

MRC NEWS

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THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MOUNTAIN RESCUE COUNCIL OF ENGLAND & WALES

ISSUE 5

JANUARY
2003

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Developments & discussions
from MRC, November 2002

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MRC 70TH ANNIVERSARY – CAUSE TO CELEBRATE?

And if so... how?

The weekend they ran out of beer...



I warned them once. I warned them twice. And I'm sure that I even warned them thrice – make sure you stock up with beer. They will drink the bar dry. Well, though the conference facility stocked up, I don't think they realised how much beer could be drunk when you get over 500 mountain rescue team members at a conference. We achieved it not only on Friday night, but also on Saturday night.

From the feedback I have received, I believe that the UK Conference 2002 in Edinburgh was a great success. Once again we brought speakers from all over the world, as well as the UK and Eire. Sadly, our main plenary speaker was unable to make it due to a major illness and Don Cooper, who spoke at the 2000 Conference, stepped into the breach.

To be able to come up with a theme, write a speech for an audience of 500 people and then practice it within 48 hours is no easy achievement. Thank you, Don. His theme of *Dependence, Independence and Interdependence* was always going to challenge us – and it did.

Yet another speaker stepped into the fold within two hours, talking about the World Trade Centre. I think the images of that event will always have a lasting effect on everyone. They'll remember where they were when they heard the news. He reminded us of the events and the challenges which were met by the New York Fire Department. There were times when we were challenged in what we heard, even to the point of maybe not wanting to listen, but to be challenged is no bad thing. It takes great courage to challenge and the willingness to listen. Remember it is so easy to say what people want to hear. Challenging allows us to assess whether we are on the right path and we all know maybe there is a better way of doing things.

The conference team are always challenging themselves. This conference does not just come together by a flick of the fingers. Its success is due to the fact that it is run like a business – there is a project plan, a timetable, and consideration of the risk and issues. Deadlines have to be adhered to.

Remember we have to meet the needs of 500 diverse people and ensure that we can balance the needs of both the exhibitors and delegates. This requires a comprehensive and varied speaker programme alongside a business case to the exhibitors demonstrating why they should attend. There are so many other conferences beside ours. They do not come out of kindness – this conference has to meet their needs. Many, many questions are asked by these exhibitors before their decision is made – how many attendees, where are the attendees from, what purchasing power do they have?..

Then, of course, there are the finances to ensure that we bring the conference at the right price. Business proposals have to be put together to obtain grant funding, as well as donations, and then balanced with funding from other income categories. It's no easy task as nothing is set in stone and has to be managed on a daily basis.

I would like to say thank you to the conference staff, not all of whom came from within mountain rescue. They committed one weekend a month for over a year. Without them – and you – the conference would not succeed. Their success is in bringing it together, yours in attending and participating.

But I cannot finish without one request to all of you who attended. Pass the word 'Wales 2004'. It's your conference. If you want to hear about a particular subject – tell me. If we can improve the conference organisation – tell me.

Peter Howells
Conference Chairman



NEXT ISSUE

Issue 6 will be July 2003.

You can send articles, news items, photographs, anecdotes, letters... complaints even... hard copy or disc (in Microsoft Word/Quark XPress format for copy and JPEGs/Photoshop EPS or TIFF for scans, please) to the editor

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I look forward to hearing from you...

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

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Editor's Note.

Articles carried in the MRC News do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the MRC.

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

Some 25 years have mysteriously slid by since I first accepted the invitation to teach first aid to Furness MRT. I had no vision at all then of where and how that role would expand. Indeed, after the opening evening in a crowded attic with a polished piece of wood masquerading as a blackboard accompanied by left over stubs of chalk the future looked quite uncertain.

The sustaining force however, then and now, has been the enthusiasm and determination to improve skills shown by team members. It has actually proved a constant challenge to provide all the teaching and training that is sought by people committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for those overtaken by misfortune in the hills.



• Tony Jones and David Allan receive their Distinguished Service Awards at the UK Mountain Rescue Conference, Edinburgh

The post of medical officer to the MRC has provided challenges, impasses and perhaps some modest successes. Getting MR team doctors together was a challenge. Trying to reach consensus agreement about drugs and doses was more of an impasse.

It has been pleasing to see the gradual move to nationally agreed levels of casualty care training and examination although there is still some ground to cover. The production of a book to support medical training has been particularly rewarding after several years of false starts.

I now believe the time is right to hand on the task to someone else and am delighted that John Ellerton will be taking on the post. I am sure that John will bring new ideas and thoughts and use these to further develop medical care in mountain rescue. I wish him every success and hope that, as I have done, he will find the trials and tribulations more than offset by the satisfaction of seeing a high standard of care for casualties in the mountains.

I have always felt guilty since taking on the role of chairman of the MRC that the medical matters have prevented me appearing at other sub committee meetings etc. This constraint removed, I shall begin to haunt the other meetings and look forward to this with the anticipation of getting to know better more of the people who devote so much of their time to unseen tasks within the organisation.

Finally I wish to record my thanks to all those, particularly members of the Medical sub committee, who have given me support and encouragement over the years.

DAVID ALLAN
MRC Chairman

...AND FROM THE PRESS OFFICER...

...why doesn't the MRC do something about it?

Why indeed! More and more people at team level ask the question and are amazed to learn that the MRC can't enforce anything.

When I first joined the Rossendale Search & Rescue Team in 1993, my training involved an induction weekend during which I was handed a copy of the Mountain Rescue Handbook issued, I thought, by the body governing mountain rescue in England & Wales. I assumed that they – whoever 'they' were – sat in an ivory tower in London or somewhere telling all of us oiks what to do and how to do it. Little did I know that some years later I would be part of that decision-making process. Power at last, you may think. But no, the MRC

doesn't govern – it advises and, should teams or regions decide to ignore that advice, there is precious little the MRC can do about it. You may think that's the way it should be but the face of mountain rescue has changed over recent years, with more and more emphasis being placed on the service appearing professional. National fundraising has started, albeit with a bit of a cough and a splutter and, as a body of teams, we now have a more corporate feel to the service with the adoption by most teams of the MRC logo.

In addition, many operational practices are common, something which, as we come under increasing pressure to conform from insurers and the like, will become more and more important as time goes on.

Perhaps it's time for the MRC to become a 'professional' association with the power to enforce and censure where teams and individuals act outside agreed bounds – and then maybe the MRC could '...do something about it'.

ANDY SIMPSON
MRC Press Officer

MRCNEWS

MORE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARDS

There were three nominations for Distinguished Service Awards in November – Brian Wright (NESRA), Mike Nixon MBE, (LDSMRA) and Ray Davies (PDMRO). All were approved by the meeting.

FIRE BRIGADE STRIKE

By the time we go to press in January, the moment may well have passed, but it's worth mentioning discussions generated in November by the impending Fire Brigade strike, for future reference. The meeting was advised that very little extra activity was expected from MR teams. ACPO point of view was that teams should not respond to anything other than MR incidents unless specifically requested by the police or they will not be covered under police insurance. This includes motorway accidents, burning buildings, rope access involving HT cables, chemical spillage, fumes etc. The meeting was also reminded that team leaders are personally responsible for exposing their team members to any incident for which they are not trained and recent litigation bears this out.

NEW MRC MEDICAL OFFICER

As Dave Allan steps down from the post, John Ellerton, a medical officer with Patterdale MRT since 1985, has been

appointed MRC Medical Officer. Having walked and climbed in the UK for many years, John elected to work near the mountains when he became a GP in Penrith, Cumbria. He first started visiting the Alps 10 years ago, initially with a group of fellow mountain rescuers, and is a member of the Alpine Club. A member of the MRC Medical sub committee since 1993, he lists his greatest achievement so far as co-editing *Casualty Care in Mountain Rescue*, published in 2000, which has now sold over 3000 copies, with a second edition planned. Perhaps less welcome was his push at the MRC that drivers of ambulances should pass the medical criteria for HGV drivers. He acts as an external examiner for the MRC Cas Care certificate about three times a year, and co-runs a Cas Care course for the Patterdale team every three years. During his time as Chairman of Patterdale MRA, 1993 to 2000, the team was transformed with the help of like minded individuals into a limited company, with their new rescue centre completed in 1999. He remains a director of PMRA Ltd. 'As MRC Medical Officer, I would want to build on the work of Dave Allan and the present sub committee, strengthening the Casualty Care exam and improving communications so the often erroneous views of members can be quickly settled. New ground could then be tackled,

particularly helping the Equipment sub committee develop the tools to do the job.'

RIGGING FOR RESCUE

Mike Margeson reports that the course was subscribed by 11 team members, including himself, from 10 different teams and 6 regions. As expected, the full week programme was significantly more substantial than weekend and day tasters. The course members were a highly talented and able group, and very motivated having, in some cases, given up a week's annual leave to attend the course. The sites and venues also seemed to work well. So what progress has been made since the last course? The general feeling from the group was very positive. A review weekend was arranged at Keswick base in November, and Richard Fry and Al Day are doing a taster weekend in Ireland. The Irish Police Team indicated to Mike at the Conference that they are interested in a week course themselves in 2003. Various teams around the country are reviewing their working practices and systems and some are adopting aspects of the Rigging for Rescue thinking. 'To me,' says Mike, 'this is all good news.'

EQUIPMENT

Post Rigging for Rescue 2002, the long awaited **540 belay devices** have arrived from Canada with



the CE mark. (Kirk was required to produce a Rescue Belay Standard and have this accepted by the CE standards committee.) A 540 will be available to pass round the teams and if feedback is positive the MRC will place a central order through the winter months for those teams that want one. It is hoped that the **Lightweight Oxygen & Entonox** project will get underway early in 2003. A re-run of the **Mark 2 Vac Mattress** during 2003 is also hoped for. A new **Defib** was presented to the Medical group – smaller, lighter and cheaper than the previous. Big discounts are available for bulk purchase.

PLAS Y BRENIN 18 MAY 2003

The training day on Sunday May 18, 2003 will focus on care and maintenance of equipment. There will be a range of external speakers, such as metal specialists and rope/nylon experts, and a member of the BMC Technical committee will advise on helmets – checking and lifespans. The day is open to any team member, not just equipment officers – the ideal would be one rep per team. A more detailed timetable of the day will come out from the Equipment sub committee in February.

WEBSITE UPDATE TEAM DETAILS

Under the Members area of the MRC website, there is now a facility to update team details – team website address, who receives the team email, secretary's details etc. Only the person delegated by the team can edit these details by using a separate username and password. Teams with email addresses already in existence on the website have been approached by the MRC webmaster and may have already updated. If your team has not taken this step, please prompt the right people within your teams. Your user name and passwords for this facility are available from the MRC webmaster – webmaster@mountain.rescue.co.uk. Say who you are and what your team position is when contacting him.

PLEASE NOTE THE FIXED DATES IN THE MRC CALENDER

MRC MEETINGS
3RD SATURDAY IN
MAY & NOVEMBER
**TEAM LEADERS
MEETING**
1ST SATURDAY IN
DECEMBER
**TEAM DOCTORS
MEETING**
2ND FRIDAY IN
OCTOBER

IT'S A PUBLIC LIABILITY - BUT WE ARE INSURED

Dave Little, MRC Treasurer, reports that 'over recent years we've enjoyed with confidence the stability of having a good working relationship with our insurers. Sadly, as we are all too aware, sooner or later, all good things come to an end and this year it was our turn. You may already be aware of my problems trying to get reinsured and at a reasonable cost, and that, in the interim we were on temporary cover. Well, at long last, we have now fully converted to new brokers and insurers. Naturally, and almost inevitably, the cost has gone up but less than I feared (and certainly less than the temporary cover). The

insurance cover is again based on the *Summary of Cover* document of July '01. Final paperwork is being sorted out and I will circulate certificates, etc. through the normal routes as soon as I can. Let's hope we can quickly build a good relationship again so that we can get on with the job without having to worry about insurance!

NATIONAL FUNDRAISING

National Fundraising will, in future, be controlled 'in house'. UCS Consultants are still to be retained, but a new Fundraising sub committee, headed by Penny Brockman, will oversee and control future activity. Penny has already co-opted a number of people to assist, including Andy

Simpson (MRC Press Officer) as Marketing Co-ordinator. A full report from Penny can be seen on page 17.

IN BRIEF...

Phi Ord, Cleveland SRT, has been appointed the new MRC Comms Officer, replacing Dave Gough. Phil has been CSRT Communications Officer and NESRA rep on the MRC Radio sub committee since 1987.

Pete Smith has been co-opted as a member of the MRC Training sub committee.

If teams have a training area on their website, please contact **Tony Jones** (01248 364131) who will arrange to have a link put in to the training bit of the MRC website.



PARTY LEADERSHIP TRAINING COURSE RISHWORTH SCHOOL ON 12-14 JULY 2002

The aim of the course was to improve the stock of Party Leaders for effective deployment by Team Leaders and Incident Controllers during Search & Rescue Operations. Effective leadership of parties during an incident is crucial to a successful outcome. Doing a good job has more to do with careful preparation and less to do with tasking someone with a natural flare to 'wing it by the seat of their pants'.

This practical course was available to all team members throughout the United Kingdom. Thirty course members and ten staff members attended, along with nine local team members who volunteered to act as exercise casualties. It is very encouraging to record that applications came from teams scattered widely throughout the British Isles. Substantial expertise was made available by recruiting experienced staff members from a variety of regions.

Driving across the high terrain of the M62 usually revives memories of dense low cloud, pouring rain or driving snow. Rishworth nestles in a beautiful oasis barely five minutes from the highest motorway in England. Wild moorland rapidly descends via steep valley sides and well-wooded tributaries to merge with pleasant pastureland, all of which provide excellent and varied locations for realistic practical training.

On this warm summer weekend course, members rotated the leadership of small parties during a variety of scenarios based upon the requirements of *National Training Guidelines for Fell Party Leaders*. For the purpose of the course a 'small party' is deemed to have a maximum of five members each having a dedicated role and carrying equipment appropriate for that role. Knowledge and skills acquired during the course greatly enhance the confidence of members to undertake the role of Party Leader in dealing with briefings, deployment, safety, search techniques, casualty site management, triage, fatalities, evacuation, recording and reporting.

'Although the members of my group all had prior experience of leading MR hill parties they were ideally suited to the course. The biggest obstacle they had to overcome was that they were either not naturally bossy or they held their bossiness in check. They benefited from being put into a situation where they had to take charge and they became more comfortable with that as the weekend progressed.'

'I thought the scenarios, casualties and locations were spot on giving a wide range of challenging tasks.'

'The domestic, feeding and lecturing arrangements were all excellent. This must be one of the few 'practical' courses available to MR members. It is very useful to members wanting to progress through a team. The model of the mentor for the first day and the independence for the second day is excellent. It enables the delegates to show the progress they had made in such a short space of time.'

Peter Smith

A POLICY FOR INCIDENT RECORDING

Have you ever thought what happens after your team leader has sent off an incident report? Why do our figures sometimes not match those published by MRC? The process of collating these reports has never been subject to any guidelines, but relied solely on the judgement of the Statistics Officer. It has become important that such guidelines or policy should govern the process and, what's more, it should reflect the views of the teams.

With this in mind, I addressed team leaders at their annual meeting (Dec 2002). Such a policy is justified by the need for consistency amongst the MRC, MRC(S) and ALSAR when reporting, especially to government agencies eg. UKSAR Land. This consistency may then be able to feed back into the reporting of team activity on websites.

There are a number of issues/questions that seem in need of an answer. How much information is required? How much does a team have to do? Does a team have to be called out? What about involvement when providing SAR cover for an event? What happens when assisting emergency services during local crises? How do you report incidents that extend over many days?

For a record to have any meaning, the report must have a minimum amount of information. An incident should have a starting point, involve at least one member of a team, have a location and some narrative outlining what was done or requested. It cannot be recorded if insufficient information is submitted. From the information above, it should be possible to determine whether the 'incident' required the reporter or MRT member to stop what they were doing, leave their present location and take an active part in any response. The point being that a passive response does not constitute an incident for recording purposes.

Should it be recorded when someone happens upon an incident where his or her training, experience or equipment could assist someone? It is clear that it is their duty as a citizen to render all necessary help. There may be exceptions to this, eg. if involvement removes the need for a genuine 999 emergency call.

Teams often provide SAR cover for organised events, fell races, mountain bike events, etc. Often that cover is not used, but sometimes their services are required for numerous competitors. Equally, the degree of assistance provided is also likely to vary from individual to individual.

Teams often receive requests from the emergency services for assistance during severe weather or other local emergencies. eg. flooding, landslides, major celebrations, etc. The reports are invariably numerous during any 24 hour period and may even extend over a number of days.

Some incidents, especially searches, often span more than one day - they can last many days, they can even be interrupted whilst further inquiries are made. It is not uncommon for a search to be resumed many days after its suspension, especially when new information comes to light.

Taking all these aspects into account, the following policy is offered for discussion and comment. With suitable changes based on your feedback, it is proposed to put forward this policy for ratification at the May 2003 meeting of the MRC. All readers are invited to comment on the following points.

1. Inadequate Information - an incident will not be recorded if any of the following items are missing:- incident date, when first notified, location or locale, cause of incident or reason for alerting the MRT and team submitting the report.

2. Passive Response - an incident will not be recorded if the reporting team was placed on 'standby' and 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', etc.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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 the whole period of the emergency, no matter how many persons were assisted or how long the particular event lasted.

6. 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.

Ged Feeney, MRC Statistics Officer

email: ged@gfeeney.demon.co.uk

address: 57 Castlesteads Drive, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA2 7XD

ENVIRONMENTAL, ACCESS & CONSERVATION GUIDELINES

The MRC has adopted the following guidelines on issues regarding the environment, access and conservation. It will make every effort to ensure that local teams base their own policies on these guidelines.

1. The team should always seek access permission for all land used for training sessions.
2. A variety of areas should be used to help prevent environmental and conservation problems through over-use.
3. The status of the land required for training sessions should be taken into consideration.
4. The training group should consider conservation and environmental issues when drafting a training programme as issued by the BMC, National Trust and the Peak Park.
5. Respect should be shown to all flora and fauna of the area.
6. Nesting and shooting restrictions should be taken into account when planning the training programme.
7. Where belay anchors are required, natural features should be used as much as possible.
8. Where trees are used, they should be padded to prevent bark damage.
9. Where there are no natural anchors ground stakes may have to be placed. When this happens the ground should be returned to its natural state afterwards.
10. If climbing nuts are used as anchors every consideration should be given to the rock structure preventing any damage to the crag.
11. Popular climbing faces should not be used for training purposes.
12. Training in stretcher work should only be undertaken on rock areas that are not popular for climbing.
13. The top of the crag should be protected to prevent ropes causing soil/ vegetation damage.

UK SAR OPERATORS GROUP. SEARCH & RESCUE FRAMEWORK FOR THE UK

The final version of the Framework Document was published by the Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA) in June 2002. Copies were circulated to the regions for forwarding to teams listed in the MRC Handbook and at the November MRC meeting. The document may also be downloaded and printed as a pdf file. The URL is:

http://www.mcga.gov.uk/sandr/framework/UK_SAR_Framework_Document.pdf

It is intended that the document will be revised in the latter half of 2003. Any comments, suggestions or corrections should be sent to the Vice Chairman (Tony Jones) by Easter 2003.



FRANKLY, THIS IS NOT WHAT I'D IMAGINED A WINTER PRACTICE TO BE...



Members of Furness MRT & Millom FRT

a dog. They had missed a find although the body was in the open near a path. Thirdly, the use of unknown volunteers, untrained in search techniques, left much to be desired. Lastly, it was apparent that in major incidents the central rescue teams like Coniston and Langdale, relying on the limited local crag rescue, needed the rapid support of trained fringe area teams which could draw on a larger supply of volunteers.'

From this experience, and encouraged by the police, came the proposal to form a Furness team, and the resulting enthusiastic inaugural meeting was held at Ulverston police station. As is usually the case, resources were limited at the start, but by the 70s the team had established its first regular base in the cellar under Neville House – part of the old Ulverston police station and also used as a morgue! Dick Long, team member at the time remembers 'we operated using six quivers of 4 foot bamboo flag poles to mark the line search parameters, an ancient Neil Robertson stretcher obtained from the local shipyard, a bolt-on 'Mountain Search' car sign, a first aid haversack containing a selection of triangular bandages and little else. Climbing equipment consisted of a few long handled ice axes and one large wooden box containing a selection of hemp ropes.'

Meetings were mostly held in the Neville House police offices and, frequently, the general nattering about recent mountains climbed would be the order of the evening before adjourning to the pub. Annual membership of the team was 50p per person in 1975, later rising to £1, and members were expected to provide their own equipment. This usually consisted of map, torch, whistle, waterproofs and hiking boots (or hob nail boots!)

1982 saw the name changed to Furness MRT to reflect the increasing workload and skills of the members. Since then, the team has purchased two Land Rovers and the base has moved out of the cellar and into the old coach house behind the police station.

And now, as a new chapter begins, the birth of a new team ensures that rescue provision in the south lakes is at its best.

Hats the way they were...



40 YEAR WIND UP

Furness MRT celebrated its 40th birthday and a winding up of the team with a dinner and a band in October. A good time was had by all, including special guests Dave Allan, as after dinner speaker, and John Dempster, Chairman of LDSMRA. The celebration was the culmination of months of preparation for the merger with Millom FRT. The new team, Duddon & Furness MRT will come into existence on 14 January 2003, when an EGM will appoint new team officials, although the teams are already training together and operating jointly on call outs.

Furness Mountain Search Team, as it was originally named, began life in 1962 as vital support to existing Lakeland teams in the more central fells. It followed an incident the previous August, when the recently formed Lake District Search & Rescue Advisory Panel called for reinforcements in the search for a young boy missing in the Coniston area for two days. Searches on Coniston Old Man had revealed nothing. John Wyatt MBE, retired Chief Ranger for the Lake District National Park and Vice President of the Lake District Mountain Accidents Association clearly recalls the incident.

'I first joined up with the Kendal Team to assist in the search of Church Beck – a wet experience. This was followed in the evening by a search of the Tilberthwaite area. It was on the Wednesday that the call went out for more volunteers. In the morning, I took charge of a motley group of inexperienced youths and a police dog handler and dog from Preston... fell walkers they were not.

'After lunch I was given leadership of over twenty volunteers from Ulverston, Barrow in Furness and Egremont Outward Bound. We were to sweep both sides of Red Dell. The area had already been searched and this was a doubling up operation. It was my party that found the missing youth... he had been dead for some time.

'We learned several things from this tragic incident. Firstly, there was a delay before the search was widened. Secondly, in the case of the earlier coverage of the large area of Red Dell, the search consisted of about 6 men and

LAKE DISTRICT



LANGDALE AMBLESIDE MOVE HOUSE

Work has now begun on a new base for Langdale Ambleside MRT. The team moved to a temporary home near the 300 year old Lowfold site, which has been their headquarters for 26 years, in early November. A Community Fund grant of £380,000 will pay for the demolition and rebuild to a facility fit to meet the demands of the 21st century. The grant does not cover any new equipment such as radios, masts, floor coverings and so forth – they will need to raise an estimated further £100,000 to complete the project. During the anticipated 38 weeks at their temporary address, all contact details remain the same and forwarding arrangements have been made.



Now you see it... now you don't...

MID PENNINE

TEAM MEMBER TAKES THE CLOTH

A great many teams may now have medical personnel amongst their ranks but how many have a fully ordained minister?



Congratulations to team member and Fundraising Officer Mike Thomason of Bolton MRT who after 5 years at theology college, including study periods on the Scottish Isle of Iona, and teaching placements in Bangladesh and Fiji, has been ordained to the Christian Ministry of Word & Sacraments and inducted into the Bolton West Pastorate of the United Reformed Church. Mike's team mates were amongst the 350 strong congregation at an afternoon service at Holy Trinity Parish Church, Horwich in September. Mike will now minister to three churches in the Horwich and

Adlington areas, as well as continuing with his team activities, though he does point out that the pager is most definitely on mute during church services!!

Still in Bolton, Team Leader Garry Rhodes has been awarded the town's Civic Medal – one of only seventeen awarded since the scheme was inaugurated in 1975 to recognise community service and reward people not previously acknowledged. 'I really do think it's a great honour and also recognises the value of the work team members do', said Garry.

TEAM IN HORROR MOTORWAY CRASH

A good turn nearly turned to tragedy on Tuesday 17.9.02 as Calder Valley SRT returned from a call out in Temple Newsam Leeds. Team members were travelling back on the M62 in the team Land Rover, shortly after tea time, when they were stopped in stationary traffic near to Ainley top. They were violently struck from behind by an HGV which had failed to identify the queue ahead. The Land Rover took the full brunt of the crash, shunting forward

into the private vehicle of another team member and the shunt continued into three other vehicles. The Land Rover suffered extensive front and rear damage and has been declared a write off. Passengers in the vehicle were all, thankfully, wearing seat belts. However, they all suffered minor injury – Hilary Newsam, Jonathan Cole, Clive Green and Simon Tatley all suffered whiplash and bruising, Simon also sustaining a fractured sternum. Jayne Haley, who was in the car ahead, suffered bruising injury and her vehicle was also totally destroyed in the impact. The strength of the Land Rover probably saved lives as the impact compressed the vehicle. Valuable team equipment including oxygen set, radios and medical equipment were also damaged.

In the aftermath, the team were obliged to employ the skills of Tony Rich, MRC Legal Adviser, when they found themselves involved in negotiations with the insurance company who were offering a value far less than the cost of replacement. Anticipating a substantial financial loss, an emergency fundraising appeal was launched. Thanks also to a



substantial donation from the Halifax Bank of Scotland, the new Land Rover has been ordered and the team have also been able to bring forward the replacement of their 14 year old control vehicle. The new Land Rover should be on line early in January.

Several lessons were learnt from the accident concerning the strength of the dividing bulk heads separating equipment and passenger areas and the safe storage of kit. The bulk head, which had been professionally fitted, failed and rods used to suspend and secure equipment were driven through it into the passenger area. The Land Rover seat backs also collapsed under the recoil of the passengers. Mick Smith comments, 'I think it is fair to say we would advise all teams to consider our experience and assess their own vulnerability to a high speed shunt to the rear.'

...AND ANOTHER 40 YEARS

Rossendale & Pendle MRT (as they are now known) also celebrated 40 years in mountain rescue with an anniversary dinner in November attended by members old and new, some returning from as far afield as Canada to join in the reminiscences. After dinner speakers were Mike Tonge, ACPO representative to the MRC, and MRC Chairman David Allan, who is becoming quite a dab hand at 40ths having spoken only the month before at his own team's do.

The 'Rossendale Fell Rescue Team' began life as a breakaway from the Northern Rescue Organisation, in Preston, a group which had only been in existence itself for a year, following the tragic deaths of two teenage brothers who, with their sister, had been caught out in the Parlick area of the Trough of Bowland when a nice winter's day turned nasty. In those early days, call outs may have been infrequent but the members met regularly for training. Money was tight and fundraising difficult (some things never change!), but by 1967, they had their first base, behind the old police station and it was becoming clear that a more structured, professional attitude was vital.

Led by Chairman Peter Durst – whose influence on mountain rescue has spread far beyond the Rossendale valley in the intervening years – and Team Leader Tony Silvers, the membership was transformed. From a group of mountaineers, meeting to provide a rescue service, the organisation became a team. New working relationships were forged with other regional teams, the police and the RAF Mountain Rescue Service.

It was around this time that the regional body that would become the Mid Pennine Search & Rescue Organisation came into being. As we saw with the Furness story, the Lake District Search & Rescue Advisory Panel was also in its infancy. It is interesting that many other teams across England & Wales were simultaneously undergoing similar metamorphoses and recognising the advantages of regional links – closer co-operation between teams, joint exercises and training allowing members to exchange ideas and adopt best practice – ultimately raising standards. With MPSRO representation at the MRC, Rossendale members have, over the years, played an active role in mountain rescue at all levels, but it hasn't always been plain sailing.

Things took a nasty turn one morning in September 1977, when team members arrived at their base to find it being summarily demolished. The only thing being rescued that day was the equipment! And in the nick of time. It would be several months and numerous false dawns before the Clegg Street building was secured for the grand sum of £3,500. And that was only the start – new doors, levelling the floor, painting and adding the loft took time and money, albeit a far cry from the many thousands ploughed into new bases in recent years. It was three tough years before the new headquarters was officially opened.

In the meantime, another phenomenon was developing in the world of mountain rescue – the Search & Rescue Dogs Association – once again with Peter Durst at the forefront. Very quickly, Rossendale had three graded dogs, a tradition still maintained today, with two operational dogs and one trainee. In 1982, Peter retired as Rossendale Team Leader, having taken on the Chair for SARDA (England).

The '80s saw a gradual increase in police use of the team particularly in low level fell searches such as missing children and Alzheimer patients. The '90s brought an ever increasing workload and, in common with all teams, the need to operate in a businesslike manner with one eye on the balance sheet and one on the future, whilst still keeping one eye (if you'll forgive the arithmetic) on mountain rescue!

A fundamental change came in 1991, with the alteration of the team name from Fell Rescue to Search & Rescue team. There was talk at the time of broadening perception of the team's 350 square mile operational area through a further name change, but it wasn't until September 2002 that the name Rossendale & Pendle Mountain Rescue Team was formally adopted. And that, as they say, is where we came in.

Now where did we put that casualty?...



PEAK DISTRICT

BUXTON BASE OPENS IN JANUARY

Despite a string of frustrating delays and problems, **Buxton MRT** will be open for call outs from their new base in late January. Concerns over the design and construction of the roof held up the fitting out of the new building but, finally, an engineer from High Peak Borough Council gave it the thumbs up and internal work could commence. More problems! Construction of the internal upper floor had to wait for special permission relating to fire regulations. Eventually, all the plans were approved and fabrications went ahead. Fitting of the floor in late November meant that all the other schemes could come together with the final fitting of electrics, plumbing and heating. Landscaping was completed in December, and if all goes well, the building should be ready to house all the operational equipment and vehicles by the end of January. That will signal the start of conversion work to the interior of the existing building. The demolition of a brick dividing wall, with the garage floor area built up to the existing classroom level, will result in a single large training room with modern facilities. There'll be plenty of room for all team members to attend a single lecture with extra spaces for practical training. Plans are being prepared for an official opening of the whole project in Spring 2003.

4TH EMERGENCY SERVICE?

The AA and RAC weren't available when **Buxton MRT** received a call to attend a car breakdown in Eldon Hill Quarry in August. But, in fact, the car hadn't broken down – it had been pushed! The incident began one Monday morning, when it was reported to police that there was a car on a ledge about 75 metres from the top and about 20 metres from the bottom of the disused quarry. It was unknown whether anyone was still in the vehicle so team members climbed to the crash site to investigate. Fortunately, the vehicle was empty, which was just as well as it was virtually flat! Damage was so severe that it took some time to determine the make and model.

OLDHAM WEEKEND INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR – NUMBER 18

The **Oldham MRT** annual event will take place on the weekend of 2-4 May, 2003. As yet prices and programmes have not been fixed but Team Secretary Tony Gillon hopes to have information out by email and snail mail with further details by mid January, bookings closing on 31 March 2003. Tony stresses that places will be strictly limited to 32 delegates, provisional bookings will not be accepted and all completed applications must be accompanied by payment.

ONE DAY IN DIGGLE

Death and disaster rocked the sleepy Saddleworth hamlet of Diggle in September, involving **Oldham MRT** in a major rescue exercise with the local emergency services. Two tearaways stole a car, drove to Diggle, put some rocks onto the railway line, which derailed a passenger train, which was hit by a goods train carrying dangerous chemicals, which spilt into Diggle Brook. The skipper of a passing barge had a heart attack and his disabled passengers were marooned. And it was all meticulously planned.



'999 Challenge' was part of an initiative from the Police, Ambulance and Fire services to get young people to realise what the emergency services do. Fronted by GMP and sponsored by My Travel, the day-long exercise also involved British Waterways, Railtrack (who provided a train), Oldham MBC and The

Johnnie Lees

In at least one newspaper obituary Johnnie Lees, who died recently, was described as the father of the modern system of mountain rescue. Whilst many will disagree with that description, arguing that no single person deserves that accolade, it is an indication of the contribution that Johnnie made to our service.

Lees was born in Essex in 1927 and educated in Hexham. He joined the RAF hoping to serve as aircrew but the return of peace frustrated this ambition and instead he became a physical training instructor. Posted to Yorkshire, he climbed with Arthur Dolphin and Peter Greenwood and, by 1950, he was an accomplished climber with several Alpine seasons to his credit.

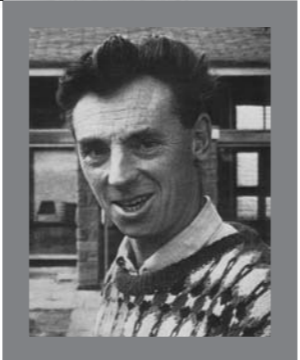
A series of incidents in the immediate post war years, culminating in March 1951 in the crash of a Lancaster bomber on the great buttress of Coire Mhic Fhearchair on Beinn Eighe, highlighted the deficiencies of the RAF mountain rescue system. Lees was involved in this rescue in which all eight crew members perished, the last body not being recovered until August. In the aftermath of this tragedy he was asked to run a mountain training course for the rescue service.

It was on this course, run at RAF Valley, and subsequent courses, that Lees put his stamp on the future of mountain rescue, both service and civilian. Hampered by equipment primitive even by the standards of the early 50s and frustrated by a turnover of personnel dictated by the exigencies of the service rather than by his needs, he nevertheless forged powerful and effective units. Both demanding and inspirational, he insisted on the highest standards from his men, and he got them. The winter and summer courses he ran were exemplary and built up a formidable *esprit de corps*.

In 1952 he met Gwen Moffat, later to become Britain's first woman mountain guide and one of the finest female mountaineering writers. They married in 1955, a relationship that was both mutually respectful and antagonistic. Ted Burton recalls with some amusement that during the time that he knew them they never used Christian names, always referring to each other as 'Lees' or 'Moffat'.

Lees qualified as a mountain guide in 1955 and in the following year took part, with Joe Brown, in the first televised rock climb – Suicide Wall in Cwm Idwal. Demobbed in 1961 he worked as a mountain guide and with Outward Bound before becoming Warden Service Officer and, latterly, Ranger Training Officer in the Peak District National Park, a post he held until he retired in 1985.

He and Moffat divorced in 1970 and he married Dorothy Pleasance in 1975, living with her in Over Haddon until her death in 1994. He received numerous awards for his work in mountain rescue including the George Medal, in 1958, for the first tragsitz rescue carried out in the UK on Crag Yr Ysfa in Snowdonia, and the BEM, in 1962, accepting them all with his usual wry humour. He died on 15 August, 2002.



Dave Brown. Kinder MRT

Casualty Union, (who provided the bodies). The whole day was organised by PC Philip Gleave.

Teams of about ten young people from all over Greater Manchester each dealt with two of the tasks which all this led to. These were many and various, from clearing a site for the police helicopter to land, acting as runners to keep the command centre informed (a sunspot had blacked out radio communications). Then there was running the casualty clearing station, looking for the original miscreants, building traps to rescue barge passengers and dams to stop the spread of chemicals. And the bridge had been damaged, so how to get the passengers from the train? Each team of young people had an observer with them who marked them on their performance on the tasks assigned, looking at their team working and co-operation as well as knowledge of basic first aid and how they got on with the task. Wet feet led to instant disqualification! And rescue team members? In all the mayhem a motor cyclist and pillion passenger had ended up in a gully next to the brook, and were both injured. 'Two teams came to us and were shown how to treat the casualties, get them onto a stretcher and set up a pulley system to haul them out. The young people we met were quick to pick up what was needed and soon had the casualties out and carried to the clearing station,' comments team member John Gardiner. 'The weather was kind, the teams were lively and the police provided a great packed lunch. The teams' performances will go towards winning a prize of a two-night stay on a residential team-building course, and other prizes include a trip to Alton Towers.'

SOUTH WEST

LANDMARK YEAR

2002 has been quite a landmark year for **Exmoor SRT**. The team's 10th Anniversary saw a number of significant achievements. There was a good throughput of trainees with much of the interest from talks, demos, and tin rattles. In the last two years, two team members have decided to train with SARDA and, to help them on their way, the team secured some sponsorship towards their training from Pet Plan. Elsewhere, it was anticipated that the campaign to raise £40K to replace their ageing Renault Master vehicle would take a good 2-3 years to get anywhere near. After 18 months of hard work, they were all pretty much taken aback in June to find themselves in a position to place the order for the new vehicle. Says Mike Long, 'It came on-line in September and was the best birthday present we could have had.' Eager to share their good fortune, they decided to give the old vehicle to a deserving cause – what better than another MRT? Hearing that a new team was starting out in Sussex, they contacted them and it was duly

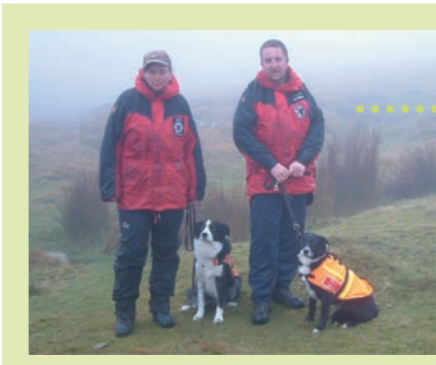
donated! 'We wish the Sussex Lowland team well with it, and with building up their team and resources!' added Mike.

THANKS TO SNOW & ROCK

Severn Area RA would like to thank Snow & Rock for their generosity in donating equipment in excess of £500 to their Beachley station. The six (of each) Ridge Rest roll mats, Life Venture thermal flasks, survival bags, Silva Type 4 compasses and Silva welded map cases and eight (of each) OS Outdoor leisure maps and Landranger maps will replace equipment in the team's ageing search packs.

THEY'VE BEEN TOGETHER NOW FOR...

Husband and wife Alex and Nicki Lyons have recently celebrated between them 40 years in mountain rescue. Nicki has been with **Dartmoor Rescue Group** Tavistock section for the past 20 years. Alex was with Plymouth for four years before transferring to Tavistock, where he has been ever since. Both are veteran dog handlers – the Lockerbie disaster coming very soon after their initial grading – and have held many badges of office in their time. Alex, now training his fourth dog, first graded in February 1987, and is now Training Co-ordinator for Graded Search Dogs for SARDA England. Nicki, who graded her first dog the following year, and is now training her third, is current Chairman of SARDA England.



ALSAR

TEN TEAMS AND COUNTING...

ALSAR continues to go from strength to strength with its current membership at ten teams. It is also in contact with five other teams who are either formed awaiting probational membership of ALSAR, or waiting to form. It is hoped to bring the membership to 15 teams covering 18 counties before the end of the year. ALSAR has also been instrumental in the formation of Lowland Search Dogs (LSD), which had its first meeting in November when five dog teams came together under the

chairmanship of Andy Williamson (ALSAR Secretary) and agreed to form an umbrella organisation to oversee and standardise the qualifications for lowland dog teams in the UK. It is hoped that by coming together, and with the assistance of ALSAR, they can approach ACPO to gain recognition of the group and standards on a national basis. A steering committee will look at how the organisation is to be run and what standards it should adopt. If any teams wish to be involved who haven't already been approached, please contact Andy Williamson on 07768 647859 or by email at andy.williamson@lineone.net.

SARDA

SARDA WALES ASSESSMENTS

The last weekend in November saw a first for the SARDA Wales assessments in Snowdonia. It was the first time in the UK where a non-mountain rescue team member was assessed alongside MR team members. As Harold Burrows explains, 'SARDA Wales has been working for a number of years with the idea of increasing the number of dogs available to the police and mountain rescue teams, whilst not reducing the high standard that they have come to expect. The dog teams will be called out in the same way, arrive in the same way and be deployed in the same way. The only difference is that Search Managers will have more details as to the capabilities of the dogs they deploy. The police and mountain rescue teams don't have to worry about deployment – we will do that as we have always done. 'We in SARDA Wales feel that this is an improvement to the service we provide. The new type of search dog is in response to the people who call us out.'

During the weekend, each dog team was set five areas, unaware of the location or number of people hidden within. Supplied with the boundaries, they had to produce the most effective and efficient search strategy. As teams worked through the area, they were watched by assessors from SARDA Wales, England and Southern Scotland. The standard was set by National SARDA.

Following the assessment, two new novice search dog teams are now on the call out list, and one fully qualified team is ready to respond.

Aberglaslyn MRT report that their very own Training Officer, Richard Beech and his dog Celyn, were one of the successful teams. Richard celebrated with his first call out just two days later in Oswestry.

Ardenbeg Outdoor Centre ARDENBEG BUNKHOUSE & OUTDOOR CENTRE, GRANT ROAD GRANTOWN-ON-SPEY, MORAYSHIRE
Contact Rebecca on 01479 872824 or email enquiries@ardenbeg.co.uk

RAF

SPECTATOR HAZARD

Back in June, **RAF Leeming MRT** were involved in a call out on Cnicht in Snowdonia with **Aberglaslyn MRT** which attracted some spectators who created a hazard to the operation. As a result, the RAF team proposed that a letter be written to an outdoor magazine to highlight the potential hazards that could be caused by spectators at incident sites.

The letter stated that 'the RAF MRS and a Sea King helicopter from RAF Valley responded to an incident in Snowdonia where two walkers had fallen. The rescue attracted something of a crowd of spectators who, unbeknown to them and quite innocently, created an additional hazard for both rescuers and helicopter crew.

'The walkers had fallen from near the summit and come to rest on steep ground. Both had suffered serious injury and were drifting in and out of consciousness. The helicopter and mountain rescue team soon arrived and first aid was administered with some care as it was impossible to completely secure the casualties due to the steep and loose ground. However, they were successfully evacuated from the scene by helicopter to a nearby hospital.

'Throughout the whole operation the helicopter, rescuers and casualties were endangered by the possibility of spectators on the summit dislodging loose rocks down onto them. At worst, one of these rocks could have damaged the helicopter's rotor blades, with potentially catastrophic results.

'Whilst it is acceptable that such an incident may well present an interesting diversion for any passersby, and that they would never deliberately be the cause of any hazard, we would ask that when faced with this situation, onlookers keep well clear and take particular care not to dislodge any rocks or to move around unnecessarily. Doing so will not only compromise the safety of the rescuers but could also affect the success of the operation. The helicopter pilot's workload is at its greatest when hovering and winching, particularly when operating close to steep ground, a time when he or she least needs distraction or other threats. Add to this that the captain's primary responsibility is the safety of the crew and helicopter and he may be forced to abort the mission at any time if he considers that they are endangered in any way. This would, of course, serve only to prolong the incident, when the aim is to evacuate the casualty as rapidly and effectively as possible.

'You should also be aware that mountain rescue teams, and helicopters in particular, can themselves present a risk to the passerby, in the form of a rockfall and helicopter down wash. It, therefore, makes even more sense to stay well clear unless directly involved.

'The ideal landing site for a helicopter is approx

the size of a football pitch, requiring a relatively large area to operate. The main dangers are from the main and tail rotors – the main rotor can sail up and down and, if the helicopter has landed on uneven ground, will come even closer to the ground. This rotor also produces a large amount of down wash which could easily knock a person over or blow loose equipment away. The winch cable from the helicopter should also be avoided as it can give an electric shock. As a general rule – sit down in a secure position at least 30 metres away from the incident site; secure any loose articles (not forgetting hats); keep still; and keep pets and children under control.'

HELICOPTER SAFETY IN MR

Hopefully you will have read the item above regarding the hazards **RAF Leeming MRT** and **Aberglaslyn MRT** encountered in June this year. We worked hard together under difficult circumstances to effect a successful rescue but, as usual, things could have been done differently.

Mountain rescue involves a lot of different short notice factors and is always subject to the unexpected risk. Most of these risks can be avoided or controlled if you think about them in advance and that is certainly the lesson that I would take away from the June incident. That said, could we have afforded to send one of the few rescuers available to the summit to 'control the crowd' – but then could we have afforded not to? Not an easy choice and not one that is readily made when you are busy arriving by helicopter at an incident.

It is difficult working with helicopters. There's noise and wind, and there is obvious interest – not only from spectators but from other team members. If you are the party or team leader, there is a lot of pressure – you need to think about many things, one of which has to be the consequences of the arrival of the helicopter. Winter is drawing on (or here, if you are in Scotland!), so now is the time I am thinking about the extra winter items I may need to consider near a helicopter:

- * How am I going to handle the ice axe(s)?
- * Does the helicopter have crampon mats fitted? Should I ask?
- * If it is night are they using NVGs? And if so, how much light do I need and where?
- * Is there loose snow? If so, will the helicopter be able to hover? Do I want to put on goggles in anticipation of being 'ice blasted'?
- * If the helicopter is around, what loose articles (including hats on heads!) may disappear?
- * Will the helicopter affect the risk of avalanche?
- * Am I dressed to survive a helicopter mishap?

Looking out my window, I can see snow on Snowdon and Moel Hebog, so I'm off to check my hill bag.

The helicopter could be here in 10 minutes....

Mike Gibson. Aberglaslyn MRT

NEW STRETCHER

The MRC of S has been working for over a year on developing a new stretcher beyond the MacInnes that has served everyone well for around 30 years. A bequest of £40K has allowed a small sub committee of interested members from across the country to appoint a couple of professional designers to generate a new system based on a very comprehensive specification of desirable features. Both designers recently presented their ideas at the annual Shell/Boots seminar to an audience of over 150 mountain rescue personnel.

The sub committee has now decided to proceed with the manufacture of two working prototypes which should be ready early in the new year. These will be subjected to further analysis (and abuse) to enable a final decision to be made on which design route to take. Shell UK has offered full (and free) use of their testing facilities.

INSURANCE AND OTHER ISSUES

A variety of issues are being debated at national level which are relevant to all those involved in UK MR. The MRC of S is hopeful that within the next 12 months, all Scottish MRTs will benefit from the same level of insurance cover. It is expected that this will include medical cover on rescues and training and a death benefit of at least £250K. MRC of S Vice Chairman, Nick Forwood, of Cairngorm MRT is developing an information booklet which focuses on all aspects of insurance (*All You Ever Wanted To Know About Insurance*). Nick and others are also lobbying members of parliament and the Scottish Executive with a view to finding ways to increase ring fenced funding from the Executive through the Police Authorities to assist an overall shortfall in income. There is recognition that the Police benefit greatly from the voluntary efforts of MRTs which is not always reflected in financial support to MRTs by the Police. The delicate issue here is to increase funding without increasing the ties or controls that could be attached.

The MRC of S is also working on the matter of communications. It looks as if there will be significant changes to the profile of frequencies available to MRTs in the near future. There will also be hardware implications together with the attendant financial complications.

If anyone south of the border wishes to blather on any or all of these topics please call **Bob Sharp** on **01360 770431** or e-mail at **Lomondbob@talk21.com**



Rigging For Rescue A Brief Report

My mobile phone rang and Marianne's cheery voice asked if I wanted to attend a 7 day Rigging For Rescue course starting in five days time. Sounds a good idea, but work could seriously spoil the plan. After a quick discussion with the boss, I was able to tell Marianne that I could be there. The duration of 7 days was unexpectedly long and after a call to Mike Margeson, I was still only partly convinced that the course would be beneficial. However, two other Ogwen team members had attended the weekend session run by the MRC and were so impressed with Rigging For Rescue that they booked places on the full week course in British Columbia. Here was an opportunity for me to attend the same

course in the UK. This was too good an offer to refuse and I became really excited about the event.

The Rigging For Rescue system evolved in British Columbia in the early 1990s following extensive research and discussions between the teams. The refined techniques have since been adopted by teams

throughout North America, the RAF MRTs and numerous other civilian MRTs in the UK. For the first time in the UK, a set of vendor independent, evidence based techniques and systems are being offered to teams to evaluate and possibly adopt.

The course started on Saturday morning at High Borrans Outdoor Education Centre near Kendal. Our instructor, Kirk Mauthner explained the structure of the course that focuses on methods of safely implementing practical technical rescue systems based on data and research from Kirk's test environments in British Columbia. The only bad news was that the course started at 9am and finished at 9pm for most of the 7 days.

I was really impressed with the experience and skills of the fellow students – from MRTs including Keswick, Calder Valley, Llanberis, Aberglaslyn, Ogwen, Glossop, Langdale Ambleside, Northern Ireland and Bridgend. We quickly gelled into an effective team and worked well on solving many of the situations and problems posed during the week.

The first day focused on theory that explored critical analysis of rescue systems and examined the worst-case events and loads that can impact a system. The principles of safety factors, critical point tests and the 'whistle test' were explored in detail. Critical point analysis assists in identifying potential single points of failure in the system and then changing the design of the system to avoid these failure modes. A new concept for me was the 'whistle test' which ensures that the system retains its safety if everyone needs to suddenly abandon the lowering site due to reasons such as avalanche, rockfall etc. The final element of the analysis is destructive testing that identifies the point at which the system starts to fail, so allowing operating safety margins to be determined. We saw some amazing video footage of some tests carried out by Kirk that showed the



performance of different belay devices when subjected to a worst case dynamic load. The tandem 8mm prussiks were shown to deliver by far the best holding performance of any comparable element.

The following days had progressively higher levels of practical work with sessions including stretcher work, pick-offs, steep slopes, high lines, simple and compound pulley systems together with moving over difficult edges. The key aspects of critical analysis and the whistle test were applied at every opportunity and it was amazing how quickly we changed from hard-nosed sceptical MRT members to firm advocates of the principles we were being taught. Kirk was always available to answer difficult questions and was able to give coherent, reasoned answers to virtually all our questions.

Several of the techniques and ideas were new to me and these included the Radium Release Hitch coupled with the brake-racks, tandem 8mm prussiks and high strength tie-offs. These elements will provide extremely useful items in the systems toolbox.

As usual, a lot of the learning was from other students and I gained a lot by discussing issues and challenges with other members of the group.

In conclusion, I arrived somewhat sceptical about Rigging for Rescue but am now a firm advocate of recommending, and hopefully adopting, many of these techniques into our operational portfolio. I do not think that it will be easy as change is often difficult, but the clear benefits of using simple, evidence based techniques and applying common systems when operating with other teams will be well worth the effort.

My sincere thanks must go Kirk for his quiet, inspiring manner and to the MRC for the initiative in running this tremendous course in conjunction with superb financial support of the Keswick team. I heartily recommend this course and hope that other team members will be able to benefit from Kirk's enormous knowledge and experience.

John Hulse

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IKAR 2002 was attended by 28 of the 33 member organisations. The 4 main Commissions – Terrestrial Rescue, Avalanche Rescue, Air Rescue and Mountain Emergency Medicine – experienced various practical demonstrations, visits and presentations and there was a show of trade stands.

* Almost all presentations, as always of high standard, were done using PowerPoint or video. For the first time, there were simultaneous translations into English, French and German – not without occasional problems for the translators keeping up with the presenters and the often highly technical content! This meant that the pace was quicker and a great deal more work was able to be done, although things were occasionally lost in the translations.

* This year, much of the work was shared by the Commissions, which meant that the emphasis was different. For example, the Terrestrial Commission, which Mike Margeson and I usually attend, experienced several presentations on avalanche safety, transceivers and risk assessment – by both rescuers and manufacturers. The Austrians noted that most victims were seasoned or ambitious skiers. There was a demonstration of the NivoTest, the brainchild of Robert Bolognesi. Using a card very similar to a parking disc, questions are printed on the side of the card and the answers drilled in. When all questions have been answered, the reverse of the card shows the result. A good web page on avalanche awareness (by Blyth Wright, referring to the NivoTest) is at www.timeoutdoors.com. Another interesting site is www.gletscherarchiv.de/EN/index.htm which shows how climate change has dramatically altered glaciers in the past century.

W. Munter claimed there were 5 deaths per week in avalanches, very often to experienced people. Why? Perhaps the training is questionable and we should focus on risk assessment more. However, what risks are acceptable? Where do we draw the line? Is one fatality in 100,000 ski tourists acceptable? In a later question, Munter defined a professional as someone who had worn out the soles of 10 pairs of boots.

* Mammut is developing a built-in inclinometer in a transceiver. Are we regularly checking and maintaining our avalanche transceivers? Perhaps we should have transceivers from different manufacturers to avoid overlap problems. Recco systems were used in 300 ski resorts worldwide. Their reflectors were supplied in 20% of ski clothing.

* In Switzerland, it was claimed that friends were more effective than rescuers at the scene of an avalanche. The average arrival time of a helicopter was 22 minutes (within the magic 30 minutes). 19 out of 57 were found dead in burials during the last season. The average burial time was 30 minutes and at one metre depth. 17 were found with rescue beacons and one by a dog. Minutes certainly counted! There were various other presentations on avalanche matters.

* Rick Lorenz from the USA gave a presentation on leadership. Roosevelt said you should pick a good man to lead, but then leave him to get on with the job.

* Evaluating Risks in Mountain Rescue from Tim Kovacs from the US. Point to ponder – ‘They don’t know that they don’t know (rescuers)’. Helicopter work, tiredness and training are the three main areas for accidents to rescuers – the badge/uniform doesn’t make you invincible. Will what you do pass the ‘Headline Test’? Is the risk justified? www.mra.org

* The French prompted some interesting thoughts with regard to sharing experiences with ‘close shaves’. There were not solutions for all eventualities but equally, an incident may never replicate itself. Post-incident debriefs should include open, non threatening interviews with team members (anonymously if necessary), and reports made and shared with other members and other local teams, inviting feedback. Only in this way, can progress be made. There were 31 such incidents in Chamonix between 1997 and 2001. There have been 7 so far this year.

In one incident, there was an injured climber on a ledge being rescued by a helicopter. The helicopter pulled away before the casualty and rescuer were both clipped on, resulting in the rescuer sustaining a fall. There is much to be learned in openly sharing such problems. Perhaps MRC teams can create some kind of common area for sharing experiences of ‘close shaves’ or of ‘rescues that didn’t work’.

* Don’t confuse training with practising. Both are essential.

* The Bavarians talked about Post Traumatic Stress and their Crisis Intervention Process. 70% of rescuers generally showed no problems. 22% showed symptoms between 6 and 12 months, and 8% were diagnosed with PTSD, which can be identified in up to 4 weeks following the exposure. The World Health Organisation claims this is a condition which should be treated.

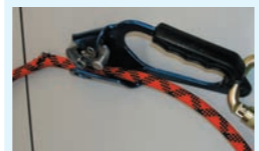
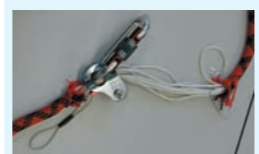
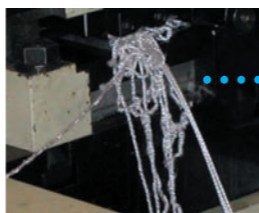
* An interesting translation blip – someone who was unconscious was quoted as being ‘without conscience’.

* Both the MRA of the US and the Swedish Civil MR wish to engage in exchange activities with other rescuers round the world.

* An interesting demonstration, using a mobile rig, was given by Pankraz Hauser of the SAC, showing the effects of energy, loading and pulleys. This approach to understanding the basics was very clear and well-presented.

* Mike Margeson gave a demonstration of the 540 Rescue Belay device used and developed for the Rigging for Rescue programme. www.riggingforrescue.com

* Gebhard Barbisch gave an account of the interesting, if futuristic, Paramount Project. This would combine all the technologies of GPS, cell phones, PDAs, GIS mapping, safety systems, weather and avalanche forecasts, and enable users and rescuers alike to derive all possible benefit. Presumably when things go wrong, the ‘technology’ will pick up the pieces! Apparently the industry has called upon mountain rescue to devise an innovative system to enable the user to interact appropriately.



A visit was made to EMPA in St Gallen where we saw some rope testing. We all know the limitations of various ropes and knots under various conditions, but it was interesting to see things happening before our own eyes!

* The French explained their new ‘Nicola’ radio system for cave rescue. The rescuers use a Radio Club to determine the best ground features – cracks, fissures, etc – to optimise communication with the rescuers underground. They gave an example of a rescue in the Gouffre Berger, where distances for comms were considerable. The technicalities were not clear, but telephone cabling was possible up to 500m but left problems at distances greater than that. A ground dipole of 80m (2 x 40m) was used in this system.

* The Helicopter Commission reported that after twenty years of technical development, accidents had reduced with better maintenance and equipment. However, accidents due to human error were up (12% technical causes; 80% human causes). Could this be dealt with?

* The Medical Commission reported pleasure in adding reps from South Africa, Argentina and Kathmandu to their number. Their new book has now been published and was available at this Conference (4 copies purchased for MRC). Thanks to the Italian Rescue Service for financing the publication. See www.stefanoni.it/inglese.html for details. You can also order a copy by emailing mailto:editrice@stefanoni.it Cost is €20. (NB. Copies of chapters are available on the IKAR website). www.ikar-cisa.org (user name and password from Paul Horder on request). Urs Wiget, past President, states that ‘analgesia at the site of an accident is a basic human right’.

* Next year, the Commission meetings will be in Coylumbridge from 1-5 October, hosted by the MRC of S. In 2004, they will probably be in Italy and, in 2005, Zakopane.

Paul Horder. Keswick MRT

PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN US MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION (MRA) TEAMS and INTERNATIONAL MR TEAMS...

There are already a number of very successful ‘sister’ relationships between states and cities in the US and regions and cities in Russia and Eastern Europe. For example, Colorado with Slovenia, and Seattle with Nantes, France, Taejon, Korea, and Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The purpose of the programmes is to build friendships, encourage cultural and professional ties and develop co-operative ventures. A number of MRA teams have informally developed ties with international teams and Chinese and Israeli teams attended the 2002 MRA Spring meeting in Estes Park. At that meeting the MRA Board supported the idea of developing a more formal partnership programme. Rick Lorenz from Tacoma Mountain Rescue brought the proposal to the IKAR meeting in Brasov, Romania, in July 2002, and a number of IKAR teams supported the venture.

Teams can be matched on a statewide basis. For example, Colorado would pair with Austria and then individual teams within each area connected. The number of volunteer teams in Austria exceeds the number of MRA teams in Colorado. Matches can also be made on an individual basis, based on similar size and interest. Some countries have only a handful of teams, such as Poland and Slovakia. As in the US, the IKAR teams are primarily volunteers, although there are a number of professional teams such as the High Mountain Police in France.

Dan Hourahan, MRA President, sent out a letter to all MRA teams in September 2002, soliciting support for the programme, and encouraging sign up. Charlie Shimanski and Rick Lorenz agreed to form an exchange committee, and a page (*International Exchange*) created on the MRA website to record and disseminate information about the programme. Dan’s letter was posted on the site, which will record all international exchange activity. As a result, ten US teams signed up for partnership. Rick Lorenz presented the proposal again in Europe, at the October IKAR, and initial partnership designations were made.

MRA will act as the clearing house between the teams, make the initial matches, provide mail and email contacts, and make suggestions on how the relationship should develop and IKAR will help to get the offer out to its member teams. All programmes are entirely voluntary.

The sister teams would actually develop the programme – it could start with email and eventually expand into exchanges where one team hosts visits from members of the other team.

International teams that participate will be asked to post a short team profile on the website so everyone can learn about the partner teams.

Here is the process. MRA teams sign up with the Exchange Committee giving any preference for a region or particular international team and designating a point of contact (and alternative) via email address. There are currently

about twelve US teams and five international teams.

Existing Programmes...

These programmes will all be the subject of separate reports and entry on the MRA website.

- Colorado teams hosted the Israeli team, and Colorado members visited Israel last month. Colorado teams also hosted the Chinese team last summer.
- Tim Cochran, Vail Mountain Rescue, has an existing programme with Italy.
- Dick Sale, Sierra Madre, has an existing programme with Taiwan.
- David Kovar, Special Response Group, is involved in a number of international programmes.

New Programmes...

- Portland Mountain Rescue (Rocky Henderson) has been matched with the Zagreb Croatia MRT. Vladimir Mesic is the co-ordinator.
- Tacoma Mountain Rescue (Ken Capron) is matched with the Sud Tirol MRT in Northern Italy. Emails have been exchanged.
- Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit (Glenn Henderson) has been matched with Hargitha District (Romania) Mountain Rescue. Marian Chivu is the co-ordinator.

Pending...

- Three Colorado teams signed up to partner Austrian teams – Rocky Mountain Rescue (Jeff Sparhawk), Alpine Rescue (Mike Everest) and Routt County Search and Rescue (Darell Livingston). Gebhard Barbisch of the Vorarlberg (Austria) Mountain Rescue, and IKAR Terrestrial Commission Vice President, will match and notify teams of the designations. These teams are very similar in size and composition and are all volunteers.
- Stowe Vermont Mountain Rescue (Neal Van Dyke) will be matched with a designated Scottish MRT.
- Mount Rainier Park Climbing Rangers will be matched with the High Mountain Rescue Unit of the French Police at Chamonix, Mont Blanc. These are both professional teams with significant rescue activity.
- Central Arizona Mountain Rescue (Dave Berenson) will be matched with Slovenia Mountain Rescue based in Ljubljana, Slovenia.
- Inyo County California Mountain Rescue (Rich Frey) will be matched with Zakopane Mountain Rescue (Poland).

Special Offer of International Exchange...

Swedish Mountain Rescue includes both professional police and volunteers from all over Sweden, including Lapland in the far north. They made a standing offer to host any MR representatives from the US or any other country for one or two weeks. Meals and lodging would be covered but not air travel. They will pick you up at the airport and arrange lodging in members’ homes, plus tours and demonstrations of Swedish rescue capabilities. They ask, in return, that Swedish rescuers be extended the same offer at a later time in the visitors’ home country. Programme co-ordinator is Sten Lindgren cifro.sten@ebrevet.nu

For more information contact Rick Lorenz on fmlorenz1@aol.com or check the MRA website www.mra.org



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MAJOR AIR ACCIDENT

ROCKS COUNTY KERRY...



View across the eastern side of the Gap of Dunloe
Photo: Jimmy Laide

Think for a minute... what would be the worst case scenario facing any MRT? A major air accident in an upland area? This was exactly the scenario facing over 80 MR personnel from various teams and over 120 personnel from other agencies attending last year's Irish Mountain Rescue Association (IMRA) National Training Exercise.

County Kerry, in the south west of Ireland boasts 15 of Ireland's 20 highest peaks, including Carrauntuathail (the country's highest peak at 1039m), which will be familiar to all Four Peaks Challenge participants. The Gap of Dunloe, a 500m deep glacial breach that bisects the spine of the Iveragh peninsula and separates the McGillycuddy Reeks from the Purple Mountain group, served as a fitting backdrop for the exercise with its spectacularly steep walls and rugged cliffs and outcrops.

From the outset, it was the intention of the organisers that the exercise should be kept as realistic as was practicable in order to simulate the operational and logistical challenges involved. So rescue co-ordinators and participating teams were very much thrown in at the deep end, and participants asked to approach the exercise as if it were for real. The

scenario was then left to develop as the day went on, with minimal intervention from the organisers.

The details were that a medium sized plane with approximately 30 passengers on board had come down during the hours of darkness, leaving a trail of wreckage, bodies and survivors. It had, apparently, glanced off the western side of the Gap before limping across the valley (over Auger Lake) to the eastern side, where the main impact occurred. Rescue services (both mountain rescue and others) had assembled at first light.

Although it was inevitable that some parts of the exercise had to be artificially staged to a certain degree it was, by and large, as realistic as intended. The Korean air crash several days later, during which over 30 injured survivors had to be evacuated from a remote mountainous area

served as a chilling reminder that such an event remains a possibility for any MRT, particularly those whose territory lies beneath flight paths. Indeed, many reading this article will already have experience of having attended light aircraft crash sites.

In total, 20 live casualties were placed over a wide area, with injuries ranging from the very serious (eg. intracranial haemorrhage, bilateral fractured femurs, ruptured spleen and internal bleeding, pneumothorax etc) to the relatively minor walking wounded. There were also several bodies and body parts which required location and recovery. Wreckage included two black box flight recorders and many other items of twisted metal, each of which was individually placed and marked with an eight figure GPS reference the week before the exercise, and subsequently recovered.

At 6.30am, Joe Dowdall (nominated co-ordinator for the exercise) briefed team leaders at Aghadoe Youth Hostel, before all personnel departed for the Gap of Dunloe. On arrival, the first task was to set up some kind of functioning control centre, whilst at the same time meeting, briefing and co-ordinating the non-MR agencies, including civil defence, voluntary ambulance services, water rescue groups, gardaí, media etc. It was obvious that Joe and his chosen team of five base staff were in for a hectic day!

It was intended that several hill parties would operate simultaneously, each comprising a core group of approximately six personnel from a particular MRT (along with their equipment) backed up by a roughly equal number of personnel from a various other teams. The rationale was that each team retained a certain degree of autonomy as a core group on the hill while several of its members would also experience how the other teams operate.

The co-ordinators had already drawn up a search plan, and the various hill parties were soon dispatched to their respective sectors. Meanwhile, water rescue groups were allocated various lake areas to search, and one RIB was designated to ferry equipment and personnel from rescue base to the far side of Auger Lake. Civil defence were allocated lowland sectors to search, whilst SARDA were given specific search sectors. A forward medical clearing station was established, with assistance from voluntary ambulance services, co-ordinated by the base doctor for the day, Matt Hayes MD (a

retired ER consultant from the US who now lives in Ireland and is involved with Kerry MRT).

Before long, hill teams had located the main impact sites and begun finding casualties. Diagnosis of the various casualty conditions and injuries by the hill teams was efficient and accurate, but the sheer number of casualties threatened to overwhelm them, despite the large number of personnel present. The volume of radio traffic was also problematic at times due to the large number of casualties being treated. This made co-ordination from base difficult in spite of the relatively large base staff. Medical direction from the base doctor, with regard to triage and prioritisation of the various casualties and treatment plans, was excellent, however, and it was a great relief for the hill teams to know that definitive medical advice was so readily available (it is still not the norm for most Irish MRTs to have their own team doctor, although most team members are trained to advanced first aid or EMT level).

At this point, with so many of the casualties located and personnel spread so thin on the ground, the momentum of the evacuations stalled for a period. In retrospect, the general consensus was that hill teams had so much to do in trying to treat so many at once that people became tied up in the details of what they were doing and seemed temporarily unable to see the 'bigger picture' and seize the initiative to begin to organise the evacuation of casualties. Most hill teams believed that they required assistance to evacuate their most serious casualties, but none was available, each team being caught in the same boat as the next. Volume of work at base also made it difficult for the co-ordinators to spend any time organising casualty evacuation.

This situation pertained for a while before there was a general realisation that each hill team needed to take responsibility for evacuating its own casualties. Evacuations commenced in earnest, with back-roped slope lowers being required for most



The RIB used to ferry personnel and equipment across Auger Lake
Photo: Jimmy Laide

stretcher evacuations on the steep and rugged sides of the gap. Although technical rescue was not intended to form a major part of the exercise on the day, a cableway was established to lower casualties down a large cliff on the western side of the Gap.

Shortly after midday, the Irish Coast Guard Sikorsky S61 arrived on the scene, and was requested to evacuate several of the most seriously injured casualties. However, despite clear conditions they were unable to carry out any evacuations in the narrow confines of the gap due to the hazards posed by gusting wind conditions and downdraughts. Over the years, this helicopter and its crews have carried out some spectacular and daring rescues in the Kerry and Connemara mountains and the crews are regarded with particularly high esteem for their bravery and professionalism by anyone who has had the privilege of working with them. This exercise provided a timely reminder of the potential limitations which weather conditions can impose on the operational capabilities of helicopters in the mountain environment. On arrival at the valley floor, each casualty was taken to the medical clearing station for examination and ongoing triage by the base doctor before being transported to 'hospital' by ambulance.

Divers, meanwhile, had been spectacularly successful in locating wreckage and bodies in the lake, and recovered one of the black box flight recorders from the lake bed (the second one was successfully located by a hill team). In one of the lighter moments of the day, a diver actually recovered a Rolex watch from about 3m of water. How it got there remains a mystery but it was definitely not one of the items of wreckage placed by the organisers!

Civil defence did a superb job with mobile catering, providing over 200 meals during the course of the day, which was hugely appreciated by team members returning from the hill.

The exercise was finally wound up at 6.00pm and, following a sprucing-up period, team members arrived at the famous Kate Kearney's Cottage for a meal and entertainment, which included an e-slide show of the day's activities, the presentation of a number of 'Golden Karabiner' awards for some of the lighter incidents of the day, and a superb performance from local traditional band Alanna.

The following morning, there were two main debriefs, from Tomás Aylward on the technical, and Matt Hayes on the medical, aspects of the exercise. In addition there was a hugely informative lecture by Graham Liddy of the Air Accident Investigation



Unit about protocols and special considerations for working in the vicinity of crash sites.

So what exactly is the point of this article? Well several interesting points emerged during the exercise, and debrief, which are worthy of discussion and could be of relevance to many other teams. The main points to emerge are as follows:

1) It should be appreciated how easy it is for resources to become overwhelmed, even with significant numbers of personnel and volumes of equipment available. Remember this was a relatively small aircraft, relatively close to a road (albeit a small one) and personnel had travelled from all over the country. The nature of the terrain meant that non-mountaineers would have found it very hard to operate in the area. If this scenario is scaled down, it could be appreciated that if a single team is called upon to attend more than one callout simultaneously, or a callout with several casualties, then similar problems could occur.

Kerry MRT was recently called to two incidents simultaneously, one of which involved a multiple fall in an extremely remote area resulting in two fatalities and one seriously injured casualty, the other involving a person with facial injuries who fortunately turned out to be walking wounded. Kerry MRT could very easily have been overwhelmed if any of the following had applied: a) The walking wounded casualty in the initial incident had been a stretcher case. b) Either of the two fatalities had been seriously injured casualties. c) The Shannon Coast Guard helicopter had been unable to assist. Unfortunately, we do not have the relative luxury of having neighbouring teams in close proximity to call on for assistance at short notice. There was a general feeling that we had 'got away with it'.

So how can we plan for situations like this, or indeed can we plan for them at all? (A colleague of mine takes great delight in saying that 'one ambulance is always too many and

six is never enough'). It is clearly not feasible to plan for every eventuality (the torch, spare torch and spare spare torch syndrome). However I would tentatively suggest that each team should (if they haven't already done so) put a little thought into how they would cope with a major incident. Examples of contingency planning might include the provision of a reserve callout list or a plan for obtaining additional equipment at short notice.

2) Most hill teams arrived at a point where they became swamped with multiple casualties, yet there appeared to be a reluctance, despite medical direction, to concentrate resources on the evacuation of the priority casualties, leaving less seriously injured casualties with a 'token presence'.

Perhaps this unwillingness to leave a person in need is human nature – particularly if we have built some sort of bond with them. I would suggest that to allow emotion to affect our judgement is to exercise poor judgement – what is required is an ability to detach ourselves from the situation facing us, and base our decisions on objective facts.

Whilst nobody wants to play God, it should be recognised that there are very rare occasions when hard decisions have to be made. An example of this is when our base doctor made a decision (during the exercise) that a casualty who had initially been a high priority was to be 'downgraded' after it became apparent that his chances of survival were very slim. The hill team involved was therefore advised that a second casualty had now become the priority for evacuation, despite the fact that the first casualty was still alive at this point. This decision was made by a man with a lifetime's work in emergency medicine, who has experienced having to make ruthless decisions and recognises the importance of remaining emotionally detached from his patients.

3) Sheer volume of radio traffic on the day actually hampered the ability

Approaching a casualty site
Photo: Aidan Forde

of the co-ordinators to co-ordinate effectively – they simply had so much to do in recording casualty details etc. that they were unable to devote time and thought to co-ordinating the evacuation effort.

On the day, two radio channels were used, one exclusively for the operation of the cableway and communication between the organisers, and the other for all communication between base and hill teams. It was felt that a third channel would have been highly desirable for the communication of all casualty details and vital signs directly to the medical clearing station. This would have freed up base to devote more resources to co-ordinating evacuation of casualties. Base could have monitored the 'medical channel' without being directly involved in it.

4) During the course of the exercise there was a certain amount of confusion caused by the fact that radio code words (for example referring to the condition of the casualty) varied from team to team. It is possible that IMRA may standardise code words across member teams to eliminate possible misunderstandings when teams operate alongside each other. How compatible is your radio usage and terminology with that of neighbouring teams?

5) During the course of the excellent lecture by Graham Liddy, it emerged that air accident crash sites require a number of special considerations from the point of view of safety (toxic chemicals, fire hazard etc.), evidence preservation, chain of command, site security and protocols. Unfortunately there is no space to tackle this complex subject here – it merits an entire article to itself.

6) The potential complications which may arise when many different agencies are required to work together

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Aerial view of base
Photo: Jimmy Laide

MRC 70th Anniversary - cause to celebrate?

2003 sees the 70th Anniversary of the MRC. Are we going to mark the occasion? Publications & Information Sub Committee (PISC) Chairman, Ian Hurst, believes that we should – a view backed up by myself and other PISCies. The question is how?

I have it on good authority that for our 50th Birthday (an occasion one or two of you might just recall if you cast your mind back – go on, I know you were there...) a pottery mug was created, available to MRT personnel around the country. Ian feels that this year's landmark anniversary should also be marked in a tangible nature – be it a mug, plaque, plate, whatever – so that we can all celebrate in some small way and perhaps, on the back of our celebration, raise the profile of mountain rescue through the media and our corporate targets in fundraising.

After all, it has been a long, and often uphill (literally), struggle to get thus far. There have been many changes along the way – not always welcome ones at that – and the prospect of many, perhaps even more radical, to come. Welcome or not, hindsight suggests that it has actually been a very gradual and inevitable metamorphosis, from scattered groups of climbers looking after their own, with the assistance of local farmers and inn keepers, doing their best to improvise with the raw materials available... through the development of more organised teams, rooted in a sharp understanding of their own 'patch'... to the regional and national collaboration and cross fertilisation we have today.

It was 1933 when mountain rescue really started to move from its makeshift beginnings with the formation of the Joint Stretcher Committee, its purpose to develop a stretcher specially adapted for the steep and rough terrain of the British Isles. Two years later, the committee suggested that materials and equipment should be available for use in mountain accidents, including a full list of first aid and medical items. All the equipment was to be left at designated rescue posts for use by climbers and post supervisors, together with local volunteers. Their report also included details of the Thomas stretcher, named after its designer and manufacturer, the first stretcher specifically produced for the mountain environment.

By 1936, the committee had decided that a more permanent association was needed, its remit to maintain and manage the rescue posts and administer the funds that were being donated by the various mountaineering clubs. The somewhat long winded 'First Aid Committee of Mountaineering Clubs' was born.

Part of the original first aid equipment list was morphia, thanks to the tenacity of a certain W Hey, who had originally been denied permission to supply the drug when he applied to the Home Office, despite keeping a careful register of its issue and usage. Hardly surprising given that, at the time, the rescue posts were almost open access to anyone needing to use the equipment. Undaunted, he continued to supply the morphia illegally, in the form of tubonic ampoules of Omnopon, until reapplying to the Home Office in 1949, twenty four years later, by which time it had been used in 57 accidents.

Despite his willingness to 'come clean'. Hey encountered more problems in the form of the government's Deputy Chief Inspector. The two men didn't see eye to eye at all and Hey's refusal to show the Inspector the dangerous drugs register cost him a prosecution and £10 fine with £10 costs. Determined, he organised another meeting with the Home Office, this time in London the day before the Alpine Club dinner, when many of the country's mountaineering luminaries would be in town. With the weight of informed opinion behind him, the Home Office relented and agreed to supply morphia to mountain rescue posts, provided that an annual return was sent to them giving details of issue and use. The supply would be 3/4 grain of morphia in the form of 1/4 grain ampoules for each post, but Ogwen and Glencoe could have six ampoules because of the frequency of accidents in those areas. Since then, there has been a Medical Officer responsible for the issue of morphia to rescue posts – the first, not surprisingly, being Hey himself.

The end of the Second World War brought a massive increase in outdoor activity. It was around this time that the First Aid Committee of Mountaineering Clubs decided to change its name – to the 'Mountain Rescue Committee' – and invite membership from a wider, more representative spectrum of outdoor pursuits groups. By 1950, it was a registered charity, membership included the Youth Hostels Association and many University Clubs, and there was a gradual realisation that a permanent, well trained team would be a far more efficient means of rescue.

The previous few years had seen the formation of a number of mountain rescue teams, such as Keswick and Coniston, more often than not by rescue post supervisors or local residents from the areas in question. Some of these people had carried out rescues with distinction, particularly Sid Cross of the Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel. He would use the climbers and walkers available on the day to form impromptu rescue teams and ultimately became involved in the formation of the Langdale Ambleside team. Elsewhere in the Lakes, the Outward Bound schools were beginning to teach mountain rescue as part of their courses. In North Wales, Ogwen became the focus for activity when the Climbing Club moved the rescue kit there and Mr Hughes, son-in-law of Mrs Williams of Ogwen Cottage, began to help using his taxi as rescue transport. From the mid 50s, the formation of mountain rescue teams became widespread, and each one affiliated to the MRC.

Today we have an organisation that stands on the brink of a very different future. Developments in technology, equipment, medical opinion, training, the need to create a corporate identity and national fundraising – the relentless metamorphosis goes on, both because of and in spite of ourselves. What better time to celebrate?

And so, back to my original question – how should we mark this 70th Anniversary? If you have any ideas, please contact me on 0161 702 6080 or via email at newsletter@mountain.rescue.org.uk and I'll pass your views on. Here's to the next 70!

Judy Whiteside. MRC News Editor



Casualty and barrowboy approach the bottom of the cableway
Photo: Jimmy Laide

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should be appreciated and understood. This exercise was predominantly an MR exercise, therefore the command and control structure was headed by MR personnel. In a 'real' situation this is unlikely to be the case – MR teams are a small cog in a big wheel and must work in tandem with many other agencies, taking direction from outside sources. It is likely that in an air-crash scenario, teams will lose a lot of the autonomy to which they have become accustomed.

7) Although perhaps not of direct relevance to MRTs, it should be appreciated that an incident such as this may have logistical implications which are far-reaching and perhaps difficult to anticipate in advance. For example it emerged that the operating theatres of all hospitals in Co. Kerry would probably have been unable to cope with the number of casualties urgently requiring surgery. This exercise was primarily an exercise in mountain rescue, however, to have obtained maximum benefit the net could have been widened to cover the entire 'system' in as realistic a way as possible.

Matt Hayes informed us that during a similar exercise in the States, the entire medical system was actively involved in the scenario in a committed way. In order to recreate what might happen in a 'real' situation, the organisers arranged for thirty people to telephone the receiving hospital simultaneously, with the result that the switchboard jammed up completely and was out of action for the rest of the exercise! This was a painful lesson to learn but it was far better to learn it in this manner than to discover the problem when it happens in anger. Following this episode the hospital in question upgraded its switchboard to eliminate the problem.

In conclusion, the laissez-faire approach by the organisers meant that the scenario developed in ways that were difficult to predict in advance and a number of problems arose during the course of the day which could well arise in any real major incident. The old adage that 'a problem is really an opportunity in disguise' is very true in this case. If the scenario had run smoothly and without hitches there really wouldn't have been much point in doing it! The exercise was highly enjoyable and hopefully we can all learn something from it.

Many thanks are due to Kerry MRT (who organised the event), the staff of Killarney Youth Hostel, (who managed to get 100 full cooked breakfasts on the table by 6am!), the staff of Kate Kearney's Cottage (who provided top class catering on Saturday night), the civil defence (who showed remarkable efficiency to provide so many meals in the middle of nowhere), to all the non-MR agencies (who performed admirably on the day and were a pleasure to work with), and of course to all our 'casualties' on the day (who managed to be in position on the hill before first light, and patiently lay waiting to be discovered).

We are all looking forward to the 2003 IMRA National Training Exercise in the Mourne Mountains.

To view more photographs of this exercise visit www.kerrymountainrescue.ie

Article by Mike Sandover. Assistant Co-ordinator of Kerry MRT and a full-time EMT.

NATIONAL FUNDRAISING

Before going any further I'd like to introduce myself. My name is Penny Brockman, I am a member of the Central Beacons MRT and I have been asked to head up a team of people to manage the Fundraising Programme on behalf of the MRC. This was a result of a report back from the Annual Review meeting of the Fundraising Programme at the beginning of November. The MRC Executive felt that appointing one person to head this project team would allow David Little to carry out his duties as National Treasurer.

In the last month, I have been reviewing the programme and meeting with our consultant UCS to understand our achievements, where we need to improve and what our success criteria needs to be. This has also involved me becoming familiar with the needs of the programme, understanding our strengths and weakness and establishing our priorities among many other areas. If we want to succeed in the cut throat world of fundraising, we have to very much take a business approach. We have to remember that it is a competitive world!

Let's take another service sector such as a consultancy business and look at the similarities. A consultancy business has to be able to provide a clear message of what service they provide so they can attract a customer base – at this point it is only to attract not win business. We, also, will have to provide key messages to ensure that people understand what mountain rescue provides. Just because it's clear to us, it is not clear to everyone else. How often is it that when we have spoken to people they are quite surprised that we are unpaid volunteers and that we do a lot more than rescue those who go on the mountains.

Next, it is to win the business. A consultancy business has to persuade their prospective client that they can provide a better service than their competitors. This effectively produces the turnover for the company. Mountain rescue has to be able to persuade the public that they should donate to them; show Trust Funds that we are a good cause to support; and show the businesses that we want to build relationships with that we are good value for money – for their business. The reality of the world is that all organisations have to justify their existence. This requires us to market ourselves and win this business from our competitors – other charities. And most of the larger ones have full time paid staff!

When working as part of the team to put together the UK Mountain Rescue Conference people would be amazed at the amount of work required to persuade trade exhibitors to attend – we really had to justify to them why it was worth them attending the conference.

There will need to be some fundamental changes in order for the whole of mountain rescue to progress. The MRC decision-making process has already been shortened to run day-to-day matters. The appointment of a programme team to manage National Fundraising is another step forward in the process of necessary change. Like any other organisation that has put a plan in place for the first year, it will not be the same plan that is seen in its second year. We have to review, put changes in place and update the scope of the programme.

A key change is that members of the fundraising programme team will be selected for specific projects. In certain areas, team members will come in and out of the programme when required, whilst others will be part of a long term team.

We have already begun to form the team. Andy Simpson has been asked to head up a group to manage PR, communications and image. This area is fundamental to our success. What we must establish as one of our first priorities is how we market ourselves and manage our brand and our products. This will help us to achieve our fundraising potential and increase public awareness of the service we provide. Work will be required to understand the infrastructure necessary to support the programme – many processes will need to be implemented to ensure success. Shirley Priestley is also a member of the team and will bring her finance and administration skills to the team. I will be looking for other people to come in and out of the programme.

What I would ask teams to do now is come through me for any fundraising advice. Do not contact UCS directly. The reason for this is that UCS project time for the MRC is limited and has now been allocated to benefit all the teams and not just those few seeking advice. We should be very aware that, like any other consultancy, every time we contact them their clock is ticking and the MRC is paying.

If you have any of these skills – project management, marketing and PR, administration, financial – and are able to work to deadlines, and of

course, have the time to donate then please contact me via email at penny@pbrockman.freeserve.co.uk.

The Fundraising Programme, and the way in which it operates, will affect us all. It will mean making changes so that we can provide the positive benefits and increased income that the teams and the MRC look forward to.

Penny Brockman. Central Beacons MRT



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Staying on Track

It has been rumoured for some time that there is a two-tier structure within MR. Amidst the sounds of chomping sandwiches, ham and pickle flying haphazardly as they lay sheltered from buffeting winds behind a collapsing cairn, Party Leaders have whispered conspiratorially.

Search Managers have scribbled notes to each other in fear of being overheard. Parked up in lay-bys, heater settings turned to MAX, kettles boil noisily in the warm confines of control vehicles parked too close to the local burger van to be pure coincidence. The jungle drums have been beating, the message is getting out.

There appears to be an elite. It has been noticed. On searches across the country, there is a handful of team members. They were rational, normal – well as normal as the next. Now, they've changed, their behaviour peculiar. They walk around with their noses in the dirt, spend hours inspecting broken vegetation and professing to know for certain that the team is searching in the wrong place.

It has caused a divide, split the loyal, the faithful. There are those that are in the know, and those that aren't. There are those that have been enlightened, and those that remain in eternal darkness. There are those that walk with confidence, and those that snigger in blissful ignorance. There are those that have been inducted in the black art of Tracking!

They use a different language, jargon that means nothing to the masses. They smirk as we wind our way up steep scree slopes, walk precariously along the tops of crags. They wait for us to reach the summits, puffing, red faced, and then radio through that they've found our Misper five hundred yards from control. Is it pure wizardry? Are they meddling with the unknown? The truth, I'm afraid, is much less fanciful. In fact, it is quite ordinary in comparison to the stories and myths that surround the skill. It is a skill, one that can be taught, one that can be practiced and honed. It may be called a number of things – 'Sign Cutting', 'Tracking', 'Clue Aware'. Some have hinted at other names, things too impolite to mention here. The theory is sound. The results can be impressive.

Take for example a missing walker who travels an average 3km/h. An MR team is called out to find her, lost somewhere on open hillside, the weather is beginning to turn, and the night draws in. The Search Manager establishes a PLS for our walker. She was seen four hours ago. In theory, she may have walked up to twelve kilometres in any direction from that point, giving a total theoretical search area in excess of 452 km2. That's a big area to search for our MR team, even if they called a neighbouring team for support.

It's getting dark, the weather deteriorates further. Fortunately, several team members have been on a tracking course – probably organised by the MRC at Bangor! Whilst the Search Manager is dividing the map into hundreds of search areas, orange and green highlighter pens smudging the laminated 1:50000 that is pinned to the control vehicle wall, they examine the scene. They find a partial boot print that matches the description of footwear that has been supplied by the police. Further inspection discovers a second, a third, a scuff against a rock infested with moss, a broken branch of a tree. They follow the trail, slowly but surely, as it winds its way towards a wooden stile, across a broken fence, along a poorly used track that follows the bank of a mountain stream.

They report their findings to the Search Manager, who at this time is disappearing beneath pages of multiplication and long division as he is attempting to calculate the POS, or is it the POD, PPOD..? Do you divide that against the speed or the time..?

Establishing a direction of travel of our missing walker quickly reduces the potential search area of 450km² to no more than 30km². There is a trail, a path that can be followed that leads directly to her. She's slipping into hypothermia, she has injured her leg. Following the path, our trackers working ahead of the main group, she is located, treated and evacuated from the hill – all in time for last orders! It is a success on all counts.

It is said that a person will leave evidence of their passing through a place every 30-45 cms (12-18 inches in old money). That equates to almost 2000 times per kilometre of travel. Some of that may be indistinct, others difficult to pick up to the untrained eye. But it's there, somewhere, a great arrow pointing you in the right direction. The skills of a tracker can be invaluable, a vital resource to be deployed at the earliest time possible. It may take some getting used to, maybe receive a little mirth from the more sceptical on the team. But in those precious moments, when the team is dividing up equipment, preparing stretchers, briefing the Party Leaders, you may be able to reduce your search area by up to 90%! That could mean the difference between hours of soul destroying drudgery, fruitless searching at night, in poor visibility, when the stakes are high. The difference between your Misper surviving or dying on the hill.

So, if you are out combing the peat hags or escarpments of your favourite hill this weekend, and your MR colleague suddenly drops to his knees, do not be afraid. You may think he's lost the plot, that he's disappearing in to the depths of a forgotten prayer ritual. You may even wonder, just for a moment, if he's been spending too much time fraternising with the canine members of your local SARDA branch! But, before jumping to conclusions, before phoning his wife to tell her of his sexual deviations, remember – it might just be that he's found something, something that may get you home in time for tea...

Paul Curtis. Brecon MRT

COURSES 2003

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MRC TRAINING COMMITTEE

NATIONAL TRAINING DAY (100 places)

Everyone welcome.
This year's seminar has Equipment as its theme and will look at selection, safety, maintenance and practical applications in a Round Robin.
Date: **Sunday 18 May**
Location: **Plas Y Brenin.**
Contact: **Richard Holmes.**
0191 252 7485
rnholmes@hotmail.com

PARTY LEADER TRAINING (30 places)

This practical course promotes effective leadership of parties during a Search & Rescue operation, which is crucial to a successful outcome.
Date: **Weekend 4-6 July**
Location: **Rishworth**
Contact: **Peter Smith**
01706 852335
petersmith.mr@btopenworld.com

SEARCH FIELD SKILLS (30 places)

This course addresses the skills required by searchers in the field. It considers the vital role of search parties and how they maximise their efficiency and effectiveness.
Date: **6-8 September**
Location: **Bangor**
Contact: **Dr ASG Jones MBE**
01248 364131
Or: **Peter Howells**
01633 893447

SEARCH PLANNING & MANAGEMENT (40 Places)

This course addresses the vital skills required to plan and manage a search operation.
Date: **9-13 September**
Location: **Bangor**
Contact: **Dr ASG Jones MBE**
01248 364131
Or: **Peter Howells**
01633 893447

RIGGING FOR RESCUE (12 places)

This technical seminar focuses on applying the critical thinking and systems analysis skills required to incorporate ropework and rigging competently into effective rescue systems.
Date: **Choice of 2 @ 4 days each September or October**
Location: **Keswick**
Contact: **Pete Barnes**
01229 774169
petebarnes@readiheat.com

FOUNDATION TRAINING TBA

Contact: **John Edwards**
01457 870734

developments in snow belaying

As Training Officer in many of our winter training exercises, I have used and had to explain to others how to use a Deadman. I find them awkward to place quickly and accurately. They can come out when you don't want them to and sometimes don't come out when you do want them to. I once spent 10 minutes digging one out. Some books say to place them at 40°, others that 45° is critical, yet there is not much to help you set them accurately at whichever angle is right.

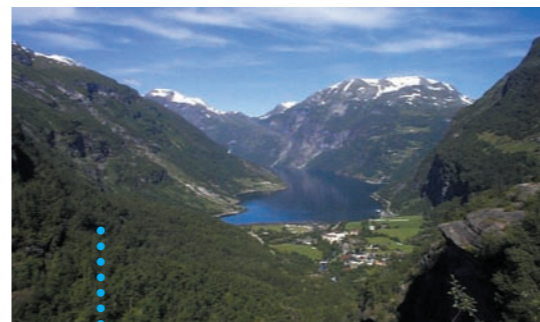
My own research showed that 60% of those tested could not estimate a 45° angle to within 5°. You are not supposed to tread on the snow beneath the placement in case you weaken it, but at the same time you cut a great big long slot for the wire right through it.

After a few years of this I realised that I had some ideas that would make them better, and set about designing the new version. This took a long time as nothing was forcing me to get on with it, and there were lots of other things to do. However things suddenly started to happen when I was given a leaflet about the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust's (WCMT) Travelling Fellowships.

If I was to set about testing my new design properly there was little chance of doing it in Scotland because the weather changes so rapidly and the best conditions are during term time. I reckoned that to test it properly I would need at least four weeks of consistent snow conditions. I applied to the WCMT to go to Norway for five weeks to conduct the tests and was awarded one of the Travelling Fellowships, so I will explain how the process works.

The WCMT, formed in 1965, provides approximately 100 Churchill Fellowships (CF) every year. There are usually eight themes for applications, which change every year. Anyone can apply – all you have to do is provide a valid reason for wanting to go to the places you have applied to go to, and be able to show that your project will benefit the country in some way.

Throughout the application process I was designing the device but, once awarded, as well as completing the design and manufacture of a range of prototypes, I had to organise the travel, make contacts in Norwegian Mountain Rescue (NFR), and purchase equipment. This proved to be a really big job, as I had to keep equipment costs down, and work out how to test them safely whilst on my own. I was very fortunate that by pure chance there was an article in a previous CasBag (MRCofS newsletter) by Albert Lunde of the NFR. Brian McDermott helped me get in touch with him.



The Return Journey

Despite being awarded the CF in early February, and working on it consistently from then on, I still had a mad rush just before I left. My laptop, digital camera and winch all arrived the day before I set off. I went by car as I had a lot of equipment and I had to be mobile in order to search for snow.

The ferry from Newcastle to Bergen is the most common route, and the one I used. On arrival in Norway I drove to Lom, where Albert lives. I attended an MRT committee meeting and training exercise, did some initial tests on my designs, and was observer on a Glacier Guide's course, run by Albert. The techniques involved in crevasse rescue were covered in great detail and differ completely from the cableways that I am familiar with.

After this I travelled to Stryn, a well known summer ski centre, where there was guaranteed snow and spent the next 3 weeks there conducting the tests. It was hard work, skiing in beautiful landscapes and throwing an old Bell stretcher down the hill 20 times a day. The tests proved that the prototypes worked, and I just got them done before the snow turned to slush, thanks to a friend coming out on holiday and lending a hand for a week. The success of the prototypes gave them their name – Liveman.

I took a roundabout route back to Bergen, then sailed via Lerwick to Aberdeen. By the time I got home I'd driven 3000 miles, the car radiator had blown on the mountain passes and the exhaust was held on by fence wire. Still is! Norwegian fence wire is obviously better than ours.

Having completed the actual visit, there are two jobs that must be done. First, a press release and, second, a report written. The WCMT require you to actively seek publicity – a drawback when you want to keep your invention secret!

The test procedure that I devised had to be operable by one person, and provide enough detail for statistical analysis of the results to be conducted to enable accurate conclusions to be drawn. The tests were designed to replicate a worst case scenario for a winter rescue. The Liveman being tested would have to withstand a shock load applied by a sliding stretcher loaded with a weight representing a casualty being lowered on static rope. The loaded stretcher would slide freely about 12m, building up speed before being brought abruptly to a halt by the static rope tightening up and applying force directly on to the Liveman. These conditions would be repeated 10 times for each placement of the Liveman, to allow for the measurement of any movement in the belay system, if belay failure did not occur sooner.

In real life, the stretcher's descent would be controlled by a team member operating a Figure of 8, which in the extremely unlikely event of a fall would bring the stretcher to a gradual halt and thus apply much reduced loads to the belay. As the belayer should not allow any slack in the system there should never be a drop at all, and certainly not in the range of 10m. Team members holding straps guide down the stretcher, and these would also help provide braking in the event of a loss of control. The team members guiding the stretcher at a slow walking pace should of course not allow it to get into a situation where a drop is possible. What this means is that a belay should only ever have to withstand constant (static) loads, in the region of the weight of the stretcher plus casualty.

To recover the load after each test run the MRCofS winch was used. This winch had to be belayed to the snow slope to stop it sliding down the slope too, so an additional Liveman was used to perform this function. The winching operation would apply a very similar force to the belay, as a normally controlled descent as described above should, so shock load tests on one prototype and constant load tests on another could be performed at the same time. At the end of the test sequence the belay placement was surveyed to determine if any displacement had occurred. None of the winch



The Liveman Snow Belay

belays ever showed any sign of movement. The lowering rope was belayed using the test prototype and, in addition, a back up belay was used, in case the test belay failed. A safety rope was also set up for my own personal belay.

The results were recorded at the test site onto cards, which I then copied on to results sheets in the evening. These were then inserted into a spreadsheet package on the laptop to allow for calculations and statistics to be collated.

I tested four prototypes fully, two others were discounted after the first empirical tests. With all the permutations and repetitions I eventually carried out 160 test drops. So what are the new designs actually like?

The major development is the removal of the wire and being used in conjunction with the axe instead. When used in the same way as a vertical axe belay the increased surface area improves the holding power considerably. The rope is tied in to the top of the axe shaft or clipped into a krab passed through one of the holes commonly found in the axe head, so the snow below the placement is not compromised. The Liveman is shaped to show the correct angle of attack to ensure accurate angle of placement. All you need to do is fit the Liveman to the axe, push it in and stamp it down. Whilst in use it is possible to inspect the security of the belay, as it is not buried, whereas with a Deadman you can only guess what it is doing. When you have completed the belaying, retrieval is instant as it remains at the surface of the snow. The designs proved to work perfectly in the snow conditions encountered in Norway.

I also tested standard Deadmen at a range of angles and found that, in the conditions encountered, there was no effect on their performance if placed between 40° and 50°. I would recommend 45° as a good base to work to. A final advantage of the designs is that they all function as shovels, too, thus saving carrying an additional piece of kit.

A Churchill Fellowship is hard work, and a lot of fun. Anyone can apply and I'd recommend it to anyone interested in doing worthwhile research abroad. My designs would still be in their infancy if it were not for the CF. Norway is a fantastic country to visit, and not much more expensive than living here. It was a good opportunity to make friends abroad and develop useful links with NFR. Some quick points about their techniques:

- Bubble wrap for casualty insulation – waterproof, light, disposable, thermally efficient and, if well wrapped, offers splinting too
- Underwater viewers used for river or loch searches
- Skiing, pulkas and snowmobiles used extensively for speed and ease of access
- Fundraising by selling badges of over 2000m peaks
- On busy weekends, MRTs are on standby with groups positioned at known hotspots.

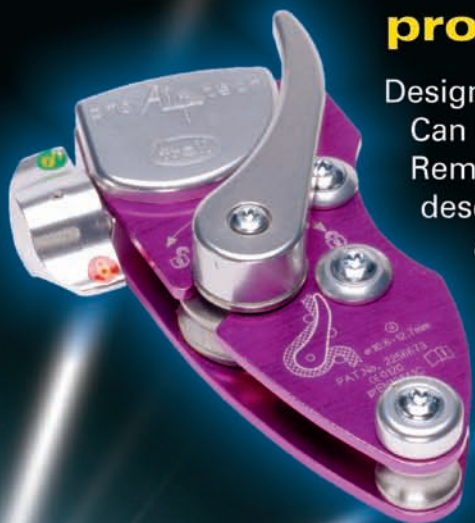
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