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WINTER
2019 **67**



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ISSUE 67:
WINTER 2019

Mountain Rescue is the **only** official magazine for mountain rescue in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

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NEXT ISSUE

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Editorial copy must be supplied as Word document. Images must be supplied as high resolution (300 dpi) JPG/EPS/TIFF/PDF.

Advertising artwork must be supplied, ready prepared on CD or via email as font embedded high resolution PDF/EPS/TIFF (300 dpi).

Cover story

Night training session for Cleveland MRT, with a search at Roseberry Topping for a 'missing' walker with a leg injury. Once stretchered off, the 'casualty' made an instant recovery.
© Gary Clarke.



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inthisissue



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#MREWDISCOVERY

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Keeping Track

A year in the life...

#MREWDISCOVERY



AND ON TO BOLTON and a trip to the Williams showroom with Bolton team member Martin Banks... December 2018

UNTIL ITS RETIREMENT FROM active duty, Aberdyfi team boasted the oldest SAR Land Rover still operational in the UK. Young and old pictured on Tarren y Gesall October 2018

AND THERE WAS A TRIP ACROSS THE BORDER TOO, with MREW chairman Mike France to visit the Bristow air base in Prestwick too... November 2018

TIGHT SQUEEZE in the South & Mid Wales Cave Rescue stores... October 2018

HITTING the ground running in the West Country... 3 November 2018

The JLR Discovery literally hit the ground running on its first day with Avon & Somerset Search and Rescue with a couple of call-outs in quick succession. In the first, police were concerned for the welfare of an elderly lady with dementia in the Long Ashton area. Fortunately, the incident ended happily when the lady was located safe and well in nearby Hotwells, Bristol. Next day, the team was called to help search for a vulnerable missing male near Dundry. He was also found on the edge of Bristol and quickly received the care he needed.

'We'd only just received the new Discovery D5 when the request for help came in', said team spokesman Jim Hardcastle. 'Luckily, in both incidents the missing person was located alive, but this is often not the case. As a team we've been involved in some very tragic and difficult incidents.'

They still found time to pose for and share some stunning photos with their 'new toy'!

Guidance on mountain rescue ambulances and towing trailers

SIMON THRESHER
MREW VEHICLES OFFICER

At a recent MREW regional chairs meeting, the subject of the legality of a liveried ambulance towing a trailer came up. Mentioned specifically were boats and water training but all trailers should be thought of equally, be they a control trailer or even a welfare trailer.

From a legislation and motor insurance perspective, it's completely acceptable for our vehicles to be driven as a vehicle with a trailer combination. However, like any motor vehicle on a road in the UK, the driver must hold the appropriate licence to drive when towing.

Licences

If you passed your driving test after 1 January 1997 and have an ordinary category B (car) licence, you can:

1. Drive a vehicle up to 3.5 tonnes or 3,500kg Maximum Authorised Mass (MAM) towing a trailer of up to 750kg MAM, or
2. Tow a trailer over 750kg MAM as long as the combined weight of the trailer and towing vehicle is no more than 3,500.

Holders of licences issued before 1 January 1997 have what we often refer to as 'Grandfather rights' and the holders will automatically have category B+E (See below). If you passed your car test before 1 January 1997 you're usually allowed to drive a vehicle and trailer combination up to 8,250kg MAM. Drivers should check their driving licence information to be certain, such drivers are also allowed to drive a minibus with a trailer over 750kg MAM.

Category B+E

You can drive a vehicle with a MAM of 3,500kg with a trailer. The size of the trailer depends on the BE 'valid from' date shown on your licence. If the date is:

- before 19 January 2013, you can tow any size trailer
- on or after 19 January 2013, you can tow a trailer with a MAM of up to 3,500kg.

If you wish to tow anything heavier you will need to check the regulations in more detail.

MAM

Maximum Authorised mass (MAM) means the weight of a vehicle or trailer including the maximum load that can be carried safely when being used on the road. This is also known as gross vehicle weight (GVW) or permissible maximum weight. It will be listed in the owner's manual and is normally shown on a plate or sticker fitted to the vehicle. The plate or sticker may also show a gross train weight (GTW), also sometimes called gross combination weight (GCW). This is the total weight of the tractor unit plus trailer plus load.

Training

It is also advisable the driver has some level of experience and training in driving the vehicle and trailer combination. ☺

MIKE MARGESON

MREW OPERATIONS

A few developments since the last time I reported here, including SAR-H training, the roll-out of our new statistics reporting system, a fresh look of the core capabilities required for an MREW team and news about safety awareness education from the Lakes.

Mike Park, of Cockermouth MRT, will be leading on SAR-H for the coming year and he recently led on our input at a recent Mountain Rescue Steering Group meeting at Prestwick. Cross airframe training has been agreed.

There's been much discussion about the use of drones in mountain rescue searches and both MREW and Scottish Mountain Rescue have active groups developing capability.

The new online statistics reporting system has been on test in North Wales for the last few months and will be rolled out to teams elsewhere through 2019. Rob Shepherd, the MREW statistics officer, hosted a series of training sessions in November. I



attended one, and quite clearly this new system is going to be so much more effective in a whole range of ways. Good data is really critical to us. I'd like to say a big thank you to Rob, who was really up against it, getting so many people trained in a weekend.

The trustees and management group have recently tasked us with reviewing the core capabilities of an MREW team. What should we expect from a team and

what criteria should be required? Have your say — feed back through your regional operations group representative!

The roll out of digital radios continues. Next stage is the development of network capabilities across the regions. There has been a formal announcement that we'll have Airwave Tetra for a number of years to come. ESN will not be operational for a considerable time.

We hope that the successful AdventureSmart Wales programme will be rolled out in the Lakes as AdventureSmart Lakes this year. Nick Owen, team leader of Langdale Ambleside MRT, is leading on behalf of the region. Thanks to Langdale Ambleside, the JD Foundation, MREW, LDSAMRA and all who have financially contributed to this. We now need to see the initiative spread to other busy national parks areas.

Lastly, we will be holding our first conference for some time at Leeds University in September 2019. We want as many team members as possible to get the opportunity to attend and network with other team members. If you have topics you want on the programme, we need to hear from you. We want to see as many practical session inputs as possible.

Finally, now winter is with us, have you checked your TSP and done a range check and battery check on your transceiver? ☺



MIKE FRANCE MREW CHAIRMAN

In my very first report for the magazine, I quoted a statement from my manifesto that under my tenure the organisation would continue to be run by volunteers. I did not want to take any control away from teams. I stood by that statement, but said there would be times when the membership would need to trust me and the management committee.

I noted that the workload is massive, so 'to keep the organisation voluntary we need to continue buying in some services. This way we can remain a voluntary organisation but buy in people to help us where we don't have the skills or the time needed to achieve the targets we must achieve'.

Today, I see more and more collaborative working in the organisation. This was very apparent at the meeting of teams who had been through or were intending to undertake peer review, at Edale base in November. The days of having a good idea in how to make admin easier or developing some front line good practice and keeping it to yourself seem long gone. Teams want to share ideas, they want to say take it and use it. This working together makes us stronger, trusting one another makes us the organisation we are.

Some team members are still unsure if I meant what I said back then, in that first report. I want to reassure you that decisions taken by the management committee are taken to move the organisation forward. This is now relevant for the CIO. We've been amending this now for over four years (far too long), and we need to trust the trustees and officers and sign it off at the AGM in May.

Another area of trust for you will be around SAR-H. Mike Park has taken the lead of this group for MREW and, in December, Al Read, Mike and myself met with the MCA in Prestwick. It is clear whatever was said when Bristow took on this contract, they don't have the aircraft or crew time to cover the training required for mountain rescue. We can and will remind them of their commitments made to us, but facts are facts and they don't have the resources we require to train all our members. Talking with the crews, they want to fulfil our training requirements but the aircraft are operationally busier than was expected. Mike, Al and I, along with colleagues for Scotland, have had a few conference calls working on a forward plan for SAR-H.

The important message here is that teams that work with the aircraft need to train with the aircraft and teams that have their annual helicopter training day but don't use the aircraft or have very little interaction with the aircraft may lose these days until we've trained others. Going forward, all helicopter training needs to be regionally based, that would be a great help. Mike will have more to say in due course.

In last June's magazine, I noted my lucky position in being able to talk to members from many different teams and also the relationship between MREW and the teams.

'It's fair to say mountain rescue for them is their local team, their team is what they joined, their team will take them on the journey through mountain rescue, not MREW. MREW only plays a small part for many, it has a role to play in that journey, it may not be the most important part for some — their team is the most important part — but MREW's role is an important one. That's why we're undertaking a review process. We have to manage what members want/need and what we need to do to manage and develop the organisation.'

Since then, I've been working with David Coleman, CIO trustee, to put together a 'roadshow', looking at what MREW does for you, with space for you to tell us what you want from MREW. We hope to visit all regions this spring. It will be down to your regional chair to organise the event. I hope you, the members, will attend. I want to hear from you, I know what your regional chairs say but they are not you so, if you haven't heard about this, please ask your team leader or chairman.

Some of you will know that our Land SAR lead was DCC Pritchard of North Wales Police. He sat on the UKSAR strategy committee, feeding back to government. This role has now moved to Devon and Cornwall Police and I hope to visit our new lead officer before long.

I am pleased to say that someone has shown interest in my role. The job description is out there now so if you fancy giving the job a go, have a look at it. Mountain rescue will only remain voluntary if we take on these roles. ☺



OCTOBER: WELL-DESERVED LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FOR PETER

The 'Stray FM Best of Skipton & Beyond Awards' encapsulates 'everything that's great about the area and the people that live and thrive there'. At an evening of celebration, hosted by the Coniston Hotel, Skipton, in October, Upper Wharfedale team chairman Peter Huff was awarded the Stray FM Lifetime Achievement Award.

During its 70-year history, the team has been called out on over 1350 occasions and one member who has in one way or another been a part of all these is Peter.

Officially a team member for 59 years having joined as a junior, aged fifteen, his story goes back further, to when his father became a founder member. Peter's service, both above and below ground, includes 35 years as the team's communications officer and he's been in the chair for the last four.

'It is testament to his late father's vision that Peter should have given so much of his life to the rescue of people and animals in difficulties above and below the fells,' says the team. His contribution in helping save lives is immeasurable. Team members old and new are in awe of his dedication and vast experience'.

In typical fashion, Peter celebrated after the awards ceremony by joining team members for their annual night navigation exercise, on Ilkley Moor (pictured above).

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Photo: Scottish Mountain Rescue.

DECEMBER: THALES DONATES SOPHIE UF2 TO SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN RESCUE

The mountains of Scotland offer some of the most dramatic scenery in the UK, and now, when things go wrong, either through bad weather, bad planning or just plain bad luck, Thales will be there to lend a hand.

The Sophie UF2 is a long wave, thermal imaging target locator, versions of which are used by the British Army. Its infra-red sensor will help locate a missing person, day or night, by sensing their heat signature. The in-built GPS, digital compass and laser rangefinder will assist in providing accurate location information, all in a compact, lightweight, battery-operated, hand-held configuration. Two Sophies were handed over to Damon Powell and Kev Mitchell of SMR at the national training conference at Glenmore Lodge in Aviemore.

'We're very grateful to Thales,' says Damon. 'This equipment will assist in the search for missing persons in the wild places of Scotland, especially in the winter months, when searches frequently take place in the hours of darkness. These outstanding pieces of equipment are a leap forward in technology available to our teams.'

OCTOBER: NOKIAN TYRES TO PARTNER SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN RESCUE FOR THREE YEARS

Nokian Tyres announced the partnership, with a three-year sponsorship deal which will see all SMR vehicles fitted with the company's most recent and innovative products.

The tyres will incorporate Aramid, used in military and aerospace applications due to its strength and lightweight characteristics. The material drastically reduces the chance of damage to the tyre from pothole damage or sudden impacts from sharp objects.

'We were looking for a partnership which could elevate the brand while maintaining our global image as a premium manufacturer whose priorities lie in sustainable practices and supporting good causes and local communities. There couldn't be a more fitting platform than this to showcase the innovation and reliability of our Aramid Sidewalls while also supporting Scottish Mountain Rescue,' said Gordon Hamilton of Nokian Tyres UK. 'With Aramid, we save tyres, with courage, they save lives.'

TEAM TALK AUTUMN



OCTOBER: A WARM WELCOME TO ERIC!

Photo: Kendal MRT.

Eric is Kendal MRT's new control vehicle, purchased thanks largely to the Readers to the Rescue campaign run by the Westmorland Gazette in 2017. Although it will inherit the call sign 'Mobile 2', the vehicle is named in memory of Eric Barrington, former team member and treasurer, following a generous donation from his daughter.

The 4-wheel drive Ford transit van, converted by Pickup Systems in Burnley, is equipped with satellite and mobile broadband which integrates with the team's digital radio system. Designed to carry a loaded stretcher, it has five seats to get rescuers to the scene of an incident with two swivel seats in the back arranged so a cascarer can safely sit comfortably next to the patient when the vehicle is moving. The swivel seats also allow a desktop to fold up on arrival at an incident so work can be done using the two built-in computers.

Equipped to provide practically all the resources available in the main control room at base, Eric was unveiled to the public at an Emergency Services open day at Bushier Walk in October, then it was off to an overnight navigation exercise in the northern end of the Kentmere valley. The vehicle replaces the old Mobile 2, which was passed on to Penrith MRT earlier in the summer and has already seen use on a number of occasions ferrying rescuers around.

Chairman Dave Hughes thanked the Westmorland Gazette and everyone who contributed to the campaign. 'We couldn't have done it without them. Thanks also to the team members who led in designing and delivering Eric. It was a challenge to integrate the latest technology and still deliver our basic needs in such a robust way. It will be a mainstay of our fleet for years to come.'



Photo: Peter (left) with team leader Roger Hartley © SMRT.

DECEMBER: 'CAPTAIN, THANK YOU AND FAIR WINDS' TO PETER

Scarborough & Ryedale team members sadly recognised the retirement of team member, Peter Holtby after fifteen years.

Peter was particularly active in fundraising and supporting the team's challenge events and held a number of operational positions, including incident controller. He was also instrumental in the ongoing and never-ending decorating of base, with carpentry skills that are worthy of note.

Far from taking it easy in his retirement, he's off to explore the world and the land masses he spent his professional life sailing past, spending more time skippering tall ships and providing adventure for disabled children. But, now an honorary life member, he intends to maintain contact with the team when he's back in the UK.

Meanwhile, team members hope he has briefed his son and team member, Andrew Holtby, on how to restock the brew kit in both the base and control vehicle!



Sally Seed looks back over a busy and sometimes challenging year for mountain rescue in the media and revisits a few points of sound advice.

It's been a busy past few months of press and broadcast media coverage for mountain rescue and there are a few points arising worth thinking about. In a couple of cases, it's also worth considering and agreeing your team's approach for the coming year.

Nothing's ever simple and, as many of you will know, it's all about balance on some of these.

Talking about 'avoidable' without it becoming criticism — high call out rates in busy tourist areas have brought some teams to crazy incident levels, to concerns about members' safety when so tired (and casualty safety) and also to worries about employers' support when the demands on time are so high.

Taking an overview of the statistics and involving MR spokespeople from across the organisation has helped avoid perceptions of criticism so far. And very clear and constructive messages about being prepared, keeping safe and enjoying a great day out have emphasised the positives.

Responding to negative comments on social media — from the pros and cons of rescuing dogs to rapid reactions on JustGiving pages, a couple of teams came in for some stick online towards the end of 2017. The usual 'good guys, rarely criticised' has slipped in the general online climate of criticism and there's no doubt other media are picking up on this too. Two simple rules apply:

- **Don't respond too quickly** — think, consider, consult and certainly don't 'do a Trump' of posting at 2.00 am when you're shattered. Remember that not responding is an option — as long as you observe the trail online and step in if needed. It is sometimes better to let a more informed supporter or follower answer on your behalf.

- **Respond with factual information if you can and always with a human voice** — you're allowed not to know all the answers and a combination of 'these were the facts and the context and this is why we did what we did' is fine.

NOTHING IS EVER SIMPLE AND, AS MANY OF YOU WILL KNOW, IT'S ALL ABOUT BALANCE

Opportunities for features — it can seem great when a journalist or editor contacts you about writing a feature article. It might involve them meeting up and interviewing you and other team members or it might be an invitation to write something yourself.

It probably IS a good opportunity but it will also involve you (and possibly others) in time and effort and it pays to explore exactly what's needed before you agree. Think about word lengths for articles, deadlines and pictures and be aware you need to supply exactly

what's needed — not a lot more and not a lot less — if it's going to be a straightforward process and one that gets repeated by the journalist concerned.

Planning for a story to be longer-term — one-off events, milestones and achievements are quite easy to manage in the media. Maybe a before, a during and an after social media post and then a press release for a fundraising event or a couple of afters with an incident. Stretching a story over several months with fundraising throughout and lots of people involved is more of a challenge.

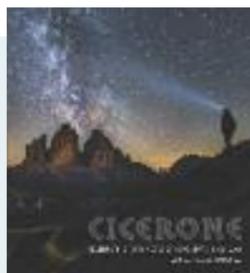
Best to work out a plan, fix a few milestones or events and then see what you can do to create stories (or images) that fill gaps. This creates a more even spread of social media posts and keeps things ticking over.

Few and far between with plenty of facts is best for press releases but spread out, short and sweet works better for Facebook. If your planned post is more than about 25-30 words long, consider how you can divide it up into two or three posts instead.

As I said at the beginning, these aren't simple challenges and there probably aren't 'right' and 'wrong' answers but I hope some of the advice and ideas above will help if they apply to you or your team.

If there's a topic you'd like me to cover in future, get in touch. Until next time, thanks. ☺

books



CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF ADVENTURE 1969-2019

EDITED BY KEV REYNOLDS. REVIEWED BY MIKE MARGESON

Inspiration from the word go, the front cover with the Milky Way over the Tri Cime immediately drew my attention, conjuring up the epic north-face adventures of Cassin, Comici or Hassel – Brandler routes. Breaking away from the format we've come to expect, this celebratory publication is no normal Cicerone guide.

Kev Reynolds has done a fantastic job bringing together the passion, commitment and spirit of adventure of the Cicerone team of authors. Their adventures from all over the world have given successive generations of would-be adventurers ideas, dreams and inspirations.

There's a fascinating short historical introduction describing the early days, working from the dining room table, with Walt Unsworth and Brian Evans passion as climbers and mountaineers to produce high quality guides for outdoor enthusiasts. When eventually taken on by Jonathan and Lesley Williams, the essence, nature and quality could easily have been lost. They may in their own words have had a steep learning curve, but they seem to have survived it!

The book is divided into three main sections — the UK, Europe, and the wider world — with something for anyone from running the Bob Graham round, to the White Mountains of Crete, to the wild Torres del Paine Circuit.

As a mountaineering instructor and mountain rescue volunteer, I found myself quickly flicking through to the last chapter entitled Mishaps and Misadventures. Colin Mortlock wrote about the nature of true adventure and how the line between real adventure and misadventure is very fine but sometimes where the maximum learning and life-long experience lies. With

winter with us, I was particularly taken by Mike Pescod's piece on being avalanched while working with clients on Aonach Mor. His reflections on the heuristic traps or human errors and poor decision-making to which we are all prone, however skilled or experienced, is food for thought.

This book is much more than the company's celebration of fifty years. It is certainly more than just a coffee table book — taking aside the stunning photographic content. For anybody looking for a gem of information or inspiration for their next adventure, this could be just the place to start.

CICERONE CELEBRATING-50 YEARS OF ADVENTURE PUBLISHED BY CICERONE WWW.CICERONE.CO.UK: 156 PAGES: ISBN 978-1-78631-030-9

We have a copy of Cicerone 'Celebrating 50 Years of Adventure' ready to go out to one lucky winner. Just answer the following question: **What is the significance of the company name Cicerone?** Send your answer to editor@mountain.rescue.org.uk before 31 January and the first one out of the bobble hat wins the book.

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TEAM TALK AUTUMN



Mountain Rescue and the Mountain Heritage Trust join forces to record and preserve our mountain rescue history

Last year, I reported on the opening of the Mountain Heritage Trust (MHT) archive facility at the Blencathra Field Studies Centre and mooted the idea of working with MHT to preserve and archive our own history. Since then, a small project group has been scoping out different ideas.

MIKE MARGESON
MREW VICE CHAIRMAN

We recently had a very productive meeting with MHT trustees, chaired by Terry Tasker (sister of the late Joe Tasker). Also present were a select few from MREW who are most likely to be involved with a project of this nature — Dave Freeborn, Judy Whiteside and Sally Seed — alongside Ray Griffiths (MREW president) and Jody Dyer (to assist in any fundraising opportunities).

It is clear we have a lot to do to ensure the rich heritage and history of mountain rescue is not lost and we need to tackle this sooner than later. And there's a bit more urgency with every passing obituary! The Fell and Rock Club recognised this some years ago and set about recording their oral history. This was highlighted as number one priority for us too and it was brought into stark focus by the sad passing in my own region of Malcolm Grindrod (obituary, page 27) and Mike Nikon (page 30). It is important we collect from

Why am I in total support of the initiative with the Mountain Heritage Trust to develop a branch of the archive to recognise and record the evolution of mountain rescue?

RAY GRIFFITHS
MREW PRESIDENT

As president, I've been privileged to meet many individuals from across our organisation and it's given me a rare insight into the different ways teams operate and organise to match their needs and areas. It is fascinating to learn how teams have evolved, and yet common threads exist.

Most teams were created by local mountaineers, farmers and hill-going folk in response to a single specific incident which then prompted the formation of a rescue service for their own dale or valley. Sometimes it was the rescue of a climber from a distant crag, sometimes the search for missing young people. Sometimes a series of incidents is the trigger.

Each team remains distinct and yet there are so many parallels, from the earliest days of the Stretcher Committee to the proliferation of teams formed in the 1960s. So, with many teams now celebrating anniversary years recently, it's clear that, unless we can provide a central focus for our history, it will be lost forever.

the regions a list of key folk so we can record our early history and, without being morbid, we need to get on with it!

It was useful to have the perspective of both Jody and Liz Sutton (a fundraising expert involved with MHT). The Heritage Lottery Fund's revised criteria are out this month and MHT will support us in applying for funding for a project worker. Another potential project is an exhibition that could feature at Keswick Museum, where MHT already has dedicated space, but also then travel around the country.

Terry and Ray have both written a few words, for which I thank them both. I believe we have a collective responsibility to the wonderful volunteers and mountaineers that have gone before us and I look forward to contributing our own strands of mountain heritage to the bigger picture in the months and years to come. ☺

As teams move into new bases, so many of the older artifacts are thrown away, unrecognised for what they represent. The stories about how teams operated out of barns and sheds, memories of epic rescues, are being forgotten as we lose our founding members. A central repository of physical evidence, properly archived data and oral history is an obvious way forward.

There are excellent books about mountain rescue and many teams have statistics and data going back for years but the world is changing and paper logbooks will degrade. Increasingly, records are digital and we should work hard to save how we got to where we are today, and keep that history going as we continue to improve what we do, and how well we do it. Broadening access and providing a resource to educate the world beyond is important, especially when we are trying to pass on our messages about safety in our wild areas. ☺

The British Isles was the birthplace of modern mountaineering and the history of climbing here is laced with episodes of bravery and fortitude by both hill goers and those that set out to help them when things go badly wrong, mountain rescue stories which have passed into legend and mountain folklore.

TERRY TASKER
CHAIR, MOUNTAIN HERITAGE TRUST

How important is it that we tell your stories and capture the rich heritage of mountain rescue within the formal documented framework of UK mountaineering history?

At the Mountain Heritage Trust, we think it has never been more important. The MHT was founded in 2000 to record and preserve Britain's rich heritage in the fields of climbing, mountaineering and mountain culture. Britain has a proud legacy in the Alps, the Himalaya and the other great mountain ranges but the mountains closer to home are the bedrock of British mountain culture. Britain's climbers and mountaineers have led the way in preservation and conservation of traditions, culture and heritage. The Mountain Heritage Trust preserves and encourages access to its own extensive collections, provides extensive educational resources to students and universities globally, provides curatorial support and exhibits in museums throughout the UK.

We want to support MREW by launching an oral history project to collect the rich and diverse stories that comprise your heritage. Every team has rescue stories and personalities. As the years pass, we lose the individuals that personify that history, stories are lost and artefacts deteriorate. Before our eyes, that very heritage is eradicated.

To this end, MHT want YOU to identify the storytellers, rummage through your document and equipment archive and start to think how we might help to preserve the rich history of YOUR team.

The British mountains have never enjoyed such popularity, and we fully appreciate that the demands on mountain rescue teams have never been so great. But creating an archival history, sharing the stories of the rescuers and the rescued, motivates a higher level of public interest and that bodes well for their continuing support of mountain rescue in England and Wales for long into the future. It's your heritage, work with us to capture it! ☺



KEEPING THE TRAINING REAL

Like all teams, Swaledale members need to keep their skills up to date – including winter skills. So during the long hot summer of 2018, they decided to look for a more unusual venue to develop casualty care skills, try out their new rope rescue devices and have some fun in the snow too. **Alan Woodhead** reports.

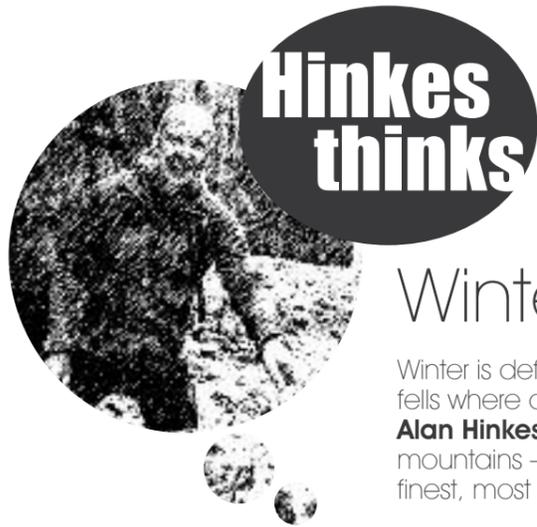
We'd been looking for a new lowering and raising device, with high load capacity/control and low friction for hauling (a big ask as these features conflict) and settled on the Heightec Quadra, as its simplicity and high load rating made it a clear winner (also happy to support a UK company designing and manufacturing in Cumbria). It's a device already used by some teams and widely used by fire and rescue teams. Now all we needed was a venue with a slope. Swaledale has mainly slopes so staying on area would have been 'normal'! What we really wanted was something a bit more unusual to add an extra dimension to the training.

So we decided to 'hit the slopes' and head south into Holme Valley's area and the Snozone. This great indoor, real snow venue gave us -6°C, a slippery slope and something a bit different to keep interest up. We ran two sessions there, looking at environmental casualty protection, casualty care and then stretcher lowering and raising on snow slopes. Not as steep as we normally work on, but great for training skills on the new Quadra devices.



Opposite & above: The then Coniston Fells Rescue Party. Picture Post 1947.





Hinkes
thinks

Winter Wonderland

Winter is definitely a more challenging, less forgiving environment on the fells where any hill area can turn into a serious, gnarly mountain adventure. **Alan Hinkes** is no stranger to the risks associated with getting out in the mountains – and here he talks about the heuristic traps that even the finest, most experienced mountaineers can fall into.

I'm all for people going out in all weather conditions, as long as they know the risks and consequences. Sadly even in these so-called information overload times, people still don't understand the danger they can put themselves in – and if the worst happens – the danger they can put MRTs in.

There is nothing like testing yourself in a blizzard. It's a masochistic sort of pleasure and it is definitely a skill to keep warm and mitigate the suffering whilst navigating or climbing in grim weather. Just for experience and fun, I often go out sometimes in the dark, which in November to January only means early evening. I might need goggles in the stinging spindrift, but it is all good training, becoming familiar with the harsh environment and, when it happens for real, you shouldn't be as fazed.

Learning how to cope with extreme inclement weather can be fun, yet many people think it's dangerous or mad. Some of the public would probably like to ban people going out in the hills in winter conditions. To them it is cold, slippery and dangerous. But how else can you ski, climb a frozen waterfall



ALAN HINKES IS THE FIRST BRITON TO CLIMB THE WORLD'S HIGHEST MOUNTAINS, THE FOURTEEN 8000M PEAKS. HE IS ALSO A KEEN ADVOCATE FOR MOUNTAIN RESCUE.

or just enjoy the winter wonderland on the fells and gain experience?

Getting painful cold hands, blinded by stinging ice crystals, or having your head torch conk out (make sure you have a spare), is all good experience on a controlled night exercise in the snow.

Regularly hillwalkers are reminded to take a torch, yet some think the light on a cell phone will do. It won't. It will last only a few minutes on a cold winter night. Nowadays there is no excuse for not having a decent head torch – or even a small LED, which are very cheap.

There are plenty of weather forecast sites, the Met Office has a mountain forecast and there is MWIS, these sites let you know freezing levels and potential conditions underfoot, yet some people still go on the hill with only a general forecast for sea level.

Last winter it was often benign, sunny and mild in the Lake District valleys, but sub-zero and Arctic-like on the fell tops. Paths from the valleys in the Lakes can lure people up higher into the snowline and out of their comfort zone. An example is from Glenridding where the path leads up to Red Tarn, often with little difficulty, tempting walkers to carry on up Swirral Edge to the summit of Helvellyn. Unfortunately, Swirral Edge can be very unforgiving when an inexperienced walker underestimates the difficulty and seriousness of a slip on the snow or ice. I have often come across very inexperienced, naive people who haven't even done Helvellyn in summer, yet think they can risk it up Swirral Edge in hard snow neve-like conditions. Sometimes I wonder how there are not more accidents. Luckily people often get away with it.

The basic tool for going out on the hills in winter conditions is an ice axe and the skill to use it. Steps can be cut for short sections and it can arrest a slip if you start sliding down a snowslope. When conditions get icy, crampons will help, but once again you need to know how to use them. If you catch your inside leg, you may end up falling, or if they ball up in wet snow it may cause a slide down a mountain side.

Ice axes and crampons, however, will not prevent you being avalanched. Avalanches can and do happen in the Lakes. I've been involved in a couple, but when I tell hill walkers there are avalanches in the Lakes,

they are often incredulous. Anywhere covered in snow can slide, even the most benign slopes can avalanche. And, just for the record, the UK's deadliest avalanche happened on the South Downs on 27 December 1836, wiping out a row of houses in Lewes and killing eight people.

As for giving advice, I don't generally tell people to go down. I may comment if I think it is appropriate or if they ask for advice. But I have had people advise me, thinking they know it all, even telling me what I should or shouldn't be doing, don't go there, or you're risking it not wearing crampons – on a soft snow-covered Swirral, Striding or Sharp Edge. Crampons are not the default solution to winter walking. Experience and skill and being in your comfort zone on the terrain is real safety.

A classic case happened with me; I was soloing grade 2/3s on Helvellyn and met some friends who had been on Great End the previous day. They said conditions were superb, the forecast was for another freeze overnight, so I decided to go the next day. I set off up Central Gully left hand only to find the ice rotten, friable, hollow and scary. I'd fallen into the heuristic trap of not checking the conditions properly. It was now three days since my friends had said the conditions were superb and it hadn't been as hard a frost as forecast.

I whimpered my way up the ice pitch, not enjoying it at all. It was not superb ice conditions. So an expected pleasant day out in the fells turned into an unpleasant struggle, almost a serious situation. I have learnt over many years in the hills to never take any situation for granted. On big Himalayan peaks I'm always prepared to retreat, to turn back, the mountain will always be there for another attempt. My mantra: No mountain is worth a life. Coming back is a success and the summit is only a bonus.

Experienced climbers and fell walkers can and do have accidents, the key to avoiding them is not to get complacent, attention to detail and avoid heuristic traps. Remember the Five 'P's: Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance. For example, it was OK last time I climbed this winter gully, so it should be OK this time. Always assess and reassess the conditions. ☘

STORY

Autumn
Winter
'18/19

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Let's go somewhere



Party Leader course 2018



TEAM TALK AUTUMN

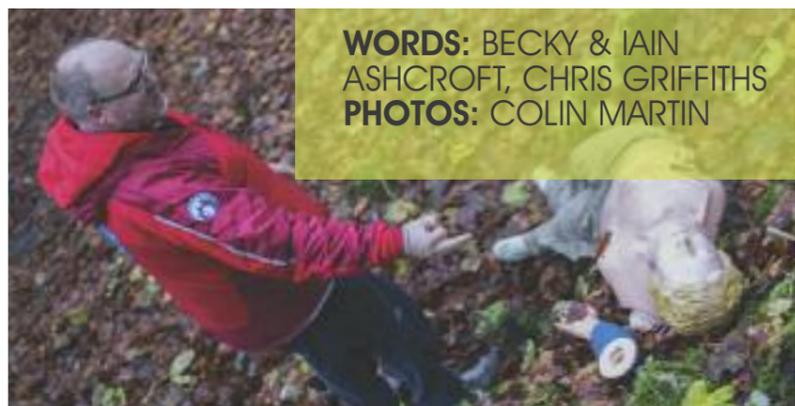
OCTOBER: BOLTON CELEBRATE FIFTY YEARS WITH ANNIVERSARY DINNER

The celebratory dinner was held at the Holiday Inn Bolton Centre, with over 150 current and former team members, and invited guests joining in the fun.

Guests included MREW Chairman Mike France with his wife Pat, MREW President Ray Griffiths and MREW Treasurer Penny Brockman and the evening was made extra special with the attendance of past team leaders, from Mike Ainscough, leader in 1968 through to current team leader Steve Fletcher.



Above: Bolton team leaders past and present. Left to right: Steve Fletcher (current team leader), Alistair Greenough, Garry Rhodes, Bob Hutchinson, Geoff Seddon, Mike Ainscough © Bolton MRT.



WORDS: BECKY & IAIN ASHCROFT, CHRIS GRIFFITHS
PHOTOS: COLIN MARTIN



Yet another full course with team members attending from across the MREW 'patch' – from the deep south of Cornwall SRT to the far north of North of Tyne MRT, from the far west of Aberdyfi SRT to the far east of Cleveland MRT. In total, there were 34 team members from 22 different teams on the course with 25 staff assisting.

We started with formal introductions on the Friday night, at the Kingswood Colomendy Centre at Loggerheads near Mold, North Wales, then attendees were divided into the small parties they would work with for most of the weekend. A group discussion on what makes a good party leader drew some interesting results then Detective Inspector Mike Waters from Cheshire Police ran through the police expectations of mountain rescue before the obligatory networking session into the wee small hours at the local hostelry.

The next morning started bright and breezy with attendees sitting through five theoretical sessions on different aspects of being a party leader, including management skills, briefing, debriefing and triage. After lunch, they were sent into the woods to experience seven different scenarios designed to test their learning from the morning sessions and practise their response. These ranged from organising a search with a surprise at the end, to an Oscar-winning performance from a distraught mother who'd lost her child being followed by a persistent pressman wanting to get a story. All the scenarios were debriefed later so the groups could learn from the sessions and build on experience.

Dinner was followed by a session from Phil Benbow on PTSD, a very important subject that whilst tough to deal with after a full day, is an important one not to be missed. Then it was off to another networking session.

Sunday morning began with a session on press and social media from Sally Seed followed by one dealing with fatalities and scenes of crime protocols. Then it was back outside for the last seven scenarios, designed to put the small parties under more pressure and get them working as a team. Considering some people had met just over 36 hours previously, this happened relatively quickly and remarkably well – possibly due to the fact that we all have the same goal: to save lives. Once everyone had been round all the scenarios, it was back to the centre for a debrief, tea and biscuits, and certificates.

We hope all the attendees enjoyed the course. The presentations will be placed on Moodle. It must be said that this course cannot run without the huge support of all the instructors from across the different regions. They bring an enormous range of experience and we thank them for giving up their time to help over the weekend. We're always on the look out for people to help so if you are interested in assisting at the 2019 course (22–24 November at the Colomendy Centre), please contact us via partyleader@mountain.rescue.org.uk 📧

DECEMBER: GRANT FUND TO THE RESCUE

The fund was set up in 2014 to provide over £5 million, over five years, to independent search and rescue teams working on inland waterways. This year, thirteen mountain rescue organisations were among 57 charities across the UK whose bids were successful.



© Derby MRT

In Cumbria, Duddon & Furness (£2,253), Patterdale (£4,005) and Penrith (£8,586) will benefit. In the North East and Yorkshire, Cleveland (£1,659), Woodhead (£14,220) and Swaledale (£6,422.62) teams had successful bids and, in Lancashire, Bolton team will receive £13,118.85 to buy rescue equipment, a new boat engine and rescue throw lines for all team members. Derby's grant of just over

£6,300 will be used to purchase a range of equipment, including an inflatable rescue boat, drysuits, lighting and technical rescue gear. Further south, Cornwall (£11,781), Dartmoor Tavistock (£3,656) and Dartmoor Plymouth (£7,057) and the Severn Area Rescue Association (£10,980.00) were all successful. And in Wales, the North Wales Mountain Rescue Association is set to receive £15,869.



Photos © Rossendale & Pendle MRT.

DECEMBER: ROSSENDALE & PENDLE TEAM IN JOINT TRAINING WITH NORTH WEST AIR AMBULANCE

The training session proved a valuable insight into this key emergency service, with the Air Ambulance crew members giving up their time, after working a full shift, to show Rossendale team members around.

There was plenty of opportunity to take a look at the helicopters and the equipment they carry, including some hands-on practice, and also learn more about some of the advanced treatments their doctors and paramedics are able to offer.



OCTOBER: LIFE MEMBERSHIP FOR STEVE BRITTON

Calder Valley team member Steve Britton was presented with the Life Membership Certificate in recognition of his service to the team after stepping down from active duty to move 'down south' for work and to be nearer family.

Steve joined the team in 2004 and has held the role of equipment officer for seven years and vehicle officer for five. Team leader Ben Carter said, 'Steve and I joined the team at the same time and I'd like to make special mention to his commitment to the team over the last fifteen years. He has one of the highest attendance for fundraising events, training and call-outs and is often seen in his spare time cutting the lawn or maintaining the rescue post — there's no denying we will miss him.'

Left: Steve Britton (left) receives his Life Membership Certificate from Calder Valley team leader Ben Carter.



A SEASONAL PATCHWORK

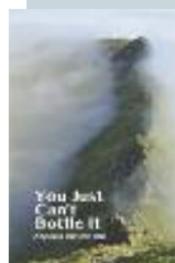
Each year, Patterdale MRT creates one or two new photographic greetings cards to raise funds for the team. New this year is a stunning image from Mark Littlejohn, showing a hidden corner of the team patch.

'The photo was taken from Beda Knotts one freezing but beautiful January morning,' says Mark. 'I'd been up and over the tops before dawn and had gone out looking for a more abstract shot of some sheep trods in frost and low, angled light and was struck by the early light on Martindale instead. The way the early light and the colour combined made me think of a patchwork quilt so I've called it Martindale Patchwork. As simple as that really — a nice image doesn't need to be complicated.'

The card is available via the team website at mountainrescue.org.uk

YOU JUST CAN'T BOTTLE IT

Patterdale team will benefit from a new book, written by trustee Angela Bell, about her years of fell walking. 'You just can't bottle it' also has a foreword by renowned fell runner Joss Naylor.



'The book contains tales from my time in mountain rescue and stories of my adventures with companions,' says Angela.

'You just can't bottle it' costs £10 plus P&P and is available from angela_bell65@aol.com.

TEAM TALK AUTUMN



NOVEMBER: RAF LEEMING JOINS WASDALE FOR A DAY

Team members spent the day on Brantrake training with their RAF colleagues and looking at how the two organisations rig the crag for rescues and stretcher lowers. Whilst not drastically different there were some good ideas passed between the two teams.

Photos © Wasdale MRT.



SHARING GOOD PRACTICE AND HELPING EACH OTHER

TIM CAIN



Peer Review Lessons Learned Seminar

'We have to do more of this', 'Do it again', 'Keep Peer Review Running', 'Superb', 'More!'... Just some of the feedback from the Lessons Learned Seminar held at Edale Base on Saturday 24 November 2018. The aim of the day was to allow teams, firstly, to share good ideas and secondly to seek out good practice from peers.

The catalyst for identifying good practice has been the peer review process, which, by 'holding up a mirror' for teams has helped raise self-awareness. In particular, this has enabled the acknowledgment of highly developed practices, which may be worth sharing. Some examples include: Training recording software (Cleveland & Brecon MRTs), the use of All Terrain Vehicles (Rossendale and Pendle MRT), Casualty Care training (Wasdale MRT), rope rescue team management (Kendal MRT), search techniques (DSRT Plymouth), strategic planning (NEWSAR), team cohesion (BPMRT), VHF relay (Woodhead MRT), use of GPS Trackers (Brecon MRT), vehicle logbooks (SRMRT), team SOPs (NNPMRT), operational support members (CVSRT), multi-agency working (Bolton MRT) and D4H (the use of this tool appears to be widespread and increasing).

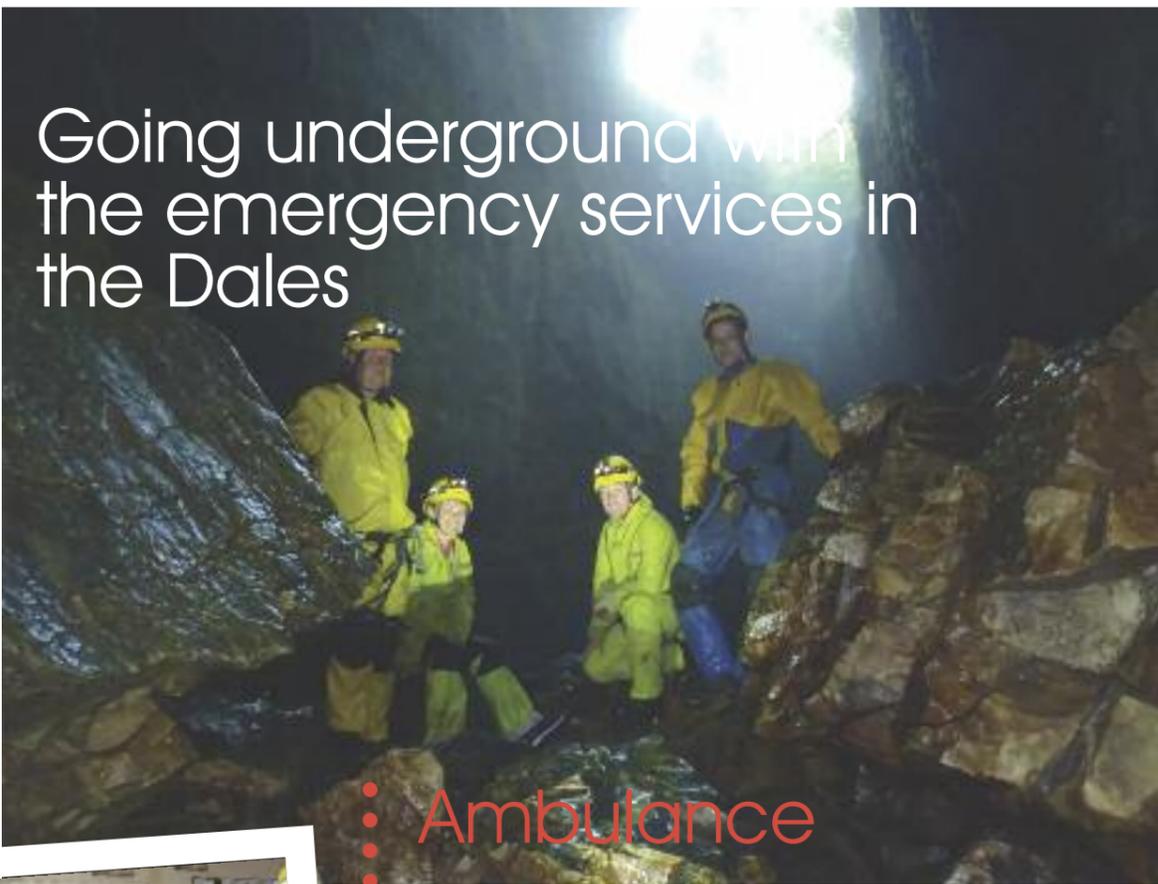
These are but some examples of all the great stuff going on across the teams and it is by no means exhaustive. How we share the strengths remains a work in progress, however, the inaugural Lessons Learned seminar appears to have been well-received, and has facilitated some useful networking. A list of contacts and their subjects of interest will be posted on the MREW website so other interested parties can join the conversations and add their own ideas.

Peer review itself continues into 2019. HVMRT, OVMRO, DFMRT and UWFRA have all decided to conduct reviews. There are opportunities in February, March, April, May and July if your team is thinking about taking advantage of the process. Email me at tim@timcainleadership.co.uk.



Mourne MRT during their MRI Peer Review © Tim Cain.

Going underground with the emergency services in the Dales



Ambulance



CRO has an excellent working relationship with the Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS). Some of the ambulance personnel live locally and have worked with the team for many years but having new team members and YAS staff meant it was time to organise some joint training and have a bit of fun. **Paul Lethebee** reports.

The crews were invited to join us on a summer evening caving trip to Lower Long Churn Cave and Alum Pot — the scene of many rescues in the team's 83-year history.

The main aim of the evening was to look at the specific problems of providing first aid and casualty care in cave rescue. Flat out crawling, vertical pitches requiring technical rope rescue, deep pools of water and tight and constricted passages make for a difficult rescue, especially if the casualty needs to be on a stretcher. In some circumstances the casualty may need to be removed from the stretcher for a particularly awkward section of passage, before being repackaged to continue their journey to the surface.

All these features are encountered within a short distance from the entrance of Lower Long Churn. The team crawled, traversed and abseiled or were lowered down pitches to emerge on a ledge part way down Alum Pot main shaft. The summer sun provided some warmth but this is still a damp and draughty place to stand still for any length of time. It served as a good reminder of how much colder and wetter it would be in normal winter conditions.

It was time to return to the surface with a ladder climb back up the pitch and a traverse over a deep pool of water, into which one YAS member managed to fall spectacularly

backwards, ending up to his neck in water. We would have given him top marks for his effort, but he didn't keep his welly boots together and there was too much splash for a perfect dive!

Further discussions followed on the problems of extended rescue and the compromises that may have to be made in order to effect a rescue. Whilst it may be best for the casualty to be hauled horizontally, the cave passage or pitch may not allow it. Indeed, the actual decision to evacuate the casualty on a stretcher means the rescue will take at least four times as long. Casualties with isolated lower limb fractures may well be assisted to the surface, with good splinting, analgesia and lots of hands-on assistance from many cave rescuers.

Once back on the surface, it was time for a quick team photo and making a date for later in the year, when a surface training exercise would be held. This would improve their understanding of the working of CRO for those YAS folk unable or unwilling to take part in the underground exercise.

Next, on the evening of 23 October, YAS staff visited the CRO depot for a joint training and familiarisation exercise. First up was a short talk by one of the duty controllers, on team organisation, mobilising procedures and communications. This included a tour of the control room to review all of



Fire Service

the IT, SARCALL and mapping available to the team.

Then came a review of the drug formulary available to the team's casualty carers and the medical kit carried in team vehicles (always good to avoid duplicating kit being carried up the hill), then a bit of practical work that included a review of how we manage risk and ensure that YAS personnel remain safe when attending casualties on steep ground, unstable surfaces and at cave entrances. Each YAS member was paired with a CRO team member, who provided them with a helmet, headlamp, harness and cows' tails. The exercise involved accessing the casualty via the depot training wall from the first floor to the ground floor, landing in a blacked out garage, complete with rope traverse to avoid a

further vertical drop into the pit. The casualty was packaged onto a Bell stretcher and carried back to the base of the vertical pitch. After being individually hauled up by CRO members the YAS folk assisted in the stretcher haul overseen by the CRO rigging team. It was acknowledged that on a real incident YAS personnel would not be expected to take part in a technical rope rescue, but it did serve the purpose of understanding what is involved in technical rescue and what the casualty may have to endure!

Exercise over, it was time for tea, food and a beer, with the opportunity for everyone to get to know each other, chat about previous rescues and look forward to seeing familiar faces on the next shout. ☺

Most Dales caves flood, it's a fact of life — caves and potholes were formed by the passage of water. But flooding underground also kills, not only by drowning, but also by the chilling effect of the draught (howling gale!) caused by the movement of large volumes of water along a cave passage. Then there's the obstacle to gaining access by the rescue team. **Rae Lonsdale** reports.

So, in addition to working with local firefighters by rivers and in surface floodwater, as surface-only teams do, cave rescue teams sometimes rely on their fire and rescue colleagues to lower underground water levels and make cave access and egress less hazardous or at least possible. This was demonstrated recently, when North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service's Bentham and Settle crews shared an evening exercise with CRO at the valley entrance to the West Kingsdale system, near Ingleton.

The firefighters first formed a triangle with three rigid ladders, placed on edge and covered, loosely, with a large canvas sheet. Filled with water from a fire appliance, this made an instant reservoir, from which water was pumped into the flooded section of cave, beyond which lay the 'casualty'. The pressure of the incoming water, passing through a Venturi device (like a pre-aerosol-era scent spray) then returned a greater volume of water to the outside and it wasn't long before the water level began to fall and the 'casualty' was recovered. ☺



Photos © CRO.

TEAM TALK AUTUMN



DECEMBER: HOLME VALLEY LAND ROVER GETS SHINY NEW FACELIFT

Say 'mountain rescue', think 'Land Rover'. Live in Huddersfield and say 'Land Rover', think 'Huddersfield Land Rover Centre'. And that's exactly what Holme Valley did, writes **Mark Clarke**, the team's vehicle officer.

We already have a 110 TD5 Defender, bought new in 2000, but we're looking at a range of improvements to our fleet of vehicles. New to the fleet and assisting with 4x4 duties is an Isuzu D-Max pick up. We still have a requirement for an off-road stretcher carrier, but the D-max is unable to fulfil this role due to the length of its load bay, an issue with all pick-ups currently on the UK market.

Now that Land Rover has stopped building Defenders, where does that leave us? The question brought us back to our 18-year-old Landy. It's only averaged 1500 miles per year, and in good condition for its years, so we had a chat with our friends at the Land Rover Centre. Could they give ours 'a reet good coat o' looking at'? And they were more than happy to oblige.

On inspection, there was actually minimal work needed to bring it back to spec. There's been a few upgrades and other modifications fitted to newer Defenders, but many of these could easily be retro-fitted to ours, so off she went. And a few weeks later, she returned with an amazing facelift.

As well as a full service — including every fluid being replaced — the brakes were overhauled, a new passenger side door lock fitted, a couple of new chassis parts and rear cross member renewed, the factory fitted tow bar removed allowing the recovery points to be upgraded and worn-out wiring replaced — not to mention the many new nuts, bolts, washers and clamps found to be old and rusty when you get that deep into a vehicle — all sealed off with a thorough coat of waxoyl. Additional mods included removal of the old folding side steps, replaced with rock sliders, bash plates fitted to vulnerable underside components and updated/upgraded suspension with the addition of a rear anti-roll bar to help improve the on-road handling of the vehicle. When we got the bill and did a quick tally up, we found the full service was done free of charge, as was the MOT!

Between the initial discussions and the time she went in for surgery, the Beast from the East hit the area three times, so the Defender was out for hours, patrolling high exposed routes, assisting the ambulance service with patient access, and helping the police with stranded motorists on snow-covered roads.

It was while out on some of these jobs that we had a couple of minor but potentially 'vehicle out of action' moments. For example, in a gust of wind during a blizzard on the local moors, a door was snatched from the hand of a team member, tearing the hinge from the door. A quick phone call to the LRC to see if they had a hinge in stock and, not only did they have the part, within the hour they had fitted it free of charge, allowing the Landy to get back out on duty again. The same happened when an electrical fault meant we lost headlights — we were back on the road again in very short order (apologies to any other customers who may have been delayed on those days!)

The next part of the plan is to redesign the interior load-space to allow for more efficient kit stowage and access, and to improve the stretcher-loading capability — allowing us to load a casualty without having to unload all the kit from the vehicle to make room. As ever, Huddersfield Land Rover Centre has promised their help and expertise. The team would like to offer our utmost thanks to all the staff for their dedication and skills, and their commitment to look after the vehicle during the rest of its time with us.

Above: Team leader Owen Phillips takes delivery of the revamped Landy © HVMRT.



NOVEMBER: HARDMOORS ENDURANCE PAYS OFF

The Hardmoors Race is a series of endurance running events held in and around the North York Moors and Yorkshire Wolds.

For a number of years, runners have been invited to donate a small amount of money to both the Scarborough & Ryedale and Cleveland teams when entering. SRMRT was delighted to be invited to the Goathland Trail Races event in November to receive a donation of £1790.20, their share of 2018 donations.

'We'd like to thank Jon and Shirley Steele and the whole Hardmoors community for the very kind donation and the ongoing support of their two local teams' says Ian Hugill.

Left to right: Jon Steele hands the cheque over to the team's Ian Hugill and Kevin Deadman with Shirley Steele looking on.



NOVEMBER: UPPER WHARFEDALE CELEBRATES

Team members celebrated seventy years with a formal dinner at the Gamekeepers Inn, in Threshfield. Eighty members past and present attended, along with proud Yorkshireman and legendary mountaineer Alan Hinkes, invited as guest speaker.

Several life members attended (the eldest being 92), and a good number of retired members travelled some distance to share in the celebrations. Alan Hinkes praised the work of all mountain rescue teams adding that it was an honour to have been invited.

UWFRA chairman Peter Huff said the evening was a huge success and worthy of the milestone. 'It was a great gathering of members and their spouses. As a team, we've been through many highs and sadly some lows over the 70 years of rescues but it was wonderful to enjoy the camaraderie of members old and new on this special occasion.'

Above: Left to right: Jeremy Daggett (President), Peter Huff (Chairman), Alan Hinkes, Mike France (MREW Chairman) © Nigel Hutchinson UWFRA.



OCTOBER: MREW PATRON HOSTS CAVE RESCUE AT THE PALACE

The visit was to meet HRH The Duke of Cambridge, in recognition of the efforts of cave rescue members in last summer's rescue of the Moo Pa football team in Northern Thailand.

Prince William put every one at ease straight away, chatting to his guests about every aspect of the rescue, both in Thailand and here back home. A memorable day out for everyone involved

Top: Photo courtesy HRH The Duke of Cambridge.



Team members raise their axes, as is the tradition at mountain rescue weddings © Naomi House Photography | www.naomihouse.com

OCTOBER: PENRITH TEAM LEADER TIES THE KNOT

In what appears to be becoming a regular feature, the latest **Stunning Wedding Photo** is courtesy of Naomi House Photography. Congrats to Kaz Frith and Andrew Field from Penrith MRT!



technical
rope rescue

Rope Rescue Guidelines Review **Update** CHRIS COOKSON COCKERMOUTH MRT



Cockermouth MRT on exercise © Chris Cookson.

First of all, a big 'thank you' to those that made the time and effort to feed back on the guidelines. Those comments were used in the meeting on 6 October 2018 at the Lymm Hotel, near Warrington, to refine the guidelines and shape the explanatory notes.

The explanatory notes have been worked on since by Al Read, Richard Quinn and myself and hopefully by the time you read this, you'll have received a more complete version of the guidelines for comment. **If you haven't, please check with your training officer. And if they haven't heard anything, please ask them to check with your regional training officer.**

The aim is to have a 'final' version to put to the MREW meeting in May. Before then:

1. The draft guidelines will be put forward to the Ops Meeting on 12 January.
2. The feedback received from the second round of comments will be reviewed at the Rope Rescue Guidelines Review meeting on 16 February.
3. A 'final' draft will be presented to the MREW management meeting in April, ahead of the May MREW meeting.
4. The 'final' draft will be sent out to teams ahead of the May MREW meeting.

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Ian Bunting and Bolt © Mark Harrison.

JANUARY: CHANGE OF NAME FOR SARDA ENGLAND TO MOUNTAIN RESCUE SEARCH DOGS ENGLAND

At its 2018 AGM, the association agreed the change to its working name and branding, from SARDA England to Mountain Rescue Search Dogs England, to more accurately reflect the purpose of the association and reinforce its mountain rescue connection.

The new brand was adopted with effect from January 2019 and sees a new logo (pictured right), badging and stationery, and some stunning new imagery from photographer Mark Harrison. There's also a brand new website and enhanced social media presence.

The existing charity registration name and number, and banking details for SARDA England remain the same.



mountainrescuerearchdogsendland.org.uk



DECEMBER: THREE NEW PUPS ON THE BLOCK FOR COCKERMOUTH

Since Search Dog Jake retired, Cockermouth team has had a long wait for another search dog to join the team but now they have three dogs in training. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you (left to right) Mike Gullen with Marty, Tom Woolley with Bess, and Mike Park with Blue. Marty causes quite a stir recently when he turned up to training in a blue jacket... We'll say no more.

Photo © Rob Grange Photography.

OBITUARY



It was with great sadness, in December, that mountain rescue said farewell to a man who was loved and respected by so many. A member of Coniston MRT and vice president of the Lake District Search and Mountain Rescue Dogs (LDMRSDA), Malcolm was welcomed to his final resting place with a guard of honour of search and rescue dogs, their handlers and mountain rescue colleagues. **Judy Whiteside** looks back over his life in mountain rescue.

MALCOLM GRINDROD MBE

Malcolm died peacefully at home, aged 79 years. Less than a year ago, we shared news here of his long-deserved honour, an MBE for services to mountain rescue in Cumbria, but Malcolm's influence and contribution to mountain rescue and the search and rescue dogs spread far beyond his home county.

Initially a member of Langdale Ambleside (for 28 years), and then Coniston team, he played a leading role in developing the work of search dogs in the UK for over 40 years but he was also a pioneer, forging links with overseas training organisations in Norway, Iceland, Bavaria and the USA. And he played a leading role in organising the tasks for search dogs at the Lockerbie incident in 1988.

'Many handlers owe their skills to the training methods Malcolm developed,' wrote Mick Guy. 'Among the UK search dog fraternity, there will be few who did as much to develop and support the handlers he trained. He was a committed mountain rescue team member, right to the end and he will be greatly missed, both as a source of information and inspiration'.

Over his 56 years in mountain rescue, 46 with SARDA England, then SARDA Lakes (now LDMRSDA), he himself trained, qualified and worked six dogs and served as both training officer and call-out coordinator.

His first association with SARDA was at a Mountain Rescue Committee conference at Eskdale Outward Bound in 1972, with his Irish Setter Jan. On the first SARDA England course, in January 1973, based at the King's Head Hotel, he and Jan graded.

'I remember watching Jim Coyle work with his dog Rock in a blizzard among the crags above the King's Head. The casualty was buried in snow up a gully, the exact location was a

little unclear, and it was a great relief to everyone when Jim and Rock came up trumps.'

At the time, dog training was mostly done at nights, at least once a week, aided and abetted by a band of willing bodies, with a January course to grade each dog team. Malcolm took on the role of training officer for SARDA England in the late-1970s and began running weekend courses throughout England. Along with assessors (selected from the more experienced dog handlers within the association), this made it possible to develop and maintain standards.

'In the early days', wrote Malcolm, 'dogs were put on the call-out list at a much younger age. Training was less rigorous, but I can honestly say, in all my years training search dogs, I can never remember an instance where a dog, having found the casualty on a real search, failed to take its handler to the missing person.'

Towards the end of his time as training officer, it became clear that SARDA England was getting too large to carry on as one organisation with half the graded dogs based in the Lakes and the other half scattered around England, so a new association was formed to cater for the Lake District teams.

In 1991, with fellow handler Dave Riley, Malcolm attended a winter avalanche course in Norway, training to find casualties buried to a depth of 2.5 metres.

'We'd been involved in winter training before, at a very basic level, but this Norwegian course gave us the knowledge to set up our own.' Those courses continue to run to this day.

Mountain rescuers — search dog handlers in particular — are rarely short of a tale to tell: amusing anecdotes honed over time, sad memories of colleagues no longer with us and — of course — somewhere



Above: Malcolm with Jan and Mist, Jan being the daughter of Mist © Malcolm Grindrod.

along the way, will be a story or several of a particular find or search. Malcolm was no exception.

'After a night search in the Upper Esk, Dave Riley's dog found the boys we were searching for. At first light a helicopter arrived and the lads were soon being winched up into a hovering Sea King. When the time came for us to be winched, down came a double strop and up we went, each holding our dog tight in our arms. Trouble was, six or seven metres up, our dogs began to fight! Clinging on for dear life to two struggling dogs, the pair of us finally arrived at the helicopter, Dave 'wearing' his dog on his head like a Davy Crockett hat! A sight I will never forget!'

On another fateful night, Malcolm's dog Spin was 'in the right place at the right time' when she found a young girl unconscious in a plastic bag on Fairfield. After a long night trying to rewarm her, she became

conscious and was flown off at first light.

Thanks to this incident, Malcolm and Spin found themselves sitting in make-up alongside Cilla Black, on the set of 'Surprise, Surprise', when 'a dreadful small percolated up from under the dressing table'.

'I hope Cilla doesn't think it's me!' he thought. Whatever Cilla thoughts were, however, she was polite enough not to divulge them — at least not to Malcolm! On the announcement of his honour, Coniston team paid tribute to his knowledge and experience. His comical 'tails' of wisdom, they said, had helped many a dog handler on a cold, wet fellside.

In classic mountain rescue style, team members wore their red team jackets and, following the service retired to the Sun Inn, Malcolm's favourite haunt to raise a glass in his memory and share a few more 'tails'. There is little doubt he will be forever loved and missed by all who knew him. ☘



DECEMBER: NEW YEAR HONOURS ANNOUNCED FOR MOUNTAIN AND CAVE RESCUE TEAM MEMBERS. CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL RECIPIENTS!

Seems as though news of cave rescue – and, in particular, the heroic deeds of a small group of its members – was never far from the world's eyes and ears in the latter half of 2018, and deservedly so. And late December brought news that two of that group had been awarded the second highest award of the UK honours system. A further five members of the cave diving team who's actions helped save twelve young Thai footballers and their coach in summer, have also been recognised.

Top: Left to right: John Volanthen GM and Rick Stanton GM © Sky News. Ken McCubbin BEM © Galloway MRT. Paul Kerr BEM © NEWSAR.

The George Medal (GM), instituted in 1940 by King George VI, is analogous with the George Cross and awarded for gallantry 'not in the face of the enemy'. For their part in the search and rescue of the twelve boys and their football coach, missing beyond floods in the Tham Luang cave in North Thailand, in June, **Rick Stanton** and **John Volanthen** will now be permitted to add 'GM' after their name.

Other members of the team to be recognised for their part in the hazardous rescue operation are **Chris Jewell** and **Jason Mallinson**, who will receive Queen's Gallantry Medals (QGM), and **Josh Bratchley**, **Connor Roe** and **Vernon Unsworth**, who become Members of the Order of the British Empire (MBE).

Lest you too have been in a cave and missed the story (or not yet read October's magazine <tsk>), it bears repeating. Over several days, the BCRC team made repeated dives far into the cave in very difficult and challenging conditions. The boys were found by two of the team, marooned on a ledge in a chamber about 2,300 metres from the cave entrance. Supplies were dived through to them whilst various rescue options were considered. It was eventually concluded by the Thai authorities that diving the boys out was their only hope of survival. With Australian and other cave divers, the BCRC team devised a rescue plan which was implemented over a three-day period with

the last boy reaching safety on 10 July, eighteen days after entering the cave.

'It was an extraordinary and unprecedented operation' says BCRC's Bill Whitehouse. 'We're proud of the critical role the team played and full of admiration for the courage and dedication of the individuals involved — and pleased they have received such well-deserved national recognition.'

Elsewhere, in mountain rescue, NEWSAR's **Paul Kerr** was awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM) in recognition of more than 25 years 'valuable service to mountain rescue' and for his many other volunteer activities with several organisations in Cheshire. Paul has been an active member of NEWSAR in many operational roles, including treasurer and trustee.

He was keen to point out that the award 'recognises his contribution within the overall picture of long and valuable service by so many other people he's had the good fortune to volunteer alongside'.

There was a BEM in Scotland too, for **Ken McCubbin**, a founder member of Galloway MRT. **Jonathan Hart** of Lochaber MRT, who also served as chairman of the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland (now Scottish Mountain Rescue), was awarded the MBE, as was **Mario di Maio**, of Aberdeen MRT. All three were for 'services to mountain rescue'.

TEAM TALK AUTUMN



NOVEMBER: CO-OP COMMUNITY FUND SUPPORTS MOUNTAIN RESCUE

The Co-op Community Fund has long supported local causes, including mountain rescue teams across England, Wales and Scotland. Arran MRT in Scotland, Calder Valley SRT in Yorkshire and the Aberdyfi team in Wales have all recently been grateful recipients of a 'whopping cheque' (in more ways than one).

Arran team members went along to the store in Brodick to chat to staff about the work they do and officially receive their cheque for £21,810.44 from their 'wonderful community'. The money, they say, will 'greatly assist the upkeep of the team, helping to pay for essential equipment, team members' kit and vehicle maintenance'.

Meanwhile, at the Co-op in Mytholmroyd, Calder Valley team members received £10,530, the equivalent of over 20% of the team's annual running costs. 'We are so grateful to the staff and generous customers', they said, adding, 'We are proud to serve and be part of such a generous community'.

And, in Wales, Aberdyfi team members took delivery of their cheque for £7612.14. So, on behalf of mountain rescue across the UK, 'Thank you Co-op and all your generous customers!'

Clockwise from top: Arran MRT, Aberdyfi MRT and Calder Valley SRT with their cheques.



NOVEMBER: MAKES A CHANGE FROM GOATS...

Climbing Tryfan, it's often said, is not for the faint-hearted. It's a regular location for calls for help for Ogwen Valley team members. An evening in November brought a call-out of a different kind, when a local farmer asked the team to help retrieve a couple of sheep from the Milestone Buttress area of Tryfan where they appeared to have taken up residence!

'Since he is a longstanding supporter of the team and lets us train all over his land, we were only too happy to help,' ran the team's Facebook post. 'A number of team members wrangled the woolly casualties into builders' bags for a short lower back to familiar pastures'.

Left: Tim Harrop wrangles one of the errant sheep © OVMRO.



DECEMBER: SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN RESCUE TRAINING CONFERENCE

The Scottish Mountain Rescue annual training conference took place at Glenmore Lodge, with up to a hundred team members from across Scotland attending.

The weekend began with a presentation from Jason Mallinson, one of the British cave divers who helped rescue the twelve Thai boys and their coach last summer. Speaking to a packed lecture theatre, Jason spoke about how they planned the rescue and what they had to do to get the boys out of the cave.

Saturday and Sunday's workshops included avalanche management,

mountain rescue skills, off-road driving, medical, SARCALL, rigging, PPE, drones, fundraising and social media.

On Saturday night SMR had a very special guest in comedian Ed Byrne, a keen Munro bagger, who popped along to join everyone at dinner and performed for thirty minutes.

It was an extremely positive weekend of learning, looking at new techniques and equipment, bringing together team

members from all across Scotland to share ideas and knowledge.

Special thanks go to the UK Training Fund, Glenmore Lodge, Keela, Mountain Equipment, Blizzard Survival, Openhouse Products, DMM, Lyon Work & Rescue, The Outdoor Company and everyone who attended for their contributions and for making the weekend a success.





NOVEMBER: MUD, MUD, GLORIOUS MUD

Mountain rescue teams generally take mud in their stride but it was mud of the highest order when Edale team members were called to haul a man from Ladybower Reservoir after he sank to his chest saving his fiancée... who'd gone in to save their cocker spaniel, Charlie.

Shaun and Julie were walking beside the Peak District reservoir, when first Charlie ran into the mud, then Julie became stuck. Valiantly, Shaun went to rescue his fiancée but stumbled backwards into a sinking 'mud hole', slipping deeper and deeper in.

With no signal on their phones, Julie ran to a Rangers station to find help, while fellow walkers stayed with Shaun, who is six foot five and weighs in at 21-stone.

He later described feeling on the cusp of hypothermia by the time Edale team members had hauled him out.

'I was completely lodged in. When one of the rescue workers started using a spade to help dig me out I could feel it but couldn't do anything about it. When I was pulled out I remember my legs shaking and this incredible burst of adrenaline.'

Low water levels had exposed the remains of Derwent, an abandoned WWII village, attracting more sightseers to the reservoir than usual. A spokesman for the team said they were 'able to access the casualty with a variety of specialist equipment designed to spread an individual's weight over a muddy surface. After about 30 minutes' digging we were able to free the gentleman and walk him back to solid ground.'

They urged visitors to pay heed to the warnings. 'Some of the surface looks like rice pudding with skin on. It may look solid but it's not. We invite visitors to come and see the ruins but advise them to stick to the shore.'

Photo: Glorious mud © Edale MRT.



NOVEMBER: HAIRY HANDS, PILLOW MOUNDS AND PARLIAMENTS AT LARGE ON DARTMOOR...

Photo: © DSRT Ashburton.

Dartmoor Ashburton hosted their third sell-out Dartmoor in the Dark guided walk in November, leading five groups of walkers on a suitably spooky walk with tales told at designated stops along the way.

Walkers travelled just over three miles, from the Two Bridges Hotel, with stops at Crockern Tor, Littaford Tor and Wistman's Wood, ending the evening with a pub supper. The weather was clear, albeit slightly windy, with plenty of opportunities to see the stars. Dartmoor in the Dark engages team members and public in fundraising, training and a spot of fun, all at the same time. Surely a win-win situation?

'Most of our training and call-outs occur after dark,' says fundraising officer, Ashley Rubens, 'so we take walking on the moor in the dark very much for granted. We forget that, for a lot of people, it is quite daunting, so Dartmoor in the Dark is for those people, helping them experience Dartmoor's unique beauty at night. We heard great feedback from our guests and we're grateful to our volunteers for their enthusiasm in making sure our guests enjoyed the evening. The money raised will go towards upgrading our radio equipment to the new digital standard'.

While searching farmland, for a 72-year-old lady reported missing earlier in the day, Derby team members met a local farmer out checking cattle on his tractor.

Seeing that the tractor was equipped with powerful, bright scene lights, team members asked the farmer if he'd mind searching the boundary of the field they were about to search and he was happy to oblige. Two minutes later, the calm of the night was shattered by the tractor's horn. He'd found her! The lady was assessed and treated for hypothermia, then transferred to an East Midlands ambulance for onward transfer to hospital.

Photo: © Derby MRT.

OCTOBER: NIGHT SEARCH BY TRACTOR



Photo: © Tina Page.

You can follow Tina's adventures on her adventurehobo.blog

DECEMBER: TINA TAKES ON A VIRTUAL EVEREST IN LATEST FUNDRAISING ADVENTURE

We've featured mega mountain rescue fundraiser Tina Page before, 'running the summits' in aid of Mountain Rescue England and Wales and Mountain Rescue Search Dogs England. But December saw her taking a break from tackling the outdoors to climb some virtual mountains in the 'comfort' of a Blackpool gym.



TEAM TALK AUTUMN

NOVEMBER: WEEKLY CLUB ENRICHES LIFE FOR A NEW GENERATION

As well as saving lives, Upper Wharfedale team members also enrich young lives by way of their Outdoors Club. Set up sixteen years ago, the weekly club gives local Dales youngsters between the ages of ten to adult the opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors through climbing, abseiling, caving, trekking, camping and first aid. You name it they do it!

Photo: Some of the youngsters from the UWFRA Outdoors Club © Iain Geldard.

Run by team members with support from some of the parents, it's a huge success with over 150 youngsters having benefited over the years. Some have even gone on to become team members like current surface leader Matt Richardson and assistant surface leader Aly Brook, and also Scott Haslim, who not only went on to forge a career as an outdoors instructor but came back to the Outdoors Club as an adult instructor.

'I joined the club aged fourteen,' says Scott. 'From the very first activity, a weekend meet in the Lake District, I was amazed at what was going on — multi-pitch climbing up rock walls hundreds of feet tall — it was unlike anything I'd experienced before. Truly exhilarating. Prior to this, I'd been just a typical teenager but with the club, my weekly activities included caving, mountain biking, climbing, even simulated rescues. It gave me experiences and teaching skills that are just not available anywhere else. I achieved such a lot, thanks to UWFRA's Outdoor Club and its inspirational leaders.'

Founder leader and team member Mark Rowley is full of praise for the youngsters. 'They are super kids and up for anything. Such is their focus and enjoyment we decided to introduce a logbook scheme for recording individual progress in learning the skills necessary for taking part and we've a graded list of some of the climbs and caves where they have to reach one of the levels to take part. It really works well.'

'The logbooks are similar to those used by the Mountain Leadership Board as well as the local Cave and Rescue Leaders Scheme. Level three is an extremely high level and may take several years but would benefit someone wishing to make a career in outdoor pursuits or joining the National Instructor Scheme or indeed becoming a full member of a rescue team. Many of the youngsters are thrilled to reach the lower levels — what really matters is that we all just get out there and enjoy ourselves.'

The club currently has 30 members. It costs £30 a year to join, mainly to cover the insurance costs. UWFRA paid to set up the club with equipment and team members were more than pleased when North Yorkshire Police recognised their work with some funding available from the sale of items from recovered crime.

SEPTEMBER: WOODHEAD MEMBERS LAUNCH APPEAL TO REPLACE 4-YEAR-OLD'S STOLEN BICYCLE

A Woodhead team training event in Penistone gave onlookers a rare chance to see the team in action, up-close in their community. Sadly, during the hustle and bustle, thieves made off with a bicycle belonging to a 4-year-old boy who'd been cycling the Trans Pennine Trail with his mother before stopping to watch the team.

When team members heard the news, they volunteered to contribute to the purchase of a replacement and also issued an appeal through social media to gather funds. As the stolen bicycle had originally been sourced from local organisation Cycle Penistone CIC, the family preferred that team members not be left out of pocket. But, thanks to the appeal, several bicycles were offered as donations by members of the community. The youngster was able to choose a colourful, character-themed replacement, which he and his family were grateful to receive.



Photo: © Woodhead MRT.

'The idea was to get people who might not have easy access to the hills involved in challenging themselves by having a go at climbing the equivalent of a mountain indoors, on their favourite piece of gym equipment. As an outdoor fanatic, it's not often I choose to work out in a gym, but they are popular places for many people wanting to fit exercising around the demands of daily life. So, despite being technically rest days, I decided to get involved and have a go at my own virtual mountain, choosing the biggest of all for my summit attempt: Everest!

'This involved over twelve hours on an elevated treadmill, to gain the height required to reach the summit, and covered over 64km of distance — the

biggest elevation gain I have ever made in one day! It didn't count towards my Running the Summits 1000 Mountains challenge, but at least I didn't have to run back down again!

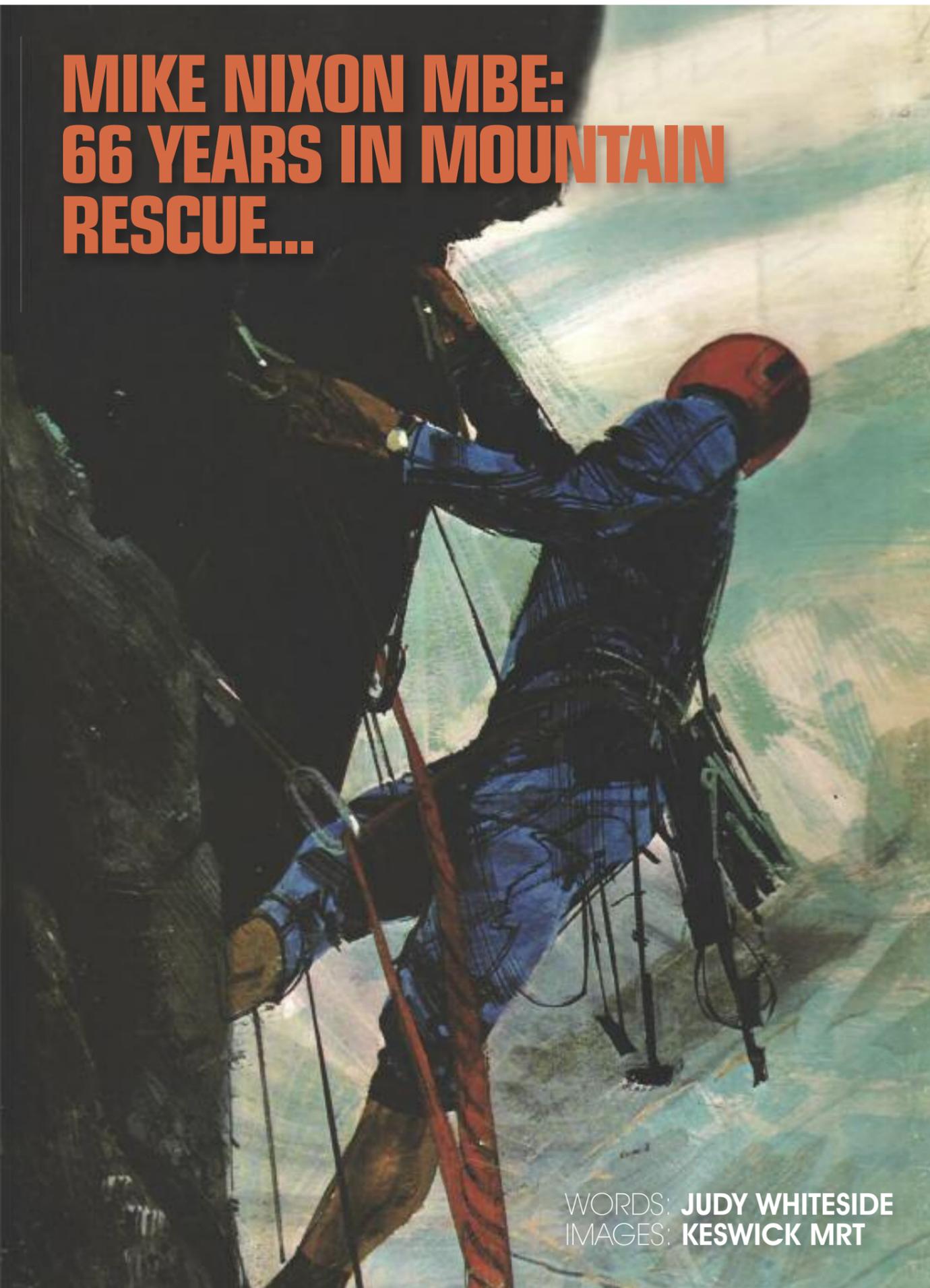
'There were mountains for all levels of ability, from the virtual Pendle Hill up to a virtual Ben Nevis, the highest UK summit. Some determined attempts were undertaken to climb Ben Nevis on the Stairmaster, arguably the toughest way to complete the challenge — a whopping 369 floors — for which was set a very impressive 54 minute 47 second record. Certainly not something I could match!

The event proved another successful fundraiser for Tina's Running the Summits causes and she was

ably supported in her efforts that day by some of the England dog handlers and their search dogs who went along to get involved and talk about their work. A fundraising raffle was well supported by outdoor businesses and local venues who donated some cracking prizes and after a great weekend of mountain madness and plenty of flapjack, a total of £725.31 had been raised.

'I am hugely grateful to everyone who supported, came along to watch or got involved in this event and hope to take it to other venues in the future. Keep an eye out for a Virtual Mountain Challenge Event near you! I promise, it's not as tough as it sounds.'

MIKE NIXON MBE: 66 YEARS IN MOUNTAIN RESCUE...



WORDS: JUDY WHITESIDE
IMAGES: KESWICK MRT

OBITUARY



In early November, family, friends, Keswick team members and colleagues from the wider rescue family, gathered to pay their respects to one of the longest-serving team members in England and Wales. With his wife Val, Mike Nixon served alongside the indomitable Rusty Westmorland and his successor George Fisher, helping shape mountain rescue locally, regionally and nationally and earning himself a place in the history books. This article first appeared, in slightly longer form, shortly after Mike achieved his sixty year Long Service Award, in 2012.

It was a beautifully sunny Lake District morning, when I met Mike, and his wife Val. Clear blue sky over the mountains but still a chill in the air, a sense that spring lurked somewhere round the next bend in the road.

It turned out — as we bonded over tea and shortbread — that they were a little anxious about the interview. As it happened, so was I. It's not every day you get to meet a couple who'd been around in mountain rescue for such a very long time but, in no time at all, we were meandering back and forth through sixty eventful years.

Mike joined the Keswick team in 1952, a year after its title change from the Borrowdale Mountain Rescue Team, and it was something of a baptism of fire, with his first official call-out on Christmas night that year.

'My landlady knocked on the door: It's mountain rescue for you. Two young men missing on Great End. It appeared they'd traversed off and were trying to abseil down. They were wearing smooth-soled shoes and it was thick snow. There were four of them climbing in two ropes of two. The top two shouted down, thinking the other two were still coming up but there was no response, so they went back to their digs in Borrowdale, assuming their companions had already done so. When there was no sign of them there either, they called the team.

'A small party of ten team members went ahead and found the two bodies lying at the bottom. The rope was beside them but not tied to them. The rest of us set off down the Borrowdale valley in the back of a pick-up truck, then flogged up the hill with a police inspector — he had to see the bodies.

'We had to unbend them to get them on the stretcher, they'd frozen so hard. It was pretty gruesome.

'I remember driving back into the market square in Keswick,

9.00am Boxing Day morning, the bodies covered in sheets. The Blencathra Hunt was just setting off as we arrived.

'It was tough for a first call. We were all pretty raw and young. But we all have them, the gruesome rescues, we just get on with it. We're not callous. We're just climbers — we go rescue other climbers and we like to think, if we fell off, similar people would come rescue us.'

In those early days, teams were fiercely male. Even George Fisher, team leader from 1956 to 1981 — a period many would consider the most 'liberating' for women in general — 'wouldn't have girls on the call-out list', said Mike, quickly making clear this is no longer the case.

There's a lovely shot in 'Call Out', the George Bott book which details Keswick's first fifty years. Rusty Westmorland stands hands in pockets, every inch the army captain and 'in festive mood' as the caption has it (although how you would know that is unclear). He is clearly delivering some sort of speech as Val sits, diminutive, next to him. 'Val Nixon listens attentively', continues the caption. And doubtless she did, although she was far from shrinking violet, more essential cog in the wheel.

In fact, both active members of the Keswick Mountaineering Club, Mike and Val joined the team together. Val became team secretary, only resigning the post when she fell pregnant in 1963. She was also the first secretary of the Lake District Accident Panel (now LDSAMRA) from the mid-1950s.

'We must praise our wives,' said Mike, firmly. 'They have to put up with a lot.' It was a sentiment he repeated often.

Val recalls how mountain rescue, despite the lack of mobile phones and pagers, had a way of invading every possible social occasion. There really

was no hiding place. 'We'd be in the cinema in Keswick and up would pop a notice on the screen: 'Call out!' There'd be a rustle of seats and people would leave.

'Often, they'd drive round the town in the team vehicle, sounding the horn. Lots of the lads didn't even have a telephone so we had a buddy system. And you weren't allowed to join in the first place unless you lived within a certain area.'

Rusty Westmorland, by all accounts, was fiercely autocratic. I was keen to hear what it was like being part of the team under him but Mike couldn't recall Rusty ever going out on a call-out — although there's another image in 'Call Out' of a steep stretcher lower with Rusty as the barrow-boy, apparently on a training day on Kern Knotts and clearly recognisable by his jaunty Austrian hat.

authoritarian,' said Mike. At the AGM in 1950, he proposed that the team leader be designated 'Captain', a suggestion which didn't go down well. It was quietly abandoned. But this was two years before Mike and Val joined the team, so perhaps Rusty had, indeed, become a pussycat. Whatever, I am unable to draw anything from them other than the fact he was a 'nice bloke'. I gather too he was not unpopular with the ladies.

But back to Mike and Val. Born in July 1928 — so 90 this year — Mike began life in Malaya where his father managed a rubber estate in Batu Caves, seven miles north of the capital city Kuala Lumpur. It's a famous spot, a sacred place for the Hindus in Malaysia. The three main caves and a number of smaller ones, made of limestone, were discovered in 1892 and are the focus for the



So was he as tough as the history books tell? Legend has it he was ever the ex-soldier, smartly dressed, boots polished, neatly trimmed mountain moustache. That Austrian hat. George Bott has him as 'executive head' of the team for 27 years.

'He could be autocratic and

annual Thaipusam festival, celebrating Subramaniam, the son of Shiva.

The sacred nature of the place proved scant protection to its British inhabitants, come the Second World War, however. Thanks to the intervention of the Japanese and the Fall of Singapore, family life as he

Opposite page: Back cover of the George Fisher catalogue, some time in the 1970s. Top: Mike and Val at Mike's surprise 60th celebration. Above: Left to right: Rusty Westmorland, Mike Nixon, Gunther Franz, Des Oliver, George Fisher, Dick Fisher, George Withington, Fred Bantock and Bobby Kelly.



knew it came to an end when eight-year-old Mike found himself bundled back 'home' to England to stay with two aunts. His parents were later captured by the invading army and sent to Changi Prison where they remained for the duration of the war. The Japanese detained about 3,000 civilians in Changi — intended to house only 600 prisoners — and as many as 50,000 Allied soldiers at Selarang Barracks, close by the prison, in the most inhumane circumstances imaginable. Many died. The end of the war was timely for his parents — any longer, believed Mike, and they would not have survived. His father emerged a very poorly man. Returning to England, he found it hard to settle back into English life but, ultimately, Mike's father stayed in England, and his mother took out citizenship and stayed in Malaya.

The aunts — 'two splendid women' — lived in Brampton and provided a happy home for their young ward. Mike attended Lime House and St Bees, and it was here he started climbing on the likes of Pillar. That and 'chasing girls from the girls school in Seascale' although, he said, he never managed to catch them!

He went up his first hill — Great Gable — aged ten, with one of the masters at Lime House, who took Mike and three other boys off for a week in the hills.

Despite a long life spent in deepest Cumbria, the Nixon family were actually a Border Reiver tribe and his father a Yorkshireman. Val, too has Yorkshire blood, on her father's side. Born in Patley Bridge, the family moved back to Keswick, to her grandfather's home (the house in which Mike and Val still lived), when her mother set up a business in the town. Val and her elder sister also worked in the business.

Val's love of the mountains was no less strong than her husband's. When I met them, she was undertaking her third round of Wainwright's, since she was 65, and planned to top her final one — most likely Wetherlam — by her eightieth birthday that July.

There followed a brief discussion about the merits of 'doing them properly' (ie. filling in the logbook), and it turned out Val is also a 'Compleatist', topping out her last Munro three years before. Mike too had bagged all 282 Munros.

Significantly, they undertook

every challenge as a couple. Since first meeting, they climbed and walked together. Although Mike had done more climbing, his experience was mainly in the UK with little interest in bagging foreign peaks. Just after the war, he travelled to Norway and then to Switzerland, with the KMC. 'We were meant to climb the Matterhorn, but it snowed heavily so we didn't'. And that was that.

One memorable trip, in 1951, saw Mike climbing Tower Ridge on Ben Nevis, in late winter conditions, with Gunther Franz, Pip Richardson and Des Oliver. On 31 May, 2008 he did it again 'in absolutely perfect conditions' and accompanied by twelve members of the Keswick team, this time to celebrate his eightieth birthday.

Mark Hodgson, Val's nephew and then team leader, later explained. 'We left the North Face car park, to ascend via the Allt a'Mhuilinn to the CIV hut then split into two, with fourteen climbers continuing to the ridge whilst another twelve family members [including Val], friends and non-climbers walked up the zigzags to the summit.

'Climbing in groups of two or three — in t-shirts all the way — it took five hours to summit, with regular refreshment stops.'

By the time the climbers reached the Eastern Traverse, the non-climbing group were on the summit, watching progress through binoculars and someone on the summit was banging a very large drum.

Back in the valley, the birthday celebrations continued into the wee small hours of the morning. Mike's appreciation of Guinness was legendary.

Incidentally, it later became clear — when I was frantically taking notes at a surprise celebration at Derwent Hill Outdoor Centre in Portinscale — that Mike hugely underplayed his climbing achievements.

Roy Henderson recalled his own first rescue with the team, as a young nineteen-year-old, on Sharp Edge. 'There were more team members up there than harnesses so Mike made sure everyone was okay then launched off the edge using only his rope — arms outstretched in a classic abseil.'

I later found this technique, also called The Duffer, described in 'Rock Climbing', by Stan Wroe, published in 1979. 'This barbaric style is no longer used,' he starts, 'and a good

thing too! The climber prepares to abseil by standing astride the ropes, passing these under one thigh, across the front of his body and over the opposite shoulder. If the ropes pass over the right shoulder, they are held by the left hand behind the back and vice versa. Braking action is achieved by the friction of the rope against the climber's clothing and, when this is worn through, painfully against his skin!'

As a still-impressionable Roy discovered, some weeks later, when he attempted to emulate Mike's nonchalant ease, down Warden's Face — sustaining a sizeable rope burn on his arm which took some years to fade! Mike and Val were clearly blessed with good health and formidable stamina. Would that all their generation could be so vibrant, so alive, that we could bottle that 'Nixon energy'.

Mountain rescue runs deep in this family. Mike's birthday trip up the Ben was organised by his son, Chris, then team leader of Kintail MRT. Nearer home, Val's nephews, Mark and Simon are long-serving team members (Mark succeeding Mike as team leader in 1993).

I doubt, when the Nixons joined this still embryonic team (a mere nine call-outs a year until 1958, when it rocketed to 42), that they imagined for one moment they'd be key players in the history and development of mountain rescue. Just to put things into context, this was a world where post-war austerity measures were still in force and the nation mourned the death of George VI, whilst marvelling at the beauty of the young princess who became Queen whilst on safari in Kenya. Gene Kelly tap-danced his way through a downpour in a musical comedy which tells how the coming of sound upset the stars of the silent movie era. The first scheduled Comet airliner left London airport for Johannesburg with 36 passengers on board. Evita died. A freak flood roared through the Devon village of Lynemouth, taking with it more than thirty lives, including three boy scouts and the village postie. The 'worst train crash in Britain since 1915' killed 112 in a three-train pile up. The US tested the first hydrogen bomb in the Pacific. Derek Bentley was set to hang for the murder of a policeman. Oh, and thirteen-year-old Jimmy Boyd first wowed the radio waves with his

number one hit 'I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus'.

It would be another seven years before 'teenagers' were invented, thanks to the Teddy Boys and Cliff Richard, eight years before JFK became president, eleven until his untimely death. The world had yet to discover the Beatles, the summit of Everest, space travel, miners' strikes, the contraceptive pill, colour television, mobile phones, Steve Jobs, the internet, GPS tracking and search and rescue dogs.

No, far from setting out to make history, Mike and Val were simply doing what they loved, but what a different world it was. Equipment was meagre and inadequate. Team members relied on their own ropes, their own 'waterproof' clothing, their own rucksacks and torches. Once they had sped to the police station, on foot or by bike, a sophisticated range of transport options included Dixon's laundry van, Young's lorry, the Motor Company's pick up truck and an ex-London cab. In 'Call Out', Des Oliver describes the dire journeys undertaken in this vehicle, which had faulty gears. 'One member of the team would sit on the luggage platform, with a stone ready to be jammed under a wheel if the gear jumped out. The driver, usually George Fisher, would give a shout of 'Bale out!' and the rest of the passengers were out of the back of the taxi in seconds.'

Jim Coyle and Mike became pals in the late-1950s. 'We started the dogs together. Hamish [MacInnes] sent one down from Glencoe for me. Then Mike got Ling. We trained them with Spam [tinned meat] — pretty much frowned upon, but it worked for us! We called them the 'Spam dogs'.

'One day, we were on a winter dog training weekend in Thirlspot. We'd climbed up Helvellyn — I remember wading up through the deep snow. It was a white-out and we missed a cornice. A couple of the dogs went straight through. One of them turned up, without his teeth and a broken jaw, but there was no sign of Ling. Mike was heartbroken. Next day, the Patterdale lads went up from Dunmail and, amazingly, they found her, still okay.'

Mike did about ten years as a dog handler with Ling, retiring her at thirteen. He remembers one successful find. 'A young couple had gone to

ground, we originally thought on Great End but it turned out to be Eel Crag. We searched all through the week — team members and others — but found nothing.

'The following weekend, we were going along the plateau when Ling started digging in deep snow, her tail in the air. Dug up a rucksack. So we started to dig down and there was the body. I always claimed there was a sandwich in that rucksack!'

Mike succeeded George Fisher as leader in 1981 and continued in the post for twelve years. On the way, he'd acted as the team's first transport officer and then quartermaster and deputy leader, although he admits he was never one for committee meetings, preferring to be at the sharp end. Despite describing himself as an 'interim team leader, until someone else came through', he certainly made his mark. To say that he was held in high regard is an understatement.

Long-standing team member and fellow dog handler, Ian Wallace, summed it up perfectly: 'You'd follow the guy anywhere, he gave you such a good feeling. Awesome man.'

'He rarely said anything as team leader,' adds Roy Henderson. 'But when he did, everyone stopped and did exactly as he said. That style of leadership is a rare talent.'

Mike was 'a really daunting bloke to take over from,' says Mark. 'Never any fuss. Just quiet encouragement. Gave people the authority to make decisions.'

Simon recalls being on call-outs as deputy, glancing across at Mike to see whether he approved of decisions made. A simple nod or shake of the head would suffice.

Under his gentle yet firm leadership, the team developed and thrived, undaunted by a fast-changing world. After standing down as leader he continued his quiet guidance and sound counsel as president of both the team and the region.

His most memorable, most difficult rescue was New Year's Eve 2000, when two walkers got stuck on Skiddaw. As they climbed, conditions had grown worse until there was a gale force wind blowing and visibility was very poor.

'We were being blown off our feet on the way up and had to crawl over the top. We found the two men and literally had to

rugby scrum them down. I think they were the worst conditions I've ever been in.'

He recalled another one, in the mid-1970s, on Esk Hawes, with Ian Wallace and his dog. They stayed out all day and night, and half the following day in a howling gale — screaming at each other inside their bivvi bags to make themselves heard. In the event, the couple were found dead, sitting with their rucksacks full of gear on top of Scafell Pike.

Things had changed 'beyond recognition' during Mike's lifetime but 'the people, the commitment, the reason for doing it, the love of the hills, the challenge — especially on a foul night — the kick you get out of helping people', they remain the same.

Val reminded me how much things have changed for women in the team. In her time as secretary, she wasn't 'allowed to have an opinion — just wrote down what the men said.' Only later did she realise how unfair that was because she was a 'mountain person' too.

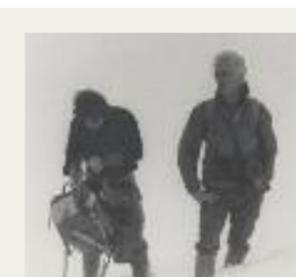
Mountain rescue aside, I'd heard rumours of Mike's 'modelling career' and off Val went to find the evidence — page after page of 1970s black and white Mikes: Mike in 'Greenland' anorak, Mike in 'Greenland' parka, Mike in oiled Egyptian cotton, Mike in 'wet look garment', Mike in 'famous Norwegian fisherman's sweater', Mike in 'Fisher hire line'...

Mike worked for 27 years at Fishers, and was roped in to all sorts of unpaid photo shoots during that time.

His love of vintage cars, he reckons, was the reason 'they put me in charge of transport!' His Morgan three-wheeler broke down going over the top to Glen Brittle so he left it there at the side of the road and went climbing for a week. 'I got back to find all the leather bits had been chewed. Whilst I was stood looking at it, the library van went past. 'Cows ate it,' said the man.

'Had a couple of Alvis 1250s too, and a three-litre Bentley — but I had to sell that for £250, to get married, dammit! Should've kept it!' he added, glancing at Val with a twinkle in his eye.

In 1993, Mike was awarded the MBE and he held Distinguished Service Awards from both MREW and LDSAMRA. He received the first ever MREW Long Service Award for fifty years —



Top: Chris Nixon, Mike Nixon and Simon Hodgson at the summit of Ben Nevis during Mike's 80th birthday trip; Above: Modelling for George Fisher, 1970s; Ian Wallace and Mike in the snow; Mike on the hill, helping take care of the casualty.

necessitating the creation of a new award, over and above those for 25 and 40 years — and that year he raised the bar yet again with a '60 years' certificate, awarded at the team dinner by David Allan, then MREW chairman.

According to the team's website, since 1946, the Keswick team has carried out 3667 rescues. It's safe to say Mike had attended well in excess of 2500 of those — and continued to do so well into his eighties, with the fitness and stamina of a far younger man. The likes of Mike might never be seen again in our mountain rescue service.

'His commitment and selfless sacrifice in the pursuit of those in distress on the Lake District fells has been an inspiration to all those who have worked with him,' ran the citation for Mike's

sixtieth award. 'He seems to have a sixth sense, an empathy with the feelings and needs of casualties and team members, making him a guardian angel for us all.'

'Mike's phenomenal contribution continues to be an inspiration and model to many current and aspiring mountain rescue team members. We are truly indebted to Mike and the unstinting support of his wife, Val, without whom we would simply never have become the team we are today.'

There's no doubt Mike helped shape not just the Keswick team but all the teams around him and much of that rubbed off nationally too. Truly remarkable. As Paul Cheshire so succinctly put it, at the surprise 80th birthday bash, 'In summary, Mike was a legend.' 🐾

#itsoktotalk



ANDY ELWOOD
CHATS ABOUT
MENTAL HEALTH,
LANDIES AND
STAYING WONKY

The most difficult experiences in life are those we have no control over. This year, I had four months off work due to burnout and, after a lot of thought, I've chosen to leave the best job I ever had – responsible for the northern half of UKSAR Paramedic Medical Governance – and restructured my working life so I can be happier and do what I want with the rest of my life.

And key to this is my 1973 Series III Land Rover...

I bought my Landie for three reasons: To remind me of good times with my dad, as a project to keep my mind active and healthy and, perhaps most significantly, to help deal with my Afghanistan flashback.

I wrote about this in the Spring 2018 issue (and you can watch a short video about it at tinyurl.com/yag9ujlz). I'd been treating a patient who was trapped in a Land Rover after an IED exploded and it affected me badly. I've always believed in 'getting back on the horse' and I needed to ensure I was over the flashback. By caring for my Land Rover, using it often and making it one of my pleasures in life, I don't dwell on one of my most frightening experiences. This puts me in the driving seat, looking forward, not back to something I cannot change.

I've always loved the iconic British brand and I bought my Series III via a friend in the Edale team about 18 months ago. I'd quite a bit of work to prepare her for MOT, but that's what it was all about. This Landie is a project, a purpose, not just a distraction. She's good for me today, and tomorrow and next week. I can have quiet time alone with her, get out and about in her and use her to meet other people. There's a sense of purpose in the maintenance, repair and improvement, and achievement as I drive down the road with another 'wee job' done.

She was high and dry for a bit, whilst I renewed brakes and suspension parts and I got professional help to finish off the brake pipes and make her fully roadworthy again. It's OK to ask for help sometimes, especially when you've too much on your plate. This has been a massive lesson for me over the last year and I recommend it. And this applies to your personal life and wellbeing too!

My first ever car was a 1974 MG Midget. My dad helped with the maintenance. We talked as we drove places, bonding over classic cars. He did navigation rallies in two VW Beetles and I too got the motorsport bug, with some auto-testing events in the Midget. The soft MG gearbox soon wore out (no synchromesh on first and reverse gears) – the most major job we'd tackled. Taking it apart wasn't too difficult, but Dad definitely thought I'd bitten off more than I could chew when it came to putting it all back together. Only then did it come out he'd never done anything quite this involved before! There I was

thinking he was taking a back seat just to give me the experience! But we got there together in the end, thanks to Haynes, time and a little extra help. Sourcing a replacement gearbox wasn't easy though, which leads me to the best £10 I ever spent...

I found that a Morris Minor gearbox would fit the Midget, which was good news because one might be easier to find. And cheaper. I'm a country boy and my mother suggested I went to see one of my late grandfather's friends. He'd owned a few Morris Minors over the years. I didn't really think this would work out, but off I went like a dutiful son, fingers crossed.

A wee man about five feet tall answered the door and it wasn't long before he grabbed his flat cap and we were walking up the street to where he kept his Morris Minors.

'So, you're Archie's grandson then?' he said, as we slowly walked. As we reached the field where he kept his chickens, I realised a Morris Minor was being used as their coop!

'What a waste of time,' I thought. 'Where will I find a gearbox now?'

He opened the bonnet. No engine. No gearbox. Relieved, because any gearbox in this car would surely be in a poor state, I just wanted to get away but, undeterred, old Jim walked round to the rear of the car and opened the boot. And there it was: a gearbox! And looking in good nick! I didn't need a single spanner or WD40, and didn't even get my hands dirty taking it out of the car. I couldn't believe it, nor that he only wanted £10 for it. I didn't ask twice, checked it wasn't seized, paid the tenner and hot-footed it out of there. Mum knew best, after all!

I used that gearbox for quite a few years until I upgraded to a 5-speed Toyota box with a conversion plate, but that's another story.

Anyway, Dad and I did more and more together on old cars. Our best weekend together was competing in the 40th anniversary of the Mini Rally in my tatty Mini Clubman, which had various Cooper S bits and an MG Metro 1275 engine installed from the scrapyard. We had a complete hoot and won the team event with two other cars. Winning a ferry ticket to England in the rally raffle led to another classic car adventure and our one and only camping trip together.

Good times indeed and the Landie helps me think of many great memories I shared with him. I miss



Then and now: Rallying with Dad in my tatty old Mini Clubman with its Cooper S bits, on active service with the Land Rover in Lesotho and, now, taking it easier thanks to 'Andy's Landie' © Andy Elwood.

him a lot. His death, over two years ago, hit me harder than I thought, not immediately after his death, but quite a bit down the line. This can be the case for many men and shouldn't be underestimated.

But let's get back to Land Rovers. I've driven a few over the years – during my RAF service, with mountain rescue, in Lesotho and with MERT Afghanistan, the Lossiemouth Line vehicle and the trusted SAR crew vehicle on the Falkland Islands – but this is the first I've owned. I live in rural Derbyshire and she fits in perfectly, especially when we have snow, as our road is neither gritted or ploughed. She also does runs to the tip, carting away a lot of hardcore from our cottage refurbishment through this year.

I wanted an old Landie, because I thought it would be simple enough with my limited engineering knowledge and mechanical understanding. She's simple and very agricultural, despite new deluxe seats and a cubby box (home comforts in the front more than doubled), and wonderful precisely because she doesn't try to be anything else – advice I've taken on for my own life. I can just 'be myself' and at last I'm feeling comfortable in my own skin. Stay wonky folks!

She's broken down a couple of times away from home and failed to start, which is mega frustrating, especially when fully loaded with garden waste (which was almost rotted down by the time she got back on the road!)

I now have a machine which runs better and more reliably. She still has foibles and a long 'to do' list but I think of her like the older helicopters I've flown in: 'If it's leaking, there's oil in there!' She's a bit like me (and almost as old): the body work's a bit rough and certainly not pristine, but there's a good few years left in her yet. With care and attention, she'll keep on running.

There's no better feeling driving down the road having done some maintenance and it brings a smile to my face when I meet a 'fellow sufferer' (as I've learned many owners describe themselves). On a good day, I stick my elbow out the window and I'm not in a rush to get anywhere. If I'm holding up other vehicles, I pull over and let them speed on, travel at my own pace and get there in my own time, often taking the scenic route. My days of rushing everywhere and always having a million other things to do are over and I feel so much better for it. I've got time to enjoy life again. I simply needed to

review what was important to me and reset my priorities in life.

I'm aiming to use my Landie to help others by travelling around. Many men, especially emergency services personnel, have a fondness for Land Rovers, so she breaks down barriers straight away. Many of us have fantastic memories of good times with our team, glad to get back to the Land Rover after a long day on the hill, soaked through, cold, tired and hungry. Even the pathetic excuse for a heater has been so welcome.

Why not get in touch to meet and chat?

Get in touch if you'd like me to travel to your base, maybe do a wee job on the Landie with me and talk a bit about how you are, how you're feeling and what's going on for you in life and with your team. My idea is to have some fun together and promote a positive culture of wellbeing in the emergency services, where #itsoktotalk about emotions and mental health.

After being instrumental in the formation of the UKSAR Wellbeing National Steering Group, I also sit on the National Paramedic Mental Health

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SOME USEFUL ADVICE THIS WINTER FROM INTEGRO – YOUR BROKER OF CHOICE

With winter just around the corner, driving in poor weather such as snow and ice can cause issues for motorists every year. The team 4x4 vehicles will be in demand for all manner of emergencies and both driver and vehicle need to be prepared.

Looking back over twelve months, team vehicles have been deployed for significant periods of time supporting the community and the emergency services, so it's important they have been correctly maintained and carry appropriate equipment and supplies. Linking in with the successful **#AdventureSmart Wales** campaign and their strapline **#WhatsinyourBag**, it's time to start thinking **#WhatsinyourCar** or **#Whatsinyourvehicle?**

Winterize your car

Get your vehicle a full service before winter sets in. If you are unable to do this, please carry out the following checks:

- Lights are clean and working
- Alternator checked and battery is fully charged
- Windscreen wiper blades are clean
- Windows are clean
- The washer bottle is filled with screen wash, to the correct concentration to prevent it freezing
- Tyre condition — tread depth and pressure of all tyres, including the spare
- Brakes are serviced and working well
- Engine serviced — check diesel cam belts, stripped teeth on cam belt can cause engine damage
- Antifreeze and oil – keep them topped up

If you must travel in bad conditions:

- Tell others where you are going and the time you expect to arrive
- Deploy team vehicles in pairs
- Plan alternative routes in case your main choice(s) become impassable
- Keep the fuel tank near to full to ensure you don't run out
- Team vehicles could have tow ropes pre-fitted ready to deploy

Emergency kit

Keep an emergency kit for extreme weather in your car, here's a list of things you may want to keep to hand:

- shovel
- torch
- ice scraper and de-icer
- warm clothes and blankets for you and any passengers
- first-aid kit
- jump-start cables
- snacks and a warm drink in a thermos
- mobile phone charger

IF YOU WANT ANY FURTHER INFORMATION OR HAVE ANY QUESTIONS PLEASE EMAIL US AT INSURANCE@MOUNTAIN.RESCUE.ORG.UK



and Wellbeing Steering Group for the College of Paramedics and I'll qualify as a Mental Health First Aid instructor next year.

I supported **#CallingOutTheMen** in 2018, focusing on men's mental health and specifically that it was OK for men to show emotion, to 'Feel Better — Do Better'. The response was so positive, a pilot programme of all-male 'Calling Out The Men' launches in January. It's essentially a corporate performance and coaching programme, but I'm proud to say we will be providing free online courses to male veterans and men in the 999 services. Check the details at callingoutthemen.com.

During Movember, I posted videos relating to my experiences in SAR and my personal life. You can view these on Twitter [@AndyElwood](https://twitter.com/AndyElwood) and at AndyElwood.com.

My favourite day was the inaugural **#MenDoLunchDay** on 14 November when I hosted a lunch in Covent Garden with an open invite through social media for men to come and talk about how they were feeling over some food. If you couldn't be in London, the idea was you should invite a man you care about out for lunch and ask him how he was doing. I asked guys to take a selfie and share with the tag **#MenDoLunchDay**. Next year, I hope to get even more folk involved.

Another idea hatched from this. My first **'Chinwag Curry Club'** podcast will be in January 2019. And who doesn't like curry? The idea is to get a few men together for a good chat over curry. We'll have some fun and discuss wellbeing, any issues going on in our lives and the coping strategies, ways forward and resources which help us. We'll aim to break down the stigma surrounding mental health in the 999 services and demonstrate that it's OK for men to talk about their emotions.

If you'd like to get involved, please

get in touch. I'm happy to travel around the country, maybe even in the Landie, if it's not too far! I'll be writing regularly here and I'd love to feature any special initiatives you have within your team, or local success stories which we can all learn from.

Summing up:
here's what I've
learned this year...

I do better when I have a balance of the following in my life: sleep, diet and exercise, quality time (both alone and with others) and purpose. Organising my life to include these elements in balance leaves more capacity in my stress bucket for the other major life stressors, which are outside my control.

Take a look at my video, to see some of the lessons I've learned: tinyurl.com/ybnaz9yj or search YouTube for 'Andy's Story'.

I realised it was essential for me to know what really was important to me and where my boundaries were. I became comfortable putting myself first, which made a lot of decisions easier and, you know what, the people who I really cared about and who really cared about me were OK with that. They only had love and support for me. I've learned this is usually the case for other guys in similar circumstances.

I have never felt better, because I am open about my feelings. Sharing this has made me feel strong again and helped me find the purpose for the rest of my life.

I believe I'll save more lives supporting others through wellbeing and mental health campaigning, than I would dangling under a SAR helicopter. Thank you for reading my first blog. I'd love to hear from you, especially if you'd like to be involved with some of the ideas mentioned.

And don't forget: stay wonky! ☺



NEW ISPO GOLD AWARD WINNING MEN'S VELEZ EVOLUTION: £330 RRP

A directional waterproof jacket with adaptable temperature control, for outdoor enthusiasts and professionals in higher altitudes or latitudes, the Velez Evolution combines two full-length two-way zips and forward-facing arm vents to keep your temperature regulated with carefully designed articulation to provide ease of movement throughout all conditions.

The unique Nikwax Analogy® waterproof system is ready for all weathers, managing condensation better than any membrane by actively moving liquid water away from the wearer, providing maximum versatility with minimum garment changes.

The Velez Evolution has extensive, innovative ventilation, helmet-compatible hood and internal back reinforcement for use with a large pack and an articulated fit.

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STAY WARM THIS WINTER WITH NIKWAX

The key to staying warm in the mountains, is to stay dry. Being wet increases the rate of evaporation of sweat or rain water from your skin, resulting in an uncomfortable chill factor. Mountain rescue volunteers understand this problem acutely. You're trained to prevent exposure and hypothermia. Base layers sit next to your skin and therefore your sweat reaches them first. If you wash your base layers in normal detergent you can impair their wicking properties, causing the fabric to retain moisture.

Nikwax BaseFresh is a wash-in conditioner that speeds up drying time by up to 90% and increases wicking properties by more than 30 times.

Down is an insulation favoured by many mountaineers for its warmth to weight ratio. But as soon as it gets wet it clumps together, causing it to lose its loft. Nikwax Down Wash Direct revitalises its Durable Water Repellency, whilst maintaining breathability.

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We can't promise to make you bionic but we'll do our best...

Judy Whiteside looks back over five years of the Rescue Benevolent Fund

Just before the national meeting in November an intriguing email landed, from Miller Harris of the Lochaber team, representing Mountain Rescue Support Scotland Ltd. This newly-formed company is a benevolent fund, set up by the four independent mountain rescue teams in Scotland, and all of us (as mountain rescue teams in England and Wales – and indeed the rest of Scotland) are invited to 'become members'.

The response on behalf of MREW, by chairman of the trustees, Peter Dymond, was to thank Miller for his email and assure him that the membership would be informed 'but of course, it will be up to individuals as to whether they join the fund and I'm sure you will be aware that MREW has its own Benevolent Fund'.

So, first things first, here we are. Informing you. Individual teams may indeed decide to join the Scottish company (if you wish to do this, I suggest you contact Miller directly) but the ensuing discussions between various trustees of both MREW and the Rescue Benevolent Fund gave pause for thought: maybe it's worth reminding people that our now five-year-old charity (no longer 'fledgling') is very much alive and well and still in business if you need us?

But, why does mountain rescue need a benevolent fund at all?

Well, there's never a 'good time' to have an accident. And they can happen to anyone. The best prepared, the most expensively kitted-out, even the highly skilled. They even happen to people carrying maps, compasses and torches. And occasionally, they happen to team members too – in possession of all those things and a lot more besides – while they're out on a shout or undertaking training.

It might not even be a physical injury. Maybe it's a particularly harrowing incident and having a chat and a drink down the pub or cafe afterwards just isn't enough.

That's where the Rescue Benevolent Fund can come in.

If this is so vital to our wellbeing, why isn't MREW footing the bill? Why do we ask teams and other individuals to contribute?

The fund was set up by MREW, in collaboration with BCRC, and since then MREW has contributed to it

financially and both MREW and BCRC are represented on the trustee board. But it became clear from the start that to 'do things right', to protect and secure any monies donated for benevolent purposes and to ensure independent, objective assessment of any possible claims, it would need to be set up as a separate charity, with its own Deed of Trust, its own bank account and its own raft of operating procedures and policies – and free from whatever other frustrations might be exercising mountain rescue minds on any particular day! And as a separate charity we need to raise our own funds.

What have we achieved so far?

Our aim is to help alleviate hardship suffered by mountain and cave rescue team members which is a direct result of official mountain rescue activity.

The number of claims we've had is still low – not least because the nature of mountain rescuers tends towards the antithesis of a claim culture! As volunteers, you don't ask for recompense when you get called out, so it doesn't come easily to ask for help – especially financial help – if you get injured in the course of 'duty'. 'We're still a young charity', says Neil Woodhead, chairman of the fund and a Kinder team member, 'so we're still growing and learning about the sort of support team members need from us.'

'Most of our claims have been for physical rehabilitation and this is where we think the benevolent fund can be a real benefit. Many of our members are self-employed. They are already giving up potential earning time when they turn out to a rescue so if they're injured on an incident and unable to work as a result, it can result in real hardship. Our guiding principle is to get people back to work and back to mountain rescue.'

Of course, there are also insurances in place to protect team members but sometimes immediate help is needed and, if it's a physical injury, often the sooner you can begin rehabilitation

with physiotherapy, the better your prognosis for recovery.

But how can we possibly help with things like physical rehab?

By covering the costs. We have agreements in place with both The Fire Fighters' Charity and the Police Treatment Centres. All their centres are residential so, one way or another, we've got physical rehab services covered across England and Wales. We've worked with local counsellors and mountain rescue TRiM personnel to help team members who need emotional and mental health support.

We've also provided immediate financial support, both on a loan basis and non-returnable, depending on circumstances and the nature of assistance requested.

Here comes the 'bionic' bit...

Patterdale team member and Lakes dog handler David Benson knows from painful experience how easily an injury can occur and how it can impact your life. A self-employed dry stone waller, when he injured his knee on a call-out, it didn't just affect his ability to respond to mountain rescue incidents – and effectively ground his search dog. More importantly, he was unable to earn a living.

It was a Saturday in October, three years ago. He'd just returned to Patterdale base, after training with his search dog Brock, when a call came in to an incident on Helvellyn. Back up the hill he went. It was a difficult stretcher carry from Swirral Edge down to Red Tarn, then to the outfall and sledging down towards Greenside.

Having taken his turn with the carry, David carried on downhill, alongside the rest of the group but, as he walked, his knee became extremely painful.

'It was just a simple walk off with a light pack,' says David, 'but my left knee went clunk clunk to the medial side and down I went.'

His old teammates from Kirkby Stephen stretched him off the hill. 'They'd been ask to support us on the casualty carry but got me instead!'

David had suffered a sprained MCL and, supported by the Rescue Benevolent Fund, undertook a week of intensive rehab just before the Christmas break. 'I was wondering how can you do rehab all day for a week. What could they possibly do with you to fill in all that time? Well they did. I wasn't expecting it to be so holistic. Diet and nutrition were covered, men's health and relaxation. Knowledgeable people who were happy to chat and answer questions, a good bunch of folk who created a calm, positive atmosphere and wanted to make you good again. Worth getting injured for!'

We think he was joking about that last bit but then eleven months after the injury he had a go at a regular run from Kirkland to the top of Cross Fell. 'Pre-injury, I've never subbed one hour to the top, despite trying. Not that day. 59.57! I just had to send the photo (see right) to the physio team at The Fire Fighters to let them know what a good job they did with me!'

See, they made him bionic!

...and we've helped deal with emotional health issues too...

Dion and Sue Llwyd Hopcroft had an entirely different experience. Shortly before midnight, in late February 2016, the Aberglaslyn team were asked to assist in the search for a young man missing in their patch. But this search was particularly poignant because the missing 18-year-old was Josh Llwyd Hopcroft and his father, Dion, was the Aberglaslyn team leader.

Alongside Aberglaslyn were members of the South Snowdonia team and SARDA Wales search dogs, searching through the night. At first light, Dion himself went out on foot and sadly it was he who found Josh, who had taken his own life.

Hard to imagine the impact such tragic circumstances might have on any family, let alone one so involved with the entire incident, and both Dion and Sue struggled. With the team liaising with us on their behalf, we were able to support them both with separate counsellors, local to them, over the course of a year, to help them come to terms with their grief.

'It's still raw,' says Dion, 'but the counselling helped me a lot. Sue too – though hers was a different experience. I've been in MR for 21 years. I've seen horrific things and I've always been offered counselling but I've just got on and dealt with it. I wasn't sure what to do at the time but it's the best thing I ever did. Definitely helped

me move forward and we've got to the stage now where we counsel each other.

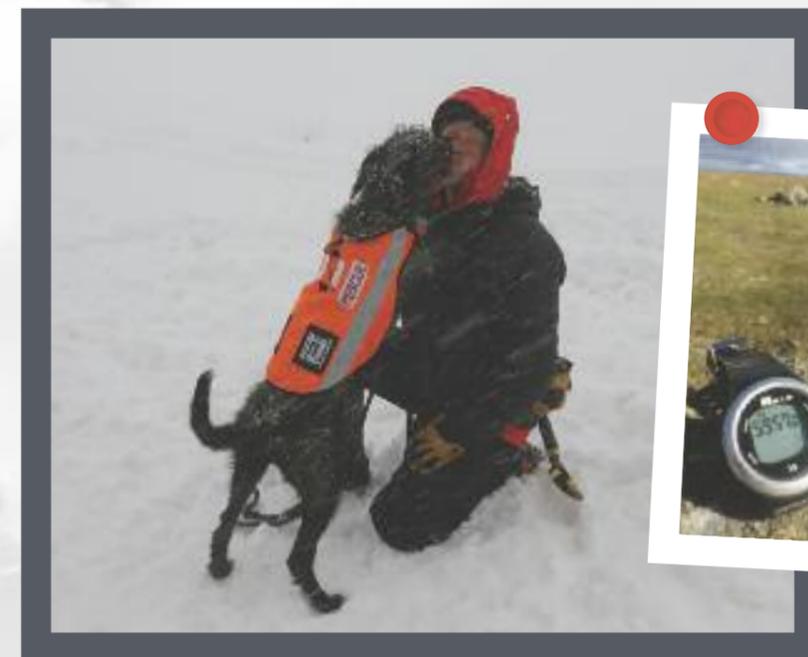
'Initially, I said this is my last call-out but Sue made me aware that Josh was so proud of me and my involvement with mountain rescue so I got back into it. It wasn't long after that I was called out to the helicopter crash in North Wales – the first team on the scene. That was pretty horrendous but I'll never see anything worse than seeing my own son that day.'

Almost three years on, Dion is able to talk about it in part because Josh's death has inspired the family to help other young people in similar situations. Determined to turn their

So how do you claim?

It's simple. If you've suffered hardship as the result of injury, get in touch. Your claim will be considered against strict criteria ('official mountain rescue activity' being a key phrase) but if there's genuine need we'll do our best to help. Any information you give us related to your claim will be treated with utmost confidentiality so we perhaps should make clear that David and Dion are happy for us to tell their stories to a wider world.

To start the process, speak to any one of the trustees or your local regional rep (see page 62) or email me



Above: David Benson with Brock © Ion Sanduloiu of Romanian Search Dogs; Evidence of recovery © David Benson.

devastation into a positive force for good, Dion and Sue, supported by friends, family and team members, have forged ahead with plans for Josh's Lighthouse Project.

An idea which started with a memorial garden has expanded to creating a safe space in the shape of a glass-fronted log cabin overlooking the sea, where young people can go for counselling, group chats and education about mental health and wellbeing. The name derives from Josh's request, just before his eighteenth birthday, to have a tattoo. He'd even designed his tattoo, in the shape of a lighthouse. He never did have it done but Sue, Dion and Josh's brother have, in his memory, and their cabin project continues the theme.

They already have planning permission on an old school property, ground works have begun, fundraising continues, and the hope is it will be up and running in 2019. We wish them luck.

at secretary@rescuebenevolent.fund for an application form. Indeed, email me if you have any further questions about the Rescue Benevolent Fund. I'm always happy to chat.

How do we raise money?

Anyone can give the fund, as an individual, team or region, as well as the national bodies – again, email me for details. A question we're regularly asked is how teams can give, as one charity to another. What we have been advised is that teams should look at whether their constitution specifically prevents them from spending money in this way and, if in doubt, consult your team's solicitor or legal adviser.

Finally, stay safe out there and be well. And, if you think the Rescue Benevolent Fund might be able to help you out in any way, please don't hesitate to get in touch. ☺

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safety awareness

Self sabotage

LYLE BROTHERTON

'I'm not going to make that mistake again!' is a phrase we will all be familiar with, and yet we do!

BBC TV's Countryfile, 16 December 2018, included a feature with Heather Morning, Mountain Safety Adviser for Mountaineering Scotland, whose knowledge and mountaineering skills are outstanding. It was about the hazards of winter walking and climbing in Scotland, where she stated that so far this year eleven people have died. The usual suspects being high on the causes: poor navigation, frequently relying solely on a mobile phone for this purpose, plus, inadequate apparel and footwear, frequently being the first links in a chain of events that led to tragedy. My reaction was that we need to educate the general public much better, and I guess this would be the corollary with many of my peers.

Monday, I was back at my work. This focuses upon people's behaviour in their professional environment who work for various government agencies and departments, identifying areas in their operational procedures for improvement, based upon empirical evidence. The results of this research are used to develop practical actions that can make improvements in these SOPs, trial and test them, and then, if proven effective, give them to the various branches to roll out operationally. Not surprisingly, whilst there is generally a difference between the way people act at work to the way they do outside work, there are also underlying behavioural traits common in both environments. I have written before about some of these in previous MR Mag articles ('The Seven Deadly Sins of Bias in Incident Management', Autumn 2016 issue) and how this work can be related to best practice in mountain rescue.

The following Monday, I was reviewing mistakes made in weapons checks (firearms), immediately prior to their use in a hostile engagement. The standard approach to perfect this technique is repetitive training, where the emphasis is upon safety and the motivation is self-preservation. This common practice works, to an extent.

A trial has been running with the British Army, where a unit of soldiers have undergone the same training, with the additional requirement of them checking each other's weapons, in a similar way

many mountaineers do with their ropes and knots prior to climbing, before setting out on patrol. Weapon failure in this unit, as a result of operator error, is significantly lower than in the control group. Interestingly, the time nearer to when these weapons are used to this final check, also corresponds with a lower failure rate.

I thought again about my initial response to Heather's piece: reasoning that we need to educate the general public better and I fell into the common trap — which I try to mitigate against professionally — namely, of doing more of the same, even though I/we keep getting the same result.

An average of 8.6 million people tune in to Countryfile, with an extra estimated 2.5 million iPlayer downloads, giving this programme one of the highest ratings on British TV. Therefore, it's reasonable to assume over 10 million people watched Heather's feature. In addition, I hear almost weekly, on both local and national news, about people getting into difficulties

JUST BECAUSE WE KNOW OF A DANGER DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN WE WILL TAKE STEPS TO AVOID IT

because they have relied only upon a mobile phone for navigation. Is it time to change our approach to helping the general public understand the critical importance of using the right kit and clothing, beyond education?

Just because we know of a danger does not necessarily mean we will take steps to avoid it. Seatbelt legislation being a prime example of changing people's behaviour in such circumstances where, after introduction of legislation, the number of people who escaped injury increased by 40% and those with mild and moderate injuries decreased by 35%. There was a significant reduction in soft tissue injuries to the head¹.

However, legislation is neither practical nor desirable for such outdoor leisure pursuits.

I remember the Scottish MR legend, Heavy (Dave Whalley) when he was

compiling the statistics with Bob Sharp, for Scottish Mountain Rescue, explaining to me the surprising number of honeytrap locations where incidents frequently happened. Looking at these areas, they all have a car park, or parking area nearby, where visitors to these locations leave their vehicles before setting out on their adventure. Similar to the troopers' last minute weapons check, is there an argument to display signs in these areas?

Signs in our countryside is a controversial topic and personally I am not in favour of them. At the same time, car parks, whilst technically in the countryside, are generally not part of the outdoor adventure and they frequently already contain notices advising people to secure their vehicles.

My first inkling was to suggest displaying signs similar to the message to drivers with road signs saying, 'X people killed on this road in X years', commonly placed by local authorities and sometimes local police forces on roads with high number of accidents/fatalities and premised on the principle that fear motivates. Yet the evidence for the effectiveness of these road signs is not conclusive. Perhaps a better approach would be a notice reminding people, because let's face it they already know, to make sure they are wearing the right apparel and not to rely only on a mobile phone to navigate with.

Possibly some teams are already providing this service and, if so, has it had a measurable impact? I'd be happy to coordinate any findings and share it with the MR community on this forum. ☺

¹ Road traffic accidents before and after seatbelt legislation, study in a district general hospital. J Thomas. Journal of The Royal Society of Medicine, Feb 1990.

LYLE BROTHERTON IS AUTHOR OF THE ULTIMATE NAVIGATION MANUAL AND CO-FOUNDER OF THE ULTIMATE NAVIGATION SCHOOL.





Lockerbie remembered. Thirty years and counting...

On 21 December 1988, Pan Am Flight 103, en route from Frankfurt to Detroit via London and New York exploded in the skies above the Scottish town of Lockerbie, killing all 243 passengers and sixteen crew on board. Wreckage crashed into homes, taking the lives of eleven more people on the ground. Mountain rescue team members from across the UK were heavily involved in the aftermath.

DAVID WHALLEY
AKA HEAVY

On that fateful evening in 1988, Heavy was just beginning to enjoy a spot of well earned leave. With more than a hint of irony, he recalls his parting shot to colleagues. 'Don't call me unless a jumbo jet crashes in the mountains'.

It's the sort of thing you might say, never imagining for one moment it will happen. And, of course, it never does. Until that once. It was the first day of his break, just as he was making plans with his girlfriend, when the call came through. At first he assumed it was a wind-up. His deputy having a laugh. But then 'Raz' suggested he turn the telly on and see for himself.

'I switched on. It was like a dream. A nightmare. I quickly sorted my gear, left my girlfriend and shot down to base. The troops were dashing about — the usual organised chaos before the brief. What do you say at times like this? How do you cope with 250 casualties? Never in our history had we

to deal with something like this.

'Already, troops from RAF Leeming were airborne for Lockerbie with RAF Stafford in hot pursuit. Raz left with the team whilst I followed behind. Before leaving I phoned the police as the motorway was closed. Very kindly, they escorted me all the way but we travelled so fast that my dog Teallach, who was in the back of the car, was even more terrified than normal! It was a weird experience driving down the M74 with no cars in sight. As we approached Lockerbie, the police had blocked all entrances and the press were everywhere. There was wreckage all over the road and the sky was illuminated with reflections from burning fires. It was also full of helicopters — the scene could easily have been Vietnam. An engine had impacted into the road, aircraft panels had landed on roofs, there were open suitcases and Christmas presents

spread about — quite an incredible scene. The smell of fuel was overpowering — a smell that will remain with me for the rest of my life.

'The police took me to where the troops were located, held back whilst Leeming MRT carried out an initial search. On their journey up, they'd been listening to the radio and hoping to save lives or help casualties. But there was little to do. The scene was utter mayhem and confusion with a real danger from the uncontrollable fires. But very quickly, and with quiet efficiency, the head of the RAF MRTs, the Inspector of Land Rescue, Sqn Ldr Bill Gault, set up control.

'I was told to keep the teams happy, find a base and control the helicopters to avoid the real chance of a mid-air collision. Communications with the outside world were non-existent. The satellite phones had broken down and landlines were severely damaged by

the crash. Somehow, we managed to set up a landing site for the choppers and gained some type of control into search areas — extremely important for flight safety. Eventually, the police gave us a briefing in the school, which was to become the co-ordination centre for the disaster. There were over five hundred people present including ambulance, fire and police personnel, coastguards, voluntary services and RAF and civilian teams. There was, as one would expect, chaos. The civilian teams from the Borders looked to the RAF teams for guidance. As luck would have it, we'd just carried out exercises in the Borders a few months previously when the scenario was an aircraft crash! Through this exercise we had made key contacts, which were to prove invaluable in the days ahead.

'It was decided at the briefing to wait until first light, as it was too dangerous to search in the dark with the fires still raging. Frustrating for the troops who were keen to go out and help, but they accepted they had to sit and wait. Few slept.

'Information was hard to gain and I decided to recce on my own. Lockerbie is a small town, situated just off the motorway near the Borders. It has the smallest police, fire and ambulance authority in Scotland, which was completely overwhelmed. A local policeman and myself went around the crash site in the dark. It was a scene from hell — bodies, wreckage, Christmas presents and clothes all over the place. The smell of fuel and death filled the air. Fires still burned fiercely. These scenes will remain in my mind forever. Nothing can prepare you for this. Even after a lifetime of rescues, it was hard to accept what I saw and felt. We located the main wreckage, which gave us vital information to guide our search areas the following morning.

'The plan was prioritised into a casualty count and a map of all the wreckage and main aircraft parts. The RAF teams had done this many times before, but never on this scale. By now, based on reports and what we had seen, we reckoned the chances of live casualties being found were extremely limited. The brief to the troops was one of the most difficult ever given. We made sure they worked in pairs with an old head alongside a newer troop member and explained what horrors they might expect to find. In the days to come, the RAF, civilian rescue teams

and SARDA handlers were all to do a magnificent job in the face of the untold death and destruction. I will never forget their efforts. After the brief we gave each team specific areas to search. We explained the importance of looking for the aircraft's black box, which was found very quickly by a Stafford team member. This impressed the police and especially the 'men in suits' who had arrived in the middle of the night.

'By now it was common knowledge this wasn't a normal crash and that terrorism was the probable cause of all the death and destruction. The teams worked together in shifts listing wreckage and casualties on the 'crash map'. The debriefings with team members were harrowing but all worked very professionally, gathering information, reporting to base, and going out to another area for more of the same. The casualties were left where they fell but mountain rescue personnel covered the bodies with fleeces and clothing and a policeman guarded each casualty, once located. As the list grew, the enormity of what had taken place began to sink in. Everything was now being treated as a

established a base in the school kitchen and produced meals 24 hours a day for several weeks. These ladies brought a touch of sanity to the scene and they worked tirelessly throughout. Helicopters carrying experienced mountain rescue team members flew across the area to plot the wreckage from low-level photographs. Casualties were found in the main town and in the fields across a vast area. By the end of a long first day the troops were tired and very stressed, but had located three quarters of the casualties. We tried to relax by going into the village but, the town had been thrown into mayhem. Many local people had been killed, several streets had been demolished and wreckage was everywhere. However, some of the pubs were open. The locals, who knew we had been working very hard in a difficult task, made us very welcome. We all felt guilty drinking and trying to relax but it was what we all needed because it served as a safety valve. Very few slept that night. Many had nightmares and were aware that it was going to continue the next day.

'Within a short period of time things took on a degree of order. The police,



scene of crime. There were countless members of the press present, desperate for information. To make matters worse, some mindless individuals had entered the area, removing possessions from some casualties.

'At times of great tragedy, the basic things in life come to the fore, and heroes emerge. The WRVS

other emergency services and teams had risen to the challenge and knew exactly what to do. Mountain rescue troops flew out with the helicopters locating casualties and wreckage. Everything was plotted — casualties, belongings, parts of the aircraft were found and marked. Additional resources were mobilised, making life better for us all. Members of the

Opposite: Mountain rescue team members at the heart of the recovery operation, the nose cone of the Clipper Maid of the Seas in the background. Left to right: Ian Baird (SARDA Southern Scotland), Stewart Hulse (Langdale Ambleside MRT) and Heather Malling (SARDA Wales) © PA.

Above: Rescue team members involved in the search © Derby MRT.

world's media were ever present, all wanting information and to record how we felt. By the end of the third day, we had accounted for all the casualties. Now, there was little left for us to do and so we pulled out but, before so

doing, we submitted all of the 'crash maps' to the police. They highlighted the enormity of the tragedy. Each life a tragedy to their families and friends, lives lost because of evil. The local mountain rescue teams worked with

the search dogs for weeks after we left, searching for human remains and other items.

'For a while, mountain rescue was flavour of the month. Teams received letters from the Prime Minister, Members of Parliament and many others. A few weeks later, we had the Kegworth aircrash and Leeming and Stafford team members did it all again. This time they saved lives and what a difference that made to the troops. It took a long time to go back to Lockerbie but when I did, I could still visualise that dark night.

'Mountain rescue has been built from years of experience, dedication and service. God willing, nothing like Lockerbie will happen again. But in this mad world in which we live, you never know. All the RAF teams are now part of the UK's Disaster Planning structure and team members have the qualities necessary to rise to any scenario. Mountain rescue and SARDA did an exceptional job during Lockerbie. We should all be very proud of the part we played.' 🐾

Below: Searching, no life found © Heavy Whalley.



Looking back, Acting forward: Cycle to Syracuse....



DAVID WHALLEY
AKA 'HEAVY'

In October, Heavy Whalley was part of a five-man team, who cycled from Washington in the USA to Syracuse University – over 650 miles in a week – in memory of the 35 students from the university who died in the plane. The cycle was planned to arrive in time for the Annual Memorial Service at Syracuse University.

The trip was the idea of Colin Dorrance, the youngest policeman at Lockerbie in 1988 at just 18 years old. It was his tribute to those who died and also a demonstration of how Lockerbie has moved on.

The cycle team were all Lockerbie based apart from me: Paul Rae a local fireman, Dave Walpole a paramedic, Brian Asher the rector of Lockerbie Academy.

Lockerbie Academy and Syracuse University have a huge bond. Every year, Syracuse give two pupils from Lockerbie Academy a scholarship at the University and, over the years, 58 students have enjoyed the benefits of this bond.

The Lockerbie incident was way above anything I'd seen or dealt with before. I was in my prime, a young leader in a job I'd dreamed of and sixteen years of mountain rescue experience. I was surrounded by a great young team. We just did our job, no egos. I was only at Lockerbie for three days with the four RAF teams but many others were there for weeks, some over months. What they saw and did is incredible.

Before we set off, we met up with Lockerbie school kids – over 1500 kids on their bikes and cycling after our talks. They heard the story of what happened, how their families coped and how many were looked after the rescue agencies and relatives, despite their own losses in the town.

One highlight was meeting Josephine from Lockerbie, one of the ladies who looked after my troops and the relatives during the tragedy. She was a guest of honour and came over to the USA to meet the families, one of the 'Lockerbie Angels'. They cooked for us in the school that became our base in Lockerbie Academy and gave us food and comfort after every search. Their kindness was on a scale of which I and many others will never forget.

For all of us, the dog handlers and teams coming in for a break and some normality after locating body after body, these ladies gave us that. Somehow we'd find the strength to go out again and again. The same ladies washed the clothes of so many of those who'd perished and an army of local women made sure that when families collected the possessions of their loved ones, they were clean and tidy. Over the years, many relatives have returned to Lockerbie and been so well looked after by these kind warm folk.

It was an honour to be invited to join this cycle but I was pretty run down when I started out. Four operations in recent years, two stones down in

weight but I'd felt ready for a huge journey after lots of hard work.

Unfortunately, I hadn't fully recovered from the soaking I got cycling the 70 miles to Edinburgh Castle from Lockerbie, for a reception in the Great Hall, two weeks before we left. But, my teammates and support crew looked after me during the week on the road and all the meetings with the relatives. Every day we met more and more families. It was a huge emotional journey.

We had great support from Miles, our mechanic, a safety man from the US who supplied the bikes and the mechanical expertise with never a penny for his endeavours.

We cycled through Washington, New York and Philadelphia in heavy traffic – exciting and terrifying, and in awful weather mostly – and met so many good folk, including relatives of the those who died. Many said we had brought their loved ones home at last. We live in a different world now but one that needs reminding it's good to talk, no matter who you are.

The ceremony at the end of the cycle, to the background of the pipes and a massive crowd was very humbling. It tore at the heart. Afterwards, I spent some time alone at the memorial. I looked around after a few minutes and several families had followed me up. I got so many hugs, cuddles and kind words. They were all looking after me.

In my 40 years in mountain rescue, I've met so many relatives of victims and casualties. I've taken relatives to the scenes of tragic mountain accidents where their loved ones died. It's a part of the job we rarely speak about. For many it takes years to come to terms with loved ones passing, especially through tragedy.

Many asked about the part we'd played. I tried to explain that many of the searchers were young folk too. Many covered the casualties with their own clothes to give some dignity and no one could comprehend the huge loss of life. To find over 160 fatalities in one morning is unbelievable, but to plot their locations and then map the wreckage and locate the black box... it all seems a dream now.

The relatives couldn't understand that the most of the volunteers were unpaid and did what they did for their fellow man or woman.

Was it worth all the effort and heartbreak to me? In short, yes. I met an 80-year-old mother who lost her daughter. She'd travelled to Lockerbie in remembrance but now feels too old to travel. 'You have brought my daughter home at last,' she told me. 'I can die happy now.'

Another was a young lady just born after the crash, there with her dad. Her mother, grandparents and unborn sister all died in the crash. She told us her story and how thankful the surviving family were of our visit. Try cycling after that!

Hopefully, nothing like this will ever happen again and the many lessons learned will never be forgotten. Yet memories are short and many who were affected still are.

Thank you to everyone who has offered support and kindness. I am collating a lot of the thanks from my blog from so many of you to the ladies of Lockerbie. They, like many of the mountain rescue teams and search



dogs from all over the UK, the SAR aircraft, Army and Air Investigation, the Crash and Smash Team, Raynet and many more, did so much. If you were there, and would like to drop me a line please do. I will pass on your thoughts.

Thirty years on much has happened since that night and I feel a lot better after this incredible journey. On the day of the anniversary I took myself off to clear my thoughts on the mountains and think of all those who died and the huge efforts of so many.

What happened will remain with me till I die but much of the pain is gone and we have learned so much and how to cope. Hard earned lessons passed on to future generations. Never forget: 'Look Back. Act Forward'. 🐾

Top: Central Park, New York with bagpipes and kilts.

Above: the Cycle to Syracuse team with New York behind

Opposite: Cycle to Syracuse PR photo. Images © Heavy Whalley.

Devastation and dog tales...

BOB SHARP AND BILL JENNISON

FROM 'SEARCH & RESCUE DOGS'



Lockerbie was unique — a steep learning curve for the emergency services and mountain rescue alike. It was the perfect example of search and rescue dogs and search and rescue helicopters working together in a crisis.

With only a few short days until Christmas, people everywhere were returning home to their loved ones, making their last minute preparations, looking forward to a break from work, a chance to relax and party. But, for residents of the quiet market town of Lockerbie, the 259 passengers aboard Pan Am flight PA103 bound for New York, and emergency services personnel across the UK, all that was about to change. At 7.02 pm, a terrorist bomb exploded aboard the Boeing 747, killing everyone on board and eleven local residents of Lockerbie.

Thirty-eight minutes after take off from Heathrow, the plane had reached an altitude of 9,500 metres. At Shanwick Ocean Control, first one blip appeared on the radar screen, then three more, then five as the shattered pieces of the airliner fell from the skies. The impact of the crash was so strong,

registered at British Geological Survey stations in the south of Scotland. Minutes later, eye witnesses described a 'fireball' falling from the sky. The plane had broken up in mid-air so suddenly that the crew were unable to send any message, and so dramatically that wreckage and debris were scattered for miles — across the border as far south as Kielder Forest.

In the cold light of the morning following the crash, the full horror of the devastation became apparent. The wings of the 747 had struck the A74, engulfing cars in flames. The fuselage had landed on a housing estate demolishing several homes, the four engines fell onto the village and there was a gash 47 metres wide and 60 metres long slewed between two rows of houses. Twisted fragments of metal littered streets and gardens. Bodies lay strewn around the towns and fields, many mutilated beyond recognition. At times like this a contingency plan swings into action which brings into play every possible appropriate resource. All the agencies — the emergency services, local authorities and voluntary organisations — involved

together in a common cause. As with any aircraft incident, the Aeronautical Rescue Coordination Centre deploys search and rescue helicopters and RAF mountain rescue teams to the area. Mountain rescue teams were tasked as fast as possible on arrival, to search for and recover survivors, provide specialist advice to civil emergency services, assist with the cordoning off of the crash site and the provision of communications. A temporary restricted air space was established — a radius of five miles and height of 600 metres. The fire services specialised in the immediate area of the crash site to deal with fire and toxic hazards and a press centre was established for relatives and journalists wanting information.

Dave Whalley (whose story about his experience then, and the impact it has had on his life, we feature on the previous pages) was a key player in helping coordinate the military and civilian MRTs as well as other emergency services. One of these was SARDA. Dogs and their handlers played a vital role in this incident and they were involved within hours of the crash. In fact, Bill Parr, a member of SARDA Southern Scotland who lived in Lockerbie was the first emergency person on scene. He played a seminal role throughout and received the MBE for his work.

The contribution of dog teams to the search for casualties continued for almost two weeks. Because of the enormity of the incident, events quickly began to follow a well-recorded timeline. Within two hours of the explosion a local dog team and two police dog teams had been deployed to search the main impact area and the ruins of domestic properties, and to ensure that the immediate area had been cleared of all non-essential personnel. At this time, it was thought some occupants were missing from houses in the immediate impact area and also from vehicles on the A74. During the search, fires were still burning and the streets were littered with glass and rubble. Members of the fire service assisted by damping down localised fires and moving difficult or awkward obstacles. The whole area was contaminated with aviation fuel. No survivors were located although dogs indicated several bodies, other human parts, personal effects and aircraft wreckage.

On completion of the initial search, the first dog team was dispatched in police transport to follow up a report of

possible survivors. The report turned out to be incorrect but, during searches of country roads, several large pieces of aircraft wreckage were located. A chance meeting with a farmer resulted in a quick search of debris on open moorland in sleety conditions. Compass bearings of the general debris trail were taken at known grid references and reported to police control. Human remains, personal effects, additional wreckage and cargo were also located in this area.

By 12.30 am on 22 December, additional dog teams had arrived having travelled up to 150 miles from their homes. After consultation with police it was decided that dog teams working in groups and in combination with local and RAF MRTs would search the urban area immediately outside the fire zone and the rural areas indicated by the aircraft debris trail.

By 8.00 am these groups had located in excess of 120 bodies but no survivors. After a short break, eighteen search dog teams were redeployed to cover forest and wooded areas with ground search teams and helicopters covering the open ground to determine the location of bodies, personal effects, mail and aircraft wreckage. Dog team searches were terminated one hour after darkness.

On Friday 23 December the search took on what turned out to be the general trend until 1 January 1989, comprising open moorland and forestry searches, searches in the area of the explosion and searches in rubble and fuselage wreckage located in the urban area remote from the rural areas indicated by the debris trail. After this, searches became less frequent and of shorter duration. These were, generally, responses to specific police requests for assistance and undertaken by local dog handlers, primarily from teams in Northumbria. The last dog team was stood down on 4 January.

Between Wednesday 21 December 1988 and Friday 31 January 1989, 48 dog teams had been used on various occasions, peaking at forty teams on Boxing Day, drawn from four branches — SARDA Southern Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland. Some travelled more than 350 miles to attend the incident and then spent up to five days continuous searching. During the call-out, dog teams accounted for over 120 bodies and many pieces of human debris, as well as a vast amount of personal effects, luggage and aircraft wreckage. Overall, they searched a total area of around 100 square kilometres, over something in the order

of 2,800 hours. In addition, a three/four-man planning team on administrative duties took up a further 380 hours.

The incident was not without injury to the dogs themselves. Seven dogs and four handlers suffered injuries whilst searching amongst ruins and many others suffered from exposure to aviation fuel fumes. One of the Irish

resources meant SARDA was able to provide continuous attendance, day and night, within the areas contaminated with fuel over many days. The most effective technique for searching was to deploy dogs and handlers in extended line searches with a police presence in each line. Members of the Aircraft Accident Investigation Branch were quick to recognise the value of



In the history of association this was to prove to be search and recovery in the extreme. The value of the dog teams on that first horrific night and throughout the following days was recognised by both the police and The Aircraft Accident Investigation Branch (AIB). Their teamwork, their ability to integrate with other agencies and their maintenance of a steadfast professional approach to their work made a substantial contribution in the quest to find possible survivors and the subsequent search for aircraft debris. As mountain rescue team members, each handler carried a heavy burden of responsibility to complete that mission in the true history of volunteers within the UK.

Neville Sharp and Ian Thompson. SARDA England Yearbook 2018



Right: Neville Sharp's dog, Jan at work amongst the carnage that remained of Sherwood Crescent © Neville Sharp/SARDA England.

dogs succumbed to poison thought to have been ingested in a forest area near Langholm and another local dog fell seriously ill. Everybody felt the regular training undertaken by dogs and handlers ensured most dogs adapted with minimum retraining but the obvious stress and tiredness generated by the extremely difficult conditions were important factors in determining handler and dog suitability for certain tasks.

In operational terms, every handler and dog was restricted to a maximum of three seven-hour-days within the impact zone, working up to 20 minutes and resting away from the aviation fumes for at least fifteen minutes. Whilst the aviation fuel restricted dog searches, careful planning of

the search and rescue dogs as well as the knowledge of local farmers and members of the then Moffat Hill Rescue Team.

The searches were physically and mentally demanding for everyone involved. The horrific sight of clumps of bodies and body parts, particularly the night-time finds, were not only stressful at the time but have proved a constant source of anxiety for many in the years since the incident.

Jan Millar had just qualified as a Novice Search Dog handler the month before. Lockerbie was her first call-out.

'I was told to make my way south to Lockerbie. The name would come to haunt me and it probably will for the rest of my life. After being redirected by the police at Moffat, I travelled along an

In recognition of their contribution to SAR operations at Lockerbie SARDA dogs and handlers were presented with a certificate of commendation from The Scottish Society for the Protection of Animals for 'Dedication and Perseverance at The Lockerbie Air Disaster'. Never before this incident or since have I witnessed such destruction first hand, to the huge loss of life, to the massive search effort or the high level of security surrounding this tragedy. I could say much more about those victims and how they were found but consider it respectful to those who lost their lives to remember but remain silent.

Andy Colau SARDA England Yearbook 2018

Lockerbie **30 YEARS**

Above: The scene of devastation surrounding the shattered nose cone of the Clipper Maid of the Seas © Heavy Whalley.

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eerily quiet A74. In the distance I could see a red and golden glow. I made my way to the police station through scenes you might encounter in a disaster movie set. Flames shooting to the sky, the strong scent of kerosene in the air, badly damaged houses and a massive smoking crater with debris all around it. I joined two other dog handlers and we were tasked to search some fields quite far out of Lockerbie. On the way, my headlights lit up my first sight of that nose cone. I can still feel the shock wave I experienced all those years ago — to

this day, when I catch sight of it on the TV, I still have a reaction. 'Within minutes our search dogs had indicated on luggage, bundles of cargo and piles of debris all scattered around the field. The dogs were confused at the amount of scent, particularly my dog on her first real search — what to indicate on first? We praised the dogs but continued looking for life. I find it unbelievable now that I was naive enough to think there might still be a living soul waiting to be rescued. It truly didn't occur to me that humans falling over 9,150 metres

would have no chance of survival. Or that the impact would leave some bodies in a horrific state. Or that some scenes would be so surreal I still question whether I truly witnessed them. 'Truth to tell, no preparation could have helped me cope with what I experienced over the next twenty hours. The sights encountered are firmly imprinted on my subconscious and rise to the surface in the form of nightmares at times of stress.'

From Derby to Kegworth via Otterburn..

Few incidents are as traumatic or devastating as Lockerbie. Yet not three weeks later, for many of the rescuers involved in the search — in the RAF, the civilian teams and SARDA — there was more to come. On 8 January 1989, British Midland Flight 92, a Boeing 737-400, crashed onto the embankment of the M1 near Kegworth in Leicestershire, while attempting an emergency landing at East Midlands Airport.



Above: Derby team members search just outside Otterburn, some 60+ miles from Lockerbie © Derby MRT.

Seventeen members of the Derby team — with colleagues from across the country — had travelled to Northumberland the day before, to join the still ongoing Lockerbie search. Although the majority of the fuselage had fallen on the town itself, pieces of aircraft, luggage, personal effects and even some casualties had been strewn across a long strip of the country as the aircraft had fallen from 31,000ft resulting in probably the biggest land search mountain rescue has ever seen in the UK.

Based out of Bellingham in Northumberland, team members were tasked with an area outside Otterburn, some 60+ miles east of Lockerbie,

over the border in England, spending two long days searching around 490 acres of land. Derby team members alone found twenty-five items in this relatively small area, ranging from plane interior to luggage and personal effects. It would later transpire that one of these items would be 'significant' and was used as a small part of the evidence in the case for prosecution.

Those seventeen team members were returning home from Northumberland, late on the Sunday evening when news came in of the Kegworth crash. The aircraft was on a scheduled flight from Heathrow to Belfast, when a fan-blade broke in the left engine, disrupting the air

conditioning and filling the flight deck with smoke. Believing there to be a fault with the right engine, the crew mistakenly shut down the functioning engine, and pumped more fuel into the malfunctioning one, which burst into flames. The airliner broke into three large pieces, less than 500 metres short of the end of the runway: a nose section, a central section and a tail section. Of the 126 people aboard, 47 died and 74 sustained serious injuries. Unbelievably, the accident happened just fifteen miles from the Derby base and the team was able to provide logistical support and communications for SARDA.



Who wants to be Fundraising Officer? It's the job none of us want to do, right?

We all joined Mountain/Lowland/Search and Rescue to be rushing out in the dark of night to save the lost kids, injured climbers/walkers and the occasional cragfast puppy. That's true but we all know there is so much more to being in a team than being at the sharp end.

I calculated that for us only about 20% of our MR time is directly call-out related. The rest is training, cleaning kit and vehicles, planning the next training exercise, committee and operation group meetings, medical training and all sorts of fantastic courses, oh yes and fundraising; standing on street corners trying to catch the eye of those wealthy tourists dressed head to toe in spotless Arc'teryx gear, or giving the old faithful presentation to the local WI, filling in countless forms and reading knock back letters. Nobody wants to do that, right?

There are plenty of teams that have excellent fundraising officers who make this look easy but for many others, the role is the last one to get volunteers for, in fact, some are even co-opted into the role. What's worse is when you do get in role and everyone says, 'we've tried that' or 'you need to do it this way'.

I've not been in Buxton Mountain Rescue Team for long, so I knew very little about the methods used, the politics within the team and the boundaries, but I recognised early doors that I was never going to be the crag/medical/vehicle/equipment guru. I'll certainly never win the race up the hills and it will be years before I feel confident leading a multi-team search and recovery exercise. There's no compulsion to take on any of those roles in the team but being involved and making a difference is what it's about, right?

So if you get the job and are given the handover folder full of previous years' events, successes and failures, where do you begin? Obvious, you contact MREW and see what they have by way of advice, guidance and support, fact sheets for grant applications, and suggestions for building up legacies and strategies. Sorry, that won't help much.

Having gone through the basics and scheduled the usual collections and activities, we still needed to find funding for our Drone Proof of Concept and, of course, those new digital radios.

After a lot of trial and error, we hit on a few grants and local supporters and quite honestly, got very lucky. We were on a roll and the enthusiasm for fundraising was on a high. Working closely with the social media team, the public seem to have got right behind us. In a recent Tesco blue token count, they had to empty our tokens four times because they were running out! Convinced that there was more we could be doing, I asked Judy Whiteside if there was a subgroup for FROs to join — for example, on Facebook. She immediately said, 'No, but do you want to set one up?'

So that's where we're at now. In early October, Judy set up a Facebook group called Mountain Rescue Fundraising. It's a closed group for MREW team members and supporters with an interest in fundraising. The aim of the group is to share ideas, opportunity and inspiration between teams working towards the same goals. The group rapidly reached about 90 members and has been posing and answering questions regularly.

We're lucky to have several experienced FROs in the group who have been incredibly helpful, corrected mistakes and made cracking suggestions but mainly it's been people supporting others to think about different ideas and approaches so an ideal place for new FROs to find their feet.

At the November MREW meeting in Preston FROs from Bolton, Bowland Pennine, Central Beacons, Derby, Edale, Holme Valley, Kinder, NEWSAR and —

best of all — Jody Dyer, MREW Development Director and chairman Mike France, all got together to ask questions, discuss issues and find out what MREW has been doing and plans to do on our behalf. Hopefully the first of many such collaborative meetings.

This group is here as a source of information and guidance for new team FROs and established experts alike, it's certainly not driven by an MREW agenda. If we can keep the group active the benefits for all should pay dividends. We can share ideas and ask questions of each other, we can identify appropriate funding such as the Lottery Awards for All scheme and help each on bids. There's potential for group purchasing if we can identify common goals and, just as importantly, we can find out how MREW can help us directly and perhaps steer their attention in a direction that works for us. The group is open to all MREW members and needs your support. Please join the group and contribute in whatever way you can.

As for wanting to be the fundraising officer, absolutely! It's been a fantastic opportunity to get involved in the team and to make that material difference to the team's prospects. Meeting supporters and business leaders has been almost as rewarding as that first carry off the hill. The challenge to find new revenue sources for next year and the longer-term strategy takes a bit more time than it should, but a few successes and it's become one of the best jobs in the team. ☺

RICHARD CARRATU BUXTON MRT



LETTER TO
THE EDITOR

Inaugural fundraising meeting for team officers shows promise for future collaboration

At the recent business meeting, fundraising officers from across the country held their inaugural sit down. Greeted by Rick and Jody, the meeting commenced with introductions, brief descriptions of our various fundraising experiences and what we hoped to learn.

The majority of members were new to FRO roles and looking for ideas on how to go about it. Jody explained her role in developing and exploring fundraising initiatives to the benefit of teams.

It was somewhat surprising to learn that some teams do not have an 'official' FRO post on their managing committees. Others did not have team shopping lists. This was countered by the statement that after everyone's social conscience to be a member of the team, the second most important element is the money to deliver the service. It was acknowledged that some work would be needed to elevate 'fundraising' up their team's priority list.

It was clear from the openness of the discussions was that those present were willing to help others in return for reciprocal ideas. Certainly, by the amount of scribbling taking place everyone was picking up a great deal! It was also evident that those present were all from 'low risk' teams with no 'high risk' team representatives. General consensus was that more meetings would be welcomed given the positivity.

Paul Durham, Bowland Pennine MRT



FUNDRAISING FAMILY HELPS MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM

The David Nelson Memorial Fund was established in 2015 after the sudden death of David, a builder from Weardale, from a cardiac arrest. It took 40 minutes for an ambulance to reach David, at his home in Hill End and his family and friends decided to raise funds in his name to provide the dale with community access defibrillators to help stop this happening again.

Led by David's daughter Gillian Hutchinson and daughter-in-law Allison Nelson, over £43,000 has been raised. To date, the fund has placed 20 machines in Weardale and bought a further four for schools. The machines can be accessed by any member of the public at any time when calling 999. Several have already been called out and one has been used in a situation where it helped save a casualty's life.

When the fund heard that the Teesdale and Weardale team was looking for funding to replace a defib on one of its vehicles, they offered to buy the machine for the team. 'Dad lived his life in the heart of Weardale and spent time on the fell at Bollihope above Frosterley,' says Gillian, 'so we really wanted to do something to help.'

Team leader, Steve Owers thanked the family for their support. 'This is a great gesture and will save the team upwards of £1000, money which can now be spent on other team equipment'.

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Avalanche in Snowdonia

On Saturday 15 November 2014, walker Matthew Myerscough was caught in an avalanche on the Pyg track, one of the most popular ascent routes up Snowdon. Fortunately for him, Mike Byrne had been in the area enjoying the winter conditions when he stopped to assist a group struggling in the snow, before continuing up the hill. That delay not only kept him from being the first person on the unstable slope, but may have saved the victim's life.

I'd headed up Snowdon to check out Trinity gullies. The weather was fairly miserable, with strong winds and drizzle but as I gained height it began to snow.

As I left Llyn Glaslyn the snow was falling in earnest, the path completely buried. I'd reached the point where the Pyg track passes above the disused mines when I noticed a group descending the mountain extremely close to the mine shafts. They headed up towards me, happy to take up my offer to show them the way down to the lake. Visibility by now was pretty poor and it was snowing heavily. Half way down the slope they were able to follow my tracks to the lake, leaving me to my lunch. It was midday.

The weather was set to improve so I headed on up to the summit and hope the snow firmed up the higher I went. As I reached the zig zags, I met two friends, John Price and John Heaps. We'd hardly exchanged greetings when out of the mist and cloud came four people, sliding and tumbling out of control. Initially I thought they were fooling around, but it soon became obvious they'd been avalanched and fortunately for us we were some 20 metres from its edge.

The guys were a little shaken-up but uninjured. They'd been some 50 metres from the finger post when they were swept off their feet. But another chap and his girlfriend were above them, attempting to climb the headwall. Some 50 metres lower down was Alison, frantically calling out for her partner, Matthew. I quickly descended to her and it became obvious Matthew was nowhere to be seen. The terrifying realisation dawned that he was buried.

We began searching. I remember trying to stay calm and rationally work out just where he'd be. There was a tremendous amount of avalanche debris, but I figured he'd be lower down the slope nearer the tongue of the avalanche so headed down the slope towards two small black objects, some 50 metres from where Alison had come to rest.

I could make out the shape of a rucksack just visible above the snow. I gave it a huge tug and realised Matthew was still attached. I recall frantically clearing the snow to locate his head and calling to the

others for help, thoughts swirling round my head of a similar incident a few years previously where the guy was not so lucky.

Matthew's face was already very blue and he was unconscious. I cleared the snow out of his mouth and listened, putting my ear closely to his lips. His breathing was shallow and steady and the sound will live with me forever. I was joined by my two friends and the lads from Loughborough University MC who assisted in digging Matthew out and put a call in to mountain rescue. After ten minutes or so, he began to regain consciousness with only one thought — for Alison. He wasn't content until she came and joined us.

Some ten minutes later we had Matthew out and sitting down whilst I carried out



MIKE BYRNE IS A MOUNTAIN LEADER (WINTER) AKA 'FRENCHY' OF THE COTSWOLD SHOP, BETWYS Y COED AND MAXIMUM ADVENTURES, CUMBRIA



finger post when they came into view.

They gave a Matthew a thorough check and were planning to walk him off but changed their minds and stretchered him down to Glaslyn lake. From there, he and Alison were helicoptered to hospital. I led the other four guys down the track and over the horns to Pen y Pass.

Matthew joked he'd planned something a little special for Alison for Valentine's weekend, but I don't think a ride with 22 Squadron was quite what he had in mind!

Matthew and Alison were so grateful to all who were there. As for me, had I not helped the previous group descend to Glaslyn, I could have been in the same position as Matthew. Would I have attempted the headwall? Would you? I like

to think I'd have made the right call, but would I? And who would have rescued me?

Making choices and hopefully the correct risk assessment is what we all do, but sometimes we get it wrong. Even the most experienced amongst us have taken calculated risks and got away with it. That's how you become experienced. You can read all you want and go on courses to help you make a correct assessment and, backed up with experience, you just might get it right. Matthew's predicament certainly made me reconsider the risks inherent to walking alone in winter.

Final note: I'd recently done my three-yearly first aid course with Helen and Steve Howe at Snowdonia First Aid, so it was fresh in my mind. I am really grateful to them for their expert training, which helped me to deal with this incident. ☘

This article was first published in *The Professional Mountaineer*, December 2014.



DRAGON'S BACK CHALLENGE: A CONTINUOUS TRAVERSE OF 190 WELSH MOUNTAINS TO RAISE FUNDS FOR LLANBERIS AND ABERGLASLYN TEAMS

MATTHEW MYERSCOUGH

'I feel like I've been over every bobble in Wales', my close friend Mike Murray exclaimed as we stopped to appreciate the view on a clear day. Mountains stretched as far as we could see, and with some satisfaction we noted their names and that we had in fact stood on their summits very recently. We were approaching the end of an extraordinary journey in which we climbed all 190 Welsh mountains in a record breaking 550 mile continuous walk lasting just 34 days.

My inspiration for this challenge can be traced back nearly five years to February 2014, when my partner Alison and I were caught in an avalanche on Snowdon's Pyg track. On approach to the finger stone there was a deep dull thud and then everything happened very quickly. We were both carried a long way down the mountain and I was completely buried. Thankfully Alison remained on the surface and called out for help, and experienced mountaineer Mike 'Frenchy' Byrne responded quickly. Along with friends John Price and John Heaps, he used his extensive experience to locate the top of my rucksack and dig me out, before calling for mountain rescue.

I'd been buried and unconscious for quite a while so I was immobilised and stretchered down to a flat area where a helicopter could land. Alison and I were both flown to hospital where I remained for a few nights under observation.

Everyone who helped us that day was fantastic, and we are hugely grateful to the Llanberis and Aberglaslyn teams for getting us safely off the mountain. The professionalism and dedication of these volunteers was really amazing. Naturally we feel a

personal connection with these two teams, and devised our Dragon's Back Challenge to try to express in our own way how grateful we are for their help.

Four and a half years after the accident, it felt great to be fundraising for the teams which had come to our aid. Despite the recent heatwave, Mike Murray and I began our journey in Swansea on 29 July 2018 in more typical Welsh weather, driving wind and rain!

Thankfully conditions improved and, despite injury, in the first two weeks we made good progress across the Brecon Beacons, Black Mountains, New Radnor hills, and on into central Wales where it was a delight to wild camp in the beautiful and remote Elan Valley region.

Our continuous traverse took us onwards across the Pumlumon Mountains towards the Cadair Idris range, and the start of the section we'd nicknamed, 'the dragon's head', a 100 mile detour to include the Aran, Berwyn and Arenig mountain summits. This remote section of the challenge required many nights of wild camping which proved testing due to poor weather combined with our demanding schedule. One particularly low point saw us spend a cold wet night pitched high in the Aran Mountains during a storm, with only a stagnant tarn as our water source. Lows were followed by highs when family and friends surprised us at road crossings and summits with hot food and fresh socks.

After two days of horrendous weather and tough navigation crossing the Rhinog Mountains, we descended into Maentwrog where we began the final chapter of our journey. By now we were playing catch up on our original schedule because of lost time due to

bad weather and injury. Before we had even started the challenge my mother had rather optimistically booked her accommodation at the finish in Conwy! Keen not to disappoint the welcome party, but also to set a new record for the fastest ascent of the 190 Welsh peaks, we accelerated through the final stages of our traverse by merging consecutive days into single longer outings. Daily ascents of over 10,000 feet became more common in the last week as we stumbled onwards over the Moelwyns, Snowdon range, Glyders and, finally, into the Carneddau.

On our final summit, Tal y Fan, it was a delight to enjoy champagne with family on a beautiful evening. Although our journey was almost complete, we'd only just begun to realise the satisfaction of our achievement. In 34 days we'd walked across Wales from Swansea to Conwy, climbed 190 mountains, and ascended five times the height of Mount Everest from sea level. We are delighted to have raised over £5,500 for Aberglaslyn and Llanberis teams and would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has supported our cause. We are very much looking forward to meeting with Frenchy and members of the teams soon in North Wales.

The events of 2014 are often in my thoughts. I was not inexperienced in winter mountaineering, however I made a poor judgement that day and am very grateful to have been given a chance to learn from my mistakes. Since the accident I am proud to have become a Mountain Leader, and am currently working towards the Winter Mountain Leader Award.

For more about our challenge visit dragonsbackchallenge.com. ☘

Raising funds
for rescue

Inset left: The length of the slide from Bwlch Glas down into Cwm Glas with the arrow showing where Matthew was located
© Ady Saunders.

Above: Walking the Dragon's Back; Matthew and Mike Murray
© Matthew Myerscough.

Introducing the Keswick MRT drugs roll

EDWARD ALLEN KESWICK MRT

There is no doubt about it – collectively as the MR community we are extremely privileged to be able to administer medication to casualties by means of the CasCare qualification. This is something we should never forget, and it behoves us to be prepared for those occasions when emergency medication is used.

I've been told there was once a time when the team's drugs were carried in a Tupperware box. Those days are long gone, and the range of drugs we carry has expanded greatly since then.

After a review of how we carry and dispense our drugs, and with some great help from Aiguille Alpine Equipment, we've developed a drugs roll that caters more specifically to mountain rescue needs.

With the view that the MR community may benefit from some of the features of the drugs roll, we share it with you here.

Aims of the design

- To have everything needed to administer medicines orally or otherwise – IV, IM etc – in one place
- To ensure items can be easily located and accessed
- To make the system easily replicable – as we have more than one vehicle and are equipped to answer multiple call-outs at the same time, it makes sense to find the same layout in the drugs roll whichever vehicle is used
- To include enough spare carrying capacity to absorb any new additions to the range of drugs we carry.

Benefits we have found in the design

- **Speed** – the roll is quick to deploy and its items are easily identified and retrieved, even by those who've not used it before
- **Well-organised** – the roll's clear sections and labelling mean it's easy to find what's needed and also easy to see what's been used and needs replacing post-call-out. The fact that everything has a designated place makes stock replacement and date checking an easier task too.
- **Security** – when the roll is rolled or folded up, the ampoules are in the centre of the roll. This positioning, coupled with each ampoule having an individual pocket, reduces the chances of damage or loss during transit and deployment.
- **Self-contained** – as everything needed to administer medication is in one roll within a drybag, we have the opportunity, if ever required, to pull the drybag out from its larger immediate care/first aid bag and use the fastest legs to run it up the hill.



ABOVE: LAID OUT, THE WHOLE ROLL MEASURES 122CM X 40CM RIGHT: ROLLED UP, IT FITS EASILY, WITH A SLIM SHARPS BOX, INTO A 15LTR DRY BAG,



LEFT: A VINYL POCKET ON THE EXTERIOR AIDS IDENTIFICATION OF THE DRUGS ROLL AND STATES WHICH VEHICLE IT BELONGS TO.

ALSO STORED HERE ARE DOCUMENTS SUCH AS CASUALTY CARDS, HYPOTHERMIA PROTOCOL, ECMO REFERRAL FORMS, AVALANCHE VICTIM RESUSCITATION CHECKLIST ETC.

RIGHT: TWO LARGE INTERIOR MESH POCKETS FOR STORING ODD-SHAPED ITEMS SUCH AS GLUCAGEN, GTN SPRAY ETC, AS WELL AS NECESSITIES SUCH AS GLOVES, TOURNIQUET, IV DRESSINGS ETC.



ABOVE LEFT: THE TABLETS SECTION HAS BIG POCKETS TO CARRY COMPLETE BLISTER SHEETS SO DATE AND BATCH NUMBER REMAIN INTEGRAL WITH THE TABLETS.



ABOVE RIGHT: NEEDLES, SYRINGES AND CANNULAS ARE ALL GROUPED TOGETHER AND SECURED BY BUNGEE FOR QUICK ACCESS.



ABOVE LEFT: THE ROLL IS CONSTRUCTED WITH VINYL POCKETS TO HOLD LABELS FOR EASE OF IDENTIFICATION. THIS HAS THE BENEFIT THAT THE LAYOUT CAN BE REARRANGED OR COLOUR CODED TO SUIT PREFERRED USE. FOR EXAMPLE, IT CAN INCLUDE A SECTION FOR DOCTOR/PARAMEDIC USE ONLY (SEEN HERE IN RED), AND SECTIONS FOR TITRATION AND FLUSH, RESPIRATORY OR ANALGESICS ETC.



ABOVE RIGHT: 43 POCKETS CAN HOLD VARYING SIZES FOR AMPOULES. THE AMPOULES ARE EASILY RETRIEVED BY PUSHING THEM OUT WITH A FINGER.



ABOVE LEFT: A 'D' RING ON EACH CORNER SECURES THE ROLL IF REQUIRED. ALSO BUILT IN ARE REFLECTIVE STRIPS FOR NIGHT CONSPICUITY.

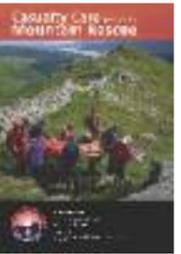


ABOVE RIGHT: WE EVEN FOUND ROOM TO INCLUDE A MAGNIFYING GLASS TO AID IN READING SMALL PRINT, SO YOU CAN LEAVE YOUR READING GLASSES AT HOME!

These drugs rolls are available from www.aiguillealpine.co.uk. A demo roll is available through MREW equipment officer Paul Smith: equipmentofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk

Note on the images: for demonstration purposes some new contents for the drugs roll have been created. But can work out what the connection is between them?)

NEW EDITION CASUALTY CARE IN MOUNTAIN RESCUE NOW AVAILABLE



The latest edition (7) can be accessed via the MREW VLE or at casualtycarebook.com.

Hard copies are available if the demand is sufficient – minimum print runs are 100 (from our printer) to keep the cost at £10 and postage would be added to the cover price. These are still printed on A5 waterproof paper with a fold-flat, wire spine. If teams or individuals are interested, email Andy Caple to find the current level of demand and the feasibility of a print run.

Some sections of this book (the Resuscitation Protocol, Guidance for Drug Administration and Diagnosis of Death) were produced by Langdale Ambleside MRT, specifically for team use, but have been included as they might be of interest to other teams. There are some blank pages for notes and although the pages are coated, Pritt stick works very well to stick A5 size printed notes of your own. All new copies printed also have a copy of ATMIST added as a new page 53, an omission from the original print run. If teams wish to print their own copies, Andy can send a PDF file on request.

TO ORDER COPIES, EMAIL ANDY.CAPLE@GMAIL.COM



Image © Euan Whitaker, ClimbNow.

COLD AND SWEATY? YOU NEED TO FOCUS ON THE SKIN

Many people venture into the outdoors to undertake more technical challenges during the winter months, often under extreme cold with reduced light. The appropriate winter clothing is vital to increase your enjoyment and comfort levels, especially when you know your body will get hot even though it's cold out. In cold weather your choice of clothing is as important as to how you wear it.

Try to stay 'comfortably cold' as you never want to get hot enough to start sweating! Do this by dressing in multiple layers and taking off layers as your temperature increases. We focus on the importance of the first two layers. Your base layer needs to be able to move sweat off your skin efficiently with merino fibre being highly effective. The temptation may be to use a heavier base layer, however, this is more likely to make you sweat. The mid layer provides insulation and helps move sweat away from the base layer. A lightweight merino wool mid layer is highly breathable, dries quickly and will continue to keep you warm even if it is a little damp. The secret to surviving and enjoying winter conditions is to keep the skin dry.

Armadillo Merino® specialises in high performance next-to-skin clothing. To learn more go to: Layering and dressing for the extreme cold blog.armadillomerino.com/blog/layering-and-dressing-for-the-extreme-cold

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— THE DAY'S PROGRAMMES —

Sunday 3rd March

- Pre-Hospital Care for First Aiders and CFRs
- Student Paramedic
- UK SARs

Monday 4th March

- National Fire Service including Extrication
- National Paramedic
- Nursing 1 - ED/Trauma
- Theatre Practitioners
- Injury Prevention
- ½ Day - Psychological Consequence of Trauma

Tuesday 5th March

- PHEM/HEMS
- D13
- Nursing 2 - Critical Care
- Paediatric Trauma
- Expedition, Remote and Wilderness Medicine
- ½ Day - Logistics of running a major incident in hospital – a manager's perspective

Wednesday 6th March

- Critical Care
- TARN
- Trauma in the ED
- Orthopaedic Trauma
- Trauma Rehabilitation National Rehab Group
- Maxillofacial Trauma
- Torso Trauma

TEAM TALK AUTUMN



NOVEMBER: CAS CARE TRAINING WITH A TWIST...

Over the years, Ogwen Valley team members have been called to rescue an inordinate number of goats, sheep and dogs. Particularly dogs. So it made perfect sense to run a Wednesday night training session dedicated to just that.

Kath Wills led the four-legged first aid training, aided and abetted by a willing and varied group of <whisper it> cuddly toys. Kath is a member of neighbouring Llanberis MRT and runs Active First Aid. She taught team members the ins and outs of treating four-legged casualties. Sounds (and looks) like a fun evening was had by all.

Top right: Steve Mullan with casualty. **Below:** A willing band of canine 'casualties' and one goat (or is it a sheep?), suitably triaged and ready for first aid © OVMRO.



Photo: CVSRT.

DECEMBER: BOXING DAY SEARCH FOR MISSING PENSIONER

Calder Valley and Holme Valley team members were called in to assist in an ongoing search for a vulnerable missing pensioner with dementia who was reported missing at 7.00 pm on Boxing Day in the Allerton Bywater area.

West Yorkshire Police, West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, NPAS Carr Gate and Mountain Rescue Search Dogs England were also involved.

As CVSRT members arrived on scene they were greeted with the fantastic news that the gentleman had just been found alive by members of Holme Valley MRT, and required immediate evacuation. He was promptly packaged and transferred by stretcher to an ambulance for treatment and onward journey to hospital.

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OR DOWNLOADABLE **FREE** TO MEMBERS FROM MREW WEBSITE AND AT MOODLE.MOUNTAIN.RESCUE.ORG.UK

PLEASE NOTE: THIS BOOK IS NO LONGER AVAILABLE IN HARD COPY

Coming soon: New statistics reporting system means more up-to-date incident lists here in the magazine

JUDY WHITESIDE EDITOR

If you're looking for the quarterly incident listing, this is indeed normally where you'd find them. Not this issue, however. You'll also recall that we usually run a quarter behind time on the reports. But now the new system is being rolled out to teams, all this will change.

Given that the stats published here are generally several months out of date before they see the printing press, and while we're in the process of swapping the incident reporting system from old to new, we're starting with a blank sheet. By the April issue, everyone will be up to speed, all the stats will be in and we'll be able to update you on six months-worth (right up to the end of March). But that also relies on teams. If everyone updates their stats as they go, we'll have a better reflection of the picture nationally and be better able to evidence any growing trends (see Bob Sharp's article on incident stats on the next page). Watch this space!

NOTE: IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NEW SYSTEMS, PLEASE CONTACT THE STATISTICS OFFICER VIA STATISTICSOFFICER@MOUNTAIN.RESCUE.ORG.UK

incident
stats reports

Mountain rescue incident reporting and governance

BOB SHARP

In a recent issue of the Scottish Mountaineer, the official magazine for Mountaineering Scotland, a tongue in cheek article looked at how readers might avoid becoming a mountain rescue statistic. It was noted that Saturday should be side-stepped but Thursday is a good day. November and December was a 'quiet' period and the hills to the south of Glasgow are much safer than the Highlands. Hillwalking in winter is relatively low risk and snow/ice climbing is especially safe. Further, it was suggested that visitors from Northern Ireland are well placed and that being over 35 years of age helps.

I discuss something similar when talking to groups about mountain rescue, but I take the opposite approach and describe the conditions to be met if someone wishes to meet a rescue team for real! The typical casualty profile I describe is someone who is a male, aged between 20 and 30 years old and professionally employed. It helps to be an experienced hillgoer unaffiliated to any kind of club, who lives outside Scotland. June to September, particularly on a Sunday in the afternoon, is the time to be out on the hills. And if the individual suffers a slip or trip, or their navigation skills are suspect, then the chances of being rescued are maximised (Figure 1).

All of this is based on extensive records of real-world evidence and I'm sure many readers will see similarities with the work of their own team. They might also conclude that participation levels can explain much. But the profiles described are just summary

statistics and say nothing about individual incidents or casualties. It is unlikely that the overall profiles apply to any single person. For these reasons many will view information like this as an academic exercise and argue that historical generalities have no practical value. I can sympathise with this view,

ANNUAL FIGURES LET OTHERS KNOW HOW MUCH WORK HAS BEEN UNDERTAKEN BY A TEAM AND THE SCOPE AND VARIETY OF THAT WORK

but I would also argue that incident reporting and the gathering of statistical information is important and can serve both mountain rescue and the wider mountaineering fraternity in several positive ways. Both Dave (Heavy) Whalley and myself have commented on this matter in previous publications and discussed the

practical value of incident statistics. Most of what we say is fairly obvious but it's worth listing some key features before commenting on what I see as the underlying *raison d'être* behind recording and publishing incident statistics.

Funding

Recording and collating incident statistics is useful for both teams and the national organisations as they provide an accurate measure of workload. Potential and current sponsors should be made aware of the scope and nature of a team's workload. This is particularly vital in Scotland where the national body allocates Scottish Government funding to teams based (in part), on the number of rescues and person hours recorded annually by each team. And, although hypothetical, when the statistics are translated into the number of equivalent full time police officers, the figures show everyone, particularly political and police agencies, exactly how much money is saved to the public purse.

Public understanding

Annual figures let others know how much work has been undertaken by a team and also the scope and variety of that work (Figures 2 & 3). Some members of the public are astonished to discover the number of rescues teams undertake each year and the personal commitment that involves. Publishing annual figures on websites, in booklet form and through public displays and events is a highly visible way of informing the public about what teams do. It also goes some way to



FIGURE 2 shows how the workload for one of Scotland's teams has risen over the years. Information like this has implications for the size of team membership, recruitment and a possible 'shift' system of deployment.

ABOUT
BOB SHARP



Bob Sharp has been involved in mountain rescue for over 40 years, many as leader of the Lomond MRT. A retired academic in sports science, he has a particular interest in statistics and historical matters.

untangling any misunderstandings which surround our work (eg. that we are not paid officers or that we constantly put our lives on the line), which also helps mitigate bad press and dispel folklores.

Training and skills

In many aspects of life, good practice is shaped by experience and achieved only on the back of what has gone before. Indeed, Albert Einstein commented that 'the only source of knowledge is experience'. Others refer to experience being a 'roadmap to the future'. It follows, therefore, that incident information gathered over a number of years provides robust evidence to inform a team's training strategy — where and when it takes place, what form it might take, and those practices to avoid or which do not work well.

Specifically, objective information confirms the areas most likely to be visited, the kinds of injuries sustained by casualties, the balance of searches

INFORMATION GATHERED AND COLLATED OVER A LONG PERIOD CAN REVEAL THINGS WHICH WOULD OTHERWISE BE HIDDEN FROM VIEW

to rescues as well as typical casualty profiles and equipment used. Most important, the use of objective data ensures that training is not biased by individual whims, anecdotal evidence or the impact of particularly serious, but rare, incidents. And the analysis of information gathered and collated over a long period can reveal things which would otherwise be hidden from view.

I was surprised recently to discover — contrary to my expectations — that one mountain rescue team in Scotland devotes over one third of its effort dealing with non-mountaineering incidents. Findings like this can remain unseen if teams fail to look for long-term trends in their incidents.

Therefore, incident information gathered over time is critical in helping shape training and therefore the skill set of members. The acquisition of specific and general skills and their relative balance must be defined by past history.

Resources

Statistical records give a fairly clear indication (if only to confirm) about the kinds of technical gear, first aid equipment and vehicles a team might

stock. For example, having a clear, objective picture of the kinds of injuries sustained by casualties, is a valuable yardstick by which the right kind of equipment might be kept. Similarly, a team that searches primarily for missing people (who may be hypothermic), might stock a different array of gear to one that rescues fallen climbers who are badly injured. And procuring equipment centred on firm evidence of need minimises the risk of acquiring gear based on the vagaries of individual interests or current fashions. You might say this is a good example of matching theory to practice.

Mountain safety

Most important is the fact that mountain incident data accumulated

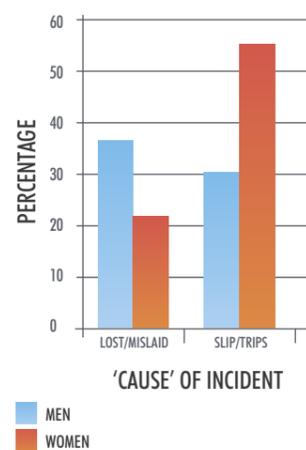


FIGURE 1 shows clear gender differences in two of the key causes of incidents attended by one of Scotland's teams. Of all the men who are rescued, just over one third are lost/mislaid and just less than a third slip/trip. The balance is much different with women; a far greater proportion slip (over half) but fewer are lost (one fifth).

The higher proportion of slips is mirrored by the high proportion of leg injuries women suffer compared to men. Men are much more likely to suffer multiple or fatal injuries. These findings are reflected in national figures.

This kind of data informs teams of the kinds of injuries they may encounter, and also precisely informs those who promote and target mountain safety initiatives.

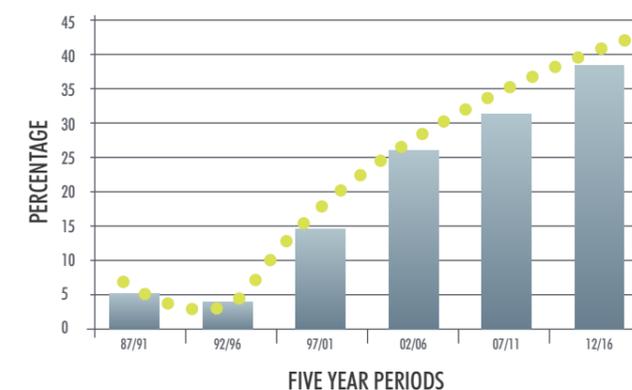


FIGURE 3 shows how the proportion of non-mountaineering incidents for all Scottish teams has changed over the past 30 years. It suggests that the nature of mountain rescue is changing and highlights how teams may need to adapt their skill base to meet the shift in demands.



over a long period of time is the best source of information for those individuals and organisations that promote and impart advice about mountain safety. Mountain rescue teams are in a unique position to identify what goes wrong in the mountains. They have first-hand

well be due to the promotional work undertaken by the sportsotland avalanche information service (SAIS), which was initiated about 30 yrs ago. The SAIS is one of a number of organisations across the UK, which includes training groups, commercial providers, national bodies, rescue

LIMITATIONS IN PEOPLES' PLANNING ABILITY SUCH AS WHAT GEAR TO TAKE ON THE HILL, HOW THE WEATHER WILL PAN OUT AND ROUTE PREPARATION ARE ALL REVEALED TO BE SIGNIFICANT FACTORS EVERY YEAR... AND MEN SEEM TO BE AT PARTICULAR RISK

knowledge and are often able to identify the factors associated with incidents. Trends in mountain incidents reveal many things about the causes and factors that contribute to mountain incidents, as well as the individual characteristics of those most likely to require help. For example, incident reporting over many years reveals that poor navigation is a key issue. Limitations in peoples' planning ability such as what gear to take on the hill, how the weather will pan out and route preparation are all revealed to be significant factors every year. And men seem to be at particular risk. In Scotland, incident analysis shows that students and those who are professionally employed are relatively high risk groups.

Taking a different example, statistics reveal that the number of avalanche incidents is small. Dave Whalley and myself have examined this problem in some detail and shown that whilst there is considerable variation each year, the trend over time shows an overall decline. Indeed there has been a 50% decline in 30 years. This may

teams, mountain instructors and leaders that use data from mountain incidents to alert people to hazards and risks and thereby foster safe travel in the mountains.

Historical uses

Accurate recording of each and every incident can have historical value. Occasionally, people make contact to gain information that will help them discover more about an incident that had a particular impact on their lives.

To give an example, some 20 years ago when serving as an officer of the then Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland, I was asked if I could provide the accurate location of someone who had died on one of Scotland's mountains. Fortunately, the team involved in the incident had recorded the exact grid reference. The information was passed to the family, which allowed members to visit the site and draw closure on a sad time in their lives. Of course, teams have a moral obligation to help on these occasions.

It's also important to keep incident reports 'open', even when they may be viewed as complete, in the event that errors can be corrected or reports updated as new information comes to light. A typical example would be when a casualty's exact injuries become known following subsequent communications with medical authorities. I know of one case where a report was updated several years later when the body of the missing person was eventually discovered.

Recruitment

Statistical information can help shape the needs of a team's overall skill set, and it can also be used to properly inform prospective members of their responsibilities, the required skills and their likely commitments. It is paramount that prospective members are given accurate information before they commence their probationary period and subsequent operational commitments (Figures 2 & 3).

I can recall instances where this did not happen. In one case, team members left after a short period because their expectation to be involved in technical winter rescues never materialised. In another case, a member found that most of her time was spent searching low level for persons missing from care homes. She had expected every incident to be a full-blown mountain rescue.

Potential members should be informed not only of their operational obligations in terms of timing, extent and scope but also any training, administrative, PR and fundraising commitments. This might impact on whether they engage in mountain rescue in the first place.

For example, it may be inappropriate for someone who cannot gain time off from work to join a team whose rescues take place primarily mid-week and during the working day. Similarly, someone whose aspirations are to participate in technical rescues may waste their time going through a lengthy probationary period with a team whose rescues are mainly low level searches. Providing all potential new members with accurate information about the range, timing and extent of involvement is essential to avoid such problems (Figures 4 & 5).

A corporate attitude

Full and accurate statistical information provides a good platform for sharing. Sharing information with

recorded accurately, fully and immediately. Whilst teams and national organisations may have different systems for doing this, each incident should be logged in a form that allows subsequent editing and analysis. The information that is recorded should have durability and transferability so that information is not lost as software, recording systems and personnel change over time. And there should always be a willingness to share this information with others.

Whilst some might say they have no time for statistics and that incident recording and reporting is just an academic exercise, I take the contrary view; incident recording is a clear sign of professionalism and good stewardship. In other words, it's a hallmark of strong governance. It allows teams to share the full nature of their work with sponsors, local community groups, other emergency services and even government agencies — local and national. Further, it provides a solid platform to inform and instruct future generations of team members. We all recognise that current members are only guardians of their organisation for a short time. During their period of responsibility, they have an obligation to ensure that all records — not only statistical records, but also minutes of meetings, financial accounts and a whole raft of other documents — should be properly archived.

In this way, there is continuity across generations of team members and the contribution of our predecessors is clearly acknowledged.

Most important, recognising that the 'past is our roadmap to the future' gives assurance that operational practice benefits from the best kind of information available. ☺

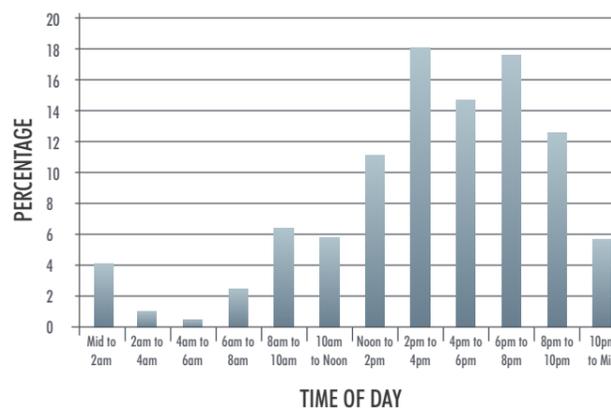


FIGURE 5 illustrates the pattern of call-outs at times across the day for one of Scotland's teams. It reveals that over 55% occur during the working day. This has implications for the availability of team members whose working hours coincide with this period and may impact on how incidents are managed by team leadership.

others demonstrates a strong and open corporate spirit. We all know that mountain rescue teams don't work in isolation. There is a wide range of stakeholders, co-workers and friends. The list is almost endless: police, ambulance, coastguard, fire and rescue, press, media, public, donors, sponsors, landowners, casualties, other rescue teams, national organisations, political and community organisations and so on. Indeed, rescue teams often have a strong focus within their local community where members are viewed as pillars of selflessness. In a small way, they add character and standing to their local community.

The dissemination of statistical information about a team's work to local and wider audiences shows a

willingness to share and goes a long way to ensure others do not mislabel the team. There is always a risk that any organisation, which fails to publicise its work openly and regularly with others may be seen as elitist and inward-looking. Of course, that is not what mountain rescue is about.

Good governance

The production of comprehensive incident reports and the preparation of informative annual summaries made available for others to examine, are signs of both strong governance and a corporate approach. Whilst rescuing people is the focus of what we do in mountain rescue, the recording process is an integral, albeit final part of the rescue process. It is my view that each and every incident should be

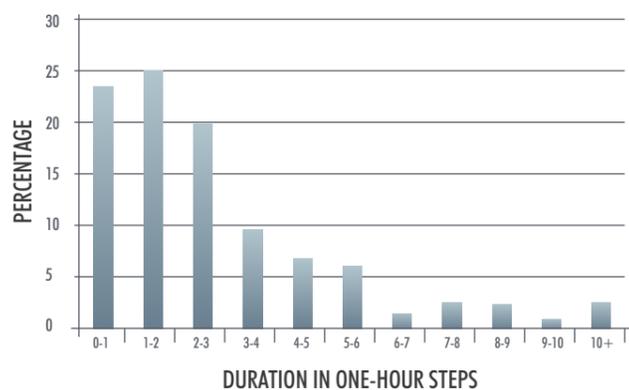
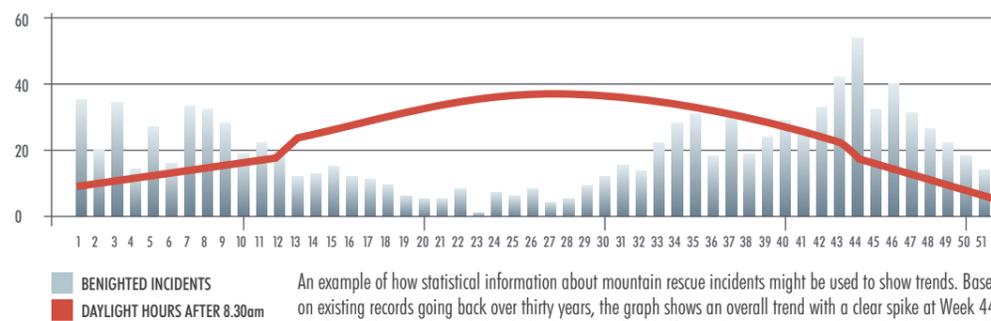


FIGURE 4 shows the duration of incidents (from call-out to stand down) managed by one of Scotland's teams. Information like this (in addition to other information such as number of call-outs) is a useful guide to would-be team members as to their likely commitments.

BENIGHTED INCIDENTS BY WEEK, VERSUS DAYLIGHT AFTER 08.30



An example of how statistical information about mountain rescue incidents might be used to show trends. Based on existing records going back over thirty years, the graph shows an overall trend with a clear spike at Week 44 which roughly coincides with the clocks changing/school half term. Source: Mountain Rescue England and Wales.

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who?



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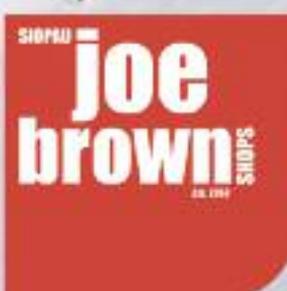
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