

ARMY MOUNTAINEER



Summer 2011 The 'Inn Pin' | Grand Canyon | Gaz Parry | Trekking in Bolivia



The Journal of the Army Mountaineering Association

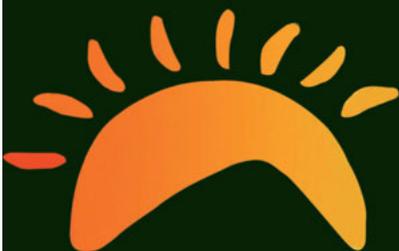
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ARMY MOUNTAINEER

The Journal of The Army Mountaineering Association



LIFE ON THE LEDGE

Clearly running out of jokes; this edition we scrape the bottom of the PC barrel for our 'alternative' view on all things mountaineering.

Q. What's the hardest bit about Sports Climbing?
A. Telling your parents you're gay.

Q. What's the difference..... between boulderers and guerrillas?
A. Guerrillas have social skills.

Q. What's the difference..... between members of UKC and a snake?
A. One is soft, dry and scaly, and the other one eats mice.

Q. What does sport climbing and cross dressing have in common?
A. It makes you feel good until you look down and realise you're gay.

TOP REASONS CLIMBING IS BETTER THAN SEX...

1. There is a choice of novice and expert routes.
2. A climb can last all day.
3. Guidebooks tell you who was there first.
4. You can pick the length and diameter of your rope.
5. There is always someone backing you up in case you fall off.
6. You can leave your protection behind for the next guy.
7. Its not considered kinky to wear a harness.
8. The only rubber you wear is on your feet.

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On the cover: High Altitude trekking in Bolivia.

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www.ArmyMountaineer.org.uk

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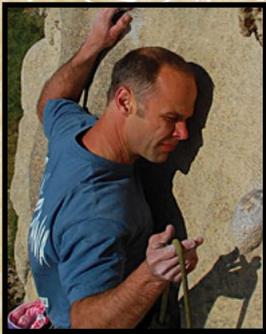
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Foreword

By Lt Col Cath Davies MBE

Another year of outstanding achievements have epitomised our Association; in the first instance we have gained our first sponsor of the Association, Towergate Wilson, as opposed to having sponsors for specific events or expeditions. Whilst we are very grateful to our current sponsors who support our Sport Climbing Competitions, DMM and Cotswold Outdoor, and we have had numerous sponsors who have assisted individual expeditions, sponsorship of the Association is something we hope we can build on and grow.

The success of our exploratory mountaineering expedition to India, Ex TIGER KARAKORAM, cannot be overstated. The team, ably lead by Matt Hing, not only gained a first ascent but also re-energised our relationship with the Indian Army Mountaineering Association to such an extent that they are inviting us to participate in a joint venture with them, an expedition later this year. Matt has done all the ground work for this, but we need not only volunteers but also a leader, so if you fit either category, speak to Matt.

You will see in future editions of this magazine more articles about the Cadet Force. Expeditions to Everest Base Camp and Island Peak to name just two. This increase in activity is partly due to the new Cadet Centre for Adventurous Training now established at Capel Curig; we also intend to cover this establishment in greater

detail soon. As an Association, we are trying to attract Cadets and Adult Instructors to become AMA members; we are all part of the same family on the hill and the younger they join, the more likely we will be able to beat the other Services at the Combined Services Sport Climbing Championships!

Training, fundraising and planning for the British Services Antarctic Expedition continues apace; this is a project of many moving parts and substantial challenges. We are very fortunate that our own Vice Chairman Mountaineering, Paul Edwards, has stood up to the plate to lead, despite having a very busy day job. This Joint Service expedition is an Army lead, so it is up to us to make it happen, and I am very grateful to all our members who are contributing.

Lastly, I cannot sign off this foreword without bringing to your attention that Sven Hassall is standing down as Journal Editor. I am sure you will all agree he has done a superb job in this post, but what some of you will not be aware of is his outstanding contribution to other areas of AMA activity. He led our 50th Anniversary expedition to Lotus Flower Tower and has been an assiduous contributor to Meets, putting his MIA qualification to good use in assisting AMA members to develop their skills. He is redeploying his energies to a growing family, but I'm sure we will still see him on the hill.

Editorial

You will have noticed the change in editor and I hope to continue the excellence that Sven has brought to putting this magazine together for longer than I can remember. It is business as usual from me, and I look forward to receiving your well crafted articles and HD photos! My passion is the Alps and, while at 53 I am generally last off the hill, I can at least give you hope for your mountaineering future.

Amid more challenging times in the Army you will find much to brighten your day in this edition. This is a club of highly committed people which allows us to access the full range of mountaineering activity at a standard second to none. And this is a tempo of activity that the Club intends to sustain. So there is undoubted opportunity for all limited only by your imagination!

But as we all tighten our belts, it is worth reminding ourselves of the benefits of the AMA: subscriptions, at £15 annually, are remarkably good value before you even consider the generous discounts from many outdoor companies (see Page 4) and the

substantial expedition grants available to the bold. But good communication is vital to the work of the AMA and the magazine is one of the best ways to get our message out there to Army mountaineers. What you put into the magazine is key not only to report your wide ranging successes but also to inspire those who follow. So step into the limelight for the Winter Edition – no subject is off limits provided it can hold its readership, has a link to mountaineering and is well illustrated. Also, remember that, as AMA members, this is your magazine. So get in touch and let us know what you think, what's good, what's bad and what's missing.

As I put the finishing touches to this piece I read that there has been a heavy snowfall in the Alps – it going to be an interesting summer. Good climbing wherever you are in the next couple of months and remember *"It is not the mountain we conquer but ourselves"* (Edmund Hillary).

John

PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

The AMA recognises that climbing and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions.

Many of the discounts that retailers offer our members have recently been renegotiated and despite the economic hardship that the industry is currently facing, we continue to enjoy excellent support from leading manufacturers and retailers of equipment and clothing. Please see details below and note that these businesses do have access (securely) to the AMA membership database and will know if you're a paid up member. They will request you AMA number when you order. The businesses retain the right to refuse these discounts.

Cotswold Outdoor

20% discount in-store on production of AMA Card

Summit Mountaineering

Summit run a whole range of walking, scrambling and climbing courses from their bases in the Wye Valley and Snowdonia; they specialise in learn to lead and technical development. 20% discount to all AMA members and their families. Call 07896 947 557 info@summitmountaineering.com quoting AMA number.
www.summitmountaineering.com

PHD / (Pete Hutchinson Designs)

POC – Emma Harris, can be contacted on 01423 781133 or via the e-mail address. PHD offer a 25% discount off all standard items to the AMA.
http://www.phdesigns.co.uk/index.php

Beyond Hope – Evolv, Metolius, Prana and Rock Technologies

POC – Lee or Rick 01457 838242
Trade price + VAT + carriage deal to all members of the AMA.
www.beyondhope.co.uk

DMM, Crux, Lightwave and Mammut Ropes

Trade price + VAT + carriage deal to all members of the AMA
POC – 01286 873580 Anne Rhodes or Katrina Spinney.

Montane

POC – Kris Carrick 01670 522300 x 210 kris@montane.co.uk
UK Pro Price List for AMA Members applies. All orders must be via the Montane Customer Order Form.
www.montane.co.uk

Paramo

A new scheme is now in place whereby the mountaineering qualifications and or experience of an individual are assessed by Paramo and then turned in to a sliding scale of discounts within their Pro User scheme. As this is a scheme which treats each applicant individually you need to speak to Paramo personally – Alex Beaumont via +44 (0) 1892 786446.

Millets

Most High Streets have one – 10% off with AMA card and your MOD90

Blacks

Most High Streets have one of these too – 10% off with AMA card and your MOD90 Mountain Equipment (via Magic Mountain shop in Glossop) – 20% discount. Phone Magic Mountain on 0161 3665020 ask for mail order department, quoting your AMA number.

Terra Nova

They now operate a system similar to Paramo whereby AMA members need to contact the company direct and set up a Pro User account via password. When you then re-log in to the Terra Nova site the price list will auto adjust to reflect your discount. Magic !!
info@terra-nova.co.uk
+44 (0) 1773 833300
Helen at the AMA Office via

If you have any issues with the scheme, or know of any other companies willing to offer discount to the AMA, please drop me a line.

Lastly, a reminder, please only use these discounts for personal purchases only!

Tomo Thompson

*Public Relations and Recruitment Officer
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GEAR GIVEAWAY

CU Belay Glasses can minimise or completely eliminate 'Belayers Neck', and reduce the impact of belaying on pre-existing back and neck conditions.

Their innovative design allows you to view your climbing partner above, whilst looking straight ahead. This ensures relief from the pain and discomfort that many experience whilst belaying.

CU belay glasses are used all over the world by recreational climbers and professionals alike – for belaying, studying routes, and by competition judges. They give a very clear non-inverted view through optical quality, scratch resistant lenses mounted on a robust stainless steel frame. Designed and manufactured in Germany specifically for the needs of climbers, the CU can be used in combination with prescription glasses, sunglasses and a climbing helmet.

The glasses normally retail for £95 and can be purchased from www.cubelayglasses.co.uk but CU have donated a pair to ARMY

MOUNTAINEER for the first correct answer from a sweaty sticky to the following question:

Q. What does the CU prism do that a mirror can't?

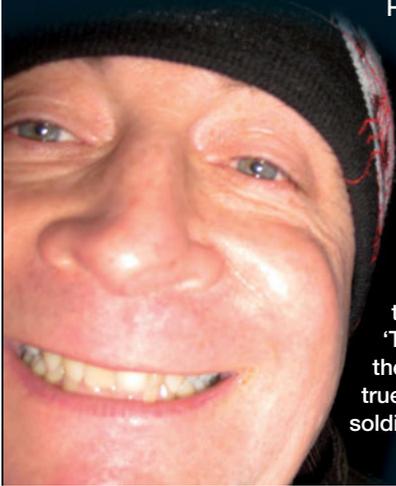


BERGHEIL – JOHN BELSHAM RIP

It is with great sadness that I have to report that John Belsham, one of the greatest protagonists of the Association for the last decade passed away recently.

Born 31st July 1962, John grew up in South London where he discovered his love for music and the early Rockabilly scene.

He joined the TA for two years before enlisting in The Queen's Regiment that he was so fiercely proud of, (later rebadged The Princess of Wales' Royal Regiment). John gave 25 years' service to the crown and despite his humility (giving himself the title 'Belshmong' and 'The world's worst driver – the later arguably being true!), was no average soldier; enjoying an



unparalleled reputation in his unit and receiving a GOC's commendation for actions during operations in Northern Ireland.

Most of us will know John from the Winter Meet that he selflessly organised for seven years in his adopted home of Scotland, over which time, he quite incredibly qualified more people with the Winter Mountaineering Proficiency award than the whole of the Joint Services Mountaineering Scheme! It is for his friendship, deep trust and loyalty however that he will be remembered by those of us fortunate to share great experiences and adventures with him; and of course the bright yellow toolbox full of spices, cooking paraphernalia and the occasional scotch whiskey that he took with him everywhere! His funeral saw a church with standing room only and a quiet graveyard packed by damp-eyed tough guys and mountaineers from all corners of life.

A Winter ML and International Mountain Leader, John spent the last year of his life travelling around the Alps with his Fiancé Gillian in a bright red camper he affectionately called The Red Baron. He leaves behind his parents Val and Trevor, a brother Kenny and many many friends.

*Farewell to the Highlands, farewell to the North,
The birth-place of Valour, the country of Worth;
Wherever I wander, wherever I rove,
The hills of the Highlands for ever I love.*

DIARY

Mark and record the following dates and get involved. Further details where not stated can be obtained through the Meets Co-ordinator (Barry Whale) and will be on the website closer to the time. We are always looking for people to help organize meets. If you feel you could contribute, please contact the Meets Co-ordinator.

25–26th May 11

Army Climbing Champs

Awesome Walls, Liverpool. See DIN 2011DIN10-020
Contact: Mike Smith 94555 8127

27–30th May 11

Spring Meet

A long weekend of the best of the Lake District.
Contact: Meets Co-ordinator

24–26th June 11

AGM Weekend

The association's Annual General Meeting will again take place at Indi. The bar will be open, tall tales will be told and the ship steered for another year; oh and of course a great weekend of all the pleasures Snowdonia has to offer.
Contact: Matt Hing amagensec@armymail.mod.uk

July TBC

Army Climbing Team Trg

Portland
Contact: Pete Skinsley amavicechairsport@armymail.mod.uk

23–24th July 11

Wye Valley Meet

Author of the local guidebook and first ascensionist of more than a few local routes, Sven Hassall will be showing us the best of what the area has to offer.
Contact: Sven 94475 5652

20 Aug –30th Sept 11

Ex INDIAN TIGER

Applications are wanted for this exciting joint Indian Army and British Army expedition to the Garwhal area of India. This will be exploratory mountaineering to the unclimbed peak of Shri Parbat (6145m). Recruiting is on-going for 8 x AMA members to form an experienced and balanced team. If you are up for the challenge of exploratory mountaineering please contact Matt Hing for an application form on amagensec@armymail.mod.uk
The initial meet will be over the AMA AGM weekend 25 & 26 Jun. The main training event will be during JSAM - see relevant DIN.

26–30th Aug 11

Pembroke Meet

Pembroke – no further explanation needed!
Contact: Ollie Noakes 07714285110

TBC Sept

Army Climbing Team training weekend

Wrexham

5th Oct 11

Inter Services Climbing Champs

The Castle, London. Army team to be selected at the Army Champs.
Contact: Pete Skinsley 94214 5547

8–9th Oct 11)

Autumn Meet

Peak District. Details TBC,
Contact: Volunteer needed

Nov TBC

European Military Climbing Champs

Austria.
Contact: Pete Skinsley 94214 5547

15–16th Oct 11

British Lead Climbing Champs

EICA Ratho, Edinburgh
Contact: Pete Skinsley 94214 5547

31st Oct 11

Belgian Military Climbing Champs

Puurs, Belgium.
Contact: Pete Skinsley 94214 5547

27 Dec 11–3rd Jan 12

Winter Meet

Details TBC.
Contact: Volunteer needed

Oct 11 – Feb 12

Tri-Service Bouldering League

Dates and venues TBC in next edition.

Details at www.ArmyMountaineer.org.uk

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations go to the winners of the Autumn 10 Gear Giveaway; the names pulled from a chalk bag were:

NoRinse

John Muston wins a NoRinse 'Survival Kit' containing a number of unique products designed around the outdoor enthusiast.

www.norinse.co.uk

For the rest us, NoRinse have kindly offered a 10% discount on all purchases. Please offer the discount code AM221 when ordering on the internet or by calling 0844 90 888.



Mountain Fuel

Mountain fuel very kindly donated three of their Weekend Packs to keep AMA members fuelled; the winners, who should be running longer and faster the next time you see them are: Henry Crosby, Mike Enever and Barry Whale.

www.mountainfuel.co.uk



Map and Compass Outdoors

One of the most generous reviews and competition prizes we have ever received at ARMY MOUNTAINEER has been donated by the outdoor enthusiasts at Map and Compass Outdoors. They are well placed to do, being one of the country's leading suppliers of Mountain Equipment products. In the Autumn 10 edition they very kindly donated a top of the range ME Morpheus Jacket worth over £220!

The lucky winner, Sam Marshall is now praying for rain.

www.mapandcompassoutdoors.com



BOULDERS SALUTE THE TROOPS

Boulders have joined forces with Tickets for Troops to support the Armed Forces by donating Climbing Taster Sessions to our military hero helpers. Tickets for Troops is 'a charity dedicated to offering free tickets for big events to our soldiers, sailors and airmen'. All military personnel including veterans will have the opportunity to book onto a free Climbing Taster Session at Boulders Indoor Climbing Centre, Cardiff.

"At boulders we want people to climb more and we thought this would be the perfect opportunity to offer our troops a fun way to unwind with their family and friends", said Robert Lawrence, Managing Director of Boulders.

"It is important to look after our military personnel and endorse them by offering a fun activity that they can get involved with outside of military life, something they can do with their family and friends. You don't need me to tell you that life in the services can be stressful enough especially with increasingly long breaks away from their loved ones. A Climbing Taster Session offers our military personnel the opportunity to take their minds off work and relax in a fun and friendly environment".

For more information and to find out how to get involved go to www.boulders-climbing.com.



WANTED LODGE SNCO – Haus Magnus in Bavaria

HQ ATG(G) is looking for a SNCO to manage Haus Magnus in Bavaria from the end of 2011. The successful applicant would have a strong military ethos and an ability to support diverse groups during their AT exercises. The individual would ideally enjoy participating in AT and perhaps hold some AT qualifications; but that is secondary to the core role of managing AT exercise personnel.

Additional responsibilities will involve protecting the goodwill within the local community and preserving training locations from overuse and abuse.

The applicant must have an understanding of G1, G4, welfare, general troop/platoon management and discipline. Recent operational experience would benefit the post holder.

The posting is accompanied with appropriate quartering provided, but there are no English schools in the area and applicants must consider carefully the challenges of living in a Bavarian ISODET. This is a fabulous opportunity to live and work in a different and challenging environment.

Interested persons, with their commanders approval should contact the 2IC ATG(G) on 94879 2889 by 15 Jul 11 to register their interest.

THE END IS NIGH – WINTER THAT IS!

£175
ARTICLE

By Mark Gregory

As I sit here in my hotel I contemplate what lay ahead. It's the dying embers of March. The snow remains but not for long. As the temperature rises in what is promised to be a pleasant spring week I wonder how much longer winter will truly serenade us. I still consider myself a novice winter mountaineer and make no claims to the contrary. 2 years ago I struggled with my fellow students to find sufficient snow to complete our Winter Mountain Proficiency; since then I have accumulated the odd quality mountain day in an effort to further my experience in this glorious wonderland. And so, I'm here at the Hilton Coylumbridge just outside Aviemore contemplating what lay ahead. There is a plan: It involves snow, the majestic Cairngorms and an enthusiasm that pulsates through me every time leave is on the cards. A drive and determination that, despite my years of hill time, still surprises me; but I digress.

Where was I? Oh yeah – the plan! The intent was simple; more winter experience with perhaps a score to settle. Over Christmas 2010 I ventured into the Larig Ghru, it was meant to be my 'break in' to the season and it certainly broke me. At the time there was a lull in two quite aggressive low pressure systems sweeping west from the Baltic and Siberia. Fresh snow came quickly and in abundance, and coupled with extensive drift it deepened. The wind roared with all the subtlety of rabid Alsatian bringing temperatures of -10°C spitting powder in the face with avid insolence. The walk in was hard; the walk out was torturous. Every other step forward was a step into the unknown. Ankle deep here – thigh deep there; a personal battle that would bring the toughest of men to their knees. As it happens that is where I spent most my time beyond the Pools of Dee and there were



Sheltering from the wind on Beinn Mheadhoin

stretches when crawling was the only viable option, but I made it; stronger and wiser if not a little scarred. Lesson learnt: next time travel lighter! No bulky tent (just in case the bothy is full) and definitely no creature comforts. Just the bare essentials with perhaps some light entertainment for the prolonged hours of darkness. On review the intent this time was to gain that experience but with less hardship. The score would have to be settled another day. On this occasion the adventure would have to be driven by fun and nothing else. The following day's target

would be Sgor Gaoith and Mullach Clach a Bhlair from Glen Freshie separated by a night in a wild camp. With the tent despatched and only a sleeping/bivvy bag as my humble abode, accommodation would be a snow cave. Why? As a crazy meerkat once said – its simples!

The following morning commenced with a stroll up from Auchlean in Glen Freshie in fine weather as a high pressure system slowly inched its way across the UK.





Sunshine & Shadow



Summit of The Devil's Point

Snow cover was non-existent at valley level and it wasn't until attaining the 700m contour alongside the Allt Fhearnagan that the white glory embraced the barren landscape. The going was easy in some tightly bonded snow and it wasn't long before the saddle beneath Carn Ban Mor was achieved. A sharp left turn followed in what were now cloudy and windy conditions. At this altitude the cloud was evidently in command and shrouded the mountains in its confusing haze. Onwards and upwards to Carn Ban Mor more heavily clothed than before. The wind bit and the cloud demanded precision of map and compass. Thankfully the task was not too challenging and Sgor Gaoith was bagged with little difficulty. Hand-railing my footprints I backtracked to Carn Ban Mor in continuing clag. The next task was to locate a suitable drift in which to dig in. My route took me north of Coire Garbhach and towards the Coachan Dubh, a small stream with high-sided banks were I planned to camp. With worrying convenience I found a suitable location immediately and having probed the drift for depth and hardness I began to

dig. From the outset I had a clear image of what was to be constructed; a snow cave fit for royalty. After an hour and a half of digging I settled for the pauper's equivalent! The snow was indeed consolidated and well bonded. All that said the end result was a suitably sized living and sleeping areas which provided excellent shelter for the long Scottish night.

Morning came quite slowly and the reflection of sunlight throughout my purl white haven was gratefully received. I arose to yet more Scottish clag. The sun had risen sufficiently to provide light but was a long way off clearing the low laying cloud that blanketed the heights in a mysterious veil. Breakfast consumed, the situation had failed to change so naturally, with poor visibility and damp air, I went back to bed. One hour further on and still the sun had not dispersed the saturated air that engulfed my winter refuge - I 'manned-up'. The boots were fitted, the kit stowed and I was on my way to Mullach Clach a Bhlair. Ascending from a snow filled depression with blatant evidence of an overnight thaw I was amazed to summit a

peak liberated of snow. The strong south westerly winds of the preceding days had taken their toll and the summit of Mullach Clach a Bhlair had been blown bare. A moment was taken to mull over the journey thus far and then it was back in to Glen Freshie, skirting Coire Domhain. The descent was more snow compliant and a wonder downstream took me past the swollen River Freshie where a bridge once stood at Carnachuin (washed away in late 2009 apparently) and brought me to the end of an invigorating mini-expedition.

They say that no plan survives first contact with the enemy and this proved evident as I set off for another overnigher. It would appear that the Funicular Railway gladly accepted those who ski, the tourist or those who wish to walk the last few hundred metres to the summit but as for the mountaineer who wishes to walk off the mountain - no service is provided. Biting my bottom lip with much venom and desperately suppressing my desire to strangle the Sales not-very-Assistant, I commenced the partial





Chilling



Descending to Loch Avon

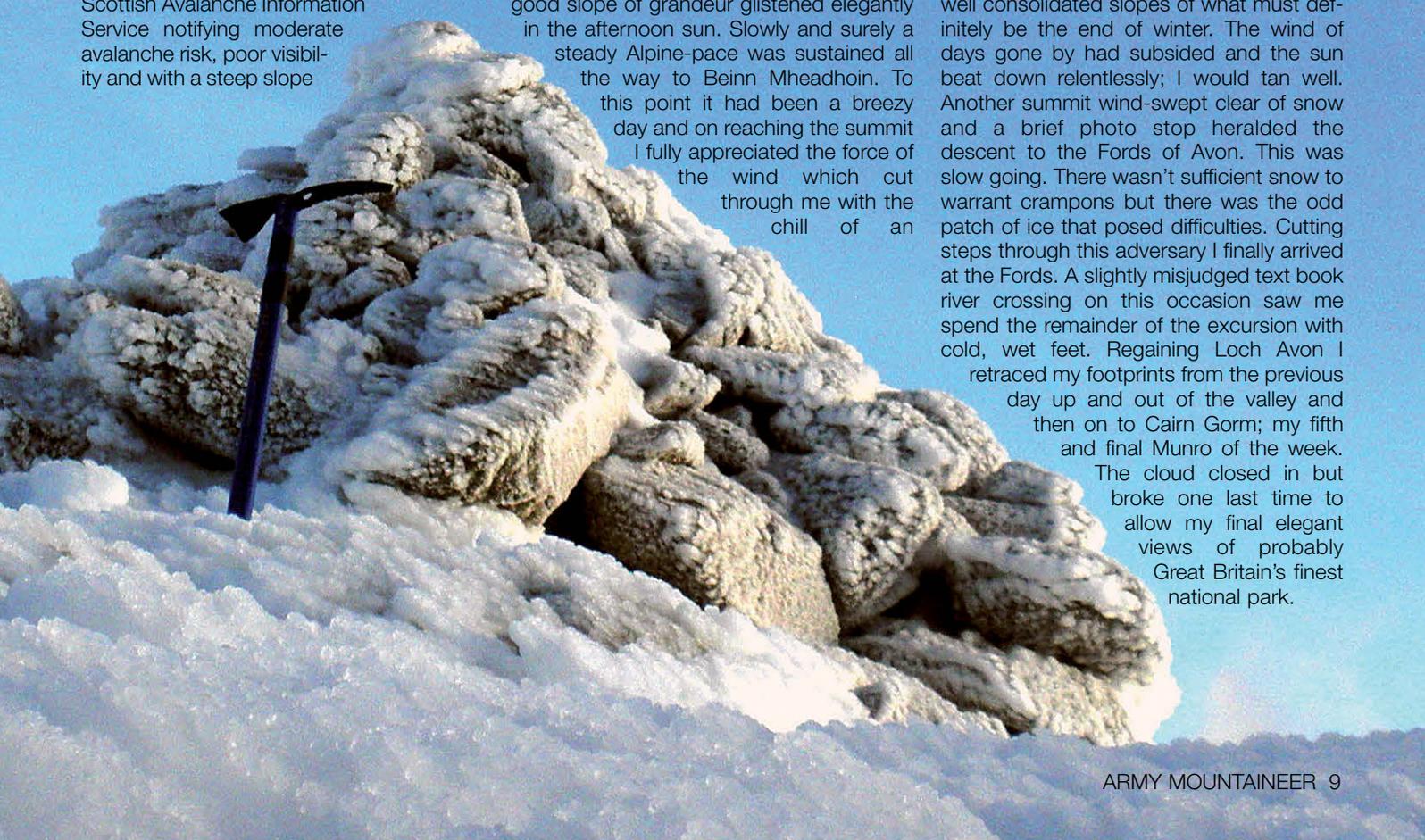
ascent of Cairn Gorm to the mountain restaurant adding a few extra kilometres and 550m of climb. As it would happen this delay would cost me my final target Munro for the day, but not all was lost as Cairn Gorm would be bagged in its place on the return journey. The relatively easy plod up to the Ptarmigan in the shadows of mankind's environmental impact was not without incident as I was fortunate enough to witness the presence of the avian creatures which had, unbeknown to them, given their name to the Funicular's final destination. It was at this point that crampons were fitted and ice axe deployed as the snow conditions that lay ahead were unknown to me. With the Scottish Avalanche Information Service notifying moderate avalanche risk, poor visibility and with a steep slope

beckoning I favoured the side of caution. The descent to Loch Avon was completed in good time on plentiful snow. The Loch itself, although predominantly frozen was evidently in thaw. River levels were up and currents were sufficiently fast to raise the odd eyebrow. An almost text book, pole assisted river crossing taught me a few lessons; if it's deep – take your boots off; take your time (there's no point rushing it and getting it wrong); and roll your trousers all the way up. Bare-footed and graceless but under control I made the other side albeit with soggy pantaloons.

With boots and crampons re-applied a good slope of grandeur glistened elegantly in the afternoon sun. Slowly and surely a steady Alpine-pace was sustained all the way to Beinn Mheadhoin. To this point it had been a breezy day and on reaching the summit I fully appreciated the force of the wind which cut through me with the chill of an

Antarctic swim. The rocky peak conquered, it was all downhill to the Hutchison memorial hut in Glen Derry for a night stop bothy-style. The plan had originally been to scoot up to Derry Cairngorm but this had to be abandoned until another visit. Following a beautifully starlit night where Orion and Gemini dominated the ionosphere with such majestic presence I awoke early to complete my second mini-adventure.

Heading north out of Glen Derry, Lairig an Laoigh was the turning point at which the ascent of Beinn a Chaorainn began. The previous days' excursions were taking their toll and I unhurriedly made my way up still well consolidated slopes of what must definitely be the end of winter. The wind of days gone by had subsided and the sun beat down relentlessly; I would tan well. Another summit wind-swept clear of snow and a brief photo stop heralded the descent to the Fords of Avon. This was slow going. There wasn't sufficient snow to warrant crampons but there was the odd patch of ice that posed difficulties. Cutting steps through this adversary I finally arrived at the Fords. A slightly misjudged text book river crossing on this occasion saw me spend the remainder of the excursion with cold, wet feet. Regaining Loch Avon I retraced my footprints from the previous day up and out of the valley and then on to Cairn Gorm; my fifth and final Munro of the week. The cloud closed in but broke one last time to allow my final elegant views of probably Great Britain's finest national park.



“SALEHANTLE”

(Go well) IN SOUTH AFRICA

CADET FORCE 150th ANNIVERSARY EXPEDITION

Lyndsey Wilson, RLC

In truth this HQ Land Forces sponsored expedition involved neither snowy arêtes nor glacial crevasses. The precipitous cliff edges of the Drakensburg escarpment and for some, the 200m abseil, did however raise a few teenage hairs! The 6 Army Team Instructors/Leaders (amongst other tri-service staff) tasked with co-ordinating 60 joint Cadet Force youngsters from across the UK on an expeditious high altitude, remote trekking enjoyed considerable support from the AMA. HRH Prince Harry as the Expeditions' Patron, also supported the 4 Teams of Cadets to also undertake different projects in Lesotho, funded by his Charity, Sentabale.

Participation alone would be challenging enough but cadets also had to undertake a selection and training process and raise in excess of £1000 each to attend. This was before challenging treks in the

Drakensburg mountains, Battlefield studies, project work and inevitable acclimatisation to a completely different cultural experience as well as a higher altitude.

There were some harrowing moments co-ordinating 60 enthusiastic, thrusting teenagers onto a single Virgin Atlantic flight to Johannesburg, but somehow we all arrived intact into the bowels of South Africa (SA) on 27th July 2010. 4 Teams of 15 cadets then proceeded first to a base at Em'seni near Ladysmith where extensive pre-training and prep took place to ensure all would maximise the opportunities and that all emergencies and eventualities were covered for what was an extremely complex turnaround of activities, plus a complete vortex of teenage clothing and kit!

The local Battlefield site of Spienkop, provided an excellent warm up climb and a

sobering understanding of the Boer/British conflicts not really so long ago. This was followed by all teams, in double relay, attending a bush awareness period at Weenan Reserve; a wild outback camp amongst the black and white rhino and many other renowned African wild animals. One rhino and calf at the trot, got a tad close to our rear vehicle for the CO and my yell to the front driver to speed up was genuine enough and caught on video!!

With a variety of transport, it was a long and dusty drive and a whole new 4x4 driving experience for me, into Lesotho; to commence the Sentabale funded projects. Two teams reported to Semonkong via Maseru, where Team 1 based from a Catholic Mission, built a bridge over the river, painted buildings inside and out and made building repairs. Team 3 meanwhile, based from a Children's Orphanage nearby, also undertook extensive repair work and decorating at the Orphanage. Team 4, based in Pitseng, worked on a primary school for orphans and disabled children, building wheelchair ramps, playground renovation and teaching school lessons. Myself with Team 2, were based in Mokhotlong undertaking gardening, painting and mural work for a Support Centre with babies affected principally by AIDs.

Given no team was based less than 2500m above sea level, everyone took time to acclimatise, undertaking day treks into the surrounding mountains. We cracked a local peak, Libbing at 3050m, with no ill effects, as preparation for our ultimate trek out of





Lesotho to the SA Border via the highest peak south of Kilimanjaro.

All teams conducted a multi day expedition; from the start however, Team 2 realised we had the cream of goals. Well'ard, we had no donkeys (unlike others) to carry the exped sacks and having completed our project in Mokhotlong we commenced a 4 day expedition into the Lesotho wilderness. In sum-

mer this area suffers the typical African heat and 'the rains', now, in the African winter it is exposed to an arid dryness combined with fierce Drakensburg winds; at 3000m above sea level this makes for some extreme temperatures which quickly saw duvet jackets coming out at every evening campsite. The Cairngorms at any time of year springs to mind!!

From Molumong on Day 1 we followed the River Sakeng almost to its source, risking a lower campsite to ensure a water source but ergo adding more height gain for the next day. Day 2, a further 12kms and another 600m of ascent across endless saddles and plateaus. The 2nd campsite at 3285m and -16 degrees C temperatures was...chilly! Day 3, we ascended the final 167m to summit Thabana Ntlenyana at 3452m with extensive views out to the Drakensburg escarpment including the Giants Castle and Hodgsons' Peak and down into a hazy SA. We descended to overnight at the Sani Pass bunkhouse and a welcome meal and beer (shhhh! don't tell the parents), at the Sani hotel before the final hike down the hairpin bends to the Border next day.



All teams re-assembled back at Em'seni before moving on to Elandseind and battlefield studies of Isandlwana, the Fugitives Trail and finally Rourke's Drift. The CO's risk assessment has yet to establish whether the treks were more hazardous than the evening team games of 'fireball hockey' in the pitch black – a few singed leg hairs! Certainly the Cadets took the entire expedition in their stride and were the wiser for experiencing the abject poverty coupled with a very genuine Lesotho and SA welcome. It took some to their limits, past them and they picked them back up on the way back to J'burg airport. As the Basutu say 'Salehantle' (Go well). Me..... I'm still watching for that rhino!!!

On 4th June 2010, 12 members of 25 Engineer Regiment embarked on Ex DRAGON CONDOR PANTHER, a 25 day high altitude mountaineering expedition to the Bolivian and Chilean Andes. The concept for the expedition was straightforward; to take a group of novice mountaineers (excluding instructors) high altitude mountaineering in a remote location.

It was decided that the expedition was to be centred on the Bolivian Andes as this region would provide a suitably remote area. The expedition would be ran jointly by Lts Jez Somodi and Damo Warren; Lt Somodi was the OIC and Lt Warren the 2IC/instructor. Running the expedition jointly between two Troop Commanders proved to be a wise decision later down the line, given the amount of work associated with organising an expedition of this nature, particularly when trying to organise it during what proved to be a very busy training year.

Once both the Sqn and Regt had given approval, the expedition leaders gave a presentation to the High Risk and Remote (HR&R) panel to demonstrate that enough thought and mitigation had been given to minimise the associated risks. Following the presentation the panel recommended that all members attain the Winter Mountain Proficiency (WMP) qualification if they did not already have it. Furthermore, the panel insisted that a 'Plan B' should be made, which should plan to attempt peaks of lower altitude as it was deemed that the original itinerary might prove to be a little over-ambitious.

Taking on all of the recommendations from the HR&R panel, the final plan involved a period of acclimatisation in Bolivia's Capital, La Paz (3700m), followed by attempting three peaks of increasing altitude before endeavouring to tackle Nevado Sajama, Bolivia's highest mountain at 6524m. The backup plan, which would be called into play should the group not be acclimatising adequately, involved attempting mountains of less height.

With the full support of the Joint Service Mountain Training Centre, whose Training Officer sat on the HR&R panel, individuals who were selected to become members of the expedition team were loaded onto various WMP courses. The course covered the basics of moving above the snowline, methods of ice axe arrest and the construction of emergency shelters, including spending a night in a snow cave. As part of the build-up to the main expedition, the team also descended on the Scottish Highlands for two 48hr training weekends, with the focus being on building up the physical stamina of the group and, more importantly, so Lt Warren could do some 'Munro bagging'.

On the 5th of June, after 24 hours of travel, the group finally landed in La Paz. As the world's highest capital city, at 3700m, some of members of the group began to show symptoms of the gain in altitude almost immediately; sporadic nosebleeds, headaches and general lethargy were prevalent. From here the expedition was split into three phases; an initial week long acclimatisation phase in La Paz, followed by a further week long phase to the Cordillera Real mountain range in the north of Bolivia, and then the final eight-day phase to the Occidental region on the Bolivian-Chilean border.

During the first phase the group conducted a number of acclimatisation treks around La Paz. There was also the opportunity to conduct a cultural visit to the Inca ruins at Tiwanaku, near Lake Titicaca, and a further cultural visit to the infamous midget wrestling which takes place every Sunday afternoon in La Paz. The week also allowed the expedition leaders the opportunity to sort out some administration, such as sourcing transport and food for the next phase.

The group departed to the Cordillera Real mountain range to conduct Phase 2 of the expedition. Transport was via a pri-



HIGH ALTITUDE TREKKING, BOLIVIA





Spr Pluskota ascending the mixed North West ridge



The group (L-R Lt Somodi, Spr Settle, LCpl Simcock and Spr Pluskota) on the Janco Huyo summit (5512m)

vately hired minibus complete with driver who, contrary to what we were told in La Paz, had no idea of where we were going and spoke no English. After a roundabout trip the group arrived at their base camp location by lake Janco Cota. After a day spent acclimatising and practising some crevasse rescue techniques, the group attempted their first peak, Wila Llojeta (5244m). It proved a straightforward climb consisting of a scree ridge followed by a short glacial climb to the summit. The peak did however claim the first victim of the trip; Spr 'Fos' Foster went 'man-down' on the descent and on return to the base camp it was assessed that the group, less Spr Foster, would be fit to attempt to climb Janco Huyo (5512m) the following day.

Following an early breakfast the group set off in its two separate rope teams. One would attempt to summit along the East Ridge and the other along the South. Following a long day the team on the East Ridge successfully summited Janco Huyo which afforded some excellent views across the Cordillera Real and down into the low lying jungle region of Bolivia. As they ascended, the team attempting the peak from the south found that they could not access Janco Huyo and so opted to ascend the nearby Jancha Pata (5424m) instead. Unfortunately Sprs Coe and Johnson were both suffering the effects of altitude sickness, and neither of them were able to complete the final 150m to the summit.

The teams descended back to base camp for a final night before heading back to La Paz to reorganise. On return to La Paz it was decided that due to the number of altitude victims

'plan B' would be brought in to play. This involved travelling into Chile to climb Volcan Guallatiri (6068m), a peak of lower altitude than was originally planned, before moving back into Bolivia to attempt Nevado Sajama. With the new plan set into motion the various administrative tasks were divvied up amongst the group to facilitate the Phase 3.

With all the administration complete the group set off for Chile in two heavily laden 4x4's. After a night stopover en-route the group crossed the border into Chile and made the short trip the base camp of Volcan Guallatiri. After setting up camp the group settled in for a few hours sleep before a 0300 wake-up to attempt the peak. Just after getting into their doss-bags a large rock-fall nearby had everyone up and alarmed; after inspection however, it was decided that unless it happened again we would stay put. The following morning the group set-off in its separate teams and again the teams would suffer mixed fortunes. After four hours one team had to turn around for safety reasons, as they found themselves high up an unstable volcanic slope. The other team made it to the top, however, it proved to be an extremely arduous climb given the difficult terrain, summed up by Spr Coe declaring, in his dulcet Bradford tones, "it was the hardest thing I've ever f-ing done!"

Following mixed success in Chile, the group crossed back into Bolivia and had a rest day in the village of Sajama. There was a lot of organising to do as mules would be required to transport food and equipment from the village to the base camp of Volcan Sajama, and from there porters would be required for



the move to high camp. It was clear that three members of the group would not be able to even attempt the climb so they would stay put in the village. Even so, a guide would still be required, not least to show the route but also to keep the ratios of instructors to climbers at 1:2 on the ropes, given Volcan Sajama's technical difficulty classification.

The climb to the top would take three days; one to base camp, one to high camp and then a summit day. The now nine-man group all made it safely to high camp. After an anxious few hours sleep, the group woke at 0200 to attempt the peak. With 4hrs of climbing in the dark the teams were very pleased to see sunrise, although this did coincide with a field of penetentes – 1m high snow icicles which form during the summer months. Unsurprisingly the climb was extremely demanding and three individuals had to be taken back down to high camp by the guide. At 0800, six extremely tired individuals summited. After a photo session, kept short by the low temperatures on the summit, the individuals were soon on their way back down.

With a well co-ordinated departure from the mountain, the teams moved from the summit via High and Base camps, back to Sajama village. The group then moved back to La Paz for a 48hr R&R period before travelling back to the UK. This happened to coincide with the England versus Germany World Cup game – unfortunately that part of the trip was less good.

Despite only half of the group making it to the top of Volcan Sajama the expedition was hugely successful. With all members climbing a 5000m peak, nine climbing a 6000m peak and

six climbing a 6500m peak; it was testament to the individuals' grit and determination. The expedition certainly stretched comfort zones and everyone developed a number of the inherent soldiering qualities: teamwork, physical fitness and mental resilience.

On behalf of all members of the group we would like to thank our sponsors; Mabey and Johnson, the Berlin Infantry Brigade Memorial Trust Fund and Headquarters 5th Division. We would also like to thank the various personalities in the Sqn and Regt who supported the expedition from the off and without whose support the expedition would not have been possible.



Crossing the wet glacier on Janco Huyo



Lt. Somódi descending the North West ridge



Hot springs with Nevado Sajama behind



PHOTO COMPETITION

This is your chance to be both rich and famous!

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 £100 or £50 for your trouble. Ok, so not quite the rich part but it's a weekend in Llanberis or a slap up meal!

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Guiding on the 55 degree North West face of Castor – Philip Maddox

**£50
PRIZE**

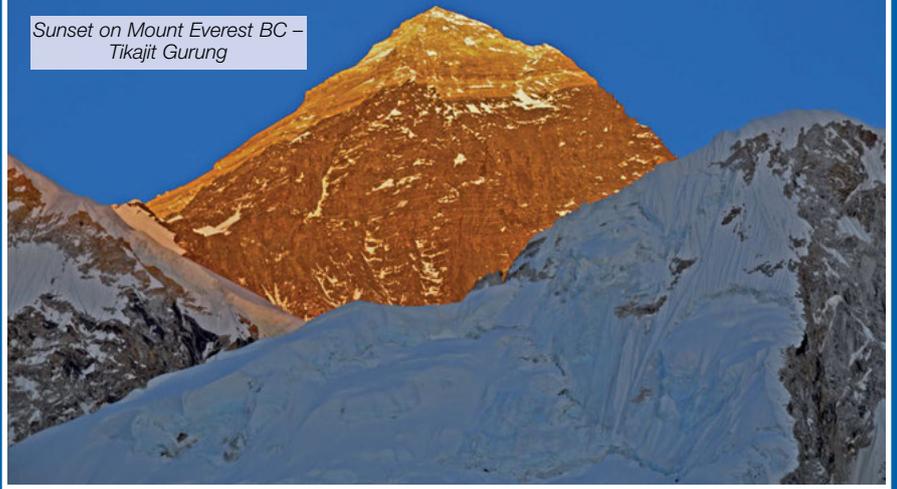


Blizzard and a sun dog – Jonjo Knott

Descent – Our last descent before coming off the glacier beneath Ischinca (5550m) after our first and successful ascent of the peak.



Sunset on Mount Everest BC – Tikajit Gurung



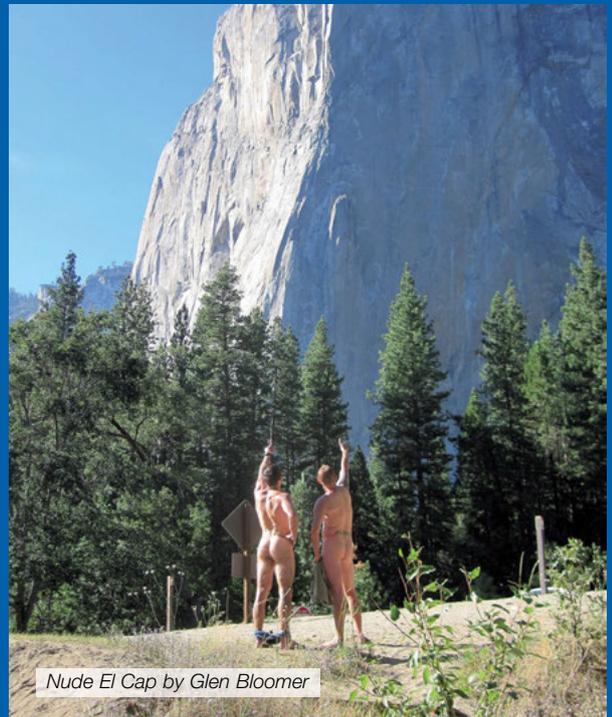
Everest horizons – Levison Wood



The Matterhorn – Malcom Sperrin



Nude El Cap by Glen Bloomer



RED RIVER

A Jaunt To The Grand Canyon

£100
ARTICLE

“I CAN SEE WHY BADLY PREPARED PEOPLE DIE IN HERE.”

Ex Aphrodite's Red River was a JSSU (Cyp) expedition in early June 2010 to the Grand Canyon. The participants were WO Mick Waller, WO2 Al Jeffs, Sgt Fergie Ferguson, Cpl Jamie Sutherland, LCpl Gav Maddison and SAC Paddy Farrell.

It would be easy to misunderstand an expedition to the Grand Canyon as being a bit of a tourist jaunt, and a jolly would be the reality if one were to stay on the Canyon rim where there are shops, food, shuttle buses, showers and most importantly an endless supply of clean water. Indeed most visitors (like 99.99%) to the Canyon do in fact simply enjoy a slow stroll along the rim admiring the views with an ice-cream and cold coke in hand. This is followed by a short ride on the air-conditioned shuttle bus which takes them to the door of the visitors centre for another leisurely wander. When this all gets too much for our colonial friends they purchase a takeaway pizza and head back to their 60' RVs to watch a bit of soccer on the telly (can't blame them when they can get a draw against England). For us the Grand Canyon was a completely different experience from that of the average tourists.

Although we completed a climb of Humphrey's Peak (the highest in Arizona at 12633') and several day hikes, I will concentrate the story on the 4-day Tonto Trail as this exemplifies the desert survival situation in which we found ourselves. This was a wilderness trek following the contours about one-third of the way up the Canyon wall. Winding round and round to avoid the deep side canyons, the Tonto Trail is probably the most arduous in the Canyon and offers many problems for the traveller. It is notorious for its lack of reliable water sources combined with open, sunburnt areas with no shade; this makes it a dangerous journey. We spent 4 days on the Tonto Trail, which was all the time our backcountry permit would allow.

Descent on the New Hance Trail to Hance Creek

An hour prior to dawn we rose, breakfasted and made last minute adjustments to our packs which had been prepared the night before. Loaded down with food, water and shelter we moved to the New Hance Trailhead. The description below sums up the thoughts of the three novices in our party as they descended the trail into the Canyon:

“Descending, our thoughts concentrated on living to tell the tale and we mustered up sufficient courage to scramble down the steepest and most awful sections of the trail on tentative feet. ‘The Trail’ does not begin to describe what was actually a twisting line of scree through boulders and cliffs with exposure to only a fathomless bottom. ‘Feet’, does not recount the truth, but on heels, toes, on hands and knees, and sometimes in the posture assumed by children when they come bumping down the stairs. The path down appears impossible... the pitch for the first mile is frightful... and to our dismayed unaccustomed minds the inclination apparently increases, as if the Canyon walls were slowly toppling inwards...”

After several hours of scrambling we made it to the roaring Rio Colorado. Here we checked ourselves, drank heavily of the water, ate our sweaty cheese rolls and rested our weary legs. As we did the heat began to rise forcing us to begin our climb onto the Tonto Trail.

By the time we had re-climbed the two thousand feet to the Tonto Trail it was fast approaching mid-day and the time had come on the value of knowing heat exhaustion symptoms. Lady Luck was on our side. As the sun beat directly down from above we faltered serendipitously upon an overhanging rock that would give us some shady respite from the 100°F heat. As Jamie stumbled into the shade, he was asked if he was OK. “Fine, not feeling dizzy, just sick”; the words stabbed me like a cactus needle in the eye. We decided to stop in the shade of the overhang for an hour whilst we took on water and let our bodies cool. Time to move along and after some hot and silent miles we trundled into Grapevine Creek and established our overnight camp. Luxury was found in the form of a trickle of water and downstream beyond a small precipice was a rock pool from which to enjoy the first and last wash of the trek. Mick had the first of the minor injuries losing his big toe nail, the pain eventually receding as the toe went black and numb; situation normal apparently. Jamie had a few minor blisters and was forced to dig deep and make tape and compeed repairs. With night drawing in we scooped down our freeze-dried rations (don't make the error of carrying pasta primavera as it only has 560 calories!).



Hance Creek to Grapevine Creek

Despite the desire to stay hidden, sweating in our sleeping bag liners, the shrill of the ravens brought us from our slumbers. After a quick breakfast and topping back up to six litres of water a man, we were on our way by the 0430 moonlight. Although it was over 80°F by 0800 the clouds were thoughtfully preventing the piercing sun's rays heating the air around us. We were therefore able to make good progress across the barren, arid landscape following the indistinct trail through the ubiquitous scrub smattered with prickly pears. Our early start and hard work navigating around the long contours of the deep side canyons paid off. By 1130, we arrived at Grapevine Creek (which would have been better named Lone Tree Creek as that is all that there was) and even with the cloud the temperature had reached a hazy 100°F. We tried to squeeze ourselves into the small area of tree shade to get some respite from the relentless beating of the sun. It wasn't possible and we hung the tent outer on the branches instead to make a much more satisfactory, but still 'sub optimal' hide out. Luckily, the Creek was running well and we drank several litres of water simply lying in the shade before the temperature started to ease downwards at 1730. After a Chicken Stew with a massive 800 calories we settled for a night on the baked hot rocks – if only bothy floors were the same.

Grapevine Creek to Crematorium Creek

Knowing that our chances of finding water before we made it back to the rim the following day were negligible, we filled every receptacle that could hold water. Even such things as an empty Planters Peanut bag held a vital extra quarter of litre of salty water. At 1kg per litre, this made our packs a heavy burden and strained our shoulders (particularly Paddy's gym moulded ones). As we made our way through the cacti that scratched callously at our ankles and shins we took fleeting glances at the sunrise behind the majestic weather sculptured peaks. However, we pushed on with survival rather than the view being at the forefront of our minds. Halfway through our day's journey we took a short rest at Lone Tree Creek. According to the map there was a spring – as briefed we expected it to be dry – but it was always going to be worth a look. After some skilled micro-navigation we located a large rock displaying some salt rings and a damp patch behind it. It was time for some good old fashioned scouting skills and using the defecation trowel we dug down at the back of the rock to create a small reservoir and hey presto the hole began to fill with a dirty coloured sandy water. After leaving it to settle for a short while we were able to put the water filters to good work and refill everything we had and take a hearty drink each. Spirits lifted as we were much more likely to make it out of the Canyon alive. By midday we arrived at the aptly named Crematorium Creek. With temperatures now soaring above 105°F we tried to get into any slither of shade. Tucking under the base of a 3' foot high rock shelf was the only option. Lying here in the lizard faeces we kept a constant check on the crevices for any snakes, scorpions and spiders; eventually around 1800 we were able to set up camp. Mick scouting around discovered a 5' long Gopher snake which we chased away. With water short we tried our best to sleep whilst the ravens circled and screeched above like vultures in the night.



Crematorium Creek to South Rim via South Kaibab Trail

In order to finish the climb out of the Canyon before the main heat of the day it was obligatory that we set off in the dark at 0300. We picked our way across the undulating dry sandy landscape, our night navigation tested to the zenith. We made a difficult descent to the bottom of a side canyon then back onto easier ground before making it to the bottom of the South Kaibab trail – our route out of the furnace. Time for Fergie to slap on the QMs white emulsion. With the sun's first rays creeping down the canyon towards us at an ever accelerating pace we began the long climb upwards. Although there was now a distinct trail the going slowed and the exertion increased as the sheer faces of the canyon pushed us backwards. The climb seemed to go on forever, not surprisingly as it was a vertical mile climb up. With the sun burning our backs and the thirst quenching water running dry we approached the final zigzag climb. The never-ending toil eventually came to an abrupt end as we emerged over the rim and back to the realm of the tourist. We happily jumped on the bus to take us to the luxury of a large breakfast with bottomless pot of coffee.

In Conclusion

A trek in the remote wilderness areas of the Grand Canyon is a fitting training ground. The value that the members gained from this expedition can never be quantified, but will be without thought displayed back in the unit and most importantly during deployed operations. The qualities that were evidently developed included leadership, teamwork, physical and moral courage, determination, self-reliance and the importance of preparation of oneself and one's equipment.

Lastly, it is necessary to thank the Expedition Leader WO Mick Waller (RAF), who is retiring after 37 years of service. He has organised a number of expeditions over the years which have provided an arduous but enjoyable medium of team and personal development for many members of all three services.



ROAD ICE

£50
ARTICLE

By Duncan Francis MIA

I was hanging by my tools just below the top of the fifth pitch of a WI4 ice route, under a cloudless blue sky. Across to my North I could see the beautiful 5694m spire of the Matterhorn-like Abi Shan, while above me rose the 5472m Hunter Peak. Like most mountains in this area of China's South Western Sichuan province, these peaks still await a British ascent. Tony and I were the only two figures in this vast landscape of mountains, rock faces and scrubby sheer hillsides, less for a herd of yaks grazing on the flattened pasture of the valley floor. The inimitable Mick Fowler had won the Piolet d'Or for a new route on Siguniang (6250m), a couple of miles to the East, but otherwise this fantastic area of Alpine peaks is almost unknown in the West.

And likewise the huge variety of ice routes which adorn both sides of the Shuangqiaogu Valley; a sort of Chinese-Rjukan, the centre of ice-climbing in China. But this is Rjukan with a difference. The routes are there, mostly multi-pitch, ranging from WI2 to WI6, and most could be termed as 'roadside'. And a lot of them are very high

quality; mostly a series of steep pitches, often with free-standing pillars, joined by shorter easier pitches. But there the similarity ends. This was our second season in the valley, and we could count the number of foreign ice climbers we had met on the fingers of one hand. And the Chinese, newcomers to the sport, climb differently. In common with the way that they rock climb, a group will gather below a route, one of them will go up the first pitch and fix up a top-rope or two, and then the remainder will spend the day happily going up and down the first pitch, chattering loudly to each other all the while. But there were never more than three groups in the valley, leaving us the pick of the remaining fifty or so routes to climb in peace. But make no mistake; some of the Chinese climbers are very good indeed. And they have all the latest gear; ice-climbing in China is the game of the nouveau-riche.

There are other differences too; there is little snow here, just glittering icefalls coursing their way down frozen brown hillsides. The ice is sometimes very hard, although on the slightly



Duncan leading the Talus Climb



Prayer flags at the Balangshan Pass

warmer days it transforms into the perfect, sticky stuff that you dream about. The tree belays of Rjukan are mostly absent; this is Abolokov country. And the valley is the home of the Tibetan ethnic minority, so the houses are beautiful Tibetan-style homes, painted garishly in many colours, with prayer flags fluttering above them. As well as the yaks, fierce Tibetan mastiffs guard the houses against strangers, and eagles circle overhead. One evening, we were invited to a Tibetan barbecue, where the women all dressed up in their finery and danced around the fire to traditional songs, with a man in a red silk jacket with long sleeves, blue silk trousers tucked into long leather boots and an astrakhan hat. Unlike Rjukan, the beer is only a few pence per bottle, but then the food, while plentiful, leaves a lot to be desired; we learnt by the second year to take a pack of delicacies with us to alleviate the diet. And prices are starting to rise slightly; from 2010 to 2011, the per person charge for dinner, bed and breakfast rose from £5 a night to £6 a night. Rockfax have yet to come here; there is no guidebook to Shuangqiaogu; you just have to ask the locals.

The Siguniang Valley, to the East, apparently has fewer icefalls but more Alpine peaks, while both offer soaring faces of granite slabs which have already provided some very hard rock routes, but which have hardly touched the apparent possibilities. There is much to explore here; the higher cwms glitter invitingly in the sun, showing off many unclimbed icefalls; there are such a plethora in the valley, that no-one appears to be bothered enough to camp up high to take on these higher challenges.

So, what's good and what's bad about Shuangqiaogu and the Siguniang Valleys? On the plus side it is relatively easy to get to [flight to Beijing, transfer to an Air China flight to Chengdu, then 6 hours on minibus/bus to Rilong]; the weather is consistently good [as long as you avoid the monsoon]; there is a sense of adventure

[generated both by the high mountain environment and the almost complete lack of foreigners]; no queues for the wide variety of roadside ice routes; fantastic scenery, friendly ethnic-Tibetan people and buildings, yaks, eagles and stupas without the bureaucratic hassle of getting into Tibet; it is very cheap to stay; access fees are very reasonable; you can combine ice climbing with Alpinism and big rock routes [including some still virgin peaks]. On the downside, you need someone who can speak Chinese and there is no guidebook [although both of these could be dealt with by using a Sichuan Mountaineering Association guide]; the valley floor is at 3500m so needs a bit of acclimatisation; facilities, while cheap, are very basic, with the food taking a bit of getting used to; there are limited medical/MR facilities; a very few routes will be covered in Chinese climbers top-roping the first pitch.

For any further details on climbing in China, whether it is Alpine mountaineering or ice



Bruce Norman on the WI5 crux of Xueshan Lao Bu

climbing in Sichuan, sports climbing in Yangshuo, big wall climbing in Xinjiang, or anything else, contact the UK Defence Attache in Beijing, Brig Duncan Francis on: Email: Duncan.francis@fco.gov.uk
Tel: (0086) 10 51924258
Mob: (0086) 13910517249



The 'Mountain Rescue' building

Tri-Services Bouldering League 2010-11

The fifth and final round of the Tri-Services Bouldering League took place on Sat 12 Feb 11 at the Indy Wall at the Joint Services Mountain Training Centre (Indefatigable) on Anglesey. The event was the culmination of the winter league and also acted as the Army Bouldering Championships.

The league is open to all serving members, both regular and reserve, of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Army and RAF and MOD civil servants and takes place each winter. This year's previous rounds at Craggy 2 in Sutton, The Climbing Works in Sheffield, Boulders in Cardiff and City Bloc in Leeds had all been real tests of ability with different styles at each event. Jon Ratcliffe and Dave Noden were not to disappoint with their setting for the final round at the Indy Wall. They had even gone to the lengths of repainting the competition boulder especially for the day. DMM, the league sponsors, brought along a mountain of prizes for both competitions along with their gear destruction rig to demonstrate the reliability, or not, of old karabiners.

With 89 competitors turning up from the Army, Navy, RAF and MOD civil service the atmosphere was light hearted but serious. With each of the 4 categories still up for grabs the pressure was on the leaders to perform and the chasing pack to catch them. Each competitor's best 3 scores from across the 5 rounds counted towards the final league standings and it had paid to turn up to as many rounds as possible to get the big scores. With 25 problems from VB to V8 to be attempted in 4 hours the game was afoot.

With a range of abilities, from complete novice to Combined Services team members, the competitors went about throwing

themselves at everything from jug pulls to dynos, from crimp fests to slopers and from a long technical traverse to desperate pulls through steep bulges. With everyone giving everything, including skin, sweat and shouts, there could only be one set of winners. On the day the locals came out on top with JSMTC(I) instructor Pete Rowlands taking the glory with the highest score of the day and Fus Miles Hill close behind with the highest Army score. OCdt Hannah Beresford was the clear winner in the women's category. In some cases the results were decided on bonus holds and attempts taken and Rob Greenwood from DMM was on hand to present the prizes at the end of a long day.

After 5 rounds of the Tri-Services League there were unmistakable winners in all categories with the Army dominating. Capt Tom Odling ran away with the Open Men's title and had the highest cumulative overall score across all categories. Plt Offr Jimmy James took the junior title despite 2 pins in his leg from a break in January but it was tight behind him with 2nd and 3rd being decided by only 2 points, with OCdt Jack Gilbert beating Cfn Tim Read. OCdt Hannah Beresford continued her dominance of the women's category but was chased hard by Maj Judith Gallagher. In the veteran's category it was Maj Pete Skinsley who took the title with 2nd place overall – there is still life in the older generation yet!

The spring and summer see a return to lead climbing competitions for the services but the bouldering league will return in 2011-12 at various walls around the country. Full details will be published later in the year.

Results

TRI-SERVICE BOULDERING LEAGUE 2010-11

Open Men

1	Capt Tom Odling	Army	654
2	Cpl Tom Moulder	Army	583
3	Sgt Shropshire	Army	518

Junior Men (<25)

1	Plt Offr Jimmy James	RAF	592
2	OCdt Jack Gilbert	Army	498
3	Cfn Tim Read	Army	496

Veteran Men (>35)

1	Maj Pete Skinsley	Army	603
2	LCpl Ian Karkoutli	Army	444
3	Capt Sam Marshall	Army	399

Open Women

1	OCdt Hannah Beresford	Army	452
2	Maj Judith Gallagher	Army	408
3	LCpl Ruth Matuska	Army	148

ARMY BOULDERING CHAMPIONSHIPS 2011

Open Men

1	Capt Tom Odling	Army	208
2	Capt Henry Crosby	Army	197
3	Cpl Tom Moulder	Army	192

Junior Men (<25)

1	Fus Miles Hill	Army	211
2	Cfn Gregor Crawford	Army	186
3	OCdt Jack Gilbert	Army	183

Veteran Men (>35)

1	Maj Pete Skinsley	Army	194
2	WO2 Rob Short	Army	159
3	Capt Sam Marshall	Army	141

Open Women

1	OCdt Hannah Beresford	Army	162
2	LCpl Ruth Matuska	Army	148
3	Maj Judith Gallagher	Army	147

Guests

1	SIO Pete Rowlands	JSMTC(I)	222
2	SAC Simon Twinley	RAF	201
3	HIO Chris Forrest	JSMTC(I)	194

European Military Climbing Championships 2010

by Maj Pete Skinsley

The cream of the military sport climbers from across Europe and the British Services gathered in Edinburgh last week for the annual European Military Climbing Championships. The 2 day event, hosted by the Army Mountaineering Association, was run at the Edinburgh International Climbing Arena Ratho. Teams from Belgium, France, Netherlands, Romania, Spain and Switzerland and the forces teams from the Royal Navy, the Army and the RAF came together to battle it out for both European and Inter-Service titles. With lead, bouldering and speed climbing disciplines all included, the event was action packed and the talent on show impressive. Both national and service pride were at stake and the 75 competitors ensured that competition was fierce but friendly.

Day 1 saw the lead qualifying and bouldering. In the lead event competitors faced with 6 flash routes from 5c to 7b spread across both the competition walls. To score they had to top at least one route but were limited to being able to attempt a maximum of 3. Failure on a route meant no further upwards progression in difficulty and a panic to top the previous route to remain in the competition. A few fell foul of the process and failed to top out on any of their chosen 3 routes as the pump set in. 13 men completed the 7b qualifier and gained automatic qualification for the semi-finals and were joined by 12 others who made the cut at the end of the day. In the women's category a strong French team were joined by the best of the Brits with 8 progressing to the semi.

In the bouldering the challenges were severe. With IFSC Bouldering World Cup entrants on the competitor list the challenge was on for the route setters to produce 15 problems to test and split all, and so they did. Sdt Benjamin Blaser (SUI) took the men's bouldering crown and Sch Virginie Vidonne (FRA) triumphed in the women's category.

Day 2 dawned with some tired arms and the prospect of semi-finals and finals in the lead and the individual speed and team speed relay events. In the international semi-finals, the men and women were faced with a severe test of ability which spat off almost all comers and split both fields. At the same time the British Inter-Services finals decided the individual and team places. Flt Lt Stuart Harth (RAF) became the Senior Men's Inter-Services

Champion, SAC Rob Patchett (RAF) took the Junior Men's title and LCpl Ruth Matuska (Army) the women's. The Army retained the Senior Men's and Women's team titles and the RAF the Junior Men's team. The speed competitions took up the rest of the morning with the Swiss dominating the male event. Sdt Phillippe Allenspach (SUI) eventually ran out the winner in the men's and Gav Alice Coldefy (FRA) was the fastest of the women. The team speed relay was also hotly contested. Teams of 3 climbers on 3 consecutive routes against a running clock generated much good natured banter and encouragement. Favourites Belgium were eventually piped by home teams from the RAF and Royal Navy.

The culmination of the event were the international lead finals. With the new competition wall's angle adjusted to something a little more severe, the finals were contested by the best 8 men and 5 women. The women's route worked perfectly with Gav Alice Coldefy (FRA) looking calm all the way to toping out and beating OCdt Hannah Beresford (GBR) and Cdt Valentine Malavoy (FRA) to the European title. The men's route was another test of power and endurance. The older generation showed the young pretenders how it was done with Sgt Dimitri Munoz (FRA) (aged 37!) coming so close to on-sighting the 7c+ final and beating Sdt Christoph Zaugg (SUI) and Sdt Daniel Winkler (SUI) to the crown. The Swiss did not go home empty handed as they took the team title.

With a slap up curry and a night in Edinburgh to wrap up the week, a very successful event was enjoyed by all. The event would not have been accomplished without the support of the Services Mountaineering Associations, the Army Sport Control Board, BFBS, Cotswold Outdoor, Entre-Prises, DMM, Beyond Hope, Tiso, The Orange House, The Climbing Works, UKClimbing.com and CU Belay Glasses. It was a pleasure for the Army Mountaineering Association to host our fellow European military climbers and we look forward to attending next year's event on the continent.

BFBS covered the event and a report can be seen on their website here.

Results

International Men Lead

- 1 Sgt Dimitri Munoz (FRA)
- 2 Sdt Christoph Zaugg (SUI)
- 3 Sdt Daniel Winkler (SUI)

International Women Lead

- 1 Gav Alice Coldefy (FRA)
- 2 OCdt Hannah Beresford (GBR)
- 3 Cdt Valentine Malvoy (FRA)

International Team Lead

- 1 France
- 2 Switzerland
- 3 Great Britain

British Inter Services Senior Men Lead

- 1 Flt Lt Stuart Harth (RAF)
- 2 Maj Mike Smith (Army)
- 3 Fg Offr Mike Coles (RAF)

British Inter Services Junior Men Lead

- 1 SAC Rob Patchett (RAF)
- 2 Cpl Andy Woolston (RAF)
- 3 Cfn Tristan Steed (Army)

British Inter Services Women Lead

- 1 LCpl Ruth Matuska (Army)
- 2 Maj Judith Gallagher (Army)
- 3 Surg Lt Lucy Matthews (RN)

International Bouldering Men

- 1 Sdt Benjamin Blaser (SUI)
- 2 CCh Nicolas Andre (FRA)
- 3 Lt Cosmin Scortea (ROM)

International Bouldering Women

- 1 Sch Virginie Vidonne (FRA)
- 2 Gav Alice Coldefy (FRA)
- 3 Cdt Valentine Malvoy (FRA)

International Individual Speed Men

- 1 Sdt Phillippe Allenspach (SUI)
- 2 Sdt Benjamin Blaser (SUI)
- 3 Sdt Lucio Nadig (SUI)

International Individual Speed Women

- 1 Gav Alice Coldefy (FRA)
- 2 Cdt Valentine Malvoy (FRA)
- 3 Surg Lt Lucy Matthews (RN)

International Speed Team Relay

- 1 RAF
- 2 Royal Navy
- 3 Belgium

THE INN PIN

Philip Maddox, HBF

Upon arriving at 2 Signal Regiment in York, the RSM, WO1 Al Combe a friendly face from way back in the heady 216 Parachute Signal Squadron days of Aldershot (early 90's something, too many fuzzy days to pin point the exact date/s!), welcomed me into the Regiment and suggested we run an Adventure Training trip up to Torridon & the Isle of Skye.

Great news; I had just left JSMTC Unspellable and unlike the desk pushing of the last two years (not strictly true!); I was already penciled in to go away and do some AT.

My gym 2IC, Cpl Paterson had just passed his APTC Selection in Jan 2010 and as a way of giving him some valuable SNCO experience was tasked to organise, set up and conduct the trip to Scotland. Oh, and he was a Jock too so it was a bit of time back in his own land - Scotlandshire!

Days past, weeks past, and eventually months past, Cpl Paterson was slowly but surely ticking off the pages of the JSATFA and phoning the relevant land owners and accommodation personnel at Cameron Barracks in Inverness to get the whole expedition off the ground. With only a few days remaining all that was left to do was collect the stores from Bicester, do the Recce (carried out the weekend before the exped) and then wait for the soldiers to arrive.

Wed 28 Apr we set off on the 8hrs drive north to Inverness and Cameron Barracks as a stop over in order to carry out a recce of the potential training areas; my god that is a long drive! I had done two postings up to Fort George but had still managed to forget just how far away Inverness really is. I will not forget again!

Thursday 29 April we drove over to the Torridon Mountains and scaled Beign Alligin and walked the famous 3 Horns before descending back to Inverness. With no snow worth mentioning we then decided to carry on up the neighboring peak of Beign Eighh. There was always going to be the potential that due to the mass of snow that fell this winter in Scotland that these particular peaks would still be too covered with snow ice, but we found it reasonably easy going. With both peaks recce'd we drove back to Inverness and then on to the Isle of Skye to recce the infamous 'Inn Pin'

We took another at Balmacara House, situated just a few miles away from the small village of Kyle of Lochalsh and the Bridge over to Skye. This is an amazing lodge run by Defence Training Estates and they are really welcoming. You really need to phone Georgina first before speaking to the central booking agency, as Georgina will give you the very most up to date availabilities for your bookings. I did this as we were driving to Scotland and managed to book our party in for Thu





evening and then the 3 x groups of 10 over the next week, and all done over the phone.

Onwards and upwards, the next day we drove the hour over to Glenbrittle Mtn Rescue Hut and walked up Sgurr Dearg; at 986m is the second highest Munro on Skye with Sgurr Alasdair its neighbor at 995m literally the next peak along on the infamous Cuillin Ridge.

This ridge-walk up is a little over 2.5hrs depending on how fast you walk. All groups managed sub 3hrs regardless of ability, and regardless of weather to the summit.

On top of this summit is the Inaccessible Pinnacle, a jagged shark fin shaped lump of rock that seems to just be perched on the crest of the ridge and very much out of place! Apparently Hugh Munro, the man who walked and founded the Munro list within the Scottish Highlands, was stopped in his tracks when trying to complete the Cuillin Ridge by this big jagged lump of rock.

This would not be the case for us however and I set off up the route. It is a very stunning and very exposed V.Diff according to the guidebook, but in reality I found it not much more than a scramble. It is just a little over 70m though with a little break about 50m along the ridge in order to belay and for a short moment share the view and exposure with your climbing partners. The ridge falls away on both sides and the wind here blows constantly, buffeting you around; combined it is enough to make even the most seasoned scrambler grip the rock with almost every body part.

Once on the top of the Pinnacle you can belay around one of the big blocks and bring up your partners to admire the view, which for us was amazing. The clouds that so often



The coveted prize - the summit of the hardest Munro

envelope the Cuillin lifted showing us 360 degrees of absolutely stunning views, including Islands of Raasay and Rum standing proud in the distance. It was most spectacular, something I'd never get bored of looking at.

It was at the midway point of the climb that I decided to tell the RSM the strengths and weaknesses of climbing equipment, much to his frustration and fear. He was not the best at heights or understanding the concept of the Kilo-Newton (Who is?!). I explained fall factors and how if the No 3, SSgt Sean Sweeney was to fall off one side of the ridge then he would have to dive over the other side to counter balance the fall. Oh, and to pray that the rope didn't snap, as they were both over 80kgs and that the ropes are only tested on bodies up to 80kgs!

As I fell about laughing (and they didn't) I think they realised I may have been pulling a leg or two and they continued up to the peak of the Pinnacle and then the short 25m abseil off the other end.

After almost 20yrs of walking, scrambling, climbing and mountaineering I finally managed to bag the most famous Pinnacle in the UK, the Inaccessible Pinnacle.

It may not be a hard or even tricky lower end graded climb, but what a reward when you get on top of it. Amazing and a sight I shall not forget in a hurry.



CADET CENTRE FOR ADVENTUROUS TRAINING (CCAT)

What is CCAT?

CCAT has been around for several years and was the initial brain child of Lt Col Mike Gerrish MBE. His initiative was to provide a base and the resources to deliver Adventurous Training (AT) courses for Adult Instructors and Senior Cadets in the Cadet Forces. CCAT was an instant success and continued to flourish throughout the subsequent years.

So what is new?

In 2010, CCAT was re-structured to create a permanent HQ based at Capel Curig Training Camp, North Wales and established with a full time support team, Officer Commanding, CEO, RQMS, HTC Centre Manager and Admin Support.

What is different about having a CCAT HQ?

Establishing a CCAT HQ provides a 'one stop shop' service for all ACF and CCF (Army) AT courses.

What is our aim?

The aim of CCAT is to provide a pathway for Adult ACF and CCF (Army) Volunteer Instructors to attain AT Leader, Instructor or Coach level qualifications in Mountaineering (Summer and Winter), Climbing (Rock and Ice), Canoeing (Open Canoe, Inland Kayak and Sea Kayak) and Caving so they can in turn deliver a broad range of challenging and imaginative AT activities in their units that will enhance the lifelong learning experience of the Cadet and boost Cadet recruiting.

The pathway starts with a Proficiency course, which can then lead to Coach or Leader training followed by courses offering essential log book experience. Finally, when the individual is ready, Leader or Coach assessment can be undertaken.

CCAT also provides a myriad of Proficiency and Advanced Proficiency level Adventurous Training courses as a progressive pathway for Senior Cadets (16-18yrs).

Where is CCAT delivering the AT courses?

The AT course programme is delivered in 5 locations so that it has a footprint in all the main UK mountain regions: the Snowdonia National Park, North Wales based at Capel Curig Training Camp, Lake District National Park based at Halton Training Camp, Scottish Highlands based at Dingwall, Ross-shire. CCAT uses Bavaria for all skiing courses and the French Alps for Alpine Mountaineering and Canoeing courses.

What courses are available?

CCAT provides a broad range of centrally organised courses for both cadets and adult instructors. These include:

- Cadet Proficiency and Advanced Proficiency. 5-day courses in rock and winter climbing, summer and winter mountain walking, kayaking, open canoeing, sea kayaking, caving, alpine skiing and ski touring. DfE Gold expeditions.
- Adult Instructor Proficiency and Advanced Proficiency. 5-day courses in rock and winter climbing, summer and winter mountain walking, kayaking, open canoeing, sea kayaking, caving, alpine skiing and ski touring. *These adult courses are conducted over two weekends in recognition of the difficulties experienced by many adults in getting time off work during the week.
- Continuous Personal Development (CPD) courses. A variety of CPD courses will be available to assist adult instructors preparing for NGB leader/instructor/coach qualifications and will include the opportunity for additional logbook experience plus technical training focussed workshops. These CPD courses will be conducted during weekends spread throughout the year.
- Expeditions. In Scotland, we carry out mountaineering (classic ridges), sea kayaking (Skye), inland kayaking and open canoeing (classic rivers) and rock climbing. In the *French Alps, open canoe, inland kayak, and alpine mountaineering are carried out and in Spain, rock climbing. In Norway, we run ice climbing expeditions.
- National Accredited Leader/Coach qualification courses. These are open to all those over 18, except where annotated, who wish to gain National accredited (MLTE, BCU, MBLA, and Snowsport Scotland) qualifications.

Is there a cost?

You are required to pay a small cost for the AT courses, usually £35.00 for five day Proficiency courses and up to £40.00 for NGB courses. Expeditions in Bavaria and France require a higher personal contribution. Financially, CCAT courses are fantastic value for money and are a fraction of the cost incurred by booking a course through a commercial provider.

Where do I get the information about the courses and how to apply?

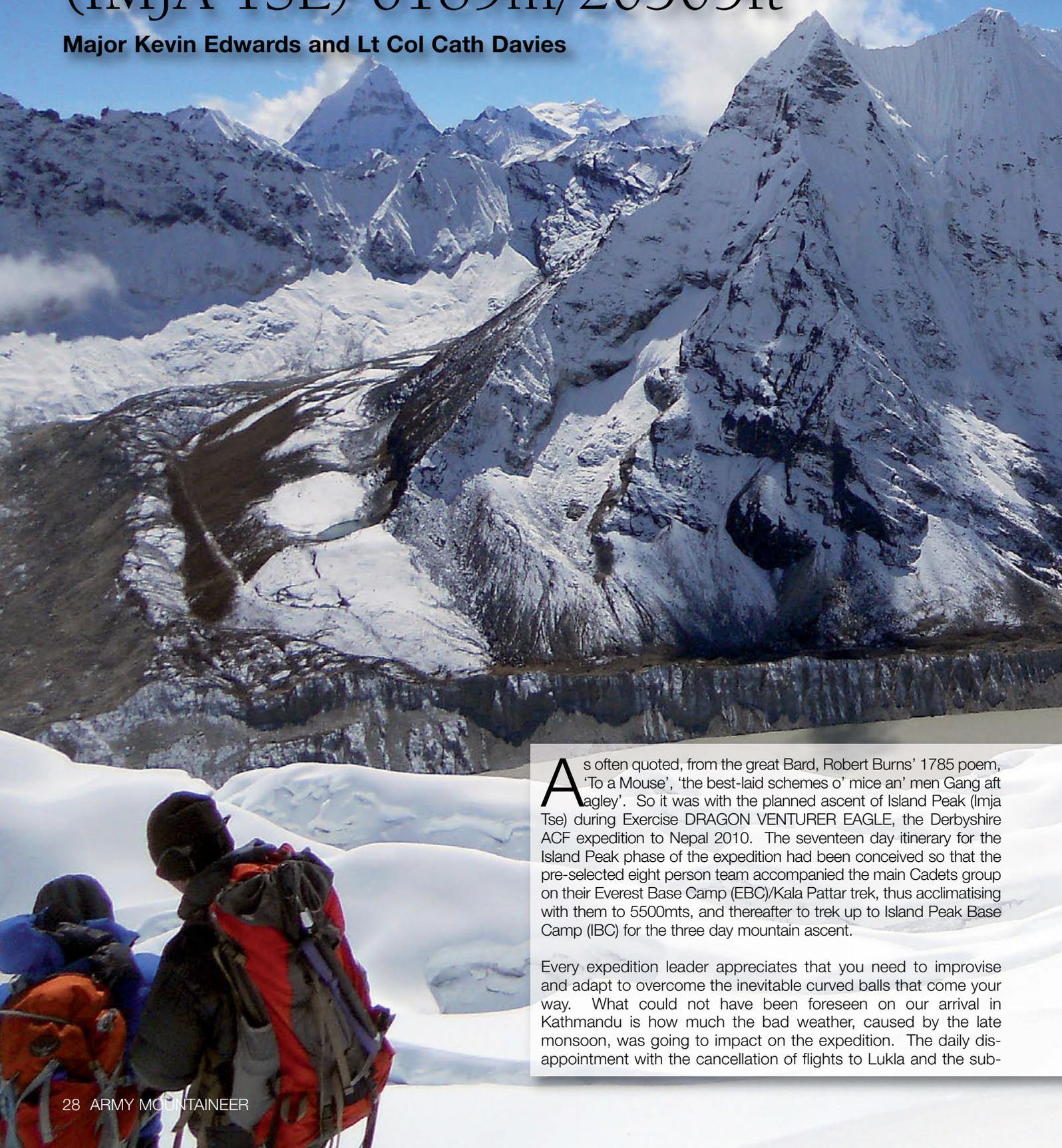
It's easy. Log on to the website: www.armycadetadventure.info where you will find the programme of CCAT courses and the course booking form, log onto WESTMINSTER or speak to your County AT Officer (CATO).



ASCENT OF ISLAND PEAK

(IMJA TSE) 6189m/20305ft

Major Kevin Edwards and Lt Col Cath Davies



As often quoted, from the great Bard, Robert Burns' 1785 poem, 'To a Mouse', 'the best-laid schemes o' mice an' men Gang aft agley'. So it was with the planned ascent of Island Peak (Imja Tse) during Exercise DRAGON VENTURER EAGLE, the Derbyshire ACF expedition to Nepal 2010. The seventeen day itinerary for the Island Peak phase of the expedition had been conceived so that the pre-selected eight person team accompanied the main Cadets group on their Everest Base Camp (EBC)/Kala Pattar trek, thus acclimatising with them to 5500mts, and thereafter to trek up to Island Peak Base Camp (IBC) for the three day mountain ascent.

Every expedition leader appreciates that you need to improvise and adapt to overcome the inevitable curved balls that come your way. What could not have been foreseen on our arrival in Kathmandu is how much the bad weather, caused by the late monsoon, was going to impact on the expedition. The daily disappointment with the cancellation of flights to Lukla and the sub-



sequent backlog of exasperated travellers waiting to start their trek was posing problems. However, it pays to be philosophical at times like this, patience is a virtue.

Eventually good news relieved the pressure and after four days of waiting patiently, the weather in Lukla improved and the massive lift of travellers to the mountains was underway.

The expedition started for real.

Wed 13 Oct – Kathmandu domestic airport was awash with a throng of people and luggage all fighting their way through to receive the much prized boarding pass. We were on board a plane sitting on the tarmac but yet one more stumbling block before we could take off – early morning fog at Kathmandu. The mountain airstrip at Lukla may have been bathing in sunshine but we were going nowhere until the pilot could see more than 10 yards down the run-

way in Kathmandu. More tension, but eventually the fog cleared and we took off into the blue skies and headed for the horizon.

The spectacular forty minute flight fully lived up to its expectations as the fertile valleys gave way to a vista of huge, snow-capped mountains in every direction. A little turbulence added to the growing excitement of landing on the shortest airstrip in the world. When the pilot closed down his engines in the small arrival bay we clapped profusely, mainly with relief but also in recognition of his skill. The cooler and somewhat fresher air filling our lungs reminded us that we had landed at 2800m. We were met by Prem, the head trekking guide, and ushered through the narrow cobbled streets, followed by our equipment porters, to the first lodge where we would have a hearty breakfast. I was aghast at the sight of a small Starbucks coffee shop, surely the highest in the world. I suppose this should not come as a surprise as globalisation has percolated to almost every corner of the world and this extremely popular trekking area for

westerners was already proving to be no exception. In the late morning we commenced the first day of the trek following the well worn trail through the lush valley overlooking the famous Dubh Kosi River, which was to be the back drop throughout the initial trek. We had our first experience of the frequent Yak trains constantly on the move up and down the trail. Laden with expedition equipment and with menacing horns, you did not get in the way of these seemingly docile beasts of burden as they squeezed past on the narrow track or, even more disconcerting, the suspension bridges. Thankfully much of the first trekking day was downhill to our first overnight lodge at Phakding 2610m. Having arrived at 2800m, this drop in height would greatly help with our acclimatisation process. During our lunch stop we received the disappointing news that flights to Lukla had been suspended at midday and thus the main Cadets group would not make it to the start of the trek.

Our conversations with Chris Young in the lodge that night focussed on the re-moulding of plans following the loss of so many days in the itinerary due to bad weather and the subsequent flight cancellations. Significant alterations to the Island Peak itinerary would be required for it to remain a viable objective and for safety reasons, it was decided that the two Cadets primed for the Island Peak ascent would stay with the Cadets main team. The Island Peak team would now solely consist of Adult Cadet Instructor's who had the requisite mental temperament and fitness levels to meet the acclimatisation and physical demands of ascending Island Peak. We also commenced monitoring our O₂ saturation indicators with a pulse/ox monitor – records were maintained throughout up to IBC and the return to Lukla.

Thu 14 Oct – Drastic times require decisive solutions. It was much to our relief when the eagerly awaited helicopters arrived at Phakding mid morning with the first tranche of the Cadets and by late morning the whole team was reunited. The Cadets had had the flight of a life time from Kathmandu through the Dubh Kosi valley and we were now all back together and ready to press on with the objectives.

The Island Peak team departed late morning ahead of the Cadets group towards Namche Bazar 3440m, home of the famous Sherpa's, the Nepalese residents of the Khumbu valley who provide the majority of porters and climbing guides who assist mountaineering teams.

Due to the necessary changes to the now condensed Island Peak itinerary, the team would be operating more or less as an independent group, leap frogging a day ahead of the main Cadets team but periodically meeting up at various stages along the trek up to Dingboche.

The memorable moment of the trek to Namche Bazar was to pass through the Sagarmatha National Park gate at Jorsale. This was followed by a strong pull up the steep rise from Larja Bridge to Namche Bazar which was hard work at the new altitude but everyone made it in good time and we were all pleased to arrive.

Fri 15 Oct – A rest day at Namche Bazar to aid acclimatisation. Mid morning, we embarked on a short acclimatisation walk up through the streets and numerous hotels in Namche Bazar to a hill top at 3700m, returning to our lodge in time for lunch. The remainder of the afternoon was spent browsing the many shops in Namche and re-evaluating the technical equipment required for the ascent of Island Peak. So we did not unnecessarily burden our porter team, we decided to stash some residue technical equipment at the Lodge to be collected on our return journey.

The Island Peak team was therefore further reduced in size and consisted of:

Major Kevin Edwards – Senior Mountain Leader (MIC, AMI)
Lt Col Cath Davies – Mountain Leader (MLW, AML)
2Lt Nicky Beaseley ACF
SSI Danny Wilson ACF
Steve – Paramedic

Sat 16 Oct – After the rest day, the Island Peak team needed to press on with the acclimatisation programme whilst the main Cadets team remained at Namche Bazar for a further rest/acclimatisation day. We were joined by Ming who was to be our accompanying trek and assistant climbing guide for the remainder of our journey.

After the initial few hundred metres height gain from Namche the route now contoured above the valley. We settled into a relaxed pace and enjoyed the expanding view with the odd stop for a spot of tea. Gentle drizzle set in for the day and the waterproofs were used in anger for the first time.

Our next overnight lodge was at Tengboche 3860m, the spiritual home for the largest Buddhist monastery on the southern flanks of Mount Everest. Once again it was a strong pull up the steep rise from Thungi Thanga but the rewards were more than worth the effort. After a late lunch we visited the monastery to observe the ritual prayers of the monks and were humbled by the experience. Further evidence of globalisation occurred when we visited the French Bakery only yards away from the monastery and was met by a Lavazza Coffee sign. The contrast of many hundred of years' history in two hundred metres was complete. It rained hard that evening and the temperature change was noticeable.

Sun 17 Oct – The next stage of our journey started after breakfast from Tengboche and a long day trek to Dingboche 4410m. The day dawned fine and the trek was punctuated by magnificent views of Ama Dablam, also known as the Matterhorn of Nepal. We had now cleared the lush vegetation to be replaced by a more open landscape of heath and the gentler Imja Khola valley. The whole day proved to be a steady delightful trek up to the next over night lodge.

Mon 18 Oct – A rest day at Dingboche provided an opportunity to catch up with some personal chores. We arranged a washing line and all pitched in to scrub and rinse some items of clothing that were looking grubby after five days on the dusty trail. We packed a day sack and late in the morning we embarked on an acclimatisation trek up to Dughla 4620m where we took a break for lunch, returning back to Dingboche by late afternoon. Once back at the Lodge we met up with main Cadets team to catch up on all the news.

Tue 19 Oct – We bade farewell to the main Cadets team at Dingboche as we would not be reunited with them until our return to Kathmandu. The trail up to Chhukung was a fairly short, pleasant trek reaching the next lodge in time for lunch. Here we met the climbing guide from Himalayan Glacier, Sheowan. We spent the remainder of the afternoon discussing the technical equipment required with the climbing guide and subsequently hiring the additional equipment, mountain boots, for Nicky and Steve. We also hired fixed rope ascenders (jumars) that Cath and I set up with the required safety lines. We then ensured everything was packed that would be required for the ascent. We briefed the team on a few top tips and handy hints for life at higher altitude and then did a final check of crampons to ensure they fitted the boots correctly. Having discussed the proposed ascent plan with the climbing guide, it became clear that the plan had already been decided. We were completely dissuaded from thinking about using High Base Camp (HBC) 5500m as the launch pad for a summit attempt. As explained to us, HBC lacked a water supply and was much colder as a base to sleep prior to a summit attempt. The mountain decisions were now being driven by the climbing guide. We acquiesced to the climbing guide's greater experience and extensive local knowledge. He had summated Mt Everest three times after all!

After dinner we relaxed and much of the time was spent with Nicky and Danny teaching card games to the climbing guide and porters, much to their amusement.

Wed 20 Oct – Departing after breakfast we made a steady ascent up to IBC 5080m arriving once more in time for lunch. En route, we met up with the Royal Marines team who had just made a successful

ascent of Island Peak and we were pleased to hear the account of their journey. IBC was swamped with various international commercial teams. We erected our personal tents in the few spaces allotted to us whilst the team dining tent was erected by the porters prior to their departure back to Chhukung. The porters were to remain at Chhukung until our return on summit day, further cementing the fact that the ascent programme had been decided in advance by the climbing guide, largely based on commercial considerations.

The remainder of the day was spent relaxing. Everyone retired early to their tents after the evening meal. It was a cold clear night.

Thu 21 Oct – After breakfast we embarked on the short ascent up to HBC for acclimatisation returning back to IBC in time for lunch. It was a windless, clear sunny morning. Following lunch, we undertook some fixed rope ascending and descending training with the climbing guide so that everyone understood how the systems worked. The team was briefed by Kevin on personal clothing, technical equipment, fluid and food to be packed for the summit attempt. They were also briefed on the application of sun screen, lip salve, glacier glasses, hats and gloves for the period that would be spent on the glacier. Personal summit day rucksacks were packed and checked in preparation for the following day. Water bottles were replenished with water for the summit attempt.

The team were briefed on the timings – breakfast 0030hrs and departure 0100hrs.

Everyone retired to their tents at 1800hrs after the evening meal. It snowed lightly in the early evening and fingers were crossed that this would not affect our summit attempt on the morrow.

Fri 22 Oct – Activity around the mess tent at 0030hrs roused us from our tents. It was mild with a star studded sky and no wind – perfect summit weather. A breakfast of hot chocolate/tea and cornflakes with hot milk was served. Everyone was in good shape as we set off from IBC at 0130hrs. Slow, steady and methodical was to be the mantra for the ascent.

The first stage of the route was over familiar ground up to HBC which we covered in good time, each step illuminated in our head torch beam. The next part of the route followed the left side of an open gully which we crossed at mid height heading rightwards toward a broad spur of rock. We became aware of a number of commercial teams who had also set off from IBC following the same line of ascent. When we reached the top of the rock spur, there was a substantial platform on which to take a well deserved rest, take on some fluid and gear up for the start of the glacier section. The sun had by now poked over the mountain tops erasing the remaining chill out of the air and it remained windless.

The team now got their second wind

and with renewed vigour crossed the glacier in good time with the summit goal now clearly in sight. There was a well marked trail across the glacier which posed no significant technical problems as the few crevasses were easily circumvented. The next and most technically difficult part of the route now lay before us. Spaced out evenly, we clipped onto the fixed rope with our jumars and a safety line to ascend the 150m of a 400 snow/ice slope to reach the summit ridge. The most disconcerting aspect of the fixed line ascent was the teams descending the fixed line alongside. Having surmounted the ridge, a further fixed rope led us up a steady incline to the summit which we all achieved within 15mins of each other. We were the last of the teams to summit at 0945hrs and had the mountain all to ourselves with an unobstructed 3600 view of Lhotse and Makalu, both over 8000m. We remained on the summit for half an hour clicking away with the cameras and congratulating each other on our achievement. Despite the physical exertions, we were all in good shape and prepared ourselves for the descent. We rapidly regained the top of the fixed line. The climbing guides had prepared an independent fixed descent rope which in my opinion was overly complex and time consuming. We all reunited on the level glacier, once again taking on fluid and food. We quickly regained the platform at the top of the rock spur where we were met by Norung, a second Himalayan Glacier trek guide, who had bought up a flask of lemon tea, some biscuits, chocolate and cheese, all of which greatly re-nourished the team after the demands of the ascent. We un-roped and packed away the technical equipment in preparation for the descent back to IBC. We arrived back at IBC in the early afternoon tired but elated. Tea and noodle soup was served. The mess tent had been dismantled and the porters had arrived to carry the bulk of our personal and technical equipment down to Chhukung. Our personal tents were quickly packed so that the porters could start on their way down the trail. Our day rucksacks were re-packed so that we were armed with the necessary personal equipment for the descent. It was mid afternoon when we set off on a slow and steady trek back to Chhukung along the well marked trail. Everyone was feeling the physical strains of a tiring ascent day but nevertheless looking forward to reaching a lower altitude and the fleshpots of the lodge at Chhukung with the promise of a good meal, soft drinks and a bed. We were dismayed by the fact that there was no lodge accommodation available at Chhukung; however we were offered tents for the night that had been erected at the back of the lodge with the promise of lodge accommodation available to us the following day. Kevin ordered a complete rest day to recuper-





Glacier Xing IP

ate after the arduous ascent day. We eventually retired at about 2145hrs.

Sat 23 Oct – Rest day and a late breakfast was taken. We utilised the day to recover our strength, eat and hydrate with copious fluid. Kevin contacted Chris in Kathmandu to relay the news of our successful ascent and the plan for the descent back to Lukla. Despite the rigours of the previous day, everyone was in good shape, flush with our success. We returned our hire equipment to the lodge manager. We re-packed our personal and technical equipment bags in preparation for the speedy descent over two days back to Lukla. Following the evening meal, Nicky and Danny resurrected the card school with the porters, climbing guides and a lodge guest whom we had taken under our wing. It had been the perfect rest day as we retired to a comfy bed.

Sun 24 Oct – Well rested, an early breakfast and we were ready to depart. We bade farewell to our climbing guide. We retraced the trail route stopping briefly at Dingboche and Tengboche for coffee and cake. We reached our lodge in Namche Bazar early evening and made full use of the hot shower facility. Steve and Danny arranged an early morning visit with Ming to the Everest View Hotel to get the prized Mt Everest photograph. We recovered the technical equipment we had stashed.

Mon 25 Oct – Another long day lay before us to reach Lukla. We stopped briefly for the last opportunity to view Mt Everest. Drink stops punctuated the journey and we finally reached Lukla in the late afternoon. We tipped our porters and assistant climbing guide, Ming.

A few beers in the local bar preceded the evening meal and the whole team retired for a good night's sleep.

Tue 26 Oct – An early start at 0500hrs put us at the airport for 0600hrs. The last hurdle was to remain calm during the chaotic booking in procedures at Lukla. We boarded the flight at 0900hrs and made it back for a late breakfast at the hotel in Kathmandu. Once there, we were reunited with the Cadets main team.

The trek to Everest Base Camp had been achieved by all the cadets old enough to be allowed by the system to go that high, though I have no doubt many of the younger ones would have been quite capable of so doing. The expedition had achieved all its aims and showed what can be achieved by a cadet unit by good planning, hard training and even harder fund raising. The cadets were unfailingly good natured, enthusiastic and well mannered and were a credit to themselves, their parents and the ACF. We are keen to encourage cadet involvement in the AMA and this expedition has definitely shown their potential.

“That’s me!”

No average climber and now professional coach, Gaz Parry has won more competitions that you can list on this page(!); here he tells ARMY MOUNTAINEER about hoarding, big walls and stiletos!

Your life in a paragraph? At school I was always the outdoor type and being a member of the rugby team and the Cadets meant I was kept pretty active. My love for the outdoors came from numerous days out in the mountains with my dad. By the time I was 12 I was climbing and was instantly hooked and by 16 I had done my first indoor competition. Ever since then I have been very active on the comp scene and I still am. I have multiple British titles to my name and am still a member of the British Boulder team. All this plastic pulling does not mean that I don’t go outside though; I spent my youth repeating Paul Pritchard desperates in the Lancashire quarries and adding my own. In the last few years I have travelled to Greenland, Madagascar and Pakistan in search for something bigger. I had a brief 4 years working for The North Face as a sales rep but I left to go climbing. Finally, climbing has led me to a house in the orange groves in Spain and the formation of Epic Adventures. Our holiday and adventure company has quickly become one of the most popular in the Costa Blanca.

I am with my long-term partner Kate and together we run Epic. She runs the business side and I do the coaching, essentially she is the boss and keeps me on track. As for marriage well we think about it and realise what a total waste of money it is just to make a party for lots of people you don’t know all that well. If it happens it will be a really low-key affair maybe in Thailand and just with a few close friends.

One route you have to climb before you die? In 2008 my dream came true and I went on an Expedition to climb Trango Tower in Pakistan. We spent a month there load carrying when it wasn’t snowing. After too many days of bad weather we finally made it to the Sun Terrace. With an evening temperature of -25 we were forced to call it a day. We were there for free climbing and didn’t have the gear for a winter siege. We headed down and stripped the ropes absolutely gutted. That night our base-camp was flattened by avalanche, the following morning we hiked over vowing never to return. 2 years on it still sits there in my mind, this is something I need to climb.

Where and when did you first start climbing? My first ever experience of climbing was at Cadshaw rocks in Lancashire, I was 12. We headed out top roping and abseiling. Hawser Laid ropes, steel carabiners and a harness made out of a car seat belt was the name of the day. I top roped an E1 and never looked back. The nicest thing was that my climbing wasn’t driven by my parents, I was the obsessed one.



Gaz Parry

What piece of gear always or never goes on your rack? Funnily enough the piece of gear that never goes on my rack is the piece of gear I first ever bought – Hexs. I totally believed they were the key to all routes and cracks. I had a 4 and a 6. I haven’t seen them for years and I don’t think I own any nowadays.

The essence of climbing? The essence of climbing for me is the move. It can be anywhere. The Lakes or Wales, Spain or Kalymnos or God forbid a climbing wall. The most fun ones happen when you are least suspecting it. Sometimes when you push too hard for pleasure and satisfaction it is hard to come by. Then that fantastic move, the one like you have never climbed before even after 25 years of climbing comes along and slaps you in the face when you are not looking. I just love the moves, man made or natural.

What skill should every man have? The ability to build walls.

What’s the worst physical pain you have ever experienced? Making my toes numb for 2 months after climbing an 800m wall in Madagascar in boots that were too tight.

What one thing should every man know about women? They are the boss (or at least let them think that)!

How do you make your favourite drink? Hot water, milk, sugar and coffee.

Any Scars that tell a story? Yes one on my head but it’s a secret, between me and a stiletto.

What was the most cherished possession you ever lost? Nothing I am a hoarder.



What was your first car? A maestro van, with blacked out back windows.

Ever have a recurring dream? Falling down the stairs.

What is the greatest honour you ever received? Recently was the smile that a guy I was coaching had on his face when he came down after flashing a route that I had helped him with, great feeling.

TopTip? Well whenever I start to get frustrated that things in life or climbing aren’t going to well I always look back at why I got into the sport. Days out with friends and exploring the unknown, was what did it for me. I sometimes like to kick back and just head out to somewhere new and just climb. If I fall off something I just laugh and think well the move was better than me. Grades are meaningless because if at the end of the day you can’t do it, you can’t do it! I actually get more enjoyment out of failing on something easy rather than something hard; it puzzles me and intrigues me to find out the answers as to why. At the end of the day it’s only a bit of rock and it will be there tomorrow. But at the end of the day the easiest solution is don’t let go....simple.

You can find out more about Gaz and Epic at www.epic-adventures.eu



**WHY?
...
FOR THE
FUN
OF IT!**

DAZ WILLIAMS MIA



Daz is a former Staff Sergeant with the Royal Engineers who now focuses his skills on delivering training and development packages through challenging activities in the outdoor environment at both individual and corporate level. Daz is a passionate mountaineering and climbing Instructor who has worked all over the world at the highest levels. An experienced manager, organiser and leader of adventure activities, mountaineering and skiing expeditions in the UK, Europe, South Africa, USA, Canada, Australasia and South America

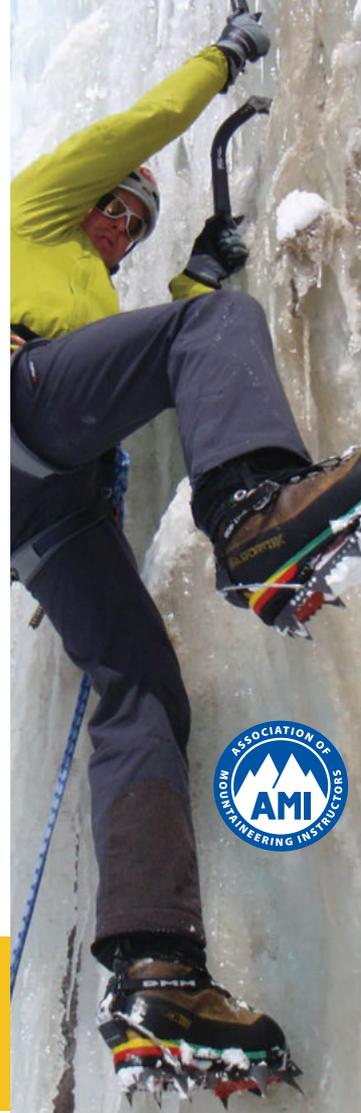
MARK HEDGE MIC



Mark is a former Warrant Officer with the Army's Physical Training Corps and specialist in Adventurous Training, Mountain Leadership and Fitness. Mark is a passionate mountaineering, climbing and fitness Instructor who has worked all over the world at a high level. An experienced manager, organiser and leader of sporting events, Mountaineering and Skiing expeditions in the UK, Europe, USA, Canada, Australasia, South America and the Himalaya.

Eryri Mountaineering is a Professional Mountaineering and Adventure Activities Company based in North Wales Set up by 2 former soldiers in the British Army. Daz and Mark run most of the activities and courses themselves. You will appreciate their depth of experience and local knowledge combined with humour and relaxed approach. Should they not be available, we use a good team of climbing, mountaineering and adventure activity instructors. The instructors have all been chosen for their skills in the outdoors, their ability to work with a variety of groups and are known to us personally.

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ERYRI MOUNTAINEERING AND ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES

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