

## **Simon and Jillian's Christmas Newsletter**

2003 has been another busy and active year for us both. In February we headed off to Val d'Isère in France for our annual skiing trip. Jillian spent the week getting to grips with the more extreme side of skiing, following an instructor who liked to spend more time in the air than in contact the snow!

On return to work, Simon was promoted to Vice President which despite requiring him to spend more time at work has not had any serious impact on his outdoor activities.

Much of the spring and early summer was spent training for our trip to the Alps in August. This included numerous long weekends away to the Lake District and Snowdonia where we spent the time slogging up steep hills in uncharacteristically hot weather.

At the end of August we returned to France, this time to the Chamonix Valley to commence the Tour du Mont Blanc (TMB). This is a long distance trek which circumnavigates the Mont Blanc Plateau and passes through France, Switzerland, and Italy in the space of ten days (see the Travels section of our website for more details). During the ten days of walking we were treated to fantastic weather and magnificent views with the average daily temperature not falling below 25°C. The whole trip was extremely enjoyable, marred only by the fact that Jillian contracted food poisoning on the way home (not from the camp cooking or from a dodgy restaurant, but at Geneva Airport in the cleanest country in Europe!)

Whilst at home, we've made some progress on the wilderness that we call the back garden including major tree surgery and the installation of a new fence. We have also drawn up plans and received planning permission to build a new extension and patio, the building work for which we hope will start early in the New Year.

At the Mountaineering Club Christmas party we managed to sign ourselves up for some more gnarly outings next year (it's amazing what otherwise rational people will volunteer themselves for after a couple of drinks!).

The adventures for next year include a trip to the Costa Blanca (climbing, not sunbathing!) and exploring the Via Ferrata of the Italian Dolomites. We are also looking forward to the arrival of Simon's sister's new baby in January.

We look forward to seeing many of our friends over the festive period and wish you all a Happy Christmas and New Year

Simon and Jillian, December 2003