

mountain rescue

ISSN 1756-8749

£7.50



SPRING
2026 **96**



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



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WELCOME TO
ISSUE 96:
SPRING 2026

Mountain Rescue is the **only**
official magazine for
mountain rescue in England,
Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

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NEXT ISSUE:
ISSUE 97
SUMMER 2026

Copy date:
Friday 12 June

Please supply editorial in Word
and images as JPG, EPS or
PDF (300 dpi)

Advertising artwork must
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embedded PDF
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Cover
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Penrith team
members Tess and
Ali during a training
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IS A CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION
REGISTERED IN ENGLAND AND WALES NO: 1178090
REGISTERED OFFICE: C/O ARMSTRONG WATSON
2 EUROPE WAY, COCKERMOUTH, CUMBRIA CA13 0RJ

inthisissue



20

Evaluating risk on the Wall of Walls

Will Gadd on his and Kirk Mauthner's three-year quest to tackle
a particularly challenging ice climb in the Canadian Rockies

25

Rate your rucksack: MREW Equipment Officer Paul Smith
invites you to take part in an online survey to rate your favourite
rucksacks — which ones work for you and why?

32

The Forgotten Path: Part 2: Freya Barnett from Dementia UK
continues her series about the nature of dementia and how
mountain rescue teams can increase their knowledge

38

Understanding trauma: Therapist Catherine Donnelly explains
that there are no rules about what experiences might be
'traumatic' — it's how you react to it that makes the difference

40

Inspiring women, inspiring others: Max Swinhoe talks about
her experience as an operational team member with an
'upper limb deficiency'. Prepare to be inspired!

what's in at a glance

INCIDENTS/STATS: 6

CASUALTY CARE: 8-9

TRAINING: 10-19

EQUIPMENT: 26-29

RESEARCH: 31

BENEVOLENT FUND: 34-39

HINKES THINKS: 42-43

TEAMS & REGIONS: 44-59

SCOTLAND: 60-63

WHO'S WHO: 64-66

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for spring**

**Raising funds
for rescue**

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CLIMBING

ADVENTURE

TRUE-LIFE STORIES

YOUNG READERS

NAVIGATION

WELLBEING

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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 and see for yourself.

TEAM LOGOS, BRAND GUIDELINES, AND SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

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

GROWING OUR DIGITAL NETWORK

Check out our LinkedIn profile 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 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 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.



1 January to 8 March 2026

PAUL BRAIN MREW STATISTICS OFFICER

Lake District		North Wales		South Wales	
Cockermouth	5	Aberdyfi	7	Brecon	23
Coniston	10	Aberglaslyn	9	Central Beacons	20
Duddon & Furness	3	Llanberis	45	Longtown	9
Kendal	10	North East Wales	9	Western Beacons	6
Keswick	30	Ogwen Valley	34		58
Kirkby Stephen	4	South Snowdonia	9		
Langdale Ambleside	20		113	South West England	
Patterdale	20			Avon & Somerset	7
Penrith	9	Peak District		SARA	9
Wasdale	21	Buxton	21		16
	132	Derby	14		
		Edale	17	Yorkshire Dales	
Drones		Glossop	10	CRO	15
Lake District	4	Kinder	14	Scarborough & Ryedale	7
	4	Oldham	8	Upper Wharfedale	7
		Woodhead	11		29
Mid Pennines			95	Search Dogs	
Bolton	4	Peninsula		Lake District MRSD	3
Bowland Pennine	4	Cornwall East	0	MRSDE Mid Pennine	3
Calder Valley	2	Cornwall West	1	MRSDE Nesra	0
Holme Valley	5	Dartmoor Ashburton	4	MRSDE Peak District	5
Rossendale & Pendle	6	Dartmoor Plymouth	1	MRSDE Yorkshire Dales	1
	21	Dartmoor Tavistock	5	SARDA South West	0
North East		Exmoor	4	SARDA Wales	3
Cleveland	10	North Dartmoor	4	SARDA South Wales	1
North of Tyne	7		19		16
Northumberland	11				
Swaledale	14				
Teesdale & Weardale	7				
	49				

✱ Sorted according to geographical region and by closed incident reports.

My 'listen and learn' tour of England and Wales continues...



ANDY BUCHAN CEO ELECT

Another three months in and my 'getting to know you' tour of teams continues apace, with twenty-seven teams now visited, and it continues to interest and fascinate in equal measure! I'm happy to say that — largely — the response has been welcoming. Yes, there have been elements of scepticism but, on the whole, I think people have appreciated that I've been open and direct with them, and haven't avoided any major issues.

I hope teams will reflect on the fact that I am seeking to understand them and undertaking this grand tour is helping build a broader view. A number of topics continue to crop up, across England and Wales. As you all might expect, these include the perennial twin issues of 'national communications', both internal and external, and national income — more specifically, in the latter case, how teams can access support for training. But other concerns are beginning to emerge.

PEOPLE TRAINING, PEER REVIEW AND LOOKING AFTER OUR TEAM MEMBERS

'People training' comes up regularly. I appreciate that historically, and perfectly understandably, mountain rescue has primarily focused training resources and development on the key operational skills, the things you need at the sharp end of rescue: the ability to work together in steep terrain, the technical rope skills, the fast-water skills, the medical and casualty care skills. And I don't question that.

But alongside this, we need to develop the skills of people management, what many might view as the 'softer' skills — good communication and motivation, emotional intelligence and empathy, the ability to actively listen and give credit where credit is due, accountability and honesty — the sort of skills which sit firmly under the banner of 'wellbeing'. In other words, I don't believe we are looking after our people as well as we look after our casualties and I really want to see this element being high profile in the organisation.

With this in mind, I'm pleased to see that a course is being set up to assist those team leaders who may be very adept in the operational skills, but may not be 'natural leaders'. But leadership is just one aspect — we should be looking at the culture within teams, how ALL team members relate to and respect each other.

Closely aligned to this is the topic of peer review and I am aware that, while many

teams have engaged enthusiastically with the peer review process, there are those who equally enthusiastically prefer not to! This fascinates me. Surely there are very real benefits to taking a more active interest in how other teams operate, and receiving constructive feedback on how we each operate, not least the ability to work more efficiently together? I will be exploring further.

ONGOING CONCERNS ABOUT THE FUTURE FOR TEAMS

Do I plan to change how we're structured? No. The changes that are required of teams will be led more by changes in society as a whole, rather than any internal structure being thrust upon them. The real question for me is this: How can MREW better support the teams without them losing their unique capacity for self-management, their autonomy? Let's harness the strengths that are already there.

I am looking at how we can better address the imbalances between teams — in terms of both finance and available resource. So watch this space... by the AGM in May, I will want to throw a question out to the teams about how THEY want to develop, to better support themselves.

TAKING A POSITIVE VIEW OF OUR INCIDENT STATS

I can't stress enough that I want this to be a really positive organisation. With this in mind, I'm interested in how we and the media have tended to view the incident statistics, with a number of elements routinely noted. These include 'human complacency', where hillgoers overestimate their own abilities and head out under-prepared for the day ahead. Then there's the underlying suggestion that accidents shouldn't happen, that hillgoers should always be able to mitigate risk. What are we saying here? That they should, by implication, stay away from the hills if they are unable to, for whatever reason? And there's the focus on the age categories involved — not least the rise in younger

people drawn to the hills and mountains through the influence of social media. But I would argue that human complacency affects every category. And, potentially, each and every one of us.

Alongside these factors, we talk about the growth in activity for rescue teams across England and Wales, the potential strain on our resources, particularly in the popular spots. But whereas that growth may be exponential for us, we should see it in the context of the number of people going out. Yes, we see the effects at the sharp end, but let's not forget that 99.99% of people heading for the hills actually have a GOOD day. We are picking up people and helping them make the best of a bad day, but there's an awful lot more we don't see.

I was struck by a BBC article, in March, about the rise in avalanche deaths in the French Alps. Frédéric Bonnevie, a guide and mountain patroller for 32 years noted that 'the new generation want to be the best, the biggest and the quickest', something we might observe here too. There's an impatience to tick things off the list, rather than delay gratification for the sake of safety (a theme we see in Will Gadd's excellent piece on page 20). The increased incidence of avalanches has been linked to climate change, but rescuers in the Alps feel that 'human complacency' plays a significant role too, and that the former is 'easier to overcome than the latter'.

'You have to keep in mind,' says Bonnevie, 'that the mountains are a magnificent playground, a field of adventures. Let's make sure their [those adventurers] memories are positive ones.'

Out of almost 4,000 calls to mountain rescue in 2025, the greater majority ended positively and that's down to YOU. As Bonnevie counsels, you too are making sure that those you rescue have positive memories despite their 'bad day', and it's easy to lose sight of that. So I'll be looking at how I can both inspire and maintain that positivity.

Until next time then, when I truly will be 'in the hot seat'! ☺



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Remote Rescue Medical Technician Conference 2025

DR NICHOLA ARCHER DERBY MRT

The Remote Rescue Medical Technician (RRMT) Conference 2025 was held over a rather damp weekend in September last year. Thankfully, the weather did nothing to dampen spirits. Instead, the participants enjoyed a blend of active learning, skills practice and challenging scenarios that mirrored the realities we may face out on the hill — along with more than a hint of the muddy knees you would expect from a mountain rescue conference!

The conference was open to all MREW members who were keen to refresh and enhance their casualty care skills. While the content was primarily aimed at RRMTs, attendance was by no means limited to those already holding the qualification, and everyone was welcome to join in the fun.

This was the first RRMT Conference to include a residential element. The venue, Boundless Outdoors Activity Centre at Bell Heath in Worcestershire, was chosen for its excellent outdoor facilities and central location. Having everyone on site for the duration of the weekend brought clear benefits. Evenings provided valuable opportunities to catch up with old friends and meet new ones, while the spacious facilities allowed us to spread out and create effective learning environments for small-group teaching.

The programme deliberately kept lectures to a minimum, instead focusing on workshop learning followed by scenarios designed to put knowledge and skills to the test. Saturday began with a small number of introductory lectures before delegates rotated through a series of workshops in small groups.

Topics included catastrophic haemorrhage, airway management and gas safety, fracture management, mental capacity, heat illness, analgesia, NEXUS rules and crush injuries. The emphasis throughout was on practical application in a mountain rescue context.

We were also fortunate to be joined by Richard Moss from Wasdale MRT, who delivered a thought-provoking talk entitled Confessions of a Casualty Carer, on Saturday evening. Richard shared insights from a particularly challenging call-out, offering honest reflections on the need for adaptability and calm decision-making when plans have to change in response to complex rescue environments.

Sunday saw a series of scenarios set up around the grounds of Bell Heath, allowing participants to put their newly refreshed skills into practice. Small group sizes ensured plenty of hands-on involvement, while the scenarios themselves were designed to stretch participants — often requiring a certain amount of lateral thinking.

For me, one of the most valuable aspects of the weekend was the opportunity to meet and work with members from teams across the country and to learn more about how they operate. Conversations over the weekend highlighted shared challenges and common lessons learned that can strengthen teams everywhere. The chance to exchange ideas and experiences in an informal, supportive setting was both insightful and encouraging.

Since September, the organising team has had the opportunity to review feedback from the conference, and we were delighted with the overwhelmingly positive responses. In particular, delegates highlighted the small-group learning in a supportive, relaxed learning environment. I also caught up with Graeme Poole from Derby MRT, who kindly shared his thoughts on the weekend.

'I enjoyed the weekend in several ways. Firstly, there was a lot of learning, but the presenters were highly engaging, meaning that a lot of it has



Images © Dr Nichola Archer.

stuck. It was also very practical, recognising that the mountain rescue environment is very different from a classroom, and that the best outcomes often require a degree of judgement and adaptability. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the opportunity to meet and share experiences with folk from other MRTs was both fun and invaluable.'

Of course, there is always room for improvement, and we are extremely grateful to all participants and instructors who took the time to provide constructive suggestions for future events. These will undoubtedly play an important role in shaping the next conference.

Finally, sincere thanks go to all the instructors and Richard Moss for generously sharing their time, knowledge and expertise, throughout the weekend. I would also like to thank my fellow conference organisers, David Lee and Tariq Qureshi, along with Alistair Morris (MREW Medical Director), for their hard work in making the event such a success. This weekend was also made possible through the generous support of the Langdale Ambleside team, whose funding enabled the conference to be offered free of charge to all participants.

Looking ahead, the next RRMT Conference is expected to take place in 2027. It promises to be another opportunity for learning, collaboration and strengthening of the medical capabilities of mountain rescue teams across the country. We hope to see you there. 📍

medical

TRAINING CALENDAR 2026

(AT TIME OF PUBLICATION – MORE DATES TO FOLLOW)

mrew

FPE COURSE (SAR PRODUCTS): OLDHAM MRT 11 JANUARY		FPE COURSE (SAR PRODUCTS): MPSRO & PDMRO 8 FEBRUARY		CENTRE FOR SEARCH RESEARCH INITIAL RESPONSE COURSE: 1 MARCH		FPE COURSE (SAR PRODUCTS): SWSARA 8 MARCH		FPE COURSE (SAR PRODUCTS): LBSAMRA 19 APRIL	
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WINTER FUNDAMENTALS: AVIEMORE 12-14 JANUARY		WINTER FUNDAMENTALS: AVIEMORE 9-11 FEBRUARY		MREW SMALL HILL PARTY LEADER COURSE: PGL 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		JUNE		JULY		AUGUST			
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SEARCH FIELD SKILLS (SFS): CAERPHILLY 19-21 SEPTEMBER		PDMRO FOUNDATION COURSE 9-11 OCTOBER		OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY: TEAM LEADER DAY: EDALE BASE 14 MARCH ROPE RESCUE JOINT TRAINING EVENT: JCB, STAFFORDSHIRE 16-17 MAY JESIP DEBRIEF COURSE: BOWLAND PENNINE GARSTANG BASE 28 MAY PREHOSPITAL TRAUMA LIFE SUPPORT AND MEDIA LEVEL 1 & 2 TBC					
SEARCH PLANNING MANAGEMENT (SPM1) TBC SEARCH PLANNING MANAGEMENT (SPM1 REFRESHER) TBC SEARCH PLANNING MANAGEMENT (SPM2) TBC									



Teamwork, excellence, passion, caring

PHIL 'RIGGER' RIDLEY MREW TRAINING OFFICER

A while ago I was asked to give my two penn'orth on the mountain rescue shared values of teamwork, excellence, passion and caring. From a training point of view, over recent months, and looking ahead, I can safely say all these values stand out and are there for all to see.

It was great to have a number of guests, CEO Elect Andy Buchan and Alex Perks (Police Service Practitioner, National JESIP Team) attend this year's Small Group Party Leader course, in February — held for the second time at PGL Boreatton Park, Shrewsbury — and to hear their encouraging feedback on the weekend.

For Alex, it was an opportunity to see how MREW actively encourages and uses the JESIP principles and promotes interoperability. Alex offered further training opportunities with a JESIP Debrief course, something which a number of teams have been asking MREW to consider. For the participants, all appeared to leave with new formed friendships, knowledge, experience and

conversations from team leaders, around various topics, and the agreement that communication and sharing of ideas, systems and devised procedures be encouraged rather than kept in-house. We all do similar things, so why not share the knowledge and experiences gained. One of the guest presenters, Sergeant Rob Simpson from Cheshire Rural Crime Team (also an enthusiastic advocate of what 'we' as MR volunteers do), gave another perspective on major incident joint working — yes, more JESIP interoperability and wellbeing — with regards to training and operations, and how things aren't always as straightforward as the 'classroom table top exercise' would have you believe when applied to 'real time' in the field. With responding and communicating at major incidents becoming increasingly complex, the public's expectations (as we know) of all involved is high. As a training officer, I am again encouraged to see that collaborations between teams and statutory services are proving to be worthwhile and benefitting all who participate.



TEAMWORK, EXCELLENCE, PASSION, CARING

As the tempo and type of mountain rescue call-outs continue to rise, the need to build into training sessions things like responder wellbeing, emotional preparedness, crisis management and risk assessment remain a focus for this year. These can be seen happening at team level, but also by having inclusion in the various training courses on offer. For example, the Foundation and Small Group Party Leader courses both have sessions delivered by wellbeing leads and several police negotiators, especially in regard to dealing with 'someone in crisis'. Obviously these are wider topics to define and explore fully. However, being able to pass on this type of training, even in a

condensed way, will make us aware and benefit us as mountain rescue volunteers.

TEAMWORK, EXCELLENCE, PASSION, CARING

Two pilot Winter Fundamentals courses were delivered in January and February. Feedback from attendees has been positive. The ongoing aim is to tailor the training and learning outcomes specifically towards mountain rescue scenarios rather than just be a standard winter skills course. Each three-day course was held in the Cairngorms, and it would be nice to see this as an annual offering to all MREW members. Not every team will experience avalanche conditions, but operating in severe weather and snowy environments is something all will do at some point. (See Paul Edisbury's article on page 13).

The scheduled Rope Rescue Exchange, Learning and Improving event on 16 May, at JCB's Wardlow Quarry in Staffordshire, will be another opportunity for teams from around the country to partner up and share ideas, reflect on experiences, demonstrate kit and procedures. It's another encouraging collaboration between teams, regions and statutory services which I'm looking forward to seeing come to fruition.

TEAMWORK, EXCELLENCE, PASSION, CARING

'Train Smart, Rescue Easy' is hopefully still a driving message which is relevant to what we are all doing. I believe we are always learning and improving, which is why I'm passionate about the importance of communicating and sharing knowledge, skills and standardising processes across the organisation by continuing the inter-team and regional cross training. 🙌

Opposite: February's Party Leader Course © Phil Ridley.
Below: Group shot © Colin Ashcroft.



training

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Water courses: (DEFRA Compliant)

- Swiftwater & Flood Responder
- Swiftwater & Flood Rescue Technician
- Swiftwater & Flood Rescue Advanced
- Rescue from Vehicles in the Water
- Water & Flood Team Leader
- Management of Water & Flood Related Incidents

Technical Rope Rescue Courses:

- Technical Rope Rescue Operator
- Technical Rope Rescue Supervisor

Medical/Trauma Courses:

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- FREC Level 3 & 4
- Safe Administration of Lifesaving Medicine
- PHTLS
- Immediate Life-support

Instructor Courses:

- Swiftwater & Flood Rescue Technician Instructor
- Technical Rope Rescue Instructor

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FOLLOWING LAST YEAR'S SUCCESSFUL EVENT, SWALEDALE MRT INVITES YOU TO THE SECOND

RRMT CPD DAY




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:

Contact Tim Cain MBE via tim.cain@swaledalemrt.org.uk

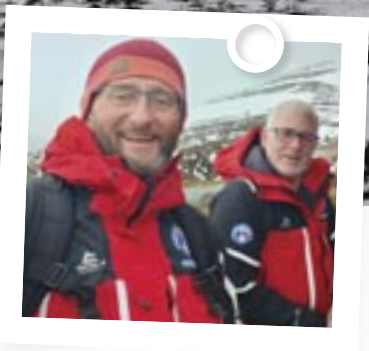
Expressions of interest for planning ASAP. Firm bids by 1 May 2026.



MREW Winter Fundamentals course

PAUL EDISBURY KINDER MRT

There is something honest about operating in winter conditions. It strips away complacency and exposes any weakness in kit, movement or judgement. It's the perfect classroom for the three-day MREW Winter Fundamentals Course, a programme designed to strengthen individual readiness for mountain rescue professionals through practical, mountain-focused training.



I attended the course hoping to sharpen the basics. I left reminded that in winter rescue, the basics are everything. This course delivered on my expectations but also delivered so much more. It was great to see so many other mountain rescue teams in the area as well. A six-hour drive away from my operational region, and I bump into team members from a neighbouring team. Buxton MRT spent several days training in the same area and kindly invited myself and Andy Smith for an evening meal and a catch-up. Which was warmly welcomed.

Movement on steep and mixed ground: The Cairngorms delivered exactly what we needed: steep snow slopes, icy sections and mixed terrain that demanded attention. We revisited core techniques in crampon and axe work, focusing on balance, efficiency and security under load.

What stood out was how quickly poor habits reveal themselves in winter. Footwork becomes clumsy. Axe placements get rushed. Over the three days, those rough edges were smoothed out. Movement became more deliberate, more economical, and more confident.

Approaches, descents and casualty access: Reaching a casualty in winter terrain is rarely straightforward. We practised structured approaches and controlled ascents and descents to simulated casualty sites, continually assessing risk, terrain traps and escape options. The emphasis was not just on 'getting there', but on getting there safely, with enough capacity left to do the job. That

shift in mindset from urgency to controlled professionalism was a key takeaway.

Human factors in the cold: Winter magnifies human factors. Fatigue creeps in faster. Communication gets shorter. Decisions can become reactive. Walking in deep snow quickly reminds you of your fitness level.

We explored how stress, cold, darkness and time pressure affect judgement. Through scenario-based discussions, we challenged assumptions, examined decision traps and reinforced the importance of clear communication and shared understanding within small teams. It was a timely reminder that technical skill alone does not make a safe rescuer.

Snow and ice anchors – building trust in the system: Constructing snow and ice anchors for casualty security was another core element. From snow and ice axe anchor systems, we practised building, testing and critiquing each other's set-ups.

The focus was on efficiency and redundancy, building anchors that inspire confidence because they have been properly assessed, not just because they 'look right', reinforcing the principle that in winter rescue, anchors are life support systems.

Risk management and avalanche awareness: Avalanche considerations were embedded throughout the course rather than treated as a stand-alone topic. Terrain assessment, snowpack awareness and safe travel techniques were constantly revisited. More importantly, we discussed decision-making in avalanche terrain,

when to push on, when to re-route and when to turn back. The emphasis was clear: operational effectiveness must never come at the expense of sound risk judgement.

Operating in darkness and harsh conditions: As the light faded and temperatures dropped, the learning did not stop. Moving, navigating and maintaining performance in darkness brought a new layer of realism. Energy management, hydration discipline and team cohesion became critical. The winter environment does not care how experienced you are, it demands respect. The course reinforced how preparation and self-awareness directly influence performance.

Final reflections: What made this course stand out was not just the technical content, it was the atmosphere. We arrived with experience, but not complacent. There was an openness to learning, to being challenged and to refining the fundamentals.

For me, the biggest takeaway was this: winter rescue competence is not built on advanced tricks or complex systems. It is built on doing the simple things exceptionally well, moving efficiently, thinking clearly, managing risk and looking after each other.

Three days in the Cairngorms was enough to remind us that winter will always test us. The difference is whether we have put the work in beforehand. Moving forward it is now all about consolidating and practising the skills from this course. 🧡

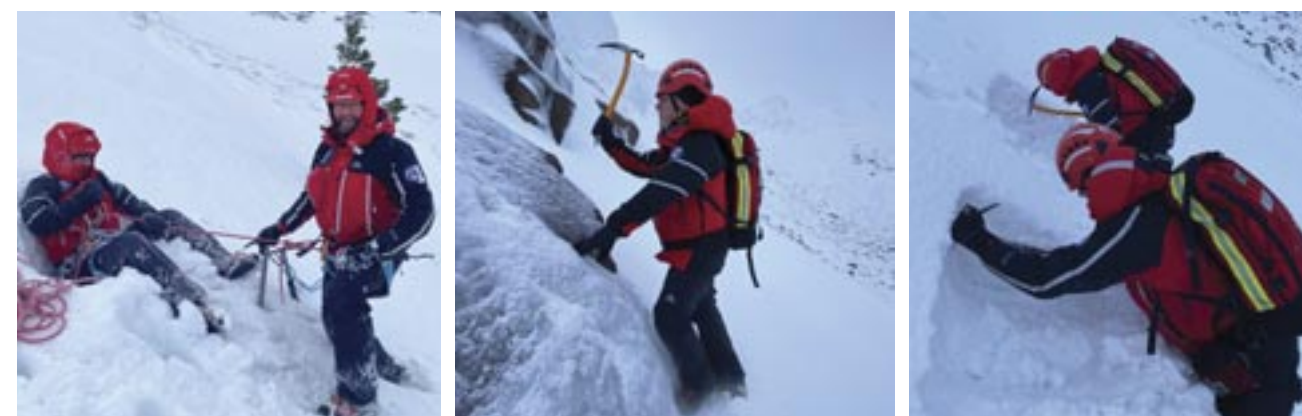
Top: Paul (left) with Andy Smith © Paul Edisbury.



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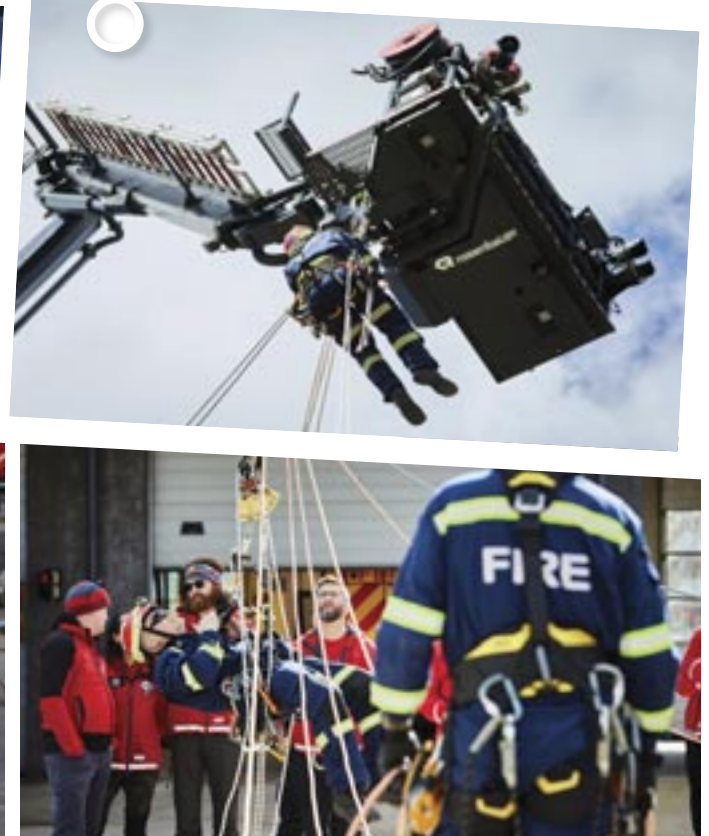



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training

Joint Rope Rescue Training



Images of the joint rope rescue training between Cheshire FRS and PDMRO © Henry Paisey.

PAUL EDISBURY KINDER MRT

A joint rope rescue training session was conducted between Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service and the Peak District Mountain Rescue Organisation (PDMRO) at the Lymm Rope Training Facility. The purpose of the session was to enhance inter-agency collaboration, develop technical competence and improve operational interoperability in rope rescue environments.

A key focus of the training was to align working practices in accordance with the principles of the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP), ensuring an effective and coordinated multi-agency response to incidents.

TRAINING OVERVIEW

The session was structured to provide a combination of theoretical input and practical demonstration. Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) delivered a detailed presentation outlining their rope rescue capability. This included the types of incidents attended, operational procedures and their structured approach to technical rescue. The presentation highlighted the breadth of their operational remit, including both human and animal rescues, and provided valuable insight into fire service methodology.

Fire service training and competency levels were outlined as broadly comparable with those of the Peak District mountain rescue teams. All firefighters receive height awareness training as part of their core training. Specialist rope rescue qualifications are structured as follows:

- **RR2:** Level 2 Rope Rescue Technician
- **RR3:** Level 3 Rope Rescue Supervisor (team and incident lead)
- **RR4:** Rope Rescue Instructor (service lead instructor).

PRACTICAL DEMONSTRATIONS

Following the presentation, fire service personnel conducted practical demonstrations of their rope rescue systems, including system set-up, anchor selection and lowering and raising techniques. The session was briefly interrupted due to an operational call-out, reflecting the on-call nature of fire service duties. Training resumed shortly after without impact on overall delivery.

The practical element enabled detailed discussion regarding system configuration, safety considerations and equipment use. While Cheshire FRS utilises specialist vehicles to support certain rescue scenarios, their rope systems and technical approaches demonstrated significant alignment with those employed by mountain rescue teams.

Representatives from Kinder and Glossop teams subsequently demonstrated their own rope rescue systems. These were closely aligned with fire service methodologies in terms of both equipment and system configuration, providing a valuable opportunity for direct comparison and shared learning.

INTEROPERABILITY AND JESIP ALIGNMENT

Both organisations undertake a range of similar rescue activities, particularly within rural environments. Cheshire FRS also responds to incidents in urban settings,

including buildings and infrastructure such as bridges, which are outside the typical remit of mountain rescue teams. There is clear operational overlap in rural incidents, and both organisations may attend the same incidents. Previous joint responses, including those involving Kinder MRT, demonstrate the importance of effective interoperability. The training session reinforced the application of JESIP principles, specifically:

- **Co-location:** Emphasising the importance of shared working areas where safe and practicable during incidents
- **Communication:** Promoting clear, structured, and consistent information sharing between agencies
- **Coordination:** Ensuring aligned objectives, priorities, and resource deployment
- **Joint Understanding of Risk:** Developing a shared situational awareness and dynamic risk assessment
- **Shared Situational Awareness:** Establishing a common operating picture to support decision-making.

In addition, the session supported the use of the Joint Decision Model (JDM) as a framework for structured and consistent decision-making across agencies. The alignment of rope rescue systems and techniques further supports JESIP objectives by reducing operational friction and improving compatibility during joint incidents.

The session was well attended, with representation from multiple PDMRO teams, including Kinder, Glossop, Derby, Oldham and Buxton. Engagement throughout was high, with constructive discussion regarding differing techniques, operational approaches, and the rationale underpinning them. Both organisations demonstrated a professional and open approach to knowledge sharing, contributing to a positive and productive learning environment.

KEY OUTCOMES

The training session delivered the following outcomes:

- Improved understanding of Cheshire FRS rope rescue procedures and operational capabilities
- Enhanced awareness of similarities and differences between fire service and mountain rescue systems
- Recognition of operational overlap,

particularly within rural rescue environments

- Strengthened inter-agency relationships and mutual understanding
- Reinforcement of JESIP principles, including communication, coordination and joint situational awareness
- Confirmation that fire and rescue services operate to consistent national training standards.

CONCLUSION

The joint training session was successful in achieving its objectives. It provided a valuable platform for knowledge exchange, practical learning and the development of inter-agency working relationships.

The strong alignment between rope rescue systems and operational approaches across both organisations supports effective joint working and is consistent with JESIP principles. Continued

collaboration of this nature is essential to maintaining and enhancing multi-agency operational effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To build on the outcomes of this session, the following actions are recommended:

- Continue joint training exercises to further embed JESIP principles in operational practice
- Incorporate scenario-based training to simulate realistic, multi-agency incident environments
- Expand participation to include additional teams and partner agencies where appropriate
- Provide further opportunities to apply the Joint Decision Model in practical training scenarios
- Explore access to specialist facilities, including indoor rope training environments, to enhance training delivery. 📍



training

January to March: Teams head back to Scottish snow to build vital winter skills

Scarborough and Ryedale Mountain Rescue Team explain why they head to Scotland to train each winter.

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& RYEDALE MRT

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'While most of our call-outs take place on the North York Moors, we also train for more complex incidents on steep and mountainous terrain and Scotland provides reliable snow, ice and harsh weather — perfect conditions for practising skills that are difficult to replicate closer to home. During the trip, team members train in moving safely on steep snow and ice using crampons and ice axes, winter rope and steep ground techniques, navigation and decision-making in poor visibility and avalanche awareness and safe route choice.'

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winter team training



Working in tandem: Why relationships with PoLSAs matter

DAN MAZHINDU LONGTOWN MRT

Strong partnerships, shared thinking and better outcomes for the casualty

In mountain rescue, we all understand the value of keeping fit and healthy. It pays off when it matters most, but only if you keep on top of it. Relationships with Police Search Advisers (PoLSAs) are much the same. They bring a huge amount of value, but they need regular time, effort and attention if they are going to be there when you really need them. If we want to be truly casualty-centric, those relationships matter.

For high-risk missing person searches especially, outcomes are likely to be better when the PoLSA and Mountain Rescue Search Managers are working in tandem, ideally in the same place, with a shared understanding of the situation and a joint strategy. That brings together different perspectives, different experiences and different ways of thinking. It gives the search the best chance of success and, most importantly, gives the casualty the best chance.

importantly, not ideal for the casualty. Shared decision-making is usually safer decision-making.

That is not to ignore the pressures on the police side. PoLSAs and PoLSCs (Police Search Coordinators) often cover a broad range of responsibilities, from missing people and crime search through to other specialist areas. They are busy people. But that is exactly why strong pre-existing relationships matter so much. If you know each other, understand each other's roles

teams bring experience, local knowledge and specialist capability. Police bring a different set of skills, responsibilities and perspectives. The sweet spot is not one side taking over from the other. It is both sides working together properly.

That Goldilocks position is built on mutual respect, a shared understanding of each other's strengths and limitations, the confidence to give constructive feedback both ways and regular opportunities to train and develop together. That is where the real value sits.

At Longtown MRT, we have seen that first-hand through recent joint training with Gwent Police. One of the largest undertakings was a series of five LSO (Licensed Search Officers) CPD days, involving approximately sixty LSOs. In the mornings, they joined mountain rescue search parties carrying out systematic searches based on purposeful wandering through mountainous terrain, looking for a vulnerable adult in need of assistance. In the afternoons, we supported them with evidential searches for small items and provided safety cover in poor weather and unfamiliar terrain. It was a significant undertaking and not something we could realistically deliver every year, but the benefits massively outweighed the effort. It gave people the chance to see each other working in different environments, with different priorities and different search objectives, while still aiming towards the same end goal. It also reinforced that the learning ran both ways. The LSOs got hands-on experience of MR methods and

and have simple ways of making contact, you are already in a much better place before the call even comes in.

At the other end of the scale, no one wants to be micromanaged either. If every small part of a search plan is dictated, it is not only demotivating for the team on the ground, it can also fail the casualty. Mountain rescue

search activity in steep, exposed terrain, while we learnt a great deal from their methodical and evidential approach. Both agencies came away better informed, with a stronger understanding of what the other brings.

We have also recently run a joint drone training day, jointly organised, planned and delivered by a PoLSA (who also leads the Gwent drone team), and Longtown's drone team. The focus was on drone pilots from both agencies practising flying and searching skills together through a number of scenarios involving casualties who were both static and moving. The real value came from doing the scenarios, debriefing together and then having another go. It was practical, honest and collaborative. We were also able to demonstrate automated flights and digital analysis using MRMap and AIDAT, which helped show the wider potential of working together and sharing capabilities.

That day also brought in other partners, including South Wales Police and Central Beacons MRT, which added another layer of value. We were also really grateful to Brendan, the MREW Drone Officer, for travelling down to join us. Days like that do far more than tick a CPD box. They build trust, improve understanding and make future joint work easier and better.

Alongside specific training days, we also hold a yearly meeting as a minimum, where all of the PoLSAs come to our base and meet with our search managers. It is a really useful meet and greet, but it goes well beyond that. We look back at the last year's successes, talk honestly about where we could work better together, share tips, and try to be ambitious about future plans. Just as importantly, that annual meeting is only part of the picture. Throughout the year, our



search managers are regularly in touch with PoLSAs, whether that is debriefing after call-outs, discussing ideas or sharing updates. That ongoing contact matters just as much as the formal meetings, because it keeps the relationship current and means that, when support is needed later, the relationship is already there. That in itself is important. It is good to be able to call, or be called, asking for assistance and knowing that conversation is welcome. Usually, that strengthens both agencies.

There are a few simple questions worth asking as mountain rescue teams:

- Do you know who your PoLSC is?
- Do you know all of your local PoLSAs?
- Do you know who the IMPSAs are (if your local police use them)?
- Do they know your search managers?
- If the control room or FIM calls you out, but no one has informed the on-duty PoLSA or even assigned one, what happens next?
- Do you just crack on, or do you push back and request that involvement?

Those are not difficult questions, but the answers matter.

One practical solution we have found useful is having a WhatsApp group with our local PoLSAs. If a call comes in and no one appears to have informed them, we can flag it early. They can then have the awkward conversation with the FIM rather than us

and, where needed, they can get themselves involved quickly. It also gives us a way of discussing SAR input into an incident before it officially becomes a call-out. It's simple, but it works.

There is also a real opportunity here for teams to be proactive. PoLSCs are responsible for organising CPD and keeping LSOs, IMPSAs and PoLSAs current and licensed. They have a lot of ground to cover and a lot of subject areas to think about. If a mountain rescue team can offer meaningful joint training, many will bite your hand off. It's a genuine win for everyone but, more importantly, it improves understanding before the pressure is on. And that is what this really comes down to.

At 2.00 am, on a cold, dark, wet night, when the clag is down and you've been called out for a high-risk missing person, it makes a real difference when the person getting into your van is a face you recognise. Someone who knows what your team can do and who brings their own skills, experience, and perspective. Someone you can have an open conversation with about how — together — you are going to find this person.

These relationships are not just valuable on searches. They carry over into rescues too. Quite often, the LSOs we work with on searches are the same response officers attending incidents. If those relationships have already been built through training and joint working, everything becomes easier, quicker and more effective.

Strong relationships with PoLSAs do not happen by chance. Like fitness, they need to be maintained. But when the weather is grim, the pressure is on and time matters most, good relationships stop being a nice idea and become an operational advantage. 📞



Above: Hill day. Opposite: Joint drone training. Images © Dan Mazhindu.

When that partnership is missing, the gaps can show quickly. At times, teams can find themselves progressing a search without a PoLSA being present or properly involved. That can leave too much of the operational and decision-making burden sitting in one place. In a complex or high-risk search, that is not ideal for either agency and, more



Understanding risk

CHRIS COOKSON MREW ROPE RESCUE LEAD

In mountain rescue, we often undertake what are considered high-risk or high-consequence activities, where safety is paramount. Operating safely largely depends on our attitude towards and how we view risk — as well as our approach to dealing with it. The same can be said of other outdoor pursuits, say rock climbing or paragliding.

My own view of risk and how I deal with it has changed over the years, shaped by reflection on my own experiences and what I've been able to learn from others. For example, the number of times I've been to 'the crag' and rock — or other objects — have rained down from above, is significant. As a result, I now put my helmet on early and I try to be acutely aware of my position relative to potential hazard. My decision-making around which route to climb, and indeed, if I climb at all on that visit, has changed too. As it has for which crags I visit and when. All things I wasn't focused on when I was younger.

An article in 'Alpinist' magazine, in Autumn 2025, caught my eye because it perfectly encapsulated this philosophy. Written by Canadian climber Will Gadd, it describes his three-year adventure on one particular ice climb, with his friend and fellow

Canadian Kirk Mauthner (who many of you will be familiar with for his work in technical rope rescue training and product development).

Media and social media articles about the outdoors tend to focus on the achievement rather than what went into making that achievement happen. Will's article is a breath of fresh air in its humble approach to risk and how the risks were handled. I hope you find it as informative and thought-provoking as I did. It's reproduced here for its openness in risk awareness and management, but it's worth a look for the amazing climbing and superb photos alone!

A big thank you to Will for allowing us to republish here and supplying additional photos, and to Kirk for facilitating the connection. Turn the page to be suitably wowed!

WILL GADD ON THE WALL OF WALLS 📞



training

A high-altitude mountain climbing scene. Two climbers are visible on a steep, icy rock face. One climber, wearing a red jacket, is higher up and is pulling a rope. The other climber, wearing a blue jacket, is lower down. The rock is dark and jagged, with patches of white snow and ice. The background shows a vast, snowy mountain landscape under a clear sky.

WILL GADD

The Wall of Walls

They say nothing good happens at 2.00 am, so why is my alarm blaring at me to get up, again, and go risk my life climbing savage ice in a valley guarded by some of the most serious avalanche terrain I've ever seen? It makes no sense, and that realisation holds me down in my warm, safe bed as if I've dropped a heavy barbell onto my neck.

But I know Kirk is awake too, so I must lift the weight and get moving. The house where my wife and kids are still sleeping is cold, but much warmer than the frigid Rocky Mountain night I'm heading into. It's -20°C and the December sun won't be up for at least another five hours. Outside, my truck is carefully loaded with everything we could possibly need for the day ahead: winches, ice tools, a drill, a rock rack, snowshoes, skis and a snowmobile. No matter what happens, I'm certain we're going to have an all-time adventure. I grind some coffee beans as quietly as I can, remembering stories of Alex Lowe (1958-1999) doing the same under a down jacket silencer. Coffee in hand, I grab the bag of pre-made burritos from the fridge, check the list and go, before inertia sets in.

Kirk Mauthner lives in the Columbia Valley, on the west side of the Canadian Rockies, and my home is in Canmore, on the east side of the mountain range. Somehow, we'd never tied in together, but three years ago I called him up to ask about a potential new route I'd found, inadvertently launching a beautiful, shared obsession. Up here, Kirk is a legend. He's done more new ice routes

of more than two dozen friends who have died in the mountains. I've watched a lifetime of mountain sunsets, and I've been to so many funerals that they blur together. I talk about risk with my kids, and even with the people running nuclear power plants as a guest speaker. I wrestle with the question of life and death every time I go out the door to climb, fly, paddle, ski or cave, which I've done two to five days a week for going on six decades. I've done CPR on fallen climbers, pilots and paddlers in some of the most beautiful places in the world. Is it worth it? And why am I still alive when so many others aren't? I'm working on that answer every day, and some of it is taking shape in the form of a book, roughly titled 'Surviving and Thriving in High-Hazard Environments'. Throughout the writing process, I've spent a lot of time digging into different ideas on risk management as I try to better understand how I handle dangerous situations.

I've sort of sworn off huge new alpine lines many times. Too many dead friends, too much risk, too much work. But Kirk sent me a photo of what he'd seen from his plane, and I could see the wall was clearly special. These routes would be really hard to find without a plane. They aren't visible from any

didn't even know what to say beyond 'Wow.' As we picked a line up through the loaded terrain, the wall just grew above us. It seemed beautifully dreamlike, or maybe a nightmare waiting to happen. There's a lot less distance between those experiences than most want to admit, until they've lived both.

The first hour and a half of my solo drive to meet Kirk is usually spent listening to risk-management audio books. Today, Dr Todd Conklin's voice comes through the speakers of my truck as he reviews how fatal accidents are unpredictable, except in hindsight. Conklin explains that the model of using prediction to prevent accidents simply does not work. Well shit, that was my primary strategy! Where I'm going today, there are literally tons of lethal hazards, from avalanches to collapsing ice pillars to loose rock, all of which we must successfully predict in order to survive. I turn off the depressing audio book and switch to some random playlist, turning the volume up to an unhealthy level. 'Guess I'm gonna die too young, too young...' sing the Stop Light Observations — not helpful. My mind wanders, reviewing a list of friends gone too young in the mountains. Am I different, better at what I do than they were? I must think so, because I sure don't want to die, but here I am, and there's no place I'd rather be. Hello, dissonance, my old friend...

I turn onto the road used by mining and logging trucks and Kirk is, of course, already there, smiling in my headlights. He's always there, and I sure am glad to see him. Shared madness is easier to carry. Other partners might bail occasionally, but Kirk never does, not in twenty-some epic trips we've now taken here together. We exchange a quick hug, but each minute is precious and we need to keep moving. We both drive alone in case a logging or haul truck runs us off the road. Our two vehicles add capacity, or the ability to handle the unexpected — in this case to help each other out on the dangerous road. The radio crackles: 'Fifteen down' — a trucker indicating their position on the road. Kirk's calm voice replies, 'I'll pull over at 14.5 left.'

Shit. We'd hoped to be off the road before these trucks were active, but we're not, and this can honestly be the scariest part of the day for me. A many-ton truck filled with logs or rocks or whatever howls by in a loud roar, and we pull back out — but why is there a six-by-six rack of light bars coming down fast on us?! Kirk's back on the radio, ditching into a small turnout, and a huge truck flies by with no f**ks given but a laconic 'Thank you, gentlemen' over the radio. They have a schedule to keep too, and ice climbers aren't on it. Nobody is up this early who doesn't have a schedule to keep.

Forty minutes later we're sniffing two-stroke mix in the dark. I manage to unload my new-to-me but well-used snowmobile out of my truck bed without bleeding or even breaking any plastic truck or sled bits, both a first. I don't know what I'm doing, and I hate being incompetent, but this is Kirk's Kootenay world, and I have to learn it if I want to climb the best new ice lines of my life. By the time I've strapped my skis and pack onto the sled, Kirk is, as usual, waiting

for me. He does that a lot. Normally I'm decently fast at what I do in the mountains, but these mountains play by Kootenay rules, meaning there aren't any. I acquired this sled and a loading ramp that doesn't really work right just to access these climbs, and it's worth it.

Kirk hits the throttle with the classic braaap! and disappears up the snowy road at over 100 kilometres per hour. I want to match his speed, but I only go to thirty. I hear Conklin's voice in my head explaining that to survive unknowns, you need capacity to handle what you didn't plan for. I have no capacity to pilot an out-of-control snowmobile at even fifty kilometres per hour because I suck at sledding. I can't predict when I might lose control. And if I do, I'll crash into the trees or worse for sure. So, thirty it is. I hate sucking, and I suck at this, but I hate crashing more, so Kirk has to patiently wait. I only crash once, slowly, not bad.

The dark of a midwinter Canadian morning still rules as Kirk and I park our vehicles amid the kind of complete silence you only encounter in the remote mountains. We pull off epic layers, hoist our fifty-pound packs and start marching up a steep hillside. Kirk shows me how to carry my skis through the shoulder strap of my pack, and the bindings dig into my shoulders like a sadistic masseuse. I can't seem to get it right, but keep moving, moving. Skis on, we slide through darkness so complete that when I turn my headlamp off, the entire Milky Way looks like a light show over my head. It's a privilege to see it, a sight no one in a warm bed will ever experience. This is worth it.

'Lot more snow since we were last in here,' says Kirk, verbalising change, a practice that is critical in high-hazard environments. 'Consistency change, new wind slabs here,' he says as we exit the trees an hour later. The first bits of morning light begin to illuminate mountain shapes beyond the glow of our headlamps, which we need to judge hazard. We're on schedule. Kirk and I talk nearly non-stop — 'It hasn't slid again. What do you think?' 'Shit. Maybe up toward the rock rib?' — as we read the terrain and question what we're thinking and seeing.

Annie Duke, a decision-making expert and former professional poker player, writes about the importance of 'truth seeking', of checking your own assumptions with impartial peers. Kirk and I need honest reality or we get killed, so we're a truth-seeking group of two, and we listen to each other carefully. Kirk understands the snow here maybe better than anyone on Earth, but even good guides and knowledgeable people will die in this year's tricky snowpack. There's debris from a size 3+ avalanche (big enough to destroy houses like a freight train going through a Corolla) in the gully we're skiing up, and we like that: it means less above us. Kirk reads snow like others read pizza menus. 'Hmm, this blew down instead of up when the storm came in,' he says as he assesses the terrain. 'Cross-loaded.' We head toward a spine that's been blown free of snow and could offer safe passage to the raddest ice lines ever, glowing blue above us.

We're nearly on the bare spine leading to our route — less than fifteen minutes away



Previous spread: Gadd leads the way up a typical pitch on the Wall of Walls — typical, in that the best way to describe it, according to Gadd, is 'Yes. Just a big YES!' **Opposite:** 'Yes. Just a big YES!!' in action: Will Gadd (left) and Kirk Mauthner climbed pitch after pitch of vertical ice over three years of risk assessment and effort, even naming one pitch (right) 'Relentless'. **Above:** Just hanging out on the Wall. Images © Will Gadd Collection.

— when we see an immense wind slab running across the entire feature above us, a monstrous, spring-loaded trap waiting for an unwary ice climber to trigger it. The snow under it is like sugar, loose and weak. Slabs over facets are really bad (avalanche safety 101), and we're poking at a kilometre of both. I have decades of experience in the mountains and professional-level avalanche training, but Kirk sees the hazard way before I do.

'If we toe-trigger this slope, it could go HUGE and run both above and to the sides of us and blow us right back into the gully — sure death,' he says.

We look over at the short patch of snow leading to the safe rib, and up at the huge slope below the ice. When I was younger, I probably would have gone for it, gotten away with it and felt good about my decision. But I've seen the aftermath of slides enough now to want better margins, not to just get away with it until I don't. The research from psychologist Paul Slovic and others is clear: we discount hazard when we find meaning in doing something. These routes carry deep meaning for both of us, but we also know what happens when things go bad. Kirk and I talk a little, but we're already pulling our skins off to start descending. It's not worth it, and we know it.

I hear Todd Conklin's voice in my head explaining that to survive unknowns, you need capacity to handle what you didn't plan for.

Our failure ratio here is around five fails for every new route we do.

On the way out, Kirk teaches me how to lean and counter-steer my sled, and we spend an hour going in circles, learning, learning, learning. I don't distinguish myself, I'm not a power sports guy, but learning is an essential part of building capacity. Capacity is essential for better outcomes. If I had to point to one reason I'm still alive

today, I would say it's because I've had good teachers, and I've worked as hard as I can to learn from them. We drive the sleds slowly back to the trucks, as I practise recovering if I get off track. I feel better about it. I know that on the next trip I can recover from forty kilometres per hour. Every day you learn something is a good day. I've learned a lot, and although we failed to climb our route, we succeeded in surviving and learning. Those are the rules we play by.

Throughout my career, I've been envious of those who enter the mountains like wolves. I remember a predatory look in the eyes of Ueli Steck, Alex Lowe, Tomaž Humar and Marc-André Leclerc. It was as if they saw the mountains like a wolf sees prey, and it was in their nature to hunt. They are all dead. Still, I envied their clarity. As for me, I worry, nerd out, read and practise the best risk management I know, but I also know how fallible we all are. Risk researcher Michael Mauboussin's 'Skill vs Luck' equations haunt me with the truth that we're seldom as good as we think we are. We ascribe good outcomes to our amazing skill, and bad outcomes to bad luck. I know this intellectually, but can I live it? Kirk and I spend a lot of the time skiing in and out

It seemed beautifully dreamlike, or maybe a nightmare waiting to happen. There's a lot less distance between those experiences than most want to admit, until they've lived both.



than anyone else, developed a lot of rescue tactics and gear used globally, and guided all over the world. Having spent more than forty years exploring the Canadian Rockies and Kootenay, he of course knew of the route I was asking about and said it wasn't very good. But there was something else he'd come across while scouting in his 'Super Super Cub' that he wanted me to see, something special. Was I interested? Yes, when do you want to go?

I've spent most of my life as a professional athlete, travelling the world in search of the biggest and best ice climbs, from the radical spray-ice routes of British Columbia's Helmcken Falls to China, Norway and South Africa. I've climbed the tallest frozen waterfalls in the world, chasing ice dreams like a Lab running after a tennis ball. But I also have a family, kids and a wife, and a list

viewpoints, and there are no winter roads leading to them; they are just a series of massive blue exclamation points on the back of a mountain with no paved roads anywhere nearby. If you're an ice climber and aren't excited by blue lines ripping into the sky, then it's probably time to hang up your tools.

But just getting there is truly an epic: a two-plus-hour drive followed by snowmobiling up an inactive logging road, then skiing into absolutely huge terrain. After four to five hours, you finally see it: strips of blue punching up a wall far bigger and consistently steeper than anything else I've ever seen. I was lucky Kirk asked me to join him there; I could never have dreamed of something so wild so close to home, nor did I have the Kootenay skills to reach it. Kirk did. On our first trip in, I stood there with Kirk and

know what to do here because this is what I've spent forty years of my life learning how to do. I have the skill and capacity. A gentle test tug, weight shift, high step onto a natural ice edge, rock over and flick another tool. Sparks fly as my tool hits rock through a veneer of detached ice. Rebalance, breathe,

We're seldom as good as we think we are. We ascribe good outcomes to our amazing skill, and bad outcomes to bad luck.

is this worth it? It is. For a moment I'm a wolf, and wolves hunt. I'm hunting with full commitment and calm ferocity; there is no fear, just focus and hard-earned competence. After 100 feet of thin ice, the sparks subside and I step out of the vortex of total focus I've been locked into and build a protected belay. Kirk joins me and we talk about the pitch, how serious it was. We used a fixed-point belay because if I'd fallen off, I would have gone a minimum of fifty feet, and possibly 200 feet or more, straight onto the belay if the gear had blown. Kirk once caught a 200-foot factor-two whipper on a fixed-point belay. That fall, plus the results of load testing he conducted on a drop-test tower, changed the belay world. We are doing dangerous things as well as we know how, and Kirk brings more capacity than most to the hunt.

Before we start the next pitch, it begins lightly snowing and immediately the spindrift starts up. Spindrift is snow transport; snow transport builds slabs, and natural slab releases kill climbers. Even a small slide can knock the leader off a route. Kirk and I don't talk; we just start rigging the ropes to go down. Every flake above collects, multiplies and lands on the slopes above and beneath us. We have to be ahead of that curve: if the slab below builds, it could kill us on the ski descent. As we switch from climbing boots to ski boots at the base, a significant sluff buries everything. Sometimes you get direct confirmation that your decision was good, and today is one of those times. If that had come down while I was on lead, I likely would have been knocked off and, at a minimum, broken some bones. Or I might have died a hard cold death in the long night. Bold wolves die. I led the pitch, but Kirk, who teaches and is known as the best in the search and rescue business, added capacity to survive if something went wrong — which it always does, eventually. Occasionally I'm a wolf, but wolves hunt in packs for a reason. We are a pack of two, far stronger than we are alone.

A week later we're back again, and this time I put a bolt in on lead to protect the worst of the thin ice section. It's still delicate, intense and run out, but way better — likely only 'hospital' consequences on the scale my kids and I use to rate risk (bumps and bruises, hospital, death). We're all running risk-management plans. If we don't have a plan, we can't judge risk and can't take good risks to do great things in life. But dying is not cool; nor fair to Kirk or to our families.

Strict ethics around route development are for people with limited climbing resources who need to play games to make it harder, or who need to preserve limited stone. I live by local ethics in those places, but we don't have a shortage problem here in the Canadian Rockies, nor is rescue a short ride away. Even with a bolt or two, the hazard level is still orders of magnitude higher than what would ever be tolerated in any of the industrial sites I speak and work at.

Annie Duke writes about how good and bad luck are both inevitable from a statistical perspective, but we all think we're going to have good luck, or we wouldn't gamble in the mountains or in life. I have had a lot of good luck, but I know it won't hold forever. And yet, if climbing like this was totally safe, it wouldn't be alpine climbing. We're here in part because of the uncertainty, the meaning we find and the joy of solving complex, high-consequence problems. But for me, danger in the mountains is a spice I add on top of dinner, not the meal itself. A climb should be beautiful, spicy and all-consuming, not just a roll of the dice. A bolt or two in an ocean of rock seems like a reasonable compromise. You die, you lose — and losing sucks.

Hours (which feel like days) later, we've climbed higher and I've cranked through a wild mixed traverse amid delaminating ice, placing one bolt on lead while hanging from a tool skating on an edge, plus some cams. I know I'm through the crux of the line and that another couple of hours will get us to the top. I'm worked, but still feel pretty strong. But Kirk is frozen; my lead took too long, it's late at night and we have a huge descent below us. Kirk calls it and we start heading down. One of my rules is that if one person isn't feeling it, we bail, no questions. That rule has directly saved my life at least twice. As we begin the descent I wonder in my head if we should have pushed harder. We were almost there. But we bobble our devices while rigging rappels with cold hands and tired brains, fix each other's errors and trust one another in a way that likely never happens when lives aren't on the line. Errors are normal. We catch and fix

climbers were at the top of Canada's most famous alpine ice zone, the Stanley Headwall, starting their rappels, when the first climber somehow lost control of the ropes and fell to his death, taking the ropes with him. The remaining climber spent the night alone at the top of the route, with his deceased friend at the base, before he was rescued. Did we avoid that fate by calling our day a little early and leaving a little capacity in the tank? Maybe. Or maybe we just got lucky and they didn't. They were both as solid as we are. On the drive home I down Red Bull number four while pondering the amazing highs and lows of climbing, the same 'Is it worth it?' question never far from my brain.

During that first year of exploration, we call the wall the 'Super Stanley!' because it's way bigger than the Stanley Headwall. Trip after trip, we oscillate between failing and climbing world-class routes. We name the first route Enduro because, well, that's what it is. We run sixty and seventy-metre pitches upward and do the math: the wall is more than twice the size of the Stanley Headwall's most famous ice route, Nemesis.

The second year, we finish off two routes before the snowpack gets too hideous to brave and rename the feature the Endurance Wall, because it's proven to be just a different beast from the Stanley. You have to ENDURE. You can be at the base of Nemesis two hours after leaving Canmore. It's five hours minimum to the base of the Endurance, with a lot more complicated terrain. Once, while guiding the uber-classic W16 Pilsner Pillar, I realised you climb about ten of those to get to the top of the Endurance Wall. And Pilsner is only steep for about twenty-five metres, usually well travelled and thirty minutes from the road. The Endurance Wall is really steep for the vast majority of every pitch, and you are OUT there. The only ice routes I've ever climbed at this level are in Norway, and they didn't have the avalanche hazard to get there, nor the approach, nor the poor ice quality. These are the biggest, most complicated and most sustained climbs I've ever done in my life.

One of my rules is that if one person isn't feeling it, we bail, no questions. That rule has directly saved my life at least twice.

them for each other with a tired 'Thanks' that goes way beyond the word.

On the second-to-last rappel of many, the ropes get stuck, likely because we were tired and sloppy while rigging them. A few snowflakes float by, adding urgency to our fatigued minds. We both use every trick we know to free the ropes, headlamps waving in frustration into the air above us, but it's a no-go. I rig up, Kirk J-loops the ropes into the belay (probably not needed, but relying on probability leads to death), and I climb up using what we have, which is enough. I don't mind the dark — I've done a lot of caving — but we're still a long, long way from home when I get back up to the rap station and flip the rope that had caught on an edge. I'm absolutely wrecked by the time we get to the safety of the valley.

That same week, two very competent local

climbers, and we somehow get lucky and send it in only a couple of tries. It's everything any alpine ice climber could ever want. We know how special it is because we've both been climbing forever. I'm fifty-eight. Kirk is two years older. As we reach the top we talk and are filled with deep appreciation and gratitude that, at this stage in our lives, we can still climb at a reasonably high level together in this magic place. We acknowledge how lucky we are to have the time, fitness, freedom, resources, experience and stoke to climb these amazing lines. We call the route Infinite Gratitude, because that's what we feel.

Things change during our third year visiting the wall. Previously, we'd fit our trips into whatever free time we had, but now we're fully committed. Kirk and I sync our schedules and both turn down good, high-paying work to keep our time free for the rare windows of snow stability. Freedom is worth more than money if you have enough of it, and it doesn't take much to be enough.

Up to this point, we haven't talked about our area publicly at all. As a professional athlete I'm supposed to spray about the rad shit I do, but in this case we just don't. These lines are special experiences that we know mark highpoints in both of our long careers. I share what we're doing with a few close friends, but even they don't get to know where we're doing it.

As the season starts, we realise we need to be faster getting in and out, and spend a full day building a trail. The path also helps us avoid more of the avalanche terrain. By adding margin and saving time, we're adding capacity for unpredicted events. We're also not comfortable being on the climbs with no safe way down the huge avalanche slope if it snows. So, we build a bolted traverse line that allows us to ski up and down on belay. Always have a way out. Trip after trip, learning, learning, working together, figuring it all out.

The last line is the steepest, thinnest and wildest looking — improbable, sexy smears up a ridiculous set of features. Kirk and I start calling the whole wall, simply 'WoW', short for the Wall of Walls. No matter how many times we ski into the valley together, that's what we always say when we see it, it's just that big and cool. We wanted to finish the four most prominent lines on the wall before going public, and this is the last one. But it snows. Then the temperature drops to -30°C. And it snows again.

We run away more than 50 percent of the time, even with our improved approach. The ice is sublimating, and eventually it won't be climbable. We find an alternate start. The



Above: Will and Kirk, never failing in their enthusiasm for their three-year-project © Will Gadd Collection.

trail is better. We ignore the other good but smaller lines in the valley, focusing on the remaining big rig even as we run away over and over.

Our friends Josh Lavigne and Alex Taylor put days in freezing their asses off to get the shots you see here, and it's a comfort to have someone else in the valley watching. I normally bring camera people up to get the story, even on big routes, but on the WoW it's simply too big and wild for me to feel good about that. I'm willing to roll the dice with my own life, but not other people's lives. Drone videos and stills, plus what I shoot on my Teletubby camera, are all we can do.

Finally, after I don't know how many tries, we are one pitch below the top of what we've simply been calling the Mixed Rig. I'm tired, and Kirk is too, but we are still stoked to go up. It's the right time to push. Kirk has been climbing longer than I have, which is rarely the case in my climbing partnerships, and he's been training hard in his 'woodshed' sessions all year. I have my own woodshed, where I do weighted pull-ups until I have more power than I've had since I was twenty-two and train harder on my tools than any season since I won the Ice Climbing World Cup in 2000. I start up the last pitch, which is a crazy chandelier that explodes into shards that fall away into the night below me. My feet blow hard once, but I have the capacity to hang on even after 280 metres of hard, technical climbing. I don't train to climb harder; I train to survive. Capacity is survival, not just prediction — thank you, Conklin.

Even when Kirk is destroyed, he still climbs with a beautiful, smooth economy of motion that shows the hundreds of thousands of swings burned into his brain and arms. He's also incredibly tough. One day I was leading when the ropes went tight sooner than I thought they should. I down-climbed a few metres and over to a mediocre belay spot but, when I pulled the ropes up, I pulled in more than ten metres. Why? When Kirk arrived at the belay, he said, 'Um, I can't feel my arm, and I think I kinda got stunned down there when a piece of ice hit me. But I didn't let go of the rope, just lost track of time for a bit.' I looked into his eyes for even pupils and suggested maybe we should go down, but he said he'd been hit harder in

judo and he was sure he was OK. I asked more questions to check for concussion or stroke, but he was still in the game despite being in a lot of pain. We went up. No reason not to, according to Kirk, but I could see him wince every time he swung, all the way to the final belay.

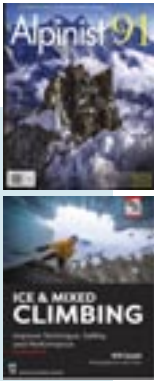
In the end we call the mixed rig 118, which is the sum of our ages. We add an extension to Relentless on our last epic day up on the WoW, and then call it for the season. It is a twenty-two-hour day, and on the whole approach, climb and descent Kirk and I work together perfectly, our systems honed after so many huge days. The best partnerships are those where the sum of your vision and power is far larger than either individual's skills. There is no way I could have done any of these routes with anyone else, nor enjoyed the process as deeply as I did. So many talks, laughs, shared snacks, so much time living fully, so much LIFE! That is worth it.

All the big lines are done. Well, not really: there are still at least six left to do on the WoW and twenty more in the valley. Will we do them, or are we done? I don't know, but it's time to share this place with the world. It's just too cool not to. I admit that it's going to be hard to see another truck at the sled parking area, but I want to hear the story of when someone else goes in there and says, 'WoW!' With time, I think this valley will become a top area in the world, but even the best climbers will need every skill they have to climb here. But if you really, really want it, then you'll find what you need up there. Good hunting.

I still struggle with the basic question: Is it worth it? I don't honestly know. But I do know that the answer has to be not just yes, but 'F**k yes!' for it to be worthwhile. As my friend Will Stanhope once wrote, you can't just want to have done a dangerous thing, you have to want to do it, to revel in the activity, not put the outcome before the experience. I think Kirk and I lived by that idea for three years, and for that experience I am forever grateful to him, and to all the people in my life who make these sorts of adventures possible. I have had luck and skill in my life when I needed them, and continue to love wrestling with the hard question of risk and the meaning I find in the mountains with good people. I have no crisp answers, but I deeply value the process of answering the question as best I can.

Now it's time to go sport climbing in the sun for a while. We hunted, we bled, we survived, we feasted. It's time to recover. 🍷

First published in **Alpinist 91** (Autumn 2025).



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What are we wearing, and why? Equipment subgroup focus for 2026

PAUL SMITH MREW EQUIPMENT OFFICER

Over the past few years, we've done a lot of work around kit standardisation, sustainability, supplier engagement and making sure that what we issue does the job we expect it to do. For 2026, the Equipment group has a clear focus: Get team members talking about what they wear — and why. Not just which brand. Not just what agreement is in place. But what works operationally.

WE DON'T ALL OPERATE IN THE SAME ENVIRONMENT

MREW is far from uniform. Some teams operate in high, exposed mountainous terrain. Others work across moorland, woodland, coastal paths or urban fringe environments. Some experience prolonged winter conditions. Others deal with persistent rain, saturated ground and high humidity for much of the year. What works on Helvellyn in February may not work on Dartmoor in August. Alongside that, we're seeing increasingly wet winters, more intense rainfall events, hotter summers and longer dry spells. The environment we operate in is changing. The question is, are our clothing systems keeping pace with it?

CLOTHING IS OPERATIONAL EQUIPMENT

We rightly scrutinise stretchers, ropes and technical hardware. But clothing is just as critical to operational effectiveness. It affects:

- Thermal regulation
- Fatigue levels
- Dexterity
- Safety on steep or technical ground
- Visibility
- Casualty care performance
- Decision-making under pressure.

If your jacket wets out halfway through a job, that isn't a comfort issue, it's operational. If you overheat during a prolonged carry in summer, that's not inconvenience, it's risk. If your layering system doesn't allow you to adapt quickly to changing conditions, that affects efficiency and safety. Clothing is not branding. It is part of our PPE and part of our capability.

WHAT ARE YOU WEARING?

In 2026 I want to open this conversation properly. I want teams talking about:

- What clothing systems are you using?
- What works well in your terrain and what doesn't?
- What have you quietly stopped wearing?
- What have you adapted or modified?
- What performs well in sustained rainfall?
- What copes with heat and high exertion?
- Where have you experienced failure?

BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY, WHY?

Operational feedback carries far more weight than catalogue descriptions. Honest discussion helps all of us — particularly

when teams are working in different conditions and at different times of year.

ARE WE ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE?

We are seeing wetter winters and hotter summers operationally. With this in mind, are teams reviewing:

- Waterproof performance during prolonged rainfall?
- Breathability during sustained exertion?
- Insulation systems for stop-start casualty care?
- Durability in abrasive terrain?
- Lightweight options for warmer conditions?

Are we choosing clothing based on how we used to operate, how we operate now or how we will operate in the future?

PRICE OR PERFORMANCE?

For this discussion, cost is not the focus. The question isn't: 'What's the cheapest option?' It's: 'Does it keep us safe, effective and able to work in all weathers?'

Procurement should follow performance, not the other way around. If something fails in sustained rain, that matters. If something delaminates after a season, that matters. If something restricts movement on steep ground, that matters. We owe it to ourselves and our casualties to get this right.

MOVING IT FORWARD

This isn't intended to be a debate that stops here. I invite representatives from teams to attend the Equipment meeting following the May AGM to begin this

discussion properly. The intention is to share experiences openly, identify common themes, capture operational feedback and establish a working group to take this forward. We need voices from across different regions, terrains and operational models. The more diverse the input, the stronger the outcome.

LET'S START THE CONVERSATION

Call-out numbers are increasing and teams are busy, that's the reality. Most people are balancing work, family and mountain rescue commitments, and national meetings can understandably feel like something for 'someone else' to attend. But this conversation needs operational voices. It doesn't require national experience. It doesn't require committee experience. It doesn't require you to have attended an AGM before. It requires honest input from people wearing this kit on real jobs, in real conditions, on real ground. So, if you've ever thought:

- 'This works well for us'
- 'This really doesn't work...'
- 'Why are we still using this?'
- 'There must be a better way...'

Then you're exactly the person we need in the room. National direction is strongest when it reflects the experience of the people on the hill.

If you care about what you wear, and how it performs when it matters, come and help shape the conversation. 🗣️

Below: Images showing just two of the different environments and conditions we work in © Llanberis MRT.



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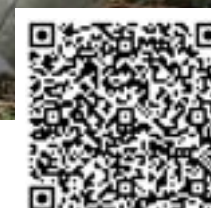
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© Judy Whiteside

We ALL have one piece of kit that is paramount to what we do — and every mountain rescue team member has one: the rucksack. And if we were to ask a dozen MRT volunteers what was their favourite brand, we'd probably get a dozen different answers, if not more!

It carries all the equipment to keep us safe and operational on the hill: spare layers, waterproofs, gloves, helmet, food, medical kit, bothy shelter and the small bits of equipment that suddenly become very important when the weather turns or the job runs longer than expected. It gets dragged through heather, scraped along rock, soaked in rain, lifted into helicopters and sometimes used as a dustbin.

If you look around the vehicles on any training night or on a call-out, you'll see something interesting, almost every team member has a different rucksack. Different brands, different layouts, different sizes. Some team-issued, some carefully chosen after years of trial and error and some which were on the latest special offer. Most teams recommend a rucksack with a capacity of

around 40–50 litres, which should be ok for all the kit we need. But beyond that, there is a huge variation which raises interesting questions, is there a perfect rescue rucksack and which ones work best for rescue work?

One of the Equipment group goals is to encourage more open conversations about equipment. We operate in very different environments, from steep mountain terrain to moorland and coastal search areas; some teams can work in all those types of areas, and what works perfectly in one area might not suit another. We feel that there is enormous value in sharing real operational experience rather than relying on manufacturer marketing or assumption — which probably works well for the average hill walker, but the most useful information comes from the people who use this kit in real rescues, in real weather, in the dark, in the rain and often when tired. With all that in mind we are starting a series of five-minute online 'rate your kit' questionnaires, a short online survey where mountain rescue team members can rate the rucksack they currently use.

We'll look at things that matter to MRT volunteers:

- Comfort when loaded
- Stability when moving at pace
- Durability in rough terrain
- Organisation and access to equipment
- Performance in bad weather
- How well it carries heavier loads.

There's also space for rescuers to say what works well and what you feel could be improved.

If you're a mountain rescue team member, please take five minutes to complete the survey. The more responses we receive, the more useful the results will be. Once we have gathered enough responses, we'll publish the results in a future issue of Mountain Rescue magazine. Whether you're a probationer or a twenty-years-plus veteran, your experience matters, so take a moment, share your experience and help build a national picture of what works well for MRT volunteers. QR code and link to the form at the top of the page. 📄

BRIDGEDALE SOCKS: DISCOUNT CODE FOR MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM MEMBERS

Due to manufacturing delays and the lack of 'seconds', the annual issue of three pairs of socks, completely free of charge, which Bridgedale kindly give to mountain rescue volunteers, is currently running at around two to three years. While Bridgedale works to get back to an annual support to team members, they have offered all mountain rescue volunteers a 20% discount until the end of May 2026.

To access this amazing offer you will need to use your mountain rescue email address to log into the Bridgedale website: bridgedale.com and use the code R3SCUE20 at the checkout.

If you use the code to purchase Bridgedale socks please consider giving them a quick 'thank you' on your team's social media channels; it helps show our appreciation for the companies that support us.



© Bridgedale.



JANUARY: PENMACRA TEAMS CALLED FOLLOWING DISCOVERY OF BOMB

The four Dartmoor teams, Devon Cave Rescue and Exmoor team members joined Devon and Cornwall 4x4 Response, the Rapid Relief Team UK and Exmouth RNLI, to assist with the evacuation of properties due to the unexploded WW2 bomb, over a two-day operation.

Once the device was located, initial evacuations were within a 400-metre cordon. The second day involved further multi-agency planning throughout the morning and afternoon, resulting in expansion of the cordon to 600 metres, triggering a second wave of evacuations, with almost a hundred volunteers involved overall.

'We were pleased to have been able to play a lead role in the coordination of volunteer rescue team resources in support of the statutory emergency services,' says a spokesperson for Dartmoor SRT Ashburton. 'It was a massive multi-agency incident with a great outcome. We are extremely grateful to the volunteers from Devon and Cornwall 4x4 for providing additional transportation, the Rapid Relief Team UK for their ongoing refreshments over the two days, and to Exmouth RNLI for hosting the Ops Room and briefing space.'

Above/below: Volunteer teams gather to support the statutory services © Dartmoor Ashburton.

news round

JANUARY > MARCH



JANUARY: NORTHUMBERLAND LEADER HEADS TO MOZAMBIQUE

NNPMRT team leader Jamie Pattison deployed with UKISAR to support the UK's response to the devastating flooding crisis, following the Mozambican government's declaration of a national emergency and request for international assistance.

The UK Government deployed the UK ISAR team to support the rescue and response efforts. Jamie joined a highly skilled, multi-agency team providing specialist support. The team of specialist fire and rescue service personnel and a medical team included an initial forward party of flood rescue specialists who deployed earlier to assess conditions and coordinate with local authorities and humanitarian partners. This was followed by a larger contingent of personnel and specialist rescue boats, who had arrived to support rescue operations.

Operations began in Maputo Province and Xai-Xai, focusing on rescuing people trapped by floodwater and supporting the wider emergency response led by the Mozambican authorities. 'We worked hard with local officials and agencies to assess needs and rescue those who are stranded by the flood waters,' says Jamie. 'Our volunteers were involved in providing medical evaluation for those who need to be taken to hospital and to deliver much needed aid to local villages and communities who had been cut off.'

Jamie's skills as a mountain rescuer, swiftwater-trained technician and paramedic were put to the test in challenging conditions alongside his colleagues in UKISAR. Significant damage was reported to roads and health facilities across multiple provinces, further complicating relief efforts.

Above: Images supplied via NNPMRT.

PHD RESEARCH FUNDED TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR MISSING PERSONS THROUGH ADVANCED MATHEMATICS AND AI

In January, a three-day research workshop at the University of Birmingham brought together over 100 years of operational mountain rescue experience with some of the best mathematical minds in the UK. The objective: to improve outcomes for missing persons. The result: a new collaborative PhD research project funded through the EPSRC Centre for Doctoral Training in Statistics and Operational Research in partnership with Industry (STOR-i) at Lancaster University, which will turn innovative ideas into reality.

The workshop was in collaboration with The Centre for Search Rescue (TCSR), drawing on the experience of former team leaders, search managers, operational drone pilots, search dog handlers and the Knowledge Exchange Hub for Mathematical Sciences represented by academic researchers from the universities of Birmingham, Coventry and Lancaster, and University College London.

The participants explored the intersection between what is possible at the cutting edge of advanced mathematics and AI,

Pete Roberts, a former team leader of Northumberland National Park MRT (NNPMRT) with over 50 years of operational experience, regularly delivers TCSR training courses on how to manage search operations.

'We explored in detail how missing person searches are managed, based on the extensive research we have undertaken at TCSR and taught on our courses over the past twenty years. Some of the best applied mathematicians in the country will take that knowledge, build upon it and

In mathematical terms, it is a classic resource, constrained scheduling optimisation problem under uncertainty. Through applying advanced mathematics, we will find people quicker, in better health and using less resources. It will deliver economic benefits to the UK Exchequer, both through efficiencies in the police budget and the reduced lost economic activity from volunteers taking time away from work.'

The workshop concluded with tangible next steps and outputs. A PhD project, currently being advertised to the MRes students within STOR-i, will be co-supervised by doctors Carolina Euan, James Grant and Israel Martinez-Hernandez from the School of Mathematical Sciences at Lancaster University, with Pete Roberts and Carl Hamilton as TCSR advisers.

'We are now progressing to recruit a PhD student to undertake the project,' says Dr Euan. 'The successful student will develop skills in modelling, computational spatial statistics and applied stochastic processes. Strong skills in R or Python will be beneficial for efficient implementation. The project has the potential for significant real-world impact, through the successful methods being integrated into search planning and management software.'



Above: Left to right: Pete Roberts (TCSR, NNPMRT), Carl Hamilton (TCSR, NNPMRT), Dr Carolina Euan (University of Lancaster), Dr Touloupou Panayioti (University of Birmingham), Dr James Andrews (University of Birmingham), Dr Daniel Herring (University of Coventry), Dr Sebastian Maier (University College London), Dr Andrew Jenkins (TCSR, NNPMRT, MRSDE).

and the challenge of finding missing persons quickly and efficiently.

Almost 170,000 people are reported missing each year in the UK: three in every 1,000 people, with someone reported missing every 90 seconds. As many first responders know, finding them is an emergency, time is of the essence and often labour intensive for both the statutory emergency services and volunteers such as mountain rescue teams.

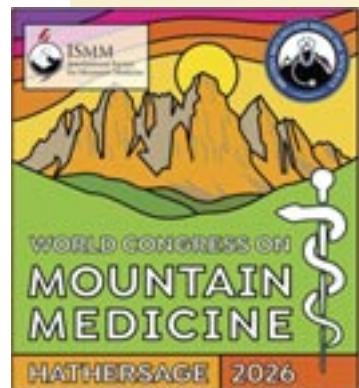
propose new ways of working that will improve outcomes for missing persons. It will take us to the next level.'

Dr Andrew Jenkins, Trustee of TCSR, member of both Mountain Rescue Search Dogs England (MRSDE) and NNPMRT, and CEO of an AI tech company, adds that 'the missing person search management process can be mapped into advanced mathematics to deliver meaningful productivity gains during search operations.



To learn more about The Centre for Search Research, download research papers, book training courses or engage to support future research activities, visit tcsr.org.uk.

MOUNTAIN RESCUERS, RESEARCHERS AND EQUIPMENT PARTNERS COLLABORATE 'OUT ON THE HILL' 16-20 MAY 2026



© Derby MRT.

The mountain medicine community will gather in the Peak District in May 2026 for an exciting programme of workshops. The event is a collaboration between Mountain Rescue England and Wales and the University of Lancashire Centre for Mountain Medicine, combining operational mountain rescue experience with academic mountain medicine teaching. Equipment partners supporting the congress will also contribute to creating realistic field learning environments. **Chris Smith** reports.

Participants will rotate through field stations exploring themes such as casualty assessment in remote environments, casualty packaging with environmental protection, prolonged care on the hill and stretcher evacuation techniques used by mountain rescue teams. The aim is to integrate clinical thinking with the practical realities of managing and moving casualties in steep terrain. It's a fantastic chance to share skills, knowledge and learning with others 'Out on the Hill'. Each day will include a series of practical, scenario-based sessions delivered on the hills above Hathersage. These sessions place clinical decision making directly into the terrain where mountain medicine and mountain rescue are actually practised. Wednesday is 'Hypothermia' day.

The workshops are a great 'hands on' part of the **International Mountain Medicine World Congress 2026**. Hathersage and the British Mountain

Medicine Society are excited to be hosting the International Society for Mountain Medicine (ISMM) World Congress, 18-20 May 2026, in the UK. The congress forms part of a wider Mountain Medicine Festival, 16-20 May, organised by the British Mountain Medicine Society, in partnership with ISMM and the British Mountaineering Council.

Alongside the field workshops, the programme includes keynote lectures, scientific presentations and research posters covering expedition medicine, environmental injury, high-altitude physiology and human factors in mountain incidents.

Mountain rescue personnel, clinicians, researchers and mountain professionals are warmly invited to join colleagues from around the world. Further information and registration details are available at mountainmedicinecongress.com.

research



The forgotten path: 2

WHEN FAMILIAR ROUTES BECOME UNKNOWN

FREYA BARNETT DEMENTIA UK

When someone living with dementia goes missing, it is rarely the result of a single moment of confusion, but of changes in the brain, in perception, and in the way the world is experienced. For mountain rescue teams, understanding this is vital. It sheds light on why a person may walk away from safety, continue moving despite danger or take a route that defies all logical expectations. This edition of 'The forgotten path' explores the reasons behind these moments, and how changes in perception, hearing, vision and pain shape behaviour in the real world.

WHY PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA MIGHT GO MISSING

Going missing often begins with purpose, not confusion. A person may leave home believing they are going to work, collecting children from school, or fulfilling another responsibility that once shaped their daily life. Even when memory fades, the emotional importance of these tasks often remains. This 'goal-driven walking' can take a person far from their usual environment before they realise something is wrong.

For people living with dementia, environments can shift unpredictably. A

workplace or place of comfort. In these moments, a person may leave in search of somewhere that feels 'right', even if they cannot articulate where that is.

For many people living with dementia, waiting becomes increasingly challenging. Changes in orientation to time can make minutes feel like hours or create a sense that something urgent should be happening, even if the person has been asked to remain where they are. If they cannot accurately judge how long they have been waiting in one place, they may believe they have waited too long, been forgotten, or missed something important. This distorted sense of

them to remain still. For mountain rescue teams, this means that a person who was last seen in a particular spot may not stay there for long, even if they previously agreed to or appeared calm. Understanding this helps explain why missing people often keep moving, and why searches must account for ongoing, unpredictable movement patterns.

HOW DEMENTIA ALTERS PERCEPTION AND THE SENSES

Dementia can change the way a person sees, hears and interprets the world, which can dramatically influence why someone becomes lost. Shadows may look like holes, uneven ground may seem flat, and even water can appear deceptively solid. Reduced contrast sensitivity means that the boundaries between paths, grass or tracks become difficult to distinguish, while a narrowed field of vision limits awareness of nearby hazards or landmarks. In busy or cluttered surroundings, visual information can become overwhelming — a phenomenon known as 'visual crowding' — prompting a person to retreat or walk away simply to escape the confusion.

Hearing can also shift in subtle but significant ways. Background noise becomes harder to filter out, meaning that voices and environmental sounds blend. A sudden noise may be misinterpreted as threatening, and a familiar voice calling out may be lost within ambient sound. These sensory distortions can leave a person feeling unsettled or unsafe, and for some, the instinctive response is to keep moving in search of a quieter or less overwhelming space.

Spatial awareness — the sense of how the body is positioned in relation to the surrounding environment — can also be

affected. People may walk in a straight line without noticing obstacles, gravitate toward open areas, or struggle to judge slopes, steps or uneven surfaces. These changes don't just influence how a person moves; they also affect the routes they choose and the risks they may inadvertently encounter.

Pain is another sensory signal that can change dramatically for a person living with dementia. They may struggle to recognise or interpret sensations such as discomfort, muscle fatigue or joint pain — feelings that would normally prompt someone to slow down, rest or turn back. If those sensations no longer register clearly, a person may walk much further than expected, unaware that their body is becoming strained or injured.

The same applies to temperature: the ability to notice feeling cold, wet or exposed can diminish, meaning a person may continue walking despite conditions that put them at significant risk.

These changes in bodily awareness can subtly but powerfully influence movement, perception of distance and decision-making, contributing to why someone may continue walking long after it becomes unsafe.

HOW MEMORY AFFECTS NAVIGATION

Damage to the part of the brain responsible for memory and spatial awareness can make it much harder for a person with dementia to create or recall mental maps. This means they may be unable to retrace their steps or recognise paths they have used safely for years.

We all rely on familiar landmarks to help us navigate, often without realising it. These landmarks act as cues linked to key decision points along a journey. For example, on a walk to the local shop, you might know that at the 'wonky tree' you turn left. Your eyes automatically glance at that tree before you make the turn. If a storm blew the tree down, you would still be able to adjust your route using quick problem solving or your internal mental map. For someone living with dementia, this process becomes far more difficult. If a landmark disappears, changes or fails to register, they may not be able to rely on a mental map to compensate. Without that cognitive back-up system, they are far more likely to become lost from that point onwards.

Simple decisions — such as choosing left or right, identifying which path looks safest, or understanding how to navigate a junction — can also become challenging. People with dementia often take the path of least resistance, which usually means continuing straight ahead.



DEMENTIA UK IS A SPECIALIST DEMENTIA NURSING CHARITY WHICH HELPS SUPPORT THE WHOLE FAMILY. OUR NURSES, KNOWN AS ADMIRAL NURSES, PROVIDE FREE, LIFE-CHANGING SUPPORT AND ADVICE TO ANYONE AFFECTED BY DEMENTIA.

Over time, this can lead them deeper into isolated, unfamiliar or hazardous terrain.

As dementia progresses, even longstanding landmarks can lose their meaning. A person may walk past their own home, a familiar shop or a recognisable trail feature without realising its significance. Landmarks that once anchored them to their surroundings no longer trigger recognition, making even a well-known environment feel confusing or unfamiliar.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAMS

Understanding how dementia affects memory, perception and movement will help teams form a realistic picture of what someone may do once they become lost. People living with dementia often follow linear features in the environment without realising it, such as roads, rivers, walls or fences, simply because these features offer a sense of direction when decision-making becomes difficult. At the same time, they may walk away from shelter rather than towards it, finding buildings, bright lights or busy areas confusing or overwhelming. This can lead them further into open spaces, woodland or terrain that feels quieter, even if it is less safe.

Because people with dementia may continue walking until something physically stops them, it is common for them to cover more distance than would be expected or to walk into areas that feel illogical from an outside perspective. They may avoid obvious paths in favour of less structured routes or continue moving long after it would normally be sensible to rest. For rescue teams, recognising these movement patterns can make a critical difference when deciding where to focus a search and how to prioritise probable routes.

At Dementia UK, we want every mountain rescue team to feel confident, informed and equipped when responding to incidents involving people with dementia. That's why we offer free knowledge sessions, delivered in person or virtually, led by dementia specialist Admiral Nurses.

To book a session email us at dementia.work@dementiauk.org.

MEET THE LUMINAID TRIO LANTERN

When darkness closes in and you need quick, dependable light, the LuminAid Trio Lantern is built for situations where visibility can't be compromised. Its three detachable LED units, two cube lights and one rectangular light, can be used together as a single lantern or separated to light different areas at once. Each module has its own battery and offers multiple modes, including high, medium, low and candle-flicker, allowing you to adapt the beam to changing conditions. The rectangular unit includes a 2000 mAh battery capable of charging a phone or small devices, giving you a vital source of back-up power when resources are limited. The system recharges by solar or USB, offering flexibility when you're away from mains power. Integrated hooks and magnetic attachment points allow each light to be placed exactly where it's needed, providing steady, hands-free illumination when it matters most.



MRTS CAN BUY DIRECT FROM BURTON MCCALL
T: 0116 234 4611 E: SALES@BURTON-MCCALL.COM



TACTICAL BRILLIANCE WHEN LIGHT MATTERS

When every second counts, reliable illumination is critical. Torches, headlamps and work lights specialist Ledlenser has introduced the new TAC7R and TAC6R, powerful tactical torches designed to support the demanding work of SAR teams. Both models feature Ledlenser's advanced multi-lens technology, allowing you to switch between a wide flood beam for scanning terrain, and a focused spotlight for long-distance visibility — or combine both for a versatile tactical light pattern. Intuitive end-cap controls ensure rapid, glove-friendly operation in challenging conditions. Both feature five light options with the TAC7R delivering 100–3200 lumens + RGB light, while the compact TAC6R produces 100–2000 lumens. Both are housed in rugged hard anodised aluminium bodies with IP68 protection against water and dust. Rechargeable via USB-C and built for reliability in harsh environments, the new TAC torches are engineered to perform when visibility can make the difference between life and death.

CHECK THEM OUT AT LEDLENSER.CO.UK



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

room that feels familiar one day may feel unsafe or unfamiliar the next. Noises can seem threatening or startling, unfamiliar faces may cause unease, and even well-known surroundings may appear altered. Sometimes, the mind returns to an earlier time in life to a childhood home, former

time can cause mounting anxiety or restlessness, meaning they feel compelled to walk or move.

Even when someone intends to stay in a fixed location — for example, while waiting for help, a lift or a familiar person to return — the internal discomfort created by this confusion makes it extremely difficult for

FANCY BECOMING A RESCUE BENEVOLENT FUND AMBASSADOR?

Anyone – irrespective of region – with an interest in wellbeing can become a Rescue Benevolent Fund ambassador. Help us spread the word about how the fund can help team members. We are even happy to have more than one ambassador per region or team!

There's no remuneration, it's entirely voluntary, but (on the plus side) 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 — or writes their own story here in the mag).

2025 and 2026 have seen 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 this is something that appeals to you, please email secretary@rescuebenevolent.fund for a friendly chat! ☺

WHO DOES WHAT WITH 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. For physical and mental health, we work with our partners, listed below, and with local therapists sourced by you, to offer online and in-person therapies as appropriate.

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.



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



How the Rescue Benevolent Fund is working for you...

JUDY WHITESIDE SECRETARY, RESCUE BENEVOLENT FUND

It's been a busy few months for the Rescue Benevolent Fund, with a definite uptick in applications for support coming in. We've had requests for physical and psychological support, as well as interim support grants to tide team members over while awaiting pay-out from the MREW insurance. It's also thrown up a few points worth talking about.

PHYSICAL THERAPY SUPPORT

When we first set up the benevolent fund, in 2013, the expectation was that we would most likely be asked to support physical rehab. And, as anyone who has ever been injured will know, the sooner you can get yourself back to full function, the better — not to mention getting back on that call-out list. With this in mind, we set up our partnership with The Fire Fighters Charity, based at Jubilee House in Penrith, to offer intensive, residential rehab care for team members. We've used this fantastic facility a number of times now and feedback has always been exceptional.

One of our beneficiaries recently has been John, the search dog handler and Kendal team member whose injury story we reported here in the magazine. On a Tuesday evening in May last year, he was attending search dog training at Brandlehow, near Keswick. With four bodies in place, he began his circuit with Trainee Search Dog Jura. First body located, sequence performed, he moved off from grass onto stony track, where he slipped on a steep, wet, stone slab, sustaining substantial injuries in his fall.

His return to full mobility continues, thanks to ongoing local physio, funded by the MREW insurance policy, along with an intensive four days of rehab at Jubilee House. This is a point worth making, incidentally, because it demonstrates how the cover provided by the insurance policy and the support of the benevolent fund have worked together to support an injured team member.

ACCESSING THERAPY CLOSER TO YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

Sometimes, family circumstances mean an injured team member might prefer to seek intensive rehab closer to home and this was the case with Jay, a probationary member (at the time) of the Upper Wharfedale team, who was injured in October last year during team training at Brigham Rocks, in North Yorkshire. Jay came to us for support, having researched a local physio practice, and undertook an intensive course of treatment which got him back on track and back to team activity.

The key with any applicant is to get in touch with us — and the MREW insurers — as soon as is physically possible. It might be that, as with John, treatment can't begin until some initial months of

healing have passed, but getting that application in sooner means the fund trustees can consider the application, make a proposal and liaise with the relevant parties to get things into the calendar for you. Giving peace of mind that you are doing the best you possibly can to get yourself back to fitness.

SPEED IS OF THE ESSENCE...

As the fund secretary I frequently liken the gathering together of the fund trustees to the 'herding of cats' but, in truth, we invariably meet within a couple of days of an application landing on my desktop — sometimes the same evening. Another recent beneficiary, Will Close-Ash of the Northumberland National Park team will happily attest to that. Within hours of speaking to me, he was undergoing his first assessment with a local physio, knowing the fund fully supported the application.

'I can't thank you enough,' says Will. 'After worrying about how I'd get back on the call-out list and feeling of no use to my team, these sessions are giving me new hope and confidence.'

And, in case you're wondering, all three were happy to waive their confidentiality here. Turn the page to read John and Jay's recovery stories, in their own words.

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TO SUIT YOUR NEEDS

The growing need for mental health support prompted us to seek relationships with providers who can offer that. Togetherall was the first, providing an online resource which all team members can tap into for information, forums, self-assessments and guided courses in key topics. It's free to register and it's completely anonymous — in fact, set up a username that might identify you to other users and you will be asked to change it, by the platform, for your own protection. I'm pleased to report that registrations are rising and people are reportedly engaging with all aspects of the site.

Alongside Togetherall, we also have Rightsteps, offering a very different resource. Through Rightsteps, we can offer you one-to-one online therapy sessions with their qualified therapists and counsellors. We can also set up group therapy sessions.

Whereas you can register direct with Togetherall, please be aware that

treatment through The Fire Fighters Charity or Rightsteps must come through us in the first instance via the application form. There is no facility to go direct. You will be directed straight back to us, potentially lengthening your application time.

As with physical therapy, if you prefer one-to-one treatment with a therapist or counsellor local to you, we can also help cover that. We would expect you to arrange appointments, at times that suit your diary, but we would liaise with the therapist regarding payment.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND WORKING WITH THE MREW

When it comes to financial hardship, we can offer an immediate support grant. The expectation is that, if you are injured during a team operation or in training, you will also be making a claim against the MREW Personal Accident insurance and your team should be able to assist you in that process — or reach out to the MREW Insurance Lead. The policy does cover loss of earnings (up to a limit). The purpose of our support grant is to bridge the gap while you wait for that pay-out to come through.

We reserve the right, depending on your circumstances, to treat that immediate grant as a loan. This is explicitly different to our support for physical and mental health therapies which we cover in full.

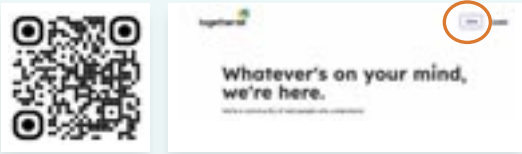
Where necessary, we might also speak with the insurers — as far as confidentiality allows — to ensure good governance for both MREW and the benevolent fund. With this in mind, we are seeking to establish a Memorandum of Understanding and a clearly outlined process so that teams and team members know who does what, who to contact and when.

In the meantime, if you have any queries regarding the MREW insurance policy or wish to make a claim against it, please contact Penny Brockman via insurance.lead@mountain.rescue.org.uk.

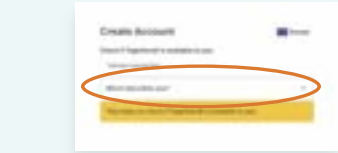
And if you've suffered an injury, be that psychological or physical, as a result of your involvement with mountain or cave rescue, and require physio or counselling to get you back to fitness, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me via secretary@rescuebenevolent.fund so we can get those wheels in motion.

Finally, something to ponder: Is this uptick in applications down to greater awareness that the fund exists or are more team members sustaining injuries? I'd be interested to hear your thoughts. ☺

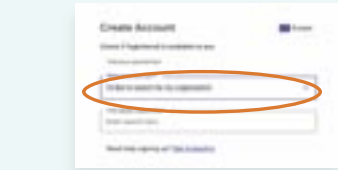
1 Go to togetherall.com or scan QR code. Click 'Join'



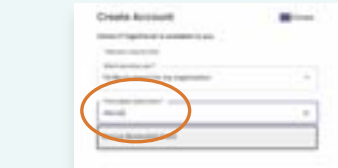
2 To create account Select 'Which describes you?'



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



4 Enter 'rescue' to find Rescue Benevolent Fund



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

Start exploring...





JOHN LEADBETTER KENDAL MRT

Well... since my accident whilst search dog training on 20 May 2025, life certainly has been different! With a swift response from the search dog handlers and dogsbodies of the Lake District Mountain Rescue Search Dogs, I soon had friends at my side and my right ankle realigned. Keswick MRT were called to help with further splinting and stabilisation, before a short stretcher carry to the roadside. From there we went to A&E to be assessed. The accident resulted with me sustaining three major trauma injuries affecting both legs...

RIGHT LEG

Knee: Patella avulsion: the patella had fractured off and a large section was able to move up and outward towards the lower thigh. Surgically repaired
Ankle: Tri-malleolar fracture: surgically repaired in two places with plates and screws.



LEFT LEG

Full thickness tear of the quads tendon from the patella, diagnosed one week post-accident with MRI. Surgically repaired.



Top: The casualty site. **Left:** Right knee X-ray; Right ankle, post-surgery. **Above:** Leg brace and cast.

I was in hospital for nearly two months. The first week was a series of X-rays, ultrasounds and, finally, an MRI scan to fully diagnose the extent of the injuries.

Following that, a lengthy five-hour combined operation to rebuild my ankle and knees. This resulted in the early stages of my recovery being confined to a hospital bed and hoisted into a wheelchair at visiting times. Slowly but surely, the NHS teams helped me progress to having a frame with restricted flex on my left leg and a cast and 'cricket' splint applied to my right leg.

This then meant that for short distances I could use a zimmer frame to move about the ward, but anything further still required the support of a wheelchair. Over time, the hospital physio team supported me so that, on discharge in July, I was just starting to use crutches for short distance, still with the wheelchair for anything longer and with supportive braces on both legs.

During the time in hospital, my wife, Clair, had been put in contact with the Rescue Benevolent Fund, and discussions had already begun as to how the fund may be able to help in my long-term recovery.

With everything that Clair was having to deal with on my behalf in daily life, it made

were happy with my post-op recovery and a degree of joint movement was achieved, we wouldn't start any supportive work with them. Six months after the operation, the NHS surgical team stated that they were happy with the progress and that it was over to the skills of physio teams to help bring back flexion, mobility and strength.

While we had been chatting with the FFC, they recommended that a week's residential, at their specialist centre, Jubilee House in Penrith, would be best suited to aid my recovery. Leading up to this, I had been in a number of online consults with their physio team, I had shared X-rays and medical notes, keeping them updated of the progress I'd been making.

So, with the start of 2026, I had my four-night residential (Sunday to Thursday) at Jubilee House. The week started early morning with an in-depth consultation with Rebecca, the assigned physio, where range of motion and balance was recorded, strength of movement and any updates from the online consultations. From this information, a tailored exercise plan was developed for me.

The following days rotated around three key one-hour sessions:

- **Physio gym:** going through the exercise plan under the watchful eye of my physio
- **Pool session:** undergoing various aqua aerobic exercises, and a
- **Hydrotherapy pool:** again tailored to the 'Watch' group I was assigned to.

Also included in the week were cardio gym sessions, health and wellbeing lectures and some short local walks for both exercise and wellbeing (café stops included).

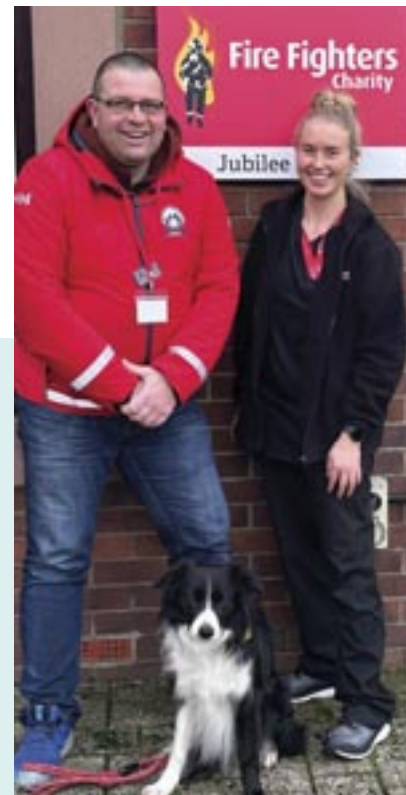
The week was great, as it not only worked on my physical strength and range of movement, but also built confidence and mental strength for my recovery.

I finished the week having the confidence to 'waddle' with only my trek poles for occasional support. I managed two miles while at Jubilee House. I had also just started to learn how to kneel (tentatively) on my left knee — something the surgical team had said would be at least twelve months away.



a big difference. That Judy, the Fund secretary, and the other Rescue Benevolent Fund trustees were so understanding of the situation, made conversations and decision making so much easier, helping us plan for the future after hospital discharge. As part of these discussions came the introduction and engagement with The Fire Fighters Charity (FFC).

We were subsequently guided by the FFC regarding when their help would be best suited to progress my recovery. It was agreed that, until the surgical team



Rebecca had pointed out the errors where my left side was compensating for the right. Going up stairs or an incline is getting better. Work is still needed for the descent side of life. But hey, six months ago I was being pushed around in a wheelchair!

The team at Jubilee House are amazing. The physios, reception staff, the in-house nursing team and the catering crew always have smiles, words of encouragement (and the odd jovial leg pull). Added to that, you are embraced by the camaraderie of the firefighters on the 'watch' that you are assigned to, like our own MRT, who will support and lift you when needed.

My recovery continues and I have regular checks on my progress and amendments to the exercise plan.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Brad, for rapidly realigning my ankle, those from both Keswick MRT and LDMRSDA who made for a swift evacuation and to those friends from Kendal, and Duddon and Furness teams and the wider world of search dogs, who came to visit me in hospital or sent 'words of comfort', to help make my hospital experience easier. The help and ongoing assistance from MREW, the Rescue Benevolent Fund and The Fire Fighters Charity continues to be amazing. 🐾

Above: John's Jubilee House exercise plan; John with physio Rebecca and his faithful Trainee Search Dog Jura. Images © John Leadbetter.

When the rescuer needs rescuing: My story of recovery and support from the Rescue Benevolent Fund

JAY GRANNEY UPPER WHARFEDALE MRT

When we talk about mountain and cave rescue, we often focus on the people being helped: the walkers, climbers and adventurers who find themselves in trouble. But sometimes, the rescuers themselves need support too. That's exactly why the Rescue Benevolent Fund exists.

My name is Jay, and I'm a member of Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Association (UWFRA). Like many members of mountain rescue teams across the country, I volunteer my time to help people in difficult and often dangerous situations in the hills. Back in October, during a routine rigging training session with the team, I had an

The Rescue Benevolent Fund lifted that weight off my shoulders and allowed me to concentrate fully on my rehabilitation.

accident I'll never forget. What was meant to be a normal training exercise quickly turned into something far more serious when I completely detached my left bicep from my arm. But, in that moment, I knew I was in the best possible hands: my own team.

They treated the situation with the same professionalism and care that they show on every call-out. But despite the reassurance of being surrounded by such skilled teammates, I knew the road ahead would be tough.

The injury required surgery to reattach the bicep, followed by a long recovery process. Physically, it was challenging. But as someone who is self-employed, the financial impact was just as worrying. Being unable to work for a period of time was devastating, and the uncertainty added a huge amount of stress during an already difficult time. That's when the Rescue Benevolent Fund stepped in.

The fund helped cover the cost of my rehabilitation, which I carried out with the fantastic team at Move Physiotherapy. Their support made an enormous difference to my recovery. With expert treatment and guidance, I was able to regain movement, rebuild strength, and get back on track far quicker than I could have hoped.

As I often say when people ask about the experience: When the accident happened, my focus was on recovering and getting back to normal life. Being self-employed, the financial pressure could have made that incredibly difficult. The Rescue Benevolent Fund lifted that weight off my shoulders and allowed me to concentrate fully on my rehabilitation. Thanks to their support and the incredible work from Jack at Move Physiotherapy, I've been able to regain full movement and strength in just a matter of months.

Mountain rescue teams are always ready to respond when others need help, often putting their own lives and families on hold. But accidents can happen to anyone even during training. That's why the benevolent fund is so important. It's there quietly in the background, ready to step in when members or their families need support the most. I'd like to finish by saying a heartfelt thank you. Thank you to everyone who contributes to and supports the Rescue Benevolent Fund. Your generosity truly makes a difference in people's lives. It's incredibly reassuring to know that, as rescuers, we have a charity that looks after us when we need it most. 🐾

Below: Jay takes delivery of the coveted white helmet as a full team member © UWFRA.



UWFRA'S NEWEST FULL TEAM MEMBER...

After completing his pre and probationary period (some of it with the Calder Valley team) – including a spot of intense rehab following his accident – Jay was unanimously voted in as a full team member at an operations meeting. 'Jay is already our enthusiastic and talented social media content creator,' they said. 'He will be a great asset to our team where his energy and expertise hold no bounds. Congratulations, Jay!'

Understanding trauma

CATHERINE DONNELLY

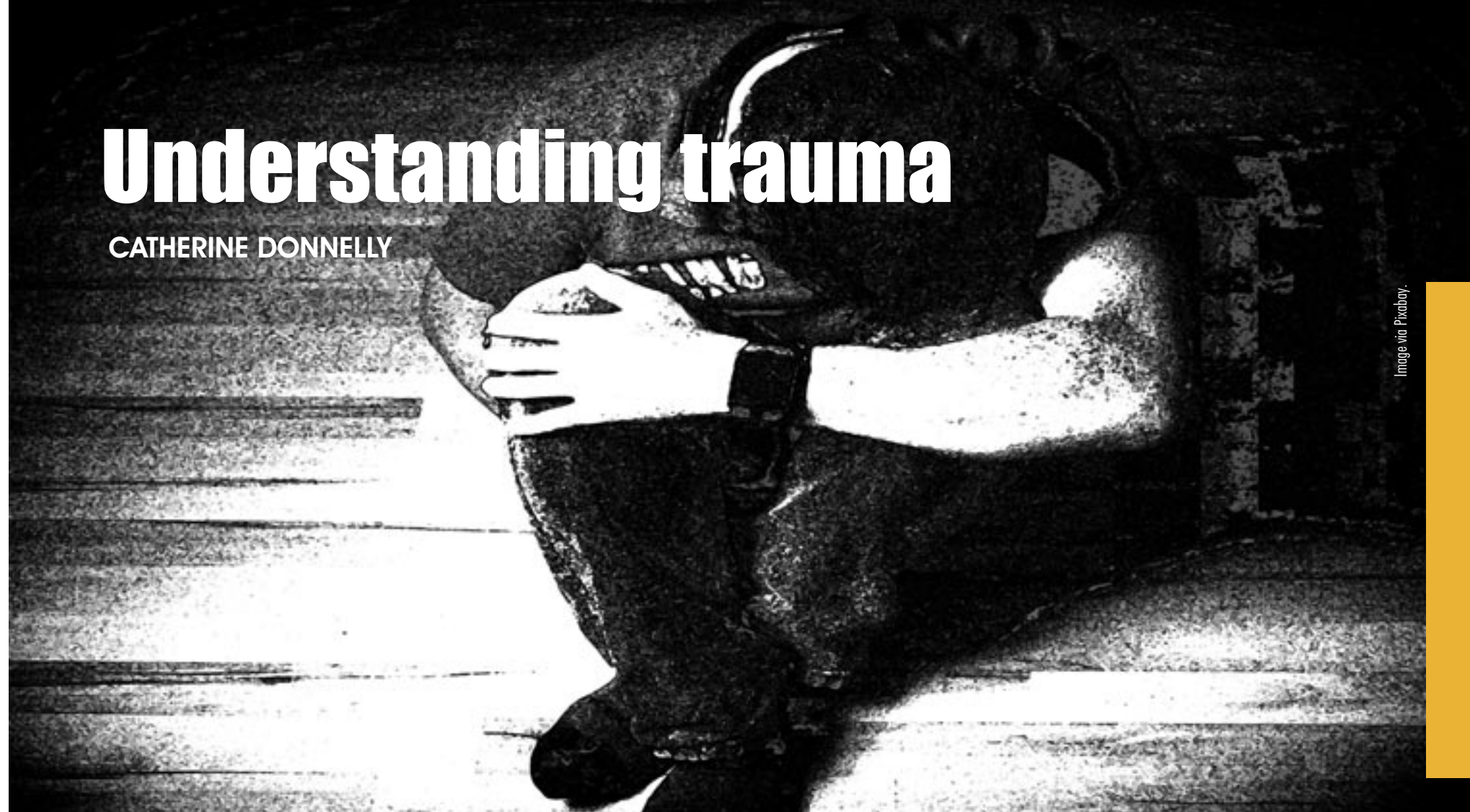


Image via Pixabay.



CATHERINE DONNELLY IS A PRIVATE PERSON-CENTRED THERAPIST BASED IN THE LAKE DISTRICT. SHE HAS PREVIOUSLY WORKED IN THE NHS, POLICE AND PRISON SERVICES. SHE OFFERS THERAPY BOTH IN PERSON, FROM HER DEDICATED THERAPY SPACE IN KESWICK, AND ONLINE. SHE HAS A POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA IN COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY, AND A MASTERS DEGREE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS.

SHE IS PART OF A GROWING NETWORK OF THERAPISTS TO WORK WITH THE RESCUE BENEVOLENT FUND IN SUPPORT OF OUR TEAM MEMBERS.

Trauma is defined as 'an emotional and psychological response to deeply distressing or life-threatening events that overwhelm an individual's ability to cope' (Mind, 2026). As a concept, it feels as if it has fully entered the consciousness of the mainstream and terms like 'trauma dumping', 'generational trauma' and 'vicarious trauma' can be found across social media, forming an important part of modern-day discussions concerning mental health.

As a private counsellor, I sincerely welcome this new-found awareness and openness to trauma because I fundamentally believe in the power that human connection has to heal. However, I also think it is important to offer some insight into some of the common misconceptions around trauma, so that we are best placed to respond to it when we recognise the signs and symptoms of it, both in others and within ourselves.

Firstly, it is important to note that trauma can result from either a singular event or can arise from the cumulative impact of prolonged emotional distress over time. Naturally, people tend to assume that certain events are more likely to be experienced as traumatic than others. When we imagine what might lead to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) we tend to think about conflict zones, road traffic accidents, or being the victim of a violent crime. Undoubtedly, it is important to recognise that these experiences are often world altering for people, but one of the often confusing and most surprising things about trauma is that two people

can witness the exact same event and have completely different emotional responses to it. One person's world may feel completely upended by something they have experienced, whilst their colleague is able to return to work and carry on without being totally overwhelmed by it. This in itself can be isolating and invalidating for the person affected, leading to questions like 'Why can my teammate cope with this and I can't?' and 'Why can't I just get over it?'

Consequently, in my own therapy practice, I continually remind myself that even as a qualified practitioner, I can

There is no rule about what experiences can be traumatic. It's more about how you react to them...

never make assumptions about another person's trauma. The mental health charity Mind summarises this, stating that 'there's no rule about what experiences

can be traumatic. It's more about how you react to them' (2026). On the face of it, this might make the task of identifying trauma seem even more confusing. However, I find that the subjective nature of trauma is the very thing that continually stops me from making assumptions about how another person might be experiencing it (which is important because making assumptions about people is always pretty unhelpful in therapy). Therefore, when working with trauma, I primarily ask questions instead of directing, I am curious rather than analytical, and I listen to the emotional content of what a client is telling me and not just the words on the surface.

Within my practice, I also work with a number of people from various emergency services who (by the very nature of their role), have often witnessed more distressing and emotionally demanding situations than the majority of other people in society. Consequently, I have become increasingly aware that emergency responders highlight another confusing aspect of trauma, which is that

despite being involved in a particular type of incident multiple times, one occasion of the same type of incident can still result in a complex trauma (whereas the previous twenty, for example, didn't). More confusingly, this is often without any forewarning or clear reason as to why this particular occasion has been so different. A person might then ask questions like, 'why can't I cope with this sudden death when I've attended so many before?' or 'why can't I stop reliving it when I've been trained to do this?'

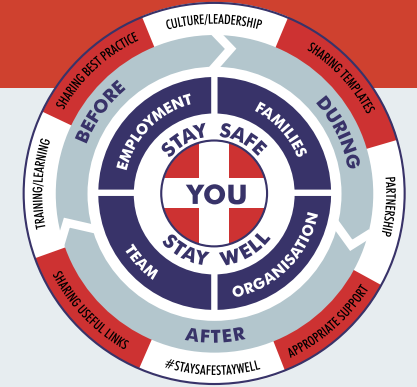
Importantly, if anybody has had an experience like this and is wrestling with

therapists offer specific interventions for trauma such as emotional regulation strategies, somatic work and cognitive processing (depending on their training and theoretical approach), but what I believe is even more fundamentally important, is that a good therapist makes you feel safe to be seen. Moreover, not just the hardworking, reliable and positive parts of self that like to be seen, but the confused, isolated and overwhelmed parts that are incredibly difficult to carry alone, especially for people whose role requires them to constantly respond to the needs of others.

Despite being involved in a particular type of incident multiple times, one occasion of the same type of incident can still result in a complex trauma – whereas the previous twenty, for example, didn't...

these types of questions, I would strongly encourage them to consider starting the process of therapy. Therapy deliberately doesn't jump to conclusions about trauma and instead seeks to establish a safe and non-judgmental space where all parts of a person are welcomed. It deliberately avoids assumptions and good therapy moves at the pace of the client (which is so vitally important when working with traumatised parts). Various

Therefore, if the increased modern-day awareness of trauma contributes in any way to bringing somebody to therapy so that they don't continue to struggle alone, then I can only see this as a positive move forward. Although social media is in many ways a double-edged sword, the fact that it has given us a greater collective awareness into both trauma and therapy, feels like one of its healthiest contributions to society. ☺



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

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

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

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide:
For adults affected by suicide, go to uksobs.org 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 or go to rescuebenevolent.fund

MREW Wellbeing on MREW website: mrew-wellbeing.org.uk



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

INSPIRING WOMEN... INSPIRING OTHERS...

MAX SWINHOE ABERGLASLYN MRT

Max is an operational member of Aberglaslyn MRT. She is also 'Upper Limb Different' and editor (with husband Tom) of Reach, a community-led charity providing support for children and young people with an upper limb difference and their families. She talks about her experience, growing up with a 'physical, visible disability' and how she now adapts in the very hands-on world of mountain rescue. An inspiration to us all.

Most of the time I don't see myself as being different, but life often reminds me that I am.

At times it feels as though I'm two people: one with a physical, visible disability, working hard to simply reach the baseline the two-handed world set for me and, at other times, a confident, capable woman.

On the less confident days imposter syndrome is in full swing. I'll catch the eyes of someone staring and I'll be thinking of it for hours. Whilst working up a sweat heading up a hill to locate a casualty the thought to not remove my jacket will cross my mind, for fear that they'll see my arm. Or I'll begin to worry if I'm going to be able to cope with the RRMT side of things — will the casualty mind me touching them?

On the confident days, I feel empowered by my difference — proving people wrong, doing things they don't expect of me, wearing my difference, my disability proudly.

compassion and not simply nosiness. This means that I seem to enter every situation expecting questions, stares, side-eye glances (yes, I do notice them). But when they don't come, it still surprises me. These people have just accepted me — weird.

I was born with an upper limb difference; in medical terms, caused by Amniotic Band Syndrome. The umbilical cord restricted growth to my left arm which gave me a foreshortened left arm, no use of an elbow and no functional left hand to speak of. However, I still wouldn't consider myself one-handed.

Anyone who knows me will know I use my left hand for most things. To climb, do yoga, swim, type, tie laces, cook, carry... however, my disability also brings me a lot of pain and discomfort. Typing, for example, gives me neck pain and headaches, whilst my right hand, arm and right side in general has to

spoke seriously with a surgeon about amputation, thinking that it would be easier for people to accept me if my arm just wasn't there.

Luckily, I didn't follow that route, but I did spend the first thirty years of my life just wanting to blend in, hiding my arm, even on the hottest days. I became adept at holding jumpers or bags strategically to hide it, or simply just keeping them on. It felt easier and gave me the control.

Despite this, my disability never stopped me doing things; Tom and I travelled the world, got our Advanced PADI diving qualifications, trekked to Everest Base Camp and, in 2017, we walked the entire Appalachian Trail. But despite the achievement of hiking 2,189 miles in five months, even in the wilderness, I had worn a buff on my arm — just in case, and atop that Katahdin sign on the epic finish line, I still hid my arm.

Fast forward a few years, I came across the charity I had been a member of as a child — Reach — and I was freed, reminded that I wasn't the only one living with an upper limb difference.

I began working for Reach and seeing children with limb differences being born every day which helped me to stop hiding, proud to represent the community. This was a rolling stone; my confidence grew and I started to see opportunities I hadn't considered previously...

In 2023, I joined Aberglaslyn MRT as a trainee. Apprehensively I stepped into this terrifying new world. The team were nothing but welcoming and I soon learned that I do belong despite being different. I realised that I have my own skills I can bring to the table.

I've always believed that my disability has given me strengths; a different level of empathy and compassion for instance, from years of being hypersensitive to stares and glances. I now channel that energy into 'reading the room', helping me to understand and connect with people.

I realised too that I had to be honest with myself and my team about what I could and couldn't manage, or how I would need to adapt in any given situation. I went from growing up being told I could do anything to understanding that it's OK to know your own

pick up the slack for most things, so it's a real shame I ended up as a copywriter and spend most days at a laptop.

Writing was the natural path though. I went on to study journalism at university, but despite enjoying my course and meeting my now husband, my first year was awful. I battled anxiety and it was during this time I

I know that everyone has something they're hung up about, something they're battling every day.

But I've spent most of my life hiding my arm or answering questions from strangers. 'Where is your arm?', 'What happened?', 'Does it hurt?'. In truth, I don't mind as long as those questions come from a place of



Max in action with Aberglaslyn and the search dogs. Images courtesy of Max and Aberglaslyn MRT.

SOS Extreme Rescues © BBC iPlayer.

limits — that's important for everyone, isn't it? I had to learn to ask for help, but give me a chance to figure it out first.

I needed to find my voice; requesting to be on a certain side of the stretcher during a carry-off, adapting to how I manage equipment, how I help rig for rope rescues and how I carry out casualty care. Learning to open ampules of morphine with one hand and draw up morphine with one and a half hands was challenging, but not impossible.

Being on the hill with other MR teams was another lesson in confidence. I knew it would be surprising for other members, but that they just needed to see what my capabilities are. And trust that I will speak up if I need to change anything.

Then came the BBC's 'SOS Extreme Rescues'. Truthfully it was great and terrifying in equal measure. I have battled over the years seeing myself in photos or videos because I often don't see myself as different until I see it in film. But honestly, I only feel proud that I was able to represent MR, Aberglaslyn and the Upper Limb Difference community.

Mountain rescue isn't for everyone. But no matter what you look like or how you've shown up, if you've got something to bring to the table, if you're happy on the hill, you can dig deep in the worst conditions and work closely with your team to help those people in need, you'll be great. And what a team to be part of.

I often think when I reach a casualty that they must be thinking, 'how is she going to do anything helpful', but have realised that that's my voice, and that I am limiting myself with those negative thoughts. Let's be honest, they've got a hurty ankle and couldn't care less how many hands I have, as long as I'm carrying the pain relief and can help get them down!

This is a journey I hope will continue for many years to come. I volunteer with SARDA Wales also, and aspire to become a Trailing Dog handler for SARDA Wales. Trust me to pick the discipline that involves managing a long-line and a lunatic cocker spaniel at the end. Mali is now six months old and certainly has the nose for it, so I'll figure it out along the way, with some fantastic teammates beside me, and I know my confidence will only continue to grow.

Last year I qualified as a mountain leader, hoping that alongside my copywriting, and the imposter syndrome that seems to have taken up residency in my head, I can start to take others out in the mountains to help them gain confidence and find their own space in the outdoors where they can feel relaxed and free.

I think we expect to reach a certain age and have it all figured out, but in truth I feel as though I'm only just beginning. I, like you, have good and bad days, but the more I have, the more I understand myself, my limits, and most importantly, my capabilities. Perhaps the more I can trust in those, the closer I will come to evicting that imposter. ☘

reach.org.uk



My husband, Tom, and I love to adventure; since 2014 we've travelled the world, lived in Australia, learned to scuba dive, swum with sharks, trekked to Everest Base Camp and hiked the 2,189-mile Appalachian Trail. We converted our van into a tiny home and toured the UK and Ireland before falling for the beautiful mountains of North Wales where we volunteer with the search and rescue dogs (SARDA Wales) and the Aberglaslyn team. Tom works as a mountain leader and graphic designer, and I'm a copywriter. I rediscovered the Reach family in 2020 and it changed my life because I realised that I'm not alone on my limb different journey. In 2021 Tom and I took over as editor and designer of Reach's magazine 'Within Reach'. We love sharing the voices and true stories of Reach children, parents and adults, as well as Reach news, inspiring tales from role models and champions of representation and inclusion.



Hinkes
thinks

Everest: 8,848m. 30 years on...

Images © Alan Hinkes.

Thirty years ago, I stood on the summit of Mount Everest, 8,848 metres above sea level. For a moment, no one on the planet was higher than me. I paused to take in the view, which was exceptional. It felt as if I could almost see the curvature of the Earth. To the north stretched the barren, brown expanse of the Tibetan Plateau. To the south, the deep, lush valleys of Nepal.

The final snow cone on Everest is surprisingly small, about the size of two king-size beds. It would be a pleasant place to sit and relax if it were a few thousand metres lower in the British hills. However, there was a cluster of aluminium poles and what looked like plastic lights, remnants of laser or GPS surveying equipment. All of it was festooned with Buddhist prayer flags and ceremonial silk scarves, fluttering in the wind like ragged washing.

But instinctively I knew this was no place to relax or become complacent. This is the death zone. Humans can only survive at this altitude for a limited time. Hours rather than days. Even if you are well acclimatised and lucky, you might last a couple of days before the body begins to shut down. The air is extremely thin — both atmospheric pressure and available oxygen are far lower than at sea level. 8,000m+ is where jumbo jets fly and the temperature is 40 below or colder.

At these heights there is effectively no rescue. Helicopters have an operational ceiling of around 6,500 metres. There are no mountain rescue teams on standby, and even if there were it would take weeks to acclimatise a team to operate safely at these altitudes. In the death zone you are on your own. If you become immobile there is extraordinarily little anyone can do to help

you. In some ways you would stand more chance of being rescued from the moon or from orbit on the International Space Station. At least the technology exists to send a spacecraft.

Many people imagine that standing on the summit of Everest would be an overwhelming and emotional experience. For me it was strangely matter of fact. I was working as a cameraman on a documentary about Brian Blessed attempting Everest. So instead of contemplating the moment too deeply, I simply got on with the job. Filming, checking equipment and myself, mentally and physically. I took my summit photograph, holding a picture of my daughter and Gran, rather than a flag.

Only nine months earlier I had climbed K2, often called 'the Savage Mountain', and by comparison I felt comfortable on Everest. I enjoyed my moment on top of the world, savouring the fifteen or twenty minutes I could safely spend there. Unlike on K2, I did not feel the same tingle of fear or seriousness. There was plenty of daylight left and I felt strong and confident about the descent.

For a fleeting moment I felt as relaxed as if I were standing on Helvellyn, Mont Blanc or even Roseberry Topping, but relaxed is

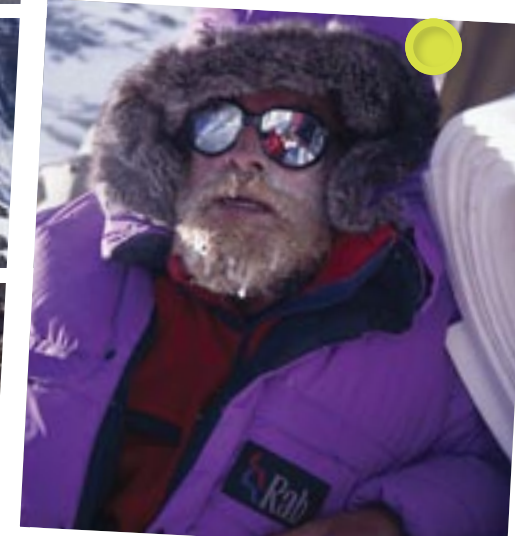
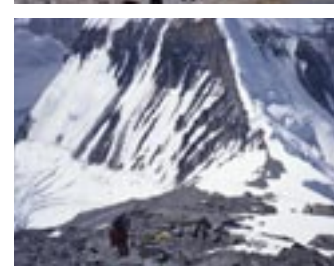
different from complacent. I did not let my guard down, kept alert to where I was.

Just nine days earlier, eight climbers had died in a ferocious storm high on the mountain. Three of their bodies were still frozen to the slopes on the north ridge above 8,000 metres, and I had passed close by them on my way up. Seeing them was a stark reminder of my mortality, and of how easily it could happen to any climber. Recovering those bodies was simply not possible. At that altitude it would take a formidable team of eight to ten people to recover a body safely, an enormously risky undertaking above 8,000 metres.

All too soon it was time to leave the top of the world and concentrate on the descent.

The upper section of the North Ridge route is dramatically exposed, with a 3,000-metre drop down the Kangshung Face on one side and a 2,500-metre fall toward the Kangshung Glacier on the other. In many ways it felt like a supercharged version of classic British ridges such as Sharp Edge, Crib Goch or the Carn Mòr Dearg Arête, only far bigger and far less forgiving. But there was no mountain rescue team waiting below. So, I stayed focused, alert to every step, determined not to slip, and make it safely back down to base camp.

I took my summit photograph on Everest,



but I always save any real celebration until I am safely back in base camp. There is no point climbing a mountain only to die on the descent. My personal motto has always been simple: No mountain is worth a life. Coming back is the real success. The summit is only a bonus.

People have long wondered whether George Mallory and Andrew Irvine reached the summit of Everest in 1924, decades before Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary made the first confirmed ascent in 1953. It is possible they did.

When Mallory's body was discovered in 1999, there was no photograph of his wife among his possessions. Mallory had planned to leave her photograph on the summit. Perhaps he did reach the top and left it there. We may never know, unless the lost camera from that expedition is

ever found with a salvageable image. Sadly, he never made it back down, which is what really counts. In 1996 we carried a memorial plaque for Mallory and Irvine to Rongbuk Base Camp at 5,200 metres. As far as I know, it is still there today.

Everest is a honeypot and will always attract climbers and would-be climbers who want to stand on top of the world.

Nowadays the climbing is less technical, with ropes fixed to the summit, but it is still a worthwhile climb and challenge. The dangers of avalanche, ferocious weather, frostbite, extreme altitude and no mountain rescue teams remain. Even though you can buy a place on an organised, guided expedition, Everest should not be underestimated — its ascent is still a deadly challenge. ☘

ALAN HINKES OBE WAS THE FIRST BRITON TO CLIMB ALL FOURTEEN OF THE WORLD'S 8,000-METRE PEAKS. HIS HARDBACK BOOK ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE, **'8,000 METRES. CLIMBING THE WORLD'S HIGHEST MOUNTAINS'**, IS AVAILABLE TO BUY FROM THE MREW ONLINE SHOP: SHOP.MOUNTAIN.RESCUE.ORG.UK.



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CALL 020 7186 9336.

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books

FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES

Bob Sharp MBE



After retiring and moving to Applecross in 2003, Edinburgh GP Gerry McPartlin spent seventeen years in the Torridon MRT, including fourteen as the team's medical officer and four as chairman. I had the pleasure of working with Gerry on 'A Heavy Affair with the Mountains', the biography of RAF MRT legend, 'Heavy' Whalley. For the period we worked on that (over twelve months), Gerry put on hold his own book.

The book is a massive undertaking and is an absolutely superb addition to Scottish Mountaineering literature. 'Friends in High Places', published in December, tells an inspirational story of Gerry's journey from dangerously incompetent bagger to accomplished Munroist and mountain rescuer, with stirring adventures in mountains from Scotland to the Himalayas.

His account is often dramatic, at times hilarious, and always absorbing. It features major highs and lows, including the tragic death of a friend on the Cuillin Ridge, his own broken back and some spectacular misadventures which he describes with disarming honesty. There are fascinating details of his work in mountain rescue and as an expedition doctor.

Gerry has been around the Munros twice. His first round was completed

in October 1996 with four friends. Their quintet is still the largest recorded simultaneous completion. His second round, 'Grandad's Mad Munro Marathon' in 2010, when he was 66, took just 88 days and is the fastest recorded completion by a pensioner. Grandad's Mad Munro Marathon raised £50,000 towards a memorial fund for a great friend. Eventually, the fund reached £1 million and financed the building of a new L'Arche home in Edinburgh. L'Arche is an international charity for adults with learning disabilities. All profits from the sale of 'Friends in High Places' are being donated to L'Arche Edinburgh. 🌟

Note: Gerry and Bob's joint endeavour, 'A Heavy Affair with the Mountains', the biography of RAF MRT legend, Dave 'Heavy' Whalley is available from lulu.com.

FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES IS AVAILABLE IN HARDBACK (£27.50) AND PAPERBACK (£5.99) FROM LULU.COM

WALKER'S GUIDE TO BAGGING THE CUILLIN SUMMITS

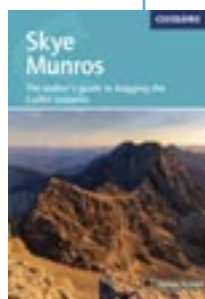
Take on the Cuillin Munros with confidence using Adrian Trendall's definitive two-volume Skye Munros guidebook from Cicerone. Designed for experienced walkers and scramblers, this essential set covers all twelve Munros, including the legendary Inaccessible Pinnacle, above the Isle of Skye's dramatic skyline.

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Raising funds for rescue

VELAIR GROUP CONTINUES SUPPORT FOR MOUNTAIN RESCUE FOR A SECOND YEAR

Velair has confirmed the continued partnership with MREW, following a successful first year of fundraising through sales of its Hydra hand dryer.

Launched in January 2025, the initiative sees £1 donated from every Hydra hand dryer sold, helping to support mountain rescue across England and Wales. After a strong first year of Hydra sales, the programme has already generated a meaningful contribution, with further donations expected as the campaign continues.

'I'd like to thank Matt, Katie and the Velair team for all their support to date, and for the ongoing relationship,' says Mike Park, MREW CEO. 'It's been a really positive experience for us and much appreciated. Due to the nature of the events which initially inspired this partnership, we feel it's appropriate to focus this donation on prevention.'

It was an incident on Yr Wyddfa/Snowdon which provided that initial inspiration, when Velair Group CEO Matt Anderson required mountain rescue assistance during a climb. The help he received from team members left a lasting impression of their dedication and professionalism.

'Experiencing first-hand the extraordinary work of mountain rescue volunteers gave me a new perspective on how vital their services are,' says Matt. 'These teams operate in the toughest of conditions to save lives and rely heavily on donations to continue their work. After such a positive first year supporting MREW, we're proud to continue the initiative and help contribute further through the success of the Hydra range.'

The hand dryer at the centre of the campaign, the Hydra, is a compact, low-carbon, stainless steel high-speed hand dryer designed for efficiency and durability. Backed by a three-year, 24-hour replacement manufacturer's warranty, it's a popular choice for modern, sustainable washrooms. Units are also branded with the MREW Supporter logo, helping raise awareness.

With thousands of incidents responded to each year across England and Wales, continued support from partnerships like this plays an important role in helping teams maintain equipment, training and operational readiness. 'As Hydra continues to grow in popularity,' adds Matt, 'Velair looks forward to strengthening the partnership and supporting the organisation's life-saving work for years to come.'

Top: Velair Group CEO Matt Anderson and General Manager Katie Furniss, pictured with MREW CEO Mike Park (centre), at The Manchester Cleaning Show 2026, in February © Velair.



FEBRUARY: EDALE TEAM GATHER TO CELEBRATE 70 YEARS

Team members gathered at the The Old Nag's Head in Edale to celebrate the 70th birthday of the team, joined by many former team leaders and members, 'a deep well of mountain rescue experience' stretching back to the 1960s.

The team has also celebrated with their '70th Voices', a series of videos on social media featuring some of the personalities of Edale MRT over the last seventy years. The first of these featured Ian Sockett, the earliest serving team leader at the party, who they dubbed 'The man. The myth. The legend.' Episode 2 featured Neil Roden, about whom they note 'to put the amount of time Neil has been an operational member of Edale MRT into perspective, half of the current team members weren't even born when he started attending rescues!' Episode 3 saw Pip, talking about the 'new normal' of 150 call-outs a year for the team. She talked about the family-work-team balancing act for someone who has been a team member for



Top: Team members, past and present. **Above:** Andy Cass (left) with Ian Bunting © Andy Jones Photography/Edale MRT.

twenty years, is an Advanced Clinical Practitioner, mum to two girls and also married to another team member. Episode 4 focused on Andy Cass, awarded the Outstanding Service Award by team chairman Ian Bunting. Andy, now in his early-70s, was first involved in mountain rescue aged seventeen, an 'integral part of the fabric of the team who is respected and admired by us all'. However, 'We would like to apologise,' they said, 'to anyone who has fallen victim to Andy's guerilla fundraising over the years.' We hear that, on Bank Holiday weekends, the bus through Hathersage would regularly be held on a red light at the pedestrian crossing by a team member whilst Andy climbed aboard with his Edale fundraising bucket and persuaded people to make a donation as the bus continued its journey down the valley. 'We've never since managed to achieve the same Bank Holiday fundraising totals as Andy The Highwayman Cass did!!'



KRISTIN HOSTETTER HAS WORKED AS A JOURNALIST IN THE OUTDOOR INDUSTRY FOR 30+ YEARS AND HAS WRITTEN FOUR BOOKS ON OUTDOOR GEAR. YOU CAN FIND AND FOLLOW HER ON LINKEDIN, INSTAGRAM AND FACEBOOK.

Don't forget the duct tape

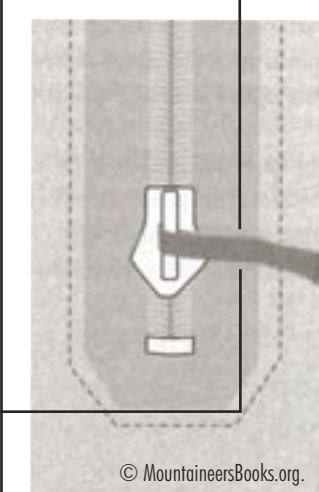
OUR QUARTERLY TOP TIP FROM THIS HANDY LITTLE BOOK BY KRISTIN HOSTETTER

Repairing a broken, lost or inadequate zipper pull

It happens all the time. The little grab on the end of your zipper either disappears or is simply so small that you need a set of tweezers to find it. If this happens, simply remove the old tab and attach a new and improved one. You are limited only to your imagination. Use ribbon, cord, a paper clip, a whistle, a thermometer... or duct tape! Generally speaking, the bigger the pull, the better, especially if it's a zipper you intend to use while wearing gloves or mittens.

DUCT TAPE TIP

Make a sturdy zipper pull by threading a thin strip of duct tape through the slider, then wrapping the tails with more duct-tape strips.



© MountaineersBooks.org.

news round

JANUARY > MARCH

SOS EXTREME RESCUES BACK FOR POSSIBLE FOURTH SERIES...

A packed NWMRA meeting in January welcomed the series' executive producer, Jenny Dafydd and lead production manager, Iona Rhys from Darlun TV, to outline what a fourth series of 'SOS Extreme Rescues' would look like and what it would entail for those teams who choose to participate.

Jenny and Iona reported that the last series had attracted 5.5 million viewers across the UK, figures that highlight how the TV series is helping get across important safety messaging and increasing awareness of mountain rescue, to audiences we can sometimes struggle to reach in other ways. The three previous series have also been sold to Australian TV. As an outcome of commitment to a further series, Darlun pledged to produce a suite of content for YouTube and social media, providing further opportunity to reach audiences in an engaging and effective way.

The proposed fourth series will comprise twelve half-hour episodes, hopefully including more 'behind the scenes' footage to help raise awareness of the volume of work that sits behind the dramatic rescues featured.



SOS Extreme Rescues © BBC iPlayer.

JANUARY: RHYS SETS NEW RECORD IN MRT CHALLENGE NORTH

Kirkby Stephen team member Rhys Beddoe won the Winter Spine MRT Challenge North, coming into Kirk Yetholm in 54 hours and 42 minutes, and raising £1,510 for all the Lake District teams along the way.

His brand new course record took nearly two hours off John Lovegrove's 2025 effort, with a fifteen-mile gap to the next fastest MRT runner. Describing this as his 'biggest challenge to date,' he noted that the Winter Spine would 'demand everything: endurance, resilience, navigation, decision-making and mountain craft, all while managing fatigue, cold and the uncertainty that comes with long winter nights and up to sixteen hours of darkness each day.' So, fantastic effort, Rhys!!



Raising funds for rescue

MARCH: KENDAL NAME VEHICLE IN MEMORY OF 'JOHN EV'

Kendal team members and family gathered to see one of their Land Rovers named and blessed in honour of John Everett, or 'John Ev' as they knew him, who passed away in November 2025.

John's wife, June, removed the sash to reveal his name and this was followed by former team leader, Eddie, 'blessing' the vehicle with a tot of Jura, John's favourite tipple. Everyone then raised a glass in his memory. John spent seventeen years on the team, and was vehicle officer for most of those, always ensuring the fleet was well maintained and call-out ready. He was also instrumental in the purchase of M1 and M3, the team's two Land Rovers, and M4 their Toyota.

Right: John Everett pictured during helicopter training; the newly christened John Ev, complete with favourite tipple © Kendal MRT.



MARCH: SWALEDALE MEMBER JOINS COMMS SYSTEM TESTING

Swaledale team member Graham was in Bavaria, to take part in the testing of the new pan European Critical Communications system.

Two scenarios were set up simulating a very large forest fire requiring the assistance of two other countries with their fire, police and rescue personnel being deployed to the scene. In his fifty years of MR experience this was easily the biggest multi-agency event he had ever been involved with. As well as evaluating the new comms equipment, he was partnered with the Bavaria Mountain Rescue Team to help them understand the new kit.



Above: Graham (centre) with members of the Bavarian Mountain Rescue Service. Facebook @SwaledaleMRT.



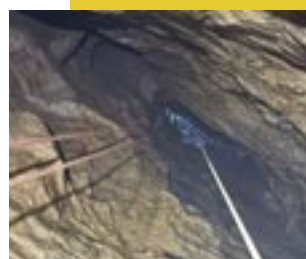
FEBRUARY: EAST CORNWALL TEAM MEMBERS IN TRAINING WITH FORESTRY ENGLAND TEAM

The joint training, alongside the Cardinham Woods Forestry England team, involved casualty evacuation in steep, technical terrain, one of the toughest challenges the team faces. Team members are already looking forward to the next session and building on the skills developed at Cardinham Woods.



FEBRUARY: SWALEDALE TEAM AND BCRC IN JOINT TRAINING AND PEER REVIEW

Three members of the British Cave Rescue Council (BCRC) joined Swaledale team members as part of a peer review, both on the surface and underground.





MARCH: RED ROSE LAND ROVER CLUB PRESENT £1,800 CHEQUE TO BOLTON TEAM

A huge thank you to the members of Red Rose Land Rover Club for their generous donation to Bolton Mountain Rescue Team.

Team members Bryan, Dave and Wayne visited the club to collect the donation and to thank everyone in person for their support. 'We're extremely grateful,' said the team, 'to everyone at Red Rose Land Rover Club for their kindness and ongoing support of the team.'

Top: Bryan (left) and David (right) receive the cheque from Michael Kerfoot, Red Rose Land Rover club chairman © Bolton MRT.

JANUARY: LOCAL RUNNING CLUB SUPPORTS COCKERMOUTH TEAM

Cockermouth MRT was Cumberland AC's charity for 2025 and, in January, some of the club's members presented the team with a 'cheque' for £5,777.

Team chairman Martin Pickavance said the amount raised was 'amazing' and would be used to maintain their vehicles and update equipment. He and the rest of the team could not thank the club enough. Club members were treated to a tour of the base, had a go on the in-house climbing wall and got to see the kit carried to every call-out. 'A big thank you,' they said, 'to Martin, Simon, Mike, Steve, Neil, Abigail, Gwyn and Daniel, and not forgetting Marty the search and rescue dog who, of course, got all the attention. Thanks to them for the very warm welcome.'

Top: Cockermouth team members receive the big cheques from members of West Cumbria-based running club, Cumberland AC © Cumberland AC.



MARCH: HOLME VALLEY TEAM VISIT BUFFALO'S NEW DESIGN STUDIO

Outdoor clothing company Buffalo Systems have unveiled Basecamp, their new design studio and community base in Sheffield. Holme Valley team members went along to check out the studio and meet owners Ben Fogle and James Sleater, along with other outdoor enthusiasts.

Left: Holme Valley team members with Ben Fogle (centre) and James Sleater (second left) © Holme Valley MRT.

FEBRUARY: CALL-OUT LEADS TO FUNDRAISING EFFORT FOR LLANBERIS TEAM



Jayden Long (19) and Eddie Hill (20) were walking in the Yr Wyddfa area, when concerns were raised for their safety. Their bodies were later found at the 1,065m (3,500ft) Crib y Ddysgl ridge, between Crib Goch and the summit.

Llanberis team members had worked through the night in extreme winter conditions, assisted by Aberglaslyn team, RAF Mountain Rescue and HM Coastguard. An inquest in February described the men's deaths as 'unnatural', but a cause of death was awaited pending further investigations. An online appeal set up by Jayden's family, in memory of Jayden and Eddie, has since raised £17,150 for the Llanberis team.

Above: The Crib Goch ridge © Trevor Littlewood/Creative Commons Licence. **Left:** Jayden Long and Eddie Hill, courtesy of the family's fundraising page on JustGiving.

Raising funds for rescue



MARCH: JAKE TAKES ON KAYAK CHALLENGE FOR TEAM

The plan to paddle the 28 miles from Dartmeet to the sea, in one day, in a Whitewater Kayak, in memory of his old mate, also called Jake, was made a little harder as he was recovering from a 'horrendous sickness bug'.

Undeterred, he has (to date) raised £615 for Dartmoor SRT Ashburton, surpassing his original target. 'My friend was so full of life,' said Jake, 'and the Dart was his favourite river. I have many happy memories of laughing downstream together. We always talked about doing this paddle as a little challenge, but unfortunately never got around to it. Now is the time!' He was accompanied by Matt Brook for the paddle, starting early at Dartmeet, then joined by his father, Barry, for the Estuary section.

Left: Jake in his kayak © Jake Deakin.

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news round

JANUARY > MARCH

JANUARY: FLOODING IN SOUTH WEST DUE TO STORM CHANDRA

North Dartmoor team members joined colleagues from the Ashburton and Tavistock teams, Devon and Cornwall 4x4 Response, Devon and Cornwall Police HART, South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust and Devon and Somerset FRS to attend multiple incidents across East Devon during Storm Chandra.

Team search managers were deployed to Ottery St Mary Fire Station to accompany the Silver Cell to organise assets and assessments of deployment as incidents came in. Meanwhile, swiftwater rescue teams met at Sowton Park and Ride to meet with Devon and Cornwall 4x4 Response.

Team members were deployed to various villages to attend RTCs involving individuals navigating the flooded roads along the River Otter, between East Budleigh and Ottery St Mary, and also conducted river level checks, wellbeing checks on the public, and the evacuation of flooded properties and vehicles caught in the flooding. Another incident, in Otterton, involved an individual who reported having chest pains. The Ambulance Service met the team at the property with a rolling convoy following the ambulance back to the main road, avoiding flooded and damaged roads. Water levels remained high over the following days with extensive damage along the rivers.

Left: Team members at work during Storm Chandra © North Dartmoor/DSRT Ashburton.



MOUNTAIN HERITAGE NEWS UPDATE MIKE MARGESON OBE MREW HERITAGE LEAD

This year marks the 200-year celebrations of the first recorded ascent of Pillar Rock by John Atkinson in 1826. John was a local shepherd from a croft farm in Ennerdale, and it is believed his ascent was by what is now known as the 'old west route'. In February 1953, Cockermouth MRT became the third team in the Lake District and they have covered Ennerdale and Pillar for over seventy years.

During 2026, a range of celebration events are planned, hosted by Mountain Heritage Trust (MHT), the Fell and Rock Climbing Club (FRCC), and Steven Reid of Needle Sports in Keswick, with his Pillar collection, as well as original Abraham brothers photos. MHT is mounting exhibitions at Keswick Museum and Art Gallery 6 July to 31 August, with a more extensive exhibition at the Beacon Museum, Whitehaven, 31 October to February 2027.

The Trust would like to express thanks to Patterdale team for hosting a quarterly MHT trustees meeting. They like to circulate these meetings around the country where possible, so if any other team could offer a Saturday morning meeting room for about fifteen people, please let me know via mike.margeson@mountainrescue.org.uk.

I am in the process of sorting out what MR stuff we have in the MHT archive. We know, of course, about old film and the entire Johnnie Lees collection, but other stuff is located all over the archive, so I am trying to sort a dedicated section for MR items. Remember, if your team have any important or rare items you would like to donate to the collection, to have catalogued and stored safely, please get in touch. I am also collecting a picture equipment record, so if you have any old equipment, please record it — I am always happy to receive images for the collection.

Lastly, I have said this several times before so excuse the broken record, but it is vitally important. Have you recorded the older members' and retired team members' memories of team history? If not, do it before it's too late and lost! 📸

Right: Cockermouth team members on the iconic Pillar Rock (as featured on the cover of Mountain Rescue Magazine, Issue 82, in Autumn 2022 © Nick Lumb.





MARCH: ABERDYFI TEAM MEMBER AWARDED ROYAL POLAR MEDAL

Dr Samuel Doyle, an Aberdyfi team member for ten years, and a field glaciologist at Aberystwyth University, was awarded the Polar Medal in the 2026 New Year's Honours List for his 'outstanding research and leadership in Greenland'. Although not directly related to mountain rescue, he believes his experience in mountain rescue has certainly helped on fieldwork on the Greenland Ice Sheet.

One of the UK's most historic honours, the Polar Medal is awarded to individuals who have made exceptional contributions to the advancement of polar science or exploration, particularly through work undertaken in extreme and challenging environments. Past recipients include some of the world's most renowned explorers, among them Sir Ernest Shackleton, Captain Robert Falcon Scott, Sir Edmund Hillary and Sir Ranulph Fiennes. Sam's research has advanced the understanding of ice sheet hydrology and how water flowing beneath the ice affects ice motion.

'I'm delighted to receive this award,' says Sam. 'It has been a pleasure to undertake research on the Greenland Ice Sheet — one of Earth's last great areas of wilderness — over extended periods of fieldwork over the last seventeen years. Overcoming the many challenges of remote polar fieldwork would not have been possible without the skill and dedication of the many people I've worked with. Although I typically work in remote areas of the ice sheet in small teams of scientists, the best part of working in Greenland is learning from the Greenlandic people. I have a deep respect for their way of life and culture, and their practical knowledge gained from centuries of living in such an extreme environment.'

His research included investigating how water and weather shape the behaviour of the ice sheet, from studying the rapid drainage of large surface lakes to showing how warm, moisture-rich atmospheric rivers can speed up melting. He has also studied the physical conditions of fast glacier flow by placing instruments in kilometre-deep boreholes drilled using techniques that Aberystwyth University specialises in. He is currently studying how hidden lakes beneath the ice fill and drain and using sensitive ground-vibration sensors to measure how much meltwater is flowing from the Greenland Ice Sheet into the ocean.

Top: Looking at the data © Joe Reynolds. **Right:** Dr Samuel Doyle researching the Greenland Ice Sheet © Josh Bratchley.



FEBRUARY: CHANGE PLAN FOR PENRITH'S NEW BASE

Penrith MRT and COMRU have updated their plans for their proposed new rescue base at Eden Business Park, Gilwilly, Penrith, following a detailed review of both teams' operational needs and input from LDSAMRA.

They will now split the builds into two separate projects. As a result, the Penrith base can now be significantly smaller, not having to accommodate so many or such large vehicles. The smaller building will be cheaper and hopefully delivered significantly quicker. COMRU's requirements are simpler — essentially, a large garage and a dedicated building should be sufficient and this could be accommodated on the Penrith team's Gilwilly site.

'This has been a difficult decision,' says Penrith chairman John Carlin, 'but we now have a plan that will be quicker and more effective for both teams. The big fundraising effort really starts now so that we can continue to provide an effective rescue service for the local community and visitors to the area.'

'One of the strengths of volunteer rescue teams is their ability to recognise difficulty in a changing landscape,' adds COMRU chairman Paul Witheridge. 'It was agreed by both teams that, for either organisation to move forward positively, it would be best to treat each team's needs separately. We will continue to work together to maximise any future opportunities.'

Top left: Penrith team vehicle during a call-out in February © Penrith MRT.

Left: COMRU team members during a training exercise in November 2025 © COMRU.



JANUARY: CENTRAL BEACONS TEAM WELCOME NEW CEO TO BASE

Andy Buchan visited the team as part of his tour of England and Wales and it was a great opportunity to demonstrate the new training manikin, generously donated by Ruth Lee.

The team were successful in applying for a Volunteer Heroes award from Ruth Lee. The company recognises the contributions of volunteers in UK search and rescue by making annual awards to teams, who can apply on an annual basis through the social commitment page on their website. The manikin will help with training in high-fidelity simulations of airway management and to practise major trauma situations in remote environments.

Above: MREW CEO Elect Andy Buchan with team leader Mike Marchant, RMTs Huw Jones and Rhianon Chalmers Brown and team doctors Patrick Corning and Alan Stone. **Below:** Rhianon and Andy administer vital life support © CBMRT.



FEBRUARY: NEWSAR NOMINATED FOR COMMUNITY AWARD

North East Wales team members were very proud to be nominated in the Mold Town Council Community Awards 2026, in the 'Over-25 Volunteering' category.

Team members Becky Ashcroft and Louise Pickford attended the awards ceremony on behalf of the team and despite very stiff competition, the team won. Many congratulations to all the other nominees and winners.



MARCH: BECKY AND IAIN MBE RECEIVE THEIR HONOURS

Husband and wife 'team' Iain and Becky Ashcroft received their MBEs from our MREW Patron, HRH The Prince of Wales.

With over sixty years of service with NEWSAR between them, they may be the first husband and wife team to jointly receive MBEs as mountain rescue team members. Well done, both!

Top: NEWSAR team with their awards. **Left:** Becky and Iain with their medals. Images © NEWSAR/Becky and Iain Ashcroft.



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FEBRUARY: KESWICK TEAM LEADER CHRIS HIGGINS HANDS ON THE BATON

Keswick team members marked a significant milestone at their AGM, when Chris officially stepped down as leader, after twelve years in the role, handing over the reins to Tom Blakely.

Team members wished Chris the very best 'as he reclaims some well-deserved free time', thanking him for his 'unwavering dedication and leadership.' He had served as only the fifth leader in the team's history, responding to over 1,100 rescues over thirty years and 'navigating the team through the busiest years on record while balancing his own career and family life'.

'I have had some of the best experiences of my life as part of this wonderful team,' says Chris. 'The camaraderie has been exceptional, the adventures memorable and the good we have done has been so satisfying: we have saved lives and changed people's existence, brought joy when there could have been sorrow, and comfort in times of grieving.'

Twenty-four hours later, new leader Tom was in at the deep end when the team received a call, via Patterdale team, of a fallen climber on Brown Cove Crag. The casualty had slipped and, unable to ice axe arrest, fallen approximately 100m down one of the gullies. His friend raised the alarm, then made his way around to the base of the crag to find the casualty who was conscious, but in a lot of pain. Fortunately, they had a bothy bag to shelter in until team members arrived. Rescue 936 from Caernarfon was also on scene, but unable to get to the casualty location due to the low cloud. The casualty was lowered by rope down the steep and snowy scree fan, then sledged and carried downward towards a suggested grid reference where a winch evacuation would hopefully be possible. Once below the cloud, R936 very skillfully flew up to meet them, the casualty was winched into the helicopter and taken to the base of the hill where a GNAAS team were waiting to continue medical care. The GNAAS medics then accompanied the casualty in the helicopter to hospital in Preston. Five Patterdale team members were also involved in the rescue.

Top: Chris Higgins (left) with new team leader Tom Blakely. **Right:** Call-out twenty-four hours later on Brown Cove Crag. Images © Keswick MRT.



the final send away

BUD FRANCIS DARTMOOR SRT TAVISTOCK



Bud Francis had been a station officer in the London Fire Brigade and moved to Devon when he took up a post as Divisional Officer in Devonport Naval Base. After buying a house in Walkhampton, he soon got the Dartmoor bug and joined what was then the Tavistock Section of Dartmoor Rescue Group, in the early 1980s. Shortly after, he teamed up as regular navigator for his friend Terry Bumford to become the first operational search dog unit on Dartmoor. Bud served as team secretary before qualifying as a search manager and becoming the team's controller (team leader) in the mid-1990s. He received the national Mountain Rescue Long Service Award for 25 years' service shortly before standing down due to ill health.

Bud was a legend, a larger-than-life character and a prolific fundraiser. Among other things he organised an annual arts and crafts sale which raised thousands of pounds over many years and also was one of the main drivers of the social side of things for the team. Peter (Bud) Francis died on 22 February 2026, aged 82 years. He leaves behind his wife Christine, two daughters and four grandchildren, one of whom continues the family involvement with DSRT Tavistock as a valued member of the support team. 🐾

Left: Bud Francis © Dartmoor SRT Tavistock.

Dartmoor Search and Rescue team (Tavistock) were saddened to report the passing of one of the team's life members and former team leader in February. **Pete Swaine** reports.



FEBRUARY: RESCUER (AND LOCAL MP) WADES IN TO KEEP OTHERS' FEET DRY!

Cumbria Police had contacted the Patterdale team, following reports of a casualty with an injured knee who was unable to weight bear and walk.

Once it was established that the casualty party had taken the steamer to Howtown, their plan to walk around the lake back to Glenridding, team members travelled across the lake to the casualty site on Patrick Pete, their rescue rib. With the casualty's leg duly splinted and pain relief given, the casualty was stretchered down to the lake shore, loaded onto the rib and taken to Glenridding pier, from where they were allowed to travel to hospital with their companions for further treatment. Mission complete, team member Josh MacAllister kindly offered a very photogenic piggyback carry to a fellow teammate...



JANUARY: TEENS VISIT PATERDALE BASE INVOLVED IN RESCUE EFFORT

The base visit was an opportunity for team members to meet the two boys, Caelan and Rowan, and their families, two weeks after their involvement in a rescue on Striding Edge.

Alongside two other bystanders, the boys had helped rescue five folk plus a dog, two weeks earlier on a blue-sky, full winter conditions day, where technical winter kit was necessary. They were given a tour of base, learned a bit more about mountain rescue and even tried out the robotic legs. 'Helping the people off the mountain was a kind thing to do,' said a team spokesperson. 'They showed some strong mountain skills, along with maturity. We did discuss with the boys, that when seeing people in trouble, mountain rescue is here 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and that we have the appropriate equipment and experience to get out in all conditions. It was great to see two young people, with appropriate knowledge in the outdoors, wanting to develop their skills and experience; they could be the mountain rescuers of the future.'

Above: Stuart Smith (left) and deputy leader Matt Nielsen (right) meet Caelan and Rowan at the team's Glenridding base © Patterdale MRT.

news round

JANUARY > MARCH



MARCH: CASUALTY MEETS HER 'INCREDIBLE' RESCUERS

Leah Matthews had to learn to walk again after a 130ft (39.6m) fall at a South Wales beauty spot last October. In March, she was reunited with the teams who rescued her, saying she will be 'forever grateful' to them for saving her life.

Leah is still on 'a long road to recovery', but wanted to meet with crews from Mid and West Wales Fire Service, Western Beacons team members and the Welsh Ambulance Service, to thank them. 'If it wasn't for you lot,' she said, 'I wouldn't be here today. Your bravery is outstanding.' She and her partner Anthony had gone for a walk with her family dogs when she slipped into a ravine, sustaining multiple broken bones and a punctured lung.

'It was a special moment,' said a team spokesman, 'to finally meet someone we'd rescued at the end of last year, and to see first-hand just how far she has come. Her strength and determination were clear to everyone in the room. Being able to speak with her, share a smile and pass on our best wishes in person made the experience all the more meaningful.'

'Several members of the team attended what was truly a celebration of success — a chance to reflect on the rescue itself and reconnect with the person at the heart of it. Hearing her perspective brought a deeper sense of purpose to everything that had happened that day.'

Representatives from the ambulance service, fire and rescue and the team came together to talk through the incident, sharing their roles and recounting how each part contributed to the outcome — a powerful reminder of how effective collaboration can be, with every agency playing a vital role.

'Moments like this highlight what multi-agency working is all about — people coming together, combining skills and expertise and ultimately making a difference where it matters most.'

Above: Leah Matthews meets her rescuers © Western Beacons MRT.



The Long Way Roond

Oldham team members Si Taylor (above right) and Andy Hadfield undertook quite the fundraising journey in August last year, setting out to visit the bases of all twenty-four civilian volunteer Scottish mountain rescue teams in just eight days. This included visiting not just the Highlands, but several islands too. Si wrote a comprehensive blog of their whistle-stop adventure which he has now condensed into an equally whistle-stop summary. At the time of writing, they had raised a magnificent £1,845 for Oldham MRT.



MEETING UP WITH RON MCAULL,
FORMER TEAM COLLEAGUE AT DMRT



LOCHABER RESCUE CENTRE

Images © Si Taylor.

Inspiration for the trip came from Nick Ray's book 'Strong Winds Are Forecast', an account of his sea kayaking journey to every RNLI lifeboat station in Scotland. Also providing motivation was Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman's 2004 'Long Way

Round' motorcycle adventure — it seemed only right to substitute 'roond' for 'round' as a nod to the Scottishness of this endeavour!

Planning and communication with teams was key to pulling this trip off. Timing was tight and ferry schedules critical to covering over 1,800 miles of sometimes tortuous Scottish roads.

Leaving our Greenfield base on 23 August 2025, we zapped up the M6 to the Scottish border before turning west to an amazing welcome by Galloway MRT, complete with Tunnock's tea cakes!

The road from Newton Stewart to our first overnight stop at Prestwick was made for motorcycles — flowing bends and little traffic. Next day, we caught the first of the week's CalMac ferries to Arran and chatted to passenger Pete — from Keswick MRT! After landing at Brodick, we had a bonus meet-up with a buddy who'd sailed his yacht to Lamlash, before hitting the first base of a very long day: Arran MRT.

An hour later, we were sadly leaving Arran to head, via Kintyre, to Oban's base on one of the finest roads I've ever ridden! Tight for time, we blasted straight on to Glencoe and Lochaber bases, calling in at Glencoe's campsite to see an ex-teammate.

Our in-country 'fixer' and friend, Alasdair of Kintail MRT, was many miles from Fort William but, since accommodation over the Bank Holiday was scarce, he kindly offered to put us up at his house near the Kyle of Lochalsh. That meant a late finish in the dark, but bought us extra miles for the next day when we visited his team base and then headed over a stunning mountain pass to



THE FAMOUS TUNNOCK'S TEA CAKES:
SCOTTISH CURRENCY!

the remote village of Glenelg and their team base. There, we received a warm welcome from team leaders Jake and Billy before being kindly guided by Alan, a fellow biker, to Skye's base via the unique Glenelg ferry where their team leader Neil met us.

After a chippy in Portree, we braved the tourist trail up the Trotternish Peninsula past The Old Man of Storr and the Quiraing before dropping down to camp near the ferry port at Uig. We were excited to be heading to the Outer Hebrides — it was Andy's first visit, and I was looking forward to showing him the beauty of Harris and Lewis. After a famous CalMac breakfast on the ferry to Tarbet, we landed with a day in hand to explore delights such as Luskentyre, Rodel and Hushinish. Following a convivial evening in the backpacker's hostel in Tarbet, we spent the next day riding through the remoteness of North Harris and Lewis to eventually arrive at the Hebrides team base in Stornaway where we were royally welcomed by Rosemary, Fraser and Michael before settling down for the night in their well-appointed building.

Next day, we sailed to Ullapool where we rode towards the most northerly point of our trip, Assynt's Inchnadamp base. Old friend Nick and his colleague met us with tea and biscuits. Reluctantly parting company with the guys, we turned back south and wound our way past the impressive An Teallach massif to Dundonnell's base and on to Gairloch where we talked with Conor, a team member working as a kayak instructor.

Still with serious miles to cover and three bases to visit, we cracked on and in



ANDY WITH HIS NEWEST FRIEND,
ONE OF THE 'LEWIS CHESSMEN'

TO READ THE FULL BLOG HEAD TO:
LONGWAYROOND.MOUNTAINFEET.COM

worsening weather made it to Torridon, followed by a stop in the attractive village of Shildaig to see old buddy Ruairidh.

A long, cold and wet stint followed over to the eastern side of the Highlands and, on the A9 in driving rain, a distinct sense of humour failure arose. Adding to this, I mistakenly turned the heated seat switch of my bike to high and burned my backside!

It was late and dark when we 'touched base' with the Cairngorm and Glenmore teams, before retiring to the youth hostel in Aviemore and the pizzeria next door to regenerate for what would be a huge next day.

Breakfast in Aviemore was followed by stunning motorcycling as we headed to Aberdeen's base to meet their leader Stuart. Andy was in Land Rover Heaven as the team is engaged in a rolling refurbishment to an 'as new' standard of their 110 Defender fleet. Dragging him away, we blasted over to Braemar's base and on to Blairgowrie and Tayside, where heavy rain greeted us.

In 'proper' Scottish weather we got our heads down and rode the twisties past Loch Tay and Ben Lawers to a warm Highlands welcome from Stephen, Kirstine and Teddy at Killin. Reluctantly leaving the warmth of their base, we sloshed along soaked roads and felt water creep inside our clothing before arriving at Arrochar's base. We had an RV at the Lomond base in Drymen where we'd kindly been offered base accommodation and,



'LAND ROVER HEAVEN': ABERDEEN'S
FULLY REFURBISHED DEFENDER 110S

after some soggy miles down the length of Loch Lomond, we bedded down comfortably for the night.

Sunshine greeted us as we left Drymen and headed past Stirling to the Ochils base at Fishcross. Encountering the first built-up area on the trip, we headed past Edinburgh and made it to Tweed Valley's modern base in picturesque Melrose. We'd agreed to meet the excellent Ian Stark from the Borders team at their base in Kelso and he kindly guided us on his BMW, all the way via 'secret' roads to our last base visit of the trip with the Moffat team.

The welcome there couldn't have been warmer and represented everything that's great about our mountain rescue community. After socialising and receiving gifts of local produce, we were offered fantastic hospitality by team member Elysha and her family — a fabulous end to a most worthwhile trip...

Until the next time... ☺



HAVE BACK BOX, HAVE QR CODES...

Andy Hadfield has been a stalwart of the Oldham team for many years, an active mountaineer, runner and cyclist, he's passionate about his motorcycling too. Last year, he raised funds for the team with an epic solo motorbike trip to Cyprus. A quiet lad, he maintained anonymity during the trip by imitating Top Gear's 'The Stig' and wearing a full face helmet with dark visor! His cover, however, is now well and truly blown!

Si Taylor joined the team in 2016. As a Mountain Leader, he spends up to three months a year in Scotland and most of the Long Way Roond route terrain was already familiar to him. He's owned over thirty motorbikes since the age of sixteen and has toured extensively in Europe and the UK.

They now plan on extending the idea to visit all the Welsh and English teams in the coming year. The Oldham team is in need of two replacement response vehicles so all funds raised from the trips have been, and will continue to be, directed to that cause.

news round

JANUARY > MARCH



FEBRUARY: HOLME VALLEY TEAM WELCOMES LOCAL MP

Team members, including Search Dog Willow, welcomed Paul Davies MP to their base, to chat about how the team helps people in the outdoors, the challenges of raising funds as a charity, and their ambition to become a 'net zero' building.

Top: Team members and Search Dog Willow, with Paul Davies MP, at their base in Marsden, West Yorkshire © HVMRT.



MARCH: WASDALE TEAM CELEBRATES SUCCESSFUL GRANT APPLICATION

Wasdale team members were pleased to welcome Mark Wear, National Lottery Funding Officer for the North East and Cumbria, to their base, for the presentation of a cheque for £19,900.

This follows a successful grant application for new equipment that will enhance the team's capability to respond to call-outs in swiftwater environments. The project, they said, was made possible 'thanks to National Lottery players, whose support helps us continue improving the resources we rely on during rescues'.

Above: Wasdale team members with Mark Wear © Wasdale MRT.

Awareness Dates

FOR YOUR DIARY:
MID-APRIL TO
JULY 2026

Some ideas and suggested words for raising awareness of both mountain rescue and our Rescue Benevolent Fund.

National Tea Day: 21 April: #NationalTeaDay
nationalteaday.theteagroup.com

Nothing better than a mug of tea to calm the senses, invite an 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 Tea Day celebrations and raise a cuppa to the thousands of volunteers across England and Wales who are on call 24/7, throughout the year, tea or no tea, to come to the aid of those injured or lost in the mountains.

Star Wars Day: 4 May: #StarWarsDay

May the Fourth be with you! Nobody sets off for a day in the hills expecting to get into trouble but, if you DO, we hardly need remind you it won't be Luke Skywalker or the Rebel Alliance coming to your rescue! But help is at hand. Call 999, ask for 'Police' then 'Mountain Rescue'. Stay where you are, keep warm, make sure you conserve your phone battery and we'll be with you as soon as is humanly possible. Stay safe out there!

Mental Health Awareness Week: 13–19 May:
#MentalHealthAwarenessWeek
#RescueBenevolentFund

Mountain rescue teams are incredibly cohesive when it comes to executing the timely rescue of anyone in need, but sometimes a particularly traumatic rescue can leave its mark on an individual team member. That's where the Rescue Benevolent Fund comes into its own, providing confidential support for team members who need it. Support the fund and you'll be supporting all our mountain and cave rescue team members.

Volunteers' Week: 1–7 June:
#VolunteersWeek volunteersweek.org

Celebrate our mountain and cave rescue team members. Every one of them at the sharp end of rescue is a volunteer who willingly gives up their time and energy to be on call 24/7, throughout the year, come rain or shine free of charge to those we rescue.

National PTSD Awareness Day: 27 June:
ptsd.uk.org **#RescueBenevolentFund**

Worth repeating that, from time to time, team members can face challenging and traumatic situations, and that can leave its mark on the individual. Those marks can accumulate over time, emerging much later as PTSD. Support the Rescue Benevolent Fund, and you'll be supporting team members with psychological help when they need it.

Social Media Giving Day: 15 July:
#SocialMediagiving

Turn that mindless scrolling into meaningful action: Donate to a team online, start a fundraiser, amplify the work of mountain rescue by creating and sharing content about us, then tag friends or followers, inviting them to match your gift or start their own giving chain.



MARCH: NEW SOCIAL MEDIA GRAPHICS LAUNCHED FOR OUTDOOR SAFETY WEEK

Team were encouraged to use the new material through the week beginning Monday 23 March, designated as National Outdoor Safety Week here in the UK.

This was a joint project across the Mountain Safety Forum, supported by #BeAdventureSmart, Ordnance Survey and Mountain Rescue England and Wales. The MREW Media and Comms Network had already identified the shift to British Summer Time (29 March) as a good hook for national social media content with the hashtag #ReadyForAnything, and there were further plans to achieve media coverage for the 2025 stats during that week. The campaign was also planned to continue through the Easter break.



Raising funds
for rescue

FEBRUARY: DCRO PASSES VEHICLE ON TO NORTH WALES COLLEAGUES

Following their recent purchase of a second-hand converted Toyota Hilux to replace their 'standard' Mitsubishi L200, donated a few years ago by Derbyshire FRS, Derbyshire CRO wanted to pay forward the generosity.

With no current need for a third vehicle, they contacted colleagues at North Wales CRO with an offer to donate it to them. In February, the L200 crossed the border to its new home, with the team 'proud to have continued the tradition of cavers helping cavers'.

Right: Handover of the vehicle at DCRO's Buxton base, with DCRO controllers, Pete and Lee, and NWCRO's Rob taking the wheel for the journey back to Wales © DCRO.



NORTH WALES TEAMS INVITED TO A ROOM WITH A VIEW

The Oriel Glasfryn Gallery in Caerwys is running an exhibition, 3 April to 4 May, by Dave Roberts PS artist and gallery owner, who specialises in landscape paintings of North Wales.

A preview evening on 2 April offered the opportunity to feature a small display, talk about the work of the teams and accept donations. Donation tins will continue to be on display throughout the exhibition. One of Roberts's paintings, 'Snowdon in White' (left), will be auctioned, with all proceeds going to NWMRA. The painting shows Yr Wyddfa/ Snowdon covered in a blanket of snow, with Crib Goch in the foreground. To find out more, go to daverobertsartist.com. Bids close on 5 May 2026.

All paintings at the exhibition will be originals, so

unique to the owner. Describing his work Dave says, 'These paintings have been produced over the last six months and I've tried to capture the area in all its moods. You'll find brightness and darkness, tranquillity and turbulence, warmth and bleakness. Frequently, you'll experience all of these in just one day of walking in Eryri or on the Welsh coast!'

Local sculptor Nicholas Eames has also donated the figure of a red Welsh dragon for auction, with the proceeds to NWMRA. For more about the exhibition, head to orielglasfryn.com.



Opposite: 'Snowdon in White'. **Above:** Poster/ad for the exhibition.

news round

JANUARY > MARCH

FEBRUARY: GOOD NEWS UPDATE ON THEFT OF HONESTY TUCK BOX

If you spotted a North of Tyne team social media post in January, you'll know that eleven-year-old Rowan set up an honesty tuck box near Stonehaugh, during the Montane Spine Race. Every penny raised was kindly intended to be donated to the North of Tyne and Northumberland National Park teams.

Sadly, the tuck box disappeared. Rowan was understandably very upset, having put so much time, effort and heart into supporting others. The team invited followers to 'rally round, lift his spirits and show him just how much kindness there is in our community'. An incredible £1,330.05 has since been raised and, one Sunday in February, Rowan and his parents went along to a team training exercise, where he was presented with a certificate of thanks. He also enjoyed a good look around the Land Rover and even got to sit in the driver's seat. What an amazing effort and a fantastic show of support for mountain rescue. Thank you, Rowan!

Opposite: North of Tyne's Ian Blackburn and Helena Samsum with Rowan © NOTMRT. The Honesty Tuck Box before it was taken, as seen on the giveawheel.com fundraising page, Rowan's Missing Spine Race Tuck Box.

Scottish news round

JANUARY > MARCH



Scottish Mountain Rescue teams experienced a demanding winter, with several long technical rescues and back-to-back call-outs for a number of teams.

In February, icy conditions on the popular Kilbo Path beneath the Munros Mayar and Drieh saw **Tayside MRT** and **Police Scotland** **Tayside MRT** officers called to the same area three times within a single afternoon. Groups of walkers descending the steep corrie wall found themselves unable to continue on the snow and ice-covered path, which traverses steep slopes of up to 60 degrees above the corrie floor. While many other hillgoers on the mountain that day were well equipped with ice axes and crampons, those involved in the incidents lacked the necessary winter equipment. With support from Coastguard helicopters Rescue 948 and Rescue 851, the teams were able to reach those in difficulty and assist them to safety.

Elsewhere, **Braemar MRT** responded to two avalanche-related incidents during the winter period. In February, the team attended a hillwalker caught in a cornice collapse on Glas Maol, prompting a multi-agency response involving neighbouring teams, **SARDA Scotland** search dogs and support from the Coastguard helicopter. Fortunately, SARDA handlers were already training nearby at Glenshee and able to assist quickly. Another cornice collapse

occurred in March in the Black Spout area of Lochnagar, involving a group of climbers. On that occasion, members of **Aberdeen MRT** joined Braemar in carrying out a challenging stretcher evacuation.

Lochaber MRT have had an exceptionally

Top: Call-out at Lochnagar © Braemar MRT (left) and Aberdeen MRT (right). **Below:** Call-out to Ben Nevis; Avalanche debris at Red Burn © Lochaber MRT. **Opposite top:** Dundonnell team at An Teallach © Dundonnell MRT. **Opposite:** Call-out with Scottish Cave Rescue and Assynt MRT © SCRO.



busy period, dealing with seven call-outs over the final weekend of February alone. The team had already had a number of prolonged late-night rescues earlier in the month, with overnight rescues involving extensive rigging operations on the North Face of Ben Nevis in full winter conditions.

During one particularly demanding evening, the team responded to three simultaneous incidents across the Ben Nevis area: a walker unable to continue while descending via the Red Burn, climbers cragfast on Tower Ridge, and another pair of climbers stuck on the west face of Aonach Mòr. While a Coastguard helicopter was able to extract the climbers from Aonach Mòr, the volunteers assisted the walker down from the Red Burn, and carried out an eight-hour technical rope rescue from Tower Ridge — eventually back to base by 7.30 am the following morning. Overnight, strong winds redistributed large amounts of snow across the mountain, and a significant avalanche later occurred across the Red Burn path, leaving substantial debris across the track.



In one complex operation on An Teallach, **Dundonnell MRT** worked with **RAF Lossiemouth**, **Assynt MRT** and Police Scotland North MRT to rescue a walker who had become cragfast on Sgurr Fiona, building long technical belays amidst loose snow and rock to reach and safely extract the well-equipped walker after many hours on a ledge.

Underground, the **Scottish Cave Rescue Organisation** were called upon in Assynt, where a stuck caver in Allt nan Uamh Stream Cave was safely assisted out in collaboration with **Assynt MRT**.

Teams have also devoted many hours to extensive searches for missing people in the hills over the winter months. Sadly, some have resulted in fatalities. Our thoughts remain with the families and friends of those affected, and with the volunteers who continue to support these challenging search operations. ☹️



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

Getting to know our Scottish Mountain Rescue colleagues...

Focus on Braemar MRT



The Braemar Mountain Rescue Association, our formal title, established in 1965, is one of the oldest rescue teams in the UK. Its creation was driven by the increasing popularity of hillwalking, climbing and winter sports in the Scottish Highlands, combined with the challenging and often unpredictable conditions of the Cairngorms.

A defining moment occurred in late 1964, when Bob Burnett and members of his party were caught in an avalanche on Beinn a' Bhùird. Their rescue — carried out by local volunteers using borrowed equipment — demonstrated both the commitment of the community and the urgent need for a formally organised, well-equipped rescue team. Burnett survived a remarkable twenty-two hours of complete burial, a record that still stands in the UK.

Over the decades, the team has evolved significantly and would be unrecognisable to those at our origins. Today, members benefit from two modern bases, vehicles (tracked and 4x4), radio and satellite comms systems, medical and technical equipment, and comprehensive training programmes, enabling the team to respond effectively to a wide range of incidents across our extensive area.

The team comprises thirty civilian volunteers and ten members of Police Scotland. Braemar has always operated as a joint civilian-police team, with police personnel taking responsibility for 999 call coordination and initial incident management.

Trainee civilian members undergo a year-long training period, with the help of a personal mentor, their mountaineering abilities and operational skills assessed and training given.

The team collaborates closely with the Ambulance Service, Coastguard and

neighbouring rescue teams — Tayside, Cairngorm and, increasingly, Aberdeen — who support joint responses when required.

The training calendar structures one day and one evening a month, supported by additional sessions for medical, transport, and technical skills. More than fifteen members are currently qualified as RRMts. Team representatives also attend the annual ICAR conference to remain up to date with international best practice.

The team responds to an average of 45 call-outs each year, with lost or injured hill walkers remaining the most common incident.

Our area stretches from Mid Deeside through Lochnagar, the Glenshee hills and across the Cairngorm Plateau to Ben Macdui and Braeriach. It includes some of the highest peaks and many of the country's most iconic climbing routes. This adds to the variety of shouts we can expect and, although technical rescues are not as common as other teams, they often happen in remote parts of our area which can make it much more challenging especially if the Coastguard is not available to facilitate access of manpower and kit.

Increasingly, mountain biking incidents have added to the workload, often involving high-speed impact trauma cases. We regularly find ourselves working closely in coordination with the Scottish Ambulance Service to treat or extricate a casualty to the roadside. The team places significant emphasis on rigging and winter skills to prepare for major incidents such as avalanches or technical crag rescues — rare events, but ones that require high levels of expertise, judgement, and most importantly, safety.

In recent years, the team management

has placed some focus on future resilience and successor planning. A review two years ago identified concerns around membership age profile and geographic distribution. Our average age was 50+ and, as more recruits to the team lived further from the base, we knew this would ultimately impact on response time. Recent recruitment in the last eighteen months, however, has seen several younger volunteers living in the Braemar area join and it has certainly eased our concerns, but it is something we maintain a focus on.

Significant work has gone into expanding and modernising the team's Braemar base. In partnership with a local contractor and with substantial volunteer effort, the project has delivered a high-quality facility that will support the team for many years to come.

With our modern base, focus on the latest techniques and development of members through a well-structured training plan, Braemar MRT continues to be well placed to support hill goers and outdoor enthusiasts across our area as we build on the experience gained over the last sixty years. ☺

**FIND BRAEMAR MRT AT
BRAEMARMOUNTAINRESCUE.ORG.UK AND ON
FACEBOOK @BRAEMARMRT**



BSARU covers the very south-east corner of Scotland, from the English border up the A68 to Edinburgh, and everything east from there to the coast. Within their patch lie the Cheviots, the Lammermuirs, a couple of renowned salmon rivers and about 75 miles of North Sea beaches, cliffs and dunes.

While not as big as many of the UK's higher mountains, topping out at 815m, the Cheviots are remote, almost completely uninhabited, wild, wind-lashed and sufficiently featureless to cause significant navigational difficulty in dark or claggy conditions. Running along the northern edge of the range is the Pennine Way, which for a couple of dozen miles follows the Scotland/England border. This is a popular hiking trail (268 miles in total from Edale in Derbyshire) and, of course, it forms the route for the Spine Race, staged in January and June.

Having a national border as one of the team's boundaries presents a particular set of challenges and procedural issues that need to be observed when SMR and MREW find themselves working together. Different police forces can be involved, working with teams from both sides, and there are significant differences between Scots and English Law (eg. deaths in England are handled by coroners compared to the Scottish Procurator Fiscal), some of which are pertinent to MR. We know that all MR teams in the UK work with neighbouring teams and have developed procedures for working with one another. Over the years, on the Scotland/England border, a cross-border protocol has evolved. The protocol aims to promote the most efficient and effective response between multiple teams from different jurisdictions, and ensures that the casualty receives the best possible care and attention.

There are stretches of the Pennine Way that, in good ground conditions, can be

accessed by a team Land Rovers from one side of the border but, in poor conditions, can be accessed more easily on foot from the other. Over the years, BSARU has been called upon to rescue many ill, exhausted and injured walkers and quite a number of Spine Race competitors. By the time they reach the Cheviots, competitors in the full race have covered about 240 miles over the course of 3-6 days, and some are by that stage not in the best of shape. The last 28 miles of the route is all on high hill country, with just a couple of wooden huts in which to seek shelter. Between and either side of these huts, the runners tackle miles and miles of track, paved with the infamous Pennine Way flagstones in parts and horrendously boggy in others, often a combination of both at the same time. Visitors to the Pennine Way will be familiar with the choice between stepping on a flagstone covered by six inches of water or stepping off into peat of indeterminable depth. A flagstone covered in ice is a whole other challenge.

This winter's Spine race provided a typical rescue for the cross-border teams. A competitor arrived in the Cheviots with a steadily worsening injury. Somewhere between the two huts they became unable to continue and activated the SOS button on their tracker. The race safety team called for MR assistance and teams from both sides of the border were activated, in line with the agreed protocol. Hasty teams from Northumberland and BSARU reached the casualty together, and after treatment from a BSARU RRMT, they were evacuated in a Northumberland team vehicle to Cocklawfoot, eight miles up the Bowmont valley on the Scottish side of the border, and from there ferried to the race finish in Kirk Yetholm. ☺

**FIND BORDER SAR AT BORDERSAR.ORG.UK
AND ON FACEBOOK @BORDERSAR**

MEET OUR SUPPORTERS



In January, Matty and Carly — members of RAF Lossiemouth MRT — took on the Montane Winter Spine MRT Challenge North to raise funds for Scottish Mountain Rescue. Having worked closely with teams across Scotland through their roles in the RAF MRS, they know first-hand the commitment required to keep teams trained, equipped and ready to respond. Their decision to take on the 160-mile winter challenge was a way to give something back to the volunteers they regularly work alongside in the hills. After more than 95 hours on the trail in tough winter conditions, they crossed the line together — an impressive achievement and testament to their determination and teamwork — raising a fantastic £1,722. We're hugely grateful for their phenomenal efforts.

Top: Matty and Carly cross the finish line © SMR.



SMR WELCOMES FIRST FEMALE CHAIR

Scottish Mountain Rescue has appointed a new Board of Trustees, marking a significant milestone in the organisation's 60-year history with the election of Moira Weatherstone as its first female chair. Elected by member teams at the general meeting in March, Moira brings over 30 years of mountain rescue experience and has served as treasurer for the past sixteen years. A member of Arrochar MRT since 1990, she has held a number of roles while remaining an active rescuer, and has also been involved with SARDA Scotland since 1992 as a search dog handler and trainer. She is joined on the board by Paul Russell of Tayside MRT, Richard Morris of Killin MRT, Susan Brook and Barry White, with the latter two becoming the first independent trustees appointed from outside the Scottish volunteer teams, strengthening the organisation's governance and expertise.

Above: Moira Weatherstone (left) with Arrochar team © Nadir Khan for Helly Hansen.

Mountain Rescue England and Wales

@mountain.rescue.org.uk

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Rescue Benevolent Fund

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

supporting mountain and cave team members



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Mountain Rescue England and Wales

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E: vicechair@



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JOHN SHEEHY

E: treasurer@



MEDICAL ADVISER:
BRENDAN SLOAN

E: medical@



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EMMA PORTER

E: secretary@



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MIKE CLAYTON

E: equipment@



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E: informationofficer@



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MOIRA WEATHERSTONE

Arrochar MRT & SARDA
E: chair@



DEVELOPMENT:
YASMIN HARROWER

E: yasmin@



DEVELOPMENT:
ELSIE RILEY

E: elsie@



NEW IN POST

SMR VICE CHAIR: PAUL RUSSELL Tayside MRT
E: paul.russell@

SMR VICE CHAIR: RICHARD MORRIS Killin MRT
E: richard.morris@

SMR TRUSTEE: SUSAN BROOK
E: susan@

SMR TRUSTEE: BARRY WHITE
E: barry@

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CHAIRMAN:
GERRY CHRISTIE

Kerry
E: chair@



SECRETARY:
COLIN FERGUSON

E: secretary@



TREASURER:
DIARMAID SCULLY

Glen of Imaal
E: treasurer@

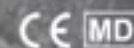
PAX

it's all about performance

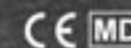
PAX TMS – The Temperature Management System

The compact PAX Power Pack - 60/2 enables mains-independent, highly mobile use of the PAX temperature management systems and guarantees a long operating time of several hours. Temperature sensors close to the patient, double fused circuit breakers and the integrated control unit of the PAX Power Pack - 60/2 guarantee a safe, quickly available and uniform surface temperature of the PAX Warming blankets - THX / THX 2.0 and the PAX Vacuum mattresses - TMS.

Item no. 283160000
PAX Power Pack - 60/2



Item no. 278165201
PAX Warming blanket - THX



Item no. 284015201
PAX Warming blanket - THX 2.0



Status 03|2026|001
Medical device regulatory requirement



YOUR LOCAL CONTACT:

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