

Mountain MAGAZINE Rescue



ISSUE 10

INCORPORATING MRC NEWS

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE FOR MOUNTAIN RESCUE IN ENGLAND, WALES & IRELAND

OCTOBER 2004

EXPEDITION

MALAYSIA 2004

**Taking team skills to the
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NEXT ISSUE

Issue 11 - January 2005

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Images must be supplied as separate JPEGs/Photoshop EPS/TIFF (300 dpi)
Advertising artwork must be supplied, **ready prepared** on CD or via email as font embedded PDF/EPS/TIFF (300 dpi) or quark document with all relevant fonts and images.

Every care will be taken of materials sent for publication however these are submitted at the sender's risk.

Front page pic
Mountain rescue cornish style
Photograph courtesy Cornwall Rescue Group

Editor's Note
Articles carried in Mountain Rescue Magazine do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the MRC.

Thank You
to everyone who has submitted news, articles and photographs for inclusion in the Mountain Rescue Magazine. If your contribution isn't here, don't worry. Everything is kept on file for future consideration, so please keep up the good work.

...A WORD FROM THE TOP TABLE...

It might seem a bit old hat to say so but it's been almost a year since I was elected to the chair of PISC – and what a year it's been!

First of all we had the stop-start negotiations over the new name and logo, finally accepted by the teams and regions in May and the Charity Commission in September. Then we had the approach to central government for funding, causing much debate within MR and, eventually, a few searching questions in parliament itself (more on that later). Trail Magazine finally came on side after several false starts and a few bollockings, resulting in a regular auction on e-bay on our behalf. As a result of Stewart Hulse's fifteen years of alternately muttering under his breath and shouting at full throttle, the discrepancies between the various teams' insurance cover has come to the top of the pile. It's still in a mess but now we all know it's in a mess and moves are afoot to straighten things out. And, most recently, there was the conference in Bangor.

Having been involved to some degree or another in all of the above, whether beneficially or not, I sometimes wonder if it's me people mean when they joke about not understanding the meaning of the word volunteer. Nevertheless, it's difficult not to get involved when everything seems to require an element of PR.

Fortunately, surrounded and supported, as I am, by the PISC team, we seem to get through most things with a degree of professionalism, reasonably on time and to most people's

...AND FROM THE EDITOR...

This issue comes to you no thanks whatsoever to the relentless march of technology. Or to be more precise, a wayward apple mac, two months of telephone diagnoses, the constant footfall of mac engineers up my garden path, a new combo CD-DVD drive, several system restores, one or two sleepless nights, zero social life, a vocabulary of expletives I didn't even know I knew and (this is the best bit) three weeks' worth of work deleted from my hard drive without a trace by one of said engineers (including all the stuff just waiting to be artworked into this quarterly jigsaw). Followed by even more engineers, still more expletives and a lot more time spent staring at a screen. Oh how I longed for the days when all I had to worry about was whether my Magic Markers had dried up or which pencil to sharpen next.

And, before you ask, I do back up. Probably more regularly than many I know. But Sod's Law was apparently in force on that particular Black Wednesday. So, first and foremost, thanks to all of you – contributors and advertisers alike – who resupplied stories, photos, ads and editorial. Thanks also for the sympathetic responses – very heartening to know I'm not the first this has happened to – and probably not the last!

satisfaction. As with most things, there's always room to improve and we'll always strive to do so.

One of the things produced by PISC was a powerpoint presentation which was aired at the May meeting. The presentation points out the relevance of our work to everyone, not just those with mountains in their constituency, and should now be in the hands of every MP and Member of the House of Lords. If you haven't already done so, we now need teams to contact their local MP to ask if they've watched it and get them to sign up to the All Party Working Group on Mountain Rescue, chaired by Tim Collins MP.

One of the next things on the agenda for PISC is the collation of a generic mountain rescue presentation aimed at the general public and available for teams to use along with their own publicity material. For this we're going to need as much video footage as possible from as many teams as possible so we can present a balanced view of what goes on around the country. If teams have anything they think might be useful, either shot by the teams themselves or from coverage by local TV stations, please send it to Richard Terrell at Central Beacons MRT and we can start putting it together sooner rather than later.

Looking forward, I'm hoping that the coming twelve months will see, apart from anything else, a new Handbook, a PR *aide memoire* for team press officers, updates and improvements to the web site and, of course, four more issues of the ever bigger, ever more successful Mountain Rescue Magazine.

In the meantime you'll keep asking, we'll keep volunteering and, with any luck, something useful will come out it!

Andy Simpson Chair
Publications & Information
Sub Committee

In the middle of all this angst came the conference where I hit the ground running on Friday evening (and didn't actually stop for a good twenty four hours) selling raffle tickets and, in the process, chatting to just about everyone. It got me thinking about the value of actually speaking to people. Computers are brilliant (when they work!). Email is a tool I couldn't do without now, either on a business or a personal level. Then there's the mobile phones (with or without digital camera), palm pilots, text messaging, pagers, voicemails, web sites, blue tooth, infra red... on and on goes the list. Seems like we're all communicating so much more, networking so efficiently. But are we?

My own feeling is there's still an element of the Emperor's clothes about all this technology. We're in such awe of it we expect it never to go wrong, never let us down. But internet connections stall, emails fail to arrive, attachments get corrupted, documents doggedly refuse to open, electronic sentiments are misconstrued.

Fine, let's use the technology as a key tool in our communications workbox. But let's not forget the value of standing in front of someone or hearing a voice on the end of a phone line, putting a face to an email address, sharing a laugh, a bit of banter, building relationships. Because, in the end, that's the best way to make things happen.

Judy Whiteside Editor

MRC TRAINING DAY AT PLAS-Y-BRENIN SUNDAY 23 MAY 2004



Glorious weather prevailed as fifty members from thirteen teams assembled in their allocated groups. The aim of the day was for members to exchange ideas about the management of six different mountain rescue situations. Experienced members supervised the scenarios guiding and tutoring each group through effective and achievable approaches to good MR responses.

The craggy bit, led by Richard Terrell and Richard Beech, focused on 'the guiding line' used in *Rigging for Rescue* whereby a casualty is evacuated over steep and rough ground. Instead of six members manoeuvring the stretcher across the boulder field this task can be done by just one member in a much smoother manner.

The watery bit was led by Gerwyn James. His session dealt with safe practice for anyone tasked with searching the



banks of a watercourse whether still or moving. Frequently this task becomes more difficult when the watercourse is swollen with flood water. Safety of the team members is paramount and the dangers should not be underestimated.

Chris Francis stayed indoors for his session. He looked at recent developments in GPS mapping. The route taken by a search party or by a dog handler can be logged into a GPS. Later on this information can be transferred to a computer and can be displayed on a large screen. When it comes to planning the next phase of the search or handing over to a new controller everyone is aware of the areas that need to be searched and the areas that may warrant a second visit.

Ewan Thomas demonstrated the recent progress in the use of stake belays for areas lacking good boulder belays. Gone are the days of bashing the biggest stake as deep as possible. Substantial data is available

regarding solid stakes versus hollow; effective depth into the ground; dynamics generated; and how the forces can easily be doubled to give greater protection.

Mountain bikers and off-road motorcyclists often wear full facial helmets. John Ellerton demonstrated the delicate techniques required to remove such helmets to allow examination of the head, neck and spine as well as treating facial injuries. Not only is this possible but it is feasible to avoid further injury, with much practice and great care.

Much interest was aroused by John Saxton as the revised casualty card was reviewed. Comments have been noted and these are being looked at by the Medical Group.

Peter Smith MRC Secretary

FIXED DATES IN THE CALENDAR

MRC MEETING

SATURDAY

20 NOVEMBER

TEAM LEADERS MEETING

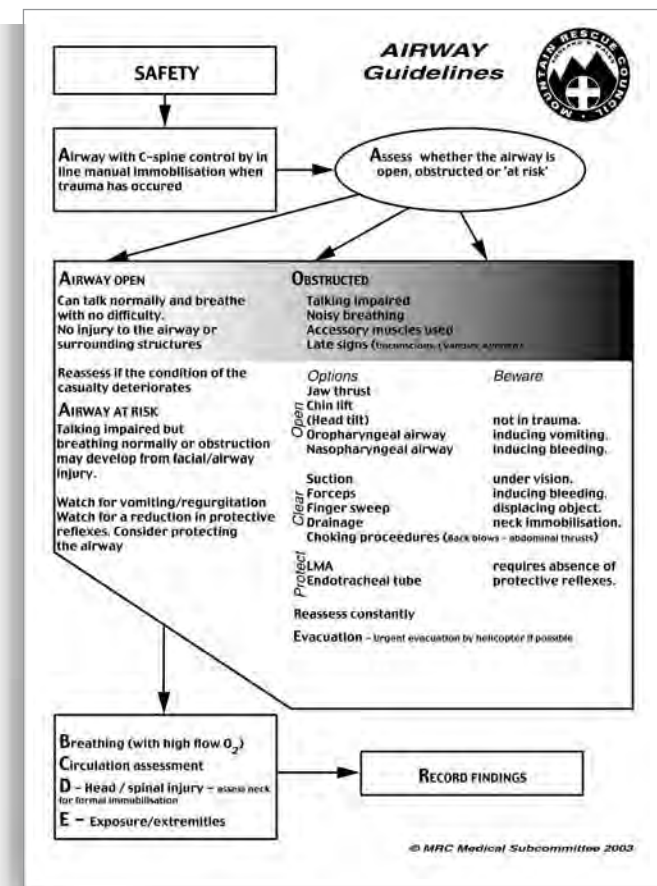
SATURDAY

4 DECEMBER

TEAM DOCTORS MEETING

FRIDAY

8 OCTOBER



AIRWAY GUIDELINES CARD

Kit crit Bags of string!

We've all been there, top of the crag on a rope rescue job. Loads of kit ready to deploy, you grab the end of the rope and 'Hey presto!' a bird's nest of rope!

The concept of loose flaking ropes into bags dates back years. We have been testing a new rope bag over the last few months and found it to be very useful and worth a closer look. The bag was designed originally for technical industrial rescue by Xi Training Ltd in Lancashire. The team were asked to have a play with it and give feedback.

The bag itself is a contoured rucksack style with two padded straps, a drawstring top and bottom tie in point. It comes in various colours and has a cordura fabric base as standard. The bag can easily hold up to 200m+ of 11mm Low Stretch Kernmantle (LSK) rope.

So what's new then? Well inside the main bag is a second soft nylon bag attached to the main bag, this allows the easy storage of

2x100m+ LSK ropes or 1x200m LSK rope with one end dropped in to each bag. In practice, this simple addition to the standard rope bag allows for smooth deployment of two ropes without the twisting mess of two ropes in one bag. With a bit of a squash the bag can take the following kit and still be carried.
1 x 100m x 11mm LSK rope
2 x rigging slings and karabiners
Sit harness, descender, slings and karabiners
1 x MIBs stretcher rolled up
1 x boiler suit
Lightweight waterproof top and bottoms
The bag is currently only available through www.xitraining.co.uk
A discounted price is available for official mountain rescue team orders. Current price is around £35.

A personal view with feedback from the team by **Alan Woodhead** Bowland Pennine MRT

MOUNTAIN RESCUE DISCOUNT

Following discussions with various Mountain Rescue members and DMM, it has been agreed that there will be a Pro Deal arrangement available to all mountain rescue team members. This deal covers all DMM hardware, Mammut ropes and clothing. (We are the distributors for all Mammut clothing and ropes in the UK). It is for individual team members' usage and nothing should be bought for resale.

The package means that the above products are offered at Trade - 10% + VAT. All orders over £200 will be delivered carriage free. Carriage will be charged on smaller orders, so it would be sensible and easier for DMM if members amalgamated their orders.

Order forms, catalogues and price lists are being sent to all team co-ordinators/contacts as listed in the handbook, so please contact your own team leaders or secretaries for this information. The arrangement was effective as of Monday 13 Sept, and will be reviewed annually.

Queries concerning how to order please contact lisa@dmmwales.com or concerning equipment chris@dmmwales.com

DMM is pleased to be able to offer this deal as a way of putting something back into the sport we have been involved with for 25 years.

Chris Rowlands Brand Manager



Council dropped - it's official

We have now had the go ahead from the Charities Commission for the new name and logo. Artwork has been prepared for both English and Welsh versions. This will be available from Judy Whiteside (Editor) on judywhitesidejw@aol.com or Andy Simpson (MRC Press Officer) on andy@andrewsimpsonadvertising.co.uk

An updated .pdf of the corporate guidelines will be available in due course although essentially the rules for use are the same as before. The only difference is the change of roundel.



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FIRST RESPONSE...



HOLDING OUT FOR A HERO?

Heroism is a rare commodity nowadays. Perhaps it's somewhat incongruous with a world of risk assessments, liability insurance, a duty of care and our compensation culture. This may also explain why the label 'hero' has become so over-used in our risk-adverse society. Today we have 'sporting heroes' or describe one who has overcome a disability as a 'hero'. Much as we might be inspired by, or admire such people, they are not true heroes, any more so than would be the mountaineer who attempts a difficult route. Almost every soldier reported in the media is described as 'a hero'. I assure anyone who lacks military experience that such individuals would never describe themselves thus, ascribing the label instead only to those whose endeavours were well beyond the call of their duty; achieved in spite of, and not because of, perilous circumstances. Real heroes are generally unassuming characters, but one might recognise them by their decorations for bravery. There are certainly very few heroes in the context of mountain rescue. Through our involvement in search and rescue we inconvenience ourselves at times and may even suffer discomfort occasionally, but very few of us ever find ourselves in mortal danger for the benefit of others. The exceptions prove the rule – the team members who extracted a fallen climber from an unstable, avalanche-prone snow slope, or those who rescued a casualty from an exposed rocky ridge during an electrical storm. These few know who they are and, occasionally, the rest of us might recognise them by commendations or medals they may receive. Irrespective of any perceptions held by members of the general public, for the rest of us to have the presumption to try to bask in a reflection of these individuals achievements is disingenuous, immoral and diminishes their significance. I am convinced that the majority of the audience at this year's conference felt at least uncomfortable with, if not acutely embarrassed by, the soundtrack to the opening video ('Holding Out For A Hero'), and would wish to dissociate themselves from it. 'NOT A HERO' **Geoff Mason** Exmoor SRT

Peter Howells, UK Conference Chairman replies:-

Whilst Geoff has an individual opinion, I'm afraid I disagree. I'm sure that to the casualties and their family members mountain rescue team members are heroes. Geoff has presented his own view, of his hero. But the dictionary shows a number of other definitions of 'hero':-
1. A person who rules, guides or inspires others
2. Someone who fights for a cause
3. An actor's portrayal of someone in a play
4. In classical mythology: a being of great strength and courage celebrated for bold exploits; often the offspring of a mortal and a god.

*I could go on but, suffice to say, that some in mountain rescue are not prepared to do as other organisations do – celebrate the work that members carry out. And this is what the presentation was about. Not to bask in someone else's glory. Members do not have to do that, they just bask in their own commitment to saving life. To give their very best 'that others may live'. That is fully enough in the eyes of the public to make them deservedly heroes. Heroes or not, for far to long mountain rescue has been in the backwater of organisations. Too few have been nominated for awards or medals whilst other organisations have nominated many of their members. Just look at the lists of award holders. We've even had lack of awards raised at MRC level. What do awards do? As well as recognising the work of the individual, they attract the attention of the very people who should be supporting mountain rescue and create publicity to support the fundraising efforts of teams. I too looked around during the opening sequence, and I most definitely disagree with Geoff's final statement. I am pleased to report that during the conference many attendees commented very favourably about the opening sequence and, to date, we have received a number of requests for a copy of the presentation, for use by teams. **Peter Howells** UK Conference Chairman*

Winter Buffalo

Pertex 6 Shell with 'AquaTherm' pile lining, overhead garment. Developed alongside the recommendations for the requirements of professionals, this Shirt is ideal for a multitude of outdoor uses, from winter hill-walking, trekking, cross country skiing, climbing and technical climbing. Pertex 6 is more windproof and more resistant to abrasion, and the longer length provides a lower run off level for rain, as well as being long enough not to ride up out of a climbing harness. The Special 6 Shirt is the choice for Mountain Rescue Teams, the Armed Forces, Fire Service Emergency rescue Teams, Police Surveillance and under water search teams. Used with Buffalo HA Salopettes, and Mountain Jacket at over 23,000 ft in the Himalayas, and with this combination as insulation for an open bivouac in a Buffalo Superbag at 18,500ft. Features are the same as the 'Mountain Shirt'.



MOBILE PHONE FACTS

Two bits of information that may help expedite a search. If the lost person has a mobile phone and night time visibility is good, their location can be determined via the phone's back light. On a recent search in the Ochils, the three lost individuals could see the helicopter but had no way of indicating their location. When the pilot told them to switch on their phone and point it in the direction of the aircraft, they were immediately seen. Apparently, depending on weather conditions, the backlight can be seen by the pilot using NVGs from a distance of several kilometres. With the naked eye, this distance reduces to about one kilometre.

Some mobiles (not all) emit a signal on a regular basis (every hour or so) even when switched off. (To locate others, there must be some sort of activity such as dial in or out.) This signal can be sensed by adjacent cells to give a triangulated position. The accuracy is dependent on the number of masts, number of nodes on the mast and the signal strength. This may be sufficient to significantly narrow down a search area but could be anything from a six figure grid reference (which some service providers will supply) to possibly 35kms away in a general arc direction. To gain access to the phone's position requires a written letter from a senior police officer to the cell network (eg. BT). This procedure and the time taken may depend on the severity of the incident and the particular police force.

Wilderness First Aid

As a member of Buxton MRT I receive excellent first aid training in both the Casualty Care and St Johns' syllabus. However, when faced with the opportunity of taking part in an expedition to a remote area of Iceland, I wondered how I would cope without other team members around me and without those handy bits of kit that we come to rely on in the mountain rescue. High Peak First Aid's Wilderness Expedition First Aid course seemed to have the answer.

I had attended their course a few years ago and was impressed with the relaxed and informal learning atmosphere. First aid can be an



intimidating subject and it's so much easier to learn with friendly and flexible trainers. I signed up for the course with only days to go before leaving for Iceland and was a bit concerned when I found out that my course mates were a bunch of army lads off to Peru on a kayaking and

climbing expedition, but they turned out to be a great bunch and we were soon happily sticking nasal airways up rubber nostrils and putting canulas in rubber arms. As soon as we had mastered the basics, off we went to the 'field' for some scenarios. The practicalities of administering emergency aid with basic kit in real outdoor environments was powerful learning. Flexibility was definitely the order of the day and the timetable for day two was built around requests from day one. Despite a packed programme there was always time to answer questions and to meet the needs of the individual course members. This is a great course to complement existing first aid knowledge. It not only gave me more confidence but also cured my fear of first aid training.



Anne Humberstone Buxton MRT

Munro maps at your fingertips

It's interesting to talk to people about ISYS mapping on CD. Explaining to them that they can now plan ahead on the home PC – easily – and then get out there and do it. All OS based ISYS Outdoors products now have the latest 2004 Ordnance Survey mapping data. The Hillwalker range gives specific hill data, pictures and routes. The MapWise range is basically OS Landranger mapping, at your fingertips, for you to plan with. The Alpiniste range is for

mountaineers to understand more about proposed routes to a summit. All ISYS Outdoors products have the ability to set up route maps, route cards, schedules, print outs and GPS download/upload. ISYS Outdoors CD mapping is for real outdoor people who want minimum time on the PC and maximum time on the hill, well prepared. All good bookshops or www.isysoutdoors.com is where you will find us.

Páramo gear still hits high note

PARAMO
Andy Kirkpatrick in High Mountain's Equipment Notes, July 2004 – 'Perhaps the best recommendation for (Páramo) is the number of climbers I know who, although they've made it into the big time and now get free clothing from the big companies, still pine for their old high wick, highly breathable Páramo...'

Nikwax fabrics and intelligent garment design mean there's no water build-up on the inside either, which can lead to sudden and rapid cooling when you stop and rest – it's better than breathable, it's directional. Páramo gear offers robustness and renewability too – straightforward aftercare using Nikwax products mean Páramo outlasts conventional waterproofs with membranes or laminates which soon deteriorate. Páramo is different – if you need convincing, ask any Páramo wearer if they'd ever give up their Páramo!

Clean, Green Campin' Machine!

Introducing the Greenheat Ecostove Range comprising the Base Camp, the Backpacker and the Picnic Cooker. Each with its own unique features and ready for anything – from a day in the park to an expedition. **Greenheat Base Camp** is the most developed model in the Greenheat Outdoor range, yet still remarkably easy to light and simple to operate. A butterfly valve in the shield makes it fully regulating and it sits on four removable feet to ensure safety and balance. This powerful stove has approx 3.5 hours burn time and is resealable and, despite its diminutive appearance, suitable for all outdoor camping and cooking requirements.

Greenheat Backpacker is ideal for all ages and levels of expertise and suitable for all sorts of cooking – from boiling water to frying your breakfast. It's remarkably easy to light and regulate and resealable, for those on the move. Each tin has a burn time of around one hour and a heat regulation function via a windshield.

Greenheat Picnic Cooker is a compact, lightweight and disposable stove that comes with three Greenheat Organic fuel cells. It's ideal for picnics and all outdoor pursuits such as hiking, fishing and walking. The pack contains three stove fuel cells plus a lightweight aluminium base that folds out to create a windshield and a stand for the fuel cells. Each fuel cell has approx 30 minutes high heat burn time and a ring-pull lid.

All Greenheat products are 100% organic and 100% safe. The fuel is manufactured from harvesting sugar cane, is non-explosive, non-toxic, non-spill and non-flare, produces no fumes except carbon dioxide and water which the plant absorbed in growth. It's unaffected by cold, wet, wind and altitude – ideal for any thing the great outdoors can throw at you!

The range is used by people from all walks of life, pursuing many different activities – from competitors in the Marathon De Sables (the world's largest sand marathon across the Sahara) to Special Forces and K2 mountaineers. It was also used as the sole source of catering fuel for the 2002 Earth Summit in Johannesburg.

The Greenheat Base camp has an RRP of £19.99 (refills are just £3.50), the pack of 2 Backpacker has an RRP of £7.99, and the pack of 3 Picnic Cookers is just £5.99. Please call 0116 234 4644 for stockists.



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LAKE DISTRICT

Richard Warren (Secretary, LDSAMRA) writes... ‘Pete Mumford from **Kendal MRT** is recovering slowly following the incident in May on Pike O’Stickle, Langdale where the Royal Navy Sea King struck the side of the crag whilst Pete was still on the winch wire. Pete is due back at Newcastle Hospital in November for a review of when the steel rods in his back can be removed. There remain concerns about the way his wrist is healing and a decision is yet to be made about future treatment. Having seen photographs of the accident site and viewed the crag from the valley bottom it is remarkable that Pete managed to extricate himself from the strop before being dragged even further down the mountainside to the valley bottom some 300 metres below. All our best wishes are with Pete for a full recovery and continued active involvement in mountain rescue. ‘The Lakes teams have now bulk purchased the new high band radio system and, at the time of writing, are going through the transition from low to high band. From mid August 2004 **Langdale MRT** and **Kendal MRT** have been operational on high band. There is some work to be done on the completion of the uplink to the remote site at Parklands and the installation of repeaters in vehicles. Both teams have retained a very limited low band capability until such a time as other Lakes teams migrate – by the time you see this, all twelve will have transferred to the new system with some limited low band capability within the outlying teams who interface with other low band users on the county boundaries.

‘Protocols for calling out rescue helicopters are agreed and working reasonably well for the callout of police and RAF helicopters. However, difficulties are being experienced with the Air Ambulance callout arrangements. Currently, a 999 call for assistance can be directed to either the police or ambulance control. The police will normally contact the local MRT if it’s an off-road mountain terrain incident, whereas ambulance control may initially task a road ambulance or air ambulance. There have a been a number of situations where, due to terrain or weather conditions MRTs were required but not requested until some time after the initial alarm was raised. ‘If you have any questions on this, please contact me and I will ensure you receive a response.’

MID PENNINE

A TEXTBOOK SEARCH
The effectiveness of the close relationship between the police and mountain rescue teams was clear in an incident involving both **Rossendale & Pendle** and **Bolton** teams in August. The right people in the right place at the right time doing the right job! Information continually received, disseminated, updated and acted upon by the most appropriate resource. What more could you ask? The story started 5pm

one Friday evening in August with an 83 year old lady missing from her home in Rawtenstall. Although enjoying generally good health, the lady suffers dementia. This, coupled with the fact that any available information came from her 90 year old husband who has concentration difficulties and is profoundly deaf, started the alarm bells ringing. Details were obtained, the home address searched and an investigation began. It soon became apparent there would be twin strands to resolving the issue – the necessity to obtain as much information as possible and the likelihood of a search of extensive, rural land. An excellent investigation and preliminary search and containment of the area was started and, within the hour, the decision was made to call in the Rossendale team. A phone call to the FIM and within a few minutes team leader Dave Barrington was receiving the initial briefing. Team members were alerted by pager as Dave made to Rawtenstall police station for a further briefing. DTL Barry Robinson, meanwhile, met up with officers already engaged in the enquiry to prepare search plans for team deployment. PC Steve Ibbotson took over the role as police liaison as PC Nicky Allison interviewed, cajoled and brewed up for the missing lady’s husband. At 7pm the first ‘fast party’ of MR personnel was deployed onto the open land to the north of the couple’s home, their job to quickly move along all the known footpaths and routes in an initial 1 kilometre arc. As more information was extracted by Nicky, and lines of enquiry developed by Steve, it became apparent that this could develop into an extensive and wide-ranging search. Due to this, an existing pre-plan (used extensively at holiday times!) brought neighbours Bolton to assist. Rossendale command trailer was set up at the RV point as planning and deployment point and brew shack. As dusk fell, some five search parties were out, police officers were managing a whole range of enquiries, ON99 had completed a sky shout and aerial search, and Nicky was still coaxing and comforting the husband. As further information was received, actions initiated and progressed, the impetus of the search started to swing towards the west and south of Rawtenstall.

Around this time a report was received that an elderly lady had knocked on a door in Ramsbottom and, although well, she needed assistance to get home. It sounded very much like the same lady and this was confirmed within minutes by a rescue team member just round the corner. The lady enjoyed a cup of tea and was reunited with her very relieved

husband – a good result. A debrief showed that, due to the information received, limited though it was, the search strategy was guiding searchers to where the lady turned up. As Barry Robinson said, ‘ Mountain rescue is not just about pulling climbers off the wild mountain. It’s as much about providing a service and support to the police and community, sometimes to those who have never even thought about MR’. Incidentally, the lady in question later stated that she had decided to go for a walk and was enjoying it so much she just kept on walking. When she realised it was dark, she thought she’d better go home but, being unsure of where she was and with no money, knocked on a house door to ask for help.

NORTH EAST

John Farnie (Secretary NESRA) writes... ‘The summer months are traditionally quiet in the north east and 2004 was no exception. The highlight of the past three months was the regional exercise held in mid-July. The event had been under threat due to concerns about insurance. NESRA covers four police force areas and it appears that cover for training varies quite considerably from force to force. In this case, the host force would insure its own teams for training ‘anywhere in the world’ but would not insure a visiting team, whilst another force covered its own teams for training only in their force area but would cover teams from other force areas whilst training in their area – if you see what I mean! Anyway, this led to two teams withdrawing from the regional exercise because they wouldn’t be insured and a third sending a reduced representation. ‘Despite this, based in the Hadrian’s Wall area of Northumberland (covering open moorland, woodland and cultivated farmland) the exercise proved to be a great success. The morning focused on a simple search for a group of young people who had become lost and disorientated. This was fairly straightforward except that the young people were Muslim which posed a number of difficulties as there were a number of cultural issues to be taken into account as well as

some language problems. As this scenario unfolded, another came to life in Wark forest – a major incident involving military personnel. A complete contrast as it involved different skills – crag work, dealing with trauma and triage. ‘It’s a pity that the continuing insurance saga nearly scuppered the event. Hopefully a national perspective on insurance will soon be a reality and NESRA regional training will be able to take place as normal.’

AIRWAVE COMMUNICATIONS

David Bartles-Smith reports that ‘since January 2004, **Teesdale & Weardale SRT** have been trialling Airwave communications supplied by Durham Constabulary. The team has been part of the police plan since its inception and experiences to date have been very encouraging. Team vehicles operate gateway/repeater sets, supporting hillsets and a set allocated to the team leader. The team can either operate solely through a specified Talkgroup, revert to direct mode using our repeater or join a patched Talkgroup, comprising of police resources involved in the incident. Much of the team’s operations are search based – usually closely integrated to ongoing police enquiries and their supporting search resources. This is where the system proves invaluable. The team leader, immediately upon activating a call-out (or prior), can be in direct contact with team vehicles, access police talk relating to the incident, liaise with airborne air support etc. Often this communication will be spread over many miles. ‘Recently the police helicopter, on identifying a body, was able to directly ‘talk-in’ ground MR personnel, through dense woodland. A recent call-out involved an RTA from which a young woman had gone missing and was believed injured. Severe weather heightened concerns and, as soon as police control had contacted the team leader, airwave communication was open, with all involved police operating through the MR Talkgroup. The team leader en route was able to listen and talk-in to officers and liaise with incoming team vehicles 30 miles away. TWSRT control was able to maintain the usual comms with search groups but also keep up to date with wider police enquiries, and immediately feed in information requests or action requests pertinent to the search, to police control. As the incident developed, more Talkgroups were established thereby always protecting the MR search Talkgroup. Radio traffic from a mountain rescue perspective has become much more concise and clearer, as much of what we say is monitored. ‘Coverage in upland areas has been good – some small areas are out of Talkgroup comms, but accessible via direct mode. Overall less problematic than low band, and in some key forest areas we are able to enjoy big improvements in comms. A major benefit is the ability to talk long distance, with the option to patch in via police control to a range of other agencies if necessary.

PEAK DISTRICT

WELL DRESSING CELEBRATES 40 YEARS

With the **Peak District Mountain Rescue Organisation** celebrating its fortieth anniversary this year, and the national park office claiming 22 million visitors a year to the Peak District, PDMRO were asked whether their name and the theme of Mountain Rescue could be used for this year’s well dressing. Says Mike France, PDMRO Chairman, ‘I wondered how many of these visitors would be getting their feet muddy on footpath and moorland compared with the number who are just taking a drive in the car. But one thing’s for certain, most of them will be travelling through some very pretty little villages and stopping off to look at the wells. And this type of publicity can only be good, not just for the PDMRO but for MR in general.’ So, now for the education bit. Well dressing is the blessing of the water supply, in the form of the well – an ancient ceremony which has recently been revived for the tourist industry, having virtually died out in the area by the 1950s. Some sources attribute the practice to the period of the Black Death in 1348-9, when probably a third of the population of England died of the disease but some villages such as Tissington were untouched. The local people attributed this to their clean water supply and gave thanks by ‘dressing’ the village wells. However, it seems very likely that the practice goes back much further than this – probably to pagan times – and the fact that many well dressings have a ‘well queen’ suggests echoes of ancient fertility rites. The practice is



continued mainly in the limestone villages of the central and southern peak with a succession of different villages dressing their wells between the end of May and early September. The construction of the well dressings is a skillful art in which whole villages are involved. After the well dressing is erected next to the well, it’s blessed in a short outdoor service and, usually, brass bands will be hired for the occasion. Since many of the towns and villages have several wells, there will then be a procession around the town to bless each one in turn. The well blessing ceremony is usually the signal for the start of a week of celebrations with a range of events culminating in a carnival at the end of the week. Bear in mind, when you take a look at the photo, that each of these exquisite displays is made up of hundreds of tiny flower petals. Sheer works of art.

John Gardiner. OMRT

OBITUARY

John Gardiner died in a climbing accident in Wales on 11 June 2004. John had been a member of **Oldham MRT** for 28 years, during which time he applied his many talents and interests for the benefit of the team and in particular team members. John was an academic by career. Armed with his degree, he completed two years VSO service in Nigeria before returning home to become a teacher and head of mathematics at a local school. He completed a PhD in Maths Education when he retired. Always looking to help young people, he recently started to mentor excluded pupils by trying to complete their education. In his own time, John was an outdoorsman and enjoyed cycling, fell running, skiing, orienteering and climbing and was a member of the Midland Association of Mountaineers. In a recent profile, he described his favourite holiday as ‘rock climbing in France. Sun wine and bolts every 5 metres’ – an indicator of his sense of humour, often coloured with his dry north eastern wit. John was renowned for his love of old motorbikes and spectacularly scruffy kit – because nothing was ever discarded – and his ability to press into useful service the most unlikely things. No one ever wanted to share the contents of his hip flask that used to be a soap dispenser. Or was it a two stroke oil bottle? He was always able to offer sound advice and it was freely given. He was the one person you always needed on a quiz team where his uncanny breadth of knowledge was legendary. John leaves his wife Sue and three children Clare, Tom and Patrick. He will be missed. **Peter Hyde**



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REGIONALNEWS

Many more developments and opportunities remain. With new upgrades and our expanding knowledge, the Airwave function will continue to enhance our work. The benefits of integrated communication and geographical spread are huge. The team has not abandoned high band – the capability already exists on our vehicles and hill sets will soon be acquired to ensure operational compatibility with NESRA and east Cumbria teams – but the distinct and numerous advantages borne out by Airwave in our own patch mean that for TWSRT this will be our primary comms mode, and we are grateful of the support and interest Durham Constabulary show in this.'

For more information please contact David on cathanddave@bartles-smith.fsnet.co.uk

NORTH WALES

Tony Jones (NWMRA) writes...

Problems arose in June with the personal accident insurance, particularly with regard to working with MoD helicopters. Urgent discussions with North Wales police resulted in an agreement to change to Zurich Medical, with a policy the same as that in force in the Lake District. The work of Stuart Hulse was of great importance. Whilst the policy is in the name of the

Association, it is fully funded by the North Wales police. It came into effect in July. Following an extended planning period, North Wales police instituted a programme to replace Low Band equipment with High Band equipment on a one for one basis and with a small increase in holdings supplied by the police. In addition, teams were able to purchase extra equipment through the police system. The new equipment, together with the replacement of antennae, was carried out in August. It was planned that the North Wales teams would become operational on the High Band channels at the end of the month. The Low Band SRC would cease to be used to any great extent. The default channel plans for the teams follows that agreed by the MRC Comms sub-committee and fits in with the National Band Plan published in the Implementation and Control Document. In future, teams will have access to thirteen channels rather than one or two. A settling down period is anticipated as teams learn to manage a new communications system. Regional training continues at a steady pace with ECMR course, meetings of search managers and a one-day exercise for active search managers and planners at the end of September at North Wales Police HQ. An annual Search Awareness Course (at the time of going to press) was scheduled for 23/24 September. In support of the

Protocol concerning fatalities and difficult to reach crimes scene – which was agreed and signed off in March 2003 – the police put on two-day courses covering basic forensic awareness, practical aspects of both still and video photography, handling evidence and written records. The police have supplied each team with high quality photographic equipment, evidence bags and tags and other necessary items.

Fresh from the UK Conference in Bangor, Ian Henderson adds this report, 'The conference was a great opportunity to meet with MR people from around the UK and beyond our shores. Good to meet up with the Irish contingent – our close neighbours being only a 90 minute boat ride away – some of whom we worked with on first aid courses only a month or two ago. 'On the subject of conference, apologies for the absence of many local team members on the Saturday afternoon and evening. Mountain rescue incidents pay little heed to the fact there's a conference going on. Llanberis – with the assistance of Aberglaslyn and RAF Stafford MRT – was called to deal with a fatality on the Watkin Path and a group cragfast on Crib Goch, while Ogwen were busy dealing with an incident on Tryfan.'



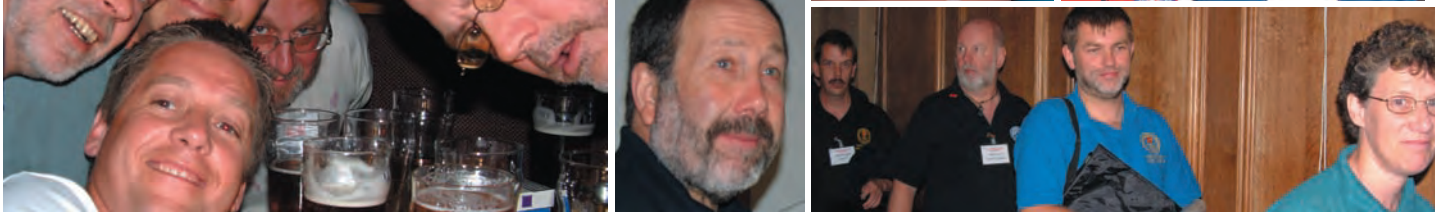
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**Full report on
UK Mountain Rescue
Conference 2004
in January issue**

SOUTH WEST

TWELVE MONTHS ON

Twelve months in and new kids on the block, **Cornwall Rescue Group** may have seen more changes in the space of twelve months than the average, reckons team leader Jim Gallienne. 'It seems more like twelve years ago that the police approached the now Chair, Andy Brelsford, and myself to complete the momentous, life-changing task of setting up Cornwall's very own mountain rescue team.

'Leaving aside the age-old question of "...where are the mountains in Cornwall...?", the county has a long established link to mountain rescue, dating back to 1965, when Climbers' Club custodian Jim Smith set up a mountain rescue post at the Carn Galver Count House at Bosigran with just a Thomas stretcher, Neil Robertson and ropes. Separate rescue kit posts were later established in the Mullion and Liskeard areas. By 1981, Jim had trained the Coastguard Auxiliary Service to take over cliff rescue in the Bosigran area, which lead to the MR post being withdrawn. By the early 90s, all of Cornwall's posts had been closed and HM Coastguard cliff rescue teams replaced the Coastguard Auxiliary Service.

'Almost forty years on, an increase in inland recreational activities and missing person incidents lead the local emergency services and regional panel to highlight a need for a team for the county. Myself – another Jim – lead CRG on its first steps during a training session in July 2003, on the slopes of Penwith Moors at Carn Galver with just Bell stretcher, casbag and sixteen farm-build 'grunts'. In the following months we'd visited eleven teams around the country to get an idea of the challenges ahead and how to overcome them.

'During these pilgrimages, three enlightening facts became apparent:-

1. Cornwall's largest 'mountain' – Brown Willy – is only 420 metres high.

2. Whereas for some teams, 90% of their work is rescue and 10% search – for us it would be the other way around.

3. A sudden realisation that our patch covers 1340 square miles!

'Despite having no mountains, but plenty of hills



(Cornwall

HRT doesn't quite have the same ring to it!), we certainly conquered many mountainous setbacks and hurdles. This was everything from the obvious financial situation to realising that the members of Bolton MRT who donated their old coats to us, were considerably thinner than our team!

'Eighteen months ahead of schedule, November 2003 saw the arrival of Edale's old Landy, affiliation to the MRC, charity status and attending our own incidents. To date, 2004 keeps on getting busier. We've designed pasty holders for the Land Rovers, searched in snow on Bodmin Moor and provided standby rescue cover wearing board-shorts and flip-flops in the scorching sun on Trencrom Hill.

'I now realise that twelve months isn't long to increase membership to thirty four, have three members on the regional panel, acquire two vehicles and a plethora of kit and become the region's busiest team. And still we move forward. Future plans include a base, more vehicles and expanding the rescue side of our work... watch this space.

'Thanks to everyone that has helped us along the way so far...'



BOSCASTLE – THE MR PERSPECTIVE

'Less than a week ago (as I write), time has already moved on. The team has had another shout and we've gone back to our day jobs, to our 'normal lives', but I don't think I will ever forget that fateful day when the police control room rang me and asked if we could help with 'severe flooding in North Cornwall'.

'I immediately said yes, expecting to turn up to householders mopping up from a couple of inches of water invading their properties. Maybe the odd cow or sheep stranded in a field. What I didn't expect was the devastation that greeted us on our arrival in the north Cornish town of Boscastle.

'I won't go over the detail, as I'm sure you all saw it on tv or read it in the papers – indeed, it was impossible not to, as Cornwall became the focus of the national (and international) media for a few days. What I will reflect on is the lessons we will be learning as the country's newest mountain rescue team, suddenly plunged into a scenario that no amount of training or exercise sessions can prepare you for.

'First and foremost was the importance of having blue lights on our vehicles. We currently have two Land Rovers (thanks to Edale MRT and Western Power Distribution), both fitted with blue lights and sirens. Without them, we would have struggled to reach the incidents. The roads in Cornwall are not brilliant at the best of times but on this day, the rains caused a spate of accidents and hazards like piles of earth and gravel on the roads and flooded



Mountain rescue Cornish style...

low lying areas forced the police to close many routes. This led to traffic chaos as hundreds of locals heading home from work, and thousands of tourists heading back to hotels and campsites ground to a halt. There are few stretches of road in Cornwall which have more than one lane in either direction and without the lights and sirens running, we would have been going nowhere. Getting team members to the scene in their own vehicles proved a little more challenging! 'It wasn't just the vehicles that needed to be visible. The coats and buffaloes we issue to team members (thanks to Bolton MRT) enabled them to be easily distinguished from the bemused

Indeed, why stop there – it would be very helpful if all emergency services could talk to each other directly at times of need. It's fair to say the police were stretched on that day, the sergeant we were working with was operating from the car park of a café in a village which was mostly under water. It was still raining and the police had one radio between three of them. That said, they did a fantastic job in co-ordinating a response to a situation which was on a scale unprecedented in Cornwall.

'I know our force were already exploring the possibility of giving us access to TETRA but it is fraught with complications and may not happen.

Whatever anyone might say about the need for a mountain rescue team in an area like Cornwall, we knew that on Monday 16th August 2004, we had done our bit to save lives in what was most definitely a wild and remote place!

residents still wandering round wondering what had happened, or the other emergency services in attendance. We presented a professional, organised image from the moment we arrived on scene.

'Our first task was to search for a missing elderly couple, reported washed away from their vehicle. It struck me how much better it would have been if we could have direct comms with the police.

Ambulance and the Coastguard. On arrival, it was straight into the action. The fire brigade immediately approached us for spare space blankets as they had run out. We obliged and were then assigned to assist them in evacuating people from houses. They lent us life jackets – not items that we carry in our own kit (though we are now reviewing that) – and we lent them our Bell stretcher and ourselves. We had to evacuate

residents who weren't able to get out under their own steam – an elderly lady who couldn't walk far, a gentleman who was terminally ill and hadn't left his home for some years and so on. What struck me was the way the police, fire, ambulance, coastguard and helicopter crews accepted us as part of the rescue effort and worked alongside us without question. Our relationship with our local constabulary is second to none. The relationship with the other services is still developing but, when it came to the crunch, there were no politics in evidence – we all just did our stuff. And afterwards, as we sat in a that same café where we had started our first search some six hours earlier, I had time to catch my breath and reflect... 'MAJAX scene, seven helicopters in action at the same time, dozens of blue light vehicles, casualty clearing stations working flat out, the air buzzing with non-stop comms traffic. How did I feel? 'My first thoughts were sadness for the beautiful village of Boscastle which will never be the same again and for its residents who have lost everything they owned – from cars to clothes. But I couldn't help feeling a certain amount of pride that in the midst of the destruction and devastation, a mountain rescue team was playing its small but important part in helping with the rescue effort. Whatever anyone might say about the need for a mountain rescue team in an area like Cornwall, we knew that on Monday 16 August 2004, we had done our bit to save lives in what was most definitely a wild and remote place!'





Torrion MRT has been doing its own trials with regards to improving the speed with which they are able to convey a casualty from the scene of an accident to the professional medical teams waiting at the roadside. Due to the steep and rugged nature of the hills within its area of responsibility, the team find that one wheel on a stretcher is clearly better than two. Or even none. To complement this well proven method of stretchering its casualties, the team has recently issued each of its team members with one wheel as well. It is now possible for a severely injured casualty to be zoomed down from the Pinnacles of Liathach to the roadside in 12 minutes. Team leader 'Coco' Hinchliff says, 'It's flippin' amazing.' The team is hopeful that extremely lucrative offers will be forthcoming from both Hamish McInnes as well as 'Titanium' Tighe's design team.

occasionally, silly things do happen. I'm sure we've all come across the stupid and downright dangerous situations where someone or a group finds themselves totally out of their depth. One such instance took place in late June when a group of teachers and schoolchildren tackled Meall a Bhuachaille adjacent to Glenmore Lodge. Many readers will have read about the incident or seen the TV coverage. But for those who missed out, read on. A schoolteacher and a party of 39 schoolgirls became lost when near the summit of the 2,500ft mountain around 4.30 in the afternoon. They had very little equipment and only a single map which no one could use, no waterproofs, hats or gloves and were eventually found wearing what were basically their school clothes – skirts, tights and trainers –

shivering, with only bin liners for protection. The party, from a private school in London were on the final day of a Scottish holiday. As they climbed the mountain, they became disorientated in misty conditions. The teacher, apparently, phoned their bus driver and asked if he could drive the coach up the mountain! The group also asked to be airlifted off the mountain. The Cairngorm team

was alerted and around ten members tasked. The girls were found within about an hour after the call. By this time, the mist had cleared and the group reckoned there was no problem. They were laughing and joking when they saw the team and clearly failed to realise how serious the situation could have been. Cairngorm team leader John Allan was stunned by the whole episode and made it clear when interviewed how he felt – that this was one of the worst cases he had come across of a group being unprepared for going into the mountains and the first time he had ever seen so many people so ill-equipped. He suggested that a ratio of one teacher to 39 children was unbelievable. The teacher was totally out of her depth. John reminded the press that the team usually takes a non-judgemental view about people heading into the mountains. But on this occasion he felt it necessary to get across the message that people travelling to climb in Scotland need to realise the risks involved.

The group walked off the mountain at around 8pm and returned to their hostel in Nethy Bridge. The teacher in charge refused to comment and the party returned to London the following day. The school Head said an inquiry would be carried out, admitting that, 'On this occasion, normal procedures governing school trips were not in place. We apologise to parents and pupils. We are grateful to the Cairngorm mountain rescue team for their help. It was they who ensured that nothing serious occurred. All procedures governing school trips will be thoroughly overhauled mindful of this unfortunate incident.' Thankfully, such incidents are rare. But even so, it does make one wonder how teachers with so much responsible for the wellbeing of children come to make such fundamental mistakes and place – unknowingly – so many lives at risk.

This item first appeared in Casbag August 2004

· ADVERTORIAL ·

Lake District selects Team simoco for new emergency radio

Team simoco is to provide a complete new communications infrastructure for the Lake District's twelve teams. The upgrade is part of a nationally co-ordinated shift by search and rescue teams to the Marine Band (135-180MHz) frequencies allocated in October 2003. The transition must be completed by 2009. The move will avoid the increasing interference experienced on low band equipment operating at 66-86MHz. It also means teams will operate on the same channels as emergency helicopter services, avoiding the complexity and cost of two separate radio systems. LDSAMRA aims to complete the move within 12 months.

Team simoco will provide a complete analogue Private Mobile Radio (PMR) system for LDSAMRA, supplying, installing and maintaining all the equipment required including 17 base stations, over 100 mobile units for use in vehicles and over 400 handsets. The company is also providing landline links to certain base stations and an innovative financing solution for LDSAMRA, funded by the Cumbria Constabulary.

John Dempster, Chairman of LDSAMRA said Team simoco put forward the most comprehensive solution. 'They will be delivering all aspects of the package, including financing, that we are likely to require. Team simoco has a long track record of successful involvement with the Lake District's teams. We know we can trust

them and their equipment and that the company has the flexibility to provide the support we require to save lives out on the fells.'

LDSAMRA's communications budget has been provided by the Cumbria Constabulary since the 1970s, when the Force made a commitment to fund the search and rescue radio communications. John Dempster points out that the Cumbria Constabulary has consistently honoured this commitment, despite the fact that it has more search and rescue teams within its jurisdiction than any other police force.

Andy Gamble, from Team simoco said, 'We have a unique track record in UK mountain rescue going back many decades that gives us unrivalled depth of experience in the specialist communications equipment and support that teams actually need. Flexibility is an important word at Team simoco – we are prepared to make the effort to understand our customers and to respond to their needs.'



Team simoco 

Expert Opinion. A case for discussion...

In July's MR Mag, MRC Chairman David Allan invited discussion on the issue of mountain rescue team members acting as 'expert opinion' in court cases involving incidents in the mountains. This followed a report from ACPO rep Paul Forrester at Plas y Brenin in May. Barry Robinson, Deputy Team Leader of Rossendale & Pendle MRT comments...

In issue 9 of Mountain Rescue Magazine, David Allan invited discussion in his article on 'Expert Opinion'. Well, here goes... I'm not sure that I follow all the various threads in David's article but I'm guessing it was written in this particular vein with the intention of sparking interest. (David, it worked!). I'd like to comment initially on the very first sentence, 'Members of ACPO have been advised not to use volunteers as expert witnesses.' Really? By whom have they been advised?

Are the police service now in the position of deciding, (or being dictated to), with regard to who and who may not provide relevant information or evidence? I'll answer my own question. No, they are not. The police are charged with investigating, collating and presenting evidence and information.

The police, (or any other authority or agency charged with the responsibility to investigate, come to that), do not, and hopefully never will have, (again) the luxury of 'cherry picking' just the information they may wish to present. A witness is a witness. If that individual holds expertise relevant to what they have witnessed then they are likely to be an expert witness and by default (with regard to the article title) be in a position to provide 'expert opinion'. Whether or not that evidence or opinion is later admitted in legal proceedings is another matter – but not a matter for ACPO to dictate.

Don't let us get too bogged down or concerned with this issue or its (apparently) perceived problems. There are probably hundreds of 'experts' out there in MR land who could, intentionally or otherwise, bring their expertise to bear in a whole range of MR related issues (casualty care, driving, search techniques, rope skills etc). If an individual is able to provide useful and relevant information and does so as honestly as possible and continues to be honest in referring to any expertise or skills they may have, then fine. Do it. Let the judge or coroner or whoever decide whether that evidence should be treated as 'expert' information.

My second point is simple. If I have witnessed something then I am the witness. On no account am I going to accept someone else reporting on what I have seen, heard or thought. Yes, I'm all for a spokesperson to relate a corporate line regarding an issue but only I can comment on what I witnessed.

· ADVERTORIAL ·

Ambu training manikins deal

SP Services are pleased to announce that they have recently been appointed the sole UK distributor for the market leading Ambu training manikins including all spares and accessories. SP will now be responsible for all sales and servicing of Ambu training manikins for the whole of the UK including pre-hospital and hospital based customers and the MOD. Managing Director Steve Bray is delighted to have struck the deal with Ambu UK Ltd which will see some of the highest quality manikins in the world being sold exclusively by SP Services.

Alan Johnston, Ambu UK's Business Development Manager said he could not be happier that SP is now responsible for sales of the entire range of training manikins. SP are and have been for some time, the dominant force in the emergency medical supplies industry. Their stunning catalogues are easily the most colourful and recognisable around, not to mention their award winning web site.

'I'm confident SP can give Ambu Manikins even wider exposure than they already have.' Ambu, created it's first training manikin in the late 50s as a result of the huge success of its revolutionary manual resuscitator, the 'Ambu Bag'. Ambu began manufacturing the training manikins to assist in the training of using the manual resuscitator which was now the world wide tool of choice for emergency oxygen delivery and resuscitation.

The original manikin was called the 'Phantom', now more pleasantly known as 'Ambu Man'. By the 1960s the training manikins had evolved to allow for the training of cardiac massage as well as airway management. For any more information on Ambu Training manikins or SP Services itself, please feel free to visit SP's website or call their friendly customer services team who will be happy to help.

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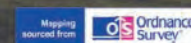
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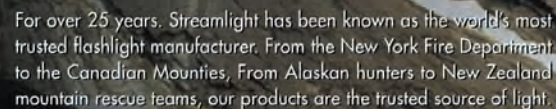
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As is the nature of many company associations and developments projects, Snowsled happened to be in the right place at the right time when the big push for vacuum mattresses came within the MRC over ten years ago.

Just prior to that, we'd had an idea for an inflatable stretcher. It was essential to test it out with those who might eventually be responsible for using it, and the MRC amongst others were positive with their advice. As it turned out, the inflatable stretcher was a product looking for a market, rather than fulfilling market demand, and very few have sold despite the benefits and advantages, and potentially really useful developments of it – anyone interested get in touch! But it was an interesting development process all the same.

However, the association with the MRC did lead to a request that Snovsled consider developing a vacuum mattress specifically suited to the special demands of mountain rescue situations.

Following a first prototype and minor changes, a small batch of the Mark 1 version was produced and distributed in 1994. This was quickly followed the next year by a Mark 2 version, with improvements being made in the efficiency of evacuation. During the Millennium Conference there were further discussions about possible improvements to the vac mat and, when funds were available, the current Mark 3 version was produced and distributed to teams during

2003. These mattresses are now also being used in Scotland and Ireland, and also as far afield as Canada.

Survival and Protection Systems Ltd was established during 1991 to market the stretcher and now also distributes the MRC pattern vacuum mat, both these products being made by Snowsled (now Snowsled Polar Ltd).

Snowsled's main business has always been the design, manufacture and distribution of sleds – fibreglass, Kevlar and plastic pulks and wooden Nansen sleds, together with pyramid tents for use in Antarctica and the Arctic. For over ten years the company has also become well known for the design and quality of its Ventile clothing and this continues to be produced, now by Snowsled Clothing Ltd.

We are also really pleased now to be able to offer Páramo clothing and Nikwax products, on a contract basis to mountain rescue teams and other organisations who will be aware of these product's own special benefits in the muddled world of hyped breathable fabric systems and garment designs. The association with the MRC and rescue teams around the country is one we have cherished over the years and look forward to it continuing and developing.

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e-mail: rescue@snowsled.com
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STOP PRESS – WORDS CULTURE AND TEAM MEMBER SEEN IN SAME ARTICLE

They do say 'more haste less speed'. Never a truer word was spoken, especially when it comes to getting ready to respond to a call out. When the pager goes off, there is that instant tingle of anticipation, not only for the shout itself, but also for the thrill of preparation during which I can embark on the carefully-planned and well rehearsed routine that I know is guaranteed to have me smooth out of the house in ten minutes flat. The rucksack is by the door and freshly waxed boots nearby. I switch on the kettle, ring the callout officer to say I am attending and dash upstairs to don the outdoor kit.

Now why is there only one thick sock? Not to worry – I'll try the airing cupboard later. Back down to the kitchen and I warm the flask, but what's that peculiar smell? Tipping out the water, a substantial culture (possibly related to penicillin) performs a slow and menacing circuit of the bowl before sliding down the plug-hole. Reflecting on the potential fortune to be made in the pharmaceutical industry from week-old tomato soup I move on to preparing the booty-box. Fleetingly mindful of a recent resolution to reform my eating habits by adopting a diet of wholesome, nourishing and fat free food, I rapidly fill the box with an indulgent selection of Mars bars and Eccles Cakes. I have to eat the one that won't fit in, there and then. Well, instant energy's the thing – I can't be running up and down stairs looking for missing socks fuelled by crispbreads and cucumber paste.

The phone rings – it's the callout officer. No, I've not just come back from the dentist, it's a mouthful of Eccles Cake. Can I pick up Fred, as I'll be passing his house? He's home but apparently his car is still buried in a Scottish snowdrift after a

disastrous winter climbing weekend. What does Fred know about disasters? He should be here to watch this one unfold.

I raid the airing cupboard – eureka! All the walking socks have mysteriously congregated deep within an enormous pile of clothes. Now the cat, never one to miss an opportunity for exploring forbidden territory, chooses this moment to take a flying leap into said cupboard and anchors itself firmly to the contents. To the sound of loud feline protests I extricate it, still attached to my partner's prized sweater, knowing that if I don't it will find its way beneath the floorboards and there will be two days of pitiful mewing from somewhere under the bath. It's a very unusual sweater.

I catch sight of the clock, the hands turning at Countdown speed, and redouble my efforts. Back in the kitchen I note with dismay that, distracted by the earlier discovery of a new family of antibiotics in my flask, I forgot to do the coffee. The pager goes off again – now it's to be a remote rendezvous for the incident, and I ring the callout officer back. Am I still eating Eccles Cakes? No, I explain between

licks, just trying to stop blood dripping on the carpet, the result of an earlier skirmish with the cat. On the way, I must now call in at the team base and collect some extra items of kit. Heading for the front door, I grab my rucksack and realise that I didn't get round to putting the laces back into the newly-cleaned boots. I tend to put off this fiddly job as the neat little crimps came off ages ago and the ends now look as if they were cut with a bread knife.

Finally thrusting my feet into the trusty Scarpas, I discover the earring that's been missing for several days, the one she was convinced was lost forever. Well, I muse, as I unplug it from my big toe, it can't have done that much harm if it normally resides in an earlobe and anyway, should infection develop, I can always cultivate a suitable course of treatment in my flask.

Now, where are the keys to her car? With my luck, they'll probably be in her handbag which is presently enjoying a matinee with its owner at the Exchange Theatre. But no, here they are in the inside pocket of the third jacket I try. I swap the vehicles round and eventually I can set off.

Driving along, I contemplate the improvements I could make to the getting-ready routine, such as keeping a pair of stout gardening gloves handy near the airing cupboard. And I could create medical history by developing the only known cure for cauliflower toe.

Twenty miles down the road I pull up at the rendezvous, noting with some satisfaction that I am not, after all, the last team member to arrive. Lots of people in red jackets are milling about with stretchers and first aid kits. As I unload the extra gear I collected from the hut the mobile phone rings. It's Fred.

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With many teams now moving to high band, there's a product that we've have been using that may be of interest! During my team's change to high band just over two years ago, I came across an alternative to the mag mount – a glass mounted high band aerial. The advantages of being more permanent than a mag mount (which generally damages paintwork after while) and not having to drill a hole in the car were attractive and so one was ordered and tested to great effect. In short, it mounts on the window like a car phone aerial. The components 'stick' either side of the glass with self-adhesive pads and the outer pad is sealed with silicon

sealant supplied to prevent water freezing around the adhesive the pad during the winter, as this can loosen it. For those who are technically minded, John Thompson from Panorama explained how it works 'Basically it is capacitive coupled - when transmitting, the energy enters the coupling box, which contains a cavity tuned circuit. The energy is then transferred to the centre contact, which is effectively one side of a capacitor, the glass being the dielectric, and the external foot assembly centre plate is the other side of the capacitor. In receive mode, the process is the same but in reverse direction.'

The aerial works well, and is

now in use with team members from Bowland Pennine, Rossendale & Pendle, SARDA England and Edale, to name a few. For those worried about using a hand set in a car with electronic engine management that can be affected by radio transmissions in the car, it's an ideal method of getting the radio signals to an external aerial.

John has offered MR team members a 50% discount on the product, which means you would expect to pay in the region of £18 (+vat and P&P), which makes the aerial attractively priced. For reference, the part number is AOG161 (covering 156 to 174MHz) and specifications are

on the web site in the Mobile Radio Section. Panorama will also fit the connector for you for a small extra charge if you don't have the tools to do it yourself. They also produce a wide range of aerials for numerous applications including a new range for GPS, so the site is well worth a visit. For further information, please contact John Thompson at Panorama Antennas (www.panorama.co.uk) on 020 887 4448 or john@panorama.co.uk.

A personal view from
Ian Nicholson
Bowland Pennine MRT

EXPEDITION MALAYSIA 2004

Avril Henson takes her mountain rescue skills to the jungle

FIRST NIGHT'S CAMP IN SIGHT – OVER THE MISSING BRIDGE!
FIRST MISSION – TO CROSS IN SMALL BOAT AND SET UP CAMP



THE VILLAGE BRIDGE – IN NEED OF A LITTLE REPAIR!

I love the outdoors and being active – the very reasons I joined Holme Valley MRT. And I like a challenge. They say it's character building, but sometimes I'm not sure just how big my character has to get!

Anyway, I'd wanted to take some time off my day job to test my skills so I researched several expedition companies and came up with Raleigh.

The application was one of the hardest I've ever had to fill in – I was so desperate to get down everything I wanted to say. Then there was a selection weekend, more to deselect yourself if you don't think it's for you. Of course, it was all my cup of tea – navigation, working as a team to think around various multiple tasks,

doing presentations, camping, casualty management – and when the offer came through of joining project staff in Malaysia, for January 2004, I could hardly contain myself. Then it was on with raising the £1,100 required to go and all the stuff to get – malerials for a long trip, the flights, equipment and so on.

Most of the staff met at a team-building weekend in December. And then it was January – anxious moments and concerns left behind in the excitement of meeting the others and comparing luggage weight! 'He who would travel happily must travel light' is a very truthful quote!

After a less than reassuring inflight pre-departure prayer we were

on our way to the 'land below the wind'! Sixteen hours later we arrived at the relative luxury of fieldbase – a house in the Lintas suburb of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah's capital, our home for the induction phase. We found beds or floor space and were soon *au fait* with our expedition leader's favourite phrase 'There are no problems, only opportunities'!

Shell shocked, jetlagged and affected by the heat, induction felt like being back at school. So much to do in such a small time. We learnt how to do reviews of the day, setting a group contract, one-to-ones with the venturers, how to administer a life saving adrenaline injection, other first aid, health around camp, environmental considerations ('Take

devoured a corned beef and cracker lunch, we had to hack and bungee our own bashers – thank goodness for girl guide lashing skills and mountain rescue knot training!

Your first night swinging in a hammock in the jungle is definitely an experience, but not very conducive to sleep! Reluctant to take off a thing, in case there was a need to get up in the night, I hung my boots off the ground and got under my mosquito net. We were rudely awakened in the morning by what sounded like a car alarm going off – a cicada for goodness sake! Then a simulated medical evacuation to raise the adrenaline levels, before heading back to fieldbase.

Only then came the crunch – I was off on an environmental project to the Imbak Canyon – actually a very exciting opportunity, as it's the last remaining untouched and unexplored rainforest in Malaysia. Only about 100 people have been into it and the government is keen to conserve it as a gene bank of rare and endangered species. We were to help plan the future ecological management of the area, map, determine the best location of field centre, trails and emergency helicopter landing site working alongside the land owners, Ysan Sabah, who had just sent a group of rangers into the area.

I was lucky. Usually staff stay on one project for continuity, but I was to swap with another project member for the third phase. I'd gain community project experience whilst he would use his skills as an architect to draw up plans for the Imbak centre. So, third phase, I was off to the remote Kampong Buyaan to help complete a kindergarten and teach English.

So now we all had something to

nothing but photos, leave only footprints') leadership/team work styles, navigation, GPS, cultural awareness, camp craft and radio usage – all of which we'd have to teach to the venturers – plus talks about differences in values, attitudes and belief systems.

Then it was out to jungle camp. Ray Mears eat your heart out! We did our swim test in the river, practiced safe river crossing and were shown how to build a basher. Then we had a trial run – cross the suspension bridge, practice throwing the antennae for the radio and find the camp site – a steep forested hillside next to a stream with a flat area for the kitchen. Having set up our three bowl system, collected water, got the trangias on for a cuppa and



get our teeth into – visits to sites to arrange, orders for equipment to sort out, route and full evacuation plans to draw up.

We had one day off in that first fortnight, soaking up the sun on the tropical, idyllic beaches of Mamutik island, just across the bay from the capital. The venturers were all coming here to learn to dive and carry out coral research, as part of their trekking phase, so of course we felt it our duty to check it out for them! Then there was the Phillipino night market – lots of food cooking, just along from the stalls selling the raw ingredients – and the 'leech socks'. They may never be catwalk material but they do the job!

Once the host country venturers arrived, three of the staff from the Imbak groups went off on a recce. We couldn't all go – perhaps as well, as two of them contracted amoebic dysentery on the trip!

The Malaysian venturers were from two distinct backgrounds – Sabah and mainland Malaysia. On the whole they were quieter than their European counterparts, but a friendly, mild-mannered people. Literally thrown in the deep end with their swim test, they were so keen to learn more about their own country, very practical and got stuck into any chores, usually showing us how it was done – very reassuring.

In total there were 30 staff, and 120 venturers (about 20 Malay). The

main thing with such a huge group is tight organisation, timing being imperative – particularly with three loos and two showers for each sex – and so much information to pass on.

Each smaller group (ours was thirteen) organised and led themselves with us facilitating rather than directing them. The information we'd gathered over the first two weeks was passed on, then off they went for their first taste of camping in the jungle.

All went amazingly well. The key learning point is prioritisation – you need shelter, a long drop to be dug, a source of food and everyone needs to know where everything is before it gets dark. And it gets dark early and quickly in the jungle. Soon you see the fireflies over the water and then the jungle orchestra starts. It is never quiet!

Our last taste of civilisation with the opening ceremony, our provisions allocated and checked and, early on the 12 February, D-day arrived. We loaded the coach with all the provisions, equipment and personal effects of both groups and set off, passing the peeping silhouette of mount Kinabalu on our journey.

At Telupid, we unloaded and sorted everything into the back of the 4x4s driven by local rangers. Two hours later, we reached the river and saw the bridge swept up on the bank, looking across at what was to



RIVER BATHING



be our first night's camp – the other side of the bridge at the logging camp. Everything had to cross the river in a small two-man boat, as we made a crocodile in the mud at each side to pass all the gear.

Then we had to recce our camp – wading across another river to a cleared area of forest. We made a shelter for our food, got the provisions required and walked 13km to our camp. Doesn't sound far, but carrying heavy loads, in the heat and on jungle trails it's hard work! Then we washed a huge tarpaulin in the river and, with the guidance of the local rangers, built our shelter. As the two groups would be staying here on the way in and out, it had to be big enough for thirty. Helping to erect huge log supports, cross frames for all the hammocks, took some effort and quite a lot of wood. There's something about getting back to nature that is very rewarding. We were all depending on ourselves and each other, needing to be practical and work hard. Learning to look after each other, live together and cope with the unexpected.

We used the river for everything – collect our drinking water, wash ourselves and our clothes, and swim. Sometimes after a recce through the jungle we were so hot and smelly (an odd combination of sweat, Deet and a more fusty odour) that I just got in clothed and gradually removed layers as I washed!

Once both groups had ferried all the gear to our camp, in several trips over a few days, we decided to head for their based camp, alongside a waterfall on the edge of the primary rain forest. The path was steep above the river bank, and we had to help a couple of members of the group, it was clearly not passable carrying heavy loads in its current condition. It was beautiful, with eerie glimpses out across the forest, leeches attaching themselves to your legs, the sounds of birds, gibbons around you. The rangers

formed supports, ladders and handrails from branches along the path, so our return was easier. They were reluctant to try another route on the map that we felt to be passable, not happy to take us on a path they hadn't checked out. So the next day a group went out to find this route over the hill.

It was extremely wet and muddy. And hot! 37°C! Like this it seemed all about survival and discomfort but looked much brighter when the sun came out. Everything soon dried and the spirits lifted. We helped carry the food in for the other group and were able to get on with our own specific objective – to recce for appropriate field centre locations. This involved many trips out into the jungle in different directions, along routes planned from the map. We rock hopped up rivers, explored trails and ploughed through forest following hot on the heels of a parang-wielding ranger. The razor wire plants at ankle height made the UK ferns found on rescue team searches look soft!

A break in routine and small treats were valued, post was like manna from God, communication with the outside world. It just puts everything in perspective. The remoteness was hard and in some ways there was no time to yourself, continually surrounded by twelve people, but in other ways there was too much space to think. We all needed each other but it also gave me confidence in my own abilities. It's good to take the time to appreciate what and who is around you, live in the now. There were moments where we had a great time as a group, good fun, there were great views, a sense of achievement and pride, good cooking – bread, home made soup and flapjack. We worked closely with the rangers, learning from them about the jungle, taking dawn nature walks, teaching English and learning Malay in return. We even had a salsa class and, in Phase 2, a masked ball!

Each group was sad to leave,

but the end of this first phase ended in style. A huge electrical storm struck on our last night and a river of mud ran straight through the shelter. The loggers took us in and we were all pleased to be going back to our comfortable changeover location to get washed and cleaned up!

It was really interesting to see the different personalities in each group and how the dynamics made a totally different team – different ages, backgrounds, interests, skills, experiences. You often saw the unexpected – the one you thought wouldn't be into outdoors living getting right into campcraft with his own little fire going.

The beginning of Phase 2 saw more unseasonal weather. As we hadn't had the induction period for the group to bond, and the two groups were still having to live together in one camp, stress levels began to rise. You learn to communicate and try various strategies to get the desired outcome, also thinking of the group as a whole and monitoring individuals.



Eventually, we did get out of camp and decided to take food to all the other groups but a sudden rise in river levels meant we had to evacuate at the crossing point. As my friends in the team will agree, I am not the one they would anticipate in a belay stance, helping everyone up the steep bank to safety but it all went well and I proved my skills to

myself once again! Wild woman of Borneo, here I come!

Our later trip to the waterfall camp was totally different, the power of the water knocked the wind out of your sails, but it was a lovely place for the group to swim, particularly after a hard hot day marking out routes and perimeters of sites in the forest. At the end of each phase all the goals were achieved, the venturers had a real sense of achievement and had experienced somewhere truly spectacular – where else do you see a vast number of roosting fruit bats in the trees overhead or hear the call of one of the eight species of hornbill? This time there was a reward in the form of a BBQ at a reserve hostel at a Kampong on the way out – beautiful food and a relaxing end to the phase.

Phase 3 was quite a different experience for me in some ways, as it was the community phase I'd been looking forward to. I think, by experiencing both, I was able to compare and gain many more diverse skills. The trek in was to be over two days. Many of the venturers had just come down from climbing Mount Kinabalu, the end of their trekking phase and the thought of another prolonged trek was upsetting to some. The first obstacle was to help them turn this around, alter their packing plans and attack this in a positive manner. The walk was strenuous, steep and hot. But the views across the Crocker range were amazing. We overnighted in a village community hall and got to

it was hoped that a kindergarten would help those starting school. We worked alongside the villagers, having many discussions with them about the work, expectations on both sides etc. A key lesson from this phase was communication – check what's been heard as well as what has been said and find out both sides of the story.

The local people are very proud, quiet but amazingly helpful. It's easy to misinterpret gestures and behaviours due to our cultural norms. They don't like to say no, they find it easier to talk one to one than in groups, live in larger family groups with larger networks, and have different timescales with a much more traditional hierarchical structure.

We worked with the locals, carrying rocks from the river for the foundations, sawing the wood, hammering in the partitions and painting the building. The venturers showed their great creative abilities designing and painting murals. We also taught English to adults, school and kindergarten children, had some cultural exchange sessions and played football. It was quite a social spot. All the treks came through the village and a group from Hobsons Publishers who'd fundraised for the buildings, came to visit.

There was quite a bit of celebrating – several birthdays, including my own. Very memorable. The thought behind a packet of smarties and a trifle with your name on really puts things in perspective. Truly a birthday to remember!

Dignitaries flew in for our opening ceremony. Lovely to see the village in all its splendour, the children doing the local dances and songs and to be part of it all. Hopefully the bright yellow building and the memory of that day will live on for a long time. Unfortunately we had to leave our new friends next day and trek eight hours to civilisation!

That was our last phase, changeover this time was more to do with end of expedition, a great film show, with snippets from all the phases and memorable moments from all, including extreme ironing and a naked man and a lunch box!

Then the venturers party at an island resort. We had challenge events by each team, an auction and a great party. Amazing that you can have a fantastic time with no alcohol (expedition is dry!) and no one worrying about what to wear! A great end to a great trip for them, lots of friendships and travel plans being

made. The next day was the sad goodbye. Amazing, after the trepidation of their arrival that we were so sad to see them go!

The work went on a little longer for us as we had to write up our expedition reports – paperwork everywhere in life! But we also had a treat. We were able to climb Mount Kinabalu (4101m). About 4.5 hours to the Laban Rata hut, where we watched the sunset, then up at two the next morning for the summit, a cold wait for sunrise, but boy was it worth it! What a view and what a spectacular mountain, lovely rocky scramble at the top! What an end to expedition. That and our first beer in three months! We had our own staff party, a mellow beach party, before setting off on our travels.

The whole experience was fantastic. I've got something out of my system, learnt a lot about myself, about teamwork and leadership and the use of outdoor skills in a totally new environment and stepped off the treadmill we all live on. I took the opportunity to travel for several months around south east Asia, particularly Thailand, Cambodia, Mayanmar and Laos.

Now I'm back home. I'd like to say I came back to enjoy the English summer but it's been a washout! All in all, I can thoroughly advocate the benefits of a career break, particularly to undertake something as worthwhile as this – utilising your mountain rescue team skills and helping others.

Well I did it, there's no reason why you can't too!!!

Background on Sabah

Sabah is in Eastern Malaysia, forming, along with Sarawak, Malaysian Borneo. South is Kalimantan, the Indonesian part of the island. Sabah is Malaysia's second largest state covering 72,000 km² – the size of Ireland.

Thirty tribes speak at least fifty different languages. The official language is Bahasa Malay.

The main sources of revenue are crude oil and timber.

Agriculture is the livelihood for most of the population, at subsistence level. It is Malaysia's poorest state with a significant proportion below the poverty line.

About Raleigh

Raleigh International is a leading youth charity with over 20 years' experience running expeditions, currently in Ghana, Namibia, Chile, Malaysia, Costa Rica/ Nicaragua. Their profile was raised through a documentary on Prince William, who spent his gap year with them on expedition to Chile.

Their aim is 'to give young people from all over the world the opportunity to learn about themselves, to understand and appreciate different cultures and global development issues. This is achieved by a 10 week expedition of challenging, sustainable and high quality projects; bringing together as diverse a group of people of different nationalities, cultures and backgrounds as possible.'

There is the challenge of living and working in a completely new environment in a remote part of the world, discovering different cultures and outlooks, expanding understanding of yourself and other people.

Projects are all planned in partnership with host country government ministries and local organisations to ensure they make a positive, long lasting and sustainable contribution to local communities and the environment.

The venturer's are 17-24 and fundraise for their place. They come from the UK and other English speaking nations, the host country and youth development programmes.

There are 9 projects – 3 environmental, 3 trekking and 3 community. Groups of 10-12 go out with 2 project staff to each of these sites. In all, the venturers get a taste of each of these aspects, as they change around every 3 weeks. Project staff, therefore, have a dual responsibility, the physical completion of the project and facilitating the development of the group. There are 30 staff in all, project staff and a field based group to support the whole expedition. These are made up of deputy expedition leader, admin, accountant, PR, photographer, artist, drivers and a logistics team.



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WINTER NAVIGATION

Andrew Bateman on winter in the mountains

The rewards and challenges of the winter mountains are both unrivalled and unique. For many it's to see them at their finest but, of course, there are pitfalls. Andrew Bateman from Mountain Innovations guides us around some of them.

The Gear

● Invest in a pair of **ski goggles** – without them winter navigation can be purgatory. A 40mph wind can transport very large quantities of snow yet, every winter, winds well exceed this speed in the British mountains. Adequate eye protection (sunglasses aren't) is an absolute must.



Photo: Paul Tomkins. Visit Scotland

● Avoid **head torch bulbs** that produce a 'yellow' light, as orange contour lines tend to 'disappear'.

● A pair of **trekking poles** can be useful in strong winds or soft snow but don't allow their use to prevent you from employing appropriate navigational techniques or, for that matter, your ice axe. If the compass is in use and you're frequently referring to the map etc, then your poles are best stowed away.

● **Compass** features to go for are:-

1. An adequately sized transparent base plate (10cm plus in length)
2. A magnifying glass for examining contour detail
3. Romer scales to help minimise mental arithmetic.

There are a good number of poorly designed compasses out there on sale. Choose yours carefully. **Don't compromise your needle** either. Live wires (in storage), ice axes and trekking poles with steel components, cameras, mobile phones, etc – and, surprisingly, under-wired bras – can all effect the needle if brought too close.

1:50 000 or 1:25 000 – what scale is it to be?

● A 1:50 000 map has twice as many grid northings as a 1:25 000 (2 cm & 4 cm spacing respectively) making it much easier to find an

appropriately positioned grid northing when taking a bearing. With a 1:25 000 map in bad conditions the lack of northings can be an irritation when trying to take some N-S bearings. This problem is exacerbated by compasses with small base plates.

● The wealth of **terrain information** – loose rock, outcrops, heath, etc – on some 1:25 000 scale maps tends to obscure the contour lines. In winter this extra surface information is often irrelevant as it's buried.

● There is a certain amount of simplification of the **contour lines** on the 1:50 000 scale. For instance if you compare the OS 1:25 000 and 1:50 000 maps you will see the fine re-entrant at NH 994 066 (Cairngorms) is missing on the 1:50 000 scale. The same goes for many small water features, they're all shown on the 1:25 000 but not on the 1:50 000. This lack of fine detail in fact acts in favour of the 1:50 000 scale acting as it does to filter out the those minor features whose presence is likely to be obliterated by snow.

Your map should be weather-proof, easily accessible and instantly usable as good winter navigation involves frequent reference to the map. Don't rely on your grasp to retain your map nor on having the opportunity to refold or unfold it on the mountain. Over the years I have found countless maps on the Cairngorm Plateau. They're easily lost in high winds and spares can quickly go the same way, so do secure your map. A map case is a good way of doing this but don't end up with a 'sail' that flaps irritatingly around your neck. It'll probably end up in the rucksack. Ideally, your map and case should be stowed in a jacket pocket so keep their bulk to a minimum to aid this. When choosing a map case it will be a play-off between minimising bulk but having one that's big enough to display the whole days route on one side.

By opting for the combination of a 1:50 000 map and an **A5 sized map case** (referred to as a 'document wallet') you'll find the map **far more manageable in high winds**. An adequate area of the map is displayed but is small enough to conveniently fit in a large pocket.

Keep mental arithmetic to an absolute minimum.

You can do this in 3 ways:-

- Use **romer scales**
 - Use a **time-pace matrix** with pre-calculated times and double pace figures
 - Use some method to count paces.
- It's surprisingly difficult to keep count when

counting large numbers and easy to forget when you're interrupted. A hand held **tally counter** removes the need to count all together and provides you with an instant record of what you have done.

Doing these things will save you time and avoid the rest of your party getting cold. Virtually everyone is slower at mental arithmetic when exposed to harsh weather.

The Route Planning

● You may well have to opt for **less ambitious objectives**:-

1. The available daylight is less
2. the conditions, the wearing of crampons and the carrying of a heavier pack makes the pace slower.
3. You will invariably have to make more stops to check the route, put crampons on and off etc.
4. The route you take may have to be less direct to take in more and better defined way-points.

● **Body Conditioning** – your brain is your most important navigational 'tool' so plan **regular short breaks** to keep it well nourished with food and drink. I find 80 mins of walking followed by a 10 minute break generally works well. A stop of this length is quickly used up adjusting clothing, eating, drinking, etc, but more than this and folks are starting to quickly chill. If you're cold, stop and do something about it. Don't wait for the next ascent to warm you up. A resultant lack of resolve to make sure things are right may lead to a navigational error that leads to a much greater delay.



Photo: Paul Tomkins. Visit Scotland

The Navigation

● **Visibility**

In flat light of white-out conditions visibility is frequently not as bad as it appears. You and your party are often the only things to stand out so get them involved in establishing the lie of the land. Send them out to the four points of the compass (all within visibility of course). On a number of occasions I've been unable to make out whether the ground is rising or falling in front of me but as soon as a party member walks away they start to 'levitate'!! If you lack bodies use rucksacks.

A structured approach. As mountain navigators we ultimately want to determine distance and direction. If we get these two right then we'll get to our objective. You can go a long way to determining them both through relating the map contours to the lie-of-the-land ie. determining **gradient, slope aspect and contour features** like saddles, ridges, re-entrants etc. On top of this you have your **compass bearings** to confirm direction and **timing and paces** to confirm distance. These latter three techniques are easily affected by winter conditions though, so they shouldn't be solely relied upon. In white-out conditions it's of vital importance that you avoid the temptation to just stick with these three techniques and give up on trying to monitor the lie-of-the-land.

If you monitor all five during any navigational leg you shouldn't go wrong – the moral being don't ignore the contour lines.

● Water features

Be wary about navigating to water features in winter. Stream channels are often completely filled in with snow leaving no surface indication of their presence. Shallow lochans, lakes and ponds readily freeze solid and won't sink when loaded by further snowdrifts leaving us without even the luxury of flat surface. The shallow margins of deeper bodies of water can behave similarly thereby reducing their apparent size. Some lakes freeze over and the remaining water drains out. The unsupported ice, which may be buried by snow, then warps and takes on the form of the undulating lake bed.

Be tactical – play safe – minimise the effect of error.

A 10% error in distance or direction over 500m is a quarter of that over 2km so in winter aim to keep your legs to below 1km.

● Learn to recognise and identify as many localised contour features as possible. The more of these you can identify, the more waypoints you have and hence the shorter your legs can be.

● Make sure you catch features to their full advantage.

● Play safe by making use of attack points, collection features and the technique of aiming off where appropriate.

And finally...

Check your bearings etc, before you walk on them – even the best sometimes make mistakes.

If you want to discover more, check out Mountain Innovations 2 day Advanced Winter Navigation Course by requesting a full brochure from or going to our website:-



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TAKEN FOR GRANTED?

Paul Curtis on motivation, leadership and reinventing the wheel

It's 3am. You can barely see the torchlight in front of you. Arctic winds sting your face as you dig your boots in, scrabble and slide to get a grip in the frozen snow. To your right is a blurred figure, beyond him the rest of the team fight to keep up momentum. Spindrift fills your pockets, finds its way in to every nook and cranny as you fiddle with the radio, try to regain comms with control.

You're exhausted, your body aches. For every step forward, you slip back further. You fight the urge to sit down, curl up, hope it's all over by the morning.

Checking your position on the map, you take a moment to catch your breath, look for somewhere that you can escape the storm. But there's nowhere. Everything is buried thigh deep in powder. It clings to your boots, your trousers, weighs you down.

'David's fallen and busted his knee!' The figure shouts, the words barely audible above the howling gale. 'We can't carry on like this – what are we going to do?'

You look back, need to make a decision, exhaustion consuming your brain.

Come on think!

The others are relying on you. The threat of hypothermia is closing in. Your mind is wandering. Maybe it's a hoax, maybe you're up there on a wild goose chase, another dangerous prank? It's probably your wedding anniversary, the kids' birthday, the romantic night in you've been promising for months...

You screw your eyes up, try to focus. There's another buttress that needs to be cleared, the north gully in your search area has not even been touched.

Despite everything, just one word hits you – Why?

And that's the point. If you can't answer that about yourself, how do you expect to understand why the rest of the team are stood beside you – knee deep in the worst the weather can throw, trading hours of beauty sleep to be on the hill, searching, potentially putting their lives at risk?

They're probably looking to you for support, encouragement, the motivation to keep going, to get on with the job you've been tasked to do. You don't need to be the party leader to feel the pressure. The success of the team relies on each and every one of you – medic, communications, navigator, climber – it doesn't matter, you're there, relied upon, relying on others.

Do you believe you can make the difference?

The ingredients of a successful team are no different on the hill than in any other walk of life. Every member is unique, has skills that they can contribute. They need to work to a shared objective, a goal, need to be motivated, believe in what they are doing. They need to be able to influence decisions, share in the planning process, feel that they are participating at every level, have a sense of belonging, an identity.

You know that, its old news – but now

you're tired and under pressure. You're trying to cope with the situation around you, pushing yourself physically, mentally, in the worst of conditions. You need to be strong, a 'leader'. Without it, your team is nothing more than a group of individuals, clinging desperately in the darkness to the north escarpment of the mountain.

Without a sense of purpose, you lack direction.

Without direction, the chances of achieving your objectives are remote.

That's your job, your speciality, and somebody's life may just be depending on it!

Despite popular myth, leaders are made, not born. They learn their skills, practice them, hone them with experience. They make a point of understanding others, what motivates them, drives them on. They look for qualities, strengths, ways to develop the natural abilities of every individual.

You don't need a PhD in abseiling to be a good hill leader – you need respect, the trust and support of the group. You can always try to adopt a more dictatorial role, stamp your feet when people won't do what you say. But it won't last. Before long, they'll start avoiding you, cross the room when you walk in.

A successful team shares responsibility, involves the individual, de-emphasises the importance of one person's position and power in favour of the collective. It works smoothly, motivates, understands the reason for its existence. Tasks are shared by the group. The leader's function is to ensure that communication and direction is maintained at all times.

The leader is mediator, counsellor, parent. These are not unique qualities. Every one of us has got them.

It's whether we choose to use them that makes the difference.

Six Steps to Motivating Small Teams

1 Understand your team's objective

As the party leader this is essential. The rest of the team will be looking to you for direction. Make sure you give them a thorough brief, and explain the importance of the team's efforts. If you don't fully understand what is expected of you, how can you expect the rest of the team to?

2 Match the objective to the abilities of the group

The team will only be successful if it has the necessary tools and expertise to achieve the objective. You need to make sure the team has a balance of skills, experience, and personalities to get it to work to its full potential. There is nothing more demoralising to a team than to believe it will be unsuccessful before it has even started.

3 Get everybody involved

Everybody needs to feel that their contribution to the team is important. Delegate as many tasks to other members as is practical, assign specialist duties to those with the necessary knowledge – medic, navigator, comms etc – and get everybody involved in the planning and preparation stages. That way each person becomes a 'player' rather than a 'follower' and will feel more accountable to the rest of the team for that involvement.

4 Listen to the others

Sometimes this can be one of the hardest things to do when you're under pressure. You're trying to juggle half a dozen things at the same time, you need to concentrate, and then somebody hits you with something completely petty and irrelevant. You've got better things to do, right? Take heed and listen – maybe you've missed something important whilst your mind has been elsewhere. They might just have saved you from making a terrible mistake.

5 Appraise and reward

When debriefing your team, make sure you examine the things that went well, as well as the things that went wrong. Catch people doing things right, and make sure they are recognised and rewarded for it. A few words cost nothing – but will make all the difference. Remember the team may have been successful in achieving its objective, but may not have found the misper. If you have managed to clear your search area with a high POD but not found your subject, then your team has achieved the task set for it. Make sure they feel as if they've done well.

6 Learn, learn, learn...

It won't go right all the time. Don't be scared of making mistakes, but ensure that you learn from them, and listen to constructive criticism from the rest of the team. Take time to learn about your colleagues – their likes and dislikes, their abilities and limits, what makes them tick. And if you feel your skills as a leader are rusty, or not getting the desired results, don't forget large tracts of rainforest have been sacrificed to publish books on *Leadership and Management Techniques* – so why try reinventing the wheel? Take advantage of other's experience.

Managing the personal effects of dealing with trauma

Dr Christine MacFie has been employed by Sussex police since 1991 and is currently Head of its Health, Safety and Welfare Unit. She achieved her PhD in 2003, following five years part time funded research into trauma management within the police service. Christine was one of the speakers at the UK Mountain Rescue Conference 2004 in Bangor.

Emergency service workers

Members of the emergency services, including associated voluntary organisations such as the UK mountain rescue service are expected to provide practical and moral support to members of the public when traumatic events happen. It is essential, therefore, to recognise the possible personal effects of those events on individuals and teams, as a direct result of their involvement in dealing with trauma.

What do we mean by trauma?

A traumatic incident may range in size from a major incident affecting a large number of people to a very small event involving just a few individuals. However, the relative size of the incident is not necessarily the most crucial factor. What matters more is the severity of that incident and the degree of distress that it may cause to victims, witnesses and helpers.

Traumatic or 'critical' incidents usually involve:–

- loss of life
- belief that loss of life was inevitable
- serious injury

They may provoke one or more of the following reactions amongst those involved in a helping capacity:–

- a sense of powerlessness
- intense fear – for one's own safety, that of colleagues or for members of the public
- guilt – about one's own actions, professional judgement or personal feelings during the incident
- personal association with the event – where victims bear a physical resemblance to one's loved ones or there is some other personal reminder that is painful or unsettling.

Reactions to traumatic incidents

After a distressing incident some people may experience a range of perfectly normal reactions immediately or shortly afterwards, which may last for several days but which usually fade over time. These can include:–

- Disturbed sleep patterns – difficulty getting to sleep, broken sleep or waking very early; sleeping really heavily and waking unrefreshed; insomnia ie. being unable to sleep at all.
- Dreaming about the incident or parts of it – nightmares and night sweats, where a person will be confused on waking and may be bathed in sweat. People often cry out in their sleep. They may well have no recollection on awakening, of the reasons for their physical reactions and state of anxiety.
- Feeling lethargic – heavy and listless during the day.
- Being 'on edge' – termed 'hyper alert', meaning a person jumps at the slightest sound or experiences that seem to be louder and more penetrating than normal.
- Avoiding things associated with the incident. This can include not wanting to talk about it, avoiding group conversation about it or avoiding the place or road where it took place.
- Feeling a great need to talk about what has happened – and being drawn to the place where it took place, in order to 'get used to it' in one's mind.
- Feeling guilty, perhaps a sense of failure; not able to help enough – especially common where a person is first on the scene, or resuscitation attempts are unsuccessful.
- Experiencing a sense of shame. This goes to the heart of what people think of themselves, whereas guilt involves worries about what other people think of them. When adults experience this it can be very difficult to talk about.
- Feeling an overwhelming sense of helplessness – often leads to feelings of guilt or shame.

- Loss of affect – no feelings at all, just a sense of being 'shut down' and numb. This can affect a person's appetite or their sex drive and can have an adverse affect on personal and work relationships.
- Having a sense of doom, or foreboding. This can be an overwhelming feeling that can cause acute anxiety. Individuals may fear for their own safety or for that of their loved ones, or they might dwell on what might happen to their loved ones in the event of their untimely death.
- Feeling irritable, tense, nervous or tearful. Any of us are likely to experience these sensations sometimes but if experienced more intensely than usual and they do not go away after a few days, they are a matter for concern.
- Increased need for alcohol or nicotine. This is common in the very short term but if a person continues to smoke much more heavily than usual, or feels they must have alcohol to be able to cope with life, this may indicate that help is needed.
- Experiencing flashbacks. An intrusive re-experiencing of the event in part or fully. This can involve one or more of the senses including sights, smells and sounds. These can be frightening experiences that differ from ordinary memories or daydreams, in that they are outside the person's control and can be triggered at any time.

Looking after yourself

Drawing on the support and understanding of family, friends and team colleagues can be extremely helpful in the process of coming to terms with the negative personal effects of trauma. Continuing with recreational activities and eating a balanced diet can also help to restore a sense of normality, well being and enjoyment of life.

Where intrusive and painful thoughts and feelings continue, or worsen over the weeks that follow a traumatic event, it is important to seek help. This is because a person affected in this way runs a greater risk of developing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. This is a recognised medical condition that can have a number of adverse effects on a person's well being and on his or her family and work relationships and will need specialist support.

Post-incident support meetings

If your team has access to trauma management support from any of the emergency services with which you work, for example post-incident support meetings (otherwise known as called critical incident debriefing), please consider taking advantage of these facilities. Such meetings involve a timely, facilitated, confidential discussion focussed on the traumatic event that has taken place.

They can be particularly valuable for teams to help their members:–

- fully understand what has happened because each participant is able to tell their part of the story
- 'normalise' their feelings about what they have experienced, through the process of sharing and listening that takes place
- be given reassurance about normal post-trauma reactions and coping mechanisms
- receive information about support that they can draw on, both within and outside of the work place.

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BEN'S FIRE ON BARROW

Ben Soffe on one of his first call outs as a probationary member with the Keswick team

Eight o' clock, Thursday morning. I pull myself out of bed, the same as every other morning. After a wash I draw back the curtains in the living room. The view covers the northern end of Derwentwater and Keswick, Catbells, Causey Pike and Barrow Fell. Instantly my eyes are drawn to Barrow Fell where fire and smoke can clearly be seen on the eastern slopes. Must be controlled burning, I subconsciously tell myself. Over breakfast and on the short walk across to work with my housemates, we try to convince ourselves that what we see is nothing more than a controlled burn.



After less than fifteen minutes at work, my team pager starts up its merry tune. I look down at the display. 'Call to assist Fire Service/National Trust - fire on Barrow'. I take a deep breath and sigh an 'okay' to myself! I seek permission from my manager to leave work and then set off to jog the short distance down to the mountain rescue base.

Already, team members are loading up one of the team Land Rovers with radios and drinking water. A National Trust van arrives and delivers a load of fire beaters and shovels. We set to work strapping these to the roof. Six team members are here now and we head off towards the plume of smoke.

As we arrive at the foot of the eastern side of Barrow, it is all very eerie. Fire engines are parked up either side of the narrow country road and all along the verges sit the fire-fighters, stripped down to their T-shirts with steam rising from their bodies. They have obviously been hard at it. We park up and find the senior fire officer. He informs us that everyone is being withdrawn from the fell. The wind is too strong and it is pushing the flames higher and higher.

We are soon joined by National Trust and National Park workers who, alongside the Fire Service, have been doing the best they can. But they, too, have retreated. A liaison panel is soon set up comprising the senior fire officer, several National Trust staff and our

team leader. We are soon giving fire-fighters and their equipment rides around the fell in our Land Rovers in order to save their energies and allow them to gauge the extent of the fire.

We had called our friends in Cockermouth MRT to assist. As they arrive, we are given the go ahead to go on to the fell to begin fighting the fire. We climb up the Stonycroft Gill track in Land Rovers. I feel very nervous as we get a close view, on the way, of what we will be up against. We soon begin our charge towards the fire, armed with our beaters. The fire officer looks on nervously.

Heather and gorse fires tend to burn in lines around five to six feet in depth. Our line is running all the way around the fell, almost like a crown. Our first task is to concentrate all efforts into one section to break that line. Once the line is opened up and we have two ends, we can split ourselves into two teams and chase the line around the fell side, beating out the fire as we proceed. We form ourselves into a single file facing the fire, each person attacking the fire immediately in front of us, with the drop and dragging action of our beaters. Then, when each section is out, we move behind everyone else at the front to face a fresh piece of fire. This happens all day long as we inch our way along the hillside.

Often we have to leave somebody behind to guard a section that has been extinguished to prevent it from flaring up again. Soon our advance

party is down to six people. For a while, we fight the fire hard in a corner on the west side. Each time we put the fire out, the wind drives the flames back up. We draw imaginary lines that we will defend to prevent the fire from crossing and each time we get forced back by smoke and heat. We call for reinforcements over the radio but none are forthcoming. The same situation is being repeated all over the fell with Fire Service personnel, National Trust Wardens, National Park Rangers and two MR teams, all working hard together.

As news comes over the radio that food and drink is on its way to us, we eventually win our corner. At this point we all sit down and drop our beaters to the ground. We say nothing - all too exhausted to talk. I don't think I have ever been as exhausted as at that moment. It was 7.30pm. We'd originally been paged to the fire at around 10.30am.

Everybody's thoughts started turning to going home, having warm baths, hot food and rest. We wearily crawled our way down to a team Land Rover, discussing who had enough energy left to drive us home safely. Once in the Land Rover we heard, over the radio, that some of our team members needed help over on the Stonycroft Gill side. Their fight had not gone as well as ours and they were attempting to use an old mining track as a fire break to prevent further spread. They needed help to patrol this line and to set up some back burning. All thoughts of tiredness and sleep disappeared as we went to the aid of our friends. I think I got to sleep around six o'clock the next morning and it took four washes to get the smell of smoke out of my clothes.

Keswick MRT's presence remained at the Barrow fire for around three days after the initial outbreak assisting the National Trust and Fire Service in damping down hotspots and dealing with any further flare-ups. Many acres of National Trust land were scorched, with the loss of animal life and large areas of rare heather.

As one of the busiest rescue teams in the country, Keswick MRT responds to around seventy callouts each year, covering over four hundred

square kilometres of wild and mountainous country including three of the highest mountains in England and one third of the tops mentioned in Wainwright's Guides. The team's work is extremely varied. Increasingly, it is called upon for help by other agencies such as the Fire Service and Ambulance Service, on top of all the usual mountain activities such as searching for missing persons, rescuing fallen climbers and recovering walkers with lower leg injuries. Find out more about the team, including an up to date incident report, by visiting www.keswickmrt.org.uk



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The 5S™'s Multi-Climate Use

An indispensable survival tool in emergencies when displaying the high visibility panel uppermost, the 5S™ is equally useful for non-emergency, daily use. With the high visibility panel reversed, the 5S™ can be used to provide overhead SHELTER from sun, snow and rain. Folded and zipped, the shelter creates a SLEEPING SYSTEM for use when temperatures drop at night, and is reversible for high visibility.

The 5S™'s Shelter & Signalling Systems



In an emergency the SLEEPING SYSTEM, fully unzipped and displaying the yellow high visibility material uppermost, can be used as a combined SHELTER and SIGNALLING SYSTEM. The yellow material will enable rescue teams to find your location more easily while at the same time provide you with shelter from the elements. The Signalling panel also incorporates a reflective 3M band to further assist rescuers working a night with search lamps. (See figs above.)
 (The yellow material should only be used uppermost in cases of emergency requiring rescue.)

The 5S™'s Sleeping System



The 5S™ can be used in any environment as a regular sleeping bag. The SLEEPING SYSTEM's waterproof bag and integrated hood offer protection from the elements. In emergencies the sleeping bag's reversible, high visibility material acts as a rescue or distress signal. (See figs above.)

The 5S™'s Stretcher System



In an emergency the 5S™ can be used as an improvised STRETCHER SYSTEM. Using the 5S™ in SLEEPING SYSTEM mode, the casualty can be placed either on top of, or inside, the bag and by using the integrated carry handles, or by sliding poles or strong branches through the carry handle loops, can be lifted and evacuated. NB: If the casualty is placed inside the bag, they can be protected from the elements. (See figs above.)

Additional Improvised Survival Use of the 5S™

In a survival situation, the 5S™ can be used as a 'water catchment' by opening the SLEEPING SYSTEM into SURVIVAL SHELTER mode, and securing the corners of the 5S™ to strong points (rocks, branches, cord) in order to collect rain water to purify and drink.

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Lifetime of personal equipment – a difficult question?

Paul Witheridge takes a look at personal fall protection equipment

With rescue teams becoming increasingly aware of issues regarding the quality, operation and safe use of equipment, we are finding more and more teams questioning how long equipment is expected to last.

In the past comments such as 'use it until even you wouldn't want it for free' were common, if not entirely accurate! Nowadays users are far more aware that even the most expensive and exotic equipment does not survive forever.

The question of 'how long to use a piece of gear' is difficult to answer definitively because of the different types of wear and tear to which each type of equipment is subjected.

Legally, as unpaid volunteers, teams are not obliged to follow health and safety legislation as it applies to industry. However, laws brought in to increase safety at work have had a direct result on equipment design, production quality and testing and are an excellent point of reference. They form the basis of some of the following recommendations.

The EC Directive on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) states that if any PPE has a date beyond which it should not be used this must be covered in the product information accompanying the goods. When such a date is given on equipment, teams must abide by it. Failure to do so would leave the team in a difficult position should the equipment subsequently fail. Remember that we all have a duty of care even if not at work!

But what about equipment that is within its manufacturer's lifetime or has not got a stated life? What do we do then?

Personal equipment used by rescue teams can be loosely divided into textile products (harnesses, lanyards, ropes, slings etc) and metal products (usually steel or aluminium alloy). The metal products can be further split into those with or without parts that may be subjected to wear. So, what is the life of textile products and suchlike?

The goods in question are normally manufactured from manmade materials such as polyamide (nylon) or polyester. Manufacturers of these materials are reluctant to give an obsolescence date for their products, because this is just the raw material for processing and making up into finished products. This processing could affect the yarn.

Clearly textile components do wear out, and are affected by a number of ageing processes so they will become obsolescent. In practice the real life of the product is a result of the combination of age, conditions of use and storage. Manufacturers of personal fall protection equipment are required to give an obsolescence date. This will inevitably be arbitrary and has to err on the side of caution.

If the products are kept from new in cool, dark, dry, oxygen free, chemically neutral environment they will have a shelf life of at least ten years. If they are kept in normal air in a cool dark room some deterioration is possible, hence some manufacturers give a cautionary 5-year shelf life. However, it can be said that some rope manufacturers have tested ropes stored for considerably longer, and that the ropes were still above standard requirements.

Once a rope or harness is put into use, its life will be subject to many factors. A

heavy fall, abuse, stitching damage, knotting lanyards or slings, heat or abrasion against a hard surface could quite easily render the product obsolete on its first use. Extended exposure to UV light, attack by chemical agents, continued abrasion, dirt, grit, repeated normal 'climbing' falls (for dynamic rope and harnesses only), general wear and tear etc. will lead to ageing of the product, and its active life is unlikely to extend to five years.

As a practical rule – the life of a rope or harness may be taken to start at the time of purchase (assuming proper storage by retailers). The storage life of the item away from heat, light etc is, on the side of caution, five years. The subsequent active life of the item may be as low as a single use, or could stretch another five years.

However it is important to read and follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully and the following information relates to Petzl, Beal and Lyon Equipment respectively, which may be taken as the official view of Petzl, Beal, and Lyon Equipment.

Petzl

Petzl give a lifetime of ten years for all metal and textile products. Why ten years? Simply, because they need to place a limit on their materials and they need to take into account the fact that some materials may become obsolete.

Also the development of new manufacturing techniques, of new methods and techniques of use, whilst retaining the compatibility of products with other products, requires a replacement every ten years.

This lifetime depends on the intensity, the frequency of use and the environment where the product is used. It is important to note the following:-

1. In exceptional circumstances, wear or damage could occur on the first use that reduces the lifetime of the product to that one single use.

2. Certain environmental elements will considerably accelerate wear – salt, sand, snow, ice, moisture, chemicals, etc (List not exhaustive).

However, for sewn slings, lanyards and energy absorbers, because of their vulnerability to wear and frequent contact with abrasive and/or cutting surfaces (eg. anchors), Petzl qualify their statement further and say for these products their average lifetime is six months intensive use, twelve months normal use, ten years maximum for occasional use.

Beal

Average lifetime

* Intensive use: 3 months to 1 year

* Weekly use: 2 to 3 years

* Occasional use: 4 to 5 years

* Very occasional use: 10 years maximum

The cumulative storage and use periods should in no case exceed ten years.

Lyon Equipment

It is very difficult to be precise but a conservative estimate for the lifetime of personal fall protection equipment of equipment would be five years. However, please note that factors such as the following will reduce the safe working life – normal wear and tear, damage to component parts, exposure to chemical reagents, elevated temperature, prolonged exposure to UV radiation including sunlight,

abrasion, cuts, high impact load, failure to maintain as recommended.

If it is intended to store the equipment unused for an extended period (say five years or more) it is recommended that it should be sealed in a non-oxidising inert gas environment, eg. nitrogen.

So, what about metallic products etc? Unlike man-made fibres, metal products do not significantly change their chemical composition over time. With careful use and correct storage and maintenance the strength of non-moving parts will not greatly decrease with time. Certain mechanisms will be prone to wear though, and this wear will eventually reach a point that will weaken or affect the performance of the device.

An important consideration is the effect of sharp blows to metal items, such as would be delivered by a fall onto a hard surface. This may produce internal weaknesses which are not visible and which could only be detected by X-ray examination. The life of such items can therefore only be determined by the user, with reference to external signs such as visible corrosion and the log of usage of the item in question.

On a more practical note, in addition to obvious signs of damage we would suggest the following indications would signify the end of the life of an item. The examples below are only a selection of the types of personal fall protection equipment.

All items – any fall onto a hard surface

Karabiners – excessive sideways movement in gate hinge, visible grooving of the body.

Descenders – grooved capstan – to be replaced, weakened springs.

Ascenders worn teeth, excessive play at cam hinge, more than 0.5mm wear on rope bearing surface i.e. surface of groove onto which cam presses rope.

Pulleys – obvious play at spindle

Anchors – worn or corroded bolt threads

Please note this list is not exhaustive. Petzl's maximum lifetime for its products of ten years also applies to metallic products.

In conclusion then, are we closer to defining lifetime on the equipment we use?

We certainly have more information to hand than ever before. What teams must remember is that a thorough inspection regime using experienced and competent team members, including logs of purchase dates and use of items are the basis of any effective equipment maintenance system. Products can be ruined in a split second and the consequences of not noticing can be dire!

The Petzl inspection CD is a useful tool for both training and record keeping and a number of equipment suppliers also provide training in the inspection and management of PPE. Courses such as these are to be recommended for key personnel.

Further reading

Refer to the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) documents

Inspecting fall arrest equipment made from webbing or rope INDG367 published 09/02

Issues surrounding the failure of an energy absorbing lanyard SIR59 HSE Books 2001 ISBN 0 7176 2256 8

Assessment of factors that influence the tensile strength of safety harness and lanyard webbings HSL/2002/16

These can be download from the HSE's website www.hse.gov.uk

Petzl PPE inspection CD. Available from Petzl or Lyon Equipment.

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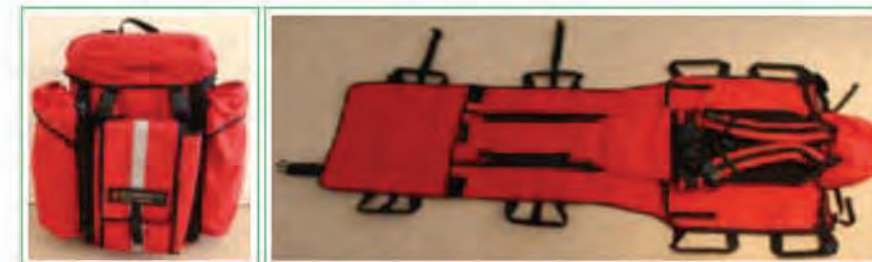
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