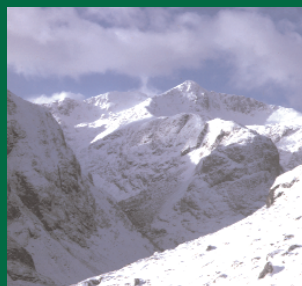


# Winter Mountain Leader Award.



M L T S

Mountain Leader Training Scotland

**WINTER MOUNTAIN LEADER AWARD  
PROSPECTUS AND SYLLABUS  
(3RD EDITION)**

**CONTENTS**

Page No

**PROSPECTUS**

PROSPECTUS

1	Introduction . . . . .	.2
2	Scope of the Scheme . . . . .	.2
3	Stages in the Scheme . . . . .	.3
4	Registration . . . . .	.3
5	Training . . . . .	.4
6	Training Course Exemption . . . . .	.4
7	Consolidation Period . . . . .	.4
8	First Aid Requirements . . . . .	.5
9	Assessment . . . . .	.5
10	Bibliography . . . . .	.6
11	Log Book and Recording Experience . . . . .	.7
12	Remit and Continuing Experience . . . . .	.7

APPENDICES

1	Providers of Winter Mountaineering Proficiency training . . . . .	.8
2	Winter Quality Mountain Day . . . . .	.8
3	Winter Graded Ground . . . . .	.9

SYLLABUS

1	Snow and Avalanches . . . . .	.10
2	Snow Holes and Emergency Shelters . . . . .	.10
3	Ice Axe and Crampon Skills . . . . .	.10
4	Security on Steep Ground . . . . .	.11
5	Cold Weather Injuries . . . . .	.12
6	Navigation . . . . .	.12
7	Winter Weather . . . . .	.12
8	Expedition Skills . . . . .	.15

# **PROSPECTUS**

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of the Winter Mountain Leader award scheme is to provide training and assessment of the skills and techniques necessary to lead walking parties on the hills and mountains of the UK under winter conditions, excluding roped climbing on technical terrain. The demands made on the hill walking leader in winter are much greater than in summer, therefore the Mountain Leader award is a prerequisite for all candidates and the scheme builds on many of the skills already acquired. It is a natural progression. The scheme integrates personal experience, training and assessment.

Since its introduction in 1965, the scheme has achieved widespread recognition by Education Authorities, youth organisations and individuals for ensuring technical competence in this field. The scheme is operated on behalf of the Mountain Leader Training UK (MLTUK) by Mountain Leader Training Scotland (MLTS), formerly the Scottish Mountain Leader Training Board, and the award is valid throughout the UK although all training and assessment courses are run in Scotland. MLTUK recognises this award as the lowest level of qualification suitable for those who operate independently while leading walking groups in mountainous country in the UK in winter conditions.

## **2 SCOPE OF THE SCHEME**

Personal proficiency training is not provided under the aegis of MLTS. Aspirant winter mountain leaders seeking personal proficiency training so that they can gain the required experience for registration for the scheme are advised to seek instruction from a qualified Mountaineering Instructor or British Mountain Guide. Attendance on a winter mountaineering course at a National or other mountain centre is also recommended. Details of instructors or centres conducting winter mountaineering proficiency training can be found in many hill walking or mountaineering magazines or through contacting the organisations listed in Appendix 1.

Under winter conditions, the intensive nature of the experience, the demands it makes on fitness and the need to navigate accurately and safely over the chosen route in adverse weather conditions present a challenge that requires the leader to have knowledge and experience well above that normally required in summer.

Completion of a Winter Mountain Leader training course alone, without taking an assessment course, is not a qualification in itself, although it is likely to be of considerable benefit to the trainee. The award does not provide a climbing qualification. The successful Winter Mountain Leader is validated to lead parties on hill walks within the UK under winter conditions. The award excludes the use of ropes and technical equipment other than required for potential emergency situations. The area and terrain chosen for the activity should be such that no use of the rope is contemplated.

Those who wish to instruct others in winter climbing skills and techniques should hold the Mountain Instructors Certificate. See Mountain Instructor Scheme below.

It is the duty of the employer or operating authority to decide whether a leader possesses the personal attributes needed to take responsibility for a particular group of people. It is the combination of technical skills, wide experience and personal qualities which forms the basis for effective group management. The scheme assesses only the technical skills and experience - the employer or operating authority must gauge personal qualities and any other professional qualification requirements.

**Mountain Instructor Scheme:** The Mountain Instructor scheme has two levels. The first is the Mountain Instructor Award (MIA), the second is the Mountain Instructor Certificate (MIC). In outline, the MIA scheme concentrates on the skills required to instruct rock climbing and builds upon the Mountain Leader award whilst the MIC concentrates on snow and ice climbing and builds upon the MIA and Winter ML. Both the MIA and MIC schemes are operated by MLTUK. More information about the Mountain Instructor schemes is available from MLTUK, address at Appendix 1

### **3 STAGES IN THE SCHEME**

The scheme consists of 6 stages:

- Gaining personal winter mountaineering experience.
- Registration and issue of log book.
- Training course (6 days minimum).
- A consolidation period after the training course when further personal experience is gained. This period should be used to practise the techniques learnt on the training course.
- Assessment course (5 days minimum).
- Continuing to maintain a log book of experience gained.

## **4 REGISTRATION**

Before registration for the Winter Mountain Leader scheme candidates must:

- Be at least 20 years old.
- Already hold the Mountain Leader award.
- Have recent experience of hill walking and mountaineering in winter conditions in at least three different mountain areas in the UK.
- Have experience of an absolute minimum of 20 Winter Quality Mountain Days, see Appendix 2.
- Be well practised in the use of ice axe and crampons.

Applications must be made on official MLTS registration forms. No other forms or details of experience are to be used. On receipt of the appropriate fee and approval of the application, the relevant publications and log book will be dispatched.

Candidates should apply to register for the Winter Mountain Leader scheme not less than three weeks before booking to attend a training course. Failure to register prior to attending a training course will render attendance invalid.

## **5 TRAINING**

The training courses are run by Providers approved by MLTS and offer candidates the choice of a 6-day course or a series of weekends. A full list of approved Course Providers, course locations and dates is available from MLTS.

Training courses are for potential leaders and assume basic competence as a winter hill walker. They emphasise those skills which a candidate might have difficulty in learning without expert guidance, for example evaluating snow conditions, arresting a slide with an ice axe, belaying securely on snow and ice, safe rope work, construction of snow shelters and navigation in extreme winter conditions. For this reason some aspects of the syllabus, which the candidate may easily learn elsewhere, may not be covered during the training course. Candidates are expected to gain knowledge and understanding of these subjects themselves.

Applicants for training courses should send a photocopy of their registration page with their application. This enables the Course Director to satisfy him/herself that the applicant has the necessary experience and has received all the appropriate information on the scheme. Course participants must bring their current, updated, log books to the training courses.

At the completion of training candidates will have an opportunity to assess their own performance and, in discussion with the Course Director, to develop a personal action plan to undertake prior to assessment.

## **6 TRAINING COURSE EXEMPTION**

Attendance on a winter training course is normally mandatory. Exemptions will only be given to exceptional candidates with considerable experience in Scottish winter conditions. Applications for exemption must be made in writing to the Secretary of MLTS and a full record of experience must be enclosed.

Before applying for exemption, candidates should consider the following points:

- The training course is not an elementary winter mountaineering course but a vital part of the preparation for assessment as a leader and includes specialised subjects which might be unfamiliar even to experienced winter mountaineers.
- Exemption from training greatly increases risk of failure at assessment, with the consequent waste of time, money and effort resulting in a disappointment for the candidate.
- The training course is an interesting and enjoyable experience from which most mountaineers derive considerable benefit and pleasure.

## **7 CONSOLIDATION PERIOD**

During the period between training and assessment, candidates are expected to gain extensive personal winter mountaineering experience including the acquisition of winter climbing experience on Grade 1 routes (see Appendix 3). The inclusion of the requirement to have climbed 10 Grade 1 climbs is to ensure that candidates have experience of moving and rope-work on a variety of terrain at this standard. If possible, working under the guidance of a suitably qualified leader is also recommended. Every opportunity should be taken to practise the skills learned during training.

The scheme is specifically designed for the UK therefore candidates should have substantial winter experience in the hills and mountains of the UK, particularly in Scotland. However winter mountaineering and snow and ice climbing experience gained in other countries may be relevant and should be recorded on the appropriate log book pages.

## **8 FIRST AID REQUIREMENTS**

Prior to attendance on assessment candidates must hold a currently valid First Aid certificate. Courses must be delivered by a Health and Safety Executive approved provider, must involve a least 16 hours of instruction, include an element of assessment and cover basic life support and emergency aid.

Whilst MLTS will accept this level of First Aid qualification it advises that it is the responsibility of candidates and/or their employers or sponsors to evaluate the likely work situations they can reasonably expect to encounter and to gain appropriate First Aid training.

## **9 ASSESSMENT**

Assessment is mandatory and is carried out by Directors approved by the Board. Prior to assessment candidates must:

- Be at least 20 years old.
- Have attended or have gained exemption from a training course.
- Have completed an absolute minimum of 40 Winter Quality Mountain Days, with at least 20 of them gained in Scotland, distributed over a period of at least three winter seasons.
- Have completed at least 10 Grade 1 named Scottish winter climbs.
- Hold a First Aid certificate recognised as appropriate for the scheme.

When applying for assessment candidates should ensure that they meet the pre-course requirements and should identify their best 40 Winter Quality Mountain Days in their log books. An \* before the date or use of a highlight pen are recommended. Course Directors may request evidence that candidates meet the pre-course requirements prior to acceptance for an assessment. On arrival for assessment candidates must present their log book and First Aid certificate to the Course Director.

Failure to meet the pre-course requirements or, where appropriate, to provide exemption evidence, will result in a deferment or attendance being declared void.

Candidates should be familiar with all aspects of the syllabus before assessment, even if some parts of the syllabus were not covered in training. During the assessment course, which lasts a minimum of five days, candidates will be tested in accordance with the syllabus requirements. This assessment normally involves a 3 day / 2 night expedition. The assessment Course Director then provides an assessment report completed with the appropriate recommendations.

The assessment reports will take one of three forms:

- **PASS:** awarded where the candidate has demonstrated a proper knowledge and performance of the scheme syllabus and has demonstrated the necessary experience for mountain leadership.
- **DEFER:** where the candidate has generally performed well and has demonstrated the necessary experience and skills, but where complete proficiency has not been attained.
- **FAIL:** where the candidate's performance has been generally weak, or the necessary experience and skills have not been shown.

Candidates who are deferred or failed on practical aspects of the syllabus cannot attend re-assessment within 3 months. Course Directors will provide advice to all such candidates on the way forward. A failure will necessitate attendance at a complete assessment course. A deferment, which normally involves a one day re-assessment of the weak area, has a shelf life of 5 years after which the complete assessment course must be retaken. Following deferment only 2 one-day reassessments are permitted, after which a full course assessment will be required. Wherever possible re-assessments should be retaken with the original Course Director.

#### APPEALS PROCEDURE

MLTS has an established appeals procedure which is documented in the winter scheme "Guidance Notes for Candidates, Trainers and Assessors".

## **10 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

While many books are available on this subject the MLTS recognise "Mountaincraft and Leadership" by Eric Langmuir (ISBN 1-85060-295-6) as the official handbook of this scheme.

#### FURTHER READING

There is a vast selection of literature, see the bibliography in "Mountaincraft and Leadership", on all aspects of the syllabus from which candidates may select.

## **11 LOG BOOK AND RECORDING EXPERIENCE**

The candidate's winter mountaineering experience should be recorded in the log book in the appropriate section. Entries should be concise and easily read.

The log book is divided into five sections as follows:

- SECTION 1- Personal particulars and endorsement page
- SECTION 2- Training course report and personal profile.
- SECTION 3- Personal walking, climbing and leading experience
- SECTION 4- Experience requirements, sample page and skills checklist.
- SECTION 5- Attendance certificates for additional training.

## **12 REMIT AND CONTINUING EXPERIENCE**

Award holders should note that the award remains valid only where the holder is deployed within the remit of the award and the holder has recent experience appropriate to that award. Also, the responsibility for ensuring that leaders receive refresher training must lie with the provider of the service, or the individual in the case of self employed leaders.

## **APPENDICES**

### **1 PROVIDERS OF WINTER MOUNTAINEERING PROFICIENCY TRAINING**

The names and addresses of qualified Mountaineering Instructors and Mountain Guides who can offer instruction in winter walking/climbing/mountaineering techniques can be obtained from MLTS or any of the following:

**MLTUK**  
Siabod Cottage  
Capel Curig  
Conwy  
LL24 0ET

Tel: 01690-720272  
Fax: 01690-720248

The Mountaineering Council of Scotland  
The Old Granary  
West Mill Street  
Perth  
PH1 5QP  
Tel: 01738-638227  
Fax: 01738-442095

The British Mountaineering Council  
177-179 Burton Road  
West Didsbury  
Manchester  
M20 2BB  
Tel: 087 001 048 78  
Fax:

### **2 WINTER QUALITY MOUNTAIN DAY**

The results of over 30 years experience of assessment courses has shown that the key element in the making of a good candidate is the quality and quantity of his or her personal winter hill walking and mountaineering experience. This experience is measured in terms Quality Mountain Days. Although it is difficult to define such a unit of experience there are a number of common characteristics. The adversity of weather conditions, the changeable nature of the underfoot conditions, the requirement to navigate accurately and carry greater amounts of equipment etc, all affect speed of movement and distance travelled. However Winter Quality Mountain Days are likely to be strenuous and reasonably demanding and will involve over 5 hours walking and/or climbing. As the award is for hill walking in winter conditions in the UK any winter climbing should be part of a longer mountain day and not the sole reason for the excursion.

Winter Quality Mountain Days should involve elements of planning, exploration of an unfamiliar locality, map reading/navigation and more than likely require the use of ice axe and crampons for security. Above all the experience should lead to feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction, even if enjoyment may occasionally be questionable!

The time of year alone, such as a January day when no snow or ice is present, or the presence of snow patches (eg on the Cairngorm plateau) on a sunny day in May do not qualify as Winter Quality Mountain Days, even though the day may satisfy the elements of length, navigation and exploration.

While foreign experience can be useful these day should be in similar conditions to those found in the UK in winter to be truly relevant. The use of an axe and crampons on snow or ice does not necessarily constitute a Winter Quality Mountain Day.

### **3 WINTER GRADED GROUND**

In climbing terminology Grade 1 ground is taken to mean "uncomplicated steep snow slopes which may present cornice difficulties", normally considered to be gully climbs eg Parsley Fern Gully, No 4 Gully, Aladdin's Couloir. However for the Winter ML award it is best to think of Grade 1 ground in a more typical hill walking setting, where it is taken to mean "snow covered ground, often with easy angled steps of ice, neve or rock on which a fall or slip could have potentially serious consequences".

In other words, Grade 1 ground need not only be encountered in long gullies, but could be sections of open slope which require techniques in addition to those normally associated with walking. It is not necessarily the angle of the ground or the length of the slope which is important, but the type of ground, the quality of the snow covering it, and the consequences of a slip.

# SYLLABUS

## 1 SNOW AND AVALANCHES

Candidates should be able to continually evaluate the terrain, snowpack and weather conditions to draw sensible educated conclusions regarding avalanche hazard:

- 1.1 interpret snowpack structure through the use of snow pit analysis and shear tests.
- 1.2 identify windslab, neve, graupel and other snow types.
- 1.3 identify possible windslab and cornice formation on a particular slope as a result of snowfall intensity and wind direction.
- 1.4 identify how changes in weather conditions effects the snowpack.
- 1.5 identify the types of avalanche common in Britain.
- 1.6 identify situations of high avalanche danger and those of little avalanche danger.
- 1.7 demonstrate safe and effective precautions when negotiating a slope that may be avalanche prone.
- 1.8 state the actions to be taken if involved in an avalanche incident and organise a search and assistance for those buried in an avalanche.
- 1.9 identify sources of avalanche information.

## 2 SNOW HOLES AND EMERGENCY SHELTERS

Candidates should demonstrate the ability to construct and use snow holes and emergency shelters to provide effective shelter in the winter mountain environment:

- 2.1 select suitable sites for bivouacs, emergency shelters and snow holes.
- 2.2 construct emergency shelters quickly using only hill walking equipment.
- 2.3 construct and use snow holes suitable for occupation as an expedition base.
- 2.4 identify the dangers of snow shelters, both for themselves and for groups, and take steps to minimise these.

### **3 ICE AXE AND CRAMPON SKILLS**

Candidates are expected to be very competent in the use of ice axe and crampons on a variety of terrain, including Grade 1 ground, and in a variety of snow and ice conditions.

Winter Mountain Leaders will frequently need to give tuition to novice groups in the safe use of ice axe and crampons. On assessment candidates will be expected to give basic instruction in the elements in sections 3.1 to 3.12 below.

On snow slopes, using only the axe, candidates should demonstrate safe and efficient:

- 3.1 selection of an ice axe of suitable length and design, and its care and maintenance.
- 3.2 carriage and use of the axe for balance and support in a fashion appropriate to the slope and snow conditions.
- 3.3 carriage and use of the axe when kicking steps up, down and across slopes of hard snow.
- 3.4 cutting the appropriate type of step up, down and across steep slopes of hard snow for personal and group use.

On a hard snow slope of a steepness such that a slip could lead to an accelerating slide if not arrested, demonstrate safe and efficient:

- 3.5 carriage of the ice axe in a fashion that allows rapid deployment for self-arrest.
- 3.6 self-arrest from any sliding position.
- 3.7 self-arrest of a tumbling fall quickly and effectively.

Using crampons in a range of winter mountain walking terrain of varying difficulty demonstrate safe and efficient:

- 3.8 selection of crampons of a suitable design and their care and maintenance.
- 3.9 attachment to and removal from boots.
- 3.10 movement up, down and across hard snow using French technique, front pointing, and a mixture of both.
- 3.11 adaption of techniques to suit a variety of underfoot conditions, for example, water ice, hard neve, new snow and soft wet snow.

On Grade 1 ground, using ice axe and crampons as appropriate, demonstrate safe, efficient and confident movement so that the following technical obstacles may be overcome:

- 3.12 cornices.
- 3.13 water ice.
- 3.14 neve.
- 3.15 rock steps.
- 3.16 mixed ground.

#### **4 SECURITY ON STEEP GROUND**

Candidates should be able to provide security for individual members of a hill walking party during ascent and descent of short sections of ground up to and including Grade 1 ground and cornices, using techniques appropriate to equipment carried by a hill walking party, for example, ice axe, rope, sling and karabiner. Candidates should be able to efficiently and safely:

- 4.1 select and maintain suitable ropes, slings, karabiners and any other relevant equipment.
- 4.2 construct suitable stances appropriate to the anchor.
- 4.3 construct appropriate anchors in snow and mixed terrain including snow and ice bollards.
- 4.4 demonstrate rope management including knots, tying on and fluent handling while belaying (including lowering).
- 4.5 identify the appropriate situations determining use of waist belays and direct belays including belaying on flat ground.
- 4.6 hold falls and arrest slides using dynamic belay techniques.
- 4.7 provide security for one person with a short length of rope while moving together on steep exposed hill walking terrain.
- 4.8 communicate instructions.

#### **5 COLD WEATHER INJURIES**

Candidates should understand the causes and be able to avoid the physiological injuries that can occur in cold, wet and freezing conditions. They should take precautions to avoid injuries but, failing that, be able to identify the signs and symptoms and then apply first aid to treat the following:

- 5.1 mountain hypothermia.
- 5.2 frostnip and frostbite
- 5.3 heat disorders.
- 5.4 snow blindness.
- 5.5 sunburn.

## **6 NAVIGATION**

Navigation in winter can be very difficult and requires considerable practice. In poor conditions, including darkness and whiteout, candidates should be able to safely and efficiently:

- 6.1 relate map to ground using either 1:25,000, 1:50,000 or other scale maps.
- 6.2 choose suitable routes between geographical features in poor conditions.
- 6.3 measure distance accurately using pacing, timing and detailed information from the map.
- 6.4 take and follow accurate compass bearings while walking in poor conditions.
- 6.5 demonstrate navigational techniques appropriate to poor conditions.
- 6.6 demonstrate using a rope to safeguard progress in poor conditions.
- 6.7 relocate position effectively.

## **7 WINTER WEATHER**

Candidates should understand the development of weather systems in winter time and the sequence of events that cause particular local weather and snow conditions. Candidates should demonstrate an understanding and use of weather information for planning and during hill-walking expeditions in winter conditions:

- 7.1 identify appropriate sources of meteorological information.
- 7.2 interpret meteorological forecasts and synoptic charts.
- 7.3 convert sea level forecasts for altitudes up to 1200 meters.
- 7.4 take account of the special features of weather in the mountains:
  - 7.4.1 wind speeds.
  - 7.4.2 temperature changes.
  - 7.4.2 wind chill factors.
- 7.5 recognise cloud formations and alterations of wind direction and temperature that are indicative of weather changes.
- 7.6 observe changes in the weather while walking and made informed decisions relating to choice of route and safety.

## **8 EXPEDITION SKILLS**

As for the summer scheme, candidates should be able to identify the equipment required for individuals and a group during winter hill walking expeditions, how to plan such expeditions and be aware of the common causes of mountain accidents in winter. Candidates should be able to safely and efficiently :

- 8.1 calculate the time required for winter expeditions and select suitable routes appropriate to the activity, group and individuals.
- 8.2 select clothing, food and equipment suitable for personal and group use for day walks and overnight expeditions.
- 8.3 demonstrate the skills and organisation to remain comfortable during an overnight expedition in the Scottish mountains in winter.
- 8.4 organise group and personal hygiene arrangements in a way that minimises the impact on the environment.
- 8.5 organise search and rescue for a lost member of the group.
- 8.6 identify and minimise the risks created by the following hazards:
  - 8.6.1 loose and verglassed rock.
  - 8.6.2 snow bridges above streams.
  - 8.6.3 cornices.
  - 8.6.4 avalanche prone slopes.
  - 8.6.5 strong winds.
- 8.7 Display positive leadership and decision making by:
  - 8.7.1 setting and reviewing targets.
  - 8.7.2 demonstrating good communication skills.
  - 8.7.3 maintaining discipline and control.
  - 8.7.4 meeting the changing needs of the group and individual members.
  - 8.7.5 fostering environmental awareness.
  - 8.7.6 maintaining involvement, interest and enjoyment.
  - 8.7.7 imparting technical skills where appropriate.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

**MLTS would like to thank MLTUK, Glenmore Lodge and Plas-y-Brenin National Outdoor Centres and the many Course Directors for their assistance in the production of this Prospectus and Syllabus**

**For further information on MLTS Mountain Leader schemes contact the Secretary or have a look at the MLTUK website at [www.mltuk.org](http://www.mltuk.org)**

**The Secretary  
MLTS  
Glenmore  
Aviemore  
Inverness-shire  
PH22 1QU**

**Tel: 01479-861248  
Fax: 01479-861249  
E-mail: [smltb@aol.com](mailto:smltb@aol.com)**

**£2.50**

**Supported by sportscotland**

# **MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL OF SCOTLAND**



**Founded 1970**

The Mountaineering Council of Scotland acts as the national representative organisation for hillwalkers, climbers, mountaineers and cross-country skiers in Scotland.

We promote safety and good practice, fight to conserve the hills from harmful development and campaign for free access.

Anyone who has an interest in the Scottish hills can become a member of the Mountaineering Council of Scotland and make use of the benefits. We currently have over 9,000 members (138 clubs, 2,000 individual members and 25 Associate members).

Benefits of membership:

- Use of club huts throughout Scotland and England. Reduced rates in Alpine Huts
- Reduced rate courses in winter skills, mountain first aid, avalanche awareness and navigation
- Regular magazine, The Scottish Mountaineer, 52pp 6 copies per year
- Free Civil Liability and competitive holiday and activity insurance
- Discount on gear at selected shops
- Events for Young Mountaineers
- A chance to have your say in Scottish Mountaineering
- Help MC of S protect the mountains from harmful developments.
- As a MLTS registrant you will qualify for a first year concessionary membership fee with the

Mountaineering Council of Scotland.

For more information about MC of S membership, contacts for your local climbing or hill walking club or the work of the Mountaineering Council of Scotland contact:

**The Mountaineering Council of Scotland**  
**The Old Granary, West Mill Street, Perth, PH1 5QP**  
**Tel: 01738 638 227 Fax: 01738 442 095**

Supported by



M L T S

Mountain Leader Training Scotland

Glenmore, Aviemore, Inverness-shire PH22 1QU

Tel: 01479 861248 Fax: 01479 861249 E-mail: [smltb@aol.com](mailto:smltb@aol.com)

£2.50