A NEW BREED

MODERNISING LAYERING, EVOLVING PERFORMANCE

Cover Story

Central Beacons team members and Floss the trainee search dog (presented in front of the camera during filming for the BBC idents 2017, poised to represent mountain rescue. Image courtesy of the BBC.)

PLEASE NOTE

Articles carried in Mountain Rescue do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Mountain Rescue England and Wales. We do not accept responsibility for advertising content.

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So much has changed in our financial situation since I first took on the role of treasurer, that Mike invited (volunteered?) me to have the ‘first word’ for this issue to talk about it all — and I freely admit this is a little outside my comfort zone. But then facing up to change has been something of a feature of my time in the financial chair!

When I started out, the organisation had just £50,000 in the bank, or thereabouts. We were two years away from the red. Discussions about how we could plan for the future — whether we even had a future — dominated not just our management meetings but our biannual national meetings. We had to make some difficult calls. Hard to believe now but there was even serious talk of closing the magazine — despite it being firmly recognised as a valuable communication tool both inside and outside the organisation.

How difficult the position now! The last five years of so have seen us benefit hugely from sponsorship deals with Go Outdoors and, more recently, the JD Foundation. We’ve received government grants and money from Libor. And the patronage of HRH The Duke of Cambridge has raised our fundraising profile and brought in substantial funds from the Royal polo matches.

But with more funding comes even greater challenges: how to deal with the growing complexity and volume of both our requirements and the needs of teams. The financial decisions we make may not suit everyone, all the time, but I guarantee they are never made lightly or hurriedly.

A key area in which we’ve been able to make a real difference is through our personal accident insurance — one of those things we pay for hoping never to have to use! There’s nothing visual or sexy about it but we all need it in place, just in case we need it. This year, we have significantly increased the amount covered, adding to what the police pay. They pay £350K in death and benefits, we’ve added that to £750K. Their weekly payment for personal injury is £350K — we’ve made it £700K. And we’re investing £40K per annum to make that happen.

As you already know, we also cover vehicle insurance — three vehicles plus one trailer per team — and there’s public liability too. Altogether we’ve committed around £120K each year to protect teams, their team members and their vehicles.

To help relieve the load in insurance, we have a new brokers in Integro and they are providing us with a dedicated five-strong support team. They have access to the insurance@mountain.rescue.org.uk email address along with myself and will respond directly to your enquiries.

We’re now in the third round of Libor funding. This year we’ve been granted £119K and overall we’ve received £267K in funding. Libor sits in a class of its own as challenges go — first in deciding what to apply for, then working out how best to spend what we’ve got, inviting tenders, drawing up agreements with providers then getting that training out there in a timely fashion (this latter a challenge in itself)!

All the officers have put in a tremendous amount of work to make all this happen but I must thank Al Read in particular who has burned many an hour with me in putting together the bid and planning the training. Thanks to Libor, this year we plan to run search management, medical, technical rescue, water and party leader courses as well as training in personal winter skills and avalanche awareness.

Later this year, we will be producing quarterly management accounts based on the themes of Governance, Fundraising and Profile (the magazine and other marketing activity) and Services to Teams (insurance, equipment etc.). This has been facilitated by Excluserv. I hope it will bring greater visibility of our finances but it’s been necessary due to the sheer volume of things we now deal with. It’s an extremely complex system for a voluntary charity.

With Excluserv, we’re also implementing a customer management system called Salesforce which means we’ll be able to connect more effectively, anywhere, any time, so everyone involved with any particular project will know what’s going on at different levels. Thank you to Paul and Jacques and everyone at Excluserv for guiding us through all these processes.

Only three years ago, we were still a computer and paper-based accounting system — Excel spreadsheets all over the place. Now we have an integrated platform to run it all, so we’re much more resilient. Goodness knows what financial challenges the future will bring but hopefully now we are much better placed to deal with them.

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INTRODUCING THE NEW MREW WATER OFFICER: KEVIN GARVEY

Kevin, who took on the role in November has been a member of Rossendale and Pendle MRT for six years and is also an assistant team leader. He’s held the position of water rep for the MRSRO for the last three years, a position he enjoyed sufficiently to apply for the national water officer role.

Away from mountain rescue, he currently works for NWAS as an Emergency Medical Technician 1, but previously worked in Further Education and Outdoor Education. He is a kayaking instructor and climbing instructor and has worked in the outdoor industry for the last sixteen years, both in a full-time capacity and as a freelance instructor.
NEW USERS ARE INCREASINGLY BEING ADDED INTO THE SYSTEM.

**SA RC A LL UPDA TE:**

- **Web-based response facility added**
- **Log viewer report modified**
- **Debrief form added**
- **Full online OS mapping**
- **SA R-H training**
- **‘A ll Partners in the Region’. This selective capability enables**
- **New users are increasingly being added into the system**
- **Friendly and helps deliver improved situational awareness for teams and our partners. Created by Jon Lynch of Wasdale MRT, it has proven very helpful in a number of recent operations.**

**Debrief format added to enable learning points, observations and post-operation reports to be added to the closed loop. The video from each debrief entry can be set to either ‘Team-Only’ or ‘All Partners in the Region’. This selective capability enables effective and candid recording of post-operational debriefs and comments.**

**Log viewer report modified to display the IP address of every log viewer instance. This has been useful for audit purposes and for identifying potential security threats.**

**Migration to ‘mobile-friendly’ continues to enable the smoother operation with smaller screen devices and more parts of SA RC A LL are being changed to become mobile-friendly. Please consult your team adm in or SA RC A LL regional admin to learn more about how to get the best from SA RC A LL and these new facilities.**

**Summary:**

- New users are increasingly being added to the system.
- The system is becoming more mobile-friendly.
- Debrief format has been added to enable learning points, observations, and post-operation reports to be added to the closed loop.
- The video from each debrief entry can be set to either ‘Team-Only’ or ‘All Partners in the Region’.
- This selective capability enables effective and candid recording of post-operational debriefs and comments.

**FUNDRAISING: HELP REQUIRED:**

**D A V E THOMPSON**

The fundraising group will hold a meeting at the AGM in May. We are looking for people with the time and commitment to get involved in national fundraising and to help manage a variety of income streams. The commitment is varied but will involve six hours per year. If you’d like to help, please contact Dave via fundraisingofficer@mountainrescue.org.uk.

**OPERATIONS/ GROUP UPDATE:**

**MIKE M ARG ESO N**

All news was eclipsed by the tragic loss of the North Coast Guard rescue helicopter R116 and its highly experienced crew of four off Black Rock lighthouse, County Mayo. Both aircrew, Dave Sheehan and John Neeson, were well known to us all. Extending our sympathies to the families, friends and colleagues in the south east Ireland Search and Rescue Association. Not surprisingly, talking to Alan Carr, chair of Mountain Rescue Northern Ireland, he spoke particularly close knit and everybody knowing the aircrew.

This whole event shines a very bright light on the importance of our training schedule with MCA. Along with driving, water and crag rescue, our work in the air is huge on the risk register. It is vital we continue to support our SAR-H reps by logging training and any helicopter interaction. When I hear people complaining about spending ten minutes undertaking the safety training mock-up online and then having to look at some of the poor quality video, it worries me greatly. They should all be 100%.

His new operations group will hold its third meeting on 15 July and undoubtedly we will have a busy and full agenda. However, I would remind everybody that this is the meeting where your regional reps can ensure that things on the ground which need attention are fully discussed and collectively agreed by regional leaders and their specialist officers. So if you have any data for the agenda, please get them to Elaine (group secretary) or myself by 1 July. Up for discussion will no doubt be radio translation and SAR-H training.

Finally, I’d like to take this opportunity to thank John Weall, who is standing down as national equipment officer at the May meeting, for his hard work. I will be taking a keen interest in the development of the next generation of MR vacuum mattress, alongside the new equipment officer.

**EQUIPMENT UPDATE:**

As Mike mentions, the post of equipment officer will become vacant when John steps down in May. Anyone interested in the role should contact Dave Close in the first instance for details via secretary@mountainrescue.org.uk.

**ALAN HINKES OBE TO BE AMBASSADOR FOR MOUNTAIN RESCUE JUDY WHITESIDE**

We’re not sure why it didn’t occur to us before, given the volume of positive sharing and retweeting of anything mountain rescue-related which comes through Alan’s social media accounts.

Still the only British mountainier to have bagged fourteen Eight Thousanders (in pursuit of which he actually climbed 28), this admirably chatty – some might say loquacious – Yorkshireman must already be our most enthusiastic supporter. So we thought we’d make it official.

‘His association with mountain rescue goes back some way. Back in 2010, he sat about climbing 39 county summits in seven days to raise awareness of Mountain Rescue England and Wales as well as funds, supported by a number of teams along the way. That was the first time, he says, he realised the 48 teams were all separate charities.

‘When first approached with the idea — essentially a recognition of what he was already doing, helping promote mountain rescue — he was (as they say in Yorkshire), extremely chuffed to be asked.

‘I’ve lots of friends in the teams,’ he says, ‘and I’ve a lot of respect for anyone in mountain rescue. They’re fantastically dedicated and professional in what they do. They love the hills and they genuinely enjoy getting out there and helping save lives. And I’m happy to get involved in whatever way I can.’

‘It’ll be great having him on board, ’ adds chairman Mike France. ‘We look forward to seeing Alan around a bit more!’

**25 JANUARY 2017:**

Dear Judy, I was delighted to see the ‘Spotted in Wasdale’ monocycling photo in the Winter 2017 issue. The chap in the photo was me! My son (11) and I were making a mountain monocycling (mountain biking on Scoot) kit at the time. This is ‘a thing’ and we represented the UK last year in the World Unicycling Championships in San Sebastian, Spain.

Dr Stuart Allan

Team Doctor, Kendal MRT & GP in Milnthorpe, Cumbria

**And, after following further provocation from the editor...**

I’m also on BBOC’s ‘tombie-tastic’ team! (**29 January 2017**) At 8.00pm in Special Forces: Ultimate Hell Week. I’m not so sure that was fun all the time but it was unicef-able, the whole family do it, but my son and I am probably the most into the downhill stuff. Daughter Tara, who is nine, is also in on the act. Evan and I uncycled on of the top of the Call in the Howgills last week. Mountain biking is kind of like what rock climbing is to mountain walking, you have to be really up close and personal with every bit of the terrain otherwise it just pulls you off. Super work for the core and great cross training for fit, running, my family other passions. I’m also into ultra running and have done the ULTRA and 100k.

It’s just another way of enjoying the fells. People have some very interesting ways of enjoying the fells. So now you know. Thanks! (Editor)

Photos show Evan and Stuart at the World Championships with their unicycles.

**25 January 2017:**

Dear Sally and Judy, I read with interest the article regarding ICs, especially local ones. This article is very poignant to my wife and myself as we lost a friend due to a tone IFA two years ago in which an incoherent became detached from a contractors’ vehicle, entering through the windshield of her car and causing her fatal injuries. She left a grieving family, a husband and two sons who are just starting on their individual careers.

So the point I want to make is that all drivers are responsible for their vehicles, whether team, personal or business – the disruption and trauma that an accident of this magnitude can cause is unthinkable. Not only does the driver go through the legal procedures which may end up as fine, the loss of a licence or even the loss of employment, but as most rescue teams members live in rural areas, they may be known to those tragically injured and also the families and friends of the injured. This will be an added strain on the driver as he or she will have to live with the consequences for the rest of their lives.

So I would emphasise enough that it only takes a couple of minutes to check the roadworthiness of the vehicle and the security of any load being carried, when a lapse of concentration could cause years of concern and distress. Perhaps I’m getting paranoid but I’m now fully aware of any potential load carrying vehicle and the dangers.
Peer review: From both sides of the fence

CHRIS GRIFFITHS  NEWSWAS TEAM LEADER

From both weekends I learned much, went away with lots to think about and many things to be proud of. I now also have a better understanding of how we, as a team, can review what we are doing ourselves. I also saw how my own team supported each other, in the same way other teams do, in ensuring that we always do our best we can for those who need our help.

And, of course, there was the usual lift bonus of making new friends along the way.

Peer review is about reflection not deflection. There is no finger pointing, it’s not threatening or judgemental in any way, it simply facilitates an inward look – a reflection – that offers a structured insight into how your team works. It is honest, open and, above all, it is designed to be developmental. You will come away from the review with things to do that will make your organisation more effective and efficient. Peer review engenders a sense of responsibility and ownership by the whole team to make progress.

The review poses questions that you will need to find answers for — in a way that best suits your team, its unique dynamics and its circumstances. It highlights what you do well too — and it is always nice to receive praise from respected peers. If it does not motivate and reassure, then you have not engaged positively from the start.

Feedback is honest and reflects what was seen and discussed. You may not agree with every word but you will come away with a clear picture of what you need to work on and you will have a true reflection of how your team functions.

The process itself is hard work for everyone involved — it has to be because there is a lot to get through in a limited amount of time but you must remember that it is your review and you have control from the start — something that Tim explained really very well...

NEWSWAS came through refreshed and energised, we had good guidance and support from the reviewers and now have plenty of things to discuss at all levels of the lead team.

The reviews, Tim, John and Derek were friendly and supportive but at the same time challenging at every stage. They were also good company to spend a weekend with and even came to our call out on the Saturday night. I would strongly recommend that all teams opt into the process. Take from it what you will — but would be amazed if you found it anything other than a positive experience. Give it a go. If you think you don’t need to do a structured review, then you really do.

My only negative is that there is no facility for the review team to share what they’ve learned as an example of good practice as a matter of course. I for one learned much from Pete Gibbs and his team at Rosedale where I was warmly welcomed during their review. Good practice needs to be shared across the whole MRM world – we all have the same aims after all.

I have included our Five Year Plan (left), as requested by the review team. It is meant as no more than an example of a development strategy. Some things are clearly more achievable than others, but what it has given us is a focus to the whole team and in doing so some degree of measurable involvement in relation to progress. If it is of any use, please feel free to use (adapt) it for your own organisations.

And finally, having survived seven years of school inspections, if anyone knows anyone in Parliament then please suggest this as an effective, friendly and positive model as a replacement for the dreaded Ofsted – could be a good winner for MREW to hire Tim out to the Minister for Education too! ☺

Having been involved with the review process as a reviewer in November 2016, I was keen to see how the experience would differ when my own team – NEWSWAS – was visited in February of this year. With a little time to reflect, I can honestly say that there was little difference.

Our Team Mission: NEWSWAS volunteers provide the police, ambulance service and local communities with a highly competent search and rescue capability that can be deployed swiftly, safely and effectively 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Our Team Vision: By 2020, we will be known by the wider community as a centre of excellence for all-terrain, all-weather search and rescue, serving the communities of north east Wales and beyond.

Our Values: We are a professional and multi-disciplined. We give our time as volunteers to help save lives.

Our Team Values: We give our time as volunteers to help save lives.

Looking Ahead: The Process Goals for 2017

Goal: Improve exec performance.

Owner: Chris Griffiths

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY
Set a clear, future ‘base budget’.
Agree a fundraising plan to support the team’s aims.
Clarify fundraising and supporter roles.
Review community fundraising and plan activity according to cost/benefit.
Agree an approach to building revenue through trading.

Quality Resources - Equipment, Vehicles, Base
Equip everyone fully.
Store, audit and replace as requested by RPMRT, NEWSWAS and NNPMT.
Maintain vehicles and equipment effectively.
Maintain base to a high standard.
Plan and budget for a new base and create a fundraising plan to make it happen.

Sound Governance & Management
Aim for operational excellence, always.
Introduce MREW Peer Review.
Keep qualifications up to date and aim for personal development.
Improve and share our handbook and policies.
Insure our equipment.
Review our constitution.

Strong Reputation & Profile
Have a clear, future communications plan – messages and protocols.
Produce new literature.
Offer more expert speakers.
Create and use a stakeholder database.
Build influential relationships.
Generate more media coverage.
Make better use of our website and social media.

People: Professional, skilled team.
Recruit and retain hill volunteers.
Recruit and retain ‘specialist’ members and supporters.
Maintain our positive culture.
Start to deliver NAVMRA MREW training in casualty care and search and water rescue.
Work towards expenses.

Improvements to the Technical Rescue Section
What is the team’s operational performance requirement for rope rescue?
How does the team organise itself to match this rope rescue requirement?
How is rope rescue equipment organised to meet the operational requirement?
Describe any specific measures the team adopts in relation to cascades in the rope rescue environment?
How does the team communicate from the top to the bottom of vertical pitches?
What is the team’s operational performance requirement for water rescue?
How is water rescue equipment organised to meet the operational requirement?
Describe any specific measures the team adopts in relation to cascades in the water environment?
How does the team communicate in the water environment?

AIMS:
To allow individual teams to gain greater self-awareness of their processes and procedures in order to enhance their own performance.
The share good ideas widely across MREW and beyond.
To demonstrate that continuous improvement is embedded within the organisations culture.

WHAT WAS AGREED AS GOOD?
Overall aims and objectives.
Increased self-awareness for team.
Open question nature of question set.
Positive culture from reviewers.
Team ownership of the process.
Developing relationships between teams through reviews.
Value for money.

WHAT WAS AGREED AS NOT SO GOOD?
Length and intensity of question set.
Perceptions of standardisation.
Difficulty in sharing successes.
Lack of awareness of the true aims and objectives.

Number of teams reviewed: 8.
Number of teams actively planning a review: 5.
Available Opportunities 2017-2018: At least 5. (Teams interested in running their own review should contact tim@timcainleadership.co.uk)
Main Events (since last report): Peer Review end-of-year-one ‘Way Forward’ meeting. Nineteen teams were represented. Observers from Mountain Rescue Scotland also came along. Mountain Rescue Ireland has stated an interest in the process. All this meeting, the strengths, weaknesses and actions needed to improve the process were discussed and agreed.

Reviews completed by: RPMRT, NEWSWAS and NNPMT.

PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE
Keep improving teamwork.
Recruit and retain hill.
Recruit and retain hill members, ‘specialist’ members and supporters.
Communicate better with each other.
Maintain our positive culture.
Start to deliver NAVMRA MREW training in casualty care and search and water rescue.
Work towards expenses.

QUALITY RESOURCES - EQUIPMENT, VEHICLES, BASE
Equip everyone fully.
Store, audit and replace as requested by RPMRT, NEWSWAS and NNPMT.
Maintain vehicles and equipment effectively.
Maintain base to a high standard.
Plan and budget for a new base and create a fundraising plan to make it happen.
LAKE DISTRICT

CONCERNS OVER ‘AVOIDABLE’ CALLS FOR HELP FROM CHARITY WALKERS

Over one 24-hour period in late February, Wastdale team members — along with colleagues from neighbouring teams — were involved in three ‘999’ mountain rescues.

All the incidents were avoidable,’ said Richard Warren, ‘if the lost walkers in all cases had paid attention to the weather forecast, and been better equipped with map, compass and torches. Organisers must keep their groups together and know where everyone is. More importantly, February is not a good time to organise a charity walk with inexperienced walkers.’

The first call, at 2.00pm, was for four young females under-20, who had become separated from a party of 36 undertaking a charity walk up Scafell Pike. The team was initially unaware of the other 32 walkers — spread out across the mountain — or how the four had come to be on their own. The girls were ill-equipped, had never been on a walk like this before and had been up since 3.00am that morning for the drive from Liverpool. Their position was identified and six team members set off in extremely poor conditions, with forecasted torrential rain and severe winds, and visibility down to 20 metres. Two were suffering deepening hypothermia when the team arrived to find them huddled behind a boulder. They were warmed up in the bivvy tent and put into dry clothing. Team members described the descent as ‘extremely challenging, even for the rescuers, and the four girls needed regular strong encouragement to keep moving’. The four girls were finally brought down to the Wastdale head car park and reunited with their friends at around 8.30pm.

Meanwhile, as team members descended the mountain, a second call-out came in, followed by a third Scafell Pike incident. This latter, dealt with by Keswick MRT, involved more than 70 rescuers from seven teams, a Coastguard helicopter and six search dogs and handlers in the search for a couple who ultimately spent fourteen hours on the fells sheltering in their bivvy bag — a piece of kit they probably owed their lives to.

At one stage, the operation had to be suspended because rescuers could not stand up in the driving wind and rain lashing the fells. The walkers were eventually found, cold and exhausted in Eskdale, fifteen hours after first being reported missing. Keswick team members were originally called out about 6.15pm to help the Wastdale team search for a family group, including two teenage children, who were overdue on a walk between Seathwaite and Great Langdale.

Two of the Keswick team’s search dogs, along with fifteen team members, searched main footpaths in the area as the weather deteriorated. Just as it was looking as if a major escalation was necessary, word came through that the party had turned up at Wastdale Head Hotel. Breathing a sigh of relief, we began to withdraw from the hill.

However, word came in that two other walkers had been reported missing on Scafell Pike. A Keswick team spokesperson said, ‘They had left no details as to their route, but told the hotel they would be parking at Seathwaite. Enquiries showed the vehicle still to be there, so we informed Wastdale that we would be continuing our search patterns for the previous job, and would they continue theirs?’

In the meantime, weather conditions had worsened, and visibility was minimal. Further information trickled in about the couple, who were obviously inexperienced, and not particularly well-equipped for bad weather. The two teams, assisted by Duddon and...
Furness MRT covered as much of the ground as possible, but once conditions got to the point where team members could not stand up in the driving wind and rain, a decision was taken to stand down the search till morning.

The search resumed at 8.00am on the Wednesday, with seven teams, four search dogs and the Prestwick Coastguard Sikorsky S-92 joining the operation in improving conditions. The helicopter airlifted some of the rescuers higher on to the fells to start their search for the couple.

‘After three hours, the couple were found in Eskdale by a member of Duddon & Furness MRT. They were cold, exhausted and stunned by the ferocity of the weather. They had spent fourteen hours in a plastic bivvy bag, waiting for daylight and a break in the weather, before trying to walk out. Their bivvy bag may well have saved their lives.

‘The S-92 flew from Keswick to pick them up, and they were given hot food and drink to warm them up at Keswick’s base. Keswick MRT then arranged transport for them back to their hotel.

‘The 70-plus rescuers in the meantime had walked down to various collection points, and transport was coordinated to bring many of them back to Keswick base for soup and sandwiches, provided by our wonderful WI group, who turn out to our biggest jobs to feed and water us.

‘Our thanks to the crew of Rescue 999 from Prestwick, who face in very testing conditions, and to our neighbouring teams who helped us out.

‘The couple’s rescue involved 22 Keswick team members and 49 from the Penrith, Cockermouth, Kirkby Stephen, Wasdale, Duddon & Furness and Langdale Ambleside teams. The team members were involved in the search for just over eleven hours.’

‘ROAD CLOSED’ SIGNS IGNORED AT DRIVER’S PERIL

On a similar note (avoidable rescues), in February, Penrith team members were requested to assist a stuck motorist and two passengers. Fortunately, the vehicle was easily turned round and able to drive back to Penrith, but the incident prompted the team to urge motorists to abide by the road closed signs, rather than reach a point where they need assistance, adding ‘The signs are clear, the road is not’.

MID PENNINE

CALDER VALLEY TEAM REACH THEIR 1000th RESCUE

Calder team members reached their milestone in early March with a call to a 68-year-old lady who had sustained a lower leg injury, with rescuers having to follow a path difficult to access.

ALL CHANGE AT THE TOP IN PENRITH

After seven years as Penrith team leader, Mike Hill has handed over to Kaz Filth.

‘Mike has led the team during a number of significant rescues and searches,’ says Kaz. ‘He will continue to be an operational member, providing much needed advice and guidance whilst I get up to speed with the role.

‘Karen has been on the team for sixteen years, serving as a deputy leader for the past three. She is also a search dog handler of ten years – she and Dotte have clocked up nearly 250 dog call-outs, including a number of finds.

Above: Road closed signs, clearly ignored © Penrith MRT.

Above: All change at the top in Penrith.
NORTH WALES
NEW VEHICLE FOR ABERGLASLYN...

The Porthmadog-based Aberglaslyn team has taken delivery of their second Isuzu D-Max, which replaces the last of the team’s Land Rover Defenders.

Supplied by RJ Williams of Talarnau, the vehicle was delivered in August 2016, before commissioning for mountain rescue purposes by the North Wales Police Fleet Commissioning Centre. A final touch was the racking, built by nearby Reatlong Railway’s Boston Lodge works on no cost to the team.

Team chairman Jon Dobson Jones said, “The new vehicle is a significant milestone for us, giving us two reliable and fit-for-purpose vehicles for the future. I am delighted at the success of the project and eternally grateful to our partners who have assisted us in being able to continue to provide a high level of service to those who visit our area and our communities.”

Having tried and tested their first Isuzu since late 2014, the 36-strong team now has two identical vehicles. They currently respond to around 60 incidents per year.

GRAIS......

Thanks to a grant of £17,000 from the Morrisons Foundation which will go towards the next refurb, Mobile 2 is already down with Auto Defiance Ltd and NEWSAR is looking towards getting this back on the road in a couple of months.

PEAK DISTRICT
SECOND SPINE CHALLENGE FOR GLOSSOP TEAM MEMBERS

This is a significant year for the Glossop team, marking their 60th anniversary. It will also be the second year the Mountain Rescue Spine Challenger event, a non-stop 108-mile race from Edale to Haystacks up the Pennine Way. Glossop MRT has been proud to be a part of the race both years, helping out with intermediate checkpoints, and also as competitors. The racers have been obliged to carry GPS systems with them as part of the mandatory kit and the team would like to thank Satmap for loaning their GPS units to the QWATT competitions.

In both 2016 and 2017, three teams

RAB WELCOMES IN A NEW BREED

Rab are meeting some exceptional demands by breaking down the traditions that have defined for generations: stretchy, waterproof, insulation without bulk, and lightweight fortresses and, this year they are introducing some hybrids that will change the world: Welcome to A New Breed.

• A lightweight stretchy that’s totally waterproof, the Xeno Fleece jacket sandwiches a stretchy waterproof layer between two knitted layers. It’s an ideal shell, built for unthought days in the mountains.
• The Alpha Flux, with zoned Polartec Alpha Direct insulation offers unprecedented warmth without bulk, and tactical use of stretchy fleece panels for exceptional freedom of movement. While an under-helmet hood and thumb loops help trap heat.
• Looking for lightweight protection against the rain that also lets you move fast? The Arc Jacket offers all the protection you need, without excess features. Stretchy breathable and super-packable, the Arc is ideal for year round use.

Similar revolutionary hybrid designs can be found through the rest of RAB’s new range.

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BABI JESSE JOINS TEAM IN CALL TO INJURED MOUNTAIN BIKER

Eagle-eyed readers will have already spotted the ‘Patterdale baby’, enjoying a spot of winter training in Scotland with mum Anna. Meanwhile, in the Calder Valley, team members spotted the ‘Patterdale baby’, enjoying a spot of winter training in Scotland with mum Anna.

Meanwhile, in the Calder Valley, team members knapsack and made comfortable, team members stretchered her to the helicopter for evacuation from the moors to the land ambulance situated on the road head. Team members created a secondary landing site for the helicopter and then assisted with the transfer to the ambulance.

But important, nevertheless. As one of the first team members on scene, I was able to give the rest of the attending team more information about the location of the casualty site. When the rest of the team arrived, I was waiting and able to direct them into the site through tricky terrain, which made their job quicker than had I not been there.

Baby Jesse joins team in call to injured mountain biker

The team at Auto Defiance has done a great job to extend the life of Carys and help ensure that NEWSAR can continue to respond to call-outs. The team is hugely grateful to them, and to working partners, Bearmach, LFR Centre, Richards Chassis, DT Engine Solutions Ltd, Hel, Spryraft Deeide, Terra Firma, Super Pro and Frog Island 4x4, as without them all, this project would not have been possible.

... AND FOR NORTH EAST WALES

Faced with the team problem of aging off-road vehicles and the cessation of production of Land Rover Defenders, NEWSAR’s vehicle manager, Griff Evans entered into discussions with local firm Auto Defiance Ltd and the decision was made to send the team’s Land Rovers for a nut and bolt rebuild from the ground up.

Working on Mobile 1 started in the autumn. It was stripped back to the chassis with parts needing replacement or repair being identified at this point. On rebuild, a galvanised bulk head was added to the new galvanised chassis, strip down checks on the engine, gearbox and clutch and running gear were carried out and new parts required replaced on assembly. All body parts were also reappraised whilst they were off the vehicle.

The Land Rover was then treated to new suspension, bushings all round, a straight through exhaust system and a new bumper was added to finish off the ground floor. A bespoke wiring loom was created to encompass the team’s operational requirements and increase vehicle security. A updwell floor was added and the vehicle’s undercarriage was treated to a full complement of underbody protection. Decals and branding stickers were added in at the end.

Mobile 1, now christened Carys, was revealed to team members on 1 March and was first tasked in anger within the week.

‘The team at Auto Defiance has done a great job to extend the life of Carys and help ensure that NEWSAR can continue to respond to call-outs. The team is hugely grateful to them, and to working partners. Bearmach, LFR Centre, Richards Chassis, DT Engine Solutions Ltd, Hel, Spryraft Deeide, Terra Firma, Super Pro and Frog Island 4x4, as without them all, this project would not have been possible.’

In both 2016 and 2017, three teams...
members have set off from Edale, and a Glossop team member has won the trophy for being the first mountain rescuer past the finish line. In 2016, Tim Budd, Phil Shackleton and Patch Haley stepped up to the plate. Tim won in an overall time of 32 hours ten minutes, Phil battled on through 59 hours of bad weather and gruelling terrain to finish just inside the cut-off. Patch pulled out 50 miles into the race but vowed to come back in 2017. Glossop supported the race at Reaps and Cowling, but at the call-out — this time to rescue a racer who had injured themselves on Bleaklow. Once more, the team was able to meet its obligations, and support and rescue at the same time.

An excellent way to kick off proceedings for their 60th year! You can read Alasdair’s account of his challenge on page 56/57.

The grant supports charities running local lifeboat and rescue services, helping those in danger on and around inland and inshore waterways, including during flooding and other incidents. The money can be used to buy new lifeboats and other equipment such as lifejackets and safety gear.

Alasdair Cowell at the finish line © Glossop MRT.

TEAMS ACROSS ENGLAND AND WALES RECEIVE FUNDING FOR WATER RESCUE EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING

In January, Maritime Minister John Hayes announced that water rescue charities around the UK would receive £913,000 funding in the third round of funding provided under a five-year, £5 million scheme, announced as part of the 2014 budget statement. The grant supports charities running local lifeboat and rescue services, helping those in danger on and around inland and inshore waterways, including during flooding and other incidents. The money can be used to buy new lifeboats and other equipment such as lifejackets and safety gear.

Every day, countless volunteers in water rescue charities across our island nation carry out vital work during emergencies, not only around our coasts but also keeping our rivers, lakes and inshore waters safe,’ said the Minister. ‘It is imperative that we value and support their tireless efforts. I am delighted to be able to announce the latest round of funding, ensuring they have the equipment and resources they need to provide their round-the-clock lifesaving services.’

An expert panel — including representatives from the devolved administrations, DEFFRA, the MCA, RNLI and the RYA — assessed applications submitted to the Department for Transport on the basis of how the equipment or training will be used to support lifesaving, search and rescue operations and flood response capability locally and nationally, whether the funding will deliver wider community benefits and how the equipment and skills will bring sustainable benefits.

A number of mountain rescue teams submitted bids, receiving just under £225,000 between them. Successful recipients included Derby, Cleveland, Scarborough and Rydal, Upper Wharfedale, Woodhead, Duddon and Furness, Kendal, Kirkby Stephen, Patterdale, Bolton, Conwy, Dartmoor (Okehampton, Ashburton and Tarlstock teams), Exmoor, Seven Areas, Aberglaslyn and the North Wales RWA, all of which were heavily involved in flood rescue efforts during December 2015.

When the TV company calls

The start to 2017 has seen a few MRI teams on TV in various ways and also a spate of enquiries from production companies looking for teams to feature. From a brief exchange on the MREW Facebook Group, it’s obvious there’s confusion and frustration out there so it seemed a good theme for a media column.

As many team press officers and secretaries will know, MRIW (usually Andy Simpson as Press Officer) is approached regularly about media opportunities. These vary and it’s worth considering the differences before offering to help.

- As certain as it can be — Some enquiries are from regular programmes such as The One Show and Countryfile where the enquirer is looking to an existing show.
- Simpson as Press Officer) is approached into an existing show.
- One Show and Countryfile where the enquiry are from regular programmes such as The
- All good until we realised that the climbing instructor, quite rightly, wasn’t confirming the exact location until he knew what the ice conditions were like. Right up to the last minute, we didn’t know which team’s area the filming would be in, or whether that team had a fully accredited search dog (and handler) to take part.
- • Quirky and surprising — Finally, there are the enquiries that come out of nowhere and seem completely unrelated to MRI. Think NEWSW and the Gork Wan programme, How to Look Good Naked from a couple of years ago. Or, more recently, Central Beacons MRT and the 2017 BBC1 idents — currently appearing regularly at peak times.
- These opportunities are hard to predict but can always be better than the emergency rescue shows. They reach different audiences, communicate strong messages about MRI and, of course, raise awareness with potential supporters. If you get involved in one of these, plan for your local team to make the most of the profile and, let’s face it, fundraising opportunities.

In conclusion, you never know what might come out of a willingness to take part on TV. As Huw Jones of Central Beacons MRT has said of the BBC1 idents enquiry: ‘We’ve worked with a lot of film and TV crews over the years and we don’t tend to get too excited about it. I think it’s fair to say we weren’t fully appreciative at the beginning of quite how big this one was going to be!’

If you have recent experience you’d like to share or to see covered in future, please get in touch via sally@stoneleighcomms.co.uk or through the editor. Thanks.

SOUTH WALES

CENTRAL BEACONS LINE UP ON PRIMETIME TV IDENT

If you’ve been watching BBC TV recently, you’ll have spotted the group of mountain rescue team members appearing on screen alongside some pretty high-profile programmes. And it’s the Central Beacons team who got the gig. But how?

When Huw Jones MBE, press officer for Central Beacons, said ‘Yes’ to taking part in some filming with documentary photographer and director, Martin Parr, he wasn’t quite sure how the resulting images would be used but it seemed an opportunity not to be missed.

‘I’ve been in the team for over 35 years,’ says Huw, ‘and we’ve always had a proactive, cooperative approach to working with the media. We’ve worked with a lot of film and TV crews over the years and we don’t tend to get too excited about it all. I think it’s fair to say we weren’t fully
But big it certainly was with the group of team members featuring in one of the new BBC 1 idents ahead of programmes such as Countryfile, the Six O’clock News and, most high profile of all, the final instalment of Sherlock.

‘If mountain rescue had to pay commercial rates for the time on screen, we’d need a substantial budget,’ says MREW press officer, Andy Simpson (whose professional background is in media buying), ‘so this was priceless. It was also brilliant that the director approached us as they wanted to feature MR. I put the opportunity out for the teams to consider as they specifically wanted a Welsh team to take part to add to their spread of groups involved.’

Huw met with the location team in December 2016 and, after looking at a couple of options around the team’s base in Merthyr Tydfil, they selected an area known as Neuadd Valley in the Brecon Beacons. Filming took place shortly afterwards with just half a day to capture a group of team members gathering in various moods.

‘There was the usual need for multiple shots while lighting, angles and positioning were tweaked,’ says Huw, ‘but they also needed to capture three different versions — a serious one, a relaxed one and then more of a laughing and joking one. Add to that getting Floss, the search dog in training, to look in the right direction and it was a busy morning.

The publicity and public awareness of MR created by the idents is proving to be invaluable. They will run all year, along with others featuring everything from sea swimming to wheelchair rugby.

‘While some people can be a bit cynical about this sort of exercise,’ says Huw, ‘we’ve been flooded with compliments, some friendly, mostly-taking and the social media side of our PR has been overwhelmingly positive. We’re very proud to represent mountain rescue across the UK with this scale of exposure’.

above: Avon and Somerset team members with their new radios © ASSAR.
WINNER SKILLS TRAINING

Scarborough & Ryedale MRT took its annual trip north in search of snow over the half term. White conditions were less than ideal, but they found enough to practise the essential winter skills and get some long mountain days in.

‘We always take as many of the newer team members as we can to teach and reinforce skills,’ says Ian Hugill. ‘It was interesting to understand what they get out of such a trip and whether the trip is meeting their objectives. In SRMRT, we do take trainees with no experience so long as they are willing to learn. Sometimes it’s hard to remember those first few days on the kit as here’s some feedback from a couple of our trainees. We also met some SARDA dogs and handlers training in the same area.’

‘I was a little apprehensive about the SRMRT winter skills trip,’ says Laura, a trainee member for just eleven months. ‘Having never undertaken any serious walking in winter conditions, I wasn’t quite sure what to expect. I was asked to bring along lots of kit with sharp pointy bits, which made me somewhat fear for my own safety, given that a lot of this was going to be attached to me whilst trying to navigate steep slopes in the snow.

‘However, as always, I felt safe with my team mates and the many instructors provided tuition and guidance, to enable me to gain confidence both in the kit and its use in winter conditions. It goes without saying I needed a lot of trust in my training officer as he held me by the ankles and then sent me sliding down a slope, head first on my back, with nothing but my ice axe to aid me stopping. ‘My personal highlight was getting to act as a body for the search dogs. I was completely buried in a snowhole and relied on the skills of the dog handlers to find me. Once the dogs located me, they continued to dig until they made their way into the hole and joined me. It was fantastic and a great relief to see their paws and noses appear through the snow as they broke into the hole.

‘All in all a great trip away with the team learning invaluable skills and strengthening the bond within the team.’

‘I wasn’t sure what to expect,’ says Liz, who joined sixteen months ago, ‘but it thoroughly enjoyed myself. We hadn’t had a lot of snow locally since I joined the team but if we do get a bad winter, knowing that we’ve practised the skills recently will give me more confidence to deal with the conditions.

‘Just working on steep ground, in the absence of snow, improved my confidence. At home, training is usually round a specific skill set rather than simple confidence when moving around on awkward ground.

‘And if any of us needed a reminder, on the last day, while we were bringing the course to a close, the Coastguard Helicopter and Calderdale MRT were in the next corridor trying to save a fallen climber’s life.’

SCARBOROUGH TEAM HEADS TO SCOTLAND FOR WINTER SKILLS TRAINING

Scarborough & Ryedale MRT was able to improve my confidence. At home, training is usually round a specific skill set rather than simple confidence when moving around on awkward ground.

‘And if any of us needed a reminder, on the last day, while we were bringing the course to a close, the Coastguard Helicopter and Calderdale MRT were in the next corridor trying to save a fallen climber’s life.’

MOUNTAIN RESCUE MAGAZINE
© Scarborough & Ryedale MRT.

CASUALTY CARE IN MOUNTAIN RESCUE IS AVAILABLE TO NON-MEMBERS TO BUY AND DOWNLOAD* PRICED JUST £15 FROM MOUNTAIN-RESCUE.ORG.UK OR DOWNLOADABLE* FREE TO MEMBERS FROM MOODLE.MOUNTAIN.RESCUE.ORG.UK ALSO REVISION NOTES FOR CASUALTY CARE BY ANDY CAPEL, PUBLISHED BY LANDALE AMBLESIDE MRT.

* PLEASE NOTE THIS IS A DOWNLOADABLE PDF AND NOT A HARD COPY.

NORTH EAST

SIX SWIFTWATER TEAMS DEPLOY TO NORTH SEA TIDAL SURGE

Ian Hugill writes: Yet again the Mountain Rescue England and Wales community and other volunteer organisations have pulled together to help us with flood response in our area. Just over twelve months after the York floods, we deployed for the anticipated tidal flood surge along the east coast on 13 January. This was to be our second ‘once-in-fifty-years’ surge event in the last four years.

Thursday evening/Friday morning 12/13 January: Cleveland MRT deployed overnight to Sandsend to the north of our patch. Scarborough water assets and drivers along with Swaledale MRT deployed to Whitby. A composite team from Calder Valley, Bolton and Bowland Pennine teams enjoyed the hospitality of Scarborough Station, North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Friday 13th midday: For the high tide and anticipated surge in the afternoon the team once again provided a single water team to stand by in Whitby from 1400 to 2000 hours, four incident controllers to be based in Scarborough and Whitby, and a Mountain Rescue adviser at Silver Command in Scarborough. The other teams returned to Sandsend and Scarborough.

Friday afternoon: All three locations suffered significant flooding and all the voluntary assets were deployed in active roles.

In Whitby, our tasking included assisting a vulnerable gentleman who wished to be evacuated from his property in North Street. He was evacuated to a location of his choice which was nearby. We went on to attend four properties on Church Street to make contact with the residents and ask if they wished to be evacuated. All were happy to remain in their property. Throughout we helped a number of persons to walk through the (shallows) flooded areas in a safe manner. Swaledale MRT attended a similar range of incidents as did Cleveland in Sandsend.

In Scarborough our incident controllers coordinated the tasking and activity of a composite team led by Calder Valley SRT and a team from the York Rescue Boat as well as providing logistic support with one of our 4 x 4 vehicles. Calder Valley was tasked to a number of incidents in the North Bay area of the town and one of our water rescue technicians went out as local guide for Bowland Pennine and Bolton teams during the afternoon’s high tide. While out in South Bay, we met with York Rescue Boat. The main tasking for this team was ensuring a safe cordon around damage to the sea wall by the Spa and cliff lift.

Yet again, the voluntary mountain rescue community pulled together to provide invaluable support for the statutory emergency services and the local resilience forum and planners, many of us travelling considerable distance just to get there. Saving lives in cold and remote places... So much more than mountains.
IAN HURST

Buxton Mountain Rescue Team was deeply saddened to announce the death of its Honorary President, Ian Hurst MBE, on Wednesday 22 March, Roger Bennett writes.

Ian was a member of the Buxton team for twenty-six years but his involvement with mountain rescue in the Peak District goes back to the very beginning of the regional organisation in 1964. In fact, Ian, as a then voluntary warden with the Peak District National Park Authority, was already regularly dealing with mountain accidents when the 1964 Four Inns tragedy gave rise to the formation of the Peak District Mountain Rescue Organisation.

During fifty years, Ian served the regional rescue organisation in nearly every capacity including spells as secretary, insurance officer and treasurer. In 1972, he became a founder member of the PDMRO Incident Controllers’ Panel which took over from the previous Search Controllers’ group. As an incident controller, Ian was often the first point of contact when an accident was reported and consequently he has dealt with hundreds of calls for assistance from injured or lost people. The only retired from incident controller duties in 2013.

Ian was not content with voluntary work at regional level but also played a role in developing mountain rescue nationally. He was soon actively involved in all administrative matters, becoming a Member of the British Empire medal for services to mountain rescue. He will long be remembered for his dedication to helping people in distress in our remote areas and for his contribution to the development of mountain rescue over a period of fifty years. His depth of knowledge, vast experience and cheerful face will be sadly missed.

Our thoughts are with his family and especially his wife Zan.

Her Majesty The Queen awarded Ian with a Member of the British Empire medal for services to mountain rescue.

The rescue community joined in tribute and mourning in early March, when Irish Coast Guard search and rescue helicopter Rescue 116 crashed into the sea off County Mayo, killing all on board.

As of 25 March, the bodies of Captain Dara Fitzpatrick and Captain Mark Duffy had been discovered, along with the aircraft’s black box recorder. The search for the two remaining crew members, Winchman Ciarán Smith and Winch Operator Paul Dinsdale, was continuing. Captain Fitzpatrick was the first to be recovered, in the water and in a critical condition, but later died in hospital. Captain Duffy’s body was discovered, two weeks later, in the cockpit of the helicopter wreckage.

Dara Fitzpatrick was a senior pilot with over twenty years’ experience. In 2013, she made Irish aviation history by flying the first all-female mission for the service, with Rescue 116, alongside co-pilot Captain Carmel Kirby. She was the chief pilot for Rescue 117 at the Waterford base before her transfer to Shannon to build up flying hours on the Sikorsky S92 at that time. During the female flier mission, the duo flew a cardiac patient from west Cork to Cork University Hospital before transferring a critically ill five-year-old child from the hospital to Temple Street Children’s Hospital in Dublin. She also featured in a television documentary on the Irish Coast Guard. May she and her colleagues rest in Peace.

The community is still mourning the loss of her and her colleagues.

What did Peer Review ever do for us?

TWEED VALLEY TANGO TRAVELS SOUTH TO TEWKESBURY

In March, a three-man team from SARA Tewkesbury made the long journey north to take delivery of their new control vehicle from Tweed Valley MRT. The Scottish team had made it known they were willing to donate the tango to another SAR team, after two years of fundraising to replace the vehicle.

This is a great addition to our capability,” said SARA’s Dr John Dutton. ‘Its primary role will be for land search but it will also be configured to act in this capacity during flood incidents.’ Station Manager Gare Trinder added that following minor mechanical and bodywork fitting, the interior would be reconfigured to suit the team’s requirements through a rolling programme, as funds become available.

SARA Tewkesbury is one of five main stations within SARA. The team is grateful to Tweed Valley for the donation of the vehicle, which they say will enable them to fulfil their commitment to the communities of Gloucestershire and Worcestershire.

Ryan Nolan, Tweed Valley’s vehicle officer, said the team was very pleased to pass on the control vehicle and that they ‘look forward to see it become operational under SARA.”

The Tewkesbury team receiving the control vehicle. From left to right: John Dutton (SARA), Ryan Nolan (Tweed Valley MRT), Dave Trinder (SARA) and Bob Sheehan (SARA).
CRO PAYS TRIBUTE TO INSPIRATIONAL FUNDRAISER JACK MORGAN

In January, it was with the utmost sadness that members of the Cave Rescue Organisation announced the death of Jack Morgan, of just thirty-seven years old. He had been a keen fundraiser for the team.

Jack raised over £2,500 in April last year, by proposing himself up Pen y Glent on his mountain bike, despite being paralysed from the waist down. And he had been planning to do the same in Whinlatter this year. He died peacefully at Bradford Royal Infirmary, leaving a wife, Laura, and eight-year-old daughter Eve.

“When Jack undertook his climb of Pen y Glent, ran the team’s Facebook entry, ‘we were deeply impressed by his determination, strength and character in completing a tough route, on from ideal tracks to his mode of transport. Our thoughts are with his wife Laura and daughter Eve.’

Following his accident, Jack became an inspirational champion for others with mobility issues. Rachel Platt, whose partner Andy Jackson joined Jack in last April’s climb, and who went along telling Jack’s own story. We were all so proud of Jack doing what he did. It is too easy for people to walk Pen y Glent, but to do what he did and with paralysis it was a lot to us. We were so looking forward to him attempting the other two, it was such a challenge.” The Cave Herald noted that, in 2015, Jack was nominated in the Volunteer of the Year category in the Craven Community Champion awards, for his outstanding contribution to improving the accessibility of routes in the area for wheelchair users and people with limited mobility, and for being an inspirational role model to colleagues, students and the Craven community.

He was a member of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority ‘Access For All’ advisory group and represented the charity, Experience Community, which helps people with disabilities access the countryside. And he appeared on BBC’s Countryfile, to raise awareness of improving footpaths for people with disabilities and to demonstrate the all terrain wheelchair, the mountain bike.

In August 2017, Jack had suffered a cliff-top fall whilst walking on holiday in Scotland. It snapped his spinal cord and left him permanently paralysed from the chest down. He was discovered unconscious at the foot of 60-foot-cliffs by the local Lancashire coastguard and airlifted by the Stonewave helicopter to the Western Isles Hospital. He was unconscious for three weeks and received treatment in Southern General Hospital in Glasgow, before being referred to a specialist unit at Pinderfields Hospital, Wakefield. He had surgery to strengthen his spine and was finally strong enough to sit up in bed after four months. He returned home in April 2019.

Despite his injuries, he eventually returned to his job as a maths teacher at Craven College, working full-time. He told the Craven Herald that ‘It was apparent early on that I’d broken my spinal cord and would be paralysed, but the fact that I’d survived meant every day was a lucky day. You have to be committed to being patient and let the body mend itself. It was just lovely being back home, I have a gorgeous wife and daughter and amazingly supportive friends. My friends have been fantastic and very thoughtful. They’ve kept me going and I really appreciate what they have done for me. There are still so many things I want to do in life.’
A sad loss of a truly remarkable and inspirational man. Image © Andy Jackson.

MARCH: WALKER AIRLIFTED AFTER 130 FOOT FALL FROM BLENCATHRA

Walkers came across the man, after spotting something blue on the lower path further down the fell. The man, in his sixties, had fallen into Mouthwalkie Combe, suffering serious chest and head injuries.

As the two walkers watched, they saw an arm move, and realised the horror of the situation. One of them got down to the man, realised he had fallen some considerable distance from the path above and had suffered serious head injuries. Keswick team requested the attendance of an air ambulance but, once they were on scene, it was clear it might be quicker to request a winching helicopter because of the distance to helicopter and the awkward carry. The medical crew from the air ambulance, and two of the team’s paramedics worked together to stabilise the casualty, and he was given an anaesthetic to enable him to be flown safely in the helicopter. In the event, the Coastguard G-92 helicopter was cancelled and the casualty was carried down to helicopter. GNAA later thanked Keswick MRT for ‘their help and expertise throughout the operation’.

NOVEMBER: WELL BUILT LABRADOR RESCUED FROM LANDSLIDE

Keswick team helped save Callie the Labrador after she slipped down a landslide above a swollen river.

Callie had landed in a tiny scoop in a gully about 12 metres above the fast flowing Greta. Aided by a national park ranger, suggesting the best point of access, one of the team’s dog handlers took a harness and some treats, and was lowered about 90 metres from the trees above the site. She was able to harness Callie and then team members above rigged a three-to-one pulley system, to pull them both to the top. Once on safe ground, Callie was much happier and able to be walked off to the ABB, where she was reunited with her grateful owner.

FEBRUARY: WALKERS RESCUED IN WHITE-OUT CONDITIONS ON PENDLE HILL

Three walkers were escorted from Pendle Hill in Lancashire, after becoming stranded on the top in blizzard conditions and low cloud.

The Rossendale and Pendle team was called by police, who had located the walkers using SARLOC. Team members ascended the hill from two directions and the party was found, checked over and escorted from the hill to walking team vehicles at Pendle House Farm.

Above: White out conditions on Pendle Hill © RPMRT.
Tim Newton and Rachel Slater died on Valentine’s Day 2016, after being caught in an avalanche on Ben Nevis. ‘An April Folly’, happening as we went to press, was a celebration of their lives, with a team of climbers carrying a grand piano to Craile Heights Viewing Station in Windermere for an open-air memorial concert.

Matt high警惕, shared his experience of working in the floods in Carlisle. ‘Travelling through the carnage in countless homes was one of the most upsetting things I’ve done in mountain rescue. On a mountain there is risk, albeit small, and hillgoers accept those risks. Seeing the water come into and destroy homes, places of sanctuary, was so saddening.

‘Moving water is seriously hazardous. Swimming across Saumby's car park, while it was a river too deep to stand in, was something I will never forget. There was the risk of being swept away and pinned underwater against hedges and trees, or further still into the Solway. Fortunately, I was part of a trusted and well-trained team, knowledgeable and experienced enough to keep risk to a minimum."

‘We were tasked to Eamont Bridge village,’ says Alastair Brock, another Penrith member. ‘A large proportion of residents had to be evacuated due to flooding and we had to access homes through people’s back gardens, sometimes by cutting down fences or lifting people to safety over walls. Some homes were inaccessible without a raft.' Penrith team members had also been on hand in the floods of 2005 and, like many of their colleagues around the country, thanks to the generosity of the public since then, they are now better trained and equipped, and have the background systems in place to manage their response in line with the statutory emergency services. That close working relationship was critical to the success of the response this time.

One of the things often not appreciated is the impact on team vehicles during flood rescue work. ‘The vehicles go through a lot of water in events like Storm Desmond so we need constant service and maintenance,’ says Alan Corneay.

For Scarborough and Ryedale team member Paul Benson, the flooding in York was the first call-out after his newly-acquired swiftwater rescue training, earlier that month. He spent most of Boxing Day night and the following day in the Huntingdon Road area of York, helping people from their homes to dry land and shelter, as well as some tasking around Navigation Road, Fishergate and Skeldergate. ‘It’s key memories include seeing the true devastation first-hand. ‘Houses that only 24 hours earlier would have been filled with families celebrating Christmas around the tree and then seeing everything floating around the room.’ In October 2016, I was lucky enough to meet again the first people we took to safety.

They were finally back in their house, after many months, but still feeling the effects. ‘Another memory was the sheer scale of response from the mountain rescue community. To see so many people and teams coming to help us in York made me feel very proud to be part of MR.’

‘After the floods,’ says Ian Hugill, Scarborough team leader, the team ran a comprehensive wash-up to see what we did well and what we could do better next time. Our training plan and operational planning now more closely integrates water skills in MR and MR skills and scenarios. As a result of the awareness generated by the floods, Malton and Norton Rotary kindly donated funds to allow us to procure a rescue boat to augment the rescue raft which was so useful in York and various other grant submissions are in place to help with equipment and training more team members in water rescue and flood work in the coming months’.

In fact, Scarborough and Ryedale team was amongst the rescue organisations who benefited from the government grant to charities running Lifeboat and rescue services on inshore waterways, including flooding.
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**Night vision**

The Gothic green light had bathed everything in shades of green, grey and black for several hours. Moments later we were cutting through the cold night air, treetopping down to the cloud layer that would provide a blanket of darkness to conceal our final descent and touchdown. In those few moments of calm before the storm, I gazed in amazement at the crystal-clear night sky around, the Milky Way prominent as moments of calm before the storm, I gazed in amazement at touchdown. In those few

Last month I was training advanced military navigation to Special Forces aspirants, soldiers who been through briefing and are about to go through their Selection. They were interested in why I used this colour of light in preference to the older standard red filter. The answer ‘I got it for free’ didn’t seem to be appropriate!

Back at my office, the ubiquitous Google offered me more confusion than answers, with seemingly everyone having an opinion about which light is best for preserving night vision, most providing little or no empirical evidence to support their standpoint.

My first port of call was to contact the manufacturers of head torches that have colour filters available, commonly red, green and blue. They were helpful and talked about different coloured lights used for signalling, yet most could not state in what situations each colour should be used, and if they did they referred to studies that can best be described as ‘marketing sciences’.

My next port was the US Department of Defence, who referred me to the National Centre for Biotechnology Information, US National Library of Medicine, a brilliant repository of millions of scientific papers from all over the world, written by credible scientists, mostly working in universities or clinical specialists, who for medical research, have taken an interest in Scotopic Vision = Night Vision. This article is my distillation of the various meetings and calls I’ve had with these scientists.

There are many reasons to try and preserve an element of night vision in low light levels, but not quite dark environments, from pilots, who, when landing aircraft in night, need to see both their instruments and the runway, to mountain rescue responders, who need to read maps, search and move across difficult terrain. Head torches cannot illuminate everything within our field of vision.

**TEN GOLDEN RULES FOR ADAPTING TO MESOPIC VISION AND MAINTAINING IT**

1. In darkness, after around 10 minutes, most of our cones have shut down. This process is most efficient in complete darkness. To assist your eyes, completely cover them with your hands, keeping them open, as tightly closing them can affect fresco, for 1 minute.
2. The time from last seeing a bright light and the length of time you were exposed to it are the principal determinants of how quickly your eyes will adapt to mesopic vision. So, if you are in a vehicle and not driving, do not look at other vehicles lights and if possible avoid seeing the area lit by the headlights of the vehicle you are in.
3. Use a head torch that is fully adjustable for brightness and use the minimum intensity you need to complete your task.
4. For fasted dark adaptation recovery use a green filter.
5. Choose LED coloured lights, as opposed to coloured filters, as these emit light at one specific wavelength, ideally around 495nm (blue-green).
6. If you need to see all colours, such as when treating a casualty, use the dimmest white light for the shortest amount of time.
7. Visual acuity at low light levels diminishes with age and by individual, so don’t be prescriptive about head torch settings, allow the individual to determine what suits them best.
8. Use a head torch that can safely point at your heel and help reserve after hill party members mesopic vision by never shining your head torch directly into their eye.
9. In groups, keep your head torch pointed groundwards and set the dimmest level.
10. If you’re in bright light, such as a car headlight or flame, cover your leading eye with your hand to minimise flash blindness.

Above: Top to bottom: Scotopic vision, Mesopic vision, and Scotopic vision. A fault of mesopic vision to be aware of is something called the Purkinje effect. In protopic vision the red petals are bright against the dull green of their leaves, or obnoxious blue flowers in mesopic vision, the contrast is reversed, with the red petals appearing a dark red or black, and the leaves and blue petals appearing relatively bright.
Mia suffered a devastating stroke at the age of 21, and now has Locked In Syndrome which means she has no voluntary movement, cannot speak and communicates through eye movement or a spell chart. Before her stroke, Mia and her friend Richard spent a lot of time on Moel Famau and Richard knew it would mean the world to her to be able to go up to the summit again. He got in touch with NEWSAR and the team was delighted to be able to help, taking Mia, with her friends and family, to the top in the team vehicles.

‘It was a pleasure for the team to be involved with helping out such a lovely lady with such a wonderful family,’ said team leader Chris Griffiths. ‘Thanks for asking us to help Mia and Richard.’

NEW NEWSAR team members spent an afternoon in January helping Mia Austin (Mountains for Mia) tick another thing off her wish list with a trip to the summit of her favourite peak, Moel Famau.

Mia suffered a devastating stroke at the age of 21, and now has Locked In Syndrome which means she has no voluntary movement, cannot speak and communicates through eye movement or a spell chart. Before her stroke, Mia and her friend Richard spent a lot of time on Moel Famau and Richard knew it would mean the world to her to be able to go up to the summit again. He got in touch with NEWSAR and the team was delighted to be able to help, taking Mia, with her friends and family, to the top in the team vehicles.

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FACEBOOK.COM: @NORTHEASTWALESSEARCHANDRESCUE

NEWLEDLENSEROUTDOORSERIES

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MARCH: TEDDIES PLAY IT SAFE IN THE SNOW

There was plenty of snow on the tops still in March, but the Llanberis ‘limited edition’ bears were playing it safe. The cute bears were on hand at the Llanberis Adventure Mountain Film Festival this spring, helping promote the team’s work and demonstrating best practice in the mountains. Everyone say ahh...

FACEBOOK.COM: @NORTHEASTWALESSEARCHANDRESCUE

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS... AN UPDATE

BOB SHARP

Just an update on my article published last year in Issue 58. Firstly, thank you very much to the many readers who commented (positively) and alerted me to a few errors. My ‘master list of teams’ is now updated, although I know it is still incomplete and will probably never be 100% correct. Such are the uncertainties of history.

I have recently been given a couple of old MRC handbooks from the late-1960s and early-1970s and note a few teams listed that I missed in my initial research. I’d be most obliged if anyone can provide further information on any organisation in the list. The handbooks of the day identified two categories: ‘Affiliated Teams and Organisations’, and ‘Recognised Mountain Rescue Teams’. The distinction is not clear to me and there does appear to be some overlap. For example, Cockermouth MRT is identified as an affiliated body (not a recognised team) and the Dewsbury Adventure Club is given as a mountain rescue team (but was probably just an affiliated body?)

Basically, I’m interested in the teams or organisations that morphed into a recognised rescue team or were combined with others to form a new team. Here is my list of ‘unknowns’. Any information that will help me work to a more complete and accurate list of teams would be appreciated.

* Army Apprentices School, Harrogate
* Bewerley Park Centre
* Dogleg Fire Service
* Dewsbury Adventure Club
* Llandudno and District Mountain Rescue Team
* Money Outward Bound Sea School
* Mid-Pennine Mountain Accident Panel
* Nansen Club
* Northern Rescue Organisation
* Outward Bound Mountain Schools (possibly representation of Eskdale DB MRT and Ulswater DB MRT)
* Outward Bound Sea School, Aberdovey
* Peak Park Planning Board
* Penrith Mountain Rescue Group (possibly the precursor to Penrith MRT)
* Scottish Ski Club
* Scarborough and District Search and Rescue Team
* Shropshire Field Studies Centre, Attingham
* Upper Teesdale/Weardale Fell Rescue Organisation (possibly Teesdale & Weardale SRT)

In the meantime, I am more than happy to circulate my current draft database of all teams to anyone who may be interested. The file identifies around 120 teams (past and present), which are ordered by country, and in the case of England and Wales, region too. The starting dates are given for each team and in most cases a brief comment is also included, describing how the team began, combined or ceased. Thank you.

CONTACT DETAILS: BOB SHARP VIA LONDONBOB@GMAIL.COM.
Brief introduction to the British Cave Rescue Officers and how to find them...

CHIEF OFFICER: NICK WEST

Holds the ‘green light’ role for the British Cave Rescue organisation and liaises with overseas cave rescue bodies.

VICE CHAIRMAN: BILL WHITEHOUSE

Assists the chairman in his role and is a trustee of the Mountain and Cave Rescue Benevolent Fund. Bill is the current chairman of DerbysRatCRO.

SECRETARY: EMMA PORTER

Handles correspondence between teams, BCRC and beyond, currently reviewing BCRC incident reports. Represents BCRC at the British Caving Association and lecture secretary for the national caving conference. Training co-ordinator of Midlards CRO and member of Gloucestershire CRO.

MEDICAL OFFICER: RICH MARLOW

Advices on medical matters and keeps teams aware of medical issues of concern to cave rescue. Represents BCRC at the MREW medical committee and represents BCRC at UKSAR. Rich is a Mendip Caves Rescue warden.

TRAINING COORDINATOR: JIM DAVIS

Training@caverescue.org.uk

Advises on which courses are best for teams and liaises with BCRC at the MREW training committee. Jim is a member of the Cave Rescue Organisation.

INFORMATION OFFICER: IVAN YOUNG

Information@caverescue.org.uk

Ensures that contact information for the fifteen cave rescue teams within the UK and Eire is maintained and updated regularly. Collects, collates and distributes incident and other statistics from the teams. Rescue controller and treasurer for Scottish Cave Rescue Organisation.

EQUIPMENT OFFICER: MIKE CLAYTON

mike@caverescue.org.uk

Liaises with MREW regarding the Government grant and runs PPE inspection courses for teams. Represents BCRC at the MREW equipment committee. Chair of Midlards CRO, he is a member of Gloucestershire CRO.

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER: JON WHITLEY

communications@caverescue.org.uk

Liaises to enhance ICT for cave rescue and is BCRC rep to the MREW ICT committee and also PortMACA chairman. One of three MREW SARCALL administrators and a rescue controller for Devon CRO.

TREASURER: HEATHER SIMPSON

heather@caverescue.org.uk

Manages finances and coordinates fundraising. Part of MREW fundraising group and also manages MREW collecting tins. Heather is a member of North Wales CRO, Midlards CRO and Derbyshire CRO.

LEGAL ADVISER: TOBY HAMNETT

toby@caverescue.org.uk

Legal@caverescue.org.uk

Advises on legal issues and can be contacted on a confidential basis. Toby is a solicitor by profession, focuses on pragmatic solutions and believes in communication to ensure legal risk is minimised. If a case requires specialist knowledge outside his area of expertise he can assist in ensuring the right expert is identified.

DIVING OFFICER: CHRIS JEWELL

diving@caverescue.org.uk

Advises on cave diving issues and liaises between the Cave Diving Group and BCRC.

FOREIGN SECRETARY: PETE ALLRIGHT

Receives BCRC at the European Cave Rescue Association and liaises with overseas cave rescue bodies. 

Twentynine years after the advent of the Shackleton Crash in Harms in 1901, in which nine died, and the Chinook Crash on the Mull of Kintyre in 1994 in which there were 29 fatalities, I was on scene very quickly at all these tragedies, so I speak with vast experience on this subject. I was asked to that nearly 1000 mountain incidents all over the UK and I have seen my share of tragedy. This is different from a military scenario, where we are trained to deal with the immediate causes of death and trauma. We were not expecting to experience anything so traumatic.

PTSD is one of the mental illnesses most associated with military service along with a range of other more common mental illnesses which might affect anyone, including depression, anxiety and panic attacks, and substance misuse—most commonly alcohol. Yet I know many of my friends in rescue have had problems too. We’ve come a long way since 1968, but it still isn’t easy for those needing help to get it.

Mental health is hugely under-resourced due to the huge demand. I once worked for months to get an appointment with a psychiatrist. I was lucky, I coped and I am much better but what an awful journey! Incredibly, at my leaving medical, although I feel he could have advised me differently, there is also a lot of fear for those who serve multiple tours, who may find it hard to return to normal life, and PTSD can be late in coming, and can generally become symptom-free long periods after.

There is also a risk of delayed-onset PTSD, where symptoms do not occur for years or decades after the traumatic event. Those who present with delayed-onset PTSD often happen those who have been exposed to the effects of trauma over a long period of time, suggesting that those who serve multiple tours and are risk of developing PTSD. People may have PTSD several years after leaving the Military. Many rescue agencies have similar problems.

Professor Gordon Turnbull, an RAF psychiatrist, assisted the RAF MRTs after Lockerbie and is now a world authority on PTSD. I would advise anyone involved in rescue to read his book *Horse from Lockerbie* in 1997. I have received positive feedback on the book, which, left unresolved, will affect our minds and how we fight for the rest of our life. Another wrote that PTSD is ‘the elephant in the room’. Those most vociferous in their denial are often those worst affected. Authorities both civil and military are now only beginning to recognise it. As treatment, it’s a matter of trust. In many organisations it doesn’t exist because those affected have an instinct fear of it affecting their careers.

I paid privately to address it. Worth every penny and, although there are no miracle cures, it’s a sure way to at least begin to function and rationalise.

Another spoke about EMRD as ‘an exceptionally powerful tool in reducing the distress associated with traumatic experiences’. He says: ‘I urge all rescue teams to take this issue seriously and make sure their team has access to the appropriate resources and support’.

As a result of this article, I’ve had a number of folk contact me—happily some will find help. One reply said: ‘Help is out there. It can transform lives and reduce or negate the effects of PTSD. All GPs should be able to refer people to the appropriate services. If you or someone you know needs help, there are local organisations it doesn’t exist but there are many services out there. I was told by someone who works in the NHS that PTSD is diagnosed early and the sufferer receives the right treatment in the right environment, rates of recovery are very positive. Veterans can live normal fulfilling lives, are able to work with the condition and can generally become symptom-free for long periods.

DAVE ‘HEAVY’ WHALLEY

Many readers will know that I suffered from PTSD after Lockerbie in 1988 and, at times, it still affects me. I have written about it many times in my blog and regularly hear from others who suffer from this tragic disease. It is sad to see that a tragedy such as Lockerbie affected nearly 60% of my team of 36, many only realising this as recently as the last ten years! So many families have had to deal with this and the scars are huge—I know from my own time in the dark room that PTSD is...
JUDY WHITESIDE

Mark Lewis, who calmly guided and the patient assistance of the back of all this, we have page at www.justgiving.com/contact the benevolent fund, you mountain rescue land, that we claim. Which brings me to another slightly delicate concern, raising the funds we will need to address.

Of the benevolent fund and, also is, by necessity, completely importantly, from my addresses but, perhaps more separate from my personal can email me on secretary@. We also now have a justgiving m embers, and talked about for mountain and cave rescue team is understandable. The subcommittee) of Mountain Rescue England and Wales.

If the national body. But, because there’s a perception that we need to build for the future. We are also constantly looking at ways we can develop and expand the charity over the coming years.

We guarantee that any money which comes into the fund absolutely belongs to the fund. And any decisions made about the fund are made by MREW, or its officers, but by the fund’s trustees, guided by your representatives from the nine regions.

I know we still have a huge PR mountain to climb. But if you support the idea of a benevolent fund for mountain and cave rescuers and their families, whether or not you think you might ever claim something may one day, I think about giving to the fund. If every single person just made a small gift, that’s a quarter on standing order, the difference would be phenomenal. Remember it’s your rescue benevolent fund.

We also now have a justgiving page, tastefully decked out in our brand colours: orange and black. And thanks to the opening up of the market, to allow just about any suffix imaginable, you can find us at rescuebenevolent.fund. Which we thought had quite a ring to it.

It’s your rescue benevolent fund!

www.rescuebenevolent.fund: Biggest, and most easily demonstrated, news from the Benevolent Fund is that we now have a website, and a range of documents that you can find us at rescuebenevolent.fund. Which we thought had quite a ring to it.

We’ve also set up a Benevolent Fund Bank CAF Cash account, clearly marked with what you want it for. Details are: Sort code: 40-52-45; Account Number 00023601; Charity number: 1152798.

Give via justgiving.com/secretary@.

CREDIT: B órder SAR

MARCH: SARLOC HELPS LOCATE DANISH STUDENTS LOST ON FIRST DAY OF WALKING TRIP

Sophie Rooney arrived back in Banbury, having run the length of Scandinavia and lived up to her motto of ‘Dare Mighty Things’ and with a life-saving blood translation along the way.

Her journey began in Nordkapp in the very north of Norway but, within a few weeks, Sophie was very unwell. The route, having taken her temporarily into Sweden, she found herself in hospital in Abisko. Diagnosed with a bleeding ulcer, she lost half her volume of blood — an emergency had needed an emergency blood-transfusion. Unsteadfast, after a couple of days, and learning to walk again. The doctor said it was okay, she set off again. The daily distance was reduced for a while – from the planned 40km/day to 25km. The illness and shorter distances run meant the whole trip took longer than planned and was a lot harder, as she ran into the winter. It also meant fewer camping facilities as they began to close for the season.

Despite that, the vast majority of nights were spent in her increasingly chilly, damp tent, with a few respite nights in camping huts or hotels when she was able to negotiate a big enough discount. Four of the best nights were thanks to the generosity of the many new friends Sophie made along the way, who invited her into their homes and gave her the best of their food.

The final stages of her journey took her to Denmark, on a trip to one of the German border and Flensburg, the finish line, where she was met by her family.

The whole adventure was to raise funds for three charities: The Thomas Teylor Foundation, The Stroke Association and Mountain Rescue England and Wales. The final result was in excess of £2,000 but she hopes to add to this through talk to schools and clubs.

We’ll do Sophie and thank you!

The 20-year-old girls had set off from York, Yorkshire on the northernmost section of the Pennine Way, for the start of a six-month walking holiday in the UK and Ireland but after a day struggling through considerable quantities of lying snow, and having somehow missed the refuge hut on Auchope Ridge, they found themselves in darkness, far from shelter and without an adequate tent.

Border Search and Rescue Unit was called out after the pair made a 112 call for help and asked for fire rescue. Their location wasn’t as good as SARLOC to pinpoint their position a couple of kilometres north-east of Windy Gyle. “The young women had just started the climb towards their exposed destination, which lies on the Pennine Way at 619m (a shade under 2,000ft),” says team leader Stuart Fuller-Shapcott, and became aware that they were getting increasingly tired and cold, and far outside their comfort zone. Conditions at valley level were extraordinarily muddy and slippery, after recent rain and snow-melt, which made vehicular access to the hill difficult. Luckily the local farmer was able to shuttle some of our members onto the hill in a specialised six-wheel rough-terrain vehicle, with the remaining make their way up on foot.

The casualties were found cold and a bit scared but otherwise unharmed. We warned them and walked them to the Border Gate, where the farmer collected them and ferried them down into the valley. Once again, we’re indebted to Rob at Cockwoodfoot for help in a rescue on the Border Ridge. We also had a huge help with the SARLOC system from our colleagues in the Northumberland teams.

The girls were just a bit inexperienced and under-equipped in terms of kit and hillcraft — they had trouble in winter conditions. Our first contact, after a few days’ reflection, they’ll carry on with their holiday a little wiser for the experience. We wish them happy travels.

Facebook.com / @BORDER SAR

NOVEMBER: OVER 300KM, THREE COUNTRIES, ON FOOT, COMPLETELY ON HER OWN

Sophie Rooney began in Nordkapp in the very north of Norway but, within a few weeks, Sophie was very unwell. The route, having taken her temporarily into Sweden, she found herself in hospital in Abisko. Diagnosed with a bleeding ulcer, she lost half her volume of blood — an emergency had needed an emergency blood-transfusion. Unsteadfast, after a couple of days, and learning to walk again. The doctor said it was okay, she set off again. The daily distance was reduced for a while – from the planned 40km/day to 25km. The illness and shorter distances run meant the whole trip took longer than planned and was a lot harder, as she ran into the winter. It also meant fewer camping facilities as they began to close for the season.

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We’ll do Sophie and thank you!
THINKING OF TAKING UP THE MUNRO CHALLENGE?

When Bob Sharp climbed his first Munro in 1976 he didn’t envisage completing every single one and he certainly gave no thought to writing a book on the subject some forty years later. It took him fifteen years to ‘complete’ and a further 25 years to collate the log entries describing every expedition. But now he’s written it all up and he’s happy to share it.

The resulting book is an informative account of a person’s endeavour to ‘complete’ at 217 mountains (Bob worked to the 1991 Munro Tables). Every outing (single and multiple-day expedition) is systematically presented, giving each detailed of the Munros and Tops climbed, route taken, weather, walking partners, experiences, hardships, lessons learned. Numerous photos and statistical analyses (eg. daily, monthly and weather patterns) as well as a complete list of all the Munros, their height, ranking and number of times climbed.

‘Munro-baggers are often criticised for their “tick list” mentality,’ says Bob, ‘which may be true for a very small number, there is some truth in the view that the process of climbing every mountain makes one a “better” person. Anyone who tackles the Munros invariably finds the experience rich and varied, full of surprises, challenges and pleasures. And there’s no better way to learn, first hand, mountain scenery, geography, mountain safety, access laws, wildlife, environmental concerns, and so on. It also turns out that every mountain has a remarkable history, full of secrets, surprises and tales to tell. This comes to light through the process of preparing each expedition, planning routes and climbing the mountain. Ben More, for example, was the mountain that saw the very first search dog find. Ben Chonzie in Perthshire boasts the densest population of mountain hares in the UK (and would you believe it that if you give chase to Chonzie in Perthshire boasts the densest population of mountain hares in the UK? It also turns out that every mountain has a remarkable history, full of secrets, surprises and tales to tell. This comes to light through the process of preparing each expedition, planning routes and climbing the mountain. Ben More, for example, was the mountain that saw the very first search dog find. Ben Chonzie in Perthshire boasts the densest population of mountain hares in the UK (and would you believe it that if you give chase to Chonzie in Perthshire boasts the densest population of mountain hares in the UK?)

Some of these wider topics are discussed in articles Bob has written over the years and several are included. One of these describes the day he and his Lomond MRT colleagues climbed Ben Lomond with the Milton Mountainers, a group of blind climbers, fearful this would be challenges too far. The only problem was the BBC crew whose extreme lack of fitness turned a five hour jaunt into a fifteen-hour epic! Another describes the day he and fellow rescuers broke the Guinness world record for climbing the four most geographically extreme Munros in the shortest time. Before he retired, Bob worked with many university students who later went on to fame and fortune, including Di Gilbert (Seven Summits), Gordon Kennedy (Russ Abbot’s Mad House) and Craig Pollock (Team principal for the American F1 racing team). He also rescues some of the amazing experiences he had climbing new Munros with students, often out of their depth.

The book might not be for all. ‘But for anyone embarking on the challenge, there’s much to guide you to the physical and logistical challenges, and highlights the verification and learning opportunities that come with the challenge.’

DON’T YOU JUST LOVE A HAPPY SEARCH RESCUE DOG? CHECK OUT THOSE EARS!

SPOTTED ON FACEBOOK.COM: @EDALEMOUNTAINRESCUE

MARCH: GENERATOR STOLEN FROM PATTERDALE TEAM TRAILER

Team members were stunned to hear that a generator worth £2,500 was taken from the team’s display trailer after the first day of a popular weekend festival.

The generator, which was used to power the trailer during PR and fundraising events, disappeared after raiders broke into the trailer overnight on the Saturday, during the Dalekirk Marmalade Festival. Fundraising officer Nigel Harling said, ‘We’d had a busy day hosting a food-stall fundraising activity as well as meeting visitors and talking about the work of mountain rescue. The generator was stored with other vehicles and displays but thieves had obviously been casing us out and realised that our generator was relatively mobile and potentially valuable.

Fortunately, very little damage was done to the trailer itself but the generator is a big piece of kit to lose and one that, having everything in Paternoster MRT, had been bought with donations from our amazing supporters.

Social media was quick to share the news and, within days, a post via the MREW Facebook page was amongst a number of messages from potential donors. ‘Thank you’, posted the team, in response to the deluge of support. ‘Your kind words and actions are greatly appreciated. We are overwhelmed by your generosity.’

NORTHERN IRELAND

MARCH: MILKING THE FRONT COVER

Good to see January’s front cover stars. Home Valley’s Adam and Steve, making the most of their meteoric rise to fame.

MARCH: PASSER-BY USES FACEBOOK TO SUMMON HELP

Asling Costello used Facebook messaging to summon help after coming across an injured woman on a Northern Ireland hill, putting a plea out to her friends to contact emergency services to rescue the woman on Devils Mountain, which overlooks Belfast.

She posted the message at about 10.40am on the Saturday to say, ‘Stuck on top of mountain with a girl I found has fallen and can’t move. Need a number to call can someone call for help or can someone call if I have no signal on internet. Devils and Black Mountain. We are at top.’ Dawn Petrie of the Coastguard picked up the thread and the police and ambulance services were alerted. Ms Costello also posted three photographs on Facebook to try to get emergency crews to the pair’s location.

The police service helicopter was activated but not used in the rescue. An ambulance crew managed to rescue the two women who had also been joined by the pair’s passer-by. The injured woman was taken to hospital for further treatment, suffering from a suspected broken leg.

The £2,500 Devils Mountain, Unnamed on map, the National Trust called the Summit Road C (O.0.5) Roscobrook Road and licensed for reuse under the Creative Commons Licence.

There’s been a murder on Scafell Pike – the half-naked body of a Three Peaks challenger is discovered below Scafell and a member of the mountain rescue team just happens to be a former investigative journalist who’s determined to find out what happened to “the body in the bog”. This is the premise behind Andrew Bibby’s second novel about dodgy dealings in the lakes. Author Andrea Bibby is a professional journalist, whose work has appeared in a number of nationals, including The Guardian and The Independent, so he knows a thing or two about the workings of the journalistic mind – although he insists his leading man Nick Pottermore, “once a successful journalist but now a struggling part-time freelance for the local press”, is “as far as I can see, a very likeable bloke who’s only got himself in trouble”. As an ex left-hander he is also more familiar with the telling of tales he writes about. At the launch in February at Langdale Ambleside base, he stressed that the story –

including his version of mountain rescue procedures – takes place in “an alternative universe”. His knowledge of mountain rescue, he says, was gleaned through friends and “mainly in the pub”. I just felt I should warn you. That said, Bibby is turning a percentage of all his sales fees to Langdale Ambleside MRT so read this and I’ll be supporting them too.

Scafell Pike has also rescued Bibby’s previous Labrador crime novel as a companion volume. The Bad Step, another murder mystery set at Crinkle Cragg has, up until now, only been available on Kindle.

MOUNTAIN PAWS UNVEILS NEW COLLECTION

When working on the mountain or exploring the great outdoors, life is better with your canine companion by your side. For 2017, Mountain Paws has revealed a brand new collection of leads, harnesses and accessories that are perfect for adventurous dogs and their owners.

Originally launched in 2006, the brand’s new collection is its most comprehensive to date. Whether supporting a rescue on Helvellyn or enjoying an amble along the local footpath, Mountain Paws has something for every dog owner. In addition to a full range of leads, collars, bowls and accessories, the collection also includes a number of technical harnesses and leads. The high spec Dog Living Harness is available in four sizes and is fully adjustable making it easy to achieve the perfect fit. Specially designed to fit comfortably around the dog’s shoulders and stomach, the harnesses also benefits front control. A breathable and lightweight harness, the Mountain Paws logo’s emphasis on comfort and freedom of movement and its durable design also features a robust aluminium D ring lead attachment.

Committed to mountain rescue, Mountain Paws is proud to be working alongside SARRDA England for 2017.

FIND OUT MORE OR VIEW THE FULL RANGE AT WWW.MOUNTAINPAWS.CO.UK.
A key aim of the changeover drill I describe is to ensure that the stance changeover is efficient and tangle free, with no ropes doing their own thing under or around the belay. Partly that’s my OCD kicking in but there are also potential safety issues associated with tangled ropes and inexperienced clients on stances. If the ropes are very tangled, at best your clients will have a job sorting it out; at worst one or t’other may be tempted to untie to sort out the problem …

I’m going to run through the method I use and teach, and which (in my personal opinion — seeing as I’m writing this that’s what you get) is guaranteed to give you a twist-free changeover. I should stress that there are other ways of doing this although one of the advantages of this method is that once you have the basic steps nailed it becomes a drill, which when practiced can about be done with your eyes shut. This means when next you are on a stance you don’t have to stand and stare blank-eyed at your set-up which looks like a seething mass of mating snakes and work out which rope goes where. Or re-invent, from scratch, a new ‘system’.

Depending on how you’ve gone about doing this before you might find that this method takes a bit of getting used to. So my advice is — practise this on the ground and take your time. There is no rush. The key to success is ensuring you have each step of the drill clear in your head. Once you have that then you practise the drill ensuring you follow each step in sequence. Once you have the sequence nailed, then the speed and efficiency will soon follow.

I will not be discussing the dos and don’t of parallel rope technique or methods of releasing Guide Plates etc. You can download and read about these aspects in earlier articles from the links I’ve listed in the references at the end of this article. They complement this article.

BY GEORGE MCEWAN GEORGEMC@COLDCLIMBS.COM

A few years ago, I wrote an article for the then AMI Magazine about facilitating stance changeovers on multi-pitch climbs whilst using parallel rope technique, without ending up with ropes snaking over and around each other. I later updated it following several discussions about some aspects of the drill I had described in the original ‘No Fankles On Stances’. A subsequent products review on UK Climbing prompted further discussion about guide plates on and off line. Here it is now, for a wider readership. I have sought to make my description of some aspects of the drill a bit clearer and have also highlighted some potential pitfalls to be aware of. Written with the instructor/student in mind, the principles remain the same.

STANCE PREP:

SOME PRINCIPLES

Careful selection of your stance and how you route it will make a huge difference to how efficient your changeover will be. The usual caveats about stance selection in relation to your client’s abilities, nature of the climbing etc apply here*. A key component is ensuring that when using parallel rope technique you strive to keep your ropes running parallel. Sounds easy but it does seem to fox people.

* One of the common errors is to equate parallel rope technique with double rope technique. They are not the same. I’d suggest thinking of your ropes as rail tracks when using parallel rope technique*. Cross the tracks and you’ll derail the train!

In saying that, there are a few principles we can apply here that will make your life a great deal easier (making the assumption that we are using a sling(s) to link our anchors to a single point and on a direct belay):

You and your clients tie in on same sides

When you and your seconds are tying into the ropes ensure you keep the ropes on the same side eg. Client/Climber 1 on the LHS is tied into the red rope which is tied into your LHS; Client/Climber 2 on the RHS is tied into the yellow rope which is tied into your RHS. Ensure when you tie in that you are facing the climb as are your clients (Fig 1a).

Images and diagrams © George McEwan.
PLACE A RUNNER JUST BACK TO THE BELAY

If you set-up your way to your back where you are free, you are in a ‘working space’ in front of you that allows you to organise your clients in such a way that you don’t have to climb over or around your team when you leave the stance.

HIGH ANCHOR POINTS

Select suitably high anchor points that when equalised they have the main attachment point (or power point) is at about sternum height. This allows you to arrange your team nice and tight on the anchor. It also saves your back as you can stand straight and pull the ropes in without having to bow up and down like the Hunchback of Notre Dame on chemicals.

ANCHOR REDUNDANCY

Bit of common sense with this one — this may well be not appropriate for all scenarios — mind, it’s your call all the end of the day. My preference when working in parallel and using a direct belay to bring up two clients is to use three independent bomber-placed pieces of protection linked together. My thinking behind this is that if anything untoward happens, the last thing I’m having to think about is my belay. Also that equalising all the pieces so they are loaded identically even a slight shift in position can mean the load changes slightly, means that if more likely you will still have two of your anchors taking the main load. If you only use two bomber pieces such a slight shift in position can often mean the main load is only on one piece.

Figure 2 gives an overview of the above principles.

USING YOUR GUIDE PLATE

There is now a huge selection of ‘Guide Plates’ available, I’d suggest care when selecting a suitable Guide Plate for work and/or play. As rope technology has advanced so has the range of diameters available for use. This means it is now possible to have ultra skinny ropes etc. Eisdein Apus which is a half-hitch rope coming at 7.8mm diameter. Now it’s a no-brainer that a Guide Plate that is designed for say 8.5-10mm ropes may have issues in how it performs with skinny ropes outwith it’s performance range. Conversely, working with a device rated for 7.8 to 10mm ropes will cope with these skinny ropes allowing a smooth take in, but there will be too much friction when you have to haul through a handy 10.5mm rope. So match your chosen Guide Plate with the rope diameters you will commonly use. This may well mean what works for personal use with skinny half ropes may not be as good for work use when using large diameter single ropes.

To have a set-up that matches the Guide Plate to ensure no fankles? The following sequence of photos will take you through each step. As I said this might be slightly at odds with how you do it at the moment but in my humble opinion it’s worth working with.

As I said I feel it’s main advantage is that you can nail this as a drill, as soon as you have set-up you will have brought your client up, the changeover will go smooth as.

Figure 2: Instructor set-up

SETTLE YOURSELF WITH YOUR BACK TO WHERE YOU ARE CLIMBING TO NEXT!

Before setting up and attaching yourself to the anchor check out where the pitch goes next. Make sure your chosen stance is going to work both for bringing up your clients as in sight and sound if appropriate and for you leading the next pitch. Mind as your clients move onto the stance you can shift out of the way to make more room.

WARNING!

Take care here — although the ropes you want will be coming off the top of the rope so your leading ends are on top of the rope stacks.

SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME?

So how do you know if you’ve climbed correctly? Well if you have ropes twisted, running underneath the ropes you are using, or any weird fankleness that causes you to untie, you’ve made a mistake somewhere.

I can safely guarantee that if you follow the above method the only fankles you will have in the rope from those that your clients may put in the rope as they second the pitch. Such twists should be easy to spot as your clients climbing up approach the stance and are easy to sort. Also good rope management can be enough to reduce the chances of this happening.

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“Meeting suppliers in one place saves us so much time and money.”

Ian Hugill, Resident Controller, Scarborough and Ryedale Mountain Rescue Team

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A unique event for everyone who works in the emergency services. Over 400 exhibitors, free seminars and product demonstrations.


SUMMARY

There are many different ways to facilitate such a changeover. What I have outlined is a method that works for me and I’ve had a lot of success with teaching others. If you have your own way of doing this — fine and dandy, if it ain’t broke you don’t need to fix it. On the other hand if you are plagued by twists and turns in your ropes after your changeover, or seem to be untying lots to sort out twists, then I’d suggest giving this method a shot.

A wise word of caution — if you are using thick ropes in your device you might find them hard work to pull through, especially if your clients are climbing fast. If that’s the case it might be worth checking the rope diameter your device is rated to use. Some of the newer lighter devices are primarily designed for using with skinny ropes (8-9mm) rather than furry caterpillar 10.5mm. So although they will work fine with these skinny ropes you might find yourself getting a workout as you pull through your two hairy caterpillars. Or alternatively use skinner ropes when climbing in parallel.

For a smooth and efficient changeover consider the following main principles:

- You and your clients tie in on the same sides — this keeps the rope orientation correct from the outset ie. rope on your left to LH client, rope on your right to RH client.
- Place a runner just before you get to the belay — this helps keep the ropes running parallel and gives you a visual clue as to whether your ropes are running untwisted.
- No Dances on Stances — avoid unnecessary twists and tums in the rope by not twirling about on the stance when setting up your belay.
- Anchor Redundancy — use one bomber piece for each person, assuming instructor and two clients, this gives three bomber pieces of gear. In saying that, allow some judgement to be exercised here — there are potentially many occasions where two or even one anchor might be adequate.
- When clipping your clients’ ropes into the Guide Plate, ensure you set up your plate such that the braking ropes come off the top of the plate, rather than underneath. In all likelihood, this is something that will seem weird to you — trust me — it works! This is key to the method I have outlined working efficiently. Ultimately, managing a smooth and efficient changeover and using parallel rope technique efficiently takes, like many other skills, a lot of practice. This won’t become second nature with a couple of hours of practice — so get out there and get climbing.

REFERENCES


GEORGE MCEWAN LMS in Aviemore and is Executive Officer at Mountain Training Scotland. Many team members in England and Wales, as well as Scotland, will know him from his sixteen years as senior instructor and head of mountain training at Glenmore Lodge. This article first appeared in the AMI magazine.
MREW TRACCAR SERVICE: TEAM MEMBER AND VEHICLE TRACKING

GERALD DAVISON
IT OFFICER NWMR & MREW ITC GROUP

The majority of teams are using something to track the position of their troops on the ground. At its most basic level, this is usually a GPS mic or a VHF radio into a base radio and attached PC/laptop running MRMap. This will show the position of team members around your control point.

Over the years, MRMap has been extended to link together receivers using the internet, so you can see position information remote from your location. It can also receive positional data from a variety of sources such as mobile phone apps and Spot trackers. Lately it is taking external feeds from aircraft position receivers and external systems with aircraft positions.

For mobile phone tracking of team members there have been a few different apps over the last few years. Many are now using Viewranger with its built in BuddyBeacon feature. However, not every team has decided to use Buddy Beacon and you have to leave a PC running somewhere for your team with the right configuration for Viewranger in MRMap. Every time the phone apps change, MRMap has needed an update to support them.

MREW was asked to look at a simple stand-alone phone tracking app that could be used to feed position data into MRMap without using any proprietary systems. It was also envisaged that this system could become the aggregator for other data sources, leaving MRMap to do what it does best — being a simple-to-use application that can be used on the field on low power PCs.

TRACCAR

Traccar is an Open Source GPS Tracking Platform (www.traccar.org). It was selected by the ITC group as the platform to aggregate a variety of application-based data and feed into MRMap for display. There are two main components:

● Firstly, a server application, with a management interface which allows you to create and update devices to be tracked.

The data captured is then sent automatically, in real time, to MRMap. MREW is now operating a central Traccar server that can be used by teams.

SUMMARY

● Simple small app for team member tracking

● Possible to add in low cost vehicle tracker

● Other tracker interfaces being written

● Messaging to email or text for devices moving outside pre-set areas (eg. vehicles away from base)

If your team is interested in using Traccar or wants more information on the vehicle trackers, it is suggested you contact officer contacts Mark Lewis via it.officer@mountain.rescue.org.uk or Gerald Davison via it_OFFICER@NWMR.org.uk
Who?

Your management team

CHAIRMAN: MIKE FRANCHE
chairman@mountain.rescue.org.uk

Represents mountain rescue with Government, the emergency services, other SAR organisations and The Princess’ Charities Forum. A member of Woodford MRT.

VICE CHAIRMAN: MIKE MARGeson
mmpresident@mountain.rescue.org.uk

Works on operations and governance, supporting the officers in their roles. Currently developing a peer review process. Team leader of Duddon and Furness MRT.

SECRETARY: DAVE CLOSE
secretary@mountain.rescue.org.uk

Acts as an interface between teams, regions and the MREW management team. He is a member of Dartmoor MRT (Ablebutton).

FINANCIAL DIRECTOR:

PENNY BROCKMAN
penny@mountain.rescue.org.uk

Penny continues in the role in lieu of a new appointment. She manages MREW finances and the administration of grant monies and continues to review the financial systems. Penny is team leader of Central Beacons MRT.

MEDICAL:

MIKE GREENE
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Represents mountain rescue in medical matters to the Government, the emergency services and IAR, and maintains the medical licence. Mike is a member of Wasdale MRT.

PRESS OFFICER:

ANDY SIMPSON
pressoffice@mountain.rescue.org.uk

Deals with the press, TV and radio, and supports teams in their own publicity, chairs the communication group (PSC) and is also chairman of Rossendale & Pendle MRT. He is a member of Ogwen Valley MRT.

EQUIPMENT: JOHN WEALTHALL
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John takes over from Richard Terrell, looking after all things equipment. He is a member of Duddon and Furness MRT.

EDITOR: JUDY WHITESIDE
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Provides design and editorial services for the magazine. Outside her role as editor, she assists in a number of areas in communication, publications and marketing and supports the fundraising group. Judy is also secretary of the Benevolent Fund.

PR SUPPORT: SALLY SEED
sally@prseeden.com.co.uk

Supports Andy Simpson and Judy Whiteside in their roles and provides PR advice and support to MREW and teams where required, seeking to improve communication both internally and externally. Sally also helps deliver media skills training.

STATISTICS: ROB SHEPHERD
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Collects and collates incident information from the teams. A member of Liebich MRT and North Wales MRO, he is also involved with SARDA Wales.

SAR-H: JOHN HULSE
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The creator of SARCALL and a team leader of the Ogwen Valley MRT. John continues to lead on the SAR-H migration process.

VEHICLES: SIMON THresher
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Works with the police, Government and teams in all matters ‘vehicles’. Vice chair: Paul Shemhard—simonth@icloud.com

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Develops computing technology across mountain rescue. Mark is a member of West Beacons MRT. Vice chair: Iain Nicholson—iain@icloud.com

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Assists Dave Close in the secretarial role. Elaine is a member of Bolton MRT.

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Develops training and guidelines for team members at all levels across a range of disciplines. Al is a member of Ogwen Valley MRT. Vice chair: Aon George—ajgeorge@theone.com

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Daves is looking to establish an effective purchasing policy, including an online catalogue and training modules in how to negotiate better deals at team level. He is a member of Swaledale MRT.

WATER: KEVIN GARVEY
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Works to establish the necessary guidance and standards to ensure the safety of members in a water environment. Kevin is a member of Rossendale & Pendle MRT.

Who makes pioneering fair trade announcement

In 2016, Parama became the first outdoor brand to sign up to the Greenpeace Detox commitment. In January 2017, we were delighted to share a ground-breaking and heart-warming announcement. The announcement sets Parama apart from the crowd as the first outdoor brand to be verified as a fair-trade-certified outdoor brand.

Setting the bar for ethical manufacturing in the outdoor industry, Parama makes the commitment to fair trade, and is now among the few brands to receive the WFTR first-buyer label for Fair Trade. This means Parama is the first brand in the outdoor industry to be verified as Fair Trade, helping us to make a real difference in the world of ethical clothing.

How to get in touch with not just the officers and trustees but also some of the key specialist advisers who assist in running the organisation producing the magazine, maximising PR opportunities, developing and maintaining SARCALL and securing insurance cover on your behalf.

Contact details:

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SPRING 2017

MOUNTAIN RESCUE MAGAZINE

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SPRING 2017
Dog handlers, as we all know, are a breed apart. Over and above their team training and call-out commitments, they will frequently be found yumping up and down hills in all weathers in pursuit of their four-legged friends in the course of dog training. Some of that training takes them to Scotland, in search of snow. But spare a thought for the hardy souls who volunteer to travel with them to hide in snowholes and drink beer. In January, Peter Sapsford had his first experience of being buried in a ‘snow grave’, waiting for salvation...

I’ve dug several snow holes, some I’ve been happy with. One with a front and back door was big enough for a group to stand in, but this time it was different. First the term had changed to ‘snow grave’, then there wasn’t a door and I was six feet down, in a grave six feet long, on the Cairngorm Plateau and being blocked in. This was the LDMRSDA winter training and my first experience of being a dog’s body buried under the snow.

Just blocking you in now, Peter. OK? Rob Grange, search dog Ron’s human from Hawick, was trying to reassure me and advised me to ‘get comfortable and just chill’. There seemed to be a lot of snow blocks going in and too much shovelling on top, but it was, after all, to bury me properly in what was supposed to look like an avalanche. Then it went quiet.

After ten minutes of chilling, one minute of I supposing something beginning with ‘s’, I found myself philosophising — which was partly prompted by the radio message: ‘Welfare check, Peter. Are you happy?’

Well, I thought, to be happy you must have everything you want and need — food, drink, shovel, transceiver, radio, professional rescue team with dogs nearby. But down here in a snow grave, what about the meaning of life or, to put it another way, how do I get out of here?

Meaningful life surely depends on finding purpose, value, self-worth and a search dog that can at least sniff you out? The group, handlers and bodies from the Lake District, three external assessors from Norway and thirteen graded and trainee dogs were based at Badaguish, a very comfortable centre near Loch Morlich regularly used by LDMRSDA.

We were concerned that there might be insufficient snow for the training. As it happened, the first day we found plenty tucked away at 1100 metres in Cote Vlaerdø, not far from the Cairn Gorm summit. There wasn’t enough for the ski runs to be open and we didn’t see anyone else around except more MRs looking for winter training opportunities. Lochaber, Oban, Arrochar, Police Scotland and RAF were all represented in the car park. Later in the week, more snow arrived but it was the wind that stopped us using the plateau. Instead we used the forest for more training, this time trying some new approaches provided by the Norwegian assessors, including a mixture of air scenting and ground scenting trails, plus further training and assessments for the non-graded dogs.

Per Olav Gundesen asked me to get within the branches of a fallen tree on a small island of snow in the middle of a river. What joy! It was only 150 metres from the road and the handlers’ start point. His thinking was that dog handlers might just be organising their dogs and themselves as they started the search pattern and would not expect a body so soon. Wrong. Every dog found me first time. Something to do with forgetting to pack the deodorant?

Next day, with less wind, we were back on the plateau and followed SARS advice to avoid NW to NE aspects. Kathy Grindrod, SARS forecaster was in our group and had given us an evening lecture about her work. What stuck in my mind was her comments about reactions to the avalanche risk being ‘considerable’. Some people apparently think that means it isn’t ‘very high’ or ‘high’ so that’s not so bad. Her message was not ‘don’t go’, but ‘choose the place to go’. This time LDMRSDA training officer Andy Peacock and Chris Francis, Beck’s human, set up a multiple casualty avalanche simulation involving a burial and several partially-buried bodies.

Evening lectures on the details of avalanche searches made clear the difficulties and tragedies people had experienced. Charlie McLeod, Assyst MRT, described the dangers of entering the high-risk areas during an avalanche search. He left us with some sobering thoughts by describing his own experiences on the Ben Nevis north face. Similarly, our Norwegian visitors gave an account of one of their searches for an avalanche victim who had sadly died, not of asphyxia or trauma, but of exposure under the snow, probably on day two. Following this and some reflections, it was back into the snow grave again.

This time we had fine weather, deep suitable snow and now I had some knowledge of what was going on. Digg ing your own grave is an excellent idea. This one had plenty of headroom and room for some energetic play with the dogs, plus I rather liked its architecture.

During the wait for the dogs there was no more wondering what am I doing down here, and is the meaning of life really 42. Instead I was concentrating, small acrobats and made a shelf which was so successfully frozen on the wall that I advanced to medieval style vaulting across the roof. The first vaulting arch was nearly finished when Elly Whitefield’s dog Bracken dug his way in and, in the ensuing tussle, toy game, destroyed the shelf and the part-finished arch. It was a shame to leave it all behind.

Our final evening was another impressive bit of organisation, involving a Highland piper, kilts, a great meal, some quantity of alcohol and memorable entertainment activity. It was perhaps the most hazardous activity of the week and is subject to ‘what goes on at winter training stays at winter training’.

For this dogsbody, the week was a thoroughly enjoyable experience of professional organisation and training constantly adjusted to suit the conditions. We all know the commitment and energy required to be a busy MRT member. Add to that the years of search dog training required by handlers and you have an admirable measure of dedication. Back home I wonder what will happen when one of these very professional dogs scent me from across the shelves in Hawick. It would probably be a dog thought like ‘Still. Mmmmm, Peter’s nearby. Good, he’ll have a squeaky toy ready.’

Main photo: Search dog Ron © Rob Grange. Inset left: Peter Sapsford. Above left: Search dogs at rest in the snow © Elly Whiteford.
“By improving my understanding of other emergency services, I believe I can better serve the public in my community.”

Anni Wilson, Dog Handler, Scarborough and Ryedale Mountain Rescue Team

The latest dog teams were graded at assessments in Wales in November 2016 and the Lake District in January 2017. Two of these dogs are new breeds to SARDA England. Abby is a Hovawart, classed as a rare breed in the UK and the first of her breed to train as a search and rescue dog. Her achievement is made all the more special as she had only just been given the all-clear, following a cancer operation in 2016, when the assessments took place.

Shoala is an English Shepherd — another first for SARDA England. There are two other English Shepherds in SAR in the Lake District and it looks likely there will soon be more as these dogs have proved to be very successful in both trainability and temperament.

In training at the moment are also a Golden Retriever, Wire Haired Pointer and a Labradoodle. It appears that the Border Collie is becoming less in number but will undoubtedly remain the most popular choice for handlers for some time to come! At the AGM in January, SARDA England appointed a new chairman, Ian Spiers replaced Ian Thompson, who had been in the role for seven years. A decision was also taken for SARDA England to come out of NSA RDA and operate independently.

In February, several dogs and bodies travelled up to the Cairngorms for winter skills training. Although the snow conditions were a bit thin until Thursday, both experienced and trainee dogs and handlers were able to get some valuable training done. A trip in the funicular was an added bonus! Sponsorship has recently been obtained from Mountain Paws (mountainpaws.co.uk) who have kindly donated a selection of leads, bowls and harnesses etc to our graded dogs.

The SARDA England website has recently been updated for 2017. All information can be obtained from there including call-outs and finds, as they happen! Go to sardaengland.co.uk.

There have been some changes in SARDA England this year. Currently there are 34 graded dogs, spread over the five locations (North East, Mid Pennine, Yorkshire Dales, Peak District and South West), providing a rapidly deployable and highly effective search asset that operate as part of a mountain rescue or search team.

SARDA ENGLAND UPDATE

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Group photo. Left to right: Ian Spiers and O lly (Full Search Dog), Mark H arrison and A bby, Paul Bartrum  and Flo, J ohn Coom bs and Shoala and B ill B atson and A ngus (all N ovice G rade).

Fabulous! Search Dog Maya breaks into a snow hole.

Aberdyfi team members brought the stranded two-year-old dog to safety after she was spotted motionless on the rockface, days after straying into a gorge near Machynlleth.

Dauntless, who belonged to a local farmer, had run into a steep-sided gorge near Aberhosan earlier in the week, and the owners had made a number of attempts to coax her out or get down to her, all without success. In the end, they called the police for help from mountain rescue. A group of twelve team members attended the call-out but at first, said Graham O’Hanlon, things didn’t look so good.

‘The dog had been spotted late the previous day, and had been quite vocal in letting everyone know where she was, but as we made our way up the hill there was no noise and no movement. I wasn’t the only one who feared the worst.’

Unable to get a good view into the bottom of the gully, it was decided to lower a rescuer into the gorge for a better look. On the second descent, a small stationary bundle of fur was spotted on a rock ledge, but it looked like Dauntless had not survived her ordeal. However, as the rescuer got closer, an ear pricked, a tail wagged, and all was well. Dauntless, seemingly fine from her time in the gully bottom, was packaged into a rescue sack and hauled back to the top of the gully to be reunited with her owners.

‘We were very pleased things worked out well for both dog and owners. We rely on the cooperation and forbearance of the farming community as we go about our rescue business, so it’s good to be able to return the favour every now and then. And these sorts of rescues give us valuable training to keep our rope rescue skills as sharp as they can be.’

FACEBOOK.COM: @ABERDYSART

MARCH: DAUNTLESS DOG RESCUE FROM ROCK LEDGE

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FACEBOOK.COM: @ABERDYSART
Taking on the challenge with the Mountain Challenge

Glossop team member Alasdair Cowell was amongst those who took part in this year’s Mountain Rescue Spine Challenger to raise funds for mountain rescue and put themselves against the most gruelling of challenges. He was supported along the way by team colleagues, always at the ready with hot drinks, cold pizza and tough words, which clearly did the trick down to the A635 Skye Road. To

Preparation for this very challenging race began early in 2016 for several visits to Yorkshire dales, running big miles over the northern fell before concentrating on the more southerly areas of the route, going over the same sections over and over. Then, once I decided the whole route, it was time to concentrate on getting more big running miles into my legs. Then my day arrived. It was time to face my fear and underfoot I coped with my ill-ovwed route conditions extremely well, hardly slipping at all. I stride out at a comfortable pace and found myself out on my own climbing Jacob’s Ladder. Kindred needed careful navigating as the clag was well up there in the mountains and I turned my head to put the pain to the back of my mind and try and think of something to block it out, as it is a physical one to just keep on going.

For me, this top of Malham Cove was not so good. Trying not to fall over the Limestone rock track was not easy, but luckily I went without any incident. Before long, I was walking alongside Malham Moor without a hint of a path. Getting through seemed to be going easier. My head was down as I

But still holding the lead. Keep putting one foot in front of the other that’s all I have to do. Then I was off the hill, into the final lane and fields. The earlier torch light caught up with me — a Spine Challenger from the early start not an MR runner. I weaved my way through the houses, hoobed past the cheese dairy and church, into Hawes. Tim and Julian saw me into the finish. I won.

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