

The height of achievement is Lee's goal at Christmas

A NEWBURY man will be climbing the highest mountain in the Antarctic in temperatures of minus 35 degrees centigrade when most people are tucking into their turkey on Christmas day.

Lee Farmer, of Woolton Hill, is climbing the 16,000ft Vinson Massif as part of a personal goal to conquer the 'seven summits', the highest points on each of the seven continents, a feat first achieved in 1985.

Mr Farmer has already conquered Kilimanjaro in Africa and the highest point in Europe, Mount Elbrus in Russia.

Mr Farmer hopes to climb Mount McKinley, in Alaska within the next year and after that to take on Everest.

Mr Farmer, who works as a land agent for Faversham Brooke Ltd, said: "It will be colder than anything you and I can imagine, so you must take nothing but the best equipment and clothing, from goggles and climbing suit to boots, gloves, and food.

"We will be carrying equipment weighing up to 20kgs in rucksacks and dragging a 30kg sledge. We will burn at least 6,000 calories a day. Every square centimetre of skin will be covered otherwise you risk perspiration being frozen to your face."

Only around 400 mountain climbers have ever managed to reach the top of Vinson mountain, located 600 miles from the South Pole.

Mr Farmer's success depends on favourable weather conditions. The Antarctic's powerful hurricane-force Katabatic winds are some of the strongest on Earth, with maximum speeds of more than 250 km per hour. During November to January, which is the summer season in the Antarctic, there is 24 hours of daylight.



■ Lee Farmer

Mr Farmer, who is also studying for an MBA in business management, said: "It's not ideal to be away from home at Christmas but my wife, who is also a mountain climber, is very supportive. The extreme weather conditions in the Antarctic make it the best possible time to attempt the climb.

"The worst-case scenario is that our tents could be broken by strong winds or our food could run out, but if weather conditions are stable I'm confident we'll make the summit."

The expedition is expected to last about 30 days and will begin in mid-December.