

ARMY MOUNTAINEER



The Journal of The Army Mountaineering Association

AMA 50

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Dartmoor National Park

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SUMMER 2007



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ARMY MOUNTAINEER

The Journal of The Army Mountaineering Association



Sail Mountaineering Opportunity

This email was sent to the AMA, are you interested?

Dear Captain Trefry-Kingdom,

I understand that you are Secretary of the Army Mountaineering Association and I wonder if you might be able to assist me.

I am in the planning stages of a trip in my boat Harrac to Smith Island in the South Shetlands. We plan to put a team onto the Island to climb Mount Foster in January 2008, which, to the best of my knowledge has never been climbed by a British team. As I'm sure you know Tilman had a go in the sixties and a United Services team had a go in the Eighties (?). The mountain was eventually climbed by a Canadian team in '96.

You can see full details of the trip on www.smithisland.co.uk but my big issue at the moment is that I lack a suitably qualified and experienced person to lead the climb (I have 3 experienced amateurs to be part of the climbing team but none of them have what I need). I shall be looking after Harrac, much as I would like to climb, and I need someone with serious mountaineering experience as well as leadership skills. There is quite a bit of fairly hairy sailing before we get to Smith Island which is another factor - I would rather not have someone who is going to be lying in their bunk praying for deliverance!

This year is the 30th anniversary of Tilman's death in En Avant en route to Smith Island and coincidentally the 25th anniversary of the Falklands War, in which my brother in law was the senior Gunner officer. You will see from the Website that we shall be Christmasing in Port Stanley.

Many thanks
Yours sincerely
Angus Cater MA
Managing Director
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Tel: 01306 746312
e-mail: angus.cater@sfs-group.co.uk

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Going for it at the Army Boulder Championships.

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To join the AMA visit our web site: www.theama.org.uk

APPPOINTMENTS

Foreword

by Brigadier Jon Watson MBE
President



This 50th anniversary year of the Army Mountaineering Association has got off to a cracking start. The team from The Army Foundation College has already returned from the Atlas mountains in Morocco having successfully achieved their goal of climbing Jebel Toubkal, members of the ski mountaineering expedition to Shisha Pangma are training hard, and planning for the trip to Andrees Land in Greenland is well under way. Mildly disappointing is the news that we will have to postpone our visit to Lotus Flower Tower until next year, but there was a late change of leadership and a short delay is a price worth paying for a properly organised attempt. These are ambitious plans, and we owe a vote of thanks to the Army Central Fund, ATG(A) and the Berlin Infantry Brigade Memorial Trust Fund as well as our various patrons and commercial sponsors, all of whom have supported us so generously and willingly throughout and without whom these adventures would not be possible.

Those who attended our Festival of Climbing in Capel Curig at Easter could have been forgiven for thinking that summer had already arrived, with conditions so arid that even the notoriously



AMA New Year's meet 2007.

well irrigated top of Grey Slab was clean and dry. So sunny was it and so blue the sky that it seemed almost a sin to be indoors, but many reaped the best of both worlds by taking advantage of the opportunity to enter the "crag pointing" competition that com-

plemented the main event at Indie and the Beacon Climbing Centre at

Llanberis. Thanks to Mike Smith's climbing and organisational skills, the indoor competition went ahead as planned, yielding some excellent performances and deserving prizewinners. On the final day we were graced with the presence of Colonel Chris Harris, the Secretary of the Army Sports Control Board, who had come to see for himself what sport climbing was all about and how the ASCB's grant was being spent. I am delighted to say that he was thoroughly impressed on both counts, commenting favourably on the skill and determination of the competitors and the high standards achieved. As a result I dare to hope that the future support of the ASCB, so vital to this growing sport, is assured.

These events follow hard on the heels of last year's Everest West Ridge expedition, whose courage and professionalism has made a lasting impression on the climbing community both within the Services and more widely in the civilian climbing community. As I watched our stars competing on the wall I was struck by the depth of the talent we encompass within the Association and the breadth of activities we undertake around the world. Whether you have been front-pointing up the French Spur or redpointing at Gogarth you really are a remarkable bunch, and I congratulate you all on this year's achievements so far. Of course there is much to look forward to as well, from the moderately tricky to the mildly bonkers, including an attempt by Mark and Ritchie to complete every Hard Rock route in Ken Wilson's book within a season. But if a couple of weekends on the crags and maybe a visit to JSAM are all you can manage, no matter: it's all climbing and it's all good. So good luck, get out there and stay safe.

Editorial

Welcome to the Summer 2007 edition of the Army Mountaineer in this our 50th Anniversary year. The magazine is full of good stuff from the AMA 50 trip to Morocco lead by Daz Doyle with a team of young climbers to the 'off the wall adventure' of the AMA Winter meet. The sport climbers have made it to the cover again, for the second time only I believe, with their muscle pumping events of the Army Bouldering championships and the very successful Army Festival of Climbing. Mike Smith project to celebrate all aspects of climbing and have fun doing it is an example to all sports lovers of an inclusive event. I have made the most of the full colour style of the magazine show off your picture, I hope you like it!

On a more serious note I was disturbed to here about how many had lost their lives in the mountains of Scotland this winter. I remember my own Scottish winter apprenticeship and the many close calls I had with friends on dubious gear and long run-outs. Winter mountaineering above all other aspects of climbing is the most risky, you go out in search of adventure when most sane people are hold up in front of a fire with a single malt in their hand! But it is also the most challenging and that is the catch. Climbers see the world in a different way to many others, full of opportunities to test them selves against the elements and gravity. I would be the last person on the planet to say 'it's not worth

the risk', because it is. But what I will say is you have to learn the trade and spend time getting to know winter conditions and developing your own survival skills. The very thing that makes winter mountaineering so enjoyable is also the very thing that will kill you at the first opportunity! It is a thin line we mountaineers walk, keep your wits about you and if you are in doubt play it safe and learn from the experience.

As some of you will know I retired from the Army at the start of this year. Life in civilian street is good but challenging and I have found myself being propped up by my sole mate, climbing. I have been the journal editor for 10 years and tried to hand over the job on two occasions. This time it is the final handover! If you are reading this magazine and are thinking you could do better or just different then you are where I was 10 years ago. It is a great job on the committee, you are in the thick of it and you can make a real difference for the membership. If you would like to become the Journal Editor contact Cath Davis direct before the AGM in September.

And finally the £150 goes to Sven for his AMA Winter Meet article and for keeping alive the adventure...

Cheers Steve

Error - Winter 06/07 Journal - The Cho Oyu Affair was wrongly credited to Stu Macdonald. The article was written by Simon Hall, Sorry Simon.

AMA 50 Expedition – UPDATE

By Major Cath Davies, Chairman and Project Leader AMA50.

The planned activities to celebrate our 50th anniversary got off to a great start with the first expedition of the five in the project, the high altitude trekking trip to the Atlas Mountains, being completed. SSgt Daz Doyle, Capt Jen Robbins and SSgt John Belsham did a great job, introducing Junior Soldiers from Harrogate to the mountainous environment. I won't say more, as their article is in this Journal, but suffice to say, the aims of Adventurous Training were met!

After much correspondence and frustration, we managed to squeeze suitable levels of financial support out of the military welfare system; in the case of one fund, it only took 12 months! No wonder people are reluctant to organise remote and adventurous, ie expensive, trips. Sterling

efforts by the Shisha Pangma management team and military patron, Lt Gen Graeme Lamb, produced the quantity of commercial sponsorship some had thought impossible and so all the expeds are now funded. All up, AMA50 will cost £229K, a big ask one year following an Everest trip, but we have done it, and 53 AMA members, of all levels of experience, will be able to participate in this great project showcasing the many varied activities we, as an Association, get up to in the mountains.

In addition, another major project to celebrate our 50th anniversary, the Army Festival of Climbing, took place in April. Capt Mike Smith, our longstanding (and long-suffering) Sport Climbing Secretary, came up with the scathingly brilliant idea to

extend the Sport Climbing Championships, normally a two day event, which we run on behalf of the Army, to a week long event including outdoor climbing opportunities in North Wales as well. Mike not only came up with the concept, but organized all of it, sourcing the funding for all the extra transport as well as the normal support, through the Army Sports Control Board. There were 70 competitors and others used the advantage of the accommodation at Capel Curig and the draw of evening presentations to enhance a week of cragging in probably the best North Wales weather there has ever been. Not only can he organize a topnotch event, but he can sort the weather too!

Coming up as another free-standing celebratory event is

an attempt by Capt Mark Stevenson and a retired member to climb all the climbs in Hard Rock in one month this summer. Only two people have ever achieved this feat, and they didn't manage it in time! This will be another true first for the AMA, and they are also raising funds for British mountain rescue. Look for the link from the AMA site. So our celebrations are going in great style. If you are not involved in any of the expeds, why not make sure you come along to the AGM weekend 21 – 23 September at Indefatigable and hear all about them, or make an effort to attend the 50th Anniversary dinner (if that's your sort of thing – only joking, it will be very informal with some great presentations) which will take place on Fri 9 Nov, location to be confirmed. Get the dates in the diary and be there.

EXPEDITION GRANT APPLICATION PROCEDURE

1. The expedition grant application proforma is available on the AMA website to be downloaded as a hard copy.

2. The grant application is to be fully completed and is to include a nominal roll of current AMA members with their membership number clearly identified. Grants are not available for non AMA members.

3. Grant applications are to be forwarded to the Expeditions Secretary, Maj K P Edwards APTC, CI JSMTCL, Plas Llanfair, Llanfair PG, Anglesey, N Wales, LL61 6NT. Alternatively the grant application can be faxed (mil: 95 581 7904 or civ: 01248 718311) or sent by e-mail (internet ci-indefatigable@jsmtc.mod.uk). NB Do not send grant applications to the AMA Expeditions Secretary e-mail as it is a dormant account.

EXPEDITION GRANTS EXPLAINED

4. The AMA allocates a proportion of the annual budget to provide a source of funding to financially assist AMA members who, in their capacity as a Leader or offering vital technical expertise through their qualifications or as a team member, are planning and organising or participating in a Level 3 expedition.

5. There is a separate allocation of funding for members planning and organising AMA Meets or the annual programme of approved AMA expeditions i.e. JSAM, HOT ROCK etc.

6. The grant application is vetted by the AMA expedition panel. The level of grant is assessed on the following criteria:

- a) The area of the expedition - Europe, Canada/USA, Other world wide destinations.
- b) The aim of the expedition – technical/non technical routes, high risk, remote, high altitude, using mountain huts or bivis, new area of exploration etc.
- c) The purpose of participation – Leader, qualifications, team member.

7. Once the grant application has been assessed and the level of grant decided a letter of confirmation will be sent to the applicant. Grants will be allotted to an expedition or unit account and not to individuals.

8. The letter of authority is for the applicant to access the grant directly from the AMA Treasurer. A condition of receiving the grant is a commitment to provide a copy of the PXR to the AMA Expeditions Secretary and an article to be sent to the AMA Journal Editor.

9. Applicants are reminded that if there is an excess of finance when the budget is reconciled on completion of the expedition then the AMA grant is to be reimbursed in the first instance.

The Army Festival of Climbing

By Mike Smith

The Army Festival of Climbing has recently taken place in North Wales. The event, part of the Army Mountaineering Association's 50th anniversary celebrations also incorporated the Army Sport Climbing Championships. Just over 70 climbers gathered at Capel Curig Training camp for a week of climbing and other activities.

Most of those taking part arrived on the Monday in preparation for the first of the competition elimination rounds at the Joint Service Mountain Training Centre climbing wall. Those not competing on the Tuesday were able to explore the crags of the Ogwen Valley and take

part in the new outdoor sport of Crag - Pointing.

The wall staff had prepared eight routes for the elimination rounds, every competitor had to attempt each route in order and each route was progressively more difficult. This ensures that competitors were fully warmed up prior to tackling the harder routes.

On the Tuesday evening Lt Col Dave Wilson gave an excellent presentation on the Everest West Ridge expedition. This had the audience enthralled for most of the evening as the story was told.

Wednesday saw the second group of climbers attempting their elimination rounds and

the team competition. The team had three disciplines to attempt; a speed climb relay, an on-sight lead and five boulder problems. This produced a very exciting event with the final winning team, NUOTC, clinching victory by one point! The new format may see the team event as a separate competition in the future.

Climbers not involved in the elimination rounds continued collecting points towards the Crag-pointing competition. Pairs of climbers climbed routes and gained points according to a pre-designed matrix. Popular routes and roadside crags incurred a penalty to encourage climbers to seek out less fre-

quented areas. The winners, who tallied up an incredible 1500pts, were Capt Mark Stevenson and Mr Rich Mayfield (AMA). Mark and Rich are preparing to attempt to climb 60 routes over a period of five weeks this summer in aid of Mountain Rescue. You can follow their progress and make a donation at www.hardrockchallenge.org.uk

In the evening local climber and climbing legend Pat Littlejohn gave a presentation on rock climbing in Africa and Alpine Mountaineering in the Tien Shan. This was an inspirational talk and showed what can be achieved by a small team of climbers.

The team at the Beacon.





Fighting gravity at the bouldering comp.

On Thursday all competitors moved to the renowned Beacon Climbing Centre for the finals. A number of VIP's attended to give their support including Col (Retd) John Peacock (1976 Everest Expedition) and Col (Retd) Chris Harris, secretary Army Sport Control Board. After the elimination rounds the climbers were sorted into three categories; "Top Rope Final", "Open Lead Semi Final" and "Elite Lead Semi Final". The routes, set by the staff at the beacon and checked by international route setter Andy Long, were

much longer and a lot steeper than those at JSMTC.

The day started with the Top Rope competition. The competitors climbed in reverse order from their results in the elimination rounds. A number of climbers reached a high point but could not get past the final small roof, until Cpl Aiden Carbutt managed to unlock the last three moves. He score the max 100 points with Sgt John Leitch a very close second.

Next came the Open Semi final. This route climbed a fiercely overhanging roof that tested the climbers to the limit. Only three managed to overcome the roof and complete the route but 12 climbers were selected to progress through to the finals.

The seven Elite climbers had been sent straight to isolation on arrival at the Beacon. This is a frustrating experience but essential for fair play. All other routes had been demonstrated but to ensure no prior knowledge the final routes for the elite category were a complete secret. The competitors were brought out in random order and all but 2 completed the first route. This gave a start order for the Elite final.

During the afternoon, competitors who did not achieve a

final were able to compete in a boulder competition. This was won by LCpl Matt Hopkinson, 17 Port & Maritime. The 12 climbers for the open comp were shown their final route, a very long and steep route up the main wall which was demonstrated by Andy Long. Again the climbers were in reverse order from the semi final round. The final produced a few surprises as favorites from the initial elimination rounds fell off. The eventual winner was OCdt Josh Conway from NUOTC. Meanwhile the elite category had been sweating it out in isolation. Again their route had been kept secret to ensure it was completely on-sight. This route was far more difficult than the semi final and produced a steady stream of fallers. LCpl Ian Karcoutli managed to gain a fraction of extra movement during his attempt and was eventually proclaimed the

Meet member out on the natural stuff.



overall winner. A full list of results can be found at the Army Sport Climbing Website.

The AMA president, Brigadier Watson, presented prizes before the third evening presentation of the week. This was a series of short video clips from Spain interspersed with a witty dialogue from Rich Mayfield, Orange House.

Many thanks to those that supported the competition including; Climb Magazine, Rockfax, DMM, Evolv Climbing Shoes and even big-

ger thanks to those sponsoring the event including The Army Sports Lottery, Cotswold Outdoor, High Places, Edelweiss Ropes, Entre Prises and The Orange House. Without their very generous support the event would not have been so successful.

Keep up to date with Army Sport Climbing at www.army.mod.uk/sport_climbing/index.htm. Next event Inter-Service Championships in July.



Making the most of the wall at Indy.



Bouldering competitor at Indy.

ARMY BOULDERING CHAMPIONSHIPS 2007

Over 100 Army climbers gathered at the Joint Service Mountain Training Center (Indefatigable) (JSMTCL) on Anglesey for this year's Army Bouldering Championships. The event, kindly hosted by the commandant of JSMTCL, is now in its fifth year and has seen a steady increase in participation.

This year's competition was wide open due to the non appearance of both last year's mens and ladies champions. Strong contenders, this year, included Capt Tom Odling, Capt Mark Stevenson and WO2 Mark Hedge.

Bouldering, for the un-initiated is climbing short routes of 3 to 10 moves to an approximate height of 3 metres. Large mats ensure a safe landing and other than climbing shoes and a chalk bag no equipment is required. Some would say this is

climbing at its purest form. The format of the competition requires competitors to move around three separate zones, each very different in character. Within each zone there are 10 problems to attempt. These are a mix of easy, medium and desperate difficulty problems, each scoring a maximum of 10 points each.

Tracking the progress of each competitor throughout the event is very difficult and it wasn't until all the scorecards were submitted that Capt Tom Odling, 6 Bn REME emerged as the clear winner with 278 points. Second and third place went to LCpl Colin Legget, ITC Caterrick and Capt Rob Lawrence, 1 PARA with 267 and 262 points respectively. The ladies champion was Capt Caroline Graham-Brown from Army Foundation College, 143 points and U21 champion was Cfn Chris Walker from School of Electrical and

Mechanical Engineering with 241 points. The team prize went to NUOTC A team closely followed by SEME Bordon and 14 Sig Regt in third place. WO2 Mark Hedge, 14 Sig Regt (EW) picked up best veteran and came fourth with 257 points. A full list of results are available at www.army.mod.uk/sport_climbing/index.htm

The next event in the sport climbing calendar is the 4 Div Championships at Arborfield on 3 March. The 2 Div Champs are on the 11 April and then followed by the Army Festival of Climbing. All details on the above website.

Sponsorship. Cotswold Outdoor, High Places (suppliers of Edelweiss ropes, Kong Climbing Equipment and Lucky Climbing Equipment) and Entre Prises Climbing Walls sponsor Army SC.

DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK

A Lifetime Of Attraction

It has been a few of years since my last (and only) contribution to this journal and like many I have felt the rigors of operations (if you can call Staff work rigorous) and the hectic life of in barracks routine to the point where adventurous training always took a back seat. In fact, I have had little adventure since I last led a group of soldiers from 4 Bn REME to the French and Swiss Alp in 2004, so I had to think long and hard as to what I could actually write. Then suddenly it occurred to me; where was the one place that I always found time to plod, the one place that I have so many fond memories of and the one place that I have always considered my home from homes? That place is Dartmoor National Park.

My love for Dartmoor started at the tender age of 13 when as an Army Cadet I was first introduced to the annual Ten Tors Expedition. For those who are not familiar with this event, Ten Tors is an annual expedition run by 43 (Wessex) Bde where some 2000 young adults in teams of six representing organisations such as the Army Cadet Force, The Scouts and numerous schools and colleges attempt

to walk 35, 45 or 55 miles across Dartmoor visiting 10 Tors en route¹. The expedition incorporates all those attributes and skills that we as regular soldiers value as vital to operational capability: leadership, teamwork, physical fitness and moral and physical courage. It should therefore come as no surprise that this venture challenges each and every individual from the 13 year-old Guide on her first Bronze (35 miles) route to the seasoned 20 year-old Officer Cadet returning for his third and maybe final time aspiring to complete the Gold (55 miles) route. I have always held this expedition in high regard and having completed all three routes it is one that I would commend to any youngster or unit with young soldiers for that matter; after all, the initial concept of Ten Tors was devised in 1959 by three officers of the Junior Leaders Regiment, R SIGS.

Dartmoor has a wealth of military history commencing long before the first soldier of the Junior Leaders Regiment set foot upon her. Ever since the construction of Dartmoor Prison in 1806-9 to house French and later American POWs the military has had a

continued presence. During WWII Dartmoor was effectively employed as an artillery range and RAF Sharpitor² was the master transmitting station for the South Western Gee Chain until its closure and subsequent demolition in 1949. By the 1982 Falklands War Dartmoor was used as a military training area, most notably by the Royal Marine Commandos and still is to this day. For many who have 'yomped' the length and breadth of Dartmoor, whether as part of the All Arms Commando Course or on exercise, it is more than just the wet, sodden and lonely place plagued with bottomless bogs and incessant rain for which it is reputed. It's a wonderful place with a picturesque landscape, shrouded in folklore and it was the setting for Sherlock Holmes and the Hounds of the Baskervilles; however there is more to Dartmoor's sinister background than this one novel. For example, the crossing of Crazy Well Pool³ is more ominous than one might think. Local superstition would have us believe that if you were to look into the pool at dusk on Midsummer Eve, you will see the face of the next person in the Parish to die; a reassuring thought for the next time you find yourself swimming across this old mine working.

Mining was very much a part of Dartmoor life and this is evident wherever you choose to walk with examples of old tin workings and ruins at Whiteworks⁴ and Eylesbarrow⁵ Tin Mines, but this form of labour was not restricted to mining alone. There has been a long history of quarrying at Merrivale⁶ and there remains China Clay Works at Lee Moor and Red Lake (disused) with its water filled pits and towering spoil heap, but long

before this man could be found on Dartmoor. For those of you who seek evidence of early life then Grimspound⁷, a Bronze Age settlement is the place to go. Situated on Hameldown, Grimspound still maintains its wall and many ruined houses and also in the locality is the Two Moors Way linking Exmoor and Dartmoor and a memorial⁸ to the 4 crew of a Hampden bomber from 49 Sqn, RAF Scampden that crashed returning from operations over France.

If like myself, you enjoy a good pint after a hard days walk, then the Warren House Inn⁹ is a great port of call. Lying 1km south west of the B3212 / Two Moors Way crossing, this inn is reputed to be the third highest in England and its log fire has never stopped burning. For the beer connoisseurs amongst you, another place worth visiting is Princetown. Named after the Prince of Wales this small town is an ideal base for ventures across Dartmoor. There are a number of campsites and B&Bs, the infamous Dartmoor Prison with its museum and the Dartmoor Visitors Centre, but more importantly there are three good pubs in easy walking distance (anyone visiting is advised to sample the local brews in particular Jail Ale).

Many may question why they should walk Dartmoor; 'its not like it's a mountain' I hear you cry. Well, the main reason I keep returning is for the simple fact that it really is off the beaten track. Not confined to mountain tracks and not hemmed in on both sides by sheer rock faces you can pretty much walk anywhere you like over a variety of terrain and in all imaginable weather conditions providing all with a real sense of achievement at the end of the



"The Stone Hunter - Bowerman's Nose" taken from website <http://www.richkni.co.uk>



"Restored Stone Cross near Crazy Well Pool" taken from website <http://www.parle.co.uk>

day. It is the weather that interests me most though. In the morning you can set off in near perfect conditions and within a few hours the skies have blackened, the rain has begun and the mist reduces visibility to mere metres leaving you utterly dependent upon your trusty map and compass. I have even found myself caught out in snow on a couple of occasions and I can safely say that the "blizzard" of 1997's Ten Tors Expedition is one day I will never forget. With mist in mind I would like to indulge you in another short story from Dartmoor's mysterious past. During Tudor times a gentleman by the name of Sir John Fitz and his good lady wife were riding the moors when suddenly the mist covered the area like a large grey blanket and in the confusion that followed, the mis-

chievous Dartmoor Pixies lured the unsuspecting travellers from their route. Officially 'Pixie-led' (lost) there was only one remedy for their predicament. Sir John and Lady Fitz turned their coats and pockets inside out and as if my magic the mist cleared revealing a spring from which they found their way home. To mark this event Sir John built a well (Fitz's or Fice's Well¹⁰) over the spring inscribing the initials I.F. So, if you do find yourself lost on the open moors remember this simple yet effective immediate action drill and you will soon be back on track.

Stone circles are another feature that does not go unnoticed. Like mini Stonehenges they appear randomly across the moors, sometime accompanied by stone rows, but often without. Scorhill Circle¹¹



"Single Living Accommodation - Grimspound" taken from website <http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/andyspatch/grimspound.html>

1 Running along side the Ten Tors Expedition is the Jubilee Challenge. Set over four different distances (7 ½, 8 ½, 11 and 15 miles) this event is organised to allow children with special needs to experience the same challenges and achievements as their counterparts in the Main Event.

2 OS Map 1:25000 OL28 GR 559703.
3 OS Map 1:25000 OL28 GR 582704.
4 OS Map 1:25000 OL28 GR 6170.
5 OS Map 1:25000 OL28 GR 598682.
6 OS Map 1:25000 OL28 GR 5475.
7 OS Map 1:25000 OL28 GR 701809.
8 OS Map 1:25000 OL28 GR 704810.



"Unveiling the RAF Memorial on Hameldown" taken from website <http://pallas.ex.ac-Dartmoor Archive>

is a prime example of this architecture as is the area of Erme Plains (GR 6365) with its stone rows, pound and numerous settlements. For those of a religious nature there are many stone crosses scattered across Dartmoor; originally used to mark routes such as the Abbots Way between parishes these features are a monument to the diverse history of this enchanting place and Ter Hill Crosses¹² is one of the finest examples.

For families there is no better place than Dartmoor with its abundance of reservoirs and rivers for short walks and idyllic picnic sites. Postbridge (GR 6478) lies a few kilometres south west of the Warren House Inn and is an ideal setting for a picnic. Although quite busy at the height of the tourist season, Postbridge with its medieval clapper bridge really makes for a relaxing day outdoors and it is also a good start point for short walks to either the East Dart River or Bellever Tor¹³, one of best vantage points on Dartmoor and an area where I too spent many summers with my parents and sister. Away from the hustle and bustle of Postbridge is the slightly more secluded village of Manaton (GR 7481). This quaint little place is another good location from which to launch into an enthralling walk that encompasses fantastic scenery, history and a

bit of folklore. Within a few kilometres you will witness picturesque panoramas of Dartmoor from the crest of Hound Tor, take a step back in time when visiting the site of the medieval village of Hundatona¹⁴ and set your eyes upon a stone man known only as Bowerman with his large nose and peaked cap. Bowerman was a mighty hunter who lived near Manaton during Norman times. One day whilst out hunting he stumbled upon a coven of witches performing a ritual. So infuriated were the witches by his intrusion that the next time he was out hunting, one witch, appearing to Bowerman as a hare led him into a long, tiring chase. Exhausted, Bowerman gave up the chase, but was immediately ambushed by the remaining witches who between them turned him into a massive rock known today as Bowerman's Nose¹⁵.

And on that note, I will leave with my final thoughts. Dartmoor is a wonderful place that is suited to all people of all ages and abilities, and makes for a good family day out or a good long venture. It is awash with beautiful scenery, historical sites and architecture, great pubs and challenging terrain. So go on! Take a chance and pay her a visit, but remember; take your reversible softie jacket and beware those witches and pixies.

9 OS Map 1:25000 OL28 GR 684809.
10 OS Map 1:25000 OL28 GR 577758.
11 OS Map 1:25000 OL28 GR 655873.
12 OS Map 1:25000 OL28 GR 641706.
13 OS Map 1:25000 OL28 GR 644764.
14 OS Map 1:25000 OL28 GR 746747.
15 OS Map 1:25000 OL28 GR 741804.

Fighting the Chill

KANGERLUSSUAQ 2007

By OCdt J Rose Thunderer Squadron

I enjoy a challenge every so often, so when in the Easter of 2006 I bumped into a friend from Southampton UOTC I had a new one. They [the UOTC] had just returned from a skiing expedition in the eastern coast of Greenland, a region known as Liverpool Land. After listening to his exciting story of adventure Greenland became lodged in my mind like a splinter!

And so Ex. Nuuk Shrivensham was conceived with the primary aim of exposing the expedition members to the Arctic climate. Initially there were two options; a ski touring expedition or a trekking one across the great Arctic snowfields with a group of officer cadets from Thunderer Squadron [a Southampton DTUS unit]. In order to do a skiing expedition, members required the relevant qualifications. A trekking expedition it was to be then! So with 5 other officer cadets we trained on the mountains of Snowdonia and the Black Mountains, and with our instructor, Major Laing from 3 Royal Welsh, obtained our

Winter Mountaineering Proficiency (WMP) award in Fort William.

We were set. We had all the equipment, an instructor and the enthusiasm, and despite a 5 hour delay at Copenhagen airport we arrived in Kangerlussuaq on the 16th March 2007. The temperature was a mild -7 oC and we were chauffeured in a classic American school bus to the hostel. The town is fascinating; situated on the western coast of Greenland, it has a population of approximately 500 almost all of whom have some connection with the airport (a former US Air Force base). To the east of the town, and about 25kms away is the Greenland ice cap (Russells - without the apostrophe - Glacier) and mountainous terrain to the west and south-east. A fjord extends about 185km west and was frozen at the time of our arrival. Kangerlussuaq, 60km north of the Arctic Circle, is said to have one of the most stable, and extreme, climates in Greenland making it ideal for expeditions.

We spent the first day acclimatising and gathering our supplies from the only two shops in town. The next day we headed out and dumped the food supplies we would be using on the expeditionary phase. The maximum temperature was -12 oC and we covered a distance of 25km there and back. There was an initial 600m climb to reach the high ground. With the day approaching our cut-off time, we dumped the food - about 4km short of our planned base camp and buried it. It was a long and tiring day. But being on the high ground we were graced with the amazing sight of the ice cap - majestic in its sheer size. Wildlife was only seen in the distance... but more was to come.

The second day was initially set aside for a visit to the Russells Glacier because we would not be trekking to it. However, after discovering the astronomical price of the tour, we concentrated on preparing for the expeditionary phase. We would be spending 6 days out and this required adequate prepara-

tion. We had brought snowshoes as part out our equipment but after the first trek we decided the conditions were not right for their use. We were also informed that all the lakes and streams were frozen - a bonus because the ground was littered with potentially track-stopping rivers and streams.

Tuesday 20th March. Although this was one of the warmest days (a max of 0 oC) it was also one of the windiest which meant that the effective temperature was much lower. We managed to hitch hike around the airport to reduce unnecessary walking after which it was crampons-on. Due to the unusually high temperatures the snow had melted and formed ice; this meant we had to wear crampons for the entire day. It was an awesome day however, with a lot of sunshine. We reached our food dump location, and dug for the stash. Due to the frozen snow, this was a bit harder than anticipated and resulted in the spade going through a couple of our canoe bags and a



crampon into one of the fuel bottles. 3kms further we selected the spot for base camp. In some areas the snow was extremely thick and some people found themselves thigh deep in snow. Needless to say that this was perfect ground for snowshoes – but we had left them behind! We persevered, and luckily this was the only time snowshoes were desperately needed.

The following day was to turn out to be the lightest day in terms of rucksack weight. We headed south-east towards the peak named 'Nakajanga' and on the way hand-railed a frozen lake. Before reaching the lake though, we came across the carcass of a Musk Ox, which amused us for about ten minutes as we tried to figure out the cause of its apparently unfortunate end. The frozen lake made for easier walking, and half way along we discovered a reindeer antler caught in the frozen water. After a few minutes of careful digging by OCdt Needham, it was free. I, however, was to carry it for the entire duration, its final destination: the Thunderer



Walking on frozen lake on route to summit.

Squadron Mess. It was another good day for trekking – we had been extremely fortunate so far – there was sunshine and little to no wind. However, upon reaching our destined peak, the clouds closed in. Luckily we had just decided to have lunch on the lake, and after setting a few sliding records on the ice (and 7 pots of noodles later) the weather had cleared up – we were

good to go for our summit! Kangerlussuaq is not exactly littered with 'Everests', so at 625m, this peak was not the hardest challenge, but it did offer some fantastic views of the surrounding terrain.

It was a good day's walking, but after a cracked plastic boot, torn salopettes and a lot of ice walking, we all looked forward to a night in our tents.

The next morning laughs were had at the expense of two members who had difficulties utilising a pee bottle and a 'shewee'!

The following days were characterised by long walks, some over ice lakes, with extremely heavy packs that, physics be damned, got heavier! Each morning snow would fall inside the tent from

On a frozen lake.





Map reading on the hill climb to base camp.

the condensation – the cause of frustration every single day – and the heads of the sleeping bags would invariably be wet or frozen as well. Made even more interesting in the morning was the fact that someone would always have to leave their tent, and therefore their warm sleeping bags (!), and try obtain breakfast from another tent. The phrase 'prior preparation...' has never rang truer. As the days passed we saw more and more of the Greenland wildlife including Reindeer and the massive, but surprisingly agile Musk Ox which we saw in great numbers.

The minimum night time temperatures also progressively dropped, and on our last day we were down to at least -30 oC and definitely necessitated the use of our duvet jackets in the sleeping bags. Day time temperatures did still fluctuate and as the expedition drew to a close terrain went from deep snow to what resembled the Kalahari (minus the heat). It really was a contrast.

The last day was a long slog! By the time we reached the 'outskirts' of town my feet, and a few others were burn-

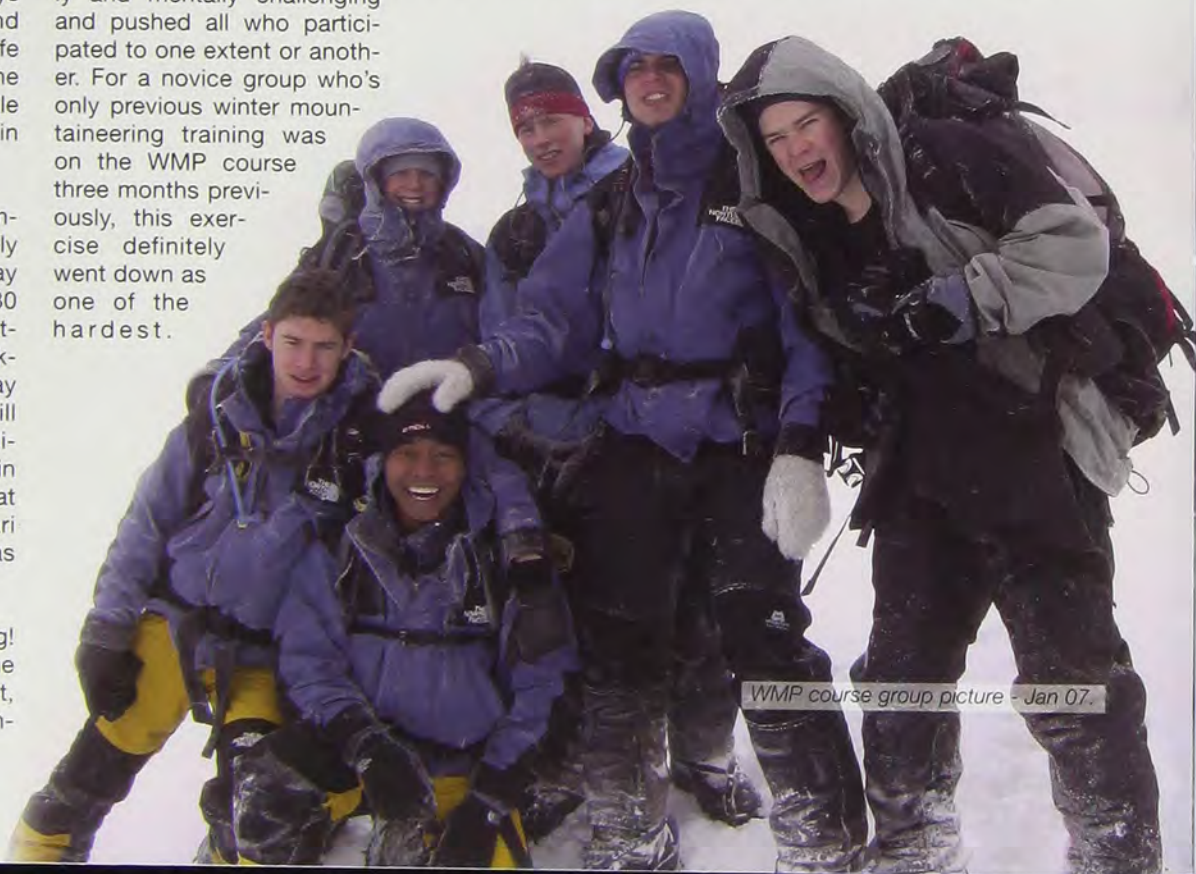
ing from walking on cramps for almost the entire expedition. Sweet relief when we took them off, but we still had a further 5km to go! In 24 hours we would be heading back to Copenhagen and onto London before heading back to Southampton.

A challenge we were looking for, a challenge we got! The expedition was both physically and mentally challenging and pushed all who participated to one extent or another. For a novice group who's only previous winter mountaineering training was on the WMP course three months previously, this exercise definitely went down as one of the hardest.

Nonetheless every one had dug in and come out of it with a sense of achievement. Unconfirmed it was, but our achievement was even sweeter when we thought we were the first Joint Services team to the region...

Kangerlussuaq is an amazing place with many opportunities for expeditions. It should also be emphasised that trekking

to the glacier is not the only possibility – as we had shown – for example the westward trek towards the larger settlement of Sisimiut 185km away! The people are definitely friendly, and most are surprisingly fluent in English. Those interested in the town can request the expedition PXR using the following email addresses: jrr104@soton.ac.uk or amnuba@hotmail.com.



WMP course group picture - Jan 07.

ALPINE TRAINING CENTRE WINTER PROGRAMME

By Hans Felder

Last year was an excellent winter season down here in Bavaria, due to most of the weather arriving from the north east, ensuring most of the northern Alps received good dumps of snow. Before being posted here as an instructor, I was totally unaware of how much Bavaria had to offer in terms of downhill skiing and especially ski touring. We started touring locally in the beginning of Dec 06 just before the lift lines opened. Piles of deep unconsolidated snow with no base, humps, ditches and shrubbery equals skis stay where they are and flying lessons. The season continued as it has over the last couple of years with better conditions as it went on. I believe ski touring is the way ahead as it achieves the aims of AT, it gets you away from the crowds, opens up more challenging technical routes improving your all round mountaineering. More importantly touring reveals, on occasions, waist deep virgin powder, which, there is no better feeling. With the above in mind, Bavaria is a bit of a hidden gem.

At ATC the winter alpine courses start they run for blocks of 10 days with a weekend in between to enjoy the cultural delights on offer locally. We offer the 5 day advanced proficiency alpine (APA) followed by the 5 day tour leader training (TLT) course which is required before attending the Ski Instructors course. You need to be of a good parallel standard before attending the above. We also had a ski

touring symposium this year which allows students to gain more quality log book days and qualifications, speaking of which the provisional Ski Mountain leader training and assessments are also run in April.

There are also 3 military multi activity lodges in the Allgau which offer the basic ski proficiency (BSA) and ski tour proficiency (STP) awards for exercising troops. Determine what your plan is and check the availability with the level 2 booking clerk. Equipment, messing, transport and a certain amount of instructors are available at no cost.

More information and booking can be obtained from the Courses Clerk, HQ ATG, tel no Mil (94879) ext 2918 civ (0049) 5254982918, or on the army net or civilian web under Adventurous Training.

Slide or Glide is a civilian lodge that is fully conversant with military exercises, any information required can be obtained direct. The lodge is accepted on the JSATFA application, contact John May at slideorglide.net or telephone (0049) 16097754252 for more information.



Phil Maddox on ridge line.



Steep couloir abseil.

NORTHERN MOROCCO

[AMA 50] 2007

By Darren Doyle APTC

Exercise Northern Morocco formed one part of a wide ranging project being undertaken by the Army Mountaineering Association (AMA) to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its formation. Northern Morocco was the first expedition and this took place in North Africa during February 2007. The aim of the trip was to be a winter mountaineering expedition to introduce Junior Soldiers from the Army Foundation College to activities in the mountainous environment. The expedition would develop not only the technical mountaineering skills of the participants; it also would assist in their personal development at this formative stage of their military career.

Arriving in Marrakech late afternoon on Sun 11 Feb 07 we found ourselves to be bartering outside the airport for a cheap taxi to take us to our hotel. Once we had been dropped off in the centre of Marrakech we realised that most of us were missing as we had been dropped off in different locations near to our hotel. Once we had found the rest of the team we headed off to our hotel to settle into our rooms. Later we went out for some Moroccan food and traditional mint tea. After leaving the restaurant we exchanged money and purchased a small amount of supplies and later took a walk around the town looking at the sights. In the



The team enjoy the local cuisine.

main plaza there were snake-charmers, dancers and other performers. The hotel staff were very helpful in organizing transport for the whole trip and with any other admin points. John Belsham and Rob Felters went for a traditional Hamman (Moroccan steam, scrub and massage) only to return without any skin and feeling somewhat violated!

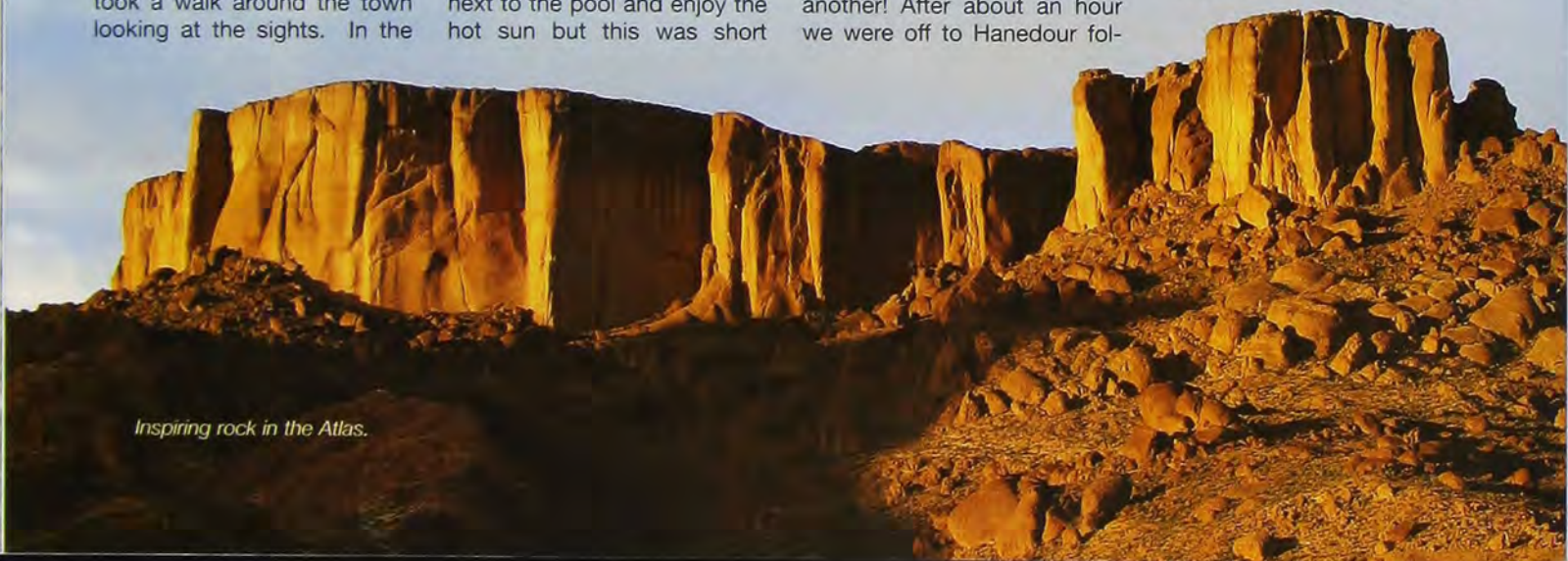
We set off early the following morning facing a 7-8hr minibus drive to N'kob. Once at N'kob, we met our Moroccan counter parts at the local police station. After a lengthy talk about our team and the itinerary with the young sproggy officer we headed to our Kasbah (Baha Baha). The manager of the Kasbah was really helpful to arrange mules and a cook for 5 days. It was time to chill next to the pool and enjoy the hot sun but this was short

lived as more of the Moroccan army turned up with the officer. He had ideas of changing our plans to make his life easier which involved them using vehicles. Jen Robbins and I had to "explain" that he could "f*ck off!"

The morning of the 13 Feb 07 the mules and the muleteers arrived and the games began! If the time wasted haggling over which of their mules was going to carry what wasn't so frustrating it would have been a comedy sketch Peter Kay would have been proud of! The officer arrived late (nothing new) he jumped out from the army land rover with aviator shades, a cravat tucked into the neck of his combat t-shirt, combat cap and matching trousers! Oh my God! Rambo! One of the lads shouted, more like Mongbo said another! After about an hour we were off to Hanedour fol-

lowed closely behind by our escort. With three in front and four at the rear we were surrounded! The location was picturesque; palm trees, clear sandy banks with running water to make the hot day cooler. This would be our first overnight camp under canvas. The Moroccan Army invited us for mint tea and almonds before our evening meal; this was their way of breaking the ice. We had completed a total distance of 7km and a height of 1100m which isn't much but it was hot.

The next four days would involve trekking a distance of 60km and gaining 2500m in height. Over the four days we saw some amazing sights including Bab n Ali; an amazing area of rock pinnacles and weird geological formations including a small canyon. At one of the camp sites (Igli) there was a little shop and hot showers but some of the harder members opted for the cold river. Each evening in the mess tent after our evening meal, we would entertain each other with stories. Many thanks to Dan Gordon and his Mum's Hoover (anyone who knows him - ask!) It would turn out that during that night one of the muleteers decided that he was thirsty and picked up a bottle of 'water' only for it to turn out to be fuel for our stoves! Urgent evacuation was needed and a passing mule



Inspiring rock in the Atlas.

train heading back the way we came obliged. Another story for another trip!

We departed our camp early on our way to Tagdilt. This was going to be our last day in this region and I was looking forward to the next phase. Loaded up and on the minibus we headed to Quarazate which took approximately 3hrs, enough time for window licking (naps) for the back seat passengers. At Quarazate John, Rob, Joe Nicholson and Darren Butterworth went in search of a Hamman, returning very fresh and happy: except John who was walking like John Wayne.

This was going to be a very long boring day sat in a minibus but with the view of getting closer to our next phase. With a few stops on the way we arrived at Imlil and into our hotel which was great considering the location. Most of the day was spent re-packing and purchasing food for the Toubkal Refuge. Later that day the head of the muleteers arrived to talk business and also to explain that the mules can only ascend to the snow line. We would have to carry our kit the rest of the way which was about 2hrs walking from where the mules would stop. This was fine but meant re-packing again and that all the food we had just bought might be wasted but we decided to hire a porter to carry some of the food and we would carry the rest.

Mountain Day 1 Total Distance 13km High Point 3207m

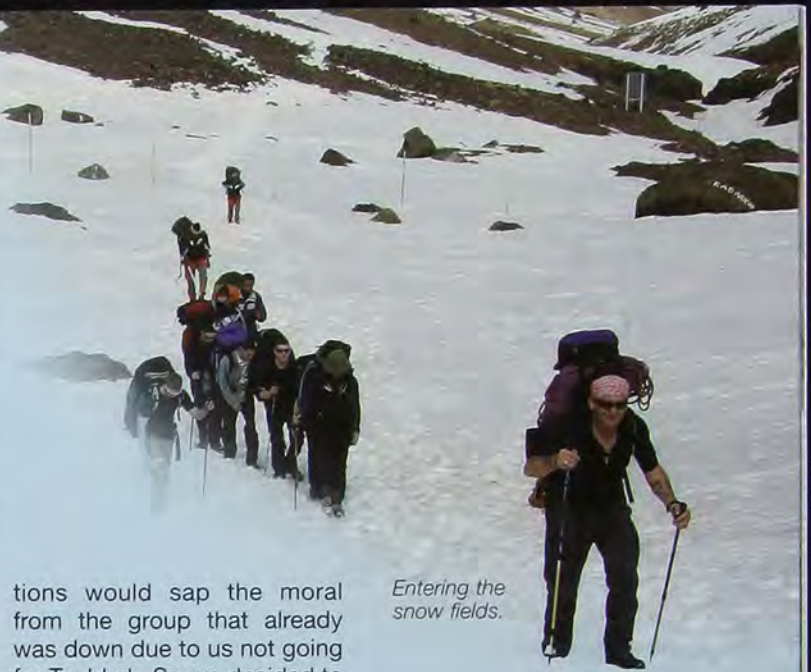
Today was going to be a test for the team especially with the kit to carry. The good thing

about the route it was well marked and clear under foot. We had a few stops before the load change and we continued to stop every 100 - 200m of ascent for water breaks prior to getting to the refuge. It had taken about 5hrs to get to the hut and I was happy to see that it was better than expected.

Once we settled into our 10 person room we had some food made by the hut staff and more mint tea. We then planned a few lessons to get under way for the training part: transceiver work, the boot as a tool and crampons plus carriage and use of ice axe.

Mountain/Training Day 2 High Point 3207m

During the night the wind was building and I started to worry that the weather was turning for the worse. The next morning was a shock, it was snowing very heavily with strong winds and it had been all through the night. It was a total white out and straight away I knew that our summit bid was not going to happen. Between John and I we carried out most of the basic winter skills, from ice axe arrest, body belay, bucket seats and emergency shelter. The last thing to be covered, which was one of the reasons why we would not be going to the summit, was snow profiling. The team were very shocked to see how weak the snow pack was and that this would not have crossed their minds. As one of them put it; 'Snow is for having fun, making snow men and throwing snow balls not killing people so I'll stay in the hut Thank You!' The weather was not getting any better and to continue with winter skills in these condi-



Entering the snow fields.

tions would sap the moral from the group that already was down due to us not going for Toubkal. So we decided to spend the rest of the afternoon playing games and catching up on sleep from a sleepless night due to snorers: Lauren Marchant!

It was an early start to depart the Toubkal Refuge for the return to Imlil but the weather was not giving up. After digging out the entrance of the hut we were able to descend but not till 0900hrs. This was going to be emotional as the snow was waste deep and virgin plus we had 10km to descend. The morale was high on the way down as it had been a very confining few days in the refuge due to the bad weather plus the youngsters were enjoying watching the old boys breaking trail. Once back at Imlil we had lunch then moved our kit back into our rooms and had well-deserved hot showers.

With all the phases of the expedition over, all that was left, was the move back to Marrakech and a day taking in what a Moroccan city has to offer. After the drive back and after the necessary adminis-

tration had been completed, everyone was quick to embrace the local culture. Many of the group also found themselves somewhat lost in the haggling for a bargain or two. John (again) and a few of the younger members really wanted to try something different, yes that's right another HAMMAN. After dark the fun didn't stop, the main square (Djemaa Al Fna) came to life with various music stands and sit-down food stalls offering something of a change for the palette. It was a welcoming and friendly atmosphere which should be seen and felt by all those who are considering visiting Morocco. The evening left most of the team members discussing a return visit to this amazing country.

I would like to finish with a big thank you to Jen Robbins (Exped 2IC), John Belsham (Instructor) and and the junior soldiers: Lauren Marchant, Darren Butterworth, Rob Felters, Joe Nicholson, Dan Gordon and David Kates.



Ice axe training as part of the experience.



Loading up the gear for the trek into the mountains.

THE WINTER MOUNTAINEERING ZONE AMA WINTER MEET 2006/07

'Picture a man going on a journey, he has left the boundaries of reality and travelled across space and time to enter the realm of the Winter Mountaineering Zone!'

Ollie and Sven sat by the fire of a local hostelry drinking mead and laughing as the banter increases in both venom and volume; 'You know what we should do tomorrow Ollie?' 'What's that numb-nuts?' Savage Slit declares Sven' Get your head down Svenners its V,6 you'll pop a hip and anyway that'll never be in!' 'He who dares' comes the reply along with a wry grin and subtle wink. Ollie mutters several expletives under his breath and trots off in the direction of the gents avoiding yet another round.

The next morning sees Ollie and Sven heading off early to catch the conditions on their new objective! Its not long before Sven is composing himself after taking a fall, with long run out and questionable gear and is having to pick himself up, now determined to at least go for the red point, only to once again find himself flying through the air with feet above his head squealing like a girl. This however is not Savage Slit but a bold, daring, near death experience called skipping across the stepping-stones on the route in. Finally through combined tactics

(Ollie pulling him out of the water) he manages the prestigious first ascent of a new six inch eliminate now known as Cold Dunking, a route set to be equally as famous as any Dave McCloud dry tooling epic, thanks to Ollie's mouth and the comic nature of the fall, guaranteed to be discussed with ever increasing volume and hand gestures and almost certainly coming to a pub near you!

Days later sees Ollie with cabin fever having missed the cold early climbing hours because of a hangover and

Svenners desperate not to spent another night in a room with a particularly flatulent girl. 'It's new years eve Ollie.' 'I know you Muppet, I'm trying to sleep.' 'Fancy a climb?' 'Now?' 'At night? See the New Year in?' 'Oh Yeah!'

Sat in the empty ski centre car park, in the sudden quiet after the engine dies I ask my fellow lunatic, 'Do you think we would be doing this if we actually had girlfriends?' The question did not require an answer and we both hopped out into the bitter cold and clear moonlight.

Topping out in the Northern Corries.



What followed was a night full of winter wonder, teamwork, strong winds and impressive navigation on Ollie's behalf as well as avalanches and blizzards.

It may seem to some that going out in these conditions was pure folly and perhaps in my own case a little hypocritical (several days before I had had to berate a fellow meet member who, although a novice had decided to go up onto an exposed ridge and then onto the Cairngorm plateau alone and in 117mph winds without safety gear nor map and compass!).

The point here is the difference in experience; Ollie and I were experienced mountaineers (myself WML) and both expert navigators, we had climbed this route before and were properly equipped with transceivers, probes, map, compass, warm kit, food and hot drink, emergency shelter and the knowledge with which to use them. We also had a properly completed route card with estimated ETA in the hands of a SOBER and sensible person with

whom we had discussed our plans in detail.

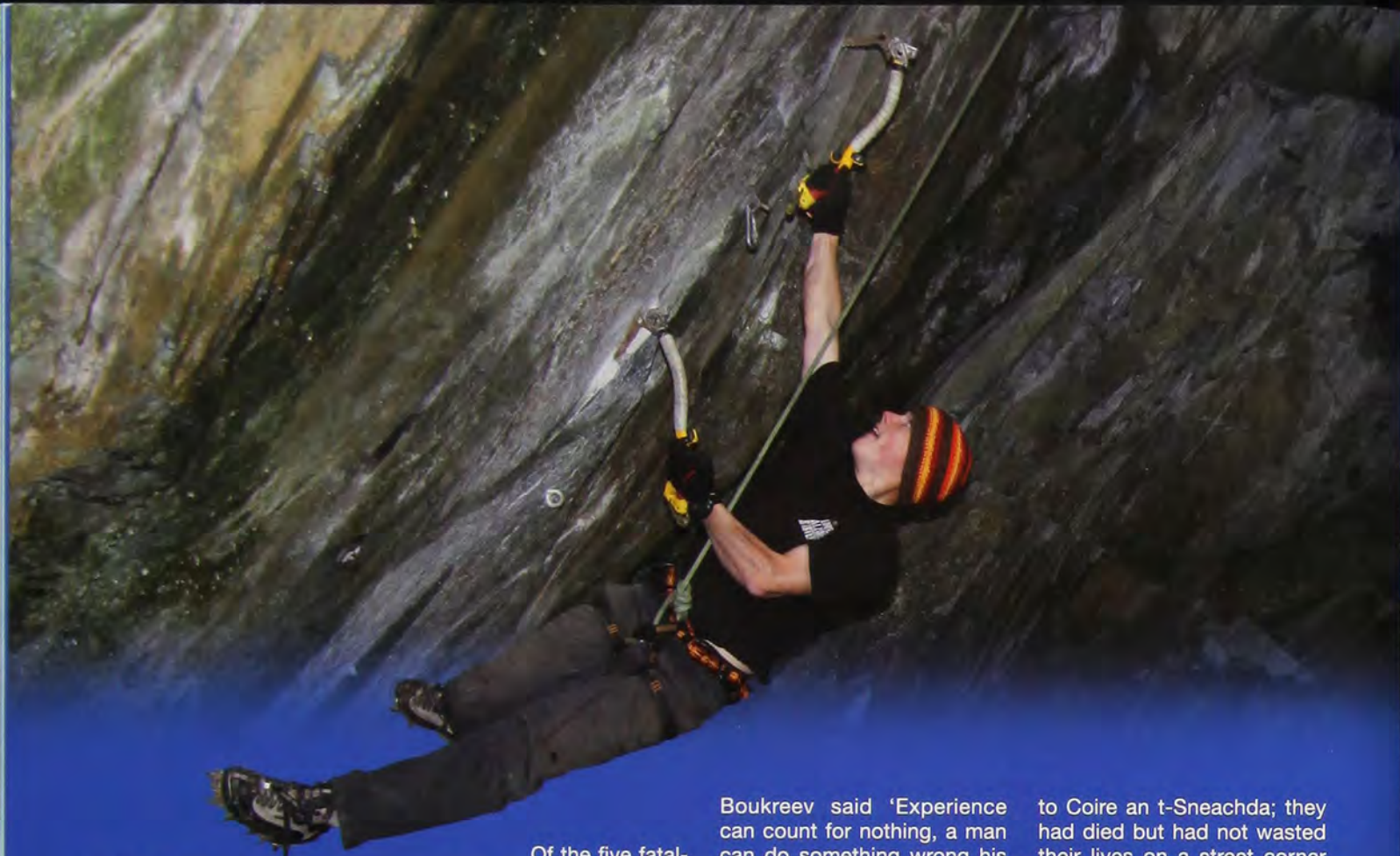
Sadly the memory of our new year night time adventure was tainted the following day on learning that two young lads of 18 & 23 had died of exposure. That made a total of five fatalities and two seriously injured since I had arrived in Scotland, all of them in the Northern Corries. The facts of what happened are unclear and one is left surmising. The majority of our journey out of the Corrie was spent in a full on blizzard and our paths must surely have passed at some stage. We saw their car, a beat up old thing in the car park and their Vaude tent was found in the Corrie the following morning; wholly unsuitable for the conditions and must have been their best, I can only guess that the remainder of their equipment was as poor and that whilst Ollie and I beat the retreat, micro-naving back in our head to toe Gore-Tex



Crack climbing with dry tools, who needs ice!



Taxing rockover on day tools.



and modern fibres that these guys were getting soaked and spent the night as such before having a crack at the impossible in the morning. Whatever happened, their bodies were found the following day on the plateau.

Of the five fatalities during this meet, four were of exposure and all were preventable; unless your lucky enough to have an MIC or UIAGM Guide as a climbing partner then there is no shortcut to gaining the knowledge required for success in the mountains. As Anatoli

Boukreev said 'Experience can count for nothing, a man can do something wrong his whole life!' Coming back each time simply isn't enough and may simply be down to a healthy dose of luck, which must run out at some stage.

These unfortunate lads followed their sense of adventure and love of the outdoors

to Coire an t-Sneachda; they had died but had not wasted their lives on a street corner or pothouse. They obviously had the drive and dedication to achieve great heights and great things.

In the forces there are ample opportunities to receive mountaineering tuition either in a formal environment at Ballachulish or informally by attending the winter meet and climbing/walking with experienced mountaineers. This year the meet saw attendance from an Aspirant British Alpine Guide, 6 Winter MLs, 4 MIAs, an MIC trainee and numerous Summer MLs, as well as many familiar faces that attend every year.

If you are a member of the AMA then the benefit of this experience is available to you free of charge by simply attending the meet. This year we trained 11 WMPs and it was very satisfying to see the smiling faces of people crawling into their first snow hole and to overhear conversations of the recently graduated students saying how much they had learnt. Of course the meets are not just about tuition and qualifications, they are so much more about friends and sharing good times with like-minded people. They are about hearing 'OH MATE' every time Jules

Hunkered down at the top of the route.



Ratcliffe walks into a room; John B declaring his love of whiskey and Glen B declares his love for..... Another AMA member who I won't embarrass here.

Glen has a great way of putting things into words, his vocabulary is no greater than that of the average climber but he has a talent of saying them with an expression that adds weight beyond the shape of the letters. Watching him stumble through the door one evening having been risking his biscuit all day and declare 'Oh my God!!' was worth paying to see! Glenn,

affectionately known as Zoomer along with Tom and John had been out three times to complete a walk up and around Bynack Mor but had each time been repulsed by the extreme winds that had dominated the meet; this morning they had set off once again on the back of another poor weather report- this had got personal! This time however, although the poor visibility ensued all day, the threatened winds were acceptable. In Glen's words, 'Because Himalayan giants have been climbed quicker, after reaching the peak much back slapping ensued and because we

obviously felt elated, a further peak was included before dropping down to Loch Avon and the way home down Strath Nethy. However in our excitement we had over looked just how sodding far it was, 12km of gopping, sopping peat slop track, how we laughed upon reaching the car at last.' And how we laughed upon hearing about it!

Other highlights include Sue Belsham tumbling down a snowy hillside with Sarah heroically holding on and doing somersaults in an attempt to stop her whilst

Rachel, still at the top, cackled something about being a farmer's daughter. Any ideas?

There was comic value on the WMP too, watching Julie pull out her handbag from the bottom of sack and shortly afterwards nearly losing her trousers whilst practising self-arrest. Nothing however will ever equal the site of the civvies face watching us dry tooling at Birnham Quarry and Baz going for the heel hook. Baz epitomises the spirit of mountaineering, and despite losing a leg to a climbing accident in Bosnia he still goes out on long mountain days and leads at a respectable standard; at Birnham he even had a pop at 'The Fast And Furious' (M11). He is a pleasure to climb with for many reasons, not least of all in order to see peoples faces as his trouser leg rides up revealing a titanium replacement; rumour has it that he is working on an alpine version containing a Jet Boil, torch and gear wrack, the ethical debate of whether he has an unfair weight advantage continues.

Of course it would be remiss of me not to mention John Belsham, who along with his wife Sue has run the Winter Meet for the last 5 years. Sadly John is leaving the army this year after 23 years; although he will be continuing in the AMA he has decided not to run the meet next year, instead dedicating more time to his wife and future career near Dundee. John has given many of us the opportunity to enjoy Scottish mountaineering throughout the years in both summer and winter and, if we were lucky, the pleasure of his company for a 'wee swally'. A warm character, keen mountaineer, mountain biker and paddler, he will be leaving some big boots for someone to fill and on behalf of the whole of the AMA I would like to thank him for the last five years and wish him well for the ones yet to come.

Off to sharpen my picks – see you next year.

Sven.



Exercise VAMPIRE DRAGON

Vampire 14 – 23 July

Captain Tim Rawlinson WFR





Exercise Vampire Dragon was a 9 day expedition I organised to take 15 personnel from HQ 1 Mech Bde to Romania. The aims of the expedition were fourfold; to visit Dracula's Castle, to summit Romania's highest Mountain, Mount Moldoveanu, to get some of the group their Summer Mountain Proficiency award and to foster a spirit of adventure, self reliance and leadership within the head-quarter staff.

We flew British Airways – carefully selected not because they offered free booze on the flight out (and back) but because they had the greatest flexibility. We flew into Bucharest arriving just before midnight and once we had established ourselves in our hostel thought it rude not to check out something of the capital. Unfortunately, the only places that were open were bars and clubs, but we still managed to see a few interesting sights.

Later that morning there were several administrative tasks to be carried out over that included, changing all our money, purchasing train tickets, finding out about the left luggage at the railway station, purchasing petrol for the stoves and rations for the expedition. The remainder of the group also flew out – late due to work commitments.

In order that we achieved our first aim of visiting 'Dracula's Castle' we headed off by train to the village of Bran. The link between Bran Castle and Dracula is fairly tenuous. The myth of Vampires was not invented by Bram Stoker. He wrote a vampire novel called 'Dracula' and set it originally in France but later moved the setting to Transylvania. It is wrongly assumed that he based his novel on Vlad 'The Impaler' Tepes. Vlad may have visited the castle but Bram Stoker certainly didn't. The castle is interesting but the group found it a big anti-

climax when compared with the creepy image of the novel.

There was no escaping the fact we were going to have to walk so we hired a bus to take us and all our kit to the start point. This was in the forest at the base of the Fagaras Ridge that would take us through the Transylvanian Alps. We had been talking to people on our journey and had been warned of the bears and wolves we would encounter on our expedition. Not sure if our leg was being pulled or not, our first task remained to cut some stout poles and sharpen them at one end – thus our Bear Fighting Poles (BFPs) were created. Along with all the garlic, crucifixes and holy water we felt invincible and ready to face the worst beasties Romania could throw at us.

The first days walk took us out of the forest and onto the ridge where we set up camp. It was here that we encoun-

Group Ascending



tered our first Shepard, bringing his sheep in for the night. Guarding the flock was a pack of vicious dogs and we felt vindicated in our decision to cut our BFPs. Unsure whether or not to mount a picket to guard us against creatures of the night – fatigue eventually decided it wasn't necessary.

For the next two days, the route religiously followed the ridge. The scenery was spectacular and the topography really not unlike that of the Brecon Beacons. We were blessed with good weather meaning despite sun tan lotion being liberally applied – everyone burnt anyway. Even though the sun shone, there was still plenty of snow – which we used to fill our water bottles up with. Within the group was a broad spectrum of abilities, experience and fitness. Early on it was necessary to redistribute weight amongst the group in order to properly balance the speeds people were walking at. We camped in the lee of the wind downhill off the ridgeline. As soon as the sun set, the temperature really plummeted. We believe it was this that saved us from being devoured by Vampires.

On the fourth day, the scenery began to change on our approach to the summit, becoming more severe – a bit like Snowdonia. After some long hard climbing we reached the roof of Romania – Mount Moldoveanu at 2544m. The final 400m to the summit was a gentle scramble for some – or a terrifying ordeal for others. Needless to say, we all made it safely, though our BFPs did come in handy for assisting some group





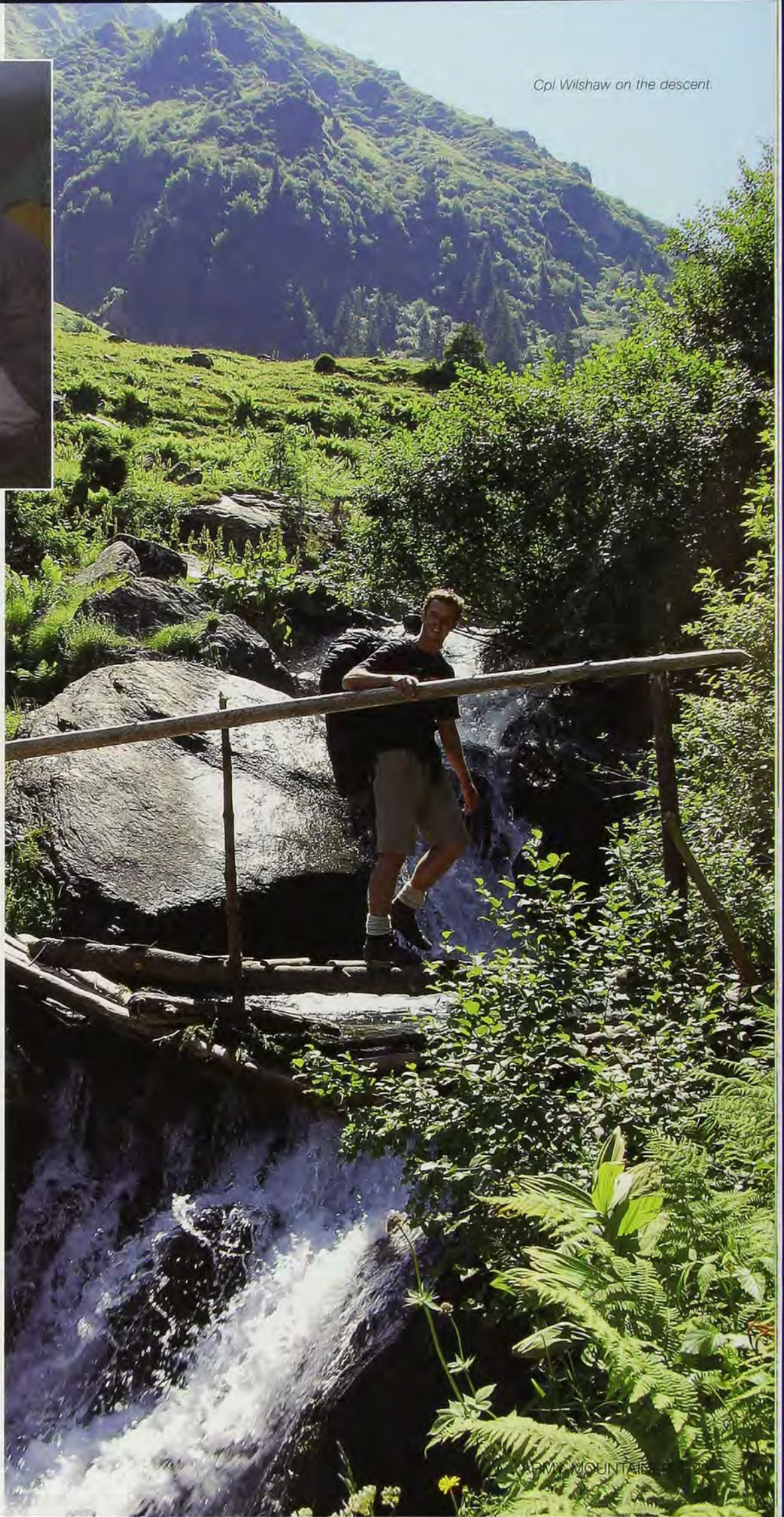
Capt Rawlinson (L) & Sgt Vander (R) at the first night's camp.

members. After the obligatory group photos we began to decent and follow the ridge on once again. All thoughts of only heading downhill were dashed as our route undulated and bucked it's way to Cabana Podragu – a mountain hut where we would spend the night.

The final day was ten hours of decent to the village of Victoria. Once again the BFPs proved their worth in taking some of the weight off our knees. As we descended, so the temperature rose and we were delighted to discover our campsite also doubled as the local communal swimming pool. Bliss. That swim was the best swim ever, despite the water turning several shades greyer as one by one the group dived in.

From Victoria we bade farewell to the BFPs – safe in the knowledge some walkers heading up into the mountains would put them to good use. We caught the train back to Bucharest just in time to do some more sightseeing before we flew back to England the next day.

The expedition worked out very well. At somewhere over 90km it achieved it's aim of being arduous and adventurous and of bonding the staff in preparation for Op TELIC 10 in 2007. It also gave us the opportunity to see a country few of us would have otherwise visited.



Cpl Wilshaw on the descent.

THE AMA MEMORIAL FUND

A TESTAMENT TO THOSE OF OUR MEMBERS WHO HAVE PERISHED IN TRAGIC CIRCUMSTANCES

By Paul Edwards

As Vice Chairman for Mountaineering I would like to bring your attention to the existence of the AMA's Memorial Fund. Whilst serving in a previous committee appointment as Treasurer I was examining the books of the Association and I came across an account named the Army Mountaineering Association Memorial Fund. From my earlier time on the AMA Executive Committee I knew of the existence of the fund but I had no clear under-

standing of its origins or exact purpose. Intrigued, I decided to find out more.

A little research brought to light the original charter of the Memorial Fund which stated that the aim of the fund was "To provide grant aid to young climbers (generally under 25 years of age) in order to increase their mountaineering experience and allow them to develop their mountaineering skills and judgement". As I delved a lit-

tle deeper the background and purpose of this philanthropic fund also became clear. The fund had been set up in 1975 following the loss of five members of the Association during or after the Nuptse expedition of that year. The fund was created as "a permanent memorial to those five and all other members of the Association that have died in tragic circumstances".

The names of all those who

have died in such circumstances, along with those who have provided notable service to the AMA, are displayed on the "IN MEMORIAM" board which is displayed prominently in the main corridor of JSMTTC (Indefatigable). These names are repeated in the table below.

To my surprise, I went on to discover that I was officially (and legally) a trustee of the fund. After some discussion with our then Chairman,

Climbing is more than a sport, it is a calling that a climber can not ignore!



Martin Bazire, I consulted our Vice President, John Muston who had helped found the fund in 1975. We agreed that the charter of the fund should be updated and that the purpose of the fund should be amended to reflect the broader base of our membership rather than just young climbers.

It was important that the fund retained its charitable status as we had a considerable sum invested (about £100K at the time of writing) and I therefore

set about carefully re-crafting the charter. With John's approval, and the agreement of the other trustees, these changes were made to the charter in early 2004 and the funds aim is now, "To provide grant aid to British Army expeditions in order to allow Officers and Soldiers to increase their mountaineering experience and allow them to develop their mountaineering skills and judgement."

It is from this Memorial Fund that the majority of the AMA's

expedition grants are now awarded. The fund now produces an income of some £4,500 per year and this is supplemented annually by a grant from the AMA's General Purpose Fund. The AMA's grant sub committee makes a number of grants from these funds each year and an application form can be found on the AMA website (www.theama.org.uk).


The fund is remains permanently open to receive gifts and donations from current or

ex members. All gifts received are invested into the funds investment portfolio and only the interest and dividends earned are awarded as grants. If you would like to make a donation please send it to the AMA Treasurer at our main address at JSMTC(I).

30 years after its inception I believe that the AMA Memorial Fund remains a fitting tribute to those of our members that have lost their lives in the mountains or on operations around the world.

NAMES FROM THE AMA "IN MEMORIAM" BOARD AT JSMTC(I)

Rank	Name	Regiment	Location	Date	Year	
1	Capt	J Reid	RE	European Alps	29 Aug	1957
2	Capt	A Borwick MC	RSLI	Dartmoor	5 Feb	1960
3	Capt	R Jones	R Fus	Khinyang Chang, Karakorum	18 Jul	1962
4	Capt	EJE Mills	RASC	Khinyang Chang, Karakorum	18 Jul	1962
5	Capt	CC Cornish	14/20 H	Mount Kenya	14 Feb	1965
6	Lt	ADW Marshall	KOSB	North Wales	14 Feb	1972
7	Sgt	K Scaife	RAOC	Axel Heiberg Island	9 Aug	1972
8	Col	H Wright	REME	FOR SERVICES	27 Oct	1974
9	Maj	GF Owens	WFR	Nuptse	9 May	1975
10	Capt	RF Summerton	RE	Nuptse	9 May	1975
11	Lt	DAJ Brister	Int Corps	Nuptse	14 May	1975
12	Rfm	Pasang Tamang	7GR	Nuptse	14 May	1975
13	Capt	EC Walshaw	RA	FOR SERVICES	20 Oct	1975
14	Cpl	FM Benson	SAS	European Alps	23 Jul	1978
15	Sgt	SH Johnson	SAS	European Alps	23 Jul	1978
16	Capt	WG Hayes	REME	North Wales	10 Feb	1979
17	Capt	JHG Beckett	RA	FOR SERVICES	27 Aug	1980
18	Tpr	RE Armstrong	RGJ/SAS	Falklands	19 May	1982
19	Sgt	JH Arthy	WG/SAS	Falklands	19 May	1982
20	Cpl	P Bunker	RAOC/SAS	Falklands	19 May	1982
21	Maj	J Cramner	RAOC	FOR SERVICES	30 Jul	1982
22	Capt	CJT Davis	Gloucesters	FOR SERVICES	11 Jan	1983
23	SSgt	P Rodgers	APTC	Cairngorms, Scotland	23 Jan	1984
24	CSgt	WJ Scott	1 RS	Cairngorms, Scotland	23 Jan	1984
25	Cpl	A Swierzy	RE/SAS	Everest	3 Apr	1984
26	Sgt	KPA Baker	REME	Shreckhorn, European Alps	18 Jul	1984
27	Sgt	DW Goodburn	RE	Papsura	14 Sep	1984
28	Sgt	ADR Baxter	SAS	FOR SERVICES	12 Aug	1985
29	Capt	TJP Roberts	RE	Chacaraju	18 Jul	1986
30	Lt	CP Sayer	RA	Scotland	1 Jan	1987
31	Cpl	PA Greateorex	QDG	Cent African Republic	15 Jun	1987
32	Capt	JD Willson	KOB	North American Rockies	15 Jun	1987
33	SSgt	SJ Burgess	APTC	Germany	9 Jul	1989
34	Capt	JP North	RAMC	Scotland	28 Dec	1989
35	Lt	JD Swift	1 QLR	Scotland	9 Apr	1990
36	WO2	G Hall	APTC	Cairngorms, Scotland	4 Feb	1993
37	Maj	M Trevilliyon	RADC	Denali, Alaska	30 May	1997
38	Mrs	A Willoughby	Civil Servant	FOR SERVICES	13 Feb	2000



The Torres del Paine.

CONDORS AND CAMPERS

Trekking in the Patagonian Andes

By Mark Bradbury

Not having planned any trips for a while, it was time to enthuse, organise and train in preparation for another sojourn. Browsing through the web pages of a popular book supplier I stumbled across a guidebook for South America, specifically the Southern Patagonian Andes.

As hardcore mountaineers go they were few and far between within the Regiment, perhaps there would be some hardcore trekkers who were the determined kind to take up a challenge in one of the most remote and inhospitable parts of the world. Thumbing through the guide it was evident that to attempt any of the treks therein contained would require stamina, courage, determination and team work. This was there-

fore the correct ingredients for real adventure training less the hard technical aspect that often accompanies other AMA undertakings.

Right then down to business, team selection would need to reflect the arduous nature of such an adventure. All equipment during the trek would have to be man-packed over some difficult terrain. But where were we going to trek. Well once again more thumbing of pages ensued and finally it was decided that the Torres del Paine, National Park situated in Chile would be the venue. The objective would be to complete a 10 day trek around the complete park circuit. November was chosen as the time to go, which would be the southern hemisphere's late spring early

summer and would hopefully give us a weather window to enjoy. Having never been in South America before the planning was an adventure within its self but finally the day came to depart.

Charmaine Geldenhuys had been selected to lead the expedition and attacked the project with total commitment and enthusiasm. It was now time to demonstrate that our planning had worked. Personnel had to arrive from all over UK to gather at Heathrow for the long haul to Santiago, Chile. This phase passed off without any hitch. Jet lagged and tired we arrived in Chile and made our way to a hostel in the centre of Santiago. We then regrouped and refreshed ourselves before preparing for

the onward flight to Punta Arenas. On arrival in Punta Arenas equipment was weighed and repacked as what we then left with from our hostel base would have to be carried, until our return.

The following morning our group of twelve intrepid trekkers set off by minibus for the National Park. As stunning views of the Andes began to entice us closer to our goal we were amazed by the sight of various indigenous animals lining the route we travelled. Most of all the first glimpse of the worlds largest flying bird the condor proved to us that our efforts would be rewarded with excellent view's, which all the guide book superlatives could not replicate.

On arrival at the park Charmaine and I booked the group in with the ranger service and were informed that the park circuit was closed, no credible explanation was given for this and both our command of Spanish was sadly lacking. Having spent months of pawing over maps and guidebooks we both felt totally deflated that our adventure would have to be shelved. We took the advice of the rangers and left with an amended map showing where the circuit would end for us.

Safely ensconced within our first camp we informed the team of the issue of closure. Then I and a third member of the team, Dave Thompson sat down to discuss the possibility of an attempt using all our training to full effect. Knowing before hand that the terrain could throw up some surprises, we planned to carry some technical equipment with us as part of the contingency.

The following morning we struck camp and set off into the wilderness. The towers of rock loomed above us and thoughts of a possible climb-

ing expedition entered my head, these were dismissed as the weight of my pack bit into my shoulders and each step became more difficult as the day drew on. The National Park has some amazing habitats. On arrival you are met with trees and pasture this changes as you travel around the park. Each campsite achieved made the team more determined to complete the circuit. Why had the rangers not sanctioned are plans? On arrival at Lago Grey we were met by large blocks of ice floating within the lake. The campsite allowed us to get to the waters edge and witness the giant serac field of the glaciers that filled the valleys put on a display of awesome power for the team.

It was at Lago Grey that we discovered that avalanches, which had occurred that winter, had destroyed all the bridging along the route and had therefore rendered the way ahead impassable. We then decided to send an advance party consisting of Dave Thompson and I forward to take a look. On returning we decided to go for the next camp and so the



Mark Bradbury negotiates one of the ravines.

team set off for the unknown. The defiles that presented themselves had indeed been serious avalanche runnels destroying all within their path. A further inspection revealed a large ravine separating us from the path ahead.

Belays were established and a shuttle service was set up to ferry personnel across the divide. All safely across the only obstacle left to negotiate was the John Garner high pass. This would have to wait till the following day. The



Charisse cooking at 1200m a.s.l with Pauline Copeland helping.



Polly Cairns on a makeshift bridge.

weather had been extremely kind to us and no rain had been encountered, so conditions were looking good for an attempt to cross the pass.

Spirits were high and so with rested limbs we set off to tackle the pass. Snow was in the pass but not in great abundance. It also proved to be incredibly stable due to lack of fresh deposits and so upwards and onwards we trekked. By lunchtime we had arrived at the col, the pass had been beaten and the team had the finish line in its sights. Trekking to the final two camps back to the start point would require mustering all the remaining stamina left within the team. The food we had purchased before entering the park had been supplemented with stocks purchased along the route at various almacén or grocery stores. The product range they stocked was poor and consisted mainly of tinned fish and pasta. Everyone was now starting to become tired of the same diet, day in and

day out and it was important that energy levels remained high. Heavy packs meant that calorific intake had to match output and hungry appetites needed to be satisfied. We all looked forward to a little variety once the hard work was over and conversations concerning food filled the air around all the tents.

The following day once rested and fed we uprooted ourselves and headed for the John Garner Pass. A strenuous pull up the hill revealed stunning vista's across the Heilo Sur glacier. Walking on the patches of snow and looking out across the endless sea of ice and snow capped mountains in the distance turned thoughts to other forays to plan in this region. There are without doubt peaks yet to be bagged and an adventurous soul could have hours of fun plotting courses and routes in the vastness of Patagonia. Finally we arrived back where we had started and the heavy packs were placed in the trail-

er of the van that met us. The trip back to Punta Arenas was quiet as tired souls slept some reflected on the trek which had probably been one of the most demanding things they had attempted. It had been a worthwhile venture to plan and hopefully will inspire those who attended to try something of their own in the

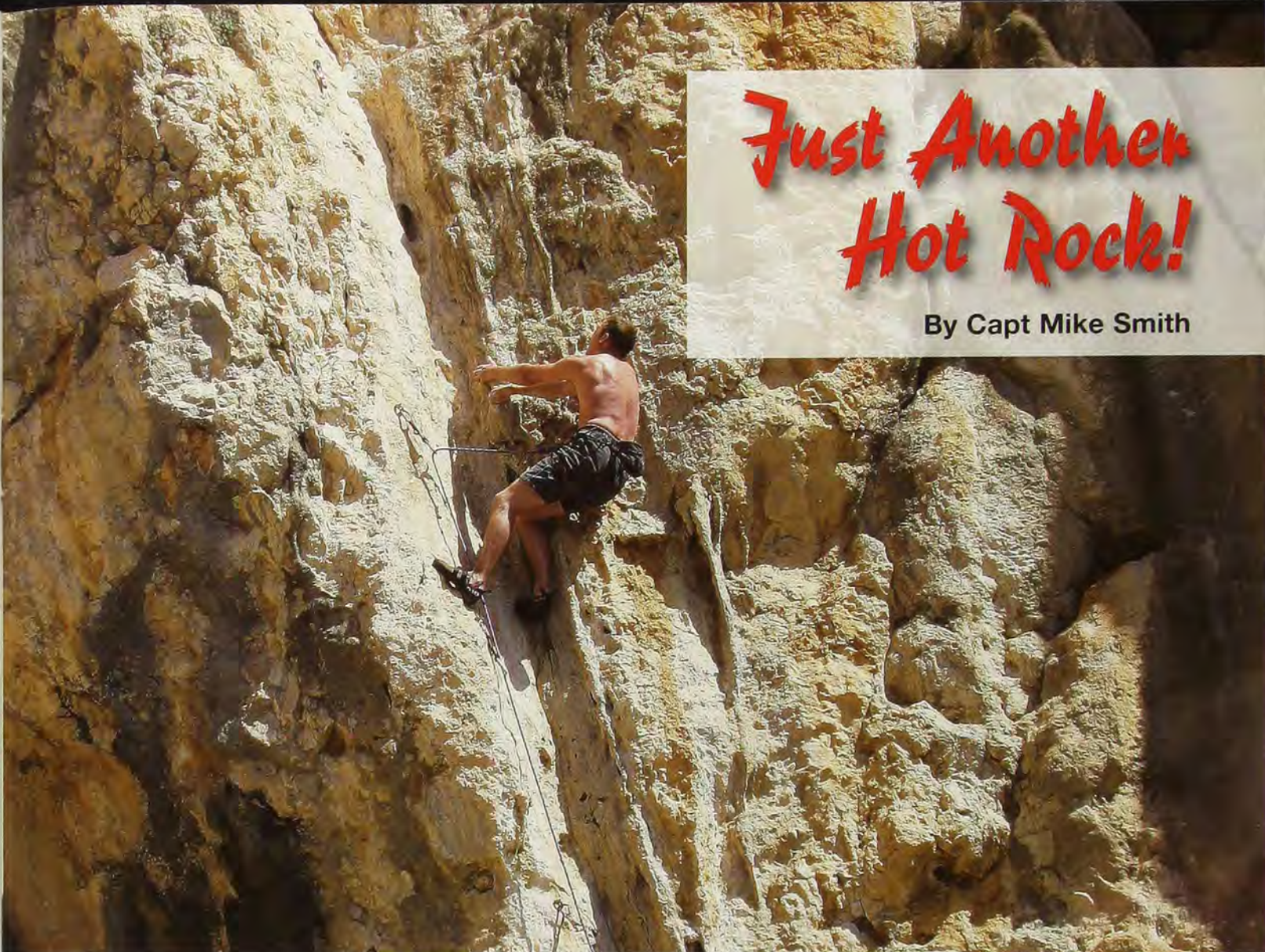
future. As far as I am concerned it has given me the confidence to look at other things within South America and right now I have another guidebook poised on the bookshelf, only this time I have designs on one of those lofty snow capped peaks that glistened in the distance, so stay tuned....!



Crossing the John Garner Pass.

Just Another Hot Rock!

By Capt Mike Smith



Laying back and enjoying the sun!

Ex Divino Tiger, my sixth Unit Hot Rock, how does he get away with it I hear you cry? Sheer cunning I reply! On this Ex I was keen to climb on the Puig Campana but not up it! If you have ever descended by the path, more like a hardcore scree run, that you can't actually run down, you know why.

Having climbed the Puig Campana twice by Epsolon Central (easy route) I was keen to explore some of the more exciting routes. Capt Ian Phillips was keen to climb the Epsolon Central again and spend the night out on the route. Despite my attempts at discouraging him from this course of action he was desperate to get the full mountain experience. I on the other hand, see any form of bivying as a failure of the leader to correctly route find! A compromise was agreed. I'd climb on the Puig and bivi at the

base while Ian would climb the Puig and bivi on route, therefore each team offering the other mutual support.

The days leading up to our attempt were a mixture of trad and sport climbing, with a leaning to the latter. The usual areas were visited; Toix, Marin, Gandia and Echo Valley with the aim of getting several NCO's through the RCP syllabus. Even with this millstone, there were a few good ticks on the way. Marin Western Buttress was visited briefly at the end of a brilliant day ticking off most of the multi-pitch routes at Marin. Even with the Spanish Army, a group from 101 Log Bde and us there was still plenty to climb.

Marin West has one 3 star 6b, Descoco Tension, which is also the photo on page 1 of the Rockfax guide. This was climbed fairly easily and fol-

lowed by a 2 star 6c, El Mono mecanica. This route had a decidedly gritstone finish that reduced me to slithering over the final roof. Another afternoon spent at Toix Placa-upper saw Coming back to life 6b+ climbed after a desperate series of very thin moves up to and then past the first bolt. Later on I took my biggest fall in ages when I popped off the relatively easy final rock over of Monkey wall 6c on Toix TV amphitheatre. I passed at least three bolts! This is an outstanding route and should be on everyone's tick list!

Eventually the day came for the big route. Ian was to climb with two of his PTI's and I was to climb with Cpl Chris Morley, ATR's most photographed climber. Chris had also climbed the Puig via the normal route on his last visit. Now the Puig is big, by anyone's standard, and as the

guide book advises should not be underestimated. We planned to set off early with the aim of getting two routes in while Ian planned a more leisurely ascent. In actual fact, due to the impossibility of finding camping gaz in Benidorm, Ian got to the base of the Puig ahead of Chris and myself.

Although it was a cloudless day we were immediately made aware of the wind as we trudged up to the start of the route. As we gained height it got worse! A pair of Brits passed us on their way down, too windy they exclaimed! We pressed on. At the base of the Puig we joined Ian who was most concerned that he couldn't see us above. Helmets were donned immediately due to a barrage of rocks, probably dislodged by the wind. Ian's route was being subjected to the full force of the wind and did not



You can still climb in the trad style in Spain.

seem feasible. My route, Diedros Magicos, was further around the huge buttress of the Puig and was slightly more sheltered, plus it was a corner! Ian, un-phased, stuck to his plan.

Chris and myself set off up the climb. Diedros Magicos (Magic Corners) is described simply as "A great mountain route" The description is minimalist and vague at best, but this is not too much of a problem as the line is fairly obvious. The striking line soars up through corners and overhangs and seems to appear far harder than the E1 grade would suggest. The climbing is sustained throughout but never too hard, the atmosphere however, probably pushes the grade up a notch. All the time the wind screamed around us. The five pitches totally consumed us and took longer than expected. The last pitch, the crux, was a classic, gritstone stepped overhanging crack, layback and think of the Peak District, very non-limestone! Once this was over a series of abseils followed. In the wind this proved a real challenge of Alpine rope work in order not to get the rope

stuck. Another group who were descending below were not so lucky; they managed to get their rope snagged on every pitch as they repeatedly tried to throw their ropes against the wind, instead of abseiling with them lap coiled. We followed and released their rope as we went.

Once down we searched for a bivi site and soon found a small bay protected by overhangs and a few small trees. Chris soon had the stove in action and it wasn't long before we were enjoying our evening meal and listening to radio Benidorm, "eh th th th th scorchio!". At six o'clock the two-way radio was switched on and almost immediately Ian came on! "Where are you?" it squawked. I described our cosy little alcove and knew what was coming next. "We'll be down in fifteen minutes", blast I thought, our nice little bivi invaded by the three muscle busters. Despite Ian's optimistic plan it was over an hour before the three battered climbers could be seen descending down the Puig. We soon realised why they had been so slow when they started cooking their meal,

they had packed enough food for a section and half a field kitchen!

After a restless night Chris and I had designs on Via Julia, another trad E1, while Ian and the men from the Gym were going to try Epsilon Central again, suckers for punishment. At least the wind had died down. Via Julia eventually joins the normal route so it was likely we would see each other on route.

Chris climbed the first pitch, but it was the second pitch where the fun started. A full 45m metre pitch involving serious but enjoyable climbing. Although this was the crux pitch the best pitches were 4 and 5. This involved a corner crack that went on for nearly fifty metres, awesome! At the top of the pillar as expected we joined Ian, Dave and Andy. Once again they decided to quit, they were moving too slowly. Due to this the following abseils took forever, although at least it meant we all got down at the same time and safely. There followed a slow trudge back down to the cars and some

welcome fruit and water.

I ended the trip with a quick visit to Olta and the superb Tufa Groove. This was with Capt Kev Page and OCdt Nick Heppenstall who were out with a rival climbing group. Tufa Groove is another must do route in Costa Blanca, an awesome 24m of overhanging groove that is only just 6b+. We all climbed the route, except for Kev who was determined to test every bolt hanger for integrity. They returned a week later with SSgt Howie Rees who proceeded to pull half of the route off!

I continue to return to the Costa Blanca because there are just so many good routes to be climbed and all so accessible. True, they don't have the same character as the Welsh, Lakes and Peak classic's but, there are rarely any queues and the weather is generally better. Within one hour from Benidorm there is enough climbing to keep most people happy and there aren't any midges! So, as soon as I get to my next unit I'll be planning another hot rock.

THE WALKERS 'HAUTE ROUTE'

By Maj IAN COMBER

We set off from Newcastle on the 'drive from hell', arriving in Chamonix after a 26-hour minibus marathon. We all started the trek a day later with aching limbs, not from the exertion, but due to the cramped driving conditions. On arrival in the d'Argentiere Glacier campsite we witnessed a huge thunderstorm which ruined my credibility, having told the group that we would leave the Tyneside rain behind, and have periods of prolonged sunshine in the Alps. Luckily, the weather after this episode improved and the daily late-afternoon thunderstorms were witnessed from the relative comforts of Alpine huts.

Day one commenced with a walk traversing along the 'Grand Balcon Nord' footpath leading us from Argentiere to Le Tour where we stopped for a relaxed breakfast. The walk through the Le Tour ski area brought back memories – most of us had been here 6-months before on a skiing expedition. Now the stanchions of the ski lift ruined the vista as we gained height to the Col de Balme and the Franco-Swiss border. Here we stopped for another drink, served by a man who could only be described as 'fos-



Descent into Zinal.

silised'. The descent to the village of Trient was interrupted by numerous mountain bikers, clearly braver than us as the footpath was extremely steep with precipitous drops left and right. On arrival in the valley, we booked into the Refuge du Mont Blanc and the first 'card school' session began. Gambling in the military is illegal, so the loser suffered a forfeit for the next day instead, mainly involving ritual humiliation. Day two began with a steep ascent alongside the Trient Glacier before cutting left to zig-zag up to the Fenetre d'Arpette. This was a test for the unacclimatised and is the reason why this day is described as the hardest on the 'Haute Route'. Descent

followed towards the village of Champex but we stopped short to sample the delights of the Relais d'Arpette whilst the next card game loser had to wear a hat made from a loaf of bread and zinc oxide tape.

After a relatively short descent we reached the quiet village of Champex with its picture-postcard lake. Much of the day was spent on either flat or downhill stretches to the village of Le Chable. This was due to be the next overnight stop but whilst Kev Reynolds' guidebook describes this village as 'an ideal stop-over point' we viewed it as the bottom of the cable car station to Verbier – Verbier won the argument.

We made an on-the-spot booking to 'The Bunker' hostel which sounds horrendous, but is in reality a room at the Verbier sports centre overlooking a swimming pool – use of the pool included in the price! Morale was at a high, and although our next halt was the Mont Fort hut above the ski area, it was still a relaxing climb, with many sore heads being nursed from the 'Verbier experience'.

Ibex and Chamois were sighted as we crossed near to the Grand Desert glacier the next day en route to the Prafleuri Hut. The normal route over the Col de la Chauv has been cut by avalanche debris and at present is impassable. The detour across Col Termin, although longer, was a steady traverse and was the route recommended by the hut guardian. The Prafleuri Hut is not the best situated in the Alps, surrounded by the remnants of a past mining period, but the guardians are friendly and the hut atmosphere is lively. This is an essential part of the overall Alpine experience and the difference between huts was marked and certainly determines if I ever wish to stay somewhere again – for example, the attitude of the owner of the Glacier d'Argentiere campsite will lead



The spectacular view of the Trient Glacier on day 2.



The Trient Glacier from the camp site.



Below the imposing Mont Blanc de Cheilon.

me to find an alternative in the future. This was based on a trivial argument over the daily rate charged for parking!! Clearly the customer is not always right, particularly in France, and particularly when it involves the English.

Day six began with a traverse alongside Lac de Dix, allegedly the highest dam in Europe. The route headed up towards the Dix Hut but veered left across moraine boulders to the Col de Riedmatten, where we had our first glimpse of the Matterhorn in the distance. The route heads towards Mont Blanc de Cheilon and its impressive rock-face. Once over the col, we descended to the small, but busy hamlet of Arolla. This is clearly a location favoured by Brits who outnumbered the locals two to one. The language spoken up to this point had been French and this was to continue up until the final couple of days when German-Swiss became the principal tongue. There were also dialects specific to valleys and this adds to the cultural experience of the whole trip.

A gentle walk along the valley from Arolla took us towards Les Haudere, a traditional Swiss village with a wide range of ice creams on sale for lunch. There followed a rising path to La Sage which was to be our next stop. At the Hotel de la Sage, we relaxed in the pool room and looked at the imposing Pigne d'Arolla peak through the telescope. This had been one of the easiest days on the trip, and the Hotel de la Sage was the best hotel that we stayed in. The next day began with another morning of ascent – the best way to describe the geography of the 'Haute Route' is that you ignore all principles of jungle travel. You continually cross-grain in that you ascend all morning to a col and then descend all afternoon having crossed into another valley system. However, today we were heading to one of the best situated huts in the Alps – the Moiry Hut, set above the Barrage de Moiry icefall. This involved another steep ascent but the view was definitely worth the effort.



The lead wall of the glacier.

The next day's high point was the Col de Sorebois before an extremely steep descent to Zinal. This was particularly bad for knee joints and was further devalued as you pass through the machinery of the Zinal ski slopes. The evening was spent in the originally named 'Le Pub' which played a selection of CDs that you have in your collection, but that you are too embarrassed to brag about. Whatever happened to Terence Trent Darby and Glen Madeiros?

The Zinal Valley appeared to have the steepest sides so far and it was an effort to ascend to the Forcletta. Clearly the evening in 'Le Pub' had little to do with the misery being experienced by the group at this stage! This climb took us into the Turtmantal Valley towards Gruben – this valley is closed and uninhabited in the Winter, but in Summer it was teeming with weekenders. The German-speakers in the group now came to the fore, as the French linguists stopped showing off. The next day would take us

into the Mattertal, and a steady walk along the valley towards Zermatt. However, first we ascended straight out from the front door of the Hotel Schwarzhorn in a steadily ascending path and into the Augstbordpass and down to the isolated ville of Jungen. Here our expert German speakers let us down by ordering the wrong meal and £100 later we departed having played food roulette – "Who ordered the salad?". A cablecar took us into St Niklaus – quiet and the poor man's cousin to Zermatt further down the valley. However, our hotel was decked out in 1970s retro décor and acted as motivation to go out and drink instead of staying in your room, in a time-warp. Our final day was alongside the road and rail network into Zermatt, with the Matterhorn only becoming visible as we reached the outskirts of the town. Two days R and R followed, a £200 taxi back to Argentiere and an argument with a campsite owner before we hit the road back to UK.



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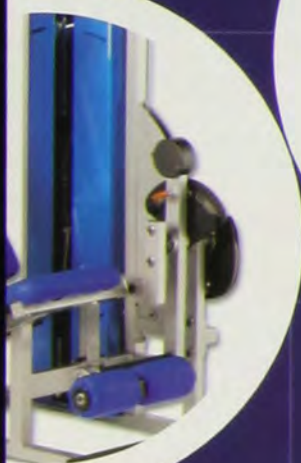
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