

# Mountain MAGAZINE Rescue



ISSUE 9

INCORPORATING MRC NEWS

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

JULY 2004

## A WALK IN THE WOODS

Searching for  
salamanders in the  
Blue Ridge Mountains

## WHAT A LONG STRANGE TRIP IT'S BEEN...

Bill Batson bows out

## DIVING EMERGENCIES AND CAVE RESCUE

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## Mountain Rescue

INCORPORATING MRC NEWS

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**Issue 10 - October 2004**

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**Front page pic**

Passage in Peak Cavern first explored by cave divers in 1949.

Photograph courtesy John Cordingley.

**Editor's Note**

**Articles carried in Mountain Rescue Magazine do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the MRC.**

### Thank You

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

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

Years ago, when I was approached by Stewart Hulse and David Allan to stand as Equipment Officer, taking over from Joe Walmsley, little did I realise what I was taking on! I can still vividly remember my first main meeting, then in the old Stockport College buildings, thinking that the proceedings seemed to go on forever (and that I was the youngster in the room!)

It was, however, an eye-opener to the potential for modernisation and development. Having taken on the role, I met with Joe to be briefed on my duties and responsibilities. I came away with an archive of material that represented the history and development of mountain rescue, a huge sense of trepidation mixed with excitement and a resolve to continue in the footsteps of somebody who has contributed so much to mountain rescue.

I could spend hours on the work of the Equipment sub-committee – its challenges, developments and successes. However, I would like to comment on some wider issues from a personal perspective. In past years, one of my biggest frustrations has been the wasted time and energy expended on inter-region, team, and MRC politics. I think that we have turned a corner over the last five years – no doubt with the help of better communication through our excellent newsletter and web site. I believe that there is a collective realisation that it is far better to plan and shape our developments at the MRC, than to be continually

reactive, fire-fighting issues, or even having directives imposed upon us.

I wrote a short piece in a previous edition about the formation of the new Duddon and Furness team. The process of amalgamation, the thinking about the future, and review of systems and operating procedures has convinced me that many other teams might benefit from a similar process, should look with a hard critical eye at the future, and look and think outside the box. Workloads and expectations of teams will inevitably continue to grow but, with modern transportation and communications, do we really need fifty plus teams?

I would also like to comment on the hotly debated subject of Standards and Guidelines. Whether one likes it or not, we already have them in many operational areas. Who set and devised them? Well of course, we developed and refined them ourselves. Who monitors and reviews these standards and guidelines? We do!

We should not look at these as some restraining straitjacket but rather as hard evidence of our commitment to developing best practice. It is this commitment to training, continual development, reviewing techniques and different ways of working, and the dissemination of these, that is a mark of a joined up and mature organisation.

I am certain that my first impressions at that MRC meeting were correct but I am also equally sure that the modernisation programme is now really beginning to make an impression. Thankfully, the time that used to be lost in petty politics is largely a thing of the past.

**Mike Margeson** Equipment Officer

## ...AND FROM THE EDITOR...

Okay, so we got off on the wrong foot. We had words. Plenty, actually – fuelled by beer and draught cider in the local – as every passing month appeared to add fresh insult to our injured egos. But, in the nature of any new relationship, it takes time to discover where the other party's coming from. And – as any battle-of-the-sexes-weary old agony aunt would tell you – you've got to talk. To each other, that is.

So, there I was at the Outdoors Show, when the *Trail* stand hove into view (or was it the other way round?) 'Aha!' I thought. 'Now's me chance!'

As it turned out, the object of my (our) collective discomfort wasn't there on the Friday (okay, so I was skiing – much more fun mooching round the NEC picking up freebies than staring at a computer screen all day) but his Deputy, Emma Kendall was. So we sat down and had a chat. I said I wasn't happy, she said they were sorry. She said they thought we did a great job and wanted to support us. I said okay... what now?

How about this for an idea? she asked. *Trail*

run an auction on e-bay and the money raised goes to mountain rescue. Sounds great, I said... as I wandered off to collect a few more goodie bags. A couple of weeks later, another Friday afternoon and the sun's approaching the yard-arm when the phone rings. It's Guy Proctor, *Trail* Editor. Same thing. Auction. ebay. What did I think? Could they have a logo? As long as I can see what you're going to do with it, I said. (Protecting the brand and all that). So I sent him a logo, he sent me a proof of the page and the result appeared in July's *Trail*. As I write, the auction has closed and the first cheques come through already – nigh on £700 raised in total. So credit where it's due... and thank you *Trail Magazine*.

But, don't leave me just yet... there's more. Now we're on speaking terms, they've approached us a couple of times for info and useful contacts for forthcoming articles and I've been able to put them in touch with the right people to talk to. Of course, mutual trust and respect take time to nurture and grow... but, if we keep talking, keep working at the relationship... this might just be the start of something worth having.

**Judy Whiteside** Editor

## COUNCIL DROPPED

The MRC is to drop the word Council from its title, to become Mountain Rescue England & Wales. All the regional reps had the opportunity to voice their thoughts on the move. The consensus was for change. The new logo will be an amended version of the old, and it is anticipated that the process of change will be a gradual one, with teams phasing in the new branding as and when replacing kit. On the subject of the new logo, teams should note this is not immediately available as the process must first be ratified by the Charities Commission. As soon as this has been done, the new version will be available via the website, or through Judy Whiteside on [judywhitesidejw@aol.com](mailto:judywhitesidejw@aol.com) – keep an eye on the newsgroup for updates.

## WILD AND REMOTE PLACES...

The new strapline was accepted by the meeting, again following discussion amongst the reps. So it's now official... mountain rescue saves lives in wild and remote places. It should be stressed – this is an MRC (sorry MRI!) initiative – teams may adopt the line as part of their own identity but are not obliged to do so.

## MRC HANDBOOK

Update on the handbook... again. Given that the bit with the names and addresses (hitherto called the insert) hasn't actually been inserted for a couple of years, it's now been retitled The Mountain & Cave Rescue Directory and will be produced as a separate piece of literature, on an annual basis. The Handbook itself has been postponed until next May, 2005. By the time you read this, teams should be in possession of their quota of Directories. Copies will be sent free to teams (two per team), the regional secretaries, reps and associated organisations.

After that, there is a cover price of £2.50. If you require copies, please contact Eve Burton, Handbook Co-ordinator at 9 Princes Road, Chinley, High Peak SK23 6AB or via email on [eveburton@chinley35.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:eveburton@chinley35.fsnet.co.uk). The address to contact Eve via the website has recently changed to [handbook@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:handbook@mountain.rescue.org.uk). The address for the Mountain Rescue Magazine has also changed. This is now [editor@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:editor@mountain.rescue.org.uk)

## NEW SEATS AT TOP

Ray Davies and David Little stepped down from long standing positions on

the MRC Executive in May. Peter Smith and Penny Brockman were duly elected to take over as Secretary and Treasurer respectively.

## PPE/FPE EQUIPMENT CHECKING

The first MRC PPE/FPE equipment-checking course took place in March – thanks go to Oldham MRT, for their hospitality, Phil Beard, course instructor, and John Edwards, organiser. The equipment sub committee has been wanting to run these courses for some time. Mike Margeson, Equipment Officer, attended the course alongside twenty team

members from as far afield as Ireland and Scotland. The day's programme was a good mix of theory and hands-on practical sessions, which had been well focused to meet the needs of MR team members. Feedback from the programme has been reviewed and the plan is to put on another course in the winter, and one in spring, 2005.

## MORE EQUIPMENT NEWS...

The new Maclnnes stretcher is a departure from the previous designs and is very light. Further details in the next edition and we hope to have one on display at the Bangor Conference in September.

## FIXED DATES IN THE CALENDER

**MRC MEETING**  
SATURDAY  
20 NOVEMBER  
**TEAM LEADERS MEETING**  
SATURDAY  
4 DECEMBER  
**TEAM DOCTORS MEETING**  
FRIDAY  
8 OCTOBER

The new casbag has finished its testing in the regions and also completed its thermal test, the results of which are due very shortly from Leeds University. Final modifications are to be completed by the autumn, ready for a production run. Feedback on the new vacmat is good – please pass any comments back via your equipment rep to the equipment sub committee.

## Ray Davies and David Little... a tribute

I was given the opportunity – which I accepted without question – to assess the vast contribution that Ray and David have made to the Mountain Rescue Council (England & Wales). For well over 30 years, I've seen Secretaries and Treasurers come and go. Every one has been hard working and dedicated but, as time progressed, these positions have become more demanding.

Over the years, my respect and friendship for both Ray and David has grown. I've always found Ray a down-to-earth, no-nonsense chap, who calls a spade a spade, does not suffer fools gladly, and is as honest as the day is long. He's a practical mountaineer and mountain rescue man which, by the way, are credentials that I like immensely and which I believe others should endeavour to emulate.

David, on the other hand, is a very efficient and quiet man. Again, a gifted mountaineer, who also has a gift for anything financial. He has worked tirelessly in this field and every mountain rescue team member should be very grateful for all he has achieved. If I had to name one area of his expertise it would be insurance.

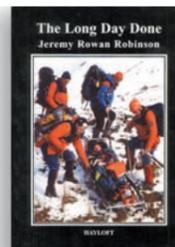
I am a hard man myself when it comes to practical mountain rescue matters, but I have great respect and admiration for both Ray and David. They are my kind of men – both of whom the MRC and mountain rescue in general should be proud of. I have no intention of embarrassing them any further, only to say I hope their services to mountain rescue are recognised and not forgotten. I personally will always regard them as very good friends, as I'm sure we all do.

**Stewart Hulse MBE President.** Langdale Ambleside MRT

## READING MATTERS

### THE LONG DAY DONE

BY JEREMY ROWAN ROBINSON



Set mostly in the Lake District's Langdale Valley, *The Long Day Done* tells the fictional tale of a couple of fairly protracted rescues from several angles. Initially setting the scene from a legal point of view before an inquest, you could be forgiven for expecting a fairly detailed debate on whether or not Mountain Rescue Teams should be professional, the inference being that the rescues didn't go well. The book then details the circumstances

surrounding the incidents leading to the rescues and then the rescues themselves, including some of the decision making, both by leadership and those on the ground.

From an MR perspective the story is well told and demonstrates several aspects of the work including incident management, search, working with helicopters, casualty management and the relationship with the police. For anyone unfamiliar with MR it would give a good guide as to how teams work and what motivates the membership.

As a piece of drama the book lacks some of the 'plot' and character development you might associate with a novel. Maybe we all expect a bit too much these days, having been fed a diet of blockbuster titles which, whilst lacking in credibility, keep you reading into the wee small hours. Nevertheless, there were times when I thought I was reading a script from a 1940's film with all the characters talking with very 'BBC' accents and all being terribly proper.

The author isn't another Joe Simpson or Jon Krakauer but, having said that, the book delivers a very competent read which both educates and entertains. **Andy Simpson**

*The Long Day Done.* 1-904524-03-6. Published by Hayloft Publishing. Price £9.50.

For further information: [dawn@hayloft.org.uk](mailto:dawn@hayloft.org.uk)

## Dave Little looks back...

Well, it's over – my stint as Treasurer. When I checked back I took over from Harry Worsdall in 1987. 17 years. It is truly amazing how quickly the time has passed. Of course, there were days when time seemed to stand still but they were exceptionally rare. Changes in my personal circumstances made the decision both necessary and correct for the MRC as it was obvious that I would be unable to commit myself to the same level in the future. It was a difficult, reluctant and sad decision. There are always things that need to be done, targets to be met and fresh goals to be achieved. Well, that's now for others.

Inevitably, at times like these, you look back to assess the changes and progress of the organisation. It may come as a shock to the newcomers to the MRC that there has been tremendous progress over the past 17 years. Shouts of 'What does the MRC do for us? Nothing!' may have had some justification all those years ago but now things are different. There has been a change in the mindset regarding what a nationally strong and active body can achieve. Communications are remarkably better and none of us have an excuse as to why we can't find out what we want to know. The increasing activity and delegation of power to the sub-committees to take on the workload of the MRC has led to achievement and openness about MRC activities.

If we aspire to be a great organisation, then the progress made must be sustained and improved upon. There is no end to the process. I believe that the quality of the people involved in the MRC is such that they can steer the organisation to greater things. I wish them every success in doing that because, as a team member, I will be watching and, of course, benefiting, supporting, and helping whenever I can.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone around the country for the help, support and encouragement I have received over the years. Without that it would not have been worthwhile, or so enjoyable. Many thanks.

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## Expert Opinion. A case for discussion...

### Members of ACPO have been advised not to use volunteers as expert witnesses.

This was included in the report of the ACPO representative at the MRC meeting in Plas y Brenin. At present this refers to the occasions when mountain rescue team members have been asked to express opinions regarding the risks being undertaken by various people and groups on the hills. Unwittingly, individuals have strayed from giving evidence of a factual nature into making judgmental statements about the suitability of pursuing actions in the light of weather conditions, experience etc. This has led to difficult and uncomfortable times for those who have strayed into deeper waters than they had imagined. It does, therefore, seem that the ACPO advice is very welcome and will alleviate this problem for the future.

On further consideration, however, it raises another question – if volunteers are not to be used as witnesses, then who will speak for mountain rescue if it is the actions of mountain rescue itself that are under the spotlight?

Professional paid mountain rescue personnel are only to be found within the RAF teams. Would they be the people to speak as experts in the event of a problem with volunteer teams? Would opinion be sought from professional mountaineers outside mountain rescue?

Hopefully, mountain rescue will never find itself in the position of defending its actions in a court but in the light of patterns seen in the rest of society this is perhaps a vain aspiration.

Being relieved of the need to comment on the actions of others, perhaps the time has come to consider who we would wish to pass opinion on our own activities.

Your views on this are important. For starters, such person(s) would need to have the confidence of the organisation, be very experienced, actively involved at the front line, eloquent, and publicly presentable. Does this describe anyone you know?

**David Allan MRC Chairman**

## MRC COURSES 2004

### SEARCH FIELD SKILLS

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Date: 4-6 September  
Location: Bangor University  
Contact: Dr ASG Jones MBE  
01248 364131  
Peter Howells  
01633 893447

### SEARCH PLANNING & MANAGEMENT

40 places.  
This course addresses the vital skills required to plan and manage a search operation.  
Date: 13-17 September  
Location: Bangor University  
Contact: Dr ASG Jones MBE  
01248 364131  
Peter Howells  
01633 893447

### WATER HAZARDS AWARENESS

To be arranged.  
Contact: John Edwards  
[jmemr@talk21.com](mailto:jmemr@talk21.com)

### EQUIPMENT INSPECTION & TECHNICAL ASPECTS

To be arranged.  
Contact: John Edwards  
[jmemr@talk21.com](mailto:jmemr@talk21.com)

## Penny Brockman takes up the purse strings...

The new MRC Treasurer tells us a bit about her background, what plans she might have for the financial future of mountain rescue and updates us on national fundraising.

Well, I think my fate was sealed when my parents christened me Penny. I wonder, when they named me, did they ever think that my professional life would be as a chartered accountant, and that I'd be able to take those skills and transfer them to support a charity doing something I love? The outdoors has always been a way of life for me, having spent all my childhood in Perth, Australia. When I moved back to London, I went and did my Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award to meet people, and fell hook, line and sinker in love with mountaineering.

As I went and studied in my professional career with its pressures, my mountaineering, and being involved in mountain rescue, kept a balance in my life. I've been fortunate to have been able to mountaineer in a number of countries including Scotland, various places in America and the Alps. And, from climbing Mt St Helens to abseiling out of a helicopter in Washington State, it has been great fun. Whilst I have taken on challenges in my mountaineering life, I have taken on new challenges in my career, with roles from Audit Manager, through Human Resources/Quality Manager, to IT Project Manager. Nowadays I balance my life between working in London and weekends in South Wales.

Never one to sit down and do nothing, I have been an active member of mountain rescue for 18 years. I continue to be an operational member of the Central Beacons team in Wales, and have played an active part in the South Wales Search & Rescue Association.

I feel that I am very fortunate that I have been able to support mountain rescue, not just as an operational team member, but have used the skills that I have acquired in my professional life – as a team member, member of a region and now as the MRC Treasurer. I hope to continue the good work that Dave Little has done for 17 years and I wish him good luck for the future.

### My thoughts of what does the future hold...

Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a crystal ball to see mountain rescue of the future and the challenges that we'll have to face? Failing that, though, I believe there are some indicators of what we might see.

The charity market will continue to change due to the law and, as more and more charities come on board, this will introduce an even more competitive nature in the obtaining of voluntary income. The pattern towards giving will continue to change and we will need to ensure that we have the ability to adapt to these changes in obtaining this income.

The insurance market and the culture surrounding insurance have seen increasing premiums in the last few years, and this will continue. As a result, earlier this year, the MRC Executive concluded that we need to seek help from someone with specialist knowledge. We've now taken this forward and discussions are underway. Watch this space!

Something I feel strongly about is that MRC will have to ensure that it is 'proactive' and I believe that this has started through the development meetings of the Executive and representatives from mountain rescue but this will need to continue. To ensure that we understand our future we will need to take time out and plan the direction we would like the MRC to take, and clearly communicate this through objectives.

I don't see my role simply as Treasurer, but as part of the executive team of the Mountain Rescue Council. I hope to continue to support the MRC through the development process to have an infrastructure which can take us into the future, and look at the financial opportunities available to mountain rescue through having a strong brand and image.

### National Fundraising

We have learned a lot and continue to do so. There is now a team of people with the correct blend of skills to move the various initiatives forward. Underpinning national fundraising success is a strong central profile and brand and we are moving forward in this direction, with the agreement at the meeting in May for the change of name to 'Mountain Rescue England and Wales'.

The last couple of months have seen various people carry out fundraising events for the MRC. Some of these have already taken place as you read this article. We are now starting to analyse the profile of these people to understand where our market is and how we can expand this area.

The government initiative is moving forward. A fantastic CD has been put together to demonstrate the work of mountain rescue. This was the result of a lot of hard work by Stewart Hulse and Andy Simpson. Anne Leuchars and I reviewed the presentation and the result is a highly professional marketing CD.

In addition, the MRC internet group are taking forward the requirements of national fundraising as part of the new MRC web site.

As we continue to grow in national fundraising, we are realising that there are new roles required – one of these being Relationship Managers. We need people in place able to cultivate our links with various commercial organisations to benefit MR. This has started to take place with Judy Whiteside as our first line of contact with Trail (myself being the second). This is already paying dividends, as Judy reports elsewhere.

You can contact Penny on 0208 857 2524 or penny@pbrockman.freeserve.co.uk



The new MRC Secretary pictured on a recent completion of the Welsh 3000s.

## ...and Peter Smith signs in as Secretary...

In my application to fill the vacant position, I mentioned that my 33 years in MR has been jam packed with good stuff. Interest and commitment at team level led to becoming Team Leader. I was able to move things forward. This led to involvement at Regional level. I now had two jobs. Again I was able to move things forward. In particular I am credited with the creation of Foundation Courses and Party Leader Courses. This led to involvement at National level. I now had three jobs. After serving on the MRC Publications Committee I was dispatched to the embryonic Training Committee. Again I was able to move things forward. In particular I was a dedicated contributor to the negotiations between that Committee and the Sports Council, as well as being a pioneer of the National Training Guidelines for Full Hill Member and for Party Leader. This led to running the Party Leader Course as a National event since 2000.

In all this activity I have never had a 'Plan B'. I conceive 'Plan A' and persevere with determination until all is resolved with a favourable outcome.

My record of mountaineering and caving testifies to my belief that those involved in mountain rescue should, first and foremost, be active mountaineers. This said, my MR activities did slow down my completion of the Munros to a leisurely 25 years. On the way I had my fair share of navigating through whiteouts, circumventing avalanche prone slopes, and dealing with companions who were hypothermic, exhausted, or diabetic. Occasionally, I was very wet, miserable and a long way from anywhere – especially the pub. I managed to avoid being benighted and never took a serious tumble. I did, however, acquire a lot of empathy for those who are at risk in wild and remote places. I believe that this is an essential quality for those involved in mountain rescue.

Parochialism has previously been rife within mountain rescue circles. I have always fought against this damaging and restrictive short sightedness. My role as MRC Secretary is to be a smooth facilitator, easing the circulation of information from team to team, committee to committee, team to specialist committee (comprised of ordinary members from ordinary teams) and committees back to teams. I believe in mutual co-operation for mutual benefit.

In hoping to emulate Ray in doing a first class job, I will always follow his advice which is 'to keep the affairs of the MRC in good order'.

You can contact Peter on 01706 852335 or secretary@mountain.rescue.org.uk

# PR for MR... good news or bad news?

## Anne Leuchars takes a look at our image

Many readers will already be familiar with Anne – a journalist and PR Consultant, she came along to the Edinburgh Conference to tell us a few home truths about how others see us. Her professional experience spans local press, regional television and ITN, and a spell as Information Officer for Northumberland National Park Authority. She has also worked with the NESRA teams on media issues for several years. Anne will be with us again in September, at the Bangor bash, no doubt beating the same drum, so we thought we'd bring a little preview to whet your appetites...

### First the bad news...

So there I am in the newsroom at the BBC in Newcastle at 5am the day after Whitsun Bank Holiday. A news release e-mail has come in overnight. In bold type the headline says, '100 RNLI bank holiday weekend lifeboat launches'. The text has details of rescues all around the coastline from Aith in Shetland to Falmouth in Cornwall.

I learn that North West Wales was one of the busiest areas, with 15 people saved from boats or trapped in a cove by the tide. In North Cornwall the drama was a potentially lethal rip current. On the south coast the RNLI saved two divers, in the southeast an RAF helicopter helped rescue a man in a diabetic coma from a broken-down speedboat. Lifeboats were launched 10 times on the River Thames.

The final paragraph told me that last year RNLI lifeboats crewed by volunteers were

launched 8,047 times rescuing 7,815 people – an average of 21 people every day. And gave a phone number for journalists to get specific information for their own area.

It had been sent at 21.27 on Monday night ie not long after darkness fell and the beaches and harbours had gone quiet. Brilliant.

I have absolutely no idea how it was on the fells and peaks, and in caves, over the Bank Holiday. Maybe you didn't match the number of RNLI call-outs, but I bet there were some good tales. Even if it was unusually quiet you could spark debate about people finally learning hillcraft and heeding safety messages. Some teams probably sent their usual news releases to their usual local media, gaining a paragraph or two of copy. How much more impact would it have had with a national roundup as well?

Those of you who have seen my presentations at MR conferences will by now be

saying 'not that comparison with the RNLI again'. A snatch squad from NESRA is probably planning to seize my Honorary Member certificate to punish me for banging on about the same things time and time again. I only do it because I care!! You have a national press officer – that doesn't mean he does all the work. Please help him to create a national profile for MR.

### ...and the good news...

SARDA demonstrated an exceptionally professional approach to the media at their training weekend at Sowerby Bridge in May. A gold star to Dave Coss for cheerfully tackling the chore of sending out dozens of news releases that generated several stories.

On the day he dedicated himself to making life easy for the national BBC team that turned up and it paid off – there were live interviews with SARDA members and, crucially for MR, with the man from Holux who had donated the new navigation equipment.

Not one person (or dog) showed irritation at the loss of training time caused by the media's demands and the BBC reporter told me afterwards how impressed she had been with SARDA. A double whammy – not only good coverage of the story, but you can bet the journalist and producer now have several SARDA names and numbers in their contacts books for future stories.

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## Langdale Ambleside selects Team simoco for emergency radio

Langdale Ambleside has chosen new radio equipment from manufacturer and integrator, Team simoco. The new equipment will operate in the new Marine Band (135-180 MHz) frequencies allocated to UKSAR in October 2003. The team, which previously operated on low-band equipment operating at 66-86MHz, has selected an analogue Private Mobile Radio (PMR) system from Team simoco comprising seven TSF2025 base stations (five remote, one local and one ground-to-air for helicopter communication) and two SRD 1000 desktop controllers.

The team, which operates in one of Britain's most popular areas – Langdale Fell, Grasmere and Ambleside – and can deal with over 100 emergency incidents per year, has a reputation for extremely rapid response times and typically aims to launch a rescue within four minutes of receiving an alert from the police.

Team simoco will make radio operation simpler by identifying the source of the strongest remote base station signal and automatically responding to that base station. This choice is currently made unaided by the operator – meaning extra workload and the potential for lost

time during an emergency rescue. As part of the selection process, Team simoco also provided radio signal propagation studies from which it was able to recommend a number of changes to the existing remote base station locations to generate total coverage of the area.

Phil Taylor of Langdale Ambleside said, 'We see the full range of injuries out on the hills, some of them extremely serious, and having a really good radio system can mean the difference between life and death. Radio and hills don't typically go well together, so Team simoco's experience of working with LAMRT over many decades, their understanding and willingness to adapt to the technical challenges of working in this terrain and the fact that we can trust the company to maintain its equipment over its full life were big factors in our choice.'

Andy Gamble, Business Development Manager UK & ROI at Team simoco commented, 'We're pleased to have been chosen to supply and commission the new radio system. Our versatile products and engineering excellence are well-suited to this type of technically and topographically challenging application.'

**Team simoco**

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## LAKE DISTRICT

**Richard Warren (Secretary, LDSAMRA)** writes... 'This is a short summary of key events in the Lake District over recent months and the first of what we hope will be a regular contribution from the region.

'One tragic event, on 17 May, was the helicopter incident on Pike of Stickle, Langdale. Whilst **Langdale Ambleside MRT** were rescuing a scrambler who'd fallen because of a black-out, a member of the **Kendal MRT**, who were assisting the rescue, was seriously injured whilst being winched from a Royal Navy Sea King helicopter. Just as the team member touched down on steep ground, the helicopter caught its main rotor on the crag above and crash dived towards the valley bottom, sending him tumbling 20 metres down the crag before he came free of the strop. Following a short period of hospitalisation the team member is now back at home recovering from a broken wrist and a fractured vertebra in his lumbar spine. The following day, a further accident occurred whilst the investigation team were working at the scene of the accident. An RAF team member fell 30 metres sustaining head and pelvic injuries. After a period in hospital, he is now back at work. The investigations are ongoing.

'An area of significant change over forthcoming months will be the introduction of high band radios. Our communications sub-committee has been very busy for the past two years working in consultation with Cumbria Police, producing and presenting business plans which were finally approved by the Cumbria Police Authority in February. The new radios are being supplied by Simoco under a five year financial arrangement. Much work has taken place on the development of protocols for calling out rescue helicopters. 'Protocols have now been agreed covering the call out of Police and Royal Air Force helicopters. This will improve the working relationship and arrangements between the various agencies and benefit casualty evacuation.

'Two team members in the county have been recognised for outstanding personal service to their communities. Their local company award scheme has recognised their achievements and made donations to their teams.

'If you have any questions on this article, or indeed any of the Lake District articles or statements made, then please contact me and I will ensure that you receive a response.'

More on some of these stories...

### ACCIDENT ON PIKE O' STICKLE

Following press reports and a flurry of activity on the newsgroup, Andy Dell, team leader of **Kendal MRT** posted a statement about the events in May, in which both Kendal team member, Pete Munford, and a team member from RAF Leeming were badly injured.

'Circa 14.30 LAMRT were paged by Cumbria Police to assist a fallen scrambler high on the face of Pike O'Stickle. Nick Verrall, team leader deployed his team, requested helicopter assistance and paged Kendal to assist. When Kendal MRT arrived in Mickledon, LAMRT were still on the way up the fell to the casualty. Shortly after, Rescue 177, a Sea King from RNAS Gannet at Prestwick, arrived on scene and lowered its winchman onto a ledge about 8 feet above the casualty. The winchman requested rapid deployment of a team to belay and secure the cas

Nick Verrall directed the helicopter to lift the three Kendal members from the valley bottom to the top of the fell with rope and cragsac, and helmets for the casualty and two informants/companions on scene. The three Kendal team members were myself (Andy Dell), Pete Munford and Les Telford. 'I was first to be winched onto the crag, with 100m static rope and cragsac. Pete was second. He made contact with the ground on a bilberry ledge about 5 feet from me. At the same moment, the aircraft rotors made contact with the crag above, sending blade debris down the crag and the helicopter into a crash dive down into the valley bottom. I saw Pete tumbling down steep ground partly in the strop, which he was trying to get off. Both the aircraft and Pete went out of view from the cas site. The aircraft made a forced landing in the valley bottom and all three aircrew and Les Telford were able to walk away shaken but unhurt. 'With no comms in the valley bottom and limited gear, the first casualty was belayed to the crag along with his companion, who was supporting his legs to prevent him sliding off from a very precarious position. Leaving the winchman and one LAMRT member who had arrived on scene to deal as best he could with the original casualty, I continued to abseil down the crag to locate Pete. I made the incorrect assumption that the aircrew had cut the winch cable. Pete was located 60-70 feet down. Two LAMRT members had traversed into the position where he lay and were providing immediate first aid. Using their radio, comms were established with control, and a sitrep given. A second aircraft was sent from RAF Boulmer and arrived on site some 5 minutes later.

'Pete was the first casualty to be airlifted, in a cervical collar, vac mat and Stokes litter. He was flown to Cumberland Infirmary at Carlisle. An initial assessment at the hospital showed he had a fractured wrist and, later at night, it was confirmed he also had a lumbar spinal injury – both of which we had picked up on our initial assessment.

'With the aircraft away to Carlisle our efforts were turned to the evacuation of the original casualty who had been attended to by the winchman and other LAMRT members. Using a Neil Robinson stretcher the aircraft had winched down, the patient was extracted and lowered from where he had fallen to a safer place for winching. When the aircraft returned from Carlisle, it lowered a Stokes litter in which the casualty was lifted, along with the RNAS winchman. This casualty was also flown to Cumberland Infirmary where he was detained with an upper arm fracture. RAF Leeming arrived to secure the scene of the helicopter grounding.

Another aircraft from RNAS Gannett arrived to recover their aircrew. The following day, a member of RAF Leeming fell approx 100 feet on Pike O'Stickle whilst involved in the search for and recovery of debris from the incident. He was assisted on scene by his own team members and airlifted to Carlisle by an aircraft from RNAS Gannett. Both Langdale Ambleside and Kendal teams deployed to assist the



**Peter Jackson** pictured centre, **Martin Bentley** far right. **BNFL chairman Hugh Collum** on Peter's left

### BRITISH NUCLEAR FUELS REWARDS MR

*The achievements of two team members were recognised by their employer, British Nuclear Fuels, at the company's 2004 community service awards ceremony. Out of the five top awards in the company, two went to mountain rescue personnel for their outstanding contribution of personal service to their communities. Peter Jackson of **Duddon & Furness MRT** was the overall winner and was presented with a cheque for £750 towards team funds. Peter, who is Head of Maintenance at Calder Hall Nuclear Power Station, has been team leader for 37 years – the longest serving within the Lake District's twelve teams. Martin Bentley of **Wasdale MRT** was also in the top five and was presented with a cheque for £250 towards team funds. Martin, an environmental and resources manager at the Sellafield site, has been a member of the Wasdale team for more than 20 years. The awards were presented by BNFL chairman Hugh Collum who said, 'In my 5 years with BNFL, I have been immensely impressed by the commitment of so many volunteers to this type of work which is largely unknown to their colleagues but really deserves to be recognised and rewarded.'*

RAF in dealing with the accident.'

Following the accident, Pete was transferred to Newcastle General for further assessment, and subsequent treatment, of his spinal injury. At the end of May, he was discharged and reported as being on his feet, literally making the first steps to recovery. The lad from RAF Leeming was still in Cumberland Infirmary, where he was detained with skull and pelvic fractures and a badly damaged elbow, but now back at work. The original casualty has eight pins and a metal plate in his arm and is undergoing physio. The Royal Naval Board of enquiry has taken statements from MRT personnel involved on the day and will report in due course.

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# Picking up the pieces...

Words & pix Helen Goodwin Rossendale & Pendle MRT

## MID PENNINE

### STRANGE BUSINESS THIS RESCUE THING...

Here we are, meeting every week, training, joking, chatting... you know general stuff between friends. We all know each other well, some of the team have known each other for the best part of their lives, even been 'best men' at weddings and godparents to each other's children. But do we ever stop and think about the 'others'?

What others? I can feel the brows furrowing as you read on. Well it's fairly simple, the 'others' are the people we rescue – in other words who, and what, the team are really doing it all for. As a team, we dib in and out of so many peoples lives, usually at their most traumatic times and how quickly we forget them, not stopping to think about them as walking, talking, living people like you and I.

We can all recall the famous ones such as Rosemary McCann, Colin Patchett, Jamie Lavis, but who recalls Laura Wood, Peter Mainment and, more recently, Frank Lennon?

It was on a breezy hillside in Trawden, last April, when we met Frank and the wreckage of his light aircraft. As we walked up the field to the remains of the plane I don't think any of us knew what to expect. But, as usual, we did our job and made Frank safe from the long lens of the news hacks and off he went with the undertakers to the Burnley General Hospital. Afterwards, when we were clearing up the site we came across Frank's personal belongings such as his golf clubs, shoes, a jacket and an umbrella.

This is when it really came home to me. Suddenly Frank became a real person who once loved, breathed and walked on the same land as I do. So who was he?

Frank Lennon was born in Drumlish, County Longford, Ireland. He was one of five children, including sisters – Rosemary, who lives in New York, and Bridie – brothers Michael, who works on a farm, and Father Pat, who is a priest working as a missionary in Zambia. The Lennon family are still a well known, prominent family in Longford. He moved to Shadwell, Leeds in the



early 1960's and took on the tenancy of a local pub called 'Four in One' on Gelderd Road, Gildersome which was recently demolished for a housing development. Later, he made his fortune by becoming involved in the construction industry, particularly hotels in the city.

On the day of the crash, Frank was flying to Knock, in Ireland, where he had one of his holiday homes. His wife Kathleen was waiting for him at the airport. We all know the rest, his Cessna 320 developed engine trouble and he radioed air traffic control, who immediately launched emergency landing procedures, but it was too late. He was an experienced pilot, who had been flying his own plane for fourteen years, but it's too early yet to say what went wrong with his plane to cause the crash.

So here's to Frank, who leaves a wife and three grown up children. They can rest assured he was looked after by a group of willing friends on a beautiful quiet hillside, one day in April. RIP.

### NEW BASE FOR BOLTON

**Bolton MRT** hosted the Grand Official Opening – the culmination of months of hard work and last minute feverish activity. All was going according to plan, right down to the glorious sunshine... but, you know what happens when you make plans. First off, came an 08.23 pager call to assist a man in a diabetic coma on Winter Hill. Followed, just as the guests were due to arrive, by an off road motorcycle accident. But, after a slight delay, the opening ceremony got underway. Team leader Garry Rhodes and Chairman Tony McNally welcomed the guests, Derek Cartwright, GMAS Director of Operations, as guest of honour, cut the ribbon and unveiled a dedication plaque, and team member, the Reverend Mike Thomason offered a Prayer of Dedication. Garry Rhodes said, 'All in all, the team had an excellent and very memorable day, and one which we were delighted to share with everybody who attended.'

### CALDER IN CONTROL

**Calder Valley SRT** has recently taken delivery of a new Vauxhall Movano Command and Control vehicle. The vehicle was selected for its size in relation to garaging facilities at the team's base and its general all round capability. The West Yorkshire Police Workshop was contracted to convert the vehicle to team specifications. The front cab area is as standard, other than the fitting of a hand microphone and the usual

switching for the control of emergency lights, sirens and PA system. The centre control area provides belted seating for four passengers whilst in transit and, on site, these seats are either side of a control table, to the side of which is a small inclined and illuminated mapping board. To the nearside, there is fixed seating for three and room for a lap top, linked to a high level monitor – making easy work of briefing, search planning, printing maps and assigning designated areas. There are dry wipe and magnetic boards on all walls and a two way fan in the roof.

The control desk supports the new High Band control radio network which can be switched through to a 25 foot hydraulic mast fitted on the rear door when on site. There is also a mobile radio providing a direct link with West Yorkshire Ambulance, together with a hand held unit for out on the ground, providing immediate and direct contact with paramedics when arriving on site. The rear of the van was designed to accommodate existing team boxes containing fell party, water safety and rope rescue gear, Bell and Alphin stretchers, the usual assortment of medical sacks, oxygen and entonox.

An external canopy, fitted on the offside, acts as shelter when briefing or taking refreshments – not forgetting the detachable table on this side for coffee and biscuits! Nev Sharp, team leader says, 'We are all well impressed by what we have achieved, albeit the total cost was almost £30,000



but, together with our new Land Rover, we feel the two units complement one another very well and are ideal for most situations we might expect in our area.'

Any team considering such a venture is very welcome to come along for a look, or simply ask questions. Most of the funding was achieved through local fund raising and support from within the area of Calder Valley.

### TEAM BANNER UNVEILED

**Bowland Pennine MRT** were looking for a way to attract attention to their fundraising activities and local company, Lasable, came up with the answer – a printed banner – which is already proving to be an eye-catcher at fundraising events. The finished product is durable, portable, easy to handle and very cost

Two web cams in North Wales – one in Bethesda, pointing up the Nant Ffrancon Valley to the Glyders, the other at Oggi base, looking out at Y-Garn. They're also working on getting their weather station data up on the web. See it on [www.ogwen-rescue.org.uk](http://www.ogwen-rescue.org.uk)



effective. Lasable offer discount to MRTs for all printing (stickers, car badges, vehicle graphics). Contact them at [sales@lasable.com](mailto:sales@lasable.com) or 0845 22 62 672

## NORTH EAST

**John Farnie (Secretary NESRA)** writes...

'Regional training continues to be the main area of focus with a number of events organised through which good practice is shared and inter-team skills developed. The most significant was a regional training weekend hosted by **Swaledale FRO** at Grinton Lodge in Autumn 2003. Forty representatives from the six NESRA teams attended the weekend, which included training workshops such as casualty care, steep ground evacuation and search skills on the Saturday, with an exercise, devised to develop the skills learned, organised on the Sunday. Although much was learnt from these two days, the social factor, with members from all teams able to get to know each other better and share ideas in a more relaxed way over a pint, also had a significant impact! The event was extremely well received by those who attended and the next regional training weekend, organised by **Teesdale & Weardale SRT** for the spring of 2005 is eagerly awaited.

'In an effort to further develop inter-team operability, a regional exercise was organised by the two Northumberland teams in June, in the Roman Wall area of south Northumberland. The area is particularly significant because of the huge popularity of the recently developed *Hadrian's Wall Long Distance Path* which has seen a huge increase in the number of walkers in the area.

'Casualty care has always had a high profile within NESRA. Over Easter, ten team members undertook the gruelling, but excellent, NESRA Advanced CasCare Course – now in its 25th year – some revalidating from previous years, others new to the course. To further develop Advanced Skills a training weekend has been organised for November at Grinton Lodge. This will be organised alongside a regional SARDA training event.

'Insurance continues to be a concern in the area and NESRA applauds the work being done by Stewart Hulse in trying to achieve a standardised and fair insurance package throughout the country. This was highlighted at a recent meeting when it was discovered that members from some teams in NESRA were insured by their local Police Authorities for less than half of colleagues in neighbouring teams!

'Finally, as with most areas, we have our share of bizarre call-outs. A recent call in Northumberland was initiated by police after the discovery of a body bag in a fairly inaccessible river bank area. When the bag was eventually recovered it was found to contain garden rubbish!

## NORTH WALES

### NEW VEHICLE FOR OGGI...

**Ogwen Valley MRO** took delivery of a second Land Rover 130 ambulance in May, to replace the ten year old Land Rover 110 hard top. The 110 has now been passed over to Global Rescue Services, based in North Wales – they are currently adding Human Remains Search Dogs to their compliment of specialist search dogs and will be using the vehicle for that division.

The new 130 has been custom built by Frogs Island of Abingdon, Oxon, to a similar spec as the existing 130, which OVMRO received following a successful promotion by Safeway, HR Bennetts, the meat processors, and the Welsh Lamb Association. It was bought using funds set aside from a bequest, a generous donation from Innogy, who operate a local hydro-electric power station and a regular generous – and anonymous – benefactor. The 130 is set out so that all makes of mountain rescue stretcher can be slid into the rear and the casualty carer can sit in comfort and safety on a forward facing seat adjacent to the casualty's head. As a personnel carrier, it can seat nine team members with kit stowed on the full length roof rack. Chris Lloyd, press officer for OVMRO said, 'Team members look forward (and seat forward) to travelling in better comfort than the 110 hard top (and hard bottom!)

## PEAK DISTRICT

The April issue celebrated 40 years for the Peak District teams. **Neil Roden (PDMRO)** explains how their system works... 'The organisational make up of the PDMRO centres around an Executive Committee into which several sub-committees feed with a very key role played by the Operational Management Group. The other subs are Training, Medical, Equipment, Finance, SARDA Peaks, Communications, Emergency Service Liaison and Benevolent. This system works because each team has a member

who attends the various sub group meetings and this feeds through to the Executive Committee.

'Equipment, Training, Medical, Communication and Emergency Liaison feed to the Executive committee via the Operational Management group. The Executive Committee is made up of a senior member from each team who represent their team, vote on issues brought by the various sub groups and most importantly feedback to their teams. The Executive Committee also has the elected MRC representatives who represent the views of the PDMRO whether or not it is their own personal view.

'Of course, for this to work well timing is important. All the operational sub groups have their meetings in time to be discussed at the Operational Group meeting, who in turn have their meeting in time for the Executive meeting. The Executive Committee meet regularly but always just before the MRC meeting to ensure that the messages taken to the national meeting are as up to date as possible. At all stages, the minutes of the meetings are available to all team members and this ensures that there is a good flow of information from team members to the MRC and back again.'

### ...AND ANOTHER FOR DERBY

**Derby MRT** have taken delivery of their new multi purpose vehicle, based on a 130 Land Rover Td5, a year after the original order – at the time, all Land Rovers seemed to be going with the army to Iraq. Thanks go to a small group of team members who helped with the project. The finished vehicle can independently deploy eight personnel plus driver – together with their personal gear, stretcher and all the necessary equipment – and quickly adapt to carry a stretcher, which is clamped to the floor, complete with casualty and attendants. It is also capable of wading through water, lighting a casualty site and is equipped to act as a radio base or link. After looking at many possibilities, the decision was made to modify a Land Rover 130 Defender Double Crew-cab pick-up. Frogs Island did the work, at a cost of £35,000.



'...AND WHEN YOU'VE CHECKED THE TIME, JUST CASUALLY ASK WHICH MOUNTAIN THIS IS...'

© DAVID ALLAN

## SOUTH WALES

### BIG BLACK MOUNTAINS UPDATE

The annual fundraiser, organised by **Longtown MRT** took place in May, around Llanthony Priory and the Black Mountains, within the Brecon Beacon National Park. For the third consecutive year a record number of participants took part, with 863 over the three routes, which are broken down as follows – Route A (43 km) 254 entrants, Route B (27 km) 421 entrants and Route C (16 km) 188 entrants – including 254 entries on the day, undoubtedly boosted by the good weather. Fortunately, there were no major problems and the last walkers were receiving their welcome tea and cakes at 21.30, after walking for approximately 13 hours. At the time of going to press, over £10,000 had been raised and this is expected to rise as sponsorship monies continue to come in. Organiser, Len Harbottle, would like to thank all team members, their families and friends for their efforts in making this the most successful year, in the history of the BBMC.

## YORKSHIRE DALES

**Peter Huff (Secretary YDRP)** writes...

'YDRP has two areas of concern – the issue of team insurance by the North Yorkshire Police and High Band radios.

'David Little – representing the **Cleveland, Scarborough and Swaledale** teams from NESRA, together with **Cave Rescue Organisation** and **Upper Wharfedale FRA** from YDRP – met with representatives from North Yorkshire Police recently to discuss the new insurance policy. In essence, it's an excellent package with some clarifications regarding air flights in helicopters. However, the police have given notice to discontinue insuring team members when a 999 call is for an ambulance but the paramedics need assistance to recover a patient on the fell, away from the track or highway. 'The North Yorkshire Police, through the call out procedure, will still call the teams. Unfortunately, this notice was for two weeks, later extended another two weeks to finish at the end of May. On the last working day before the Police insurance cover expired for ambulance calls, David Little negotiated an extension to the 30th June 2004 whilst negotiations continued with TENYAS and WYMAS.

'Concerning High Band, two years ago a business case was put together by the same teams and presented by Phil Ord to the Police Finance Committee. This was eventually turned down due to financial constraints. Since then, representations have been made to the police with negative verbal responses. YDRP recently sent a letter to try and open negotiations on the same basis as the Cumbria Police, LDSAMRA and Simoco project whereby the finance to the Police Authority is spread over five years. The letter was only acknowledged.

'At the MRC mid meeting break the ACPO rep, Assistant Chief Constable Paul Forrester offered help to clarify the position with North Yorkshire Police. Since then, a letter was sent to the YDRP stating High Band Communications equipment will not be funded.'

## SOUTH WEST

# The Evolution Of Mountain & Cave Rescue In The South West of England...

## ...Goldfish, Pasties and a Vision

From the earliest days of the dinosaurs, roaming the forests of Dartmoor and those often-wild hills of Exmoor, searching out the weak and lost souls who had not taken advantage of the natural shelter in the caves of Mendip, Devon and Cornwall... to the shiny wet mud covered reptilian creatures often found floundering about in the silt and on the waves of the Bristol Channel... and those ape like beings often found scampering over and climbing the heights of the west country's cliffs... is where we must look for the beginnings of the rescue teams which form this ever evolving South West Of England Rescue Association (SWERA).

The South West of England isn't, at first glance, a prime area for mountains *per se* but, nevertheless, it's a fine hunting ground if you're looking for cave and mountain rescue teams. Many of you may have just driven through it with little more than a scant glance, en route to those fine surfing beaches of Devon and Cornwall – despite all local efforts to slow you down and enjoy the beauty of this truly varied region, such as our extensive use of bank holiday motorway roadworks, needless diversions and an ever increasing arsenal of speed cameras.

Anyways... back to the subject of evolution and, whilst at the southern end of the area, I should point out a classic example of this evolutionary chain. As previously mentioned, those poor lost souls of Kernow (Cornwall for the uneducated) that were forced underground by the dinosaurs of Dartmoor, ever ready to make a shilling or two, had found that, by digging around in the dirt of those deep cavernous holes, they had invented tin, lead and treacle mines (or was that somewhere else?). Now, this was hungry work and the light of invention shone again in the form of the pasty. This true gentleman's repast bore little more than name in resemblance to the modern mass produced item of the supermarket shelves. It was complete in every way as, contained within its crusted mud stained shell, were both main course and pudding.

In fact, just like the present South West of England Rescue Association. 'How?' you may ask. Well, in its evolution from those well-seasoned, tough real-meat-and-two-vegetables dinosaurs of the moors, carried in the early days by their pure bred Dartmoor ponies, acquired and broken to the task, through to the most recently formed colour co-ordinated, sweet young things, just like tart west country apple in the pudding end of the pasty, SWERA truly is complete.

Still on the evolutionary track – as I have been told on many occasions – we are a little different to many other teams in that we usually have a greater number of prospective

aspirant members than we can train at any given time. Therefore, we can afford to be a little more than choosy. The process starts for all by attending a selection weekend to sort the wheat from the chaff, and one such ran recently. This weekend runs along the lines of a management training event, together with basic first aid, health and safety and lots of team building exercises combined with controlled tasks and stress environments to test the candidates' abilities and team working skills. Thus, the successful candidates' training can be tailored to their personal needs and that of the team/region.

As the weekend was drawing to a close, we received a call from our local police control room to attend and search a headland promontory of limestone downland, stretching out in to the Bristol Channel, in conjunction with the local auxiliary coastguards. They were tasked with the search of the beaches below, during low water – no easy task as, with the tidal range of the river Severn running to the best part of forty feet from low to high water, and a tide that comes in faster than you can run, we were glad to be up on the cliffs and downland plateau above.

Back to the aspirants – they were all beginning to wonder what would come next because, as well as the weekend's carefully planned exercises and a real air crash just around the corner, they were all raring to help and get involved. Discussions between the incident controllers and police highlighted the fact that though they were not team members they could be used as civilian volunteers in line with standing risk assessments for search. So they were briefed, and individually adopted by a team member, to assist in the search of the downland. And a second regional team were put on standby to assist further, if required.

This Sunday afternoon was glorious, wall to wall blue sky, a sun so hot that it would melt your ice cream before you could eat it, which needless to say it did – straight down the leg of my trousers. Oh the joys of acting as incident controller. This sudden shock of cold realigned the senses and I looked across this scene of activity. The enthusiasm of the aspirants was boundless, darting about the gorse bushes like bright eyed shiny scaled goldfish in their own crystal clear bag of water en route home from the fair. This put me back in mind of the pasty. In the same manner as we in the region have to nurture and guide the sweet young things of the newly formed Cornwall Search and Rescue Group, all us well seasoned scabby old muddling trout have a duty to take on the enthusiasm of the bright eyed, shiny goldfish, clean up this murky silt-filled stagnant pond, and get it back to the crystal clear sparkling waters of the bag we all know as Mountain Rescue.

**Alan George** Regional Executive Officer SWERA  
Chief Rescue Officer Avon & Somerset CRT



**Bob Sharp** on leaving the job...

Photo Ian Dawson

As the outgoing Secretary (MRC of Scotland) I commented at the AGM that there are always issues in the pipeline that require attention, discussion and decision. There's never a dull moment. It was my expectation, when taking over that, following a few initial hurdles, things would settle down and life would return to an easy, comfortable mode with few things to worry about. How wrong I was! So, what are the current issues in Scotland?

**The Order of St John**, as many readers will know, has provided massive funding for Scottish MR, including purchasing new Land Rovers (or the equivalent) for all MRTs as well as rescue posts for those teams in need. My own team will move into its new HQ later this year. The project is fully funded by the Order and will set them back about £1/4 million. They will own the post and the land, but has given us 100% access for the next 99 years. The Order is now looking at how it can extend its funding once the vehicle and post projects are out of the way. Needless to say, we have a very good relationship with them – a true 'win/win' liaison.

**Shell UK**. Scottish MR also receives significant funding from Shell UK and Boots Across Scotland, a charity dedicated to supporting injured walkers and climbers. We receive around £5/10k each year which goes, essentially, towards our annual training seminar. Traditionally, this takes place at Glenmore Lodge but, last year, it went to Knoydart and, this year, goes to Ballater. We're hoping that HRH Prince of Wales will show up and share a pint with the lads

**14 years, several hundred incidents, one search dog, a very understanding family and many happy experiences later, I find myself as leader of Tweed Valley MRT and, now also, Secretary of MRC of S - and all because I didn't walk past that car...**

As the new Secretary of the MRC of Scotland, I was asked to write a few words by way of introduction... my name is Steve Penny. I originally hail from Crieff in Perthshire and I currently live and work in the Scottish Borders, based in Selkirk, working for the Forestry Commission. It was while I was posted in Galloway that I made my first contacts with mountain rescue some 14 years ago.

Actually, I went along to a joint services open day to volunteer for the Fire Service (encouraged by a friend who was on the local crew). As I approached the fire engine, I passed by an estate car with its back door open to reveal a hefty looking stretcher. A brief moment of hesitation and I was hooked! I never did get to the fire engine because I had found the local MR team. There were no fancy 4x4 vehicles and no fancy gear – just a group of

sense of the commitment of the volunteers and see the benefits of search and rescue dogs. When I was moved by the Forestry Commission to the Borders in 1992, I immediately sought out the local team (Tweed Valley MRT) and made contact with the local SARDA training officer, Tom Middlemas, who I'm sure will be known to many readers.

And so, 14 years, several hundred incidents, one search dog, a very understanding family, and many happy experiences later, I find myself as Team Leader of Tweed Valley MRT and, now also, Secretary of MRC of S (and all because I didn't walk past that car in Galloway!)

Everyone involved in MR will have their own bag of highs and lows. For me, some of the highs have been as a dog handler, particularly making an avalanche find in 1995, or when a missing person

and lassies. We also run an annual avalanche course which is sponsored entirely by Eileen Touey whose partner was killed in an avalanche a few years ago. She raises funds each year to send about 30 Scottish MRT members on the course.

Regarding **radio communications**, the new bandplan has now been agreed and additional funding from the Scottish Executive to purchase new hardware for all MRTs is in place. Quite separately, we have secured around £1M to kit all Scottish MRT members with new radios and teams with base sets. Yes, the sun really is shining on us here in Scotland. This makes up a bit for the abundance of midgets and rain and general crap weather that you guys in the south don't have to endure! A lot of research was undertaken by NTL on our behalf to trial and test the best equipment. We will need some discussion on how the bandplan operates with our Border colleagues in England.

A major issue is the new funding from the **Scottish Executive**. We're all very proud that the government has decided to provide guaranteed funding (with no strings attached) to Scottish MR. The current figure is £400k

shared between 23 teams. This will continue for three years, then be reviewed (probably increased). Much lobbying was done to achieve this. An addition to this overall package was extra money to make the Scottish Mountain Safety Adviser's position (Roger Wild) full time. The money has been divided between the eight Scottish Police Forces using a formula which gives a constant amount to all MRTs (25%) and the rest on the basis of workload. The formula has proved acceptable to almost every MRT, but will be examined shortly by ACPOS to see if it needs to be adjusted for the next year's funding. The point should be made that Scottish MRTs still need to adopt a mixed economy – fundraising and donations continue to be very important in the overall funding equation.

**Tony Rich**, who already advises mountain and cave rescue south of the border, has agreed to be our new legal wizard – good news for everyone.

An issue that still compromises some rescues is the occasional inappropriate tasking of **ambulance resources**. We're working closely

committed men and women who were prepared to volunteer time to help others in distress.

I spent only a brief period in the Galloway team, but time enough to get a tremendous

search succeeds in saving a life. I am always gratified by the tremendous commitment shown by all those in MR and proud to have spent so many years working alongside so many interesting people. And the lows... well, we all know about those!

My particular interest is in the area of Missing Person Search Management and I was one of the first in our team to be trained as a Search Manager. This interest was kindled when I attended the MRC course in Bangor in September 1997. Since then, as a team, we have developed our skills over many missing person incidents and have found that careful analysis of the facts, profiles and interview techniques can often save valuable time on the ground. Effort at this stage can mean that scarce resources are targeted far more effectively... and it really works!

In November, I step down as leader of TVMRT. This will give me more time for the job of Secretary – a three year post. I'm looking forward to seeing how the role develops and getting involved in more of the detail of MR at the national level.

I hope to be able to attend the UK Conference in Bangor in September and look forward to meeting with some of you then.

Contact **Bob Sharp** on 01360 770431 (evening) or **Steve Penny** on 01750 21871 (evening)

with ACPOS and the SAS (Scottish Ambulance Service) to establish a Memorandum of Understanding so that comms all round are improved. We're also working with the Scottish Mountain Safety Forum to get across the message to all hillgoers that calls for help should always be 'Call 999 and ask for the Police'. Too often the SAS are requested. They, in turn, fail to alert the Police/MRT, or do so late in proceedings. I personally believe that we need to do a lot of public education on this matter. Only yesterday, my own MRT rescued two young girls (from Doncaster!) from the summit of a 3000ft mountain here in Central Scotland in a terrifying thunderstorm. Their attempt to call for help began with a phone call to Directory Enquiries for the phone number of mountain rescue!

**Distinguished Service Awards** were awarded in May – one to Alfie Ingram (whom many of you will know) and the other to John Hinde's wife. John was our statistician for over 20 years and a stalwart of Scottish MR. He passed away two years ago on his return from a day on the hill. John was a real mountain man. His diary showed that he had been walking or climbing every single day in the last year of his life – not bad for someone in their seventies!

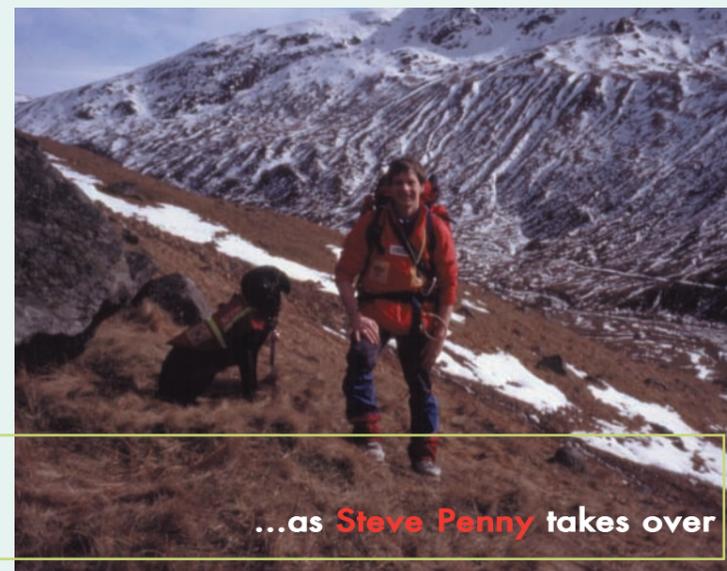
The Committee has agreed to consider appointing a **part time, paid administrator**. As Secretary, I came up with a few wacky ideas but I think this was one of the better ones. I firmly believe this is the way to go – let's get someone paid to do the job of helping move MR forwards. So, watch this space for developments.

Some years ago, we received a donation of £40,000 to develop a **new stretcher**. We now have a working prototype but there's still a long way to go. In the meantime, Hamish has brought out his Mk 7 stretcher which is very light (around 11kg) and made of lots of fancy materials. Anyone interested should contact Hamish at his Glencoe base.

And now we have the **Emergency Workers Bill** – aimed at providing increased protection to emergency workers if attacked by those they are trying to help. It's designed mainly for police/ambulance workers, but we in MR have been asked if we wish to be included in the 'at risk' group. Early days yet.

Finally, we are very sorry to hear about the accident involving a helo from RNAS Gannet and a member of the Kendal MRT. Hope you guys are all OK. My own MRT trains with the RN crew on a regular basis and we know from our own experience that these things do happen. I know this may not be an issue but I keep thinking about how old the Sea Kings are (almost 40?) We have some intense and interesting discussions in Scotland on the Sea King versus smaller craft. In this an issue in England/Wales?

And if anyone would like to include an article in our own MR magazine (CASBAG) let me know. I'd be delighted to include views from England/Wales in the Scottish mag.



...as **Steve Penny** takes over

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## SEEMS LIKE ONLY **YESTERDAY**

# WHAT A LONG, STRANGE TRIP IT'S BEEN...

## Bill Batson gets off the bus

I learned afterwards that the conversation went something like this... 'Jim, take this young loon out and give him a good day and let's see if he's as good as he reckons he is...' 'Right, Sunshine... we'll sort the little bastard out!' So, off we went - to Skye. To Cioch Direct. In big boots. With rucksacks. In the rain.

Thinking that this would be 'just another day', I followed Cheeky and Jim up into Coire Lagan from MacRae's barn in Glen Brittle, carrying a huge rucksack (this was the norm), with only mild apprehension to deter me from the promised adventure. Of course it turned out to be far from just another day. It was my first day on the team for starters. Previously, I'd only climbed Severe in sticky boots (we called them PA's then) and never with a rucksack and, to cap it all, I was terrified of Jim and Cheeky (f\*\*k me, they looked and talked hard). This would be an adventure.

What I didn't expect was for Jim to fall off. Somewhere near the top of the route, leading up a corner and making quite good progress (or so it seemed), Jim suddenly departed company with the rock and came clattering back down to where Cheeky was belaying and I was stood gawping, wondering what the hell was going on. Luckily he suffered no more than a twisted ankle and we finished the route (with Jim still doing all the leading - yes, he is 'kin hard'), arriving safely back in Glen

Brittle in time for the pub run to Sconser (it was the only pub open in those days). And so began an MR career that was to continue, unchecked for the next 26 years.

Ray Sunshine Sefton was the Team Leader and Don Shanks his DTL. It seemed everyone had nicknames then - Smudge, Prep, Gringo, Mitch, Cheeky et al. And so I became Hadrian (because I had climbed Hadrian's Wall on the Ben before joining the team). Fortunately, it didn't stick and I pretty soon became plain old Skinny Bill. We drove to basecamps in petrol-driven Land Rovers ("In the back, Nov") and fire-breathing 'RL's'. We slept in tents (OK, not all the time...) and we learned to keep our mouths shut. We walked, we climbed and we drank - lots. Fitness and climbing ability developed slowly, the ability to drink never quite did.

Fast forward for a couple of years and I'm married (in the finest of traditions, I met my wife-to-be at an MR do one drunken night), I'm a Kinloss Party Leader and life is good. Then my brother John took a huge 200ft lead fall while we were attempting



Point 5 one New Year's Eve. Standing on the belay, head bowed against the spindrift, the rope suddenly landed in a pile at my feet. I didn't get it at first. John was 10 feet out in space when he appeared, as if in slow motion, to a point where he was level with me then suddenly he was gone. Down. Like a bullet. He hit hard, ricocheting off a rock rib before slamming into the snow apron below the route. I thought he was dead, but he wasn't. Abseil, climb, jump, shout for help, call for helicopter. Helicopter arrives. Mick Anderson is the winchie, flash of recognition through the confusion. Helicopter lands, ambulance, hospital. Over. Phone home and tell parents that their son is in hospital, badly injured but alive. Too shattered to drink. Sleep. Happy New Year.

Pretty soon I'm DTL at Kinloss, taking over from Terry Moore - a hard act to follow. Kas Taylor is my Team Leader and I am the sorcerer's apprentice. Climbing with the likes of Chalky White, Andy Pigpen Watkins and, of course, Al McLeod. We lived for the moment and bagged some great routes, both at home and further afield. Various trips to the Alps produced varied results, some good, some not so good. Two incredible days spent on Mont Blanc's Brenva Face climbing Route Major with Al provided the high that we were all seeking. Witnessing four people being killed in an avalanche on Mont Maudit provided a sobering reminder of our own mortality and the risks we choose to take. Still, what better place to take those risks than in the mountains with such great friends?

So off we go to the Himalayas, to have a do at Shivling, aka Shiva's Penis. Standing high and proud above Tapovan base camp, the Matterhorn of the Himalayas was sure pleased to see us!! Andy Watkins, Al McLeod, Jim Morning, Nick Sharpe, Nev Taylor and Skinny Bill. 5 days up, 2 days down by the South-East Ridge - it's a first British ascent. HVS climbing at 20,000 ft with a 21,500 ft fairytail summit - a cheeky little number. Nick and Al reached the top first (having first fixed ropes for us lesser mortals), returning after dark to the bivi ledge. Watching the two tiny specks of light descending the headwall I hear a loud cry and suddenly one of the lights is plummeting into the void. Dry mouthed and head reeling with what I think I've just witnessed, I shout into the darkness. Finally, a reply. 'It's Nick..... He's dropped his head-torch!'

...continued on page 22

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## Double DSA for RAF

Flight Sergeant Bill Batson and Warrant Officer Alistair Haveron are to receive the Distinguished Service Award for their services to mountain rescue.

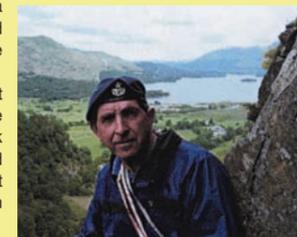
**Bill Batson** joined the RAF in 1977 with the sole intention of joining the Mountain Rescue Service (MRS). He trained as a weapons technician, and became a member of the MRS the following year. A natural and talented climber, he was soon rising rapidly through the Service. Over 26 years, he served as deputy team leader at RAF Kinloss and team leader at RAF Linton on Ouse, RAF Leeming and RAF Leuchars. Bill was the first RAF TL on scene at the Lockerbie disaster in 1988.

In the Queen's New Year Honours List of 1996, he was awarded the MBE for services to mountain rescue and since June 1998, served as the MRS Chief Instructor, during which time he introduced many changes and developments that have not only benefited the RAF MRS but mountain rescue throughout the UK - the most significant, undoubtedly, the introduction of Rigging for Rescue. This radical approach to technical rescue has also been considered by other organisations and Bill has advised and assisted many teams who have shown an interest. In addition, he qualified with his search dog in 2001, winning the trophy as Best Novice Dog. Bill has organised and led many expeditions to the greater ranges including the successful RAF MRS 50th Anniversary Expedition to Diran Peak in 1993. He summited Shivling in 1987, Ama Dablam in 1998, Kanchenjunga in 2000 and Mt McKinley in 2001 and was a member of the Joint Services expedition to the West Ridge of Everest in 1988 and 1992. He has held an MIC since 1995 and served on the BMC training committee. Bill left the RAF in April 2004.

**Alistair Haveron** joined the RAF in 1966, as a general mechanic, and the MRS in February 1967. In his 36 years' service, he served as deputy team leader at RAF Kinloss, RAF Leuchars and RAF St Athan and team leader at RAF Leeming and RAF Valley. Alistair has been involved in many high profile rescues but is best remembered for leading the RAF MRS team deployed to Low's Gully, Borneo in 1994 to search for the missing British military team.

He qualified as a member of SARDA (Scotland) in 1974 - also winning Best Novice Dog - with his German Shepherd bitch, Driesh. Awarded the BEM in 1984 for services to the RAF and to MR, he served as the MRS Chief Instructor from 1992 to 1998 and also holds an MIC. He is a vastly experienced mountaineer and instructor and has worked throughout the world passing on his experience, in particular to the Hong Kong Civil Aid Service, on several occasions.

Alistair was awarded the MBE in the Queen's New Year Honours List in 2003 in recognition of his outstanding commitment and loyal service to mountain rescue. All who have worked with him will have been struck by his infectious humour, his incredible fitness and his dynamic and forthright approach to any situation. He left the RAF in August 2003 at the end of his full career, drawing to a close his incredible association with rescue teams throughout the UK.



# A WALK IN THE WOODS!

Bob Sharp takes a leaf out of Bill Bryson's book



THE WASHINGTON MEMORIAL

**Over the past thirty years I've walked, climbed, skied, scrambled, run, rescued and instructed in the mountains of Scotland. But there is one activity I've never entertained – backpacking.**

Indeed, I've always had a mild aversion to backpacking. I think that's because my mountain interests are primarily skill-based (picking off a Munro, navigating in bad weather, improving my skiing ability). Walking from A to B for its own sake has always seemed a bit pointless. Far better to cycle or paddle or even take the car. This is a bit surprising since I live only half a mile from the West Highland Way. I should also say that I don't really like the 'gear style' that goes with backpacking – skyscraper size sacs, poser walking poles, plumbed-in drinking tubes and garish bandannas. How could someone with such an entrenched attitude, ever find themselves joining this band of happy hillgoers? Wind back two years.

I have a good friend Dave who lives in North Carolina. Previously, he lived in Scotland where we enjoyed the winter mountains together. As a keen cyclist and outdoor person he took to climbing quite naturally and we agreed to continue our outdoor ventures again if the opportunity arose. On a family holiday two years ago, we discussed the possibility of

sampling the Appalachian Trail (AT) – just a few hours drive from his home. A year on, we contacted each other and decided to go for it. He would plan things in regard to the section to walk and I would look at equipment. Planning was helped through the abundance of available information and, come July last year, Dave, two other friends, and myself were ready to walk a section of the AT. But a few facts before I recount our experiences.

The AT is a very well known and certainly America's best known long-distance footpath. The idea for a trail began in 1921 through the enthusiasm and dream of a Massachusetts planner named Benton MacKaye. He envisaged a footpath running along the crests of the eastern mountains which would serve as an accessible, multipurpose wilderness belt providing a 'retreat from urban life'. The path was designed, constructed and marked in the 1920s and 1930s by volunteer hiking clubs and finally completed in 1951. Today, it's known as the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and extends some 2,173 miles from

Katahdin in central Maine to Springer Mountain in Georgia – passing through fourteen different states – and is part of the American National Park System which also includes Yellowstone, Yosemite and the Great Smokey Mountains. It is protected along more than 99% of its course by Federal or State land ownership or by rights-of-way, and is maintained by members of the numerous clubs that make up the Appalachian Trail Conference. As one would expect with such a long path, the AT passes through extremely varied terrain – swampland bog, steep rock scrambles, high open meadows, rhododendron thickets, open forest, lakes and ponds and deep valleys. Flora and wildlife abound, although the fabled bears are not a common sight. The danger from bears is more perceived than real.

In terms of usage the Trail is enjoyed by people who take in small sections for single or 2/3 day trips and others who complete the trail end to end – 'thru-hikers'. The Trail is continuously marked with a standard system of whites 'blazes' painted on trees every 100 metres or so.

Navigation is not a problem! There are many campsites (wild camping is permitted most of the way) as well as over 250 primitive, but highly functional, woodland shelters located about a day's hike apart. The path itself is typically soil, rock or grass with a very small number of paved sections for wheelchair access. Vehicles, cycles and horses are not permitted. It crosses hundreds of roads, which makes it convenient to replenish food stocks and plan shorter trips. The 'Leave No Trace' principles are firmly established and (apparently) adhered to along the entire length of the Trail.

So what did we do? Dave suggested we complete a section along the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia (remember the hit song by Laurel and Hardy?). It's a very popular one about 65 miles in length and served by an excellent shuttle service. The route begins at the HQ of the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area, climbs to the summit of Mount Rogers at 5300ft and then descends to Damascus at about 2000ft. It's worth noting that Mount Rogers is one of around 350 peaks along the Trail over 5000ft. We spent the first night in Damascus before travelling to the HQ the following morning (about an hour's drive). One of my initial concerns was the availability of good maps and guidebooks. In the event, this was not a problem. The maps are highly informative and relevant guides are numerous and easy to obtain. One inch maps are available for every section of the Trail and each is printed in full colour with contours spaced every 100ft. Each map contains scaled profiles of the route, along with details of history, geography and alternative routes. Trail guides can also be obtained and these provide masses of additional information. Despite a good lead in time, we failed to give enough attention to equipment/food matters. Erring on the side of caution we duplicated many heavy items and included too much food. As a result, no one's sac weighed less than 40lbs. One thing we did do, however was to devise 'trail names'. It's traditional for AT travellers to sign in the 'guest book' at each shelter they pass. This serves to provide interesting reading for fellow travellers, warn of any hazards and

also to maintain a record of who is on the trail, and how far along they are – useful when locating someone's whereabouts in emergency. We came across people known as Lobster Grill, Chubbler, Gimpy Knees, Raven, Pooh-Bear, Zydecajun, Shower Shoes, Muttley, Half Pint, Threepacks, 10 Percent and The Lone Ranger. The four of us became known as Crome Dome, Buddy Holly, Stan Laurel and Indiana Jones – four sad old gits!

On arrival at HQ, we took a leisurely tour of the centre before loading up. The sacs didn't seem too heavy, but high spirits masked our perceptions of how we might feel a couple of hours later! Furthermore, little did we know that, as we entered a rather gloomy tunnel of trees, things would remain the same for the next five days. Bill Bryson referred to his walk along the AT as 'A walk in the woods'. Well, this is a very apt description of the AT. The Trail does leave the woods, of course, and there were several occasions when we escaped into a high meadow or entered a clearing – but these were few and far between. For most of the next five days, we remained under a canopy of trees and rarely saw the sun or sky. The first section of our route was a long downward stretch through dense trees. At this early stage we were highly sensitive to the dangers referred to by various authors – bears, wolves, poisonous snakes and backwoodsmen! The four of us had joked about the latter during the planning phase. Readers who have seen the film *Deliverance* (which was made in the same area of our walk) will understand our mild concern about being waylaid by locals. Our fears passed by quickly as we settled into a slow rhythm with nothing but the sound of an occasional deer to break the tranquillity. Throughout the trip, the path was generally excellent, making progress safe and reliable. As the path gained or lost height, the vegetation changed considerably both in density and nature. I was surprised that we encountered so many rhododendrons and Scots pine trees. Both seemed totally out of

place. At various stages we encountered deer, large butterflies, tortoises, salamanders and a rather threatening (but very small) copperhead snake. Bears are not a common sight and even then they only frequent particular parts of the Trail. It was as well we didn't come face to face with one as none of us could remember the rule to run or remain still depending on whether the advancing animal is a grizzly or black bear!

The first day was extremely arduous and passed by very slowly. The weight of our sacs coupled with high temperature (around 90 degrees) and humidity (95%) took its toll quickly and the friendly banter of the first hours soon evaporated into silence. As the miles unfolded, it was easy to visualise Bill Bryson's companion discarding the contents of his sac to relieve weight. Our destination on the first day was the Raccoon Branch Shelter. Most shelters are three-sided with open fronts and a sloping roof and a wooden floor for sleeping. Water, toilet and benches are usually nearby and some have fireplaces. They are used on a first-come, first-served basis and are not intended for stays longer than one or two nights. We enjoyed a very pleasant night, troubled only by a raiding raccoon

purification back up but were informed that constant rain over previous weeks had helped clear the water of most nasty bugs.

Each day of our journey was similar in some ways (overbearing sac weight, heat and humidity, tree cover) but also different. The further south we travelled, the countryside became more open and the trees and plant life changed in nature and variety. Every few miles the Trail crossed a minor road leading to small towns. Had we been inclined, we could easily have taken a detour to savour some real food and decent accommodation. But our time was limited and we had planned to return to Damascus within five days. We met many people along the Trail. Some stopped for a lengthy chat but most meetings were marked with a simple nod to avoid breaking rhythm. We camped on a single night and spent the others in various shelters. Evenings were spent relaxing, eating and chatting to people from all kinds of backgrounds. I was surprised at the number of middle-aged people taking in the entire Trail. In many cases their (overweight) size didn't seem commensurate with their ability to travel such a long distance! It was interesting to read each night about the local history and geography. Much of the trail passed old

**Nearly everyone I talked to had some gruesome story involving a guileless acquaintance who had gone off hiking the trail with high hopes and new boots and come back stumbling two days later with a bobcat attached to his head and dripping blood from an armless sleeve and whispering 'Bear!' in a hoarse voice before sinking into troubled unconsciousness. Bill Bryson**

which stole a food bowl Dave was using for his dog. Two other young hikers joined us, both of whom had been on the Trail for several weeks. It was notable how light they travelled and how quickly they organised themselves – both skills, I suspect, a function of their greater experience. If bears were a foremost concern, two others were mosquitoes and polluted water. For some reason (perhaps the height of our walk) there were very few mosquitoes and the water was invariably pure. We used iodine as

homesteads, former mining areas and sites of fire-lookout towers. Some of it followed the route of old tram and railroad lines used during the logging days of the early 1900s. Many parts of the Trail have wonderful descriptive names – Whitetop Laurel Creek, Feathercamp Ridge, Buzzard Rock and Rhododendron Gap – but I have to say that names like these, together with the depth of history associated with many parts of the Trail, were not matched by the bland landscape.



TWENTY MINUTES IN AND WE'RE KNACKERED ALREADY...

On our final day, we short-circuited the AT and picked up the Virginian Creeper Trail. This saved about five miles. This doesn't sound much but with legs suffering shin splints and feet gathering blisters, this was a very welcome move. Also, in contrast to the main Trail, it was a rather interesting route. The VC Trail began as an Indian footpath and in the early part of the 20th century was constructed as a railroad from Virginia to Carolina to haul lumber, iron ore and passengers. It acquired its nickname Virginia Creeper from the early steam locomotives that struggled slowly up the railroad's steep gradients. Today, it's a multiple-use trail totalling 34 miles used by walkers and cyclists alike. A number of enterprising individuals have set up companies to ferry cyclists to one end who then return downhill to the start point. It runs through some of the most picturesque and rugged country in Eastern America and is recognised as one of the countries most beautiful trails. It certainly ended our walk on a high note, although that was to be topped when we finally entered

Damascus and our awaiting accommodation. Never has a hot shower felt so good! Our kind host even made us a fresh blueberry crumble – but she only does this for Scots!  
We all learned a little more about each other and ourselves along the Trail. Maybe that's one of the attractions of long distance walking? It certainly taught me to have a little more sympathy for the long distance walkers back home in the UK. It seems there is something about taking long journeys on foot (without having to navigate or employ new skills) that provides rewarding personal and physical challenges. Indeed, the AT has awakened in me a keenness to tackle the West Highland Way. So if you see a long distance walker next year – without a heavy sac, walking poles or drinking tube – then you will know that I may have been converted.

**The woods were full of perils – rattlesnakes and water moccasins and nests of copperheads; bobcats, bears, coyotes, wolves and wild boar; loony hillbillies destabilised by gross quantities of impure corn liquor and generations of profoundly unbiblical sex; rabies-crazed skinks, raccoons and squirrels; merciless fire ants and ravening blackfly; poison ivy, poison sumac and poison salamanders. Bill Bryson**

Anyone with the slightest intention of walking along the AT should read Bill Bryson's book.

*A Walk in the Woods* is a highly entertaining, humorous and informative source. (Published in 1997 by Black Swan Books, ISBN 0 552 99702 1).

There are very many texts on the AT, many of which are published by the Appalachian Trail Conference (ATC). A particularly useful one is *The Appalachian Trail Backpacker* written by Victoria and Frank Logue in 2001. The ATC can be contacted at The ATC, PO Box 807, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425, USA or [www.atconf.org](http://www.atconf.org) or tel (304) 535-6331.

The ATC publishes a series of 11 Trail Guides which cover the entire Trail from Maine to Georgia. These are extremely useful, containing all kinds of information such as maps, route choice, accommodation, historical details and so on. We used *The Appalachian Trail Guide to Southwest Virginia*, by Vaughn Thomas. ISBN 1 889386 33 2.

**Web sites**

There's a very entertaining website written by Keith Drury where he compares the AT with the West Highland Way. Well worth a read – [www.indwes.edu/tuesday/scotland.htm](http://www.indwes.edu/tuesday/scotland.htm)

The ATC can be found at [www.atconf.org](http://www.atconf.org) and is an obvious visit. Other related sites can be found at [www.fred.net/kathy/at.html](http://www.fred.net/kathy/at.html) [www.appalachiantrail.org](http://www.appalachiantrail.org)

# ALSAR NEWS

Richard Andrews writes...

The chairman of ALSAR has paid tribute to two members of the executive committee who stepped down at May's AGM. Rob Bradley has had to give up his role because of work commitments, and John Dutton, who has been vice-chairman, is also stepping aside.

In his end of year speech, ALSAR chairman Andy Williamson said both men had played a vital part in the development of the organisation in recent years.

He said, 'The amount of work that John has put in on the development plan should be recognised and, on a personal note, I would like to thank John for being there as a sounding board for me.'

'As for Rob, I think he's really made people sit up and think about training – I don't think anyone can deny the amount of work he's put in here.'

Andy Williamson will remain as chairman for the coming year, while Adrian Edwards has been elected as the new vice-chairman. Steve Upton was voted into the training officer's position, while Margaret Bennett won the election for the secretary's post and retained her position on the committee. Steve Cranswick was re-elected as treasurer unopposed.

Two teams have successfully applied to become full members of ALSAR – HantSAR and Mid Shires SAR. Both teams completed their assessment exercises ahead of the May meeting. Meanwhile, a new lowland search and rescue team has been started in Dorset, and they have been granted probationary status by ALSAR. They are receiving strong support from police in Dorset and hope to be operational this summer.

The website has seen many major changes in recent months thanks to the efforts of Ian Bennett and Paul Dollemore, and is worth a visit. It can be found at [www.alsar.org.uk](http://www.alsar.org.uk)

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## Friday 10 September – Sunday 12 September UK Mountain Rescue Conference 2004

This year's Conference takes place at the University of North Wales, Bangor. The programme is developing as we speak but, to date, we have speakers from the UK Air Ambulance, lots of gear stuff for the techies amongst you, what promises to be a lively debate (Mountain Rescue should be charging – discuss), and visiting guests from Iceland (where mountain rescue encompasses all generations from cradle to grave) amongst others. At least, that's the plan so far.

Trade stand exhibitors are still being signed up so there should be plenty to tempt the eye and the pocket. We hope to present a stimulating weekend to rival the success of 2002. And, as we mentioned in the last issue, rumour has it that the bar at Bangor Uni knows better than to run out of beer... well, we'll see about that, eh?

For info, call **Eve Burton on 01663 750371** or via email [eveburton@chinley35.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:eveburton@chinley35.fsnet.co.uk)  
For trade stand info, call **Richard Terrell on 07971 191942** or **01495 270717**.  
Email exhibitors.conf2004@mountain.rescue.org.uk or [richardterrell2@aol.com](mailto:richardterrell2@aol.com)



### Read on for a taste of those exhibitors at this year's show...

#### Keela

On the **Keela** stand in September will be the new Zenith soft shell jacket which is available in red specially for mountain rescue. The new soft shell range offer a new level of versatility – the stretch woven outer material sheds heat and repels rain whilst the specially developed inner has excellent moisture management properties and removes moisture in liquid and vapour form. The full range of soft shells will be on show including the Alutian, which is 100% waterproof with 30% stretch, System Dual Protection garments including our established Munro jacket, along with new multi-active lightweight trousers and featherlight active breathable outerwear.

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#### Ultimate Outdoors

**Ultimate Outdoors** have a stand for the first time at the Conference. They will be advertising their 20% discount for all mountain rescue team members, on production of a valid card, and taking the opportunity to discuss their contract service available for MRTs and groups. General Manager Gary Westwell said, 'We are delighted to offer a 20% discount to members of mountain rescue teams, in recognition of the important work they do. After all, it's the MRTs who look after those of our customers unfortunate enough to get into trouble on the hill.' The ultimate outdoors contract service is able to offer extremely competitive quotes for team purchases, and has already supplied equipment to Staffordshire, Keswick and Ogwen teams, despite being a relative newcomer to the contracts world. For further details ring (01690) 710631 and speak to Contracts Manager Gill Winter, or meet her on the stand.



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### Blizzard

**Blizzard Protection Systems** will officially launch its new range of outdoor survival products in Bangor. 'This is the culmination of four years of development and field trials,' said Derek Ryden, who invented Reflexcell™, the revolutionary material which gives Blizzard products their performance. 'All our products have now been used in anger by mountain rescue teams in the UK and internationally. Their feedback proves beyond doubt that they set new standards in thermal protection and practicality.' Recent Arctic trials by the Royal Marines have also shown that the Blizzard Survival Bag maintained body temperature up to three times longer than conventional bivvy bags, and up to four times longer than current issue army survival bags. Delegates can try the full range of Blizzard Survival Bag, Jacket, Blanket and Tube on the company's stand, and attend a workshop on their use and deployment. For more information and to buy on-line [www.blizzardpack.com](http://www.blizzardpack.com).

### Field & Trek

Established in 1973 **Field & Trek** is the UK's leading specialist outdoor clothing and equipment retailer. A family owned company; we put great importance in ensuring our customers receive the best service possible. Field & Trek always strives to offer the widest range of clothing and equipment from the world's finest brands and to provide impartial, technical advice and to share our enthusiasm for the outdoors with every customer, new or old. Shopping with Field & Trek is simple. We have 20 stores nationwide with knowledgeable staff, a helpful and rapid mail order service and an award winning web site at [www.fieldandtrek.com](http://www.fieldandtrek.com). We also operate a hugely successful Group Sales Department which caters for the needs of large groups and organisations from Scout troops to the military to multi-national companies. As well as offering competitive prices, the Group Sales team has experience in sourcing clothing and equipment to tight budget restraints.

### Páramo

'Páramo gear rocks!' Praise indeed from Pete and Andy Benson, whose Aspira systems have weathered harsh environments from Arctic Norway to the Himalayas. But, in their words, 'the fierce Scottish winter demands most from clothing. Overall, it's lived up to expectations and far exceeds the performance of membrane-based fabrics. Páramo gear rocks! In the most demanding climatic conditions it keeps you warm, dry and very comfortable.'

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## FIRST RESPONSE...



### MR... IT'S A MAN'S WORLD... ISN'T IT?

I note that in the recent article in the Daily Express of Saturday, 5th June, that a certain female member of a Mid Pennine team, thinks that twenty years ago MR was 'exclusively a man's world.'

Get your facts right dear lady, have you never heard of Molly Porter? Molly was team leader of Caingorm MRT a lot more than twenty years ago. In my own team, (Buxton MRT), when I was leader, we had five female members around that time. All five were there as of right on their ability as 'Mountaineers' and were simply considered as team members, and that is how it should be.

In the early seventies there was only one team in the Peak District which did not have any female members and that one changed before 1980.

I often used an all female section on incidents and felt nothing unusual of it, knowing that they could, and would, do whatever I asked of them. Indeed, when dealing with young female casualties I always considered them invaluable. My own wife Eve was one of these and is still a very active member thirty odd years on.

It is unfortunate that over the last few years I have noted a few female members appearing in teams who perhaps shouldn't be there or feel that they have something to prove for feminism. I personally find this deplorable as the battle for females in mountain rescue was fought, and won, many years ago.

The only thing that should matter in a team is ability. Neither creed, colour, sex nor anything else are of any moment.

**Ted Burton MBE**

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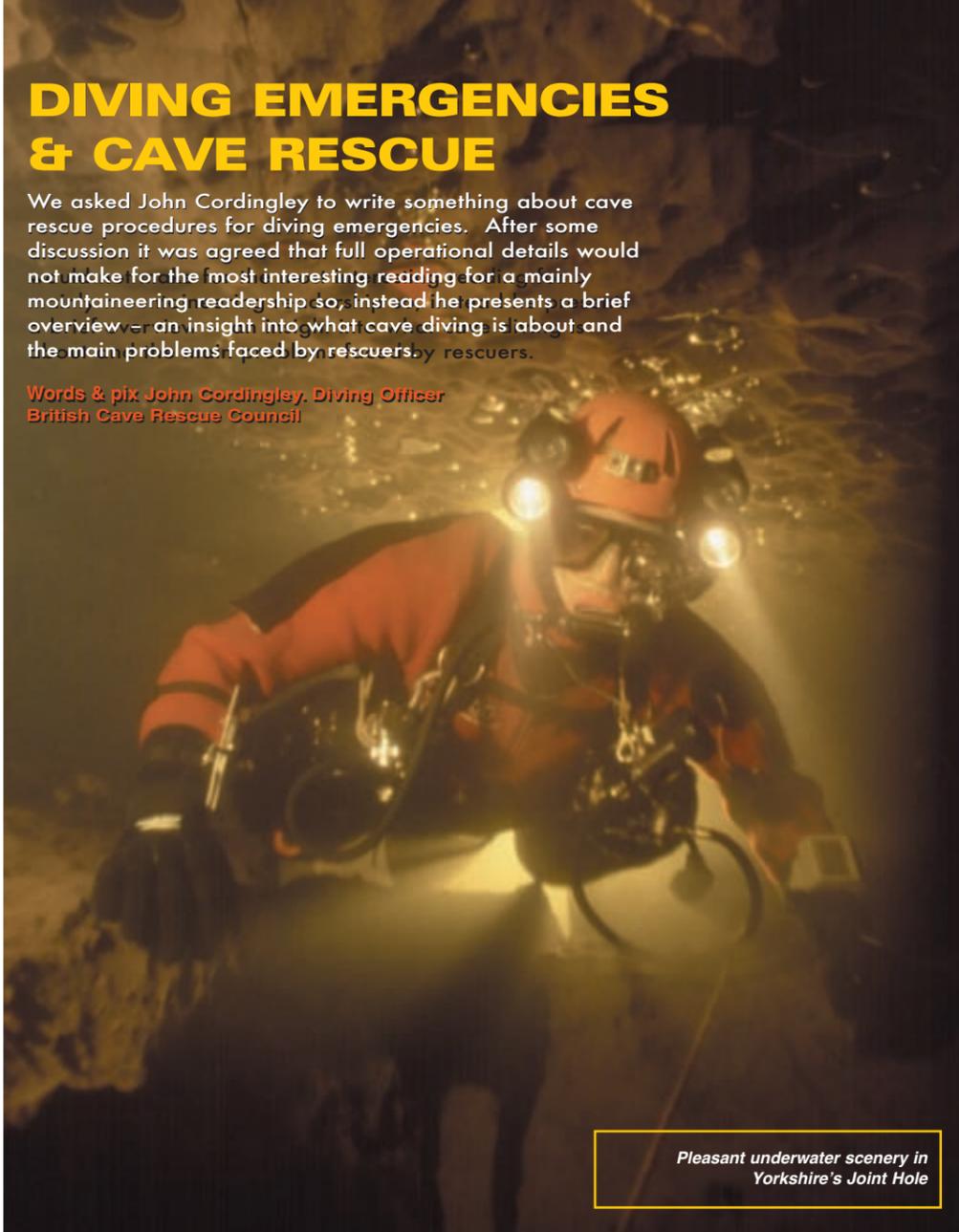
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## DIVING EMERGENCIES & CAVE RESCUE

We asked John Cordingley to write something about cave rescue procedures for diving emergencies. After some discussion it was agreed that full operational details would not make for the most interesting reading for a mainly mountaineering readership so, instead he presents a brief overview – an insight into what cave diving is about and the main problems faced by rescuers by rescuers.

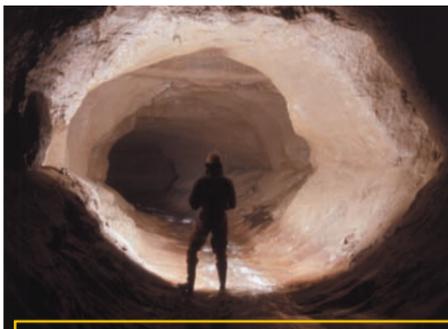
Words & pix John Cordingley, Diving Officer British Cave Rescue Council



Pleasant underwater scenery in Yorkshire's Joint Hole

The adaptation of conventional diving techniques as an aid to cave exploration is very well established. The first 'sump' (a section of flooded passage) in the UK was passed by a diver as early as 1936 and the Cave Diving Group formed in 1946. It remains the representative body for all cave diving activities in this country. Many early dives were done with surplus wartime frogman's (closed circuit) equipment but at certain sites the brass helmeted 'standard diving apparatus' was used, bottom walking with lead boots. In the 1960s, Cousteau's 'Aqualung' became the equipment of choice, combined with free swimming using fins.

Arguably the greatest quantum leap in cave divers' achievements in this country came in the late 70's, when the psychological barrier of being a long way in (maybe a couple of hours away from airspace and therefore totally reliant on equipment carried) was finally broken. Major explorations at Keld Head in the Yorkshire Dales were undertaken – the underwater cave system here now totals 5 miles in length. Around the same time, the submerged passages at Somerset's Wookey Hole were creeping downwards as exploration progressed – the first dive in excess of 60 metres deep in a British cave was conducted here.



Cave diving group members have made many discoveries in the UK. This fine passage in Peak Cavern was first explored by divers in 1949

It's probably fair to say that up until around the time of these (and many other) discoveries there were two main cave diving rescue scenarios. Either someone was lost underwater, (in which case, divers would usually be asked to perform a body search) or a cave diver would be injured beyond a sump. The latter situation is logistically much more difficult, but usually boiled down to the rescue divers performing basic first aid then getting the casualty out through the flooded section. Once back on the 'safe' side the casualty would be attended by a doctor and be extricated by conventional cave rescuers. However it's worth pointing out that the main reason divers are deployed in cave



Emerging from a restriction in a submerged cave in the Peak District

way, if a lemonade bottle is decompressed by removing the lid quickly, it fizzes due to carbon dioxide being released from solution). Bubbles in the blood are bad news – they block vessels and cause damage to tissues subsequently starved of oxygen. The result is called Decompression Sickness or more often 'the bends', since the affected diver may be bent over due to extreme pain.

Divers try to avoid this potentially life threatening affliction by delaying their ascent in a series of 'decompression stops' at progressively shallower depths. There are standard tables which allow the time needed for decompression stops to be calculated, based on the maximum depth reached and the duration of the dive. More recently, submersible computers have become the norm for controlling (theoretically) safe decompression.

Even with meticulous dive planning and correct ascent profiles, a diver may get a 'DCS hit'. Symptoms and signs are varied but skin discolouration, pain in joints, breathing difficulty and neurological abnormalities are common. Pain may be severe, but even mild symptoms should be properly dealt with as progression to more serious forms of the condition is likely.

A diver with decompression sickness needs rapid first aid of the correct type, normally followed by transport for specialised treatment in a pressure chamber. Unfortunately, very few cave rescuers have any experience or understanding of diving medicine. Consequently, in the mid 80's, I produced the first operational document on decompression sickness for UK cave rescue teams, which has been updated many times since. The most important thing is to get the affected person breathing OXYGEN as soon as possible. Administration of FLUIDS is usually beneficial (provided the casualty can urinate). It is also vital to arrange rapid DESPATCH TO A CHAMBER as soon as practicable. This can be remembered as 'OFD' (which is also a common abbreviation for the name of one of the UK's best known caves – Ogof Ffynnon Ddu in Wales).

It seems unlikely that mountain rescue teams will be involved in dealing with divers suffering in this way. If it does happen, get your casualty breathing pure oxygen as soon as possible (minutes count!) and establish contact with any cave rescue team, all of which have a standard advice sheet with the information you need to deal effectively with what may be a life threatening incident. Also, avoid analgesia unless a diving medic takes responsibility. In particular, Entonox should not be administered as it can result in serious complications.

Most readers who have got even this far will probably soon forget the above advice. If nothing else, remember the usefulness of oxygen for divers. Oxygen is THE most important first aid treatment for a diver with decompression sickness. It is unlikely to have any adverse effects (although advice from the attending doctor takes priority), it's easy to administer, it costs next to nothing – and it can literally be a life saver.

rescue situations is most usually to rescue ordinary cavers who have got into difficulty beyond some sort of wet obstacle. The recent (and unfortunately much publicised) cave rescue in Mexico is just one of many examples.

With safe exploration techniques for long submersions well and truly established, together with the availability of increasingly high quality equipment, the 1980s was the decade when deep cave dives came to be considered routine rather than exceptional. Decompression was now a concern for the rank and file cave diver. The problem is that the deeper one dives, the more quickly nitrogen gas is absorbed into the body's tissues. If the ascent to the surface is too fast then instead of this excess nitrogen being returned in solution to the lungs in the blood (to be breathed out) it starts to form bubbles in the blood vessels. (In a similar

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## WHAT A LONG, STRANGE TRIP IT'S BEEN...

Relief. The next day the rest of us top out. Two days and 26 abseils later we're back at base camp eating freshly baked bread. Sometimes life can be finger-licking good.

I had passed my Team Leader's course the previous year, 1985, and pretty soon after was posted south to my first Team Leader post. Linton on Ouse was serving as a temporary home to Leeming MRT, while the Team's parent station was effectively being rebuilt in preparation for the arrival of the F3 Tornado. The station rebuild also included an all-new MR section and it was while we were celebrating the grand opening of the new section that the terrorist bomb exploded on Pan Am Flight 103 as it flew north over Lockerbie.

Memories, flash-backs, call them what you will – a host of images from that first night remain. A fire hose lying unattended and writhing like some great serpent, casually spouting precious water into the street forming great, useless puddles when we knew the water supply had been damaged. Sherwood Crescent, or what was left of it. Burning. A 747 engine, almost intact, driven deep into the tarmac road by the impact, only feet from a group of houses, all occupied. The fleet of yellow council transit vans, waiting patiently for the bodies to be brought in by the helicopters, moving off one at a time like some surreal taxi rank, to carry their silent passengers to the Town Hall. You need a lot of space for 250 bodies. Difficult times indeed. The troops, as ever, were magnificent.

Compared to Lockerbie, the 737 on the M1 at Kegworth was a breeze. Once again the troops done great. The Stafford troops, arriving well ahead of the Leeming gang, did a tremendous job, bringing their mountain rescue skills to the very edge of suburbia, helping to save a number of lives in the process.

From Leeming to Lossiemouth. From Lossiemouth to Kathmandu. I broached the subject of my spending four months away on my second British Services Everest Expedition with my new boss during our arrival chat. He

wasn't impressed. Personally, I thought it was great. So off I went. Some pretty intense days spent finding a route through the Khumbu ice fall were rewarded when we finally made it through to the Western Cwm. By pure good luck, I had bagged the final pitch that took us up and out of the frozen mayhem of the icefall into the awe inspiring beauty and heat of the Cwm and for some 20 minutes I had it all to myself. Totally alone and insignificant in this valley of my childhood dreams, in the very heart of the world's greatest mountains, I cried. Tears of relief, of sadness, of joy. Tears for Al, lost on the Matterhorn, tears for my brother, disabled after the fall on the Ben, tears for my father, dead at 38, never to see his children become adults. Tears of joy also and an overwhelming happiness at being alive. I would wish these moments on everyone.

**I once bought a T-shirt that carried the message 'What a long, strange trip it's been'. Yes, it's been a long and, at times, strange trip, but I always loved travelling and have had a tremendous journey. It's time now to get off the bus.**

Of course we didn't get to the top, but that's another story.

It wasn't long after returning from Everest in '92 before I was off to Leuchars where I would once again try to fill the considerable void left by Pete Kirkpatrick's departure as Team Leader. Like a rich man's son, I had inherited many things in the shape of a great team, with a great area, offering great opportunities. The next six years were to prove the most challenging yet also the most satisfying and rewarding of my entire RAF career. An unashamedly rose-tinted memory recalls weekends full of climbing, walking, running, jumping. Long hard days of sweating brows and freezing fingers followed by more action of the liquid kind (and action of an altogether different kind for a few, but we won't go into that!) Callouts came thick and fast but with troops like Andy Fowler, John Roe, Joe Wiggins and Innes Cronshaw (to name but a few) on the books we were more than up to the challenge. In fact we relished it. Great days indeed and impossible to sum up in just a few lines.

Of course there were lows as well as highs. The death of Ian Rolland while pushing out the route on a ground breaking cave diving expedition in Mexico was a tremendous blow. I was told in the early hours. When it came to breaking the news to the troops the next morning and with my brain still in denial mode, I struggled to make the right words come and eventually just blurted out something like 'Bad news, troops. Ian's dead.' Nobody spoke, their expressions said it all. It was as if I had slapped them all in the face. I felt sick. None of us wanted it to be true, least of all Ian's wife Erica and their three young children, Leonie, Carly and Connor. But it was, and we had to deal with it. Ian's body was subsequently recovered to the UK and we said goodbye to him in a packed-to-the-ceiling service in St Athernase church in Leuchars. That evening we held a wake for Ian, the like of which I shall probably (hopefully) never see again. Take upwards of a 100 emotionally charged climbers and cavers, add large helpings of alcohol and stand well back. Ian would have been proud.

I joined the RAF way back in February 1977. Why? To join Mountain Rescue, of course – the weapons engineer bit just came as part of the deal. Twenty six and a bit years later I've left, having been a DTL, TL (twice) and, for the past five years, Chief Instructor. I can honestly say it's been good; mostly Great, in fact. Mostly. We all know what has happened to the MRS and Stafford, in particular, during the last two years and most of our lives have been touched by the police investigation in some way. Sadly for me, it has permanently damaged my faith in my employer, but that's my problem. Saddened and angry as I am, the events of the last twenty four months have not affected the enormous pride I feel at having been a member of the RAF Mountain Rescue Service. The hills have not changed, the routes are still there and the troops, I know, will continue to give their all. The troops are the lifeblood of the MRS, the spark that ignites the flame and the fuel that makes the engine run. The moment that fuel runs out or the spark is lost, the engine will stall. Let's just hope that those who that sit in the driving seat don't forget this!

MR has been my life for more than a quarter of a century and, for the last seven years, until last December, I had the honour and pleasure of sharing that life with my search dog, Kyle. Losing him just before Christmas was a shock from which I've still not quite recovered and so will leave it there. We plan to begin training another dog in the next few months. Caroline and I now live in Ingleton, on the edge of the Yorkshire Dales. From our front door I can go walking, climbing and caving without going anywhere near the car. It ain't Scotland, but it sure as shit ain't Stafford either, and Yorkshire beer is better than either!! Come (up/down/across) and see us sometime.

I once bought a T-shirt that carried the message 'What a long, strange trip it's been'. Yes, it's been a long, and at times, strange trip, but I have always loved travelling and have had a tremendous journey. It's time now to get off the bus. Thanks for a great ride troops. Hold on tight and enjoy the rest of the trip. As Heavy would say – 'May all your falls be little ones!!'

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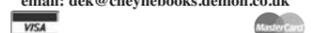
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