Several times on the subsequent uphill slog expedition members paused, hands on hips, mouth slightly agape and stared around them. Alas, this was more to catch their breath than in any admiration of the spectacular surroundings. Cory Pass itself, at 2360m, is the high-point of the walk and the perfect opportunity to pause. Views to the South included a tantalising glimpse of Mt Assiniboine, our future objective standing proud some 500m above its neighbours.

Sentinel Pass, the highest point on maintained trails in the Rockies was another fine objective. Reaching an elevation of over 2600m it provides unsurpassed views of Moraine Lake (lovelier even than Lake Louise) and Paradise Valley. Due to bear activity each member of the group had to stay within four metres of each other and make constant noise to warn bears of our approach. Feeling very Chris McCandless, we bravely stepped out into the wild armed with bear spray and a

dawning realisation of the very real threat these creatures pose in this area. Previous to our visit two unfortunate individuals, whilst enjoying a mountain bike ride, had met their end at the paws of a surprised bear. The control measures put in place by the authorities (a scheme called the bare camp ensures no food is left accessible to bears and daily bulletins highlighting which areas are closed and restricted are posted in several locations) should not be ignored.

The training phase was very successful complemented by fine weather. A gradual introduction to hill walking was what was required, not only for the less experienced members of the teams but also for the others following a months' inactivity on the prairie. The treks also proved the ideal platform to deliver instruction on the basic techniques required for summer mountaineering.

The Expedition phase, planned as a six day excursion around Mt Assiniboine, a mountain sometimes known

as the 'Matterhorn of the Rockies', went slightly less to plan. After a two day walk in we established ourselves at Lake Magog campsite, our base camp for the next few days. However, as evening wore on snow began to fall even more steadily and by morning two feet had settled at our elevation. There was no decision to be made, restricted by the confines of the qualifications held within the group the only option was to get off the hill. Retracing our steps we subsequently covered more than twenty miles with full expedition packs back to the trail head, 1400m lower down the valley and also covered in snow. It was a disappointing premature end to the endeavour.

Our unexpected extension gave us the opportunity to explore another area and we travelled west to Whistler in a vain attempt to escape the increasingly miserable weather. The plan was to again undertake a series of day walks followed by an expedition phase. However, as the rain had set in we decided instead to undertake five fur-

ther day walks giving us the chance to dry out our kit and ourselves in between.

Ex Assiniboine Diamond ran over fifteen quality mountain days and qualified five members of the expedition for the Summer Mountain Proficiency Award (SMP). Adventurous training is undoubtedly a retention positive activity and in increasingly busy times the chance to experience a different country, learn a new skill and participate in trips such as this should be encouraged. I am confident that all participants on this trip will volunteer again for further expeditions even if they are 'glorified tabbing'.

On a final note it would be churlish of me not to take this opportunity to extend sincere thanks to WO1 Dave Bunting APTC and his team at Trails End Camp (TEC) for their help throughout the expedition. TEC were kind enough to lend us technical equipment throughout and Dave was instrumental in getting us the required permissions for our extended stay.

# Hot Rock

Exercise Hot Rock Cadet began with an early morning drive to London Stanstead that was particularly hard on those in the contingent who had been "running" the bar for the Commissioning Ball the night before. The party comprised of 9 cadets and 2 officers, lead by 2 RCIs, an RCL, an RLT (Lead), 3 RLTs and four novices. The remarkably cheap flights courtesy of Easy Jet deposited us in Palma airport where we picked up our hire cars, per man only marginally less expensive than the flights. The decision to purchase extra indemnity insurance on the three cars quickly paid off as we neared the first hurdle of the exercise: a petrol station. Confused by the bright lights and foreign language, one Cadet managed to purchase an entire tank of the wrong kind of petroleum. Luckily our Spanish linguist was on hand to exchange friendly banter

with the local mechanics who quickly exchanged the car.

We soon located our villa, which nestled at the foot of the village of Valdemossa. The farmhouse accommodated 11 people with an outdoor pool, sadly unsuitable for human usage. Across the island there are a large variety of apartments and villas left empty out of season that are reasonably priced. The area around the villa was rather isolated, although we later discovered the village centre near the top of the hill.

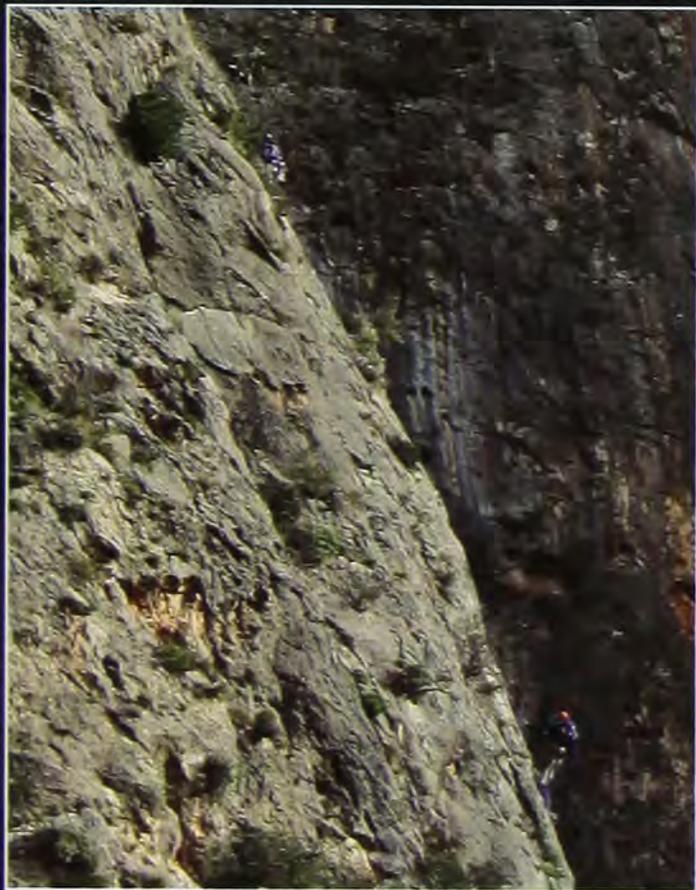
The climbing regime was a strict one, with reveille at 07:00 every morning in order to make the most of the light available to climb by. The first location climbed at was S'Estret, a 5 minute car journey from the villa. An abundance of lower grade climbs made the area ideal for the beginners in the group and gave all a chance to warm up

and get to grips with the rock, which sadly proved to be anything but 'hot'. Our first day in country was spent with water-proofs on and hoods up, sheltering from hail and rain!

In Mallorca the rock is limestone, a sedimentary rock, which is sharp but offers very good hand holds: finger tape is worth packing! Foot and toe placement is important, for the small pockets although smearing is possible if not essential on some of the routes. Across the island there are many possible venues to climb which include sea cliffs, roadside crags as well as within the mountains. The second day of climbing was spent at La Creveta, an hour's drive from the villa near Port de Pollença. From the viewing area "Mirador d'es Columet", we spent 20 minutes scrambling down to the routes. The site was again ideal for our purposes with a number of 4+ routes as well

as number of 6's and 7's for the more advanced climbers to push their grades on. The sun made a brief appearance at points during the afternoon's climbing, and was greeted by widespread disrobing in a vain attempt to suntan! Most locations climbed during the week were sheltered from wind and rain, but situated such that there was no sun exposure until the afternoon.

The third day was spent climbing at Valdemossa Main, directly next to a single lane mountain road, and amusing motorists who would drive past pressed up against their car windows. The majority of the climbing in Mallorca is sport climbing, although there are a few traditional unbolted routes. Traditional kit was employed for some of the routes at Valdemossa Main to ensure that no-one was left dangling at truck height when the locals sped



Close up of the two teams working hard for the ridge



OCdt Crosby leading a delicate slab at La Creveta



OCdts Crosby and Nathanson the third pitch of 'La ley del deseo' at Sa Gubia

past. Much of the climbing throughout all the locations in Mallorca was at its toughest at the bottom of the face during the first few moves, leading to comedy falls into bushes and trees.

The fourth and final days were spent climbing at Sa Gubia, one of Mallorca's main climbing attractions. A brief 10 minute drive left us a 30 minute insertion up to the cliff. Here the group split into two, with one group exploring the single pitch options at Sector Princesa and the other heading to Sa Gubia itself. Both days of single pitch then multi-pitch climbing were extremely rewarding for the quality of the climbing involved as well as the views at the top of Sa Gubia. The 5(+) route that OCdt Crosby and I took up to the top was "La Ley del deseo" (The law of desire), one of the more popular routes on the crag. The climbing was consistently challenging with a variety of holds, moves and stances. The final fifty five metre pitch to the top was particularly challenging leaving us both in the upper end of 'stretch'! The penultimate day was

spent climbing back at S'Estret in order to take advantage of the widespread bouldering opportunities available above the main wall.

For the most part, we saved money by preparing packed lunches back at the villa and cooking dinner back at base. However, in celebration of OCdt Conway's birthday, with Valldemossa having little to offer out of season, we headed to the bright lights of Palma only a 20 minute drive away.

The wide variety of locations is definitely a benefit of climbing in Mallorca as there are areas to climb when the coastal areas are too exposed or winds are too high to climb in the mountains. Weather does not stop activity completely and each location holds options for climbers of all abilities. We would like to thank the AMA for its generous grant, and thoroughly recommend Mallorca as a low-cost, winter-sun climbing destination. The best times of year to go would probably be from October to November and March to April.

**Officer Cadet Nathanson**



# THE STREATHER AWARD

By Maj Cath Davies MBE TD

The Streather Award, named after our Honorary President, Lt Col (Retd) Tony Streather, one of the most exceptional British military mountaineers, was initiated to encourage exploratory mountaineering. It has been awarded twice, both times to the same expedition leader, and both times for trips to Greenland. Whilst WO1(ASM) Sam Marshall's first Greenland trip was to a previously visited area, the fact that he took novice climbers and went to an area that presented considerable logistical challenges as well as being relatively little known, meant it was the most adventurous and exploratory trip an AMA member undertook that year.

The fact that I, as the then Vice Chairman Mountaineering, promised him support for that trip on the understanding that he would use it as a recce to test the logistics to mount an expedition to an unexplored area of Greenland for AMA50 is little known, but true! As it turned out, I participated in the expedition as Sam's deputy leader and it fully lived up to all my expectations. My instincts that exploratory mountaineering is the way ahead for our Association, both in terms of challenging our members and ensuring continued support from the system, who only

fund Adventurous Training when it can be argued it prepares personnel for operations, were borne out to the full by that expedition. I hope you read Sam's article in the last Journal.

So that everyone can see what we are trying to encourage and achieve I have reproduced the Terms of Reference for the Streather Award below. I hope members will aspire to compete for this award in the future by planning exciting, exploratory expeditions to previously little visited regions.

## THE STREATHER AWARD - TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Streather Award will be awarded annually to any expedition including AMA members that meets the criteria of being suitably adventurous. If no expedition fulfils

the criteria, no award will be made.

With respect to AMA supported expeditions, closed or otherwise, the Expedition Secretary will initially identify expeditions that might meet the criteria when AMA members apply for grants and will notify the Vice Chairman (Mountaineering). They will discuss the suitability, seeking further details if necessary. The Vice Chairman will then send a précis of the plan to the Honorary Vice President who is heading up the Award Committee. This process should happen periodically throughout the year, with the PXR of the identified expedition(s) being forwarded by the Expedition Secretary to the Honorary Vice President and Vice Chairman. The award will only be made to expeditions that have taken place during the year preceding each AGM.

Early identification of adventurous undertakings, as envisaged here, will

also have the twin benefit of enabling assistance to be offered with preparation of High Risk/Remote presentations or other such requirements, increasing the chance of these enterprises coming to fruition.

Expeditions in which AMA members are participating, but for which they are not seeking financial support, can also be considered, but in this instance, the AMA member must submit an overview and then the PXR to the Expedition Secretary.

The criteria for judging such an award will, of necessity be both relative and subjective, but the factors considered might include:

Area - Exploratory nature, remoteness, number of previous visits, logistical information available.

Peak - Accessibility, route choice.

Route - Available documentation, seriousness of undertaking, number of previous attempts, technical difficulties.

Challenge - Weather conditions, length of time, logistics, overall commitment in terms of relative experience/ competence of the team.

The awards will be announced and made at the AGM. A board, on which names of the winning expeditions will be recorded, will be displayed at Indefatigable and a medal will be awarded to the expedition leader. The recipient will be expected to submit an article to the Journal.

Jo Williams in Greenland.

# "That's me!"

An outspoken supporter of the military in the climbing press recently, **ANDY KIRKPATRICK** tells **ARMY MOUNTAINEER** about life, climbing and his seat getting shiny.

**Please briefly explain your military connection.**

My Grandfather was in the Army and my dad (Pete Kirkpatrick) was in the RAF for most of his adult life, starting as a PTI and then doing 13 years in the Mountain Rescue as a team leader. My Brother Robin was a loadie in Hurcs for many years, having far more dangerous scrapes than me. He's now upgraded to C17s although I suspect he misses the seat of his pants adventures in Afghanistan.

**How would you describe your life and job description?**

You could say I'm a full time climber, which means I talk, write and take photos based on my climbs; it translates to very little climbing and lots of time sat behind computers. I'm currently writing my first book for Random House, the publishers of *Touching the Void*. This has already meant three months sitting in cafes getting fat and pushing up my word count (90,000 at the moment!).

**Where and when did you first start climbing?**

My Dad took me climbing from a very young age, and probably the first rock face was a climbing tower in Tywnn where my dad was an outdoor instructor at the Joint Services Centre.

**What is your favourite hill food?**

The 'American Burger' from Midnight Express on the Chamonix high street, after spending a week on a hard route.

**If you had to choose a route to do before you die, what route would it be?**

A winter ascent of Mount Vinson in Antarctica; It is the hardest climb that will probably never be done.



Andy Kirkpatrick. Thinking about the now.

**What one route should everyone climb before they die?**

Anything on El Cap, there is no piece of rock finer; climbing it will change your life. It is also doable by anyone – once on it though most people realise its not what they want.

**What piece of gear always or never goes on your rack?**

I've lost so much over the years on big retreats that I've never really become attached to any one piece of gear, but I suppose it would be super small wire gate krabs.

**What is the essence of climbing?**

Climbing, or at least the type of climbing that I do is all about not knowing; not knowing if you will be able to do it, not knowing what lies around

the corner and not knowing what the future brings. The essence of climbing is about not knowing the outcome.

**What skill should every man have?**

The ability to go easy on themselves once in a while; try to imagine you are someone you care about.

**What one thing should everyman know about women?**

That they are stronger than men, they just don't know it.

**What was the most cherished possession you ever lost?**

My boot on the Frenedo Spur in winter!!! It was my first alpine route; luckily after abseiling down I found it on top of a pile of avalanche debris.

**What is the greatest honour you ever received?**

Being able to make a living out of something I love doing.

**Are there any funny mountain stories that you wish to share?**

Bloody hell there are about three books worth of those! How about climbing El Cap with three complete novices, one being my paraplegic girlfriend Karen Darke (who I skied across Greenland with in 06) and two Aussie women who were a couple?!

**Your top tip for climbing?**

Don't think about the end, think about the now.

Read the full El Cap story and more at [www.psychovertical.com](http://www.psychovertical.com)

*"Climb When Ready!"*



# PsychoVertical.com



# next edition...

**motivation**

**the perfect rack**

**mount aiguille**

**gear giveaway**

**that's me**

**Sir Chris Bonnington**

**photo comp**