

mountain rescue

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members during an
incident in November
on the Glyderau
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4 **Building a sustainable future:** Mike Park outlines the substantial
steps forward we've made thus far, including the seeding of
new ideas at the 2024 conference, the exploration of shared
values and the ground-breaking Peak Diamond exercise

18 **Training to be in the news:** Sally Seed talks us through the
training being done in how to deal with the media

24 **Heart Rate Variability and breathing:** Judy Whiteside and Chris
Cookson catch up with Alan Littlefield to discuss some of the
ideas introduced at the 2024 conference

48 **Accident on Cul Mor:** Alan Hinkes describes the rescue of a friend
and mountaineering colleague following a serious accident

what's in at a glance

TRAINING: 6-11

BENEVOLENT FUND: 20-21

MEDICAL: 12-13

TEAMS & REGIONS: 30>

INCIDENTS: 15

SCOTLAND: 51-55

IN THE NEWS: 18

WHO'S WHO: 56-58



Building mountain rescue a sustainable future...

It's been a busy year for mountain rescue, both nationally and in the wider world. Internally, we've identified our key 'shared values' and begun to explore how codifying those four values might guide us towards a sustainable future. We've opened up a debate about how far we've grown as an 'officially recognised', nationally-collaborated volunteer service (since our early fledging with the Joint Stretcher Committee in 1932), how that plays out through our teams and regions, and how we develop from here. And we've begun talking to government about re-establishing an APPG to support all the volunteer rescue services. Throughout, 'sustainability' has remained our key consideration as incidents continue to rise, with the impact on team member wellbeing and the need to build cohesive teams a major theme in our September conference. **Mike Park CEO** tells us more...



Above: Mike Park at the MREW Conference in September 2024 © Scott van der Zanden. Below: Images from the Peak Diamond exercise, also in September 2024 © Buxton MRT/PDMRO.

At the AGM in May 2024, I said to the assembled audience that I 'wasn't happy'. And the reason I wasn't happy was because, in my opinion, we — that's 'MREW' — are not progressing fast enough in the areas we mountain rescuers invariably refer to as the 'boring bits'. The bits none of us joined mountain rescue to do.

I went on to say that as Chief Executive Officer of the representative body, I was frustrated that we are not able to react

quickly enough to deal with all or any of these issues — 'the bits we didn't join mountain rescue to do' — because, we keep being dragged into the weeds. We keep procrastinating. And I asked the audience to tell me how we sort this.

Well, it seems that others in the organisation agreed with me and they've not only told us how to sort it, they are actively out there showing us how to sort it.

HOW ARE THEY DOING THIS?

Let's start with risk management. We're starting to see teams tackling the issue, sharing their thoughts and ideas and coming together with other teams to peer review and share best practice — addressing the 'boring bits' so we can 'do 'mountain rescue' with the peace of mind that we are reducing risk to an acceptable level to ourselves.

Which leads me to preventing the accident happening in the first place, another 'boring bit'. There have been two meetings this year — instigated by the teams in North Wales and the Lakes — to bring the stakeholders and landowners together to discuss the increase in 'unsustainable' call-outs and working with stakeholders to prevent those call-outs from happening. I was kindly invited to both of these meetings. There is still a lot of hard work to do in this area to prevent us getting dragged into those weeds, but I know and trust that the mountain rescuers who instigated those meetings will succeed, so we can reduce the 'boring bit' in order to 'do mountain rescue' efficiently and effectively.

SHARING IDEAS AND ASKING FOR HELP...

I also noted in May that 'sharing ideas, learning and working together across the organisation is firmly established, but what about learning and working together with our peers outside the organisation?' Again someone must have been listening — or,

TEAMWORK

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

CARING

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



EXCELLENCE

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

PASSIONATE

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

more probably, was already way ahead of what Mike Park was thinking! — because, in September, what I believe to be two remarkable events happened.

The first was the MREW Conference, with its remit to 'engage, educate and entertain'. Well it did all that by the bucketful, but what was remarkable for me was that it took the brave step of asking more peers than ever before — from outside the organisation — to share ideas and learning, and to share their views of working together with mountain rescue.

The second event was 'Peak Diamond', a major incident exercise organised by team members in the Peak District region, that ran over two days in a quarry facility kindly 'loaned' for the purpose by Lord Bamford and JCB.

The exercise involved multiple agencies and teams from across the Peak and beyond, the scenario simulating a large passenger jet crash with multiple casualties. Why was this event remarkable to me? For the sheer audacity and persistence of the organisers to make it happen, the many untold days in planning and, of course, the massive success that it ultimately was. As far as I am concerned it will be remembered as a 'game changer' in our mountain rescue journey. Take a look at Buxton team's stunning video overview of the 'incident' on YouTube via [tinyurl.com/yu5t38rw](https://www.youtube.com/yu5t38rw).

Alongside this, as noted in the intro, others in our organisation have also taken up my challenge to begin long-term conversations with government. Following a meeting in late-November, supported by Josh MacAlister, MP for Whitehaven and Workington (and a member of Patterdale MRT), and Torcuil Crichton, MP for Na h-Eileanan Iar (Western Isles), we've seen the formation of the Volunteer Rescue Services APPG. Work will begin in earnest early in 2025, but we anticipate that this group — expected to attract around forty sitting MPs and lords — will meet every six weeks and will incorporate Scottish Mountain Rescue, Lowland Rescue, the

British Cave Rescue Council, Independent Lifeboats, RNLI and Voluntary Coastguard. The hope is that this will significantly raise the profile of the voluntary rescue services with the public and Westminster, and encourage greater collaboration between all our organisations.

Why have these things happened? Well, the answer is simple. They've happened because the people who have made these things happen have those four key values (as laid out previously) firmly embedded within their psyche.

So how do we address and reduce the 'boring bits' faster? That's simple, too. We help each other. We support each other. We encourage each other. We get involved. And we believe in our values. And I can promise you, it will make the 'doing mountain rescue' bit even more fulfilling.

BRINGING SHARED VALUES TO A WIDER CONVERSATION

At the national meeting in November, Jonny Read (who facilitated our Shared Values discussions), played Devil's Advocate to a gathering of 74 in-person delegates (divided into tables of eight to ten) and a further 48 in four online rooms, to debate 'What is the future of Mountain Rescue?' We asked members to focus on a range of talking points, such as the demands and pressures on our voluntary service, whether we need a central funding pot and how we might keep our work 'cost neutral' and what might be the appetite for more paid roles. We also considered how we might control our destiny — who we are, what we do, how we do it and how we present ourselves to our colleagues, partner organisations and the wider world.

All of those conversations will continue. The next stage is a survey designed to move the discussion on, in preparation for further group discussions, both online and in-person. The aim is to focus in on the main definitions and find possible solutions to the issues raised.

SO WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

We will absolutely keep the momentum going over the coming months. We'll continue to establish closer links with government whilst considering both the positive and negatives of this relationship. We will continue to develop our external relationships so that we speak with one voice and ALL are better heard. And we will continue to develop closer relationships internally across the organisation, as this has multi-faceted advantages for our progression.

MEANWHILE...NEW FACES AT THE MANAGEMENT TABLE

Penny Brockman stood down as MREW Finance Director at the November meeting. Penny continued to cover the role until the end of 2024, with Deborah Pourkarimi co-opted to the role in January 2025. We'll have more about Deborah in the next issue.

Meanwhile, we will shortly be advertising for a successor to Andy Simpson as media and communications officer. Andy will be standing down in 2025. And we will also shortly be advertising my own role of CEO, with the successful candidate expected to take the baton in May 2026. I'm putting this out there eighteen months before my successor takes over for two fundamental reasons: continuity and succession. Having someone in place sooner will enable the new chief to understand the role better, and be fully involved in our ongoing journey. It will also free up some of my time to fulfil my remaining objectives: making sure we are fit-for-purpose to face the future, and that we continue to develop a more empathetic organisation.

I have no doubt there will continue to be moments along these next steps of the journey where we stumble, but these are undoubtedly the times we will need to trust our values: teamwork, excellence, caring and passion. 🌟





Exploring future training: opportunities and possibilities

PHIL RIDLEY MREW TRAINING OFFICER

Training always puts into focus a number of topics which require addressing or updating and allows opportunities for people to refresh or have a go at something new. Keeping these relevant, safe and current will always be a challenge. Sometimes, we need to push boundaries with the complex 'what if' scenario, and on other occasions we just need to do the obvious typical mountain rescue scenario.

For some, repetitive training may seem like it is just box ticking to say something was covered — for others it may mean maintaining competency and keeping everything focused so it becomes second nature. Either way, in the main, hopefully people will take something away from any training no matter how much experience they may have. We always learn or have something to offer, no matter how long we have been doing something.

I have been humbled and privileged to have been invited to a number of joint and regional exercises over recent months, and have endeavoured to attend as many as possible. Apologies to those where I've had to decline, hopefully I'll be able to continue to attend more in the future. It's great to meet new people and see what others are doing.

The opportunities in 2025 for MREW to deliver more Foundation, Search Planning and Small Group (Party Leader) courses (to mention a few), is also testament to those who have been organising, developing, presenting and delivering these for years. These courses — and hopefully those who have attended them will vouch for — offer great opportunities for networking, socialising and generating ideas and conversations which can be taken back to

teams. I can honestly say that the interest in these sessions has also illustrated a need to revive and progress other courses which have to date been shelved for one reason or another. Obviously, the challenge of funding these will be on the agenda when the national Training subcommittee next meets, especially as the LIBOR subsidy will have ended or been allocated to other scheduled projects.

I have also been encouraged to see numerous posts on various team social media pages publicising successful training exercises where new scenarios and joint working with local statutory, volunteer partners and other regions have been well received. Keep up the good work, as this continues to show the professionalism, acceptance and capabilities of MREW from the statutory services as a whole. I am keen to expand on some of these and share details to others where lessons have been learnt or constructive feedback made. It would be great to be able to generate some case studies which could be shared. So, if anyone is interested, please do get in touch.

Chris Cookson (MREW Rope Rescue Lead) organised a webinar in December, relating to a number of technical rope topics. This was well received, with nearly 200 people logging in. I would like to thank the

various speakers and all those who participated:

- **Ground Anchors:** Paul Witheridge (Penrith MRT & COMRU)
- **Development of a Lightweight System:** Jon Sanders (Scottish Mountain Rescue)
- **A Regional Approach:** Paul Edisbury (Kinder MRT & PDMRO Crag Lead)
- **Power Cord Testing:** Andrew McNeil (Team Leader, Cockermouth MRT)
- **Short Roping:** Robin Woodward & Ric Potter (Ogwen Valley MRO).

It would be nice to develop other webinar topics. If anyone can help organise — yes, I mean 'volunteer to sort out!' — please get in touch with me or the relevant MREW officer. There are plenty of topics which can be considered and made available for the benefit of the membership.

The 2025 training calendar is filling up nicely with a number of courses which have continued to be requested as well as a few new ones being planned. This list will be issued to teams and updated accordingly as other bookings become confirmed — turn to page 8 to see where we were up to at the time of publication. ☺

For Training Calendar 2025
TURN TO PAGE 8



Images from the various rope sessions Paul has held, indoors at Edale base and outdoors at Harboro Rocks near Brassington © Paul Edisbury.

ROPE RESCUE WEBINAR DECEMBER 2024

The idea was to allow teams and regions to share the rope rescue projects and challenges they've been working on. It's hoped it was an opportunity to share information, learn and be inspired into action, to work on your own projects and challenges (hopefully with a view to sharing with the rest of us at a similar event in the future!) MREW Rope Rescue Lead, **Chris Cookson**, reports.



Thank you to everyone who attended and for the community atmosphere generated via the chat with helpful indications of technical webinar issues and when they were resolved, rope rescue information, links to rope rescue information and the like. There were some great questions (and answers), and I hope allowing people to turn on their cameras and mics to ask their questions enabled a more interactive and discussion-based approach. A big thank you to all the presenters too. The work you put into creating your presentations as well as presenting on the night was/is really appreciated.

I'm sure other teams and regions have been — or will be, over the coming months — working on their own particular rope rescue interests. If your team has a topic you'd like to share at a future event, please drop me an email and we can look forward to finding out what you've been up to. Thank you for the hugely positive feedback received so far. One common suggestion is that the event was perhaps a little too long, and that four, rather than five sessions would have been better. This was the first such event we've run, so any feedback would be greatly appreciated. Please do send me an email, with your thoughts: roperescuelead@mountain.rescue.org.uk.

Finally, thank you to Mark Lewis for the IT work and support that enabled the webinar to take place and the recording, which will be available to view in the Training folder on Moodle. ☺



Paul Edisbury was one of the five speakers at the Technical Rope Webinar, speaking about a 'regional approach' to rope rescue training.

Having completed the Lyon Rope Rescue Operator Instructor (RROI) course three years ago, with other members of the Peak District Mountain Rescue Organisation (PDMRO), we all decided at the end of the course it was worth getting together to continue sharing ideas, discuss case studies from incidents (both past and potential), and train with each other's systems. Until recently, PDMRO teams in the main had previously only trained with their own team members when it came to technical ropework (there has been the odd joint training, but nothing of real substance to take away and learn from). Initially, the regional joint training was

proposed to be 'show and tell' events with different teams hosting the sessions each time. This worked well, but people's interest grew over time and members wanted to get hands-on and use other teams' systems rather than just watching. This made sense, and could only help with our interoperability. Recently on a call-out, Kinder team was requested to assist neighbouring Glossop MRT with a rope rescue job because of low numbers, being familiar with the geography and terrain. Some team members were also familiar with each other's technical systems. This certainly benefited the rescue operation and things worked well, which just shows that this type of collaborative training is essential.

The benefits for knowledge sharing between organisations have been hugely beneficial so far and can only get better in

the future. There are so many agencies and teams we could end up working with: Police, Fire and Rescue Service, HART, RAF MRS, Coastguard, Lowland and Cave Rescue, to name a few.

Members of PDMRO will continue to train together. One event we are really looking forward to is a training session with Cockermouth MRT over a full weekend in 2025. This can only enhance everyone's knowledge and skills, going forward.

We also have opportunities with the police, HART and RAF MRS. These are the types of agencies we are likely to work with on call-outs in the future so all this training and sharing of ideas will be invaluable. ☺

PAUL EDISBURY IS PDMRO CRAG LEAD.
CRAG@PDMRO.ORG.UK

TRAINING CALENDAR 2025

(AT TIME OF PUBLICATION – SOME DATES TO BE ADDED)



ROPE RESCUE OPERATOR INSTRUCTOR (LYON) COURSE 3: DARTMOOR SRT ASHBURTON BASE & CHUDLEIGH ROCKS

SPMI: NESKA

SPMI: PDMKO

PENMACRA CATCH-UP PARTY LEADER WEEKEND

JANUARY

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FEBRUARY

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MARCH

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APRIL

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FOUNDATION: SWSARA

MREW HILL PARTY LEADER

TEAM LEADER DAY: NEWSAR

MEDIA TRAINING LEVEL 1: INTRODUCTION TO MEDIA INTERVIEW TRAINING

PRE-HOSPITAL TRAUMA LIFE SUPPORT COURSE 2

SPMI: PENMACRA

SPMI: MPSKO

MAY

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JUNE

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JULY

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AUGUST

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ROPE RESCUE OPERATOR INSTRUCTOR COURSES (LYON) COURSE 4: SWANSEA LOCATION TBC

ROPE RESCUE OPERATOR INSTRUCTOR COURSES (LYON) COURSE 5: TEBAY

SPM2 ADVANCED: TBC

FOUNDATION: PDMKO

SEPTEMBER

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OCTOBER

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NOVEMBER

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DECEMBER

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SEARCH FIELD SKILLS

ROPE RESCUE OPERATOR INSTRUCTOR COURSES (LYON) COURSE 6: TBC

SPMI NWMRA: TBC

MREW HILL PARTY LEADER: NOVEMBER TBC

PRE-HOSPITAL TRAUMA LIFE SUPPORT COURSES 3 & 4: TBC

FALL PROTECTION EQUIPMENT CHECKING (SAR PRODUCTS): JANUARY OR FEBRUARY 2025: SWSARA: TBC

FEEDING BACK FROM THE MOUNTAIN RESCUE CONFERENCE

It's always good to hear that our conference delegates have been inspired to take home new ideas and play with them — and then to hear that the rest of the team buys into these ideas too. **Craig Scollick**, team leader of Dartmoor SRT (Ashburton) explains what most impressed him and his team members.

Our team, like most teams, has a pretty health culture and is really good at learning and executing hard skills like Remote Rescue Medical Technician, Rope, Water, Navigation etc. We've always had this nagging doubt, however, that we could be better. A couple of us from Dartmoor (Ashburton) attended the Mountain Rescue Conference at Lancaster University in September.

In addition to going to the fantastic technical talks, we also attended a number of non-technical sessions. The two that inspired us most were Dr Chris Turner, talking about the impact of rudeness on individuals and team performance, and Dr Stephen Hearn, on 'communication under pressure' (from his book *'Peak Performance Under Pressure'*). We talked about these sessions and how good they were and this sowed the seed of an idea to share the material with our team.

The idea finally became an evening session in our training programme in December. We introduced Chris's concepts from *Civility Saves Lives* (the impact of rudeness) and Stephen's *Performance under Pressure* material. We had a great discussion, with the material positively received, and rounded off the evening with some team games run by one of our team members who does this type of thing for a living. Our next steps will be diving more deeply into the two topics to see now we can practically apply the material in our environment.

The evening was a bit of an experiment and could have been embarrassing if no one had turned up. As it was, we had almost half of the team there with twenty-one team members in the room, and a great mix from trainees to folks who had been in the team for a (very) long time. It was great that folks were open to the material and I'm really pleased we were in a position to share it. I'm looking forward to us being able to take some of the ideas forward in the new year. 🙌



Conference-inspired fun and games © Dartmoor (Ashburton).



DECEMBER: CHRISTMAS ROPE RESCUE TRAINING AS SANTA TAKES A FALL

COMRU team members headed to Tebay for a day's training at Lyon Work and Rescue, practising complex and technical rope rescue techniques in a controlled environment.

The day was split into two with small groups practising a variety of different techniques, before getting into new groups to use what they learned to combat a large and complex scenario, involving a single casualty. It transpired that Santa had fallen from his sleigh, presumably while delivering some early Christmas presents, and was now hanging in the air. He was, of course, duly rescued from his predicament, before being passed from group to group around the room, without touching the floor.

The activity ended with him going down his final chimney of the night: a grain silo. The team also had a visit from the 3R Foundation, which has kindly donated £500 for the purchase of new ST-C compact traction splits.

'We would like to extend our thanks to them for their support and also to thank Matt from Lyon Work and Rescue — who is also a COMRU team member — for organising a fantastic training session for the team and spending his weekend at work for us.'

Above: Rope rescue training at Lyon Work and Rescue © COMRU.



Crowden Foundation Course 2024

PHIL 'RIGGER' RIDLEY



October 2024 saw delegates and instructors attending the PDMRO Foundation Course, once again at the Crowden Outdoor Education Centre. Without exception, the course draws on the experiences from all the participating PDMRO teams who have representation on the directing and instructing staff.

The weekend covers a wide range of core skill topics that complement the individual team training programmes. These are delivered as a mix of theoretical and practical sessions, with attendees typically still in their probationary phase, or recently promoted to 'full team' status.

Characteristically, the camaraderie is always evident throughout and testament to all who participate be that as directing staff, instructors, guests or delegates. It's one of those ideal opportunities to bring like-minded individuals together for a bit of good old-fashioned socialising and networking, to build new bonds, friendships and the inter-team working relationships essential to 999 volunteering. Everyone leaves the weekend having gelled into an effective unit, with friendships forged that will hopefully last many years.

This year also saw delegates from Lowland's Cheshire SAR, Bolton MRT, Derbyshire Constabulary Control Room and representatives from South Wales Search and Rescue Association (SWSARA) — and

not to mention Storm Ashley who offered some ideal on cue simulation during the practical sessions.

One 'delegate' who proved to be a huge hit with students and instructors alike was MREW CEO Mike Park who joined in and participated enthusiastically throughout the weekend. A big thank you to Mike, as it means a lot, not just to the instructing team, but also the attendees who are starting out on their mountain rescue journey to see their CEO 'mucking in' and getting to know them throughout the weekend.

I've said it many times and make no apologies for saying it again — the enthusiasm

and commitment of all the staff (including the behind-the-scenes helpers), and delegates make this course the continuing success it is. Thank you for everyone's support, because you're the ones who make it an all-round great weekend and a privilege to be part of.

Preparation for 2025 Foundation Course is underway and some of the PDMRO directing staff will be assisting SWSARA in the delivery of their first course in January 2025. Watch this space for a report!

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any training-related issues: trainingofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk ☎

I recommend that all regions send a group of members to a PDMRO foundation course and consider implementing it within their area. SWSARA is holding its first foundation course in January 2025, supported by a few members of PDMRO foundation course organisers.

Mark Lewis, Chairman SWSARA

What an amazing course! Those delegates are the future of our teams, regions and MREW and this course is the foundation for joint working, training and thinking. It brings grass roots members together with regional and national expertise in a wide variety of disciplines including Search, Rope, Casualty Care, Dogs, Drones and Water. There are few such opportunities and the professionalism, enthusiasm, energy and passion were contagious.

Gareth Williams, Western Beacons MRT

The weekend consolidated and built on the excellent training I've received during my probationary period, while also providing opportunities to understand how other teams operate. The networking with fellow 'newbies' and the 'top brass' (and everyone in between!) offered plenty to consider and take back for discussion with my team. I hope to return in the future wearing a 'Staff' badge.

Rick Sanchez, Kinder MRT

The weekend provided valuable insight into how mountain rescue operates and allowed me to connect with members of the local teams. It was enjoyable and highly informative, a well-balanced mix of practical sessions and presentations. One highlight was the opportunity to lead one of the final practical scenarios — with the added excitement of Storm Ashley! A valuable experience and an incredibly enjoyable one.

Kim Eagle, Cheshire Search and Rescue



INTRODUCING DAVE OTTER, MREW EXTERNAL TRUSTEE



We introduced Maddy Desforges and Alex Siviter Platt in the last issue... a warm welcome now to Dave.

Dave is an experienced leadership coach, mentor and operational director with a passion for helping organisations unlock their full potential. Specialising in high-performance leadership development and colleague engagement, he has spent years working with international organisations to create tailored strategies that drive growth and performance. He has a strong background in designing and delivering accredited leadership programmes — from Level 7 Director development to Women in Leadership programmes designed to support diversity, equity and inclusion goals.

'My approach is all about creating bespoke development programmes that elevate both individual and team performance. Whether it's coaching, mentoring or leadership development, I focus on nurturing the right skills that empower people to thrive in a high-performing environment. I'm also responsible for leading the business's colleague engagement and wellbeing strategies, aiming to boost motivation, reduce absenteeism and create a workplace where talent can flourish.

'Outside of my professional life, I'm deeply passionate about mountain rescue. I've been involved with the Ogwen Valley team as a trustee, and trained with Langdale Ambleside MRT. Whether it's scaling the peaks of Ecuador, Nepal or Jordan, or tackling the iconic mountains across England, Scotland and Wales, mountaineering has taught me invaluable lessons in teamwork, resilience and leadership that I carry into my work every day.' ☎



Guidance to teams around events and events cover

ALISTAIR MORRIS
MREW MEDICAL DIRECTOR

The medical, insurance and legal groups have pulled together some guidance for teams around events and events cover, to support teams and ensure you and your team members are appropriately covered for the support you provide for events.

It is recognised that running events and providing events cover are a fundraising and profile opportunity for teams.

Following the Manchester Arena inquiry there are new stipulations over running and providing first aid provision to outdoor events and these are covered in the 'Purple Guide' available at thepurpleguide.co.uk.

This document has been pulled together by medical and insurance/legal groups to provide guidance to teams around events and event cover based on the published information at this time.

Events can be subdivided into three areas:

1. Organising own event.
2. Teams providing rescue cover for a third party event.
3. Teams providing first aid cover for a third party event.

It is important that teams are clear with event organisers what level of care they can and are willing to provide. The Medicines Regulations, CD licensing and the CQC requirements for casualty transportation regulate the level of care a team can provide and compliance is obligatory.

1. ORGANISING OWN EVENT

The 'Purple Guide'¹ provides comprehensive information on the requirements for event organisers. Teams should read the full guide which costs £25 per year. In the event of an incident occurring our actions will be judged by reference to this Guide. The guide has specific information for Adventure Sport Activities (including fell races) in Chapter 33.

The Fell Runners Association provides advice and documents for those organising races at fellrunner.org.uk/articles/documents

All events should be risk assessed and discussed with our insurance brokers well in advance to ensure cover is in place. Guidance on events from an insurance perspective can be found on page 8 of the Insurance Summary document available on Moodle.

If the team is going to provide first aid cover for their event then the requirements set out in 'Purple Guide' Chapter 5 (Medical) must be followed. These measures are the same as those in Section 3 (see below) on providing first aid cover for a third party event.

2. TEAMS PROVIDING RESCUE COVER FOR A THIRD-PARTY EVENT

The team may be present at an event and provide rescue services to those in need in a remote or austere environment. This is likely to be the commonest type of cover that is provided by us.

The event organiser should again follow the 'Purple Guide' in organising their event. It must be clear between the event organiser and the team what level of provision of service and attendance will be provided (for example rescue cover out on the hill, whether the vehicle/team members will remain in situ if a call-out comes in).

This type of cover does not include providing first aid cover where there is easy access (eg. roadside checkpoints, event centre).

MEDICINES LEGISLATION

Medications in the Formulary can only be administered as part of 'mountain rescue services' by those suitably trained under the Human Medicines Regulations, and furthermore can only be administered as part of a rescue.

Controlled Drugs can only administered as part of a call-out. Please note the following extract from the MHRA/HO Guidance to Rescue Teams on Controlled Drugs:

'The Group Licence provides the provision for controlled drugs for use during officially tasked call-outs. The Group Licence does not allow the use of controlled drugs to be part of the level of care provided to an "event". Therefore, there should be no expectations made to the event organisers that this is the case.

'The controlled drugs should not be carried at the event to avoid a casualty carer being in a position of potentially using CD stock outside of licensing cover. If the controlled drugs are taken to maintain the operational capability of a vehicle for call-outs (eg. to ensure a vehicle taken to an event is deployable elsewhere, in the event of a call), then they should be stored in an appropriate drug safe in the vehicle, an appropriately qualified team member assigned as responsible for the drugs in the vehicle and the vehicle not left unattended.

'If a casualty on the event requires this vital treatment, then a call-out (can be limited) should be initiated and incident log created with the calling authority. CDs should not be used until the call-out has been logged using the designated process.'

Teams should have standing operating procedures to ensure compliance at all times and in all activities. All operational team members must understand and be aware of these mandatory legal requirements.

INSURANCE

As the team is providing rescue cover then indemnity for first aid provided, should it be needed, is as per the MREW Medical Malpractice insurance.

TRANSPORTATION OF PARTICIPANTS

1. Casualty — teams must follow the guidance on transportation of casualties available via SARCALL or Moodle.

2. Drop out participants — if teams are extracting exhausted individuals from an event then this is covered by the motor policy providing that the team is not receiving a specific financial benefit for picking them up (beyond any general payment for covering the event as a whole).

From the 'Purple Guide': In England, it is highly likely that ambulance services undertaking patient transport services need to be registered with the Care Quality Commission for the provision of such services. Further guidance can be found at cqc.org.uk/guidance.

3. TEAMS PROVIDING FIRST AID COVER FOR A THIRD PARTY EVENT

This is not necessarily covered under the MREW group medical insurance — teams **must contact** the insurance brokers to discuss requirements. See page 16 of the Insurance Summary document for further details on acceptable events.

The event organiser should follow the 'Purple Guide' in organising their event performing risk assessments and Event Safety Management Plan and these be

provided to the team. It must be clear between the event organiser and the team what level of provision of service and attendance will be provided (for example rescue cover out on the hill, whether the vehicle/team members will remain in situ if a call-out comes in).

Some First Aid qualifications, and specifically the MREW Casualty Care/RRMT qualification, do not include the assessment and management of first aid areas such as foot care (eg. blisters) and minor musculoskeletal injuries (sprains, shin splints etc) that are often seen on longer/ultra events. This should be made clear to the event organiser to ensure First Aid/RRMT holders do not treat outside their scope of practice. If the event organiser needs these skills at control points/event centres then this should either be delivered by others or there must be specific documented training with clinical oversight for those attending.

INSURANCE

Only those with First Aid and MREW Casualty Care/RRMT qualifications are indemnified by the insurance to provide care. Those without in-date qualifications are not insured to provide care on behalf of the team. Team members must only ever operate within their personal scope of practice.

SIZE, LENGTH & TYPE OF EVENT

Depending on the event, there are different requirements for the first aid cover. These are split into five tiers, information on Tier 1 and Tier 2 is provided below. For larger events please refer to the 'Purple Guide'. This information is up to date as of July 2024, so must be reviewed on the guide for any updates.

TIER 1 EVENT

Tier 1 events are the smallest and simplest events, some of which may not fall within the scope of local authority licensing. Indicators that an event is in Tier 1 include:

- Fewer than 500 attendees
- No or minimal alcohol consumption
- No or minimal recreational drug use
- No activities which have a risk of injury
- Hospital referrals very unlikely
- Duration of a few hours or less.

If any of these indicators do not apply, the event is in a higher tier.

COVER LEVEL

Tier 1 events are normally suitable for first aid service and do not need a healthcare professional or an ambulance to attend. In some cases, organisers might not need a

TIER (WITH TYPICAL ATTENDANCES)	RECOMMENDED	MAY BE CONSIDERED
TIER 1 <500	AT SOME VERY LOW-RISK EVENTS A FIRST AID KIT AND A PERSON COMPETENT IN ITS USE AT OTHERS, 1-2 RESPONDERS ACCESS TO A NEARBY DEFIBRILLATOR	DEFIBRILLATOR ON SITE
TIER 2 500 – 2000	CLINICAL LEAD – NORMALLY HCP 2-4 FIRST RESPONDERS	PARAMEDIC CREWED AMBULANCE

*See note below around CQC requirement

dedicated first aid resource, but should still consider how to provide first aid if the need arises and should particularly consider:

1. Provision of suitable first aid kit.
2. Access to a defibrillator.
3. Ensuring that appropriate people know how to access emergency assistance.

TIER 2 EVENT

Tier 2 events are somewhat larger events which often fall within the scope of local authority licensing. Indicators that an event is in Tier 2 include any of the following:

- More than 500 but fewer than 2000 attendees
- Social drinking of alcohol
- No more than isolated drug use
- Low risk of any injury from activities
- Hospital referrals unlikely
- Duration no longer than a day.

If any of these indicators do not apply, the event is in a higher tier.

COVER LEVEL

Tier 2 events need a dedicated first aid resource, preferably led by a healthcare professional. Where indicated by the medical needs assessment, provision may include:

- A nominated lead who is responsible for the delivery of the service on site
- Supporting first responders or HCPs
- An ambulance with suitably qualified crew.

A full medical needs assessment should be carried out for each event and using this to determine the level of medical cover needed.

The following matrix sets out an indicative level of resource at peak times for each tier of event. It is NOT intended to be directive

and will need to be modified in the light of the circumstances of individual events.

If a team is providing a First Aid Cover service for an event (own or third party) the 'Purple Guide' states:

- Medical teams may need to be able to manage a wide range of medical, trauma and mental health presentations, including substance misuse and chronic conditions.

- The team must be appropriately insured. This should include:

- Public liability insurance
- Medical indemnity insurance
- Employer's liability insurance
- Fleet insurance for vehicles (where appropriate).

- The team must have appropriate governance in place. This should include:

- Data protection
- Safeguarding
- Infection prevention and control
- DBS checks for all patient facing staff.

- Where there is more than one medical provider at an event, there should be a lead contractor and agreement on joint working and accountability.

- In England, it is highly likely that ambulance services undertaking patient transport services need to be registered with the Care Quality Commission for the provision of such services. Further guidance can be found at cqc.org.uk/guidance.

- Organisers should ensure that the provider has the capability to move patients safely around the site using equipment or a vehicle that is fit for purpose. 🚑

¹ MREW is exploring whether a central copy can be made available on Moodle but for now copyright restricts this.



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British Antarctic Survey
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Incident Figures: National Status Summary January through to mid-December 2024

PAUL BRAIN MREW STATS OFFICER

Lake District	North East	Peak District	South Wales
Cockermouth 78	Cleveland 61	Buxton 89	Brecon 83
Coniston 67	North of Tyne 42	Derby 72	Central Beacons 81
Duddon & Furness 52	Northumberland 58	Edale 154	Longtown 44
Kendal 74	Swaledale 45	Glossop 58	Western Beacons 24
Keswick 148	Teesdale & Weardale 39	Kinder 72	232
Kirkby Stephen 24	245	Oldham 47	
Langdale Ambleside 131		Woodhead 71	South West England
Patterdale 101	North Wales	563	Avon & Somerset 22
Penrith 51	Aberdyfi 49		SARA 46
Wasdale 162	Aberglaslyn 57	Peninsula	68
888	Llanberis 316	Cornwall East 35	
	North East Wales 79	Cornwall West 32	Yorkshire Dales
Mid Pennines	Ogwen Valley 172	Dartmoor Ashburton 42	CRO 81
Bolton 36	South Snowdonia 46	Dartmoor Plymouth 14	Scarborough & Ryedale 45
Bowland Pennine 49	719	Dartmoor Tavistock 38	Upper Wharfedale 57
Calder Valley 35		Exmoor 33	183
Holme Valley 54		North Dartmoor 17	
Rossendale & Pendle 45		211	Search Dogs
219			Lake District MRSD 13
			MRSD England 78
			SARDA Wales 39
			SARDA South Wales 25
			155

* Sorted according to **geographical region** and by **closed** incident reports.
At the time of going to print, **210 records remained open**, so some figures may not have changed since October.

Mountain Safety Group/Forum News

MIKE MARGESON MREW/BMC PARTNERSHIP AND MOUNTAIN SAFETY GROUP

Many will be aware of the very successful Scottish Mountain Safety Group. For some years, key players — including Scottish Mountain Rescue — have worked in partnership to develop coordinated safety messaging and training opportunities, a joined-up approach which brings great benefits to our educational safety messaging efforts and potential outcomes.

I have seen several IKAR member countries where this approach is completely normal and very effective. For some years, we have been trying to develop a similar working group south of the Border. While AdventureSmart has done a fantastic job and is well supported by teams in Wales and the Lakes, it's not the only answer.

The group took shape in early 2024, with membership comprising Mountain Training (England and Cymru), Plas y Brenin, MREW, NPCC/UKSAR, Mountaineering Ireland, Scottish Mountain Safety, the BMC, Ramblers, OS, the Outdoor Industries

Association, AdventureSmart and the Met Office. We are chaired by Mike Rosser, with secretarial support from Plas y Brenin. Adrian Woon (NPCC/UKSAR) is the most recent to join.

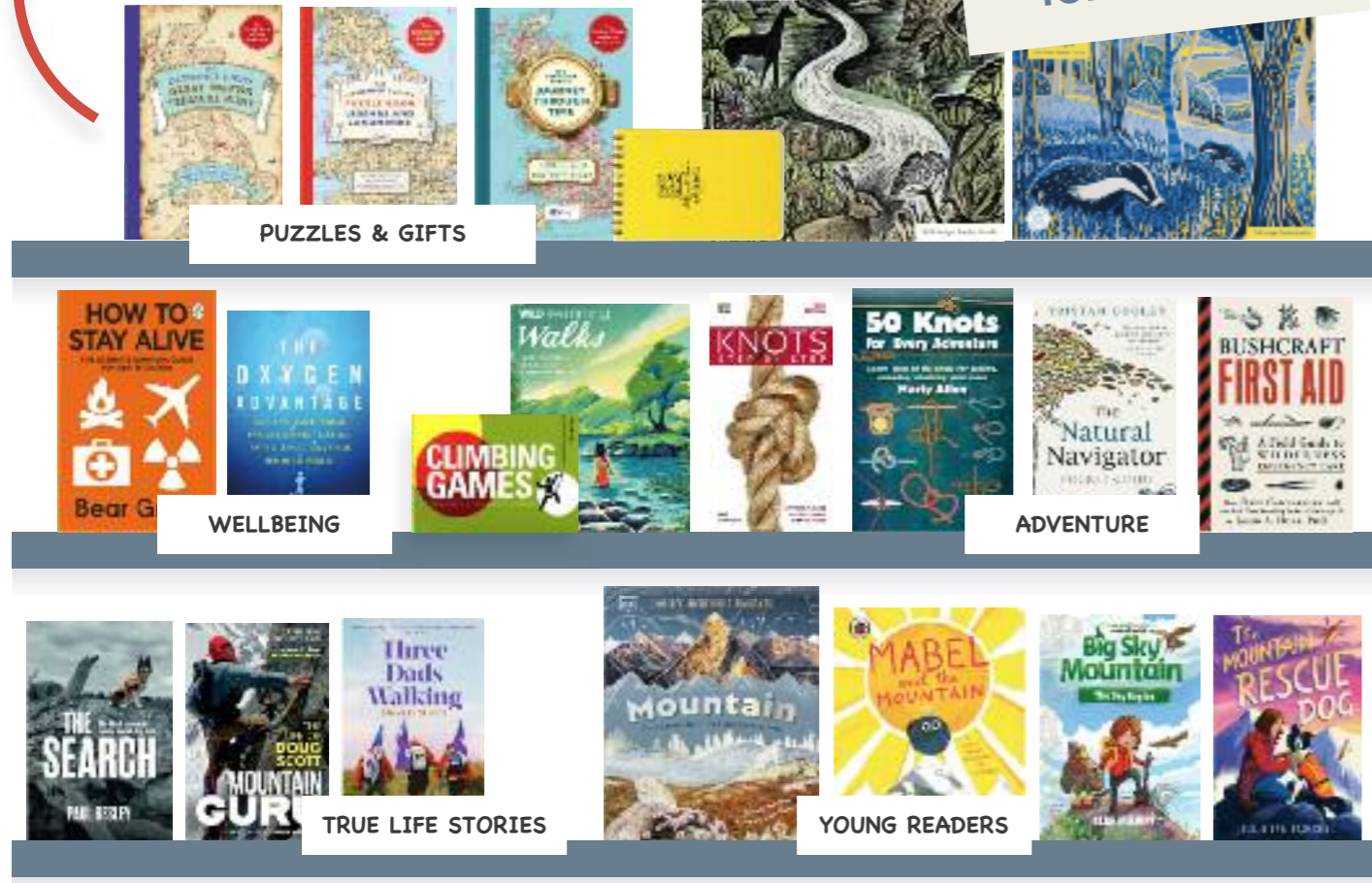
At our December meeting, Ross Cadie Mountaineering Scotland Safety Officer, made a very valuable presentation of their recent work strategies, and safety messaging plans and objectives. A good example was recent messaging on digital mapping and the use of mobile phone mapping. There have been a wide range of topics discussed thus far and the input from Ross clearly demonstrated that

focusing on key topics and then delivering them is vitally important. We are very good at reaching the already engaged audience, but how do we get our messaging to the occasional user, or those brand new to the outdoors and especially the hills, the 18-25 demographic a top priority.

Following Ross's presentation there was considerable discussion. It is clear that a huge amount has been achieved in Scotland by organisations working together. A number of working groups now need to be set up here on key topics such as messaging, data collecting and analysis, and funding. ☺

NEW in the online shop

Raising funds for rescue



HEAD TO OUR BOOKSHOP TO DISCOVER NEW OUTDOORSY TITLES, GIFTS AND PUZZLES AND HELP SUPPORT MOUNTAIN RESCUE

Check out our bookshelves for additions to our range of titles including wellbeing advice, true life adventure stories past and more recent, women talking about women in the outdoors, and fun books to encourage younger readers – the next generation of hill enthusiasts – safely into the outdoors. We've added in a few foiled journals and bookmarks and some new jigsaws – always popular and the perfect treat for you or as that special gift. Plus plenty of the usual titles on navigation, skills and mountain adventures. With each purchase you'll be making a very welcome donation to mountain rescue of around 30-40% of the cover price. Go to shop.mountain.rescue.org.uk and see for yourself.

ALPINE JACKET EPITOMISES TOP-TIER OUTDOOR PERFORMANCE

Dannah's Alpine Jacket is a pinnacle of outdoor gear, blending cutting-edge technology with eco-conscious design. Engineered for the harshest mountain conditions, this jacket boasts a 3-layer, PFC-free microporous fabric, offering exceptional waterproofing (30K HH) and breathability (20K MVTR). Its tough, abrasion-resistant nylon withstands intense use, while features like a helmet-compatible hood, strategic pockets, and innovative venting cater to climbers and hikers alike. Crafted to endure, Dannah's lifetime guarantee underscores its commitment to quality and sustainability. This versatile, performance-driven jacket promises reliable protection and comfort for every alpine adventure. Outdoors Magic Magazine lauds it as a 'stellar all-mountain shell'.



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ACCESSING THE MREW ONLINE SHOP (TEAMS)

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

EMAIL OFFICE@MOUNTAIN.RESCUE.ORG.UK OR CALL 0330 043 9101



To access the digital bookshelf (in the digital version) click on any cover and go straight to that issue.



TEAM LOGOS, UPDATED BRAND GUIDELINES AND MOODLE...

Reminder that you can 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.

The **Publications** section holds all the logos for teams who use the MREW roundel.

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

TO REGISTER



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

IN THE news

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: **Training to be in the news.**

There's been a flurry of activity on the media training side in recent months and I wanted to take this opportunity (with Will Close-Ash from Northumberland National Park MRT) to summarise where we're up to, what's emerging and what might be taking shape in the year ahead.

GRASS ROOTS COMMUNICATIONS TRAINING

Will and colleagues at NNPMRT designed and delivered a one-day Media Communications workshop for team members in late November. This brought together duty controllers and leadership, trustees and team members, and covered a lot of ground in one day!

'We have a range of people who at times find themselves working directly with the media or preparing communication materials or handling social media,' says Will, the team's press officer. 'It's a really visible part of what we do and, done well, can contribute to public understanding of what we do, fundraising and safety awareness too. The key aim was to enable and empower our team to share accurate, compelling stories while upholding the highest standards of responsibility and professionalism.'

One useful aspect of the course that could be adapted and used elsewhere involved small groups of participants analysing existing social media posts, incident reports, press releases and other materials. 'They were trying to pin down what works well, what's not so good and how to work more effectively,' says Will. 'There was a big

emphasis on the imagery used and thinking more about what makes a good photograph or image for a range of media. Keeping it really practical in this way proved very useful and I think we all learnt a lot from each other too.'

You can read a fuller report of the workshop content on the opposite page and Will would be happy to answer any questions if you get in touch with him direct via pressofficer@nnpnprt.org.

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN TALKING TO THE MEDIA

Following on from the pilot in August 2023, there are now various Level 1 media spokesperson courses planned for later this year, the first in early February.

The focus is very much on getting in front of camera and seeing how you come across on TV, with added input on radio and Zoom interviews.

The course is delivered by Helen Nugent (who also chaired the Sustainability panel at September's Conference) and James Richardson of Gatto Nero Marketing with me in the background, capturing some of the messaging and phrases that work best.

With ten participants and just one day, the course is only an introduction to some of the skills required. That said, it should build confidence and enable more people to be more effective when called upon to give interviews.

If you'd be interested in taking part and have not already registered an interest, please get in touch asap via pr@mountain.rescue.org.uk.

BUILDING SKILLS FOR NATIONAL SPOKESPEOPLE

If the Level 1 courses give an introduction, the Level 2 course that took place at the end of November, near Preston, moved things on, adding pressure and raising some of the bigger challenges that are facing MR.

With fewer participants and even more emphasis on doing and reviewing, the scenarios started as fairly straightforward post-incident interviews that then developed into some of the situations we have seen for real in recent years. Helen, who is a news journalist at heart, covered extended searches rife with social media speculation, challenges on the availability and response times of busy teams, and whether some of the toxic cultures reported in other emergency services were happening in MR.

As one participant fed back: 'The course lived up to and exceeded my expectations with the constructive feedback throughout the most useful aspect. I was very pleased with the day and think it's a good concept.'

GETTING SOCIAL WITH MEDIA

Apart from initiatives like that in Northumberland National Park, social media is probably still the biggest and most urgent gap in the training programme for media and communications. That, and the lack of national MR presence on key channels such as Instagram.

Please be assured that there are various projects in the pipeline on this, with more news to come in 2025. If you're keen to know more and be involved, please keep an eye on the Media and Communications Network Facebook Group as we are using that to rally resources and ideas.

And, if you're involved in your team's publicity and comms, but you've not heard of the MREW Media and Comms Network, please get in touch or ask to join at facebook.com/groups/951908816049247. We have just over 110 members at present and it's currently a forum for 'blue sky' discussions, as you might guess.

Thank you to everyone involved in that network for their work at all levels throughout mountain rescue during 2024. There's lots happening in media and communications and, I hope, it's all gradually feeling a bit more joined up.

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



NORTHUMBERLAND NATIONAL PARK TEAM HOSTS MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS WORKSHOP

The one-day Media Comms Workshop was aimed at enhancing member skills in managing media interactions, producing impactful content, and understanding key guidelines for sharing information in a mountain rescue context. **Will Close-Ash** explains.

The workshop, held at the team's base in Pegswood, brought together team members, duty controllers and trustees who can find themselves working directly with the media or preparing communication materials. Interacting with the media has become a key aspect of our role, be it speaking to reporters live on air or in the studio, drafting statements or handling social media. With so many of our members using social media, I was really keen to give them ideas on how to navigate this tricky landscape.

The training covered essential topics tailored to the unique demands of mountain rescue operations, including:

- Writing effective press releases and social media posts
- Understanding imagery rules and guidelines to maintain operational and ethical standards
- Preparing for interviews across different media formats, including radio and TV
- Building collaborative media campaigns with other agencies and stakeholders.

Media communications play a vital role in ensuring the public remains informed about our work while also supporting our efforts in fundraising and raising awareness about campaigns such as #AdventureSmart. This workshop empowers our team to share accurate, compelling stories while upholding the highest standards of responsibility and professionalism.

The workshop was structured into two sessions:

- In the morning, team members explored the purpose of media communications in a mountain rescue context and honed practical skills in creating press releases, social media posts and feature articles. Discussions also touched on the growing role of artificial intelligence in media production.

- In the afternoon, NNPMRT member and media expert, Andrew Miller, focused on visual storytelling, learning about image selection and guidelines.

The session also offered practical advice on handling media interactions, including preparation tips for interviews and strategies for navigating challenging questions.

'The practice interviews were definitely challenging and pushed me out of my comfort zone,' says Rich Newby, deputy team leader.

'There were a few curve balls thrown in but it was worthwhile going through the experience. I now feel like I have the confidence to handle a potential interview with a clear idea of what reporters might be looking for and how I stay "on message".'

The team plans to host similar workshops in the future to ensure ongoing skill development for members, helping us to effectively manage public communications while supporting the critical work of mountain rescue. ☺

Top: Will Close-Ash (left) plays TV journalist at an incident, conducting a practice interview with Iain Nixon, duty controller © NNPMRT.

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARDS NOVEMBER 2024

Two long-serving team members – both very familiar names at local, regional and national level – were recognised at the MREW meeting in November, for their dedication to mountain rescue.

Dave Binks (Duddon & Furness MRT) was recognised as having been 'instrumental in the dramatic advancement of mapping technology in mountain rescue, leading the way in developing MRMap and integrating it into search management'. Mark Lewis (Western Beacons MRT) was recognised for his 'immensely positive impact at all levels of mountain rescue, dedicating much of his life to the organisation.' Without a doubt, both Dave and Mark embody the spirit of volunteering. The awards were presented by MREW President Ray Griffiths.



Meanwhile, Penny Brockman was recognised with an official 'thank you' for her twenty years of service as MREW finance director.



Ray Griffiths presents Dave Binks (top), Mark Lewis (centre) and Penny Brockman (above) with their certificates © Judy Whiteside.



Top: News type © Spaceheater. Dreamstime.com. **Above:** Camerawoman via Pixabay.

News from the Rescue Benevolent Fund

We've simplified our application process so it's easier to ask for help when you need it...

Rescue Benevolent Fund chairman **Neil Woodhead** updates us on developments making it easier to apply for benevolence or to find support to aid wellbeing.

It was fabulous to attend the Mountain Rescue England and Wales conference in September where we were able to speak to team members about what the Rescue Benevolent Fund is all about and what services we can offer. But it was also disappointing to hear from a couple of team members that they had been put off seeking our assistance because of the application process. That was really difficult for us to hear, but we were so glad that those team members felt able to share this view with us.

To meet our objectives we do need to have a robust application process that stands up to scrutiny and ensures that we are fair to all. That said, it hasn't really changed since we were formed over a decade ago. We

immediately took action and have made some significant changes to the application form and supporting documents to make them less formal, shorter and easier to complete.

Please do take a look at the Resources section on our website — you can find it at rescuebenevolent.fund/resources — where our shorter and snappier 'How to Apply' document and application form are freely available to download.

We also understand much better now how difficult it can be for team members to ask for help. We really don't want anyone to be put off from applying in their hour of need. We all happily head out to help those in need on the hills and mountains, or down in the caves and

mines — but we're often very slow to seek help ourselves and the smallest hurdle can mean we turn away from seeking the help we really need.

I really want to stress that I don't want anyone to be put off from asking for our support because there's a form to complete and it feels too much. The easiest option is perhaps not to complete the form and not seek our help — but that is most probably the wrong option. So if you need our help, please ask someone to help you and to complete the form for you — anyone can fill it in on your behalf. We've kept it as short as we can and essentially we just want you to tell us, in your own words, as much as you can about why you are turning to the Rescue Benevolent

Fund and what sort of support you are looking for.

On a different note, I'm delighted that our partnership with Togetherall continues to be seen as a very valuable service to assist us all with our wellbeing. If you haven't heard about this then let me explain. Togetherall is a safe, online community where people support each other anonymously to improve mental health and wellbeing. Operational team members from mountain and cave rescue teams in England and Wales can register for free and start talking, finding the support they need, when they need it, 24/7. They can also access a raft of online resources such as articles, courses and NHS-approved wellbeing assessments. The site is monitored by professional clinicians and 'wall guides'.

In the last magazine, we heard how my fellow trustee Shirley, together with Emily Bromiley from Togetherall, led a very moving session at the conference. Building on that we had the pleasure of

Emily leading an online awareness session in October where she talked about their service and how team members can access it. Whilst we had a good number of team members attend we wanted to make sure that everyone can access this, so a video of Emily's session is now available for you all to access on our website at tinyurl.com/4rt2jjk. It's also uploaded to Moodle, in a folder dedicated to the Rescue Benevolent Fund. Please do share this with everyone in your team and help us to spread the message about the service.

Finally from me, a quick thank you to Jon White and everyone involved in the MREW Wellbeing group. We always have at least one — sometimes three — benevolent fund trustees attend their meetings to support their work and see how we can be part of it. It's great collaboration and good to receive their positive feedback on the service we provide to the mountain and cave rescue community. 🙏



AS A MOUNTAIN OR CAVE RESCUE TEAM MEMBER YOU CAN ACCESS TOGETHERALL FREE OF CHARGE

The Togetherall digital mental health and wellbeing support service is a completely anonymous community where you can express yourself freely and openly. Professionally trained Wall Guides and clinical professionals monitor the community to ensure the safety and anonymity of all members. Once you're registered and logged in, there's a range of activities that allow you to work through what's troubling you. **Share your thoughts** with other community members, gain support and advice or offer YOUR valuable support to someone else who needs it. **Access a wealth of useful resources** and join self-guided support courses covering the key topics which affect all our lives. Or take **clinically-approved self-assessments** to help you understand more about yourself. 🙏

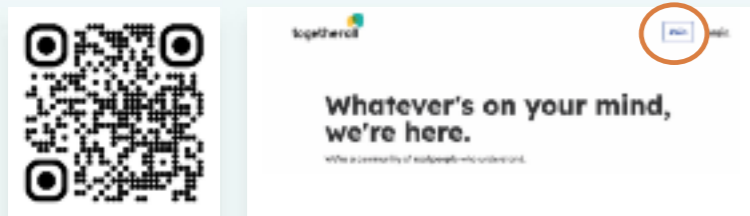
See left for instructions on how to register



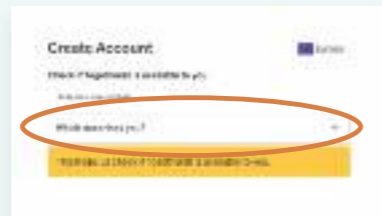
PARTNERING TO DELIVER PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING SUPPORT TO MOUNTAIN AND CAVE RESCUE TEAM MEMBERS



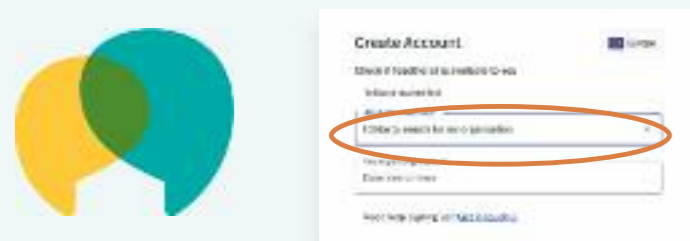
1 Go to togetherall.com or scan QR code. Click 'Join'



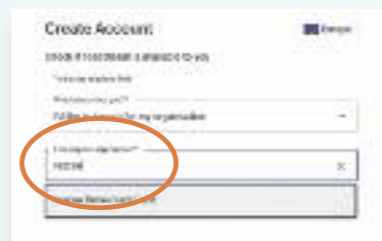
2 To create account Select 'Which describes you?'



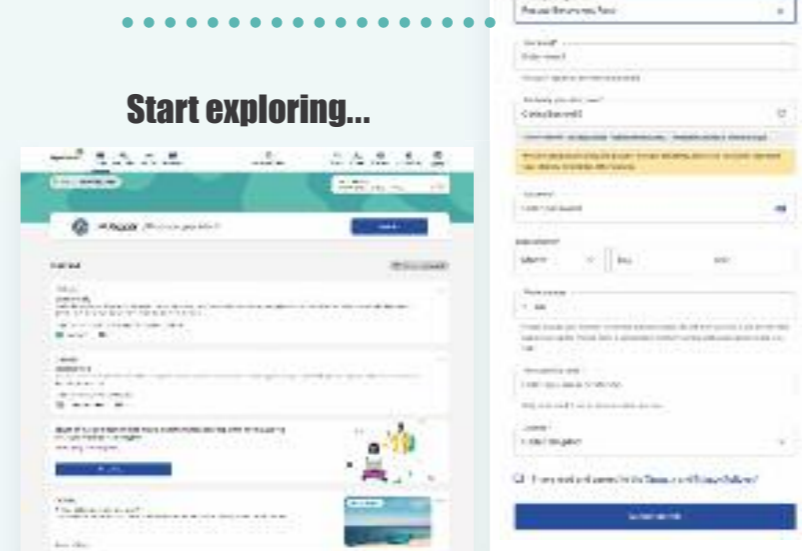
3 Select 'I'd like to search for my organisation'

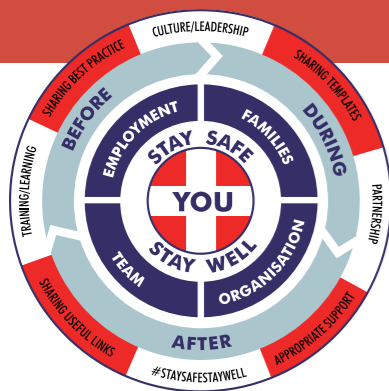


4 Enter 'rescue' to find Rescue Benevolent Fund



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





WELLBEING INFORMATION

For the family and team members of mountain and cave rescue

Being a mountain or cave rescue volunteer can be mentally and physically stressful. Sometimes we can struggle to cope. It's important to seek help if you feel that you or one of your colleagues need it.

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

Name: _____ Contact number: _____

Other useful contacts:

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

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

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

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

Go to BlueLightTogether.org

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



MOUNTAIN RESCUE ENGLAND AND WALES
BRITISH CAVE RESCUE COUNCIL

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

SARLOC Version 2

SARLOC Version 2 is now available in the Apple and Android app stores. It's a free download and SARLOC V2 Technology is free to use. Its creator, **Russ Hore**, offers a summary of SARLOC version 1 (SV1) Technology and looks to the future.

SV1 was a major innovation for SAR around the world when it was released in 2007. SV1 Technology describes:

- Delivering a URL to the LostPer, normally via including it in an SMS
- The URL has an appended random token to prevent misuse and allows the URL to be disabled
- The URL queries the web browser already installed on the phone for the phone's location
- The LostPers position is reported into the calling authorities mapping system
- The position is also emailed to registered parties.

WHAT IS SARLOC V2 (SV2) AND WHY HAS IT BEEN CREATED?

The huge benefit of SV1 Technology is that nothing needs to be installed on the LostPer's phone to obtain their location.

The major problem with SV1 and all its derivatives (eg. PhoneFind) is that, if the LostPer does not have internet connectivity, neither they or the SAR teams obtain a location, because SARLOC V1 Technology relies on downloading a web page to query the browser for the phone's location.

As connectivity across the country increases (see the work being carried out by Shared Rural Networks in Scotland <https://srn.org.uk>), there are likely to be fewer mobile signal dead spots so SARLOC Technology will work in more locations, but there are still technical issues that may prevent SARLOC working eg. Location Services not enabled, JavaScript disabled.

SV2 is a real app for both iOS and Android. The obvious downside is it needs to be installed on the LostPer's phone before it can be used. The upside is, unlike

SV1 technology, it will give them a location without needing internet connectivity. So the LostPer could send the location via SMS or, if in voice contact, read it out to the Emergency Services. If the LostPer does have internet connectivity, SV2 also allows them to share their location with the SAR teams under the teams control, as per SV1.

To prevent the LostPer continually sending their location to SARLOC, they must be given a SARKey to enable sharing. The SARKey is obtained by the emergency services and passed to the LostPer. It is valid for two hours, after which it is automatically disabled. The SARKey is obtained by browsing to a password protected URL, which could be stored for easy access which would show a screen similar to the screen grab top right.

The URL could be easily integrated into other applications. When the SARKey is requested, the requester provides a 'tag', which could be a Radio ID suitable for MRMap and thus the SARLOC location would appear directly in MRMap. The SARKey will only be created if the Radio ID is within the team's allocated set of Radio IDs.

The SARKey will expire after two hours, but if the team want to keep using the



same SARKey, for example if tracking somebody walking off, they just need to request a SARKey again with the same tag and the two-hour timer gets reset.

PROS OF SV2

LostPer gets a location without needing internet access. Once the app has been installed, the user can check it gives them a location before they become a LostPer, which they can't do with SV1.

CONS OF SV2

It is an app and needs to be installed before it can be used. 📱

THE MINDFUL CLIMBER BY MARK SNEDDON: FIVE MODULES DESIGNED TO CALM YOUR MIND AND INCREASE YOUR CLIMBING POTENTIAL

An alternative approach to help those with a fear of falling but for whom falling practices don't work... Grounded in mindfulness, this concise book is full of practical exercises that really work! Ideal for coaches, instructors and clients.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO BUY OR EMAIL MARK TO FIND OUT MORE:
MARKMINDFULCLIMBER@GMAIL.COM



Heart Rate Variability: what it is and how we can influence it

Alan Littlefield was one of our keynote speakers at the conference in September. He spoke about building trusting teams and introduced the concept of positively affecting our HRV by deploying the BREATHE skill, to improve both our individual and our team performance. The breathing bit, it has to be said, inspired a degree of scepticism amongst some in the audience, with a few questions raised. On a mission to better understand the idea, **Judy Whiteside** and **Chris Cookson** did a bit of digging into what's been published thus far on the topic, and caught up with Alan again in December to discuss those questions.



Above: Alan Littlefield at the 2024 Conference in September © Scott van der Zanden.

First, a bit of background. The BREATHE skill was devised by another Alan — Dr Alan Watkins, who for the purposes of clarity, we'll refer to as Dr Watkins. A neuroscientist and former cardiologist, Dr Watkins moved away from medical practice 25 years ago, to work with people on a wider scale to improve their health, wellbeing and performance. He and his wife Sarah set up Complete twenty years ago, working with organisations around the

world to develop leadership and human performance. He's passionate about his work and the power of this simple breathing skill to affect change. He's also a prolific author on the subject (twelve books and counting). It's a passion Alan Littlefield has shared for thirteen years working with Complete. His background and experience are in leadership development and coaching.

WHAT IS HEART RATE VARIABILITY?

'Heart rate variability (HRV) measures the distance between one heartbeat and the next,' says Dr Watkins. 'This inter-beat interval is constantly changing' (Figure 1). And, in a nutshell, our HRV can indicate how well we use our energy, how well we are performing and how well we are recovering.

Dr Watkins routinely prefaces interviews and articles with a potted history of the growth of interest in HRV, dating back to 1965, when doctors first noticed that HRV could be a predictor of infant mortality during labour. In 1975, an Australian physician working with people who'd had heart attacks noticed that those who lost HRV post-attack were less likely to leave the ward. And, in

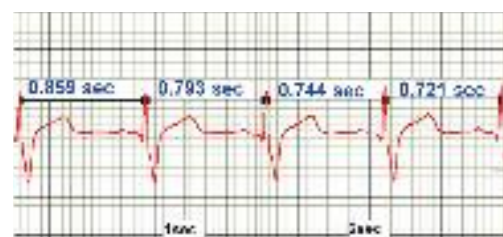
1995, scientists discovered that HRV could predict 'all cause mortality' — including accidents.

One of the queries raised post-conference referenced the 'generally limited evidence on the HRV and its meaning in the literature'. We picked up on this with Alan and a number of references are listed at the end of this piece. Dr Watkins himself states that there are 'more than 50,000 research papers looking at how HRV can predict the risk of illness as well as death'.³ More importantly for our purposes, 'HRV analysis can shed light on exactly what's required to improve performance'.^{1,2}

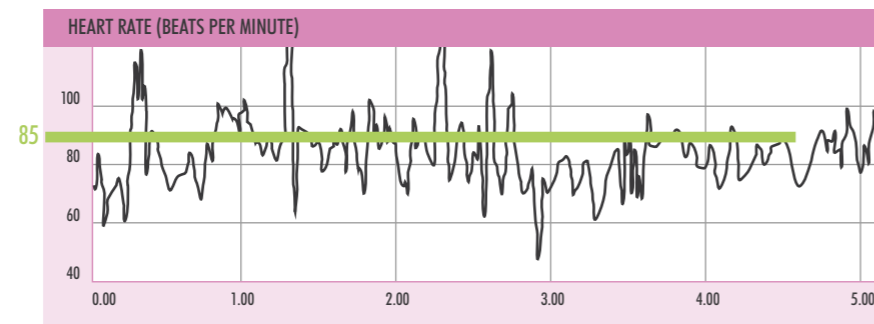
WHY IS HRV IMPORTANT?

HRV is undoubtedly the buzz acronym *du jour* amongst anyone with the remotest interest in fitness and wellbeing, with any number of apps and devices on the market competing for your attention and cash. But, as Dr Watkins notes to breath coach and podcaster Mike Maher: 'Take it all with a pinch of salt. Even cardiologists are not necessarily *au fait* with HRV'. He admits that he wasn't (tinyurl.com/38pc3uw3).

FIGURE 1 (BELOW): CHANGES IN THE INTER-BEAT INTERVAL FIGURE 2 (RIGHT): VARIATIONS IN HEART RATE OVER FIVE MINUTES



3.0 SECONDS OF HEARTBEAT DATA



Left: Graph © Complete. Above: Graphic representation based on images supplied by Complete.

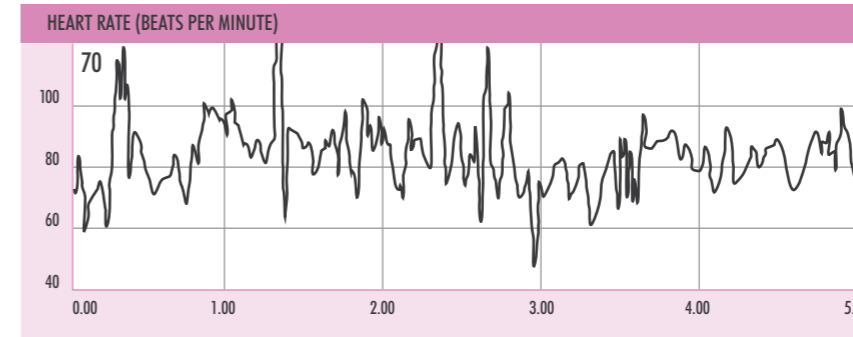


FIGURE 3: ERRATIC, CHAOTIC 'WHITE NOISE' ELECTRICAL SIGNAL (HRV)

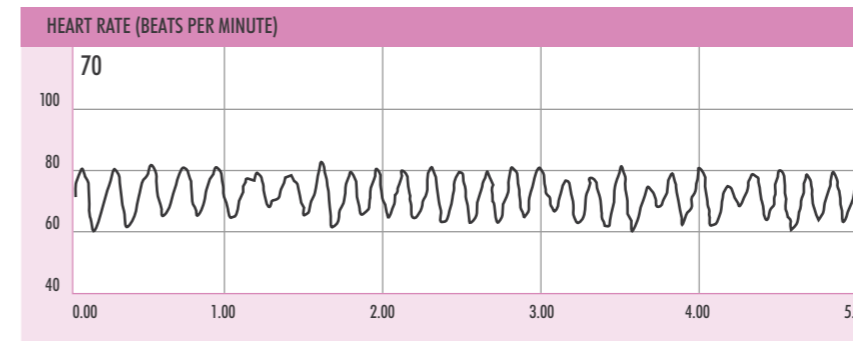


FIGURE 4: A MORE COHERENT 'SINE WAVE' ELECTRICAL SIGNAL (HRV)

But why should we care? On a personal level, tracking our HRV can paint a picture of our health (or ill-health), our energy level, our cognitive ability and decision making, and even our 'individual identity'.⁴⁻¹⁵

As we all know, even in the less-busy teams and regions, mountain rescue can place huge demands on the individual. Whatever it is you do all day, be that mentally or physically demanding, chances are you're ready for rest at the end of it, whether that's settling down to an evening meal and a cheeky glass, having fun with the family or heading out to the hill or climbing wall. But when that call-out SMS pings, the adrenaline surges and you're off. No dinner. No cheeky glass. No time with the family. No rest and recovery. Maybe no sleep. Exerting enormous physical energy pumping up that hill with heavy kit on your back, making decisions, possibly facing unspeakable trauma. Fuelled by adrenaline and camaraderie.

We might not always notice it, but that steady outpouring of adrenaline and energy is exhausting. Adrenaline accelerates the system. And when we're exhausted, we can't possibly perform at our best.

HRV is a way of quantifying how much energy we actually have. This isn't about physical fitness. In fact, a small study into the 'Physiological demands of mountain rescue work' in 2011, co-authored by John Ellerton (then MREW Medical Officer), suggested that 'mountain rescuers generally have high levels of physical fitness and are required to perform at very hard intensity for the majority of the ascent to a casualty.' The study used heart rate as a measure of exercise intensity (tinyurl.com/3t2a8f6r).

So, rather than physical fitness, this is about how well we manage the energy we

have, despite those additional demands on our minds and bodies.

'When we measure HRV, we're looking for a daily tide, so it's best done over a 24-hour period,' says Alan. 'Heart rate will typically be higher during the day and lower at night and we can zoom in on specific chunks of time and activities and see how those have affected our heart rate variability. That data can then tell us whether the person is making best use of their energy or failing to recover effectively.'

WHICH IS BEST: HIGH OR LOW?

Another post-conference query was around the relative value of high and low HRV, the presumption being that the higher the better. Our understanding is that we're looking for that sweet spot, the 'golden window', but where exactly is that?

'In terms of the amount of variation, higher is better,' says Alan. 'If we plot heart rate over 24 hours, a large day/night difference is good. Even better if the heart rate has lots of variation in the day as we respond to stimuli, and stays low at night so we recuperate well'. The amount of variation is a good predictor of health and dynamism, which is why all the wearable tech measures HRV and gives a strong 'high is good' message.

However, Alan suggests we focus on the 'pattern' as well because this is what affects brain function. Heart rate can have a 'chaotic' pattern where it varies erratically (Figure 3) and it can have a 'coherent' pattern that looks more like a smooth, even sine wave (Figure 4). If you look closely at these graphs, you can see that the chaotic heart rate in Figure 3 varies from 45 to over 120 bpm, whilst the coherent heart rate in Figure 4 only varies from 60 to 80 bpm. So which is really 'better'— lots of energy that is

chaotic with disrupted brain function, or less energy that is coherent and more effective brain function?

Alan and Dr Watkins advocate training ourselves to have a more coherent HRV pattern as well as having a high amount of HRV. The good news is we can achieve coherence by simply breathing rhythmically and evenly. But before we get to that, there's another query to address.

HOW DOES HRV AFFECT OUR BRAIN FUNCTION?

During his presentation, Alan referenced the connection between HRV and our ability to think. He mentioned the vagus nerve, carrying those 'coherence' signals from our heart to our brain. Uncertainty about the 'physiology behind this' raised another query. Again, Alan has kindly provided references.¹⁶⁻¹⁷ We asked whether there was a 'killer paper' we might link to and, following our catch up, he caught up with Dr Watkins who made a great point that 'the proof of the power of coherence affecting cognitive function lies in many different strands of research, which must be integrated rather than relying on a single killer paper.' That said, he feels that *Thayer et al (2009)*¹¹ is the best.

'The quality of our thinking is significantly affected by HRV,' says Dr Watkins. 'Specifically, when our heart sends our brain a chaotic HRV signal it can inhibit our prefrontal cortex and create a DIY lobotomy (Figure 5). In contrast, when the heart sends our brain a much more coherent signal, the brain turns back on, and our ability to think clearly improves significantly' (Figure 6). It's the same phenomenon that gives rise to stage fright (or the inability to remember simple facts when faced with a Casualty Care exam environment, perhaps?).

This is our innate 'fight/flight or freeze' instinct continuing to drive our behaviour, outside our awareness. It's a physiological response to danger, except now we're reacting to the pressures of modern-day life rather than fleeing tigers and grizzly bears. When the brain shuts down, we lose the

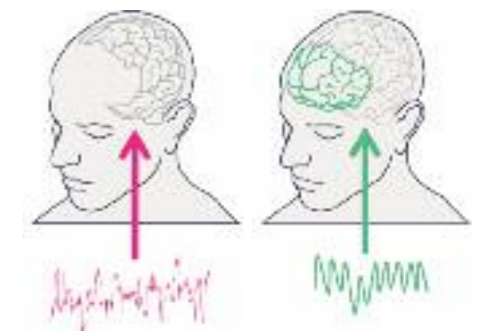


FIGURE 5 (LEFT): DIY LOBOTOMY FIGURE 6 (RIGHT): BRAIN SWITCHED ON

ability to think or even do simple tasks. And, worse still, when our brain shuts down in this way, it also affects our perceptual awareness, so we don't even realise we're not performing well. We may even be thinking the exact opposite, while those around us grit their teeth in barely concealed frustration.

At the conference, Alan demonstrated this phenomenon with willing volunteer Harry, from North Dartmoor team. Connected to a monitor, via a clip on his earlobe, our volunteer's heart rate was displayed on the screen above, for all to see. Having lulled his victim into a false sense of security with amiable chat, Alan redirected his attention, asking Harry to count backwards from 300 in steps of three, whilst also seeking to further confuse matters with random numbers and banter.

As you might expect, the heart rate graph headed sharply upwards. This too was commented on in the verbal feedback (something along the lines of 'No surprise Sherlock!') to which we say, yes, he was facing an audience of 200-plus people and being asked to count backwards at speed — of course he was stressed. But the idea was to demonstrate how our heart rate is affected by stress and to look at the underlying pattern of HRV, rather than how high the heart rate went, and then see how that could be calmed into a smoother sine wave by simply breathing rhythmically and evenly. Once Harry was invited to breathe in time with a rhythmically moving pacer on screen, we saw his heart rate come down and his HRV settle from chaotic into a more coherent wave form, in less than a minute. A huge thank you to him for being such a good sport!

This live demonstration is an integral piece of the many presentations and TedX Talks by Dr Watkins, available online. We recommend 'Being Brilliant Every Single Day', from 2012, available from Complete via tinyurl.com/frsdmyfx.

We queried whether this demo ever goes beyond the calming of the heart rate. Whether, armed with this new technique, the volunteer is ever asked to repeat the counting down exercise. Understandably perhaps, the answer is no — because it takes time and practice to establish the skill. To expect any volunteer, however mathematically brilliant, to so soon again face the stress of performing in public would be unreliable. Not to say quite cruel!

'The whole idea is to practice and, by practising, perform better', says Alan. 'The BREATHE skill is like a piece of gym equipment. If you don't pick it up on a regular basis — and practise good form — you won't build the muscle.'

'The key is to begin by practising in simple situations, maybe on your own in a quiet moment, a minute at a time, then during a conversation where you have to both talk and listen... gradually moving onto more challenging situations. Build the muscle so you can use it when things are challenging, even in high stakes.'

Once mastered, it becomes second nature. Dr Watkins (we hear) has a favourite anecdote, which might resonate here. We ask Alan whether Complete had ever worked with other emergency services or first responders, and this story fits that bill. Dr Watkins was working with personnel at an RAF base and they decided to put his fine words to the test, in a helicopter simulator. Using the breathing skill, he was able to 'fly the aircraft', his HRV reflecting that he was dealing well with the pressure. However, not satisfied with this performance, his 'captors' decided to up the ante somewhat, with the appearance of a bunch of 'insurgents' aiming fire at the helicopter. Still he managed to stay 'fairly coherent', says Alan.

Alan has his own tale, of heading to a noisy neighbour's house to remonstrate with him about the din. Heading to the door, he deployed the breathing skill, consciously bringing himself to a level of coherence. The door opened and his neighbour took one look at him before aiming a punch at Alan's face — which he swerved, like a slow-mo scene from 'The Matrix', as the fist travelled past his ear. Stunned at the reaction, the noisy neighbour promptly went inside and turned the noise down.

SO, HOW CAN WE IMPROVE OUR HRV?

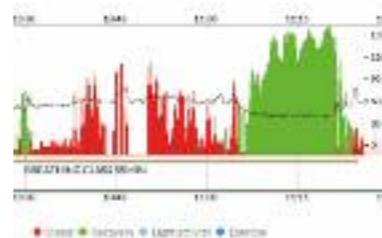
Full disclosure here: both of us — thanks to our own HRV monitoring devices — have seen in real time how the stresses of our 'mountain rescue life' can affect our heart rate variability, Chris as an operational team member and Judy as a non-operational keyboard warrior and serial online meeting attendee. Never mind the yomping uphill, we can tell you from experience, those late night meetings, staring for hours at a screen after a long day's work, have a demonstrable effect on that HRV chart! And not in a good way. On the other hand, we've also seen the beneficial effect of a focused breathing session (Figure 8).

FIGURE 7: FOCUSING ON BREATHING INTO THE HEART, THE POWERHOUSE OF THE BODY



Above: Breathing into the heart © Judy Whiteside. Opposite: Heart on a tree via Pixabay.

FIGURE 8: BREATHING INTO RECOVERY



Just a tiny bit of supporting evidence that settling into a regular, guided breathing pattern brings the body into a state of 'recovery'. This was Chris during a 'breathing' class, wearing a device to monitor HRV and heart rate. During the initial red section we were using gentle movement before finding our way to stillness. The green bit reflects the twenty minutes or so we spent in focused breathing and shows how effectively we can settle into recovery © Chris Cookson/Judy Whiteside.

As Dr Watkins explains, we improve our HRV by 'reducing the chaos in our system and developing more bio-coherence'. This, in turn, 'facilitates an improvement in brain function'. Complete lists twelve dimensions to our breath which we can learn to control. The three most important to generate coherence are:

1. **Rhythmicity** (fixing the in:out ratio)¹⁸
2. **Smoothness** (even flow rate in and out)¹⁸
3. **Location of attention** (focus on the heart).¹⁹

1. Rhythmicity: There are many theories about the optimum ratio for beneficial breathing. For example, Brown and Gerbarg (tinyurl.com/yc3p9d3s) and Stephen Elliott (tinyurl.com/nhnhzhcc) teach that a rate of five breaths per minute is 'essential' for 'coherent breathing'. The world of yoga espouses any number of breathing techniques, each with a different intention, too many to detail here.

At Complete, it's simple: it doesn't matter what ratio you use, the main point is to maintain a consistent rhythm. If your HRV signal becomes rhythmic, 'this can stabilise other aspects of your physiology, enabling other systems to operate with a much greater energy efficiency'.

2. Smoothness: 'Bio-coherence requires a silky smooth breath' with 'a fixed volume of air' going in and out of your lungs per second.¹⁸ Imagine breathing along a sine wave on a graph, or tracing your breath around the perimeter of an oval shape.

3. Location of attention: Fellow yogis out there will be familiar with the concept and practice of interoception — cultivating an



awareness of where your body is in space, 'listening' to what's going on inside, using the breath to release tension in specific areas. What Complete talks about is bringing awareness to our heart centre (imagine somewhere behind the sternum as in Figure 7, not high in the chest). Why? The heart is the powerhouse of our body, generating electrical and electromagnetic energy which extends beyond the body by some distance. Focusing here draws us away from our busy mind. And, finally, focusing on the heart can 'facilitate positive emotional experiences'.

For the record, the other nine dimensions which we can learn to control are listed below. Whilst the first three above help us become coherent, the nine below have different effects on the body:

4. Speed of breathing (alters arousal and adrenaline levels)
5. Pattern of in and out (affects CO2 and vascular tone)
6. Volume of air in a single breath (affects CO2 and vascular tone)
7. Entrainment with other systems (drives system synchronisation)
8. Depth of breath (impacts oxygenation)
9. Resistance through the nose and mouth (affects humidification and has an antibacterial effect)
10. Flow patterns around the body (helps regulate attention control)
11. Special techniques (such as Vipassana, Buteyko, Nadi Shodana etc)
12. Mechanics of accessory muscles (alters energy expenditure).

SO WHAT IS THIS BREATHE SKILL?

The acronym BREATHE invites us to Breathe Rhythmically Evenly And Through the Heart Every day.

Of course, we're all breathing all the time (until we're not), and this is often cited as a reason not to bother practising anything other than just getting on with it — 'I already know how to breathe', a well-worn refrain. Usually delivered with some semblance of smirk. But, for all the reasons noted, learning to breathe coherently, and doing this more often, has the power to transform your life. Dr Watkins even maintains that breathing regularly with coherence can 'turn the clock back ten years' on your energy levels, so why wouldn't you try it?

Complete top tips for practising the BREATHE skill:

1. **10 by 10 Challenge:** Practise for a minute on Day 1, then increase by one minute a day for ten days.
2. **Countdown Challenge:** Set a target time on your phone. Each time you have the opportunity to do some coherent breathing, start the timer, then pause again when you stop. Aim to get the clock to zero within a week.
3. **Handy Habits:** Attach breathing practice to everyday habits such as queuing for coffee, listening to the news, sitting in a traffic jam.
4. **Performance Enhancer:** Anticipate difficult situations with a five-minute practice before hand (as per the noisy neighbour tale).

And a few more from us: Download a breathing app, find a suitably rhythmic piece

of music, set a metronome, come along to Judy's yoga classes... whatever works for you, but start small and keep practising.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT TO YOU AS A TEAM?

Okay, we sense there might still be some resistance to the idea that simply breathing more coherently can change — well, anything. But remember that breathing coherently improves brain function and means 'less cortisol in your system, more energy and more helpful emotions' — arguably ALL essential qualities in a mountain rescue environment. And then there's entrainment — not just the entrainment of an individual's bodily systems, where your bio-oscillators are sufficiently synchronised to create a 'flow state', but the entrainment of an entire team, working together in perfect harmony.

In an ideal world, no matter the individuals and personalities involved in any one call-out, when the chips are down, things just flow. Everyone knows what they're doing, everything falls into place, everyone gets on. This is entrainment. 'Good examples of entrainment might be a startling murmur or a Mexican wave,' says Alan. 'Nobody really knows where it begins, but everyone there is perfectly attuned to what's happening.'

But this isn't an ideal world and maybe sometimes things don't flow quite as well as

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AND A FEW MORE, FROM PUB MED...

Practice effects of a breathing technique on pilots' cognitive and stress associated heart rate variability during flight operations.

Cardiac coherence and posttraumatic stress disorder in combat veterans.

[Dynamics of EEG Alpha-Activity and Heart Rate Variability in Subjects Performing Cognitive Tests].

The connection between heart rate variability (HRV), neurological health, and cognition: A literature review.



ARTICLE WRITTEN WITH HUGE THANKS TO ALAN LITTLEFIELD AND DR ALAN WATKINS FOR THEIR INPUT AND SUBSEQUENT CHECKING, AND FOR SHARING THE ARTICLES, PRESENTATIONS AND REFERENCES. WE HOPE THIS HAS IN SOME WAY ANSWERED THE VARIOUS QUERIES RAISED AT THE CONFERENCE. FOR MORE ABOUT COMPLETE, GO TO COMPLETE-COHERENCE.COM

we'd like. In the high stakes of a call-out, team members might be most exposed to that moment of brain shutdown. That 'What do I do now?' moment.

People can get 'task fixated' too, unable to see the bigger picture. When you're coherent, you can still focus on a task, but be aware of everything else around at the same time. So we're not advocating having a group 'breathe-in' before every incident or training session (we know how far THAT one would fly), but perhaps encourage individuals to become more coherent. Even increasing awareness a small amount individually could create a collective improvement.

And, it may not surprise you to hear that the most important person in the process of entrainment is whoever is leading the team or group — be that the 'team leader' in name or whoever is making the decisions on the day. If that person is coherent, their coherence will influence everyone around them thanks to the electrical and electromagnetic signals their heart gives out.

This concept of entrainment was first recognised in 1665, when the Dutch physicist Christian Huygens discovered that the pendulum frequencies of two clocks became synchronised to each other. After much experimentation, he concluded that a feedback loop drives 'an adjustment process in which different energy amounts are gradually eliminated to zero until both moving bodies move in resonant frequency or synchrony.

'The strongest oscillator locks the weaker into its frequency and when both oscillating bodies have equally strong energy, both systems move toward each other: the faster system slows down and the slower system speeds up until they lock into a common movement period'. (tinyurl.com/ymjy7kp5).

Put simply, team members are no more than a collection of oscillating bodies, entraining themselves to the strongest amongst them, so it's important that the strongest oscillator is getting it right!

ANYTHING ELSE COMPLETE WOULD RECOMMEND?

There's an app, of course. It's packed with 'advice and skills as well as software to track your own biology'. Just search for the 'Complete App'. And the two devices that Alan recommends work well with the app are the Kyto KYTO2935 ear clip (tinyurl.com/54cnhwy) and the Polar H10 chest strap (tinyurl.com/2s3ppt6x).

That said, you don't need an app to start practising coherent breathing. Just do it. Your body and brain — and, indirectly, your fellow team members and the casualties you rescue — will thank you for it. ☺

Note: The graphic representations of Heart Rate and HRV charts used in Figures 2, 3 and 4 are based on images in 'Coherence. The Science of Exceptional Leadership and Performance', 2nd edition (pictured left), by Dr Alan Watkins. Published by Kogan Page Limited ISBN: 978-1-3986-0118-5.



Update on the partnership between MREW and OS

JOSH WARREN OS LEAD

The partnership between MREW and Ordnance Survey (OS) has now completed its second year. The partnership allows both organisations to work together to further our common interests in encouraging responsible outdoor leisure through shared events and media campaigns.

The big highlight of 2024 was the Princess Royal visiting an Emergency Services showcase at OS HQ in Southampton, in February. It was also a great opportunity to share what MREW does with staff from across OS, who really enjoyed seeing how their work was being used in practice. As ever, Search Dog Amber was the star of the show.

As part of the partnership, OS provides a free Premium subscription to OS Maps to all team members. This year, around the time this goes to print, team members who have already signed up will receive a renewal email directly from OS. New members can get the code and instructions from their team leadership. The code gives an additional twelve months' subscription and can be applied at any time: you do not need to wait for your previous subscription to expire.

In return for free Premium subscriptions, suggestions for improvements and feedback from MR volunteers are contributing to the further development of OS Maps for the future, with new features like Pins (Points of Interest) emerging from those partnership discussions about the technology. After a lot of work, we can finally announce that the new Pins feature will be released into the app and web in early 2025. This functionality will be free to all users of OS Maps, across web and mobile. I would like to thank the volunteers in the Product Committee for their input into the development of these. Future development is planned, but see below for a glimpse of what the first release will look like. ☺

CREATE SAVE CATEGORISE



Right: The Princess Royal meets (left to right:) Sally Seed, Josh Warren, Brendan O'Neill, Dave Binks and Mark Lewis, with Nick Giles OBE looking on (right). Paula Holbrook and Search Dog Amber, bottom left of shot. Images courtesy of OS.

MREW AND MHT HERITAGE UPDATE AND NEWS

MIKE MARGESON

I am delighted to report that following a recent fundraising lecture by Jasmin Paris MBE, ultra fell runner and holder of both the Bob Graham and the Ramsay Round records (and the only woman to successfully complete the Barkley Marathons), raised a £500 kind donation for MREW heritage work. Many thanks Jasmin. The fundraising event was organised by our friends and partners at the Mountain Heritage Trust.

There is, of course, a variety of ways the funds could be used — perhaps further filming and interviewing of key MR team members or funding of a stand at the next conference which probably seems ages away but will come round quickly.

We continue to unearth important items, such as the plaque sent to me by an FRCC member in memory of Charles Paget Lapage MD FRCP, first chairman of the Mountain Rescue Committee. I have been trying to find more about him. If anyone has any info, please do let us know. Other items include the complete wire rescue Tragitz found in Patterdale base attic, alongside a treasure trove of other pieces. Also, the original RIVIVA developed by Peter Bell.

My thanks to Mike France, who produced a copy of the report on the Lockerbie Air Disaster by the North East Search and Rescue Association and Northumbria Police: a sobering and very interesting read, and obviously an important historical document.

Then there is the original load test method for the Bell stretcher compared to the computerised load test process demonstrated to Peter Bell when we filmed Peter at Lyon. If you haven't seen the film interviews with Peter and David Allan, Mark Lewis has arranged for them to be available to view on Vimeo.

Lastly, please keep sending me details and photos of important things you find buried in the depths of cupboards and attics. Meanwhile, I continue to search for possible partners, sponsors or grants for future MREW heritage work. ☺



NEWS ROUND

OCTOBER > DECEMBER

KENDAL TEAM SUPPORTS THEIR 'LOCAL' FILM FESTIVAL WITH A RANGE OF ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

It was never a dull moment for Kendal team members at this annual three-day event, spreading the word about mountain rescue and supporting the local community.

Day one saw them visiting Kirkbie Kendal School to talk to Year Five and Six pupils and then do some rescue scenarios with a few willing volunteers. The event was sponsored by Yeti, with all the pupils getting a free cooler flask. Search dog Jura did wonder what all the fuss was about and was happy to investigate. The first of the ticketed base tours/talks also got under way.

By day two of the festival, Storm Bert was doing its best to make life difficult, but team members maintained a presence at base camp and continued the ticketed base tours – plus keeping up a tradition of one Kendal team vehicle leading out the competitors of the 10k Trials race. In between base tours the team also hosted a group of speed flyers who wished to discuss a variety of safe practice methods with input from mountain rescue.

Final day brought a final base tour in the morning but, as we all know, you leave the best till last, and Kendal Trainee Search Dog Jura and handler John Leadbetter represented the team and Lake District Mountain Rescue Search Dogs on the Gallery stage to talk all things 'search dog'.

'The team enjoyed being able to promote mountain rescue over the weekend and we wish to thank Yeti for sponsoring Friday's school event and the festival team for allowing us to have a presence at base camp. Finally a big thanks to all those who attended our tours and met our team members at base camp. All donations to the team were gratefully received.'

Below: John Leadbetter with Trainee Search Dog Jura © Kendal MSRT.



NOVEMBER: MOUNTAIN RESCUE AT THE KENDAL MOUNTAIN FESTIVAL 2024

Helena Sansum, North of Tyne MRT, reports back on a successful showing at this annual event, in collaboration with Helly Hansen.

Wow, what a weekend that was! Thank you to Helly Hansen for inviting us once again to the Kendal Mountain Festival to help promote safety in the outdoors as well as the professional gear we use, trust and rely on to carry out our work in mountain rescue. Over the course of three days, team members took to the Helly Hansen stand in the event's 'basecamp' to interact and engage with visitors about mountain rescue, as well as the Helly Hansen kit we use.

Six two-legged team members attended, along with three four-legged members — and it's no surprise that the four-legged members were the real stars of the show! Search dogs Rona, Freya and Flynn, took to one of the stages on Friday evening with handlers Chris and Pete, where a captivated audience



listened to a story told by Chris about a recent rescue. Chris, who is also deputy team leader, passed on plenty of top tips about staying safe in the great outdoors too. A grateful audience then got to meet and pat the search dogs, who were lapping it up.

Storm Bert then came along on Saturday to keep us on our toes, but thankfully it didn't put a stop to the festival fun.

Basecamp was nice and busy with people sheltering from the rain, where a constant stream arrived at the Helly Hansen stand having heard about the 'Ready Steady Rescue' challenge.

The challenge, taking place all day every day, was a good-hearted bit of fun to see how fast someone could be 'rescue ready', donning Helly Hansen mountain rescue waterproof trousers, jacket and helmet. The clock stopped when the helmet strap was clicked shut.

On Sunday, team members took festival goers who'd signed up to a Helly Hansen guided hike out for a walk in the local area. We stopped from time to time to chat about top tips for staying safe in the outdoors and to practise navigation using a map and compass. Team member Graham then went off for a quick lie down up a hillside, but not for long, as search dog Freya demonstrated her impeccable skill at being able to sniff him out!

All in all, a fantastic weekend supporting our partnership with Helly Hansen and interacting with many brilliant people, all with a keen interest in the great outdoors. 🐾

Top: Left to right: Pete, Chris, Ian, Helena, Grant and Graham © Helly Hansen. Inset: Chris delivers the talk, alongside Pete (seated) and Chris's collie, Flynn © Helena Sansum. Images opposite © Helly Hansen.



NEWS ROUND

OCTOBER > DECEMBER



OCTOBER: LEADERSHIP AND TRUSTEE CHANGES FOR NORTHUMBERLAND TEAM

October brought a change in leadership for the Northumberland National Park team with Iain Nixon standing down after ten years as team leader, and Andy Mace stepping down after four years' service as chair of trustees. Both will continue to be operational team members.

Iain took on the role of leader after a period of instability and change and immediately set about developing and strengthening the team's professional links with the statutory emergency services across Northumberland and Tyne and Wear.

Under his leadership, the team has gone from strength to strength, responding to 761 incidents, with 2018 and 2011 the busiest years. The average number of incidents for this period represents a three-and-a-half-fold increase over the preceding period of time.

'This increase is in part due to the increased popularity of Northumberland as a tourist and outdoor activity destination, which is a great thing for the county,' says Iain. 'Our volunteers have had to contend with a crashed glider high on The Cheviot, several severe storms, supporting the fire service with a number of major wildfires and, of course, responding to 46 incidents in a 72-hour period during the Beast from the East.'

The Covid pandemic tested the team's resilience, forcing a complete review of how the team operated in preparation for the 'return to the outdoors' post-pandemic.

'Our team members have been at the forefront of this work and over the past ten years, and a number of them have received awards for their involvement in mountain rescue. These have included long service awards, an MREW distinguished service award, Jubilee and Coronation medals and awards from the High Sheriff of Northumberland. We've also had two members recognised with awards from the Royal Humane Society and the Police Governance Search Governance Board. I am incredibly proud of the commitment and efforts of all our volunteers.'

Also stepping down at the AGM was the chair of trustees, Andy Mace. 'Change is inevitable and a part of any healthy organisation,' says Andy. 'Although Iain and I are both stepping down, the team is in a strong and stable position with a strong group of trustees. Iain's service to the team and the initiatives he's led have been phenomenal. We've grown so much and the systems now in place will allow us to continue to develop. On behalf of the trustees, I'd like to extend our thanks to him

for his valuable and dedicated service as team leader.'

Andy took on the role of chair in 2020 and, along with Iain, has overseen considerable development. The team became a CIO during that period and has seen considerable changes and improvements in financial stability and governance.

'Being an operational member and a trustee is challenging at times, but it gives you a unique insight into how the team is governed. I'd like to extend a huge thanks to all the trustees I've worked with. Their efforts help ensure that the team can continue to function and meet its primary objective of saving lives. We continue to be a highly respected team of volunteers and, alongside our colleagues in North of Tyne, continue to provide an essential blue light service. It has been a privilege serving as chair.'

Both Iain and Andy extended a thank you to the other agencies they've worked with over the past ten years. 'Mountain rescue as a service is not delivered in isolation and requires strong partnerships with other agencies,' says Iain. 'A lot of the work goes on behind the scenes with Andy, myself and our duty controllers working alongside colleagues in the police, ambulance, fire and rescue, Coastguard and the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum. We continue to have great relationships with our rural partner organisations: Northumberland National Park Authority, Forestry England and Northumberland County Council.'

'It's been an honour to fulfil the role and I've thoroughly enjoyed every minute. However, it's the right time to step down as it is an all-consuming role. I am looking forward to continuing as a duty controller and an operational member, and watching the new team leader take the team forward.'

'It would not have been possible to achieve what I have over the past ten years without the support of my family, my biggest thanks goes to them.'



This prestigious accolade, created in 2002 to celebrate Her Majesty the late Queen's Golden Jubilee and continued following the accession of King Charles, recognises outstanding work by volunteer groups to support their communities and is often regarded as the MBE for voluntary groups. The teams have been jointly recognised for their dedication, courage and commitment in safeguarding residents and visitors across Northumberland.

The teams respond to incidents across Northumberland, including the upland landscapes of Northumberland National Park, as well as in Tyne and Wear. Their work spans the search and rescue of lost or injured outdoor enthusiasts, as well as for vulnerable and despondent individuals in semi-urban and rural areas, response to extreme weather events and community support. From aiding injured hikers to responding to wildfires and severe storms, the teams play a crucial role in the North East's emergency response framework.

The challenges faced by both teams have grown significantly over the past decade, some of which Iain Nixon details on the previous page. 'This award

celebrates the bravery and commitment of our team members,' adds North of Tyne leader, Keith Briggs, 'and it underscores the essential role we play in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of everyone who ventures into this region's vast wilderness.'

The Lord Lieutenant of Northumberland, Dr Caroline Pryer, was 'enormously impressed by the commitment of all volunteers of the Northumberland National Park and North of Tyne teams, working together to ensure a fully professional, effective and efficient rescue service covering Northumbria Police area. During the KAVS process, both teams evidenced not only the substantial and sustained contribution from each volunteer, but the outstanding teamwork in training, preparation and rescue incidents, and the dedicated support to residents and visitors in our county. My huge congratulations to both teams.'

Above: North of Tyne members during a photo shoot with Helly Hansen © Nadir Khan.



SEPTEMBER: WESTERN BEACONS TEAM CELEBRATE SIXTY YEARS OF MOUNTAIN RESCUE

The 'black tie' event was attended by representatives from South Wales Police (who awarded the team an award of thanks), Dyfed Powys Police and the Lord Lieutenant.

'Team members past and present, representatives from the emergency services, and friends and family, joined in celebrating the team's anniversary,' says Will Oliver, deputy team leader. 'We look forward to the next ten years of service and success.'

Top: Gathered team members and dignitaries. Above: Left to right: ACC Phillips (Dyfed Powys Police), ACC Maal MSc (South Wales Police), Air Cdre Philip Arnold (President Western Beacons MRT), Ashley Cunnick (Team member), Lord Lieutenant Peter Vaughan QPM CSI (Mid Glamorgan), Deputy Lieutenant Martin Trainer JP DL (West Glamorgan) © Western Beacons MRT.



Raising funds for rescue

OCTOBER: ANNUAL TRACTOR RUN BENEFITS TEAM

Cleveland MRT were the beneficiaries of the of the annual Thirsk Young Farmers Club Tractor Run. Team members staffed a merchandise stall at the event start and crewed a team Land Rover, which 'leap-frogged' along the route helping out with collection buckets.

At one point, the fundraising was interrupted by a call-out for an injured mountain biker, but they still managed to raise £498.50 from sales and donations with a further donation to be made by the Young Farmers Club at a later date. One hundred and six tractors were involved, passing through a number of villages and Thirsk market place, before they returned to the start location at the nearby auction mart.

Above: Thirsk and District Young Farmers tractor © Cleveland MRT.



Top left: Iain Nixon. Top right: Andy Mace with the Lord Lieutenant for Northumberland, Dr Caroline Pryer. Above: Left to right: Graeme Binning (Chief Fire Officer Northumberland Fire and Rescue), Iain Nixon, Tony Gates (CEO Northumberland National Park Authority), Andy Mace and Superintendent Andy Huddleston (Northumbria Police) © NNPMRT.



MAKING THE GRADE... RAISE A PAW TO NEW SEARCH DOG TEAM

The Lake District Mountain Rescue Search Dog Association is excited to announce a new search dog team to add to our Graded Dogs list, writes **John Leadbetter**.

Danny Barnes (Penrith MRT) and River completed their final assessment at the end of October in a very wet and challenging woodland on the shores of Windermere, working the assessment area well and finding all three of the stealthily hidden bodies. The dog team worked for just over two hours. They were presented with the very precious and much sought after, Graded Green Tag of the Lake District Mountain Rescue Search Dogs, along with the Graded Dog Jacket by Elly Whiteford, LDMRSDA Training Officer.

'Danny has worked hard with River to achieve graded status,' says Elly, 'He has a very strong bond with River which shines through when they work together as a team. To get a team to this standard takes years of hard work and support at all stages from the trainers, assessors, bodies and

vets. Thank you to all who have helped Danny and River get there. It's for days like today that make it all worthwhile.'

Danny thanked all who had helped along the way, sharing 'absolute gratitude with everyone involved in getting River and I to this point. First and foremost, thank you to all the bodies who come out and lie out on the fell getting soaked through, buried in the snow and sometimes — on a rare occasion — sunburnt! It's the dedication to put yourself in awkward places and the energy that you bring to rewarding River that motivates her and sees her setting off like a rocket for her next find!

'Each of the assessor's has shared their own experience with me and I have learned some valuable lessons from them individually, so have messaged them directly, along with Jen Cartmel for all of the

work during Pre-Stage 1. I'd also like to thank Clair, as the Association's vet, for always being on hand to offer advice.

'My work pattern and chaotic lifestyle has not been the easiest to work around, and I really appreciate the effort that has gone into organising training and assessments to fit in with that.'

Danny and River soon put their new-found skills to the test. Only a day after grading, alongside fellow Search Dogs, they supported Langdale Ambleside MRT in a major search of the Grasmere area for a missing paraglider which involved multiple teams and agencies.

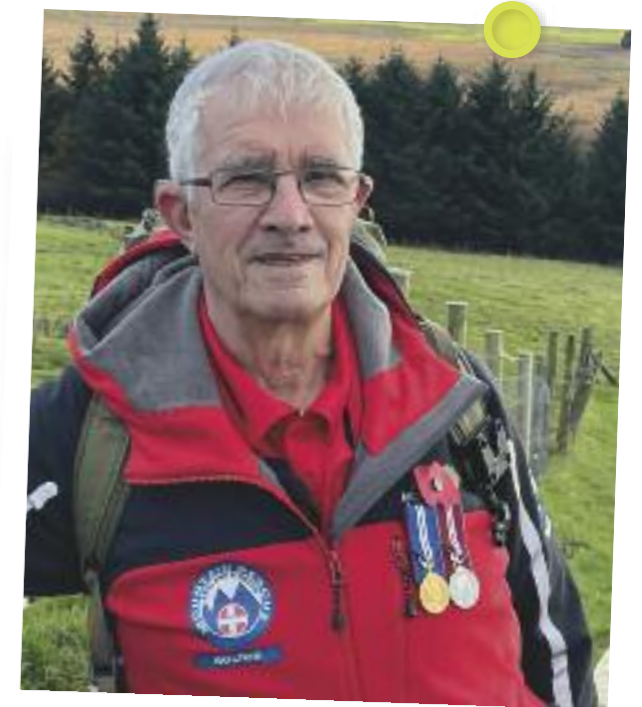
Top: Danny and River. Inset: Receiving their green tag from Elly Whiteford © Robert Collyer (dogbody).



DECEMBER: THERMAL IMAGING CAMERA DONATED TO HOLME VALLEY TEAM

The camera was kindly donated and fitted by Rosenbauer UK who are based in the team's area, reports **Helen Sheard**.

Rosenbauer supply specialist emergency vehicles and equipment to UK fire services. Used by fire service personnel across the country, the device has a specialist setting for locating people within a landscape and should enhance mountain rescue search capabilities in challenging terrain. Holme Valley team members are currently exploring its potential on training and call-outs in various weather conditions and are looking forward to its first 'find'. Ian and the team at Rosenbauer are happy to help out other MRTs. He can be contacted via email: ian.robertshaw@rosenbauer.com.



JANUARY: BOB CELEBRATES 45 YEARS AS BOLTON TEAM MEMBER

In January 2025, at 81 years old, Bob Hutchinson will celebrate 45 years as a dedicated member of Bolton Mountain Rescue Team. **Diane Blakeley** pays tribute.

Since he joined as a volunteer in 1980, he has continued to provide unwavering service, including taking on roles in the development of the Bolton team as it is today. He has been team leader and chairman, as well as developing our current support group, which he led for a number of years. He was also MPSRO regional secretary, a role he did for over ten years before taking the chair.

In January 2024, Bob celebrated his 80th birthday and decided now was the time to hang up his boots as an operational team member. He has continued to be fully involved, including continuing in his role as team president, a role he has held for several years. Bob continues to help young people understand how to stay safe, delivering talks in schools and to many other organisations. Although many of the ladies attending WIs, church and retirement groups are most entertained by Bob's humour, whilst being impressed by his dedication and the fact that at the age of 80, he is still volunteering. He can still be seen shaking a collecting box to help raise funds, being in Control, manning the radio, taking photographs at training and helping out on team equipment maintenance days.

It is impossible to sum up how many individuals and their families Bob has helped over the last 45 years, or the impact he has had — and continues to have — on our newer team members or those who have been around longer, providing a valued point of unbiased support and guidance. Now that Bob has more time on his hands, he continues to enjoy walking with friends as long as it involves a pot of tea or a malt whiskey.

Above: Bob Hutchinson. Left: Mayor and Mayoress of Bolton, Andy Morgan and Karen Holdsworth; team members taking delivery of Grub's wellies © Bolton MRT.



DECEMBER: MAYOR AND MAYORESS OF BOLTON VISIT GRUB'S BOOTS WITH TEAM

They were invited by the Bolton team to Grub's, in Bolton. This family-run business — a popular exhibitor and sponsor at the conference in September — specialises in high performance footwear, selling their high-quality products around the world. **Mayor of Bolton, Councillor Andy Morgan** takes up the story.

'The company pioneered the use of neoprene in sports and agricultural boots, crafting sports footwear for nine generations, with connections to historic brands like Reebok, co-founded by members of the family in 1960. In early 2024, they contacted Bolton team to offer their support and have since provided every team member with a pair of walking boots. This amazing support has never happened in the team's 56-year history.

'Following that initial donation, Grub's is now donating every operational team member a pair of walking wellies, which are high spec and very useful in the very cold weather. A lovely early Christmas present to say thank you to our mountain rescue volunteers, and we were more than happy to help load the 49 pairs of boots, along with beanie hats, onto the team vehicles to be distributed prior to Christmas. Another brilliant business taking the time to support the army of volunteers that make Bolton and the borough the place that it is.'

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DECEMBER: A FOND FAREWELL TO LONG-SERVING TEAM MEMBER

Colin Ridgers steps away from Dartmoor Plymouth team after 44 years, having been a member since 1980 — including a break as a Royal Marine during the Falklands conflict. **Vicky Coumbe** reports.

Colin has supported the team in a variety of roles, including deputy leader, search manager, equipment officer and as part of the training team. One of his passions has always been supporting new recruits through their training and seeing whether they will believe any of his Dartmoor myths — one of his most believed stories that the toolmarks in the Dartmoor granite (officially called ‘feather and tare’) were actually created by granite worms. I was relieved to not fall for that one when I was a trainee. Our last estimate is that he has probably been responsible for training at least 80% of the current team.

Whilst he has attended hundreds of call-outs, there are a few that stand out in the team’s memory. In July 1994, with our neighbouring Ashburton team, we were called out to the beautiful seaside town of Salcombe for a missing 22-year-old woman. After several hours of searching, her body was discovered by a dog and handler. It was later discovered that she was the victim of a rape and murder, the killer only found when he hung himself leaving a suicide note. Colin was acutely aware of the emotional trauma team members could be feeling and arranged counselling for all those affected.

In 2001, search and rescue hit close to home. On a Tuesday training evening, he was search manager in the control vehicle and received an urgent radio message requesting the air ambulance. A team member had collapsed due to a heart attack and, despite the efforts of the team, tragically died. Colin attended the address of the next of kin with the police to inform the family whilst dealing with the grief himself.

Whilst we could dwell on the difficult call-outs, we give thanks to the time and effort Colin has put into the running of this team. Whether supporting a fundraising walk he’s arranged, learning to navigate in featureless terrain, or being driven at breakneck speed in the Land Rover, we’ve all benefited from his knowledge and experience.

Happy retirement Colin, on behalf of Dartmoor Plymouth.

Top: Colin Ridgers (centre in the red jacket) at the York briefing, 2015.
Right: Colin Sturmer CVO © DSRT Plymouth.

NOVEMBER: FINAL PEAK OF A FIFTY-YEAR CHALLENGE COMPLETED

Colin Sturmer CVO (also of the Dartmoor Plymouth team), has successfully completed his mission to climb all 529 peaks over 3,000 feet across Scotland, Wales and England, culminating in his ascent of Broad Crag in the Lake District. **John Babb** writes.

This extraordinary personal challenge, compiled by the Scottish Mountaineering Club, included 282 Munros, 226 Munro Tops, fifteen Furths in Wales, and six peaks in England. It reflects his passion for the outdoors and a life dedicated to public service and personal adventure.

A chartered surveyor and land agent, Colin’s distinguished career began in 1965, working for the Duchy of Cornwall in London. He moved to Princetown on Dartmoor, as deputy land steward managing vast stretches of land for the then Prince Charles. In 2003, he was appointed land steward of the Isles of Scilly, overseeing the Duchy estate. His exemplary service, over four decades, earned him the prestigious title of Commander of the Royal Victorian Order (CVO), an honour given for personal service to the monarch.

Colin has been with the Plymouth team since 1969, serving in many capacities, including swiftwater rescue technician, casualty carer and chairman. He oversaw the funding and development of the team’s rescue centre during a time of unprecedented change. His boundless enthusiasm and wry humour during countless call-outs, often in miserable conditions across the rugged terrain of Dartmoor, reflects a strong sense of duty to his community.

His adventurous spirit also extends to the sea, dedicating years to restoring a 1957 lifeboat, cruising throughout Britain and Ireland and raising funds for the RNLI. He and his wife, Jan, have travelled to far-flung destinations such as the Falkland Islands and South Africa. They are an extraordinary couple in both their local and international projects.

On this final summit day, Colin was joined by friends and team members, to celebrate not just the end of this journey and a lifetime dedicated to the mountains and the communities he continues to serve.



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DECEMBER: WEST CORNWALL TEAM RECEIVE THEIR KING’S MEDALS

‘It was a case of “if at first you don’t succeed”...’ says Andy Brelsford, ‘thanks to our previous attempt being cancelled due to a storm, followed by a call-out! At a re-arranged AGM, we were joined by Catherine Mead OBE, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Cornwall, who presented the King’s Coronation medals to qualifying members.’

Left: Left to right: Graeme Sargent, Ricky Swan, Chris Meyer, James Newman, Christian Jennings, Adam Short, Matt Stone, Tony Ayres, Sean Penhaligon and Paul Oliver © WCMRT.

NEWS ROUND

OCTOBER > DECEMBER

NOVEMBER: LOCAL ARTIST LINKS WITH COCKERMOUTH TEAM TO RAISE FUNDS

Raising funds for rescue



The team joined forces with local artist, Anna Owens, commissioning five original pieces of art which were auctioned at a fundraising evening of cheese and wine at Cockermouth base.

The compact oil on canvas paintings (measuring just 20 x 20 cm) depict five of the iconic fells in the team’s area, where team members frequently find themselves on rescues, searches or training scenarios. With kind permission of the artist, the paintings have also been used for a print run of greetings cards, which the team hopes will continue to generate essential funds. ‘The idea came about when I chatted to Anna at Cockermouth Show,’ says Laura Connolly. ‘It’s become a bit of a tradition for her to visit the team stand and for us to have our annual catch up! We used to work as physios together at West Cumberland Hospital, over twelve years ago. She showed me some pictures of her paintings and I saw an opportunity for collaboration! I asked whether she would be willing to paint a series of five mountains in our area, which we could auction off at a fundraising night and have them turned into greetings card to sell throughout the coming year. She agreed and the rest, as they say, is history.’

Anna first got into painting as a means of de-stressing whilst working on

ITU during Covid. She was also rescued by the team after spraining her ankle whilst walking round Buttermere lake shore with her toddler, so she was keen to give something back.

About forty people joined in the fun on the evening, raising £1,400 with ongoing funds being raised through the card sales. Team members introduced each of the paintings and explained why it was special to them, sharing a memorable call-out or event which happened on each fell.

‘We also auctioned off some limited edition Lakes Distillery Gin,’ says Laura. ‘The gin was initially distilled to raise funds and awareness for the work of LDSAMRA.’

‘The evening was a great success. Everyone entered into the spirit of the event and bid big. The audience was gentle with the auctioneer who had no previous experience and isn’t very good with numbers. (I won’t be doing that bit again in a hurry!) We even had some closed bids made prior to the night which provided more anticipation and suspense!’

‘Huge thanks to everyone who supported Cockermouth MRT that night and to Anna Owens for her very generous contribution.’

Top: Lake District artist Anna Owens. **Above:** Three of the paintings auctioned featuring Pillar, Grasmoor and Hopegill Head © Anna Owens.



DECEMBER: SEARCH DOG HANDLERS TAKE ON SPECIALISED OFFSHORE HELICOPTER ESCAPE TRAINING WITH SOUTH TYNESIDE MARINE SCHOOL

Andy Colau (UWFRA/CRO) and Johnny Roe (UWFRA) were amongst the first in the country to take part in special emergency escape training with their search dogs Kez and Storm.

Mountain Rescue Search Dogs England were in the region following a call-out to the Maritime Offshore Safety Training at South Shields Marine School for help donating essential and potentially life-saving training. Maritime and offshore safety trainer Lee Stead told hellorayo.co.uk how the training came about.

'We were asked if we could provide some training for them, as they are frequently required to travel to emergency rescue situations via helicopter and felt it would enhance their chances of survival if the worst was to happen, and we wanted to help straightaway.'

The Helicopter Underwater Escape Training (HUET) is designed to give personnel who travel by helicopter, the knowledge and understanding of helicopter escape procedures, evacuation and escape procedures and practical wet training for rebreather equipment. Such situations might involve landing on water and

escape to a life raft so training incorporates partial submersion and escape and submersion and capsizes escape.

Andy has long experience of training search dogs — we understand he has trained more mountain rescue dogs than anyone else in the UK, with Kez his sixth companion-at-arms. Johnny qualified with Storm just twelve months ago.

'Safety is paramount during search dog incidents,' he says, 'and training helps mitigate possible mishaps that might occur during any rescue incident. Since we are sometimes deployed by Coastguard helicopters, practical training is one way to ensure better preparedness in the event of a crash onto water. We're incredibly grateful to South Shields Marine School and their Maritime Offshore Safety Training centre.'

Andy and Johnny were accompanied to the riverside training centre at South Shields by their colleague Adam Collinge. The centre is the oldest marine school in the world, training over 3,000 students a year by emulating the most realistic offshore environment.

Top left: Johnny with Search Dog Storm © Johnny Roe. Top right: Johnny with Storm and Andy with Search Dog Kez at the Marine Safety College © Adam Collinge (UWFRA).



Raising funds for rescue

OCTOBER: WALKING GROUP RAISE FUNDS FOR NORTH EAST TEAMS

The North East Walking Group celebrated their first anniversary with an evening event at Durham Rugby Club, raising over £1,200 for both the Cleveland and Teesdale and Weardale teams. Both teams were represented at the event and gave a presentation before the dinner.

Above: Team members with walking group members who had helped raise funds for the teams © Cleveland MRT.



© Teesdale & Weardale MRT.

NOVEMBER: LEADER OF TEESDALE & WEARDALE TEAM STANDS DOWN AFTER EIGHT YEARS AT THE HELM

Steve Owers spent seven years as deputy, before taking over as team leader in 2016. A former fireman, he has been with the team for 29 years and will remain as part of the hill team and a search manager. His successor is John Little who has been a deputy team leader for the past seven years.



NEWS ROUND

OCTOBER > DECEMBER

NOVEMBER: SNOW BRINGS TWO CALLS FOR HELP AT SAME TIME

As the snow hit on Monday afternoon, 18 November, Ogwen team members found themselves addressing two separate calls for help in two separate locations.



After summiting Tryfan, two walkers descended via Nor Nor gully, but became stuck and, after three hours, called for help. Due to the deteriorating weather conditions, a hasty party was deployed to climb in and locate the pair and supply warm clothing and head torches. A second team was deployed with rope rescue equipment, and the pair were lowered down the remainder of the gully to heather terrace and assisted back down to the road.

Meanwhile, a father and son had climbed Glyder Fach via Bwlch Tryfan but had mistakenly descended toward Nant Peris thinking they had reversed their route. After trying to negotiate the now steep technical terrain, they stopped and called for help. Three team members walked in via the Miners' Path before climbing down to the stuck pair. After supplying warm clothing and some fresh head torches, the pair were led back up to the summit, and

then confidence-rope down Bristley Screes to Bwlch Tryfan. Two more team members met the group with heat pads and fresh torches, and to assist with the descent from Bochlwyd. All team members were back at base by 4.00am to defrost and debrief.

'Both casualty groups were very lucky, with temperatures down to -9,' writes the team, via facebook.com/OVMRO. 'One group had no warm clothing or torches and were very cold and wet by the time they were found. A check of the weather forecast would have shown the amber warning. Setting off earlier would have helped too. One group was navigating with Strava and followed a heat map trail thinking they were on a footpath.'

Above & featured on front cover: Ogwen team members involved in calls in November © Karl Lester/OVMRO.



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NEWS ROUND

OCTOBER > DECEMBER



© Edale MRT.



Above and below © Buxton MRT.



NOVEMBER: TEAM ASSISTS HEAVILY PREGNANT WOMAN STUCK IN HEAVY SNOW

The heavy November snowfall prompted a number of call-outs and team activity across the Peak District. This request to Edale team came when the woman and her partner became stuck in their car.

After reassuring her that the team was on the way to help out, team members made their way to the couple's location on the moors above Castleton. They transported the woman down to the team's base in a team Land Rover for welfare reasons, while her partner and team members dealt with digging the car out. 'After a fair bit of grunting, we managed to free the Mini from the snow drift and accompanied by a team member, the gentleman was able to drive the safer way around to our base to be reunited with his partner. We wish them all the best and no doubt they will be telling the story for some time to come!'

Meanwhile, Kinder team was called at 1.15 in the morning to assist an ambulance crew with a patient in Mellor, after it had been snowing all day. Team members were able to assist in carrying the lady downstairs, then out of the house.

Once outside, she was wheeled down the snowy road to the ambulance at the bottom of the hill. From there it was a

careful drive for the ambulance, as even the main roads were still covered in snow. Most team members were able to catch a couple of hours' sleep before getting up for work later in the morning.

And over in Buxton, team members attended to multiple incidents through the evening due to the winter weather, including assisting Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service and East Midlands Ambulance Service, with a multiple vehicle incident on The Street, heading into and out of the Goyt Valley.



© Kinder MRT.

OCTOBER: SWALEDALE MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM

October was a great month of inter-team training and multi-agency collaboration for Swaledale team members.

Early in October, a small group travelled to the deep south west to attend a rope rescue training event hosted by the Avon and Somerset Search and Rescue team. Colleagues from the Coastguard, cave rescue, fire, police and HART also attended for 'an excellent learning and ideas sharing event'.

Later the same month, team members enjoyed 'another fantastic joint training day', focusing on search and recovery from water and then the transition from water to land. The initial search phase was undertaken by the team from Search and Detection Dogs and water teams from both the Cleveland and North of Tyne teams.



Above: Images from the multi-agency, multi-team training sessions in October © Swaledale MRT.



STOP PRESS: DECEMBER: BOWLAND PENNINE MEMBER AWARDED MBE FOR SERVICES TO MOUNTAIN RESCUE

Kev Camplin was awarded the honour by King Charles III in the New Year's Honours List.

He served as Bowland Pennine's team leader from 2014 to 2023 and, prior to that, was the team's training officer for three years and deputy team leader for two. During his time in mountain rescue, he has been involved in a number of high profile operations, including the Morecambe Bay cockling tragedy in 2004, the Grayrigg train crash, Storm Desmond flooding across Lancashire in 2015, and high profile searches such as for Katie Kenyon in 2022. 'It is an unexpected honour,' says Kev. Congratulations!!

Above: Kev Camplin © Bowland Pennine MRT.

NOVEMBER: BACKPACK CAMPER STUCK ON DARTMOOR IN RAPIDLY WORSENING CONDITIONS

The team was called at 11.00am, to locate the camper, who had become lost as the low cloud and ongoing blizzard was creating zero visibility at Yes Tor, and extremely deep snow drifts.

Those team members local to Okehampton walked to the rescue centre to collect a Land Rover, fitted with snow chains, before driving as far up to Yes Tor as possible. The individual is a frequent visitor to Dartmoor and an experienced walker so had all the right kit and, consequently, they weren't in a life-threatening situation or injured when the team arrived. However, Dartmoor's weather is changeable and unforgiving and can catch out even the most experienced of hikers and campers. 'They'd made the right call,' said the team, 'before things deteriorated.'

'The backpacker had no injuries, but was cold and wet along the extremities having fallen into several deep snow drifts along the way. Given the landscape, they were lucky to have not sustained any injuries from the falls.'

Due to ground conditions, and up to five-foot-high snow drifts, the Land Rover was unable to go any further past the track alongside West Mill Tor. Team members continued on foot, arriving at Yes Tor and locating the individual in white-out conditions at 12.25 pm.

Left: Backpacker rescue from Dartmoor © North Dartmoor MRT.

DECEMBER: #THINKWINTER SAFETY CAMPAIGN GOES LIVE FOR ITS SEVENTH YEAR

The Scottish campaign also serves as a useful reminder to visitors to the hills, mountains and moorland of England and Wales.

The #ThinkWINTER campaign is the result of a collaboration between Scotland's mountain safety organisations, including Mountaineering Scotland, Scottish Mountain Rescue, Mountain Training, Glenmore Lodge, Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland, Snowsport Scotland, Police Scotland and the Scottish Avalanche Information Service. It offers inspiration, advice, skills and safety information, enabling people to make safe decisions in the winter hills and mountains. The campaign runs until late March 2025. We are all encouraged to share the resources, which can be found at tinyurl.com/thinkwinter2024 or by scanning the QR code.

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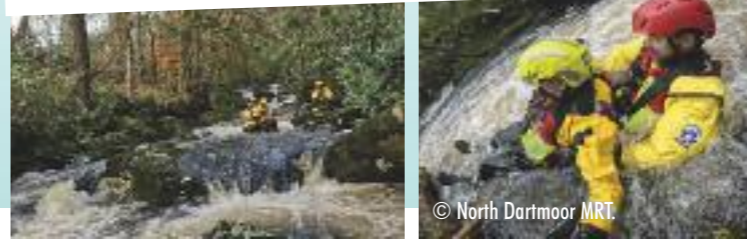

Raising funds for rescue

DECEMBER: WEST CUMBRIAN MAN COMPLETES WAINWRIGHT CHALLENGE IN TWELVE MONTHS TO RAISE FUNDS

Professional photographer Carlos Reina Silvestre marked the end of his year-long effort with Skiddaw (Lesser Man and Little Man), Jenkin Hill and Lonscale Pike, raising £1,535.

Besides being a personal challenge – finding time in a busy family and working life, and negotiating the vagaries of the Cumbrian weather – Carlos hoped to raise awareness and funds for both Hospice at Home West Cumbria and Wasdale MRT. He began his Wainwright journey with no fell walking experience, and admits that he has 'learned a lot'. He chose to raise money for the hospice having 'seen their incredible work within the community and worked alongside them during Gary McKee's 365 Marathon Challenge'. And the idea to support mountain rescue seemed obvious to him given 'the nature of the challenge'.

'This year has been an extremely busy,' says Richard Warren, 'with over 160 call-outs [at the time of writing] and an anticipated 180 by the end of 2024. Running the team costs over £100,000 every year, and this is all covered by generous donations such as that raised by Carlos with his 2024 Wainwright Challenge. It's a very fitting challenge and not something usually done so quickly, so hats off to him.'



NEWS ROUND
OCTOBER > DECEMBER

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER: TEAMS GET RESCUE-READY FOR STORMS

With more frequent storms and the increased risk of flooding a number of team members have been out training regularly to keep their skills fresh and ready to deploy at a moments notice.

In south west England, North Dartmoor's swiftwater rescue-qualified team members spent a weekend training on the Upper Teign (left). And, in December, Lakes team members from Cockermouth, Duddon and Furness, Penrith and Wasdale were joined by colleagues from Bowland Pennine, to take advantage of high water levels to practise water rescue techniques (opposite page).

@ Letter to the Editor...

Many of you will know that **Bob Sharp** has already been instrumental in recording much of the history of mountain rescue, covering its development across the UK. He writes here to appeal for help with another piece of research into the Post system.

Some readers will know of my interest in the history of MR and motivation to document as much as possible before it's too late! My latest (and perhaps final) project is to find out as much about the Rescue Post system that began in 1933 and — effectively — came to an end in the 1990s. Very little has been written on the subject and the few key references available are included in early issues of the Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal, and the excellent book on the 'History and Development in the Peak District 1920s to Present Day' by Ian Hurst and Roger Bennett. Perhaps the most comprehensive sources are the various handbooks of mountain and cave rescue published by the Mountain Rescue Committee. I do have a few copies, the earliest dated 1965, but I would like to examine earlier issues which may go back to the late-1940s or early-1950s. Can anyone help?

I would also like to document any stories or issues (with or without photographs) teams may have on the subject. It may be some teams will have relevant information stored in their own archives.

Any information on the subject will be most welcome and I thank you in advance for going to any trouble to help. Once I have as much information as possible, I will write everything up in the form of a printed booklet which I will distribute to everyone. Thank you.



Above, top: An original plaque on a post outside the Clachaig Inn in Glencoe, taken in 1959. The Inn hosted Post Number 2, established in 1933. Above: The Clachaig Inn, taken in the 1950s at the time it contained the Post.

DECEMBER: RAISING FUNDS IN MEMORY OF JOSS NAYLOR

In 2024, the fell running world lost a legend in Joss. After the funeral, a bronze resin bust, created in 2008 by Cumbrian sculptor Paul Bainbridge, was auctioned in aid of Wasdale team, raising £2,100. The life-size bust is now displayed at the Wasdale Head Inn.

The Fell Running Association has subsequently coordinated the production of limited edition five-inch miniature busts (pictured right) which replicate the original. All profits from this project will go to Duddon and Furness team's permanent base project. Each miniature will be hand cast, finished and polished, and individually numbered, with a limited number available each week. To buy, head to tinyurl.com/nrt78d4a – a snip at just £55 including postage and packaging.



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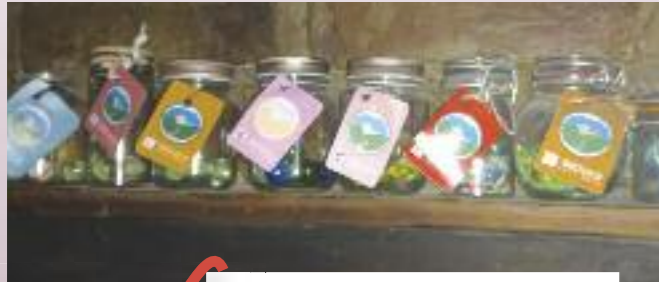
OCTOBER: NOVEL FUNDRAISER FOR 'MOUNTAIN HEROES'

Thirty-two members of CMUSHO (Chew Me Up Spit Me Out), spent a day carrying a single marble each — multiple times — to the top of Chew Reservoir, 1,640ft above Greenfield, raising £320 for Oldham team.

Once at the top, each participant popped their marble in an individually numbered box, before running back down to collect another. This novel exercise continued until midday when the boxes were closed and carried back down. Then it was a quick break for refreshments before the treasured marbles were placed in jars to take home as trophies.

'Each year the group raises funds for a different charity, nominated by a group member,' says CMUSHO's Victoria Carter. 'This year we chose Oldham team. There are just shy of a hundred of us in the group and this year saw 32 of us "chewing". The youngest was twelve and did two laps, and we had a fifteen-year-old who did an amazing nine laps. The most anyone did this year was eleven, which is equal to the record. The best women did nine. Cumulatively we did 200 laps, which is 660 miles.'

Left: The 2024 Chewers and their treasured marbles (safely back home in their jars) © CMUSHO.



Raising funds for rescue



Illustration: Design of the new rescue hub © 2030 Architects Limited. Inset: The current Penrith base meeting room also serves as a drying room after rescues © Penrith MRT.

NOVEMBER: PENRITH MRT AND COMRU SUBMIT PLANNING APPLICATION FOR £1.8M RESCUE HUB

The joint venture will create a bespoke training, storage and garage facility, providing a hub for both teams' operations in north-east Cumbria, and across the wider county. This planning submission will also trigger a major fundraising drive to secure the £1.8m that realising the project requires.

Penrith team has been working hard to secure a new operational base, to be shared with COMRU, having comprehensively outgrown its current base, surrounded by residential properties on Tynefield Drive, in Penrith. Two years ago, the team purchased a suitable plot of land — off Cowper Road, on Eden Business Park on the western side of the town. Working with Rod Hughes, from 2030 Architects Ltd, a design for the shared base has been developed around the operational requirements of the two teams, including vehicle and equipment storage, training space, an energy-efficient drying room and meeting rooms. This design, along with car parking space and landscaping, has now been submitted to Westmorland and Furness Council, as a planning application, which the team hopes to see approved in early 2025.

COMRU — which operates county-wide — does not currently have an operating base, storing equipment and vehicles at members' houses, outbuildings and premises. The project will provide two garage bays to protect the team's two Unimog vehicles from the weather and secure operations in years to come.

'This long-awaited milestone marks the beginning of a concerted

campaign to raise the necessary construction funds,' says Peter King, Penrith team leader. 'We'd like to thank the community and partner organisations for all the support received over many years, which enabled us to purchase the land and now enables us to be optimistic about replacing our current, outgrown base.'

'This is a very exciting time for COMRU,' adds Chris Jones, COMRU leader, 'to have the prospect of a centralised location from which to train and operate. We recently hosted the national cave rescue conference up at Nenthead mines near Alston and we frequently train in this part of Cumbria. Our Unimogs will already be familiar to supporters in Penrith as we've previously displayed them at GoOutdoors and raised awareness of COMRU and its specialised role.'

The two teams would welcome approaches from any individuals, businesses or organisations interested in partnering over the construction of the new base, donating funds or supporting in kind in any way. The planning application (2024/2057/FPA) can be viewed in detail on the local authority's planning portal.



© Henry Paisey/Buxton MRT.



DECEMBER: MOUNTAIN RESCUERS SING CAROLS AT THE ABBEY

Nik Prabucki (Dartmoor Ashburton), Toby Green (Derby), Tom Ferrero (Duddon and Furness), Henry Paisey (Buxton) and Alex Siviter-Platts (MREW Trustee) represented mountain rescue at the Royal Christmas Carol Service at Westminster Abbey. They were amongst other volunteers and achievers who have given back to a community. The service was broadcast on Christmas Eve.

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER: £3,000 BOOST TO DUDDON TEAM'S NEW BASE PROJECT...

Park Cliffe holiday park in Windermere has handed the team a substantial cash boost to its ongoing campaign to build a new HQ.

The money was raised over the past year through a number of projects, including a popular duck race and charity raffles supported by local businesses and park suppliers. Guests also donated via the park's collection box and the final figure was reached after a £400 booster was added by the family-owned park.

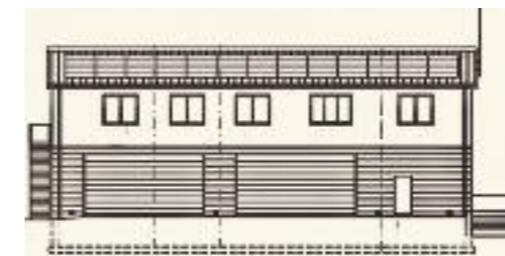
Susan Dickson, who owns Park Cliffe with her husband Derek, said she was delighted with what everyone had achieved over the last twelve months. 'Many of our guests are keen walkers and stay here because of the easy access to the surrounding fells. They fully appreciate the life-or-death difference mountain rescue teams can make if a person is lost, stranded or injured whilst out. Their generosity will help bring the goal of a permanent base even closer and support the fantastic work of these volunteers.'



Above: The team's fundraising officer Martin at Park Cliffe holiday park. Below left: Drawing of the proposed base. Below: Fundraisers Lynn Cook and Dave Collins with team chairman John and Martin. Images © DFMRT.

...AND ANOTHER £3,500 BOOST THANKS TO TREK PAIR

Local supporters Dave and Lynn undertook their Killimanjaro trek in September 2024, raising £3,500 towards the base project.



UPDATE ON SEARCH DOG BRAMBLE FUNDRAISER

In the Autumn issue, we reported on the passing of Northumberland team's Search Dog Bramble and the fundraiser set up to honour her memory. The six-year-old English Shepherd dog had been diagnosed with leukaemia and died on her sixth birthday, her handler Andrew Jenkins by her side.

Since then, the team reports having been 'overwhelmed by the generosity of all who've made donations to support Bramble's legacy. Over £3,000 have been raised which is incredibly kind,' says Andrew. 'To put that into context, £3,000 is equivalent to the annual veterinary insurance costs of the remaining search dogs of Northumberland: Search Dogs Tess, Rona, Freya and Flynn, along with Trainee Search Dog Merlin. We'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has supported Bramble's legacy and for your kind words of support.'

The money will be split between Mountain Rescue Search Dogs England to support the training of future search dogs, and also between North of Tyne MRT and NNPMRT as reserved funds for supporting the operational costs of the search dogs. At the time of publication, there was £3,192 in the pot (and still rising). To donate, visit [justgiving.com/page/search-dog-bramble](https://www.justgiving.com/page/search-dog-bramble).

Raising funds for rescue



Left: James Norton, the 'Yorkshire Vet' visits Cleveland base © Cleveland MRT.

OCTOBER: YORKSHIRE VET RETURNS TO VISIT HIS CLEVELAND RESCUERS

In the Spring issue, we reported the rescue by Cleveland MRT of Julian Norton (of the 'Yorkshire Vet' TV series), following a mountain bike accident. Whilst recovering — and still in a leg brace — Julian visited team members at their base to say 'thanks'.

He was accompanied by the programme's production crew who filmed the visit and spoke to a number of team members about the rescue and the wider issues involved in mountain rescue. Julian was very generous with his time and in his praise of MR work, 'says Gary Clarke. 'And it has been great to see him back on his bike in the months since then.' On 22 October 2024, his visit featured in an episode on Channel 5. A few weeks before the broadcast, Julian revisited the base as a guest of the team at a social evening where he presented a number of members with the King's Coronation medals.



© Woodhead MRT.

NEWS ROUND

OCTOBER > DECEMBER

DECEMBER: WOODHEAD TEAM CELEBRATE FIFTY YEARS WITH PIE AND PEAS SUPPER

Team members past and present (pictured left), some of them founding members, joined with their family, friends and supporters to celebrate the team's milestone 50th anniversary at their base.

Christmas Day calls for teams around England and Wales*

Christmas proved a busy one for teams across our two countries, with a number of calls on Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

During the afternoon of Christmas Day, **Holme Valley** assisted **Oldham** team members in a long stretcher-carry to evacuate a female walker with a broken ankle from high ground in the Dovestones area. Using PhoneFind, she was located high up on the moor near Ashway Stone and, while she was being readied for the stretcher and her ankle splinted, her companions were walked off the hill in the remaining daylight. By the time the carry-off began, it was dark. Holme Valley team members headed out again on Boxing Day to assist an ambulance crew with a casualty

in the Slaithwaite area of Huddersfield.

Over in Cumbria, it was very misty and windy on the tops when **Coniston** team received notification from Cumbria Police that a dog had been reported lost on Coniston Old Man. As it was Christmas Day, they simply wanted to make the team aware. A party of three had walked up the mountain and were descending when the dog disappeared from sight in the mist, towards Goats Hawse. The Coniston team leader rang the caller for more information and to offer advice. Fortunately, about an hour later, the dog was found returning up the track after responding to her name being called. **Langdale Ambleside** team were out too, attending to someone with an ankle injury in Langdale.

Across in Yorkshire, **Scarborough and Ryedale** team members were called for a targeted search for a missing person and later stood down, returning to their families to continue their Christmas Day.

Down in the far south west of England, the **Cornwall East** team received a call from Devon and Cornwall Police to assist two walkers stuck on Rough Tor, pinpointing their location using Phonefind — particularly helpful on this occasion, as the walkers had started to become cold and wet from the very bad weather. One of the walkers was stretchered down the steep and very rocky ground, with everyone arriving at the team vehicle for subsequent transport back to their vehicle to head home to the warm.

Across in Wales, **Llanberis** team noted 'beautiful scenes on the East Ridge of Crib Goch with calm conditions in the mountains'



earlier on Christmas Day'. However, team members were called to leave their families, turkeys and mince pies at 6.00pm to go to the aid of three individuals lost on the Pyg Track in the dark — without food, water, appropriate clothing or head torches! And Boxing Day saw the team out again, in daylight, roping off a 'panicked' walker.

And in South Wales, **Central Beacons** team were called just after 6.00pm, to go to the assistance of a lone female walker who was reported to have become 'disoriented'. Efforts to utilise the team's phone location technology were 'not entirely successful' so team members were deployed to the hill, including search dog teams from SARDA South Wales. After a short while, whistles were heard and one of the dogs located the lady, otherwise safe and well. This was Search Dog Dug and handler Rhi's first operational find after recently qualifying as an operational search dog team so huge congratulations to them — the perfect Christmas present!

*Apologies to any teams we've missed!



Images courtesy of LAMRT/Michael.

OCTOBER: RESCUED CUB SCOUT RETURNS TO MEET HIS RESCUERS IN AMBLESIDE... FIFTY YEARS ON

Langdale Ambleside team, as do many of their rescue colleagues, often have those they rescue contact them later on with an update on their condition — but generally sooner than fifty years later!

Michael contacted the team asking if they had any more information on his rescue, other than what he could see on the team's website (see his incident report at tinyurl.com/ybbdxrk3). Unfortunately, this was the only record they had. Michael himself offered some photos and an update.

'I do have a bit more background information that may be of interest. I was a member of a large party (two coaches if I remember correctly), of Cubs and Scouts from around East Lancashire who had travelled up from Mill Hill St Peter's Junior School in Blackburn. At eight years old, I was among the youngest in the party and had insisted to my mum on wearing my Cub Scout uniform, including cap, on this eagerly anticipated expedition, because that was what the Cub Scouts had been depicted wearing in the handbook when out in the field.

'About half an hour out, maybe, I was encouraged by some older boys to follow them on a "shortcut", off the path, down the hillside, across the stream and back up, with the intention of rejoining the arc of the path further up the ghyll and getting to the front of the party. As recorded, I was then hit on the head by what was described at the time as a small boulder (that had enough mass and momentum to roll itself down the slope). I was knocked out and rolled down the slope into the stream, unconscious.

'I then variously remember being woken, lying in the stream bed, being carried down the hill, waiting for an ambulance, being in an ambulance and at a hospital or clinic (possibly in Ambleside?), and having eight stitches in a head wound — so not "allowed to go home"... "after attention by the team doctor" as has been recorded. Whilst at the clinic I was told I had made the right decision to wear the uniform, particularly the cap, as my injury might have been more serious if I hadn't. One might speculate, as I sometimes do, that if I hadn't been the only boy in Cub Scout uniform that day, then that small boulder may have remained attached to the path rather than "spontaneously" rolling down the slope....' He went on to express his appreciation for his rescue.

Top: Christmas tree ©Angeleses via Pixabay. Above: Team member ropes a nervous walker off the hill © Llanberis MRT. Above right: Search Dog Dug and handler Rhi pictured with Robert Bronsdon © Central Beacons MRT.

Hinkes
thinks



Accident on Cul Mor

It is always very worrying when you hear that a friend has been in a serious accident in the hills involving a mountain rescue team. Recently a good friend, Joe Cornish, was injured in the North West Highlands of Scotland.

Joe is one of the world's best landscape photographers and a very experienced mountaineer. He wrote a piece in my book, '8000 Metres: Climbing the World's Highest Mountains', about my photography in the Himalaya and the risk involved in getting images at 8,000 metres. He is acutely aware of the risks of mountain photography in the hills and mountains and the vagaries of inclement weather.

I have been on the hill many times with Joe and know how proficient and competent he is, moving efficiently on mountain terrain. He goes out in all seasons, carrying a heavy load of photographic kit, including a tripod. Joe is well-used to bad weather and rough terrain. However, he had an unfortunate incident on Cul Mor when an unpredictable, powerful gust of wind blew him off his feet

and several metres down a rocky slope. Luckily, he was not swept over a cliff edge but, nevertheless, he was severely injured. Joe has been hillwalking for over forty years and, like a lot of people, never expected he would need help from a mountain rescue team. Joe and his party were well equipped, well prepared and well led. It was bad luck, which can catch anyone out at any time rather than complacency. Joe is very grateful to Assynt MRT and it has made him more aware of the commitment of all MRTs.

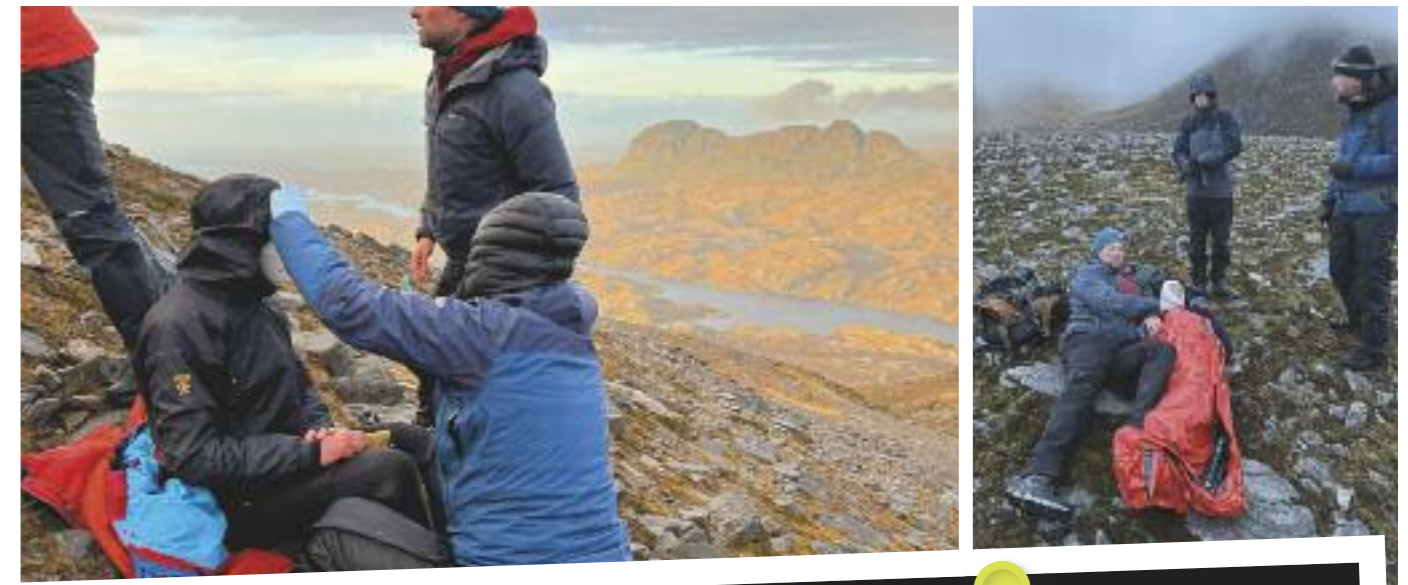
I spoke to Joe and his co-leader Alex Nail. They were in a party of six, including a photographic group of four people. The weather was windy, but manageable — what you often must cope with and embrace in Scotland, normal Scottish conditions.

Joe explained that Cul Mor is one of his favourites photographically. He has climbed it twice before and his group leader Alex has climbed it six times. The weather was challenging with gusty winds, but Alex judged it within the capabilities of the experienced group of photographers.

The approach and summit climb were incident-free. The top was chilly and windy, but they had a couple of hours there taking photos and practising photography skills before the descent. Everyone was warm and comfortable enough with enough suitable gear for the conditions.

The incident happened as the group were descending the steep summit section of broken quartzite slabs and boulders.

At about 4.45pm, people at the back of the group were hit by a powerful gust of wind.



Raising funds
for rescue

Images: Rescue of Joe Cornish by Assynt team members © Alex Nail.



Several stumbled, one reported being spun around. It seemed Joe was lifted by the wind blast and tumbled head over heels directly down the slope, cartwheeling at least three times, over a distance of ten metres before coming to a halt.

He was in immediate pain and had a ten-centimetre, full-depth gash in the crown of his head. There were two GPs in the party and Alex is a Mountain Leader trained in emergency care. The GPs assessed Joe in the usual way, working from the head down and assessed that his airway and breathing were unaffected. Joe indicated pain in his neck and right arm. He had his head wound dressed and Joe appeared to have no cognitive or vision issues. He ate a few jelly babies, drank some water and was keen to stand up and continue walking. The leader made the decision at 4.55pm to descend to a safer, less exposed position.

I feel this was a good decision by Alex as Joe was mobile and able to walk carefully with support. Getting lower while conditions allowed seemed prudent as he could deteriorate, and the slope was precarious

and too exposed for an extended stay. Extraction would have been extremely difficult for a helicopter or a mountain rescue team. There were ongoing 40 mph gusts. Even with all the clothing and equipment it would have been difficult to keep Joe and the group warm.

As Joe descended in the buffeting wind, he reported worsening neck pain. At 5.19pm, Alex made a 999 call and alerted the Assynt MRT. Joe tried to continue down but, by 5.55pm, his neck pain was increasing, with a tingling in his right arm. Another phone call advised Joe to stay put as the team was on its way along with an air ambulance, 'ETA 25 minutes'.

Joe was helped to lie down. He was in his warm clothing, wrapped in a Blizzard bag and put in a survival bag. The group hunkered down around Joe acting as a windbreak. It was starting to get dark; the wind was gusting 30 mph, the group were at 600 metres, and the cloud base was at 750 metres.

The air ambulance arrived at 6.22pm, but was unable to land and left. The Coastguard

heli was tasked at 6.24pm, ETA a further twenty minutes and the MRT were en route by foot.

At 7.15pm, the Coastguard Rescue 151 landed. Joe was helped into the heli and flew off twenty minutes later. Alex continued down with the rest of the group to meet Assynt MRT, which was a big relief as the team helped escort everyone to the road at 8.43pm.

Joe recalls being given two injections and strapped in horizontally on the floor of the aircraft and flown to Raigmore Hospital, Inverness. It was a lucky escape, as doctors ascertained multiple fractures to several vertebrae, but no damage to the spinal column. He is recovering in a neck brace and keeping a positive outlook from a mountain incident that could have been a lot worse.

Joe and Alex are indebted to Assynt MRT and have donated ten curated prints of Assynt and Coigach to help meet the team's £15,000 shortfall. All the prints have been sold and over £20,000 has been raised. 🙏

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Image by SARCast



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

News from Scottish teams



Focus on Lochaber MRT

Based in Fort William, at the foot of Ben Nevis, Lochaber Mountain Rescue is an extremely active team. Born in the late 1960s, it started as a group of committed local climbers getting out to help fellow climbers in need. The Lochaber team today has 39 full members and 12 aspirants. We provide rescue services on behalf of Police Scotland all year round.

Ben Nevis sees hundreds of thousands of visitors each year, with another 60,000 taking the precipitous path up to Steall Falls. A large proportion of our call-outs are on the busy mountain track and in Glen Nevis. We are also faced with regular large scale technical rescues on the north face. Although often assisted by the helicopter crews, we rack up serious mileage and height gain with heavy packs, in all weathers and seasons. Outside of Ben Nevis, our patch is large. We travel from Creag Meagaidh and Corrour in the east, up to the Loch Quoich munros and across to Fort Augustus in the north, remote Knoydart in the west and further out to the small isles of Rum, Eigg and Muck. Our southern boundary is on the Mamores, where we have a close friendship with the Glencoe team and we regularly assist each other during large or challenging calls.

Given the variety and large number of our call-outs, along with the serious nature of our terrain, it is vital that we have a committed team with plenty of availability. We require a high level of competence and ability to problem-solve, to react to the ever-changing nature of call-outs. We must trust in one another.

We are trained to handle serious medical trauma, conduct multi-day searches across complex terrain and rig rope rescues. Winter adds a whole extra challenge: the cold, the darkness and the often more serious nature of the rescues. We are lucky enough to have a number of doctors, rope access technicians and highly competent mountaineers as part of the team.

Visitors to our area have doubled in the last twenty years and that number is continuing to grow. The Lochaber team are seeing a rise in call-outs per year and, as of November 2024, were at 157. Last year was record breaking for us and this year is set to break that again. As a team that is entirely voluntary, responding to calls and attending training is a huge demand on time. To take the lead in a team like this requires a very understanding family, resilience and a remarkable ability to survive on little sleep and still be nice to people. There were days

in summer 2024 with multiple call-outs.

The team has worked hard to develop a substantial base in Fort William. We have dedicated spaces for all equipment and for the team to store their own kit ready to go, a stocked kitchen to keep us full of beans, a small gym to help us develop the stretcher carrying muscles, and a highly equipped control room. We also have a fleet of vehicles including a quad bike and a tracked ATV. We recently expanded the base to house our vehicles properly, but we are always looking to develop the facilities to improve call-out response time and our level of care for casualties.

Outside of call-outs, we provide support for race events and Highland Games. Our presence at these events helps to maintain the high profile and standing of the team within the community and for visitors. It allows us to share our stories, services and to raise the much-needed funds that keep us going. Without our generous donors we wouldn't function, so a heartfelt thanks to all that help out in this vital way. You keep us warm and dry and most importantly, out in the hills to help those who need it. 🍷

FIND LOCHABER MRT ON FACEBOOK @LOCHABERMRT OR VIA LOCHABERMRT.CO.UK

and Galloway MRT

Galloway team has existed since 1975, serving the community of the western part of Dumfries and Galloway from its main base in Newton Stewart eastwards towards Dumfries. Since its original inception as the Galloway Search and Rescue Group, the team has grown to some 40 call-out members with a fleet of four vehicles located around the region to provide a professional search and rescue service, 24/7, whatever the weather. Last year we attended fifteen call-outs, with a combined 820 hours of volunteering and training undertaken.

The Galloway Hills is a remote, wild landscape that is often overlooked by visitors to Scotland yet provide a stern test to those who dare venture into them. Hillwalkers and climbers who do tackle these hills — including the aptly named Awful Hand containing our tallest peak, the Merrick (843m) — find themselves on some of the most demanding and unforgiving terrain in the British Isles. Their reward is some of the most stunning views to be found anywhere in the UK, and a tranquillity not often found in the more popular hills to the north. Good navigation and hillcraft are essential, our team members spend hours training in this rugged environment which is used extensively by the military for training both special forces and regular infantry. Earlier this year the team was lucky enough to be invited to train with Ghurka regiment and such liaison exercises are regularly undertaken with both outside agencies and our neighbouring teams to enhance and maintain our skills.

In addition to the larger hills to the west, Galloway is a vast, predominately rural region which contains rolling hills covered with extensive forestry and farmland, large lochs and fast flowing rivers, all running towards the beautiful Solway coast. With such a variety of



team grows and technology advances, the decision has been made to seek a new home for the team and we are currently fundraising to build a new team base. We hope our new facility will allow the team to continue to adapt to the needs of the local community and provide a strong foundation for the team going forwards. As with all teams, we are constantly fundraising, not only for our new base, but to raise much-needed funds for the continuing operation of the team. Recent activities include organising running events in the local hills and attempting to climb all 42 peaks in the Galloway Hills in one go!

All team members are proud of the region we live and volunteer in, and proud to support a variety of community events, such as the annual Newton Stewart Walk Fest. During this week-long celebration of the walks to be found in Galloway, team members guide people around the local area helping them tackle everything from lowland walks to demanding hikes across our highest peaks.

2025 marks the 50th anniversary of the team and we are planning some special



different terrain, the team has adapted over the years to meet the needs of the local population and now boasts a Swift Water and Flood Rescue Team and an extensive network of highly trained drone pilots, all members of SARAA, equipped with the latest technology to assist with searches in our region and beyond.

Our current team base is an old St John's ambulance station, built in the 1950s. As the

events to commemorate this milestone. We are very lucky to still have some of our original team members within the team and they continue to contribute as the team changes and grows for the future. 🍷

FIND GALLOWAY MRT ON FACEBOOK @GALLOWAYMRT OR VIA GALLOWAYMRT.ORG.UK

Scottish teams were kept busy as the days grew shorter into autumn, with a flurry of call-outs for overdue, lost and benighted walkers, multi-agency missing person searches, and injured mountain bikers and hikers. **Tweed Valley** recorded their busiest ever month in October with thirteen incidents and 398 volunteer hours logged in rescues.

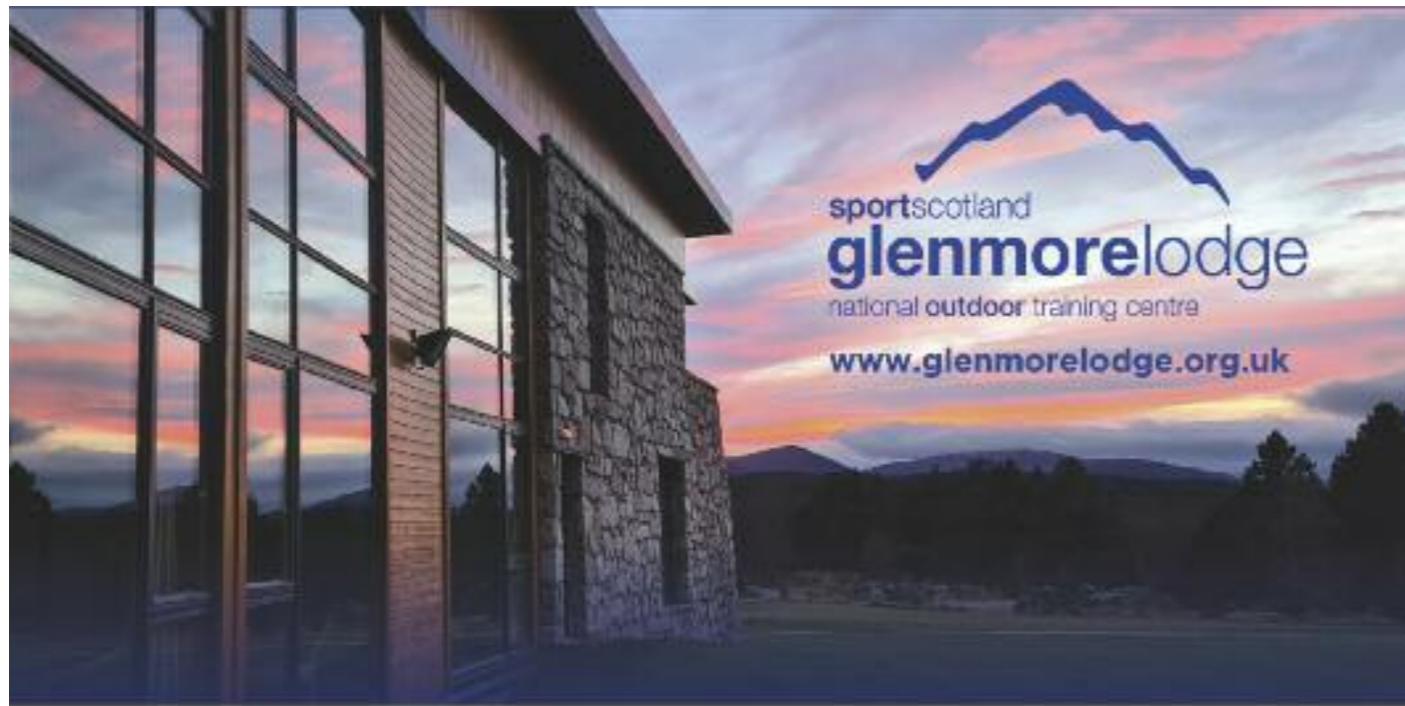
Storm Bert brought a blanketing of deep snow to the highlands in late November, prompting the Scottish Avalanche Information Service to begin forecasts earlier than planned. Three volunteers from **Dundonnell** battled atrocious conditions during the storm to rescue a stranded walker near Shenavall bothy. The walker had endured a night in a collapsed tent. He was found in fierce weather conditions, assessed and transported back to the warmth and shelter of the team base.



Above: Dundonnell team member during Storm Bert © Dundonnell MRT.

Assynt responded to a call-out near the UK's tallest waterfall, Eas a' Chual Aluinn, to assist two lost hill walkers. Using phone-find technology, the team pinpointed the walkers' location near steep terrain and advised them to stay put until volunteers arrived to guide them safely back to their vehicle. The team commended the couple for making the right decision to call 999 and request mountain rescue when they realised they were lost.

Tayside volunteers showed remarkable dedication when they responded to four call-outs in the first week of November, culminating in a call-out that required members to leave a team wedding to investigate flashing lights in Glen Doll. Thankfully, the incident turned out to be a false alarm with good intent, allowing the team to return to the celebrations. Congratulations to James and Lily, and well done to the team for upholding the commitment of 'Any Hour, Any Day, Any Weather' with such professionalism and spirit.



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We've seen a handful of hardy hillwalkers take on their Last Munro for Scottish Mountain Rescue.

'Completing' the Munros (Scottish peaks over 3,000ft) involves summiting 282 peaks, and is widely considered a lifetime achievement. By encouraging donations for their last Munro, these wonderful fundraisers have raised over £5,000 in support of Scottish teams.

Lynne Eshelby-Allan (top left) celebrated her final Munro atop Braeriach in the Cairngorms in August, and kindly shared the story of her journey in the mountains. She raised over £1,750 for Scottish Mountain Rescue, and we are deeply grateful for her remarkable fundraising efforts. Her journey is a testament to the joy, challenges and sense of community Scotland's mountains offer. Read more here: tinyurl.com/ynaxrj77.

The start of Autumn saw a determined ten fundraisers take to the Loch Ness Marathon, raising over £6,400 for SMR as they ran the scenic shores of Loch Ness to the highland capital of Inverness. (Two of those fundraisers, Kelly and Michael, pictured left).

In November, fundraisers embraced the opportunity to participate in the Supernova Forth Road Bridge 5K (some of the 37 participants, pictured above). This illuminated run offered a rare chance to enjoy a traffic-free dash across the iconic bridge, creating a memorable evening of light and energy. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who supported us through their fundraising efforts.



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SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN RESCUE TRAINING EVENT

October saw over 100 team members from across Scotland gather at Glenmore Lodge for the annual Scottish Mountain Rescue national training event. Across two action-packed days, attendees honed critical skills in casualty care, 4x4 driving, water safety, avalanche rescue and wellbeing — to name just a few!

A big thank you to everyone who made the event possible — volunteers, sponsors, instructors, exhibitors, and the fantastic team at Glenmore Lodge. The weekend was a celebration of teamwork, skill-building, and preparation, ensuring our volunteers remain ready to face the challenges of the Scottish winter and beyond.

Right: Water rescue training © Evan Holahan. Group shot © Edinburgh Drone Company.





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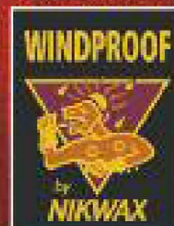
To find out more contact:
sales@mountain-equipment.co.uk





CHOSEN BY PROFESSIONALS

Crafted with



AVAILABLE IN DECEMBER, INTRO PRICE £96 INC. VAT UNTIL 31ST JULY 2025.

Our updated Fuera Ascent Jacket delivers rapid drying and excellent breathability for multi-agency SAR and MR activities. It can be badged according to spec.

- Nikwax® Windproof uses a closely woven microfibre fabric that cuts wind chill and protects your insulation whilst moving moisture away from your body.
- Updated vents provide excellent airflow with minimal water ingress even in the rain. The vents are still accessible when wearing a pack and allow access to any inner layers.
- Updated, extra length at the bottom of the jacket is more compatible with a harness.
- Updated hem cord design provides additional temperature control and prevents rucking when load carrying.

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