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Gaz Howell approaching Pike’s Crag in winter conditions, Scafell Pike. Photographed by Alastair Lee whose stunning coffee table photography book ‘Eyes Up’ is set to hit the shelves of all good outdoor shops in time for Xmas. See www.posingproductions.com for further info.
Summit is the membership magazine of the British Mountaineering Council. The BMC promotes the interests of climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers and the freedom to enjoy their activities. The primary work of the BMC is to:

- Negotiate access improvements and promote cliff and mountain conservation.
- Promote and advise on good practice, facilities, training and equipment.
- Support events and specialist programmes including youth and excellence.
- Provide services and information for members.

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EDITORIAL
Contributions for Summit should be sent to the Editor Alex Messenger at the above address or alex@thebmc.co.uk. Every care is taken of materials sent for publication, however these are submitted at the sender's risk.

FOREWORD

‘...the Grim Reaper lurks around every corner’

- or so a friend once told me with a resigned sigh as I described the death of a climbing friend in a fall whilst scrambling up to the base of a route on Longs Peak in Colorado. The climber in question was a young American called Cameron Tague - we had met in northern Mexico in 1999 and climbed some spectacular granite walls at a place called El Trono Blanco. Over the years I have been fortunate enough to climb with some impressively accomplished characters from vastly experienced UIAGM Guides to cutting edge young activists, but in Cameron there lay something really quite unusual - a rare blend of confidence, ability, personality and above all, safety awareness that I’ve not seen the like of before or since. No one knows precisely how he came to slip on the short, moderate grade scramble to the base of Yellow Wall - his knowledge of Longs Peak was virtually unprecedented having completed more than 30 routes on its main face, the Diamond. A loose handhold, a patch of ice, over-familiarity and a momentary lapse of concentration perhaps - who knows - the end result was the death of probably the safest climber I have ever met. But from a shocking event such as this at least there are lessons to learn, the sobering conclusion must be that regardless of our experience and ability, whether novice or veteran, cliffs and mountains are basically dangerous places and climbing, an inherently dangerous activity that requires constant care and vigilance - don’t kid yourself otherwise.

But despite the risks and subjective dangers, somehow we keep heading back to the hills. Much of what we read in the outdoor media focuses on the thrills of challenging ascents and the major mountaineering achievements in which storms, avalanches and innumerable hardships are overcome to leave a uniquely fulfilling experience - a bizarrely British sense of retrospective satisfaction in which the fears and dangers of the moment gradually fade to be replaced by fresh new ambitions that emerge from deep within us. For sure this climbing thing goes right to the bone, Deep Play, Paul Pritchard called it - that’s the closest I can get to defining what its all about. But anyway, I digress. I set out to write this Foreword on the theme of safety and personal responsibility (the theme of Summit 28) following several serious incidents on our crags and mountains in recent months. A fatality caused by rock fall at Harpur Hill, a sport crag in the Peak; some serious ground falls on the Pembroke sea cliffs and the gritstone edges; several British fatalities in the Alps...the list goes on. This edition of Summit reminds us of the everyday risks we can expect to encounter on the hill and also stresses that at the end of the day, we are all personally responsible for our safety whether climbing on an indoor wall or a winter gully on the Ben. I’ll leave the final word to Edward Whymper who summed it up nicely:

‘Climb if you will, but remember that courage and strength are nought without prudence and that a momentary negligence may destroy the happiness of a lifetime. Do nothing in haste, look well to each step and from the beginning think what may be the end’.

Wise words indeed - have fun but take care.

Dave Turnbull, BMC Chief Executive.
A CRAZY SITUATION

I read the brief news item in issue 27 on fencing in the Wye valley and the straw has now broken the camel’s back! Because I climb my pension company increased the income protection waiver on the pension by three-fold. Parity because we take young people climbing our work public liability insurance has risen 300% this year. Because the insurance company fears that climbers might fall and then sue at Woodcraft Quarry, the quarry must be fenced off. Yet climbing has a low accident record - certainly it must be lower than any of football, rugby, motor sport and skiing, yet insurers seem to penalise climbers unfairly. In fact driving must surely be more hazardous than climbing. What is it that the insurance companies don’t understand? Can we in the BMC do anything to rem- edy this crazy situation?

Kev Webb, Burford

GIVE THEM A CHANCE!

I write in defence of outdoor instruc- tors operating with youth groups. The groups most of us work with vary in age and learning abilities, but the one thing nearly all these young people take away from our activities is a sense of achievement and an increased aware- ness for the environment for which they are in. Granted, not the same awareness as the self-righteous, red sock wearing brigade, who think that only a select few should be allowed onto the crags! Give these young people a chance, Outdoor Education plays a huge part in learning values such as confidence building and team work, and yes, abseiling is one of the best tools for this. Surely it is better to climb on the crags than through our windows?

Paul Kirkpatrick, Gateshead

WHO’S PREYING ON WHOM?

Early this summer I was paddling along the Pembrokeshire coastline when I spotted a Peregrine Falcon chick in its nest, near to a public footpath and very accessible from above. As a climber I am aware that chicks are taken from their nests by thieves, and was concerned that this chick was vulner- able. Being in a remote area I thought it highly unlikely that it had been ringed by the appropriate authorities so decided to report the location.

A colleague, who is extremely knowledgeable about birds of prey, called the RSPB Wildlife office and told them of our concern. You can imagine his surprise when there was a very blunt response of ‘Do you not think we have anything better to do?’ They then advised him to contact the local County offices, where a similar response was received. What surprises me is the lack of interest shown by the RSPB. As a climber who is aware of the need to protect wildlife I expected at the very least a proactive reaction to a falcon that is a protected species and possibly at risk. In my opinion climbers are showing due empathy with respecting ban areas so why are the RSPB not valuing our opinions?

Sean Taylor, Herefordshire

CONTROLLED PERCEIVED DANGER

Controlled perceived danger is what attracts young people onto these personal development courses and allows us to play our part in helping these young people to develop into responsi- ble adults. We are playing our part in developing the next generation - what are you doing?

Kev Webb, Burford

KILI - ACTION REQUIRED

Jeremy Windsor is quite right to encour- age trekkers to slow down while going to altitude but he fails to mention the critical factor on Kilimanjaro which forces trekkers to ascend too quickly. The Tanzanian government charges fees totaling $70 a day for each trekker, providing a major incentive for the inexperienced to take the risk of climbing as fast as possible. More than 20,000 trekkers attempt Kili each year, not 4,000 as Jeremy states, and the majority are taking their first trip to altitude. While there are plenty of warn- ings at road-heads about altitude sickness, the structure of daily peak fees is causing the problem. If you climb Kili in the dangerously fast time of four days up and one down, as many do on the popular Marangu route, then you are charged $350 by the park. If you take seven days up, which must surely be the minimum for a mountain close to 6,000 metres, and another down, then the fee is $560, a difference of $210. To an impoverished student or independent traveler, that’s a lot of money. In the past I have tried to get information from the Tanzanian authori- ties on the numbers dying, most of them unnecessarily, but they haven’t responded. Doctors working in Tanzania tell me the problem is worse than many trek leaders think. And while most experienced climbers know how their bodies react to altitude and can re- spond if things start going wrong, most trekkers on Kilimanjaro are not experi- enced and face the likelihood of failing to climb the peak and the possibility of illness or death simply because they are scarming on the peak fee. Since the climbing world has the expertise here, its representatives, particularly the UIAA, should lobby the Tanzanian government to adjust its rules. There is no reason why changing the rules should cost Tanzania a fall in revenue, and it would protect the lives of tour- ists, something which can only be good for business. The authorities also col- lect $20 per trekker in rescue fees - that’s $400,000 a year - and yet rescue facilities are rudimentary. Gamow bags could be installed at high camps and rangers taught how to use them. Kilimanjaro is a beautiful climb, but most are too sick to notice.

Ed Douglas, Sheffield
The South West Needs You!

The land of cream teas, sandy beaches, Dartmoor ponies and scrumpy cider needs your help. The BMC South West Area Committee, which covers some of the finest climbing and walking areas in the country - Dartmoor, Exmoor, West Penwith, Portland, Cheddar Gorge to name but a few - is seeking new members to support vital access and conservation work and development work in the region. If you're interested in putting something back into your sport, contributing to fixed equipment debates, discussions on climbing wall development, competitions or the wider issues effecting mountaineers in the region - please get in touch with graham@thebmc.co.uk or local contact Jon Booth on booth@waitrose.com if you would like to get involved.

Calder Valley SRT Appeal

The Calder Valley Search and Rescue Team’s primary emergency response vehicle was involved in a major road traffic accident recently. The team was returning from a call out in Leeds when the specially converted long wheelbase Landrover was written off. The team now faces a serious dilemma as it struggles to come to terms with its predicament. Although fully insured the ambulance was highly specialised with a lot of valuable equipment, which was also destroyed. Now the team are facing a major shortfall in cash and an uphill struggle to become operational again. So if you are able to help in any way, however small, it will help the team through a difficult time. Please contact Clive Sidall, the Fundraising Officer on 01422 233009 or email csiddall@sidhil.com.

Members Handbook

You should have already found your copy of the handbook - a one stop resource for all our members services and much more - Answers to FAQ’s, links to associated organisations, updates on BMC work areas and developments in store for 2003 and top tips for the outdoors from the BMC team are all within! The handbook will now be a yearly feature of membership, and all comments or suggestions are welcome. Contact stuart@thebmc.co.uk with your thoughts.

Crampons & Ice Axes

The latest technical publication is now available from good retailers or the BMC Office and website (£2.50 members, £4 non-members). Offering advice on specification, selection and maintenance, this booklet is essential reading for anyone venturing into the winter hills.

Insurance Hit Spells BMC Subscription Increase

Substantial underwriting losses over the past 5 years together, recent claims history and the aftermath of September 11 are just some of the reasons why the BMC’s insurers are set to increase our civil liability and personal accident premiums over the next few years. Whilst negotiations are still ongoing, it is almost certain that the first increase (which will take effect on 1 January 2003) will more than double the civil liability premium per member. All club and individual members benefit from civil liability insurance and the good news is that the level of cover is increasing from £3m to £5m. Individual members personal accident cover is also set to increase by 15% in the New Year and the BMC has been warned that further increases are likely in 2004. The net effect of this is that the BMC Management Committee has had to agree to increase BMC subscriptions as of 1 January 2003. Individual member subscriptions will be increasing to £22.50 and club member subs to £6.50. Despite all this, BMC insurance still represents excellent value as it is pretty well impossible for an active climber to get appropriate personal accident or civil liability cover at anything like the group rates negotiated by the BMC - especially in today’s uncertain insurance market. Turn to page 42 to find out more about liability and climbing.

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31/10/2002, 10:29 AM
Heading to the Alps?
Then get the low-down on how to prepare for the Alps with the BMC Alpine Lecture series. If you’re unsure of what to expect in the Alps then become inspired by these interactive introductions to the Alpine environment. Two top mountaineers/alpine guides will provide advice on coping with alpine hazards, interesting areas to visit, how to improve your skills and how make the most of your time on the hill. You’ll be able to quiz the lecturers on both their exploits and your holiday plans during the interval. This series of six lectures will begin on the 4th March. See the BMC website for venue details. Tickets available from the BMC office in the New Year.

CROW maps for consultation
Draft maps for the Upper North West area of England including the Yorkshire Dales, Cumbria and parts of NE England are now open to consultation. More details on how to respond, and where you can view the maps can be found at www.ca-mapping.co.uk. You can also contact your local BMC area access representative if you want to get involved.

Famous Five error
Syd Clark has been in touch to correct our Famous Five feature in the last edition. On behalf of the not-so-famous five, he’d like to point out that the second British ascent of this mountain was completed on October 2nd 1976, by a five-man team who climbed the South East Face, alpine style. The round trip took five days and the descent was made via the connecting ridge to Kalanka. The third British ascent, West Face, Boardman/Tasker, followed two weeks later on October 15th 1976 and not 1975 as stated. Thanks Syd.

Get involved
The BMC are looking for climbing ornithologists to get involved in the BMC’s access and conservation work. We are also interested in hearing from anyone who has good knowledge of conservation issues that may relate to climbing, hill walking and mountaineering. If you are interested in getting involved get in touch with clare@thebmc.co.uk.

E-news
New for 2002/3 is a monthly update on all BMC (and related) news, direct to your inbox. Some of you will have already received a test version (all comments and feedback welcome) and very soon the website and magazines will carry details of how to subscribe.
**SHORTS**

**Challenge 8000 for WaterAid**
Alan Hinkes, the UK’s top high altitude mountaineer, is aiming to climb the world’s fourteen mountains over 8000 metres. Now you too can join Alan’s challenge and help raise vital funds for WaterAid. In doing so you will be helping the world’s poorest people escape the spiral of poverty through water, sanitation and hygiene education projects. On the 29th November WaterAid is holding 14 sponsored climbing events across the country where each climbing wall will be transformed in to a Challenge 8000 mountain for the day. The challenge is for a team of participants to climb the walls to a total height that equals or surpasses that of the mountain. There will be a small entrance fee to take part and each participant will be asked to raise a minimum sponsorship of £25. For more details just email: ianfenton@thebmc.co.uk or call 0845 120 1293.

**BMC Country Information Packs**
These are currently getting a revamp - the first new edition of the series (Nepal) should be available by the time you read this, and provides a wealth of information for only £4 (£6 non-members). Subsequent titles include India, South America, Pakistan and East Africa.

**UIAA Mountain Medicine Centre**
The newly updated information on all medical matters relating to the outdoors - especially information on proper acclimatisation and the hazards of high altitude are now available FREE (£2.50/sheet non-members) from the altitude are now available FREE (www.uisangroup.com) and go to

**Whillans Hut: New booking procedure**
Please contact the BMC Office for all bookings. Address enquiries to Whillans Hut c/o the BMC or email ianfenton@thebmc.co.uk.

**Students Learn A Lot!**
The annual BMC Student Seminar has just taken place at Plas y Brenin, and was attended by 92 representatives of over 45 University Clubs. The weekend event again proved to be a great success, and concentrated on developing the skills needed to safely introduce novices to the club as well as developing individual personal skills. Saturday morning featured a mixture of lectures including discussions on risk with responsibility, introducing novices to clubs, the legal perspective on club liabilities, club incidents and outcomes and BMC guidance for clubs.

After lunch students chose from a variety of indoor climbing or hill walking practical workshops run by Plas y Brenin instructors and a host of highly qualified volunteers. These ranged from organising overseas trips, first aid and emergency care, water hazards, care and maintenance of club pooled equipment, teaching of lead climbing and indoor coaching.

After the traditional bouldering and orienteering competitions on Saturday evening and a mountaineering slide show by Dave Hollinger of Plas y Brenin it was a wonder the students had the energy to get up Sunday morning! However, it was a full house once again in the lecture theatre on Sunday morning, which kicked off with short lectures on access and conservation and qualifications in walking and climbing. Then the sun was shining (yes, in Wales!) and it was outside for detailed practical workshops, which covered single pitch rock climbing, multi-pitch climbing, scrambling and hazard awareness, hill walking and navigation. After a full weekend the seminar finished on a short lecture on how clubs and students can source funding for their trips.

With increasing numbers of clubs coming under pressure from their Student Unions as to how they operate, this event becomes more valuable each year. All those attending came away with increased personal skills, and a good base of knowledge to help defend themselves against any restrictive policies. Many thanks to Plas y Brenin, Mountain Training Trust, the Association of Mountain Instructors and all the volunteers, without whom this event wouldn’t be possible.

If you have any questions regarding Student Clubs, do get in touch with Ian Hey (ianhey@thebmc.co.uk).

**COMPETITION DATES**
The dates have been confirmed for this season’s AS Series British Bouldering Championships and the Troll British Indoor Climbing Championships.

**AS Series BBC 2002/3**
Seniors
Round 1 - Nov 17th
The Kendal Mountain Film Festival
Round 2 - Dec 1st
West View, Preston
Round 3 - Dec 14th
The Foundry, Sheffield
Juniors
Round 1 - March 9th
Broughton Recreation Centre, Salford
Round 2 - March 15th
Ordnance Survey Outdoors Show, NEC

**Troll BICC 2002/3**
Round 1 - Jan 25th
WICC, Wales
Round 2 - Feb 8th
Sunderland, (New Wall)
Round 3 - Feb 22nd
Awesome Walls, Liverpool

**THE SMALL MOUNTAINS COMPETITION**
A small mountains competition sounds a little like it may involve fell running, navigation, an unfortunate amount of discomfort and a dozen or so peaks in North Wales. It doesn’t. In fact there is very little misery or pain involved at all. Smallmountains are a quirky and satirical range of prints and original paintings by Ray Eckermann based on the climbing world. To enter all you need to do is come up with the funniest idea for a painting in each issue of summit. The subject matter can be anything climbing or mountaineering related. The prize is the first limited print; numbered, embossed, mounted and framed. To register your idea of immense comical value log on to www.smallmountains.co.uk and go to contact. If any ideas are used at a later date then the brains behind then will be notified and will also receive a limited run print. So there you have it, a climbing competition which does not demand you to climb 8a, does not require you to train in a dark cellar to the point of social ineptness and is unlikely to permanently injure your fingers or relationships with the opposite sex.
ACCESS NEWS

IN FOCUS: BORING INSECTS SPARK BOLT DEBATE!

Recently abseil chains to protect trees or to replace ‘tat’ have appeared on Lakeland crags. The Lakes Area Committee keeps an eye on these, since in accordance with BMC policy, fixed gear should generally only be placed in exceptional circumstances to maintain access or to protect the environment.

But now a new situation has developed. At Sergeant Slabs in Borrowdale sheathed chains were placed around two trees in 1995, where an abseil descent had become the norm since the way by foot is both steep and difficult when wet. The chains were designed to protect the trees, but now one is under attack from rot and wood boring insects, and it is inevitable that the chain will soon have to be removed before both the tree and chain take a dive from the top.

So what should be done about the chain in the absence of another convenient tree? Should the chain be removed and replaced with bolts or simply dispensed with and climbers advised to walk down in traditional style? Walking down is feasible, but the ground is steep, between trees and usually wet. It may also have ecological and landscape implications since the National Trust (who own the land) consider the crag to be sensitive and would prefer climbers to abseil rather than create an eroded path.

As expected local opinion is divided, so to give as many as possible the chance to air their views an open meeting is to be held at The Queens Hotel, Main Street, Keswick on the 12th December at 8 pm. A second meeting will then be held on the 16th January (same venue and time) to ensure that all options have been explored. Your opinion can also be emailed to claire@thebmc.co.uk, and it will be reported at these meetings.

AREA UPDATES

LAKES

White Scar wait continues

Time flies! The five-year moratorium on climbing that was agreed for White Scar finished in September. But despite the best efforts of the BMC, a site meeting between the BMC, local climbers and the landowners has not taken place. However the Lake District National Park Authority is supportive of the BMC position and is currently acting as an intermediary to arrange this meeting.

Badger Rock sign

A sign and gate catch have been produced and put on site at Badger Rock after local access rep Colyn Earnshaw successfully negotiated permissive access. The cost of the sign and catch has been met by ACT. Access is welcomed by the farmer, but please leave your dog at home.

Fencing of the Fells

The BMC has responded to several proposals on fencing of the fells. This is a big topic, which was highlighted in the last Summit. The proposal to fence the common boundary between Caldbeck and Ulldale has now been amended and a further meeting will take place in January.

PEAK DISTRICT

Peak Group Use booklet

Continuing concern over pressure for stakes and problems associated with group use at crags has led to a review of the good practice booklet ‘Peak Group Use’. If you would like to sponsor its publication, do get in touch. It is hoped that the booklet will be part of a wider strategy to promote good practice information to help minimise the effects of group use.

Stanage Forum Finale

The final Stanage Forum took place at the end of October, with local access rep. Henry Folkard heading the line up with a presentation on the BMC input into the process. Henry has worked very hard to represent climbers’ views on the forum and has done a superb job. Unfortunately the work doesn’t end there. The forum wants to continue its consensus building approach to estate management and the next few years will see put into practice some of the ideas that have emerged.

LANCASHIRE

Houses o’ th’ Hill Quarry

United Utilities have been in touch with the BMC to report a very recent rockfall at this quarry near Whittington, Lancashire. They are particularly concerned about a loose looking overhang on the left hand side of the face. They report this has a crack all the way through it and is ready to drop. So be careful out there people!

SOUTH WEST

Tintern Quarry

Tintern Quarry has a new landowner who is currently working on the quarry and has asked for climbers to stay away for the time being. The BMC are trying to establish the long term plans for the Quarry.

Cheddar Gorge

The Shield on Coronation Street has parted company with this classic route - please be careful and wary of loose rock when climbing in the gorge.

WALES

Snowdonia Green Key

Having initiated the first User Group meeting to enable mountain users to give their views to the consultants working on the Snowdonia Green Key project, the BMC have been invited to join a formal User Group forum. The first meeting should have taken place by the time you read this and more information will be posted on the BMC website as the consultation develops.

FIND OUT MORE

For the latest access info on more than 600 crags in England and Wales - check out the Regional Access Database (RAD) on www.thebmc.co.uk
When the temperatures drop, nothing is quite as inviting as a down jacket or sleeping bag. But all down products are not created equal, so what should you look for when heading to the shops? Rab Carrington from Rab takes a look.

The Basics
So why does a down jacket or sleeping bag feel so warm? Well, this is due to physics - still air is a poor conductor of heat, so most insulative garments exploit this by trapping a layer of still air around your body. The more effective the material is at trapping this air, the warmer it appears, and down, designed by nature to keep birds alive, is very good indeed. It’s just like a thermos flask for your body. But that’s only part of its appeal; it’s also incomparable in terms of packability, warmth for weight, longevity and resilience. With such great credentials it’s no surprise that down equipment is highly sought after, but in order to get the best out of it you need to choose the right product for you.

Temperature Ratings
You’d think that rating down equipment would make for an easier choice in the shop. Well, almost. Firstly only sleeping bags get temperature ratings, not jackets. This is because sleeping bags are generally only used for sleeping, whilst clothing can be used at many differing levels of activity so cannot easily be pigeon holed. Secondly sleeping bag ratings are a huge conflict area and can cause great confusion due to differing manufacturers’ guidelines and materials. Some things to bear in mind when making comparisons between manufacturers ratings are as follows:

When comparing synthetic and down bags...
It is unwise to do a straight comparison, as synthetics are, on the whole, over rated. Generally ratings on down bags are about right and if anything are often under rated.

Listen to the shop staff
Go to a specialist outdoor shop. The staff there can usually draw on a wealth of experience of their own and from customer feedback.

About manufactures stated ratings
The ability of a sleeping bag to meet the stated rating on the bag depends on a number of factors including: people’s metabolism, level of fitness, degree of fatigue and hydration, standard of diet, type of climate and altitude, wind conditions, humidity and type of accommodation. These will all have a profound effect on how warm the bag is and all warrant serious consideration.

(TOP) Cold times. Choosing the right bag will make your life a lot more comfortable. Credit: Rab (RIGHT) The South East Face of Jirishanca (6126m), Cordillera Huayhuash, Peru. Credit: Al Powell, who with his desire to seek out suffering is an ideal tester for down equipment. (INSET) Al on the 2nd Bivi, Arwa spires, Greenland. Credit: Al Powell.
"...cold, always cold -
stalking you like a hungry
bear. That growing
insidious discomfort one
can only escape through
sleep.."

- Al Powell, on Greenland in winter.
EQUIPMENT

Down Quality
The quality of down is basically measured in two ways, fill power and quality:

Fill Power
This is a measure of the strength of the down or its ability to resist compression under a standard compression force, but also how well it can loft. The standard method for measuring fill power is set down by the IDFL (International Down and Feather Laboratory) using the Lorch Fill Power Meter. Under this method a fill power of 750+ indicates that a 30g sample of down will occupy 750 cubic inches when subjected to a standard force of 94.25g in a cylindrical tube measuring 284mm diameter. Consumers should be aware that there is an American Fill Power Meter, which generally gives a higher reading on top quality downs. This can make a down appear a better quality, when in fact it is the same or slightly worse. Remember that any down as a raw material when placed into a sleeping bag or jacket will lose a certain percentage of its fill power. This loss can be increased further depending on how the bag is stored and also how dirty it gets from body oils and other substances.

Down Quality
Down is graded according to the mix of pure down clusters to small feathers. This is expressed as a ratio i.e. 96/4, or sometimes as a percentage 96%. Some claims have been made that down needs a small amount of feather to give the material substance, but this is not true. The simple fact is that the purer the down, the better it will be at trapping air and thus warmer. Another consideration is the maturity of the down. To be effective at trapping air the down needs to have come from a mature Duck or Goose, where the down cluster has had time to develop, becoming larger and stronger.

Lower quality downs generally come from young birds of which there is an abundance in this country due to slaughtering for food by the supermarkets. The quality of the end product is also affected by the way the down is handled from source, in terms of cleaning and transporting. This means that for maximum warmth you need to look for maximum quality in the shop, and is why low grade high street brands will always be out performed by high quality specialist products.

Construction Methods
The construction methods that are used in jackets and sleeping bags are just as important as the filling quality. The best methods (and most expensive!) are Box Wall (single and double), and Trapezoid. These methods utilise separate pieces of fabric that create individual channels in packing.

Packing
When packing sleeping bags or jackets into a stuff sac that use coated fabrics, turn it inside out beforehand. This will allow the air from the loft of the down to squeezed out more easily and the bag will pack smaller and re-loft a lot easier.

Feather Leak
If a feather from the down pokes through the fabric, never try and pull it out – pull it back into the bag or jacket from the inside. This stops the hole getting bigger and additional down escaping in future.

Mats
Always use a sleeping mat. This stops heat being lost through conduction into the ground. This is especially important when you consider that when you lie in a down bag you squash most on the insulation on the underside limiting its ability to provide any insulation.

Storage
Always store product loose in a cool dry location. Most reputable manufacturers will supply a cotton storage sac for sleeping bags which is also fine. Never keep down products stored in a storage sac or even worse a compressed compression sac, as this will damage the down irreversibly. Never store down damp, always make sure the bag is well aired, otherwise it will smell and the only remedy will be to have it cleaned professionally.

Liners
It is inevitable that all down bags will need to be cleaned after a time, but using a liner will reduce the amount of body oils and dirt entering the bag.

Cleaning
Due to the long life of a quality down bag (10-15yrs) - they will inevitably need to be cleaned at some stage. This should only be done by a specialist company, as DIY can cause more damage than you think. W. E. Frankin (0114 2659161), are a specialist cleaning company, who for around £30 will clean and return your bag or jacket.

GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR DOWN PRODUCT:

between the inner and outer fabrics of the jacket or bag. These types of construction vastly reduce the opportunity for cold spots and as such are used mainly in bags. The main other type of construction that is used is ‘stitch through’ and as the name suggests it is basically two pieces of fabric that are sewn together. This is mainly seen in jackets, as it allows more freedom of movement combined with adequate insulation for mountain use.

Shell Materials
Shell materials are as important as the down itself. It is these materials that provide the product with durability. It is the shell materials that are the only real variable in producing lighter bags, as the down itself is pretty much a fixed weight. Most manufacturers use a variety of fabrics to perform different functions. At Rab we utilise a variety of fabrics from Pertex®. One of the most important considerations is the ability of the fabric to be ‘downproof’. Fabrics achieve this through a process known as ‘calendaring’ - this process applies a heat to one side of the fabric and seals it stopping the down escaping. Strength is also important for technical wear, and top end fabrics feature ripstop to provide additional durability. This is essentially using two threads instead of one, and gives the fabric a grid like appearance. There are two main types of fabric:

Coated fabrics
These fabrics have a coating on their inside face, affording the bag more protection from wind and snow plus having the advantage of increased protection against water. Pertex Endurance is a fabric that does this job extremely well and is used by a number of manufacturers, including ourselves. Coated fabrics, will to some extent, give the bag a higher thermal efficiency due to the amount of air being trapped that is not able to escape.

Uncoated fabrics
These fabrics feel softer and lighter than coated ones and arguably provide a more comfortable night’s sleep night after night. Recent advances in the technology required in the production of fine yarns suitable for outdoor apparel has enabled a new breed of ‘superlight’ fabrics to be born. Pertex Quantum from Perseverance Mills weighing in at 30g/m2 is one of lightest. The unique construction of this fabric offers the user outstanding strength to weight ratio with a super soft silky feel - which actually will allow down products to loft better.

Thanks to Rab for help with this article. More information about Rab products can be found at www.rab.uk.com. Made in Sheffield, Rab clothing is used in some of the most inhospitable environments in the world.
The BMC Festival of Climbing has moved alongside the Ordnance Survey Outdoors Show in March next year and is set to be the biggest and best event yet. If you missed the previous Festivals then you’re in for a treat, and if you’re a regular attendee you’ll find a whole lot more going on.

The Ordnance Survey Outdoor show takes over the NEC arenas in Birmingham in a celebration and exhibition of the outdoors. Every conceivable outdoor sport is on display here, and most of them you can try out too. All the best retailers are present, so it’s an ideal place to spend that Christmas money, or you could take a look at the many travel operator stands and plan your next trip. Plus, for when it all gets too hectic, there’s a very large pub to chill out in, and a great selection of leading lecturers to entertain you with their tales.

And this year Climb ’03 will take over an entire arena within the event, and is set to be the best yet – over 55,000 visitors are expected to attend the show in total, so we’re laying on some very special exhibits and competitions. The final round of the British Bouldering Championships will be held on some new and innovative Entre-Prise boulders, together with an International Bouldering Masters where the strongest climbers in the world will compete for prize money totalling £7000. Last year both visitors and competitors alike voted the Outdoors Show as the best attended competition they’d ever experienced, with a fantastic atmosphere - so come along and watch the best in action. But of course, it’s not just watching others; there’ll be an open attempt to break the newly set world Dyno record, and five separate “Come and Try it” walls.

Plus with the 50th anniversary of Everest next year, a huge Everest exhibition is planned. Chris Bonington will be leading the way in the Mountain Theatre in a celebration of the mountain together with some of the members of the first ascent team. Full details of the event will appear in upcoming issues of High and OTE as well as the next Summit, but don’t miss the exclusive 2 for 1 ticket offer featured below. There are a limited number of these tickets available, so ring today and be one of the lucky few to get in at half price!

**Climb 2003**

**At The Ordnance Survey Outdoors Show**

**The NEC, Birmingham, 15-16th March 2003**

For Summit readers we’ve arranged a great ticket offer. Just buy one ticket, and get the second absolutely free! Ring 0870 0109086 quoting “Summit Offer” now to book your place at what’s shaping up to be the biggest outdoor event of 2003. The first 50 callers will get a pair of tickets FREE. Tickets are priced £8 to adults / £6.50 concessions. We look forward to seeing you all there!
A new version of Anderl Heckmair’s memoirs and discoveries in the Library of Congress prompts further scrutiny of the political background to the 1938 ascent of the Eiger North Face - the Eigerwand.

Few would dispute that the 1938 ascent of the Eigerwand by Heckmair, Vörg, Kasparek and Harrer was the most advanced alpine climb of the pre-war era, matched only by the Beziingi Traverse in the Caucasus. But the Eigerwand, in terms of climbing influence, notoriety and political significance proved the far more important ascent. It became a major preoccupation for ambitious alpinists for many years thereafter, indeed there are many that would say that it remains, to this day, the definitive alpine challenge. Its sheer size, its strange geological character which enforces a very devious route, and its exposure to volatile weather changes, ensure that it provides a daunting test for all the mountaineer’s skills. But was its first ascent actually a politically sponsored climb? That is the major question that arises from the new edition of My Life, the memoirs of Anderl Heckmair.

The Eigerwand saga was fully chronicled and roundly criticised at the time in the Alpine Journal by its editor and later Alpine Club President Colonel Edward Strutt. Strutt was a mountaineering version of Churchill – a close and sceptical observer of events in Germany and Austria in the aftermath of WW1 and during the rise of Nazism. Like Churchill he too was ringing alarm bells about political deterioration in Central Europe. He was particularly scathing about how this was polluting the good sense of mountaineering with Nietzschean “triumph of the will” ideas, and was convinced that most of the Eiger attempts, and certainly its first ascent, were imbued by this approach.

Subsequently mountaineers came to view Strutt’s assessment as too extreme. The second ascent of the Eigerwand in 1947 by Terray and Lachenal emphasised its status purely as a great climb and the 1954 accounts of Gaston Rebuffat and Hermann Buhl plus the description in Heinrich Harrer’s The White Spider (1958) all added to the route’s prestige. By the 1960s the received view was that the Eiger first ascensionists were merely honest mountaineers. The political emphasis was just a manifestation of State expediency tacked on after the event, but before and during the ascent the climbers were solely motivated by “climbing” interest and ambition – charged, as is usually the case when a “last great problem” is in focus, by a good deal of competitiveness.

But was it as simple as that? Doug Scott and I were keen to find out when we interviewed Heckmair at his home in Oberstdorf on New Year’s Day, 1972. We went well prepared and elicited certain information but we were not as searching as we might have been. Perhaps due to the festive season, the circumstances of the visit, and the fact that his memoirs had not yet been published. Heckmair proved to be a very nice fellow, instantly recognisable as “one of the lads”.

This was later underscored when he attended the Buxton Mountaineering Festival in 1978 and also by his fraternal support to the British guides in their quest for European recognition. How could one speak ill of such a nice man?

But in recent years a slow accumulation of evidence has begun to suggest that the Eiger climb did indeed have a degree of political momentum behind it. Events between Germany and Austria were reaching a climax in 1937 and early 1938 in the run up to the Anschluss (the Annexation of Austria by Germany). It is now clear that the Austrian Alpine Club in the 1920s and 1930s was a focal point of anti-Semitism and the steadily emerging fascist sentiment. Secret right wing meetings were held in remote climbing huts and elements in the Austrian mountaineering world seem to have been heavily involved in the undermining of the Austrian Dollfuss and Schuschnigg administrations prior to the Anschluss.

Was the Eigerwand actually a state sponsored ascent? By Ken Wilson.
Adolf Hitler poses with the successful Eiger climbers: (L-R) Anderl Heckmair, Heinrich Harrer, Adolf Hitler, Fritz Kasparek, Ludwig Vörg, Herr von Tschammer-Osten (Sports Minister) and Wilhelm Frick (Minister of the Interior and power broker in Bavarian politics). Harrer and Kasparek, as Nazi Party members, were given pride of place at Hitler’s side. Harrer having been accepted into the SS (Schutzstaffel) four months earlier.

All of this background is absent in Harrer’s “post-war” book and Heckmair’s book is quite specific, almost strident, in stating that there was no political influence. Yet the discovery in the Library of Congress that both Harrer and Kasparek were Nazi Party members at the time of the Eiger ascent contradicts the points made in Heckmair’s account: “We were not party members...The Nazis built us into such celebrities that people believed that we had been supported by and received monies from the Party. However that simply is not true.” But it is now clear that both the Austrians were party members and Harrer had been a Nazi party member since the early 1930’s, and been accepted into the SS on April 1st, 1938. (Eiger: The Vertical Arena, 2000).

Recent researches by Simon Wells and David Roberts in the Library of Congress have confirmed Harrer’s and Kasparek’s party memberships at the time of the ascent and have also suggested that Heckmair was member as well, though exactly when he joined the party is still unclear— it may well have been an expedient later action. In his book Heckmair describes traveling to a Nazi Party Rally in Nuremberg with Leni Riefenstahl in September 1937. There he came face to face with Hitler who quizzed him about his Eigerwand attempts. After that he went to Berlin with Riefenstahl and stayed there for several months maintaining, he reports, a strict training regime which “preserved me from the temptations of city life”. All of this was in preparation for his renewed attempt in the following year. What is not clear is how he was financed during this period. Then, as now, a period of several months spent in a capital city is not cheap. Later, as Harrer somewhat enviously describes in The White Spider, Heckmair and Vörg were able to go to Sporthaus Schuster in Munich and equip themselves for the great climb with the latest equipment and clothing – again a considerable expense.

It seems to have been a coincidence that the Heckmair/Vörg team were attempting the face at the same time as the Kasparek/Harrer rope, but what a coincidence! Nazi propaganda’s central-casting could not have written a better scenario – two young Germans combining with two young Austrians (both Nazi party members) to climb the greatest mountaineering problem in Europe just a few weeks after the highly controversial Anschluss. For them it provided a very timely sporting confirmation of the camaraderie and racial prowess of the reunited “Greater Germany”. This would have seemed a far better piece of international propaganda (in Nazi eyes) than Riefenstahl’s recently released Olympia which, despite its aesthetic and technical perfection, maintained the correct stress on the feats of the athlete Jesse Owens which would have been difficult for the Nazis to stomach.

Some commentators have noted that in the triumphal photograph of the Eiger foursome standing with Hitler (left), Harrer and Kasparek are given pride of place next to the dictator while Heckmair is on the fringe thus suggesting his more apologetic status. Heckmair’s memoirs seem scrupulous in emphasising that distance, but a party membership is never mentioned. It is clear from his book that Heckmair, despite his explanations, was drawn like a moth very close to the Nazi flame. After the climb he refers to officials from the Sonthofen Ordensburg who “swept us home to the Reich as national heroes”. He goes on to say “I attached a condition to our annexation by the Nazis, I agreed to enrolment on the Ordensburg staff with the understanding that we would be helped with an expedition to the Himalaya...we asked for a round sum of 100,000 marks”. The meaning of the words “annexation” and “enrolment” in this account would probably have implied party membership but this was “after” the Eiger event. The question remains of whether a party membership and sponsorship dated from the autumn of 1937.

It is important for our understanding of alpine history to discover whether one of the greatest climbs of the last century was discreetly financed by a regime which later exploited it to emphasise ethnic and political prowess and nationalist unity. Such an enquiry would be our version of the awkward reassessments being made in the athletics world following the revelations about East European Olympic performances during the Cold War. The republication of Heckmair’s engaging memoirs taken with Harrer’s My Life as a Mountaineer and sponsorship dated from the autumn of 1937.

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My Life
by Anderl Heckmair

My Life by Anderl Heckmair is fascinating and exciting in its intimate view of a climber at the peak of his powers focusing on the great alpine problem of his day, and is an essential read for anyone captivated by the history of the Eiger.

These memoirs were first published in Britain as My Life as a Mountaineer (Gollancz, 1975), translated by Geoffrey Sutton. This new edition, translated by Tim Caruthers and with many new photos and some minor text additions is now available in the USA and Britain as My Life (The Mountaineers/Bâton Wicks 2002). ISBN 1-898573-95-7.

Please return your completed order form to: British Mountaineering Council, FREEPOST MR 9759, Manchester, M20 7AD.
Tel: 0870 010 4878 Fax: 0161 445 4500
Website: www.thebmc.co.uk E-Mail: members@thebmc.co.uk
Every year, the BMC and Mount Everest Foundation (MEF) provide financial support to a number of expeditions representing the cutting edge of British climbing in the Greater Ranges. In many cases this support makes the difference between expeditions taking place and not, and when you look at the amazing achievements that consistently result, you can see it’s money well spent!

In 2003, just over £43,000 of UK Sport’s money was divided between 41 expeditions with the level of award based on climbing objectives, exploratory content and value to the international climbing community. This support regularly results in successful attempts on world-class “last great problem” lines, extreme and remote rock routes, rapid alpine assaults and even the development of medical websites and glaciological data.

So if you’re planning an adventure for next year, why not apply for some help with it? Conditions for eligibility and application procedures are detailed at the end of this article, and the BMC also has contacts with a number of other organisations that offer expedition funding. To whet your appetite, here’s a round up of the sponsored expeditions from this year. Not all of them of course, some of them are still out there up to their necks in it!

Antarctic Convergence Zone
Antarctica
Ten weeks, 5000km in a 15m boat and a number of first ascents on the Antarctic Peninsula and nearby islands. Al Hubbard & crew retreated from a first ascent attempt of Mt Walker due to poor weather (experienced throughout the trip), but traversed onto the icecap via “the downfall”, taking radar observations and snow/water samples.

The Longest Day
Denali NP, Alaska
Ian Parnell and Kenton Cool consolidated their reputation as one of the strongest lightweight alpine assault teams on the planet by making the second ascent of the Denali Diamond (Alaskan 6+). The original ascent took 17 days and used considerable aid – the boys cut this to five days and just two aid points, pointing the way forward in climbing of this style.

North Wales Alaska 2002
Kichatna Spires & Hayes Range, Alaska
A strong party including Twid Turner, Stu McAleese, John Cousins and Rob Collister climbed a new route on the Citadel, 8520ft – an 18 pitch eliminate of the 1978 first ascent at E3, A2+. Rob and JC attempted the South ridge of Mt Hess twice, but in the end had to settle for a ski circuit of the massif due to bad weather.

(TOP) The North Face of Siguniang in the Qionglai Range, Sichuan, China. Mick Fowler and Paul Ramsden made the successful first ascent over 8 days, the line climbed is the obvious ice runnel in the centre of the shot. They report vast potential for alpine style routes of all grades in the range as well as some tempting granite big walls.
Credit: Mick Fowler.
British Donjek Glacier 2002
St Elias NP, Alaska
Geoff Hornby, Glenn Wilkes, Susie Sammut and Alistair Duff made three first ascents in the upper Donjek/Eclipse Glacier dome area and a further five around the SW fork of the Goat Glacier.

West Buttress of Mount Hunter
Central Range, Alaska
The small Yorkshire based team thought better of attempting this after seeing the lethal state it was in from their approach plane! Instead, they tried the Harvard Route (Alaskan 5) on Huntington, retreating from "the spiral" as the weather got warmer and warmer.

British Lemon Mountains 2002
Lemon Mountains, Greenland
A hugely successful exploration penetrating the untrodden North Lemon Mountains and covering over 1000km on skis! Highlights included the first ascent of one the highest peaks, The Spear (~2500m) in a continuous 34-hour push by Dave Wilkinson and Geoff Cohen.

Apolobamba 2002
Cordillera Apolobamba, Bolivia
Exploratory forays into the Cordillera yielded three first ascents amidst poor weather and unstable slopes: Pelechuco (Pt 5527 or 5488) by its N face & W ridge, Nevado Nubi (5710m) via W ridge and Pt5490 by the E ridge.

Jirishanca
Cordillera Huayhuash, Peru
Al Powell and Nick Bullock tried the first ascent of Jirishanca’s (6126m) SE face, both times being repulsed by weather, melting and avalanches. They then expended their pent up energy making the first ascent of the N face of Utta (5885m, ED2, Scottish 7) and added a direct finish to the Cheesmond-Dawson route on the NW face.

Maestri-Egger Alpine style
Cerro Torre, Patagonia
An audacious attempt to free the infamous Maestri Egger route by Alan Mullin, Kevin Thaw and Leo Houlding. Climbing alpine style the team reached pitch six (1000ft up the route) with Leo leading, when a hold broke and so did Leo’s ankle! A two day descent/evacuation ensued and the weather broke preventing further attempts.

Towers of Paine
Paine NP, Patagonia
Andy Cave & team visited the park with the aim of freeing existing routes and making first ascents in the Bada Valley. Their tally included the first free ascent of Illusions on the Mascara (800m, A3+ - now E4 5c), a repeat of the Duncan Dihedral on the same peak and the first ascent of the West Couloir of Paine Chico (1500m). They also looked at the South face of the Tower of Paine, finding permanent wetness and no obvious line.

Angel Falls 2002
Canaima NP, Venezuela
Way back in the late spring you may remember reports of an unsuccessful free attempt on the Angel Falls beloved of the BASE jumpers, topped off with a new 25 pitch E7 on Cerro Autana, courtesy of John and Anne Arran. [LEFT] Kenton Cool at the first camp on the 2nd ascent of the Denali Diamond with Ian Parnell. Using this tiny one person tent for the two of them in order to cut down on weight, the pair suffered four sleepless nights during the five day ascent. The most spectacular being when they were forced to pitch the tent vertically! Credit: Ian Parnell.

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Makalu

NEPAL PRO GORE-TEX LINED

The Makalu is an outstanding 3-4 season mountain boot. It is in fact a Gore-Tex lined version of the tried and tested Nepal Pro. The durable double density Vibram sole unit gives excellent support, whilst the 2.7mm upper leather is exceptionally tough and backed with a guaranteed waterproof lining making the Makalu virtually bombproof.

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EXPEDITIONS

Credit Union Garhwal Virgin Summit 2002
Bagirath Kharak Glacier, India
Roger McMorrow & Co. discovered a few map errors for this region, so after a bit of straightening out and a change of objective they made the first ascent of a 6175m peak in this remote region of the Indian Himalaya, enjoying some bad weather and a miniature epic on the descent.

British Indian Suitilla
Kuamoan, India
Graham Little and Jim Lowther made a first ascent of Suitilla West (6373m) in the Kuamoan Himalaya, naming the route “Moonlight Express”. But a snatched glance at an unpublished military map revealed Suitilla East (6394m) to be the highest point! This and many other challenges await on Suitilla, a complex and beautiful mountain.

British Mongolian Mountaineering 2002
Ikh Turgen Uul area, Mongolia
Paul Hudson led a team to this infrequent area, discovering considerable glacial recession on South facing slopes, and made some exploratory forays on peaks up to around 4000m. Again, the area holds huge potential.

British Heart of Asia Expedition 2002
Mongolian Altai
Despite delays caused by an outbreak of FMD, this strongly exploratory expedition racked up a number of first (British) rock and ice ascents in the Tavan Bogd and Otgontenga Uul areas on both established and new peaks. A GPS survey and extensive mapping were a large part of the trip.

Khrebet Kyokkiar 2002
Mongolia
The expedition was delayed in accessing the Khrebet Kyokkiar by bad weather and flooding, during which three first ascents in the nearby Gory Sarybeles were made. After the rivers had subsided, horseback access to the range allowed another four new peaks to be climbed, all by alpine-type couloirs & ridges. The potential for quality mixed and rock routes of up to 1000m in length remains immense.

British Siguniang Expedition 2002
Qionglai Range, Sichuan, China
Mick Fowler and Paul Ramsden made a successful first ascent of the North face of Siguniang (6250m) in 8 days, over steep ice and mixed ground, a variety of brutal bivis and several packets of minute noodles! They report vast potential for alpine style routes of all grades in the range as well as some tempting granite big wall action.

Scottish West Face of Kizil Asker
West Kokshaal Too, Kyrgyz Republic
Finding the (as it turned out, avalanche laden) West face of the 5842m peak unapproachable, this all-Scottish party opted for the SE face instead, reaching about halfway before it started melting on them. A second ascent of Pik Babuchka (approx. 5300m) provided consolation.

Borkoldoy 2002
Khrebet Borkoldoy, Tien Shan
Stephen Saddler & team were the first team ever to visit this area to the North of the Kokshaal Too in the Kyrgyz Republic, and netted three first ascents of peaks up to 4850m, including Peak Alexander (4665m). They report a wealth of opportunity for those looking for beautiful alpine climbs at technically easy grades.

British Nyewo Chu Expedition
Central/East Tibet
John Town’s expedition made a thorough exploration of the exceptionally remote Kong-Po range, Nyewo Valley, which was last visited by a Briton in 1936. They photographed and mapped the area including the spectacular Nyenang / Kangla Karpo (6870m) with its unclimbed NW face, and attempted subsidiary peaks over a 4-week period.

Yet to report in...
Sharks Fin, Garhwal Himalaya, India.
Zagros Mountains, Bisotun, Iran.
Great Walls of China, Qionglai Range, Sichuan, China.
West Gyundi 2002, Himachal Pradesh, India.

BMC & MEF FUNDING
The BMC administers UK Sport funding for expedition grants. To meet the criteria for consideration for an award, teams must be attempting first ascents, or first British ascents in remote mountainous environments. The UK Sport excellence fund is an additional fund from which awards are made to those expeditions that are felt to be of global significance, often allowing the expedition to operate at a very high standard, giving the best chance of success. Applications for 2003 should be made to the Mount Everest Foundation (MEF), which also provides substantial grant opportunities to exploratory expeditions from New Zealand. Contact Bill Ruthven, Gowrie, Cardwell Close, Warton, Preston PR4 1SH or visit www.mef.org.uk for further details and application forms. The closing date is 31st December 2002.
It's nearly 50 years on from the most famous first ascent in history.
Sarah Turner takes a look at the planned celebrations.

On 29 May 2003 we will be celebrating 50 years since the momentous first ascent of Everest. The date will not go unnoticed, indeed with less than eight months to go, interest in the 50th Anniversary of the first ascent of Mount Everest continues to grow.

The Mount Everest Foundation, set up following the successful ascent using money received from the royalties of the Expedition, is spearheading the celebrations and has set up a special 50th Committee with representatives from the Royal Geographical Society, Alpine Club, British Mountaineering Council and George Band, a 1953 veteran, to manage the programme of activities and events.

The MEF 50th Committee is working with television companies to produce Everest programmes on radio and TV and with newspapers and magazines to produce special commemorative editions. There are a number of anniv- ersary books on the 1953 Expedition being published as well as ones on Sherpa Tenzing, on Hillary and on Everest itself. Royal Mail is also producing a special set of stamps of famous explorers.

Dr Charles Clarke, Chairman of the MEF’s 50th Anniversary Committee, said, “Where 2002 was the year of the Queen’s Golden Jubilee and the World Cup, 2003 will be The Year of Everest. This is a chance to recapture the spirit of 1953. Those of us who were around then remember it well and those who weren’t have read about it. We are going to take people back there to the feeling of great pride when news reached us that the British Expedition had reached the top. Like many people, I remember seeing it on the television on Coronation Day with excitement and pride.”
WHAT'S PLANNED?

Endeavour on Everest: the Royal Gala Celebration which will take place on the 29th May 2003 at the Odeon Cinema, Leicester Square, London. We anticipate that the event will be held in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness Prince Philip, patron of the MEF. This will be an opportunity to hear from the veterans of the 1953 Expedition themselves as they take us back to the mountain: the ups, the downs, the excitement, the determination to succeed. Archive film footage and slides will be screened along with first hand descriptions of what it was like to be there.

“This will be an evening of drama, nostalgia, pride and joy,” commented Sir Chris Bonington, one of the competitors. We are planning to take people through the Everest experience. Our aim is to replicate the tension, atmosphere and excitement of the 1953 Expedition.”

Tickets are priced at £50.00 and £75.00 with all profits going to the MEF. The MEF will also be offering corporate tickets which will enable ticket holders to attend an exclusive reception with the 1953 veterans. For tickets please send a cheque, made payable to MEF Endeavours Ltd and a sae to MEF Everest Events, c/o RGS-IBG, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR.

50th Anniversary Everest Expedition: The Anniversary Expedition is scheduled to follow the same route and use as many of the same resources as the 1953 British Expedition and will be a real celebration of the 1953 achievement. The Expedition will be filmed and broadcast around the world. The Leader is Iain Peter and the team will include many of Britain’s leading mountaineers.

Everest Exhibitions: The Helly Hansen National Mountaineering Exhibition will be hosting a year long series of exhibitions featuring the story of the first ascent and all that led up to it. Look out for info on www.mountain-exhibition.co.uk.

Books: As well as the special edition of ‘The Ascent of Everest’ there will be a major new book by George Band, the youngest member of the ‘53 team, entitled ‘One Man’s Everest’ which will cover the full story of Everest - from the early days to today’s top ascents. It is on sale from April 2003 and a portion of the proceeds will support the MEF. The RGS-IBG is also producing a book ‘Everest: Summit of Achievement’, which will be on sale from April 2003.

If you would like any additional information about any of these events please contact Sarah Turner at sarahm alc@yahoo.com.

The Mount Everest Foundation

It was following the triumphant expedition that the Mount Everest Foundation (MEF) a charity formed by the Alpine Club and Royal Geographical Society (RGS) was established. Funded initially by proceeds of the 1953 British expedition the MEF now relies on donations to continue its support of the exploration and understanding of the world’s mountain regions. In the last forty seven years over 1,300 expeditions have been supported.

In association with Hodder & Stoughton, the Mount Everest Foundation has commissioned a special edition of John Hunt’s landmark 1953 book, The Ascent of Everest. This edition is blue cloth bound, like the original and has the superb and memorable Heaton Cooper dustwrapper. Each contains a copy of the signatures of the entire 1953 team, a must for any collector of climbing books and a fine gift for anyone interested in high mountains. HRH the Duke of Edinburgh, patron of the 1953 expedition has kindly written a new foreword.

The book is priced at £55.00 to include post, packing and insurance. Profits from the sale of this special edition are in aid of the Mount Everest Foundation. Deliveries will be in time for Christmas 2002.

To order a copy, please call Hodder & Stoughton’s distribution company, Bookpoint, on 01235 827702. You can pay by credit, debit (except Visa Electron and Solo). Alternatively send a cheque to: Bookpoint Ltd, 130 Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4SR. Overseas orders are welcome, and the price of post and packing will be confirmed when you make your order.

THE ASCENT OF EVEREST BY JOHN HUNT

Special Edition

Only 1000 limited edition books are being produced.
The days of drinking from a cool, sparkling, mountain stream are over. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reckons 90 percent of the world’s fresh water is unfit to drink without first being treated. The World Health Organization claims waterborne gastrointestinal infections cause 80% of all disease, and kill more than 50,000 people every day: over 5000 from diarrhoea and cholera.

If you believe you are the exception, think on: up to 50% of all holidaymakers catch diarrhoea and the risks for mountaineers away from civilization are much higher. In most countries most tap water is safe to drink most of the time but once beyond the reach of piped water if you want to stay healthy treat your water before cleaning your teeth never mind drinking your fill.

And clarity is no proof of purity. The dangerous pollutants are invisible to the naked eye and produce a range of illnesses that includes amoebic dysentery, bilharziosis, cholera, cryptosporidiosis, giardiasis and schistosomiasis before moving on to the side effects of chemical contaminants from alachlor (a cancer inducing herbicide runoff) to zinc.

So what can be done? Polluted water can be made fit to drink in three ways. It can be boiled, treated with chemicals or filtered. The method you choose depends on what is to hand, including cash, how often you need to treat water and the amount of water you need to treat.

**BOILING**

Boiling is simple and effective. Filter out any sediment before boiling and a rolling boil for at least 1 minute kills protozoan parasites and most bacterial and viral pathogens. The resulting flat taste is disguised by pouring back and forth between a couple of containers. If boiling is your chosen treatment remember that backpacking restricts the amount of fuel carried and don’t forget that adding one minute of boiling to the initial boil for every 1000 feet above sea level eats into your fuel supplies. Boiling does not neutralize chemical pollutants.

**CHEMICAL TREATMENTS**

Chemical treatment works best if the water temperature is at least 16°C and its ultimate effectiveness depends not only on the temperature, but the pH, and cloudiness of the water. If water is visibly dirty, filter it before beginning treatment. Add the chemicals and let them stand for half an hour for them to do their work; for water temperatures below 10°C wait for at least an hour. Very turbid or very cold water may need to stand for several hours or even overnight. With unfavourable water conditions iodine is better than chlorine. The chemical after taste is reduced by adding a pinch of Vitamin C, or salt, or powdered fruit drinks. If you are using a branded chemical treatment system follow the instructions on the packet but generic chemicals are just as effective and cheaper. Chemicals are a useful way of treating substantial amounts of water but are not always effective against all pollutants.

**FILTERS**

Filters are either adsorption filters of silver-impregnated carbon, charcoal, activated carbon, or ceramics, or membrane filters of thin sheets of precisely sized pores. The effectiveness of any filter depends upon its pore size. Some filters
can be cleaned which reduces the frequency they are replaced, others are used until exhausted and then thrown away.

**SILVER-IMPREGNATED CARBON OR CHARCOAL FILTERS**

Ordinary or silver-impregnated carbon or charcoal filters removes undesirable chemicals, odours, and very large particles, but not micro-organisms.

**ACTIVATED CARBON FILTERS**

Activated carbon filters have a matrix of millions of microscopic pores and crevices. The pores trap microscopic particles and large organic molecules, while the activated surface areas cling to, or adsorb, small organic molecules. Their ability to eliminate a range of organic chemicals, heavy metals and some bacteria depends upon:

- The type of carbon and the amount used.
- The water flow rate (contact time).
- How long the filter has been in use.
- The impurities the filter has previously removed.
- Water conditions (turbidity, temperature, etc).

Activated carbon is either in grains or solid blocks. Granular activated carbon removes nearly all organic impurities and some bacteria but, ultimately, the impurities accumu-

**WHY IS WATER SO IMPORTANT?**

Over 70% of our body weight is water and after three waterless days we are dead. Major causes of water loss are sweating and urinating but fluid loss from diarrhoea and vomiting kills just as quickly (sometimes more quickly) and in all cases dehydration can result in hypovolemic shock and death.

Drinking less than half a gallon of water a day brings a real risk of dehydration. At 5% dehydration there is thirst, lack of appetite, nausea, muscle cramps headache, irritability and drowsiness. At 10% there is dizziness, lack of saliva, clumsiness, slurring and difficulty breathing. At 20% the tongue and throat will swell along with a dulling of senses and delirium.

Visible semi-mucous membranes such as your lips are a better indicator than a feeling of thirst. If your lips feel dry or chapped drink several glasses of water. Another good guide is urine colour. If it’s dark you’re probably on the way to being dehydrated. A useful rule of thumb is to drink enough water to ensure at least two clear pees per day.

How much water you need to stay healthy depends on age, physical condition, activity and environment. Adults should consume two litres (3.5pts) or eight glasses of water each day and children about half that amount. For strenuous activities (mountaineering qualifies) or in hot climates the need for water can double or triple. Alcohol and caffeinated drinks give the illusion of quenching thirst while encouraging dehydration mostly through urination.

Drinking a lot of water to rehydrate quickly can upset your body’s salt balance. The symptoms are very similar to the early stages of dehydration and salt should be taken with food, on its own or in rehydration mixtures such as Gesol, Dioralyte, and Rehidrat or using a home made mixture of six teaspoons of sugar to one of salt in a litre of water.

**WHAT'S SAFE TO DRINK?**

- In most countries regular filtered tap water is safe for older children and adults.
- As is boiled water and chemically treated water.
- As a rule hot tea and coffee are safe. Even if the water has not boiled, heating water is similar to pasteurising it, and most, if not all, harmful bacteria, parasites, and viruses will be eliminated. But be sure the cup is clean.
- Commercially bottled or canned beverages, carbonated water, soft drinks, fruit juices, and beer, are usually heat treated and filtered in the factory, and so are OK.
- Bottled water is not safe to drink in all countries. The origin, the quality, and treatment of bottled water varies, even among brands from the same company and labelling does not always identify low risk products. Claims of well water, artesian well water, spring water or mineral water are no guarantee of purity. Locally bottled water sometimes comes from the nearest tap despite claims on the label. Water from a well or spring free from surface water contamination is less likely to be polluted than water from rivers and lakes.
inert binding agent, and because they tend to clog they have, size for size, less capacity than granular activated carbon filters. Some filters rely on chemicals like iodide-impregnated resins to destroy the micro-organisms as the water flows through the filter. Although this kills many species of bacteria and viruses remember:
- Chemical treatment to remove protozoa is not always effective.
- The contact time for effective treatment varies and may exceed the time the water takes to pass through the filter.
- Chemical filters are not recommended for muddy or very turbid water.
- There is usually no indication to the user when the disinfectant element is depleted.

MEMBRANE FILTERS
Membrane filters transpose the flow of water in the natural process of osmosis so that water passes from a concentration to a dilute solution through a semi-permeable membrane. Treated water emerges from one side of the membrane, and the accumulated impurities are washed away on the other. This is reverse osmosis or ultrafiltration and because it removes 98% of salts and makes seawater drinkable such systems are sometimes called watermakers.

WATER PURIFIERS
A water filter is not necessarily a water purifier. Filters do not remove viruses, water purifiers do. The United States Environmental Protection Agency defines water purifiers as units which remove, kill or inactivate all types of disease-causing micro-organisms from the water, including bacteria, viruses and protozoan cysts so as to render the processed water safe for drinking. Meeting EPA requirements means a purifier must remove 99.9999% of waterborne bacteria, 99.9% of protozoa, and inactivate 99.99% of viruses. This is tested in different water conditions, including “worst-case”, cold, acidic, and turbid water. Water purifiers need true micro filters, which are:
- Filters in reverse osmosis systems.
- Filters that meet the US National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) Standard 53 for “cyst removal”.
- Filters that have “absolute” 1 micron filters. The “nominal” 1 micron filter rating is not standardized and many “nominal” 1 micron filters do not meet the NSF standard.

Most purifiers combine filtration with ultraviolet irradiation, (you need power for this) halogenated resins, or chemical disinfection either alone, or in some combination to offer a very high level of protection. Purifiers are the choice of people who want safe water supplies.

CHOOSING A SYSTEM
It is a hard choice. There is a huge range of products on the market and they all claim to be the best at what they do, so before buying decide exactly what you expect of your filter system. The choice begins with silver-impregnated carbon or charcoal filters and moves through various combinations of filters and chemical treatments, up to water purifiers with your wallet emptying in inverse proportion to filter pore size. Remember to check the cost of replacement filters and chemicals. Depending on the type of filter the price of replacements filters can vary between a third and three quarters of the original purchase price.

The next task is to find the model that best suits the environment in which it will operate. Basically the choice is between back packing and base camp systems. The first are small, light, easily carried and aimed at individual use, the latter for the heavier demands of a static base camp.

MORE INFORMATION
www.generalecology.com - First Need Products
www.katadyn.net - Katadyn products
www.msrcorp.com - MSR products
www.purwater.com - Pur Products
www.cascadedesigns.com - Sweetwater products
www.nsf.org - National Sanitation Foundation
COMMON POLLUTANTS

Protozoan Parasites are single celled parasitic cysts. Best known are Giardia intestinalis, and Cryptosporidium parvum, found in 90% of U.S. surface water. Giardiasis ranks in the top 20 of killer infectious diseases in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. By micro-organism standards protozoa are large ranging between 1-16 microns (1 micron = 1 millionth of a metre; under 50 microns is invisible to the naked eye.) They can be filtered out of water but are resistant to chemical treatment.

Bacteria range from 0.2 to 1.5 microns and include E. coli, the cause of 40% of travellers’ diarrhoea, dysentery, cholera, typhoid and Salmonella. Bacteria are caught by some filters and respond well to chemical treatment.

Viruses. The most common illness-causing viruses are the Norwalk and Rotaviruses. Others include polio (0.020 microns), meningitis (0.20 microns) and hepatitis A and E (0.027 microns). Water-borne viral hepatitis E is common in Asia, northern and sub-Saharan Africa, and the eastern Mediterranean.

Chemical contamination is usually a by-product of civilization and includes inorganic contaminants (arsenic and other heavy metals) or organic toxins, fertilizers and pesticides. Nitrate in drinking water are from fertilisers and the oxidation of sewage effluents.

CHEMICAL TREATMENTS

IODINE

Iodine is light sensitive and must be stored in a dark bottle. Tincture of iodine contains sodium iodide as well as iodine. Sodium iodide has no disinfectant activity but counts towards total iodine consumption. Iodine is not highly toxic, though prolonged use may cause health problems. People with thyroid problems, women over fifty, pregnant women and anyone allergic to shellfish should avoid iodine as a purification medium. Chlorine and silver disinfectant tablets are an alternative. The following measures should prove useful:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Iodine</th>
<th>Clear Water</th>
<th>Cloudy Water</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1% Tincture</td>
<td>10 drops/gallon</td>
<td>At least 20 drops/gallon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2% Tincture</td>
<td>5 drops/gallon</td>
<td>At least 10 drops/gallon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4% to 6% Tincture</td>
<td>2 drops/gallon</td>
<td>At least 4 drops/gallon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7% to 10% Tincture</td>
<td>1 drops/gallon</td>
<td>At least 2 drops/gallon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown Tincture</td>
<td>10 drops/gallon</td>
<td>At least 20 drops/gallon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHLORINE

Chlorine alone can easily be deactivated by organic matter and its action varies with pH, but it can be effective. If using liquid chlorine bleach from the local supermarket it should have at least 5.25% to 6% sodium hypochlorite (check the label) and contain no soap, fragrance or phosphates. Bleach loses efficiency with age and after a year it is at half strength. If the bleach is not dated then when you buy it note the date on the bottle. Add 20 drops of chlorine per gallon, mix thoroughly and let stand for an hour. A slight chlorine odour should be detectable. If not, repeat the dosage and let stand for at least another 15 minutes before using. Dry chlorine (calcium hypochlorite) from swimming pool supply stores is an alternative to liquid chlorine bleach. Providing it is kept dry, cool and in an airtight container it may be stored up to 10 years. Be aware that it is about ten times more powerful than liquid chlorine bleach (65% strength compared to 4-6%) and adjust the dosage accordingly.

STABILIZED OXYGEN

Stabilized Oxygen is an effective but lesser known treatment. Add 20 drops (1.3ml) to one gallon of water. Chlorine dioxide (a form of stabilized oxygen) products on the market include Perox, Genesis 1000, Dynamo 2, Aerobic 07, and Aquagen.

backs. What you need is independent advice. NSF International certification programmes do not recommend, rate, or compare products but test and verify that products are up to standard and that the manufacturers’ claims about their performance are true. NSF testing programmes are recognized worldwide and involve annual inspection and periodic product re-testing. On the NSF website click on Certified Products and then Drinking Water Treatment Units for a long list of products which have been certified by the NSF. If all else fails happy sailors claim a mixture of one part red wine and three parts water makes the water safe to drink. It is something to do with phenol compounds enhanced from contact with the charred wood of the wine aging casks. Columbus, and others, swore by this method but it may just be a waste of good wine.

Who knows? Cheers!
Tired and not looking forward to the long drive back from London to Sheffield, I hurriedly packed away my steaming slide projector; keen to be off now the lecture was over. With my back turned to the dwindling audience I wound up the extension cable and thought about the best route out of the city, hoping no one would stop me to ask any complicated questions.

I usually look forward to this time, to talk to people about what they thought, or their own strange experiences. For me it can be the highpoint of the evening, like the time I ended up talking to a 60 year old crack addict (not the jamming kind), and the man whose job was firing frozen birds into jet engines. It was all going well until I heard a small voice, almost lost within the din of the tiny room - “You’re going to die aren’t you mister?”

I’d been speaking at the Castle climbing wall, and my mood wasn’t great as the audience had been rather thin. Having a small turnout isn’t really that bad as it’s quality not quantity that counts – that and the lecturer’s willingness to give a hundred percent to only a fraction of the possible audience. It’s just that you can’t help but take it personally when less people turn up than expected. In fact it can break your heart. On this occasion I blamed the poster; a non-descript A4 sheet, that looked more like a Health and Safety notification than a spine tingling advert for an evening of epics. 30 people had turned up, not bad, but only the week-end before I’d lectured to about 400, and I suppose it had gone to my head.

“You’re going to die aren’t you mister”, repeated the voice, as I turned around to find a small boy standing there. He was probably about ten, the typical climbing wall youth. From his waist hung a chalk bag – probably highly treasured as I turned around to find a small boy standing there. He was probably about ten, the typical climbing wall youth. From his waist hung a chalk bag – probably highly treasured, the thick cord that held it to his tiny waist no doubt tied around him asking ‘who the f@@ks Andy Kirkscribble?’ And the man whose job was firing frozen birds into jet engines. It was all going well until I heard a small voice, almost lost within the din of the tiny room - “You’re going to die aren’t you mister?”

“Why did you want my signature?” I asked, genuinely interested why anyone would want the signature of someone who talks about his holidays. If I could wrestle rabid donkeys while doing tricks on a skateboard, I’d have understood. “Well, like I said,” he began, “my Dad said you’re mad.”

“And?” I asked, as he folded up the paper and slid it into his back pocket. “Well, you’re probably going to die soon ain’t ya mister, so I sort of thought I’d better get it now rather then later, you know what I mean?”

Kids – don’t you just love ’em.
sexy images of scantily clad sun bronzed rock gods and goddesses. Epic tales of suffering and endurance in far flung corners of the world. Jaw dropping photos of huge cliffs and improbable lines. These beam out of every climbing magazine around like a siren call, seducing new and old climbers alike.

But there’s a flip side to the game we play, one sometimes forgotten in the quest for stronger fingers. Climbing and mountaineering are dangerous pastimes and, rather unusually for this pre-packaged and no-quibble guaranteed world, take place in an uncontrolled environment where hazards lurk around every corner. This doesn’t mean we should all wrap ourselves up in cotton wool and take up knitting, but that by understanding and evaluating just what can go wrong out there the odds can be stacked in your favour.

Building up the knowledge and the ability to assess these hazards is part of learning to become a climber, but as a rising number of climbers acquire their early skills indoors and then seek to move outside, this “crag sense” can be lagging behind forearm development. And it’s not just beginning climbers that are at risk. Even if you’ve been climbing for years and have a vast amount of knowledge, it’s all too easy to get a little blasé occasionally. Perhaps you’ve been cranking for so long that you’ve stopped questioning everything quite as much as you used to? Maybe now is the time to nudge yourself gently and start reminding yourself of the possible consequences of various actions. Just because a particular action or route was safe last month doesn’t mean it will be today.

So what are the hazards? Well, that’s an infinite list - anything from tripping over a hex to getting hit by the Roaches Ice Cream van, it could all happen to you, tomorrow. The key things are awareness, observation, and knowledge. Be aware of what’s going on around you, know why it’s happening and keep an eye on it - don’t just switch off and hope it goes away. Some of the main causes of accidents are covered here to start you off, but next time you are out why not endeavour to look around, question your actions and those of others, open all your senses to absorb all the sights, smells and sounds of the outdoor world - it might make your day more enjoyable, and it’ll definitely make it safer.

loose rock

A lot of recent incidents have one thing in common; loose rock. Mountains and cliffs are there to be eroded, that’s their job. And they like eroding by falling down, whether assisted by other factors or not. Look at the route and ground below to see what’s fallen off recently. Are there scars from recent impacts and shattered presents from above? Is the rock shelf above your head held on by anything? Is there another party above? What’s on top of the crag? Start to think about these things before you get stuck into your lunch while sitting below a tottering pile of blocks. And all that’s before you’ve even got the sack open - once you’ve uncoiled 50m of rope, perfectly designed for dislodging loose material, things get even more interesting. Whenever using ropes pay close attention to where they’re running, especially if there’s anybody below. Avoidance is always better than protection but there is no question about it, if something does get dislodged - helmets can save lives. Some people wear them on sports routes, others won’t even take them to the Alps. But be responsible for your head, no one else will. Make a decision based on your judgement but realise their limitations, they won’t make you invincible!

route choice

Selecting a climb outside requires more judgement than leaping on the blue route in the corner, so take a moment to scope out the route before getting stuck in. Don’t blindly trust the guidebook, it may be out of date or even incorrect to start with. Routes change with time, crucial flakes disappear, gear placements vanish, and in extreme cases like Wraith, an E2 5b at Mother Carey’s down in Pembroke, crack lines can turn into arêtes! Look out for wet or vegetated rock, and if the route looks dirty and unclimbed there may well be a good reason.

descent

When indoors or on sport routes descent is usually just a matter of shouting “down”, but on multi pitch trad lines backing off becomes more complicated. Be aware of the various different options for descent. Sometimes discretion is the better part of valour and it could be worth turning back before say, a committing traverse if you’re moving too slowly or bad weather’s approaching. And don’t forget that even when the top is finally reached you’ve still got to get back down. Try to locate the descent route before racing up the first pitch. It may seem irrelevant just then, but when you’re stuck on top in fading light knowing which gully to head down will help everything end well. On some routes the descent can prove more taxing than the climb, so don’t be afraid to abseil sections if required. It can only take a quick rain shower to make an already polished step a dangerous trap. Wet grass is also particularly dangerous if you have to descend in rock shoes. But if a rope is used take extra care to prevent loose rock raining down on you, or others.

abseiling

Even for experienced climbers abseiling into the unknown can be a nervous affair. It’s one of the fairly rare moments in climbing when all your eggs are truly in one basket. A momentary lapse of concentration here can end even the most illustrious climbing career in seconds. But there are three main things you can do to reduce the risks; Firstly choose good anchors and fully understand the mechanics of the system, secondly concentrate and triple check everything before you go, and finally always abseil with an auto bloc. The few seconds it takes to fit one will more than be repaid if you ever lose control of your descent. The many climbing handbooks show a variety of ways to protect yourself; prussiks above or below the delay plate, or specialist devices such as a shunt. All have their benefits and limitations, so experiment and find the method that suits you.

(LEFT) Debbie Birch taking time to get the right gear in on Bachelor’s Left Hand, HVS 5b, Hen Cloud. Credit: Alex Messenger.
**SKILLS**

**fixed equipment**

Somebody at the climbing wall has the responsibility to ensure that bolts are safe but what about those you clip at the local quarry or the rusty peg at Gogarth? Never blindly trust fixed gear of any type, even bolts, and if in any doubt back it up or back off. There is no way of telling how long it's been there or what's going on out of sight inside the rock. Take extra care on sea cliffs, here pegs can look superficially OK whilst being extremely corroded and very likely to fail.

**your equipment**

Whilst you’ve got no control over fixed equipment, it’s up to you to place good gear. Practicing on ground level will give you a better understanding of the various types of placements. Try it next time you are out – put in some marginal gear, attach a foot loop, then “bounce test” it. It may be a surprise to see just what does come out! Placements will also vary between rock types – a bomber small nut on the grit could be a very marginal piece in the slate quarries. And when you’re leading take the time to ensure your gear is as good as it could be. We’ve all done it, slammed in a piece thinking “that’ll do”, headed up above the piece and immediately regretted it! Better to spend the extra few seconds making sure you’re happy with it before carrying on.

**other people**

Visit a high Lakeland crag and you could well be the only team there, but a trip to Stangeway on a sunny Sunday won’t be quite such a solitary experience. Watch out for other people, both for your own safety and theirs. Even the most well meaning of teams can accidentally drop some gear or brush a rock off with their ab ropes, so don’t hang around below climbers. Likewise when you’re abbing or pulling ropes always check below first and alert anybody on the ground. These points are all linked to general “crag etiquette”, which is a tricky thing to define, since people tend to get quite emotive about certain topics such as top roping on gritstone. But the main thing is to be considerate of others, and don’t do anything that might damage them or the rock. If you’ve only just started heading outside, then don’t be afraid to ask for advice from other climbers, especially locals. They’ll usually only be too pleased to help you, recommend a great route in the area, or explain why certain climbs aren’t ideal for a top roping session.

**skills**

If you believe your personal skills are lacking in any department, don’t worry. It’s easier than ever to get good advice and instruction whether you want an intensive week long course at Plas y Brenin, or a half-day refresher with a local qualified instructor. The BMC produces a range of skills publications to start you off but there really is no substitute for hands-on experience, so get out there and practice. A day of indifferent or inclement weather at the crag can easily be salvaged by turning it into a training and practical day.

**access & conservation**

Not usually a hazard unless you count shotgun toting farmers, but access to climbing areas changes over time so don’t purely rely on your guidebook. Keep an eye out for signs and notices in the climbing press, and visit the Regional Access Database on www.thebmc.co.uk. It’s important to respect any arrangements, because ignoring them could jeopardise future access to the area. Equally important is to treasure the crag environment. Remember that cigarette butts, banana skins, chalk wrappers and finger tape are still litter, and take a moment to clear up after you before you move on. Plus why not pick up somebody else’s litter too? OK, the rewards may not be in this life, but it’ll do your karma a whole lot of good.
it's your life

Taking responsibility for our sport, by Andy Macnae.
Imagine it. You hit the deck, break some bones, scream in pain, and face the prospect of taking a couple of months off work then spending a small fortune on physio...

Now you’ve got two options. You could say, well it’s part of the game, a risk you accepted and get on with it. Or you could find someone who was at fault (it must be somebody’s fault surely?), press a claim at no risk to you and angle for a pile of cash. Which one would you go for?

Next year membership subscriptions are going to go up because of a big increase in the cost of covering you (as a BMC member) against litigation. Why? Because it’s started happening – climbers suing climbers, the denial of responsibility, the chase after supposedly deserved compensation. A series of major claims against BMC members has doubled the cost of cover and led the insurers to warn that we will see much bigger increases in later years. So why is this happening, what’s changed, and what can we do about it? There are four possible reasons for the current situation:

Climbers, like anyone in Britain today, are more aware of the possibility of compensation following an injury and are led to chase fault by the no win, no fee culture.

Here we come to the first big point – what is fault in a climbing accident? And remember it’s not just paying out on successful claims that sends the cost of insurance up, it’s also the cost of defending against the “chancers”. We need a line in the sand, something that clearly separates negligence from “racing accidents”, something that the no win-no fee hawks will understand, and a position that the climbing community is prepared to defend.

Climbers today rely more on others for their safety – the placer of fixed equipment, the belayer who will lower them off, the climbing wall staff, and so it’s not surprising that we are now seeing more claims.

There is a truth in this. We’d not be revealing too much by saying that all recent successful claims, and most of those defended successfully, result from some form of top roping incident. But hang on – what happened to personal responsibility here? Your belayer drops you – were you watching them? Rope runs out – did you check the length of the route? They’re not paying attention? – firm words will remedy that. Did you even check if they could belay before you set off? Only when you’ve done all this, and more, may hitting the deck not be in some way your fault.

Climbers are simply not as competent and risk aware as they once were – the advent of superficially ‘safe’ environments has dulled that sense of danger.

This follows on from before. Let’s be honest very few of us worry about the skill level of someone belaying us on the wall nearly as much as we would on some chop route.

“..we need to say no! to the chancers, the climbing leeches, who try it on with the “I didn’t know it was dangerous” rubbish..”

(LEFT) Graham Lynch soloing on Stanage. Credit: Alex Messenger (TOP) Deep Water Soloing at the recent festival - climbers taking pure responsibility for their own actions - but for how long? (RIGHT) Johnny Dawes - you couldn’t accuse him of not understanding the risks of climbing! Both credit: Niall Grimes.
And this also goes for the belayer, where the sense of seriousness and responsibility can easily be lessened by the environment. What about competence too? Well how many of us have dragged a non-climber along to the crag or wall for a spot of belaying duty? And whilst someone may be confident with say a Gri Gri, can they handle an ATC or vice versa? Has the variety of today’s belaying devices made the drop more likely? And let’s remember that it’s not just about belaying, there are plenty of other areas where any failure to appreciate risk levels and crag dangers is going to make injury more likely. How many times have you seen thoughtless individuals scoring near misses with dislodged rocks? We need to get back to the simple premise, phrased in our participation statement – “climbing is an activity with a danger of death or serious injury”. It doesn’t matter what sort of climbing, gravity’s no discriminator.

The very existence of liability cover – via the BMC in itself encourages claimants.

A big issue this one. What if the BMC just stopped giving liability cover to members, surely case solved? Agreed everyone might save the price of a pint but would litigation be made more or less likely? When an incident occurs and the injured party feels there may have been fault the first thing their lawyers do is to find out if the other party has cover. Assuming the other party is an individual and a BMC member then it is likely that it will be the BMC cover that is claimed against. The BMC instructs its insurers to fight every claim so as to ensure negligence is proved prior to any payout - this means that many potential claims never progress beyond the enquiry stage and the chancers are discouraged.

If the individual is not a BMC member then either they will have another policy that gives some cover or it’s the individual’s estate that the claim will be against. Maybe if no policy exists then a claim between ‘friends’ is unlikely to be pursued, but in other situations it does mean that someone’s whole livelihood is at stake. And if other insurance exists then the underwriter is unlikely to have any appreciation of climbing and will probably settle out of court rather than fight and so encourage future claims by our no-win no-fee friends. With the above in mind the BMC feels that members should continue to receive liability cover as an integral part of the package, but if we are not careful the time could come where this represents a serious cost.

What does this mean for climbers?

A lot of claims are against climbing walls and activity providers. In this case the vigour with which the claim is defended depends on the insurer and there is no doubt that many claims have been settled out of court and the cost simply loaded onto the next year’s premiums. If this litigation/settlement cycle continues we could see walls and centres in serious financial difficulty and some will go out of business. So what are the long term consequences? Well first of all more litigation means higher costs – walls and indeed all paid activity will continue to go up in price. Some unlucky facilities will go bust. BMC membership fees will be forced

"Freedom to climb is all about not needing a piece of paper before you go out. It's about having the freedom to take risks without a wider society making judgements about it. It’s about being able to take personal responsibility and not having to abdicate this to a nanny state."
HELP! - AVOIDING A CLAIM AGAINST YOU

We’ve been concentrating to an extent on those making the claims. But equally important is how you avoid a claim against you. Actually it’s very simple – anyone following accepted good practice and operating with a skill level commensurate with their experience will be fine. The courts do understand that climbing, walking and mountaineering are risk activities and that accidents do happen.

Faced with an incident they will simply apply the same tests that they would in any negligence claim and ask if the defendant’s actions were as could be reasonably expected of an individual with their experience in the circumstances in question. We need to say no! to the chancers, the climbing leeches, who try it on with the “I didn’t know it was dangerous” rubbish. In simple terms we need to go back to a state where climber, belayer and anyone else involved never forget that climbing/mountaineering is a game where people can get badly hurt or die. And where all take responsibility for minimising the chance of this happening.

So what can be done?

So if that’s the situation what can we do about it? Draw that line in the sand. Take back the responsibility for our own safety. Ask those questions, make the checks, stop assuming someone else will take care of it and stop blaming someone else when things go wrong. The BMC needs to take a lead in this, the risk and responsibility message needs to be strengthened and pushed out to all participants and the no-win no-fee parasites need to understand that the climbing community will stand behind this position. We need to say no! to the chancers, the climbing leeches, who try it on with the “I didn’t know it was dangerous” rubbish. In simple terms we need to go back to a state where climber, belayer and anyone else involved never forget that climbing/mountaineering is a game where people can get badly hurt or die. And where all take responsibility for minimising the chance of this happening.

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Faced with an incident they will simply apply the same tests that they would in any negligence claim and ask if the defendant’s actions were as could be reasonably expected of an individual with their experience in the circumstances in question. So pay attention, do your best and although an accident may happen at least you’ll know you weren’t negligent.

A final point – all insurers, BMC’s included, require that they be allowed to fight a claim – this means that you absolutely must not admit negligence. If you do this then your cover is likely to be void and you’ll be on your own.

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This is the story of John, who decided to enter the Three Peaks Challenge to raise money for charity. His aim was to try and raise money for research into the illness that had claimed his younger brother Paul at an early age. He'd found out about it from the web - the idea was to join up with a group which would climb Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon, all in 24 hours, having secured generous sponsorship for doing so.

How romantic, thought John, to scale such peaks in one day, his older brother Peter would be proud of him. Peter was the outdoor member of the family, always off walking, whereas John hadn’t walked more than a mile in ten years. And the idea seemed even more romantic when he learned that, in order to complete the Challenge in 24 hours, he’d be setting off up Scafell Pike at 3am in the morning. Perhaps he would be on the summit by the time the sun came up! How magical it would be to stand there in the silence with his little band of heroic companions and watch it rise.

Before he could do that, there was the small matter of getting fit, raising the registration fee and the minimum sponsorship, but John was ready to give it a go. After all, the organisers of the event had promised that full support would be provided. And it would certainly do him good to lose some weight. Yet somehow things didn’t quite turn out the way he was expecting. The first blow had come when he’d asked Peter to sponsor him. The spoilsport had suggested that John should look for some other way to raise money in Paul’s memory! John assumed to begin with that Peter was just feeling guilty because he hadn’t thought of doing it. But then Peter had come out with a stinging tirade all about the damage the Challenge did. He went on and on about how much effort it entailed and how much it cost, and how all those suckers doing the Three Peaks were systematically undoing other people’s work. What was the point, Peter had asked, of raising funds for one charity, while costing other charities money? It was downright irresponsible to use our green and pleasant land as a gym.

Well, John had got rather cross at that point and demanded to be told what point there was in building paths at all if no one was going to be allowed to use them? And why should it do more damage to walk up a path for charity than just for your own pleasure, like Peter did every weekend? It was scarcely surprising after this, John reflected ruefully, that Peter had refused to sponsor him.

This cast rather a dark cloud over the whole affair. But it wasn’t the only one. Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon all turned out to be shrouded in cloud when John climbed them, and it didn’t seem very romantic at all to be battling his way up them in driving drizzle. He knew that Peter would never have ventured onto the hills in such conditions, but this was the day on which the event had been scheduled to take place - he had no choice.

And so much for John’s vision of a brave little band of heroes. His own group was quite small, but it turned out that the Challenge was being done that same weekend by 300 firemen, whose fleet of 70 minibuses choked the car parks at Wasdale Head. Everywhere there was litter and shouting, the slamming of doors, the bleeping of phones, and people peeing against walls. But at least there was no danger of getting lost - torches lit up the slopes like a Christmas tree as a veritable procession of walkers trudged up to the top, then came crashing down again, five abreast to either side of the path, tearing up the grass with their boots.

So much too for the quiet camaraderie to which John had been looking forward. He didn’t have the energy to even talk. He’d tried to get fit in the weeks leading up to the event, but found himself gasping for breath all the way,
and his feet were a patchwork of blisters. Worse even than the climbing were the hours of frustration spent on Britain’s congested motorways. John half remembered Peter trying to lecture him about the senseless waste of fuel; why couldn’t John and his fellows have climbed three mountains which were closer together? It wouldn’t exactly make any difference in the end whether they were the three highest peaks in Britain or not. But John didn’t want to think about things like that. Now that the Challenge was over, he wasn’t even sure that he wanted to collect in his sponsor money. All he wanted to do was sleep.

John, Peter and Paul are fictional characters, but any resemblance they bear to persons living or dead is very much intentional, and only too real. Tens of thousands of Johns attempt the Three Peaks Challenge every year, mostly between the beginning of May and the end of August. They do it from the most admirable of motives. Yet in many cases they are hopelessly inexperienced walkers, blissfully unaware of the trail of devastation which they leave behind them. When the Challenge began, travel between the three mountains was done by sailing boat and on foot. This meant that no pollution and participants had to be extremely fit, and there were very few of them! Nowadays the very opposite is true. The National Trust has placed an automatic counter at the foot of Scafell Pike to record the number of people climbing the mountain via the most popular route. In a typical month during the Three Peaks Season (June 2000), 28,618 people passed the counter, and whilst many of these people will have been counted twice (up and down), outside the season the monthly figure is more like 4000.

In fact Richard Palmer, National Trust Property Manager for the Lake District Western Valleys, describes the numbers involved in the Challenge as ‘colossal’ and claims that ‘the mountain simply can’t take it’. The engineered path up Scafell Pike which the National Trust was reluctant to build ‘the mountain simply can’t take it’. The engineered path up Scafell Pike which the National Trust was reluctant to build in the first place because of its artificial appearance, cost £125,000. Already it is being seriously eroded by walkers, beside it there is now a gash in the glacial moraine up to 15 metres wide and 2 metres deep.

The Challenge adversely affects communities as well as the environment. Residents of the Wasdale valley regularly have their summer nights disturbed by large Challenge groups whose conduct Richard described as ‘totally antisocial’. Nor does the Challenge have any positive effect upon the local economy. Challenge groups do not stay in local hotels or even buy drinks in local pubs, since they arrive in Wasdale in the middle of the night and leave in a hurry in their minibuses the following morning. Nor can the tourist infrastructure at Wasdale Head cope with the influx. There certainly aren’t enough toilets, car parking space is at a premium, and Mountain Rescue vehicles have been all but forced into the ditch by minibuses hurtling down the narrow road in the dead of night. Yet road widening and the building of facilities are not what nature lovers come to see.

Some very reputable national charities are benefiting from the Challenge in spite of its controversial nature. Prominent on Three Peaks websites are the Meningitis Trust, the British Heart Foundation, Children’s Aid Direct, the Neurofibromatosis Association, Action Research, CARE International and Shelter. These charities are no doubt putting the money they make to good use, but the same cannot be said for the middlemen who are making plenty of money too.

Some of the charities are aware of the controversy surrounding the Three Peaks and have co-operated in the production of a Code of Practice which aims to minimise its harmful effects. The Code stipulates that no organised event should have more than 200 participants, and that no one should arrive or depart in Wasdale between the hours of midnight and 5am. Since its publication, some things have improved. Many groups now elect to do the Challenge in 36 hours instead of 24, reducing the temptation to speed on the motorways or set off up Scafell Pike too early in the morning. The Mountain Rescue has not had to deal with so many Three Peaks call-outs in recent years, either, though this may well be because there are now so many people up the mountain at once that they rescue each other!

But even if all groups adhered to the Code of Practice, this would not in itself be sufficient to protect Wasdale from harm. Each group inevitably makes its plans in isolation from the others, with the inevitable result there may be more than one group of 200 doing the Challenge simultaneously. And not every group does adhere to the Code. The British Fire Service on one occasion this year has had 76 minibuses in Wasdale all at the same time, and up to 400 walkers on the fell.

There is still an enormous litter problem. Unlike those fell walkers who climb mountains because they appreciate their beauty, Three Peakers do not necessarily do so. The National Trust has collected ‘bags and bags and bags’ of rubbish from the car parks, and found trails of tickertape leading all the way to the summit of Scafell Pike. A few charities have offered some of their proceeds to the National Trust in acknowledgement of the extra work they are causing. But the Trust’s policy is not to accept such offers, since this would be tantamount to condoning the Challenge, implying that the damage being caused can be readily repaired by throwing money at it. It can’t.

If the Three Peaks Challenge does so much harm, why don’t organisations such as the National Park Authority and the National Trust seek to get it banned? There are certainly members of both who wish they could do so. However, Chris Berry, the South West Area Ranger, and Richard Palmer both recognise that their organisations exist to provide public access as well as for conservation purposes – and this has to mean access for all, including participants in fundraising events. Nor would they want anyone to think that they did not respect those people who are prepared to put themselves out to raise money for charities. But although they do not feel that they can or should press for an outright ban, they do very much seek to dissuade. The Challenge is in danger of destroying forever what the vast majority of visitors to areas of outstanding natural beauty are seeking.."
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AGENDA

Management Committee Summary
The 325th Management Committee meeting took place at the BMC office on Wednesday 9 October 2002. It was agreed that the Yorkshire and Humberside Area Committee would drop the Humberside from their name and be known as the Yorkshire Area Committee. Reports were given by all areas except the North West, for which the meeting will take place later in the year, and the South West and Southern area, which has been disbanded. The Stanage guide book is due to hit the shelves soon and work is being undertaken on a Staffordshire guide book. Dave Musgrove summarised a report into the MEL and the recommendations were discussed. A summary of the Tyrol Declaration for Mountain Sports was circulated and the emphasis placed on the importance of reaching young people, as the ‘future of mountain sports’, was noted. There were no club applications for membership. Dave Musgrove stated his intention to step down as president as of April 2003. He said he had been honoured to take on the post. The next meeting of the Management Committee will take place on Saturday 7 December at Plas y Brenin.

Summit 2003 - For Clubs
The BMC is producing a new version of Summit magazine for club members in 2003. The slimmed down 16 page version of Summit will have tailored articles and a much increased proportion of features articles and photos to adverts.

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Getting Involved!
Find out more about Area Meetings and all the work of the BMC areas on the BMC website. Just click on “Getting Involved” and select an area. You can view all upcoming and past meetings, download agendas and minutes, and find maps of all the venues. And there’s area news, volunteer vacancies, and a list of key area contacts. Making your views known or helping out is now even easier than before.

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