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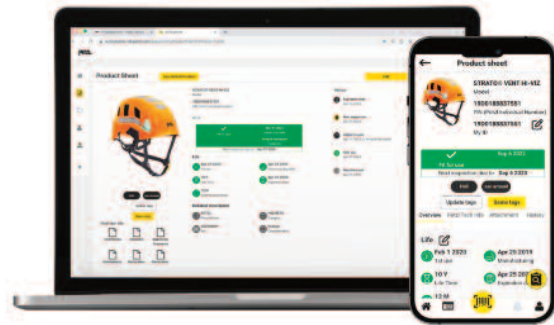
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inthisissue

conference 2024

To engage, educate and entertain

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To engage, educate and entertain

conference 2024

It's a wrap! So how did we do?

JUDY WHITESIDE EDITOR

So that's it for another two years – eighteen months of planning and organisation and the weekend of the conference passed in the blink of many bleary eyes. And I'm happy to report that feedback for the wellbeing themes was overwhelmingly positive with some delegates going so far as to say 'life-changing'.

A couple of times leading up to the weekend, I heard the expense of holding a conference framed as a 'loss' to MREW. Given the positive nature of feedback and expressions of thanks, I would suggest this be robustly reframed to better reflect that it has value far beyond the bottom line. These conferences offer a unique opportunity for grass roots team members from across England and Wales to meet with each other, and with colleagues from the wider rescue community – Scottish Mountain Rescue, Mountain Rescue Ireland and Lowland Rescue – and also to meet, in a less formal way, those who represent them and their interests at national, statutory and government level. It's an opportunity to hear new ideas, learn new skills and have your own thinking challenged. An opportunity perhaps to sit with members of another team or region over a dinner table and find yourselves exchanging numbers and planning joint training exercises you might never have previously considered (I'm looking at you Cockermonth!)

It's an opportunity to see how other teams are approaching the same challenges – and to appreciate that different teams have different challenges to yours, but it's all 'mountain rescue'. It's also an opportunity to socialise and chat without agenda with people just like you, from far beyond your own team, region or country.

Few of these things happen at the national meetings, preoccupied as they are with more formal 'business' matters. The only other such opportunity would be nationally and regionally-organised training weekends,

but these tend towards the more practical end of the spectrum and are perhaps limited in terms of numbers attending. That said, a number of you requested that there be more practical stuff and fewer lectures, more internal speakers rather than external 'consultants' next time round so maybe there's a case for revisiting the idea of a National Training Weekend **as well as** this style of broader-topic conference?

Our keynote speakers may all have been 'external', but each had their own take on how we can change how we relate to ourselves and each other. Oli Patrick's session was described by one delegate as 'life-changing', with his focus on how we can make the most of our own physiology to improve personal performance. Chris Turner gave food for thought in how we speak to and engage with each other. Alan Littlefield talked about how the body reacts to stress and how simply breathing rhythmically can affect the way you think. And our pre-dinner speaker Sarah Furness talked about her experience as an RAF combat helicopter pilot and the importance of being focused and mindful at the sharp end.

Beyond the keynotes, a balanced programme of speakers covered just about every aspect of mountain rescue, both on the frontline and off: medical and casualty care, technical rope rescue and risk, statistics, dealing with the media, water rescue, drones, air sports accidents, clothing 'myths', mapping, MR Map and rugged technology. In the field of wellbeing, there were presentations from Togetherall and the Workplace Collective, how human

factors impact the rescue environment and how to approach and deal with the family and friends of those we rescue. And the panel discussion helped open up the concerns of the key busy areas to wider discussion – hopefully the first step on a longer pathway to finding some solutions.

For their part, our speakers reported an enjoyable experience. 'My feedback would be wholly positive,' writes Oli Patrick. 'In the set up and preparation the briefing was clear and well structured. The organisation great. I found the audience open minded, engaged, warm. A room full of people aligned to a core purpose, serving others, made a lovely energy to stand in front of. If I was ever to do a talk on the benefit of serving others to improve the wellbeing of ones self – that audience could be a good case study. Smiling, engaged faces – makes life easy at the front.'

Of course there were grumbles – perhaps not surprisingly largely focused on the food, beer and bedrooms – but it's fascinating how those often run from one end of the spectrum to the other – cited as 'excellent' by many and 'very poor' by others. And the combination of a Sunday morning triathlon and a deep trench blocking the two entry/exit roads cause more than a little friction – unfortunately some things were entirely out of our control.

So here's to the next one. Let's continue to keep those wellbeing themes bubbling, lessons learned, and to seek solutions to those burning issues. And, most important of all, continue to add value to this amazing, voluntary mountain rescue service. 🍷

A resounding thank you to all our amazing sponsors...



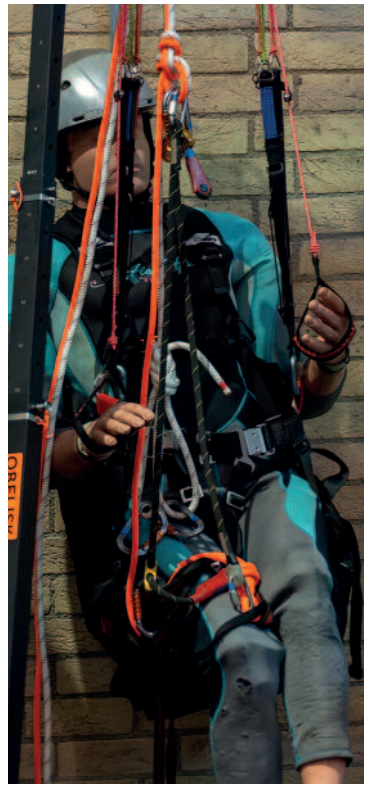
... and to our exhibitors... old friends and new...



And thank you to those delegates who entered into the spirit of the quiz: head to page 11 to find the answers and the winner of a £50 Cotswold gift voucher!

Top: Crib Goch © William Barton.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



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MR CONFERENCE CONTINUED

Quiz: Questions and answers...

1. What does LEP stand for in the new Ledlenser P9R CORE LEP Torch?
Answer: Laser Excited Phosphor.
2. How many years' experience does Tony Collinson, director of Beyond Driving, have in the driver training industry?
Answer: 22 years.
3. Can you name one of the three 'Unique First to Market' products launched and shown on the COAST Torches stand?
Answer: Coast ZX rechargeable batteries; RL35R voice-activated rechargeable headtorch; XPH40R and XPH80R rechargeable ultra-torches.
4. What is the name of the large Mountain Rescue Medical Response backpack visible on the PAX stand?
Answer: The Mount MckKinley.
5. Which company announced the world's first AI-Ready rugged laptop this year?
Answer: Getac.
6. What is the name of Keela's new cold weather jacket?
Answer: New extreme cold weather systems (ECW) Munro Expedition Jacket.
7. In what year did EDELRID create the Kernmantel rope?
Answer: 1953.
8. What was the first item Rab Carrington (founder of Rab) made back in 1981?
Answer: Sleeping bag.
9. In which English county was WRS founded?
Answer: Cumbria.
10. How did Garmin get its name?
Answer: Combination of founders Gary Burrell and Dr Min Kao.
11. Outwear Woolpower seamstresses make an entire garment from start to finish, then sew their own name tag into the final product. Who made the zip turtle neck on display on their stand?
Answer: Rashad Alhammoud.
12. What is the name of the updated Páramo MR Windproof?
Answer: Fuera Ascent Jacket.
13. Can you name two of the Rescue Benevolent Fund trustees?
Answer: Choose from Shirley, Judy, Woodie, Brendan, Bill.
14. What new colour bags are Openhouse introducing into their off-the-shelf range in September?
Answer: Purple.
15. Northern Diver will be promoting the new Cross Line Reach at the conference. What colour is it?
Answer: Red.
16. In communications technology, what do the initials SFR stand for?
Answer: Single Frequency Repeat.
17. What year was Helly Hansen founded?
Answer: 1877.

18. Which substance has the most impact on the breaking strength of an 8mm Dyneema Sling when contaminated for the same duration and at the same temperature? Coffee or Coca Cola?
Answer: Coca Cola.
19. What weight is the Schiller Easy Pulse Mechanical CPR Device?
Answer: 3.5kg.
20. Which team put four specially-trained rescue sheep to work on rural searches in April this year?
Answer: Dartmoor Ashburton.
21. Who is patron of Mountain Rescue England and Wales?
Answer: HRH The Prince of Wales.
22. Sarah Furness is our pre-dinner speaker. What's the title of her [first] book?
Answer: Fly Higher.
23. By the middle of June this year, which was the team with the highest number of incidents recorded?
Answer: Llanberis.
24. What do PETZL call the becket on the Maestro and how strong is it on each of the two versions?
Answer: Auxiliary attachment hole with the Maestro Small strength is 11k Kn and Large is 22Kn.

... and the winner is... **Rick Salter, Penrith MRT**

Finally, thank you to all those who donated raffle prizes... (and bought tickets) raising a magnificent £2,585 for the Rescue Benevolent Fund

- Northern Diver: Rescue Sled/raft (pictured right)
- Elliot Brown: Two Mountain Rescue watches
- Alison Bradley Gallery: Framed print 'Winter Rescue'
- Ledlenser: New to market P9R Core LEP torch – laser power light
- Páramo: Velez Pro red jacket
- Nebo/ACG: Luxtreme SL100 torch – 1 mile 1,600 metre beam
- Grubs Boots: Gift voucher for pair of Frostline boots
- Coast Torches: XP86R – 15 lumens 'ultra-torch' + WLR2 – 2,200 lumens wide-area sight light
- Corrmed: Meds backpack for emergency services paramedics
- Lakes Distillery: Reflections limited release whisky, produced for Michelin 3* Cumbrian chef, Simon Rogan
- Fenixlight UK: High-performance magnesium industrial headlamp/HM75R
- Snow & Rock: £50 Gift Voucher
- Ordnance Survey: Box of goodies
- Hamper: North Wales produce, including Halen Môn salt from the Menai Straits
- Sarah Furness: Pre-publication date copy of 'The Uni-tasking Revolution', Sarah's latest book (pictured left)



Above: Sam Wells, team member of Rossendale and Pendle MRT and a Swiftwater Rescue Technician shows off the newly-acquired rescue sled, courtesy of Northern Diver, the top prize in the MREW Conference raffle © RPMRT.

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ALIVE SINCE / 1877

TRUSTED BY PROFESSIONALS

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: **Learning from the conference communicators**

In Lancaster at the beginning of September, there was a lot of communications going on — up, down, across and from the front — so this issue's column aims to capture some of the communications strengths and the opportunities that struck me during three busy days on campus for the conference.

TELLING STORIES MAKES THINGS MEMORABLE

Anyone who was at Sarah Furness's pre-dinner talk will remember some aspect of it.

It might be her amazing shoes — sorry to those who were at the back and didn't get to see them! Or it might be her delivery — very armed forces, very direct and very focused, but with added humour too. But I think most people will remember at least one of her stories and the punchlines too.

For me it was 'just fly the helicopter'. It was refreshing to hear an advocate for focusing on the job in hand, not getting distracted and, basically, the value of uni-tasking over multi-tasking. But my point is that she told stories. You were introduced to the people involved, presented with the situations they faced and given an insight into the challenges too.

How much do we do that in our communications and our MR community? Rather than talking about the demands of more call-outs in terms of numbers, what about the stories of impact on volunteers? And, rather than 'telling' walkers to carry an emergency shelter, let's build on the value of telling the story of when one has been used and made a difference.

And we also need to find the storytellers in MR — I know you're out there and we need to be using you in our communications.

IT'S GOOD TO TALK

A huge amount of our wider communication is done by email and WhatsApp, but it was apparent from the buzz during the conference that there's a huge value in getting together to talk (and listen) to each other. Things get moving, experiences are shared, people get drawn into things and, in an ideal world, foundations are created for more effective communications and action in future.

So how do we keep that going? It's a challenge when there's so little time available to do the urgent stuff — some of this important stuff falls to the bottom of the list. So, several weeks on, who is the one person you could make time to talk to about



Left: Sarah Furness at the MREW Conference. Inset: Those shoes!! © Scott van der Zanden.

some aspect of MR? It might be a new member of your team with a fresh perspective, an officer in a neighbouring team who seems to have a solution to something you're struggling with or an external contact or partner where the relationship isn't what it could be.

It's good to talk so make time to talk to that person, before we're into 2025!

WORDS MATTER

I was struck by Chris Turner's use of the word 'civility' in his talk about why it matters in a complex world. It's obviously a word that's used in the NHS and I think we can learn from it and from Chris.

First, he wasn't talking about being nice to each other or being kind — two words that tend, however hard we try, to sound a bit fluffy — but he WAS talking about basic respect amongst everyone on a team, whether out on a hill or in a hospital operating theatre, shown by how we speak to each other. Civility seems to sum up that straightforward, achievable tone.

Chris also used his words carefully and emphasised the broad impact of how we speak to each other, not only on those in the conversation, but also on those around them and hearing what's going on. And he brought it down to our needing to be civil so that everyone stays engaged and willing to contribute — and that then has a huge influence on how effective our teams are at solving complex problems.

If you weren't in Lancaster and want to know more, Chris has done a couple of TEDx talks that you can find online¹ and there's more on the Civility Saves Lives website². If we can learn from the NHS experience and get better at this, it could

make a big difference in future. Teams working on a Code of Conduct might find that word 'civil' useful too

MEDIA IS MOVING ON

Helen Nugent, journalist and media trainer, talked about what the media wants and how to give it to them and the question and answer session that followed raised all sorts of ideas.

There are still local newspapers and nationals, magazines and broadcast news but the whole social media world of influencers and the demands of rolling news are creating different opportunities and challenges too. Some MR teams are responding to these changes brilliantly with live streaming, virtual open days and innovative use of video. At a national level, we're working with Ordnance Survey Champions — influencers themselves — to reach different audiences with safety messaging.

But we're struggling to keep an eye on everything that's going on — 30 years ago that would have been a media clippings service but those days are gone — and there's little time to share best practice across the organisation. We're working on it within the Media and Communications Network but, as a final plea, if you have ideas on how we could do it better, please get in touch or get your media and comms person to get in touch. Which brings me back to where I started — it would be good to talk.

If you want to get in touch 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. ☺

¹ <https://youtu.be/4RUlhjwCDO0?si=Zhs-qcllNxdBnlvW> ² <https://www.civilitysaveslives.com>

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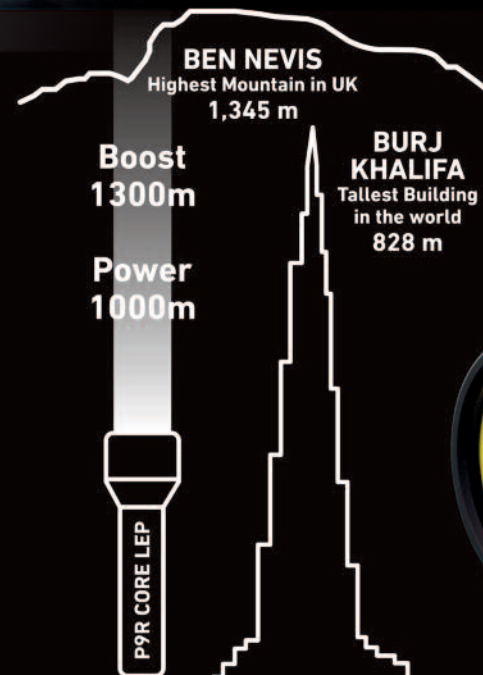


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Update on Team Leadership Project



JON WHITE
MREW WELLBEING OFFICER

MREW's peer-to-peer Team Leadership Project is being launched as 'Team Leaders Together'.

Following a successful pilot study with the psychologist-led team from The Workplace Collective, MREW is hoping to roll the project out across England and Wales from the start of 2025. Unlike the pilot, which lasted six months, this project is planned to last as long as necessary.

The pilot data, published in August and presented at the MREW Conference, provided very positive insights on the impact of peer-to-peer groups for the mountain rescue team leaders who volunteered to be part of the pilot study.

Sixteen team leaders from all over England and Wales came forward at the end of 2023 to take part in independently facilitated online group sessions for six months. The groups followed a format allowing reflection and collegiate feedback on issues raised within the group, and the confidential closed group also enabled robust trust and support to be developed and offered.

Together with their fellow leaders from other geographic regions, they reported an improvement in their leadership development and in on-the-ground operational support issues, as well as feeling supported in their own mental health which can be impacted by the team leader role.

From November, the entry process will be open to operational team leaders from each team to apply. We know that not all teams use the title 'team leader' so do get in touch if you are unsure who in the team the support is for. Keep an eye on your email inbox for more details.

Any team leader interested in joining the new groups starting in January 2025 should email myself via wellbeing.officer@mountain.rescue.org.uk or Kerry Slater via kerry@theworkplacecollective.co.uk for more information. A feature detailing the pilot study data will be published in the January issue. 📧

Aside from meeting some remarkable people, it has been a great experience to sit and talk with other people from all areas of the country doing the same type of role, and the realisation that the issues and challenges I am presented with are in fact surprisingly common and the approaches and ideas I have are not too far off those of my peers.
Anonymous participant



Above: Kerry Slater and Divine Charura of The Workplace Collective presenting the pilot study data at the MREW Conference © Scott van der Zanden.

Patterdale Mountain Rescue Wellbeing Survey

GLENN BRIDGE & LOUISA RODRIGUEZ

In 2023 when MREW published its Wellbeing Guiding Principles we were already thinking about this important subject but, like anything so broad and new (to us), we felt like we did not know where to start! The Guiding Principles gave us a great framework on which to build. We used them to design a survey, the results of which have given us a wellbeing baseline and a clear direction for our efforts.

We recognise this is the start of the process in terms of developing the existing culture in the team around wellbeing. In the past we've had TRIM as an assessment for team members that have witnessed trauma while volunteering with mountain rescue. This has evolved with the development of the 'Stay Safe, Stay Well' model which takes a holistic view of the wellbeing of mountain rescue volunteers.

When we think about wellbeing, often people focus on our mental and physical health, but there's more to it than that.

WHAT IS A CULTURE OF WELLBEING AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAMS?

A culture of wellbeing is an environment where the health and wellbeing of individuals are prioritised. It is about creating spaces where people feel supported, valued and encouraged to be at their best. There are different aspects to this:

1. Physical Health: Encouraging activities that promote positive physical health such as regular exercise, balanced nutrition, operational policies and processes that promote safety while volunteering.

2. Mental Health: Promoting practices that reduce stress and anxiety, such as mindfulness, adequate rest and mental health support.

3. Emotional Health: Fostering emotional intelligence, resilience and healthy relationships.

4. Social Wellbeing: Building a sense of community and belonging where individuals feel connected and supported by others.

5. Environment of Trust and Transparency: Team members can trust each other to do what they say they will, alongside respect for confidentiality when required. There is an open and supportive culture of feedback, reflecting on things that did not go well to support the learning, development of individuals and the whole team.

THE PATTERDALE WELLBEING SURVEY

We introduced the Wellbeing Survey as a starting point to get team feedback on the approach and culture currently in place around wellbeing. The plan is to complete the survey on a yearly basis to check in with team wellbeing and any changes that happen. There were ten questions in the survey encapsulating various elements of being a team member. The survey was sent via a Google forms survey link to all team members, asking them to respond. To receive honest answers and create safety, the responses were anonymous and each question had an answering scale detailed below. Each person had to pick one to answer each question:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

There was also a comments box for each question giving the opportunity for team members completing the survey to expand on any of their answers, giving greater insight if they wished. The comments later produced interesting debate and discussion during the team survey feedback session. (It should be noted for the presentation back the comments were summarised to ensure they remained anonymous).

QUESTIONS WE USED IN THE WELLBEING SURVEY

1. Being a member of a mountain rescue team has a generally positive effect on my physical and mental wellbeing?
2. My mountain rescue team has a culture of raising awareness around mental health issues, and challenging any stigma associated with these issues.
3. Time, education and encouragement is given at all stages of volunteering with mountain rescue, from recruitment to retirement, to have conversations with colleagues around mental health and wellbeing.
4. The team provides volunteers with the safest possible operating conditions,

including the right training and right equipment for the role.

5. There is not a culture of bullying in the team. (Definition of 'bullying': Bullying behaviour can take many forms, including persistent, offensive, intimidating or humiliating behaviour that may undermine an individual or group of team members and may cause them to suffer stress or other harm).

6. The team actively promotes opportunities for volunteers to look after their own mental health and maintain their own psychological wellbeing within an organisation that exists to help others.

7. The team makes volunteers and families aware of different types of support available, with support updates and within training programmes. Also creating an atmosphere and opportunities for volunteers and families to feed back when a situation may lead to poor mental health.

8. The team considers the impact of volunteering commitment in a '24-hour, always on call' culture on other aspects of their life, such as family and work, and acts appropriately.

9. The team provides access to help from relevant support organisations, including support for post-traumatic stress treatment.

10. There are enough organised social events for volunteers and families to help promote team cohesion and wellbeing.

Once team members had completed the survey and the results had been collated, these were shared during a Tuesday training evening with the opportunity to discuss the outcomes as a team. These outcomes and subsequent discussion are shaping the Patterdale Wellbeing Programme for the next twelve months.

This has been a positive step forward in the development of wellbeing culture which the PMRT Wellbeing Group will continue to develop in alignment with the MREW Wellbeing Guiding Principles. 📧

Left: View from Raïse during a rescue in 2023 © Patterdale MRT.



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November 2024 debate: Reflecting on what's changed

MIKE PARK CEO

At the national meeting in November, rather than the usual subgroup meetings, Jonny Read of ICE will facilitate a broader debate, to understand how mountain rescue has changed and what needs to happen for us to prepare for the future. We hope the discussion will provide insight and clarity about what the membership thinks and feels about past changes and future needs – including, perhaps, the need for more paid roles, more funding and greater governance, and the potential for future collaborative partnerships.

TEAMWORK

We work as one unit,
sticking together to achieve our
shared purpose



EXCELLENCE

We are highly skilled, needed
and trusted
We always strive to get even
better

CARING

We give our best with
kindness and compassion, even
when it's tough



PASSIONATE

Our work matters
We take pride in our work and
are committed to a job well
done, whatever the challenge

The aim is to gain a better understanding of the people we rescue, the partners we work with and our own membership, as well as our current structure and governance. In considering what needs to happen for mountain rescue to prepare for the future, we'll look at our structure and governance processes, how we work with other organisations and government, how we communicate and report internally and also talk about the services we provide.

Through the afternoon, we will approach four overarching questions, asking within each one: 'What was it like?', 'Why did it change?' and 'What will it be like in the future?'

1: WHAT HAS CHANGED IN HOW WE RESCUE PEOPLE?

This very open starting question will provide insight into what is front of mind for people when they think about what has changed – whether it be the membership, partners, rescues etc.

2: WHAT HAS CHANGED IN OUR PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS?

Historically, how were mountain rescuers treated and perceived, and how are we

treated and perceived now? How do we want to be treated and perceived?

3: WHAT HAS CHANGED IN THE MEMBERSHIP?

How did we treat each other before? How do we treat each other now? How do we want to treat each other?

4: WHAT HAS CHANGED IN HOW WE OPERATE AS AN ORGANISATION?

How were we structured before? How are we structured now? How do we want to be structured? What legislation do we have to follow? What legislation will we need to be prepared for?

The shared values (illustrated above) will help inform and guide the process. 'We were delighted to be a part of the creation of MREW's values and will hold these at the centre of our future work with you,' says Jonny. 'They are the keys to the mountain rescue spirit. This session will build on what we've already established, the aim to understand mountain rescue's past changes and future needs with a focus on the membership, partnerships and MREW.' ♡

THIS DEBATE IS OPEN TO EVERYONE IN MOUNTAIN RESCUE...

We really can't emphasise this enough: this isn't just about where we are now and those people who are leading the organisation right now. This is about the future of mountain rescue: YOUR future and YOUR mountain rescue...

So, we would encourage those of you who might conceivably be running and managing your teams in five or ten years time to come along to the debate — **in person** (as in face to face) — and join in the discussion. Be part of the process to take things forward. The venue is the Park Royal Hotel, Stretton Road, Stretton, Warrington WA4 4NS. To register, go to:

<https://forms.gle/LVgKUeoTmHPoyfRQ8>

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Incident Figures: National Status Summary January through to end September 2024

PAUL BRAIN MREW STATS OFFICER

Lake District	North East	Peak District	South Wales
Cockermouth 66	Cleveland 51	Buxton 79	Brecon 38
Coniston 57	North of Tyne 35	Derby 64	Central Beacons 80
Duddon & Furness 52	Northumberland 58	Edale 127	Longtown 38
Kendal 63	Swaledale 38	Glossop 46	Western Beacons 31
Keswick 121	Teesdale & Weardale 30	Kinder 56	187
Kirkby Stephen 16	212	Oldham 41	
Langdale Ambleside 109		Woodhead 55	
Patterdale 83	North Wales	468	South West England
Penrith 39	Aberdyfi 39		Avon & Somerset 17
Wasdale 140	Aberglaslyn 47	Peninsula	SARA 42
746	Llanberis 266	Cornwall East 22	59
	North East Wales 63	Cornwall West 23	
Mid Pennines	Ogwen Valley 146	Dartmoor Ashburton 36	Yorkshire Dales
Bolton 27	South Snowdonia 44	Dartmoor Plymouth 13	CRO 71
Bowland Pennine 41	605	Dartmoor Tavistock 35	Scarborough & Ryedale 31
Calder Valley 35		Exmoor 26	Upper Wharfedale 48
Holme Valley 39		North Dartmoor 17	150
Rossendale & Pendle 34		172	
176			Search Dogs
			Lake District MRSD 6
			MRSD England 63
			SARDA Wales 27
			SARDA South Wales 18
			114



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



MOUNTAIN RESCUE ANNUAL REVIEW 2024

Our latest annual review was published in May. Available as a digital flip book: scan the QR code to see the key incident stats for 2023 and to read an overview of mountain rescue activity across England and Wales, over the last twelve months. Once again, the emerging theme is of collaborative, multi-agency training and activity, nationally, regionally and locally, in all aspects of our rescue work.



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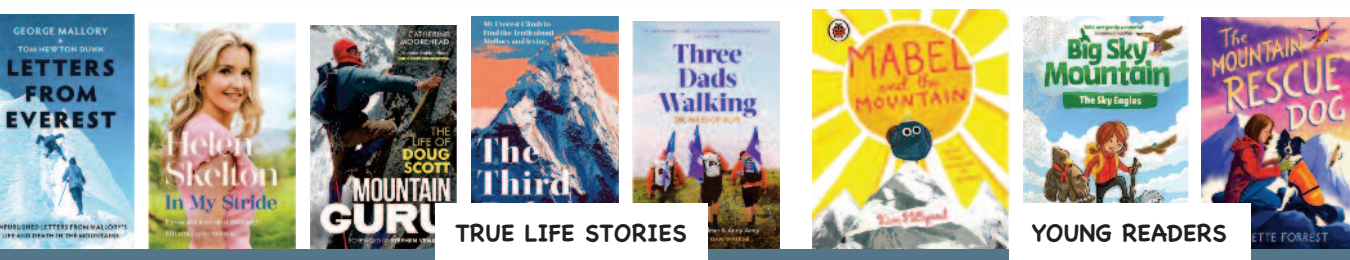


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ACCESSING THE MREW ONLINE SHOP (TEAMS)

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.

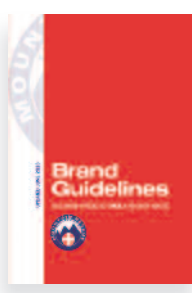
To register your team, please email office@mountain.rescue.org.uk and include the details listed below for your team's designated purchaser, **using an official team email address**. An account will be created for your team and any further information regarding the setting up of this account sent directly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

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* 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**.

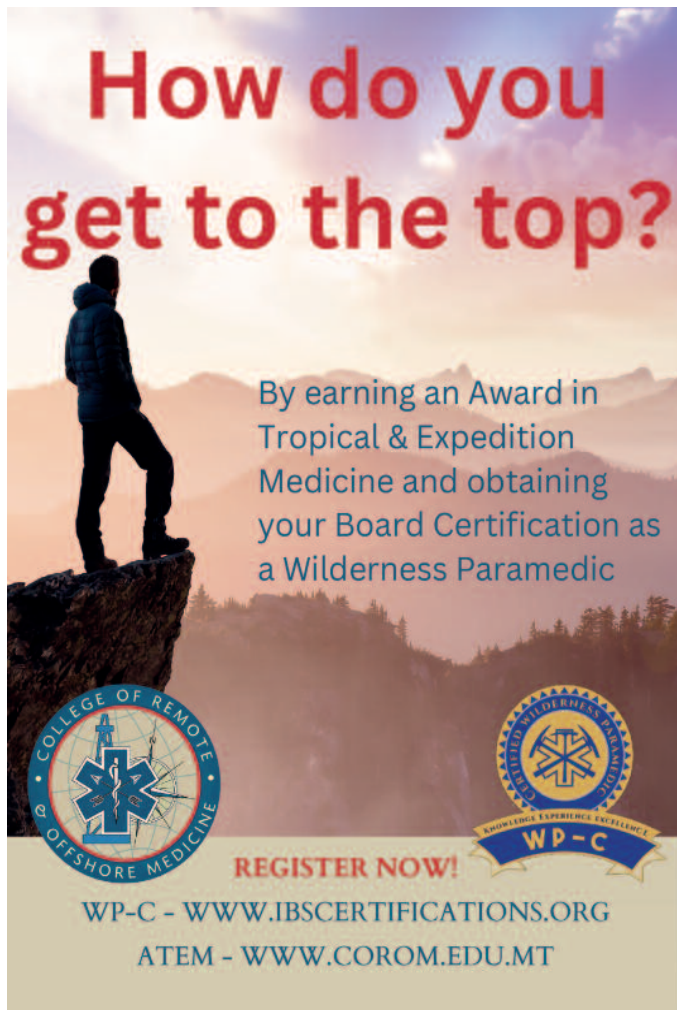
Finally, Moodle is going through a refresh so expect changes and improvements over the coming months to make it easier to navigate. Have fun! ☺

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.

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INTRODUCING TWO NEW MREW EXTERNAL TRUSTEES...



ALEX SIVITER-PLATTS

Alex is new to the world of mountain rescue, although he grew up very close to Dartmoor and has spent a lot of his life out on the moors, so he has been well aware for many years of the important role mountain rescue teams play. 'I've sadly left the West Country behind,' says Alex, 'and am now a civil servant in central government, working in London and living in the Chiltern Hills. As part of my new role as a trustee, I am hoping to help MREW develop stronger relationships with government to better support mountain rescue both locally and nationally.'



MADDY DESFORGES

Maddy has been on the margins of mountain rescue for some time as her husband has been a member of Edale team for over 30 years, including time as team leader. 'That gives me a perspective on the reality of life in a mountain rescue family and the impact it has, as well as on individual team members. I've always loved mountains and I am conscious of the critical service mountain rescue plays so I jumped at the chance to contribute as a trustee.'

Maddy's day job is CEO of NAVA, a charity which is also a membership organisation, supporting groups across England. She is also co-chair of the voluntary sector emergencies partnership, working with response charities, community organisations and central government, so has significant experience of charity governance and operations to bring to the role, to help develop the direction of MREW. 'I'm looking forward to the challenges of that, conscious there are many, not least the ever-increasing demand on teams from a more diverse set of people out in the hills.'



Raising funds for rescue

NEWS ROUND

JULY > EARLY OCTOBER

JULY: WALKING GROUP RAISE FUNDS FOR MREW

Jackie Hall and eleven friends (left) from East Lancashire are all members of the Empowering Walk Club, a group of ladies 'of a certain age that love a challenge every year'. This year, they headed north to climb Ben Nevis in aid of MREW.

Their initial fundraising target was £500 but their JustGiving total currently stands at over £1,563. A huge thanks to all of them — looks as though they got a view from the summit too!

JULY: HELLY HANSEN DONATES PERCENTAGE OF UK ONLINE SALES TO MOUNTAIN RESCUE

Over one weekend in July, Helly Hansen donated 5% of all online sales in the UK to Mountain Rescue England and Wales and Scottish Mountain Rescue, funds which help provide the teams with the kit, training and education resources they need to carry out their work. Thank you Helly Hansen.



AUGUST: CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN RESCUE DAY



In August 1948, mountain rescue experts convened at the invitation of the Austrian Alpine Club to exchange experiences, knowledge and technology. This gathering led to the founding of ICAR (International Commission for Alpine Rescue) in 1955, which has continued to strengthen the international network and community of mountain rescuers.

International Mountain Rescue Day celebrates the spirit of community, progress and commitment of all those people who dedicate themselves to the safety of others in the mountains and Mountain Rescue England and Wales is a proud member of ICAR, honoured to share and celebrate this legacy.

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Technical Rope Rescue Courses:

- Safeworking at Height
- Technical Rope Rescue Operator
- Technical Rope Rescue Supervisor

Medical/Trauma Courses:

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Fatal mud slide

© Cleveland MRT.

On Wednesday 22 May 2024, Cleveland MRT was called to what would prove to be one of the most tragic incidents that they have dealt with for many years. **Gary Clarke**, the team's call-out officer, said: 'It was a poor day weather-wise with heavy rain, mist and low cloud covering large parts of the region. When the SARCALL alert went off it was clearly very serious with a report of a mudslide resulting in a child casualty'. He updates here on the story.

The initial request came from the North East Ambulance Service, followed a few minutes later by a separate alert from the Yorkshire Ambulance Service (the team's area encompasses two ambulance trusts and two police forces). A multi-agency response involved police, fire, both ambulance services and both regional air ambulance units (travelling by car as they couldn't fly due to the weather). At one point we also received a call from Aeronautical Rescue requesting an update for an in-bound Coastguard helicopter (which was subsequently stood down).

The mudslide had occurred on the North York Moors below a section of the Cleveland Way National Trail, near to a location known as Carlton Bank. All available Cleveland team members were directed to a nearby RV point. One of the team doctors, Dan Slane, lives nearby and was the first mountain rescue member to the location. With other emergency services already on scene, he was advised by the police that the girl (Leah Harrison, aged ten) had very sadly been pronounced dead. She had been a member of a school party on an activity day.

During a JESIP meeting, Dan was asked to arrange for mountain rescue personnel to recover Leah's body. 'Initially there was a very busy multi-agency scene developing on a narrow country lane,' says Dan, 'with limited space for vehicles to access the scene. This incident really highlighted the importance of utilising the JESIP principles to coordinate all of the agencies on scene to arrive at one cohesive response.'

Further team members started to arrive including two Land Rover crews. With vehicle access beyond the roadside RV not possible, the route to the scene involved a 1.25km walk. Knowing that there may be a technical rope aspect, they carried what equipment they could. At that time, nineteen Cleveland members were on scene, although that number would rise to thirty in the subsequent hours. An offer of additional personnel from Swaledale MRT was received, but ultimately proved unnecessary, albeit thanks were passed to our colleagues.

Two firefighters from North Yorkshire Fire

and Rescue Service acted as 'uphill spotters' and another one performed the role of overall incident safety officer. With those arrangements in place, Cleveland personnel set up a back-up rope system to secure team members in the event of further mudslides.

Cleveland MRT operates a competency-levels-based system across all mountain rescue skill areas. For tech deployments, the levels range from T1 up to T5. In this case, a T4 was nominated as tech lead. The slope itself was not so steep that it would normally have needed such a rope system (other than for the stretcher), and team members would usually have been able to move about safely on such terrain. It was only the wet ground conditions and the potential for further mudslides that required such precautions.

Initially, three back-up ropes were set up: two for team members (one on each) and one for a Bell stretcher. With the arrival of more equipment, this was later increased to four back-up ropes, allowing three team members to operate at any one time, with one T2 managing each system at the belay point. Team members recovered Leah's body back along the route to the RV and into the care of North East Ambulance Service.

As with any incident, particularly one of such a tragic nature, it was vital to address the welfare and wellbeing of everyone involved. North Yorkshire Police arranged for a supply of hot drinks to be brought to the RV. That was very welcome as, by then, everyone was starting to feel the effects of some hours spent 'on the hill' in cold and wet conditions and in such trying circumstances. Throughout the recovery, members were regularly talking to each other and checking on their mutual welfare.

Later that day Sarah Davies (the incident T4 tech lead and also the team's wellbeing lead) circulated a message to everyone involved, emphasising the need to consider themselves. As Sarah so appropriately put it: 'It's okay to be affected by these things, so please take some time to decompress and process what's happened. Please do speak with your teammates if you need to

talk. Even if it's just to chat with someone who gets it.'

Sarah also provided information on how and where to seek advice. This was reinforced by Dan Slane (in his role as incident lead and also members rep). Team leader Tim Wood received a further offer of support from Swaledale MRT, this time in terms of wellbeing support. In the following hours and days, many supportive phone calls were made between team members and a small gathering (to repack kit) at the base the following day proved beneficial. There were also offers of support from other organisations such as the North York Moors National Park Authority.

It was obvious that the incident would lead to significant media interest. As both call-out officer and PR officer, I had a reasonable understanding of what had taken place, despite operating remotely from the scene. This was helped by a post incident one-to-one briefing from Tim, the same evening, backed up by more detailed notes from Dan and Tim early the following morning before the calls started. All of this proved particularly beneficial when subsequently dealing with a number of media interviews from TV, radio and newspapers that day and demonstrates the importance of getting the PR officer involved at an early stage.

Naturally, the thoughts of Cleveland MRT members have been with Leah's family and friends. Two weeks after the accident, four team members attended her funeral.

Tim Wood summed up the incident: 'On 22 May we were another MRT faced with the sad task of recovering the body of a young person. This tragic incident has had an impact across the team and beyond. Conversations I've had with people from other agencies, the staff in the ambulance control room, the fire service crew and police tell how we were all shocked by what had happened. All were so determined to do the best for Leah on the day, to provide dignity for her in the most desperate of conditions and were ready then and later to help each other to cope with what we had done on that day.' 🙏



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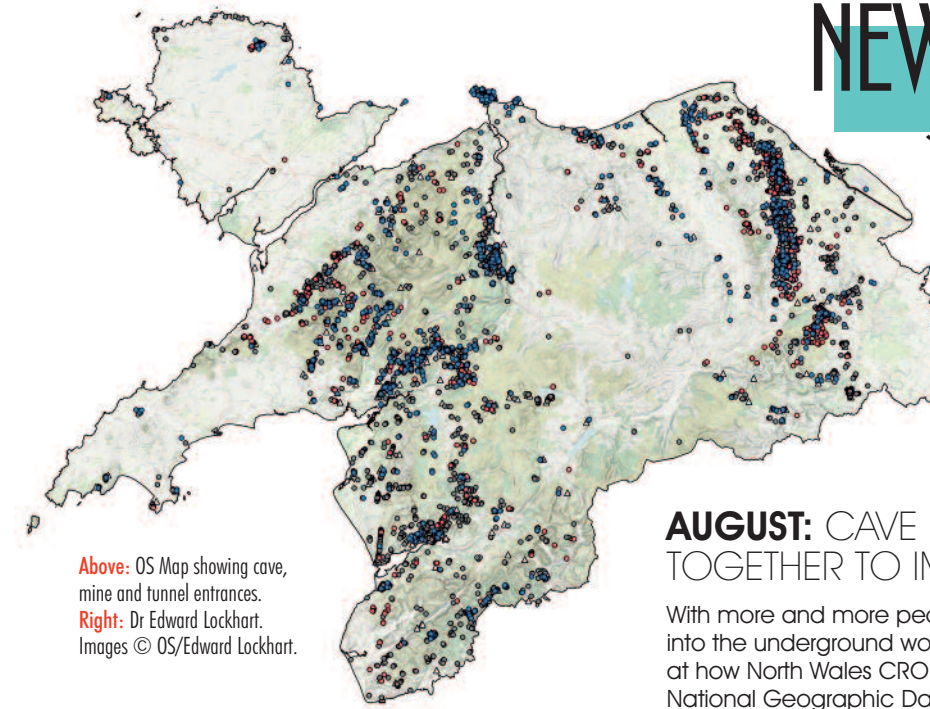
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NEWS ROUND

JULY > EARLY OCTOBER



Above: OS Map showing cave, mine and tunnel entrances.
Right: Dr Edward Lockhart.
Images © OS/Edward Lockhart.

AUGUST: CAVE RESCUE AND OS WORK TOGETHER TO IMPROVE RESPONSE TIMES

With more and more people enjoying the challenge of delving into the underground world, a recent Ordnance Survey blog looks at how North Wales CRO have been using data from the OS National Geographic Database to help enable faster responses.

Dr Edward Lockhart is senior data scientist at the scientific research institute, the Hartree Centre, and also a member of North Wales CRO. By their nature, cave rescue missions can be complicated and lengthy to resolve because of the environmental, logistical, and physical challenges of being underground. So, over several years, Edward has been accurately mapping individual mine, cave and tunnel entrances, producing the most comprehensive record of underground locations in North Wales. The spatial catalogue also contains appropriate rendezvous points and automatically-generated information on nearby road access and mobile phone signal coverage, which is then all available online for team members, whether they are coordinating incidents from home or deployed at the scene. All of which can only help improve response times and rescue outcomes. To read more, head to <https://ow.ly/tHob50Tem3l>

OCTOBER: LAKES TEAM MEMBERS HOST NORWEGIAN COLLEAGUES

Langdale Ambleside team hosted members of the Norsk Folkehjelp at their base, for a joint training session on hypothermia. The twenty volunteers came from across Norway and specialise in different areas of search and rescue.

After a presentation covering signs and symptoms, treatment and evacuation methods, there followed an interesting discussion on different kit systems for both personal and casualty needs. Just before lunch break, a call-out came in to a person that had been found unwell on Loughrigg so there were plenty of hands already on deck to assist — including the Norwegian team members — with a fantastic response time. Back at base, the afternoon consisted of scenarios on lower leg injuries and cardiac problems. 'This was a fantastic opportunity for team members to exchange ideas and get an insight into how other organisations across the world perform search and rescue — as well as making new friends and connections with like-minded people. We are extremely grateful to have had this experience and look forward to visiting our colleagues in Norway in the not too distant future.'



Above: Members of the Norsk Folkehjelp during training and a call-out with Langdale Ambleside team © LAMRT.

OCTOBER: OLDHAM CELEBRATE SIXTY YEARS

In early October, the team celebrated their 60th anniversary with team members past and present, their families and distinguished guests including the Vice Lord Lieutenant for Greater Manchester, Sharman Birtles, Frank Rothwell and some of the team's founding team members.

It was also an opportunity to present some team members with long service awards and King's Coronation medals. Amongst other long service awards, Katie Johnson celebrated 25 years, Dr Andy Taylor 50 years, and team president Peter Hyde a magnificent 60 years. The team wished to thank the Holme Valley team for being on call and allowing them a rare night off to celebrate. They also thanked supporters and the families of team members AKA 'the people that have to pick up the pieces when we disappear at odd times of the day!'



Left: Oldham team members at their 60th anniversary dinner © Oldham MRT.

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Becoming a trustee changed my life and why YOU should consider it too!

ANDY BRELSFORD WEST CORNWALL SRT

When I agreed to take on the role of chair of a rescue organisation almost thirty years ago, little did I know it would change me as a person and lead to some of the most challenging but rewarding opportunities of my life.

'Charity trustees are the people who share ultimate responsibility for governing a charity and directing how it is managed and run.' So says the Charity Commission in its useful guide 'The Essential Trustee'. It goes on to talk about the role and responsibilities of a trustee and what the Commission expects from you. I must confess that whilst that publication is invaluable for new and existing trustees, it doesn't really convey the breadth and depth of experience the role can offer.

Being a trustee is about the life experience you bring to the table and we all have our own unique set of experiences that have shaped us a person. As a trustee, you are part of a team of equals and so being able to listen to and take on board other people's views is important as well as the ability to quickly get on top of a topic or issue to the point you feel you can make an informed decision.

Of course, you are not alone in your task. Besides your fellow trustees, you have a wealth

a trustee of the search and rescue team is all the more fulfilling for knowing that everyone there is doing what they do because they chose to; because they believe in the mission and we share a sense of purpose and a set of values that we, as trustees, helped create.

As a trustee, there are obviously meetings to attend, reports to read and decisions to make. But I have also found myself having to act as arbiter and agony aunt, confidant and sounding board, strategist and spokesperson.

Thanks to being a trustee I have hob-nobbed with chief constables and lords lieutenant, appeared on TV and radio and developed my public-speaking capabilities to a point I could never have previously imagined. And yet, these moments, memorable though they are, are not what I would consider the essence of the role. Far from it.

For me, it is about the quiet words of reassurance to a colleague that their efforts are appreciated and their approach is the right one that keeps them going through doubt. Listening whilst someone outlines a seemingly insurmountable problem and supporting them to come up with a solution of their own. Building consensus and seeing self-belief grow in individuals and teams as they come together to make things happen.

In conclusion, the one thing I think trustees need more than anything else is empathy. These days the role, more than ever, is about the human factor. All of the decisions we take have to be taken in the context of the impact on our members, our stakeholders and the wider public. From which vehicle or stretcher to purchase to where we invest our funds to membership criteria and codes of conduct — it all comes back to how we relate to and interact with each other.

I know charities, including mountain rescue teams, sometimes struggle to recruit trustees as the role is often associated in people's minds with budgets and meetings and bureaucracy, but I hope I have shown that there is more to it than that and that experience and empathy are more important than technical or administrative ability. And I would urge everyone reading this to consider yourself as a potential trustee. Like anything that's worth doing, it can be hard at times but it is also incredibly rewarding and absolutely vital for the functioning of our teams. And trustees are, at the end of the day, ordinary folk like you and me who have taken the plunge and stepped up to the mark.

To end with another quote, this time from American writer and artist, Mary Anne Radamcher: 'As we work to create light for others, we naturally light our own way.'

The sense of pride and achievement I get as



Above: West Cornwall team during a recent training exercise near their base in United Downs © West Cornwall SRT.

As a young and naïve mine rescuer thirty years ago, I probably didn't even equate becoming chair of Cornwall Mine Rescue Organisation with being a trustee. There was a lot I didn't know back then and, with hindsight, if I'd known about the personal responsibility it entailed, I might have had second thoughts. But I'm glad I took on the role because, through a series of events and encounters, it led to the here and now — and I sit and write this as a much older (and hopefully wiser) chair of the West Cornwall team.

Most of us join MR because of a passion for the outdoors (and/or underground) and a desire to use our skills to help others. In my case, I was a very active team member and my trustee duties were, in my mind, secondary. We often assume that to be a trustee, you must have other skills: organisational, legal, financial etc. But in my experience, whilst those things can be useful, they are not essential to the role. There are plenty of people who may be good managers, solicitors or accountants, but who wouldn't necessarily make good trustees.

of advice, information and support in the form of subject experts within the team, for example team officers who can provide technical and specialist advice. Beyond the team, you have regional and national officers and expertise who can help you and these days there are forums galore on the internet — whatever issue you are grappling with, it is likely someone has grappled with the same issue before and is usually happy to share their wisdom and experience.

But I said at the start that being a trustee had changed my life and I genuinely believe it is a role that gives as much back as you put in. I work in the charity sector, but I know that my volunteering, particularly my experience as a trustee, has helped me tremendously in my paid employment. Experience that I wouldn't have been able to get through my job, but gained as a trustee, led to the position I hold today. And through my role as a trustee, I have had to deal with situations and people that have shaped my outlook and approach — I hope for the better.

Keeping a healthy team constitution – transparent processes for handling the membership



TOBY HAMNETT BCRC LEGAL OFFICER

Most voluntary search and rescue teams, especially those in MREW, are charities these days. There may be some that remain unincorporated associations.¹ In either case, the team, its purposes and how it operates administratively are guided by its governing document, usually called the Constitution. This is the key to the smooth running of a team, and the investment of time in a well-written constitution will pay dividends should anything go wrong.

Search and rescue teams, like any human endeavour, will from time to time encounter friction amongst the people who make up the trustees, committees and members. Having a transparent and fair process to deal with these challenges will often enable a team to deal with these issues quickly and allow the team to retain its focus on the most important person: the casualty. This article provides some guidance on matters that should feature in your constitution to prevent those frictions causing more trouble than necessary.

Many teams have chosen to have a short-form constitution, often a side or two of A4. This provides the minimum necessary to establish the charity, but often omits key

areas that a team may have not considered when they began. I will address two areas which are often overlooked — membership refusal and termination and provide some suggested provisions to address these areas. I have also added some ideas on establishing the 'Rules' for the team. These are based on Charity Commission templates and issues I have been asked to deal with previously. They should not be copied wholesale into your constitution without ensuring that the constitution remains internally consistent and achieves what you, as the team, require. The process for updating your constitution will be in the document itself and usually requires a vote at the AGM or an EGM.

The trustees of the charity will also be members of the charity, but there may be different categories of membership. I have used the generic 'member' in this article, but examination of your specific constitution will identify where these are different.

Two challenges commonly faced by search and rescue teams are:

- Where an inappropriate prospective member wishes to join
- Where a member behaves in a manner that would lead the trustees to terminate their membership.

In each case, a transparent and fair procedure to be followed by the trustees will protect them and the team from challenge.

REFUSAL OF AN APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

It is not uncommon for people to want to join, who lack the aptitude or experience required of a team member, even with the benefit of training. By using an accountable system set out in the constitution in dealing with an individual there will be a trail of justified reasons why they had been refused. Keeping these clear and transparent, there is a lowered likelihood of reputational damage to the team should the individual tell others that they have been turned down unfairly. This also provides an audit trail should they apply to other teams. It should also provide development points should an individual wish to accrue the appropriate experience to reapply in the future.

There are criteria for which it is not appropriate, indeed might be unlawful, to refuse an applicant. Including these in the constitution ensures that the trustees are notified and ensures that they are not being swayed by unconscious bias in their selection for the team. A suggested format for a constitutional provision might read as right:

Refusal of Membership. The trustees may only refuse an application for membership if, acting reasonably and properly, they consider it to be in the best interests of the charity to refuse the application. The trustees will not be swayed by matters of race, sex, gender, religious persuasion or other protected characteristic in considering an application for membership.

- The trustees must inform the applicant in writing of the reasons for the refusal within twenty-one days of the decision.
- The trustees must consider any written representations the applicant may make about the decision. The trustees' decision, including reasons, following any written representations must be notified to the applicant in writing but shall be final.

TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

There are many non-contentious reasons for a member leaving a team, but clearly stating a process for doing so can facilitate the trustees in dealing with it. I have advised teams trying to terminate membership of a member who has become incapacitated by mental health, so considering how you will

deal with physical or mental incapacity in the constitution prevents difficult situations later.

The most useful aspect of this provision is the removal of someone who is detrimental to the objects of the team and the effective provision of care to the casualty but wishes to remain a team member. This process

must be fair, robust and set out clear reasoning behind any decision. It should not be used to remove a member who is presenting legitimate challenge to the manner in which the team is run. A suggested constitutional provision might read as above right:

Membership is terminated if:

a. The member dies or, if it is an organisation, ceases to exist.	but is not limited to, any act or omission which undermines the objects of the charity or the search and rescue work or persistently failing to demonstrate the core competencies required by the Rules or otherwise unreasonably places a member or a casualty at risk.
b. A person acting on behalf of the member through a power of attorney agrees that membership is terminated.	
c. The member resigns by written notice to the charity unless, after the resignation, there would be fewer than [insert minimum number eg. three] members; [the constitution will usually have a provision accepting electronic communications as appropriate notice].	f. A resolution to remove a member from membership may only be passed if:
d. Any sum due from the member to the charity is not paid in full within six months of it falling due; [you may consider this useful even if there no membership fee but, for example, if someone has bought kit from the team legitimately but has not paid].	i. the member has been given at least twenty-one days' notice in writing of the meeting of the trustees at which the resolution will be proposed and the reasons why it is to be proposed;
e. The member is removed from membership by a resolution of the trustees that it is in the best interests of the charity and that there is a good reason that his or her membership is terminated, following any disciplinary process under [the Rules clause], if extant and only insofar as it does not conflict with the provisions of this constitution. 'Good reason' includes,	ii. the member or, at the option of the member, the member's representative (who need not be a member of the charity) has been allowed to make representations to the meeting;
	iii. [you may wish to place a minimum majority on this vote eg. 'a resolution is valid under this clause if agreed by two thirds of the trustees present and voting' or remove 'present and voting' if you want all trustees to vote and this is practical].

THE RULES

The full detail for membership requirements need not be in the constitution itself and can be included in a set of Rules for day-to-day administration. The constitution will govern what the Rules will cover. The content of the Rules allows for a transparent and agile administrative system which does not require the trustees to return to an AGM

to adjust, for example, the training requirements. It is up to the team to decide what flexibility and control it wants the trustees to hold without returning to a General Meeting.

I have provided a suggested paragraph to allow for the drafting and amendment of the Rules. These provisions allow the trustees to

remove a member in accordance with the constitution and allow more detail on the structure to be included. In relation to a disciplinary process included in the Rules, this, too, must be fair and transparent and will usually be tied into a complaints procedure that the team will almost certainly already have.

Rules:

The trustees may from time to time make Rules for the conduct of the charity. The Rules may regulate the following matters but are not restricted to them:

a. Training and operational matters to fulfil the objects, including requirements for membership.	g. The procedure at general meeting and meetings of the trustees in so far as such procedure is not regulated by this constitution.
b. Administrative policies and procedures to include complaints and disciplinary processes.	h. The keeping and authenticating of records. (If regulations made under this clause permit records of the charity to be kept in electronic form and requires a trustee to sign the record, the regulations must specify a method of recording the signature that enables it to be properly authenticated).
c. The admission of members of the charity (including the admission of organisations to membership) and the rights and privileges of such members.	i. Generally, such matters as are commonly the subject matter of the rules of a charity whose objects are focused on search and rescue.
d. Entrance fees, subscriptions and other fees or payments, if any, to be made by members.	The charity in a general meeting has the power to alter, add to or repeal the Rules. The trustees must adopt such means as they think sufficient to bring the Rules to the notice of members of the charity. The Rules shall be binding on all members of the charity. No Rule shall be inconsistent with, or shall affect or repeal anything contained in, this constitution. Should an inconsistency be identified, the provisions of this constitution will prevail.
e. The conduct of members of the charity in relation to one another, and to the charity's employees and volunteers.	
f. The setting aside of the whole or any part or parts of the charity's premises at any particular time or times or for any particular purpose or purposes.	

SUMMARY

Each team is different and how they would wish to approach the administration of their team will vary. Some may wish to provide more power to the executive committee, some would prefer the members to have a greater say in the running of the team. Whilst

each team is different, it will face the same types of challenges. Having a constitution that is healthy enough to be a reliable framework to deal with the challenges smoothly is vital to maintaining the focus on the training for and rescue of individuals in

your remote environment. A regular review and refresh to ensure it is up to the task is important. Keep your constitution healthy — it will benefit you in the long term. 🧗

¹ Whilst this advice could apply to both models, I will assume that the team is a charity.



Sometimes, a lot of things happen at the same time...

In September, it was the Mountain Rescue Search Dogs England (MRSDE) training and assessments, based in Ingleton in the Yorkshire Dales, and the MREW Conference in Lancaster over the same weekend. Luckily, Ingleton is not far from Lancaster University, so I reckoned I could fit both in.

I went over to Ingleton on the Thursday night, from near Scotch Corner. Like a few of us I am an avid weather watcher, some might call us weather geeks. I was aware of a strong easterly airflow and, to the east of the North Pennines and Yorkshire Dales in County Durham, and in North Yorkshire, it was grey and wet, the easterly airflow dragging moisture in off the North Sea. As I drove towards the Pennine hills of the Yorkshire Dales the cloud got thicker on the windward slopes, engulfing the area in thick fog. Over the tops, the cloud lifted to clear sky and a strong wind, a classic Foehn effect, a rare phenomenon in the UK. In the Alps a Foehn wind is more common, often

called a 'snow eater' as the leeward slope wind is warm and dry and melts the snow.

A classic Foehn occurs when damp air rises over high ground, rising up the windward side of a range of hills or mountains. As the air rises it cools and expands, producing an orographic cloud cap on the summit. Often the moisture precipitates as rain or even snow. All the moisture is dumped out of the airstream, and the dry wind, compressing and warming up, accelerates on the leeward slope, often reaching gale force. Essentially, wet and cold on the windward side and warmer and drier on the leeward.

In the UK we have only one named wind:

the Helm. This is a Foehn wind which occurs when an ENE blows over Cross Fell in the North Pennines. It often roars down the leeward slope, with farming tales of lifting sheep in the air. A few miles further on, the gusts die down, but the weather is generally drier, clearer and warmer than the windward ENE side of Cross Fell in County Durham and North Yorkshire.

Friday was a spectacularly clear and warm day for dog training. Even the USAF and RAF were taking advantage of the clear weather and topping up their flying skills in fast jets. Always an impressive sight and sound as they roar through the valley.

I have done a lot of dogsbodying, hiding in the fells or crouching in rocky areas to help train the search dogs. Generally, MRSDE dogs find casualties by air scenting. There are a few that are also trained in trailing, which is where the dog sniffs a piece of the missing person's clothing to then follow their trail on the ground. Usually there is no clothing available and the trail scent could have vanished or been mixed with others, so air scenting is the norm.

What I was not aware of is that search dogs can smell a body under water. They are often tasked to help the police find missing people, some of whom sadly have taken their own life by drowning. We've all seen the films where a person, usually the hero, wades through a stream or swims a river to escape the search or tracker dogs. I now know this is fantasy; you cannot escape a search dog even by being underwater.

We had a great demonstration of finding a submerged body — in this case, a volunteer cave diver lurking underwater in Keld Held, Kingsdale.

As is usual when a search dog finds a dogsbody, it is rewarded with treats and ball playing. Helen, our diver, would surface for this. Sadly, in a real-life scenario the find will most likely be dead, possibly by suicide and will not surface for a play.

Left: MRSDE handlers and dogs during training in September, with dogsbody cave diver Helen in the water. **Right:** Searching the nooks and crannies © Alan Hinkes; checking out the Helly Hansen stand at the MREW Conference © Scott van der Zanden.



OCTOBER: TEAM HELPS MOVE THE ICONIC BLUEBIRD FOR A WEEKEND AWAY

Coniston team members had a unique experience helping to move the iconic Bluebird. She was leaving her home in Coniston for a long weekend, going down south to show off with the water speed trophy. The iconic Bluebird K7 is based at the Ruskin Museum, having returned to her home in Coniston on Saturday 9 March this year.

It was a tricky, careful winch job by team member Jess, who has a lot of Land Rover experience. Several other team members were there to help, including Rob, Paul and Jeff, along with team supporter Phil from Coniston Copper Mines.

Above: The iconic Bluebird, leaving home for a long weekend © Alan Hinkes.



AUGUST: TEAM TRIES OUT NEW DRYSUITS

Avon & Somerset water team members (pictured above) tried out their new Aquatek drysuits in August, funded by a generous donation from the Freemasons of Bristol, The Provincial Grand Lodge of Bristol.



NEWS ROUND

JULY > EARLY OCTOBER

SEPTEMBER: PEAK DISTRICT TEAMS STAGE LARGEST EVER MOUNTAIN RESCUE EXERCISE



Patch Haley PDMRO's Operational Support Office reports: This year sees the 60th Anniversary of the Peak District Mountain Rescue Organisation and Toby Green, our regional training officer, decided he wanted to mark the occasion with a large exercise. And what a wonderful exercise it was.

Based at JCB's test quarry in Staffordshire, over the weekend of 21-22 September, the exercise took many months to plan and simulated an air crash with mock casualties and different unfolding scenarios designed to challenge the teams. Toby pulled together a small team from across the region — including mountain and cave rescue team members — and after ten months of planning, meetings, phone calls, more meetings and many sleepless nights, produced one of the largest multi-agency exercises mountain rescue has ever seen. And yes, that did include acquiring a large plane fuselage. The premise was that a large plane crash having been reported in a local quarry and we ran the incident as if it were a real live time job.

So, practically, what did we do? We asked each of the seven teams to provide two team members to be in the Tactical Command Group (TCG) who would have tactical command over the whole incident. They were located away from the crash site and had to rely on good communication with the teams on the ground. Also inside the TCG we had fire, ambulance and police, then — as the incident developed — AAIB and CAA investigators and a representative from the insurance company Blake's who were involved in the recovery. The TCG were then responsible for controlling the whole incident including all the mountain and cave rescue and the emergency services personnel, UKSAR and the Army.

This was a very challenging situation for anyone to be placed in, with the team members on the ground met by screams for help and distress by many of the forty live casualties who had volunteered to make it as realistic as possible, alongside the twenty manikins that had been collected over the weeks. Abbie and her team from Derby MRT did a sterling job organising all this.

There was a real focus on inter-team working and to highlight the advantages of common working practices and building stronger relationships with our blue light and civil contingency partners. The

exercise took place over two days with the evening meal being provided by Rapid Relief Team (RRT) — a very welcome hot meal between lightning strikes on the Saturday night.

We are currently doing a full debrief with the learning points to be shared out in due course. Over 240 participants all took something away from the weekend. A huge thanks to our sponsors, with extra thanks to Lord Bamford of JCB who allowed us to take over a quarry for the weekend and supported us with staff, buildings and vehicles to make this happen. Next time Toby comes to you saying 'I've got an idea', hold your breath and hang on for the ride!

When the initial planning started for a multi-team regional exercise to celebrate the PDMRO's 60th anniversary, no one imagined how complex and challenging the project would become. Credit to all who took part in the organising and planning over the following months. You all know who you are — well done. It was a privilege to be part of this event.

When the extent of the final proposed scenario and participating MRTs, statutory services and partner organisations became apparent, a few people were probably shaking their heads in disbelief — this was going to be the biggest multi-agency, major incident exercise of its type for not just PDMRO, but MREW as a whole. Thankfully, everything went as near as possible to plan — there were unforeseen challenges on the day, but plenty of learning points to take away and changes to implement going forward.

The exercise illustrated the need for and the benefits to be had from joint training and collaboration in all areas, hopefully something MREW will continue to develop. It was encouraging to see so much enthusiasm and interaction from all who participated, as this ultimately added to the overall success of the weekend. Even the weather wanted to get in on the action, with the developing thunderstorm playing its part. A massive thank you to everyone who was able to participate and be involved. You definitely showcased mountain rescue's capabilities.

Phil 'Rigger' Ridley, MREW Training Officer



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OCTOBER: TRAPPED LAMB FLUSHED OUT DOWNSTREAM

Kirkby Stephen team members were called to rescue a lamb stuck twenty metres into a drain beneath farm buildings.

Since the access was very tight, and there was the potential for accumulation of gases, COMRU team members were also called to assist. The team deployed gas detectors and a lean team member in an attempt to reach the lamb, but this proved not possible. COMRU were stood down and Kirkby Stephen MRT made alternative plans for their Friday morning. After further unsuccessful attempts with plastic piping and drain rods, the lamb was eventually persuaded to continue further downstream to a manhole, by the application of high-volume water from the fire and rescue service. A challenging problem with a happy outcome.

Top: A butter-wouldn't-melt lamb safely returned to her pen © COMRU/KSMRT.



CONGRATS TO HELEN AND JORDAN!

Bowland Pennine team doctor, Hazel Fox née Sharrock, took a break from being on call 24/7 to marry Jordan. Congrats to you both!

Above: Helen and Jordan on their wedding day © BPMRT.

NEWS ROUND
JULY > EARLY OCTOBER



AUGUST: BEAU RAISES OVER £1,000 FOR MOUNTAIN RESCUE

Beau lives in East Sussex but, when his grandparents moved to Cumbria eight years ago, he fell in love with climbing the fells, topping his first Wainwright aged just five years old with Catbells. And he's been challenging himself with new adventures ever since.

It's a tradition at his school that pupils transitioning from Year 7 to 8, are asked to plan a summer project. Some build go-karts, some design dresses, some create recipe books... but Beau decided to attempt the Three Peaks Challenge and raise money for mountain rescue. He's not quite old enough to complete the challenge in 24 hours so he decided to attempt it over three consecutive days.

Before setting off, he wrote: 'I can't promise it will be a quick Three Peaks... but I won't give up. I'll keep climbing, even when my legs don't want to climb anymore. I'll have Mum, Dad and my two spaniels, Molly and Mabel, with me and they will give me the boost I need.'

He did indeed keep climbing, with his final total of £1,010 'smashing' his target. 'It was just the most amazing experience,' he says. 'So many people stopped to talk and share their mountain rescue stories with me, and it was so humbling.'

'I remember taking my last step down off Ben Nevis, and I took one last glance back. I had just climbed the three highest peaks in the UK, in three days, raised lots of money for an extraordinary charity, and it felt amazing! This is by far the most incredible challenge I have ever experienced! Thank you so much for all your time and support,' he adds. 'You are all wonderful!'

I rather think it's we who should be thanking Beau! Keep enjoying those adventures and stay safe!

Top: Beau Martin during his Three Peaks Challenge © Beau Martin.

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NEWS ROUND

JULY > EARLY OCTOBER

SEPTEMBER: TEAM MARKS THE YEAR SINCE THE LOSS OF ICONIC TREE WITH A PLEA TO SUPPORTERS

A year on from the cutting down of the iconic tree at Sycamore Gap, Northumberland team members have invited their followers and supporters to join the campaign **#RespectNorthumberland** to ensure that the landscape is cared for so that future generations can enjoy it.

'The Sycamore Gap tree will always hold a special place in the hearts of not just Northumbrians but everyone who respects and loves the outdoors.'

Left: Team members with the iconic Sycamore © NNPMRT.

SEPTEMBER: TRAGIC OUTCOME TO OVERNIGHT SEARCH

Members of the North of Tyne and Northumberland National Park teams worked alongside Northumbria Police, through a Thursday night and into the early hours of the Friday morning, searching for a missing hospital chaplain in the Jesmond Dene area of Newcastle.

Five search groups and a Mountain Rescue Search Dog England team were deployed to search open, wooded, overgrown and steep-sided areas in and around Jesmond Dene, using hand-held thermal imaging units. A Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service drone was also utilised to overfly some of the area. Despite a long night and everyone's best efforts nothing was found and the teams stood down at about 3.00am. Tragically, later on Friday morning, a body was found by the police outside the areas searched overnight: a heartbreaking outcome.

Right: Images of the search © NNPMRT.



SEPTEMBER: CAVE AND MOUNTAIN TEAM COLLABORATION ON MINE RESCUE

North Wales Cave Rescue Organisation (NWCRO) assisted Aberglaslyn team members with an incident in a mine near Blaenau Ffestiniog. The location at Croesor-Rhosydd slate mine is a regular call-out spot for the cave team, requiring appropriate caving experience, suitable equipment and the ability to both ascend and descend with ropes.

One person had exited the mine to call 999 and report that two young people were trapped underground, one each side of a flooded chamber and one having fallen into deep water. Team members attended from as far afield as Chester and Holyhead, some attending directly from the UK national caving conference at Llangollen. An advance party was dispatched to find the two individuals and establish their condition. Once found, they were given hot drinks and warm dry clothing before technical ropework was used to bring them to a safe location. When additional team members made contact with the advance party, the two individuals were assisted out of the mine and handed over to Aberglaslyn team members. While the underground rescue was taking place, there was concern for the person who had made the initial 999 call being alone on high ground in deteriorating weather and falling light. An Aberglaslyn party found and escorted them back to the rendezvous point where the teams were assembled.

Left: Team vehicles and team members at the scene of the incident © NWCRO.

the final send away

SEARCH DOG BRAMBLE
NORTHUMBERLAND NP MRT



Bramble died just ten weeks after saving a life during her first operational call-out to a major search for a missing person. The six-year-old English Shepherd dog had only qualified as a mountain rescue search dog in January 2024, and was a valued member of the Northumberland team. She was a true community dog, her name chosen from over 200 suggestions made by the public on the

team's Facebook page. On 22 May 2024, during her first operational call-out, Bramble found a missing person, bringing a major search, involving over sixteen different search and rescue teams, to a close. Operational search dogs might only find two or three people in their career and what made this find so unique was that Bramble found the person on her very first search. Just ten weeks later, she was diagnosed with acute leukemia and died on her sixth birthday, with her handler, Andrew, by her side. Helping others was a family affair for Bramble — her sister Dottie is an operational search dog with Edale MRT, and her brother Stan is a therapy dog. Her mum, Shola, and aunt, Fern, are also both retired search dogs. Between them this family of search dogs have found eight missing people.

'Bramble was a fantastic search dog and we are all incredibly sad she has died so suddenly,' says team leader Iain Nixon. 'Search dogs are very much part of our team and her loss is felt by everyone. On behalf of the team, and especially Andrew, we'd like to offer our thanks to Ayres Veterinary Hospital in North Shields for doing all they could to help Bramble.'

It typically takes two to three years to train each mountain rescue search dog, and the volunteer time required is equivalent to an



Raising funds for rescue

It was with great sadness that team members heard that Search Dog Bramble had died, just ten weeks after herself saving a life. Her loss has now inspired a fundraising campaign to support future life-saving search dogs, following in Bramble's paw prints.

investment of around £60k. One search dog team is able to cover ground and clear search areas that would otherwise need around twenty fully-trained human searchers without dogs. They can also smell what humans cannot see, so come into their own in adverse weather conditions and at night — the conditions rescuers often face during a search when it is imperative to find missing people quickly.

The fundraising appeal to support future search dogs will donate half of the funds raised to Mountain Rescue Search Dogs England (MRSDE). The other half of the funds raised will be donated to the mountain rescue teams of Northumberland that Bramble worked with: Northumberland National Park MRT and its sister team North of Tyne MRT). The money will support the costs of their search dogs, such as veterinary care and associated insurance, dog-related PPE, equipment and consumables, and other life-saving equipment issued to the dog handler. To support the campaign, head to [justgiving.com/page/search-dog-bramble](https://www.justgiving.com/page/search-dog-bramble).

Top and left: Search Dog Bramble with her handler Andrew © NNPMRT.

NEWS ROUND

JULY > EARLY OCTOBER

JULY: RESCUE TEAM SAVE LEADER'S DOG AFTER SNAKE BITE

Upper Wharfedale team members came to the aid of Elsa when the Cocker Spaniel fell poorly following a nip on the nose by an adder at Thruscross reservoir.

Elsa had been walking with her owner Carol, whose husband, Derek Hammond, is a team leader of the Upper Wharfedale team.

'Elsa saw this snake on the path', says Derek, 'and went up for a closer look, but the snake obviously took exception to that. Elsa had carried on walking, but became unwell and needed carrying, which Carol was unable to do. Obviously, when the team turned up, they all recognised each other. They've walked round the reservoir many times and never encountered a snake. She was just very unlucky but, thankfully, she's on the mend now.'

Twelve-year-old Elsa was taken to Forest House vets in Knaresborough and given anti-venom.



This was the first of four dog rescues that the Upper Wharfedale team has been involved in this year, says Derek, 'three of them being in August and two at the same hole above Guisecliff, in Nidderdale'.

On 18 August, whilst team members were finishing the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service open day at Harrogate fire station, they were called to rescue Bailey, who had fallen down the five-metre steep-sided opening. The ten-year-old Labradoodle had been walking off his lead and exploring the undergrowth when he fell into the deep hole. Fortunately, he was uninjured, but unable to climb back out. A few dog treats and some water later, he was reacquainted with his owners.

Six days later, three-year-old Border Terrier Milly followed her ball into the River Wharfe near the water treatment works and found herself swept towards Grassington. A full team and water call-out followed, to search upstream from Grassington but, before team members had mobilised, the owner called to confirm that Milly had been found safe and well at a nearby campsite.

The following day, it was back to Guisecliff to rescue Scout, a nine-year-old Cocker Spaniel.

Top: Derek Hammond with Elsa © Derek Hammond. Above: Border Terrier Milly. Image via UWFR Facebook. Far left: Labradoodle Bailey and the deep hole at Guisecliff. Left: Rescue of Cocker Spaniel Scout, also at Guisecliff © UWFR.

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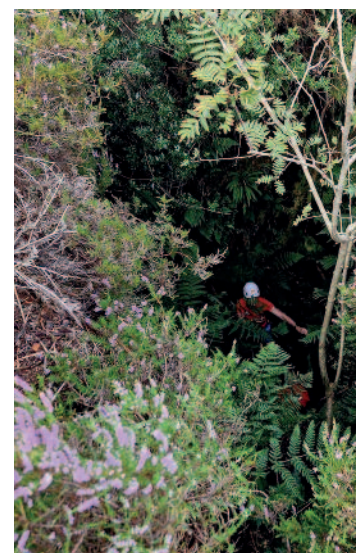
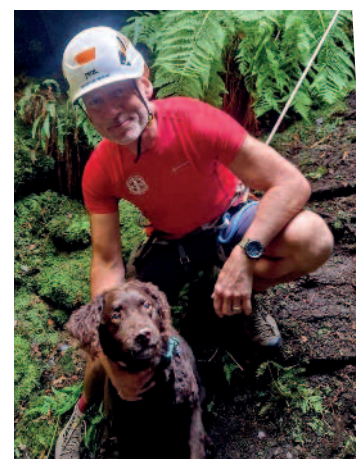
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books

THE SEARCH: THE LIFE OF A MOUNTAIN RESCUE SEARCH DOG TEAM by Paul Besley

Growing up in a Yorkshire steel town, Paul was always drawn to the solitude of the hills, but that life nearly ended when a fall while hillwalking left him critically injured and alone in the mountains of the Lake District. His rescue by a mountain rescue team inspired him to transform his life, first by joining his local team, then by training Scout, his Border Collie, as a mountain rescue search dog. In 'The Search', Paul writes with humour and honesty as we follow him and Scout through their complex training, with searches and rescue incidents sometimes tragic and often funny.

Paul's previous books, 'Day Walks in the South Pennines' and '1001 Walking Tips' also published by Vertebrate, and his three 'Peak District' guidebooks for Cicerone Press, are well respected by walkers and explorers of all ages. His writing developed from his interest in the interaction between humans and the land, evolving into a study of how the physical environment imprints itself on humans and how we respond. His belief is that walking does not just have to be in the hills and mountains of national parks, or rely on expensive equipment, but can be enjoyed from the front door of home through our urban landscape and out in our local countryside.

THE SEARCH. THE LIFE OF A MOUNTAIN RESCUE SEARCH DOG TEAM BY PAUL BESLEY
PUBLISHED BY: VERTEBRATE PUBLISHING



AUGUST: PARTY OF WALKERS AND THEIR DOG BENIGHTED ON SCAFELL MASSIF

Wasdale team went to the aid of a party of three walkers and their dog who'd become benighted after a very long day out and unable to navigate themselves down to safety. Their dog was also struggling.

After discussing the situation with one of the party, it was decided it would be safest to send a group to their location and guide them down to Wasdale. Team members made their way to high on the Scafell Massif, arriving at 3.00am. After some rewarming and equipping of the party in a bivvy shelter, the party started the long descent to Wasdale via Esk Hause and Sty Head. Once back in the valley, after a debrief, they were brought back to base where a taxi was arranged to take them back to their vehicle at Wrynose Pass. Team members restocked the vehicles and wearily made their way home.

Below: One weary wee dog © Wasdale MRT.



AUGUST: TEAM COMMEMORATES ACQUISITION OF LAND BENEATH BASE

Guests at the Kirkby Stephen team base included the team's president John Dunning (accompanied by Sarah Dunning and her husband), vice presidents Mike Saint, Ben Lyon and Gordon Kay, and other guests Tina Galloway, Alex Birtles and Tanya Mellor. John Dunning was given the honour of unveiling the plaque in front of team members and partners. 'Special mention needs to go to our chairman, Peter Miller, and medical officer, Jim Wardrope, who worked relentlessly to achieve this milestone.' While he was there, John also presented King's Coronation medals to nineteen team members who had five or more years' service at the time of the coronation.

Top: Team members during a joint training sessions with COMRU. Above: The commemoration ceremony at Kirkby Stephen base in August © Kirkby Stephen MRT.



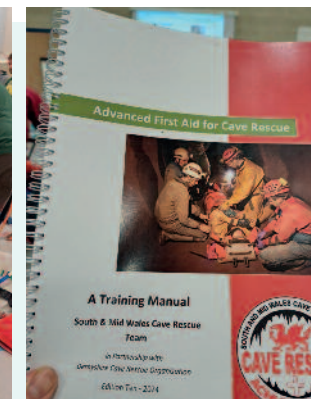
SEPTEMBER: PATERDALE TEAM MEMBERS MEET TO OFFICIALLY LAUNCH NEW BOAT

The new rescue boat is named the Pete Hamilton after a former team member who served the team for 35 years as a team member, equipment officer, deputy team leader and coxswain.

Pete passed away recently and his widow named the boat in Pete's honour. The ceremony was conducted at Glenridding Pier, by a team member who used to be priest-in-charge of the Patterdale parish. After the ceremony, team members gathered at their base, Ogilvie House, for the awarding of the King's Coronation medal to qualifying members, a buffet lunch and a team photograph (above).

...ALSO IN SEPTEMBER, TEAM MEMBERS ENJOYED A VIA FERRATA EXPERIENCE!

Patterdale team members enjoyed a 'brilliant evening' at Honister Slate Mine on their Via Ferrata experience, thanks to Keswick team's deputy leader. The training was to allow the team to assess the area, in case they get called to support a rescue there in the future.



SEPTEMBER: CAVE RESCUERS TRAIN NEXT GENERATION OF ADVANCED FIRST AIDERS

It was a busy weekend for the South and Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team members, in collaboration with Derbyshire Cave Rescue, who were involved in training up the next generation of Advanced First Aiders and Casualty Carers from around the UK.

Training and support was delivered by a range of medical professionals and volunteers, giving up their time to help train volunteers from a number of cave rescue teams. The course and subsequent assessment was also supported by medical students from Swansea University.

NEWS ROUND

JULY > EARLY OCTOBER



SPECIAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE TO ALL MREW TEAMS FROM COAST!

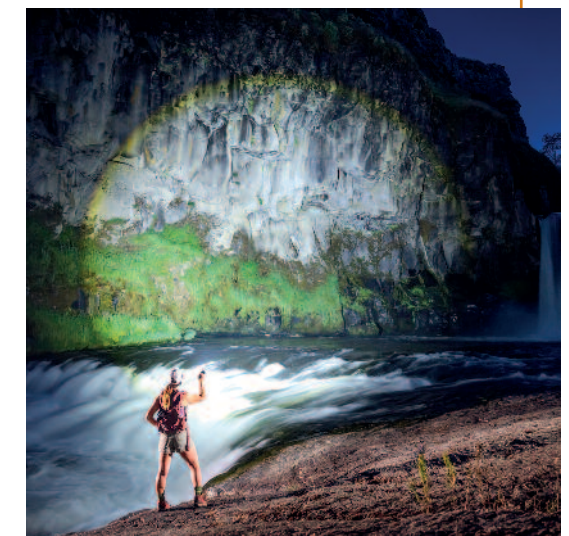
Further to our participation in the recent MREW Conference weekend in Lancaster, we would like to confirm the special assistance available to all MREW teams and team members interested in connecting with us.

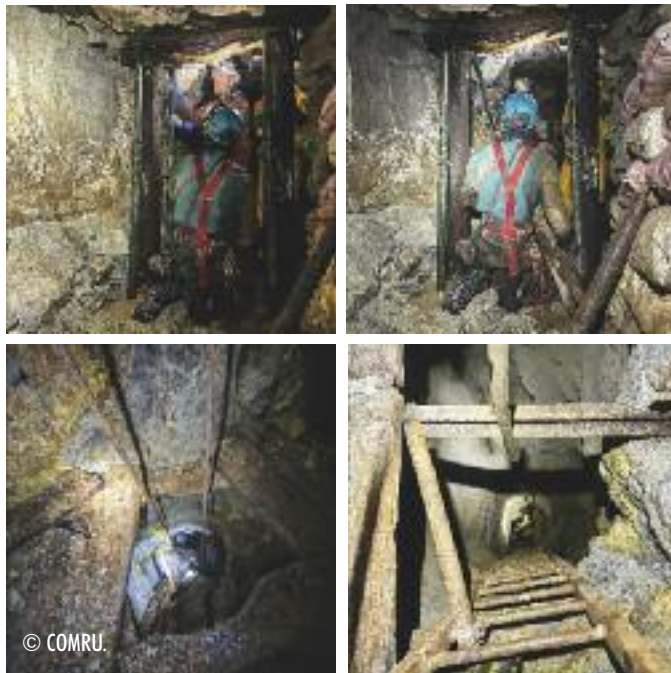
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AUGUST: CAVE TEAM RECCE RESCUE PLAN FOR LAKE DISTRICT MINE

Cumbria Ore and Mines Rescue Unit (COMRU) spent their August training session looking at a rescue plan for the now disused mine (name withheld for safety reasons).

When the mine was still working, an emergency escape route was created up to surface from the main haulage level. Since closure, the Cumbria Amenity Trust Mining History Society (CATMHS) have put a huge amount of effort into maintaining access to the mine and its history. Recently they carried out a refurbishment of the emergency escape route to allow organised visits along the main haulage level to continue, secure in the knowledge that there is a safe means of escape. During the training session, team members familiarised themselves with the newly refurbished route, which is now travelled on ropes, rather than just by use of ladders. They also discussed the rescue plan and, where they were able, installed temporary acrow props on the haulage level for CATMHS, giving support around degraded timber until more permanent repairs can be carried out.

AUGUST: RUNNER FALLS DURING BOB GRAHAM ROUND ATTEMPT

Close to midnight, on a Tuesday night in early August, police were contacted by a runner to say their friend had slipped and fallen from the ridge into Pillar Cove as the pair made their way down from Pillar to Kirk Fell.

Cockermouth team members were called out, with HM Coastguard Rescue 199 tasked to support, given the potential seriousness and remote location of the incident. However, as the team approached the base of Pillar in the Ennerdale valley, it became apparent that the cloud base was too low for the helicopter to assist and team members began to work their way up to the summit of the mountain on foot. Due to the uncertain casualty location and the conditions, neighbouring teams were also alerted to plan for a possible protracted search. Sadly, at around 1.30 am, the body of the runner was located in Pillar Cove, to the east of the mountain summit. A long and difficult evacuation followed, supported by six Wasdale team members, eventually reaching the valley bottom at around 6.30 am.

Below: Cockermouth and Wasdale team members during the evacuation of the fell runner from beneath Pillar © Cockermouth MRT.



Raising funds for rescue

AUGUST: BOOK SIGNING GOES UNDERGROUND FOR SWALEDALE

Swaledale team member Emmy Hoyes undertook what might possibly be the first ever book signing underground in Crackpot Cave in early August, raising £50 for the team.

Later in the month, the second event in the 'adventure series of book signings' was at Swinnergill Kirk, not underground but maybe a little wet underfoot for the brave set of hikers who made the trip — raising a further £50 for the team. Emmy grew up in Sweden, enjoying a childhood roaming endless forests, but now lives on an exposed hillside in the Yorkshire Dales. After a career in science and working as a mountain bike instructor, her time is spent writing fiction, as well as software for scientific instrumentation. 'My books are fast flowing with the main draw being surprising and intriguing plots involving lovable and diverse characters, rounded off with a bit of humour,' says Emmy. £1 for each copy sold is donated to the team. Get your copy from Amazon, for just £7.99.

Left: 'Rescued?' by Emmy Hoyes. **Right:** Emmy during the underground book signing; the waterfall at Swinnergill Kirk © Swaledale MRT.



NEWS ROUND

JULY > EARLY OCTOBER

SEPTEMBER: OVERTURNED QUADBIKER INJURED ON FARM

For the second time this summer, Cleveland team members were called to assist the ambulance service following an overturned quad bike on farmland, this time to the Westerdale area on the North York Moors.

The team's medical officer, who lives not far from the area, arrived first on scene and commenced an assessment of the casualty's injuries. Following that, an air ambulance was requested. Fortunately, the Yorkshire Air Ambulance air desk had been monitoring the incident and a helicopter was already en route. Although the hill tops were shrouded in low cloud the crew managed to fly up the valley which was relatively clear. After treatment the casualty was secured within a vacuum mattress and carried the 200 metres down to the helicopter before being flown to hospital. Less than two weeks later team members, including the medical officer, were fundraising at a local village show when they had an unexpected visit from the casualty. He had sustained a broken L1, some fractured ribs and a collapsed lung. In addition, two six-inch rods and eight pins were — in his words — 'holding my back together'. Expressing his appreciation for the care and attention he had received from the team, he said he was a bit hazy about what happened after the drugs were administered! Team members were amazed to see him walking about so soon after his accident.

Left: Cleveland team members working with the Yorkshire Air Ambulance crew to treat the injured quadbiker © Cleveland MRT.



JULY: NORTH OF TYNE TEAM FEATURE IN COUNTRY WALKING MAGAZINE

Back in May, North of Tyne team members were joined during a training day, by a journalist from *Country Walking* magazine on behalf of Helly Hansen, to see what the team 'gets up to'.

The article was published in July, in the August issue of *Country Walking* with the team sharing the images on their Facebook page on 25 July. The comprehensive eight-page article was packed with images and information about so many aspects of mountain rescue: the hasty search, the 'wild men of the woods', the major incident, the despondent search, the work of the search dogs and the casualty care training... and the relationship with clothing partners Helly Hansen. Huge thanks to Nick Hallissey, the journalist, for the words, Helly Hansen for the kit and Nadir Khan's amazing images — and, of course, to *Country Walking* for helping raise awareness of the work of mountain rescue. 'Training with mountain rescue: We could be heroes' is also available to digital subscribers to *Country Walking*.

FIND THE TEAM AT [FACEBOOK.COM/NORTHOFTYNE MRT](https://www.facebook.com/northoftynemrt)





AUGUST: SOCIAL MEDIA DRIVING A RISE IN CALL-OUTS FOR NORTH WALES TEAMS

Instagram and TikTok are putting more strain on mountain rescue teams as walkers follow social media posts and put themselves in danger, according to a BBC report by George Herd, in early August. Herd spoke to Chris Lloyd, of the Ogwen Valley team, about what promises to be a 'record-breaking' year for them, with an unprecedented eight recorded deaths in the last year on and around the national park's peaks.

'This is a superb area, with a lot of exciting and good quality countryside here, and I can understand people wanting to go out and enjoy themselves, but they really do need to think, especially when going on the mountains. Think about what the consequences are, just even if the weather changes, or you have a minor injury, or if it gets dark — you should be prepared for those consequences.'

Over the summer, the team has dealt with a number of incidents involving inexperienced walkers tackling Tryfan, without appreciating its technical difficulty. The mountain stands at 917 metres, and is often described as a peak that 'marks the line between hiking and mountaineering'.

There are no marked footpaths to the summit, and it requires using hands and scrambling skills to reach the top and accounts for around 28% of all call-outs so far this year, including two deaths.

'Things have changed,' says Chris. 'Certainly all mountain rescue teams have noticed a big difference since Covid, and I believe one of the things driving that is social media. We are getting a number of people going up getting into difficulties because they aren't suitably equipped or experienced.'

Teams across the national park have urged visitors to make use of online services such as AdventureSmart, that offer advice about enjoying the outdoors safely.



Raising funds for rescue

NEW JIGSAW FOR THE KITCHEN TABLE!

After the success of John Rowell's stunning image of Tryfan (still confounding the puzzling skills of jigsaw lovers out there, we hear), Ogwen team has introduced their newest limited edition arrival to the OVMRO merchandise selection.

This admittedly more gentle test of puzzling ability is equally fun to do (of course) and suitably billed as 'great for all the family'. The 1,000-piece bilingual Eryri National Park Jigsaw was created by illustrator George Manley — who also produced the stunning illustrations for the best-selling Ogwen book 'Risking Life and Limb'. Head to the online shop at ogwen-rescue.org.uk to get your hands on one for just £20 — while stocks last.

Top: Tryfan in winter © George Manley.
Above: Eryri National Park jigsaw, illustrated by George Manley.

NEWS ROUND

JULY > EARLY OCTOBER

SEPTEMBER: DERBY VEHICLE FINDS NEW HOME IN PENRITH

Penrith team members were 'very excited' to announce the recent purchase of their new vehicle, Mobile 4, from mountain rescue colleagues Derby MRT.

Left: The new Mobile 4. Below: Left to right: Gerry Rusbridge, Ali Atkinson (driving), Jon Carlin (passenger), Ben Crisford and Tom Middleton. © Penrith MRT.



AUGUST: AVON AND SOMERSET TEAM ALSO COLLECT THEIR NEW PURCHASE FROM DERBY

ASSAR's Steve and Ian travelled to the 'far north' (well, Derby) to collect their new (to them) 4x4 response vehicle from Derby team.

The purchase was kindly funded by contributions from numerous sources including National Grid, Analog Devices, Inc. Foundation and Thatchers Foundation. The sale of the two Derby vehicles to ASSAR and Penrith keeps these valuable assets within the mountain rescue family. As Derby's Jon Sabine noted, 'Derby was in a very privileged position, being able to replace our two response vehicles... and this also works out great for the other teams to get low mileage, young well-looked after vehicles ready to go.'

Right: ASSAR team take delivery of their 'new' vehicle in August. Jon Sabine, Derby MRT (left) and Steve Britton, ASSAR (right) © ASSAR.



INTRODUCING THE NEW NEBO SLYDE KING 4K THE ULTIMATE FLASHLIGHT FOR MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAMS

The latest addition to the best-selling NEBO torch range is the much anticipated Slyde King 4K. This powerful flashlight is a game-changer for mountain rescue teams, designed to perform in the most demanding conditions. Boasting a powerful 4000-lumen LED flashlight, a 1,000-lumen COB work light, and a red task light, this multi-functional tool ensures rescuers have the perfect lighting for any situation. Its patented slide-to-reveal design automatically activates the work light, while a 4x zoom allows you to switch between a floodlight and focused spotlight. The Slyde King 4K's rugged, IPX7 waterproof construction ensures it can withstand the toughest environments, making it ideal for rescue operations in challenging weather. With a magnetic base for hands-free use, USB-C recharging, and a memory setting for quick adjustments, this flashlight delivers reliability in the field. Trusted by rescue teams worldwide, NEBO's dedication to durability and performance ensures the Slyde King 4K will be a vital tool for professionals who depend on their gear.

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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:

- **999:** Call 999 if there is immediate threat – especially if taking own life has been attempted
- **NHS:** Call 111 for urgent medical advice (or contact/advice 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

TEXT: If you, or the person you are supporting, prefer text support:

- **SHOUT:** giveusashout.org Text the word **BLUELIGHT** to **85258**

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

- **Lifelines Scotland:** www.lifelines.scot (An NHS project specifically for the emergency service community in Scotland)
- **Police Scotland EAP:** policescotland.yourcareeap.co.uk
- **National Wellbeing Hub:** wellbeinghub.scot (Aimed at Health and Social Care sector in Scotland)
- **NHS:** nhs24.scot Links to NHS Inform and NHS 111

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

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Getting to know our Scottish Mountain Rescue colleagues...

smr



Focus on Tweed Valley MRT

BY TIM DARLOW & PAUL MCGREAL

The team traces its roots back to the Cheviot Walking club in the 1950s, and in 1963 the first search and rescue team was formally recognised in the Scottish Borders/Southern Scotland. This team consisted of three sections covering different areas across the region. The section based in the Central Borders town of Galashiels became established as a team in its own right as Tweed Valley Mountain Rescue Team (TVMRT) in 1973.

The team later moved most recently (in 2018) to its current home in Melrose. Our base is an ex-fire station, purchased and refitted with significant support from the Priory of Scotland of the Order of St John charity, and many other generous donors.

roles within Scottish Mountain Rescue (including the current chairman, Bill Glennie).

Our patch is large and varied. It begins at the English border (we've even seen our southern neighbours from Penrith MRT across the stream that functions as the border at call-outs in Newcastleton Forest), and covers West Lothian, Midlothian, Edinburgh and the Scottish Borders west of the A68. Whilst it's true we don't have the huge hills of our more northerly colleagues, our area covers the highest hills of the Southern Uplands including Broad Law (840m), much of the Pentland Hills, the Moorfoot, Tweedsmuir and Eildon Hills, the wild and remote Ettrick and Yarrow valleys and some of the best and most popular mountain biking areas in Scotland at Glentress and Innerleithen, both part of the '7Stanes' mountain biking area. A large stretch of the Southern Upland Way is within the team's area as well as a number of other popular waymarked paths. As well as the wild uplands, our area also covers significant population in Edinburgh.

The team responds to a wide range of call-outs, broadly split into thirds between assisting injured mountain bikers (though we are seeing this work rise at the moment), helping hill walkers, and searching for missing persons (often lengthy and, sometimes, multi-day shouts).

The team also responds to requests including assisting communities experiencing flood and extreme weather events such as the 'Beast from the East' snowfall in 2018

where we staffed base and were on call for a period of over 48 hours. In 2023, the team responded to 52 call-outs and undertook 2,282 hours of volunteering. At the time of writing, the total is 56 — we're having a busy year!

Outside of call-outs, the team provides cover to a number of local events, including the annual 'Ride Outs' that each Border town holds as part of their annual summer festival. Providing support to these events is critically to maintain the high profile of team and its high standing with the communities it serves.

We currently have a fleet of four vehicles: two Land Rover Defender 130 TDs (one at our base in Melrose, the other in Innerleithen), a Long Wheelbase Control Unit (based at Galashiels Fire Station), and a Transit people-carrier (based in South Edinburgh).

We have to work pretty hard at fundraising, like most teams. We don't have large legacy resources, and so in addition to the support received from SMR/Police Scotland, we need to raise money through event support, donors and a bit of old-fashioned tin rattling.

We work closely with neighbouring teams, including cross-Border (BSARU, Moffat, Ochils, Strathclyde Police and the two team in Northumberland) including occasional joint exercises. In addition to these relationships, Tweed Valley MRT is proud to be twinned with HSSK, a volunteer rescue organisation based in Kópavogur, Iceland. 🇮🇸

FIND TWEED VALLEY MRT ON FACEBOOK @TVMRT OR VIA TWEEDVALLEYMRT.ORG.UK

and SARDA Southern Scotland

BY ROSS MACINTYRE

SARDA (Southern Scotland) is one of two SARDA associations that train and operate search and rescue dogs to find missing and injured people. The association operates primarily in Central and Southern areas of Scotland, but supports search and rescue activities across Scotland.

We currently have five active mountain rescue dogs on our call-out list and a number of trainees in the later stage of their training. Each dog handler is a member of a mountain rescue team, which includes Killin, Tayside, Ochils, Tweed Valley, Galloway and Border SAR teams. We also have a drowned-victim search dog who is a member of Nith Inshore Lifeboat.

Call-outs average over forty per year, supporting teams across Scotland, our sister organisation SARDA Scotland, Police Scotland and, from time to time, teams and search dog organisations located in the north of England.

As well as dogs and handlers, our members include a group of dedicated bodies. These bodies are critical to our organisation, lying out on the hill in all weathers to allow the dog teams to train. They also help with giving feedback on training as a lot of the interaction can be out of sight of the handler. Bodies come from all walks of life and include ex-team members, a retired police dog handler and a retired military dog handler, all of which brings experience and guidance for dog teams.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Humans shed skin and chemicals that are carried away from them on the wind as scent. A human has about five million scent glands while a dog has 125 million to 300 million (breed dependent) which makes a dog's sense of smell 1,000 to 10,000,000 times better than humans. Additionally, four legs, all terrain and keen to work in any weather!

Training a dog to seek out human scent in unexpected places, with a handler who can interpret the dog's behaviour, means that large, difficult areas can be searched efficiently in all conditions, day and night. Dog teams formally train together once a month in addition to personal training which can vary from every few days for a young trainee. This is a big personal commitment for handlers over and above their own mountain rescue team training. Training locations are varied and include a weekend in each handler's team area as well as a winter training weekend based in the Cairngorms.

A DOG'S JOURNEY.

It is very much dependent on the dog and the handler, but training a dog to be on the call-out list can take anywhere from one to two years. If a team member is interested in training as dog with us, we will ask them to come along as a body for a few months.

When it's time for their dog to attend, the first few sessions are about assessing the dog's socialisation and obedience. As the dogs will



Above: Search dogs at ease with the livestock. Image supplied.

be interacting with many different people, and can be deployed to call-outs in the back of a team vehicle, on boats or a helicopter, a calm well-socialised dog is a must.

The 'game' of finding people is then introduced and the dog is rewarded by receiving their favourite toy or food. The game becomes more difficult over time, covering bigger distances and mentally complex areas such as under bridges, on top of boulders and finding a body hiding in a tree.

In parallel to search training, dog teams undertake training with livestock and are assessed each year by our assessors and a farmer/shepherd to ensure that they are safe working off lead around livestock.

The trainee dog team will undertake two training assessments to ensure that they are meeting the required standards of the training programme before being assessed at the call-out grade level. This involves passing five search areas of mountainous terrain. Once on the call-out list, dog teams are continually assessed, both formally and informally.

The formal assessments are conducted by external assessors from SARDA organisations across the UK to ensure that the high standards are met.

When our dogs are not training or working, they live at home with their handler as a family pet and enjoy all the benefits of being a really good dog! 🐾

YOU CAN FIND OUT MORE ON OUR WEBSITE: SARDASOUTHERNSCOTLAND.ORG.UK.

News from Scottish teams

In July, the **Scottish Cave Rescue Organisation** (SCRO) rescued a caver who had been trapped for over five hours in a cave near Applecross, Wester Ross. The caver, part of an experienced group, became wedged in a narrow crack but was kept warm and fed by his companions while they awaited help. SCRO members were scrambled from across Scotland to assist, along with the local Torridon MRT to provide surface support. The caver emerged cold but unharmed. SCRO chairman Andrew Morgan expressed gratitude for the teamwork and support from local communities during the incident.

Torridon MRT had a testing rescue of their own at the end of June. After a busy few weeks of training and covering hill safety for the Celtman Ironman Triathlon, they were called to assist a casualty who had fallen near the Black Carls section of Beinn Eithe. Facing steep, loose and rocky terrain with low cloud cover, they carried out a complex and lengthy stretcher carry to reach a suitable altitude for airlift. Recent training with Maritime Coastguard helicopters proved invaluable during the rescue. After a long and challenging night, the team successfully completed the operation and were off the hill by 4.00am.

Borders SAR was also involved in a cross-border response earlier in the summer, working with Northumberland National Park and North of Tyne teams to assist an injured competitor in the Summer Montane Spine Race. The runner had sustained a leg injury and was unable to weight-bear, necessitating a long stretcher carry from high up in the Cheviot hills.

Bob Sharp shares this archive piece, first published in 'Casbag', from one of the characters of the early RAF MRS and Scottish Mountain Rescue: Ray 'Sunshine' Sefton. Ray was a member of RAF Kinloss for almost forty years. On his retirement in 1994, he penned these words.

The RAF Mountain Rescue Service: The way things were...

It only seems like yesterday when I was posted to Kinloss in 1956 as a fresh-faced sixteen-year-old, straight from training. The journey from RAF Yatesbury in Wiltshire took thirty hours and, as the old steam train trundled through the windswept Drumochter Pass and on over the Dava Moor, I pondered what I would do with my life so far from home, family and friends.

On arrival at Kinloss I was sent to work as a radar mechanic in the Radio Servicing Flight. I soon became bored and with little work to do and stacks of people around I thought I would look for something challenging to do in my spare time. Having heard of the famous Kinloss Mountain Rescue Team, I thought maybe I would give it a try. The old hands at work warned me off and said they were a bunch of hard men and ruffians. However, being young and impressionable, off I trotted to see the team leader. In my young eyes, he seemed ancient at all of 48 years. He took me into his office, closed the door and gave me a brief on the team. He then ran his finger down the manning board and proceeded to advise

Some time later I heard them talking about me. 'Don't like his smile... must be a cheeky bastard... soon sort him out'... Already I'd begun to think I'd made a mistake.

Some time later again, they deigned to ask me my name. 'Ray Sefton.' I replied. I was then told that everybody in the team had a nickname and with myself not possessing one, they would see to it. Hence 'Sunshine' as in 'Ray of sunshine'. Bright boys, aye.

Imagine if you will what Kinloss was like in those days. The base was full of discontented National Servicemen with no money, who hated regulars because we were paid substantially more. The troops were billeted in wooden huts with 28 men in each. In each hut was a potbellied stove that worked on coke (which was on ration). The trick to lighting the stove was to chop up a chair and throw a 7lb tin of floor polish on it.

When the chairs ran out we'd pinch one from another hut. When the coke ran out, we'd raid the coke compound in the dead of night. Occasionally, we got caught and the system meted out retribution. The new-fangled television had just arrived and we could get BBC.

Almost all the roads north and west of Inverness were single track and consequently, we lost a fair amount of wagons in crashes. Unit inquiries were always convened and some of the stories we concocted to get us out of trouble were truly amazing.

At this time there were no organised civilian teams in Scotland and the RAF did most of the search and rescues. In Fort William the Lochaber boys (Junior Mountaineering Club of Scotland) helped us a lot on the Ben. Also young Hamish MacInnes and his gang would appear pretty fast. He was lurking around the Fort and Glencoe at this time putting up new routes. In those days any person on the hill would offer us their help on a rescue. Helicopters were not available for civilian rescues.

Briefings were very interesting. Here you were allocated a party, your route given and you had to have a route plan made out by the end of briefing. Little instruction given on

other aspects of MR, although techniques were practised at nearby cliffs on Wednesday afternoons. A party was normally four people. The wireless operator carried the radio which worked on HF, weighed 28lbs and had a nine-foot aerial. If you upset the team leader, you carried the wretched thing for six weeks and it seldom worked.

However, we got wise and if our course didn't go near the leader, we sometimes hid the radio behind a boulder on the way out and collected it on the way back. Additionally, the party carried a one-inch Very pistol, cartridges and some thunderflashes for signalling with. The illuminators were good for getting off the hill at night and it was not unknown for the thunderflashes to be used for fishing. The other bods carried a tiny rucksack which contained a spare pair of socks, mitts, spare jumper, slings and 'scran' (sultanas, currents, raisins and nuts). The Military Transport fleet was almost the same size. The ambulance, however, was similar to an aircraft crash ambulance and the sigs truck was a one-ton Austin which could do 70 mph once you got it going. Sadly, MT support was lousy and the team were lucky if it went out with one Bedford and a SWB Land Rover. New troops didn't get to sit in the Land Rover, you had to be in the team about a year to get that privilege. Health and safety wasn't a problem: we loaded the Bedford

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with all the kit plus twenty jerrycans of petrol, the troops all climbed in and smoked and sang or played cards, all the way to base.

My first exercise was at Inverailort. I was a real towny. Having been brought up in London I had hardly seen a hill, let alone climbed one. The usual ploy was to leave Kinloss at 1300hrs on Saturday, stop at the

Rendezvous cafe at Inverness for tea and cakes, and then stock up with a loaf of bread and some makings to last until we got to base in the early evening. Base camp was nearly always in tents because we didn't have any funds to pay for a bothy. On Sunday, I was sent on the hill with three troops. The planned course was about fifteen miles. Shortly after I left the road, I was lagging and these stalwarts got further and further ahead. There was absolutely no communication between us. Eventually they waited, but as soon as I caught up they were off. So the 'pond life' plodded on getting more and more knackered.

By the end of the day I was literally on my knees. On arrival, I crawled into my sleeping bag and fell asleep, missing dinner. The next thing I felt was a kick: 'Come on novice, get up and get the washing up done'. We packed up and started the long journey back to Kinloss on Sunday evening, arriving at 0200hrs. Shortly after leaving, I started to get cramp, a thing I had never experienced. I was squealing like a pig and the troops were wetting themselves with laughter. I had every intention of handing my kit in. Next morning, I hobbled in to work with large blisters on both feet, still in a near state of collapse. Everybody was laughing at me. There was no sympathy because I had been warned about these hooligans. Any thought of packing in disappeared because this youth needed to save face. Thereafter, things gradually improved and I am still here 38 years later.

Social life was brilliant. The troops attracted the local girls like a magnet. There was usually a good Ceilidh or dance on in the villages. We never dressed up, just arrived in hill kit and boots and no charge was made to get in. We took our boots off and danced in our socks until the wee small hours. We didn't have any money but it was fun. Aviemore with the Comrades Hall and Village Hall, and Fort William with K K Camerons and the Bracksie were particularly memorable. Aviemore was a tiny railway junction with a dirt track from Coylumbridge to Glenmore, where the road ended. We'd drive to Glenmore, put the trucks in four-wheel drive and cross the beach to a suitable campsite. Base was quickly established, pick up the girls from Glenmore Lodge and then head for the dance. After a good night's social we were like zombies on the hill. To get to Ben Macdui or Loch Avon then was a major expedition, especially in winter. Fort William was another tremendous place. The team camped at Achintree for ten days each Christmas and, on New Year's Eve, the Fort was 'first footed' in style. Everywhere was open house where fine songs were sung and tales told. At 0500 hrs we'd meet up in MacBraynes Buses Canteen for a couple of hours and party around the Fort for the rest of the day, providing, of course, there were no call-outs.

Now, MacBraynes is a name to be conjured with. It was said that 'God gave man the earth and MacBraynes the Western Highlands'. Fortunately for us, He put clippies on the buses. They were lovely girls and we got to know them really well, which was good news when we wanted to go climbing

on the Ben. In those far-off days troops didn't own cars so we'd hitch to Inverness and catch the MacBraynes bus to the Fort. Again, MR never paid, unless the inspector got on. Inevitably marriages took place and, as I remember, four of the troops married clippies in a short space of time. This perk all changed when MacBraynes went onto one-man operation.

My first call-out occurred one November night in 1956. A Canberra aircraft on route from Kinloss to RAF Bassingbourne had gone missing. A bang followed by a flash had been seen in the hills above Braemar.

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The team deployed in various states of sobriety because we'd just spent the evening in the Eagle in Forres. We made Braemar in the early hours and started a search at first light. The wreckage was spotted and the bodies of the crew were recovered by a Sycamore helicopter from Leuchars. I helped remove the bodies from the helicopter — a terrible sight. I watched the way the troops very quickly learned to live with these sights which would become all too frequent over the years.

Christmas saw my first big job: four young lads from Yorkshire lost somewhere on the Ben. Three were found on Carn Dearg and had succumbed to hypothermia. The fourth had fallen over Castle Ridge and was recovered later. In January a couple on their honeymoon had an accident in Twisting Gully on Stab Coire Nan Lochain. We were called out around midnight and arrived in Glencoe around 5.00 am. The body of the girl was found at midday. The recovery proved difficult and stopped as light faded. Tired troops returned to their tents in the Glen. At first light we were off again, picked up the stretcher and dragged it over the ridge by Gear Aonach and down the Lost Valley. Two days to accomplish what would take two or three hours now.

A lot of the call-outs were on the Ben, and some of the runs to the Fort were frightening. The governors on the Bedfords had been doctored. I think the record run was one hour 58 mins for the 98 miles to the aluminium works. Then a race developed to the CIC hut from the distillery as there was no Torlundy track. Find the casualty and another race for the 'bogey' on the old aluminium works railway to save the last two miles of carrying. The bogey was just like you see on a Buster Keaton movie — troops would fly off at the first bend. Then we'd hit the Jacobite or Nevis Bank for some stress counselling.

Shortly after joining the team, I was moved to MR full time to service the useless radios, becoming the scapegoat for the old war time radios not working. We had thirty and I hadn't a clue about fixing them. My method was easy: change the valves and connectors and, if that didn't work, send them back to

the maintenance unit, knowing we'd never get them back. Before long, we only had six left. Then another wagon left the road and was a write-off. Some bright spark decided this would be the end of those six radios too. Within seconds, they were taken from the truck and bashed against a boulder, the remains slung into the wreckage. Very soon after, we had new radios — unfortunately just as heavy, but at least they worked.

In spring 1957 the team at RAF West Freugh disbanded and the troops posted to other teams. One day, two airmen arrived at Kinloss. They were obviously experienced

MR troops because they wore the illegal aircrew shirt with their uniforms, our trademark at that time. They started to unpack. One hung his pitons, hammer and etriers in his locker and the place went quiet. The other produced a banjo. 'What's your name?' somebody asked. 'Ian Clough,' came the reply. 'Got a nickname?' 'No.' 'Your name's Dangle from now on'. The other was christened Lonnie after the great skiffle player of that time.

At Easter, the team were in Fort William. Dangle offered to take me up Observatory Ridge. It was a lovely day and we sauntered up to the CIC Hut where we wasted a lot of time drinking tea and chatting with the world. We started the route at about 2.00 pm and, after about 300 feet, ran into difficulty on the ice. As daylight ran out we moved onto the easier part of Zero Gully and proceeded to chop steps for about 400 feet. We arrived back at base at 2.00 am to find the team on standby. They were not best pleased, having missed the pub. I skulked off to my sleeping bag having had a tremendous day. Dangle got a severe 'tuning' from the team leader! Little did we know that this was to be the first of many epics that Dangle and the team were to have as the team put up many new routes on 'The Big Bad Ben'. Ian Clough went on to become one of the finest climbers of his era.

So, when you're poncing around in your colour coordinated kit, with your GPS in your hand, and your chocks and friends on your harness, remember me, the 'has-been'. And remember that you too will be a has-been quicker than you think... ☘

Postscript from Bob: In 1978, Ray Sefton took over as statistician of the then Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland, following the passing of Ben Humble. He relinquished this position in 1980 when John Hinde took over. Following retirement from the RAF, he worked for the Cairngorm National Park as a part-time ranger on the Rothiemurchus Estate and secretary for the planning department. In addition to his nickname 'Sunshine' he was also referred to by the RAF teams as 'The Badger' (the reason why is not documented).

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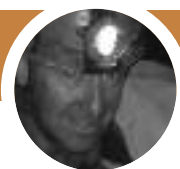
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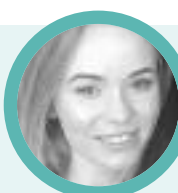
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YOUR TEAM SUPPORT NAME AND NUMBER IF YOU NEED A CHAT:

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:

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

Go to BlueLightTogether.org

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

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

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- Where to get help near you
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The Rescue Benevolent Fund: Email secretary@rescuebenevolent.fund or go to rescuebenevolent.fund to find out more

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