

ICE WORK BY PUPILS



WINNER Pupil with charity medal

Ten young Arctic explorers from Edinburgh have been awarded a prestigious Polar Academy Medal.

The pupils, aged 14 to 17, from Broughton High School and Fettes College completed the 10-day, 100km expedition in Eastern Greenland, in temperatures as low as -25C. It was a life-changing experience for the teens, who previously suffered a lack of self-confidence and esteem.

Craig Mathieson, founder of charity The Polar Academy, said: "These ordinary pupils have achieved the extraordinary by pushing themselves to the limit." ■ www.thepolaracademy.org

PATH TO SUCCESS

Ramblers Scotland are celebrating the reopening of an important Fife path.

The off-road route, linking Lochgelly and Cowdenbeath, was blocked for almost a year using locks, fences, anti-theft paint and nails. This contravened Scottish access rights and a campaign was launched to re-open the Fife Council designated "core path".

Brendan Paddy, director of Ramblers Scotland, said: "The public response has once again emphasised how much people value access rights in Scotland. We're really pleased the problem appears to be resolved."

GEAR OF THE WEEK

Dynafit Elevation Polartec Alpha Running Jacket

This highly breathable jacket is for runners who prefer higher altitudes.

A thin layer of warming Polartec Alpha insulation claims to stop over-heating and excessive sweating. The outershell is water resistant. The jacket comes in a male and female design, priced around £170. ■ www.dynafit.com & outdoors stores.



Climb every mountain

WHAT GOES UP
Challenging ascents are followed by thrilling descents



FIONA RUSSELL

Saddle up and set off on a thrilling uphill adventure to tackle some of the best bike routes in new book Cycling Climbs of Scotland. Here, author Simon Warren lists his top five.

Few cyclists like riding uphill – but many enjoy ticking off a list of challenges, as well as the thrilling descent afterwards.

This is how various climbs in the UK have become must-dos for riders. But where are the best cycling hills in Scotland and how many have you done?

Keen cyclist and author Simon Warren has compiled a list of top hills in the new book, *Cycling Climbs of Scotland*.

Warren is also the name behind the best-selling 100 Greatest Cycling Climbs and Another 100 Greatest Cycling Climbs.

Of *Cycling Climbs of Scotland*, he writes: "Wild, remote, windswept and downright epic, the climbs of Scotland are not for the faint of heart."

"Crossing weather-beaten islands and often snow-covered mountains, the great roads demand respect and are often set in scenes of indescribable beauty."

"The famous glens and lochs that draw visitors from around the globe are the backdrop to legends such as The Lecht, The Talla Wall and the one and only Bealach na Ba.

"So if you like your cycling rough and rugged and if you crave fresh air and pristine wilderness, then head north to tackle the *Cycling Climbs of Scotland*."

Simon lists five of his favourite bike climbs, of the 60 listed in the book published by Frances Lincoln this month priced £8.99.

1. THE WALL OF TALLA
Where: Tweedsmuir, Borders
Length: 1725m
Height gain: 149m

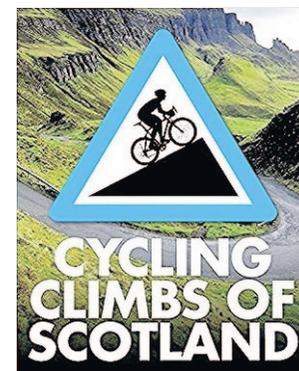
Following the edge of the Talla Reservoir, I spied what looked like a road cutting up the hillside ahead.

I thought, 'No, it can't be, it's way too steep'.

But then as I drew closer, it dawned on me – this was indeed the road – and what a climb. Right from its bottom corner, the narrow sliver of tarmac



SUMMIT SPECIAL Bealach na Ba in Applecross features in Simon's book



rockets skyward, hitting 20 per cent almost right away. It continues in this vein up to the small bridge crossing the reservoir then thankfully eases to the eventual summit.

2. LOWTHER HILL
Where: Wanlockhead, Dumfries & Galloway
Length: 3850m
Height gain: 273m

When ridden following the ascent of the Mennock Pass from base to summit, you get close to 14 kilometres of constant climbing before you reach the top.

The higher reaches that are the best, after leaving the B797 just outside Wanlockhead. Winding through the hillside in search of the giant radar at the top, the closer you get, the tougher the climb becomes. It has countless bends and stunning views in all directions.

3. THE SERPENTINE
Where: Rothesay, Isle of Bute
Length: 775m
Height gain: 74m

When I first saw this climb with its amazing bends, I was stunned. On the approach up Castle Road in Rothesay, you see the spectacular concertina of hairpins above and feel a surge of adrenaline.

First you twist left, then right, before you negotiate Mount Pleasant Road to tackle The Serpentine itself. And with 14 tight corners from base to summit, it's enough to send you dizzy.

4. THE LECHT
Where: Cock Bridge, Aberdeenshire
Length: 3010m
Height gain: 245m

A true monster of a climb through the heart of the Cairngorms National Park, the road up to the Lecht Ski Centre is also a stunning ride.

The ascent starts from the beautiful Corgarff Castle and straight away you hit 20 per cent slopes. It is rough, relentlessly steep and a little twisting. After a short breather during a slight downhill midway, there, in front of you, painted on to the side of the mountain and resembling a giant flight of stairs, lies the rest of the climb. It's an awesome sight.

5. BEALACH NA BA
Where: Applecross, Ross & Cromarty
Length: 8980m
Height gain: 623m

This is it: the Holy Grail. The toughest and wildest climb in Britain. Believe the hype. Anything you have heard about this amazing road is true. The nine kilometres of rough road clings precariously to the mountainside as it delivers you into true wilderness. As the final bends come into view, you must first tackle an endless, soul destroying 20 per cent slope before you reach the four majestic hairpins that deliver you to the summit of this infamous tangle of tarmac.

Join me on my adventures in Scotland's great outdoors by checking out my award-winning website at www.fionaoutdoors.co.uk. You'll find lots of great information about walking, cycling, running and other outdoor activities, as well as kit reviews.

Advice and ideas