

mountain rescue

APRIL 2010

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ISSUE 32



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WELCOME TO ISSUE 32

Mountain Rescue is the membership magazine for mountain and cave rescue in England and Wales.

Contributions should be sent to the editor at the address below. Every care will be taken of materials sent for publication however these are submitted at the sender's risk.

EDITORIAL

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NEXT ISSUE ISSUE 33

Copy Deadline:
 5 June 2010

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

Advertising artwork must be supplied, ready prepared on CD or via email as font embedded PDF/EPS/TIFF (300 dpi) or Quark document with all relevant fonts and images.

FRONT PAGE

Avalanche rescue on Pinnacle Ridge, Patterdale MRT
 Photo: Andy McAlea

EDITOR'S NOTE

Articles carried in Mountain Rescue do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Mountain Rescue England and Wales. We do not accept responsibility for information supplied in adverts/advertorial.

mountain rescue



In 1993 two external studies of mountain rescue in England and Wales looked at how we might improve the service into the new century. Whilst the Sports Council looked at our overall structure, Rescue 200 focused on more operational issues in the Lakes. The two studies were complimentary and largely pointed in the same direction.

At the end of the first decade it is pertinent to look at how far we've moved towards the suggestions made. Both reports showed a willingness to take on most of the issues raised along the principle of Henry Ford – 'nothing is particularly hard if you divide it into small jobs'.

We took on the removal of historic membership of meetings quite soon and founder clubs such as the Rucksack understood our intent and disappeared with good grace – putting the national body firmly in the hands of the teams. Closer links with the BCRC have also been achieved, to the benefit of both. In the Lakes, the amalgamation of teams has been carried out exactly as suggested and this has improved the service.

Some issues are well on the way to being accomplished but need a little more time and work. The importance of a standard national insurance policy was highlighted and we have almost achieved this. More national guidelines and training were strongly advised and we have begun to make substantial progress in this direction.

Rescue 200 surveyed people on the hill, including a number who had been rescued. A common observation was the desirability of easy and standard recognition of MR teams and we have made significant steps in this direction. Other SAR services suggested that a means of identifying the leader of a rescue with a common national pattern should be introduced. Recent events such as floods have reinforced this and it should not be too difficult to bring this to a conclusion.

Recommendations that we supported but

have not brought into play included some aspects of funding. There was a feeling that MR across the UK should have common monetary support. In 1993 it was strongly advised that more money should be forthcoming from the Sports Council but soon after the reports a change of policy removed this entirely. The allowance from the Department of Health needed to be regularly reviewed and lifted in line with inflation. Despite our attempts, it has in fact reduced significantly in real terms.

The estimated average value of a rescue in 1993 was £5,750 (at £10 per hour for team members) whereas the actual cost was £400. Updating those estimates and comparing the figures with official incoming monies would reveal an enormous deficit.

Regular review of the opinions of people rescued from the hills was advised. We recognise the value of this but lack the resources to actually carry it out.

Two recommendations were regarded as unachievable and time has not really changed things. There was reference to salaried admin posts but no suggestion as to their funding. There were also serious reservations about the move away from an entirely voluntary service at all levels. A suggestion that MR should consider being involved in the operation of helicopters in the busy areas was, and still is, difficult to envisage in terms of both financial and human resources.

I think we can claim to have acted successfully on the majority of recommendations that are within our control, whilst recognising that this will always be an ongoing task. This is good news for the forward planning group who can be confident that the aims and projects they produce will be taken forward. Remember the astute observation of Samuel Johnson 'Nothing will ever be achieved if all possible objections must first be overcome'

David Allan Chairman

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INTRODUCING THE ORACLE

January saw The Oracle launched on the Members area of the website. Initial response has been very positive, but not without some confusion. So, what is it? Well, in a (rather large) nutshell... The original plan was to publish a training and information resource (popularly dubbed 'the training manual' despite my best efforts!!) bringing together the expertise and experience of mountain rescue personnel across the UK. However, putting aside the fact that the words 'training' and 'manual', when arranged sequentially in the same sentence seem to elicit a generally negative response from the majority in mountain rescue; or that the cost of printing an encyclopaedia such as this

was pretty prohibitive: the real problem was that, three years down the line, we still didn't have enough material for even half a book. At that rate, by the time we had everything, the first lot would be out of date. So we ditched the publishing idea in favour of an online resource – the advantage that it can be added to and updated at any time. Currently there are about twenty chapters/articles posted, with plenty more in the pipeline. It's anticipated that, over the next eighteen months, we'll have built a fairly comprehensive resource for team members. We may also transfer a portion of that to the public side. To find The Oracle, go to the Members area where fourteen sections deal with a variety of topics including medical, equipment, skills, operational issues, safety

advice, vehicles, water and communications, plus a separate section dealing with cave rescue matters. Each article is presented in pdf format and ready for download. And they are all designed in a corporate style so they sit together as one resource. Which brings me to the next point... Everything in The Oracle will be specifically written or adapted for it; verified by David Allan and Bob Sharp; then edited and formatted and uploaded by me (Judy Whiteside). If you have anything you think might be suitable, either email me on judy.whiteside@zen.co.uk, or David Allan on allan986@btinternet.com, with your article. Sounds simple, so... why the confusion? Well, in the last mag we ran an appeal for teams to send training material to Gary Anderson and the training



subcommittee for upload to the training area of the website. This is a different and entirely separate resource being a pool of material which will, by its nature, vary in content, style, quality, format etc etc. Each subcommittee has had a dedicated section of the website since we relaunched last year – which, thus far, have largely been inhabited by tumbleweed. Those with admin rights should, please, continue to upload resources to their own sections – or send to Gary.

EQUIPMENT UPDATE

Every team should have now received, via their regional reps, a new

Blizzard heat bag. These bags can have heat pads placed in them to actively warm the casualty on the hill – heat pads not supplied. Richard Terrell would like each team to test these to see if, in combination with the light weight cas bag, we can reduce the amount of bulky kit we carry on the hill. Please note, an equipment checking course has been arranged in South Wales, on Saturday 5 June. Application forms can be found on the Members area of the website under 'Equipment'.

MR(E&W) SUBCOMMITTEES AND BUSINESS MEETING

Places: 100
Date: Saturday 15 May (One day)
Location: Lancs Police HQ, Hutton
Contact: Peter Smith 07774 678049
secretary@mountain.rescue.org.uk

LAPTOP ISSUE + SARMAN TRAINING

Places: 100
Date: Sunday 16 May (One day)
Location: Lancs Police HQ, Hutton
Contact: Mark Lewis
communications@mountain.rescue.org.uk

EQUIPMENT CHECKING COURSE

Places: 30
Date: Saturday 5 June (One day)
Location: South Wales
Contact: Richard Terrell 07971 191942
rterrell.orangehome.co.uk

SEARCH FOR THE MISSING PERSON - MANAGING THE INITIAL RESPONSE

Places: 24-25 June (2 days)
Date: Longhirst Conference Centre
Location: Morpeth
Contact: Pete Roberts
conference@searchresearch.org.uk

SEARCH PLANNING & MANAGEMENT REFRESHER

Places: 30
Date: 25-26 August (2 days)
Location: University of Wales, Bangor
Contact: Dr ASG Jones MBE
01248 716971 and 07811 041227

SEARCH FIELD SKILLS

Places: 30
Date: 27-29 August (3 days)
Location: University of Wales, Bangor
Contact: Dr ASG Jones MBE
As above

SEARCH PLANNING & MANAGEMENT

Places: 40
Date: 30 August - 3 September (5 days)
Location: University of Wales, Bangor
Contact: Dr ASG Jones MBE
As above

JOINT IMRA & UK CONFERENCE

Places: TBA
Date: 10-12 September (2 days)
Location: Dublin City University, Dublin
Contact: Peter Howells OBE MSTJ
01633 254244 and 07836 382029
pHOWELLS@PIHOWELLS.FSNET.CO.UK

MR(E&W) SUBCOMMITTEES AND BUSINESS MEETING

Places: 80
Date: Saturday 20 November (One day)
Location: Lancs Police HQ, Hutton
Contact: Peter Smith
As above

TEAM LEADERS DAY

Places: 50
Date: Saturday 4 December (One day)
Location: Derby MRT HQ
Contact: Peter Smith
As above

Dates for your diary...



and don't forget...

MOUNTAIN AND CAVE RESCUE AWARENESS DAY
Date: Monday 3 May (One day)
Location: Across England and Wales

Water based wax waterproofing for leather

In Spring 2009, Nikwax introduced a completely new WaterBased Waterproofing Wax for Leather to replace the original Waterproofing Wax that launched Nikwax over 30 years ago. Like the old formula in its time, it easily outperforms everything else on the market, and one year on the response to this new formulation has been hugely positive.

Why Nikwax Waterproofing Wax for Leather?

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- Reduces water absorption for enhanced comfort and prolonged life of leather
- Does not reduce breathability of leather
- WaterBased so can be applied to wet or dry leather
- Convenient dual method application – sponge-on or rub-in
- Solvent/VOC-free formulation which is safe for you and the environment



To keep smooth leather boots performing perfectly, and your feet comfortable, Nikwax Waterproofing Wax for Leather is an essential part of your kit. For more information, and to find your nearest stockist, visit www.nikwax.net where you can also play the webquiz to win some free Nikwax!

Get insured with Tricketts!

James Trickett & Son (Insurances) Ltd currently act as insurance brokers for over 30 UK mountain rescue teams, so we are only too aware of the perils facing teams day in day out – especially following the harshest winter conditions most of us have experienced for many years, resulting in more team callouts than ever. If you are not already aware, we have designed a good portfolio of policies, specifically created for all teams needs, including:

- Motor/Fleet Policy
- Charity Combined Policy
- Rucksack Policy
- Trustee Indemnity Policy
- Search and Rescue Dog Policy

Now, thanks to the success of our existing Motor Policy scheme, we have negotiated even cheaper rates with the insurance company. Renewal premiums have been reduced across the board since 2009. But, not only that, if uptake continues at the present rate, the underwriters have pledged to make a donation back to Mountain Rescue in 2010.

Charity Combined Policy will not only provide standard cover for buildings and contents, but will automatically provide full accidental damage cover. Policies can be extended to give Property Owners Liability, Goods in Transit, Money and Fidelity Guarantee cover. All policies would attract a no claims discount after 12 months claim free. Policies can be extended to cover certain fundraising events.

The Rucksack Policy is exclusive to James Trickett & Son (Insurances) Ltd. You can cover your personal and team kit in your rucksack to the value of £3,000, for a single annual premium of £63.

Trustee Indemnity Policy can provide cover at varying levels of indemnity and will automatically provide Legal Expenses and Loss of Reputation cover, amongst others.

Finally, the **Search & Rescue Dog Policy** is underwritten by Allianz, and can be offered on any of three levels: Value, Budget or Supreme levels. This provides a minimum cover of £3,000 for vet fees per year, and £1million Public Liability per incident, plus we have our specially negotiated scheme discounts.

Should you have the misfortune to need to make a claim, please be assured that our Lancashire-based staff will offer you all the help and support necessary. If you or your team require any insurance in addition to these policies, we have 128 years broking experience, and can provide any insurance tailored to your requirements.

Give us a call, either at renewal (or earlier if you prefer) we'll be only too happy to review all your insurances, and provide you with a competitive quote. Call **01706 212231** or email **enquiries@trickettsinsurance.co.uk**



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APPLY TODAY!

MOUNTAIN RESCUE AND THE CAMPAIGN FOR GOVERNMENT FUNDING

For the last five years a sub group of the Fundraising Committee has been in consultation with various departments and individuals in government. Our initial aim was to secure some long term, predictable funding for mountain and cave teams in England and Wales similar to the support enjoyed by those in Scotland. We were advised at the time that a specific, targeted approach may yield a more positive response as it was unlikely a request for unspecified funds would get very far. On that basis we approached the Treasury for relief of taxes paid by teams, specifically Vehicle Excise Duty, VAT and fuel duty. Following our first meeting with the Treasury a memorandum was circulated amongst DVLA offices asking them to interpret the existing rules in favour of rescue teams. The Treasury felt at the time that to exempt teams from fuel duty might cause them a problem in that, if they did it for us, they would have to do it for all charities. They promised to leave no stone unturned in an effort to find a way to help us but, so far, nothing has been forthcoming. Regarding VAT, the

Government is bound by European Law and cannot make a special case for anyone without the law first being changed by the EU. A review is currently underway in Brussels and we are hoping for a positive response, although the results are not expected until some time in 2011. We are corresponding directly with the Tax Commissioner in Europe, Lazlo Kovacs, and several MEPs are lobbying on our behalf. One thing we did learn from Europe was that, whilst domestic governments cannot change the VAT laws on their own, they can make donations to whoever they like, for whatever reason they like, and in any amount they like. We then started to lobby for a donation equivalent to the tax paid by rescue teams. Recent high profile activity by mountain rescue teams, including the Cumbria floods and the adverse weather in January, has produced a flurry of media coverage, quite a bit of which has mentioned our funding issues and our dealings with government. Questions have been asked in the House of Lords and House of Commons and there now appears to be some momentum amongst the media and government decision makers to press for support for mountain rescue.

PR 'guru' Sally joins the national team

The more keen-eyed Patterdale MRT readers may recognise the face on the right as that of Sally Seed, PR 'guru' to the Patterdale team and now appointed to help out with PR for the national organisation. Sally has a wealth of experience and has been brought in to help with the growing number of press enquiries, as well as aiming to generate more column inches in the appropriate media and coordinate our PR activity, especially on the proactive and campaigns side. Several of you will already know her as she, along with other MR colleagues, was instrumental in the success of the media training day last year. (Watch this space, incidentally, as there are plans to run another in November through the training subcommittee). Sally is no stranger to the mountains. She has lived in Cumbria for just over six years and has been a keen walker and trekker for many years. She is currently 'doing the Wainwrights' with the family, with the target of finishing them 'before our eleven year old leaves home or loses interest!' One of Sally's first tasks will be to maximise our exposure for the National Mountain and Cave Rescue Awareness Day on 3 May, so keep letting me know what you're doing at team level and we'll see if we can drum up some interest outside of your local area. We're going to need all sorts of examples of activities and events to create interest, so please keep in touch on your plans. Any press enquiries you need to pass on should still come to me at press@mountain.rescue.org.uk but don't be surprised if they're followed up by Sally as she eases into this pivotal role.

Andy Simpson MREW Press Officer

The LibDems have included support for mountain rescue in their manifesto for the forthcoming election and are encouraging both the Labour and Conservative parties to do the same. We are currently waiting for a date for a meeting with interested parties in government following a promise made to Lord Dubs during question time in the House of Lords. If you are approached by the media for a comment on any of the above please quote the information provided or ask them to

contact MREW Press Officer Andy Simpson on 0161 764 0999.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION WITHIN MREW

Peter Smith, MREW Secretary, writes... Since 2001, 277 Long Service Certificates have been issued; 203 for 25 years, 60 for 40 years, 13 for 50 years, and one specially commissioned when Fred Barlow reached the 60 year mark. Presentations take place at team functions

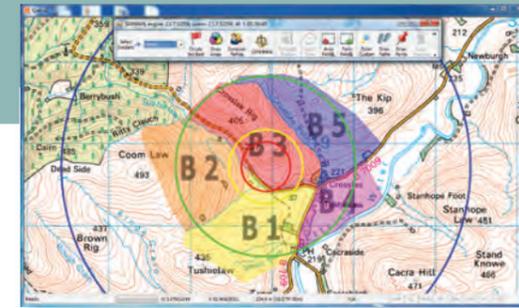
such as the AGM or annual dinner. Some teams have a 'bumper bundle' presented at a prestigious occasion such as a 40th anniversary. Recipients are thanked for the long years of dedicated service including numerous incidents and countless sessions for training, as well as the extra commitment to maintain the HQ, vehicles and equipment. They will have given up yet another Saturday for the dreaded tin shake. Often they will have dozed on the back row of a business meeting



whilst the temperature reaches boiling point at the front. The presentation of the award signifies a well deserved pat on the back and a sincere thanks for, without such involvement, the team would otherwise struggle to keep going. The agreed criteria clarifies that 'long service', however worthy, is completely different from 'distinguished service.' Disappointment has ensued upon an application being rejected when it was obvious the intention was to give a team stalwart a memorable send-off upon retiring. The guidelines state: *'The award should be held in high esteem by all concerned. Its standing should be enhanced by being awarded rarely and after due consideration.'* Members nominated for the Distinguished Service Award would normally be well known within mountain rescue circles for their substantial contribution or support resulting in significant advancement or benefit for mountain rescue. This could include admin, organisation, finance, PR, training, equipment development, leadership, search techniques, rescue techniques. Nominations are considered by an impartial group whereby the President consults with the regional chairmen and makes recommendations at the AGM. Seventeen such awards have been made since 2001. Nominations for the above two categories may be made by a member or by a team or region, as indeed is the case for the third category which is for a Certificate recording the Appreciation of Significant Service to Mountain Rescue.

GOODYEAR LAPTOPS

Under the Goodyear sponsorship deal, Toshiba laptops will be distributed to teams recognised* by MREW and BCRC, pre-installed with the following software: MRMap and associated maps for the relevant MR region; Mapyx Quo; Quo SARMAN Plugin; Open Office; antivirus software; and an email address book of all team and regional contact details. The laptops will be distributed free of charge on Sunday 16 May at Lancashire Police HQ in Hutton – the day after the MREW AGM and business meeting at the same location. The session will also include training in SARMAN and each team is expected to send two members to attend.



MOPYX DIGITAL MAPPING SYSTEMS

Mark Lewis (MREW Comms Officer) and Ewan Thomas (MREW Water Officer) have worked hard to bring this deal to the table over several months. So what is Mapyx Quo? In the company's words, it's '100% free, fully functional digital mapping software that has won numerous awards and is the optimum choice for those who operate in the outdoor environment whether for personal or commercial use.' 'Digital mapping has been a project we've been investigating for some time,' says Mark, 'and the wait has certainly paid off in choosing Mapyx as a partner to supply a solution to our specification at no cost.' **Please note:** Please DO NOT contact Mapyx directly in relation to Quo or SARMAN – all communication must go via mapyx@mountain.rescue.org.uk. There is also a Mapyx Forum on the website.

SARMAN SEARCH AND RESCUE MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

SARMAN is a modular system which provides the capability to better plan, coordinate and manage searches. 'The SARMAN application has been developed from first principles,' says Ewan, 'to provide an incident management system that is fully integrated into the Quo digital mapping platform.' The SARMAN software has been designed in conjunction with MREW. Key features include:

- Topographic and aerial maps at various scales to provide accurate ground data.
- Detailed routing and tracking info.
- Reduce set-up time in establishing search parameters.
- Live communication and tracking facility allowing immediate feedback of search progress.
- Coordination of multiple search teams and equipment across multiple incidents.
- 'Black box' recording of all planning and field operations.

* For an explanation of what constitutes a 'recognised team' see page 15.

MOUNTAIN RESCUE CONTROLLED DRUGS

John Ellerton writes... The annual CD Compliance statement has been lodged with the Home Office. Thanks to Bolton, Cockermonth, Duddon & Furness, Glossop, Kendal, Llanberis, Northumberland, Ogwen, Oldham, Patterdale, Western Beacons, Upper Wharfedale and Woodhead – your stocks are fully compliant with the licence. I am often asked which is the best strong painkiller or which is used most. We may know answers to the former next year when the MRC Pain Relief Audit finishes. Currently 85 forms have been submitted; please can all teams continue sending forms¹ for any casualty with a pain score of $\geq 4/10$ to me at ellerton@enterprise.net so that we get the clearest result possible. As for what is being carried currently by MR teams, the CD returns show that of the thirteen teams, eight carry morphine, four cyclimorph, five diamorphine and four fentanyl lozenges. Teams wishing to explore the newer options for giving pain relief can contact me about arranging a study day.

¹ Available to download in the 'Medical' section of the 'Members' area of the website.

New and exclusive to SP Services The Lewis Pelvic Applicator

Pelvic fractures are one of many potentially life-threatening injuries commonly associated with trauma patients which, if poorly managed, can lead to severe and uncontrollable haemorrhage and even death due to prolonged shock and multiple organ failure. This type of fracture should always be suspected in casualties who have sustained high impact injuries. Having the right equipment to hand, whether you are dealing with first aid or roadside critical care, can save vital seconds and may make all the difference in life-threatening situations. In just this situation, the Lewis Pelvic Applicator comes into its own, ensuring safe, fast and

correct application of pelvic immobilisers such as the SAM Sling, facilitating effective stabilisation of the suspected or indicated pelvic fracture. Unique to SP Services, the patented applicator has the following benefits:

- simple to use
- compatible with many types of pelvic support
- can be applied by one person
- may be used on all surfaces with minimum friction
- facilitates effective, correctly positioned pelvic support
- used to safely apply a pelvic immobiliser in under 20 seconds

- requires minimal movement of the casualty, so reducing pain and assisting internal haemorrhage control
- lightweight, easy to carry and easy to store
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- flexible enough to allow use on uneven surfaces
- re-useable
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For further information, please contact Customer Services on 01952 288 999 or by fax 01952 606 112 or email sales@spservices.co.uk.



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Well, I think we should have given the Ambulance Service the damn shovels and chains!

LAKE DISTRICT

LAKES TEAMS SUPPORT THEIR FLOODED COMMUNITIES

Richard Warren writes... During the unprecedented rainfall which fell on Cumbria in November last year – over 400mm on the central fells – all twelve of the LDSAMRA teams were involved in the rescue operations, either directly or as back-up to their neighbouring teams. We were also supported by teams from adjacent regions and our thanks go out to all those who helped our struggling communities.

Mountain rescue teams did tremendous work over those five days and saved many lives, but in doing so took a massive hit with lost and damaged gear. This ranged from dry suits, ropes and throw lines to lost paddles and damaged vehicles and radios. Overall, the teams needed to replace over £42,000 of gear. The Government recognised that the local councils needed additional funding to deal with the recovery process and a million pounds was injected from central government. The lakes teams asked for help and it came in the form of two



▲ LEFT TO RIGHT: RICHARD LONGMAN, TREASURER LDSAMRA ACCEPTS THE £15,000 CHEQUE FROM POLICE AUTHORITY CHAIRMAN, COUNCILLOR RAY COLE, ALONG WITH IAN CLEMMETT AND MIKE GRAHAM FROM PENRITH MRT

STEVE BRAILEY RECEIVES A CHEQUE FOR £21,000 FROM TIM HESLOP, ON BEHALF OF LAKE DISTRICT MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAMS



grants. Cumbria's Chief Constable, Mr Craig Mackey, made a recommendation to the Cumbria Police Authority and a cheque for £15,000 was presented in February. Cumbria County Council's newly appointed Chief Executive, Jill Stannard, facilitated an agreement with Allerdale Borough Council which resulted in a cheque for £21,000, also presented in February. Further applications for financial support will be made to Cumbria Community Foundation as the teams recognise the need to strengthen their capability in the area of water rescue and our communities now have greater expectations of the services we can provide.

At their last meeting, Police Authority Chairman, Councillor Ray Cole said, 'Every single team is a

registered charity. They all want to remain a voluntary service and do attract considerable public support with funding, which is just as well when they are increasingly called on for 24/7 specialist support to our constabulary and the other emergency services. That is why both the Authority and our Chief Constable are so appreciative of what the LDSAMRA membership does for Cumbria; and why our members were so glad to approve this opportunity to make good some of the equipment lost to their teams during the floods. We know they will be putting it to good use.'

Tim Heslop, leader of Allerdale Borough Council presented the cheque for £21,000 to Lake District mountain rescue teams, in recognition of the cost of rescue work during the floods last November. It will go some way to replacing damaged and lost equipment. Seen receiving the cheque is Steve Brailey of Cockermouth MRT, who had the unenviable task of collecting and collating the cost of damages for several MRTs. The grants have been distributed amongst those teams involved and much of the equipment has already been replaced. The LDSAMRA working groups are currently preparing proposals for improving team capability in communications and infrastructure, swiftwater and stillwater rescue equipment, personal protective equipment (PPE) and training. With extreme weather being a recurring theme within the UK, we will be in an even stronger position to deal with whatever emergency befalls either the Cumbria communities, or those elsewhere in the country where our assistance is needed.

2009 ANOTHER RECORD YEAR FOR THE LAKE DISTRICT (UNFORTUNATELY)

At the December national team leader's meeting, LDSAMRA delivered a presentation on the subject 'Does publicity help reduce incidents?' following

▶ **nextpage**



▲ DES TAKING A BREAK ON ONE OF THE TEAM'S MORE UNUSUAL RESCUES – FIGHTING A FELL FIRE ON OUTERSIDE THAT BURNED FOR ABOUT THREE DAYS, IN 2003 – THOUGHT TO HAVE BEEN CAUSED BY A CIGARETTE DISCARDED FROM A CAR AS SOMEONE DROVE HOME FROM THE PUB

TEAM AWARDS DES OLIVER FOR FIFTY YEARS OF SERVICE

Keswick MRT has added another MREW long service award to the impressive array on the wall in their base. The 50-Year Long Service Award went to former team member Des Oliver and is thought to be only the second ever such award. The first was presented in 2009 by MREW Chairman David Allan to Mike Nixon MBE, still an active full team member.

Des clocked-up something like 54 years before leaving the team, when the longest award available was for 'only' 40 years. Many team members felt his outstanding contribution deserved national recognition. 'Des is quite a character,' confirms Paul Cheshire, 'and a great source of historical detail about Keswick and the team, and he often encouraged newer members. Whether he was scouting-out a stretcher route down the fellside, offering words of wisdom in a meeting, or sitting patiently in a Land Rover doing radio relay through the wee small hours of a night search, he did so with a ready wit and a unique style.'

'Of course, Des has a standing invitation to our base and to our annual dinner... when he can fit it into his busy schedule!'

MBE for Dave Freeborn

Team member and ex-team leader of Patterdale MRT, Dave Freeborn, was recognised in the New Year's Honours List with an MBE for services to the team. Dave joined the team in 1981, becoming team leader in 1990 and serving almost seventeen years in that role before stepping down in March 2008. He continues to serve as a deputy, as well as contributing his design and media expertise to the national mountain rescue organisation.

Martin Cotterell took over from Dave as team leader. 'Dave continues to make a huge contribution to the team – as does his wife, Jacque – and we all congratulate him on this honour. I am in awe of his energy, experience and dedication over the years and very grateful he is now supporting me as a deputy.'

'I very much enjoyed my time as team leader,' said Dave Freeborn, 'and can reflect on many memories of leading a well-trained and supportive team. No team leader can do the job without total and dedicated support, humour and camaraderie from the team and I thank everyone, past and present, for their work and dedication.'



SARDA Iceland supports Cumbrian floods appeal

The Search and Rescue Dog Association (SARDA) of Iceland (BHSI) has made a £600 donation to the Cumbria Flood Recovery Fund as a thank you to members of SARDA Lakes for their help over the years.

Snorri Þórisson is the vice chairman of the Icelandic team. 'The cooperation started back in 1992, when BHSI received great help from the Lakes group in starting to train our field search dogs,' he says. 'From that time we have often had instructors from SARDA Lakes visiting our courses and some of us from Iceland have also been able to take part in Cumbrian training. It is very important for us to have this link to SARDA Lakes to keep the quality standards in our work and we also hope that now SARDA Lakes can benefit something today from this cooperation.'

Mike Blakey, a member of SARDA Lakes and of Patterdale MRT, has had the contact with Snorri about the Icelandic donation. 'The Cumbrian floods were featured in the news media over in Iceland and, like a lot of people, I suppose, the members of BHSI thought of the people they knew here and were keen to find out if we were all okay. The donation to the Recovery Fund is very welcome and we can only thank the team out in Iceland for their concern and their generosity.'

Many of the Lake District's mountain rescue teams and SARDA dogs were involved in searches and rescues associated with the recent flooding in Keswick, Penrith, Ullswater and, of course, Cockermouth.

'As well as training for mountains, many of our volunteers also train for swiftwater rescue,' explains Mike, 'and we do joint training with RNLI and the coastguard for support on lake rescues on and around Ullswater. Our own base in Patterdale was nearly cut off by the floods and it was only right we were able to help the local residents and businesses who so often support us with funding and donations.'



Snorri with Kolar

▶ **from previous page**

four years of public awareness campaigning. The answer was a resounding NO. The number of callouts for teams in the Lakes was up by a staggering 20%, compared to 2008, with teams responding to nearly 800 '999' calls, requiring team members out on the fells 679 times. The reports for 2009 have now been collated, with multiple team callouts reconciled, and the final figures show over 540 total incidents dealt with by teams. These, along with over 100 alerts, still show a significant increase over the 2008 figure of 464 total incidents.

The Lake District teams, as with most of the other regions who are experiencing similar worrying trends, will monitor 2010 very carefully. There would appear to be no let up in the increasing numbers and teams are implementing new strategies to stay on top, making full use of the local mountain rescue resources and those from neighbouring regions when they are in the area.

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

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CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP AT KENDAL TEAM BRINGS BAPTISM OF WATER AND SNOW FOR NEW LEADER

Eddie Harrison writes... Andy Dell stepped down as team leader of Kendal MRT, after twelve years at the helm, leaving a very stable team for me, as the new TL, and Kathy Jackson as deputy. Baptised with water and blessed with snow was a good start. This is an outline of team activities from November through to and including Christmas.

THURSDAY 19 NOVEMBER

Less than a month as new team leader and I was well and truly baptised with water today when the rains fell and, as with most Lake District teams, the pager burst into life and the police requested we assist with various flood related issues. Our first task was transporting a patient for the ambulance service from home to a hospital.

Then a request to attend an RTC on the A6 which no one could find. During this our team Land Rover was diverted at the request of North West Ambulance Service to assist an elderly lady with chest pains in a village the ambulance could not get to. Having arrived at the house, and whilst a team member assessed the patient, the ambulance 'that could not get there' arrived and wondered why we were called. Hey Ho!

Next job was a request by the police to assist an officer on traffic control by advising drivers not to continue on a very flooded road. All went well while a police officer was there but, when he went, people ignored our advice and some even managed a bit of verbal abuse. More water, another village, the same process – this time with police on board! Our second Land Rover began transporting equipment to a local school to set up an emergency reception area. The river Kent in Kendal did break banks but only flooded a few minor roads and footpaths. The flood relief scheme built after the 2005 floods reached two inches from failing and was monitored every 30 minutes then, fortunately for us, the waters subsided. Although we stayed on



▲ FLOODING IN KENDAL

LEFT TO RIGHT: ANDY DELL (EX TEAM LEADER, KENDAL MRT) EDDIE HARRISON (TEAM LEADER) AND KATHY JACKSON (DEPUTY)



standby all night and until midday on Friday, when we all went home for a rest.

SATURDAY 21 NOVEMBER

The team were very involved with a local PR event when police requested us to search the River Lune at Kirby Lonsdale for a missing female. A riverbank search was carried out until darkness fell, but nothing was found. Later on a body was found in the Lancashire area. Saturday evening brought a request from the police to carry out a small search of part of the River Kent just in case there was anyone missing from a canoe that had been reported missing the previous day (the occupant was known to be safe). I declined a night search on the basis of safety but in agreement with the police a small search was carried out on Sunday morning again nothing was found. Hey Ho!

MONDAY 23 NOVEMBER

Two team vehicles used to transport Lord McKenzie and members of South Lakeland District Council around flooded areas in South Cumbria. We managed to get all the usual digs in about VAT and funding but, despite this, never even received a thank you letter from local council or the minister...

TUESDAY 24 NOVEMBER

On standby again as the Met Office had put out an early weather warning of severe rain. Again this did not come to much and there were no callouts. Overall the Kendal area came off very light considering the original weather predictions. Then came the snow...

Rain out of the way and, one month later, the team was tasked to assist the police and NWAS as roads became difficult due to heavy snow in the area. Our Land Rovers were used on various incidents including attending a man in the village of Sedbergh who had fallen in the street with a possible shoulder dislocation. When team members arrived, he was on the pavement covered in blankets and hot water bottles supplied by neighbours – in fact, nearly suffering from heat exhaustion! He was treated by team members and taken in a Land Rover to a waiting ambulance at Junction 37 on the M6 for onward transport to hospital in Lancaster.

Whilst this was on the go, reports came in that a young blonde girl decided to walk to her parents home from Oxenholme Railway Station to Sedbergh (some ten miles) dragging a suitcase and not suitably dressed. Our second Land Rover was dispatched with a police officer on board. Back at base, and several phone calls later, I was speaking to her mother when thankfully she turned up, having been given a lift by a local lady in a 4X4 (no comments about blondes please.)

MONDAY 21 DECEMBER

No jobs but regular liaison with local police, (well the inspector on duty kept popping over to base and drinking our coffee) while more snow fell.

TUESDAY 22 DECEMBER

With more overnight snow, today we assisted in transferring a gentleman from Dent to Kendal for dialysis treatment. To avoid tying up vehicles on long jobs we arranged for CRO to assist and the patient was transferred at a suitable location. At 22:00hrs a care worker was also transferred to a house in Kendal for overnight stay.

WEDNESDAY 23 DECEMBER

At 07:00hrs the overnight care worker was picked up for onward journey to home. At 09:00hrs, another care worker was taken to a house with difficult access in the village of Crook. Team members waited and returned the worker back to Kendal.

Early evening the team picked up a patient at the request of NWAS, who were having difficulties in reaching the location in Selside near Kendal. A Land Rover with two team members was dispatched and the gentleman was transported to the nearest hospital for treatment for a possible DVT. Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day again saw the transportation of care workers and dialysis patients.

SOUTH WEST

DARTMOOR TRAINING WEEKEND A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

Julian Setterington writes...The Dartmoor Rescue Group training weekend, at Okehampton Battle Camp is, for many the highlight of the training year. The 2009 event built on the success of previous years and proved to be the biggest so far.

Historically, we have extended a welcome to other mountain rescue teams across the country and colleagues from lowland search and rescue. This year delegates from the four Dartmoor teams (Ashburton, Okehampton, Plymouth and Tavistock) were joined by team members from Cornwall and Exmoor. From ALSAR we were joined by HANTSAR, WILSAR, SEBEV (Berkshire), South Staffs and ISIS SAR. And this year the invitations went wider still, with delegates from organisations as diverse as Devon and Cornwall Police, the Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Service USAR Team, Kimmeridge Coastguard, Devon and Cornwall 4x4 Response, and the Army. Two hundred and fifty people from all walks of SAR life in the melting pot of one group training weekend.

The Saturday exercise was designed to reinforce existing working practices between all those taking part in the exercise, consolidating joint training in a realistic and likely scenario and was based on an extreme weather event during a Ten Tors Dartmoor training weekend. Following severe rain, wind and then mist, over 100 young casualties, aged 14-18, were known to be missing – all parts played superbly by air cadets from the Devon and



▲ PHOTOS: DEL WILLIAMS DSRT (TAVISTOCK)

Somerset, Plymouth and Cornwall wings).

On Friday, the search managers were briefed and given details of resources likely to be available for deployment on Saturday morning, including 4x4 vehicles to assist deployment of teams, two SARDA search dog teams, police air scenting search dogs, the Fire Service USAR team, Cornwall SAR and the police rope rescue teams.

An initial search plan and search areas were agreed and personnel delegated to handle transport arrangements and equipment distribution to the individual search teams. Throughout the day a variety of incidents occurred, some deliberately organised, others through fate. Radio problems necessitated a relay point being set up which, of course, delayed the search of some areas. By the end of the afternoon all the casualties were located and

treated and virtually everyone recovered to the RV by the ENDEX time.

Occasionally the management of so many people and varied resources, over a search area of about 75 square kilometres, proved to be challenging. It was, however, an event which provided learning opportunities for all the control team, increasing their experience and highlighting some areas for improvement.

Sgt Mike Rose, Force Search Adviser and Coordinator (Devon & Cornwall Police) said, 'This was an ambitious exercise testing a realistic scenario – a fantastic opportunity to put into practice and consolidate the local, multi-agency training that has been taking place down here for some time.'

Kathryn, Dartmoor SRT, Tavistock said, 'I was a hill party leader for this exercise. My team consisted of local team members, the chairman of ALSAR, a coastguard, and police search trained officers. We formed a cohesive and effective search team, each bringing our own skills and experience to the exercise. Without doubt we all learnt something from each other and we now have a greater understanding of each others' roles.

'We located a team of cadets fairly soon in the second of our search areas and treated one team member who was suffering asthma symptoms. We then walked the team safely off the moor. The weather on Dartmoor can often be adverse and this proved to be the case on the day of the exercise. The cadets were very grateful for their swift and effective 'rescue'.

Saturday night continued in classic MR style in the camp NAAFI then, for those who stayed overnight, a series of workshops were organised for the Sunday morning. The low Dartmoor mist which had descended on the camp gave ideal conditions for practical skills to be demonstrated, learnt and exercised.

SARDA gave lively demonstrations of how air-scenting search dogs are able to find a casualty in poor visibility and across difficult terrain; a Land Rover recovery workshop demonstrated how a stuck vehicle can be assisted from the soft Dartmoor peat; ropework and water searching were demonstrated in the unlikely venue of the Okehampton camp hangar; Sgt Rose delivered a workshop about multi-agency working in the world of search and rescue; Nigel from Ashburton entertained with a radio exercise; and delegates heard about the role of 'hasty' searchers.

The DRG would like to acknowledge the enormous amount of work undertaken by the unsung volunteers who organised and made this training weekend such a huge success, in particular, the support given by Landmarc, Paramo, Kountry Kit, Nightsearcher, Cotswold Outdoors and RV Ops.

Finally, we must express our thanks for the support of Colonel Clark, Commandant of Okehampton Battle Camp, who has helped us immeasurably by allowing us the use of this superb training venue.

Haiti: update from the front line

Back in January, whilst mountain rescue teams were battling through wind, rain and snow here in the UK, a small group of rescue colleagues from the Emergency Response Team were working hard to help the victims of the earthquake in Haiti. Gary Foo reports from the front line.

25 January 2010: We have been deployed in Haiti on the front line of the earthquake disaster response for a week. We are in Port au Prince, on the grounds of an airfield by the UN base. There is no access to water, toilets, electricity or the internet – apart from this UN/Military internet connection.

The team are well and in good spirits. Many lives saved and medical treatments and operations. We have fixed bones; debrided major life threatening wounds with septic infection and muscle tears; stabilised and treated with medicines, intravenous infusions, injections and surgeries. Food and water is still a major problem which is a frustration. Many of these casualties are pulled from collapsed buildings or displaced. We treat them for medical emergencies and then the next day there is no food or water for them to build their strength. We have cared for elderly and young alike... sadly lost many too. Our doctors and paramedics have done an amazing job but, as well as medical treatment and delivery of medicines, we have delivered aid, tents, food and water to an orphanage and field hospital.

Transport is a real issue – with casualties to move, and a hospital ready to receive but no way to get there due to impassable roads and lack of vehicles. Although we sometimes needed armed escorts for safety and security reasons, including guns shooting in our hearing range, we were never threatened and, in fact, were welcomed and treated very well by all the Haitians we met. We are very proud, pleased and honoured to be able to help so many people first hand. To actually be able to see and touch the people who need the help is a humbling and honourable experience.

Check out our website for updates www.ert-sar.org.uk – our donations page is www.justgiving.com/haiti. Thank you all who have supported us so far. We are a small but very effective charity. All our specially qualified members are unpaid volunteers with no paid administration costs. The money and aid we get is efficiently channelled to those who need it and we go there to give it personally.



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REGIONAL NEWS

NORTH WALES



The Joys of Volunteering
By John (Hoppy) Heppenstall

Definition: **Volunteer** 1. To perform or offer to perform a service of one's own free will.

Do you think volunteering could be genetic? I am sure it is. Why couldn't I have the lazy-bum-sat-watching-telly gene? No. Some all powerful thing gave me the go-on-and-volunteer gene. Now, don't get me wrong. Volunteering can be a hugely rewarding experience... some of the time.

'OK. Hello. Is that John and Richard there?'

'Errrr. Yes.'

'Who is that?'

'Errrr. John.'

'OK. Your balance is down, Sweetie, can you sit closer to the mike please.'

'Is that better?'

'Yes. That's great. Richard?'

'Hi.....'

'Oh yes, Lovey. Got you nice and loud....'

And so it went on. We (Richard and I) had been admiring the 70s decor in the small BBC studio in Wrexham for the last 30 minutes, waiting for our slot. 'Do you just want to pop in for a chat?' the nice lady had said. Sure. So here we were, about to broadcast live on the BBC Wales 'Jamie and Louise Show'. Right then, final checklist of things to mention: Voluntary organisation. Need cash. All volunteers. Need cash for new Land Rovers. Need cash. No government funding. Did I mention we need some cash? Charity. Need cash. Right, let's do it!

'So we are joined now by a couple of members of the North East Wales Search and Rescue Team. Hello John and Richard.'

'Hi'

'So what on earth possessed you to want to take your clothes off on the top of a mountain?'

Arhhhh... well it's a bit like this... Once upon a time... someone at Channel 4's 'How to Look Good Naked' sent an email to MREW, who sent it out to all the teams, who all thought it was a completely ludicrous idea... apart from a small bunch of fools in North Wales.

Now, I just want to get one thing straight. It was not me who started it. I just volunteered (urrrggg – that pesky word) to collect names of the interested and send in the completed application form. As I also don't possess the let's-just-forget-about-it gene, I sent in the form with a few names attached, volunteered by me. Well what comes around goes around, doesn't it? Within days, Channel 4 were on the phone. Yes. They would love for us to be on the show. Can they come up say the next week and screen test us? Errrrr... okay.

Oh, the excuses that followed. It wasn't like they were asking us to take our clothes off (yet). The fact that one person did and wasn't even on the final programme tells you something I guess. Amongst

the better excuses were, 'I work for a bank.' As if that gives you any special voting rights these days! The team doctor backed out muttering about ethics but then volunteered to 'check us all out with a cold spoon.' The TL was informed by a DTL he wasn't allowed out to play (must be terrible living with your mum).

Well, after the excuses, ethical discussions, soul searching and some more beer, we finally arrived at a select few who were willing to bare all for nothing more than publicity for the team and a free lunch.

The day dawned bright and clear, which is just as well, as the entire film production crew, usually restricted to urban wardrobes and shopping centres, were treating themselves to a day out in the countryside. So they came complete with tag-alongs, hangers-on, extras, body doubles (like they were needed!), prop, assistant prop, etc, etc.

The filming itself was, to be fair, a slightly boring affair. Gok himself was in full flounce mode complete with quilted wellies, a cardy that didn't fit and trousers (well pantaloons) that could not be worn without endangering the occupant in high winds. Thankfully the breeze was only slight and not too chilly with our exposed flesh needing only a quick rub to get the blood back in it.

The concept of taking your clothes off on the side of a hill is nothing new to some of us, is it? A mean, it's just a good thorough primary survey without using tuff-cuts, is it not? (That's what I told the wife in any case.) The concept of having your work colleagues taking the mickey is nothing new. Having four million people see your white bum? No big deal. But to almost get your face sat on by a naked



Slightly warmer... and still smiling...

fell running gentleman must leave certain mental scars that will stay with you forever.

The programme was aired at the end of September and generally it was well received. We certainly got some web coverage and most of the local new services ran articles. Our mistake was that we had little marketing follow-up planned following the airing, eg. a naked calendar or similar that we could then go on and sell to raise funds. Well next time we will know... next time? I will leave you with a few words of the great bard himself:

*We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he today that bares his rear with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition:
Hoppy V, chapter 8, verse 2*

And boy, there were a lot of conditions to gentle that day!

Volunteering then. So whose turn is it now? Oh, mine again.



PHOTOGRAPH OF BBC'S RAV WILDING WITH MEMBERS OF SUSSEX SEARCH AND RESCUE DURING RECENT FILMING ON THE SOUTH DOWNS

Following on the success of the conference last August, ALSAR has made good progress implementing ideas and recommendations generated at this event. A new clinical governance advisory panel is being established, with the support and involvement of all the ALSAR teams. Although originally focusing on casualty care, and first aid provision, it is hoped the panel's responsibilities can be expanded to include governance on dealing with mental health issues in the future, as a large proportion of the searches organised by ALSAR teams have a mental health component. Another conference recommendation was the introduction of working groups or subcommittees for key areas. A very successful open forum at the conference led to the capture of a number of desirable initiatives, which the subcommittees will endeavour to implement over the coming year.

Representatives from a number of ALSAR teams celebrated Valentine's Day by avoiding card shop clichés and instead attending the UK's first Lost Person Behaviour course. This three-day course, based on both Robert Koester's book of the same name, and the International Search and Rescue Incident Database (ISRID), provided excellent guidance for searchers on the ground, as well as search planners, on how to apply an understanding of missing person behaviour to their search activities. ALSAR continues to expand with one new probationary team accepted and potentially four more in the pipeline. The ALSAR chair will soon visit Northern Ireland, at the request of the PSNI, to look at the formation and accreditation of volunteer Lowland Search teams in the province. During the recent adverse weather, many ALSAR teams have assisted their local police services and authorities with tasks outside of their normal search and rescue remit. The provision of well trained and equipped resources has been well received by various other agencies.

The February ALSAR meeting took place in Milton Keynes on the 21st. Once again we were delighted to welcome Peter Bell, MREW President. Peter's enthusiasm for volunteer search and rescue is infectious, and his experience is enormously useful to us. This commitment by MR to forge closer links with ALSAR was reciprocated by all the ALSAR teams, and Peter's dry sense of humour was very welcome during the six hour meeting.

Over the previous few months, ALSAR teams have been involved in the filming of a new series of the BBC's Missing:Live, starring Rav Wilding. This filming has involved both training sessions and search reconstructions. ALSAR is committed to a greater understanding of the importance of volunteer search and rescue in the UK, and is keen to support initiatives which promote this. The current financial situation has hit teams hard, both in terms of fundraising, and the understanding of employers when staff need to leave work at attend callouts. Effective publicity for search and rescue is essential to counter this.



Babies, babies everywhere...



Snowy weather and several weeks of icy conditions brought on a rash of baby deliveries for mountain rescue teams in December and January. We thought we'd share a few here...

23 December...

Kicking off the trend, and making national news, was Jenny Walsh, from Hyde in Greater Manchester, who gave birth to baby Leah in the back of a Glossop MRT Land Rover as it headed towards Tameside General Hospital. The team was called out by paramedics when the ambulance was unable to reach Jenny, who had gone into labour a month early.

'The vehicle was more comfortable than I thought it would be,' said Jenny. 'It didn't have much room and the ambulance lady looked a bit nervous when she said she could see the

was used to transport her to Tameside hospital. Just as we arrived at the car park, the baby girl was born (six weeks early) and our Land Rover quickly filled up with doctors and midwives! We were also very glad of the NWS paramedic, who did all the hard work!'

2 January...

Lyndsay and David Fane got a double new year shock when their baby arrived in their bathroom, just as a fully kitted-out team from Bolton MRT rang the doorbell. The Bolton couple had called the Royal Bolton Hospital at 3.15am on New Year's Day to say she was in labour. Leah Jasmine Fane (another Leah!) arrived an hour later, weighing in at 7lb 11oz, delivered by Lindsay's husband David. 'We called for an ambulance,' said Lyndsay, 'but there was no time. It all happened really fast and then the rescuers got here. It was a bit of a shock. They checked Leah and her temperature.'

Mr Fane had delivered the baby with the help of a paramedic on the other end of the phone. 'The hospital didn't say the rescuers were coming, so when they arrived, we wondered what they were doing in Moses Gate as there's no mountains

round here! And they had all their gear on.' Team member, Mike Marsh said, 'We've never had anything like it before, but we were just glad to be of assistance.'

7 January...

Still in Bolton, Amy Croysdale had a lot of people to thank when she gave birth to her first child, as the dramatic delivery included paramedics, hospital staff and Bolton team members. Amy went into labour in the early hours of the morning, at her mother's house in Leigh. She had planned to give birth at the Royal Bolton Hospital, but heavy snow meant her parents couldn't get

the car past the end of the street. They called for an ambulance, but that vehicle was also unable to get there. So the team was called at 6.40am. Amy said, 'I panicked when I realised I couldn't get to the hospital. I was really surprised when the mountain rescue team came but they were brilliant with me. They gave me gas and air all the way to the hospital to help with the pain.'

Amy arrived at the hospital at 8.20am and gave birth to her son, Harley, at 12.02pm. 'I'm really grateful to them,' said Amy, 'and just want to say thank you for all their support. I don't know what I would have done without them.'

12 January...

Over in deepest Derbyshire, Melanie Pollitt's suspicions that her second child's birth might not be straightforward were confirmed by the foot of snow settling outside her home in the High Peak, just as the cramps in her belly were becoming unmistakably regular. But, despite being nine days overdue, she was reluctant to ask the midwife to trudge up the snowy hill until she was sure things were beginning in earnest. So she sat at her computer and fired off an SOS to Mumsnet. 'Is this the onset of labour?' I haven't rung the midwife yet, because anyone coming out will have to come with the local mountain rescue team and stay till the job is done. Any advice on what to do now or when to ring midwife etc would be greatly appreciated.'

The advice, which began to arrive a minute and four seconds later, was unanimous. 'Ring them now!' And so it was that, at 6.00pm, midwife, gas and air arrived in Hayfield, courtesy of Kinder MRT and its 4x4. The ordeal for Melanie, however, was far from over. Everything was fine for the first hour and then the lights went out thanks to a local powercut. Not that the midwife was fazed. She just suggested they light some candles and carry on. Not too long after midnight, baby Jimi Ray was born. Unfortunately, due to his jaundice and breathing problems, baby Jimi and Mum were whisked away to hospital for a couple of days – leaving hordes of Mumsnet users hammering at their keyboards, frantic for an update. All their concerns were allayed on Melanie's return home and mother and baby are now doing fine. 'But,' adds Melanie, 'without the midwife and the mountain rescue guys it could have been a different story.'



Bolton MRT vehicles and snowploughs outside the Royal Bolton Hospital in January

baby's head, but she told me to keep breathing and push. She did really well.'

Leah's father, Curtis Kenyon, had been out on his work's Christmas do when he received a call telling him the baby was on the way. 'I was just getting my first pint when I got the call from Jenny saying go to the hospital.'

Team leader Rick Fry said, 'We were called to assist NWS with a lady in labour. Paramedics were on site but had to leave their ambulance some distance away due to heavy snow. Glossop Mobile 2 (110 Land Rover)

What constitutes a 'recognised team'?

by Peter Smith, MREW Secretary

Most readers will be well informed about the development of mountain rescue leading up to our 75th Anniversary in 2008. Since the formation, in 1933, of the Joint Stretcher Committee, we have been through a variety of name changes and structural reviews and the gradual emergence of the first organised teams in Coniston and Keswick in the late 1940s gave way to a dramatic growth in team numbers in the 50s and 60s, later grouped geographically into administrative regions.

During 2008, we began a revision of our Constitution which, when adopted in the following year, introduced the most significant structural change for decades – regional representation to MREW was supplemented with team representation. Specifically, 'each recognised team of MREW is entitled to one voting representative.'

But what is a 'recognised team' and what are the implications? The following discussion document was circulated to all teams:

'There are a number of reasons for taking a more positive approach to identifying the function and capabilities of mountain rescue teams. It is important we can describe to other SAR bodies exactly what teams are able to perform and standard information across the organisation is clearly the sensible way to do this.'

MREW now has the constitutional responsibility to recognise teams and needs a yardstick against which to take measurements. Other teams need to be aware of the abilities of all other teams particularly as we move towards more shared call out responses.'

It is important at the outset to emphasise that it is the capability of a team as an entity that is considered, not of the individuals within the team. Nor do we seek to define how a team will reach or maintain that capability as there will be a number of ways to achieve this. This is a definition of the CORE capabilities of MRTs and it is recognised that many teams will have capabilities beyond this.'

It is also very important to recognise that the final decision regarding the deployment of a team will always rest with the team leader. This is especially important in respect of extreme weather conditions but also in terms of the appropriateness of using the team in any situation.'

The MREW strapline 'Saving lives in wild and remote places' forms the basis of the abilities of teams but clearly means these can be carried into less hostile environments.'

Although a few teams were not represented, due to flood responses in the Lake District, a substantial majority of team votes combined with regional votes to approve that document at the MREW meeting in November 2009. Those present noted that 'MREW will seek to provide help and additional training to assist all teams in meeting the conditions agreed in the Ten Point Plan of Core capabilities.'

The next step was for teams to declare 'help not required' or 'help required' against this plan. The team will be able to:

1. Operate in all weather conditions, including full winter conditions, by day and night.
2. Work in all hostile mountainous terrains but also use these skills in other areas including urban surroundings.
3. Conduct and manage searches in all circumstances including the ability to effectively deploy other resources such as other teams, SARDA and other SAR agencies for this purpose.
4. Carry out stretcher evacuation of casualties in all the above situations.
5. Effect steep ground, crag and cliff rescues.
6. Deliver casualty care to the standard of the MREW CasCare course on every occasion.
7. Operate safely along water margins.
8. Work with helicopters.
9. Maintain effective communication systems.
10. Establish working relationships with other SAR services.

The responses from teams throughout England and Wales will be presented to the AGM in May. It should be clarified that a team vote rests with the

'designated representative' of that team. Proxy votes will not be permitted. That representative will be the main conduit between a team and MREW and should build up a substantial portfolio of all matters relating to MREW.

Life often reveals coincidences. Back-to-back with that meeting in November was the successful Technology and Innovation Day. One particular topic was repeated at the Team Leaders' Day in December. John Hulse demonstrated the 'Regionwide MRT Callout Platform in use at North Wales Police Control Centre' and stated, 'The idea of having any MRT in the region called from the control centre using a common simple, operator-friendly system took shape and, three months after the launch, all North Wales teams, SARDA and cave rescue are now called by the police exclusively via this new SMS platform designed and implemented by NWMRA. The feedback from the control centre staff has been exceptionally positive and teams are getting a better, faster and far more consistent callout from the police.'

This system may become the norm for most of the police forces requiring MR assistance. The feature of striking significance is that police operators will have a single web screen to select and call any required SAR team from a list of teams showing area and key capabilities. The expectation will be that 'Team A', tasked with operating outwith the home patch on unfamiliar terrain, will possess capabilities comparable to 'Team B' for whom they are substituting. It is feasible the system will facilitate tasking between MR regions. Teams could be tasked to a hill incident in another region in which the local teams are deployed in widespread flood responses and are all 'up to their neck in it'. This reinforces the importance for all teams recognised by MREW to comply with all ten core capabilities – they will be central to the negotiations as we progress towards a consolidated personal accident insurance policy.

Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue Organisation

by Chris Lloyd

Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue Organisation is the mountain rescue team that covers about 400km of the mountains of Northern Snowdonia (generally speaking, North of Llanberis Pass to the north coast and from Bangor to the Conwy valley).

Whilst we cannot boast of the highest and most popular mountain in Snowdonia, Snowdon, we have ten of the fourteen famous 'Welsh 3000' summits including the very popular Tryfan (always responsible for about a third of our callouts).

The organisation was born out of the Ogwen Cottage Mountain Rescue Team in March 1965, when Ron James MBE founded OVMRO. After a further ten years based at Ogwen Cottage, the team moved to Bryn Poeth, a former water bailiff's cottage East of Llyn Ogwen and in the shadow of Tryfan. This cottage has good facilities and a good landing site for two Sea King helicopters just behind the building.

Innovation

Innovation has been a key part of the team including numerous examples of new mountain rescue equipment and techniques driven by operational needs. These include a Mariner stretcher, a tragsitz and winch with steel wire brought from Austria; Dr Ieuan Jones' First Aid for Mountain Rescue courses,

courses were brought over from the USA and further developed to suit the UK. This course is still one of the leading courses for SAR and is taught to mountain rescue teams and police forces throughout the UK.

After numerous challenging and high profile river rescues, all team members are trained in swiftwater awareness and half are trained to SRT level 1 standard. The team is well equipped to support other teams and assist in swiftwater search and rescues throughout North Wales and further afield. Also the team is called upon to assist in the event of river flooding.

OVMRO was the first MRT in England and Wales to have a voluntary, 'no holds barred' audit of the organisation by fellow MRT members from the Lakes and southern Snowdonia. Many of the key recommendations from the audit were implemented, improving our operational capability, and the team intends to repeat the audit again. We have also reciprocated by executing audits on Dublin Wicklow MRT.

In the late 1990s, two members went to British Columbia to attend Kirk Mauthner's ten day Technical Rope Rescue course. Realising this was a scientifically proven, specialist rescue course, not just an adaptation of rock climbing techniques and equipment, OVMRO invited Kirk across to the UK to train twenty team members in these world renowned and evidence based systems. OVMRO continues to develop and adapt these techniques and Kirk returned a few years later to audit our training and equipment as well as run another intensive five day Technical Rope Rescue course.

Fundraising and publicity

The Ogwen team was one of the first in the UK to form an effective and enthusiastic support group which has enhanced effective fundraising. The group, named Treble Three after our Capel Curig telephone number, continues to grow in membership. In addition to its fundraising and merchandising, it has become a vibrant social organisation in its own right.

About ten years ago, the team had the experience of the BBC spending nine months filming a 'fly on the wall' documentary about who we are and what we do.

Working with the police

Following a number of fatal incidents the team worked with North Wales police and other MRTs in the region, to develop the Fatal Incident Protocol. This is a systematic process which enables experienced and trained members to investigate fatal incidents and prepare reports for the Coroner. OVMRO also benefits from two serving police officers who provide expert tuition and training. North Wales police have provided defensive and response driving training. These five day long courses are run at the North Wales Police Driving School, using the team Land Rovers. The region has a close working relationship with the police and this has led to the issue of Airwave handsets and Gateway units being issued to all teams. One of the great benefits of the Tetra system is the 'secure' communications between teams and the police.

Casualty care

After the Dr Ieuan Jones course, two team members developed, and run, the ECMR casualty care courses. Members also train on the MREW Casualty Care courses. Several members are trained to 'advanced' level and are supported by spending time training in local hospitals. One team member is an orthopaedic surgeon at the local hospital so provides casualty care from the incident site to discharge from hospital.

IT and communications

Our communications group has developed an SMS 'Call Out' platform to enhance the efficiency of the region. This has been operational since August 2009. It enables North Wales police to select and alert any one of seven teams in the region using a simple but secure web interface. This system is now being considered in other mountain rescue areas in the UK.

Shortly, the team is to issue all its operational members and trainees with a waterproof GPS radio which is compatible with the MRMAP system developed by Dave Binks and Rob Brookes in the Lake District.



▲ TEAM MEMBERS ON TRYFAN NORTH RIDGE

which were widely used throughout the UK from the late 1960s and the Ogwen Stretcher which was de-mountable so it could be easily carried by three members up the scrambles of Tryfan and across the exposed plateaus of the Glyders and Carneddau. In addition, ground breaking Search Management

Based on the successful Wasdale MRT training manager programme, our IT group has developed a web-based system to record the training and rescues carried out by individual team members. This is hosted remotely so team members can log in and review personal statistics from anywhere.

Operations

To spread the high workload, the team uses a flat topped pyramid of team leaders, supported by trainee team leaders to coordinate search and rescue operations. Team leaders are subjected to a critical and objective review on a three yearly cycle. This ensures they remain current and effective. Their continued role as a team leader is endorsed by the members at the AGM. The operational leadership and the administrative leadership were separated twenty years ago to spread the workloads.

There are about 50 operational members and there is an annual intake of trainees who have to go through a prescribed training programme for about twelve to eighteen months. During that period they are 'operational' and attend callouts. There is an

annual long weekend in Scotland for winter training and, at the time of writing, three members are training with the mountain rescue teams of Croatia.

Historically, the team has always had close ties with 'C' Flight, 22 Squadron, RAF Valley and carried out their first 'mountain rescue' in Snowdonia in 1969. The teams in the region and all their 'clients' greatly benefit from the support and first class flying from the crews at RAF Valley. We hope this relationship will be able to continue with future developments.

With the increasing workload on the volunteers of the mountain rescue teams, we regularly work with our neighbours at Llanberis and NEWSAR. Regional training events in casualty care, water awareness and search management help bring the teams together. OVMRO has hosted a number of introductory weekends for the new trainees of the region.

Team members regularly attend and present at the MR UK conferences and part fund members to attend the IKAR conference in Europe. There is also a training bursary for members who wish to enhance their skills through external training.



▲ TOP: FYNNON LLUGWY
▲ ABOVE: KITTING UP FOR SOME WATER PRACTICE

Our Constitution states that we are to disseminate information about our activities; something we are glad to do. We always welcome visitors to Oggi Base at Bryn Poeth so members can exchange ideas and skills with other MRTs. Please call in at a weekend or Bank Holiday.

SNOW VOLUNTEERS RECOGNISED FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY: ELAND HOUSE, LONDON – MONDAY 15 MARCH

Team members from across England and Wales ventured to London in March, at the invitation of Barbara Follet MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. Local Government Minister Mrs Follett thanked forty local heroes including members of Mountain Rescue England and Wales, the British Red Cross, St John Ambulance, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and the WVRS, at an awards ceremony, praising them for their hard work and commitment to helping their neighbours during the recent heavy snow.

Transporting stranded patients, assisting the emergency service vehicles, cleaning drives of deep snow and helping to get meals-on-wheels to isolated, elderly people during the heavy snow earlier this year were just some of the voluntary acts of kindness recognised by Mrs Follett.

'The heavy snow earlier this year showed Britain's community spirit in action. The people here today, and many others across the country, spontaneously leapt to the aid of their neighbours. I want to congratulate them for their generous acts of kindness to help those in need.

'Volunteering doesn't just mean getting involved in big, organised events – it can mean just looking out for your neighbour. I hope more people are inspired to help their local community and are encouraged to start volunteering on a regular basis. The Government is working with local councils to ensure people have all the information they need to get involved in volunteering.'



MEMBERS OF MOUNTAIN RESCUE WITH BARBARA FOLLETT MP PHOTO: ALEC COLLYER

Mrs Follett praised the volunteers from many third sector organisations and those who are simply 'good neighbours', involved in efforts to restore normality to local communities around the country during the snow.

Many teams dealt with what was essentially a year's worth of work during a very concentrated period dealing with incidents as varied as retrieving ambulances stuck in snow and ice whilst responding to emergencies, transferring patients to and from hospital, getting district staff to patients in deep snow, rescuing motorists stuck in deep snow, helping dig out vehicles, famously assisting in the delivery of a number of babies, attending sledging accidents and, of course, searching for missing persons in extreme wintry conditions.

After the awards ceremony, each person was presented with an 'Outstanding Contribution to the Community' Certificate from HM Government,

signed by Mrs Follet. Speaking no doubt for all who attended, Elaine Gilliland of Bolton MRT said, 'We are extremely proud to have been recognised by HM Government for our contribution to the local community and would like to personally thank Barbara Follet MP for the invitation to a very special event and the opportunity to meet with other volunteers from England and Wales.'

Those who attended were Duncan Massey and Alan George (Avon and Somerset CRT); Alec Collyer and Rob Illman (Dartmoor SRT Ashburton); Paul Heywood (Rossendale and Pendle MRT); Russ Hore, Kevin de Silva, K.C.Gordon and Alistair Read (Ogwen Valley MRO); Robin Knott (Derby MRT and PDMRO); Huw Birrell (North East Wales SAR); and Martin Willey and Richard Longman (Wasdale MRT).

SOUTH WEST

DARTMOOR TEAM MEMBER TO SCALE MOUNT EVEREST IN MAY

Team member Ian Ridley, who runs mountain-skills.com, will leave Exeter on 3 April to attempt to climb the 29,035 foot mountain, via the fabled North Ridge, in aid of the Ashburton team of the Dartmoor Rescue Group and The Intensive Care Society.

The trip will involve being away for ten weeks with the summit attempt taking place in the latter half of May, when there is traditionally a brief weather window as the jet stream moves away from the summit. The first six weeks will be spent acclimatising and helping to stock up the higher camps.

Ian is hoping to raise at least £8850 (the height of Everest in metres) for each of his two chosen charities. He explains, 'I've decided to split all donations equally between the two charities. The voluntary nature of mountain rescue – and the need for funds – needs no explanation. His second charity, the Intensive Care Society, aims to advance and promote the care of critically ill patients. 'In simple terms, the society backs the

doctors who care for patients on life support. This is vital work if, Heaven forbid, you or a relative should ever end up in an intensive care unit.'

Ian will be following in the footsteps of George Mallory and Andrew Irvine during the famous 1924 British Expedition. 'It is one of the great climbing mysteries, whether they made the top or not,' he says, adding, 'One of charms of the Everest North Ridge approach is that it offers a view of virtually the whole route from the base camp.'

Mount Everest has been climbed successfully by more than 200 Britons, with fewer than 100 completing the harder route of the North Ridge. Ian has been walking and rock climbing since the age of the eleven when he first climbed Snowdon in the pouring rain. He wasn't put off by the wet weather and mist, only by the dreadful cagoule he had to wear which he says was best described as a 'nylon bin liner'!

He has climbed and walked not only on Dartmoor, in Scotland, the Lakes and North Wales but further afield including summiting Mont Blanc, the Matterhorn and the Eiger. In the autumn of 2009 he climbed Ama Dablam (6856m) in the Himalayas.



Ian concludes with an extra fundraising plea. 'If there are any local companies who feel they would benefit from being associated with this trip then they are welcome to contact me. And I can wave some of their promotional material for the camera when I reach the top of the world.' Donations can be made online via www.charitygiving.co.uk and searching for Ian 'Ridley's Mount Everest 2010'. The expedition will be professionally led by Adventure Peaks, a Cumbrian mountaineering company.

Barry Robinson Rossendale & Pendle MRT

It was with great sadness on Friday 12 February, that Rossendale and Pendle team members gathered at St Cuthbert's Church in Burnley, to say goodbye to their friend and colleague Barry Robinson. The 55 year old former deputy team leader, a dedicated and committed team member for many years, finally lost his battle against cancer the previous week, having confounded his original prognosis with typical courage and dignity.

Barry was a policeman, scout leader, mountain rescue team member and fire prevention team leader. His first experience of the Rossendale and Pendle team was during an incident on Pendle Hill at Halloween in 1992, where he was called in as the SOCO. Clearly thinking the team needed his help he joined in May 1993, bringing a wealth of experience from his time in the police, particularly in the areas of search management and training. He served as a member of the team council as well as spending several years heavily involved with the training group, and as deputy team leader for around eight years. He was instrumental in how the team's relationships with the other statutory emergency services developed over the years. Many of our standard operating procedures were written by Barry, culminating last year in him rewriting the entire team 'rule book' – a legacy which will continue to influence the team and how it runs for many years to come. Over sixteen years, Barry attended hundreds of incidents, regularly leading operations and bringing great skill and professionalism to everything he did.

In his 'spare' time he was a keen mountaineer and caver, and responsible for many of the team's social excursions, inevitably, involving a small amount of beer and much hilarity. Never one to stand on ceremony, Barry was able to demonstrate his caving prowess at a team dinner, when he managed to get all the way over, under then back on top of a table without touching the floor. He followed this by threading himself through the legs of a bar stool (no mean feat wearing a dinner suit) before getting stuck half way through and being told by the bar staff that it would cost him £70 if he broke it to get out. Skilled, funny but also thrifty, Barry managed to get himself all the way through rather than waste valuable beer money on a piece of furniture.

He was diagnosed with bowel cancer in December 2007. It had spread to his liver and he was told he had twelve to eighteen months to live. He fought it bravely and with real dignity, always believing he would beat the prognosis. Which, by several months, he did.

In equal measure, he was the team's harshest critic ('devil's advocate' being a term which surely was coined for Barry!) and its greatest supporter. As a friend, colleague and mentor, he will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

Judy Whiteside Team Secretary



ABOVE: HELICOPTER TRAINING WITH RAF VALLEY PHOTO: CHRIS BOYLES RIGHT: ON EXERCISE WITH THE LANC'S POLICE ASU PHOTO: JUDY WHITESIDE

Barry Robinson



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The EUV can also be fitted with a winch which can easily be interchanged from the front to the rear of the vehicle. Overall the EUV can be fitted with various additional equipment to suit individual requirements.

In addition to the Morton EUV a purpose built trailer is also available – as well as being used for transporting the vehicle, the fact that it is a fully enclosed trailer allows it to be utilised as a mobile incident unit providing protection from the elements.

A side personnel door is fitted to allow access in and out of the vehicle. As with the EUV, trailers can be supplied to suit individual requirements.



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Bankside training

Train the Trainer days 5/6 June 2010

To help cascade out the new bankside training module across mountain rescue, Howard Crook is running two 'Train the Trainer' days on 5th and 6th June. The training is intended to equip participants with the skills and knowledge to deliver the bankside programme to their own teams.

These one-day programmes provide an exemplar of the module and outline how to deliver the training with an emphasis on safe practice. Participants will leave with detailed trainer notes, risk assessment details and feedback regarding their ability to deliver the programme – expect to be working into the evening.

The minimum level of experience to attend this training is a swiftwater rescue technician award such as the Rescue 3 SWRT award or equivalent. Ideally, candidates would have experience of instructing in the swiftwater environment and a strong whitewater background.

Participants are required to come fully equipped as they would to instruct this day, including safety equipment.

Location: Bala, North Wales. Cost: £88.00 (including VAT).

Howard can also deliver

a range of rescue and development programmes anywhere in the UK. He is the Director of Re-Think Development delivering a range of outdoor based development programmes to business, charitable and public sectors. For further information, call 01539 739050 or email howardcrook@rethinktraining.co.uk. Or check out the website at www.rethinktraining.co.uk



Rescue 3 (UK) are the country's leading swiftwater and flood rescue training provider, offering world-class training facilities and unequalled expertise in water safety and rescue training.

Their courses form the base training for many emergency services and are available at Awareness, Operations, Technician and Instructor level, with a number of courses carrying University accreditation.

Training courses include:

- Swiftwater Rescue Technician**
- Management of Water & Flood Incidents**
- Swiftwater Rescue Boat Operator**
- Rescues from Vehicles in Water**

For more information please contact:
Rescue 3 (UK), National Whitewater Centre
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Tel: 01678 522035
Fax: 01678 521158
E-mail: info@rescue3.co.uk

Three levels of training for team members have been identified, depending upon the role they will fulfil during search and rescue operations. All team members should have basic water awareness, so they are aware of the risks and controls when working next to water. This is addressed by the materials currently being prepared for issue to all teams. Those who will be placed next to the water margin (still or moving) should have completed the MREW Bank Team syllabus, or a course of similar scope available from

Water matters...

by Ewan Thomas, MREW Water Officer

Coordinated purchasing

Whilst centralised purchasing of water safety equipment is still some way off, we have decided to take our first steps toward coordinated purchasing. We are in discussion with the leading manufacturers and suppliers so we can compile a database of prices for commonly used items of water safety and rescue kit. Over the coming months we will make the pricing information available to all teams through a website link. Initially, the information might be simply a series of price lists, but we hope to extract some useful information to make the data more interactive. We have indicated to suppliers that we would ensure teams that wished to purchase from their MREW price list would do so on headed paper. Please look out for the link which will be coming soon.

Water awareness training material

MREW will shortly be issuing water awareness training material to every team. This will comprise a DVD titled 'Water Awareness for Rescue Professionals' along with trainer notes and some supplementary presentations. The objective is to ensure we have a consistent national approach to awareness training that is aligned with that of the other emergency services. The DVD has been produced for all services, but has not been tailored toward mountain rescue team use, so we have added the trainer notes, which point toward the sections of greatest relevance to us. The supplementary material provides the MR specific aspects of the hazards and precautions of working close to water. This will allow the delivery of water awareness training to all members in a relatively painless guided video evening session.

Training syllabuses

Three levels of training for team members have been identified, depending upon the role they will fulfil during search and rescue operations. All team members should have basic water awareness, so they are aware of the risks and controls when working next to water. This is addressed by the materials currently being prepared for issue to all teams. Those who will be placed next to the water margin (still or moving) should have completed the MREW Bank Team syllabus, or a course of similar scope available from

commercial providers. The Bank Team syllabus has been finalised and is available on the MREW website. Those who may have to intentionally place themselves into water should have completed the MREW Water Team syllabus, or a course of similar scope available from commercial providers. The Water Team syllabus has been prepared in draft form and will be tested at a pilot course in April. Soon after this the final syllabus will be published to the website.

Trainer availability

The key constraint on providing bank team training is the availability of trainers. MREW is keen to resolve this quickly and will be running a training course in April to train suitable candidates to deliver this course within their region. We would like to receive nominations for two or three candidates from each region to attend the course at Llangollen on the weekend of 23/24 April. The course will take one full day. Places will be conditional upon the candidates then running at least one Bank Team course in region before the end of the year. Candidates should have a 'Swiftwater Rescue Technician' qualification (or similar), and the course will focus on teaching the syllabus rather than learning water and bank skills. There will be further courses available later in the year, some sponsored by MREW and some run on a commercial basis.

Water assets database

At the team leaders' meeting in December, I suggested we maintain a database of water assets that teams would be prepared to offer other teams if required. The meeting was of the opinion that this should be a MREW database, held and managed by us. This database would be used to give government a picture of the total resource within MR teams. It would be secure and accessible to all team leaders through a password system. In the event of another dramatic flood incident, the MR liaison would be able to examine the database allowing the full spectrum of potentially available resources to be seen. Such a database requires up to date information, not only on water capabilities, but also on callout and contact details. This is most easily done by allowing each team to edit its own details within the database.

Coincidentally, our requirement became apparent just before John

Hulse presented the North Wales callout database to the technology day held at Preston. John has been kind enough to adapt the system to meet the objectives we identified in the team leaders' meeting, and an amended version, able to identify water capability, is in production. Whilst there is still work to be done on the technical side, I have recently sent out a request for information that will allow us to start populating the database. I will give an update on progress at the May management meeting.

Water credentialing database

I am keen to see the training of individuals recorded systematically so we are aware of those who have passed through the MREW bank and water training syllabus. This requires yet another database to be maintained. We are lucky to have John Little on our group who has volunteered to develop this too. Unless there is demand, I don't

workload, and that of the other services. We need to understand our risks more clearly, and also understand how working collectively with other services can achieve safer and more effective outcomes. MREW will be holding a one day training event on the weekend of 9/10 October for those who will be taking the decision to respond, committing team members next to or into water. This is an event aimed not so much at the water specialists (though I'm sure they will find it very interesting) but at the team leaders/search managers and those who will be in a leadership role at such incidents. We will publish the programme when it is finalised but will be looking at legal/moral aspects, safety management, command and control in a multiagency forum, management systems used by other services and how we fit in to the national response.

I'm hoping we will hear from those involved in previous MR responses to water emergencies so we can all benefit from their experiences.



▲ ACCIDENTAL IMMERSION DRILL, NEWSAR BANK TEAM TRAINING, BALA
INSTRUCTORS: HOWIE CROOK (LDSMRA) AND JOHN LITTLE (NESRA)

foresee MREW issuing certificates, but I would hope each instructor passes along the details of those trained for us to maintain an accurate and meaningful central record. I would also like to see those gaining certification from other providers pass on this information so that it can be recorded.

Incident management

Water incidents, and particularly flood incidents it would seem, are becoming an increasing part of our

Assembling the range of speakers that we are in contact with will not be cheap, but we are working hard to minimise costs. It looks like there will be a charge of about £40 per delegate. It would be useful to gauge interest at this stage as this will allow us to plan the venue.

If your team is interested in sending some delegates please email water@mountain.rescue.org.uk with the approximate number. No commitment at this stage!

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**QUARTERLY INCIDENT REPORT FOR
ENGLAND AND WALES
OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2009**

The following is a listing of the number of incidents attended by MR teams in England and Wales during the period from 01/10/2009 to 31/12/2009. It is grouped by region and shows the date (day/month) the incident began. It is not comprehensive as many incidents have yet to be reported.

Lake District

Cockermouth	23/10, 19/11, 23/11
Coniston	17/10, 26/10, 14/11, 20/11, 20/12, 21/12, 30/12
Duddon & Furness	23/10, 24/10, 26/10, 26/10, 15/11, 19/11, 07/12, 21/12 29/12, 30/12
Kendal	23/10, 04/11, 20/11, 21/11, 22/11, 28/11, 07/12, 20/12 22/12, 23/12, 24/12, 24/12, 25/12, 26/12
Keswick	01/10, 02/10, 04/10, 05/10, 11/10, 14/10, 22/10, 23/10 24/10, 26/10, 27/10, 28/10, 31/10, 07/11, 15/11, 16/11 19/11, 23/11, 26/11, 27/11, 16/12, 24/12, 25/12, 28/12 29/12
Kirkby Stephen	19/11, 22/12, 30/12, 31/12
Langdale Ambleside	02/10, 05/10, 07/10, 08/10, 14/10, 18/10, 24/10, 26/10 26/10, 27/10, 27/10, 28/10, 31/10, 31/10, 02/11, 04/11 07/11, 08/11, 09/11, 10/11, 11/11, 11/11, 13/11, 19/11 20/11, 21/11, 22/11, 28/11, 28/11, 01/12, 07/12, 12/12 19/12, 20/12, 20/12, 21/12, 21/12, 22/12, 29/12, 30/12
Patterdale	03/10, 03/10, 04/10, 11/10, 04/11, 14/11, 15/11, 19/11 20/11, 21/11, 02/12, 30/12
Penrith	11/10, 23/10, 19/11, 20/11, 21/11, 22/11, 26/11, 27/11 20/12, 30/12, 30/12, 31/12
Wasdale	02/10, 03/10, 11/10, 12/10, 14/10, 14/10, 23/10, 24/10 27/10, 29/10, 31/10, 05/11, 18/11, 19/11, 20/11, 26/11 28/11, 29/11, 24/12, 29/12

Mid-Pennine

Bolton	12/10, 19/11, 18/12, 19/12, 20/12, 20/12, 21/12, 21/12 22/12, 24/12, 25/12, 26/12
Calder Valley	15/10, 15/11
Rossendale & Pendle	18/10, 18/10, 22/11, 27/11, 13/12, 14/12, 19/12, 20/12 21/12, 21/12, 21/12, 22/12, 23/12, 24/12, 24/12, 25/12 26/12, 27/12

NE England

Cleveland	06/10, 16/10, 17/10, 24/10, 07/11, 18/11, 16/12, 18/12 25/12
North of Tyne	16/10, 06/11, 09/11, 21/11, 27/11, 30/11
Northumberland NP	06/11, 09/11, 21/11, 27/11, 30/11
Swaledale	03/10, 15/10, 16/10, 17/10, 21/10, 22/10, 28/10, 19/11 20/11, 02/12, 17/12
Teesdale & Weardale	16/10

North Wales

Aberglaslyn	01/10, 17/10, 22/10, 26/10, 26/10, 30/10, 15/11
Llanberis	17/10, 17/10, 17/10, 20/10, 26/10, 27/10, 04/11, 28/11 29/11, 03/12, 05/12, 05/12, 10/12, 17/12, 22/12, 23/12 26/12, 28/12, 29/12, 31/12
North East Wales	12/10, 08/11, 17/11, 19/11, 22/11, 23/11, 12/12
Ogwen Valley	01/10, 02/10, 04/10, 04/10, 04/10, 06/10, 10/10, 12/10

	13/10, 17/10, 18/10, 23/10, 25/10, 26/10, 30/10, 07/11 08/11, 08/11, 08/11, 09/11, 15/11, 17/11, 27/11, 29/11
	04/12, 12/12, 12/12, 19/12, 26/12, 26/12, 26/12, 26/12, 27/12, 28/12, 28/12, 29/12, 29/12
Outward Bound Wales	18/10, 14/11, 04/12

Peak District

Buxton	06/10, 06/10, 11/10, 20/10, 26/10, 27/10, 07/11, 11/11 14/11, 14/11, 25/11, 10/12, 19/12, 20/12, 20/12, 22/12 26/12, 28/12, 30/12
Derby	02/10, 03/10, 08/10, 09/10, 05/11, 15/11, 12/12, 19/12
Edale	16/12, 02/10, 03/10, 03/10, 04/10, 10/10, 10/10, 20/10 25/10, 25/10, 26/10, 06/11, 07/11, 11/11, 14/11, 14/11 22/12, 30/12
Glossop	03/10, 03/10, 20/10, 06/11, 20/12, 20/12, 21/12, 21/12 21/12, 21/12, 22/12, 23/12, 28/12, 31/12
Kinder	20/10, 07/11, 11/11, 14/11, 14/11, 29/11, 05/12, 20/12 22/12, 22/12
Oldham	07/10, 11/10, 15/10, 24/10, 30/10, 06/11, 08/11, 09/11 09/11, 15/11, 21/11, 29/11, 18/12, 19/12, 19/12, 19/12 20/12, 21/12, 21/12, 21/12, 22/12, 23/12, 24/12, 24/12 26/12, 27/12, 30/12, 31/12
Woodhead	03/10, 03/10, 03/10, 06/12, 06/12, 23/12

South Wales

Brecon	14/10, 14/10, 18/10, 25/10, 26/10, 07/11, 13/11, 21/11 06/12, 06/12, 08/12, 21/12, 26/12
Western Beacons	14/10, 14/10, 07/11, 21/11, 08/12, 26/12
Central Beacons	05/10, 11/10, 07/11, 21/11, 26/12
Longtown	05/10, 06/12, 26/12

South West England

Exmoor	14/10, 14/12, 18/12, 23/12
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Yorkshire Dales

CRO	11/10, 13/10, 18/10, 22/10, 26/10, 29/10, 07/11, 16/11 05/12, 22/12, 22/12, 23/12, 24/12, 30/12
Upper Wharfedale	05/10, 31/10, 08/12, 23/12

SARDA

England	13/10, 15/10, 16/10, 17/10, 18/10, 20/10, 21/10, 22/10 07/11, 07/11, 19/11, 22/12, 24/12
Lakes	02/10, 05/10, 18/10, 22/10, 23/10, 23/10, 24/10, 26/10 26/10, 27/10, 31/10, 08/11, 10/11, 13/11, 14/11, 16/11 07/12, 29/12, 31/12
Wales	01/10, 12/10, 22/10, 17/11, 17/11, 19/11, 03/12
South Wales	14/10, 14/10, 21/11, 22/11, 23/11, 06/12, 06/12, 08/12

Non specialists

	01/10, 17/10, 17/11
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The tales behind the stats...

22 February 2010: Four climbers avalanched above Pinnacle Ridge

Patterdale MRT received a call from the police at 14:00 on Monday 22 February, reporting an avalanche on one of Cumbria's classic scrambling routes. Team members spent the next six hours involved in the rescue of four climbers.

Dave Freeborn, one of the team's deputy leaders, was at base during the rescue, 'The four, from the north east of England, had completed their climb of Pinnacle Ridge on St Sunday Crag but had been avalanched from the top,' he explained. 'Initially three members of the group were reported as being buried, but it turned out that two had managed to roll out of the avalanche nearer the top.'

Due to the seriousness of the incident and the number of reported casualties, the team requested assistance from the local air ambulance and from an RAF Sea King helicopter. 'The air ambulance lifted a MR doctor, Andy McAlea and our team leader, Martin Cotterell, up the valley to near the scene,' said Dave, 'and then six more team members were lifted by the Sea King and winched directly down to the casualty site.'

Of the two who had managed to escape the avalanche near the top, one was unhurt and a second had escaped with a broken lower leg. The other two casualties, Caed Parker, 22 and Stuart Nelson, 21, both of Redcar, Teesside, had been swept about 750 feet and had sustained serious multiple injuries in their fall.

'It needed quick decisions on who to make the first priority,' explained Andy McAlea, 'but at least both of the casualties were under cover and conscious. I dealt with the man who was higher up the slope first, checked him thoroughly for injuries – he had serious multiple injuries including a skull fracture and broken femur – and then got him packaged and ready to be stretchered and winched into the RAF Sea King helicopter.'

'The second casualty was a bit more complicated in a way as he had a typical 'distraction' injury that we needed to ignore at first – his foot was facing the wrong way, indicating a badly fractured dislocated ankle, but we needed to check for anything life threatening before dealing with the ankle. As it turned out, this was absolutely right as Caed had a

serious chest injury that had damaged one lung. Only once that was identified did we deal with the ankle and get him ready for evacuation on the helicopter.'

One of those lifted to the scene was Ally Howard-Carter on one of his first major callouts since completing his probationary period at the end of 2009. 'I'd been on the helicopters before but being winched down to an incident scene was a first for me and it was certainly my first contact with major trauma like this,' he said. 'I used a lot of my training all in one go, from initial assessment of casualties and creating shelter to reassuring and communicating with someone who is seriously injured as well as the technical aspects of rope work and setting up belays for secure stretcher and winching.'

Martin Cotterell, Patterdale TL, was also one of those involved, 'When we reached the casualty site, it was obvious both men had been quite badly injured but at least we found them quickly and were able to deal with the immediate priorities and then evacuate them from the hill as safely and securely as possible. As ever, the team was fantastic – efficient and professional in what were quite difficult conditions.'

Meanwhile, the climber with the lower leg injury was located by an air ambulance, following a brief search by team members, and the fourth climber was able to walk off the hill. Both were also taken to hospital, the first to have his leg pinned and the second to be checked over.

Nineteen members of the Patterdale team were involved overall and the incident was finally wound up at 20:30. 'Since then, we have tried to keep in touch on progress,' said Martin Cotterell, 'and there's been good news on improvements in their condition so far. We wish both the badly injured climbers a speedy and full recovery.'

He continued, 'The media interest generated by this being an avalanche was quite staggering. Inspector Lee Skelton and the press team at Cumbria Police HQ did a great job of getting information out to the media and Lee said that it was a real eye-opener for him to see how our control centre worked and dealt with the incident. Even with



Photos: Andy McAlea

their help on the day, it still took me most of the following day or so to follow up on the incident with radio and TV interviews – very much part of the role, these days.'

Cumbria Police thanked the team publicly for their work and this was followed a couple of days after the rescue by a statement from the men's families, saying, 'We would like to thank Patterdale Mountain Rescue, the North West Air Ambulance, Rescue 131 RAF Boulmer, Cumbria Police, North West Ambulance Service and everyone else involved in saving both of them.'

From a medical perspective

Dr Andy McAlea was air lifted to the casualties and had to deal with a number of potentially serious injuries and issues:

Beware of distractions

'One of the casualties in this incident had a serious and very obvious fracture dislocation of his ankle. We realised we needed to deal with it and stabilise it before it got worse but it wasn't life threatening – which the chest injury was – so it had to take second place. Making those sorts of decisions in these situations comes down to training and experience.'

Oxygen and pain relief

'Giving oxygen to both the serious casualties in this case proved quite tricky as the masks become less flexible at such low temperatures. Having the casualties under shelter helped a bit but things like this are still worth bearing in mind. On the pain relief side, I was concerned that cannulas might also be difficult to put in place but this proved okay.'

Keeping warm

'On an unstable mountain side and in freezing temperatures, the temptation was not to expose the casualty at all but I needed to check thoroughly and make sure that I wasn't missing any injuries. In that situation, the best approach was to cut his harness and clothing straight down, check him as quickly as I could and then tape his clothing back on to him. That way, he was exposed for as brief a time as possible.'

Stethoscopes on the hill

'I know it is always a bit of a problem to get the surrounding noise down to a level where you can hear anything with a stethoscope but we managed it in this case and it proved invaluable in identifying the serious lung and chest damage.'



The importance of regular avalanche training

Words and photos by Jonathan Hart

In the winter of 2008/9 Lochaber MRT hosted the first MRCoFS Level Two Avalanche Rescue course. The course attracted 24 participants who were provided an update on personal and team considerations regarding avalanche and slope assessment, workshops on transceiver searches, probing techniques, casualty management for asphyxiated/hypoxic, trauma and hypothermic casualties. In addition, avalanche on-scene management issues (including the appropriate use of SARDA assets) were discussed and then put into practice with a series of mock avalanche scenarios.



AVALANCHE DEBRIS FROM NUMBER 2 GULLY BEN NEVIS. THE TWO CASUALTIES SURVIVED A SLIDE OF OVER 300M, ENDING UP IN COIRE NA CISTE. THE AVALANCHE SNOW HAD SET LIKE CONCRETE WITHIN MINUTES OF SETTLING FURTHER DOWNSLOPE ONCE THE ANGLE HAD EASED

The feedback received from the initial course was very good. However, I think many folk left the course thinking they were unlikely to attend at a real avalanche rescue (due to the changing climatic conditions in Scotland and the relatively low number of recorded avalanche related rescues) and, whilst they enjoyed the course, its immediate relevance may have been questioned.

However, the timing of this initial course was sadly very fortuitous, for the following weekend there was a tragic incident in Glen Coe and three hill walkers died as a result of being buried in an avalanche on Buchaille Etive Mor. A number of persons survived having been successfully dug out from the debris. A number of Glen Coe team members who had participated on the Level Two course attended the real incident. In addition, during the remainder of that winter season Lochaber MRT attended several other avalanches, most notably on Ben Nevis (Number 2 Gully) and on Aonach Mor. Fortunately, there were no further fatalities.

Move forward one year and the 2010 MRCoFS Level Two avalanche rescue course

was booked in to be held at the Lochaber team base in Fort William over the weekend of 22-24 January.

In the run up to the course, in December 2009, there was significant snowfall across Scotland (and many other parts of the UK) ultimately leading to four avalanches on the same day (31 December) on Ben Nevis, An Teallach, Ben Uidhailh and in Glen Orchy. Sadly there were three fatalities that day as well as a number of severe trauma injuries to those persons partially buried.

The snow continued into the New Year and, combined with the high level of national media coverage from the earlier avalanches, this led to a high level of demand for the second MRCoFS Level Two avalanche course to be hosted by LMRT. The team had to stop taking bookings as numbers quickly rose to 36 participants from teams across Scotland.

As with the previous year, the programme ran smoothly and we were blessed with great conditions for teaching avalanche rescue with light winds, good visibility and interesting snow pack conditions for the participants to study and to broaden their experience. Both

days were held at Nevis Range facilitated by the ease of access onto the Nid ridge on Aonach Mor. SARDA obliged by supplying four dogs and their handlers and Nevis range staff facilitated the construction of a mock accident site for us to use on the second day (thanks... Lewis). Lochaber and Oban MRT supplied the core staffing for the programme, which was all pulled together by Stuart Johnson (Tayside/MRCoFS) and Daz Steatham (RAF Kinloss).

Given the winter weather conditions this winter season (2009/10), the relevance of this course cannot be understated. Plus the fact that, in the intervening period between the hosting of these two courses by Lochaber MRT, there have been five avalanche related fatalities in the immediate area, as well as a number of successfully completed rescues of partially trapped casualties. With so many teams sending their team members on this course we (MRCoFS affiliated) teams can really work together to set some high standards of care for casualties caught up in these awful and tragic events, as well as maintain a really high standard of safety awareness for ourselves and our fellow team members.

I expect the course will be even busier next year, so please book early!!



A BURIED MANNEQUIN SUCCESSFULLY LOCATED AND SYMPATHETICALLY DUG OUT REVEALS SOME OF THE CHALLENGES FACED BY RESCUERS WHEN DECIDING UPON THE APPROPRIATE TREATMENT. THE IKAR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AVALANCHE CASUALTIES ARE TAUGHT ON THE COURSE. MRCoFS HYPOTHERMIA GUIDELINES ARE ALSO TAUGHT AND PARTICIPANTS GET LOTS OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR DECIDING ON THE KEY TREATMENT AND EVACUATION PRIORITIES



LOCHABER TEAM MEMBER TOM GILCHRIST WORKS HIS DOG BEHIND THE PROBE LINE IN A SUCCESSFUL FIND OF A BURIED CASUALTY, THE SCENT FROM THE CASUALTY BEING MADE AVAILABLE FROM THE PROBES BREAKING UP THE SNOWPACK. DEMONSTRATING THE SPEED AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SARDA DOGS WAS VERY BENEFICIAL FOR THOSE ATTENDING THE COURSE AND HELPS IN THE TEAM APPROACH TO RESPONDING TO THESE INCIDENTS



THE DIGGING TEAM GET TO WORK BEHIND ONE OF THE MANY PROBE LINES CONTINUING ITS SEARCH. SUCCESSFUL, SIMPLE AND EFFICIENT DIGGING TECHNIQUES, TO ENSURE THE HIGHEST CHANCE OF SURVIVAL FOR THE BURIED VICTIMS, ARE TAUGHT ON THE COURSE



DAF (RAF KINLOSS) REVIEWING HIS RUTSCHBLOCK AND DECIDING UPON HIS SLOPE ASSESSMENT. ON THE MRCoFS LEVEL 2 AVALANCHE RESCUE COURSE, SLOPE AND SNOW STABILITY ASSESSMENT IS REVIEWED WITH PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE BEING PLACED UPON THE ADDITIONAL LOADINGS APPLIED BY ORGANISED RESCUE TEAMS



CLOSE UP OF THE AVALANCHE DEBRIS FROM NUMBER 2 GULLY, BEN NEVIS. NOTICE HOW COMPACT AND DENSE THE MATERIAL IS. HAD THE CASUALTIES BEEN TOTALLY BURIED IN THIS THEIR CHANCES OF SURVIVAL WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY LOW INDEED. MIRACULOUSLY THEY WERE ONLY PARTIALLY BURIED AND MANAGED TO DIG THEMSELVES OUT. BOTH RECEIVED ONLY MINOR TRAUMA INJURIES



TEAM MEMBERS AT THE END OF THE WEEKEND MRCoFS LEVEL 2 AVALANCHE RESCUE COURSE HELD AT NEVIS RANGE, HOSTED BY LOCHABER MRT, IN JANUARY 2010. PARTICIPANTS CAME FROM TEAMS ACROSS SCOTLAND AND INCLUDED RAF AND SARDA MEMBERS



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MRC of S Technical Rigging Courses 2010

Words and photos by Jonathan Hart

In 2010 the MRCofS plan to run a full programme of technical mountain rigging rescue courses, hosted by teams across Scotland. The courses have at their heart some basic fundamental principles to ensure that they are acceptable to their target market (MR team members) and meet the needs of this group.

General principles

1. Courses are hosted by individual Scottish mountain rescue teams and delivered by members of those teams, working alongside a core team of other instructors, all of whom are current Scottish team members with a wealth of practical mountain and crag rigging experience. This ensures a high degree of ownership of the programme by the host team and is a great way for teams to increase their own members' skill and confidence levels with these subject areas, by facilitating the course programme, and to consolidate their own skills by teaching others. Whilst bringing in outside experience can be beneficial, the main focus of these rigging courses is about boosting the skill and confidence of the host teams to tackle complex rescue scenarios in both summer and winter conditions.



LOCHABER TEAM MEMBERS TRAINING WITH THE NORWEGIAN LJANGFELLA MRT IN TECHNICAL ICEFALL RIGGING RESCUE TECHNIQUES RIUKAN, NORWAY

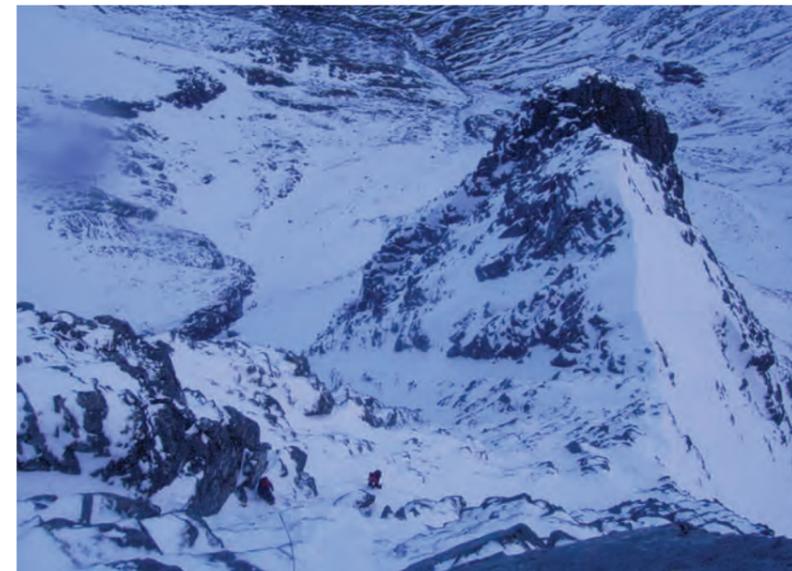
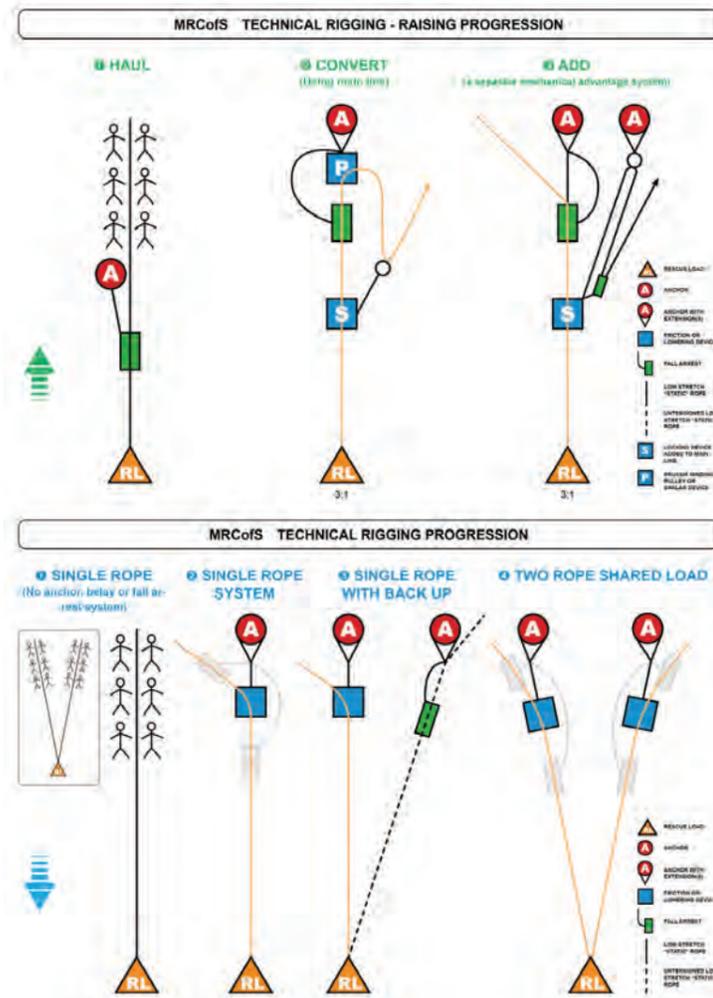
2. The course syllabus reflects a range of different techniques and draws from a wide range of sources of information. The programmes do not promote any one particular technique but encourage participants to understand the key principles and processes behind the building of effective mountain rescue rigging systems. The MRCofS is not promoting a one size or system fits all approach and does not suggest to teams which system they should employ. Clearly this remains the decision of the local team and will depend upon their local terrain, team membership and skill base.

3. The courses aim to provide a constructive and supportive environment for team members to learn more about mountain rescue rigging systems. The Level One course does not have any assessment element. This

is a purposeful decision. Whilst assessment may boost some learning and education outcomes, our experience to date has been that the introductory courses need to be held in a relaxed and supportive environment in order to encourage participants to be content to experiment with different techniques whilst

not worrying about the assessment element of the programme. The Level One course will consolidate a participant's understanding of general rigging principles and will encourage them to go onto the Level Two and Three courses, once they have accumulated sufficient real rescue experience.

THE MRCOFS LEVEL 1 COURSE COVERS THE GENERIC PRINCIPLES OF RIGGING FROM SIMPLE SINGLE ROPE TECHNIQUES ON GRADE 1 TERRAIN THROUGH TO THE USE OF TWO ROPE SHARED LOAD SOLUTIONS. IT FOCUSES MAINLY ON LOWERING SYSTEMS AND COVERS THE SUBJECT OF CONVERTING THE SYSTEM TO A RAISE. THE LEVEL 2 AND 3 COURSES WILL COVER MORE ADVANCED TECHNIQUES SUCH AS CASUALTY PICK OFFS, TYROLEAN SET UPS, SITE MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS AND WILL HAVE SOME FORM OF ASSESSMENT INCLUDED. THE ACTUAL CONTENT HAS YET TO BE FULLY AGREED AT THE TIME OF WRITING THIS ARTICLE



LMRT ASSISTING A TEAM OF CLIMBERS OFF TOWER RIDGE, BEN NEVIS. THE CLIMBERS HAD BEEN CRAGFAST OVERNIGHT ON THE LITTLE TOWER. A VARIETY OF MOUNTAIN RESCUE RIGGING TECHNIQUES WERE USED INCLUDING ASSISTED ABSEILING, FIXED LINES, SIMPLE SINGLE ROPE LOWERS, MOVING TOGETHER AND SOME 'TOUGH LOVE'

4. However our Level Two and Three courses will introduce the concept of assessment and we are currently reviewing how we proceed with this issue, as well working out the full content for these more advanced courses. The first MRCofS Level Two course will be hosted by Glenmore Lodge MRT in September 2010.

5. The venues used for the training courses need to provide challenges and present anchor and rigging difficulties which will need to be overcome. We stay away from sites that teams are overly familiar with (and which are too easy or pre-rigged) apart from early on in

the Level One course, so we are providing real, practical scenarios for the participants to resolve.

6. The courses will take you through understanding the advantages and disadvantages of the complex and simple rigging systems currently in use amongst MR teams in the UK, as well as providing an objective view of the different types of rigging equipment and their use and abuse.



LOCHABER TEAM MEMBERS MARTIN MCDERMOTT AND IAIN MACLEOD MANAGE AN IMPROVISED LOWER OF A CASUALTY DOWN THE NORTH EAST BUTTRESS (4, IV), BEN NEVIS. WITH A HELICOPTER ON SCENE AND THE BELFORD HOSPITAL JUST FIVE MINUTES FLYING TIME AWAY, A RAPID EXTRICATION USING SIMPLE RIGGING TECHNIQUES WAS THE PREFERRED TECHNIQUE

LEFT: JOINT TRAINING BETWEEN OBAN AND LOCHABER TEAMS IN COIRE NA CISTE, BEN NEVIS. THE TRAINING LOOKED AT ALTERNATIVE RIGGING SYSTEMS AND ANCHOR CONSTRUCTION FOR THREE PERSON LOADS, COMPARING THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF COMPLEX VERSUS SIMPLE RIGGING SYSTEMS



USE OF A VARIETY OF EQUIPMENT IS COVERED DURING THE LEVEL 1 COURSE (NOT JUST THE GEAR SHOWN ABOVE). THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THESE ITEMS IN A RANGE OF SCENARIOS IS ALSO COVERED, PROVIDING TEAM MEMBERS A GOOD BACKGROUND IN THE KEY, UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES OF MOUNTAIN RESCUE RIGGING



GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK SAR TEAM ACCESSING A CRAGFAST WALKER OVER 200 FOOT DOWN IN THE GRAND CANYON, ARIZONA. THE SYSTEM USED IS A MAIN LINE WITH SEPARATE UNLOADED BACK UP, UTILISING A TRAVERSE 540 AND A 5:1 HOIST SYSTEM. THE FALL ARREST SYSTEM WAS TANDEM 8MM PRUSSIKS. IN THIS PICTURE, THE LOADED MAIN LINE IS THE BLUE ROPE. THE BACK UP IS THE RED ROPE. WITH GOOD WEATHER AND NO IMMEDIATE CONCERNS REGARDING THE CASUALTIES CONDITION AND SAFETY, AND WITH GOOD ACCESS (ROAD AND LAYBY) AT THE TOP OF THE ROUTE A LOWERING AND RAISING SYSTEM THAT REQUIRES MORE RESOURCES COULD BE DEPLOYED

Course Dates 2010

23-25 April
Oban MRT is hosting an MRCofS Level One Technical Rigging course.
Course Administrator:
Roger Perry
roger@cuanra.co.uk

17-23 May
Lochaber MRT is hosting a week long Mountain Rescue Rigging course in Fort William.

The course is being run by Reed Thorne from the USA in partnership with Technical Rescue Magazine. Although not part of the formal MRCofS technical rigging programme it is included here for completeness. Bookings for this course and for further information go to the website: www.ropesthatrescue.com

6-8 August
Tayside MRT is hosting an MRCofS Level One Technical Rigging course.
Course Administrator:
Simon Vincent
simon@birmamglen.co.uk

17-19 September
Glenmore Lodge MRT is hosting an MRCofS Level Two Technical Rigging course

Course Administrator: Liz Belk
liz.belk@glenmorelodge.org.uk

Additional potential rigging course dates
We are currently in negotiation with Lochaber MRT and Arran MRT for additional rigging course dates in 2010. These will be circulated to teams once they are agreed.



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What's on Offer

Thanks to the sponsors, suppliers and manufacturers who support us.

NEW LOOK WEBSITE – RECOMMENDED FOR A REASON...

A new look website, launched by Mountain Rescue sponsors Burton McCall, showcases the lightweight, functional and easy to use kit officially recommended by the Duke Of Edinburgh's Award. The website, officially launched at the DofE Leaders Conference held at Stafford University on 21 November, has much more to offer than just recommended kit lists. New additions include a Leader's Tools section, with plenty of handy downloadable worksheets such as; 'How to put up a tent', 'Outdoor nutrition' and

'Compasses explained'. The website will also be updated each month to include gear reviews, bespoke kit lists, outdoor news and competitions to win recommended gear. Founded in 1956, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award attracts over 275,000 new participants each year and has so far helped over four million young people in the UK (aged between 14 and 24) to achieve their Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards. RFAR brands including Adventure Medical Kits, Bridgedale, Grangers, Maglite, Pacsafe,

Recta, Sea to Summit, SIGG and Victorinox – each appointed after months of equipment testing by outdoor experts at the Duke of Edinburgh Award. To see the full range of recommended kit, add your own comments or check out the leaders tools section visit www.rfar.co.uk



YOUR CHANCE TO WIN A VICTORINOX SWISS TOOL SPIRIT WORTH £90!



4 runners up will also receive a Victorinox Climber Swiss Army Knife worth £25

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To be in with a chance of winning, just answer this question*:
Victorinox knives have been manufactured in the small village of Ibach since 1884. In what country is this?

- A China
- B America
- C Switzerland

*Competition open to Basecamp subscribers only
Send your answer with your name and address details to The Editor at editor@mountain.rescue.org.uk. Competition closing date: 15 May 2010



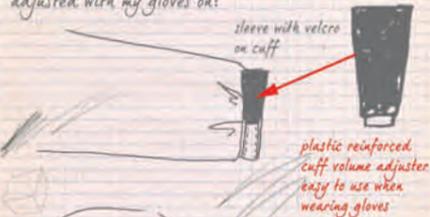


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Sleeping Bags	RRP	MR
Sanctuary 900 XP	320	189
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Tents	RRP	MR
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when prices will change to the offer prices – or view the full RRP prices and log in at the check out. The offer prices will then automatically be updated.

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SAR Products is pleased to offer any mountain rescue team (except Oldham MRT and Mountain Rescue (England & Wales) who purchase equipment from SAR directly) 25% discount – at the end of the year, MR(E&W) will receive 10% of all MR sales. *The deal does not include the Pro Alp as we only sell this at trade, but this may change in time.



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Any queries in relation to the above, please contact Penny Brockman via email – treasurer@mountain.rescue.org.uk or telephone 01633 254244 or mobile 07775 851737. Or Andy Simpson via email – andy@andrewsimpsonadvertising.co.uk or telephone 0161 764 0999 or mobile 07836 717021.

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Ireland & UK Mountain Rescue Conference 2010
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Dates: 10 - 12 September 2010
Location: Dublin, Ireland
Venue: Dublin City University
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Website: www.mrconference2010.ie

Delegate Rates:

Organisation	Sterling	Euro
DELEGATE FULL CHARGE		
Mountain Rescue Team Members	£85.00	€95.00
Non Mountain Rescue Team Charities	£170.00	€195.00
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'Mountain Rescue - our future role' is the main theme for the event but the 450 delegates will also hear national and international speakers on mountain rescue medicine and equipment and see the latest technology in action over the two days. The conference also gives delegates a chance to share experiences and knowledge with colleagues from around the world.

The conference is expected to be over-subscribed but spaces are currently available at £85.00 / €95.00 per person for members of mountain rescue teams, which includes accommodation and meals. For more information or to download a booking form log on to:

www.mrconference2010.ie

Mountain Rescue on display at THE OUTDOORS SHOW

by Judy Whiteside

Please. Somebody... next time I rashly volunteer to take home the proceeds of the very many, very weighty collecting buckets from three days at the Outdoors Show: stop me. Make me just say No. Distract me. Step away from the boxes! Anything. Please.

Because, much as counting all that change into teetering piles across the entire surface of my desk (thus precluding getting any work done whatsoever for an entire day) before decanting it into dozens of flimsy little plastic bags ready for banking, might initially seem an appealing pastime, what I hadn't bargained for in my post-show sleep-deprived state was the counting, recounting and then recounting over again (twenty, forty, eighty... no, hang on, er, twenty, thirty, forty, sixty, a hundred... damn... twenty, forty, sixty, eighty...) punctuated at annoyingly regular intervals by random teetering piles, clearly as tired as me, heading for the floor in glorious hara-kiri.

Which is another way of saying what a very productive show it was for Mountain Rescue - and not just in terms of the money taken.

Whilst the show as a whole was disappointing (massively shrunken over the last few years, this was the last at the NEC as it heads down the M1 to London in January) our stand went down a storm. Not least of all thanks to the sterling efforts of our crag display team, who really worked for their suppers hauling each other and members of the public up and down in the repeated stretcher rescue of a suspended casualty.

With the hauling system belayed to the Cockermouth team vehicle, rescuer and stretcher were raised to a point high above the crowd, and the 'casualty', for a demo of how a hanging casualty can be accessed and made safe, then strapped into the vertical stretcher, before being released from their own ropes for

including those on the stand - are set to boost their Rigging for Rescue credentials still further, when they travel to Canada for two weeks in late June, to join Kirk Mauthner's Advanced course - but more on that in a future issue). Roy and fellow deputy team leader Simon Hodgson and Keswick member Chris Gillyon, were joined by Cockermouth team leader and deputy, Mike Park and Chris Cookson, and Craig Palmer from Penrith. Paul Witheridge, also of Penrith MRT and the Lyon Equipment Work and Rescue department, also joined them for a day.

As a steady stream of volunteer casualties went through their paces, the process was explained and the mountain rescue safety message hammered home - even to the smallest tots, made to recite the '999 mantra' before being allowed to escape from the stretcher, hovering a couple of feet from the floor!

Elsewhere, we had Montane to the front of us, with a stand exclusively selling their Mountain Rescue range, with well over 50% of the ticket price being donated to us. And behind us were SARDA Lakes dogs and handlers, sponsored by Montane, alongside our old friends Keela with their stand. So quite an offering.

A huge thanks to everyone who visited us on the stand - many of you stuffing rolled up notes into the collecting buckets. Also thanks to Grand Central Trains who sponsored 2000 handy backpacks to be given away - let's just say we didn't have a single one left and it was gratifying to see our cave and mountain rescue logos wandering the length and breadth of the exhibition halls on the backs of children and adults alike! Thanks to George Fisher Ltd of Keswick, who provided a couple of mannequins - kitted out in mountain rescue and swiftwater gear with laminated charts detailing exactly how much it costs to kit out an individual team member. And finally, thanks to Burton McCall and Victorinox who sponsored our red 'team' polo shirts and provided the incentive to prospective Basecamp members of a prize draw to win a Swiss Spirit Tool worth £90. Oh and best not forget the Outdoors Show organisers themselves for giving us the stand space free of charge!

As for those teetering piles of pennies, they added up to an impressive £3000+. Add



The SWAT team: Simon Hodgson, Chris Cookson, Chris Gillyon, Craig Palmer and Mike Park taking a rare break from proceedings

horizontal lower back to the ground. The display was the result of several months of planning, thanks to Roy Henderson, and the Keswick team. And what a wealth of rigging know-how and mountain rescue experience they share! (Ten Keswick team members, incidentally -

to that the £900 or so from the subscriptions and donations from 33 new Basecamp members and I think you'll agree it was worth turning out for. So can I sleep now?

Who knows what next year will bring - London sees the show joining with the International Boat



Models courtesy of George Fisher, Keswick



Roy Henderson and new Mountain Rescue PR person Sally Seed... Nervous? Moi?

Show and the London Bike Show for three days, 13-16 January. It's early days yet to say whether we will be attending. But just count me out on that counting up. Please....

The importance of winter skills training

by Mike Margeson,
MREW Training Officer

own region ten people have been involved in three avalanche incidents involving teams. These just being the ones reported and involving MR – I have heard of others, and very near misses, on the grapevine. Unlike in Scotland, these have avoided fatalities but only just. Although this might seem exceptional, it still highlights the importance of good skills and knowledge.

Two significant areas are personal skills and snow avalanche awareness at individual and, importantly, party leader and planning level. After this winter, I believe there should be a wake up call south of the border that considering snow conditions and risk assessment for team members and avalanche safety is not just a Scottish mountain rescue problem.

Before any of this, individual teams members' winter skills should be revised, checked and their skills on their feet in crampons and axe in hand on steep ground visited every winter season. Additionally their personal winter kit and navigational skills – to be able to deal with low light, snow and or dark – should also be practised. Never mind GPS microphone or hand-held GPS, the basic skills of map and compass are even more fundamental in winter!

When the pager goes off, if it's winter callout

coupled with rapidly oncoming dark and an avalanche reported, it's vital the response is fast. The excellent IKAR training DVD is even titled 'Time is life.' This urgency, and the requirement for a fast response in potentially avalanche conditions, bring a very real danger to the rescues.

All active winter team members should have a good basic knowledge of snow pack and its assessment, and be thinking on their feet about how to approach the incident or casualty site and undertaking dynamic risk assessment on the hill. Fundamental is thinking what the wind has been doing and were it has been blowing from. It does not matter that it has not snowed for a week – what's the wind been doing? You should not hesitate to dig a pit on the same aspect and test the slope. You might even decide the only safe way to approach is by rope from above. The management of team safety in this type of incident is critical. It's not the time to discover you haven't trained and thought about these issues for a few years.

Many teams have, indeed, been taking full advantage of this year's winter conditions. One weekend, working in the Northern Corries, I met four different rescue teams – two from south of the border as well SARDA dogs working hard.



Patterdale winter training pix: Courtesy of Steve Shaw and Chris Gasparth of Patterdale MRT

This winter's full winter conditions serve to highlight the very real importance of winter skills training or revision in the annual team training programme. For the sceptics, just look at the picture of a full depth avalanche in North Wales, taken by Pete Robertson. In my



Full depth avalanche North Wales Photo: Pete Robertson Llanberis MRT

Patterdale MRT winter skills training: On the ridge



Patterdale MRT winter skills training: Reaching the summit

Training update

from Mike Margeson

The busy winter season is over – a season that included valuable skills training opportunities for teams, with the best winter conditions for many years – and now we can turn our thoughts to forthcoming courses and training opportunities for the year.

Plas y Brenin

We have been in discussion with Plas y Brenin as I am very keen to re-establish our link with our National Mountaineering Centre. In particular it would be good to again be able to run the National Training day, which was very successful over a number of years and is, in my view, a much better way of using the resource and venue and the support of PYB than simply having meetings there. We will be talking to a range of subcommittees to look at subjects we can provide on such a day.

Train the Trainers

This new course for 2010 is scheduled for October, provisionally located at the NEWSAR team base. PYB have offered to provide one of their staff with a particular interest and specialism in teaching and coaching to provide a session. Huw Birrell is heading this up and putting the programme together. If anybody would like to help or has content ideas for this day please contact Huw on HuwBirrell@aol.com. I would like to thank Martin Doyle and John Cousins from PYB for their help with these two projects.

The annual Party Leader, PPE/FPE equipment checking courses and the Bangor Search Management course will run as normal – please see training calendar on page 5, or on the Members area of the website.

Media Skills course

We will be running this very successful course again in November. It is hoped, following the success of the Information Technology Day, to improve access and availability by running this at Police HQ, the Sunday after the main MREW meetings.

The Search for the Missing Person: Managing the Initial Response

Run by Pete Roberts and Dave Perkins, this course is ideally suited for those responsible for the management of the early stages of a missing person incident. A key component is the use of the information contained in the UK Missing Person Statistics. Located at Longhirst Conference Centre, Morpeth, Northumberland, Thursday – Friday 24–25 June. Fully residential £175 (including meals, accommodation and course materials). Day rate £115 (not including accommodation, breakfast and evening meal, but including all other meals and course materials). For those who wish to travel to the venue the previous day, B&B is available at an extra cost of £35. For venue details see www.longhirst.co.uk. The conference centre is readily accessible by road, rail and air. If you are interested, please email Pete and Dave at conference@searchresearch.org.uk as soon as possible.

Finally, Ken Owens, the vice chairman of the MREW training committee and chairman of the Lakes training group, has stood down from both these roles. I would like to pass on our thanks to Ken for all his work and efforts to support MR training at team, regional and national level.

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Mountain Recreation

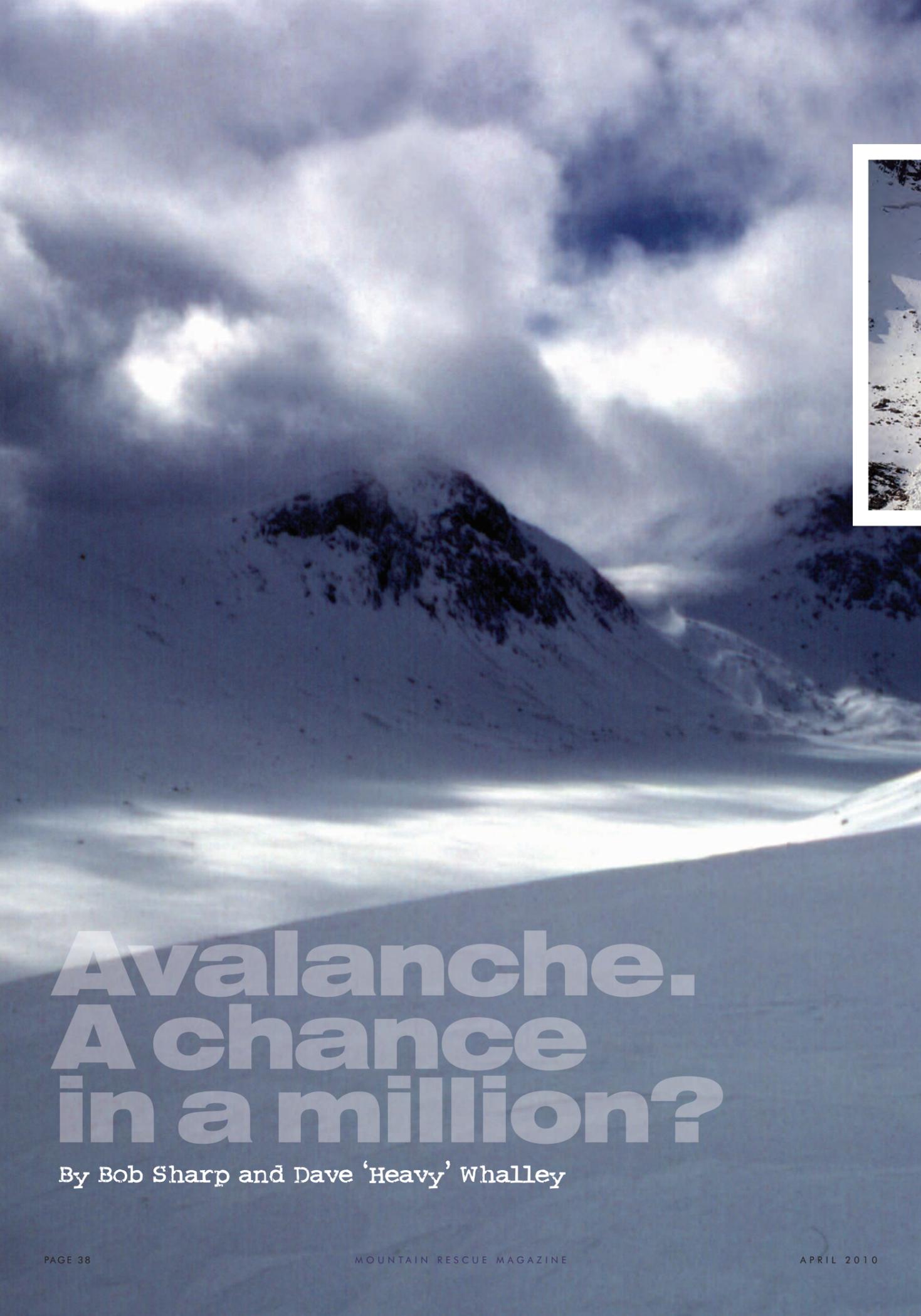
- Norway Ice Climbing
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Mike Margeson
mike@mountainrecreation.co.uk

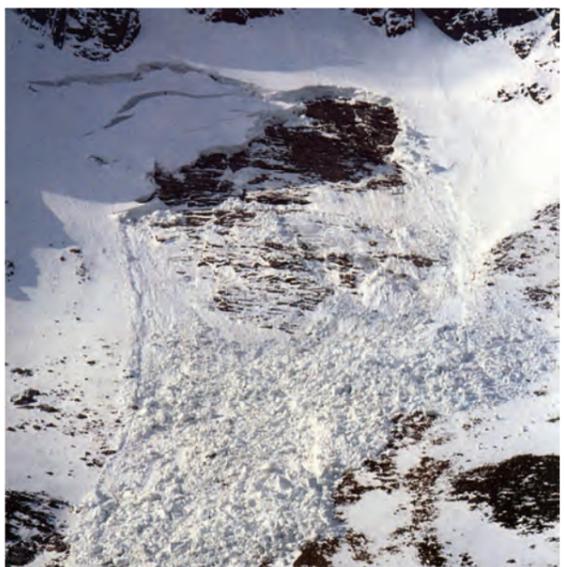
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Note: When he died last year, Blyth Wright was the Coordinator of the sportscotland Avalanche Information Service, something he had done from the beginning of the service starting in the late 1980s. Blyth was keen to continue his research into Scottish avalanches and this brief article is a small tribute to his work and commitment.



BIG PIC: LOCH AVON FROM THE SADDLE PHOTO: BOB SHARP INSET: SLAB AVALANCHE PHOTO: ALLAN FYFFE

Avalanche. A chance in a million?

By Bob Sharp and Dave 'Heavy' Whalley

Incidents like these paint a very gloomy picture and bring home in graphic and tragic terms some of the hazards that face climbers and walkers who venture into the mountains in winter. The statistics show that if you are caught in an avalanche there is a very real chance you will die. In fact, there's a 14% chance you will die and a 54% chance you will be injured. Only one third of those involved in an avalanche escape injury and walk away virtually unharmed. So, the chances of leaving the scene of an avalanche unscathed are rather small. This is a very important point and places into perspective the real dangers of being caught in an avalanche relative to, for example, slipping on a path or becoming mislaid in the cloud.

There was a classic example in 1997. Saturday 11 January was not particularly inviting from the point of view of hill walking. However, on that day three mountaineers, accompanied by a pet dog, approached Coire an Lochain on their way to Ben Macdui. Visibility was poor and winds were about 30 mph from the south west. There had been some fresh snow and the avalanche risk was known to be high. At the bottom of the slope which leads out of the coire and onto the plateau, the group stopped to review the situation. One member of the party decided he didn't wish to continue and turned back. The remaining two carried on, along with the dog. Generally, an 'avalanche safe' route exists close to the path ascending the west side of the corrie but it needs to be followed closely and is not easy to track in poor visibility. Both to the right and particularly, to the left, just beyond the Twin Burns, steeper slopes exist which are frequent avalanche paths. It appears that the two walkers wandered in the poor visibility too far left, on to that part of the slope where the maximum accumulation of new windslab lay. The result

On 24 January 2009, three walkers lost their lives in a slab avalanche at the head of Coire Tulaich on Buachaille Etive Mor. The avalanche engulfed seven people altogether and others may have succumbed had it not been for the speedy actions of walkers nearby, including some who survived the avalanche. Later in the year on 31 December, two climbers were killed on Ben Nevis and another on Liathach in Torridon. Altogether, six people were killed in 2009. The worst year on record for avalanche fatalities was 1995 when twelve people lost their lives in avalanches across Scotland – Torridon, Lochnagar, Creag Meagaidh, Cairngorms, Glencoe and the Southern Highlands. In addition 22 were injured and 48 were involved in total. The worst single incident in Scottish mountaineering took place on 28 December in 1998 when four people died in an avalanche in the Aonach an Nid basin on the eastern side of Aonach Mor.

was not long delayed and, without warning, both were carried off in a large slab avalanche.

The exact sequence of events is unclear in the minds of both victims, but what is certain is that they were carried from near the plateau, down about 500 feet onto the lochan and buried. It seems both were unconscious for a time and that initially they were completely buried at a depth of about 8 feet. Then came the event which transformed their no-hope situation into one which, almost incredibly, gave them a chance of survival. It seems that, as the full force of the avalanche came to bear upon the surface of the lochan, the ice fractured and allowed a substantial mass of the debris to pour into the lochan itself. As this happened, cracks and crevasses opened up in the debris. One of the victims regained consciousness. He was aware of being buried and trapped but he was also aware of being able to breathe. Astonishingly, he could hear the dog barking. It had evidently survived the avalanche. He shouted and was immensely relieved to receive a reply from his companion but from what position or direction he was unable to determine.

He gradually became aware of his position. He was buried, still at a depth of eight feet,

of his body which he could move was his head and that only in a restricted, nodding fashion. Using this ability, over a period of time which must have amounted to hours, he succeeded in burrowing down to his right hand which as fate would have it, was held in the debris just above the left breast pocket of his jacket. Having freed his hand, he was then able to open the pocket, which contained his compass. Using this implement as a shovel, he then proceeded to dig himself out of the snow. Darkness was falling and relief at his own extrication was tempered by concern for his companion. He was alive, but where was he? Then the first survivor made the amazing discovery that the two of them had actually been buried beside each other, with the second man's arm touching the first man's leg. The second victim was much further from the wall of the crevasse but eventually, with the aid of his ice axe, which he had held onto, he was also liberated.

It would have been understandable if, exhausted by their efforts, the pair had stayed put and awaited rescue. After all, their friend who had turned back would have been concerned at their failure to arrive back before dark and might already have alerted the

Only one third of those involved in an avalanche escape injury and walk away virtually unharmed.

with his body held immobile in the snow. However, his face was exposed in the wall of one of the crevasses which had opened up and he had a clear air passage through to the surface. He could hear his companion, but still not identify his position. The dog stood guard at the top of the crevasse, barking furiously. The will to survive took charge. The only part

rescue services. This is in fact what had happened and the Cairngorm MRT was gathering to search for them. However, the two walkers showed further evidence of their self-reliance by setting off back in the dark, to reach the ski car park just as the rescue team was setting out! If nothing else, this was a supreme example of self-reliance in action.

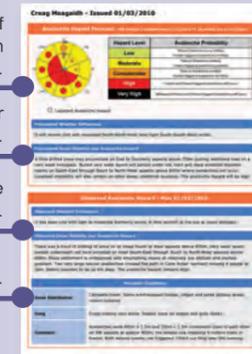
The new format SAIS reports

A new sportsScotland Avalanche Information Service (SAIS) report format was launched at the start of the 2009/10 season. There are two versions – web and download – consisting of four main levels of information. Both carry the same content, but the web version has interactive elements.

Information courtesy of www.sais.gov.uk

Download version

1. A visual forecast representation of hazards by aspect and altitude with hazard level/avalanche probability key.
2. A written forecast with weather influences.
3. A written observed avalanche hazard with weather influence.
4. General mountain conditions.

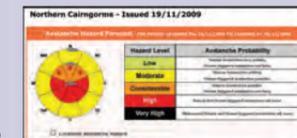


Interpretation: Download version

1. Visual forecast: Example 1

The stated hazard is HIGH.

- Snow line starts at 200m altitude.
- Ascending above 200m, the hazard level is moderate until the altitude of 800m is reached.
- Above 800m on east, south east, south and south west aspects the hazard level is high and therefore natural avalanches will occur and a person would trigger an avalanche on these slopes.
- On north west, north and north east aspects above 800m the avalanche hazard is considerable but there are localised places where the hazard will be high, eg. steeper slopes etc.
- Traveling in the mountains with a forecast such as this would require a good understanding of travel in avalanche terrain methods, particular slopes would be avoided by ascending/descending ridges or using techniques that avoid certain slopes. Additionally, reading the written reports would give an indication of wind scoured areas and other areas where travel remains possible. Good visibility would help you to make better route choices.
- All hazard forecasts require the user to interpret their own observations and continually assess the encountered situation.



1. Visual forecast: Example 2

- The stated hazard is CONSIDERABLE.
- Snow line starts at 900m altitude.
- Ascending above 1000m, the hazard level remains moderate up to the altitude indicated (usually the highest point in the area).
- The snow only lies on north east, east and south east aspects above 900m – no other aspect has snow.
- In localised areas on north east and east aspects above 1000m there are localised places where the hazard is considerable.

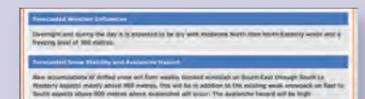


2. Written forecast

- The forecasted weather influences text is now separated from the snow stability and avalanche hazard text.
- More detail is available in the text forecast which gives a better picture of the situation likely to be encountered.

3. Written observed avalanche hazard

- The information provided is a description of what was encountered by the SAIS observer in the mountains.
- This is important as it describes the avalanche hazard situation and snowpack with 100% certainty at the time of observation, whereas the avalanche forecast is dependent on uncertain factors and 100% certainty is not possible.
- The snowpack and its stability is a continually changing process and stability can vary greatly from hour to hour, especially when weather conditions are unstable and during storms.
- All hazard forecasts require the user to interpret their own observations and continually assess the encountered situation.



4. General mountain conditions

- Observations related to climbing and walking conditions and related subjects are noted in this section.

Web version

1. The forecast hazard page and observed hazard page are presented one at a time using tabs.



2. Mono and colour pdf versions of the report are downloadable.
3. The report is issued on the date indicated at the top of the page.
4. The avalanche hazard forecast period extends from 18:00hrs on the day of issue to 18:00hrs the next day (forecast day). This is on both report versions.
5. Highlighted words (blue) indicate that an explanation is available and that a text box will appear when the mouse is over the highlight.

So, just how 'dangerous' are the Scottish mountains in winter? Well, one thing is certain; avalanches take place and people are caught in avalanches every winter. Indeed, people are injured every year and sometimes there are fatal incidents. Of those that are trapped in avalanches, only a small proportion escape

as well as the serious ones that require mountain rescue assistance. For example, in 2009 the SAIS recorded 112 avalanches of which 21 involved people. Figure 1 shows the number of avalanche incidents in the 30-year period 1980–2009. These figures are based entirely on data recorded by the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland and published in the SMC Journal and on the MRCofS website.

Annual figures for avalanche incidents vary between one (2007) and fourteen (1986). Interestingly, a linear trend analysis (see straight line which overlays the annual figures) suggests the number of incidents across the thirty-year period is declining. It is still relevant to recognise the annual variability (which shows no signs of going away) but, if you take a broad look across the period, it seems relatively safe to conclude that avalanche incidents are declining. Further evidence to support this lies in the figures for number of fatalities, injured casualties and number of people involved. In each case, the trend over thirty years is downwards. In other words, the number of incidents, the number of people who die or injured and the number of people involved in avalanches each year are all declining. Another way to look at the figures is to examine the number of incidents each year as a function of the number of all mountaineering incidents. The overall figure is 2% but when this is broken down into the three decades, then in the ten year period 1980/89 the proportion was 3.6%, in the period 1990/99 it was 1.9% and in the last decade it was 1.4%. So, when all these figures are taken together, we can be confident in concluding there is a general downward trend in avalanche incidents.

The interesting question is to explain the downward trend. It's likely the answer is multifaceted but a couple of factors stand out. The downward trend in incidents coincides with the twenty-year operation of the SAIS. It is possible that in educating hillgoers more about avalanche hazards and provided them with forecasting information, the service has led to a generation of walkers and climbers who are more avalanche-savvy and better prepared to face winter hazards. So today, there may be a stronger safety culture towards winter mountaineering which, in turn, has led to fewer incidents. Whilst it is impossible to attribute cause and effect and say that the SAIS is responsible for the decline in incidents, the association does seem to be strong.

The SAIS has its foundations in the 'Scottish Avalanche Project', which began in 1988 as an avalanche forecasting service funded by the Scottish Sports Council. It operated in two areas – Glencoe and the Northern Cairngorms and ran for two years, with the addition in 1988-89 of Lochaber and a weekend pilot scheme in Lochnagar. After this, the project was permanently adopted by the Scottish Sports Council and became the Scottish Avalanche Information Service. Within a year the service was computerised and reports

became available on the web. The Southern Cairngorms and Creag Meagaidh were added in 1996-97 and the service renamed the SportsScotland Avalanche Information Service. Forecasts are based on a five-point hazard scale: low, moderate, considerable, high and very high. Low indicates that the snowpack is generally well bonded and stable. The avalanche probability is described as, 'triggering is possible only with high additional loads on a very few extreme slopes. Only a few small natural avalanches (sluffs) possible.' At the other end of the scale Very High indicates the snowpack is generally weakly bonded and largely unstable. Under these conditions, 'numerous large natural avalanches are likely, even on moderately steep slopes.' Daily forecasts of the snow, avalanche and climbing conditions at the five climbing areas are published and the SAIS is the main source of dissemination of the snow and avalanche reports with over 3000 visits to the website on a busy winter's day.

Another factor, which may have contributed to the fall in avalanche incidents, is that mountaineers are now better prepared. It can be argued with some confidence that people who walk and climb in Scotland are much better equipped and informed than they were twenty or thirty years ago. As a result, they are better organised for dealing with a wide variety of mountain hazards both in summer and winter, including avalanche risk. How is this? Well if you look at changes in clothing, footwear, equipment, availability of information materials and courses and online access to weather and avalanche information, it is clear that, in broad terms, hillgoers are more knowledgeable than they once were. You only have to look at equipment/clothing for winter to see this. Ice axes are ergonomically more efficient, crampons are engineered to suit

TABLE 1. KEY 'CAUSES' OF MOUNTAINEERING INCIDENTS

Cause	%
Overdue	29
Slips	27
Poor navigation	23
Lost/mislead	21
Bad planning	18
Falls	16
Cragfast	14
Inadequate equipment	11
Medical problem	11
Poor timing	8
Group separation	7
Avalanche	2
River crossing	1

different types of boot and types of activity and clothing is much more functional. Of course, these alone do not make it less likely someone will be caught in an avalanche but they are indicative of a more informed and safer approach to winter travel. All this is born out by a rise in mountaineering participation, which is not mirrored, by a proportionate rise in incidents.

All of this is conjecture and there is no way of knowing with certainty why incidents rise and

fall each year or why it appears the number of annual incidents is slowing down. As already noted, Figure 1 reveals the extent of the problem and it might be useful to put this into perspective. When the number of avalanche incidents that result in injury/death each year is compared to the overall number of mountaineering incidents, it turns out the proportion is actually quite low.

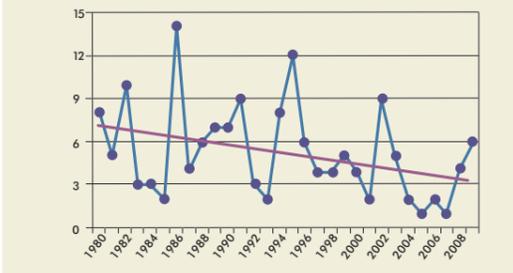
Table 1 lists the major 'causes' and shows that other factors (some in combination) are much more likely to result in a mountain incident than an avalanche.

It is important to put the problem of avalanches into perspective. It is a relatively rare phenomenon and it also one that is declining over time. However, readers may be interested to note some other facts about avalanche incidents. One might suspect they take place during a relatively narrow time period. In fact, they occur across a six months period in the year (late October to late April). However, the most common period is the month of February, which accounts for 35% of all incidents. There is a common perception that avalanches mainly involve climbers on named routes (mostly gullies). This is not the case. The split between those who are walking (who may be on their way to/from a climb) and climbing is almost 50/50. In other words, half of all incidents occur on open slopes, ridges and other areas, which are not typically defined as climbing routes. Finally, it's worth pointing out that many avalanche incidents are self-triggered (12%) although it is likely this figure underestimates the true picture. Information from the SAIS suggests it could be much higher.

What of the future? Hopefully, the overall decline in avalanche incidents will continue. And, if global warming comes home to roost then the mountains will be devoid of snow, and avalanches will be a thing of the past. But that is likely to be many years away and beyond the lifetime of readers. In the meantime, it seems safe to conclude that walkers and climbers will continue to be avalanched, that the numbers will rise and fall considerably each year and that three key areas – Ben Nevis/Grey Corries/Mamores (29% of all incidents), Cairngorm Northern Corries (22% of all incidents) and Glencoe/Buachaille Etive Mor (20% of all incidents) will continue to dominate the avalanche 'league table'. It should be noted that the avalanche forecasting service covers each of these areas.

At the present time, members of the MRCofS and the SAIS are working

FIGURE 1 – THE NUMBER OF AVALANCHE INCIDENTS EACH YEAR FROM 1980–2009



death or injury. The precise figures change every year and often fluctuate abruptly from one year to the next. For example, in 2009 the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland (MRCofS) recorded that twenty one people were involved in avalanche incidents, but the year before the number was only seven. And in 1995, twelve people died in avalanches but, the year before, it was one quarter this number. Many years pass by with few reported avalanches, no fatalities and few people injured, but then the tables turn abruptly and the figures rise significantly.

Accounting for the extraordinary variability from one year to the next is not an easy task. Similarly, explaining why some years are particularly 'bad' and others 'good' is thwart with difficulties. It is tempting to link the number of avalanche incidents with favourable climbing conditions, snowpack instability or the number of people climbing and walking. But there are so many potential factors that play a part – weather on the day, weather history, snowpack structure, slope angle/aspect, participation levels, skills and planning ability of climbers/walkers, time of day, intentions of the people involved, availability of relevant information, geographical location etc – that the task of explaining why some years are 'bad' or 'good' is far from straightforward. Much is known about avalanche forecasting and the SportsScotland Avalanche Information Service (SAIS) is the lead authority on this subject, but despite the seminal work carried by the SAIS (more later) avalanches cannot be predicted with certainty and avalanche incidents continue to take place.

A look at the exact figures might enable a better understanding of the scope of the problem. But, before we look at the incidents recorded by the MRCofS, it is vital to acknowledge that very many avalanches take place each year in Scotland which go unnoticed and unreported and many others occur where people walk away without injury. And there are many 'near misses'. The SAIS is actively involved in recording these events

A brief dip into eponymous medical terms: 7

David Allan continues his examination of what's in a name

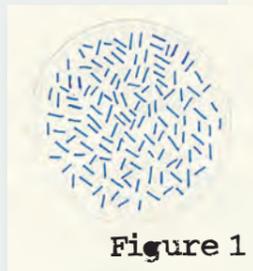


Figure 1

Salmonella

This bacterium and the infections it causes have nothing to do with salmon or any other fish. Although carried by tortoises, snakes and various rodents, fish do not feature as a host. The term arises from one Dr Elmer Salmon who first recognised and described the bacterium.

The bacteria are rod shaped motile, appearing blue with Gram stain and can multiply very rapidly in the right conditions. (Figure 1). They are found worldwide infecting numerous animals as well as humans. There are several forms of the organism. The most virulent is responsible for typhoid fever, fortunately now rare in this and other European countries. The commoner form is responsible for Salmonellosis, an often incapacitating form of food poisoning.

Salmonellosis is an illness featuring vomiting, diarrhoea and stomach cramps. (Figure 2). It will develop some 12-72 hours after ingestion of infected food and persist for 3-7 days. In severe cases there is a risk of dehydration.

The infection usually arises from food but contaminated water may be responsible. The bacteria can survive freezing and have been found to be alive in dried faeces for 2-3 years. A temperature of 75°C for at least ten minutes is needed to kill the bacteria and casual reheating of food is often the cause of infection. This and contaminated water have been responsible for a number of cases occurring in people camping in 'remote' areas.

Dr Daniel Elmer Salmon was an American

Figure 2



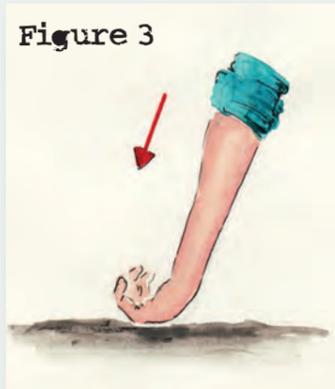
veterinary surgeon. He lived from 1850 to 1914 when he died of pneumonia. He establishes the first department of veterinary medicine in the USA at Cornell University and later establishes a veterinary college at Montevideo. He carried out extensive studies of infections involving animals and humans and publishes his work on salmonella in 1876.

Smith's Fracture

This injury is a fracture of the distal radius. It is often referred to as a reverse Colle's fracture as the mechanism of injury and the resulting deformity are the opposite of those in the much commoner Colle's.

The mechanism involves a fall onto the outstretched arm but landing on the back of the flexed hand rather than the outstretched hand (Figure 3). The displaced fragment of the radius therefore lies anteriorly (Figure 4). This injury is quite stable and simple support alone is needed as primary treatment. The

Figure 3



fracture can usually be reduced with a good recovery.

Robert William Smith was an Irish surgeon who lived from 1807 to 1873. He was the first professor of surgery at Trinity College and Vice president of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. He made extensive studies of the pathology and anatomy of injuries and publishes an account of the fracture bearing his name in 1847.

Spencer-Wells

The name of Sir Thomas Spencer-Wells is linked to arguably the most widely recognised and used surgical instrument after the scalpel. The principal of a ratchet controlled instrument designed firstly to stop bleeding from blood vessels was a landmark in practical operative surgery (Figure 5).

The original instrument has been copied, altered and extended to many other patterns but the basic design has stood the test of time for 150 years. It has formed the basis of a series of holding, grasping and occluding instruments in all surgical disciplines. It has also found wide use outwith surgery and from model making to threading pyjama cords has an endless variety of applications.

Sir Thomas Spencer-Wells lived from 1818 to 1897 when he died from a CVA. He was born in St Albans, trained at Trinity College Dublin and worked at St Thomas's hospital in London. He also served in the Royal Navy and was a field surgeon in the Crimea. He clearly had good motivation to develop an instrument efficient in the control of haemorrhage. He was possibly the first surgeon to operate using general anaesthesia

Figure 4

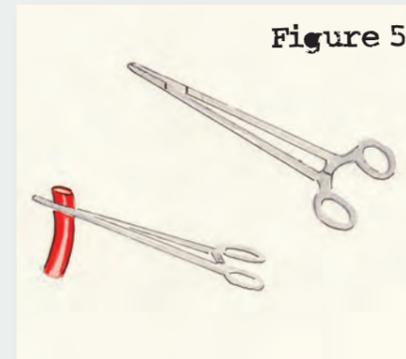
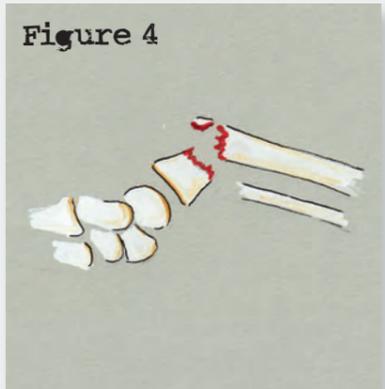


Figure 5

and from 1863 to 1896 was surgeon to Queen Victoria.

Starling's Law

This physiological principal in cardiac function was described in 1914 and was a major step forward in the understanding of the working of the heart.

Basically the 'law' that the greater the volume of blood entering the right side of the heart the greater will be the volume ejected by the left side. This comes about because the stretching of cardiac muscle leads to greater force of contraction and the length of myocardial muscle fibres determine the amount of work done. There is of course a limit to this response (Figure 6).

Starling also demonstrated that this would only apply to healthy heart muscle. Diseased heart muscle would very rapidly lie in the 'limit of response area' in the diagram.

All of this is now assumed as fairly basic knowledge but, at the time of Starling's description, it was a very new concept.

Ernest Henry Starling was a physiologist at University College hospital in London. He lived from 1866 to 1927. In addition to his work on the heart and circulation he carried out important research work on digestive enzymes, renal function and was the first to fully describe peristalsis in the gut.

He received some unwelcome publicity in what was known as the 'Brown Dog Affair'. A run in with anti-vivisection lobby centred round the erection of a statue of a brown dog in Battersea Park and riots in the park, to the extent that the statue was removed in 1910 and not re-erected until 1985.

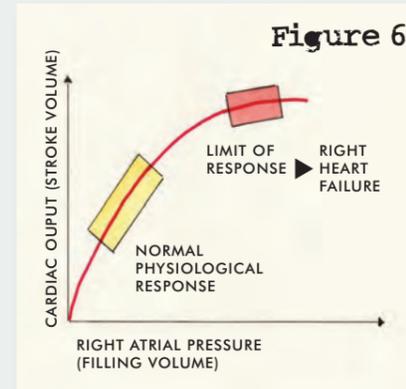


Figure 6

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For more information, go to www.traumafx.co.uk, call +44 (0)776 9976682 or email enquiry@traumafx.co.uk



Snippets from the Journals

CHEST COMPRESSION FIRST AID FOR RESPIRATORY ARREST DUE TO ACUTE ASPHYXIC ASTHMA

A study of three patients with sudden severe life-threatening asphyxic asthma, two with respiratory arrest, and their treatment by manual chest compression. External chest compression in the treatment of respiratory arrest in asthma was reported as early as 1984. However, because a trained medical assistant is unlikely to be present within minutes of the arrest, there is only anecdotal evidence of its effectiveness. This is unlikely to change because the duration of sudden asphyxic

asthma attacks in these circumstances is short and patients usually die outside the hospital, before medical help can arrive. This study provides further evidence of the usefulness of manual external chest compression in cases of sudden asphyxic asthma and the importance of including this method in teaching first aid to paramedical staff and the relatives of persons with asthma. This may be the only way to avoid death in such patients.

• A sixteen year old girl was found supporting herself with both hands at the kitchen sink. She was making short, high-pitched noises like a faint hiccup sound, trying to breathe, then collapsed and became unconscious, with cessation of respiration. Mouth to mouth resuscitation failed, even with a clear airway, and she was turned over on her face in an attempt to use the Schafer method of artificial respiration. Two hands were placed flat over the lower part of her chest, the thumbs over the spine and the fingers around each side of the lower part of the chest using the operator's body weight to compress the chest against the floor. There was an immediate escape of air from the lungs, suggesting that mouth to mouth respiration had failed because the lungs were already overinflated and the chest wall at maximal extension. After four or five compressions, the girl started to breathe on her

own. Intravenous hydrocortisone and adrenaline were administered, as well as oxygen by face mask and, by the time the ambulance arrived 45 minutes later, she had regained consciousness.

• A large man, having an asthma attack with similar faint hiccup-like noises and no air entry into the lungs and no chest improvement, was standing with both hands on the back of a settee. Both the operator's arms were placed round the lower part of the chest, only just able to link the two hands because of the man's size. This also helped support the patient in an upright position. With chest compression, the patient made an immediate respiratory gasp and was encouraged to slow these gasps so chest compression allowed more prolonged expiration. His relief was immediate. Chest compression continued until the man's wife had retrieved drugs and emergency oxygen from the doctor's car. This patient had a further attack two months later, when no external application was used, and he died.

• A 59 year old man, with asthma and chronic bronchitis, presented with severe cyanosis. He was taking very short inspiratory gasps. The operator's hands were placed on the lower part of the chest inwards and downwards in time with the man's expirations. There was an immediate and marked improvement in his condition after even the first compressions, and he had recovered by the time he reached hospital.

All three were resuscitated by manual external chest compression with ease and very little pressure. The first two were of the acute asphyxic asthma type with sudden onset. The third case used to be called 'asthma and chronic bronchitis' but now would be called by the perhaps less descriptively accurate 'chronic obstructive pulmonary disease' (COPD). If the patient had died in the attack, the death would have been registered as 'COPD and cor-pulmonale' but consequent to the unexpected sudden response of chest compression, 'asthma' would appear to be the more accurate primary diagnosis.

Discussion

There was a rapid rise in deaths due to asthma during the 1960s. 81% of deaths, between October 1966 and March 1967, in patients between 5 and 34 years, occurred suddenly outside the hospital and were frequently unexpected. Of the 133 patients, 37 died in less than an hour. At the time, the only explanation put forward was the overuse of the inhaled drugs and corticosteroids used to treat asthma.

Research into patients arriving at hospital in respiratory arrest showed that undertreatment, rather than overtreatment, may contribute to an increase in mortality from asthma – in contrast to the generally accepted view in the 60s that deaths due to asthma were caused by the adverse effects of treatment.

What did change was that mouth to mouth resuscitation was introduced as the standard resus technique for respiratory arrest

and the previously trusted methods of chest compression were discarded. Up to that time, chest compression of the lower ribs, Scafer's prone and Holger Neilson's method were the only techniques used. CPR, in which the sternum is depressed to compress the heart chambers, is without effect on respiration. They were easier to use correctly than mouth to mouth and widely used in the UK. It is certainly possible that this change in practice was responsible for the increased number of deaths. There is evidence that there is a separate group of patients with asthma with extremely rapid onset of life-threatening asthma with no earlier signs of deterioration or increase in peak expiratory flow prior to the onset. This group of patients is more difficult to ventilate mechanically but recovers more rapidly and has a higher incidence of respiratory arrest.

Epidemiological studies have investigated the problem of sudden death in asthma but none have elucidated a mechanism separating them from asthma in general. The usual explanation is that extreme bronchospasm, rather than mucus plugging, bronchial oedema or vascular bronchial compression, plays the primary role in pathogenesis. During suffocation, there is a powerful urge to expand the chest forcefully, as when a drowning person inhales water into the lungs. In the cases described, the urge to 'breathe in' appeared to take over the respiratory response. This hypothesis of a chest wall effect producing sudden asphyxia would explain the following:

1. Why life-threatening asthma can occur without previous warning or a decrease in peak expiratory flow. These patients may account for most of the deaths occurring outside the hospital and are the ones needing first aid before medical help arrives.

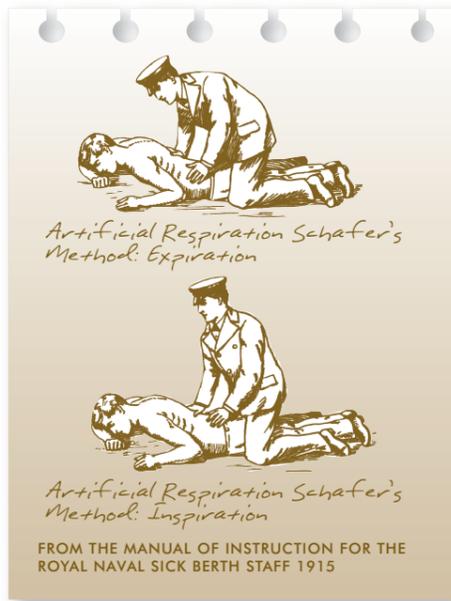
2. Why some patients who experience severe asthma attacks recover so rapidly. A few of these patients may have recurrent attacks and recover before getting to the hospital. These patients stand the risk of being labelled as overbreathing or neurotic. Others have never had previous hospital attendance or even a severe asthma attack.

3. The sudden increase in asthma-related deaths from 1960 to 1965, as patients who died of asthma would be the ones responding best to the frequently used method of artificial respiration prior to 1960.

At present, any emergency in asthma is dealt with by the patient getting to hospital as speedily as possible and then, if there is no quick improvement, a decision has to be made whether ventilation or intubation is necessary. It would take less than a minute of assisted expirations to discover whether chest compression would be effective. In the past, chest compression was performed in the prone position, but it can easily be done with both arms and hands and exerting pressure inwards and downwards as in the third case history noted.

In summary, chest compression to treat respiratory arrest due to asthma is safe and sufficiently simple to be taught to relatives. One cannot pump air into overinflated bellows to get them to work, but this is being attempted with mouth to mouth resuscitation, or even mechanical ventilation. The speedy recovery with chest compression suggests a 'chest wall effect' rather than acute bronchial constriction as the cause of asphyxia. It is likely the immediate response to chest compression depends on how important a factor this is in any individual asthma attack – and one will not know unless it is tried.

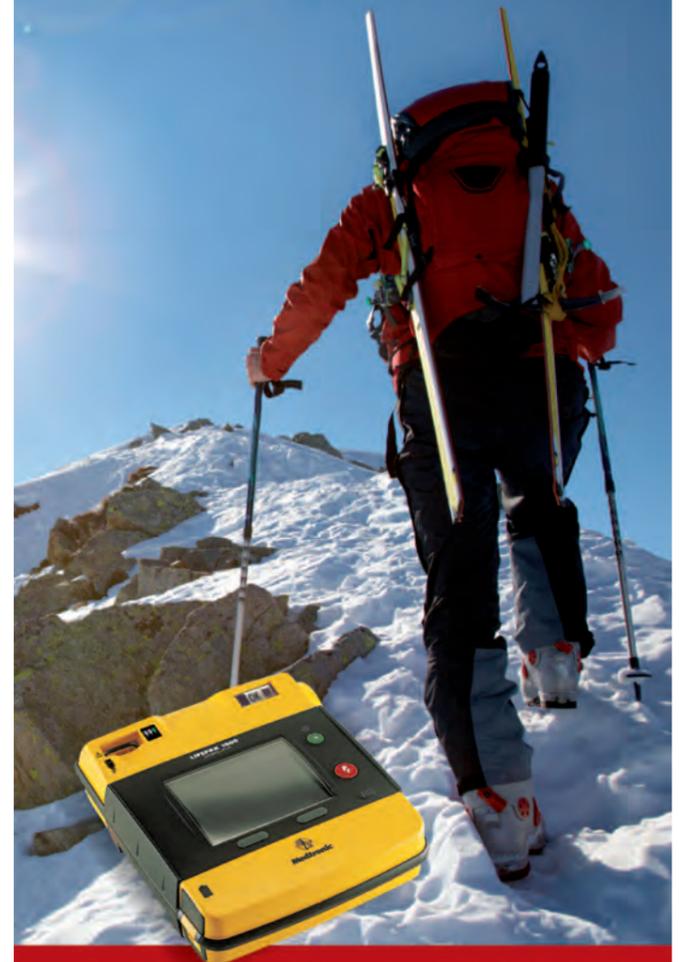
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For more information email hiking@macmillan.org.uk, call 0207 840 7887 or visit www.macmillan.org.uk/alpshike, quoting AL103.



Tick Alert launches online tool for travellers

An online device that helps travellers find out whether they might be at risk of potentially fatal Tick Borne Encephalitis (TBE) in Europe is now available at the Tick Alert website. The 'TBE Travel Check' takes less than a minute to complete and asks users a sequence of simple questions about where they are going and any outdoor activities they are planning to determine their level of risk. A message at the end advises whether a user should consider seeking medical advice ahead of their trip.

Tick Alert say, 'The TBE Travel Check gives people a better understanding of their risk before they travel so they can think about the need for precautions against the disease. Many of us heading into Europe often don't consider seeking travel health advice so we hope this quick check will help.'

The 'TBE Travel Check' is one of a number of new-look features to Tick Alert's website, which now includes the latest updates on TBE risk, prevention measures taken by health authorities in various destinations and an interactive map showing risk areas of Europe

TBE is a viral disease contracted via the bite of an infected tick which is endemic in 27 countries in Europe. It leads to an annual average of 10,000 cases needing hospital treatment. Two in every 100 TBE sufferers will die from the disease. For more, go to www.tickalert.org

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EMT training with the British Association of Ski Patrollers

by Steve Johnson

It's 10.00am on a damp Monday morning and I'm wondering what on earth I'm doing. Along with five others, I've signed up for the British Association of Ski Patrollers (BASP) Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) course held at Glenmore Lodge, the National Mountaineering Centre in Scotland. Just ninety minutes into the course and we're all reeling, we've done a written exam and a practical which have highlighted gaps in our knowledge, yet we're not novices. I'm an ex-Army medic and member of a Lake District mountain rescue team. Others include ski patrollers and members of police and civilian MRTs in Scotland, many of us with the MRC Cas Care certificate. We are heavily outweighed in terms of experience and numbers by the trainers who include members of four MRTs, paramedics, nurses and a senior consultant anaesthetist. Just looking at the sheer amount of kit in the room - medical bags, airway models, high tech resuscitation training devices and more, is enough to make us worry about what comes next.

What comes next is five days of impressive tuition, endless scenarios and challenges to our competence and our ability to keep going. Working from early morning until late evening with just the odd sojourn to the Lodge Bar to console each other about our performance in whatever trauma incident we'd just dealt with. Here's just a brief idea of what you can expect.

On day one, the aforementioned written and practical tests serve to remind you of the importance of and necessity to use protocols. These are rapidly followed by sessions on drugs in MR, Basic Life Support (BLS) and AED use, all interspersed with scenarios. These are not the gentle exercises some may be used to but instead what, in the Army, we used to call 'trauma clinics' where, as you treat the casualty, things are going wrong, their condition is getting worse and people around you are piling on the pressure. These go on into the evening accompanied by ample review, reflection and discussion.

Day two brings anatomy and physiology, with in-depth review of cardiac rhythms followed by anaphylaxis protocols and treatment. This is followed by helmet removal, useful for those of us faced with MTB and trails riders wearing full face helmets. The afternoon introduces cannulation, including practice on both simulators and live cannulation of each other! The core BASP team and specialist nurse trainers deliver this workshop that is the same as that delivered in hospitals including accreditation and logbooks. Throughout the day we also had more outdoor practical scenarios ranging from treating a diabetic

emergency to diagnosing a 25 year old with a sub-arachnoid haemorrhage!

Day three and we're on to airway management with a range of adjuncts from O/NPAs to LMA and I-Gel, followed by upper and lower airway obstruction, intubation and differences with children. Then onto chest injuries and the move to advanced skills including chest examination and needle decompression of tension pneumothorax. Then it's abdominal trauma and more cannulation practice. Late afternoon brings more outdoor scenarios ranging from a multiple casualty MTB collision in the forest, leading to a carry off and helicopter evacuation, through to an MI which applied the pressure like no previous scenario (to learn more you'll need to do the course).

Day four was more testing and scenarios, mixed with paediatric anatomy and physiology - some key things here we should all remember, as well as further resus skills and yet more scenarios! The end of the day brings a 90 minute written paper which includes everything from multiple choice to essay type questions, protocols to rhythm strips, and even then we're not finished! The evening consists of practical scenarios based on the issues raised in the exam. At least the bar was still open when we'd finished so we were able to revive ourselves.

And finally to day five, which included suspension trauma and, of course, the final individual practical exam that for me was 45 minutes of total pressure with a deteriorating casualty and including not only appropriate diagnosis and treatment but even a good handover to the virtual helicopter winchman. So that's the course. Was it worth it? Definitely, even for those with more experience it reinforces existing knowledge, introduces new skills and, more importantly for me, improves diagnostic ability and builds confidence.

Where does it fit in MR? I've done the MRC Cas Care course and the Edale MRT Trauma and Acute Medical Emergency Course (which I'll be repeating this year as it's also great) and along with the high standard constant training, extra practice and encouragement provided within my team, I find these the only way to maintain skills. I think that all these programmes and methods are great and the BASP EMT course should be seen as the next step for anyone who wants to maintain and enhance everything they've learned or experienced so far. We in mountain rescue may be volunteers but we're definitely



Casualty packaging in vacuum mattress outside on night scenario



IV cannulation practice with Martin Taylor (ski patrol) and John Morris (MR)

professionals and courses such as this will help us stay this way. The training team were terrific, sharing their experience and skills professionally and freely. The pressure was certainly on, but even those who didn't pass (and yes, not everyone got through, it is definitely not a 'do the course get a certificate' programme) would agree that the course is valuable, increasing knowledge and making you better as a casualty carer. Give it a try: you won't regret it - at least not afterwards!

Steve Johnson is a member of Duddon and Furness MRT, Mountain Leader and SPA holder and works for Tao Mountain in Cumbria.

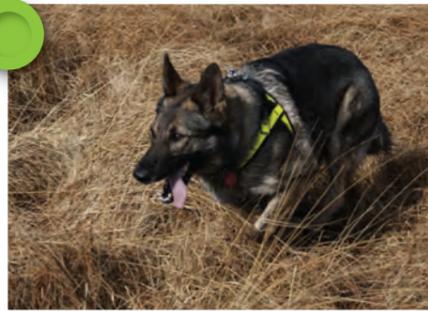
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Biscuit and the fatal attraction

by John Coombs

My current operational dog, Biscuit, is eight years old and has a few real finds to her credit – most are on items of lost property and some on dogs as well as lost people – she is still working while we train Flash. Dogs have very sensitive and efficient noses, also the part of their brain that connects to it is proportionately larger than ours – smell is their primary sense. One of the fascinating things about dog work is that science cannot fully explain what it is that a dog perceives from the mixture of scents it is aware of, but we have to put together our knowledge with some theories that explain what we know works in practice.



* Skin rafts issuing from the neck of my clothing and the smell of breath as it might be perceived by a dog

Eventually we emerged, cut and torn, on the other side of the thicket to find Biscuit barking at two young men who were helping a policeman search a culvert. I could not understand why a five year old dog, who had only ever been rewarded for finding bodies that are sitting down, and had been ignoring team members and walkers all day, should latch on to these two people. Biscuit is very friendly with anyone – particularly those she has found – the barking is to ask for a game. Nevertheless, the lads didn't look happy so I apologised and clipped on her lead.

The police officer had finished his shift and the young men decided to go back to the search control – so we followed them for a rest, and to clean up our bramble scratches. Apparently, Biscuit still wanted to play with her new friends – and continued her pursuit by dragging me after them – in a manner that was more appropriate to a penitentiary bloodhound, or a new starter at Dog Borstal, than a trained SARDA dog. Her instincts seemed to have taken over from me.

Our rapid arrival at control brought an explanation for my dog's strange behaviour – the lads she found were the missing person's grandsons. Biscuit had been obsessed with the smell of what I can best describe as their 'distress.'

Sadly the relative's fears were justified – three days later the search had a tragic outcome.

This was not the first or last occasion I have seen this; it seems likely to me that the origin of such canine behaviour comes from a natural ability to use certain smells to select the easiest prey animal from a herd. The weak and injured appear to have a distinct scent picture that is attractive to a predator.

Police and SARDA dogs work with basic instincts that are focused by their training. Handlers must have made use of their dog's natural compulsion to hunt this 'odour of trauma' ever since the first wolf cub was taken in by our ancestors.

area downwind with a mix of scents distinct to the person they came from.

Under the right conditions, dogs can be aware of a person from hundreds of metres away. The odours can carry messages about recent diet, trauma, health, wellbeing, fatigue, and distress.

Perhaps it is fortunate that this power to analyse others from a distance, without either seeing or touching them, has been trusted to dogs rather than humans.

In March 2006, Edale team assisted the police with a rural area 'missing from home' search near Sheffield. After a couple of hours work, Biscuit took off with distinct enthusiasm into some bushes and returned with the 'urgent' bark which means a find. So Judith, my navigator and I, knowing this type of missing person can end up in the undergrowth, hurried after the dog as she drove back through.

What a dog senses is chemical vapours. It can distinguish between different compounds and is able to discern variations in concentrations and mixtures. Our canine colleagues use their noses just like we use our eyes. There is one advantage: unlike light, odours linger in the vicinity and downwind of a source – so, in theory at least, a scenting hunter has a lot more chances to find a hidden casualty – ask any dog handler or try hiding yourself!

Dogs who hunt for people (or animals) use mixtures of scents. The latest idea, which explains what happens, is this: The most important 'body odours', from live people, are created by microbes acting on sweat and blood as well as different oils and compounds secreted onto the epidermis. Microscopic flakes of skin, called 'rafts', are shed by the body. As they are blown on the wind, the bacteria they carry continue to work, filling the

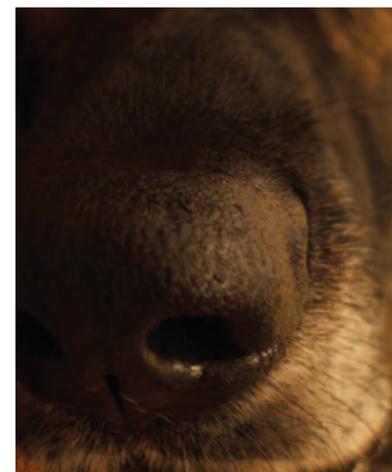
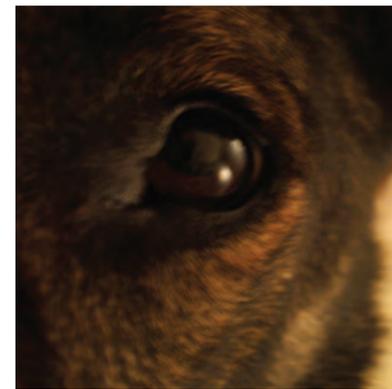
From experience, this scent seems to be present in animals as well as humans. It gets stronger as the individual emitting it gets closer to the point of death, and lingers for some time after they have passed on.

We can't train for it. This canine addiction starts like a revelation – the 'taste' for trauma being triggered by interaction with a distressed human. A police dog will probably get it from its first arrest. SARDA dogs may have to wait for a real find.

Biscuit's 'enlightening experience' with fearful casualties was with snow burial training. Nearly everyone is afraid the first time they are entombed beneath two or three metres of snow – as with many search dog stories, the bodies that help us train are the real heroes.

Thanks to Tom Middlemas and Nev Sharpe who have both taught me how much I have yet to learn about scent work. Also SARDA Lakes and their brave bodies for a most memorable visit to Cairngorm in 2006.

Photos thanks to Trev Lawton and my son William.



Openhouse want to sponsor your dog!!

Openhouse would like to take this opportunity to offer you a sponsorship. The Search and Rescue Dog Association (SARDA) is a voluntary organisation responsible for the training of mountain rescue team members to become handlers of air scenting search and rescue dogs, enabling them to search for missing people, predominantly in the mountains, high moorland, and also lowland, rural and urban areas of Britain.

Openhouse have a longstanding relationship with SARDA regions around the UK and we have, over the last year, been sponsoring search and rescue dogs by donating our dog beds, collars and visibility lighting, etc. Now we want to help you and sponsor your search and rescue dogs!

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expected to take a minimum of fifteen hours of non-stop climbing, racing against each other and the clock to set a new world record, and push the limits of what is physically possible.

'We are not in this for anything other than to make some sort of positive contribution by pushing ourselves to the limit,' said Tom. 'The competition between us is intense but it's good. I'm stronger than Jonny, but he's fitter – it will be interesting to see which one of us beats the challenge first!'

'If we can pull this off it will be amazing,' said Jonny. 'Raising the money will be a double win for us – the sense of achievement will be massive and we will have contributed to three charities that are important to us.'

Tom and Jonny are now only a couple months away from their world-first record bid, having begun training in October last year. As they enter the final months of their challenge, they will have to fight the physical and mental barriers such as an intense training programme will bring, whilst trying to avoid injury and remain focused.

The Longest Climb is supporting three worthy causes in undertaking this never-before

attempted challenge. In supporting Amnesty International, they want to urge people to take action for Burmese prisoner of conscience U Win Htein, senior assistant to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, also held indefinitely for peaceful expression of opinion. Heart Disease is the leading cause of death in the UK, USA and Canada, and Tom and Jonny want to raise awareness of this, the work done by Heart UK and the importance of exercise in eradicating it. Mountain Rescue England and Wales needs no introduction here except perhaps a reminder for newer readers that the service is provided by around 3,500 volunteers, on call 24/7, whatever the weather. The climb is dedicated to the memory of Tom's friend and mentor, the expert mountaineer Rupert Rosedale, whose life was tragically taken away by an avalanche on Ben Nevis on 30 December, 2009.

For details about the Longest Climb and information on how to support Jonny and Tom by donating, please visit the website at thelongestclimb.com, follow them on twitter @thelongestclimb, and on their Facebook page – facebook.com/thelongestclimb

Get some Mountain Sense and stay safe with the updated Mountain Logbook

Want to cherish the memories of where you walked, who you went with and what you saw when you got there? Well, you can do just that with this handy A5 logbook, custom designed to record your outdoor adventures in a clear and user-friendly layout.

The Log Index Page provides a quick reference to all your complicated routes as you chart your progress through the Wainwrights, Munros, Corbetts and Welsh 3000s listed there. Name, height, rank and grid reference are given for each of these sought after summits – so no need to rummage through countless books when you have everything here at your fingertips! Ideal for planning and recording your peak-bagging exploits.

Created by Chris Gillyon and Chris Harling – both Mountaineering Instructors and members of Keswick MRT – the Mountain Logbook has been updated with ten new pages, including some stunning photographs to accompany the top tips for walkers on how to stay safe in the mountains, appropriate clothing, equipment and emergency procedures. You'll find tear out route cards,

inviting you to leave details of your intended route, along with personal information, any medical conditions and a contact name and number in case of emergency – plus a separate fold out version so you can photocopy extras. And there's a handy kit checklist, and tick boxes for you to assess your hill walking experience and navigation ability. All invaluable to a mountain rescue team in the event of an accident.

'Many people do leave details of their objectives and planned routes, at home or back at their hotel, but often leave out vital information – simple things like the colour of clothing or whether or not a torch is being carried,' explained Chris Gillyon.

Priced at £7.99, the Logbook is already selling well in outdoor retailers and bookshops in Keswick, including Cotswolds, Ultimate Outdoors, the Tourist Information Centre and Book Ends or you can buy online at themountainlogbook.co.uk or from Mountain Sense at mountainsense.co.uk. You can also, incidentally, keep up with their news and courses on their Mountain Sense Facebook page.

So, if you're a Basecamp member, or even a rescue team member who wants to keep a record of their travels, check it out. And if you're a business or individual just itching to sponsor the Logbook (and the safety campaign that goes with it), the boys would be delighted to hear from you!

For further information, or to offer sponsorship, call Chris on 01787 80312 or email info@mountainsense.co.uk



together to establish a complete database of all avalanche incidents with a view to presenting to the public and the outdoor community a full and true picture of the avalanche situation in Scotland.

Over the past 30 years there has been an average of just over five avalanche incidents each year serious enough to require mobilisation of the emergency services. Compare this with sportsScotland's estimate of around six million 'mountaineering participation' days each year in Scotland. So it seems that, even though the consequences of being caught in an avalanche can be very serious, the likelihood is extremely low – a chance in a million!

There are a number of excellent resources available on the subject of avalanches, avalanche awareness, forecasting, etc. The SAIS focuses on avalanches and the Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCofS), as well as agencies such as Glenmore Lodge, run mountain safety courses, some focusing on avalanche awareness. The MCofS website provides comprehensive information on avalanche safety.

Key References

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sportsScotland Avalanche Information Service. Go to: www.saais.gov.uk

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Launch of the Dragon

Without a shadow of a doubt, the big news from Llanberis is the launch of the Dragon Cams. The first units hit the shops in the second week of March, and they are one of the most sought after bits of kit we have launched for a few years. The final design has changed from the first prototypes shown last summer – the biggest change the introduction of a thumb grip as opposed to a full thumb loop. This allows us to incorporate the extendable dyneema sling which has proved so popular on our original 4 CU units. The Dragons bring together the very best features from a variety of designs, resulting in a unit that is superlight, very strong, offers 360 degree flexibility, and has the extendable sling feature too. 14Kn in every orientation is an impressive strength rating for units which are so light. We have also maintained the 13.75 cam angle which we believe gives greater security across a range of placements. For those of you wondering



what happened to the Shadow Secure Carabiner, we have been carrying out prolonged testing to prove the longevity of the mechanism, and so far the news is good, and this unique product should be ready for general release before very long.

DMM
CLIMB NOW WORK LATER

Mal-practice with maillons

by Rich Mayfield

I climbed Mandolin Wind on the Costa Blanca sport crag of Sella on the Monday, lowering off a single bolt with a maillon. I re-climbed the route on the Wednesday but this time the maillon was partially open. It wouldn't tighten by hand, and being a tight climber, I made a judgment call and lowered off it anyway.

I returned a few days later with the drill and replaced the lower off with a double bolt chain. On inspection of the removed lower off, I was horrified to find the gate was about one third of a turn from being completely open. (A maillon attains its strength from the gate being fully closed).

This raised two questions: what had happened to the maillon in those two days and how strong was it in that state?

That was two years ago and ever since I've been on the lookout for dangerous maillons on lower offs. Where I've come across them I have replaced them with double bolt chain units. The frightening thing is there has been no shortage of dodgy maillons, homemade junk, pieces of string connecting maillons and clips from DIY shops.

With the help of Fred Hall (design director of DMM) and his destruction testing machine at their factory in Llanberis, I set about finding out exactly how safe these maillons and links are.

Twelve pieces of equipment were tested to destruction; five lower off karabiners and seven maillons. These were made by different manufacturers and unmarked, so the working loads were unknown. Therefore these test results are only a rough guideline to the safety and strength of such lower offs.

Karabiners links:

A rock climbing karabiner will have been manufactured to ensure the surface is hard wearing but still retains a certain degree of elasticity. The gate is designed to be reliable under constant use and, even if the gate failed, the karabiner will still have a gate open strength. These factors and considerations are not present with products bought at DIY stores.

Equipment tested were 4mm to 8mm karabiner type links, which failed at 3.7kn to 8.2kn gate closed. Gate open all karabiner links failed below 2kn. Some of the gates on these karabiners did not stay closed as the gate mechanism had failed or was too weak to ensure a fully closed gate. The smallest karabiner was not actually the weakest.

Maillons links

A maillon link should be marked with its working loads and its manufacturer, the same as a karabiner. The gate needs to be completely closed to achieve those loads. All maillons tested were galvanised steel.

Equipment tested were 4mm to 8mm maillons

with the gate position unchanged after removal from the crag. These failed at 2.5kn to 4.7kn. Again the smallest was not the weakest.

One partially open 6mm maillon was closed fully to see if its strength had been affected by being left in its partially open position during lowering. In its strongest (closed) position it failed at 41kn. This would suggest that if you come across a maillon in a partially opened state, whether it has been loaded or not, doing the gate up will increase its strength to at least near its maximum.

One can only speculate as to how these maillons come to be partially open, but the following factors may have an effect:

- The maillon was not installed correctly – they should be tightened with a spanner, beware that over tightening can break the gate.
- Inappropriate maillon used – if it is too small then the rope can loosen the maillon gate by rubbing against it as the climber is lowered or the rope is removed.
- Climber lowering off without checking that the gate is fully closed.
- Non PPE rated maillons used.

Conclusions

Once the gate is partially open the failure process has started with complete failure being very close indeed. If the maillon can be tightened by hand then you could assume that it has not been loaded in the partially open position and its full strength could be regained by fully tightening the gate, although a repeat opening cannot be ruled out.

If the maillon cannot be tightened by hand and thread is showing, you should assume it has been loaded in this state and that the failure process has started. As the maillon starts to stretch open, more pressure is exerted on approximately the last one third of a turn on the gate which holds the maillon together. Our tests show that maillons in this condition are approximately 5% to 15% of full potential strength. If in doubt, back it up with a real karabiner. If the gate can be closed with a spanner or another maillon, then our tests show that near full strength can be regained.

A sneaky tip

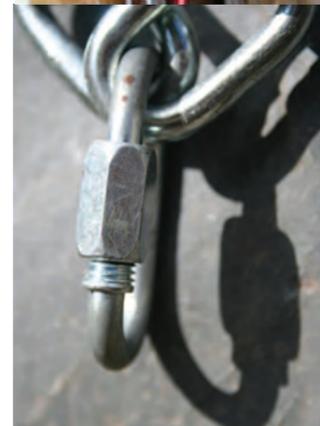
When we climb sport routes we don't usually carry spanners or leaver biners, however some of us do carry maillons. If this maillon has a large opening, then this can be used as a spanner. Or leave it behind!

FAILED MAILLON: THIS MAILLON WAS FOUND ON A BELAY STANCE ON THE TOIX SEA CLIFFS. SOMEONE HAS HAD A VERY CLOSE CALL, BUT PROBABLY DOESN'T REALISE IT!

CHAIN LINK MAILLON: A PARTIALLY OPEN MAILLON LINKING TWO CHAINS

BOLT TO CHAIN LINK: THE SYSTEM IS ONLY AS STRONG AS ITS WEAKEST LINK, SO CHECK ALL THE MAILLONS

CLOSE UP: THE MAILLON NEEDS TO BE FULLY CLOSED TO BE SAFE. HERE THE MAILLON IS ONLY SHOWING THREE THREADS BUT ONLY HAS ONE THIRD OF A TURN LEFT BEFORE COMPLETE FAILURE



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