

Mountain and Cave Rescue

in England and Wales

Review of The Year

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Foreword HRH The Duke of Cambridge



Main shot: Swaledale vehicles at work © Swaledale MRT. Top: HRH The Duke of Cambridge courtesy of Kensington Palace.



KENSINGTON PALACE

As Patron of Mountain Rescue England and Wales and as a former RAF Search and Rescue pilot, I have been privileged to witness, first-hand, the invaluable work of mountain rescue volunteers – on our mountains and in our communities. The crucial part played by mountain rescue volunteers in responding to crises is increasingly recognised, along with the specialist expertise they bring to challenging situations.

This year, teams are working closely with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and Bristow Helicopters to develop the new helicopter search and rescue service. With this comes new opportunities, but also additional training and time commitments – and so we are ever more grateful for the dedication of the volunteers, who already do so much.

Along with its steadfast volunteers, mountain rescue also relies on the organisations and individuals who so generously support the cause. Without them, mountain rescue would not be possible and I am grateful to everyone who continues to sustain its vital work.

Fel Noddwr Achub Mynydd Cymru a Lloegr, ac fel cyn-beilot Chwilio ac Achub yr Awyrlu Brenhinol, cefais y faint o weld, â’m llygaid fy hun, waith hynod werthfawr gwirfoddolwyr achub mynydd – ar ein mynyddoedd ac yn ein cymdogaethau. Cydnabyddir fwylwy'r rhan allweddol a chwaraeir gan gwirfoddolwyr achub mynydd mewn ymateb i argyfyngau, ynghyd â'r wybodaeth arbenigol sydd ganddyt mewn sefyllfaedd heriol.

Eleni, gweithia timau'n agos gydag Asiantaeth y Môr a Gwylwyr y Glannau a *Bristow Helicopters* i ddathlygu'r gwasanaeth chwilio ac achub newydd â hofrenyddion. Daw hyn â chyfleoedd newydd, ond hefyd ag ymrwymiadau ychwanegol o ran hyfforddi ac amser – ac felly'r ydym yn fwylwy ddiolchgar am ymroddiad y gwirfoddolwyr, sydd eisoes yn gwneud cymaint.

Yn ogystal â'i gwirfoddolwyr dygn, dibynna achub mynydd hefyd ar y sefydliadau ac unigolion sydd mor hael eu cefnogaeth iddo. Hebddynt hwy, ni fyddai achub mynydd yn bosibl, ac 'rwyf yn ddiolchgar i bawb sy'n parhau i gynnal ei waith hanfodol.

04



Requests for assistance from mountain and cave rescue continue to rise. And financial constraints on statutory services mean that supporting the Ambulance Service during winter months has become the 'norm' for many teams. Despite the reduction in police air support and the loss of the immediate search facility, for people lost or injured in the moorlands and mountains, or despondents missing in urban areas of England and Wales, mountain rescue will always be there for them.

Being a totally voluntary organisation is very important to everybody involved in mountain rescue and we all work hard to protect and continue this.

Each member joins to get out on the hill and help fellow walkers and climbers if they get into difficulties. But, at team level, as the organisation changes, as much time can be spent doing administration to run the team and training to maintain skills, as is spent out on the hill.

At national level, many of the management team and specialist officers spend huge chunks of the week doing administration, driving around the country to meetings with government, statutory services and potential funders, just to keep the organisation running. It is becoming clear that, certainly at national level, volunteers are needed for their specific business skills and this could mean that in the future some roles may be undertaken by people without a mountain rescue background.

The organisation is going through a lot of change to satisfy governance stipulations but the main role of search and rescue remains the same.

One of the big changes to be aware of, when out and about in the mountains and moorlands, will be the red and white Bristow helicopters. The excellent service provided by both the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy is

coming to an end and, as from April 2015, search and rescue helicopters for the United Kingdom will be provided by Bristow. Mountain rescue has spent hundreds of hours with an intensive training programme getting up to speed with the new aircraft.

There are many recent changes in all aspects of our work. As recognition of the work carried out by mountain rescue, the Government is offering VAT relief which will be a great help to many teams. The support for training through Libor funding (bankers fines) enables the continuation of training to the high standard expected. To provide the service expected of us, costs both teams and the national body more money than can be raised from 'can rattling'. These offers of support have to be welcomed, even by a voluntary organisation.

The outdoors has become easier to access with better clothing, electronic mapping and apps on mobile phones. However, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that some personal skills are also needed because, no matter how well planned, it can still go wrong. Despite all today's challenges of running a totally voluntary but professional organisation, the free insurance for all is that a mountain rescue team is never far away to come to your assistance.

05



Chairman Mike France

Mountain and Cave Awareness Weekend: This annual event takes place across England and Wales every May Bank Holiday weekend – a great opportunity to get to know and support your local team.

Princes' Charities Forum Day:
26/27 June: This MREW event is hosted by North Wales this year, with young people and families from WellChild, Child Bereavement and Centrepoint charities joining in the fun.

KEY DATES

Main shot: Care amongst the bluebells. Calder Valley team members at Hardcastle Crags © Hanners www.hannraphotography.co.uk.
Inset: Keswick team call-out to Carlside © Keswick MRT.
Top: Getting to know the new helicopters © Simeon Leech.

Front cover: Woodland rescue © Calder Valley SRT.

The Annual Review is designed by Judy Whiteside, written and edited by Judy Whiteside and Sally Seed, with contributions attributed where applicable. Copyright for images belongs to the individual photographer as credited.

This year's facts and figures

The decrease in the four key measures of mountain incidents has continued for a fourth year, although the number of fatalities has risen again – albeit not to the previous high – as has the total of people assisted.

Mountain

Despite the continuing downward trend, however, in the third quarter (July to September) of 2014, the total number of incidents was the highest on record. A mild and settled start to the year produced fewer incidents. Likewise, the end of the year was quiet.

In spite of the annual figure being low, this masks a dramatic spike in the summer months.

The year saw a welcome reduction in mountain bike incidents but these still exceed rock climbing incidents and

scrambling incidents. It seems inevitable that the continuing popularity of mountain biking as a sport will ensure that this number of accidents will be seen for years to come and may well increase.

This year has seen a significant increase in incidents involving fell runners — a 35% increase over the 2013 level which was fairly high in its own right compared to the previous three years. The nature of the sport, being light-weight and solitary, means the level of risk is considerably higher than hill walking.

A summary of the last five years' mountain incidents and accidents in England and Wales.

Year	Incidents	Fatalities	Injured	Persons assisted
2014	1043	29	640	1281
2013	1011	22	624	1179
2012	1073	30	632	1292
2011	1078	33	671	1318
2010	1118	53	658	1394

A summary of the last five years' non-mountain incidents and accidents in England and Wales.

Year	Incidents	Fatalities	Injured	Persons assisted
2014	398	29	87	289
2013	460	43	75	274
2012	445	47	114	300
2011	472	52	108	323
2010	710	44	118	335



Non-mountain

All regions report a large commitment to searching for missing persons. These are often protracted, often over multiple days and all demand good cooperation between the agencies involved.

The support provided by mountain rescue to the ambulance service has been a significant part of the workload in recent years and this year has been no exception.

Many teams report being 'stood down' while responding but would rather this situation than one where they could have contributed significantly but were never alerted.

We can't do any of it without your help...

Mountain and cave rescue, whether it's at team or regional level or nationally, simply couldn't continue as the voluntary service it is, without the generosity of the public and our various sponsors, and the continued support of key manufacturers and suppliers.

Each of our team members gives many hours of their time to help their communities and those in need. They do it without question. They do it voluntarily.

When the pager calls, they're off, often regardless of what they're doing or who they're doing it with. Speak to any child, spouse or workmate of any mountain rescuer and the stories are the same — children's birthdays, anniversary suppers, Christmas dinners, copy deadlines, business meetings... abandoned in an instant.

And they also put in hundreds more hours, tending to rescue kit and team vehicles, making sure the bills are paid and fulfilling paperwork, maintaining readiness for the next shout.

Yet, despite all this, they still need to put in thousands of hours just to raise sufficient funds to keep their teams in operation — collection boxes, raffles, events, personal challenges... even more time away from work and home.

All of this is free of charge to the casualty. And our team members' time is given freely too — and long may that be so. So we'd like to say 'thank you' to all our supporters, sponsors and fundraisers — we couldn't do it without you!

Stay safe, and thank you.

How can you support us?

There are also a number of ways you can support nationally.

Read our books or buy your very own miniature Land Rover.

Or a teddy or a badge, or a car sticker. Whatever takes your fancy. Or [join Basecamp](#) — the simplest way to support all the teams. You can even add a donation with the Platinum, Gold, Silver and Bronze options. For details, go to [mountain.rescue.org.uk/shop](#).

Leave a legacy. A gift to us in your Will allows you to support our future

— even a small gift can make a big difference. And it's the surest way to fund the equipment and training for the years to come as gifts are exempt from inheritance tax, capital gains tax and income tax, so the charity receives the full value of your bequest.

Give securely online through [mountain.rescue.org.uk/giving/online-donations](#).

Organise an event in aid of Mountain Rescue England and Wales or join an existing one and raise

Equipping a team member: the costs

Teams work hard to raise sufficient funds to provide the necessary fit-for-purpose kit for their members, including warm, waterproof clothing, comms equipment, bigger items such as vehicles, and their rescue base buildings. That said, the majority of team members wear and carry a combination of essentials supplied by their team, and their own gear.

Bear in mind that team members must be prepared to be out there for many hours — or may be called to two or three incidents within the same day, often in dreadful conditions.

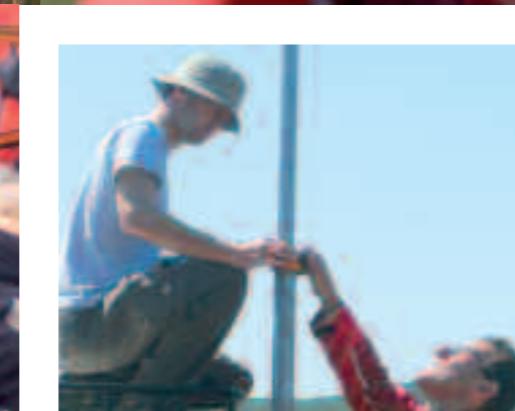
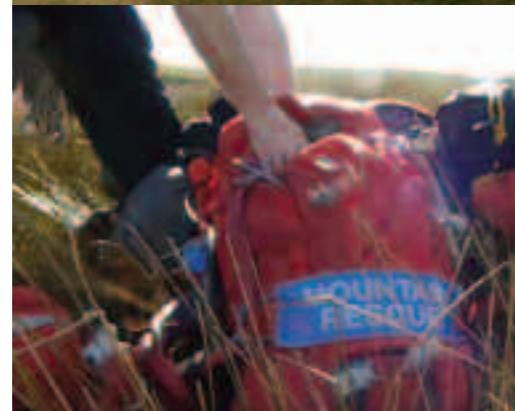
And with the clothing (and spares), the rucksack full of personal first aid kit, maps and compass, torch, headlamp and batteries, notepad and pen, radio, pager and mobile phone, the grand total for each team member is not far shy of £2000 — which we think you'll agree is a huge commitment in personal and team finances.



sponsorship. You'll be providing funds and raising awareness. It might seem daunting but, with lots of enthusiasm, commitment and support, you will find the experience enjoyable and very rewarding.

Watch our new Mountain Rescue Film 15 (YouTube link TO BE ADDED) — then show your support with a donation. Just text RESQ41, followed by the amount you want to give, to 70070. Then share the link. Thank you!

Mountain rescue: the movie



The making of a movie, with film maker Dove Freeborn featured top left. Sills and film clips © Viscom Studios Limited.

Representatives of mountain rescue sit alongside those from BAFTA (the British Academy of Film and Television Arts) at meetings of the Princes' Charities Forum. So it was no surprise that a film about mountain rescue had been a discussion point at those meetings and former chairman, David Allan, was keen to make this happen.

Taking that germ of an idea and creating a useful communication tool took many months of planning and development.

'We knew we needed to keep to a couple of strong but simple messages,' says Judy Whiteside, editor of Mountain Rescue Magazine and one of those involved early in the project.

'We wanted to show real rescuers, reacting to a wide range of realistic situations and we wanted to emphasise that they are all volunteers, on call every day of the year, by showing them being called away from work, family commitments and sleep.'

'Sounds quite simple, but we also wanted to create something that would have a fundraising as well as an educational impact.'

The process kicked off in late 2013, when Dave Freeborn and Judy set about scripting and storyboarding a number of scenarios for the film. A member and ex-team leader of Patterdale MRT, Dave has been involved in mountain rescue for over thirty years. In his 'day-job' he is a professional film and documentary maker and a member of the Institute of Videographers. Along with Judy's creative background as a TV storyboard artist, it was the ideal skill set.

'As creative people who feel as passionately about mountain rescue as our professional lives, this was a great opportunity to produce an emotional, powerful and creative piece of work — and hopefully inspire people to share our passion and donate!' explains Judy.

From their original script, screenwriter Nick Green was able to craft a screenplay. Meanwhile, Dave had started putting together a film schedule and network of partners, including fellow filmmaker and co-director, John Hamlett, to help capture the story.

'We filmed at more than twelve

different locations with various mountain rescue teams,' says Dave. 'The schedule included a huge amount of negotiation and liaison with what seemed like hundreds of people. We wanted to show the changing seasons as well as the broad nature of incidents and environments. In all, there were about twenty days of filming in all weathers — all to create just over six minutes.'

'Some scenes were shot using a drone and we also edited in some actual footage from winter and underground rescues. The music was composed specially for the film by Miles Hancock and the finishing touch came when Broadchurch actor Matthew Gravelle agreed to record the voiceover.'

'It was important that we had the voiceover in both English and Welsh. Welsh-born Matthew was perfect for the part and able to record both versions,' says Judy.

All the team members involved with the filming were incredibly enthusiastic and keen to make this work, despite already volunteering so much of their time to mountain rescue.

'This is the first film of this nature the national body has ever produced, so it was an exciting project to work on,' adds Dave. 'I'm sure it will all prove worth it, and help raise both public awareness'



and much needed cash for mountain rescue nationally. But I also hope it will help us explain the range of what we're trained to do, the skills and expertise we have and how we might be able to use those skills to help in other situations too.'

As this annual review goes to press, the finished film is being seen across the country after its launch on Thursday 2 April, just ahead of Easter.

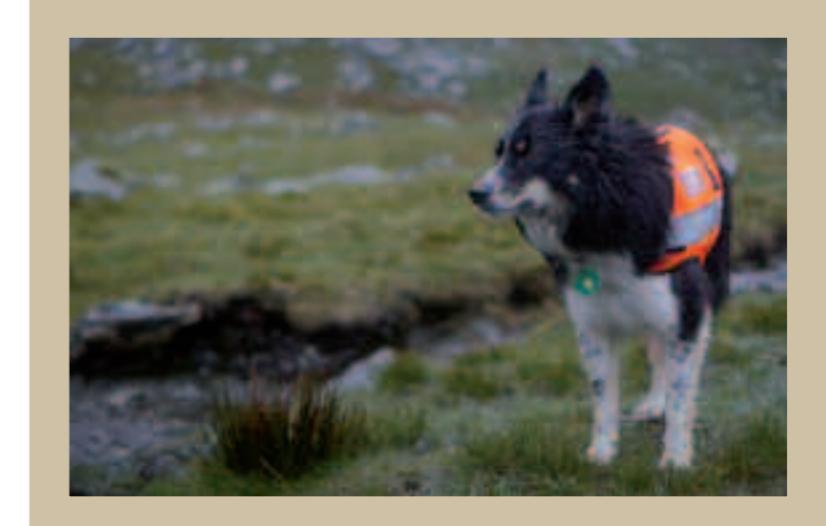
'I think we've created something that will really reinforce the value of our volunteer service and also make it clear that we rely on public support,' says Judy. 'That's what we set out to do from the very beginning of the project and it's going to be exciting watching that message as it spreads in the coming months.'

You can see the finished 'Mountain Rescue Film 15' online at youtube link and it's easy to make a donation.

Just text RESQ41, followed by the amount you want to give, to 70070.

Or donate via our Mountain Rescue Film 15 Appeal page at justgiving.com/mountainrescuefilm15.

And please support us by sharing the link to the film with your friends and family on social media and help to spread the word.



Getting to know the new helicopter



The shape of helicopter rescue is changing. Before long, the 'big yellow budgie' will no longer be a familiar sight to rescuers and their casualties. From April, the service will be operated by Bristow, wearing the distinctive red and white livery of the HM Coastguard. A small group has been working at national level to ensure team members are fully prepared for this brave new world.



Images: Helicopter training © Keswick MRT.

This work has mostly been done with the Maritime Coastguard Agency and Bristow, in conjunction with Scottish Mountain Rescue and the Association of Chief Police Officers. The start of a brand new partnership, with newly-launched aircraft operating out of new locations, was a real opportunity for mountain rescue to review every aspect of helicopter operations – from initial aircraft familiarisation, through staged training to actual rescues.

With the new service due to start in April 2015, phased through to January 2016, time has been of the essence to ensure a structured, national training model was in place and underway, particularly for those teams whose casualties are most likely to require helicopter evacuation by means of stretcher winch.

The agreed model is very similar to the one most teams are already familiar with. Broken down into three clearly-defined stages, it is closely aligned to the different levels of interaction teams have with the military SAR-H aircraft.

Stage 1A, an online resource backed by DVD, introduces team members to the aircraft. Intended for those most likely to operate in close proximity to helicopters, this resource deals with operational hazards such as safety distances, downwash and noise, as well as radio communication with the

aircrew and management of the winch hook.

Stage 1B involves a cabin briefing with the aircraft on the ground. The focus is on those team members most likely to fly during operations and includes familiarisation with the cabin, safety and emergency procedures, and management of the hook and any loads. Team members will be expected to complete this stage of training every two to three years.

Stage 1C focuses on training in winch operations and is intended for those who are likely to be winched into and out of the aircraft.

Training with the Humberside S-92 aircraft is now well underway, further informing the future development of both training provision and working procedures, whilst also developing the vital working relationships with the new Bristow crews.

Working with differently-appointed aircraft has also meant ensuring the stretchers employed by teams across England and Wales are suitable for purpose. A three-month trial is currently underway looking at the options available, including the Tyromont Helicopter Rescue Bag, which winches the casualty rather than the stretcher.

Meanwhile, our old friend the Sea King continues to fly, set to grace our skylines well into 2016 in some areas.



RESCUED MEN RELIEVED TO HEAR THERE WAS 'NO CHARGE': NOVEMBER

The two men, from eastern Europe, had been brought down to safety from Tryfan after getting stuck in darkness. The Ogwen team was called out after the lights from the men's mobile phones were spotted moving on the mountain. The men had spent a day in North Wales, visiting Llandudno and Conwy Castle before heading for the mountains. They saw Tryfan, checked the OS map on their phone and concluded that the summit was only a short distance from the A5, so off they ventured, up the rocky North Ridge.

Unlike many European mountain walks, the way to the summit of Tryfan is not marked with painted rocks or signposts. By the time they reached the towering wall of the North Tower, it was mid-afternoon. Wisely, they decided to return down the ridge but, with the onset of darkness, lost any sort of path. They tried in vain, going up and down using the lights on their phones, which were seen and reported to North Wales Police. Fortunately for them, the two young men were easily located on difficult ground above the Milestone Buttress and brought back to the safety of the A5.

'They were embarrassed by the incident and concerned about how much it was going to cost,' said Chris Lloyd. 'There was a look of relief when it was explained that not only do we have free access to much of our countryside, but rescue is free too!'



Good news for teams from the Chancellor

On 3 December 2014, the Chancellor of the Exchequer stood up in Parliament and, as part of his Autumn Statement, announced that a range of search and rescue charities, including Mountain Rescue England and Wales (MREW) and mountain and cave rescue teams across the country, would be able to claim refunds on VAT with effect from April 2015.

In response to the Chancellor's announcement, Mike France, chairman of Mountain Rescue England and Wales, said, 'It is great to have the recognition in central government of the valuable work done by volunteer rescue services and also of the generosity of our many supporters.'

'This issue of financial support has been under discussion for a long time and there have been various options and mechanisms in place at a national level that have been a great support to the teams and the national body.'

'The latest announcement looks even more encouraging as it is written into the VAT rules and open-ended, whereas previous support has had no guarantees of continuity. It is good news for mountain rescue and should mean that money donated by the public can be used in full for the purpose it was intended.'

It's good news for mountain rescue and should mean that money donated by the public can be used in full for the purpose intended.

'The change also means we will be treated similarly for VAT as the emergency services we work alongside, such as the police and fire and rescue service.'

The announcement came after several years of lobbying and advocacy and, in 2012 and 2013, successful events at the Senedd in

Cardiff and the House of Commons where MREW representatives met with MPs, Welsh Assembly members and others in government to tell the story of volunteer rescue and make the case for central support.

Since the announcement, members of the MREW management committee and finance officers in 50 or more local teams have been keen to find out how the system will work, how administration can be kept to a minimum and also how this income can be used as fairly as possible to support teams of different sizes and incomes.

'We've now met with Treasury and HMRC officials,' says Penny Brockman, MREW finance director, 'and, once the legislation and process is agreed, there'll be guidelines to make claiming as straightforward as possible for team treasurers.'

MREW and British Cave Rescue Council worked closely with the RNLI, the United Kingdom Search and Rescue Volunteers Working Group and the Charity Tax Group to achieve this result. It will benefit all charities that carry out search and rescue operations and therefore all the people they assist.

Main photo: Langdale Ambleside MRT
© Paul Burke/Langdale Ambleside MRT.

PENSIONERS SPARK MULTI-AGENCY RESPONSE TO DISUSED MINESHAFT IN TAL Y BONT: DECEMBER

The two men, in their seventies, had to be rescued after one of them got into difficulty trying to exit the mine. The pair had been part of a group conducting a geology survey at the disused Bwlch Glas mine.

Mid and West Wales Fire Service was called initially and sent two crews from Aberystwyth and one from Machynlleth, with Aberdyfi SRT alerted by Dyfed Powys Police soon after. The team was tasked with stretching the casualties from the pithead over steep and broken ground to the waiting ambulances, once they had been brought to the surface.

Equipment was put in place on the hillside in anticipation of their arrival but, as the night wore on, the casualties were sufficiently recuperated to take an active role in their own rescue underground and walked off the hill unassisted once on the surface. Nevertheless, it was the early hours of Sunday morning before team members were back in the comfort of their homes.

One member of the casualty party later posted an account of the incident on a mine exploration forum, stating that the casualty had been unable to get himself out of the mine due to a sudden loss of energy.

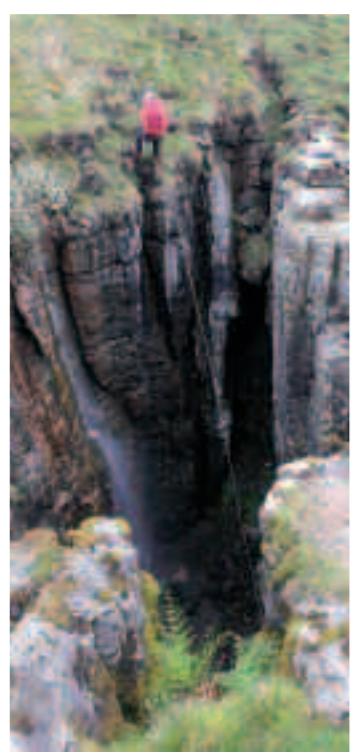
'It was a strength matter – one of us lost all strength and energy suddenly and simply could not climb back up the rope.'



A small fraction of the resources on hand © Aberdyfi SRT.



Yorkshire in the spotlight



When the Tour de France came to Yorkshire, team members from sixteen mountain and cave rescue teams across Yorkshire, the Peak District, Lancashire and Cumbria – and even Ireland – worked together to help ensure spectator safety for one of the biggest crowds ever seen in the area. Derek Holland, of the Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Association takes up the story.

'News that the 2014 Grand Depart would start in Leeds was greeted with mild indifference initially (other than by cycling enthusiasts) but then we realised that nearly fifty miles of the route on Day 1 and twenty miles on Day 2 would pass through our operational area. From then on, things got busy.'

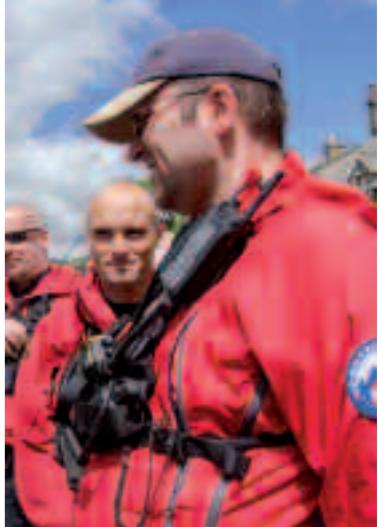
'Our involvement — and that of other rescue teams — began in 2013 with multi-agency planning meetings and a rapid understanding of the scale of the challenge. Organisers were anticipating more than one million spectators on each of the days, many of them watching from along country roads out in the Dales and planning to stay for the weekend.'

'With the road closures and restricted access associated with the event, rescue teams had to plan their deployment very carefully. For instance, Swaledale

MRT deployed to Buttertubs, with the Cleveland team moving into Wath Gill camp to support them. Calder Valley SRT based two vehicles in Skipton and Upper Wharfedale FRA had one vehicle in Grassington and one in Buckden, the latter supported by Scarborough and Ryedale SRT.

'On Saturday, the sun shone, the crowds were out in force and the atmosphere was fantastic. The race came through and was gone very quickly and, as soon as the last Tour vehicles had passed, cyclists and spectators started to head home. It took nearly two hours before the stream of cyclists on the pass started to thin out.'

'On Sunday, we were based near Kex Gill, also known as the 'Cote de Blubberhouses' for the Tour. We were very aware of the risk to spectators (many of



them in cycling shoes) on the steep banks and rocky outcrops along the route but there were just a few minor injuries to patch up.'

'All in all, it was fantastic to be part of such a huge event for Yorkshire and the north of England. There were just a couple of significant injuries to the public and everything went pretty much as anticipated. We had plenty of opportunity to meet the public and talk about our work — and we got to show off our amazing landscape to over a million people.'

Main shot: The peloton passes through © Owen Phillips/Holme Valley MRT. **Inset:** Team members training at Buttertubs, ahead of the Tour.

Top right: Scarborough team members 'on duty' during the race © Sara Spillet/Upper Wharfedale.

Below: Awards certificates on display.

INCIDENT LOG

NORTH YORKSHIRE THANK YOUS: OCTOBER

One night in October, North Yorkshire Police hosted a gathering of the rescue services from across North Yorkshire for an evening of thank yous. The venue was the new Tennant's Auction Centre in Leyburn and PC Jon Rushton from North Yorkshire Police, as the Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for the teams, organised the event.

A surprise element of the evening was a donation of £4000 to each of five teams from the North Yorkshire Police charity fund: £1000 as a specific thank you for their support during the Tour de France events and a £3000 contribution to funds.

'The donation to each team was a surprise,' confirmed Ian Hugill, a member of the Scarborough and Ryedale MRT. 'We've held four of these dinners in the past and the thanks and recognition from the North Yorkshire Police has been much appreciated as well as all the practical support that we get.'

'All five teams – Cave Rescue Organisation, Cleveland, Scarborough and Ryedale, Swaledale and Upper Wharfedale – were represented at the glittering dinner and, as well as presentations to each team, Mr Barry Dodd, Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of North Yorkshire also presented five awards to individual members.'

He commented, 'It makes me feel very humble to hear about the commitment and hours put in by rescue volunteers. It is hard not to be impressed when you hear about people with twenty, thirty or more years of such service.'

That commitment was perhaps summed up best by Chief Constable Dave Jones, who went on to describe rescuers as 'modern day heroes who walk towards harm.'

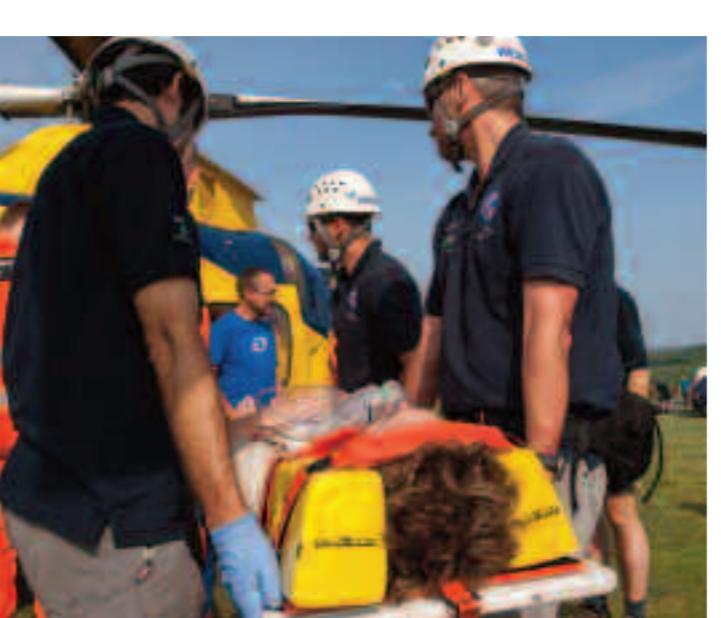




Fifty years of Peaks rescue

Prior to 1964, rescues were carried out by ad hoc groups, but none were equipped to deal with a series of fatal events. The first ended with the death of two children, missing from Glossop and found five days later. The second saw two climbers killed in an avalanche. But it was the third, when three Rover Scouts died during the Four Inns Walk, that proved the catalyst to change.

The Four Inns Walk was used by many walking clubs as an initiation test. Then, in 1957, it was adapted into a competitive hike for Rover Scouts. The original route was some 50 miles long. Starting out at the site of the Isle of Skye Inn, the route



went via Black Hill to a checkpoint by the Holme Moss TV mast and on over the moors to the Flouch Inn, at the cross-roads of the A616 and A628 on the edges of Langsett and Thurlstone moors. From here it travelled over Bleaklow to the Snake Inn, over Kinder Scout to the 1st Chapel-en-le-Frith scout group HQ. The final section took teams over the hills into the Goyt valley, across the river and on to the Cat and Fiddle Inn.

By 1964 it was a national event with rescue cover provided by the Glossop Rover Scout Crew. The forecast that day was for 'showers with fine periods' with no mention of strong winds. The first teams set off at 6.00am but quickly found the going over Black Hill unbearable. Many retired at Crowden.

About noon, the westerly wind grew

stronger, with heavy showers and cold forcing most competitors to consider retirement at the Snake Inn.

Clothing wasn't as advanced then as now. There were no breathable fabrics, no fleeces, 'waterproofs' were barely showerproof. Hypothermia was little understood. And, inevitably, poor clothing, poor weather and poor navigation skills led many into trouble. An unconscious competitor was found by a sheepfold, his rescuers having to cross waist-deep river to recover him. One of the rescuers was injured when he fell 30 feet down a bank whilst helping another casualty, who later died. Two more competitors were reported missing.

As the weather deteriorated further, heavy snow began to fall, bringing the rescue effort to a temporary halt. Through Saturday night, the organisers checked for accurate information about those still missing — hampered by the confusion of so many dropping out along the route. When daylight broke, a major search was launched but, by the end of the day there were still two people missing.

By Monday morning, snow lay deeper than two feet in places. Later, as dusk fell, and just as the search was called off for the night, the body of the second casualty was found face up in a stream, above a waterfall. Then, on the Tuesday, a police officer saw a torch lying in a stream and found a body face down in Nether Reddale Clough. As many as 800 people volunteered over three days, lining up along the A57 facing up the Alport valley.

The word 'chaos' perhaps best describes the events of those few intense days, as those involved struggled to cope with enormous problems. The organisers had to care for all the walkers and staff spread across the Peak District.

The lead rescue team was faced with a stream of casualties. Communications on the hill were sparse — except for the RAF who were equipped with radios — so coordination was difficult. It was almost impossible for anyone to get an overall



picture of what was going on and then control the situation. Some recalled searching areas they had visited already. People were entering and leaving the search at will or doing their own search.

Immediately afterwards, the County Commissioner for Derbyshire set up a committee of enquiry. Jack Longland, BMC president, would chair. Drawing lessons from the events of the 1964 Four Inns Walk, the committee published their report in August.

Amongst many of their points were some that seem obvious to us today. Competitors should be better clothed and equipped, and better informed about hypothermia. And they recognised that rescuers should be able to respond quickly enough to save life, drawing on

The word 'chaos' perhaps best describes the events of those few intense days...

sufficient resources to meet the needs of a major incident.

A meeting at Whitehall Outdoor Pursuits Centre, about the provision of mountain rescue in the Peak District, agreed on an efficient call-out system, largely based on that used in the Lake District, and a search control panel was elected. Thus, the foundations of the PDMRO were laid.

Fifty years on, the organisation goes from strength to strength. There are now seven teams — Edale, Kinder, Buxton, Woodhead, Derby, Glossop and Oldham — and their nineteen vehicles are packed with twenty-one stretchers and state-of-the-art medical bags. A fitting legacy to such early tragedy.

Main shot: View from Kinder. **Inset left:** News cuttings from 'Four Inns Walk. The Story so Far' by Robin Knott, published in 2007, reproduced with thanks to Sheffield Telegraph and the British Library Board. **Inset centre:** Edale team at work © Edale MRT. **Top right:** The Lego MRT © David O'Sullivan. <http://legomrt.blogspot.co.uk>.

A MISSING COLLIE AND THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA: NOVEMBER

Wasdale became the focus of media attention when Border collie Jasper became separated from his owner Adam on a descent from Scafell Pike. And, following a call online for help to find Jasper, the world literally mobilised into action with interest from as far afield as New Zealand and the US.

Examples of extraordinary kindness included a group getting together to help fund bringing in a commercial helicopter to search for a day and a young lad who offered £500 of his grandmother's legacy money towards night vision equipment.

Jasper's owner Adam spent each day searching the fells, without success. Groups of volunteers were coordinated by a member of the public with some



knowledge of dog behaviour when they become lost. Wasdale team members were asked to join the search but carefully declined – although they did offer to pass messages to their team members, asking them to look out for Jasper when they were out and about.

It was on three or four days into the search when an experienced mountaineer

from Carlisle set out from Seathwaite at 10.30pm to search the tops, following a reported sighting. As a dog lover who'd recently lost his own family pet, he didn't want Jasper's owner to go through the same trauma. So he was motivated to go out that night with a pretty foul weather forecast and below freezing conditions.

Fortunately he found Jasper, at around 2.30am, when his powerful torch beam reflected in the dog's eyes.

In fact, Jasper was extremely well hidden, tucked in behind a pile of boulders on the remote northern edge of Broad Crag and off the beaten track. He was frightened, hungry, thirsty, exhausted and had injured his paws. Coaxing him down with food didn't work. And, with the difficult ground, with loose, icy boulders, it soon became clear that carrying Jasper could end with his rescuer falling and getting injured. So, after a great deal of soul searching, he called for help.

'The team was called out by Cumbria Police,' says Richard Warren, 'with the pagers going off at 3.00am, asking for volunteers to bring down an injured dog. Seven team members were involved, with five on the fell.'

'On our ascent, an unexpected slip on a patch of ice at 750 metres was a timely realisation that conditions for the carry down were challenging. Jasper and his finder were eventually located at 900 metres in difficult weather with low cloud, poor visibility, high winds, some rain and freezing conditions.'

'It was only when Jasper and his owner were safely back at base that we began to appreciate the power of social media.'



We were aware of reports of well over 500,000 people following the story. To help raise funds for the team, Jasper's owner set up a Justgiving page at the rescue base. Immediately it went live, donations began streaming in.

'Our expectation of a few thousand pounds was overtaken within the first hour. By day three we'd hit £20,000. After seven days, the total donated by over 5,000 kind people had topped £51,500 with an additional £11,500 in Gift Aid. There were also donations to the team's own Justgiving page.'

At the team's AGM, later in November, Wasdale team members welcomed Adam and Jasper to their base, where he handed over a cheque for £63,000.

Chairman John Bamforth pledged that the 'truly fantastic sum of money' would be spent wisely, contributing towards the team's ongoing new base appeal. Demonstration, were it ever needed, of the power of social media!



Members of the Aberdyfi team, pictured above, have plenty of experience of the Welsh mountains in poor weather. And – like any other team – they're more often to be found swaddled up in state-of-the-art clothing to keep themselves warm and dry. So what on earth prompted them to bare all in the wind and rain?

It was all down to Rummers, a popular bar in Aberystwyth, which started raising money for Macmillan Cancer Support five years ago. To date, they have raised over £18,000 with their tasteful calendar nudity but they hope to break the £20,000 mark with their 2015 Macmillan Naked Calendar, launched in November.

Bar owner Huw Roberts said, 'Each year the bar takes on a theme and for 2015 we're marking the great effort the emergency services provide in the town. We are proud of this year's calendar and have only achieved this with the kind support of our staff, customers and friends.'

Team member Graham O'Hanlon took part in the photoshoot. 'When Rummers first contacted us it seemed an unusual concept

for one charity to be fundraising for another. We kicked the idea around a bit and in the end decided to give it a go. Like any section of the community, the lives of many team members have been touched by cancer, and we were pleased to be able to do our bit to support Macmillan. Responses from team members ranged from 'Let's get naked now!' to hastily arranged trips out of town, but in the end a hardy handful braved the poor weather for this great photo.'

Meanwhile, earlier in the year, members of the swiftwater team at Kirkby Stephen MRT had a job with a difference when they were invited to assist with a photoshoot at Bolton Abbey in Wharfedale. Ladies from the Cappuccino Cycling Club, based in Harrogate, were the stars of a calendar being produced in support of the National Air Ambulance Organisation.

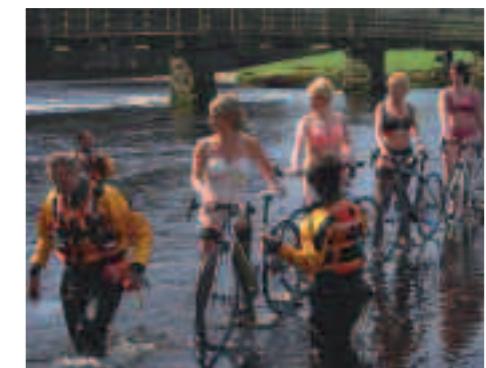
Each month's photograph would feature the ladies at Yorkshire beauty spots with their bicycles and dressed appropriately! This particular photograph (right) has the impressive backdrop of Bolton Abbey with the ladies standing on the famous stepping

NEWS LOG

CALENDARS GALORE AS BOTH ABERDYFI AND KIRKBY STEPHEN TEAM MEMBERS RISK EXPOSURE TO THE ELEMENTS

stones across the river. Fortunately, the water just covered the stones but holding a bicycle whilst wearing expensive lingerie and high heels required the assistance of the team to get everyone into position without getting wet or cold. None of the ladies got more than wet feet! Coincidentally, the BBC Countryfile team were filming at Bolton Abbey and the photo shoot appeared on Countryfile in April.

All in a day's work as they say...



MOUNTAIN RESCUERS BRING 40 TO SAFETY IN BLIZZARD AFTER CRASH BLOCKS KIRKSTONE PASS: FEBRUARY

A coachload of Chinese tourists was among forty people rescued when blizzards brought chaos to the Kirkstone Pass. Members of Langdale Ambleside, Patterdale and Penrith teams worked to bring motorists to safety after an accident involving a number of vehicles in which one car overturned, 454 metres up on the road between Windermere and Ullswater. Two people were freed from the car on its roof and stretchered to a Langdale Ambleside Land Rover which then took them to an ambulance waiting at a lower level.

Some stranded motorists were taken to the Kirkstone Pass Inn, while Patterdale team members – who had just taken part in the rescue of a man who survived a 200-metre fall from Helvellyn – worked in relays to ferry the forty people down to its base in the valley, a combined operation of twelve long hours.

As one team member reported, 'We're constantly filling up our freezer with food and it keeps getting eaten by casualties and team members alike. I think we'll need a bigger freezer, if 2015 keeps up at this rate!'



In at the deep end: training the trainers

It's been a busy year for water rescue training. Thirty-six team members have now achieved Module 2 instructor sign-off, meaning training can now be officially delivered to the same high standard across mountain rescue teams throughout England and Wales.



Andy Lee, MREW Water Officer, has been responsible for setting up the training programme, which was delivered over a series of weekends by Outreach Rescue in North Wales.

'As national officer responsible for this project it's been a pleasure to work with Outreach. They couldn't have been more dedicated to our needs and I have to especially thank instructors George and Laurence who have tirelessly supported developing the process, including a number of tweaks along the way.'

Summing up with a sobering thought, he urged all first responders to remember: Good swimmers die every day!

The course was designed to ensure high standards within the time challenges faced by volunteers and, while this qualification only enables candidates to teach mountain rescue team members, it does ensure that those trained achieve the DEFRA Module 2 standard.

Team members from six of the seven regions filled available places on this fully-funded course over nine long weekends between October and December.

'From the start,' said George, 'it was clear we were working with some very experienced people with good instructional backgrounds. The course wasn't so much about skill acquisition as the re-evaluation of a skill set and its precise boundaries.'

'Delegates were more than happy with this. Many having a concern over the possibility of 'skill-creep' under operational pressure with first responders being drawn into dangerous situations.'

'Despite cold conditions, we were frequently lifted by outbreaks of morale, with each group possessed of some terrific characters, lightening a lot of hard work for all concerned. All in all, it was an absolute privilege to work with such a committed crowd of people and I hope the programme leads to positive things in the future.'

Summing up with a sobering message, he urged all first responders to remember: 'Good swimmers die every day!'

The new cohort of instructors attended a further training weekend in February, to complete the final part of their development — including training in the MREW accreditation process and other practical skills workshops. Once fully-fledged, they will be able to deliver certificated MREW training.

'A huge thanks should go to all involved in the process,' says Andy. 'It will continue to strengthen our operational capabilities and, more importantly, our safety in this area.'

Main photo: Cheryl King www.ckingimages.co.uk.
Inset: Instructors in the making.
Top right: Scarborough & Ryedale team members on winter training © Scarborough & Ryedale MRT.



DERBY TEAM MEMBERS RESCUE BELL RINGER FROM CHURCH TOWER RESCUE: JANUARY

Well accustomed to dealing with casualties in a more urban environment, Derby team members were involved in an unusual call-out even by these standards, when they were called to a casualty in the tower of Brailsford Church.

The lady had been taking part in bell ringing for the Sunday service when the rope became entangled around her arm, causing injuries to the arm and her hip as she fell to the ground. Due to the extremely narrow stairway leading to the tower, the team's expertise was called on to evacuate her to the ground.

A team member living locally was first on scene and provided medical attention. As more team members arrived, the lady was placed into a specialist vacuum mattress and full body splint — which forms a rigid shell around a person — and then carried down the narrow stairs to be handed over to the waiting ambulance crew and on to the Royal Derby Hospital for treatment.

'We often get called to incidents that people would never associate with mountain rescue, but I believe this is a first for the team,' said one team member, afterwards.

'We're just happy to have been able to help and wish the lady a speedy recovery.'

WORKING TOGETHER: EXMOOR TEAM MEMBERS IN JOINT EXERCISE WITH THE RNLI: FEBRUARY

Exmoor team members took part in a joint exercise with Minehead RNLI, as part of a continuing drive to train jointly with the other agencies in their area. And it was a particularly interesting one, not least we hear, to see how much water the team's medical officer could absorb.

The exercise was organised through the respective organisation's training officers and took place at the RNLI station in Minehead. Participants were split into groups with some of the RNLI crew showing mountain rescuers their facilities, including the rescue boats. Says Lionel, 'We did have to prise our water technicians away from the large one as it wouldn't have fitted in the vehicle anyway!'

The day culminated in a joint land search with finds of casualties and an evacuation from the beach by the RNLI teams.

'This was an excellent exercise in showing how well our teams work together to achieve the best outcome for the casualties. It was here that our medical officer, Sammi, who had volunteered to be the evacuee casualty, found that waves look small from the beach but in a relatively small semi-rigid inflatable



boat are quite large, wet and very cold! But she survived and after being transferred to the larger boat was safely returned to land to

dry out and warm up. But, on a serious note, many valuable lessons were learned from this exercise.



DAVID ALLAN MBE STEPS DOWN AS CHAIRMAN: MAY

David's involvement with mountain rescue combined a unique skill set as surgeon, anatomist, cartoonist, rock climber, mountaineer and sailor with an insight into the effects of extreme weather conditions, cold and sleep deprivation gleaned from his early years as a Morecambe Bay trawlerman (one of long, family line!).

It wasn't long after moving to the Barrow area, to take up a post at the hospital, that David joined his local mountain rescue team, within weeks graduating to team doctor, followed before too long by his appointment as Medical Officer for the then Mountain Rescue Council. His involvement revolutionised the way casualties are treated in the fells, through the development and coordination of first aid standards.

In 1999, he took on the role of chairman, advancing the cause of mountain rescue on the international stage, through IKAR, at government level and at the Palace – his greatest pride being the agreement, in 2007, for Prince William to become our patron.

'He has helped forge mountain rescue into a competent, robust and recognisable asset,' said Peter Bell, who presented David with a token of our appreciation. 'He will be missed but his numerous contributions to mountain rescue will continue to flourish.'

MIDNIGHT CALL FROM WALKER LOST IN FOG ON BLEAKLOW: FEBRUARY

A Manchester man called for help at midnight after spending many hours trying to find his way off Bleaklow, the Peak District's second highest hill. Thirteen Glossop team members, a dog from Kinder team and second dog from Oldham team searched for two hours, eventually locating him by the flashes of his torch and the sound of his whistles.

Team members arrived home around 4.00am, just in time to grab a couple of hours' sleep before getting up to go to their day jobs.



WINTER CONDITIONS BRING SERIES OF FATAL ACCIDENTS ON HELVELLYN, AND ONE VERY LUCKY CHAP: JANUARY & FEBRUARY

INCIDENT LOG

Helvellyn and the surrounding mountains may look stunning in their winter clothes, and the glorious winter conditions of January and February drew many to the hills, to walk, climb and ski. Sadly for some, this came at a price, with three climbers losing their lives in falls. During that period, teams in the area were called out more than forty times, with just three of the Lake District's twelve teams dealing with eighteen of these call-outs.

In early January, sixty-two team members were involved in a two-day search for a man reported missing after failing to check out of his hotel. At 10.30am on the second day, a search dog found a man on the headwall of Helvellyn at the same time as an RAF team spotted the man from above. He had sustained fatal injuries.

Days later, another man died in hospital having fallen from Swirl Edge into Brown Cove as his group were descending from Helvellyn. One man had slipped a short distance from the ridge, the second slipped and fell 1000 feet as he descended to help his fallen friend, and a third man was helped off the hill by a passing walker. The injured casualty died of his injuries later that night.

Then, in February, a local mountaineer was found laying seriously injured by a mountain

rescue search dog. The 68-year-old from the Penrith area had set off earlier the day before to ascend Helvellyn. He was very experienced and well equipped.

The team was alerted by the man's wife at around 8.40pm, when he failed to return from

car, before mounting a major operation involving over forty team members from five teams and a Royal Navy Sea King helicopter.

Mike Blakey, Patterdale team leader said,

'In a situation like this, we search all possible routes and locations where a missing person may be, on both sides of the mountain.'

'During the very early hours of the morning Patterdale's search dog located the missing man on the headwall of Helvellyn, above Red Tarn. Two doctors and further team members were on scene within minutes.'

'The weather conditions were atrocious and, despite several attempts, the Sea King was forced to retreat to the Greenside Mines area where it waited for about two hours until we were able to carry the man down the mountain.'

'During the evacuation, which lasted four and half hours, the man suffered a cardiac arrest. With three doctors and a paramedic now on scene, we were able to continue CPR until he reached the major trauma centre in Newcastle but, sadly, he died in hospital from his injuries at around 6.30am.'

Days later, another man collapsed at the feet of Patterdale rescuers after falling 650 feet from Helvellyn. Described as 'one lucky chap', the 28-year-old survived the fall in white-out conditions. He had stumbled into the team

members, who were training below the ridge, unable to recall what had happened or whether he had been with anyone.

'Not only did he fall a long way from a mountain on which three people have died so far this year,' said Mike Blakey, 'but he managed to make his own way down in a snowstorm.'

'He had no idea where he'd ended up. He described falling through the snow when he was on the ridge and coming to rest about half way down the mountain, still in a blizzard.'

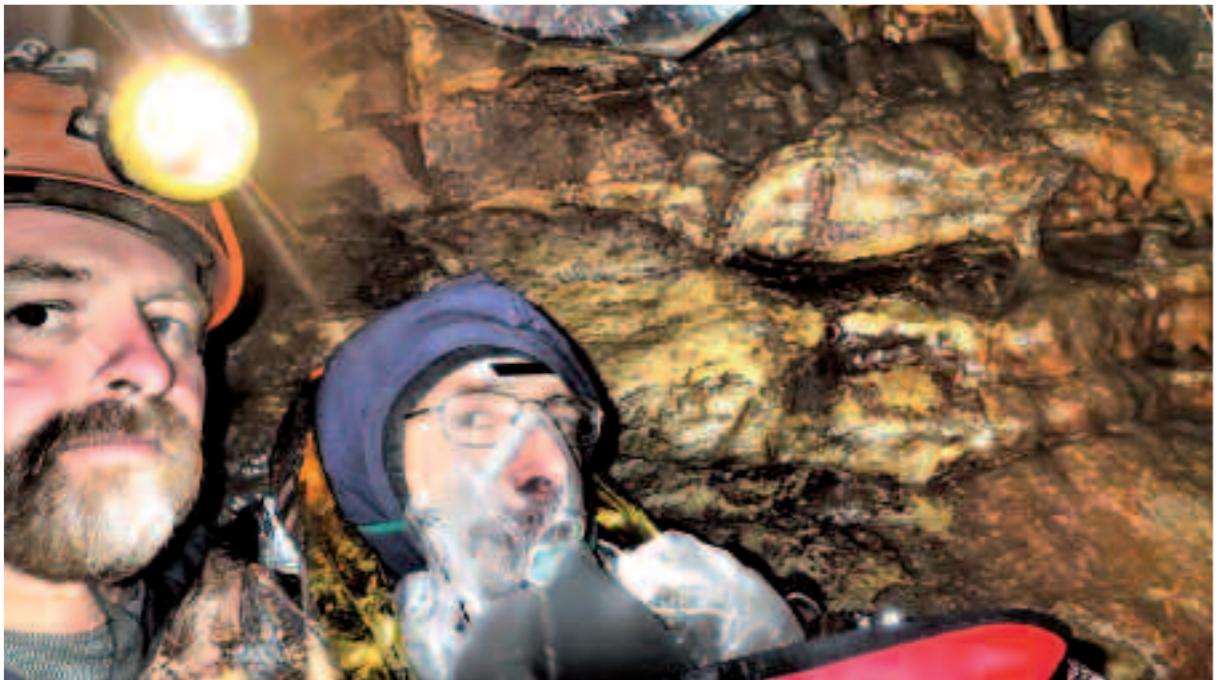
'We'd originally planned to train in Red Tarn in the morning, but with the severe weather forecast we changed our plans at the last minute. If we hadn't, this man would not have been rescued so quickly, and it would be difficult to say if he'd have found help. He probably should buy a lottery ticket!'

He was assessed and quickly transferred by stretcher to one of the team's vehicles, parked nearby at Brown Cove dam. From there, he was taken to Patterdale team base where he was assessed and later released. Remarkably, he had only suffered minor injuries.

Left: Helvellyn © Craig Palmer.
Centre: Above Red Tarn © Simon Ledingham (under Creative Commons Licence).

After the fall..

Mountain and cave rescuers know only too well what can happen when things go wrong. And, there but for fortune they continue to enjoy their own adventures, walking, climbing, caving. But every now and then the coin flips. What then? Jules Carter, warden and underground controller with the South and Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team, found out the hard way.



I lie confused, disorientated, my mind furiously trying to figure out where I am, how did I get here?

Involuntary groans leave my body from the shock, pain and confusion racking me. Gradually the thinking clears and I'm looking up. I see the outline of the 40-metre-deep shaft I've just fallen down – a large gaping sphere of blackness in the middle of the beam from my helmet light, which is lying just behind my head. Amongst the first coherent thoughts are, 'I survived falling down that!'

Next comes the sudden awareness that I'm at the edge of the next pitch in the cave. Quickly my bloodied hands find the rope I should have been attached to and clip it into my chest ascender.

The next instinct is to establish what state I'm in. Years of cave rescue first aid training kick in and I do a quick self-assessment. Remarkably, head and back seem okay, but the left leg is broken, and the right kneecap isn't where it should be.

Fortunately, the right leg can still take weight and I crawl off to somewhere safer to tuck up and await rescue. Before long, my mate Pete is sliding down the rope to reach me and finds me sitting on the rope tackle bag on a ledge with my broken leg dangling over the edge to provide some traction. Remarkably, I'm in a state worth rescuing!

There is little I can now do other

than keep the psyche in good shape. I'm broken and will need all the help my friends and the local rescue team can give me. To stay warm, I snuggle into the bear of a man that is Pete and await the rescue. Fortunately, we're not far from a road, I'm almost directly under the cave entrance 80 metres above me, and there are no nasty crawls or tight rifts to negotiate!

I've little concept of time. The rescue effort seems to take off remarkably quickly. In what seems a very short time a member of the French team appears along with my good friend Ali. The emotion of seeing each other hits home. I'm alive and talking – not a jellied lump. Tears easily flow as the enormity of surviving this fall suddenly becomes very clear.

Stuff continues to happen as more people appear and I become a compliant casualty. A tent of tarps is put around me, oxygen given, a paramedic appears and my clothing is cut off. A cannula is inserted and morphine applied, though I remember remarkably little pain.

Pete keeps checking on me as I'm quiet, but it's just me trying to snuggle down and rest. Around me my rescuers are busy preparing to take me to safety. At some point Lisa appears. She is one of our cave rescue doctors and also a French speaker so useful to the effort. Lisa has known me for years and taught me much of my first aid knowledge. She also checks me

out, amazed how intact I am considering the distance fallen. She reassures me I'm fixable.

At some point my French rescuers are ready to haul. I'm guided into the back splint and then into the stretcher, being handled well all the way. When loaded the controller looks at me. Am I ready? 'Allez, allez, allez!' I reply. Then the words 'traction' and I'm off.

It's a single haul rope from the start of the first pitch down to me, no additional lifeline, with regular releasable deviations along the way. There's plenty of space so I'm hauled in a horizontal position (so much better than being hauled vertically), and the haul is carried out using a counterbalance system.

After a week in hospital, the French doctors agree I can travel and a few days later my insurance cover arranges an air ambulance to bring me back to the UK. So begins my stay in the University Hospital Wales in Cardiff.

Again, I'm well looked after. The injuries are x-rayed again, consultants check the work of the French surgeons (which is apparently very good) and even the food proves to be pretty good!

A week later, consultants review the damage in my left foot. I've mashed a few bones out of existence and it seems likely the foot will heal at an angle. Within twenty-four hours, I'm back in theatre having a plate fitted to stiffen the foot and an external frame to ensure it heals straight. All being well, this has to stay in place for the next six weeks and effectively makes me wheelchair-bound until the frame is removed. The plus side means I should be able to run again.

So where and how did this happen? Sadly, almost at the start of our holiday in the Gorges du Tarn region of the Massif Central in France. A whole bunch of families and friends had met up on a campsite in the region. Keen to start caving, some of us decided to do the Aven de Hures, a fine pothole system reasonably near the campsite.

I had another day and night of this waiting for the operation to pin the femur and wire the kneecap back together. I'd never had an operation before and this became a surreal experience. The initial injections put you into a vaguely aware conscious state before being taken into theatre and going completely under.

Trying to wake from the operation also becomes surreal. You vaguely come to. Someone checks on you and then you fade out again. This seems to go on for a while, before becoming more aware in a small ward room and finding tubes everywhere – cannula in the neck and arm, separate painkiller feeds to both legs and drains coming out of the surgery sites. There's no sleep

with this lot!

The French look after me well, but my lack of language skills makes communicating a challenge. Nights are the hardest. My mind is wired, the room is hot and it's hard to find any comfort. By morning I'm shot, but the auxiliary nursing team come in, clean me, wipe my bottom, change the sheets and basically look after me, after which I feel much better. The sleepless nights continue and I'm becoming more emotionally shot. Sleep is needed and drugs are resorted to!

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still a few metres off the floor.

Keen to keep going, I rigged the start of the traverse onto the second pitch then dropped the rope down for it, before getting Pete, following me, to give me the rope for the third pitch. This I stashed into my tackle bag before resuming rigging the second pitch.

I don't remember why I initially slipped but I do remember, prior to the incident, stopping to assess my next steps and sort myself out a bit. I was trying to reduce the bolts I needed to rig into, to save hangers and rope, and I remember I was planning to clip my short safety loop, or cows-tail, into the next resin anchor. From there, I'd be able to sort the rope for the hang down the pitch itself.

It seems as that I went to move the short cows-tail I slipped from my stance, bringing me onto the long cows-tail which was still clipped into another of the resin anchors. That should have been it, but to my horror the snapgate carabiner had twisted round with the gate now lying in the danger position across the bolt. As my weight loaded onto the cows-tail the carabiner unclipped itself.

The click of that carabiner unclipping is still sharp in the memory. I know full well I'm about to fall forty metres and there is little I can do. My shouts horrify my friends – it's clear this is no dropped tackle bag.

Some instinct to survive, however desperate, must have kicked in as I grabbed the pitch rope. Despite feeling the rope burning into my hands I must have clung on for a good few seconds. This probably saved me by pulling me against the side of the

shaft and meant I fell against the rock for some of the distance, taking some energy out of the fall and keeping me upright, but I only have a single glimpse left in the memory of looking down as I fell.

So – somehow – I've survived this in an injured but fixable state. The road to full recovery will take a while but to have a second chance is truly remarkable. Why I fell, on something technically straightforward, is something I ask myself a lot. It shows accidents can happen, but I was also probably a bit tired and wired from a stressful period of work, and then the rushing to pack and travel to France. No doubt a combination of minor things added up to me not being as aware as I should have been.

Whatever, there is much to take from this. Support from family and friends has been phenomenal, the superb efforts of the French rescue services, Snowcard insurance and the excellent care and expertise of both the French and UK health services. Thank you everyone! I owe a lot of beers...

Postscript: The consultants and physios tell me progress has been

good. At the time of writing it's been just over seven months and I'm walking around without support, getting about on the bicycle again and have been back at work for about a month. Still a lot of fixing to do but fortunately the overall prognosis is pretty good – just got to keep it steady and be patient! I've even managed a bit of gentle skiing!

Left: Awaiting rescue. **Top:** Looking up the pitch Jules fell down.

Royal charities share day in South Wales



Our link with Prince William, as our patron, has brought the opportunity for mountain and cave rescue team members to entertain youngsters and their families from other charities with a Royal connection. This year, it was the turn of South Wales to host this annual event on behalf of Mountain Rescue England and Wales.

The day's activities included abseiling, a search and rescue exercise — looking for Westie Bear — a caving experience, and lessons in bushcraft skills at Craig Yr Gors Country Park, with each of the South Wales teams taking ownership of one of the activities.

Those taking part were split into groups so everyone could try their hand at two activities during the day. As in previous years, the children and young people came from Centrepoint, Child Bereavement and WellChild and a good deal of fun was had by all.

To be truthful, mate... this is the best day ever!

One participant, from Yorkshire, who had never abseiled before, was asked whether he enjoyed the experience. 'To be truthful mate,' came the reply, 'this is the best day ever!'

Chief Constable Simon Prince of Dyfed Powys Police arrived to present each participant with a certificate and goodie bag.

Every year, the focus has been on a different region of England and Wales, with teams in the North East, the Lakes, North and South Wales taking turns to devise creative ways to engage with and entertain these often severely disadvantaged children. And every year, feedback from youngsters, their families and team members alike confirms that this is a heart-warming and inspiring day for everyone involved.

This year's event is set to take place in North Wales, on 26/27 June, once again hosted by the region's mountain and cave rescue teams. The last time the event was here, in summer 2010, it was a great success, with youngsters taking part in activities based around Little Tryfan, close by the Ogwen team's base at Bryn Poeth, and The Towers outdoor pursuits centre at Capel Curig. Plans are already well underway.

Who are the other charities?

Centrepoint, another of Prince William's charities, was founded in 1969 by Ken Leech, vicar of St Anne's, Soho. Concerned about the number of young people sleeping rough in the West End of London, he and a group of volunteers opened up the basement of the church as a temporary night shelter. More than forty years later, the charity continues to campaign to give homeless young people a future.

WellChild, one of Prince Harry's charities, is committed to helping sick children and their families as they deal with the consequences of serious illness and complex conditions. Their care and support enables many terminally ill children to leave hospital and return home, whilst also supporting their siblings and parents.

The Child Bereavement Charity, another of Prince Harry's charities, supports families, and provides training to professionals, across the entire spectrum of child bereavement — both when a child of any age dies or is dying, or when a child is facing bereavement.



Main photo: Sasha, the drowned victim search dog © Dave Marsh. Right: WUFRA © Upper Wharfedale FRA.

Making the grade on the water

Drowned victim search dogs were relatively unknown in the world of mountain rescue. In Northern Ireland, Neil Powell has been training and working in this field for many years. It was thanks to him that Bolton team member and experienced air-scenting dog handler Dave Marsh, was inspired to set out on a different adventure, training young collie Sasha.

He first set eyes on Sasha three years ago after Neil asked if he would take this 'lovely wee dog' in need of a new home. 'Is she suitable for drowned victim search work?' asked Dave, and 'Yes' came the response.

So it was that, one wet miserable Saturday morning at Birch services, the small, smooth-coated seven-month-old collie bitch, with a tail that never stopped wagging, came bounding towards her new master and the process of bonding began.

And, once you've decided to train a dog to search for people who have drowned, who do you turn to? Well, in this instance, back to Neil Powell, the expert.

A little nervously, I pointed to a spot in the lake. We were just three metres from target! We'd passed!

What to do? How to do it? When? The list was endless and daunting. Minor hiccups could become major disasters if the training regime wasn't right but, fortunately, there were many pointers in the guidelines compiled by Neil with John Sjoberg.

John has a vast pool of knowledge gained from training dogs for the Swedish armed forces to detect unsolicited frogmen entering Swedish territorial waters. With Neil's experience of training similar dogs over thirty years — many years in advance of anybody else in the UK — they have compiled a set of training stages and working standards which were accepted by NSARDA in 2007.

The next very important step was to join SARDA Ireland North. Why? Well, simply, no other association believed in or undertook training in this specialism, so Dave had to look outside his own

association for training and support, travelling to Ireland for his initial Drowned Victim Search Dog course. And, by the end of a weekend of lectures and practical sessions on Castlewellen Lake, Dave and Sasha were well on their way.

Two years on, and Sasha's initial assessment in August 2014 at Lough Neagh in Northern Ireland was postponed due to poor weather. But in October, the opportunity arose again.

'I'd been given the parameters of a search area with full scenario briefing,' explains Dave. 'The search method was discussed and then we were off. Rodney drove the boat, Neil watched me intently and I watched Sasha. We searched on sweeps at 90 degrees to the wind, over a two-hour period, covering most of the lake.'

After lunch, searching recommenced with Sasha indicating after twenty minutes. The search area was narrowed down and that's when Neil asked the question: 'Well, where is it?'

'A little nervously, I pointed to a spot in the lake. We were just three metres from target! We'd passed!'

There are around 168 drownings in England alone in one year. Around 60% of those missing are found within the initial search stages but it's the remaining percentage Dave and Sasha are most suited to search for. For that, they need access to a few resources including a boat, trailer and vehicle to tow them. So — a little fundraising is required on Dave's part. They also need water (obviously) and people with boat skills to assist on actual searches.

Since being declared 'active', Dave and Sasha have attended five searches with one successful indication as to where the body was, which was then recovered by police divers.

To find out more about drowned victim work, contact Dave via secretary@nsarda.org.uk.

NEW THREE PEAKS CHALLENGE DEEMED A SUCCESS: JUNE

Negotiating with a local butcher to buy 500 pork pies doesn't normally feature in a team's training modules but that's what was needed for Upper Wharfedale's inaugural Wharfedale Three Peaks Challenge. Their alternative Yorkshire Three Peaks covered Buckden Pike, Birks Fell and Great Whernside, a distance of twenty-two miles and climbing something around the height of Ben Nevis. Two lesser routes were also included in the event to make it into a family occasion. The aim was to tempt walkers and runners away from the conventional route.



The new route included the scene of UWFRAs most famous rescue, of the emaciated dog stretchered from the summit of Buckden Pike. UWFRAs, as he was subsequently named, became a media sensation in some twenty-seven countries, raising the profile of mountain rescue at home and abroad. And, needless to say, he was the celebrity to start off the event from Kettlewell.

The event formed part of the 100-day Tour de France Cultural Festival. Participants were even given first-hand experience of a typical team call-out when a 75-year-old man was stretchered off Great Whernside during the event suffering from exhaustion.

The team was delighted at the event which raised in excess of £6,000 — not least of all, we feel, due to the prevailing popularity of their delightful celebrity guest!



Harnessing the power of social media

Supporters of mountain rescue have been using websites such as Just Giving and Virgin Money for several years but it is only really in the past five years or so that teams across England and Wales – and the national body as an organisation – have begun to see the benefits of Facebook, YouTube, Twitter et al.



Neil Hayter is the National Fundraising Officer with MREW and the driving force behind the umbrella organisation's social media presence.

'We've known for years that supporters of mountain rescue like to keep in touch, find out about incidents and also learn how they can support teams financially. Social media offers a lot of opportunities to do just that and most teams in England and Wales now use at least one of the more popular channels to share their activities and build up a network of supporters and 'Friends' or 'Followers'.

Of the forty-eight mountain rescue teams and nine cave rescue teams, fifty have a Facebook profile and thirty have a Twitter stream — and the public Mountain Rescue England and Wales Facebook page has almost 10,000 'likes' while the Twitter feed has more than 10,300 'followers'.

'That's an awful lot of people with some interest in what we do,' says Neil, 'and, even if you take off all the team members, that's a lot of potential supporters and activists on our behalf.'

One of the ways Neil has been encouraging those thousands of people to spread the word is by posting images

of familiar faces and people with a simple 'Support Mountain Rescue' message board.

'At first, it was just me and my fellow team members out in the hills with a message board,' says Neil, 'but we've gradually got other people to do it. The big coup last year was when our Royal patron, HRH The Duke of Cambridge, agreed to pose for a photograph. That post alone reached over 300,000 people, through supporters sharing it with their own contacts — although it did prompt a few interesting comments about whether the hero of the shot was the real thing or a lookalike! And we can assure everyone he was very much the real thing!

'We're working on a few more ideas for the future and, with the launch of Mountain Rescue Film 2015 — featured on page nine — hoping that we can really go viral with our Support Mountain Rescue message.'

You can find us on Facebook at facebook.com/MountainRescueuk. On Twitter via @mountrescueuk. Or check out the film on YouTube: coming soon.

Main photo: Cave Rescue Organisation train with the Sea King for the last time © Steve Finch.

Inset: HRH The Duke of Cambridge, image courtesy of St James's Palace. **Top right:** Lego team member rallies support © David O'Sullivan <http://legomrt.blogspot.co.uk>.

Below: Showing off the new vehicle © COMRU.



COMRU UNVEILS UNIMOG: DECEMBER

Social media fans were kept informed throughout the building process, with this unique vehicle finally unveiled, fully liveried, in December.

It had been quite a process. COMRU's existing vehicle was starting to show its age but the volume of technical equipment to be carried had also grown significantly. So, rather than look at traditional team vehicles, they began with a clean sheet.

The resulting Unimog can operate at locations which are significantly challenging to vehicles, especially in winter, and travels at a slower than average speed for an 'emergency' vehicle. It can move off with just two team members on board, conforms to the ambulance registration rules and it's tough enough to stand outside all its life in all weathers! There's also plenty of spare capacity for any future developments in equipment and, best of all, it was affordable!

The vehicle came from Europe — fully serviced and MOT'd, registered as an ambulance and complete with full military tool kit, snow chains and recovery gear — via a company that buys surplus government stock to sell to the civilian market, aid agencies and the governments of other countries.

Team members carried out the conversion with livery applied locally by a company who specialise in high quality vinyl 'wrapping'.

The grand total as a fully operational vehicle was just £26,000! Money well spent!



Where to find your local team

Lake District

Mountain Rescue:
Cockermouth
Coniston
Duddon & Furness
Kendal
Keswick
Kirkby Stephen
Langdale Ambleside

Mines Rescue:
COMRU

Search Dogs:
Lakes District Mountain Rescue Search Dogs

Patterdale

Penrith

Wasdale

Mines Rescue:

COMRU

Search Dogs:

Lakes District Mountain Rescue Search Dogs

North East

Mountain Rescue:
Cleveland
North of Tyne
Northumberland Nat Park
RAF Leeming MRT
Scarborough & Ryedale

Teesdale & Weardale Mountain + Cave Rescue:
Swaledale

Search Dogs:
SARDA England

Mid Pennine

Mountain Rescue:
Bolton
Bowland Pennine
Calder Valley
Holme Valley

Mountain + Cave Rescue:
Cave Rescue Organisation

Search Dogs:
SARDA England

Rossendale & Pendle

Mountain + Cave Rescue:

Cave Rescue Organisation

Search Dogs:

SARDA England

North Wales

Mountain Rescue:
Aberdyfi
Aberglaslyn
Llanberis
North East Wales
Ogwen Valley
South Snowdonia
RAF Valley

Cave Rescue:
North Wales CRO

Search Dogs:
SARDA Wales

NWMRA

Mountain + Cave Rescue:

Cave Rescue Organisation

Search Dogs:

SARDA Wales

Search Dogs:

SARDA Wales

South Wales

Mountain Rescue:
Brecon
Central Beacons
Longtown
Western Beacons

Cave Rescue:
South & Mid Wales CRT

Search Dogs:
SARDA South Wales

Cave Rescue:

South

& Mid Wales CRT

Search Dogs:

SARDA South Wales

Peninsula

Mountain Rescue:
Dartmoor (Ashburton)
Dartmoor (Okehampton)
Dartmoor (Plymouth)
Dartmoor (Tavistock)
Exmoor

Mountain + Cave Rescue:

Cornwall

Cave Rescue:

Devon CRO

Search Dogs:

SARDA England

North East

Mountain Rescue:
Cleveland
North of Tyne
Northumberland Nat Park
RAF Leeming MRT
Scarborough & Ryedale

Teesdale & Weardale Mountain + Cave Rescue:
Swaledale

Search Dogs:
SARDA England

Yorkshire Dales

Mountain + Cave Rescue:
Cave Rescue Organisation
Upper Wharfedale

Mountain Rescue:
RAF Leeming

Peak District

Mountain Rescue:
Buxton
Derby
Edale
Glossop
Kinder
Oldham
Woodhead

Cave Rescue:
Derbyshire CRO

Search Dogs:
SARDA England

Midlands

Cave Rescue:
Midlands CRO

South East

Cave Rescue:
South East CRO

In case of accident or incident requiring mountain or cave rescue assistance
Dial 999. Ask for the Police
then Mountain Rescue or Cave Rescue



To find out more about mountain and cave rescue in England and Wales go to mountain.rescue.org.uk or caverescue.org.uk

Or find us on social media via Facebook: [facebook.com/MountainRescueuk](https://www.facebook.com/MountainRescueuk)
Twitter: @mountrescueuk • YouTube: xxxx link to film to follow