

# mountain rescue

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

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# inthisissue



8

### Spotlight on Josh MacAlister OBE

Judy Whiteside meets the Patterdale team member and MP helping to bring recognition to volunteer search and rescue

12

**SAR-MED App launches:** Sally Armond talks us through the recently launched SAR-MED app, designed to support the Casualty Care syllabus

22

**Working with an online influencer:** Jacqui Hanson, North Wales media officer, describes the experience: outlining the challenges and the undoubted benefits gained

30

**Breaking boundaries:** Sarah Leggett explains how women in teams across England and Wales took up the opportunity to undertake instructor training for technical rope rescue

39

**Introducing Rightsteps, another tool in the box for team member wellbeing:** A new partner working alongside the Rescue Benevolent Fund to support mental health

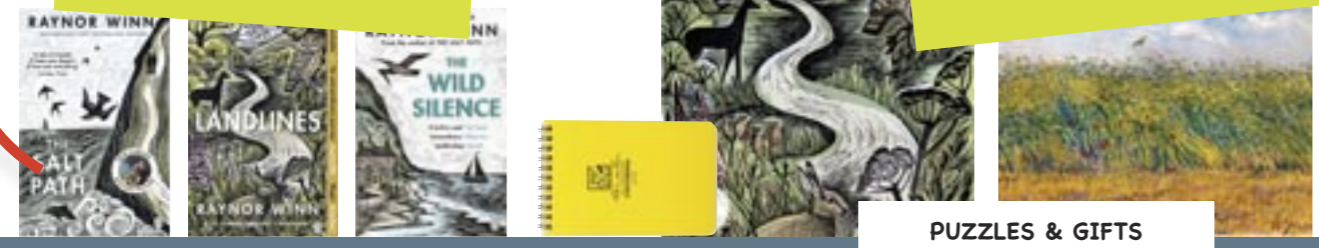
## what's in at a glance

EQUIPMENT: 11	HINKES THINKS: 43
CASUALTY CARE: 12-19	TEAMS & REGIONS: 44-55
IN THE NEWS & MEDIA : 21-24	INCIDENTS/STATS: 48
TRAINING: 26-37	SCOTLAND: 56-59
BENEVOLENT FUND: 38-41	WHO'S WHO: 60-62

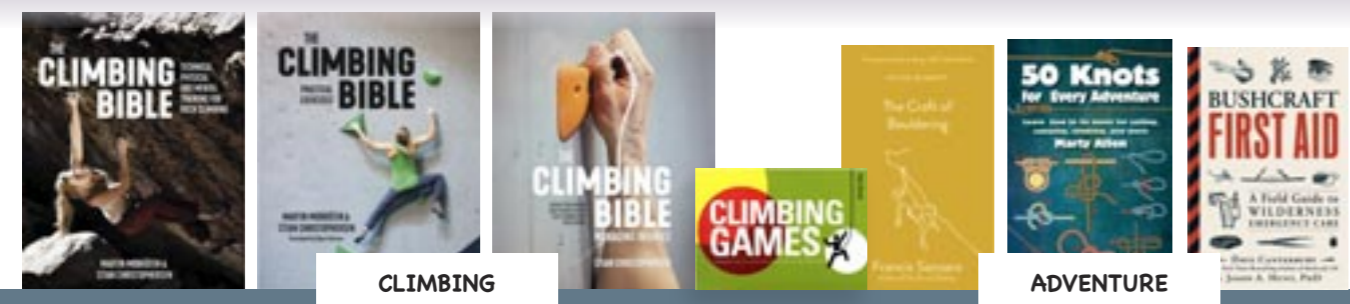


**NEW in for spring**

**Raising funds for rescue**

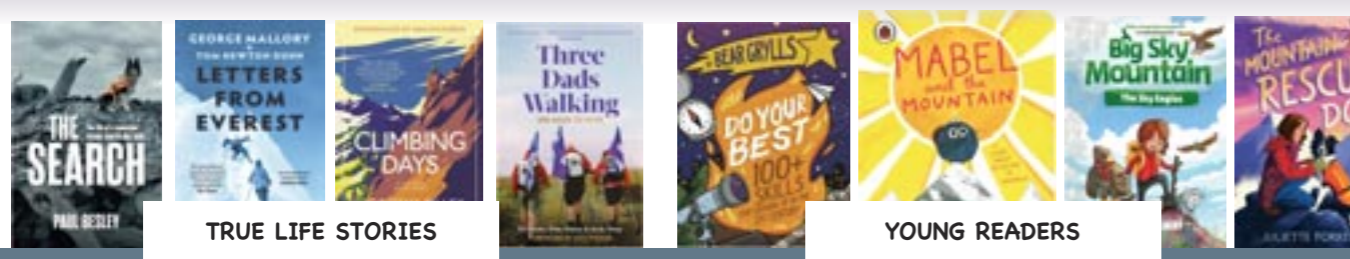


PUZZLES & GIFTS



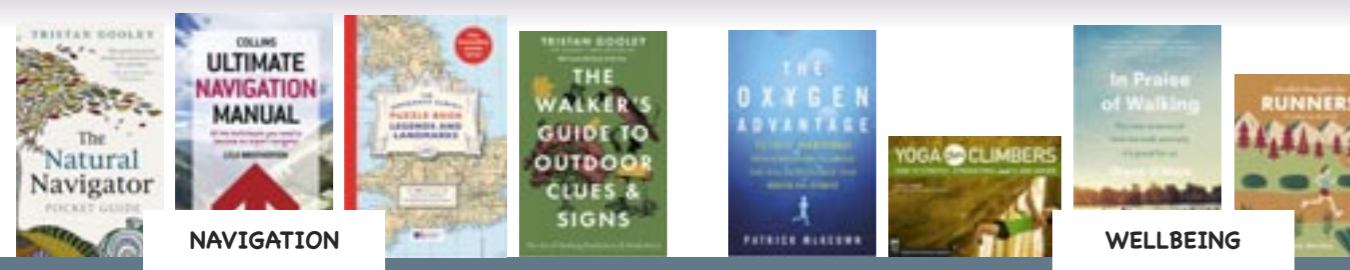
CLIMBING

ADVENTURE



TRUE LIFE STORIES

YOUNG READERS



NAVIGATION

WELLBEING

## HEAD TO OUR BOOKSHOP FOR SOME SPRINGTIME 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.

### 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.

### 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.**

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.

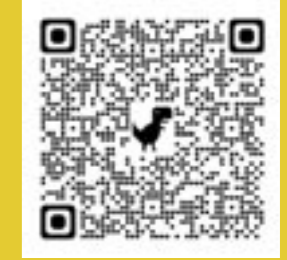
The **Medical** section addresses the legal and medical requirements for training and operations, and there's plenty of resources to download. You'll find stuff relating to the Casualty Care Certificate, a PDF of Casualty Care for Mountain Rescue Edition 2, Revision Notes for Casualty Care, and a section 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).

# Celebrating our successes and looking to the future...

## MIKE PARK CEO, MOUNTAIN RESCUE ENGLAND AND WALES

As 2026 begins to unfold, we've begun to make considerable strides in a number of areas, including developments with the All Parliamentary Party Group (APPG), changes to the CIO Constitution and the establishment of an Operational Support Fund for MREW member teams.



### VEHICLE EXCISE DUTY (VED)

Thanks to the efforts of MPs Josh MacAlister and Torcuil Crichton in particular, we've ticked off one of the key aspirations in our APPG Manifesto. In her budget statement in November, Chancellor Rachel Reeves announced that 'the Government will exempt search and rescue vehicles from VED, and will work with stakeholders to design and implement an exemption from April 2027'.

We've yet to learn what this means with regards to what will legally constitute a 'Search and Rescue vehicle' (specifications such as blue lights, sirens and SAR decals), but this represents a saving for many teams of several thousand pounds a year.

We should recognise the huge amount of time and effort that has been invested in this and similar campaigns over many years, across the search and rescue community, with many a knock-back along the way. Without a doubt, having a mountain rescue team member who is also an MP has helped considerably in carrying this one across the line. As Josh himself noted after the announcement, 'this is the change that can happen when you've got a local, campaigning MP focusing on issues and getting them onto the desk of the decision makers like the Chancellor'. So thank you Josh (a member of Patterdale MRT) and Torcuil, for securing this success. (You can read more about Josh on pages 8-9).

### MEDICAL GASES UPDATE

We've also seen movement on the medical front — again supported by the APPG — following uncertainty around the practice of 'hot swapping' medical gases with ambulance services. Thanks to medical directors Alistair Morris (MREW) and Brendan Sloan (BCRC), and UKSAR, we can report a positive outcome.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has confirmed

that the practice may continue 'for now', where there is an agreement in place between the two parties, provided that agreement fulfils three core criteria as per the 1968 Medicines Act: small quantities, not for profit organisation, and public need.

Discussions with MHRA will continue, aimed at developing a sustainable and compliant longer-term solution.

### WHAT NEXT FOR THE APPG?

Inspired by these two successes, we will continue to chip away at our manifesto, to help raise the profile of volunteer search and rescue, and better support our communities and those we rescue. So, what else are we looking for? Simply...

- Recognition of the status of search and rescue volunteers in the workplace equal to Army Reservists and Special Constables
- The appointment of a government minister to represent and work with the volunteer search and rescue organisations
- To bring the insurances required for volunteer search and rescue teams under Crown Indemnity
- Support and endorsement for safety messaging in the outdoors, both to the wider public and outdoor organisations
- Support and endorsement with initiatives aimed at addressing the challenges facing our volunteers.

To find out more, download the Manifesto here: [mountain.rescue.org.uk/appg](https://mountain.rescue.org.uk/appg).

### OPERATIONAL SUPPORT FUND

I'm happy to report that this new fund will provide financial support to MREW member teams according to need, to help maintain or uplift operational capability, in accordance with our charitable objective 'to promote the efficiency and effectiveness of mountain rescue charities and voluntary organisations for the public benefit'.

In future, a member team will be able to apply for financial support to cover essential

running costs required to keep a team operational or improve operational capacity. This might include costs such as equipment and training; support costs such as rent, utilities and insurance; capital expenditure such as improvements to the base and vehicle replacement; and unforeseen or emergency situations.

The fund will be administered by the MREW trustees, from unrestricted income. We hope that we may also attract restricted funds from donors who give specifically for this purpose. Trustees Dave Otter, Alex Siviter-Platts and Deborah Pourkarimi have been key to bringing this to fruition, so huge thanks to them for their efforts. Any team wishing to find out more, or make an application, please email the MREW Office in the first instance.

### THE CIO CONSTITUTION

Work continues on the proposal for the updated constitution ahead of the AGM later this year. I can't stress enough that the aim here is to make clearer the roles and responsibilities of the national organisation, with regard to the trustees, the CEO and the officers, and to create a more robust relationship with the teams — to the benefit of all parties.

Work began in late-2024 and trustees Maddy Desforges and Deborah Pourkarimi have been guiding us through this process. 'Our aim is to align with best practice in the charity sector and to enhance accountability and communication between the Board of Trustees and members,' says Deborah.

'The trustees would like to thank those teams and regions that have provided feedback to date on the proposed changes.'

I know there have been concerns about who will, in future, appoint the CEO and the designated officers comprising the MREW 'Exec.' The trustees (themselves appointed by the member teams), will appoint the CEO. The CEO will then appoint and lead the MREW Exec. Teams will be part of the

recruitment process of the Exec, as your input and involvement are — and always will be — key to running an effective national representative and supporting organisation. For example, team members will be on the recruitment panel, as they were for the recruitment of Andy, our incoming CEO. Team members will take part in engagement sessions and input questions into the recruitment process, as with the recent CEO recruitment process.

All the feedback will be incorporated into an updated schedule of changes, to be distributed to member teams prior to the AGM in May. By the time you read this, the process may already have nudged forward again, but it's worth reiterating that if you do have any further feedback, it might not be too late to send it to Deborah via [financedirector@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:financedirector@mountain.rescue.org.uk) before the stated deadline of 31 January.

### INVICTUS GAMES

We've had an interesting approach from Invictus, regarding an event in 2027, involving Climb 2 Recovery (C2R) members. They aim to climb a series of routes on crags from Cornwall up into Wales, across to the Peak District, the Lakes, and then into Scotland. Most of the climbers will be assisted and guided by C2R instructors, with

a variety of skills, disabilities and desires at play. It's early days yet, but the organisers are keen to get the involvement of the local teams for each climb location. Expect to hear more over the coming months.

### BULLYING

Those of you who came to the national meeting in November will be in no doubt about my views. Bullying should not exist within our teams. It needs to be called out and it needs to stop. Sadly, we are still hearing of instances — often embedded in the culture of an entire team — but we ARE bringing it slowly out of the shadows. So how can WE, as a national organisation, help stop it? We've already established our 'Shared Values', so what next? Well, next we will embed 'wellbeing' into everything we do: every training course and every meeting, nationally and within teams.

### AND FINALLY, TO ANDY...

When I stepped into this role, forefront of my mind was 'what's my exit strategy?' I was determined that the person taking over from me wouldn't have the experience I had, in at the deep end with little or no preparation. Appointing Andy well ahead of time gave him the opportunity to shadow me, attend meetings, meet the teams, chat



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with members, and generally wrap his head around the nature of mountain rescue. This was doubly important to him, coming in as an 'outsider'. I can honestly say, it has been a pleasure working with him through the last few months. I know he will bring his own vision to the role, but I am confident he is developing a solid base on which to build, and a sound understanding of the task ahead. I look forward to following his progress with interest.

One more magazine then, until I hand over that baton. One more update in April, as CEO. But what I do hope and plan to do — perhaps in our Summer magazine — is to take time to reflect on my five years in the role. In the meantime, the mountain rescue rollercoaster keeps on rolling... ☺



## ANDY BUCHAN CEO ELECT

My first piece as CEO Elect then and, as Mike outlines above, I have indeed been travelling the length and breadth of England and Wales, meeting you in your 'home' environments, and showing my face at a number of video chats. It's been fascinating and informative — with one or two of the things I thought I 'knew' about mountain rescue being soundly debunked.

Couple of fun facts about me first. The last issue introduced me as the newly-appointed CEO-Elect, with an overview of my business background and some thoughts about what I might bring to MREW in terms of my management experience and philosophy. But what we hadn't discussed was my Geordie heritage, a firmly 'black and white', fifth-generation Newcastle supporter — although perhaps the less said about that the better, on current form! Another snippet I've routinely thrown out, is that I'm a global expert in manhole covers. Not surprisingly, nobody has ever made a comment about that until I got to Glossop, where one chap said he was a global expert too. A little unnerving, but that was quite the chat in the pub afterwards!!

But, back to mountain rescue. What you all want to know is this: Have I got a plan for the next five years? Definitely not, but I'm fast gaining information.

What I CAN tell you is that I like change, but not for the sake of it. I will throw ideas out there. Get the reactions from people. Have discussions. What you do is important and it's worth clinging on to and making as good as we can make it.

When I started out, last summer, I had an outsider's view and, as I meet more and more of you, three things in particular are increasingly corroborated. You successfully rescue people. You are increasingly busy. And you are highly trained and motivated.

What I hadn't realised was that, far from being the 'one big organisation' I thought you were, you are, in fact, 47 separate entities, plus associated, national and regional organisations. I had also assumed that the government supports your efforts financially. In some senses, I'm surprised they don't, but I can see the pitfalls too in that any money that comes in from government, would have strings attached. The more of you I meet, the more I see that every team is unique and yet there is so much more that unites you. And some questions pop up regularly. What's the purpose of MREW? Are we being pushed towards central control? What's the role of the trustees and the officers? I agree, these things need ironing out.

Then there's the 'big issues' everyone shares. Communication. Burnout. Funding. Resources. Diversity. Leadership. And the need for training in people management skills alongside the technical stuff.

So how do we address all these things? Through 'collective synergy'. By influencing a new generation and adapting to life in a digital world. Embracing wellbeing and looking after people. Developing and maybe reinvigorating peer review. Addressing equality, diversity and inclusion. Working more closely with the Rescue Benevolent Fund to support teams and team members when things go wrong. Securing stable funding. And continuing our collaboration with the wider search and rescue community, UKSAR and the APPG.

Of one thing I am sure: whatever we do in the next five years, team members and teams are the beating heart of everything. It would be foolish to ignore that — but, if pressed to offer an idea of our direction of travel, it would be this. Greater recognition and status in an organisation that is secure in both its funding and capability, an organisation that YOU want, rather than one that someone else wants to impose upon you. One that keeps that beating heart alive.

Remember, I'm always happy to chat and hear your thoughts. Just drop me an email via [ceo.elect@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:ceo.elect@mountain.rescue.org.uk). ☺



SPOTLIGHT ON

# Josh MacAlister OBE

## JUDY WHITESIDE MEETS THE MOUNTAIN RESCUER AND MP WHO'S HELPING BRING RECOGNITION TO VOLUNTEER SEARCH AND RESCUE

The November Budget announcement, that SAR vehicles would be exempt from Vehicle Excise Duty, marked a significant step forward in the cross-party campaign for greater recognition for the volunteer rescue services. In her speech, Chancellor Rachel Reeves recognised the efforts made by her 'honourable friends', MPs Torcuil Crichton (Western Isles) and Josh MacAlister (Whitehaven and Workington). Josh later celebrated the success in a reel which was widely shared across mountain rescue, not least because he himself is a mountain rescue team member. But, beyond the Lakes and his own constituency, few perhaps will have heard of the MP, described in December 2024 as the 'rising star of the year' in Westminster. So it seemed only fitting we find out a little more about him, his involvement in mountain rescue and where we go next with the APPG.

In one way or another, we've been lobbying Westminster since the 1930s, when Wilson Hey began agitating for the morphine license, with more knock-backs than successes, it has to be said. Even as recently as 2010, when Tim Farron was battling for VAT exemption, another MP reportedly compared and aligned mountain rescue with the Cats Defence League, so things have clearly improved — substantially — and I wonder whether Josh has become our now 'not-so-secret weapon', thanks to that unique combination of a rescue team member also being an MP.

It certainly helped, he says, being able to draw on direct experience, but is very clear that he wouldn't want to take away from the work of other members of Parliament, who haven't got a background in voluntary search and rescue, but who very effectively helped to put pressure on as well.

'That it's come from politicians from different parties, and from very different ends of the country is significant. Torcuil, for example, who chairs the APPG, has done a brilliant job.'

In his social media reel, he talked about how important it was to have a 'local campaigning MP, focusing on issues, getting them onto the desk of decision makers like the Chancellor'. But how hard is that? And what is the process you have to go through to get something in front of the Chancellor,

get them to read it and then take it forward?

'You've got to find a way of making the policy arguments. How would you actually make this thing work, in this case an exemption to an existing tax? You have to come up with something that's achievable but, at the same time, make the politics of it work. By politics, I mean you've got to help people who are weighing up lots of different trade-offs and decisions, against other also very worthwhile decisions.'

'For me it was about the special role search and rescue volunteers play in the community, lots of people giving their time for free, and finding a way to acknowledge that contribution through a change in tax.'

It's important, he says, to be able 'to hustle a bit too' (for which I would read 'charm', which Josh has in spades) — to get this in front of the right people. 'You see them in the corridor, bend their ear, send them the odd WhatsApp to remind them of the things you talked about... all of that stuff pays off.'

And it helps, I guess, that when you're hustling, you're speaking from personal experience as opposed to someone who has been briefed by someone in mountain rescue to go say 'this', whatever 'this' is?

He agrees it makes a difference, that being able to say 'this will save my team x-thousand pounds' is a lot more powerful than talking in the abstract.

### SO WHAT'S THE NEXT 'HUSTLE' FOR THE APPG?

'I think there are some obvious areas that the APPG could have some influence on, like the cost of insurance. That could be pretty transformational. There's also the issue of demand and the need to raise awareness about how people handle themselves in the outdoors, particularly in the honeypot spots.'

'VED was a very clear win. There's obviously an understanding now in government that what these volunteers are doing is making a difference and we should build on that momentum.'

How about recognition of our status in the workplace, in line with Special Constables and the TA, another key point in the APPG Manifesto. Is that achievable?

'Yes, I think it's worth pushing for recognition from employers. There's something about the magic of mountain rescue being very bottom-up and feeling very responsible for how they approach things. So you want to create national recognition for these things, without losing that bottom-up freedom.'

And what about a government minister for search and rescue, another manifesto aim? I'd have thought Josh the ideal person for that — although I note he does have his hands quite full at the moment after being

appointed Minister for Children and Families at the Department for Education, in September 2025.

He admits he has 'quite a lot on at the moment', but always has head space to keep pushing for some of the things we'd like to achieve. 'I think it's more about finding a home in government, a team somewhere that has cross-government visibility — Home Office, Department for Transport, the Treasury, all the elements we need.'

He's already talked about the value of our grassroots-led organisation, but does he see any risks or downsides to this increased connection with government? It's often said that once government gets involved, they can become more intrusive, more 'governing'. Can we keep the balance?

'Of course, if we're talking about government giving direct funding to mountain rescue, then that might be a very real risk. But I think there's an understanding in government at the moment that there is something really special here that we don't want to mess with. Teams have incredible expertise, team members give up a lot of their time, enjoy what they do. You wouldn't want to lose that.'

One final thought regarding the APPG, it occurs to me that Josh is still in his 30s. With an often older demographic in teams, it's really good to see a younger generation coming through, working towards a strong future for mountain rescue. Is mountain rescue finally shaking off that reputation of 'old grey beards'? It's clear from a very cursory glance at Josh's online presence that he's a young energy, passionate about his community, about mountain rescue and about spending time in the mountains. I wonder whether that energy and enthusiasm has helped, literally changing the face of mountain rescue at government level, but he disagrees.

'A lot of people won't have interacted with mountain rescue, ever. Within a community like Cumbria, we might have a stronger sense about the sort of people in mountain rescue, but while a lot of people in government think it's an admirable thing, they don't really know much about how it works, the fact it's done by volunteers, hundreds of people across the country who are giving up their time — and I'll keep flagging that persistently.'

### BUT ENOUGH ABOUT THE APPG... LET'S TALK ABOUT JOSH

I detected a fellow Mancunian in the voice and he did indeed begin life in Rochdale. Moved to rural Scotland as a child, university in Edinburgh then back to Manchester, for Masters degrees in Politics and Education respectively, before taking up teaching posts in Oldham and Stockport, then moving to London.

He's clearly passionate about young people's welfare and about effecting change in people's lives. In 2013, he founded and led Frontline, a charity set up to 'transform the life chances of vulnerable children'. He stepped down from that role to chair an independent review of children's social care



Opposite & above: Josh MacAlister with the Patterdale team vehicle and during a couple of rescues. Above right: Outside the Houses of Parliament following a meeting of the APPG in March 2025. Images supplied by Josh MacAlister

and, in 2019, he co-founded SHiFT, an organisation set up to 'break the destructive cycle of children caught up in, or at risk of, crime'. In 2023, he was awarded the OBE for services to vulnerable children.

All this work was London-based so what brought him up to Cumbria?

'At the time, my mum was still living in the south of Scotland. Matt's mother was living in Lancashire so we would spend a lot of time up here — and we got married in Cumbria. Then when Covid hit, we both started working from home and literally ran for the hills! Haven't looked back since. I've had a long affection and affinity with Cumbria so it never felt like moving to a new place. I love being out in the hills with our dogs Huck — short for Huckleberry — and Molly, two lovely lurchers.'

His constituency is further to the west of Cumbria, so why the Patterdale team?

'When we first moved up, we were between Penrith and Greystoke so within Patterdale's catchment. I joined the team as a probationer in 2023, and the selection as a Parliamentary candidate came after that, so I was spending a lot of time in a lot of different places for a while! Sometimes a bit of a push to make it all work, but the team are really good at making sure I can do enough training. I prioritise mountain rescue at the weekends but, certainly since becoming a minister, it's been harder to get to call-outs.'

I'm impressed by quite how he manages it all. He's seen out and about a lot in his constituency, meeting the people he represents, getting things done — how does he keep a balance?

'Part of it is making use of the time I've got. So, on the train journey to London, I'll plough through the paperwork. I've a brilliant team, as a minister and a constituency MP, so they make sure I make really good use of my time, wherever I am. And my family are great at pitching in. And then, in the very slim bit of time that's left...'

He pauses and chuckles, explaining that Matt is currently pointing at himself (and rightly so), adding that Matt also works in London so they are able to spend time together there.

'...as for mountain rescue — it's really good to just do something that's very different that's not about politics.'

Does he keep his call-out alerts switched on in Westminster?

'Yes, and there have been a few comedic moments when it's gone off at meetings. I have this paranoia that I'm going to be at the Despatch Box, and get told off by the Speaker for the phone going off, so I do put the phone into airplane mode on occasion.'

We discuss that he went out on a call-out just after getting elected, which must have been quite the adrenalin hit, but have there been any other memorable rescues?

'Three. One was a fatality, a heart attack. He was part of a walking group. Something struck me about that group — they didn't know each other well, but there was something about being outdoors together and for him to be surrounded by people at that moment, in an environment he loved, not being alone. Reflects how important it is that whoever shows up first is well-attuned to the situation.'

'Another was a hypothermia case near Helvellyn, a search for an older couple who hadn't returned to their coach at the end of the day. I'd just got back from London so it was a long day. That was the call-out where I felt I'd made the biggest difference — had they not been found, it could've been a much worse outcome.'

'The third one was when I walked a guy off from an accident at the Bad Step where his friend had died. It was quite a long walk back and he was processing it all along the way. It's so easy to forget how momentous those things are. There's a level of gravity that sometimes we can take for granted. That training, recognising that the grieving process starts straight away — how you respond, what answers you give to their questions, it's all important.'

Finally, where does he see his future in MR? Leadership perhaps, or regional or national involvement? About this he is unequivocal.

'I am completely content being a dogsbody team member and will continue being a dogsbody team member for as long as the team will have me. It's really nice to be doing something where I'm just part of the team. And even if I wanted to, I wouldn't have the time to do any more than I'm doing now.'

And on that note, our time is up. Huge thanks to Josh (and his Parliamentary team) for giving me the time to chat, in what I know is a very packed diary. And here's to seeing the APPG momentum continue with more successes ticked off soon. 🐾

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Image by SARCast



## FINDING OUR WAY: MAP AND COMPASS, GPS OR SMARTPHONE?

**PAUL SMITH** MREW EQUIPMENT OFFICER

What do we use when it really matters? Picture this: you're halfway up a windswept fell, rain hammering sideways, radio crackling in your ear. Control asks the question we've all heard at the worst possible moment: 'Can you send us your exact grid reference over?' Without thinking you reach down – but for what? Your map? Your handheld GPS? Your phone? Or even your smartwatch?

In mountain rescue, we navigate with one boot in tradition and the other stepping firmly into technology. The truth? No single tool is perfect. But each one shines in its own way, depending on the scenario, the weather and the pressure of the moment.

### MAP AND COMPASS: OLD SCHOOL

The map and compass are our old friends who never let us down. They give us the full picture all at once, every contour, gully, forest edge, boundary fence and escape route, all laid out in one glance. When search managers are briefing teams, nothing beats the speed of grabbing a marker, drawing a box, and saying 'That's your search area'.

There's no battery to die, no touch screen to freeze, no lost signal. But what about the downside? In darkness, sideways rain, or when you've been pacing for two hours, accuracy can drift. And unless someone's scribbling as they go, a map can't tell you exactly where you've already walked.

### HANDHELD GPS DEVICE, OUR PRECISION PARTNER

A decent handheld GPS doesn't care about fog, rain, snow, or how tired your brain is. It gives instant, accurate grid references — unarguable ones. A simple press of a button and you know exactly where you are. Even better, it leaves a breadcrumb trail behind you, quietly recording everywhere you've been. When you're searching for a MISPER, the track log proves where you have searched, reveals gaps in the search area, stops overlap and wasted effort.

But it's not perfect. Batteries can die. Cold can kill screens, and nothing is more embarrassing than being asked for a grid reference and realising your GPS is still buried in your rucksack from the last training session.

### SMARTPHONE MAPPING APPS, THE FAST AND FLASHY CONTENDER

So, being honest, most of us use our smartphone apps more than we like to admit, especially as MREW team members currently get OS mapping for free.

Zooming in on 1:25,000 mapping, dropping pinpoints, recording tracks, sending screenshots to control, it's fast, intuitive and incredibly helpful. Smartphones give us brilliant visual clarity and quick reassurance when the terrain gets complex.

But the outdoors and British weather don't care how expensive your phone is.

Cold weather does kill smartphone batteries. Touch screens hate gloves, can be easily broken and they are not that waterproof and, unless you've downloaded offline maps, a dead signal turns your app into a very shiny paperweight.

So back to my question: What do you use to get the grid reference?

- **Map:** Great when calm and dry, and you can see your surroundings
- **Handheld GPS device:** Rock-solid accuracy in almost all conditions
- **Smartphone app:** Fast and visual, brilliant for cross-checking
- **Smartwatch:** Surprisingly handy — surprisingly easy to forget to charge.

In a perfect world, we should be able to get your location from any of them. In the real world, it usually depends on what's in our hand and how wet and cold we are.

### MISPER SEARCH: WHAT DOES WHAT BEST?

- **Map and compass:** Good for planning, briefing, working out search areas. Quick to mark boxes and discuss strategy
- **Handheld GPS device:** Accurate, precise location information and records everything
- **Smartphone app:** The flexible problem solver: zoom in on tricky detail, check features, confirm boundaries.

I like to think of it like this, the map gives us the story, the handheld GPS device gives us the facts, and the smartphone gives us the visuals! Together, they make us a better searcher, a better navigator and a better teammate.

### SO, WHICH IS BEST? NONE OF THEM, AND ALL OF THEM

Mountain rescue isn't about choosing sides. It's about using all the tools in our arsenal so we can adapt to whatever the hill throws at us. The rescuers who perform best aren't the ones who swear by a single device. It's the ones who can switch confidently between all three, in the dark, in the rain, with cold fingers and adrenalin running high.

Because when someone out there needs us, our navigation tool isn't the important thing — finding them is. 🗺️



**equipment**



# SAR-MED App launched to support Casualty Care across MREW

After successfully deploying the SAR-MED Pocketbook in 2023, casualty care is now supported by the SAR-MED App.

**SALLY ARMOND** OVMRO

## FROM POCKETBOOK TO APP: THE MREW DRUG FORMULARY AIDE MEMOIRE

Back in 2019, the MREW Drug Formulary was available to teams only as a very detailed A4 office document. The downside of this was it required much time-consuming editing, adaptation and modification by each mountain rescue team to render it suitable for operational use in challenging rescue environments.

That autumn, an article was published here in the magazine describing an OVMRO project I led, to develop a succinct, 'hill-fit', waterproof pocketbook version of the MREW Drug Formulary. The OVMRO pocketbook came complete with step-by-step flowchart protocols for the administration of drugs and was made available to OVMRO team members and also as a digital resource for access via their smartphones.

So much national interest resulted from the article, and from both the printed and digital Pocketbook, that it led to the initiation of a highly innovative three-phase collaboration between MREW and OVMRO.

The results of Phase One have proven extremely popular, with over 3,000 copies of the SAR-MED Pocketbook published to date. Feedback has highlighted the greatly enhanced confidence and reassurance the resource has given rescuers during medical and traumatic incidents as well as supporting and encouraging learners undertaking RRMT training.

By 2022, Phase Two had commenced. The user interface design of the SAR-MED

app was soon completed and its technical build began. OVMRO team members Tim Radford and Russ Hore shared their technical expertise free of charge to build, host and field test the fully-functioning app for iOS including developing its back-end content administration system.

Due to its involvement in broader, national search and rescue coordination, the UK Home Office became very interested in the app and, by summer 2025, MREW was able to allocate funding to support its further development. This allowed us to select the digital solutions company, F12 Consult as a partner. They were given free access to the OVMRO iOS design and source code to mirror across Android for robust testing and ongoing maintenance.

With the Christmas 2025 release of the SAR-MED app across MREW, we are looking forward to hearing feedback on the results of Phase Two testing in preparation for commencing Phase Three.

## ABOUT THE SAR-MED APP

- Available for iOS and Android
- Designed as a rapidly accessible resource to support confidence in casualty care
- Real-time Clinical Update Alerts and Notices are provided to keep you abreast of recent changes to the MREW Drug Formulary, RRMT training and events
- All content is automatically refreshed each time you open the app, to ensure the most current version of the MREW Drug Formulary is always available
- SAR-MED remains fully functional without phone signal.

## APP FEATURES

- Clinical Alerts and Notices
- Drug Formulary and Drug Administration Protocols
- Casualty Observation Charts (Adult, Child, Ten-Second Triage)
- Quick Reference Guide to Clinical Operational Terminology used in the field
- Soon to be developed into a rapid-access field guide to managing trauma and medical incidents.

## WHO CAN USE SAR-MED?

**SAR-MED for Learning:** Any SAR/MR team member with an MREW-recognised email address may download and use the SAR-MED app for reference, familiarisation and revision purposes.

**SAR-MED for Clinical Decision Making:** Only those SAR/MR Team members holding MREW Casualty Care/RRMT certification, or registered HCPs with appropriate medical indemnity insurance, may use the SAR-MED app to support clinical decision making during SAR/MRT incidents. 🚫



SCAN THE QR CODE (PLEASE NOTE: YOU MUST BE REGISTERED WITH MOODLE TO ACCESS)

CLINICAL ALERTS AND NOTICES IMMEDIATELY NOTIFY USERS TO ANY CHANGES IN NATIONAL GUIDELINES AND NEWS ITEMS

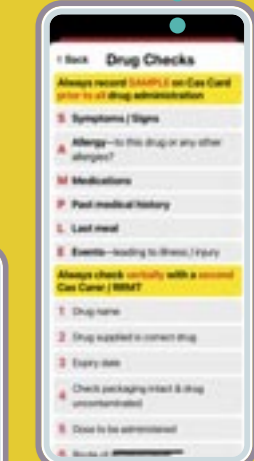
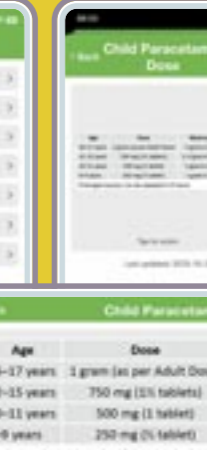
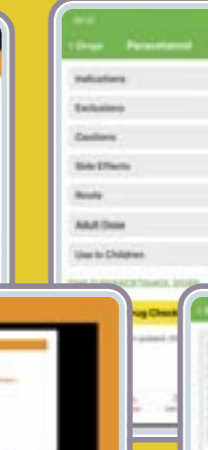
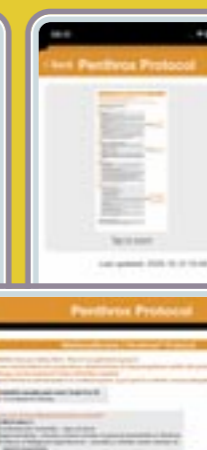
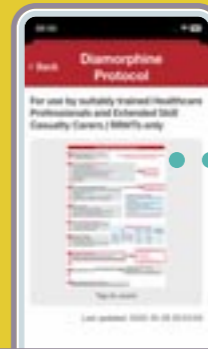
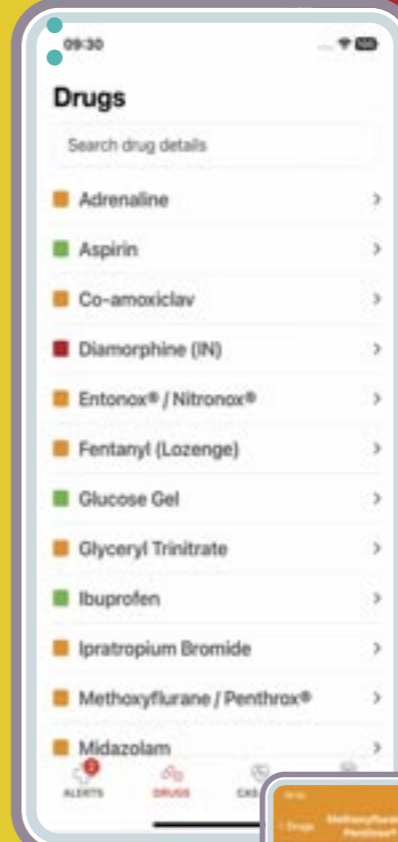
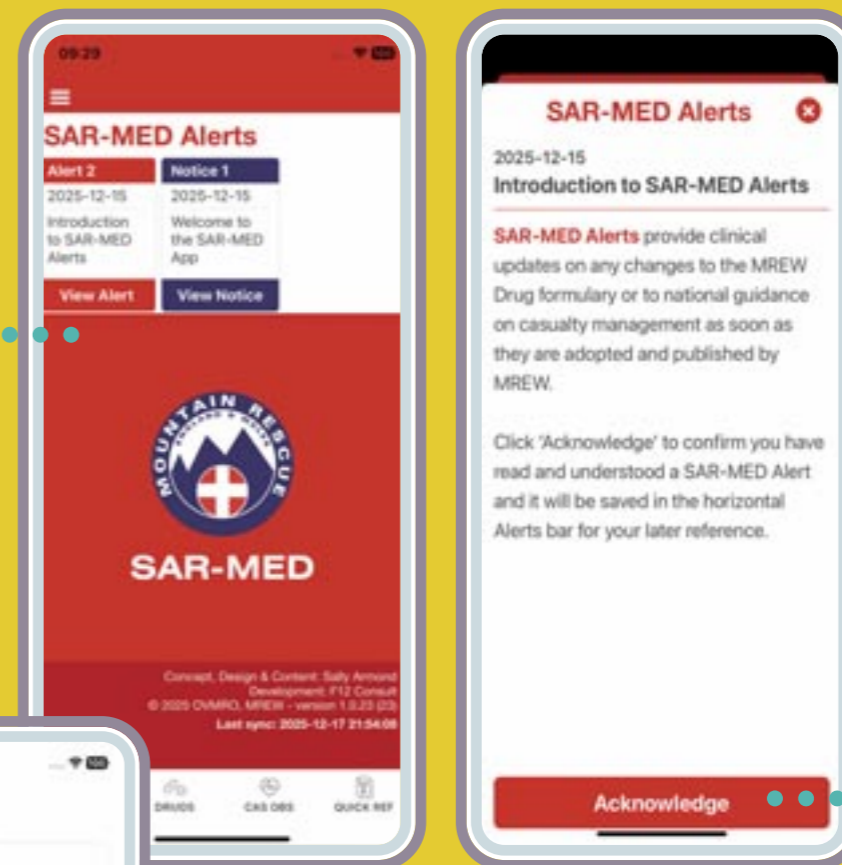
THE DRUG FORMULARY IS COLOUR CODED ACCORDING DRUG GROUP AND IS SEARCHABLE

USERS CAN ACKNOWLEDGE WHEN AN ALERT HAS BEEN READ, ENABLING AT-A-GLANCE IDENTIFICATION OF WHICH ALERTS HAVE BEEN READ AND WHICH STILL NEED ATTENTION

DRUG MONOGRAPHS DIRECTLY MIRROR THE ORGANISATION OF CONTENT AS PER POCKETBOOK LINK TO ESSENTIAL DRUG CHECKS IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE VIA EACH DRUG SCREEN

DRUG ADMINISTRATION CHECK LIST AVAILABLE VIA EACH DRUG SCREEN

ALL DRUG PROTOCOLS ARE RESIZABLE AND CAN BE VIEWED IN LANDSCAPE AND PORTRAIT



Above: The three-phase collaboration between MREW and OVMRO

SAR-MED APP CONTINUED

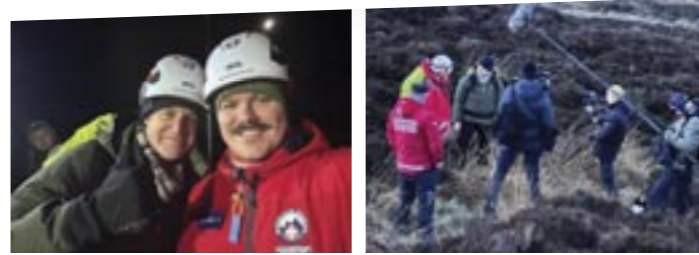
**CASUALTY OBSERVATION CHARTS FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN ARE RESIZABLE AND CAN BE VIEWED IN LANDSCAPE AND PORTRAIT**

**SEARCHABLE QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE PROVIDES A RAPID-ACCESS AIDE MEMOIRE TO THE CLINICAL TERMINOLOGY MOST COMMONLY USED DURING DEPLOYMENT**

**USEFUL LINKS, STRAIGHT FROM THE APP, TAKE YOU TO MOODLE, JESIP AND THE RESUSCITATION COUNCIL (RCUK)**

Parameter	Normal	Abnormal	Abnormal	Abnormal	Abnormal
Respiratory Rate (per min)	12-20	<12	>20	>30	>40
Heart Rate (per min)	60-100	<60	>100	>120	>150
SpO2 (%)	96-100	<96	>100	>100	>100
Capnometry (ET)	35-45	<35	>45	>45	>45
ET CO2 (mmHg)	35-45	<35	>45	>45	>45

Age	Resp Rate (min)	Heart Rate (min)
4-7 years	20-30	80-130
8-11 years	15-25	70-120
12-14 years	12-24	65-110
>14 years	ADULT VALUES	ADULT VALUES



# news round

## OCTOBER > JANUARY

### JANUARY: NORTHUMBERLAND TEAM FEATURES ON BBC COUNTRYFILE

Northumberland National Park Team featured in the episode on 11 January, titled 'Northumberland: Nature's Playground'. Presenter Matt Baker spent time with the team in early December, to learn more about the vital role mountain rescue plays in one of England's most remote and rugged landscapes.

'Team members spent an afternoon filming with Matt,' says Will Close-Ash, 'sharing insight into the work we do, the specialist equipment we use, and the dedication required to operate safely and effectively in challenging environments. The programme explored a training scenario, offering viewers a rare behind-the-scenes look at how mountain rescue teams prepare for real incidents.'

'The episode also reflected on the origins of the team, which was formed sixty years ago following the tragic deaths of two shepherds in Northumberland, highlighting how that loss led to the creation of a volunteer service that continues to save lives today.'



The team formally took shape in May 1966, growing out of a tragedy, in the winter of 1962, when two shepherds lost their lives in a blizzard in the Cheviot Hills. Initially known as the Northumberland National Park Voluntary Wardens Fell Rescue Team, the team was affiliated with the then Mountain Rescue Committee (now MREW) in 1967.

The team has evolved considerably over six decades. While originally made up entirely of voluntary wardens, today's team comprises volunteers from all walks of life. Over the years, members have responded to a number of high profile incidents, including the Lockerbie Disaster in 1988, the search for Raul Moat in 2010, resilience responses to the 'Beast from the East' in 2021 and during Covid in 2020 – and a number of others, including wild fires, flooding incidents and Storm Arwen damage in 2021. In 2024, they were awarded the prestigious King's Award for Voluntary Service, celebrating exceptional contributions to the community.

Looking ahead, they plan to celebrate their anniversary with a 'Summer of Northumberland Adventure', with a series of events already planned, including a summer garden party, 'Meet the Team and Training' showcases, the iconic Cheviots Challenge, a walk/run across the beautiful Cheviot Hills – open to all abilities – to raise funds for the team. And there will be more announced as the year progresses.



Top: Team members during the filming of BBC Countryfile in December © NNPMT. Right: Team members during a call-out with North of Tyne team in early December © NNPMT; front cover material, during winter training in Cairngorm © Neil Irwin.



# The forgotten path

## WHY DEMENTIA AWARENESS MATTERS IN MOUNTAIN RESCUE

**FREYA BARNETT** DEMENTIA UK

When a call comes in for a missing person on the hills, every second counts. But what if the person you are searching for is walking a path shaped not by the terrain, but by dementia? For many people living with the condition, confusion and disorientation can turn even a familiar route into an unfamiliar wilderness. This is the forgotten path – one that rescue teams may not always see, but that profoundly affects how searches unfold.

Understanding this hidden journey is vital because dementia changes how people think, move and respond. A lost walker may not follow logical routes, may avoid shelter, or may even walk toward danger. Without awareness of how dementia can affect a person, these behaviours can seem puzzling, delaying rescue and increasing risk.

Education around dementia gives teams the insight to anticipate these patterns, adapt their search strategies and approach individuals with empathy and reassurance – because in these moments, safety is not just about finding someone, it is about understanding the world they are navigating.

Throughout this year, we will be running a series of articles, focusing on different topics

once during the progression of their condition. These episodes are not only distressing for families, but can be life-threatening for the person who is missing. If they are not found within 24 hours, the risk of severe injury or death rises sharply.

‘Critical wandering’ – where a person keeps moving until physically stopped – is common in people with dementia. Factors such as complex environments, disorientation and impaired judgment make these situations unpredictable, dangerous and even fatal, with a mortality rate of up to 20%.

That is why, at Dementia UK, we want to support every mountain rescue team in the UK by offering free awareness sessions to help them feel confident and prepared when

● **Common signs and symptoms:** How to recognise when dementia might be a factor during a rescue.

● **Effective communication:** Practical advice on how to talk to someone living with dementia, even in stressful or unfamiliar environments.

● **Managing distress:** Strategies for calming and supporting a person who is anxious or frightened, while keeping everyone safe.

● **Why people with dementia go missing:** Understanding triggers such as confusion, disorientation and delirium, and how these influence behaviour.

● **Accessing support and using the Herbert Protocol Guidance** on tools and resources that can make searches faster and safer, including how to work with families and local networks.

We want to make it as easy as possible for mountain rescue teams to access this vital training. Sessions can be delivered face-to-face at your base or virtually, so you can choose what works best for your team. Each session will be led by a specialist Admiral Nurse, bringing expert knowledge and practical experience to support your learning. To book your free awareness session, simply email us at [dementia.work@dementiauk.org](mailto:dementia.work@dementiauk.org). Together, we can make sure no one is truly lost on the forgotten path.

### STEP FORWARD ON THE FORGOTTEN PATH: JOIN OUR ULTRA CHALLENGE TEAM

Every rescue call answered by a mountain rescue team requires strength, compassion and commitment. Now, we are inviting you to channel that same spirit into a new challenge – one that brings hope to families living with dementia and supports your incredible work.

searching for people with dementia. Our sessions will explore the realities of dementia and provide practical tools for real-world situations, covering:

● **What is dementia?** A simple, practical explanation of the condition and how it affects thinking, movement and decision-making.



Top: The dementia jigsaw © Geralt via Pixabay. Above & opposite: Going for a walk; running for Dementia UK © Dementia UK.

around dementia, with the aim of helping teams and volunteers to understand more about this condition.

Every year in the UK, around 40,000 people with dementia go missing for the first time, often during routine activities like walking the dog or going to the shop. Research suggests that up to 70% of people living with dementia will go missing at least

Across the UK, thousands of dedicated people take on an Ultra Challenge event every year, with routes to suit everyone: from 10km walks to 100km endurance treks. We would love you to join our team and raise funds for Dementia UK and your own rescue team – because we know how vital your work is, and we want to stand alongside you.

Whether you choose to walk, jog or run, this is your chance to take on a personal challenge while making a real difference.

When you sign up, you will receive a free place in the event and become part of a community united by purpose. Every mile you cover will help Admiral Nurses provide life-changing support to families facing dementia. These events are not just about distance – they are about determination, empathy and solidarity.

You will not be doing this alone. Admiral Nurses from our Dementia at Work Team are taking part in every event, walking alongside the participants, offering encouragement and sharing stories of why their challenge matters. Together, we will turn every step into a message of hope and action.

There is an event for everyone, from scenic coastal paths and rugged mountain trails to iconic city routes. So gather your team, set your goal and join us for an unforgettable experience. Let's show that when communities come together, incredible things happen.

Ready to take the first step? Head to the Dementia UK website ([tinyurl.com/7d4y9h7u](https://tinyurl.com/7d4y9h7u) or scan the QR code below) to sign up today and help us make sure no one is lost on the forgotten path. 🗺️

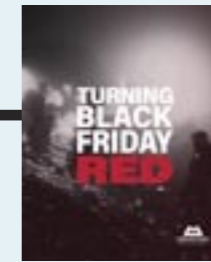


**FREYA BARNETT IS A DEMENTIA SPECIALIST ADMIRAL NURSE AT DEMENTIA UK**



# news round

## OCTOBER > JANUARY



### DECEMBER: MOUNTAIN EQUIPMENT TURNS 'BLACK FRIDAY' RED FOR UK MOUNTAIN RESCUE

Across the Black Friday weekend, the fundraising promotion by the retailer raised £4,060.55, shared between MREW and Mountain Rescue Scotland.

Neil Bradley, Mountain Equipment's Brand Director, explained: 'Red Friday began as a simple way to take a different path, at a time of year usually dominated by discounting. We've worked with rescue teams for over a decade, learning from the gear they depend on and the environments in which they operate. Giving something meaningful back to that community continues to feel like the right thing to do. The teams represent much of what we value in mountain life: skill, humility and a willingness to help others when it matters most. We're proud that this year's Red Friday donation will support the work they do all year round. Thank you to everyone who played a part in this year's outcome. We are already looking at how we can grow Red Friday in 2026 and do even more for the teams who play such a vital part in our outdoor community.'

Raising funds for rescue



### FUNDRAISER WALKS 20,000 MILES IN SUPPORT OF MOUNTAIN RESCUE

Jon Ryley is undertaking the impressive challenge in memory of his parents Maureen and Terry Ryley, who passed away at the end of 2019 and early 2020, just 70 days apart. He'd initially set out to walk 10,000 miles, supporting six mountain rescue teams across the UK, a milestone he achieved in April 2025 – finishing on the summit of Ben Nevis – before upgrading his goal to a further 10,000 miles, in support of another six teams.

'In my career, I've led business transformations that took organisations to new heights,' says Jon, 'aligning people, process and technology to deliver lasting growth. Business transformation and mountain walking share the same truths: the path is rarely straight, conditions change and progress comes step by step. Both demand endurance, adaptability and purpose. So, here's to the next stage – on the trail and in business – walking forward, being the light. This challenge spans the highest mountains in Scotland, England and Wales, attracting thousands of participants who take on the challenge for charity. Inspired by their efforts, I wanted to give back to the heroes who make these challenges safer.'

The first stage, between 2021 and 2025, raised £40,000, each 2,000-mile leg supporting an individual team and ending up at a significant summit or landmark – Scafell Pike for Wasdale, Helvellyn for Patterdale, Cairngorm for Skye, Snowdon for Llanberis, Scafell for Duddon and Furness, and Ben Nevis for Lochaber. Stage two began with Glossop MRT, with Loughrigg Fell scheduled for 9 January 2026. Alongside the connection to his parents, each leg has been dedicated to the life of someone 'who mattered' and the Glossop stage, he explains, 'is in memory of a great friend of mine, Seth Edward McClain RN1, who passed away in November, aged 55'. At the time of writing, he had raised £2,342 for Glossop team.

Still to come are Cockerthorpe (where he will be heading for Haystacks and Fleetwith Pike), Bowland Pennine (Clougha Pike), East Cornwall (Coastal Walk or Brown Willy), Brecon (Pen Y Fan/The Fan Dance) and Cairngorm (Ben MacDui). To donate, just head to [justgiving.com/page/jonryley12000](https://justgiving.com/page/jonryley12000).

Above: Jon (far left of photo) on the top of Helvellyn © Jon Ryley.

# POV: THE CASUALTY

Bank Holiday Monday, 5 May 2025. : Nick Wight and his son Alex set off for a father-son day out in a sunny Peak District, choosing Stanage Edge for their first outdoor climbing trip together.

But the day ended in disaster when Nick fell, sustaining a nasty ankle injury and needing help from Edale team.

It's not often we get to hear the casualty's side of the 'rescue experience' and Nick was keen to share his story, because of 'the fabulous teamwork shown by the Edale team' who were, he reckons, 'really phenomenal!'

A consultant gastroenterologist based at King's Mill hospital in the East Midlands, he recalls being hooked on climbing as a younger man, choosing university in Manchester so he could spend time in North Wales and the Peak District. But, after moving to Nottingham to train, in 1994, he left the mountains behind.

Until two years ago, when he and sixteen-year-old Alex, began exploring climbing walls, beginning with the Climbing Hangar in Sheffield. 'We both loved it and we've been going to walls locally and around the country ever since. We both made progress — at first I was much better than Alex but, inevitably, youth wins out!'

'Although I reached a certain level I couldn't get beyond. Alex is now way better than me. He now treats climbing as his primary sport with the full support of his school.'

They'd never climbed together outdoors — although Nick still owns a full rack of gear that has travelled with him all over Europe: North Wales slate, Llanberis Pass, every Peak gritstone crag, the Verdon Gorge and Buoux en Provence amongst others. All a very long time ago, he does admit.

'Although the metal hardware is OK the slings, ropes and harnesses will probably have deteriorated during the twenty years spent in my garage. My old, first-generation

rigid friends look particularly frayed. So we gritted our teeth and bought a new rope and harnesses, some slings and, in pride of place, a new set of flexible friends. Off to the peak it was...'

They chose Stanage Edge for that first trip because, he says, 'Where else? An absolutely beautiful crag at its best in the spring sunshine.'

'I haven't touched grit for twenty years and Alex had never even seen it, so we decided to be conservative. Multi-star VS only was our plan. I would lead and Alex would second. By way of a warm-up we started on a slightly easier route — Martello Buttress (HS 4b\*\*\*) — at the popular end and, flippin' 'eck this is not like a climbing wall! No real holds to speak of, just big bulges and flared breaks. At least we had some friends!'

'After a little struggle we made it and decided to move on. Next up was Wall End Slab (VS 5a\*\*\*) above the plantation. Much more like it: gentle angle and lots of friction.'

'After that came what I consider to be the greatest route on gritstone: High Neb Buttress (VS 4c\*\*\*) Anyone who's sat below it will know the feeling. Although it doesn't look particularly difficult, it is certainly rather imposing. I soloed it when I was younger. What was I thinking? Maybe my palms didn't sweat as much back then. Anyway, we did it and we loved it. Gritstone is just brilliant. We finished off with the route next door (Tango Buttress HS 5a\*\*), before retiring to Hathersage for tea and medals.'

After tea in Outside Café, they decided to finish off a wonderful day with some

bouldering at the Stanage plantation.

'I must have climbed Crescent Arête (V2 or HVS 5c) at least a dozen times in my youth. It's a very clean edge line, on a perfect bit of rock, with a reasonable landing. From memory, the difficult bit is just above halfway where a committing move leads to a much better hold on the arête itself, before an easier finish.'

'For reasons that are now hard to fathom, I decided I had to do it, just to prove I still could. Well, it turned out I couldn't. I got to the difficult bit easily enough, but it did feel quite a long way off the ground and not quite as stable as I remembered. Now all I need do was to commit completely. Unfortunately, my weight was in the wrong position, I got scared and started to swing out.'

'Rather than bailing out in a controlled fashion I struggled on and fell off in a very uncontrolled fashion. I landed with my left foot on the mat, but my right foot landed squarely on a round gritstone protrusion with a rather ominous crack which I think I felt rather than heard. Alex was my spotter and he made sure I didn't roll on down the hillside. As we fell on top of each other I could see my right foot flapping in the breeze and I announced profoundly that I had broken my ankle.'

## DOING ALL THE RIGHT THINGS AND WAITING FOR RESCUE

'The first thing was to get my climbing shoe off, as my leg was going to get swollen. I couldn't do it myself, but Alex was able to pull my foot away from my leg with traction and get it straight before removing the shoe. Crescent Arête is very close to the main path from the plantation to High Neb, and I'd more or less fallen onto the path. Although the circumstances were not ideal it really was a rather pleasant place to be.'

'It was a beautiful day with no wind and actually rather warm. We sat there and had a chat about what to do. It was reasonably painful, but as long as Alex pulled my foot hard away from my leg in traction, it was perfectly bearable. Whilst we were considering options, a few people went by and we saw the first of numerous kindnesses I have experienced since then. Everyone offered practical help. One party gave me ibuprofen, another paracetamol. A couple of strong young lads offered to carry me down the path, but by this stage my leg



Top: Taylor spatial frame and internal screws to stabilise the joint line; CT scan with the frame in place. Above: X-rays and photos with the frame removed; particularly pink cast (chosen by daughter, Rosie). Images supplied by Nick Wight. Right: Edale team members stretcher Nick off the hill © Edale MRT.

had developed a force field that demanded absolutely no movement so we wisely abandoned the plan. Another very practical lady managed to fashion a splint out of some socks which was very helpful.'

Half an hour went by, and Nick and Alex decided they had to 'do something'. They'd spotted an Edale team Land Rover earlier, but how to contact them?

'We knew you contacted the coastguard through 999, so presumed mountain rescue must be the same so — for the first time in my life — I dialled 999. I asked for mountain rescue and the lovely man on the phone asked me questions about my injury and my safety and, once satisfied, put me through to the team. I explained where we were and they said they'd be there soon. So we sat and waited, slightly embarrassed, as more passersby offered help.'

Twenty minutes later, team members began to arrive, the first three armed with nitrous oxide (gas and air which he didn't need), an inflatable splint and good humour. It was, he says, 'wonderfully British'.

'I was apologising for being a nuisance and they were all saying I was helping them by getting them out of other chores. Others began to arrive — two with metal frames on their backs which they bolted into a stretcher, another with what looked like a motorcycle wheel on a bracket — everyone chatting happily with us!'

'Once I was on the stretcher and the wheel attached, several team members took positions around the stretcher and then expertly navigated me down the rocky path to the plantation car park and the waiting ambulance they'd already arranged.'

'The ambulance team had come from the Manchester area, but kindly agreed to take me to Chesterfield as the furthest south they could venture. Fortunately, another member of the Edale team was on-call as an emergency doctor in Chesterfield so the team with me arranged for her to meet me on arrival. We said our goodbyes and off I went.'

'I have worked as a full-time hospital doctor for 35 years. I've worked in many teams, in a lot of challenging situations, and

I think I have a grasp of the fundamentals of teamwork. What I saw from the Edale team was simply outstanding. Watching them at work was a privilege. The effortless good humour, competence and communication — with each other as well as with me — as they shepherded me off the hill, was wonderful to behold. And all done by volunteers. We live in a fabulous country!'

Alex stayed with Nick's car in the car park, let his mum, Caroline, know what had happened, then waited for a friend to bring her to collect him and the car.

Meanwhile, at Chesterfield Royal Infirmary, X-rays confirmed that Nick had sustained a severe Pilon fracture of the right ankle.

'I'd landed on my right heel, forcing my foot into the bottom of my leg, splintering the tibia and fibula and disrupting the main joint line. A bad, ugly business.'

'While I was in the emergency department, the Edale team member came to meet me and kindly showed me the gruesome X-rays. She was also able to recover the inflatable splint the team had first placed underneath the arête which seemed strangely complete and satisfying!'

'The first treatment was immobilisation in a temporary plaster backslab, before transfer to the orthopaedic ward. There the team explained that I'd need specialist treatment at the main trauma centre at Queen's Medical Centre in Nottingham. In the meantime, Chesterfield did my first operation and placed a temporary external fixator to keep things stabilised in the short term.'

Once at the Queen's Medical Centre, Nick met the specialist team that deal with this kind of injury. They discussed various options and agreed on internal screws to stabilise the joint line and an external Taylor spatial frame. The operation had to be delayed to allow the swelling to subside. Eventually, he was discharged and, thanks to the frame, able to weight bear.

## RECOVERY CONTINUES...

Initial recovery went well. After seven weeks, the lower foot plate was removed and Nick's ankle movements felt free and

painless. By July, he even felt well enough to get back on his bicycle turbo trainer!

Sadly, however, by August Nick's leg had deteriorated again with incapacitating pain rendering him virtually bed-bound. A CT scan in early October suggested that, even after five months, a large part of the fracture had not healed. He underwent a third operation to remove the frame and replace it with a plaster cast.

'Mercifully the pain has largely gone, and I am beginning to feel that recovery is coming at last. As I write (in November), my next X-ray is due in four weeks' time and the team will decide whether I need another operation.'

## REFLECTIONS

'So, how do I reflect on all of this? Here's the thing: I had a bit of bad luck. One inch to the left or right, I'd have been fine and carried on with a wonderful day. But, thanks to my injury, I have seen the absolute best in people — strangers who have been kind and generous. And the wonderful Edale team, who gave up their Saturday evenings to help us — unpaid volunteers who helped me both physically and mentally. The ambulance crew, again people who helped and supported me and asked nothing in return. The same theme has repeated itself time and again with every interaction I've had, whether in the hospital or in the bus or tram. We are privileged to live in a wonderful country with wonderful kind and generous people.'

'As for the future, my main aim is to get back to work and back on my bicycle. I'd love to get back to climbing although I confess that the thought of landing, even on a mat, is still a bit intimidating. Alex is climbing more than ever and is currently competing in the Midlands youth climbing league and hoping to make it to nationals. Caroline has had her own health problems and has endured two operations and is due to start radiotherapy soon — a happy ending is expected. Rosie loves to dance and is happily decorating my splint as I write.'

'Thank you to everyone who has been there for me!'



Top: Nick doing his best Homer Simpson impression where he fell. Above: Nick with son Alex; the temporary external fixator; the composite CT scan that shows the splintered bones.



# IN THE news

Prior to her retirement at the end of March, in her fiftieth and final column, **Sally Seed** looks back at what's changed, what matters and what's still challenging on all things MR media and comms.



## FOCUS ON PEOPLE

That first column, in autumn 2013 was all about personalities and individuals and how wary most mountain rescue volunteers are to be the focus of media attention. But it's still very true that journalists (and supporters) like to read about the people involved in MR stories — and, of course, the search dogs!

If you can tell a story and include something about the people, that'll be of more interest. It's interesting that the TV series about MR from recent years have very much focused on the individual volunteer rescuers and the rescued. It's not always easy to persuade people, but it's worth trying when you can.

However... one of the challenges for our social media channels is how to tell the real stories without exposing casualties to social media criticism and, at its worst, trolling. Keeping comment to a minimum seems to be the obvious route but taking the opportunities to be constructive and positive about people's planning, gear and navigation (when you can) is useful too.

## COMMUNICATIONS IN VARIOUS FORMS...

A quick look back at the content and themes of In the News columns over the past twelve or so years shows just how

broad that 'Media and Communications' umbrella can be. I've written articles on social media planning, broadcast interviews, use of images and video, handling (and preparing for) emergencies, learning from TV series (with thanks to North Wales and the Lake District teams), training for spokespeople, working with partners on comms campaigns and much more.

In fifty articles, it's not surprising there's also been quite a bit of overlap and duplication, but I hope that's reinforced and updated advice too.

Thanks go to colleagues in Cave Rescue, North Wales and the North East, AdventureSmart and elsewhere, who've been guest writers or much-appreciated contributors over the years.

## ...AND VARIOUS VOICES

My style is quite factual. I'm pretty sure that's the scientist in me from previous roles. I think it's fair to say I'm more on the 'inform' and 'educate' sides of the comms business than the 'entertain'.

However, it's been encouraging over the years to have emails from mountain rescue volunteers, to be asked for advice following a particular column. Thanks to Judy (magazine editor) for the visibility in these pages that has enabled that to happen.

Now, I think fresh views and new voices

are needed. And I don't underestimate the skills involved in creating a consistent but more entertaining style. For example, that might be about bringing more humour into the safety messaging — check out Central Beacons' Pro Tips — and there are others in the network extending reach with a change of tone too.

This might mean increased use of video — our own and our partners' — so that everyone involved in outdoor safety is making the most of the available skills as well as the investment in time and resources. Hopefully you have read with interest Jacqui's piece about working with online influencers and harnessing the power of video on a different platform.

It might be about finding the younger spokespeople at grassroots in mountain rescue and enabling and training them to take a more national communications role.

Those are just some of the challenges. I don't think it's going to get easier, but it'll certainly carry on being challenging and, when it works, really satisfying. Good luck to those who carry on and to those who get more involved in the years to come — and have fun!

Please do feel free to get in touch via [pr@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:pr@mountain.rescue.org.uk) — I'll be around for a few months yet! Thanks. ☺

Top: News type © Spaceheater via Dreamstime.com.



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Kongur MRT Jacket  
Men's & Women's



## CELEBRATING 'TOGETHER AT CHRISTMAS' AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY

Five representatives of mountain rescue travelled south to London — from Cumbria, the Peak District and North Wales — on Friday 5 December, at the invitation of HRH The Princess of Wales. The occasion was a Carol Service in Westminster Abbey hosted by Her Royal Highness and attended by volunteers and community leaders as well as members of the Royal family. **Sally Seed** reports.

Tim Radford, Phil Ridley, Deborah Pourkarimi and Jacqui Hanson joined me at the service. 'It was beautifully organised and ran like clockwork,' says Tim. 'The atmosphere was really seasonal with huge wreaths, Christmas trees and lots of candlelight. I think we were all honoured to be part of such a special occasion.' There were plenty of famous faces in the Abbey too, says Phil. 'It was an absolute privilege to be there, representing mountain rescue in such an amazing setting.'

Along with traditional carols, there were performances by the Fisherman's Friends choir, Katie Melua and Griff, and readings by The Prince of Wales, Kate Winslet and Chiwetel Ejiofor. Everyone involved received a brief letter from the Princess of Wales and a quote from that seems appropriate to recognise everyone involved in mountain rescue: 'There is a softness to the season that reminds us of something easy to forget: that what we do matters. Our words, our choices and even the ways we look out for one another — they ripple outward, touching lives we may never see.'



Left: Left to right: Phil Ridley (Kinder MRT), Jacqui Hanson (NWMRA), Deborah Pourkarimi (MREW), Sally Seed and Tim Radford (OVMRO); The invitation © Sally Seed.

# Our experience of working with an online influencer



JACQUI HANSON NWMRA MEDIA OFFICER

Communications make our work more visible and transparent to our communities – important when we rely on those communities to fund the majority of what we do, to be our supporters and advocates. Communications also enable us to share our knowledge and experience on how to be better prepared, to reduce risk and harm while enjoying the great outdoors, and this ultimately helps reduce the demand on our volunteers. It's not our role to tell people what to do, but we can help them make more informed decisions. But first of all – we have to be in the space our target audiences are in, and we need to get their attention. And that's one of our challenges.

## WHO ARE WE TALKING TO?

Our communities are diverse. Our geographical communities tend to be those that live near our bases and the areas we cover. Our virtual communities include people all over the country who share a passion for the great outdoors, for beautiful places and adventure, and will travel to North Wales for this purpose. Within those communities are people of various ages, different levels of knowledge and expertise, and different shades of interest and understanding about who we are and what we do and why it matters.

The challenge is: how do we get those important messages to as many people as possible? Of course, we have our websites, our own social media channels, and the news media. We also engage directly within communities – such as Duke of Edinburgh students, scouting groups, businesses and stakeholders, community fairs and events, and so on. All good!

## ENGAGING WITH HARDER-TO-REACH AUDIENCES

In North Wales, we've observed a shift in the demographics of those who call upon

our help, to more frequently younger people, or those who have seen beautiful places on social media and want to travel and experience them for themselves. These communities, anecdotally, are less likely to visit our websites, follow us on Facebook, or source information from traditional news media. They're on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, that we may not always have the resources to maintain. And yet, these are the people we need to reach to help them understand inherent risk and the importance of research and preparedness in reducing that risk.

So, when we were contacted in October 2025 by an online content creator we saw opportunity, but I was cautious. Jack Roscoe, known as Northern Introvert, had been walking in Eryri and asked if we wanted to collaborate in producing content to help reach and educate those people.

The request received a mixed response internally. The risk of engaging with online influencers was clear. What was really the motivation? More clicks, more views? Will we lose control of the narrative? Social media is notoriously hard to manage once it starts to go wrong. We have our own platforms, so why do we need another?

## COLLABORATING WITH AN ONLINE CONTENT CREATOR

My first task was research, and this took many days. I looked at Jack's online content – rafts of it across multiple channels – checked out the people looking at it in terms of numbers and demographics, the subject matter he had focused on for the year, and his LinkedIn profile to see his professional connections and networks and how he presented himself to them. It took time and patience, but it paid off. I saw a professional who brought passion and reflection to the subjects he focused on, but also gave others a voice. It wasn't all about him or product promotion!

Of course, I also asked Jack why he wanted to do this.

'One of the core aims of my YouTube channel is to help people connect more deeply with the landscapes around them, often by retelling stories from lesser-known local history and folklore. That sometimes involves hiking to remote places, so safety in the outdoors is something I'm always conscious of.

'Earlier in the year I came across reports of rising mountain rescue call-outs on Yr Wyddfa, and was curious to understand

Left: Jack Roscoe, the Northern Introvert, at Llanberis team base. Opposite, above and over page: Screenshots from the YouTube film, featuring Jack with Jurgen Dissmann and Kathryn Cummings (Llanberis MRT) and the inspiration for our header graphics © Northern Introvert.

why. I found that there was already some excellent work being done in more traditional media to highlight the role of mountain rescue teams, but I felt there was an opportunity to approach the subject differently on YouTube, in a more relaxed, informal way to help present the subject to a new audience.

'From the outset, the aim of the collaboration was to share simple, practical advice as widely as possible, and in particular to reach younger audiences who may not engage with more conventional forms of outreach.'

We were still a little nervous about the potential loss of control in enabling someone else to create and own content which was our work and our brand, but Jack was an absolute pleasure to deal with. Following some early conversations, we agreed editing input over the final content, enabling us to discuss and potentially remove anything which caused us concern. We did indeed later make some adjustments and worked with Jack to get the final content absolutely right for everyone.

## FILMING THE CONTENT

The next step was to arrange for Jack to accompany Llanberis team chairman, Jurgen Dissmann, and press officer Kathryn Cummings, on a walk up Yr Wyddfa in late October. The day in question had a predicted storm due to hit in the afternoon, so a great opportunity to talk about the importance of researching the weather conditions along the planned route.

The filming was simple – Jack had a



handheld camera and simply chatted conversationally to Jurgen as they made the climb. The result is incredibly relaxed and watchable, and occasionally other walkers making the ascent chipped in. Very helpfully, about three-quarters of the way up, the predicted storm began to make its presence known, so the decision was made to turn back without ascending to the summit. This was a fantastic live example of preparedness and dynamic decision making.

At this point, the obvious question arose from Jack: 'Why aren't you telling the other people continuing to climb, to turn back?' Jurgen's response was simple: 'It's not for us to tell people what to do.'

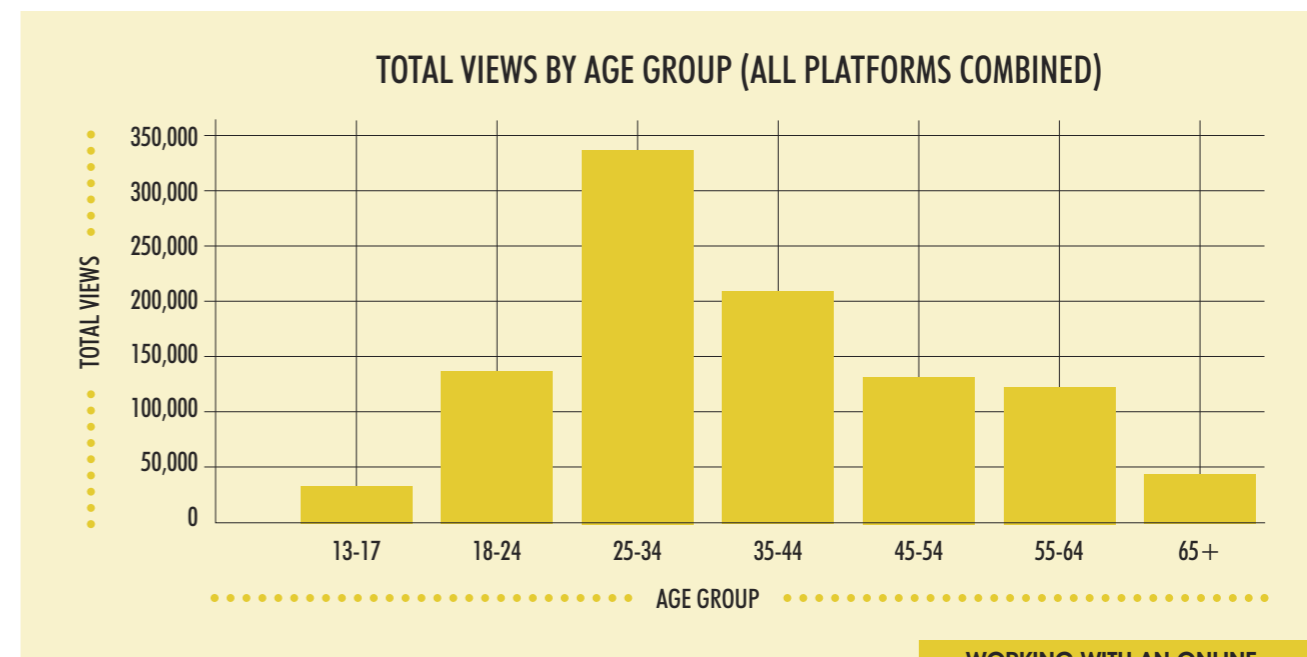
The descent, as the wind grew and temperature and visibility dropped, really made the point about how quickly weather conditions can change, without us having to say a thing.

## THE RESULTS

The end result was a 40-minute long-form video on YouTube showing Jack and Jurgen, with Kathryn, chatting on the walk. This has been viewed almost 77,000 times. We also shared a link to our own safety and information videos on the NWMRA website, and Jack's content helped to drive traffic to our own platforms.

A series of five shorts were also produced from the long content, for YouTube (303.8k views), Instagram (217.9k views), Facebook (299.5k views), and TikTok (130.3k views). The chart below shows reach by age. We had succeeded in reaching audiences we would not have been able to engage via our own platforms.

In addition to reach, sentiment was hugely positive. Jack's analytics, shared with us a few weeks after the content went live, showed the long-form video had a 99.6% like to dislike ratio – higher than Jack's



WORKING WITH AN ONLINE INFLUENCER CONTINUED

channel average of 98.3%. And the content also got some great conversations going, which got people thinking and talking and learning about the issues.

We learnt some interesting things. The most controversial piece of content was a short which looked at the cairns people construct on Yr Wyddfa as they walk the route. Jurgen was quite clear that this was not a good or useful thing to do. People reacted less positively to this — it was very clear that people do not like being told what to do or not to do.

This piece of learning has helped to inform the key messages and narratives we put together around other issues. Our approach is always to inform and influence decision making, but not to direct it, and this is often better received. Interestingly, in the longer-form content, where context and rationale for why the cairns aren't helpful is included, this more negative response does not occur.

But what was Jack's view?

'From my perspective, the response to the project was overwhelmingly positive. The YouTube audience was very receptive and frequently commented on how approachable and relaxed the format felt, while the accompanying short-form videos reached large numbers of viewers across multiple social media platforms.'

'Overall, I'm confident the collaboration helped a significant number of people better understand how to prepare themselves for Yr Wyddfa, and hopefully for many other outdoor adventures too.'

### WOULD WE RECOMMEND THIS TYPE OF VENTURE TO OTHER TEAMS?

It was a labour-intensive process — and the commitment from Jurgen and Kathryn cannot be overstated. Add to that the research time ahead of the filming, the conversations and work post-filming, and the monitoring of comment and sentiment after go-live, it all took valuable time. However, we felt the end result justified the effort involved.

It's also important to recognise risk. We were hugely lucky to have someone as professional and accommodating as Jack to work with, but the motivation for an online influencer or content creator to focus on your team is important. The potential to lose control of the narrative and messaging are real and need to be assessed and then managed.

The other great thing about this venture was that it was a collaboration not just with an online content creator, but within our own structures. Kathryn's team at Llanberis are one of nine in the North Wales region, and we wanted the messaging in the video to be generic — as Jack says — something to inform all outdoor adventures, at any location. This benefits not just Llanberis, but all teams in North Wales, and across MREW. It was also a great example of how regional coordination can support and benefit individual teams.

I think another of our communications challenges is the fact that we all do brilliant work, but often in silos. Together we can have a louder voice, greater reach and more resounding results. I think the final words must sit with Kathryn.

'Working with Jack gave us a valuable opportunity to take our safety messaging beyond our usual channels and reach an audience we don't always connect with through traditional communications. While we continue to see fantastic engagement across our own social media platforms, we also recognise that different audiences consume information in very different ways.'

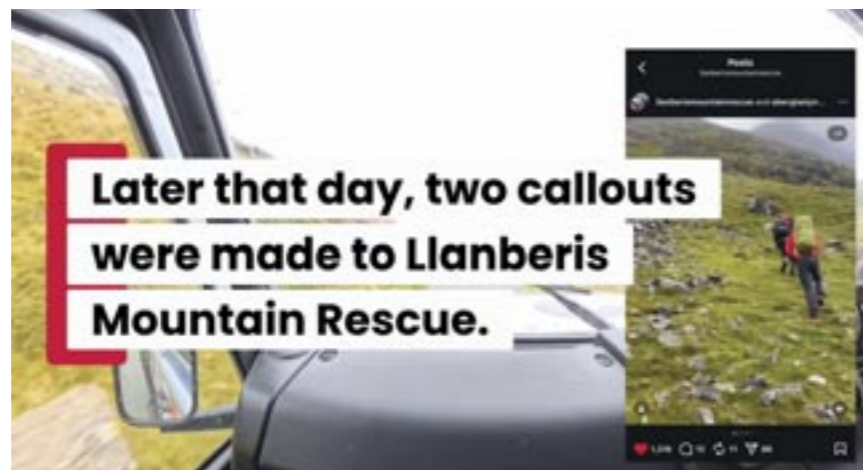
'By collaborating with a creator who already has the trust and attention of a large online following, we've been able to place vital safety messages directly in front of people who may not actively follow Mountain Rescue content but are inspired by adventure, exploration and the outdoors.'

'In an increasingly digital world, where

social media and online platforms play a huge role in how people plan days out and assess risk, it's important we continue to evolve how and where we communicate. Using alternative platforms doesn't replace our existing channels — it strengthens them by broadening our reach and reinforcing key messages in new spaces.'

'We'd encourage other teams to explore different and creative ways of engaging with their audiences, whether that's through collaborations, new platforms or innovative content. Reaching people before they set foot on the hill can make a real difference, and adapting our communications is an important part of this process.'

If anyone is thinking of undertaking a collaboration like this in the future and we can help by sharing our learning and experience, please do get in touch via [jacqui.hanson@nwmra.org](mailto:jacqui.hanson@nwmra.org). And be sure to check out the YouTube video on [youtu.be/wlwsRXwXc-8](https://youtu.be/wlwsRXwXc-8)



THE NORTH FACE OF BEN NEVIS, SCOTLAND  
PHOTOGRAPHY: HAMISH FROST

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## Training together, talking to each other and sharing ideas across borders...

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

It's great to see and hear about the numerous multi-team and statutory agency collaboration training that has been happening over recent months. This can only strengthen capabilities and attitudes of all parties when that major incident occurs. More teams (and regions) appear to be working together and sharing ideas across all topic areas.



Above: Crowden 2025 © Phil Ridley/Matt Field.

The recent Hill Party Leader course was held in the Peak District, with some new presentations and minor adjustment to scenarios. Thank you to all who participated. The February 2026 course will see a return to the PGL Boreatton Park near Shrewsbury. There will be a full course review over the coming months to check and maintain the course's credibility and allow adaptation to the evolving needs and ethos of teams.

Slightly longer than originally envisaged, but the revised Rope Rescue Guidelines were approved at November's training meeting and have now been issued to all teams. Thanks to Chris Cookson (MREW Rope Lead) and the working group (from across all MREW regions) who have carried out a thorough review. See Chris's article for more information (page 29).

A number of new projects are now underway. These include looking at a framework guidance document for technical

ropework and what record-keeping options would be beneficial for such a diverse and core topic across MREW.

Following the success of last year's rope rescue webinar, Chris kindly volunteered to host another one in early December. Again, the interest from MREW members was greater than last year, so thank you to Chris and all who contributed. There were some great topics discussed — see Chris's report opposite.

Keeping with (hopefully) standardising a lot of our technical rope rescue progress, Paul Edisbury (PDMRO Rope Lead) is arranging an event 16-17 May 2026 at the JCB site in Staffordshire. The idea is to offer teams the opportunity to collaborate, learn and use the practical sessions as CPD. It also allows teams to increase their awareness of various techniques and procedures used to conduct efficient, effective rescues in a safe, controlled environment. More awareness,

sharing ideas and learning from each other. While MRTs operate in slightly different geographical locations, the core principles, procedures, equipment and expectations will be similar. What better way to showcase to each other what teams do?

### LEADERSHIP

In the main, the majority of nationally-offered training to date has been about hill party leading. There is a growing demand for the softer leadership skills to be considered. I'm not sure if this is the correct phrase, but it's probably more of 'management leadership.'

One of the questions I have recently been asked is: 'What does MREW offer teams in way of core organisation or guidance in regard to leadership skills such as communication, vision, inspiration, motivation and fostering cultural, ethical decision making to achieve team goals.'

All valid as our society evolves. As teams are individual entities, they take ownership for their own management responsibilities. MREW can assist with guidance on soft-skill operational leadership which can be incorporated into some specific training, which is being considered initially and aimed at team leaderships.

### WELLBEING

As Mike Park notes in his piece (page 6), wellbeing is another evolving topic which hopefully will be introduced to all training schedules in some form. Although in its infancy, this process has commenced and it is my intention to work closely with wellbeing and training officers to devise suitable guidance.

### CALENDAR 2026

The intention to put training course dates out as early as possible is something I hope is working for members. On page 28, we've outlined some of the currently scheduled events for national and regional delivery. Regional training officers and team leaders should already be aware of these, but please don't hesitate to contact me for further info if required.

Please don't hesitate to email with any questions, queries or suggestions for training opportunities via [trainingofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:trainingofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk)



© Henry Paisey.

## MREW Rope Rescue Webinar 2025

**CHRIS COOKSON** MREW ROPE RESCUE LEAD

The idea of the webinar was to encourage the sharing of any rope rescue projects teams have been working on, and the challenges involved — whilst also making sure we're not too insular and keep an eye on what's going on in the wider world. I hope the evening was an opportunity to share information, learn and be inspired, perhaps, to work on your own projects and challenges — hopefully with a view to sharing at a similar event in the future! Thank you for the feedback from the last webinar, which was used to shape this 2025 event. Please keep that feedback coming, I really appreciate it.



© Edale MRT.

### THE PROGRAMME COMPRISED THREE PRESENTATIONS:

**Technical Skills Development: Some Lessons from 35 Years of Training:** Vernon Smith (ISAR3), outlined the challenges of technical skills development and a few of the common problems. He explained some of the theory of learning and its use in formulating a strategy, understanding the need and how to follow up!

**CRAG 24:** Simon and Becky (Edale MRT), talked us through the team's technical rope rescue system, designed to address the challenge of balancing the demands of 150+ call-outs per year with the need for an effective, safe system for those few incidents that require high-angle rescue.

**Learning Lessons from a 'Near Miss':** Richard Newhouse (SARA) described a rockfall during a team rope training exercise last summer. No one was hit or injured, but looking into how this happened has led to a rich set of actions, many of which apply beyond technical rescue alone.

Vernon kicked us off, sharing his vast knowledge of training technical rope rescue over many years. His impressive presentation style kept us engaged whilst covering a large number of pertinent topics. If you signed up for the follow-up emails, by scanning the QR code at the end of his presentation, you'll have since received a number of emails designed to reinforce what he presented, as well as other offers and information. If you didn't sign up on the day, it might not be too late. Head to [isar3.com/national/conference/signup](http://isar3.com/national/conference/signup) or try scanning that QR code.

After a short break, Simon and Becky presented CRAG 24 system. Clearly a huge amount of work has gone into this project, and it wasn't possible to cover everything in detail or answer everyone's questions in just 30 minutes. They described the drivers and goals, and provided a brief tour of the

system — including a brief insight into the development and validation of the team's innovative ground anchor system — their learning environment and competency framework.

Edale team are happy to share what they've done with other teams, be that validation, data, the Crag Digital platform (which is very easy to customise), or something else covered in the presentation. They are also happy to host team visits, to show how their approach works. You can contact Simon via email at [crag@edalemrt.co.uk](mailto:crag@edalemrt.co.uk).

And so to the final presentation. We don't seek out near misses but, when they happen, they're a golden opportunity for learning: all the ingredients for an accident, but without the accident.

In the event of a near miss, we should ask ourselves: 'Were we good? Or were we

lucky?' It's never really that black and white, though, is it? Usually, it's a combination of both: things that went well that we should reinforce, and some element of luck, from where we can learn and improve. And sharing the learning is key to preventing near misses and accidents happening to others in the future.

Principle Two in the 'five principles of human performance' is 'Blame fixes nothing'. In fact, it **prevents** learning, and Principle Three is 'Learning and improving is vital'. So, let's focus on learning and improving — as Richard did in this presentation.

I'd like to commend Richard — and SARA — for their courage, openness and maturity in presenting on this topic, for all our benefit. Rockfall is perhaps the biggest hazard we face in rope rescue, and the hardest to mitigate against or put in controls for.

I'd like to extend a big 'thank you' to Vernon, Simon, Becky and Richard for presenting, and all the work that goes on in the background to make that happen. Thank you also to Mark Lewis, MREW ICT Officer, for his technical assistance. Finally, another big 'thank you' to everyone who attended. I hope you found it worthwhile.

If you registered for the event, you should have received an email with a link to the recording. If you are registered with Moodle, you can also find it there. (See directions on how to register on page 5). If you have any feedback or suggestions for future events, or any general rope rescue-related comments, drop me an email via [roperescuelead@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:roperescuelead@mountain.rescue.org.uk).

### THE FIVE PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN PERFORMANCE:

1. People make mistakes
2. Blame fixes nothing
3. Learning and improving are vital
4. Context drives behaviour
5. How you respond to failure matters.

From 'The 5 Principles of Human Performance' by Todd E Conklin. ISBN: 9781794639140.

# TRAINING CALENDAR 2026

(AT TIME OF PUBLICATION – MORE DATES TO FOLLOW)



**CENTRE FOR SEARCH RESEARCH INITIAL RESPONSE COURSE: 1 MARCH**

**FPE COURSE (SAR PRODUCTS): OLPHAM MRT 11 JANUARY**

**FPE COURSE (SAR PRODUCTS): MPSRO & PDMRO 8 FEBRUARY**

**FPE COURSE (SAR PRODUCTS): SWSARA 18 MARCH**

**FPE COURSE (SAR PRODUCTS): LPSAMRA 19 APRIL**

## JANUARY

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
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	8

## FEBRUARY

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
26	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	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8

## MARCH

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
23	24	25	26	27	28	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

## APRIL

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
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	8	9	10

**WINTER FUNDAMENTALS: AVIEMORE 12-14 JANUARY**

**WINTER FUNDAMENTALS: AVIEMORE 9-11 FEBRUARY**

**MREW SMALL HILL PARTY LEADER COURSE: P&L BOREATTON PARK, SHREWSBURY 20-22 FEBRUARY**

**ROPE RESCUE OPERATOR INSTRUCTOR (LYON) COURSE: 4-DAY SPLIT COURSE: TEBAY 17-18 & 24-25 JANUARY**

**ROPE RESCUE ELI (EXCHANGE LEARNING AND IMPROVING): JCB 16 MAY**

**FPE COURSE (SAR PRODUCTS): PDMRO 14 JUNE**

## MAY

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
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## JULY

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31	1	2	3	4	5	6

**FPE COURSE (SAR PRODUCTS): NESRA 20 SEPTEMBER**

**FPE COURSE (SAR PRODUCTS): MPSRO 4 OCTOBER**

**FPE COURSE (SAR PRODUCTS): SARA/ASSAR 15 NOVEMBER**

## SEPTEMBER

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## OCTOBER

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## NOVEMBER

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## DECEMBER

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28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10

**SEARCH FIELD SKILLS (SFS): CAERPHILLY 19-21 SEPTEMBER**

**PDMRO FOUNDATION COURSE 9-11 OCTOBER**

**SEARCH PLANNING MANAGEMENT (SPM1) TBC  
SEARCH PLANNING MANAGEMENT (SPM1 REFRESHER) TBC  
SEARCH PLANNING MANAGEMENT (SPM2) TBC**

**OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:  
TEAM LEADER DAY: EDVALE BASE 14 MARCH  
ROPE RESCUE JOINT TRAINING EVENT: JCB STAFFORDSHIRE 16-17 MAY  
PRE HOSPITAL TRAUMA LIFE SUPPORT AND MEDIA LEVEL 1 & 2 TBC**

## Rope Rescue Guidelines Review

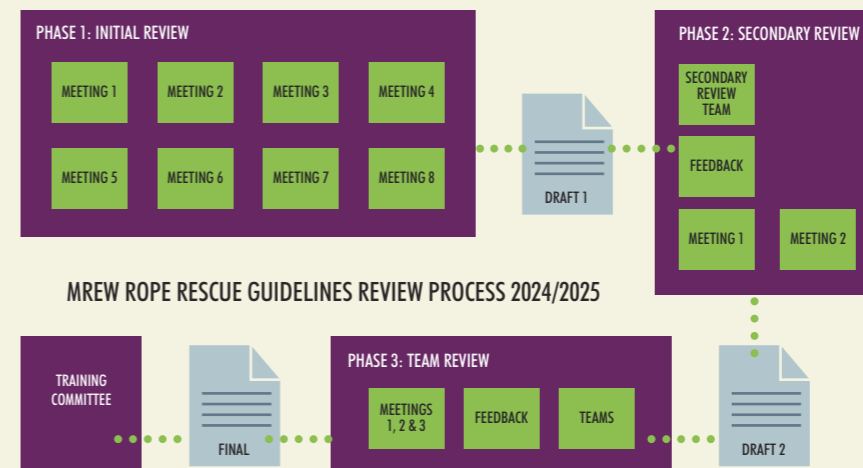
**CHRIS COOKSON MREW ROPE RESCUE LEAD**

The MREW Rope Rescue Guidelines are now in their third edition (over 10+ years) and a lot of people have had an input into shaping how they look today. Even more people, I'm led to believe, have used them and found them useful. Not only for guiding their own internal set-up and practices, but also for engaging with external agencies, where they can be useful for helping to build trust in our capability and competence. To stay current and well suited for the purpose they are intended to serve, they need to be reviewed on a regular basis.

The current five-year review period seems sensible, given the work involved in a review and the pace of change within the rope rescue world. We are talking largely principles here and not specific pieces of equipment so, although kit can change substantially in that time period, the principles of how that kit works and is used hasn't changed much. That said, if something happens within that five-year period that impacts on the guidelines, they can be reviewed sooner. Nothing is fixed in stone.

At the start of this review, the review team set out a list of aims or success factors. I'll leave it to you to judge whether we've met those aims or not. We'd like to think we have.

- Being fit for purpose without being prescriptive
- Accommodate innovation
- Framework of support for teams
- Good roll-out
- Include a definition of rope rescue and associated terms
- Identify good practice and principles, ideally evidence based
- Clean, concise language — plain English
- Keep simple
- Follow a good process, including asking for feedback from teams.



The review process did take longer than anticipated to complete (~18 months). This was partly due to a desire to include all regions. We ran the review via online meetings, to avoid travel time and cost, and there were lengthy and detailed discussions on tricky topics. But it has proved to be worthwhile. All the regions engaged with the process to a greater or lesser extent, and I would like to thank them for their involvement.

I need to thank the review team for the considerable amount of time they put into the venture, and for being so willing to share their knowledge, skills, experience and expertise. I certainly learnt a lot during the process and, on several occasions, had to question my understanding and beliefs on certain topics. One of the hardest parts of the review, if not the hardest, was to put down in words what we intended to say, so that it was clear and concise and didn't lend itself to being used or interpreted in an unintended way. I'd also like to thank the secondary review team and the teams for their feedback. When you're so close to something for such a long time, it can be difficult to see the wood for the trees. I don't think we would have ended up with such a well-rounded document, without that feedback, so 'thank you'. Thank you also to Phil Ridley for his continued support.

Version 3.12 of the MREW Rope Rescue Guidelines was approved at the MREW Training meeting on Saturday 15 November. A copy can be found in the 'Member Guidelines' area of the Training section on Moodle — good reason to register with our Moodle platform, if you've not already done so. To register, go to [tiny.cc/Moodle4MR](https://tiny.cc/Moodle4MR) and fill in the form using a team email address (not role-specific). I'd welcome your feedback on the process, the document itself, or in fact, anything else rope rescue related.

Thank you for your attention and reading this far — any further enquiries, feel free to email me via [roperescuelead@mountain.rescue.org.uk](mailto:roperescuelead@mountain.rescue.org.uk) ☺

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# Breaking Boundaries: Women in technical rope rescue

**SARAH LEGGETT** CALDER VALLEY SRT

It was early March 2025, when an interesting-looking advertisement popped up on my social media account: 'Breaking Boundaries – empowering women in technical rope rescue through rope rescue instructor development.' A company down in Devon was offering the opportunity for women involved in emergency services, to come and have a go at rope rescue for a weekend, with the potential to return for a further eighteen days' training.

I'd always been into climbing and felt my rope skills weren't too shabby, and had gravitated towards the rope section of my team since joining three years previously. This new rope rescue initiative felt like the perfect opportunity to learn and become more skilled within my team, while training alongside a group of like-minded women.

But first, I had to write an application and convince the family that spending the best part of a month, over the next six months, down in Devon, was a fantastic idea. I think I said, 'I probably won't get selected anyway!'

The competition was tough. A hundred and fifty applications received, with only twelve places available. Understandably, many other women were attracted to the prospect of following the Rescue 3 pathway from Rope Rescue Operator (RRO) to Rope Rescue Operator Instructor (RROI), taking in Rope Rescue Technician (RRT) on the way, all while basking in the Devon sunshine (not

actually that sunny, as we would find out later, while rigging in horizontal rain under the Tamar Bridge).

In May, the newly-selected group of Breaking Boundaries women met for the first time at ISAR3 in Plymouth. It turned out there were eighteen of us as Vernon couldn't choose just twelve. The weekend was an introduction to the personal and team skills we would need for the RRO course and also gave us all the opportunity to get to know one another. It was a brilliantly fun weekend and we all learnt loads. If this was Breaking Boundaries, then sign me up! I came away feeling I hadn't laughed so much in a very long time and couldn't wait to return for a whole week of RRO training.

The RRO is the foundation for creating competent rope team members. It incorporates the many skills that are needed to carry out an effective rescue while keeping yourself, your team and the casualty safe. It includes elements such as rope

ascending and descending using a main and safety line, setting up and running a twin-tension rope system, understanding forces and safety factors and using mechanical advantage, among many others. At this stage, it is important that the basics are done well and as Vern would say, 'Very good, now do it again,' illustrating that repetition and keeping it simple are key to embedding these skills.

As the summer progressed, we moved from RRO to RRT and onto some interesting industrial structures. Rigging in an unfamiliar environment adds another element of difficulty to the process, but is valuable practice for live situations. After a day at Plymouth docks, dangling just above the waterline, we progressed to a reservoir water tower where, frustratingly, none of the anchor points were in the correct orientations for the rescue scenarios we needed to perform. This led to imaginative solutions and the utilisation of redirects, forward tensioning and fixed high directionals. This, along with setting up drop-loop and highline systems under the Tamar Bridge were probably the most memorable days of the programme.

On to October and November. Things are starting to look much more serious as we progress onto the RROI training and assessment. I don't think any of us had anticipated the considerable commitment and amount of work involved in preparing for the course and assessment. Multiple hours were spent refining our practical skills with anyone willing to help, and topping up the knowledge we'd need to get us through, alongside producing a teaching folder,

complete with lesson plans and risk assessments. Reminiscent of my teacher training, in the late-1990s, it was enough to bring me out in a cold sweat!

I am very happy to say seventeen Breaking Boundaries women are now Rescue 3 RROI qualified. This includes six members of mountain and lowland rescue teams, specifically representing Calder Valley, Tavistock, Avon and Somerset, Aberdyfi, West Cornwall and Hampshire. Every woman who took part in the initiative reported a positive experience. The intensity of the programme brought the group together in a truly incredible way. Not only were new professional networks established, lifelong friendships were formed. The skills and knowledge gained by the group in a mutually supportive environment have not only enhanced their personal capabilities, but have also made them valuable assets within their teams, contributing to the overall strength and effectiveness of rescue operations.

This is not the end of the Breaking Boundaries story. Technical rope rescue is a sector where women are underrepresented. The initiative seeks to adjust the balance by building a diverse and supportive rope rescue community, where women have equal access to training, representation and leadership. Recognising that the structure and delivery of rope training can greatly influence who feels able to participate, the ISAR3 delivery team redesigned the way their technical rope rescue training is delivered, deliberately moving away from a traditional, performance-based model to a more balanced 'participation and repetition' model. The aim is to put building learner confidence at the centre of the delivery, making it more accessible, inclusive and less elitist.

In 2026, an additional twenty-four women will be able to participate in the Breaking Boundaries programme. ISAR3's commitment extends beyond the programme itself and a modular programme is being developed for mountain and lowland rescue, to allow the women instructors to lead mixed group training. For further information you are encouraged to visit the ISAR3 Facebook page (links opposite).

'This was never simply about producing a group of R3 RROs,' says Vernon Smith. 'Breaking Boundaries was designed to be far more ambitious and impactful.'

The initiative would not have been possible without the generous support of several companies and organisations throughout the year. Special thanks go to Vernon and his team at ISAR3 for being the home and sponsor of Breaking Boundaries and proactively delivering change and investing so much in the programme. Also to Jen and Clive, whose initial conversation laid the foundation for the programme, and for the provision of essential equipment by Sovos, who supplied helmets, and Mechanix, who donated gloves. Appreciation is also extended to I am Hutch for designing the initiative's logo (right), SAR Street Stores for providing T-shirts, and Rescue3 for their ongoing involvement and support. Their collective contributions have been instrumental in fostering the professional growth of women in technical rescue. ☘



## REFLECTIONS ON THE EXPERIENCE

**Heather (Dartmoor SRT) Tavistock:** Being part of the Breaking Boundaries initiative has been a real milestone in my mountain rescue journey. It has strengthened not only my technical skills, but also my confidence to step into an instructional role, something I never imagined when I first joined the team. The Rescue 3 Rope Rescue Operator Instructor course has given me new tools to help deliver safe, consistent and effective training, and I'm excited to bring that back to our operational work on the hill. I'm especially motivated to help create a more inclusive training environment where different perspectives are welcomed and encouraged. I hope that stepping forward as one of the first female Rope Instructors in our team will inspire more women to get involved in the technical side of rescue and see these roles as fully accessible. I look forward to putting these skills into practice and helping strengthen both our team and the wider MREW community.

**Weronika (Aberdyfi MRT):** Taking part in the Breaking Boundaries initiative was a hugely positive experience. It was powerful to train in an environment built on mutual support rather than competitiveness. Working alongside seventeen women with a shared purpose was genuinely inspiring. I'm eager to apply these skills within the team, and to continue developing my technical abilities – and hope to support future Breaking Boundaries cohorts of women entering technical rescue roles.

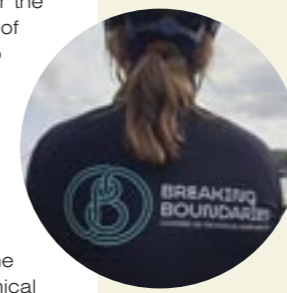
**Sophy (Hampshire SAR):** Being part of this programme has been hugely impactful for me, both personally and as a member of Lowland Rescue. What stood out most was being surrounded by an incredible group of women with such a wealth of experience, who were so open in sharing their knowledge and encouraging everyone to keep trying – especially when things felt difficult. In moments of self-doubt or lack of confidence, there was always someone there offering support, reassurance and belief, and that collective encouragement has been the most powerful part of the programme for me. I see this as just the beginning. Over the coming months and years, I'm keen to continue developing my skills and, most importantly, share what I've learned with my rope team at Hampshire Search and Rescue.

**Meg (Avon & Somerset SAR):** I feel incredibly fortunate to have been able to participate in the Breaking Boundaries programme. The support and enthusiasm all the women showed whilst learning, motivating and inspiring confidence in each other, was invaluable. I am also incredibly grateful for the support and encouragement from my team, and hope to start paying forward the skills and knowledge I've developed through Breaking Boundaries to support the development of rope rescue within ASSAR – and hopefully the wider MREW community.

**Sarah (Calder Valley SRT):** Participating in the programme has been a truly powerful journey. The opportunity to meet and collaborate with a group of such inspiring women, with their varied backgrounds and array of knowledge, has been incredibly encouraging and I am committed to carrying this positive momentum forward. I realise this is just the start of the journey and that there is so much more to learn. I am looking for opportunities to work together with experienced RROIs to develop these skills further and work towards increasing consistency and access to RRO courses within MREW.

**Saffa (West Cornwall SRT):** This opportunity wouldn't have been possible for me without being part of the Breaking Boundaries initiative. It's given me the chance to grow and strengthen the skills I use in my search and rescue role. I'm very aware of how few women are represented in search and rescue, and it's incredibly rewarding to help lead by example for any women who may be considering joining. I'm excited to share my skills in both a volunteer and professional capacity.

**Opposite:** Sarah Leggett, author of the article. **Top:** Left to right: Weronika, Sarah, Meg, Sophy, Saffa and Heather. **Left:** The Breaking Boundaries T-shirt, modelled by Saffa. Images supplied by Sarah Leggett.



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**Medical/Trauma Courses:**

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**Instructor Courses:**

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**SATURDAY 16 MAY 2026**  
**NORTH YORKSHIRE**  
10.00 AM — 4.00 PM

Your team is invited to send a team of FIVE to take part in an RRMT CPD Day, to share ideas aimed at enhancing your team's casualty care

**The Idea:**

- The meeting of peers to develop good practice through shared experience
- Scenario-based learning with teams demonstrating their RRMT skills, practices and equipment
- Shared problem solving
- 'Critical Friend' feedback
- An opportunity to meet colleagues from different teams and establish links.

**Who is it for?**

- RRMT Certificate holders
- Team Medical Officers

**To sign up or find out more:**

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Expressions of interest for planning ASAP. Firm bids by 1 May 2026.

# news round

OCTOBER > JANUARY



## OCTOBER: MOUNTAIN, CAVE AND LOWLAND TEAMS IN JOINT TRAINING IN THE SOUTH WEST

At the end of October, small teams from SARA and ASSAR joined colleagues from BCRC and Lowland Rescue for a rope rescue training day. The event was run by Mike Clayton from the Midlands Cave Rescue Organisation, and held at Arco Professional Safety Services in Stafford. **Mark Cawardine** reports.

This amazing venue offered a variety of industrial installations, both indoors and outside, with some awkward features and numerous rated anchors. Whilst none of the teams plan to execute industrial rescues, such facilities simplify some elements (anchor construction, loose rock etc), to enable a focus on rope rigging and moving a casualty around.

Mike set some challenging scenarios for the two teams — mixed from the various organisations — so they had to rescue some long-suffering casualty dummies from a vertical shaft and a tower, and move them horizontally through a high window. Paul Taylor from Gloucestershire Cave Rescue Group introduced everyone to their new Petzl Nest stretcher.

It was a great opportunity to share and explore ideas, and work with colleagues new and familiar. The 'surface' team members tended to use twin ropes for everything, whereas the cavers were very happy to 'SRT' themselves up and down a single line, and use twin ropes for moving the casualty. There was a lot of experience in the room — industrial, mountaineering and rescue — and it was great to share ideas and for many people to try new things in a controlled environment. Many thanks to Mike and Arco for hosting the day.

This exercise is one of a number of multi-team events organised throughout the year by SWERA across various disciplines. As was mentioned in the last edition of MR Magazine, an earlier rope rescue event — a

long-standing annual, coordinated by Clive Bush, from Prusik Rescue and ASSAR, brought together multiple agencies, including several volunteer SAR teams, Fire, Coastguard and HART Ambulance Services. This collaboration provides valuable opportunities to share expertise and refine joint-working practices in realistic rescue scenarios.

In a similar spirit, SWERA annually books the Cardiff White Water Centre for a Swift Water Rescue training afternoon, which runs into the hours of darkness. This unique facility allows member teams to hone their skills in challenging, fast-moving water conditions that simulate the realities of flood operations. Several Casualty Care workshops take place each year at Gloucester Fire Services 'SkillZONE' centre in Gloucester, where rescuers can tackle complex casualty care scenarios in a controlled environment — including some in simulated night-time. Adding to the calendar, the region hosts an annual Land Search Skills Day, where both surface and underground rescue teams join forces for simulated searches and extractions, developing coordinated responses to challenging rescue situations.

At the heart of all these activities lies a shared commitment to interoperability, collaboration, and professional growth. By sharing skills, ideas and experiences — and by getting to know colleagues from across the region — teams continue to raise the bar in the interests of the casualty. 🗨️



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Far left: Carrying out welfare checks and bringing evacuees to dry ground. Left: Multi-agency flood training at Cardiff White Water on in November. Images supplied by Richard Newhouse/SARA.

### NOVEMBER: SARA IN MONMOUTH FOR THE STORM CLAUDIA FLOODS: A TIMELY REMINDER OF HOW TRAINING TRANSLATES INTO REAL-TIME PRACTICE

Friday 14 November began with severe weather warnings in place for much of Wales and the West of England. It also coincided with the first of two annual multi-agency flood rescue training days at Cardiff White Water Centre (CIWW), organised by Avon and Somerset LRF. **Richard Newhouse** reports.

To go or not to go? A small team from SARA stuck with the decision to go and spent the morning in rescue scenarios from a vehicle and various pretend buildings, working with colleagues from ASSAR and various teams from Category 1 responders including HM Coastguard. Even more than in previous years, we felt that there was a lot of mutual respect between the various agencies, and the volunteer teams were seen as equals ('unpaid professionals'). Everyone was keeping an ear to the ground for flood deployments. Around 12.30pm, SARA was tasked, with three flood teams requested. The team at CIWW were advised to finish the session there, and it was slightly curtailed by the organisers, so that everyone could get ready for later possible deployments.

During the afternoon, SARA teams were on standby at forward bases: two boat-based flood teams in Monmouth and a third at the main fire station in Newport. Longtown MRT also had a team in Monmouth, but it was mainly the Fire Service and Coastguard that were deployed to tasks, further up the River Monnow around Skenfrith.

After a few hours, the SARA and Longtown teams were redeployed to Abergavenny, where the River Usk had overtopped its banks. One of the two SARA teams in Abergavenny was sent to what sounded like a straightforward task, but found themselves

rescuing four people from a tractor. It was becoming submerged and was in an awkward narrow lane, which had become a fast-flowing stream, on the far side of a railway bridge. That rescue made all the training with sleds on tethers pay off!

Around 8.00pm we organised a crew rotation from and back to home. By then, just getting to Abergavenny was difficult due to flooded roads — the A40 was closed west of Raglan — but the levels had dropped and perseverance in a 4x4 paid off. One of the main efforts, at around 10.00pm, was to do justice to the huge volume of pizza which the Fire Service had generously provided.

At 11.00pm, we were directly back to Monmouth, to the fire station. A new boat team, which had arrived as a relief, was quickly tasked to house evacuations in an area on the other side of Monmouth, river left of the Monnow, which regularly floods. Whilst they were there, the water rose rapidly — dry tarmac quickly became knee-to-thigh deep, with water flowing directly across the road. A car that had been fifteen metres away from the waterline on their arrival was flooded up to the top of its roof when they left. The SARA boat was deployed into fast-flowing water down a narrow lane. However, access was blocked due to sharp metal fence panels that had been damaged and displaced from their original positions, making it unsafe to proceed.

The area right of the Monnow, known as 'Overmonnow', often floods as small streams back up when they are unable to discharge into the main river — particularly the aptly-named Watery Lane. We expected to be deployed to this area from our previous experiences. The team from Newport arrived and were tasked to go and monitor Watery Lane and the cottage hospital behind the fire station. At this stage, there was still no sense of emergency, and the fire service produced yet more pizza and a set of very large cakes. But on the river gauge, we could see that the record-breaking peak that had passed Skenfrith was coming downstream. And then it all kicked off...

Around 1.00am, water started to flow along the road outside the fire station. There was a sudden decision to evacuate the Fire Station before the area flooded, and to relocate Fire HQ to the centre of Monmouth, which is uphill. The SARA members in the station at that time moved their own cars and the SARA vehicles to high ground, and set about launching a boat on the road. Unfortunately, the team members who were doing welfare checks didn't get that opportunity, and a couple had their cars completely ruined by the floodwater. Around this time, we heard via Sarcall that a major incident had been called.

While Fire HQ moved, Monmouth was effectively cut in half by the river. We lost our co-location (that good JESIP principle) with

their Control, so command and control disappeared for a while. The fire engine sitting in the steadily-filling street at 1.30am, with sirens on full blast, woke everyone up and left little doubt about the urgency.

Meanwhile, the left bank of the Monnow, on the town side, was overtopped along about 100 metres and tons of water flowed into the bottom of town. At street level in Monmouth, there are many shops with flats above, and panicky phone calls came from those trapped upstairs in a pub and from the late-night shelf-stackers in Waitrose.

Back on river right, the mobile home park next to the river was in trouble. The river almost overtopped its protective wall — thankfully it held, but water was bubbling up through the lawn having come under the wall, and it was filling up rapidly: fifteen people to evacuate from there pronto, plus various others. The big raft, which can take eight people and is sometimes regarded as a 'white elephant', suddenly came into its own.

On the road were a number of cars, notably a lovely Aston Martin Vantage. It was on dry tarmac when we'd moved our cars. Three hours later, motoring past in our boat, there were two inches of roof visible. SARA and Fire worked together to get an elderly lady out of her house when she was floating in her living room. We needed to keep her warm whilst being gently manoeuvred into a fire service boat. It turned out that she was the nan of one of the firefighters.

At the water's edge (some traffic lights), a group of police officers was co-opted to help get evacuees from boats and rafts into ambulances or walked along the road to the Premier Inn. On slightly higher ground, this became an impromptu evacuee holding area. A SARA team had spoken to the hotel manager earlier in the evening, whilst doing

door-to-door, asking whether he could accommodate evacuees if necessary. The team medical officer and two RRMTs (easily identifiable with their tabards), worked there through the night, processing close to a hundred evacuees before most were moved on in minibuses to temporary accommodation provided by the council.

At the same time, the SARA flood team on river left were now in the right place to link up with Fire HQ, and re-establish co-location of Control. One SARA team was sent with Fire down the high street (Monnow Street) into the area of flash flooding. One of the main tasks there was to enter a badly flooded pet shop located in a shopping alley which had become a main water channel. With keys provided by the owners, they tried to save as many animals as possible. The situation there was not great, but the crew did what they could and the owners were profoundly grateful. There were various isolated high-hazard features in the hydrology of the alley where the shop was situated, memorably the smashed sliding doors of the supermarket acting as a nasty-looking broken glass-edged strainer, and a street planter which had got wedged in an alley and formed a syphon holding back a good metre height of water.

One of the most significant tasks was to advise not to evacuate the hospital's 29 elderly patients and, at 3.00am, there was a 'critical incident' with demands for their evacuation. The SARA teams had better situational awareness than the responders at the hospital, having been travelling around and seen how perilous a journey that would involve. Since the water had stopped rising, they were advised to stay put and that proved to be sound. Another good JESIP principle at work.

A last, really dramatic turn came just before 5.00am, when a chap on his way to start an early-morning shift drove past a series of flood vehicles, straight into the flooded road, and past two rescue teams ('He'll stop in a moment, won't he?'). Despite water going up over the windscreen he kept going until he reached the deeper water and his car started to float. This ended up being a snatch rescue, as the water flow was minimal and posed low hazard to rescuers, but uncertainty about variable depths was enough to not hang around to find out. Driving a car into floodwater is never advisable, but doing it directly in front of three rescue teams at least in this case resulted in an expedient extrication!

Eventually, it had all calmed down — the water levels had peaked and began to drop. There were no more evacuees and morning reliefs were being arranged. It had been a full-on major incident for a few hours, but there were no significant casualties.

For most of the SARA members, this was the first major incident they have been involved in. So, what were the takeaway learning points?

The benefits of the multi-agency trainings we have done were very clear. The JESIP principles worked very well and there was mutual respect from all the Cat 1 responders. It was also useful to have had some exercise exposure to major incidents, for example at a train crash or a terrorism exercise, where the scale of the task becomes overwhelming and one just has to keep to doing the basics, well. And for jobs like this, powered boats and big rafts are very useful; most of the tasks really were not suitable for rescue sleds. Many thanks to everyone involved. We are sure this will not be our last flood rescue call-out. 📍

### NOVEMBER: PARTY LEADER COURSE, CASTLETON

The clans assembled at the Hollowford Centre in Castleton in the Peak District for the MREW Party Leader course, 26 team members from 18 different teams from across the country. **Iain Ashcroft MBE** reports.

This year we were very grateful for MREW Office assistance in dealing with the application process — less stressful for the admin team — further changes will be made before the next course. Teams arrived on the Friday evening and were introduced to their fellow group members for the weekend. Over the next two days, they attended eleven lectures, from negotiating to wellbeing and twelve outdoor scenarios — followed by networking on both days. Despite the weather on the Sunday, hopefully, all went away with the knowledge to become a Party Leader. My thanks to all the lecturers, helpers and casualties who helped over the weekend, some of whom have helped over many years and I especially thank them for their continued support. This year we made a few changes to the course and in the summer there will be a full course review. For now the course has been put back in its box and will reappear at the end of February (currently fully booked) at the PGI Centre at Boreatton Park, near Oswestry. We look forward to seeing you.



Outdoor images © Henry Paisey.



Group photo © Iain Ashcroft.



## Initial Response Search Management Course

Sunday 1 March 2026

Our popular annual course held in Northumberland  
Based at the Holiday Inn – close to the A1 and Newcastle Airport

Cost: **Prices held from 2024**  
£80 – volunteers  
£100 – statutory organisations  
includes all course materials plus  
hospitality (tea, coffee, lunch)



Cost includes 20%  
subsidy for volunteers

Full details at:  
Annual IR Course – The Centre  
for Search Research  
([tcsr.org.uk](http://tcsr.org.uk))  
To book a place, email:  
[contact@tcsr.org.uk](mailto:contact@tcsr.org.uk)

Follow us on at [facebook.com/TheCentreforSearchResearch](https://facebook.com/TheCentreforSearchResearch)



### NOVEMBER: WEST CORNWALL AND TEESDALE & WEARDALE TEAMS TO RECEIVE KING'S AWARD FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE

The award is the highest award a local voluntary group can receive in the UK and is equivalent to an MBE. The teams are just two of 231 social enterprises, charities and voluntary groups to receive the award in 2025.

A relatively new team in terms of mountain rescue, the West Cornwall team was founded in 2019, originally part of the Cornwall Rescue Group, and operates above and below ground. Over recent years, team members have been called to assist with a number of large-scale incidents across the South West, including the Beast from the East blizzards and the Plymouth WW2 bomb evacuation. The Teesdale & Weardale team began life in 1968, following an accident in Teesdale. They cover the whole of County Durham, from the high fells in the west to the coastal communities of the North Sea, responding to a range of incidents, in both hill and urban settings. Congratulations to both teams!

Top: West Cornwall team members in May 2023 © West Cornwall SRT.  
Left: Teesdale & Weardale during a search in September 2025 © TWSRT.



## NPAS Unmanned Aircraft Trials

**BRENDAN O'NEILL** MREW DRONE OFFICER

Over the last two years, MREW has been working closely with the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) Drone working groups to understand how emergency services drone use can develop going forward. As part of this we've recently been involved with the NPAS programme to develop their large unmanned capabilities. After much planning in the previous months, a joint exercise was run in late November with the NPAS team, based in Avonmouth, and the Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA).

**Location:** The Severn Estuary. Given the nature and size of the aircraft being tested, the NPAS team were allocated a Temporary Restricted Area (TRA) in the airspace above the Severn Estuary. Due to the single-engined configuration of the aircraft, the CAA were keen for it not to be flown over any centres of population.

**Participants:** NPAS Unmanned Trials team and Severn Area Rescue Association Beachley. Given SARA Beachley's Lifeboat and Land search capabilities, we were able to set up both water and land-based scenarios to test the equipment.

**Equipment:** The aircraft currently being tested is the Schiebel S-100, weighing 110kg. It is a single-engined aircraft with a 3.4m main rotor and additional tail rotor. Being powered by jet fuel, it has good endurance of up to six hours or 200km. The payload in use was an MX10, the same unit as used on a lot of the current NPAS manned fleet. The aircraft is piloted using a mouse on a computer screen with the video feed being controlled by a second Technical Flight Officer.

**Left:** The NPAS site at Avonmouth Docks; Like their manned equivalents, the aircraft are subject to rigorous maintenance cycles. **Opposite:** Getting ready to lift; the Control room; view from the Derby MRT drone with the AI system identifying targets on the thermal and night vision images.

On the day of the first exercise, the wind was doing its best to put a stop to things, with gusts in excess of 35 knots, above the take-off speed for the S-100. The exercise involved the SARA team launching one of their lifeboats and dropping a dummy in the middle of the Bristol Channel. Luckily the weather eventually cooperated and a window presented itself to allow NPAS and SARA to launch. With the video feed being streamed back to the control room and the wider team direct to their mobile devices, we were able to monitor the launch and the progress of the aircraft along the channel up towards the Severn bridges. Even though the water was quite rough, the operator was able to identify the dummy and guide the boat team into its location.

Later that evening, a discussion at SARA's Beachley base looked at how drones are being used in MREW and how their own programme is developing towards their Operational Authorisation from the CAA.

The second day involved making use of the 'late slot' NPAS had been given which meant they could only fly between 22:00 and 03:00. The SARA team placed three (live) casualties on land adjacent to the estuary. We also flew the Derby MRT DJI M4TD. The wind had dropped significantly, as had the temperatures! The location of the casualties meant the NPAS aircraft had to fly approximately 16km up the estuary,

transiting over both of the Severn bridges en route. Its noise signature was quite unique, unmistakably a 'helicopter', but quite different to the manned units we are used to.

De-confliction procedures had been put in place between our drone and the NPAS system. They were operating at 1,000ft above sea level with our drone at maximum 400ft. As the NPAS aircraft approached the scene, the ADSB detection systems on the DJI controller picked it up and started giving warnings to the pilot about the proximity of the other aircraft, including its height and distance, something we've not been able to test/prove in anger previously. With direct communications to the land search teams, the NPAS TFO (technical flight officer) was able to locate the casualties and guide them into the location of each.

Our DJI drone was also effective in locating all the casualties using the thermal capability, the real-time AI built into the system proving effective at highlighting points of interest for the pilot to investigate further. The lighting system also proved useful to illuminate each casualty site.

Overall, the trials proved really useful on a number of fronts, proving the NPAS capability, highlighting the need for robust comms between the different agencies and demonstrating how multiple unmanned assets can operate together. ☺





# Introducing Rightsteps...

*My therapist was calm and comforting during our sessions. She explained all the techniques thoroughly and helped me to adopt a different way of thinking about stress and anxiety.*

*Perfect counsellor for me, supportive, listened, reflected back on past conversations and followed up on outcomes. Very impressed!*

*I've had such a massive shift in perspective and I am super appreciative!*

We are delighted to announce that we have added a new 'partner' organisation to the portfolio of wellbeing support that the **Rescue Benevolent Fund** can offer to mountain and cave rescue team members and their families. Rightsteps joins Togetherall and The Fire Fighters Charity and broadens our offering to bring specialist, tailored and confidential therapies to you, right where you are, through the power of the internet.

Thanks to Rightsteps, we can now support **individual online therapy** — perfect if you need mental health support but, for whatever reason, are unable to access a suitable therapist locally to you. We can also set up and support **online group counselling sessions** of up to six people per group — something we've been asked about by more than one team.

## HOW TO ACCESS RIGHTSTEPS

Simple. Contact the Rescue Benevolent Fund via [secretary@rescuebenevolent.fund](mailto:secretary@rescuebenevolent.fund) in the first instance, so we know you plan to ask for support. Then fill in the application form in the usual way and leave the Fund trustees to sort out the rest. Our aim is always to get back to you with positive news,

as quickly as possible so, if you think you or your team might benefit from this particular service, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

In the meantime, we thought it would be good to have **Taylor Ball** of Rightsteps explain who they are and what they do. Check out their website at [rightsteps.co.uk](http://rightsteps.co.uk) to find out more.

## Rightsteps

bound to take an emotional toll — and that's where we come in.

Our in-house team of fully-qualified therapists, who are all registered or accredited with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), have significant experience in supporting frontline communities and they truly understand the challenges faced by those who work or volunteer in high-pressure environments, are routinely exposed to trauma, and dedicate themselves to supporting others in times of need.

Our integrated, person-centred talking therapies enables individuals to prioritise their own mental health and empower their wellbeing. In turn, this contributes to a more sustainable rescue service where volunteers feel supported, confident and empowered in their vital role.

## HOW IT WORKS IN PRACTICE

At Rightsteps, we work with you to understand your needs and provide support which is suited to you. We offer a

variety of therapeutic approaches which are personalised, compassionate and clinically robust.

If you would like to benefit from Rightsteps Talking Therapies, as noted left, please contact the Rescue Benevolent Fund Secretary Judy Whiteside in the first instance, via [secretary@rescuebenevolent.fund](mailto:secretary@rescuebenevolent.fund). She will be able to offer further information about accessing our support. One of our specialist team will then be in touch with you for an initial consultation which will enable us to better understand your needs to ensure you receive the right type of support for you.

Our support is judgement-free and confidential. It aims to provide you with a safe and reflective space to work through challenges, build resilience and confidence, and gain practical tools to support your wellbeing both personally and professionally. 🧡

Top: Online therapy © Valeriy\_G via iStock.



## 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](http://togetherall.com)

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

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

**Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide:** For adults affected by suicide, go to [uksobs.org](http://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](http://rescuebenevolent.fund)

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

## SO... WHO OR WHAT ARE RIGHTSTEPS AND WHAT DO WE OFFER?

Rightsteps are workplace mental health specialists who provide personalised and accessible support tailored to the unique needs of different teams.

We are part of Turning Point, the leading social enterprise that's been delivering health and social care services across the

UK for over sixty years, and align our mission with their values of creating positive change through innovation and collaboration. This strengthens our ability to deliver impactful, evidenced solutions, which includes our Talking Therapy services. This initiative reflects our shared commitment to supporting those on the frontline who face extraordinary challenges and demands, both physically and emotionally.

## WHY THIS PARTNERSHIP MATTERS

The Rescue Benevolent Fund plays a vital role in supporting volunteer mountain and cave rescue families across the UK, who operate in some of the most demanding and turbulent conditions. Yet, the physical dangers are only part of the equation. The traumatic incidents which volunteers experience, either directly or indirectly, are

# wellbeing

## FANCY BECOMING A RESCUE BENEVOLENT FUND AMBASSADOR?

Worth repeating in every issue... In 2013, it made sense to follow the well-established 'regional' structure with 'reps' appointed by their regions. In practice, this didn't work. There was reluctance for already busy people to take on yet another 'responsibility' within their region. So, in 2025, the Fund trustees changed the structure and now invite ANYONE (irrespective of region) with an interest in wellbeing, to help us spread the word about how the fund can help. And we are happy to have more than one ambassador per region, or team!

Full disclosure: There's no remuneration, but also no expenses, it's entirely voluntary, and any meetings we call are conducted online. The idea is that you liaise with those within your own team and region — the people you are close to and work with as rescuers — and feed back into us, the Fund trustees. All we ask is that ambassadors are willing to assist potential beneficiaries in making applications to the Fund, and help promote the Fund to the wider mountain and cave rescue community, encouraging those team members and their families who need support to make appropriate applications. Essentially, help

us promote the Fund to a wider audience.

We also ask that all our ambassadors ensure that any information shared with them is regarded as confidential irrespective of outcome (unless the applicant has expressly given their permission to share more widely).

2025 saw a distinct uptick in applications to the Fund — which means our message is getting out there, thanks in no small part to those who already act as ambassadors. So, if you do fancy joining our merry band, please email [secretary@rescuebenevolent.fund](mailto:secretary@rescuebenevolent.fund) for a friendly chat! 🧡

## WHO DOES WHAT FOR THE RESCUE BENEVOLENT FUND?

**Rescue Benevolent Fund:** Apply to us if you think you need support, be that financial hardship, mental health concerns, or physical rehabilitation after injury that has arisen due to your involvement in mountain rescue — in whatever capacity. And we will support family members too. Alongside our partners and their offerings listed below, we can also support you with a therapist local to you, for in-person therapy.

**The Fire Fighters Charity:** Focused physical rehabilitation on a residential basis, at Jubilee House, Penrith in Cumbria.

**Togetherall:** Anonymous mental health support online, through community forums and chat rooms, and a range of downloadable resources and quizzes.

**Rightsteps:** Online mental health support through individual or group counselling sessions, tailored specifically to your needs.



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

LOOKING AFTER YOUR **HEALTH AND WELLBEING** WITH ARTICLES COURTESY OF **TOGETHERALL** IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE **RESCUE BENEVOLENT FUND**

# The power of sleep: Why we need it and how to get it

Sleep isn't just about the number of hours of shut-eye we get each night, but the quality of sleep we get can have a significant impact on our overall health.

## HOW MUCH SLEEP DO YOU REALLY NEED?

On average, adults need roughly eight hours of sleep per night. However, it's important to listen to your body, so when you wake up feeling your best, track how many hours of sleep you had or remember your nighttime routine. This way you can recreate what works best for you.

Sleep isn't just about the number of hours of shut-eye we get each night, but the quality of sleep we get can have a significant impact on our overall health.



Top: Owl © oniciva2011. Above: How NOT to sleep, with the laptop by your head! © daha3131053. Images via Pixabay.

## THE STAGES OF SLEEP

Sleep happens in a series of recurring sleep stages. Each stage plays a part in restoring us and preparing us for the day ahead. The stages of sleep are:

- 1: Drowsiness** we are feeling tired and ready to slip into slumber
- 2: Deep restorative sleep** (non-dreaming deep sleep)
- 3: Alert stages** (non-dreaming light sleep)
- 4: Dreaming stages** (REM sleep).

Each cycle lasts about 90 minutes and repeats four to six times over the course of a night. For good quality sleep, these stages repeat uninterrupted. But if you find yourself stressed, anxious or not sleeping well, then you may wake and interrupt these cycles, which can leave you tired and irritated the next day.

Our body needs all the stages of sleep to feel our best. Deep sleep renews the body and helps us feel energised the next day. It also boosts our immune system and is imperative for our growth and development. Deep sleep also secretes a growth hormone that helps the body repair itself.

REM or dreaming sleep renews our mind. It allows our brain to process and bring together what we have learned in the day and helps strengthen our memory. REM

sleep also helps boost our mood by replenishing our brain's chemical messengers.

## A HUGE IMPACT ON OUR SLEEP HEALTH? LIGHT AND SCREENS

Screens have a significant effect on our sleep because light is one of the most powerful regulators of our internal body clock. Our brains normally secrete more melatonin when darkness falls, making us tired and ready for sleep, but with TVs, tablets, laptops and phones, we are getting more light at night, preventing melatonin production, making us less drowsy and unable to fall asleep at a normal time.

## OTHER FACTORS THAT CAN PREVENT QUALITY SLEEP...

- Stressful events of the day
- Difficult life situations, such as losing a loved one
- Worrying about work, relationships
- Anxiety, depression, or post-traumatic stress
- Poor physical health or side effects of medications
- Use of stimulants or lifestyle habits that work against your internal clock.



## HOW TO IMPROVE SLEEP

We may try to combat tiredness with naps, coffee and alcohol, but these actually disrupt our sleep even further. Lifestyle changes or improving your 'sleep hygiene' can help you get back on track after sleepless nights or waking up feeling tired. Think about the barriers that prevent you from having good quality sleep. Is it your study schedule? Your social life? Daily stressors that prevent you from relaxing? Try some of these tips to work on improving your sleep:

- **Create a schedule to make sleep a priority and prevent you from staying up late:** Togetherall has a goal-setting guide to help you keep on track. You could also use the journal tool to create a priority list with sleeping being at the top.
- **Avoid screen time while in bed:** The blue light from your devices blocks melatonin, preventing us from getting tired. Try using laptops or phones at a table or desk and watching TV on the couch and not in bed.
- **Cut down on caffeine later in the day:** Ideally, eight hours before bed.
- **Nicotine and alcohol are stimulants that can prevent us from feeling tired and sleeping:** Keep this in mind as you assess your sleep hygiene.

Sleep is imperative to our physical and mental health. We need proper sleep to feel refreshed to take on the day. If you find yourself struggling with sleep, Togetherall has courses and resources to help you better understand your relationship with sleep so you can feel better and handle everything life throws your way. See below for how to register. ☺

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

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

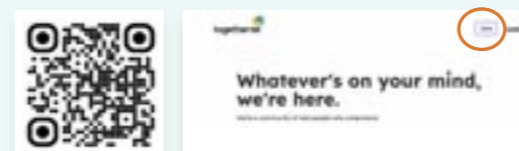


## AS A MOUNTAIN OR CAVE RESCUE TEAM MEMBER YOU CAN ACCESS TOGETHERALL FREE OF CHARGE

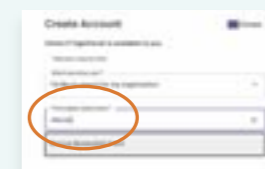
The Togetherall digital mental health and wellbeing support service is a completely anonymous community where you can express yourself freely and openly. Professionally trained Wall Guides and clinical professionals monitor the community to ensure the safety and anonymity of all members. Once you're 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

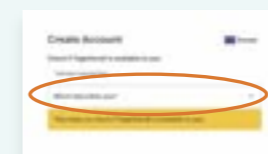
- 1 Go to togetherall.com or scan QR code. Click 'Join'**



- 4 Enter 'rescue' to find Rescue Benevolent Fund**



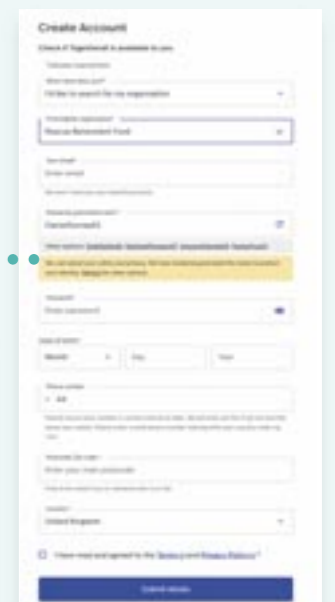
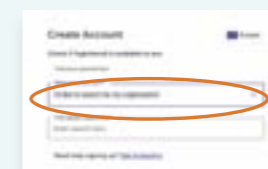
- 2 To create account Select 'Which describes you?'**



- 5 Enter email. Create profile name. Enter details. Click 'Submit details'**

Start exploring...

- 3 Select 'I'd like to search for my organisation'**



## A HEAVY AFFAIR WITH THE MOUNTAINS

Reviewed by Kev Mitchell, Ochils MRT

There are only a very few folk in mountaineering circles who can be identified by a single name and 'Heavy' was one such person. A far cry from the small, skinny 'son of the manse' from Ayrshire who developed into one of the most experienced mountain rescuers in the UK, and whose passion for the mountains and compassion for those rescued was only matched by his legendary inability to under-exaggerate and his insatiable energy for banter and being in wild places.

Many will be aware of Heavy's blog and his writings on all things mountain and mountain rescue. His 'lecture tours' were mainly rather unorganised and hilarious blathering about rescues and misadventures, and had to be believed. However... what is less known is his fight to even be selected for the Royal Air Force Mountain Rescue Services (RAF MRS) – 'too small and skinny' – and the subsequent harrowing recoveries of multiple air crashes, including his involvement in the Lockerbie disaster, and the cumulative effects this had on him for the rest of his life. This book is an honest account of a life dominated by the love of mountains, the impact of being a mountain rescuer who had seen more tragedy than most, but still retained a wicked sense of humour and an unswerving belief that we should help others in need.

Heavy's outdoor journey began with family holidays on Arran, climbing Cir Mhor and Goat Fell, and by the age of ten he had climbed the Ben via Carn Mor Dearg. There was only one way this was going! Although gaining a few Highers, he found school hard and, in 1971, enlisted in the RAF and managed to get posted to RAF Kinloss where he was desperate to join the team. At a statuesque 5 foot 5 inches tall and 7½ stone they took one look at him and told him to get lost. Luckily the legendary Kinloss team leader George Bruce took a liking to the young svelte Heavy and, as long as he could prove himself, he was in with a chance. There are a myriad of stories about derring-do, as well as lucky and not-so-lucky escapes, so read the book and enjoy this formative period.

Being involved in the Kinloss team was a fantastic mountain apprenticeship for the young Heavy, and his determination and enthusiasm was only matched by his appetite for nonsense and upsetting the 'top brass'. Many routes were climbed and mountains walked in horrendous conditions, something that is still vital in today's mountain rescue environment – you can't look after folk in trouble if you can't look after yourself! Pay particular attention to some of the long-distance walks undertaken by the RAF MRS as they show a level of determination and resilience many would aspire to today. A particularly memorable chapter is the one 'written' by his beloved Teallach who would be immortalised on the RAF MRS Munroists roll of honour and was a much-loved companion.

Postings abroad followed with the usual high jinks and seeking out mountains or at least fairly vertical adventures. Tours to Masirah Oman (mainly football!)



and the Falklands came and went, and Heavy and the MRS were also spreading their wings to Canada, and to the RAF MRS Everest expedition of 2001 where he was Base Camp manager. Colleagues Dan Carroll and Rusty Bale successfully reached the summit. Dan remained a close friend and wrote a beautiful foreword.

Heavy is well known outwith mountaineering circles for his work on the effects the Lockerbie disaster had on all the emergency services, on the night of 21 December 1988. This disaster, coupled with multiple air crash recoveries, are covered fully in the book, and the impact on Heavy and many others cannot be understated. Thankfully, we now know much more about the effects of these events and have processes in place to help the folk involved.

Huge credit must go to Bob Sharp and Gerry McPartlin who took on the unenviable job of collating Heavy's writings and organising the book into some semblance of order. This was a massive task, undertaken in the knowledge that Heavy's time was limited. I know the number of hours both Bob and Gerry put in for their friend, and it was fitting that a pre-published copy of the book was given to a delighted Heavy a few days before his passing.

This review so far has looked at 'A Heavy Affair with the Mountains'. However, it is clear all the way through that Heavy was a man who had a huge pride in his stepdaughters and granddaughters – the love and affection in which they are talked about is a testimony to a father figure and a much-loved Grandpa, and I know their support was a constant source of happiness and strength during his illness. It is fitting that the book is dedicated to them.

The book is about one man's love for the mountains but, more than that, it's a testimony to a man with huge compassion for others, a love for family and friends, an innate ability to exaggerate or even 'misremember' things, and a wicked sense of humour. The mountain rescue community loved and respected him greatly for all these attributes. A compelling read for any mountain lover, mountain rescuer or anyone with an interest in wild places, this book is a riveting read and a great testimony to a great many. 🍷

ORDER FROM LULU.COM: SELECT 'BOOKSTORE' AND SEARCH FOR 'A HEAVY AFFAIR WITH THE MOUNTAINS'. PRICE: £21.50 + P&P.



Flags are popular at the moment, the symbolism is generally an expression of pride and identity. Mostly flying the Union Flag or Union Jack of the UK and the cross of St George.

Mind you if I hoisted a flag, it might be the White Rose of Yorkshire on a blue background. If I were Scottish, Welsh, Irish or from Lancashire with the Red Rose flag, I might fly them. Mostly, I'd embrace my flag and be proud of it but, on my mountaineering expeditions, I never felt the need to carry a flag to a mountain summit, where other nationalities would often fly theirs, both at Base Camp and on the summit.

The sense of glory for their country that others might feel as they planted the flag on a summit was not for me. Summit flag waving and picture taking with a national flag always seems a bit jingoistic and pointless. It could also detract from the seriousness of the situation, leading to a false sense of security, thinking 'the summit is the goal' and the climb is over. Complacency on the descent can be fatal.

I always celebrated back at Base Camp, when I knew I was safe. You need to focus on the climb down, assess your stamina reserves, check the weather and adjust your kit accordingly: an 8,000-metre version of #BeAdventureSmart!

I climb for personal achievement, not for the glory of my country. Whether I climb abroad in the Himalaya, or at home in the Lakes, North Wales, Yorkshire or the Scottish Highlands, I climb for the same reason of personal pleasure.

Instead, my personal summit flag on my Himalayan climbs was a photo of my daughter, Fiona. That photo was like a paper talisman to nudge and remind me not to get complacent, especially on the descent.

My motto is: no mountain is worth a life, coming back is a success and the summit is only a bonus. I have a life wish, not a death wish. I climb to live, not to die. Climbing enhances my life.

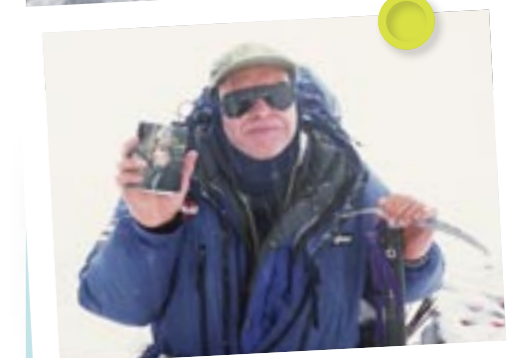
I've been carrying a photo of Fiona to the top of mountains since she was one year old and now I've extended it to grandchildren. On Everest, I carried a photo of Fiona and my gran, her great gran, who lived until she was a hundred. On my last 8,000-er, Kangchenjunga, my summit photo had progressed to Fiona and Jay, my grandson.

On one expedition, to Gasherbrum 1 and 2 in the Karakoram, I unintentionally left my summit photo of Fiona in Islamabad. I wondered if that would be bad karma, but all went well. On the summit of Gasherbrum 1, friends on a British military expedition lent me their Union Flag for a summit photo, the only time you'd see me posing with a flag.

Back in Base Camp, the British military expedition displayed a flag, as did a nearby American expedition – there was often a Stars and Stripes somewhere. Nepalese Sherpas always like to have garlands of Buddhist prayer flags around camp and often take them to the summit, along with a prayer scarf and a Nepalese flag.

At Kangchenjunga BC, I did raise a Union Flag amid the Buddhist prayer flags but, unfortunately, hoisted it upside down, which is a signal of distress!

I feel sure that having a photo of Fiona with me contributed to my success, keeping me focused and alert on the way down. It reminded me to survive. After all, Fiona just wanted her dad back. 🍷



ALAN HINKES OBE WAS THE FIRST BRITON TO CLIMB ALL FOURTEEN OF THE WORLD'S 8,000-METRE PEAKS. HIS HARD-BACK BOOK ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE, '8,000 METRES. CLIMBING THE WORLD'S HIGHEST MOUNTAINS', IS STILL AVAILABLE FROM THE MREW ONLINE SHOP.

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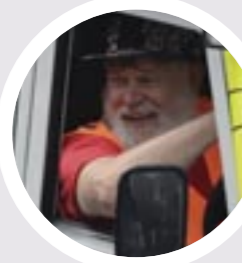
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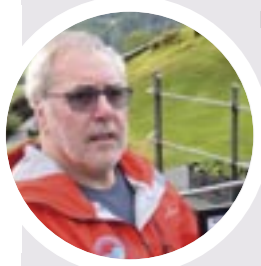
### JANUARY: MOUNTAIN RESCUERS RECOGNISED IN THE 2026 NEW YEAR'S HONOURS LIST

Three long-serving members of mountain rescue, two Mountain Rescue England and Wales, and one in Scottish Mountain Rescue, have been awarded the MBE in the New Year's Honours List.

**Bernie Stephens** awarded 'For services to the Kinder Mountain Rescue Team and to young people and the community in Greater Manchester'. Bernie has been a team member for fifty years and counting.



**Dave Barrington** awarded 'For services to mountain rescue in Cumbria and the Lake District'. Dave has been involved with mountain rescue for over fifty years. Currently treasurer of the Langdale Ambleside team, he was previously team leader of Rossendale and Pennine MRT.



**Dr Robert Sharp** awarded 'For voluntary service to mountain rescue in Scotland'. Bob served as leader of Lomond MRT and held a number of positions in Scottish Mountain Rescue. He is a keen historian, having written and published a number of books on mountain rescue.



### DECEMBER: DART 51 TAKES FINAL TOR AFTER A LIFETIME OF SERVICE TO MOUNTAIN RESCUE

After 32 years within Mountain Rescue England and Wales, with the honour of being the oldest working Land Rover in the organisation, Dart 51 has entered retirement. On 7 December, she completed a last journey into Dartmoor for her 'Final Tor' and handed over the call sign, Dart 51, to North Dartmoor Search and Rescue Team's (NDSART) replacement Land Rover.

In 1993, Ada Hillard, benefactor of several Lake District teams and charities, donated the funds to Langdale Ambleside MRT to purchase the Land Rover. It was later named 'Ada' in recognition of her generous spirit. Fast forward to 2008, the team sold Ada to North Dartmoor team, where she has spent the rest of her time in service. At 32 years old, her age is beginning to show, and her time as an emergency service vehicle come to an end.

The change in the theme of call-outs, time spent running up and down the A30, in and out of Exeter's busy streets and even down to Plymouth, has meant that Dart 51 is no longer fit for purpose and deserves a quiet retirement with someone who can provide the care required for an aged Land Rover.

During her years of service, Ada was deployed on over 400 call-outs, participated in all the Ten Tors event since 2008, attended the disposal and evacuation of two World War II devices in Exeter and Plymouth, and played a vital role around Okehampton during the 2018 Beast from the East snowstorm.

The team would like to extend their thanks to all those who have contributed to the purchase and refit of the team's new Land Rover, soon to become the new Dart 51. Farewell Ada!

Images © North Dartmoor SRT.



The collaboration marks an important step in recognising the quality and strengthening the consistency and credibility of medical training for volunteer mountain and cave rescue personnel across the UK. Drawing on the university's academic expertise in mountain medicine and education, the collaboration focused on reviewing the RRMT syllabus, learning outcomes and the assessment processes to ensure they reflect current best practice and meet the needs of rescue teams. The review also supports MREW's long-term commitment to delivering high-quality, evidence-based training and operational clinical practice across its national network of teams.

Alistair Morris, MREW Medical Director, has been the main point of contact with the University of Lancashire over the past twelve months. 'What has been known in Search and Rescue (SAR) as the CasCare qualification has existed for many years. It has developed and evolved as medical technology has changed, and as the standards expected of volunteer rescuers have changed

too. Renamed as the RRMT qualification, it continues to require significant work, commitment and professionalism from SAR volunteers. I am really pleased we've been able to achieve the sort of recognition associated with this academic review as a mark of all that effort. The use of Medical Technician also highlights the comparability with other qualifications in the healthcare sector.'

Following the successful collaboration on the RRMT review, the university and MREW have formalised their relationship through a memorandum of understanding (MOU), which sets out a shared commitment to research, knowledge exchange and innovation in mountain rescue education and practice. Nick Wright, a lecturer in Mountain Medicine at the university who has been involved in developing the relationship with MREW added, 'The MOU opens opportunities for experienced mountain rescue volunteers to contribute to the delivery of our mountain medicine courses and for the university to further support the work of RRMTs and the healthcare professionals volunteering in mountain rescue in future.'

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### NOVEMBER: CALDER VALLEY TEAM RECEIVES CHIEF CONSTABLE'S COMMENDATION

The team was deeply honoured to receive the Chief Constable's Commendation from West Yorkshire Police Chief Constable John Robbins QPM DL, presented alongside Lord Lieutenant of West Yorkshire, Ed Anderson CBE. This prestigious commendation recognises 'steadfast and exceptional support to West Yorkshire Police, acknowledging the dedication, professionalism and teamwork shown by every volunteer who gives their time to help keep our communities safe'. The team said they were 'incredibly proud of this recognition' and extended thanks to West Yorkshire Police for their ongoing partnership and trust in them, adding 'a huge well done to every member of CVSRT - this award belongs to you all'.

Left to right: Lord Lieutenant of West Yorkshire, Ed Anderson CBE, Stuart Combridge (team secretary), Rob Freeman (team leader) and Chief Constable John Robbins QPM DL © Calder Valley SRT



### NOVEMBER: DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARDS FOR CHRIS AND NEIL

**Chris Lloyd** has played a significant role in the life of Ogwen Valley MRT over almost fifty years, as team member, officer and trustee. As the team's press officer, he has regularly represented mountain rescue to the wider public via the media, a great ambassador and advocate for rescue volunteers who speaks with authority, experience and knowledge.

**Neil Carruthers** has given over four decades of service to Buxton MRT, across multiple roles in both operations and management, well-known and respected across mountain rescue. He has served as a regional incident controller since 2007 and has coordinated many major incidents.

Top: Images supplied by teams. Above: MREW President Ray Griffiths presents Chris Lloyd (centre) and Neil Carruthers with their awards © Judy Whiteside.

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# news round

OCTOBER > JANUARY



## NOVEMBER: LOCAL BUSINESS HELPS NORTH DARTMOOR TEAM REACH NEW HEIGHTS IN SAFETY

Devon-based company, Van Guard Accessories, has teamed up with North Dartmoor to create an innovative way of transporting rescue stretchers, using a compact version of their ladder loader system.

Historically, stretchers have been dismantled and loaded into the rear cab of response vehicles or left assembled on roof racks. As all teams will be aware, this requires team members to climb onto the roof of the two-metre-high vehicle during urgent call-outs, adding unnecessary risk at precisely the moments when safety is critical. The team looked for a solution that would allow stretchers to be loaded and accessed at a safe working height, removing the need to tie them down in the wind and rain. Van Guard's ULTIloader is designed to lower equipment to an accessible working height, enabling controlled loading and unloading, and the team has adopted the 2.3-metre model, which is ideal for smaller vans or specialised vehicles with restricted roof space.

Team chairman, James Watts, said, 'This has revolutionised how we use our Land Rovers and stretchers. This new solution is easier to use, allowing individuals to unload a stretcher with one hand. We don't have team members on the roof of the vehicle in cold, wet and windy conditions, often in the dark. To unload or load the stretcher previously required up to three people, but now it can be done safely by one person at ground level in thirty seconds. No more climbing up a tiny metal ladder and untying a stretcher from a roof rack and waiting for two or three team members below to unload the stretcher.'

'The added benefit is we've removed a substantial weight — nicer to drive when travelling around Devon and Dartmoor's narrow tracks. We plan to adopt the new system across all our vehicles so, no matter the vehicle, location or time, we can safely unload, load stretchers, and transport with ease and speed.'



Top: Team members try out the new stretcher loading system © North Dartmoor MRT.

## DECEMBER: NORTH OF TYNE FEATURE IN FINAL ISSUE OF TRAIL

Almost 36 years after the launch of the original 'Trail Walker', in 1990, Britain's biggest-selling outdoor magazine has published their last-ever issue.

A social media post in December cited 'the pressures facing the media industry and the wider economy' having made it impossible to continue creating a magazine to the standard they demand of themselves. Over the years,

'Trail' has been hugely supportive of the work of mountain rescue, working with us to create features about teams and individuals, the kit we use, and the importance of 'staying safe'.

But this isn't the end of their story. From now on, they are throwing all their effort and energy into their new website at [livefortheoutdoors.com](http://livefortheoutdoors.com)

North of Tyne team were honoured to feature in the final issue and Helena, Ian, Vicky and James have already made an appearance on the new website, talking about their 'most memorable call-outs in 2025'. We feel sure they will continue to support all things mountain rescue so thank you to them. And good luck in this new guise.

Left: North of Tyne in the last issue; Ian Blackburn as featured on Facebook @Trailmagazine.



## NOVEMBER: 100-MILE RUN RAISES £1,200

Two members of East Cornwall SRT undertook the race around East Cornwall, to raise money for the team. Liam and Julian set off at 6.00 on a Saturday morning from Looe, heading north across Bodmin Moor to the north coast at Boscastle. From there, they followed the South West Coastal Path down to Padstow, arriving in the early hours of Sunday, then back south, across Cornwall to Fowey, turning east to Looe for a 7.00pm finish on Sunday. With two ferry crossings, torrential rain and miles of relentless coastal path climbs and descents, and less than half the competitors completing the race, the pair were delighted to finish within the cut-off time.

Top: Team members meet the pair at the trig point; Liam (left) and Julian during the race © ECSRT.

Raising funds  
for rescue





### CAPTAIN BUL BY JIM COYLE

*OUT IN THE STORM-TOSSED NORTH SEA, A LONELY BOAT DID SAIL FROM THE ICE-CAPPED PEAKS OF NORWAY. BLONDE MAIDENS AND GOOD ALE.*

*A COURSE WAS SET FOR ENGLAND, SO WITH THE STARS ALL SHINING BRIGHT THEY LEFT BEHIND THE FJORDS AND THE FAMOUS NORTHERN LIGHTS.*

*WHEN A STORM IT CAME FROM NOWHERE, THE WIND BEGAN TO BLOW THE CREW DID PRAY FOR RESCUE WHILE HUDDLED DOWN BELOW.*

*BUT ONE MAN THERE HE STOOD ALONE, HIS BACK AGAINST THE MAST AS HE HELD ON TO THE RUDDER AND FACED THE ICY BLASTS.*

*NO CALL WAS SENT FOR RESCUE, A LIFEBOAT HE'D DISDAIN FOR HE'D SPENT HIS YOUTH ON TRAWLERS, SALT WATER IN HIS VEINS.*

*THE CREW DID WEEP BUT TO NO AVAIL FOR THEY HAD TO START AND BAIL WHILE UP ABOVE, THE CAPTAIN ROARED, 'I THINK I'VE SEEN A WHALE'.*

*THE THUNDER ROLLED, THE LIGHTNING FLASHED, THE CREW WERE ALL SEASICK WHILE UP ABOVE, AGAIN A SHOUT, 'I'VE JUST SEEN MOBY DICK'.*

*BUT SOON THE STORM WAS OVER AND THEY REACHED A FRIENDLY SHORE TO FIND AT LAST A HAVEN, FOR THEY'D BEEN SHAKEN TO THE CORE.*

*SO WHO WAS THE GALLANT HERO WHO SAVED HIS BOAT AND CREW? WHO STOOD ALONE AND FACED THE GALE AND DANGERS ALL A NEW?*

*WHO MADE THEM ALL THEIR BREAKFASTS AND TOLD THEM MANY TALES? OF ROARING SEAS AND FISHING BOATS OUT HUNTING FOR THE WHALE?*

*LET'S STAND AND DRINK A TOAST LADS, MAKE SURE YOUR GLASS IS FULL HERE'S TO THE FAMOUS MARINER: THE GOOD OLD CAPTAIN BUL (ONE ?!)*

### NOVEMBER: TEAM MEMBER CELEBRATES SIXTY YEARS WITH COCKERMOUTH TEAM

It's a fact that mountain rescue runs through many of its older members like a stick of Blackpool rock, with forty, fifty years regular notches along the way. Sixty though is a rarer thing. **Andrew MacNeil** reports on that very special landmark for young John Bulman ('Bully' to his mates) – sixty years in and still counting.

John has now officially been an operational member of the Cockermouth team for sixty years. That alone, is an incredible feat and puts him in a very elite group. However, it's about more than just long service — it's the effort, dedication and spirit that John has shown throughout that service that makes it such an achievement. Rock-solid reliable — he never shirks a task, be it humping a heavy pack up the fell, a stretcher-carry back down, packing away kit, cleaning vehicles... ('It's 3.30 in the bloody morning, John...')

But there's the other side of the team too. The fundraising, our relationship with the town, the team's profile and, above all, its history and ethos. John quietly instils the importance of all these things into new team members and leads by example on all of them. He's the first down at 8.00, setting up for Loweswater show, or bag packing in Sainsburys. Never

misses a team meeting. He's a details man — 'If summat is worth doing, you might as well do it right' — an example being his work with DMM on the Talon. Every detail thought through, down to cutting 'grips' in to the top plates to make it easier for team members to stand on. I'm still not sure that without his perseverance and enthusiasm for that great tool, whether DMM would ever have got it made!

Martin (team chairman) and I value John's opinion, as does every team member. We regularly discuss team issues with him to seek his thoughts. He will always give a considered answer, often via a quiet phone call or chat. He has consistently been a fantastic support to both of us, and I know many team members would say the same.

Bully is an example of what a team member should be — so much so that at the 2025 MREW Conference, after spending much of the evening socialising and no doubt storytelling, on a table full of Derby lads, he was formally adopted as a Derby MRT team member. Martin couldn't sign the paperwork quick enough!

John's background in health and safety occasionally comes in handy. One winter course at Badaguish, we had a helicopter booked to come in and train with us at the centre. The new manager there panicked thinking it might chop up some of his other residents. The job looked like it was off but, never fear: Bulman's here. Thirty minutes later, he had presented the poor guy with a full risk assessment written, legend has it, on the back of a beer mat.

He's no stranger to the odd accident mind. I once watched him run at pace into a scaffold ledger, splitting his head open. Rushed him

to our team doctor's house, who turned white whilst his wife stitched him up in the kitchen. He was rescued by his own team after snapping his Achilles' on a practice in the snow on Pillar. His attitude towards his rehabilitation would put far younger people to shame — back on the call-out list and Wainwrights completed within twelve months.

John's greatest achievement, however — and I think he would bear this out — was in 1968, the year he took first place in the Allcomers Combined Cumbrian and Welsh Sheep Flonking Championship, held in Abergele in North Wales, beating off seemingly unstoppable Welsh flonker Gywndaf Evans in the final. Now, unfortunately, due to the necessity to be back in Cockermouth for the annual raft race (which he and Jim Coyle did actually also win), John had to leg it back up north before the presentation ceremony. We know how much he has always regretted missing out on officially being named champion, so team member Laura Connolly (who purports to actually be Welsh), took it upon herself to contact the organisers... and it just so happens they had kept the legendary trophy for all these years, and were more than happy to dust it off, and send it on to its rightful home.

So... ladies and gents, I give you, a great friend, a father, a grandfather, toolmaker, Health and Safety specialist, mountain rescuer, renowned Atlantic mariner and, now finally, Allcomers Combined Sheep Flonking Champion 1968: John Bulman. 🍷

**Above & opposite:** 'Bully' through the years; a poem from Jim Coyle. Supplied by Cockermouth MRT.

## the final send away

**JOHN DEMPSTER**  
COCKERMOUTH MRT



Cockermouth team members and the wider mountain rescue community said a very fond farewell to their former chairman and vice president, John Dempster MBE, who passed away in October. It was standing room only in a moving service, celebrating a 'mountain rescuer, friend and inspiration', followed by team members from across the Lakes lining the path as mourners left the church.

John's long involvement with mountain rescue started when he was just a boy. Having been introduced to hill walking and scrambling through the Scouts, he went on to join Workington Ramblers and would regularly catch the bus through to Keswick to go hiking and scrambling in the fells around Derwentwater and beyond. On its way to Keswick, the bus would pass through the town of Cockermouth and often picked up groups of rock climbers from the local mountaineering club. It wasn't long before John received an invite from one of these climbers to join the group for a day at Yew Crag Knotts, and it was here that he received his first introduction to rock climbing and mountaineering.

In 1956, he joined Cockermouth Mountaineering Club. The rescue team was still in its infancy, having only been established three years

earlier. However, in these early days, the rescue team recruited almost exclusively from the ranks of the Mountaineering Club, so it wouldn't have been long before John's climbing talent was spotted by his peers, and he was approached about joining the team.

Thankfully, he took up the challenge just fifteen years old. In the days before radios, young team members like John were recruited to act as runners, relaying messages between the casualty site and the police, or providing updates to base via the phone in the kitchen at Gatesgarth Farm in Buttermere.

In addition to spending many years as an active hill-going team member, he eventually took up the role of chairman, a position he held for 36 years. During this time, he was responsible for driving numerous improvements that the team continues to benefit from. Undoubtedly, the greatest of these, was the establishment of the team's specifically-built headquarters. This colossal achievement was the culmination of five years of tireless work by John, who led efforts to secure the necessary funding, and then oversaw the planning and construction of the build, which was eventually completed in 2003.

Alongside his undeniable commitment, John will be remembered for the wonderful work he did as chair of the Lake District Search and

Mountain Rescue Association. Over fifteen years, he provided invaluable support to the twelve Lake District teams, worked closely with Cumbria Police to set up a ground-breaking insurance policy for volunteers, and spearheaded numerous other initiatives that ultimately made the lives of rescuers safer and improved outcomes for the casualties. After stepping down from that role, he was awarded the position of president of LDSAMRA, allowing him to stay closely involved with the organisation and continue much of the good work he'd started.

John served as an active team member of Cockermouth Mountain Rescue Team for 60 years, receiving an MBE in 2005 for 'services to mountain rescue'. He stepped down from the call-out list at the age of 75, but remained actively involved with the team to the end, attending his last team meeting just days before his passing.

All the members of Cockermouth Mountain Rescue Team would like to extend our deepest condolences to John's family and loved ones during this very difficult time. His memory will live on in the rescues we attend which, in no small part, are possible because of the wonderful work that John committed so much of his life to. 🍷

**Opposite:** Stretcher carry in the early-1960s with (left to right) Jim Coyle, Jack Thompson, Billy Bowman, John Dempster, Peter Shand and Frank Rushton © Cockermouth MRT.



# the final send away

**GEOFF SEDDON**  
BOLTON MRT



Bolton team members were devastated to announce the death of Geoff Seddon, in December, following a short but brutal battle with cancer. Geoff was a stalwart of Bolton MRT and contributor to mountain rescue regionally and nationally for more than 56 years.

Geoff joined Bolton MRT very shortly after it was formed in 1969, aged 19, and remained an operational member until his death, aged 75. During that time, he served as team leader, from September 1973 to March 1981, and as chairman of the Mid-Pennine Mountain Accident Panel (now known as the Mid-Pennine Search and Rescue Organisation). From 1992 to 2014 he took on the role of deputy team leader and, on standing down from this, was appointed a life vice president. Throughout this time Geoff had time for family, marrying Gill in 1974 and being father to three children — Felicity, Ted and Tom, and grandfather to Mateo and Ruby. He was an avid outdoor enthusiast, a member of Bolton Canoe Club, a Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme instructor, a member of staff for Bolton Council's Youth Service instructing the young people of Bolton in outdoor activities, and more recently working with other independent providers of youth outdoor education.

He attended his first large incident in 1973, where he joined around 350 mountain rescue volunteers in the search for a missing pharmacist in the Ogwen Valley, North Wales. His most memorable search came in April 1991, when he found a six-year-old boy who had been missing overnight in the Trough of Bowland. After being involved in thousands of search and rescue incidents, it might be assumed that he'd recently taken a step back from front-line duties, but he was still very active, both on the hill and on water. Geoff was a qualified Rescue 3 Water Rescue Instructor, a very physically-demanding role. He was involved in the water to the response to flooding at Stockport and Didsbury on New Year's Day 2025, assisting in the rescue of over 500 people from flooded properties. His most recent land rescues were in October 2025, a search for a missing thirteen-year-old in darkness on Holcombe Moor, and the rescue of a fifteen-year-old from Cox Green quarry, Egerton. Geoff shared his knowledge, wisdom and experience throughout mountain rescue with new and old team members alike — content to use his experience to deliver training for Bolton and other regional teams, always tempered with his experience and dry wit, often concluded over a roll-up or pint in the pub.



Geoff was awarded the Horwich Civic Medal in 2003 and had been awarded the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal (2002), the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal (2012), the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal (2022) and the King's Coronation Medal (2023). In 2019, he was awarded the MREW 50 years' long service certificate and, in 2024, the 55 years' service certificate from the Lord Lieutenant of Greater Manchester. In May 2025, in recognition of his support for mountain rescue, he attended a garden party at Buckingham Palace with his daughter Felicity. Never assuming, always quick-witted, humorous and of impeccable integrity, Geoff was a hero and legend to family, friends and everyone in Bolton MRT. He will be deeply missed by all who knew him. ☹️

**Opposite:** Geoff taking a rest during a walk. **Above:** Swiftwater rescue boat training on the Menai Strait; helping to carry the stretcher during a rescue call-out © Bolton MRT.

**DAVE MATTHEWS**  
BOWLAND PENNINE MRT



Over sixty current and former team members of Bowland Pennine team were joined by representatives from across mountain rescue and the emergency services communities in December, to commemorate the passing of their long-standing team colleague, Dave Matthews.

Lining the driveway to Preston Crematorium, and to the strains of Amazing Grace played beautifully on the pipes by former Scots Dragoon Guardsman and team member Andy Daniels, they formed an honour guard to bring Dave to his last rest. Dave passed away in November, surrounded by his wife and family, following a long fight with cancer. He will be sadly missed.

He joined the team in September 1983 and served continuously for forty-two years as team member, medical officer and chairman, relinquishing this post only when illness prevented him from carrying on. As chairman, he was actively involved in the team's recent change from a charity to a CIO. Throughout his time, he saw the introduction and implementation of the original Mountain Rescue First Aid Certificate and CasCare programmes, and latterly assisted in the implementation of the now Remote Rescue Medical Technician qualifications. He also served as the MPSRO rep on the MREW medical subcommittee for some years, and in 2013 was made an honorary member for his service to mountain rescue and the team.

In his early years, Dave had roles including working for P&O and even as a zookeeper, but later became involved with the NHS as a registered nurse working with children and adults with learning

disabilities. After living abroad for a short while, he moved to Preston with the opportunity to practise as a community nurse and — always a nurse at heart — he fought hard for the health and wellbeing of learning disabled people and their families, developing the 'OK Health Check' assessment tool as part of his Masters degree. It became a nationally used Health Care Tool. His career later progressed into education and he worked as a senior lecturer in higher education at the University of Central Lancashire, where teaching and writing were his dream job. He published many articles in professional journals and found writing came easily to him. In 2006, he became a member and published contributor to ITC First, an awarding and regulatory body for those working in the provision of First Aid Training, and in this capacity was a major contributor to many of the training protocols adopted in mountain rescue. Along with fellow team members Ian Ordish and Keith Gillies, in 2008, he formed the company Lancashire First Aid Training Ltd. He also wrote and introduced specialist first aid training programmes for organisations such as Northumberland Fire and Rescue, UK Police Forces, and the international Maersk Offshore Wind company, which was adopted both nationally, across European waters, and now internationally, as best practice.

Outside of first aid, Dave was a prolific outdoorsman, a mountain leader and guide with experience of big mountain climbing in America, the Italian Dolomites, the French Alps and several treks in the Himalayas, including being a climbing member of a team that achieved the first ascent of the 6,078m Himalayan mountain, Shahib Chasa. In later years he became an accomplished inshore and offshore yachtsman, sailing extensively in both UK and European waters. It could very easily be said that Dave's was indeed, 'a life well lived'. He will be sadly missed by all for his prodigious experience, patience, sage advice and wit.

Dave is survived by his wife, Pauline, son Steven and daughter Debra, and a host of grandchildren, including his great



**Opposite:** Dave Matthews. **Below:** The 2006 winter snow rescue on Beacon Fell, which became iconic and featured in the national press and on our own front cover (left), Dave at the rear drag rope (stretcher head end) on the left hand side © Bowland Pennine MRT.



granddaughter Myah, only two months old, who he was overjoyed to be introduced to only a matter of weeks before he passed away and for whom he hung on so hard, to welcome into the world and his life. Rest in peace, Dave. ☹️

# news round

OCTOBER > JANUARY

## OCTOBER: LLANBERIS TEAM JOINS SEARCH FOR MISSING HIKER

The missing hiker, from Worcestershire, disappeared after he reached the 3,560ft summit at around 7.00 on the Monday morning and was later seen around midday at Bwlch Glas, where the Pyg Track meets the Llanberis Path.

A multi-agency search operation was launched to locate Kieran when police became increasingly concerned for his welfare. Extensive searches on the rugged terrain continued into Tuesday when police sadly confirmed that his body had been found.

'I would like to offer our heartfelt condolences to Kieran's family and friends,' said team chairman, Jurgen Dissmann. 'This is not the outcome any of us had hoped for, and our thoughts are with them at this very difficult time. Thank you to all of our team members who gave so much of their time and commitment during the search, including our coordinators who worked tirelessly throughout. We are also deeply grateful to our — Aberglaslyn MRT, North Wales Police and SARDA — for their support and collaboration during this extensive search.'

## NOVEMBER: INQUEST CONCLUDES THAT A WALKER LIKELY FELL MORE THAN 500 FEET TO HIS DEATH

A major search had been launched by Llanberis team, in May 2024, when the young student was reported missing by his family, in weather that was described as 'beyond atrocious', with 78 mph gusts on the peak.

The twenty-year-old had walked up Yr Wyddfa with his family, via the Llanberis Path, but his father and sister had decided to turn back due to the poor weather. Two hours later, he rang his father and reported that he was lost. Police were also reported to have received two dropped 999 calls from him, requesting mountain rescue and saying he was on Snowdon, before the second call ended. There was considerable wind noise in the background. The inquest heard there was no response when police tried calling and messaging him. A conclusion of an accident was recorded.

Kate Robertson, senior coroner for north-west Wales, said it was likely he had reached the top of the mountain and started his descent, but became 'disorientated' before losing his footing in treacherous weather conditions. The student's body was spotted by a coastguard rescue helicopter crew at Cwm Glas. She acknowledged 'the significant efforts made by the mountain rescue team and other emergency services in a very difficult and challenging situation.'

Rescuers had faced the risk of being blown off a ridge and, at one point, the search for him had been suspended overnight. The Llanberis Path is regarded as the easiest path up Yr Wyddfa but, in poor weather, it is still possible to lose the track. More than 35 rescuers were involved in the eighteen-hour mission.

**Above:** The Llanberis Path © Jeff Buck and licensed for reuse under the Creative Commons Licence.

# Awareness Dates

FOR YOUR DIARY:  
FEBRUARY TO  
APRIL 2026

## Time to Talk Day 5 February [timetotalkday.co.uk](http://timetotalkday.co.uk) #TimeToTalk

Time to Talk Day is the nation's biggest mental health conversation, a day for friends, families, communities and workplaces to come together to talk, listen and change lives. And did you know that the Rescue Benevolent Fund – in partnership with online mental health resources Togetherall and Rightsteps – is there to help support mountain and cave rescue team members and their families, encouraging all of us to take time to talk? Support the fund and you'll be supporting team members, when they need it. Because it's always good to talk.

## Galentine's Day 13 February: #galentinesday

Never heard of it? Neither had we. But apparently, Galentine's Day is a global celebration of women's friendship which grew from a popular sitcom episode! Be that as it may, a month ahead of International Women's Day, why not take a moment to celebrate the many women in and around our mountain and cave rescue teams, be they operational team members, trainers, fundraisers and support members, or the wives and partners who 'keep the home fires burning' as their other halves (male and female) head out at the ping of a text. We couldn't do it without them.

## International Love Your Pet Day 20 February: #LoveYourPetDay

On a day dedicated to celebrating the bond between humans and their four-legged companions, you'll find no greater bond than the one between a search dog handler and their trusty search dog. Search and rescue dogs play an important role in many a missing person search, and they're also great at attracting attention during fundraising events. So what better day to celebrate them? PS. We've also been known to rescue and recover a fair few pets to their grateful owners too...

## International Women's Day 8 March: #IWD2026 [internationalwomensday.com](http://internationalwomensday.com)

As the world celebrates women's achievements, take a moment to celebrate the amazing women in our teams, be they operational or enthusiastic support. On the hill, at base or at home. We couldn't do it without them.

## British Summer Time 29 March: #BritishSummerTime

Spring forward into summer and set your clocks an hour forward. From here on in, the evenings grow noticeably lighter until the middle of the year: more time for you to enjoy the hills and mountains. But be aware, it might still be chilly, there might still be snow on the tops (and the not-so-tops) and that soaking clag can still descend at speed, wiping out your bearings. So remember to pack that extra layer or two, think about carrying an emergency shelter, and make sure the phone is topped up in case you need to call for help.

## April Fool's Day 1 April: #AprilFools

If you already follow our member teams on social media, you'll be well aware we enjoy a 'fool' or two so keep your eyes peeled for this year's round of creativity. In previous years, we've had rescue sheep, rescue cats and rescue llamas, so who knows which animal species might be called into service this year...

## National Tea Day 21 April: #NationalTeaDay [nationalteaday.theteagroup.com](http://nationalteaday.theteagroup.com)

Nothing better than a mug of tea to calm the senses, invite and exchange of chatter and restore energy, and we guarantee that every mountain rescue base boasts a kettle, at least one massive box of tea bags and maybe even a packet or two of custard creams. Why not join us in this year's celebrations and raise a cuppa to the thousands of volunteers across England and Wales who are on call 24/7, tea or no tea, to come to the aid of those injured or lost in the mountains.



## DECEMBER: DOG HANDLERS THANK THOSE WHO EQUIPPED THEIR 'BODIES' WITH VITAL PPE

In 2025, Mountain Rescue Search Dogs England undertook a massive project to provide all their volunteer dogsbodies across the country with new PPE. These amazing people hide out on the hills in all weathers, all year round, day and night for the dogs to find by way of training.

The project was enabled thanks to a legacy and the kindness of a number of suppliers. Páramo Directional Clothing supplied waterproof Cascada jackets and Torres smocks and special thanks should go to the repair shop team who stitched on hundreds of 'dogsbody' badges. Montane supplied their brand new Cetus waterproof pants – before they hit the stores – perfect for keeping the bodies dry, when running away from the dogs and sitting in bogs. Military 1st imported dozens of MilTec Bivvy Bags and Camping Mats 'when nobody else would'. As well as protecting from the wind, rain and wet ground, these bags have perfect flecktarn camouflage so the dog teams are reliant entirely on scent rather than sight to find missing people.

Tolley Badges Ltd printed hundreds of handler and dogsbody badges for the new kit. CarolAnn at Origenals produced summer and winter search jackets to keep the dogs identifiable and safe on the hill.

With no permanent home as a charity, they also thanked Buxton team for the use of their base to store all the hundreds of items of kit and use of the space for the name tag stitching, picking and packing.

And finally they thanked the local bodies in the Peak District who met up at Buxton base with mountains of cake, to name and sort all of the hundreds of items ready for distribution.



The call-out had involved two walkers who became lost and stuck in the dark on Tryfan, two days before Christmas. In a social media post, the team explained that the walkers were 'descending the north ridge when they became lost/stuck in the dark above steep ground near the bottom of the mountain. Five team members deployed and lowered them to safe ground, before walking them down to the roadside.' It was the ideal opportunity to warn about the difficulties of navigating Tryfan during the winter months, and reiterate mountain safety messaging. 'Tryfan is very difficult to relate map to ground on. With the days at their shortest, take good, fully charged torches and leave enough time to work around any unforeseen navigation problems.'

Conversation below the line quickly took a turn for the critical – including observations about the need to 'charge' those we rescue – prompting a further post from the team: 'Well, didn't think we would have to moderate the comments section, but given some of you have got a bit boisterous... None of you know who, why or how these people came to need help. The important thing is, they felt able to call when they did. For all of you shouting about charging people, that they are somehow lesser people than you, just know everyone needs a hand at some point, regardless of ability or experience. While the Christmas

Thinking  
Mountain Rescue  
Should Charge  
People?

Cool... let's have a chat about that

Top: Call-out on Tryfan © OVMRO. Left: Central Beacons' memes © CBMRT.

# news round

## OCTOBER > JANUARY

## DECEMBER: ONLINE COMMENTS AFTER CALL-OUT SPARK RESPONSE ACROSS MOUNTAIN RESCUE

Ogwen Valley team spoke out after online criticism followed a pre-Christmas call-out on one of Eryri's most challenging peaks. This in turn inspired a set of memes from the Central Beacons team which were widely shared across mountain rescue socials.

spirit clearly didn't last long for some of you, maybe like, or scroll on instead of criticising.'

Soon afterwards, Central Beacons took up the conversation on their socials: 'We see it all the time in the comments: "Charge them"... "They shouldn't have been there"... "Why risk your lives?"... Here's our take: We are not here to judge. We always want people to feel they can call us – no embarrassment, no fear of being told off, no worry about being blamed. Waiting too long to ask for help is when things get dangerous. Absolutely everyone makes mistakes in the hills. Including us. That's how you learn. That's how experience is built. And for the record... we've never rescued anyone wearing Crocs!'

'Most people we rescue are well prepared – they're just unlucky. Stuff happens. So a small ask: Let's be kind in the comment section. Many people we rescue are seriously injured, already dealing with the physical and emotional fall-out of what's happened. Please don't make assumptions. Kindness always helps more than judgement. We want you to enjoy the mountains, explore them with confidence, and always feel safe knowing help is there if you need it.'

'Support your local mountain rescue team if you can – and above all, keep getting outside.'

But you're all  
volunteers?

That's right:

We choose this  
We understand the risks  
We train to manage them

If we don't mind, nor should  
you, but we love that you're  
looking out for us.

Let's Be Honest

Absolutely everyone makes  
mistakes in the hills.  
Including us.

Most of our team members  
have their own "what on  
earth was I thinking?" story

That's how you learn.  
That's how experience is  
built.

We're not telling you to take  
unnecessary risks but just  
that none of us are perfect.

## DECEMBER: DOG RESCUE FROM LAKES MINE SHAFT

It was a dry and cloudy morning when Cumbria Police called Coniston team to go to the assistance of a dog that had fallen down a mine shaft.

The dog had got into difficulty at Red Dell. Two vehicles were deployed and team members met up with the family party. A rope system was set up and the dog was recovered fifteen foot down and put in a harness before brought up to the surface safely and uninjured, very happy to be reunited with his owner.



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

## Focus on Assynt MRT

BY TISI DUTTON



© Tim Hamblet

Think of Assynt and Sutherland and you might conjure up images of rocky Ben More Assynt and its sister Conival, the broad landscape of the five peaks of Quinag, the pointed double hump of Cùl Mòr or the long whale's back of Ben Klibreck. All form part of the vast area that forms the Assynt team patch, 7,500 sq km ranging from the north shores of Dornoch Firth, up the east side of the country to the north coast and west across the peatlands of the Flow Country to arrive at the delectable beaches and coves of the west Highlands. But surprisingly, it is not these mountains that make up Assynt's most recent hotspot.

Tourism up here takes many forms and there is a growing number of people who want to explore the lower landscape, and the path to the Bone Caves is an example of this. The 4.5km walk heads up a wild and beautiful valley toward Breabag, slopes rising steeply on either side, red deer often on the horizon, a burn running beside the length of the path, at times fed by large springs that gush crystal clear out of the hillside and spill across the path. The caves are reached by an at times exposed path. Despite this, they're easily accessible, and the imagination can turn them into places of drama and a wild existence thousands of years ago, when they were once the lair of bear, lynx and wolves.

Aided by alluring shots on social media, people are understandably intrigued to see these places. But visiting them can be a challenge as a number of people have found. The path is rockier than might be expected, very uneven underfoot at times, and slippery in wet weather. It's easy to take

a tumble, and the number of call-outs the team has had to this area has increased by almost 75% in the past year. The injuries dealt with are mostly to lower legs, although more complex incidents have occurred, which have led to a request for the Coastguard helicopter crew to assist. Flying into the head of this valley can be testing in the best of weather, and a rescue might have to be achieved by a long winch, a challenge in unpredictable winds created by the encircling landscape.

Extracting a casualty has been helped greatly by using our Titan stretcher. The much-valued but heavy McInnes stretcher has been superseded by the lightness of the Titan, with its wheel and detachable handles. Both the wheel and the handles

make it relatively simple to extract a packaged casualty to roadside, even when that means leaving the narrow path and heading across the steep heathery slopes: the Titan crosses deep foliage, rocky ground, burns and culverts extremely well, and it can be supported on either side by team members without much of a struggle. The cushioning effect of the wheel makes for a potentially more comfortable ride than if the stretcher was being carried by the team. If large areas of heather or snow have to be covered, the wheel can easily be detached and the stretcher pulled along, the heavy-duty plastic cover which clips underneath sliding easily across these sort of surfaces. The Titan is our most-used piece of equipment, and there is often the option of assembling it roadside, loading it with kit and heading on up the hill.

The Titan can also be a useful fundraising tool. Ten Assynt members took part in the recent Golspie Back Yard Ultra. Lap 3 is traditionally run in fancy dress, so of course the team ran the 6.7km course pushing the unladen Titan. It was an eye-catching spectacle and helped to raise money toward's the purchase of a second Titan stretcher, for our new base in Thurso. Any mountain rescue team in the UK has to be very resourceful in their fundraising attempts. While Assynt is no more special than any other team, the sparse population of the vast area covered makes fundraising especially challenging. People are generous, but pockets are not bottomless and funding fatigue sets in. As with all teams, covering core costs is a constant part of life in the team. 🐾

**FIND ASSYNT MRT AT ASSYNTMOUNTAINRESCUE.CO.UK AND ON FACEBOOK @ASSYNTMOUNTAINRESCUE**



© Mark Worrall



## 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.**

**Please address any questions regarding this page to: wellbeingofficer@scottishmountainrescue.org**



Former RAF Mountain Rescue Team member Alan Swadel completed the 160-mile Spine Race MRT Challenge North in 2025, taking on the demanding route as a tribute to his long-time friend and mentor, Dave 'Heavy' Whalley.

With triple-match funding from his employer, Alan raised an exceptional £10,120 for Scottish Mountain Rescue. In November, he visited Glenmore Lodge to hand over the cheque in person — a moment filled with warmth, gratitude and many shared memories of Heavy.

His achievement not only honours a much-loved figure in the mountain rescue community, but also provides vital support for the volunteers who continue that lifesaving work today.

**Top:** Alan (right) presents his cheque to volunteers George McEwan (left) and Bill Strachan (centre), who were delighted to accept on behalf of Scottish Mountain Rescue © SMR.

## MEET OUR SUPPORTERS



We should make it clear that not all fundraisers need to undertake huge feats of physical endurance! November saw a beautiful creative fundraiser from SMR supporter Sandra, who crafted no less than eighty 'mountain faeries' to sell at Christmas markets in the Scottish Borders. Her magical creations — the result of months of hard work — saw a brilliant £612 raised in support of Scottish Mountain Rescue.

A big thank you to all our fantastic fundraisers!

**Above:** One of Sandra's beautiful Mountain Faeries on Sandra's stall at a local Christmas market © SMR.

# The Ochils: Scotland's Mountain Underdogs



DAN MALTBY OCHILS MRT

To anyone travelling north towards Stirling, you'll spot the Ochils long before you realise what they are. A crooked volcanic wall running east to west, they sit quietly behind Stirling like a line of sleeping giants; overshadowed by the postcard peaks of the Highlands just up the road.

From our base in Fishcross, Clackmannanshire (Scotland's smallest county) we cover a surprisingly large patch: from the Gargunnoch Hills in the west, all the way to the Lomond Hills of Fife in the east. It's a span of more than 40 kilometres of steep corries, deeply carved glens, rolling plateau, and weather systems that can turn from 'taps off' to 'whiteout' in half an hour.

## DUMYAT: OUR POSTER BOY

If the Ochils have a celebrity peak, it's Dumyat. Around 50,000 people climb it each year, making it one of the most visited hills of its height in Scotland. Families, dog walkers, students, mountain bikers, runners. Half the Central Belt seems to have been dragged up it at some point.

Its popularity brings pressure. Every year we respond to multiple lower limb injuries, usually the result of slips on rocky paths or enthusiastic walkers turning up in trainers better suited to the high street than the hillside. Despite its modest 418 metres, Dumyat has seen more than a few helicopter evacuations. When you have a casualty on a steep, awkward section and time matters, altitude is irrelevant. The safest way out is with help from the sky.

Dumyat sums up the paradox of the Ochils: accessible, friendly-looking, yet more than capable of catching people out.

## WHERE THE HILLS GET SERIOUS

A few miles east and the tone of the landscape shifts entirely. The Alva, Tillicoultry and Dollar Glens; deep, dramatic cuts into the range, are where the Ochils show their teeth. These glens were carved by meltwater at the end of the last Ice Age, leaving behind near-vertical sides, boulder fields, narrow paths, and terrain that funnels wind and water with enthusiasm. They are beautiful, wild places, but they also demand respect. Lower leg injuries are again our most common call-out here, but the extraction is rarely simple. The topography turns a straightforward stretcher carry into a prolonged, technical team effort.

Route choice becomes an art form: too high, and you're traversing steep uneven ground. Too low, and you're negotiating slick rock and narrow crossings. It's easy to underestimate just how challenging a 'small Scottish hill range' can become.

## LE PLATEAU

Above the glens lies a broad, rolling plateau. On a clear summer afternoon it can look almost benign — a big green carpet stretching into Fife. But bring in low cloud or late light and it changes character quickly. The plateau lacks the distinctive navigational features you find in the Highlands. It's full of gentle rises, false tops, and subtle watershed lines that can lead walkers away from their intended descent without them noticing. Every year, we assist people who've simply lost the path, missed a turn or been pulled into a different glen entirely.

On bad-weather weekends, visibility-related incidents outnumber slips and trips.



## WHY THE OCHILS BITE BACK

Part of the Ochils' deceptive nature lies in their geology. This is ancient volcanic country: hard, resistant lava flows that have been tilted over millions of years. It's why the southern slopes rise steeply straight out of towns like Alva, Menstrie, and Tillicoultry, giving the range its distinctive 'big wall' appearance.

Steep slopes, hard ground, and quickly changing weather combine to create conditions more serious than first-time visitors expect. The Ochils may lack the altitude of the Highlands, but they share many of the same risks, sometimes compressed into a smaller footprint.

## VISIT THE OCHILS

The Ochils overlook the ground where William Wallace rose to fame, and we like to imagine he was a regular participant in the Dumyat Hill Race. They're historic, accessible and deceptively serious hills. For many, the Ochils is where our love of mountains began. Visit them, respect them, and you'll discover one of Scotland's most underrated upland ranges..

FIND OCHILS MRT AT [OMRT.ORG.UK](http://OMRT.ORG.UK) AND ON FACEBOOK @[OCHILSMOUNTAINRESCUETEAM](https://www.facebook.com/OCHILSMOUNTAINRESCUETEAM)

# Scottish news round

NOVEMBER > JANUARY



As winter conditions settled across Scotland's hills in mid-November, bringing early snow, and high winds alongside the shorter days, Scottish Mountain Rescue teams continued to respond to a wide range of incidents across the country.

Killin MRT was called out on 18 November to assist a hillwalker in difficulty, caught in full winter conditions on Ben More. With support from Coastguard Helicopter R199, team members were airlifted partway up the mountain before navigating challenging terrain to reach the individual and bring them to safety.



The team praised the walker's preparation: warm layers, a survival bag, whistle, torch and extra food and hot drink — simple items that kept them warm, visible, and bought vital time while help was on the way.

Skye MRT gathered in early December for their AGM, marking the end of their busiest year on record with more than 100 incidents, including several lengthy searches. The meeting also marked a significant moment for the team as Neil Urquhart stepped down as team leader after six years in the role and nearly four decades of service. His calm leadership, deep knowledge of the Cuillin and steady presence at challenging call-outs have guided Skye MRT through some of their most demanding periods.

Tweed Valley MRT experienced an exceptionally challenging 24-hour period in mid-October, responding to three separate call-outs across their patch. Late on 18 October, they assisted Police Scotland with a search for a missing person in woodland



















near Beecraigs, supported by Ochils MRT and SARDA Southern Scotland. By morning they were helping the Scottish Ambulance Service reach an injured mountain biker at Glentress and, by early evening, they were on the hill again — this time locating two overdue walkers on the remote ridge between the Moffat Water and Ettrick valleys, with support from Moffat MRT. A demanding run of incidents, but three successful outcomes.

Lastly, more good news from SARDA Southern Scotland. The team celebrated a significant milestone when newly qualified Search Dog Woody made his first live find during an Ochils team call-out in November — reaching a missing person in a difficult-to-access area. Well done, Woody!

Clockwise from top left: Winter arrives with a vengeance © Killin MRT; Tweed Valley vehicles during a busy run of call-outs © Tweed Valley MRT; Search Dog Woody © SARDA Southern Scotland; Neil Urquhart © Skye MRT.

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Contact secretary@rescuebenevolent.fund to find out how you can be an ambassador.

supporting mountain and cave team members



Find us at [rescuebenevolent.fund](https://rescuebenevolent.fund)  
To donate, go to [rescuebenevolent.fund](https://rescuebenevolent.fund) and click 'Donate'



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