

“You have ropes that go back to two or three tyres, or as many as you want. It simulates the effects of pulling a sled and helps build up the muscles you need.”

At least the remoteness of Skye will provide some privacy for the rather bizarre sight, which is something Avery and his fellow polar trekkers were not afforded – not that it was going to stop them.

“We did a lot of it along Rotten Row in Hyde Park before the North Pole expedition,” he says. “You get some very strange looks, but it was without doubt the best bit of training we did.”

Tom has led mountaineering expeditions to the Andes, New Zealand, the Alps, Tanzania, Patagonia and Morocco, and conquered nine previously unclimbed peaks in the former Soviet Republic of Kyrgyzstan, naming one after his cleaning lady in London.

Meeting Tom, hearing him talk with endless enthusiasm about his achievements, it's hard to imagine he has ever done anything else in his life.

It comes as a surprise, therefore, to hear that after graduating from Bristol University, he spent 15 months working as an accountant with Arthur Andersen in London. Unable to get the mountains out of his system however, his City days were short-lived: he failed important accountancy exams and

chose to return to the mountains, where he landed a job as a ski guide in Verbier within a few days.

Tom lacks no drive or enthusiasm for what he does. However, he stumbles over sourcing the inspiration for his chosen way of life, apart from to say that he loves exploring (although he dislikes being labelled an ‘explorer’)

Originally from Ticehurst in East Sussex, Tom fell into mountaineering after his parents – despite having little interest themselves – encouraged him to join his school's climbing club.

“It's just the outdoors, really,” he enthuses. “It gives me a thrill. It doesn't really matter if it's in a forest or the Arctic. I don't like the heat though.”

Seeing as his 25-year-old brother Leo has recently completed a 5,000 mile bike trek in central America, and two years ago his sister Jessie, now 27, swam the English Channel, you can be forgiven for thinking that he was just born to do extraordinary things in life. After all, when the plight of Captain Robert Scott might have put many young children off polar expeditions, for the young Tom Avery, the ending was immaterial. It was the spirit of adventure that struck a chord with him.

“Back then they didn't even know Antarctica was a continent. They went on this journey and so nearly made it back. I think it was the romance of the story

