

FACES OF MONT BLANC EXPEDITION 2007

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Training Schedule

Induction Week Health & Safety, Training Agreement, e2e Targets, Kit issue, and EMA's

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**Monday/Friday/
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HSE 1st Aid at Work 18 & 19 July 2007

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1st Residential 15 - 17 May 2007

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Voluntary & Grad Work Opportunities Ongoing

Training Programme

Including excerpts from young peoples logbooks (italics)

After the dreaded induction we start the training which will prepare the young people for the residential ahead and the expedition. This group has been different from all previous groups because out of the thirteen starters there are eight people who we already know from our successful Activ8 re-engagement programme and two others that are trying again. For the new people it makes it all the more difficult to fit in and gel with the rest of the group.

It is clear from the beginning that this is a very practically minded group who hate paperwork. They soon get stuck in to the fitness training and hill days but some need a little more coaxing with navigation and taking first aid seriously.

After very few changes within the group its time to set off on the 1st residential.

we went boxing at rawthorpe boxing club and did circuit training it was hard work but I loved it because we was being active and I was never bored at one point we went on the bags learned some boxing moves and did weight training with mark the trainer.

Did boxercise today we did more team games. Our team lost but it was still fun. When we did our route card it took ages

today went to widdop reservoir for a walk it was 6.2 kilometers I loved it because it was just fun going out some where I haven't been before. we all took part in taking leading role of leading the way by using our navigation skills what we learned on Tuesday.

today was first aid we learned how to handle a drowning casualty and we also went through our C.P.R and got assessed by each other and by Trudy it was good but confusing when she told us what we had to do on either a drowned casualty or a heart attack casualty. we had to remember them both for what ever she asked us to do. We also did our log books what was boring.

I practiced CARE and ABCDE in first aid, I need more practice to perfect my technique. I did my paperwork that I did not enjoy because I am a practical person.

1st Residential - Yorkshire Dales

The room is buzzing with excitement and nerves as the minibus bus is being loaded up. We arrived in the Yorkshire Dales and set off walking to the campsite. After 30 minutes some of the group asked how much further they had to go because their legs are aching. We eventually arrived at the campsite, put up the tents and cooked some food. For some this was definitely a new experience but at least they knew how to make a brew.

They are put into two teams and set off to do night navigation; the staff stand at different check points so hopefully no one gets lost. One group does really well and it is obvious that one of the group is a strong navigator, the others have some disagreements and don't work as a team. Back at the campsite there is a debrief where everyone has a say on how they did and if they thought everyone worked as a team. Some of the group struggle to wait for their turn to speak.

It has rained all night and the group aren't too happy when we wake them up at 7am. Some verbal abuse is shouted from a tent at Pete, but they quickly apologise when they realise he is coming in the tent. The group looks in horror when they are told it is a 15Km walk ahead. The day goes ok but the staff constantly challenges the group about their language which is going to be a constant battle. We arrive back, have tea, then set off again to do more night nav which is a lot better.

Up in the morning the group pack, drop the tents, pack the minibus and set off to a café for a full English breakfast, which puts a smile on everyone's face.

We set off for the Yorkshire Dales to do our first bit of walking which turned out to be a lot harder than I thought it would be but that might have been because we did a longer walk than we normally would of done

After the walk we drove to a campsite where we set up our tents and had some pasta that was full of grass and tasted foul.

2nd Residential - Snowdonia

It is organised chaos on the morning of the residential. We have one young person whose first day is today, and another who is waiting to hear if she has a place. Someone doesn't show so we pack essentials from her belongings, which are in the bin liners we are looking after for her, as she is homeless, into the other persons' rucksack. We are at maximum capacity for the minibus and Andrew travels to Wales by train and we meet him there!

Wales has had torrential rain, and the valley we planned to walk along was completely flooded. The scenery is spectacular with waterfalls bursting through rocks and water pouring onto roads. Not doing a walk-in is not an option as the group would be too lively during the evening. We select a safe option and the group look on in disbelief as the minibus leaves them and goes up the steep road they must walk up in the pouring rain.

That evening it's the first improvised rescue training session. Some take it more seriously than others, and the reality of having to learn first aid kicks in. Feedback is difficult for some as they don't like listening, let alone to constructive criticism. Later the group set off together for night nav. There are issues within the group which come to the forefront and later some young people come to staff to talk things through.

In the morning it's an early start as we get ready to set off up a mountain for the first time. Unfortunately, before we are ready to set off there is a drugs related issue which prompts a trip back to Project Challenge as drugs are a big No No! Two other young people pack their bags and drop tents. No persuasion can change their minds and they too return to Halifax with Trudy.

The rest of the group set off on the longest walk of their lives. 9 hours later some are just finishing and two of the group break down in tears with tiredness and can't wait to get into their sleeping bags and go to sleep.

We then set off on a long walk up Y foel goch, some people were lagging behind so it was a bit of a stop and go process.

We carried on and the wind was howling on top of the mountain, we got some shelter as we got a bit lower and into a swamp, someone got stuck and had to be dragged out by Steve.

3rd Residential - Lake District and the D of E Bronze Expedition

Seven young people have survived the training so far and are as prepared as they can be. The thought of walking without staff for 2 days on their D of E is exciting but also a bit nerve racking as there is still a lot of arguing going on. Tent teams have been revised again, and the staff hopes this will lead to fewer disagreements.

Next morning it's an early start, but mornings aren't the best for some and organisation is a bit amiss. Michael has developed earache again but wants to do the expedition. The group head off up Stake Pass - their biggest test yet of walking in a remote area in bad conditions - windy, freezing and driving rain! They are a bit behind schedule but are walking as a group, which is great news. Pete and Andrew are sitting at the top waiting for them - huddled over their rucksacks protecting themselves from the elements.

At the end of the day when they reach the campsite one young person has had enough, his legs are sore from walking and wants to go home. He threatens to sleep in the toilets but the staff know the tent is definitely a warmer, comfortable and less 'nightlife populated' option.

The next day the group work together and set off a bit behind schedule, but in good spirits. The group make good progress and all is going really well until there is a disagreement between two of the group. Fortunately, it's near the end of the day and it gets sorted out, and there's another tent team change. The group finish their journey and pass their D of E expedition and there is a sense of achievement and relief around the camp. Until tomorrow!

Michael is worse the next day and has to return home. The group set off up to Dale Head, but the wind is so strong that it nearly knocks them over and Pete cuts the walk short. They have never experienced weather like it and serious doubts set in about the main expedition.

*We woke up at 7am and set off. Got p*** wet through when we went over Stake Pass which was hard.I ate my tea then put up the single tent then I slept in the toilet until 2. It was cold and hard then I slept in my p***** wet through single tent.*

We walked over Cat Bells. When we got to the top me and Lucy sat together and talked, the view was awesome.

Main Journey

There is only a week and a half between the last residential and our departure date for the main journey. Seven young people have completed the training and are making final preparations for the expedition - walking 151km on the Tour du Mont Blanc. There is a mixture of nerves, excitement and self-doubt, especially as some of the group have never been abroad before and have no idea of what to expect. The group will also be doing their D of E Gold expedition section during the first 4 days of starting the journey.

We weigh the rucksacks for the last time, making sure they are not too heavy for the flight, and before we know it, it's time to travel to Liverpool airport. All goes smoothly until the rucksacks go through the scanners and they come back down the conveyor belt. We are carrying stove heads for cooking, and apparently they are now categorised as explosive objects. They have to come out. We argue the point as they are not attached to a gas canister but there is no convincing them, and Lorna takes them back. We cannot believe it!

When we arrive at Geneva it is a smooth but lengthy trip by taxi-bus to our campsite in Les Houches in France. There has been an accident on the motorway and we are delayed. We put our tents up in the dark in a bog; there has been lots of rain recently. The staff hope it doesn't continue as promises have been made to some of the group that the weather will be sunny! It was the only way to overcome some of the doubts before we left.

The next day some of the staff set off into Les Houches to try and replace the gas heads before we can set off on the expedition. It is the end of season, and stocks are low but we eventually manage to obtain them. It is too late to set off and we postpone the journey until the following day when the weather forecast predicts dryer weather.

I sorted out all my kit then went to the shop to buy my food for the journey to the airport we set off I was kind of exited and nervous because I have never flown before

I was kind of depressed today because I was just getting used to being abroad and being away from home I wasn't looking forward to being here to be honest but I don't think anyone was. so when I found out we wasn't setting off today I wasn't happy because I thought we could get it over and done

Day One. Les Houches to Les Contamines - 16km

We left the campsite and posed for photos at the start of the Tour du Mont Blanc. It was a steady start but we gradually pulled higher and higher up. A couple of the group were really starting to struggle both physically and mentally as the sun came out and the realisation of what walking an expedition was really going to be like. Today's route involved a 646m height gain and 633m descent. Near the top of the ascent we stop at a refuge for a drink and a rest. What goes up though must come down and we start the long descent into Les Contamines. The group were looking forward to getting to the campsite, but for some the journey had taken its toll and tiredness led to tears, and another young person refusing to sleep in his tent and threatening to walk back the next day. The rest of the group either chilled out, played chess or just chatted amongst themselves

We got up at 7.00 and got ready to start the Tour De Mont Blanc. Me and Luke got really tired really quick. But we got to the top and had a coffee.

The journey started with a horrendous hill but I was lucky to find a beautiful walking stick. I enjoyed walking through the woods and at the top of the hill I found a very strange man made waterfall.

*We put up our tent then I and ***** came to a decision that he cooks and I wash for the rest of the expedition because I liked washing and he liked cooking. That night ***** went off in a mood and said he was going to go back home while all the staff was asleep.*

We started our walk up a giant hill on our way to Contamines. It was a very long (16km) day, we climbed 646m,

When I arrived at camp terrible things happened, on top of the fact that I had a very tiring first day.

Terrible thing no.1 – Trudy made me a wonderful hot chocolate which I tragically spilt all over our home for the next two weeks the tent!!!!

Terrible thing no.2 – I thought I could balance more things than humanly possible and smashed Trudy's beloved bowl (it was only a small hole and Trudy said that it really didn't matter but it hurt)

Terrible thing no.3 – I had another emotional breakdown in another bloody toilet!!!

Day Two. Les Contamines to Wild Camp at Chalet de Jovett - 10km

Everything had calmed down in the morning and it was a relaxed start to the journey - not too much height gain to begin with and we followed a big track. Spirits were high and the weather was sunny. We stopped for lunch by a

water trough and everyone enjoyed sitting in the hot sun. Ryan decided to cool himself down by filling his hat with water and putting it on his head - little did he realise how cold it would be as its source was the glacier above us. He went from red hot to freezing, but the challenge was on. One by one some of the guys decided to test the water for themselves while the rest of us watched on in amusement.

After lunch the pace was slow and a few of the group really started to struggle. Just before the big pull up to Col du Bonhomme the staff decided to find a wild camp. The group were tired, morale low, and there was still a long ascent ahead of us with a big 889m descent at the end of it. Safety was important so we set up camp by a shepherds hut at 1940m above sea level. We waited until 7pm to put up the tents because we shouldn't have camped there, and enjoyed the fantastic views around us while chatting, playing cards or just enjoying the peace and tranquility of our surroundings. Someone mentioned there may be wolves around. One thing led to another and two young people were really nervous. Eventually, we said it wasn't true. They weren't amused - but at least they slept and didn't stand guard all night.

We got up at 6.30 and started walking it was a big pull up as soon as we started it was ok though coz I was walking with Keith and lee and we was having a laugh there was some beautiful views we had our dinner and went up another big hill but by the time we got to the top of the hill it was like 5.30 and because it was really late we had to wild camp and if we had to carry on we would have had to walk in the dark which is hard with some of the paths we were walking up

...I had to wash up in freezing water while Andy guarded me with a stick because they was all in on a joke about the wolves what scared me a little bit.

I was really hot and at dinner time I filled Ryan's hat with freezing water on my head, Andrew got a great photo. What a fool I am.

We walked and walked and walked and walked and walked, then we walked some more. There were a few highlights however. We wished we had a magic carpet as the hill was humongous.

Day Three. Chalet de Jovett to Les Chapieux - 8km

We would have struggled to our destination yesterday in the diminishing daylight, and what a pity it would have been to have walked this fantastic route in the dark when spirits were low. We were up early and could make as much noise as we wanted because we were miles away from anywhere. No

nearby campers. We set off, uphill, in good spirits and just before the final pull up to Col du Bonhomme at 2329m we stopped for a break and to top up with sun cream. It was fantastic - the weather was hot and sunny, and we were surrounded by areas of thick snow and ice. A shepherd was herding his sheep and as we set off, a rather nervous Michael became totally surrounded by sheep.

We continued on to the Refuge where we planned to stop for the remains of our lunch. The refuge had the most amazing atmosphere as soon as you walked in - and clean toilets with a toilet seat- a rare occurrence! We bought drinks, but the homemade chocolate cake just looked sooo delicious that we bought everyone a piece. Suddenly, the staff are OK after all - nice!

Today has been the best day for amazing views and everyone takes the long descent in their stride until Michael has a slip that shakes him up a bit. We reach the campsite and everyone settles in for the night while Pete and Trudy go to the little quaint cheese shop to see what they can buy to top up the food supplies. They empty the shop of its 'local' cheese, much to the regret of the rest of the queue. Later that evening Michael tells Trudy that his jaw is aching and there is a small swelling. Not good. She tells him to sleep on it and see what it's like in the morning.

*we got up early and I found it so hard to get up because it was really cold and ***** made our breakfast but spilled it three times I was feeling bad today and wasn't in the mood I just wanted to go back home*

We got up and there was frost all over our tents and it was cold outside and all I had was shorts.

We woke up and packed our stuff as usual and set off up a giant hill, 777m, and descended 929m and walked 9km.

When we set up camp me and Luke went sunbathing and Ryan tried sunbathing in his sleeping bag but I don't it works as well. Later on we played a friends quiz I was the judge and I judged until my feet turned purple.

we got to the top and everyone did fantastic to get to the top in 30 mins we all felt really good because a couple of months before that would of taken us a lot longer especially me so I felt really good but it was absolutely freezing cold we had 15 mins up there to get some photos

...I had burnt pasta to the pan and it took him like 2 hours to clean

we were playing quizzes about friends, but I was more interested in the stars because they looked amazing Steve was showing me the milky way and showed me how to find the north star by looking at the frying pan shaped stars I was very interested

Day Four. Les Chapieux to Refugio Elisabetta - 15km

Today the lump on Michael's jaw is the size of a golf ball and we have to make preparations to pull him out of the journey and get treatment. We find out that the 'cheese making farmer' is going to town and there is a dentist so Michael and Steve go with him. The rest continue on the journey into Italy.

The mood is sad as we set off along the valley without Michael. We make good time but as we start ascending Luke starts to struggle up the hill. He does his best but finds walking uphill really tiring. When he reaches the Col de la Seigne, at 2561m high, Lee and Pete dance around the French/Italian border stone welcoming him with 'Bon Ciao' as they did when everyone reached the border. Luke didn't really appreciate it at this point, and just wanted to sit down and eat his lunch. We tucked into the cheese, fresh baguettes and tomatoes. Soon the 'Walking Holiday' group catch us up with their pack ponies. The group want one, (a pony) and think it is very unfair that they have "enormous sacks" and have to carry everything while they only have day sacks. We explain that these people have paid a lot of money to go on their walking holiday and again they cannot believe it. "HOLIDAY! HOLIDAY?" they shout. "They must be (flipping!) mad. I'm never gonna put a (beep) rucksack on my (beep) back ever again when I've finished thisetc. etc."

Our campsite for tonight is by the Refugio Elisabetta. Trudy and Andrew take the group in for a drink while we look for a place to camp. The 'Walking holiday' group have caught us up and are camping there. The wind is whipping up around the refugio at the base of a glacier and camping space is limited. The group are settled in the warm refuge and complain bitterly when we tell them it's time to leave. Marnie and Lucy in particular want to enjoy mixing with people from different cultures, but it's not possible and we have to say those inevitable words "Sacks on Backs" once again and move back down the hill to a sheltered wild camp Pete knows about. It has changed. Someone has put chemical toilets there. We have our own glacial fresh water supply and

toilets! Bizarre but true. We share out the remains of the food and the staff get what's left. When Trudy heads back to her tent at 10pm she can't believe it. The place is in darkness and all is quiet. Next morning the staff get told off for keeping the group awake!

I woke up with a golf ball sized lump on my gum so I could not continue and Steve took me to the dentist where he loaded me up with antibiotics

we carried on at 1870m and we pulled up to 2156m where we had dinner on the boarder of Italy then I had ago at Pete because he said it would only be a little pull but his little pull and mine are completely different so we had our dinner where it was really cold I went to sit on my own and just think it was nice and quiet

There were beautiful views of mountains with pretty damn cool glaciers. We carried on up a mountain. The only way I made it to the top of the humongous mountain was to make up a crazy rhyming game which, I gladly (crazily) played with Andrew the king of crazy.

..... get over being away from home because every day of walking was getting closer to going back it was a long pull up and I was feeling tired after a about three hours I hung back at one point to talk to Andy which made me feel better because I talked about my problems

there was a hilarious display of further craziness performed by Lee and Pete. They said "bonjour" on the French side "Ciao" on the Italian stallion side and "bon-ciao" in the middle!!!!!!!!!!!!

Day Five. Refugio Elisabetta to Courmayeur - 18km

The thought of sleeping in a real bed tonight has a dramatic effect and everyone is packed and ready to leave promptly at 8.30am. Amazing! We set off along the road track and pull off up a path and ascend steadily until we are walking on a level with the glaciers at the other side of the Val Veni and Mont Blanc in the distance. This is the most amazing scenery most of the group have ever seen. As we leave the valley behind us we see a ski lift up ahead and know that we are close to Courmayeur. We stop at Refugio Maison Vielle because most of the group have dropped their bags anyway to go to the toilet. As we continue walking down the long steep descent into Courmayeur it is strange to think that in a few months time the whole area will become a ski resort.

As we get closer to the town, we contact Steve to see where he is. He has booked our 1* pension and comes to meet us. Michael is asleep - his medication has knocked him out. He has a major infection. The group are

delighted at being in civilisation again and sleeping in a bed. Those with money go shopping; some do their washing while staff go for necessary medical and food supplies.

There is a general mood of excitement as we prepare to go out for a pizza. But Michael cannot eat Pizza and our pigeon Italian, and cheek, pays off and he has spag bol and polishes off the whole of the parmesan! The meal is great and there is no need to challenge swearing. Everyone is relaxed and enjoys themselves.

I woke up in a strangely foul mood (Bizarre I know!!) and, yet again I had to pack my temporary home and worldly possessions into a large PURPLEYBLUE bag. Grumpington was my pseudonym of the hour or so.

the last hour and half Marnie's foot was hurting so me and Trudy stayed at the back and helped her down the steep steps and we was jus talking about allsorts

it felt very communal in the mountains although they were obviously lazier than us. They had a pack pony that carried mostly all of their kit.

Day 6. Courmayeur to La Fouly - 15km

Leaving a town to go back into the mountains is always difficult. Today was no exception. Michael is clearly too ill to travel with us and Steve stays with him. Marnie tells us her foot is really sore and Pete and Steve go out to buy her some special insoles for her boots. The staff decide to take a bus to cut out a long stretch of road walking from the town which will keep us on track for the journey and hope that Steve and Michael can rejoin us in a few days. After the bus leaves us at Arnava, motivation is at its lowest for some. We eventually persuade everyone to start walking but progress is slow, and we walk up a long valley which means you can always see how far you have come when you look behind. For some this was really de-motivating. The higher we climb the windier it gets and we are definitely behind schedule. But there is nothing the staff can do but keep encouraging the slower ones to keep going.

When we stop for a break at a Refugio, the last ones to arrive find that the others are sat in a sheltered spot behind the building. We all eat lunch together then Lucy and Trudy go to find the toilets in the Refugio. They nearly get blown off their feet and the wind whips Lucy's hat from her head

and lands titillatingly close enough to reach but near enough to the edge to be unsafe. Lucy looks at Trudy, and she says ok but go carefully. Lucy took one step forward before the wind scooped it up and it went flying down to the bottom of the valley. Lucy was mortified as the hat had special sentimental value to her. But the expedition had to go on, and we wandered off back to the others and got ready to set off again.

After lunch we had to ascend steeply up a series of zig zags. In the distance across the valley we could see a small mountain hut at the edge of one of the glaciers. "I bet we're going up as high as that" says Luke as he and Marnie struggle at the back. "No, no" says Trudy. "We wont be going that high." Well, it was only a white lie. We stop for another break. There have been a number of cyclists going downhill past us for the last few hours. As we have our break one of them decides to ride across some seriously dangerous terrain, right towards us. Some of the group thinks this is a highly skilled operation. The rest of us, myself included, think it is madness and am relieved that he did not come off taking us down the mountain with him!

As we approached the top, and are alongside the mountain hut on the other side of the valley, the young person shouts "I told you we'd be walking this far." But look how far you've come was the response. And even the most dejected couldn't help but agree that the views were awesome.

As we get nearer to the Italian/Swiss border the wind gets stronger and we put extra layers on. We leave the fantastic glacial views behind us when we enter Switzerland, but meet a group of young English lads walking towards us wearing tee-shirts. We have a chat for a while and their pure excitement of being there is infectious and we continue in a happier mood.

I can't remember at which point the staff discussed having a rest day the following day. Marnie was clearly struggling with her foot, and some of the others were visibly deteriorating both physically and mentally. When Pete put it to the group that we could have a rest day once we got to La Fouly, one young person replied "You can kiss my *** if you think I am walking tomorrow"

A rest day was declared and celebrated by all!

We walked from Arnava to la fouly which crossed the border in to Switzerland the distance was 15 k and a height gain of 895m I found it hard and was really cold that night.

Day Seven. La Fouly to Champex - 15km

We wake up in the morning to frost all over the tents and Andrew not too happy because he is in the smallest tent and his thermarest sleeping mat has a small hole in it and it has gone down. He has been cold all night and cannot warm his numb bum much to Pete and Trudy's amusement. Sadly one of the young people is not well at all so it is decided that Trudy would take her to see a doctor. The rest of the group continue the journey and will meet Trudy and Marnie at the next camp site. Spirits are a bit low in the group but as the day goes on people start to smile again. Pete and Lucy get a bit in front of the group walking down the road when a car pulls up and offers them a lift. Surprised, they politely refuse even though with aching feet it wasn't easy to do. Just before the main climb of the day we have lunch - bread, cheese and tomatoes. We arrive at the campsite and Trudy and Marnie are waiting.

It is bad news Marnie has a severe water infection and cannot go back in the mountains.

When we arrived at the campsite we all chilled out and met Marnie there because she had to go to the doctors that morning because she wasn't feeling well. That night we all found out that marnie wasn't coming with us for the rest of the journey.

Day Eight. Champex to Le Peuty - 17.5km

We say our goodbyes and set off. Today is a long day with a pretty big climb. Everyone seems in good spirits and as we walk we eat wild strawberries, bilberries and cowberries which taste great. People are singing and laughing and there is a good feeling in the group. We get near the Bovine Refuge when Lee says to Pete "I can hear the bells of the cows". After a couple of minutes Lee said "They sound close". Pete walks further on at the front and there are hundreds of cows all with horns. The group stands still and lets them pass except for one which won't move off the path, but after a stand-off it decides to walk round. We eventually arrive at the pass where there is a café

and Luke and Keith go and get the drinks of coke which taste great. Ryan sits in a comfy chair and isn't happy when Pete gives the call "Sacks on Backs."

We descend to the campsite and start to cook tea on some tables provided. Luke sits down on one side and the table flies up with food and pans going everywhere, but luckily Pete and Ryan manage to catch the pans. Keith's coffee goes from a cup into a bowl and Luke manages to stop the table going right over. Everybody falls about laughing and the day ends in a positive mood.

Day 9. Le Peuty to Tre-Le-Champ - 11.5km

Up in the morning and straight away it's a big ascent. Andrew led the group at a steady pace keeping them all together until we reach the top. There is a refuge so Andrew goes in to get drinks. Lucy walks out of the refuge and tells Pete they have chips. Then with sad eyes and a smile says "Pete can we have some". Pete replies "Tell Andrew to get the chips in". The chips arrive on a big tray and are gone in seconds - you would think it was their last meal. We start the descent and near the bottom we see Steve and Michael. He is a lot better and wants to do the last two days. The group are pleased to see them and chat away as we walk to the camp site. Steve tells the group to watch out for the fox which at night is pinching food from the tents. Pete and Steve go into town to shop but the main store is closed so go to a small shop. They get pasta, two jars of Dolmio sauce, a tube of mayonnaise and some cake. The group have tea and play a card game called cheat, but also talk about there being only two more days of the journey left with the final night in the mountains being a wild camp.

As usual we played cheat and there was a fox that ripped Steve's tent. While we were playing cheat Freeman was chasing the fox off. When we went to bed Lee sprinkled breadcrumbs round his and Luke's tent.

*At the bottom we met Steve and Michael which was good bur they told us about a fox that eats your food at the campsite and even your tent! That night I had to wash our pan for about half an hour with a metal spoon because ***** burnt the pasta again. Then we all played cheat and went to bed.*

Day 10. Tre-le-Champ to Wild camp near Refugio La Flegere - 8km

Steve and Andrew get up and go down to the town to shop for the next two days. Pete stays and gets the group up to pack and be ready to set off, but there is a bit of a delay because two of the group have a disagreement which ends in them rolling on the floor. Pete pulls them apart and it is sorted out. Steve and Andrew arrive back, food is sorted then we set off on the ascent. We go up a series of metal ladders and one member of the group is petrified of heights. With encouragement from the rest of the group Michael manages to get up the ladders and breaths a sigh of relief. We reach Refuge La Flegere and get a well deserved drink before continuing the last 2km to the wild camp site.

We arrive at the camp site, put up tents, have tea and it is soon dark. Most of the group are sitting on a big flat rock and then everybody laid down and looked up at the stars, discussing what had happened over the past days and what they would do in the future.

I went to bed really early and got woke up by Ryan and couldn't get back to sleep because everyone was snoring. At 02:10am Lucy told everyone to shut up. (snoring!)

..there was two routes we could take for today one with ladders and one without. I wanted the one with ladders because it was more exciting and we did so I was a happy bunny.

climbed some ladders on a massive walk I was glad to join back in with the group we walked 8km and climbed 733m I was scared of the heights.

Day Eleven. Wild Camp to Les Houches - 17km

The last day can sometimes be the worst. You say "last day" and they think 'short day.' This last day is a very hard day with a massive ascent and then an absolute massive decent all the way to Les Houches. Pete keeps reminding them that this is a hard day, so the group, with that in mind, set off in a positive mood looking across the valley at the fantastic views of Mont Blanc. We arrive at the highest point with everyone in good spirits. There is a ski lift and a café so we have a drink and a plate of chips. The group chat all the way down (1546m height loss) to Les Houches where we meet Trudy and Marnie at the first café after you hit the town. It is a nice feeling for all the group to be back together again. We then pick our rucksacks up for the last

time and head to where we started. We have a group picture then head for the camp site.

We set off walking for the last time we knew we had a long day but it didn't dampen our spirits. We got to some more ladders and these were easier than the ones we did yesterday.

this was our final day of walking. Today was a really long day it seemed to go on forever,

We had a drink and chips at a café that was hanging off the cliff which I thought would be scary but was ok especially the chips.

On the way down it was a long and hard descent, I kept on falling over for some reason. Andrew was worried that I was going to fall of the cliff. If I had he would have had to do tons of paperwork, and the kit would be ruined because gaffer tape can only do so much! We got to the bottom and met Marnie and Trudy at a café and we had a drink, everyone was together at last and happy. We made the final stretch together to the beginning of the end.

The following night we go for a meal to celebrate and there is a real buzz in the group. Lee thanks everybody and we all head back to the camp.

The physical part of the journey has come to an end, but the mental journey carries on. The young people have a new found confidence and are proud of their achievements. With help and guidance they are now all capable of following and achieving their dreams.

Faces of Mont Blanc Expedition 2007

Michael Freeman

Keith Johnson

Marnie Jones

Lee Morley

Lucy Rae Myers

Ryan Rouston

Luke Shaw

The Expedition Staff Team

Pete Dawber

Trudy McLaughlin

Steve Mason

Andrew Cannon

Young Peoples Evaluations

Before I came on to Project Challenge I didn't have much idea of what I wanted to do. I couldn't focus on things for long or got distracted easily and also I didn't have any qualifications. But now I feel that Project Challenge has done me so much good and opened new doors for me because I have a good idea of what I want to do and achieved something what I thought I'd never do and gained some qualifications. IV had fun and a laugh with everyone and made good friends because we can talk about everything we've done on Project Challenge and the expedition

Before I came to Project Challenge I had no plans. I did several courses at Dewsbury College and Activ8 then came on to Project Challenge. At first it was boring but it started to get better after the first couple of weeks. We started going to the gym and we started first aid plus navigation, then a couple of weeks after that we started our residential. I was ill on every residential, but soon after we prepared for the expedition. I was looking forward to it but I was nervous because I have never been abroad. It was not what I expected. I got an infection and was put on strong medication which made me sleep for 4 days. But even though I was asleep for most of the time I was still aware of the environment we were in. It felt good to get back into the mountains and it felt good when we finished the expedition. Now I'm back in the UK I feel I need to get a job.

How do I evaluate Project Challenge? That's hard because there has been some hard times and a load of fun times. The training was amazing, really hard at the beginning but it started to get easier. Project has completely changed me and my life. Being on Project has given me the opportunity to meet loads of people who I wouldn't usually hang around with, but doing this has given me friends for life. We may have fallen out over the last 6 months but it's been fun, we have pushed each other and ourselves. It has been physically hard as well as mentally hard. I've enjoyed Project but also hated it. I would recommend everyone should go on Project Challenge, you will meet some really good people, you will have a laugh, you will push yourself more than probably ever before and once you have finished you will feel like you can do anything. When you're doing the expedition it can be hard sometimes but when you realise that you have actually done it the feeling is indescribable. I suppose I had better mention staff, I suppose they can be alright but honestly I am really grateful to them because we couldn't have done it without them and all the people who make Project happen behind the scenes, like the funding among other things.

When I started Project Challenge I had just left sixth form for the second time. At first I thought I wouldn't fit in but when I got here I made friends quickly. As a group we have bonded more. The training was really useful and helped me an awful lot. Without the support of the staff down at Project I don't think I would have completed the course. At first I disliked the course and when I completed the first residential I wanted to leave. But the group and the staff supported me and I'm now here writing an evaluation for the completion of the course. I believe that Project has given me the confidence to apply for jobs because it was something I really didn't like to do. I also think Project Challenge has helped me mature as a person and can now go to the outside world and support myself.

Before I came to Project Challenge I was out of education after dropping out of school and college, I didn't get out of bed until well into the afternoon. When I first came to Project Challenge I found it hard because of the walking and physical activities. The first walk I did was only 5km and all I carried was an empty rucksack and after 6 months I was fit enough to walk 151km carrying a 20kg sack. Project Challenge helped me get back into a routine and I'm moving on into training to start work next year.

Achievements

The 'Faces of Mont Blanc' Team Achievements

	MF	MJ	KJ	LM	LRM	RR	LS
BHF	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ITC	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HSE	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
IOSHWS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
NNAS B	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
IMP	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
F4L	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

F of MB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
D of E B	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
D of E G exp	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FMP	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
E2E	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ASD IOL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
ASD PS	✓		✓	✓		✓	
ASD WWO	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓

KEY

BHF	British Heart Foundation Heartstart Award
ITC	2 day Immediate Temporary Care First Aid
HSE	HSE First Aid at Work
IOSHWS	IOSH Working Safely
NNAS B	National Navigation Award Scheme Bronze
IMP	Improvised Rescue Training
F4L	Fit4Life Fitness Training Programme Certificate
F of MB	Faces of Mont Blanc Expedition Certificate
D of E B	Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award
D of E G	Duke of Edinburgh Gold Expedition Section
FMP	E2E Film & Media DVD Project
E2E	Completion of E2E Training Course
ASD IOL	ASDAN Improving Own Learning Level 1
ASD PSS	ASDAN Problem Solving Skills Level 1
ASD WWO	ASDAN Working With Others Level 1

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