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in this issue

conference 2024

To engage, educate and entertain

4 **Judy Whiteside** updates on the September conference, with news of more speakers and sponsors confirmed and the website launched. Book your place now!

8 **In conversation with Mike Park:** Halfway through his five-year term as CEO, Mike outlines his plans for the second half, and his hopes for the future of mountain rescue

20 **New Casualty Care syllabus:** MREW Medical Director outlines changes to the syllabus, due to be published in January 2024

26 **Ordnance Survey and MREW Partnership: Review of 2023:** Also including details of how to get your Mountain Rescue Premium subscription



what's in at a glance

INCIDENT STATS: 7

WELLBEING: 13-17

MEDICAL: 20-21

WELLBEING: 27-29

TEAMS & REGIONS: 31 >

OBITUARIES: 36

SCOTLAND: 54-56

WHO'S WHO: 60-62



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To engage, educate and entertain

conference 2024

And still more reasons to join us in Lancaster 6-8 September 2024...

JUDY WHITESIDE EDITOR

Things have moved on apace since my October update. We've continued to add to an impressive list of speakers, exhibitors have begun to book their spaces (with more pencilled in), we've partnered up with a couple of sponsors (and talking to more potential partners), and the Conference Project Team is now beginning to look towards the myriad tasks necessary to ensure the smooth running of the actual weekend. And I'm delighted to announce that our Conference 2024 website has now launched and booking is open!

But first, just to quell one rumour — which may well have begun as an innocent observation — before it rolls downhill at speed gathering mossy mountain rescue myths. As these things tend to.

'Wellbeing'. Well, who knew that word would prompt visceral response in some quarters? And, yes, the conference will (to slightly misquote my October self) 'be looking at how we can support team member wellbeing and empower them as individuals to remain fit and well and, perhaps most importantly, enthusiastic — because if your people fall over, then this volunteer service falls over too'. But also underpinning the weekend will be the idea of 'sustainability', as in the sustainability of the mountain rescue service itself.

So we'll also be looking at creating cohesive teams and keeping our team members safe, both at the sharp end of rescue and online. We'll look at technical training and 'human factors', the value of record keeping and statistics, and the importance of civility. We'll be hosting a panel discussion on the topic of sustainability, focusing on three of the busiest areas in England and Wales. And we even hope to have a barrister on hand to talk us through a possible 'courtroom' scenario, considering what might happen should mountain rescue end up in the dock.

REVISITING OUR FIVE KEYNOTE SPEAKERS...

To be fair to that potentially rolling rumour, the four plenary speakers I revealed in October do have strong wellbeing focus, in the broadest sense of the word — 'the state of being comfortable, healthy or happy' — because whether it's the pressures of increased call-outs, the changing nature and expectations of our volunteers and our calling authorities, the worrying incidence of reported bullying, the ever-increasing administrative workload, there's a lot we could perhaps learn and change about how we operate and interact — as teams and individuals.

In October, we revealed four of our keynote speakers. Dan Scoular will talk about how equality and diversity are the hallmarks of high-performing organisations, Oliver Patrick will demonstrate how individual biology affects performance, Alan Littlefield will explore performance under pressure and building strong trusting teams and, pre-dinner, Sarah Furness will talk about how we must 'train hard to fight easy'. To this stunning



line-up, we've added **Chris Turner** (left). A consultant in emergency medicine at University Hospitals of Coventry and Warwickshire, Chris is interested in governance and highly-performing teams, and this has led him on a journey from being blame and process-focused to something completely different. His organisation, Civility Saves Lives, aims to raise awareness of the impact of behaviour on performance.

...AND EXPLORING A RANGE OF OTHER TOPICS...

Former MREW Training Officer **Al Read** will be looking at **The Art of Instruction**.

'Safe and effective training helps build the knowledge, skills and competencies of team members to provide the capability required for operations. The session will outline the training-development process, highlight some of the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for trainers, and provide a training model ideally suited to practical and scenario-based training sessions.'

Still with an eye on training, **Kirsty Pallas** (Oban MRT), works on the Scottish Mountain Rescue rigging and avalanche rescue courses, training members across all the Scottish teams. In the **Non-Tech Path to Safety** she will discuss whether there are more ways we can increase the safety of our team members at the sharp end.

'The majority of accidents happen when driving or on steep snow slopes, so how can we mitigate against these in even very experienced people? Moving towards an open and equal team, allowing everyone to speak up and share when something feels off, are some of the steps we can take.'

Still at that sharp end, **Ed Kinnear** (Kendal MRT) will be delving into the **Key Elements Necessary to Support a Casualty's Family and Friends** off the hill. Expect training 'top tips', a gold standard approach and the raising of known unknowns. And BCRC Medical Officer **Brendan Sloan** will be taking a look at recent developments in the understanding and treatment of casualties with **Suspension Trauma and Crush Injuries**.

Chris Lloyd (OVMRO), **Dr Steve Rowe** (Edale MRT) and **Penny Kirby** (Wasdale MRT) have agreed to take part in a panel discussion about the **Sustainability of Mountain Rescue**, chaired by journalist and media consultant **Helen Nugent**. They'll no doubt be talking about the changing face of mountain rescue: where we were, where we're at now and where we might be headed. Helen will also be doing a 45-minute session on **What the Media Wants and How to Give it to Them**, joined by **Sally Seed** to talk about **MREW Media Training**.

From the leadership POV, **Pat Holland** will be crossing the Irish Sea from Mountain Rescue Ireland to share his thoughts on **Avoiding, Preparing for and Dealing with HR and Other Unexpected Challenges**.

And finally — for now — MREW Statistics Officer **Paul Brain** will be looking at the **Past, Present and Future of MREW Data**, outlining where we've got to since he took up the role in May 2023.

Plus plenty more speakers and topics still being discussed in what is shaping up to be a packed and varied timetable.

SO HOW DO YOU BOOK YOUR PLACE?

Appetite yet what? Well now you can head to our website and book your place through our Eventbrite booking system. There are



Top, left to right: Helen Nugent, Paul Brain, Chris Lloyd. Middle, left to right: Edward Kinnear, Brendan Sloan, Penny Kirby. Above, left to right: Kirsty Pallas © Morag Skelton, Pat Holland, Dr Steve Rowe. Opposite page: Chris Turner. Images supplied by speakers. Header image: Crib Goch © William Barton.

two levels of discount available. MREW member tickets cost £190 each. Tickets for other SAR organisations (eg. Lowland Rescue, Cave Rescue, Lifeboats, Scottish Mountain Rescue, Mountain Rescue Ireland) are £220. And the price to public and statutory emergency services is £320. The relevant discount codes will be shared with your teams or organisations and we ask that you respect the process in fairness to all the delegates attending. You must provide an

email address, and the name of which organisation you belong to, with your purchase. Any ticket sales that we deem non-compliant with the appropriate discount will be voided, your money returned and the ticket invoiced correctly.

Included in the cost of the ticket is breakfast, lunch, dinner and tea/coffee

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MR CONFERENCE 2024 CONTINUED

through Saturday, and breakfast and tea/coffee on Sunday morning. Please be advised food is not included for Friday. Accommodation for Friday and Saturday is in the Lancaster University Guest Rooms (all en suite and at the centre of activities). The option for alternative accommodation is NOT included in the ticket price and there is NO discount for booking elsewhere. Should you wish to book your own accommodation, there are a number of hotels within a four-mile radius. We suggest using the usual search engines for details.

If you're a professional wishing to attend as part of CPD, we can provide a Certificate of Attendance on request. Just ask.

The deadline for registration is 30 July, but we recommend buying your ticket early as places are limited.

PARTNERS AND EXHIBITORS

Helly Hansen will once again be our Conference Clothing Partner and Keela Outdoors is partnering us by sponsoring keynote speakers Sarah Furness and Chris Turner. Check out the website for sponsors and exhibitors as they are confirmed.



To find out more and book: mountain.rescue.org.uk/conference



A REMINDER OF THE TRACKS AND THEMES

- The Frontline
- Building a Sustainable Future
- Wellbeing & Human Factors
- Safety Management

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Incident Figures: National Status Summary: January through to end of December, 2023*

* Sorted according to geographical region and by closed incident reports. Dog associations listed separately.

Lake District	North East	Peak District	South Wales
Cockermouth 82	Cleveland 54	Buxton 109	Brecon 85
Coniston 67	North of Tyne 36	Derby 73	Central Beacons 97
Duddon & Furness 82	Northumberland 77	Edale 157	Longtown 45
Kendal 52	Swaledale 43	Glossop 46	Western Beacons 47
Keswick 112	Teesdale & Weardale 35	Kinder 40	274
Kirkby Stephen 15	245	Oldham 37	
Langdale Ambleside 116		Woodhead 80	South West England
Patterdale 55	North Wales	542	Avon & Somerset 37
Penrith 34	Aberdyfi 53		SARA 46
Wasdale 163	Aberglaslyn 73	Peninsula	83
778	Llanberis 309	Cornwall East 22	
	North East Wales 73	Cornwall West 23	Yorkshire Dales
Mid Pennines	Ogwen Valley 173	Dartmoor Ashburton 43	CRO 84
Bolton 57	South Snowdonia 52	Dartmoor Okehampton 30	Scarborough & Ryedale 44
Bowland Pennine 52	733	Dartmoor Plymouth 13	Upper Wharfedale 51
Calder Valley 49		Dartmoor Tavistock 30	179
Holme Valley 60		Exmoor 48	
Rossendale & Pendle 60		209	Search Dogs *
278			MRSD England 81
			SARDA Wales 37
			SARDA South Wales 23
			141

3,462 closed incidents reported 'closed' by end December 2023

* No 'closed' reports submitted by Lakes Dogs to 31 December 2023.

In conversation with **Mike Park**... thirty months in...

JUDY WHITESIDE EDITOR

Thirty months in... with thirty still to go (not that he's chalking these up on a wall anywhere, you understand)... and Mike made his intentions very clear at the November meeting: he is halfway through his five-year term. When those thirty months are up, he'll be standing down, with a successor in place who has shadowed him for the preceding year.



Above: Mike enjoying winter climbing at Professor Falls, in the Bow Valley, British Columbia © Chris Cookson.
Opposite: Addressing the MREW general meeting in November 2023 (as seen on YouTube) © MREW.

So when I talk to him in early December, there are four topics he wants to address and see substantially progress in his 'second half': succession planning, shared values, the worrying incidence of bullying, and a management structure that connects both internally and externally.

STEPPING DOWN AND SUCCESSION PLANNING

Succession planning is a topic he repeatedly returns to in management meetings, often encouraging officers to consider where they are, how long they've been there and how they hope to continue whatever legacy they've seeded during their time in post. What once seemed a bold

aspiration, with fewer and fewer people seemingly willing to step up to the heavyweight responsibility of national roles, now feels possible. A wave of new blood has begun to appear, with a number of new officers taking up the challenge. And where once the CEO seat may have been occupied for a good ten years or more at a time, Mike is leading by example in his intention to step down after the five.

He's driven by the belief that it is 'healthier for the organisation if the enthusiasm and drive for change remain strong'. He's clearly looking after his own health too, setting a 'wellbeing' example for others to follow.

In 2021, he set out to problem solve and move the organisation on. He took to the road in his van to talk to grass roots team

members around England and Wales. He's attended endless meetings, locally, regionally, nationally, online and in person. He's asked questions and listened to what people want. Of course, not everyone wants the same things so, arguably, this in itself has added to the challenge.

Looking to the future, he asks that we all consider exactly what we want from our CEO, then advertise and recruit to have his successor lined up by May 2025, with the opportunity to spend a full year working with Mike to keep that smooth progression going, before fully taking over the chair in May 2026.

But, in the meantime, he summarises what might be called his 'achievements over the last six months'.

'I'll leave it up to you,' he says, 'to decide whether these could be described as achievements, but there are a couple of things I do want to talk about.'

SHARED VALUES

From the outset, 'shared values' have been important to Mike. He wants our organisation to become more 'empathetic'. To those on the outside, he says, this may come as a surprise. Surely, the very essence of mountain rescue service is empathy with our fellow humans? Isn't our every effort — and our volunteer time — selflessly focused on the welfare and wellbeing of our casualties and their families? Well, yes. But what we're not so good at, it seems, is looking after each other. 'This is what I see with the apparent rise in bullying and the stuttering progress in shared values'.

He cites the Party Leader course as a shining example of shared empathy. 'Those courses are really successful because they allow people to network and bond, to share experiences.'

Why, he asks, is he seeing the same people, the same teams, repeatedly 'doing the same bad stuff'? When teams continue to behave badly, failing to share the values we should all espouse, he's prepared to say

they have no part to play in our organisation.

He was pleased to see a face-to-face 'shared values' meeting in November, believing that the ideas 'sink in better when people meet in person. There was more cooperation in the room. More willingness to move to a bigger in-person event with representatives from all the teams looking at the values we need to focus on'.

Prior to November, a repeated query arising from the shared values questionnaire was whether respondents were expected to answer the questions from a team member perspective or as a member of MREW. He doesn't see the distinction.

'We want everyone to recognise themselves as mountain rescuers, because that's what our customers see on the hill — a mountain rescuer.'

'Your answers won't change your relationship at team level — we're just asking

He's saddened to admit that bullying exists in mountain rescue, accepted as part of our 'mountain rescue culture'. 'Except we don't call it bullying. We call it "banter"... "just a bit of harmless fun". Well, it's not banter, it's not harmless, and it's not fun. And it definitely is not acceptable!'

you to share what you think makes us mountain rescuers. By recognising this commonality, we can work together more efficiently and be seen and treated more professionally by our peers.'

With this in mind, he asks that everyone supports the work of the Shared Values Group, so we can all share the conclusions of that work early next year.

BULLYING

And so to bullying — never an easy topic to address, but one Mike felt he had to raise. He doesn't direct his comments at any specific person or persons, however, 'if it strikes a chord, then so be it. You know who you are'.

The Anti-Bullying Alliance defines bullying as 'the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can be physical, verbal or psychological. It can happen face-to-face or online'.

He's saddened to admit that bullying exists in mountain rescue, accepted as part of our 'mountain rescue culture'.



'Except we don't call it bullying. We call it banter. Just a bit of harmless fun. Well, it's not banter, it's not harmless, and it's not fun. And it definitely is not acceptable!'

Asked what evidence he has, he holds up his phone. 'When teams and individuals have disagreements, fall out, don't agree with each other, they turn to their rules and guidance. If they exist! They try to sort things out. Great, but sometimes these things

ways. Or leave. You have no part to play in this organisation.'

'And if you are that person, or persons, or team, choosing to look the other way then here is what you're going to do. One, stop the bullying. NOW. Two, change your ways. Or leave. You have no part to play in this organisation.'

FAIRNESS FUND

In stark contrast to the concept of bullying, he's pleased that things are moving at grass roots level, towards the better-off teams formally helping other teams who need it through a 'fairness fund'. The idea is being driven by Keswick MRT, with representatives from other teams involved in the preliminary discussions. Once in place, the fund might, for example, support a team with unexpected vehicle costs, or a particular project, perhaps with match funding required from recipient teams. This, he says, 'is empathy actually working'. So watch this space for more on this.

AND ANOTHER THING...

Besides tackling succession planning, shared values, bullying and fairness (as if this wouldn't be ambitious enough for anyone in five short years), he's aiming to establish a changed management structure which connects across the entire network.

And finally, in case we think he's forgotten a previously 'top favourite' topic, he brings it all back to 'communications'. We should never stop aiming for better and better communications, with everyone buying in. 'Things could run a lot more smoothly if we all focused on it more.' Too true. 🗨️

Note: Presentations from the November general meeting are available on Moodle. A recording of Mike's review of the last six months (presented towards the end of the morning's meeting) is available to view on YouTube, via tinyurl.com/363vhdbx.

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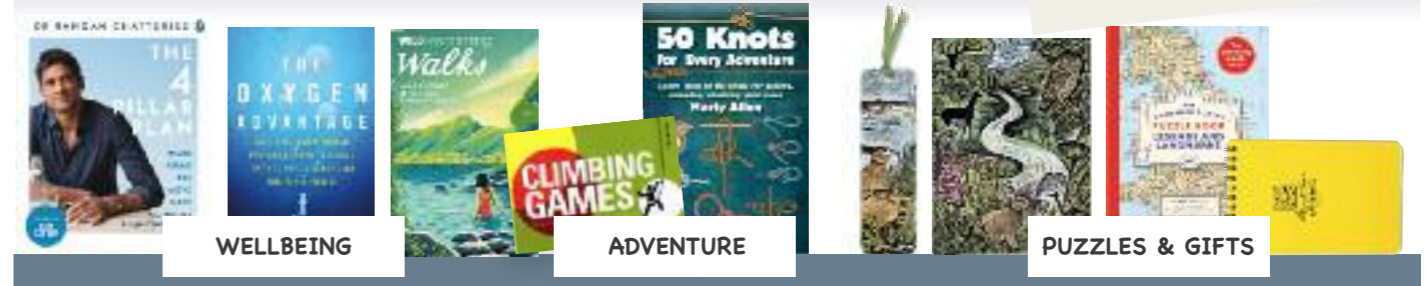
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Hello from the newly-appointed MREW Ops Director **Ian Bunting**

Firstly a big thank you to Mike Margeson for the time, work and commitment he has put into the role of Operations Director and all the other positions he has held within MREW. Mike was very helpful when I was considering applying for the role and provided me with an insight into what the role currently involved.

I first came into contact with mountain rescue as a part-time ranger for the Peak District National Park assisting on incidents whilst still in my teens. Back in those days mountain rescue in the Peak was coordinated by the Ranger Service and as such we attended many incidents. I eventually joined the Edale team in the mid 1990s — with none of the application forms, try-out days, interviews, training courses and assessments we have today. An evening training session in Grindsbrook followed by a pint in The Ramblers and I was in.

Over the intervening years I have undertaken a number of roles for Edale including team secretary, deputy team leader and leader, search manager and chairman. These roles in turn led me to becoming an incident controller and operations officer for the PDMRO. The latter ultimately led to me applying for the MREW Operations Director role. In conjunction with all this I have been involved with MRSDE (formerly SARDA England), since 2002 and have qualified three dogs.

Mountain rescue is forever evolving and the expectations and demands on everyone within the organisation, whether at team, regional or national level are increasing. Some of this is down to increased incident numbers, some by the demands of external bodies. Some by our

own success and readiness to say, 'Yes, we can do that', to things we haven't in the past. Consequently there are some things we can control and do to mitigate the increased demands, and there are some things we cannot. This means that teams, regions and MREW have to work more closely together to benefit us all and, consequently, the people we assist. At the heart of this is planning and communication, something that has gotten better over recent years, but there is still more work to do. Communication is a two-way thing and there is as much responsibility on the teams as the officers of MREW to ensure a flow of information from MREW to team members, and from team members to MREW.

I am not an expert at anything and nor do I have an infinite amount of time. (Apparently the normal mountain rescue pay deal applies for this role so I will still have to work for a living.) Therefore, I will be relying on the help of everyone to assist me with the role. If you have any thoughts, ideas, questions, advice or time, please do get in touch, I would love to hear from you. I may not agree with you, know the answer to a question immediately, or take up your advice, but I will listen, consider and take on board anything you offer. Please feel free to contact me via opsdirector@mountain.rescue.org.uk



Above: Ian Bunting with his two canine companions, Search Dog Bolt (top) and Search Dog Ebba (inset) © Ian Bunting.



Jon White
MREW Wellbeing Officer

UKSAR has recently agreed and published Guiding Principles for Emergency Response Volunteer Wellbeing. This document is based on the Mental Health at Work Commitment, but has been altered (with the help of many MR teams and members), to better suit the volunteer and MR team structures in the UK. However, it is important to understand that teams should feel free to edit the document for their own needs and circumstances. At the end of the document is an example work plan which teams can use to plan how they propose to develop their own team's wellbeing culture and skills.

There is also now an updated version of the Wellbeing Information poster (see opposite). The most important change to note is that the Blue Light Together resource (previously BlueLightTogether.org.uk) has been replaced with a similar web address: BlueLightTogether.org. This new resource is funded by the Blue Light Card Foundation, and is at an early stage in its development. It is hoped that there will be resources specifically for MR teams, including examples from teams of work or experiences which are worth sharing with the wider MR community. These and other helpful documents are available on the Wellbeing section of MREW Moodle. Please do let me know if you have any material you think would be suitable, via wellbeing.officer@mountain.rescue.org.uk.



WELLBEING INFORMATION

For the family and team members of mountain and cave rescue

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.

YOUR TEAM SUPPORT NAME AND NUMBER IF YOU NEED A CHAT:

Name:

Contact number:

Other useful contacts:

Togetherall offers anonymous, 24/7 online mental health support for mountain and cave rescue team members. To register, go to: togetherall.com

The Samaritans: Call **116 123** for confidential emotional support, 24 hours a day

Blue Light Together is a new resource for members of the emergency services. Help is available with issues such as:

- Stress and Burnout
- Trauma and PTSD
- Financial Wellbeing
- Healthy Lifestyles
- Your Family

Go to BlueLightTogether.org

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide is a national charity providing dedicated support to adults who have been bereaved by suicide. Go to uksobs.org or call **0300 111 5065**

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

17:00–midnight to talk about any troubles you are feeling

MIND Mental Health Charity: Infoline: **0300 123 3393** Monday – Friday 09:00–18:00 (except for bank holidays). Information and access to support services for:

- Mental health problems
- Where to get help near you
- Treatment options available
- Advocacy services

The Rescue Benevolent Fund: Email secretary@rescuebenevolent.fund or go to rescuebenevolent.fund to find out more

For when you need more structured therapy — either physical or emotional — with a defined treatment plan from a professional therapist, you can apply to the fund for financial support

Go to mrew-wellbeing.org.uk for the MREW Wellbeing page



MOUNTAIN RESCUE ENGLAND AND WALES
BRITISH CAVE RESCUE COUNCIL

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



Guiding Principles for Emergency Response Volunteer Wellbeing

STEPHEN J PENNY MBE SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN RESCUE
JON WHITE MOUNTAIN RESCUE ENGLAND AND WALES
ADRIAN EDWARDS LOWLAND RESCUE

The mountain and lowland rescue representatives on the UKSAR Mental Health and Wellbeing Work Group considered how the six Mental Health at Work (MHAW) Commitment Standards¹ can be translated into a form more appropriate for volunteers.

It is important to recognise that each team in mountain and lowland rescue in the UK is an organisation (and charity) in its own right. The national bodies have no governance responsibility over the day-to-day running of any team. However, the volunteer-led national bodies do exist to help share best practice and to be engaged in issues that affect all teams (or groupings of teams). Involvement with UKSAR is one such area.

The final document is the result of several working drafts sent out to teams for comment and feedback. As volunteers managing volunteer organisations, there is always a limit to the time and resources available. This means that wellbeing initiatives need to be embedded into existing culture and practice, and not perceived to be an additional administrative workload.

We have translated the essence of the MHAW Commitment Standards into a form that will suit our volunteer organisations. The guiding principles are set out on the first three pages, and an example of a wellbeing work plan follows.

We fully recognise that it is likely each organisation may adopt a slightly different approach to suit their own circumstances.

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

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

The principles are based on the well-established Mental Health at Work (MHAW) Commitment Standards, but written to be relevant for volunteer organisations.

THE MHAW STANDARDS

- S1:** Prioritise mental health in the workplace by developing and delivering a systematic programme of activity.
- S2:** Proactively ensure work design and organisational culture drive positive mental health outcomes.
- S3:** Promote an open culture around mental health.
- S4:** Increase organisational confidence and capability.
- S5:** Provide mental health tools and support.
- S6:** Increase transparency and accountability through internal and external reporting.

THE FIVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR VOLUNTEER WELLBEING:

- P1:** Promote an open culture around wellbeing and mental health.
- P2:** Increase organisational confidence and capability on these issues.
- P3:** Promote team (and family) actions to enhance wellbeing.
- P4:** Signpost and bridge to relevant mental health learning, tools and support.
- P5:** Increase transparency and accountability through reporting as and when appropriate.

These five principles offer a guide for volunteer organisations and those who volunteer to grow and sustain a positive

culture and practice around wellbeing. A Wellbeing Work Plan² may be a helpful way to help cross-check against the guiding principles and an example is shown below.

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

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

PRINCIPLE P2: Increase organisational confidence and capability on these issues

- 1:** Provide volunteers with the safest possible physical operating conditions, including the right training and equipment for their role.
- 2:** Encourage all volunteers to be suitably prepared and educated to have effective

conversations about mental health with colleagues. This should be made clear during inductions for new volunteers, including where to signpost and bridge to support.

- 3:** Aim for volunteer roles to be designed and supported in a way which maximises the wellbeing benefits of volunteering in addition to making a valued contribution to the organisation and the communities served.
- 4:** Implement and communicate a Wellbeing Work Plan, to build organisational resilience in terms of wellbeing and mental health in a timespan that is appropriate.

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

- 1:** Actively support and encourage opportunities for all volunteers to increase mental health literacy and learn how to look after their own mental health. Mental health knowledge can help maintain psychological wellbeing while volunteering in any capacity for an organisation that exists to help others in distress or need.
- 2:** Create opportunities for volunteers and families to feed back when culture and conditions might contribute to poor mental health.
- 3:** Consider how volunteer commitment (and the risk of an 'always on call' culture) impacts on other aspects of their life such as work and family. When necessary, make appropriate adjustments.

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

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

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

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

¹ mentalhealthatwork.org.uk

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

EXAMPLE FORMAT FOR A WELLBEING WORK PLAN

PLAN DATE: <i>OCT '23</i> PLAN REVIEW DATE: <i>APR '24</i>							
1. THIS WELLBEING WORK PLAN SETS OUT ACTIONS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND LOCALLY APPROPRIATE TIME SPANS AS THEY RELATE TO THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE VOLUNTEER WELLBEING. THIS PLAN IS A DYNAMIC DOCUMENT THAT WILL BE REGULARLY REVIEWED AND UPDATED.							
2. THROUGHOUT THE PLAN WE AIM TO PREPARE (BUILD KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND UNDERSTANDING), ENGAGE (LISTEN AND SHARE), AND SUPPORT (SIGNPOST AND BRIDGE). THESE REFLECT THE BEFORE/DURING/AFTER PHASES DETAILED IN THE UKSAR WELLBEING FRAMEWORK (2018). NOTE THAT THE FRAMEWORK HAS BEEN ADAPTED BY OTHERS (eg. SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN RESCUE AND MOUNTAIN RESCUE ENGLAND AND WALES) TO SUIT THEIR OWN CIRCUMSTANCES.							
PRINCIPLE	POINTS WITHIN THE PRINCIPLES	WHAT DO WE DO NOW?	ARE THERE GAPS OR IMPROVEMENTS?	WHAT WILL WE DO? ACTION(S)	WHO IS TAKING FORWARD?	TIME SPAN TARGET	COMMENTS
<i>EXAMPLE: P1. Promote an open culture around wellbeing and mental health.</i>	<i>Positively support the way our volunteers think and act about mental health by increasing awareness and challenging stigma.</i>	<i>We speak openly about mental health within the team and promote relevant resources and training.</i>	<i>We could do more to support some sessions within our training programme.</i>	<i>We will arrange a mental health awareness session.</i>	<i>Training officer.</i>	<i>Within next six-month programme.</i>	

Article based on Guiding Principles for Emergency Response Volunteer Wellbeing
 Version 1: September 2023



Setting goals: How to accept where you are and grow from there

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



© Glen Carstens Peters.

When the new year rolls around, it's easy for us to feel like we need to accomplish everything we didn't get the chance to tackle last year. Sometimes we can put so much pressure on ourselves to improve every aspect of our lives, that we can feel anxious, depressed, or overwhelmed.

There's no problem with setting goals for yourself, but it is important to work towards our goals while being kind to ourselves.

Do you have areas of your life you want to work on this year? Try some of the following tips from the goal-setting guide in the Togetherall platform.

DECIDE WHAT MATTERS TO YOU

Think about an area of your life you'd like to work on. This could be incorporating physical activity, mindfulness, meal prepping or learning something new.

Ask yourself: What's important to you? Think about something you want to do, not something you feel like you must do. Remember, prioritising one goal will likely mean you need to shift time/energy spent in other areas.

START SMALL AND SPELL IT OUT

Every major journey begins with a first step. To help yourself achieve big goals, allow yourself to start small. Identify two small action steps to help you achieve your goal. It's important to make these steps achievable and small, and have a plan in place to achieve them.

For example, if you want to start meditating in the new year, instead of starting with a big goal that you'll meditate twenty minutes every morning before you head out the door, try starting with a more realistic goal such as

meditating for five minutes twice a week and see how that goes. Once you start a new habit you enjoy, you can gradually adjust it and eventually make it part of your daily routine.

MAKE THINGS EASIER FOR YOURSELF

Think about an area where you succeeded in the past and adapt it to your new goal. Reflecting on previous success can help to motivate and inspire us to channel our strengths into new endeavours.

Get support with your goals from a friend or someone who can help hold you accountable.

It's easier to work towards your goals when you have someone to talk to. Tell someone that you trust your goals and the steps you're taking to work towards them. They might join you on your journey or set some goals for themselves.

If you're not sure who to talk to, try Togetherall's online community where you can receive validation and support from others who understand.

ACCEPT WHERE YOU ARE RIGHT NOW AND LEARN

It's hard to quickly create new behaviours. It may take a few tries to set yourself up for success. Just remember:

- Prioritise
- Set realistic goals with achievable plans
- Get support from those who will support your efforts. ☺

News from the Rescue Benevolent Fund

Neil Woodhead RBF Chairman

The benevolent fund is now well into its second decade supporting team members and their families within both the cave and mountain rescue communities. My tenure as chairman has also passed the ten-year mark and I'm very proud of what we've achieved for you all.

Have you looked at our website? It's easy to remember rescuebenevolent.fund and should be one of your 'favourites' — you never know when you might need our assistance or even give us a donation. But more than that the website is also a great place to find some useful resources. Did you know you can find our downloadable resources which include:

- Your FAQs
- An infographic: Who can claim?
- Application form
- Keeping it confidential
- Raise funds and get sponsorship or set up a legacy.

WELLBEING SUPPORT ARTICLES

We also have a selection of articles, many of which first appeared here in the magazine, all gathered into one handy resource. There's a wealth of useful information here to help you look after your own health and wellbeing, including:

- Understanding the stages of relationships
- Stress and anxiety: what they are and how they affect you
- Retrain your brain by making like a flamingo
- Harnessing the restorative power of sleep
- Stay fit for purpose and flexible, to avoid injury
- Volunteering with mountain rescue saved my life

- We can't promise to make you bionic
- Cope with stress by learning to identify the signs
- Improve your mood right now with these ten simple ideas
- Improve your mental wellbeing by home growing your own veg
- Spotlight on men's health with three common conditions.

HOW WE CAN HELP YOU

I've said before and I make no apologies for repeating myself, but when the Rescue Benevolent Fund started we anticipated and received requests for assistance following physical injuries to team members on call-outs and whilst training.

That remains a key objective but, as we've grown, we also found ourselves being approached for assistance when team members needed wellbeing support and therapy after witnessing something on a call-out. Team members have explained to me how difficult it can be to seek help with wellbeing difficulties. To help we've been providing you with Togetherall for the last eighteen months. It's a community of real people who understand. The advantage of Togetherall is that you don't come through the Rescue Benevolent Fund — instead, you can go straight to Togetherall if you're feeling lonely, stressed, worried or just not yourself — and it doesn't have to be anything to do with

your volunteering for a rescue team. It might be work, finances, relationships or a combination of many different stressors you're experiencing.

There isn't a limit as to how many team members can use Togetherall. We all can. It doesn't cost us a single penny more if you join the community and you won't be taking the space of someone who you might feel is more deserving. The more of us that use Togetherall, the better it will be. We know it works and we know that numbers using it have increased by 50% this year, which is really positive. If you haven't had a look, then why don't you? You have nothing to lose and you may have plenty to gain.

Last, but by no means least, I'd like to thank everyone who has supported the Rescue Benevolent Fund. We receive donations from all across the cave and mountain rescue communities, from individual team members to national bodies. Every single penny counts and I hope that you, your team or your region may be able to make a donation in 2024. I'd like to thank the following organisations for the donations they have made to us in 2023:

- British Cave Rescue
- Cockermouth MRT
- Coniston MRT
- Derbyshire CRO
- Keswick MRT
- Patterdale MRT. ☺

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 support courses covering the key topics which affect all our lives. Or take **clinically-approved self-assessments** to help you understand more about yourself. ☺

To register, go to togetherall.com > Click **Join now** > Under **Create account**, scroll down to **I'd like to search for my organisation**. Enter **Rescue Benevolent Fund** > Begin creating your anonymous account.

Or simply scan the QR code on the right to get started



FIND US ONLINE AT [RESCUEBENEVOLENT.FUND](https://rescuebenevolent.fund) & VIA THE QR CODE OPPOSITE, OR ON FACEBOOK @RESCUEBENEVOLENTFUND



PARTNERING TO DELIVER PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING SUPPORT TO MOUNTAIN AND CAVE RESCUE TEAM MEMBERS





National training matters

Phil Ridley MREW Training Officer

At November's Training subcommittee (TSC) meeting, the data received from 'Phase 1' of the strategy training review instigated in June 2023 was collated and presented to the meeting. A small working group was proposed to progress 'Phase 2', by analysing and identifying common trends or core skills which can be targeted, and where necessary liaise and work with other MREW subcommittees (and third-party organisations) to implement training objectives which would help coordinate common standards, skills, delivery and good practice. The results will be presented at a future Training meeting.

Work continues on the review of **Training's Contribution to Duty of Care and Governance** which began several years ago. A minor delay held up the completion of the project, but I'm hopeful a conclusion can be achieved soon, once the 'legal' review has been completed. The purpose of this project was to open the discussion on training, duty of care and governance, with the hope of achieving a clearer, more unified view within MREW, its member teams and team members. A working group was formed from the TSC. A lot of time and effort went into the project, with a successful and detailed member questionnaire produced to capture information. The data was wide ranging and of value, echoing some of the wellbeing and shared-value topics being discussed within MREW today.

This year's **Party Leader Course** at Colomendy Outdoor Centre, near NEWSAR base, was well attended with 21 teams sending delegates. The course caters for 35

for 2024, with the intention of allowing a more even distribution of allocated places. The course will remain centrally delivered for 2024. Further details will go out to teams shortly. **Diary dates for next year: 23-25 February and 22-24 November 2024.**

The revised draft **Hill Member Guidelines** were presented to the TSC in November, and we are currently reviewing these and the Party Leader guidelines. Thank you to Dan Mazhindu and to everyone who has contributed and supported this project. I'll get the updated documents issued as soon as possible.

Recently, RAF Valley's **SERE (Defence Survive, Evade, Resist, Extraction)** training unit held a presentation session on aircrew post-crash survival to North Wales teams. A couple of PDMRO members also attended which provided a good insight into what to expect should MRTs be asked to assist with this type of rescue operation.

As a newcomer to the actual **UKSAR LIBOR**

they would be delivered is on a par with what any project manager will be familiar with. This final application before the fund runs out is for the period 2024-2026. The application was submitted in November and any awarded LIBOR decision won't be known until April 2024. All bids received by UKSAR LIBOR Training Fund are evaluated against several criteria and greater weight is given to bids that have a national or regional theme running through them. Topics applied for are varied and this year include Search Planning and Management, Search Field Skills, Prehospital Trauma Support, Equipment Inspection, Water and Flood Response, Rope Rescue Instructors, Vehicle and Driver Instructors, Logistics and Record Keeping, Foundation and Party Leader courses, and Train the Trainer, to mention a few. Importantly, contributions will also be changed to a 50/50 funding from teams and MREW (through LIBOR) mainly due to the limited amount of funding which remains.

MREW has previously stipulated that certain guidelines should be reviewed approximately every five years (good practice), so it's nicely timed that several topics are due to be reviewed in 2024. Some of these will include reviewing the **Rope Rescue Guidelines** (a huge amount of work over several years went into the existing guidelines), to make sure they are still valid, fit for purpose and up to date with current practices. Also, **Training Record Keeping and CPD** for all members is something that has been discussed by several MREW committees over recent years including the TSC. As such, the opportunity to explore ideas and collaborate with others is something that is being considered.

Finally, at the time of writing, I am in the process of compiling a draft of training course dates for 2024. The aim is to prevent unnecessary clashes of major courses/meetings and give teams the opportunity to forward plan.

Any queries, suggestion or training related issues please do not hesitate to contact me: trainingofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk ☺



Above: Team members from around England and Wales at the Party Leader course, November 2023 © Bolton MRT.

delegates with a similar number of directing staff, instructors and helpers. As always, it was great to meet and socialise with members from the attending teams. I am aware of the time and commitment everyone puts into this course — thank you to all involved. As a direct result of its popularity and recent concerns raised over bookings, the course will now be run twice a year, in November and February. The application and booking process has been reviewed and changes will come into effect

bid application process, I would just like to thank all those who have worked on this financial project over the last decade, and in particular to acknowledge the work that Penny Brockman has done in managing the overall financial aspects. The fund was established to support 'operational training'. It is not open to bids that support other aspects of running or managing a team. The amount of background work, including writing pitch summaries for the numerous training courses along with costings and how

ACCESSING THE MREW ONLINE SHOP (TEAMS)

The MREW online shop currently allows teams to purchase Covid-19 specific PPE items as well as car stickers and badges. Access is available to all MREW member teams upon request. **Julian Walden** explains.

To register your team, please email office@mountain.rescue.org.uk and include the details listed below for your team's designated purchaser, **using an official team email address**. An account will be created for your team and any further information regarding the setting up of this account sent directly to the shop user. The information we need is as follows:

- Full name of proposed team purchaser + team name
- Email (must be a team-specific address)
- Postal address (must be able to receive post/parcels during the working day).

ANY QUERIES OR HELP REQUIRED, EMAIL OFFICE@MOUNTAIN.RESCUE.ORG.UK OR CALL 0330 043 9101 BETWEEN 08.30-17.30, MONDAY TO FRIDAY (PLEASE LEAVE A MESSAGE IF CALLING OUT OF THESE HOURS).



✦ To access the digital bookshelf in the Flippingbook version of each magazine, click on any cover and go straight to that issue.



TEAM LOGOS, UPDATED BRAND GUIDELINES AND MOODLE...

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

Moodle is an easy-to-access resource for medical, training and insurance information, in particular. Here's a quick tour of the key areas to see what you're missing plus guidance on how to register.

The key disciplines listed include **Medical, Search, Water, Safety, Technical Rescue, Leadership and Incident Management, Insurance and GDPR** and a few categories yet to be fully populated. Please note that some areas are restricted to those attending the actual course.

The **Medical** section addresses the legal and medical requirements for training and operations, and there's plenty of resources to download. You'll find stuff relating to the Casualty Care Certificate, a PDF of Casualty Care for Mountain Rescue Edition 2, Revision Notes for Casualty Care, and a section on Anatomy and Physiology containing materials to explain how the human body works and why we do what we do. There's a section devoted to Recognition of Life Extinct in MR, and you'll find meeting minutes here too.

The **Insurance** category is worth a check for the policies and schedules applicable to mountain rescue, and a list of frequently asked questions. And now you can also find a selection of the presentations from the **MREW Conference 2022**.

Finally, Moodle is going through a refresh so expect changes and improvements over the coming months to make it easier to navigate. Have fun! ☺

TO REGISTER



Go to <http://tiny.cc/Moodle4MR> or scan the QR code above and fill in the form **using a team email address** (not role-specific). You'll get an automated email within 30 minutes confirming receipt and, once you're approved, you'll be given a temporary password, which you can change at first log in. Easy peasy. Any issues, email moodlesupport@mountain.rescue.org.uk.

New Casualty Care syllabus

ALISTAIR MORRIS MREW MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Throughout 2023 myself, Brendan Sloan (BCRC Medical Officer) and Ken Crossley (SMR Deputy Medical Officer), with the members of the MSC, have been working on a revision of the Casualty Care Syllabus. This has been agreed, published and will start in January 2024 by the three lead organisations.

The core of the syllabus is unchanged and the vast majority of the injuries we treat during rescues continue to be covered by this. It was pleasing to see, at iCAR in Italy, that what we teach is in line with what healthcare professionals and rescue teams are delivering around the world.

There are, however, some additions that both reflect the changing world and casualties we face on rescues, and aims to support casualty carers with some knowledge and skills whilst also knowing where to seek help and support.

NEW AREAS

1. Mental Capacity and Consent: It is important when delivering treatment that consent from the casualty is sought and repeatedly checked — they have a right to reject our offers of treatment. This section gives an overview of what is meant by 'mental capacity', where to get advice if there are concerns for capacity, and ensuring consent is taken

2. Safeguarding: All teams as charities should have a safeguarding policy. This section highlights safeguarding awareness for casualty carers to know where to turn if concerns are raised and ensure you are protected when caring for vulnerable individuals.

3. NEXUS: The ability for a casualty carer to clear a cervical spine injury using the NEXUS tool is now included. It has been available for some time, but not explicit in the syllabus.

4. GCS: The need for casualty carers to know and remember the Glasgow Coma Scale has been removed and the focus is on ACVPU as a measure of conscious level.

5. Environmental Problems:

a. Heat illness: An expanded section on heat and exertional heat illness. We have seen an increase in the numbers of casualties with heat illness — from single figures per year 4-5 years ago to 33 at the time of writing.

b. Suspension Syndrome: How to avoid and what to do following the latest iCAR guidance. (Also see article on opposite page).

STRUCTURE OF THE SYLLABUS

The syllabus covers all areas of casualty care and is structured to cover the subject matter areas.

1. General Principles of Care
2. Casualty Assessment
3. Casualty Management: The Primary Survey
4. Casualty Management: Secondary Survey – Trauma/Injury
5. Casualty Management: Secondary Survey – Medical Illness
6. Casualty Management: Environmental Problems
7. General Principles of Casualty Management
8. Medications
9. Resuscitation
10. Special Circumstances
11. Clinical Skills



c. Crush Injury: What to do and what to expect as a casualty carer.

6. Onward Care of the Rescued Person: The MSC had a long discussion about what is 'a casualty' and it is difficult to fully define. However, we do know there are those who we rescue that do not need ongoing or any medical care and this section covers advice on how to manage these and ensure documentation is completed to protect the individual and team.

7. Resuscitation: This now has its own section, including support around the decision-making of not commencing and also considering stopping resuscitation in the SAR environment, supported by the UKSAR Recognition of Life Extinct framework and documentation.

8. Special Circumstances: This has been expanded to individually deal with children, the elderly and pregnancy — of which we are seeing more in our environments. There is an additional section on mental illness

awareness, both from a cause of the call-out or as a consequence of it for casualties and team members. With Jon White from the Wellbeing group, awareness of Psychological First Aid is included.

As you can see we have aimed to reflect the changing world and the casualties we encounter in the SAR environment and to support casualty carers with the knowledge and skills you need to initially manage the incident, then seek help and support.

We are conscious that the casualty care qualification is a lot of work and stress for volunteers and don't want to add unnecessary areas and additional burden on teams and trainers. A range of e-learning packages are in development and new areas will be covered by these and available on Moodle.

The full syllabus is already available on Moodle for team members and medical officers to download. 📄

Suspension Syndrome*

BRENDAN SLOAN BCRC MEDICAL DIRECTOR

One of the new additions to the Casualty Care Syllabus 2024 is the recognition and management of Suspension Syndrome. This article is intended to increase awareness of the condition and how to manage it.

Suspension syndrome, also referred to as suspension trauma or harness-hang, refers to the potentially fatal collapse of a victim passively hanging in a vertical position. In 1972, a case series of fatalities was presented at the Second International Conference of Mountain Rescue Doctors in Innsbruck. In these cases, the victims had been found deceased, hanging vertically in climbing harnesses, but otherwise apparently uninjured. This raised the possibility of the fatal event being due to their positioning. Subsequently, there were a number of both incident reports and experimental data where people passively suspended vertically developed fainting (syncope) or near-fainting (pre-syncope). In some cases, this occurred very rapidly. As a result, many organisations, including IRATA, HSE and iCAR developed guidance on the avoidance and management of the condition. However, despite being known about for over 50 years, the background is still unclear. Post-mortem examination may be unremarkable, and there may also be contribution from hypothermia or trauma which has rendered the casualty immobile.

So what is the theoretical basis for suspension syndrome? The most common theory relates to impaired venous return to the heart, resulting in circulatory collapse. The heart pumps blood, at high pressure (typically 120/80mmHg), to the rest of the body, where it delivers oxygen and nutrients to the tissues. However, as the blood passes into the capillaries, it loses this pressure, and by the time it enters the veins to return to the heart, it is at a pressure of around 5-10mmHg. This is clearly inadequate to force blood back up from the legs without assistance. This assistance comes from the leg muscles, which compress the veins as they contract, for example while walking. The veins have one-way valves, preventing blood back-flow so, as they are squashed, the blood is forced back to the heart. This muscle pump, however, only works when the leg muscles are being used, so if a casualty is exhausted or unconscious, this will not occur.

Other theories involve vasovagal reflexes, essentially similar to fainting, where the heart rate dramatically slows resulting in reduced blood flow to the brain. Experiments on healthy volunteers have not given a definitive answer, but it is clear that in some cases, syncope or pre-syncope can develop within minutes of being passively suspended. There is likely a degree of variability between individuals, for reasons that are not yet understood.

Regardless of the mechanism, if there is inadequate blood flow to the brain, then unconsciousness rapidly develops. Normally, that would result in the person collapsing to a horizontal position, at which point there is no longer a pressure gradient between the heart and the brain. Blood flow is rapidly restored, with no lasting effects — as in the case of a simple faint. The issue with casualties in harnesses is that they are suspended vertically and so do not change their position once unconscious. This may lead to ongoing impaired blood supply to the brain and other vital organs, which can be rapidly fatal. There is also the risk of an unconscious vertical casualty obstructing their airway from neck hyper-extension or hyper-flexion, which is again immediately life threatening.

The key management priority of managing a casualty suffering from, or at risk of, suspension syndrome is to get them down from suspension, or at least into a horizontal position, as quickly as possible. Many of the professional ropework organisations have regulations on how quickly this should be achieved, but the aim should be to minimise the time passively suspended. Once down, the casualty should be positioned horizontally, and managed in line with standard practice, ie. an ABCDE approach. Casualties who have been passively suspended for a long period (hours) or who have lost consciousness should be assessed in a hospital. Most of the published guidance relates to casualties who are unconscious or have been pre-syncope (nearly fainting). If a casualty has been passively suspended for a period but not had signs of pre-syncope, they should be assessed in the absence of any ongoing symptoms.

There has previously been concern about the blood pooling in the legs accumulating 'toxins', and that the rapid return of this blood to the central circulation, such as positioning the casualty horizontally, may cause problems. However, there is no real evidence to support this. In major surgical procedures, such as knee replacements or operations on the major blood vessels, arterial tourniquets are applied for up to 90 minutes to minimise bleeding by cutting off all blood flow to the affected area, before being released, and this does not cause major problems. In suspension syndrome, the proposed mechanism of inadequate blood flow to the brain and/or airway obstruction will be lethal well before there is enough build up of metabolic products to

cause harm. For this reason, the recommendation is to get the casualty horizontal as quickly as possible, addressing the immediate life-threatening condition of impaired blood supply to the brain.

There is no experimental evidence on the effect of hypovolaemia combined with suspension syncope, as all the trials have been on healthy volunteers. Logically, it could be expected that hypovolaemia may cause suspension syndrome to develop more rapidly, as there is already a partially empty circulation. This should be considered when a badly injured casualty requires a stretcher evacuation. Vertical stretcher hauling, particularly in an unconscious casualty, has the potential to provoke suspension syndrome, and so horizontal positioning should be considered. However, in the mountain and cave rescue environment, this may not always be possible due to physical restrictions. If vertical hauling is unavoidable, aim to do so for the shortest time possible.

Finally, on an individual level, it is useful to have an understanding of personal risk. Many of us will have spent a long time suspended in a harness on climbing or caving trips, or on rescues. When freely suspended, it is important to keep moving, either by using surrounding structures or foot loops to maintain the leg muscle pump activity. If suspended for a prolonged period, it may be sensible to try and assume a more horizontal position, as allowed by the environment. It is also recommended not to undertake ropework alone.

KEY POINTS

- Passive vertical suspension is bad
- Aim to get a casualty on the floor, or at least horizontal, as soon as possible
- Once they are no longer suspended, treat as per any other casualty. 📄

REFERENCES

iCAR Recommendation MED REC 0036 2021 (www.icar-med.com/Recommendations/Current-Recommendations/Suspension-Syndrome/Index.php)



Brendan will be talking about Suspension Syndrome and Crush Injury at the MREW Conference, September 2024.

PR consultant and media trainer Sally Seed looks at an aspect of publicity and PR and suggests ideas to build on for the future. This time: **Extending our role in social media – and cutting back**

First, a thank you to a name most readers won't recognise. Oliver Robinson has been supporting us on social media for a number of years now, making sure that as many team Facebook and Twitter/X posts as possible are shared more broadly and also supporting me on the safety and fundraising posts that originate with MR.

Over those years, our Facebook following has grown, to over 38,000 at the end of November 2023. Oliver recently reported to the Media and Comms Network meeting with stats that make encouraging reading so it seemed a good time to explain what's happening in this area of MR publicity.

FACEBOOK GROWTH

Having a following of over 38,000 is great in terms of sharing news from MR and appealing for funds but we're also very aware that, for safety messaging, we're probably reaching people who are already in the know.

So, in the past year, we've focused more on encouraging 'Shares' — aiming to get to the friends and contacts of those who follow us. 'Reach' (people who see our posts), Interactions and 'Visits to our Page' or 'Profile' have all grown significantly, with those latter two more than doubling during 2023.

One post actually had a reach of more than 104,000 and that was on Thursday 26 October, just ahead of Mountain Rescue Awareness Day. The post linked to a blog on the OS 'Get Outside' website that we'd worked on with them, focusing on staying safe in the dark. That reach was more than double the equivalent post in October 2022.

Our other highest reach post in 2023 came in April when a 'What would Mountain Rescue do?' graphic about carrying gaffer tape with you had a reach of over 71,000. Doesn't make it easier to predict the posts that will have most impact, but good to know we're getting it right sometimes as that post, like the October one, achieved a tremendous number of shares.

X/TWITTER CHANGES

Rather than spread our social media resources too thinly, we've decided to stop posting on Twitter (now known as X) and to focus on building an MREW channel on the growing Instagram platform.

Thank you to the teams that have blazed a trail on Instagram (and built up the #mountainrescue hashtag) and also thanks to those teams that took the decisions to withdraw from Elon Musk's X/Twitter earlier in the year.

DIGITAL MARKETING FUNNEL

Just a brief answer to the 'So what?' question on social media — and it's a question that's worth asking! My argument is that Facebook followers, if you do a combination of the right things, can be of tangible benefit.

For instance, if 10% of followers followed a link to our website or read a blog, that's 3,800 website connections (and nearly 4,000 people better informed). If 10% of them made a donation to MR or purchased something in our online shop, that's 380 donations. And finally, if 10% of them remembered MR in their wills and left a legacy, that's 38 legacies — which could be of tremendous benefit.

We need to be using the channels to make this happen, but that's part of the challenge.

SOCIAL MEDIA TRAINING

There are great examples of brilliant social media marketing across teams, whether it's tying into topical dates, creating shareable video content or making new partner connections. We now need to ensure that everyone with a team or similar social media responsibility has the knowledge, skills and support to do the job well.

Members of the Media and Communications Network are working on a plan for three online workshops that should be available later in 2024, all being well. These are likely to address the different needs for training — basics and planning (Context), posting about incidents, creating content and responding to interactions (Reactive) and proactive use for campaigns like safety messaging, recruitment and fundraising. There'll be more news on this to come later in the year.

If you've any questions about this issue's column (or any other media and publicity-related activity) please get in touch with me via pr@mountain.rescue.org.uk. Thanks.

POST SCRIPT...

This time last year, my column focused on our print media coverage in the outdoors and emergency services magazines. Thank you to everyone who contributed to that content during 2023 — and it was great to see Mel Smith from Holme Valley MRT in one of the glossy women's magazines at the end of the year too. The Media and Communications Network will be aiming to create more opportunities for even more MR coverage and messaging in the year ahead.

POST POST SCRIPT...

If this is the first you've heard of the Media and Communications Network, please get in touch or send me a friend request on Facebook so I can invite you into the online group. We're hoping to have an online planning meeting in February and it would be great to include as many teams as possible. Thanks. ☺



Top left: News type © Spaceheater. Dreamstime.com. Above: The 'Gaffer tape' graphic, thanks to Sarah Harvey.



NOVEMBER: NORTH FACE ALLYSHIP COURSE LAUNCHES AT KENDAL MOUNTAIN FESTIVAL

The Allyship in the Outdoors digital course is free and easy to access and takes somewhere between 30-60 minutes to go through, with information and short videos followed by a 'test your knowledge' session.

The aim is to change the way organisations, communities and individuals view allyship and racial inclusion. The course is one of the resulting outputs from the Explore Fund Council, the group brought together from multiple sectors including sport, academia and media to help direct and shape The North Face funding to break down systemic barriers to exploration.

Developed in partnership with leading social impact and sport consultancy, thinkBeyond, the focus is on five key outdoor sports, climbing, skiing, snowboarding, trail running and hiking and is suitable for everyone from instructors and coaches to governing bodies, brands and charities.

The Allyship in The Outdoors course is funded by The North Face Explore Fund alongside a grant from The VF Foundation, the philanthropic arm of The North Face's parent company, VF Corporation. To take the course, simply sign up to The North Face XPLR pass programme and follow the online instructions — it's that simple.

HEAD TO THENORTHFACE.CO.UK TO FIND OUT MORE.

Left: Image from the North Face Allyship campaign © The North Face.



Mountain Rescue at Kendal Mountain Festival



Left: Trainee Search Dog Jura; North of Tyne team on the stand TV; Shane Ohly. Above: Team members with pupils from Kirkbie Kendal School © Kirkbie Kendal School. Below left: Women in Mountain Rescue panel participants, left to right, Rachel Smith, Rachael Crewesmith, Kath Jackson and Jo Shelmerdine. Below: Saturday morning Trail Run Start © Andy Milton. Opposite: North of Tyne team members including Helen Sansum (centre). Images credited as supplied.

Raising funds for rescue



The (long) weekend of Kendal Mountain Festival saw over 25,000 people in the Cumbrian town with events, exhibitions and happenings based in several venues across Kendal, including the Kendal MRT base. Kendal MRT's presence at the event has ebbed and flowed over the years, but 2023 became a real high point with almost every member of the team involved in activities across the weekend presenting, informing, connecting and raising funds, in collaboration with Ordnance Survey and Helly Hansen and with support from MREW.

A BUSY FEW DAYS FOR KENDAL MRT: SHANE OHLY

As a team, we were proud to represent MREW and LDSAMRA during Kendal Mountain Festival. Over four days:

- We demonstrated a technical rescue above water to over thirty MREW partners and media guests on the Thursday evening, alongside fellow MR team members from Langdale Ambleside, Kirkby Stephen and North of Tyne.
- On the Friday, team members met up with pupils from Kirkbie Kendal School to help promote mountain rescue amongst local primary schools, giving the pupils a hands-on rescue scenario to tackle.
- Team members hosted four base tours for members of the public during the event — these workshops were ticketed and sold out, giving us a great chance to really show people what we do and how we do it.
- We had a presence at Base Camp with our Mobile 2 vehicle stationed within this main display area, near all the food and drink spots, which also gave visitors a chance to meet trainee search dog, Jura.
- I hosted a Mountain Rescue Live session on the Macs Adventure Stage where I interviewed Lou and Glen Bland, a couple that the team had rescued from Ill Bell, Kentmere in July 2021.

And, as you can read below, team leader, Kath Jackson and probationer, Jo Shelmerdine also took part in a panel session on the Sunday.

The highlight for many visitors as well as team members was the Kendal Mountain Festival Trail Run on the Saturday morning. This race is organised by Ourea Events (Editor's note: Shane is the owner of this business) on a not-for-profit basis, with the surplus being donated to Kendal MRT. Town centre roads were closed for 1,000 participants and double this number of spectators, and the event created a real focal point for the Festival weekend and raised over £10,000 for the team.

ALL PART OF THE ONGOING HELLY HANSEN PARTNERSHIP: HELENA SANSUM

As part of North of Tyne MRT's ongoing partnership with Helly Hansen, I had the pleasure of attending the first two days of the

Festival with fellow team members, Ian Blackburn and Grant Ridley. It was fantastic to represent Helly Hansen and OS Maps, and to interact with so many lovely people who visited the stand. We had lots of great questions about the Helly Hansen clothing we wear and about what it's like to be a mountain rescue volunteer.

Ian and I took part in a talk titled 'Helly Hansen: Working with Professionals', on stage in the Base Camp area of the Festival, with Philip Tavell from Helly Hansen, who flew in from Oslo.

Our partnership with Helly Hansen means we get to directly influence future clothing design for professionals through the feedback our team members provide, which is exciting and works well for all involved. We genuinely cringed at times as we felt like we were delivering polished sales pitches when it came to talking about the kit, but it's testament to the quality of the

MOUNTAIN RESCUE LIVE: THE FEMALE EXPERIENCE

The second of the two Mountain Rescue Live sessions featured a panel of three MR volunteers interviewed by outdoor coach, instructor and presenter, Rachael Crewesmith. Even though the event was on the smaller Polartec stage in Base Camp at 3.00pm on the final afternoon, it drew a good crowd for a fascinating insight.

Kath Jackson, team leader at Kendal, was joined on stage by Rachel Smith of North of Tyne MRT and Kendal probationer, Jo Shelmerdine. The three of them talked about their roles, the challenges of mountain rescue, the benefits of diversity in a team, and the work at North of Tyne with Helly Hansen on kit for a female shape.

Rachael also asked Kath and Rachel about their 'most amazing rescue' and the answers said a lot about the work of MR. In



relationship we have with Helly Hansen as well as the quality of the kit.

Peta MacDonald, from Helly Hansen, said 'It was fantastic to have volunteers from both North of Tyne and Kendal teams on the Helly Hansen and Ordnance Survey joint stand. Having the MR volunteers made us have a point of difference with professionals on the stand, increased foot traffic and created engaging conversations.'

If you've not been to the Kendal Mountain Festival before, I really recommend it. I'll certainly be going again!

Kath's case, she pointed out that day-to-day 'normal' rescues would be pretty major for the individual concerned, while Rachel still remembers her very first rescue of an exhausted elderly gentleman. When pressed on the 'amazing', both came up with answers relating to the broader work of MR in its own communities — the Grayrigg train crash and the Morpeth floods.

Thanks to everyone who came along to support Rachel, Kath and Jo. Shane has a plan for more Mountain Rescue Live sessions at Festivals to come! 🐾



Mountain Rescue England and Wales and Ordnance Survey Partnership Review 2024

At the end of 2023, MREW and OS looked back over the first year of our partnership in a document shared with teams. It was a year that exceeded all initial expectations.

Just before Easter, we saw a successful media campaign — with both Nick Giles OBE, Managing Director Ordnance Survey Leisure, and our own Mike Park MBE interviewed on TV and radio — to drive safety education and inspire people into experiencing the outdoors. And at the other end of the year, the Kendal Mountain Festival in November was a fantastic opportunity to help raise the profile of Mountain Rescue England and Wales and share the partnership with our common audience. Working alongside Helly Hansen, with a stand mocked up as a mountain rescue base, Helly Hansen's 'locker room' showcased their technical clothing, while Ordnance Survey demonstrated the 'operations' side. (Read more about the mountain rescue involvement with the Kendal Festival on the previous page).

Alongside these key events, throughout 2023, Ordnance Survey has worked with MREW to share expert advice with their current and potential new customers with topics such as how to administer first aid outside, what to bring on a hike, how to stay

safe in the dark, and accident-prone locations.

In addition to social media work, OS ran an App Store feature and in-app messaging to promote the partnership along with the key safety features of OS Maps, during relevant periods such as coming into autumn and the clocks changing.

Spending time with teams in the Peak District and South Wales, and attending the 2023 MREW AGM, they said, had provided valuable insights into how mountain rescue works, what's important to us and why.

'The partnership has had a huge impact on the scope of development of OS Maps and how we've established the new look and features in the app (coming to your devices in 2024). You may already have noticed some changes coming in, like the ability to share routes with a link and the incredibly popular snap-to-path improvements which make route plotting quicker and more reliable.'

In return OS has supported teams and individual team members with access to OS Maps Premium and up to 30% off items in

the OS Shop with a MREW partner discount. Simply log in to the OS shop with your team email address and see your discounts automatically applied.

COMING IN 2024

The 'OS paper maps team' hope MREW will help test the physical maps in the harshest conditions. The new-look OS Maps will be launched in early 2024, with the 'mapping and route planning you're familiar with, but modernised and full of potential. With new technology behind it, it will enable the development of features and functionality we'd like to introduce in the future'.

SIMPLIFIED MENU BAR

To help you get to what you want, quickly.



HOME TAB

Your personalised hub for all things OS Maps. Includes how-to guides, route recommendations or planning tools. It will also give OS a place in the future to communicate with users about things like relevant seasonal safety messaging and being responsible in the outdoors.



ROUTES TAB

Helping everyone get outside no matter who you are and what experience you have — creating and sharing your own route, finding routes from OS Maps partners or filtering for A to B or circular routes.



MAPS TAB

Full-screen mapping, map legends at your fingertips and navigation features.



ACTIVITIES TAB

Record, relive and retell your adventures. Real-time recording, turning activities into new routes and see your activity stats and history.



SAVED TAB

View and manage your routes, offline and paper maps in one place. Save, bookmark or download routes, view offline maps and manage your digital paper maps.



OS believe that 'these improvements to user experience will make it easier for people to find what they need in the app, without losing the simplicity and functionality that is core to its popularity. Android users will get the same experience as those on iOS. For example, you will be able to see your offline maps outlined on the map-screen and easily share a grid reference. There are also a whole host of other small but important developments like pins staying put when you move the map'.

OS MAPS PREMIUM ACCESS

If you have already set up an OS Maps account with your mountain rescue email address and been using your free premium subscription, you will need to renew it, as it will only be valid for twelve months from the time you first registered. You can renew at any point during your subscription period,

and the next twelve months' access will be added on to the end of your existing subscription. You should also receive an email prompt a few weeks ahead of the end of your subscription, and can check the expiration date of your current subscription in the app. The instructions on how to renew are detailed below:

OS MAPS – CREATING A NEW ACCOUNT

You will need to create an account using your Mountain Rescue email address. This is essential to claim your free OS Maps Premium Subscription. Your account will give you access to all OS products.



- 1 Get your individual redemption code from your team — you will not be able to access your free Premium subscription without the code.
- 2 Create an OS Account using your mountain rescue email address. Your team code will not work against other accounts and must be associated to your team email address. You will not be able to find the product in Google or by searching in the OS Shop.
- 3 Add the OS Maps 12 Month Access for Mountain Rescue Volunteers to your bag. Proceed to Checkout and add your discount code for your team at the basket. The discount code box is available on the View Bag page or under the Order Summary on the Checkout page.
- 4 Complete your purchase with no charge. Once you have created your account and redeemed your subscription, you will receive an OS Maps email welcome designed to help you understand some of the key features OS Maps has to offer.

OS MAPS – RENEWAL PROCESS

- 1 Make sure you have your redemption code available. Each MREW team has its own individual code to help you unlock your premium subscription. You will not be able to access your free premium subscription without the code.
- 2 Go to <https://shop.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/> to log in to your OS Account using your mountain rescue email address. Your team code will not work against other accounts.
- 3 Follow the link in your welcome pack, to a dedicated MREW Volunteer Premium Subscription. **Please note:** This product is not available in the OS Shop and must be accessed via the link. You will not be able to find the product in Google or by searching in the OS Shop.
- 4 Add the OS Maps 12 Month Access for Mountain Rescue Volunteers to your bag. Proceed to Checkout and add your discount code at the basket. The discount code box is available on the View Bag page or under the Order Summary on the Checkout page.
- 5 Complete your purchase with no charge. Once you have redeemed your new subscription, twelve months of premium access will automatically be added onto the end of any existing subscription.
- 6 Your OS Maps premium subscription will now work on both mobile and desktop app. Download OS Maps for your phone at the Apple or Play Stores or visit explore.osmaps.com to access the desktop app. Your account will sync seamlessly between mobile and desktop.

If you have any questions relating to the redemption of your Premium subscription please contact partnerships@os.uk. If you have any questions on how to use OS Maps please head to the OS Maps Help Centre.



Hinkes thinks

Mountain rescue experiences, and talking #BeAdventureSmart on TV and radio

Thanks to Helly Hansen and Ordnance Survey, I have recently been lucky enough to be involved in two excellent mountain rescue demonstrations – one in Scotland with Arrochar MRT and another near Kendal, coordinated by Kendal MRT with support from Langdale Ambleside and Kirkby Stephen teams.

Getting properly involved with the call-out and rescue procedures is a fascinating and enlightening insight into the complexities of managing a rescue. Obviously, it is not just jump in the wagon, pitch up at the road head, bash up the hill, load a stretcher and carry the casualty out. To say it is more nuanced than that is an understatement. Not least, safety is of paramount importance.

Arrochar MRT organised a full day experience, with briefings in the team base, including facts about incidents, rescue statistics, first aid and kit run-throughs.

In the afternoon we participated in a full-scale search and rescue. The ground search was coordinated by full team members in a real life-like scenario. The Scottish weather also contributed, with typical heavy rain, which was a good test for the latest Helly Hansen shell jackets, which kept us dry and comfortable. Eventually, we found the manikin 'casualty' lying on the hillside. Once located we had to stabilise the casualty and organise the extraction. Firstly,

comfortable as possible whilst negotiating hazards on the ground. It was a good, strenuous work out, all done with enthusiasm and good humour.

Kendal MRT organised an impressive and realistic evening demonstration rescue in the dark. Sponsored by Helly Hansen and OS, various outdoor writers and outdoor gear personnel met in Kendal and walked several miles south along muddy tracks to a gorge in the River Kent. Looking over a bridge we all noticed a person hanging above the raging torrent by his fingertips. It seemed he had slipped down the steep bank and was dangling over the limestone cliff. Very impressive and scarily realistic. One of our group members pretended to dial 999 — for the purpose of this exercise a prearranged number to Kendal MRT. Several team vehicles and team members rapidly arrived to facilitate this difficult, technical rescue. I was relieved to realise that the 'victim' was safely tied on with a hidden black rope — but many journalists were not aware of that

winched up. A slick and impressive practical demonstration.

Be AdventureSmart and mountain rescue got national radio and TV coverage in November and December. BBC Radio 4 Open Country with Helen Marks had an episode titled 'Mountain Rescue' about increasing call-outs stretching mountain rescue resources. Recorded in Langdale, with contributions from LAMRT and others, the episode is still available on BBC iPlayer. AdventureSmart got a plug from me and I gave advice about gear, what to take in the fells and the contents of a rucksack. I closed the programme with the famous and poignant Edward Whymper quote: 'Climb if you will, but remember that courage and strength are nought without prudence, and that a momentary negligence may destroy the happiness of a lifetime. Do nothing in haste; look well to each step, and from the beginning think what may be the end.'

BBC Breakfast also called me in to talk about winter safety in the hills so



Above: Left & centre: Exercise during Kendal Film Festival © Veronica Melkonian. Above right: Alan at the Breakfast TV studio (image supplied). Opposite: Top, inset & centre: Exercise during Kendal Film Festival © Veronica Melkonian. Opposite, right: Alan on exercise with Arrochar MRT © Alan Hinkes/Arrochar MRT.

assembling the stretcher, before splinting, insulating and lifting the body onto the stretcher and securing it for transporting. It then became noticeably clear how difficult it is to manage a stretcher on rugged terrain. All the time trying to keep the casualty as

first. It looked very realistic and precarious. Immediately, team members were dispatched to the water in case anyone slipped in and bright lights illuminated the scene. Belay systems and pulleys efficiently put in place, the dangling 'victim' was safely

AdventureSmart got another plug, along with a general chat about safety and responsibility. Unfortunately, I didn't get the opportunity to go through the contents of my rucksack this time. 🍷



OCTOBER: LYON EQUIPMENT CELEBRATES FIFTY YEARS

The company celebrated its 50th anniversary at Tebay, with over 90 employees, many of whom are local mountain and cave rescue team members.

'It was a fantastic opportunity to strengthen our partnerships and discuss plans for the future,' says Ben Green. 'Ben Lyon explained the journey Lyon has been on in its fifty years, which led into conversations about where we are now and where we are aiming to be.'

'Then we headed to our off-site location at Lune Gorge for an activity. The Work and Rescue team set a task of retrieving some birthday cake from the other side of the gorge. Working together we set up an English Reeve using many of the products we manufacture, as well as those from our suppliers. Our hard work paid off and we enjoyed afternoon tea and cake chatting to our mountain and cave rescue partners.'

'Finally, after dinner, Kenton Cool spoke to us about his adventures on Everest and his long-time partnership with Lyon.'

Back in 1973, founder Ben Lyon was a keen caver, making the flexible ladders and tackle bags cavers need to get around underground. In the same year, Ben, with good friend and fellow caver, Mike Meredith, met a caving activist in France called Fernand Petzl, who in a similar way was making gear in his three-man workshop. In 1974 'Lyon' became the first overseas Petzl distributor.

As the company grew, they began distributing products from more international brands and branched out into providing training and equipment for people working at height. At the turn of the century, its warehousing moved to Tebay, close to the M6. A few years later, the Work and Rescue division was set up and, in 2012, the company moved into a new, state-of-the-art facility at Tebay.



Time for change... and a big thank you to JD Sports from everyone in mountain rescue

Since 2016 our relationship with JD Sports has been hugely supportive, largely thanks to the 'bag tax' introduced by the Government, and it's helped considerably towards the national organisation supporting the individual member teams. Along the way, team members from around the country have, in turn, supported JD at a variety of events. **Mike France** looks back over those last seven (and counting) years and looks forward to the future, as we move into 2024. Change is in the air.

On 23 March 2016, Mountain Rescue England and Wales met with JD Sport to talk about a possible funding partnership. The 'bag tax' had been introduced in October 2015, aimed at reducing the use of single-use carrier bags, and the litter associated with them, by encouraging people to reuse bags. The proposed levy at the till looked set to raise substantial funds and JD wanted to pass some of that money on to both MREW and Scottish Mountain Rescue.

When the request for the meeting arrived, our thoughts at the time were: 'What have we to lose? This could be worth thousands to us, with the bonus that the money was not restricted. It could help towards insurance costs as well as going towards training and helping start our wellbeing programme.'

In the Summer 2016 issue, we reported

that 'the JD Foundation — the registered charity of JD Sports Fashion plc which owns the Blacks Outdoor Group — pledged a level of support for MREW which will have a significant impact on mountain rescue over the [following] years'. An initial cheque for £218,273 was presented to myself (as MREW chairman at the time), by Traci Corrie, chair of the JD Foundation. This was to be followed by regular donations of approximately £180,000 per annum (depending on bag revenue), for the next three years.

Indeed, largely thanks to these monies, MREW has been able to expand and diversify in response to demands from the teams, other agencies and the expectations of the general public. Teams now benefit from a range of support services, and also

represent mountain rescue at national level, for example at UKSAR. These running costs increase each year and those JD donations have helped us enormously.

EVENTS AND EXPERIENCES

In summer 2017, we reported that four members of the JD staff had joined Teesdale and Weardale on a team exercise, to experience for themselves what happens in a mountain rescue. A good, if somewhat wet, day out was apparently had by all.

In a different sort of event entirely, in April 2017, we reported a busy JD Foundation weekend at Holcombe Moor Army Cadet Training Camp, entertaining 84 children and young adults as well as 45 JD Group and Foundation staff. Team members from Bowland Pennine, Rossendale and Pendle, Cleveland and Bolton, alongside search dogs and their handlers from across England and Wales, helped make the event a huge success.

One of the more recent tasks taken on by us, first in October 2022, then again in February and October 2023, were the two-day staff product awareness events. These offer the opportunity to talk with the 1,500 or so staff that attend each event and let them know that, through the bag tax from JDF, MREW has received over one million pounds from JDF. We always thank the staff for their support, which is well received. Everyone we talk with is very happy we get a donation from JD and its group members, which include Go Outdoors, Blacks, Millets, George Fisher and Ultimate. Staff feel more confident about telling the customers when asked, what the money goes to.

The other very important point for us being there, is that we can talk about what happens when their customers get it wrong and buy the wrong kit: they can soon become our customers. This is always a good opening to our conversations, and enables us to offer JD staff some basic hill safety information to pass on to their customers. Information is seen as knowledge — from people who know — and always goes down well. It's also a great way of getting a safety message to frontline staff.

THE TIMES THEY ARE A' CHANGIN'

So now it's time for the change. At the end of December 2023, along with JD's other charities, we will no longer receive money from the bag tax or till giving. JD very much wish to continue supporting MREW but, in future, if we need money for a project, we will need to apply for funds. This is about the Foundation (and the now JD Outdoor Group), using their charitable money wisely and the charities justifying why we/they want it. We have some great ideas about this opportunity, but it will need some work from all of us. The staff development events work well and JD would like our continued presence at these events. Keith Gillies will continue to work with JD on our behalf and I am optimistic that the relationship will go from strength to strength, albeit under a different guise.

Finally, a big, big thank you for the support JD Foundation and the frontline staff have given MREW over the years. 🙏



NEWS ROUND

OCTOBER > DECEMBER



OCTOBER: PENNY BROCKMAN NOMINATED FOR AWARD

Congratulations to MREW Finance Director Penny, who was a nominee for the Women of the Year Award, for her work in mountain rescue, nominated by Caroline Roberts-Simcock. 'It was an honour to spend the evening with so many inspirational women,' says Penny.

Above: Penny Brockman with Caroline Roberts-Simcock. Photo: facebook.com/CBMR



DECEMBER: TWO PRESTIGIOUS AWARDS FOR PENNY KIRBY

The Prime Minister's Points of Light award was given in recognition of Penny's forty years of volunteering in mountain rescue. A Wasdale team member, Penny has also long been involved with the search dogs — now working with Jess, her fifth dog. She said she was 'humbled and honoured' to receive the award. Just as we were heading to print, news came through of her New Year's Honour too, so double congratulations to Penny Kirby MBE!

Above: Penny Kirby with Search Dog Jess © Penny Kirby.



Top left: Presentation of the initial cheque in May 2016. Left to right: Bill Whitehouse (then MREW Fundraising Officer), Traci Corrie (chair of the JD Foundation), Mike France (then MREW Chairman) and Lee Bagnall (managing director, Blacks Outdoor Group).

Top right & above: The JD Foundation event in March 2018. Opposite: Mountain rescue members at JD event. Images supplied.

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Following a wet September, the team had a call-out to Hordern Stoops, on the outskirts of Bolton. A male fell runner had taken a tumble directly into a very deep peat bog, briefly immersing himself up to his neck and injuring his leg. He mistook the bog for a puddle – an easy mistake. Fortunately, he was able to get himself out of the bog. With the help of a couple of sticks, he managed to hobble 2.5km back to Hordern Stoops where he was quickly assessed and conveyed home for onward transport to the hospital.

This individual was extremely lucky. The peat bogs of the West Pennine Moors can be unexpectedly deep. They are known to give way whilst being walked on, even just slightly off the well-walked paths. Unsurprisingly, they do occasionally claim victims. Whilst bogs are present all over the UK, this particular bog regularly causes issues as it surrounds a popular paved footpath and it is easy for the public to succumb to it.

When this incident was shared on social media, significant interest was generated. People came forward with their own reports of similar stories. The same ‘puddle’ has caught out other walkers and runners, so we revisited the scene of the accident to investigate.

The pictures show a 6’ 2” person holding a 5’ 6” wooden fence post found lying on the moorland nearby. The stone path is solid and about three-foot wide. When covered with water it is very difficult to make out the edges of the stone, especially when the sun is low above the horizon.

As can be seen from the pictures, the bog very easily consumed almost all of the fence post, with very little resistance from the mud. It’s the same on the other side of the path. We can well believe the stories of people (and pets) sinking up to their chests. A number of team members have suffered the same fate during training sessions.

Peat bog formation requires moisture and the

accumulation of organic matter. Wetland plants and mosses grow in waterlogged areas and, over time, these accumulate partially decayed organic matter to form peat. The slow decomposition process, coupled with the acidic conditions in these environments, contributes to the distinctive properties of peat. These are regularly hidden, and can thus be a danger to the public.

There was one very positive outcome from this event. Following this call-out, the landowners were contacted to discuss the dangers and the incident. They have now erected signposts to warn the public of this peat bog.

Bolton MRT... So much more than mountains... So much moor than bogs!

This hazard is located on the path between Redmond’s Edge and Great Hill, on Anglezarke Moor, grid ref SD 6505 1832.

Top: A bog worthy of the Vicar of Dibley © Bolton MRT.

NEWS ROUND

OCTOBER > DECEMBER

OCTOBER: SO MUCH MORE THAN BOGS IN BOLTON...

Bolton Mountain Rescue team recently attended a job with a difference that sparked a lot of public interest and demonstrated that working with local landowners can improve the public’s safety as they enjoy the excellent walks in the area. **Richard Howard** explains.

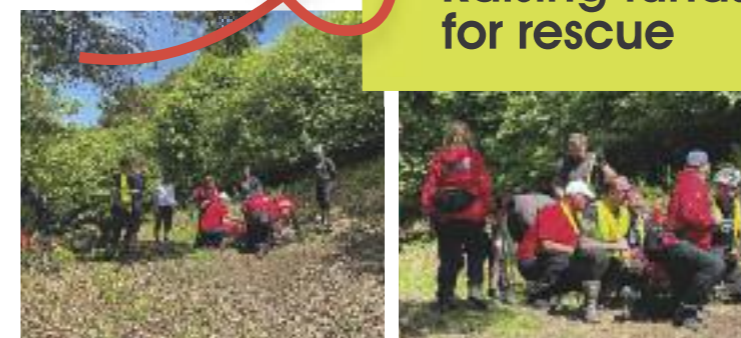
OCTOBER: MOUNTAIN BIKE CASUALTY TAKES ON CYCLING CHALLENGE FOR TEAM

In Spring 2023, Cleveland MRT went to the aid of Nick Piper who sustained serious back injuries whilst participating in a mountain bike event. After treating him at the scene, team members carried him, with the assistance of other participants and event staff, to an ambulance.

By October, Nick had recovered sufficiently well to undertake a personal cycling challenge to raise funds for the team. Announcing his challenge on Just Giving, Nick said ‘In May I had a big crash at a mountain bike race on the edge of the North York Moors which unfortunately resulted in me breaking my back in three places. Luckily for me the wonderful team from Cleveland were on hand to tend to my injuries and scoop me safely off the hill – by no means easy as I was lying on a steep slope a kilometre away from the nearest road. Thanks to their efforts (and the team at James Cook Hospital), I’m now fully recovered and back on the bike. Blakey Ridge is the highest road on the North York Moors, there are nine routes to climb it and I’m going to attempt riding all of them in a day – a distance of 132 km including 2.7 km of climbing. I’m not that fit at the moment so it’s going to hurt.’

Nick did amazingly well to complete his challenge. Some team members dropped by to wish him all the best and thank him for the £1,693 he raised, including Gift Aid!

Left, top: Dan Slane, Nick Piper, Jordan MacSween and Alison Selby. Left: The original call-out. Photos © Cleveland MRT.



Raising funds for rescue

Crowden 2023

PHIL 'RIGGER' RIDLEY
MREW TRAINING OFFICER



The annual residential Peak District MRO weekend, at the Crowden Outdoor Centre, brings together team 'newbies' who are typically in their first few years of team membership. Some are still in their probationary phase, others will have recently been promoted to full team status. The course covers a wide range of core skill topics that complement the individual team training programmes.

With shared values, wellbeing and diversity at the forefront of a lot of what we do today, it's also one of the ideal opportunities to bring like-minded individuals together for a bit of good old-fashioned networking and socialising to build new bonds, friendships and the inter-team working relationships essential to 999 volunteering. The comradeship is evident throughout the weekend and testament to those who participate — be they directing staff, instructors, guests or delegates.

Without exception, this course draws on experience from all the participating PDMRO teams (this year joined by Holme Valley MRT) who have representation on the directing/instructing staff.

To say the weekend is a full-on MR extravaganza is probably justified. The course commences on the Friday evening with a series of presentations aimed at setting the scene as to why we do what we do. After the mandatory introductions, Health and Safety and risk assessment briefings, the first session gets underway with a member from the local constabulary (who just happens to be an ex-team leader), to thank our volunteers and explain police expectations of us. This is followed by a presentation from PDMRO Operations Officer (again, ex-team leader and Duty

Controller), with an overview of what PDMRO offers its numerous 'calling authorities', type of deployments and trends, how they evolve and escalate, and their frequency. Generally reminding the delegates the sort of things they've inadvertently signed up for and how without the 'family (and possibly employer) support' it can often be difficult managing day-to-day life. After all, we are unpaid volunteers. Other presentations touch on wellbeing and shared values before a series of 'ice breaker' tabletop search planning exercises which complement and illustrate the earlier lectures.

The first evening closes with the 'no obligation' opportunity to retire to the land of slumber or engage with a spot of networking and light entertainment for a wee while longer.

It's an early start the following day with a quick breakfast before straight into the business end with core skill-based topics and activities. The weekend is a mix of indoor and outdoor theory and practical sessions based on how events would typically evolve depending on the type of incident. Without giving the game away, I'm sure you'll appreciate these topics are wide ranging and cover everything from observation, search techniques and procedures, field skills, missing person behaviour, search dogs, drones, casualty

site management, scene of crime, major incidents, water awareness, helicopters, hazards and safeguarding.

A highlight this year was the 'drone' presentation. Derby and Buxton teams gave the theory and practical demonstration showing their M30T's capabilities. It was evident how far drone capabilities have come in a relatively short period of time as a search aid for numerous operations within PDMRO and the wider MR community.

After a long day (let's be honest: it is), it's time for the evening meal, before a quick refresh and off to a bit of civilisation (for those who wish as there is no obligation to do so) for another round of networking and socialising, this time several miles away in the comforts of the local hostelry. For those of you who know Crowden, it's in the middle of nowhere with limited phone or wifi signal, so the opportunity to escape for the evening is usually well attended.

Reveille on Sunday morning was even earlier and the allure of the coffee helped. Outside temperature had dropped overnight, but we soon get people woken up, motivated and on the move. After breakfast there was a hasty briefing for the delegates, before the short trek to the Crowden Great Quarry for a full day on the hill participating in a series of round robin

simulations covering most of the topics presented the previous day.

To round off the weekend, the final exercise is designed to let attendees fully join forces (putting any inter-team rivalry to one side), and participate by showing their newfound skills. It's a privilege to see how, less than 48 hours after many attendees first met, they are operating as an efficient, coherent mountain rescue team. No dramas about 'we do it this way' or 'we've not done that', as everybody is working in harmony with one another carrying out the required tasking.

Holding the course at a neutral, semi-remote location such as Crowden helps bring the diversity of those attending under one team banner. It highlights that most of

us (if not all) see mountain rescue as a second family regardless of which team or region you're from.

As in previous years, Derbyshire Constabulary sent members from their operational call centre. This year was even more significant because it was the first time Lowland Rescue attended. Colleagues from Cheshire Search and Rescue joined in, which helped dispel some of the myths about 'them and us'. Mid Pennine Search and Rescue Organisation also had a couple of delegates and an instructor from the Holme Valley team. And not to mention Longtown MRT's Dan Mazhindu attending the weekend as an observer, with the intention of assessing the format for potential introduction to the South Wales region.

The enthusiasm and commitment of all staff and delegates make this course the success it is — and has been for over forty years. A final note from me: It's been a privilege helping to organise and run this course for so many years. Thanks again for everyone's support, because you're the ones who make it so enjoyable (and those of you who put in the many hours behind the scenes — until next time, keep that anthem soundtrack playing in your head). The continual refinement of the course content has begun to ensure it remains fit for purpose and maintains the training message for the current and future generation's PDMRO call-out landscape. 🍷

'...such a great way to integrate into the MR way of doing things and learning that, whilst our terrain may be different, the guiding principles are the same. It was an absolute privilege to spend the weekend surrounded by the wealth of knowledge and experience from both long-established MR members and the new generation coming through. The course material was informative and a great balance of indoor and outdoor learning. Add to this the fun and humour – a cracking weekend all round.'
Rhiannon Thomson, Cheshire Search & Rescue

the final send away

JOHN WAIND
SCARBOROUGH &
RYEDALE MRT



It was with great sadness that members of the Scarborough and Ryedale team heard that John had passed away suddenly at home on 2 October, aged 84 years old. **Andrew Priestley** looks back at John's mountain rescue involvement.

John was a member of the team from the 1970s through to the late 1990s and had been our team leader for much of that time. He was very much a 'man of the moors' and had spent many days following the hounds on foot in his younger days giving him formidable knowledge of the area which was invaluable when it came to looking for the lost and injured. He once held the record for a double crossing of the Lyke Wake Walk (a 42-mile route across the North York Moors), and it was on the Lyke Wake Walk that the team would spend many of its early days looking for lost walkers, and John knew well where mistakes were likely to have been made.

For those of us who spent time in the team with John, we certainly remember fondly his sense of humour. He loved a practical joke — and he could take one as well as dish them out. Play a joke on John and you had better be prepared to receive it back and likely better played in terms of timing and impact — you never quite knew when to expect it. New members of the team quickly learned never to leave their rucksacks unattended, otherwise they'd find all sorts in it when they returned home after training — usually a few extra rocks!!

John was well respected as an individual and team leader, his approach to leadership very practical, quite 'old school' in so far as he didn't go much for paperwork other than his trusty black notepad, which never let him down. He did, however, command great respect from team members, and we followed his leadership knowing there was reason behind his planning.

Prior to his life as a courier, John was a proud Yorkshire farmer and there are many sayings from our neck of the woods, for example 'Never do owt for nowt'. This could not be further from the truth when thinking of John, he was very giving of his time to team members, the team and the many people he helped rescue from the moors. 🍷

NOVEMBER: NATIONAL AWARDS FOR TWO LONG-SERVING MEMBERS

At the national meeting in November, CEO Mike Park announced prestigious awards for both Pete Roberts, a member of Northumberland National Park MRT, and Al Read, Ogwen Valley team member and former MREW training officer.

The MREW Distinguished Service Award is held in high esteem and awarded only rarely and after due consideration. Only 70 have been awarded since the first nine awards in 1958. They have occasionally been awarded when death has occurred as a result of responding to an incident and one of those first awards was to Anthony Woodroffe, killed while assisting an injured climber on Snowdon. Since then, posthumous awards have gone to Mike Rudall, who was killed by a rock fall while shielding a casualty during a rescue in the Brecon Beacons in 1983, and David Anderson, killed during a search of Rowten Pot in 1986.

Both Al and Pete also received the National Police Search Governance Board

Award 2023 for Lifetime Achievement, presented by Chief Inspector Mark Sweeney of the Police National Search Centre. The award recognises individuals who have made a significant contribution to the UK search community which has resulted in a legacy of improved safety to the general public or contributed significantly to improving the search capability in the UK. Nominees are required to have substantial, recognised accomplishments in the UK search community, over at least fifteen years, and it is rarely awarded to individuals outside the police service.

Pete has been a member of NNP MRT for over 50 years, serving as chairman and leader twice. He's played a critical role in a number of high-profile searches, including the search for evidence after the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 in 1988. His passion for the search for missing persons led him to invest his personal time into developing and updating search management practices. In the 1980s, he co-authored a number of research papers in this field. In 1997, he formed the Centre for Search Research with a colleague from NNP MRT and continues to present on the subject of search techniques and search management at conferences throughout the UK, Ireland, US and Canada.



Al has equal enthusiasm for search, having devised and delivered courses up and down the UK and in the US. He's been an active supporter of police governance and assisted in training and policy for DEFRA, and also POLSA training. He undertook his first rescue with Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue Organisation (OVMRO) in 1981 and has been an active team member since then. He is one of the operational team leaders who manage incidents for Ogwen, but also supports North Wales Mountain Rescue Association, as a member of the Tactical Command cadre that support regional incidents. Al was training officer for OVMRO for six years before moving on to become regional training officer. In 2012, he took on the role as MREW training officer, standing down in 2023.

His awards were presented by Huw Birrell, viewed on screen by those in the room, on behalf of Mike Park and Mark Sweeney. 🍷

Left: Al Read © Al Read. Above: Pete Roberts with Mike Park © NNP MRT.



NEWS ROUND

OCTOBER > DECEMBER



NOVEMBER: THEY SURVIVED THE CRASH, NOW FIND THE PILOTS...

Paul Edisbury (Kinder MRT), Mike Gibson (Aberglaslyn MRT) and Phil Ridley (MREW Training Officer), spent a very valuable day at RAF Valley on Anglesey, where they got to meet members of the RAF Mountain Rescue Service (MRS), and see their operational base. **Mike Gibson** reports.

We learnt a lot about how they operate, and hope more joint training can be arranged soon, which will help develop our inter-agency working across the wide range of mountain rescue activities.

The rest of the day was spent with other members of mountain rescue from North Wales being briefed by SERE (the defence Survive, Evade, Resist, Extraction training organisation), to find out about the survival equipment carried by military fighter pilots flying over the UK. This organisation teaches fast jet pilots what to do in the unlikely event they need to eject from their aircraft. It was a very informative day, learning about the equipment the pilots carry for their survival — which is surprisingly little — how the ejection from an aircraft is initiated and what happens during the ejection through to the pilot landing on the ground. We saw an ejection seat, found out how it works and how it fits in the cockpit. We were shown the ejection process, only on videos thankfully, and quickly realised this is not something you would want to experience in a hurry.

The primary responsibility for rescuing military aircrew and passengers lies with the RAF MRS. The day was of huge help with regards to knowledge to assist the RAF in successfully finding the pilot and dealing with their injuries. The three military

teams are the UK experts in Aircraft Post Crash and Incident Management (APCIM) and provide briefings to MREW and Scottish Mountain Rescue teams on the key safety and rescue considerations. Time would be a key factor in the survival of the pilot so the more mountain rescue personnel available for a search the better. 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'. Although it may be safe for a civilian MRT to assist the RAF MRS in searching (under direction from a RAF MRT Leader), and to approach an ejected pilot far from the wreckage, it should be noted that only the RAF MRS are trained and equipped with the PPE to approach aircraft wreckage in the mountains, and will only do so to provide life-saving aid. Key APCIM hazards include explosives, batteries, fuels, broken composites and off-gassing, and should not be underestimated. Additionally, military aircraft crash sites fall within the Official Secrets Act, and should not be approached by civilians for legal reasons.

This raises the question of what would your team do if your police force called you out to assist with a pilot who had ejected from an aircraft. As a result of the visit to Valley, we plan on undertaking some more development work with a view to creating

useful information on aircrew equipment and 'survivor behaviour' for teams. In the meantime, you might want to consider a couple of rescue and casualty care factors:

- Pilots are trained to aim to steer their parachutes towards water. Do you have a plan on how to extract someone from a large body of remote water?
- Leaving an aircraft on an ejection seat is both lifesaving and traumatic, so you should assume any ejected survivor has a back injury until proven otherwise. What other injuries and environmental factors might you consider?
- When was your last briefing with your nearest RAF MRT and do you know their key team members from joint exercises, training and operations? Introductions and exchanging business cards at the scene of a major incident really is too late.

This visit was supported by the RAF and some of the companies working at RAF Valley, particularly Baines Simmons, BAE Systems and Affinity FTS who released staff to facilitate the event. We are grateful to all who helped on such an interesting visit. 🍷

Top left: Proudly displaying the MR jacket. Right: Classroom showing boots on ceiling and survival equipment © Crown/RAF Valley 2023.

NOVEMBER: TEAM MEMBERS SUPPORT WAINWRIGHT'S PAL

Cockermouth team supported Andrew Nichol (Wainwright's friend and publisher) in his triumphant climb to Innominate Tarn, on Haystacks, to pay his respects to his old friend. The morning was recorded as part of a two-hour show on BBC Radio Cumbria.

Right: Andrew Nichol with Cockermouth team members © CMRT.



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NEWS ROUND

OCTOBER > DECEMBER

OCTOBER: LAKES DRONES ASSIST WITH SEARCH OPERATION IN SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS

A walker who had been missing for six weeks in the Scottish Highlands was found with the help of new mountain rescue drone technology being explored by Lake District.

Police Scotland had initially mobilised the nearby Glencoe Mountain Rescue Team. What followed was a Herculean effort, involving multiple mountain rescue teams, Coastguard helicopters, RAF MRTs, search dogs, drones and police cell data analysis. Despite the exhaustive efforts from all involved, and encouraging signs — such as the finding of the missing person's rucksack — Glencoe made the difficult decision to scale back their operation after ten days. Various team members continued to go out on most free days, but the complexity of the ground and size of the area presented a challenge.

During the latter stages of the operation, Glencoe team was approached by the LDSAMRA drone group, who have been developing new, computer-assisted search software for drones. Looking for an opportunity to test their latest software, they offered to assist.

Some time passed waiting for a weather window, but eventually a team comprising members of both Cockermonth and Duddon and Furness teams made their way to Glencoe. Several theories were mooted and, the night before deployment,

plans were drawn using bespoke software that programmes a flight path into a drone. The team of three were to split up to search opposite faces in the valley where the missing person's rucksack had been found. The ground had already been covered multiple times on foot, and overflowed by helicopters, but was so broken and complex it remained the most likely location.

On the morning of 24 October, accompanied by a Glencoe member, the drone operators began searching their respective areas. The software takes multiple images as it goes. Each photo is overlapped, so objects that cannot be seen from one angle can be spotted from another. Once the drone lands, the photos are analysed by the software, which searches each image for unusually coloured clusters of pixels, ie. things that don't belong in the natural landscape. These anomalies are then viewed by the team on the hill, so they can determine if any require further investigation. Further analysis can then be conducted later, off the hill, to ensure a high degree of confidence in the areas searched.

Later that morning, one of the two drone search teams reported a potential find in their area. The other team diverted their drone to the location of the anomaly and were able to confirm the casualty find. Glencoe MRT and the police were quickly informed while the hill team made their way to the location of the casualty, and were joined by Glencoe team members who conducted a very swift and professional evacuation.

'This find was a huge milestone for drone development,' says Richard Warren, LDSAMRA chairman, 'but it would not have been possible without the incredible groundwork carried out by Glencoe MRT and all the other agencies involved. The hope is that this new technology can go on to save lives at risk, and bring answers and closure to the families of those whose time has passed.'

Above: Cockermonth MRT's pilot, Daniel Parsons, flying the DJI M30T drone used in the search. The Duddon and Furness MRT drone pilot who successfully located the casualty was flying a smaller but very effective DJI Mavic 2 Enterprise Advanced drone © Cockermonth MRT.

NOVEMBER: WOODHEAD TEAM TO RECEIVE KING'S AWARD (KAVS)

The team was nominated for the King's Award for Voluntary Service in 2022. In November, they were pleased to announce that they will receive the award next year. The highest award a voluntary group can receive, it is equivalent to an MBE.

'I am delighted,' says team leader, Keith Wakeley. 'This award is recognition of the dedication, selfless commitment and voluntary service our team members have put in over many, many years and continue to do so to provide a vital high-quality rescue service to alleviate distress and suffering in our local upland and community areas. All team members give their time voluntarily in service to our community without any expectation of reward. I am proud to lead such a dedicated group of volunteers and all our team members, I am sure, are most grateful to receive such a prestigious award.'

Each year, the KAVS recognises outstanding examples of voluntary service. Created in 2002 to celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee and previously known as The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS), it has been shining a light on the fantastic work of voluntary groups from all across the UK for many years. Congratulations Woodhead!



Above: Woodhead team members supporting the community during the heavy snow in early December 2023 © Woodhead MRT.



DECEMBER: HEAVY SNOW BRINGS MULTIPLE CALLS TO MOUNTAIN RESCUE

The Lakes teams supported a concerted multi-agency response to heavy snow in Cumbria.

Amongst these, Wasdale tasked three 4x4 vehicles to RV at Grizebeck and assisted Cumbria Police in the search of abandoned vehicles. Duddon and Furness dealt with thirteen incidents including recovering a race marshal from the Grizedale Stages Rally (which was abandoned due to the weather), assisting in transporting an elderly casualty from Haverthwaite to an ambulance, evacuating vulnerable residents from Broughton and taking carers to vulnerable people, checking on welfare of residents in remote places and dealing with people trapped in snowbound cars. Kendal team members assisted families with young children and those with medical conditions. Amongst a number of medical emergencies, Langdale Ambleside team dealt with a potential cardiac arrest, suspected stroke, head injuries caused by an assault, a suspected spinal fracture from a sledging accident and several urgent medication requests. A busy few days.

Top: Left to right: Wasdale team on the road © Wasdale MRT; Duddon and Furness members clearing snow © DFMRT; Kendal team helping rescue trapped motorists and bus passengers. **Above:** Kendal team during the snow incident © Kendal MRT.



Raising funds for rescue

DECEMBER: COPPERMINES GRIZEDALE STAGES RALLY RAISES VITAL FUNDS FOR CONISTON

The heavy snow certainly made its presence felt as the Coppermines Grizedale Stages Rally passed through Coniston's patch in early December, and Coniston team received a much appreciated 'massive thank you' from the organisers of this year's rally.

'Not only were they as brilliant as ever running our car parks but they were absolute life savers when called into action assisting those that were stranded in the snow!'

The event raised £2,000 for the team through car park ticket sales and the organisers also encouraged their followers to head to Coniston's JustGiving pages to donate more.



DECEMBER: FROM SLEDGES TO SLEDGED STRETCHER CARRIES...

Not your everyday mountain rescue accident, it has to be said, but when heavy snowfalls in early December brought people out to play on their sledges, one casualty wound up experiencing a very different sort of sledging! A group of friends were enjoying sledging in Buxton, when one of the party collided with a boulder, resulting in a serious fracture to the lower right leg.

The East Midlands Ambulance Service rapid response vehicle and a land ambulance were the first on the scene. Following the initial assessment, the casualty received strong analgesia to manage the pain. Subsequently they were carefully packaged and placed onto a mountain rescue stretcher before being sledged to the ambulance for further assessment and eventual transportation to the hospital. The team extended their best wishes for a speedy recovery to the casualty and expressed gratitude to the members of the public who assisted in caring for the injured person before the arrival of the emergency services.

Above: Sledging incident in Buxton leads to sledged carry-off in Buxton © Buxton MRT.



DECEMBER: KESWICK TEAM MEMBERS HEAD TO SWITZERLAND FOR A WEEK OF WINTER TRAINING

A number of Keswick team members underwent a week of winter training with the International School of Mountaineering (ISM) in Leysin, Switzerland. Torrential rain in the valley at the start of the week gave rise to risky snow conditions high up. With this in mind the original plans for the day often changed to safer 'Plan B' options, but it was the perfect environment to improve the team's mountaineering skills and knowledge.

Training included route choice and decision making based on avalanche risk, use of transceivers, probes and shovels, axes and crampons on steep terrain, short roping, mixed climbing, building snow anchors and much more. Plus a visit to the base of the rescue team that covers the Leysin area.

Photos: The team is fortunate to have talented photographers in the team so credit for the stunning images goes to **Tom McNally Photography** and **Stuart Holmes**.



Meanwhile... Yorkshire Ambulance Service called CRO to assist with an unconscious caver who had fallen on her way to Yordas Cave. In snowy conditions the team assisted YAS with treating the casualty who had regained consciousness and was suffering mild hypothermia. She was placed in a warm casualty bag and, making good use of the snow, quickly sledged off the hill on the team's Bell stretcher.

Above: CRO members attend to an injured caver © CRO.



DECEMBER: BUSY TIME FOR KESWICK TEAM... ASSISTED BY NEIGHBOURS COCKERMOUTH

Keswick and Cockermouth may have missed the worst of the Cumbrian snow storm in early December, but there were still a few cold weather incidents to deal with.

The day started with a party of three walkers who were descending Souther Fell when one slipped and heard an ominous crack in her left ankle. After pain relief the ankle was re-aligned and she was stretched down to her party's vehicle for onward transfer to hospital.

Next up were the three climbers from a fellow rescue team who were climbing in Combe Gill (on Glaramara) when one slipped and fell, badly injuring his knee. He had also landed in the gill and so, immobile in fading light and dropping temperatures, the three friends realised he was now at increased risk of hypothermia. Unable to get a mobile signal in that area, one of the climbers set off on the long walk to the phone box at Seathwaite to call for help, while the third stayed with the casualty, using additional kit to keep him warm.

Keswick team members quickly made their way to the scene to assess how to extricate the casualty. Air Ambulance H58 was on hand, but were unable to land near to the casualty site and so had to return to base. The Coastguard helicopter had also been alerted and, after refuelling, made its way to the area. Hovering above the site the aircraft was able to drop a winchman, at the full extent of their cable, into the gill to allow an assessment of the casualty who was subsequently winched and airlifted to Cumberland Infirmary. In the meantime, Keswick team rigged a rope rescue system to retrieve the third, uninjured climber. Many thanks to the Coastguard for their help with what would otherwise have been a very long and difficult stretcher carry with a cold casualty.

And finally, later in the evening, a man camping at Sprinkling Tarn on Seathwaite Fell was reported as being unwell with vomiting, shivering and headache. Information received was sparse, coming via SMS from the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service and therefore difficult to obtain further details. Direct communication with the man proved difficult.

Due to the possibility of a long stretcher carry and being low on numbers, Cockermouth MRT was asked to assist. The teams ascended Grains Gill but, when they reached the casualty's tent at Sprinkling Tarn, he said he had been feeling hypothermic but had now recovered. He hadn't realised his message had been received and acted on. Team members were glad that the man was feeling well and left him in his tent to return to their respective vehicles.



Above: Photo from another incident a couple of days later © Charlie Allen Beale.

NEWS ROUND

OCTOBER > DECEMBER

OCTOBER: CASUALTY CARE EXAM SCENARIO MEETS REAL LIFE

Casualty care exams and training, frequently include a scenario where a member of a school group eats something, then has an allergic reaction. In October, Ogwen team members discovered that this isn't just 'make-believe'.

Two school teachers were with a group of students walking in the area of Crimpiau when, after eating some food, one of the teachers had an allergic reaction and began to show difficulty breathing and swelling. As the hill party deployed, Rescue 936 was tasked, and lifted the casualty directly to hospital.

NOVEMBER: CHARITY BALL LIGHTS UP MOUNTAIN RESCUE

Members of the NEWSAR team, along with Tim Radford, chairman of North Wales Mountain Rescue Association, were pleased to represent Mountain Rescue England and Wales at the Adventure Buddies Charity Ball at the Lion Quays hotel in November.

In October, the Adventure Buddies had organised hundreds of walkers to 'light up' two peaks in the UK by standing in a long line, wearing illuminated head torches. The walkers created the spectacle after sunset at Mam Tor in Derbyshire and Pen y Fan in Powys during October. The Light up the Mountains event, featuring up to 1,000 people, was in aid of Mountain Rescue England and Wales. A recent check of their JustGiving site indicated they have so far raised £11,407 for MREW. Thank you.



Raising funds for rescue

DECEMBER: TEAMS DEPLOY TO FIRST AVALANCHE OF SEASON IN SCOTLAND

In Scotland, Braemar team members deployed to work side by side with the Cairngorm Mountain Rescue Team to the first avalanche incident of the season, near Ben Macdui in the Northern Cairngorm. The avalanche was triggered by a human but, thankfully, no one was discovered buried after an extensive search of a large site by both teams.

And if you're heading to the Scottish snow, check out the Avalanche Reports before you go, at the Scottish Avalanche Information Service at sais.gov.uk. Stay safe!

Right: Photo courtesy facebook.com/braemarmrt



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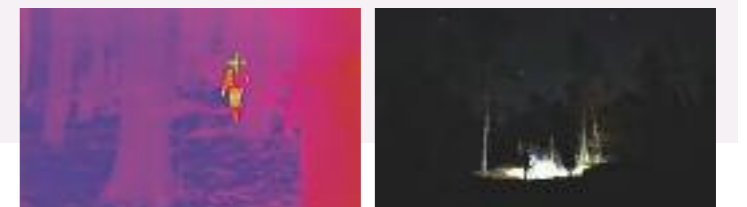
BBC One Wales's SOS: Extreme Rescues features 'Saving lives in a place like no other, by an emergency service like no other. In the stunning, wild landscape of Eryri, also known as Snowdonia, dedicated teams stand by to help.'

'If you have time to relax in front of a TV on Friday evenings in January,' says Chris Lloyd, OVMRO chairman, 'the North Wales teams have done mountain rescue proud.' Check it out on iPlayer and see who you can spot... and tell your friends!

DECEMBER: THERMAL IMAGING TECHNOLOGY ASSISTS SEARCH

A vulnerable person was reported missing near Wooler. With nightfall rapidly approaching, coordinated searches of the open and wooded areas in the immediate vicinity were conducted by Northumbria Police, supported by North of Tyne and Northumberland National Park teams, along with air support from the National Police Air Service.

The handheld thermal imaging technology was deployed to increase the likelihood of locating the missing person, if they were still in the area. Thankfully, as the search progressed, it was confirmed that the missing woman had been located outside the search areas. Two mountain rescue medics assessed the missing person before they were left in the care of their family. A good swift outcome for everyone concerned.





NOVEMBER: CONSULTANT WORKS WITH CLEVELAND TEAM MEMBERS TO HELP DEVELOP FUTURE STRATEGY

On one of their weekly Wednesday night training sessions, Cleveland MRT were joined by Dr Bill Snaith, an international organisational development consultant, working with the team to help develop their strategy for the coming years. Bill accompanied team members to the Yorkshire Cycle Hub where they practised the rescue of an injured mountain biker from one of the Hub's tracks on a section of steep ground.

After being located by a hasty search party the remaining team members, accompanied by Bill, brought in additional rescue and medical equipment plus a back-up rope system to help in securing the stretcher as the 'casualty' was carried to lower ground where the exercise ended. A very useful training exercise but as a number of those involved had been out on a search until 3.00 am the same morning they were very thankful when the training ended in order to get home to catch up on some sleep.

Bill will continue working with the team over the winter to develop their strategy. 'This evening was a great example of the dedication, skill, knowledge and expertise within the Cleveland team,' says Bill. 'It is all the more impressive to think these amazing people are volunteers, giving their valuable time, and managing the risks involved, to ensure the safety of all in a dangerous environment. It was a privilege to be part of the team, and my respect to these great people. I look forward to working with them to develop a way forward for the organisation.'



Top: Photos from the training evening. Above: Left to right: Jenny Hall (the team's EDI lead and one of two technical rescue instructors), Dr Bill Snaith, Dan Slane (team doctor) © Cleveland MRT.

NEWS ROUND

OCTOBER > DECEMBER



NOVEMBER: TEAM MEMBERS HEAD TO PRESTWICK FOR TRAINING

Six North of Tyne team members joined six colleagues from Northumberland National Park MRT to head to Prestwick for a spot of live helicopter training.

Members were briefed in the hangar on how to operate safely around helicopters, how to board, strap in to the seats and how to attach to the winch in pairs. Once outside, they boarded the helicopter in groups of four to be winched down to the ground in pairs, with their bags. Everyone was able to practise safely operating the hi-line, a vital skill to assist the winch operator on board the aircraft during rescues. 'A huge thanks to HM Coastguard Prestwick SAR Flight for the fantastic training!'

NOVEMBER: NORTHUMBERLAND TEAM TRAIN WITH COLLEAGUES FROM HM COASTGUARD

In 'typical' Northumberland weather, team members headed up to Linhope Spout to undertake some joint technical rescue training with colleagues from HM Coastguard Northumberland.

Working alongside each other, both teams looked at the techniques they use for rescuing an injured person, in this case a volunteer at the bottom of the spout. The joint session was an opportunity to develop interoperability and explore any differences and similarities in each other's technical equipment.



SEPTEMBER: A LAUNCH INTO THE FUTURE FOR NORTH DARTMOOR'S NEW INCIDENT CONTROL UNIT



On Saturday 23 September 2023, North Dartmoor Search and Rescue Team enjoyed a sunny afternoon with members of the local community, businesses, family, and friends to launch their new Incident Control Unit. Team members displayed some of their medical, rope and water rescue equipment providing an opportunity for interested individuals to learn more and members' children to get a feel for what mum or dad 'do' when they disappear for hours on a call-out to rescue someone.

Over eighteen months ago, the team learned that their worn-out 20-year-old control unit wouldn't pass its next MOT and immediately set about fundraising. Reflecting on their efforts to buy a new van and modify the interior, the team's chair, Catherine Davis said, 'It's been a remarkable achievement to raise over £63,000 in what is a relatively short length of time. We are very grateful to West Devon Borough Council, Okehampton Town Council, Okehampton Hamlets Borough Council, Okehampton United Charities, Snows Exeter, Mercedes-Benz, Rotary Club of Okehampton, the Tors in Belstone and many more local businesses and individuals for their support and generosity and are pleased they could join us at the launch.'

The team is particularly grateful to life member Les Agar, who not only gave 37 years to the team as an operational member but has since spent countless hours collecting for the team at a local BP service station where he's raised over £55,000. In appreciation of his continual support, he was asked to unveil the new van. What they didn't tell him was that they'd named it 'Les'. A couple of days after the launch the team had a call-out — a search followed by an evacuation lasting over thirteen hours for a high-risk missing person on Dartmoor. Commenting on the first use of the new control van, team leader David Stoneman said, 'It was a big relief to have a reliable new vehicle and not have that underlying worry

about a breakdown, would we get to the call-out location or would we need recovery?' 'The other positive difference was the additional working space, but the most impressive aspect was the battery life from the new leisure battery installed. We ran all the computers, lights and radios from 2.30am until 10.00am on the battery, and that was only 50% of the battery's power. 'We recharged the battery with a generator in about an hour and then used the battery to power everything until the end of the evacuation which was 3.00pm. With the old van, we were powered entirely by a generator, there are obvious cost benefits as well as environmental benefits and a significant reduction in noise which is much appreciated when working in the van for that length of time.' The resounding theme from those who joined the team at the launch was the overwhelming support members provide for the local community and the importance of having teams like them to rescue those in need in extreme and remote areas like Dartmoor. Seeing the team's successes with the new vehicle brings confidence and security to the surrounding community.



Photos © Midlands CRO.



DECEMBER: ANOTHER DARK NIGHT, ANOTHER DOG, ANOTHER RESCUE FROM A DEEP, DEEP HOLE...

In what seems to be a regular rescue operation for many cave teams, this beautiful dog was rescued by Midlands CRO, after she fell around ten metres into a mine shaft near Minsterley, Shropshire.

In the dark and torrential rain, the team managed to locate her after hearing her whimper. Two team members abseiled down, armed with her favourite treats, and set about becoming her best friends before she was hauled up using a specialist dog harness.

DECEMBER: ROB ILLMAN AWARDED BEM IN NEW YEAR'S HONOURS LIST

Rob received the British Empire Medal for his forty-one years' service with the Dartmoor Ashburton team.

Right: Rob Illman pictured with his Mountain Rescue Long Service Award, in December 2022 © DSRT Ashburton.

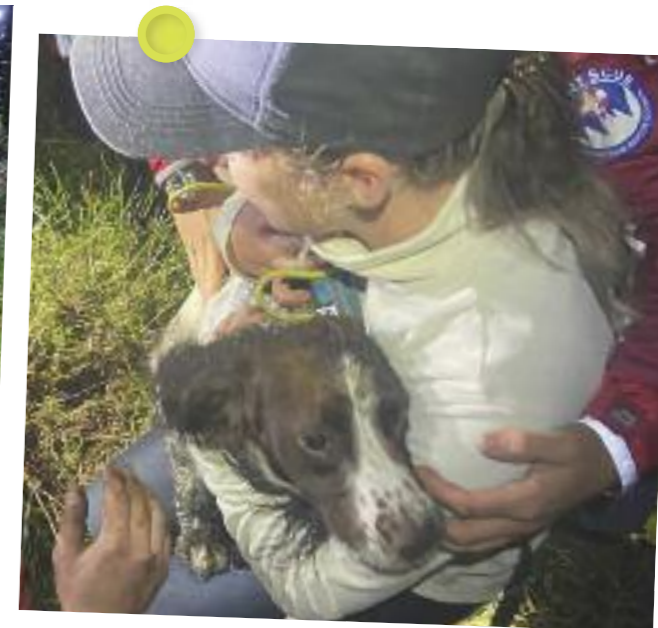


DECEMBER: TEAMS RESCUE WALKERS FROM STREAM IN FULL SPATE

Glossop and Woodhead teams were called out for two walkers who had become stranded at the Black Cloughs due to the water course being in full spate. A party of Glossop team members located the two and were able to transport them to a safe area.

Left: Ploughing through the floods © Glossop MRT.

NEWS ROUND
OCTOBER > DECEMBER



Photos © South and Mid Wales CRT.



OCTOBER: INDIE RESCUED FROM A DIFFERENT HOLE IN THE GROUND

Another successful canine rescue, this time involving the South and Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team pulling Indie the dog out of a hole in the ground in the South Wales valleys. A great team effort supporting their colleagues at Treorchy Fire Service, Ebbw Vale Fire Service, Barry Fire Service and South Wales Fire Service.



OCTOBER: CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF MOUNTAIN RESCUE

Upper Wharfedale team celebrated its 75th anniversary with a meal attended by members old and new, and guests from the Cave Rescue Organisation and Calder Valley Search and Rescue Team, at the Yorkshire Dales Sailing Club, Grimwith Reservoir.

Many things have changed for the team over that time, not least that the original equipment store, an old railway parcel van, has now become a modern purpose-built base, the first of its kind for any rescue team. Calling out members used to involve a cascade of phone calls (including local pubs), but is now done using modern apps and websites, instantly requesting members to attend with links to maps of the location of the incident. Equipment is stronger, smaller and lighter, and instead of reels of wire to rig telephones underground there is specialist communications technology which will penetrate hundreds of metres of solid rock.

Long searches on vague locations have (largely) been replaced with accurate locations from casualties' phones. The number and type of rescues have changed over the years, from less than a dozen call-outs annually for many years, the team can now expect over seventy. Half the team's call-outs used to be for caving incidents, where now we only expect one every year or two.

What hasn't changed very much are the reasons for call-outs — the most recent to a calf stuck in an old mine pit (as seen here in the magazine). Rescuing sheep from old mines in 1948 was what caused the team to be formed. Another thing that hasn't changed is the dedication of team members, who are not only happy to drop everything to go on a call-out, but attend training and learn new skills.

The evening celebrations were a great success, the opportunity to catch up, recall memories and share stories. Thanks go to Jason Mallinson who was guest speaker, newly back from an expedition in Spain, where over the last twenty-plus years he has steadily increased the penetration in Pozo Azul 2023, a resurgence of water from a cave system, from 1,700 metres to over 12,000 metres, most of which requires diving. Finally, thanks should go out to everyone who has supported the team over the last 75 years, without whose donations and goodwill the team couldn't exist.



Top: Team members, friends, family and colleagues enjoying the 75 year anniversary celebrations.

Above: In another significant development over the 75 years — with the increase in localised flooding and the need for local resilience — a number of the team's Swift Water Technicians are now qualified to DEFRA Mod 3 standard. November saw team members refreshing their skills and techniques in and around water. Photos © UWFR.

OCTOBER: WINCH PARAMEDIC DUNCAN TRIPP RECEIVES PRIDE OF BRITAIN AWARD

Tripp received the award at a star-studded ceremony on Sunday, 8 October, at Grosvenor House in London. A subsequent Instagram post from @MaritimeCoastguard read: 'We are incredibly proud of Winch Paramedic Duncan Tripp, who has received the Pride of Britain Emergency Services Award for his bravery during an eight-hour rescue operation on Ben Nevis! Duncan and his team bravely saved 24 people that day from life-threatening weather conditions.'

The incident occurred in March 2022, when a 28-year-old man died after falling about 300 metres down an icy slope at Red Burn, Ben Nevis, and 23 others had to be rescued in 'ferocious' conditions during an eight-hour operation. Members of an army climbing group had tried to rescue him and two soldiers sustained injuries requiring hospital treatment.

Members of Lochaber and Glencoe teams and a police mountain rescue team responded to the call-out, supported by Coastguard helicopters from Prestwick and Inverness. Duncan Tripp was aboard the Inverness helicopter. It was a complex and challenging operation. Conditions were treacherous, described by Donald Paterson of Lochaber MRT as 'classic alpine: springlike in the glen, but above the snow line everything is solid'. With the aircraft unable to land high up the mountain, Duncan left the helicopter, equipped with rescue kit, crampons and ice axe, to climb up. En route he met two groups on their way down who were 'mentally and physically exhausted'.

Enlisting the support of an experienced climber from the second group, the pair continued up the freezing mountain. Further on, they encountered the reported casualty, with another two who had gone to his aid, trapped at Red Burn, a craggy area about 1,800ft above the helicopter. One of the climbers had sustained a broken leg. Sadly, the man who had suffered the fall could not be saved. Higher still, as darkness approached, two more were stranded. The rescue teams made their way to the group of three at Red Burn, while Duncan and his companion climbed on, finally tracking down the last two climbers and guiding them back down the mountain. Asked later about the rescue of so many people, in such extreme conditions, he said that the single fatality reflected the 'stark reality' of the challenging work he and his team do.

The crew of Rescue 151, the helicopter involved in the rescue, also won last year's Emergency Services Award in the annual Highland Heroes competition. Based at Inverness Airport, they were nominated for their role in a host of call-outs, including this dramatic rescue in March 2022.

With thanks to @maritimecoastguard, The Pride of Britain Awards (prideofbritain.com), The Northern Times (northern-times.co.uk) and The Guardian (theguardian.com).



Above: Duncan Tripp with his Pride of Britain Award, October 2023 © MCA/Pride of Britain.

NEWS ROUND

OCTOBER > DECEMBER



NOVEMBER: BUXTON TEAM SUPPORTS VERNON FOR THE BBC'S CHILDREN IN NEED

Team members helped support BBC Radio 2 presenter Vernon Kay on his Ultra Ultra challenge in aid of Children in Need, as he passed through the Peak District towards Kinder Scout. They said their goodbyes as Kay took a well-earned rest at The Sportsman Inn, preparing for the final push of the day to Manchester.

Kay ran the 116 miles from Leicester to Bolton over four days, raising more than £5 million along the way. Speaking to Radio 2 colleague Zoe Ball as he reached the finish line, he described the experience as 'one of the most painful and joyous' he'd ever had, saying he had finished it 'absolutely exhausted, absolutely spent, physically, mentally'.

Above: Radio 2 presenter Vernon Kay with team members © Buxton MRT.

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NOVEMBER: BOLTON TEAM MEMBERS GET THEIR DEFRA MOD 2 QUALIFICATION

The four operational team members attended and passed the DEFRA Mod 2, Swiftwater and Flood First Responder Course, arranged by the Mid Pennine Search Rescue Organisation.

The first part of the course was a theory session at Holme Valley Mountain Rescue Team's base, the second part a two-day practical on the River Dee at Llangollen. Thanks to expert instruction, support and guidance, course participants were put through their paces. They covered hazards found in swiftwater and flood situations, hydrology, rescue hierarchy and priorities, and a variety of non-buoyant water rescue techniques. The weekend culminated with two scenarios — one a bank-based search for, then rescue of, an exercise casualty with an upper limb injury who was stranded on an island, the other the safe recovery of an unresponsive exercise casualty with a foot entrapment.



Congratulations also to the five Central Beacons team members who requalified as Swiftwater Rescue Technicians to the DEFRA UK Level 3 certification via Rescue 3 Europe syllabus.

A busy and challenging course involved continuous assessment and practice of skills for assessing water levels, hazards, risks, evaluating and demonstrating appropriate deployment of rescue techniques.

Top: Bolton team members during the weekend's course © Bolton MRT. Above: Central Beacons team members during their swiftwater training © CBMRT.

NEWS ROUND

OCTOBER > DECEMBER



NOVEMBER: LANCASHIRE POLICE VISIT TEAM'S BASE

In a change from training, call-outs, fundraising and educational talks, Rossendale and Pendle team members took time out to chat with their colleagues from Lancashire Police, about the skills and services the team can provide to the local community.

Top: Team member Peter Leonard with the Lancashire Police contingent at Rossendale and Pendle team's Burnley base © RPMRT.



DECEMBER: SAD PASSING OF FORMER TEAM MEMBER

It was with great sadness the Rossendale and Pendle team learned of the passing of former team member Ian 'Kip' Brown, a dog handler in the team in the 1970s and '80s, when the team was still known as Rossendale Fell Rescue.

Above: Ian 'Kip' Brown. Photo courtesy of RPMRT.

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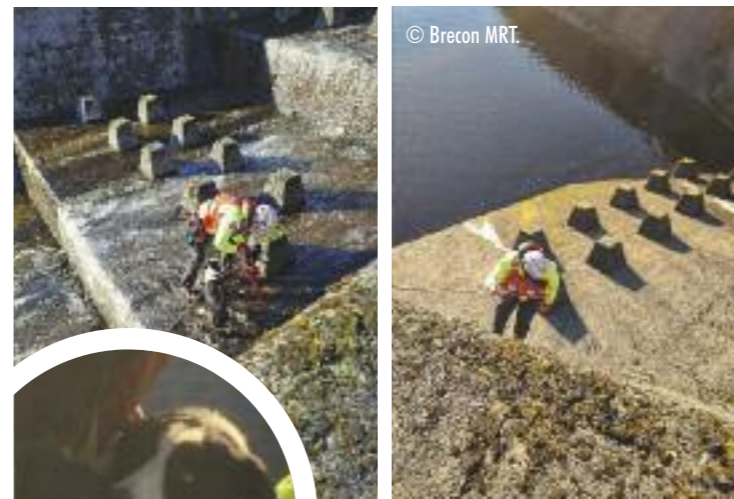
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DECEMBER: DOG RESCUED FROM DAM

Another dog rescue from a deep hole in the ground, but this time fallen down a dam rather than a cave. Brecon team members were called to the dam in Nant y Moch and successfully reunited the dog with its owners. Smiles all round.

NOVEMBER: INSPIRING THE NEW GENERATION OF BROWNIES

Dartmoor Plymouth team members had a blast visiting a Brownies unit to show off some of the team's equipment and Land Rover, and to talk about mountain rescue.

The visit included some hands-on fun and games with the stretcher and vacuum mattress, making for a fun and memorable couple of hours for all concerned. The evening was a massive thank you for their incredible support – thanks to their efforts, the Brownies had raised an amazing £642. Each of the girls had £3, which they then had to grow – so there were lots of cakes baked and lemonade sold. 'We were hugely grateful for the opportunity to inspire these young minds and share the joy of learning through play.' And maybe inspire the mountain rescuers of the future...



Raising funds for rescue



© Dartmoor MRT Plymouth.

NEWS ROUND
OCTOBER > DECEMBER



© Cleveland MRT.

OCTOBER: HOSTING A NEW GENERATION OF NATIONAL PARK APPRENTICES

As with many MRTs, the Cleveland team works closely with their local national park staff, so they were only too happy to host a visit to their base by Countryside Worker and Countryside Ranger apprentices from the North York Moors.

As part of their apprenticeship they have a forum group which they use to develop their skills, to volunteer and to undertake educational talks/days, learning more about what takes place in and around the national park. 'It was a great opportunity for the team to host the visitors and particularly good to see such enthusiastic young people getting involved with the national park,' says Gary Clarke. 'The future is in good hands!'



© Edale MRT.

NOVEMBER: DOG KEEPS INJURED OWNER COMPANY ON STRETCHER

Edale team members were called to assist with an ankle injury near Bretton Clough. A walker had been out for a walk with her three dogs when she slipped on the wet ground.

With pain relief given and the guilty leg splinted, under the watchful eye of her three faithful companions, one in particular wasn't keen to leave its owner so was duly packed on the stretcher as well – which, given the weather, was better than a heat blanket. The injured walker and dog were then stretchered back to the team vehicle before transfer to an ambulance, at which point dog and owner went their separate ways, one to hospital and one back home.

Getting to know our Scottish Mountain Rescue colleagues...



Focus on Kintail MRT

BY BELINDA DIQUINZIO

Kintail Mountain Rescue Team has been operating in the Kintail-Affric region of north-west Scotland for over 60 years. Like many others in the UK, the team had very humble beginnings.

During the 1950s and early 1960s, a group composed largely of shepherds, stalkers, foresters and the like formed a rescue unit in Kintail and Glenshiel to help those in trouble on the local hills. By the mid-60s, records show that the Kintail Mountain Rescue Unit (as it was then labelled) was an established rescue organisation with appointed office bearers.

The local topography, characterised by large remote areas, consistently steep ground and well-defined ridges, is of a particularly demanding nature. Even in the earliest times the team was involved in challenging work in all seasons and altitudes, sometimes involving avalanches. The area includes some of the most impressive and remote landscapes in Scotland, encompassing 39 Munros (peaks over 3,000 feet), including those in Glen Affric, the Five Sisters of Kintail and South Shiel Ridge. The impressive Falls of Glomach and stunning long distance cross-country long route, the Affric Kintail Way, are also in the call-out area.

As the growth in the popularity of mountaineering gathered pace through the 70s, 80s, and 90s, it brought an increase in the number of incidents in the hills. By this time, closer relationships had been forged between the police and civilians in mountain rescue. The local constabulary advised on formal procedures and provided some equipment, while climbers joined the team who brought a more technical approach to rescue work. Press and television attention increased, and the team appeared in both

an entertainment programme and a documentary in the 1989 Scottish Television (STV) production series 'Rescue', about the work of D Flight 202 Sqn RAF.

The last twenty years have been characterised by developments in the communications technology available to teams, and the emergence of a coordinated funding and management structure at national level. In 2004, the Scottish Executive's Justice Department started funding about one third of mountain rescue expenses and paid for a new radio system for mountain rescue in Scotland. This included radio transceivers for every rescue base, vehicle and team member. Kintail, like other teams across Scotland, was now able to equip every team member in a manner that ensured their operational safety and enhanced the safety of those they help.

The team has continued to develop their capabilities through recruitment, engagement with the community and involvement with Scottish Mountain Rescue. They have long harboured the ambition of building a new rescue base. The current one, an old byre, is becoming difficult to maintain and the facilities inadequate for training and equipment storage. They are also upgrading their response vehicles and have commissioned a van conversion to provide a comms and casualty care van. The low population in the team's area of operation means that donations from those living further afield are extremely important. Fundraising events are an important source of income, so providing additional safety cover at sporting events such as the Affric

Duathlon (from 2006), the Dirty Thirty (2009) and the Skye Sportives is vital.

At any one time the team has around 25 members. A typical workload for the team is around nine substantial call-outs per year and a number of smaller incidents not requiring full team call-out. Kintail MRT may also be called to assist neighbouring teams. 2023 was a particularly busy year, with sixteen call-outs within the first eight months. Historically, it has been a challenge to



maintain team numbers due to the large coverage area and low local population density, so members must be drawn from a wide geographic area, from the Isle of Skye in the west to the city of Inverness in the east. In November 2022, Kintail MRT elected the team's first female team leader, Lara Hinde, who is keen to increase the team's operational capacity through a recent recruitment campaign. They hope that this, along with promoting their public profile through increased social media presence and fundraising efforts, will allow the team to go from strength to strength. 🍀

FIND KINTAIL MRT ON FACEBOOK @KINTAILMRT OR VIA KINTAILMRT.ORG.UK



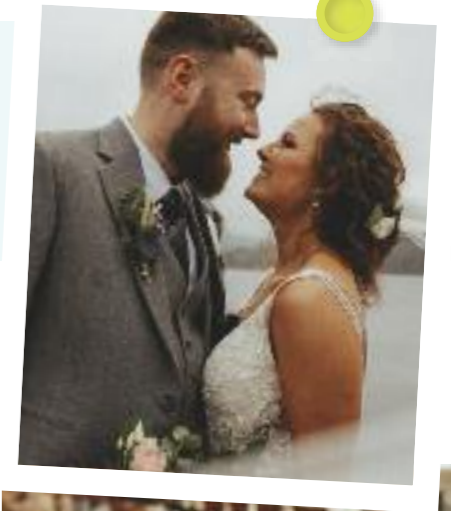
SUPPORTER STORIES

A couple of 'thank you's' to three of our supporters...

...to comedian, hillwalker and long-term SMR supporter, Ed Byrne (left) who recently won 'Celebrity The Weakest Link' and donated his £19,350 winnings to Scottish Mountain Rescue.

...and also to Sarah and Gordon (right) who got married in May 2023 and marked the occasion by raising funds for SMR. Keen adventurers, they've hiked many a mountain through their eight-year relationship, and got engaged in January 2022 on a getaway near Crieff, while looking out over the mountains and lochs. They were married at Venachar Lochside and purchased wedding favours for Scottish Mountain Rescue*.

'We chose Scottish Mountain Rescue because we had to make a call to mountain rescue in 2021 when Gordon had a misfooting at the Devil's Pulpit. The team responded so quickly and essentially saved his life so, without them, there would have been no wedding! We'd heard of mountain rescue, but didn't realise till then they were volunteer run. It hit home when they said they thought they were coming to a fatality and we knew then we needed to give back somehow. Many of our guests commented on the lovely gesture and loved that it also tied in with our outdoorsy theme for our wedding.' *[scottishmountainrescue.org/wedding-favours](https://www.scottishmountainrescue.org/wedding-favours)



Scottish Mountain Rescue training event

October saw over 110 team members from all over Scotland attend the annual SMR training event at Glenmore Lodge. Delegates had the opportunity to take part in 25 different training workshops over the weekend, from lightweight rigging to water awareness.

Jamie Aarons opened the weekend with an inspiring talk on her record-breaking Munro-round which made headlines in June, and the event was well-attended by a number of sponsors and exhibitors who contributed to the training workshops and were on hand to chat about gear and equipment needs. Never to have our spirits dampened by rain, we all gathered outside on the Saturday for a photo with HM Coastguard helicopter 151. Overall it was a very successful event, with lots of sharing and learning within the mountain rescue community and great feedback from attendees.



Photos: © Evan Holahan.



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 (SMR) aims to support teams to embed an understanding of personal resilience into the volunteer experience from recruitment to retirement, including how to support colleagues and what to do following incident trauma exposure. The Lifelines Scotland (NHS project) model of informal peer support reflects the evidence that early and ongoing support such as reassurance, information and kindness, ideally from people who know us — family, friends, and colleagues — helps to challenge stigma, normalises reactions and promotes the expectation of recovery. Most responders, most of the time, cope well.

Lifelines Scotland: lifelines.scot provides emergency service staff and volunteers with the knowledge, understanding and skills to look after themselves and their colleagues, allowing them to function well in their roles and for this experience to be both positive and rewarding. There are resources for family, friends and others (eg. employers who have staff who volunteer as responders). Lifelines runs facilitator-led learning opportunities for emergency response volunteers.

If you are looking for resources to support someone, it will help to try to listen carefully to them and explore what type of support will best suit their needs. You can also call/text the helplines for advice when supporting someone. You can call on someone's behalf with their permission since making that first call can be very difficult.

The SMR Team member wellbeing pages include a number of useful links as well as those signposted in this summary. You will find phone, text and web links as well as SMR specific support videos. There are also details of the SMR Benevolent Scheme. (Password available from your team): scottishmountainrescue.org/team-pages/wellbeing-support

SPEAK If you, or the person you are supporting, wish to speak to someone:

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- **NHS:** Call 111 for urgent medical advice (or contact/advise GP if less immediate urgency)
- **Samaritans:** samaritans.org or call **116 123**
- **Breathing Space:** breathingspace.scot or call **0800 83 85 87** (Also piloting a web-chat option)
- **Police Scotland Employee Assistance Programme (EAP):** Call **0800 011 6719**
- **Working Health Services** (for self-employed and small organisations): healthyworkinglives.scot/workplace-guidance/Pages/Healthy-Working-Lives-services.aspx
- **Able Futures:** able-futures.co.uk provides up to nine months of support: see website for details. Call **0800 321 3137** Monday to Friday 08.00 – 22.30

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READ/WATCH/LISTEN: If you, or the person you are supporting, wish to access online resources:

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- **National Wellbeing Hub:** wellbeinghub.scot (Aimed at Health and Social Care sector in Scotland)
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Early first aid training remembered

Saddened to see the obituary to Ieuan Jones in Mountain Rescue (July 2023) **Bob Sharp** was reminded of the time the Lomond team ran his course. 'I recall it cost about £200 to hire the tape/slides – a lot of money then. It was popular, albeit briefly, here in Scotland, before we moved across to the bespoke courses run by the British Association of Ski Patrollers (BASP).' He shares here some notes, taken from his 2021 book 'Lomond Mountain Rescue: The Early Years'.

However, whilst these visits and the various first aid courses gave sight of many critical injuries, they weren't tailored for mountain rescue work or the typical scenarios members might experience. This was a problem already addressed in the mid 1960s by Dr Ieuan Jones. It's worth dwelling on his work as it had a seminal impact on the provision of mountain first aid right across the UK. Dr Jones was a qualified specialist in trauma and orthopaedics, working in the Caernarfon and Anglesey General Hospital in Bangor. As a medic, he was concerned by the flow of casualties coming in from mountain accidents, many of whom had received little in the way of competent first aid. He understood that team members were doing the best they could with what knowledge they had, but their medical skills weren't sufficient for the more serious emergencies. His view was that whilst team members had appropriate first aid equipment, if they saw somebody in need of urgent help, they only had a rough idea what to do with them. He reckoned that team members focused on getting the person off the hill as quickly as possible – often running back down with the stretcher – at the expense of giving the casualty adequate first aid treatment prior to evacuation. This was good for speed of response, but not necessarily best for the casualty. Furthermore, despite morphine being available in the rescue posts, it was rarely used.

Jones offered his services to the local mountain rescue team. The team leader seized the opportunity and as a result, Ogwen Cottage (as it was then known) became the first rescue team in Britain to offer full, formal medical training for team members. An element of bargaining took place where the team agreed to teach Dr Jones how to climb, whilst he would teach members first aid! At the time, first aid courses were uncommon, apart from those delivered by the St John Ambulance Brigade (and St Andrews in Scotland) but even then, the course material didn't address the kind of problems rescuers might encounter. Initially, his courses were based in the hospital's physiotherapy department, using a combination of practical demonstrations and colour slides – many leaving little to the imagination and were definitely not for the faint-hearted. One team member recalled:

His live lectures, often delivered while

smoking a cigar, would last some two hours, the audience enlivened by comments such as 'the next rather gory slide shows...' It wasn't unknown for the occasional candidate to faint when a particularly gruesome slide appeared on the screen.

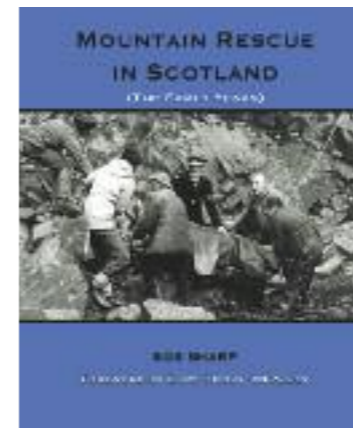
After a two-year break away from hospital medicine, Dr Jones returned to Bangor as head of the accident unit. His revised 'First Aid in Mountaineering' course ran one evening a week at the University of North Wales and won the support of the St John Ambulance headquarters in Wales, which issued a special certificate for the course. Dr Jones's wife Joan, who by all accounts was a highly competent and very strict nurse, ran the practical training sessions and the individual practical examinations. As the courses developed, Jones slowly increased his collection of faint-inducing slides! His course became well established as a standard for first aid in the mountains and the cornerstone of first aid training for teams across the UK until the late 1990s.

As demand grew, he introduced an advanced and an instructor's course. By most standards his courses were anything but basic and the pass rate across the entire UK never rose above 69%. His slides illustrated the range of injuries and laid the foundation for what could be encountered on the hills. Unintentionally, this proved to be an early example of 'psychological inoculation' to reduce stress!

The Lomond team ran the course for several years. It is highly likely that those who undertook it still have strong memories of it! And the fear of failing the final written examination (gain a point for getting an answer correct, but lose a point if you got it wrong), was a strong motive to study hard and learn all the anatomical and physiological foundations!

With developments in first aid training by the British Association of Ski Patrollers (BASP), the team moved away from the Welsh course to one with Scottish roots. The Lomond team was the first in Scotland to take the BASP two-day course. Some team members went to Glenmore Lodge to take the full blown five-day course. This continued for a number of years before the team finally moved onto the Casualty Care system designed and developed by Mountain Rescue England and Wales. ☘

Top left: Bob's certificate in Mountaineering First Aid.



MOUNTAIN RESCUE IN SCOTLAND

by BOB SHARP

When I became secretary of the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland (MRCofS) twenty-five years ago, I was tasked to write an historical record of the Scottish teams. A couple of years later I completed a small book that focused on the early days of the organisation with an entry for every team and partner organisation, including SARDA and the ARCC (Kinloss). Everyone engaged fully with the project and copies of this unique record of Scottish mountain rescue were distributed to teams and partner organisations.

Whilst researching the history of my own team (Lomond), I came across a rich assortment of documents in the team's archives – reports, letters and minutes – describing the work of the MRCofS some 50 years ago. This was too important to ignore and became the catalyst to update my book. I felt that much could be incorporated into a revised edition and make it possible to expand on the issues and challenges facing Scottish mountain rescue in the early days. It also provided an opportunity to highlight the impact of individuals such as Hamish MacInnes, Wilson Hey and Eric Langmuir, who played a significant role at the time.

After two years' research, the book is complete. It has turned out to be much more comprehensive than the first edition and is structured around three (overlapping) parts. The first describes the development of Scottish mountain rescue between the 1930s through to the 1980s. It shows how the introduction of the system

of Rescue Posts, the influence of key individuals and climbing clubs, together with the changing national organisational structure eventually led in 1965 to the formation of a definitive national body: the MRCofS.

I thought I knew much about our history. I didn't! I had failed to realise the critical importance of the Rescue Post system and especially the role of mountaineering clubs across the UK. Further, my research confirmed that Scottish mountain rescue has its roots firmly embedded in developments south of the border, particularly through the ground-breaking initiatives of Wilson Hey and Eustace Thomas, and the developing committee structure including the Joint Stretcher Committee and the Mountain Rescue Committee. In turn, these stimulated action in Scotland through a Scottish subcommittee of the MRC, the Association of Scottish Climbing Clubs and finally the founding of the MRCofS. This section of the

book shows the logical progression of successive developments, initially in England and Wales, through finally to a unique Scottish system.

The second part of the book is a compilation of articles describing the history and development of each Scottish team. This section reveals that a tragic incident, poor coordination or the limited availability of rescue personnel were common catalysts for action. It also shows that a small number of local individuals who had vision and energy were instrumental in making things happen. One wonders how things would be different had it not been for their involvement!

The third part of the book is a compilation of biographies describing the work of key individuals such as Eustace Thomas, Ben Humble and Donald Duff, plus short descriptions of organisations such as the Fell and Rock Climbing Club, the RAF Mountain Rescue Service, SARDA and the Scottish Mountaineering Club. The central role of these organisations shows how the development of mountain rescue in the UK and Scotland owes so much to the influence of a very small number of individuals who recognised the need for some kind of customised service back in the early to mid-20th century. I'm sure they would be astounded to see how their initiatives and ideas have developed. ☘

'I believe this is the best factual book on mountain rescue that I have ever encountered. An amazing amount of information presented in a very readable manner. Clearly a prodigious effort has been involved.' David Allan FRCS OBE.

MOUNTAIN RESCUE IN SCOTLAND: THE EARLY YEARS BY DR BOB SHARP PUBLISHED BY: MOUNTAIN RESCUE PRESS, 2023 ISBN: 978-1-3999-5412-9 PRICE: £15 AVAILABLE ONLY FROM THE AUTHOR AT LOMONDBOB@GMAIL.COM

books



SIXTY YEARS STRONG: A HISTORY OF THE BORDER SEARCH AND RESCUE UNIT 1963-2023

by Seymour Haugh

Along with a considerable number of photographs, the book details the team's initial formation and early days, up to the present. Mixed in with accounts of exercises and incidents, is information on equipment, activities of the team, involvement with other services, and the development of long distance walking routes in the Borders. Publication has been supported by the Scottish Mountaineering Trust.

SIXTY YEARS STRONG: A HISTORY OF THE BORDER SEARCH AND RESCUE UNIT 1963-2023 SUPPORTED BY: SCOTTISH MOUNTAINEERING TRUST PRICE: £15 + P&P (FIRST CLASS: £4.20, SECOND CLASS: £3.60) COPIES AVAILABLE FROM BORDERSAR.ORG.UK

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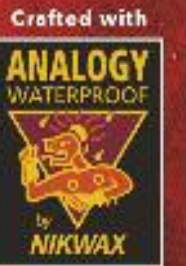
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