

Mountain MAGAZINE Rescue



ISSUE 21

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

JULY 2007

THE GRAYRIGG TRAIN CRASH

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EDITORIAL

Editor

Judy Whiteside
Rossendale & Pendle MRT
8 bridgefoot close · boothstown · worsley
manchester M28 1UG
telephone 0161 702 6080
editorial
email editor@mountain.rescue.org.uk

Website

Paul Baxendale
Paul Horder Keswick MRT
Dave Freeborn Patterdale MRT

Handbook

Eve Burton Buxton MRT

Statistics

Ged Feeney Penrith MRT

MRC Press Officer

Andy Simpson
Rossendale & Pendle MRT

www.mountain.rescue.org.uk

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NEXT ISSUE

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Editorial copy must be supplied as Word/Quark document.
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

RAF Sea Kings. RAF Valley.
Photo: Judy Whiteside.

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.

Editor's Note
Articles carried in Mountain Rescue Magazine do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the MRC. Further, we do not accept responsibility for information supplied in adverts/advertorial.

It's a little while since I've written the 'word from the press officer', mainly because our editor has so much to say, but also because there's not much happened that you're not hearing about from elsewhere. Having said that, there was a flurry of activity leading up to the announcement that Prince William was to become our patron.

On the day of the announcement, I was being driven down the side of Loch Ness, alternately deep in conversation with the press officer from Clarence House and my own office, who were reading press statements from The Prince's office for me to either approve on the hoof, or supply further detail. Having been forewarned some months ago about the appointment, David Allan and I had already agreed a statement to be released after the announcement by Clarence House.

On the allotted day, our press release went out to every national daily and Sunday newspaper in the country as well as outdoor mags, TV stations and news agencies. Every press release had my mobile phone, home and work numbers at the bottom and I'd even shaved my face ready for the inevitable avalanche of TV interviews that would surely follow. All in all this was going to generate a media frenzy the likes of which we'd never had without an aircraft falling from the sky or a train coming off the rails at 100 miles an hour.

So I waited, in eager anticipation. And I waited. I checked my emails, eagerly

anticipated a bit more... and waited. I waited a bit more then checked my emails again... and waited. Then I checked my emails, eagerly anticipated, went for a cup of tea... and waited. Absolutely nothing. Not a sausage. I was deafened by the silence.

Then I checked Radio Four, stalwart of the broadcasting world, to see what could possibly have buried the biggest story in MR for a decade (at least I thought it was!). And there it was, an announcement from Clarence House, or possibly the MOD – Prince Harry would not be going to Iraq with his unit.

So instead of a story about a prince doing something, we had the main news item being a story about a prince not doing something.

Most of my working life has been spent dealing with the press in some capacity or another but it never ceases to amaze me how fragile the 'fifteen minutes of fame' can be. Or, despite the decline of printed newspapers in this twenty four hour news culture, how much we look forward to seeing our name in print, only to see our hopes dashed at the last minute by something which, to be fair, had a great deal more public interest but didn't float my boat as much as our announcement would have done.

As they say in newspapers, 'today's headlines are tomorrow's chip wrappers,' but it still would have been nice to read about us whilst I demolished my fish supper!

Andy Simpson Press Officer

So, reference the above, the editor has a lot to say eh? Well so, I might add, do many of you. And long may that continue. This issue, I find myself in the position of not only adding yet another four pages (s'okay, I don't intend to do a running tally of our incremental increases every issue. Promise I'll say nothing now until, ooh.. sixty four pages... deal?) but also having to keep back not just one but three or four substantial pieces of editorial.

The more we grow, the less room I seem to have to squeeze everything in and the more my quarterly task begins to resemble attempting some sort of digital jigsaw puzzle. This time round, this is partly down to the inclusion of more matters below ground alongside the mountain stuff. Regular attendees at the bi-annual meetings, at Plas y Brenin and Preston, will know our colleagues in cave rescue play an integral part in both the sub committee and main meetings – be it reporting on their incidents or discussions on training, equipment, medical et al. Indeed, as three of the cave teams also operate as fell rescue teams, there is already a fair crossover between the two organisations.

Welcome to those cave rescue readers who haven't previously had the pleasure – I look forward to receiving your contributions to future issues. Would be

great to develop the tales behind the incident report section to take in a few cave incidents as well, but that's down to you, dear reader, sending me the material. So, no pressure there then...

As I write this, I am hearing news reports of a month's rainfall in one day, of RAF Sea Kings winching stranded folk to safety from their rooftops, of a Meadowhall cut off by floods and a young man trapped in a drain losing his life in the rising torrent, despite every effort to save him. Every story a demonstration that none of us are very far from tragedy and you could just as easily be shopping for shoes as hanging from a rope or crawling through the dark.

I don't know whether any mountain or cave rescue teams have been involved in the rescue effort, but it's generally when stuff like this happens (floods, moorland fires, snow storms, civil emergencies) that the general public get a bigger picture of what we actually do. The Grayrigg train crash was perhaps one of those times and we have here a series of first hand reports of that fateful evening, reflecting the uniquely personal experience of each of the authors. Interesting reading.

Anyway... now I've proved the press officer's point entirely, I'll sign off. Roll on sixty four pages then...

Judy Whiteside Editor

CHARITIES ACT
SHAKE UP GUIDE

The Charities Commission has launched ‘Charities Act 2006 – What Trustees Need to Know’, a concise guide to the biggest shake up in charity law for centuries. Trustees need to be aware of the opportunities new powers and greater flexibility will bring and this is aimed primarily at smaller charities which may not have the knowledge or expertise to make the most of the new law. Available from www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk or in hard copy by calling 0845 015 0010 and quoting URN 07/Z2 and the title of the publication.



EQUIPMENT NEWS

Mike Margeson reports... Peter Bell’s workshop closes. This must surely be a significant landmark in the history, development and production of MR equipment. For me, it has particular resonance, having worked so closely with Peter as MRC Equipment officer for over 20 years. On your behalf, I would just like to say a big thank you to Peter and Lisa Bell for all their hard work, support and help to MR teams over many years. I know whatever development in stretcher design lies around the corner you can be sure there will be Bell stretchers around for a good many years to come!!! The last three MRC funded Bell Tangent stretchers ever to be made are still available on a first come, first served basis at £1000 each. **Equipment warning** Screw joint fastening on basket/litter stretchers Ewan Thomas reported

they had found a stretcher undone at one of its two main thread attachment points. This was a titanium basket type litter. Ewan says his team have now painted the threads red so there is a visual reminder to do them right up. **Vacmats** We have a number of these still available and a further production run due in September. Please place orders on headed paper with two team officials’ signatures and channel through your region’s equipment rep. **New lightweight casbag** William Lumb (cave rescue doctor), with the help of Aiguille Alpine Equipment, has developed a new synthetic bag made from much less bulky material than fibre pile. In initial trails with cave rescue it has performed well. At the most recent equipment subcommittee meeting it was decided to undertake a full-scale trail above ground. We have commissioned a bag for each team to be made so a full test can be carried out. Auguille hope to produce these and get them out to teams in the autumn. Each team will receive a questionnaire for feedback on the new bag. **PPE/FPE Equipment Checking Course** The feedback from the most recent equipment-checking course, run for Lakes teams at Patterdale MRT base, was excellent. The next MRC course will be in the autumn at Oldham base – contact John Edwards for details.

ENTONOX WARMING
SYSTEM UPDATE

Tracey Binks reports... Gosh doesn’t time fly! Practically all the initial testing work had been completed at the time of the last equipment subcommittee meeting, all that remained to do was to make some development

work on the bag design. Unfortunately, due to an immense work load, Aiguille have not been able to complete the development work as yet. It is considered likely the work will be completed during the summer when traditionally things are a little quieter. The current plan is to develop bags suitable for the following cylinders:– Medical Gas Systems (MGS) carbon-fibre, BOC ‘CD’ carbon-fibre and BOC Steel cylinder. Having gained samples of all types of cylinder and then met and discussed this with Adrian at Aiguille it seems likely there will be two different bag designs – one for the MGS and BOC steel cylinders and one for the BOC ‘CD’ cylinder. To make things simpler still, the same sized insert from Inditherm can be used in both. Each bag will contain two external pockets – one for the demand valve and delivery tube, one for the battery, and the location of the shoulder strap will be changed to prevent stressing of the top zip. The inserts for the new bags have arrived from Inditherm along with a power supply for each bag. So once the new bags have been made teams will be welcome to trial the system. If interested please send a note of which cylinder type your team has and a contact email address so I can let you know when the bags are ready – tracey.binks@dfmrt.org.uk).

COMMS UPDATE

Mark Lewis reports... At the last UKSAR Comms Working Group updates were made to allow for changes in technology. As of 31 December 2009, CTCSS will be mandatory on all TWC (Team Working Channel). This will reduce the data burst noise (FFSK) that is used when transmitting GPS data. The



PETER BELL HANDS OVER THE LAST BATCH OF FIVE STRETCHERS TO MIKE MARGESON, HON EQUIPMENT OFFICER

THE END OF AN ERA FOR BELL STRETCHER
PRODUCTION AND MAINTENANCE

‘The date recorded on my Patent Certificate for the original Bell stretcher design is 11 July 1972 – almost exactly 35 years ago,’ explains Peter. ‘I feel privileged to have met so many interesting, friendly and helpful MRT members, civilian and military. It has always been a pleasure to discuss stretcher design and ways to incorporate improvements and the combined expertise of numerous team members has, over the years, contributed to fine tuning the Bell stretcher. ‘My principal objective has always been to provide a totally dependable stretcher capable of long-term use in all conditions. Whilst I believe I have achieved significant progress in that direction, I hope also that stretcher production will continue to flourish, with the introduction of real improvements based on new ideas and current operational experience without diminishing that essential element of reliability. ‘Over the years, I’ve accumulated a considerable volume of stretcher concept and test data which I will be handing over to the equipment subcommittee in the hope they will be able to advance rather than just re-invent stretcher designs. ‘I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their considerable support.’ Now Peter’s service and test facility is closed, Mike hopes an enthusiastic engineer, within mountain rescue, will take on the responsibility of routine proof load test and service so the existing stock of Bell stretchers can continue to give good service for as long as is required. Peter also makes a range of one-piece rigid industrial stretchers. He intends to transfer the product, under license, to a new supplier. Once that transfer has been completed, Peter’s stretcher test rig will be available for MR(E&W) use.

reason this date was agreed was to that, at the same time, the channel spacing changes on 53a and we all know what a mammoth task getting all the radios together is. Teams may introduce its regional use immediately, but must ensure that the tones can also be easily

switched off so that, during major incidents when teams lacking the facility may be involved, they are not disadvantaged. Text messaging is now also authorised on TWCs. Some manufactures already have this feature in production. Please remember TWCs

only – not on Channels 62a and 24a. **Personal Location Beacons** Currently, you are not able to licence a PLB for land use. (Yes, I hear you asking, if a plane goes down on land they set off then aren’t they in breach of the licence conditions?) A document is being produced asking Ofcom to look at a change in licence conditions to allow land use of PLBs. If successful, a body – ideally the UKMCC at Kinloss –will have to administer and maintain a PLB Registration Database. **Airwave** After many years, this has hopefully been put to rest. ACPO and MR(E&W) have been in talks with O2 and an agreement has been met where mountain and cave rescue teams can, under the seven day rule, use police maintained radios. Details of this and the criteria that must be adhered to have been sent to all regional secretaries

and comms officers. My thanks to ACC Ian Shannon and Staff Officer Ian Fulcher of North Wales, for their hard work. What is Airwave for? In the eye of UKSAR and MR(E&W) these sets are not to replace the UKSAR channels we use, they are purely for ‘Command and Control’. Hill parties should please keep to the UKSAR channels so we are all compatible and informed. **Publications** Please remember documents relating to communications can be found at uk-sar.org.uk and the members’ area at mountain.rescue.org.uk **UKSAR Channels** I’m sure I don’t need to remind you, but the MCA are the licensee of the channels we use. Please don’t compromise our position. Remember, the channels are for use of SAR and training activity and not for events such as fundraising and general chat etc. Most, if not all regions hold a UK general

licence for this purpose. If you hear any illegal activity please contact me with as much detail as possible. If it can be recorded it will be of great benefit in the investigation. **Case Studies & PR** We are being asked by companies to supply case studies and filming on various aspects on communications, GPS and mapping. If your team is willing to take part in any PR of this nature, representing both MR(E&W) and your team, please contact Andy Simpson and/or myself so we have a list of teams ready and can share out the publicity between teams. Finally, I wish to pass on my thanks to Tom Taylor of ARCC for his continued support, especially on the communication front. Thank you, Tom If you have any queries about comms you can email Mark Lewis on communications@mountain.rescue.org.uk.

Get one or get
lost!

The Where-Wolf Grid reference finder is a simple to use tool for quickly and accurately giving and locating grid references. Simply place on the map and read your co-ordinates using the handy grid. It’s fast, easy and accurate. Used by professionals in the field and as a teaching aid in and out of the classroom, the Where-Wolf is proving a vital bit of kit to all walks of life. Suitable for use on all OS maps and maps with similar scales. Visit our website for user guides or to buy your Where-Wolf in our secure online shop. We offer discounts for large orders and charities. **www.where-wolf.com enquiries@where-wolf.com 01508 481799**



HRH PRINCE WILLIAM OF WALES BECOMES PATRON OF MOUNTAIN RESCUE

Prince William has been appointed Royal Patron of Mountain Rescue (England & Wales). The announcement in May was tremendous news for mountain rescue. It is hoped Prince William’s patronage will inspire very tangible benefits to rescue teams across England and Wales, and a greater recognition of the work we do. Chairman David Allan expressed pride and delight at the honour bestowed. ‘We’ve deliberated for many years whether we should seek such a Patron but felt certain we could only work with someone who empathised with mountain rescue and its raison d’etre.’ Prince William certainly fits the bill, having already seen and experienced first hand the workings of mountain rescue. In December 2005, keen to develop a better understanding of the work of people who do extraordinary things every day, The Prince spent two weeks with the RAF Valley search and rescue unit. During a fortnight he described as ‘inspiring’ Prince William attended briefings and learned combat manoeuvres, helicopter rescue techniques, and mountaineering and sea drills – a series of events which formed part of a wider programme before setting out on his military career. To date, we are one of only a handful of charities supported by The Prince in this way – in all of which he has been personally involved. His first appointment, in September 2005, was to Centrepont, the UK’s leading youth homelessness charity, an interest he has held since childhood when he visited homelessness charities

in London with his mother, Diana, Princess of Wales. The Tusk Trust, which supports twenty five conservation projects in twelve different countries across Africa, came later that year, inspired by his gap year experience in Kenya. Prince William’s patronage of the English Swimming School’s Association was announced the same day as his appointment to Mountain Rescue. Having swum and played water polo throughout his days at school and university, The Prince is keen to do whatever he can to help other children and young people enjoy the benefits of swimming and watersports. On his appointment, Prince William said he felt honoured to be asked to become Patron. ‘Mountain Rescue is an amazing organisation, full of unsung heroes. Most are volunteers, who do a fantastic job saving literally hundreds of lives every year. I want publicly to highlight and celebrate the vital, selfless and courageous work of our mountain rescue organisations. I have wanted to do this ever since I spent an inspiring fortnight working with a team in North Wales eighteen months ago.’ The Prince has expressed a desire to become actively involved, to meet with rescue team members and learn more about our work. The announcement is timely, coinciding as it does with plans currently taking shape for next year’s 75th Anniversary celebrations, which aim to bring awareness of the mountain rescue service – and its enduring ethos of voluntarism – to a wider public.

DIARY DATES FOR 2007

SEARCH FIELD SKILLS	
Places:	30
Date:	Friday 31 August to Sunday 2 September
Location:	University of Wales, Bangor
Contact:	Dr ASG Jones 01248 716971 3 Maes Tyddyn To, Menai Bridge LL59 5BG
SEARCH PLANNING & MANAGEMENT	
Places:	40
Date:	Monday 3 to Friday 7 September
Location:	University of Wales, Bangor
Contact:	Dr ASG Jones as above.
SEARCH PLANNING & MANAGEMENT REFRESHER	
Places:	30
Date:	Saturday 8 to 9 September
Location:	University of Wales, Bangor
Contact:	Dr ASG Jones as above.
EQUIPMENT INSPECTION DAY	
Places:	24
Date:	Autumn
Location:	Oldham
Contact:	John Edwards 01457 870734 jmemr@fsmail.net
MR (ENGLAND & WALES) MEETING	
Places:	50
Date:	Saturday 17 November
Location:	Lancs Police HQ
Contact:	Peter Smith as above
TEAM LEADERS’ MEETING	
Places:	50
Date:	Saturday 1 December
Location:	Keswick MRT base
Contact:	Peter Smith. As above.

BASECAMP ESTABLISHED

The national support group launched at the NEC in March has found itself a name – Basecamp – and membership is beginning to grow steadily. Single membership costs £24 per annum, joint £42, for which supporters will receive the four issues of Mountain Rescue mag per year, a Supporters badge and car sticker. For further details, contact Neil Roden c/o White Cottage, 9 Main Road, Grindleford, Hope Valley, Derbyshire S32 2JN or check out the website – mountain.rescue.org.uk

INCIDENT REPORTING & RECORDING POLICY

Ged Feeney reports... Since taking on this post ten years ago, team and regional officials have been asking 'Which 'incidents' can I report?' It was thought good practice to attempt to regularise the process of how such judgements are to be made by the production of a policy document. Clearly, this would go some way to allaying concerns about any variation of reporting

between teams and regions. Caution is warranted at this stage – any policy that covers all eventualities would be extremely detailed and so become unworkable. Alternatively, a poorly defined document would be of little use. Clearly, for the process to evolve, the policy should be reviewed on a regular basis and modified as new demands arise. The policy agreed in May 2003 has been running for four years and has received wide acceptance. MRC(S) has expressed interest in the policy and has generally followed a similar approach. Following a number of suggestions from team, regional and national officers, a number of variations have been considered. No objections have been received from the consultation and a small number of replies were supportive. After some testing with alternative models, the policy has been modified and the proposal accepted at Plas y Brenin, 19 May 2007. It is therefore effective from that date.

Policy Statement

Incident reports will be filed without being recorded in a database or combined into a single recordable incident on any of the following grounds:–

Inadequate Information:

An incident will not be recorded if any of the following items are missing

- Incident date, when team first notified
- Location or locality, with grid reference two-letter prefix + 6 figures
- Cause of incident or reason for alerting the MRT
- Name of team submitting the report

Passive Response:

Was originally not recorded but will be recorded and referred to as 'Alert/ Standby'. An incident will be recorded if the team was placed on 'standby' or 'alerted' to an event but not tasked to action. This may include simple checks like visiting local car-parks doing vehicle checks, or driving a road for a 'look-see'. These events will be summarised separately in any annual report for MR(E&W).

Act of a Good Samaritan:

An incident will not be recorded if the

incident reported refers to assistance given as that by a good citizen. Phrases like 'happened upon...', 'came across...' are examples.

Provision of SAR Cover:

In cases where the reporting team is providing SAR cover for organised events, individual reports will be combined into a single incident no matter how many casualties were assisted. The team's attendance will not be recorded if the team were not called upon to respond to any request for assistance.

Aid during Local Emergencies:

In cases where the reporting team is operating in support of other emergency services during periods of local emergencies, individual reports will be amalgamated into a single incident covering a complete day (00:00 to 24:00) of the emergency, no matter how many persons were assisted or how long the particular event lasted.

Multi-day or Non-continuous incidents:

Separate reports relating to the same event, even

though it might extend over many days and/or cover non-consecutive days, will be amalgamated into a single record. However, the record will reflect the team's involvement over those days by recording the number of man-hours contributed by the teams involved.

Examples

What follows is guidance and not definition – this is added to expand the spirit of the policy, not to supply loopholes etc. There are, in effect, two categories of incidents for reporting purposes, namely 'Deployments' and 'Alerts/Standbys'.

Deployments: Team has been requested to respond to an incident, the team has actioned the request and members are assembling. Even if the team is subsequently stood down while responding or any time after, this should be reported in full. This category covers what has constituted an 'incident' up to the present. Nothing has changed for these events.

Alert/Standby – a team has been contacted to share information about an event. Advice might be sought from an MR perspective, options discussed but no task resulted. The team may have been asked to await further instructions. Even if the team were placed on 'standby', no task has been requested, as such this category is appropriate. Some examples cited when this category was suggested may help to illustrate.

1. A team leader is contacted at home/work about a party reported overdue at a prior booking. No action recommended but the situation would be reviewed in two hours. The party duly turned up having been delayed by poor navigation.

2. Police search in progress for a despondent. Intelligence indicates an area of steep woodland as a likely search area. Call is giving early 'heads-up' and asking what search numbers can be supplied. While a ring round is conducted, the police contacted to advise the despondent has been located, and no further assistance required.

3. A member of the public reports seeing flares on the hillside unconfirmed by any other report. The team leader agreed to monitor any calls of a similar nature. Over the next three hours, no persons were reported missing and no further sighting reported. Joint agreement concluded a false alarm with good intent.

Method of Reporting

At the meeting in November 2005, it was agreed that electronic reporting was the preferred method. In the intervening month, many teams have migrated to this method. There remains a handful of teams that still report by paper. The Statistics Officer argued that all teams will have access to a computer and internet, if not for the team then certainly via a team member. It was agreed that paper reporting will not be accepted after August 2007. This gives a clear three months for teams to arrange for electronic reporting. The Statistics Officer will assist all teams to achieve this goal – after all, anything that makes dealing with more than a thousand incidents a year has to be beneficial. Please feel free to contact the Statistics Officer by email on statistics@mountain.rescue.org.uk.

Develop your nav skills with Cicerone

Acquiring good navigation skills is an essential step to enjoying the hills in safety. Poor navigation ability is the most frequently mentioned reason why people are reluctant to extend their walking adventures, and one of the main factors which lead to people getting into difficulties in mountain areas. Cicerone now have two books by Pete Hawkins which will help people develop these skills – 'Map and Compass', the highly acclaimed techniques book, and now a new 'Navigation' mini-guide to take on the hills with you!

Pete Hawkins is an outdoor writer, photographer, walking guide and expert on navigation. He runs the successful Silva Map and Compass Courses in the Peak District, sponsored by Silva UK Ltd. Cicerone has a growing range of techniques books and mini-guides, covering essentials such as mountain weather, first aid, avalanche awareness and other mountain skills. Check out www.cicerone.co.uk for the full list.

Go with the glow with Peli

Peli Products (UK) Ltd have launched a new range of their most popular torch models. The torch head is made from a photo luminescent material which absorbs light and emits a bright glow in darkness, even after the light is switched off.

The right-angled 3600 Little Ed is available with a photo luminescent shroud at £42.14 or as a Recoil™ LED torch (3610PL) at £55.54 exc VAT. Also available are the Super SabreLite (2000PL) and SabreLite Recoil LED (2010PL) models, at £34.85 and £48.86 respectively.

These glow in the dark torches, ideal for emergency situations, industrial use or simply to find your torch in the dark, are the latest additions to the Peli range of professional torches, with the legendary 'You break it, we replace it' lifetime guarantee. For further details, call 01457 869999 or go to www.peliproducs.co.uk.



NAVIGATION skills for safety on the hills



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...IT'S THE TEAM LEADER, DAD - WANTS TO KNOW HAVE YOU SORTED OUT THAT CLASH BETWEEN THE EXERCISE AND YOUR WEDDING ANNIVERSARY YET?

TRAIL VERDICT
1st
February 2007

"Compare this to any other pole and it is noticeable how much more energy-efficient the Pacerpole design is..."
"...they are more natural and less tiring in both ascent, and descent over rough ground and tracks"
Graham Thompson Technical Editor

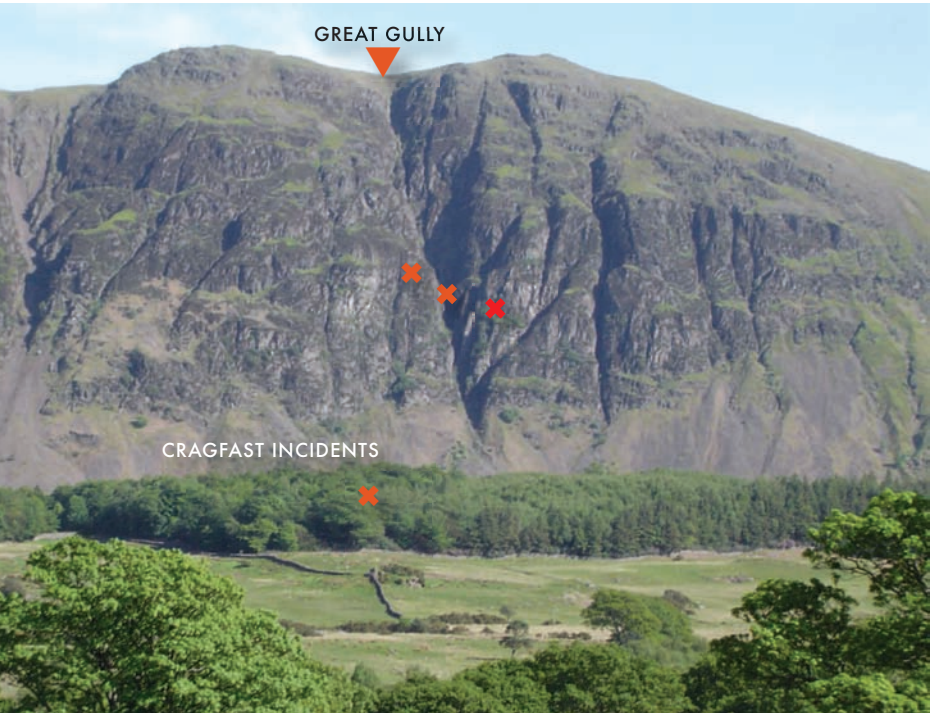
Steve Perry - The first continuous winter Munros round (2006) "It's the speed you can move and the distance you can cover with them."

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LAKE DISTRICT

Richard Warren (Secretary, LDSAMRA) writes... Although the teams work very well with the other emergency agencies, over the past twelve months there have been a couple of instances where the operational interface between the various agencies of police, ambulance service, RAF and air ambulance has been less than ideal. To rectify this, LDSAMRA convened a meeting at Cumbria Police HQ on 23 May and invited representatives from all the agencies including RAF Boulmer and ARCC Kinloss. The outcome was an improved awareness of each of the agencies accountabilities when air assets are tasked, recognition of the medical experience and skills of mountain rescue teams, and the operational difficulties teams face on a rescue, the best use of air support, improved communications during a rescue and an agreed approach on working together in the field. The biggest achievement was, of course, getting all the players round the one table and talking face to face. This will be repeated on regular six monthly intervals. Copies of the notes from the meeting will be made available to regional secretaries as there may be some benefits for other teams.



REPEATING INCIDENTS ON THE SCREES IN WASDALE

April and May 2007 saw two rescues of extraordinary similarity. The first on the evening of 8 April involved a male walker who had taken a wrong turning when descending from the top of the Screes and ended up seriously cragfast, very high up on the side of Great Gully. Four weeks later, another male walker decided to descend Great Gully from the top of the screes. This time, rather than contouring out of the narrow and very steep gully along the sheep paths to become

cragfast as per the previous walker, he continued down into the main gully, slipping and sliding down the numerous waterfall pitches until he could drop no more. At an elevation of around 300 metres he came to a 30 metre waterfall pitch and decided to call it a day and use his mobile phone to call out the mountain rescue. Attempts to climb up the gully to his location had to be abandoned within feet of his location due to very loose, unstable and slippery pitches so a top down approach was used. Abseiling into the gully from above and then lowering/assisting the walker down the remaining pitches was the chosen evacuation route. By 9.30pm that evening, just as the light was fading, he had been extricated from his seriously perilous and very well concealed position, and lowered down the gully. He was then walked off and back to the safety of his vehicle in the valley bottom. Both of these rescues were captured on video by a team member's camcorder and now appear on the Wasdale MRT website. Is this a start of a new incident blackspot for the Wasdale valley? Over the years there have been other rescues involving walkers who have become cragfast and others not so lucky in and around Great Gully. We hope that by drawing attention to these incidents the various gullies and sheep trods do not become walkers'

magnets. The photograph gives an indication of the gully and its exposure. The video gives a good steer as to why it should be avoided.

999 FOR THE DEAF

An enquiry came in through mountain rescue from a Lancashire walking group on the subject of how the deaf might report a mountain accident when in the Lake District. The matter was taken up by Cumbria Constabulary and they, along with the North West Ambulance Service and the Cumbria Fire Service, have come up with a single number to

which the deaf (or possibly MR casualties) can text their message and receive text replies. Text messages will always be received at the police call handling desk, whether for police, ambulance or fire and forwarded onto the required service. The system is currently going through its final stages of testing and, when fully operational, will provide a single texting number for any of the emergency services in Cumbria. Similar systems operate elsewhere in the country so it is not a first but certainly a new tool for the region.

THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY

As 2008 approaches, work kick-starting the various projects has begun to gain momentum. The national mountaineering exhibition centre at Rheged is to be one of the launch locations, the idea to create a Mountain Rescue (England & Wales) static exhibition which will run for a number of months. Final duration will depend on costings and sponsorship arrangements. In addition to promoting mountain rescue through the 2008 celebrations, the exhibition will be very helpful in establishing a more permanent exhibition dedicated to support the Lake District mountain rescue teams. The Rheged centre is the northern gateway to the Lake District attracting many hundreds of thousands of visitors each year and a permanent static exhibition at Rheged has been one of the region's aims for some years.

TELEVISION DOCUMENTARY

The idea of a 2008 television documentary covering mountain and cave rescue has not been totally rejected and we are still exploring a number of avenues on behalf of Mountain Rescue (England & Wales). The announcement of Royal patronage has added more interest to the project and two TV companies are currently considering the idea. One of the most interested, is the company responsible for the BBC five part 'Mountain' series with Griff Rhys Jones, scheduled for July and August this year. GMTV are also interested in doing something next year. As I write, GMTV are finalising arrangements for the reconstruction of a dramatic rescue on Grasmoor, Buttermere for their breakfast programme during a 'heroes and heroines' week. Cockermouth MRT have agreed to carry out the re-enactment which will have been shown by the time this magazine comes out. The casualty whose life they saved has already agreed to participate in the filming.

THE LORD MAYOR'S PARADE

The parade, in November 2008, is to include a mountain rescue procession. However, the London organisers are hoping MR will do something around a climbing tower theme. Last year, the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office erected a 'bun tower' and Chinese climbers raced up and down collecting buns. This year, there will be a similar tower suspended from a crane (to ease the logistics of removal). For next year, Neil Roden and myself are looking for ideas, support and volunteers. The parade will involve a float of some kind and there will need to be plenty of team

representatives including SARDA search dog teams from across the UK. This is not something that can be organised by just two people so drop me a line if you are interested in becoming involved. You may have specialist skills or know of a freebie low loader, or know a kind sponsor, or just willing to come to London for the weekend. A couple of national and international organisations have already been approached and have considered sponsoring the event but so far have not been able to follow through with solid financial commitments. So Neil and I are still on the hunt for a major sponsor to underwrite the costs which could run into several thousands of pounds depending on the scale of the event. Whichever organisation eventually sponsors the event, they will certainly be guaranteed some 'free' BBC1 exposure on the day. The parade has to be self financing through sponsorship in order to be viable but an opportunity like this to promote MR cannot be missed. If you have any questions on this article, or indeed any of the Lake District articles, please contact me and I will ensure you receive a response.



SUPPORT MOUNTAIN RESCUE... BREAK A LEG!

As part of their 60th anniversary celebrations **Coniston MRT** has commissioned the Coniston Brewery to produce a special draught bitter. Called Broken Leg, the brew should be on sale in the free houses around the South Lakes. Ten pence in every pint goes to mountain rescue. So make sure you sample a pint next time you are in the Lakes!

PENRITH APPEAL

Penrith MRT has set itself the ambitious target of replacing all three vehicles over the next three years. On 26 May, the team launched their campaign to raise £110,000 with a stretcher lower down the side of Carlisle Civic Centre, in association with local outdoor pursuits company, Distant Horizons. Members of the public could the try their hand at abseiling. Penrith covers over 2,500 sq km of NE Cumbria including the lower Eden, Carlisle and Penrith – the largest patch of any of the Cumbria teams and one of the largest in England, stretching from the Scottish Borders to the Shap Fells, the Northern Pennines, Mardale Head and High Street. Located

centrally to its area, in the Penrith 'rescue village' the team currently operates three elderly vehicles. These are two modified Land Rover Defender 110s, now over 20 years old, and an LDV Leyland DAF minibus used as team transport and command vehicle. To date the appeal has raised £12,650. For further details go to penrithmrt.org.uk.

NORTH EAST

ICELAND EXCHANGE

Teesdale & Weardale SRT continue with their firmly established youth programme, travelling to Iceland at the end of July. The group of nine young people (aged 16 to 20) and a leader (considerably older) will take part in a number of joint activities with youth members of the host team from Isafjordur. The programme includes two days at the ICESAR training centre at Gufuskalar where the group will take part in a rescue exercise. From here, they will also visit the Snaefellskull glacier, then on to Isafjordur for activities including jumping into the ocean from Zodiacs and, finally, an overnight hike into one of the remote areas. There will also be an opportunity to visit the tourist attractions of Reykjavik, make new friends and renew old acquaintances. The project has been made possible by funding from the North Pennines Leader+ Programme and the young people are also undertaking various fundraising activities to pay for 'team clothing' for the visit.

NORTH WALES

EYES DOWN FOR FUN

It seemed like a novel idea when a couple of local ladies approached the Aberglaslyn team to raise funds with a fun Bingo Night. Denise Morris and Delia Lightfoot had successfully raised funds for many other local charities and good causes, so it would have been rude to refuse. Prizes came from all angles – including weekend holidays and a bike. Held at the Memorial Hall in Crickieth, with the hall hire generously donated by Btfred in Porthmadog, the evening was a great success, as team members assisted and joined in with the bingo games to raise £1300 to add to the £200 raised by Delia from a car boot sale. The team would like to thank Delia and Denise for all their hard work, and the businesses that donated, not to mention the local people who turned up to play.

MOUNTAIN RESCUE TAKES NO PRISONERS

Accident statistics formed the basis for a joint exercise between members of **Aberglaslyn MRT** and local coastguard teams, SARDA and staff from Portmeirion, the Italianate village near Porthmadog made famous by TV shows such as The Prisoner and Cold Feet. Based on the scenario of a missing person from the Portmeirion Hotel, with the informant a stropky teenage daughter that was most unhelpful to the search managers, the exercise used profiling from Ged Feeney's MR data on missing person behaviour, with a look at

SARDA



ALEX LYONS WITH SEARCH DOGS AIKEN (ON HIS LEFT) AND TRAINEE MAX (ON HIS RIGHT)

Alex Lyons has been recognised by SARDA England with the Outstanding Achievement award for twenty uninterrupted years on the call out list as a dog handler. During this period, he has trained three fully qualified dogs Scruff, Mac and Aiken. Sadly, Scruff and Mac have passed away but Alex is still training with Aiken and trainee dog Max. He has served SARDA in various capacities, most notably as training officer, and has been a member of a Dartmoor Rescue Group for over 24 years and attended over 500 incidents, saving many lives.



GWEN PATMORE WITH ROLF AND IAIN NICHOLSON WITH MIJ

The SARDA Wales Assessment in December 2006 saw another trailing dog onto the call out list for SARDA Wales with Iain Nicholson and Mij grading to Novice Grade Trailing Dog. Gwen Patmore and Rolf furthered their success in achieving Advanced Grade Trailing Dog. Iain and Mij, members of Bowland Pennine MRT in MPSRO, and Gwen and Rolf from Aberglaslyn MRT, train with SARDA Wales as the only SARDA members currently operating trailing dogs, and train with help and guidance from Tom Middlemas who has many years of experience in the field of scent specific trailing dogs. Trailing dogs are trained to follow one specific scent (ignoring all others) and are proving a great asset to the teams they're working with on operational searches.

Syrotuck, Hills and Koester, along with the use of digital mapping and GPS. The aim was to demonstrate to coastguard personnel how teams use the technology at their disposal. It provided an opportunity to use the new local repeaters supplied by North Wales police, to see what problems arose when two different agencies work together on different radio channels, and how to overcome them. The exercise also gave staff at the hotel an insight into how they would cope with such an incident and the logistics involved. The day was a great success, the highlight a free lunch supplied by Portmeirion in the Hercules Hall.

GELERT SPONSOR TEAM KIT

Aberglaslyn team members have recently received new kit from Gelert. The company have long partnered/sponsored the team, over the years giving help towards vehicle insurance, clothing and numerous raffle prizes.



ABOVE: TEAM MEMBERS ON EXERCISE AT PORTMEIRION. BELOW: IN NEW GELERT KIT

SURVIVING THE WELSH MOUNTAINS

North Wales is extending a warm welcome to novice walkers keen to improve their navigation skills, in an effort to reduce accidents. Over 150 people are injured and ten killed in the mountains of Snowdonia ever year. The one day course at the National Mountain Centre in Capel Curig, Plas y Brenin, (the first held in May, the second planned for Saturday 22 October), was run by experts from the North Wales Mountain Rescue Association, the Snowdonia National Park Authority and North Wales Police, who have come together to form 'Mountainsafe'. The free course is the first of its kind to be held in the UK. The day begins in the classroom, before heading out to the mountains with experienced instructors for practical navigational training. A recent study of mountain incidents in Snowdonia over the past six years highlighted that 82% of the casualties were from outside the National Park and Wales (the majority being from the South and North West of England. Men between the ages of 21 and 30 have been shown to be the group most



MOUNTAINSAFE INITIATIVE TAKES OFF IN SNOWDONIA

at risk and another element of the study showed that 60% of people who requested help from a mountain rescue team were not actually injured. Mountainsafe course director, Tim Bird, added, 'By running such an initiative, we are hoping to pass on some of the basic navigational skills required by walkers wanting to head into the mountains, skills which can prevent them getting lost or stuck. Or, if they do get into difficulty, skills which they could use to look after themselves and get themselves to safety.' As the Mountainsafe strapline states 'getting to the top is optional, getting back down is mandatory.' For further information email mountain.safe@eyri-mpa.gov.uk.

PEAK DISTRICT

DIAL 999 AND ASK FOR RESCUE

Glossop MRT celebrated their Golden Jubilee Year with the opening of their new HQ at Glossop police station in early July, in the company of local dignitaries, officials from the 999 services, local businesses and national companies and other members of mountain rescue. Refused money by the Lottery and Sports for All funds, the team have had to look at other ways of raising funds, including the publication of their book '999 Mountain Rescue, Please.' Complete with a foreword by



Sir Ranulph Fiennes, the book takes a lighthearted look at fifty years' work, from the early days of the Glossop Rover Scouts, and the first recorded call out in 1959, when team members assisted in the evacuation of a girl with an ankle injury from Kinder Scout, to the present day. There's something for everyone – maggots and mudwrestling mermaids, carrot cake and kamikaze sheep, the odd hoooley and more than a fair share of drizzle, clag and mud, not to mention thrutching and faffing. And if you've lost me then really there's nothing more to be done than buy a copy. Read all about it and support the team in the process. It's a snip at £7.99 (additional contributions welcome!) published by Bay Tree Books, ISBN 978 0 9551377 1 6. To buy online, go to www.gmrt.org.uk or email sales@gmrt.org.uk.

BIRTHDAY HONOUR FOR RAY

Ray Davies, President of **Glossop MRT** who, for many years served as Hon Secretary of the MRC (England & Wales), has been awarded the MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours for services to mountain rescue in Derbyshire. The team are delighted that Ray's dedication and commitment over fifty years in MR, and the vital contribution he has made in its development of MR, has been nationally recognised. This is the second honour in quick succession for Ray whose long service has also been recognised by High Peak Borough Council, with the freedom of the High Peak.

SOUTH WALES

BIG BLACK MOUNTAINS CHALLENGE

This year's annual fundraiser for **Longtown MRT** was a resounding success. After much deliberation, the team took the opportunity to revise the event. In the interests of safety and to preserve the environment of the Black Mountains, a limit was put on the number of entries and none were taken on the day. However, this did nothing to deter the runners and walkers and the interest was phenomenal. Weather was mixed, with sunshine and showers, but all enjoyed the day. Thanks to all those who supported and helped make the event a success. Next year's challenge takes place on Saturday 17 May.

LAND ROVERS LOST AND GAINED

Mark Nicholls, team leader with Longtown MRT with a salutary tale... Last summer, the Longtown team's much loved 1995 110 Defender, call sign 799, was unfortunately involved in an off-road incident during a search and evacuation exercise in the Black Mountains. Whilst climbing a fairly moderate slope at the base of some crags the vehicle stalled and fell out of gear due to what appeared to be mechanical failure of the gearbox, rolling backwards down a steep slope for approximately 50 metres, before hitting rocks, rolling over twice and coming to a halt in a broken mess below. Luckily the driver, realising the vehicle was not going to hold, jumped clear and survived unhurt



apart from the knowledge they had to answer to the team who were at the top of the crag and who had all just performed a self administered jaw thrust whilst looking on in horror! The vehicle was loaded at the time and luckily the majority of equipment stored in the rear was salvaged, undamaged, with the exception of the Entonox kit and the Bell stretcher mounted on the roof. The team quickly responded to the situation by ferrying equipment back to Control by hand and organising a tractor to pull the very sad looking 799 back to the roadside where it could be transported back to base.

A word of caution at this stage, if you hold AA or similar cover for your off-road vehicles, check the policy includes for recovery from off road incidents as, although we managed to pull the vehicle back to the roadside, the AA would not come and collect it as the 'incident' had occurred fully off road and not 'gone off the road'. We had to pay to have the vehicle collected from the roadside and delivered to our base. We are in the process of changing our recovery service provider to the RAC. We obviously had to quickly organise a replacement vehicle to maintain our operational status and we are very grateful to **Brecon MRT** who did the good neighbourly thing and allowed us use of a K reg V8 110 they had recently replaced and were in the process of selling (we still have it in storage if anyone is interested – call Peter Bradley of Brecon MRT on 01982 551861). Replacement kit was quickly ordered, including a new Bell Tangent stretcher. The old Bell was 95% serviceable, surviving two full rolls of the Land Rover from its position on the roof-rack. However we obviously weren't going to continue it in service. In respect of a new vehicle, the old 799 was declared a write off and we received a cheque in the order of £6,000 from our insurers. Other funds were obtained from team funds previously allocated to replacing the vehicle within the forthcoming months and we were lucky to obtain a grant of £10,000 from the Sports Council for Wales. Further monies were donated by the Hereford Society for Aiding the Industrious. In considering a replacement vehicle we took the opportunity to review the type of vehicle that would be best suited to our work and several different options were considered, including crew-cabs,



Landcruisers and numerous other 4 x 4 exotica. The unanimous decision, based upon cost, payload, servicing and general all round ability was another 110 Defender. We negotiated a good deal with Stratstone Land Rover of Newport, South Wales, who gave us a discretionary charitable discount and took delivery of a 56 plate 110 County Defender in Zambezi Silver (we were informed that white is a special colour and on long delivery). We reviewed the fit-out required and have kitted out the vehicle with a new Patriot roof rack from Venture Overland (www.ventureoverland.com) who we thoroughly recommend – a fantastic rack, built in Britain to very high standards and we received a great level of service from the company. We have also obtained blue lights, spotlights and sirens from Premier Hazard, installed internal safety cage between seating and rear load area and a local auto electrical company, Just Auto Electrics of Pontypool did a fantastic job in installing the lights, sirens, blue-tooth hands free kit and comms equipment. Vehicle livery and markings were bought from Blue Light Graphics and fitted by Autobond (Body Shop) Ltd of Pontllanfraith, South Wales. Finally, a bespoke chequer plate roof box was made by D&T Engineering Ltd in Hereford and fitted to the rack to house our new Bell stretcher. The unexpected loss of our main response vehicle presented an immediate challenge to the team but,

with input from many team members, we've ended up with a fantastic new vehicle and more importantly we can look back on the incident positively as no one was hurt or worse. It has highlighted further the dangers we all face both on training and call outs where we are operating off road and stresses the fact that it is crucial to be aware of the risks, minimise them wherever possible and provide the appropriate level of training to reduce the chances of such incidents occurring. In this instance, the driver was an experienced member of the team who had undergone independent off road training, so the risks are always there. If anyone is considering replacing a vehicle and requires any advice or assistance as we've just gone through the process, please do not hesitate to contact me on mn@nichollspartnership.co.uk.

Remote beach cottages take off in cyberspace

A one in one cliff track to beach cottages and a remote private bay in the middle of nowhere? Not a problem for the off-road community and the power of the world wide web. Richard Nash initially found his 25 acre bay on the Mull of Galloway a marketing challenge. However, this exclusive bay is now booked throughout the year, mostly by repeat visitors and a second croft on the beach front has recently been stylishly redeveloped with the Scottish Tourist Board 4 Star rating.

Richard said, 'We were lucky finding the off-road community. The place is pretty inaccessible without 4WD although we do offer a collection and delivery service. I built a website back in 1997 as we had been getting calls at all hours from all round the world. The site publishes availability, pricing and booking forms. We top the search engines for 'Beach Cottage Scotland.' We've recently added virtual reality tours and video.'

For further details call Richard and Susan Nash on 01457-862128, fax 01457-852800 or go to www.morroch-bay.com

Picture Big Moor in North Derbyshire, above 300 metres. Off the beaten track it is quite wild and desolate, no sign of lights, no sound of cars or human activity of any kind, treacherous, waterlogged walking conditions with a mixture of deep tussock grass, clumps of heather and the occasional hidden rock.

This was Christmas 2006 at 4.30pm. Night has just fallen and with it a mist has thickened, reducing visibility to 50 metres. The temperature is about 4 degrees and falling.

A lone and somewhat aged walker with only a dog for company, has covered so many miles in a state of increasing uncertainty as to his whereabouts and fallen so many times that he realises he is at the point of exhaustion.

How did this come about? Well, Christmas Day morning in the balmy lowlands of Doncaster had dawned pleasantly. Not too cold and with a hazy sunshine. Too hasty a decision was made to take a walk in the Peak District. Excitement, carelessness, over-confidence in his knowledge of the area, led to setting off without all the things he knows to be essential – and in particular map, compass, extra protection against the cold, something to drink and high calorie rations. The warnings appeared as he neared Longshaw Estate car park – a light fog lay over the hills – but there were plenty of people about. He trusted his memory of the routes and was in too much of a hurry to leave a note of his intentions in his car. So he set off at 11.00am on the three hour oval, across what he did not know to be called Bog Moor, and back along the edges.



BASECAMP ESTABLISHED

Well done for launching the National Supporters Group for Mountain Rescue (England & Wales). I'm a member of a lowland search team in Sussex (mole hills and not mountains unfortunately for us). We don't profess to be crag or mountain rescuers but the police do use our search skills, which is good for the community spirit etc.

We've been low on call outs until last weekend when we worked with teams from Hampshire and Dorset looking for a misper near Andover.

I subscribed to the MR magazine back in February this year. An excellent publication with some extremely interesting and informative articles. My copy has been well and truly used within our members. I have added a link to the subscription page to our own forum so hopefully you should get some of our team subscribing soon.

I would like to join the Basecamp Group and therefore will be sending a cheque and form for £24 today. As I am already

It was a classical complex of traps for the hillwalker and they all worked.

Back to Big Moor at 4.30pm... realising his exhaustion, the walker looks for something substantial to shelter against. Perhaps half an hour's rest against a stunted oak, leaning at a comfortable angle will set him up. It does not, and he fears help is needed. He has decent clothing and, by chance, his mobile phone and a whistle.

At this stage he blames anyone but himself, but could it be that the two people he has sought direction from had been so unclear – both managed to direct him without using the words 'left' and 'right'. What does it mean, 'Go past the reservoir' when it should have added 'leaving it on your left or right'? What does it mean, 'Turn by the stream' when it should have been 'Turn left or right by the stream'?

Reluctantly, the walker telephones Sheffield police on his mobile. The communications officer is concerned and helpful and takes all the relevant details and difficulties. Fortunately, the walkers' memory of Barbrook Reservoir and his sense of whereabouts in relation to it are good. The police officer promises to act. He tells the walker to leave his mobile switched on. No sooner has the walker thanked him than there is a flash on the phone. 'Battery low. Switching off!'

About five hours pass. By now, the walker is cursing himself for his own failings. he is very cold and wet, The dog constantly circles him, warning off a host of invisible wild things that come to investigate. There are thoughts of mortality, but

receiving the magazine please don't send two copies, just add the extra £24 to the donation kitty. I would however appreciate you sending some of the stickers, badges etc etc. I have an eight year old daughter who loves plastering her bedroom window with stickers and also collects sew on badges to go with her Brownie badges. Keep up the good work.

Paul Brooks

Great to have such positive feedback and to know the mag is read far beyond the initial distribution! Thanks for your support.

While we're on the subject, should our colleagues in the lowland teams, subscribers or support members care to offer contributions for consideration, you can contact me at editor@mountain.rescue.org.uk.

To join Basecamp contact Neil Roden c/o White Cottage, 9 Main Road, Grindleford, Hope Valley, Derbyshire S32 2JN or check out the website – mountain.rescue.org.uk

death is acceptable, not frightening. Anger at himself and regret at failing to do more of the nice things in life, and at not making a will so his dog would be looked after, are the emotions and thoughts uppermost. There has been no sign of rescue and the walker would not blame potential rescuers for calling it off in the fog which is now thick. He thinks of the pictures he has seen of the unfortunates around Leningrad in the last world war, lying grotesquely frozen, their hands reaching up to the heavens. Nevertheless, he blows and keeps blowing the whistle. Just in case.

Then there is a faint lightening on his visual horizon – or is it an optical illusion? Suddenly a bright emerald light low down to the ground appears and zigzags towards him. Can this be help and, if so, what sort? Or is it one of those strange lights in the wilderness beloved of the Brothers Grimm? The walker tries to stand three times and each time falls backwards through lack of strength. The whistle blows and blows.

Torches appear through the fog. Comes the cry 'Keep blowing, mate!' and then, 'Is that you, David?' A friendly dog called Biscuit washes my face and explains the green light.

The rescuers are superbly organised and understanding. Quickly they radio to others that the walker is found. An exact location is identified by radio positioning. The walker is protected with sleeping bag and foul weather tent and later a vacuum bag, and is given constant cheering company and conversation, and a big dose of High Force, which is calorific in the extreme. This is the Edale mountain rescue team, called out by Derbyshire police, Bakewell, who had been alerted by Sheffield. Searchers come from all directions, now reinforced by the Woodhead team.

The walker is relieved but suddenly embarrassed at having caused all this. There is no need. 'Don't worry, David' a successful rescue like this gives us joy and satisfaction. You see, this is what we do!

Three teams of six are used to stretcher the casualty off the moor. Their training and discipline are excellent. Some carry, others light their way and guide around and over obstacles. Every move is well rehearsed. It is hard work, enlightened by good humoured conversation.

On arrival at the nearest car park, police are waiting to help and a paramedic team who give a thorough examination. Transfer is made back to the Longshaw car park where hot soup and a Mars Bar are welcome treats. There now followed the nearest thing to a party one can imagine on such a night in such a place.

Given the all clear, the chastened walker left quietly, realising that if you set off to the south east thinking it is south west, ultimately you will end up not where you expect to be!

The walker looked around from his car as perhaps 25 to 30 people talked happily amongst themselves. Not one person grumbled or complained though several had come from far afield. They are remarkable people.

David Collier



**International Commission
for Mountain Emergency
Medicine ICAR MEDCOM**



Spring 2007. Patterdale.

Patterdale MRT and Mountain Rescue (England & Wales) hosted the Spring meeting during the glorious weather of late April. Using the Rescue Centre for the Commission's work sessions and the ABMSAC Starkey hut for overnight accommodation, delegates were able to see many facets of British mountaineering and mountain rescue. Indeed, on the first evening, two persons obliged and fell off Helvellyn, allowing the delegates to see the Patterdale team and an RAF Sea King helicopter spring into action. No tame demonstrations required!

The International Commission for Alpine Rescue (ICAR) was formed in 1948 when a group of guides, doctors and rescue team members from five countries – Austria, France, Germany, South Tyrol and Switzerland – met to discuss their common concern, that the rescue of those in difficulties in the mountains should transcend national boundaries. Since this embryonic stage ICAR has expanded to represent 30 national mountain rescue organisations from Europe and North America. Other organisations from South America, South Africa and Nepal benefit as corresponding members. ICAR promotes and disseminates best rescue practice, and proactively talks to national and international organisations to ensure that the needs of those injured in the mountains receive the best possible care. The Medical Commission, unlike the Avalanche, Terrestrial, and Air Commissions, meets twice a year; the Spring meeting being a small gathering of ten to twenty doctors, where isolation in the mountains away from the plush hotels of the Autumn General Assembly allows the delegates to concentrate on their work of developing recommendations for the treatment of the injured. This was the first time an ICAR had come to England, so it was important to show MR at its best. The purpose built facilities at the Patterdale Rescue Centre certainly impressed.

This year, fourteen delegates representing Austria, Bosnia, England and Wales, France, Italy, Norway, Scotland, South Tyrol, Spain and Switzerland attended. The main topic was a flow chart for the treatment of shock – a life-threatening condition that requires careful assessment and management if its high mortality rate is to be reduced. The flowchart and accompanying article will be published in an international scientific journal and then spread to all member countries.

Equally important to the work of the commission are the making of friends, and the sharing of experiences and ideas. This was immensely successful in Patterdale as delegates felt 'at home' in the Rescue Centre. The social side of the meeting was sealed with a walk over the Helvellyn edges on Saturday morning. The photograph confirms the stunning weather.

To thank Mountain Rescue (England & Wales) for supporting the meeting, the delegates travelled over 'the Struggle' to Ambleside on Saturday afternoon to present six short lectures to mountain rescue doctors and casualty carers. The subjects and their illustrious speakers certainly stimulated the audience, who then had a chance to talk with the delegates at Langdale Ambleside's base over an excellent supper. This was a fitting end to both the MR (England & Wales) medical day and the ICAR MEDCOM meeting.

Lectures included Crevasse rescue of the seriously ill on the Matterhorn (Dr Oliver Reisten, Emergency Physician & Head of Alpine Rescue Centre, Air Zermatt, Switzerland); Use of the mouth-to-mask device in Basic Life Support (Dr Peter Paal, Anaesthetist & ICU Specialist, Innsbruck, Austria; Managing shock in mountain rescue (Dr Gunter Sumann, Anaesthetist & ICU Specialist, Innsbruck, Austria); Safety equipment in avalanche accidents (Dr Herman Brugger, President IKAR Medcom. GP & Associate Professor, Innsbruck University, South Tyrol; Suspension syndrome – avoiding it! (Dr Xavier Ledoux, Anaesthesiologist, St Martin, British Virgin Islands & Grenoble, France; Diploma in Mountain Medicine – Rescue module (Dr Fidel Elsensohn, Vice President, IKAR Medcom. GP, Austria).

Convenient hot drinks in any conditions

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Kevin Griffiths, Rescue Officer for Mines Rescue Service Ltd, uses Drinkpacs on call outs, saying 'they're small and convenient, the soup warms you up when it's cold and they work great with a flask of hot water – I'm not stuck with just tea or coffee.'

Drinkpacs have a two year shelf life, are completely waterproof and remain intact no matter how much they get battered inside a rucksack. The average weight is just 16g and the easy-pull tab is ideal when you're wearing gloves or fingers are numb from the cold. All your favourite brands are available – Gold Blend, PG Tips, a range of hot chocolates and soups and Fairtrade varieties.

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You can contact Drinkmaster on 0800 373 515 or email info@drinkmaster.co.uk for more information and we're also available on the web at **www.drinkmaster.co.uk**.

Openhouse break new ground with micrAgard

Openhouse has launched micrAgard, a ground breaking, new anti-microbial product, unique in its type. Created and developed entirely by Openhouse, one of the UK's leading suppliers of bags and outdoor products, micrAgard is a cutting edge innovation, and the product of over two years of research and development.

Produced for maximum strength, durability and protection, the micrAgard product can now be specified on a wide range of our bags – for no extra cost. From extreme sports bags and gear for the outdoors, to travel bags or first aid kits, micrAgard contains the following properties and benefits:

It is fluid repellent, flame retardant to aircraft standard, completely rot-proof, lightweight, waterproof and entirely anti-microbial for total hygiene reassurance.

Rob Smith, Project Manager from Openhouse commented, 'At Openhouse we are very proud of this innovation in protective material. There really is nothing else on the market like the micrAgard product, with it's incredibly versatile, robust properties and ultra-protective design. Bags made with micrAgard combine the very latest design technologies with over 30 years of expertise in the traditional craft of hand finishing and quality control.'

Exclusive to Openhouse, micrAgard is now available in a number of different colours, is easy to handle and comes with full washing and caring instructions included.

Managing Director at Openhouse, Brian Jones added, 'We have a company ethos which strives for constant innovation and excellence, in order to create stronger, safer, higher performance products that make a real difference – wherever you are. For hard-wearing kit you can depend on, proven to perform, and able to endure even the toughest of terrains and most challenging of conditions – look for the micrAgard seal.' For more information, please contact the Openhouse sales team on **0151 647 4044** or email sales@openhouseproducts.com

...With a Little Help from my Friends...

There's a whole world of support out there for trustees – if you know where to look

When we set up Cornwall SRT, four and half years ago, I was surprised at the lack of support available. About two years later, I changed jobs – now working in the voluntary sector – and I quickly realised the help is there. You just have to know where to look.

The Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) is a big player across the country but it is generally made up of relatively small organisations, often quite fragmented, and supported by a chronically under-funded infrastructure. Having said that, it has become adept at working wonders on a limited budget. I have outlined here some of the support that should be available, which I hope will be of use to team trustees and committee members. Organisations may go under different names in different parts of the country so you may need to do a bit of internet or library research.

Volunteer Centres

The organisation I work for runs volunteer centres in Cornwall. These exist across the country under the supportive eye of Volunteering England. They will happily help you recruit volunteers for teams. They probably won't find you prospective team members, but may be able to find suitable support team members and/or trustees. Their service is free and some may also offer additional support like reference checks and CRBs if you require them.

Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS)

Often co-located with volunteer centres, these help develop the capacity of the sector. This may include offering training on governance, fundraising and bid writing. CVSs also provide a wealth of information on other help available like IT support. (May have renamed as Council for Voluntary Action (CVA))

Voluntary Sector Forum

Go by a variety of names but essentially provide a local voice for the voluntary sector. Can be useful way of networking with other organisations in your area and can represent your views at local, regional and national level. They are often the first stop for the public sector when wishing to consult with the voluntary sector.

Andy Brelsford is Chair of Cornwall SRT. He is employed as Support & Development Manager for Cornwall Centre for Volunteers.

Every second counts!

The Auto-Eject and Eurocharger are synonymous with reliable starting of emergency and standby vehicles. No more ripped-out cables, and the battery is always in top condition. Manufactured to the highest standards for long life application under all conditions, and proven in the U.K. market with more than 7,000 systems sold to ambulance, fire, police, rescue services and M.O.D. users over 12 years – truly the industry standard. New to our wide range of battery controllers is our CANpower power management system. This programmable modular product links its units by CANbus for great flexibility and ease of installation, and the first version controls alternator charge dividing to unlimited numbers of battery systems within one vehicle by just adding a module per battery. See our range on www.ludomcgurk.co.uk or call 01625 527673 for details and our latest catalogue.



CALDER VALLEY VEHICLE WITH AUTO-EJECT FITTED IN FRONT WING

Dream, explore, discover with confidence

Safety on the hills is always of critical importance and the Zaptag Emergency Record delivers an innovative way for individuals to carry their own emergency information and medical history on a user-friendly memory stick. Individuals can update and manage the information held on their Zaptag, which is easily available when they may need it most.


Zaptag is ideal for adventure sports or emergency responders who want the peace by mind of carrying their essential medical records and emergency information on their person. With 256mb or 512 mb memory capacity, Zaptag also works well as a travel companion as you can save files scans and photos such as passport pages, travel itinerary information and vaccination records and have easy access to documents while abroad.

Zaptag Managing Director, Ian Gallifant, is keen to highlight the life saving benefit of having medical records easily accessible in emergencies. 'With the continued advancement of new technologies coupled with the everyday reliance on computers in our lives, everyone can now benefit from quick access to personal medical records should the need arise.'

Each Zaptag comes loaded with software for the individual to complete and personalise. Additional personal information can be added under a security password – but, in case of emergency, the Zaptag will only reveal the critical details for use by medics. First responders or medical personnel can quickly access accurate medical data such as name, age and next of kin, allergies and medication by simply inserting the Zaptag USB drive into any computer. In the event a patient is unconscious, the Zaptag is designed to display select critical medical information as previously authorised by the patient.

The next exciting upgrade soon to be released will enable users to take their Zaptag to their GP to have a complete download of their clinical medical records currently held by their GP.

For a free sample and mountain rescue team support, contact Ian Gallifant +44 (0) 8456 120510 or email sales@zaptag.com.



QUARTERLY INCIDENT REPORT FOR ENGLAND AND WALES JANUARY-MARCH 2007

The following is a listing of the number of incidents attended by MR teams in England and Wales during the period from 01/01/2007 to 31/03/2007. It is grouped by region and shows the date (day/month) the incident began. It is not comprehensive as many incidents have yet to be reported.

Lake District		Peak District	
Cockermouth	23/02	Buxton	16/01, 16/01, 18/01, 22/01, 23/01, 23/01, 25/01
Coniston	12/01, 01/02, 03/02, 14/02, 23/02, 12/03		04/02, 04/02, 07/02, 09/02, 14/02, 17/02, 18/02
Duddon & Furness	04/01, 08/02, 19/02, 23/02		22/02, 26/02, 03/03, 18/03
Kendal	03/01, 22/01, 20/02, 23/02, 03/03, 03/03, 18/03	Derby	09/02, 25/02
	26/03	Edale	13/01, 16/01, 21/01, 28/01, 07/02, 08/02, 09/02
Keswick	03/01, 06/01, 06/01, 19/01, 07/02, 08/02, 10/02		14/02, 17/02, 18/02, 22/02, 26/02, 04/03, 14/03
	18/02, 18/02, 19/02, 23/02, 27/03, 31/03		17/03, 18/03, 18/03
Kirkby Stephen	03/02, 23/02	Glossop	04/03
Langdale Ambleside	07/01, 07/01, 12/01, 14/01, 19/01, 03/02, 03/02	Kinder	21/01, 26/01, 26/01, 27/01, 22/02, 18/03
	05/02, 07/02, 16/02, 18/02, 23/02, 23/02, 02/03	Oldham	13/01, 25/01, 30/01, 05/02, 09/02, 11/02, 10/03
	03/03, 03/03, 08/03, 21/03, 28/03		20/03, 22/03
Penrith	20/01, 18/02, 23/02, 24/02, 03/03	Woodhead	21/01, 04/02, 25/02
Wasdale	07/01, 19/02		
Mid-Pennine		South Wales	
Bolton	01/01, 01/01, 09/01, 11/01, 18/01, 21/01, 23/01	Brecon	03/01, 27/01, 03/02, 14/02, 26/02, 08/03, 13/03
	26/01, 28/01, 10/02, 11/02, 11/02, 16/02, 17/02		14/03
	24/02, 25/02, 01/03, 04/03, 19/03, 29/03	Western Beacons	03/01, 27/01, 03/02, 22/02, 13/03, 31/03
Bowland Pennine	03/01, 15/02, 23/02, 04/03, 09/03, 17/03, 31/03	Central Beacons	03/01, 30/01, 03/02, 14/02, 14/02, 03/03, 07/03
Calder Valley	04/03		13/03, 31/03
Holme Valley	06/01, 22/03	Longtown	14/02, 07/03
Rossendale & Pendle	11/01, 04/03, 27/03, 31/03, 31/03		
NE England		South West England	
Cleveland	13/01, 23/01, 31/01, 04/02, 04/02, 26/02, 03/03	Cornwall	01/01, 01/01, 01/01, 27/01, 06/03
	24/03, 25/03, 29/03	Dartmoor	21/01, 16/02, 04/03, 04/03
Northumberland NP	10/01, 11/01, 18/01, 30/01, 03/02, 03/02, 11/02	Exmoor	13/01, 17/02, 23/02, 14/03
	24/02, 27/02, 08/03		
North of Tyne	18/01, 27/02, 04/03, 08/03	Yorkshire Dales	
Scarborough & District	23/01	CRO	01/01, 03/01, 07/01, 23/02, 17/03
Swaledale	31/01, 04/03	Upper Wharfedale	03/01, 16/02, 23/02, 01/03
Teesdale & Weardale	05/01, 31/01, 10/02, 22/03, 22/03, 25/03		
North Wales		RAF	
Aberglaslyn	15/01, 29/01, 24/02, 10/03	RAF Stafford	08/03
Llanberis	05/01, 22/01, 29/01, 03/02, 03/02, 03/02, 05/02	RAF Valley	15/01, 03/02, 03/02, 24/02
	24/02, 03/03, 08/03		
North East Wales	05/01, 23/01	SARDA	
Ogwen Valley	01/01, 10/01, 26/01, 10/02, 14/02, 18/02, 20/02	SARDA (England)	16/01, 18/01, 31/01, 22/02, 23/02, 04/03, 14/03
	24/02, 30/03		17/03, 22/03, 22/03, 25/03
Outward Bound Wales	28/01, 31/01, 11/02, 08/03, 11/03	SARDA (Lakes)	03/01, 22/01, 03/02, 03/02, 14/02, 15/02, 23/02
South Snowdonia	07/01	SARDA (Wales)	05/01, 05/01, 15/01, 23/01, 29/01, 14/02, 15/02
Snowdonia Nat Park	03/02	SARDA (South Wales)	03/01, 03/01, 26/01, 27/01, 30/01, 14/02, 22/02
			07/03, 31/03
		Non specialists (Non MR)	
		18/02	

Support Mountain Rescue

Now you can support mountain rescue and benefit all the teams in England and Wales. For £24 per year for a single membership, £42 for joint membership you will receive a Supporter's badge, car sticker and four issues of Mountain Rescue Magazine – January, April, July and October – delivered direct to your door.

Interested? Fill in the form below and return to Neil Roden White Cottage, 9 Main Road, Grindleford, Hope Valley, Derbyshire S32 2JN

Yes, I am interested in supporting Mountain Rescue (England & Wales) – please send me details of Support Membership.

Name _____

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Postcode _____

Telephone number _____

Email address _____

Posh gets a strop on. Great headline, we mused, as we kicked our heels by the tarmac at a windswept RAF Valley. It was a lighthearted play on words, you understand – Posh being the sobriquet I somehow acquired at the same time as team membership, the strop that vital loop of leather which allows the winching in and out of a hovering Sea King. Banter prompted by our suddenly empty day, once so full of promise, now with little else to do but eat our way through the contents of our rucksacks.

We'd come down to Valley – a small group of trainees and three experienced team members – to learn the ropes, as it were. It started out as a bit of a 'jolly' (a vague attempt, I confess on my part at least, to deny the fearfully trembling anticipation lying only just beneath the surface). Tea and bacon butties en route, catch up on the goss, mugs of tea before the safety briefing on board the aircraft, and plenty of dark humour from our winchman/paramedic Chas about the imminent death awaiting us should we grab the wrong this, clutch the wrong that – all very entertaining, despite the serious lessons to be learned. And the opportunity, the only opportunity as it transpired, to experience said leather strop, demonstrated from the comfort of a bum firmly in seated position, in a resolutely parked aircraft. If that's what you call it when they're stationary.

Then it was back to the mess for another brew and an hour or so spent practicing it for real. Gulp. Or that was the plan. And you know what happen when you make plans.

No sooner had our bums left those aircraft seats than 'Bing Bong!' went the station tannoy. 'Job on,' said Chas. Female casualty had apparently fallen above the Ffynnon Llugwy Reservoir in Snowdonia. As it was a mountain job, and at this stage unclear whether the Oggi team had been called, Chas requested that Andy and Barry (Rossendale & Pendle team leader and deputy) assist him. Whisked off to the Ops Room, via the boots of their respective cars for appropriate kit, they emerged moments later complete with flying helmets to enable access to radio traffic. We watched them board the aircraft and disappear into the gathering Welsh cloud.

Abandoned by our leaders and locked inside a military base, there was nothing more to be done than loaf on the leather sofas, fight for the remote control, catch up on the tabloids, and avail ourselves of the Valley tea caddy. All the while believing they'd be back in a mo and our training would resume.

Even when the craft returned two hours

later, and we watched, eager cameras at the ready, for our two to deplane. No sign. Out went the fuel tanker, back came the fuel tanker and up went the aircraft. Ah they've stayed on, we thought. Word came they'd left the winchie at the site. Rumour had it there were now two casualties, the second a heart attack, and incredibly from the same party. But where were our two? Jammy beggars! A proper job! And still we believed we'd get a go.

Even when the craft returned again. Back out went the fuel tanker. Ah, here comes the winchman... Then back came the fuel tanker and back went the winchman. But still no sign. They're off to Leeds now, someone said. Hospital transfer. What?! Are our two walking back? And – still – we wondered about the possibility... but an afternoon of tea and music channels had taken its toll. People had parties to get home to, beer to drink. Then in came a member of the ground crew – sorry but training's off. You can go home. Just as well really, we've run out of tea bags.

And almost simultaneously, a call from Andy. They were en route to Oggi base. Could we drive up there to meet them? So off we set up the A5, musing all the while on their luck at getting to play with the helicopter for real! God how wrong can anyone be?

Back at Oggi base, I was fortunate enough to sit in on the debrief. I heard of the tragedy that had unfolded, and the sheer professionalism of this small group of volunteers in dealing with its consequences, as we'd bantered our way restlessly through an idle afternoon.

Who knows what passed through his head that morning, as Sgt Paul Upton prepared to join his companions in the gruelling Welsh 1,000 Metre Peaks Race? Doubtless he was fit, doubtless he had been training for many months for this very day.

The 22 mile race, with its 8000 foot of climb, has been run in Snowdonia on the first Saturday in June since the 1970s and has a long history of military participation, attracting competitors from the Army and running clubs across the UK. Competitors set off from the Menai Straits before running up the Carneddau Mountains, through the Ogwen Valley, over Pen y Pass and on up Snowdon. Not for the fainthearted.

Somewhere above the Ffgynnon Llugwy Reservoir, as he crossed Carnedd Llewelyn, Sgt Upton lost his footing and fell 150 metres to his death.

The disjointed information which filtered through to us at RAF Valley was no less confusing to those at Oggi base. The initial call from North Wales police, at 10.55am, had indeed suggested that a woman had fallen and been unconscious with injuries. Land and air ambulances were en route and the ARCC contacted regarding 22 Squadron. The map reference, plus the information regarding ambulance resources, gave the impression the

incident was at, or very near to, the road head at the dam.

Ten minutes later, a call from the police stated the air ambulance was not attending – just as it flew overhead the casualty site! Another five minutes and another call suggested there was also a 35 year old male with a heart attack – at a similar grid reference.

Chris Lloyd, from the Ogwen team, called the informant who confirmed there was only one incident, the road ambulance was at the road head but the casualty was, in fact, 200 metres away. The air ambulance radioed in saying it was unable to assist on the steep ground and that 22 were already on site. 22 Squadron radioed in stating this was a fatality and, in line with Fatal Incident Protocol, Oggi troops would now be required at the scene.

Meanwhile, our boys on the aircraft listened to the radio traffic as the Sea King flew across Anglesey, following the A5 as it meanders through the Ogwen Valley towards Capel Curig, before turning left just after Ogwen Cottage and up the hill to circle the reservoir. It would be a snatch and run, Chas explained, his intention to treat the casualty as an MI. He would go down with either Andy or Barry, then the other, their task to perform CPR and bag and mask. The basket stretcher would be lowered, casualty loaded and winched and off would fly Chas, leaving Andy and Barry to fend for themselves on the hill.

As they approached the lake, they saw several vehicles, including the land ambulance, and Helimed was just leaving. The casualty lay on very rocky ground and it didn't look good, so down went Chas alone. As the aircraft came out of the hover and flew a couple of orbits round the reservoir, he quickly diagnosed life extinct – a heart attack brought on by massive trauma. No longer a snatch and run, this was now a job for the coroner.

Leaving the winchie with the body, the Sea King transported our two back to Oggi base, in exchange for Oggi team leader Jed Stone and Chris, who still believed this to be a simple fatal heart attack incident. Only as they approached the cas site did they realise this was going to be more unpleasant.

In line with the Fatal Incident Protocol, as requested by North Wales police, the area had to be thoroughly photographed and recorded. Aware that 22 might not be available for too long, given the shift in urgency, Jed requested the collection of further troops and kit. Back to the site went our two with a couple of Oggi boys, then the aircraft returned to refuel.

'This gave us valuable time to gather and record evidence before we bagged the body and readied it for the winch up,' explained Chris. 'The aircraft returned with another two troops and some technical kit. The body was then moved from the mountainside and we set about trying to find the cause of the accident.'



As they ascended the steep grass and scree slope they identified evidence of the fall. Clods of earth and impact marks, and the everyday detritus of our outdoor life – a Mars bar, Nutrigrain bar, a shoe and a sock, a map – each marked with an orange flag. Soon a fall line became obvious – a diagonal straight line from the body to a point two thirds of the way up the hill, and the foot of a 50 metre vertical crag.

As team members made their way round to the top of the crag, they identified a departure point. Anchors were set up and John Hulse, Oggi team leader, abseiled down the line. He found scuff marks and part of a water container.

Finally, all the evidence was photographed, bagged and sealed with the relevant GPS reference, and then signed for. By 3.00pm they had left the scene for the Oggi Land Rover parked at the road head, some ten minutes away.

Back at Oggi base, having potted under the valley under late afternoon sunshine, I watched the Land Rover meander down the hill and along the road to Bryn Poeth, still little appreciating the tragedy my fellow team mates had become embroiled in. Jed's firm reiteration that, if anyone had been emotionally affected they could access the critical incident experts at North Wales police for guidance, underlined that this was no ordinary call out. I recalled Barry, in similar circumstances on our own patch, reminding team members that despite his thirty years as a serving police officer – and more than enough death and trauma – he still never knew when an incident might come back and bite him. Frame of mind, time of month, family conflicts, emotional stress, personal bereavement, whatever. So many other factors in the mix at any one time. Experience does not inure you to horror.

And, as we set off back to Lancashire, Jed, John and Chris remained at Bryn Poeth, collating the information. Later, a police officer came to collect the evidence and rolls of film and the following day, Jed collated a more thorough report.

As press officer, Chris spent Monday fielding calls from the press, many picking up on a comment to the BBC about the weather. 'There was a very big change. They would have started in a beautiful sunny, clear, blue sky but would rapidly have climbed up into heavy cloud and would have relied on good navigation to find their way.'

Despite speculation that the change was unpredicted, a Met Office spokesman suggested their forecast for Snowdonia had said cloud would thicken and lower into the

afternoon and that the cloud base would be around 500 metres (1640 foot).

Wherever the truth lies, should organisers still have gone ahead? Chris saw no reason why not. 'It's a navigational exercise and that's part of the challenge. There was no wind or rain and, though cloud is an adverse condition, it's not an extreme condition. You frequently get it on the summits so I see nothing wrong with running the race with a bit of cloud covering. There were no strong winds and the weather was mild. You just have to take your time and be careful with your navigation.'

'Whilst the low cloud probably contributed to this tragic accident, the differing weather forecasts did not.'

So back to normality, whatever that may be. For the family and friends of Paul Upton, and for those running the race with him, it may never be quite the same again. A thirty seven year old divorced father of two, he was still young, still serving in the 1st Battalion the Parachute Regiment, based at Brize Norton, still looking forward to the active life ahead of him.

For team members, the image of his death may fade into the background, emerging again when least expected, a haunting moment of sadness. And it affects us all. One of our party had spent the day worrying whether the 'female casualty' was in fact one of his mates, out on the hill in that same area whilst he was 'playing with helicopters'. Even as he drove away from RAF Valley he'd had little reassurance this was not the case. Doubtless he was somewhat relieved to meet with them again, safe and sound.

Chris Lloyd spent Saturday evening at a fiftieth birthday party thinking about a widow and fatherless children. Andy travelled home the 120 miles to Bury and a family outing to the local pub garden. Pint in hand, he gazed at the sky. What should fly overhead but the very Sea King from which he had been winched to an unforgiving Welsh mountainside not six hours earlier – en route back from Leeds. What are the chances of that?

And as for me... clearly I wasn't witness to the incident but, hearing the debrief and Barry's account of the day en route back home, the image of another similar death in a local quarry, sprang to mind and stayed with me for the evening, superimposed on the events of the day.

I was also reminded – in the light of our forthcoming 75th anniversary celebrations – that the spirit of voluntarism, the care and concern for a fellow mountaineer (not to mention the skill base) which drove our predecessors to form a more organised mountain rescue service, is still alive and well in our mountain rescuers today. Long may that continue.

Judy Whiteside
Rossendale & Pendle MRT

The train now leaving Platform Two will not be arriving at Glasgow Central Station...

Shortly after 20:30hrs on the evening of Friday 23 February, the 17:15 Virgin Pendolino service from London Euston pulled out of Oxenholme Station in Cumbria, northbound towards Glasgow. Onboard were 111 passengers and four Virgin rail employees.

No more than five minutes later, as the train was travelling at 95 miles an hour, it crossed points at Lambrigg, just south of the village of Grayrigg, left the rails and travelled for another 600 metres, plunging down the embankment before coming to a halt on land at Bracken Hall Farm.

When my Leader Group pager went off I knew this job was going to be different. The brief message mentioned 'Train Crash' and to contact a telephone number I did not recognise. But I did recognise the location – Cross Houses Farm, Lambrigg. It's a farm I had looked at purchasing some fifteen years earlier, and is now owned by close friends.

I spoke to the control room, paged the team and, given the possible scale of the incident, asked that Langdale Ambleside and Penrith teams be mobilised too.

Whilst I grabbed my kit, my partner phoned Cross Houses Farm and spoke to the owner, Caroline Fry. Her husband Paul was outside helping passengers from the train and walking wounded were already finding their way into her kitchen.

Cutting through back lanes I went direct to Cross Houses, talking to Base on the radio. Kendal Mobile 1 was en route. The narrow lane was already blocked by emergency service vehicles. Mobile 1 pulled up right behind me. I did a quick tour of the yard and tried to locate control. There was none! A senior police officer said it was around the other side at Bracken Hall Farm. A quick dash back to the vehicles and in the nick of time some deft car park attendant duties from a team member allowed us to reverse out of the developing chaos. We picked up the Emergency Medical Crash Team from Lancaster Royal Infirmary, who were found wandering round the lanes and beat a retreat for Bracken Hall. It was clear we were unlikely to get there because of the sheer number of blue light vehicles trying to do the same thing, so we parked on the main road, grabbed essential kit and hoofed it about half a mile to the farmyard.

There were many more walking wounded on



Incident report... the tales behind the stats...

The Casualty Clearing Station

February 23 is always important to me – it’s my birthday! This year, I arrive home at 8.20pm after a 12 hour day at the practice. A few family and friends are there – my husband, Paul, has arranged a surprise birthday curry. We crack open a bottle and sit down to the meal when our pagers go off, ‘Major Incident – train crash at Grayrigg, control ASAP’.

Rapid apologies as Paul and I throw on some kit, grab our maps and torches, switch on the radio and head towards the scene. We radio in to Base and get the grid reference of the access point. As we approach the incident, a sea of blue flashing lights invades the night sky. Quickly, we locate KMRST vehicles and the rest of our team and we begin our well-drilled approach to the incident site.

You can’t get there easily. The fields and tracks are a quagmire which we wade through laden with stretchers, casbags, oxygen and Entonox cylinders and medical equipment. I appoint some folk to ‘stay near me with the medical kit’, while other members assume their roles as radio operators, leaders, runners, scribes etc.

My first glimpse of the fated Pendolino fills me with abject horror. I am about 100 yards from the train that is partially lit by Fire & Rescue Service floodlights. It appears to have fallen down the embankment and the carriages are skewed at odd angles – one of them seems to have upended. There isn’t enough light to see the carriages have not crumpled, so I shiver at the thought of tens dead and many more with horrific injuries, trapped inside amidst twisted, broken metal, darkness and fear. Fortunately, I am prepared. As well as being a GP, I’ve worked in an A&E department. I regularly update myself with pre-hospital emergency care courses, where we train with paramedics, doctors, nurses and the fire services, to deal with the approach to trauma victims with multiple injuries. I also teach the lay KMRST team members skills in immediate casualty care.

I am familiar with the Major Accident plan. Doctors and paramedics are needed to take on leadership of the medical teams. These roles have been assumed by the time I arrive. Doctors may be needed to attend at the sharp end, with passengers trapped on scene. This requires advanced skills such as the ability to anaesthetise – fortunately I know there are some A&E consultants here as well as mountain rescue doctors with advanced skills who have arrived before me in their guise as BASiCs doctors. Doctors like me with ‘middle-grade’ experience in emergency care need to deal with the stretcher cases. Other medics will treat the walking wounded.

So I locate the triage centre beginning to evolve. This is the floor of an outbuilding at Bracken Hall Farm. Casualties arrive on stretchers with coloured cards around their necks stating the priority for evacuation. A few doctors, nurses and paramedics have assembled. As a stretchered man is delivered to the barn, I begin the work. Two KMRST cas carers, Jon and Pierre, come with me. We begin the drill working as a team. Airway with cervical spine, breathing with oxygen, circulation, disability. Our role is to identify and treat life-threatening injuries, and decide priority for evacuation. We also gather essential medical information and details of next of kin. The medical card must remain tied to the casualty at all times as he will journey through many stages before being delivered to hospital for definitive care. Nervously, I manage to get a line into his vein and administer some welcome pain relief.

Mountain rescue medical kit is only designed to treat two, perhaps three casualties. We start to think of the potential numbers of casualties and ask KMSRT members to start scavenging incoming ambulances for gloves, clinical waste bags, needles, syringes and medication. The outbuilding begins to feel like an organised medical facility. A paramedic is managing the flow of casualties in and out. We are aware there is some delay and casualties can only be moved three at a time by helicopters. My man will have to wait, which is unfortunate – I think he has internal bleeding as his vital signs are deteriorating. Jon and Pierre monitor him while I assess another casualty.

I am moved. She arrives with a walking wounded buddy who she has met after the crash, together on the ceiling of a carriage. I hear for the first time the now familiar description of the train hitting something and then swaying from side-to-side before careering off the banking. They tell me people were calm and helped each other. I am amazed by their composure, and the girl on the stretcher asks the names of all her rescuers. She is to be married in eight weeks. Emotion takes over and my eyes well with tears, but she is OK and I tell her she is OK and she is very happy.

More time passes. My team colleagues have moved all the casualties out and we wait in anticipation. Then the rumour begins there are no more casualties. My first thought is that there must be many dead. I remember scenes of hospitals in New York in the aftermath of 911 preparing for multiple casualties, but there were few.

I wander outside to stare at the wreckage. Passengers warm themselves round an open fire, drinking tea from polystyrene cups. I’m passed a bar of chocolate and a bottle of water. While I have been focusing on my small job, a great organisational structure has transformed this farmland. Then, good news, there are no more casualties, because the rest have only minor injuries. A fleeting hint of anti-climax rapidly gives way to overwhelming relief.

I spend a couple more hours at the scene searching neighbouring fields for any survivors who may have wandered off and become lost. At 3am Paul and I drive home. We eat cold Madras and drink warm rosé, then drift-off for well-earned sleep.

Dr Abby Astle Team Doctor Kendal MRT

this side – being ushered to a barn being used as a makeshift casualty clearing station. Directing team members to operate with our doctors, I went off to find the elusive control. ‘Around the other side at Cross Houses,’ said everyone! ‘No it’s not,’ said I!!

I found another senior police officer and off we went into the night – passing tumbled carriages, stepping over fallen high voltage lines and up onto the embankment.

We found a senior fire officer and then a recognised face – Theo Weston, from Patterdale MRT, who had been mobilised in his BASiCs capacity. We had a conflag. We were Control! Where? Surely not up here!! Ok, where? Our Mobile 3 had somehow made it past everyone else and was the forward most vehicle. I radioed for them to put blue lights on – everyone had blue lights on – but at least ours flashed differently! Right – back down there – ‘This way,’ said a fireman, pointing at a rope that ran down the bank, then up and over a carriage. ‘On yer bike,’ I said, and we headed back around the back of the train, over the fallen cables. Reassuringly the fire officer told us they were declared safe. We still stepped over with caution!

Back at the vehicle there was a more structured meeting of minds. The local police superintendent had arrived – another familiar face. The fire brigade control the Hot Zone, taping it off and policing its boundary. A systematic search of the seven carriages starts. Theo requests a scribe and a Kendal team member is delegated to stick to him like glue. We agree to act as forward logging point and it works. Police and ambulance crews arrive, sign in and are despatched.

Other MRTs arrive, including RAF Leeming who had just unpacked their kit at Loweswater when the call went out. They act as marshals for the four helicopters which were starting to shuttle casualties to major accident units further to the south at Lancaster and Preston.

Casualty clearing prioritises and despatches casualties. A bus convoy is organised to get walking wounded away to the local village hall.

Word comes through from Kendal base that more MRT resources are enroute. If there are more casualties on the train we will need more stretchers and carrying parties to get them across the developing sea of mud to the helicopters. The rain and the trampling of hundreds of feet have done their worst! The decision is taken to divert and hold all incoming vehicles at our base, where there is light, food and warmth. That plan soon starts to buckle with the sheer volume of vehicles and well intentioned personnel (at one stage there were over 75 MRT personnel at Kendal).

At KMSRT base in Kendal they close the road outside and get the local church hall opened up. Someone decides to send a raiding party to the local supermarket for a resupply – a call on the radio from one paramedic to see if anyone has a bottle of water has snowballed. By the time the request ends at the local

supermarket it is , ‘We need as much as you have!’ A full pallet is loaded onto a vehicle along with biscuits and Mars bars in bulk, all donated by the supermarket. Well done ASDA!

Back at forward control my mobile rings. It is ambulance control. Somehow they are using my mobile as their main link to the front. They offer an Airshelter, en route from Workington. They can get it to the roadhead but need manpower to move it forward. The job is delegated to Penrith MRT. Figures go off into the night – tales filter back of borrowed Range Rovers. In the end that tent, designated for use at forward control, never materialised. It went back to Workington when the last of the walking wounded found their way to Grayrigg – a fine example of crossed wires.

With the casualty clearing station starting to empty it is still unclear how many passengers were on the train. Have any staggered off into the night, only to collapse out there, undetected? Clearly a search outside the hot zone is needed. This is a major incident and it is obvious fingers will get pointed at some time in the future. I ask for a police search adviser to be appointed. Whilst I openly admit more for personal protection than anything else, it is always better to bounce ideas and formulate search plans together. Large scale maps miraculously turn up – and we quickly sketch out search areas. British Transport Police arrive – declaring it unsafe for anyone other than them to be searching the tracks – major hazards like shifting gravel and steep banks to deal with! We identify four main areas and despatch teams including dogs from SARDA. Eventually every piece of land outside the hot zone is searched out to tarmac. Local residents not already aware of the incident are woken just in case they have given shelter to any of the walking wounded. Nothing is found.

The train is declared clear. Miraculously, with the number of people onboard, the number of casualties is relatively small. Another familiar face appears from the dark – Dr John Ellerton from Patterdale MRT has also been there all night. He was involved with extracting the driver from his cab and had flown with him to hospital. Returning back in the helicopter he says you can see the Cas site for miles because of the sea of blue lights.

Sadly news filters through that an 84 year old female passenger has died in hospital and we know there are others in a critical condition.

We start to gather kit and pack up to go home. International Rescue Corps, who have travelled from a weekend training event in Liverpool on hearing of the incident, start to set up camp for the night in the sea of mud. At least we are going home to warm beds and proper well earned sleep. It is 4.30 am.

The phone rings. Did I dream that? No, the phone is ringing. I fumble on the bedside table and grab it, glancing at the clock in the process. It is 8.30 am. It’s police control. They want the whole lot searching again in daylight!! Getting the brain back in gear, I decide everyone out last night deserves a lie-in, so call on fresh troops – Duddon & Furness, Kirkby Stephen and Bowland



The First Carriage

‘Ok, it’s dark, but then it usually is on the mountain. I clamber up and over a carriage lying on its side, pleased to have my mountain boots and head torch on.

;Doc, in here!’ ‘Is it safe?’ ‘Yes’ So in I go.

The first carriage is on its side and the route in is through the rear. I’m crawling along on my side with gravity pulling me into the seats. I need to stay up in the corridor suspended above (Grade = ‘Moderate’). No broken glass or intrusions, just the occasional splats of blood but with no casualties: this feels safer than I expected.

1st casualty: A, B, C and D; triage ‘Urgent (P2)’ - this is probably a pneumothorax that might... I move on.

2nd casualty: A, B, C and D; triage ‘Urgent (P2)’ but no chance as down a 1.5 metre hole – probably a broken neck the way he is gripping his head with his hands.

A friendly paramedic appears, organised and relaxed, just like arriving in the casualty tent, and it’s warm, very warm. We are soon dripping with sweat.

Cannula, analgesia, KED®, up onto a spinal board and now the chain of firemen passing the casualty all the way to the rear. I follow behind with a closely watching eye: Casualty 1’s chest is holding. This evacuation is better than from Helvellyn’s head wall. Out in the cold, I follow to ‘my’ Sea King. Bonus – it’s from RAF Boulmer and the winchman and I even recognise each other.

‘More worried about this one, Doc!’

3rd casualty: A (obstructed – cleared and opened), B, C and D (responding to pain); a serious head injury...

We set off to Lancaster, and then fly on to Preston. The lights of civilisation appear in the windows: that’s a familiar feeling. Fussing A&E staff but amongst them a senior colleague I know well. I hand over.

Back to the Sea King, there should be euphoria but not this time. We are returning to the scene not to pick up the fell party but for potentially more casualties. However, fortunately our action is over. Home to bed until the next...

Dr John Ellerton MRC Chairman

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Incident report... the tales behind the stats...

press have left and the wreckage has been recovered. The fields at Bracken Hall, which were churned up on the night, had a temporary bridge and road installed to facilitate access for heavy lifting gear needed to recover the train, have all been reseeded and in time will recover.

Within a fortnight the West Coast Main Line was reopened to traffic, and high speed trains once more hurtle their way north past the accident site, their passengers cocooned in their modern shell, as the Cumbrian landscape flies backwards past their windows.

In mountain rescue circles we train for the expected and try to predict the unexpected. From the outset this one was different. No doubt lessons were learned on the night, but the joint efforts of all the emergency services present on the night, and in the days afterwards, brought order to a chaotic situation, and most important of all, got those who needed it to proper medical care in a timely and efficient manner.

The mountain rescue service played its part in that process, and on behalf of Kendal MRT I would like to say a big thanks to all the teams that responded to the incident, whether they made it to the frontline or were held back at base, or turned around whilst en route. It's reassuring to know that on a cold, wet, dark and muddy night we can all come together with one common goal and sort out the job in hand, whether that be the lone walker, lying injured on a mountain side, or the 17:15 from London Euston.

However, I cannot help but think back to a regional meeting only about two months before the incident. In it, the police/mountain rescue rep gave a talk about control systems at major accidents. The thinking behind his presentation was for better understanding of joint emergency service response at incidents like the Carlisle floods. We should have gazed into his crystal ball – the master slide for his presentation was a picture of the Selby train crash!

Andy Dell
Team Leader Kendal MRT

Kit, Logs and the Search Party

'Callout Base ASAP Major Rail Derailment' read the pager, disrupting a quiet Friday night. In the blink of an eye, I'd moved from my sofa to Mobile 2, our people carrier, to the road near the crash site surrounded by a sea of flashing blue lights and reflective jackets. Andy Dell gathered team members together, instructed us to grab what kit we could and move to the main site en masse.

'This is big, really big' I thought, as we passed two Sea King helicopters parked in a field with rotors still going, ready to fly. We found Mobile 3 which had become an incident control point, and those medically trained disappeared to the casualty clearing station. The rest of us had a moment to take in the scene around us – police in yellow reflective jackets, fire and rescue in their brown uniforms, ambulance staff in green and yellow, mountain rescue in red, rail staff in orange, all lit up by blue flashing lights. 'We've half of Cumbria's police force on this site,' I commented to a colleague. 'Nope', they replied, 'it's all of Cumbria's police force'. Lines of tape had been drawn round the main crash site so I couldn't get very close but through the dark I could make out carriages strewn down the embankment. I can hardly believe this is real – Hollywood film makers would be proud of this set.

'We need a stretcher, where is it?' 'I'm sure I've just seen one, who's got it?'

Right, we need to sort and log all the kit. Penrith team had just turned up with their kit, and there was some Langdale Ambleside gear sitting behind Mobile 3 as well as ours, so I grabbed a KISU, laid it out on the ground and sorted out all the equipment on it. I also logged the kit we had and used the list to record where things had gone and who had taken them so we could provide an immediate response to requests. The KISU also provided a barrier against the thick mud that was quickly coating us all and anything we seemed to touch.

More and more people were arriving on the field, floodlights were being manhandled on to the main site (too muddy for the vehicles to reach!), and a request came through for some water so a few of us returned to the road to get all our bottled water and empty our vehicles of anything that may be needed on site. We returned to find groups of people primed and ready to deal with casualties in the remaining carriages when the word came through they were clear – an absolute miracle given the crash scene.

Our thoughts turned to the surrounding fields – we needed to make sure that they were clear too. Search parties were drawn together from available personnel – I was in charge of three police officers, two members of Bowland Pennine team and two Kendal team members, communicating via a couple of Kendal's radios I'd commandeered. Almost as three police officers who were busy

apprehending a member of the press who was lurking around the back of the farm. Suitably dealt with, we continued sweeping the fields and hedges, checking inside buildings for any walking wounded – luckily none was found.

By the time we reached the road the first response stage of the incident was winding down. An RAF MRS vehicle cruised past us on the road. 'Where's the crash site?' they asked. 'I think you're a bit late,' we replied, but we directed him to the traffic officer at the road head.

We piled back into our vehicles and returned to base to be greeted by a man with a pressure hose, washing all the mud off us before we stepped inside the building. There was kit everywhere, still coated in mud, so we sorted it as best we could and headed for our beds.

There was a further search the next morning, to be absolutely certain no one had been lost in the surrounding fields, instead of the training exercise I'd set up for that evening (ironically, night navigation!) we had a full kit clean, sort and tidy up and a team debrief. It was only then we each became aware of how much else had taken place aside from the tasks we were individually involved in at the many locations on the crash site, back at Base, in Kendal and beyond. It was an extraordinary night and a fabulous team effort from everyone involved at all levels.

Larissa Robson
Kendal MRT



Silver Command

At 20:45 the pager went off with a message saying 'Pls Call Ambulance Control Major Incident'. Having got over the initial adrenaline surge, I phoned control to discover the location and incident type. While I gathered a few items together, Dr John Ellerton rang as his pager had also been triggered and offered his help. We agreed to travel down together in our fully kitted out immediate response vehicle, paid for by donations from the local public to the Penrith BASICS Scheme (BEEP Fund Ltd). John made further phone calls to other doctors while en route, including Penrith team doctor and local BASICS doctor, Andy McAlea.

We arrived at about the same time as Andy at the end of the small lane nearest to the site of the crash. The three of us MRT docs then loaded as much emergency kit as we could carry into the back of an ambulance which took us a short way nearer to the train, from where we had to walk to the trackside (I shall never forget a over-enthusiastic press photographer being physically removed from the scene by a policeman as we did so!).

We were led onto the track above the train, which we could just make out in the dark and drizzle, lying on its side at the bottom of the embankment below us. We were told the train was still not safe due to live wires but the front carriage was safe and this contained several seriously injured casualties including the driver. John and Andy instantly volunteered to assist here at Bronze level and promptly disappeared into the gloom leaving me at the initial temporary Silver Command! I then started hastily trying to remember what I had been taught on my MIMMS course 18 months before!

Following our first inter-service briefing shortly after, we decided to relocate Silver Command nearer to the farm below us where the casualty clearing station had already been set up. We then headed off towards a Kendal MRT vehicle which had its blue lights flashing which remained the Silver Command point for the rest of the incident.

When I approached this new location, I was aware firstly of several RAF Sea King helicopters landing and taking off with casualties on board and secondly lots of MR personnel. Both helicopters and mountain rescue personnel were to perform a key role in the smooth running of the whole event. Without the former, we could not have evacuated the most severely injured of the casualties to hospital so swiftly as poor access across several muddy fields and no nearby roads made it impossible to get many ambulances very close. Indeed, by the time Silver Command was effectively set up, a majority of these casualties had been evacuated by helicopter. At this point, we were expecting a second wave of casualties to appear from the other carriages (once they had been made safe), when the waiting masses of MR personnel would have swung into action.

However, this never happened as most of the other passengers had climbed out of the carriages by themselves and had been taken to nearby Grayrigg School. However, a number of MR team members were put to good use evacuating some remaining casualties and one of the best things I did all evening was to collar a spare Kendal MRT member, Kevin, who stuck to my side like glue all evening and acted as my scribe, keeping a log of everything that happened, especially the regular briefings! A tremendously useful asset and made writing up

the report so much easier!

During the evening we made a log of doctors helping at the scene – in total we had 17 doctors. A couple of times, I saw Andy and John in the distance as they sorted out casualties and, during my sorties to visit the casualty clearing station, I bumped into other MR docs such as Abby Astle (Kendal), Tim Sanders (Penrith), Paul Davies (Langdale) and Dave Earnshaw (ex-Langdale). In the casualty clearing station, they treated four P1 casualties (including two with chest injuries, one needing a chest drain, and one head injury), one P2 and five P3s. There were also another 22 with minor injuries that bypassed the CCS and ended up at Grayrigg School.

One of the main problems was communication and, if I had thought at the time, a good solution would have been to have used MR radios. Another potential problem was getting enough medical supplies to the scene, which could have been resolved by using mountain rescue vehicles to ferry kit from the road to the CCS if we had had more seriously injured casualties (though in the event not needed). Also, the weather, the dark and the fact that the location was very inaccessible made conditions extremely difficult but, despite all this, the whole event went very smoothly indeed and the seriously injured were taken to hospital as quickly as possible. Although things could have been a lot worse in terms of casualty numbers, it was great to see all the emergency services, including lots of mountain rescue personnel from various teams and the RAF, working so well together in such difficult conditions.

Theo Weston Patterdale MRT

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The Emergency Services Show is back for 2007, bigger and better than before, at Stoneleigh Park in Coventry, 28-29 November. The scale and nature of recent national incidents has made multi agency collaboration in rescue operations not just preferable but critical. Since last year, the UK has experienced flooding and storms, the Cumbrian train crash, the poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko, the ongoing threat of avian flu, and 'everyday' civil emergencies such as road traffic collisions and fires – all relying upon specialist emergency services combining forces for the most efficient response and recovery.

David Brown, organiser of The Emergency Services Show, explains, 'This is the only event in the UK which mirrors what is happening at grass roots level. By bringing together all the emergency services and specialist equipment suppliers under one roof, we are providing an essential environment for visitors, exhibitors and conference delegates to source new products, network, share information and build relationships.'

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Conference Hungary

Pete Allwright on the 11th Cave Rescue Conference Aggtelek National Park, Hungary

The 11th Union International de Speleology Cave Rescue Conference was held between the 15-18 May 2007 in the Aggtelek National Park in north-eastern Hungary. It was centred around the Cseppkö Hotel, although the British contingent occupied a number of the bunkhouse cottages, which were quite sparse but adequate. Members of the Cave Rescue Organisation (CRO), Gloucestershire Cave Rescue, Midlands Cave Rescue and Swaledale Mountain Rescue attended.



RESCUE DEMONSTRATION LIFT AND TYROLEAN
PHOTO: ROY HOLMES

In all it was a busy and informative conference. Certainly by the end, the attendees had a lot of information to digest. However, the form of the conference was lecture oriented rather than practical, which contrasts with the way cave rescue conferences are held in the UK.

Some 24 countries were represented from as far afield as Japan, Mexico and Lebanon and included representatives from many continental rescue teams.

I will try to highlight some of the points learnt from the lectures:-

- Cave rescue throughout is provided by volunteer cave rescue teams. For the most part the service was offered free to those in need. It seemed the exception here was Austria. However, the care and attention following a rescue may need insurance cover, especially if helicopters are used.

- Many of the cave rescue teams come under the auspices of the national caving body. Here, whilst the cave rescue teams are members of the national body, they operate independently.

- Others operate within the mountain rescue service where members must sometimes be multi-disciplined and capable of ski, mountain and cave rescue et al.

- In particular, the Italian cave rescue service had undertaken extensive avalanche

training following recent tragedies where cavers were killed after completing their caving expeditions (ref 1). Similar events have occurred in Poland (ref 2).

- Some countries have but a fledgling cave rescue service. Many have turned to the Speleo Secours Francais (the SSF) for training. The SSF offers formal cave rescue training courses and makes these available. The only other country that I am aware does similar is the USA – I will stand corrected if anyone knows otherwise. (Cave rescue teams here certainly have the experience and knowledge, but do not offer the formalised training.)

- After the SSF, teams in the British Isles remain amongst the busiest teams in the world. CRO possibly remains the single busiest team carrying out more rescues in its own right than many countries attending.

- British teams remain the only ones able to give restricted analgesia (pain relief) where a caver suffers a serious injury. Other teams require a doctor or paramedic to attend.

On Thursday afternoon we saw some more practical aspects of cave rescue. A demo by a joint Hungarian/Rumanian team saw a volunteer casualty lifted some 20 metres, swung across a void to a second lift of some 10 metres. She was then returned to ground on the usual tyrolean – the continental rescue teams are very fond of their tyrolean techniques.

We saw the new (Siemens) TEDRA cave radio in operation. These are next generation cave radios and offer a significant upgrade on the HEYPhone used presently by many British teams – but at a significant cost. The radios were offering a distance to underground of over a kilometre and, indeed, at one point during the conference 5km had been mentioned. The expected cost of some 1200 Euros per end will put this out of reach for most British teams, so we await Nicola III, which could offer a better specification at hopefully a reduced cost.

Further practical demonstrations of medical kit and of bolting techniques were shown. Of particular interest here is that the Hungarian Cave Rescue used vacuum

mattress type splints underground. We here have previously considered these not to be sufficiently robust but, now materials have much improved, we could consider the matter again.

The British contingency gave two presentations – a general description of cave rescue in the British Isles from the countrywide cover offered to the police through how a rescue is initiated via the 999 system and concluding with the conduct of a cave rescue, and a report on the Christmas Day rescue from Easegill Cavern.

The conference closed on the Friday.

Enough – but was the conference a success? Yes, but could the conference have been better by keeping to the subject better.

A full report will appear on the BCRC web site when completed – www.caverescue.org.uk – and will also be published in Descent. A further article reporting on the pre-conference visit to Poland will follow.

WebSites

Conference
caverescue.hu/konferencia_gb/conference.html

Photographs
bmszgallery.extra.hu/index.php?category

Ref 1
zenas.gr/site/home/eng_detail.asp?iData=3932

Ref 2
sktj.pl/epimenides/jaskinie/jask34.html

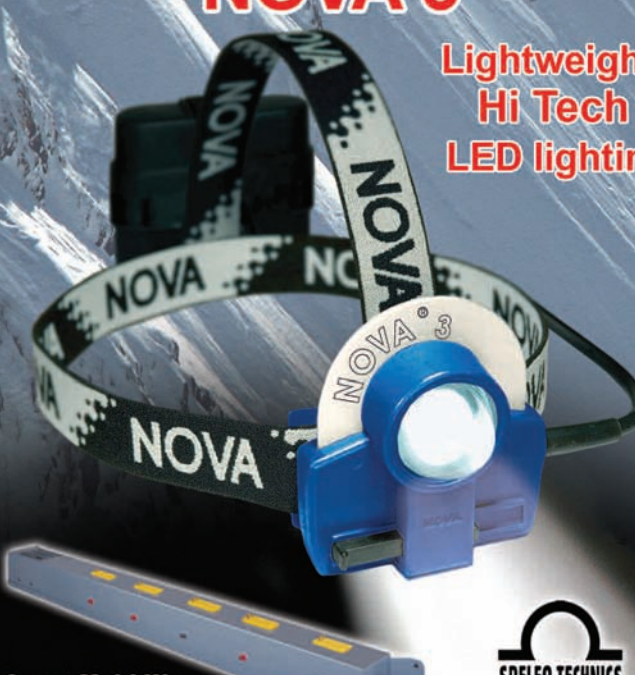
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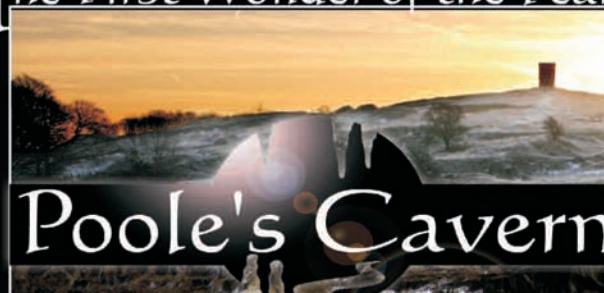
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When a man grows old and his blood runs cold, he can tell you a tale or two

BY JIM EYRE



Pausing briefly to apologise to those 'dedicated and bemused readers who found themselves stranded in deepest Yugoslavia' when his previous tome ended abruptly in 1964, Jim Eyre journeys once more to the centre of the earth. From the opening words 'all potholers are bloody daft', he proceeds to demonstrate that some are considerably dafter than others, as this thoroughly entertaining romp takes the reader to new depths of mishap, madness, mayhem and Mendips. Under India, Iran, Turkey, Greece and Spain – not to mention his beloved Dales – he tells a crackin' tale. Toe curling, cringe making, shoulder shaking, face achingly good. Never dull. Often outrageous. And always entertaining. Tales of tragedy and loss, of friends long gone and hopes dashed; of strangers demanding trousers at gunpoint; of steamed up glasses, glazing eyes and silly grins; of making moves and making movies; of yearning for a fictitious buxom nymphomaniac and being granted the opportunity to marry an angel... accompanied by Jim's trademark – and categorically non-PC – cartoons.

This book, the publishers say, is 'definitely not for maiden aunts. (although I reckon that might be underestimating maiden aunts!!). Or the squeamish. Or politicians, sheep or chickens...' Setting off at a riproaring pace, Jim doesn't pause for breath until the final page. And if you love climbing, caving and the great outdoors, then neither will you.

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Fight for Life. The Neil Moss Story.

Dave Webb on the filming of a tragedy

A film by Dave Webb, covering the attempted rescue of Neil Moss in Peak Cavern in 1959, has achieved acclaim for its factual yet gripping content. This story, extracted from an original article in *Descent* (195) April 2007, and reproduced here with permission of the author and publisher, explains some of the pitfalls and successes Dave experienced bringing the project to fruition, and a little about the rescue itself.



MOUNTAIN RESCUERS IN THE VESTIBULE
PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMES LOVELOCK COLLECTION

I had not been caving for long before I purchased a small waterproof camera and indulged my artistic side through the medium of simple underground photography. Later, in 1991, I acquired an early Standard 8 format video camera and soon realised the superior creativity of the medium. Now I had the bonus of sound – here were grunts, drips, the chink-chink of electron ladders and, of course, a fair quantity of expletives!

Once the techniques of shooting to tape had been grasped, I embarked upon a crude method of editing with my finger on the pause button of the VCR, which led to the satisfaction of creating a storyline.

The next few years were technically a steep learning curve but I eventually achieved a modicum of success in local and national film and video competitions. Then, in 1994, I found myself in Peak Cavern and Moss Chamber. I was already familiar with the outline details of the immense physical and emotional struggle that had taken place here thirty five years earlier, but the large, well decorated chamber that housed the tiny shaft which became Neil Moss's final resting place possessed an extraordinary atmosphere that was impossible to ignore.

Here was human drama which had

captured the imagination of cavers and non-cavers alike. The fact that, had he lived, Neil Moss would have been the same age as me, was an additional spur to attempt to retell the story, this time through the medium of video, using the recollections of those who were around at the time.

The story was already well documented and the announcement to caving colleagues that I was planning to make a film met with mixed reactions. A few thought I would be opening a can of worms, but most were very supportive and felt the rescue attempt was an important part of local caving history and should be recorded for posterity.

On Sunday 22 March 1959, Neil had descended a narrow shaft feet first but had been unable to climb out again – despite a major rescue attempt that made headlines throughout the UK. So great was the event that reporters were present in Castleton en masse and national appeals were made for help while cavers struggled underground to reach Neil. As it transpired, with bad air exacerbating the problem, Neil's life faded and, though the exact time of death is uncertain, the inquest stated 3am on Tuesday 24 March. His body was eventually sealed within the passage.

Despite the heroic efforts of his would-be rescuers in almost impossible conditions, there followed many accusations and counter claims regarding poor organisation and incompetence relating to the failure to extract Neil. Some of the media coverage was negative towards cavers and caving as an activity. In fact, certain quarters called for it to be banned altogether as irresponsible and dangerous! Even now, press reports concerning individuals who get into difficulties and require rescue are inclined to describe their predicament as 'foolhardy'.

In my presentation, I wished to show the structure and voluntary nature of our rescue services. The Neil Moss rescue attempt was a pivotal moment in caving history. It focused minds and changed attitudes in a manner that helped move the sport towards a more considered approach and became the catalyst for the reorganisation of the Derbyshire Cave Rescue Organisation. I wanted to record the memories and feelings of those who were there and present a study that was as unbiased and factually accurate as possible.

Two very full accounts exist – one by Eldon PC member George Cooper, the other by Les Salmon, one of the rescuers. Both have since died. I was also fortunate to find a box of correspondence between Les and Eli Simpson of the BSA. This included a copy of the police log which revealed the true extent of the three day operation.

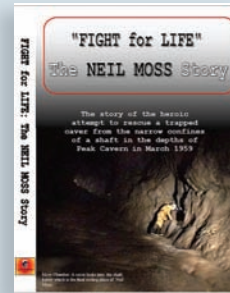
My first scoop was to be granted an interview with Bob Toogood, one of the original team, who agreed to be interviewed in Moss Chamber. Spurred on by this, I went on to interview others who took part, each with a different perspective.

The only photographs of the site had been taken by well known French caver Jo

NEIL MOSS PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMES LOVELOCK COLLECTION



'Fight for Life: The Neil Moss Story' DVD



Copies of 'Fight for Life: The Neil Moss Story' (DVD, 50 minutes) are available direct from Dave Webb for £14.95 post free. Call 0115 840 1109 for further information.

Berger, which subsequently appeared in *Paris Match* (although as coroner's evidence they should not have). My lengthy correspondence with the *Paris Match* office failed to produce the desired issue. However, I did receive the following week's edition, which contained an article and photos of the diminutive caver June Bailey who had offered to help. The female angle was picked up on by the media although she had not been allowed to descend the shaft. It was some time later when Ralph Johnson produced a yellowing and slightly dog-eared copy from his attic complete with Jo Berger's famous photos.

Eventually, I also received a collection of old press photos from James Lovelock, author of 'Life and Death Underground', which contains an illustrated chapter on the incident. He had also been a freelance reporter with the *News Chronicle* at the time. This was the icing on the cake so to speak, as the quality and relevance of the photos was outstanding.

Having thoroughly enjoyed gathering material, interviewing people and making new friends along the way, I faced the daunting task of actually making the movie. The hardest part was deciding on the structure and a storyline that flowed, with twelve hours of footage to trawl through and a commentary to make, to fit the sequence of photographs. It took almost a year dipping in and out to complete the project but the reception so far has made it all worth while.

If you would like to read the full story, copies of the issue carrying the full article are available from *Descent* at £4.25 inc p&p. To obtain copies of *Descent*, which serves the sport caving and mining exploration community – indeed for further information about all things caving – contact Wild Places Publishing, PO Box 100, Abergavenny NP7 9WY or email descent@wildplaces.co.uk or go to caving.uk.com

O2 Airwave offers deeper functionality

The Airwave network is now the largest public service network of its kind in the world, and with this Britain is closer than any other country to operating a fully joined up approach to emergency communications – an extremely important achievement, and one that will ultimately save lives.

The announcement that O2 Airwave would be supplying the Welsh Ambulance Service with digital comms marked an important milestone for the Airwave service. Airwave will help Welsh Ambulance provide a greater level of care to its patients through a combination of data and voice networking. New tools such as status messaging, alert paging, resource/incident location and mobilisation messaging will help improve response times and provide greater scope of care.

The significance reached beyond Wales, as all 'blue light' services in Britain became unified by a common network infrastructure, the largest of its kind in the world and a major step towards a fully interoperable network where police, fire and rescue and ambulance, as well as other public safety services, can communicate freely with each other.

The 'flavours' of Airwave

The Welsh Ambulance announcement highlighted another interesting point – that the various blue light services have differing requirements for their communications channels. The fire and rescue and ambulance services have mostly used Airwave for the data solutions it offers, from vehicle location services to in transit status messages, while the police have traditionally focused on using the Airwave network for voice calls. This looks set to change as police forces come to realise the benefits data networking can bring and the huge impact it will have on the way they operate.

Lancashire Constabulary has led the way in the use of data for police comms. In 2006, it was announced they would become the first force to deploy a multi bearer force wide mobile data solution, involving up to 3500 users. By mobilising data, police officers will be able to reduce the amount of time spent in the station and maximise the time spent 'on the beat', thus benefiting the whole community in Lancashire.

The solution is made possible by Airwave's Mobile Applications Gateway (MAG) service. In practical terms, it will allow officers to send and receive pictures of wanted, suspect or missing persons, check local intelligence databases, undertake searches of the Police National Computer remotely and to receive remote briefings on incidents as they unfold. This development really has the potential to impact greatly on the day to day lives of police officers, taking many administrative tasks out of the station and into the field.

Airwave Locator

Lancashire Constabulary has demonstrated to police forces across Britain the innovative ways in which Airwave can be used. However, Airwave continues to trial and release new products such as the Airwave Locator. This Location Based Service (LBS) is an asset management service designed to allow users to keep track of teams working in remote locations. Managers are able to get regular updates on the location of patrols when they are away from the main office or station, improving the safety and efficiency of lone workers. The service involves no additional hardware or software costs beyond the necessary GPS terminals, and is entirely managed by Airwave, tracking workers to the street level (a 1:10,000 scale). The product goes hand in hand with the trend towards mobile data solutions and more mobile working, and



will allow workers in the police, fire and rescue and ambulance services to be protected while they work.

Airwave successes

Airwave is justifiably proud of its innovative products but these products must prove themselves in real world situations if they are to be considered of any worth. Recently, the Airwave service was given another chance to prove itself during the Irish Peace Talks at Fairmont St Andrews Hotel in Fife.

The event was attended by a number of high profile VIPs including the Prime Minister Tony Blair, the Irish Taoiseach Bertie Aherne, the Democratic Unionist leader Ian Paisley as well as Sinn Féin's Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness. It was vital that police had a reliable communications service to help them ensure the safety of the attendees. To ensure this, Airwave established portable coverage around the grounds of the hotel to guarantee in building coverage, using mobile base stations connected by fixed link to the Airwave network. This provided complete coverage on all hotel floors and in the below ground conference area, and guaranteed enough network capacity for the 300 officers from multiple forces that were on duty at the talks.

For the purposes of monitoring the movements of the VIPs, Airwave used automatic vehicle location to track convoy movements. Instead of having to report in vehicle movements by radio, officers could see their location in real time on a digital map. The event ran smoothly and Airwave received a great deal of positive feedback from the officers using the system.

Supporting large scale public service coordination

The Airwave service has proved itself to be up to the task of supporting large scale public service coordination time and again. The degree to which O2 Airwave has striven to over perform has led to accolades for the service from outside the emergency services. Recently Airwave was awarded with the ISO20000 service management certification, the highest award for IT service management available. The fact that Airwave managed to achieve this in 18 months, well under the usual three years, is further recognition of the great work the company is doing with its Airwave service.

'Airwave is by no means going to rest on its laurels,' commented Richard Bobbett. CEO of O2 Airwave. 'Despite the great work we have done up till now. We plan to continue to look for new ways to innovate so that the UK's emergency and public safety services can continue to boast the leading communications network in the world.'

This article first appeared in *Emergency Service Times*

Medical Symposium 2007

David Allan with a brief summary of the presentations

Several years have passed since the last medical meeting in Ambleside. This year's IKAR medical meeting in the Lake District served as an impetus to arrange another and to take advantage of the presence of international speakers. The venue was the Charlotte Mason College and we were well served both in terms of lecture facilities and refreshments. Our thanks are due to Langdale Ambleside MRT for use of their Lowfold Base to hold the evening meal.

The symposium was well attended by doctors, nurses, paramedics and cascare team members from all over the country and this enabled useful and informed discussion to take place throughout the day. The quality of presentation was uniformly high both in terms of content and delivery and we are indebted to all of the speakers for their efforts.

Fractures that are difficult and why

Mr Hugh Stewart. Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon, Royal Lancaster Infirmary.

Hugh is an active mountaineer and has considerable experience of treating the end result of both mountain and cave accidents.

An outline of the mechanism of fracture healing was given and the interesting issue of the amount of movement at a fracture site in order to produce callus and union of the fracture was discussed. Poor blood supply and soft tissue damage were demonstrated as two prominent problems. Soft tissue injuries keep people in hospital longer than fractures.

The interesting concept that 'large people' sustaining small falls do in fact have the equivalent of high velocity injuries was expounded.

Intra-articular involvement of fractures leading to long term 'arthritis' needs to be minimised by early and accurate reduction of displacement. The reduction of both fractures and dislocations in the field, whenever possible, was seen to be an important part of this management.

The importance of stabilising pelvic fractures to restrict blood loss and spinal fractures to prevent deteriorating neurology were described.

For those who normally see only the initial phases of an injury this was a very useful insight into the 'bigger picture' and reinforced the importance of getting the early management right.

RSI. What is it? Does it have a place in MR?

Dr John Williams. Consultant anaesthetist & team doctor with Duddon & Furness MRT.

RSI stands for Rapid Sequence Induction. It's a technique to intubate the

trachea where control of the airway is essential for resuscitation or emergency surgery, widely used in the USA and now being employed by HEMS teams in this country.

Before RSI can be carried out, it is essential to know of any medical conditions because of the administration of drugs. Resuscitation, pre-oxygenation and anaesthesia with a drug such as Etomidate, Propofol, Ketamine or Midazolam are required. The Sellick manoeuvre to prevent aspiration is needed along with muscle relaxation using Suxamethonium or Atrocurium.

The principal indications for performing RSI are airway compromise, respiratory failure, aspiration of blood or vomit, loss of consciousness, severe trauma, severe confusion/agitation and imminent rapid deterioration. Head injury is the prime indication encompassing many of the above problems.

A study in Dallas found that only 4% of casualties were appropriate for RSI. It has also been shown that for non-head injury trauma there were no advantages over bag and mask control of the airway.

If RSI has been performed then full monitoring of the casualty will be required along with attachment to a syringe driver with an ongoing supply of drugs and enough oxygen to last until arrival in hospital. The conclusion must be that in the foreseeable future it would not be feasible or effective to introduce RSI into mountain rescue practice in this country.

The best pre-hospital management of myocardial infarction

Dr Ian Boyland. General Practitioner with cardiology speciality. Although Ian has no links with MR he is an active skier and hill walker.

Myocardial infarction is the death of an area of heart muscle. An absolute diagnosis can only be established in hospital. The history is essential in establishing a diagnosis but remember that 30% of patients are pain free. Beware of the patient with trauma who has an underlying MI – most often seen in a

car crash.

A 12 lead ECG is the best investigation and elevation of the ST segment is the most important element. The management of a patient with an MI requires high flow oxygen, 300mg aspirin to chew, analgesia using morphine, an anti-emetic such as metaclopramide 10mg, monitoring including defibrillation access and rapid transfer to a coronary care unit.

Pre-hospital thrombolysis was discussed. NICE guide lines advise thrombolysis at the earliest opportunity and if possible not more than 60 minutes from the onset of symptoms. There are a significant number of contra-indications to this therapy such as trauma, menstruation. Surgery/CVA within 3 months, BP over 200/100, warfarin, CPR carried out for more than 5 minutes.

There are also a number of complications including bleeding, reperfusion arrhythmia, bradycardia, low BP and anaphylaxis.

Intra-venous access must be very good in order to administer thrombolysis. It's important that any move to pursue this treatment must fit in with local protocols. The need to have a 12 lead ECG diagnosis presents a major problem from a mountain rescue aspect at present. It is also necessary to look at this in the light of transfer times etc.

In summary the primary treatment of MI is oxygen, aspirin, analgesia and ??? thrombolysis.

Accidents in the Northern Corries

Simon Steer. Cairngorm MRT & Ski Patrol. NHS Manager

Simon gave a very graphic account of the problems produced by weather conditions in the Cairngorm massif and how they dictate what is feasible in terms of casualty care.

Mountain bikes continue to present challenges. The new designs of helmets are difficult to remove and have been associated with sternal fractures. Novice mountain bikers regularly sustain serious ankle fractures from trying to put a foot down when things are getting out of control.

In skiing the use of blades has seen an upsurge in 'boot top' fractures often associated with facial injuries.

The changing weather patterns are having an impact. Traditionally 'the first winter snow catches the last of the summer diddies'. The new snow pattern is catching people out as guide book descriptions relate to years gone by. Winter now often consists of snow smears with hard icy snow. Ice axe braking is impossible in these conditions and long falls result with major head, face and spinal injuries ensuing.

The weather will often make it essential to coerce casualties into walking out rather than wait for back up, by which time the weather has closed in and a protracted rescue would follow. Cairngorm MRT frequently works in conditions when helicopter flights are not possible and decision making has to be based on this. Survival of the team members as well as the casualty regularly becomes the overriding concern.

The future of medicine in the SAR environment

Mr Paul Grout. A&E Consultant, Furness General Hospital & Principal of the College of SAR Medicine.

The aim of SAR medicine is to achieve the highest possible care whilst recognising environmental and operational factors will always compromise this ambition. There are common skills between the different disciplines of SAR and it is desirable we share these and move forward together.

For those involved in MR, it is essential that they are mountaineer first, rescuer second and medic last. In all SAR operations there are common difficulties. Safety, limited personnel, limited access, limited ability to perform and responsibility for bystanders.

In all pre-hospital care there are very few **proven** facts–

- Simple things work eg. simple airway control
- Too long on scene is detrimental
- Well intentioned interventions can be detrimental

Not **proven**–

- RSI is of benefit
- Air ambulance is of benefit (in UK)
- The best way to manage a spinal injury

We must be very wary of statistics which are not really valid in SAR. It is important actual outcomes are used as the parameters of judging effectiveness. Remember –'advanced level training teaches doing the basics well'

Physiological monitoring on the hill

Alasdair Mort. Respiratory physiologist and PhD student Aberdeen University

Alasdair explained his background of very highly technical expertise in developing systems to monitor the performance of pilots flying Tornado aircraft. He is researching the effectiveness and usefulness of wireless monitoring of casualties during the rescue from remote areas. At present the parameters being studied are heart rate, respiratory rate, temperature and body position/orientation.

There was discussion about the usefulness of this information but support for participating in the research to be carried out. Alasdair is very keen to talk to any team who would like to get involved in this work.

The problems of prolonged rescue above and below ground

Dr William Lumb. General Practitioner & Medical Officer BCRC

Most people are agreed that a prolonged rescue is one taking more than six hours and we probably deal with 3-4 per annum. Some take much longer and, in 2005, a casualty was on the stretcher for over 24 hours during a cave rescue in South Wales. Packaging of casualties in these circumstances assumes great importance and comfort must be attained if at all possible. A vacuum without a cervical collar is the best arrangement.

Hydration has to be maintained – usually regular drinking will suffice. 'Waste products' must be dealt with. The most useful system is the use of incontinence pads and teams who consider any possibility of prolonged rescue should carry and know how to deploy them. Monitoring is important – it will detect changes in a casualty's condition at an early stage. Hypothermia is an increased risk

Drugs. Analgesia will have to be repeated. Antibiotics will often be indicated. An anti-emetic may be advisable for a long period on a stretcher.

PSYCHOLOGY – very important. Limited goal setting and guided imagery are known to be of benefit.

Handover mistakes can easily happen. A written record if at all possible to avoid the 'Chinese whisper' phenomenon. Self help and mobilisation that might not normally be required may make an enormous difference particularly with underground incidents.

The quality of performance of team members deteriorates significantly after four hours. This should be anticipated and early changes made.



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Who wants to be normal anyway?

Andrea Smith on what women in mountain rescue think about being a woman in mountain rescue

I had been a member of Kinder mountain rescue team in the Peak District for four years when, for my final year thesis for my psychology degree, I decided to research the experiences, thoughts and feelings of women in MR teams. I carried out a number of interviews, a group discussion, and a number of email interviews from women in England, Wales and Scotland. Most of the people I approached were keen to help and provided me with an abundance of fascinating views and opinions.



My research was based around joining; balancing masculine behaviour and still maintaining feminine characteristics; gender expectations and stereotypes and; how their self identity is affected by the culture of their team.

Women have always been alongside men in outdoor pursuits. They made up half of the Sierra club after it was founded in 1892, by 1916 nearly a half of the Alpine Club were women, and they comprised a third of the ascent of 112 climbers of Mount Rainier in 1905. In fact, the female membership of the BMC currently stands at 25%.

An article in 'The Great Outdoors' in 2000 asked why there are so few women in MR. The reasons seemed to be family commitment, lack of equal opportunities, old school attitudes, elitism and the public image of MR. I was interested to see how much had changed after seven years.

Many of the women interviewed take part in more extreme sports related to the mountains such as climbing, winter activities and mountain biking. MR seems to be an extension of their need for the outdoors, exercise, excitement and risk.

Another reason for joining MR was to help people and contribute to society. Many of them identify themselves as the sort of people that 'do helping' and feel that they want to help their fellow mountaineer.

'So I decided why not combine my love and experience of the mountains with a chance to do/experience first aid in the outdoors. Plus I enjoy helping others and I thought this would be a fun and exciting way of combining both.'

When talking about joining, they describe the image of MR to be a 'ruff tuff' one of bearded older men or super fit iron men. Many of them feel it is an intimidating organisation to approach with very little information available about how to join and what is expected after joining. A lack of role models is mentioned often and it is thought that more women would be encouraged to join if there were already more women in MR. There is also a feeling that MR is old school and somewhat 'behind the times'.

'...what a shame, there was truly a missed opportunity here for the girls in the audience to perhaps aspire to the role of a mountain rescuer. I suppose to answer your question I

had some concerns that this rather Neolithic attitude may in fact be pervasive of the whole of mountain rescue.'

I received very mixed feelings relating to whether more women should be encouraged to join MR. Some women think it is missing a valuable asset by not recruiting more women.

Others feel that teams are fine as they are and nothing needs to change. Some just like being a minority in a male dominated team and others think that having more women in a team would feminise its image making it less appealing for both men and women. The macho image of the team is seen as a good selling point and is valuable for fundraising as well as attracting the 'right sort' of person.

What you generally find in society is that 'women's jobs' such as childcare, caring or service to others are regarded as low status and jobs that are thought of as masculine in, for example technology or finance, are higher status demanding higher wages.

Women in 'masculine' occupations are often expected to exchange their feminine qualities of gentleness and passiveness for ones of aggression and risk taking. This illustrates what is known as the classic 'double bind' situation where, if women behave like men they will be regarded as unnatural; while if they behave like women they will not be accepted as competent colleagues.

Many women in MR see themselves as different from 'normal' women, distancing themselves from traditional feminine characteristics such as passivity and emotionality. Often MR is another activity that they do that is different from 'normal' women. It seems to be a lifestyle choice of unusualness.

'I have always enjoyed sports/work that some people might perceive as 'masculine', however, I have never seen a distinction. Joining MR has not made any difference at all. I don't bother if people think I am unusual – who wants to be normal anyway?'

The physical and technical aspects of MR are very highly regarded with the roles of

caring, communication and organisation being seen as less important. Women in the team consider themselves to be better than the men in communication, caring and administration. They also feel they are more practical, better organisers, good at getting things done and know their limitations.

'We think differently and we are built differently. I find women are much better on the whole at the 'care' aspect of the first aid, they talk to the casualty, hold a hand, stroke a head, men are particularly poor at this. Casualties really do appear to appreciate the presence of a woman. Particularly female casualties. Women's voices are much clearer when using radios. Women appear to be far more able to multi task, which is particularly obvious when running base. They are more capable of completing paper work (legibly!) and passing on, gathering, displaying and disseminating information.'

It is noticeable that the areas in which women see themselves as superior in the team are those which are seen as traditionally feminine, even though they distance themselves from traditional femininity.

Many of the women feel under pressure to compete with the men and the responses I received relating to equality illustrate an unusual paradox. They have a need to feel equal but believe they have to be better to be equal. On the other hand, they are careful not to be seen to be better than the men.

'I think I put some pressure on myself to try and keep up. I don't want to win and I don't want to be better than them but certainly... and for me there's a piece of me that says 'you need to at least keep up with these people'.'

So, this complex situation has developed to allow the women to feel equal and the men to feel as if they are better than the women; a win-win situation endorsing the masculine superiority.

It is interesting that the 'masculine' task of stretcher carrying seems to be the dirty, hard, physical job that is definitive of MR. For many of the women, being given this job gives them a very real sense of being treated equally and being just another team member.

Social reasons provide an added bonus for being a member of a team and the MR women participate in the social activities enthusiastically. They enjoy the male environment and often like being a minority. They feel treated as one of the lads and join in the joking about. Even here though they have to be tough and give as good as they get when joining in the banter.

It is very common for the women to have a partner in the team and the perception is that it is almost impossible to have young children and remain. In fact, it is thought that there are almost no women in MR with young children.

The ability of men being able to drop everything generated a sense of injustice and

frustration but in spite of this many MR women felt that team duties could not be reconciled with children. They expected to step down, if they had children, leaving their partner in the team. There was one instance, however, of a woman who had integrated her role in MR with children but she found herself usually left at base with the baby while her partner went on the hill.

As physical ability is prized so highly in teams it provides one of the barriers for many of the women. Another area is technical skills related to mountain activities such as rope work or navigation. Many of the women feel that they get marginalised in situations that require physical or technical abilities and are not given the opportunity to learn or demonstrate existing skills.

'And I think they're happy for me to be wandering along involved in a search, they're more than happy for me to do the first aid and to do the first aid training but, yeah if we got onto a difficult, I don't know, rocks, crags, somewhere that's dangerous I think I would probably get pushed to one side.'

One fear for many of the women is that any incompetence, failure or weakness would be attributed to being a woman, whereas for the men this is not the case.

Deeply entrenched 'old school' attitudes are seen to be pervasive in MR. Some of the women have received open hostility from an anti-women element in their team comprising usually the older team members. There were a couple of instances where women were treated differently on joining, having to do extra assessments, but these women often continued to say that, once they had proven themselves, they were treated equally. Often these women seem to feel no sense of inequality but pride that they have made it and gained respect and status within the team.

'I made lots of tea before I was finally allowed to go on the hill. But once I earned their respect as 'one of the team', no further problems at all.'

Other instances where MR women were excluded from team activities generated strong feelings and led to them objecting to this overt discrimination.

The women are pleased with the image they portray of being strong and capable. All the women express pride that they have been admitted to an MR team and that they are contributing valuable skills and abilities. They all have positive views of MR and felt very welcome and encouraged to join. Commonly the women express opinions that there are no barriers in MR at all but interestingly these are often the same women who described discrimination against them.

So why aren't there more women in MR? Well, some teams have far more women than others and the culture of each team seems to be very different. I came across strong hostility and opposition to this project from my team

leader (who has since resigned) but otherwise received nothing but help and enthusiasm.

Possibly, one of the reasons why there aren't more women in MR lies within the women themselves having the confidence to join. There is no doubt however, that other contributory reasons are the image of the team when joining, 'old school' attitudes and family restrictions. Also, the highly valued physical and technical 'masculine' skills provide restrictions to women who perhaps excel at the less highly valued, more 'feminine' skills such as communication and cas care.

Having said that, the overwhelming story I have come away with is one of strong, individual women who feel confident that they are valuable members of mountain rescue teams. They negotiate the cultural and social expectations in enterprising ways, and generally overcome any barriers or ignore them.

I would like to leave the final word to one of my interviewees...

'Then again, maybe the answer is to have pink team kit?!'

Walkers needed for Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge

The British Heart Foundation (BHF) is urging people to pull on their walking boots this summer and raise vital funds to fight heart disease by taking part in the Hearts First Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge on Sunday 29 July.

This scenic 25 mile walk through the Yorkshire Dales National Park will take walkers over three of the highest peaks in Yorkshire – Pen-Y-Ghent, Wharfedale and Ingleborough. It's the first time the nation's heart charity has organised this event and it hopes to attract over 400 walkers to raise over £40000.

Jessica Storer, Regional Event Organiser for the BHF said, 'We're delighted to be staging the Hearts First Three Peaks Challenge this year. It's already a popular and well trodden route with walkers and we hope people will take to the hills to support us this year and raise vital funds to fight heart disease. Although we can't guarantee the sunshine, we can guarantee a well organised event, great camaraderie amongst the walkers and a fantastic sense of achievement for everyone taking part!' Money raised at this event will help the BHF save lives through funding pioneering heart research, providing patient care and vital information. There is a £10 entry fee per person. For more details or to register call **0800 085 2280**.

www.bhf.org.uk/events or e-mail **north@bhf.org.uk**



ARE YOU UP FOR AN OUTDOOR CHALLENGE?

Join us for adventure, achievement and fun!

The British Heart Foundation (BHF) has launched its series of exciting sponsored Challenge events and is looking for people with a sense of adventure and fun to take part and raise vital funds to fight heart disease.

Walking in the Yorkshire Dales and cycling and running in the Lakes are just some of the exciting ways you can raise vital funds for the nation's heart charity and help keep hearts beating.

Choose to take part in one of the following events:

YORKSHIRE THREE PEAKS CHALLENGE - 29TH JULY 2007

A 25 mile walk in the beautiful Yorkshire Dales National Park that will take you over three of the highest peaks in Yorkshire.

TRANS LAKE TEAM CHALLENGE - 9TH SEPTEMBER 2007

Take to the beautiful countryside of the Lake District on foot and bikes in this 37 mile team event.

Money raised at these events will help save lives through funding pioneering research and patient care and providing vital information.

If you're interested in taking part in any of these events or would like more information please

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Forthcoming Events



Friday 17 to Thursday 30 August 2007

Cycle Challenge. Land's End to John O'Groats

North East Wales SAR team members Heather and Ann, and their friend Carol plan to cycle the whole 950 miles to raise money for the team. To find out how you can sponsor the girls and contribute to the challenge, go to the donation page at www.newsar.org.uk.

Friday 28 September to Thursday 4 October 2007

Blairgowrie & East Perthshire Walking Festival

For online booking information, go to www.walkingfestival.org or call 01828 640763.

Up to 30 September 2007

Cornwall SRT Pub Challenge

A novel fundraising idea from Cornwall SRT - inviting pubs, clubs, bars, cafés, guest houses etc to raise funds for the team by any means whatever, before September 30. The establishment which collects the most wins tickets for eight to a Cornish Pirates home game in the new season, with meal and drinks thrown in. For further details go to www.news.cornwallsar.org.uk.

April 2008

Allendale Challenge

One of the toughest challenge walks around - 25 miles covering some of the finest peat bogs in the North Pennines. For further details go to www.northoftyneseachandrescue.org.uk.

75th Anniversary of Mountain Rescue. Photos needed.

There are various plans afoot to raise the profile of mountain rescue, celebrate its seventy five year history, and recognise the contribution of those involved. These include the production of a new handbook, a training handbook, the biennial UK Mountain Rescue conference scheduled to take place in Stirling in September 2008, and a static exhibition at the National Mountaineering Centre in Rheged, due to open in March next year.

The exhibition is a major undertaking for Mountain Rescue and we will be working closely with Rheged to ensure a professional representation in words and images.

So here's the point... we need your images, for use within the exhibition and our various publications.

These should be supplied by email to either Peter Smith (secretary@mountain.rescue.org.uk) or Judy Whiteside (judy.whiteside@zen.co.uk) or on CD to Peter at 18

Sandbank Gardens, Whitworth OL12 8BH or Judy at 8 Bridgefoot Close, Boothstown, Worsley, Manchester M28 1UG.

We require good quality digital high resolution (300dpi) jpeg, tiff or pdf files capable of reproducing at large scale. Please do not send 72dpi files as these can only repro at thumbnail size. You should also supply caption and photographer's credits for each image, for copyright purposes.

It will be presumed that if you supply images, you have agreed to their use within Mountain Rescue (specifically for the magazine, the handbooks, the exhibition and any related literature) but not by other publications or persons without the express permission of the copyright owner (ie. the photographer).

Images might be anything relating to MR - specific incidents, crag rescues, land searches, helicopter rescues, casualty care, working with the emergency services, equipment in use, search dogs, caving rescues, plus historic images of incidents, equipment, bases and people gone by.

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Goodbye to the Alouettes

Capt David Browne, No 3 Ops Wing, Irish Air Corps on the end of an era

It was a very hazardous and dangerous rescue and one of the most difficult I ever performed. I would say the helicopter blades were less than two feet away from the cliff face at one stage of the rescue. We had to contend with a gale force wind and I had to bear in mind that the down draught caused by the helicopter might whip away the holly bush and cause the student to tumble to his death into the lake below....'



AN ALOUETTE CREW MEMBER IS LOWERED ONTO A SNOW COVERED SLOPE PHOTO AIR CORPS

The above account was given by Commandant Barney McMahon, an Irish Air Corps Alouette helicopter pilot, after a challenging rescue in Glendalough, Co. Wicklow, to save a student who had been clinging to a holly bush for five hours on the sheer face of St Kevin's Bed.

As familiar as this may appear to an experienced mountain rescuer today, this rescue did not occur this year, or even this decade. In fact it was 37 years ago, on Wednesday 18 March 1970. The helicopter was the venerable Alouette III, then just seven years old. This year, after almost 44 years of exemplary service to the State and literally thousands of air ambulances, air-sea rescues, mountain rescues and mercy mission flights, the Irish Air Corps Alouettes are finally going into well deserved retirement.

During the severe winter of 1963, the country ground to a halt as roads became impassable with deep snow and treacherous ice. Ambulances had limited effectiveness as county councils did their best to win a losing battle of keeping main roads open. There was public outcry as the infrastructure failed, and cases emerged of desperate attempts to get people in need of urgent medical care to hospital. One woman, who had gone into labour, had to be towed on a piece of galvanised sheeting to a tractor, in order to reach hospital. The government subsequently reacted and decided to purchase three rescue helicopters, to be operated by the Air Corps.

The Air Corps evaluated a number of different types of helicopters and decided on the French built SA 316B Alouette III. The first, (call sign 'Alpha 195') flown to Baldonnel in November 1963, was soon

joined by Alouettes 196 and 197 and, in the early 1970s, five more were added to the fleet (No's 202, 211, 212, 213, and 214).

The Alouettes have been kept incredibly busy over the years, not only in their military support role, but in air-sea rescues, as air ambulances, mercy flights, VIP transport (Eamon DeValera flew in an Alouette as President), wildlife patrols, fisheries inspections, snow relief, island medevac... the list is endless. Readers here, however, will be most familiar with the Alouette in its mountain rescue role. The Defence Forces, and the Air Corps in particular, has a long and very proud working relationship with mountain rescue teams across the country. Air Corps crews have always held our MR colleagues in the highest regard, borne out by the professionalism and dedication shown by

their working closely with the Air Corps since the arrival of the first Alouette in 1963.

Over the years, there have been countless operations involving Air Corps Alouettes and mountain rescue members working closely together as a team. This is just a brief snapshot of some of these operations.

One of the first examples of Alouettes operating on a very difficult rescue in the mountains occurred just over three years after the they entered service, on 29 June 1967. A private light aircraft with five people on board was being flown through Wicklow when the aircraft entered cloud and crashed near the 3,039 foot summit of Lugnaquilla. The pilot managed to crawl from the wreckage and raised the alarm at a farmhouse in Glenmalur. Mountain rescue volunteers, some locals and some Gardaí prepared for the worst, and the helicopter rescue service at Baldonnel was alerted. Two Alouette helicopters were quickly on scene, and it was decided one would land at Baravore car park while the other would enter the fog. The crew who landed at Baravore prepared to receive casualties with the assistance of mountain rescue and others at the scene, as they watched the other Alouette 'tip-toe' its way up the side of the mountain and become invisible in the thick fog.

This was an incredibly dangerous mission for the crew, as the helicopter was not equipped to fly in cloud, and so had to manoeuvre the whole way up the mountain at a fast walking pace, with the tips of the rotor blades spinning very close to the rocky slopes. One error, either getting too high and losing sight of the surface or letting the rotor blades impact with the rocks, would have ended in certain disaster.

Inside the Alouette, the crew eventually reached the summit and found the wreckage of the aircraft. Two of the passengers were very seriously injured so it was decided to evacuate them first. One of them was still hanging upside-down in the wreckage. As soon as the two casualties were on board, the Alouette was brought back down the slopes, all the time in thick fog. On some sections where the ground got very steep, the Alouette had to be flown backwards down the mountain to avoid losing sight of the ground. Once back at the car park, personnel on the ground tended to these two casualties while the crew of the Alouette that had carried out

the rescue swapped helicopters with the other crew, as they were low on fuel.

They then repeated the ascent again, located the wreckage again and brought the remaining casualties back down to safety. An extract from the Department of Transport report into the crash read, 'The efforts made by the Air Corps helicopters to reach the scene of the accident were heroic. They literally had to 'walk' the helicopters to where the aircraft was, because of low ceilings and low forward visibility. It was not until the cloud lifted that the actual point of impact could be ascertained accurately.'

Compliments were voiced by one of the survivors on the first aid rendered by personnel in the car park, despite adverse weather and limited facilities available at the scene. A newspaper the following morning quoted a surgeon at Sir Patrick's Dun's Hospital saying, 'Had it not been for the helicopters, one man and probably another would have died.' The teamwork between the Air Corps, mountain rescue, locals and Gardaí certainly paid off.

mountain rescue teams in order to further improve the mutual understanding of techniques and enhance the strong, professional and friendly relationship built up between the two rescue services. The Kerryman newspaper of 11 April 1975 featured a large picture of Seoirse Devlin, Kerry MRT, being winched on board Alouette 195 on a joint training exercise, the second of such exercises with the Kerry team.

Alouette crews enjoyed spending a weekend with any mountain rescue team that requested joint training, and continuity training was carried out as frequently as possible with any team who did not have occasion to use helicopters as much as some of the busier teams. The social side of these weekend exercises for joint training was certainly popular with the Air Corps crews!

Another difficult rescue occurred on 1 August 1977, when two climbers became stuck on a cliff face on Muckish Mountain in north Donegal. The alarm was raised as dusk was falling by a third climber who had managed to make it down to safety. Mountain

and in shock, were then treated and taken care of by the personnel on the ground. Two Alouette III crews were awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for the rescue.

On the 26 June 1980, Gardaí in Kilorglin alerted Kerry MRT that a climber had become stuck 400 feet up an 800 foot high cliff in the Horses Glen. He was unable to move in any direction and was in a very difficult and dangerous position.

Cloud had fallen and it was just about dark as the Alouette arrived. The helicopter was carefully flown just under the cloud base to a point on the cliff from which a rescue could be achieved. The man was winched to safety, and Mr O'Sullivan of Kerry MRT remarked that it was very fortunate that the cloud was just high enough for the Alouette to manoeuvre underneath because, if the Alouette had not been able to rescue the climber, it would have been an all-night operation!

The winter of 1982 again brought very heavy snow, especially to the east of the country, which was virtually at a standstill for a week and a half. Over ten days, 148 snow relief operations were launched and 98 lives saved, as road ambulances could not operate on the treacherous and mainly blocked roads.

The bulk of the work was carried out in mountainous areas which were completely cut off and without food, water or fuel. Many tonnes of food were also dropped for stranded sheep and cattle all over the mountains and elsewhere. The Wicklow teams were in the thick of the relief operations, flying with the Air Corps to help distribute supplies and helping to rescue stranded people. One such example was the rescue of a group of fourteen young people who had become stranded in a hostel for five days, after they had become trapped in the deep snow and blizzards. Luckily one of them eventually managed to get to a house and telephone for help.

...one woman, who had gone into labour, had to be towed on a piece of galvanised sheeting to a tractor...

On August 5 1972, two brothers aged eighteen and twelve attempted to climb Powerscourt Waterfall, which is about 380 feet high. About 100 feet from the top, they reached a ledge and found they were stuck. One of the brothers tried to climb down but, unfortunately, fell to his death. The alarm was raised and mountain rescue were soon at the scene. The body of the boy who had fallen was recovered but, despite their best efforts the other boy could not be reached. It was decided to call the Air Corps, who immediately dispatched an Alouette to the scene.

On arriving overhead and surveying the area, it became apparent that a strong wind was blowing down the waterfall, causing powerful and dangerous down draughts and turbulence. The crew decided to land in a nearby field and dispose of any unnecessary rescue equipment and fuel in order to make the helicopter as light as possible. They then approached the ledge but found that, due to a tall tree, they could not achieve a direct drop. The only answer was to hover the helicopter just twelve inches from the waterfall, and descend until the top of the tree was at the door of the helicopter, all the time battling the down draughts and turbulence. The winchman managed to reach the ledge twenty feet from the boy. He scrambled over to the distressed boy, quickly secured the rescue strop around him, and both were winched to safety into the Alouette.

Training continued over the years between the Air Corps Alouette crews and

rescue was alerted, and the Alouette stationed in Finner Camp on border security duties was sent to investigate.

By this time, the duty rescue Alouette stationed in Baldonnel had also been scrambled, even though darkness was approaching. The position of the stranded climbers was pointed out to the Finner Alouette crew by personnel on the ground, but this Alouette was not equipped with a rescue hoist as it was primarily used for military ops on the border.

By the time the Baldonnel Alouette arrived, the area was completely dark with a strong wind blowing down from the summit. The Finner Alouette took off again and illuminated the position of the climbers with its landing light, hovering a few feet away from the cliff. The Baldonnel Alouette then manoeuvred overhead the climbers, and managed to successfully winch the first climber on board. The second climber was more difficult, being stuck by a crevice in the cliff face. The Alouette moved in extremely close to the rock and managed to pluck the climber from the cliff, all the time hovering close to the other Alouette in total darkness. It was too dangerous for the Baldonnel Alouette to remain so close to the cliff any longer than necessary, so it pulled away from the cliff as soon as the winchman had the climber secured, and both dangled underneath the helicopter on the thin wire over 2000 feet from the ground as it flew away and winched them on board. The climbers, who were very cold



ALOUETTES FLYING IN FORMATION PHOTO AIR CORPS

Dauphin helicopters were brought into service with the Air Corps in 1986 with the intention of replacing the Alouettes, as they were a far more modern helicopter, with two engines for increased safety, and an ability to



MEMBERS OF SEMRA AND THE AIR CORPS TOGETHER DURING REEK SUNDAY 2006

with the Alouette being deployed to Waterford as the coastguard took delivery of a Sikorsky S-61 on contract to cover the east coast. However, there was no match for the Alouette's power and manoeuvrability in the mountains, as was demonstrated on 10 July 1998. A person had fallen at Slieve League cliffs in Donegal and the Dauphin at Finner was despatched to assist.

turbulence the Dauphin was unable to perform the rescue. An Alouette happened to be in the area on a security duty with the local Gardaí, so it was called over the radio to route to Slieve League immediately, where one of the Dauphin pilots and the winchman and winch operator got into the Alouette (the other Alouette pilot was not SAR rated) and successfully performed the rescue.

fly in cloud. The Dauphins soon took up rescue duty at Shannon and later at Finner, The wind was blowing over the top of the cliff, causing so much down draught and

IMRA Update

Paul Whiting, Development Officer, IMRA

In early March, IMRA asked the teams to help shape the direction and future of IMRA and we now have a draft three year development plan, with six major areas of development – fundraising, pre-hospital emergency care, the IMRA Book of Knowledge, the structure of IMRA and team development, insurance and training.

One of the things apparent to me is that teams are always in need of

more money to operate. I aim to assist in this area with a long term plan to provide 'trickle funding' – money coming into the organisation in the background with little or no effort. The idea is that each year the IMRA Executive Committee will have money available to distribute to the teams, without causing any impact on the fundraising activities or relationships teams already have in place.

The IMRA Book of Knowledge will look at the administrative and operational documents each team uses, collating these into a structure which is clear, simple and helpful, for distribution back to teams to use as a resource. I also looked outside of IMRA to our 'cousins' – MR(E&W), MRCofS, MRA and IKAR – for their thoughts. I am currently collating all this information.

Much of April was spent putting together the second edition of our newsletter 'Call Out'. Currently, this is being distributed electronically and is available for download from the Documents and Publications section of our website – www.mountainrescue.ie. This second edition saw a four-fold increase in the amount of content from our first edition. As a result, we created a 'preview' version for those without the technology (or the patience) to download the full version.

Five lucky members of the Irish mountain rescue community were invited to attend a special afternoon to recognise the efforts of professional and voluntary emergency services personnel, hosted by President Mary McAleese at her official residence – Áras an Uachtaráin. In her speech, the President said 'she has always felt safe in the ARAS but never more so than today in the company of such exceptional people who give their time and efforts to the emergency services.'

She complimented the long hours of training and time away from families we undertake, indicating that the reception was her way to say thank you. It was indeed a great honour for the particular members – Helen McNamara (SARDA), Dave Goddard (Mourne MRT), Ronan Waters (Galway MRT), Derek Keegan (Dublin/Wicklow), Noel Daly (GOI-Red Cross) and Mary Mullins (IMRA) – to attend the reception on behalf of mountain rescue. Present also were many of the other emergency services from the statutory bodies as well as the voluntary sector, so time with Mrs McAleese was short. However, the MR contingent was noticed due to the

day itself, the Alouettes assisted in casevac, flying injured walkers from the mountain back down to the car parks to RV with waiting ambulances or, in more serious cases, flown directly to Castlebar Hospital. In the evening the helicopters were used to lift the heavy items back down off the mountain, and more than a few weary MR personnel!

There isn't a mountain in Ireland that an Alouette helicopter hasn't landed on over the years, and many people have been saved thanks to the combined hard work of mountain rescue personnel and Alouette crews. Alas, all good things come to an end, and the Alouettes are going to be retired this year after almost 44 years of exemplary service to the Irish Nation. It is interesting that the Alouettes outlived the Dauphin helicopters, which were purchased 23 years after the Alouettes began working under the Irish flag! Air Corps look forward to maintaining the links and working relationship with MR teams across the country with the new breed of helicopters in the Air Corps fleet, the Eurocopter EC135 and the Agusta Westland AW139.

This article first appeared in 'Call Out' the periodical newsletter of the Irish Mountain Rescue Association.
www.mountainrescue.ie

smallest four legged individual in the place. Without doubt, Scream (otherwise known as Helen's dog) won the hearts of not only our President but many of those who attended. Helen was surrounded by members of other organisations who inquired about the dog handling and its work in SAR.

We've had two national training events in the last three months. The first was our inaugural Training the SAR Trainer course, at the Gortatole Outdoor Education Centre just outside of Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh in March. Designed particularly for team training officers, the course was open to anyone looking at how to develop interesting and varied training schedules and events. One of the key aspects of the course was the sharing of experiences. It was great to have four members of the Arrochar MRT to provide an overseas and external perspective on training.

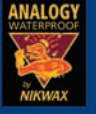
The second event was our equipment course, held later in April at the Bluestacks Centre in Donegal. Special thanks to Seamus Bradley (Donegal MRT), Joe Dowdall (North West MRT) and Diarmaid Scully (Glen of Imaal MRT) for putting on the Training the SAR Trainer course, and Paul Moran (Dublin Wicklow MRT and IMRA Equipment Officer) for the equipment course.

April saw the release of a new Charities Bill. One of the initiatives proposed is the establishment of a Charities Regulator. It is likely that charities in Ireland will be required to produce an annual report to provide accountability for the funds they receive and raise through each year.


In preparation for this, I attended a course on Producing an Annual Report, the idea being that we can prepare a high quality annual report if the need arise and I can provide support to others who may need it. The course was held in Dublin in May and provided me the opportunity to meet and visit two more IMRA teams.

The Glen of Imaal MRT invited me to visit them during a Rigging for Rescue evening training session overlooking the upper lake of Glendalough. Two days later, I was attending the launch of a new transit van for the Dublin Wicklow MRT. This is no ordinary transit van being fitted out as both an equipment carrier and a mobile operations centre and has been designed to make use of our new GPS radios and software. More importantly, it was named in honour of team member Mick Stynes, who passed away earlier this year.

Over the upcoming months, there is a varied schedule for the teams. The June bank holiday weekend proved to be a busy one with a number of teams reporting call outs. The last Sunday in July will see members from most teams participate in providing support for the pilgrimage conducted on Croagh Patrick, Co. Mayo. Traditionally, IMRA has aimed to keep the month of August free from national events to provide the opportunity for MR members to have a break and this year will be no exception. On return from the August break, teams will have the opportunity to participate in an Information Day on the changes being proposed by the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council and our National Exercise.



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Our new arrival

On the evening of Friday 13 April, Dublin & Wicklow MRT took proud delivery of its new Ford Transit from Winfield Motors in Rathmines. The transit had spent close to two months at Vanequip in Clondalkin (our thanks to Noel and the lads), getting transformed from a standard panel van into the team's new operations and equipment carrying vehicle, call sign MR1.

Saturday was to be spent transferring the equipment from the old transit but, before twelve hours had gone by, the new vehicle was to see its first action. The team was called out by the Gardaí in the early hours of Saturday to search for a young male missing in the Blessington lakes area of Co. Wicklow. After several hours, the body of the young man was recovered from the lake by the Gardi Underwater Unit.

The layout of the new transit followed much discussion about lessons learned from our previous transit and new requirements. We decided to put more emphasis into the operations and planning area, especially with the introduction of live GPS assist tracking capability of our new radio system, enabling those at the nerve centre of operations, to know exactly where hill party and team vehicles are at any moment.

The vehicle is fitted with an inverter which powers six power points, allowing us to use laptops, printers, scanners and laminators, enabling us to print off our own maps of search areas. There's also an external power socket to enable the vehicle to be powered up by either generator or mains power. The radio system has four stand alone radio units and the vehicle is fitted with a portable radio repeater system. An added advantage is the extendable mast fitted to the vehicle to help in areas of poor comms.


But the gadgets and gizmos are little use without our standard rescue equipment and the rear section of the van holds the main equipment, stretcher, medical kits, vac mat, summer and winter cas bags, crag rescue equipment, to name but some.

The total cost was just short of €60,000, achieved in several ways – 40% funding from the Irish Coast Guard with the rest donated by members of the public through street collections and members of our Friends of Mountain Rescue scheme. Without their generosity this state of the art vehicle would not have been possible.




MR1 WITH THE TEAM FIRST RESPONSE VEHICLE ON TROOPERSTOWN HILL DURING A NAVIGATION TRAINING AND EXERCISE

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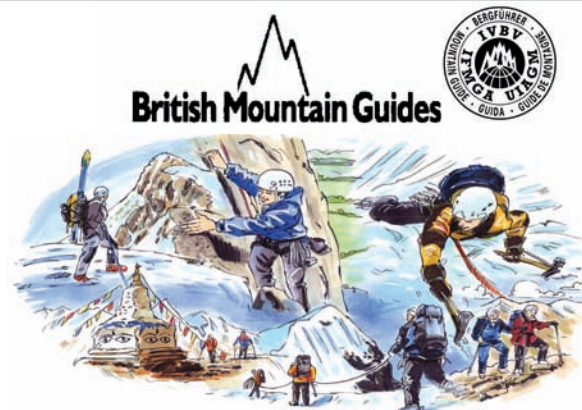
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