

## Heathrow to Kathmandu

### Exercise Imja Tse Team Building

The Powerfan is something I don't think any of us knew about before the recent three day gathering at Llanwrst. By the end of the 3 days we all well acquainted with the Powerfan and had a healthy respect for the emotions it generated. With the Powerfan we knew what it was



like to step outside our comfort zone. In addition to individual challenges the 3 days looked at practical and theoretical aspects of leadership and team dynamics in a context of adventurous training and reinforced the value of such activities for military organisations.

The 3 day package was organised by Duchy Holland one of the key instructors on the expedition in conjunction with Mark Lovatt the senior instructor at the Joint services instructor training centre, Llanwrst, North Wales.



The ethos driving tri service adventurous is continually evolving and is driven by the quality of the instructors produced from Llanwrst. In addition to physical challenges other aspects of team working were explored and developed. The first morning eloquently demonstrated an

important lesson. A complex desk top exercise conducted blindfolded demonstrated that sometimes it is the quietest voice which should be listened to.

Later in the morning we headed to a high ropes course based in Snowdonia. If you imagine a high ropes course designed and run by an Ex Royal Marine parachute instructor you might get a feel for the ambiance. Starting quite sedately the course progressively became more and more exposed and seriously challenged those of a nervous disposition especially as the wind swirled through the trees causing the whole course to sway.

The exit from the course was via the Powerfan. The Powerfan is a bit like a bungee jump without the rebound. From a platform 60 feet in the trees we jumped out into space, after a heart stopping moment of acceleration the Powerfan mechanism kicks in slowing the fall to the ground.

For some this leap of faith required digging deep. And it was clear a few interesting discussions and observations took place on the platform before some stepped off – although after some gentle and not so gentle encouragement everyone made it down the quick way.



That evening we were given an introduction to the Myers Briggs preference typing, based on the theories of Carl Jung. The Myers Briggs typing is used widely by businesses to develop the leadership and team working skills of staff. Each of us were given a questionnaire to work through

that evening to allow our personality type to be determined.

The next day started with a mountain bike orienteering event based around the Marin Trail. The forestry commission throughout the country have made significant investment to create single track mountain bike trails – one of the first was the Marin Trail in Llanwrst. The riding on this



trail is rated as difficult – equivalent to a black run skiing and is not for the faint hearted. Fortunately the centre had some excellent front suspension mountain bikes, equipped with disc brakes ideally suited for these trails. Following instruction on how to deal some of the technical features on the trail we set off in three groups to the far flung corners of the trail. Despite the technical difficulty which led to a lot of emotional moments and a couple of spills we managed to collect all the clues and solve the mental challenge.

That afternoon and evening we looked again at the Myers Briggs personality typing – this time receiving our individual personality types. The chief instructor led a very informative discussion about how the preference types work together in teams, highlighting the importance of a blend of personalities in a successful team.

In the evening the instructors were entertained at an informal group meal. Perhaps the entertainment might have more sombre if we knew what awaited us the next day.



In the car park of the high ropes course was a 150ft tree trunk. Perched at the top was a small platform – we had walked past it the over day without really considering it. Today we were going to jump from the tower. The instructors informed us it was the worlds biggest Powerfan. From the

bottom it looked a long way to the top. The mood was sombre that morning as we kitted up and climbed to the top of the platform – swaying in the early morning breeze. Everyone faced up the challenge of getting down and became stronger for the experience.

All in all it was a very useful get together, everyone learnt about themselves and each other, learning practical things which can be applied directly to our peacetime and operational roles and contribute to the success of the expedition.



Massive thanks to the instructors for their time and patience – and of course Rob and Dutchy for organising it.

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