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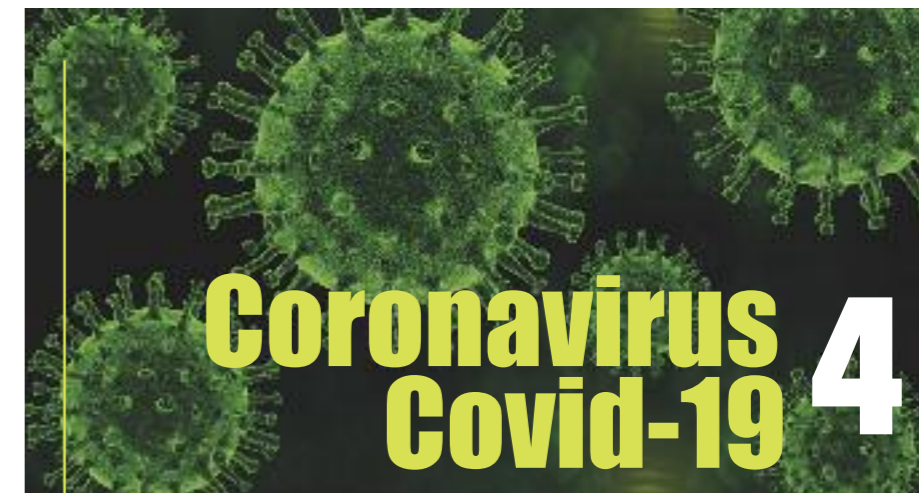
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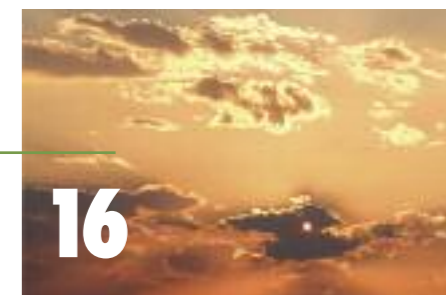
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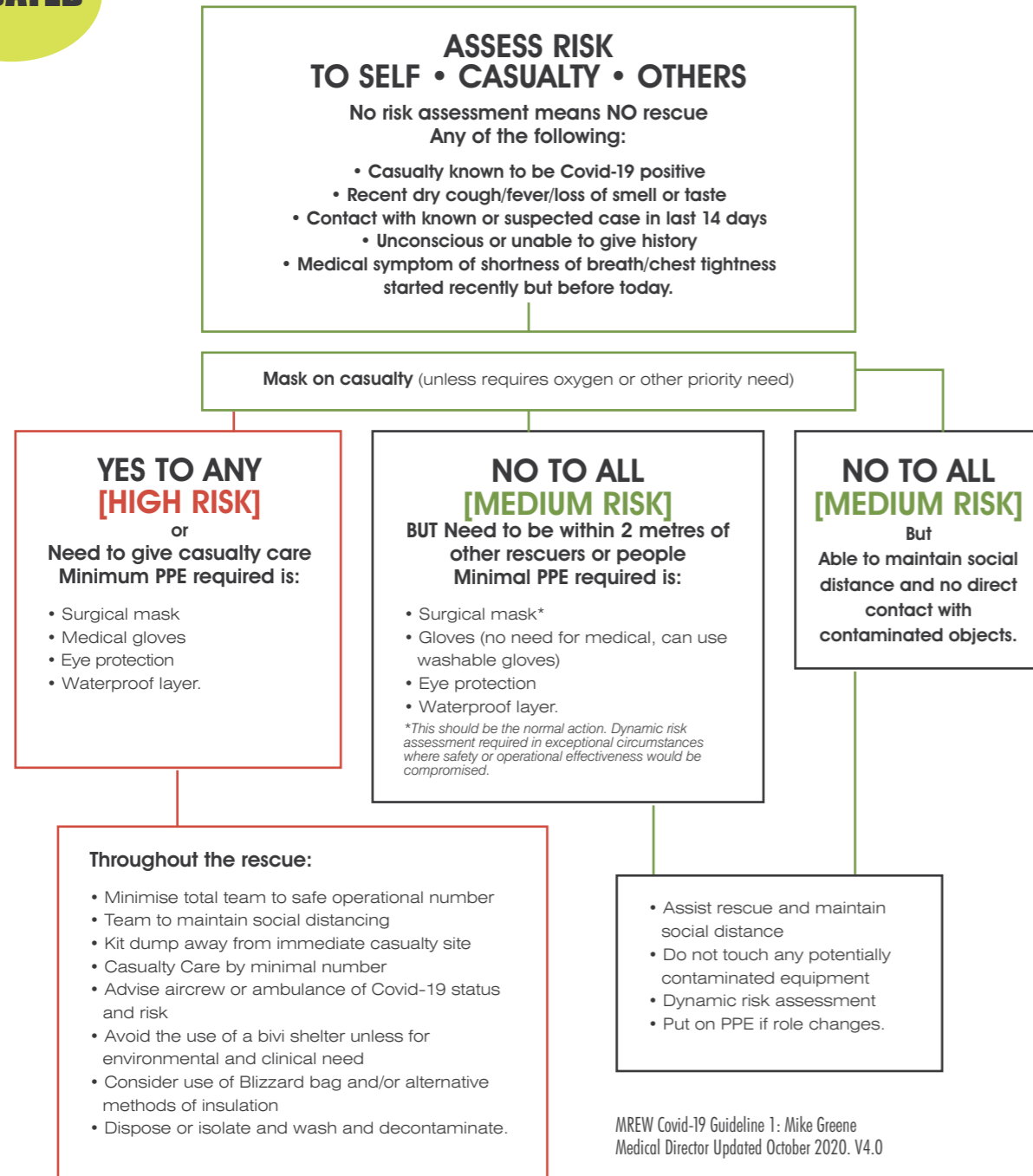
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MOUNTAIN RESCUE ENGLAND AND WALES
SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN RESCUE: COVID-19 GUIDELINE 1

UPDATED

INITIAL APPROACH TO THE CASUALTY



Please note: These documents were updated in October 2020 to reflect UKSAR guidelines. These are guiding principles and will need to be implemented at a local level. This continues to be a fast-moving crisis and guidance can change. Further amendments will be posted in the MREW Moodle Covid-19 site.

MIKE GREENE MREW MEDICAL DIRECTOR

MOUNTAIN RESCUE ENGLAND AND WALES
SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN RESCUE: COVID-19 GUIDELINE 2

UPDATED

CHANGES TO CASUALTY CARE ABCDE MANAGEMENT

You **MUST** have done your risk assessment and have appropriate PPE for this rescue.

- A** **Make a risk assessment – use MREW Airway and Breathing Risk Assessment**
- Turn a casualty with an 'airway at risk' into lateral position
 - Avoid use of suction — use positional drainage if possible
 - Use manual airway opening manoeuvres only after risk assessment
 - Only use airway adjuncts — OPA/NPA after risk assessment.
- B** **Make a risk assessment – use MREW Airway and Breathing Risk Assessment**
- Do **not** use a pocket mask or face shield
 - Only use a BVM with good fitting mask and filter after risk assessment
 - Use oxygen with a face mask according to clinical need. Avoid nasal delivery
 - Use pulse oximeter to guide oxygen use if possible
 - Use inhaler and spacer as first line (single use/dispose after use)
 - If required, use nebuliser — lowest functional flow (approx 6l/min), do not use in enclosed space, rescuers to remain upwind.
- C** **Cardiac arrest:**
- Use level 2 PPE (minimal requirement)
 - Check for signs of life but do not listen for breathing or get close to mouth or face
 - Cover casualty's mouth and nose with a face covering/mask
 - If AED is immediately available apply before chest compressions
 - Apply AED and follow instructions
 - Perform chest compression-only CPR as instructed by the AED
 - Do not ventilate or perform airway interventions (see MREW Airway and Breathing Risk Assessment)
 - Consider use of mechanical chest compression devices if available.
- D**
- No change — record conscious level
- E**
- Avoid use of bivi shelter unless environmental or clinical need. Keep warm using alternative methods of insulation if possible.

MREW Covid-19 Guideline 2: Mike Greene
Medical Director Updated October 2020. V4.0

Coronavirus Covid-19

UPDATED

MOUNTAIN RESCUE ENGLAND AND WALES AND SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN RESCUE COVID-19 GUIDELINE 3

EVACUATION AND END OF RESCUE

EVACUATION

Consider:

- Minimise members involved — but must be operationally appropriate
- Face mask on casualty to act as a barrier
- Sledging may create more distance between members than carrying
- Wheel may be less stressful and helps to reduce breathing rate/high intensity exercise whilst wearing face mask
- Gloves — use washable gloves — medical gloves not required
- Do not touch face
- PPE is hot — consider adjusting layers of clothing/regular change of personal etc.

WORKING WITH OTHER AGENCIES

- Inform other agencies of your risk assessment.
- Maintain your PPE and social distance when working with other agencies
- If uncomfortable, ask other agencies to respect your PPE and distancing.

END OF RESCUE AT ROADSIDE AND AT BASE

Dispose. Isolate. Decontaminate.

At roadside:

- Consider: Decontaminate as much as possible before leaving roadhead, setting up a decontamination zone at roadhead. Use of a buddy system.

Removing personal clothing:

- Do not touch face. **Clean hands between each step.**
- Removes gloves — turn inside out — dispose/isolate (if washable)
- Remove waterproofs — turn inside out — isolate in bags — wash (follow manufacturer's instructions)
- Remove eye protection — isolate/decontaminate
- Remove helmet/headwear — isolate/clean (manufacturer's instructions)
- Remove face mask — dispose
- Clean hands.

At base:

- Ensure you have a local procedure to decontaminate or isolate all equipment
- Refer to manufacturer's instructions as required
- Clean vehicles and base
- Ensure immediate access to hand sanitiser in base for all members.

DRUGS

- There is no proven link between Ibuprofen and worsening of Covid-19. Ibuprofen can be used for analgesia in MR casualties
- Only use Entonox with a viral filter to protect the system from contamination
- In HIGH risk casualty avoid the use IND (risk of sneezing or coughing)
- Consider use of IM Morphine or Fentanyl Lozenge in these cases.

MREW Covid-19 Guideline 3: Mike Greene
Medical Director October 2020. V4.0

REMINDER... HOW TO REGISTER WITH MOODLE

Go to <http://tiny.cc/Moodle4MR> and use a team email address to register but NOT a role specific one! If you've registered correctly, you'll receive an automated email within thirty minutes confirming your request has been received. Your account will usually be approved within a few days, but please be aware it may take up to a week. An email will arrive with a temporary password which you'll be invited to change when you first log in.

Moodle will ignore duplicate registrations so if you have previously registered, but forgotten, try the forgotten password link. If you have any queries regarding registration, please email moodlesupport@mountain.rescue.org.uk.

NHS COVID-19 APP CALDER VALLEY SRT

The NHS Covid-19 App provides electronic contact tracing via Bluetooth. This is automatic and performed in the background. Users are notified by the app if a 'contact' registers a positive test result. A notification then advises the user to self-isolate for a period.

If mountain rescue team members are using the app and attending call-outs, it is important they suspend contact tracing within the app when practicing Infection Prevention and Control (IPC), including the use of appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and should remember to turn the contact tracing function back on when IPC is no longer practised i.e. at the end of a job'. This can be achieved by toggling the button within the app (see below).

Why is this important? The app uses Bluetooth to establish a contact if you are in range for a period of time. However, due to data protection, the 'contact' is a code that changes regularly¹. Only in the cases of a positive test are a user's 'contacts' uploaded to a central server (with their permission) and matches established. This notifies those 'contacts' via the coded database. To prevent data breaches, the codes cannot be identified to individual users and users will not be notified the identity of the positive 'contact'.

In instances where IPC is in place, there may be no need to isolate, however, due to the anonymity of data within the app it is not possible to ascertain where the contact occurred so a 'false' period of isolation may be indicated.

Consider the following

example: A team treats a casualty whilst practising IPC in full PPE who goes on to test positive for Covid-19. Members who are using the app and have been in close proximity to the casualty are then notified of a positive interaction. However, because this is anonymised, team members cannot be sure it was the casualty or another contact from, for example, a shopping trip. Worst-case scenario: teams could see a substantial number of team members isolating for up to two weeks following a call-out.

¹ <https://tinyurl.com/yc6qgktb>
² <https://tinyurl.com/ya8893vj>



Covid-19

Advice and Risk Assessment for Airway and Breathing Management

These notes are intended to provide a framework to guide decision-making in complex situations where a Casualty Care Certificate holder is faced with the situation of considering an Airway or Breathing intervention and no other help is available. It is not possible to provide advice on every situation in mountain rescue.

Covid-19 will remain in the community for the foreseeable future. The virus is transmitted by airborne particles or direct transfer from a contaminated surface to the face — entering via the eyes, mouth and nose. Management of the airway in first aid situations has the risk of producing airborne particles that can be inhaled by the rescuer and cause infection. A patient who requires airway intervention will be very sick and is likely to have an unknown Covid 'status'. Infection rates in the community are increasing and casualties come from a variety of areas in the UK. Increased Covid-19 in the community increases our risk.

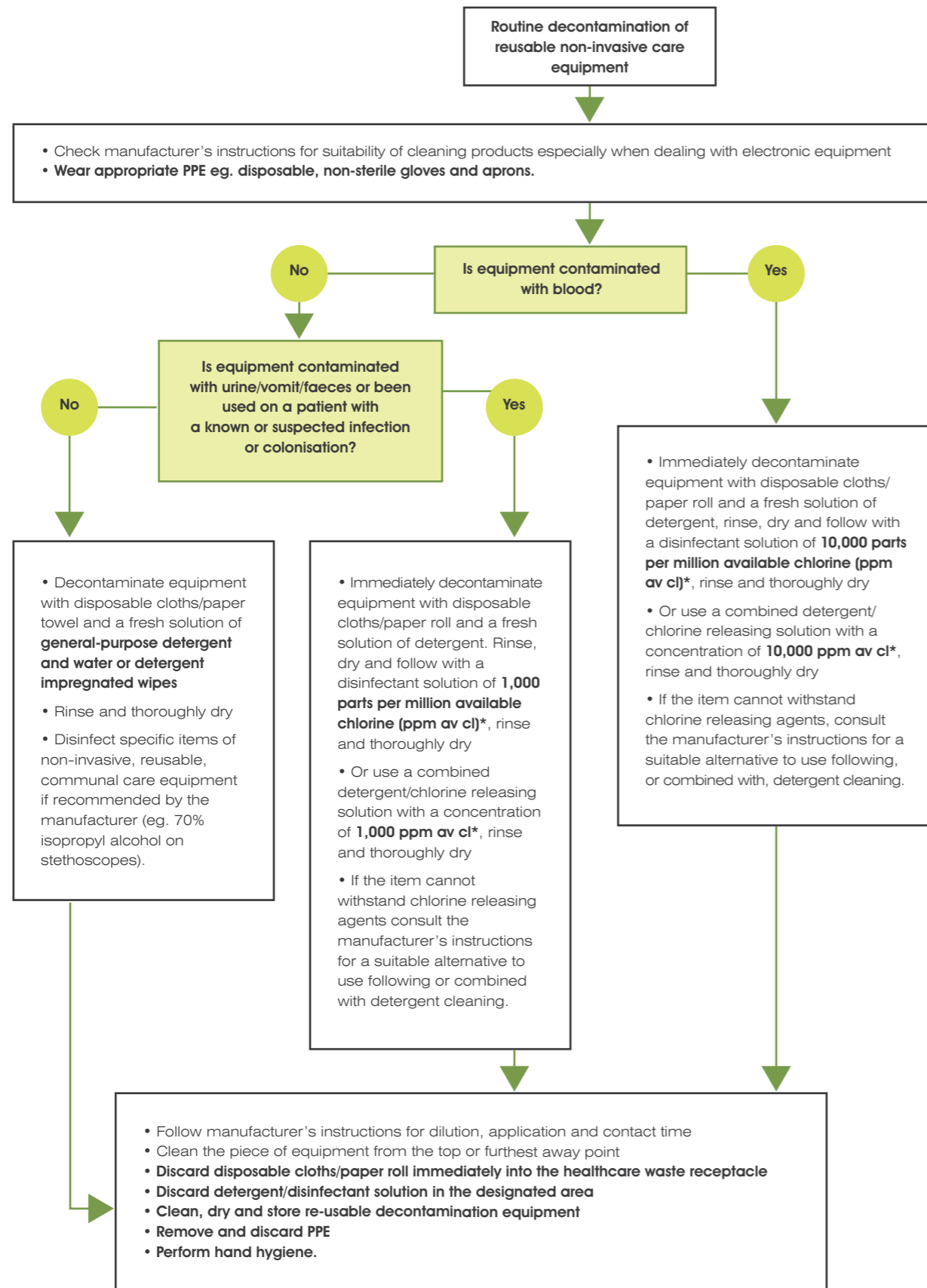
- Infection depends not only on exposure to the virus but the amount of virus, protection (to reduce viral contamination from the casualty and exposure to it by carers), and immunological factors in the host. Working in an outdoor environment considerably reduces risk compared with an indoor space.
- Mountain casualties do not usually have active Covid illness (but could be asymptotically shedding virus and cause infection).
- Airway and breathing treatments all have some risk to the rescuer therefore they require an informed risk assessment.
- In all cases, the safe default is no airway intervention, but in mountain rescue there may be no other professional help to manage the airway in timely manner.
- Rescuers are not required to place themselves at risk by their actions. This decision will always be supported.
- Health Care Professionals (HCPs) will make their own risk-based assessment of the situation and are likely to have access to Level 3 PPE.
- Some teams will have the resources to provide limited amounts of Level 3 PPE and this must be administered at a local level.
- The advice in this document should ideally be supported and supplemented with local professional support and decision making.
- In nearly all mountain accidents, the time delay for deployment, reaching and extracting the casualty means that those in cardiac arrest are non-survivors.

MREW MSC Airway Management Covid-19. V.2.0. October 2020. (Contributors: Dr R Walker, Dr L Gordon, Mr D Whitmore, Dr S Rowe, Mr M Hughes, Dr A Morris, Dr K Greene).

PROBLEM	BENEFIT & CONSIDERATIONS	AIRWAY RISK FOR CASUALTY CARE CERTIFICATE HOLDERS	COMMENTS
Adult cardiac arrest/medical unwitnessed or CPR ongoing > 15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extremely likely to have very poor outcome. Usually has a cardiac (heart-related) cause. Success dependent on early defibrillation and prompt chest compressions within first few minutes after collapse. 	Risk likely to outweigh benefit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MREW teams attend approx 10 cardiac arrests per year. Use current MREW Covid-19 CPR guideline.
Adult cardiac arrest/medical witnessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If team is present at 'collapse' or within first few minutes, outcome initially more hopeful. Cause likely to be cardiac (heart-related). Early defibrillation and chest compressions remain the best means of treating the reversible cause. 	Risk likely to outweigh benefit. Consider A & B if defibrillation not successful in first three shocks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AEDs are used by MREW teams approx 8 times a year. Use current MREW Covid-19 CPR guideline. See below for risk assessment and interventions if A & B interventions considered.
Adult cardiac arrest/trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome very poor once arrest has occurred. Mountain accidents cause blunt trauma. Rapid intervention is not usually available for a reversible cause in remote situations. Blood loss is the cause of arrest in 50%. Although other reversible causes may be present in 15%, these cannot be corrected by Casualty Care Certificate interventions. 	Risk is likely to outweigh benefit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defibrillation will not treat the cause of a traumatic cardiac arrest.
Paediatric arrest/drowning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respiratory cause but very poor outcome unless recently submerged and rescued within 10 minutes. After 25 minutes' submersion, very poor outcomes. There can be a protective effect of hypothermia in ice cold water. Bystander immediate CPR/ventilation critical. 	Benefit increased BUT requires assessment of situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MREW teams attend approx 3 drownings (of all ages) per year. Emotional dilemma present in all child cardiac arrest. <p>Assess the risk:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Children do have the potential to infect adults BUT this might be less likely to do so. Cause of arrest is lack of oxygen and airway intervention with ventilation is more likely to reverse the cause than with some other causes. Time under water: improved survival if child is rescued within 10 minutes. Very poor outcomes after 25 minutes under water. Improved outcome if CPR started immediately. Ideally, decision by experienced HCP. Resuscitation requires Level 3 PPE available and suitably skilled provider — is this available? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you accept the risk, use a bag-valve-mask (well-fitting mask and filter) + oxygen, rather than a face shield or pocket mask.

PROBLEM	BENEFIT & CONSIDERATIONS	AIRWAY RISK FOR CASUALTY CARE CERTIFICATE HOLDERS	COMMENTS
Paediatric arrest/trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likely to have very poor outcome. Cause severe blood loss, severe hypoxia or severe brain trauma. These causes cannot be reversed by interventions available to Casualty Care Certificate holder. 	Risk likely to outweigh benefit.	Follow BLS Guideline if professional help is quickly available to support further resuscitation.
Paediatric arrest/medical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More likely to have respiratory cause. Children have less severe illness from Covid-19 but can carry and transmit the infection. They also interact with many potential contacts. 	Benefit maybe higher than in other forms of arrest.	<p>A very rare event in a mountain rescue team. Ideally, decision by experienced HCP and resuscitation requires Level 3 PPE available and suitably skilled provider.</p> <p>If you accept the risk use a bag-valve-mask (well-fitting mask and filter) + oxygen, rather than a face shield or pocket mask.</p>
'Live' casualty requiring airway support	<p>Perform a risk assessment Best assessed and managed by HCP.</p> <p>When no professional help will be available in a suitable time period consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Airway intervention in MR is a rare event. Only 6 records of the use of airway adjuncts in MREW database in 2019. If airway and breathing intervention is to be carried out, use a step-wise approach and non-invasive methods first. Only use more invasive actions if simple action is not successful. Do something simple and 'safe' or wait for help if this is possible: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lateral position Simple airway manoeuvres <p>before</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjuncts Suction. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use BVM rather than a pocket mask or face shield. Use a well-fitting mask and must use a filter. 	Ideally, intervention by appropriately protected and trained carer or HCP. Consider risk on individual case basis.	<p>Ideally requires Level 3 PPE available and suitably skilled provider.</p> <p>There is much more risk to the rescuer if the casualty coughs during an airway intervention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only use an intervention if required. Keep your head and face as far away from casualty as possible. Position yourself out of the 'line of fire' from a cough (upwind if possible). Only insert an airway adjunct in sufficiently unconscious patients to avoid coughing. Avoid using suction if possible. Try positional drainage first. Do not use a pocket mask or face shield. Use a BVM only with a well-fitting mask and a filter. <p>Other factors are the individual profile of the rescuer. Factors such as age and other illness may make the rescuer more susceptible to more severe infection so these individuals should not be exposed to unnecessary risk from Covid-19.</p> <p>A local arrangement for 'fit testing' and supply of FFP3 respiratory protection may be available through local resilience forums. The Fire Service is providing fit testing in some areas. Note that FFP3 masks are manufacture specific and not interchangeable. Also be aware that the wearer must be clean-shaven. It is likely that such an arrangement would require limited number of individuals in a team to be suitably tested, equipped and trained.</p>

ROUTINE DECONTAMINATION OF REUSABLE NON-INVASIVE PATIENT CARE EQUIPMENT



* Scottish National Blood Transfusion service and Scottish Ambulance Service use products different from those stated in the National Infection Prevention and Control Manual



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Covid-19

A guide for MRT members*

DAVID WHITMORE DERBY MRT & MIKE GREENE

This article was published on the Moodle VLE in May 2020 but its message remains as pertinent going forward into 2021. Covid-19 remains endemic in the UK and we can expect a significant number of the UK population to have the potential to be infected so, as mountain rescuers, we must continue to be alert. Not all infected persons display symptoms, and therefore it is wise to assume that your casualty or missing person has the potential to be infected with the virus. We must continue to adapt not to 'business as usual' but 'our normal business done differently'. MREW, regions and teams have all been working to ensure we have safe systems of practice in place to keep both team members and our casualties safe during this crisis. This document is a summary of important information for all team members.

WHAT IS COVID-19, AND HOW IS IT SPREAD?

Covid-19 is a coronavirus¹ discovered in November 2019 in Wuhan province China, and passed from animals (bats) to humans². In humans the virus is spread via droplets as a result of breathing, coughing or sneezing in close proximity (within two metres) of an infected person. It can also be spread by a person touching an infected person, a surface or object that has been contaminated with respiratory secretions and then touching their own mouth, nose or eyes³. The virus can last for up to 72 hours on some surfaces⁴.

HOW CAN WE LIMIT THE SPREAD?

Because the virus cell is surrounded by a lipid ('fatty') layer it is inactivated by soap⁵. This is one of the main reasons why really good hand hygiene and cleaning down of potentially contaminated surfaces assists in restricting the spread of the virus. It is also a reason why washing clothing in an ordinary washing machine is effective in killing the virus⁶.

We can limit spread by staying outside the range of droplets expressed from the respiratory system (two metres), avoiding any interaction with the airway (the most potentially infectious area) and never touching our own faces with gloves that might be contaminated. We can minimise droplet spread by placing barriers between the casualty's airway and ourselves, hence the use of a fluid resistant face mask on the casualty and ourselves when we have to get within two metres of the casualty.

HOW DO WE DETERMINE IF A CASUALTY HAS COVID-19?

If casualties meet the below criteria they are classified as a possible case:

- Acute respiratory distress syndrome⁷
- High temperature (of 37.8°C or higher)

And at least one of the following which must be of acute onset:

- Persistent cough (with or without sputum), hoarseness, nasal discharge or congestion, shortness of breath, sore throat, wheezing or sneezing.

However, there is a wide variety of presentations and not all patients will have fever or these signs and symptoms. The dilemma for MRTs is that some casualties will have no signs of Covid-19 but could be shedding⁸ the virus and be infectious. We do not know how often this happens. Therefore it is prudent for the assessment and treatment of the patient to be by as few people as possible, depending on the physical location and clinical condition of the casualty. These team members must be wearing gloves, a mask, eye protection⁹ and a waterproof layer (Level 2 PPE).

A second dilemma is that assessment and treatment can be more difficult when we are trying to avoid viral spread. It is advisable to keep a physical 'hand on' assessment to a minimum.

Collect as much information as possible from the casualty, their relatives or friends and use observation to help diagnosis. Thus, observation of the effort of breathing, inability to speak in whole sentences, their colour and their demeanour take on a much more nuanced meaning for the casualty carer.

Physical contact should be reduced to essential assessment and treatment. It is advised that the most clinically competent person carries out the examination and assessment. Think — will the examination or procedure I am going to carry improve my decision-making and or change treatment. If, due to the casualty's injuries or medical condition, a closer physical examination of the chest or abdomen is required, then the casualty carer must replace their outer layer of gloves having completed the examination¹⁰.

It is worth considering putting in place systems that restrict the self-deployment of team members, and that they wait at the RVP and approach the casualty site as a team; and that the most clinically experienced member of the approach party makes the initial assessment. This will also allow for PPE kits to be made available from the RVP to ensure that a casualty carer, and others, have the correct PPE.

Remember your D-R-C-A-B-C-D-E approach. Danger encompasses Covid-19. A sensible and calm approach in our normal manner is what is required. You are there to treat a casualty, who might, as an aside, have Covid-19. The fact that they are 'on the hill' is a sign that they are probably not seriously ill with the virus, but they might be infected with it. It is unlikely that the reason you have been called out is because they have the virus as the main problem.

The majority of casualties treated within MREW have had the normal injuries and illness that we expect to treat in MR. After the lockdowns/restrictions, we will continue to treat people with broken legs and cardiac chest pain. The difference is that they might be able to spread the virus. Until there is widespread testing in the community or a

vaccine we need to adapt our mountain rescue operations to this situation.

The MREW Moodle site has further resources and three specific guides on how to approach, treat and evacuate a casualty during Covid-19 (reproduced here on pages 4-6). This information changes from time to time and you should continue to check the MREW Medical Covid-19 section of the site once a week for updates. There are also videos and documents from teams across MREW detailing how they are approaching these issues¹¹.

PROTECTION FROM COVID-19: PPE AND RESCUE EQUIPMENT

All MRT members should be carrying medical gloves, goggles for helicopter ops and waterproof clothing. These items form the absolute minimum basis of your PPE for Covid-19, and must be supplemented by team PPE, in particular fluid-resistant surgical masks. It is strongly advised that team members practise how they will put on (don) and remove (doff) PPE. Using a 'buddy' system is recommended because, when in a hurry, you can make mistakes. Pre-planning how you will respond from home/team base and what you need in your vehicle is vital.

There are video and documentary resources on the MREW Moodle site about all these aspects of preparing for a call-out, and post call-out procedures¹². Don't forget that when you get home — you also need a routine, so you don't place your family in harm's way.

At the casualty site, establish a kit dump that is at least two metres and, wherever possible, upwind from the patient. Now more than ever the casualty carer(s) and the site manager/team leader must think in advance to minimise the number of drugs, equipment and personnel that will be required to assess, treat and evacuate the casualty.

Remember whatever you use will either need to be disposed of as clinical waste¹³ or decontaminated. This should not compromise treatment but will minimise the kit that needs decontamination.

Stretcher evacuations present a challenge. Carrying a stretcher does bring you within two metres of a casualty. The casualty should be wearing a face mask. Wearing full waterproofs, eye protection and masks would be Level 2 PPE for all those on the stretcher. These team members are not anticipated to have the intimate contact that those delivering casualty care would have

but we must keep them safe. Wearing PPE is always hot and exhausting even in hospital so we must expect and manage this problem during strenuous activities in mountain rescue. Deliberately wearing lightweight clothing under outer garments should be considered. Changing, isolating and then washing clothes could be considered for the stretcher party. Wrap around sunglasses could replace helicopter goggles or glasses. A dynamic risk assessment is useful but apply the essential principles to keep team members safe.

KEEPING SAFE

We start the process of casualty care by emphasising the safety of ourselves, others and the casualty. In most MR situations the objective danger from steep ground or an approaching helicopter can be easily seen and its effects are immediate. This is not true for the risk of Covid-19. This requires the same but, arguably, a more thoughtful approach. The first decision point is before you leave home. If you have a medical problem that places you in a higher risk group you should not go on call-outs at the moment. If you have vulnerable family members or family who are in a period of isolation you should stay at home. Discuss attending call-outs with your family — your actions can seriously affect other family members.

When you attend a call-out, ensure you fully understand the new operational policies and be aware that rescues will need more 'command and control' in this climate. Please be patient with your team leaders.

You must be responsible for your team members and keep to social distancing and minimise interaction during the call-out.

Think through each action during the rescue and have a plan and routine for decontamination when the job is finished.

We want to see you and your family safe and well. Mountain rescue will always be there on the 'other side'.

'Climb if you will, but remember that courage and strength are nought without prudence, and that a momentary negligence may destroy the happiness of a lifetime. Do nothing in haste; look well to each step; and from the beginning think what may be the end.'

These familiar words of Edward Whymper, from his 'Scrambles Amongst the Alps' are just as true today as then, but Whymper had never considered this might one day apply to Covid-19.

Access all the latest information and guidance on everything related to Covid-19 and mountain rescue through the MREW Moodle platform.

REFERENCES

- ¹ A coronavirus is so called because under a microscope the individual virus cell surface resembles a crown.
- ² Any disease that is passed from animals to humans is known as zoonotic transmission. Lyme disease is zoonotic in nature.
- ³ 'COVID-19: guidance for first responders': <https://tinyurl.com/tgsxkzf>
- ⁴ This varies on the type of surface: Copper up to 4 hours, cardboard 24 hours and hard plastic or steel surfaces 72 hours.
- ⁵ It is the surfactants in the soap that break down the lipid layer and allow the virus to be killed.
- ⁶ Wash items in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Use the warmest water setting and dry items completely. Dirty laundry that has been in contact with an unwell person can be washed with other people's items. Do not shake dirty laundry — this minimises the possibility of dispersing virus through the air. Clean and disinfect anything used for transporting laundry with your usual products. 'COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings outside the home': <https://tinyurl.com/lyx4ervgy>
- ⁷ NHS 'Acute respiratory distress syndrome': <https://tinyurl.com/vzud9k5> Symptoms include: severe shortness of breath, rapid shallow breathing, tiredness, drowsiness/confusion and feeling faint.
- ⁸ The term is used to refer to shedding from a single cell, shedding from one part of the body into another part of the body, and shedding from bodies into the environment where the virus may infect other bodies.
- ⁹ These need to be surgical masks and conform to EN1463 for Type2R masks. This means they will be FFP2 as a minimum standard.
- ¹⁰ If there is contamination it will mainly be on the patient's clothes so examination under the clothes is low risk
- ^{11, 12} <https://moodle.mountain.rescue.org.uk/>
- ¹³ It is advised that teams source yellow clinical waste bags, double bag all clinical waste and either dispose of it through NHS resources if available to them. Or, leave in a safe area at base for at least 72 hours and then dispose of in the domestic waste (based on 'COVID-19: cleaning in non-healthcare settings outside the home': <https://tinyurl.com/ya54fw2k>

NOTES:

In the context of this article, the term 'casualty' refers to anyone who we have been called to assist — so from a fallen climber to a missing person who appears uninjured at the 'find' and everything in between.

MRT denotes Mountain Rescue Teams.

* First published in May 2020



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MREW PRESIDENT AND OPS DIRECTOR NAMED IN THE NEW YEAR HONOURS

Patterdale team member Ray Griffiths (MREW president since 2017) was appointed MBE. Mike Margeson, of Duddon and Furness MRT, (MREW Operations Director and currently in the national chair) gained an OBE. Both were recognised for their service to mountain rescue.

Ray joined the Patterdale team in January 1976 when he moved to the Eden area of Cumbria to teach at Ullswater Community College. He has served in a number of roles with the team, including deputy leader for many years, as well as both regional and national work.

'Massive congratulations from all the team and everyone you have helped over the years Ray,' said Patterdale team members. 'You join a growing but small number of amazing people in mountain rescue who have been recognised for their efforts over many years. We are all proud.'

Mike is former team leader for the Duddon and Furness team. Fellow team members believe the award is well-deserved. 'Mike has dedicated over forty years of his life to mountain rescue, carrying out more than 1,000 rescues during this time. He has a lifetime of experience in the mountains which is called upon during rescues, but Mike also plays a pivotal role in imparting his knowledge to the team and mentoring newer members. Congratulations Mike, from all your DF MRT colleagues. Keep up the brilliant work!'

Elsewhere in mountain rescue, Richard Paskell of Western Beacons MRT also gained an MBE. A serving police detective, he received the honour for his services to mountain rescue and to the community in south Wales. As well as his work with Western Beacons, he is also involved with St John Ambulance Cymru. And Kevin Hindle was awarded a British Empire Medal for his work with Bowland Pennine MRT. His colleagues congratulated him for his recognition in the New Year Honours list. 'Well done from us all'.

Top: MREW President Ray Griffiths © Dave Freeborn.

USE OF TEAM EMAIL ADDRESSES MARK LEWIS MREW ICT OFFICER

Over the years we've asked teams to use email addresses from within their team or regional domains, for example teamleader@myMRT.co.uk and forname.surname@myMRT.co.uk.

There are several reasons for this but, primarily, it helps with data protection. When someone leaves your team you can just turn their email address off. We often have ex-team members moan at us that they are still receiving emails from MREW.

If the team uses teamleader@myMRT.co.uk, when your officers change, you just need to give the email account to the new officer. A simple change of password and the correct person receives the information and MREW will always be sending the information to the people you, the team, want to receive it.

If you use forname.surname@myMRT.co.uk, it helps us identify that people are members of mountain rescue when trying to access services. When we enter discussions with organisations such as Bluelight Card (and others) they normally ask us for a list of team domains so they know who to accept for membership, discounts etc.

After discussion with, and the agreement and support of the MREW management team, regional chairs, Operations group and ICT subcommittee, from 1 February, the email list will be updated, and we will ONLY be using the team email address. **No team email address, you don't get the email.** All teams and regions need to update their contact details for their team officers and key contacts by 29 January.

If you need support with this, please email ictofficer@mountain.rescue.org.uk or assistant-secretary@mountain.rescue.org.uk.

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mrew

MIKE MARGESON ACTING SEO AND OPERATIONS DIRECTOR



I was not at all surprised to hear from Yasmin, at the Scottish Mountain Rescue office, of the many messages received on the passing of the legend that was Hamish MacInnes. It was somehow very fitting that the week of his funeral heavy snows fell across the Scottish Highlands. In close succession came the sad announcement that Doug Scott had passed away peacefully at home. While the mountain rescue legacy of Hamish is widely known, perhaps less so with Doug. He was no stranger personally to rescues and, through his charity CAN (Community Action Nepal), set up three porter rescue stations in Solu, Khumbu. I remember the generosity of our teams donating used and unneeded rescue equipment back when I was equipment officer, to help Doug set these up. How we got the donated mountain of equipment out there was thanks to our RAF MRT friends and that's a whole other story.

After such a challenging year the mountain rescue service should be proud of its resilience, professionalism and teamwork. Looking ahead there are now real reasons for optimism that later in 2021, with the roll out of a vaccination programme, some form of normality can begin to return to our lives. However, before then, the coming winter months clearly provide potential resilience pressures on our teams. Maintaining safe operations whilst managing the Covid risks with added challenge of winter weather, longer rescues with less hours of light, reduced air ambulance support, all whilst having to operate in full PPE, clearly remain a significant challenge.

The operations group and medical subcommittee are acutely aware that although there is light at the end of the tunnel with the vaccination programme, it is critically important that we keep to our protocols and guidelines for safe working. We need to continue to guard against over-familiarity or any complacency in the coming months to keep our team members and families safe.

Training and skills fade have been discussed extensively. As frontline rescue volunteers we are legally allowed to undertake training activities. A national guidelines document on 'back to training' has been produced by the training subcommittee. Teams have made their own risk assessments and put in place plans of what face-to-face training is required and what can wait. Teams have followed best practice and guidance and kept to small groups or team bubbles for training and applied dynamic risk assessment for their own team as situations have changed locally.

The medical subcommittee has reviewed the concerns and worries about the training and examining process of our Casualty Care Certificate and potential impact on operational capabilities. Although temporary modification of the assessment process has been made and some assessments have successfully taken place, it was recognised that with the second lockdown and pressures on medical professionals, a further extension for expiring certificate holders was provided until 1 September 2021. It is expected that those concerned will keep up to date with the required skills. Full details are, of course, on the medical area of Moodle.

The monthly Covid meeting and the collection of data and reports from the regions has been incredibly useful. Its continuation will be reviewed at the Operations Group meeting on 9 January. Thanks to the regions for the feedback and data collection.

The central provision of PPE for teams that need it will continue with a slight difference. Ordering will be through the shop not through Julian. This allows for a more efficient accounting process.

Despite the present challenges, many of our projects and work streams continue to move forward. For full details see the officer reports from the November online main meeting. I will, however, mention that our excellent new website is up and running with its emphasis on educating and engaging with the public audience. The material in the old members area has been moved to Moodle.

I am informed by David Coleman, chair of the selection panel for CIO member teams and regions, that this is on track for the end of the year completion, with a recent flurry of activity. I would like to thank David and the panel on your behalf, for this not insignificant task with the huge volume of material they have received and reviewed. I know that many teams have appreciated the guidance and advisory feedback provided.

I would like to finish following the resignations recently announced of the National Officers Mike France, Mike Greene and Mike Gullen in thanking them all for their significant contributions. And, on a positive note... in December, we completed the interview process for the MREW Medical Director role and member teams voted to appoint Dr Alistair Morris. I know that once restrictions ease, Alistair is very keen to visit regions and meet with teams. 🍷

CALDER VALLEY TEAM MEMBER ALISTAIR MORRIS APPOINTED MREW MEDICAL DIRECTOR

So who is he, what's his background and what are his thoughts and plans for his new role? We asked Alistair to say a few words here, by way of introduction...

I've led an active outdoor life – rock climbing, mountaineering, caving, expedition cycling, ultra running and adventure racing – and joined Calder Valley on the back of my outdoor skills rather than my medical qualifications. I've been an active team member and have also trained in water rescue and am on the extended list for cave rescue with CRO. I have been team medical officer, regional medical officer for MPSRO, assistant and deputy team leader.

My day job is as a paediatrician and has gravitated more recently to emergency and ambulatory care. Through my experience with prehospital care in mountain rescue I have expanded my training and knowledge through the West Yorkshire prehospital scheme. I have management experience within my hospital trust, being an associate medical director for digital health leading on the implementation of an electronic patient record. Medical education has been an area of particular interest throughout my career and I have trained and worked on projects including developing e-learning packages, designing electronic portfolios, producing and delivering paediatric training in the West Bank. I am a course organiser for an MSc at the University of Leeds and a trustee for a charity for medical education training health workers in Africa.

I aim to bring my knowledge, skills and experience to build on and develop the hard work of my predecessors, John Ellerton and Mike Greene, to keep all teams providing the excellent care we currently do to those in distress. I would like the opportunity to listen and learn from teams around the country and hope I can be invited to come to regions and teams in 2021 when Covid allows safely. I look forward to meeting and working with all of you and it is a privilege to be appointed to this post and to represent all the teams and MREW.



Above: New MREW Medical Director, Dr Alistair Morris © Alistair Morris.



International Commission for Alpine Rescue Virtual Conference 2020

Greek sunset © Thanasis Papazacharias via Pixabay.

The majority of us have never attended an ICAR conference but being able to sign up for the virtual 2020 congress was a great opportunity. The conference was due to have been held in Greece and, like most other events since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was postponed and is scheduled for October 2021, in Greece. **Chris Cookson** attended from the comfort of his desk at home.

Registering was easy, with no cost and you can still catch up with the presentations at vimeo.com/alpinerescue, along with video highlights from previous ICAR conferences. It's well worth a look, a good flavour of what ICAR is about and what it might be like to attend in person.

The 2020 virtual conference ran over two weekends in October and was very well put together, with the presentations themselves pre-recorded. Presenters were available to answer questions live via the chat, and also on camera for a few minutes following the presentation. These Q&A sessions follow the presentation in the recordings, where some very relevant questions are asked and answered.

DAY 1

The first day was moderated by Charley Shimanski, president of the Air Rescue Commission. Following an introduction and welcome by ICAR President, Franz Stämpfli, the first presentation — not unexpectedly, given the year we've had and the reason the conference took place online — was titled 'Covid-19 Effect on Mountain Rescue'.

Dr John Ellerton, currently president of the ICAR Medical Commission, provided a great resumé of how Covid has impacted mountain rescue globally, and the PPE use and guideline changes required, with a particular focus on what's happened within MREW and his own team, Patterdale MRT.

This included a critique of Covid-19 risk assessments, with a case study. Other commission presidents contributed with the impact of the pandemic for their own commissions. The avalanche commission report, presented by Stephanie Thomas, looked at the lessons learned and also looked forward to the next winter season from the point of view of forecasting avalanches, prevention work, educators and guides, highway patrol/road work and ski patrol, as well as search and rescue. It finished with a look at mental health strategies. The Air Rescue Commission report, presented by Charley Shimanski, looked at the use of PPE in helicopter rescue operations, along with protocols for protecting the crew and patient transport

and, finally, decontamination of the aircraft.

'Accidents and Incidents in Helicopter Rescues' covered accidents and incidents from the last twelve months or so, along with recently published air accident investigation reports. If you've ever heard people say things like, 'helicopter accidents account for the highest death toll amongst rescuers', this presentation may give some context to that, and perhaps explain why, as aviation in general, there is such focus on investigating and learning from air accidents and incidents. It also demonstrates that it's not just rescuers who get killed in these accidents. Some really good learning points were covered, that make sense to consider further afield than air rescue. Well worth a watch. And to highlight the issue of rescue helicopter safety, since the ICAR Virtual Conference, a further five people died in a rescue helicopter crash in the French Alps in early December. In conclusion, the sharing of incident and accidents reports was seen as a strength and key to improving safety. It was also noted that around 50% of accidents/incidents involved winching.

The third presentation about the role of the European Union Aviation Safety Agency and the relationship between ICAR and the EASA included an interesting section (36:16) on drones and the ICAR Interdisciplinary Drone Working Group — more of which later.

The session on dynamic winching operations was intriguing, and presented an approach to stopping people being winched into a rescue helicopter from spinning by quickly moving to forward flight, so the downwash falls behind those being winched rather than not acting upon them. Great footage of this technique in operation by Air Zermatt.

An organisation called Lifeseeker provided what they refer to as an airborne phone location system (25:21). This looks to be a very exciting system, with a version for use from helicopters and drones, that locates people via their mobile phone.

The final presentation was about Instrument Flight Rules (IFR), in flights for rescue operation, for use when visibility is poor and Visual Flight Rules (VFR) can't be used, or for specific flight corridors. This all makes sense, even to the layperson, when

you see that presenter Renaud Gillermet works in the mountains around Grenoble.

DAY 2

The second day, moderated by Stephanie Thomas (ICAR AvaCom Vice President), began with a review of avalanche accidents during the 2019/2020 season, from around the world, including Scotland.

Next, Cody Lockhart and Jen Reddy, from Teton County SAR, used a case study to illustrate the importance of a specific approach to giving psychological first aid to avalanche victims and their companions. This could also be applied to rescuers and other types of rescues, not just avalanches.

Dr Malin Zachau took an in-depth look at avalanche accidents in New Zealand, looking at the implications for mountain rescue and next up was AvaLife, a survival chance optimisation decision-support tool and avalanche patient protocol.

The rather sombrely-titled 'Death Registry', saw Dr John Ellerton provide an update on the ICAR Rescuers' Fatality Project. The aim of this project is twofold: firstly to enquire and analyse rescue fatalities during training and rescues and secondly to provide a 'Line of Duty' to give respect to mountain rescuers who die during service. At the Chamonix ICAR conference there was agreement to add near-misses to the data collection. The review looked at whether the project was required, what the challenges are and what the next steps should be.

The last presentation was a case study of an avalanche rescue on the Dachstein mountain in March 2020, in which five people died whilst snowshoeing. This was a large-scale operation involving lots of rescuers and quite a number of helicopters.

DAY 3

The third day was moderated by Gebhard Barbisch (ICAR TerCom President). 'Near Miss Reporting: Improving Risk Assessment by Sharing Lessons Learned', from Dale Wang (MRA), looked at what a near-miss was, why reporting is important and the associated objectives, some case studies and consideration of how we can better risk-manage training and rescues in the future.

Closer to home, Alan Carr of Mountain Rescue Ireland (MRI) talked about 'Risk and Assurance' and the development in Ireland of the National Search and Rescue Plan for air, land and sea, search and rescue. I was impressed with the bigger picture this plan looks to address, the joined-up way they're going about this and their desire for assurance from all stakeholders.

Reducing the weight of kit is often desirable and Edi Cartaya looked at how Teton County SAR have considered and used lightweight kit and techniques for rescues from a cave system in the Jedediah Smith Wilderness. Local laws prevent the use of mechanised transport, including helicopters. Even a wheel on a stretcher can only be used on a live rescue! A fascinating insight into how they've addressed the issues they face.

Klaus Opperer presented the Mountain Rescue International Facebook group, an open group that anyone can join. Having introduced this group, why it was formed, how it can be used and is operated, Klaus goes on to look at five key lessons learned from operating it. In the first, 'Some people and organisations do really good media work', Keswick MRT is among the three examples cited.

'Innovative Analytic Tools and Practices for Wilderness Search and Rescue in Bosnia and Herzegovina' looked at software tools developed to aid search decision making.

The final presentation was about drones, their many uses and potential uses, and the huge positive impact they have and are likely to have on mountain rescue in the coming years, as well as the hazards they present. We were introduced to the ICAR Drone Working Group and what it aims to achieve, with a request for delegates with relevant experience to volunteer to join the group. The uses drones are being put to and their potential is really quite incredible.

DAY 4

Dr John Ellerton began with some very uplifting and heartfelt words of appreciation both for those presenting and behind the scenes (11:14). The first session, by Marcel Meier of Alpine Rescue Switzerland (ARS), featured a very moving case study of a missing elderly gentleman to illustrate the importance of cooperation and good teamwork between rescue helicopters and search dog teams.

Another inspirational and joined-up picture, from Norway, with the introduction to the Shared Resource Information Repository. Stig Mebust, operations manager with the Norwegian Search and Rescue Dogs, shared his experience with the system. It sounds impressive and provides functionality on assets nationally, in the MRMap, SARCALL, SARCALL App arena, with a hint of JESIP.

'Effects of Acute Altitude Exposure on Decision Making in HEMS and CPR Quality in Mountain Rescue', from Giacomo Strapazzon (CNSAS/Eurac Research, Italy) and Marika Falla (University of Trento),

explained the research and its findings. Simulating being at altitude was accomplished using the terraXcube, a new facility in Italy (terraXcube.eurac.edu/).

Anyone with an interest in accidental hypothermia in a mountain rescue setting, will be keen to watch 'Latest research on Clinical Staging of Hypothermia and its Implications for Mountain Rescue'. Martin Musi (Rocky Mountain Rescue, University of Colorado) presented a proposal for a modified Swiss Staging System for hypothermia.

Fabrice Legay (EASA) gave an update on the EASA regulation that may impact on mountain rescue, around use of hoists, HEMS operations and drones.

Finally, in 'Search Mapping Techniques', Matt Jacobs, a SAR volunteer in California was very impressive and a must-watch for any search manager, looking at the techniques possible with online mapping and how they can assist in search planning and management. Whilst he focused on the techniques and not specific tools, he is the creator of the SARTOPO website used in his presentation. Again, very impressive.

I have to say I've honestly been blown away with what ICAR and Topograph Media have managed to achieve with the virtual conference, in terms of quality, content and approach, particularly in the circumstances. Top marks to all involved. 🙌

			Time from start
Day 1 - Part 1 vimeo.com/467758687	Welcome and Introduction	Charley Shimanski	03:30
	Welcome, Introduction and Opening	Franz Stämpfli	10:20
	COVID-19 Effect on Mountain Rescue	Dr John Ellerton	16:06
	COVID-19 Effect on MR (Avalanche Commission)	Stephanie Thomas	49:06
	COVID-19 Effect on MR (Air Rescue Commission)	Charley Shimanski	54:08
Day 1 - Part 2 vimeo.com/467903670	Accidents and Incidents in Helicopter Rescues	Shimanski, Gillermet	00:00
	European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA)	Renaud Gillermet	22:56
Day 1 - Part 3 vimeo.com/468033975	Dynamic Hoisting Operations	Oliver Kreuzer	00:00
	IFR Flight and Mountain Rescue — Risk Management	Renaud Gillermet	28:36
Day 2 - Part 1 vimeo.com/468964024	Avalanche Accidents	Michael Finger	12:10
	Psychological First Aid and Avalanche Case Study	Cody Lockhart, Jen Reddy	36:49
Day 2 - Part 2 vimeo.com/469052479	Death in New Zealand Avalanches	Dr Malin Zachau	00:12
	AvaLife	Paal, Macias, McIntosh, Genswein	28:09
Day 2 - Part 3	Death Registry	Dr John Ellerton	00:31
	Avalanche Rescue Operation Dachstein	Klaus Wagenbichle	24:58
Day 3 - Part 1 vimeo.com/470116704	Near Miss Reporting	Dale Wang	06:15
	Ongoing Developments in Ireland	Alan Carr	32:52
Day 3 - Part 2 vimeo.com/470179630	Lightweight MR Kit in Alpine Cave Rescue in the Tetons	Edi Cartaya	00:25
	Connecting the Community	Klaus Opperer	29:29
Day 3 - Part 3 vimeo.com/470252248	Innovative Analytic Tools and Practices for WSAR	Bojan Šunji	00:00
	Drone Working Group	Shimanski, Barbisch Gillermet,	26:28
Day 4 - Part 1 vimeo.com/470321275	With Teamwork to Success	Marcel Meier (ARS)	14:10
	New Call-out System in Norway	Stig Mebust	42:00
Day 4 - Part 2 vimeo.com/470379588	Acute Altitude Exposure and Decision Making in HEMS	Giacomo Strapazzon	00:00
	Latest Research on Clinical Staging of Hypothermia	Martin Musi	30:28
Day 4 - Part 3 vimeo.com/470497063	EASA Update	Renaud Gillermet, Mr. Fabrice Legay	00:00
	Search Mapping Techniques	Matt Jacobs	

Table: Conference programme with links to the recordings and offset times for each presentation.



A word from the editor...

Expanding our online shop offering to echo our mountain safety messages...

I've lost track of the conversations we've had in various configurations of the fundraising group, with various fundraising officers, our finance director, Penny Brockman, and Julian Walden (currently 'de facto' fundraising officer), about the 'dire state' of our online shop. Over the years, we've tried, we really have, but never quite got to grips with it, managing instead to fall prey to the tantalising myth that bulk buying is the best way forward (three thousand plastic wristbands anyone? Please. Anyone! We have orange! And green!).

And don't get me started on cheap tat. Sell badges and stickers for a couple of quid each yes (and we do, aplenty) – but let's not be so rabbit-in-the-headlights petrified of upping our game a bit and selling more expensive, quality merchandise, appropriately priced, in the belief that our supporters will do just that and support us.

The 'beg, steal and borrow' mindset has been endemic in mountain rescue for too long. It made sense once because it was all we had. That's how we got ourselves equipped, grew ourselves into the organisation we are now.

But those days are long gone and, somewhere along the way, our admirable thriftiness began to work against us, wedded as it was with the ethic of voluntarism, persuading us to undervalue our brand – and be forever fearful of asking more than tuppence for something we might sell in the shop.

So Penny and I had a plan... okay, it's taken a while to take shape what with everything else in the mix but it's finally getting there. And we think it's working.

First stage was to get the new website up and running so we had a strong vehicle to host a revitalised shop. That launched last year, with a heavy emphasis on our 'safety' messages.

Alongside this was an expansion of the bookshop, the easiest way to increase sales and support those messages. We don't hold a huge stock – usually ordering only one or two of a title to test the market before buying more – but we've expanded gradually over the last twelve months, selling titles which cover knots and mountaineering, navigation, guidebooks, non-fiction books from well-known climbers and celebrities and a selection of children's

to simply be a vehicle for good quality kit and allow those products to speak for themselves. That said, if it's a branded trinket or gift you're after, we've got plenty of 'I support mountain rescue' teddies and soft puppy toys, microfibre cloths, pens and, of course, the model Land Rover, alongside those several thousand plastic supporter wristbands. (Did I mention we have green AND orange?)

Again, we've started small with all of this, with minimum orders for the branded stuff and very small quantities of stock for the other merchandise. More testing of the market but still at a modest profit for MREW. If things start flying off the shelves then we may think of expanding stock levels, but first we want to see what people want to buy.

Our price points have risen too, along with the quality of our stock, and we're not currently offering any of this new merchandise, or the books, at special 'team' rates or discounts to team members. This is about selling to the public, supporting the national body and raising awareness of the need to travel safe and develop navigation skills.

On that note, you'll also spot that the books sell at full cover price. We're very clear on the website that we're not attempting to compete with Amazon, or even your high street 'three for twos' – and you'll pay postage too. That extra cost is effectively a donation to mountain rescue and we're happy to say that people seem happy to support that premise. Thank you if you've done this yourself and bought from the bookshop.

Our runaway bestseller, by the way, is David Webb's 'Fight for Life' DVD about the Neil Moss incident, over sixty years ago, which changed the course of cave rescue in the Peak District and beyond, and clearly continues to be a huge source of fascination.

Another change has been that distribution has moved 'in house'. I look after the books and Julian and son Cam look after the rest, so we're better able to keep track of things and respond more promptly if there's a query. We even offer a gift wrapping service, featuring bespoke MREW paper, red tissue and silky ribbon (oh, how we've changed).

Leading up to Christmas, Sally Seed and Oliver Robinson set up a series of boosted ads on social media which worked well. We avoided the temptation to sell Christmas cards but our gift cards proved popular. A simple card thanks the recipient for a donation made on their behalf, with current options to give £5, £15 or £25.

I'll be looking at expanding all the ranges in 2021. We'll continue to link merchandise and books with our safety messages as well as stocking a range of branded goodies, badges and stickers. More importantly, we'll have some fun doing it. If you haven't taken a look at the shop yet, please do. And any ideas for stock, please don't hesitate to get in touch: editor@mountain.rescue.org.uk ☺



LedLenser's Lite Wallet, new to market and available in our shop. Left: Meet our Fudge Bear supporter teddy.



books (some educational, some just fun to have).

The next stage was to set up a number of accounts with key suppliers (and our list is by no means exhaustive yet), then select the sort of items we encourage the hill-going public to carry with them – so compasses, torches, head torches, power banks, waterproof notepads, bivvy bags and medical kits, thermal flasks and water bottles. We're even right at the cutting edge with a couple of our products from Led Lenser, new to market and state-of-the-art design. Who'd have thought it eh? Mountain rescue, cutting edge?

The eagle-eyed might spot that we haven't branded this stuff with our logo either, preferring



NOVEMBER: HIGH SHERIFF OF LANCASHIRE AWARDS FOR BOWLAND PENNINE TEAM

Team leader Kev Camplin accepted the awards on behalf of the team, in recognition of exceptional voluntary service to the community during the Covid-19 pandemic, from the High Sheriff of Lancashire, Mrs Catherine Penny.

'This is truly a great accolade to receive during these unprecedented times,' said Kev. 'At the start of the pandemic it was very challenging to manage the changes to our normal procedures, keeping abreast of the guidelines and the implementation of PPE. I feel honoured and privileged to lead the Bowland Pennine team, who have risen to the challenges in maintaining our service to the community under these exceptional circumstances.'

Above: Kev Camplin with awards © Bowland Pennine MRT.

Just a few of the titles available in our bookshop. We can't promise to compete with Amazon, and the postage won't come free of charge, but when you buy a book from our shop, you'll be making a donation of around 30-40% of the cover price, each time you buy. We can promise that much. Check out the bookshop at shop.mountain.rescue.org.uk



NEWS ROUND

OCTOBER > DECEMBER

DECEMBER: PATERDALE TEAM REACHES £85,000 TARGET FOR LAND ROVER DEFENDER APPEAL

Chris Sanderson, chairman of trustees for the team was delighted to announce that an exceptionally generous donation had taken the fundraising effort to its final target. The donation was in memory of a late family member who loved the Lake District and highly valued the work of the team.

'Recent activities such as sales of the Ullswater Valley calendar and an online auction associated with the new Terry Abraham Helvellyn film had already taken us to our halfway fundraising milestone,' said chairman of trustees, Chris Sanderson. 'Now this tremendous support from one family has enabled us to meet our target in full, a year ahead of schedule. We are looking forward to the completion of the modification work on the new vehicle and its entry into operational service early in the New Year.'

'On behalf of everyone associated with the Patterdale team – members, trustees, supporters and fundraisers alike – I'd like to thank all those who contributed to the appeal. Its success underlines the importance of donors, both large and small, to the continued delivery of a fully supported voluntary rescue service.'

Inset: Chris Sanderson, Patterdale MRT © Chris Sanderson.



Raising funds for rescue

A very big four at forty



Photos courtesy of Ross Jenkin and friends.

Ross, a police officer in Cumbria, has been fell running for nearly seven years and the idea for the 'Big 4 at 40' started when he supported a friend, Simon Mounsey, on his Bob Graham Round.

'We were talking about how it was a shame to waste all that fitness and training after just one of the 24-hour mountain challenges,' explains Ross. 'We joked about doing the three in Great Britain in one season. Then I found out about the Denis Rankin in Northern Ireland, which would bring the total up to four, and that got me thinking. Had anyone done all four in a season? And was it remotely possible to do all four in a week?'

Two years later, with sponsors, equipment, clothing and supporters in place, the plan was for Ross to attempt all four national mountain rounds in one week in June 2020. Ross would be driven between each location

by his wife, Maria. She would rest while Ross ran and he would sleep in the car as much as he could while she drove. The plans were all set and ferries booked but then Covid happened.

'We knew we'd have to postpone and decided to plan for late August,' says Ross. 'I thought heat might be an issue but it turned out to be wind and rain. Strong winds and a lot of rain!'

First of four: Ramsay's Round was first completed by Charlie Ramsay, in July 1978. It starts at the Glen Nevis Youth Hostel and finishes back at the same point, 56 miles and 23 Munros later.

'It can be done in either direction,' says Ross, 'and we did it clockwise, heading off up Ben Nevis and then east beyond Loch Treig to Beinn na Lap near Corour Station. So far, so good, as we had the wind at our

backs on this part of the route but, as we turned to head west for the Mamores, we were running into 90mph winds and I genuinely thought my accompanying runner was going to get blown away! We managed as far as the second Stob Bàn on the route and then had to retire but we'd completed so much of it, I decided to carry on to the next stage. I could always come back to Scotland once I'd completed the others.'

Second of four: The Denis Rankin Round connects the 39 tops over 400 metres in the Mountains of Mourne in County Down and it was named as a tribute to Denis Rankin, who died during the Slievemoughanmore mountain race in May 2013.

'It's a similar length to the Ramsay,' says Ross, 'but the landscape is very different: rolling hills with granite tors on top and not too different from my home hills, the Howgills, just with added rock! The route starts from a white arch in the Donard car park in Newcastle and we arrived during the early hours of the morning as the wind was easing, with a promise of beautiful sunshine when the sun rose. With such a change in the weather, I was hopeful I'd have a much better day.'

Unfortunately, that better weather was a temptation and Ross now realises he set off too quickly and, after several miles, began to suffer with tendonitis. 'I was being supported throughout by Lagan Search and Rescue team members as well as a local Norwegian mountain runner, a friend from Dublin and other local runners. We made good time and I completed the route in under 24 hours but I was in a lot of pain by the end, hoping a rest on the trip to Wales would sort that out.'

Third of four: The Paddy Buckley Round was devised by the eponymous Paddy Buckley and first completed in 1982 by Wendy Dodds. It features 47 tops over a 61-mile route and covers Snowdon, the Carneddau, the Glyderau and the Moelwynion.

'I'd planned to start at Capel Curig and had great support in place, including Simon from home and Nikki Summers, another ultra

runner who is also an A&E doctor. She recognised the tendonitis immediately and knew it was going to get more and more painful but agreed with my giving it my best shot. When the first leg took 8.5 rather than 7



hours, and every descent was excruciating, I should probably have given up but persevered.'

Ross hobbled on, getting slower and slower, refusing to give up. Towards the end, his ankles had swollen to the same size as his calves and he was going no more than half a mile an hour.

'Thirty-seven and a half hours later, I was undernourished, dehydrated and surviving on painkillers but back in Capel Curig. I'd completed the route but we all recognised that the Bob Graham, my final challenge, was not an option any time soon. The sunset that evening in North Wales was stunning and, although bitterly disappointed, it seemed a good place to stop before I did any permanent damage.'

So what next? Ross has raised almost £7,000 of his £15,000 fundraising target, even without completing the full challenge but he's determined to reach that target in 2021.

'If we can set it all up again for June, as we'd originally planned for 2020, I'm hopeful we'll get better weather as well and longer days of daylight. Most of those who supported me on the Scottish, Irish and Welsh routes are keen to help again and, as long as I'm fully fit, I'm keen to give it a try. With better conditions in Scotland, a more considered pace in Northern Ireland and less pain in Wales, I think all four can be done in a week and I'm still keen to be the one who does it first! 🙌'

NEWS ROUND OCTOBER > DECEMBER

Our Autumn issue included a brief report on Ross Jenkin and his epic Big 4 at 40 ultra run. As Ross plans a second attempt for 2021, **Sally Seed** talked to him about the background to his amazing challenge.

ROSS IS HOPING TO RAISE HIS TARGET OF £15,000 WITH THE BIG 4 AT 40 IN 2021 AND THE MONEY WILL BE DIVIDED BETWEEN THREE CHARITIES:

CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably): 'Ultra running is a calm place to be and I've realised that a lot of people in the sport, including me, have mental health issues. Running makes a difference so it makes sense to support this charity by running.'

The Dogs' Trust: 'I've had a rescue dog myself and there are fears that about 40,000 dogs are likely to be abandoned after Covid-19 so charities that look after them and connect them with new homes and owners are going to need a lot of support.'

Mountain Rescue England and Wales, Lochar MRT, Lagan Search and Rescue: 'I hope I never have to call on mountain rescue but, if I needed them, I'd like them to be as well-funded and equipped as possible!'

If you or anyone you know would like to support him, his online giving page is at <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/RossJENKIN2>. And we'll try to make a connection with Ross's second attempt later in the year so that you can follow his progress.

A NOTE OF THANKS TO THE COMPANIES WHO SUPPORTED HIM ALONG THE WAY

As with any expedition or major challenge, a lot of companies have supported Ross in kind. He'd like to ensure that they are credited: Dynafit (Salewa) for their clothing and footwear, Coros for Ross's GPS watch, Saxx for base layer (aka underwear), Injinji for toed socks, Voom Nutrition for a constant supply of energy bars, Castle Embroidery Kendal, Bowness Bay Brewing, Petzl, and Sidas UK.

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Hinkes thinks



Gone to greater climbs...

It goes without saying that 2020 was a very difficult year and we have also lost some of the greats of mountaineering who died last year. Joe Brown in April, Jan Morris and Hamish MacInnes in November, and Doug Scott in December. **Alan Hinkes** takes a walk down Memory Lane recalling four remarkable people, fellow climbers who were friends and mountaineering colleagues for many years.

Joe Brown was dubbed 'The Master' and the 'Human Fly' and one of the world's greatest rock climbers but he was also a mountaineer. He made the first ascent of Kangchenjunga in 1955, with George Band, Tony Streater and Norman Hardie. In many ways a greater achievement than Everest two years earlier. Certainly it was a more difficult ascent. I climbed Kangchenjunga fifty years later, in 2005, my final 8000m peak. There was rock climbing and scrambling at 8600m, so no easy plod. I remember seeing pictures of Joe with his gloves off climbing the final rocky sections to the summit and he finished on a typical Joe Brown crack'. I managed to traverse round this crack and scramble to the top.

Over the last thirty years, I had got to know

Joe and even climbed a route together: Coronation Street at Cheddar in the early 1990s. The first time I came across him was when I was eighteen and rock climbing in North Wales. My mates said they were going for a beer in the Padarn, a pub in Llanberis, now a hotel. They told me that the legendary Brown drinks there and plays darts. Yeah, I thought. I had to go to the bar to buy a couple of pints and squeezed past a bloke drinking at the bar only to realise it was Joe Brown. I was speechless. Years later I would often call in to chat and have a brew when I was in North Wales. If the weather was good, he would encourage me to get out on the hill or go rock climbing. Joe was well known for his sharp wit and sense of humour, a lovely man.

Jan Morris was the last living link to the 1953 Everest expedition. On that trip she was James Morris, and covering the ascent for *The Times*. Somehow, James got the scoop and got word out that Everest had been summited, just before the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. I met Jan a couple of times and was most impressed by her eloquent oratory and bright personality. She was a well known character in Pwllheli, and an excellent travel writer and author.

Hamish MacInnes should be well known to all mountain rescuers. He was known as the 'father of modern mountain rescue', especially in Scotland. He invented the lightweight, foldable alloy stretcher — the eponymous MacInnes — and developed modern metal ice axes, as he was aware of wooden shafts often snapping and not being strong enough for rescue work. He also developed modern technical dropped pick ice tools — the first being Terrodactyls. I made a lot of steep ice climbing ascents with 'Terrors', as they were known. They had very short alloy shafts with steeply dropped flat-forged picks, and a piece of thin polypropylene cord as a wrist loop. As well as the wrist loop digging into your wrist, if you were not careful how you placed these tools you could seriously bash your knuckles on the ice. There is no doubt Hamish, the 'Fox of Glencoe', made a major contribution to mountain rescue.

Doug Scott was diagnosed with cancer in March, and died on 2 December. I first met Doug, or 'Scotty' as he was affectionately known, in North Wales, in the late 1970s, just after he'd climbed the south west face of Everest with Dougal Haston. This was the first British ascent in September 1975. In 1953, the summit pair was Edmund Hillary, a New Zealander, and Tenzing Norgay, a Nepali-Indian.

I was probably a bit nervous and in awe of meeting this legend who had survived a high bivvy on Everest, and yet he was just like one of the lads and soon had me at ease. He was driving a battered estate car, probably a Ford Cortina, I remember that it was bare sheet metal inside — apparently the interior lining had been eaten by a dog he'd left inside.

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He was mostly interested in getting some rock climbing done — and a few pints in the pub, with a bit of banter and storytelling. I kept in touch after that, and later went on a couple of expeditions with him, to Makalu in 1988 and Nanga Parbat Mazeno Ridge in 1992. Scotty was always good value on the hill, although after the Ogre incident he often had pain and trouble with his knees, especially on descents. I remember a great winter day out with him on SE Gully Great End. We easily climbed the route together, but on the descent back down Grains Gill he was suffering with his knees and it was a slow almost hobble back down to Seathwaite.

Doug was indomitable. Knee pain never put him off and we climbed a few more routes together. One of the last times I saw him in action, rather than at events and gatherings, such as mountain festivals, was at Shepherd's Crag, two years ago, still getting to grips with the rock. Recently he took up gardening at his North Cumbrian home. I remember visiting and Scotty proudly showing me his raised vegetable beds which he was tending with great zeal, while he cracked a few anecdotes peppered with his wry sense of humour.

There is no doubt that Doug Scott has left an indomitable mark on British and world mountaineering. 🇬🇧

NEWS ROUND

OCTOBER > DECEMBER

NOVEMBER: CROWDFUNDING HELPS RAISE VITAL FUNDS FOR SWALEDALE TEAM

The month-long crowdfunding appeal helped raise the £80K the team urgently needs to buy a new Incident Command Vehicle. By December, they had raised £18,108, plus an estimated £3690.25 in Gift Aid).

Their current trailer has been with them for over fifteen years, but time has taken its toll. It's difficult to manoeuvre, requires specialist driving skills, is time-consuming to set up and requires more and more maintenance. They concluded the best solution was to replace the trailer with a vehicle which would offer greater flexibility and reliability and are looking to convert a Volkswagen T32 van to do the job. The vehicle will be something of a multi-purpose workhorse. Besides acting as the team's communications and IT hub and liaison point with other emergency services, it will help transport team members to call-outs, house built-in welfare facilities for team members and carry additional equipment when required. It will be fully liveried as a mountain rescue vehicle with blue lights and sirens and the hope is the new vehicle will enable the team to respond to and manage operations more effectively, and ultimately provide better care for casualties.

'This new Incident Command Vehicle will be a vital piece of equipment for the team,' said Ian Speirs, the team's chairman. 'Recent call-outs have shown how critical it is we have a modern command and control centre with communications, mapping and IT resources readily available to assist use. It also allows the team to ensure we can effectively integrate with partners in the multi-agency environment.'



DECEMBER: ALAN ZOOMS IN TO BOOST SWALEDALE FUND

Alan Hinkes OBE is well-known for his tales of high peaks conquered and his work with mountain rescue as an MREW ambassador. Covid-19 might have forced

a few changes but, thanks to Zoom, he was still able to speak at Penrith Rotary's 74th annual charter party, with 57 members and guests, distributed across three screens, and raising £435 towards the Swaledale trailer fund.

Back in April 2020, Penrith Rotary welcomed Alan as an honorary member having supported the club's efforts for several years on social media. Rotary guests were enthralled for about an hour as he presented photographs and video clips of his exploits in the high mountains of the Himalaya and Karakorum. 'Clearly, Alan has an amazing story to tell,' said District Governor Welma Robinson. 'His chosen charity for the night was the Swaledale MRT Command Vehicle Fund. Hopefully, we will have helped in some small way towards this goal.'

Above: Alan (centre) with Steve Clough (left) and Graham Brown of Swaledale MRT © Swaledale MRT.

NOVEMBER: SWALEDALE FANS GO TO THE THEATRE

Swaledale fans had a treat in November when the team staged a lockdown theatre production of Pete Roe's play, *The Shout*, via YouTube.

Written and directed by team member Pete, the play tells the story of the sometimes complicated lives of mountain rescue team members, with humour and emotion. Part of the Swaledale festival programme in 2018, it was filmed by Mike Barker, and the online premier was organised as a fundraiser for the team's ongoing effort to raise funds for a new control vehicle. You might have missed the premier but, the last time we looked, it was still available to view at <https://youtu.be/bPe-f25yV5Y>.



Above: Climbing with Doug Scott on a 5000m peak in 1988. This was an acclimatisation climb above Advance Base Camp ABC with Makalu West Face behind. Opposite page: Trekking into Makalu with Doug in 1988 © Alan Hinkes.



MREW PR consultant and media trainer, **Sally Seed**, looks at some of the challenges facing our PR and communications in 2021. This time: **Getting our message across.**

Getting our message across is at the heart of MR's communications but a few things need to be in place for it to be effective. We need to have the message as clear as possible and we need to know who it is we're trying to reach so that we use the right channels to get to them. It's a tough balance for each of the following challenges.

Educating the new visitors to our mountains and moors

Late spring and summer 2020 saw an invasion of the UK's national parks by a lot of people who'd never ventured into the great outdoors before — or certainly didn't appear to have much experience of it. Wild camping

reports online and Buxton MRT has produced several useful videos in recent months — could you share them? The Little Mountain Rescue Team (Derby MRT's Lego specialists) create posts that could have broader reach if shared by others. We need to find new ways of making new audiences (potentially new visitors) aware of MR and that, at least, will give us a start on communicating more detailed messages.

Reducing avoidable call-outs without wrecking our reputation

The campaign around #BeAdventureSmart was designed to support safety communications and reduce avoidable call-

something's happened that could happen to anyone and the casualty concerned survived (or was less at risk) because they had done the right things to prepare.

Keeping it constructive when dealing with dangers

Readers might have seen Glossop MRT's media coverage around the risks of visiting Higher Shelf Stones in the Dark Peak to see the military plane wreck. Coniston MRT and COMRU (Cumbria Ore Mines Rescue Unit) have had similar issues underground with ill-equipped visitors to the Copper Mines and it's all frighteningly similar to Patterdale MRT's issues at the Priest's Hole on Dove Crag since that was featured on TV.

There have always been 'black spots' in MR patches but Instagram and other social media channels are attracting a growing number of people to selfie spots that are a threat to their safety — and to rescuers too. When you've no idea of what the terrain is like — or the impact of hill weather — or you've seen someone with no protective headgear spouting enthusiastic rubbish about an old mine or you've seen the great view from a spot that's actually really awkward to get to, the temptation to see for yourself is too much for some people.

Patterdale MRT has tried not to publicise Priest's Hole, and Coniston and COMRU were keen to point out the hazards of old mines. Glossop managed to get coverage beyond the outdoors media for their 'Instagram hikers' and that's exactly what's needed. The team's Facebook post after two call-outs to the same spot in one day included clear information and team leader, Patch Haley, put safety advice into simple language that also spelt out the risks.

If you've not read the Glossop post, have a look back on Facebook and have a think about how you'd tackle anything similar.

Explaining why 'location' is not 'navigation'

Thanks to the marketing budget of what3words, this one crops up a lot. Richard Warren of LDSAMRA even got into a discussion about it on BBC Radio 2's Jeremy Vine Show.

There are (at least) two aspects of MR's concern about what3words and we need to keep a balance and make sure that messages are accurate for particular regions. In the Lakes, as Richard made clear, what3words can be inaccurate in about 20-30% of mountain call-outs. That error could put a casualty in the wrong valley, on the wrong descent from a summit or even, as in one case, in the middle of a lake in the

outs. Unfortunately, it's easy to focus on the 'you should be thinking about these three questions to stay safe' side of things and miss the 'it's about making a good day better' part.

MR has to avoid coming over as a gatekeeper to the hills and we must make sure that people don't just hear volunteers moaning about those who don't know what they're doing and shouldn't be there. We've got to fine-tune the messages and emphasise that it's mainly about people keeping themselves safe, comfortable and well so that they can really enjoy their trip in the hills.

If you're already finishing off some social media posts and news releases with warnings about weather, light, gear and navigation, it is also worth considering having a positive equivalent. Use it when

became synonymous with tent-dumping and rubbish while 'new visitors' developed a negative connotation too.

MR teams across the country saw avoidable call-outs that could have ended in disaster — poor footwear and clothing on steep ground, no idea of the time needed to complete a walk, no clue about cold and wet weather effects and an expectation that 'someone would help' if they got into danger.

I am still not sure how best to reach these 'new visitors'. It won't be all of them but we need to try to educate and inform at least those who will be returning in 2021. There's good work to be done with tourism bodies, accommodation providers, pubs and cafes and via social media but we all know that a lot of our effort is preaching to the converted.

Video is likely to reach further than written



Above: Teams across the country continued to be busy over the November/December lockdown period, and not just in the popular Lake District locations. In the early part of Northumberland National Park and North of Tyne team members attended eight incidents over a two week period © NNP MRT.



Above: Plane wreck at Higher Shelf Stones © Glossop MRT.

northern Lakes rather than closer to home near the southern coast! But accuracy in an emergency isn't the only issue.

In a best-case scenario, what3words gives someone their location in a form they can easily communicate. A grid reference would do the same thing and there are apps for that, of course, but what3words has captured the imagination and makes sense to the non-map reading public.

It is, however, only useful in calling on someone for help — it's no use whatsoever for navigation to find your own way and take responsibility for your own safety. To me, the MR position needs to be developed around this 'location is not navigation' message in the months to come and I'd be interested in your ideas on that.

Teams across the country are already dealing with many of the above with patience and clear messaging and my apologies if I've only mentioned a small selection. We can all learn from best practice (and clear messages) so, if you've anything to add or recent experience to share, please get in touch via sally@stoneleighcommms.co.uk or through the MREW Facebook group.

I hope to follow up on this column with more advice ahead of Mountain Rescue Awareness Day in October. Thank you. 📍

NEWS ROUND

OCTOBER > DECEMBER

NOVEMBER: GLOSSOP TEAM'S PLEA TO 'INSTAGRAM HIKERS' ATTRACTS WIDER MEDIA INTEREST

Local and mainstream media were quick to pick up on Glossop's 'urgent plea' after concerns that the Peak District has become a bigger draw to new visitors from Greater Manchester, Yorkshire and beyond, since Covid-19 and lockdown restrictions.

Their Facebook post came after a second search for walkers who were already at home, an increasingly familiar scenario for teams across the country, asking that 'if you get into difficulty on the hills and call for assistance, but manage to find your own way down before help arrives, please call 101 and let us know you are safe'.

In one case, dozens of team members and several search dogs, rushed to scour the well-known local landmark Higher Shelf Stones after receiving information about a walker in difficulty. As the night wore on, concerns grew and more team members were called in. When the team finally made phone contact with the missing party, it transpired that they were not only safe and well, but at home some distance away.

'This has happened twice in recent weeks,' explains Glossop team leader, Patch Haley. 'We're always glad to hear that people are safe, but I can't stress enough how important it is to keep us informed. If people do make their own way down after they call emergency services for assistance, it's vital they let us know via 101. My fear is that with higher volumes of walkers visiting the area during lockdown, more of these false alarms will leave our rescue team overstretched, and at risk of struggling to reach those who are genuinely in need of urgent assistance.'

The limitations on travel and overnight stays wrought during the year, and especially during lockdown periods, have made the Peak District a big draw for visitors from Greater Manchester and Yorkshire. Higher Shelf Stones in particular has found unlikely fame on Tik-Tok and Instagram, thanks to its eerie and photogenic landscape, where the natural beauty of the area contrasts with the wreckage of a crashed B29 Superfortress — which led to two incidents in one three-hour period over one weekend — following quickly on from an incident the previous day near to Crowden. However, the elevation and inhospitable route to and from the crash site offers significant challenges for even the most experienced hikers.

'Visitors should be aware that social media only tells them half the story,' explained Patch. 'Always check the weather before you set off. Conditions can change without warning at these elevations, and low cloud can reduce visibility drastically. It's easy to get disorientated and wet, and that's when hypothermia can set in. And remember to allow plenty of time to get back before sunset, as conditions underfoot will become claggy, and navigation nearly impossible. Make sure you bring food, water, a torch, and a map and compass. And be confident you can use them.'

DECEMBER: ANNUAL FIGURES REVEAL AN INTERESTING STORY

The final stats are yet to be calculated but an initial review suggests it has been an interesting year for mountain rescue teams across England and Wales as the hill, reservoir and country park-going public took to their new 'lockdown exercise' routines. Overall, call-out numbers were remarkably consistent with 3080 in 2020 compared with 2973 in 2019, a relatively small increase of 107 (under 4%). But this national view hides a much more complicated story once the figures are broken down by region with incident numbers down for the usual hotspots of the Lakes and North Wales and up pretty much everywhere else.

The first three months of 2020 saw a small increase in call-outs. The first lockdown saw a huge fall overall with 359 fewer incidents April to June with the Peak District unchanged at 123 call-outs. However, through summer and into autumn, call-outs generally increased by nearly 300, with Peak District teams called out over 170 times — an unprecedented level. Call-outs were up in the North East and South Wales too. We hope to have final figures ready for the MREW Annual Review.



Above: Upper Wharfedale FRA swiftwater-trained team members during a multi-agency response in December to assist a severely injured, hypothermic male kayaker stuck on the rocks in the river at Linton Falls © Sara Spillitt.

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OBITS



NEIL ADAM OGWEN VALLEY MRO

One of the founder members of SARDA Wales, Neil died peacefully at home at Mynydd Llandegai, on 13 November 2020. Neil and his wife Maggie were also members of the fledgling Ogwen Valley MRO, achieving their joint one hundred year mark a couple of years ago, a landmark we celebrated in the Spring 2018 issue of the magazine. Both served as search dog handlers and played an important part in promoting the work of search dogs across the UK. **Chris Lloyd** looks back over his life.



Top left: Neil in his St John Ambulance uniform.
Above: Neil and Maggie at Buckingham Palace
© Neil & Maggie Adam.

Neil was a man with coats of many colours, not just the red of mountain rescue. Born in Ruthin, Denbighshire in 1942, he was the youngest of five siblings and eight years younger than the fourth. When he was about ten years old, he was introduced to Snowdonia by his elder brothers and was soon scrambling on the crags and cliffs of the Ogwen and Llanberis valleys. His brothers had also introduced him to the Boy Scouts.

It was at Easter 1963, when Neil was sitting on the A5 roadside wall near Ogwen Falls, enjoying a cup of tea from Merfyn's Brew Shack, when Ron James of Ogwen Cottage Mountain Rescue Team came looking for climbers to assist with a rescue on Tryfan. A person had broken their thigh. And that was the start of a lifetime membership of mountain rescue.

Neil was part of a group of regular weekend climbers, who would stay in a barn at Bodesi Farm, just East of Bryn Poeth. Ron James was often needing extra hands to assist with rescues and he would frequently call upon those staying at the Bodesi Barn. When the Ogwen Cottage team changed to the Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue Organisation (OVMRO), Neil was very much part of the transformation.

In 1966, he left the Denbighshire County Council to study at Bangor Normal College and attended the Dr Ieuan Jones evening lectures on Mountaineering First Aid. His new passion for casualty care never left him. He passed his Basic and Advanced

exams. And, being lighter than his two OVMRO contemporaries, he was usually selected to be lowered to the casualty with the stretcher.

He was appointed a team leader in 1969, a post he held until 1997. When he stepped down, he was awarded honorary membership of the team.

It was through OVMRO that Neil met Maggie. They became engaged at Christmas 1969 and married in July 1970. They honeymooned on the romantic Isle of Skye (camping amongst fellow Ogwen MR members, by coincidence rather than by choice!)

Both being teachers, they enjoyed long summer holidays so were able to visit the Alps and Himalaya, where Neil was able to complete a first ascent of Ladakh. Although they both taught in Merseyside schools, they had a weekend house in Bethesda. They trained and worked a SARDA dog, then became involved in search management. Meanwhile Neil was assisting the running of OVMRO by becoming treasurer.

He joined St John Ambulance in 1989 and this led him to becoming a trainer for St John's. He went to instruct in Zambia and Berlin and was invested into the Order of St John at Bangor Cathedral in 2014. His service to the community was rewarded with an invitation to Buckingham Palace.

After retiring from teaching, Maggie and Neil bought a smallholding in Mynydd Llandygai. Here, they have bred rare breed sheep and Tamworth pigs. Once again,

Neil went that bit further and found himself touring the UK as a judge for Rare Breed competitions.

In his latter years with OVMRO, he would assist with rescues as a driver, delivering troops to the hills and collecting them after long rescues. He was also despatched as a 'spotter' helping to identify where the lone flashing torch was sited on the rock face. He was always there, willing to assist.

He died on 13 November after being taken ill earlier this year. He is survived by his wife, Maggie.

In summary: Neil Adam: OVMRO for fifty-five years, team leader for twenty-eight, served as treasurer, secretary, equipment officer and newsletter editor. Neil Adam: Honorary member. Neil Adam: OVMRO through and through. ☘



SIMON JAMES SARDA SOUTHERN SCOTLAND

Members of SARDA Southern Scotland and SARDA South Wales paid tribute to Simon, in December. SARDA Southern Scotland's social media post was shared and noted by friends and mountain rescue colleagues across the UK, remembering the kindness, fun and dog-handling skills of 'a true gentleman'.

'Today we said a very sad goodbye to Simon, our colleague and friend, as he makes his final journey through the Angus Glens. Simon was a huge part of our association, from being an external assessor during his long career in South Wales to this last year as a call-out member with his dog Skirrid. Simon has saved and enhanced many lives in his decades in mountain rescue across South Wales and Scotland both with his mountain

rescue search dogs and also with his mountain rescue team mates. We would like to say thank you for all the messages of love and support from the mountain rescue and search dog family across the UK. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, Simon's funeral will be a much smaller occasion than he deserves but the thoughts of all of us will be with him and his family. Rest in peace Simon.'

A justgiving page set up in Simon's memory, to support his love of nature and the wilderness, at had raised £1,450 of its £100 target at the time of writing.

OBITS

DR HAMISH MACINNES OBE BEM

The world of mountain rescue – and particularly the world of search and rescue dogs – was saddened to hear of the death, in November 2020, of possibly one of its most pivotal characters through the latter half of the twentieth century. **Dave 'Heavy' Whalley** looks back over the life of his great friend and colleague.



Above: Hamish in his workshop © Hamish MacInnes.

SARDA, Lochaber and Glencoe – and many of his friends and neighbours, gathered in the bitter cold. Sadly, there would be no helicopter that day due to the weather (Hamish would laugh at that!) but, as the time drew near and his hearse arrived, the skies cleared and there was snow on the hills. There was a spontaneous clap as he passed by. On top of the coffin were two of his ice axes and a piece of heather. So simple and so special. RIP Hamish. Glencoe – and mountain rescue – has lost a special man. 🍷

David Heavy Whalley MBE BEM, is ex-team leader of both RAF Leuchars and Kinloss.

Editor's note: You can read more about Hamish on the following pages, where we take the opportunity to revisit Jonny Dry's interview with him, as he recovered from illness (published here July 2019), and also look back at the inspiration that led to the formation of SARDA (extracted from **Search and Rescue Dogs**). We may never see Hamish's like again so I hope readers will forgive the indulgence.

There will be much written about Hamish, by many, his exploits are legendary and so impressive. He had climbed all over the world yet his passion was Scotland. He wrote so many books about his exploits, including *Call Out* (a 'must read'), and the *International Mountain Rescue Handbook*. He designed new techniques for technical rescue and took part in so many films and used his engineering expertise to develop equipment like his stretchers and metal ice axes. He was a true mountaineer and an innovative thinker who made breakthroughs that changed the face of mountain rescue and mountaineering. Truly a legend.

I got to know Hamish through mountain rescue where he was known as the 'Fox of Glencoe'. His incredible pioneering work within the early days of Scottish Mountain Rescue and the formation of the Search and Rescue Dog Association (SARDA) and Scottish Avalanche Information Service are renowned but, in the early days of rescue, he was also key to the formation of the Glencoe team – the 'Glencoe Mafia'.

Yet this world-class mountaineer was one of us. I got to know him well over the years. I'd be in the corner of the room as a young lad as he talked about rescues and other tales and, working with him on the hill, was amazed at his endurance. He never seemed to feel the cold. He was ice cool in any drama, moving over steep ground in winter like no one else I had met. I got to know him better when I became team leader of the RAF mountain rescue teams. He was full of advice and listened to you and shared his knowledge readily.

With his many contacts in the military, he could get anything done. He worked with the helicopters, improving systems, the man they could trust on a rescue. He had contacts in the Special Forces too and easy access to so much of the state-of-the-art gear he used on searches.

If you had a problem, Hamish was the man. He had an incredible memory, able to produce at any time a picture of some first ascent or famous climber on an expedition he was part of.

His stories were incredible and when he took ill a few years ago I was honoured to be part of the network he spoke to. These were terrible times for Hamish but, amazingly, he recovered, regaining his memory by re-reading his own books. As I visited, the stories kept coming back. He'd drop the names of the famous into conversation: Chris (Bonington), Clint (Eastwood), Sean (Connery), Michael (Palin) and so many others. He was involved with a number of Hollywood films, as a climber, climbing double and safety officer, including *The Eiger Sanction* with Eastwood, *Five Days One Summer* with Connery and *The Mission* with Robert De Niro.

On his recovery he seemed so happy and well looked after by his local carers, whose praises he sang. He was fighting back to health. When he died, he'd just celebrated his ninetieth birthday and, despite Covid-19, on that day had been surrounded by his Glencoe MRT pals in the garden. A special day.

I saw him recently in Glencoe, still in fine form but I think he knew we wouldn't meet again. He asked if I could sort out a flypast sometime. He missed his pals in the helicopters. My last words were 'take care' as he sat by Tom Patey's desk amongst the pictures of the mountains he loved.

I will miss our lengthy chats, the huge emails, the visits to his home, his incredible memory and his stories, but also his true friendship. He did so much for so many, especially those in trouble on the mountains. I feel honoured to have been a small part of his story.

The morning we said farewell to him began with pouring rain and awful weather. I headed over to Glencoe where I met many old pals – from



SEARCH DOG MEG

Keswick team said farewell to a much-loved team member in October. **Ellie Whiteford** pays heartfelt tribute to her 'beautiful **Search Dog Meg**'.

Meg was nearly thirteen years old. She was a pretty tri-colour collie girl with foxy pricked ears and spotty nose and legs, expressive amber eyes and a beautiful banner tail. She started training in November 2008 and would only bark for a dustpan brush wiggled on the floor, but soon moved on to proper toys, with balls and squeaky toys a favourite. She graded in April 2011 in the Howgills and was a team member for eight years before developing arthritis and retiring in March 2019. In that time, she attended 84 call-outs with me, often working as a team with her search dog partner Bracken. Many were in the dark – wet, raining, windy and poor visibility – searching for lost walkers, runners or despondent and vulnerable people. Working a dog in those conditions builds a bond and understanding that cannot be explained. In late 2015 she and Search Dog Ginny were tasked to find Pudsey Bear, who was lost on Catbells, for Children in Need. She was quite taken with Pudsey's feet which, in her eyes, were very large fluffy toys, several times trying to get hold and run off with them!

She was such a character: loving, fun, playful and cheeky but also stubborn, awkward and analysing, a real thinker who pushed my patience to its limit at times, but she made me laugh and I adored her. She was vocal with a 'Woo Woo' which could escalate to an excited bark when playing. She loved water and would be down at the water's edge of any lake or river waiting for a toy to be thrown in and would often swim alongside me.

She taught me so much as a search team partner and as a companion, and life is so much emptier without her. I am heartbroken to lose her and miss her enormously. She was always there and life is very quiet. Time will heal and I have many good memories of all the good places we went and the things we did together. She will always be with me. 🍷



DES BIRCH

Long-standing member of the Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Association, Des Birch, passed away on 10 November 2020, aged 92. **Peter Huff** and his team colleagues pay tribute to his memory.

Initially an Outward Bound instructor at Eskdale, Des had mountain rescue experience, was a very accomplished rock climber and mountaineer. He had moved to Ilkley to teach maths at Ilkley Grammar School and when, in 1959, the school's head boy, David Priestman, was fatally injured in Dow Cave to Providence Pot system, it inspired Des to join the team soon afterwards. He became a full team member in 1960. Peter Miller, who was with David when the accident happened, also joined the team a little later.

Des was a valued team member and it was not long before he became an assistant search leader, then search leader. The many rescues in Dow Cave to Providence Pot introduced him to the caving world and he took over from Don Robinson as underground leader for six years, when Don stepped down. In that time there were some serious incidents, including one at Mossdale Caverns when six cavers drowned.

Des was made a life member in 1986 when he moved to Silloth. He had a very laid-back approach but was a great asset to the team. A smoker, he would keep his cigarettes and matches under his helmet and when he had smoked all of them, the first words he uttered on exiting a cave would be, 'Has anyone got a fag?'

At short notice, in the early 1960s, he was tasked to lead a party to take over the ill-fated expedition on Jan Mayen Island. He was a great guy to be with, especially when the chips were down.

Thanks to Howard Driver, Alan Stockdale, Tony Dean and Peter Miller who helped with this. 🍷

AUGUST: NORTH OF TYNE TEAM MEMBERS GATHER TO CELEBRATE A GOOD FRIEND'S LIFE

Team member Tony Mountain died in 2019 and, on Saturday 15 August, his friends gathered in Alwinton to celebrate his life and carry his ashes to their final resting place, high in his beloved Cheviot Hills. **Mick Hill**, the team's medical officer, reports.



A team member for six years, Tony's tragically early death from Motor Neurone Disease at just 49 years old represented a great loss to his friends on the team, but paled into insignificance compared to that endured by his sister Sonya and brother-in-law Louis who were able to join us on the day.

I bear a personal responsibility for Tony having joined the team. It was during a social walk in 2011 when some relatively straightforward mountain rescue skills were called for. Someone in another party required help off exposed ground with the use of a confidence rope. His interest was piqued and, during that evening, he talked incessantly about how to join mountain rescue. The rest is history and shortly afterwards he joined the team as a trainee.

There is no denying he was a character. He had a deep fondness for (red) wine, women and song in nearly equal measure. Always a glint in his eye and a winning smile, he could be described as being a bit of a charmer. Tony's other real passion was his bikes. He was supremely fit and regularly took part in 300k+ endurance cycling events. If the team was deployed on event cover (within a 50k radius of 'home') Tony would turn up on his bike, barely breaking a sweat and ready for deployment. His general fitness made his decline all the more painful for us to witness. It would be wrong, however, to describe his MR skills as 'global'! I recall being with Tony when we attended a casualty who required assisted ventilation and asking Tony to take over 'bag duties' for a while. He turned a funny white colour as he duly obliged – and I narrowly avoided having to attend to two casualties that day!

Tony was a bit of a gadget man – and when the disease robbed him of his mobility, his attention turned to how he might extend both the speed and endurance of his mobility scooter – with a possible attempt at the mobility scooter land speed record being mentioned!

None of us can know how we will react in the face of a terminal diagnosis but many of his fellow team members will never forget the absolute courage and stoicism he demonstrated. He quite literally laughed in the face of MND retaining his sense of humour until the very end (only the fact that this is a respectable publication prevents me from sharing examples!)

We kept in touch with Tony long after he stood down as an active team member. Only one week before his death, I recall sitting in a pub with him – Tony consuming a couple of pints of his favourite real ale via a straw. On the night of his death I was able to sit with him at his bedside in South Tyneside District Hospital. The hospital staff had done a wonderful job in palliating his distress. Tony, a man of modest means, was extremely generous in death – leaving a substantial bequest to North of Tyne MRT – which we will use in a way that ensures his legacy is never forgotten. We have lost one of our own, a part of the fabric and history of North of Tyne, but one that we are grateful for having known. It was a privilege to be able to accompany him on his 'final deployment': RIP Tony, our 'Starman'.





Hamish MacInnes takes the initiative and SARDA is born

EXTRACTED FROM **SEARCH AND RESCUE DOGS**,
BY **BOB SHARP AND BILL JENNISON**

Hamish MacInnes was born in Gatehouse of Fleet, Dumfries and Galloway in 1930 and moved to Glencoe in 1959. Between 1948 and 1950, during his two-year 'National Service', he spent most of his time stationed in the Austrian Tyrol, where he became friends with mountain guide Hans Spielman who owned two dogs that had been used to search for people caught in avalanches. By all accounts, his dogs weren't specially trained for rescue work and searches were somewhat haphazard affairs, but the seeds of an idea were sown.

Back in Scotland, Hamish pursued his new-found interest in using dogs to locate people lost in the mountains. He was aware that dogs had been used to help find climbers lost or avalanched in the Highlands but they had been mainly shepherds' dogs.

The years following his return marked significant change in society. A new sense of mobility and freedom saw many taking advantage of the outdoors for leisure. The Cairngorms and Glencoe opened up for skiing and the long winter season meant people could ski and climb from the end of November through to mid-May. Inevitably, there was an increase in accidents. Civilian mountain rescue had yet to be fully established but calls for help (around 50 each year in 1960) never went unanswered. Police officers and locals (with little or no training and often ill-equipped with no searchlights, ice axes or crampons, or even

climbing ropes) were called out to assist people in distress, sometimes at risk to their own lives. Early search parties were largely dependent on people with local knowledge, who worked in the hills, their only equipment a stick or crook and a telescope, their only means of communicating with each other a shout, whistle or wave of a handkerchief.

Hamish felt sure that if dogs were used, trained along the lines Hans Spielman had demonstrated, they'd be capable of covering search areas in much less time than a man, rescue operations could be executed more quickly and with greater success.

Ever the innovator, he began to train his own dog, Tiki. Early in 1960 he'd been given Tiki, a seven-month-old Alsatian, by friends in Glasgow. She was affectionate, obedient and a first-class watchdog but, more importantly, she was intelligent with a natural willingness to learn — all the potential to become a first-rate search and rescue dog. However, a few months later, Tiki fell ill with cancer. Hamish and his wife Catherine were devastated. Not only were they about to lose a loved companion, but Hamish's ambitions to train her as a search and rescue dog might never be realised. The prognosis was bleak, but Hamish convinced Catherine they should get another dog and train it as they had trained Tiki over the past year.

Unknown to them, an advertisement to sell a young Alsatian had been placed in the

Greenock Advertiser. The puppy had been bought as a pet for the owner's children, but they soon learned they'd made a mistake. The children lost interest, there was nowhere for the dog to run, it was given little exercise and received no obedience training. The ad attracted no interest so the owners decided to have the dog put down. However, the vet convinced them that, as the dog was so good looking and physically very strong, he should be given a reprieve. A second ad was placed.

Again, fortune played a part. His sister, who lived in Greenock, noticed the ad and contacted Hamish with the news. Catherine, who was working as a locum GP in nearby Dunoon, popped by to see the dog on her way back home to Glencoe and she was impressed. Its coat was black and silver and it seemed in good physical condition, but it was quite apathetic, having had no exercise for weeks. Catherine was concerned the dog's living conditions might have had a serious psychological effect: would it ever learn to be a useful search dog? Nevertheless, she agreed to take it and, following a fraught journey during which the dog was constantly sick, she reached Glencoe and home.

Almost immediately, Hamish began to train his new dog, which they called Rangi. Obedience training was high on the list of priorities and he found it helped to work Tiki and his new dog together. The change in Rangi's environment from the cramped flat in Greenock to the fresh open space of Glencoe had an immediate and significant effect. His strength and fitness grew daily and he soon outpaced Tiki. Teaching him to sit, lie down, retrieve and stay took many weeks of training, but he had a physical quality that endeared him to Hamish. Steep, rough terrain and long days on the hill in bad weather had little effect on his energy or enthusiasm.

In the summer of 1961, Hamish left Scotland to climb in the Caucasus Mountains as a member of a Scottish-Russian climbing expedition. One of his climbing colleagues, George Ritchie, agreed with Hamish that there was merit in establishing some kind of search and rescue dog team. Hamish had mixed feelings, as an initial attempt by him to use dogs for searching proved unsuccessful. On this occasion he had acquired a pair of Tibetan Mastiffs to help him track down the famed Yeti on his Abominable Snowman

Expedition. George Ritchie encouraged him that he was likely to be more successful with Tiki and Rangi. So, on his return, Hamish set about devising a structured method for training his dogs.

His technique began with simple retrieval skills, always shouting 'Search!' as the command for the dog to retrieve. He varied the direction of throw and, in time, increased both the search area and difficulty of the terrain. He also used different objects and always threw them out of the dog's sight.

Hamish's ideas about the usefulness of a search and rescue dog team were picked up by a number of influential and interested people. In October 1963, two people paid him a visit: a mountain rescue expert from Norway and Jack Arthur, who was chairman of the Scottish branch of the British Red Cross. They watched Hamish's dogs in action and the Norwegian visitor asked Hamish what 'grade' were his dogs. Somewhat taken aback, Hamish admitted he hadn't understood the question. The visitor said he was referring to the gradings given to dogs that had undertaken training for avalanche rescue work. Hamish didn't know things were so well-established abroad and wondered if he could become involved in some way. Taken with Hamish's enthusiasm and commitment, Arthur secured funding from the British Red Cross for Hamish to attend an avalanche dog training course at Thurbsee, in Switzerland, later that year. Funding also came from the cigarette manufacturer Player's, as well as the Swiss Rescue Service.

Hamish was the first British person to attend such a course and, although he couldn't take his own dogs, he joined people from a number of other European countries, working in a variety of training situations. The group included police officers, ski instructors, mountain guides, hotel workers, bar staff and others from a wide variety of occupational backgrounds, all volunteers who shared a common interest in helping save people caught in avalanches. The emphasis was on using dogs to find people buried under the snow. 'Victims' were buried at varying depths and then required to wait for the dog to find them. Hamish was surprised how quickly dogs found buried people, even when the dog had no prior training, and when the search area was extended to several hundred square metres. In many cases, the dog went straight to the victim's location without undertaking a broad search to begin with. Little did he know that many of the search and rescue ideas used by the Swiss had been borrowed from the British, who had used dogs to locate people buried in bombed-out buildings during World War Two.

It became clear to him that training a dog is as much about training the handler, who had to be fully conversant with the nature of snow and avalanche formation, weather conditions and general rescue procedures, as well as understanding the conditions under which a dog can be used most effectively. The handler should always have



Opposite page: The first course in Glencoe. From left to right, Kenny Mackenzie with Fran, Sandy Seabrook with Rory, Willie Elliot with Corrie and Catherine MacInnes with Rangi and Tiki © Hamish MacInnes. **Above:** Catherine and Hamish MacInnes with Rangi © Sandy Seabrook.

confidence in their dog's ability to pick up a scent, even if their own hunches differ. Hamish was also introduced to the importance of assessment and the classification system used to grade dogs at different levels of expertise.

He continued to train his dogs in difficult and challenging mountain terrain. Others learned of his efforts and came to visit. One of these was Sandy Seabrook.

Sandy was an army sergeant stationed on Dartmoor. He had already established the Devon CRO with a friend (and was later to establish the Lomond MRT). Early in 1964, he and his friend had driven to Glencoe for a weekend's climbing. They decided to camp on the hills and, during the first night out, Sandy's dog Judy, an Alsatian, went missing. The two men searched for two days to no avail, eventually returning to barracks without the dog. Before their departure, they told local shepherds and the police about the dog but, after two weeks without news, they gave up hope.

Then Sandy received a phone call from Hamish. He and a party had been camping in the same area as Sandy two weeks earlier and, as they huddled around a campfire, they heard a 'ghostly howl'. It was Sandy's dog, looking somewhat sorry for itself having not eaten for almost two weeks. Overjoyed, Sandy drove up to Glencoe to collect his dog and it was at this meeting that Sandy raised the idea of a training course using dogs for rescue work.

Later that year, Kenny Mackenzie watched Hamish training Rangi and Tiki. Fascinated by the way they worked together, he wondered if his own dog Fran, also an Alsatian, could be trained. Hamish was sure the dog could be trained, as long as it was done in the right manner — with patience, know-how and affection.

Walter and Willie Elliot, who were shepherds living further down the glen, questioned whether their two Border Collies might become good search and rescue dogs. The Elliot brothers and their father were not unaccustomed to rescue work in Glencoe, having been involved in searching and rescuing climbers and walkers for many years. Hamish thought the collies might be trainable but was concerned about their long coats, which would 'ball up' quickly as they ran through snow. Unlike Alsatis, which have thick, short-haired coats, the balling-up problem with collies would not only impede their progress but also reduce body temperature. However, he felt collies would be fine in conditions when the weather was more favourable and the ground not covered in snow.

Hamish became more and more certain the time was right to bring together the growing interests of the many people who were training their dogs for search and rescue, and formalise all he had learned. He decided to run a pilot course in Glencoe.

Set for 14 December 1964, the course ran for five days. Only a small number were involved, including Catherine MacInnes, Walter Elliot, Kenny Mackenzie and Sandy Seabrook (the only person from outside Scotland) and, at the subsequent formal course a year later, he and his dog Rory became the first ever team in England to qualify with SARDA.

In May 1965, Hamish called a meeting at his house and, by the meeting's end, they had agreed to set up a dedicated organisation, its aims to further the development of search and rescue dogs in Britain, and to raise funds to help pay for the cost of training and rescue work. The Search and Rescue Dog Association had finally come into being. ☘

SEARCH AND RESCUE DOGS IS AVAILABLE FROM MOUNTAIN.RESCUE.ORG.UK/SHOP/BOOKS



The Novel Mind

An interview with
Hamish MacInnes

How fragile is the human mind? Whilst not as enduring as mountain rock, perhaps they are more resilient than we think. Hamish MacInnes lost the ability to remember his life's adventures, but returning to the mountains and sifting his way through the stories of his life helped rebuild his memories and his mind.

Jonny Dry from the Mountain Heritage Trust headed north to Glencoe to find out more.

There's a gentleman I read about recently, Sion Jair, who at the age of 68 climbs the Old Man of Coniston every day. Indeed he's been doing this for years, twice a day up and back. After being diagnosed with Alzheimer's, the visceral pull of the Coniston fells is clearly strong enough to ground his ailing memory. Mountains provide a welcome familiarity.

Such was the experience for Hamish MacInnes. After being admitted to hospital in Glasgow there was a general consensus that Hamish had little conscious memory left. Diagnosed with delirium and subjected to scans, internal examinations and endless bureaucracy, he admits himself that he was, at that stage, dying. Down to eight-and-a-half stone, the life and climbs that he had undertaken had been entirely forgotten and it looked unlikely he would ever improve.

Certainly many in the mountaineering community had low expectations of a recovery.

Under the direction of his consultant, Hamish was transferred back home to Glencoe, requiring regular nursing support to undertake the most basic of tasks and still unable to recall much of his life's achievements. Caught in a white clinical setting, Hamish had received little stimulation. Yet once back amidst Glencoe's mountains that framed much of his life, Hamish began to piece things together. Although the physical feats and achievements of his life had been forgotten, he was still all too aware that he was inherently a climber. 'You don't lose that. When you're cooped up in a hospital for years you're certainly very conscious of it.' Perhaps climbers have an underlying essence; no matter what they are subjected to, that identity is innate.

Speaking to him now in January 2019, with the promise of winter snow dusting the mountain tops, the sharpness and clarity of his mind is all

too apparent and he states proudly that he's back to almost 100% capacity. It has not been easy. The process of rediscovery has been long and at times painful and Hamish's dogged determination is clearly what has got him through. There's little reason it shouldn't have worked with recalling his memory, it's worked on hard climbs across the world.

Making the first British ascent of the Dru's Bonatti Pillar in 1958 with Don Whillans, Paul Ross and Chris Bonington, Hamish suffered a serious skull fracture following rock fall at the end of their first day. Bandaged and

Diagnosed with delirium and subjected to scans, internal examinations and endless bureaucracy, he admits himself that he was, at that stage, dying.

stuffed in one corner of their bivouac ledge, Hamish was determined to continue. Aided by Don, Chris and Paul, Hamish doggedly persisted. With Don continually growling that they were almost there, cloud began expectantly gathering over the surrounding aiguilles. Day three, summit day, saw the weather deteriorate and by day four all four climbers were on their knees. Hamish's hands were dangerously cold, his gloves mislaid somewhere behind them. An Austrian party ahead of them was also tiring and a wrong turn during the descent had put them on the wrong side of the Flamme des Pierres. The group returned to the Charpoua hut, battered, cold but happy, Hamish clearly requiring treatment.

Hamish is visibly proud of such ascents, and I'm struck by how that perseverance is most definitely still there. Curiosity and tenacity has been a potent mix upon returning from Glasgow, and it's not been enough for Hamish to simply to drag his mind back from the brink. He's done it in a

way that maintains the utmost accuracy of his memories. He cracks and laughs at the detail he can still recall. 'It's very embarrassing, I can remember back away to 1946. I remember this chap and think, he's dead now, but I can remember how many sugars he had in his tea.'

Writing in *Call Out*, Hamish has said himself how some of his 'most memorable recollections have been of rescues'. Mountains and disaster are clearly vivid in his mind and it's imperative as we talk that the facts are adhered to. I wondered, though, whether his relationship with danger and rescue had changed after piecing his memory back together. 'That's an interesting point,' he muses before falling silent. I'm aware suddenly of the clock ticking over the mantelpiece. He thinks hard before answering. 'See, I started reading my books again, and a lot of these are about rescue. I had a fantastic library.'

Hamish has been a prolific writer in his time, often publishing books that set a benchmark in the mountaineering community. His *International Mountain Rescue Handbook* — distilling expertise from around the globe and published in 1971 — has never been out of print and is now in its fourth edition. His guidebooks date back to 1969, covering rock and winter climbing as well as a guide to West Highland walks which extends to four volumes. His writing in the *Alpine Journal* on climbs with John Cunningham, Yeti hunting in the Kulu, and hard ascents in the Caucasus on Pic Shchurovsky's North Face and the Shkhelda traverse is vividly candid, and captures his often intentional approach to climbing.

These are the threads that Hamish used to stitch himself back together. Meticulously re-reading and re-reading his personal archive to make sense of it all. 'I was curious,' he says, 'I wanted to find out'. No-one told him to undertake such an exercise, it was merely something of the drive within him to never settle and to constantly want to know more. Yet how strange must that have been? Seeing yourself



Opposite: Hamish underneath the Eiger North Face in 1957 © Chris Bonington Picture Library.

Article first published in Summit #93, Spring 2019. Words and images reproduced here with kind permission of the BMC, Jonny and the Chris Bonington Picture Library.



Right: Hamish making kit adjustments on the 1975 British Everest Expedition © Chris Bonington Picture Library.



on the wildest of faces yet not remembering being there. Watching Hamish now re-call the books he read to return his mind to where it is today, it is clear that his relationship with danger and rescue is still as pragmatic as ever.

I ask whether rescues were some of the first and most arresting memories to come back. Here Hamish paused again. 'There's one on the Buachaille,' he said before pausing to reflect. 'I'm trying to sort this in my mind.' He went to answer suddenly, but caught himself. It was clear the memory wasn't fully formed in his mind and he had little interest in recounting false information to me. The room fell silent. Hamish's eyes were fixed on Meall Mòr framed outside his window. He was thinking hard.

Maintaining such ordered thinking is

He went to answer suddenly, but caught himself. It was clear that the memory wasn't fully formed in his mind.

well documented in Hamish. His engineering background has pushed many innovations that revolutionised safety. The Terror — the first all metal ice axe designed in 1970 — was founded on the principle of precisely

chosen angles and materials. At every turn was the possibility of reinventing what an ice axe could be and the detail with which Hamish produced and refined his designs drove '70s winter climbing standards higher. Even now, at the age of 88, his Mk8 MacInnes stretcher — first designed in the early 1960s — is due to be delivered directly to his house for him to review and approve the final model ahead of field testing.

Hamish took a step away from the direct design years ago, but the Mk8 is exemplary of modern day innovation, utilising the high grade composites found in the aeronautical sector. Hamish is clearly proud. The fact his original designs still hold up to modern day standards, even as materials have become positively space-age, is a marker of how his meticulous mind has produced lasting designs.

Sat across from him now I could see that mind at work. Older, worn and worse for wear, but still unwilling to compromise. It was clear he would not be rushed. I thought at first I might have found a gap in his memory, and I began to wonder how far might I let this silence extend out before I changed the subject. Hamish needed nothing of the sort though. His mind began to fire as he isolated the memory he was after, 'ah yes, I've got it now'. True to form, perhaps from

sheer force of will, he dragged the memories to the surface and forced them to form a coherent memory. It was certainly impressive.

It was January 1961, Buchaille Etive Mor and three climbers had fallen from Crowberry Gully. Conditions at the time were less than ideal, a previous frost left a hard under-layer that the subsequent snow fall had failed to properly bond to. The lead climber, Robert Gow, was avalanched and swept off route, pulling his partners David Tod and Neil Keith from their stance. The three climbers fell more than 1,000 feet, Robert Gow was dead. Neil and David managed to self-evacuate and raise the alarm. Hamish recounts such events with a quiet assurance, even dark humour. Death is something that is all too familiar and he had a fair share of his own close encounters.

In 1951, just 21 at the time, Hamish decided to solo the Charmoz-Grépon Traverse. Whilst all too aware he was pushing the envelope, the exuberance of youth could not be held back. He'd already soloed the Matterhorn's Hornli Ridge at 18, and made a repeat ascent of Herman Buhl's winter route on the Predigstuhl in the Kaiser mountains. And a chance meeting with French guide Lionel Terray in Snell's Field gave Hamish the opportunity to follow Terray and his client up the route. It was clearly too good an opportunity to miss. Hamish remembers well the 'sheer magic of the great face, walls and towers'. Even 68 years later the experience is as vividly recalled as ever.

The climb progressed without fault, on the Mummery Crack Terray watched with interest as the exuberant youth tackled the bold moves. Fear and self-doubt figures little in his recollections, yet looking back to the day Hamish is all too aware of the real reason Terray perhaps wanted him close at hand. Maybe it is 'preferable to be able to keep an eye on someone, who you know is determined on a course of rash action than to pick up the bits'.

Hamish was lucky. Content with the day he began the abseil behind Terray. Yet suddenly Hamish found himself falling through space, out and away from the slung rock bollard. He hit the ledge 40 feet below; the sling had failed, corroded by UV light. His legs had doubled up beneath him, crumpling upon impact. His head was bleeding and he could barely see from the pain. The 600 feet down to the glacier lay to one side. Terray was indeed there to pick up the bits, along with aspirant Raymond Lambert who was climbing nearby on the Grepon.

Hamish walked away with, in his words, 'the gait on an ungainly ballet dancer'.

Hamish shrugs at such events. What more is there to say? One makes their decision and lives with the consequences. He's used to identifying and fixing problems and used to having agency. Or at the very least living with the consequences of that agency. 'Accidents occur in the mountains just as they do anywhere else', he suggests in his 1973 publication *Call Out*. 'Even if the casualty is guilty of negligence, the experience of an accident is generally chastisement enough.' Things balance out in the mountains and Hamish has been around long enough to be comfortable with taking the rough with the smooth.

For a man used to this darker side of mountain rescue, it was affecting to see the change in him as our talk turns to his time in hospital in Glasgow. The memories are still fresh, arguably fresher than the lifetime's worth of mountaineering that has recently come back to him. He's guarded as he talks of life in hospital, his experiences were clearly harrowing. Screaming patients, confusion, and imposed routine that was not his. Now he's back to the familiarity of operating on just a few hours' sleep a day; he runs, walks, lifts weights and this return to his natural rhythm has seen him not only increase his physical strength but mental fortitude as well.

He talks briefly about his future plans. [As we speak] *Final Ascent*, the film about his experience, is on the horizon. An even deeper exploration of his recent journey and a delve in to his own mountain history. It was well received at screenings in NZ, Kathmandu, and previewed at Kendal in 2018. The UK premiere was at Glasgow Film Festival. Hamish though, wasn't there. 'I don't want to go back there,' he says. Dragging up his memories of hospital has been difficult and feels out of place where we are now. It's obvious the film hit very close to home.

He's back to living independently and relishes being amongst Glencoe's current cutting-edge developments again. He needs that stimulation. The likes of Dave MacLeod and Glencoe Mountain Rescue Leader Andy Nelson are still regular visitors. With the former, Hamish is consulting on a comparison climb of Raven's Gully in which Dave reclaims the route using the gear that Hamish and Chris Bonington would have had to hand back in 1953. He



Death is something that is all too familiar and he had a fair share of his own close encounters.

smiles at this. 'These modern climbers are so strong, I'm sure he'll be fine.'

There's an interest as well in revisiting many of his life's accomplishments. Unpublished memoirs are being written which often take him back to the late 1940s to revisit his early climbs in Austria and Italy as an eighteen year old. Forgotten memories have also been unearthed again and he talks of remembering a self-rescue off Waterpipe Gully on Sgùrr an Fheadain in the late 1950s. The trigger was a painting of the gully shown to him by Graham Hunter.

Memory is incredibly fragile, certainly more fragile than the mountains with which he is so familiar. Walking away down the garden path however, I can't help but think there's something else that is just as immovable as the mountains. Looking back over his films and photography it's apparent Hamish was never surprised at seeing himself on these huge faces, even if he couldn't initially remember it. Memory it seems is fallible, yet Hamish's character has remained as fundamental as ever. ☺

Top: Hamish on bivouac below difficult crack in 1957 on the Eiger North Wall © Chris Bonington Picture Library.

Above: Hamish's old home in Glen Coe © Bob Sharp.

JONNY DRY IS A WRITER AND FILM DIRECTOR WHO ALSO WORKS FOR THE MOUNTAIN HERITAGE TRUST, ALPINE CLUB AND MOUNT EVEREST FOUNDATION. FIND HIM ON TWITTER @JONNY_DRY.



JANUARY: DARTMOOR TEAM MEMBER CELEBRATES FIFTY YEARS' SERVICE.

Richard Thorne MBE joined the Plymouth section of Dartmoor Rescue Group on 16 January 1971. The earliest picture (above), shows him on the right when a vehicle was presented to the group. He was always keen to help with fundraising and with the team equipment, even producing livery for the team's vehicles. **Bryony Behan**, team secretary, writes.

'Richard has been on a host of call-outs, some more demanding than others. In 1974, he was on his way to Holming Beam in pouring rain to look for some overdue walkers when he found the two lads walking along the road and gave them a lift to the 'controllers', so cutting short the search. Another call-out was to move a group from near Childes Tomb across Foxtor Mire to the road at Whiteworks. They managed to get a vehicle to shine its headlights from the road to allow an easy passage across the bog. In 1981 there was a huge night search for air cadets missing in the snow; the search team Richard was with then went out again the next day and located the cadets who were walking from Great Links Tor to Arms Tor — the cadets were picked up by a Whirlwind helicopter and taken to safety. He also remembers what became known as 'Super Sunday' in 2013, when he was search manager for four call-outs on the one day.

'Richard has always been one of the best attendees at training events. The photo below left, from 1991 shows the section at rest during a navigation exercise at Crazywell Pool, with Richard middle front. On another training evening, members were near Sharp Tor heading for Piles Gate when Richard said 'Do you fancy a detour to Hillson's House and back?' He and two others then proceeded to do that very physically demanding route! Back at home, admitted to wife Jan, he'd made a mistake!'

'Richard served in the Plymouth section of the group to the end of 2004. He has since then been a member of Dartmoor Search and Rescue Team (Plymouth) and held many management posts including team treasurer. He has been a trustee as well as team chairman from 2005 to 2008. Of course, the wider Dartmoor Rescue Group has also continued and Richard has also been a trustee and treasurer of this for four years, starting in 1973 when Bill Ames was chairman. He was then treasurer again in the 1980s for eight years, and from 2005 to the present day!

'Richard was awarded the MBE in 2012 for services to Dartmoor mountain rescue and is pictured, below, with his wife Jan after receiving his medal.'



NOVEMBER: FAREWELL SCOOT

Dartmoor Tavistock reported the sad loss of Search Dog Scoot with a heavy heart in late November.

Scoot was fourteen years old and graded at just two in 2008. With handler Matt, he attended many call-outs over the years, from the Lake District to the south west, loyal to the end and sadly missed, never forgotten.



Raising funds for rescue

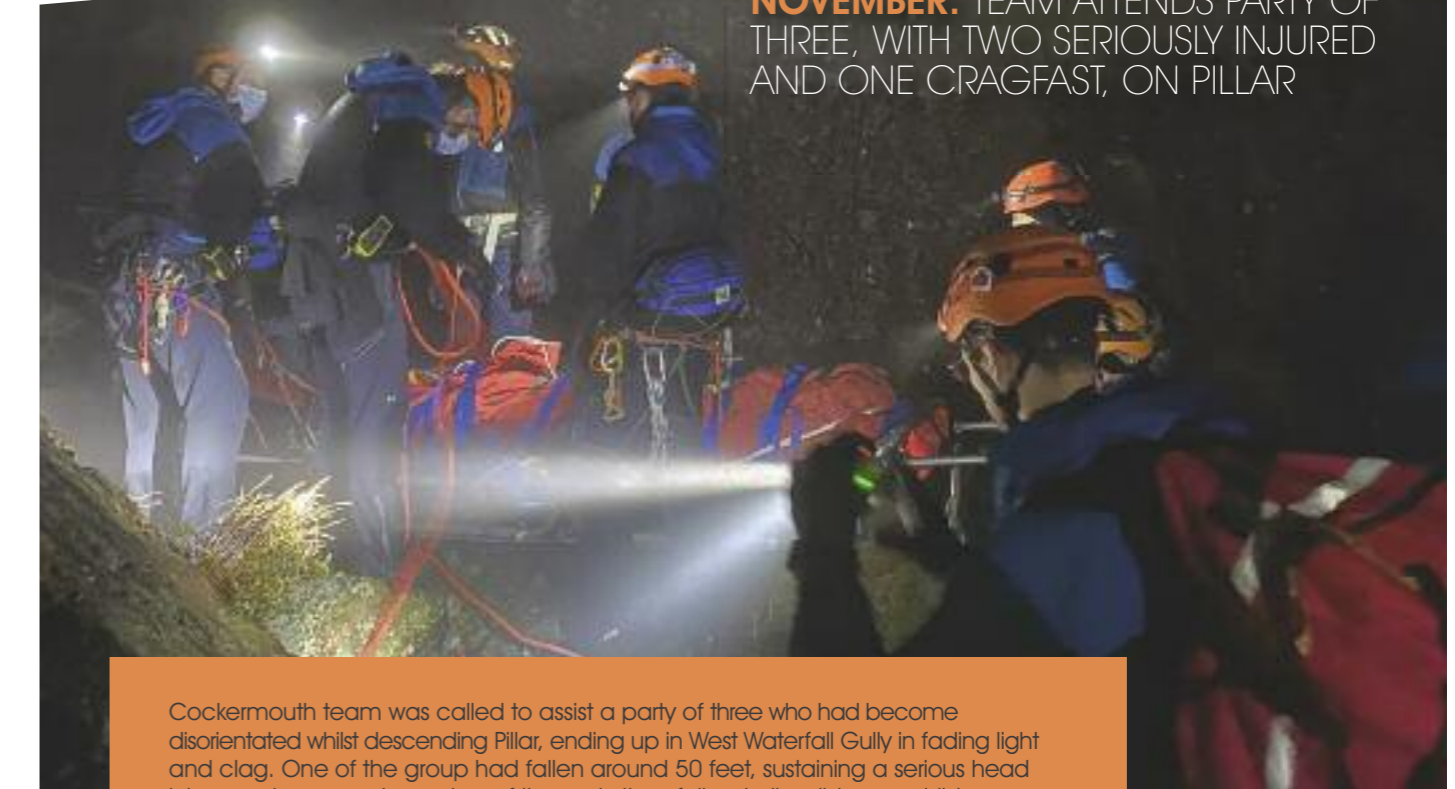
SEPTEMBER: A WHEELY GOOD FUNDRAISING IDEA

Since last July, Calder Valley team member, Paul Taylor, has been pedalling his unicycle over multiple days along the canal towpath system across the country between Runcorn and Goole, via Summit, to raise funds towards new swiftwater rescue kit for the team.

He passed through Mytholmroyd in September and, while he is well on his way to completing the challenge, the ongoing travel restrictions have delayed things a little. He hopes to complete the journey by Easter 2021. Over recent years, Calder Valley has been struck by several severe flood events and Paul is determined to complete the challenge, even though it might now take longer than anticipated. As he says: '...WHEEL eventually get there...!'



NOVEMBER: TEAM ATTENDS PARTY OF THREE, WITH TWO SERIOUSLY INJURED AND ONE CRAGFAST, ON PILLAR



Cockermouth team was called to assist a party of three who had become disorientated whilst descending Pillar, ending up in West Waterfall Gully in fading light and clag. One of the group had fallen around 50 feet, sustaining a serious head injury, and a second member of the party then fell a similar distance whilst attempting to help his friend.

Images supplied by Cockermouth MRT.

Initially it wasn't clear where the incident had taken place, with the emergency call stating 'Buttermere'. However, as the first team vehicles were dispatched, it was established that the casualties were somewhere below Pillar Rock over Ennerdale. On confirmation of the location, helicopter support was requested and Rescue 936 from Caernarfon was dispatched to assist.

The first vehicle arrived at the base of Pillar at roughly 4.40pm, and a party of three began to ascend via Pillar Ride. As the group were climbing they heard shouts for help in the forest below and the second team vehicle was diverted to locate the source of the cries. At 5.05pm a casualty with severe head injuries was located in the woods, attempting to walk for help. He was treated at the scene by team members, transferred to an NWS ambulance and taken to hospital for further medical attention.

Meanwhile, the rest of the team had continued to climb Pillar where it became apparent that the second casualty and final member of the group were stuck high on

either side of the West Waterfall, adjacent to Pillar Rock. Team members accessed the fallen casualty, who had sustained back, rib and hand injuries in his fall, via Green Ledge. He was secured and treated on scene whilst the HM Coastguard helicopter attempted to move in to winch. Unfortunately the conditions and proximity to Pillar Rock made it impossible, so R936 retreated to refuel in Blackpool, intending to return once the casualty had been moved to a more accessible location.

A twin rope system was set up, and the casualty was lowered in a stretcher down the technically challenging West Waterfall gully to the combe below. By the time the team had extricated the casualty from the gully, Rescue 936 had returned from refuelling and was able to access the combe and winch the casualty aboard, before onward transfer to a land ambulance at Bowness Knott.

Whilst the injured party was being lowered down the gully, his uninjured companion was located cragfast above the gully. He was secured and raised back to safe ground then walked off the mountain to the

team vehicles waiting in the valley bottom.

'This was a complicated rescue,' said team leader, Andrew McNeil, 'with a lot going on. Three casualties, two of which had significant injuries following lengthy falls, and a third cragfast in a precarious location, all in a very remote, steep and loose mountain environment, at night, in fog. We had 22 team members on the hill and every one was needed to deal with what, in effect, was three separate and very different rescues.'

'We were dealing a long technical stretcher lower down West Waterfall Gully, a crag pick off and a raise to safety of the uninjured cragfast casualty, and a search with casualty care given to the third 'walking wounded' who had somehow managed to get himself off the mountain, through the forest almost to the forestry track, with a very significant head injury sustained in his fall.'

'Rescue 936 stayed on scene with dogged determination to assist, despite thick fog rolling in and out, eventually managing to return after refuelling in Blackpool, to winch the stretchered casualty onboard during a brief clear weather window.'

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Call-outs
in the time of
COVID

Images © Keswick MRT.

NEWS ROUND

SEPTEMBER > DECEMBER

NOVEMBER: A SECOND DATE WITH A DRAMATIC DIFFERENCE

A couple on their second date together decided to climb Sharp Edge on Blencathra. In slippery conditions part way along they wisely opted out of continuing along the ridge but, unfortunately, tried to descend from the ridge towards Scales Tarn. The man slipped and fell from part way down.

Instinctively, he put his arms out to try to avoid tumbling and ended up sliding fast and bumping down the steep rocky slope until he came to rest on a ledge some sixty metres further down. His partner was then stuck on the crag unable to go up or down.

Keswick team responded, approaching from below Mousethwaite Combe and requested air ambulance and HM Coastguard helicopter assistance but, on their arrival, weather conditions meant neither helicopter was able to assist directly with the rescue.

Team members split into two parties with a hasty team going to assist the fallen man approaching from the tarn. The second party climbed up to and along Sharp Edge in order to get to and lower the woman to safety. Many thanks to the passerby who had gone to the man's assistance and given him extra clothing to wear whilst waiting for the rescue team – his torchlight was very useful in locating the casualty.

A group shelter was used to protect the casualty against the increasingly inclement weather. Heat blankets were used to keep the casualty warm whilst he was being assessed prior to evacuation. His successful attempts to not tumble, thereby avoiding potentially more serious injuries, meant all the impact had been on his lower back, ribs and leg. Strong analgesia was given before immobilising him in a vacuum mattress and placing him on a stretcher for a rope-assisted lower down the mountain.

Meantime other team members had climbed along Sharp Edge, securing a safety line along the ridge. A belay was set up and a team member lowered to locate and secure the cragfast woman. Once harnessed and helmeted, the woman and rescuer were lowered to easy ground at the foot of the crag above the tarn from where they were able to walk down. The man was then taken to Glasgow hospital by the HM Coastguard helicopter that had waited in a field at the base of the mountain.

Postscript: Apparently, despite the drama of their second date a third one has already been discussed.



SEPTEMBER: ROPE RESCUE SYSTEM GETS WALKERS OUT OF TRICKY TRYFAN GULLY

A party of two walkers were descending Tryfan when they accidentally descended into Y Gully and became stuck close to the lower chocks stone. Their rescue appears no less hairy than the tricky situation they found themselves in.

The pair had called for help and a joint Ogwen Valley MRO and RAF Valley Mountain Rescue Service response saw team members operating on steep, loose ground in a serious location. Two team members climbed up to the walkers from the bottom of the gully as a rope rescue system was put in place above them. They were extracted upwards out of the gully, moved along fixed ropes to safe ground, then escorted back to the roadside.

venture further

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NOVEMBER: SEARCH DOG POPPY RETIRES

After nearly nine years of service, Poppy has stepped down from search dog duties in the south west. She is hanging up her working jacket and looking forward to a lovely retirement in sunny Devon.

Poppy was one of a few search dogs initiated into the fold of what was then SARDA England as an outsider to MREW, because handler James Taylor-Short was a member of HM Coastguard at the time he applied. After many hurdles, they graded in January 2012. After a short stint remaining with HM Coastguard, it became clear that, to get the best out of both James and Poppy, it would be a good move to join his local team so, having passed through the team's usual training programme, they became fully-fledged members of Exmoor Mountain Rescue Team. But, as with all MRSDE search dog teams, work and training extended far beyond their home patch, travelling to some of England's most beautiful mountain regions including the Lake District, the Dales and the Peak District.

During their working life together, Poppy and James attended countless call-outs and travelled across the PenMaCra region searching for all types of missing persons.

'I recall our most memorable call-out was to Tresco on the Scilly Isles,' says James. 'We spent four days on the island, along with other search dogs and rescue team members, searching for a missing nineteen year old. On the last day, Poppy sustained a foot injury taking her out of action for a few days when she worked through some cut elephant grass. The boat trip there and back scared both Poppy and myself... neither of us were good in the rough seas!'

Poppy has been an integral part of the Exmoor team on call-outs and also PR and fundraising events and invaluable in the location of missing persons.

'As every dog handler knows, the decision to retire your search dog is dreaded but as Poppy is now twelve, she's showing signs of slowing down so the decision seemed right. Going out on call-outs without my 'wing girl' will be strange, but new adventures are afoot for us both and we look forward to embracing them in the future'.

The Exmoor team would like to extend their thanks to Poppy for her service and all the support of MRSDE over the years. There have been a few people who have been vital to the success of Poppy's working life and maintaining her high standard of training. Poppy and James would like to thank Matt Roberts, Steven Ward (Wardy), NL (you know who you are) and Jacquie Hall for your help and complete faith in us and your ability to always find a solution to our training puzzles. Also to everyone who has every bodied for us over the years! Can't do it without your help!

Top: James Taylor-Short with Poppy © James Taylor-Short.

NEWS ROUND

SEPTEMBER > DECEMBER



Call-outs in the time of COVID

NOVEMBER: THIS ISSUE'S SHAGGY SHEEP RESCUE STORY

Despite Covid restrictions across the county, Yorkshire's sheep have continued to stage impromptu training sessions to ensure team members stay on top of their game in the technical rope rescue department. The search dogs get a run out too, standing guard else the mischief-makers run along the edge of the cliff and do it all again.

Above: Swaledale team members keep their sheep rescue skills up to scratch © Swaledale MRT.

SEPTEMBER: JET SUIT PARAMEDIC TESTED IN LAKE DISTRICT

Coming to a rescue team near you, maybe one day soon? Gravity Industries' Jet Suit found its way to the Lakes and news headlines, in late September, on test with the Great North Air Ambulance Service (GNAAS), with the tantalising prospect that future patients might be reached in minutes by a 'flying' medic.

The first test flight came after a year of talks between the air ambulance service and the British company that is pioneering human aeronautical innovation. Andy Mawson, director of operations at GNAAS, came up with the idea and described seeing it in action as 'awesome'. The idea is that a paramedic could 'fly' to a fell top in 90 seconds rather than taking 30 minutes on foot, wearing a suit that has two mini engines on each arm and one on the back, allowing the paramedic to control their movement just by moving their hands. The test flight was carried out by Richard Browning, founder of Gravity Industries, who has cited the Marvel Comics character Iron Man as inspiration to make human flight a reality.

'If the idea takes off,' adds Mawson, 'the flying paramedic will be armed with a medical kit, including strong pain relief for walkers who may have suffered fractures, and a defibrillator for those who may have suffered a heart attack.'

We'd best get saving up...

Future forward for SARLOC with the new SAR-EyesOn[®] augmented reality technology

RUSS HORE

Way back in 2007, the ability to locate Lost Persons (LostPers) using their mobile phone browser was developed, and the innovative SARLOC technology was released to UK MR teams and search and rescue teams around the world.

The LostPer is sent a text message with a URL in it and when they click on it, the location of the person is displayed on mapping systems back at base. The URL contains a token that expires after a period of time to stop LostPers showing their mates how they were found and sending the location of their house/pub to SARLOC. The LostPer's location is also emailed to teams.

When I presented an update at the MREW Conference in Leeds, in 2012, the last slide in the presentation gave a taster of the future tools that may be available to SAR teams. Well the future has come a little bit closer with another innovation from the SARLOC stable.

Most people will be familiar with apps that provide an augmented reality (AR) display of your surroundings. The smartphone's camera displays a 'forward looking' image and the software overlays items of interest on top of it. Think of it as similar to the 'head

up display' fighter pilots see in the cockpit. An app called SAR-EyesOn[®] will soon be available to teams, that goes part of the way towards what I had envisaged.

Currently running on iOS (iPads/iPhones), SAR-EyesOn allows points data to be displayed in AR. Point data could be SARLOC technology hits, team members radios, aircraft, vehicles, etc. These can all be displayed, overlaid on the view from the user's phone camera. Navigating to a hit will be as simple as holding up the phone and seeing how far away and above/below you they are.

The AR view (Figure 1, opposite page) shows a SARLOC hit 0.7km away and 29m below the user. As the user moves, the display is updated to show the current distance/relative altitude. Fixed items such as a radio mast can be added to the display as shown. The location of team radios are also shown in this view. Although altitude data is not currently available from the radios, SAR-EyesOn uses innovative back end technology to estimate the altitude to within 25m. The detail view (Figure 2) gives a tabular view of the data including distance and altitude.

When there are many items added to the display it can become very cluttered. If a team member is in a party of other team members, they do not want to see other team members' radios in the party cluttering up the view. Therefore, SAR-EyesOn allows the user to configure a minimum and maximum range, between which they want to display information (Figures 3), effectively creating a doughnut around the user so only items between the green and red circles are displayed (Figure 4). The number '8' next to the 'AR View' tab indicates the number of items currently being displayed.

The compass screen (Figure 5) gives an overview of tracked items with the green line being North. SARLOC technology hits are shown as red dots in this view.

SAR-EyesOn currently only displays point data but will be extended to show line and area data. Line data could include cave systems, effectively making the ground between the user and the cave transparent. Area data could show search areas. The possibilities are endless.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT RUSS HORE ON SARLOC@RUSS-HORE.CO.UK



Figure 1: A SARLOC hit 0.7km away and 29m below the user.

Figure 2: Tabular view of the data including distance and altitude.

Figure 3: Ability to enter minimum and maximum range to display information.

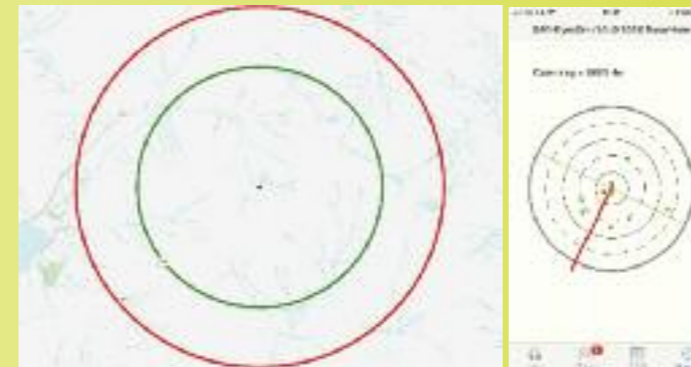


Figure 4: Doughnut created around the user so only items between the green and red circles are displayed.

Figure 5: Compass view with overview of tracked items.

OCTOBER: SUPERHUMAN EFFORT RAISES CASH FOR HOLME VALLEY

Gavin Pittman ran 100 miles in just over 22 hours in an ultramarathon organised by himself and Marsden Racers, his local running and cycling club.



Photo © Gavin Pittman.

At the time of writing, he'd far outstripped his target of £850, with £2,520 in the bag for the Holme Valley team. Gavin, who works as a butcher in Saddleworth, set off from Standedge Tunnel, Marsden, at 5.00am on the Sunday morning and trailed up and down the canal between Tunnel End and New College, completing the gruelling challenge just after 3.00am on the Monday morning. He took short fifteen minute breaks throughout the day to refill on food and water, his longest pause an enforced stop for treatment from a sports therapist.

He was kept company by other members of the Marsden Racers team at different points along the way, support which he said was vital in helping him complete the challenge.

"If I'd had to run it by myself, it would have been horrific. Each lap I had two, maybe three, runners from my club supporting me and keeping my mind off what we were doing. The worst part was the relentless backwards and forwards. The mental side of it was horrible. At about 88 miles, I hit a massive brick wall. My feet were blistered, my legs didn't want to go, and I'd chafed the skin off my arms. From that point there was a lot more walking than running but I just kept going forward. I'd have crawled the rest of the way if I had to!"

Raising funds for rescue

NOVEMBER: FARMER RESCUED AFTER SERIOUS FALL IN QUARRY

The farmer had fallen from a significant height of 30-40 metres at the disused quarry near Penygroes whilst tending his livestock, and come to rest on the quarry floor unable to move.

Aberglaslyn team members responded with three vehicles and fifteen personnel, along with the Welsh Ambulance Services, EMRTS Wales and North Wales Cave Rescue. A team doctor was lowered into the quarry to assess and treat the casualty who was found to be in a serious but stable condition with multiple injuries to his head and legs. He was lifted from the quarry floor, then conveyed to Ysbyty Gwynedd and onwards to the Major Trauma Centre at Stoke Hospital. Wishing him a speedy recovery.



Photos © Aberglaslyn MRT.



DECEMBER: GARI FINCH MBE APPOINTED NESRA PRESIDENT

Cleveland team member Gari has been involved in mountain rescue since 1970, serving as team chairman, secretary and call-out officer and holding the NESRA chair for the last forty years until his retirement from the role.

When Gari first became NESRA chair, mountain rescue was a very different organisation. Teams often didn't have permanent bases, their vehicles were usually ageing Land Rovers, radios were large and heavy and mobile phones were non-existent with call-outs coordinated by landline. Despite this, teams worked well together. The most significant call-out Gari recalls was Lockerbie, in 1988 when the north east teams made important contributions in both Lockerbie and Northumberland. He was awarded the MBE for services to mountain rescue in the 2012 New Year Honours list.

"The casualty care driven by NESRA is of a very high standard. Indeed, NESRA led the way in casualty care in mountain rescue for many years. The number of call-outs the teams attend has drastically increased over the years," says Gari, "not just because there are more of the public engaged in an increasing variety of activities, but because police and ambulance personnel have complete confidence to call upon our services and that's down to years of hard work. Our responsibilities have increased too and we now have a strong and efficient water/flood rescue capability."

"We have never lost sight of the most important principle: whatever we do is in the interests of the casualty. NESRA is a brilliant organisation, with members who astonish me, never mind the public, with their dedication and selflessness. I look forward to being their president. I am honoured and humbled to be awarded the post. To my colleagues I say thank you for your confidence, I will try to be an active president and at the same time not get in your way!"

OCTOBER: ICONIC RESCUE BOX REPLACED

The iconic rescue box at Styhead Pass has been retired after many years of service, with a replacement in the pipeline so keep eyes peeled for a shiny new box. There have been several versions since the first was installed in 1938. The original stretcher box was destroyed by a storm in the late-1940s.



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NEWS ROUND

OCTOBER > DECEMBER



NOVEMBER: THE THREE-DAY SEARCH FOR BETSY ENDS WITH RELIEVED SMILES ALL ROUND

Betsy, a small pointer cross, slipped her harness around midday on Saturday 14 November and ran from her owners on the summit plateau of Cader Idris, midway between Pen y Gader and Mynydd Moel peaks. Her worried owners searched extensively for Betsy but could find no trace, and reluctantly left the mountain without her.



Top: Team members with Betsy © Aberdyfi MRT.

A significant number of friends, family and well-wishers headed back up the mountain on Sunday, in some fairly challenging weather conditions, to continue the search, but to no avail. Late on Monday afternoon, a searcher reported hearing what he thought was a dog whimpering in an area of steep craggy ground to the north east of Llyn Cau. This was an area he thought he might have heard a dog barking on Sunday, and had returned the following day to investigate. With a specific target to explore, the owners requested mountain rescue assistance.

Finding Betsy #1 Monday 16 November:

A call-handler from Aberdyfi team spoke directly to the informant and, from his description, an area of interest was highlighted in the crags south of the summit ridge. With night rapidly falling, and rain falling even faster, a party of three team members headed up the Minffordd path to see if they could confirm the reported noise but, as suspected the weather was too bad to see or hear anything. As rescuers arrived in Cwm Cau they spotted the owners'

torches high on the crag in the dark, trying to investigate this new information. Waiting until the anxious searchers returned down, there was a discussion about Betsy, the area where she was lost and the places searched over the last few days. They were desperate to find her, and it was apparent they'd been drifting into some hazardous ground in their quest. It was their stated intention to resume the search at first light the following day, and team coordinators felt that a mountain rescue presence on the hill might provide alternative options to them putting themselves at risk should the dog be spotted.

Finding Betsy #2 Tuesday 17 November:

A party of twelve team members had made themselves available to take part in the search for Betsy at 8.30am. One party, consisting of several of the team's technical rope rescue technicians set out to approach the area of interest from above, while a second party headed into Cwm Cau to scan the crags with binoculars, and then to approach the area from underneath. In the

event, the very poor weather meant that visibility was too poor to view the crags from the other side of the valley, so the second hill party made their way to the foot of the crag. As they approached the valley floor, a dog was heard howling on the wind, and attempts were made to quantify current position and compass bearing to the origin of the noise.

As calculations were underway to get an approximate position for the source of the noise, news came through that one of the owners had located the dog on a rocky buttress in the identified area, but was unable to reach her. Team members were able to move quickly into position and rigged a simple rope system to access Betsy who was cold and hungry but otherwise in surprisingly good condition given her three nights out in some appalling weather.

While this was happening others rigged handlines down the steep rocky slope to provide a quick and safe exit route. Betsy was quickly reunited with her owners, and everyone made their way safely back down to the car park. Everyone was safely off the mountain by 1.00pm.

DECEMBER: FRENCH RESCUE HELICOPTER CRASHES IN ALPS

The aircraft, owned by a private company, was carrying out a rescue when it went down near the town of Bonvillard in the Savoie area. The cause of the crash was unclear, but officials said it could have been due to poor weather.

The alarm was raised by the pilot who managed to escape the helicopter and was found seriously injured. The Eurocopter EC135 belonged to Service Aérien Français, a private company that conducts search and rescue missions and other air services across France. It was carrying an air rescue crew on a training mission when it fell from an altitude of 1,800 metres (5,900ft).

French President Emmanuel Macron took to Twitter to offer 'support from the nation to the families, friends and colleagues of these French heroes'.

The crew consisted of two pilots – one in training – two winch operators and two mountain rescue workers. Three helicopters, sent as part of a rescue team of over 40 people, were unable to reach the site due to fog and the pilot was recovered by rescuers who approached on foot.



From MacDonalds to Munros to the Mera Glacier...

...the diary of an overweight mountaineer

I looked across at the summit of Everest glowing in the newly-risen sun and caught my breath. From my vantage point, 20,400 feet above sea level, high on the Mera Glacier, I was seeing the world as only gods and elite mountaineers tend to see it. I am neither god nor elite mountaineer. In fact, I am quite overweight. Now, looking over the most beautiful and spectacular mountain view I had ever seen, I realised how valuable my training in the Scottish Mountains had been.

The notion to head for the mountains first came to me in the summer of 2014 when I weighed in as heavy as I had ever been. Something had to change for sure. I have a pathological hatred of dieting, weight loss plans or 'obsessive eating' as I call it. Having tried every weight loss plan known to man, the only long-term loss had been my happiness. Panting at the top of the two flights of stairs that lead to my flat, I resolved to climb Everest.

The plan was simple, naive and preposterous. Three UK peaks of Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon in 2014. Then head to the Alps to conquer Zugspitze and Mont Blanc in 2015. Everest Base Camp in 2016 and then the summit of Everest in 2017. Deep down, I knew I would never do most of that but hoped that maybe wanting to would bring my weight down and my fitness levels up. Before long I found myself among the mountains of Scotland contrasting a harsh reality with a naive dream and learning so much about myself.

It's not impossible to climb in the mountains when you're overweight but it does come with its own set of physical and mental challenges. I move at a very slow pace. I tire quickly which leads to being off balance often. My knees have grown steadily weaker and I suffer from frequent episodes of lower back pain. Due to a lower level of fitness I have to be aware of my pulse rate, especially in hot weather. I also need to know my limits and be careful to avoid exhaustion in the winter. Emotionally I have to be thick-skinned, humble, with

bucket loads of determination and an ability to stay calm. I am often unconfident and sometimes downright scared.

My lack of fitness became apparent during one of the biggest scares I've had in the mountains. Early in 2015 my brother and I headed up out of Arrochar to climb Beinn Narnain. The weather was very poor. High winds, thick mist and lots of rain. Even high up, at a landmark known as the Narnain Boulders, the mountains around us were completely hidden in the mist. The boulders themselves, mere dark shadows even when we stood among them. We carried on with our ascent and made the summit, but the real problems started on the way down.

At that time, I thought all Munros were like Ben Lomond on a sunny day: clear, well-constructed paths that you see roll out for miles ahead. Frankly, that was all I was fit enough, emotionally prepared and equipped for at the time. I'd used all my available energy reaching the summit and was daft enough to think that was all I needed. My quads and my toes, crushing into the front of my boots, began to ache. This was already going to be a very long walk back and I couldn't gauge for myself how long.

We were blasted and blown almost off our feet by near hurricane winds that drove the rain at us in sheets. Completely immersed in clouds, the only thing that was visible to us was a deer fence that we'd arrived at unexpectedly, one we hadn't encountered on the ascent. My brother yelled at me so he could be heard over the roaring wind and

confirmed what I suspected but didn't want to believe. We were lost.

Unknown to us we'd missed the path back towards Arrochar and strayed down off the bealach between the Cobbler and Beinn Ime. Fortunately, my brother knew the area well and, after an hour retracing our steps uphill, we managed to find the path. By the time we did I was completely exhausted and soaked to the skin. Lessons learnt were that my equipment was not quite robust enough for the weather and I simply didn't have the level of fitness required to move effectively in the mountains.

Planning for a slower pace became very apparent during another descent in 2016. This time my brother and I were coming down off Ben Starav. Again, my energy was completely spent after traversing the sharp rocky ridge between Ben Starav and Stob Coire Dheirg. As we descended further into the bealach between Stob Coir Dheirg and Maell Nan Tri Tighearnan I was moving at a snail's pace and struggling with my balance on the rough terrain. Darkness was already closing in as we walked off the bealach into the corrie below. We only just managed to reach the river at the bottom of the mountain before complete darkness had descended. Otherwise we'd have had an unplanned bivvy. It wouldn't have been safe to continue the descent from the corrie in the dark.

Having started out relatively unsupported in 2014, I now wear heavy knee supports on both knees and make extensive use of walking poles. I have a daily stretching routine to try and keep my muscles supple



Opposite page: Glen Coe. Above: From left to right: Everest in the background from Mera High Camp; Stella Point on Kilimanjaro at 5786m; Toubkal, the highest point in the Atlas Mountains at 4167m; Abel and Sean McBride at the summit of Ben Starav. Below: Sean at Everest Base Camp. Images © Sean McBride.

and gently strengthen my core. This also includes several stretches for my lower back to loosen the muscles there and in my hips to overcome lower back pain and sciatica.

I wear a sports watch and monitor my heart rate. During one of the hottest days in the summer of 2018, I pushed for the summit of Cairngorm after having walked across from the summit of Ben Macdui. I'd considered descending into the ski resort instead of pushing for the Cairngorm summit because I was feeling so tired. In hindsight, I should have. By the time I clambered onto the Cairngorm summit, for the first time in thirty years, I was exhausted, distressed and dizzy. It turned out my pulse had reached 204 beats per minute.

The mentality of an overweight mountaineer requires several factors. First, you need to be thick-skinned. The looks I receive from others on the mountains vary from surprise to downright shock or concern. Those looks alone could have me hiding out in the car. I've learned over the years, however, that most people we meet in the Scottish Mountains are extremely friendly and helpful. They are not judging me, just concerned, and often wanting to help. It's that camaraderie and encouragement which gives me the self-belief to keep going into the mountains.

For sure a sense of humility is required. Fortunately, it's easy to feel humble when surrounded by the majesty and beauty of the mountains. There has to be an acceptance that I am going to be one of the slower walkers on the mountains. It's not uncommon for me to see people leaving the car park hundreds of feet below me and be talking to them within half an hour before they move on past me. We all get to the top in the end and the advantage for me is that people can tell me the conditions up top as they pass me on the way down.

It's also vital to know your limits and turn around when you need to turn around, whether you've reached the top or not. My brother and I attempted to summit Ben Nevis through the night via the Mountain Track in 2019. I had a cold at the time and had started to struggle before we had climbed 600 feet. We climbed on through the night and soon found ourselves crossing the Halfway Plateau across the Red Burn and on towards the zig-zags. Even as high as the zig-zags, looking up at the summit ridge tantalisingly close, I had to tell my brother I needed to turn round. He was full of encouragement, telling me I'd made the right decision. High on the mountain in the middle of the night in sub-zero temperatures was no place to risk my condition deteriorating further.

Finally, and in common with everyone else on the mountain, a clear head and positive mindset need to be maintained. When the weather closes in and there's thousands of feet to descend over miles of rough terrain is not the best time for the 'critical self' to emerge. I need to read the map, consult GPS or my phone. The conditions and the emerging situation need to be assessed and reassessed. I need to be ready and able to revert to my survival kit and communicate that situation and location should the need arise. I need to do all of this despite any voice in my head telling me I shouldn't have come here in the first place. It's not so much about telling myself I can do these things. It's as simple as I need to do them to survive.

Over the years in the mountains, I haven't

lost any weight, in fact I've still gained, but that hasn't stopped me. To date I've summited 54 Munros and, though a modest tally, the experience has been nothing short of amazing. Though I've found myself either in, or passing through, Glencoe every other weekend, the sight never gets any less breathtaking.

The experience of climbing the mountains here in Scotland and the encouragement of so many people I meet in them has been fantastic. It has taken me to over 20,000 feet in the Himalayas, to the rim of Kilimanjaro and the summit of Mount Toubkal. Scotland is my home and I truly feel like these are my mountains. They are wild and beautiful, and I love being among them. ❧



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navigation

Follow the science?

Over the last sixty years, geographers, cartographers, psychologists, neurologists, neurobiologists and others have produced hundreds of research papers on how humans develop cognitive navigation skills. It extends from the design of cartography and differences in how men and women navigate, to the impact of the GPS on the development of the brain's cognitive navigation skills.

They provide clues to the differences in clients' navigation ability and speed of learning as well as the importance of coherent and matching progressions between map scale and detail, the terrain/environment and navigation skills.

However, as yet there has been no research into how we might apply the science to teaching the basics of navigation but there are some useful pointers which seem to be borne out by personal experience of navigation and teaching the subject.

How did we navigate before maps — often referred to as 'wayfinding' (the task of navigating without the aid of a map)? It involves a process of becoming familiar with the terrain. The research identifies four key sets of brain cells, Boundary, Grid, Self Location and Heads-Up cells. Between the four of them they help create a mental

bird's-eye-view map, based on observed landmarks and their relationship to each other and our relationship to them in terms of direction and distance. It requires the development of spatial awareness and memory which is a function of the hippocampus area of the brain.

Freedom to explore unfamiliar objects and environments, early outdoor adventures, forest schools, and so on, stimulate the brain cells and develop the cognitive mapping processes. Social and gender influences can impact those developmental opportunities. This makes a sound argument for outdoor education when society is generally less comfortable with youngsters exploring independently, and research has shown that the habitual use of digital technology stifles the development of our cognitive mapping ability.

The first time we visit a new area of hills we

normally start by following the paths (boundaries) to gain a general lay of the land before having the confidence to step away from them. It appears we are hard-wired to do this. We then link the linear features cutting corners across country creating a mental grid until we have enough landmarks and their relation to each other to explore the open areas with a degree of confidence. All four sets of brain cells work together mapping these stages and fire in unison as we travel around.

As a toddler, becoming separated from our parents in a store is often our first experience of being lost. At this stage we probably don't even have the spatial awareness or mental map to point in the direction of the car park. With age we gain more experience of our wider surroundings, our mental map and confidence expands ultimately to the point of coping in a white-out.

wayfinding and navigational strategies. A poor decision when navigating will have an immediate consequence both psychologically and physically. It also uses other senses: hearing, balance and feeling and different aspects of visual senses.

Map reading as a starting point to learn to navigate does not instill a sense of exploration or adventure, yet it is often where most of our teaching begins. We need prior terrain experience to interpret and visualise the map. This is key to understanding how we learn and develop confidence with navigation.

All that would suggest that developing both map knowledge and navigation skills simultaneously is likely to be more effective at building our cognitive map, what orienteers refer to as a map walk. Ideally on a large scale map 1:10,000 with lots of recognisable features marked. Using a 1:50,000 is likely to be a long walk passing lots of memorable information on the ground which is not on the map. It rather undermines confidence. As Matthew Syed says in *Black Box Thinking*: 'Enlightened training environments maximise the quantity and quality of feedback, thus increasing the speed of adaptation'. This is a proposed model that might illustrate these inter-relationships.

COMPONENTS OF NAVIGATION

It is also very clear that we cannot teach navigation unless every individual has a map, one between two or three is a waste of time and opportunity. This also raises questions about the value of online navigation learning, something that has come up a lot during lockdown.

Object rotation (map setting) is a specific cognitive task closely associated with map reading. Evidence shows that people are quicker with their navigation if the map is set. Map setting is best learned outside as part of our map walk practical navigation. With an unset map, the further the direction required is from north (assuming that being the top of the map), the longer it takes to make a decision. It is also easier to mentally rotate text than symbols. Conversely, the brain wants to conserve energy so it would prefer to read text rather than rotate symbols. Another good reason for using an orienteering map for teaching novices as there is no writing across the map.

British Orienteering and the National Navigation Award Scheme appear to broadly use a teaching methodology which aligns with some of these themes. But based on the experience of teaching novices rather than the science and they appear to be increasingly successful with it.

A question that often comes up when discussing the cognitive processes of navigation is around the differences between men and women. Evidence suggests both are capable of navigating effectively but may go about it differently.

Having an appreciation of that may be useful for trainers, assessors and candidates. This summary of the research, from *Psychology Today*, may be of interest: <https://tinyurl.com/ya7325vu>.

It is worth considering that our traditional two dimensional cartography and symbology have been developed by men (probably unintentionally), for men. One study compared men and women using 2D and 3D maps to navigate through Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in London. Men were better than women using the 2D map but with a 3D map women found their way faster and with fewer mistakes than the men. The women also remembered more landmarks and in greater detail. It appears that women rely more than men on observation and remembering landmarks, while men rely more than women on spatial information such as time, distance and direction. This may for instance influence relocation strategies. Another study suggested women tended to return to an observed landmark for positive confirmation of their location whilst men are more likely to attempt to calculate their location on the spot — not dissimilar to the 'men not wanting to ask for directions' scenario. Both methods can be successful and in truth most of us use a mix of both.

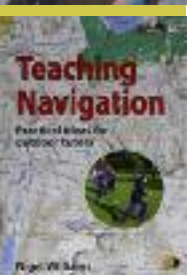
What we can take from all this is the importance of understanding that progressions with environment and navigation features are just as important as developing navigation and map reading skills, combining all three provides the most powerful learning process.

Past opportunities to explore outdoors and develop spatial awareness may influence a novice navigator's confidence and ability to acquire navigation skill. In a teaching role we may be able to observe and understand differences in navigation processes between men and women.

Decision making is a key element of navigation which is why confidence plays such a key role and needs to be developed and nurtured. It is surprising how often the scientific research talks about navigational confidence. 📍

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The somewhat 'controversial' rescue of writer, author and TV personality, **Tom Weir**

When Tom Weir passed away in 2006, we lost a National Treasure. Indeed, Tom was an iconic Scottish figure. If you met him in an outdoor setting then, most likely, he'd be wearing his trademark red woolly 'bunnet', Fair Isle jumper and tweed breeks. However, it's possible many readers – especially those living south of the Scottish border – may not have heard of him. So, who was he and what were his achievements? **Bob Sharp** looks back at Tom's life and his link with mountain rescue.



Tom was born in Springburn, Glasgow in Christmas week 1914. He never knew his father, who was killed at Gallipoli. His mother was the wage earner and worked as a wagon painter in the locomotive works in Glasgow, while his grandmother looked after him and his sister during the day. His elder sister, Molly had a successful career as an actress, memorably as Hazel the McWitch in the 1976-84 children's television show *Renaghost*.

Tom developed an affection for the environment as a child and commented that his love of the Scottish landscape began when a young teenager living in Springburn. 'The bus that ran past our door went

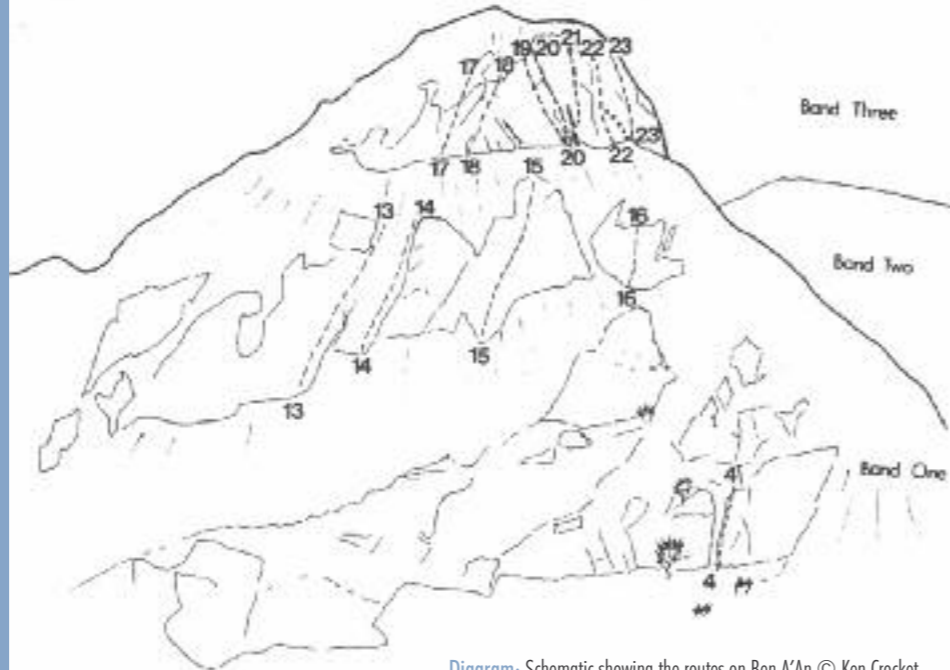


Diagram: Schematic showing the routes on Ben A'an © Ken Crocket.
Left: Close up view of Ben A'an and the Last 80 which takes a line up the top rock band © Bob Sharp.

straight to Campsie Glen. A single journey cost just sixpence. From my house I could see the green outline of the Campsies and the blue skyline of faraway and bigger hills and decided I would go there. For me, the Campsies became the most wonderful place in the world.'

After a period working in the local grocer's shop, during which he escaped to the Campsie Hills in any time off, he went to work on a farm on the island of Arran. He was called up in 1939 to join the Ayrshire Yeomanry, then transferred to the Gunners as part of the Royal Artillery surveyors' unit. On demobilisation he worked as a surveyor with the Ordnance Survey before commencing a full-time career as a climber, writer and photographer.

Tom was a man of many talents — a broadcaster, climber, environmental campaigner, TV personality, naturalist, prolific author and much else. As a mountaineer he had many claims to fame. He was a member of the first post-war Himalayan expedition in 1950 and one of the first to explore the previously closed mountain ranges of Nepal, east of Kathmandu. He climbed in Arctic Norway, Greenland, Turkey, Iran, Syria and Kurdistan

and achieved many first rock ascents in Scotland.

Above all, he was a champion of wild places. Cameron McNeish expressed this very well. 'Tom Weir was born only a matter of days after the death of John Muir — for anyone who may believe in reincarnation! Both men lived for wild places and wildlife, both men sang the praises of wild land in their prolific writings and both men influenced the conservation of such landscapes.'

Tom is fondly remembered for his long-running Scottish television series *Weir's Way* which he both wrote and presented. Typically, in each programme, he would meet local people who recounted interesting tales and personal experiences. He used these interviews to illustrate and explain Scotland's landscape, its rich social and natural history. A modern parallel would be the TV programmes presented by Cameron McNeish and Paul Murton. He is also remembered for his monthly column in *The Scots Magazine* (the oldest magazine in the world, still in publication), which he started in 1956 and continued without a break for almost 50 years — an achievement that will never be broken. As a pioneering

campaigner for the protection of the Scottish environment this became a thread he wove through his articles and TV programmes.

Throughout his life he was praised and celebrated by many and received numerous awards including an MBE in 1976. In 2000 he was awarded the inaugural John Muir Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his environmental work. He was an office bearer of several national bodies including the Scottish Wildlife Trust and the Scottish Rights of Way Society. From 1984–1986, he was President of the Scottish Mountaineering Club.

I had the good fortune to meet him one summer day in 1986. He was taking a stroll up the Cobbler just west of Loch Lomond in the Central Highlands with his two pals, one of whom was celebrating his 73rd birthday. I was with a couple of students heading up to climb one of the classic routes, Right Angled Gully. We met a few times on the ascent (more of which later) and I met Tom later in the day as I scabbled out of the gully onto the summit of the north peak. To my surprise, Tom was sitting on a small rock about ten feet away. He started chatting and for some fifteen minutes or so we had an enjoyable discussion on mountain matters. He was extremely interested in my climbing gear and our climbing interests. In a subsequent issue of *The Scots Magazine*, Tom referred to our meeting, commenting on how climbing had changed over the years.

'Leaving them to their sport I couldn't help reflecting on the difference in attitude between theirs and mine. Armed with gear and guided by a trained leader they were engaged in rock sport, a form of athletics shown now as television entertainment. They are men who train on indoor climbing walls to attain world champion boxer fitness. Well, it's all very wonderful in a way, but does it make sense? Not to me, I'm afraid.'

Tom remained an active Scottish mountaineer all his life, but a serious incident in 1970 could easily have halted what was already a rich and celebrated career. In June of that year, Tom and his pal Leonard Lovat (then Deputy Procurator Fiscal for Glasgow Sheriff Court), were climbing on the small peak Ben A'an. Only 454 metres in height, it is exceedingly popular with walkers. Located at the heart of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park it boasts stunning views west along the length of Loch Katrine. From a distance it gives the impression of being a distinct peak although it simply marks the end of a ridge leading north to higher ground. That doesn't matter since the short one kilometre path to the summit is a pleasant hike for tourists and walkers alike. Additionally, the rock bands are a superb playground for climbers interested in straightforward challenges, but nothing too serious.

The route Tom and Leonard were climbing (The Last 80), takes a straight line up the final rock band just below the summit. The two men had 'opened up' the route just two years previously. Graded only 'severe', it's a classic climb on vertical mica schist. Tom recounted that it was his first real rock climb

since he climbed the Cioch of Applecross with Tom Patey three weeks previously. Tragically, Tom Patey fell to his death just a few days after their climb. At the time of Tom Weir's accident it was a clear, fresh evening with a fresh breeze. Tom mentioned that he felt in good form and climbed more easily than the first ascent. He had completed the route and was preparing to belay to a small spike at the top using a 'short sling of No 2 rope'. In the process, his attention was diverted to a peregrine falcon resting on a nearby ledge. Keen for a better view, he attempted to move closer but in the process dislodged the sling which dropped to the bottom of the route. He was then forced to

is minute and you anchor yourself to a rock spike hardly bigger than the thickness of the rope. You wouldn't use it unless you had a companion whose competence was beyond question.'

The start of the route involves negotiating a three-metre overhang using good handholds. Leonard started climbing and was almost above the overhang when a handhold failed. His weight came onto the rope and he fell backwards to the ground. At this point, the load transferred to Tom's rope, his belay gave way and he was catapulted through the air to the bottom of the crag falling about 30 metres. Having hit the ground with some force, he rolled a



Top: Right angled gully. Route starts from the grass at centre picture, up and out of sight between the buttresses © Bob Sharp. Above: Sandy Seabrook with Tom's statue © Bob Sharp. Right: Tom (left) presenting Sandy with a painting to mark his 25 years as Lomond team leader © Graham Baird.

fashion another belay using the hawser-laid climbing rope. Given the curvature of the rock spike, this turned out to be less than satisfactory. Indeed, in his subsequent account of the incident Tom said that 'unfortunately, the best belay position above the crucial section is not too good. The ledge

further 20 metres down steep heather-clad ground. It was fortuitous that Leonard managed to arrest his fall with a tight rope else Tom would have slid over the drop beneath. Leonard descended quickly and secured him with the rope.

He found Tom unconscious and his eyes

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rolling. After a brief moment he had come to, but had difficulty comprehending what Leonard was saying. Tom reported that his back and ribs were giving him great pain. As he shivered, each violent spasm felt like a pneumatic drill was piercing his spine. Hospital examination later revealed that he had suffered several broken ribs, compressed and chipped vertebrae and a broken hip. He reckoned the steepness of the ground on to which he fell and the subsequent slide, cushioned his impact. He was also lucky to strike heather and not rocks.

In a subsequent report, Leonard described the incident in vivid colour. 'We were climbing the last wall before the summit, on a route we worked out ourselves two years ago. Tom had gone up ahead and belayed — looped our climbing rope round a rock boss. He was out of my sight. Then I started to work along under the overhang separating us. In this position you are leaning back, relying on overhead handholds to keep you from falling. One of my handholds snapped off and I fell backwards. The rope was tight for a second, and then it came slack. As I fell back, I had one thought: he's come off. Then I saw Tom, as I fell still further back, coming out above me just like a high diver. I fell on to a small flat space and he hurtled over me on to a steep heather slope. We started to slide down, still roped together and I just managed to stop us by digging in.'

Lucky to be alive, Leonard realised that Tom required urgent outside help. He said to Tom, 'I'll have to leave you now. Try not to slide and for God's sake, don't take off that rope. I'll be back as quick as I can'.

According to Tom, it was now 9.30pm although the incident report prepared by the Lomond team secretary indicated a much earlier time of between 8.00pm and 8.30pm. Leonard made his way down the track to the Forestry Commission lodge by the roadside. Here, he phoned fellow members of the Scottish Mountaineering Club (SMC) in Glasgow. Notably, he didn't call the police or mountain rescue. In fact, it seems he may have been unaware of the Lomond team's existence and thus didn't know that Ben A'An was located within the team's patch. It's important to point out that some months later, a member of the team spoke to the forester whose telephone Leonard used on the night of the accident. He had offered Leonard the Forestry Commission's own Maclnnes stretcher, but Leonard refused, saying he'd make his own arrangements as he wished to avoid publicity. Of further note is that whilst Leonard was making the phone call, the forester made up a flask of tea and some sandwiches to take up to Tom! It is not known if they arrived!

Realising they would need a stretcher, the SMC set about locating one. Glasgow police were contacted and an officer then called his counterpart at the Drymen police station, located just a few hundred metres from the team's base. At this point the Lomond team received a call from someone (no name



Top: At the official 'opening' of Tom Weir's statue, left to right: Jimmie MacGregor, 'Tom Weir', Rhona Weir and Cameron McNeish © Paul Sanders Photography. Above: Map section showing the relation between Ben A-An, Drymen and Balmaha © Crown copyright and database rights OS 100050486. Above right: Press clipping from the Glasgow Herald.

given), saying that a man (no name given), had fallen on Ben A'An and asked if the team had a mountain stretcher. The person appeared to have very little knowledge of the incident. The team member who answered the call replied in the affirmative and the person said he would make contact later. He then called off. It later transpired that the person who called the team was a family member of the Drymen police officer. The officer was away at the time and couldn't take the call from Glasgow. Notably, the team's committee was in session at its base in Drymen at the time, but given the uncertain nature of the communication, members were unaware of the ongoing incident and didn't respond.

Team members heard nothing else until 11.30pm when a second call was received from the officer on duty at the Drymen police office. He reported that it was Tom Weir who had fallen on Ben A'An and that a senior member of the SMC, Sandy Cousins, was at the station asking if a stretcher could be delivered to him. Sandy Cousins explained to the constable that nine members of the SMC were on the hill with Tom and that no members of the Lomond team were

required, only their stretcher. The team leader, Sandy Seabrook, replied that the team's stretcher would be made available immediately and that it would be accompanied by two team members — himself and one other.

Fifteen minutes later, both members met Sandy Cousins and together they drove to Ben A'An. On arrival they learned that a Maclnnes stretcher had already been obtained and was on the hill. Sandy decided to leave the team's own new stretcher behind and take the remaining kit — first aid, ropes etc. The three men hurried up the hill and, around 1.00am joined the SMC group and Tom Weir at the foot of the climb. At this point, it became clear that the stretcher on the hill, which had been obtained from a local outdoor education centre (Montrose House in Balmaha), was in very poor condition, with broken tubes and missing webbing.

Whilst all this was happening, Tom had manoeuvred himself into 'position of prayer' which he reported was less painful than lying on his back. But he was still in need of urgent medical care. With help from others he was positioned onto the back of a club

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member who, 'moving like a frog up the heather and rocks', carried Tom twenty metres up the steep slope to the waiting stretcher. He was then strapped to the stretcher and carried off the hill reaching the road around 3.10am. From here he was taken by road ambulance to Stirling Royal Infirmary where he arrived at 4.30am. Over the next few days, he experienced excruciating pain from his various injuries and was told it would be several months before he could climb again. However, his progress surpassed all expectations and he was out and about gentle walking within a few weeks.

Unfortunately, this was not the end of matters. The incident was reported widely in the press and, over the next few weeks and months, Tom's rescue was the subject of much discussion by the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland (MRCofS) with correspondence toing and froing between the Lomond team, the SMC and the MRCofS. Questions were raised about poor casualty care, use of a broken stretcher, the length and timing of the operation and, in particular, whether the Lomond team had been actively bypassed in favour of the SMC group.

An accident report was prepared the day following the accident, by Stanley Smith the team secretary, and submitted to Ben Humble who was the then accident collator for the MRCofS. In his very lengthy report, Stanley commented that 'a marked feature of the whole operation was the reluctance of the organisers to use the services of the district mountain rescue team. Until the SMC group came to realise on Ben A'An that the two Lomond MRT members knew their business, the team was kept at arm's length, it having been made clear early on that the team's stretcher was required but not the team.'

Stanley raised a number of other matters. Bearing in mind the length of time between Tom's fall and his arrival at hospital many hours later, he estimated that had the Lomond team been involved from the beginning, Tom Weir would have received hospital care some two to three hours earlier. Also, he would not have been carried off the hill on a broken stretcher, nor carried part way on someone's back. It does seem extraordinary that given the availability of a bespoke mountain stretcher, someone with a broken pelvis and ribs should be carried up the steep slope by a person. Indeed, when Stanley Smith visited Tom in hospital the following day, Tom described the agonising pain he felt being carried on someone's back.

In his report summary, Stanley commented, 'While it is understandable that the first thought of the members of the SMC would be for themselves to succour their old friend and fellow member after his accident and injury, it surely needs to be brought out in some way that the services of the local mountain rescue team can hardly be other than the most effective means available for

getting casualties safely and rapidly off the mountain and down to road transport. The team is trained, equipped and organised for this purpose, on immediate call, located in the mountain area and in close liaison with the police and other local bodies.'

As accident collator for the MRCofS, Ben Humble was extremely fastidious and placed great store in detail and accuracy. His initial reaction on receiving the incident report was to question the timing of events. He questioned why the operation had taken so long, suggesting that the 'attempt to bypass the MR team caused much delay'.

He reasoned that, had the Lomond team been alerted directly by Leonard from the forester's house then the rescue could have been completed several hours earlier. Stanley Smith agreed with this. Knowing the team's experience of rescues on Ben A'An, he reasoned that had the team been called at, say, 9.00pm then Tom Weir would have been at the roadhead just after midnight and in hospital around 1.00am, much earlier than actually happened. It is important to add that the exact time of the incident noted by Stanley Smith in his report (8.00 to 8.30pm) may have been wrong. Tom Weir said it was 9.30pm.

In addition to the timing of events, Ben also sought further information on the broken stretcher. He was extremely perturbed to learn that a MacInnes stretcher in such poor condition had found its way onto the hill. Stanley Smith reported that this particular stretcher, a MacInnes MkII, was owned by Montrose House, which operated as an outdoor centre for the Glasgow Union of Boys Clubs. Over the years, it had been used by various organisations, including army personnel, and had clearly suffered from rough treatment. Stanley added that on his visit to see Tom Weir the day after the accident, he noticed the stretcher was still at the hospital. On inspection he saw that it was indeed the Montrose House stretcher and in a bad state of repair. He reckoned it was probably uplifted on the evening of the rescue and then taken to Ben A'An by one of the SMC rescue party members. He said that whoever uplifted this stretcher would have driven through Drymen on two occasions and therefore passed by the Lomond team's post which housed the team's equipment including a new MacInnes stretcher.

The SMC expressed some disquiet with the team's incident report. After examining the information, Donald Bennet, the then secretary of the SMC, wrote to Stanley Smith: 'As there are several discrepancies between your report and the one I submitted, I am writing to you in the hope of clarifying this matter. Your report is critical of the way in which this incident was handled by T. Weir's companion L. Lovat and other members of the SMC team which turned out that night.'

In particular, Donald Bennet queried the timing of events. He was of the view that Tom fell at 9.30pm and Leonard Lovat

telephoned for help at 10.10pm. This time difference makes sense since it takes no more than 30 minutes to descend from the summit to the roadhead. But Stanley Smith's report indicated that the incident took place at 8.00pm and the team then received a phone call from Drymen police office at 9.45pm. Donald Bennet disagreed and said the team was wrong in saying it received a call at 9.45pm as this was only fifteen minutes after Tom's fall and Leonard had yet to descend and phone for help.

Donald Bennet went on to add that the lost time in calling SMC members rather than the team was, at most, 40 minutes. He commented on two other matters. He made it clear that when the SMC requested a stretcher only and not team members, it did not imply the team was not wanted, but merely that it was not needed. He confirmed there were nine SMC members on the hill and that some had considerable mountain rescue experience. In regard to the carrying of Tom on a club member's back, he said that 'this was done under the strict supervision of a doctor who has had experience of skiing and climbing accidents, and I am certain that, if he had thought that the method of carrying Tom Weir up to the stretcher would result in aggravating his injuries, he would not have permitted it.'

The correspondence and reports from the time show that the MRCofS found itself in a difficult position trying to explain and resolve different explanations about the timing of the incident and why certain things took place. At the time, the chair of the MRCofS was Eric Langmuir (also Principal of Glenmore Lodge). It was fortuitous that Eric's vast mountaineering experience and pragmatic style led to a suitable conclusion. He commented that the MRCofS was reluctant to act as a court of law in the matter but it was quite clear that 'an attempt had been made to avoid official channels and hush up the whole business.'

He concluded that no good would come from direct confrontation with those involved, and that the key principle for everyone to note with all mountain accidents was 'that the most efficient help should be sought immediately.'

The accuracy of whether or not the SMC actively chose to avoid the Lomond MRT is something which is now lost in the mists of time. Most of those involved in the incident are long gone. It is possible that the extraordinarily long time it took to rescue Tom Weir', together with subsequent interpretations over timing and equipment was symptomatic of the revolution taking place in rescue provision at the time.

In 1970, mountain rescue was still undergoing significant change and development. As most readers will know, for several decades, rescues had been actioned primarily by local people — members of climbing clubs, police officers, GPs, farm workers and walkers. In some areas, established climbing clubs had responsibility for incidents in their area. In




'The time from Tom's accident to his arrival in hospital was around 8 hours. Had the accident taken place today, then given the use of mobile communications and the availability of swift SAR helicopter provision, the time period would not have been much more than 90 minutes!'

who?

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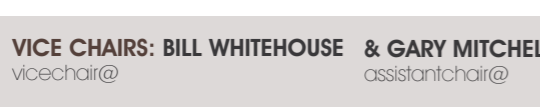









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addition, unmanned rescue boxes located in key mountain areas contained basic emergency equipment accessible by hillgoers willing to help those in distress. By 1970 many civilian MRTs had been established but others had yet to form. The Lomond team had been in existence only two years, so it was not surprising that Tom's climbing partner Leonard Lovat may have been unaware of the Lomond MRT. And to quote Stanley Smith again: 'It is understandable that the first thought of the members of the SMC would be for themselves to succour their old friend and fellow member after his accident and injury'.

Tom, in support of his friends, remarked two months later, 'It is also nice to look back and remember that the men who did the mountain rescue job so speedily and expertly were all climbing friends.'

The key (and somewhat surprising) fact is that Tom survived the fall. But he was known to have an incredibly strong constitution. By all accounts, when out walking with younger people he would often leave them toiling in his shadow. Even into his late-80s, he was still taking a daily stroll up his local hill.

With the accident behind him, Tom developed a strong connection with mountain rescue and would often attend fundraising and PR events held by the Lomond team. He was always happy to have a blether with team members and the public at large. There's no doubt he was all ears for a tasty snippet of information to flavour his next article for *The Scots Magazine!* Which takes me back to our chance meeting on the Cobbler in 1986. The students and I had parked our car at Succoth and chose to climb via the track which follows the fall line — a steep relic from the days when the Sloy dam was built in the 1950s. After a few minutes, we passed Tom and his pals. Keen to reach the start of our climb we moved off at full speed with little time for a blether. After a few minutes, sweating and exhausted, we needed a rest. Tom and his pals passed by, chatting away and looking quite relaxed. But after a very short break we shot off once again. We passed Tom's group without a sideways glance and strode off into the distance.

By the time we reached the Narnain Boulders halfway up the mountain, we felt Tom would be far behind. Wrong! Just a few minutes later, we heard his unmistakable voice. 'Aigh, you boys must be fit.' He was correct but we certainly didn't feel it. Anyway, this 'tortoise and hare' sequence continued for the remaining ascent and even though we arrived at the summit col before Tom, we were only five minutes ahead. More important, he and his pals had not broken sweat and had blethered all the way. In contrast, myself and the two students were knackered and in no physical shape to begin the climb.

This was a lesson that had a huge impact and taught me not only about the value of pacing but also the gift of enjoying the mountains. Tom was all for the process and the experience and not simply the end game. He made this point repeatedly in his TV programmes and writings. In one of his *Scots Magazine* columns, he commented that 'climbing a hill is such a complete thing. You get up on the remote tops and then return to the haunts of men and wildlife. I get more and more pleasure from not going to the top, but from exploring some hitherto unnoticed feature of the mountain — a gully, or a vegetative rock face with alpine plants or a possible eagle nest site.'

And when interviewed for the 1980s TV series 'The Munro Show' he noted that 'people are doing the Munros today faster and faster. Well, I find that difficult to comprehend. I believe the Munros should last you forever. When you climb a Munro, you should make a friend of it and see it in every season of the year.' Interestingly, he was not the least bit interested in 'tick lists'. He commented that if he did the Munros then it would be an accident. 'I wish to be remembered as the man who didn't do the Munros'. When he passed away at the grand age of 91 years, he had climbed all but five! 🏔️

A short history of stretchers: Part 4 Influences from abroad...

PETER BELL

Besides the creation of his own, now iconic, Bell stretcher, by the end of Part 3, Peter Bell had considered the many and varied efforts from across England, Wales and Scotland to develop stretchers specific to local needs. Elsewhere in the world, other ideas were being tried and tested in the mountain environment.



FROM EUROPE

Mountain rescue conferences were, by the 1980s, enabling the exchange of ideas and experience to a much greater extent than ever before. At one of these, in 1983 at Glenmore Lodge, Aviemore, in Scotland, there was a display to illustrate some of the design concepts originating in Europe. These stretchers were rarely seen and hardly ever used in Britain. Nevertheless, this display had a marked influence over some of the stretcher designs that later developed in Britain.



THE TYROMONT STRETCHER

The Tyromont mountain stretcher was also designed for transport of injured persons across all kinds of terrain, for roping up or down, dragging over rock or ice, carrying and riding on the single wheel — wherever a good protection of the injured and a rugged device are required.

Today's model, less than 14kg in weight, is divisible into three loads of approx 4.5kg. The frame is manufactured from lightweight, high precision steel tubing with a red powder-coated frame.

The circle-sector shaped frame design enables easy handling in all kind of terrain and the flat lying area for the injured is totally protected from side impacts by a rail that surrounds the whole stretcher — which also serves as a grip, allowing rescuers to hold the stretcher at any position. The two base runners are shaped in a circle-sector and retracted to the centre to provide more space for the legs of the rescuer when roping up or down steep rock.

The Tyromont Universal (UT2000) can be divided into two halves, each weighing 3.5kg, for transport on the back of two rescuers. Each half can also be used as load-carrying frame.

The tubular frame is made from high strength Alumi-num-alloy and the durable plastic lying area is shock and scratch resistant. The stretcher features a wide, padded shoulder belt, detachable carrying belts for helicopter transport, and four multi-

functional load-bearing belts for securing the casualty in place. The weight of the complete stretcher is 6.6kg with a load-carrying capacity of 2000kg.

PIGUILLEM STRETCHER

The 'Perche Piguillem', adapted as it is to winch rescue, is the most frequently used stretcher by the rescuers of the Peloton de Gendarmerie de Haute-Montagne by the mountains of the Mont-Blanc Massif. It is from this design that the Alphin stretcher evolved.

Saveur Piguillem was an alpine guide and, for almost 20 years until 1971, instructor of the French Police Alpinism Centre. Until 1986, he was head of mountain rescue in Grenoble, Val d'Isere and Chamonix. Thanks to his extensive experience and knowledge of the mountains, Piguillem created and built a variety of rescue equipment, including the stretcher which took his name, a walls winch, a tow for the evacuation of skiers and a tow for use with avalanche dogs. The Piguillem is carried like a backpack to the scene of the incident.

WASTL MARINER

Sebastian 'Wastl' Mariner (1909–1989) was an Austrian alpinist and a pioneer of mountain rescue in Austria, famous for the development of a wide variety of equipment intended for use in helping injured climbers. His 'mountain carrier' or 'one wheel litter' is

still in use in mountain rescue. His invention of the ice screw, special carabiners and various ski bindings all, incidentally, contributed to increased safety in the mountains. The first really usable lug sole for climbing boots was also invented by Mariner. His idea of wanting to help the victims of climbing accidents lead to the founding of the ICAR, the International Commission for Alpine Rescue. Indeed, for his untiring and courageous work in mountain rescue, he was repeatedly honoured, receiving the title of 'Professor' from the President of Austria — an honour that his modesty kept him from ever using'.

From 1939 to 1955, he was head of the mountain rescue service in Innsbruck. The School of Mountaineering Austrian Alpine Club was founded by him. His book *Modern Mountain Rescue Technique*, translated by Otto T Trott and Kurt G Beam into English, paved the way for the development of alpine rescue in the US. Ironically, the so-called European 'father of mountain rescue' died just one day after the death of the North American 'father of mountain rescue', Orme Daiber.

The Mariner mountain carrier was made of thin steel tubing, and consisted of two parts. Two pairs of longitudinal bars, the lower more curved, the upper less, met at acute angles and were fixed together by joints at their ends. In the middle they were firmly connected by bars which could be shifted to allow rapid disassembly and assembly of the device. A locating pin prevented independent loosening of the two bearing surfaces. Lever handles were adjustable to four positions and independent of each other. A slightly dished tub of plastic served as a bed and shelter for the casualty, who would be secured into the stretcher by four pairs of straps.

The versatile Mariner was deemed suitable for moving the casualty over all grounds, for lowering on steep rocks, sliding down slopes, driving on narrow and steep mountain paths with the aid of a single wheel, driving with skis on glaciers and for carrying in the same way as an ordinary stretcher.

FROM THE USA AND CANADA

THE STOKES LITTER

Invented by Charles F Stokes (US Patent application dated 21 July 1905, Full Patent granted 8 May 1906. No 820026), this remarkable device was not just a means of carrying a casualty — it had a dual, and equally important role, as a splint. The original designs were such that the mesh support areas were pliable, and specifically designed to mould around the casualty to provide local support and immobilisation. Uniquely, the leg end was divided into two longitudinal sections so that injured legs could be separately splinted by moulding the wire mesh as injuries dictated. Adjustable foot pieces were provided so support could be available or traction

applied. One or both of the footrests was capable of providing vertical support if the stretcher was to be lowered or raised vertically — an important characteristic when used aboard ship.

Opposite page: The Tyromont stretcher. Below left: The Piguillem stretcher. This page: The Wastl Mariner stretcher.



applied. One or both of the footrests was capable of providing vertical support if the stretcher was to be lowered or raised vertically — an important characteristic when used aboard ship.

The frame itself was of lightweight steel and, according to the patent drawings, joints were riveted. However, before long, tubular steel was used to increase rigidity and the joints were then welded.

It seems likely that there was strong rivalry between the British Royal Navy, represented by Neil Robertson Surgeon Commander, and the US Navy, represented by Charles Stokes Surgeon General. In so far as it is possible to compare ranks between the British and US navies, Charles Stokes outranked (and outlived) Neil Robertson.

That said, the common objective was a stretcher capable of splinting and lifting vertically an injured seaman. Both men finalised their respective designs in 1906 and both stretcher formats continue in use over a century later — a technical and humanitarian achievement.

Over the past 30 years or so, the titles 'Stokes Litter' or 'Stokes stretcher', have become more generic, almost a household name, and they are now available in a wide variety of formats, including moulded plastic. The original design, which incorporated splinting and leg channels, has all but disappeared with the Stokes Splint Stretcher now a simple basket stretcher.

Charles F Stokes was the fourteenth Surgeon General of the United States Navy, and the eighteenth Chief of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery. Born in Brooklyn, New York, on 20 February 1863, he was appointed from New York as an assistant surgeon of the Navy in February 1889, his first duty on the USS Minnesota. He was the first medical officer to command a hospital ship and was appointed as Surgeon General of the Navy in February 1910, holding office until 6 February 1914.

He was widely known as a skilful surgeon — a pioneer in abdominal surgery, he devised the first aid dressing which the Army and Navy used in modified form during the First World War, but is best remembered in the US Navy today for the stretcher he devised. The eponymous 'Stokes' has proved of remarkable value in the transportation of the sick and injured up and down the narrow ladders, and through the small manholes and hatches, aboard ship.

A patient could be lowered into a boat in comfort and, by simple fittings, the stretcher was made to combine splinting for fractures with the function of a litter for transportation.

The story goes that, in 1926, Doctor Stokes — who had retired eleven years earlier — was visiting the display of naval medicine in the exhibits of the American Medical Association held in Washington, DC. He showed much interest in the Stokes stretcher so the polite and efficient hospital attendant, on duty with the exhibit, explained the stretcher and its uses at great length. Only afterwards did the attendant learn that he had been explaining the stretcher to its inventor! Stokes praised him for his knowledge of the stretcher and its uses and expressed the hope that doctors on the hospital staff were as well informed.

After retirement, Admiral Stokes lived in New York City until his death on 29 October 1931, in his sixty-eighth year.

For some years, the Stokes Splint Stretcher was manufactured in military/naval supply factories for naval and other military use in the USA. Early in 1930, running parallel with the Joint Stretcher Committee in England, the Junkin Safety Appliance Company was formed in Louisville, Kentucky. It was in the early-1940s that they began the commercial production of the Stokes-style litter, probably spurred on by an increased demand during the Second World War. By then the business was owned by John Junkin whose father had founded the business. John Junkin died a few years ago but, after the family was bought out in 1973, the business continues to flourish to this day. (Thanks to Chris Mercke and Rhonda, both of the Junkin Safety Appliance Company, for this background detail.) The image shows an early Junkin Stokes Splint Stretcher from their old Bulletin, number 108. The basket unit was priced at \$40, an indication of the age of this illustration. This style of basket stretcher was rarely seen in mountain rescue environments here in Britain.

'The main stretcher frame is of 5/8-inch steel tubing and the cross braces and runners, of 3/16-inch x 5/8-inch flat wire. The basket is carefully constructed of 18 gauge, 1-inch hexagon mesh netting formed and securely fitted into the frame. Length 80 1/2-inch — height

¹Mountain Rescue Bergrtrage, the newsletter of the Mountain Rescue Council, Seattle, No 134

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In 2007, a titanium tube option was introduced to reduce weight. A few of these titanium tube basket stretchers have been imported from America for evaluation. These have been manufactured for or by Traverse Rescue located at Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. Traverse Rescue is a Ferno Group Company.²

The Ferno Manufacturing Company (the foundation of the Ferno Group) was established in a rented building by Richard Ferno in 1955 in Staunton, Ohio. The Ferno headquarters are now based in Wilmington, Ohio.³

Ferno Manufacturing started life as a manufacturer of cots and stretchers for mortuaries and ambulances.

Note that the original 'Stokes' design concept of splinting as part of the integral design has lapsed. The mesh is not conformable and there is no facility for individual leg separation and splinting. Similarly, there are no foot plates to provide a casualty with that important sense of comfort, as injuries dictate.

Various plastic basket stretchers, designed for short carry, are manufactured in Britain or imported from the USA and Canada. Most mountain rescue teams do not regard these to be general purpose mountain rescue stretchers.

THE SKED

The Sked is a fold-up stretcher device made in the US. It comes equipped for horizontal hoisting by helicopter, or vertical hoisting in caves or industrial confined spaces. When the casualty is packaged, the stretcher becomes rigid, the durable plastic providing protection for the injured during extrication through confined spaces. Popular with the military, the Sked is available in International Orange or olive green for military, SWAT and other tactical situations.

Again, this is not considered a general purpose rescue stretcher.⁴

THE STUDENT FACTOR

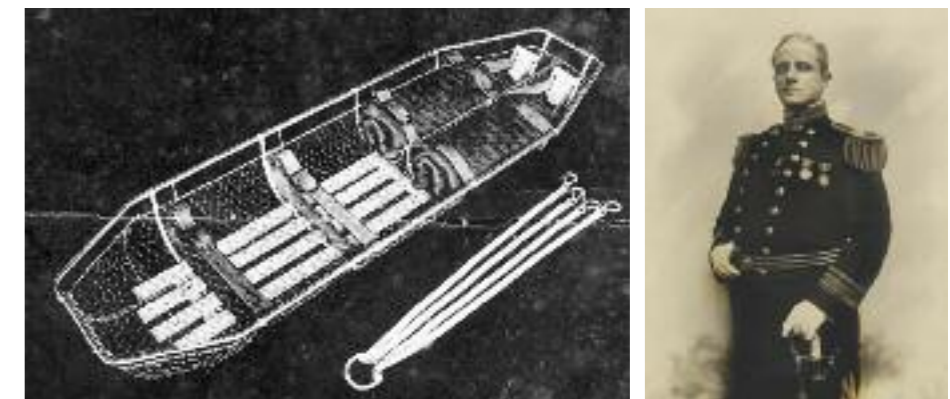
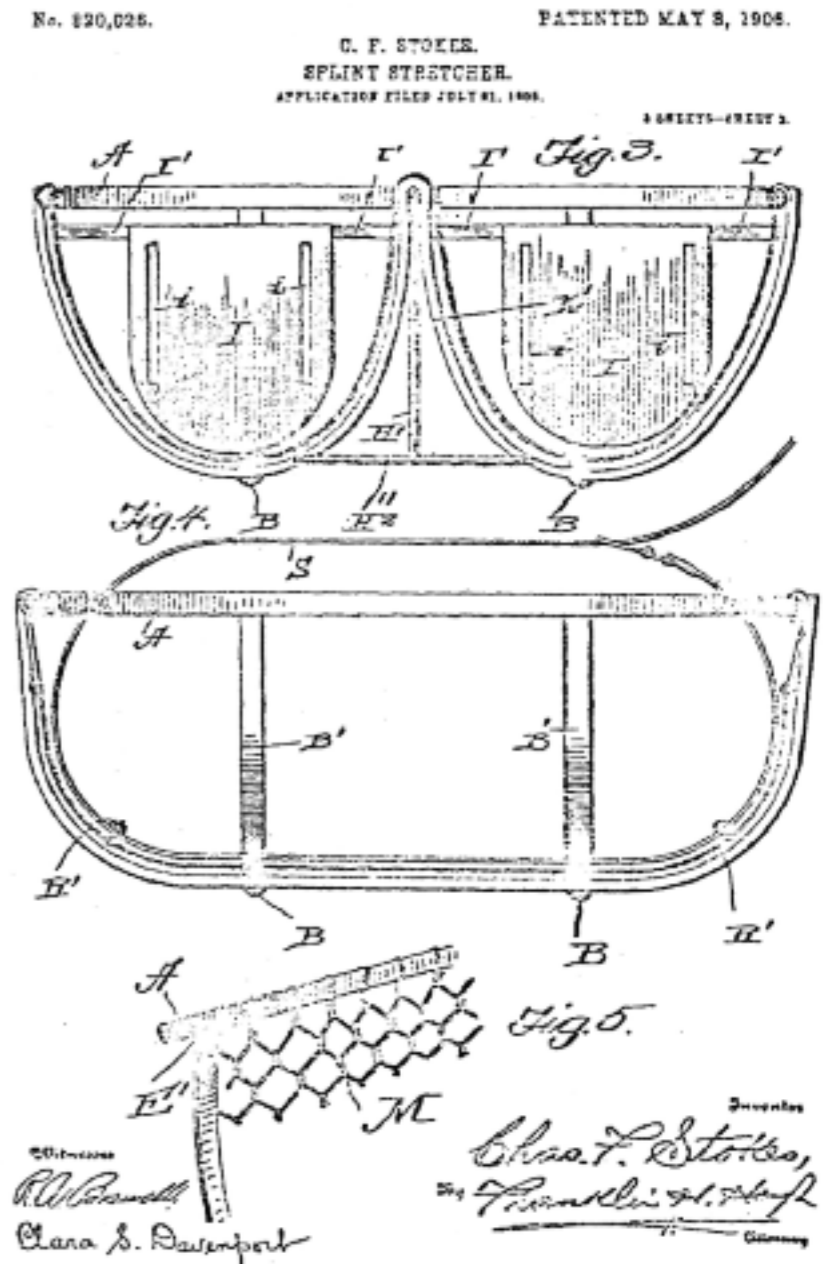
Numerous other stretcher devices have been designed over the years, many as Final Year degree projects. As such, they invariably incorporate novelty but rarely allow for the reality of mountain rescue and the harsh conditions and terrain encountered in the mountain environment.

OTHER STRETCHERS

A few stretchers have been purpose built for limited applications – for example, a rucksack design which can be deployed as an emergency stretcher.

Snowsled Rescue has, for some years, produced a most competent inflatable stretcher, a bit like a large airbed.⁵

Numerous designs have evolved for various applications other than remote area



Above: The Stokes Splint Stretcher kit, consisting of the standard splint stretcher, stretcher bridle and wool safety blankets. Above right: Charles F Stokes © Clinedinst, Washington, DC.

¹http://www.traverserescue.com ²www.ferno.com
³https://skedstretchers.co.uk/
⁴https://www.aiguillealpine.co.uk/products/snowsled-polar/

NEWS ROUND

OCTOBER > DECEMBER



Left and above: Simon and Spot © CVSRT.

NOVEMBER: PUPPY ALERT NEW TRAINEE AT CALDER VALLEY

Calder Valley team has welcomed a cute new trainee with six-month-old Spot, who joins handler, Simon Adams, to begin the long journey towards operational search dog. Good luck Spot!



OCTOBER: BRITISH EMPIRE MEDAL FOR WESTERN BEACONS TEAM MEMBER

Congrats to Geraint Thomas, who was awarded the BEM in the delayed Queen's Birthday

Honours, for 'service to the Samaritans, to mountain rescue and to disadvantaged people in South West Wales'.



NOVEMBER: CHRIS DUNN STANDS DOWN AFTER SEVEN YEARS AS ABERDYFI TEAM LEADER

Chris stood down after seven and a half years in the post. He is succeeded by Phil Britton.

Left: Phil Britton (left) with Chris Dunn © Aberdyfi SRT.

Heading to the Scottish hills?

Be prepared

- Take appropriate winter clothing, footwear and equipment plus spares
- Bring a map and compass and know how to use them
- Keep your mobile phone fully charged and in your pocket.

#ThinkWINTER

DECEMBER: SCOTTISH MOUNTAIN RESCUE LAUNCHES #THINKWINTER

At the end of September 2020, Scottish Mountain Rescue noted a significant increase in the number of people accessing the outdoors across Scotland, with mountain rescue teams 36% busier than the previous year.

To protect the teams and, hopefully, limit the number of call-outs over the winter months, they have joined forces again with Mountaineering Scotland, Mountain Training, Glenmore Lodge, Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland and Snowsports Scotland, to launch the campaign. They are focusing on the following key messages:

- Check the mountain weather forecast – pay particular attention to wind speed temperature and cloud cover
- Take warm layers, waterproof clothing, hat, gloves and boots with good grip plus a head torch with spare batteries
- Pack plenty of food and drink to keep you going – plus some extra just in case
- Build up your navigation skills and confidence with shorter, smaller days before taking on bigger hills and longer days
- Be prepared to turn back if the weather or conditions change
- Let someone know where you are going, what time you will be back and what to do if you don't return when expected
- If you are injured or lost and can't get off the hill, call 999 and ask for Police and then Mountain Rescue.

The campaign was launched in mid-December to coincide with the daily reports provided by the Scottish Avalanche Information Service and will run until the end of March, each week focusing on a particular message.

'We plan to reach more people this year,' said a spokesperson for Scottish MR, 'not only those who are used to heading out into the hills and mountains, but also people who may have discovered a new passion for the outdoors. This is being helped by our retail partners and suppliers who have agreed to share these key messages with their own customers'.

The hope is that, by playing a part in the #ThinkWINTER campaign, anyone accessing the Scottish hills will remain safe, and enjoy it to the full, without putting themselves and others at risk.

Top infographic and image below: © Scottish Mountain Rescue.



PETZL RESCUE SOLUTIONS

The challenge of the rescue professional is their ability to adapt, facing the unexpected in every situation. In order to always be prepared, the members of the Centre National d'Entraînement à l'Alpinisme et au Ski (CNEAS) train on a daily basis, for example here, on the cliffs above Lake Annecy, France.



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