

Mountain Rescue England and Wales

Annual Review 2024



Published May 2024



Foreword

HRH The Prince of Wales



As Patron of Mountain Rescue England and Wales, I was so pleased to be able to spend time with Central Beacons Mountain Rescue Team in April of last year. Catherine and I were determined to see first-hand how team volunteers work together. We were involved in abseiling and a stretcher carry, chatting to members in the process, we even shared pizza as part of the team's 60th birthday celebrations.

That visit brought home to us both the commitment of mountain rescue volunteers and the demands upon them. 2023 was busier than ever for many teams as an increasing number of visitors to our moors and mountains needed the safety net that mountain rescue provides.

Thank you for the reassurance that mountain rescue offers to everyone who seeks relaxation or adventure outdoors. Your service is a vital one - thank you.

Fel Noddwr Achub Mynydd Cymru a Lloegr (MREW), bûm i mor falch o fedru treulio amser gyda Thîm Achub Mynydd Canol y Bannau ym mis Ebrill llynedd. Bu Catherine a minnau'n benderfynol o weld droson ni'n hunain sut mae gwirfoddolwyr timau yn cyd-weithio. Buom yn abscilio a helpu cario rhywun ar wely cludo, gan sgwrsio â'r aelodau'r un pryd, cawsom hyd yn oed rannu pítsa fel rhan o ddatliadau pen-blwydd y tim yn 60 oed.

Gwnaeth yr ymweliad hwnnw inni'n dau werthfawrogi ymrwymiad gwirfoddolwyr achub mynydd a hefyd y galwadau arnynt. Bu 2023 yn brysurach nag erioed ar gyfer llawer o dimau; ar nifer cynyddol o ymwelwyr i'n rhosydd a'n mynyddoedd bu angen y diogelwch wrth gefn a roddir gan y gwasanaeth achub mynydd.

Diolch ichi am y cysur y mae'r gwasanaeth achub mynydd yn ei gynnig i bawb sy'n ceisio hamdden neu antur yn yr awyr agored. Mae'ch gwasanaeth yn un unhepgor - diolch ichi.



Is mountain rescue sustainable?

Mike Park has been in the post of MREW Chief Executive Officer for three years now. Following his first two years 'getting to know' team members across England and Wales, as well as our wider network of search and rescue colleagues and partner organisations, 2023 brought into sharper focus the issues and challenges facing mountain rescue teams — particularly those in the 'honey pots' of North Wales, the Lake District and Peak District.



'The biggest concern,' says Mike, 'is the increase in demand for mountain rescue assistance. Especially in those popular locations.'

Last year, Llanberis team members (operating around the tourist magnet that is Yr Wydffa/Snowdon) responded to over 300 calls. Wasdale team (based in the western Lake District) recorded over 160. And Edale team (in the Peak) picked up 157. Since the early days of mountain rescue, incidents have tended to rise year on year, as more people discovered the joy of the outdoors — and the outdoors became more accessible — but the last three years have seen the numbers shift exponentially and there's been a marked change in the demographic.

'It's not sustainable. There's a very real concern for team member wellbeing and the impact on their families and their working lives. Mountain rescuers have always been a resilient and resourceful bunch, but they are still volunteers. How, for example, does an individual decide which call-outs they can afford to miss, if any? How does that impact a team's ability to respond to incidents? And what impact will this have on any future casualties?'

'We're no longer looking at the same customers. We're seeing fewer people with outdoor skills, and a growing lack of awareness of the risks involved in the hill and mountain environment, of the need for appropriate skills, clothing and kit while they're out there. Essentially, they're not the archetypal outdoors enthusiasts, perhaps unfamiliar with the outdoor press and our own media channels — so how do we influence and educate them?'

'We're thinking about how we can

relieve the pressure on the busier teams, and looking at how they can do things differently. Neighbouring teams already support each other on call-outs, but perhaps there are ways to collaborate more to spread the load.

'Another area of concern is the ability for individual teams and, indeed, the national body, to raise funds. Again, those teams in the honey pots attract more donations because more people go there as tourists, so awareness is greater — and they attract more of the traditional climbing and walking demographic. So we're looking at how the better-off teams can formally help those who need it through a fairness fund. The idea is being driven by Keswick team, with other teams involved in the discussions. Once in place, the fund might, say, support a team with unexpected vehicle costs or a specific project. It's early days, but this is innate mountain rescue empathy in action.'

He's been pleased to see that the media profile of mountain rescue has benefited significantly from not just one, but two, television series (focusing on mountain rescue in North Wales and the Lakes), and a well-observed piece in *The Sunday Times* magazine.

'It's good to see the recent level of mainstream media interest in what we do — not just when a high profile story hits the headlines, but looking at the nuts and bolts of mountain rescue and the people who make it happen.'

The Sunday Times article profiled the Llanberis team, following their busiest year yet. The journalist and photographer shadowed team members during training sessions and a couple of call-outs in mid-February, capturing a lot of human

interest and interviewing team members and some of the casualties involved.

The BBC Wales *SOS Extreme Rescues* series included other rescue services, working alongside the teams, and aired over a number of weeks.

'The crews worked very closely with all those involved, and what came across was very mature, not only in terms of its high production values, but in getting our key safety messages across. We're hoping there will be another series.'

Beyond the organisation, we continue to be involved at UKSAR level and Mike is lobbying hard for proper recognition at government level. 'It's not happening fast enough,' he says, with a characteristic grin, 'but we're making progress!'

And finally, returning to the topic of sustainability and the need to support our team members, he's happy to report that we continue to develop a number of initiatives looking at shared values and wellbeing in general.

'Our team members are our greatest asset — our most important piece of kit. If they fall over (be that actually or metaphorically), through exhaustion or dwindling enthusiasm, or sheer lack of time, because of the ever-increasing demands on their energy and resources, then our whole mountain rescue service falls over.'

The issue of sustainability is such a key issue, we've focused our 2024 MREW conference on that very topic, drawing in speakers who are expert in building cohesive teams and enabling the individual to optimise their own health and wellbeing. Find out more at: mountain.rescue.org.uk/conference.

Opposite: Llanberis team members during filming for an article in *The Sunday Times* © Jelthro Kiernan.
Top: CEO Mike Park in his natural habitat, winter climbing at Professor Falls, in the Bow Valley, British Columbia © Chris Cookson.

THIS WAY FOR THE INCIDENT STATISTICS IN DETAIL



2023

At a glance: the year's statistics

3462 call-outs
resulting in **2775** deployments

Busiest months
May • June • August with
33% incidents

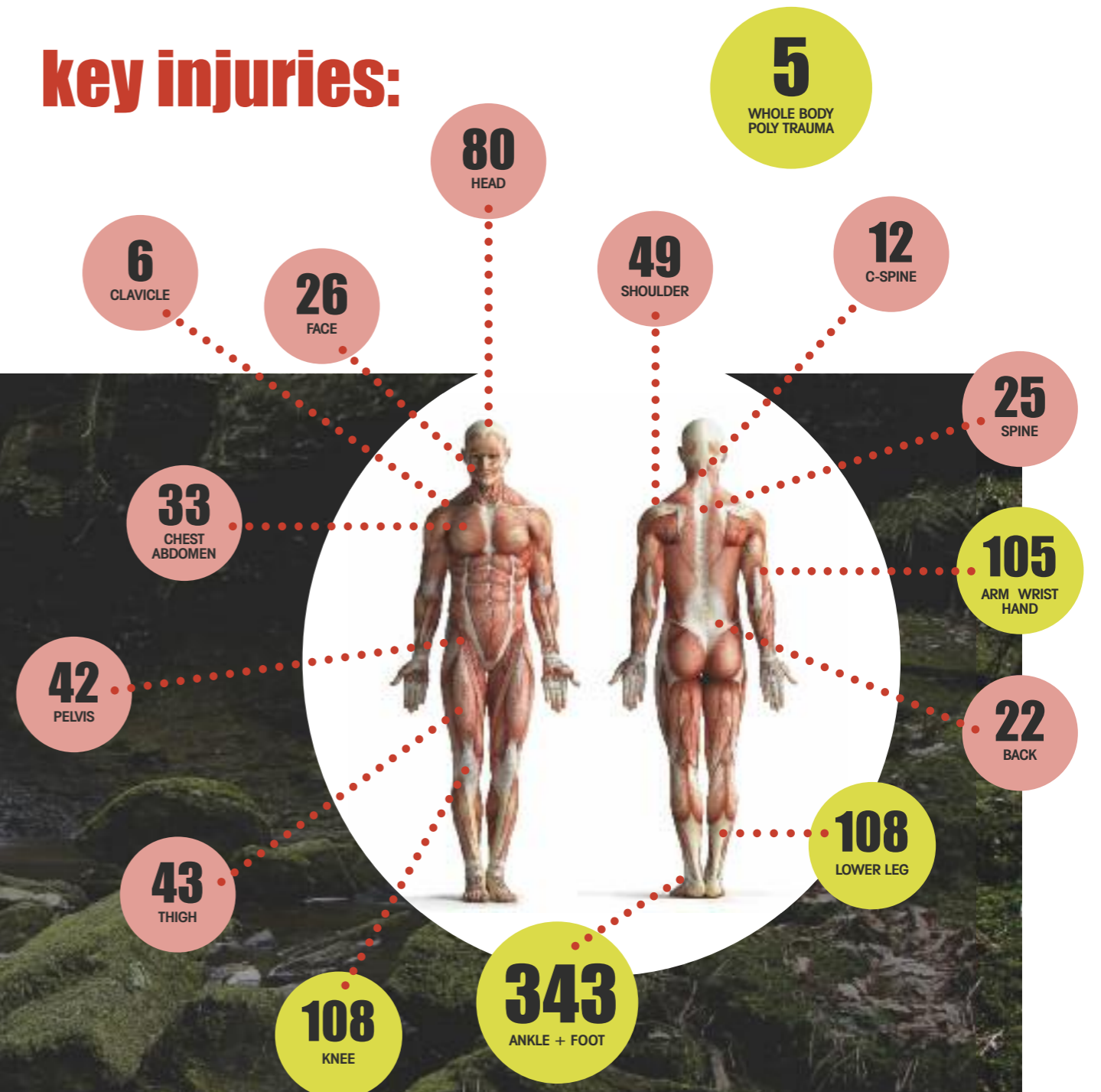
Busiest days of the week
Saturday • Sunday with
45% incidents

Subjects involved
58% male **41%** female * 1% of subjects are recorded
as either 'unknown' or 'other'

Age groups most frequently involved
46% 25-60 years **22%** over-60 years

Nature of incident
21% missing persons **79%** casualties

key injuries:



other reasons for rescue include: allergy, drowning, breathing difficulties, chest pain, collapse, cramp, exhaustion, hypothermia, self harm, suicide and stroke

9 days
without
a call-out

Main photo: Hareshaw Linn, Northumberland National Park | via Pixabay.
Above: Anatomical illustration © Cosmin4000.

2023 Breakdown of key facts and factors

key factors:

- 836:** Human error
- 403:** Weather
- 295:** Inexperience
- 194:** Unfamiliar with chosen pursuit
- 172:** Tired or unfit
- 144:** Poor visibility



Contributory factors

Poor decision making/human error:	836
Inexperience of pursuit/unfamiliarity:	489
Weather (rain/wind/snow/heat):	403
Tired, fatigued or unfit:	171
Poor visibility:	144
Inadequate equipment:	96
Icy conditions underfoot:	76
Inadequate footwear:	60
Inadequate communication:	42
Equipment failure:	9

Mountain rescue skills

Casualty care skills:	643
Inter-agency collaboration:	647
Response driving:	494
Off-road driving:	411
Working with aircraft:	262
Formal search management:	126
Technical rope rescue:	111
Fatal incident protocol:	52
Swift water rescue:	39

Age groups involved

Unknown age:	238
0 – 15:	169
16 – 24:	237
25 – 60:	942
Over 60:	457

Interventions/equipment

AED:	12
Airway adjunct:	6
AutoPulse:	7
Cannula:	37
CPR:	12
Heat pack:	55
Joint reduction:	34
Needle decompression:	1
Vapour barrier:	25
Warming:	133
Wound dressing:	78
Femoral traction:	7
Limb splintage:	431
Neck collar:	16
Pelvic binding:	38
Vacuum mattress:	204
Advice given:	104
Boat:	7
Stretcher:	712
Transported by train:	7
Transported by helicopter:	248
Transported in team vehicle:	332
Walked off:	393

116,103
volunteer rescuer hours

Incident Figures: January through to end of December, 2023

Lake District

Cockermouth	82
Coniston	67
Duddon & Furness	82
Kendal	52
Keswick	112
Kirkby Stephen	15
Langdale Ambleside	116
Patterdale	55
Penrith	34
Wasdale	163
778	

Mid Pennines

Bolton	57
Bowland Pennine	52
Calder Valley	49
Holme Valley	60
Rossendale & Pendle	60
278	

North East

Cleveland	54
North of Tyne	36
Northumberland	77
Swaledale	43
Teesdale & Weardale	35
245	

North Wales

Aberdyfi	53
Aberglaslyn	73
Llanberis	309
North East Wales	73
Ogwen Valley	173
South Snowdonia	52
733	

Peak District

Buxton	109
Derby	73
Edale	157
Glossop	46
Kinder	40
Oldham	37
Woodhead	80
542	

Peninsula

Cornwall East	22
Cornwall West	23
Dartmoor Ashburton	43
Dartmoor Okehampton	30
Dartmoor Plymouth	13
Dartmoor Tavistock	30
Exmoor	48
209	

South Wales

Brecon	85
Central Beacons	97
Longtown	45
Western Beacons	47
274	

South West

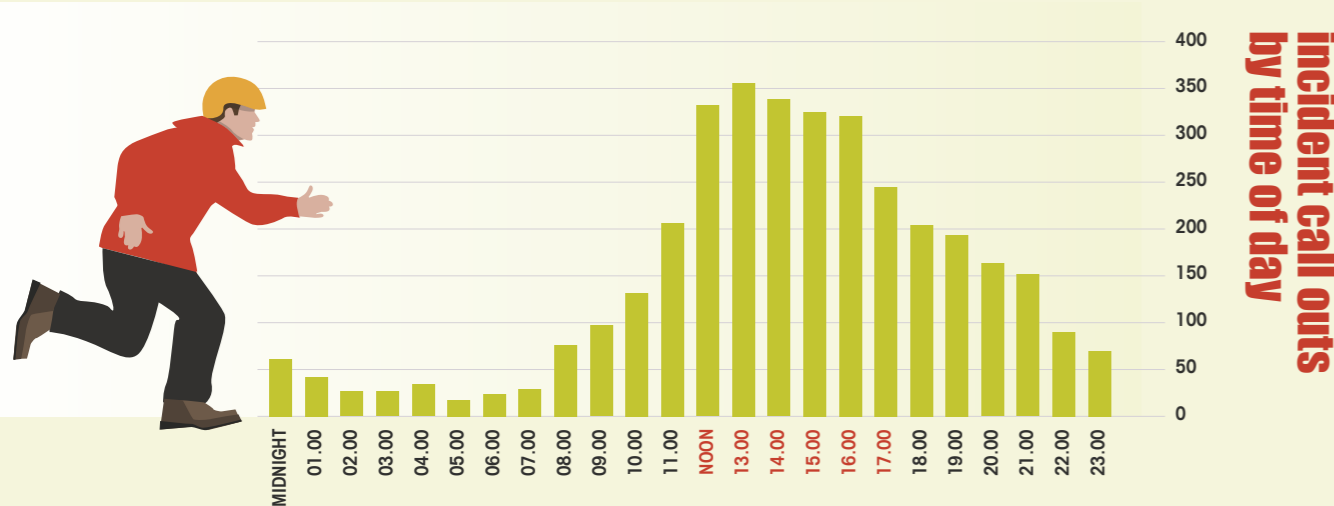
Avon & Somerset	37
SARA	46
83	

Yorkshire Dales

CRO	84
Scarborough & Ryedale	44
Upper Wharfedale	51
179	

Search Dogs

MRSD England	81
SARDA Wales	37
SARDA South Wales	23
141	



Figures as published in **Mountain Rescue Magazine, Issue 87** in January 2024. Sorted according to **geographical region**. Dog associations listed separately. (Note: No reports submitted by Lake District Mountain Rescue Dogs at the time of publication).





A year in the life of a partnership with OS

In 2023, MREW entered into a strategic partnership with Ordnance Survey, to promote public safety messages and encourage a more responsible outdoor experience. As part of that partnership, mountain rescue volunteers have had free access to the Premium subscription of the OS Maps app for up-to-date maps and navigation tools. A year on, we look back on a busy year of joint working that's extended well beyond free app access.

Just before Easter 2023, a successful media campaign involving both Nick Giles, Managing Director of Ordnance Survey Leisure, and our own CEO Mike Park, drove home key messages via TV and radio, not only about safety, but also to inspire people to experience the outdoors.

There was also joint working between the MREW media team and those at OS to ensure that social media and digital marketing opportunities were maximised and safety messages communicated as broadly as possible around Easter 2023.

Developing the product

Josh Warren (Exmoor SRT) is relationship manager in MREW for OS Consumer and he has taken the lead in feeding back comments from team members since they've been using the app.

'Experts from OS spent time with teams in the Peak District and South Wales early in 2023, and a small group of OS personnel attended the MREW AGM in May,' he says. 'From their feedback, this all provided valuable insight into how mountain rescue works, what's important to us and why.'

'The partnership has had a huge impact on the development of OS Maps,' confirms OS Partnerships Manager, Celia Wray. 'It's influenced how we've established a new look and features in the app and we've also tweaked things like the ability to share routes with a link and the snap-to-path improvements, which make route plotting quicker and more reliable.'

Joint working at events

Another aspect of the partnership has been joint working at key public events. In November 2023, the Kendal Mountain Festival proved a great opportunity to

promote a couple of MREW partnerships. OS worked alongside Helly Hansen with a stand mocked up as a mountain rescue base. Ordnance Survey demonstrated the 'operations' side, while Helly Hansen's 'locker room' showcased their technical clothing.

The festival was a particularly busy time for Shane Ohly and his colleagues at Kendal MRT, involving their own fundraising and then everything from media events to team base visits and schools work to a 'Women in Mountain Rescue' panel, and a major fell race event as well.

MREW also worked with OS Maps and Helly Hansen on a stand for the National Outdoor Expo in Birmingham in April 2023, and in 2024 too.

'Working with partners at these events enables us to have a higher profile,' says Julian Walden of Derby MRT, who helps coordinate these events for MREW. 'The OS Maps connection is an easy way into talking about safety and navigation. We still encourage people to carry a paper map and compass — they don't need battery power — but we can also push the importance of navigation as well as location if people prefer to have a good app on their phone.'

Royal approval

In February 2024, MREW was asked to take part in an emergency services event at Ordnance Survey HQ in Southampton. This was about showing how the different services are working with OS and its data to improve capabilities. Our focus was on the use of drones and the software tools developed by mountain rescue volunteers which use OS data to search steep ground more effectively. Over 600 OS staff had the opportunity to find out more (and to meet Search Dog Amber),



during the morning. Later in the day, HRH The Princess Royal and senior VIP guests from the emergency services toured the exhibition too.

Coming in 2024

The new-look OS Maps app launched in early 2024, with additional functionality as well as laying the foundations for future developments. The roll out within MREW has just been completed.

'The hope is that we can attract more MR volunteers to use the app and feed back,' says Josh. 'We know that some of those who didn't sign up at first already had the app on their phones so they're now gradually taking up the partnership offer. And we'll continue to feed into the developments of the tool in the months ahead.'



Opposite & top: Western Beacons photoshoot with Ordnance Survey © OS. **Right centre:** Trainee Search dog Jura at the Kendal Mountain Festival in November 2023. Image supplied. **Right:** Left to right: Dave Binks (Duddon & Furness MRT), Paula Holbrook (Dartmoor SRT Ashburton/MREW Trustee) with Search Dog Amber, Brendan O'Neill (Derby MRT/MREW Drone Officer), Josh Warren (Exmoor MRT/MREW OS Relationship Manager), Mark Lewis (Western Beacons MRT/MREW ICT Director at OS HQ in Southampton) © OS.



Mountain rescue gets sociable

Mountain rescue teams and MREW have been active on social media for several years, but recent changes and trends have brought fresh focus to making the most of its opportunities. Many teams are shifting their activity to Instagram, to reach new and younger audiences with incident news, fundraising appeals and safety information. That shift has, in turn, created a hunger for many more images and video too.

'MREW created its first Social Media Guidelines in 2019,' says Judy Whiteside, *Mountain Rescue Magazine* editor and one of those involved in shaping our social media approach. 'There's pressure to be first, to be quick and to say (and show) as much as possible, but we need to push back on that. Our posts need to be consistent with those from the paid emergency services, timed and worded appropriately for the casualty and their friends and family, and we need to assume that anyone and everyone will take images and words and publish them elsewhere with no consultation.'

From local team to national profile

On Facebook, our focus is very much on sharing team posts, mainly about incidents, to the national following (about 38,000 at the last count), interspersed with safety advice and support posts linked to those raising money for MREW.

'Our Followers are mainly interested in the core activities of the teams,' says Sally Seed, who posts on behalf of MREW. 'But we like to give our followers things to share occasionally, aiming to connect with their Friends and extend our reach, especially with safety campaigns. We're also aware that those 38,000 are the interested many. If we can encourage just 10% of them to have a look at the MREW website and make a stronger connection, that's 3,800 ambassadors for mountain rescue. If 10% of those ambassadors go on to buy something from the online shop or make a donation, that's 380 financial contributions to MR.'

Opposite: Buxton team members during a call-out in March 2024 © Buxton MRT. **Top:** Glossop and Kinder team members were involved in helping close the Snake Pass for an incident in April 2024 – Kinder team vehicle can be seen in shot with the HM Coastguard helicopter © Peter Józefczyk.



And if just 10% of those supporters — that's 38 individuals — consider leaving a legacy or making a significant donation to mountain rescue, that's a huge contribution to funding the service in future.'

Adapting to Instagram

MREW is still shaping its approach to Instagram, relying so far on the hashtag #mountainrescue and similar tags. It's not as appropriate simply to share team posts on Instagram — the hashtag does that already.

'We're looking at how we could use Instagram for our safety campaigns and fundraising,' explains Sally, 'which means we need to consider the creation of stories and reels and everything else that's developed in recent years. And that's just adapting to what's already there. Some teams have considered TikTok, Threads is still developing, and there are bound to be new tools and approaches emerging in the next few years too.'

Building communities...

The MREW Media and Communications Network is a Facebook-based group that brings together people with media roles in their teams, regions or nationally. Group

members work together to support each other and share experience, resources and ideas.

Social media has also enabled the development of other outdoors-related communities and MREW is working with some of them to learn how best to communicate and build a safer outdoor community. Adventure Buddies (with almost 12k members) and Hiking Buddies UK (over 45k), both on Facebook, raise money for MREW with events, and also publicise walks and adventures across the UK for their online members. They bring together people who are new to the outdoors and with the more experienced, one of the key ways of helping people build their skills, knowledge and expertise, and get local advice from people who know more about what to expect.

All in all, social media offers lots of opportunities for mountain rescue. Done well, it can educate, inform and entertain and, with luck, will help raise money and save lives too.

WHAT WOULD MOUNTAIN RESCUE DO? CHECK OUT OUR SOCIAL MEDIA SAFETY CAMPAIGN OVER THE PAGE



MREW Facebook performance in five easy figures

Oliver Robinson is a social media professional who supports our activities online. He reports regularly to the Media and Communications Network on what's working best and what could be done differently. The following figures are based on Oliver's analysis, comparing the year mid-November 2022 to November 2023 with mid-November 2021 to November 2022.

- 1 REACH: 553,581**
UP NEARLY 27% ON THE PREVIOUS YEAR
- 2 INTERACTIONS: 83,075**
MORE THAN DOUBLE IN 2021/22 (37,382)
- 3 LINK CLICKS: 21,745**
A VERY SMALL INCREASE OF JUST 1.4%
- 4 VISITS: 43,665**
162.2% INCREASE ON 2021/22 (16,651)
- 5 NEW FOLLOWS: 814**
UP FROM 2021/22 (721)

News snips

from around England and Wales

The Royal Family have long been keen advocates of the outdoor life — perhaps none more so than Prince William, who has been our patron since 2007. His patronage has brought many opportunities to teams across England and Wales, helping raise both awareness and funds. Thank you!



APRIL 2023: The Prince and Princess of Wales pop in to meet the Central Beacons team

The visit was to be 'as informal as possible, with lots of activities and fun', and it certainly lived up to the brief!

William and Catherine joined in with as many 'team activities' as possible, including abseiling, casualty care and stretcher handling. They were also given a tour of the technological wizardry involved in the average mountain rescue incident — satellite and radio comms, mapping and casualty location, SARCALL and drones. All topped off by the sharing of pizza and drinks. A good day out, with plenty of smiles all round. The feedback was 'overwhelmingly positive,' says Huw Jones, Central Beacons team leader.

Above and left: The Prince and Princess of Wales during their visit to Central Beacons team, in South Wales © Sin Hart Photography. **Opposite:** HRH The Prince of Wales playing in the Royal Charity Polo Day in July 2023 © Chris Jackson.



AUGUST 2023: King and Queen meet South Wales teams

Brecon MRT and South and Mid Wales CRT were invited by the First Minister of Wales to attend a reception for King Charles and Queen Camilla, to celebrate community.

The event was also an important opportunity to build relationships between mountain and cave rescue. Those present had the opportunity to talk to King Charles, who recalled the major rescue of George Linnane in 2021 from Ogor Fynnon Ddu. Mr Drakeford joked about his own experience of going caving in his youth and getting stuck behind a fellow young caver.

Top: Left to right: Tom Ford and Sue Goodhead (SWMCRT), Ashley Stamford Plows, Dominic Turpin, Claire Key and Geoff Key (Brecon MRT), Roger Thomas (Chief Fire Officer, Mid and West Wales FRS), Gary Mitchell and Ali Garman (SMWRT). **Above:** First Minister for Wales, Mark Drakeford with Queen Camilla and King Charles. Images supplied by SMWCRT.



JULY 2023: Royal Charity Polo Day supports mountain rescue

The Prince and Princess of Wales attended the match, which raised a stunning £1,000,000 to be shared between eleven of the charities they support. William took to the field in 'an exciting round-robin format' from which his team emerged the winners.



SOCIAL MEDIA 2023: What would mountain rescue do?

This quirky safety campaign has continued into 2024, featuring examples of things mountain rescue volunteers do to keep themselves safe in the mountains.

Ideas have included carrying an emergency shelter, thinking about clothing layers, and carrying a paper map and compass as a back up to mobile phone apps. The message that's proved most popular was all about wrapping gaffer tape round a walking pole (or an old credit card) to keep it handy for repairs on the hill! Deceptively simple!

...and top tips

News snips

from around England and Wales

The mountain environment can be infinitely photogenic — photo opportunities abound. And with the ever-rising use of social media, many areas are seeing increased traffic as people seek out that 'perfect shot', perhaps on terrain they wouldn't otherwise feel comfortable in.

JULY/AUGUST 2023: Beware seeking out that seductive selfie spot!

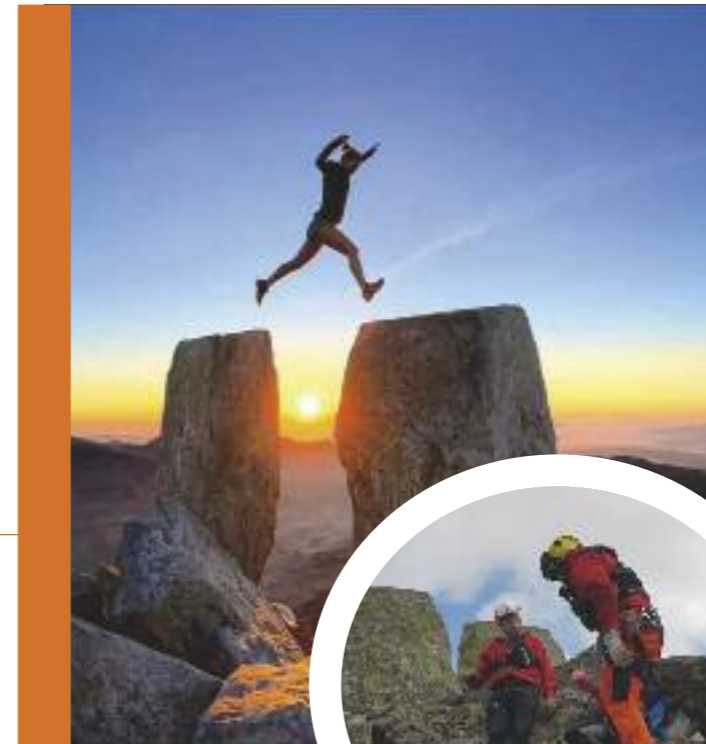
Thornton Force is a 14-metre high waterfall which features in the Ingleton Waterfall Trail, where the river flows over tree-lined limestone rocks in a wide cascade into the rocky pool below. It's a stunning photo opportunity.

In July, the Cave Rescue Organisation (CRO) were called when a visitor slipped while taking a selfie on the ledge running behind the waterfall, falling and slithering over three metres onto the rocks below. Held there temporarily by the sheer force of the water, he was eventually able to escape the water and stand, with the help of a friend. He 'seemed happy' when the team arrived but, after experiencing pain in his back and elsewhere, he was placed in a vacuum mattress by the team, for evacuation by stretcher.



In August, a group of ramblers had to be rescued after becoming lost on a treacherous walking route which has become increasingly popular among Instagrammers keen to take selfie shots with the spectacular three-pronged gritstone pillar known as the Trinnacle.

Oldham team members located the lost walkers, escorting some back to safety on foot, while others were transported in the police helicopter. The unofficially named 'Trinnacle Trail', regularly features on social media, and the Instagram-driven increase in traffic is concerning. So much so that the Peak District National Park website advises that the rock formation is 'a dangerous scramble and climb in all conditions and comes with a risk of serious injury in a remote location', reminding visitors that climbing is not advised.



Also in August, Ogwen Valley team warned about the dangers of the often-photographed jump on Adam and Eve on Tryfan's summit after a man fell some distance to the ground during his attempt, sustaining suspected head and spinal injuries.

A team member commented that it was 'lucky' the casualty jumped right to left and 'only' fell five metres. A jump from left to right would result in a fall of several hundred. 'If you are unsure,' was the advice, 'maybe consider leaning against them instead.'

Left: Thornton Force waterfall, part of the Ingleton Waterfalls Trail © David Dixon (Creative Commons License); **CRO** team members during the stretcher carry © CRO. **Far left:** 'The Trinnacle' pillars in the Peak District © Trevor Harris (Creative Commons License). **Above:** Sion a Sián/Adam and Eve pillars on Tryfan. **Inset:** Winchman and team member at the incident © Ogwen Valley MRO.

2023/2024: Two new team bases start to take shape

In June 2023, Duddon and Furness team held their first meeting at their 'new base'. After several years of fundraising, the team finally acquired a piece of land on which their new 'home' will be built, having spent the last twenty years or so in rented units.

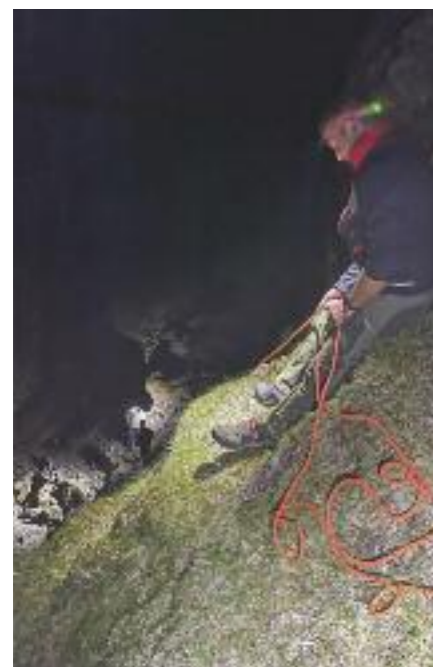
Sadly, while planning permission has been granted, the land secured, and an impressive £775,000 raised, rising costs have left a funding shortfall of £150,000 for the main build. Duddon and Furness is the only team in the Lake District not to have a permanent home. Besides tending their own patch, team members frequently support neighbouring teams with the ever-rising number of call-outs. Martin Cooper, the team's fundraising officer, said the planned base would be a 'game changer'.



Above: Outdoor meetings with a difference © Duddon & Furness MRT. **Below:** Derby team members with Derbyshire Chief Constable Rachel Swann; artist's impression of the new base © Derby MRT.



Meanwhile, in February 2024, Derby team members gathered in the wind and rain, to celebrate the first sod being dug for their new home. Fundraising and plans have been in the process since 2014, when the land was first purchased.



MAY 2023: Marriage proposal ends in late night gully rescue

The mountain environment is more than photogenic, of course. It feeds the soul and lifts the heart, inspiring poets and romantics for centuries. So what better place to propose? Unfortunately for one couple, what started out as a wonderfully romantic moment, ended up with a call to Keswick MRT.

The couple had climbed Scafell Pike via the Corridor Route, and were returning via another route having received instructions from a passerby on the best way back to Seathwaite. Somewhere along the path, by a heart-shaped rock, the man proposed to his partner, who (we're pleased to report) said 'yes'. They continued down, but took a wrong turn and ended up cragfast in the dark on the flanks of Glaramara, in a steep sided gully. Keswick team members were alerted, an hour before midnight, after reported light flashes and whistles in an area with poor phone coverage. A team member descended to the couple, equipped with helmets and harnesses, and they were able to climb out with the safety of a rope from above. What you might call a proposal to remember!

Left: Cragfast couple rescue from heart shaped rock © Keswick MRT.

APRIL 2024: Leo Houlding opens Keswick base extension

After an introduction by second generation mountain rescuer Jonny Hume, chairman James Lamb gave an overview of the history of the team bases from their humble beginnings in garages on the side of the Central car park to the amazing facility they have now.



The extension provides more space for storage and training and allows the base to serve as a Silver Command Centre to coordinate responses to major multi-agency events such as floods incidents. Local climbing legend Leo Houlding was clearly impressed by the base describing it as 'probably the most advanced mountain rescue facility in the country'.

Left: Leo Houlding © Keswick MRT.



Sustainability in terms of the environment is a challenge for mountain rescue, as for any organisation that relies on petrol or diesel vehicles. Progress is being made and **Chris Jones**, acting MREW Vehicles Officer, workhorse vehicle enthusiast and team leader of the Cumbria Ore Mines Rescue Unit, demonstrated and reviewed a possible solution last year.



The demise of the 'old' Defender and the vacuum left by its parting have left MR teams with a real difficulty. Pick-ups and 4WD vans have been pressed into service but now an all-electric, British alternative has entered the scene.

The Munro EV looks very purposeful. Its straight lines and boxy shape are redolent of early Land Rovers and wannabe kit car 4x4s, but it's bigger and cleverer. It has a twin cab and lots of space in the back and, yes, it will take a mountain rescue stretcher. You can even hose it out (below dashboard level), so those muddy and wet boots aren't quite as hard to deal with. The best thing from our point of view: it's no 'Chelsea tractor'. Everything is there for a purpose.

So electric then? Will the Munro EV work for us? I would say for most, definitely. It has a stated range of up to 190 miles and few teams would exceed that on a shout but Munro claim this drops to 113 miles when driving in 'adverse conditions'. That might be an issue for some teams but range is improving all the time.

The Munro EV weighs 2500 kgs with a stated maximum payload of another 1000 kgs, so it's within the 3500 kgs limit. It requires extra training to go up to the limit of 4.25 tonnes in an EV, but this is by no means as much as a C1 licence. Charging, a common challenge, can be accomplished with a 50kWh charger from 10% to 80% in an hour.

The body is made of steel, coated with hard-wearing paint and aluminium plate is used inside to cover everything such as the dash and the doors. Switchgear is large and well-spaced to allow for gloved hand operation. As you might have guessed, the Munro is built in Scotland where they know a thing or two about adverse weather. The running gear is very familiar and Munro have taken the view that they use as few specialist parts as possible so these are easily sourced for repair and maintenance.

If you've driven an EV you'll be used to quirky things like silence coupled to great torque. The Munro had those and was also very comfortable. The dashboard is

simple and Munro have minimised the display to only give you the information you need. There are locking differentials available and live axles with excellent approach and departure angles and there's just a lever for automatic drive or reverse as it is permanent 4WD. There's a list of extras you can specify, including on-board power and air suspension.

On costs, there are three vehicles in the range, each giving more range, but the base model, which we drove, is on sale for around £75k including VAT.

To drive, the vehicle felt very planted and certainly good off-road, tackling climbs and mud with ease. Obviously having the battery weight low down helps. Everything was reassuringly familiar to an old Defender driver, but you were aware that this was something much more modern and capable.

All in all, the team members who came along to the test day up in Cumbria were impressed. As we look to the future and the demise of the internal combustion engine, Munro may have the answer.

Rethinking greener vehicles in five easy steps

Based on an article by Catherine Levin, editor of Emergency Services Times. EST online has a whole channel dedicated to sustainability in both the paid and voluntary emergency services. Read more at [emergencyservicetimes.com/category/sustainability](https://www.emergencyservicetimes.com/category/sustainability)

The deadline to end sales of diesel and petrol vehicles in the UK may seem a long way off but, well ahead of 2035, fleet managers in all emergency services are working hard to ensure staff have the right vehicles to do the job and reduce emissions along the way. Here are five important steps to getting there:

- 1: Sort out rapid charging.** There are currently 57k public charging points across the UK with an ambition to increase this to 300k by 2030. These public charging points will be helpful to emergency service drivers using smaller cars and needing to charge while out and about, but they can't rely on them and need their own charging points.
- 2: Collaborate.** This is a key aspect of the way the emergency services work, but it could be a challenge when charging for charging is involved. Collaboration should also contribute to joined up planning for the location of emergency service chargers. It makes sense to plan together.
- 3: Rethink operations.** Moving to electric vehicles means that top speeds will change and emergency service vehicles often have to be at an incident for a prolonged period. Should services be rethinking what vehicles get sent to incidents in the first place?
- 4: Remove friction.** Make it easy for drivers to use an electric vehicle by simplifying the process of charging it. Buy vehicles that are great to drive. Test out lots and work out which work best for you.
- 5: Leadership.** There's a real need for discussion about buy in at senior levels. Investing in 'green fleet' is a big challenge but so is reducing emissions.

Are friends electric?



The MREW Party Leader course was first introduced back in the 1990s and it has been hosted by North East Wales SAR team (NEWSAR) since 2015. In all, at least twelve groups of 35 or so participants have lived and worked together for these weekends, sharing team experiences, facing practical challenges, and developing and building their leadership skills.

Iain Ashcroft of NEWSAR has been involved in delivering the course since 2014 and, since February 2024, has been working with our national training officer, Phil Ridley to extend its impact and ensure two courses per annum in February and November.

'We've always been over-subscribed, especially when there's been only one course in a year,' says Iain. 'Going to two weekends a year, and continuing to hold the course at the Colomendy Kingswood Outdoor Centre, just west of Mold, should work well.'

I was well out of my comfort zone and hesitantly put myself forward. Glad I did. Massive thanks to the training team – all so supportive and encouraging.

'As a venue, it's ideal and economical because it offers accommodation, classroom facilities and external grounds for the practical scenarios, as well as a good opportunity for delegates and staff to socialise and network. The most recent course proved successful and we're looking forward to the November one already.'

Phil Ridley attended the Party Leader course as a delegate back in 1993 when it was organised by the Mid Pennine region. He sees the course as a crucial

element in any future national training programme.

'Without giving too much away, this course brings together MREW and BCRC leadership expertise to share good practice and to enhance and develop team members' skills. It's not a team leaders' course as such — that's another story and there's a plan in the pipeline for later in the year — but it has proved ideal for those who are progressing into the management of small group parties during operational call-outs.'

With only 35 places available, there is wide participation from all regions, with 22-25 teams sending delegates over the years. This means it's easy to illustrate both commonality and different approaches to the tasks carried out during the course.

The weekend's busy curriculum is designed to push boundaries in a safe environment and prepare candidates for some of the situations, expectations and stresses that may present themselves at live incidents.

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

'The enthusiasm and commitment of delegates and staff (including those behind the scenes), make the course the success it is,' stresses Phil. 'It's an encouraging example and a privilege to see how, after meeting for the first time on a Friday evening, by Sunday

I found the course really did push me and make me think about things in a much more detailed and structured way. I came away definitely regaining my MR mojo. Buzzing!

MR volunteers from around the country are able to operate as an efficient, coherent and effective team, with everybody working in harmony with one another. That's all too easy to take for granted, but it is a credit to MR.'



Opposite: Annual Peak District training weekend at Crowden, 2023. Inset, top & above: Party Leader course, February 2024. Images supplied.

Objectives of the Party Leader course

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

Lots in common brought to the party

News snips

from around England and Wales

While the core of our work is, of course, providing support for fellow human beings, team members are frequently called to assist with searching for and then rescuing a whole array of pets and other animals which have become stuck, for whatever reason, in the mountain environment.



dogs...

MAY 2023: Rocky the Akita remains 'cool, calm and positively regal' during stretcher carry off Scafell Pike

The exhausted dog was refusing to move while on a return walk to Langdale, after scaling England's highest mountain.

Keswick team members climbed towards Esk Hause via Grains Gill, having first encouraged Rocky's owners — who were beginning to feel the cold — to begin their descent towards the team, eventually meeting up high on Grains Gill. The canine casualty was duly made comfortable in a casbag on the mountain rescue stretcher, then carried and sledged back to Seathwaite Farm. 'Despite being quite a large dog at 33kg,' said the team, 'it was a joy to carry such a relatively lightweight casualty.'

Above & inset top: Keswick team members carry a 'positively regal' Rocky the Akita down to the safety of Seathwaite Farm © Keswick MRT. **Inset right:** Wasdale team members with the two dogs rescued from Piers Gill © Wasdale MRT.



MARCH 2024: Hot dogs to the rescue

Wasdale team members went to the aid of a man who had fallen in Piers Gill, sustaining a broken leg.

His two dogs were also stuck, higher up the gill where they remained until later in the day when team members were able to descend into the gorge on ropes, armed with hot dogs to coax the animals to safety.

MARCH 2024: Scooby Doo digs his paws into Scafell Pike

Still with Scafell Pike — and rather large, reluctant dogs — and Wasdale team was called out when two walkers and their dog, Dexter, failed to make contact from an intended walk up the mountain and were now overdue their expected return.

Given the real risk of hypothermia for the missing persons, no phone contact, and the weather closing in, team members called in extra support from their colleagues in Duddon and Furness team and the Lake District search dogs. Search groups were sent to all the usual routes in Wasdale and Eskdale, eventually hearing a 'woof' and a howl in response to their whistles. A light was visible high on the flanks of Scafell. It was difficult to see exactly where but, finally, the missing party were found 'dogfast' on steep ground. Only problem was that Dexter, a 40kg Doberman Belgian Malinois cross, was refusing to budge! And night was falling fast. The only thing to do was throw up the bivvy shelters and wait it out until dawn. As dawn broke, Dexter was still stood firm. A last ditch attempt with a 50-metre rope lead eventually encouraged him downhill and, once he started moving, it was a brisk, boisterous walk back to Brackenclose.



Above: Dexter the dog © Wasdale MRT. **Below:** Dartmoor rescue sheep © Dartmoor Ashburton MRT. **Right:** Jeckyll with owner Molly and team member Rick. **Inset:** Jeckyll with Llyn Idwal below © OVMRO.

sheep...

APRIL 2024: Just foolin' around...

Then, sometimes, the boot's on the other hoof and Dartmoor Ashburton MRT made national news with their 'First of April' initiative: four crossbreed rescue sheep working with the team to find casualties in difficult terrain.



JULY 2023: Tickling tail feathers around the world...

When Ogwen team members were called out on the first day of the summer holidays, little did they know the story would reverberate around the world's news media, with enquiries flying in from as far afield as New York, Canada and Hindustan.

A young woman was apparently stuck high on the cliffs of Glyder Fawr above Cwm Idwal. A group of parrot owners, visiting the area from Derbyshire, had been flying their birds when a peregrine falcon attacked them, spooking one of the parrots. The owner's tracker showed the bird to be high on the upper cliffs and she climbed up to retrieve it. As is often the way with non-humans seemingly stuck in high places, the parrot duly flew back down to the group, leaving its owner and a second bird still stuck. To the inevitable barrage of parrot themed quips, a hill party climbed to the base of the cliffs and belayed a team member up to her location to make her safe. In the best pantomime tradition, Jeckyll, the second parrot — still perched on her owner's rucksack — greeted their rescuers with a parrotty 'Hello!' before both were safely lowered back down to earth.

...and parrots



Drone use for remote searches

Mountain rescue teams have been deploying drones in small numbers since the technology first became affordable and viable, about seven years ago. There are about 50 trained pilots across England and Wales, working in about 25 different teams and Brendan O'Neill (Derby MRT) took on the new role of MREW Drone Officer, heading up a drone group, last year.

'The group works closely with partner agencies,' says Brendan, 'including police, fire and rescue, National Police Air Service, Lowland Rescue, Scottish Mountain Rescue and the Civil Aviation Authority. We also consider the regulatory framework in which our pilots must operate and the direction of both the regulatory and operational aspects of drone use.'

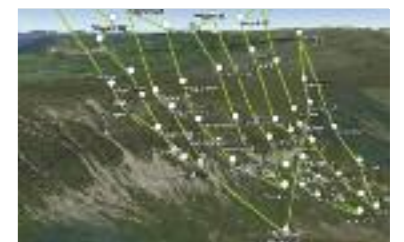
One development in the past year has involved Brendan and his MR colleague, Dave Binks (Duddon and Furness MRT) working with Ordnance Survey. Using OS data, they are looking at the application of semi-autonomous grid patterns being flown while capturing high-resolution, still images for subsequent analysis.

'Lake District team members have been developing a search management tool over several years,' explains Dave, 'and it is now widely used throughout MREW. The latest release includes support for drone missions and the image analysis capability to process the data captured. It's a straightforward process to export the required route file and load it onto

the aircraft before deployment. The flight route and image spacing is programmed such that each image captured overlaps the adjacent images. This ensures that objects not visible from one angle can be picked up from a different angle.'

The system uses precise OS elevation data to ensure the aircraft maintains a set height above the terrain while also keeping the camera perpendicular to any contours beneath. Each pattern flown is designed to be completed on a single battery to simplify the workflow the operator needs to follow.

The pilot manages the safety aspects of the flight, which ensures the team stays within the Visual Line of Sight (VLOS) rules required by the regulator and can quickly respond to dynamic hazards that may arise in-flight. Post flight, the team on the ground load the images into the tool and this detects anomalies in the image set, based on colour, so it can pick up on possible casualties, even if they're lying on a steep slope. Such anomalies are



identified to the operator for further investigation.

Teams now have another powerful 'tool in the box' when deciding how to deploy their drones at an incident and where best to focus the efforts of their team members and search dogs.

The Glen Coe experience

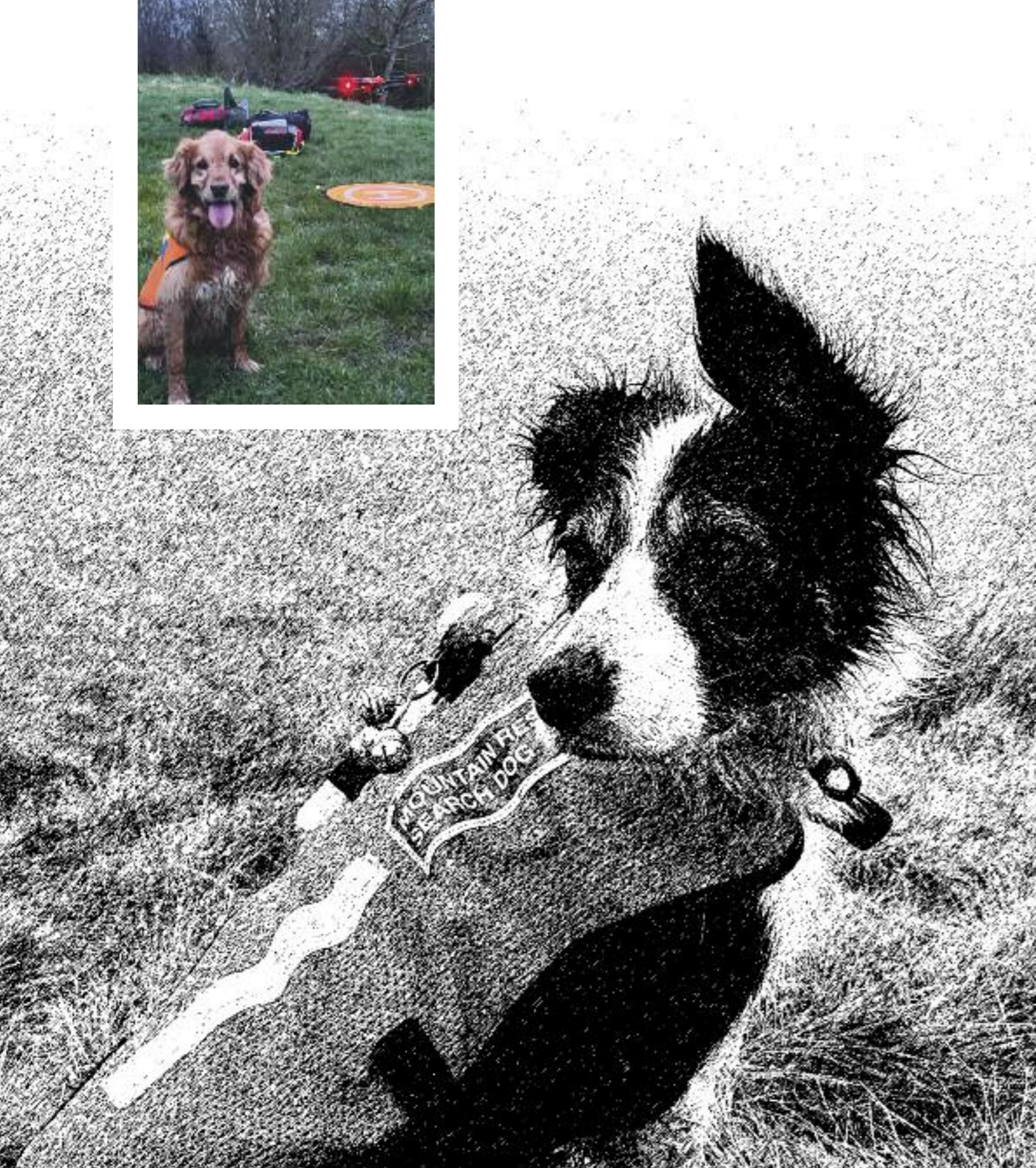
In October 2023, the still image technique was successfully deployed during a lengthy search on steep, rocky ground in the Scottish Highlands. The story started in early September, when Police Scotland received a report of a hillwalker who had not returned after a planned trip in the Glencoe area. The police mobilised Glencoe MRT and a full-scale search operation launched in earnest. What followed was a Herculean effort, involving multiple teams and other agencies. Despite exhaustive efforts and encouraging signs (such as finding the missing person's rucksack), the team made the difficult decision to scale back their operations after ten days of effort.

During the latter stages, members of the Lake District Search and Mountain Rescue Association (LDSAMRA) drone group approached Glencoe, offering to assist, using the drone search software. Eventually there was a weather window and a team

from LDSAMRA made its way to Glencoe. Several theories were discussed, and deployment plans were drawn using the software tool. Teams of three searched opposite faces in the valley where the rucksack had been found. The ground had already been covered on foot and overflowed by helicopters, but was so broken and complex it remained the most likely location.

On the morning of 24 October, one of the drone search teams reported a potential find. The other team diverted their drone and it was confirmed as the missing walker. Glencoe MRT and the police were informed while the hill team made their way to the casualty. They were joined by Glencoe team members who conducted a very swift and professional evacuation. While still a tragic end to a search story, at least the deceased man's family were not left in limbo and rescuers knew they'd done everything possible.

Opposite & top: Drone pilot flies the DJIM30T drone used in Glencoe © Cockermouth MRT. Above: The image in MRMap. Pink is the search area, black line is the drone track, red dots are where each image is taken, the thin black lines are the camera direction and the yellow circle shows limit of 500 metres from pilot; 3D view of the drone track © Google Earth; MRMap shows an anomaly, actually Dave Binks curled up by a rock, found in five images with the grid reference.



As new search tools, such as drones and location apps, feature in today's mountain rescue activities, is there still a role for search dogs? 'Yes!' is the resounding answer from search dog handlers across the country.



'The role of search dogs hasn't changed,' says Nick Oliver, an Exmoor team member and south west-based dog handler with Search Dog Lottie. 'It's always been about providing efficient and effective clearance of search areas and it's not only about finding anyone who may be in that area. Just as importantly, it's about confirming that there isn't anyone there too.'

The role of search dogs in a mountain rescue team is very similar to the role of drones. They are both in the 'search toolbox', and both are additional assets for search managers to use as best benefits a specific search situation, landscape and weather conditions.

'The search dog's role is primarily to search large areas quickly and accurately,' says Nick, 'though we're often deployed to search more complex areas as well. The same can be said for drones, but they have limitations in terms of flight time, weather conditions and regulatory control. Both can usually cover an area much more quickly and comprehensively than a foot team, but dogs never seem to mind bad weather!'

The number of searches involving MR teams hasn't changed as much as you might expect in recent years. While location and mapping apps can now tell people — and the rescue team — where they are, the numbers of visitors to the national parks and similar areas in England and Wales has increased even more.

'Search numbers are relatively steady,' says John Wood, mid-Pennines-based dog handler with Search Dog Willow and a Holme Valley team member. 'It's not just about lost walkers, runners and cyclists as search dogs are often called

to look for vulnerable people who can't or won't make that emergency call.'

There are currently 33 graded dog teams in Mountain Rescue Search Dogs England (MRSDE) covering operational areas from the North East, Yorkshire Dales, Pennines, Peak District and the South West regions, with in sister organisations in the Lake District, North Wales and South Wales. Training usually begins from a puppy, with the dogs and their handlers training as part of a regional group from about six months old.

'Search dog and handler training takes about two to three years on average,' explains Emily Thompson of Holme Valley MRT, who is currently working towards accreditation with her Trainee Search Dog Névé. 'That includes the national monthly weekends and also local training, which is one evening and a Sunday morning session each week.'

'The more familiarisation a dog has with situations the better. It's certainly advisable to make sure a search dog is familiar with everything a team does — whether it's rope or water rescue situations, drone deployment or exercises with helicopters. For instance, the dogs get familiarisation sessions with the helicopters as part of team training, so that they'll be confident around them on a search.'

In any search deployment, the first point of contact is the search manager. They will discuss search areas and strategies based on the various assets available to them and the next step is for dog handlers and drone pilots to discuss with the search manager which areas they will cover.

'In live search operations, it should be rare for a dog team to be working directly underneath a drone,' says John. 'That would be a waste of valuable search

assets as it's just duplication. They should be deployed separately to maximise the benefits of using both on a search just as you'd avoid overlapping with a foot search team.'

'There's always the option to ask each other for assistance,' says Nick. 'For example, if there's an area that a dog can't get into due to restricted access — fencing, dense undergrowth or similar — but the dog is showing signs that there might be a scent to follow up, this would be flagged up to the search managers and a drone could be used overhead to search it. Vice versa, if a drone pilot is unsure of being able to effectively search an area, they can request a dog team to assist.'

The effectiveness of search dogs has been proven over fifty years. Today, whether search managers, foot teams, drone pilots or search dog handlers, as with most things in mountain rescue over that time, it's all about teamwork!



A search dog's role in modern rescue

Opposite: Search Dog Willow © John Wood, Holme Valley MRT. **Inset:** Search Dog Lottie with drone in the background © Nick Oliver, Exmoor MRT. **Top:** Trainee Search Dog Névé with dogsbody © Emily Thompson, Holme Valley MRT. **Right:** Search Dog Wren © Buxton MRT.



DECEMBER 2023: Team members head to Switzerland for winter skills training

Given the uncertainty of the British winter, teams frequently travel abroad for their winter training, to ensure their readiness for extreme weather events when they do arrive here, on home terrain.

In one example, Keswick team members travelled to Leysin for a week in the snow with the International School of Mountaineering. Torrential rain in the valley made for some risky snow conditions high up, but Plan B proved the perfect environment to improve the team's mountaineering skills and knowledge.



Images: The team is fortunate to have a number of talented professional photographers amongst their ranks, so credit for the stunning images goes to Tom McNally Photography and Stuart Holmes.

Training can take many forms including medical and casualty care, technical rope rescue, media training, swiftwater rescue and winter skills. And the key to successful training is to anticipate the type of many and varied scenarios team members are likely to meet.

OCTOBER 2023: Cascade scenario proves prophetic

The casualty care training and exams which team members go through often include a hypothetical member of a school group experiencing an allergic reaction to their lunch whilst visiting the mountains.

Ogwen team members were faced with this scenario for real when two teachers were walking in the area with a group of students and one of the teachers suffered an allergic reaction, which began to manifest as difficulty breathing and swelling. As the team's hill party were deploying, Rescue 936 was able to lift the casualty direct to hospital.

MAY 2023: Facial injury and dentistry training

The training, for medical personnel and healthcare professionals from the Lakes teams, was organised following a spate of such injuries encountered by some teams.

The evening included how to identify and splint jaw fractures, deal with soft tissue injuries around the face and scalp, and deal with basic emergency dentistry techniques.



Image © LDSAMRA



FEBRUARY 2024: Preparation for the wild fire season ahead

With wild fires becoming a regular feature on the hills and moorlands, team members have begun training in the skills they might require to help support the emergency services and other agencies who are called to deal with them.

Holme Valley team members were involved with this particular multi-agency training day, along with West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, National Trust Marsden and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service.

Above: Holme Valley team members involved in a wild fire training day with the fire and rescue service and National Trust © Holme Valley MRT. **Below:** Images from the thermal imaging used in a missing person search in Northumberland. Image supplied.



DECEMBER 2023: Thermal imaging tech assists in missing person search

Alongside humans, dogs and drones for searching out missing persons, police and rescue teams have another tool in the box in thermal imaging technology.

When a vulnerable person was reported missing, with nightfall fast approaching, Northumbria Police needed to conduct a search of an open and wooded area. They were supported by team members from the North of Tyne and Northumberland National Park teams, and the National Police Air Service. The handheld technology was deployed to increase the likelihood of a find. In the event, the missing woman was found outside the search areas and returned to the care of her family.

NOVEMBER 2023: They survived the crash, now find the pilots...

Three team members spent a valuable day at RAF Valley on Anglesey, where they met members of the RAF Mountain Rescue Service to discuss just that scenario, amongst others. Phil Ridley, MREW Training Officer, joined Paul Edisbury (Kinder MRT) and Mike Gibson (Aberglaslyn MRT) in exploring how we can further develop inter-agency training with the RAF Mountain Rescue Service (RAF MRS).

Mountain rescue history aficionados will know that the present day mountain rescue service grew in large part from the activities of the RAF, during and immediately following the Second World War, recovering downed pilots from the mountains. The primary responsibility for rescuing military aircrew and passengers still lies with the RAF MRS.

'The day was a huge help,' says Mike, 'with regards to knowledge to assist the RAF MRS in successfully finding the pilot and dealing with their injuries. And with only three RAF teams to cover the whole of the UK — and overseas! — it's possible local emergency services could be first on scene.'

He notes that only RAF MRS personnel are trained and equipped to approach aircraft wreckage and will only do so as a life-saving aid. With this in mind, the discussion revolved around what the civilian volunteer teams could do in these circumstances. More collaborative training is anticipated in the future.

Below: Team members proudly displaying the 'mountain rescue' jacket © Crown/RAF Valley 2023.



Train, train, train...

...and train some more

Mountain rescue teams and the emergency services work together under 'JESIP Principles' to achieve the overarching aim of 'working together, saving lives, reducing harm'. And teams frequently work with their statutory colleagues to prepare for future incidents, taking the opportunity to explore a wide range of potential scenarios.



multi-agency

Images: Multi-agency activity © Scarborough & Ryedale MRT.



APRIL 2023: Scarborough and Ryedale team members train with emergency service colleagues at water park

Fifteen team members dealt with the scenario that might arise following reports of fourteen or so individuals 'missing in or around the North Yorkshire Water Park after engaging in an illicit barbecue while the park was closed'. Plenty of things to consider with this particular situation!

The exercise involved North Yorkshire Police, Yorkshire Ambulance Service, HM Coastguard, Yorkshire Air Ambulance, police search advisers, the regional Police Marine Unit, Scarborough Mountain Rescue Team and the Royal Air Force. Staff at the waterpark also got involved. Multiple casualties were found to be suffering from multiple realistic injuries, and many of the participants were also found to be under the influence of alcohol. The team reported that there was great JESIP collaboration

and learning while team members deployed, searched for, found and dealt with all the 'casualties' and 'miscreants.' They were pleased to report that nobody was actually injured or arrested, but we hear a number of nominations have since been received for the Oscar-winning performances of the various protagonists and role players. 'It was great to work with the statutory emergency services,' says Ian Hugill, 'and be given the opportunity to demonstrate our varied skills'.

JUNE 2023: Indoor ski slope plays host to winter skills scenario

While the rest of the country was basking in a protracted summer heatwave, Buxton team members joined Lowland Rescue colleagues from Cheshire Search and Rescue in a multi-rescue response to a 'collision in extreme weather' dubbed #Exercise Winterstorm.

The 999 call had allegedly come in from the occupant of a car, reporting that the vehicle had left the main carriageway and crashed, 180 metres down a snowy embankment. One passenger had been ejected, others were trapped and one was unresponsive. The roads to the scene were blocked and no helicopters could fly. Team members were obliged to carry all the kit they would need. The exercise was organised by Cheshire Constabulary and the evening saw representatives from the North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust and Cheshire Fire and Rescue join the volunteer rescue team members at the Chill Factore indoor ski slope, near the Trafford Centre, on the outskirts of Manchester. To add to the winter vibe, the lighting was off, there were flashing lights and the use of handheld and head torches and industrial fans kept things cool for a truly immersive experience!



JUNE 2023: Joint swiftwater training with the fire and rescue service

Northumberland National Park team members joined fire and rescue colleagues at Pinkston Watersports Park in Glasgow for 'Vehicle in Water' rescue training.

The training involved a variety of water rescue skills, such as wading techniques, using a tethered boat or sled, and technical rope rescue systems.



AUGUST 2023: Cornwall team trains with RAF and Navy

East Cornwall team invited nurses from The Joint Hospital Group, Princess Mary RAF Nursing Service Association and the Queen Alexandra Royal Navy Nursing Service to join them in a training day.

The idea was for them to experience working with the specialist mountain rescue kit and learn a few of the rope rescue skills used in search and rescue. The day culminated in a mini search and rescue exercise to locate, treat and extricate a casualty with a lower leg injury.

Left: Multiagency exercise at the Chill Factore via Facebook @CheshPolRural. Top: Nurses from the Princess Mary Nursing Service and Queen Alexandra Royal Navy Nursing Service with East Cornwall team members © East Cornwall MRT. Below: 'Vehicle in the water' training for Northumberland mountain rescue team members © Karl Wait/NNPMRT.





Underground, over ground and overseas

Mountain and cave rescue teams often work together on incidents, as the terrain demands. And with five of our teams operating as 'dual purpose', above and below ground, there is a considerable pool of skills available. Underground incidents, by their nature, can be protracted events, demanding on human resources. So, when a major incident occurs abroad, it's not uncommon for our own team members to head out there to assist.



Perhaps the most high profile such rescue operation in the UK in recent years was the incident at Ogof Ffynnon Ddu in the Brecon Beacons, when an injured man was rescued from a cave after being trapped for more than two days some 300 metres below the surface. The full story of the epic rescue effort, in early November 2021, featured in *Mountain Rescue Magazine*, January 2022 and our *Annual Review 2022*. The operation involved 256 men and women from ten cave teams, with support from mountain rescue personnel too.

The logistics of coordinating a major incident in the UK are considerable, achieved through the collaboration of local teams and the British Cave Rescue Council (BCRC). But when an incident

happens abroad, those logistics become even more complex. It's invariably the BCRC who will receive the initial call for support and they then help coordinate their network of 'home' resources. Even if, ultimately, team members are not required to travel overseas to the location of an incident — potentially on the other side of the world — considerable time and effort will go into sourcing essential equipment and mobilising potential rescue personnel 'just in case'.

In September, a medical emergency occurred 1,050 metres underground in Morcan Cave, in the Taurus Mountains of Turkey. Given the cave's depth and complexity and the prospect of a lengthy stretcher evacuation lasting many days, BCRC were asked to prepare to assist

teams from across Europe. British teams were asked because of their expertise in technical rope rescue, and having within their membership doctors with the necessary underground trauma skills.

Team members were put on standby, should more resources be required. In the event, the extraction continued swiftly with no significant medical relapses requiring further personnel.

The European Cave Rescue Association subsequently thanked their colleagues across the UK for their willingness to deploy to Turkey at such short notice. They also thanked their colleagues in MREW for access to insurance and offers of material assistance.

Northumberland rescuer deploys to Moroccan earthquake rescue effort



Not 'cave rescue' as such, but certainly involving a very different, uncertain terrain — and a substantially different challenge — to the usual mountain rescue environment. Northumberland National Park team member Jamie Pattison deployed to Morocco with 62 other search and rescue specialists in September, to assist following the 6.8 magnitude earthquake in the Atlas Mountains.

A paramedic and member of UK International Search and Rescue (UKISAR), Jamie was amongst those providing medical assistance and helping in the search for survivors. UKISAR responds to disasters on behalf of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. Their specialist search equipment includes seismic listening devices, concrete cutting and breaking equipment, propping and shoring tools, which provide the ability to lift, cut and remove concrete and rubble, in order to reach people buried under collapsed buildings. Their efforts were recognised by Grant Schapps, the then UK Defence Secretary, saying that the UK took a leading role in the international effort to 'enhance search and rescue operations, moving quickly to deploy our unique strategic airlift capabilities, expert personnel and aid'. As we like to say: so much more than mountains!



Opposite: South and Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team, December 2023 © SMWCRT. **Inset:** Upper Wharfedale team members during the rescue of a hypothermic casualty from Goyden Pot © UWFRFA. **Top:** Cave Rescue Organisation, working with members of Swaledale, Upper Wharfedale teams and COMRU, during the search for six overdue cavers © CRO. **Above:** Jamie (centre) and with his UKISAR colleagues © Jamie Pattison.



Staying safe and supporting our teams

Browse our digital bookshelf

Our quarterly magazine and the annual review are available in digital format for anyone to view – great for sharing with a much wider readership, and helping teams to spread the word about mountain rescue.

If you're reading any of these digital versions, you can find all our recent publications on one handy bookshelf. Just click on any front cover image and you'll go straight there. And if you fancy subscribing to the magazine to receive your own print copy every quarter, head to mountain.rescue.org.uk/magazine-subscription and sign up.



'Call out mountain rescue?': also available digitally

This second edition looks at preparation and route planning, what to take with you and how to pack it, how best to stay safe in the mountains and what to do if you have an accident. We explain the mountain rescue call-out procedure and how to relay the relevant information to the emergency services. There's an illustrated first aid guide to recognising the nature of any injuries and keeping the casualty comfortable as you wait for

the rescue team, a foreword from Mountain Rescue England and Wales patron HRH The Prince of Wales and a potted history of mountain rescue. Plus some useful advice on publications, websites and organisations to hone your hill skills. You can find the online version at <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/449666983/>

And if digital reading really isn't for you, we still have print copies available in our online shop at the reduced price of £4.99: Head to shop.mountain.rescue.org.uk/collections/books



Opposite: PenMacra team members during medical training © PenMacra. Top right: Mountain rescue Land Rover illustration © Judy Whiteside.



Thank you. We can't do any of it without your help. Here's how you can support us.

Give online: Go to mountain.rescue.org.uk and click **Donate**.

Join Basecamp: The simplest way to support us. You can even add a donation. Go to mountain.rescue.org.uk and click **Basecamp** to join.

Leave a legacy: A gift to us in your Will allows you to support our future — even a small gift can make a big difference. And it's the surest way to fund the equipment and training for the years to come as gifts are exempt from inheritance tax, capital gains tax and income tax, so the charity receives the full value of your bequest.

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MOUNTAIN RESCUE ENGLAND AND WALES

SO MUCH MORE THAN MOUNTAINS

Lake District Search & Mountain Rescue Association

Cockermouth
Coniston
Duddon & Furness
Kendal
Keswick
Kirkby Stephen
Langdale Ambleside
Patterdale
Penrith
Wasdale

Mid Pennine Search & Rescue Organisation

Bolton
Bowland Pennine
Calder Valley
Holme Valley
Rossendale & Pendle

North Wales Mountain Rescue Association

Aberdyfi
Aberglaslyn
Llanberis
North East Wales
Ogwen Valley
South Snowdonia

South Wales Search & Rescue Association

Brecon
Central Beacons
Longtown
Western Beacons

Peninsula Mountain & Cave Rescue Association

East Cornwall (Mountain + Cave)
West Cornwall (Mountain + Cave)
Dartmoor (Ashburton)
Dartmoor (Plymouth)
Dartmoor (Tavistock)
North Dartmoor
Exmoor

North East Search & Rescue Association

Cleveland
North of Tyne
Northumberland National Park
Teesdale & Weardale
Swaledale (Mountain + Cave)

Yorkshire Dales Rescue Panel

Cave Rescue Organisation
(Mountain + Cave)
Upper Wharfedale
(Mountain + Cave)
Scarborough & Ryedale

Peak District Mountain Rescue Organisation

Buxton
Derby
Edale
Glossop
Kinder
Oldham
Woodhead

ASSOCIATED ORGANISATIONS

Avon & Somerset SAR
Severn Area RA

Cave Rescue

COMRU
Derbyshire CRO
Devon CRO
Gloucestershire CRG
Mendip CR
Midlands CRO
North Wales CRO
South East CRO
South & Mid Wales CRT

Search Dogs

Lakes District Mountain
Rescue Search Dogs
Mountain Rescue
Search Dogs England
SARDA Wales
SARDA South Wales

RAF

RAF Leeming MRT
RAF Valley MRT

If you require mountain or cave rescue assistance: **Dial 999. Ask for 'Police', then 'Mountain Rescue' or 'Cave Rescue'**

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Find us online at mountain.rescue.org.uk

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