

# mountain rescue

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WELCOME TO  
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Mountain Rescue is the **only**  
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Editor: Judy Whiteside  
07836 509 812 • editor@  
mountain.rescue.org.uk

Media Officer: Andy Simpson  
07836 717 021 • media@  
mountain.rescue.org.uk

Ad sales: Caroline Davenport  
07726 933 337 • caroline@  
media-solution.co.uk

Proofreader: Gina Rathbone  
ginarathbone.com

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## Cover story

Derby team  
members during  
a training evening  
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Derby MRT



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Landscape Ambassador Mountain Rescue Team

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Brand NEW titles just in

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## HEAD TO OUR BOOKSHOP FOR NEW SUMMERTIME READING, GIFTS AND PUZZLES AND HELP SUPPORT MOUNTAIN RESCUE

Check out our bookshelves for additions to our range of titles and some old favourites, including wellbeing, true life stories, navigation, and fun books to encourage the next generation of hill enthusiasts safely into the outdoors. With each purchase you'll be making a very welcome donation to mountain rescue of around 30-40% of the cover price. Go to [shop.mountain.rescue.org.uk](http://shop.mountain.rescue.org.uk) and see for yourself.

## ANNUAL REVIEW 2025 PUBLISHED...

Put together by Sally Seed and Judy Whiteside, the review provides a comprehensive overview of how the mountain rescue year has unfolded across England and Wales. This year we elaborate even more on the national stats, thanks to our collaboration with Ordnance Survey. They've taken the numbers and crunched them into some fascinating graphs and illustrations, enabling us to really understand where we need to focus our future safety messages. Turn to page 47 to read a little more...

## GROWING OUR DIGITAL NETWORK...

We've had a LinkedIn presence for some time, but only recently begun to use it to best advantage to showcase our serious side. Check it out for updates on publications, stats and press releases.



## ACCESSING THE MREW ONLINE SHOP (TEAMS)

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. We require the following:

- 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).

EMAIL [OFFICE@MOUNTAIN.RESCUE.ORG.UK](mailto:OFFICE@MOUNTAIN.RESCUE.ORG.UK) OR CALL 0330 043 9101



To access the digital bookshelf (in the digital version) click on any cover and go straight to that issue.

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

Reminder that you can 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.

The **Publications** section holds all the logos for teams who use the MREW roundel.

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).



## MIKE PARK CEO, MOUNTAIN RESCUE ENGLAND AND WALES

Ten months on from all our 'engaging, educating and entertaining' in September, 2024 and questions are beginning to be asked about the next conference. Existing and potential programme and magazine advertisers, exhibitors and sponsors are asking, because they have budgets to plan — and prospective delegates are asking because there's an expectation that two years from the last one, there'll be another. But here we are with nothing in anyone's diary. So, yes, we do need to talk about the conference...

We've been running national mountain rescue conferences for twenty-five years or so, arguably raising the bar of expectation with every one.

I was reminded this week of the UK Millennium Conference at Lancaster University — run in collaboration with Scottish Mountain Rescue and Mountain Rescue Ireland — when we aimed for (and got), 500 delegates from across the UK. And thanks to National Lottery Charity Board funding we were able to substantially subsidise tickets for team members.

The 2002 UK Conference, at Edinburgh's Heriot-Watt University, aimed for similar numbers attending (and once again achieved), this time supported by a Community Fund grant which allowed us to offer tickets to our members at just £25!

Since then, there have been conferences in Dublin, Bangor, Stirling, Lancaster and two in Leeds, before returning to Lancaster last year. Occasionally we've missed a year or two — most notably when Covid put a stop to everyone's fun — but mostly we've aimed to run our conferences at two-year intervals. Which would put us at September 2026 for the next one.

Sadly that's not going to happen. But the good news is, we're aiming now for September 2027.

### WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM CONFERENCE 2024?

In October last year, from her point of view as conference chair, Judy Whiteside put

together a comprehensive report, analysing the feedback received leading up to, during and following the conference weekend. The majority was overwhelmingly positive, but there were critics too, and these are honestly represented in this 'warts'n'all' document. The report divides feedback into the categories of sponsors, delegates, exhibitors and speakers, as well as the conference team, and gives a broad brushstrokes breakdown of the costs involved weighed against income, and concludes that these conferences have an intrinsic value to our mountain rescue community. Judy's document is essentially a blueprint for future conferences.

### SO WHAT IS THE VALUE OF OUR MOUNTAIN RESCUE CONFERENCES?

'In terms of how much these things cost,' says Judy, 'I frequently heard the expense of holding a conference framed as a "loss" to MREW. In fact, I am still hearing this despite my best efforts to argue the case in my report! I suggested that this be robustly reframed as a "value-added cost" rather than a loss, which would better reflect that it has a value far beyond the bottom line.

'Why? For the same reason we've run conferences for the last twenty-five years... because they offer a unique opportunity for grassroots team members from across the UK to get together with like-minded colleagues from the wider rescue community — and also to meet, in a less

formal way, those who represent them and their interests at national, statutory and government level.

'It's an opportunity to hear new ideas, learn new skills and have your thinking challenged. An opportunity perhaps to sit with members of another team or region over a dinner table and find yourselves exchanging numbers and planning joint training sessions you might never have previously considered. Witness Peak District team members travelling up to Cockermouth for a weekend exercise, earlier this year (see page 19)!

'It's an opportunity to see how other teams are approaching the same challenges, and to appreciate that different teams have different challenges to yours, but you are all part of the mountain rescue family.

'It's also an opportunity to socialise and chat without agenda with like-minded people, from far beyond your own team, region or country.'

I agree that few of these things happen at the national meetings, preoccupied as they must be with more formal business matters and a tight schedule. Training days, or even weekends, tend towards the more practical and are necessarily more limited and focused in terms of numbers attending.

However, Judy also reminds me that in her report she recommended that, if we were to have a conference in 2026, work should begin before the end of 2024. And that, with ten months now flown by and still no decision made, we've somewhat missed the boat! That's why we're now looking at

2027, to give ourselves some thinking time. That said, if we're going to go ahead, we need to have things up and running BEFORE THE END OF THIS YEAR (for the avoidance of doubt, that's 2025!) so we can secure the speakers and venue we want, begin talking to potential advertisers, exhibitors and sponsors, and start promoting to team members.

### WHAT WE NOW NEED FROM YOU, OUR TEAM MEMBERS

So where do we go from here? Well, first of all we're looking for YOUR feedback.

We think we already know the answer, thanks to those who fed back last year, but do you agree? Are these mountain rescue conferences worthwhile? Do you agree they add value to your mountain rescue experience? And what form should they take?

If we do go ahead, we would need to gather an organising team who will work together to make this happen. And, given that the same individuals have been running these events for those twenty-five-plus years, maybe it's time for some fresh blood? Some new ideas. New energy. Taking the learning of previous years and raising the bar still higher again.

'I admit I kept pushing hard against that bar last year,' says Judy, 'particularly with my co-chair (who also happened to be in charge of the purse strings). But I was determined to aim higher than before. So we engaged more outside speakers — professionals in their field — alongside our own mountain rescue experts. We invested in external professionals in various aspects of conference organisation, such as exhibition sales and management. And we dared to ask more of our sponsors — who came up absolute trumps!

'We also changed the format on the Saturday morning — which gave us time to really dive into our wellbeing theme — and moved the after-dinner speaker to pre-dinner to maximise audience attention.'

Running conferences has always been a major organisational undertaking, but these days there are so many other things to consider — quite apart from the increasingly stringent legal requirements, there's the ever-growing demands on our team members' time. Giving two years of your time to organise a conference in your 'spare time' is not a commitment any of us would take lightly, arguably an impossible ask.

### AS I SEE IT, WE HAVE THREE CHOICES AND A FEW QUESTIONS TO ANSWER...

We aim to have a plan together to present to the trustees by October, and to move forward with that plan with immediate effect. With this in mind, I would ask you to consider the following three options and let us know your thoughts...

**Look at the options below and let us know what YOU believe could be the way forward:**

- Option One:** We go back to being run entirely internally — bearing in mind all of the above. Consider, for example, whether you would prefer us to return to a more insular conference, using only mountain rescue personnel, or whether we should continue to welcome and embrace the voices, expertise and experience of speakers from outside mountain rescue.
- Option Two:** Continue with the mix of voluntary and professional input. This worked well in 2024 — and takes some of the pressure off those who are willing to volunteer, but might not be available 24/7. In the final few months leading up to the event, we can guarantee that the organisational demands become a full-time occupation — and there really is no hiding place. The responsibility buck stops with you.
- Option Three:** Go fully external, which would entail surrendering an element of control in terms of both organisation and management — although we would hope to exert considerable influence in subject matter and direction.

### WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE INVOLVED?

**And do you have a particular skill set to contribute?**

There are many aspects, skills and disciplines involved: admin, finances, delegate booking, venue liaison, exhibition management, timetable planning and speaker booking, branding and programme design, website liaison, health and safety, delegate registration, merchandising... to name a few. How could YOU help?

### HOW MUCH TIME CAN YOU COMMIT?

**This really is key. Because once we start, we need to sustain effort and commitment to bring the conference over the line in 2027.**

Please take a few moments to complete our Google form here:

[forms.gle/6WFzCmABpinjeWA6](https://forms.gle/6WFzCmABpinjeWA6)  
by 31 August 2025.

OR email  
[conference@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:conference@mountain.rescue.org.uk)

**PS.** If you'd like a little more detail, you can access Judy's Conference Report via [online.flippingbook.com/view/658513726/](https://online.flippingbook.com/view/658513726/)

Opposite: Crib Goch © William Barton.  
Right: Just a small reminder of the fun we had in September 2024 © Scott van der Zanden.





## Grangers partners with MREW to support teams

**PAUL SMITH** MREW EQUIPMENT OFFICER

For two years, MREW has been working in close partnership with Grangers, a UK-based leader in performance aftercare products. That collaboration is now being taken to the next level, with the launch of a comprehensive support package designed to help mountain rescue team members keep their gear functioning at its best — whatever the weather.



In May 2025, Grangers became the official aftercare partner of MREW, with an exciting offer for all MREW teams. The initial set-up includes:

- A free refill station per team base for Grangers Performance Wash and Clothing Repel
- 10L of product to fill the station
- A 300ml bottle of Performance Wash
- Access to exclusive 80% discounts on key products like Footwear + Gear Cleaner, Footwear Repel Plus and G-Wax.

But the benefits don't stop at set-up. Teams and members will also gain:

- Ongoing wholesale discounts to keep refill stations stocked
- Training — virtual or in-person — on how to properly care for technical clothing and equipment
- 40% off RRP at Grangers.co.uk for team members and their friends and families via the Pro Programme
- Promotional support from Grangers, helping to highlight the life-saving work

of mountain rescue volunteers through digital platforms and social media.

This partnership reflects a shared commitment to protecting MREW volunteers who protect others. Whether it's battling high winds on the fells or enduring freezing rain during a call-out, properly maintained kit is not a luxury — it's essential. I hope that by now, everyone will have taken full advantage of this support — if not, or to find out more, email me at [equipmentofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:equipmentofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk).

## Stretcher servicing and weight testing: a life-saving standard...

In mountain rescue, reliability isn't a luxury — it's a necessity. The stretchers we rely on are more than just equipment. They are lifelines that bridge the gap between the casualty and definitive care. Whether it's a Bell, Titan, Alpine or another model from the approved list, every stretcher must perform without fault under immense pressure. That's why servicing and weight testing are not optional — they are mandatory.

### WHY IT MATTERS

Our stretchers operate in some of the most hostile terrain and challenging conditions imaginable. Exposure to mud, snow, salt, water, UV and heavy loading takes its toll — even on the most well-built frames. Regular servicing ensures all components, from harness buckles to pivot joints, remain operational and safe. And weight testing, validates the stretcher's structural integrity

under load. Put simply: these checks are what stand between a safe evacuation and a catastrophic failure.

### THE CONSEQUENCES OF NON-COMPLIANCE

**A stretcher that is out of date for servicing or weight testing is not insured.** If a failure occurs and your records are not current, your team — and the casualty — could be

left dangerously exposed, both physically and legally. Additional risks include:

- Immediate grounding of the stretcher during inspections or audits
- Team liability in the event of equipment failure or injury
- Loss of operational readiness if a stretcher is withdrawn from use unexpectedly
- Breach of trust with partner agencies, patients and the public

### BOOKING REQUIREMENTS: ACT EARLY, STAY COVERED

To support in maintaining compliance, MREW supports teams with full weight testing and servicing for any stretcher on the approved list, at an approved service centre. However, to ensure compliance, and to keep the process efficient and fair to all, **stretchers must be booked in at least six months in advance.**

Booking is simple and can be done via the Equipment area of the MREW Moodle. Leaving it too late risks delays — and, worse, could render your team non-operational during a critical call-out. ☹️

**Left:** Stretcher handling with Western Beacons MRT © Ed Smith. **Top:** Grangers display © Grangers,



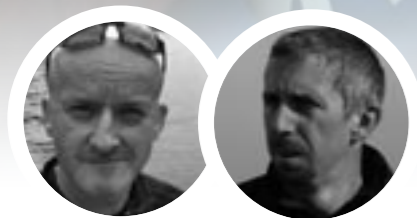
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# Protecting the vulnerable in high risk environments



**DAVE OTTER** MREW TRUSTEE  
& SAFEGUARDING LEAD

**ALISTAIR MORRIS** MREW MEDICAL DIRECTOR  
& DEPUTY SAFEGUARDING LEAD

We have duty of care, as citizens, to protect others from harm, exploitation and abuse. This duty is simply to report a concern to the police or social services. For team members in search and rescue this responsibility is no different and, although we may initially report through our incident or team leadership, we are expected to have better knowledge and understanding.

Teams operate in challenging and unpredictable environments, providing critical emergency support to individuals in distress. We provide a lot of pastoral care and support during a rescue ensuring the casualty or casualties have full trust in the team so we can rescue them safely, even if this is simply placing them in a stretcher and carrying them off. We are effectively safeguarding them from further harm by rescuing them.

However, in a rescue context, safeguarding is not just about preventing harm during an operation — it's also about being aware of the broader vulnerabilities of those involved, especially children, young people and adults at risk. Because we deal with vulnerable people as well as people who are at a vulnerable point in their lives, we should have a better understanding of safeguarding, and teams should have safeguarding policies and procedures (as a requirement of their status as a charity), so we can act appropriately to help that individual.

## WHAT IS SAFEGUARDING IN SEARCH AND RESCUE?

'Safeguarding in search and rescue' refers to the procedures and practices used to protect vulnerable individuals who may come into contact with team members during a rescue operation, training, or community engagement. This includes:

- Casualties or missing persons
- Family members or companions at the scene
- Members of the public involved in incidents
- Members of the public at engagement or community events.

Mountain rescue teams must be prepared to recognise and respond appropriately to signs of abuse, trauma or neglect, even when physical injury may be the presenting issue. As rescuers or casualty carers, we have established a particular trust and confidence with a person, casualty, missing person or bystander. It is not unusual for them to disclose some important information to us, rather than to others at the scene or family members. It is important we know what to do in that situation.

## WHO IS VULNERABLE?

Within legislation the two main categories of people who are classed as vulnerable are:

- **Children:** Defined as 'under the age of 18'
- **Adults:** Defined as 'a person who is over 18 who may be eligible for community care services, by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness who is or maybe is unable to take care of him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against harm or exploitation'.

Through our searches or rescues it is highly likely we will be involved with someone who is classified as vulnerable.

However, being 'vulnerable' is not a black and white state — many of our casualties are to some extent vulnerable due the fear of having had an injury in a remote location. Families and the companions of someone who has had fatal or life-threatening injuries are vulnerable, even if physically uninjured themselves.

## TYPES OF ABUSE

- Physical abuse — direct physical harm or injury
- Sexual abuse and exploitation, grooming
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect — lack of access to food, clothing, shelter, heating, stimulation or activity, personal and medical care
- Maltreatment
- Domestic abuse
- Trafficking, exploitation and gangs
- Online abuse/bullying and cyber bullying
- Non-recent abuse.

## MORE INFORMATION HERE:

Types of Adult Abuse:  
scie.org.uk



Types of Child Abuse:  
nspcc.org.uk



## THE UNIQUE SAFEGUARDING CHALLENGES IN SEARCH AND RESCUE

Mountain rescue environments present several distinct safeguarding risks:

### ● Isolated and Remote Settings

Rescues often take place in secluded areas, where communication and oversight are limited. This increases the need for strong safeguarding protocols to protect both the rescued individual and the rescuers.

### ● High-Stress Situations

Casualties may be in shock, injured, or mentally distressed. Vulnerabilities such as mental health issues, substance misuse or domestic abuse can surface during rescue operations.

### ● Physical Contact

Rescuers often need to administer first aid, carry casualties or help them into harnesses. This close physical contact must be conducted respectfully and professionally, with awareness of personal boundaries and consent wherever possible.

## THE KEY PRINCIPLES OF SAFEGUARDING IN SEARCH AND RESCUE

### ● Awareness and Vigilance

All team members should be trained to recognise signs of abuse or neglect and understand the broader context of vulnerability. For example, a missing person may be fleeing abuse, or a distressed companion may disclose safeguarding concerns.

### ● Respectful Communication

How rescuers speak to and support casualties can have a lasting impact. It is vital to treat individuals with dignity, explain actions clearly, and provide reassurance without making assumptions or promises that cannot be kept.

### ● Clear Reporting Procedures

Teams must have a designated safeguarding lead or officer, and clear procedures for reporting concerns, both internally and to external agencies such as police or social services. Check your team policy/procedure on how to report.

### ● Confidentiality and Record-Keeping

Any concerns or disclosures should be documented accurately and shared only with those who need to know. This helps ensure appropriate follow-up and legal compliance.

## POTENTIAL SAFEGUARDING SCENARIOS IN SEARCH AND RESCUE

**Scenario 1:** A young person is found injured and alone. During the rescue, they hint that they are afraid to go home. The rescuer listens calmly, reports the concern through the safeguarding lead and ensures appropriate agencies are notified.

**Scenario 2:** A rescuer notices a teammate behaving inappropriately toward a child during a community event. The concern is recorded and reported confidentially to the safeguarding officer for investigation.

**Scenario 3:** A casualty being rescued from a cliff edge becomes agitated and refuses assistance. The team recognises signs of mental distress and manages the situation sensitively, contacting mental health professionals post-rescue.

**Scenario 4:** A casualty or bystander makes an allegation against a team member. This is investigated by the safeguarding lead/team leader and, due to good documentation and the team following safeguarding procedures, no concern is found.

## The 4 Rs

SAFEGUARDING IN SEARCH AND RESCUE CONTINUED

## 1 Recognise

- Listen to what they are saying and take it seriously.
- Reassure that having made the disclosure that they have done the right thing.
- Give them time to talk and do not probe or ask leading questions. Investigation is not your responsibility.

## 3 Report

- Report the information via your team safeguarding procedures.

## WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE MAKES A DISCLOSURE

If a child, young person or adult at risk tells you that they, or someone they know, is being abused: Keep calm and don't panic. The follow the 'Four Rs': Recognise, Respond, Report and Record.

## 2 Respond

- Let them know what you are going to do.
- Do not promise to keep secrets. All allegations of harm or potential harm must be acted upon.
- Explain to the child, young person or adult at risk that you will share this information with a senior member of your team.
- In cases of safeguarding where a vulnerable person is at risk, or potential risk, then casualty confidentiality can be breached with those who need to know. If in doubt speak to your team safeguarding lead first.

## 4 Record

- Record in writing all information around the event.

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## SAFEGUARDING IN SEARCH AND RESCUE CONTINUED

### PROTECTING MEMBERS — SAFE WORKING PRACTICES

It is essential that all team members/volunteers are conscious of how they should conduct themselves to minimise the risk of finding themselves as the subject of any allegations. All members/volunteers should be aware of the following summary of things to do and not to do when working with children, young people and adults at risk.

#### 'DO'

- Read and follow your team safeguarding policy and procedures
- Attend team, or access Moodle, for safeguarding basic training
- Report any safeguarding concerns
- Report any concerns about the conduct of other members/volunteers
- Record in writing all relevant incidents
- Work in an open and transparent way
- Discuss and report any incidents of concern, or that might lead to concern, being raised about your conduct towards a child, young person or adult at risk
- Report any incidents that suggest an individual may be infatuated with you — or taking an above-normal interest in you
- Dress appropriately for your role
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact
- Ensure you understand the rules concerning physical restraint
- Where physical contact is essential for health, safety or educational reasons, gain the individual's permission for that contact wherever possible
- Allow individuals to change clothes with levels of respect and privacy appropriate to their age, gender, culture and circumstances
- Avoid working in one-to-one situations with vulnerable individuals
- Be careful about recording images of children and do this only when it is an approved activity
- Fully cooperate with any investigation into safeguarding issues.

#### 'DON'T'

- Take any action that would lead a reasonable person to question your motivation and/or intentions
- Misuse in any way your position of power and influence over any situation
- Use any confidential information about an individual to intimidate, humiliate or embarrass anyone
- Engage in activities out of the team areas/settings that might compromise your position with children, young people or adults at risk
- Establish or seek to establish social contact with individuals outside of team settings
- Accept or give gifts in any circumstance.

### WHY IT MATTERS

Search and rescue is built on a foundation of trust, courage and care. While our primary goal is to save lives, the responsibility doesn't end when the casualty is safe. By embedding safeguarding into search and rescue culture, teams help protect the vulnerable, support mental and emotional well-being, and uphold the highest standards of public service. By having embedded safeguarding practices and procedures within teams this also will help protect rescuers should allegations be made.

### CONCLUSION

Safeguarding is not an add-on to mountain or cave rescue — it is a core responsibility. Whether rescuing a lost hiker, attending a community event or supporting a traumatised family, every team member plays a role in creating a safe and respectful environment. By being prepared, trained and vigilant, search and rescue teams ensure that their commitment to saving lives includes protecting dignity, wellbeing, and human rights — even in the most extreme circumstances.

### FURTHER RESOURCES:

Online training and draft team documents are available on Moodle: Log in to your Moodle account, then go to 'Search Categories' > 'Safeguarding' > 'Safeguarding Online Training'.

### TO REGISTER



Go to [tiny.cc/Moodle4MR](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).

## INTRODUCING TWO NEW OFFICERS TO THE MREW TEAM



### DEBORAH POURKARIMI MREW FINANCE DIRECTOR

Deborah takes on the role of Finance Director, taking over from Penny Brockman. She introduced herself to the membership at the meeting in May and was officially voted in as an officer and trustee, having been co-opted into the role for the last few months.

'I am a Chartered Accountant with many years' experience working in both auditing and banking. About fifteen years ago I made the move from Finance to the Charity Sector, after studying for a postgraduate diploma in charity accounting and financial management at City University. I have been involved in several charities, in senior finance roles and also as a trustee.

'Most recently, I was Chief Operations Officer for a Whitehall-based Research Institute, responsible for finance as well as a wide range of other functions including risk and compliance, legal, HR, IT, facilities and events.

'Since "retiring" I have moved to the Lake District, and I am now excited to have the opportunity to become involved in the work of MREW.'

### JON GODDARD MREW VEHICLE OFFICER

Jon takes on the role of national vehicle officer, picking up the reins from Chris Jones. A Central Beacons team member since 1998, he retires this year from running his own long-established business as a building contractor, and currently works as an ADI and fleet driver trainer.

Since completing a five-day response driving course with South Wales Police in 2005, he has undertaken this role during numerous call-outs with the team over the years. He initiated a steering group tasked to review his team's driving policy, driver training and vehicle maintenance, and helped lead the team's vehicle group with acquiring loan vehicles immediately after the devastating fire at their base. He subsequently led the project to replace all three team vehicles. He has also run several on-road RoSPA and MREW off-road 4x4 courses for the team and region.



PR consultant and media trainer **Sally Seed** looks at an aspect of publicity and PR and suggests ideas to build on for the future.



## Top tips for broadcast interviews

So far this year, we've delivered two Level 1 Media Spokesperson training courses, building on experience from a pilot in summer 2023. Each delegate will have their own lessons and learning from the interview analysis and workshop process, but experience over Easter with the stats campaign showed just how urgently we need to spread that learning to others — hence this quarter's column.

### MORE, DIFFERENT AND YOUNGER SPOKESPEOPLE

When discussing the Easter stats campaign with OS, it was clear we were going to need a few under-30s spokespeople if we were really going to offer the media what they wanted around the growth in incidents involving 18-24-year-olds.

Huge thanks go to Harry, Lucy and Lindsay (all PDMRO) who were on standby in the run up to Easter — as well as Mike Park, Nick Owen and Phil Kirby (both Langdale Ambleside) who didn't meet the age criteria (!) but took interviews too. But we still struggled. Some media wanted someone from a specific area, some wanted a spokesperson to be in central London, some wanted a Welsh speaker, some only wanted to talk to the CEO.

What became apparent was that, at the moment, sometimes someone may need to take on a national media spokesperson role at short notice and without one-to-one training, if MR as a whole is going to grab the opportunities. So, what follows aims to help.

### TOP TIPS FOR BROADCAST INTERVIEWS

These are extracts from a document created by North Wales regional comms and media lead, Jacqui Hanson, and consistent with presentations I've made and with the media training delivered by Helen Nugent and James Richardson at Gatto Media.

### BEFORE THE INTERVIEW PREPARE AND PRACTICE

- You will be nervous — this is a good thing and quite natural. Complacency can lead to mistakes or sound monotonous.
- What do you want to say and how are you going to say (and maybe show) it?
- Have no more than two or three key messages you can repeat and reinforce as needed.
- Prepare a few simple facts and figures that are relevant to those messages.
- Have clear in your head any 'no go' areas such as criticising others or talking about an aspect that is not a mountain rescue responsibility.
- There is no such thing as 'off the record'. If you don't want to hear it, don't say it, even once the microphone is off.

### DURING THE INTERVIEW 1: BEHAVIOUR AND ETIQUETTE

- Look like an MR volunteer — wear the kit and choose a background that's appropriate.
- Ask the journalist whether you should look at them or at the camera.
- Avoid giving one word or very short answers — it comes across as dismissive.
- But avoid lengthy or complex answers too — it's an interview, not a monologue.
- Don't fidget or move about, don't sway or jangle keys in your pockets — our media trainer, Helen Nugent, recommends having a tissue in your pocket to shred if you really need something.

### DURING THE INTERVIEW 2: MAKING YOUR POINT

- Tell the truth and nothing but the truth — never lie, never speculate and you don't have to volunteer the whole truth all the time either.
- If you don't know the answer, say so. And if it's not appropriate for you to be the person commenting or answering that question, say so.
- Use the journalist's questions to lead the conversation to your key messages — the points that you want to make.
- Avoid jargon, including acronyms — even 'MR'!
- After an incident, remember that you're talking about people, walkers, cyclists, climbers, visitors etc.

### AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Expect snippets from your interview to be used across the day and on multiple platforms (website, socials, later bulletins).
- Watch or listen to yourself, ideally with someone else from the team.
- Main question to ask is whether you got your message across — that was why you did it!
- But then consider what else went well, what went less well and what you'd do differently next time.

### MORE TRAINING FOR MORE PEOPLE

This is both a funding and a logistics challenge. Finding a convenient date and a suitable venue for the right number of people (ideally ten), with maximum availability AND the trainers available is a juggling act. We've managed it so far for North West England and for North Wales, as well as the pilot in Trafford Park, Manchester.

Next on the list is a combined South Wales and PenMacra course, but I am aware that there's demand in the North East and Peak District/Pennines as well. With three more Level 1 courses in 2025 and into 2026, we'd have trained sixty people in all, with a good geographic spread and a wide range of experience and expertise. That's probably where we need to be.

But I have a big ask from readers of this column — please be thinking now about who on your team should have this training.

Like the first thirty, the next thirty people need to be the right people, those who are clear, calm and concise, and who are in the key roles (or likely to be in those roles in future) that audiences and listeners would expect to represent mountain rescue.

100% of those on the most recent workshop would recommend it to other teams or others in their team. And, despite some nerves and concerns, the recorded interview on camera and subsequent analysis was considered 100% valuable and worthwhile by those who took part.

Do you have a couple of effective spokespeople on your team? If so, great — if not, get in touch and I can start the juggling all over again.

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.

**PS.** If you're involved in your team's publicity or media (social or otherwise), but you've not heard of the Media and Comms Network, please get in touch or send me a Friend request on Facebook so I can invite you into the online group. We have almost 150 members at present and it's proving a useful way of sharing ideas, resources and opportunities. ☺



**Left:** NEWSAR's Mike Jones receives feedback. **Below:** Onor Crummay of MönSar while being interviewed © Sally Seed. **Above:** Nick Owen on screen and Mike Park in the studio, for a BBC Breakfast interview in April with Naga Munchetty and Charlie Stayt, looking at what is driving the rise in call-outs to mountain rescue teams © BBC.





# Strength in collaboration: A united approach to mountain rescue training across England, Wales and Scotland

**PHIL 'RIGGER' RIDLEY** MREW TRAINING OFFICER

Obviously training continues in all topic areas, and I'm pleased to see some of the projects the Training Subcommittee (TSC) have started are beginning to show results. Building on the agreed values of Teamwork, Excellence, Caring and Passionate, earlier this year, I asked Dan Mazhindu and Toby Green to become TSC deputies to help develop and lead on a couple of wider training projects — I suppose you could call it a 'Mountain Rescue Inter-Regional Collaboration and Learning Programme'.

## LOOKING AHEAD, A CULTURE OF COLLABORATION

This project is more than just a training schedule. It's about building a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement. Surely by learning together, training together and sharing experience, mountain rescue teams across the UK will be better equipped, more connected and more aligned in their purpose: to save lives in challenging environments.

Together, we can build a stronger, more unified future for mountain rescue, rooted in collaboration, shared experience and a commitment to excellence.

Teams across the UK are renowned for their professionalism, technical skill and ability to operate in more often than not a 'harsh environment'. However, as we all

know, the environments in which we operate and the challenges we face often differ from region to region. This initiative aims to bring together those regional differences as strengths, creating an opportunity for all of us to learn from one another and develop a common understanding of best practices in topics such as technical rope rescue, search management and multi-agency coordination, while maintaining the local expertise that defines each team and region.

## OUR TWO INITIAL TRAINING OBJECTIVES ARE:

1. Understand and enhance operational effectiveness through interagency training.
2. Standardise best practices across teams to improve rescue and training outcomes.

The aim is to look at opportunities through joint technical training, shared learning, shared knowledge and enhanced interoperability. Where necessary, working groups within the Training group would also be established to help share the work and develop ideas.

Some of these would consist of not just talking, but also include development of a couple of collaboration projects with Scottish Mountain Rescue (SMR). Paul Russell, my counterpart in Scotland, is also keen to have more collaboration and sharing of ideas between SMR and MREW. I think we've made good progress and there are a number of ideas in the pipeline for future development to allow some new initiatives, designed to bring teams and regions together through joint training and shared learning.

One programme will focus on technical rope rescue, and a recent invitation for Toby and Paul Edisbury (PDMRO Rope Lead) to join colleagues from Tayside on their Glenshee Rope Training weekend proved to be very successful, not just from a sharing of ideas perspective, but also that all-important networking opportunity that helps bond teams.

'A few months ago,' says Toby, 'Paul Edisbury and I had the invaluable opportunity to join Tayside Mountain Rescue Team for their training weekend in Glenshee, Scotland. The primary focus of the weekend was rope rescue and crag work, offering a

comprehensive insight into their operational techniques and equipment.

'The session included a detailed explanation of their new equipment and system set-ups, demonstrating their specific applications and operational benefits of how and why things may be done. It's important to ensure everyone's understanding and familiarity with the kit, along with pre planning for possible complex scenarios.

'The experience of training with our Scottish cousins was exceptional. Beyond sharing technical ideas, the weekend fostered a valuable exchange of insights into broader aspects of mountain rescue operations and hill work, laying a strong foundation for continued partnership and enhanced operational readiness across mountain rescue teams.

'We extend a huge thank you to Paul Russell and Tayside MRT for their warm welcome and hospitality.'

I can confidently acknowledge that the success of this collaboration has already led to further long-term proposals on a larger scale, which would allow for wider participation in joint training weekends and strengthening the developing interregional ties. Details will be feedback through the Training group in due course.

I'd also like to develop some more collaborative training with Mountain Rescue Ireland. I know some teams cross-train and share ideas, but we don't always hear about these until after the event.

## UPDATE ON SOME CURRENT OFFERINGS

Al Read and the search planning team have continued to deliver a number of search management courses to regions, with a number still to be delivered before year end. How these develop going forward is also being continually reviewed especially as technology, resources and type of incidents evolve.

It was good to see that The Centre for Search Research (TCSR) held a successful follow-up drone session in 'Exercise Northumberland 2' back in May. Drones (and Mountain Rescue Search Dogs England), are being included more regularly as part of the search resources available.



How we build future training opportunities is something both Brendan O'Neill and I continue to discuss.

Over recent years, the implementation of Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) has changed the way many now operate and bring this into their training strategies. While JESIP was originally designed for use by the police, fire and ambulance services, the principles of shared situational awareness, joint decision making and a coordinated communication model is now widely accepted in mountain rescue or search scenarios. The topic is briefly covered on the MREW Search Planning, Foundation and Party Leader Courses. In the near future, it is hoped that a JESIP Training Module for all members can be included on Moodle for everyone to have access to.

Exercise Winterstorm is another example of how joint inter-agency working has become more widely accepted as good practice, and beneficial to all the emergency services involved in major incidents. Several similar large-scale multiagency exercises have now been carried out across the country and it would be good to have some feedback from the teams involved in some of these. Winterstorm 2025 was held at Liverpool's John Moore University. Billed as being slightly different to previous years which were 'cold weather' practical scenario based. This one was more 'conference based' with evident development into other 'environmental' related topics.

## PROPOSED ROPE RESCUE AWARENESS EVENT

PDMRO is proposing to hold a rope rescue awareness event in May 2026 that will enable teams and other statutory services to showcase their capability and procedures for setting up and executing a rope rescue in an unfamiliar area. The intention is to have

a series of demonstrations showing how individual and joint working can achieve successful rescues and to illustrate the benefits of:

- Cross-pollination of knowledge between teams and regions
- Improved rescue outcomes and responder safety
- Resilience building through shared resources and familiarisation
- Enhanced public confidence in rescue services through unified training.

Personally, I believe any joint training initiative encourages openness and reflection, turning every incident into a learning opportunity.

## TRAINING RECORDS AND BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE

This is a project I have wanted the TSC to consider since I took over the role of national training officer. The aim would be for MREW to have a standardised guidance or best practice framework for training record keeping. If things 'go wrong', training records will always be considered early in any investigation, however serious the

incident. I believe MREW should have a comprehensive and consistent method for recording training activities to ensure best practices, maintain high standards and facilitate continuous improvement. The question posed was: 'How can teams implement and maintain a robust system for logging training records that adheres to best practice, ensuring accuracy, accessibility and effective utilisation for individual development, team readiness and regulatory compliance?'

A working group from across regions will allow a good range of views and suggestions to be considered. The aim of the first phase to this project, is to establish effective methods for recording and evaluating training topic competencies. Over time these will be developed into a working document for the TSC as a whole to review before presenting to teams.

- Consider 'Protocols and Standards' by establishing a clear policy on what training information needs to be recorded, who is responsible for recording it, where it should be stored and for how long
- Ensure records are kept for all types of training, including core skills, specialist skills, scenario based, joint training, online training, refresher training etc
- Develop a detailed training curriculum that outlines all core or essential skills and procedures required for mountain rescue operations. This should align with national guidelines and best practices
- Establish a competency framework to advise on or recommend a framework outlining the different levels of proficiency expected for various roles within teams and regions
- Define how competency will be assessed and ensure these methods are consistently applied
- Regular review with periodic audits to allow recommendations from observations and feedback which help qualify crucial data for reflection and improvement.

As a reminder, should any one have any concerns or suggestions for how training topics can be developed or improved, please do get in touch via [trainingofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:trainingofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk)



Images supplied by Paul Edisbury.



training

MREW SPM1: MPSRO 4-6 JULY

JULY

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
30	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10

AUGUST

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

RRDI (LYON) COURSE 5: MIXED TEBAY  
19-20 JULY & 26-27 JULY

COMING IN  
2026...

PREHOSPITAL TRAUMA  
LIFE SUPPORT: 7-8 MARCH 2026

MREW PARTY LEADER  
20-22 FEBRUARY 2026

ROPE RESCUE AWARENESS DAY  
PDMRO: 16-17 MAY TBC

SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN RESCUE  
RIGGING GORGE & CANYON: TBC

MREW SPM2:  
12-14 SEPTEMBER

FOUNDATION: PDMRO  
17-19 OCTOBER

PREHOSPITAL TRAUMA  
LIFE SUPPORT: 4-5 OCTOBER

RRDI (LYON) COURSE 6:  
LOSAMRA 1-2 NOVEMBER

SEPTEMBER

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12

OCTOBER

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
29	30	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9

NOVEMBER

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

DECEMBER

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11

RRDI (LYON) COURSE 6:  
LOSAMRA 13-19 OCTOBER

RRDI (LYON) COURSE 7: MIXED TEBAY  
29-30 NOVEMBER

MREW SEARCH FIELD SKILLS: 19-21 SEPTEMBER

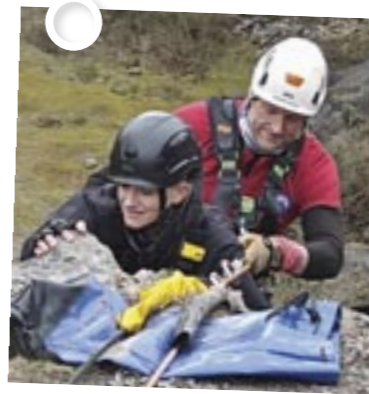
MREW HILL PARTY LEADER 21-23 NOVEMBER

MREW SPM1: NORTH WALES 21-23 NOVEMBER

DANNAH ALPINE: TAILORED FOR MOUNTAIN RESCUE

The Dannah Alpine Waterproof Jacket is tailored for mountain rescue teams in the UK – rugged, precise and engineered for mission-critical conditions. Crafted with a Microporous-layer membrane, it delivers outstanding waterproofing, windproofing and breathability – essential for long shifts in heavy rain, snow or gusty winds. Weighing just 480g (Medium), it's lightweight yet durable, with taped seams, micro-taped joins and a PFC-free DWR finish – eco-conscious and effective. Designed by Rich Dannah – ex-Rab/Montane – its sculpted fit, articulated sleeves, scooped hem and low-profile helmet-compatible hood offer full mobility and protection. The hood peak stays flexible down to -30°C, and the chunky zip pulls and YKK Vision waterproof zip work even with gloves on. Teams like Holme Valley MRT have field-tested the jacket, praising its performance in real UK mountain weather. Built for demanding terrain, lightweight comfort and sustained protection – this jacket gives teams the confidence to perform when it matters most.

EMAIL: RICH@DANNAHDESIGN.CO.UK WEBSITE: DANNAH.UK.COM  
FACEBOOK: @DANNAHUK X: @DANNAHCLOTHING



NEWS ROUND  
APRIL > JUNE

MARCH/APRIL: PEAK TEAMS LOOK  
AT HOW OTHER TEAMS APPROACH  
THEIR ROPE RESCUE TRAINING

In March, fifteen team members from Kinder, Glossop, Buxton, Woodhead and Derby teams and nine Derbyshire police officers came together for a joint rope training session at the National Stone Centre, a 40-acre site thirty minutes north of Derby. And in April, two each from Kinder and Derby travelled north to see how Cockermouth team members operate when on a rope rescue call-out, and how they carry out their training and equipment checks. **Paul Edisbury** reports on both events.

In March, Reg from Derby Police talked us through the training required to become a competent member of their rope team, including some things which we wouldn't be involved in, such as protest removal. The police have two levels of competency: operator (who would operate and set up a rope rescue), and supervisor (who coordinates and runs a rope rescue job, with overall command and control).

After a safety briefing, Chris from Derby MRT showed how his team would carry out a snatch rescue of somebody who was crag fast. A 'casualty' was lowered to a ledge about half way down the quarry and a separate rope system set up for the rescuer to be lowered to the casualty. Both rescuer and casualty were then hauled back up.

Dave Mason, one of the police officers attending, is also a member of Derby team. He outlined how the police set up their system and talked about working together with mountain rescue on live jobs – which did happen last year (the inspiration for this training session). One of the main differences was the type of call-outs and the speed of response. They normally have time to pre-plan and respond less quickly as their casualties are often deceased. It was interesting to hear that the police would be happy to work on our rope systems, provided it was within the remit of what they are trained to do. In such an event, a supervisor would check over the set-up before deploying any of his team over an edge. Other than two very small differences, their system is the same as Kinder's, using the Petzl Maestro as a belay device.

The day proved useful for both agencies, allowing confidence and trust to build. It demonstrated that while their operational responsibilities may be worlds apart, agencies can support each other thanks to the similarity of their systems and processes. Joint training opportunities are valuable, not just for the practical training, but in building partnerships.

This was followed in April by a full weekend of training with Cockermouth team. We arrived early evening on the Friday, and got straight into learning how they operate. The Dual Capability Two Tensioned Rope System (DCTTRS) was the first topic covered, and it is good to see it is being adopted in all the teams I have visited so far.

This system forms part of the current Rope Rescue Guidelines and should be implemented across MREW.

After this, there was a practical session in Cockermouth team's indoor training facility. We set up an anchor system and a DCTTRS using two CMC clutches, their preferred belay device. We practised a pick-off rescue and, because the edge was a 90-degree angle, used a vectoring technique to assist in the difficult edge transition. This worked well and is a lot easier than it looks – and makes it easy on difficult edge transitions.

Saturday was perfect for a day of rope rescue. Not a single cloud in the sky. The morning started with a familiarisation session in base with power cord (5.9mm). This is lightweight and much smaller than an 11mm rope – ideal for teams who have a long walk-in to any crags they must attend. We then set off for an afternoon practising different scenarios, including a vertical and horizontal stretcher rescue and two pick-offs, in different locations for maximum practice. We all worked on different aspects of the job, from setting up the anchors, running the job as rope officer on scene and

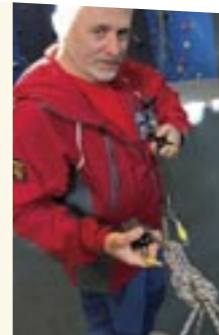
rescuer, as well as operating the clutches. It was no surprise that, although we operated with some minor differences in terms of equipment and how we set up our systems, we all worked well together to perform multiple rescues with safety and efficiency. It was plain to see that the MREW rope rescue guidelines were being followed and that, should there have been a call-out for a rope rescue whilst we were training, we could have worked together as a cohesive group.

Sunday morning, we rigged a guiding line from the second floor of the team's base down into their car park and, once again, everyone had the chance to perform all the various tasks.

In summary, a worthwhile and valuable weekend of rope training, with experience gained by everyone who attended. A massive thank you to Scott Stanley (Cockermouth MRT training officer), and all those who contributed to the weekend. Long may this type of training continue. ☺

Top: Training day between PDMRO and Derbyshire Police in March. Below: Weekend training involving PDMRO and Cockermouth teams. Images supplied by Paul Edisbury.

EVEN MORE JOINT TRAINING ADVENTURES OVER THE PAGE ➡



training

# Solo Jacket

You like pockets - so we made them matter. Thoughtfully placed for rescue-ready performance:

- Inner pocket sized for a map
- Twin hand pockets for easy access
- Internal mesh pockets, perfect for gloves



133gsm PrimaLoft® Gold | Built for multi-agency rescue operations  
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[keelaoutdoors.com](http://keelaoutdoors.com)

# NEWS ROUND

APRIL > JUNE

## JUNE: PDMRO JOINS FORCES WITH RAF LEEMING FOR A ROPE RESCUE TRAINING DAY

Over the past year, Paul Edisbury, PDMRO Rope Officer, supported by Toby Green (PDMRO Training Officer) and Phil Ridley (MREW Training Officer), has been exploring the rope systems of different teams across the country. The aim is simple, but vital: to 'gather an understanding of the crag systems and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) being used by teams across the UK'. These collaborations have improved visibility on current capabilities, allowing knowledge consistency in what each team can provide. Buxton's **Henry Paisey** reports on a recent collaboration with RAF Leeming.



Once a quarter, the PDMRO Ops Group meets to discuss what the Peak District teams have encountered — 'what went well' and 'what learning points were gained' are matters of importance. Said points aid in informing organisational decisions, creative solutions, stronger strategies and the ability to solve complex problems more effectively.

The most recent training session saw a collaboration between RAF Mountain Rescue, Buxton MRT and many other PDMRO teams. In contrast to the teams within MREW, the RAF has been able to standardise their crag system and SOPs, allowing interoperability across the country. The RAF MRTs work nationwide and respond to a variety of scenarios. For this reason, their procedures and systems are standardised for safe working in all crag scenarios. Many teams within MREW, however, have developed 'personalised' crag systems suitable for their specific operational area, meaning there is a variety of equipment and SOP nuances used throughout MREW. Interestingly, there was not much difference between the systems or fundamentals of the RAF's system.

However, unlike the teams in the PDMRO, the RAF system was a hybrid of rope access and standard climbing equipment. As you can imagine, the RAF had some 'Gucci' kit, which was displayed in an organised carry system suitable for long carries and efficiency.

As most readers of this magazine love kit, some notables used by the RAF included a custom Titan stretcher and 8mm Tec Reep Cord. Titans are familiar to most teams across the country, but the RAF version was much wider at the top, to accommodate service personnel wearing bulky kit and equipment. Tec Reep Cord, used exclusively for anchor building, is lightweight and very strong. Finally, like the use of coloured helmets used for water rescue, the RAF teams use coloured helmets to highlight members of a higher crag qualification.

A notable point regarding crag management was the 'pre-lower talk through'. Once the system was built and all members ready, the crag manager would order the 'talk through'. Each member working on the system, would individually briefly talk through their own role on the

system, tie-in method, equipment they were operating and state when they were 'ready'. For example, 'I am the edge person. I am tied to an anchor using a rethreaded Figure of Eight, with a stopper knot to my harness. I am using a classic Prusik for length adjustment, which is clipped to my harness with a screw gate. I have been buddy checked. I am ready.'

Starting from the edge and working towards the members backing up the belayers, the 'talk through' was completed within a few minutes. Quite often the top of a crag can become busy when building a rope system and the 'talk through' informed all members of the actions taken and allowed a moment of focus before committing to the lower.

Working with other teams in any organisation is vital to improve communication, streamline processes, improve productivity and ensure alignment. Paul ([crag@pdmro.org.uk](mailto:crag@pdmro.org.uk)) aims to continue his collaborations and share all his learning to help improve visibility on the systems operated by other teams. 🧗

Images supplied by Paul Edisbury.



training



# The Swiss Cheese effect

## HOW HUMAN FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO MOUNTAIN INCIDENTS

Images: Terrain (main picture), Time and Weather (inset) © Derby MRT.

The British Mountain Medicine Society, supported by the BMC, ran their annual Mountain Medicine weekend in Hathersage in May. It's a weekend where a wide range of lay people and professionals gather to share knowledge and experiences. One of the groups discussed 'Mountain Incidents and Human Factors', exploring how human factors can cause mountain incidents, and how this can be mitigated with good planning and regular reviews of the evolving situation on the hill.

The take-home messages could prevent a call-out! Maybe better understanding Human Factors can help reduce the number of times when things go wrong?

Let's consider a few incidents from just one week in May, with examples of incident reports taken from MREW and team Facebook pages:

**23 May:** 'Two walkers were lost, after low cloud had caused disorientation. Casualties were not aware of the way they had ascended, nor where they had parked'.

**24 May:** 'A wet rocky path caused a man to slip and injure his ankle'.

**25 May:** 'One felt they were out of their depth and wanted to turn round. The other friend decided to continue and left their mate to descend alone. After struggling into steeper terrain, the abandoned friend eventually called for help when they became stuck'.

**25 May:** 'Two walkers intended to camp on the summit, but the ground was too rocky to secure their tent; they spent the night inside the summit shelter in their tent inner. By daylight, conditions on the summit were

poor and they were cold, wet and struggling to navigate.'

**26 May:** 'Walker rescued after being blown over by wind.'

**28 May:** 'They topped out and started to descend but only had one torch so struggled to make progress. At 0420, they were only fifteen minutes from the road when one fell.'

**29 May:** 'One of the walkers was struggling to make progress, falling frequently, was very cold and still an hour away from the valley.'

### WHY DOES THIS HAPPEN?

It doesn't take much imagination to produce 'Swiss Cheese' examples from all the incidents listed above. If we are honest, most of us can tell our own tales when we look back on hill days that didn't quite go to plan, or near misses! One simple error will often lead to others, but it doesn't have to.

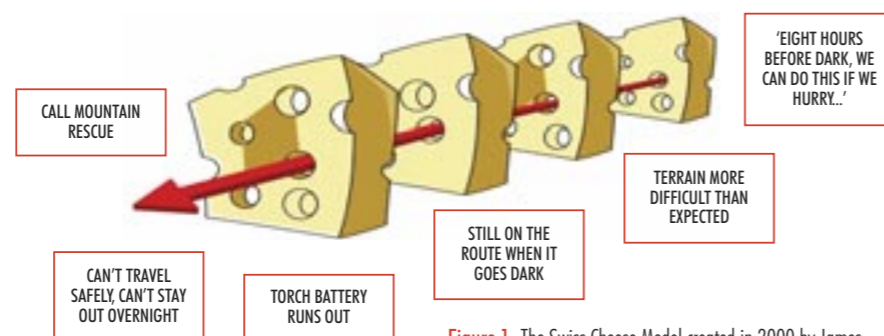


Figure 1: The Swiss Cheese Model created in 2000 by James Reason for an article in the British Medical Journal.

### WHY DOESN'T THIS HAPPEN?

If we consider Human Factors we can use our knowledge and experience to reduce mountain incidents both for ourselves and others. These insights might also inform our future campaigns to build on #BeBothered.

How many recent incidents have been due to someone seemingly 'ignoring' the weather, the terrain, the time, the lack of kit, the battery life, the consequences of pressing on regardless? Do we take time to consider why they were ignored? From the first 'hole' in the Swiss cheese — **Figure 1 (opposite page) & Figure 2 (right)** — and at every 'slice', there is an opportunity to make decisions which could lead to a different outcome. Simple things, like having a 'Plan B', choosing a shorter route, turning round before sunset, having navigation skills/backup technology. But sometimes human factors mean we don't make good decisions.

There are many tools available to remind us of common Human Factors. One such tool is the acronym FACETS — **Figure 3 (right)** — which has been widely circulated in relation to avalanche accidents, though it is useful in summer and winter days on the hill.

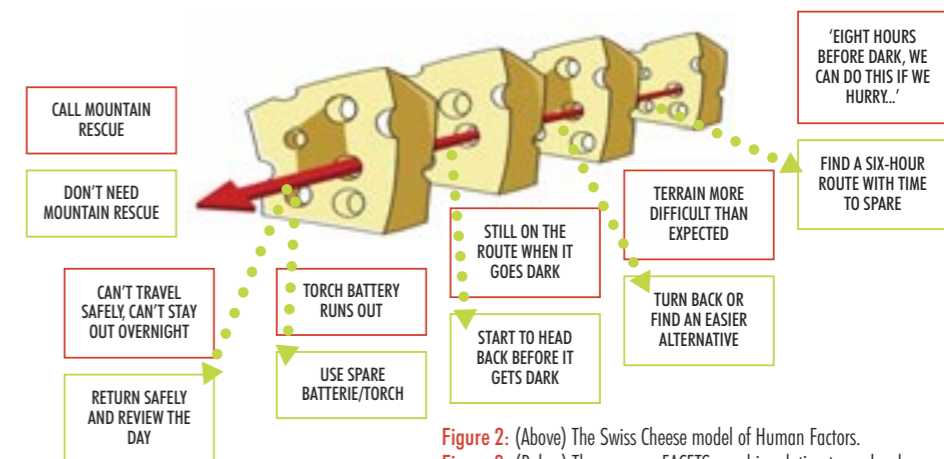
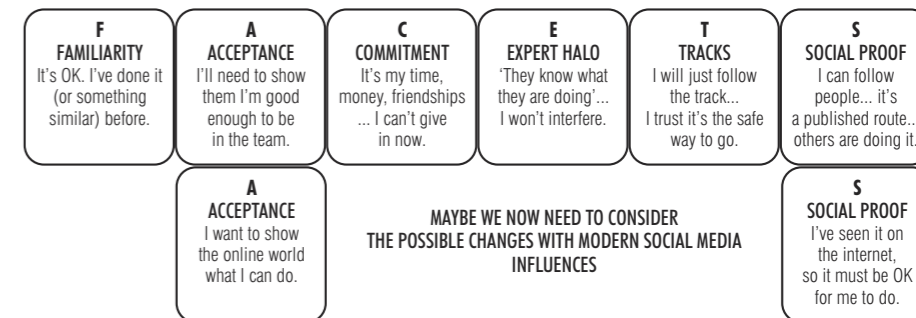


Figure 2: (Above) The Swiss Cheese model of Human Factors.

Figure 3: (Below) The acronym FACETS, used in relation to avalanche accidents, is useful in both summer and winter incidents.



Human Factors influence our trip from before we even leave the house to after we have come home. Here are the most common pieces of advice shared amongst the Hathersage discussion groups:

### AIM

What would we like to achieve?

- People forget that the number one objective is to come home alive and uninjured
- A secondary objective should be the route and it should fit easily with everyone's time, money, ability, idea of 'fun/enjoyment'
- In a group, check everyone has the same aim. If not, review how the aims differ and ask what this means for your objective.

### PREPARATION

- Plans won't always work out, but the planning process prepares you for what may happen
- Don't be afraid to change the plan
- #BeBothered and #BeAdventureSmart messages can help with preparations before venturing out
- Pre-empt possible issues, think about alternative options in case circumstances turn out differently to what you planned for.

### REVIEW

Have a quick check before setting off.

- Is this going to be the great day everyone expected?
- Be open to changing plans before you set out for the day
- Agree everyone can stop and question what's happening if they are not happy
- Consider kit, food and drinks, phone, spare batteries, an alternative if there is no signal, the weather, the route and terrain
- Does everyone feel happy and healthy?

### ON ROUTE

- If it doesn't feel quite right, isn't going well, isn't what you expected or prepared for, don't just press on regardless in the hope it will be OK in the end
- Stop, review and change your plan if necessary
- Have pre-planned check-in points, places where different options are possible [to escape the cheese]
- Regularly review the weather, the terrain and your progress
- Considering different scenarios can help you be more prepared for the unexpected — either alone or with a peer, play the 'What if?' game. 'What if... I fell and hurt my ankle here?' 'What if... the weather turns?' 'What if... I don't want to continue?'
- Remember to #BeBothered and address your needs as well as those in your group to keep you mentally on top form
- Remember HALT — it is harder to think clearly if you are Hungry, Angry, Late or Tired
- Remember we are more likely to make avoidable mistakes at the end of the day or when hurrying back later than expected — take extra care on the way down.

### REFLECTION

Looking back on the day (not just incidents and near misses):

- Consider FACETS — how did we behave?
- What risks did we take or avoid?
- Think about what this means for next time.

### FINALLY

How many mountain rescue call-outs have a 'Swiss Cheese'/Human Factors story to tell? How can we help change this? Maybe it's something we should be recording? ☺

### THE AUTHORS:

**CHRIS SMITH** DERBY MRT, BMMS VOLUNTEER

**ROSANNE DUBOCK** PAEDIATRIC STAFF NURSE, MSC DISASTER RELIEF (HEALTHCARE)

**DR CHRISTOPHER HOOPER** MOUNTAIN AND PRE-HOSPITAL DOCTOR AND PARAMEDIC

**DR HELEN JEFFERIES** MOUNTAIN AND PRE-HOSPITAL DOCTOR, DIPLOMA OF MOUNTAIN MEDICINE, BMMS MEMBER, ASSAR AND SARA VOLUNTEER TRAINER



human factors

# Joining forces for stronger teams: Women in Mountain Rescue launch new 'best practice' programme

**ANEELA MCKENNA** MÒR DIVERSITY

We all know mountain rescue teams are incredible, dedicated to saving lives and supporting our communities in the toughest conditions. But what if we could make our teams even stronger, even more reflective of the diverse communities we serve? The data speaks for itself: Diverse teams are 87% better at making decisions than homogeneous teams. When different perspectives and experiences are brought to the table, information is processed more thoroughly, leading to more robust and effective decisions. Plus, inclusive teams have been shown to be over 35% more productive — because when people feel valued and respected, they're more likely to contribute their absolute best. (Source: The Shaw Trust).



**Above:** Aneela prior to the MREW Conference © Aneela McKenna. **Opposite top:** Discussion board generated during the online 'Think Tank' session. **Opposite:** Just a few of the women featured in our International Women's Day feature in our Spring issue, with thanks to Bolton, Bowland Pennine, Calder Valley, Central Beacons, Cleveland, Derby, Devon CRO, Glossop, Holme Valley, Kinder, Kirkby Stephen, Longtown, Mountain Rescue Search Dogs England, NEWSAR, North of Tyne, Patterdale, Rossendale and Pendle, Swaledale, South and Mid Wales CRO, and UWFR.

That's precisely what the Women in Mountain Rescue group set out to champion with their new online series. It's designed to be a platform for sharing best practice and helping us all grow stronger, together.

This initiative kicked off with a one-hour online 'Sharing Best Practice' session focusing on the topic: 'Diversifying Mountain Rescue Teams'. Held on 15 May 2025, this session brought together members from teams across the regions. It was a unique opportunity to share ideas and find practical ways to welcome more diverse members into our teams.

## SOME EYE-OPENING INSIGHTS FROM TEAM MEMBERS

The discussions during the session were incredibly insightful. They showed a deep understanding of what makes diversifying a team a challenge, but more importantly, how we can overcome it.

Sometimes, it's about perception. One big takeaway was that often, it's not actual barriers, but perceived ones, that stop people from joining. For example, some teams found the name 'Mountain Rescue' could put people off and feel a bit intimidating. One team paired it with 'Volunteers Saving Lives', a much more inclusive and welcoming message that could help to expand its reach.

Then there's the idea that it's more than just the 'cool stuff'. While certain activities tend to be prominently featured with mountain rescue work, they can also feel daunting to newcomers. We realised just how important it is to show all the vital roles within mountain rescue such as logistics, communications and support. As shared by one group — just like in the military, where every role is crucial — everyone in a team is valuable, even if they're not on the front line. We heard a great story about an active rescuer who, after an injury, became the team's 'best ever' loggist — proving just how vital those support roles are.

One lovely quote from our groups perfectly summed up the spirit we're aiming for: 'It takes all sorts!' That really captures the essence of a team where everyone feels included and valued for their unique contributions.

And we talked about the importance of 'see yourself here'. If our social media

always shows the same type of person, it can unintentionally exclude others. People need to 'see someone like me' to feel like they belong. So consistent, year-round visibility of our diverse members is absolutely key, not just on days like International Women's Day.

Of course, we also discussed some very real-world challenges. Things like the time commitment involved — it's a big ask for anyone. And sometimes, there's a need for a certain amount of disposable income for kit, which can inadvertently lead to what some described as a 'middle-class organisation'. We also noted that the tendency to recruit people who are similar to ourselves, by default, can significantly limit our reach.

BRILLIANT SOLUTIONS: PAVING  
THE WAY FORWARD

The group session came up with some innovative and actionable ideas. To challenge perception and broaden our image, we need to actively celebrate team members who aren't 'hill-fit', but contribute massively. Show the full spectrum of roles that make mountain rescue so successful.

When it comes to new ways to reach out, we need to think beyond our usual channels. Discussions included connecting with diverse community groups, exploring Asian community radio stations, engaging with walking clubs, universities, workplaces and organisations like Scouts and Guides.

We also talked about inclusive messaging, suggesting we use taglines like 'Volunteers Saving Lives' to make our teams more inviting and accessible to a wider audience.

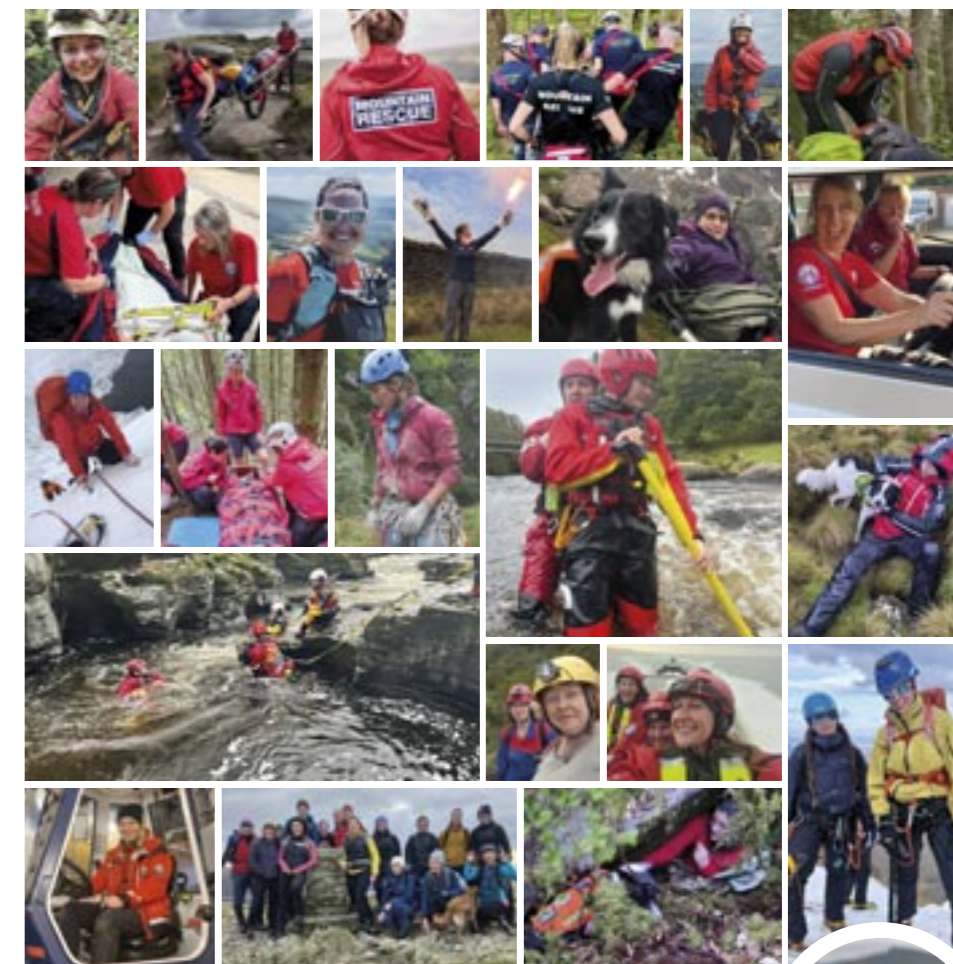
Leveraging community leaders came up

## Question: How can we diversify our teams?

## Solutions



## Challenges



ANEELA IS PASSIONATE ABOUT HELPING TO BRING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION TO ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES. SHE IS WORKING WITH **PENNY BROCKMAN** (RIGHT) TO BROADEN THE WOMEN IN MOUNTAIN RESCUE INITIATIVE INTO A WIDER DIVERSITY REMIT .

# Mountain Rescuers recognised in King's Birthday Honours 2025

## BECKY AND IAIN ASHCROFT NEWSAR

Becky and Iain have both been awarded an MBE for their services to the community as mountain rescue volunteers.

The couple first met when Iain interviewed Becky as a potential team member. 'I got the impression she didn't like me!' he says of their first meeting. Mountain rescue has been a huge part of their lives, and their wedding day saw them conveyed from Mold Registry Office to the reception just outside Ruthin in a team liveried vehicle.

Between them, they have over 60 years of volunteering, often responding to a call-out together — although, with different strengths and skills, they may find themselves heading in different directions dealing with different call-outs, or different elements of the incident.

They agree that the rewards for volunteering are immeasurable. 'To be able to help someone in difficult circumstances, to be part of a team that returns a person back to their loved ones or gets a casualty to much needed hospital care, to see the smile and relief on the face of someone freezing cold and stuck alone for hours as we approach — makes the night-time calls, the darkness, wind and rain worthwhile.'

Do they ever worry when one of them is out on a call? 'Of course. If one of us is responding to difficult terrain, in extreme weather or at night, it's natural to feel concern, and not fully relax until we are both safely home. But being prepared is key. We work hard to train and maintain our skills, always set out prepared with the equipment and supplies right for the circumstances, and it's very much about

teamwork — we know we can trust and rely on our team members.'

Neither Becky nor Iain had any inkling they had been nominated for the award. 'I was at home by myself on the day the letter arrived,' says Becky. 'When I opened it, I simply could not believe my eyes! I cried and then I was stunned for a long time. I still find myself reeling at the unexpectedness of it all. I saw Iain had a similar letter, but I didn't tell him about mine until he came home and opened his. I could see his reaction was similar — disbelief, shock and emotion.'

It's not the first time the husband-and-wife team have received recognition at the same time. In 2008, they each received a Divisional Commander's Commendation for dedication, personal commitment and professionalism in providing assistance in locating vulnerable and missing persons from North Wales Police. However, NEWSAR believes this may be the first time a husband-and-wife team within North Wales have been recognised jointly.

'We feel very honoured and immensely proud that someone has recognised the contributions we've made to mountain rescue over the years and taken the time to submit a nomination,' says Iain. 'That both of us have been recognised at the same time is amazing.'

'We're also delighted that the work of NEWSAR is recognised. We couldn't do what we do alone — there's a huge and committed team of volunteers behind and alongside us — and we know our award is also a reflection of their dedication and professionalism.'

Iain estimates that during his 27 years in mountain rescue, he has undertaken

close to 1,000 call-outs. 'While each can be challenging in its own way,' he says, 'it's also important to remember that we don't just help people off mountains — we also assist in searches for vulnerable or missing people, as well as deploying to bad weather events. A particularly challenging time I recall were the heavy snows in 2013, which saw 24 call-outs in 48 hours, with teams working around the clock because ambulances were unable to move due to the deep snow. It fell to mountain rescue to reach many people stranded and in need. It was cold and exhausting, but immensely satisfying to



be able to contribute our skills to keeping people safe.'

Iain was appointed Operations Officer for North Wales Mountain Rescue Association (NWMRA) in 2016. During his tenure he introduced a Major Incident Plan and assisted North Wales Police in establishing a Land Search and Rescue Group which brings together various blue light and voluntary agencies. Last year he was elected as co-chairman of the group and continues to work closely with police and partners. He is also national lead to Lowland Rescue.

Becky notes that the occasions when she needs to speak to families during a difficult time in their life, to gather the information needed to find their loved one, can be challenging, and remain with you, as can the fast pace of multiple responses undertaken simultaneously.

'We are absolutely delighted to hear about this well-deserved recognition,' says Chris Griffiths, NEWSAR team leader. 'While they may have been surprised, their teammates are not — their kindness, dedication, professionalism and wealth of experience in mountain rescue have been evident to their colleagues for many years.'

Well done, both of you! 🎉

**Left:** Becky and Iain © Mike Jones.  
**Inset:** On their wedding day © Babs Boardwell  
Photography | babsboardwellweddings.co.uk



## RICHARD WARREN WASDALE

Richard has been recognised with the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to Mountain Rescue in Cumbria and the Lake District.

Richard is one of the longest-standing operational team members of Wasdale team, with forty years' voluntary service in August this year. In his time with the team, he has been buildings officer, secretary, press officer, drones officer and also chairman for many years. In addition, he has served as both regional secretary and subsequently chairman of the Lake District Search and Mountain Rescue Association (LDSAMRA), from 1998 to 2024.

Throughout his service, Richard has delivered regular interviews with local and national radio, television and newspapers, asking visitors to be mindful and consider the additional pressures placed on the emergency services and local mountain rescue teams, especially during Covid. In particular, he has been instrumental in getting the message across to reduce the number of what he terms as 'avoidable accidents', by raising issues such as preparedness whenever he can.

'Richard is a trusted and conscientious member of our team,' says John Bamforth, Wasdale chairman. 'His contribution to the running of our team and the regional association in his nearly forty years to date has been very significant. He has left a legacy of achievements as well as demonstrating how to behave as a mountain rescue volunteer in an exemplary and professional manner. On behalf of the team, please accept our heartfelt congratulations on this deserving achievement.'

'It's an immense honour,' says Richard. 'I'd like to dedicate it to my family and friends who have supported me throughout. It is a privilege to play a small part in the team, as well as the Lake District region and the wider mountain rescue community. I value the fact that we remain a voluntary organisation, and I am extremely proud of the service we provide.'

Colleagues across Cumbria and beyond passed on congratulations and wished him well in his continuing mountain rescue activities. 🎉



## NIGEL LISTER DUDDON & FURNESS

Nigel has been awarded the British Empire Medal for services to the Nuclear Industry and Mountain Rescue.

A team member for 27 years, he has held various roles, including deputy team leader and seven years as team chairman. His current role is as the base officer, working with a small team to deliver the team's much needed new permanent base. Work is now underway and Nigel says that 'this is the culmination of seven years of work — purchasing land, arranging access, clearing planning permission, arranging a contractor and so on. It has been a huge amount of work for a small team of volunteers. After all this effort it's great to see the build getting going.'

He is 'surprised and chuffed to hear of the honour. I have worked with some great teams both in my work life and in mountain rescue and am just one of a huge number of MR volunteers who give up their time.' Congratulations to him on a well deserved award! 🎉

## NEWS ROUND

APRIL > JUNE



## CHARLIE MACLEOD ASSYNT

Assynt team's training officer Charlie Macleod was awarded an MBE for voluntary service in Scotland.

Charlie joined Assynt team in 2009, bringing with him extensive medical and mountaineering experience, strong leadership skills and an innate ability to teach people. Training officer since 2013, he quickly identified innovative ways to educate and influence team members. From 2021 to 2022, he combined the role with deputy team leader. For the past fifteen years, he has also been an active member of SARDA Scotland and has successfully trained two search dogs, first Molly and later Freya.

'The team is thriving,' runs a team Facebook post, 'and Charlie's redoubtable character has had a significant influence on this', adding that in early 2023 he was diagnosed with Stage 4 prostate cancer. 'His stoic altruism and determination to live every minute of his life to the maximum is an example to us all. Well done Charlie, we are extremely proud to call you a teammate and, above all else, a friend.'

Prior to joining the team, Charlie had already achieved an impressive career as a climber and mountaineer. He also worked as a Senior Cardiac Rehabilitation Physiotherapist at NHS Forth Valley, volunteering thousands of hours to the Stirling Healthy Hearts Club that he co-founded with Catherine Mondoia BEM in 1996. 🎉



# Goyt Valley moorland fire: 30 April 2025

AS FEATURED ON BBC COUNTRYFILE SUNDAY 29 JUNE 2025

Mountain rescue teams are frequently involved in major emergencies, including flooding or wildfires. Recently, our developing drone capability has been used to great effect in assessing wildfires, providing valuable information to the Fire and Rescue Service. **Brendan O'Neill**, MREW Drone Officer and Derby team member, tells the story of three days in April.



## DAY ONE

PDMRO received a call from Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service for drone support on a moorland fire, north of Buxton. Derby drone team agreed to attend what would be our sixth wildfire deployment this year. Arriving at the control point, it seemed every fire appliance from Derbyshire and Cheshire was there. In a short time, the fire had already consumed a huge amount of moorland and was heading west.

We consulted the incident controllers and were asked to provide an overview of the current position. As well as the incident controllers alongside us, we were able to relay the footage to a large screen mounted in our vehicle and live stream to a secure website for wider viewing.

This was by far the largest fire we had

attended. The smoke was so thick and hundreds of metres high that we relied primarily on the thermal imaging to identify the areas alight. By dropping laser pins on the edges of the fire, we were able to roughly estimate the extent of the fire and the direction and speed it was travelling.

Shortly after commencing our second flight, we received a message from a team member: 'I don't suppose you're at the Buxton wildfire? From the looks of it, it's right near my friend's farm... is it heading that way? He's got a baby, toddler, wife and elderly parents. He's on his way home now, but his wife hasn't called him back...' We relayed this to the incident controller and police on scene, who travelled to the location to assist with their evacuation.

Shortly after our second flight, the helicopter water bomber arrived and we

took the opportunity to regroup and assess where we could be best deployed. The fire service asked us to redeploy to Errwood Reservoir as there were concerns the fire could spread to a large forested area. The reservoir was out of reach as the fire had made its way down to the road, 500 metres ahead of us and the drone confirmed that the fire was heading for the plantations and trees were already alight. Aerial imagery provided to the Derbyshire Fire Service media team allowing them to provide up-to-date reports to the public.

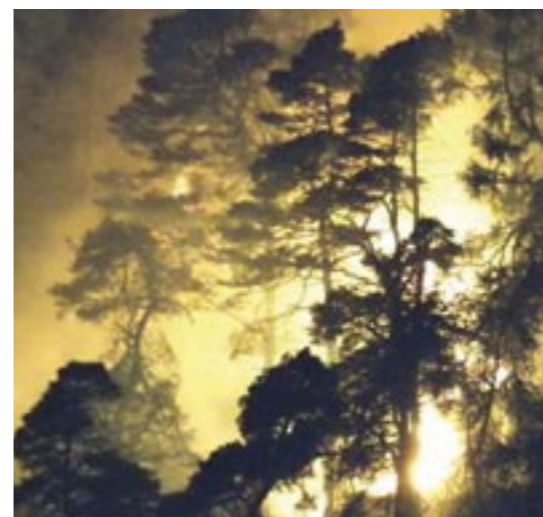
As darkness fell, we reached the reservoir via a different route and met the fire crews there. Flames were visible on the hillside, but the full extent of the fire wasn't clear from the low vantage point. Another drone flight confirmed their worst fears that much of the woodland above the reservoir was alight. The drone's laser pointer allowed us to pinpoint the exact location of the worst affected areas.

We continued to monitor the fire and provide live images until midnight, arranging to return at 6.30am next morning.

## DAY TWO

Arriving back at the location in daylight, the scene that greeted us was of huge devastation to the moorland. Initial

**Top:** Initial stages of the operation. **Inset:** Fire crews monitoring live drone footage. **Left:** Side by side thermal and daylight images of the fire front. **Opposite:** Concerns for the farm at risk from the fire; fire raging in the forestry plantations above the Errwood Reservoir; getting ready for a shower! Images supplied by Brendan O'Neill.



measurements showed 800 acres of open moorland and woodland had been burned. Our drone team launched to carry out an initial survey of the area and identify anything for immediate attention. The cool morning temperatures allowed us to pick out numerous areas that were still smouldering or burning.

360-degree panoramic images were captured at a number of sites. These take around sixty seconds to generate and can be instantly shared on WhatsApp or other messaging platforms to a wider audience. This enabled the fire crews and other partners, including the National Park's rangers and landowners, to get a bird's eye view of the scene without having to travel into any high-risk areas.

At 8.30am, the helicopter arrived and started his epic task of collecting water from the reservoir alongside our new control point and dropping it on the fire or into dams set up on the hill. Making up to twenty round trips an hour, this had a massive effect on the remaining areas. Meanwhile, ground crews made their way up onto the hill on foot, in 8x8 Argocats and Unimogs to address the many pockets of fire and smouldering trees. It was a huge effort by all involved in very hot and difficult conditions.

## DAY THREE

Returning at first light on the third day, the team again carried out thermal scans of the area and produced current 360 degree images. Based on the data, a

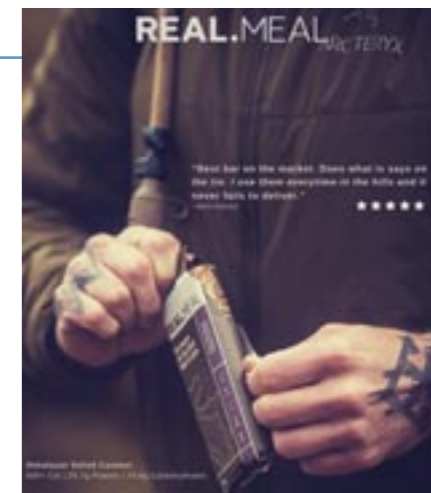
decision made was to request the helicopter team to attend once more. The weather forecast was another hot day with winds picking up and it was necessary to get the remaining areas of concern under control.

After another day of water bombing and ground crews working tirelessly, the bulk of the fire was under control and Derby MRT stood down. Fire crews stayed on scene for the next two days to monitor the area and deal with any hotspots that could have reignited.

## SUMMARY

The drone capability allowed us to provide real-time footage and data which enabled decisions to be taken by the incident controllers, reducing the risk to fire service personnel. The mountain rescue pilots were able to provide this information from a distance without having to go near the fire itself. 🙌

THE PEAK DISTRICT MOUNTAIN RESCUE ORGANISATION (PDMRO) COMPRISES SEVEN MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAMS. THREE HAVE DRONE CAPABILITY WITH TWELVE PILOTS ACROSS THE REGION. THREE WERE INVOLVED IN THE RESPONSE ALONGSIDE A NUMBER OF TRAINED OBSERVERS.



## REALMEAL TO SUPPORT MOUNTAIN RESCUE WITH EXCLUSIVE DISCOUNT

RealMeal, the UK-based endurance nutrition brand trusted by elite military units, is offering Mountain Rescue personnel 15% off all products with the code 'RESCUE'. Built for those operating in demanding conditions, RealMeal deliver over 600 calories of natural energy in a compact, vegan and gluten-free bar. With a macro profile of 60% carbohydrates, 20% protein and 20% healthy fats, each bar is designed to sustain energy and performance during long-duration call-outs, remote missions, and tough terrain.

RealMeal bars are already used by candidates on the most arduous military courses, athletes and emergency services across the UK. This exclusive offer is part of the brand's commitment to supporting those who serve in the harshest environments.

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**EMAIL: [INFO@REALMEAL.CO.UK](mailto:info@realmeal.co.uk)**

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**26 APRIL: TIME FOR A COMFORT BREAK WITH MY SON SAM**

## Raising funds for rescue

Already a seasoned long-distance walker and camping enthusiast, Martyn credits his love of the outdoors to living in Derbyshire, with the beautiful countryside on his doorstep. As a member of a mountaineering club, he also appreciates the efforts of the volunteer rescue teams and the reassurance this provides.

Now semi-retired and with more time on his hands, he trained assiduously over the winter, with long-distance walks such as the West Highland Way and Cumbria Way, in cold and snowy conditions, followed by the Cotswolds Way as the weather warmed. Besides the fitness and training aspect, those walks also gave him the opportunity to fine-tune his kit for the challenge ahead.

As we go to press, Martyn is still walking, but we thought we'd share a few of the highlights to early June, in his own words...



**1 APRIL: FIRST DAY: SHARING A SEASIDE BENCH WITH PADDINGTON**

**Day 8:** Eight days in and up and down along the Cornish coastal paths in glorious sunshine, think I must be running on solar power as my legs feel strong and the miles are going by so quickly. The star of this section of the walk has been Newquay, with so many beautiful beaches.



**9 APRIL: A DAY OF BEAUTIFUL BEACHES AND SUNSHINE**

## Walking from Land's End to John O'Groats in aid of mountain rescue...

On 1 April, walker Martyn Culley set off on a journey from Land's End to John O' Groats, to raise funds for both Mountain Rescue England and Wales and Scottish Mountain Rescue. 'I'm walking from end to end in my own way,' says Martyn, 'taking in lots of the major ways and paths that cover the length of the country. Some might call it madness, but I call it an adventure. I'll let people decide for themselves though! Step by step, mile by mile, the road will tell its story.'

**Day 20:** Goodbye Minehead and hello 'The Salt Path', otherwise known as the South West Coast Path!

**Day 25 & 26:** Time out in Somerset for cheese and cider (of course), plus glucosamine to keep my knees going, and a haircut, ready for the Cotswolds Way with my son Sam, who's looking super fit and extremely strong. Then off to meet Alex and Judith from Avon and Somerset team who kindly guided us back to the route, sharing loads of local knowledge along the way. Then, time for us to head off again.

**Day 31:** 400 miles into my epic challenge and, just like that, five fantastic days walking the Cotswolds Way is done! Thanks for your company Sam, and for bringing the sunshine with you. Every day, I've been amazed by how kind and generous people are. So far, we've raised over £4,000 for England and Wales and £2,300 for Scotland.

**Day 45:** A cracker and one I will remember forever, meeting up with some of the teams — Buxton, Edale, Glossop, Kinder and Derby, you have all been amazing! Started the day meeting up with Tomo and Judy who saw me off from the traditional start of the Pennine Way, The Old Nag's Head. The route was officially opened 60 years ago. Great that it is still being enjoyed today. I was met with water en route and played in at Crowden! Today's route over Kinder Scout, Kinder Downfall and Jacob's Ladder made me think of the people who took part in the 1932 Mass Trespass and how much we have to thank them for.



**11 APRIL: TINTAGEL TO BUDE... BE RUDE NOT TO...**



**20 APRIL: FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE SALT PATH**



**26 APRIL: TIME FOR A COMFORT BREAK WITH MY SON SAM**



**16 MAY: STEVE, TOMO, ME, JUDY AND PAUL FROM EDALE AND BUXTON TEAMS**



**20 MAY: JONTY, JUDE, ME, JAKE AND DOM FROM CRO**



**31 MAY: TOASTING THE END OF THE PENNINE WAY WITH A WELCOME BEER**

**Day 49:** Pennine Way Day 5 ends in Malham. Pitched my tent and then it was off to meet the team from CRO. Thanks for a great night!

**Day 61:** Made it to Kirk Yetholm in the Borders and the end of the Pennine Way, so it's 'Goodbye England, hello Scotland!'

Two months since I set off from Land's End, and leaving England behind, has really made me reflect on the experience so far. Over 800 miles in and still going strong with many more miles to go until I reach my final destination at John O'Groats. I've met too many amazing and kind people to mention and been able to appreciate how beautiful our country is. Get ready for the big list of paths so far completed... South West Coast Path, Tarka Trail, King Charles III Path, Coleridge Way, West Mendip Way, Limestone Link, Cotswolds Way, Millenium Way, Monarch's Way, Heart of England Way, National Forest Way, Bonnie Prince Charlie Way, Derwent Valley Heritage Way, Rivers Way and, finally so far, the Pennine Way. And thanks to the generosity of people, over £11,100 of my £15,000 target raised so far to support these incredible volunteers.

**Day 64:** Today was about Tweed: the River Tweed, the Tweed Valley Railway Path and a pop in to the Tweed Valley team base.



**4 JUNE: HELLO TO THE TWEED VALLEY MOUNTAIN RESCUE BASE!**

We leave Martyn (for this issue) as he heads towards Milngavie to start the West Highland Way. Checking out his three justgiving profiles, as we go to print, he had raised a spectacular £7,367 for MREW and £3,727 for Scottish Mountain Rescue. He's also crowdfunding £50 for a coffee or two along the way, a total which is currently at £1,520! We'll update again in the next issue but, for now, a huge thank you Martyn. Walk well and stay safe!!

## ...and cycling in the opposite direction for mountain rescue

As Martyn Culley was setting off from Land's End to walk north, Sam Williams was setting off from John O' Groats on a cycle ride in the opposite direction — an almost 1,000-mile ride in aid of Mountain Rescue England and Wales.

The University of Chester student took on the monumental fundraising challenge of cycling solo across the UK, inspired by the incredible work done by mountain rescue teams, and to show his heartfelt appreciation for the team members who came to the aid of a friend who had a climbing accident in Llanberis last year. He described the team as 'extraordinary' in their rescue mission. He admitted the challenge would test his endurance, resilience and determination, 'but every mile will be worth it because I'm doing this for a cause close to my heart'. He chose to cycle because he wanted to push himself physically while finding a meaningful way to take time away, after reaching the end of his final year of studies. Spending time outdoors and cycling are two passions of mine, and this challenge provides the perfect opportunity to combine both activities over an extended period while raising money for a charity that consistently does its best to help people in the mountains.'

His aim was to raise £1,250, but he has achieved substantially more than that with £1,966 to date. Well done Sam and thank you!



**SAM (LEFT) HAVING REACHED LAND'S END... AND WITH SHEEP...**

## Offa's Dyke, Chepstow to Prestatyn, for mountain rescue

On 20 May, Stephen Russell set off from Chepstow to raise funds for Mountain Rescue England and Wales, his third long-distance walk for MREW, having completed the 277-mile Pennine Way in 2022 and the 190-mile Coast to Coast in 2023. Last year he walked the West Highland Way (98 miles) for Scottish Mountain Rescue.



**LUCY MORRIS WITH STEPHEN AT THE END OF HIS TRIP**

## Raising funds for rescue

Image © Mike Jones, NEWSAR.

He walked an average seventeen miles a day, walking from Bodfari to Prestatyn on the final leg. Waiting to meet him, were Lucy Morris and Mike Jones of North East Wales Search and Rescue. Stephen had set himself a target of £1,049 on his walk through Wales, to bring his combined fundraising for MREW across his three walks to £3,500, but his supporters have clearly been inspired by his travels through North Wales, with his total now standing at £2,240 raised, doubling his target. After meeting with Stephen, Lucy and Mike waved him off at the local train station to make his way home. Twenty minutes later, they were responding to a call-out.

## MOUNTAIN RESCUE IN SCOTLAND (THE EARLY YEARS)

by Bob Sharp. Reviewed by Mike Margeson

This revised edition of Mountain Rescue in Scotland (The Early Years) provides a fascinating historical record and insights into the development of the mountain rescue service in Scotland. This growth runs parallel with and because of, the huge growth in hill walking, climbing and mountaineering during the post-war years.

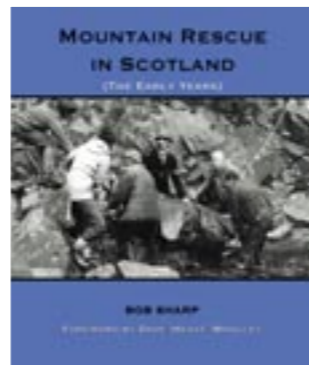
The text is divided into five main sections so it's the sort of book you can delve in to any particular topic of interest. The first section deals with what happened before there were established official teams, with the efforts of local shepherds, farmers and the village bobby. The first example is of the fatality of a young man on Ben Nevis in 1836. The second section covers the formation by the Rucksack Club and the Fell and Rock Club of the Joint Stretcher Committee in 1933, which went on to change its name to the Mountain Rescue Committee in 1946. Until 1950, the committee included England, Scotland and Wales, but that year it was decided that Scotland needed its own committee. The first civilian team was in Coniston in the Lake District. The Coniston Fells Rescue Party was set up in January 1947 by the parish council after a three-day search in the Coniston Fells. The section continues to explore the many challenges faced by the rescue teams including funding, police liaison, training and equipment. The next section is a short piece by each team in Scotland detailing their history, their area, the type of incidents they face and their development. I found this section full of gems of information. It plugged gaps in my knowledge and gave inspiration for trips to places I haven't visited or at least, not for a long time.

The next section is about some of the characters that influenced the direction of Scottish mountaineering overall. A couple particularly took my interest. First was Eric Langmuir, then principal of Glenmore Lodge and author of the seminal text on mountain leadership. He was also chairman of the Mountain Rescue

Committee of Scotland and helped establish the Scottish Avalanche Service before going on to lecture on the famous outdoor education course at Moray House in Edinburgh. The other is Hamish MacInnes, who is synonymous with developing mountain rescue stretchers and other technical developments, like the knuckle-bashing Terrordactyl ice axes. Having worked closely with rescue dogs and handlers in my own team for many years, I was really interested in the history of Search and Rescue Dog Association (SARDA). The first training course ran in 1964, in Glencoe. There followed further assessment courses and the challenges of persuading the police of the value of dedicated search dogs. There is a delightful picture taken by Catherine of Hamish and their two German Shepherd rescue dogs Rangi and Tiki.

This book has been meticulously researched and fact-checked by the author. It stands as a historical record which can be consulted easily. I concur with the late Dave 'Heavy' Whalley's comments in his foreword: 'We now have a wonderful addition to the history of Scottish Mountain Rescue which will stand the test of time.'

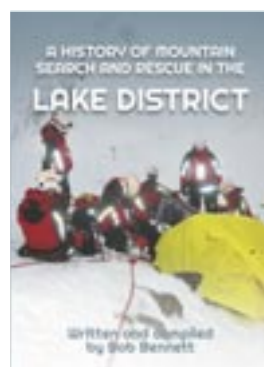
**MOUNTAIN RESCUE IN SCOTLAND (THE EARLY YEARS) BY BOB SHARP**  
**PUBLISHED BY: MOUNTAIN RESCUE PRESS ISBN: 978-1-3999-54129**  
**PRICE: £18 INCLUDING P&P [MOUNTAINRESCUEPRESS@GMAIL.COM](mailto:MOUNTAINRESCUEPRESS@GMAIL.COM)**



## STOP PRESS...

As we go to print, news that **A History of Mountain Search and Rescue in the Lake District** by Bob Bennett, published by the Lake District Search and Mountain Rescue Association, has been shortlisted in the Lakeland Book of the Year Award, 2025. Little known fact is that the book was designed and edited by this very magazine's designer and editor, so regular readers may be interested to hear that the particular award it's up for is The Latitude Press Prize for Illustration and Presentation. Fingers crossed for 8 July.

'A HISTORY OF MOUNTAIN SEARCH AND RESCUE IN THE LAKE DISTRICT' ALSO FEATURED IN THE JUNE ISSUE OF CUMBRIA LIFE MAGAZINE, WITH AN ARTICLE BY SARAH FRENCH. CONTACT YOUR FAVOURITE LAKE DISTRICT TEAM TO GET HOLD OF A COPY, PRICE JUST £20. **ISBN: 978-1-3999-7882-8**



## THE MINDFUL CLIMBER BY MARK SNEDDON: FIVE MODULES DESIGNED TO CALM YOUR MIND AND INCREASE YOUR CLIMBING POTENTIAL

An alternative approach to help those with a fear of falling but for whom falling practices don't work... Grounded in mindfulness, this concise book is full of practical exercises that really work! Ideal for coaches, instructors and clients.

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# World First: Contemporary Misper Behaviour statistics take shape in Progressive Web App

**CARL HAMILTON & PETE ROBERTS** THE CENTRE FOR SEARCH RESEARCH

The Misper-UK web-based app, which was first released by The Centre for Search Research (TCSR) in 2019, has undergone significant updates. The most recent update, released in June, now has a live link to the MREW incident database and updates daily. This means that the missing person behaviour statistics presented are contemporary and up to date. We think access to 'live' Missing Person Behaviour data in this way is a world first.

By the mid to late-1980s mountain rescue teams in England and Wales were becoming increasingly used in missing persons searches, not just in the mountains or upland areas, but also in lowland and urban areas. Teams relied on missing person behaviour statistics from other countries, such as the USA, to inform their search planning as there was no equivalent available in the UK. Bill Syrotuk, the originator of missing person behaviour research back in the 1970s, said, 'there is no substitute for local data'. TCSR, a UK registered charity formed in 1997, recognised this and, in 2000, began what has been a twenty-five-year collaboration with MREW.

Working with the MREW statistics officers — originally Ged Feeney and then Rob Shepherd — TCSR have analysed the data

supplied by teams from missing persons incidents to produce the UK Missing Person Behaviour Study. This was the first UK-based study of its type and identified different categories of missing person, the terrain types they were missing in, their location within these terrain types, the distances travelled from their Last Known Point and condition when found. The study has fifteen different misper categories so anyone can be slotted into a category and their likely behaviour then used by search managers to inform the development of scenarios.

For the first time it gave search managers access to reliable statistics which analysed the behaviour of missing persons in the UK. It enabled them to make evidence-based predictions based on the premise that if 99 mispers in a particular category in a particular terrain behaved in a certain way,

it's likely that the next missing person in the same circumstances would behave similarly. This was a paper-based study and was updated and reviewed several times as the data set grew.

As technology advanced, TCSR sought to make the study more portable and available to search managers on various devices such as laptops, tablets and mobile phones, and the concept of the Misper-UK app was born. After more than a year in development, and fully funded by TCSR, this was released in 2019 and presented the statistics in an easy to interpret digital format. It was made available free of charge, as is all of TCSR's research. Misper behaviour data was now readily available to search managers and planners. Misper-UK can be accessed via a link on TCSR's website at [tcsr.org.uk](https://tcsr.org.uk) or directly from [misper.uk](https://misper.uk)

Due to the prohibitive costs of developing a fully downloadable app, the original Misper-UK was a web-based app and relied on an internet connection to access the statistics. It was updated annually but, ultimately, as with the paper-based study and other missing persons behaviour studies such as Grampian and iFind, the statistics were static and fixed at the date of their publication.

## WHERE WE ARE NOW

Following further fundraising by TCSR to support the work, and many hours spent by Rob Shepherd in merging records from Ged Feeney's database into the new dataset, Misper-UK has undergone significant development. It is now a Progressive Web App (PWA) available to download and use offline. The statistics are updated with the latest information whenever there is an internet connection.

More significantly, the app is now linked directly to the MREW incidents database and updates daily giving search managers access to up-to-date missing person behaviour statistics. We believe this access is a world first and unique amongst all other missing person behaviour studies. It puts



TCSR and MREW at the vanguard of misper behaviour data.

As part of this development, we have also added a mapping function meaning the distance travelled from the Initial Planning Point (IPP) can now be shown on an OS map, on Open Streetmap or on a satellite view and each of these are fully scalable. The map will centre on the user's location, but a simple click to define the IPP will centre the map on that location and display the 50% and 80% distances by default. All other distances, in 10% bandings, can be toggled on and off.

In the spirit of all our research and published papers (available on our website at [tcsr.org.uk](https://tcsr.org.uk)), TCSR has fully funded the development of Misper-UK and we are pleased and proud to make it available to users entirely free of charge, giving UK search managers access to the highest quality and most up-to-date information to inform their future search planning.

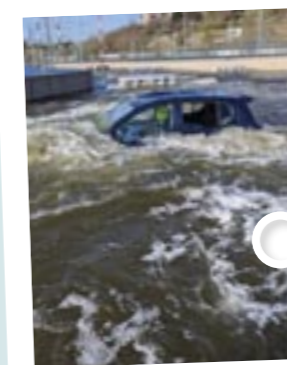


## WHO ARE WE?

The Centre for Search Research is a UK registered charity, offering training courses in Search Field Skills and Search Management, nationally and internationally, to both statutory and voluntary organisations with a responsibility for missing persons search. All associated with the charity do so on an entirely voluntary basis. Carl Hamilton and Pete Roberts are members of Northumberland National Park MRT. Carl is an operational member of forty years, Pete is now an honorary member, having stood down in 2003 with fifty years of service. Both have served as leader and represented the team and NESRA, nationally. 🇬🇧

## NEWS ROUND

APRIL > JUNE



## APRIL: NESRA TEAM MEMBERS TRAVEL TO GLASGOW FOR 'VEHICLE IN WATER' TRAINING

Teams travelled to Pinkston Watersports in Glasgow to participate in the NESRA run Vehicle in Water training and qualification, working through a number of workshops and scenarios in a variety of water depths and speeds.

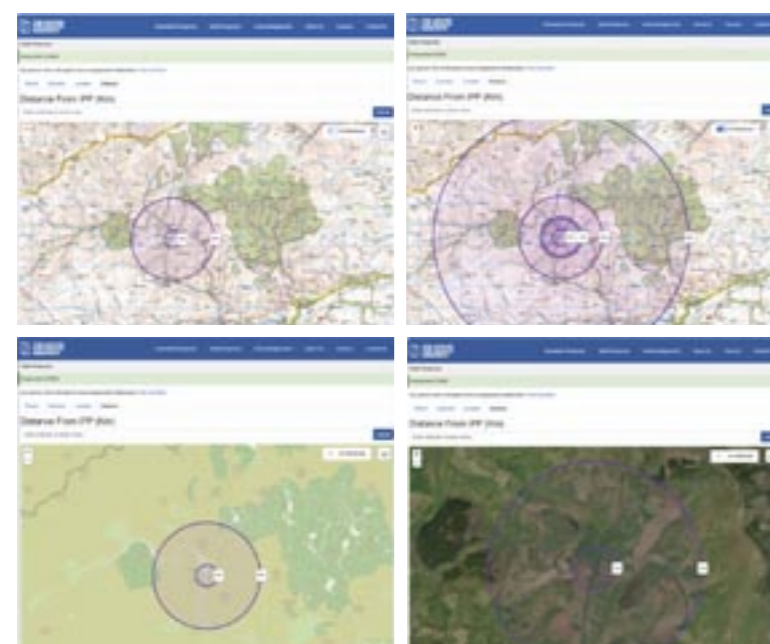
The two-day training highlighted the hazards associated when working with vehicles when they are stuck in water. Cleveland, Swaledale and Upper Wharfedale team members, practised the skills and techniques, using a variety of equipment, learning how to move in water, stabilise vehicles and then extract injured and non-injured occupants to a safe place.

Above: Vehicle in Water training © Cleveland MRT.

## ORTOVOX RESCUE OPERATOR BACKPACK OPTIMISED FOR MOUNTAIN RESCUE

The Rescue Operator Backpack is built for professionals requiring maximum flexibility and reliability in alpine terrain. Designed with optimised weight, its versatile roll-top access allows volume extension by up to five litres or reduction via four-sided compression straps. The fully opening main compartment ensures fast, full access to contents, while removable components – lid, hip fins, and back reinforcements – enable further weight-saving. The ergonomic back system distributes load evenly across hips and shoulders for all-day comfort, even with rescue gear. Functional highlights include a radio holder on the shoulder strap, robust 420D Cordura outer material, and reflective elements for 360° visibility. With features like diagonal and side ski fixations (D-ski and A-ski), two ice axe attachments, rope fastening, three inner pockets, and a large safety compartment with probe, shovel, and light axe fasteners, it is built for serious use. A contrasting colour-lifting loop allows secure suspension from a helicopter winch. Also includes pocket for name tag.

TO FIND OUT MORE HEAD TO: [ORTOVOX.COM](https://ORTOVOX.COM)



Screenshots of Misper-UK in use, clockwise from top left: 50% and 80% distances shown by default on OS map; All distances toggled on; Open Street Map view of the same area; Zoomed in, satellite view, of the same area. © Centre for Search Research.

# What's stopping you contacting the Rescue Benevolent Fund?

Since we set up, we've been approached by a number of people asking whether we can help, but then deciding — even though they have been assured that we CAN help — not to go forward, for a variety of reasons. We're also aware that others haven't approached us at all, assuming that they won't 'fit the criteria'. Both these scenarios are frustrating to us in their own way. Why? Because we're here to help you, and we want to hear from you, when you need support, whether that's physical, emotional or financial. **Shirley Priestley**, one of our fund trustees, explains how we are looking to put more ambassadors in place to help us better support mountain and cave rescue team members.

If you ARE suffering with either mental or physical injury or financial hardship, why are you not contacting the Rescue Benevolent Fund on the off-chance we may be able to help? I suspect some of the responses might include:

- Who?
- I'm sure there are people who might need it more than me...
- I don't feel comfortable taking charity money...
- I feel sure things will get better in their own time...

It's a conundrum we've wrestled with for a while: how can we ensure that every team member knows that the Rescue Benevolent Fund is for THEM when things are not quite tickety-boo? We hope we've gone some way to finding a few solutions.

## WE'RE LOOKING FOR MORE TEAM MEMBERS TO BECOME FUND AMBASSADORS

When we first set up the fund, we very much followed the MREW model at the time, with regional reps appointed by their region, not by us. Often the role was simply added to whatever responsibilities a person carried out within their region so, when a person stepped down from that role, they effectively stepped down from the benevolent fund role too — and if their successor was reluctant to carry out the responsibilities of interfacing with us, that contact was lost.

Time has moved on — the regional reps are no longer part of the decision-making process for applications. Rather, they are ambassadors, who we hope will spread the word about the fund, and encourage people to apply for our support. This standalone role

doesn't need to be tied to an officer role, nor should it be restricted to one per region or even team. Our only request is that you are a member of a team because the target audience is your peers.

Following feedback from the 2024 Conference we reviewed who and what we are from an applicant's point of view. Our website and application process has been simplified making it easier for applicants to give the right information to assist the decision process. So the best way to spread the word and gain awareness within teams is through you, the members.

We are looking for people who would be happy to raise awareness and promote the available services, including our access to rehabilitation facilities and psychological support — either through the Togetherall platform or more personalised tailored one-to-one. And of course, not forgetting the emergency funding we can offer while team members wait for an insurance pay out.

## GETTING HELP AND SUPPORT WHEN IT'S MOST NEEDED

We know that engaging in support services early promotes recovery and helps us return to the things we love, faster. But when life has been turned upside down, it's not easy to see clearly. Searching for help becomes a struggle and is often neglected. Life can lack clarity. We might even convince ourselves that we're not suffering enough to warrant help. Our aim is to ensure every team member knows where to come when they need support and we'd like our ambassadors to be front and centre in those times.

So what are we expecting of you? This role is not intended to be onerous and time consuming. In brief, we're asking you to:

- Talk to your teammates about our work, making them aware, not in a formal way but as part of a conversation, promoting the benefits of engaging early.
- Put team members in touch with Judy, our secretary. You can be as involved in the application process as much or as little as you and the applicant wish.

- Come along to our twice-a-year update meetings so that we know — and you feel — you're part of 'the family'.

- Promote the annual Togetherall online sessions (usually held in October).

If you are passionate about wellbeing, please consider becoming a recognised ambassador for the Rescue Benevolent Fund. The more we have, the happier we'll be. If you're intrigued or want to find out more before you commit, get in touch via [secretary@rescuebenevolent.fund](mailto:secretary@rescuebenevolent.fund) and get chatting!

And if you think you may need our support, but you're not sure whether you'll fit the criteria — just ask. You may be surprised about the degree of support available through the Rescue Benevolent Fund. Once an application has been submitted, we aim to provide an answer and begin your support within five days. In fact, our shortest timeline to date was 24 hours! So never be afraid to ask.

We are here for you. And yes, we're a charity, but remember that those funds are there to support you as team members. ☺



Rescue Benevolent Fund



We're happy to announce that **Jenny Dart** is our latest ambassador to the Rescue Benevolent Fund. Ogwen team member and Wellbeing Lead for the North Wales teams, she outlines how her own team and region are working to support the mental health and wellbeing of team members.

Across North Wales each team has their own wellbeing structure, but at NWMRA we have put in place access to a network of North Wales Police-approved trauma counsellors, and any team member can contact any on the list anonymously and have up to six funded sessions. The counsellor invoices NWMRA and is paid directly. We have ensured that there are both Welsh and English language options, as well as the option to be face-to-face or have online video sessions.

Within Ogwen team, we've adopted the Responder Alliance trauma response approach as outlined in the ICAR guidance (see page 39 for a summarised version).

Team leaders notify the wellbeing lead of the names of people who have been involved in a potentially traumatic event and an email is sent out with information and signposting at three days and three weeks. In the third-day email, we remind people of a normal trauma response and then, at three weeks, we include the self-led trauma stress questionnaire with the reminder to get in touch with our counsellor if they are scoring six or more at this point. Everyone can go for six funded sessions with the option to extend as needed — all anonymous if chosen to be that way.

Karen, our team funded counsellor comes and delivers training a couple of times a

year. We have covered topics such as difficult conversations, normal trauma responses, dying and grief, self care.

As a region we have also used MREW wellbeing funding to provide training from a local clinical psychologist around dealing with trauma and how to support ourselves.

We're all familiar with the nature of trauma. We're there because someone else has suffered trauma, but we all have a different bar as to how we deal with it.

A traumatic event might be a major incident where there are multiple things happening, such as aircraft crashes, flooding, the death of a colleague or recovery of a body. It might be an 'everyday'

trauma such as mountaineering accidents, suicides or missing persons. Or secondary or vicarious trauma where maybe you're not there at the incident, but in the control room dealing with outside agencies or families. And what makes an event traumatic can vary from person to person. For example, an event that is sudden and unexpected, involving prolonged exposure, multiple deaths and mutilation, or involving children, close proximity to the trauma, the death of a colleague or special meaning to the individual. Some events will always cause trauma and people can also be traumatised by their ability to imagine a traumatic event.

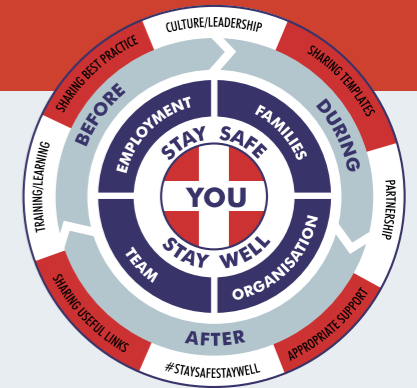
## Signs and symptoms

Signs and symptoms of stress and anxiety can include worrying more than

usual, seeming tired or irritable, even if there hasn't been a late night, trouble sleeping at night, muscle tension or restlessness. Signs of low mood or depression include difficulty concentrating or making decisions, dramatic changes in sleeping and eating patterns, anger, sadness or frustration — particularly after a call-out — or losing interest.

The UKSAR Wellbeing Principles (see page 38) set out clear guidelines to promote an open culture around wellbeing and mental health and enhance wellbeing. Alongside this, ICAR recommends recurring education and training around stress injury and resilience — and normalising this within team culture. ☺

YOU CAN CONTACT JENNY VIA  
[JENNY.DART@OGWEN-RESCUE.ORG.UK](mailto:JENNY.DART@OGWEN-RESCUE.ORG.UK)



## WELLBEING INFORMATION

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.

## USEFUL CONTACTS AT A GLANCE:

**Togetherall:** To register, see opposite and go to: [togetherall.com](https://togetherall.com)

**The Samaritans:** Call **116 123** for 24/7 confidential emotional support

**Blue Light Together:**  
[BlueLightTogether.org](https://bluelighttogether.org)

**Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide:**  
For adults affected by suicide, go to [uksobs.org](https://uksobs.org) or call **0300 111 5065**

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

**MIND Mental Health Charity:**  
Call Infoline: **0300 123 3393** Monday – Friday 09:00–18:00 (except for bank holidays).

**Rescue Benevolent Fund:** Email [secretary@rescuebenevolent.fund](mailto:secretary@rescuebenevolent.fund) or go to [rescuebenevolent.fund](https://rescuebenevolent.fund)

**MREW Wellbeing** on MREW website: [mrew-wellbeing.org.uk](https://mrew-wellbeing.org.uk)



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

# Five Guiding Principles for Emergency Response Volunteer Wellbeing

★ ARTICLE FIRST PUBLISHED IN ISSUE 88, WINTER 2024

In 2023, the UKSAR Mental Health and Wellbeing Work Group considered how the six Mental Health at Work (MHAW) Commitment Standards<sup>1</sup> could be translated into a form appropriate for volunteers. **Steve Penny** (SMR), **Jon White** (MREW) and **Adrian Edwards** (Lowland) were part of that group, and noted that wellbeing initiatives need to be embedded into existing culture and practice, and not perceived to be an additional administrative workload. (Note: This is a summarised version: full document is available to download from Moodle).

The guiding principles form the basis of an organisation-specific approach, and the material found in the 'Mental Health at Work toolkit: Supporting the Mental Health of Your Staff in the Emergency Services', is a useful reference for background and case studies. The key thing is that the conditions and culture for volunteers on the ground are the best they can be to help maintain and protect their mental health and wellbeing.

Our vision is a volunteering experience where wellbeing and mental health is valued, promoted and protected. It is where team members can participate fully, free from stigma and discrimination and maintain psychological wellbeing while being part of an organisation that helps others in need. Volunteering, in general, has beneficial effects on wellbeing and mental health, but we recognise the potential stresses involved. Volunteers and their organisational leadership structures should work together to create a culture where everyone can speak out without fear of judgement. It is important that team members feel supported and know where to access support should they need it.

## FIVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR VOLUNTEER WELLBEING:

These five principles offer a guide for volunteer organisations and those who volunteer to grow and sustain a positive culture and practice around wellbeing. A Wellbeing Work Plan<sup>2</sup> may be a helpful way to help cross-check against the guiding principles.

**PRINCIPLE P1:** Promote an open culture around wellbeing and mental health

**1:** Positively support the way our volunteers think and act about mental health by increasing awareness and challenging stigma.

**2:** Positively empower volunteers to champion wellbeing and role model an open culture throughout the organisation.  
**3:** Positively encourage, and create space for, open two-way conversations around mental health and wellbeing throughout all stages of volunteering. This includes all operational and non-operational activities, including during recruitment and retirement, training, meetings and through a positive wellbeing culture in the organisation and any supporting documentation.

**PRINCIPLE P2:** Increase organisational confidence and capability on these issues

**1:** Provide volunteers with the safest possible physical operating conditions, including the right training and equipment for their role.  
**2:** Encourage all volunteers to be suitably prepared and educated to have effective conversations about mental health with colleagues. This should be made clear during inductions for new volunteers, including where to signpost and bridge to support.  
**3:** Aim for volunteer roles to be designed and supported in a way which maximises the wellbeing benefits of volunteering in addition to making a valued contribution to the organisation and the communities served.  
**4:** Implement and communicate a Wellbeing Work Plan, to build organisational resilience in terms of wellbeing and mental health in a timespan that is appropriate.

**PRINCIPLE P3:** Promote volunteer (and family) actions to enhance wellbeing

**1:** Actively support and encourage opportunities for all volunteers to increase mental health literacy and learn how to look after their own mental health. Mental health knowledge can help maintain psychological

wellbeing while volunteering in any capacity for an organisation that exists to help others in distress or need.

**2:** Create opportunities for volunteers and families to feed back when culture and conditions might contribute to poor mental health.

**3:** Consider how volunteer commitment (and the risk of an 'always on call' culture) impacts on other aspects of their life such as work and family. When necessary, make appropriate adjustments

**PRINCIPLE P4:** Signpost and bridge to relevant mental health learning, tools and support

**1:** Raise awareness and understanding of the resources and support available through member/family regular updates and within training programmes.  
**2:** Explore opportunities with the relevant calling or responsible agencies to gain access to relevant support eg. access to organisation 24/7 support programmes or rapid assessment for post-traumatic stress treatment.  
**3:** Feed back wellbeing and mental health training requirements or need for further support to the relevant leadership/management groups.

**PRINCIPLE P5:** Increase both transparency and accountability to members through reporting, as and when appropriate

**1:** For the organisation, there may be a range of methods to achieve this principle. This should be considered as a part of the Wellbeing Work Plan with methods and timings to suit each organisation.

<sup>1</sup> mentalhealthatwork.org.uk

<sup>2</sup> The Wellbeing Work Plan could be a plan within each organisation that sets out how these principles are progressing, with a locally agreed time span



# Recommendations for Stress Resilience in Alpine Rescue



Also in 2023, a document was prepared by **John Ellerton** (ICAR MedCom President) and **Alison Sheets** (MRA) with recommendations designed for all rescuers and mountain rescue organisations (Note: this is a summarised version: full version also available on Moodle).

Mountain rescuers are exposed to significant stress in their work which takes a toll on their emotional wellbeing. Over the last decade, building awareness and resilience against operational stress injury has become an important focus in alpine rescue organisations and other first responder agencies. We believe that all rescuers should have the knowledge, skills and an ability to cope with the difficult work we do. All rescuers should be supported in this by their organisations. We also believe these recommendations promote a healthier team culture and could encourage better retention of experienced members.

## PREPARATION AND PRE-PLANNING

**1. Understanding exposure to stress:** the formation of stress injury, its physical effects and risk factors should be part of medical training.  
**2. Recurring stress injury training** to normalise and destigmatise discussion of emotional and mental health topics.  
**3. Teams should develop a method to promote resilience and connection** — this could be a 'resilience team' within the team or other peer support — and ensure continuous education about stress injury.  
**4. Teams should develop strategies for the assessment and ongoing monitoring** of, and team response to, a potentially traumatising event or other critical incident eg. a line of duty death. Include responding agencies in this planning.  
**5. Successful teams reduce exposure to stressors and proactively offer support.** They should develop social cohesion, with zero tolerance policies on bullying, harassment, emotional and physical abuse.

## DURING AN INCIDENT

**6. Stress continuum utilisation** should be routine in the day-to-day activities of the team and the individual rescuer.  
**7. Stress First Aid\*** should provide practical, effective, and timely interventions using the five intervention principles (safety, calm, self-efficacy, connection and hope).  
**8. If feasible, rescuers should be able to opt out of traumatic exposures.** Consider a tactical pause when there has been a major change to the mission goals eg. a change from rescue to body recovery.

## AFTER THE INCIDENT

**9. Timely after-action reviews/critical incident** debriefs when a potentially traumatising event is identified, with focus on establishing the facts of the incident, what went right and

areas for improvement — including the acknowledgment of incident stressors (but should not re-traumatise the participants).

**10. Rescuers should understand the elements of stress injury recovery** and the normal timing of the stress cycle.

**11. Utilise the 3:3:3 Protocol** and the **Traumatic Stress Questionnaire** (after three weeks).

**12.** Mental health professionals working with SAR personnel should be familiar with the culture of the organisation and use a common language consistently.

## TRAUMATIC EXPOSURE PROTOCOL POTENTIALLY TRAUMATISING EVENT (PTE) CRITERIA

- FAMILY CONTACT
- PERSONAL CONNECTION OR EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT
- DUTY TO ACT
- MISSION INJURY/ HELPLESSNESS
- EXTREMES OF EXPOSURE
- OVERWHELMED/DEPLETION
- INCIDENTS INVOLVING CHILDREN
- COMPLEXITY OF INCIDENT
- FIRST-TIME EXPOSURE

Traumatic Exposure Protocol © Laura McGladrey 2021.

READY	REACTING	INJURED	INJURED
Sense of Mission Spiritually & Emotionally Healthy Physically Healthy Emotionally Available Healthy Sleep Gratitude Vitality Room for Complexity	Sleep Loss Change in Attitude Criticism Avoidance Loss of Interest Distance from Others Short Fuse Cutting Corners Loss of Creativity Fatigue	Sleep Issues Emotional Numbness Burnout Nightmares Disengaged Exhausted Physical Symptoms Feeling Trapped Relationships Suffering Isolation	Insomnia Hopelessness Anxiety & Panic Depression Intrusive Thoughts Feeling Lost or Out of Control Blame Hiding Out Broken Relationships Thoughts of Suicide

Responder Stress Continuum (adapted from Combat and Operational Stress First Aid by Laura McGladrey).

3 DAYS POST INCIDENT	3 WEEKS POST INCIDENT	3 MONTHS POST INCIDENT
Stress Continuum Check-in Normalisation/Education Leverage <b>GREEN</b> Choices (make a plan) Self & Partner Awareness (Support Return to Baseline) Life Stressors Check-in	Complete TSQ Scores > 6 = increased risk of stress injury development Provide Resources for Professional Support Stress Continuum Check-in Revisit Plan to return to <b>GREEN</b> Baseline	Stress Continuum Check-in Revisit Plan to return to <b>GREEN</b> Baseline Offer Resources and Connection Offer Further Check-ins if Requested

3:3:3 Protocol © Laura McGladrey 2021 | responderalliance.com

## HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED ANY OF THE FOLLOWING (AT LEAST TWICE IN THE PAST WEEK)?

1. Upsetting thoughts or memories about the event that have come into your mind against your will?
2. Upsetting dreams about the event?
3. Acting or feeling as if the events were happening again?
4. Feeling upset by reminders of the event?
5. Bodily reactions (such as fast heartbeat, stomach churning)?
6. Difficulty falling or staying asleep?
7. Irritability or outbursts of anger?
8. Difficulty concentrating?
9. Heightened awareness of potential dangers to yourself and others?
10. Feeling jumpy or being startled by something unexpected?

Traumatic Stress Questionnaire © C R Brewin et al 2002.

\* Stress First Aid focuses on the rescuer; Psychological First Aid embraces both rescuer and casualty/bystanders. The intervention principles are very similar.



# Are we all just kind of lonely?

HOW TO MANAGE FEELINGS OF LONELINESS AND ISOLATION...

It can feel odd talking about loneliness when it's easier for us to connect with others now than at any other time in history. However, the means of connecting have changed, and some of the most popular options are designed to encourage comparison to others.

In a time when we can instantly be connected to anyone in the world, why is loneliness and isolation at the forefront of our mental health conversations? Covid isolation mandates, polarising politics and societal injustices have all caused feelings of uncertainty, anger, sadness and isolation.

And when our means of connection have changed so much, we can feel whiplash at the thought of how and when to socialise. The 2020s have highlighted the question: what does it mean to be connected to others and are we really feeling lonely?

## Are we lonely or does everyone else look like they're having more fun?

It can feel odd talking about loneliness when it's easier for us to connect with others now than at any other time in history. However, the means of connecting have changed, and some of the most popular options are designed to encourage comparison to others. While we might enjoy a quiet night at home, if we then see others socialising (or having different experiences), we may then question our choices or things

about ourselves and our relationships that we otherwise wouldn't have.

In fact, research has shown that if we think our relationships should be or feel a certain way because of a standard we've set, we may feel even more lonely. So, even if we do have friends we regularly see or talk with, we may still feel lonely because we are comparing our relationships to a standard that we saw on social media and incorporated into our thinking.

Because of the design of social media, we also know it's hard to avoid comparing ourselves to others on social media, and that experience further amplifies feelings of loneliness. It doesn't actually matter what we do on social media, just being exposed to the content on the platform contributes to feelings of loneliness.

We're not saying you should never go on social media again, but it's important to know that doing so can cause our feelings and behaviours to be hijacked without us realising it.

Chief Clinical Officer of Togetherall, Dr Ben Locke, wants us to know that 'loneliness is

a real feeling, regardless of what prompted it, but there are a lot of ways to manage it'.

We are social creatures, but also creatures of habit. Combine that with digital tools that can put us on autopilot, and we may be actively worsening our own feelings without realising it. So how do we get off autopilot? Dr Locke emphasises that it's not always easy, but it's worth it — and the more you do it, the better you'll become.

'Intention setting is one of the best ways we can combat loneliness. Our typical go-to move when feeling lonely or bored (or even uncomfortable) is to pick up our phone and scroll. The problem is that not only does this automatic behaviour not fix our lonely experience, but what you see suggests everyone else is not lonely and having a better time. To feel less lonely or isolated, we have to challenge ourselves to not do the easy and automatic thing. Instead, set an intention to connect with others or do something that makes us feel better.'

People are drawn to social media because of new information and novelty. If this can lead us to feel lonely and isolated, it can also

have the power to do the opposite if you are intentional about which services you use.

## To feel connected and supported by others, do we have to know who is giving us the support?

Research has shown that the greater the number of weaker ties someone has (people you may have casual conversations with, but not consider a friend), the happier they feel and the fewer depressed feelings they have. So, to have a happy and satisfied life, it doesn't necessarily have to be filled with best friends or super-close ties.

Sometimes it can even feel easier to open up to someone who is not our closest confidant. While our closest friends and family may know the most intimate details of our life, it doesn't mean that we always want them to be involved in difficult or private problems. Sometimes we just want someone to listen to us. Period.

If we find ourselves dealing with a difficult situation or difficult emotions, we typically prefer to talk with someone who has experienced something similar. This allows us to feel that we have a shared experience and that this will lead to greater understanding. In addition, sometimes it is just easier to share difficult details with people who are not a close friend or family member.

## Feeling better even if we feel lonely

As the past few years have presented numerous physical, mental and emotional challenges for the world, it's easy to understand how loneliness and isolation

have kept people from feeling well. How can we feel better if, and when, we feel lonely? Recognising when we start to feel lonely can be a big step to helping us feel more connected.

### ♥ Set an intention each day to feel better:

If you find yourself feeling lonely, try setting an intention to cut down on screen time or maybe actively disengage from social media accounts that invite you to compare yourself to others. Simple strategies like setting a time-limit, scheduling your social media time for the day, or creating a daily reminder of the link between social media and wellbeing can be surprisingly effective.

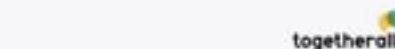
### ♥ Engage with loose ties, meaning connect with others who may not be your best friend or family member:

Not every person can give us every type of support we may need, so widening your support network can help you feel understood with a greater sense of belonging. Allow yourself to open up and engage with a broader range of people and experiences.

### ♥ Connect with others who have had similar experience — even if you don't know them,

that sense of support and empathy can make us feel like we are part of a community who understands.

And if you find yourself wanting to widen your network and sense of belonging, why not register with Togetherall, courtesy of the Rescue Benevolent Fund ☺



Mental health support online, **anonymous & 24/7.**

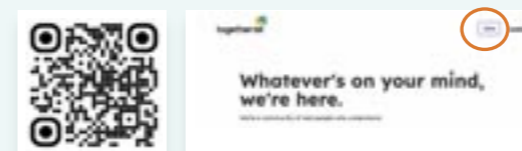
At Togetherall you can speak to someone who understands what you're going through, **anytime & anywhere.**

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

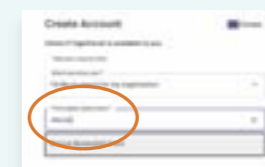
The Togetherall digital mental health and wellbeing support service is a completely anonymous community where you can express yourself freely and openly. Professionally trained Wall Guides and clinical professionals monitor the community to ensure the safety and anonymity of all members. Once you're 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 courses covering the key topics which affect all our lives. Or take **clinically-approved self-assessments** to help you understand more about yourself. ☺

See below for instructions on how to register

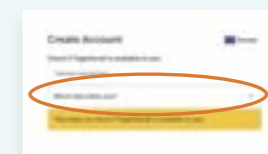
## 1 Go to **togetherall.com** or scan QR code. Click 'Join'



## 4 Enter 'rescue' to find Rescue Benevolent Fund



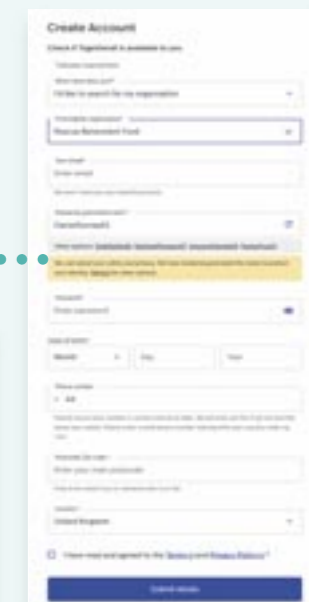
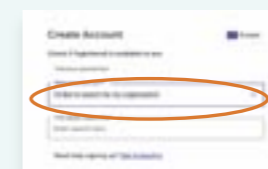
## 2 To create account Select 'Which describes you?'



## 5 Enter email. Create profile name. Enter details. Click 'Submit details'

Start exploring...

## 3 Select 'I'd like to search for my organisation'





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## PRACTICAL + ROBUST S&R LIGHTING

Since 2008 we've been supplying UK Rescue Teams with Fenix lighting products. Our lights offer impressive performance, outstanding reliability, and provide a worry-free experience so that team members can focus on the job at hand.

### MOST POPULAR SEARCH & RESCUE PRODUCTS



#### HM65R Headlamp

Our most popular headlamp, and it's clear to see why. With simple, individual operation of the spot and flood beams, the user can select their ideal lighting combination. Made from a lightweight magnesium alloy, HM65R is incredibly light (147g) and highly durable.

**1400lm** Max Output  
**163m** Max Range  
**280h** Max Runtime (800lm)  
**3400h** 18x50 battery



#### PD36R V2.0 Torch

An ever-popular model in the rugged Fenix torch range, PD36R V2.0 offers a balanced range of lighting outputs for S&R needs - whether that's high output for searching at range, to low level lighting for navigation, or elongating battery life. The large 5000mAh battery gives exceptional battery life for longer operations.

**1700lm** Max Output  
**396m** Max Range  
**482h** Max Runtime (800lm)  
**5000h** 21700 battery



#### LR35R Compact Searchlight

A pocket powerhouse designed to illuminate far and wide - perfect for searches over large areas. At only 14cm long and less than 400g in weight, LR35R keeps the user agile, whilst able to lay down extensive light for effective search use.

**10,000lm** Max Output  
**500m** Max Range  
**80h** Max Runtime (800lm)  
**7x** 21700 batteries

## MAY: NEW TEAM LEADER FOR COMRU

After over ten years as COMRU leader, Chris Jones stepped down from the post at the team's recent AGM.

Chris is a founder member of COMRU and will have completed forty years of service to the team next year. He has held many officer posts over that time and has in no small way shaped the team into what it is. His practical knowledge of the mines of Cumbria and the UK at large, his bewilderingly broad skills set, and his understanding of the systems and procedures of the other services the team works alongside, gave COMRU a lead who was more than capable of rising to the challenges the team faces. Chris has also served as an ambassador to the Rescue Benevolent Fund, stood in until recently as MREW Vehicle Officer, and has just become the vice-chairman of BCRC. At the conclusion of the AGM, the chair formally thanked Chris for his outstanding work with the team and presented him with a Distinguished Service Award. COMRU's new team leader is Tracey Binks, who is also a member of Duddon and Furness MRT and the LDSAMRA SARCALL admin.



Top: Chris Jones (Left) receives Distinguished Service Award from COMRU chairman, Paul Witheridge © Sally Allsop.



## MAY: CONISTON FELL RACE RAISES £2,300 FOR TEAM

Thanks to outstanding participation in the Coniston Fell Race in early May, Pete Bland Sports announced that they had raised an incredible £2,307.64 for Coniston MRT.

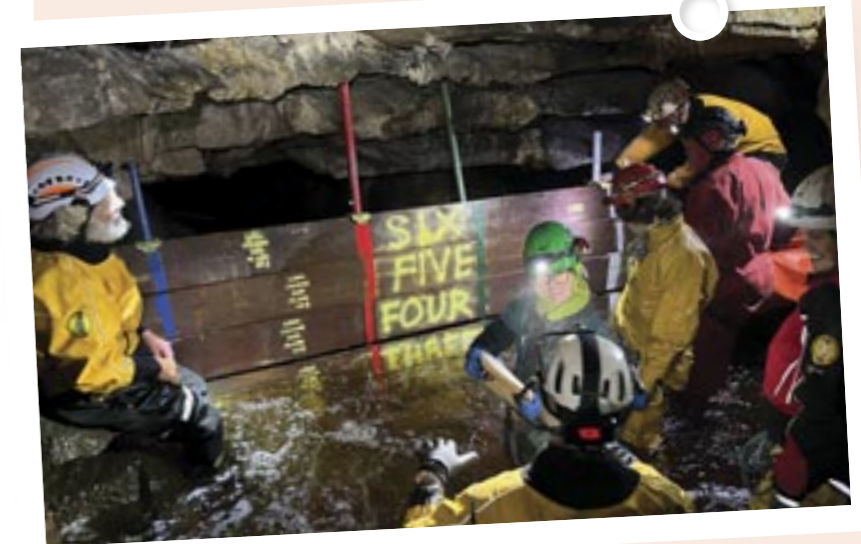
'A huge thank you to all the amazing volunteers, marshals, sweepers, kit checkers and to Coniston Primary School, who raised £1.4K from parking and food, and to everyone who joined us for this event and contributed to such a worthy cause, your support truly makes a difference!'



Raising funds  
for rescue

# NEWS ROUND

APRIL > JUNE



## JUNE: CRO HOSTS RESCON25

On the weekend of 6-8 June, the Cave Rescue Organisation hosted the annual gathering of British and European cave rescue organisations. 'It's always been a pleasure to host the event,' writes **Jake Stapleton**, 'but this year was especially the case as we celebrate 90 years as a cave rescue team. Founded in 1935, we believe, this makes us the oldest cave rescue team'.

The weekend properly got underway with a keynote speech from our president Ben Lyon. Ben – and Lyon Equipment – have long been valued supporters of the team and so it was a real privilege to hear from him. Despite the weather being on the damper side of wet, attendees were treated to a host of different situations that allowed them to discuss different techniques and share knowledge and experience. It also gave us an opportunity to demonstrate how we use damming to divert the waters that run into the Alum Pot cave system to allow access in an emergency. For some of the team, drysuits were definitely the kit of the day! The water wasn't enough to dampen spirits though, and a ceilidh on Saturday evening soon warmed people back up. Over the weekend we held a raffle, raising £500 for the Rescue Benevolent Fund. Prizes were donated from Keela, Petzl, and Lyon Equipment, as well as many other local, and very supportive, companies. We'd like to say a huge thank you to Sean Whittle from the team who put so much time into coordinating everything to do with the event, team members who helped out across the weekend and, of course, everyone from the visiting teams who joined us to make for a great weekend.

Above & below: Rescon 2025. Images supplied by Jake Stapleton, CRO.



## Born from necessity

First introduced in 2008 and used by over 70 rescue teams UK wide, the Kongur MRT Jacket is built with GORE-TEX Pro; for those moments when nothing else matters.

To find out more contact:  
[sales@mountain-equipment.co.uk](mailto:sales@mountain-equipment.co.uk)

Kongur MRT Jacket  
Men's & Women's



# NEWS ROUND

APRIL > JUNE

## Raising funds for rescue



### MAY: 'COME TO THE RESCUE' EVENT RAISES £8,000 FOR WASDALE TEAM

The event happened thanks to considerable efforts from a number of people, not least of all Basia MacMillan, the Wasdale team member who led the organising team.

Local breweries kindly donated barrels of local ale, with profits from every pint going to the Wasdale team, the Wasdale Head Inn provided the food, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority gave their support, and team members and families and the local MP Josh MacAllister (also a Patterdale team member), went along to join in the fun.

'It's hard to tell exactly how much we have raised,' says Basia, 'because donations were coming in before and after the event. A few people couldn't attend on the day, but donated on the JustGiving page instead, and we had donations coming from many different sources — so it's hard to establish which donation is caused by the event and which is not. But we estimate that overall funds raised are coming to just under £8,000.'

'We'd just like to publicly express our sincere thanks to all those who supported or attended our "Come to the Rescue" day in May,' ran their Facebook post. 'We had a fantastic time and it was great to engage with so many members of the public in different ways. We met some long-time friends of the team, budding new members, and those just interested in seeing a bit more of what we do. A fun time was had by all, and it was great for many team members to be off call for the day. Thanks to all who planned, prepared, attended, sponsored or kindly donated on the day.'

Top: Wasdale team members with local MP Josh MacAllister (centre) © Wasdale MRT.



### JUNE: TRAINING FOR PARAGLIDING INCIDENTS IN THE PEAK DISTRICT

Buxton team members were entertained and informed in an evening training session with Ginger Nomad Paragliding, a local outdoor equipment and paragliding expert.

Above: Training in how to treat injured paragliders © Buxton MRT.



### APRIL: CALLING CORONATION STREET SUPERFANS...

Want to help raise money for Llanberis MRT (the busiest team in England and Wales by a considerable stretch)?

In April, the team put up for auction on eBay a scraperboard rendition of the iconic Rover's Return, signed by the Coronation Street cast of 2024. The picture had been kindly donated by a member of the Corrie production team who had their own drama on Yr Wyddfa, in October 2023, when they were rescued by Llanberis members. To thank the team, a friend who was with him on the day created this brilliant scraperboard of the famous pub, scene of many a drama over the years, and arranged for it to be signed by the cast. The guide price was £225, but we hear that it failed to sell. So, if you're a dyed-in-the-cobbles Corrie fan and this is something you might be interested in, why not get in touch with their fundraising contact via [carolyn.samuel@llmrt.org](mailto:carolyn.samuel@llmrt.org) and make them an offer they can't refuse (with apologies for mixing our references!!)

Top: Carolyn Samuel pictured with the framed scraperboard © Llanberis MRT.

Below: The injured climber's helmet — a crushing reminder that experienced climbers can get injured too © LAMRT.



### APRIL: A CRUSHING REMINDER

Langdale Ambleside team responded to a climber who had been crushed by a large boulder when testing to see if it was loose, and remained suspended in his harness with multiple, very serious injuries.

A number of emergency services made their way to Raven Crag in Langdale. Two very helpful passersby had managed to get the casualty onto a small ledge and begun to treat him. The incident was a harsh reminder that even if you are an experienced climber (as was this casualty), it is still possible on well-travelled rock climbing destinations that there is still loose rock. Please take care when climbing.



# January to 11 June 2025

PAUL BRAIN MREW STATISTICS OFFICER

## Lake District

Cockermouth	30
COMRU	1
Coniston	30
Duddon & Furness	12
Kendal	22
Keswick	65
Kirkby Stephen	14
Langdale Ambleside	59
Patterdale	38
Penrith	19
Wasdale	60
	<b>350</b>

## Mid Pennines

Bolton	18
Bowland Pennine	34
Calder Valley	22
Holme Valley	22
Rossendale & Pendle	40
	<b>136</b>

## North East

Cleveland	42
North of Tyne	14
Northumberland	21
Swaledale	21
Teesdale & Weardale	23
	<b>121</b>

## North Wales

Aberdyfi	23
Aberglaslyn	24
Llanberis	141
North East Wales	20
Ogwen Valley	81
South Snowdonia	7
	<b>296</b>

## Peak District

Buxton	52
Derby	48
Edale	70
Glossop	30
Kinder	36
Oldham	20
Woodhead	31
	<b>287</b>

## Peninsula

Cornwall East	11
Cornwall West	–
Dartmoor Ashburton	11
Dartmoor Plymouth	5
Dartmoor Tavistock	11
Exmoor	14
North Dartmoor	2
	<b>54</b>

## South Wales

Brecon	52
Central Beacons	44
Longtown	17
Western Beacons	14
	<b>127</b>

## South West England

Avon & Somerset	13
SARA	17
	<b>30</b>

## Yorkshire Dales

CRO	39
Scarborough & Ryedale	12
Upper Wharfedale	31
	<b>82</b>

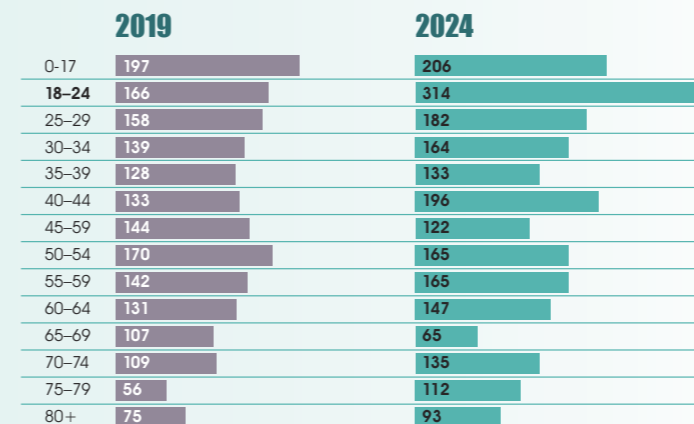
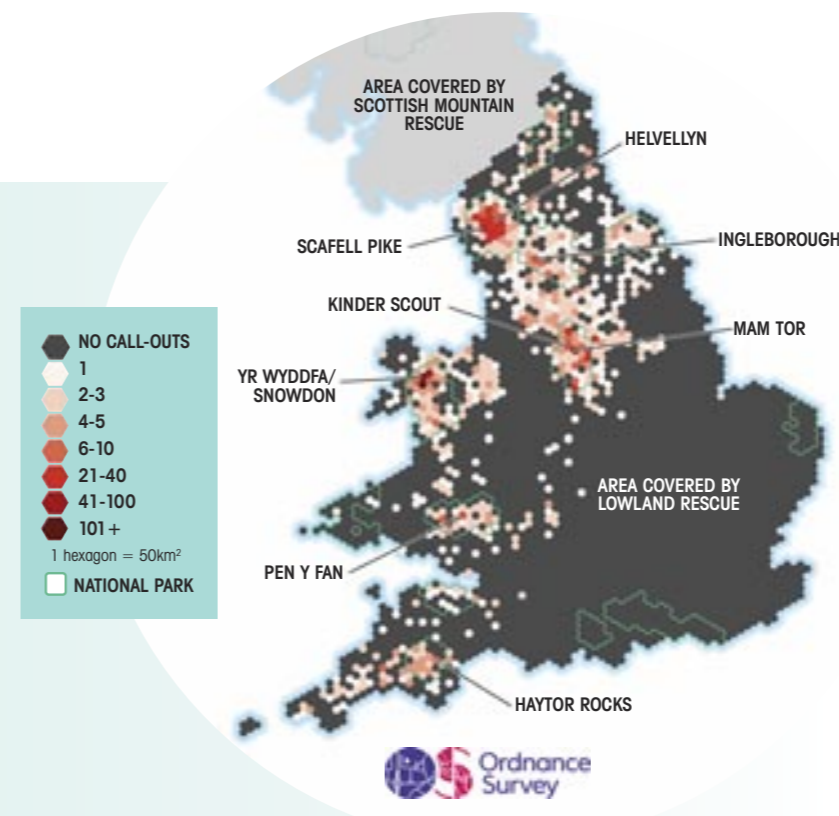
## Search Dogs

Lake District MRSD	7
MRSD England	27
SARDA Wales	6
SARDA South Wales	5
	<b>45</b>

## Drones

Lake District	11
	<b>11</b>

\* Sorted according to geographical region and by closed incident reports.



## OVERVIEW OF 2024

AS SEEN IN THE ANNUAL REVIEW 2025



Mountain rescue call-outs have significantly increased in the 18-24 year age group since 2019

For the first time in our history 0 days without a call-out



## JUNE: POLICE OFFICER HIGHLIGHTS THE DANGERS OF WALKING IN ERYRI

The rise in incidents in Eryri/Snowdonia prompted a North Wales Police news item featuring Sergeant Paul Terry, of the North Wales Police Drone Unit, sharing the tragic story of two experienced mountain walkers found deceased on Pen yr Ole Wen in the Ogwen Valley in May last year, having gone missing twelve years apart. It was an opportunity to reiterate the safety messages of AdventureSmart and to underline that even experienced walkers can suffer mishap.

David Brookfield was walking alone in the Carneddau in January 2024 when he went missing. During his descent from the summit of Pen yr Ole Wen he fell and, despite extensive searches in challenging winter weather conditions, David could not be found.

Four months later, coastguard helicopter crews located his body while carrying out a routine training exercise through the Ogwen Valley. It was during his recovery that incredibly, team members found the remains of Shayne Colaco, in the same spot. Twelve years earlier, the doctor had also been walking in the Carneddau range. Shayne had provided information about his intended route, but never returned to his car.

It's believed his descent from the summit took the same fatal turn as David's.

'While we were carrying out the investigation process into David's death, a mountain rescue team member found a jacket about five metres further down the gully,' he said. 'The jacket didn't seem to fit with the picture of what we were investigating. It was older, seemed to have been there for some time and inside the pocket was a car key.' It was later confirmed that the key was Shayne's. A specialist mountain rescue drone operator carried out further investigation in the area, to find Shayne's body. 'As the drone pilot was stood in the spot we had recovered David, he noticed a piece of

fabric under some brush and the detritus that had washed down the gully — and quite incredibly, realised he had also discovered Shayne's remains.'

Highlighting the dangers of walking in Eryri, Sergeant Terry explained that David and Shayne were both experienced walkers who were well prepared. Both had strayed into dangerous ground which 'might have seemed inviting from the summit, but as it got steeper and more broken, it became harder.' His message was simple: 'Be prepared.'

For the full account, head to North Wales Police website: [tinyurl.com/534zj5k2](https://tinyurl.com/534zj5k2).



Above: The rocky western face of Yr Wyddfa © Copyright Phil Brandon Hunter and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence.

## JUNE: TWO WOMEN DIED AFTER BEING FOUND IN A POOL IN SNOWDONIA

North Wales Police were called to Nant Gwynant, Gwynedd following a report of a woman in the pool on the Watkin Path, one of the main routes to the summit of Yr Wyddfa. The second woman was pulled from the water, but pronounced dead.

Llanberis and Aberglaslyn team members, police, air ambulance and a coastguard helicopter were sent to the scene. Jurgen Dissmann, Llanberis chairman, said it was a 'complex and difficult call-out'. The incident once again raised the issue of people heading to these natural beauty spots, encouraged by social media. This may be the highest mountain in Wales, but it's relatively easy to access the pools and waterfalls where the two women died. The rise of TikTok and Instagram posts showing bathers taking a dip in the waters running off the mountain have lured a whole new demographic of hill goers to this spot. But after days of heavy rain across the national park, the pools were described as having 'turned into torrents of foaming white water', creating a powerful undercurrent into the plunge pools below.

# NEWS ROUND

APRIL > JUNE



## MAY: EDALE TEAM DONATES STRETCHER TO CAVE RESCUE

In October 2016, Derbyshire Cave Rescue used a specialist floating stretcher during a big rescue of an injured caver from JH Mine, down and out of the Speedwell show cave entrance.

This stretcher was owned by Edale MRT, who kindly provided it to the cave team for the evacuation of the casualty along the Speedwell canal. Now that Edale no longer require the stretcher, they recently contacted DCRO to ask whether they would like to have it and this essential piece of kit was officially handed over.

'We are hugely grateful to them for the donation of this specialist piece of equipment,' says Alan Berry, DCRO team leader. 'Although we don't often find ourselves able to float someone around in small passages during rescues, there are certainly some locations on our patch that this stretcher could see action in future and it will be a valuable asset to DCRO. We thank our blue-light friends at Edale MRT for their generous gift, and it reminds us that the PDMRO network of voluntary mountain and cave rescue and teams across our region are always ready to support one another.'

**Top:** Edale's Ian Bunting (left) hands over the floating stretcher to Alan Berry (DCRO) © Edale MRT.



## MAY: 8-DAY TREK RAISES FUNDS FOR THE PATERDALE TEAM

Rachel Ardley, of Lakeland Horse Trails, undertook the 90-mile camping trek through the Lakeland fells with her Norwegian Fjord Horse, Emeline, over eight days, in aid of the Patterdale team raising £2,500 to date. And, in June, the pair popped into Patterdale base to say hello.

While she was at the rescue base, she was also invited to give a talk about their trek to a group of visiting school kids. 'It was a nice opportunity to share our adventures and Em was so incredibly well behaved around them,' says Rachel. 'She sure is a horse who can go anywhere! Double-decker buses passed behind us in the yard and she wasn't concerned at all, just took the whole experience in her stride.'

**Top:** Rachel with 'Em' at Patterdale base © Patterdale MRT.



## Raising funds for rescue

## JUNE: BOOK SELLERS PLEDGE TO SUPPORT MREW THROUGH SHOP SALES

Jenny and Josh (pictured) run Nature Bound Books, an independent online bookshop based in Hay-on-Wye which specialises in nature books for all ages. They will be donating 5% of their profits at the end of each financial year to a number of nature-focused charities that align with their values, including mountain rescue.

'As a new and growing business, our sales may start modestly, but we're very hopeful that contributions will grow year on year,' says Josh. 'We're passionate about helping people fall in love with the natural world by inspiring and educating through books and we're equally committed to supporting the incredible work you do.' Thank you. You can find Jenny and Josh at [natureboundbooks.co.uk](http://natureboundbooks.co.uk).



## JUNE: COCKERMOUTH TEAM PAY TRIBUTE ON 56TH ANNIVERSARY OF A TRAGIC ACCIDENT

June marked the 56th anniversary of the tragic accident that changed history for the Cockermouth team. The accident occurred while team members were undertaking a stretcher lower on Low Crag in Buttermere.

Sadly two team members, team leader Jock Thomson, aged 49, and Michael Stephenson, just 28 years old, were killed and others seriously injured when the rock which was holding the main belay broke away, triggering a rockfall, engulfing the stretcher and several team members. A group of team members went to Gatesgarth to lay a wreath at the memorial. Flowers were also laid at the crag, where there is a memorial plaque. The incident remains strong in memory. Family members of the deceased visit the memorial every year, and many of the older team members, both active and honorary, remember it like it was yesterday'.

**Left:** Team members Laura Connolly and Russell Butler lay flowers at one of the memorials © Cockermouth MRT.



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# The Savage Mountain, thirty years on...

Hinkes  
thinks



This year is the thirtieth anniversary of my ascent of K2 in July 1995. It was the culmination of three consecutive expeditions, having spent nearly twelve months over a three-year period attempting K2. Known as the Savage Mountain, it has a reputation for difficulty and danger — not much lower than Everest, but much more difficult to climb.

It is a more serious, arduous two-week trek to a remote BC, the weather is worse, the climbing is more technical and there are more avalanche and rock fall risks. Rescue is not really practicable, although the Pakistan military have flown helicopters to BC at 5,200m. The realistic ceiling for helicopters is 6,500m, above which the atmosphere is too thin for the rotors.

Straddling the Pakistan-China border in the northern Karakoram, it pokes up dramatically from the rock-strewn glacier. At 8,611m, K2 is a mountain of almost perfect proportions. It soars up over 3,000m in a striking pyramid of ice, snow and rock. It is a mountain with no name, just the notation 'K' for Karakoram and '2' because it was the second from the left when it was being surveyed in the early 1800s by the Great Trigonometrical Survey. It feels appropriate that this remote challenging mountain has the brief, stark designation K2.

My first attempt on K2 was abandoned to help rescue an exhausted climber. I was making a lightweight summit push with a mate and came across a stricken climber from another expedition. His partner had already fallen to his death down the 3,000m south face. It was a simple decision to abandon the climb and rescue the injured climber. He was walking wounded, but needed support, we could not have carried him. It took both of us several days to guide him to BC. He was badly frostbitten, but survived with his toes amputated. After that I was too exhausted to go immediately back on the mountain. Unfortunately, the good

weather window for the season closed and that was the end of that attempt.

The following year, I made an attempt on the remote north side from the Shaksgam area in China. This expedition was so remote that it lasted five months, UK to UK. I had a close shave at 6,000m when an avalanche struck the narrow bivouac ledge I was on. I managed to get out of my tent before it was flattened, but I was buried up to my thighs in wet snow which set like concrete. I was only in my underpants and freezing to death. Luckily, two of my teammates nearby were unharmed and dug me out. Otherwise, it would have been an ignominious, embarrassing end.

Later in June, I was surprised when a Spanish-Italian expedition turned up. As this area is so remote I presumed we would have K2 to ourselves. I ended up making a solo attempt for the summit, spending eleven nights alone above 6,800m. I knew I would be deteriorating and had to make a summit push. I reached a tiny ledge at 8,100m and two of the Spanish climbers joined me. On the north side of K2, the final five hundred metres is an exposed hanging glacier of steep ice and snow. It looked and felt very unstable and highly avalanche prone. I reached an altitude about five hours from the summit in clear, settled weather, but the risk of avalanche was too great and I turned back. The calculated risk was too high. Even though I had spent five months on this expedition, I was still prepared to turn back only five hours from the summit. I have a maxim: 'No mountain is worth a life. Coming back is a success. The summit is only a bonus'. Tragically the two Spanish climbers carried on and the slope did avalanche.

I planned for my third attempt on K2 in June/July 1995. Unfortunately, in April 1995, I had a serious leg injury after slipping off the path trekking in to Makalu. A tree stopped me plummeting sixty metres my death, but a branch ripped into my leg like a medieval spear. The branch narrowly missed my femoral artery, otherwise I would have bled to death, and luckily missed other vital private parts. Otherwise, I might have been singing soprano.

I was five days into the ten-day trek to BC, five days from the nearest road head, which was three days further to Kathmandu.

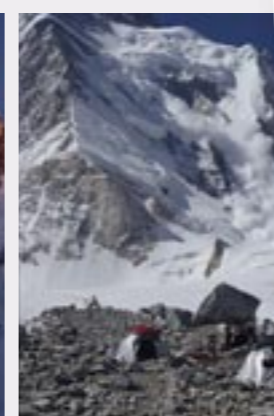
Fortunately, I had a good contact in Kathmandu who sent a helicopter the following day. My leg was in a serious state and badly infected. I was transferred to Bangkok for surgery and spent most of April alone in hospital.

This serious incident was caused by complacency. I let my guard down, thinking that the trek to BC is only a bimbble and I do not need to be aware of the dangers like when I am climbing on the mountain. It was a salutary lesson to never underestimate any mountain experience.

My leg healed well and I was ready for K2. I teamed up with Alison Hargreaves and we set off together to join the 1995 American K2 expedition. I knew Alison well, she was an old friend and we had climbed together a lot, especially in winter on Ben Nevis. We trekked in for twelve days and climbed together for two weeks, acclimatising on the mountain, before changing to an American climbing partner. This was my third attempt on K2 and I was focused and determined to summit. I had a lot of local knowledge of the mountain and area. Also, this was my thirteenth 8,000er expedition and I had summited four 8,000ers. At that time, I was the most experienced mountaineer in the area. I still had my mantra, that no mountain is worth a life, coming back is as success, the summit is a bonus.

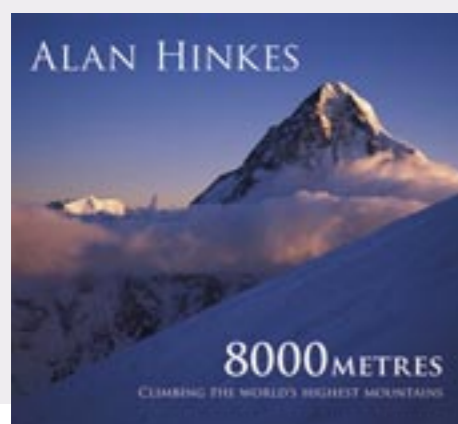
K2 felt like an old friend. It didn't faze me. I felt confident, although I was acutely aware of the dangers it posed and knew I mustn't get complacent and underestimate the risks on what was becoming familiar terrain.

I was fit, ready and felt a sense that a good weather window was opening. I knew I had to go for it. My American climbing partner had to drop back as he was not acclimatised enough and I pushed on alone. I reached the top solo at the same time as two Dutch and two Pakistani climbers on 17 July 1995. It took me fifteen hours from my last bivouac on the shoulder at 7,900m and I descended in the dark back, to the shoulder, overtaking the Dutch and Pakistani climbers. Luckily, the weather held and I descended to BC the following day. I was elated but utterly exhausted. Sadly, Alison perished in a storm a couple of weeks later. That year only five people summited and survived and eight were killed. K2 truly can be the Savage Mountain. ☹



Images © Alan Hinkes.

'8000 Metres. Climbing the World's Highest Mountains' is available to buy from the MREW online shop: [tinyurl.com/44k7jmx](http://tinyurl.com/44k7jmx)



## APRIL: EAST CORNWALL TEAM PARTNERSHIP WITH CALLYWITH COLLEGE BRINGS HUGE REWARDS

The partnership brings significant benefits to the local community. East Cornwall team has been working on initiatives with the Ofsted 'Outstanding'-rated Further Education College on the edge of Bodmin, on a range of initiatives, involving both students and team members. **Julian Wills** reports.

As a geographically isolated county on the edge of the country, Cornwall has a close community feel and relies on the people working together for the greater good. The county is one of the poorest in the country and has significant issues relating to the deprivation, including having one of the highest suicide rates in the country. The East Cornwall team is often at the forefront of the fall-out from this, supporting the police with call-outs for high-risk missing people.

The evolving partnership working has seen Callywith College offer free facilities, enabling ECSRT to host meetings (including their AGM), as well as team building events and medical training. Meanwhile, students have organised fundraising events to support the team's vital work across East Cornwall.

In return, members of the team have supported the students whilst on DoE and

Ten Tors training, provided them with advice and assisted with engagement events at Callywith. Most recently the team assisted alongside other key agencies at a major incident training event, at Newquay Airport, part of the final assessment for Year Two Uniform Protective Services students. Student teams were tasked with managing all aspects of a simulated plane crash including firefighting, crime scene management, medical response and searching an extended fall-out area.

Just days later team members were back at the college cheering on Year One Uniform Protective Services students, during a 100k rowing challenge to raise vital funds for the team. Sponsorships, cake sales, raffles and other fundraising activities, helped raise a staggering £1,883 for the team.

That money will enable the purchase of ropes and essential kit. As a thank you, the

East Cornwall ropes team will host an event to give students the opportunity to see how their efforts have helped save lives in Cornwall. A number of students have since submitted applications to join the team, building on their experiences and giving back to the local community.

Matt Kennedy-Smith, Uniform Protective Services Lead at the college said, 'Working in partnership with East Cornwall has helped students appreciate the incredible work they do and inspired them to make a difference in their own lives, helping people when they are most in need.'

'Supporting, inspiring and working with the community is what we are all about,' added team leader Nicki Lyons.

There are already exciting events in the pipeline for the next academic year. For further information about Callywith College please visit [callywith.ac.uk](http://callywith.ac.uk).



## Raising funds for rescue

### MAY: NORTH WALES FREEMASONS DONATE £20,532 TO NWMRA

North Wales Freemasons met with North Wales team members at Oggi base, to present their donation.

Lodges and Chapters in North Wales were invited to donate up to £250 each, which North Wales Freemasons Charity (NWFC) agreed to match-fund up to £10,000, raising the magnificent sum of £20,532. Phil James, NWFC chairman, together with members and trustees received a warm welcome and were given a regional overview and a tour of the Ogwen Valley team's rescue base.

'I am delighted,' says Phil, 'that the North Wales mountain rescue community engagement initiative — launched by John Charles Hoult, Head of North Wales Freemasons, at our annual meeting last October — has reached its target of raising £10,000 from members. This will now be match-funded by the NWFC, giving a total donation of £20,532 to this very deserving and community-based rescue service.'

'The North Wales region consists of six mountain rescue teams, a lowland search team, a cave team and a search dog team,' says Andy Harbach, the region's new chair. 'Across North Wales, around 300 volunteers are available to provide assistance for those in need in difficult-to-reach areas at any time of the day or night. One of the busiest regions in the country, we rely on donations to provide this essential service.'

'North Wales Freemasons' support will go a long way in helping provide this service. We are grateful for every penny received.'

**Top:** Freemasons and North Wales team members gather at Oggi Base © NWMRA.



## NEWS ROUND

APRIL > JUNE



### APRIL: NORTH WALES WELCOMES NEW CHAIR ANDY HARBACH

Andy takes up the role as mountain rescue faces an unprecedented increase in the number of call-outs, particularly in Snowdonia. Recent statistics compiled by Ordinance Survey show that demand for the skills and expertise of the North Wales teams has grown.

He takes over the chair from Tim Radford, who held the role for five years and saw NWMRA navigate a number of challenges, including Covid. A keen walker and runner himself, Andy has been involved in mountain rescue for many years. He was a member of the Ogwen Valley team from 2009 to 2020, becoming a search manager in 2011, and went on to chair Ogwen for six years, until 2020. He has also acted as a trustee for both Ogwen and the region. 'I'd like to thank Tim for his commitment and achievements as chair of North Wales Mountain Rescue Association for the past five years,' says Andy. 'As incoming chair, I recognise that these will often be challenging — but also interesting — times, but we are ready and equipped to meet those challenges.'

Handing over the role, Tim said, 'It has been a privilege to chair the region over the last five years. I have been proud to watch relationships strengthen with our partners and among the teams. The region will continue to grow with the help of Andy and the new exec.'

**Top:** Andy Harbach (left) takes over the NWMRA chair from Tim Radford © NWMRA. **Below & left:** Ben Fogle and James Sleater with Peaks teams members © Edale MRT.



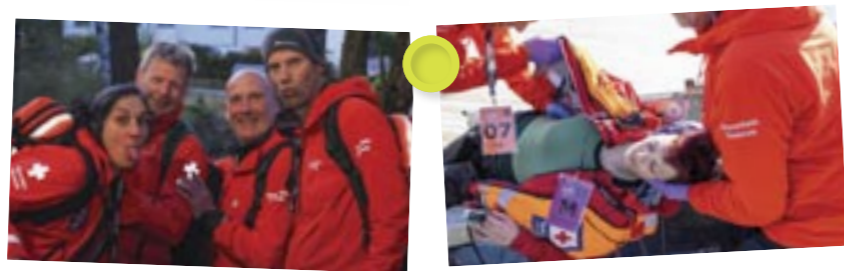
### JUNE: PEAK TEAM MEMBERS JOIN IN THE FUN WITH THE NEW OWNERS OF CLOTHING BRAND BUFFALO SYSTEMS

A couple of weeks beforehand, Edale team heard that Buffalo Systems had new owners... and one of those owners likes the mountains. A bit. In fact, having summited Everest, you might even say he loves the mountains. So an evening on the hill was planned with members of PDMRO joined by business partners Ben Fogle and James Sleater, at one of the busiest call-out spots at Curbar Edge.

Team members learned more about them and their epic journey into business, and treated them to a spell in one of their stretchers. 'Many of our teams wear Buffalo on and off the job. It's even claimed that one of the current team leaders was born in his', ran the PDMRO posting on Facebook (the identity of said team leader remaining a close kept secret to anyone beyond the Peaks, it seems). 'We look forward to working closely with the Buffalo team over the coming months across the Peak District and look forward to seeing how they take one of our favourite brands forwards.' 'It was a great opportunity,' said an Edale spokesperson, 'to hear why they bought the business, what they have planned for it and their appreciation for the volunteers in mountain rescue. They were both really keen to hear our experience of their products and suggestions for improvements and new products.'



Bottom left: Search scenario © David Been; Road Traffic Accident © Tor Kleiven; Stretcher handling and crawling through the undergrowth, images supplied by Aberglaslyn. Right: Patterdale's Louisa Rodriguez, Matt Nielson, James Bicknell and Felco Doctor in playful mode © David Been; Dealing with a medical scenario © Ann Mari Amundsen.



## MAX SWINHOE ABERGLASLYN

It's amazing how easy it is to say yes to something when it's seven months away. But, in the months before the games, two things became very clear. One team member was scarily good at organising group travel. And two, the SAR Games were going to be... something else!

We discussed everything, from baggage allowances to hypothetical situations. We brushed up on remote rescue and medical skills, talked tactics and assigned roles. And we watched last year's videos. We knew we'd be faced with scenarios such as road traffic accidents, domestic disputes, multi-casualty fires...

After a warm welcome we were given team numbers and electronic tablets with pre-loaded mapping and tracking, before setting up 'Aberglaslyn camp': roll mats and sleeping bags primed to crash in the early hours. At the briefing on the school steps, teams mingled and chatted, the excitement palpable.

Red jackets on, teams were called by number to their first posts. Some walked, others were driven. En route, a judge explained the set-up and the timer started for a mix of medical, trauma and search scenarios, as well as problem-solving and team-building games. From guiding two blindfolded teammates attached to a stretcher, through a maze using drone footage and a radio... hooded figures in the dark at a cult-like sacrifice with an untimely cardiac event... a multi-casualty hotel fire... and a landslide with a trapped casualty. Some were fairly light and fun

to tackle, others came with an intensity no one could have prepared us for. Just fifteen minutes each, the acting enabled full immersion before time was called and you moved on to the next.

It was fantastic, terrifying and extreme all in good measure, and as we competed into the darkness of Friday, each team of four making their way from post to post, the time dissolved and, before we knew, it was the early hours of Saturday.

Part two began more intensely – less problem-solving, more medical-focused scenarios and a great crescendo in the school gymnasium for the final CPR race.

Truly an event born of passion because on paper it's a logistical nightmare, but one the creators tackled head-on for a fantastically mad event! We didn't win, but came away wholly satisfied and proud of our teamwork and performance.

Thank you to our Aberglaslyn teammates who gave us enormous encouragement in the run-up, with dedicated training sessions and messages of support until the end. In the words of Owen, for any teams considering applying next year: 'Just go with it – don't try and understand everything that's going on. It's fun, you'll enjoy it and you'll leave tired.' ✨

## LOUISA RODRIGUEZ PATERDALE

This was the first time Patterdale had sent a team to the games. We turned up to registration late Friday afternoon with the sun shining, excited and with slight trepidation, unsure of what to expect. The goodie bag with its, um, 'interesting' contents didn't much settle the nerves, but meeting the other teams, chatting about what motivated them to enter the games was a positive start.

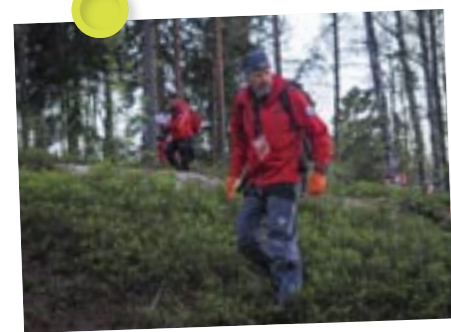
The short hike through woodland to the first scenario definitely broke us in gently as we had to create a fun social media post. In the next, we were merely told that 'not everything is what it seems', faced with a casualty having a heart attack. Then ten more scenarios into the early hours. Over 24 hours, the scenarios and challenges included a boat accident, an axe-wielding Viking, area searches, a stretcher carry over an obstacle course – and the extra challenge of carving a swede into a Norwegian children's cartoon character! An intense, but brilliant time putting into practice our knowledge, skills and experience and we hope to return next year to take the winning spot from Exmoor... ✨

## ALEX GEORGE AVON & SOMERSET

A hectic first incident set the scene for what was an exciting event: a fire in a block of flats! We'd 'happened upon it', and had to provide triage of the large number of people piling out of a smoke-filled building, followed by a firefighter who collapsed at the doorway with significant burns, and deal with a very enthusiastic maintenance guy who wanted to go back into the building.

In our first evening task, we were finding pieces from a plane crash in a woodland. The second day, a boat had run aground into a crowd, with multiple casualties. Beside our team of four, our ASSAR colleague, who came along as judge, was paired with a Norwegian judge for a different task each day. The event closed with a celebration dinner, live band and presentations and we were really pleased to land third place behind Exmoor. The local team came in second. What better way to showcase good practice, drive up standards and foster excellent relationships with other teams than some friendly competition? A great experience and lots of learning points we can take back to the team! ✨

Left: ASSAR's Mike Dementis, Louise Ennever, Chris Newton-Goverd, and Leon Troake. Not shown, Kat Beckley (who was a judge). Below: Saturday evening's band © Thomas Larsen Kjenner.



# NEWS ROUND

APRIL > JUNE

## Triumph, waffles and an axe-wielding clown... Norwegian SAR Games 2025

This year saw not one, but four teams entering this increasingly iconic games, hosted by Svelvik Røde Kors. The games are based in a small town called Svelvik, and run by the local rescue team. Eleven teams from Norway and the UK spent 24 hours making their way around the town, completing 24 challenging rescue scenarios.

## CHRIS MACDONALD EXMOOR

Last year had seen us clinch first and second place, a result we put down more to our hosts' generosity than any remarkable proficiency on our part. But this felt different. The field was stronger. We weren't just up against Norway's finest, but arguably some of mountain rescue's best with Aberglaslyn, Patterdale and ASSAR also competing. Glossop had even sent three spirited volunteers to act as casualties, pending entry in 2026. And with judges drawn from both Norway and MREW, the pressure felt very real...

We had one distinct advantage – we'd experienced the full sensory overload before. We knew to expect the mind-bending, immersive scenarios. We'd faced the multiple casualties, the realistic injuries courtesy of a team of make-up artists, the cryptic clues hidden in briefing documents that would make Taskmaster blush, the lack of sleep... even the axe-wielding clown. But we were wrong. So very wrong.

This time, we learned from our mistakes. No more bleary-eyed arrivals after overnight travel (not least because I had to sit out the final three scenarios in 2024, having taken an emergency nap on a park bench. I've yet to live that down). Of course, that didn't allow for having to deal with an ill passenger mid-flight! Instead, we booked an airport hotel for Thursday night, then made our way to Svelvik on Friday morning via the pristine and reliably efficient Norwegian public transport system. Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, we were feeling smug. Until we weren't.

It turned out the other UK teams were already in Svelvik, lounging in the sun, eating gelato from the excellent local parlour, having driven in via hire cars and settled into luxury AirBnBs. As we unrolled our sleeping bags and roll mats on the floor of the local high school library, our confidence took a knock.

Still, it was brilliant to be back. Warm embraces from old friends and new faces helped settle the nerves, even as teams subtly began sizing each other up over waffles and strong Norwegian coffee.

Representing one of two Exmoor entries, and keen not to be dismissed as the 'B' team, we cheekily added 'etter' to our team name on the sign-in sheet. Those of us returning from last year began probing the judges for clues. No luck. They were tight-lipped and immune to our charm. That didn't stop us making the visiting MREW teams feel at home with helpful comments like, 'Did you struggle to find bear spray in the UK or just get some when you landed?' or 'You'll be fine – so long as your translator speaks Bokmål. Or at least Oslo dialect.' It's a competition after all.

The format mirrored last year: following a Friday night safety brief, teams were bussed up onto the hill for an 8km loop featuring ten night-time stations focused on search skills and teamwork. Saturday was for trauma: ten first-aid heavy scenarios in an urban setting.

At each station, teams received a brief – often packed with subtle (and not-so-subtle) hints. We faced hotel fires with multiple casualties, a Satanic cult (the Secret Order of SAR: Who knew?!), mid-sacrifice (thanks for that one, Glossop), and a blindfold stretcher carry through an obstacle course, navigated by team radio comms and drone thermal imaging. Even a knots-and-throw lines challenge made an appearance.

It was relentless, brilliant, exhausting and utterly absorbing. Then just as we thought it was over and

began to relax, a surprise twist – a CPR knock-out round. Teams were summoned to the school hall for a live competition using digital Annies whose stats were displayed on a giant screen. No pressure.

That night, we finally let our hair down. There were gifts exchanged, hearty meals shared, drinks poured generously and a raffle with prizes from kind sponsors. Then came the moment we'd all been waiting for: the results.

A hush fell across the gymnasium as third place was awarded to Avon and Somerset. Second went to a formidable young team from our Svelvik hosts (watch out for this lot next year!) Then, astonishingly, the overall winners: Exmoor (Better). For a moment, it didn't register. Then we remembered our cheeky registration joke – and who was technically on which team. Laughter, disbelief and pure joy, as celebrations carried on late into the night with a live band that absolutely brought the house down.

The next morning was rougher, with sore heads but happy hearts. We packed kit, helped dismantle the marquee and said our goodbyes. Proud to defend our title and thankful for an unforgettable weekend of training, camaraderie and chaos in the very best spirit of search and rescue. And to anyone reading this who thinks 'Hang on, we're the best UK team', we say: 'Come and have a go if you think you're 'ard enough!' See you in 2026. ✨



Top: The winners!!; Daisy Goldsmith, Chris MacDonald, Joe Bradley and Ian Goffey © Thomas Larsen Kjenner.

Left: ASSAR team deals with the Secret Order of SAR © Ann Mari Amundsen; Exmoor's Daisy dealing with the 'Hotel S.A.R.' fire scenario © Thomas Larsen Kjenner; Exmoor deal with a casualty © Unni Henning.



**Top:** Bowland Pennine team members attend to their teammate © BPMRT. **Above:** Keswick members carry their colleague to the ambulance © Keswick MRT.

## MAY: TEAMS CALLED OUT TO NOT JUST ONE, BUT TWO OF THEIR OWN IN SEPARATE INCIDENTS

It might be a day most team members will say they dread — and would walk over hot coals to avoid — but when the chips are down, who better to treat you and carry you to safety than your own trusted mountain rescue colleagues? And May saw not one, but two such incidents, one in a quarry in Lancashire, the other in the Lakes.

In the early hours of an evening, Bowland Pennine team members were called to assist a climber who had fallen twenty feet at Anglezarke Quarry, in Lancashire, and was suffering severe back pain. Shortly afterwards, a message came in from one of their members saying, 'I'm the cas, guys... sorry!' 'Knowing we were heading out to rescue one of our own team members, and the potential severity of the injuries, made it a difficult call-out for everyone involved,' said one of those in the rescue party. 'But we pulled together, supporting each other and talking through decisions to help manage the extra adrenaline that was pumping.' The first team members to arrive carried out a medical assessment. The injured climber was given Entonox for pain relief and secured in a pelvic binder and vacmat to prevent any spinal movement. 'After a careful extraction down some steep ground, we were able to get our teammate to the road, and the waiting ambulance.'

They thanked the other climbers in the area who had helped in various ways during the call-out, adding that their 'team member is now recovering from surgery to pin his spine after fracturing his L1 vertebra'.

Later that same month, Keswick team members were alerted to an incident in Brandlehow Woods above Derwentwater. One of their own members had raised the alarm whilst on a dog training exercise with the Lake District search dogs. One of the dog handlers, a member of the Kendal team, had slipped on a greasy slab of rock caused by the first rain in what seems like an age, causing significant injuries. Dogs were returned to vehicles and rescue efforts began. Surrounded by dogsbodies and dog handlers, the casualty was quick to receive help. Keswick team members provided medical assistance and stretchered the man back to the road for onward transfer to hospital.

We wish both team members a steady and full recovery, and hope to hear that they are both back on the hill soon!



# NEWS ROUND

## APRIL > JUNE

## MAY: CAVER RESCUED IN EIGHT-HOUR OPERATION

Derbyshire Cave Rescue team members were called out to Nettle Pot near Castleton when a caver reported that one of their party had fallen en route back from a trip to Derbyshire Hall, sustaining possible pelvic injuries.

The group of cavers had been visiting the Derbyshire Hall chamber inside the Nettle Pot cave, near Castleton, when one of them fell. Thirty-two team members worked for around eight hours to treat and then extract the caver to the surface, where they were passed into the care of East Midlands Ambulance Service. 'We understand the casualty is thankfully not seriously injured and wish them a swift recovery,' said a team spokesman, adding that a further nine hours of work was needed after the incident to clean and sort the 'very muddy equipment' used in the operation.

**Left:** From day into night, the eight-hour operation to treat and extract a caver from Nettle Pot cave © DCRO.



## JUNE: SQUIRRELS RAISE FUNDS FOR OGWEN

The 1st Gwydyr Scout Group Squirrels raised money for the team by setting themselves the challenge of walking all the way around #llyngelirionydd. The mini adventurers also navigated their way around, after being taught how by team members. Good effort!

**Above:** Jed Stone with the intrepid Squirrels © OVMRO.

## JUNE: TEBAY SERVICES COLLECTION RAISES AN IMPRESSIVE £4,500+, DESPITE THE WEATHER

Team members, family and supporters of the Kirkby Stephen team, young and old, were out in force over the weekend of National Volunteers Week, metaphorically 'rattling' tins at the M6 Westmorland Services stop-off.



An effort which raised an impressive £4,461, both through cash donations and tap and donate. 'A superb amount which will help the team continue in its role to help those requiring our services.' The collectors took the opportunity to chat to the public and clarify that this isn't their 'day job', just 'us volunteering our free time to train and retain skills that can help others when they need us most'. It was also a chance to encourage new members to the team, directing anyone interested to get in contact via the team's website at [ksmrt.org.uk](http://ksmrt.org.uk), adding that their annual intake is in September so people had 'better get their skates on!'

**Left:** Fundraising at Tebay © Kirkby Stephen MRT.

Raising funds for rescue

## MAY: WING WALK SUPPORTS WEST CORNWALL TEAM AND 'MAN DOWN' PROGRAMME

A long-time supporter of the West Cornwall team, Nel Winton undertook the Wing Walk in May, raising £560 for both the team and the Man Down Programme which supports men's mental health.

She explains why. 'On Thursday 15 August 2013, I got home from my new job at Treliske Hospital to find a suicide note from my fabulous, brave and incredible husband. Del was a paramedic who was suffering from PTSD, work-related depression and bullying. Prior to being a paramedic, Del was a police officer for fifteen years. The police launched a search involving West Cornwall Search and Rescue Team, who were just amazing. Sadly the weather (typical of Cornwall) changed and the search stopped in the early hours of the morning, but resumed after a break. The team searched diligently for days. Unfortunately, Del wasn't found until Sunday 1 September. I cannot stress, when a loved one is missing, how much it means to know there are people looking for them. SO! What do you do to raise funds for a wonderful charity when you are terrified of heights? Obviously, a wing walk! Normally, if I'm on a plane, I'm going on holiday and sat in comfort with a drink! Not on this excursion!'

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## JUNE: 'I WAS LOST BUT NOW I'M FOUND'

Well dressing season in the Peak District, when wells and springs are dressed in intricate petal mosaics which offer thanks to our invaluable water sources.

They are, of course, all fantastic displays of colour and represent many, many hours of work, but we love this particular tribute to mountain rescue. Thank you to the creators for dedicating their time to highlighting this life-saving service!

**Left:** Well-dressed well © Buxton MRT.



## MAY: PENNINE WAY RESCUE

A walker had been unable to pitch their tent in the high winds. Penrith team used PhoneFind to locate them, then drove as high as possible up the fell to recover the now very cold walker and return them to safety and a hotel room.

# A Heavy affair with the mountains

**DR BOB SHARP & DR GERRY MCPARTLIN**

On the fateful evening of 21 December 1988, Dave 'Heavy' Whalley was just beginning to enjoy a spot of well-earned leave from his work at RAF Leuchars. With more than a hint of irony, he said to his rescue colleagues, 'Don't call me unless a jumbo jet crashes in the mountains.' Then, when the emergency call came through, he assumed it was a wind-up. But it wasn't. He quickly sorted his gear, shot down to the base and phoned the police. Troops from RAF Leeming MRT were already airborne whilst Heavy was given a police escort at speed down the M74 to Lockerbie.

Suddenly, he was living a nightmare. Amongst utter carnage, mayhem and confusion, he was tasked to organise the rescue teams, help control the air space and establish landing sites for the helicopters. Everyone was briefed on the horrors they might experience but, whilst keen for action, the obvious dangers meant the troops had to wait until first light. In the meantime, Heavy and a local police officer carried out an initial recce of the crash site. They witnessed a scene beyond imagination — bodies, parts of bodies, wreckage, Christmas presents, children's toys and clothes everywhere. The smell of death, fuel, the intense heat and smoke left a mark he found hard to accept.

He contacted the Aeronautical Rescue Coordination Centre (ARCC) at Pitreavie. When the controllers asked what he needed, he described a scene that was beyond his understanding or experience and that some kind of psychiatric support was critical. He was very concerned for the wellbeing of his troops especially the younger ones who would have the awful task of seeing death and recovering bodies for the first time in their lives.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was first recognised as a medical condition in the early-1980s, but measures to address the wellbeing of the RAF team members, who would often confront extremely harrowing scenes, was a long time coming. The Lockerbie crash was a wake-up call. Heavy's determined efforts over many years, at all levels within the RAF, was instrumental in ensuring that today, there is proper support for the wellbeing of troops.

Heavy was born in 1952, in the West Coast town of Ayr. His father was a 'Fire and Brimstone' Church of Scotland minister which ensured life in his early years was very strict. His parents took him on family holidays and expeditions to the local Galloway hills, the mountains of Arran and further to Glencoe and Ben Nevis. Numerous camping excursions and overnight bivouacs set the scene for a lifetime of mountain adventure.

Unable, or perhaps unwilling, to find work in Ayr, he joined the RAF in 1971 and quickly applied to join the rescue team. Although small in stature, the team leader discovered that Heavy was extremely fit, highly

motivated and determined to succeed. He was accepted on the mandatory three-week training course but, on the final weekend, he survived a significant avalanche which affected his health for many years to come. This was the first of many rescues that led to a close involvement with the emerging Avalanche Information Service and a wider focus on promoting mountain safety.

He met all the assessment conditions and qualified as a full member of RAF Kinloss MRT in 1972. One of his first call-outs was to locate three missing climbers on Tower Ridge. Sadly, all three had fallen to their deaths. Heavy and the troops were required to remove the bodies, an experience that shocked and prepared him for many such incidents over the next 32 years, including several to close friends. Membership of the team required spending three weekends each month in the Scottish mountains. Through this, he gained a vast knowledge of Scotland's landscape, people, weather patterns and places that served him well on rescues across the country.

Over the course of his career in the RAF Mountain Rescue Service, Heavy served as leader of the Kinloss and Leuchars teams and deputy leader of Valley MRT. Brief periods away from the mountains (eg. RAF Innsworth) were frustrating, but these were compensated by numerous RAF expeditions to Pakistan, Nepal, Canada, Dolomites and the Falklands. His professional career in the RAF (Catering), often conflicted with his MR commitments, but rescues always took priority. His catering expertise came good when he was appointed basecamp manager for the RAF Everest Expedition in 2001. Fellow MR Troops Dan Carroll and Rusty Bale were successful in reaching the summit and remained good friends of Heavy through his life.

Over the course of his rescue career he attended/led well over 1,000 incidents — perhaps unremarkable by some standards, but he also attended over 70 aircraft crashes including the F111 crash on Skye in 1982, the Wessex crash on Ben More in 1987, the Shackleton crash on Harris in 1990, the Chinook crash on Kintyre in 1994 and, of course, Lockerbie. These tragedies, as well as numerous fatal mountain incidents took a toll on his psychological wellbeing and



**Top:** Heavy on 'Wrecker's Slab' (Cornwall) © Pete Greening.  
**Above:** Kinloss MRT Ballachulish 1972 © RAF MRS.

sharpened his resolve to raise the profile of PTSD which he did with remarkable tenacity and success.

On retirement in 2004, he was appointed assistant controller at the ARCC (Kinloss). His vast knowledge of the Scottish mountains (seven-time Munro Compleater!) and all the major climbing areas in the UK (completing every route in 'Classic Rock' in 2011), made him uniquely invaluable when advising on the deployment of air and ground assets. In 1989, he was awarded the BEM for his contribution at Lockerbie, and an MBE in 2002 for his long service to Scottish Mountain Rescue. He also served as chair and later statistician of the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland and, in his final years, received the Scottish Award for Excellence in Mountain Culture. Following the passing of Hamish MacInnes, he was appointed chair of SARDA Scotland in 2002.

During his lifetime, Heavy was recognised not only as a rescuer 'extraordinaire' but as a wonderful human being, a man of immense compassion, always concerned for the welfare of his 'Troops' and caring, sometimes for years, for the relations of deceased casualties. His sensitive and caring nature undoubtedly contributed to the emotional scars he carried. It is testimony to the unique and significant contribution he made to UK mountain rescue that so many people attended his 'Celebration of Life' and wrote so many wonderful tributes.

It was Heavy's ambition to complete the book marking his 'life and times' in mountain rescue, but that was not to be. However, with our support, it will be finished and reviewed in time for the next issue of Mountain Rescue magazine. ☘

## **BILL BATSON MBE (RAF MRS)**

'Rarely in life does one person touch the lives of so many others, in such a positive and constructive way. If he were still with us, I think Heavy would agree that his life included many incredible highs and his album of 'Happy Memories' must have been bulging at the seams. He treasured his family and friends, and they treasured him.'

## **ANNE BUTLER (PRESIDENT, MOUNTAINEERING SCOTLAND)**

'Heavy was a one-off, a unique character, a true gentleman and a man who would always fight for what he believed was right. He was a perfect hill-walking companion and a day in the mountains with him was always memorable — that loud booming laugh and, boy could he chat!'

## **DAN CARROLL MBE (RAF MRS AND EVEREST SUMMITTEER)**

'Of all the people I encountered in the RAF MRS, you have been the single most influential character — an outstanding mentor, an inspirational leader, and a true friend!'

## **DAVY GUNN MBE (GLENCOE MRT)**

'The mountains have called a legend back to his spiritual home — a true legend and hero of mountain rescue...'

## **CAMERON MCNEISH**

'Heavy was the perfect hill companion, always caring, always mindful of others, and I suspect it's these qualities that made him such a great mountain rescuer and more importantly, an iconic rescue team leader.'

## **STEVE PENNY MBE (SMR WELLBEING OFFICER)**

'Heavy's legacy most definitely includes all the fantastic work he did to help break down stigma and open honest conversations around mental health.'

## **SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN RESCUE**

'A true legend of mountain rescue and an inspiration to all who had the privilege of knowing him. His legacy will live on in the Scottish outdoors through every team member he guided, every life he touched and every summit where his spirit roams free.'

## **ADRIEN TRENDALL (FRIEND)**

'A few times in life somebody really special comes along. David Whalley was one of these special people, a larger than life character who was just one of humanity's good guys. His forté was mountain rescue, but he was a bit of a polymath with a wide ranging knowledge of Scotland, its mountains and anything connected to them.'

## **DUNCAN TRIPP MBE (SAR (H) WINCHMAN/PARAMEDIC)**

'He had a heart of gold, would have done anything for anyone, dedicating his life to the mountains and those in need. This would have taken its toll on most of us, but more so Heavy who, at times, sacrificed his own mental wellbeing and personal life to look after the troops.'

**BOB SHARP HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN MOUNTAIN RESCUE FOR OVER 45 YEARS, AND WRITTEN/CO-WRITTEN A NUMBER OF BOOKS ON MOUNTAIN RESCUE. GERRY MCPARTLIN IS A RETIRED GP AND FORMER MEDICAL OFFICER WITH TORRIDON MRT.**

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

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## News from Scottish teams

### Focus on Aberdeen MRT



significant incidents such as the Cairngorm Disaster, in November 1971, when six teenagers and one of the party leaders died after being caught in a blizzard on the Cairngorm plateau. Members of the Aberdeen team were also first on site in March 2001, when two US Air Force F-15 aircraft crashed near the summit of Ben Mauchi.

We do have certain 'hot spots'. Branchiae, some 30 miles from Aberdeen, is a fairly regular call-out location. This is a popular hill, not overly challenging and relatively close to Aberdeen, so sees a lot of incidents involving twisted knees and ankles.

The Aberdeen team works closely with the Braemar and Cairngorm teams and, given the size of the area covered, it is not unusual for all three teams to be involved in extended searches for missing walkers and, from time to time, in technical rescues. The use of helicopters in assisting with searches and the deployment of team members has been of great value given the large area.

Running a mountain rescue team is an expensive business and, like all the Scottish teams, we are grateful for the financial support from the Scottish Government. As a team we raise money by attending public events and through an annual sponsored walk. Over the years the team has seen considerable support from the Order of St John in the purchase of vehicles and providing purpose-built bases, which has helped in the development and overall effectiveness of mountain rescue teams.

**FIND ABERDEEN MRT AT [AMRT.ORG.UK](http://AMRT.ORG.UK) AND ON FACEBOOK @[ABERDEENMRT](https://www.facebook.com/ABERDEENMRT)**

Aberdeen team came into being in June 1964, initially drawing most of its members from the then very active Aberdeen Venture Club. Bill Marshall, who was one of the club's leaders, and the first team leader, saw an opportunity to bring together a group of individuals from within the club who could form an effective and much needed rescue service. Initially the team was based in the centre of Aberdeen, utilising a small garage building within the grounds of the then St Johns Hospital. The team used this as a base for almost thirty years before, with the support of the Order of St John, moving to a purpose-built base in the village of Edrick some six miles to the west of the city.

In the early years of the team, the membership was principally folk working in and around the Aberdeen area and comprised a mix of individuals covering a wide variety of occupations. Gradually, through the late Seventies, there was an increase in the number of team members working in the developing oil and gas industry. The team has been very fortunate to have team members who were either doctors or paramedics within its ranks, and they have been instrumental in supporting and delivering advanced first aid training to team members.

The team currently has thirty-five operational members. The area covered consists principally of the Cairngorms, Lochinvar and the lower hills of Depside and Donsie, a large area with a significant number of mountains over 1,000 metres. The Cairngorm plateau has the largest land area in the UK continuously over 1,000 metres and is the snowiest and windiest location in the country.

Because the team's Edrick base is some fifty miles from the main area of operations, transport is a major consideration for the team. Five long-wheelbase Land Rovers and trailers are used to transport team members and equipment to the call-out location. Maintenance and general upkeep of the vehicles is a significant financial burden for the team and has over the years been a central purpose in fundraising activities. Due to the distance from the Edrick base to the hills, the team has two forward bases, one on the Balmoral Estate at the Spilt of Mujik, and another on the Mar Lodge Estate at Derry Lodge.

With such a diverse area in terms of terrain there is a great variety of call-outs — from rescues involving climbers, hill walkers, skiers and mountain bikers. Over the years the team has been involved in some very

## and Arrochar MRT

The origins of the Arrochar team involved local farmers Johnny Paterson and his brother Charlie when they were asked to assist with mountain rescues in the local area. The ever-increasing number of accidents involving hill walkers around the mid 1950s necessitated a more structured approach to the previous reliance on local farmers and shepherds. Johnny quickly established the first Arrochar Mountain Rescue Post at his family farm in Succoth, also doubling it up as temporary shelter or 'howf' as it was affectionately known to visiting climbers.

The number of call-outs during those early years were limited to around three a year, reaching a peak of six by 1978. By comparison, Arrochar responded to 36 calls in 2023 and 33 in 2024. This trend seems to be indicative of the rise in popularity and accessibility of the Arrochar Alps, with the Cobbler and its adjacent Munros particularly favoured destinations. Despite the largest proportion of our call-outs are concentrated in these 'Alps', our operational area spans a much larger geographical area from Dumbarton to the Bridge of Orchy and down to Campbeltown. A benefit of being located so close to Glasgow also means we enjoy regular support and a good working relationship with the Police Scotland MRT.

Call-outs tend to involve minor injuries and inadequately prepared hill walkers on the popular mountain routes, but there have been many notable exceptions over the years. Recent examples include a technical rescue of rock climbers on the Cobbler's dramatic North Peak, the retrieval of an injured hill walker after falling into one of the notorious fissures on Ben Vorlich, and a rescue involving two canyoneers who got into difficulty whilst navigating the Eagle's Fall near Glen Fyne.

The team has moved homes several times since those humble beginnings, including a broom cupboard inside a local outdoor centre at one stage, but the team eventually settled into its current base in 2002. Construction of this modern building was only possible through significant funding from St John Scotland for which the team remain extremely grateful, but we've recently outgrown these premises, so another significant fundraising project is underway. Our hope is to extend our building into a more spacious home which will see us through another 20+ years.

We maintain extremely close links with local communities in Arrochar, Lochgoilhead and Helensburgh, where most team members live. In addition to the two training sessions per month, our annual calendar includes the provision of mountain rescue support to various traditional hill races on Beinn Dubh, Jura, the Kilpatrick's and the Cobbler, which is organised by veteran team member Brian Cook. The increasing popularity of endurance sports also means demand for our support is increasing, and we've recently committed to supporting the Kintyre Way Ultra Marathon and an iconic Dirty Events Triathlon planned in the Arrochar Alps this summer.

According to our records, the team has had around 100 members since the mid-1950s. Our current call-out list comprises 29 members including three doctors, a Paramedic, a SARAA dog handler, two SARAA drone pilots, two Winter Mountaineering and Climbing Instructors, and our team leader Ross Cadie, who is



also Mountain Safety Adviser for Mountaineering Scotland. With five new trainees and a healthy smattering of veterans amongst our number, the team continues to evolve and grow as a professional team of volunteers.

**FIND ARROCHAR MRT AT [ARROCHARMRT.ORG.UK](http://ARROCHARMRT.ORG.UK) AND ON FACEBOOK @[ARROCHARMRT](https://www.facebook.com/ARROCHARMRT)**



Top: Arran Glen Rosa wild fire © Arran MRT.  
Above: Wildfire in Galloway © Galloway MRT.

The dry spell of sunny weather in April brought with it a flurry of mountain rescue activity across Scotland. A number of teams were involved in assisting with wild fires in their patches — Arran, Assynt, Galloway and SARAA, among others. Galloway team worked overnight to bring wild campers to safety in the Buchan Ridge area, while SARAA drone pilots in Assynt provided support to fire crews dealing with a blaze at Stac Pollaidh. Arran assisted with a large wild fire in Glen Rosa which burned for several days. The team was deployed eleven times over April — for medical emergencies, broken limbs, head injuries and overdue walkers, alongside the fire.

Braemar team had a couple of notable calls for biking incidents towards the end of May. The first to a biker with an ankle injury, which presented a logistical challenge for the team in extracting 'a load of e-bikes'. Two days later brought another first for the team, when a biker took a fall resulting in their watch activating an emergency alert. 'Helmet trashed, but did its job,' says the team.

After a rare quiet spell at the start of the year, activity for Skye ramped up dramatically when the good weather brought plenty of footfall to the island. May's final total saw the volunteer team respond to eighteen call-outs — with many arduous stretcher carries from the Cuillin Ridge for fractures, falls and dislodged boulders. The theme of helmets saving lives continues.

Two particularly memorable incidents for the team occurred in April, when they were called out to recover human remains, potentially dating back as far as 7,000 years — part of the long span of human activity at the Mesolithic site of High Pasture Cave. The second incident happened when someone reported what looked like a paraglider crash landing in the Cuillin. After investigation by the team, it turned out the 'wreckage' was a long string of party balloons that had burst and tangled themselves. A very convincing decoy, say the team!



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## 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 aims to support a culture where our volunteers and staff enjoy a positive and rewarding experience throughout their journey from recruitment to leaving or 'retirement'. This applies to whatever roles we play throughout the broad spectrum of providing a world-class mountain rescue service. We recognise that the risks associated with psychological injury arise from both operational and organisational stressors. The organisational stressors are linked to the general challenges of being a volunteer responder and, together with the pressures of managing teams and the national organisation, these stressors can often be greater than the risks from operational trauma exposure. We are committed to managing these organisational and operational risks, and to have support in place should it be required.

Through the training we offer, and the support we have in place, we continue to make progress in how we embed an understanding of personal wellbeing and resilience — how to support colleagues and what to do following incident trauma exposure — into our complete (recruitment to retirement) volunteer experience: Preventative and early intervention rather than reactive post-event approach to volunteer wellbeing and resilience.



### TOOLKIT : Managing the Risks of Psychological Injury

We want to get upstream, and our focus is on prevention and early intervention, giving people the knowledge and skills to look after themselves and their colleagues.

As well as helping people when they're in the river, or over the waterfall, we want to teach them to swim, build rafts and put up fences at the risky parts of the riverbank.

#### Tools for regular use:

- Capacity Self-check tool
- Post-incident Self-check tool
- Also helpful: Coping Guide

#### The Lifelines Scotland Model: imagine a river and waterfall



How we manage the risks of psychological injury, and any recovery journey, involves a number of key partners as well as every volunteer, member of staff, colleague and our personal social networks. Our key partners are Police Scotland and the Rivers Centre (NHS Lothian). All our volunteers and their families have access to the Police Scotland Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which offers a wide range of services. Since September 2024, we also now have an agreement in place for post-trauma support from NHS facility The Rivers Centre. The staff there have many years of experience in working with emergency service staff and volunteers (Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Police Scotland). The Rivers Centre team also created the Lifelines Scotland resource and the training that forms part of their overall ethos of taking a public health approach to how we manage the risks of psychological injury. You can find details of our approach in the SMR toolkit: Managing the Risks of Psychological Injury.

Please use the QR code at the top to access our general wellbeing information and support page, together with our toolkit for managing the risks of psychological injury.

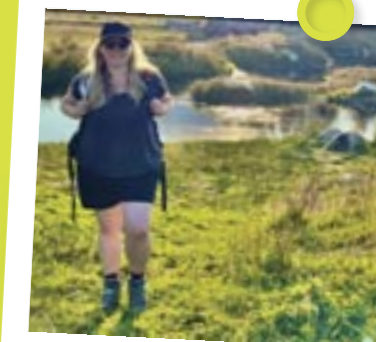
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## SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN RESCUE STATS REPORT AND ANNUAL REVIEW 2024

Scottish Mountain Rescue has published our Annual Review and Stats Report for 2024. These reports highlight another exceptionally busy year for our mountain rescue teams — for the first time recording 1,000 call-outs (including continuations, which are linked call-outs over several days). Teams continue to be around a third busier post-Covid. Our Annual Review serves to highlight the dedication and enormous resilience of the teams, who continue to do more with less. Also featured in the Annual Review are team member profiles and a challenging rescue story from a snowy Torridonian wild camp.



## MEET OUR SUPPORTERS



We are delighted to have not one but two amazing fundraisers currently on the trail walking from Land's End to John O'Groats in support of our teams. After sunny starts in Cornwall, we're looking forward to seeing how they get on in the days ahead. Our heartfelt thanks go out to both Jo — @nessielass on Instagram — and Martyn Culley (see page 30 for more on his adventure to date) for their enormous dedication in raising thousands in support of our volunteer teams.

Elsewhere, our virtual event Miles for SMR has just wrapped up for the fifth year in a row, with another amazing total — expected to exceed £10,000. Thank you to our dedicated fundraisers all over the world who have logged their miles — running, walking, cycling and swimming this May to support us.

Above: Jo Nessielass from her Givestart entry  
@ tinyurl.com/29kp7268

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Cockermouth MRT  
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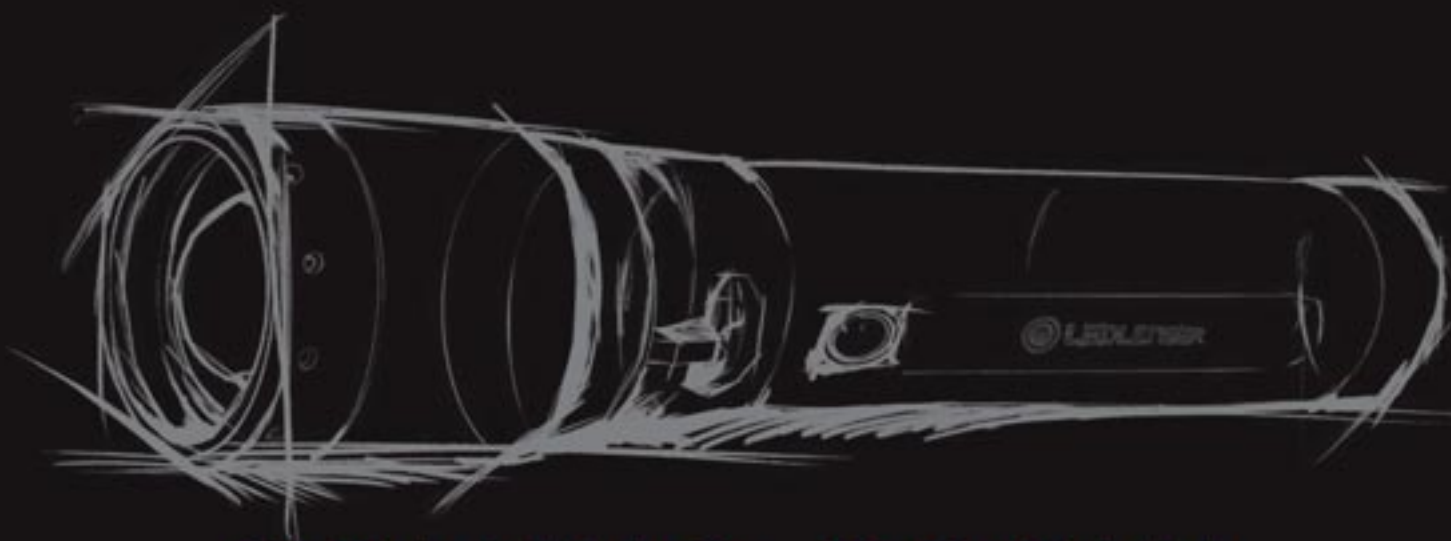
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