British Journal for Military History

Volume 12, Issue 3, November 2026

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ISSN: 2057-0422

Date of Publication: 20 November 2026

Citation: Crispin Agnew, 'The Evolution of British Army Adventurous Training: 1960 - 2008', *British Journal for Military History*, 12.3 (2026), pp. 230-257.

www.bjmh.org.uk

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The BJMH is produced with the support of Goldsmiths UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

The Evolution of British Army Adventurous Training: 1960-2008

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ABSTRACT
From the early 1960s Adventurous Training (AT) was seen as good training for active service and was encouraged in the British Army. However, it took place on an ad hoc basis until the mid1960s after which it became a part of formal training. In 1973 it was decided that AT should be delivered on a joint service basis with each service delivering the AT relevant to that service. In 2002 Army AT was centralised under the Adventurous Training Group (Army). This article examines the evolution of British Army AT and AT Policy in the period 1960 to 2008.

Introduction

Although the Army has always encouraged soldiers to undertake adventurous activities, it was not until the early 1960s that the Army mandated Adventurous Training (AT) as a component part of Army general training. From 1973 all AT moved onto a Joint Services basis when the first Joint Services Adventurous Training Scheme (JSAT 1973) was introduced.[1] Later, in 1992, the Army recognised that,

> (w)hen properly conducted, adventurous training complements both individual and collective training by providing the physical hardening and mental robustness that is so vital in war, but so difficult to inculcate in peace …' [and went on to say] … 'the importance of which in preparing soldiers "to stand up to the shocks and strains of war" was acknowledged by the Principal Policy Officers (PPOs) as long ago as 1969.[2]

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DOI: 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v12i3.2003

[1]UK Ministry of Defence (hereinafter MOD) JSP 419, e.g. *Joint Services Adventurous Training (JSAT) Scheme*, Aug 2008, JSAT Charter and Administrative Details, paragraph 3.

[2]HQDT/17/26/1 Trg 3(072), A Review of Adventurous Training, circulated under letter from Major General S.C. Grant (DGAT) dated 21 February 1992. The PPOs

The aim of this article is to record the historical background to and evolution of Army AT and how by 2008 policy had slowly brought it under the central control and direction of the Adventurous Training Group (Army) with the Army Physical Training Corps (APTC) adopting the instructional specialisation.[3] It was not a smooth journey, and from inception there were arguments as to what was AT and what was sport, and what service should provide it etc

Research Difficulties

In researching the evolution of Army AT and AT policy, the author found that the early documentation had not been retained on a logical basis by the UK Ministry of Defence (MOD). Sometime before 1990 the MOD files were sifted and weeded after which the more important files were transferred to The UK National Archives (TNA).[4] The basis for this sifting and weeding is unclear with some TNA AT Folders containing an incomplete series of papers. For example, some AT files with TNA are not the complete series of files, so there are many gaps. Further some Minutes of Meetings have been retained, but the papers for the meetings have been weeded, making it difficult to determine what was agreed or discussed. In the text & footnotes, where no source is referenced for a document, it was recovered from the MOD Historical Documents Section under a Freedom of Information request. Neither has the MOD retained early copies of Army Council Instructions (ACI) and Defence Council Instructions (DCI) relating to AT, and to which references can be found in Hansard, AT Expedition Reports and other sources. Similarly, the first (1973) copies of the Joint Services Publication (JSP) 419, Adventurous Training in the UK Armed Forces and, for the Army, the Adjutant General's Administrative Instruction (AGAI), Chapter 11, Adventurous Training were not retained. An FOI request on the MOD produced copies of JSP 419 from 2016, but the earliest JSP 419 that the author has been able to source is from 2008.[5] Similarly, the earliest AGAI, Chapter 11 dates from 1980.[6] In the author's view, and from experience in dealing with AT these later documents are not too dissimilar from the editions first issued around 1973.

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were the Second Sea Lord (RN), the Adjutant General (Army) and the Air Member for Personnel (RAF).

[3]https://www.army.mod.uk/learn-and-explore/about-the-army/corps-regiments-and-units/army-adventurous-training-group/ (accessed 6.6.2025).

[4]MOD Information Management Report: 2020. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transfer-of-mod-records-to-the-national-archives-reports-2020/mod-information-management-report-2020. Accessed 6 June 2025.

[5]MOD JSP 419, August 2008 (amended Jul 09).

[6]MOD AGAI (1980), Chapter 11, Issue 26.

Similarly, a TNA file on the Joint Services Expeditions Trust (JSET) Committee exists for the period 1967 to 1972, but does not hold files from before or after those dates.[7] The earliest file records the 1962 formation of the Committee which continues to the present day. Consultation with a present MOD staff officer showed he was unaware of, and did not hold, any papers relating to JSET expeditions prior to 1975. Most of the documentation provided by the MOD dates from after 2000, with any surviving, but weeded, documentation before that date held at TNA.

Where documentation is not available, gaps have been filled from the author's own memory and experiences, and that of contemporaries consulted in writing this article.[8]

Another challenge has been describing AT evolution over an albeit limited period of some forty plus years without placing AT in, or considering AT within the wider context of change in the British Army in the same period. The constraints of a journal article limit what can be covered here.

The British Army & Historical Exploration

The Army has a long history of taking part in exploratory and mountaineering expeditions. A notable early example was the 'Great Game' which saw young army officers exploring and carrying out intelligence gathering operations in Central Asia at a time when the Russian Empire was expanding there and was seen to threaten British India. To enter Central Asia the officers had to pass through the mountains of the Hindu Kush and the Karakorams, often on secretive routes.[9]

Soldiers were also engaged in exploring Greenland in the 1930s with the British Arctic Air Route Expedition of 1930-1931, and Lieutenant Martin Lindsay's crossing of the Greenland Icecap in 1934.[10] In 1935 Lieutenant John Hunt, later Brigadier Lord Hunt, who led the 1953 Everest Expedition, led a joint services expedition to the Himalayan Peak K36, now Saltoro Kangri.[11] Commander C. J. W Simpson RN led the British

[7]TNA DEFE 68/60, Joint Services Expeditions Trust Committee: minutes and briefs.
[8]Principally Lieutenant Colonel J W Fleming, Parachute Regiment; Major M T King, RAOC, and Colonel M G le G Bridges, RE.
[9]Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service In High Asia*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
[10]Lieutenant Colonel Sir Martin Lindsay of Dowhill Bt., Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Online Edition. https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/31363. Accessed 6 June 2025; Martin Lindsay, *Sledge, The British Trans-Greenland Expedition 1934*, (London: Cassells, 1935).
[11]Alpine Journal November 1935, No 251, 272. https://www.alpinejournal.org.uk/Contents/Contents_1935.html. Accessed 6 June 2025.

North East Greenland Expedition of 1951, which consisted of civilian scientists and service personnel, including four from the Army. In 1955 the British Kanchenjunga Expedition and the Royal Air Force Mountaineering Association Kulti Himal Expedition were the first expeditions to be allocated service manning and dedicated resources.[12]

The Post-War Emergence of the Character Training Industry

Army AT received an impetus from the evolution of the post-Second World War 'character-training industry'.[13] The idea of British youth going overseas in search of adventure dates back to 1932, when Surgeon Commander Murray Levick formed the Public Schools Exploring Society. It was renamed British Exploring Society in 2012.[14] Post-war examples of civilian AT can be found in Kurt Hahn's Outward Bound Trust which has its roots in 1941, The Sail Training Association founded in 1956, and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme of 1956.

It was against this civilian AT background, and its expansion, that the Army began to promote and develop its own AT. In late 1956 the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer ordered the creation of an Army Outward Bound School and appointed Lieutenant Colonel Jack Churchill as its first Commandant.[15] The school opened on 11 March 1957 at the Army's Trawsfynydd Training Area in North Wales where AT activities included hill-walking, navigation, camping, rock climbing, canoeing, caving and survival skills.[16] The Army Outward Bound Centre, later called the British Outward Bound Centre, at Isejaer, near Kristiansand in Norway was established in 1958 as a part of the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) to provide 'physically and mentally demanding activities in difficult climatic and geographical terrain'; a further camp was established at Gautestad in 1966.[17] Both camps closed in

[12]Bronco Lane, Military Mountaineering, A History of Services Mountaineering, 1945-2000, (Kirby Stephen: Hayloft Publishing, 2000). (Lane, Military Mountaineering)

[13]Kenneth Roberts & Graham White, The character-training industry: Adventure-training schemes in Britain, (London: David & Charles, 1974).

[14]T. Stott, P. Allison, J. Felter & S. Beames, 'Personal development on youth expeditions: A literature review and thematic analysis' *Leisure Studies*, Vol. 34 No. 2, 2015, p.2.

[15]M. Bibby, *Fighting Jack Churchill*, Historic UK. https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Fighting-Jack_Churchill/. Accessed 6 June 2025.

[16]Lane, Military Mountaineering pp.43-44; MOD, The Joint Services Training Centre (Wales), (Until 31 December 1972 known as The Army Outward Bound School), A Short History, Precis No. 102, Revised FEB 85 obtained from Lieutenant Colonel John Muston, RAOC who was, at one time, Commandant of the School.

[17]Military Historical collection – Gausdal – Army Outward Bound Camp Isejaer - http://www.spycom.org/11_KALD_KRIG/AOBCI/index.htm. Accessed 6 June 2025.

1992. The BAOR's Kiel sailing center had also been running since shortly after the Second World War.[18] However, the Joint Secretary of the Defence Training Committee noted in 1977 that, 'it was discovered that the Army had an establishment at Kiel tasked with diver training and "adventurous" training' and a request was made to bring the Kiel Centre 'within the umbrella of the JSAT Scheme'.[19] Providing an example of ongoing AT activities being brought under centralised MOD control.

Under the auspices of the Army Sports Control Board (ASCB) formed in 1918, a number of other organisations connected with adventurous activities had been formed, including the Army Sailing Association (1947); the Army Mountaineering Association (1957) (AMA); the Army Canoe Union and similar sports associations. Unsurprisingly there was some tension in such organisations as to what sport the Army would recognise as AT and how it would be controlled.

The 1960s Evolution of Army AT

In 1961, Major G.S. Hatch, Royal Artillery, later Brigadier and in retirement Secretary of the Royal Artillery Historical Trust, suggested that,

> a new approach to some aspects of training; to show how adventurous training can be used to make an ordinary soldier's life full and interesting, as well as to develop leadership qualities of sub-unit commanders; and to urge its application on a worthwhile scale so as to enhance unit morale by binding together the leaders and the led with a common feeling of real achievement.[20]

Hatch further recommended that AT training for leaders should be conducted at Adventure Training Centres and expressed criticism that '(t)he Army's present attitude to adventure training is to regard it mainly as a way of developing leadership qualities. Its real aim should be to provide a full and interesting life for all ranks'.[21]

AT had also become the subject of comment and questions in Parliament. In an Army Estimates debate on 13 July 1960, Field Marshal Lord Harding of Petherton said that more needed to be done by subsidising 'adventure activities' that 'call for skill and hard

[18]Katy Stickland, 'End of an era; British Kiel Yacht Club boats are transferred', *Yachting & Boating World*, 10 October 2016. https://www.ybw.com/news-from-yachting-boating-world/british-kiel-yacht-club-germany-closed-boats-transferred-43047. Accessed 6 June 2025.
[19]TNA DEFE 24/1695, Minutes - Defence Training Committee, MOD file D/D.S.15/507/150/5, Minute dated 13 May 1977.
[20]G.S. Hatch, 'Adventure Training and Recruiting – Some Suggestion', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institution,* Vol. 106, 1961, pp.486-490.
[21]Ibid.

work in preparation and courage and resolution in execution', if it was to attract young men.[22] He went on to refer to the British-Indian-Nepalese Joint Services Mountaineering Expedition and how an offer of cine cameras and film had been withdrawn.[23] This expedition was the first Himalayan venture of, the now noted mountaineer, and then, Captain Chris Bonington, Royal Tank Regiment, who made the first ascent of Annapurna II in 1960.

The diplomatic repercussions of adventurous training, for example by the Black Watch who had travelled through Lebanon, Syria and Jordan in 1961, was raised with the Secretary of State for War who replied that 'I am anxious that this sort of scheme of training should be developed to the fullest extent.'[24]

In May 1961 Lord Nathan asked: 'how many soldiers, and of what rank, have taken part in exploring or mountaineering expeditions', The Earl of Jellicoe replied,

> My Lords, the only two Service-sponsored expeditions in recent years were those to Chitral in 1959 and to Annapurna in 1960.[25]
>
> On the Chitral expedition, two majors, four captains, two subalterns and one sergeant took part, at an extra cost to the Exchequer of £1,970.
>
> On the Annapurna expedition, one lieutenant colonel, one major, one captain and one subaltern took part, at no extra cost to public funds' noting that it was 'a reasonable surmise … the Treasury refused to find the funds'.

The leader of the Annapurna expedition, Major J.O.M. Roberts, a Gurkha officer, noted that the expedition received no financial assistance from official funds.[26] But neither did he underestimate the value of the Services' assistance to that expedition

[22]Hansard, HL Debate 13 July 1960 Vol. 225 cc.200-26 https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1960/jul/13/the-army-estimates#column_200. Accessed 9 June 2025.

[23]'British Indian Nepalese Services Himalayan Expedition 1960 led by Maj. J.O.M. Roberts', *Alpine Journal* 1960. p.143. AJ`1960C143-150_Roberts_Annapurna2.pdf. Accessed 11 May 2025.

[24]Adventure Training Exercise, Middle East HC Deb 08 March 1961 vol 636 cc445-7. https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1961/mar/08/adventure-training-exercise-middle-east. Accessed 9 June 2025.

[25]See fn 27.

[26]Lieutenant Colonel James Owen Merion Roberts, LVO, MBE, MC. Himalayan Journal 1998, Vol 54. https://www.himalayanclub.org/hj/54/21/in-memoriam/#point1 Accessed 9 June 2025.

including leave, travel and accommodation, and the loan of some equipment, oxygen sets and cylinders, etc.[27]

In the same year, in answer to a further question by Lord Nathan about 'Adventure Training in the Army 1961-1962', Earl Jellicoe, then a Government Whip, said that AT was given every encouragement by the Army Council and was a normal part of military training and that it was carried out at unit level and during recruit training.[28] In March 1963, in a debate proposing that the Army strength should not exceed 241,000, Sir Harwood Harrison MP noted that 'I am glad to see his paragraph on more men doing adventure training.'[29]

The Emergence of Army AT Policy: 1960-1970

Against this previous and rather *ad hoc* approach to AT the Army began to develop AT policy. Jellicoe's reply to Lord Nathan in May 1961 demonstrated that while AT was by then being encouraged by the Army Council, it was still being organised at command and unit level, so there does not seem to have been any overall policy for Army AT before 1961.

In a debate on AT in July 1963, and when asked about the Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC) taking part, the Secretary of State for War replied that the extent to which women took part in adventure training was decided by the WRAC commander. He referred to the latest War Office directive on adventure training issued in June that year.[30] This is the first mention of any 'directive on adventurous training' that has been found, but it has not been possible to source this document. It is noted that the MOD had refused permission for a female climber, Gwen Moffat, to join the 1959 AMA Karakoram Expedition, despite her being an experienced mountain guide and being selected.[31] The outdated WRAC training syllabus was rewritten by Major Rowena Patrick post 1969 to include 'adventurous survival training for both men and women, including rock climbing, ice climbing, and walking in all weather in the UK and abroad';

[27]British Indian Nepalese Services Himalayan Expedition 1960. J O M Roberts, Annapurna II, 1960, Alpine Journal 1960 143. https://www.alpinejournal.org.uk/Contents/Contents_1960.html. Accessed 9 June 2025.

[28]Hansard, HL Deb 31 May 1961 vol 231 c 805. https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1961/may/31/adventure-training-in-the-army#column_805. Accessed 9 June 2025.

[29]Hansard, HC Deb 14 March 1963 Vol. 673, cc 1557-701, c1660

[30]Hansard, HC Deb 10 July 1963 Vol.680. col 1215. https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1963-07-10/debates/8572b049-e868-4dbf-a2ff-36991c514956/AdventureTraining. Accessed 12 August 2025.

[31]Lane, Military Mountaineering, p.41

and from then on women were fully included in Army AT.[32] Nevertheless, it was not until 1980 that the first all-female WRAC mountaineering expedition was mounted to the Pyrenees.[33]

In 1962 it was stated that the AT scheme, supported by an annual grant, was now a part of normal military training. Personnel taking part in AT under the scheme were seen as being on duty; a significant change because, if injured on AT, then the soldier, or their relatives, were eligible for military support and/or a service pension. A 1962 Memorandum noted that,

> The aim of adventurous training is to develop initiative, self-reliance and discipline in all ranks' [and went on] '(t)he element of risk in hazardous forms of adventure training is accepted … It is important that skill should be joined with courage, and prudence with daring; it is folly for hazardous exercises to be undertaken without the inherent risks being carefully calculated.[34]

An AT Brief for 1963/64 noted that AT funding totalled £120,000, some £2.2 million in 2026 terms, but conceded that the sum could only support 6% of the Army taking part in AT. The Brief noted that approximately 14,377 all ranks or 5% of the Army had taken part in AT in 1960/61, and 18,217 or 6% in 1961/62. It noted that many of the AT exercises 'have in the past relied upon regimental and/or individual financial support … we think it is wrong that payment to achieve the aim of Adventure Training should come other than from public funds.' The Treasury responded that it would not agree to an increase in funding to £120,000 and recorded that it understood 'that adventure training needs careful planning and skilled control, if it is not to be a waste of time and at worst, dangerous to participants' and went on to agree an increase only to £75,000.[35]

Defining Acceptable Army AT Activities: 1960-1970

Initially, there were arguments and discussions as to what was an acceptable AT activity and what activities should be regarded as sport. A BAOR General Routine Order of 1963 listed acceptable AT activities as (a) canoeing, (b) sailing, (c) underwater swimming, (d) mountaineering and rock climbing, (e) trekking, (f) potholing and (g) cycling and then set out detailed instructions regarding political clearance, financial

[32]Rowena Patrick. https://www.legasee.org.uk/project/women-of-the-army-1949-92/. Accessed 14 June 2026.
[33]Lane, Military Mountaineering, p.166.
[34]TNA WO 32/19687, Adventure Training Scheme: policy. See Minutes dated 15 September 1962 and 21 December 1962.
[35]Ibid. Treasury Chambers letter dated 29 January 1963 Reference 20DOP.207/208/01.

control and necessary qualifications for those leading these activities.[36] Correspondence between Major General Victor FitzGeorge-Balfour and Lieutenant General Gordon Lennox refers to 'the ease with which this kind of activity can be attacked' and that expeditions 'might be open to suspicion and criticism'.[37]

A 1964 Memorandum stated that the AT directive 'set out the principles on which Adventure Training would be organised'. It then complained that 'many of the schemes submitted by Commands, including Boys Units, seem to be outside the scope of Adventure Training' and gave examples. It questioned whether for sub-aqua training, it was necessary to go to the Mediterranean to practice it. It also commented that a tiger shoot and [a] crocodile hunting expedition might be highly adventurous but was hardly Adventurous Training.[38]

The Memorandum also stated that club activities, such as a sailing club 'cannot be said to cover the majority as it can only be open to club members to participate and to that extent is a closed shop' and so could not be considered AT. There was also confusion between AT and sport, so that a regimental team taking part in a French Canoeing championship was not entitled to AT funds, because it was sport – 'This sort of confusion is in its infancy' is annotated on the Memorandum. A later letter to Headquarters, BAOR, states 'It is regretted that Gliding cannot be accepted as an Adventure Training Activity per se' because it was an authorised sport, but, at least by 1977 it was included as an AT activity.[39] The AGAI 1980 included motor cycling as AT, but it was no longer in the list by 2003.[40]

While dinghy sailing had not been recognised as AT, a Minute dated 3 July 1974 recommended that it should be recognised as a joint service AT activity.[41] A Loose Minute dated 22 June 1977 recommended 'an authorised scale for recreational dinghy sailing in the RN' and proposed sailing centres where dinghies could be located.

A good example of the arguments about the definition of AT comes from SAS Trooper Tom McLean's request that his attempt to row the Atlantic single-handed in 1969

[36]Ibid. BAOR General Routine Order dated 15 March 1963, Issue No. 476 (7353-7369), p. 5 para 4.
[37]TNA WO 32/19687, Exchange of letters dated 24 May 1963 and 30 May 1963.
[38]Ibid. Memorandum to Colonel GS AT 1, Adventure Training reference 505/QMGF/A(i) dated 30 July 1964.
[39]Ibid. Letter to Headquarters, BAOR dated 20 November 1964 reference 43/Trg/5535; Defence Council Instructions (DCI) Joint Service, Issue No. 4 dated 28 January 1977.
[40]AGAI, Ch 11 (2003) paragraph 11.006.
[41]TNA MOD D/D.S.15/507/150/5, Minutes in File.

should be recognised as AT.[42] Army Strategic Command reported that 'The GOC-in-C does not consider that this crossing of the Atlantic could be counted as adventure training, nor does he propose to give it official support in any other way' and went on to say that the HQ would not prevent McLean's attempt.[43] A file note, with the letter, records,

> the proposal is not acceptable as it is an individual gladiatorial effort.

A further file Note from the Col A.TI (?) then says,

> Go back to Stratco (Army Strategic Command). I simply cannot understand why the GOC in C does not consider this Adventure Trg … It is not military trg, but surely comes with the (at least) lowest category of Adv Trg. We are otherwise going to look damned silly again in the Press when it comes out that he is not even being paid!!!!

A compromise was reached and McLean was allowed to do the row on annual leave and on special unpaid leave although he had to sign a disclaimer that the Ministry of Defence and the Special Air Service would have no responsibility for his death or injury. An example of policy evolution is that Atlantic rowing and participation in the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge is now routinely considered to be AT.[44]

A Memorandum of 1964 noted that 'Present policy is that officers are not entitled to any assistance from Adventure Training Funds unless leading or taking part in 'All Ranks' expeditions and exercises'.[45] It opined that this was unfair on officers on long courses such as those studying for a degree, as they had no other ranks to call upon, and suggested that such officers should be allowed £10 for each AT expedition they went on.

The whole emphasis of policy in the years 1962-1966 referred to small or unit AT training expeditions or exercises, and does not reference any major expeditions.[46]

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[42]Tom McLean, Motivational/Inspirational Speaker http://www.motivationspeaker.co.uk/Biography.asp. Accessed 9 June 2025.

[43]HQ Army Strategic Command letter dated 23 December 1968 to Ministry of Defence (P39) (Army).

[44]For example, Force Atlantic team (2024) https://www.army.mod.uk/news/army-s-first-all-female-force-atlantic-team-takes-on-world-s-toughest-row/. Accessed 9 June 2025.

[45]Memorandum to QMCF, Adventure Training, Assistance to Young Officers, by Col GS AT1 dated 20 April 1964.

[46]TNA WO 32/19687, Adventure Training Scheme: policy. (1962-1966)

References to World Wide AT endeavours start in 1968.[47] The file includes a number of examples of the continuing dispute as to what was or was not AT. In June 1969 the Command Secretariat refused to approve a grant to soldiers taking part in the Joint Services alpine meet, but the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief gave his opinion that 'individual participants in organised Services meets of this nature … should qualify for a grant up to £12 towards travel and accommodation expenses'.[48] In the same year, approval was given for the funding of two apprentices from the Army Apprentices College, Arborfield to join the British Schools Exploring Society expedition to Newfoundland because 'the value of the expedition and the possible public relations cover mades (sic) it very worthwhile expenditure'.[49] Likewise in 1969, agreement in principle was given for the Special Air Service to take part in the Around Britain Powerboat race, and for the services to participate in the Daily Mail Transatlantic Air Race.

As can be seen an acceptable distinction had emerged by about 1970 as to what was sport and what was AT, an example of policy making having caught up with reality.

Army AT Training Centres: 1957-1973

Following the opening of the Tywyn and Norwegian Army Outward Bound centres in 1957 and 1958, no further Army AT centres were opened. In 1969 Tywyn was redesignated as an Army Mountain Training Centre (AMTC). The Fort George Inverness-shire AMTC was set up in April 1969 and was intended,

> as a pilot scheme [and] as a centre from which parties of up to 30, under their own qualified leaders, can collect equipment, rations and information on local mountain training facilities'. [It was stated that] 'although instruction does take place at the AMTC, its primary role is to assist parties to carry out their own expeditions.[50]

Army or Territorial Army accommodation was provided at Ballachulish, Ballater and Kingussie in Scotland for skiing and other mountaineering activities, and a Forestry

[47]TNA WO 32/21598, Adventure Training – Miscellaneous – World Wide, MOD reference A/43/Overseas/1882.

[48]Ibid. Letter from HQ Southern Command reference 652/3 G(Trg) dated 9 June 1969 to Ministry of Defence (AT 1).

[49]Ibid. Letter from Headquarters South East District reference 62091 G (Trg), dated 12 May 1969 to Command Secretary HQ Southern Command.

[50]Report by the Joint Services Working Party on Mountain Training and Ski-ing dated October 1970 – copy obtained from Col. Peacock's personal papers. (Hereinafter The Peacock Report 1970), now held by the AMA.

Commission camp at Capel Curig, Wales was purchased in 1970 to replace two smaller camps then in use for AT.[51]

The Army & Major Expeditions: 1965-1970

From about the mid 1960s the Services began to approve funding for participation in major expeditions. These were intended to give individuals experience in AT and fit them to organise unit level AT and provide positive publicity for the services as an aid to recruiting and retention.

In 1966 the Royal Navy supported an expedition to the unexplored Schweizerland region of east Greenland, and on which the author was the Army representative. [52] Major John Peacock, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, led an expedition from the Royal Military Academy (RMA) Sandhurst to West Greenland.[53] Two years later, the author led the Army's East Greenland Expedition to the Kristian glacier, the aim of which was to climb in the area and make an attempt on Mount Forel, Greenland's second highest peak, while collecting botanical specimens for Lancaster University.[54] Expeditions to the Himalayas were also approved, including the AMA Tirich Mir, Pakistan Expedition in 1969, under the leadership of Major Jon Fleming, Parachute Regiment, and the AMA Annapurna I Expedition led by Major Henry Day in 1970.[55] These Himalayan expeditions were a prelude to and training for the Joint British and

[51]The Peacock Report 1970.

[52]M.B. Thomas & R.H. Wallis, 'The Royal Naval East Greenland Expedition, 1966', *Alpine Journal* 1967, Pt. 1, pp.29-35, https://www.alpinejournal.org.uk/Contents/Contents_1967_files/AJ%201967%2029-35%20Thomas%20&%20Wallis%20East%20Greenland.pdf. Accessed 9 June 2025) Pt 2 pp.212-224. http://www.alpinejournal.org.uk/Contents/Contents_1967_files/AJ%201967%20212-224%20Thomas%20&%20Wallis%20E.Greenland.pdf#search=%22royal%20navy%20east%20greenland%22 (Accessed 9.6.2025).

[53]J.D.C. Peacock, 'Sandhurst in Greenland, 1966', *Alpine Journal* 1967, pp.45-56.

[54]Noel Dilly, 'East Greenland: Kristians glacier area 1968', *Alpine Journal,* pp.276-281; National Records of Scotland, Author's expedition papers & files, Agnew of Lochnaw Muniments GD154, Nos. 1024-1026 & 1043-1055.

[55]Henry Day, 'Tirich Mir, 1969', *Alpine Journal* 1970, pp.79-86; https://www.alpinejournal.org.uk/Contents/Contents_1970_files/AJ%201970%2079-86%20Day%20TirichM.pdf. Accessed 9 June 2025; H. Day, 'Annapurna – North face route', *Alpine Journal,* 1971, pp.88-98. https://www.alpinejournal.org.uk/Contents/Contents_1971_files/AJ%201971%2088-98%20Day%20Annapurna.pdf. Accessed 9 June 2025.

Nepalese Army Everest Expedition 1976, which successfully put two Special Air Service servicemen on the summit.[56]

Colonel John Blashford-Snell, Royal Engineers, organised and led two RMA Sandhurst expeditions to Ethiopia in 1964 and 1966 to collect specimens for the Natural History Department of the British Museum; and he went on to lead the Great Abbai Expedition in 1968, which carried out a scientific exploration of the Blue Nile gorge by descending the river in rafts.[57] The emergence of a new scientific focus can be seen in these expeditions.

The Role of The Joint Services Expedition Trust (JSET): 1962-1975

In parallel with each Service developing its own AT policy, the MOD set up the Joint Services Expedition Committee to sponsor, every second year, a major expedition having scientific objectives.

The first joint expedition was a 1962 Joint Services Expedition to Mount McKinley (Denali), at 20,320 feet the highest mountain in North America. It was led by Major Mike Banks, Royal Marines who had been a member of the British North East Greenland Expedition 1951-1952, and the British Combined Services Rakaposhi Expedition in 1958.[58] The McKinley expedition successfully reached the summit, although one member required evacuation due to altitude sickness and two others sustained frostbite and snow blindness.[59]

The second was the Combined Services Expedition to South Georgia in the summer of 1964/65, in which Lieutenant Commander Malcolm Burley RN, with Major John Peacock REME, led a team of eight.[60] The party crossed South Georgia from King Haakon Bay in the south, to follow the route taken by Shakleton when seeking help after the sinking of his ship *Endurance*. The expedition surveyed and mapped the ice-

[56]J. Fleming & R. Faux, *Soldier on Everest,* (London: HMSO, 1977).

[57]J.N. Blashford-Snell, P.A. Morris, C.M. Chapman, & M.G. Spratling, 'Conquest of the Blue Nile' *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 136, No. 1, 1970, pp.42-60. This also refers to the RMA Sandhurst expeditions.

[58]John Cleare, 'Obituary of Mike Banks, MBE, Polar Medal 1922-2013', *The Alpine Journal* 2013 pp.380-385. https://www.alpinejournal.org.uk/Contents/Contents_2013_files/AJ%202013%20376-415%20In%20Memoriam.pdf. Accessed 9 June 2025.

[59]John Hinde's Diaries, British Joint Services Alaska Expedition 1962, *The Climber*, December 1962. https://diariesofjohnhinde.wordpress.com/2017/12/30/british-joint-services-alaska-expedition-1962/. Accessed 9 June 2025.

[60]M. Burley, 'Combined Services Expedition to South Georgia, 1964-65', *Polar Record*, Vol. 13 , Issue 82 , January 1966 , pp.70-71;

free area north-east of the Ross Glacier and made botanical, geological and zoological collections and observations.[61]

The next was the Joint Services North Peary Land Expedition 1969, to north Greenland, led again by Peacock.[62] The expedition carried out a closed tellurometer, a surveying instrument that measures distances using microwaves, and theodolite traverse of the peninsula, a geological survey in the eastern region and made geological collections. It also carried out botanical, mammalogical, ornithological and meteorological research, it also climbed twenty one peaks in the area.

In 1969 the committee converted itself into the Joint Services Expedition Trust (JSET), a charitable trust, with the objective:

> To further the efficiency of Her Majesty's Armed Forces and to educate their personnel by undertaking expeditions for the purpose of carrying out research in geology, geophysics, glaciology, meteorology, physiology, ornithology, botany, natural history and kindred sciences and, where practical, to disseminate the knowledge gained as a result thereof.[63]

There was competition for JSET sponsorship for the 1970 expedition between a proposal by Commander Burley, to explore Elephant Island in Antarctica, and one by the author that proposed an expedition to the Northern Chilean Icecap. The committee selected the Elephant Island expedition, suggesting that the author go on that expedition and then re-submit his application for possible sponsorship in 1972.[64] Both expeditions had detailed scientific objectives to comply with the JSET requirement. The Elephant Island expedition went ahead in the southern summer of 1970/71 surveying the island and carrying out geological, geomorphological, glacial,

[61]M. Burley, Expedition Report addressed to The Permanent Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Defence dated 14 April 1965; Bodleian Library, Archive of Sir Edwin Arrowsmith, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 511/5/4 - Combined Services

[62]J. Peacock, 'North Peary Land, British Expedition, 1969', *Alpine Journal* 1958 pp.234-240. http://www.alpinejournal.org.uk/Contents/Contents_1970_files/AJ%201970%20237-247%20Greenland.pdf#search=%22north%20peary%20land%22. Accessed 22 June 2026.

[63]TNA JSET DEFE 68/70, Draft Deed of Trust 1969 (unsigned and undated). – The Deed was signed on 8 September 1969; MOD Letter dated 9 September 1969 reference D/1413/1/PPO to ACAPL and others.

[64]TNA JSET DEFE 68/70, JSET Minutes of Meeting, 19 June 1969.

botanical, ornithological, mammalogical and biological research.[65] In the southern summer of 1972/3 the author led the Joint Services expedition to the Northern Chilean Patagonian Icecap.[66] The expedition carried out a survey to fix the location of the coastline last surveyed by Darwin in 1831. It also carried out a hydrographic survey of Kelly Inlet; collected geological and geomorphological specimens; conducted a detailed glaciological survey of the Benito Glacier; ran a meteorological weather station, and collected botanical and entomological specimens, as well as recording ornithological species and undertook a physiological experiment on body weight.[67]

Since then, the JSET has sponsored an expedition every second year and provided some endorsement or other support to other expeditions. On 27 February 2001 the JSET executed a revised Deed of Trust simplifying its role,

> The object of the charity is to further the efficiency of the Armed Forces of the Crown and to educate their personnel by undertaking or supporting expeditions and adventurous activities.[68]

The research objective present in the 1969 Deed was dropped so that the JSET could now sponsor or endorse an expedition entirely lacking in scientific content. The

[65]M. Burley, 'Joint Services Expedition to Elephant Island', The Geographical Journal, Vol. 138, No. 3, 1972, pp.298-308.; C.H. Agnew of Lochnaw yr, 'Elephant Island', Alpine Journal 1972, pp. 204-210. https://www.alpinejournal.org.uk/Contents/Contents_1972_files/AJ%201972%20204-210%20Agnew%20Elephant.pdf (accessed 9.6.2025). M. Burley, *Joint Services Expedition, Elephant Island Report* (FONAC 1971) in author's possession.

[66]TNA, JSET DEFE 68/70. JSET Minutes of Meeting, 22 July 1971 records the approval for that expedition The expedition is described in C.H. Agnew of Lochnaw & C.S. Gobey, 'The Joint Services Expedition to Chilean Patagonia 1972/73', *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 140, No. 2, 1974, pp.262-268. *https://www.jstor.org/stable/1797083?seq=1* Accessed 9 June 2025;

[67]C.H. Agnew, *Joint Services Expedition to Chilean Patagonia 1972-73, General Report,* (London: HMSO, 1974) and individual Scientific Reports (HMSO 1974); V. Winchester, M. Sessions, J.V. Cerda, O. Wündrich, S. Clemmens, N.F. Glasser & M. Nash (2014) 'Post-1850 changes in Glacier Benito, North Patagonian Icefield, Chile', *Geografiska Annaler*, Series A, *Physical Geography*, Vol. 96, No. 1, 2014, pp.43-59; J.C. Ryan, M. Sessions, R. Wilson, O. Wündrich & A. Hubbard, (2018) 'Rapid Surface Lowering of Benito Glacier, Northern Patagonian Icefield'. Front. Earth Sci. 6:47.

[68]Revised Deed of Trust.

constraints of time and manpower had meant that it was increasingly difficult for expeditions to find worthwhile science or research to carry out.[69]

The Emergence of Joint Services AT Policy in the 1970s.

From the early 1970s AT was put on a Joint Services basis, with particular Services nominated to run particular AT activities and AT centres for all services. This was separate from the more general AT run by the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force for their servicemen. Generally, that AT was similar to that provided by the Army for its soldiers, and as discussed in this article.

A Review of Adventurous Training in 1992 noted that 'The current Joint Services Adventurous Training (JSAT) Scheme, which was originally formulated by the Defence Training Committee (DTC) was approved by the Principal Planning Officers and the Treasury in 1971'.[70] Each Service then had to deliver AT within its own Service under the overall policy set out in the Joint Services Scheme. The Joint Services Adventurous Training (JSAT) Scheme, JSP 419 of August 2008 recorded that,

> In May 1970 the need was recognised for a co-ordinated approach to, and an expansion of the existing facilities for Adventurous Training, and the Defence Training Committee (DTC) was tasked by the Principal Planning Officers (PPOs) (2SL, AG & AMP) to devise an appropriate scheme. This was completed in 1973 when the JSAT Scheme was introduced. This Charter was amended in 1994 and this update re-establishes the fundamental guidelines for the conduct of JSAT administered by the Armed Forces Adventurous Training Committee (AFATC).[71]

The 1970 Peacock Report commissioned by the Director of Army Training gave advice on a Joint Service approach.[72] The committee's terms of reference were to,

a) Examine the needs of all three Services for Mountain Training and Skiing in the context of Adventurous Training,

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[69]Letter, M.H.H. Adler, Treasurer JSET, to Secretary JSET, DGTE-TEPOL, MOD dated 5 April 2005. Recovered from MOD JSET under a FOI request.

[70]A Review of Adventurous Training circulated by Ministry of Defence, Reference HQDT/17/26/1 Trg 3 (072) dated 21 February 1992. The PPOs were the Second Sea Lord (RN), the Adjutant General (Army) and the Air Member for Personnel (RAF). JSP means Joint Services Publication.

[71]JSP 419, Aug 08 (amended Jul 09) paragraph 3.

[72]Report by the Joint Services Working Party on Mountain Training and Ski-ing dated October 1970 – copy obtained by author from Colonel Peacock's personal papers. (The Peacock Report 1970). Now held by the AMA.

b) Consider existing and proposed facilities,
c) Prepare a plan, showing costs, for the joint use of such facilities as would be necessary to meet the needs of all three services …'

The Report examined the different AT facilities of each Service, the individual costs to each Service and made recommendations, most of which appear in the later editions of JSP 419.

The guiding document was Joint Services Publication (JSP) 419, Adventurous Training in the UK Armed Forces; Part 1: Directive, Part 2: Guidance. The earliest edition that was found by the author dates from 2008. The Territorial Army (TA) took part in AT from 1992 'under the same policy guidelines and conditions as the Regular Army, once operational objectives have been achieved.'[73]

Services AT Policy Evolution from the mid-1970s Onwards

Although, as noted earlier, the archival record is woefully poor, one important file still exists, MOD file D/D.S.15/507/150/5 opened 31 January 1977 - Training Adventurous.[74] This gives a good insight into 1970s AT.

A Defence Council Instruction, dated 28 January 1977 (DCI) entitled 'Joint Services Adventurous Training' which predates the JSP 419 (2008), records that the activities approved in 1977 were free-fall parachuting, sub-aqua diving, gliding, off-shore sailing, and mountain activities, including canoeing and skiing.[75] It also listed the locations for AT training and noted that personnel attending JSAT courses were on duty and that they were permitted to travel at public expense. It provided for courses to be available for Servicemen and Servicewomen and on certain conditions members of the Reserve Forces. JSP 419 (2008) added caving and hang gliding/paragliding to the list.

A Progress Report by the Adventurous Training Sub-Committee dated 31 January 1977 noted that the total cost of AT, as it had developed since 1970 and which should be put into the estimates for 1977 was £1,781,000, some £14 million in 2026 terms.

A draft report on AT attached to a Memo by Joint Secretary, Defence Training Committee to MA/ACPL and others dated 14 March 1977 recorded that 'The primary

[73]A Review of Adventurous Training, circulated under letter from Major General S C Grant (DGAT) dated 21 February 1992 reference HQDT/17/26/1 Trg 3(072). The author obtained a copy from Major (retd) Tim King, RAOC who had it from his time as Secretary of the AMA.
[74]TNA DEFE 24/1695, file D/D.S.15/507/150/5, Training Adventurous.
[75]Defence Council Instructions (DCI) Joint Service, Issue No 4, dated 28 January 1977.

reason for sustaining adventurous training at public expense, is to provide a modest range of outdoor activities for Service personnel, requiring participation in challenging pursuits …' It went on to note that 55-60,000 Servicemen took part in AT expeditions annually, including a small number of major expeditions, but that most activities were unit level expeditions.

Following a review, another Minute dated 19 April 1977 noted that there was agreement in the 'assessment of the military advantages, particularly for the Army, of adventurous training, but accepts that in the present financial circumstances it is necessary to make a cut of 3½%, i.e., £70,000 …'.

The 2008 Joint Services Adventurous Training (JSAT) Scheme (JSP 419) notes that,

> The value of Adventurous Training in leadership and personal development is recognised by the Services. It adds an extra dimension to the life of Servicemen and women. Adventurous Training provides challenge, a sense of achievement, excitement, variety, enjoyment, interest, contact with nature and the broadening experience of travel. It introduces personnel to new activities and provides opportunities to improve the skills and knowledge of those with previous experience. It enhances the quality of Service life and is an aid to recruiting and retention.[76]

It defined the overarching definition of JSAT, agreed by the Armed Forces Adventurous Training Committee (AFATC), as,

> Challenging outdoor training for Service personnel in specified adventurous activities, involving controlled exposure to risk, to develop leadership, teamwork, physical fitness, moral and physical courage, among other personal attributes and skills vital to operational capability.

And went on to list the nine adventurous activities that were funded by the three Services and which Service sponsored particular activities: offshore sailing and sub-aqua diving by the Royal Navy, canoeing, caving, mountaineering and skiing by the Army and freefall parachuting, gliding, hang gliding and paragliding by the Royal Air Force. It also recognised that 'a variety of activities may qualify as Adventurous Training because they promote the development of the qualities mentioned at Paragraph 6'. It provided that the delivery of AT as defined by JSP 419 and the funding of the various centres at which it was provided was the responsibility of the Service that provided the activity.

[76]MOD, JSP 419, Joint Services Adventurous Training (JSAT) Scheme (Amended July 2009) (2008).

The JSP 419 also listed the Joint Services Centres at which the nominated activities could be carried out and which provided training for recognised qualifications in the nominated activities for a leader/supervisor/instructor. It concluded by setting out certain training and qualification standards and administrative requirements for AT and contained Annexes specifying how to apply for courses at the relevant centres.

Implementation of AT within the Army

The Adjutant General's Administrative Instruction of 1980 implemented JSP 419 and set out the Army's policy for AT and noted that:

> There is little need to justify the philosophy of adventurous training. A good soldier needs mental and moral self discipline as well as physical strength and endurance; he needs to become accustomed to danger, hardship and challenge and these are not easy to provide within the constraints of normal peace time training.[77]

The AGAI recognised that participation could be by way of attendance at courses, by individuals in continuation training, taking part in Service or civilian clubs providing AT activities. It is interesting to note that participation includes club activities as authorised, when in the 1960s participation in club activities was not recognised as AT. Participation in private expeditions was authorised provided 'any period of annual leave has been forfeit' and participation had been authorised in advance by MOD (PAT 2). Expeditions were said to 'provide particularly valuable training, involving planning, leadership, administration, public relations, etc in addition to the benefit to be derived from carrying out the main task.' Three types of expeditions were defined: unit expeditions, major expeditions and civilian expeditions, in which Service personnel might apply to take part.[78]

The AGAI then set out the principles for conducting AT, the need for authorisations and political clearance and administrative arrangements, including travel, equipment from stores, casualty procedures, pay and allowances and financial arrangements and grants to expeditions, safety regulations including qualifications required etc., with detailed Annexes. Annex A lists the accepted activity and any appropriate link with an Army sport association.

Participating personnel were considered to be 'on duty' even if AT was being carried out voluntarily during leave on an expedition, or on an individual basis, for example going climbing in the Alps with a non-military climbing partner. Individuals were

[77]AGAI, Chapter 11 (2008), paragraph 11.004 to 11.007.
[78]Ibid. AGAI, Chapter 11 (2008), paragraph 11.002.

entitled to apply for an annual grant, in 2008 it was £15, and for cash in lieu of rations (CILOR). Further 'the MOD would accept vicarious liability for any negligent actions or omissions committed in the performance of those duties.'[79] 'Vicarious liability' means that the MOD will accept liability for any negligent actions or omissions of the soldier on AT, which may have caused injury or damage to another party.[80]

This financial support dated back at least to the early 1970's as the author applied for, and was granted support, for climbing trips to the European Alps from 1973 including claiming CILOR.

Political and Other Clearances

Political clearance for AT expeditions was always an issue for the MOD as shown by the Black Watch's Syrian expedition in 1961 mentioned above.

Chapter 11 of the 1980 AGAI provided that with the exception of attendance at courses at AT centres, all AT activities required,

a) military clearance,
b) political clearance outside the United Kingdom including activities in countries in which British forces were normally stationed e.g. West Germany and
c) security clearance for any AT in or that required transit through a country to which leave travel was restricted, but which was not banned outright. It set different timetables and requirements for different countries, including '(c)ountries to which expeditions are not to be planned' as set out in Annex C.[81]

In 1984, the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office tried to develop a policy to rationalise applications relating to political clearance for AT because 'it seems to me that a lot of unnecessary time and effort is consequently wasted …'[82] The file shows discussions about which countries should be in which category and which countries were excluded from AT.

A Memo dated 16 April 1984 about the Whitbread Round the World Yacht Race 1985/86 notes that the South African media were likely to play up the event 'as a

[79]Annex C to JSP 419 Part 2 – Chapter 3 (V1.0 Jan 16).
[80]Armitage, M. and others. Charlesworth and Percy on Negligence, 15th Edition (2024. Sweet & Maxwell) para 7.01 'Nature of vicarious liability'.
[81]AGAI, Chapter 11 (Issue 26) (D/DAT/64/5/1/PAT2).
[82]TNA FCO 46/4253, File No. DPP 072/2 Title Adventurous Training Policy; Joint Services Adventurous Training Scheme.

measure of re-acceptance into the sporting world' and so 'the participation of a Service vessel and crew would in such circumstances not be in the UK interest'. This was because under the Gleneagles Agreement 'the Government are committed to discouraging sporting contacts with South Africa'. A Services' team therefore did not take part in the race.

Major 1970s Expeditions

In 1971 the AMA proposed an expedition to climb Everest and a booking was made with the Nepalese authorities for Spring 1976 for what was to be a Joint British and Nepalese Army expedition.[83] Training for the expedition included an expedition to climb in Himal Praedesh in the western Himalayas in 1973, an alpine training meet in 1974, and an attempt on Nuptse Himal in 1975, where four team members unfortunately died.[84] Despite this tragedy, Everest was successfully climbed in 1976.[85]

During the 1970s there were a number of other Army mountaineering expeditions to Greenland, the Himalayas and other parts of the world.[86]

The Royal Naval Sailing Association entered the Sailing Vessel *Adventure* in the 1973/4 Whitbread Round the World Yacht Race.[87] The Army chartered Chay Blyth's yacht *British Steel*, renamed *British Soldier*, for the same race.[88] The Joint Services were authorised by the MOD to enter Her Majesty's Sail Training Yacht *Adventure,* in the 1977/78 Whitbread Round the World Yacht Race, and the Army entered *British Soldier*.[89] The proposal to enter the 1980 race was vetoed for political reasons, as the yachts were to visit Cape Town.

[83]J. Fleming & R. Faux, *Soldiers on Everest,* (London: HMSO, 1977), Chapter 2.

[84]J. Fleming, 'Nuptse 1975', *Alpine Journal* 1976, p.107. AJv1976107-116Fleming Nuptse.pdf. Accessed 9 June 2025); TNA DEFE 70/1435, Himalayan Expedition; Mount Nuptse; mountaineering accident. Board of Inquiry.

[85]J. Fleming, 'The Army Mountaineering Association Himachal Praedesh Expedition 1973', *Alpine Journal* 1974, p.21; Fleming & Faux, R. *Soldiers on Everest.*

[86]Crispin Agnew, Soldiers in Greenland 1930-1980', *British Army Review* No. 108, Spring/Summer 2021, p.112; Lane, *Military Mountaineering*.

[87]Oceanum Vela, the ocean race. https://www.oceanumvela.net/the-ocean-race. Accessed 9 June 2025.

[88]Information from Colonel Meryon Bridges, Royal Engineers, an active mountaineer and offshore sailor in the Army who was on the 1976 Everest and the 1980 Api Himal expeditions with the author.

[89]Letter from Naval Personnel Division 1 reference D/NP1/12/10/4B dated 31 December 1976; Information from Colonel M G le G Bridges.

Colonel Blashford-Snell led the Darien Gap Expedition 1971/2 which crossed the gap, a dense rain forest area between Colombia and Panama in South America.[90] Two years later, Blashford-Snell led the Zaire River Expedition 1974/5[91]. He was awarded the Royal Scottish Geographical Society Livingstone Medal.[92] He went on to found the Scientific Exploring Society and Operation Raleigh.[93]

Unit Level AT Activities: 1960 to 1980

Details of AT expeditions conducted at unit level are not generally available, so the author has provided details from his own experience, and which were probably replicated in other units. From 1966 to 1968 the author was with the Junior Soldiers Unit at the Lowland Regimental Depot, near Edinburgh where he took junior soldiers camping and hill walking in the Scottish Borders or skiing at Glenshee as their AT. Funding for skiing had to be applied for on the basis that the unit was running a 'winter warfare cross country training exercise' and army skis, that did not have safety bindings, were provided, which resulted in numerous injuries.

A posting back to his battalion in 1969 at Fort George, near Inverness, provided opportunities for unit camping and hill walking expeditions and the operation of the unit mountain rescue team (MRT) that trained with the RAF Kinloss MRT. A group from the regiment went climbing in the Chamonix Alps for two weeks in the summer 1970.

In 1972 the author was posted to the Junior Tradesmen's Regiment at Troon, Ayrshire as adventurous training officer. This involved taking platoons of junior soldiers away for a week at a time in summer to the Isle of Arran for camping, hill walking, cycling and sailing and during the winter for skiing and winter mountaineering in the Cairngorms near Aviemore.

In the summer of 1972, the author was asked by MOD (PAT 2) to lead a party of junior soldiers to the Austrian Alps for three weeks, employing local guides and introducing the junior soldiers to alpine climbing. This was one of a series of annual junior soldier AT expeditions of various types sponsored by the MOD.

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[90]R. Braddon, *The Hundred Days of Darien,* (London: Collin, 1974); P.J.K. Burton, 'The Province of Darien', *Geographical Journal*, 1973, pp.43-47.
[91]J. Blashford-Snell, *In the Steps of Stanley,* (London: Hutchison, 1975).
[92]Colonel John Blashford-Snell, Royal Scottish Geographical Society https://www.rsgs.org/blog/john-blashford-snell. Accessed 16 June 2025.
[93]Colonel John Blashford-Snell website - https://www.johnblashfordsnell.org.uk/biography/. Accessed 16 June 2025.

AT & The Army Cadet Force (ACF) & Others

The ACF, always recognised as a good source of Army recruits, was also encouraged to undertake AT, although it remains unclear when it was brought into the Army's AT regime, but the AGAI Chapter 11 of 2003 stated that its instructions also applied to the cadet forces and recognised that,

> the significant benefits Cadets gain from participation in adventurous outdoor pursuits, [and that] it is necessary to provide policy as to how such activities are conducted.[94]

It then listed the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, challenge pursuits such as water-skiing, pony-trekking and mountain biking, and acknowledged that low level adventurous training was to be 'recognised as AT activities'. The Cadet Centres for AT, set up about this time and are now at Capel Curig, Halton Training Camp, Lancaster and Rothiemurchus Lodge, Cairngorms.[95]

AT was also used to recruit particularly young soldiers. Neville Trotter MP noted in 1978 the 'highest regard for Army Youth Teams following our experience in running Adventure Training for unemployed boys.'[96]

The value of AT in the rehabilitation of injured soldiers was also recognised but this is a topic worthy of research in itself and is not covered here.[97]

Army AT Post 1980

By 1980 the Joint Services approach to AT had been well settled by JSP 419 and the Army's participation was governed by AGAI, Chapter 11. Minor amendments to these key documents were introduced, as necessary and from time to time. In 1990 the Director of Internal Audit (Services) 'although recognising the value of adventurous training, criticised various aspects of the current arrangements' which led to a review

[94]Apart from the 1980 AGAI which applied to the Regular Army alone, this is the first of the more recent AGAIs recovered under FOI.

[95]HQ Cadet Centre for AT. https://armycadets.com/who-we-are/cadet-centre-for-adventurous-training/ (accessed 16.5.2025).

[96]Nevill Trotter MP in a debate about the decision to abolish Army Youth Teams. Hansard HC Deb 30 January 1978, Vol 943 cc 207-20. https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1978/jan/30/army-youth-teams. Accessed 16 May 2025.

[97]JSP 419 Pt (V1.0 Jan 16) para 28. S. Peacock, D. Carless & J. McKenna, 'Inclusive adapted sport and adventure training programme in the PTSD recovery of military personnel: A creative non-fiction', *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, Vol. 35, 2018, pp. 151-159.

of Army AT which was intended to '... recommend the future structure, management and funding of adventurous training within the Army'.[98] The paper defined AT, in terms slightly different to the JSP 419, as,

> a form of outdoor training for Service personnel requiring participation in challenging pursuits, by inference those which contain an ever present risk to life and limb, and calling for, from those taking part, some or all the qualities of fitness, physical and moral courage, initiative, powers of endurance and interdependence.[99]

It went on to list the approved activities as mountain training, including rock climbing, top roping and abseiling, trekking and mountaineering, caving, canoeing, skiing including, cross-country, downhill and ski touring, gliding, free-fall parachuting, off shore sailing and sub-aqua diving.[100] By 2016 Mountain biking (MTB) had been added to the list of AT activities.[101]

AT was formally recognised as a mainstream activity in the Army's overall training strategy so that it could be properly structured as an essential element in both individual and collective training.[102] Four levels were proposed with,

> (1) an introduction to AT for RMAS Officer Cadets, Apprentices, junior leaders and adult recruits,
> (2) in-theatre unit AT run by platoon officers and NCOs assisted by trained unit instructors, so that 30% of the army took part in a minimum of seven days AT each year,
> (3) expeditions ranging from the simple to the sophisticated, depending on the vision, ambition and expertise of the leader and participants and
> (4) training and continuation training for instructors.

The various AT training centres in the UK and overseas were also detailed.[103]

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[98]Headquarters Doctrine and Training, Army Plans and Resources Committee, *A Review of Adventurous Training, (A Paper by COS HQDT),* Reference APRC/P (92) 6 dated 22 Apr 92; File Reference HQDT/4/16/20/12 (Coord), paragraphs 1 and 2.
[99]Ibid, paragraph 3.
[100]Ibid, paragraph 4.
[101]JSP 419 Pt 2 (V1.0 Jan 16) p 1-1.
[102]Ibid, paragraph 8.
[103]Ibid, paragraphs 8-17.

The Territorial Army could participate in AT under the same policy and conditions as Regular Army.[104]

Safety & Risk Assessment

In the early days of AT, while the risks were noted, it was left to units and experienced individuals to organise AT. A Memorandum dated 21 December 1962. refers to 'the inherent risks being carefully calculated' and refers the reader to various safety booklets issued by national bodies.[105] While the author was active in organising unit AT from 1964 to 1976, and leading major expeditions up to 1980, he was never required to produce a risk assessment. The risks were understood and dealt with by the team.

From1980 there was more formality with the AGAI 1980 Chapter 11 paragraph 11.011 requiring that strict attention be paid to safety standards. Applications for approval for expeditions had to be signed by the commanding officer or an officer delegated by him had to sign applications for expeditions and state that he was satisfied that the person leading an expedition was competent to do so, but this still left the assessment at unit level.

The increased Army emphasis being placed on safety and risk assessments was probably prompted by the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, and, in particular, the Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Act 1987, which made the Armed Forces liable for acts of negligence by Service personnel. The 1990 Audit required that an 'Expeditionary Advisory Cell was to be set up'.

By 2003 Divisional/District AT Staff Officers had been established with a duty to scrutinise 'the thoroughness of the risk assessments, and the AGAI 2003 goes on to set out the duties of the Regimental Adventurous Training Officer (RATO) including 'Ensuring the expedition leader has carried out an exercise risk assessment'.[106]

JSP 419 (2016) refers to High Risk and/or Remote Panels which determine if an expedition is high risk or going to a remote area in which case the leader 'must attend a HR&R Panel which will fully assess the feasibility of the Expedition'.[107] The criteria for that assessment being set out which includes '(a) detailed Risk Assessment' with the process being outlined in JSP 375, Part 2, Vol 1, Ch 40.[108]

[104]Ibid, paragraph 21.
[105]Fn 52. Memorandum dated 21 December 1962.
[106]AGAI 2003 para 11.017; AGAI 2003 para 11.019 g.
[107]JSP 417 2016 Pt 2, Ch 3 (V 1.0 Jan 16) paragraph 2c.
[108]JSP 417 2016 Pt 2, Ch 3 (V 1.0 Jan 16) Annex A paragraph 3; JSP 419 Pt 1 Directive (V1.0 Jan 16) paragraph 30.

The Army Adventurous Training Group 2002

The Command and Control of Adventurous Training in the United Kingdom (2001) Study identified major weaknesses in the provision of AT to the Army mainly from the lack of overall co-ordination between many disparate elements, including some called 'black economy' facilities unofficially funded by units. It recommended the establishment of an Adventurous Training Group (Army) (ATG(A)) and (paragraph 20) that the Headquarters of the Army Physical Training Corps should take control of all AT requirements and training courses. [109] The Study was approved by Headquarters Land Command on 31 January 2002 and directed the establishment of the Group under command Regional Forces with the implementation team formed in April 2002.[110]

By 2003 the Directorate of Individual Training (Army) had set out the Armed Forces Physical Development Policy recognising three core pillars namely physical education, AT and sport. The Army AT Policy (2003) was in Annex B. The policy refers to the Joint Services AT Centres which conduct recognised AT training; it sets out the scope of the formal training, which accords with the Levels 1 to 5 noted above; provides that 'The Field Army is mandated (and publicly funded) to provide directed low level AT for seven days annually for 20% of the force. Units within the Field Army were encouraged to mount AT expeditions where training programmes and availability of resources permit.'; that the JSAT and Expeditions were supported by both public and non-public funding; that the Army was to provide canoeing, caving, mountaineering and skiing. [111]

The new ATG(A) undertook A Review of Adventurous Training in the Army (2003) setting out the role of AT as,

> AT is an essential part of tri-Service training. It develops leadership, inter-dependency, physical courage and mental robustness. Properly conducted, it provides the opportunity in a physically challenging and mentally demanding outdoor environment to experience danger and hardship. It contributes

[109]Ministry of Defence, *Study into the C² of Adventurous Training in the United Kingdom*. The author has only been able to obtain the second draft dated 18 June 2001. (C² means Command and Control).

[110]HQ Land Command letter dated 31 January 2002 reference LAND/Trg/PAT/2120.

[111]Directorate of Individual Training (Army), *Armed Forces Physical Development Policy*, circulated by letter dated 26 November 2002, reference D/DTTrg(A)/11815/4. Annex B to D/DGTE/4/1713 dated 1 Aug 03, Adventurous Training Policy & see paragraphs 3, 9b., 10, 11,14 & 14b.

> significantly to the development of fighting power. The conduct of AT as a G3 training activity undoubtedly adds to the "cutting edge" absent from the Armies of so many of our allies and potential adversaries. AT is also enjoyable, exciting and rewarding. It makes a positive contribution to recruiting, motivation and retention. The opportunity to take part in AT is a fundamental part of the soldiering 'contract'.'

and that ATG(A)'s mission was:

> to provide focus and pan-Army C2 for AT conducted at Army-sponsored AT centres; on OTX; Expeditions and Operations; and multi-activity AT conducted by units or at Army AT lodges; in order to enhance the physical, mental and environmental preparedness of soldiers for operations.[112]

Since then, the ATG(A) opened a new era and mission for AT within the Army and now provides opportunities 'for anyone to pursue Adventurous Training to the highest level. Whether to summit Everest without oxygen, wreck dive off the coast of New Zealand, white-water kayak the Sjoa River in Norway or skiing first descents in Greenland.'[113]

The foreword by the Commander, Home Command AT, to the ATG(A) guide sets the scene:

> Physical and mental fitness are essential to our people, as is fighting spirit and the will to win; leadership, team cohesion, inclusivity, self-confidence, resilience and determination are also critical to our success. The British Army promotes Adventurous Training because it develops and nurtures all of these attributes in our people and enhances our military capability.'[114]

It lists the AT activities as summer, winter and alpine mountaineering, klettersteiging (or via ferrata climbing), rock climbing, mountain biking, Nordic and alpine skiing, ski mountaineering, winter climbing, caving, inland kayaking, open canoeing, sea kayaking, sub aqua diving, offshore sailing, paragliding, freefall parachuting and gliding.

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[112] Adventurous Training Group, *A Review of Adventurous Training in the Army*, ATG(A)/27 dated 30 November 2003.

[113] https://www.army.mod.uk/learn-and-explore/about-the-army/corps-regiments-and-units/army-adventurous-training-group/ (Accessed 16/6/2025)

[114] ATG(A), *Army Adventurous Training, the Guide*, Army AT Guide ADRo10025 JSMTC Guide 2021 v7. (Available only to army personnel).

Conclusions

It has been shown that within the Army AT can be traced back to the 1930s and a time when there was no policy to determine what was AT or determine how it was to be controlled. In the post-war period that situation continued alongside an evolution in AT that was influenced by the Character Training Industry's activities. Army AT only began as an on-duty activity in the early 1960s and even then was mainly conducted on an ad hoc basis, and at unit level, alongside some major expeditions organised by individuals within the Army, the Services as a whole or by Sports Associations. By the end of the 1960s individual Service AT centres, such as the Mountain Training Centres in Wales and Scotland, had been established to provide formal AT training for individuals. Army AT was also extended to include Army Reservists, the WRAC and the ACF, and by the early 1970s was re-organised on a Joint Service basis with major expeditions needing a scientific or research basis to justify them. That basis gradually disappeared until at Army level the establishment of the Adventure Training Group (Army) in 2002. This brought in a new AT era which is outside the scope of this article although AT remains a central component of Army training. It has also been shown that Army AT has supported a number of major expeditions as well as it being delivered at unit level; with support through the progressive evolution of policy enshrined within the various JSPs, AGAIs and Directives.

An understanding of AT's evolution in the period from 1960 to 2008 shows how Army AT has become more inclusive, how policy has in general followed practice, while the Army adopted and adapted AT within its training regime, at a time when the Army was looking for ways to provide a substitute for active service.