

mountain rescue

ISSN 1756-8749

£7.50



SUMMER
2026 **97**



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



20

Rope Rescue Exchange: learning and improving
Paul Edisbury reports on a successful day of cross-team collaboration, working together and sharing ideas, hosted by PDMRO

22 Managing the risks of rockfall: Following on from the Rope Rescue Exchange day, Ady Koe and Tom Lia take a look at the main points raised and mitigations to manage risk

32 The Forgotten Path: Part 3: Freya Barnett from Dementia UK continues her series about the nature of dementia and how mountain rescue teams can increase their knowledge

38 Managing Type 1 diabetes and running ultra marathons: Regular ultra-runner and GP Chris Cope talks about his own very personal experience and how he manages his condition

44 Climbing for calm: How one young man is taking care of his own wellbeing by ticking off the Wainwrights (several times over) and raising funds for mountain rescue at the same time

what's in at a glance

TRAINING: 17-25

INCIDENTS/STATS: 27

EQUIPMENT: 30-31

SOCIAL MEDIA: 34-35

HINKES THINKS: 37

WELLBEING: 38-41

BENEVOLENT FUND: 42-43

TEAMS & REGIONS: 45-69

SCOTLAND: 70-71

WHO'S WHO: 72-73

WELCOME TO
ISSUE 97:
SUMMER 2026

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

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NEXT ISSUE:
ISSUE 98
AUTUMN 2026

Copy date:
Friday 10 September

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

Advertising artwork must
be supplied as font-
embedded PDF
(300 dpi) unless otherwise
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Cover story

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the Peak District
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IS A CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION
REGISTERED IN ENGLAND AND WALES NO: 1178090
REGISTERED OFFICE: C/O ARMSTRONG WATSON
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MREW ANNUAL REVIEW 2026 NOW AVAILABLE



After five short years as MREW CEO, Mike Park offers a resounding list of heartfelt ‘thank you’s...



Mike stepped down at the MREW AGM in May, handing over the reins of responsibility to Andy Buchan. Without doubt, during his time in the ‘hot seat’, this remarkable organisation has undergone significant metamorphosis, with changes to the CIO constitution, developments with the APPG, and a host of new faces at various tables. By way of ‘farewell’, he took the opportunity to summarise where we are today, and to thank a long list of individuals who have supported his efforts over the last five years. Editor **Judy Whiteside** runs through what proved to be an emotional final address.

Mike’s ‘closing brief’ began with ‘a warning’ — which certainly got everyone’s attention. Backs of necks visibly stiffened. Not another telling-off? No. Not another telling-off. This was ‘feel good’ stuff.

‘There will be a lot of mentions of people, groups and organisations,’ he warned, ‘that we all need to thank for their unstinting work over the last five years... so get your clapping hands out!’ And, by golly, we did.

STRONG, EFFECTIVE SUPPORT

He said it would be in no particular order, and so it proved. The words ‘strong’ and ‘effective’ and ‘support’ featured repeatedly — and deservedly so — interspersed heavily with thoughtful ‘thank you’s as appropriate.

Top of Mike’s list of ‘proud achievements’ was highlighting the need for everyone to take responsibility for theirs and others’ safety in the outdoors. Followed by our ‘steadily strengthening’ relationships with an impressively long list of organisations: the Air Ambulance, BCRC, Lowland Rescue, Scottish Mountain Rescue, JESIP, UKSAR, the Maritime Coastguard Agency, the Police and NPCC (with thanks to Jim Gallienne), Mountain Safety Forum, the Royal Foundation, Rescue Benevolent Fund, Local Resilience Forum network and the Voluntary and Community Sector Emergency Services Partnership.

We were reminded that a couple of years ago, we had gathered at the national meeting to debate the question, ‘What does the future of mountain rescue look like?’ And this, says Mike, has led to the now accepted changes to the CIO constitution.

‘This is now a constitution that empowers us to run a national representative and supporting body into the future. Please don’t let it sit on a shelf, gathering dust. It should be a living document, which reflects a progressive and forward thinking organisation.’

On which note, he commended the ‘working practical policies that reflect the organisation we are and want to be’ — including ‘Safeguarding, Safer Recruitment’ (with thanks to Alistair Morris and Dave

Otter); a pragmatic and practical recruitment and interview process; ‘Corporate Risk Management’ (thank you, Alex Siviter-Platts); an ‘Income Generation Strategy’ (thanks also to Alex, and Deborah Pourkarimi — and a warm welcome to our newly appointed income generation officer, Sue Jones); an MREW membership process, with a group set up to review membership in a pragmatic way (Dave, again); and GDPR (thank you, Jakub Kolasa).

OPERATIONAL STUFF

The MREW Operations group, says Mike, has developed into a forum for the sharing of best practice, innovation and new ideas. ‘We owe Ian Bunting a huge thank you, for his steady no-nonsense approach in leading the group in what is at the core of mountain rescue. I particularly want to thank him for taking on and delivering risk management to being firmly centric and simply applicable to everything we do.’

Still with operational stuff, the last five years has seen the establishment and growth in significance of the Drones Group (thank you, Brendan O’Neill). He thanked MREW training officer Phil Ridley — indeed all the officers and leads — for the ‘A’ class training they deliver and their unstinting hard work in the background. And he singled out Jon Goddard and Chris Jones and the Vehicles group, for their ‘stoic patience’ in delivering sensible solutions in ‘the safe and efficient transportation of teams from bases to the people we rescue’.

Two key developments have been the setting up of an Operational Support Fund (thank you, Alex), to help teams who might need financial support for bigger projects; and the inaugural Team Chairs and Trustees Day, ‘a grassroots-led pilot, which I hope will now be a required regular event’ (thanks to Andy Harbach for organising this).

TEAM MEMBER WELLBEING

Just a little bristling around my own table at the assertion that ‘the word wellbeing was not in the mountain rescue dictionary five

years ago’, given the existence of the Rescue Benevolent Fund since 2013, set up by MREW and BCRC to help support team member wellbeing (and yes, I’ll take any opportunity to shoehorn that in). Wellbeing was also a significant feature at the 2019 MREW conference, so presumably part of the lexicon in the twelve to eighteen months leading up to that.

I’ll grant, though, that anything wellbeing-related takes a very long time to filter through — a conundrum we are still puzzling — and Mike thanked Jon White for his work in this respect, with plans to integrate the principles more into our training.

OUR EVER-GROWING MEDIA PRESENCE

The Media group continues to grow and strengthen, providing many of the communication ‘tools’ to which he feels personally indebted, not least our MREW Annual Review and this quarterly magazine. We have developed press and media relations that are ‘professional in every aspect’ (thank you, Sally Seed), statistics that are ‘meaningful and effective’ (thanks to Paul Brain), a social media presence that continues to grow (thank you Oliver Robinson). And we have progression in registering the MREW ‘trademark’ (long overdue), thanks to Julian Walden.

Specifically, he thanked those of us who have been toiling away at the whole media piece over the last five years (and beyond): Andy Simpson, myself, Sally and Oliver, Caroline Davenport (our advertising sales guru), Jacqui Hanson, Nick Owen and (more recently) Jonathan Caswell, along with the Ordnance Survey media team and AdventureSmart.

MEDICAL MATTERS

Alistair and the MREW medical group have been ‘a super-quiet, high output production machine throughout my tenure-ship’, says Mike, adding that ‘this group wins the CEO award for low maintenance’. It is ‘Carlsberg’ in its performance — ‘you just need to think

what would be helpful and useful, and this group has already thought about it, invented and produced it!’

Steady yourselves for another list. Our Casualty Care qualification is replaced by Remote Rescue Medical Technician (RRMT) training and certification and we are piloting Remote Rescue First Aid (RRFA). We now have the SARMed app, and a digital version of our Cas Card is under development, to record and protect the information we gather as we treat our casualties. We have Verification of Death (VOD), a UKSAR-recognised qualification, a patient transport protocol, an agreed way forward for the exchange of medical gases and a continued, professionally-managed drugs licence.

‘We are leading our external peers forward into the ever-changing world that is modern society,’ says Mike. ‘So thank you, Alistair.’

BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS...

We continue to engage with national training events including Border Storm, Winter Storm 2025 and Exercise Peak Diamond (thank you, Toby Green and crew), and public events such as the Kendal Mountain Festival, National Outdoor Expo, Emergency Services Show, Blue Light Show and the Outdoor Industries Association (OIA). All of which help raise awareness both within and outwith the organisation.

...AND THE CRITICAL, BEHIND-THE-SCENES ADMIN STUFF

On the ‘paperwork’ side of things, we now have SarCall Ltd, following the purchase of the mission-critical situational-intelligence platform developed by John Hulse (thank you Phil Benbow, Deborah and Mark Lewis for facilitating this. And John, of course). Mark also continues to manage all things IT, ensuring we are fit for purpose in this modern world.

‘We have a reinvigorated government engagement with the APPG for Volunteer Rescue Services, ‘thanks to MPs Josh MacAlister and Torcuil Crichton, Nigel Harling, Alistair Morris, Alex Siviter-Platt, Judy Whiteside, Jon Caswell and all the teams that got behind this effective route to highlighting the vital service mountain rescue plays in modern society. Following the success in securing Vehicle Excise Duty exemption, we continue to work towards our manifesto pledges.’

We have ‘strong, effective and pragmatic insurance leadership thanks to Gallagher’, an insurance broker that he believes ‘goes well beyond a professional service’. Thank you Penny Brockman and Andy Underwood for their work in this area.

The regional chairs are the ‘catalytic glue’ which binds the organisation. ‘Thank you all for your positive support over the last five years and for keeping me in check. Thank you Tim Wood for chairing this group to date, and Andy Harbach for stepping into that role.’

Our ‘shared values’ are ‘the handrail always by our side’, thanks to Jonny Read, who facilitated this key piece of work. Mike continues to see ‘bullying, harassment and diversity’ as a troublesome trio. ‘However,’ he says, ‘what we have done is bring these

issues out from the shadows and held them in plain sight. There is still work to do, but I will never turn away from calling this issue out, so the perpetrators of bullying have nowhere to hide.’

In new finance director Deborah, we have ‘strong, effective and pragmatic financial leadership’. And in Maddy Desforges, Dave and Alex, we have ‘dedicated and effective’ external trustees who have set the benchmark for what we look towards in selecting these valuable people. As for the wider, newly-formatted Board of Trustees he trusts that they will provide a ‘constant strategic and effective’ conscience to us moving into the future.

By this point, I swear I heard Beethoven’s Fifth soaring towards its finale, an experience described by the BBC’s Tom Service as hammering ‘home its hard-won victory in an ever-increasing ecstasy of ending’. Phew. But hey, you know what, it was good to have people publicly thanked for their dedication, not just to running up the hills in the dark and rain, but for all the other vital work which keeps this organisation operational. In every sense.

But, to continue... we have an executive committee, whose ‘unstinting work has always got our back’, and a new CEO who he knows ‘will deliver’ (thank you, Andy).

Finally, he offered a very personal thanks to Julian and ‘the Office team’ for their support for him and his family, through the last five years.

‘And finally, finally,’ says Mike. ‘I have not achieved any of this stuff (emphasis on the ‘I’). You have achieved this (emphasis on the ‘you’). As team members working together, you are the most effective, passionate, caring, excellent search and rescue organisation in the world!’

‘I am so proud and privileged to have met you and to call you friends. Please do not forget our values. They define who we are. Keep smiling and goodbye.’

Cue that final Fifth’s drumroll...

PS. Mike may have stepped out of his CEO boots, but he continues as a co-opted trustee. He also continues to take a keen interest in the APPG.

PPS. You can catch ‘Beethoven’s Fifth’ here: tinyurl.com/y5we6u88.

Opposite: Mike looking pensive during the MREW Conference 2024 © Scott van der Zanden. **Below:** Sporting his familiar grin, on his ‘home turf’ in the Lakes, with Blu © Mike Park; Mike enjoying the Canadian snow and ice © Chris Cookson.



CHANGES TO THE CIO CONSTITUTION, IN A NUTSHELL

As part of the changes to the CIO constitution, agreed at the AGM in May 2026, the composition of the MREW Board of Trustees is different. **Alex Siviter-Platts** (vice-chair), **Paula Holbrook** (chair) and **Deborah Pourkarimi** (finance director) have kindly put together a summary of how the Board looks for the future.

The Board has a maximum number of thirteen. Of the Board members, four will be external trustees (ie. not members of a team), with the majority of trustees being internal (ie. members of a team).

Each region will be able to select and nominate an internal trustee from their region, at their discretion. It’s important to note that those internal trustees do not represent their region, but rather bring their insight and experience from that region. This is why you will see trustees labelled as either ‘internal’ or ‘external’.

Should a region not put forward a trustee, it will not be offered to another region. The Board can, if it wishes, co-opt trustees for the period up to the next AGM to support the work of the Board and MREW.

The Board also cannot include members of the MREW management team, specifically, the MREW executive, officers and deputy officers, to ensure the separation between governance and operations.

Regional trustees are still being added as we go to print, but here’s the list to date, according to their length of tenure. (**Note:** The list takes Mike from his recent co-option, not his ex officio tenure). We’ll keep you updated with further additions, issue by issue.

- Dr Paula Holbrook, Chair (Internal)
- Alex Siviter-Platts, Vice-Chair (External)
- Matthew Dooley (Internal: Peak District)
- Maddy Desforges OBE (External)
- Dave Otter (External)
- James Lamb (Internal: Lake District)
- Martin Banks (Internal: Mid Pennine)
- Clive Wright (Internal: North Wales)
- Mike Park MBE (Co-opted)
- Roger Hartley (Internal: Yorkshire Dales).

TURN THE PAGE TO
MEET THE NEW TRUSTEES
AND TURN AGAIN FOR
AN OVERVIEW OF ANDY’S DEBUT

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INTRODUCING FOUR NEW INTERNAL TRUSTEES...

James Lamb joined Keswick MRT in 2019 and has been team chair for three years. He took up the LDSAMRA vice-chair, in 2025. 'In all these roles, I aim to encourage collaboration and promote fairness across the mountain rescue community. I'm proud to have developed a scheme in my region that provides for the equitable distribution of central funds, which means that those teams with the most need are supported. I am now developing a similar fund within MREW, that will provide support to those teams across England and Wales, that need it the most. Away from mountain rescue, I have a self-catering house in Keswick which allows me plenty of time to enjoy climbing, mountaineering and ski-touring adventures throughout the UK and Europe, as well as exploring new peaks in more remote areas such as Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan.'



Roger Hartley joined mountain rescue in the late-1970s while serving at RAF Stafford. He later spent time with RAF St Athan MRT in South Wales, joining the Scarborough and Ryedale team around 25 years ago. 'I've taken on a variety of roles in the team – trustee, secretary and, for ten years, chair. I also currently chair the Yorkshire Dales Rescue Panel (YDRP), working alongside colleagues from CRO, UWFA and SRMRT. These roles have given me a real appreciation of the commitment, professionalism and teamwork that exist right across the mountain rescue community. Away from mountain rescue, I spent 25 years working in science education in local schools and have served on the governing bodies of three schools. Between those experiences and my Masters-level studies, I've developed a strong interest in governance, leadership and helping organisations work effectively. As I take on the role of trustee for MREW, I'm looking forward to giving something back to an organisation that has been such an important part of my life for many years. Most of all, I'm looking forward to working with and learning from colleagues across England and Wales as we continue to support our teams and volunteers.'



Martin Banks joined Bolton MRT in 2010 as an operational team member and, since 2013, has also been a trustee and treasurer for the team. For more than five years, he has supported the MREW Party Leader Course as part of the training team, helping others develop their Party Leader skills. His enjoyment of the outdoors began with the Cubs and over the years he has maintained that love, through camping, walking, trekking (Fun fact: He proposed to wife, Stella on the top of Kilimanjaro) and running, although he says its more of 'a plod' now. He is also a trustee of BYB@Blackrod a school charity enabling opportunities for children in the local community. This is linked to his role as a governor at Blackrod Primary School, where he has been chair of governors for five of the eight years he has served as a governor. Professionally, he has worked in HR for over 30 years and has been at the University of Manchester as a 'People Partner' for the last fourteen.



Clive Wright is a member of South Snowdonia SRT and he's relatively new to mountain rescue – along with his wife Karen – having been on the call-out list for just over a year. 'It's a time of change in MREW. New CEO, new constitution, new trustees, new strategy, more voluntary roles and leadership initiatives. I can see that there is an enormous amount of serious hard work ahead – the kind of work that isn't foremost in our minds as operational team members – and, for us to do that, we have to be credible nationally, have influence in government and be a national player with our public sector partners. That may sound boring but for fantastic things to happen we have to do boring really well!' Now retired, Clive's professional background is running several charities, a multi-agency partnership, a local government Chief Exec and a senior civil servant, so lots of experience in corporate governance, strategic partnerships, finance and fundraising. 'I was once also a plumber, but I try to keep that quiet! I hope to help keep the organisation on track by supporting and holding executives appropriately to account, sharing experiences and so enable the great work in teams to continue. 'I attended the recent MREW AGM and it's clear that improvements have already been made. But there are some immediate and significant challenges ahead, including navigating legislation, influencing government, profile raising, funding and the pace of change in technology. I suspect, if MREW get these things right, most team members won't notice and may perhaps still wonder what on earth it is we do.'



UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENTS IN VEHICLE OPERATIONS

There have been a number of important developments, from regulatory progress and driver training documentation to future planning across MREW. Some elements have slowed, others are taking shape, and several areas are encouraging teams to share their experiences and views. **Jon Goddard**, MREW Vehicle Officer reports.

UKSAR-S19: One of the most significant updates, with S19 now pushed back until early autumn. Mark Perry from the DfT had hoped the matter would be signed off by Spring this year, but a number of political obstacles have emerged, delaying progress.

There is more encouraging news in that UKSAR is close to completing the supporting documentation for driver training. Once sign-off is achieved, the material will be made available to teams through the UKSAR portal.

Team vehicle insurance information return form: Also under discussion is how best to capture the vehicle and driver information required by the DfT and S19. Under current expectations, all UKSAR organisations are expected to

maintain a register covering team vehicles and trained drivers. There is now agreement in principle to incorporate this information into the annual insurance return form, which will offer teams a more practical and streamlined way to meet the requirement.

MREW 4x4 instructors: An online CPD session for MREW 4x4 instructors is planned over the next few months. More details will be shared in due course, but the session is expected to provide a further opportunity for CPD and shared learning.

Calls for team input: Teams are being asked to share information in two specific areas. The first is electric vehicles: if any teams are already using

EVs or are planning to introduce them in the near future, that insight would be very welcome. The second relates to representation and expertise: if any team has a female member who is a vehicle officer or who has strong knowledge of team vehicles, maintenance and vehicle policy, please get in touch.

Regional vehicle officers are invited to get in touch ahead of a proposed meeting in the coming months to consider how MREW can move forward in this area. It is intended as an opportunity to bring people together, share perspectives and help shape the next stage of development.

To get in touch, email me via vehicleofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk

vehicles

...and so to Andy Buchan, our new CEO, with a few 'thank you's of his own, as we look towards the future...



Andy took over as CEO in May, switching places at the podium with Mike and introducing himself to the membership with his characteristic good humour: 'His car's still running, mine is now stuck in the car park'. Not literally, we hoped, although it sounded believable. Regular readers know that Andy has been on an extensive 'listen and learn tour' and **Judy Whiteside** continues her summary of this significant moment in our national history, with a spot of listening to and learning about his plans for the future. Our future.

Mike may well now be in his metaphoric car with the engine running, but the segue between his and Andy's list of 'thank you's felt seamless. This really was a 'feel good' morning.

'I feel very privileged', he began, 'and slightly in awe of Mike'. Not least, I suspect because Mike had managed his entire presentation with just the one slide. Unlike Andy's initial 72. In the event, we were saved from certain 'death by PowerPoint' thanks to a 'quiet word with his wife', who very astutely advised, 'No, don't do that'. Ah, the wisdom of women... And so, 32 slides it was, eight of which Mike had already covered.

'I have to say a huge thanks to Mike,' he continued. 'He's been brilliant with me over the last six or seven months. It's a hard act to follow. He's helped me to understand what's been going on and introduced me to all sorts of people — and reading through that list of organisations, I realise I only know about half of those names! So I haven't quite grasped everything. Yet. What I will say is, it's not as easy as he makes it look!'

All of which, we soon learned, was by way of preamble to Andy presenting Mike with a small token of his gratitude — a mocked-up rescue post sign featuring Mike's name. Cue more clapping. We understand that visitors to Mike's home can expect to see said plaque proudly on display over the fireplace. Or maybe the garden gate...

THE 'LISTENING AND LEARNING TOUR' GATHERS PACE

Last November, Andy vowed to visit every one of our teams, not just to 'listen and learn', but to become a little more visible as the next CEO. By the May meeting he had 'done' forty teams — aiming for the remaining eight by the end of August.

'A big thank you to all those teams. You've all been very hospitable, but the hospitality prize goes to one Mrs Miller, the wife of Kirkby Stephen chairman who produced a three-course meal for twenty people, at the drop of a hat, when I rocked up very late one evening feeling very tired and hungry!'

It was good news also that he hasn't (yet) been dropped by anybody, or left 'trussed

up like a burrito'. Special thanks went to Duddon and Furness, where he picked up a speeding ticket, and to Upper Wharfedale for reintroducing him to abseiling. In short, speeding ticket aside, he's 'had a lot of fun'.

SO, WHERE ARE WE GOING WITH ALL THIS?

Well, as we all might have predicted, he's had a lot of questions asked. Top of the list? Should Newcastle have sold Alexander Isak? Isak, to save you a Google, is the Swedish striker who now plays for Liverpool and, if you've been listening and learning yourselves, you'll know by now that Andy is a keen Newcastle United fan, which goes quite a long way towards breaking any ice.

Other regular questions were, 'How much are you being paid?' (absolutely nothing, for the record), and 'Why do we have to do so much admin?' And a whole raft of questions about Section 19 and driving, DBS, drones, swiftwater rescue, blue lights, CQCs... all of which, of course, teams already know a good deal about and Andy is still discovering, so I can't help but think there was an element of mischief at work here...

But what did he make of it? 'Two questions came back, again and again and again. The first was, "What's my view of mountain rescue?"'

'Coming in as an outsider, I see mountain rescue as a **National Asset** (emboldened at Andy's request). You should make no mistake about how important you are. For those people you end up rescuing and supporting, it's vital. Clearly. But it's important we communicate that message both internally and externally.'

The second question he heard a lot was 'What is his ambition for mountain rescue?' and he's clear that the points he made in November still stand.

'I want to see MREW supporting teams at the heart of the organisation, so they feel secure in both funding and capability. I want external recognition and status, a sense that this is a great organisation to volunteer with and fit for purpose. This is a world-class organisation that needs to remain a world-class organisation.'

So where do we start? 'Well, we've already recognised our shared values and we should embed these in our teams, in everything we do. But being world-class also means having a process of continued improvement. Things have to change. You have to keep pace with society. There are things around us that we have little or no control over.'

He cites Lindsay Buck, the 'Wasdale Womble', and an article in 'The Fell Runner' magazine, in which she discusses picking up litter during her runs. 'We don't educate people properly,' says Lindsay. 'We don't get them out, don't teach them. We don't even have the Countryside Code on the national school curriculum, so we need to look in the mirror as a society, rather than blaming the kids and those that don't know any better.'

'That same principle applies to safety awareness and self-responsibility,' says Andy.

FUTURE THINKING

We need to look at 'future thinking' — how will this organisation look in another five or ten years? And we need to continue that process. How do we want the teams to develop? How do teams want MREW to develop and support them in the future?

Take operational and resource capability. 'In my view,' he says, 'there is an imbalance. We are essentially one brand with multiple teams, but we need to equalise the resources that teams have. We also need to look more at organisational support and team dynamics, but brand recognition is critical. Why? Because the public sees us as a singular brand, whatever we like to think as individuals.'

Communications, he's says, is always cited as the 'biggest issue' and, since the AGM, new media director Nick Phillips has been looking into how we can improve things with a monthly 'In Brief' newsletter to teams — indeed, by the time you read this, you should already have received the first of these, perhaps a second.... so please do engage with this. The idea is that 'In Brief' and the magazine will work together; the newsletter — as the name implies — a taster

of the key pieces of information that month, the magazine a more in-depth look at the news and other stories.

Speaking from my own point of view, having been instrumental in setting up this magazine over twenty-five years ago — to address the very same perceived 'communications issue' — what we definitely don't want to see is 'In Brief' falling into whatever void it is that seemingly swallows other MREW communications whole, never to be seen again.

Communications without engagement is just information. To succeed, it has to be a two-way street. As Andy explained, in the first of five things he'd like to pick up on.

JUST FIVE THINGS...

1: Filling the perceived gap between MREW and the teams: 'This involves reassuring teams about the future, and I think that's a two-way activity. **It's not just about MREW reaching out to the teams, we need you to reach back to us.**'

2: Diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI): 'I think the challenge now is how do we, as an organisation, reflect the people who are in the hills?'

3: Helping the development of team performance: 'You do lots of training with ropes, carrying stretchers, navigation, first aid, all sorts of operational activity. But team performance is also about what happens back at base. One of our stated values is "caring". I see caring in spades when it's to do with the casualty, but we need to have that same philosophy of caring with our colleagues.'

4: Providing better tools for wellbeing and safeguarding and better tools to help people raise the flag if there is an issue: 'We can't get away with just leaving things in the teams. And this isn't just about how you might have been affected by a traumatic call-out, but whether you are being treated by the team leaders and others in an appropriate manner, so you don't feel bullied or undermined.'

5: It all comes down to money in the end: 'We need to ensure we can continue to develop, with the finances in place to do so.'

CREATING NEW ROLES FOR NEW CHALLENGES

Those 'five things' established, he spoke about the MREW executive team structure now comprising himself and the Medical, Operations, Finance and Media Comms directors, and outlined his plan to add two new roles: Volunteer Management and Organisational Development. Within the management team, he's creating a further, diverse raft of new roles, focusing on 'digital transformation', DEI, UKSAR, National Parks, Scouts and Guides, and the Duke of Edinburgh scheme.

THE 1% CLUB

And then it was 'game show time'. Andy, it transpires, has aspirations to be a TV game show host. Specifically, of the '1% Club'. Inviting everyone to grab a pen and

paper and put on their puzzle caps, he posed the question: 'What common greeting is represented here? ENTURY'.

No, me neither. Nor anyone in the room or on screen. Tumbleweed skittered through, cogs wheeling frantically the length and breadth of England and Wales. Not sure I've ever seen an MREW gathering quite so lost for words, frankly.

After what seemed an eternity, we had the answer: 'Long time, no see!'

A groaning 'Arghh... of course...' echoed through the room as Andy moved swiftly on. 'So... why am I bringing up the 1% Club? Well, there is within our community our Rescue Benevolent Fund, set up to support both mountain and cave team members. It's hugely important and it's there to protect and support our members. What I'd like to float is that teams donate 1% of their income to the benevolent fund annually. Not something to decide on here and now, obviously, but I'd like to think teams will take that away as an idea and discuss it.'

Picking up my other hat as a Rescue Benevolent Fund trustee, and speaking on behalf of my fellow trustees, thank you Andy for your enthusiastic support and appreciation of the fund. We will watch with interest!

But what do you, the teams and team members, think about Andy's idea? Would you be happy to donate 1% of your team's annual income to the benevolent fund, as he suggests? Please do email your thoughts to ceo@mountain.rescue.org.uk.

AND, FINALLY...

He talked about an interesting question posed by one of the North Wales teams. 'We're always asking what MREW can do for us. But what can we, the teams, do for MREW?'

'My answer,' says Andy, 'is simple: you can reflect back to us what it is you want.'

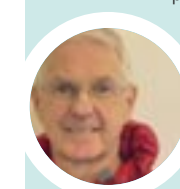
And with another round of clapping ringing in our ears, he left 'the stage'. His car may indeed now be 'stuck on the car park' for the next five years, but I feel sure that metaphorical engine will continue to enthusiastically tick over. A new era has begun. ☺

Opposite: Andy during a visit to Oldham team in November 2025 © OMRT. **Below:** Mike with his shiny new Rescue Post plaque, pictured in front of his fireplace (currently under renovation) © Judy Whiteside. **Below:** Andy trying out Patterdale's robotic legs. Image supplied by Andy.



INTRODUCING THREE NEW FACES AT THE MANAGEMENT TABLE...

Nick Phillips takes on the role of Media and Communications Director, bringing with him his expertise in corporate marketing, media strategy, communications and market analysis. Through his company, Point 5 Consulting, he has partnered with organisations to design and execute high-impact marketing, media and business strategies to drive sustainable



growth. He holds both a PhD and an MBA in marketing and has completed advanced studies in strategic content marketing and leadership. Outside of his professional work, he is an experienced climber and mountaineer and a qualified Mountain Leader — who regularly guides clients in events such as The Three Peaks Challenge. He is also a member of Bowland Pennine MRT.



Sue Jones takes on the role of Income Generation Officer. She has been with South Snowdonia SRT for eight years, currently serving as deputy team leader and lead casualty carer. She has used her professional skills to help support her team's fundraising efforts, securing funding for the team's new garage. 'After many years of software deals, landing £64k funding to build a garage for my team was the deal of a lifetime! It was really satisfying to use my bid management skills for charity!' Now retired, she is keen to utilise her skills for the greater good at of the wider mountain rescue community — find out more about her plans on page 15.



Jonathan Caswell takes on the role of PR officer. He is a former daily newspaper and broadcast journalist who's worked across local, regional, national and international media. He moved into strategic communications, advising public, private and third sector organisations, and has held senior roles including head of PR at Liverpool Vision and Marketing Liverpool, and Communications Adviser to the Mayor of Liverpool. Over a 25+ year career, he's led campaigns, launched events and handled media, crisis comms and reputation management across a wide range of issues, sectors and organisations. He now runs his own consultancy. Outside work, he's a keen climber, hiker and camper, spending as much time as possible outdoors, co-hosting Pilates and wellness retreats and exploring in his van. Turn the page to read his analysis of how, one year on, the APPG for Volunteer Search and Rescue is turning recognition into results.



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One year on: How the APPG for Volunteer Search and Rescue is turning recognition into results

Twelve months after its formation, the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Volunteer Search and Rescue is beginning to translate long-standing calls for recognition into tangible political momentum. **Jonathan Caswell** reports.

Established to champion the UK's volunteer rescue organisations — and led and supported by Mountain Rescue England and Wales (MREW) — the group set out with four clear aims: to raise national recognition, strengthen coordination, cut unnecessary bureaucracy and better support the communities who rely on Search and Rescue (SAR). One year on, progress is visible, although significant challenges remain.

Volunteer SAR sits at the heart of the UK's resilience infrastructure. Across mountains, rivers, coastlines and rural communities, thousands of trained volunteers respond to emergencies at all hours. They support statutory services, provide specialist capabilities and do so at a fraction of the cost of equivalent state provision. Yet, historically, that contribution has not always been matched with formal recognition or consistent policy support.

This last year has sought to change that, the most notable success in November 2025, when the Government announced a Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) exemption for Search and Rescue vehicles. Secured through coordinated lobbying by the APPG and its partners, the measure marked a significant symbolic and financial step.

Welcoming the move, MP Josh MacAlister described it as 'a practical recognition of the extraordinary contribution made by volunteer rescue teams, and a clear example of what can be achieved when Parliament works in partnership with those on the frontline'.

For volunteer teams, many of which operate on tight budgets, the reduction in vehicle costs is expected to ease pressure and help sustain frontline capability.

Behind the headlines, the APPG has also been working through more complex structural challenges. One of the most pressing is insurance. Volunteer SAR organisations collectively face substantial annual premiums, with some of the largest bodies paying hundreds of thousands of

pounds each year. The APPG has begun building the evidence base for a potential Crown Indemnity model, which could reduce costs and provide greater assurance for volunteers operating in high-risk environments. The work is ongoing, with detailed data gathering across the SAR community now underway.

Mike Park, former MREW CEO, said the issue goes to the heart of long-term sustainability. 'Volunteer search and rescue delivers enormous public value, but it does so while carrying costs and risks that would normally sit with the state. If we want these services to remain resilient, we need to create a framework that properly supports them.'

Another central focus has been workforce recognition. Unlike Army Reservists or Special Constables, SAR volunteers do not benefit from consistently recognised employment protections when called out. Rescues often take place during working hours, placing strain on both volunteers and employers. The APPG has explored proposals for a 'SAR Charter' and potential legislative routes — including a Ten Minute Rule Bill — to place volunteers on a more equal footing.

Nigel Harling, another from Patterdale MRT and who serves as the APPG Secretariat, said the aim is to bring clarity and fairness. 'These are highly-trained volunteers who can be called out at any time, day or night. What we're seeking is simple: recognition that reflects the reality of what they do and gives both employers and volunteers the confidence to support that role.'

Coordination within Government has also come under scrutiny. Responsibility for SAR policy is spread across multiple departments, creating complexity and, at times, inefficiency. The APPG has therefore pushed the case for a single ministerial point of contact to provide leadership and accountability. While no formal appointment has yet been made, discussions with the Cabinet Office and other departments

suggest growing acceptance of the need for a clearer structure.

Alongside these headline issues, the group has tackled a wide range of operational barriers. These include regulatory challenges around medical provision at events, access to essential equipment such as medical gases, and the use of emerging technologies like drones. Legislative pathways, such as the long-discussed Section 19 provisions on vehicle recognition and driver training, remain critical enablers and are being closely monitored.

Importantly, the APPG's work has not been confined to Westminster. It has also sought to shape the national conversation around outdoor safety. With call-outs rising sharply in some areas, there is growing concern about public awareness and risk behaviour. The group has supported efforts to develop clearer safety messaging aimed at reducing avoidable incidents.

Perhaps the most compelling argument underpinning all of this work is the human one. Those rescued are rarely extreme adventurers. More often, they are ordinary people — families, walkers, cyclists — caught out in familiar surroundings. And those who rescue them are volunteers balancing training, employment and personal lives to serve their communities.

One year on, the APPG for Volunteer Search and Rescue has established itself as a credible and increasingly influential voice. It has demonstrated that cross-party collaboration can deliver results, as seen with VED exemption, and laid the groundwork for more ambitious reforms.

If the first year was about building momentum, the next will be about locking in change. 📌

Below, from left: Left to right: James Bicknell (Patterdale), Carolyn Otley (Cockermouth), Nigel Harling (APPG Secretariat), and Mike Park (former MREW CEO), outside Westminster with the Patterdale vehicle; Josh MacAlister MP; the inaugural APPG in March 2025. Images © Carolyn Otley/MREW.



national



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Where there's a Will, there's a gift in waiting

SUE JONES MREW INCOME GENERATION OFFICER

I am really pleased to take the role of income generation officer and use my professional experience to help drive fund growth at MREW. As a member of the South Snowdonia team for eight years, I understand the huge challenge all teams face in balancing fundraising, operational readiness, management and call-outs. I hope to contribute and ease the financial burden, particularly with those teams that are financially constrained and 'make do' a lot of the time.

Mountain rescue is a great brand. I believe many will wish to be associated with it and I will look to build out programmes so that we can align with more organisations and individuals as they want to give back and support our valuable community service. In the first year I will be looking at:

- **Legacy initiative** — I see this as a priority activity, and we have already made a start with this.
- **Application to Grants, Foundations and Campaigns**
- **Large contributors** — high net worth individuals and corporate sponsorship
- **Justgiving** — individual contributors
- **Developing Partnerships** rather than sponsorships
- **Enriching Basecamp** membership for our regular subscribers
- **Developing fundraising best practices** with work groups to share ideas across teams and regions
- **Developing the MREW online shop.**

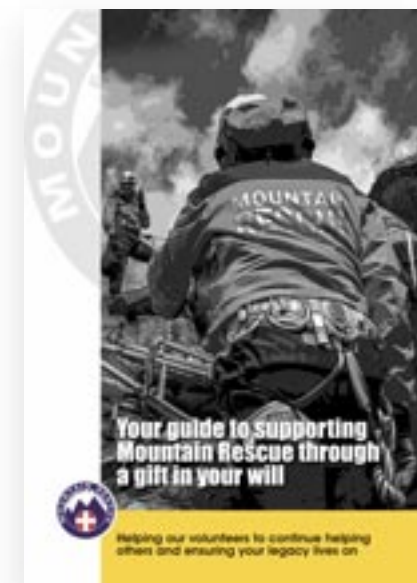
This list will take some time but, only a few months in, we are in the closing stages of launching the Free Wills Service'.

LEGACIES AND GIFTS IN WILLS

A gift in your Will is a life-saving legacy in the mountains. After researching what other charities do, it is clear we need a free Will writing service. There are online capabilities, but they don't really stand up to the legal rigour required. 40% of people say they would like to leave to a charity, but only 14% actually do and it's widely thought that this is due to the inaction of writing a Will rather than intention. With this in mind, we hope this scheme will get people started, simplify the process and cover the legal costs.

The good news is that people usually pick more than three charities to include in their will, so local teams may directly gain too.

Our expectation is that a detailed legacy programme is a long-term initiative, showing returns in three to seven years, with the typical range from £2,000 to £65,000.



Above: Our guide to supporting mountain rescue through a gift in your Will, downloadable from the MREW website.

To take this forward, we have created a downloadable guide to help those who wish to give through their Will. The guide advises what sort of information might be useful to have to hand before contacting your solicitor, such as the names and addresses of beneficiaries, trustees and charities, and how to estimate the value of your Estate.

Also to come is a 'What a legacy gift will do' guide, demonstrating how your legacy can help support the work of mountain rescue.

On 1 July, we will launch our free Will writing service, followed by a media campaign launch on 1 August — including targeted marketing to our Basecamp subscribers.

As mountain rescue teams and team members, we offer this to you too. to update a Will or create one. Visit the Legacies page on our website to find out more — mountain.rescue.org.uk/legacies — and head to myfreewillportal.org/ MountainRescueEnglandandWales to receive a Free Wills pack. ☺

BREAKING THE CODE...

We all know mountain rescue loves its acronyms and initialisms* — and often we'll confuse the two ('EmRoo' anyone?) — but, hand on HART, how many truly know their EAR from their ELBOW? (Okay, we made that last one up... we think). But seriously, maybe you're new to MR? Or maybe, just maybe, you've been around a very long time but never dared to ask? So here's a handy guide to just a few of the usual suspects:

ALSAR	Association of Lowland Search and Rescue (AKA Lowland Rescue)
APPG	All Party Parliamentary Group
ATV	All-Terrain Vehicle
BCRC	British Cave Rescue Council
CRT	Cave Rescue Team
DEFRA	Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs
DTT	Department for Transport
EAR	Emergency Air Response
FRS	Fire and Rescue Service
HART	Hazardous Area Response Team
HEMS	Helicopter Medical Services
HMCG	His Majesty's Coastguard
ICAR	International Commission for Alpine Rescue
IRB	Inshore Rescue Boat
JESIP	Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles
KHz	Kilohertz
LDSAMRA	Lake District Search and Mountain Rescue Association
LRF	Local Resilience Forum
MCA	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
MHz	Megahertz
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MPRSO	Mid Pennine Search and Rescue Organisation
MREW	Mountain Rescue England and Wales
MRI	Mountain Rescue Ireland
MRT	Mountain Rescue Team
MRSDE	Mountain Rescue Search Dogs England
NESRA	North East Search and Rescue Association
NWMRA	North Wales Mountain Rescue Association
NHS	National Health Service
NFCC	National Fire Chiefs Council
NILA	National Independent Lifeboat Association
NPAS	National Police Air Service
NPCC	National Police Chiefs Council
PDMRO	Peak District Mountain Rescue Organisation
PENSAR	Peninsula Search and Rescue
RNLI	Royal National Lifeboat Institution
RWC	Rescue Water Craft
SAR	Search and Rescue
SARDA	Search and Rescue Dogs Association
SMR	Scottish Mountain Rescue
SPOC	Single Point of Contact
SWSARA	South Wales Search and Rescue Association
UHF	Ultra-High Frequency
UKSAR	United Kingdom Search and Rescue
VHF	Very High Frequency

* An **acronym** is 'a word formed from the initial letter or letters of each of the successive parts or major parts of a compound term', which 'means that acronyms can be differentiated from other abbreviations because they are pronounceable as words'. (Merriam Webster)
An **initialism** is 'an abbreviation formed from initial letters', generally pronounced as such — although some 'become acronyms by virtue of being spoken out loud frequently enough to become more like a word than a set of letters'.

TRAINING CALENDAR 2026

[AT TIME OF PUBLICATION – MORE DATES TO FOLLOW]

mrew

OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

PREHOSPITAL TRAUMA LIFE SUPPORT AND MEDIA LEVEL 1 & 2 TBC

MREW LOGIST COURSE: A NESRA BASE TBC EARLY 2027

SPM1 FULL COURSE: 19-21 FEBRUARY 2027

LYON ROPE RESCUE OPERATOR INSTRUCTOR COURSE 2: TEBAY

23-24 & 30-31 JANUARY 2027

LYON ROPE RESCUE OPERATOR INSTRUCTOR COURSE 3: TEBAY

20-21 & 27-28 FEBRUARY 2027

LYON ROPE RESCUE OPERATOR INSTRUCTOR COURSE 4 (2-DAY

HI-LINE GUIDING ONLY): TEBAY 20-21 MARCH 2027

LYON ROPE RESCUE OPERATOR INSTRUCTOR COURSES: SOUTHERN

AREA TBC 17-18 & 24-25 APRIL 2027 TBC

MREW LOGIST COURSE:
CENTRAL BEACONS 11 JULY

SEARCH FIELD SKILLS (SFS):
CAERPHILLY 4-6 SEPTEMBER

SPM 2 FULL COURSE: THE
RESILIENCE ACADEMY:
11-13 SEPTEMBER

FPE COURSE (SAR PRODUCTS):
NESRA 20 SEPTEMBER

FPE COURSE (SAR
PRODUCTS): MPSRD
4 OCTOBER

TEAM LEADERS
SYMPOSIUM: PLAS Y BRENNIN
10-11 OCTOBER

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

SEPTEMBER

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

SEARCH FIELD SKILLS
(SFS): CAERPHILLY 18-20
SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

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

MREW LOGIST COURSE:
BOWLAND PENNINE 17 OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

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

PDMRD FOUNDATION COURSE:
9-11 OCTOBER

SPM1 FULL COURSE:
6-8 NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

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

PLUS: FREE REGIONALLY DELIVERED FPE INSPECTION
COURSES VIA SAR PRODUCTS. 50% LIBOR FUNDED:

- 20 SEPTEMBER NESRA REGION
- 4 OCTOBER MPSRD REGION
- 15 NOVEMBER SARA/ASSAR REGION

Brendan O'Neill MREW Drones Officer

It was a fantastic day out delivering the joint Lowland Rescue and MREW Drone Awareness and Observer course, to teams from across England and Wales. We explored how drones can be used safely and effectively within search and rescue, including when they are most appropriately tasked, drone safety and post-flight image analysis.

Using a range of examples, participants reviewed imagery, explored how post-flight analysis can support search operations and discussed the practical application of drones in search and rescue. It was great to see such a high level of engagement throughout the day and the strength of collaboration between Lowland Rescue and Mountain Rescue England and Wales.

DRONE COLLABORATION BETWEEN LOWLAND AND MOUNTAIN RESCUE



A busy quarter for training together and sharing of ideas

PHIL 'RIGGER' RIDLEY MREW TRAINING OFFICER

Training opportunities nationally have been very varied, and it's pleasing to see the challenges of joint working and interoperability coming to the front with favourable results and feedback. Thank you to all who have contributed, in both organising and taking part.

ROPE RESCUE EXCHANGE DAY OF LEARNING AND IMPROVING

This was a great opportunity for collaborative learning, shared awareness, different ropework techniques, procedures and equipment, combined with good old-fashioned networking. Team members from around the country met at JCB Wardlow Quarry to take part (Full report from Paul Edisbury on page 20). The amount of time and effort the organising team put into the event was fantastic. With over 120 members and fifteen equipment manufactures attending to exhibit and promote their wares (which was also beneficial), I believe the event was a success for everyone, not only showing mountain rescue's professionalism, but also the willingness for collaboration between teams, regions and statutory services.



Top: Rope rescue exchange day at JCB Wardlow Quarry © Henry Paisey. Opposite/above: MREW and Lowland Drone Day © Brendan O'Neill. Right: Left to right: Richard Gale, Simon Woodbury and Mike Park try out the eBikes, Phil Ridley and Paul Witheridge behind © LDSAMRA.

JESIP NATIONAL STRUCTURED DEBRIEFING COURSE

Alex Perks and Frankie Westoby from the National JESIP team delivered this College of Policing course to MREW delegates, hosted at the Bowland Pennine team base in Garstang. This was a well-attended day with great shared learning and discussions which will hopefully allow MREW to contribute to the JESIP National Joint Organisational Learning. The plan is to hold another session later in the year for the southern regions

LAKE DISTRICT 'FESTIVAL DAY'

It may have been billed as the 'LDSAMRA Festival' day, but this was definitely a great 'show and tell' session of kit, local team capabilities and regional resources — also illustrating various training opportunities and utilisation of new and existing technologies. The AI-powered Hypershell exoskeleton leg frames were trialled by many, with plenty of discussion around their pros and cons. As for the eBikes: 'Well, Mike Park was last seen riding off into the sunset', as someone commented. An interesting discussion about the bike's versatility and use within mountain rescue. A lovely location for the sessions and guest speaker Simon Yates brought home the appreciation of those mountaineers and hill walkers who at times call upon our services. The day ended with more networking and socialising. Naturally.

REMOTE RESCUE MEDICAL TECHNICIAN CPD DAY

Swaledale MRT hosted another CPD day in May. Another great opportunity to share good practice by having a series of scenario-based learning stations for RRTs, to demonstrate various skills, practices and equipment. This could easily become an annual event in the training calendar.

DRONE OBSERVER COLLABORATION

The inaugural joint MREW and Lowland Rescue collaboration for Drone Observers took place 13-14 June. The objective was to improve awareness of drone use, safety procedures, regulations, deployment considerations, observer training and search considerations. Primarily aimed at search managers, team leaders and those team members who would be part of the 'ground crew'.

Feedback has been positive with a desire to progress with more interoperability

between agencies. Drone development and use have continued to make them a plausible asset in the search toolbox, proving to be a good resource for spotting hazards ahead of various types of deployments. Discussions and challenges will continue, along with more training opportunities.

LOGIST COURSE:

It feels like a lifetime has elapsed since the MREW Training group first discussed the benefits of offering a 'Logist' course. It's finally here, with three regionally delivered courses on offer. The first will be in South Wales, mid-July, it's aim to provide attendees with the knowledge and skills to produce and maintain accurate operational incident records that will support effective action and accountability during incidents. The second will be mid-October in Mid Pennine region, with a third in the North East in early February 2027.

TEAM LEADER DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

This is another long overdue training opportunity for team leaders, deputies and/or team leaders elect, to be held at Plas Y Brenin, 9-11 October. Historically, MREW team leaderships have received no formal leadership training to prepare them for the demands of the role, and they are left at the mercy of their team. Devised through the MREW Ops group, the aim is to offer a weekend of workshops and scenarios to develop value-based leaders and model a culture of success and wellbeing within teams, reinforcing the MREW values of Teamwork, Excellence, Passion and Caring. Teams differ and only by discussing ideas and sharing skills will we as an organisation be able to develop opportunities and help set successful, measurable goals to build upon. I see this as a challenge and one that helps develop the future culture of teams. ☺



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Instructor Courses:

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An opportunity to join peers and share some ideas to foster 'world-class' performance



Saturday 10th & Sunday 11th October 2026 at Plas y Brenin, Eyr

Your team is invited to join peers at a Leadership Symposium hosted by mountain rescue folk, for mountain rescue folk

The idea:

- A meeting of peers to develop good practice through shared learning
- Application of 'values-based' leadership theory in the context of mountain rescue practice
- Exploring the role of leadership in developing a culture of success and wellbeing
- Discussing MREW shared values and agreeing measurable goals
- An opportunity to meet colleagues from different teams and establish links

Who is it for?

- One representative per team

To sign up or find out more:

Contact Kev Camplin MBE via operations@MPSRO.org.uk

Expressions of interest for planning ASAP.

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Operational safety and liability in the use of personal FPE

PENNY BROCKMAN MREW INSURANCE LEAD

We've received a number of enquiries recently about the use of Fall Protection Equipment (FPE) within rescue systems. Subsequently, in May, representatives of Mountain Rescue England and Wales met with our insurance brokers, Gallagher, to establish key principles — especially with regard to team members using their own FPE — and to discuss associated training taking place in mountain rescue team activities.

To ensure we maintain robust insurance cover and align our practices with the MREW Rope Rescue Guidelines (v3.12), teams and members should please take note of the following:—

USE OF PERSONAL FPE

While the insurance policy does not prohibit personal FPE, using it could create risks for team trustees and leadership if not managed correctly.

- **Priority:** Team-issued FPE that is inspected and recorded is always the preferred choice.
- **The 'Logged or Lost' Rule:** Any FPE used during an incident or training must have been inspected and systematically logged, ideally by a team.
- **Liability:** If FPE is not part of a team's formal inspection control system, it should not be used for mountain rescue use. In the event of a concerning incident, a failure to produce inspection records could adversely affect our insurance cover.
- **Bottom Line:** If it isn't in a team's equipment inspection regime, you should not use it for team tasks.

TRAINING AND ASSOCIATED ACTIVITIES

Teams can undertake associated activities such as scrambling, rock climbing and short-roping as these can be vital for development and maintenance of technical rescue skills.

- **Operational Relevance:** Each team must determine if an associated activity is relevant to their operational needs. These activities are covered only if they are a foreseeable part of technical rescue and properly risk-assessed. Clear documentation of learning outcomes and

competencies will support to make this training 'defensible' in a legal or insurance context.

- **Training Events:** To distinguish between 'personal recreation' and 'team training', training events should have a formal training plan and documented learning outcomes.
- **Risk Management: Dynamic Risk Assessments (DRA)** are essential on-the-day updates, but do not replace the need for pre-planned, written risk assessments for training sessions.

ACTION POINTS FOR TEAMS

- **Review your FPE:** Ensure you are prioritising team-issued FPE for deployments.
- **Documentation:** If you believe specific FPE is essential, it must be submitted for inspection and integrated into the team's equipment log.
- **MREW 'Rope Rescue Guidelines':** Refer to Guideline 5 of the guidelines for technical specifics on traceability and manufacturer instructions:
 'A **reasonably practicable** approach must be taken. FPE that is not inspected and logged under a team's equipment inspection controls should, ideally not be used for MR purposes.'

If you have any further questions in relation to any areas covered by the above, email as relevant:

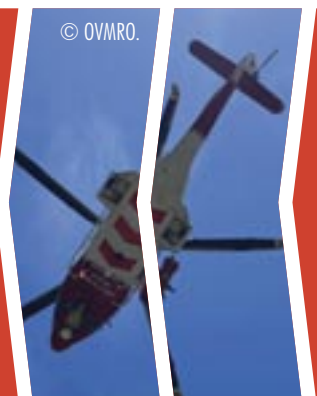
- Insurance (Penny Brockman):**
insurance.lead@mountain.rescue.org.uk
- Equipment (Paul Smith):**
equipmentofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk
- Training (Phil Ridley):**
trainingofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk
- Rope Rescue Guidelines (Chris Cookson):**
roperescuelead@mountain.rescue.org.uk

ONLINE HELICOPTER TRAINING

A reminder that **ALL** members should be recertifying (annually) to the relevant aircraft operating in their respective areas. Please ensure Stage 1A (ISAR CBT modules) are all in date. There should be no reason why members remain out of date. These particular Stage 1A online modules are **an operational requirement** and future revisions are currently in development with Bristow/MCA.

Contact helicopterofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk or trainingofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk for further information.

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Rope Rescue Exchange Learning & Improving

PAUL EDISBURY KINDER MRT

On Saturday 16 May, teams from across England and Wales gathered at Wardlow Quarry for this training day, hosted by PDMRO with the support of JCB. What began as an idea to create a collaborative rope rescue learning environment for PDMRO members, quickly developed into one of the largest multi-agency rope rescue training events many attendees had experienced in recent years.

The aim of the day was simple: to bring teams together in a realistic environment where they could not only practise technical rope rescue skills, but also observe, discuss and learn from the differing techniques and operational styles used by other organisations. With 120 attendees on site throughout the day, the event combined mountain rescue teams, police rope rescue capability, medical cover, safety staff, trade organisations and demonstration teams into

a single operational training environment.

The setting provided an ideal venue for the exercise. The steep quarry faces, exposed edges, restricted access and JCB vehicles as anchors created realistic challenges for teams to manage while still allowing the event to be conducted within a structured and controlled and safe framework. The exercise scenario involved a casualty positioned at the bottom of the quarry, with access only possible from the top. Teams

were tasked with lowering rescuers, packaging the casualty into a stretcher and safely raising them back to the top using their own rope rescue systems and operational procedures.

Unlike many exercises, the decision was taken for each organisation to operate independently while being paired alongside another team for observation and learning. One team would complete the rescue while the other watched, studied the set-up and discussed the operational decisions being made. Once completed, the second team would then carry out the same task while being observed in return. This proved to be one of the strongest aspects of the day. It gave teams the opportunity to compare approaches to anchor selection, hauling systems, edge management, command and control, communication and stretcher handling in a constructive and professional environment.

Throughout the quarry was an impressive variety of systems and techniques on display. While the equipment and methods sometimes differed, the common themes of safety, efficiency and teamwork were evident across every rescue. Discussions between teams continued long after rescues had been completed, with many participants commenting on how valuable it was to observe other organisations working in real time rather than simply discussing techniques in a classroom setting.



The day highlighted the professionalism and safety culture that exists throughout the wider mountain rescue community. Safety staff remained positioned along the quarry top throughout, overseeing operations and ensuring that the exercise remained controlled and safe without interfering unnecessarily with team rescues. Dynamic risk assessments were carried out by all participating organisations, and despite the inherent hazards associated with steep ground, rockfall potential and exposure, the event was completed without any accidents or injuries, which goes to show safety played a major part in this event.

Dedicated radio channels allowed effective coordination between crag teams, control staff, safety personnel and medical cover throughout the day. Medical support was provided on site by Derby team members, providing routine welfare and standby cover. Rope rescue cover was provided by Western Beacons, who also carried out a rope demonstration.

In addition to the practical rescue exercises, teams were able to spend time visiting rope rescue demonstrations and trade stands during the day. These sessions provided further opportunities to discuss equipment developments, operational techniques and future rescue capability across the rescue community.

The rope workshops consisted of a guiding line demonstration on the quarry face which was performed by Western Beacons. Paul Russell from Scottish Mountain Rescue kindly travelled south for the day and gave a demonstration on anchor bolt use. Andy Smith from Kinder team showed the use of Reep cord and PowerCord when used on an

anchor system. This is very helpful for teams when trying to keep the weight of rope equipment to a minimum. Two members from Arco Professional safety services set up a Reeve system and demonstrated its use. Ady Koe from Derby team — our rock expert for this event — not only talked about rock safety and awareness, he was the main safety expert in terms of choosing the safest location to perform the rescues on the day.

One of the strongest takeaways was the positive atmosphere throughout the day. Despite the scale of the exercise and the numbers involved, the environment remained relaxed, professional and highly collaborative. There was a clear willingness to share ideas, discuss lessons learned and support one another's development. For many, that exchange of knowledge and experience was as valuable as the practical rope rescue itself.

Events such as this demonstrate the importance of collaborative training within mountain rescue. While teams may operate in different regions and sometimes use different systems, the shared goal remains the same: carrying out safe, effective rescues in difficult environments. Bringing organisations together in this way not only develops technical competence, but also strengthens professional relationships and mutual understanding between teams that may one day work alongside each other during major incidents.

Special thanks must go to all the teams and organisations that attended and supported the event. Representatives from Scottish Mountain Rescue, Western Beacons, ARCO, Derby, Kinder, Buxton, Oldham, Brecon, Calder Valley, Upper Wharfedale,

Avon and Somerset, Derbyshire CRO, Bolton, Derby Police, Holme Valley, SARA, Swaledale, Bowland Pennine, Cockermouth and Woodhead all contributed to making the day a success. The willingness of teams to share ideas, demonstrate techniques, support one another and openly discuss operational methods was what truly made the event valuable.

Not forgetting to mention all the trade stands that set out their latest equipment for people to view and interact with. Thank you to the following for turning up to one of the first events like this: Skylotek, Lyon, Petzl, Scannable, Beta Climbing Designs, R3, Ocun, Arco Professional Safety Services, Marlow Ropes, Ruth Lee, PAX, Fall Safe, Kong Italy, Harken and Abaris.

Additional thanks are due to JCB for allowing access to such an excellent training venue, to the safety and medical staff who were available on the day, and to the volunteers and organisers who worked behind the scenes to coordinate the event from start to finish.

By the end of the final debrief, it was clear that this training day had achieved exactly what it set out to do. Teams left not only having practised rope rescue in a demanding environment, but having learned from one another, shared experiences and strengthened the wider rescue community in the process.

In summary, a successful day with positive feedback. This has shown that this type of event is worthwhile and that those teams that attended would attend another similar event in the future. This is something that is now being looked into. ☺



Managing the risks of rock fall in mountain rescue

ADY KOE DERBY MRT & TOM LIA SOUTH AND MID WALES CRT

This article presents the main points given at the **Rope Rescue Exchange Learning and Improving Day** held at Wardlow Quarry in May 2026. I've attempted to distil the main points from existing rockfall guidance, presenting the key aspects of the risks from a mountain rescue perspective and present some practical mitigations. I've used a format that is hopefully easily accessible for future reference. An online training session is planned for 14 December.

BACKGROUND

Rockfall is a specific type of landslide hazard, characterised by the detachment and rapid downward movement of rock from a steep slope or cliff face. In the context of mountain rescue, it represents one of the most acute and unpredictable risks — capable of causing serious harm to both casualties and responders with little or no warning.

Data on the relative number of injuries or deaths from rockfall varies depending on location, but is generally understood to be relatively low: <10% of all climbing-related accidents. However, the likelihood of rockfall is not static. There is increasing recognition that climate change is likely to exacerbate rockfall hazards. Changes in temperature and precipitation patterns, particularly more storms, intense rainfall events, all act to weaken rock masses and increase the frequency of detachment. As a result, terrain that may previously have been considered relatively stable could become more active and hazardous over time.

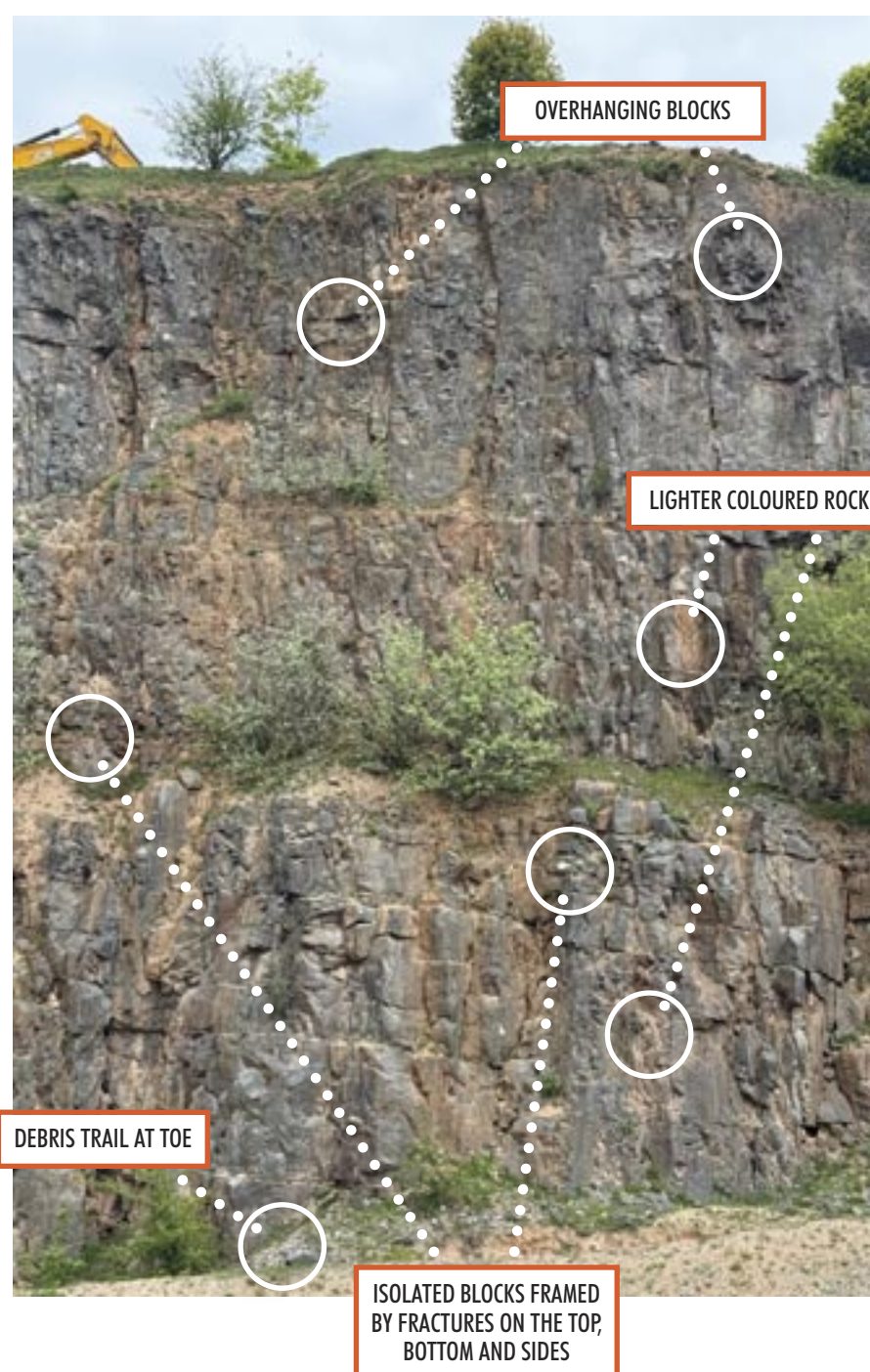
For mountain rescue teams, this evolving risk landscape reinforces the need for a structured, risk-aware approach to all crag and steep-ground operations, where understanding rockfall processes and maintaining situational awareness are fundamental to safe and effective response.

IDENTIFICATION OF LOOSE BLOCKS

Fractures in the rock (Discontinuities, ie. bedding joints faults etc.) control stability on the majority of rock faces that we deal with.

What to look for (fast visual cues)

- **Separation/daylighting cracks** around a block (a visible 'frame' crack on top, bottom and sides).
- **Overhangs** or blocks sitting on smaller 'pedestals'.
- **Fresh, clean break surfaces** or lighter-coloured rock indicating recent movement.
- **Debris trails** below a feature (recent small fragments often precede larger releases).



Engineering teams often focus on **failure mechanisms** (planar sliding, wedge failure, toppling) because that drives long-term stabilisation design. In a rescue, you are unlikely to have time for a kinematic analysis. Instead, your rapid assessment is often best framed around:

1. Can I identify an isolated block?
2. Does it look loose/detached/undercut?
3. Where could it fall (pathway) and where could it end up (run out)?

NATURAL ROCK SLOPES vs BLASTED (QUARRY) SLOPES

Natural rock slopes tend to have discontinuities (bedding, joints, faults) formed by geological processes and then modified by long-term weathering. Over time, loose material often falls out and accumulates as talus or scree, and the rock mass can reach a form of 'equilibrium' where the most unstable blocks have already detached.

By contrast, blasted rock slopes (eg. quarry faces) are created rapidly by excavation. Blasting and stress relief can damage the rock mass behind the exposed face, increasing looseness and the likelihood of block release compared with an equivalent natural cliff. This near surface damage is often described as an excavation damaged zone (EDZ): a zone of fractured, loosened rock where properties (strength, stiffness, permeability) are degraded relative to undisturbed rock. For drill and blast excavations, published ranges commonly place the construction-induced EDZ thickness on the order of ~0.1m up to ~1.5m into the rock, with many case studies clustering around ~0.3–0.5m as a typical/average thickness (context-dependent).

Operational implication:

A blasted face can have a 'skin' of rock that looks intact but is mechanically compromised, with loose blocks extending to a depth of 0.5 to 1.5m. Once one block comes off, there is much higher risk of more blocks being dislodged. So treat quarry and recently excavated faces as higher risk than many natural crags.

MAIN TRIGGERS OF ROCKFALL – WHAT CHANGES TODAY'S RISK?

The main triggering causal factors that initiate rockfall are: rainfall, snow/ice and wind acting on trees (root jacking). Rock slopes do change over time as a result of weather, erosion and human action. What was stable a few months ago may not be currently stable. So it's important to assess a rock face each time we access it.

Snow and ice

- Freeze-thaw prisms open joints; thaw releases blocks that were 'locked' by ice
- Cornices/snow loading near the crest can destabilise loose debris
- Falling ice can act as a trigger or a projectile in its own right.



Rainfall

- Water adds weight, reduces the effective friction on fractures, and can increase water pressure in fractures and debris.
- Rain also mobilises loose material and can flush smaller debris that destabilises larger blocks.

Root-jacking and high winds

- Trees and shrubs growing in cracks exert jacking forces as roots thicken.
- In strong winds, trees can lever blocks loose (root plates and trunks transmit cyclic loads into fissures).

Operational implication:

If the weather has recently shifted (heavy rain, rapid thaw, storms), assume the rock face is temporarily 'more alive' and increase stand-off/reduce time in the rockfall zone.

BLOCK SIZE AND FALL HEIGHT CONSIDERATIONS

Key considerations on falling blocks are the size, shape and distances fallen as these will often dominate the impact and damage they can cause. The larger the fall height and the larger the block the more energy it will have and the more damage it will do. As a practical reference point:

- A fist-sized round (not pointed) block falling from 25m or less should be withstood by a mountaineering helmet.
- A football-sized block falling from 25m or less has the potential to cause life changing injuries.
- A coffin-sized block is likely to prove fatal.

If the block is pointed or has sharp edges it has the potential to cause more damage at small sizes and lower heights.

MANAGING RISK AT THE CREST OF A ROCK FACE

The crest is often where teams unintentionally create rockfall.

Key crest hazards

- **Loose boulders** used as anchors (appear massive, but may be perched or sitting on top of soil).
- **Root-jacking** undermining blocks near the lip.
- **Sharp edges** that can cut ropes/slings under load or movement.
- **General loose debris** that can be kicked over the edge — especially with multiple people moving around.

Practical mitigations (rescue-focused)

- **Choose anchors deliberately:**
 - Choose deep rooted, healthy trees preferably at least 3m from the edge.
 - If using blocks at the crest ensure that they cannot move, and are at least 1m³ or larger.
- **Keep slings/ropes as low as possible:**
 - Lower attachment points reduce leverage on blocks.
- **Manage the Hot Zone at the top:**
 - Personnel that are within 3m of the edge are considered within the Hot Zone — try to limit personnel in this area.
 - Personnel in the Hot Zone should be attached to a safe rope system.
- **Edge protection for ropes:**
 - Use rope protectors, padding, or redirects to eliminate sharp-edge contact.
- **Housekeeping:**
 - If safe to do so, move small loose stones away from the edge (never down the face).

MANAGING ROCKFALL RISK ON THE FACE – ABSEIL/LOWER OPERATIONS

Once personnel are on the face, rockfall becomes both an external hazard (natural release), and an induced hazard (rope movement, contact, dislodgement).

Face-based hazard controls

- Minimise time in the danger zone ('load and go' bias). Where the casualty is exposed to rockfall — and treatment will keep rescuers

stationary in the fall line. Consider a **move-first** strategy if injuries permit — package and relocate to a safer position out of the rockfall run-out zone.

- Avoid abseiling directly below suspect blocks. If an unstable block is directly above the casualty position, consider abseiling/ descending offset from the casualty and traversing in from a safer line if on a ledge rather than placing rescuers directly beneath the hazard. Alternately, use tensioned lines or an English reeve to keep the rescuer away from the rock.
- Reduce rock interaction. Keep feet and equipment away from loose rock if possible and avoid dragging ropes across rubble on ledges.

MITIGATING RISK AT THE TOE/ BASE – STANDOFF DISTANCES AND RUN-OUT CONTROL

The toe is where rockfall **accumulates and accelerates** — bouncing, rolling and fragmenting. People often underestimate how far blocks can travel beyond the vertical drop. Look at the potential block and try to asses where it could fall.

What does the evidence say about run-out?

A widely used rapid method for estimating rockfall propagation is the shadow angle/energy line approach. Published guidance notes that cone/shadow angles commonly range from 27° to 37° depending on terrain and the definition of ‘maximum run-out’.

- Using 27° (longer run-out) gives approximately 2.0H. So for a 25 m face that’s up to 50m distance.
- Using 37° (shorter run-out) gives approximately 1.3H.

Rule of thumb for rescue exclusion at the toe (vertical face):

- Plan for at least 1.5 times the height of the rock face as a **baseline** stand-off where space allows, and
- Treat twice the height of the rock face as a prudent, conservative exclusion if terrain is smooth, frozen, snow-covered or otherwise conducive to long travel.

This is consistent with the idea that ‘safe distance’ is not a fixed number — it scales with face height and ground conditions. Alternately move to the side away from the area of potential travel.

Toe risk mitigations (operational)

- Keep team members out of run-out areas as the default.
- Once down on the ground, move the casualty to a safe location, then treat where practical — particularly if the casualty lies within the predicted runout zone.
- Use spotters and controlled access lanes: if you must enter run-out, do it deliberately — minimum personnel, minimum time, clear understood escape routes for those in the runout zone.



Important note:

Even the best rules of thumb can be wrong for unusual topography (gullies, ramps, ledges that launch blocks, snow chutes). Shadow angle methods are fast and useful, but they are an approximation — so pair them with local observation (fresh debris, talus extent, bounce marks).

Pause, assess and manage ‘red mist’

Rescues create urgency, noise, adrenaline and strong pressure to ‘get in and do something’. That is precisely when red mist

can creep in, with rescuers rushing into the danger areas, stacking people at the crest, or committing to a line directly beneath questionable rock.

Stop for a short, deliberate rockfall risk check before committing personnel into the Hot Zone, with experience a few minutes can be sufficient to spot the main risks and can prevent avoidable exposure. **‘No casualty benefit is worth an uncontrolled rockfall exposure.’**

That does not mean delaying care unnecessarily; it means controlling where and how you deliver care. 🗡️

SUMMARY: KEY POINTS TO EMBED IN TEAM PRACTICE

- 1

Treat blasted/quarry faces as a significantly higher risk.
- 2

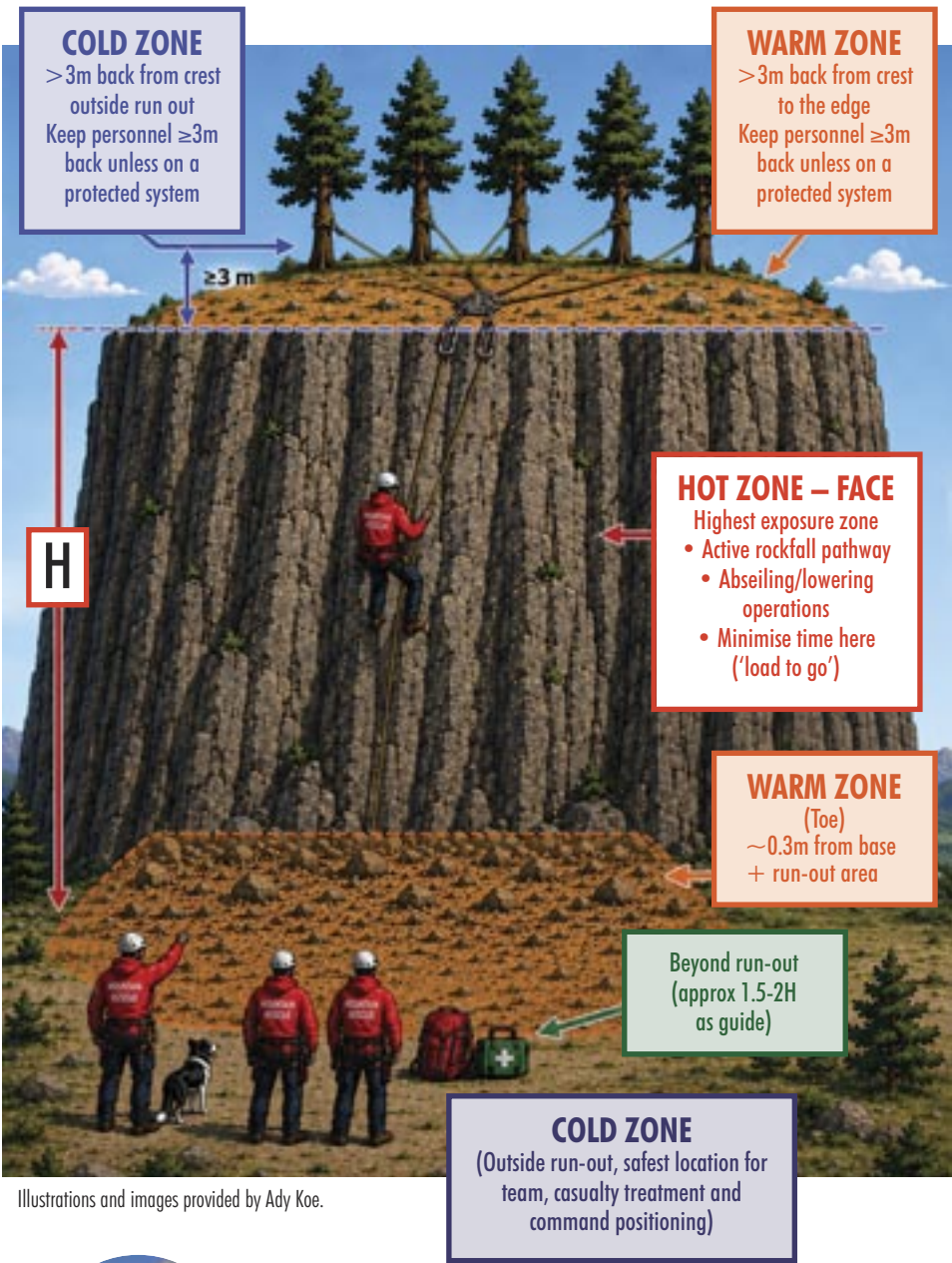
Beat ‘red mist’ with a deliberate pause.
A short risk check (loose rock above, pathway, run-out, stand-off, escape routes) to prevent avoidable exposure.
- 3

Know and anticipate triggers.
Rainfall, snow and ice (freeze/thaw) and root jacking in high winds all raise the likelihood of release.
- 4

Control the crest.
Choose anchors carefully, keep ropes and slings low, protect against sharp edges, limit personnel at the lip, and keep **at least three metres back** unless on a safe rope system.
- 5

On the face, minimise the risk to the rescuer and casualty.
Consider tensioned lines or an English reeve. If medical conditions permit, take a load and go approach, and continue treatment outside the area of rockfall.
- 6

Control the toe with scaled stand-off depending on face height.
Using shadow angle guidance (between 27–37°), a practical run-out exclusion for a vertical face is often around 1.5 to 2 times the height of the rock face, adjusted for terrain, snow and observed debris.



Illustrations and images provided by Ady Koe.

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RAPID ROCKFALL CHECKLIST

PAUSE > LOOK UP > THINK
PATHWAYS > CONTROL EXPOSURE

RAPID ROCKFALL CHECK (APPROX 30 SECONDS)

1. ABOVE
 - ☐ Can I see isolated or detached blocks?
 - ☐ Any fresh fractures, overhangs, debris trails or ice?
2. TRIGGERS (TODAY)
 - ☐ Recent rain/thaw/freeze-thaw?
 - ☐ Snow/ice present?
 - ☐ Strong winds affecting trees (root-jacking)?
3. PATHWAY
 - ☐ If it falls, where will it travel?
 - ☐ Are there ledges, ramps or gullies that could direct/bounce rock?
4. RUN OUT/STAND OFF
 - ☐ Where is the likely end point? (approx 1.5-2 × slope height as a guide)
 - ☐ Am I or the team inside that zone?
5. EXPOSURE
 - ☐ How many people are in the fall line?
 - ☐ Can I reduce numbers/shorten time?
6. CONTROL MEASURES
 - ☐ Helmets on?
 - ☐ Safe line/anchor available?
 - ☐ Can I reposition (offset line, tensioned system, move casualty)?
7. DECISION
 - ☐ Safe to proceed?
 - ☐ Adjust approach?
 - ☐ Withdraw and reassess?

Key principle:
Reduce time. Reduce numbers.
Reduce exposure in the fall line.

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incident figures summary



1 January to 16 June 2026

PAUL BRAIN MREW STATISTICS OFFICER

Lake District

Cockermouth	34
Coniston	32
Duddon & Furness	19
Kendal	26
Keswick	73
Kirkby Stephen	12
Langdale Ambleside	70
Patterdale	41
Penrith	23
Wasdale	67
	397

Drones

Lake District	9
	9

Mid Pennines

Bolton	19
Bowland Pennine	23
Calder Valley	3
Holme Valley	13
Rossendale & Pendle	20
	78

North East

Cleveland	25
North of Tyne	11
Northumberland	31
Swaledale	28
Teesdale & Weardale	15
	110

North Wales

Aberdyfi	24
Aberglaslyn	21
Llanberis	167
North East Wales	39
Ogwen Valley	91
South Snowdonia	20
	362

Peak District

Buxton	42
Derby	38
Eddale	64
Glossop	32
Kinder	32
Oldham	22
Woodhead	32
	294

Peninsula

Cornwall East	16
Cornwall West	14
Dartmoor Ashburton	10
Dartmoor Plymouth	7
Dartmoor Tavistock	10
Exmoor	11
North Dartmoor	15
	83

South Wales

Brecon	44
Central Beacons	47
Longtown	16
Western Beacons	6
	115

South West England

Avon & Somerset	15
SARA	16
	31

Yorkshire Dales

CRO	42
Scarborough & Ryedale	12
Upper Wharfedale	29
	83

Search Dogs

Lake District MRSD	6
MRSDE Mid Pennine	3
MRSDE North East	0
MRSDE Peak District	9
MRSDE Yorkshire Dales	1
SARDA South West	4
SARDA Wales	8
SARDA South Wales	3
	34

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

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Having chosen Openhouse for their experience in the industry and track record of producing robust, well-designed equipment, we as a team were hugely fortunate that they are only a stone's throw away from our operational area. Their reputation also solidified our decision to work with them, given their understanding of the wide range of organisations they have supported across the world, including NHS trusts, Air Ambulance charities, Ambulance Services, specialist teams and, importantly, other mountain rescue teams across the UK.

The team at Openhouse truly understood what we wanted from this project. Using our bespoke design, along with robust weatherproof materials and excellent build quality, the bags will most definitely endure the environments in which we operate. The distinct features, overall visibility and organised multi-coloured pouch layout are a significant step forward for our team, and we have already received many positive comments from our Remote Rescue Medical Technicians and Healthcare Professionals. Since their introduction, there has been a clear benefit to both team members and casualties, with improved recognition, ease of use and more prompt treatment due to the enhanced layout and design.

I can wholeheartedly recommend Openhouse. They made the entire process straightforward and seamless, clearly demonstrating that their experience in this sector is something you can truly put your trust in.

Declan Mayo Medical Officer, NEWSAR



When designing a new medical bag, we approached Openhouse for the pouches. Importantly, they provided a bespoke service, measuring the interior of the rucksack and the kit to fit in the pouches. This attention to detail ensured everything was compact and well fitting. The interior of the pouches was designed to carry a range of medical equipment. We were able to choose bright colours and add clear reflective writing so kit can easily be identified. The kit is cleaned with a wipe down.

Openhouse's considered approach has produced a medical bag which is well organised and easy to use.

Lucy Belson Medical Officer, Wasdale MRT



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Peer Review

TIM CAIN MREW PEER REVIEW LEAD

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Peer Review is alive and well in MREW. Since its inception in 2015, nineteen teams have taken the opportunity to run a review of themselves, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive — 'A fantastic opportunity to develop and improve as a team', 'Challenging, but really worth the effort', and 'Wish we'd done this years ago', just three positive comments.

The aim of Peer Review is to allow teams to gain greater self-awareness with the additional aim of advancing a world-class culture of success and wellbeing across MREW. It is a non-judgemental, peer-facilitated conversation within a team, that raises awareness of what's going on and what could be achieved in the future. Usually done over a three month period starting with the team's internal responses to the Peer Review Question Set, through which the team examines their operational goals.

These goals are as follows:

- The team communicates effective SOPs and processes
- The team's equipment is always maintained in a safe and serviceable state for call-out
- The team has effective processes for conducting call-outs, fostering teamwork and mitigating human factors
- The team has effective procedures in place for wellbeing and mental health protection
- The team has effective processes in place to conduct technical rescue
- The team has effective casualty care and medical processes in place and, where necessary, achieves Care Quality Commission (CQC) standards
- The team has effective processes in place for individual and collective training.

Following the operational goal analysis, the team invites a group of peers to visit and

'hold up the mirror'. Usually conducted over a weekend and informed by the team's responses to the question set, peers are invited in to ask second-order, thought-provoking questions that spark meaningful conversation within the home team. 'Why do we do it this way, and how might we be even better at what we do?' In busy teams, time for reflection is often limited, and familiarity can make new opportunities harder to see. Experienced peers, acting as 'critical friends', challenge assumptions, unlock fresh thinking, and help teams move from good practice to even better performance.

So, having talked about how Peer Review can generate even better performance for teams, how can we improve the Peer Review process itself?

Peer Review has stood the test of time. The intent is now to embed Peer Review as 'The way things are done around here'. Encouraging Peer Review not only in the format we have employed so far, but in various guises. Some teams are already bringing together peers to run events and share good ideas. Others have conducted 'mini reviews' examining one aspect of their team's operational goals rather than the whole question set. Options are limitless, it is about how we routinely bring peers together to share ideas and spread good practice.

The vision for Peer Review going forward focuses on three goals, the achievement of which requires your help.

1. The creation of Peer Review Regional Ambassadors:

We are asking for one volunteer from each of the MREW regions to act as the catalyst for developing Peer Review within and between regions. Could that be you?

The vision for Peer Review going forward focusses on three goals, the achievement of which requires your help

2. A pool of trained reviewers:

Do you have the skills to act as a critical friend? We are looking for people with coaching and mentoring skills, along with sufficient mountain rescue experience, to ask 'second-order' questions that spark reflection and meaningful discussion. The national lead for Peer Review will maintain the list of potential critical friends.

3. Database establishment:

The development of an online repository of 'good ideas' based on the Peer Review Questions. Are you someone with the skills necessary to create an accessible database on MREW's Moodle? Somewhere where examples of good practice identified during the Peer Review process can be accessed. This will include signposts to the teams who can share these ideas with us all. 📌

The aim of Peer Review is to allow teams to gain greater self-awareness, with the additional aim of advancing a world-class culture of success and wellbeing across MREW

If you are interested in a Peer Review Regional Ambassador role, becoming a Reviewer or helping to develop Peer Review, please contact Tim Cain at peer.review@mountain.rescue.org.uk



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**NOT SIGNED UP YET AND WANT TO KNOW MORE?
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New ordering system announced for SPS and mountain rescue



ALISTAIR MORRIS MREW MEDICAL DIRECTOR

We are pleased that SP Services has partnered with mountain rescue to deliver medical supplies. Working closely, we have developed a simplified and standardised pricing structure designed specifically to support our requirements nationwide.

This initiative gives teams consistent access to agreed preferential pricing, improved product availability and a more streamlined procurement process across essential medical and rescue equipment.

To support this roll-out, we have produced a dedicated mountain rescue order form (shared on 23 June via email to the team leaders address list), containing a carefully selected range of products based on historical purchasing trends and the operational needs of teams. The aim is to simplify ordering, reduce admin and ensure standardised pricing through a single approved supply route.

Should you require any assistance, product guidance, or wish to discuss your team's individual requirements, please email Joshua.holford@spservices.co.uk. Josh will be responsible for managing account set-up, pricing support and ongoing product enquiries.

If there are additional products your team would like to include within the agreed range, contact him to discuss. Following review, suitable products may be added to the standardised list where appropriate.

IMPORTANT: ACCOUNT SET-UP AND PRICING ELIGIBILITY

To ensure teams can access and retain the agreed pricing structure, all teams are required to complete the application form, to establish an SP Services account.

Preferential pricing, discount approvals and any future pricing support will only be available to teams operating through an approved account and directly through the mountain rescue supply process. For teams wishing to continue on a pro forma basis, please complete the same form and confirm this preference via email so the account can be configured accordingly.

SIMPLE ORDERING PROCESS

Ordering has been designed to be quick and straightforward. Simply review the product list and enter the quantities required for each item. If an item is not currently listed, teams can either add the product code directly from the SP Services website or contact Josh. Pricing is clearly displayed alongside each product, making it easy to calculate totals and attach purchase orders when submitting completed forms.

By consolidating procurement through the SP Services Mountain Rescue kit list, teams across the UK will benefit from improved pricing consistency, reduced equipment costs and enhanced interoperability between rescue services — helping support more effective cross-team working, wherever that might be. 🇬🇧

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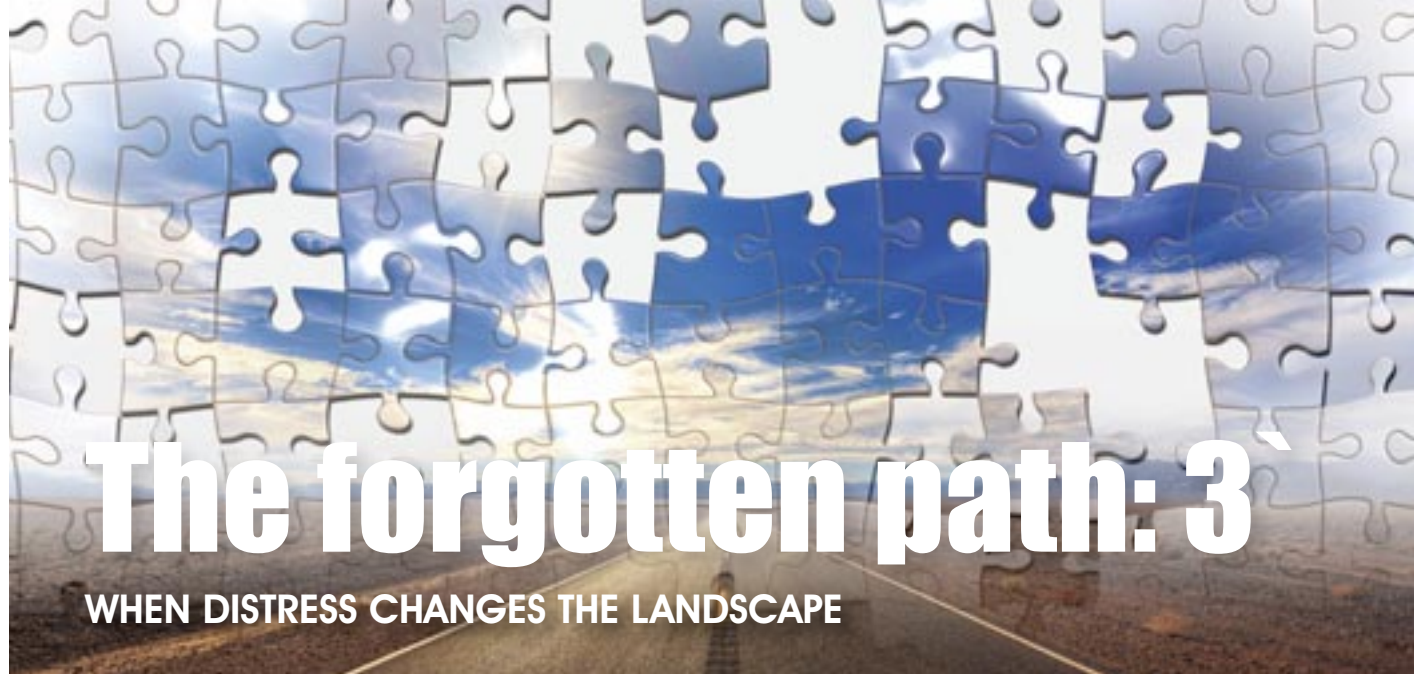
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The forgotten path: 3

WHEN DISTRESS CHANGES THE LANDSCAPE

FREYA BARNETT DEMENTIA UK

When mountain rescue teams encounter a person living with dementia, they may meet someone in a moment of overwhelming distress. What may appear as anger, aggression, stubbornness or confusion is usually the result of the person trying to make sense of a world that no longer feels safe or familiar.

For people living with dementia, distress can escalate quickly, particularly in unfamiliar, noisy or physically demanding situations. A search and rescue environment may involve flashing lights, radios, multiple voices, strangers approaching, exhaustion, cold temperatures and fear — all of which can intensify confusion and anxiety.

Understanding why a person may become distressed, how it might present and how to respond calmly can make a significant difference to the safety and wellbeing of everyone involved.

WHY PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA BECOME DISTRESSED

Dementia affects much more than memory. It changes how a person understands their surroundings, processes information and responds to the world around them. As the condition progresses,

environments that once felt comfortable or familiar can feel confusing, frightening or overwhelming.

Distress may be triggered when a person feels unsafe, rushed or overwhelmed, or is unable to communicate their needs. This may happen because they are disoriented or lost, cannot recognise the people around them, feel frightened or overstimulated, or are physically uncomfortable, cold, hungry or in pain.

A person with dementia might misinterpret sounds, movements or facial expressions. Some people may struggle to understand what is happening around them, including why people are approaching them. Others might believe they urgently need to get somewhere or feel they are being stopped or controlled.

Importantly, the person may not be able to explain what is wrong. Instead, their distress is expressed through behaviour.

SPOTTING THE WARNING SIGNS

There are often early signs that a person is becoming overwhelmed and distressed long before the situation escalates. These vary from person to person. Some people may become restless, pace, raise their voice or show visible frustration, while others become quieter or withdrawn, or repeatedly attempt to leave the area. Distress is not always shouting or aggression — for many people it can appear as silence, freezing, avoiding eye contact or struggling to concentrate.

Recognising these warning signs gives rescuers the opportunity to slow things down, reduce pressure and help the person feel safer.

WHEN DISTRESS ESCALATES

If a person's distress continues to build, they may enter a heightened state of fear or panic. At this stage, their ability to process information and respond logically becomes even more impaired.

A person experiencing escalating distress may attempt to walk away, hide or be otherwise unwilling to engage in the rescue attempt. Some people may lash out if they feel frightened or trapped, while others become increasingly confused, suspicious or unwilling to accept help, such as food, water or medical support.

These reactions are not deliberate. In many cases, the person believes they are protecting themselves or trying to regain control of a frightening situation.

For mountain rescue teams, this can be particularly challenging because the instinct in an emergency is often to act quickly, ask multiple questions or physically guide someone to safety. But when a person with dementia feels overwhelmed, too much information or too many people approaching at once can unintentionally increase distress.

DE-ESCALATING THE SITUATION

When supporting a person living with dementia, the goal is not simply to gain compliance — it is to help them feel safe enough to accept support.

Building trust and reducing fear must come before attempts to redirect or distract the person. If someone feels unsafe or overwhelmed, introducing a new task or trying to rush the process is unlikely to succeed.

The first and most important step is for rescuers themselves to remain calm. People living with dementia are often highly responsive to tone of voice, facial expression and body language. If the people around them appear rushed, anxious or confrontational, this can quickly increase their fear and distress.

Even if the rescuers' responses are positive, excited relief at finding the person can still be overwhelming to the someone who does not recognise that they were in danger in the first place. A calm tone, gentle gestures and steady reassurance can help create a sense of safety, even when the situation itself feels frightening.

Giving the person space is equally important. Approaching too quickly, surrounding someone or invading their personal space may make them feel threatened or trapped. Wherever possible, allocate one person to become the lead communicator, while others remain slightly back. This person takes responsibility for building trust, giving reassurance and explaining the processes happening around the person.

It is useful to have a reserve communicator on standby in case there is a breakdown in trust or the lead's attempts to engage with the person are not successful. It is important to note that any breakdown is not a failure on the part of the lead; they simply might not be the right fit for that person.

Staying alongside the person rather than directly in front of them can also feel less confrontational.

If the person is holding something that they perceive as protective, but could be used to caused harm — such as a hiking pole — attempting to remove it may escalate the situation further, so careful judgement and patience are essential. Once the person can trust the team around them, the object will no longer be a threat and it can remain with them.

Building rapport can significantly reduce tension. Taking time to listen, asking gentle questions and allowing the person enough time to respond can help them feel heard rather than controlled. What matters most is not correcting facts but acknowledging their emotions. Rather than saying, 'You are confused, your family is looking for you', it is better to say, 'You seem worried. We are here to help keep you safe'. Responding to the emotion behind the words rather than challenging the statements made can help build trust and reduce anxiety.



© Phil Hardman/DementiaUK.

Only once rapport and reassurance have been established is it usually helpful to introduce a new focus or source of comfort to interrupt escalating distress. This might involve gently changing the subject, offering food or a warm drink, talking about family members, or helping the person become more physically comfortable, for example by providing warm layers. For some people, simply walking alongside them while talking calmly can reduce anxiety far more effectively than repeatedly asking them to stop or change course.

UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOUR DIFFERENTLY

Perhaps one of the most important things for rescue teams to remember is that behaviour is communication. A person who is shouting may be frightened. A person refusing help may feel unsafe. Someone repeatedly trying to leave may believe they urgently need to protect themselves or get to an important place.

When behaviour is viewed through this lens, interactions often become less confrontational and more compassionate.

Mountain rescue teams regularly work in high-pressure, unpredictable situations requiring patience, adaptability and empathy. These same skills are invaluable when supporting a person living with dementia.

SUPPORT FROM DEMENTIA UK

At Dementia UK, we want every mountain rescue team to feel confident and equipped when responding to incidents involving people with dementia. Our specialist Admiral Nurses provide free knowledge sessions designed specifically to help teams understand dementia, communication and distress in real-world rescue situations. To book a free session for your team, contact us at Dementia.Work@dementiauk.org.



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

THE HERBERT PROTOCOL A VITAL TOOL WHEN SOMEONE GOES MISSING

When a person living with dementia is distressed, unfamiliar responders can feel frightening or overwhelming. In these situations, understanding who the person is beyond their name and diagnosis can make a significant difference to the interaction. Knowing details about their communication style, important relationships or things that may comfort and reassure them can help rescuers build trust and reduce distress in what may be an intensely frightening situation.

The Herbert Protocol is a simple but extremely important form designed to provide this information quickly when someone goes missing. It is completed by a family carer or someone else who knows the person well, and contains details such as recent photographs, favourite places or familiar routes, previous addresses, daily routines, medical information, and places the person may try to go.

Having this information prepared in advance can make a critical difference when every minute matters. It can aid the search itself and help locate the person faster, as well as helping the rescuers manage any medical issues more promptly when they are found.

Mountain rescue teams can ask the police search coordinator whether a Herbert Protocol form is available during an incident. If the form has not been completed, it is helpful to discuss it with the person's family after the search as they may not be aware that it exists. Forms can be completed online through [MedicAlert](https://www.medic-alert.co.uk/herbert-protocol/index.html) and Safe and Found Online.

Herbert Protocol: Provided by MedicAlert for Dementia UK: [herbertprotocol.com](https://www.herbertprotocol.com)
Herbert Protocol: Safe and Found Online: [safeandfoundonline.co.uk/herbert-protocol/index.html](https://www.safeandfoundonline.co.uk/herbert-protocol/index.html)

FREYA BARNETT
IS A DEMENTIA
SPECIALIST ADMIRAL
NURSE AT DEMENTIA UK





Staying safe on social media

JACQUI HANSON NORTH WALES MRA

Social media is key to mountain rescue for a number of reasons. It makes our work and the demand upon us visible to communities. It enables us to provide safety advice to help inform decision making, keeping people safer and reducing demand on teams. It raises our profiles as volunteers and supports our fundraising. And it shares our successes and our challenges with the communities who support us and share our passion for the great outdoors.

It's also very public — and once a post is out there, there's no opportunity to turn back. Our integrity, our reputation, the confidence and trust of the communities and partners we engage with — all of these may be negatively impacted by the wrong social media post. And in addition to this, if we get it wrong, we may break the law and be liable criminally or via other litigation. So, how can we ensure we stay on the right side of the law when posting on social media?



TRAINING IS KEY

Training is core to mountain rescue — and as volunteers we devote hours every month to developing, maintaining and enhancing the skills and expertise essential for the operational role.

However, many of the essential support functions that need to happen to make our work as responders possible, are frequently picked up as another hat to wear by team members, and often little or no formal training is available. People tend to bring in expertise from elsewhere, such as the day job, or learn as they go. This is not a criticism — it is right and proper that our stretched training budgets are first and foremost focused on the practical skills that save lives.

So, the question we asked ourselves recently in North Wales was — how can we enhance and develop the skills of the social media officers across our nine busy teams on a budget? The answer was collaboration.

COLLABORATIVE WORKING

We work closely with our local police force on call-outs as most teams do, and the chief constable of North Wales Police is president of North Wales Mountain Rescue Association (NWMRA). We approached our policing colleagues and asked if they could support us in providing our teams with a social media training day and they did — providing a venue in their Divisional HQ room free of charge, and throwing in a tour of the

control room so delegates could see how the calls which prompted mountain rescue team deployments came in, were triaged, managed and resolved.

The timetable for the day saw an input from the North Wales Police Social Media Manager who talked through how to post to better gain visibility on those all important search engines and stay abreast of the algorithms. After all, what good is your social media post if no one encounters it? Insight was also provided into which audiences were on which channels, and how they like to receive content — helping us better understand how to target specific demographics.

THE RIGHT CONTENT

It's not just about creating the content that's visible — it also needs to be the right content for the right audiences. So professional content creator Jack Roscoe, @NorthernIntrovert, provided us with a video lesson on his top tips on how to create engaging and effective content. We had previously worked with Jack on some content around safety messaging, and he was more than happy to return the favour and provide us with content for the course on how to make good content!

The timetable for the day also scheduled an input from the MREW communications team on where the local/regional/and national interface, and how we can support each other.

The timetabled sessions were incredibly useful, and the feedback from delegates on the value of the day's learning was highly positive. However, the opportunity to have discussions about shared issues and how to manage or mitigate them, was equally as

valuable and productive, and has resulted in a number of positive and practical outcomes for the region.

MEDIA LAW

One of the big challenges emerging from these discussions was the realisation that most people acting as team social media officers attending the workshop had never, or at least not recently, had any training in the law as it relates to social media. This was seen as a risk to both the individual, the team and mountain rescue, so a key outcome of the training day was to address and remove that risk by developing a briefing sheet which details the legislation which can inadvertently be breached when posting on social media, and how to avoid doing that.

The briefing sheet, entitled 'The Law and posting on social media', was supported by a subject matter expert, Amanda Ball, principal lecturer in media law, who checked and verified its accuracy. It explains the legislation and how to navigate it in simple colloquial terms. This training aid has now gone out to all nine teams in the North Wales region as a resource to draw upon, and we are happy to share it with other regions if it will benefit your teams. The MREW communications team is also exploring developing the briefing sheet as a national resource and building in routine media law training to social media officers.

VULNERABLE PEOPLE

Finding the right language to respond to media enquiries or post on our social media platforms about deployment to an incident in which someone has taken, or attempted

to take, their own life can be very difficult, and how to navigate the sensitivities around this was another big topic of discussion at the training day

You may have heard of the Werther Effect, whereby a depicted suicide can serve as a model for imitative behaviour by others? Conversely, sensitive storytelling in the right way has been proven to help prevent suicides and can be a useful tool in communications around missing vulnerable people. This makes it really important to understand the impact that the language we use in our communications can have, and how to minimise risk and optimise prevention.

The Samaritans have undertaken significant research over many years into this and produced guidance which has been embraced and adopted by many organisations, including the police and the news media, and which is referenced in the cross-Government suicide prevention strategy.

As a result of the discussions at the social media training event, we have invited The Samaritans to provide a training session to our region on the use of language around these incidents and share their insight. This will be hosted online, is free of charge, and will take place in July.

EVERY LITTLE HELPS

Finding time and money for training in the support functions which assist the operational response can be problematical, but we hope our journey in developing and enhancing our social media function provides some insight into how collaborating with others, who share an interest in our work, can yield some excellent outcomes.

Our thanks must go to Sue Appleton, head of communications at North Wales police, and Andy Knowles, social media manager for their hospitality in providing a venue, and their support in delivering the learning on the course. Credit also to Amanda Ball in sharing her expertise in developing the briefing sheet on the law and posting on social media, and to The Samaritans for our much-anticipated training session in July.

The generosity and support of all these people and organisations has helped us to be better equipped and informed to navigate a complex social media landscape, and has cost us nothing but our time and a few biscuits to go with the brews!

If any teams feel they will benefit from any of the products of this training — the lesson plan for the social media training, the briefing sheet on posting on social media and the law, or a contact for The Samaritans training, then please do get in touch via jacqui.hanson@nwmra.org. As they helped us, we are more than happy to help mountain rescue colleagues across the country. We all share the same goals and purpose — lets collaborate on anything which can avoid duplication, save time and better help achieve those objectives. ☺



MAY: DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARDS IN RECOGNITION OF SERVICE TO MOUNTAIN RESCUE



At the AGM in May, three individuals who have collectively contributed well over a hundred years of service to mountain rescue, were presented with Distinguished Service Awards by Ray Griffiths, MREW President.

Peter Hyde received the award for his 60 years of 'outstanding commitment to Oldham Mountain Rescue Team'. Since joining the team in 1965, shortly after their formation, he has been an active and enthusiastic member who soon became team leader. Following an injury, he stepped back from leadership to take on the roles of secretary and treasurer for over thirty years, taking a key role in radio communications, by lobbying nationally for us to acquire a license and a dedicated frequency. Peter also helped to create multi agency planning across Greater Manchester and the Peak District. 'He continues today to be a great asset to his team with his experience and expertise'.

Sally Seed is unique in deserving this accolade, having never been an operational team member. Nevertheless, she has a real understanding of mountain rescue from an inside view and has made a massive contribution to the way mountain rescue is recognised far beyond our organisation through her professional input to both internal and external PR and the development of media training. She is highly respected for advising and coaching a large number of team leaders and others, delivering powerful training to enable them to interact with the media in a professional manner and has crafted many careful and very well chosen words — often in very difficult situations — on our behalf for all our benefit and to our credit.

Andy Simpson received his award in recognition of the significant contribution to, and astute guidance of, his own team and his service to the wider mountain rescue organisation. Since joining Rossendale and Pendle team in 1993, he has served as team leader and chairman, taking on the role of national press officer in 2004 and overseeing the media and communications nationally until this year. Over thirty years, he has also played a key role in the delivery of national mountain rescue conferences.

JUNE: LONG-SERVING MOUNTAIN RESCUERS AWARDED THE MBE IN KING'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS



John Mottram joined Kinder MRT in 1971 and remains an active and valued team member. Over the years, he has attended countless call-outs, helped develop rescue communications, supported Derbyshire Cave Rescue and raised thousands through collection boxes and talks. Among the situations he has been called to were the response to the potential collapse of the dam wall at Whaley Bridge in 2019. He was also amongst those drafted to help sweep the countryside for debris in the wake of the Lockerbie air disaster in 1988.

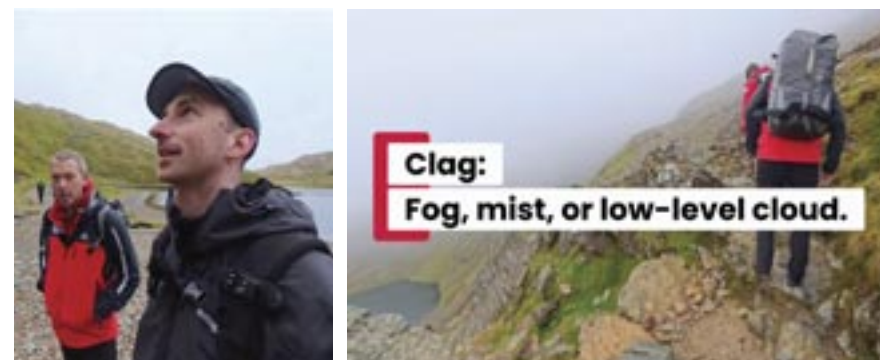


Karl Lester joined Ogwen Valley MRO in 2008 when he moved to North Wales, and has since been involved in over 555 rescue operations. He also picked up responsibility for Ogwen's social media in 2013. Described as 'a highly dedicated individual' Karl's military career included tours in Northern Ireland, Cyprus, the Gulf War and Iraq earning him honours such as the General Service Medal and the United Nations Medal.



In Scotland, **James Coles** has served as leader of Moffat MRT for the last five years but his service to Scottish Mountain Rescue spans decades, from his early years as a search and rescue dog handler, supporting some of the most demanding search operations in the country. He has played a pivotal national role in helping SMR develop modern, resilient radio communications infrastructure for teams across Scotland.

Top: Peter Hyde, Andy Simpson and Sally Seed with their DSAs © Judy Whiteside. **Above:** John Mottram © Kinder MRT; Karl Lester © OVMRO; James Coles © Moffat MRT.



Above left: Training at North Wales Police Divisional HQ. Image supplied. **Above:** Screenshots of Jack Roscoe's YouTube film, with Jurgen Dissmann (Llanberis MRT), as featured in Mountain Rescue magazine January 2026 © Northern Introvert.



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Hinkes
thinks

Food glorious food

People often ask me what I ate on a Himalayan expedition, as if I need special food or some sort of magic high-altitude diet. The reality is much simpler. The main requirement is calories. Although one of my favourites in base camp is chips, which are calories and pleasure.

The human body needs a massive amount of fuel to perform efficiently at altitude, probably between 4,000 and 5,000 calories a day. Similarly, on a long day in the hills or during a demanding mountain rescue call-out, a significant amount of energy is needed to keep your body functioning well and your mind alert. The key is not to wait until you are exhausted before eating. Regularly topping up your energy reserves with food and drink is far better than waiting till you start flagging.

At extreme altitude eating isn't always straightforward. Large quantities of food are heavy to carry and difficult to eat and digest. As you climb higher, appetite can disappear. Food can become unappetising at 7,000 metres, but your body still needs the energy, so you have to force yourself eat and drink.

Hydration is very important. Breathing hard in the cold, dry high altitude mountain air causes you to lose moisture with every breath; dehydration is a serious problem. As the body loses water, the blood becomes more viscous, increasing the risk of blood clots and other complications.

Water is heavy to carry and there is no liquid water. You have to melt snow and ice, a slow, fuel-intensive process. A bottle of water represents a considerable amount of arduous work.

Many people assume that high-altitude climbers rely entirely on dehydrated meals. These certainly have advantages — lightweight, compact and easy to transport — but years ago, dehydrated meals were often unpleasant and could lead to stomach and bowel problems. Modern dried meals

are much improved, and I happily use them when camping in the UK or at lower altitudes.

At high altitude, water boils at a lower temperature (below 100°C). As atmospheric pressure drops, boiling point lowers, the water bubbles and boils, but it's only warm, so dried food doesn't reconstitute properly.

With a lower appetite, the best food is essentially whatever you fancy — the same principle on a long mountain rescue incident or multi-day walk in the British hills. Personally, I try to eat natural, minimally processed food wherever possible. I am not a great fan of confectionery or energy drinks. I do enjoy chocolate, particularly good milk chocolate. It's one of the great mountain foods: calorie-dense, easy to carry and enjoyable.

At base camp, typically around 5,000 metres, my appetite is usually quite good. I have always tried to source as much food as possible locally in Kathmandu and in the villages along the trekking route not least because it supports local communities. I'd supplement local produce with tinned fish or meat, cheese, biscuits, chocolate and sweets. Variety is important.

Most of my expedition diet would be vegetarian, partly because of local customs and food availability. There is no beef in Hindu regions and no pork in Muslim areas. Goat, sheep and chicken are generally available, and I do enjoy the occasional chicken meal in base camp.

One staple I always take is eggs — nature's pre-packed food, albeit fragile packaging. Dozens of eggs would be

carefully packed in straw and carried to base camp. I'd take hard-boiled eggs on the mountain along with chapattis, samosas, bhajis, cheese and cold boiled potatoes, together with the energy bars and chocolate. Military 24-hour ration packs are also useful.

My base camp meals relied heavily on fresh local ingredients. Dhal bhat, the Nepali staple of lentil curry, rice, and vegetables. It is nutritious and filling.

In base camp I have chips every day. They are an excellent source of calories and vitamin C and a plate of hot chips are a great morale boost, comfort food. I often have fried eggs or omelettes with chips and warm chapattis spread with Australian or Indian tinned butter to make a Himalayan chip butty.

Food has always been about more than nutrition. It's about comfort, morale and maintaining a sense of normality in difficult environments. A favourite snack, a hot drink or a familiar meal is a powerful psychological boost when conditions are tough.

The same applies on a mountain rescue call-out or spending a long day in the hills, make sure you eat and drink regularly. Take food you enjoy eating and that works for you. Good nutrition and hydration are simple things, but they can make a remarkable difference to your performance, decision-making and enjoyment of the day.

After all, whether you're in the Himalaya, or on an MR shout on a wet hillside in Britain at two o'clock in the morning, the body still runs on the same thing: food and water. ☺



Images © Alan Hinkes



GP and ultra-runner with diabetes hopes his achievements will inspire other diabetics

Ultra runner, Nottingham GP and father of two running-obsessed teenagers, **Chris Cope** has enjoyed an active life since schooldays, including athletics, cross country running, Scouts and a DoE Gold award completed in Snowdonia. But, aged 36, he decided to up the ante, setting himself the challenge of completing an Ironman triathlon. Since then he's competed in and won successive challenges, all whilst managing his Type 1 Diabetes. He talks us through how he manages the risks and challenges involved.

I trained obsessively for seven months to complete that Ironman, qualifying for the World Championships in Hawaii the following year. But my eyes were really opened when I won the Brutal Double Ironman in Snowdonia — a 4.8 mile swim in Llyn Padarn, a 231.9 miles cycle, followed by a 51.1-mile run (including an ascent of Snowdon). The memory of climbing Eyri in the dark and early dawn still gives me goosebumps. I quickly gave up triathlon and focused on ultra running!

I completed the Dragon's Back Race in 2022, winning the first three stages before coming sixth overall due to an injury.

Next up was the 268-mile Summer Spine in 2024, which I led from Edale to Kirk Yetholm, along the Pennine Way, winning in 79 hours — nineteen hours ahead of second place. I went back in 2025 for the shorter Summer Spine Sprint from Edale to Hebden Bridge and won again, beating the course record. This summer I chose the Spine Challenger South from Edale to Hardraw over 108 miles of the Pennine Way. There were four seasons of weather within the 21

hours I took to complete it, again beating the course record by over an hour.

The Montane Spine races are special, crossing some of the most beautiful parts of England — from the limestone pavement of Malham Cove to the 20,000-year-old High Cup Nick, carved out by glaciers. The race is raw; a largely self-sufficient adventure. The winter and summer versions each have their challenges: bogs, heat and dehydration risks in summer, lack of daylight, freezing conditions and deep snow in winter.

I had wanted to do the full Winter Spine so entered the January 2026 event. My training was the best I've had, running the whole route over a period of two months. My kit was perfected: light, comfortable and effective. I lined up on the start line in my best shape. The weather was terrible. Strong winds over Kinder Scout and Downfall. By the time I got to Doctor's Gate I was in the lead and trying to find the path through six-foot snowdrifts. Everything flowed smoothly, despite the icy conditions, until Stoodley Pike when I fell heavily on my knee. It started to swell and, over the next

40km, it got slowly worse. Knowing when to push on and knowing when to stop is one of the most important outdoor skills you can have. I could have pushed on, but would probably have been crawling within ten miles. That would have meant hypothermia and needing the rescue team. I didn't want to risk mine or others' safety so deciding to pull out at a road crossing was an easier decision than I expected (the frustration and disappointment came later!)

If these races were easy and we finished all of them, there'd be far less satisfaction in the successes. I will be back on the start line of the Full Winter Spine Race in January 2027. Once again, I will prepare well, try to make good decisions whilst racing and manage the risks.

Those risks are jointly managed by the racers and organisers. You have to carry an extensive list of kit to cover most eventualities — essentials and specifics such as a sleeping bag to 0°C, bivvy bag, fleece jacket, GPS device with maps and a battery charger, full waterproofs and insulated layers — finding a balance between lightness of

weight and possible risk to safety on the mountain. We each have a 2G GPS tracker attached to our packs, monitored 24/7 at race HQ, with the Spine safety team dispatched if needed. The support of the local mountain rescue teams is vital to this and hugely appreciated. Without their specific knowledge of the local environment, in all weathers, and their first aid capability, the event would be too risky. So THANK YOU.

MANAGING THE DIABETES

As a Type1 Diabetic I have another layer of complexity to manage. I was diagnosed thirty years ago, aged thirteen, with the classic symptoms of weight loss, thirst and spending a penny every five minutes. I also saw my running times getting slower and slower. My body was destroying the 'islet cells' in my pancreas which produce insulin, causing my blood sugar levels to rise dangerously high. I saw my GP and was admitted to hospital. My GP was so brilliant, I decided there and then that was what I wanted to do in life! In hospital, I was given insulin and my teenage self saw this as a real positive. Weeks later, I was stronger and running well again. It's easy to rebel against such a frustrating condition, but thankfully my younger self was really pragmatic and determined to not let it stop me.

A lot has changed in the management of Type 1 diabetes since then. I still need insulin to allow me to use carbohydrates for energy in my body, but rather than injecting twice a day, I have an insulin pump on my arm to steadily inject insulin

the heart, brain, eyes, kidneys and limbs. The importance of good control cannot be underestimated at any age. Compared to the old blood and urine sugar tests and the twice-daily insulin injections, our ability to control Type 1 is so much better now. And, on the horizon, we may finally have a cure. The Vertex trial is using specially adapted islet cells injected into the liver — they sense the blood sugar and release insulin as needed. Previously this would require immunosuppression (fairly toxic medicines), but the new trial has given these cells a coating to protect them without the need for this.

KEEPING THE BALANCE

Type 1 forces me to be organised and regimented, which translates well to ultra running. I eat 90-120 grams of carbohydrate an hour as a mix of normal food and Voom bars which contain so much sugar and are easier to manage than sticky gels. I have to stay on top of hydration, drinking a minimum 500mL of fluids and hour, but up to two litres in very hot races. Being aware of how your body is feeling is essential, so you can address problems quickly. Also (just like Type 1), there will be some dark times and keeping positive is essential! All useful skills I have been building since thirteen.

Investing 15-20 hours a week in training whilst working as a GP and being a husband and father is a tricky balance. I hugely appreciate the support I get from friends and family! Putting that amount of time into training means I want to optimise every aspect of my life to let me

After races, I get messages from Type 1s and parents of Type 1s around the world thanking me for giving them hope. Control the Type 1, don't let Type 1 control you.

and this is replaced every three days. I used to have to prick my finger or wee on a test strip to see what my sugar was doing, but now a small sensor in my arm measures my glucose levels every five minutes. The pump and sensor are connected to my phone by Bluetooth. The real magic happens on my phone with the AndroidAPS app (this software is called a loop and several are available).

It's transformed my life. If my glucose rises, the app makes my pump inject more insulin. If it falls, it stops injecting. I can tell the app that I am going to exercise so it will inject less insulin; keeping me safer whilst running. I can tell it what I am about to eat, so it will inject an amount of insulin appropriate for the grams of carbohydrate. One of my biggest challenges used to be overnight when I can't check my blood glucose because I am asleep. Now, the loop checks my sugar every five minutes and balances my insulin to keep the blood glucose in the perfect range.

Good control of Type 1 Diabetes is essential. In the short term, high blood sugar make me feel sick, dizzy and angry whilst low blood sugar make me confused, shaky and sweaty. In the long term, if my blood sugars are poorly controlled, I'm at higher risk of damage to

reap the gains of that training and the recovery. I drink less alcohol, I optimise my sleep hygiene and, most importantly, eat a really healthy diet. This is great for the control of my Type 1 although, in contrast, after races I am lot less dedicated to avoiding beers and processed foods!

As a GP I believe everyone should exercise regularly, but it has to be something you enjoy. Completing these events is my type of fun. I fit training sessions into my daily life, running to and from work, head out while the kids attend piano lessons, or grab an hour at lunchtime. Sometimes, I run through the night — great for training navigation in the dark, finding new routes and understanding the effects of sleep deprivation. That journey to the start line is a rewarding challenge, the camaraderie of the race is wonderful, and the exposure to real world adventures and problem solving out in the wilderness gives us skills for life back home. I love it.

But one of my biggest driving factors is showing how Type 1 diabetes should have no limits. After races I get messages from Type 1s and parents of Type 1s around the world thanking me for giving them hope. Control the Type 1, don't let Type 1 control you. 🌟



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

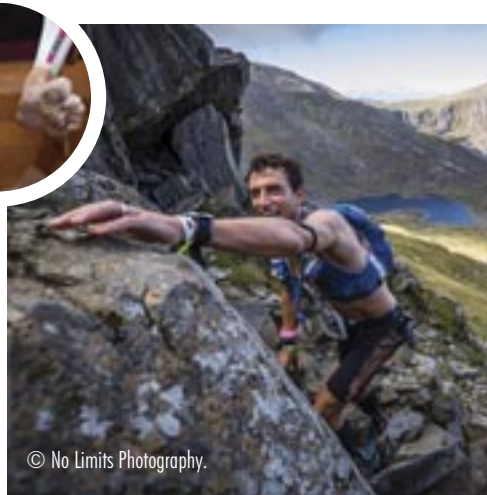


We can all need help sometimes. Don't be embarrassed to ask for it.

wellbeing



Images © @willbaldlygo.



© No Limits Photography.



JON WHITE MREW WELLBEING OFFICER

From awareness to empowerment: Developing psychological stress support for emergency responders

Emergency responders are trained to run towards danger, uncertainty and distress. Whether in the police, ambulance, fire and rescue, prison service, mountain rescue or voluntary response roles, their work places them in repeated contact with trauma, pressure and human suffering. The message from the Symposium was clear: Psychological stress injury should not be seen as weakness, but as an occupational risk that can be recognised, reduced and treated.

Gill Moreton (Rivers Centre for Traumatic Stress, NHS Lothian and Lifelines Scotland), and Laura McGladrey (University of Colorado and Responder Alliance), focused on moving organisations beyond awareness to genuine empowerment. The aim is to build systems, language and leadership practices to prevent harm before it becomes a crisis.

A central idea is the use of shared language. The term 'psychological stress injury' helps describe the impact of repeated exposure to trauma and stress in a way that is practical and non-stigmatising. Like a physical injury, psychological injury can develop over time, show warning signs, and improve with the right support. This language gives responders, colleagues and leaders a way to talk about stress earlier, more clearly and without shame.

The session highlighted the need for a prevention-focused approach, using the public health metaphor of a river. Rather than waiting until people are at the bottom of the waterfall, organisations should invest upstream — in education, check-ins, peer support, reflective practice and clear pathways to help. Gill spoke about the Lifelines model of embedding training in self-care, peer and post trauma support into organisations' core curricula so that all responders have an understanding of what will threaten and protect their wellbeing as they perform their roles.

Laura shared the stress continuum model

developed by Responder Alliance, which uses colour-coded stages: green for ready, yellow for reacting, orange for injured and red for critical. This simple framework helps people recognise changes in sleep, mood, relationships, motivation, performance and emotional availability. It also makes stress visible as something that moves along a continuum rather than appearing suddenly as a diagnosis. Used well, it encourages earlier conversations and earlier support.

A key message was that stress injury is not just an individual issue. Responders operate within wider systems made up of teams, managers, organisational cultures, families and communities. Therefore, responsibility for psychological health cannot sit solely with the individual. Agencies need to build psychological preparedness into normal procedures from recruitment through to retirement. Supportive colleagues, trained leaders and family awareness all play a part.

Leadership was presented as essential. Visible, consistent and authentic commitment from senior leaders can shape whether wellbeing initiatives succeed or become token gestures. Poor organisational culture and working practices can be as harmful to responder mental health as traumatic exposure itself. Leaders must therefore model healthy behaviours, encourage openness, reduce stigma and be accountable for putting support systems into practice.

The symposium also called for structured psychological stress mitigation plans. These should define roles and responsibilities, integrate peer support, provide access to culturally competent clinical resources and include regular evaluation. A plan should not sit in a policy folder but be operational, understood and embedded in everyday practice.

Finally, the session emphasised a continuum of care. Support should be available at every point: prevention, early identification, active intervention, recovery and long-term restoration. This includes addressing self-stigma and common fears, such as being removed from operational duties, damaging a career or being seen as weak. Multiple routes to support, both inside and outside the organisation, increase the chance that people receive the right help at the right time.

The overall message is hopeful. Psychological stress injuries are common, predictable and manageable when recognised early. By using shared language, taking a systemic approach, engaging leaders, planning properly, sharing best practice and providing care across the whole recovery journey, responder organisations can move from awareness to empowerment. In doing so, they protect not only the people who serve, but also the communities that rely on them. ☺

Why a simple blood test could save your life



PAUL SMITH MREW EQUIPMENT OFFICER

Earlier this year, at the age of 55, whilst attending a routine health check at my doctors, I asked for a PSA (Prostate Specific Antigen) blood test. I had no symptoms. I didn't feel unwell, had no urinary problems, and there was nothing to suggest that there could be any issues.

The reason I asked for the test was after seeing Sir Chris Hoy talking about his own prostate cancer diagnosis on Breakfast TV and encouraging men to get checked. I knew what prostate cancer was, but it wasn't something I had really thought much about. Hearing Sir Chris talk about it made me think that at my age it was probably worth getting tested, even though I felt completely fine.

Initially, I had to insist on having the test because I wasn't displaying any symptoms. Thankfully, the Practice Nurse agreed.

The results showed that my PSA level was above the normal range. I was put on a two-week cancer pathway and, almost immediately, further investigations were started. These included an MRI, CT and bone scans and a biopsy. Following these, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. While mine is considered quite aggressive, we have caught it early enough for treatment to start quickly and I have been told that it is treatable, with every expectation of making a full recovery.

Up until seeing Sir Chris, I always thought that the only initial prostate check was a rectal examination, so I need to make it clear that at no point did I have a rectal examination and if, like me, I can imagine that this is the reason that puts many men off being tested. The PSA test is a simple blood test. I wanted to write this because I like to think that all of us in mountain rescue spend our time looking after other people, but sometimes we are not as good at looking after ourselves. Looking around the room at the last general meeting I noticed that there are quite a few of us who are either approaching the age of 50 or already over it, and 50 is the age when the risk of prostate cancer starts to increase. As mountain rescue volunteers, we do try to remain fit, active and healthy, which can make it easy for us to think that serious health issues happen to other people — but my experience has shown that it isn't always the case.

If you're over 50, ask for a PSA test. Don't

wait for symptoms because, if you're like me, there may not be any. Prostate cancer can develop over many years without any obvious signs. Getting tested and catching it early can make a huge difference to the treatment options available and the outcome.

I had no symptoms and felt fine. If I hadn't seen Sir Chris Hoy talking about his own prostate cancer diagnosis — and for once listened to advice — my cancer might not have been found until much later.

I have now started treatment. It's still early days, but the outlook is positive, and I am expected to make a full recovery. Which is only possible because the cancer was found when it was.

If you're a man over 50, don't put it off! Make an appointment, ask for a PSA test and get checked. It could make all the difference. ☺

Image: PSA test via iStock © Kitsawet Saethao.

men's health



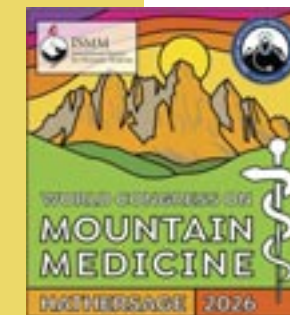
MAY: EDALE MRT SUPPORT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN RESCUE CONFERENCES.

Hathersage and the Hope Valley in the Peak District played host to a series of national and international alpine and mountain medicine events in May, with Edale MRT involved in all of them.

On the Sunday, team members provided medics, equipment and training scenarios for the BMC Mountain Medicine Weekend. Monday to Wednesday of that week saw the British Mountain Medicine Society host the International Mountain Medicine Congress. Attendees arrived from all over the world, with a phenomenal amount of global medicine and rescue experience in the valley. Edale MRT provided some lecturers and also ran several training scenarios out on the crags and moors. On the Thursday, the team were proud to host the International Commission for Alpine Rescue Medical Commission (ICAR) meeting, welcoming mountain medicine experts from around the world. Edale members helped host delegates, before joining them the following day for local walks and climbing — sharing a little of what makes the Peak District special.

'It was a privilege for Edale MRT to be intimately involved with the whole week — a huge thank you to everyone involved. Weeks like this remind us that mountain rescue is about much more than responding to incidents — it's about learning, teaching and collaboration — and building friendships across the global rescue community.'

Photos supplied by Al Morris & Thomo Thompson.





Every day's a school day

WILL CLOSE-ASH
NORTHUMBERLAND NATIONAL PARK MRT

You never think it could happen to you until it does! Having spent thirty years in the mountains and never getting so much as a scratch, the idea that I could injure myself whilst out training with the team never crossed my mind...

I'd had two excellent days in the Cairngorms with the team, putting our new trainees through their paces and we were heading off the hill for a final debrief and some tea and cake. As a winter mountain leader, it had been my job to go through the basic skills needed to operate in winter conditions and to ensure they had a safe and enjoyable weekend. So far so good!

I still, to this day, don't know how I managed to slip. We were a few kilometres away from the cars (I could see the car park), walking on a gentle slope downhill. The ground was wet and typically Scottish with lots of heather. I planted my left foot down and then my right — except that foot didn't stay where it was supposed to! My right foot slid forwards so I tried to lift my left to catch up — except it didn't move. I did a kind of 'box split' and heard a 'snap'. 'Shit' was the first thing to come to my mind. 'I've broken my leg and I'm supposed to be going skiing in three weeks'.

I fell over with my left leg doubled under me and landed in the mud. Everyone else assumed I was acting or that I had 'created' a scenario for the trainees: one last test. Nothing could be further from the truth! Another team member came up to me, knelt down and whispered in my ear 'Are you putting this on Will?' I explained with some expletives that I wasn't, I really wasn't!

Other team members caught up. I explained what had happened and that I was worried I'd broken something. We had a few RRMTs with us (I am one too), and they checked me over; my ankle was swelling, but didn't seem to be broken,

nor was my leg. I decided that if I put my boot back on and I could weight-bear, I'd probably be able to walk back to the car. This seemed infinitely preferable than being rescued by my own team!

Sure enough, with some effort I was able to limp back down, get my boots off and drive back to the accommodation. Although my ankle was painful, I assumed I'd torn ligaments and I'd be ok.

When I finally got back home after a long drive, I hobbled along to my local walk-in centre (no pun intended), and sorted out an X-ray. As suspected, I had indeed torn the ligaments in my ankle but I'd also fractured my upper fibula — a spiral fracture to be precise.

Sadly, the only advice I was offered by the NHS was to rest and accept that I'd be off work for 6-8 weeks. Not knowing what I could or couldn't do, or how I could help myself get better, was really frustrating.

My teammates were fantastic. With a wealth of medical and physio experience, I was able to get advice and guidance straight away and this helped allay my worries and concerns. My initial conversations with our team welfare officer and team doctor really helped put things into perspective and they answered a lot of my worries. However, my skiing holiday with my family in three weeks was clearly off the cards!

It was clear I needed to get some physio to support and help my ankle, but I wasn't going to be able to get this from the NHS.

Luckily, I remembered a teammate had raised funds for the Rescue Benevolent Fund and I'd read about them in 'Mountain Rescue' magazine. I wasn't

sure how or if they could help, but I emailed the secretary (Judy) anyway.

I received an email back within an hour and by the following afternoon, she'd liaised with the trustees who'd agreed to support me by paying for my physiotherapy sessions! I had my initial screening with a physio five days after the accident and started bi-weekly sessions the following week.

I had two weeks of physio before we were due to fly on holiday and, thankfully, I was able to go (although I couldn't ski). Without these sessions, I don't know what I'd have done — they enabled me to get back up and running (literally) within seven weeks of the accident.

The benevolent fund has been amazing. They've handled all the costs (including paying for a strange rubber band that I wear when pottering around the kitchen) and the speed at which they acted was fantastic. I'm back on the call-out list now — these sessions gave me the confidence to get back on there to support my team. They also enabled me to take part in my family holiday and to get back into work. All thanks to support I received from benevolent fund.

I would encourage anyone in the mountain and cave rescue family who needs support to reach out to the team at the benevolent fund and if you've not found yourself in a positive of need, consider raising funds for them so that when a teammate does need their help, it's available to them. ☺

Top: Will following his slip. **Below:** En route back to the car park after a successful training weekend; X-ray of the broken fibula. Images supplied by Will Close-Ash.



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.

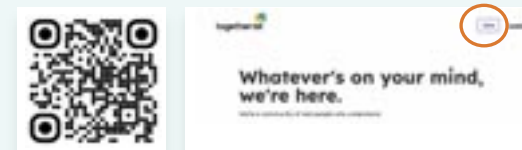
The Fire Fighters Charity: Focused physical rehabilitation on a residential basis, at Jubilee House, Penrith in Cumbria.

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

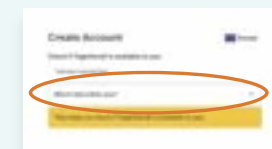
Rightsteps: Online mental health support through individual or group counselling sessions, tailored specifically to your needs.



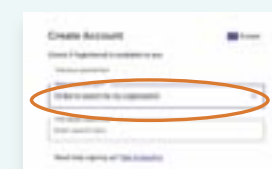
1 Go to togetherall.com or scan QR code. Click 'Join'



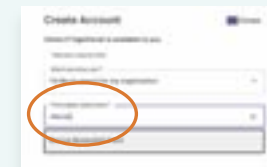
2 To create account Select 'Which describes you?'



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...



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



Climbing for calm: Leo Mason's mountain mission

JONATHAN CASWELL

On a bright, breezy day above Windermere, 11-year-old Leo Mason stood on Orrest Head with his dad, Michael, looking out across the fells that have shaped his young life.

It was a fitting place to pause. Though not officially one of the Wainwright peaks, Orrest Head was the first Lakeland hill Alfred Wainwright ever climbed — a starting point for one of Britain's most iconic walking journeys. Now, it marked a moment in another remarkable story.

Leo, from Frizington in Cumbria, is no ordinary young walker. Living with Tourette syndrome, ADHD and hyperactivity, he has found something in the mountains that medicine never quite provided: calm. 'I just feel calmer when I'm up on the fells,' says Leo. 'It helps my head, and I really like being out there with my dad and sometimes my mum and sister.'

Since starting his challenge in September 2023, Leo has climbed all 214 Wainwright fells again and again, completing five full rounds and reaching more than 1,000 individual summits. His ultimate goal is staggering: ten full rounds, that's 2,140 climbs across the Lake District. But for Leo, it's not about numbers. It's about purpose.

Now into his next five rounds, he is using that purpose to give back, raising money for the mountain rescue teams that help keep the fells safe. Each round will support a different team across the Lakes, starting with Keswick Mountain Rescue Team.

That commitment is what brought Leo and Michael to Orrest Head in May, where they were joined by MREW CEO Andy Buchan, who wanted to meet the young boy behind such an inspiring effort.

'Meeting Leo was genuinely inspiring,' says Andy. 'What he's achieving on the fells is remarkable in itself, but to turn that into fundraising for mountain rescue teams shows a level of determination and generosity beyond his years. Rescue teams rely on support like this, and Leo's story will inspire many others to get involved and give something back.'

For Michael, the moment reflected something far bigger than the miles already walked. 'It means a lot to us that Mountain Rescue England and Wales have taken the

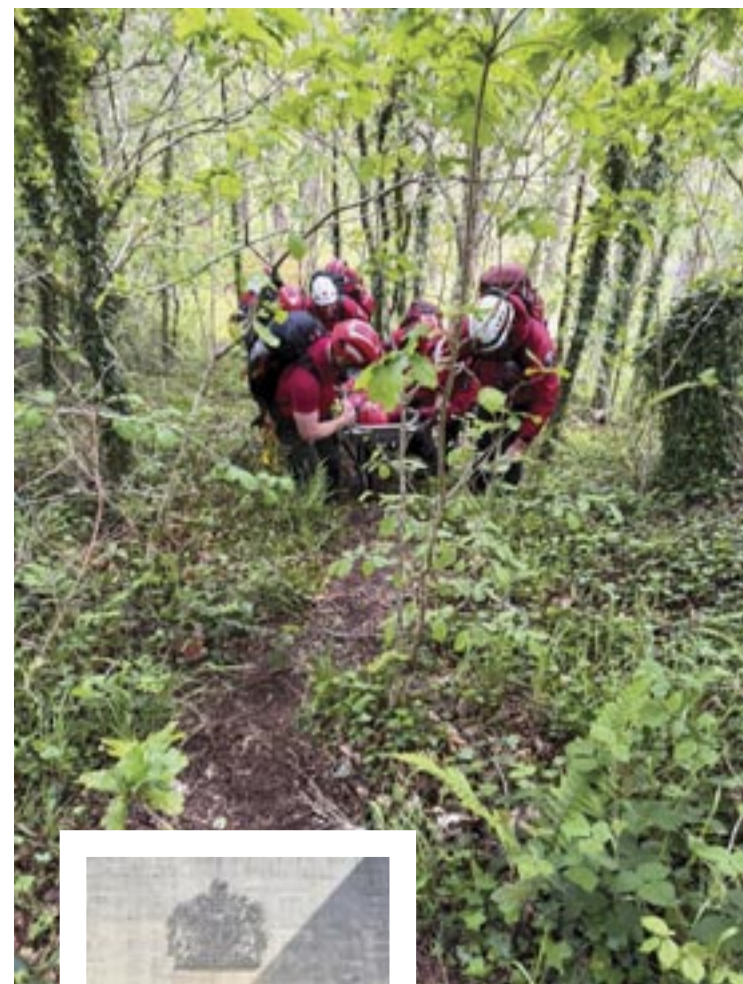
time to come and meet Leo. What he's doing out in the fells is his way of coping day to day, but to see MREW recognise that and support him is really special for us as a family. It shows how much this journey has grown into something bigger than just the two of us on the hills.'

The walk itself was modest compared to some of Leo's previous climbs — nothing like the demands of Scafell Pike or Great Gable. As they made their way up the well-worn path, Michael reflected on the early days, before the mountains became part of Leo's life, when things were more difficult, and how each climb since has helped build not only strength, but also confidence and resilience. Leo, meanwhile, was already looking ahead, talking excitedly about the next peaks, the next rounds and the next opportunities. 'I want to keep going and help raise money for mountain rescue, because they're always there for people.'

At the summit, the view opened up: Windermere stretching below, the fells rolling into the distance, the vast landscape that has become Leo's sanctuary. His journey is about more than endurance. It's about resilience, rewriting expectations, and showing that the outdoors can do more than challenge — it can heal and inspire. Step by step, climb by climb, Leo Mason is proving exactly that. 🌟

Footnote: At the time of writing, Leo had raised more than £5,730 for Keswick MRT. For more updates and to contribute, search 'Leo Mason is fundraising for Keswick Mountain Rescue Team'.

Top: Leo with his now iconic Tickinemoff flag, as seen on many a Wainwright summit © Leo Mason. **Left:** MREW CEO Andy Buchan with Michael and Leo © Jonathan Caswell. Leo with his Yr Wyddfa badge in June © Leo Mason.



Top: Team members during the stretcher recovery of the upside down, injured biker.
Above: Carys and Huw outside the Welsh Government building in May © Central Beacons MRT.

news round

APRIL > JUNE

MAY: ROUTINE TRAINING DAY TURNS UPSIDE DOWN FOR CENTRAL TEAM

The day had begun routinely enough, with some team members supporting a Welsh Mountain Bike event at Dare Valley Country Park, with other members attending a monthly training day.

A call to assist Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust Paramedics with an injured mountain biker in forestry above Llantrisant was quickly dealt with, and training soon resumed.

Then came the call from Dyfed-Powys Police, to assist two walkers stranded in the waterfalls area of the Brecon Beacons. The two had found themselves in difficulty after walking off the formal trails. Thanks to what3words, PhoneFind and Sarloc, team members quickly had a good indication of their location, but what they found on arrival surprised them all — one of the walkers had slipped head first down a slope, coming to rest upside down above a 20-foot vertical drop, his feet jammed between two tree trunks! The first team members on scene set up an abseiling system, so one team member could make them safe with ropes and a harness (quite the challenge in that position). Once the walker had been suitably treated for a possible lower leg injury, it was a challenging stretcher carry out of the gorge through woodland onto the main trails and on to the RV point.

APRIL: CENTRAL BEACONS INVITED TO TALK TO SOCIAL MEDIA TEAMS IN THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

The invitation was to speak to social media teams from across a range of departments and organisations, including Wales, Cadw and Climate Cymru. Word was, they had seen the work the team has been doing across their social channels and wanted to hear more about their approach, where their ideas come from and how campaigns like the Pro Tips series have managed to reach so many people while still sharing important outdoor safety messaging.

'Spoiler alert', says Carys, the mastermind behind the Pro tips memes. 'There is no strategy. Sometimes it's dancing in a music video, sometimes it's calling people a muppet in a pro tip and sometimes it's simply surprising a team member by discovering their face has unexpectedly been plastered across our socials in the name of banter.' Carys and Huw went to fill 45 minutes talking about 'mountain rescue, public engagement, social media and the strange reality that people actually find us funny. By all accounts, it actually went pretty well.'

Raising funds for rescue

JUNE: BUXTON TEAM SAY 'MASSIVE THANK YOU' TO JOINERY STUDENTS

The second year, Level 2 joinery students from Macclesfield College, have kindly constructed some shiny new red collection boxes for the team. Those red boxes will play a vital role in the team's fundraising and can be found in various outlets around their area. Great job!



JUNE: ROSE RAISES FUNDS FOR TAVISTOCK

A support member of the Tavistock team, 79-year-old Rosemary, aka 'Rambling Rose', is all set to walk the 137-mile Dartmoor Way, between 9–18 July, to raise funds for the team. We'll bring you more about this impressive and epic challenge in the next issue, so watch this space! Safe travels Rosemary!



Above: 'Rambling Rose' © Rosemary Clarke.

NEW AUTUMN ADDITIONS FROM COAST TORCHES

Leading LED Torch brand COAST announces its latest innovations, adding to the range from Autumn 2026, here are just a few of them felt to be of particular interest for Mountain Rescue magazine readers!

G40R AND G65R WATERPROOF USB-C RECHARGEABLE TORCHES

- Super Lumens Torch options (G40R: 1000 Lumens) (G65R: 15000 Lumens) at incredibly competitive prices
- Lightweight, aluminium bodies with inbuilt locking-ring for waterproof cover of USB-C charging point
- 4 light modes available, plus one-handed long-distance spot beam to broad-view flood beam adjustment
- Both models fully waterproof to IP67 standard
- Easily visible colour-coded battery life indicator built into top/front-mounted switch.

G40R



G65R



LS20R

LONG-SHOT WATERPROOF RECHARGEABLE SPOTLIGHTS

- Traditional 'pistol-grip' form/shape, upgraded to the latest 'industry-leading' specifications and standards!
- Ideal for use when wearing gloves in cold/wet weather
- Long-distance beam throw of ¼ mile (LS20 – 2000 Lumens model) to ½ mile (LS50 – 5000 Lumens model)
- 4 varied light modes available, long-distance spot beam/ broad-view flood beam, combined and SOS beams
- Both models fully waterproof plus also designed to float if dropped in deeper water
- USB-C rechargeable, the USB-C charger lead (both models), neatly stores in rear waterproof compartment.



LS50R



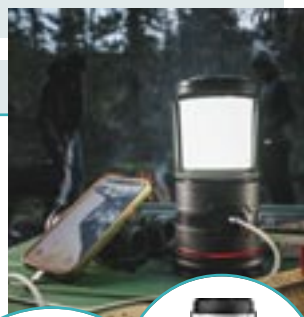
FLX65R

FLX65R WATERPROOF VOICE-ACTIVATED RECHARGEABLE HEAD TORCH

- 600 Lumens USB-C rechargeable head torch option within a compact/lightweight form
- Our industry-leading 'Voice Activation' technology allows users to instantly switch on/off, select or change to the required type/level of light or beam within seconds, with just a simple 2-word command
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news round

APRIL > JUNE

JUNE: BCRC MEDICAL WEEKEND

Around 40 members of cave rescue teams across the UK descended on the Mendips for a conference hosted by Mendip Cave Rescue (MCR). This biennial event runs between the BCRC Rescon meetings. As 2026 is MCR's 90th anniversary (the second oldest cave rescue organisation in the world), it seemed appropriate to hold it in the beautiful Somerset countryside. **Brendan Sloan** reports.



Note: The horrific leg is a prosthetic borrowed from the ambulance service. Images © Emma Porter.



The event was run out of Priddy, which sits above Swildons Hole, a classic British cave and site of much early cave diving activity. The Friday evening featured a guest speaker, Dr Phil Cowburn MBE, emergency medicine consultant, co-founder of Great Western Air Ambulance and developer of the Ten Second Triage Tool, who talked about management of complex incidents. Saturday was occupied with a 'round robin' of scenarios in the entrance series of Swildons, covering topics as varied as chest pain, crush injury, diving problems and paediatric suspension syndrome. These were greatly enhanced by the range of moulage equipment in use – the benefit of having several paramedics in the team. The weather was glorious and, after the exercises, there was much discussion and reflection while kit was cleaned and dried. Dinner was followed by a selection of historic rescue films, featuring a combination of news reports and team footage. While there are certain similarities, the kit has definitely moved on and I've not seen a casualty smoking on a stretcher for a long time!

Sunday morning saw a series of lectures, including developments of the RRMT course, upcoming governance changes, the effects of ageing on cavers and new kit. Of particular interest was a lecture on diving-related incidents, particularly immersion pulmonary oedema, which seems to be a previously under-recognised condition with relevance to surface and underground teams. This was courtesy of Dr Craig Holdstock, a Devon CRO doctor who also works as a dive medicine consultant. (This will probably feature in a future edition of the magazine). After a group session discussing the challenges of prolonged incidents, the delegates departed home, fuelled by yet more of the excellent catering that had accompanied the whole weekend. Thanks and congratulations should go to the organisers of the weekend – Mendip Cave Rescue, the catering team, the caving clubs who supported with accommodation, Priddy Village Hall, and Rich Marlow, Adam Evans and Greg Brock who oversaw the hugely successful medical programme. Here's to the next 90 years!

JUNE: FAIRY LIQUID TO THE RESCUE...

Devon CRO members were called to an incident involving a young person trapped in a rock cleft at Hound Tor. It transpired that the casualty's thigh had become firmly wedged between rocks beneath the Tor, after she slipped while making her way through a narrow tunnel system.

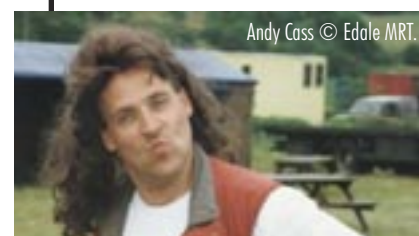
It developed into be a multi-agency endeavour, involving Devon & Somerset FRS, South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust, HART, Dartmoor SRT Ashburton, Devon and Somerset FRS, BASICS Devon, and Devon Air Ambulance. The rescue proved to be a meticulous and challenging operation, with teams working for over three hours in hot conditions. Thanks to the combined efforts of all agencies involved, the casualty was freed and was able to walk off the hill after being assessed by ambulance crews on scene. While rescue equipment, technical skills and teamwork all played their part, the real hero of the day may well have been a bottle of Fairy Liquid, which proved invaluable in helping bring the incident to a successful conclusion. (Other brands are available).



© Devon CRO.

the final send away

ANDY CASS EDALE



Andy Cass © Edale MRT.

It was 'with a heavy heart' that Edale team shared the news of the death of Andy Cass in April. 'For over fifty years, Andy gave his time, energy and spirit to mountain rescue in the Peak District — starting off as a 17-year-old youth with Sheffield Scouts Rescue Team, which merged with Huddersfield and Stockbridge Scouts Rescue Team to form the current Woodhead MRT.

'In the mid-1990s, he transferred into Edale team and from that day on he was very much part of the fabric of the team. His contribution to the team and the wider community is hard to overstate. Andy was a joker, a tireless fundraiser and a key member of our operational team for all that time. However, above all of this, he was a genuinely kind and generous man who always put others before himself. He brought people together, lifted spirits when it mattered most and leaves a legacy that will continue to shape the team for years to come. We have lost a valued team member and the best friend anyone could ask for. Our thoughts are with Andy's wife at this difficult time. Stand down Derwent Andy we will take it from here.'



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BARNEY BARRONS NORTHUMBERLAND NATIONAL PARK

It was with great sadness that Northumberland team shared the passing of former team member Barney Barrons in June.



Barney stood down from the team around 2020/21 due to ill health, having been a stalwart member since the 1970s, contributing to countless rescues and playing a huge role in shaping the team and supporting the local community. He served as team leader from 1988 to 1991, including during the Team's response to the Lockerbie bombing, bringing calm leadership, experience and dedication to every aspect of mountain rescue. Barney was solid, dependable, capable and most definitely one of the great characters of the team — a true team player who could always lift spirits and lighten even the most difficult moments with his humour and warmth. Those who knew him are better for it, all the poorer for his passing. Barney was a great friend and colleague who will be sorely missed across the mountain rescue community and beyond. Our thoughts are with Barney's family, friends and all who knew him at this difficult time. ☹️



HARRY LONG UPPER WHARFEDALE

Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue team members were saddened to hear of the passing of Harry, on 31 May, aged 86. They paid tribute to his memory online.

Harry started caving in the late 1950s whilst living on the south coast of England as a civil engineer working on sea defences, and moved to the Dales to pursue his passion. He joined the team in 1967 just after offering his expertise at the Mossdale tragedy to construct the dams to divert the flow of water away from the cave. He soon became assistant underground leader and rose through the ranks to underground leader chairman, one of four Controllers and, finally, a trustee. He stood down in 2019 after 52 years service and was made a Life Member.

His love of caving took him exploring with his trusty crowbar looking for new caves and potholes in the Dales, very observant at where water disappeared down sink holes and pursued to a conclusion where the water rose or entered a known cave system. He made notes and completed surveys which became invaluable on rescues requiring the diversion of floodwater away from the cave entrances or water on the surface that would enter the underground systems.

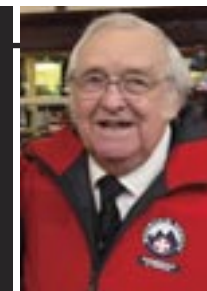
Because of his knowledge, Harry was primary compiler and co-author of the three volume set 'Northern Caves', comprehensive guide books for 'North West', 'The Counties System', 'Three Peaks', 'Yorkshire Dales' and 'North East'. In 2023, he completed writing a book on his caving exploits entitled 'Weekend Explorers'. To raise funds, he and other team members wrote articles for 'Any Time Any Where', about the first fifty years of Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Association. With the help of Helen, he also compiled the book. As chairman, he steered the committee through difficult decisions relating to running the team 'as a tight ship'. Sid Perou also from the south of England, a fellow caver, film-maker and life-long friend of Harry's, worked with him and others to produce a series of films 'Beneath the Pennines'. As one of the team's controllers, Harry had some difficult and prolonged rescues to manage including the rescue of Thirza Holden from Birks Fell in flood conditions, the Cote Gill tragedy and the rescue of Andrew Peel (who later joined the team) who had fallen through snow down a 38-metre mineshaft on Top Mere in winter conditions. There was the incident at Langstroth middle entrance sumps, where three cavers drowned and two men were trapped by floodwater at the far end of Sleet Gill — with no diving experience, the men were ultimately brought out wearing aqualungs.

Away from caving, he was one of the founder members of the 'Good Times Jazz Band' along with Sid and four other members who played once a week for over thirty years at The Fleece in Addingham: Harry on coronet, Sid on clarinet.

Essentially, Harry was very meticulous in whatever he did and that was very evident in his time with the team. Truly a legend! ☹️

the final send away

PETE DURST ROSSENDALE AND PENDLE



Tributes poured in for the globally respected mountain rescuer, search dog handler and founder of Rossendale and Pendle MRT, who died in April following a long illness. **Gail Todd** looks back at his considerable contribution.

Peter's love of the hills and mountaineering led to his involvement in the early stages of Rossendale Fell Rescue which in turn became Rossendale & Pendle MRT. In the early 1960s he joined like-minded people to form a rescue group for the Rossendale Valley, a commitment that would exceed 60 years of service. In addition to being an operational team member, he served as chairman (1970-72) and team leader (1972-76) — and both leader and chairman in 1978! He became a search dog handler in 1978, qualifying with Search Dog Jan. He also served as vice-president (2005-2007) and subsequently president until his death. He was also on the Mid Pennine panel.

Over the years, he influenced and witnessed many changes. He saw the team grow from an initial twelve members to over 40. Links with RAF Stafford assisted in forming the training programmes. In the mid-70s, while undertaking voluntary work at Burnley A&E, he was introduced to Dr Neville Marsden who became the team doctor and a full team member. Between them, they went on to produce a First aid course — 'Diagnosis before First Aid' — which later evolved into the Casualty Care Course which was adopted throughout MREW as the standard for casualty care.

Peter was involved in the team getting their first radios, courtesy of the local Round Table. He witnessed the unexpected demolition of the first team base on Pickering Street, the subsequent purchase of their Clegg Street base in Haslingden and the move to their current 'home' in Burnley. He saw transport evolve from the first vehicle purchased to the fleet we now have, and call-outs move from being initiated by the local copper knocking on each team member's door, to the communication systems we now employ. Peter was always looking forward and embracing new technology with thoughtful consideration.

In 1974, during a team call-out, he saw a search dog in action and was most impressed. So much so, it was said by his daughter Gillian that Peter only gave into the family desire to have a dog on condition that he trained it as a search dog. He went on to become involved with SARDA and graded with two dogs, Jan and Bray,

responding to over 200 incidents. Whilst not having many significant 'finds' himself, Jan went on to produce several pups who became successful search dogs. He worked with others such as Ian Brown to introduce training marking sheets, rules and standards of the association. In 1988 he was involved for several days in the search following the Lockerbie bombing. This led to links with colleagues in other countries and study trips to Sweden, America and Italy. In 1992, in Minnesota he and Neville Sharp took part in a K9 Search and Rescue school, sharing ideas and techniques which were much appreciated. In 1994, in Sweden, he and Neville were able, whilst taking part in a training course, to give a presentation on the working strategy of SARDA which had dogs ranging over a wider area than those in Sweden. In 1994, he appeared on Tyne Tees TV show 'Gimme 5' with Neville, displaying the work of Search Dogs. He was chairman of SARDA 1981-90.

Peter was awarded the Distinguished Service Award by MREW in 2006 — an encourager, counsellor, confidant and a fount of knowledge to the Rossendale Pendle team, always with the progression of mountain rescue at heart. At Mid Pennine Panel meetings he was known to sit quietly, listening intently and saying little, but when he did speak it was with a calm and measured voice, spoken with knowledge and experience. Known for his love of Lancashire dialect, he often entertained with his rendition of 'Albert and The Lion'. To his wife, his nickname was 'Mr Ponds' — a nod to a lipstick that had the ability to last on and on. He was also known, and will be sorely missed, for his ability to always have 'just one more thing' to say at AGM meetings. We will miss him and his words at the next AGM!

Throughout his life, Peter gave of his time supporting local events, Round the Hills Walk in Rossendale, marshalling at checkpoints, in addition to the many hours given to mountain rescue. He was not one to brag of his achievements, but quietly made a difference to so many people. Rest in peace our dear friend. ☹️

Above: Peter Durst proudly wearing his Rossendale and Pendle jacket © RPMRT.

ARTHUR LITTLEFAIR KIRKBY STEPHEN



Above: Arthur pictured in 2014, on announcement of his MBE in the New Year Honours List © Kirkby Stephen MRT.

It was with sadness that Kirkby Stephen team reported the death of erstwhile team leader, Arthur Littlefair MBE, peacefully at home on the evening of 2 May 2026, at the age of 75, after a stoic struggle with cancer over many years. He leaves his wife Vivienne, daughter Jane and sons, John and Philip. Team chairman **Jason Winder** relayed the news to the wider mountain rescue community.

Arthur had served as a team member for over 55 years. Team leader for twenty-three years and chairman for several more, he made a huge contribution to the success of the team today. Along with his mountain rescue commitments, he was also an active member of Rotary, and a well-known and well-respected member of the Kirkby Stephen and Eden Valley community.

Born in 1950, the son of William Henry (Harry) who had a builders' merchants on the main street of the town. He took over and expanded the business, opening several branches before selling it as a successful going concern to J T Atkinsons in 2005. In 2014, he was awarded an MBE and became a Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Cumbria, for his service to the community and mountain rescue. He was largely instrumental in arranging for the construction, in 1992, of the Kirkby Stephen team base at Christian Head, in Kirkby Stephen, and its subsequent extension in 2004. The materials for the base were 'acquired' on reasonable terms from his suppliers, with team members and other local tradesmen undertaking the work. He often voiced regret that they had not laid an additional course of blocks which would have helped the first floor room heights. He will be sadly missed, we give sincere thanks for his friendship and life of service to the community and mountain rescue. ☹️

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news round

APRIL > JUNE



MAY: NORTHUMBERLAND TEAM MARKS THEIR 60-YEAR MILESTONE WITH A RETURN TO WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Northumberland National Park team members returned to the scene where organised mountain rescue in the county began 60 years ago, to celebrate with a public training day in the Ingram Valley which brought together history, modern capability and community support — not to mention the team's very successful inaugural duck race!

The team traces its origins to May 1966, with the establishment of the Northumberland National Park Voluntary Wardens Fell Rescue Team, becoming affiliated to the Mountain Rescue Committee the following year. Early training included river crossings, radio comms, map and compass work, stretcher handling on snow slopes, night searches, lectures and rescue demonstrations. As demand grew, this became increasingly difficult to sustain and the link with the Voluntary Warden Service ended in 1993. Sixty years on, the team continues to protect and assist people across Northumberland's rugged landscapes.

The day offered visitors the opportunity to take part in CPR training, speak with volunteers and partner organisations, learn more about mountain rescue, and enjoy the inaugural duck race. Training scenarios highlighted just how far the service has developed, including an adder bite, a cardiac incident and a large-scale search exercise with drones and search dogs.

'We wanted this to be an interactive day,' says Ninette Edwards (Deputy Team Leader). 'We were delighted to have support from the Northumberland National Park Association, as well as dementia training and support from specialists at DemNurse and Alnwick Round Table. We also wanted to raise funds for our new vehicle and what better way than a load of rubber ducks racing along the river? Lord Percy, the Duke of Northumberland started the race and it was tremendous fun.'

The event raised more than £1,100 thanks to the public, local charities, businesses and those who donated prizes — with special thanks to Alncom and Alnwick Round Table for helping organise the ducks and wider event.

'The day was so different in many ways to what those volunteers started sixty years ago,' says Ninette, 'but I think they'd be pleased to see the community coming together to support the team they started.'

MAY: OLDHAM TEAM WORK WITH ITV GRANADA TO RAISE AWARENESS OF CQC PROPOSALS

On 27 May, Oldham MRT hosted a team from ITV Granada Reports, to film the Dovestone Diamond 10K fell race. The objective was to raise awareness of the potential implications to mountain rescue of current proposals that could require volunteer mountain rescue teams to register with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) when providing first aid cover at community and sporting events.

If mountain rescue is not granted dispensation from registration — with costs estimated at between £10,000-£20,000 per team — this would have a substantial and negative impact on teams and the local communities they serve. There will be a full briefing to teams regarding the current position of mountain rescue and the request to be granted dispensation in the coming weeks.



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JANE HILTON DARTMOOR SRT TAVISTOCK

Jane was a woman of incredible spirit, strength and heart. She died on 7 November last year, leaving a legacy of service, adventure and a profound love for the wild places she called home. **James Metcalfe** pays tribute.



Jane's life was defined by her passion for the outdoors, a journey that began with family adventures on Exmoor and grew into a lifelong pursuit of excellence. After earning her Duke of Edinburgh awards, she transformed her natural navigational prowess into a career of caring for others, graduating from the South West College of Health in 1992 as a registered nurse. She initially worked in Tavistock Hospital, Devon, qualifying as an Emergency Nurse Practitioner working in the Minor Injuries Unit, and then went on to work in the Emergency Department at University Hospital, Plymouth.

Her professional life was spent at the heart of her community, providing comfort and care in their most difficult moments, but her commitment to service extended far beyond the hospital walls. In 2005, she joined the Dartmoor Tavistock team, and became an integral and beloved member for two decades. In 2009, she joined the 'hasty team', a group of elite runners who travel light and fast to save lives.

Jane and her partner Russ (also a team member and paramedic), shared the same dedication to the team. In 2009, they introduced us to the CasCare syllabus, elevating the our medical capabilities and earning recognition for their selfless contribution. Jane and Russ married in 2013, beginning a decade of breathtaking shared adventures. Whether they were spending summers in the Alps or skiing through Norwegian winters, they lived life to the fullest. An extraordinary endurance athlete and marathoner, Jane's physical grit was legendary, highlighted by her completion of the Winter Spine race in 2023. Yet she was also a woman of many layers — a talented musician who co-founded 'Flute Cocktail' and spent some time as a dedicated Special Constable for Devon and Cornwall Police.

Even when faced with a high-grade brain tumour diagnosis in December 2023, Jane's spirit remained unshakeable. Despite undergoing surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy, she stayed 'in peak physical fitness' and remained a steadfast member of her rescue team. In April 2025, showing the stoicism and grace that defined her, she completed seventy miles of the Northern Traverse with Russ. She never once complained.

To those who knew her, Jane is best remembered as a 'free spirit' running into the darkness of Dartmoor with a purpose, her large smile glowing under the light of a head torch. She was, and remains, an inspiration. This year, her teammates honoured her memory by completing the Dartmoor Marathon together.

Jane Hilton lived with a courage and kindness that will never be forgotten. She is survived by her husband, Russ, and a community of friends and colleagues who are better for having known her. ☘

Top: Jane Hilton with husband Russ © Dartmoor SRT Tavistock.



APRIL: A MARATHON LIKE NO OTHER...

After a break of over thirty years, the Dartmoor Marathon returned this year. Because it is across Dartmoor, on roads, a Personal Best (PB) is very unlikely for most, but Dartmoor Search and Rescue Team Tavistock managed, not one but, two records. **Andy Hodges** reports.

The team fielded the largest group of runners for any club or group, and clocked the highest number of PBs. As most team members who took part had barely run around an athletic track since leaving school — a good few years for some — this was no mean feat. Twenty-six miles of up or down (a flat 400m was a rare section indeed, a flat mile impossible to find) challenged the most unlikely group of runners.

So why, at the age when most people know better than to contemplate a marathon, did sixteen team members stand at the start line in April? Simply, to honour a much loved, respected and valued team member.

Jane joined the team in 2005, bringing with her a wealth of hill skills and medical expertise. She was a keystone to our medical team and, in a short time, a member of the hasty team, a group of team members who use their running skills to improve the team's ability to search, locate and stabilise casualties until 'the cavalry' arrive.

She was a phenomenal runner. Not the fastest, but she never stopped. Ever. It was this strength of character that saw her complete the Montane MRT Spine in 2019, the only



Left: Tavistock team members running the Dartmoor Marathon in memory of their late colleague. Below: Jane's husband Russ. Images © Dartmoor SRT Tavistock.

female finisher. To emulate Jane, the Tavistock team stepped up.

The training began, quietly and without fanfare. The team carried on as normal, meeting on Wednesday evenings. But things began to change, chats in the pub started to include comments like, 'I did three miles today, not too bad' and 'I ran home from work yesterday'. From some team members it was a definite change of direction. No longer was it about Land Rover gearboxes, or Single Frequency Repeaters, it was about nutrition, mileage, stretching and a new event: Sunday morning yoga at the Rescue Centre!

Jane had changed the team, she did it when she steered Casuality Care into our skill set. And as she battled her brain tumour she changed it again.

The days got shorter as the distances got further. I bumped into Heather one Sunday morning, she looked happily exhausted and cheerfully announced she was planning a ten-mile route, running laps of the local reservoir, about four miles per lap. At ten miles she realised her error, ten miles does not divide by four! A twelve mile run was the result, a PB for distance!

On 25 November we said our final goodbyes to Jane, a guard of honour of over thirty present and former members of the team was a fitting tribute. Jane's final gift to us was a beautiful winter's day and a chance to catch up with old friends.

The training continued with determination. Darkness and rain were permanent training partners through January. Kat, our team doctor, had entered the event and was beginning to become an unpaid running

niggle consultant. But the grit and determination Jane had demonstrated for so long was more than enough inspiration.

And then, the day arrived. The team of runners had completed their TV appearance (who chose the steepest road hill as the filming spot for the local news?). The fundraising campaign was in full flow, the target of £5,000 to be shared between DSRT Tavistock and Brain Tumour Research.

The gun sounded, the runners started and reality hit home to many of the team. They were committed to a challenge like nothing they had taken on before.

The first few miles flew by in a flurry of cheers and cries of support from familiar faces and strangers inspired by our local news coverage. Pork Hill, used on the tour of Britain as a King of the Mountains climb, is even longer on foot! Climbing at a gradient of between 8 and 10% and around two miles in length, it certainly called for team members to dig deep, but team support was enough of a boost to take the sting out of the climb.

The miles rolled by, each one seemed to include yet another hill. The sombre Dartmoor Prison gates were passed and marked the highpoint of the route, downhill all the way now!

As seems to be the case in every marathon, the middle miles always seem to go into a wilderness zone. Dartmoor may well be considered a comparable wilderness (it's the least visited national park), and the 'teen miles' involved a lap around Burrator Reservoir and commonly used training loop, Heather flew around this time! A

flapjack stop was staffed by team members, it remains a question within the team of just how many were 'quality tested' before the runners arrived.

Around twenty miles in, our team chair, Helen, was in position with fellow teammates and much needed snacks, water and supportive cheers of encouragement. And then the final miles were within sight, coming into Tavistock on minor roads usually driven in the middle of the night on a shout, having cheering crowds and well-wishers helped tired legs.

'Finishing alongside my teammates, with everyone cheering us home, was an incredible moment I'll never forget', and 'I thought it was a nightmare and I was going to wake up' were contrasting and honest reflections on the finish line.

As you'd expect from an MR team, nobody left until everyone was home. The team gathered to a mix of tears and cheers. Jane would have been proud. But, knowing Jane, she would have immediately set off on another lap, 26 miles would be a morning out for her. A team member whose achievements we all aspire to reach. ☘

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APRIL/MAY: PRE-HOSPITAL TRAUMA LIFE SUPPORT (PHTLS) SUCCESS FOR PENSAR MSC

Between April and May, PenSAR (Peninsula Search and Rescue Association, formerly Peninsula Mountain and Cave Rescue Association (PenMaCRA) medical subcommittee (MSC) facilitated two PHTLS courses, for healthcare professionals (HCPs) or medical officers, from around the region. North Dartmoor's **Harry Price** reports.

The two courses were made up of members from North Dartmoor, Dartmoor Plymouth, Dartmoor Tavistock, Devon Cave Rescue Organisation (DCRO) and Dartmoor Ashburton. The course was facilitated by Scott, from King's Paramedical Services, who delivered excellent training and scenarios tailored specifically to a mountain rescue environment. The feedback of both courses was entirely positive. One such testimonial from that they 'found the course tested me, allowing me to develop my RRMT skills and knowledge. From a Tavistock perspective I would be keen to offer the course to experienced RRMTs within the team, as well as HCPs.'

The committee organised these courses, to enable teams in the south west to be able to attend a PHTLS course at much lower cost, than attending courses much further north, such as the MREW-coordinated courses which bring a significant cost in travel and time commitment for members (upwards of ten, eleven hour travel times in most cases). The other focus was to ensure HCPs in PenSAR are getting continual professional development opportunities, enabling them to deliver great training to the region's RRMTs and team members. There are lots of great opportunities for non-HCPs across MREW and we wanted to make sure that HCPs also get a benefit in attending the courses.

A participant from the May course had an equally positive statement to give: 'It was great to get involved in some joint training between mountain and cave rescue teams. We as DCRO – and the wider cave rescue community – are actively trying to train more with our neighbouring teams. It was a great course and a really great opportunity for me and other DCRO members to socialise with our fellow PenSAR members.'

Members from both courses spent a weekend learning the skills necessary to pass their PHTLS course. Between indoor lectures and skill sessions, at North Dartmoor's base, and further skill sessions and exercises on the North of Dartmoor (in all weathers – further improving the accuracy of our environment), the weekend provided our members with both individual skill development, that can be carried forward when looking after the people we rescue, and enabled great conversations between attendees of the course, around MR and the medical interventions we can deliver. Thank you to Scott, from King's Paramedical Services, for putting on these courses and tailoring them specifically to our environment.'



Top: Course 1 Attendees © Harry Price. Above: Course 1 Scenario; Course 2 Attendees © Scott King.



MAY: IT'S OFFICIAL! NAME CHANGE FOR PENINSULA REGION

The erstwhile Peninsula Mountain and Cave Rescue Association (PenMaCRA) has now officially changed their name to PenSAR (Peninsula Search and Rescue Association) — with a brand new logo to boot!



Not only did Sam complete one of the UK's toughest national trails, he also raised an extraordinary £143,000+ for Mountain Rescue England and Wales supported by thousands of donors following his progress online and occasionally in person.

The South West Coast Path is often described as the ultimate long-distance challenge: 630 miles of relentless ups and downs along the rugged coastlines of Somerset, Devon, Cornwall and Dorset. For Sam, an experienced hiker who regularly explores the UK hills, the route was always going to push him, but even he admits it surpassed expectations.

'This has been the toughest hike I've ever done, but also one of the best experiences,' says Sam. 'I've met so many great people along the way, had some brilliant conversations and felt a huge amount of support. The scenery's been incredible, the challenge very real, but ultimately, it's about the people.'



Raising funds for rescue

And it was those people — locals, fellow walkers, business owners and supporters online — who became the defining feature of his journey. From chance meetings on remote headlands to shared miles with mountain rescue team members, the human element shaped every day.

Sam's motivation was simple, but powerful: to give back to a service he and countless others may one day rely on. The walk has helped bring the reality that mountain rescue is made up entirely of volunteers into sharp focus for the thousands who followed and supported his fundraiser.

'I've met lots of mountain rescue volunteers along the route, and it's been great to hear their stories, why they joined and the experiences they've had. It's given me even more motivation. I spend a lot of time in the hills, and it's reassuring to know mountain rescue is there if something goes wrong. It's so important that they are — and team members absolutely deserve recognition for everything they do.'

The reality of the Coast Path proved relentless. Days regularly stretched to 15 or 20 miles, or more. The terrain constantly shifted, steep ascents, exposed clifftops, muddy descents and long coastal traverses. But the emotional side of the journey proved just as impactful.

Along the way, Sam documented daily progress, sharing both highs and lows. In Cornwall, he walked sections alongside team members. In Devon and Dorset, he spoke to dozens of people who stopped him to offer support, donate or simply say thank you. These encounters helped maintain momentum, physically and mentally.

After nearly seven weeks on the trail, the finish brought a mix of relief and reflection. But like many long-distance walkers, he is already anticipating the adjustment back to normal life. 'I've done a lot of long-distance walks before and always feel a bit flat after a couple of days at home. You lose that sense of purpose. So, I'm already planning a few Wainwrights with my dad, Martyn.'

630 MILES, 48 DAYS, ONE PURPOSE: SAM CULLEY'S COAST PATH JOURNEY

After 48 days on the trail, thousands of metres climbed, and 630 miles underfoot, Sam reached the eastern terminus of the South West Coast Path, a solo challenge that became a journey powered by community, connection and a deep respect for mountain rescue. **Jonathan Caswell** reports.

Sam's dad, for those who don't already know, raised over £15,000 earlier in the year (and £8,000+ for Scottish Mountain Rescue), walking from Land's End to John O'Groats — often accompanied by Sam along the way.

His South West Coast Path hike stands as a reminder of what's possible when adventure meets purpose. What started as a personal challenge evolved into a nationwide fundraising effort, raising both vital funds and awareness for mountain rescue.

It also highlights something central to mountain rescue itself: community. From the volunteers who dedicate their time to saving lives, to the walkers who rely on them, to supporters who give what they can, Sam's 630-mile journey captured the spirit of that network in action. And, in his own words, it's the people he'll remember most. 📍

Top: Sam at the start of his long walk; Visiting Dartmoor Ashburton team base. Images © Sam Culley.



TRAIN WHERE IT MATTERS: SWIFTWATER AND FLOOD RESCUE IN DORSET AND DARTMOOR

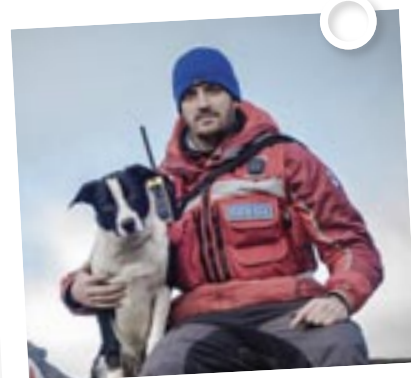
The instructors at Land & Wave have built their Rescue 3 training around one principle: professional outcomes delivered without the stiff formality that gets in the way of real learning. Land & Wave is the only Rescue 3 provider in Dorset, offering Swiftwater and Flood Rescue Technician courses this October, November and December. Each course splits across two contrasting environments: two days on the fast-flowing waters of the River Dart on Dartmoor, and two days on the Dorset coast. Transport between sites is included, so candidates can focus entirely on the training. That variety is deliberate. Moving water behaves differently depending on terrain, volume, and gradient. By training on both the technical white water of Dartmoor and the conditions of the Dorset coast and rivers, candidates leave with practical experience that reflects the unpredictability of real incidents, not just one type of environment.

Whether you're with a fire service, mountain rescue team, coastguard unit or specialist water rescue team, this breadth of experience is hard to find on a single-location course. With over 900 TripAdvisor reviews and top ratings on Google, Land & Wave has a reputation for warm, accessible instruction that never compromises on rigour. Instructors bring real depth of experience and a straightforward, human approach: no jargon, no ego, just focused professional development that sticks.

TO FIND OUT MORE OR BOOK A PLACE, CALL 01929 423 031 OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE: [LANDANDWAVE.CO.UK/RESCUE-3-HOME](https://landandwave.co.uk/rescue-3-home)



Images provided by Land & Wave.



JUNE: RICK AND ACE 'MAKE A DIFFERENCE'

Congratulations to Search Dog Ace and his handler Rick, from Oldham team, who have been chosen from hundreds of nominations as finalists in the Animal Category for BBC Radio Manchester's Make a Difference Award 2026. Along with three other finalists, they will attend an awards ceremony in September this year. Good luck!

Above: Search Dog Ace with handler Rick. Image courtesy of @OldhamMRT.



Outwitted by a Border Collie

SUSIE MCCULLOCH SARDA SOUTHERN SCOTLAND

Ever agreed to puppy-sit an entire litter for a neighbour? I can highly recommend it — if your goal is to accidentally acquire another dog. I've always been a Border Collie loyalist: smart, independent and fiercely loyal, but definitely not for the faint-hearted. This became obvious the moment I brought home my second collie, Caoimhe — I installed a stair gate to give her some boundaries and she promptly squeezed straight underneath it.

When I first got Caoimhe, I was volunteering as a body with SARDA Southern Scotland, acting as a missing person in training scenarios while hoping to become a handler myself. Having joined in 2018, I watched experienced dog teams clear huge search areas, their dogs working across hillsides and picking up scent from impressive distances. Each dog had its own

style: some charged around the hill like they'd had three espressos, while others searched with calm precision. Either way, I was hooked.

To become a handler, you first need to join a search and rescue team. So, like any sensible person, I signed up for more training, more assessments and significantly less free time. Meanwhile, Caoimhe began

her own training — because apparently I didn't have enough to do already.

At its core, search dog training is one big game. Our dogs, capable of searching mountainous terrain for hours in any weather, are ultimately just looking for someone to play with. From puppyhood, we use toy motivation to build an enthusiastic game of hide-and-seek. The fun comes first. Precision and skill come later. A willing volunteer runs off with the toy while you hold your increasingly over-excited puppy. Then you release them and off they go.

From there, the challenges gradually increase — longer distances, rougher terrain and more difficult scent conditions. We train the dogs to air-scent, encouraging them to work into the wind and use their natural ability to locate human scent.

Training quickly became my favourite hobby, even if it meant regularly coming home cold, wet, scratched and occasionally questioning my life choices. My husband likes to point out that I spend more time following a dog across the hill, than with him.

They say it takes around two years to train a search dog. Ours took a little longer thanks to a global pandemic arriving halfway through. Still, watching Caoimhe progress through her assessments made every midge-filled training session worthwhile.

The assessments test both dog and handler. Early stages focus on whether the

dog can search effectively. Later ones test whether the handler can read the dog, recognise a find and carry out an organised search. Caoimhe enjoys making this difficult. Her preferred route back to a casualty is usually the most direct — over walls, through gorse and straight uphill, assuming I'm far more athletic than I actually am.

Alongside search work, we also train the dogs not to chase livestock, which feels slightly ironic with a Border Collie. Many Sunday mornings were spent near sheep fields practising obedience under the suspicious stare of nearby cows.

Eventually came our Novice Search Dog assessment: long days on the hill searching multiple areas expected to take around two hours each. My watch tracked nearly 40,000 steps on just one of the assessment days. I was told to enjoy it and, surprisingly, I did. I'd put in the training, trusted my dog and we passed.

We now work as an operational team. SARDA Southern Scotland attends around 30 call-outs a year, from missing walkers to high-risk searches. It's unpredictable and occasionally involves a lot of driving only to be stood down, but when we're needed, we're



ready — usually after abandoning whatever meal I've just finished cooking.

Training never really ends and sometimes you realise you've accidentally trained something unhelpful. On one search, Caoimhe barked repeatedly until I followed her, only to discover she was enthusiastically showing me a giant puddle. It turned out I'd taught her that barking at water resulted in permission to swim, her favourite thing. Brilliant on walks, less helpful mid-search. There is nothing quite like calmly explaining over the radio that your dog has not found the casualty — just a particularly appealing pool. We quickly untrained that habit.

Working as a dog team is a true partnership. Early on, I learned that over-handling can undermine a dog's confidence. Subtlety is key — small movements, trust and letting them do what they are trained for. Caoimhe, on the other hand, is anything but subtle. When she finds someone, I am informed loudly and repeatedly until I follow her.

There's nothing quite like watching your dog transition from casually roaming a hillside to suddenly locking onto a scent — her body stretching and stride lengthening. It's a real privilege to be part of it.

Cold, wet, scratched and occasionally outwitted by a Border Collie — I wouldn't change a thing. 🐾

news round

APRIL > JUNE



MAY: SELL-OUT CONCERT RAISES VITAL FUNDS FOR BRECON MRT

The very talented musicians from the Royal Marines Military Band brought the house down at Henderson Hall in Talybont, raising around £2,900 for the Brecon team. The evening was organised between the Outdoor Leadership Training Centre in Talybont and Henderson Hall committee.

JUNE: THOMAS CYCLES THIRTY MILES TO RAISE FUNDS FOR THE TEAM WHO RESCUED HIM

Thomas and his friend Joe cycled for six hours on Sunday 14 June, in a sponsored bike ride for Duddon and Furness MRT, by way of thank you to the team members who had rescued him after a nasty fall off his bike on the fell. They covered an amazing 30 miles of pedalling, between the beach and the viaduct, with a top speed of 19.4 mph, raising an impressive £620.



Thomas on his Crowdfunder page © Thomas Tyson.



Raising funds for rescue



Above: Keith Wilson with his book '9 Lives Lucky' © Chris Barron.

MAY: INTREPID GRANDAD RAISES FUNDS FOR TWO TEAMS

Keith Wilson launched his book, '9 Lives Lucky' with a signing on top of Roseberry Topping, AKA 'the Yorkshire Matterhorn'. The book chronicles his pioneering adventures and 50% of the money raised will be shared between Penrith and Keswick teams, and Parkinson's UK.

Keith has become widely known for tackling his Parkinson's diagnosis by embarking on mountain climbs, long-distance runs and gruelling cycle rides. Initially, the book set out to dedicate a chapter to each of his nine 'near death experiences' to date, but Fate intervened in January with a tenth 'miraculous escape' which saw Keith plunge 60 metres down an icy mountainside in the Lake District. Keswick and Penrith team came to the rescue.



LEDLENSER LIMITED EDITION ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION

One of the world's leading portable lighting brands, Ledlenser celebrates 25 years of innovation with the launch of a special limited edition collection featuring three of its most iconic products: the P7R torch, H8R headlamp and T2 tactical torch. Inspired by a quarter-century of innovation since the launch of the legendary Photon Pump V8, the range combines proven performance with an exclusive Dark Blue finish and a special industry-leading '25-year with registration' warranty. Designed for professionals, outdoor enthusiasts and everyday users alike, each product reflects the engineering excellence and reliability that define the Ledlenser brand. The P7R torch delivers exceptional versatility and Advanced Focus Technology, the H8R remains a trusted hands-free lighting companion, while the compact T2 tactical torch offers dependable performance in demanding environments.

CHECK THEM OUT AT [LEDLENSER.CO.UK](https://www.ledlenser.co.uk)



SUN, SEA AND MISSION-CRITICAL SAFETY

Summer brings a surge in outdoor activity, from coastal swimmers to remote hikers, driving demand for search and rescue teams. At the same time, seasonal climate risks like wildfires, flooding, and heat-related incidents can create fast-changing environments where reliable communication plays an integral role in response efforts. Designed to meet DMR open standards, Tait Rapid Deployable Solutions help teams respond to the increase in summer call-outs with confidence. Compact, rugged, and quick to deploy, they provide critical coverage in remote or temporary locations, supporting a coordinated, interoperable response across dispersed teams and agencies. From coastlines to mountainous terrain, keeping teams connected not only improves response times — it can save lives. Contact Tait Europe to see how our rapid deployable solutions could support your team this summer.

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MAY: RRMT CPD DAY

Swaledale MRT hosted a second RRMT CPD day, attended by thirteen teams from the Peak, Yorkshire, the North West, the North East and the RAF. The aim was to give teams the opportunity to enhance their skills, by completing scenarios, problem-solving and the giving and receiving of 'critical friend' feedback. It was an opportunity to engage with other teams and share best practice in a safe coaching environment. **Helen Cain** reports.

Teams came having prepared two scenarios, which other teams then undertook. It was great to see the level of preparation, with some challenging scenarios, scary moulage and Oscar-winning acting skills. At the end of each scenario there was a feedback conversation with shared ideas which was a great learning opportunity. Teams were able to work together easily because of the shared MREW RRMT syllabus and shared understanding. Two of the teams were made up of composite members and it was commented on how well they gelled together, even though they were from different teams who had never met before.

The day offered the opportunity to work together as a team around the casualty site and to see how other teams work together and what equipment they use, although people have commented that they would like to see more of the equipment next year. Feedback has been excellent and we look forward to seeing more of you next year, but next time not on a busy day in the MREW calendar. Thank you to those who were the mentors for the day and to those who worked hard to make it happen.

MAY: LAND AND WATER RESOURCES DEPLOYED IN MULTI-AGENCY RESCUE OF INJURED TEEN

SARA members were called to support fire and ambulance services from both England and Wales with the evacuation of a casualty from steep ground close to the River Wye, when one of a group of teenagers painfully dislocated their shoulder, making it impossible for him to climb back up.

The SARA team doctor was able to reset his shoulder, making his condition much more bearable. 'Stretcher evacuation back up the hill was considered,' says Richard Newhouse, 'but the simplest solution was to transfer him to a lifeboat and move him by river — something SARA practise quite often. We worked together to get the casualty down to the river's edge, and then the SARA lifeboat and land team worked together to move him by stretcher across the mud onto SARA Lifeboat 3. SARA 3 then carried him down to Chepstow, where they could make use of the newly installed Chepstow Boat Club pontoon. He was landed there and transferred to a waiting road ambulance.

'Altogether, a great example of multi-agency working, with the various SARA disciplines working together.'

Right: Casualty transfer onto SARA Lifeboat 3 © SARA.



Dunsfold founding trustee and museum curator, Philip Bashall, was on hand to welcome Ada to the collection. 'We are delighted to welcome this very special Defender to Dunsfold, and it's wonderful to see another historically important Land Rover joining the collection, especially one that has spent its entire life supporting the incredible volunteers in two of the country's mountain rescue teams.'

NDSART chairman James Watts went along for the handover. 'After 32 years of service, Ada was no longer suitable for frontline emergency service, so we were delighted to be able to transfer her to the care of the Dunsfold Collection, who will ensure that she can tell the story of how she — and Land Rover Defenders like her — continue to serve mountain rescue across the country.'

Over sixteen years with North Dartmoor, Ada was involved in over 400 call-outs, saving countless lives and helping make people's bad days a little bit better.

JUST A FEW OF THE MEMORABLE CALL-OUTS ADA HAS SUPPORTED

February 2021 & February 2024: Supported the evacuations by transporting resources and team members to locations across the cities when unexploded World War II devices were discovered in Exeter and, three years later, Plymouth.

1 March 2018: A rare 'red' weather warning centred on Okehampton, preceded a significant, sudden snowfall. The 'Beast from the East', picked up the fine snow and, in relatively few minutes it drifted and filled the A386 road, in places to over 1.5 metres deep. That evening team members helped locate people trapped in their cars and, through the night, checked on vehicles and dug access routes to doors, with many tens of adults, children and pets rescued, including a litter of puppies. The next day, after only an hour or two of sleep, they continued to support the ambulance service, only standing down in the evening — but not before responding to a 999 call for a suspected heart attack.

26 December 2019: A lone walker called 999 after becoming lost and disorientated, reporting that they were 'cold but unharmed at the top of a hill next to a small building'. There are small buildings on many of the hills in the area, associated with the military firing range, so a particularly large number of team members were deployed in thick fog and a cold wind to check each of them in both Land Rovers. The casualty was located at the top of Steeperton Tor and extracted in a warm Land Rover to their family at the RV point. They were very apologetic until several members explained that they'd been stuck indoors with their family for two days, and happy for the excuse to go out!

30 September 2020: The team responded to a group stuck in the middle of the notorious bog of Raybarrow Pool. They'd tried to find a way out, but kept getting more and more stuck.

6 July 2021: The British Army asked for help with evacuating a soldier who had sustained a significant knee injury, in a challenging location halfway down a steep slope. In battle conditions, the army would have managed this themselves, but they wanted specialist support to extract the soldier without worsening the injury. Ada took a team, including an RRMT, who assessed and treated the casualty and packaged them for transport. Meanwhile, rope rescue technicians set up a system to haul the soldier, on a stretcher, up the steep slope, before carrying him on to a Land Rover.

23 March 2025: Ada joined a parade of Series 1s from the Series 1 club before they started a day out on Dartmoor.



Top: 'Ada' supporting the Through the Darkness event; On her final Tor. Above: 'Ada' AKA 'Dart 51'; Arrival at her new home in the Dunsfold Collection. Images © North Dartmoor SRT.

news round

APRIL > JUNE

APRIL: AFTER 32 YEARS OF SERVICE, 'ADA' IMMORTALISED AT HER NEW HOME IN DUNSFOLD COLLECTION

After an operational life split between Langdale Ambleside MRT and North Dartmoor SRT, Ada ('Dart 51') has found a new home at the Dunsfold Collection in Surrey, a registered charity dedicated to the preservation of Land Rover history, that manages the largest Land Rover museum in the UK. Ada will remain in her mountain rescue livery and continue to showcase the extraordinary work of teams. On Sunday, 8 March 2026, she made her final journey with her team and made the long journey from Okehampton to Dunsfold. **Matt Holland** pays tribute.

THE DUNSFOLD COLLECTION

The Dunsfold Collection of Land Rovers is a registered charity dedicated to the preservation of Land Rover history. The Collection was started in 1968 by Brian Bashall, who realised that his love of strange prototype and pre-production Land Rovers was of interest to others.

Over the years, the collection has expanded to include not only prototype and pre-production vehicles, but also examples of almost every model made by Land Rover from 1947 to the present day, including military vehicles, record breakers, Royal cars, limited editions and display vehicles.

The Dunsfold Collection is managed by a board of trustees led by Brian's son, Philip, who is also an internationally recognised expert on the Land Rover marque. The other trustees are Gary Pusey, Andrew Munden and Richard Beddall. The trustees are supported by an enthusiastic team of volunteers.

For further media information, contact the Dunsfold Collection on collectionadmin@btconnect.com

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news round

APRIL > JUNE



Raising funds for rescue

JUNE: MARK AND SON JUMP AT CHANCE TO RAISE FUNDS FOR HIS TEAM AND WALES AIR AMBULANCE

Western Beacons team member and MREW ICT officer Mark Lewis wanted to celebrate his sixtieth birthday in style, something to remember with his son Jake. And what better way could there possibly be than jumping out of a plane strapped to another human being?

The original date was set for March, but this was postponed due to forecast poor weather conditions. And just to up the sense of jeopardy, news came through the week before that two people had died in Devon, when their parachute failed to open during a tandem skydive. But they kept their nerves and jumped, raising vital funds for the Western Beacons team (with which this year Mark notched up forty years), and the Wales Air Ambulance. Helly Hansen also donated goodies for a prize draw. The smiles after their jump said it all! And £1,566 raised!

Left: Mark with his instructor during the jump, and Mark and Jake, jubilant after their mini-adventure © Go SkyDive.

JUNE: TEAMS FORMALLY RECEIVE THEIR KING'S AWARDS

Teesdale and Weardale team members held a 'lovely garden party', with team members, founding members, supporters and family there to celebrate the award. Team leader John Little received the award from the Lord Lieutenant of County Durham Mike Butterwick CBE.



© Teesdale & Weardale SRT.



Meanwhile, West Cornwall team received their trophy and certificate by Colonel Sir Edward Bolitho at their AGM at Tregenna Castle. It was a sad moment too, as team leader Chris (pictured centre), stepped down to begin a new chapter outside of Cornwall. 'His contribution to the team has been extraordinary. Not only as team leader, but also serving as our training officer, 4x4 driver, controller and mentor – sharing his knowledge from his military and work experiences and shaping the team we are today.'

MAY: TEAM MEMBERS HEAD TO BUCKINGHAM PALACE GARDEN PARTY FOLLOWING KING'S AWARDS

Earlier this year, both West Cornwall SRT and Teesdale and Weardale SRT were honoured to receive the King's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award given to volunteer groups in the UK. Early in May, two members of each proudly represented their teams at a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace, hosted by the Prince and Princess of Wales, alongside the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh and Zara Tindall.

James Newman and Ricky Swan from West Cornwall, met their fellow volunteers John Little and Scott Bisset from Teesdale and Weardale, as well as catching up with Colonel Sir Edward Bolitho, Lord-Lieutenant of Cornwall, whose support was instrumental in helping his local organisations receive this year's King's Award recognition. Military bands performed throughout the afternoon and the weather was beautiful: 'a truly memorable experience'.



Above: Teesdale & Weardale team leader John Little (left) and deputy Scott Bisset. Left: Ricky Swan (left) and James Newman from West Cornwall SRT.





That first day in April continues to draw out the creatives in our midst and 2026 saw the perhaps now predictable deployment of cats, dogs, sheep and er... ducks and dinosaurs, vying for attention with a positive plethora of new-found airborne resources. Not to mention the ever more inventive acronyms.

SARA Wyre Forest Station undertook 'several months of trials and an intensive selection process' prior to announcing their latest team asset. Their new Search Duck, call sign 'Mobile Mallard' was set to enter service in April — the perfect resource for water search deployments as well as aerial support for land ops — following successful completion of the Duck Care Course.

Speaking of air support, over in North Dartmoor, newest rescue kids on the blocks are the Air Rescue Technicians (ART for

short), equipped to fly high above Dartmoor and ready for deployment anywhere in Devon. Wherever the wind takes them, you will see them floating on by.

ART will be working together with another innovative system. AIR LP will be deployed with the team's Land Rovers and coordinated from the Field Operations and Off-road Logistics cell (aka FOOLS). 'The AIR Landing Pads are exactly what our balloon-hoisted team members need when it's finally time to bring that stretcher back down to earth.'

In West Cornwall, team members have truly recognised the value their dogs bring to the team, with the appointment of Merryn as team leader. 'Merryn's performance spoke for itself. Her consistency, drive and instinct in the field made her a stand-out candidate. She is focused on ensuring all team members receive appropriate recognition for their efforts (whether they want it or not).

'She has a natural ability to lead from the front and bring out the best in the team. It's a well-deserved appointment. We particularly liked her idea of enhancing communication protocols, with a move towards more direct and vocal briefings.'

Merryn's first policies as team leader are expected to include strengthening team cohesion with regular outdoor briefings, the requirement for all team members to bring a ball to training, and the improvement of wellbeing through 'cuddles on demand'.

Still in the south west, East Cornwall introduced their newly-formed Mounted Search and Rescue Division, specially trained to navigate Cornwall's rugged

moorlands and coastal paths, reaching places four wheels can't reach. The sturdy rescue horse is equipped with 'high-visibility gear, medical supplies and the strength to carry essential equipment deep into remote terrain. Whether it's mist-covered tors or cliff-side trails, this four-legged responder is ready to assist.' This initiative 'blends tradition with innovation, honouring Cornwall's heritage' while expanding the team's rescue capabilities.

Over in Edale, after almost three years of testing the team had succeeded in getting permission from the Civil Aviation Authority to fly their Casualty Rescue Aerial Platform (CRAP). In future, two vehicles will deploy with the platform housed in boxes on the vehicle roof. This can then 'launch and undertake a number of rescue operations including stretcher carry, hoisting, moving equipment and canine conveyance'.

The team has also invested in groundbreaking AI software for the CRAP which allows it to monitor the routes on to the high points of their patch and, 'by analysing the equipment and movement of people on the hills, it can forecast and forewarn about likely call-outs. This amazing technology, called Simple Launch Incident Detection and Emergency Reduction System (SLIDERS) will be in use on Mam Tor and Kinder over the Easter holidays.'

Over in the Yorkshire Dales, the CRObots are coming, with the Cave Rescue Organisation Bioscanning, Observation and Triage units. These CRObots can carry kit, help with stretcher evacuations and send automatic situation reports straight to the



duty controller. Team boffins are continuing the all-important mission of teaching the CRObots to brew post-hill tea at the perfect 'Goldilocks' strength.

And finally, the dinosaur... every team has its share of 'strange and rather different locations' on call-outs, but NEWSAR members were so engrossed in their task, they hadn't noticed the 'wildlife' on one of their recent jobs, caught on camera by a team member. Fortunately, this was identified as a 'veggie-saurus' (to quote 'Jurassic Park') so no danger to team members or casualty! 🐲

Opposite top: April Fool's Day © Rosestock via iStock.

Opposite: North Dartmoor ART © NDSART; East Cornwall's Mountain Rescue Horse © ECSRT; Edale's CRAP © EMRT.

Above: SARA's Mobile Mallard © SARA Wyre; NEWSAR's 'veggie-saurus' © NEWSAR; CROBot © CRO.

news round

APRIL > JUNE

JUNE: 850 MILES AND COUNTING FOR MOUNTAIN RESCUE

Stephen Russell has taken on some of Britain's best known trails to raise money for mountain rescue. A retired Army officer, he's tackled one major route each year, turning his enjoyment of long distance walking into a personal campaign.

It began with the Pennine Way (277 miles) in 2022, the Coast to Coast (190 miles) in 2023, and Offa's Dyke (191 miles) in 2025 — all in support of MREW — then, in 2024, the West Highland Way (98 miles) for Scottish Mountain Rescue, inspired by years training and walking in Scotland during his military career. He walks alone, preferring the simplicity of managing his own pace, staying in B&Bs and meeting people along the way. Including this year's Two Moors Way, he's covered over 850 miles of uplands, moorland and coastal stretches. Each challenge follows the same rhythm of days on the trail with significant mileage and, across successive campaigns, he's raised over £5,500 for MREW. 'These are some of the best trails in the country, but they can be unforgiving,' says Stephen. 'Mountain rescue teams are there when people get into difficulty, and raising money while I walk feels like the most straightforward way of giving something back.'



© Stephen Russell.

Raising funds for rescue

JUNE: FOUR 'OLD-ISH BOYS' RAISE FUNDS FOR MREW

For well over two decades the 'Old-ish Boys' have been walking together in the Lakes and North Yorkshire. Last year, they headed for Braithwaite, near Keswick, but their planned walk didn't quite go to plan...

Around ten minutes after the photo (below), one of the four began to feel very tired, with mild but increasing chest pains. It quickly became clear that they were in a heart attack situation and they called mountain rescue. Keswick, Cockermouth and Patterdale teams responded to their call, along with an RAF team that were training in the area. Fast forward through an emergency cardiac procedure and, by way of thanks — and to support the work of mountain rescue — they undertook a walk around Derwentwater in June, with family and friends, to raise awareness and funds for mountain rescue — raising £2,788.



© 'Old-ish Boys'.



KRISTIN HOSTETTER HAS WORKED AS A JOURNALIST IN THE OUTDOOR INDUSTRY FOR 30+ YEARS AND HAS WRITTEN FOUR BOOKS ON OUTDOOR GEAR. SHE WAS BACKPACKER MAGAZINE'S GEAR EDITOR FOR 22 YEARS BEFORE BECOMING EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF NEWS, WHICH BECAME OUTSIDE BUSINESS JOURNAL.

Don't forget the duct tape

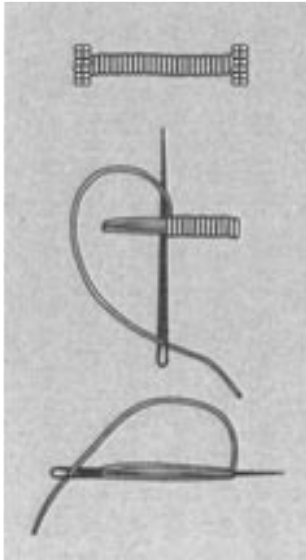
OUR QUARTERLY TOP TIP FROM THIS HANDY LITTLE BOOK BY KRISTIN HOSTETTER

Stitches you should know: Bar Tack

Great for fixing blown pack straps or mending pocket tears. Make three or five long stitches running parallel to the tear. Then make a zillion small, tight overhand stitches across the long ones to close the gap. Augment the repair with tiny bar stitches at either end so that the finished work resembles a capital 'I'.

DUCT TAPE TIP

Resist the urge to make a quick duct-tape patch on fabric unless you absolutely have to. The tape will eventually peel away and leave a sticky residue on the fabric, which makes permanent repairs more difficult. Instead, practice your sewing skills — in the long run, you'll be much happier and so will your gear.



COMPETITION TIME

Answer these three questions to win!

- 1 How far can the new LS20R & LS50R Spotlights see?
- 2 How many new waterproof products is COAST launching this year?
- 3 Does COAST offer special discounts to support emergency services and mountain rescue personnel?

Clue: You'll find the answers to all three questions on page 46 — email your entry to the email at the foot of that page.

Closing date for entries 30 September.



1st prize: 3900 Lumens COAST CL40R Safety Worklight

2nd prize: New COAST LS50R: 5000 Lumens Long-Range, Rechargeable Spot-Light
3rd prize: New COAST EAL35R: 1000 Lumens Voice-Activated, Rechargeable Lantern





FEBRUARY: FROM SOUTH WALES TO SOUTH AMERICA

In February 2026 **Dr David Lee** of Western Beacons Mountain Rescue Team joined the DiMM Andes programme for an expedition to Aconcagua and Mountain Rescue Symposium. Here are the lessons learnt from mountain rescue in the Southern Hemisphere.

'It looks just like Brynammfan'. The words I hear every time I return from an expedition to some exotic mountain range. I suppose my wife is right, that dark brown and green blend of heathland vegetation, interspersed with streams and the odd rocky outcrop. It's a typical feature of a lot of alpine heathland environments, where trees are few and far between. But not this time, you wouldn't find this in South Wales. This was an alpine desert crawling its way up into the realms of high peaks and melting glaciers.

Medicine Andes, University of Colorado and Extreme Medicine, this expedition was designed to bring healthcare professionals from the across the Andes and an international delegation to discuss and practice Mountain Medicine together in a high-altitude environment. Aconcagua is the highest mountain outside of the great ranges in Asia. Standing at 6,961m tall it is one of the Seven Summits, and just like the honeypot areas across the UK, it attracts the crowds and, consequently,

commit to between two weeks or the entire climbing season from Mid-November to early March.

Our expedition was purposefully planned to incorporate the final two weeks of the climbing season. As the number of visitors dwindled this freed up both the Extreme Medicine team, Park Ranger and local Police to join for training exercises. The first few days reviewed the different ropework practices before moving onto extrication and evacuation scenarios. Several key points stuck with me during this phase, the first centred around communication. Despite my very limited Spanish, we were still able to communicate effectively through gestures, body language and the experience of having practised skills together, clearly defining roles in advance. The second was recognising the risk involved in casualty extrication. In hospital, the process of preparing, planning and then moving an unwell patient across the hospital site, let alone between hospitals is a high-risk undertaking. Being aware of the vulnerability of the casualty and how you'll monitor and manage this risk whilst moving is something I'll be introducing to our upcoming casualty care scenarios.

During the expedition we visited three clinic sites. Visitors to the park are limited by a permit system. A requirement of this permit is that you must check in with the Rangers stationed at set camps and get clearance from the Extreme Medicine doctor before continuing upwards. This system is a researcher's dream, with data collected on all visitors throughout their ascent to different altitudes. The role of the clinic doctor does



Images © David Lee.

Flying across the world to a new mountain range needed a strong justification, both for myself and my family. Like the frequent reflections I have on being involved in mountain rescue, there are both financial and time costs that I must balance with the good that comes from being part of a professional volunteer team. This trip was unlike my previous expeditions. In collaboration with Diploma in Mountain

the casualties. In response to the high numbers of injuries and illnesses occurring on the mountain, Aconcagua National Park put out a tender for a private company to provide free on the mountain healthcare for visitors and mountaineers. Awarded to Extreme Medicine, an organisation run by Argentinian doctors, medics are stationed at four sites across the most popular routes. Those signing up to run the clinics typically



share some of the same conundrums faced by us in mountain rescue. The doctor has no powers to stop anyone from proceeding up the mountain, they can strongly advise and have access to medications to support visitors. But in the end, if the continued ascent is likely to cause the visitor or others harm, then the case must be escalated to the Mountain Police Unit, who hold the overall power to remove people from the mountain.

The climax of the expedition was a two-day Rescue Symposium hosted at 4,300m in Plaza de Mulas. If you do ever find yourself contemplating a trip to Aconcagua, just let me advise that these camps are small villages. Even at the tail end of the season there was a hum of excitement throughout. There's a bar, the 'GP surgery', the world's highest art gallery, Wi-Fi, showers and regular barbecues to enjoy as you watch Aconcagua light up from the alpenglow before the stars fill the sky.

Back to the course which began with working alongside the helicopter. Imagine the online ISAR training delivered by a military pilot in Spanish. This was followed up with practical training on loading and unloading a casualty into the H125, affectionately called the hero of high altitude. Midway through the rescue symposium, the helicopter was tasked to evacuate a case of high-altitude pulmonary oedema from 5,500m Nido de Condore, the highest permanent landing zone and the highest medical clinic. During our stay the helicopter also made use of fine weather windows to assist with searching for a lost visitor, a task we supported during one of our acclimatisation hikes.

In the high mountains 'self, team, casualty' is a harsh reality. We were witness to another incident whilst in base camp. Three young Japanese males had summited and



news round

APRIL > JUNE

were making their return down to the high camp. La Travesia is an exposed steep scree slope, that frequently requires crampon use to negotiate. As two of the team went ahead the third slipped and fell down the slope. Lost from view, his companions could not make any contact and hurried back to camp to seek assistance. A hasty party and helicopter flight did not locate the fallen individual and, as the sun set, the search was suspended, fearing that the length of the fall was fatal. A sombre night was starkly broken when the lost man wandered into Nido De Condore, with fluid leaking from his ear and frostbitten hands. Stabilised at the high-altitude clinic he was then flown to a waiting ambulance and taken to hospital in Mendoza.

The remainder of the symposium included medical skills training for park rangers; covering common skills such as splinting and hypothermia to the rarer but important basic life support. The final session was the classic mass casualty incident, a large rockfall with multiple casualties. This provided an excellent opportunity for members of Extreme Medicine to work alongside local police to direct the response of Park Rangers and additional rescue support (guides). As wonderful as the exercise was, does it really need an international expedition to encourage these parties to come together for joint training exercises? The training officers in my team have developed excellent relations with the other agencies we operate alongside, and this is something that I'll, ironically, be taking home from the other side of the Atlantic and would encourage others to reflect on how well they know their own neighbours too.

If you've made it this far then I suppose you're wondering what came of our expedition? Well, we were successful,



everyone came home with all fingers and toes, and still smiling. Did we make the summit? No, but if that is what defines success in the mountains for you, then you wouldn't be reading this magazine. We made the final camp in good time and prepared for an early start for the summit push. A sleepless night was made more troublesome by the formation of a lenticular cloud over the summit. As wind speeds increased, the risk was too high and we made a slow descent off the mountain, nursing some high-altitude pathologies within our own team.

It's likely I'll never return to Aconcagua National Park, and there will always be that sliver of doubt about whether we could have made it. We never get to meet those people in our role as mountain rescue, the ones who made the 'right' decision and fate delivered them safely back to their lives. I imagine many others in this community have similar experiences. So to them I say 'Thank you', and to those less fortunate, I say 'SAR A'. ☺

Awareness Dates

FOR YOUR DIARY:
AUGUST TO
OCTOBER 2026

Raise awareness of both mountain rescue and our Rescue Benevolent Fund.

International Dog Day: 26 August:
#InternationalDogDay

Message here couldn't be simpler: Support and celebrate our amazing search and rescue dogs, handlers and dogs bodies!

International Day of Charity: 5 September:
#CharityDay

Celebrate our team members. Everyone 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.

World Mental Health Day: 10 October:
#WorldMentalHealthDay

Team members are a resilient bunch, but sometimes rescue can affect them in a way they hadn't anticipated. Raise awareness of the Rescue Benevolent Fund and the support it offers to mountain and cave rescue team members. Supporting them, helps support the teams.

simoco

Proudly supporting Mountain Rescue teams across England and Wales with mission critical communications.

Come and visit us at Emergency Tech Show
STAND B115

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MAY: BCRC DOCTORS GET STUCK IN BARADLA IN INTERNATIONAL CAVE RESCUE EXERCISE



Doctors from Derbyshire, North Wales and Irish Cave Rescue took part in the complex medical and technical workshop in Hungary, colloquially known as 'STUCK in Baradla'* (Speleological Techniques in Underground Casualty Crisis) — over eighty attendees from seventeen countries, hosted by the Hungarian Cave Rescue Service. Dr Brendan Sloan (BCRC Medical Officer) explains.

BCRC are members of the European Cave Rescue Association (ECRA), and attend the annual meetings. Within the wider ECRA meetings, there is a medical subcommittee, which facilitates discussion and demonstration between the various attending national teams.

Over the last few years there have been some very significant and medically complex cave rescues (Reisending, Germany in 2014, Ogof Ffynnon Ddu, Wales in 2021 and Morca, Turkey in 2023). In Reisending and Morca, ECRA were involved in coordinating the response and the scale of the rescue required members from multiple national teams working together, often for the first time. There is potential for much bigger future incidents, with known caves now extending up to 2km vertically and hundreds of kilometres horizontally. However, there is great variability in the experience of cave rescue medics, both in terms of caving and actual cave rescues. With this in mind, the chairs of the ECRA medical committee, myself and Dr Denes Nagy (Hungary) formulated a plan to run a multi-day international medical exercise, designed to expose attendees to the challenges of prolonged cave rescues, and allow the testing of equipment and techniques in the cave environment. This would be supported by

a large team of technical cave rescue personnel, as well as significant surface support. After nearly two years of planning, the event ran 5-10 May, with some pre-event tourist caving around Budapest.

The BCRC contingent took advantage of this, and we enjoyed a number of trips in the caves around the capital. Interestingly, the Budapest caves were all created by thermal water, so the passage nature is very different from the karstic caves in the UK. It was also a great opportunity to meet other arriving delegates and explore Budapest. The thermal water, as well as creating caves, is used for thermal baths. A Turkish bath after a caving trip is rather different from the UK experience of getting changed in the sleet on the side of a road.

On 5 May, everyone converged on Aggtelek, a small village in the north of Hungary and the location of the Baradla-Domica cave system, a 25km cave with entrances in Slovakia and Hungary. One of the longest caves in Hungary, it contains one of the world's largest stalagmites (an impressive 37 metres), and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The exercise was supported by the Hungarian National Park. Introductions were made, and an enormous amount of kit prepared.

The following day, the twenty medical attendees, comprising doctors and paramedics from twelve countries, split up into teams of four — deliberately chosen to get the broadest range of experience and background — supported by a group of technical rescuers. They were given scenarios, and had to decide on what medical equipment and kit they would take underground. In many cave rescues, getting resupply of equipment is challenging and slow, and the intention was to

help focus on planning for rescues that may last days. The medical team also took camping equipment, as they were going to stay underground until after the last exercise was completed. The teams entered via a show cave entrance, with a trip of several kilometres to teach the casualties. And so the fun began...

Over four days, the teams faced a range of scenarios, including crush injuries requiring field amputation, severe head and spinal trauma, medical emergencies and drowning. There were also technical challenges — a cave passage that was imminently going to flood, passages that required vertical hauling, and a large stream passage with limited airspace that allowed teams to develop floating stretchers. The aim was to make the scenarios as realistic as possible, with moulage make-up, animal limbs and catheter bags into which medication could be given. The medical personnel took turns as the casualties — for some quite a new experience — and others delivered performances worthy of an Oscar.

As well as the scenarios, the underground mornings were used for discussion, demonstration and teaching of techniques. The use of ultrasound for diagnostics and nerve blocks, joint relocation, splinting and amputation were very popular. Several teams also brought along their monitoring, with several having impressive remote abilities, maintaining signal up to 20m away. It is always interesting to see other teams' equipment and everyone came away with some new ideas and techniques to try.

The final day was in the stream passage, a rare opportunity for the Hungarians to access this part of the cave. Usually flooded, a very

dry April made it ideal for our exercise. With water varying from knee to waist deep, and several areas with restricted air space, this was unfamiliar to many of the European teams, whereas it is more reminiscent of UK stream ways. It is also the part of the cave that crosses the Hungary-Slovakia border, and several people managed to visit this point, complete with border stones and the remains of an iron gate dating back to Soviet days, when it was used to escape from behind the Iron Curtain.

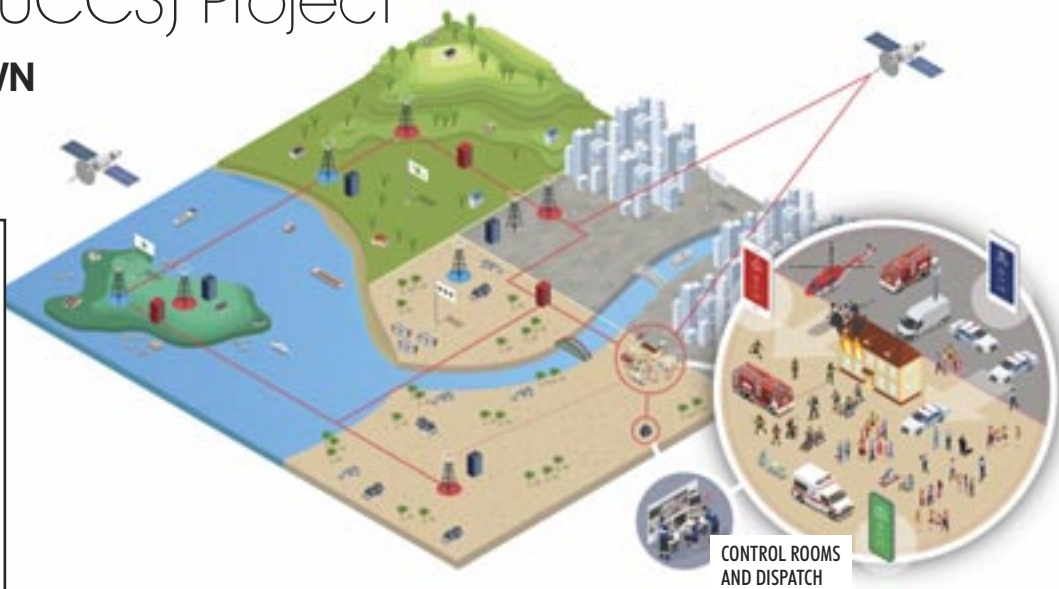
After returning to the surface, there was a great deal of equipment to clean, before a party to celebrate the success of the event. Living and working in such close proximity over the previous 4 days had helped foster friendships, and the feedback from the delegates was universally positive. It was a shame to have to return to normality, although a final thermal spa trip on the way to the airport did help somewhat.

This was a massive undertaking, and we are profoundly grateful to the Hungarian Cave Rescue Service for the logistical and technical support, as well as organising all the transport and pre-event trips. The event was so large it even made the Hungarian national TV news program, with cameras filming some of the underground exercises. There is a plan to run a smaller event prior to the ECRA meeting in Slovenia in October, and we hope that further events will follow. ☺

Above: Remote monitoring, stretcher handling, amputation workshop, a lengthy Tyrolean Traverse, flooded passages, working with ultrasound nerve blocks and a whole team briefing. Images as credited.

The European Critical Communication System (EUCCS) Project

GRAHAM BROWN
SWALEDALE MRT



I was invited by Dr David Lund to take part in the evaluation of the European Critical Communication System (EUCCS) project as a mountain rescue first responder participant. David is the project coordinator, who I first met five years ago when he supported Swaledale MRT during a trial of 5G communication equipment.

EUCCS is designed to develop a modern, secure and interoperable communications capability that enhances coordination between emergency services and public safety organisations across national borders during crises and disasters. These services include police forces, fire services, ambulance services and mountain rescue teams etc.

At its heart is the concept of 'operational mobility' — enabling responders to use their own national devices and applications to communicate seamlessly with national and international teams. In effect, responders can operate 'the same as at home, wherever they may roam'.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

EUCCS envisions multiple countries, each with different geographical challenges such as urban environments, hilly countryside, sparsely populated rural areas and island territories. Each participating country operates its own National Critical Communication System (NCCS) — a secure and resilient mobile communications network. These national systems are interconnected via a Secure and Resilient Interconnect (SINC), which enables the secure sharing of data, voice and video communications between

countries. The architecture makes use of both dedicated public safety networks and commercial mobile networks to maximise availability, with satellite communications providing additional coverage and resilience where required. EUCCS is built upon modern 4G/LTE and 5G mission-critical standards, moving away from legacy systems such as TETRA and TETRAPOL, which are largely limited to voice communications.

ASCHAFFENBURG PILOT TRIAL

A key element of the project is the execution of realistic testing and evaluation exercises. In March, I attended a pilot trial in Aschaffenburg, Germany, comprising one day's training on the technology, with a live operational scenario the following day.

The scenario simulated a large-scale forest fire, with international assistance deployed from two neighbouring countries. Participants from fourteen countries took part. During the exercise, I was partnered with members of the Bavarian Mountain Rescue Service.

The technology evaluated during the trial was developed by two of the project's industrial partners, Teltronic and Airbus. The equipment comprised ruggedised 5G push to talk devices capable of transmitting:

- Voice communications
- Text messages
- Live and recorded video
- Voice messages
- Photographs.

OPERATIONAL SCENARIO

The exercise began with Country C responding to a wildfire within its borders. Countries A and B were on standby to provide cross border assistance. I was deployed with Country A alongside fire, ambulance and police services. Once the situation was declared out of control, we were tasked with crossing the border. After deployment, my mountain rescue team was directed by our dispatcher to rendezvous with the local police to assist in the search for a missing mother and daughter.

Given the proximity of the wildfire, it quickly became clear that close coordination with local police and fire services was essential. After informing our dispatcher, I was instructed to swipe the screen on my device and select the first option. This simple action enabled me to communicate simultaneously with my dispatcher in Country A, and with police and fire services in Country C.

During the search operation, the mother was located quickly. Information obtained from her allowed us to refine the search area, leading us to a man made labyrinth structure. It became evident that the daughter was probably in the centre of the labyrinth. To accelerate her recovery, a drone transmitted live video directly to my device. This enabled us to navigate efficiently and reach her location promptly.

EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

Throughout the scenario, responders were required to record written observations on what worked well and what did not. Each responder was also shadowed by an independent observer who assessed

whether operational procedures aided or hindered task completion. Immediately after the scenario, group debriefs were conducted, followed by an online questionnaire to complete several days later.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

My experience of the devices was extremely positive. They were intuitive to use and offered several powerful capabilities, including:

- Sharing photographs directly from the scene
- Transmitting live and recorded video
- Sending real-time GPS locations of personnel and assets
- Integrating all inputs into a common operational picture.

However, the most significant benefit was the ability to communicate effortlessly across national borders and between different emergency services with minimal user input. This represents a substantial operational advantage during complex, multi-agency, multi-national incidents.



FUTURE TRIALS AND OUTLOOK

The next trial is scheduled to take place later this year in Prague, and will focus specifically on a mountain rescue search scenario.

Running parallel to the EUCCS are several other projects which will exploit the capabilities of 5G technology eg. medical Bluetooth sensors sending data to the 5G device and onward to the relevant medical/control facility for the remote monitoring of casualties and responders.

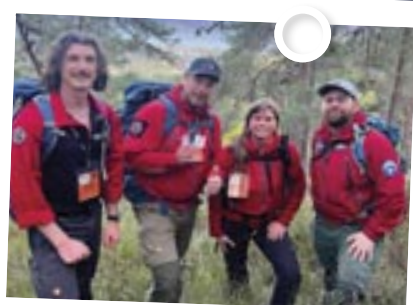
The European Union has now passed legislation requiring the EUCCS to be fully operational by 2030, marking a major step forward for cross border emergency response capability. At the moment, the UK is not a formal participant in the EUCCS project. There are ongoing discussions and interest but this could change.

In summary, the project demonstrates how secure interoperable 4G/5G communications can significantly enhance multinational emergency response. Real world trials show strong usability, powerful situational awareness tools and seamless cross border coordination. For mountain rescue and other emergency services, EUCCS represents a transformational improvement in operational effectiveness ahead of its planned EU-wide deployment by 2030.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank members of the Bavarian Mountain Rescue Service for looking after me during my stay in Germany. 🇩🇪

news round

APRIL > JUNE

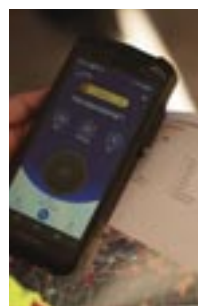


APRIL: TEAMS RETURN TO NORWAY FOR THE SAR GAMES 2026

Over two challenging days and a night, with little sleep, team members from Exmoor, North Dartmoor, West Cornwall, Glossop and Patterdale faced over thirty intense, high-pressure scenarios designed to push them to their limits — from navigating complex search operations and casualty care to making critical, time-sensitive decisions in challenging conditions.

All told, there were sixteen teams from the UK, Poland and Norway. Congratulations to the Exmoor team, who we hear came a very credible fifth. North Dartmoor featured in the top ten too, securing seventh place. Winners were NF Oslo Øst, with locals Svelvik Rode Kors in second and West Mercia SAR in third place. Exmoor team members Eoin, James, Chris and John were also in attendance as guides — a vital role in getting all the participants to the correct scenarios in a timely way, as well as mucking in with the cooking.

Above: Images © Exmoor SRT, Glossop MRT, Patterdale MRT, West Cornwall SRT and North Dartmoor SRT.



Scottish news round

APRIL > JUNE

Spring brought a busy start to the year for the Scottish teams. While sunny weather and long daylight hours encouraged more people into the hills, winter conditions lingered on the highest summits well into May. When the Scottish Avalanche Information Service finished reporting for the season in mid-April, Lochaber and North Cairngorm regions were still showing a moderate avalanche risk, a reminder that winter conditions can persist on Scotland's mountains long into Spring.



© Torridon MRT.

Torridon MRT volunteers responded to two separate incidents on Liathach. One involved two people stuck before the mountain's famous pinnacles in full winter conditions. Team members used ropes to guide the uninjured but cold casualties across the narrow ridge and down steep snowy slopes to safety. A month later, a well-equipped walker became cragfast on complex terrain at the western end of Liathach as daylight faded. A hasty team assisted the walker safely back down the mountain under a starry sky, arriving back to base by 2.00am.

As late as mid-May, **Braemar MRT** and **Aberdeen MRT** were called out to assist walkers who became disorientated in white-out conditions on high ground. The volunteers put in a tough overnight effort to safely return the walkers by morning.



© Lomond MRT.

Top: April's rescue from Liathach in persisting winter conditions © Torridon MRT. Below: Lomond team stretcher casualty with dislocated kneecap © Lomond MRT. Right: SARAA heifer rescue © Scottish FRS; SARAA drone © SARAA.

Lomond MRT experienced a busy Spring, responding to a wide variety of incidents. A 5:30am call-out at the start of April saw volunteers assisting a camper whose tent collapsed in high winds on Ben Lomond's Ptarmigan Ridge, safely escorting them from the hill once conditions improved. The team also responded to two separate medical incidents involving walkers on the West Highland Way who had been vomiting and were unable to continue. Contaminated water was thought to have been a contributing factor, and the incidents prompted reminders about the importance of using known drinking water sources where possible and treating water collected from streams before consumption. The team also supported the Scottish Ambulance Service with the evacuation of a casualty suffering a suspected adder bite at the Whangie, a rare but serious occurrence. Finally, a dislocated kneecap brought the team back to Ben Lomond in June to stretch the casualty off the hill.

Search and Rescue Aerial Association (SARAA) volunteers were kept busy in May, supporting the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service during wildfire operations in the Pentland Hills, using thermal imaging drones to identify hotspots that might otherwise have reignited.

One of the most unusual rescues of the season came at the end of May, when SARAA Scotland pilots from **Tweed Valley MRT** and **Border Search and Rescue Unit** assisted the Scottish Fire and Rescue



© Scottish FRS.

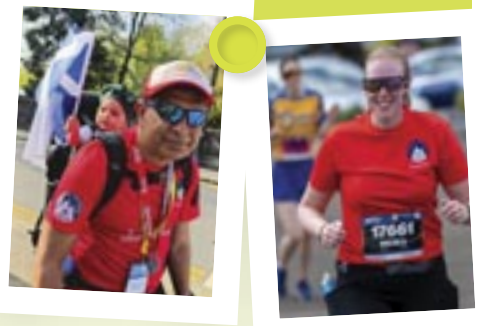


© SARAA.

Among the many unusual aspects of this incident was what we believe to be the first time we've deployed a drone without propellers

Service with the rescue of a 500kg heifer who had fallen into an underground Victorian ice house at a farm in the Scottish Borders. Unable to safely fly a drone within the confined space, the pilots improvised by removing the drone's propellers and lowering the powered-on aircraft through a narrow opening to provide live video footage. The images helped rescuers identify an old doorway near the base of the structure, allowing an escape route to be created and bringing an end to the eleven-hour operation. 'Among the many unusual aspects of this incident was what we believe to be the first time we've deployed a drone without propellers.'

MEET OUR SUPPORTERS



It has been another fantastic fundraising season, with supporters raising funds through marathons, long distance trails and Kiltwalks across Scotland. Edinburgh Marathon Festival ran in exceptionally warm conditions, making the achievements of our runners all the more impressive. Together, our marathon and half marathon fundraisers raised more than £11,000. A special thanks to Nikki who raised an outstanding £1,300. We were also delighted to have volunteers from Tweed Valley MRT out on the course supporting runners.

A huge thank you to SMR Vice Chair Paul Russell and SMR Medical Officer Dr Alastair Glennie, who raised more than £7,000 between them at the TCS London Marathon. Our Kiltwalk supporters continue to inspire. Choudhary Shahid, the first Scottish Pakistani Muslim to complete all 282 Munros, once again took on the Glasgow Kiltwalk. We are also incredibly grateful to supporters Liz and Mike, who completed the Aberdeen Kiltwalk for Scottish Mountain Rescue for the second year running. To everyone who has raised funds, donated or supported our events this year, thank you. Your efforts help us to continue saving lives across Scotland's mountains, hills and wild places.



Top: Choudhary Shahid © Feroz Shahid. Nikki Stevenson. Above: Liz Riley and Mike Webster

SMR ANNUAL REVIEW 2025

Scottish Mountain Rescue has published its 2025 Annual Review and Statistics Report, highlighting another busy year for teams. Teams responded to 1,270 call-outs (including continuations), assisting 901 people and 11 animals. Volunteers gave 39,229 hours of their time on call-outs alone. This year's Statistics Report also includes a ten-year analysis of mountain rescue trends by the University of Strathclyde. Both publications are available to view on the Scottish Mountain Rescue website.



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.

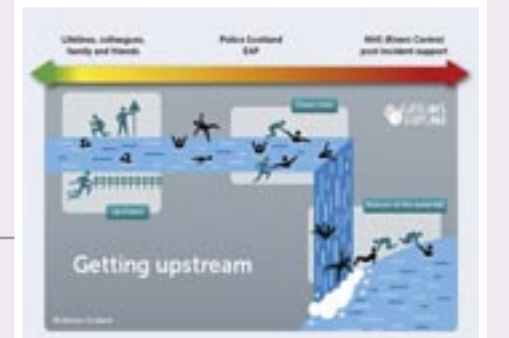


TOOLKIT : Managing the Risks of Psychological Injury

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

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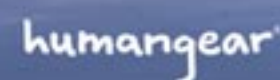
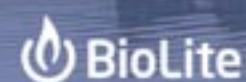


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