

# Issues faced by alpine clubs in the modern era

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## **Hosts**

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Finally, I would like to thank and acknowledge the support of my friends and family, especially my wife Willemyn.

# Executive Summary

**(For a list of Key Learnings, please refer to page 40.)**

National scale Alpine Clubs provide critical governance, networking and services to climbers all over the world. The International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (UIAA) represents over 3 million climbers from more than 80 member federations on six continents and over sixty countries across the world. The largest and most influential of these Alpine Clubs are European. The New Zealand Alpine Club (NZAC) and the broader New Zealand outdoor recreation community can learn from the experience and example of European Alpine Clubs.

In recent years, issues such as the regulatory management of risk, environmental impacts, the gender balance of climbing and youth engagement with the outdoors have become increasingly prominent.

Without repeating the Key Learnings outlined on page 40, there are some key points for the casual reader.

Firstly, New Zealand is not unique in its sense of anxiety over these issues. Even the largest and most progressive Alpine Clubs of Europe and UIAA itself have similar concerns. They are equally motivated to address these issues and open to solutions.

Secondly, NZAC is highly regarded amongst European alpine clubs and the UIAA. For its relatively small size, it is held in high esteem. NZAC should be confident that it can contribute to the international discourse and be valued for its input. There is scope for NZAC to take a more internationalist approach and play a bigger hand in the functioning of the UIAA. A concrete step in that direction would be to pay closer reference to the UIAA Kathmandu Declaration (1982) and the UIAA Environmental Objectives and Guidelines (1997).

Thirdly, NZAC would benefit a great deal by making efforts to engage with European alpine clubs. While no single club has a 'silver bullet' for solving any particular issue. Each of major European Alpine Clubs have numerous initiatives, programmes and operational objectives that make incremental progress.

Finally, where it can, NZAC should seek to stay ahead of regulatory and public pressure to resolve these issues. The most successful European alpine clubs assume a quasi-governmental role in the management of alpine areas and issues that concern the alpine environment. This will require NZAC to be bold, confident and authoritative on the issues that concern its members most. Advocacy and self-regulation of the climbing community should be a major function of NZAC.

# Introduction

Modern climbing, as we have come to know it, came into existence in the late 1700s with the first ascent of Mt Blanc in the French Alps. The first Alpine Club was formed in the United Kingdom in 1857.

Climbing is a sport that does not necessarily require communal ownership of assets, does not lend itself to regular competition or teams and in its simplest form only requires an individual motivated to climb something. So, it perhaps somewhat unsuspecting that climbers have so readily formed themselves into collective bodies. But the formation of Alpine Clubs and their enthusiastic membership is a phenomenon that has transcended generations and cultures.

There have been perhaps thousands of small localised Alpine Clubs formed amongst climbers across the world. The International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (UIAA) represents over 3 million climbers from more than 80 member federations on six continents and over sixty countries across the world. The size of national Alpine Clubs varies from a few dozen members to well over a million. The scope of activities undertaken by national Alpine Clubs varies, but there are some prevalent commonalities.

All Alpine Clubs provide a network in which to share climbing experiences and information, as well as socially engage with other climbers. Where clubs are present in the area in which alpine climbing occurs, it is common for Alpine Clubs to play a hand in the provision of mountain accommodation facilities such as lodges, huts or bivouacs. Larger Alpine Clubs have an interest in the provision of climbing instruction, both to increase the safety and skills of new members, and to introduce new people to the sport. Another strong commonality is the publication of an annual Alpine Journal that chronicles the most important feats of climbing in the Clubs realm, over the previous year.

In my time, as General Manager of the New Zealand Alpine Club, it has been a privilege and a joy to oversee the abundant positive outputs of the Club. But in many cases, national Alpine Clubs serve, by default, as the national body for a range of activities including mountaineering, rock climbing and ski touring. They also serve a leadership role in the physical space in which they carry out their activities. Climbing has inherent risks which regularly results in human fatalities. These factors combine to place a certain degree of responsibility on national Alpine Clubs.

When formulating my proposal to the Sir Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, it quickly became apparent that the question of “what issues do modern Alpine Clubs face?” would be so broad, as to be inefficient and wasteful. It was necessary to focus on what I knew to be three common emerging issues of concern amongst the larger and more national Alpine Clubs. My approach had to be “These are common issues. How are you dealing with them?”

Those three issues are:

## **Risk management and the regulatory environment.**

Alpine Clubs can often become the lightning rod and institutional apologist for the risks of climbing. Over the course of mountaineering history, safety and risk management has become more codified and regulated. The pace of that change seems to have quickened in recent years. This has usually been driven by broader societal shifts and governments, but the more successful Alpine Clubs had influenced and in some cases, led, that change.

At the same time, there is a demand from the membership for Alpine Clubs to resist encroachment into an individual's right to take their own risks or what has become encapsulated in the term "Freedom of the Hills."

### **Environmental pressure - protection of water sources and the removal of human waste.**

In many cases, Alpine Clubs have assumed the role of quasi-environmental advocates. Typically, climbers have an appreciation and fondness for unpolluted and lightly developed environments, in which to pursue their sport. In recent years, glaciated alpine areas have become the places of most obvious evidence of climate change. Even in mountainous areas where water is frozen into solid form, any pollution inevitably makes it way downhill to the more populated areas. Most mountainous areas serve as a catchment and water source for a human population. As such, Alpine Clubs have often shouldered the moral responsibility for protecting those water sources from pollution. The most pressing issue in that regard is how to manage the removal of human waste and waste water, of which climbers produce approximately 2 litres by volume per day. This is particularly the case where an Alpine Club owns or manages a form of mountain accommodation such as a hut, where visitors can reasonably expect for environmentally friendly toileting facilities to be provided. As visitor numbers to alpine areas increase, as has almost universally been the case, the problem intensifies.

### **Gender and youth engagement.**

For a variety of reasons, Alpine Clubs tend to have a gender imbalance. The New Zealand Alpine Club, for example, is comprised of only 20% females. It is widely accepted that Clubs and the wider sport would be stronger if a better gender balance was achieved and successful Alpine Clubs have invested a lot of energy and resource into doing so.

Similarly, regardless of how an Alpine Club defines 'youth', it is very common to have only a fraction of members join and remain members at a young age. By way of illustration, the average age of an NZAC member is 46. The average age of a member of the Japanese Alpine Club is 65. In climbing, especially mountaineering, the barriers to entry are high. Transport to and from the mountains is required. Equipment and Instruction can be expensive. Experience is hard-earned and the gratification of climbing is often not immediate. Encouraging young people to become members has obvious long-term benefits to Alpine Clubs. The extent to which they are successful in doing so, is a key determinant of any Alpine Clubs longevity and success.

By initially focusing on those three issues, I would come to learn a great deal about the Alpine Clubs themselves, how they have evolved, their strengths and weakness, and what lesson can be learnt for the New Zealand context. In fact, I came to regard those three issues as a conduit into a much larger investigation and appreciation of the Alpine Clubs I visited. These issues are fascinating in themselves, but were by no means the limits of what I came to learn.

# Alpine Club (UK)

## History

The Alpine Club (UK) was the first mountaineering club in the world and served as the model adopted by others in subsequent decades. Amidst the 'Golden Age' of mountaineering in the European Alps and the genesis of mountaineering as a recreational pursuit, the Alpine Club (UK) was formed in London in 1857.

At the time, and for many subsequent years, members were required to qualify themselves by way of establishing a respectable record of climbing in the Alps. For at least the first five decades, the Alpine Club (UK) resembled a gentlemen's club of the type that abounded in London. As is still the case today, new members are required to be nominated by existing members, who tended to be from the wealthier strata of society and who had the means to engage in recreational mountaineering abroad. Until the late twentieth century the club was headquartered on Saville Row, in Mayfair.

The Alpine Club (UK) membership was, for many years, reserved for males only. This exclusion was the catalyst for the formation of the Ladies' Alpine Club in 1907. Within a short time of opening membership to females, the two clubs were merged in 1974.

At various times throughout its history, the Alpine Club (UK) has been criticised about and challenged by its tendency to focus on expedition and exploration, as opposed to the development and celebration of technical climbing standards. This dissatisfaction has contributed to the formation of rival organisations such as the Alpine Climbing Group (1952) and the British Mountaineering Council (1944).

## Governance and management

The Alpine Club (UK) is governed by a committee made up of the president, two vice presidents, a treasurer, a secretary, the journal editor and a librarian. The Committee is responsible for the management of the club and its operations. It employs two paid staff: a general manager - Ursula Haerberli and an administrator - Iwonna Hudowska.

The appointment of a general manager is a relatively recent change to the organisational structure and, at the time of my interview, Ursula had only been in the newly created role for a matter of months. She was extremely interested in the scope and duties of my role as general manager of NZAC.

Beneath the Committee of the Alpine Club, there are a variety of sub-committees responsible for the functions of climbing and events, finance, marketing, membership and recruitment, and property. This is similar to NZAC, except that the chairs of the sub-committees of the Alpine Club (UK) do not sit on the main committee, as at NZAC.

In addition to the Committee, sub-committees and staff, there are numerous officers of the Alpine Club (UK) who are responsible for an extraordinary range of functions. These vary from organising lectures and liaising with other organisations to carrying out various operational tasks such as archiving or maintaining the website.

In contrast to many of its international counterparts, the Alpine Club (UK) does not have a prominent section, branch or regional structure. This can be seen as both a strength and a weakness when compared to other alpine clubs.

A distinctive feature of the Alpine Club (UK) is the prominence of the Club Library. For commercial and legal reasons, the club has seen it fit to separate the Club Library from the main body and establish it as a separate legal entity. The library leases a significant proportion of the club's headquarters in London. In practice, a visitor or member is not necessarily aware of the distinction between the club and the library, as they run conjointly.

## Membership

The Alpine Club (UK) is very unusual amongst alpine clubs globally, in that it retains a nomination and qualification process for membership. The practice of only affording membership to established climbers with a record of ascents was common amongst alpine clubs in the early 20th Century, but has been largely abandoned.

Currently the Alpine Club (UK) has a membership structure made up of three parts. *Associate membership* is for people who have not yet made any technical ascents or who have a non-climbing interest in the alpine realm (literature, art, history etc). An *Aspirant member* is a climber who is in the process of accruing the requisite number of technical ascents. It is expected that aspirant members have some experience climbing at the PD grade and are working their way towards full membership. *Full members* of the Alpine Club (UK) are required to have climbed 20 or more technical routes in the European Alps, over at least three seasons. Applications to become a full member of the Alpine Club (UK) require a letter of support to be written by an existing member of the club, termed a proposer. Each application is reviewed and decided upon by the Membership Committee.

Relative to the vast majority of other alpine clubs around the world, the traditional and rigorous membership process of requiring a record of ascents and a nominator is unusual. Virtually all other alpine clubs have opened their membership to anyone willing to pay the requisite membership fee.

As a consequence, the membership of the Alpine Club (UK) is relatively low at just over 1,500 individuals in 2015. Approximately 10 per cent of members are female, which is regarded as extremely low by other international alpine clubs. This proportion is expected to improve slowly, as 13 per cent of new members are female. Fifteen per cent of the membership is based outside of the United Kingdom.

The annual membership fee for a full member of the Alpine Club (UK) is £55, which is at the higher end of the world spectrum. This can possibly be attributed to the club's modest size and lack of economies of scale. The major benefits of membership are a copy of the club's annual alpine journal, various other club newsletters and bulletins, access to the Club Library and various events, including evening lectures and climbing meets.

## Functions and operations

The scope of operations of the Alpine Club (UK) is slightly narrower than its European counterparts, largely due to the fact that there is no genuinely alpine terrain in the UK. While winter climbing in Scotland, Wales and the Peak District is technically demanding, the peaks

are of modest altitude and the routes short. The vast majority of technical climbing undertaken by Alpine Club (UK) members is in the European Alps.

Both historically and presently, the focus of the Alpine Club (UK) has been the networking of members by way of lecture evenings and climbing meets in the French Alps. Lecture evenings are organised on a regular basis at five locations across the UK and attract anywhere from 10 to 100 members at a time. Climbing meets are typically held in Scotland during the winter and Chamonix during the summer. The organisation of climbing meets and lectures is devolved from the national headquarters, which has very little involvement with the organisation.

A clear impression that I got from my visit and interviews at the Alpine Club (UK) headquarters, was the priority and effort placed on the administration and operation of the Club Library, archives and photographic collection. The extent to which the club's funds, volunteers and staff time were committed to that area of the club was quite notable.

The Alpine Club (UK) has a very limited instructional focus and has only one hut that it jointly owns with the British members of the Swiss Alpine Club.

## **Strengths and weaknesses**

The Alpine Club (UK) holds a unique position with regard to its history and traditions, in that it was the first alpine club to be founded and has possibly deviated the least from what alpine clubs historically resembled. Its sense of history and stability undoubtedly engenders a degree of brand loyalty founded amongst its members, but also admirers abroad.

A pertinent example of this is the annual Alpine Club Dinner. This is a grand affair that typically attracts 1,500 attendees, of which many are not members. The high cost of tickets means that it serves as a critical fundraising mechanism for the Alpine Club (UK), as well as a powerful promotional tool.

The Alpine Club (UK) has rather uniquely retained a membership standard that requires each potential member to submit a record of 20 ascents. While a minimum standard of technical ability and success was common amongst several other alpine clubs in the past, it is extremely rare in modern times. This restricted entry has served as a double-edged sword for the Alpine Club (UK). It has almost certainly limited the number of members the club has and contributed to the emergence of numerous other mountaineering and climbing clubs across the UK, as well as the much larger over-arching British Mountaineering Council (BMC). This is especially the case for novice mountaineers, who are excluded from the Alpine Club (UK) and seek out the instructional opportunities made available by other clubs.

On the other hand, a minimum proficiency requirement lends the club and its members a certain confidence in itself and each other. At any given climbing meet or interaction between members, there is less anxiety over safety and competence than there would otherwise be. The club and its members are assured by the process that each member has proven themself as an experienced and capable mountaineer.

Expedition funding is a considerable focus of the Alpine Club (UK). Nearly all alpine clubs have some form of expedition funding or support, but it is more prominent within the Alpine Club (UK). This could be attributed to a few reasons. Firstly, having a basis of proven experience and skill relative to their international counterparts, it is possible that members of the Alpine Club (UK) are inherently more likely to be interested in challenging themselves in

the more remote and demanding great ranges of the world. Secondly, given the limited mountainous terrain of the UK, travelling abroad to undertake mountaineering objectives is fundamental to a British climber's experience of the sport.

The library, photographic collection and archives of the Alpine Club (UK) are a significant feature. During my visit, I was surprised by the extent to which their management and sustainability is focussed on this. They are certainly impressive and valuable. Over many years, members have donated and bequeathed an extraordinary range and quantity of material. However, it was my observation that the sheer quantity is proving to be more of a liability than an asset. At the time of my visit, staff and volunteers were grappling with the problems associated with making the material available to members in a way that is not excessively time consuming or costly. For many years, it has been the objective of the Alpine Club (UK) to commercialise the photographic collection by selling the rights to use images to authors and others. This struck me as an unlikely commercial proposition. More broadly, it was my impression that the Alpine Club (UK) expends too much time and energy on their historical collections, at the cost of other operations typical of other alpine clubs.

In recent years, membership of the Alpine Club (UK) has benefited from the appointment of Mick Fowler as president. Mick Fowler is an internationally recognised alpinist and expedition mountaineer of considerable fame within the global climbing community. His presidency of the Alpine Club (UK) has been characterised by a strong marketing focus, the appointment of a paid general manager and increased membership. During my visit, it was made clear to me that the Alpine Club (UK) made no apologies for leveraging the reputation of Mick Fowler for the purposes of increasing membership.

## **Responses to common challenges**

### **Risk management and the regulatory environment**

During the course of my visit to the Alpine Club (UK), the staff and volunteers I spoke to did not express any concerns about risk management and the regulatory and cultural environment. Nor was it conveyed that the Alpine Club (UK) expended much energy considering it. Many of the issues relating to risk management and the regulatory environment that are faced by other alpine clubs are avoided or mitigated by the Alpine Club (UK) due to several of its inherent facets.

As members of the club are, by way of the membership standard, experienced and capable climbers, they are less likely to incur the accidents and fatalities that novices are susceptible to. In a similar vein, the Alpine Club (UK) does not run any novice instruction courses, which can be problematic from a risk perspective.

On the occasions that members do organise meets or camps, organisers can be assured that the members are attending are of an experienced and capable standard. There is almost no club headquarters involvement in the organisation of club meets, other than their promotions via various communication channels. Volunteer meet coordinators and leaders set the timing and venue of the meet, but are not considered by the club as responsible for its safety or risk management. Attendees climb in autonomous groups or alone and do not act under a duty of care provided by the club or meet organisers.

Additionally, many of the meets or camps are held in jurisdictions outside of the UK. This seems to mitigate a great deal of anxiety over risk management for the club.

### **Environmental pressure - protection of water sources and the removal of human waste**

Unlike the larger Alpine Clubs of Europe or even NZAC, the Alpine Club (UK) does not own or manage a network of accommodation assets in the mountain environment. As such, it does not concern itself with the methods and technology of waste disposal at scale. In a similar vein, the fact that the majority of mountaineering undertaken by its members is outside of the UK, the Alpine Club (UK) does not take a leadership role in environmental advocacy for mountain areas. Even in the limited mountain regions within the UK, which members utilise for winter mountaineering, other large organisations such as the BMC take the lead in these issues.

The Alpine Club (UK) makes it very clear that it has adopted the UIAA Ethical Code for Expeditions and the much more pertinent Kathmandu Declaration on Mountain Activities.

#### **Articles of the Kathmandu Declaration on Mountain Activities**

1. There is an urgent need for effective protection of the mountain environment and landscape.
2. The flora, fauna and natural resources of all kinds need immediate attention, care and concern.
3. Actions designed to reduce the negative impact of man's activities on mountains should be encouraged.
4. The cultural heritage and the dignity of the local population are inviolable.
5. All activities designed to restore and rehabilitate the mountain world need to be encouraged.
6. Contacts between mountaineers of different regions and countries should be increasingly encouraged in the spirit of friendship, mutual respect and peace.
7. Information and education for improving the relationship between man and his environment should be available for wider and wider sections of society.
8. The use of appropriate technology for energy needs and the proper disposal of waste in the mountain areas are matters of immediate concern.
9. The need for more international support - governmental as well as non-governmental - to the developing mountain countries, for instance, in matters of ecological conservation.
10. The need for widening access to mountain areas in order to promote their appreciation and study should be unfettered by political considerations.

The Kathmandu Declaration was made in 1982. While it does not prescribe specific environmental issues, techniques or mitigations, its broad principles are worth reference.

### **Gender and youth engagement**

The Alpine Club (UK) has made significant efforts to engage more young people in recent years. The most recent president of the club, Mick Fowler, is an alpinist of international renown and celebrity. His agenda as president has been to increase the number of young

people engaging with the club and to increase public profile of the club by way of a marketing focus. In doing so, he has leveraged his own personal brand for the benefit of the club. In recent years there has been an increased number of meets for aspirant members and younger climbers. The focus of expedition climbing has been skewed towards cutting edge alpinism carried out by relatively young climbers. While these steps are admirable, they are not borne out of any governance-level strategy. Ultimately, the youth engagement of the Alpine Club (UK) will always be limited by its membership structure. It takes years of effort to successfully complete the requisite 20 climbs. The time and expense associated with the travel to the European Alps is a challenge for young people seeking membership.

Female membership of the Alpine Club (UK) constitutes only 10 per cent of the total. This is by far the lowest of the alpine clubs I visited. It was noted that 13 per cent of new memberships in the previous year were female. That is moving in a positive direction, but at a glacial rate. I suggest it would take a comprehensive and focused strategy by the Alpine Club (UK) to rectify their gender imbalance, but in my discussions with various staff and office holders, it was not identified as an issue.

# The Alpine Club of Italy (*Club Italiano Alpino*)

## History

The Club Italiano Alpino (CAI) was formed in 1863 at Valentino Castle in Turin, near the mountainous region that adjoins the Alps of Switzerland and France. The formation of the CAI was instigated by Quintino Sella, a notable mineralogist and mountaineer who was even more famous for serving as Italy's Minister of Finance on three occasions.

The CAI was modelled on the original Alpine Club (UK), as were several other alpine clubs that emerged in Europe in the 1860s. The CAI had considerable size and scope at its genesis, with over 200 enthusiastic mountaineers as founding members.

At various times, the CAI has absorbed smaller local mountaineering clubs. Notably, the Society of Tridentine Alpinists based in the Dolomite region of Trento is now the largest section of the CAI after being absorbed in 1920.

Initially headquartered in Turin, the CAI has based itself in Milan since the late 1940s. The CAI's National Mountain Museum, which I visited, is also based in Milan.

## Governance and management

The sheer size of the CAI necessitates a multi-layered federal governance structure.

The highest decision making body of the CAI is the *l'assemblea dei delegate* or Assembly of Delegates. This body is made up of the president of each section and an additional elected delegate for every 500 members that each Section has. The Assembly of Delegates elects the president of the CAI and the three vice presidents.

The Central Steering Committee is responsible for directing and controlling the implementation of the programmes and policies that have been agreed upon by the Assembly of Delegates. It very much resembles the Executive Committee of NZAC and its relationship with NZAC's Club Committee, albeit on a much, much greater scale.

The CAI is made up of 501 sections and 370 sub-sections as at 2015. Primarily, those sections are based on geography, but there are several national sections that base themselves on non-geographical criteria such as being a mountaineering guide or involvement in mountain search and rescue. Each section has relative autonomy and is at liberty to have its own rules and constitution, as long as it is not contradictory to those of the national body. Sections are responsible for the management of the refugios (mountain huts) in their area and the larger ones run instruction.

While it was not made apparent to me during my meeting with the president of the CAI, perhaps due to the language barrier, I have discovered in the course of my own research that there is another layer of governance that sits in between the sections and the central organisation. Regional groups are made up of sections of the CAI, organised on a geographical basis that reflects the regional structure of the Italian government. Each regional group resembles the central organisation in that they have a regional assembly of delegates, a regional management committee and a regional president. Each regional group can have their own rules and constitutions, as long as they do not contradict those of the

central organisation. The primary purpose of having the regional group tier of governance within the CAI is to liaise with the local government of Italy that exists at that *regional* level.

Another interesting feature of the governance structure of the CAI is the existence of a quasi-judicial system. The *collegio probiviric* or Board of Arbitrators, carries out the function of internal justice and conflict resolution within the CAI. It has two levels. The *collegio regionale dei probiviri* sits at the regional group level and the *collegio nazionale dei probiviri*, which serves as a kind of appeal court and sits at the national level.

## Membership

Like most of the European alpine clubs, the CAI counts its members in the hundreds of thousands, rather than the thousands or hundreds. As at 2015, the membership of the CAI was just over 320,000. This has fallen slightly over the previous three years. Depending on the variable component of the membership fee levied by each section, annual membership can cost anywhere between €46 and €60.

Benefits of CAI membership are fairly typical, including discounts on refugio fees, guidebooks and instruction. However, overwhelmingly the major driver of membership to the CAI, as it is to most continental European alpine clubs, is the insurance cover and mountain rescue service that is automatically afforded to each member of the CAI and legally required of all climbers in Italy. The CAI office holders that I spoke to were very clear about the primacy of insurance and rescue services to the CAI membership and are under no illusion that for the clear majority of members, it is the sole reason to join the club.

It has not been possible to obtain figures relating to the gender or age breakdown of the CAI membership.

## Functions and operations

The CAI is typical of the European clubs in that it views the provision of accident and rescue insurance very much as business as usual, and an unremarkable function unworthy of much attention. It also sees the networking and social connection of members as an intrinsic part of the club that does not require much explaining or effort. Within the confines of our language barrier, the president of the CAI did not show any particular interest in discussing those aspects of the CAI.

The CAI has a broad ranging instruction programme delivered by volunteers by way of its sections. In addition to the typical disciplines of snowcraft, ice climbing and rock climbing, there are a variety of courses available in subjects such as the mountain environment and mountain protection. The CAI receives approximately €12 million per annum in funding from the Italian federal government for the instruction it provides.

The provision of refugios is a major function of the CAI. In total, the CAI has over 400 accommodation assets on public land, not including the various offices and section headquarters in urban centres. The management, maintenance and especially the ownership of refugios are vested with the individual sections of the CAI, which were largely responsible for their construction. The larger refugios are typically managed by paid staff and/or contracted out to private concessionaires for the summer season.

A somewhat unique function of the CAI, compared to other alpine clubs, is the role that it takes in the provision of via ferratta in the Dolomite Mountains of Northern Italy. While via ferratta exist in other parts of the European Alps, notably Switzerland, Austria and France – they are concentrated and exemplified in their abundance in Italy.

#### **Via ferratta – an explanation**

Translated to 'iron road', via ferratta were developed on the Austro-Italian border during WWI as a method of transporting troops and equipment through steep mountainous areas. Via ferratta involve fixed steel cables attached to rock faces at fixed points, ranging from three to 10 metres apart. Utilising a harness, sling and carabiners, a climber can secure themselves to the steel cable, whilst moving along the route. It allows movement through and across steep and exposed terrain, with very little risk. Participants are afforded all the thrill of the exposure of rock climbing, without requiring the associated equipment and training associated with the more difficult sport.

The installation of via ferratta has been undertaken by military, professional mountain guides, CAI volunteers and contracted professionals. But while the CAI is very much supportive and enthusiastic about the existing via ferratta, it has a policy of not allowing the construction of any new via ferratta. Not all via ferratta in Italy are monitored or maintained by sections of the CAI. Various regional tourism bodies have funded the development and maintenance of popular routes.

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

The long standing history and traditions of the CAI serve to buttress it from the vagaries of Italian political and cultural trends. In most of Northern Italy there is a deep-rooted mountain culture, where people have lived in the mountains for centuries. This is particularly evident in the relatively isolated German-speaking valleys near the Austrian border. The CAI is the institutional umbrella of this mountain culture and the popularity of climbing in Italy. As such, I suspect it will continue to enjoy healthy levels of membership.

That legitimacy is reinforced by financial support from the federal government and the requirement for climbers in Italy to have accident and rescue insurance, which the CAI has a near-monopoly on.

The CAI refugios, like huts provided by alpine clubs in other areas, are a great strength. Refugios greatly enhance the accessibility, convenience and safety of climbing in Italy. This is particularly true for novice climbers, families and those unwilling to camp out. On a collective level, refugios are a catalyst for section-level collaboration between members, as they require constant management, maintenance and administration. Refugios bring people together, both on the mountain and as section of the CAI.

The presence of extensive via ferratta in Italy is, in my view, a strength of the Italian climbing culture and the CAI. Via ferratta provide a uniquely safe and accessible way for people of all abilities to engage and interact with mountainous terrain. They can serve as an entry-point discipline into the more serious pursuits of rock climbing and mountaineering, or as a life-long pursuit in its own right. During the time I spent undertaking via ferratta trips during my study tour, I saw a variety and quantity of people enjoying the mountains in a way that I have not seen in any of the numerous other mountain regions I have visited. Critics will argue that via ferratta leave a permanent and unnatural impression on otherwise unmodified terrain.

## **Responses to common challenges**

### **Risk management and the regulatory environment**

The CAI expressed a great deal of anxiety, passion and concern when discussing issues around risk management and the regulatory environment. It is evident that they are topics that the CAI spends a great deal of time concerning itself with, at all levels.

By far their biggest concern is the risk of fatalities on club instruction courses, which has occurred at various times in recent years – unfortunately they were not able to give me figures on that. When a fatality occurs during a CAI activity, the club comes under intense media scrutiny and suffers with regard to public opinion. The most common criticism is the ‘wasted tax-payer funds on rescue’, even though in most cases insurance makes this criticism invalid.

The CAI gave me the distinct impression that it regards itself as an organisational ‘lightning rod’ with regard to these issues and, as such, feels much maligned. The impact of the public and regulatory response to such fatalities is very real. In several cases, some areas and activities have become forbidden or closed to the public, often by way of deeply entrenched legislation. The CAI officers I spoke to described these, using the English expression, as ‘knee-jerk’ reactions. They repeatedly referenced an instance in which the fatalities of some US citizens resulted in a disproportionate regulatory and legislative response. At the time of my interviews, I was unable to ascertain the specifics of that case and even subsequently have been unable to determine exactly which accident it was.

It was described to me that in the case of any mountaineering fatality in Italy, the public prosecutor is legally obligated to ‘open a file’ on the incident. It is then subsequently determined if the case is criminal and/or prosecutable. This legally enshrined process is a particular source of friction for the CAI who probably feel that it runs counter to their alpine spirit of adventure and acceptance of the fact that ‘accidents happen’.

In response to these challenges, the CAI has taken the expensive step of providing a form of legal insurance for all their volunteer instructors and trip leaders. This is in addition to the standard accident and rescue insurance and covers any legal costs incurred by their volunteers following a fatal accident. Further to this, the CAI is giving serious consideration to the idea of extending that legal insurance to all of its members. It has been the case that a surviving member of a climbing partnership, on a completely private and independent trip, has been held criminally accountable following a fatal accident. As at the time of my visit, the CAI had not made that extension of cover. However, it does speak to the level of their concern that they would even consider doing so.

### **Environmental pressure - protection of water sources and the removal of human waste**

The CAI is acutely aware and conscious of the fact that the fresh drinking water of the entire population of Italy is largely derived from alpine terrain. As such, the CAI is sensitive to the fact that their activities can come under close scrutiny and criticism from differing quarters.

On an individual climber level, the CAI encourages its members to behave in an environmentally responsible manner. The extent to which environmental responsibility is held in high esteem is evidenced by the fact that some of the numerous instruction courses that the CAI makes available, are focussed on the alpine environment and environmental protection. These instruction courses lie in the same realm as courses on technical skills and disciplines such as ice climbing and ski mountaineering. Also on an individual level, the CAI encourages a carry-out habit of human waste management, utilising a system which was translated to me as a 'shit-sack'.

On a collective level, the CAI is particularly concerned with the management of human waste and waste water from their network of over 400 refugios. It is my understanding that there are no national standards, established either by the CAI itself or the federal government, that must be adhered to by the refugios. However, it was my distinct impression that the CAI, under political and social pressure, holds itself to a higher standard than what would otherwise be imposed externally. The solutions to the problems of human waste and waste water are as diverse as the refugios themselves. Varying enormously in size, usage, altitude and geography, each refugio has systems that are specific to its situation.

In total, I visited 13 refugios of varying sizes and circumstances in the Dolomite Ranges of Northern Italy. Across the entire network of 400, each refugio is owned and managed by a section of the CAI. The smallest ones are unstaffed and managed by volunteers. In these cases, the climber carry-out concept is the norm. The larger refugios are managed and staffed by concessionaires, particularly in the summer months. The size and usage of these facilities require ongoing staff input into the operation of the various and complex reticulation systems, incineration systems, settling tanks and extraction transport methods that are utilised. In the middling-sized refugios, systems of human waste collection and periodic extraction are utilised in a way that is widely seen in New Zealand and very familiar to both NZAC and the Department of Conservation (DOC). In all cases, it is very clear that the CAI takes its duty of environmental care very seriously.

In a similar vein to its attitude to the regulation of risk, the CAI gave me the impression that it was sensitive to external criticism around environmental care. I was left with the impression that the CAI was trying to stay ahead of any possible negative publicity and making genuine efforts to exceed the expectations of the public.

## **Gender and youth engagement**

The CAI did not have gender split age breakdown membership figures to hand at the time of my visit and I have not been able to obtain them subsequently. The CAI does not have any specific programme or initiative to encourage female membership. In my discussions, it did not seem that they considered underrepresentation of females in their membership an issue. Indeed, there is no evidence either way of whether it is a problem.

In both the realms of gender and youth engagement, the CAI representatives I spoke to were confident that the club was moving the right direction. Youth is defined by the CAI as the ages between six and 18 years old. At the time of my visit, there were 30 youth groups within the CAI, spread across the country. These exist alongside and separate to the established geographic or special interest sections.

Similarly to most other alpine clubs in Europe and indeed, the NZAC, the CAI has an established programme of instruction courses and events that are exclusive to young members.

Aside from formal initiatives or any proactive agenda by the CAI, it was my impression whilst enjoying the network of via ferratta in Italy that the existence of such a safe and accessible means of recreating in the alpine areas makes it much easier for young people and females to become comfortable in the mountains than it would otherwise be. On any given via ferratta route, there were people from all age groups and genders enjoying the adventure. In this way, it can be seen that via ferratta are a fantastic means of introducing people to the alpine environment and the more intimidating disciplines of rock climbing and mountaineering.

# The German Alpine Club (*Deutscher Alpenverein*)

## History

The Deutscher Alpenverein (DAV) was initially founded as an offshoot of the Austrian Alpine Club. The Austrian Alpine Club was formed in 1862 and was focussed in Vienna. Dissatisfied with its focus on science and publications rather than exploration, a group of German mountaineers established the separate DAV in 1869.

The focus of the newly established DAV was the development of mountaineering and trans-alpine tramping in the Eastern Alps. Mountain huts, trails and via ferrata were established rapidly by a fast-expanding membership. The rapid expansion of the DAV to a size equalling, and then surpassing, the neighbouring Austrian Alpine Club, resulted in a merger in 1873. This created, by a wide margin, the largest alpine club in the world – a distinction that the DAV has held for many years since.

By the early 20th century, the combined German and Austrian Alpine Club (DuOAV) numbered over 100,000 members spread over more than 400 distinct sections, and had established over 300 mountain huts. In 1902 the Club Library was established and in 1911 the Alpine Museum, both in Munich. The mapping of the Eastern Alps in this period was carried out by the DAV. Cartography remains a central element of the modern DAV.

In the first half of the 20th Century, the DAV was guilty of institutional anti-semitism, with many sections expressly excluding Jews and banning them from the use of mountain huts.

Following the 1938 annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany, the DuOAV was renamed and converted into the mountaineering arm of the National Socialist League of the Reich for Physical Exercise. At the end of the Second World War, the allied occupation force dissolved the DAV and entrusted its assets (mainly mountain huts) to the care of the Austrian Alpine Club.

In 1950, the DAV was re-established with strict rules imposed by the allied occupiers about the separation and independence of the DAV youth wing from the main DAV.

In the second half of the 20th Century, the DAV increasingly concerned itself with mountain conservation, rather than development. This was perhaps because that the extraordinary work done in the previous 100 years had reached its developmental zenith.

The DAV today is by far the largest, wealthiest and most influential alpine club in the world.

## Governance and management

The DAV is governed, at the highest level, by a general assembly composed of representatives of each of the 353 sections. Beneath the General Assembly, which only meets once a year, sits what was translated to me as the Supervisory Board, referred to in literature as the Association Council.

The Supervisory Board is made up of 11 appointed regional representatives (regions being a supra-structure of sections), one youth representative and the seven members of the Presidium. The Supervisory Board meets three times a year and considers policy decisions.

It also undertakes medium and long term planning processes, before submitting plans for consideration by the General Assembly.

The Presidium is made up of the club president and six vice presidents. It serves as the professional management body of the DAV and is responsible for all functions of the DAV that are not expressly required by any other body. It oversees a staff of 140.

It should be noted that individual sections comprise up to 80,000 members, making them huge alpine clubs in their own right. Numerous sections of the DAV have their own paid staff, sometimes as many as 50 employees.

In accordance with German law, the youth arm of the DAV is an entirely separate legal entity to the DAV. Youth clubs in Germany are required to be governed by young people and for the benefit of young people, completely separate from the influence of any parent organisation. The *Jugend des Deutschen Alpenvereins* (JDAV) has a governance and management structure that mirrors the DAV and benefits greatly from its close association and support. However, the legal and political autonomy of the two organisations is strictly adhered to.

## **Membership**

During the interviews I conducted and a presentation that was given to me at the DAV headquarters in Munich, staff made the point very clearly that membership of the DAV is obtained by joining a section. In turn, membership of a section endows an individual with membership of the DAV as a national entity. The primacy of section membership was emphasised, even though it was clearly obvious that the federal DAV is the supremely functional and influential entity. The DAV staff only provided me with a broad figure of 1.1 million members of the DAV as a whole, but would happily provide the membership numbers of any given section which varied from 50 to 80,000. They claim that membership is increasing by three to four per cent per annum, which struck me as extraordinary.

Consistent with most other alpine clubs across Europe, membership is almost singularly driven by the benefit of accident and rescue insurance, which it is a legal obligation to have. The DAV enjoys a virtual monopoly of providing that service in Germany.

Depending on which section is joined, membership fees range from €40 to €100 - €30 of which is remitted to the central DAV. Benefits of membership vary from section to section, with each one producing its own annual journal. Consistent benefits across the entire DAV include six centrally published magazines every year, insurance, discounts and affiliation to the UIAA.

## **Functions and operations**

Befitting of its size, the DAV undertakes a huge range of functions and benefits from the economies of its scale in doing so.

Aside for the obvious provision of accident and rescue insurance, the DAV regards its primary operational purpose as the provision of huts and tracks, which it sees as a unitary function. In total, the DAV has 325 huts and maintains 30,000 kms of tracks. Sections assume the responsibility for and carry out the maintenance of huts and tracks in a particular area, utilising a combination of volunteers, contractors and concessionaires. Interestingly,

this area may be significantly removed from the sections catchment. Some sections of the DAV even look after huts and tracks in Austria and Switzerland. The DAV considers that the development of their mountains and climbing areas is complete and is no longer in the practice of building new huts or tracks, instead modifying existing structures if necessary.

By ways of its sections, the DAV delivers in excess of 100,000 trips or excursions each year. These are not necessarily mountaineering or rock climbing. Activities undertaken on section trips are as diverse as kayaking, singing and triathlon. In this sense, the DAV is a social club that is rooted in, but not restricted to, climbing.

The DAV has a very large and highly organised instructional function. Fifteen thousand DAV members are recognised by the club as volunteer instructors, with the requisite logged experience, training and club accreditation to instruct across a variety of disciplines including ice climbing, mountaineering, rock climbing and mountain biking. Three hundred and fifty members are involved in the training and accreditation of volunteer instructors – essentially assuming the role of ‘training the trainers.’ In addition to these, there are 3,500 youth instructors within the JDAV.

Increasingly, the DAV has taken a role in the advancement of conservation and preservation of mountain areas. This is not restricted to awareness and advocacy. It has real operational outputs such as signage, messaging and active participation in events by volunteer members. The staff I met with expressed a particular concern with climate change and its effects.

With regard to mountain safety, the DAV has assumed the role that most New Zealanders would associate with the Mountain Safety Council. The DAV takes a lead role in Germany in the realm of safety messaging, the establishment of safety standards and advising the government on the regulation of recreational activities in the mountains.

The DAV has several commercial arms that operate in relation to the club in a similar way that state owned enterprises relate to the New Zealand government. These include 250 indoor climbing gyms and a specialist tour operator that organises guided trips abroad. These entities are often criticised by their commercial rivals for enjoying certain tax advantages associated with club ownership.

The DAV has the preeminent role in the indoor rock climbing scene in Germany. As well as owning a significant proportion of the climbing gyms in Germany, it organises the sport climbing competitions and requires competitors to be a member of the DAV. The DAV selects the national teams that reorient Germany in the various international competitions.

## **Strengths and weaknesses**

The strength of the DAV lies in its sheer overwhelming size. By membership, revenue and influence it dwarves any other alpine club in the world. In fact, its membership is greater than the two next largest alpine clubs combined. With 3,500 members, the New Zealand Alpine Club would only be regarded as a medium sized section of the DAV. There are only a handful of national alpine clubs that are larger than the DAV’s largest section, which has over 80,000 members. Illustrative of what that scale can mean, is the brief period in which the DAV chose not to affiliate itself with the UIAA. In that period, the UIAA suffered a dramatic reduction in revenue and confidence – such is the impact of a huge member club like the DAV.

The size of the DAV is reflected in the scale and depth of the activities that the DAV engages in. As would be expected of any alpine club, the DAV has extensive interests in the provision of mountain accommodation, instruction courses, social activities, publications and advocacy. Part of what makes the DAV unique is that its operations regularly extend beyond its own national borders. While the mountains of Bavaria and the Eastern Alps are significant and worthy, the DAV operations and activities are often extended into the Austrian Alps, the Swiss Alps and the Italian Dolomites.

The DAV also enjoys a quasi-governmental status within Germany, in the sense that like other national sporting bodies, it is officially recognised by the German government as the official governing body of the sport of climbing. By doing so, the German government cedes a certain amount of authority and mandate over the sport and the areas in which it is undertaken. This gives the DAV a great deal of credibility and confidence, relative to other alpine clubs. We see this in the areas of safety and environmental management, in which the DAV is the preeminent thought-leader and standard-setter in the mountains of Germany.

In addition to the normal activities that one would expect of a large alpine club, the DAV engages in extra activities that others do not. For example, the DAV takes responsibility for the maintenance of walking tracks, both within Germany and abroad. This is relatively unusual for an alpine club. Similarly, the extensive commercial interests that the DAV has in the ownership of indoor climbing gyms is more than what most alpine clubs concern themselves with. Indeed, the role that the DAV plays in indoor rock climbing, more generally, is much stronger than alpine clubs in other countries.

Another example is the role that the DAV plays in cartography and the provision of maps of mountain areas, which is far as I can make out, is totally unique to the DAV as an alpine club.

With all these relative strengths in mind, it is very difficult to deduce any weaknesses of the DAV. Not only is it stronger in the areas that are commonly expected of typical alpine clubs, it also engages in areas that other alpine clubs do not – and does so very well. It sounds trite, but it is my opinion that the DAV is the alpine club by which all others should judge themselves.

## **Responses to common challenges**

### **Risk management and the regulatory environment**

Befitting of its size and influence, both within Germany and the international climbing community, the DAV dedicates a significant amount of time, resource and intellectual energy to the realm of risk and safety management.

In the various meetings I had and interviews I conducted at the DAV office in Munich, two strong themes came through very consistently. The first was what was described to me as the primary goal – freedom to climb or the right to climb. In English speaking climbing communities, this is commonly phrased as ‘the freedom of the hills’. That idea was spoken about with a certain degree of feeling and passion, which belied the intensity of belief of those principles by DAV staff and office holders. The second theme was of the role that the DAV plays to resist pressure from regulators, media and public in the realm of safety and

risk. This theme was encapsulated in a German phrase that was translated to me as 'reserve freedom'.

The desire to advance the right to climb freely and reserve freedom by the DAV is counter balanced by an intertwined raft of programmes, projects and norms that enhance safety and minimise risk. But above all, the DAV believes that it is the trainers and the system in which they operate within the DAV that are the main drivers of safety management and risk mitigation.

The DAV staff utilised the word trainers to describe what I am sure most English-speaking alpine clubs would refer to as instructors. Trainers are based in their sections and entirely voluntary, although their operational expenses are reimbursed. There are 15,000 registered trainers within the DAV, encompassing a wide variety of disciplines. These include the usual disciplines of ice climbing, snowcraft and rock climbing as one would expect of an alpine club. However, the DAV also has trainers and instruction courses for a wider scope of activities including, for example, mountain biking.

The process by which someone is accredited and recognised as a trainer within the DAV is rigorous. Before becoming a DAV trainer, an individual must prove his or her experience by logging his or her personal endeavours in the relevant discipline. The ensuing first stage is a one week education programme that is universal to all disciplines and does not include any technical or sport-specific skills. Instead, it focusses on pedagogical and educational theory and skills - essentially how to teach. A second, three week course focuses on the technical skills of the relevant discipline. This course includes a pass/fail testing component. The cost of undertaking these courses is shared evenly between the central DAV, the trainer's section and the trainer. Both courses are facilitated by a cadre of 350 senior instructors or 'trainers-of-trainers'.

The DAV also resources and takes pride in various safety messaging and prevention campaigns that resemble those carried out by the Mountain Safety Council in New Zealand or the BMC in the UK. The three major campaigns underway at the time of my visit were *Safe Climbing*, *Safety on the trails* and *Safety in Snow and Ice* – the latter relating to avalanche awareness. The DAV endeavours to regularly renew and refresh their safety messaging, as they are convinced that old collateral swiftly becomes boring and suffers from diminished cut-through. They also endeavour to deliver their safety messaging through a variety of media and range of products, recognising that there are different ways that people learn and absorb information.

Despite the influence of the 15,000 rigorously qualified trainers on the climbing community and the well-crafted prevention campaigns delivered by the DAV, there are still numerous accidents and fatalities amongst DAV members. It was conveyed to me that the DAV deals with 15-20 crises annually, which involve either a fatality or serious injury *on a DAV instruction course or excursion*. There are obviously many more accidents incurred by DAV members undertaking personal climbing trips. This struck me as an extraordinarily high number, given the deep and lasting wounds inflicted upon NZAC by two such fatal incidents over the last 10 years. However, on reflection I have come to understand that on a per capita basis, despite the high nominal figure, the DAV has lower incidence of crisis than NZAC. To deal with such crisis, the DAV has a staffed and resourced crisis management team consisting of, amongst others, press officers and psychiatrists. This team is in a constant state of operation.

My overarching impression of the DAV in the realm of risk management and the regulatory environment was the impressive extent to which it seeks to be the master of its own destiny. Given its preeminence and quasi-governmental role, the DAV assumes the lead role in Germany in establishing what is best practice, promoting safety messaging and at the same time defending the freedom to climb. The DAV is sensitive to the criticism of the public, government and media of poor safety outcomes. But it does a very good job, proactively and reactively, of managing risk and influencing the regulatory environment.

### **Environmental pressure - protection of water sources and the removal of human waste**

Among the numerous roles it plays within German society, the DAV very much regards itself as conservation organisation that wishes to advance the cause of environmentalism. Like most alpine clubs, it recognises that its activities take place in some of the most pristine and ecologically sensitive left in the Western world. The interests of its members in retaining the environmental integrity of alpine areas are reflected in the strong environmental agenda of the DAV. At the time of my visit, the DAV was undertaking a variety of advocacy activities with various environmental themes. These were grouped under a banner that sported the tagline "Alps under pressure".

Regarding government relations, the DAV engages with, and is most effected by, both the Ministry of Forestry and the Ministry of Environment. This engagement happens at both a federal and state level.

A large role that the DAV plays with regard to environmental sustainability is providing direction to visitors of alpine areas on how to minimise their impact. This direction encompassed a range of messages delivered in a variety of ways. Perhaps the most prominent and expensive being signage akin to the type that DOC provides in New Zealand. The role of providing signage in alpine areas has an obvious symbiosis with the role that the DAV plays in establishing and maintain tracks in the same areas.

A desire to overturn existing bans and prevent further bans is a big driver of the DAV's efforts in providing signage. It is quite common to have rock climbing banned in certain sensitive habitats in the alpine areas of Germany. Ski mountaineering and ski touring are also commonly banned from certain areas, typically for the benefit of nesting birdlife. The DAV goes to great efforts to modify visitor behaviour to simultaneously protect sensitive habitats and allow for freedom of access.

On a broader environmental level, the DAV is also concerned by the effects of climate change, which are very apparent in the glacial alpine areas. Mindful of the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions generated by transport, the DAV encourages its members to travel to the mountains for the purposes of recreation in the most environmentally friendly way. Without being particularly prescriptive, the DAV advises to, where possible, utilise public transport or share private transport when embarking on trips.

Of course, like most alpine clubs that have established and maintained accommodation assets in alpine areas, the DAV has become concerned with the protection of water sources and the removal of human waste. The various sections of the DAV own 325 huts, most of which are managed by concessionaires contracted to the club. All huts in Germany are subject to strict legal environmental regulations imposed by the government. By way of their

contracts, concessionaires are required to comply with those regulations. In numerous cases, as the regulations have become increasingly strict, many huts have been completely replaced or had their waste management systems replaced. Efforts have also been made to equip huts with renewable energy sources such as solar or wind electricity generators.

In addition to the strict legal requirements, the DAV has developed a standard for huts, which they translated as the 'Seal of quality for the environment'. For a hut to be accredited with the seal, it must be audited against a series of standards that cover the disposal of human waste, recycling and the disposal of rubbish, renewable energy and other considerations. At the time of my visit, the DAV had accredited 70 of its huts with the seal.

## **Gender and youth engagement**

During my meetings and interviews at the DAV in Munich, I did not get any impression that the DAV had any concerns about a gender imbalance within the club's membership. At the time of my visit, it was not considered a matter of interest by any staff member or club officer. As such, there were no specific programmes or initiatives in place to encourage female membership or participation.

Conversely, the efforts that the DAV makes to engage with young people and encourage their participation is extraordinary – far greater than any other alpine club I visited or am otherwise familiar with.

Youth, as defined by the DAV, is 27 years old or younger. While there is no lower age limit, most youth members are eight years old or over. The *Jugend des Deutschen Alpenvereins* (JDAV) had 282,000 members at the time of my visit. Standing alone, it would be one of the largest alpine clubs in the world. Under laws introduced after the demise of nationalist socialism and World War II, it is required that any youth organisation in Germany is independent from its adult counterpart. In practice, this means that the JDAV must be self-generated and self-governed. Both the DAV and the JDAV take this separation very seriously, both as a legal obligation and because of the risk that non-compliance would pose to government funding.

The JDAV has its own General Assembly, which meets annually. The organisational structure flows out from the General Assembly in similar and parallel section structure to the DAV. In addition, each section of the DAV has a position relating to its JDAV counterpart.

The bulk of the JDAV's engagement with young people is by way of its cadre of 3,500 youth leaders. Youth leaders are required to be 16 years or older, serve on a voluntary basis and can be drawn from either the JDAV or the DAV itself. Youth leaders are trained and qualified by the organisation, but to a less rigorous standard than their trainer counterparts in the DAV. The one-week youth leader course encompasses instructional techniques, the history and structure of the organisation and mountaineering skills. Youth leaders are subject to annual renewal.

While most youth programmes are delivered by youth leaders through their local section, there are various open youth programmes delivered centrally. These open programmes are open to members from any section and are designed to assist smaller, less capable sections. The result is an impressive level of youth engagement with training provided by the JDAV. On average, every member of the JDAV participates in three days of youth training, annually.

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the JDAV to me, was the extent to which its members were passionate and engaged about things separate from climbing. This echoes and even extends beyond the notion that the DAV is a social club that is rooted in, but not limited to, climbing. The JDAV has a strong political and conservation bent. It is a passionate advocate of many diverse causes. For example, in the week that I visited Munich, the JDAV had organised a protest of several thousand people against free trade.

A strength of the DAV with regard to the engagement of young people, is the extent to which it is involved with indoor rock climbing. As a relatively cheap, all-weather, urban pastime, indoor rock climbing acts as an excellent conduit for new climbers to engage in the wider sport of climbing and its associated disciplines. The DAV own more than 250 indoor climbing gyms across Germany. These gyms are operated on a non-profit basis and have a tax advantage over their commercial rivals. This allows them to offer discounts to youths and DAV members.

The DAV also essentially monopolises the organisation governance of indoor rock climbing competitions, of which there are many in Germany. The DAV sets the standards and criteria of indoor climbing competitions as well as holding the national cups, which only DAV members may enter. Representative climbing teams, at various levels, are selected by the DAV. Ultimately, the DAV is the organisation responsible for selecting the German national team that competes at the World Cup. Typically, in other countries, these functions are carried out by an entirely different organisation that usually regards indoor climbing as a separate sport from mountaineering. In Germany, it is possible, and even common, for a young person solely focussed on indoor climbing to be a long-standing member of the DAV without ever considering the idea of climbing outdoors.

# The Swiss Alpine Club (*Schweizer Alpen-Club*)

## History

The Schweizer Alpen-Club (SAC) was formed in 1863, only six years after the original Alpine Club (UK) and a year after the only other alpine club at the time, the Austrian Alpine Club. But perhaps more important than its chronological relativity to other clubs, is the fact that the SAC was established only 15 years after the birth of the modern state of Switzerland, itself. For this reason, proponents of the SAC put forward that the club, and mountain culture in general, are fundamental to the national identity of Switzerland. This is perhaps best exemplified by the fact that at the time of the club's formation, four members of the seven-person Swiss Cabinet were members of the SAC.

The formation of the SAC was, at least in part, driven by what the Swiss felt was the encroachment and over-influence of British mountaineers at the time. It was particularly galling to Swiss climbers at the time that the only obtainable information on climbing in the Swiss Alps was written in English. Consequently, the initial foci of the SAC were to produce an annual journal and accurately map the mountainous regions of Switzerland.

In subsequent years, an increase in the popularity of climbing in Switzerland, by both locals and foreign visitors, drove the SAC to establish numerous mountain huts and bivouacs – 34 in the first 25 years of its existence.

Even in these early stages, the SAC concerned itself with the preservation and conservation of mountain regions. It vigorously opposed a railway development on the Matterhorn, for example. This was in direct contrast to other alpine clubs of the time that typically advocated for improving access to and the development of mountain regions.

By the turn of the 20th Century, the SAC had over 6,000 members spread over 43 sections. In 1905 the Swiss Alpine Museum was established in Bern.

In the first half of the 20th Century, several factors drove an increased popularity of mountain recreation and, subsequently, the strength of the SAC. The improvement of rail and road transport infrastructure in mountain regions improved access. The establishment of the 40 hour working week and improving wages allowed for the working class to take a greater part in the mountains. The development of skiing saw a huge increase in the winter use of mountain regions. Perhaps most importantly, the CAI itself expanded its hut network across the Swiss Alps. By 1963, the membership of SAC was 44,500.

The SAC has both resembled the original Alpine Club (UK) and reflected Swiss society, by excluding females for much of its history. In 1907, female members were explicitly excluded, which resulted in the formation of the Swiss Women's Alpine Club in 1918. Following females obtaining the right to vote in Switzerland in 1971, the SAC took until 1980 to decide that females were to be afforded membership to the SAC. What followed was effectively an absorption of the Women's Alpine Club into the SAC, resulting in a boost in membership to approximately 70,000.

## **Governance and management**

Consistent with the organisational structure of most European alpine clubs, the SAC is governed by a general assembly made up of delegates from each of the 111 sections. The General Assembly meets once a year and sets the broad direction, policies and rules of the SAC.

The General Assembly of delegates votes members on to the Central Management Committee, which meets far more regularly and is directly responsible for the club's outputs.

Supporting the Central Management Committee are the ten specialist committees, which focus on specific areas such as instruction, huts and publications – very similar to NZAC.

The SAC employs 50 paid staff based at their national headquarters in Bern. In addition, the two largest sections employ a small number of paid staff.

## **Membership**

Relative to the size of the Swiss population, membership of the SAC is extraordinarily high. There are currently 135,000 members of the SAC, which is nearly two per cent of the total Swiss population. This high figure is made more impressive by the fact that while accident and rescue insurance is a legal requirement in Switzerland, it is not provided by the SAC and is not in any way a driver of membership – as it is in Italy, Germany and Austria.

The popularity of SAC membership speaks to the ingrained mountain culture of Switzerland, the primacy of mountain sports and the role that mountains have in the Swiss national identity.

The 111 sections of the SAC are based on geography and vary from tiny (30 members) to large (8,000 members.) Individuals are free to choose which section they join, regardless of where they live. Consistent with the very high cost of living in Switzerland, membership fees to the SAC are very high, ranging from 100CHF to 200CHF – depending on the section.

The chief executive of the SAC left me with the impression that membership of the SAC is growing, largely due to its embrace of sport climbers and lapsed members coming back to the club once they reach retirement age.

## **Operations and functions**

The chief executive outlined the three major functions of the SAC as: trips and instruction, social connection between members, and advocacy.

Trips and instruction are very much viewed as two sides of the same coin by the SAC. They are delivered by each section at a rate of approximately 100 trips per section, per annum. Trips can be as varied as coffee meetings, mountain biking excursions, yodelling meets or canyoning expeditions. One quarter of all SAC members are actively engaged with club trips. For activities requiring technical competence, volunteer instructors and volunteer trip leaders are regarded as the same thing. An individual undertakes the same rigorous training and accreditation process to become qualified to either lead a trip or carry out instruction.

For the SAC members who are not actively involved in club trips, social connection is achieved by way of the annual SAC Journal and a monthly magazine, which are both of a

high standard. In the realm of publishing, the SAC also produces climbing guidebooks, for which members are entitled to a discount.

The SAC plays a strong advocacy role within Swiss civil society. Apart from the obvious environmental and conservation priorities that most alpine clubs have, the SAC also advances an agenda that was translated to me as 'freedom of access'. This agenda seeks to strike a balance between the rights of climbers to enjoy any given area and an increasing tendency by the Federal Office of the Environment to prohibit access to 'ecologically sensitive areas'. A lot of this work lies in the realm of ski mountaineering and ski touring. The SAC is particularly interested in utilising signage in ecologically sensitive areas to educate mountain users and mitigate their potential impact.

Aside from the three major areas of focus described to me by the chief executive of the SAC, it is clear that the SAC has a major role to play in the provision and maintenance of huts. The 152 SAC huts are owned by the sections, which generally grant concessions to private individuals to operate each hut or maintains the smaller ones with volunteer labour.

Unusually for a European alpine club, the SAC does not provide accident and rescue insurance to its members. While it is legally required in Switzerland, this type of insurance is usually provided by employers and, where it is not, can be purchased individually.

## **Strengths and weaknesses**

My impression of the SAC was one of an organisation that has a highly resolved clarity of its own purpose and is highly focussed and competent in carrying out its core objectives. The management and governance of the SAC gives the impression of tightness and efficiency.

The obvious strength of the SAC is the mountainous country in which it exists. Over 60 per cent of Switzerland is mountainous terrain, with most of the population residing in the small central plateau. Everyone in Switzerland lives within proximity to an alpine region and mountain recreation is ubiquitous. As the chief executive of the SAC described it: "In Switzerland we do not pay football, we do not play rugby. We are mountain people." The Swiss Alps, and alpinism in general, are a core part of the Swiss national identity.

The SAC has an extensive network of alpine huts spread across the country, which not only serve summer climbing but are also popular for skiing – which is a sport enjoyed by even more Swiss people than climbing.

Swiss people are nationally characterised as driven and independent people, which are traits suited to the sport of mountaineering. But the Swiss also have a cooperative and egalitarian spirit, which is conducive to the formation and success of a club. It is these traits combined that make the national character of Switzerland such a strength of the SAC. Of all the alpine clubs I have come to be familiar with, the values and characteristics of SAC are the most closely aligned with the country's population as a whole.

Another strength of the SAC is its proximity and relationship with the UIAA. In fact, the UIAA is headquartered in sublet offices of the SAC headquarters in Bern, Switzerland. While there is no overt evidence to suggest that the SAC has a disproportionate influence within the UIAA, I think it would be fair to assume that both the UIAA and the SAC benefit to some degree by being in such close physical proximity.

The only discernible weakness of the SAC, relative to other alpine clubs of its size, is the cost of membership. Membership to the SAC costs between 100 and 200 Swiss Francs,

depending on the variable component levied by each section. Like many things in Switzerland, the cost is much higher than what can be purchased in neighbouring countries.

## **Responses to common challenges**

### **Risk management and the regulatory environment**

It was my impression that the SAC did not feel as pressured or maligned by the public, media or government in the realm of risk and safety management as their German or Italian counterparts. I believe this could be for two reasons. Firstly, unlike other alpine clubs, the SAC does not have a role in the provision of accident or rescue insurance to individuals, or in the rescues themselves. While insurance is compulsory to go climbing in Switzerland, it is almost universally provided by employers and where it is not, it can be purchased privately. Secondly, I believe that the Swiss population, owing to its familiarity with and love of the alpine environment, is either less likely to be involved in mountaineering accidents and/or more accepting of them when they happen. Regardless of the reasons, the staff and office holders I spoke to at the SAC did not express any great anxiety or concern over the club's role in defending risk or mitigating negative perceptions of the sport.

That is not to say that the SAC is naïve or uncaring towards risk or fatalities. The chief executive could tell me, without reference, that in the preceding eight years there had been 10 incidents on SAC organised activities, which, in turn, had resulted in 10 separate investigations undertaken by the SAC.

Fundamentally, though, the SAC seeks to improve the level of safe climbing by way of its various instruction courses and club trips. At the section level, the SAC regards volunteer instructors and volunteer trip leaders as the same thing. An individual undertakes the same rigorous training and accreditation process to become qualified to either lead a trip or carry out instruction. Volunteers undertake two SAC-assessed courses of one week each to achieve accreditation. There are numerous disciplines, including summer climbing, trekking, ski mountaineering and rock climbing.

With each of the SAC's 111 sections undertaking, on average, 100 trips per year, the cumulative effect of having trained and assessed volunteers permeating their knowledge through the club, is expected to have a positive effect on the safety outcomes and risk management skills of all club members.

### **Environmental pressure - protection of water sources and the removal of human waste**

The SAC is an alpine club that takes its role of environmental advocacy very seriously. During the formative years of European alpine clubs in the mid nineteenth century, most alpine clubs were concerned with the development of access and facilitating human interaction. In contrast, from its earliest days, the SAC was concerned with the preservation and protection of alpine areas. This is, perhaps, because human interaction with alpine areas was already fairly evolved in Switzerland by that time. Over the course of its history, the SAC has opposed and advocated against various developments in alpine areas, including roads, railways and energy infrastructure. Often this is in collaboration, but occasionally in opposition to, the Federal Office of the Environment.

As it was described to me, the overarching theme of the SAC's efforts in this area is striking the balance between 'freedom of access' and the protection of ecologically sensitive areas.

With regard to managing the specific issues relating to the treatment of human waste and waste water from the clubs network of 152 huts, the SAC takes a very proactive approach. While each hut is owned and maintained by individual sections, the central SAC dictates that they comply with strict regulations. Typically, the management of huts is contracted out to concessionaires that report to the section. But the central SAC office has staff dedicated to developing methodology and giving advice on how the regulations can be met. The technology utilised to contain and remove human waste and waste water is constantly evolving. During my visit to the SAC, I spent some time with two staff members who were completely immersed in the design of an engineering solution for a hut that was being retrofitted with a more modern humans waste disposal system. Interestingly, they were starting to factor in not only the financial cost of helicopter time, but also the net relative CO2 emissions of any given system.

## **Gender and youth engagement**

Prior to the late 1970s, the SAC excluded female membership and an entirely separate female alpine club was in existence to cater to females. As unusual as this seems, it is important to note that women were only afforded the right to vote in Swiss elections after a referendum in 1971. The decision to allow for female membership was immediately followed by what was effectively a merger of the female alpine club with the SAC. Since that time, the SAC has made great efforts to be gender inclusive and enhance female participation.

At almost every level of the SAC and across nearly every discipline, there are female specific programmes. These are most commonly female-only instruction courses and section trips. At the governance level, a women's working group, which provides advice and guidance to the club on how to improve female participation and engagement, has been established. In 2013, a female served as president of the SAC.

The SAC categorises young people into two blocks. It defines children as those between the ages of six and 14. It defines youth as those between 14 and 22. In both categories, the SAC has a well-established and strong tradition of engaging young people with the various disciplines of climbing and the SAC itself.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the SAC developed various programmes, at both section and national level, that catered exclusively to young people, including climbing trips and instruction courses. At the time of my visit, the most popular method of youth engagement, with both the youth and their parents, was the 'drop-off, come back' programme.

The 'drop-off, come back' programme is facilitated by the SAC cadre of qualified volunteers. Parents can drop-off their child on a Friday evening to be taken on a SAC instruction course or climbing trip (the SAC makes little distinction between the two). The parents are then free to spend the weekend however they like, but many choose to go climbing at an adult level themselves. The 'come back' component of the tagline, refers to the safety management systems in place to give parents the confidence that their children will be safe and well looked after over the course of the weekend. For obvious reasons, these programmes are very popular with parents and youth alike. It is easy to predict the positive endearment that such programmes generate for the SAC as an institution.

Gender and youth engagement with the SAC is also positively assisted by the extent to which the SAC is involved with indoor climbing in Switzerland. In the mid-1990s, the SAC

involved itself with indoor climbing and even established indoor climbing competitions. As previously stated, indoor climbing serves as an excellent conduit for females and young people to engage with the wider sport of climbing. While the SAC does not own indoor climbing gyms like the DAV, it does facilitate a forum of climbing wall owners, which endeavours to advance their interests. These efforts are firmly rooted in the belief held by the SAC that increases in numbers of people undertaking indoor rock climbing will ultimately increase the level of SAC membership.

While outside the scope of my investigation, I found it interesting to note the SAC has observed an increase in the number of retired people returning to climbing and the SAC, via indoor rock climbing.

# International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (Union Internationale des Associations d'Alpinisme)

## History

In the late summer of 1932, representatives of 20 national alpine clubs met in Chamonix, France – widely regarded as the heartland of mountaineering. The representatives voted to establish what would become to be known as the *Union Internationale des Associations d'Alpinisme* or UIAA. The founding members agreed that the UIAA would be responsible for ‘the study and solution of all problems regarding mountaineering’. Count Charles Egmond d’Arcis of Switzerland was elected as the president of UIAA and would go on to serve in that role until 1964.

The initial pre-war period of the UIAA was particularly productive. Prior to war breaking out, the UIAA published 25 studies of common issues facing alpine clubs and the wider mountaineering community.

The outbreak of war saw the UIAA fall into what amounted to a seven year recess, with the largest and most influential alpine clubs (UK, France, Germany and Italy) finding themselves on opposing sides.

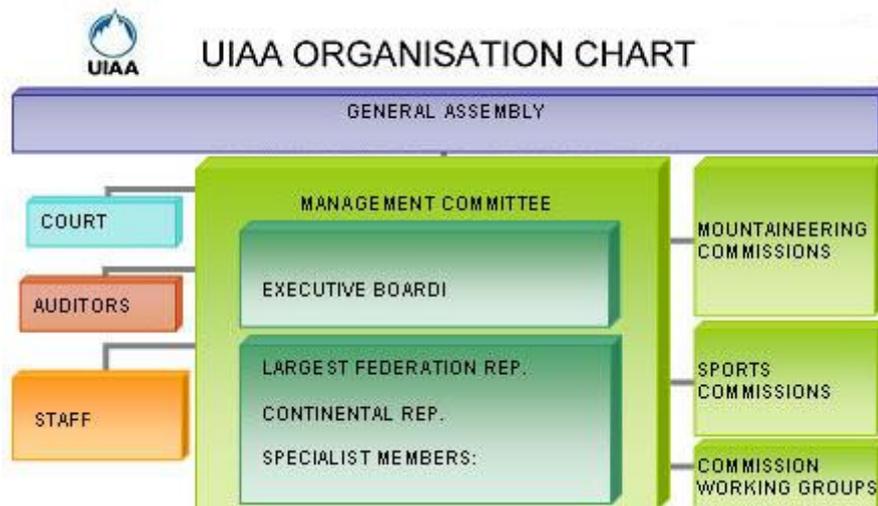
In 1947, the first post-war General Assembly was held and has continued every year since. In the latter half of the 20th Century, the UIAA concerned itself with the preservation and conservation of mountain regions. In the 1960s, the now-ubiquitous UIAA Safety label was created and the testing of climbing equipment began. Initially, this testing and accreditation was limited to ropes, but has come to encompass carabiners, helmets, harnesses and belay equipment. The UIAA safety label is now, by far, the most common touchpoint that any climber has with the UIAA.

In 1982, the UIAA agreed on the Kathmandu Declaration. The Kathmandu Declaration recognised the increasing environmental impact that mountaineering, particularly large scale expeditions to the Himalayas, was having on fragile ecosystems. It calls upon mountaineers to minimise, mitigate and remediate the environmental impact of their sport.

In later years, the UIAA concerned itself with the organisation of climbing competitions, both artificial rock climbing and ice climbing. This resulted in International Olympic Committee (IOC) recognition of the UIAA in 1995. In 2006, the realm of indoor rock climbing competitions was ceded to the newly created International Federation of Sport Climbing (IFSC). However, competition ice climbing remained the responsibility of the UIAA and it was successful in having it recently established as a Winter Olympic Sport.

## Governance and management

The Governance and Management structure of the UIAA is represented in the diagram below:



The General Assembly is the highest decision-making body of the UIAA and is made up of delegates from member associations from across the world. The General Assembly sets the policy and direction of the UIAA, sets the annual budget and elects the president, Management Committee and Executive Board. On general matters, each constituent club or association is allowed one vote. But on financial and constitutional matters, members are allocated voting rights in proportion to the number of members they have.

The Management Committee is made up of the Executive Board (see below), representatives of the largest constituent associations, representatives from each continent and a variable amount of members elected by the General Assembly (usually 3-5). It essentially serves as a more agile and informed version of the General Assembly and makes recommendations to that body on matters of finance, policy and constitutional matters.

The Executive Board is made up of four office holders (president, vice president, secretary and treasurer) and three elected members. It meets regularly and is responsible for the direct oversight and implementation of all UIAA operations, staff and the work of the commissions. It can be easily likened to the Executive Committee of NZAC.

The commissions of UIAA are voluntary committees made up of experts in specific realms of UIAA interest. At various times, commissions of the UIAA have been formed, dissolved or changed their name. As at 2015, there are commissions of the following areas: access, medical, mountain protection, mountaineering, safety, youth, ice climbing, and anti-doping. The commissions of UIAA closely resemble the sub-committees of NZAC, in that they are made up of volunteers who have a specific expertise or interest in a focused area and are only responsible for policy and decision-making, rather than implementation or operations.

The work of UIAA is supported by a small staff of six employees, headquartered in an office sublet from the SAC, in Bern.

## **Membership**

The UIAA is made up of 64 constituent national federations, spanning every continent except Antarctica. The UIAA does not accept individual members, but it has appointed 10 individual Honorary Members, including New Zealand's Sir Edmund Hillary. For any given sovereign nation, the UIAA only allows a single mountaineering club or association to be a full member. Membership is granted subject to the approval of the UIAA Management Committee and ratified by the General Assembly.

In several instances, a second or third entity has been granted Associate Membership of the UIAA. These Associate Members must prove that they are of reasonable national significance within their own country before membership is granted and they do not have any voting rights within the UIAA. Associate Membership is only granted after the full voting member from the relevant country has been consulted.

Membership fees are based on the number of members within a club or association. The fees are calculated on a sliding scale that results in the smallest constituent club paying a minimum of 1,300CHF and the largest clubs paying in the realm of 25,000CHF.

## **Operations and functions**

The UIAA broadly sticks to its main functions of policy development and advocacy. It has very little operational output.

By far the most recognised and obvious output of the UIAA is its safety label. Currently the UIAA is partnered with 60 individual manufacturers of climbing equipment that have, in turn, a little over 1,800 UIAA certified products currently on the market. Even though this service is widely acknowledged and hugely appreciated by many climbers from all over the world, it has a very small operational footprint. The technical standards themselves are developed by experts who volunteer their time to serve on the Safety Commission of UIAA. The testing of equipment against those standards is conducted at commercial laboratories and paid for by the equipment manufacturer. So, while the UIAA owns the intellectual property of the standard itself, it has almost no operational input into the process.

The UIAA serves as the international thought-leader in several mountaineering related areas. This is primarily achieved by way of the various commissions. Areas where UIAA seeks to lead thinking and policy development include environmental protection, mountain medicine, and access. The UIAA has also developed training standards for climbing instruction, which are available to member associations to apply to their own instruction programmes. The UIAA training standards are of some use to smaller alpine clubs that are developing their instruction programmes. None of the large European alpine clubs that I engaged with compared themselves to the UIAA training standard.

The UIAA is the governing body and organiser of the international ice climbing competition circuit. In recent years, the UIAA has sought to have ice climbing recognised by the International Olympic Committee and entered as a sport into the Winter Olympic Games. The goal of UIAA is to have ice climbing fully included in the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games. At the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, ice climbing was present in the form of a cultural demonstration. It is hoped that it will appear as a demonstration sport in the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea. To support this effort, the UIAA has formed the Anti-doping Commission, which oversees testing of climbers who participate on the UIAA ice climbing circuit.

## **Strengths and weaknesses**

My overarching impression of the UIAA was that it is a lot smaller and less influential than a typical climber, or indeed a paid alpine club manager such as myself, might think. In terms of operational output, it is barely the equivalent of a small alpine club such as the NZAC. I was somewhat surprised by the fact that the entire professional staff of the UIAA only includes six people and is headquartered in a few small rooms sub-let within the SAC headquarters. This is in no way a criticism. The staff are highly professional, courteous and diligent. That the UIAA achieves the level of influence, favourability and recognition that it does is testament to the organisation's executive efficiency

The widely recognised UIAA safety standard logo that is universally prevalent on all climbing equipment lends the UIAA a disproportionate level of credence and brand recognition. In that sense, the UIAA safety standard is probably its biggest strength. It is of great benefit to the climbing community and the wider group of equipment users, that safety accreditation of climbing equipment is conducted by a singular, credible and low-cost organisation, such as UIAA. In addition, the UIAA itself benefits in terms of branding, by having its logo present on almost every single piece of climbing equipment manufactured across the world.

The membership of UIAA is a critical element. Presently, the membership of UIAA is in good health with all the major alpine clubs of the world participating, as well as plethora of smaller clubs. However, for several years in the last decade, the DAV – the world's largest Alpine Club – chose to remove themselves from the UIAA. This had deep implications for the UIAA on numerous levels, but especially in regard to finances and credibility. Fortunately, DAV has chosen to re-join the UIAA and membership is again a strength of UIAA. But the episode did reveal the potential weakness of the organisation, which can very quickly lose legitimacy and sustainability at the whim of a handful of federations.

Probably the greatest strength of UIAA is its ability to attract passionate and highly qualified subject-matter experts on to the various commissions. The commissions of UIAA generate the policy, thought-leadership and advocacy that the value-proposition of UIAA sits upon. The extent to which these experts are willing to continue to volunteer their time to UIAA is a key determinant for UIAA.

## **Responses to common challenges**

### **Risk management and the regulatory environment**

The credibility and universality of the UIAA Safety label has obvious positive benefits in managing the risks of climbing and improving the regulatory environment of climbing across the world. UIAA accreditation of climbing equipment gives enormous confidence to climbers in the safety of their equipment. This is essential in a sport in which equipment failure or manufacturing defects can easily result in fatalities. It is extremely uncommon for climbing equipment to be manufactured, let alone climbers utilising it, that does not meet the UIAA safety standard. It is testament to the UIAA safety label that very few climbing accidents are caused by faulty equipment. For over 50 years, the UIAA safety label has also removed the regulatory burden on national governments and alpine clubs. The expensive establishment and enforcement of localised equipment safety standards has been rendered unnecessary.

The UIAA safety label has internationally centralised the burden and largely placed it on the manufacturers themselves.

The other major role that UIAA has played in the realm of risk management and influencing various regulatory environments is the establishment and evolution of the UIAA training standards. The training Standards are the responsibility of the UIAA Safety Commission. They are an accreditation scheme by which alpine clubs can have their own instruction programmes and qualifications examined against an international standard. Under the scheme, a UIAA expert assesses the training provided to volunteer instructors by an alpine club. If that training is deemed to be of sufficient quality and aligned with the UIAA standard, the UIAA training panel gives its endorsement. This endorsement has recently become known as the Mountain Qualification Label (MQL). The Mountain Qualification Label covers eight disciplines separately: mountain walking and trekking (summer), winter mountain walking and snowshoeing, sport climbing (indoor and outdoor), rock climbing (leader placed protection), canyoning, ice climbing, alpine climbing, and ski mountaineering.

Alpine clubs are not required to obtain the MQL for their instruction programmes. In fact, the majority of them don't – NZAC included. The larger and more evolved alpine clubs, including the ones I visited, regard their own systems and processes as sufficient and do not see the need to pursue the MQL which has emerged, in most cases, many years after their own programmes have been established. But for the smaller and newer alpine clubs emerging across the globe, the MQL can serve as a useful tool to both judge their instruction programmes and assert themselves in their local regulatory environment.

### **Environmental pressure - protection of water sources and the removal of human waste**

Within the UIAA, activities in this realm are guided by the Mountain Protection Commission, which was established in 1969. But even prior to that, the UIAA concerned itself deeply with the environmental impacts of climbing. Appropriate for its broad umbrella role in the governance of climbing, the UIAA does not provide specific or technical advice to member clubs on how to best protect water sources and remove human waste from alpine areas. Instead, it tries to establish common values and guidelines that are acceptable to all member clubs and applicable across all regions.

The UIAA Mountain Protection Commission has produced numerous influential papers on environmental issues and has formulated several declarations that have been adopted by the UIAA General Assembly at various times. The most important and relevant of these has been the *Kathmandu Declaration* of 1982 and the *UIAA Environmental Objectives and Guidelines*, adopted in 1997.

The *Kathmandu Declaration* was approved by the General Assembly in 1982 and expresses the UIAAs view on the environmental impact of mountain activities and how they should be mitigated. It was a landmark declaration for the UIAA. The Kathmandu declaration is still held in high regard and referred to regularly by numerous alpine clubs. It has ten articles, of which the most relevant to my study are:

- There is an urgent need for effective protection of the mountain environment and landscape.

- Actions designed to reduce the negative impact of man's activities on mountains should be encouraged.
- The use of appropriate technology for energy needs and the proper disposal of waste in the mountain areas are matters of immediate concern.

In theory, all alpine clubs that voted for the declaration are still beholden to its principles.

The other relevant declaration made by the UIAA was the *Environmental Objectives and Guidelines*, adopted by the UIAA General Assembly in 1997. The guidelines outlines the value of the mountain environment for both climbers and non-climbers alike. It goes on to identify the main environmental effects that climbers can have on alpine areas, before outlining an integrated approach to mitigating those effects, with climbers and their alpine clubs at the forefront of those efforts.

## **Gender and youth engagement**

In my interviews and meetings with various staff and office holders of the UIAA, I was not able to ascertain the existence of any specific programmes or efforts to promote female engagement in climbing. I should note from my own experience that when an alpine club such as NZAC declares its membership to UIAA for the sake of paying its affiliation fees, the UIAA does ask for and record the demographic (gender and age) breakdown of each club.

It is also notable that females are very well represented both at the volunteer-governance and paid-staff levels of UIAA, including the secretary general of UIAA as well as the chief executive.

The responsibility of the UIAA to promote youth engagement is guided by the UIAA Youth Commission. The efforts of the Youth Commission seem to be focused on staying abreast of the development of new alpine disciplines, organising and supporting various youth events around the world, and the support of competition in various disciplines.

Young people are usually at the forefront of emerging 'new' disciplines in the realm of climbing. Historical examples include sport climbing and bouldering. More recent examples include canyoning and skyrunning. So it makes sense, both in terms of youth engagement and staying relevant, that UIAA engages with these emerging disciplines as they evolve. In the 1990s the UIAA become heavily involved with supporting and governing indoor rock climbing competition, before abdicating that responsibility to the International Federation of Sport Climbing. During this time, the UIAA received recognition by the International Olympic Committee. In order to advance the goal of establishing ice climbing as an official Winter Olympic Sport, the UIAA established separate ice climbing and anti-doping commissions.

In recent years, the Mountain Qualification Labels have been developed by the Safety Commission of the UIAA for the emerging sport of canyoning. The UIAA has also recognised and supported the International Skyrunning Federation, which has been established as a unit member of the UIAA.

Perhaps the most effective and beneficial effort the UIAA makes to engage with young people is the facilitation of the Global Youth Summit. The Global Youth Summit is a collection of bespoke events open to young people over the age of 10 from UIAA affiliated clubs. Each event is organised by a member club with the support of a paid UIAA staffer and in accordance with the UIAA Event Organisers Programme Checklist. Typically, there are 5-10 different events held in various countries, incorporating a variety of disciplines such as ice

climbing or sport climbing. The UIAA has some very clear goals and values that it promotes via the Global Youth Summit, including the promotion of peace and cooperation between countries and a greater appreciation for the mountain environment.

It is admirable and indicative of the esteem in which youth engagement is held by the UIAA, that it has dedicated its limited financial resource to the employment of one staff member to support the Global Youth Summit.

# Key learnings

For ease of reference my key findings are numbered and grouped under the three main issues and an additional general heading. Each Section has been limited to a maximum of ten learnings.

## Risk Management and the regulatory environment

1. New Zealand Outdoor Recreation Sector is not unique in its anxiety over Risk Management and the encroachment regulation into the freedom to undertake personal risk. That anxiety is held in many other countries and by other Alpine Clubs.
2. The provision of Accident and/or Rescue Insurance for climbers is a core function of most European Alpine Clubs. The clear majority of membership to these clubs is driven by the legal requirement to have such insurance and the Alpine Clubs monopoly of its supply.
3. This will never be the case for NZAC as long as the 'no-fault' underpinnings and universal coverage of ACC still exists. However, there will always be a demand for insurance for New Zealand climbers travelling abroad. While it is possible, NZAC should continue to provide that service.
4. To the extent to which it is possible, NZAC should advocate for the preservation of the 'no-fault' and universal underpinnings of the ACC system in New Zealand.
5. Safety and Risk Management is improved by climbers receiving quality instruction and trip leadership across all disciplines. Good habits and safe practices are more likely to be absorbed from high quality mentoring and instruction.
6. Relative to their counterparts in the larger Alpine Clubs of Europe, NZAC volunteer instructors and trip leaders are less qualified, have less proven competency and experience and are not trained to the same level.
7. In cooperation with NZOIA, NZAC should benchmark its instruction programmes against the UIIA Mountain Qualification label. It may even consider having their programmes assessed against the standard in order to achieve accreditation.
8. Some Alpine Clubs in Europe, notably the DAV, take a leadership role in determining what the appropriate norms of safety management are in climbing terrain. They also assume the responsibility for safety messaging, of the type that is provided by the Mountain Safety Council.
9. It would be beneficial for NZAC to take more of a leadership role in advocating its own view of what safe practices are and what appropriate risk management practices are in the alpine environment. This is preferable than having those standards or norms imposed upon them by another agency or organisation.
10. NZAC would be well advised to develop a more codified and formalised crisis response protocol, in order to deal with any accidents or fatalities on Club organised trips and courses.

## **Environmental pressure - protection of water sources and the removal of human waste.**

11. A strong desire to conserve the alpine environment and reduce human impact on its sensitive ecosystems is not unique to New Zealand climbers. In every Alpine Club I visited, there were well-resourced programmes that reflected this universal trait.
12. To better understand the environmental and conservation priorities of its members, the NZAC should include additional questions on these topics in its annual membership survey.
13. The treatment and removal of human waste and waste water from mountain areas is not something that can be universally templated or have a 'state of the art' solution applied to. There is no singular 'magic-bullet'. The solutions are as diverse as each discrete situation.
14. NZAC is performing at a similar level of competence and sophistication regarding the treatment of human waste, as its far bigger and better funded counterparts in Europe.
15. The two areas of improvement that NZAC could learn from its European counterparts are: a) Factoring in the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of any comparison between treatment options at the time of build. B) the adoption of personal 'carry-out' protocols in suitable circumstances.
16. NZAC would be well advised to imitate its European counterparts by holding itself to a higher standard than the minimum legal requirements. Thus becoming the key thought-leader in the NZ context and avoiding regulations imposed from the outside.
17. NZAC should make greater reference to and audit itself against, the UIIA Kathmandu Declaration (1982) and the UIIA Environmental Objectives and Guidelines (1997).
18. The DAV has started to consider and act upon the degree to which climbers travelling to alpine regions for the sake of recreation are contributing to climate change by way of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.
19. At some point, NZAC will need to consider its position on the use of fossil fuel driven transportation methods by its members, particularly the use of helicopters within New Zealand and the use of passenger jets to climb on expedition abroad.

## **Gender and youth engagement.**

20. There are various definitions of what a 'youth' member of an Alpine Club is. The NZAC defines a 'Junior' as under the age of 18 years old and a 'youth' as anyone between the ages of 18 and 26. These are adequate and comparable to other Alpine Clubs. There is no pressing need to adjust them.

21. Relative to other Alpine Clubs, NZAC makes admirable efforts to engage and cater to young people. The significant efforts NZAC makes to host the National Indoor Bouldering Series, Mountain Skills for Youth course and the Youth rock climbing camp are laudable and should be continued.
22. The SAC 'drop-off, come back' programme is worthy of NZAC imitation. It achieves the dual purpose of safely introducing young climbers to the various disciplines of climbing, as well as allowing parents of children to pursue their own climbing objectives during their middle age. Charging for the service on a non-profit basis, would allow qualified instructors to be paid for their time or at least reimbursed for their expenses.
23. European Alpine Clubs recognise that increasing youth engagement with Alpine Clubs is just as much about catering to the climbing activities that young people want to do, as it is encouraging young people to do the activities that the Club already does.
24. NZAC could adopt, as several European Alpine Clubs have, the policy of aligning the Youth subscription fee with the marginal cost of membership. This recognises that, while a Youth member may not generate a great deal of income in the short term, their longevity on the club over a lifetime has long term benefits.
25. However, NZAC should be mindful the practice of offering cheap youth rates, coupled with the discount that it offers to members after 35 years, may result in a reduction in income when those members are middle aged.
26. Gender balance within Alpine Club memberships is not regarded as seriously by the European Clubs, as it is by NZAC. This could be because they do not have the same imbalance and/or they already have programmes and initiatives in place to address the gender imbalance.
27. NZAC should enhance and build upon the embryonic efforts it has made in recent years to address the gender imbalance of its membership. These efforts range from female-specific instruction courses at the Section
28. NZAC should not be averse to the development of publicly accessible, low-cost Via Ferratta in terrain that would not be otherwise utilised for rock climbing. In Europe, Via Ferratta serves as an excellent conduit for young people and females to safely enjoy the alpine environment with minimal equipment or instruction.

## **General**

29. The larger Alpine Clubs of Europe do not limit the scope of their activities or Section Trips to climbing. Activities and trips as diverse as kayaking, yodelling, mountain biking and even 'coffee groups' are offered at both the National and Section level. NZAC should be encouraging of members who wish to use the social connectivity of the Club to create opportunities that lie outside the realm of climbing.

30. The Sections of NZAC are currently defined by geography and segment the Club along provincial lines. European Alpine Clubs operate on a similar basis but also include Sections defined by other criteria. Examples include the Mountain Guide Sections, Alpine Rescue Sections and LGBTQ Sections. In the New Zealand context, there may be scope to form and offer up Sections based on special interests such as bouldering or ski-touring. Another possibility is the reformation of the 'unaffiliated' Section for those members who do not wish to be defined by their location.
  
31. NZAC could play a bigger hand in UIAA affairs and extract more value from its affiliation to the UIAA. Despite its relatively low level of engagement with UIAA, NZAC is regarded by the UIAA and other Alpine Clubs as a competent, moderately influential and valued member of the international climbing community. NZAC could make a better effort to serve as a conduit of communication between its members and the UIAA. NZAC members should be encouraged to serve on the various commissions of the UIAA.
  
32. In the broadest sense, regardless of what issues are emerging, the most successful European Alpine Clubs endeavour to prepare themselves for future developments and take a leadership role in responding to challenges. Successful Alpine Clubs consider themselves the pre-eminent thought-leaders relating to the alpine environment and seek to assume a quasi-governmental role in its management. For NZAC, it is preferable that it implements norms and protocols earlier and of a higher standard, than an external regulatory body.

# Dissemination of Key Learnings

The Sir Winston Churchill Memorial Trust rightly asks that each recipient of a fellowship endeavours to share the new insights and understanding that will enrich their community and, ultimately, New Zealand as a whole.

While it is by no means exhaustive, the following list outlines ways in which the insights I gained from my study tour have been (or will be) shared.

- I serve on the Canterbury Aoraki Conservation Board. Conservation boards are independent bodies, established by statute. Each board represents the public interest in the work of the Department of Conservation, and conservation in general, within the area of jurisdiction of that board. The insights I gained on my study tour into the environmental impact (and mitigations) of recreation on alpine areas, has served to community in that capacity. I continue to serve in that Board.
- In late 2015, I was a speaker at the Outdoors Forum. The Outdoors Forum is the pre-eminent national conference in New Zealand for those employed in the Outdoor Recreation industry. The subject of my presentation was in the category of case studies of Outdoor programmes that have initiated personal change/social equity/environmental sustainability/holistic wellbeing.
- In late 2015, I reported back to my employer, the New Zealand Alpine Club. In my presentation to the Executive Committee, I outlined my key learnings.
- In 2016, I was co-Opted on to the Board of the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council. The insights I gained on my study tour into the regulatory environment and risk management have served me well in contributing to the governance of that organisation. I continue to serve on the Board.
- In early 2016, I was recruited into the role of Advocacy Manager – Outdoors sector, for the New Zealand Recreation Association. My new role is to work closely with the outdoors sector and Government to raise awareness of the value of the outdoors and to ensure the sector's views on regulatory matters and other important issues are heard.
- In August 2016, I moderated a panel discussion at the Sustainable Summits Conference at Aoraki Mount Cook. The panel discussion was entitled "Global climbing pressures and management options."
- In 2016, I gave a presentation at the 2016 Outdoors Forum. My presentation was entitled "Advocating for the outdoor community" and drew heavily upon the learnings and insights of my study tour.
- In May 2017, I am giving a presentation at the 2017 Green Pavlova Conference. Green Pavlova is the parks and open space event for people working in the recreation and sport industry. My presentation is entitled "Coping with all these visitors: When does a tourism boom become a tourism crisis for DoC?"

- In July 2017, I will be speaking at the Parks Agencies Managers' Group trans-Tasman seminar in Sydney. The New Zealand Parks Agencies Managers' Group is made up of a network of New Zealand parks agency managers and parks business leaders who meet regularly to assist each other and to progress sector issues. – My presentation is entitled “Coping with all these visitors: When does a tourism boom become a tourism crisis for DOC?”