

# mountain rescue

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2024 88



THE ONLY OFFICIAL MAGAZINE FOR MOUNTAIN RESCUE IN ENGLAND, WALES, SCOTLAND AND IRELAND



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Llanberis team member Jess Ward during a photo shoot earlier in 2024 for The Sunday Times magazine © Jethro Kiemann.



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# conference 2024

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# To engage, educate and entertain

# conference 2024

Lancaster 6-8 September 2024...  
our MR Conference is getting closer...

**JUDY WHITESIDE** EDITOR

Booking is open and tickets have begun to sell, we continue to confirm speakers, exhibition stands continue to fill up and another couple of sponsors have joined the party...

Since January's update, we've continued to add potential speakers — although a number of them are proving extraordinarily coy about supplying their byline photos! We CAN, however, tell you about **Professor Andy Lockey MBE**, President of the Resuscitation Council UK bringing us up to date with current thinking.

And then, in keeping with the wellbeing theme, **Emily Bromiley** from Togetherall will be joining the Rescue Benevolent Fund on the stand and giving a 45-minute presentation on how Togetherall can help mountain and cave rescue team members looking for support with their mental health and wellbeing.

By July's issue, I certainly hope we have pinned down all the speakers — complete with elusive mugshots — with the timetable fully buttoned down too. I also hope to be able to report a healthy level of registered delegates, from across the UK. Speaking of which...



Above, left to right: Professor Andy Lockey MBE (President of The Resuscitation Council UK), Emily Bromiley (Togetherall). Header image: Crib Goch © William Barton.

## HOW TO SECURE YOUR PLACE AT THE CONFERENCE ...

Just head to our website and book your ticket through our Eventbrite booking system. In March, we announced an additional discount for MREW and BCRC team members. This followed a number of enquiries from team members living local to the venue who wished to book without accommodation. Whilst I fully understood the sentiment, this took a good deal of consideration — and, believe me, I lobbied hard on your behalf — so I feel I should make you aware of the background to how we arrived at the final figure.

MREW is contractually committed to a specific number of rooms. If these are not taken for any reason (because everyone wishes to book a non-accommodation weekend rate, for example), then we are obliged to pay a slippage fee to the university, rising steeply the closer we get to September. We need to mitigate that loss in our budget and, as Penny has made very clear to me, this impacts the wider MREW budget available to supporting the teams in other areas.

There is a tipping point at which we will have to decide how many rooms to hand back and pay slippage on. Reducing the number of rooms will mean fewer available, so we would now ask everyone to **please book by 31 May**, so we can gain a better picture of who wants what.

The non-accommodation weekend rate for MREW and BCRC team members is now offered at £130, with the relevant

discount code. This includes registration and entry to all the sessions, workshops and exhibition areas, and all available food opportunities over the weekend, but (obviously) does not include overnight accommodation. The all-inclusive weekend rate for **MREW and BCRC members\*** (including overnight accommodation) continues at £190, with the relevant discount code. A notice has now gone to teams with the relevant codes for each ticket.

We hope everyone will find this a satisfactory solution. The conference has always been heavily subsidised by MREW and this year is no different. The cost of tickets reflects this year's high-calibre keynote speakers, alongside our various in-organisation experts in their field. Lancaster is an excellent venue, easily accessible from all corners of the UK via the M6. But more than anything, these biennial conference weekends are unique opportunities for grassroots team members to meet and celebrate their involvement with an amazing service. It's an opportunity to network across the entire rescue spectrum and meet the officers and trustees who represent you at national level (and vice versa). It's also a key learning opportunity. Plus, you get the opportunity to chat to some of the suppliers, trainers and manufacturers who help keep mountain rescue fit-for-purpose. Bearing all this in mind, we feel very strongly that the ticket price represents real value for money.

Tickets for other SAR organisations continue to be priced at £220. And the price to public and the statutory emergency services is £320.

## SPONSORS...

Since announcing **Helly Hansen** and **Keela** as partner sponsors in the January issue, we are proud to welcome **Getac**, specialists in rugged mobile computing solutions, as our technology sponsor. The company undertook a case study with members of the Western Beacons team in 2023 and will be on hand to showcase their rugged tablet technology, fit for use in the harshest outdoor environments. Turn to page 26 for a taster of what they do, from Will Hitch, Public Safety Lead for Getac UK Ltd. MREW insurance brokers **Gallagher** have also come on board, sponsoring the 'Safety Management, Indoors and Out' track for the weekend. Needless to say, we continue to explore sponsorship opportunities.

## ...AND EXHIBITORS

Alongside the sponsor stands from **Keela**, **Helly Hansen** and **Getac**, the perhaps more familiar names (on these pages, at least), such as **Lyon**, **Petzl**, **Paramo**, **Mountain Equipment**, **Edelrid**, **Helix**, **Lowa** and **Simoco** will be joined by brands and PPE equipment distributor **Fletcher Stewart**, textile products manufacturers **Openhouse Products**, and **Coast Products**, producers of world-class LED optical technology and pocket tools.

New to us at the mountain rescue conferences, **Grubs** will be joining us to showcase their range of rubber boots — something this British, family-owned business knows a thing or two about, thanks to eight generations-worth of experience in crafting 'the finest sporting footwear since 1776'.

On the water front, we have **Amanzi**, **WRS International** and **Northern Diver**. And **Beyond Driving** will be there too (indoors and outside), to talk about how they can help 'create safer, more efficient drivers'.

All things considered, an impressive range of climbing, mountaineering and mountain rescue kit, clothing and communications equipment — and still more to be announced!

To find out more and book:  
[mountain.rescue.org.uk/conference](https://mountain.rescue.org.uk/conference)



## A REMINDER OF THE TRACKS AND THEMES

- The Frontline • Building a Sustainable Future
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email [conference@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:conference@mountain.rescue.org.uk)  
for sponsorship and exhibitor opportunities

As mentioned last time, the **Rescue Benevolent Fund** will also be there, with trustees Neil Woodhead, Shirley Priestley and Brendan Sloan on hand throughout the weekend, to chat and answer any questions you might have, about how the fund can help support mountain and cave rescue team members. We're also lining up what we hope will be some enticing raffle prizes — but more about that in the July issue.

That about sums things up for now. Time is moving swiftly on so get your tickets booked now. And I'll see you all again, on these pages, in three months' time! ☘

\* I owe a mea culpa here — in the January issue, I incorrectly listed *Cave Rescue* in the 'Other SAR organisations' category. MREW and BCRC members pay the same.





## Party Leader Course, in North Wales February 2024

**Phil 'Rigger' Ridley** MREW Training Officer

The National Party Leader Course is a residential weekend event for all teams to attend. Due to the demand and increased applications, the course will now be held twice a year in February and November. Holding the course at the Colomendy Kingswood Outdoor Centre is ideal and economical because it offers accommodation, classroom facilities, external grounds for the practical scenarios as well as a good opportunity for delegates and staff to socialise and network with each other.



Images: © NEWSAR.

### AIM OF THE COURSE:

Without giving too much away, this centrally run course brings together MREW and BCRC leadership expertise to share good practice, and enhance and develop team members' skills for those who are progressing into the management of small group parties during operational call-outs.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE:

- Define and discuss teamwork on small group operations
- Understand the human and wellbeing factors involved
- Empower motivation and performance
- Understand and apply briefing and reporting skills
- Refine situational awareness
- Practice problem solving on small group operations
- Understand interoperability
- Understand control of media and public interaction
- Awareness of dealing with fatalities and forensics
- Understand and apply training, coaching and mentoring into small group operations

- Define and apply safety skills in an operational situation.

Throughout the weekend it is fairly evident and encouraging to see that new bonds, friendships, comradery and interteam working relationships quickly build and are maintained throughout. As with the PDMRO Foundation Weekend, this course draws on the experience of all those participating, be it as directing staff, instructors or delegates. In many ways, it allows staff and delegates to take a step back from their typical team operating procedures and have the opportunity to see how others may do things differently, share and learn new things as well as expel any preconceived ideas that things must be done a certain way. The weekend certainly offers plenty of challenges.

With only 35 places available, there is wide participation from all regions, with on average 22-25 teams sending delegates. This not only illustrates both commonality and differences to the approach of tasks carried out during the course, but also the diversity and experience of attendees from within the organisation.

The enthusiasm and commitment of delegates and all the staff (including those

behind the scenes carrying out all the unnoticed administration bits), make this course the success it is. I've said it before, but it's another encouraging example and privilege to see how, after meeting for the first time on the Friday evening, by Sunday attendees from around the country are able to operate as an efficient, coherent mountain rescue team in its own right, with everybody working in harmony with one another.

The weekend's busy curriculum (as there is lots to cover in a short period) is designed to push boundaries in a safe environment and hopefully prepare candidates for some of the scenarios, expectations and stresses which may present themselves at live incidents.

The course content is reviewed annually to make sure it remains current, fit for purpose and maintains its credibility as one of the most demanding, challenging, confidence building and hopefully enjoyable MREW courses on offer.

Thank you to all those involved.

Details for this November's course will be published in due course, or contact [partyleader@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:partyleader@mountain.rescue.org.uk) for further information. And you can email me via [trainingofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:trainingofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk) ☺



## Operational 'lead' roles appointed

**Ian Bunting**

MREW Operations Director



One of the main things I was conscious of when taking up the role of Ops Director was the need for people with more expertise than myself to undertake certain roles, who can help promote and improve mountain rescue in the future and who I can refer to for advice and guidance.

The first of these roles was establishing a Rope Rescue Lead. Rope Rescue is one of the most critical activities our teams and team members undertake. MREW has not had a specific person leading on this and historically it has come under the remit of the Training subgroup. Both Phil Ridley and I agreed that we should have a named person taking on the role of Rope Rescue Lead but still under the remit of the Training committee. This will be a developing role over the next 12-24 months and, during this time, we will assess whether it should become a separate specialist officer/subgroup akin to the Water Officer/Water Group and other subgroups. Chris Cookson, from Cockermouth MRT, has agreed to take on and develop the role over this initial period. Chris is very experienced within mountain rescue and particularly the technical/rope rescue element of what we do.

Maintaining and building relationships with other SAR organisations is something that I believe is important, initially Scottish Mountain Rescue and Lowland Rescue. We have had historically close links with Scottish Mountain Rescue, but no specifically named person from MREW as a point of contact. Iain Nixon, from Northumberland National Park Mountain Rescue Team and their current team leader, has agreed to take on the role. Due to the geography of the area, the Northumbria teams work with some of the Scottish teams on a regular basis so Iain already has established contacts within SMR.

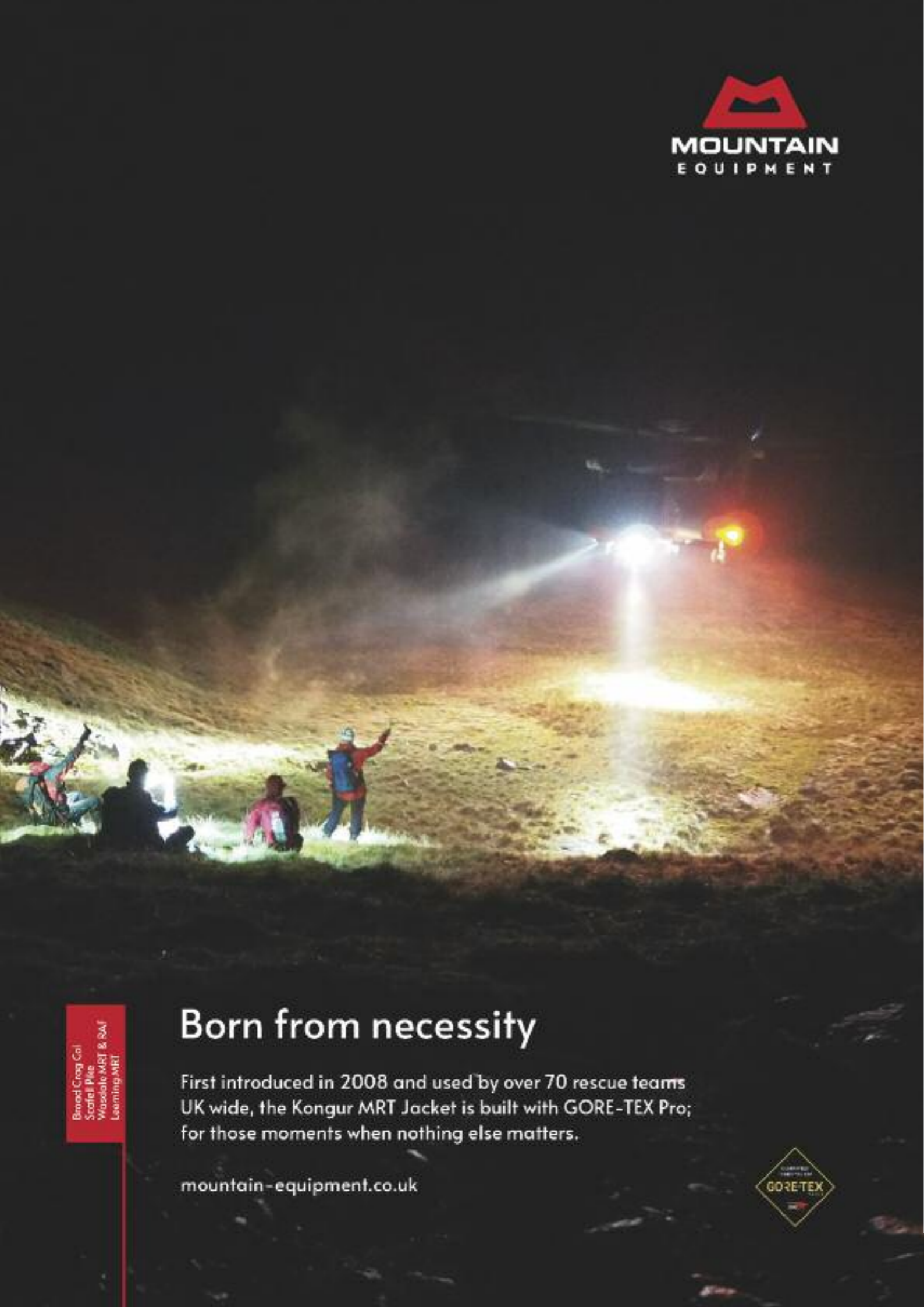
Lowland Rescue, along with British Cave Rescue and Mountain Rescue England and Wales, are key partners within UKSAR and particularly Land Search and Rescue group. It is anticipated that over the next few years Land SAR will be developed more, it is therefore important that there is a working knowledge and understanding of each organisation's capabilities. Iain Ashcroft, from North East Wales Search and Rescue, has agreed to take on this role. Iain is an ex-team leader of NEWSAR and current operations lead for NWMRA. He has also worked with a number of neighbouring Lowland teams over the years, gaining experience of the organisations.

I would like to welcome and thank all three for agreeing to take on the roles and spending yet more of their time within mountain rescue.

Next in the pipeline is to establish closer links with Mountain Rescue Ireland, so if anyone is interested in taking this on and developing that relationship, please let me know. Being called Iain is not a prerequisite for the role. ☺

### CONTACT DETAILS FOR LEADS :

- Chris Cookson:** [roperescuelead@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:roperescuelead@mountain.rescue.org.uk)
- Iain Ashcroft:** [alsarlead@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:alsarlead@mountain.rescue.org.uk)
- Iain Nixon:** [smrlead@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:smrlead@mountain.rescue.org.uk)



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# mrew



## Updating on a couple of longer-term training projects Phil 'Rigger' Ridley MREW Training Officer

Thank you to everyone who has contributed over recent years with bringing these longer-term projects closer to completion. These include looking at duty of care and governance, and also taking a fresh look at the rope rescue guidelines.

### DUTY OF CARE AND GOVERNANCE

The terms 'duty of care', 'governance', 'good or best practice' have been used during various discussions on training within mountain rescue, and possibly been referred to with a negative connotation.

Following the November 2019 Training committee meeting, a working group began the challenge of reviewing 'Training's Contribution to Duty of Care and Governance'. The aim was to establish what good 'training governance' looks like in mountain rescue. Some common themes emerged, such as:

- Acknowledging and ensuring that training is widely accepted and practised as a necessity
- Strengthening recognition of training
- Achieving good practice and maintaining high standards
- Efficient record keeping of training progression required
- Achieving a balance in the commitment required from unpaid volunteers.

Other findings from the resulting analysis of responses to a questionnaire issued to members suggested that there wasn't a clear or agreed definition for the terms 'Duty of Care and Governance' in a mountain rescue training context. There was, however, broad understanding of Duty of Care being an obligation which included wellbeing.

The findings were collated into a draft document and sent to the MREW legal advisers for comment, ahead of what was intended to be a workshop session at a proposed National Training Officers Day. This is still the intention, however, it's taken a little longer than expected to complete the legal review, which remains ongoing. When completed it may allow the organisation to

offer a common view of good/best practice, delivered through quality training at all levels be it team, region or national.

Training (theory, practical, CPD or online) is widely accepted as a necessity for teams and team members. It is the development and maintenance of skills and knowledge that enable teams to carry out rescue operations efficiently, effectively and safely.

Training records featured highly in the overall review. This remains a topic that keeps being brought to my attention and is one that will no doubt be discussed within a number of other reviews currently being carried out by various subgroups. It will take time — and possibly involve some controversial debates — but it is hoped that, over the next year, progress can be made to help consider, consolidate and agree what these records should consist of and why.

### ROPE RESCUE GUIDELINES

It was always agreed that the MREW Rope Rescue Guidelines would be reviewed every five years. Chris Cookson (Cockermouth MRT and now MREW Rope Rescue Lead) was recently asked to lead on rope-related issues from within the Training committee. A small working group comprising members from across the regions met in early March to discuss a number of projects and working threads which will be carried out over the coming months.

The knowledge, skill and enthusiasm from the working group is greatly appreciated. This has always been a topic of much discussion and debate over the years for a variety of reasons. More recently the feeling has been that things are becoming common and coherent across regions, so it will be good to continue this positive development to ensure that the guidance is current and fit for purpose.

### WATER AND DRIVER TRAINING

Two other topics I am often asked about are water and driver training. Both have training packages which have been developed and final touches are being put together ahead of their future roll-out.

The development of the Module 1 online Water Awareness course has been completed and is now in its trial period with a few teams. A lot of work has gone into developing this which is intended to be beneficial for all teams and team members. It not only standardises the content but also allows for a record of completion. Will Oliver (MREW Water and Flood Rescue Officer) gives more detail on the development, content and next steps, over the page.

Obviously, driver training takes many forms with the regional off-road instructors being revalidated and some new ones certified for the first time. Having in-house trainers helps teams and regions and allows us to have a common framework and guidance for driver expectations. It's important to remember that those members taking on these additional 'instructor' responsibilities will have expectations to deliver training sessions to their regions. It may be beneficial for regions to publish training dates in advance to capitalise on ensuring courses remain fully subscribed and value for money.

Other training relating to Section 19 expectations is in the final stages of development. From what I understand, the original aim of the Driver Training Advisory Group (DTAG) was to establish a national standard across UKSAR, including reduced costs and ensuring a record-keeping paper trail was maintained.

This would be done by devising a series of driver training modules or levels with the flexibility to allow drivers to progress through to specific required levels. 🚗

If you have any queries on rope-related training topics, please don't hesitate to email either myself, via [trainingofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:trainingofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk) or Chris via [roperescuelead@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:roperescuelead@mountain.rescue.org.uk).

Queries on driver-related training topics, please don't hesitate to contact either myself or Chris Jones, via [vehicleofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:vehicleofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk)

## MREW Water and flood awareness Module 1, online training



### Will Oliver MREW Water Officer

The module, which will help support teams alongside the delivery of practical training such as the proficient use of throw lines, has developed from the work by Derby team member, Jonathan Crowley-Volpato (below) and several other contributors at team level.

The great news is that this is now being tested by an initial group and will be available to all team members across Mountain Rescue England and Wales very soon on the Moodle platform.

The areas the course content covers link directly to the concept of operations and include aim, scope, learning objectives and outcomes.

Module units will include Characteristics and Hazards of Water, Safety Measures, Effects of Cold Water, Unstable Surfaces, Hydrology, Personal Protective Equipment and Floods. The content has been designed to be as interactive as possible and, when undertaken with some teaching and practical throw line sessions, will provide a great resource and awareness for everyone in mountain rescue.

The incorporated assessment will enable

people to record their participation and awareness level and ensure greater consistency of content across teams, to support their already excellent training: a step forward for us all.

We have already had positive feedback by those testing the content, including this stand out quote: 'Really good, professional material — well done!'

Further detail on how to access the content will be shared via training officers and water officers and some guidance documentation will be shared with everyone soon.

Look out for further information and dates for drop-in sessions which will cover how to access the course and view some of the content of the course before undertaking it.

As national water and flood rescue officer, I want to thank all those involved that worked on this, especially Jonathan for his input and

changes made to deliver what is a professional and quality introduction to water and flood awareness.

Any enquiries about this or other water-related matters, please email me via [waterofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:waterofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk)



# Net

## MREW Net Zero

### Alistair Morris MREW Medical Director

All of us love the outdoors and over time are seeing changes in our environment. My first hand experience is the retreat of glaciers such as the Mer de Glace. When I first climbed in the Alps the glacier was easily reachable by a few ladders beyond the Montvers Station. The last time I visited, there was a cable car with further ladders to get down.

At iCAR there were a number of presentations and discussions of the changes in rescues provided, including a marked increase in forest fires placing huge resources on the SAR services to support the fire teams with fires continuing to burn for months.

The changes in climate are having an effect on our local areas and the rescues we are called to. The rate of flood events is increasing with nearly all teams having some form of water rescue provision. Moorland fires are more frequent and widespread. Heat-related illness and looking at the MREW data we have seen a three-fold increase in cases in the last five years.

Therefore, the CEO Mike Park and the Management Team have

begin looking at the opportunities we can take to reduce the carbon footprint of MREW — and to support teams to look at reductions in theirs — whilst maintaining rescue provision.

#### TO DO THIS WE ARE LOOKING FOR:

1. Anyone across the organisation who works in this field to assess current footprint of MREW and provide advice on options to reduce our impact.
2. A small number of teams to volunteer to be reviewed and provided with ideas which we can share across the organisation.
3. Any teams that have areas of innovation and experience in reducing their footprint to submit these for dissemination.

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# 2020



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## ACCESSING THE MREW ONLINE SHOP (TEAMS)

The MREW online shop currently allows teams to purchase Covid-19 specific PPE items as well as car stickers and badges. Access is available to all MREW member teams upon request. **Julian Walden** explains.

To register your team, please email [office@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:office@mountain.rescue.org.uk) and include the details listed below for your team's designated purchaser, **using an official team email address**. An account will be created for your team and any further information regarding the setting up of this account sent directly to the shop user. The information we need is as follows:

- Full name of proposed team purchaser + team name
- Email (must be a team-specific address)
- Postal address (must be able to receive post/parcels during the working day).

ANY QUERIES OR HELP REQUIRED, EMAIL [OFFICE@MOUNTAIN.RESCUE.ORG.UK](mailto:OFFICE@MOUNTAIN.RESCUE.ORG.UK) OR CALL 0330 043 9101 BETWEEN 08.30 - 17.30, MONDAY TO FRIDAY (PLEASE LEAVE A MESSAGE IF CALLING OUT OF THESE HOURS).



\* To access the digital bookshelf in the Flippingbook version of each magazine, click on any cover and go straight to that issue.

## TEAM LOGOS, UPDATED BRAND GUIDELINES AND MOODLE...

Reminder that you can now find all the logos – for teams who use the MREW roundel within their own team logo – plus the updated Brand Guidelines, in a folder on Moodle, under Publications. These include Welsh-language versions, plus Supporter and Fundraiser logos in both languages.



Moodle is an easy-to-access resource for medical, training and insurance information, in particular. Here's a quick tour of the key areas to see what you're missing plus guidance on how to register.

The key disciplines listed include **Medical, Search, Water, Safety, Technical Rescue, Leadership and Incident Management, Insurance and GDPR** and a few categories yet to be fully populated. Please note that some areas are restricted to those attending the actual course.

The **Medical** section addresses the legal and medical requirements for training and operations, and there's plenty of resources to download. You'll find stuff relating to the Casualty Care Certificate, a PDF of Casualty Care for Mountain Rescue Edition 2, Revision Notes for Casualty Care, and a section on Anatomy and Physiology containing materials to explain how the human body works and why we do what we do. There's a section devoted to Recognition of Life Extinct in MR, and you'll find meeting minutes here too.

The **Insurance** category is worth a check for the policies and schedules applicable to mountain rescue, and a list of frequently asked questions. And now you can also find a selection of the presentations from the **MREW Conference 2022**.

Finally, Moodle is going through a refresh so expect changes and improvements over the coming months to make it easier to navigate. Have fun! ☺

## TO REGISTER



Go to <http://tiny.cc/Moodle4MR> or scan the QR code above and fill in the form **using a team email address** (not role-specific). You'll get an automated email within 30 minutes confirming receipt and, once you're approved, you'll be given a temporary password, which you can change at first log in. Easy peasy. Any issues, email [moodlesupport@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:moodlesupport@mountain.rescue.org.uk).



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- Swiftwater & Flood Rescue Technician (Defra Module 3)
- Swiftwater & Flood Rescue Boat Operator (Defra Module 4)
- Management of Water & Flood Incidents (Defra Module 5)
- Water & Flood Team Leader
- Rescues from Vehicles in Water
- Swiftwater & Flood Rescue Technician Advanced
- CPD, Refresher and Recertification Courses

### Boat Rescue Courses Include:

- Rescue Boat Operator
- Flood Rescue Boat Operator
- Swiftwater & Flood Rescue Boat Operator (Defra Module 4)
- CPD, Refresher and Recertification Courses

### Rope Rescue Courses Include:

- Safe Working at Height
- Rope Rescue Operator
- Rope Rescue Technician
- CPD, Refresher and Recertification Courses

### Instructor Courses Include:

- Swiftwater & Flood Rescue Technician Instructor
- Swiftwater & Flood Rescue Boat Operator Instructor

All our courses are accredited by Rescue 3 Europe. We offer generous discounts for Search & Rescue organisations and charities.

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Website: [amanzisaftyandrescue.co.uk](http://amanzisaftyandrescue.co.uk)



# WELLBEING INFORMATION

For the family and team members of mountain and cave rescue

Being a mountain or cave rescue volunteer can be mentally and physically stressful. Sometimes we can struggle to cope. It's important to seek help if you feel that you or one of your colleagues need it.

### YOUR TEAM SUPPORT NAME AND NUMBER IF YOU NEED A CHAT:

Name:

Contact number:

### Other useful contacts:

**Togetherall** offers anonymous, 24/7 online mental health support for mountain and cave rescue team members. To register, go to: [togetherall.com](http://togetherall.com)

**The Samaritans:** Call **116 123** for confidential emotional support, 24 hours a day

**Blue Light Together** is a new resource for members of the emergency services. Help is available with issues such as:

- Stress and Burnout
- Trauma and PTSD
- Financial Wellbeing
- Healthy Lifestyles
- Your Family

Go to [BlueLightTogether.org](http://BlueLightTogether.org)

**Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide** is a national charity providing dedicated support to adults who have been bereaved by suicide. Go to [uksobs.org](http://uksobs.org) or call **0300 111 5065**

**CALM: National Helpline for Men:** Call **0800 58 58 58**

17:00–midnight to talk about any troubles you are feeling

**MIND Mental Health Charity:** Infoline: **0300 123 3393** Monday – Friday 09:00–18:00 (except for bank holidays). Information and access to support services for:

- Mental health problems
- Where to get help near you
- Treatment options available
- Advocacy services

**The Rescue Benevolent Fund:** Email [secretary@rescuebenevolent.fund](mailto:secretary@rescuebenevolent.fund) or go to [rescuebenevolent.fund](http://rescuebenevolent.fund) to find out more

For when you need more structured therapy — either physical or emotional — with a defined treatment plan from a professional therapist, you can apply to the fund for financial support

Go to [mrew-wellbeing.org.uk](http://mrew-wellbeing.org.uk) for the MREW Wellbeing page



MOUNTAIN RESCUE ENGLAND AND WALES  
BRITISH CAVE RESCUE COUNCIL

We can all need help sometimes. Don't be embarrassed to ask for it.



# Mountain rescue call-outs for the lost, missing or overdue



**NIGEL WILLIAMS** IS A FREELANCE INSTRUCTOR, AND FORMER HEAD OF TRAINING AT GLENMORE LODGE. HIS BOOK 'TEACHING NAVIGATION' IS AVAILABLE ONLINE AT THE MREW BOOKSHOP

## NIGEL WILLIAMS

Repeated messaging for people to carry and learn to use a map and compass doesn't seem to be resonating. Nor does the availability of digital mapping and GPS to locate our position appear to be reducing the number of call-outs. Whilst navigational issues are only one of the reasons for call-outs, it is statistically one of the most significant, yet reduceable, reasons. This article aims to examine some of the deeper underlying issues and possible solutions to improve the situation over the long term.

To begin with, some definitions. Map reading and navigation are different things although there is overlap.

**Map reading:** the act of interpreting or understanding the geographic information portrayed on a map (Geographyrealm.com).

**Navigation:** the process of determining and maintaining a course or trajectory from one place to another (Gallistel 1990).

We can't effectively learn to navigate on the internet or from books as it involves decision making and confidence during a journey. Our ability to navigate is tied to our spatial and cognitive navigation development and terrain confidence: 'wayfinding' ability. Research indicates this

development comes from exploring our environment from childhood to early adulthood and it is impacted by the landscape, social and cultural environment we grow up in. There is also clear evidence that habitual use of the GPS negatively impacts this cognitive development.

Fundamentally, navigation is a process involving observation, deductions and decision making with real time consequences, which could also be subject to heuristic biases. Confidence is also key to independent navigation. (These processes are often overlooked in a teaching approach that tends to focus on the physical tools of navigation). Behavioural neuroscience research is changing the

understanding of how humans navigate using different parts of the brain. It points to some of the reasons behind the why and who might be more susceptible to becoming lost which might enable more targeted and nuanced messaging. It also offers insights as to how we might teach navigation focused on the needs of recreation where the vast majority have little desire to leave a path.

## SURVEYS AND EVIDENCE

In a 2007 report on *Scottish Mountaineering Incidents* Dr Bob Sharp comments on the high proportion of call-outs being linked to poor navigation, inadequate planning and timing skills.

*'Just over 50% of rescues involve searching for people who are lost or overdue. In most cases the people involved are not injured.'*

And later in the paper: *'Greene (1996) noted that many walkers were not confident in their own navigation skills and Sharp's survey of outdoor course providers also revealed navigation to be the central concern. They suggested that weak navigation and the inability to apply basic map and compass skills was a problem for a wide variety of groups and that there was a need for improved education in the subject.'*

In 2023 a number of rescue teams across the UK reported as much as 50% of call-outs for lost, overdue or missing people. In 2022, Ordnance Survey commissioned a survey into people being lost in the outdoors<sup>2</sup>. Some of the findings were quite alarming and clearly support the reports from MR teams. Here is the response to the findings from Nick Giles, OS MD for Leisure: *'One of the key reasons we run National Map Reading Week is to make the outdoors in Britain more fun, accessible and safe.'*

*'We want to encourage people to better understand how good map skills, both paper and digital, can unlock and inspire people to*

*safely discover new places and adventures.*

*'So if you want to get outside and explore this summer but feel apprehensive, you can brush up on your skills by watching our short "How to" videos or read the blogs.'*

Julia Bradbury, OS GetOutside Ambassador added to this: *'On the face of it these results seem to show the British public have a lack of confidence regarding their map reading skills. It's a shame, but something that can be quickly rectified. Knowing a few basics about how to read maps, understanding map symbols, contour lines, and working out grid references can transform how you feel about getting outside safely.'*

The need for 'good map skills, both paper and digital' makes the point that we are beyond the either/or argument about the tools of navigation. What that means and how to combine them in practice at the teaching stage is little explored or known, yet there are some simple skills that might help people see the benefits of combining both. Julia Bradbury also identifies confidence as an important issue. Confidence is built through good teaching progressions and resources for developing safe independent practice. How do we teach or instill it?

## CONFIDENCE IS ERODED WITHOUT PRACTICE IN CONTEXT

When people are misplaced, high levels of stress can occur which is known to interfere with the cognitive navigation, memory and decision-making processes required for navigation. Stress leads to increased risk taking which may be why people sometimes leave a path and try a shortcut to rectify an earlier path-based navigation error, missing a turning, for instance.

However, the remedies offered by OS are map reading rather than navigation skills and if lost without a working phone, being able to give a grid reference won't help. Perhaps OS GetOutside National Map Reading Week, might be better titled National Navigation Week?

## IMPROVED EDUCATION

Seventeen years on from Sharp's report, this fundamental issue remains largely unaddressed. Possibly because it was difficult to define, articulate or provide practical guidance as to what it might be.

Research suggests that around 75% of the walking public do not want to leave the path. If one keeps to the path, the decision making is usually which of two or three pre-determined options to take, and generally only requires map setting with or without a compass needle. The moment one steps off the path the direction choices and

associated skills, strategies and confidence increase exponentially; theoretically one could have a choice of up to 360 directions.

The internet and books are full of explanations on how to do a compass bearing to go across open country, sometimes even with diagrams based around making a simple, path-choice decision. Many walkers are unlikely to require this skill and if they do in an unexpected situation, it is unlikely that they are practised or confident. These descriptions also lack the strategies required of attack points, catching features and distance measuring to allow for relocation if the destination is not found. They illustrate how the teaching of some navigation skills is often out of context and overly complex, lacking simple confidence building



Opposite and above: Western Beacons team members out and about with OS © OS.

progressions. Anecdotally, these issues at a beginners' stage of learning, particularly if through books or the internet, appear to be one of the barriers to people learning the skills and resulting in reduced confidence which leads them to view technology alone as the simple solution. Further research on this would be interesting.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ➔

For nearly 100 years of outdoor recreation in the UK, the teaching methodology has been based around skills related to the tools of map and compass and the needs of the military, often quite static in nature. Yet the most successful on-the-move navigators (orienteers) and their teaching methodology is based around skills progressions linked to terrain, decision making and strategies. Of course the map and compass are a part of it, but the skills required are linked to the terrain to be used. Starting with following paths, then to short cross-country legs between obvious linear features and finally point-to-point cross-country journeys requiring a full range of strategies and skills.

The need for speed and efficiency in orienteering has also revealed shortcuts and simple progressions to learning compass skills without the need to turn the dial or for numeracy. The map and compass are viewed as a single item from the start. Another simple confidence-building tip for beginners is having a red strip at the north edge of the map and using just the red end of the compass needle for map setting — 'Red to Red' fast, simple and efficient.

The National Navigation Award Scheme (NNAS), which aims to serve the needs of active outdoor recreation rather than competitive sport, uses similar processes and, like orienteering, also trains all tutors around this system. The NNAS also recognises that technology can play a part in teaching beginner skills when combined with a paper map, making the subject perhaps more attractive for phone users to learn. So, we have a successful approach to improve navigation education and it is supported by research, tutor training and accompanying literature.

## MESSAGING

In terms of messaging, the recently refreshed AdventureSmart messages<sup>3</sup> was developed in partnership with NNAS, MTE and LDSAMRA. The 'keep on track' approach emphasises that people should

plan to use pathed routes and keep to the paths and marks a move away from the traditional 'carry a map and compass and know how to use them'.

Current teaching seems to be an all or nothing approach often led by a 'what if I am lost in the middle of nowhere?' kind of question. Perhaps the response should be about not leaving the trail, as opposed to rushing to teach bearings and how to walk on one in the mist, which they are unlikely to be able to do when the panic of feeling lost sets in for real.

If navigation education is part of, or even the root cause of, navigation-related call-outs, then the real issue is how do we engage and train the thousands of enthusiastic and well-meaning volunteer trainers in the range of ideas and resources now available? ☘

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## MR demonstrates latest drone developments at Ordnance Survey VIP showcase event



**Sally Seed reports:** On Thursday, 15 February, representatives of mountain rescue were part of an emergency services showcase event at Ordnance Survey's headquarters in Southampton.

'We were invited to take part,' says Josh Warren, relationship manager for MREW and OS Consumer, 'and Mark Lewis (ICT Director) and I got together to plan our approach. We weren't quite sure what to expect from the day as a whole, but we knew there would be at least one very VIP guest and we had an opportunity to show some of the latest developments in our partnership with OS, particularly the work on drone software.'

As it turned out, the event was the first of its kind for OS, and involved key representatives from police, fire and rescue and ambulance service, as well as HM Coastguard, military and mountain rescue. The aim was to show how each organisation is using 'cutting-edge OS location data and tools to create a more resilient and safer nation'.

'A week or so before the event, we were told that the special guest would be The Princess Royal,' explains Mark, 'but that wasn't the whole story. As well as bringing together lots of VIP partners with the royal guest, OS also wanted to create an opportunity for their own staff — more than 600 of them based in Southampton — to see how their work is saving lives and improving safety.'

'The theme of our display was very much around the work that Dave Binks (Duddon and Furness MRT) has been doing with OS data to create software that Brendan O'Neill (Derby MRT) is using to improve the effectiveness of searches using drones in remote areas,' says Josh. 'We got some really interesting questions from the guests, including the board of Ordnance Survey, and the drone work proved fascinating to Princess Anne too.'

However, many of the employees browsing the exhibition stands during the morning had a favourite MR representative: Search Dog Amber from Dartmoor Ashburton MRT. 'I'd have to admit that there were also plenty of OS staff who ignored the drone and made a beeline for Amber and her handler, Paula Holbrook!' says Josh.

All in all, despite the journeys required to get to Southampton, the event proved worthwhile in lots of ways. Not only did MR reps have opportunities to demonstrate new technology and build links with OS experts working on a range of tools and projects, but it was good to be included in the context of developments from across the emergency services and others. ☘

## NEW LAUNCHES FROM OS

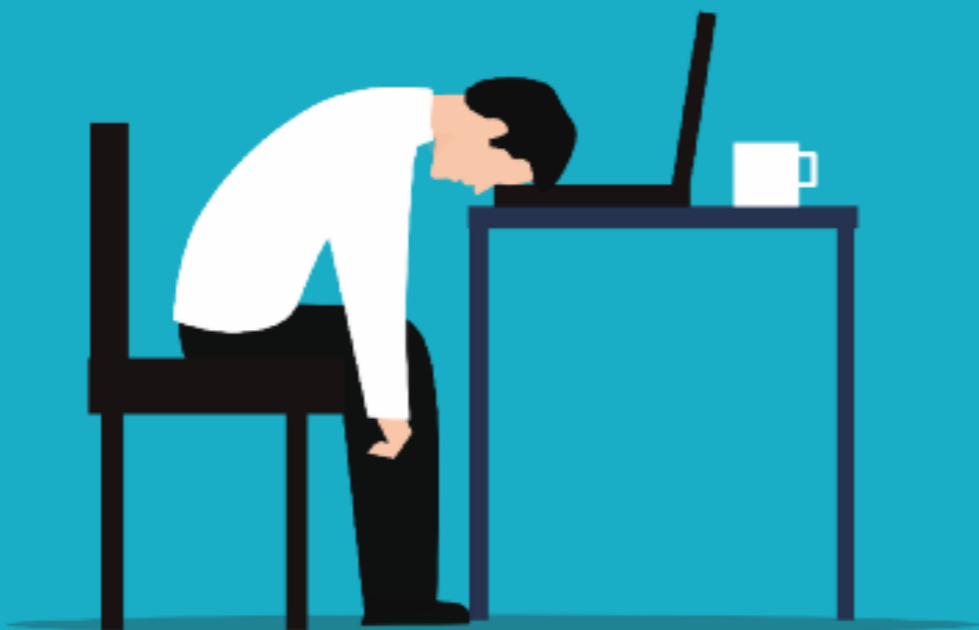
There were two key OS developments that featured in Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal's tour and both may be of interest to MR Magazine readers:

First, Her Royal Highness was given an exclusive preview of the new OS Emergency Services Gazetteer. This is an OS product which has been keenly anticipated by the emergency services and is due to be launched in spring.

The Gazetteer is a database of locations and it currently contains 1.3 million features (names, places and objects), such as motorway junctions and roundabouts, especially those with no addresses, like named cliffs and waterfalls. Developed in close collaboration with the emergency services, it is designed to equip responders, in control rooms and on the front line, with the precise location information they need to act quickly during emergencies.

The Princess Royal also had the opportunity to see a demonstration of the OS Vernacular Names tool which, in future, will help power the Gazetteer with colloquial nicknames for features, landmarks and buildings. The tool is fully accessible to all emergency service organisations to input and read names and it builds on a previous bespoke tool created for the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, which included over 8,000 vernacular names around Britain's coastline. It helps emergency services to find the location of callers and incidents by cross-referencing a database of alternative names with official place names.

**Top left:** MREW meets Princess Anne, clockwise from top left: Sally Seed, Josh Warren, Brendan O'Neill, Dave Binks, Mark Lewis, HRH The Princess Royal and Nick Giles OBE, Managing Director of OS Consumer, Search Dog Amber and Paula Holbrook. Images courtesy of OS, Sally Seed and Brendan O'Neill.



Main image via Pixabay. <https://www.pixabay.com/> Image supplied by Togetherall.

## How to manage stress when you're feeling under pressure

Stress is a prevalent aspect of modern life. It can stem from the demands of today's fast-paced society. Work pressures, responsibilities such as caring for children or elderly relatives, financial concerns, social expectations and relationship complexities can all also cause stress.

### EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO STRESS

The emotional responses to stress are diverse and can feel like they pop up out of nowhere. They might include:

- Feeling prone to outbursts, even in trivial situations
- Difficulty making simple decisions
- Sense of inadequacy or failure due to overwhelming work demands.

Yet, stress can have positive aspects in moderation, fostering excitement, creativity and enhanced productivity. It can serve as a catalyst for rising to challenges, such as boosting alertness during a job interview. Some individuals even derive pleasure from the adrenaline rush associated with extreme sports. However, excessive or prolonged stress diminishes these benefits.

### 'FIGHT OR FLIGHT': THE PHYSIOLOGICAL STRESS RESPONSE

The 'stress response' reflects the physiological and psychological changes when confronted with threatening or challenging circumstances. Originating as a survival mechanism, this response prepares the body for 'fight or flight' reactions, which saved our ancestors' lives when encountering wild animals. In contemporary settings, situations such as urgent deadlines, potential accidents or dissatisfaction with work can trigger this same 'fight or flight' response.

### COPING STRATEGIES FOR PROFESSIONALS

Proactive stress management begins with recognising early warning signs and accepting the need for intervention. Strategies include:

- Identifying stressors and having a game plan for when they occur
- Cultivating awareness of your stressors and how you respond to them
- Developing adaptive coping mechanisms tailored to individual needs
- Engaging in stress-reducing activities such as mindfulness, exercise or creative hobbies.

### CONCLUSION

If you're facing stress, you can navigate its complexities by understanding the physiological, psychological and behavioural aspects of stress. It's also important to connect with others who have similar experiences, sharing what works for them.

With Togetherall, you can connect with others who have similar experiences, completely anonymously. Knowing someone else can relate to your situation can help you relieve stress and feel better. See opposite for more about how to connect.

Not ready to share with others yet? That's okay — you can also take self-help courses around stress and anxiety, as well as read helpful articles and create art. Or maybe just help support others going through challenging times. 🗨️



### RECOGNISING THE SYMPTOMS

When under stress, you may find yourself struggling with concentration, decision making and confidence. Sleep disturbances, irritability, tearfulness, defensiveness and occasional aggression can also be manifestations of stress. Physically, stress can lead to headaches, indigestion, frequent infections or colds. In severe cases, it may result in health issues such as ulcers, heart problems and strokes and worsen mental health conditions like panic attacks, anxiety and depression.

## News from the Rescue Benevolent Fund

### Neil Woodhead RBF Chairman

I start this time with a huge thank you to Mountain Rescue England and Wales for their £10,000 donation, which we received in February. To wind the clock back some twelve years or so, the 'Mountain and Cave Rescue Benevolent Fund', as we were known then, was set up as a separate charity to provide for members of mountain and cave rescue teams. This donation is testament to the strong ongoing relationship between MREW and the Rescue Benevolent Fund.

Matt Dooley, chairman of MREW trustees, told us that he is 'really pleased that MREW was able to make this happen', adding that he is 'a massive advocate of the work the benevolent fund does. The very fact it exists should never be taken for granted.'

As an individual team member, Matt's team was part of the formation of the PDMRO Benevolent Fund, formed after Terry Broadbent died on a call-out in August 1998. 'I had not long joined the team and supported the PDMRO fund's closure in order to support the new Rescue Benevolent Fund. We are committed as trustees to annually review how we can support, something I am keen we do.'

MREW CEO Mike Park added that it should not be 'you who should be thanking us! It's we who should be thanking you, and the Rescue Benevolent Fund, for the peace of mind the fund brings to me, my family and my friends'.

Mike's comments notwithstanding, I know I speak for all the benevolent fund trustees when I say that this donation is very much appreciated and will go a long way to supporting the team members of all our member teams.

As an example of the work we are currently doing, we have two ongoing matters for team members who have requested our assistance. Confidentiality is of the utmost importance to us so I can't share any details, but both have made applications for modest amounts. I say modest because they are to us, but of course to them it has made a huge difference to their situations — which arose due to injuries sustained on rescue activities.

This is what we are here for. Not just a once-every-decade significant matter, but modest amounts following injuries sustained whilst out training or rescuing others. Whether it's physiotherapy or psychotherapy, respite care or help with financial hardship, please just ask. We will do our best to help you. We pride ourselves on acting on applications as quickly as is possible on receipt, keeping you informed along the way and, in the case of those physical and talking therapies, dealing direct with the provider so you don't have to pay those bills up front. It's about making that process as pain-free as possible for all concerned. So please don't wait for that big event or think others are 'more deserving'.

We have received some significant donations over the years and in my article in the January issue I thanked a number of individual teams and BCRC for their donations through 2023. If your team — or indeed you, as an individual — would like to support us by making a donation then we'd love to hear from you.

Our Annual General Meeting takes place in April and your regional representative/s — or 'ambassadors' as we like to call them — are invited. Please do make sure that you are getting the information from them circulated around your region and team. Also keep an eye on our website and social media for regular updates to resources and articles.

Finally, a reminder to attend the MREW conference at Lancaster University in September. I'll be there on our stand again, with fellow RBF trustees, so book your place (I'm not on commission, honestly!) and come along for a chat. We'll be having a fabulous raffle, bigger and better than Leeds 2022 — don't miss your chance. Thanks also to MREW for that opportunity and support. More on this in the next issue. 🗨️

### AS A MOUNTAIN OR CAVE RESCUE TEAM MEMBER YOU CAN ACCESS TOGETHERALL FREE OF CHARGE

The Togetherall digital mental health and wellbeing support service is a completely anonymous community where you can express yourself freely and openly. Professionally trained Wall Guides and clinical professionals monitor the community to ensure the safety and anonymity of all members. Once you're registered and logged in, there's a range of activities that allow you to work through what's troubling you. **Share your thoughts** with other community members, gain support and advice or offer YOUR valuable support to someone else who needs it. **Access a wealth of useful resources** and join self-guided support courses covering the key topics which affect all our lives. Or take **clinically-approved self-assessments** to help you understand more about yourself.

**To register, go to [togetherall.com](https://togetherall.com) > Click **Join now** > Under **Create account**, scroll down to **I'd like to search for my organisation**. Enter **Rescue Benevolent Fund** > Begin creating your anonymous account. Or simply scan the QR code on the right to get started...**



PARTNERING TO DELIVER PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING SUPPORT TO MOUNTAIN AND CAVE RESCUE TEAM MEMBERS

# Crush Injury\*

**BRENDAN SLOAN** BCRC MEDICAL DIRECTOR

One of the new additions to the Casualty Care Syllabus 2024 is the recognition and management of Crush Injury. This article is intended to increase awareness of the condition and how to manage it.

Crush injury occurs when a crushing force causes direct damage to tissues. Most commonly, this occurs in building collapse caused by earthquakes or explosions, or in road traffic accidents. However, any prolonged pressure can result in a crush injury. While most are traumatic injuries, a person lying immobile on a hard surface for a prolonged time, due to illness or intoxication, can develop a crush injury from the weight of their own body compressing itself; for example, lying on their arm. Crush injury most commonly affects the legs. While any body part can theoretically be affected, significant crushing of the head or chest is likely to be fatal for other, obvious reasons.

## HOW CRUSH INJURY AFFECTS THE CASUALTY

The underlying problem in crush injury is the disruption of muscle cells by pressure, resulting in cell death and the leaking of cell contents into the circulation. These cell breakdown products can result in damage to other organs, particularly the heart, and the kidneys. These body-wide effects are referred to as crush syndrome. The severity of the crush syndrome is generally related to the amount of muscle damage, which in turn is related to the magnitude and duration of the crushing force, as well as the amount of muscle affected. It is particularly associated with prolonged pressure, rather than sudden, brief compression, which may result in less muscle damage. This tissue damage and widespread cell breakdown is rather different from the muscle trauma from an injury like a fracture or laceration, where the muscle damage is much more limited and does not generally lead to effects on the rest of the body.

When cells are squashed, they will eventually burst, which releases the cell contents. The most significant of these are potassium and proteins. There is also uptake of water into injured cells, which is a fairly standard response to almost any injury, e.g. a twisted ankle. This can lead to further damage if the water causes the cells to become excessively swollen, which can lead to the development of pressure within the tissues. If the pressure is high enough, it can impair the blood and nerve supply, resulting in further cell death. This process is referred to as compartment syndrome,

where the pressure in a 'compartment' of muscle is high enough to start causing damage.

## MAJOR EFFECTS OF CRUSH INJURY

The major effects of crush syndrome are shock, cardiac instability, and kidney injury. The shock has multiple causes. Firstly, severe crushing injury may be associated with blood vessel damage and severe bleeding, resulting in hypovolaemia. The uptake of water into the damaged cells can also result in hypovolaemia from dehydration. Many of the compounds released by damaged cells reduces the effectiveness of the heart to contract, and can also result in abnormal heart rhythms which also reduce blood flow. Cardiac instability is caused by both the high levels of potassium released from dead and injured cells, as well as the increased acidity of the blood caused by accumulation of other cell breakdown products. Finally, the proteins released from injured cells can clog up the kidneys, preventing them from effectively producing urine and resulting in kidney failure. This generally takes longer to develop, and while it may cause long-term problems, it is less likely to have an impact during a rescue.

## ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Assessment and management of crush injury follows the standard ABCDE approach, treating issues as they are found, in common with all trauma care. Safety of the rescuer is also essential. In the mountain and cave rescue environment, crush injury is most likely to occur as a result of rockfall or avalanche, and so the environment may be extremely unstable. Stabilisation of loose material may be required before access to the casualty is possible.

The principal treatment of crush injury is to release the crushing force as soon as possible. The degree of damage is associated with the length of time the crushing force is applied, so removing that is key to treatment. However, depending on what is causing the crush this may be technically extremely challenging, and it is important to avoid further injury to the casualty or rescuers during the process.

# medical

## USE OF TOURNIQUETS

There has been a great deal of debate around the use of tourniquets in crush injury. While theoretically a tourniquet may prevent the release of cell breakdown products into the circulation, there is no evidence to support this, and use of an arterial tourniquet will definitely result in hypoxia of tissue below the application point, which could lead to the loss of a salvageable limb. The role of tourniquets is to control torrential haemorrhage, and there is a risk that a significant crushing force could cause major damage to a large blood vessel, which is then compressed. If this has occurred, as the crushing force is released, there is a risk that there may be sudden torrential bleeding. In our environment, it may not be easy to rapidly apply a tourniquet. It is therefore recommended that a tourniquet is applied, but NOT tightened, before a crushing force is released, allowing it to be rapidly tightened if there is bleeding as the casualty is released. If there is no bleeding, the tourniquet can then be removed.

## ADMINISTRATION OF IV FLUIDS

Crush injury is one of the scenarios where intravenous fluids are likely to offer significant benefit, helping to manage hypovolaemia and potentially dilute the toxins returning to the circulation. The Consensus Statement from the Faculty of Pre-Hospital Care recommends that this should be in the order of 1-1.5 litres per hour, and that fluid should ideally be warmed. This may present serious challenges to the rescue team; ability to place IV lines, access to IV fluid, and the ability to warm any fluid. The Consensus Statement also recommends that gaining IV access and fluid administration should not delay extrication, as this is the most important element of management. While it is strongly recommended that healthcare professionals attend as soon as possible, in our environment that may take several hours, and the priority should be on release and evacuation.

## PAIN MANAGEMENT

Crush injury is extremely painful, both from the tissue damage, and from any reperfusion once the crush is released.

Good pain relief will be essential to effective management, and is likely to require opioids (morphine or Fentanyl) if there are no contraindications. Entonox and methoxyflurane (Penthrox) may be useful adjuncts, especially during the release process. Once released, the limb should be splinted, which will also aid with pain relief. A released limb is likely to swell, so it is important to regularly assess it to ensure the splint is not becoming too tight and causing further injury. This is of particular importance with vacuum splints as they have limited ability to expand. If a casualty complains of worsening pain in a previously entrapped limb, this should prompt urgent re-examination to look for a cause.

## HOSPITAL TREATMENT

Any casualty who has a suspected crush injury should be reviewed in hospital, as they will require ongoing monitoring and blood tests to determine the severity and impact. These should be treated as priority evacuations, and should ideally be transferred to a hospital with an Intensive Care Unit. While the decision of where to transfer a patient lies with the ambulance service, it is essential to highlight if a crush injury/crush syndrome is suspected to help guide that decision.



**Brendan will be talking about Suspension Syndrome and Crush Injury at the MREW Conference, September 2024.**

# Remote Rescue Medical Technician (formerly Casualty Carer)

**ALISTAIR MORRIS** MREW MEDICAL DIRECTOR

At the January MSC meeting it was agreed, following feedback from teams, that the Casualty Care qualification will be renamed 'Remote Rescue Medical Technician'.

This gives the gravitas this qualification deserves and recognises all the hard work volunteers put in to achieve the certificate. The new term also allows for easier communication with other agencies, around the level of clinical input that is at scene (matching the current Emergency Medical Technician in use). Casualty Care is the core of what we do during a rescue and encompasses more than just the medical side. The environmental management, rescue and extraction planning, communication with the casualty, friends and family are all important parts of casualty care.

Under the umbrella of Casualty Care will be included all the levels of first aid and medical care in the organisation:

- Tier 1: Basic First Aid and BLS
- Tier 2: Outdoor First Aid/Remote Rescue First Aid (in development)
- Tier 3: Remote Rescue Medical Technician
- Tier 4: Extended Skills and HCPs.

## eLEARNING RESOURCE

With the launch of the new 2024 Remote Rescue Medical Technician syllabus it was clear that additional materials and resources were needed to support team medical officers in delivering the training.

The purpose is to create blended learning — the e-learning covering the theory, supported by interactive learning and videos, allowing the face-to-face learning to be focused on getting hands-on with skills and scenarios. LIBOR funds have enabled us to obtain software licenses to develop a suite of e-learning packages covering the new syllabus. These work on desktop, laptop, tablet or phone.

A small group of team members have put a huge amount of effort to create these packages and they are now available on Moodle under the Medical > Remote Rescue Medical Technician course. Each section of the syllabus is covered by a different course.

A navigation bar down the side takes you to individual sections and the knowledge and skills learning objectives are at the start of each section. Videos previously created from LIBOR funds, by Richard Walker and HCI Digital, are embedded in the packages, and further videos are in production this year.

A huge thank you to all those that have put their own time and effort into creating or reviewing these learning materials: Alan Stone, Dan Walker, Johnny Crowley-Volpato, Mike Greene (original Moodle development), Les Gordon (hypothermia), and Jon White (safeguarding and mental illness).

CASUALTY CARE			
TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3	TIER 4
<p>ALL TEAM MEMBERS</p> <p>BLS IMMEDIATE FIRST AID + THERMAL CARE</p>	<p>RESCUE FIRST AID (EQUIVALENT TO OUTDOOR FIRST AID: 16 HOURS)</p> <p>VALIDATED COURSE</p>	<p>RESCUE MEDICAL TECHNICIAN (EQUIVALENT TO CURRENT CASUALTY CARE COURSE)</p> <p>EXTERNALLY VALIDATED</p>	<p>EXTENDED SKILLS HCP MODULES</p> <p>eg ROLE IV ACCESS</p>

PR consultant and media trainer **Sally Seed** looks at an aspect of publicity and PR and suggests ideas to build on for the future. This time: **Coverage of MR in magazines – a second look**

Last January, this column focused on 2022's magazine coverage of mountain rescue and talked about the various aims and objectives. Slightly over a year on and there are more examples that you might not have seen but which have useful ideas and background — and which are all contributing to a growing awareness of mountain rescue.

party. The planned feature was all about different New Year volunteers for whom, to quote the intro, 'the New Year is all about putting others first'. Facebook is a wonderful thing when it comes to finding someone in MR who fits a specific requirement like this: female team member who is OK about being in a magazine feature (with a photo) and who has worked on a New Year's Eve incident in recent years.

A few people got in touch after a post in the MREW Members Group and, after a bit of toing and froing, Mel Smith of Holme Valley MRT had a chat with the journalist, sent across some pictures and then waited to see what would happen.

The article appeared in the January issue of *Woman and Home* magazine with Mel featuring alongside a Samaritans volunteer, someone organising for entertainers to go

NOT ONLY WALKERS BUT ALSO POTENTIAL SUPPORTERS

I've worked with LDSAMRA on articles for *Lakeland Walker Magazine* for several years now and, although these have been useful, there's always been the slight concern that the safety information featured was simply reaching those who were already experienced fell walkers.

When the magazine combined with its stablemate, *Cumbria Magazine*, in March, it was a chance to review the tone and content of the features for a new readership. Cumbria has more of a visitor reach, is read by an older demographic and has more subscribers across the country — so I am hoping that it will generate new supporters and donors.

I used the first article in the new format to introduce LDSAMRA, the 2023 call-out statistics and the #BeAdventureSmart safety messaging. April then focused on a particular team (Langdale Ambleside MRT) and lessons from its Easter incidents last year, while May has just been submitted and is all about the recruitment process at Penrith MRT, featuring two new team members.

The aim is to cover each Cumbrian team over ten months and to reinforce seasonal aspects of Adventure Smart each time too.

I can already anticipate that finding good images will be a challenge. So many teams focus (sorry!) on web and online resolution photographs and these are rarely suitable for magazine print. It's worth bearing in mind if you're capturing a team training exercise or event that setting the camera or phone to 'high res' for a change will mean you have pictures available for print too — and you can always create the web resolution versions for social media posts. (Editor note: I'll second that.)

A CHAIN OF MEDIA CONTACTS

As many readers will know, Llanberis MRT had a record year last year with over 300 call-outs. Jethro Kiernan, the team's press officer, issued a news release and social media post early in January. The story was picked up locally and, either through someone reading that coverage or via a press agency or via social media, it was also spotted by a national newspaper.

Jethro had a call from a freelance journalist who'd been commissioned to write a feature about Llanberis MRT for *The Sunday Times*

*Magazine!* The journalist and a photographer shadowed team training and a couple of call-outs (approved by the team), to gather material, over a weekend in February.

The resulting feature appeared on Sunday 17 March. In the weeks before publication, Jethro worked with Andy Simpson, Paul Brain and myself to ensure that stats were correct, facts were checked and key people across MR were aware that it was coming. Once published, we created a stand-by statement with a lot of the same information and a file of images so that any resulting calls from other media could be handled as easily as possible.



Top left: News type © Spaceheater. Dreamstime.com. Above: Langdale Ambleside stretcher carry, as seen in *Cumbria Magazine* © LAMRT. Opposite: Llanberis team members, featured in *The Sunday Times* article © Jethro Kiernan; '10 Tips for loading your backpack like a pro', in *Trail* (Spring 2024), featuring tips from mountain rescue team members.

VOLUNTEERING AT NEW YEAR

In summer 2023, freelance journalist Mel Hunter, approached MREW looking for a female mountain rescue volunteer who'd had to 'work' on New Year's Eve rather than

into children's hospitals and hospices, and a food bank volunteer planning a New Year party. It's hard to quantify the impact of a piece like this. It was a fair time commitment from Mel to do the interview, but it seems right to ensure that MR volunteers feature in a context like this.

It involved a lot of work by people at Llanberis MRT to make this happen and they told the story of the increasing demands on MR on behalf of everyone else too. Given that the printed paper has a circulation of almost 650,000, easily the biggest for a 'quality' Sunday newspaper, it will be interesting to see the longer-term impact of the article.

If you've any questions about this issue's column (or any other media and publicity-related activity) please get in touch with me via [pr@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:pr@mountain.rescue.org.uk). Thanks..

POST SCRIPT...

If you're involved in your team's publicity and comms, but you've not heard of the Media and Communications Network, please get in touch or send me a Friend request on Facebook so I can invite you into the online group. We have just over sixty members at present and it would be great to cover all teams if we can. ☺



# How rugged technology is digitally transforming mountain rescue

**WILL HITCH**  
PUBLIC SAFETY LEAD FOR GETAC UK LTD



In a world increasingly dominated by technological advances, it's no surprise to see digital solutions replacing pen-and-paper processes across a wide range of sectors and industries. Mountain rescue is an area that can benefit enormously from the introduction of digital devices, thanks to their ability to bolster communication capabilities in the field, speed up data collection and transfer, assist navigation and location efforts, and much more.



In the past, rescuers have typically relied on handwritten notes and records, paper maps and voice-based communication via two-way radios when coordinating rescue efforts. While these methods still have a vital role to play, the integration of digital technology into rescue teams' arsenals can help to significantly streamline key processes by putting more information at their fingertips, which reduces the risk of errors.

However, choosing the right technology is critical. With mountain rescue often taking place in highly challenging environments, the last thing rescuers need is devices failing unexpectedly in the field. For this reason, a growing number of mountain rescue organisations are choosing rugged technology as the backbone of their field-based technology solutions. Here are six key benefits that come from choosing rugged technology.

## 1 RUGGED SOLUTIONS ARE BUILT TO THRIVE IN THE FIELD

Simply put, consumer-grade laptops and tablets aren't built to withstand the difficult working conditions that mountain rescue teams often find themselves in. Screen cracking, water damage and drop damage are just some of the potential incidents which can cause consumer-grade devices to fail at inopportune moments, even when using a protective case.

Rugged devices undergo extensive certification processes such as Military Standards (MIL-STD) and Ingress Protection (IP), which test against strict requirements on ruggedness, shocks, drops, dust and moisture protection, as well as the ability to withstand extreme temperatures. As a result,

rescue teams know they have a device they can rely on during emergencies, regardless of the situation faced.

## 2 EXTENSIVE BATTERY LIFE LETS TEAMS OPERATE FOR LONGER IN THE FIELD

Rescue operations can sometimes take a long time, particularly when being carried out in remote locations. When this happens, device battery life starts to play a critical role in teams' ability to operate uninterrupted while out in the field and away from charging facilities.

Rugged devices are designed with this kind of extended use in mind, with many featuring high-capacity batteries, dual battery configurations and even hot-swap battery technology that enables users to switch batteries in the field without having to turn the device off first. The result is significantly longer up-time between charges, meaning teams don't have to break off from search efforts in order to go and recharge their devices.

## 3 COMPREHENSIVE CONNECTIVITY AIDS COORDINATION EFFORTS

Consumer-grade laptops and tablets typically rely on public wi-fi networks for connectivity. Even when these networks are available, they can be notoriously patchy and unreliable, which means users will experience call drop-outs, lengthy download/upload times and more. Rugged devices boast a much more comprehensive list of connectivity options, including wi-fi, 4G LTE, 5G and built-in GPS. This gives rescue teams multiple ways to send patient and incident information from the field, which can play a critical role in achieving a positive outcome.

## 4 ADVANCED TOUCHSCREEN TECH BOOSTS FIELD EFFICIENCY

With the majority of rescue operations taking place outside, it's vital that leaders can fully brief their teams in every environment. Screen glare can be a real issue, making it difficult to read information and hampering operational efficiency in the field. Rugged manufacturers understand the implications of this, which is why their devices come with ultra-bright screens that are easy to read in even bright sunlight. Advanced touchscreen technology also means they can be operated whilst wearing gloves and when covered in moisture, so rescue teams can stay focused on the task at hand.

## 5 ROBUST SECURITY FEATURES KEEP DATA SECURE

Data security is becoming a bigger and bigger issue today and the impact of a breach can often be felt far and wide. Most mountain rescue operations occur in public locations, which means rescuers need to know sensitive data is protected if they leave their device unattended for any period of time.

Rugged device manufacturers spec their products with much stronger security measures than consumer-grade equivalents to account for the highly sensitive and personal information they tend to receive and transmit. With this in mind, decision makers should look for rugged devices that have the following:

- Security built-in with multi-factor authentication
- OPAL 2.0 SSD self-encryption technology
- Trusted Platform Module (TPM) 2.0

Many rugged manufacturers also let customers add additional layers of security to their devices in the form of fingerprint scanning, smart cards, magnetic stripes and/or RFID readers, meaning data stays safe even if the device falls into the wrong hands.

## 6 LOWER TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP SAVES ORGANISATIONS MONEY

While the initial purchase price of non-rugged devices tends to be lower than rugged solutions, their failure rate is typically three times higher. This means that over a five-year lifespan, the higher failure rate of non-rugged devices results in a 42% higher TCO. When the impact of unexpected user downtime is factored in, this rises to a staggering 74%. Rugged solutions provide a long service life and platform stability and have warranties to match, with leading manufacturers offering three-year warranties that even include accidental damage as standard. In short, they stand by their products.



Digital transformation has the potential to revolutionise mountain rescue, aiding team coordination and saving precious time in scenarios where every second counts. However, this can only be achieved when rescuers have the right technology for the demanding work they carry out. This is why more and more organisations are turning to rugged technology, so if you haven't already, maybe it's time you did too.

For more information about Getac's rugged solutions for the public safety industry, visit [www.getac.com/en/industries/public-safety](http://www.getac.com/en/industries/public-safety)



It shouldn't happen to a vet...

It sounded like a routine call-out for Cleveland MRT and, in most ways, it was. A report from North Yorkshire Police about a mountain biker with a possible dislocated knee after an accident in woodland a few miles east of the market town of Thirsk. Cleveland's **Gary Clarke** reports.

Following a conversation between myself, as the team's call-out officer and our deputy team leader Tim Wood, Tim was deployed to an RV point to act as incident lead. We'd noted that the casualty's name — Julian Norton — was the same as the Yorkshire Vet (of Channel 5 fame), and Tim mentioned that he was known to be a keen mountain biker in the area. Could it be him?

With other team members en route, I called the casualty to check his condition and the location. It certainly sounded like the Yorkshire Vet, but perhaps then wasn't the best time to discuss that with him! Once team members reached him, he was assessed, his leg stabilised with a vacuum splint, before he was carried and 'wheeled' to an ambulance. They also confirmed that it was indeed the Yorkshire Vet. Sixteen Cleveland MRT members were involved in his rescue which lasted for just over four hours by the time they got back to base.

Ironically his accident took place in the heart of 'Herriot Country', made famous by the Thirsk-based vet, Alf Wright, who wrote books under the pseudonym of James Herriot, selling millions of copies around the world and eventually being turned into films and the long-running TV series 'All Creatures Great and Small'. These days the town is home to the 'World of James Herriot' visitor attraction — the fully-restored site of his original 1940s home and veterinary practice.

As well as his veterinary practice and television work, Julian Norton is a regular contributor to *The Yorkshire Post* newspaper so his accident and rescue were featured in various articles over the course of two weekends. The following extracts are reproduced with kind permission of *The Yorkshire Post*:

It was two o'clock on a freezing afternoon. It was snowing and he'd just crashed his bike. After realising he couldn't move due to a knee injury, he made a call to the Cleveland team, the nearest branch.

'They scrambled a team, and sent encouraging messages that help was on its way. Darkness started to descend as steadily as the snowflakes, and I began to shiver. I had been warm, but the steep inclines around here mean it's impossible not to ascend without sweating profusely. Even if warm whilst moving, with inertia creeps a gnawing chill, especially as my clothes were clammy against my skin.'

Although riding alone Julian had been found by another mountain biker who remained with him until Julian's wife, Anne, arrived with some warm clothes, followed by mountain rescue.

'Once the team arrived, everything was quickly under control. The initial medical assessment suggested there was considerable damage to my knee. The three-inch gap where my knee cap should have been didn't auger well'.

It later transpired that his patella ligament had ruptured. Speaking later to Emma Ryan (*The Yorkshire Post* Rural Correspondent), Julian said, 'I couldn't understand what had happened. I could wiggle things around, it wasn't broken, but the function wasn't there. It became evident that I couldn't walk and I thought, what am I going to do?'

'It was very much a team effort for an idiot that had fallen off his bike. These people were having their afternoon inconvenienced because of me. I felt awful. I keep thinking I don't know what I would have done without them. I don't think I could have moved from where I was. I am absolutely passionate

about encouraging people to get out and enjoy the countryside and open spaces, but this is the only real safety net if you have an accident and tumble. For me, this has highlighted how essential this support mechanism is.'

Writing in her separate 'Comment' article, Emma said, 'As I was speaking to a member of Cleveland MRT, a few things struck me.'

'First of all, how easily things can go wrong, even for people that are taking part in a regular activity (such as walking, running or mountain biking), that's second nature to them and in a part of the moors and countryside that is familiar to them.'

'Secondly, whilst partaking in such ventures, we are reminded how isolated and remote some parts of the county can be and difficult to access. And, thirdly, if an ambulance can't physically get to you when you need one, who can?'

'Mountain rescue teams are volunteers who have regular jobs, hobbies and family lives themselves, but give up time to train to form these invaluable rescue operations.'

'It costs more than £40,000 a year to keep Cleveland MRT going, and it seems incredible that they are not a government-funded emergency service. We are grateful to have them'.

The team sent their good wishes to Julian for a swift recovery and thanked him and Emma for their kind comments and comprehensive newspaper coverage — not just of the rescue, but of mountain rescue work in general. ☺

**Top:** Cleveland team during the rescue © Cleveland MRT.  
**Inset:** News cuttings from *The Yorkshire Post*.



# NEWS ROUND

## JANUARY > MARCH

### FEBRUARY: PENMACRA TEAMS TAKE PART IN MULTIAGENCY BOMB ALERT

Volunteers from across the PenMacra teams were praised for their role in a bomb alert in Plymouth which prompted one of the largest evacuations since the end of the Second World War.

The WWII 500kg bomb, which was discovered in the back garden of a house in the Keyham area of Plymouth, was safely removed by bomb disposal experts from the British Army and Royal Navy on Friday, February 23, and disposed of at sea beyond Plymouth Sound. Team members were part of a large scale multi-agency effort to support the evacuation of residents in Keyham. We hope to bring you a full account of the incident coming in the next issue.

Images courtesy Dartmoor teams Ashburton, Plymouth and Tavistock.

## Incident Figures: National Status Summary: January through to end of March, 2024

\* Sorted according to geographical region and by closed incident reports. Dog associations listed separately.

Lake District	North East	Peak District	South Wales
Cockermouth 12	Cleveland 12	Buxton 15	Brecon 24
Coniston 18	North of Tyne 13	Derby 10	Central Beacons 21
Duddon & Furness 19	Northumberland 18	Edale 36	Longtown 12
Kendal 21	Swaledale 9	Glossop 14	Western Beacons 9
Keswick 33	Teesdale & Weardale 6	Kinder 16	<b>66</b>
Kirkby Stephen 4	<b>58</b>	Oldham 8	
Langdale Ambleside 20		Woodhead 12	<b>South West England</b>
Patterdale 14	<b>North Wales</b>		Avon & Somerset 3
Penrith 13	Aberdyfi 8		SARA 13
Wasdale 33	Aberglaslyn 3	<b>Peninsula</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>187</b>	Llanberis 36	Cornwall East 8	
	North East Wales 17	Cornwall West 9	<b>Yorkshire Dales</b>
<b>Mid Pennines</b>	Ogwen Valley 44	Dartmoor Ashburton 9	CRO 14
Bolton 5	South Snowdonia 9	Dartmoor Okehampton 6	Scarborough & Ryedale 4
Bowland Pennine 12		Dartmoor Plymouth 3	Upper Wharfedale 7
Calder Valley 8		Dartmoor Tavistock 11	<b>25</b>
Holme Valley 7		Exmoor 5	
Rossendale & Pendle 10		<b>51</b>	<b>Search Dogs *</b>
<b>42</b>			MRSD England 18
			SARDA Wales 5
			SARDA South Wales 7
			<b>30</b>

703 closed incidents reported 'closed' by end March 2024

\* No 'closed' reports submitted by Lakes Dogs to 31 March 2024.



An issue has been identified with the reporting of problems via the incident website. If any teams have reported an issue which has yet to be resolved, please email [statisticsofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:statisticsofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk). (Paul Brain)



Paul Taylor © CVSRT.

## JANUARY: PAUL RAISES £1,760 FOR CALDER VALLEY TEAM WITH SPINE RACE

Paul Taylor completed the 108-mile Montane Spine Mountain Rescue Team Challenge between 8.30 am on the Saturday, through to 6.57 pm on Sunday. A massive achievement, he also finished second in his category. Reflecting later, on 'the good, the bad and the ugly' of his time completing such a gruelling event, he concluded it was an 'incredibly friendly, supportive atmosphere that seems to mask the worst of times.'



## JANUARY: KNITTED KNICK-KNACKS RAISE FUNDS FOR CLEVELAND TEAM

Ladies from Nunthorpe and Marton Knitters visited Cleveland team for a tour of their base and to learn about the team's work. The group donated £916 to the team raised by the sale of knitted items and donations to the group.

**Above:** Unfortunately, we don't have the ladies' names but the team members, left to right, are Kath Pincott, Jo Sewell, Austen Floyd and Craig Sewell © Cleveland MRT.



## JANUARY: NEW YEAR SEARCH FOR MISSING FELL RUNNER IN LAKES

Penrith team were called in the late afternoon, on New Year's Eve following a call to police by the concerned friends of a fell runner who had not met up with them at the agreed time in Dufton village. Team members were supported by neighbouring Kirkby Stephen and Kendal MRTs, and Lake District search dogs.

The missing runner had planned a long route along part of the Pennine Way over Cross Fell, so search teams were deployed from various access points to the fell. These groups covered the mainly snow-covered route and surrounding areas in deteriorating weather conditions. After midnight, the early-afternoon rain and snow returned, and the search was paused at 3.00 am, with a plan made to resume at first light, and to call on further resources from across the Lakes.

Almost fifty volunteers resumed the search at 8.00 am on New Year's Day, now able to cover larger areas away from the paths and tracks with the benefit of daylight and improving weather. Unfortunately, the team received a call from North West Ambulance Service later in the morning, confirming that a body had been found by members of the public, as well as notification by the police helicopter. The Great North Air Ambulance flew to the scene and Penrith team members, assisted by a colleague from Cockermouth team, recovered the body from the fell.

'Everyone involved in this search wishes to pass our condolences to the family and friends of the runner Edward Catmur,' said Peter King, Penrith team leader. 'Our thoughts are with them all at this difficult time. As well as the 26 members of Penrith MRT, I would like to thank team members from the Kirkby Stephen, Kendal, Patterdale, Wasdale, Duddon and Furness, Cockermouth, Keswick and Langdale Ambleside teams for their help, alongside the nine search dogs and their handlers from across the Lake District and elsewhere in northern England. I would also like to acknowledge the work done by Cumbria Police, both the police and HM Coastguard helicopters, North West Ambulance Service and the Great North Air Ambulance.'

**Top:** Penrith mountain rescue searchers checking Cross Fell summit wind shelter; a team member searching between Great Dun and Cross Fell © Penrith MRT.

Raising funds for rescue

## COMING IN MAY: THE TOUR DE PAUL EVEN THE LONGEST RIDE STARTS WITH A SINGLE TURN OF THE PEDAL...

Life throws us many challenges and, in July 2023, Whitbourne's Rob Coldicott lost his brother-in-law Paul Hickson to cancer. Paul was an integral part of the South Snowdonia Search and Rescue Team, where he served as deputy leader.

Paul was instrumental in the development and training of new recruits, overseeing the team's equipment and kit, and representing them at national meetings and beyond.

To this end Rob has decided to raise money for South Snowdonia team in a charity bike ride in memory of Paul. The route will take riders through the key locations of Paul's life from London, where he was born, to Bala where they will be joined by members of the team.

So far, over a dozen cyclists have signed up for the event, which will take place over a period of five days at the end of May 2024 — the final leg of the 'Tour de Paul' being between Shrewsbury and Bala on Saturday 1 June. Now Rob is calling for people across Wales to take part in the ride to help boost the funds for the South Snowdonia team.

'We are looking for as many cyclists and cheerleaders as possible to join us on the 'Tour de Paul'. You don't have to ride all of the way, even a few hours in the saddle with us would be great.'

Follow Rob with his training and fundraising on [tourdepaul.co.uk](http://tourdepaul.co.uk).

**Right:** Paul Hickson © SSSRT.



## FEBRUARY: REMEMBERING THE MORECAMBE BAY COCKLE PICKERS, TWENTY YEARS ON

Bowland Pennine team members attended a service of remembrance in Morecambe on the twentieth anniversary of the search for 35 Chinese cockle pickers in Morecambe Bay.

'This was one of the most distressing and demanding events that any of our volunteers have ever had to take part in and is still felt today. A large number of those who attended are still in the team. Team members train hard to deal with every sort of rescue incident, but nothing could have prepared them for that night and the awful tragedy they witnessed.'

Sixteen were found safe on the shoreline having either made their own way out or been rescued from the treacherous waters. Unfortunately nineteen bodies (seventeen men and two women) were recovered during the night and the following day. Team members worked alongside search dog teams, RAF and police helicopters, RNLI, and the statutory emergency services. 'As on every anniversary of this terrible incident, our thoughts are with the families and friends of those who were lost that night.'



**Above:** Bowland Pennine team members at the remembrance service in February, left to right: Dave Matthews, Stuart Davidson, Mark Aldridge and Clive Shelly. © BPMRT.



## MARCH: DONATION HELPS SUPPORT THE NORTH WALES TEAMS

The cheque for £5,028 represented the money raised from the last year's Dylan's Three Peaks and Troughs Challenge and fundraising dinner.

**Left:** NWMRA chairman Tim Radford receives the cheque from Dylan's © NWMRA.

## MARCH: KIRKBY STEPHEN VISIT GNAAS BASE AT LANGWATHBY

With air ambulances regularly assisting teams across the country, Kirkby Stephen team members took the opportunity to visit the Great North Air Ambulance base at Langwathby to have a closer look at their kit and the aircraft.

**Below:** Kirkby Stephen team members at GNAAS base © KSMRT.







Hinkes  
thinks

## Enjoying some gnarly Scottish snow after a long wet, windy, waterlogged winter

Spring has sprung. It has been a mostly mild, wet, windy winter, with poor conditions for ice climbing in England. There has been a lot of rain. In fact, it seems like it has been raining since July 2023. The lakes and reservoirs are full to the brim and the terrain is waterlogged and muddy.

There was a brief period of frosts in March which turned the ground hard and concrete-like. I was lucky enough to be out taking photos on the Spine Race in the North Pennines. The bogs were frozen over, resulting in dry feet. I remember thinking there could be a course record set in these conditions, which there was. However, the iron-hard terrain caused other issues such as knee, hip, ankle and other joint pain. At times the icy terrain caused slips, so spikes were essential on the sheet ice sections. Speaking to some of the participants, many said they would have preferred the soft boggy terrain to cushion their knees, gladly accepting wet, cold feet.

I spend a lot of time in the Patterdale area and Helvellyn has had a very sparse snow cover, with no build-up of ice or névé. What snow appeared was usually an 'icing sugar' coating on the fell tops, which made for nice

seven in five days. The local press contacted me for information, comments and my views of the causes and what can be done in the future.

I have been involved in the fells and mountains for over forty years and, yes, there is now more pressure on MRTs. Wasdale were stretched with their back-to-back call-outs. Of course, other Lakes teams helped out, as well as having their own shouts.

There are more people going in the hills and more people are encouraged to go outside for physical and mental wellbeing. Perhaps people underestimate the risk. I find it interesting that there is more information than ever available, even on phones: weather forecasts, route information, what to wear, OS Maps and so on. Earlier this century, only twenty years ago, this info was not as easily accessible. You had to make phone calls for weather forecasts, listen to

the radio, watch TV or check a print out. Safety advice was mostly in books or leaflets. Now so much info is out there and yet people still do not seem to check, research, plan accordingly, carry emergency kit or learn to read a map.

With the winter so wet and mild I had a foray to the Costa Blanca for some sunny rock climbing, before mostly climbing on indoor walls and fell walking on the few sunny days. Nevertheless, I do like to put on my crampons and get a proper winter route bagged.

So, with that in mind, I headed up to Scotland and the mighty Ben Nevis mid-March to catch the last

remnants of snow and ice. The snowline was high, which entailed a long walk before strapping on crampons. The North Face of Ben Nevis is a special place, one of the best climbing areas in the world and generally gives a great mountain day out — or more if you get benighted.

I went up with Dean, who is a member of Nottingham Lowland Search and Rescue Team, and a friend from the Bassetlaw Mountain Club. It is a long walk up the Allt A Mhuillin from near sea level to the CIC hut below the North Face of the Ben. I first did this yomp fifty years ago when it was a quagmire. Now there is a dry made-up path, which makes for easier, drier access. It had been several years since I had been to the CIC Hut and, unfortunately, I had forgotten to bring trainers for the walk in and out, which didn't do my knees any good.

We climbed a grade 2, Ledge Route on Carn Dearg in full on Scottish conditions: gnarly, just as I remembered them, with stinging spindrift, gusty wind trying to rip you off the upper ridge, cold, harsh conditions. Battling the constantly blowing wind with roaring gusts adds to the climbing effort, making you more exhausted as you fight to not get blown off the mountain. It is one of the best mountain environments you can wish for — if you're a masochist!

Seriously though, I think Scottish winter conditions toughened me up for the Himalayan peaks. What Ben Nevis lacks in altitude, it makes up for in harshness and quality of climbing. Not to be underestimated, the dangers on Ben Nevis are just as real as Everest or K2, only lower. Apart from difficulty and weather there are avalanches to be aware of and we negotiated through avalanche debris in Number 5 Gully on the climb up to Ledge Route.

Interestingly there were two Chinese mountaineers from Shanghai in the CIC hut spending a few days on the Ben. Apparently, they were training for Everest 8848m and Manaslu 8263m.

After the rigours of Ben Nevis, I had an easier day and bumped into an old friend, Tom Gilchrist, now retired from Scottish Avalanche Information Service. He now trains with SARDA Scotland.

So that is winter over. Let's hope for a dry, sunny summer to enjoy the hills and rock climbing. Not too many call-outs. And roll on next winter for that full-on Scottish experience. ☺



Above: View from the Ledge Route above Number 5 Gully © Alan Hinkes.

photos — if you were quick enough before the weather clagged in.

As usual there was a spate of rescues in winter conditions, some in the deep short-lived snow falls.

Wasdale MRT had a particularly busy period, with four call-outs in 24 hours and

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## London's first electric ambulance – what we've learned three months in\*

London's first electric ambulance came into service late last year, its first shift on New Year's Eve. The capital's first electric ambulance is both a novelty and a trailblazer, but does it do the job? **Catherine Levin** of the Emergency Services Times caught up with two of its London Ambulance Service crew in March, to find out more.

John and Os are experienced clinicians with eighteen years' experience between them. They proudly showed us around the Ford electric ambulance as it took a well-earned rest at the headquarters of the London Ambulance Service near Waterloo Station. To the untrained eye, this looks like a normal boxy ambulance, but on closer inspection the blue wiggle along the sides gives away its electric origins.

It's a real privilege for the Emergency Services Times editorial team to get up close and personal with the ambulance and see what all the fuss is about. Shaving off 1.5 tonnes of weight to get this to be more efficient for the electric battery to power it to run around London's streets was no mean feat. LAS Fleet Manager, Rob MacIntosh told me last year that they had questioned the value of every single item of kit on the diesel-fuelled ambulance to see where they could shave off weight.

*'Crews definitely find this system much better. They were quite anxious when we lost the tail lift, but crews prefer it now.'*

This brand new ambulance doesn't have a traditional tail lift. John shows us the ease of moving the Stryker stretcher from inside the ambulance to the street; there's no physical stress on him as the stretcher moves elegantly onto the pavement.

Hopping up inside the ambulance — my first time — I am surprised at the blue cloudy sky on the ceiling and a picture of a field of poppies with, unexpectedly, a fox gazing at me. It's all part of a cunning design to calm the environment, and is helped by thoughtful lighting and a nondescript box with items designed to help patients with autism adjust to the space.

As John calmly explains all the functions of the ambulance's interior to us, it quickly becomes clear that everything has its place and even without labels, the crew know where to find each piece of kit. They are primed for everything — from the maternity kit to burns and infections, the crew supplement the super-heavy kit bag with oxygen and dressings so they are ready for anything.

We meet Gino, who's an LAS manager and goes out on calls to support

paramedics. He shows us the Lifepak made by Physio Control, a rather expensive machine that provides lots of important vitals like heart rate and oxygen levels and includes a defibrillator.

Because it's an electric ambulance, we learn that the cabinetry is designed to be lightweight and there are fewer windows, just two in the rear. Os says that it's super quiet in the back. When he's in there with a patient and John is driving, he can't hear anything except the occasional creak of a cabinet as the kit inside moves about. With air con and heating better than ever, he also told us they don't need to open the windows

up with a small steering wheel that isn't special to an electric ambulance. The only giveaway is the battery visual on the dashboard telling me how much charge is left. It's as mundane as the charging information on my phone.

We spend an hour with the crew and are left with the impression that this ambulance feels modern, clean and fit to go around London clocking up a massive mileage without polluting the city and contributing to climate change. For now it's the star of the show, but will shortly be joined by a second ambulance before a further two appear later this year. It's a slow process, but it's



London Ambulance Service electric ambulance © Emergency Services Times  
emergencyservicetimes.com

\*First published in Emergency Services Times 14 March 2024, and worth sharing here as we consider the future for mountain rescue vehicles

and the well-known super-loud siren noise doesn't penetrate the interior.

Giving the exterior the once over, I find the charging point at the front where Os opens the flap and says it's easy to charge the ambulance and there is a fetching blue grill, another nod to its electric origins. I wonder if the charging only takes place, once a twelve-hour shift is over? Rob MacIntosh tells me that the plan is for every make-ready station — where the ambulance is cleaned and kitted out for a new shift — to have an electric charger so it's just another process for the ambulance to go through before it's on the road again.

I get to sit inside the cab and it feels high

important to iron out any wrinkles and provide the data back to NHS England who will be watching this trial with great interest. The team there know about the emissions and will want to see great reductions over time, but that's not going to come soon.

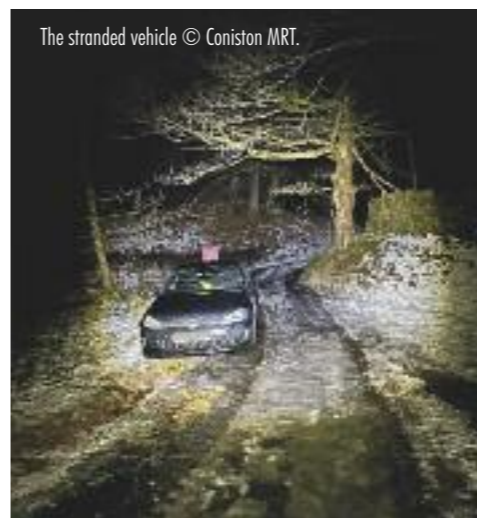
The big question is can it complete a shift? And the answer to that so far is yes, it can. It also ticks the box when it comes to meeting standards for the design and equipping of ambulances — the all important CEN EN 1789. It's a huge step forward and we will be looking out for more of the wiggly blue line ambulances as they provide a service to Londoners in their hour of need and help save our planet along the way. ♻️



## MARCH: SCARBOROUGH TEAM WORKS WITH FORESTRY ENGLAND ON SIGNAGE FOR DALBY FOREST

For a number of years, writes **Ian Hugill**, there has been some recognition within the team that when people become lost, injured or in distress in Dalby Forest, there can be a lack of understanding about which emergency service to call and how to best articulate their location, and this often delays any response.

Most mountain bikers do not carry maps and compass and the winding trails and woodlands quickly disorientate. Equally, call handlers in the emergency service control rooms have little understanding of 'I am at post 31'. With that in mind we were delighted to work with Dalby Forest Forestry England Rangers to add simple information signs to existing structures at key points around the forest trails. The advice reads: 'In case of emergency call 999, ask for the police and then ask for mountain rescue'. There then follows a what3words location for the sign which is the one most commonly used by the control rooms. One of our incident controllers, Tony Heap (pictured above with one of the Forestry England Rangers), led the initiative.



The stranded vehicle © Coniston MRT.

## JANUARY: CONISTON TEAM HELP RESCUE COUPLE STRANDED IN CAR ON ICE

It was a beautiful clear but very cold night when a couple decided to go for a drive towards Cathedral Quarry in Little Langdale after their work shift had finished. They crossed a patch of ice on the minor road leading to the quarry, and decided it was probably unwise to continue so turned around and tried to retrace their route. However, their car had other ideas — unable to make it back across the ice patch which was also on a hill.

Unable to raise any friends or family at such an ungodly hour, they rang Cumbria Police for assistance. They in turn asked the neighbouring Langdale Ambleside team to assist but, when they managed to pin the location via PhoneFind, it transpired the couple were actually in Coniston's area so passed it over. As the vehicle wasn't blocking the road, team members transported the couple back to the team's base to warm up before taking them to their other vehicle so they could get home and organise recovery of the stranded vehicle later. 'No doubt,' said a team spokesman, 'there were a few lessons learned from this little escapade, thankfully the only injuries were to pride!'



## FEBRUARY: EAST CORNWALL AND DEVON CRO TEAM MEMBERS AND HART WORK TOGETHER IN RESCUE FROM ABANDONED MINE

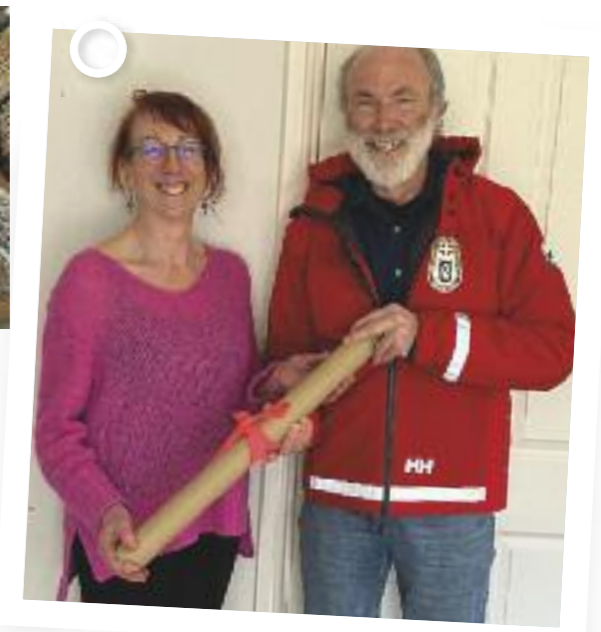
Devon and Cornwall Police called on the East Cornwall team following reports of two people trapped in an abandoned mine near Minions, on Bodmin Moor. Also tasked were colleagues from Devon Cave Rescue Organisation and specialist paramedics from the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust Hazardous Area Response Team (HART).

Initial reports suggested that two people were in the mine with one trapped in suspension on the ropes after going into the mine at 11 o'clock that morning. The initial suggestion was that they were in and out of consciousness. The alarm had been raised by a friend who went to the shaft when the explorers hadn't made it to the surface at the end of their expected trip plan.

On arrival, team members established that the shaft was deep into the moor and part of the Phoenix United Mine series of abandoned workings. One casualty was now out, however, the friend had managed to enter the shaft himself to provide immediate assistance to the remaining explorer who was cold, exhausted and complaining of severe leg pain due to being held in suspension for a significant time.

This left one casualty and one member of public around 45 foot down the mine shaft, on the edge of a ledge with a significant drop to his side. The team set up a system to check air monitoring and allow rapid access for a HART paramedic to stabilise the casualty — providing insulation and administering pain relief. Devon CRO helped provide additional members and kit, and deployed one of their team and a cave rescue stretcher to assist the paramedic, to bring the member of public back to the surface.

Once the casualty had been lifted, there followed a long stretcher carry across moorland in wild and wet conditions. A long cold wet night for everyone involved — the team finally standing down at 3.00 am — but one with a good outcome. We wish the explorers a swift and full recovery.



# JIGSAW JEDIS

## HOW I JOINED THE OGGI VALLEY 'JIGSAW SURVIVORS CLUB'

Judy Whiteside Editor

'Oh my, that was challenging!! Do you know if anyone else has completed it? We should form a jigsaw survivors club.' My short yet deliciously sweet-to-write email to Ogwen team's Chris Lloyd in March, several weeks after pouring my first glass of 'jigsaw wine' and picking my way through all the straight-sided bits (if you know, you know) — every single one of them uncannily grey and slaty in nature. Or white.

I was lucky enough to get hold of one of these limited edition jigsaws, thanks to a surprise visit from Santa, not long after hearing about this particular fundraising initiative and waxing lyrical about my love of these tricky puzzles. The trickier the better. I should be careful what I wish for!

'Congratulations!' replied Heather Beale, the team's fundraising coordinator, just moments after my triumphant email. 'You are jigsaw completer number 4!!' And there were prizes to be had for the first ten to complete.

Before too long, I was exchanging 'survivor' emails with Tracey Stubbins, who'd set the whole idea rolling for the team. Torture over, a kindred spirit found, confession came easy. Matching shapes, ignoring the photo (stunning as it is, of no use whatsoever in assembling the actual jigsaw). I'd lost count of the times I was invited to 'step away from the jigsaw' at some ungodly hour, 'just one more piece' to fit as lights switched off around me. My first stop before breakfast, my last stop at bedtime and myriad points between. Patiently awaiting my return home from two separate ski trips.

Tracey had hers framed (surely a feat in itself!) Mine sits, still, at the end of the table,



daring me to break it. And, just after Easter, I was proud to be presented with my prize, a print of that iconic Tryfan shot!

Tracey explains how the idea for a fundraising puzzle came about.

'Since August 2021, there has been a magnificent photograph of the East Face of Tryfan in the meeting room at our Bryn Poeth base. This high-quality image was taken by John Rowell who, with his walking friend Andy Pyatt, made a special trip onto Braich y Ddeugwm — on a day carefully selected for good light conditions. They did this in response to a request from team member Jed Stone, to help with identifying rescue areas. Jed hadn't asked for the image to be any particular size, so John had spoken to master fine art printer, Julian Wynne, from Pixel Printer, and Julian kindly donated the resulting print to the team in March 2021.

'In September 2023, I arrived at Bryn Poeth for base duties. Having just completed a pre-loved, 1,000-piece jigsaw, I was clearly hungry for a mightier puzzle challenge. My first thought when facing that majestic Tryfan was how much I'd love to attempt piecing it together. Why not turn this image — at the heart of the Oggie team — into a fundraising jigsaw?

'Of course, ideas for new fundraising merchandise must be carefully thought through and vetted from a financial perspective. John confirmed he'd gladly support the use of his photograph and liaison with producers All Jigsaw Puzzles commenced.

'Business case approved, the idea was unanimously agreed by the team, but we needed to act quickly. The vast majority of all jigsaws are sold in Q4, Christmas being puzzling "prime time". Handmade in Devon, production lead times had to be taken into account and a suitable, bilingual template for the box designed.

'Any opportunity to raise awareness of mountain safety is a bonus, so the offer from the makers to print the base of the box without any additional charge to us was a real bonus. As a result of the partnership between the NWMRA and AdventureSmart, lots of great work has already been done to

develop succinct safety messages, so I approached Paul Donovan of AdventureSmart for use of their 'three questions' on the box, along with a QR code for easy access to further safety information.

'At a memorable 333 Adventure Evening at Plas Y Brenin in October, John stunned us by offering to provide ten professional, customised prints of the Tryfan image to award as prizes to the first supporters to complete the jigsaw. Anticipation ahead of launch could not have been higher!

'An order for forty 1,000-piece jigsaws was placed on 26 October 2023. We used the box artwork to advertise on social media in the hope of attracting pre-orders. I confess that, by this point, the reality of how hard this jigsaw would be had hit home: 1,000 pieces of Tryfan's craggy grey walls. As effective as it is for plotting routes to cragfast casualties, I had to concede that the sky in this photo isn't particularly blue, nor graced with any helpful white clouds!

'Sure enough, the orders came flooding in from team members, family and friends. We sold out a day before delivery, at the end of November. It was 'all systems go' for Heather, Amy and I, posting or hand-delivering them as quickly as possible. I noted one customer in particular who wasn't going to let the grass grow under his feet and listened in awe as we approached Christmas, to tales of hours spent and progress made — even the mention of a magnifying glass! The first official completion was Melfyn Parry from Ynys Mon.'

The hope is that some of the completed jigsaws will be returned to the team for resale and further fundraising opportunities. And rumour has it that this year's jigsaw will feature one of George Manley's wonderful drawings, as seen in *Risking Life and Limb*, a book I was also very proud to be a part of! I, for one, cannot wait: bring it on! 🧩

**Top:** Left to right: A tale of two jigsaws: 'completed' and 'very-far-from-it'; Ogwen Valley MRO chairman Chris Lloyd presents Winner Number 4 with her prize © Judy Whiteside. **Inset:** The original photograph by John Rowell, in pride of place at Oggie base © Chris Lloyd.



**APRIL: JUST FOOLIN' AROUND...**

Okay, not strictly between January and March but these initiatives and incidents take some time to make it onto social media. And then, weirdly, they all arrive on the same morning...



**FEBRUARY: LLOYD COCKERMOUTH MINI MAKE COCKERMOUTH 'CHARITY OF THE YEAR'**

The team was delighted to be chosen as Lloyd Cockermouth MINI's 'Charity of the year'. Team members met Lloyd's staff at their team base to receive a fantastic donation of £1,610.

**Raising funds for rescue**

In South Wales, Central Beacons team members were caught up with rescuing a number of giant sea creatures apparently left behind by a family visiting the area. The incident resulted in large parts of Waterfall Country being closed off to visitors. A team spokesman later revealed that all creatures had been rescued with 'no team members eaten' in the process. Phew!

In North Wales, Aberglaslyn team revealed their exceptional map-reading skills in preparation for 2025 calendar. And, still with maps in mind, across in the Ogwen Valley – where the team has experienced a 50% increase in call-outs – visitors to Tryfan would, they said, now have technical help to navigate when in difficulty. In partnership with Ordnance Survey and Eryri National Park, a small QR code was placed on the summit pillars that walkers could scan with their phone. Through this, a one-time access to the OS app would reveal a 'Heads-up display' showing the true, virtual path.

In the Lakes, Duddon and Furness team members spent the Easter weekend 'trailing the new MR-EV' around their patch. 'If the vehicle proves useful,' they said, 'we will look at using it alongside our current fleet in the longer term. Initial thoughts are that the quiet running volume is much less disturbing for livestock and ramblers, and the automatic gears are a lot easier for team members who drive modern cars and can't cope with Land Rover gear boxes.'

However, they did concede that the vehicle's range is 'a bit limited' so it might be necessary to install charging points at incident hotspots such as Walna Scar Road and Wallabarrow Crag. Wherever possible these will be powered by solar panels, or more likely 'new rain-energy-capture arrays'. The range might also be increased by asking team members to lighten their kit by cutting back on non-essential items such as Pepperamis and Haribos. Sadly, they reflected that the vehicle comes in at a mean £142,024, so perhaps it might be wiser to focus in their fundraising for a new, permanent base.

Dartmoor Ashburton made ITV news with their spring initiative: four crossbreed rescue sheep, working with the team to help them find casualties in difficult terrain. Seems like only yesterday (March 2015 in fact), that the Lochaber team (inspired by the Canadian Avalanche Rescue Cat Association) were investigating the purr-fect answer to mountain rescue searches.

Meanwhile, in Edale, team members took to the skies in their efforts to improve efficiency. One of the busiest teams in the Peak District, they spent most of last year considering ways to cope with the huge increase in visitor traffic and still get to emergencies quickly. Following hundreds of hours of trialling new ways of deploying to call-outs, they were pleased to announce their new 'cutting-edge fast-response capability'. The Aerial Rescue Search Evacuation team consists of two highly-skilled paragliders tasked to hover over the Peak District for eight hours a day between Easter and early September, ready to respond. And you've got to admit, mountain rescue does love a good acronym...

**Opposite:** Clockwise from top left: Rescue sheep on Dartmoor © DSRT Ashburton; Testing out the new MR-EV vehicle © DFMRT; Central Beacons team members deal with two of the many giant sea creatures at large in their area © CBMRT; Aberglaslyn team calendar 2025 © AMRT; one of two Aerial Rescue Search Evaluation response paragliders in the Peak District © Edale MRT; Oggi team members attach the new QR code to the Tryfan summit pillars © OVMRO.



**MARCH: NORTH DARTMOOR TEAM CELEBRATES £10K AWARD FROM THE NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND**

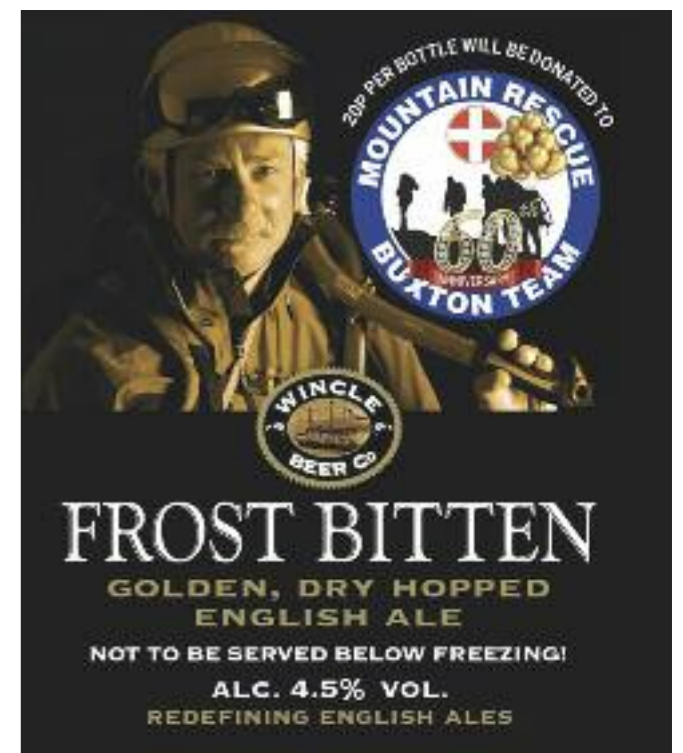
They intend to use the funds to replace their 'tired and worn-out waterproof jackets'.

**NEWS ROUND**  
JANUARY > MARCH



**FEBRUARY: STUDENTS JOIN MASS CASUALTY EXERCISE IN SNOWDONIA**

Aberdyfi team members were joined by South Snowdonia team and students from the Swansea University Medical School rural practice cohort for the mass casualty exercise.



**MARCH: SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY BEER HELPS SUPPORT BUXTON TEAM**

As part of Buxton team's 60th birthday celebrations, they asked a select few team members to pop along to Wincle Beer Company Ltd to brew some very special beer and, rumour has it, it took a WHOLE DAY to get the recipe right!

Estimated brewing time is about a month. It's a golden, dry-hopped English ale, and 20p of every bottle will go directly into supporting the team. Beer money well spent! The name of the beer is Frost Bitten in tribute to the team's president, Nigel Vardy FRGS, who after losing his fingers and toes in a blizzard on Mount McKinley in 1999, earned the title Mr Frostbite. Nigel was, of course, on hand to sample the brew.

# Busy times for Wasdale prompt a Piers Gill social media campaign

The evening of Friday 1 March was even busier than usual for the Lake District's busiest team, with support drawn in from colleagues in Keswick and Duddon and Furness teams, RAF Leeming, RAF Valley and the Coastguard helicopter.

## CALL-OUT NUMBER 1

The first of four calls in quick succession, from Cumbria Police, came in just after 4.00 in the afternoon when two walkers reported themselves 'lost, very cold, wet and concerned for their safety'. Their intended route had been to Scafell Pike, but a Phonefind located them on the flanks of Scafell, just above Rakehead Crag. With decent mobile signal this allowed a 'talk off' downhill to Brackenclose and safety.

## CALL-OUT NUMBER 2

Next up was a call to two walkers who had reported themselves lost on their Scafell Pike descent. Unfortunately, the team leader was unable to make further contact with the party by phone, but coordinates from the original emergency call were available.

Due to the prevailing winter conditions, and lack of further contact, a search party was tasked to investigate and escort off the fell if necessary. However, shortly afterwards, contact was made. The walkers had managed to descend on the correct path to Seathwaite and no longer needed help. On confirmation that they had safely returned to their vehicle, the log was closed.

## CALL-OUT NUMBER 3

The third call began with a similar situation: a party of three inexperienced walkers lost on their descent, at exactly the same location. Their waterproofs and footwear were inadequate and they were concerned for their safety, stuck and unable to move.

Again a limited call-out was initiated to locate and escort the party off the fell. However, further information indicated that one of the walkers was now unconscious, which escalated things significantly. A full call-out followed, with assistance requested from Keswick MRT for help with urgent medical care and a likely stretcher carry. They enlisted further support from the two visiting RAF mountain rescue teams.

About thirty minutes later, more information

suggested that the party was now on the move, but it wasn't possible to confirm if the unconscious walker had recovered and was with them. Both Keswick and Wasdale teams proceeded towards the walking party from differing directions. It was with some relief that the Keswick team met the party at Greenhow Knott and it was confirmed all were present and well. Two Keswick team members escorted them to Seathwaite, whilst the remaining team diverted onto an urgent search in the final call of the day.

## CALL-OUT NUMBER 4: PART 1

This fourth call developed into something of a two-parter, the first part being the search and rescue of a missing walker, the second involving the recovery of his two cragfast dogs.

The call began when a man reported his son overdue from a walk up Scafell Pike. He had reached the summit successfully at 4.00 pm, but no contact had been possible since. As it wasn't known which route had been taken, a search of all the usual car parks ensued, with his car discovered at Seathwaite by Keswick MRT. Due to the winter conditions, including heavy snowfall at height, and this being a lone and inexperienced walker, a full call-out was initiated, supported by Keswick, Duddon and Furness, RAF teams from Leeming and Valley and the Coastguard helicopter. As teams started their allocated search routes, and by way of contingency planning, a further request went out for other Lakes



# NEWS ROUND

JANUARY > MARCH



teams to stand by for the morning. Unfortunately, Rescue 199 was unable to complete a search of Piers Gill due to low cloud, so two team members set out to search on foot. Heavy snow, up to twelve inches deep, made search conditions difficult and hazardous, with some parties aborting search routes at higher elevations.

At around 2.00 am, rescuers' shouts were rewarded with a faint call back, followed by a whistle. It was the party tasked with Piers Gill who had found the missing walker at the bottom of the gill — a location soon confirmed by searchlight and thermal imaging scope. He had broken his leg and couldn't move. His two dogs were located a waterfall pitch above him, seemingly fit and well. With the two options being a technical rope rescue (most likely), or helicopter winch (unlikely due to the location and conditions), the team leader coordinated resources to attempt both, this time with Rescue 936 from Caernarfon tasked to help.

Two team members from another search route returned to the team vehicles at Brackenclose to ready medical, stretcher and crag rescue equipment. Eight loads of equipment and two team members were duly uplifted by Rescue 936, as close as possible to the location. The thirteen RAF team members were closest to the incident site so they too were redirected. With the weather improving and cloud base lifting, Rescue 936 attempted to directly access the walker, but this wasn't possible. Having found a landing site at Middleboot Knotts,

they returned to Brackenclose to pick up the two team members and equipment. The RAF teams collected the extra equipment from the landing site and returned to the scene. Rescue 936 left the area to refuel.

A team cascarer was lowered via a side gully into the bottom of the gill, with further rescuers and equipment following. It was quickly established that the walker had suffered serious injuries and was very cold but, thankfully, he had managed to find a small shelf to keep himself mostly out of the water. Medical assessment and treatment were given and cold wet clothing exchanged for dry in a bivvy shelter. In very challenging conditions, a stretcher, casbag, heat blankets, vacmat and dual rope system was also established, and the walker packaged securely. The haul out of the gill was then completed before Rescue 936 returned to winch the casualty away.

Team members walked wearily back to Brackenclose, arriving back at base at about noon for much-needed food and drink, kindly prepared by other members.

Meanwhile, back on the hill, 'all' that now remained was to rescue the two dogs. Additional team members, with support from Duddon and Furness had been lined up, fresh legs ascending whilst tired ones came down...

## AND NUMBER 4: PART 2

As the 'night shift' clocked off and returned to base, their relief 'day shift' headed up the fell. Once on scene, ropes were used to

keep team members safe as they descended steep snowy ground to locate the dogs — which were gently encouraged through the medium of hotdogs!

All in all, a very challenging operation in winter conditions, logged as almost twenty hours of activity, twenty-four hours after that first late afternoon call-out. As ever, great teamwork and inter-agency cooperation, but that twenty-four hours (Incidents 22

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ➡



**Wasdale's Penny Kirby will be joining a panel discussion about the sustainability of mountain rescue at the MREW Conference, September 2024.**



Images © Wasdale MRT.



Above: Cockermouth team members lead the technical rope rescue from Piers Gill © Cockermouth MRT/Wasdale MRT.

through to 25), snapped swiftly at the heels of the previous call-out (Incident 21), only the day before and also to Scafell Pike, logged just fifty minutes after midnight and running for almost seventeen hours — itself barely three hours after the six-hour call before it (Incident 20)!

### THE DAY BEFORE...

Incident 21 involved a lone male walker, reported overdue by a friend, having declared his intent to 'climb Scafell'. He'd left home early the previous morning, likely setting off on the fell around 7.30 am. The police had located his car at Brackenclouse, but very little else was known, other than he had intended to return the same day before the weather deteriorated.

With team members only just recovering from Incident 20, coupled with the prospect of a major search on both Scafell and Scafell Pike (walkers often talk about 'Scafell', but really mean Scafell Pike), the team leader escalated the call-out to regional level, requesting support from all other Lake District teams. The poor weather of the previous day made the search urgent due to risk of hypothermia. Visibility was still poor and the temperature was forecast to drop further through the day.

An initial Wasdale party set off just before 5.00 am, with other teams tasked as they arrived at base or, in some cases, remotely. Search dogs and Coastguard helicopter support were also organised. As the digital map began to fill with the many traces of individual rescuers, a shout was heard by the Cockermouth team, from the bottom of Piers Gill. Team members were able to

access the location with a rope system to find that the walker had suffered injuries to both ankles, amongst other injuries. He had been lying injured in the gill for about twenty-four hours by this point, having misnavigated on his descent from the summit. Other teams on the hill migrated to the evacuation point with further medical equipment. Meanwhile, Rescue 199 flew additional team members up from the valley, along with rope rescue kit and the stretcher.

Cockermouth team led the technical rescue from the gill, with assistance from all those present but, having done the hard bit, the normally straightforward part of either a stretcher carry or helicopter transport from the scene proved difficult. With weather conditions thwarting a helicopter extraction, and steep ground below preventing a descent by stretcher, the safest and quickest option was an uphill carry to Lingmell Col. After an energy sapping journey, also helped by a passing Assynt MRT team member, the walker was transferred into the care of the Helimed 58 crew.

Once again the multi-agency response included Wasdale, Duddon and Furness, Coniston, Kirkby Stephen, Keswick, Cockermouth, Kendal and Assynt team members, search dogs from the Lakes and Mountain Rescue Search Dogs England, Helimed 58 and Rescue 199.

### PIERS GILL AND A SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Piers Gill has always been an accident blackspot for the Wasdale team, with a long history of serious events and fatalities. However, the number of incidents of people

walking down the stream bed from the Corridor Route, on their descent from Scafell Pike, has undoubtedly become more frequent, with four serious events recently, prompting a social media campaign in mid-March to inform potential visitors of the risks.

The posting listed four incidents in particular. The first, a ten-hour operation on 20 August 2023 involved two walkers who had spent twenty-four hours in the gill before finally alerting a passing walker. Both were cold with minor injuries.

On 4 February this year, a lone walker was reported overdue. They were evacuated having spent about six hours in the gill with multiple scrapes and bruises. The third, on 29 February was Incident 21, detailed here, involving the lone walker stuck in the gill for twenty-four long hours, having sustained injuries to both feet and ankles in a fall. The fourth, on 1 March, we detail on the previous pages, a lone walker evacuated after about twelve hours in the gill with serious injuries and hypothermia.

The post goes on: 'Each one of these rescues has only been successful because of amazing luck in not suffering worse injuries or spending longer in the gill before being found.'

'Piers Gill is extremely hazardous because it comprises of a series of waterfall climbing pitches. They can only safely be attempted by rope access. It can be tempting to believe that the one just descended is the worst, but they get progressively harder. They are also more difficult or impossible to climb back up. This results in a trap where either people become stuck, or they risk taking the next descent, thinking it the last one.'



'Eventually, either people fall, resulting in traumatic injuries, or become stuck with increasing hypothermia risk. Or both. For rescuers, it is also a hazardous location, primarily because of the steep sides and loose rocks. Almost nothing is truly stable, so there is always a risk of rockfalls, even with a technically perfect rope system.'

The team called on their followers to share the post as widely as possible through their own socials.

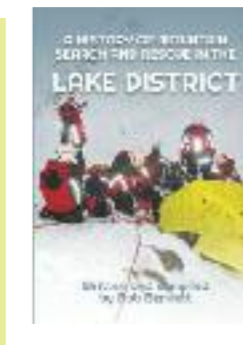
'For some reason people are starting to take this route more often. The relevant authorities are reacting and considering what additional things they can do to prevent people accidentally straying into the top of the gill, which, at the top, looks fairly benign. The only path down is on the east rim of the gill and even that goes very close to the edge and has a rock step.'

'Our responsibility is primarily search and rescue, not prevention. We also need help to raise awareness outside of this following. Good navigation and awareness is needed, and none of the walkers in the events above intended to be where they were found. We realise that, to a large extent, we don't need to remind the followers of this page, but we do need to reach others who come to enjoy the mountains and are not seasoned walkers. As well as the well-prepared walkers, we see many people on Scafell Pike unaware of the very real hazards.'

At the time of writing, the reach for shared posts had topped 1.1 million and created significant interest and support from the media. Check it out (dated 19 March), on [facebook.com/WasdaleMRT](https://www.facebook.com/WasdaleMRT).

# NEWS ROUND

## JANUARY > MARCH



### NEW: A HISTORY OF MOUNTAIN SEARCH AND RESCUE IN THE LAKE DISTRICT BY BOB BENNETT

If you'd like to read more about the history of mountain search and rescue in the Lake District, this is the book for you!

The book details the development of the service over many years, with stories of incidents going back as far as 1783 and an incident sparked by the search for ravens' eggs! Bob joined the Wyndham

Fell Search Team, based in Egremont in 1966. Twelve months on, as the Wyndham team became known as the Wasdale Mountain Rescue Team, he took on the role of equipment officer, remaining in that position until leaving the area in 1978. In 2018, with John Bamforth, he co-authored a history of the Wasdale team, in celebration of its 50th anniversary, and recently wrote a history of Wasdale Head and the Wasdale Head Inn. With a cover price of £20, the book will be available through each of the teams so keep an eye on their respective social media profiles to get your hands on a copy.

**A HISTORY OF MOUNTAIN SEARCH AND RESCUE IN THE LAKE DISTRICT PUBLISHED BY LAKE DISTRICT SEARCH AND MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION ISBN: 978-1-3999-7882-8 PRICE: £20**



On a lighter note...

### MARCH: WASDALE HAD A 'TAIL' TO TELL WHEN DEXTER THE DOG DUG HIS PAWS IN

Two walkers and their dog (Dexter) had failed to make contact from an intended walk up Scafell Pike and were overdue.

Due to the weather conditions, and the real potential for hypothermia, team members were called out with support from Duddon and Furness MRT and the Lakes search dogs. With no phone contact, they were without any real 'leads', so search teams were sent via the normal routes in Wasdale and Eskdale. The team at Sty Head were clearly 'barking' up the wrong tree. Others were 'poodling' around for some time with nothing heard or seen. However, the team in Hollow Stones heard a woof and a howl in response to their whistles. 'Scooby Doo' had been found. The hunt was on!

A light was visible high on the flanks of Scafell, but it was very difficult to tell exactly where. 'Dogged' determination kept the teams searching in Lord's Rake, up Black Crag and in Red Gill. Finally, the missing group was found 'dogfast' — rather than cragfast — on steep ground which was manageable with care. However, Dexter, a 40kg Doberman/Belgian Malinois cross, had decided not to move any further as night fell. The walkers were uninjured but cold, and had not wanted to leave their dog on the fell. Still more rescuers 'harnessed' the energy to make the hard pull up to their location, but no amount of encouragement could budge Dexter. The agreed course of action was to wait for daylight and hope he regained his confidence to move downhill with better visibility. Bivvy shelters were deployed for all, and a long 'paws' ensued.

As dawn broke, after a 'woof' night, despite further enticement, Dexter stood firm. With hope fading, a last ditch attempt with a 50m rope lead gently encouraged him downhill. Thankfully, once he started moving there were no further problems and it was a brisk, boisterous and friendly walk back to Brackenclouse. Team members wearily returned to base where a friendly team member had kindly played 'fetch' with breakfast butties from the local shop. After gratefully consuming these, it was time for a 'lie down'.



Above: Dexter stands firm in the mist. Right: Finally back at base with team members © Wasdale MRT.

# the final send away

SEARCH DOG RONA  
KESWICK MRT



It was with great sadness Lake District Mountain Rescue Search Dogs, Keswick team members – and the wider rescue community – heard that Search Dog Rona had passed away in March, aged fourteen years old, at home with her family. Handler **Rob Grange** looks back at their amazing life together.

I never officially retired Rona, mostly because she and her half-brother, Broch, were graded to work as a team, which meant that as she got older I could just choose the easier searches for her. Many will remember her as an independent, feisty old lady who loved the attention of people, but less so the attention of other dogs. Her piercing bark would leave many a body with ringing ears after a find but, despite her propensity to bark at every opportunity, that wasn't always the case. In the beginning, she wouldn't bark at all! But, after many years of dedication, we graded in November 2016.

There were many highlights in her career, including several good finds, notably an 87-year-old during storm Hector in June 2018, and a gentleman on Heron Crag in July 2021. We also had great international opportunities including avalanche training in 2016 in Chamonix, with the French police and border guards, and ICAR in 2019 when, amongst other things, she joined me down a fairground slide with her on my knee, and negotiated a Tyrolean traverse, as part of a demonstration about working under pressure!

Snow was definitely her favourite place and she became quite

infamous on the winter courses, for not taking the easy route and going through the door like every other dog. Instead, she would pick up where the scent was strongest and usually dig straight through the ceiling – even if that took over half an hour – finally breaking through and falling on the poor unsuspecting body inside. I was touched when one of the Norwegian assessors said, 'That's the dog I want to find me!' if they were ever avalanched.

I have to say an enormous thank you to all the people involved in her career. From all the bodies who might be slightly deaf, to the assessors, who demonstrated unbelievable patience during training, and the many other people that make this association great. And to Millcroft Vets for their love, care and professionalism.

Please support Lake District dogs via [lakes-searchdogs.org/donate](https://lakes-searchdogs.org/donate) or buy a well-earned coffee for a search dog team that has been out all night via [buymeacoffee.com/doglovers](https://buymeacoffee.com/doglovers) ☺

**Top and below:** Rona in her favourite snowy surroundings, pictured left with her half brother Broch and Rob © Rob Grange.



## Raising funds for rescue

### FEBRUARY: RUNNERS VERSUS RIDERS!

What started as a challenge for local farmer and staunch fell rescue supporter Ted Mason's 40th birthday, five years ago, has turned into an increasingly successful yearly event for the Upper Wharfedale team, this year attracting over 200 participants.

The runners and cyclists battled it out in brutally windy conditions on the fell and fields above Appletreewick. This year the conditions favoured the two wheels and a cyclist crossed the line in first position. The team was thrilled to receive a donation of £520 from the event and once again thank Ted for his kindness.



# NEWS ROUND

JANUARY > MARCH

## FEBRUARY: PREPARING FOR THE WILD FIRES SEASON AHEAD

Holme Valley team members were involved with a multi-agency training day, which included West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, National Trust Marsden and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service, in preparation for dealing with possible wild fires in the area.

**Left & below:** Holme Valley team members join multiagency training in dealing with wild fires © Holme Valley MRT.



## FEBRUARY: MEMBERS OF SEVERN AREA AND NEWSAR SECURE ROPE RESCUE QUALIFICATIONS

Three members of the Severn Area team and one member of NEWSAR qualified as Rope Rescue Technician Instructors in the Rescue3 scheme.

They had to be already qualified as Rope Rescue Specialists to attend the course workshop, which was run over two weekends at the SARA Rescue Station at Beachley and at Lydney Fire Station. Two members of Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service were also on the course, which included practical and theory sessions, assessing and coaching the ability to instruct, as well as personal skills and knowledge. And just to keep the candidates on their toes, the Rescue3 Rope Rescue syllabus was updated partway through the course!



**Above:** Rope Rescue Technician Instructor training in progress © SARA.

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## SEMRA and Covid-19

Four years on from the Coronavirus pandemic, **Pat Holland** looks back at how his team, South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association (Mountain Rescue Ireland) coped and considers the longer-term effects of those lockdowns.

The South-Eastern Mountain Rescue Association (SEMRA) provides a Search and Rescue service to the south east of Ireland. Pre-Covid, SEMRA's incident rate was about thirty a year, having risen gradually over the years since the team's foundation in 1977. The rise was both due to a growth in the numbers on the hills and a growing awareness of our service. The number of members in the team, our experience and abilities grew with that rise in incidents and we are now a small but (we like to think) significant part of the state's front line services in the south east. With Covid however, like other emergency services, the team came under increased and unexpected strain.

Covid-19 began in late 2019 with a few references to illness in China. Anyone who speculated on the possibility of a widespread pandemic was seen as an alarmist at first, but soon those 'in the know' were very worried. The National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHET) was formed in January 2020, with the first cases reported in the country at the end of February that year. As the number of cases rose, with the first fatality the Government announced the closure of all schools, colleges and childcare facilities. From then to the end of restrictions early in 2022, there were times of social restrictions and three separate periods of lockdown. During the lockdowns, the desire to roam, to see a broader horizon meant that when we could go five kilometres away from home, the hills were full of people. This increase in hill walking, which seems to have continued up to the present day, was accommodated by the extension of car parks in the mountains, which are still being well used.

SEMRA responded to call-outs from An Garda Síochána and the HSE National Ambulance Service all through the Covid-19 emergency. An early decision was taken to source protective masks and to impose a strict safety regime of personal protection, social distancing, decontamination of equipment and vehicles, and mask wearing by all. This reassured both members and their families at home, though carrying a stretcher while mask wearing was very difficult. The normal routines of chatting together after a call-out were gone, leaving people feeling a bit isolated. This was countered by the introduction of Zoom sessions where members gave talks on a wide variety of topics — anything to be

talking to each other. A general feeling of fear and uncertainty was balanced by the fact that call-outs provided a rare and authorised reason to go to the hills, to travel on empty roads, something others badly wanted to do, to 'get out of the house'. There were mixed feelings about the lockdown, some valuing the call-outs as a break from a wearing isolation, while others found the extra time at home useful for various jobs.

The first operational response, in the full team Covid procedure, took place on 18 March 2020, for a female walker with a lower leg injury on the Sliabhnamon track. There was a full use of PPE and only a minimum of members called, to reduce the chances of cross-infection. As well as the normal range of incidents, we saw new locations for incidents such as an area in the Knockmealdowns which seemed to 'catch' lost walkers as well as increased 'traffic' in the Ballyhouras and Slieve Blooms. Coumshingaun became a hotspot also with many walkers, some experienced, some not, attempting the loop walk. A number had difficulty with navigation, in poor conditions, or with a descent of the steep part of the south ridge. The team walked a number of lost walkers out. Tragically, there was a fatality on this route in April 2021, a thankfully rare but terribly sad event for all involved. The incident included a major search, and a complicated recovery process involving all available members and several other services.

A happier event was the 'Ruby Rescue', where a small group of members went to Coumshingaun to rescue a sheepdog who had fallen down the back wall. We rarely do animal rescues, but this dog was a valuable working dog belonging to a local farmer. The worldwide response to the rescue was surprising, showing the power of the internet and the appeal of a good news story involving animals.

Unfortunately, while the increase in visitors to the hills was generally good for all, it did mean an increase in incidents. During Covid-19, the number rose to 47 incidents in 2020 and 51 in 2021, almost one a week. This was a significant increase of workload on a voluntary front line service. This rise in incidents was also seen by other teams. Kerry MRT, for example, had a period when they had nineteen call-outs in as many days, most of them with an arduous carry-out. As volunteers, each member must deal with their work and home responsibilities, as well

as being available 24/7/365. Covid put members under unexpected strain, in trying to protect themselves, the casualty, their families and their colleagues at work. In practical terms this meant travelling alone in private transport to incidents (additional cost), and strict infection control measures. It also meant that while we were expected to respond to call-outs, we were very restricted in our training. When restrictions eased, some members could still not attend, because they had vulnerable persons or healthcare workers at home.

Covid also put the team under governance and financial pressure. Normal meetings were not possible and the team, to maintain the rescue service, had to find new ways of working and communicating. Financially, all our normal ways of raising funds to run the Association ceased. Projects such as the equipping of our new base paused. The government grants received were a crucial factor in supporting the team to continue our service in very difficult times.

Looking back, team members are proud of how the team adapted to new realities, got and used new equipment and strict procedures, learnt new skills such as Zoom and above all maintained our mission in a time of increased call-outs and a lack of the normal group supports of meeting and discussing incidents. We learned to accommodate remote meetings (though some grew to hate them), a better awareness of biohazards and PPE and changes in first aid. All this was due to our dedication to our service, our ethos of constant improvement and a good team spirit. It is a matter of pride to the team that, as far as we know, no team member was infected with Covid from a team event. Perhaps we lost sociability, and some members were put under increased pressure. All we can hope for is that we will not see such a time again, though this can never be presumed. In the event, we did things that we would have laughed at had we been told a few years before. In retrospect, it is a tribute to the commitment of the team members to their mission that we continued to serve the public and An Garda Síochána in being the search and rescue service for the mountains and uplands of south east Ireland at a time of increased need and decreased public financial donations. ☘



### MARCH: SEMRA TEAM HEADS TO POLAND FOR WINTER TRAINING

Eight members of SEMRA took part in winter training with Polish Mountain Rescue, Tatrzańskie Ochotnicze Pogotowie Ratunkowe (TOPR) in the Tatra Mountains in Poland. Members learned many new winter rescue techniques and got to check out the team's vehicles and equipment.



Images © SEMRA.

### FEBRUARY: BOGGED DOWN IN POOLS OF FROG SPAWN...

Mourne team members faced an interesting rescue and recovery when called to a quad bike incident in the Western Mournes.

With reasonable phone comms with the solo casualty, they were able to determine the details and approximate location. The biker himself was wet, cold and shaken but otherwise unhurt with a 'bogged' quad bike in a less-than-accessible location. It was finally decided to recover the bike with the assistance of the team's Argo.

'Not necessarily something we would normally undertake, but we felt it necessary to reduce the potential for further risk should the casualty or others decide to return to recover the machine themselves, and also to reduce the potential damage to the surrounding environment. Navigating around every pool of frog spawn took some time!'



© Mourne MRT.



Images © Mayo MRT.



### FEBRUARY: MAYO TEAM JOIN COAST GUARD 118 FOR DAY OF INTER-AGENCY TRAINING





# Derby team breaks ground on their new base as work begins

## DAVID O'SULLIVAN DERBY MRT

It was a cold and wet Friday lunchtime as a small number of team members congregated at our land on the A52 in Mackworth. The wind, rain and road noise didn't dampen our spirits though, as we were gathering to celebrate the official start of our build project for the new base – a base to call home. We were joined by Derbyshire Constabulary's Chief Constable Rachel Swann who, together with team secretary Lucy Green and team leader Martin Cavill, hosted our festivities.

The notion of a permanent home was first raised back at the turn of the century (I couldn't resist, you don't get to write that very often). In 2000 it was suggested that the team investigate the possibility of buying out our currently rented garage, however this was unsuccessful. Since then the team has grown in operational numbers and the demands on training, continual personal development, and certification have put an extra burden on the garage.

In short, we've outgrown the space we have available. Add to this multiple flooding events at our current garage, requiring temporary evacuation and remedial works, and it all adds up to one thing... we need a new base.

The current plan has been some time in the making with various team members and supporters involved along the way. In 2014, we purchased a plot of land just off the A52 in Mackworth, since then several iterations of building plans have been made and we obtained planning permission in 2016. Fast-

forward to 2024, we've worked our way through prerequisites, raised enough funds to complete the first two phases of the project and, crucially, have now given the green light for the commencement of build.

Due to the logistics of getting people on site, we also held our first (semi-successful) livestream – more on this to follow as we clean up the road noise on the audio.

### HERE ARE SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS:

'The team is sixty years old this year,' says Martin Cavill, Derby team leader. 'In that sixty years we've been quite nomadic, trying to find places to train, keep our vehicles, look after our equipment, and we've always dreamt of having somewhere we can call our home, somewhere we could build a base. In 2014, we bought this patch of land, so ten years later after a lot of fundraising and a lot of effort on behalf of a lot of people, we've got to this point where we can start

the build which is obviously a momentous occasion.

'Today we're going to start the foundations, we're going to get the building up hopefully by the middle of the year, and then we need some more funds to do the fit out and complete the building – hopefully another few months after that.

'So, massive thanks to everyone that's been involved in this project since its inception in 2011. There's an awful lot of effort gone in, from team members, supporters, friends, family, donors, sponsors, everybody really, to get us to this point – so a massive thanks to all those.'

We were delighted to be joined by Chief Constable Rachel Swann, underlining the importance of the work we do.

'It is my absolute privilege and pleasure to come here to commemorate this occasion. We have a really strong, good working relationship with you in Derby Mountain Rescue Team. Keeping those people safe in the county – who live here, work here,



# NEWS ROUND

JANUARY > MARCH



come and visit – requires a really strong partnership effort. And it's those people like you, amazing people like you, who give up your time and volunteer to help keep those people safe particularly when they find themselves in a crisis.

'We are really lucky to benefit from such working. So as I say it's my absolute pleasure to come here and help break ground like this. I'm really glad you're going from strength to strength and wish you well for the continued fundraising and building of this new base.'

After the obligatory turning of turf and some photos, team secretary Lucy Green gave a closing statement.

'I wanted to say a few thank-yous, which honestly is not an easy task, because over the last couple of decades leading up to today so many people have touched this project and I didn't want to miss anyone. To that end, we'd like to recognise the support of everyone who has been involved in the purchase of the land we stand on here

today. To everyone who worked hard to get planning permission granted. To those who have worked tirelessly through all of the planning phases to this point so far. To all of our supporters who have selflessly donated their time and their money to our team to support us in our operations and getting us this far. And especially to our operational team members past and present who have kept the team operational, and kept the wheels turning saving lives while this project has come to fruition.

'Thanks also to Rachel for joining us here today and showing us your support as we embark on the next chapter in our Diamond Jubilee year.'

As you can see from the photos, work is now well underway. As well as raising a large amount of funds to ensure the successful completion of the project, we are also extremely fortunate to have been given many offers of help by our sponsors and local businesses offering a combination of free or at-cost services, products or plant –

which all add up to a substantial savings for the team.

We'll try to make regular updates as donations come in but, for now (and at the risk of missing some), in no particular order we'd like to thank regular sponsors Carter Jonas, Tippers Building Merchants and Tippers Kitchens, Alfred Belle, Darwin Forest and Sandybrook Luxury Lodge Holidays.

Also special thanks to Hitachi Construction Machinery, Longcliffe Quarries, Halso, Underwood Carpenter, Badger Commerce, AMG Groundworks, M Lambe Construction, D-Tox Waste Management, Anvil Hire, J C Balls and Sons, Don and Low, Aggregate Industries, Corden Group. 🙌

**Top left:** Derbyshire Chief Constable Rachel Swann, Martin Cavill and Lucy Green with team members in February. **Top right:** Works begins © Derby MRT.

**TURN TO PAGE 50 TO READ ABOUT THE TRAGEDY WHICH LED TO THE FORMATION OF MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAMS IN THE PEAK DISTRICT SIXTY YEARS AGO: FROM THE ARCHIVE, ISSUE 48, SPRING. ➡**



Search dog Bramble, a five-year-old English Shepherd has become the latest qualified search dog for Northumberland National Park MRT. Bramble's qualification is not just testament to her skills but a continuation of a legacy – her mother, Shola, and aunt, Fern, were both search dogs.

Bramble's journey to search dog status is a tale of dedication and hard work. Her sister, Dottie, already a qualified search dog, was a constant companion and inspiration. 'Our community played a unique role in Bramble's story,' says handler Andrew. 'Her name was chosen through a Facebook campaign, reflecting the public support for our team.'

The training process was intense and comprehensive, involving various stages from basic obedience to complex search and operational training. This rigorous training culminated in a challenging preassessment and final assessment, covering nine areas over five days. The effort invested in training a search dog like Bramble is monumental. The estimated equivalent cost is around £60k, considering the volunteer hours, training courses and additional expenses like fuel, food and insurance. To put it in perspective, it takes approximately 3,456 volunteer hours to train a search dog, a true labour of love and commitment. This commitment hasn't just been Bramble's, of course, Andrew has been with her every step of the way. 'Bramble is now an integral part of our team,' he adds. 'I'm looking forward to seeing her play a bigger part in helping others.'

## FEBRUARY: TWO NORTHUMBERLAND NATIONAL PARK DOG HANDLERS REACH NEW MILESTONES

Alongside Bramble's success, Trainee Search Dog Merlin and handler Mike passed their Stage 1 assessment with flying colours.

This assessment required Merlin to demonstrate his keen abilities in a challenging wooded environment. Tasked with finding multiple dogsbodies, he showcased his exceptional detection skills, displaying a strong, reliable 'indication and find' sequence. Their success marks the beginning of an even more challenging journey ahead. Merlin and Mike will now advance to Stage 2, where the stakes are higher. They will undergo training to search for longer durations and navigate through more complex areas, sharpening their skills.

'We'd like to say thanks to all our dedicated dogsbodies,' says Mike, 'for their commitment and support in this vital training process. These unsung heroes play a crucial role in training by hiding in various terrains, allowing dogs like Merlin to hone their search skills.'

**Opposite:** Northumberland's two newly graded search dogs. Left: Mike with Trainee Search Dog Merlin. Right: Andrew with Search Dog Bramble © NNPMRT.

**TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE TRAINING AND ASSESSMENTS OF SEARCH DOGS, HEAD TO [MOUNTAINRESCUESEARCHDOGS.ORG.UK](http://MOUNTAINRESCUESEARCHDOGS.ORG.UK)**

## JANUARY: BRIAN JOPLING GIVEN CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

South and Mid Wales awarded 'Joplo' the Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of the 'vast contributions and achievements in cave rescue over many years as a team member, associate team member and trustee'.



# The Four Inns Walk 1964

Mountain Rescue magazine, Issue 48, Spring 2014

## ROBIN KNOTT DERBY MRT

As the Peak District Mountain Rescue Organisation – and a number of the region's teams – celebrate their fiftieth anniversary, Robin Knott takes us back to the tragic events of 1964, the catalyst for a more structured mountain rescue service in the area.

The origin of the Four Inns Walk is unknown. A long-distance walk, it was used by various Manchester walking clubs, often as an initiation test. Then, in 1957 a member of the 51st Derby (California) Rover Scout Crew adapted it into a competitive hike for fellow Rovers. Ten teams of three men entered the first event.

Starting out at the site of the Isle of Skye Inn, the route went via Black Hill to a checkpoint by the Holme Moss TV mast and on over the moors to the Flouch Inn, at the cross-roads of the A616 and A628 on the edges of Langsett and Thurlstone Moors. From here it travelled over Bleaklow via Swains Head to the Snake Inn and thence over Kinder Scout to a checkpoint at the 1st Chapel-en-le-Frith Scout Group HQ. The final section took teams up over the hills, into the Goyt Valley, over the river by the

suspension bridge (before the Errwood Reservoir was built) and on to the finish at the Cat and Fiddle Inn.

The original route was some 50 miles long but has since been modified to around 45 miles. Lying around the 2,000 feet level with just over 4,500 feet of ascent and descent, the current route starts at the Church Hall in Holmbridge and proceeds to the site of the old Isle of Skye Inn. It then follows the Pennine Way over Black Hill to the Hey Moss Trig point, to the Hostel in Crowden, back on the Pennine Way to Torside, up Clough Edge to Doctors Gate and the Snake Pass Inn. After crossing Kinder Scout the next check point is the Nags Head Inn in Edale thence onto Chapel-en-le-Frith via the Chapel Gate path. Finally the route goes via the White Hall Outdoor Centre, the Errwood Valley to the Cat and Fiddle Inn and the finish in Buxton.

By 1964 the walk had grown into a national event with an entry list of 80 three-man teams with 40 being refused due to lack of accommodation and other logistical problems. The Glossop Rover Scout Crew was

providing rescue cover, with Edale team members on standby.

The weather forecast for 14 March 1964 was for 'showers with fine periods' with no mention of strong winds. The first teams set off at 6.00am as planned. Soon, many found the going over Black Hill quite unbearable and retired at Crowden.

About noon, the westerly wind increased in strength with heavy showers causing temperatures on the moor to be around 1–4°C, forcing most competitors to consider retirement at the Snake Inn.

Clothing, particularly waterproof clothing, wasn't as advanced as today. There were no breathable fabrics, and fleeces were yet to come. The standard inner garment was a string vest. Walkers often went out wearing shorts with ex-army 'gas capes' for rain protection and cotton fabric jeans were common (indeed, several competitors wore shorts or lightweight trousers that day).

Thanks to poor weather conditions, inadequate clothing, bad map and compass work and lack of experience in the

terrain, significant numbers got into trouble, with several teams taking the wrong course at Bleaklow Head, dropping into Grains in the Water and the Alport Valley — no particular problem to an experienced walker other than it being a long way down the Alport to the road and then some distance back to the Snake. Only 31 competitors passed the Snake checkpoint with 22 reaching the finish.

Glossop Rover Scouts recorded their first 'incident' at 1.15 pm when they helped six walkers from Doctors Gate to the Snake Inn. At 2.30 pm, they were called to assist walkers in the Alport Valley. As they moved up the Alport, the rescuers located an unconscious competitor by a sheepfold. He was placed on a stretcher and carried down towards Alport Farm, crossing the waist-deep river, to the Snake. Four competitors walking down the valley were used in the stretcher party which allowed some of the rescuers to proceed further up the valley where they found another competitor from a different team. They carried him off Bleaklow Moor to Alport Castle Farm, arriving at 7.15

pm. During the carry, one of the Glossop rescuers was injured when he fell 30 feet down a bank whilst carrying the stretcher. The casualty was transported to Woods Hospital, Glossop where he died, later that night. The rescue team, including the injured member, then returned to search for two more missing competitors.

By now, the organisers had contacted Derbyshire Police. At 4.30 am on the Sunday, snow started to fall heavily so efforts were abandoned for the night. Through Saturday night, the organisers double-checked all the records for accurate information about those still missing — not helped by the confusion caused by so many dropping out along the route. The police, in turn, involved other agencies including the RAF MRT based at Stafford (although later they claimed to have learnt of the search from the newspapers), Glossop and New Mills rescue teams, and National Park wardens. When daylight broke, a major search was launched, with about 145 searchers reported to be involved. At the end of the day there were still two people missing.

As Monday 16 March dawned, it was no longer snowing but snow lay some two feet deep — deeper in places. A reported 500 to 800 people volunteered over the three days, lining up along the A57 facing up the Alport valley. They were a very mixed bunch. Civilian mountain rescue team members, RAF MRS personnel, Rover Scouts and police in welly boots, helmets and capes waded through the deep snow, up the Alport Valley. Regularly the line would grind to a halt and communications were very difficult as only the RAF team members carried radios. In addition to the ground searches, the RAF sent one of their helicopters to assist, possibly the first incidence of a 'search and rescue' helicopter being used in the Peak District.

As dusk fell, a group of 51st Rovers and National Park Wardens were nearly at the top of the Alport Valley where it comes into Grains in the Water. Those in charge of the search decided to call it a day, as it would be dark by the time searchers reached the road. The group decided to continue



Above left: Down from the bleak Alport Moor, police and rescue parties carry the last victim of the blizzard which claimed the lives of three Rover Scouts out on an endurance test. Above right: A stretcher party brings down the body of the 21-year-old Rover Scout John Butterfield from Derbyshire's Alport Moor yesterday. The body was found lying in a stream.

Newspaper cuttings from Robin's book on the subject 'Four Inns Walk. The Story so Far', published in 2007, and reproduced here with thanks to Sheffield Telegraph and the British Library Board.

for a short while to check above a waterfall just around the corner. There they found the body of the third casualty face up in the stream, just above the waterfall.

On Tuesday 17 March a police officer searching in a group that had set off from Doctors Gate saw a torch lying in a stream and found a body face down in Nether Reddale Clough. At the inquest their time of death was placed at between 9.00pm on the Saturday and 9:15am on the Sunday.

It is easy to use the single word 'chaos' to describe these events but although this was the result, those involved were suddenly presented with enormous problems. The Four Inns Walk organisers had to care for all the walkers and staff spread across the Peak District. The lead rescue team were faced with a stream of casualties or imminent casualties. Communications on the hill were relatively sparse, except for the RAF, so coordination between the various groups was difficult. It was almost impossible for anyone to get an overall picture of what was going on and then to control the situation, especially if the numbers quoted as taking part in the search for the last two casualties are accurate.

Some of those present remember searching areas that, from the evidence in the snow had been visited already at least once. And they recall people entering and leaving the search at will or doing their own local search. Some semblance of order was brought to the

Alport line searches by spacing out RAF MRS personnel along the line with their pack radios.

The County Commissioner for Derbyshire immediately set up a Committee of Enquiry under the Chairmanship of Jack Longland, President of the BMC. The terms of reference included drawing lessons from the happenings of the 1964 Four Inns Walk. The report from this committee was circulated on 18 August. The conclusions pertinent to the organisers of the Four Inns Walk were that:

- Competitors should be better clothed and equipped.
- Competitors should be better informed of the symptoms and treatment of mountain hypothermia.
- The police should be provided with full details of the walk in advance.
- The rescue organisation should be able to respond quickly enough to save life in the event of an incident.
- The rescue organisation should be able to draw rapidly on sufficient organised and trained resources to meet the needs of a major incident.

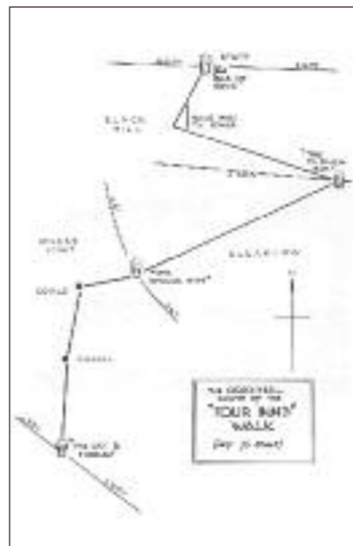
Later in August, a meeting was held at the Whitehall Outdoor Pursuits Centre where interested parties discussed the provision of mountain search and rescue in the Peak District following the tragic deaths of the three Rover Scouts. This meeting agreed on an efficient call-out system to aid casualties in the hills, largely based on a system used in the Lake District, and elected a panel of experts to control searches.

The foundations of the Peak District Mountain Rescue Organisation (PDMRO) had been laid.

Another outcome of the Four Inns tragedy was the work undertaken (with 51st Derby Rover Crew members as 'guinea pigs!') to further the understanding of accidental hypothermia. Dr Griffith Pugh was a Medical Research Council Scientist who, in 1950, had joined the Division of Human Physiology, set up to study the effects of extreme environments. A member of the 1953 British Everest Expedition, he was credited with solving many of the problems of high-altitude activity thus contributing to the success of the expedition.

Although hypothermia was well known in the context of immersion in cold water, the knowledge of what led to the condition then described as exposure (or mountain hypothermia) was only beginning to be appreciated. The original BMC publication formed an appendix to the report of a working party set up by the Outward Bound Trust in 1964. His studies led to his paper in the British Medical Journal in 1966.

At one point the guinea pigs were required to swallow an electronic thermometer to determine the change in inner and outer body temperature during prolonged exercise. Recovery of these pills led to a payment of 10/- (ten shillings, now 50p) on return to the Medical Research Institute! ☺



Above: View from Kinder © Kevin Corcoran; the original route drawing © Robin Knott; the current route drawing © Bob Rogerson, 4 Inns Walk Organising Committee.



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**Rescue 3 Rope Rescue Operator**  
Nov 18 (2 days)

**Rec Outdoor First Aid**  
Dates available from April to November  
check website

**Rec Mountain First Aid**  
Aug 31 (3 days), Oct 18 (3 days)

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# NEWS ROUND

JANUARY > MARCH



## FEBRUARY: OGWEN DEALS WITH SERIOUS HEAD INJURIES AND A LANGUAGE CHALLENGE FOLLOWING TEENAGER'S FALL ON TRYFAN

A mother and her fourteen-year-old son had attempted to climb Tryfan, but turned around at the North Tower. At some point, they attempted to descend via one of the gullies on the West Face, but the boy slipped and tumbled 20-30 metres suffering severe head injuries.

Photos: © Martin/Karl/Charley OVMRO.

His mum managed to scramble down, but was unable to call the emergency services due to lack of signal. She covered him in all their spare clothing and made the hard decision to run down on her own to get help, flagging down a passing motorist on arrival at the road. With Polish as a first language, communication with the informant was difficult and numerous 999 calls were received. As she was unable to say exactly where he had fallen, team leaders resorted to looking at photos on the mother's phone and two hill parties were deployed to search likely looking gullies. Rescue 936 was requested to search using their thermal imaging camera and eventually were successful in spotting him, well outside the team's search area. The winchman paramedic was deployed onto steep ground and able to confirm the boy was conscious, but very poorly. He requested help to secure them both onto the cliff and two team members were winched down with technical rope rescue equipment. Four more team members were then able to scramble up and helped package the casualty into the stretcher before he was lifted and flown to Alder Hey Children's Hospital.

© SMWCRT.



## FEBRUARY: CAVE AND MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAMS WORK TOGETHER TO RESCUE INJURED CAVER

South and Mid Wales CRT was called early one Sunday afternoon, to an injured caver in the Agen Allwedd system who required stretcher evacuation. Once the caver was brought to the surface, team members worked with their colleagues at Longtown MRT to transport them to the Coastguard helicopter for onward flight to hospital. Good collaborative work between cave and mountain rescue.



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Images © Severn Area Rescue Association.

# NEWS ROUND

JANUARY > MARCH

**JANUARY:** SARA FLOOD TEAMS DEPLOYED IN TEWKESBURY AND GLOUCESTER OVER SEVERAL DAYS



The Severn Area flood rescue teams carried out a number of evacuations from flooded homes – humans and pets (four cats from one house) – in one case having to first take a translator as the evacuees were refugees from overseas.

They conducted welfare checks and took in supplies to those who could not leave their homes, working alongside colleagues from Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service, social services, parish councils and Gloucestershire County Council to support residents. A few days later team members were invited to meet HRH The Duke of Gloucester when he and his wife visited the flood-hit areas, with the Duke talking to SARA members at two of his stops. SARA maintains six flood rescue teams on the National Asset Register, with all of their Mod 3 and Mod 4 qualifications delivered internally, by their own Rescue3 instructors.

## FEBRUARY: WINTER SKILLS MEET HIGH WINDS AND REINDEER

Eight members of Cleveland team undertaking their winter skills training weekend in the Northern Cairngorms, in the Coire Cas ski area, were met with winds gusting to 70 mph at summit elevations on the first day.

Team members were able to practise movement skills using ice axe and crampons and some entry level rope work. However, despite restricting their training area to the snow aprons below the crags of Coire an t-Sneachda, the team's technical rescue lead, Louis, said that even in the relative shelter of the coire basin, the gusts knocked them over at times. The second day began with a chance encounter with the Cairngorm reindeer herd as team members learned about Scottish snowpack and avalanche risk using the debris visible from several avalanches triggered the week before. Movement on steeper terrain and snowpack assessment were both practised before the team split with a small contingent topping out on Cairn Lochan and practising ice axe arrests on the return to Twin Burns.

Right: Winter skills training in the Cairngorm © Cleveland MRT.



# Getting to know our Scottish Mountain Rescue colleagues...



## Focus on Killin MRT

BY STEPHEN RAWLINSON



The Killin Mountain Rescue Team was established in 1967, primarily by local police officers based out of Killin and Crianlarich. This formalised the ad hoc nature of rescues with police officers calling on local shepherds and gamekeepers to assist in rescues and searches.

The team's patch is in the centre of the Southern Highlands, within the northern part of the Lomond and Trossachs National Park and radiating off the glens located along the A84 trunk road from Callander to Tyndrum and includes nineteen Munros or over forty hills above 2000 feet high.

However, the history of mountain rescue in the area goes back as far as 1874 when a Dundee businessman slipped on ice and fell to his death on Ben More at Crianlarich. The search was carried out by local shepherds who located the body with sheep dogs. No stretcher was available in these times and a ladder was used for the recovery. This incident is marked by the iron cross erected on the north side of Ben More. The infamous fact that the next highest mountain south of Ben More is located in the Alps, means winter incidents are common and unfortunately is still one of our accident hotspots with at least three fatalities in the last ten years located near the cross.

This spot is also unfortunately the location of one of the darkest days of mountain rescue in the UK. On 1 February 1987, a typical tasking with the assistance of an RAF Wessex aircraft resulted in the helicopter rotor striking a rock and crashing into the hillside. Team members, already on the hill, assisted in evacuating the helicopter. However, team leader and police sergeant

Harry Lawrie died in the collision. There has been much written about this incident, but from it, a team of leaders was born in Billy Stitt, Teddy Inglis, Bill Rose and Gus Cameron, tirelessly leading Killin MRT for over thirty years. They have only recently taken a step back, but have grown a strong team of dedicated and skilled members.

In January 2023, the team were training on the northern slopes of Ben More when a call-out came in to assist a male who had fallen on the southern slopes of the hill. A hasty party of two stayed with the gentleman for over two hours, till eight further members could assist with the necessary equipment. Unfortunately, whilst being evacuated he died in our care, but from this sad incident, positives have risen. His wife, family, friends and SSE colleagues have done a monumental effort in fundraising for the team and we have subsequently begun to work closely with SSE and their corporate team to support and educate staff who are interested in spending more time in the mountains. Capturing a completely different audience, who also have a strong focus on safety, has been fulfilling for the team in what was a traumatic experience.

Historically we could call upon a membership primarily of people who lived and worked in the hills and villages along this route. However, with changing land use, the growth of tourism and an ageing population, we are now calling upon a far wider field of people including outside of our team's area. With this change in membership, we are working closer with our six neighbouring mountain rescue teams to ensure those who need help get it more promptly.

Like many mountain rescue teams, our unique skill set is often utilised in our rural communities for non-mountain related incidents. For our team, this may be working with multi-agencies at rescues in many of our picturesque yet hazardous waterfalls such as the Bracklinn Falls or Falls of Falloch. The popular West Highland Way also passes through our patch, providing many a late-night call-out! Like any mountain rescue team, we are always happy to help others, whether it's drivers stuck in snow, checking on the elderly during day three of power cuts, or rescuing stuck sheep or dogs. Even with all the changes in equipment, technology and the call-outs, our members will still have the same sense of purpose of helping those in need and representing our local communities. 📍

FIND KILLIN MRT ON FACEBOOK @KILLINMRT OR VIA KILLINMOUNTAINRESCUE.SCOT



SUPPORTER STORIES

...We were overjoyed to be nominated by Sam Colmy for a donation of over £11,000 in January, thanks to outerwear brand ThruDark and their annual charity giveaway.

Members of the ThruDark community are invited to donate £10 and nominate a charity of their choice, with the winner selected at random. Twenty-nine-year old Sam grew up in London, but now lives a life of outdoor adventure in Scotland, where he runs, hikes and climbs.

'I chose Scottish Mountain Rescue because, since I have been going out onto the hills and into these remote locations, I have seen first-hand how quickly things can change or go wrong in the mountains. Thankfully I've never needed the assistance of mountain rescue, but I have seen them in action: it is honestly remarkable! I have great respect for everyone who volunteers their time and skills to help others.'

Thank you Sam and ThruDark! You can read the full story on: [scottishmountainrescue.org/meet-our-supporters-sam-colmy-and-thrudark](https://scottishmountainrescue.org/meet-our-supporters-sam-colmy-and-thrudark).

## News from Scottish teams

The winter has kept Scottish Mountain Rescue teams very busy, with a number of long call-outs in challenging conditions for casualties with significant injuries.

**Dundonnell MRT** were deployed along with two SARDA dogs to a fallen walker on Ben Wyvis. The team set out into deteriorating weather, braving high winds, blizzards and white-out conditions to locate the casualty at the base of rough craggy ground. Helicopter extraction from here wasn't possible, so the team faced a challenging belay of the casualty back up onto the ridge above, before stretching them off to flatter ground. Rescue 151 uplifted the casualty to hospital and the team stood down at 3.30 am.

**Tayside MRT** had a very busy start to the year, with six call-outs in the first two weeks of January. One particularly busy Saturday saw two simultaneous shouts to lower leg injuries on different hills. Neighbouring Killin team provided assistance so that Tayside team members could effectively manage both incidents.

We're incredibly proud of Paul and Sam and their search dogs Bowie and Rogue at **SARDA Scotland**. Rogue and her handler

Paul, of **Braemar MRT**, qualified at the end of March 2023. Just days later, the pair made history by finding a missing hillwalker on their first official call-out. The team were presented with the Scottish Award for Excellence in Mountain Culture at Fort William Mountain Festival's 20th anniversary in February. A wonderful honour for their dedication and skill!

**Arrochar MRT** managed a very efficient first call-out of the year on the Cobbler, the most distinctive hill in their patch. The team were training nearby when they were called to assist a casualty with a suspected broken arm. The casualty was quickly treated and successfully extracted by foot and 8x8 Argocat to a waiting ambulance. For Burns Night this year, the team gave the traditional 'Address to a Haggis' on BBC Scotland as part of the celebrations for Scotland's national bard, Robert Burns. [www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001vqpc](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001vqpc).



SARAA Drone pilots from **Galloway MRT** have recently demonstrated the incredible capabilities of the team's drones, managing to spot wild goats while testing their DJI Avata FPV. The team were later asked to help search for a pair of missing dogs, successfully located from the air. They then managed to get the dogs to follow the drone back to their take-off point, from where they were reunited with a relieved owner!

Above: Tayside MR © Tayside MRT. Below: Left: Paul and Sam with Rogue and Bowie © SARDA Scotland. Right: Arrochar team members on film © Arrochar MRT.





## SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN RESCUE WELLBEING INFORMATION

### Looking after your own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others in your team

**STEVE PENNY** SMR WELLBEING OFFICER

Scottish Mountain Rescue (SMR) aims to support teams to embed an understanding of personal resilience into the volunteer experience from recruitment to retirement, including how to support colleagues and what to do following incident trauma exposure. The Lifelines Scotland (NHS project) model of informal peer support reflects the evidence that early and ongoing support such as reassurance, information and kindness, ideally from people who know us — family, friends, and colleagues — helps to challenge stigma, normalises reactions and promotes the expectation of recovery. Most responders, most of the time, cope well.

**Lifelines Scotland:** [lifelines.scot](http://lifelines.scot) provides emergency service staff and volunteers with the knowledge, understanding and skills to look after themselves and their colleagues, allowing them to function well in their roles and for this experience to be both positive and rewarding. There are resources for family, friends and others (eg. employers who have staff who volunteer as responders). Lifelines runs facilitator-led learning opportunities for emergency response volunteers.

If you are looking for resources to support someone, it will help to try to listen carefully to them and explore what type of support will best suit their needs. You can also call/text the helplines for advice when supporting someone. You can call on someone's behalf with their permission since making that first call can be very difficult.

The SMR Team member wellbeing pages include a number of useful links as well as those signposted in this summary. You will find phone, text and web links as well as SMR specific support videos. There are also details of the SMR Benevolent Scheme. (Password available from your team): [scottishmountainrescue.org/team-pages/wellbeing-support](http://scottishmountainrescue.org/team-pages/wellbeing-support)

**SPEAK** If you, or the person you are supporting, wish to speak to someone:

- **999:** Call 999 if there is immediate threat – especially if taking own life has been attempted
- **NHS:** Call 111 for urgent medical advice (or contact/advise GP if less immediate urgency)
- **Samaritans:** [samaritans.org](http://samaritans.org) or call **116 123**
- **Breathing Space:** [breathingspace.scot](http://breathingspace.scot) or call **0800 83 85 87** (Also piloting a web-chat option)
- **Police Scotland Employee Assistance Programme (EAP):** Call **0800 046 5593**
- **Working Health Services** (for self-employed and small organisations): [healthyworkinglives.scot/workplace-guidance/Pages/Healthy-Working-Lives-services.aspx](http://healthyworkinglives.scot/workplace-guidance/Pages/Healthy-Working-Lives-services.aspx)
- **Able Futures:** [able-futures.co.uk](http://able-futures.co.uk) provides up to nine months of support: see website for details. Call **0800 321 3137** Monday to Friday 08.00 – 22.30

**TEXT:** If you, or the person you are supporting, prefer text support:

- **SHOUT:** [giveusashout.org](http://giveusashout.org) Text the word **BLUELIGHT** to **85258**

**READ/WATCH/LISTEN:** If you, or the person you are supporting, wish to access online resources:

- **Lifelines Scotland:** [www.lifelines.scot](http://www.lifelines.scot) (An NHS project specifically for the emergency service community in Scotland)
- **Police Scotland EAP:** [yourcareeap.co.uk](http://yourcareeap.co.uk)
- **National Wellbeing Hub:** [wellbeinghub.scot](http://wellbeinghub.scot) (Aimed at Health and Social Care sector in Scotland)
- **NHS:** [nhs24.scot](http://nhs24.scot) Links to NHS Inform and NHS 111

Please address any questions regarding this page to: [wellbeingofficer@scottishmountainrescue.org](mailto:wellbeingofficer@scottishmountainrescue.org)

## Focus on Scottish Cave Rescue



© Scottish Cave Rescue Organisation.

Scottish Cave Rescue Organisation (SCRO) was established in 1966 to provide a service to search for and rescue people and animals underground across Scotland. This obviously includes caves all over Scotland, but also the widely distributed disused mines — except coal mines. Though Scotland may not hold the renown for caving as some other parts of the UK, there are over 3,000 known caves in Scotland and the area is vast.

Assynt is probably the best known area in Scotland for caving, and some of the largest Scottish caves are here, but there are caves the length and breadth of Scotland, including many around the coast — which is over 6,000 metres long on the mainland — and other notable caving highlights such as Applecross and Skye.

The scale of the area brings challenges for SCRO: with such an area to cover, getting to a call-out for most of the team is a lengthy affair. Our members are split across Scotland from the central belt to Skye which aids response time, but with inevitable fragmentation. As a result, SCRO use a flexible approach to personnel in preference to a more rigid team structure which works well elsewhere. SCRO aim to keep healthy working relations with mountain rescue teams and several of our members are members of an MRT as well as SCRO. We have used joint exercises to increase familiarity between teams and the cave knowledge of teams such as Assynt as it's very likely they will be able to respond more quickly than SCRO.

In recent years SCRO invested in a van. This allows an identifiable point of contact versus the old solution of members' own vehicles and is fitted to carry the majority of

our rescue equipment and surface digital radio equipment as used across SMR. SCRO also use sub-surface radio to allow communications between underground sites if required, or a suitable underground location and the surface. Some practice is required to get useable signal underground and, because many Scottish caves are comparatively short by the standards of some southern areas, SCRO have also recently gone 'old school' with the addition of a field telephone to the communications kit. This allows simple, reliable comms underground, constrained only by the length of cable carried. In practice, it can be much quicker to set up than sub-surface radio and take away the need for comms by runner when the radio has not been successful. SCRO have no base, but have been gratefully adopted by Ochil MRT. We are now able to keep the van ready for use at their Post, which has an accessible location and is fairly central.

The SCRO year includes about seven large training events and exercises, set across Scotland and incorporating medical, comms and technical training, area searches and the use of specific equipment such as the Slix stretcher which is suited for use underground, and the Larkin frame, which allows safe hoisting over difficult edges. Additional external training is used for Single Rope Technique, rigging and medical skills.

Call-outs in recent years have been low, though after many years of waiting for a guide to be available in print, the recent publication of *Caves of Assynt* is likely to bring

more attention to the area. This is welcome, but brings an air of trepidation that the probability of SCRO being called upon might also increase.

In common with other teams, recruiting and keeping members and a full committee can be a challenge, though numbers are healthy at present. SCRO have been remarkably well-served for many years by an old guard of very experienced, knowledgeable and dedicated Scottish cavers, some of whom have been a stepping back from hands-on rescue duties in recent years, but generally have remained available to offer the benefits of their



experience or take on surface roles. We are always happy to hear from cavers interested in joining SCRO — anyone keen or curious should please contact the secretary via [secretary@scro.org.uk](mailto:secretary@scro.org.uk).

FIND SCOTTISH CAVE RESCUE ON FACEBOOK @SCOTTISHCRO OR VIA [SCRO.ORG.UK](http://SCRO.ORG.UK)

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