

# ARMY MOUNTAINEER



Winter 2013

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The Journal of the Army Mountaineering Association



  
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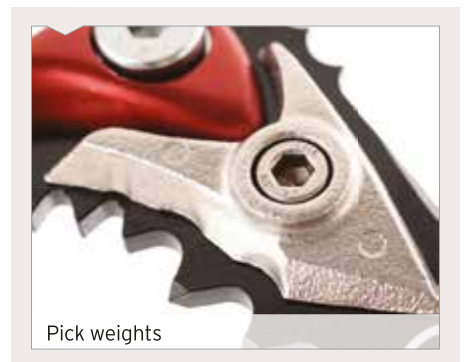
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Adze version



Pick weights

# ARMY MOUNTAINEER

The Journal of The Army Mountaineering Association



# Contents

## Top tips for climbing coaches

1. If your group is bored, you are boring.
2. Falling off is what climbers do – teach it.
3. Gaining an award means it is time to start learning to use it.
4. Don't let climbs defeat you. Find a way up, even by pulling on gear. This will minimise mental barriers and keep you positive. Back off only if it's dangerous.
5. The most important part of the day is the ten minutes in the café, discussing and agreeing a plan for the day.
6. The second most important part of the day is the review of the session at the end of the day, when you can highlight what you have all achieved.
7. Use the walk-in to listen to your group and observe how they are moving – are they stable on their feet or do they stumble with every step?
8. When teaching wear the same shoes as your clients. Wearing approach shoes when they are in rock boots may belittle their achievements.
9. If a challenging member of the group is doing something daft, just point out what and why and then turn away. Confrontation is counter-productive.
10. An expert is someone who has made and survived more mistakes than most. Get out and make your own.

The above tips are an extract from "Top tips for climbing coaches" by Paul Smith which is published by Pesda Press [www.pesdapress.com](http://www.pesdapress.com). It contains over 300 top tips and handy hints for climbing coaches. The book is a must have for all aspirant Rock Climbing Instructors.



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ON THE COVER –  
Ex Northern Altura – Peru

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The Army Mountaineer is published for The Army Mountaineering Association by:  
Crest Publications, 1 Rothwell Grange Court, (Junction 6 A14), Rothwell Road, Kettering, Northants, NN16 8FB  
Tel: 01536 317000 Email: [jayne@crestpublications.com](mailto:jayne@crestpublications.com)  
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VACANT



# Foreword

*Foreword by Chairman*

## A Few Words From The Chairman

Having now been Chairman for a year I find the Association to be in continuing good health. Our membership continues to increase slowly and now exceeds 2,400 and our finances are healthy. The general purpose fund is likely to finish the year with a balance of around £70,000 and the Executive have agreed to invest a £50,000 of this into the memorial fund which is in addition to the £86,000 transferred to the Memorial fund earlier this year.

This year saw our membership secretary Helen Smith leave after working for us for over 6 years. As our only paid member of staff Helen managed our office in Anglesey with huge efficiency and will be greatly missed. Unfortunately her replacement, Ali Lavender was only with us for a few weeks before finding employment more suited to her qualifications, however we have now secured the services of Wendy Steele, who will be in place by the time you read this. Wendy is a Nurse and Lawyer and should, therefore, be able to keep us all under control quite nicely!

Elsewhere, our expedition programme is going well with recent highly successful expeditions to Alaska and Peru having been completed, and expeditions to Western Nepal and Everest planned for next year. Sport Climbing continues to thrive with regional and national events scheduled for next year and the ever popular tri-service bouldering league now underway for this season. Our meets programme has met with mixed success due to the availability of leaders, but where meets have happened they have been hugely successful. As ever we are looking for willing individuals to come forward and help organise UK meets.

As I look forward to the next year I feel that we, as an Association, are well placed for future success, but I am also aware that this is based, almost exclusively, on the hard work of the AMA's committee and those other members who come forward and offer their help. I would like to extend my, and the Association's thanks to them all.

## PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD

During my all-too-short time in the hills this Summer, chance encounters on with fellow Army Mountaineers on the Midi ridge; the Crochures; Haytor; Idwal; and even at the Beacon wall, reminded me how prolific the AMA is. With membership now at around 2500 it's maybe not surprising but nevertheless good to see. Now, the summer seems a long time ago but as the year draws to a close and we look forward with the usual optimism to a good winter season, there is plenty of achievement in 2013 to reflect on, including: successful expeditions to Denali and Peru; a tremendous indoor league; and a lots of ambitious and challenging unit level activity.

So what next. No sooner have we put BSAE 2012 to bed, then we start to look towards the next quadrennial Joint Services Expedition. 2016 will be an RN&RMMC lead with Dhaulagiri (8167m) the objective. The plan is ambitious and inclusive, with opportunities to join summit, development and trekking teams; it is only 2 seasons away so do start thinking about it

now. AMA expeditions are planned for 2014 to Nepal, and 2015 to the Andes, and we also have Army mountaineers with their sights set on Everest in 2014. Sport climbing will offer its well established regular and high quality drumbeat of events and we will continue to improve the meets programme; as ever we are reliant upon the willingness and commitment of those who are prepared to run the meets on the day, on the ground. Thank you to those who have done so this year and if you can help please let Tommo know. Finally welcome to our new Journal Editor who will be relieved to see his first edition in print. Again, please do support him with timely articles and photographs.

Whatever you have achieved this year I hope that you also derive some vicarious enjoyment from the adventures of other AMA members in the pages that follow.

### PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

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

**Beat the credit Crunch**

# AMA DISCOUNTS

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

## **Cotswold Outdoor**

The 20% discount code for the AMA at Cotswold Outdoor Ltd is AF-DFMC-P2. The old code (A3000) will not work anymore. Additionally, YOU MUST BE IN POSSESSION OF A VALID AMA MEMBERSHIP CARD TO USE THIS CODE IN STORE. No card, no discount. Cotswold Stores have a copy of the AMA card. Cotswold has been particularly supportive of the AMA, but has had several problems recently with customers attempting to claim AMA discount in store without cards. Please carry the card and be polite to one of our key sponsors. Cotswold is using an intelligent retail management system to monitor usage of the new code.

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

## **Summit Mountaineering**

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

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

## **PHD / (Pete Hutchinson Designs)**

POC – Emma Harris, can be contacted on 01423 781133 or via the e-mail address. PHD offer a 25% discount off all standard items to the AMA.

[www.phdesigns.co.uk/index.php](http://www.phdesigns.co.uk/index.php)

## **Beyond Hope – Evolv, Metolius, Prana and Rock Technologies**

POC – Lee or Rick 01457 838242

Trade price + VAT + carriage deal to all members of the AMA.

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

## **DMM**

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POC - Nick Thomas – 01286 872222, [nick.thomas@dmmwales.com](mailto:nick.thomas@dmmwales.com)

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

## **Montane**

POC – Kris Carrick 01670 522300 x 210 [kris@montane.co.uk](mailto:kris@montane.co.uk)

UK Pro Price List for AMA Members applies. All orders must be via the Montane Customer Order Form.

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

## **Paramo**

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

## **Millets**

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

Mountain Equipment (via Magic Mountain shop in Glossop) – 20% discount. Phone Magic Mountain on 0161 3665020 ask for mail order department, quoting your AMA number.

## **Terra Nova**

They now operate a system similar to Paramo whereby AMA members need to contact the company direct and set up a Pro User account via password. When you then re-log in to the Terra Nova site the price list will auto adjust to reflect your discount. Magic !!

[info@terra-nova.co.uk](mailto:info@terra-nova.co.uk) +44 (0) 1773 833300

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

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



# DIARY

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

## ARMY MOUNTAINEERING ASSOCIATION MEETS 2014

DATE	LOCATION	ACTIVITY	LEAD
21-23 Feb	Snowdonia	Winter mountaineering	Tbc
Apr	Pembrokeshire	All grades single and multi-pitch sea cliff climbing	Tbc
10-12 May	Peaks	All grades single pitch trad climbing	Mike Smith
20-23 June	Cornwall	All grades single and multi pitch crag and sea cliff climbing	Tbc
July	JSAM	Alpine mountaineering	
Aug	Lake District	All grades single and multi-pitch crag, mountain climbing and scrambling	Tbc
26-28 Sep	AGM Week-end	All grades single and multi-pitch sea cliff, crag, mountain climbing and scrambling	Tbc
10-12 Oct	Wye Valley	Single pitch climbing	Ryan Lang
Nov	The Roaches	All grades single pitch trad climbing	Tbc
21 Nov	RMAS	President's dinner	Tbc

## TRI-SERVICE BOULDERING LEAGUE 2013-14

DATE	ACTIVITY	LOCATION
15 Jan 14	Round 4	The Climbing Works Sheffield
15 Feb 14	Round 5	The Indy Wall, JSMTTC (I), Anglesey



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# 'Guinea Pigs and Burros!'

Ex NORTHERN ALTURA

16 Jul – 14 Aug 2013

Cordillera Blanca, Peru

By Capt J A Thompson SCOTS

**M**achu Picchu, guinea pigs, panpipes, llamas, 'Touching the Void' and adventure... just some of the things that spring to mind when thinking of Peru, so when the opportunity presented itself to go as part of an Army Mountaineering Association (AMA) expedition in July 2013 it was an opportunity not to be missed!

In September 2012 the concept of an expedition to the Cordillera Blanca in the Peruvian Andes was put forward by the AMA. It wasn't long before a leader was selected in Capt Alex Dow RE who seized upon the opportunity and drove the concept forward to make it a reality within the space of ten months.

After an initial training weekend, coinciding with the AMA Winter Meet at JSMTIC Indefatigable, and a subsequent further three weekends based from Capel Curig, a team was selected to go forward. With Maj Terry Denton REME as 2IC, the team comprised of fourteen personnel from across the regular Army and Reserves. Maj Al Mason AGC(ETS), QMSI Si Naylor RAPTC and Maj Lee Shannahan R IRISH formed our Alpine Mountain Leaders with the rest of the team consisting of LCpl Emma Dempsey R SIGS(V), Cpl Michael Miller RLC, Cpl Simon Hall RIFLES(V), Sgt David Havenhand RE, Capt Trish Patterson RA, 2Lt Jordan Dickinson RLC(V), Musn Rachel Johnson RA(V), Capt Antonia Hazlerigg RAMC (the team doctor) and Capt Jonny Thompson SCOTS.

The aim of the expedition was to develop members' alpine mountaineering skills as well as providing the opportunity to be a part of a high altitude expedition. The expedition was to last for four weeks structured in a way to allow for acclimatisation and training before attempting three major peaks within the Cordillera Blanca range.

From Borden Camp, where we met to collect and pack our technical kit, we set off for the airport with multiple matching North Face and Mountain Equipment bags full of shiny new kit, excited at the

prospects that lay ahead, but not quite sure of what to expect once we hit the ground.

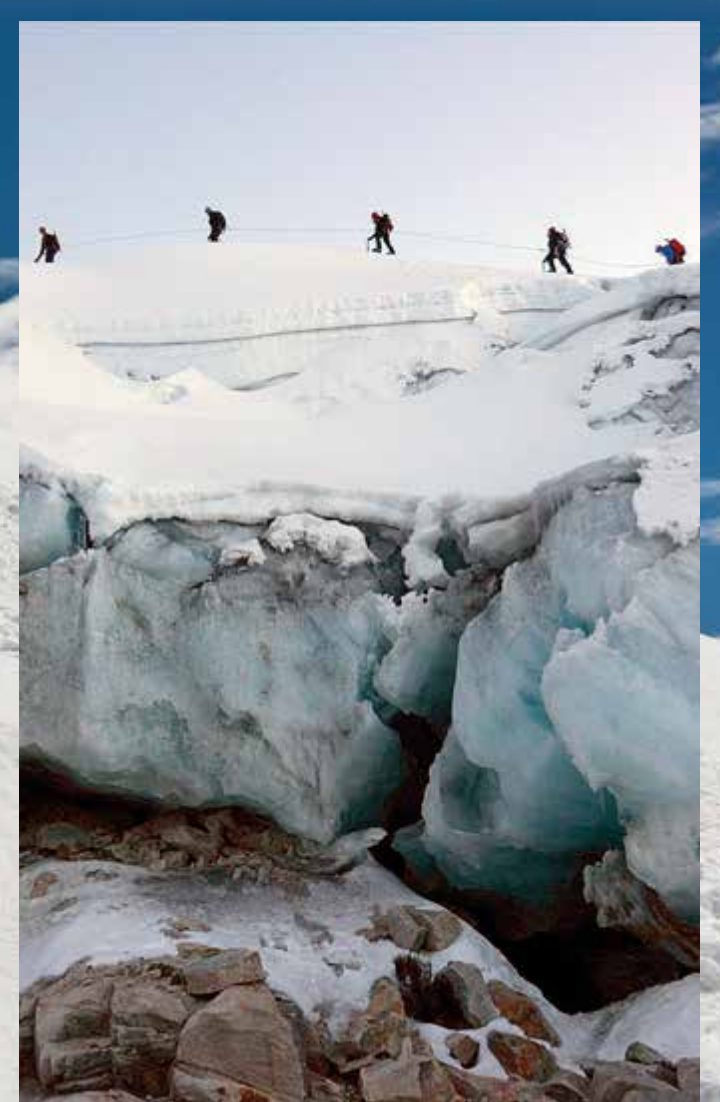
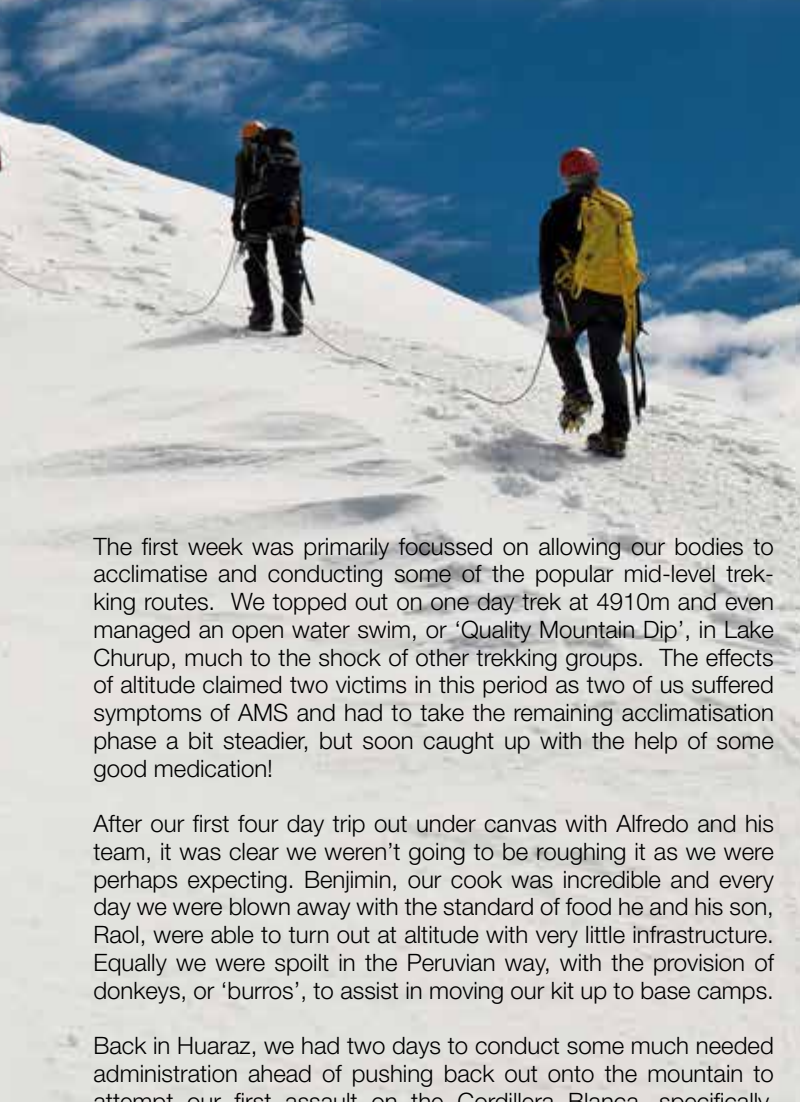
We arrived in Peru after an overnight flight courtesy of Air Europa, think Ryan Air but long haul. Hungry and tired, we were met by Carlos Quintana, our host's uncle who whisked us off for an unexpected breakfast of chicken and chips. We were then dropped at the bus station, where negotiations were initiated in an effort to get us and our multiple kit bags to our final destination, Huaraz. We nervously watched as our baggage was tagged and separated from us ("no problema"), reassured that we would be reunited with the baggage in Huaraz after an eight hour bus journey. One bag down already courtesy of Madrid airport, we were dubious!

The bus journey was an experience in itself, and Spanish bingo proved to be an instant hit with all passengers, much to our amusement. Regardless, we arrived in good spirits greeted by Alfredo Quintana of Mount Climb, our host for the duration of the trip and whose company would take care of our camp logistics whilst on the mountain. Draped in Mammut gear, it was clear he was the Tom Cruise of mountain guides in the area. Immediately, we felt as though we were in safe hands.

Huaraz was bustling and lively, and with the build up to their independence day celebrations on 28 July every evening seemed to be a party with fireworks and loud music. Despite the persistent sirens, horns and zumba class music from opposite the hotel, we didn't struggle to sleep that first night.

Our first day involved an initial acclimatisation walk and an opportunity to get used to the 3000m height gain we had made the previous day. Some of us congregated on the roof of the hotel that morning to take in the panoramic view of the Cordillera Blanca range. Looking up at 6000m+ snow-capped peaks was awesome and filled us with eager anticipation for the trip ahead.





The first week was primarily focussed on allowing our bodies to acclimatise and conducting some of the popular mid-level trekking routes. We topped out on one day trek at 4910m and even managed an open water swim, or 'Quality Mountain Dip', in Lake Churup, much to the shock of other trekking groups. The effects of altitude claimed two victims in this period as two of us suffered symptoms of AMS and had to take the remaining acclimatisation phase a bit steadier, but soon caught up with the help of some good medication!

After our first four day trip out under canvas with Alfredo and his team, it was clear we weren't going to be roughing it as we were perhaps expecting. Benjamin, our cook was incredible and every day we were blown away with the standard of food he and his son, Raol, were able to turn out at altitude with very little infrastructure. Equally we were spoilt in the Peruvian way, with the provision of donkeys, or 'burros', to assist in moving our kit up to base camps.

Back in Huaraz, we had two days to conduct some much needed administration ahead of pushing back out onto the mountain to attempt our first assault on the Cordillera Blanca, specifically,



Maparaju at 5326m. Time in Huaraz was also taken to hone our alpine skills, with Al Mason (our resident teacher) keen to thoroughly rope up some local park railings to save them from an unseen crevasse in town.

For some team members, Maparaju was their first alpine peak and it was certainly an endurance event unlike the Alps with an epic walk into the toe of the glacier battling scrub, rivers, cows, scree and then icy winds, all in the dark, to then struggle to get kit on and make our way onto the peak. Once the sun rose and the sun glasses were on, smiles began to show through bated breath as we all struggled for air whilst breaking the 5000m point. On the ridge line we had our first uninterrupted view of the entire range which was breathtaking. Unfortunately one of the rope teams had to turn back with the altitude taking its toll on some members, but this turned out to be a wise choice especially with bigger goals planned for later in the trip. We soon were learning some valuable and sensible lessons in high altitude mountaineering.

By the time we were all back from the Maparaju summit, the camp slightly resembled an apocalypse, with bodies and kit strewn everywhere. However, with Benjamin's Michelin style mountain food, it wasn't long before the life came back into the team and we could all recount the day's events and the special achievement of our first alpine summit in Peru.

Another 'rest/training' day in Huaraz followed, and refreshed from our Peruvian cold showers in the hotel we were set to head back out and commence our second summit attempt, this time aiming for

Ishinca at 5530m. We were treated to another bumpy, off-road journey in a very normal bus which defied logic and physics to get us up the precarious mountain road. This road led to the burro station, where we began trekking ahead of the burro train into the Ishinca Valley towards base camp. The start of the route offered views of Huascarán and Copa, two of the largest mountains in the range. We soon reached a plateau at the foot of a large glacial moraine next to a refuge where we set up camp and prepared our kit for an early start the next day. We had warning of an incoming storm and so wanted to take advantage of the good weather that was still with us.

Rising at 3.30am, we quickly fuelled ourselves with Milo, bread and crackers. The circular route would consist of an ascent of the NW slopes and a descent via the SW ridge. It proved a hard traverse up to the summit as we detoured around large crevasses before reaching the main ridge and commencing the long, steep slog up, breathing hard in the thin air. The summit was clear and again offered some amazing views across the range. A short descent through the cornice from the top and onto the bergshrand on the SW side led to a clear route all the way off the glacier and back onto the footpath leading down to base camp. The entire expedition team achieved the summit which led to some celebrations that night in base camp, including 'pisco sours' courtesy of the cook to compliment a well-earned meal.

The current conditions on Copa, which was originally to be our final objective, were such that it was going to prove beyond the experience of the team to attempt the summit. A bold decision was made to bid for an alternative final peak in order to achieve a suc-





successful 100% summit in line with the aims of the expedition. Our minds were set instead on Pisco at 5752m, and whilst we wouldn't break the 6000m mark, it was still going to be a fulfilling mountain experience. Pisco is a popular summit in the region for alpinists and the plan was to move up to 4500m and establish a base camp before moving up to a high camp the following day at 4900m. This would be our highest camp to date, and allowed us to sleep within striking distance of the glacier.

From our first camp we had a clear view of Pisco and some impressive cornices that had formed on the entire ridgeline. Even at 3900m we were still finding ourselves getting sore necks looking up; we still had a long way to go. Our night in the high camp was unforgettable; Benjamin slapped together an impressive spaghetti bolognese as we watched the sun go down behind Huscaran and took the opportunity for some impressive group shots. On waking from a warm nights sleep in our minimum number of tents, we decided to allow another group to push on ahead of us and trail blaze. This decision paid off. As we picked our way up to the summit ridge we watched as the sun started to hit the mountain faces to our left and large seracs broke free in the warmth, we breathed a sigh of relief each time that it wasn't anywhere near us. Pushing to the summit, we were acutely aware of the lack of oxygen, especially on the steep final pitch to the large plateau forming the summit. Yet again another 100% summit, which was celebrated again with Pisco Sours, this time made with genuine ice from Pisco glacier carried delicately down by the author. The ice also came in handy when we passed a German tourist who had taken a falling rock on the head.

Our work complete we headed back to Huaraz to enjoy a night on the town and took up the opportunity to sample the local delicacy - guinea pig. Before leaving, we were given one last treat of experiencing a local BBQ at Benjamin's family home up in the foothills as they baked food for us in an open fire and treated us to some real local dishes, a final chance to eat the infamous guinea pig and Alfredo's special guinea pig sauce.

A rece party left Huaraz for Lima a day ahead of the group, primarily to try out the surfing as part of R&R. By the end of the day we had sampled some amazing food, good surf and dined in a well recommended restaurant which prided itself on traditional Peruvian dishes.

The flight home was much the same as the one out but without the excitement of the trip ahead. It was a bitter sweet ending with the unpacking in Borden before going our separate ways. It had been an unrivalled opportunity for novices and a unique region in which the more experienced among us had got to tread new ground. Peru has a great deal to offer and the Cordillera Blanca is truly one of the most spectacular ranges in the world.

Thank you to Alfredo and his team at Mount Climb for taking such good care of us, Selex and Dynatech as our two main sponsors, and the AMA for facilitating the expedition – without the support of each of these organisations, this expedition would not have been possible.



# DMM equipment review

Ryan Lang

A climbing trip to North Wales usually always means a visit to DMM to purchase yet more climbing equipment and to make best use of the DMM discount offered to all AMA members.

This summer's trip was no exception! Apart from this time Nick Thomas from DMM provided Barry Whale and I two Dragon Cams (size 1 and 4) to trial for the AMA Journal.

## Dragon Cam review

Prior to using the Dragon Cam, Nick gave one particularly interesting piece of advice which was to scratch the Cam lobes on rock before using them for the first time as this would assist the friction on particularly smooth rock such as slate. It felt really strange deliberately scratching new equipment to make it work better, but we followed the advice none the less!

The first thing I noticed about the Dragon Cam was their double axle design gives them a wider range than my other Cams. After some experimentation, I found that they were easier to place in a wider range of crack than my other Cams, which resulted in me being able to reduce the amount carried on my rack.

The Camming action was also smooth compared to other Cams. Despite the lack of a thumb loop, I found them easy to place however it was acknowledged that Cams with thumb loops were easier to place above head height.

One of the other features of the Dragon Cam is the extendable Dyneema sling, which allows the Cam to be extended. This means that you can potentially reduce the amount of slings and quickdraws carried, reducing your overall weight. This is a feature that you either love or hate, personally I liked it as I'm used to this feature from using DMM Hexes that use a similar design.

Baz on the other hand disliked it as he preferred a shorter sling that could be extended if required with a sling or quickdraw. The extendable sling is also more complicated for the second to stow which can result in Cams dangling around your knees.

Overall, I found the Dragon Cam had a smoother action, wider range and easier to place than my other Cams. I will certainly be using the DMM discount so that I can replace my other Cams as soon as possible.



# James McHaffie interview

Ryan Lang

## What are your top tips to improve climbing?

The trick is to try, try and try again, put the effort in eventually you will get there. Never believe anything is impossible. Through physical conditioning, goals can be achievable.

Set specific goals, dream routes, dream problems. Without setting goals, there will be no improvement, you will just tread water. There is a difference between normal practice and deliberate practice. If you make a conscious effort to improve, you will do so faster than those who coast along.

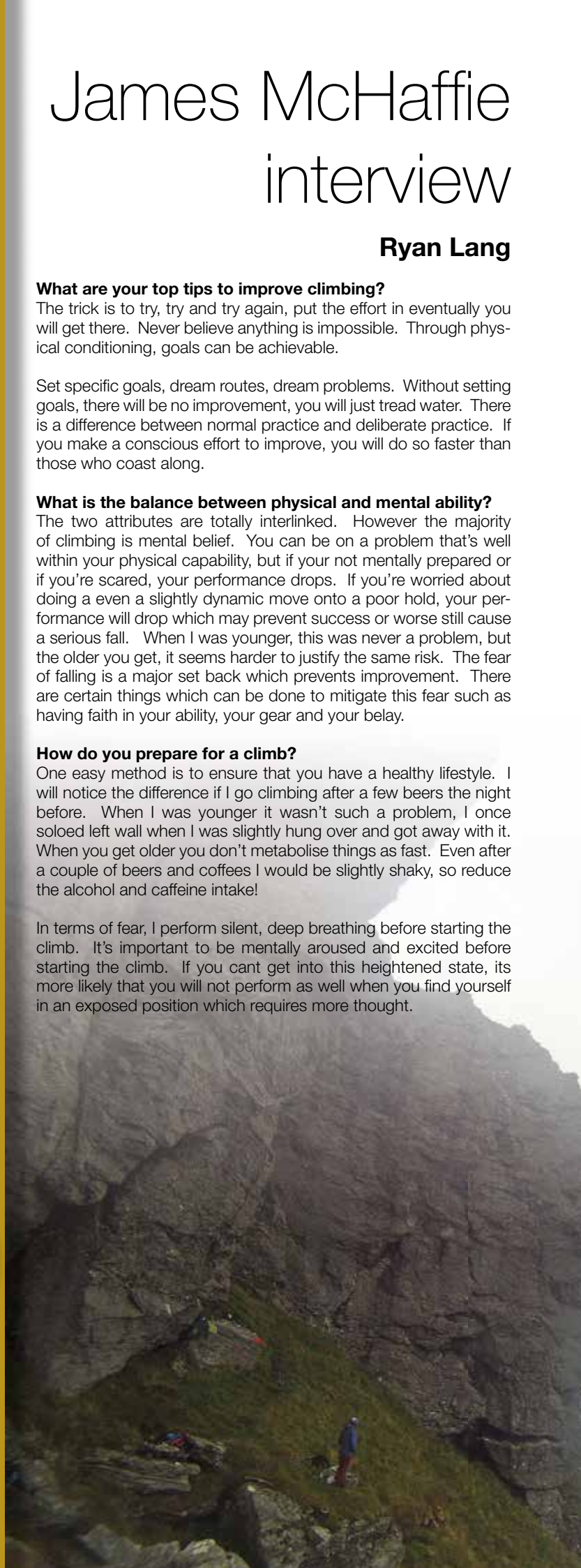
## What is the balance between physical and mental ability?

The two attributes are totally interlinked. However the majority of climbing is mental belief. You can be on a problem that's well within your physical capability, but if you're not mentally prepared or if you're scared, your performance drops. If you're worried about doing a even a slightly dynamic move onto a poor hold, your performance will drop which may prevent success or worse still cause a serious fall. When I was younger, this was never a problem, but the older you get, it seems harder to justify the same risk. The fear of falling is a major set back which prevents improvement. There are certain things which can be done to mitigate this fear such as having faith in your ability, your gear and your belay.

## How do you prepare for a climb?

One easy method is to ensure that you have a healthy lifestyle. I will notice the difference if I go climbing after a few beers the night before. When I was younger it wasn't such a problem, I once soloed left wall when I was slightly hung over and got away with it. When you get older you don't metabolise things as fast. Even after a couple of beers and coffees I would be slightly shaky, so reduce the alcohol and caffeine intake!

In terms of fear, I perform silent, deep breathing before starting the climb. It's important to be mentally aroused and excited before starting the climb. If you can't get into this heightened state, it's more likely that you will not perform as well when you find yourself in an exposed position which requires more thought.



### **What is your most memorable route?**

It's tricky to pinpoint one! The route that I'm most proud of is The Meltdown. The year before I'd learnt the skills to break a personal barrier on big bang. This put me slowly on the curve, to success. Prior to succeeding everything came together which included going superlight. I went  $\frac{3}{4}$  a stone lighter, I went down to 9 stone to achieve the aim. The meltdown is a tricky route as it takes a long time to get the sequences right.

Pete Robbins suggested The Meltdown was a 9A, as it's very slippery at the top. It was one of those routes that you can fluff forever, it was a fluky ascent. It felt great to do it when I did, I was slightly nervous as the new slate guidebook had been released throwing down the gauntlet alongside Johnny Dawes book. I felt the pressure as there are a few professional climbers around. People started making a basecamp down there. I felt I had an advantage as I'd put a few days down there already as I really wanted it.

I wanted to do the Meltdown and Rain shadow, but later decided not to bother with Rain shadow, partly because the weather was poor and it did seep a lot last year and was further away. Meltdown meant a lot more to me personally. I've done most of the hard routes on the slate quarries. To get  $\frac{3}{4}$  the way up the Meltdown is harder than the Very big Very small, the next hardest route, then you have the properly hard moves!

### **Are you working on any new projects?**

I have my eyes on a new project. I'm going out to Yosemite in May, with a new route to attempt. That's all I'm going to say at this moment as I don't want the yanks to get a sniff of it as it's on their doorstep and I'm only out there for a month. I've studied the guidebook and eyed up a weakness. The first few pitches are the hardest, I've figured if you can pick a line around the aid climb, there are no hand holds or foot holds, it will be a case of body bridging all the way up!

### **Do you have trouble managing the climbing/work balance?**

Sometimes! It's all a case of being strategic. For example going climbing after an ML assessment is very tiring and I won't climb as well. It might only be two nights out, but power loading the legs for two nights is enough to degrade your performance. I will give a known hard route a go and I'll be knackered, whereas normally I could give it about 4 good attempts on a red point.

Certain types of work make the balance more difficult. I see my job as active rest, none of the rock climbing courses that I do are above E5. I did a course last week on a performance rock course where I did a couple of E5 routes, however most of the time I won't need to work above HVS. I work perhaps  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the year, I'm quite in the winter so get a bit of downtime.

### **What was the scariest climbing situation that you've been in?**

It was when I got rescued from Masters wall. I was out for about four hours, I was absolutely drained for the last half hour and I literally had nothing left. Every second thought I was dead.

I also remember the solos that I did when I was 16. I was climbing in the lakes, there was an HVS corner I wanted to do called Drayton corner. It was all a bit damp, I got 20ft up and couldn't continue, I started going left, nearly fell off 4 times on a 4 pitch crag. I looked at where I went years later to try and identify where I nearly fell off, to this day I think the wind must have blown me back on! I was literally soloing at my limit which was E2. I still can't work out where I went, I was just right of bonsai pipeline top pitch. I knew I was scared, but nowadays I would probably sit still and not move!

### **What is your favourite destination?**

My favourite destination is the UK as there is lots of trad variety. I also love Spain, the climate, people and crags are amazing. I've always had great trips and like the language too!



# I feel the need ...the need for *speed*

Toby Dunn

## Fall 2007, Yosemite

*I'm struggling down the final stretches of the descent from El Capitan in the gathering gloom; after an arduous on-sight attempt on Freerider. The haulbag is cutting into my shoulders in an increasingly painful sawing action, and every step feels like its taking ten minutes. Two figures pop out of the darkness in between pine trees, "Those look like heavy bags," the long-haired one remarks with a touch of smugness. "What you guys been on?" he asks, more friendly now.*

*"Freerider."*

*"Nice. How long that take ya?"*

*"err... three and a half days I guess"*

*"What you guys been on?" I sensed he probably would have told me anyway, so I might as well ask.*

*"The Nose. Six, thirty-two, seventeen. Anyway, have a good one guys." They jogged off through the trees with a deeply irritating efficiency.*

*"Pretty keen on times that guy." I remarked, needlessly and slightly grumpily.*

*"You do know that was Hans Florine?" answered my partner.*

**H**ans Florine, for those still in the dark, is the current Nose of El Capitan record holder (with Yuji Hirayama) at a ridiculous 2hr43min33sec, to reach the top of a clear vertical mile of difficult, steep rock. Most teams do the route in three to four days. There is little or no interest in speed records within UK climbing, but there is plenty we can learn in terms of efficiency and speed from ascents like this, by harvesting the appropriate nuggets of technique and approach that can improve our everyday climbing experience, even if it is just about getting one more route in after work, or making it to the café before it starts raining!

### Why do I need to climb faster?

Why go fast? I always saw climbing as a relatively slow sport compared to my previous obsessions of windsurfing and mountain biking; part of the attraction is having the time to think, to plan and execute the moves. Why get all stressed out about trying to get it over with? Why not just enjoy climbing at your own pace?

Perhaps the most important thing about climbing fast is that actually climbing fast is perhaps the least effective way to try to speed things up. This article is more about doing everything you possibly can to allow you to climb without hassles, which I think is something all of us enjoy. Climbing more smoothly, if you like.

### Five reasons to want to go faster

- Live longer. Speed gives you the ability to escape objective danger. This might mean getting off the route before it is exposed to stone fall, storms or even dangerous levels of busyness later in the day on popular routes.
- Sleep more. Going fast means you can do longer routes without bivying. If you know you can move fast, you can climb long routes with a minimum of clutter (which speeds you up for a start) and be back for a night of comfort rather than shivering on a ledge halfway up a route. On popular classics, it means you can start late and avoid tangling with other teams, and still have the route done by the end of the day.
- Longer, harder routes become within reach. Dreaming of doing Yosemite's Astroman, or the Cima Grande's Brandler-Hasse?

Harder, longer routes will become much more manageable if you know you can motor on all the pitches up to a certain grade – you get more time on the harder pitches, and the whole thing becomes less daunting when you know you can turn up the pace, even when your 'time' on the route is of no importance to you.

- Climb more: knowing you can climb fast gives you the option to exploit narrower weather windows and still get routes done. In places like Patagonia, this is absolutely crucial to getting anything done; but the principle is also applicable to making it worthwhile going climbing after work, as you know you can get a couple of routes in before darkness.
- Closing time: important matter, this: everyone knows the most important feature of summer evening cragging is the debris pit, and making closing time can be a struggle in midsummer if you try and fit one last route in – a little swifter on the crag equals plenty of chilling time!

### Planning and preparation prevents poor performance (PPPPP!)

For their nose record (now beaten) in 2007, the Huber brothers tick marked virtually every hold and gear placement on the entire route. The Nose is pretty much a mile of vertical climbing. I'm not suggesting for a moment we all start going out and emulating this level of route prep, but it shows the difference some forethought can make. The advantage with doing a little preparation is that it's 'free' speed when you are on the route, in that you are not expending any extra energy or concentration in order to go faster, or to have more time in which to do other things which allow you to go faster. So here are some things you can do before you get anywhere near the crag to enable you to focus and enjoy the climbing when you are actually there, remember, some of this can be as useful to do at work (when the boss isn't looking, obviously) before an evening on the crag, as it is the nervous night before a big route.

### Five ways to go faster without trying harder!

- Read your guidebook, memorise the route description or topo; and take a copy with you if the route is long. Keep it handy in

case your 'photographic' memory fails you. A climbing partner of mine used to write the route description on his forearm in biro so he could make sure he was on the right course whilst mid move. If it works for you, do that.

- Try and assess the right rack to take. Although this cuts down on excess weight by not taking more than you need, it also has the added benefit of not rifling through the stacks of extra karabiners you don't need on your harness every time you are placing a piece of gear.
- Organise your rack – have a racking system and stick to it, and ideally make it the same as your partner's. This means you can clip gear to each other's harnesses at changeovers and know it is the 'right' place for the other person. Colour coded krabs for cams can be really handy, especially with bigger racks.
- Pick a route at the right level for you. This sounds obvious, but try and factor in how long the route is, its level of difficulty, and how much the approach and descent will take out of you.
- Have a good system for eating and drinking. As an example of the right attitude, experienced mountain marathon competitors will often not carry a water bottle, instead having a plastic mug on a string that they can scoop and drink with every time they pass a stream. It's fast, light, simple and efficient. Obviously you can't do this on a route (unless you climb a lot in the Lake District perhaps). But you are looking for minimal weight, maximal accessibility. Use a hydration bladder / tube if you get on with them; though be aware that on a longer route, having all your water in one container is potentially risky if you drop it or the bladder gets damaged. I favour a slung bottle or separate bladder for each member of the team. Take food that you can shove in a pocket and get to quickly and at regular intervals. Cereal or energy bars, a chunk of malt loaf, dried fruit and nuts or whatever you like eating really. Energy gels can be a lifesaver and are very portable and convenient, although I'd avoid relying on them for an entire day for taste reasons!

### Gear Choice

Clothing – have stuff that is versatile, adaptable to a range of conditions, and not too heavy. There is a huge range of this sort of thing on the market, so choose something appropriate for where you intend to climb. One recommendation is the lightweight pertex / pile style top – such as a Rab vapour rise or Marmot driclime. These tend to be breathable, durable and adaptable to a wide range of conditions so you don't need to keep taking things off / putting them back on which wastes valuable time. If it is cold, a synthetic insulated jacket or vest for the belayer / follower can be an immense benefit.

Footwear – again, appropriate to the climbing you are doing. If you feel you can go quicker if you really trust your feet, it's probably better to have tighter, more precise rock boots, and have to remove them every pitch or two while you belay rather than climb in more comfortable boots that can stay on, but slow up your climbing. If you are doing this, it's well worth getting some thin bungee loops that you can tie to the pull-tabs on your boots, and make a loop around your ankle. This means you won't have to worry about dropping them, or clipping them in, and can rip them off whilst belaying if you need to. If, on the other hand, the climbing on your chosen line is easy for you, consider going for 'sticky' approach shoes rather than rock shoes. Many of the modern models are amazingly precise, and you can walk in wearing them as well, cutting down on weight.

Rope(s) - if possible (unless the place you are climbing is much more suited to using doubles) go for a single – it's lighter, less complicated, makes simul-climbing much easier to deal with and tangles less likely. I like to use something around 9.8mm most of the time, a good compromise between weight and durability, and not too worrying to jumare or hard to 'batman' (see below!) on if need be.

Other gear – Use 'magic' belay plates whenever possible to enable you to belay directly and auto block belay the second, this allows the leader time to drink, reorganise the rack, and slip rock shoes off without losing time. Use cams whenever possible and appropriate instead of wires, they are generally quicker to place, quicker to clean and less hassle to re-rack at the belay.

### Five things not to sacrifice for speed

- good belays – safety is always paramount.
- enjoying going climbing – efficiency, not rushing, is the name of the game enabling you to relax and enjoy it more in the long run.
- extending runners – a few seconds extending things properly saves time you might lose later with horrific rope drag. DMM revolver krabs can be very handy for reducing rope drag.
- Spare gear - carrying genuinely essential extras (e.g.: head torches if appropriate), an extra couple of quickdraws, you won't be quicker if you're trying to extend gear with your belay plate because you thought some weight saving would be a good idea.
- eating and drinking enough – you'll be slower and climb badly if you are dehydrated / have low blood sugar.

### Five ways to really start motoring

Proviso: these techniques demand practice and confidence to execute effectively. This is a list of suggestions, not a technique manual- seek out further reading or instruction if you are unsure. Do not try them for the first time as the thunderclouds are gathering halfway up a mountain. Whilst we are interested in being as fast as possible, this always goes along with being as safe as possible.

- Simul climb – everything from the alpine style moving together on easy ground to the Yosemite style, where mini ascenders are used on runners to safe guard a fall by the second member of the party. This confers an increased, though still somewhat dubious margin of safety.
- Short fix – used when the second man is jumaring. Lead a pitch, pull up all the slack, tie it off to an unquestionably solid belay and shout 'rope fixed. Now continue to 'lead' as far as you can on the available slack rope. Obviously you should be supremely confident of your ability on the ground ahead, or able and willing to self-belay (the details of which are beyond the scope of this article).
- French free – essentially, cheat whenever possible. When speed is of the utmost importance (e.g.: approaching storm), forget pulling tricky moves and pull on the gear, if that is the fastest way to get to the next decent hold when you are leading.
- Batman! When following, you can call for tension in the rope' and 'batman' (hand-over-hand) up the rope to the next decent hold. Then drop the slack created and call for the leader to take in whilst continuing to climb conventionally. This makes following pitches very quick indeed. This works best on intermittently difficult, or not steep ground. Yarding up a rope is obviously very strenuous on steeper pitches, and it is generally more efficient to jumare to follow for speed in these situations.
- Changeovers – when swapping gear, consider using a bandolier. Have an organised routine of swapping gear, drinking or eating if necessary, checking the next pitch, and go! It can be just as handy to have a routine on a relaxed cragging day – you get to climb more, relax in the sun more, get to the pub earlier – but generally spend less time fiddling with gear.

# EX ALPACA EMU

## MOUNTAINEERING – PERU 2013

*Maj Tolan's Rope team on Gully to Copa High Camp 1*

In August a team of nine OCdts led by 2Lt Sam Potts RE set out on an ambitious expedition to climb Huascarán Sur 6746m - Peru's highest mountain. In addition to AML's Major John Tolan and Captain David Stanley, the team also hired two local UIAGM guides - William Cordero and Cesar Vargas for the duration of the mountain phases. We have worked with these guides on three previous successful 6000m+ expeditions. Prior to deployment, the team undertook winter skills training in Scotland under the supervision of Major Tolan.

The expedition began to acclimatise with a trek along the Salkantay Trail, which crossed the Salkantay Pass at 4600m on the way to Macchu Picchu. This route concluded with a road move to the railway and a 10km final walk to Agua Calientes at the foot of Macchu Picchu. Here the team took in the sights of the Inca City and then returned to Cusco. The team then moved by bus north to Huaraz, a large town surrounded by the peaks of the Cordillera Blanca and Peru's mountaineering capital.

Having checked climbing conditions and reviewed the itinerary, the team switched their first peak from Pisco to Ishinca (5500m). This was a three day climb based at the Don Bosco Refugio. From the hut we set off at 4am walking on good trails to the glacier. Once on the glacier, the route was a gentle meander to the narrow summit which had a steep finish with some large crevasses under very fragile snow bridges. The team achieved 14 out of 15 members

on the summit and were rewarded with spectacular views of the higher surrounding peaks.

Elated at the success on Ishinca, we then focussed on Copa at 6189m - a huge mountain with a large glacier on its table like top. This was a four day climb using a base camp at 4500m and a high camp at 5300m. The route to base camp took about six hours on good paths with the camp being good with good pitches and a clean river.

The route from base camp to Copa high camp looked improbable with a steep gully and headwall to climb. Setting off at 0730, the team followed good track well into the gully. As it steepened, the teams roped up and climbed quickly to avoid stone fall to the snow headwall. This consisted of a short snow/ice pitch, which the teams negotiated in good style. Thereafter, it was a gentle rising walk to the glacial plateaux and high camp. The team dug tent platforms in the snow and settled in for the night. An alpine start climbing through penitentes and a series of steep rising ramps, which the teams protected thus slowing progress. As the steepness eased, we followed a broad ridge leading simply to the summit, again with 14 out of 15 climbers on the summit. The views here were dominated by the Huascarán massif just a few kilometres away. In descent, extra care was taken and we arrived at high camp in the late afternoon. The team then returned to Huaraz to prepare for Huascarán.





been placed in. He was very ill, incapable of standing, incoherent and panicking about his condition. Major Tolan taking his signs and symptoms found he had severe HAPE (High Altitude Pulmonary Oedema) and developing HACE (High Altitude Cerebral Oedema). His pulse was weak and he had an O<sub>2</sub>/SAT of 52% - against a team average of 80-85%. Fortunately, we had altitude drugs and after consultation with a medical handbook, he was treated with Nifedipine and Dexamethasone for the HAPE/HACE. After nearly an hour with him he was recovering and was well enough to be carried down the mountain by the policemen, our Peruvian guides and porters. This intervention undoubtedly saved the guides life. The team meanwhile set high camp and rested.

After a good nights sleep the team set off at 2am for Huascaran. Initially, crossing the hugely crevassed Garganta and then the ascent of Huascaran Sur. The route here rises steeply through some steep ramps before easing as we neared the broad convex summit dome. This took longer than it appeared due to the many false summits. It is surprising how much harder the going was over 6000m, and reduced the team to a slow and breathless pace, eventually reached the summit after 7.5hrs climbing. Here we saw 12 out of 15 on the summit of Peru's highest mountain - a tremendous achievement. Conditions were perfect so we had a lengthy celebration/photo session.

Huascaran is a huge massif with the North and South peaks separated by a large col called 'The Garganta'. The team plan went perfectly with a walk from Musho to the Don Bosco Huascaran Refugio taking about six hours. The next day was a complete rest day in the Refugio to aid acclimatisation. From the refuge, the team had an easy 3hr ascent to Camp 1 on the glacier at 5300m. The following day was a difficult climb through a steep and heavily crevassed section known as the 'Canaletta' to get to high camp at 5900m. After a few hours climbing and approaching high camp, we were approached by two Ecuadorean policemen seeking urgent medical attention for their Ecuadorean guide. He was some distance higher, so we steadily approached him to see him in the tent he had

High Camp 2 on Huascaran 6000m.



Having summited, the team made their way back to high camp, taking extra care and doubling up rope teams over the fragile snow bridges of the Garganta. In good shape and beaming, the team had an early meal a well earned nights rest. Overnight, there had been a large snowfall so we set about a quick withdrawal back to the refuge. The going through the Canaletta was hard in the deep snow, one of our porters slipped and got a severe wound from the adze of his ice axe through his cheek. He was treated and dressed by Major Tolan and then evacuated for urgent medical treatment. Once through the Canaletta, the team made fast progress to the Refugio where we celebrated with a good meal.

The return to Huaraz was straightforward and the team celebrated what has been an outstandingly successful expedition. Every team member had climbed at least two of three high peaks and were in good health. Peru is a great country for high altitude mountaineering with the logistics easy to set up. Huaraz has a very professional Casa De Guias with UIAGM qualified guides. The expedition could not have taken place without the excellent support of the Ulysses Trust, The AMA and Support Command. It enabled the team to fund our guides, get better quality accommodation and food which all led to the strong health and condition of the team and therefore such strong summit success.



*Rope team on Ishinca*





Team on Huascaran summit



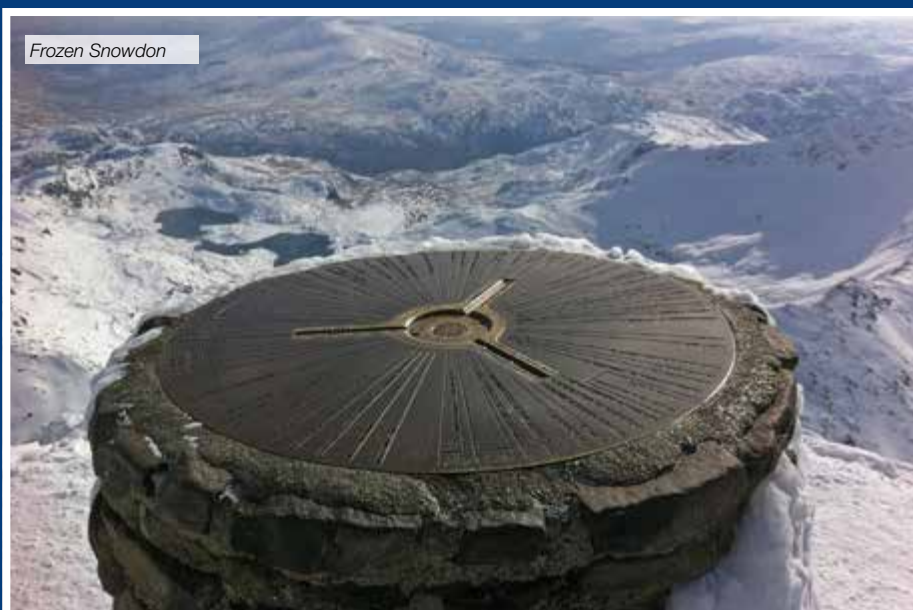
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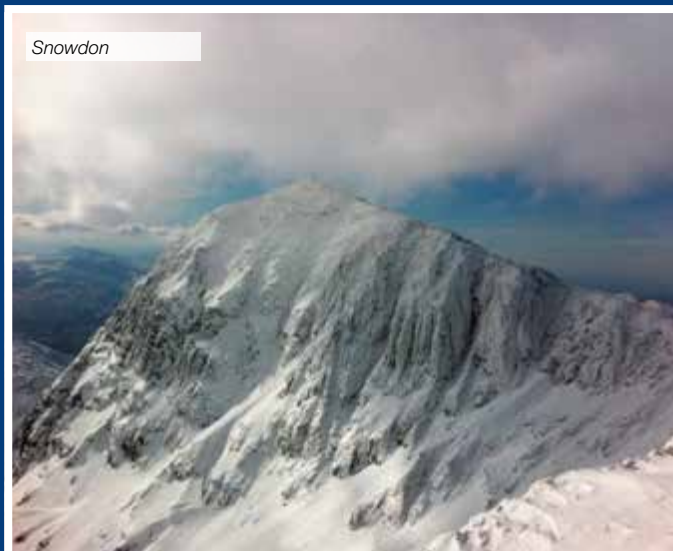
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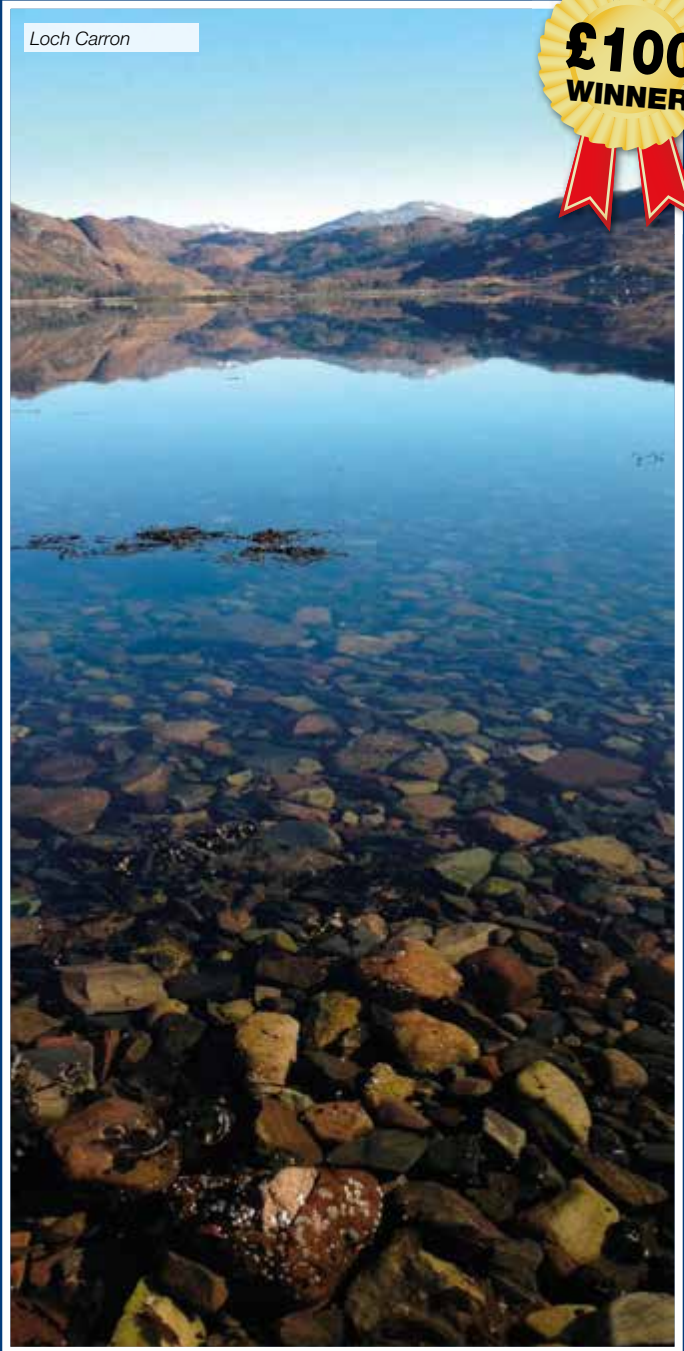
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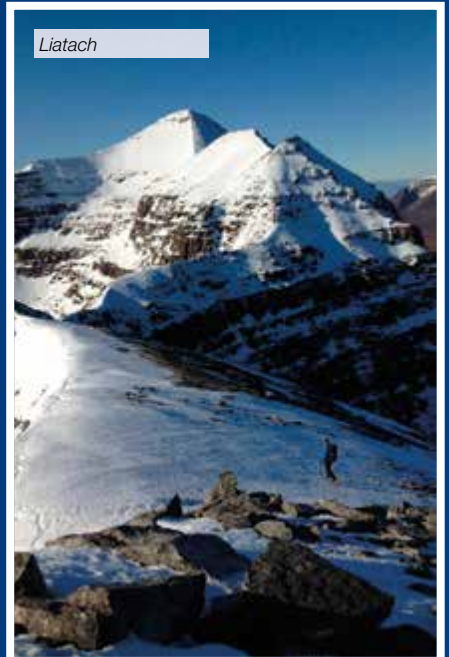
Pete's Eats



Outside Pete's



Liatach



# Wye Valley novice climbers meet

Ryan Lang

11–13 October 2013

Once again the AMA novice climbing meet was held in the picturesque Wye Valley, based in Symonds Yat. The location was chosen for the second year running due to the ideal facilities and ideal proximity of a suitable climbing venue.

As I set off for Symonds Yat I couldn't help but feel despondent at the unfair hand the weather man had dealt us compared to the sunshine we had the year before. Still, a total of 17 people decided to take the risk and travelled far and wide from the corners of the UK to make the weekend a success.

On Friday evening, people arrived in dribs and drabs which saw the meet organiser promptly provide an arrivals brief which consisted of the location of the bunkhouse and the bar which are ideally located 10 yards apart.

Breakfast was served on the Saturday morning which was a welcome sight after the night before! People were placed in groups according to ability and aims. Overall there were three groups, novice climbers – coached by Tony Penning (MIA), lead climbers – coached by Baz Whale and Ryan Lang and other climbers that wished to climb with friends as equals.

The day started off damp, but stayed dry all day which was an added bonus considering the weather forecast. The novice group achieved great success with Tony Penning who knows the Wye Valley like the back of his hand. By the end of the day they all climbed several routes including the iconic 'Pinnacle' which provides a great view down the valley.

The lead climbing group witnessed Ali, Oli and Ibbby all progress to lead climbing, placing their own protection, building anchors and bringing up a second.

All groups achieved great results which were discussed in the bar afterwards. That evening everyone dined together in the Olde Ferrie Inn, making use of the 10% discount which was negotiated on food for the weekend. This was where a man versus food competition ensued, the winner by a country mile ate a starter, 16oz T-bone steak then ordered bangers and mash for dessert!

There were a few sore heads on Sunday morning which were quickly cured by the awesome fry-up provided by the Olde Ferrie Inn. This time the weather was well and truly against us, therefore after a quick discussion, the vast majority of people opted to go to Boulders in Cardiff, where Ollie Noakes provided all members a discount. Tony Penning provided a great day for all, the highlight being the lead fall training.

Overall the weekend was a great success and great value at only £20 per person. If you are interested in running a climbing meet, please email the meets organiser.

They are very easy to arrange, you don't need any instructor qualifications and people are always willing to help. Without a meet organiser, the meet won't happen!



# Is your phone registered with the emergency SMS service

Ryan Lang

The emergency SMS service was established originally for deaf, hard-of-hearing and speech-impaired people. It allows users to contact the UK 999 services by sending an SMS text message.

Many outdoor organisations now recommend registering for this service which can be used to summon 999 assistance in the hills when mobile reception is poor and there is not enough signal to make a call. As of May 2012 there were over 32,000 phones registered with the emergency SMS service.

## How the emergency SMS service works

The emergency SMS service is an add on to the existing 999 and 18000 services that are available in the UK. Your SMS text message will be connected to 999 through the Text Relay 18000 service. A relay assistant will speak your SMS message to the 999 advisor, their reply will be sent back to you as an SMS message. If you send another SMS text message the relay assistant will read it to the 999 advisor and send their reply back to you.

## Registering your mobile phone

You need to register your mobile phone before using the emergency SMS service. This is best done before you need help. You can register by sending an SMS text message from your mobile phone.

To register using SMS text messages you must:

1. Send the word 'register' in an SMS message to 999.
2. You will then receive SMS messages about the service.
3. When you have read these SMS messages reply by sending 'yes' in an SMS message to 999

You will receive a SMS message telling you that your mobile phone is registered or if there is a problem with your registration.

## Checking your Registration

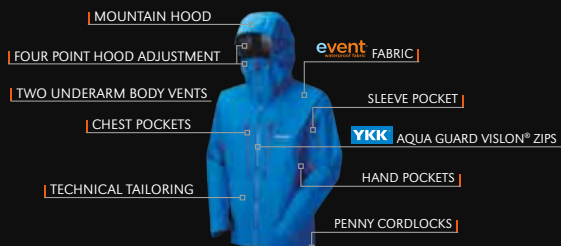
You can check your mobile phone registration by sending the word 'register' in a SMS message to 999. You will receive a SMS message telling you if your mobile phone is registered or if there is a problem with your registration.

## Unable to Register?

If you try to register and do not receive an SMS message from the emergencySMS service please check with your mobile communications provider to make sure they support the emergencySMS service.



Photography by Alexandre Brisse



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In June 2013 all eight climbers of an Army Mountaineering Association team successfully summited Denali via the West Buttress route with a view to then trying some different routes once acclimatised. The team comprised four regulars and four reservists who had been selected from an army wide trawl and subsequent training weeks in JSMTCC Ballachulish, Scotland and an exercise rehearsal in Saas Fee, Switzerland. This trawl looked for team members with prior mountain experience and the training plan developed this further. By the time the team deployed all members were at least WML, AML or WCL trained with most holding a clutch of qualifications. In the end, the selection and training process ensured the team was one of the most qualified/experienced expeditions across the board

Denali has been summited regularly since 1913 by a variety of routes with the most popular being the West Buttress climbed over 10-20 days. The next buttress to the north has an interestingly quiet history due to being the hardest to reach and very dependent on good conditions to climb. The first successful ascent of this Northwest Buttress was in 1954 and it had yet to be climbed by a British team. A secondary aim for the expedition was to have a look at this route and try it if the conditions permitted.

Flying in to Anchorage, the state capital of Alaska, Denali can often be seen in the far distance as a summit hovering over the clouds; an inspiring if a little daunting first sight. Other than some surprisingly large outdoor shops, Anchorage has little else to offer so after a quick shopping spree to collect some last bits of equipment and all of the sundry rations, the next move was northwards to the backwater town of Talkeetna near the edge of the national park.

Talkeetna's existence revolves around Denali with a significant tourist setup and an impressive pan of ski-planes ready to take climbers and tourists into or over the mountains. The rangers have an office there where they register and brief each climbing team and issue the 'clean mountain cans' to ease pollution in the camps.

Dominating the air industry there is Talkeetna Air Taxi. With a remarkably laissez-faire attitude they recorded the total weight of all our equipment and loaded us up in a de-Havilland Otter and, after a spectacular flight through the foothills and an alarmingly close pass past over the northern flanks of Mt Hunter (prompting a robotic "pull up, pull up" from the auto-pilot) we scraped over a serac-strewn ridge to the makeshift landing strip, marked out with sleds.

The first night was spent beside the airstrip and after a sled-rigging and packing session we were soon able to head off onto the Kahiltna Glacier for the long haul upwards. After a few hard days of hauling sleds loaded with 30 days rations and mountaineering kit and often in poor visibility, hugely variable weather and temperatures we reached the turning point on the route, where we could drop off the first cache of food and fuel for any secondary climbs. Rested and lightened, we then set about carrying the first load of supplies from Motorcycle Camp, just above the Kahiltna Pass, up into the Genet Basin. Firm snow underfoot and clear weather made for near-perfect conditions and the team moved well despite the best efforts of a guided group of Americans hell-bent on getting in the way of all other climbers.

Before long the team were established in Basin Camp where we were able to acclimatise at 4330m. The rangers based perma-

# EX TIGER DENALI



*Pausing to change over trail-breaking on the route up the Kahiltna Glacier*



*Matt Swannell surveying the scene from High Camp*





*Matt Swannell and James Gordon on the summit of Mt Capps with the West Buttress route behind them*

nently in the camp passed on the weather forecast and so each evening we would wander over to their camp to check the board. A strengthening high-pressure system had our best interests in mind as it looked set to linger over Alaska for several more days. Clear skies and light winds persisted as we took the first load of food and equipment up to high camp, tackling the headwall; a 1000m face behind the camp topping out on the West Buttress with a system of fixed lines.

At 5245m High Camp perches almost directly above Basin Camp with an eye-watering drop and breath-taking views out to the west. Nights are punctuated by the weary squeak and scrape of worn crampons being dragged back after concerningly long summit days so it was with slight trepidation at the unknown when we set off for the summit at 1015 (allowing the sun to hit the first section of the route to avoid the worst of the cold) on Wednesday 29 May. Using the in-situ snow stakes and moving well, we reached the Denali Pass in little over an hour; significantly less than previous groups we had seen, and kept that pace up in near-perfect conditions past Archdeacon's Tower until the final slog up Pig Hill, the last steep section up onto the summit ridge. The ridge itself drops mesmerically down to the south through layers of churning cloud over such famous routes as the Cassin Ridge stretching some 3000m below. Weaving around the cornices, using many of the in-situ snow stakes for protection, and taking in as much of the view as we could we soon reached the summit at 1505 for a wind-hastened photo-shoot. With clear visibility down to about 4500m the sea of cloud allowed but a few peaks to poke through adding an exaggerated sense of height and grandeur to the highest point in North America.

Riding on a wave of euphoria and benefiting from the increase in oxygen on each downward step, we made quick progress back down off the summit with the two rope-teams passing on the Foot-



*Chris Wright and John Tolan on the Summit*

ball Field to get back to High Camp at a hugely rewarding time of 1810; well below the guidebook time and half that of most of the other groups. Chris Wright, suffering from the altitude, had to turn back 200m below the summit and was taken down by the first rope team. He re-ascended successfully with John Tolan two days later.

The team having all successfully achieved the primary aim, our attention was then turned to what to do next. Our hugely fortunate window of high pressure was coming to an end and whispers of the 'ten-day-storm' were passing up and down the mountain. We had all hoped to be able to get over to the NW Buttress, requiring a descent to the Kahiltna Pass; the site of our first cache, so the process of collapsing back down through the camps began.

In preparation for the NW Buttress a cache was carried across a deceptively nasty ice face and crevasse field and up to 5000m to our planned final camp on the route. Everything was in place for the ascent if the weather would hold.

What had been long and tiring hauls up the mountain turned into short, tiring and frustrating descents. Laden sleds do not traverse well downhill and through gritted teeth and with tested humour we made it back to the Kahiltna Pass in rapidly worsening weather and, by the time the tents were up and the cache had been recov-



*Darren Swift on the summit ridge*



*Matt Swannell trying to get the forecast over the phone during the storm*

ered, the snow was falling fast and the robotic voice of the recorded forecast on the satellite telephone proclaimed 'some snow' but little other detail for the next four days. Numerous revisions to the ascent plan for the NW Buttress were calculated and pushing the timings as far as we could it became clear that unless the snow stopped by the following day there would be too much snow on already loaded slopes, and too little time for consolidation, for the route to be achievable. The depressing, yet unavoidable, decision was made that we were going to run out of time to complete the route and so would need to descend back to the airstrip to get out.

The several days of warm weather had transformed the Kahiltna Glacier with many open crevasses throughout the route where it had been so firm on the ascent. Arriving back at the airstrip in the early afternoon we were met by the backlog of climbers waiting for snow-hindered flights and began the long wait at the back of the queue. A recce flight came in and then with remarkable coordination from the ground the flights were timed through each break in the cloud until the ority of the climbers, though not us, had been extracted.

A final night on the glacier, eased by a particularly harsh celebratory Canadian whisky, led into another day of waiting and hoping for the clouds to lift until late that evening we finally left to be welcomed back into Talkeetna with a glut of burgers and beer. Little remained to be done other than kit cleaning, drying and packing, and some well earned rest.

The exercise has undoubtedly been a huge success. The 100% success on the summit of a 6000m peak which is regarded to be



*Ivar Milligan leading the team back down the Kahiltna Glacier*

significantly harder than many of similar heights, is testament to the team's and leader's planning and preparation, a well-considered ascent profile, dedication and hard work on the mountain, and a certain amount of luck with the weather and conditions.

The AMA team comprised Matt Swannell (Leader), John Tolan, Chris Wright, Ivar Milligan, James Gordon, Darren Swift, John Sealey, Tpr Gareth Steel.

*John Sealey, Darren Swift, Ivar Milligan and Tpr Gareth Steel with a Sqn flag on the summit*



# How easy is it to run an AMA meet?

## David Cross

**I**t's true that AMA meets don't just happen and that someone out there has to step up and volunteer to run it. But just how hard is it to run? What needs to be done? What qualifications do I need? Will I get any help?

Firstly as the AMA meets co-ordinator, I am here to help you as much as is required through the process, so there is no need to panic.

Let's answer two questions in the opening statement.

### What qualifications do I need?

The answer is none at all! The meet organiser is responsible for all the administration required to allow the meet to happen. Qualifications are not required to perform this role. A technical lead is required to cover the safety aspects of the meet. As the AMA meets co-ordinator, I will ensure that a technical lead is provided by the AMA or provide an external instructor to perform this role. However, if you have the correct qualification and are happy to be the admin and technical lead then great!

### What needs to be done?

So you've volunteered and are the admin lead here is a list of tasks you will need to do:

#### Pre-meet

- Write an admin instruction – Short and simple; I have previous examples that can be used to assist you. There is no need to reinvent the wheel as long as the details are correct.
- Book the accommodation – If I haven't already.
- Advertise the meet – On the Facebook page and by email via the membership secretary.
- Choose from the abundance of applicants, a fair spread of ranks and experience to run a successful meet.

#### During the meet

- Ensure all payments are received and bills paid.
- Ensure you have the correct personal details for all participants.
- Give an admin brief to ensure the meet runs smoothly.
- The technical lead will be responsible for the safety brief, grouping people dependant on aim, experience and qualification.

- Ensure the attendees book out and in from their activities (including where they are going, contact numbers and estimated time back).
- Ensure that the accommodation is left as you would expect to find it.

#### Post meet

- Send any receipts to the membership secretary
- Put a small article into the journal editor with some awesome pictures.
- Pat yourself on the back and receive a £50 DMM voucher!

That's right as an incentive to run meets I will be giving the meet leaders a £50 DMM voucher when the article has gone to the journal editor to say thanks for stepping up and supporting the AMA.

If you want to run a meet elsewhere, rather than what is in the diary, there is always scope to manoeuvre. Speak to me early.

Hopefully you can now see that running a meet is not as daunting as you first thought. You will have help along the way if required, if you still have questions just get in touch!



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# 10 Reasons why everyone should go bouldering in Fontainebleau this year.

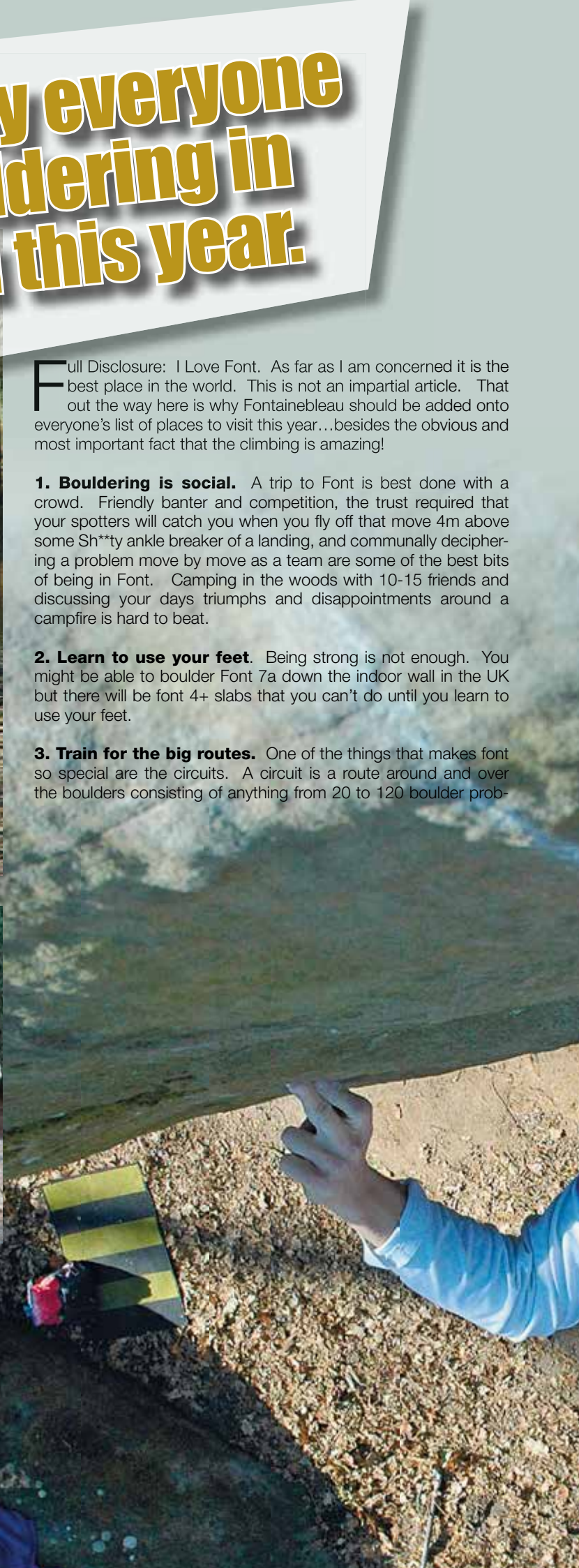
Tom Odling

**F**ull Disclosure: I Love Font. As far as I am concerned it is the best place in the world. This is not an impartial article. That out the way here is why Fontainebleau should be added onto everyone's list of places to visit this year...besides the obvious and most important fact that the climbing is amazing!

**1. Bouldering is social.** A trip to Font is best done with a crowd. Friendly banter and competition, the trust required that your spotters will catch you when you fly off that move 4m above some Sh\*\*ty ankle breaker of a landing, and communally deciphering a problem move by move as a team are some of the best bits of being in Font. Camping in the woods with 10-15 friends and discussing your days triumphs and disappointments around a campfire is hard to beat.

**2. Learn to use your feet.** Being strong is not enough. You might be able to boulder Font 7a down the indoor wall in the UK but there will be font 4+ slabs that you can't do until you learn to use your feet.

**3. Train for the big routes.** One of the things that makes font so special are the circuits. A circuit is a route around and over the boulders consisting of anything from 20 to 120 boulder prob-



lems of similar difficulty. The circuits are given alpine grades (Eg TD-) for a good reason; they were originally conceived and put up by Mountaineers training for the Alps. Some are up to six miles long and others cover loads of climbing without ever touching the ground! Lots of "hardcore trad climbers" think a big day of rock climbing is climbing a couple of hundred feet of multi pitch rock so far below the limit of their ability that they haven't fallen off anything in years. If you complete a 40 problem circuit in font you will have probably climbed over 500ft of climbing at or near the limit of physical ability...prepare to be tired!

**4. Get stronger.** You will discover muscles aching you didn't know you had. Get ready for a savage workout.

**5. Learn how to use your body.** Much of the climbing in Font is about clinging to slopers or standing on a hold that simply isn't there. This requires core strength, balance and an understanding of how to use your whole body. Sometimes placing your body two inches to the right or left whilst using the same holds can make all the difference.

**6. French pastries and little bottles of beer.** Enough said.

**7. Amazing scenery.** The forests are beautiful and varied . From the landlocked beach at Cul de Chien to the huge boulders at Dame Juanne to the Chateau de Fontainebleau to the WW2 bombed out church at Chappel le Reine Font is a beautiful place.

**8. It's only five hours away.** If you live in the south there are parts of the UK that are further away than font and no-where near as good for climbing.

**9. It's cheap as chips.** Buy a cheap ferry ticket and camp, or as it seems like every other Army Officer / Warrant Officer has a VW Camper, rope one of them in and Glamp it up!

**10. Humility.** Last but not least...nothing teaches humility better than an 85 year old man and his 8 year old great granddaughter breezing up the problem that you and your mates have been trying (unsuccessfully) to master for the past 2 hours!



# EXERCISE TIGER MAPLE PAINE

Expedition Leader: Capt N J Watson REME

Scribe: LCpl A Kitt

In Southern Patagonia is one of South America's finest natural assets – the Torres Del Paine National Park, consisting of 2000m peaks, stunning lakes, cold rivers, and several glaciers, including the huge 15km Glacier Grey.

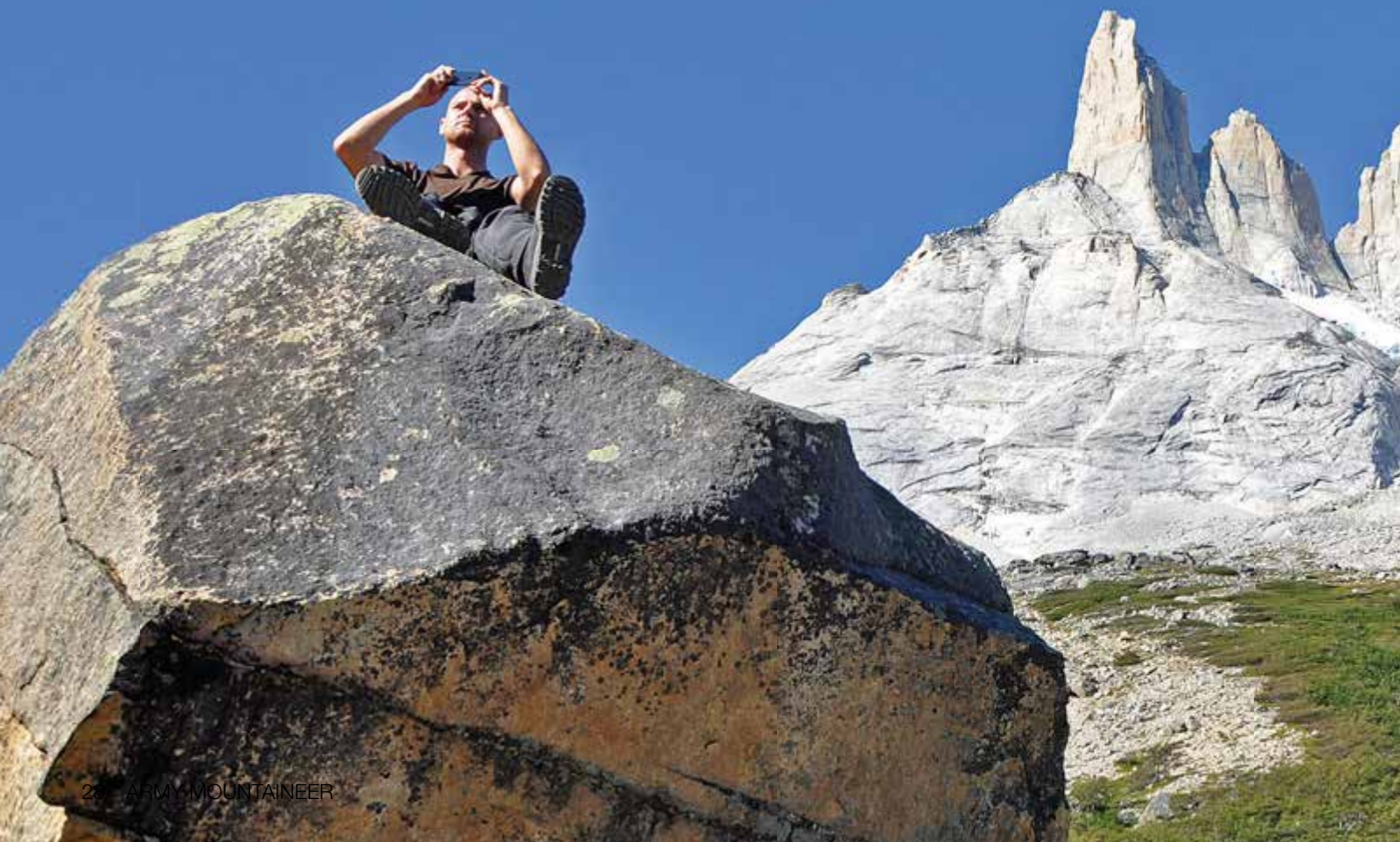
On 20 February 13, ten members of 4 Close Support Battalion REME embarked upon Ex TIGER MAPLE PAINE. Making the most of concessionary travel to the Falkland Islands, the expedition would last a total of 3 weeks. Whilst in the Falkland Islands, prior to the trek, Capt Watson delivered the theory lessons of the Summer

Mountain Foundation syllabus which included weather, mountain hazards and risk assessments.

After two days in the Falklands we started our journey to the Torres Del Paine National Park, flying to Punta Arenas before a coach journey to Puerto Natales where we met our first major challenge. Confident that he had booked Backpacker's El Refugio for our stay, Capt Watson was greeted with a run down hostel and an owner who denied all knowledge of a booking. The hostel was quickly renamed Backpacker's El Refusio and accommodation elsewhere was swiftly sought.

"This just looks like Brecon" and "I just travelled half way around the world to put my Gore Tex on" were among the first comments made when stepping off the bus at the entrance to the Torres Del Paine National Park. Instead of stunning views we were greeted with that really annoying drizzle that slowly but surely gets every inch of your kit wet. 16.5km later we arrived at our first campsite still unconvinced that the 'views' so far were worth the money we'd paid for the expedition. Mosquitoes helped to further reduce morale but with typical soldier mentality we cracked on with it.

Halfway through day two, just as the reality of the 25kg+ bergans and the remaining 80km+ really hit home, the cloud lifted to reveal a glimpse of the scenery that was to come. As the trek continued day-by-day the mosquito bites faded and the weather was certainly on our side. The views became more and more astonishing; mountains, rivers, waterfalls, bridges, ladders, steep climbs, lakes and glaciers. The highlight of the trek was climbing over the John Garner Pass to be greeted with a stunning view of Glacier Grey.







For most of the group this was the most breathtaking view we had ever seen.

Throughout the trek we all took it in turns to map read and guide the group from campsite to campsite as part of the SMF qualification. We encountered wildlife of all kinds such as condors, woodpeckers and foxes. Capt Watson also did his best to educate us on the mountain environment, often greeted with remarks like, 'this is like geography lessons at school!'

Along the trek we met people from all over the world including Germans, Australians, Americans, French, Israelis and Welsh, in most cases overcoming the language barrier by attempting sign language and speaking with an accent – as you do. (Although the cover-story of us all being workers in the Rich Tea biscuit factory didn't always wash).

On the last day of the trek we got up early to make our way up to the Torres Del Paine lookout to watch the sun rise on the Torres Del Paine towers – the classic picture postcard view. It wasn't quite like the postcards but it was almost worth the early start! We then proceeded to make our descent back down to get on the bus back

to Puerto Natales which inevitably turned into wacky races to the kiosk at the bottom, which served hot dogs and cans of coke!

Retracing our steps through Puerto Natales and Punta Arenas we landed safely back on the Falkland Islands for a few days before the 18hr flight back to the UK. However, being concessionary passengers, we were bumped off our return flight and had the pleasure of another week on the Falkland Islands. Grateful for the assistance of the REME Workshop, Capts Watson and Ashton put together a host of activities to keep us all entertained; over the week we enjoyed a tour of the Typhoon jets, a battlefield tour to Mount Harriet and a trip to Sea Lion Island to see penguins (and sea lions) as well as several epic games of Risk and Monopoly.

The expedition was extremely rewarding because it enabled various ranks and trades within the Battalion to mix in an environment well away from work whilst also delivering outstanding adventurous training. All in all, it's safe to say that the whole expedition was absolutely amazing and most certainly a once in a lifetime opportunity. If I were ever to have the opportunity to go again, I would be gone at the drop of a hat.







Taken by Mark Ryle after a day of inspired crack climbing in Indian Creek 2006. A day that helped me believe – thank you Mark!

# Letter to me

by Tania Noakes

I'm not often asked the question anymore. I've tried out any number of different answers along the way but the truth lay a little deeper in me than even I was initially aware. So what is the question? Well it takes many forms of course, but essentially it remains the same: "Why would you want to become a Mountain Guide?"

One positive aspects of growing older is that you become more aware of who you really are. You accept what motivates you and what you want from life. That understanding helps you to focus and relax. Suddenly everything seems so much easier. You stop struggling and start striving.

There is a lovely Country and Western song by Brad Paisley called 'Letter to me.' It describes a letter he imagines writing to himself aged 17 with the benefit of hindsight. I love this song; it never fails to make me smile. Its melancholy sets me thinking about what advice I would give my younger self. Above all, I think I would want to try to help that young woman stop struggling and start striving - sooner than she did!

Hopefully, my advice might inspire and encourage other women. Especially those who love being in the mountains and just need a little push in the right direction to consider becoming an IFMGA accredited Mountain Guide too.

## **This is the advice I would write in a letter to me at 17:**

Believe in yourself and work hard to develop the skills to support that belief.

Believe in yourself; because fundamentally it's what you believe that will shape your performance and progression. Throughout your life there will be people who believe in your ability and people who don't. But it's your opinion alone that will shape your success.

Have a realist view of your ability or else you can never improve. Belief without substance is delusion. Belief, combined with hard work and experience, can achieve remarkable results. To be a Mountain Guide you need belief in yourself and the abilities and experience to validate your belief.

## **Decide what you want from life and commit to it.**

In life there are so many demands competing for our time and attention; making it difficult to see clearly which direction we want our lives to take. And just as you discover what you want from life, you are

faced with an even harder decision... Whether to commit to it or not. I personally struggled with this for a long time. Making a decision seemed difficult because I didn't want to wake up one morning feeling I'd made the wrong choice. The one true advantage of hindsight is the certainty it provides. Here's what I've learnt: Nothing is permanent and very few decisions are irreversible. However, indecision leads nowhere. Do your research and be honest with yourself. How much is this goal worth to you? Ultimately it forces the question of how to spend the most precious commodity of your life, your time.

In terms of becoming a Mountain guide you should try to strip away any illusions you have about the job. A Mountain Guide isn't all about climbing hard routes or steep ski descents. Fundamentally, it is about your clients and your relationship with them. Keeping them safe and ensuring that the experiences you share with them have the right mix of challenge and enjoyment is essential. To do this well you have to like sharing you time with a variety of people and personalities. Be realistic and honest. If you are only motivated by personal goals and achievements in the Mountains then you may not find the work of Mountain Guide as satisfying as you might another profession.

## **Accept and embrace a far from standard life. Be prepared to make sacrifices.**

It can often seem easier to live your life according to what society expects. Stepping away from the norm can lead to feelings of isolation. Anyone entering a profession dominated by the opposite gender may find they have a different attitude or approach to the majority of their colleagues. I recently read an article on 'Women in Finance' published by the Guardian. In it I found common ground with my own experiences working in the very male dominated world of Mountain Guiding. The article suggested that women were not (as is generally portrayed) more risk-averse but that "They took the risk but seemed more aware of it – and more willing and able to acknowledge the accompanying emotions." There have been more than a few times in my professional life where I have wearily witnessed the silent labelling of women as 'emotional' (implying over-emotional and therefore an undesirable trait). Don't be disheartened, in my experience a keen awareness of risk and an appreciation of the cost of failure are very valuable qualities in a Mountain Guide.

Working as a Mountain Guide is not an 'everyday' profession. The work is intense and fairly seasonal. It doesn't fit easily with attending a regular club, high level physical training, or even family life.



*Students James Smith and Camilla Cox after a successful ascent of the Bridalveil arête on Cima de la Madonna, Pala Dolomites. Working with students as motivated and positive as you convinced me I love the work. Thank you.)*

Yet it can be intensely rewarding. Ask yourself whether you could enjoy a somewhat alternative lifestyle and if the sacrifices you might have to make to achieve your goal won't be too painful for you.

**Learn to love pushing yourself physically. Build a strong base so that you can safely sustain a physically demanding job.**

When it comes to physical prowess, often women underestimate their abilities and don't set their targets high enough. If you don't like physical challenge then this job isn't for you.

The reality is, the fitter you are the easier, safer and more enjoyable it is to do a physically demanding job. Being a Mountain guide demands a robust fitness that cannot be built up overnight.

I am passionate about cross-country skiing. It is a sport renowned for being aerobically very demanding. Many of the girls whom I have taught have not possessed a good enough base level fitness to get the most out of this amazing sport. As a woman this is a terrible shame. If you do not have a good level of fitness challenging physical activities can offer more pain than reward. It's tougher to start training in the first place than it is to further improve your fitness. But don't be discouraged, once you have a good basic fitness level you will find that the more you push yourself the easier it is to improve and the more you will enjoy it. Remember that while it's really tough in the beginning it does become easier... but it never becomes easy.

I encourage the girls whom I coach to view physical training like investing in a bank. You have to make deposits on a regular basis to appreciate any gain in your bank balance. No investment means no return. As long as the training you do is aerobically challenging it doesn't really matter what you do but you must do it regu-



larly. Base fitness is important for recreational climbing too and will enable you to fully enjoy your experiences and lead to a full and active life. Many people don't realise what they are missing out on by neglecting this important aspect of their lives. For some of them it simply isn't true that they can't, it's just that they don't try hard enough. Any woman aspiring to become a Mountain Guide is going to have to work very hard. So start now and learn to love pushing yourself physically.

**Make your learning process efficient but don't lose the enjoyment.**

I started climbing at University aged 18. I wasn't coached into rock shoes aged two or heading up Alpine peaks with my parents in my teens like some of my friends. A lot of studies have shown that it takes a lot of practise of any complex skill to develop true competence. To be a Mountain Guide you need both a high degree of technical ability and depth of experience. There is no quick fix, this kind of skill comes with time and investment and lots of practice. While those who start early have more opportunities and time to gather this vital experience; achieving your goal is still possible if you start later in life, it will just require hard work to master the disciplines required.

You need to be a strong climber on rock, mixed, ice and alpine terrain, and you need to be a strong skier too.

**Surround yourself with enthusiastic and positive people who have similar goals and ambitions.**

The people you surround yourself with have a dramatic influence on our attitude and beliefs and consequently your progress. Enthusiasm is contagious; hard work is made easier when those



*Climbing the Comici on Cime Grande with Joe Williams Guitarist extraordinaire and one of my favourite climbing partners in wintry conditions*





*A day climbing ice in Cogne with Alice Gartland... a girl who couldn't be more fun and positive... thank you Alice ! J*

around us work hard too. My most rewarding climbing experiences have been achieved with friends who share this positive mind-set, regardless of their technical climbing ability. Negativity and laziness are like virulent weeds that if left unchecked will stifle your performance. So spend your valuable time wisely- surrounded by motivated and positive friends. Some of whom may share similar aspirations and goals but all of whom will want you to succeed.

**Powerful practise. What do you need to improve? Work hard to improve it!**

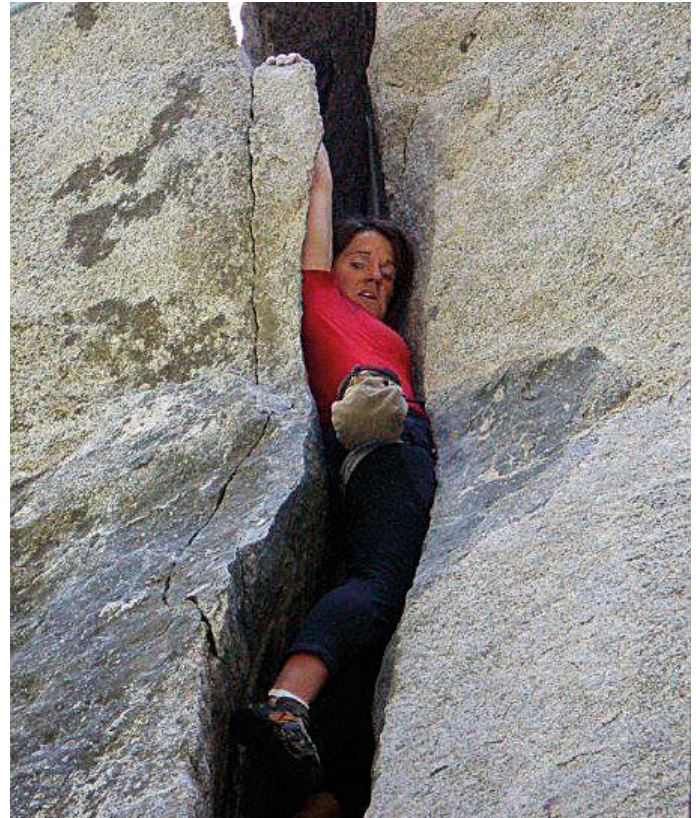
So many studies have shown that it takes hours of practise to become an expert at something. But when we practise we often just rehearse what we're good at rather than working on our weaknesses. The trouble is that we don't improve without persistence and determination. I learnt this after my first encounter with an off-width in Yosemite Valley. Initially I hadn't a clue about how to climb it or what techniques to use and ended up giving up in disgust after some fairly ineffective struggling. Rather than accepting defeat I decided that I had to do something about it. So I started telling everyone that off-widths were my 'speciality'. I made sure that I did as many of them as I could, even though I disliked and feared them. I pretended to be excited when my climbing partners realised in relief that I wanted that pitch. I hunted them out and threw myself at them left right and centre.

Many bruises, scrapes, bloodied elbows and aerobic lung-burns later I caught myself saying that I liked off-widths... and realised I was actually telling the truth. Then I overheard someone saying that I was pretty good at off-widths... and I realised that they were speaking with conviction about my ability! Somewhere along the line my appreciation and my ability had shifted. It taught me a great deal about the power of positive, determined practise and how strongly our minds affect our boundaries and our performance.

**Move to a good location from which to work towards making your goal come true.**

I currently live in Chamonix. My home town in Chelmsford, Essex could not be further from the mountains; in fact the highest point within the county boundaries is Danbury Hill which stands at a lofty 110m. If you draw a line from Danbury Hill eastwards there is nothing higher before you hit the Ural Mountains in Russia. (Small claim to fame for an otherwise very flat county.)

My point is, had I stayed in Essex I would not be working as a Mountain Guide. As a result of some fortunate events in life I moved to the French Alps and became well placed to make the most of every opportunity to climb and ski in the high mountains. There is no escaping the fact that poor locations reduce opportunities and work against you achieving your goal. Good locations work in your favour and accelerate your progression. I have never regretted my move to the Alps. But I have regretted not doing it sooner.



*Up close and personal with Generator Crack in Yosemite. Turning a weakness into a strength... bring it on!*

**Be an eternal student.**

It is very important to recognise and accept that we remain students all of our lives. Often the more you learn about a subject, the more you realise there is to discover about the subject you have chosen. A good coach is able to help the student focus their attention on areas for improvement and guide their learning process efficiently. Taking lessons or going on courses can be expensive, but sometimes professional coaching is invaluable.

Of course it is not impossible for you to teach yourself, but it does take more time. On the flip side, lessons cost money, so develop your skills and apply them rigorously- this will help you identify the areas in which you need professional guidance.

**Don't get disheartened if the journey is difficult and try not to let set-backs turn into failure.**

Winston Churchill once said "Never, never, never give up!" and in terms of pursuing your dreams I believe that he's right. I almost gave up.

To be a Mountain Guide you have to reach a high level in a lot of different areas of Mountaineering. Many Guides have an area they specialise in and it isn't uncommon that they have had to work hard to bring another discipline up to the required level. My nemesis was Scottish Winter climbing. For a while I had a bit of a reputation amongst my friends for bringing mild weather to Scotland whenever I visited. I allowed myself to become dispirited with the fickle conditions north of the border and moved to Chamonix. Several times I almost gave up on my dream of becoming a guide.

A close friend was instrumental in helping me reconsider, but when I first applied to the Guide scheme I was rejected. The committee felt that I didn't have enough Scottish winter climbs under my belt. Four years after that rejection I am about to become one of very few women qualified as an IFMGA Mountain Guide.

When my application was rejected I was forced to decide how important my goal was to me and what I was going to do to achieve it. I committed to spending each winter season in Scotland until I passed the exam. In addition I spent countless hours 'dry-tooling' in cold, dank, water seeping caves around Chamonix in order to

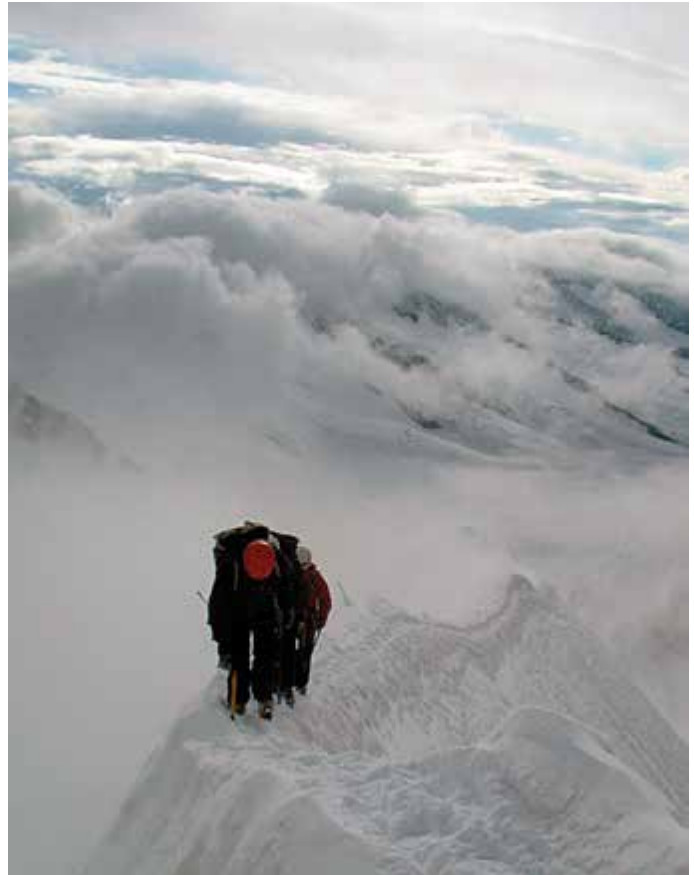
start the winter climbing season strong. It wasn't enough to simply pass the test – I had to pass it well. As with any profession, your personal standards and your reputation are important. The time I invested was worth the reward. My Scottish journey has given me some of the most enjoyable climbing experiences of my life. I am proud of the time and effort I invested. Memories of the routes I shared with good friends continue to make me smile. I feel that I have improved as a climber as a result of those experiences. It will also make me a better guide because it has given me increased confidence in my skills. A quality often tested in this profession.

**Understand the Risk and acknowledge your Responsibility.**

Mountaineering can be a hazardous activity. Accidents can and do happen. Even to the most risk-averse mountaineers. The same is true of Mountain Guides. This summer, the Alps have seen a number of accidents involving Guided and non- Guided climbers / parties.

Accepting responsibility for exposing yourself to these risks is one thing; taking responsibility for exposing someone else less experienced than you to the same risks is a different proposition altogether. Very few mountaineers I know are reckless. However it requires quiet reflection and serious consideration to decide if you want to or are able to shoulder this sort of responsibility every day of your working life.

Of course it is impossible to know precisely how you would feel if something was to go wrong and someone in your charge was injured. However, it is very important for someone considering this profession to reflect on how they might be affected in such circumstances. Regardless of whether there was anything that could have been done to alter the outcome. To be a Mountain Guide you must be a good evaluator of risk in the mountaineering environment. You also have to accept that a certain degree of risk will always remain. Regardless of what you do to mitigate it.



*My Military Guiding exam on the SW Ridge of the Monch Sept 07. I have a huge respect for the British Services Military Instructor scheme and believe without its excellent training, support, and opportunities I might never have realised my dream of becoming a Mountain Guide. There are so many excellent, professional and enthusiastic instructors in the Military system that I feel proud to be part of it.*



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time you spend with your clients. A Guides responsibility is not just keeping their clients safe, but also to share with them some of the beauty and wonder that life in the mountains can offer.

That magic that can still be found out there even in our ever more tightly constrained and managed wilderness. Mountaineering can provide some of the simplest and yet most profound experiences of our lives. It can help put our exaggerated stresses back into a manageable perspective. It reminds us that there are some choices that we must take ultimate responsibility for, with no pause button, rewind, or second take.

#### **If I could write a letter to myself at seventeen...**

When I was 17 it felt like the whole world was opening up in front of me. Everyone had a piece of advice they wanted to offer and seemed very sure that I shouldn't waste my 'potential'. I hardly had any space or time to glimpse what else was out there and find what was right for me. I attended a very academic school and there didn't seem to be very many careers which offered the kind of physical and mental challenges which drew me even then, as a young girl.

It took a while for me to discover this path and then longer to accept it as the right one. At times I have found myself wishing that I'd had a role model or mentor to help me with some good advice and support along the way.

Now there are many more young women being introduced to climbing as a sport at a young age, through increased access to indoor climbing gyms and greater visibility of female role models. This is slowly trickling through to the profession of Mountain Guiding. This September I will qualify as the seventh British female Mountain Guide. I hope that in years to come this trickle into our profession keeps getting stronger.

By writing about my experiences here I am hoping that it kindles the idea of qualifying as a professional Mountain Guide in other young women. Whether you are already passionate about mountaineering or simply an adventurous soul looking for a physical and mentally challenging path through life then I encourage you to find out more! In future years I hope to be well placed to help other women discover that they too have what it takes to become a professional Mountain Guide. If you need advice, or help, or simply want to get a good route done to help you on your way then feel free to get in touch. I will be delighted to hear from you. Until then, I wish you good luck and courage and hope our paths cross soon in the mountains.

Be sure to ask yourself if you want that level of responsibility in your work? Some people do not. For them being a Mountain Guide may cause inner conflict which would be impossible to resolve

#### **Never lose your love for the Mountains.**

I have been told by various people that they considered becoming a Mountain Guide but decided against it because they didn't want to lose their passion for Mountaineering by making it their profession. I also know of Mountain Guides who hardly do any Alpine climbing for personal pleasure, preferring to explore other areas of life in their spare time. Whatever direction your life takes, a passion for the Mountains is an essential part of being a good guide.

If you have a job that you enjoy, one which presents you with variety, and interest and challenges, then you don't resent the time that it demands from you- it becomes a way of life. It is very difficult to be a good Mountain Guide without enjoying what you do and the





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