The Professional Mountaineer

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ASSOCIATION CONTACTS

AMI **Sandy Paterson**
development@ami.org.uk

BAIML **Ian Spare**
communications@baiml.org

MTA **Belinda Buckingham**
belinda@mountain-training.org

BMG **Dave Searle**
davesearleguiding@gmail.com

EDITORIAL

Editor **Belinda Buckingham**
belinda@mountain-training.org

Technical editor **Steve Long**
steve@mountain-training.org

Sub editor **Mike Riley**
mike@mountain-training.org

Layout **Rosie Edwards, Vertebrate Publishing**
www.v-publishing.co.uk

ADVERTISING

Advertising sales **Caroline Davenport**
T 07726 933 337
E caroline@media-solution.co.uk

Advertising artwork must be supplied ready prepared as high resolution (300dpi), font embedded pdf/jpeg. Please refer to our T&Cs for details and cancellation terms.

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NEXT ISSUE

Spring 2022 Tides for sea cliff climbing, The comfort zone and Flowers in the window: The botany of Hohe Tauern National Park

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Our front cover
Looking towards Eachla Mhór from the Muckish Gap. © Iain Miller

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EDITORIAL

ABOVE Author abseiling on Old Man of Hoy. © Anna Taylor.

Ignorance is bliss… but unfortunately it doesn't stand up in court! I'm thinking back to the halcyon days when my life was full of travel plans and expeditions.

Exploration has a long and proud history, but gradually the realisation that our carbon footprint is part of our legacy became increasingly clear. Some colleagues realised this long before me, others point out that stag parties in Ibiza seem just as popular, so why should we rein in our dreams… ?

And so, to COP26… Governments know that market forces need to be nudged towards the science but are aware that an unpopular intervention can topple them. More than half the UK population have stated that they are unwilling to pay more for "green" alternatives. According to Bill Gates' How to avoid a Climate Catastrophe (Sure enough, it's an entrepreneur's blueprint, but the overwhelming message is clear) if you reduce the "green premium" (nance or perception) anything is possible. Our profession has the power to lead and advocate for positive change, by pushing forward as ambassadors for wilderness and nature. Education is key: people only value the things they know.

Within your hands you are now holding the collective wisdom of an adult profession – we have all come through the last couple of years older and wiser. Metaphorically, we have experienced a journey from rock 'n'roll towards mindfulness, jet-setting towards stewardship, Instagram to empathy and mental well-being. In short, it is our Continual Professional Development that sets us apart, and this is what this magazine both celebrates and articulates.

Steve Long
Technical editor

OUR COVER

Iain Miller

Iain is a rock climber, guidebook author and hill walker living, working and playing on the sea cliffs, sea stacks, mountain ranges and uninhabited islands of County Donegal in the Republic of Ireland.

OUR WINTER ISSUE CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE

Alex Kay

Alex is a Winter Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor trainee, and an International Mountain Leader, working predominantly within Snowdonia, the Scottish Highlands, and the Alps.

Cecilia Mariani

Cecilia is an International Mountain Leader based in the Italian Alps. She works as a freelance leader in the Alps for both Italian and international groups, as well as leading trips in Scotland.

Graham Moss

Graham is a Senior Forecaster for the Scottish Avalanche Information Service. He has been writing Avalanche Reports in Lochaber for over 30 years.

Rebecca Williams

Rebecca runs Smart Climbing, offering performance psychology coaching for climbers and CPD for coaches and instructors. She runs regular free reflective practice workshops for coaches and instructors.

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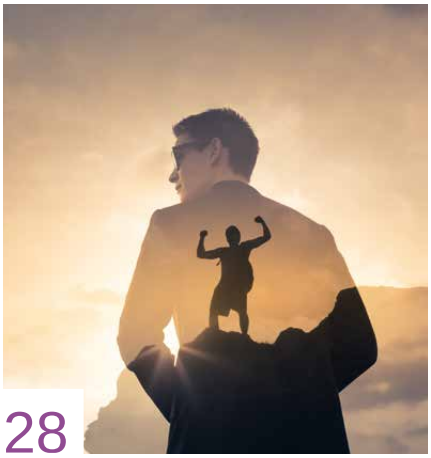
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Feeling inspired?

If you would like to contribute to the next issue, please contact Belinda Buckingham at belinda@mountain-training.org

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NEWS

THE ASSOCIATION OF MOUNTAINEERING INSTRUCTORS (AMI)

Continuing Professional Development is high on the agenda for AMI as the requirement to hold appropriate CPD points for membership approaches as of next June. A weekend event is planned at Plas Y Brenin in November as I write this, and AMI are organising a winter workshop event at Glenmore Lodge 7th–9th January. In addition, increased regional CPD workshops are taking place, as well as at the AGM in April.

The Founder's Bursary, generously provided by AMI's original member and founder, funds one AMI member to undertake their Winter Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor training each year. This year's draw will be made during the Kendal Mountain Film Festival weekend.

Due to the success of the previous 2 years work, Alpkit Foundation have agreed to match fund a further year for the AMI Charity Tenders. This will allow AMI members to undertake targeted charity work that will influence the grass roots of our sports. Improved access to our sport will hopefully lead to greater diversity and inclusion at instructor/leader level.

Finally, the AMI Technical Advisers (TAs) register will be open for new entrants early in the New Year. To support this process new guidance has been produced for potential TAs, incorporating the changes to this work over the last few years. The guidance will be available on the AMI website before the end of December.

Have a safe and successful winter season.

Phil Baker (Chairman)

© Carl Davies

AMI is the representative body for professionally qualified Mountaineering and Climbing Instructors in the UK and Ireland and is committed to promoting good practice in all mountaineering instruction. Full members hold the Mountaineering and climbing instructors qualification or higher qualification the Winter Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor.

T 01690 720123
www.ami.org.uk

BRITISH MOUNTAIN GUIDES (BMG)

As I write we are in the interseason between the busy summer and winter guiding seasons. A time to reflect on the year ending and to plan the next one. The two challenges we faced at the beginning of 2021 are still with us but better understood now.

Covid 19 – As society has reopened our members have returned to work with clients. We have seen more guiding activity across the mountains in the UK as travel for clients across international borders has been complicated (to say the least).

Brexit – More complicated than envisaged because passport status and residency in different countries has an impact on the process to follow for registering to work. Nevertheless, we are finding ways to work in in Europe. We continue to work with other professions and have dialogue with government departments (frankly, the government has been unable so far to assist us).

We have held our courses this year so that trainee and aspirant guides are progressing through our scheme as normal and we are happy to welcome interest and have dialogue with prospective members from other associations.

To end on a brighter note this is also the time of year when Guides often get away for a climbing holiday in warmer climates and meet up often by chance with colleagues. The time to visit Greece, Spain or further afield. Enjoy.

Martin Doyle (President)

© Martin Doyle

The BMG is a member of the International Federation of Mountain Guides (IFMGA), currently comprising 24 nations worldwide, with growing membership, it is the professional organisation that trains and assesses Mountain Guides in all disciplines. A British Mountain Guide operates to the highest recognised level throughout the world, in all terrain and in diverse roles.

T 01690 720386
www.bmg.org.uk

THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN LEADERS (BAIML)

By the time you're reading this BAIML will have had its 2021 Annual conference in Llanberis – wonderful to be able to meet up face-to-face again. Writing this I can see that we've a sell-out program of CPD, so if you attended, I hope it was great. If you didn't, don't worry, we've a fantastic range of regional events happening via the Reps Team in 2022. Look out for newsletters with details.

Behind the scenes work continues to represent members in discussions with the UK Governement, Embassies and other stakeholders as we try to find a way to navigate the many problems created for our industry by Brexit. Solutions to this won't be found quickly or simply, but we continue to make sure that BAIML are part of the discussions.

Finally, but importantly … we've made the decision to reduce the 2022 full membership fee by 50% again for renewals in December (£100 reduced to £50). So don't delay and miss out as it will revert to full price from January 1st.

I wish you all an excellent festive season and a hopefully better 2022.

Kelvyn James [President]

© Samantha Evans

BAIML is the professional association for International Mountain Leaders (IMLs) in the UK. It represents the UK at UIMLA, the Union of International Mountain Leader Associations, which is the international governing body for IMLs. Full members hold the IML award and are committed to a dedicated CPD programme.

T 01690 720272
www.baiml.org

THE MOUNTAIN TRAINING ASSOCIATION (MTA)

The Winter Conference on the weekend of the 22nd and 23rd of January at Glenmore Lodge is booking up well, but there are still some spaces available. This looks set to be a great weekend for everyone from the complete winter beginner through to the experienced leader. The Autumn and Winter regional programme of workshops and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is out and available for booking, with sessions on managing hazards, rope work, archaeology and the weather, to name but a few.

Peer-led night navigations are gathering apace across the UK as the evenings draw in and become dark earlier. There are plenty already listed, and more being organised all the time.

The Mountain Training Association is in the process of formalising its strategic development, and to that end have recruited a new Membership Strategy and Communications Officer, Mike Riley. With years of experience in membership organisations, Mike has worked at senior manager level on strategy, planning and development as well as within communications and marketing. Mike is also a keen rock climber and scrambler and is currently working towards his Rock Climbing Instructor qualification, which gives him an insight into the Mountain Training schemes and what it's like to be a trainee member of the MTA.

I hope you have a great winter season.

Belinda Buckingham [Development Officer]

© Karl Midlane

The MTA is a membership organisation providing support and development opportunities for all candidates of Mountain Training. Promoting good practice and providing continued personal development opportunities as part of a UK-wide community of outdoor leaders. Full members hold one or more of the Mountain Training Awards.

T 01690 720272
www.mountain-training.org/mta

SNOWSHOEING in LAGORAI

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY
CECILIA MARIANI

First on the list of sights to see in the region is one of the most impressive natural environments on the planet: the Dolomites. A UNESCO World Heritage site, and lled with mountaineering history, the Dolomites are a must-visit for mountaineers and tourists alike. But in the heart of Trentino, a short drive away from the city of Trento and in the shadow of these world-famous limestone giants, there's a wilder and lesser-known mountain range that will take your breath away. It's called Lagorai, and it is a snowshoeing wonderland.

At 70km, Lagorai is the longest mountain range in Trentino, and it separates Valsugana to the south from the more touristy Val di Fiemme in the north. e chain of mountains is mainly formed of porphyry rock, and it boasts crystal clear lakes and deep conifer forests, vertical rock walls and green pastures. It is also, tragically, famous for being the site of many battles during World War I as its southern anks, rockier and steeper than the northern side, were a natural barrier between the Austro-Hungarian and Italian soldiers during the war. It's a relatively low mountain range, with the highest peak reaching only 2754m, which is nothing compared to other areas in the region, but Lagorai has something that makes it unique. e number of ski lifts in the area has remained low (only four in the whole range) and the only other human activities that have contributed to a change in the landscape are farming (with transhumance* still a common practice) and logging. For this reason, the landscape of Lagorai has remained relatively unscathed, making it one of the wildest mountain ranges in the whole of the Alps.

Last winter was a great one in terms of snowfall on the south side of the Alps. With ski resorts completely closed due to the pandemic and plenty of snow throughout the season, snowshoeing quickly became a favourite activity. As a non-skier, and with nowhere else to go, I had to make the most of it. I had moved to the area not long before and hadn't had the opportunity to explore it in winter yet, which meant I had a whole range of options to choose from. Here are some of the best.

Rifugio Sette Selle

On the far western side of the mountain range, just a short drive from Trento, is a beautiful unspoilt valley called Valle dei Mocheni or Bersntol. e people of Mocheni are a language minority group who have lived in the valley for centuries and speak an old German dialect. e valley is not at all touristy, but is quite popular with the locals. e easy access and rolling terrain make it the perfect spot for some easy ski touring and snowshoeing trips.

Starting from the carpark at the top of the valley, in the village of Palai en Bersntol, it's possible to walk in a north-easterly direction to one of only four mountain huts present in the whole of the mountain range. e journey starts at 1453 metres and ends at Rifugio Sette Selle, just short of 2000 metres, making it an easy introduction to snowshoeing in this area. It takes you through beautiful conifer forests and past some 'masi' – traditional mountain huts in which people used to live, keep their animals, and dry hay, all in the same building. Some of the masi have now been renovated and are used as holiday homes or bed and breakfasts. e mountain hut is in a beautiful clearing just below some pretty impressive rock faces, a great place to stop and enjoy some hot chocolate or mulled wine while soaking up the winter sun.

Cima Socede

Val Campelle is another breath-taking valley found on the south side of the Lagorai range. Here some signs of the Great War can still be found, including trenches and an old burial ground for Austro-Hungarian soldiers. It's also the location of another one of the