



## TEESDALE AND WEARDALE SEARCH AND MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM

### NEWSLETTER – SPRING 2016



Search for:  
**Teesdale and Weardale Search and Mountain Rescue Team**

Please find below dates of the street collections this year. If you can help at any of them we would be most grateful.

<b>Stanhope:</b>	Saturday 28 <sup>th</sup> May
<b>Barnard Castle:</b>	Saturday 6 <sup>th</sup> August
<b>Bishop Auckland:</b>	Saturday 17 <sup>th</sup> September
<b>Durham:</b>	Saturday 3 <sup>rd</sup> December

#### Becoming a Mountain Rescue Team Member

Once a year the team recruit new members. The new candidates send in an application, from these an number will be invited for a 'hill' test and in interview. The 'hill' test allows an assessment of their safety on rough ground together with their basic navigation. If they are successful the candidates are invited to join the team's 'C list'. Once on the C list the candidates attend the teams regular fortnightly Wednesday training night and monthly exercises to acquire the required skills to pass an assessment after a year of training to be placed on the team's 'A list' and be a full member of the team.

In addition to the above training the C list members are offered additional training to get them to the required level. Some of this additional training is in navigation. While in order to join the team candidates have to have a basic level of navigation, the level they require to pass their assessment to A list is higher, requiring them to be able to micro navigate at night in poor weather conditions and still be able to arrive at a set location.

To assist them with this in the autumn when the early nights arrive some navigation courses are held. Prior to this a days course is run demonstrating all the techniques they will require. This years course was held on Saturday 23rd April on Cockfield Fell. Everyone attending had an excellent day, and although it was a bright day, there were a few small snow flurries, to give a suggest of the weather that can be expected on there final assessment.

During the day the candidates are asked to navigate to progressively harder locations. To achieve this they will need to take compass bearings and correct them for declination, walk on a bearing, take back bearings, pace, use timings and accurately read the terrain from a map.

They will also be expected to use attack points, handrails and catch features as well as being to describe the terrain they are going to cross before they do so.

#### Call of Duty

About a year ago a message came round on the team notice board looking for team members to volunteer to do training to become a 'duty controller'. As you know the team is on call 24/7. That means that at any time of the day or night, a member of the team has to be on stand-by to take an emergency call and co-ordinate the initial response. We call this role 'Duty Control'.

Deputy Team Leader Steve Owers led the training at Sniperley Fire station in Durham. We went through different scenarios. It involves asking lots of questions of the Police Control to get the maximum information about the situation and then making decisions - about who to call out, what equipment will be required, where to set the rendezvous point, what information to pass on.

We use software called SARCALL to send SMS and email messages to the team. It is viewable by other Mountain Rescue Teams and we can use it to call in other teams too. The system logs the decisions and communications so that we have a record which can be passed on to the Search Manager on the scene.

Not every call turns into a call-out. Sometimes the Police contact us for information, or to pre-advise that a search may become necessary. Sometimes the team is 'stood-down' before or en route to a call out. Situations are often dynamic. In the case of missing people we try to ascertain the 'last known point', the circumstances leading up to their going missing, typical behaviours, what they were wearing, a description. More time spent collecting as much information at the beginning of a search can often lead to a better outcome. So, it's not the most glamorous role, but it is a necessary one.

Anne Allen  
Fundraising Officer



# TEESDALE AND WEARDALE SEARCH AND MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM

## New Bases Update

This exciting development is underway and progress is as follows;

At Sniperley the new extension blockwork is up to roof height and the mezzanine floor has been installed in the existing garage. Talking to the builders, work is on schedule and should be finished mid-summer.

Progress at the Quad Station at Barnard Castle is not as advanced, the old Fire Station has been demolished, and the site cleared.

The nature of the ground means piling is required to carry foundations and this is ongoing. The build is more complex than Sniperley and the building is projected to be completed at the end of the year.



Mezzanine  
Floor



New extension



## TEESDALE AND WEARDALE SEARCH AND MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM

### Sheep Ticks - It's that time of the year.

Dr Alan Walker, Senior Lecturer in Veterinary Parasitology, Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, Veterinary Field Station, Roslin. October 12.

Ticks are small, blood-sucking arthropods related to spiders, mites and scorpions. There are many different species of tick living in Britain, each preferring to feed on the blood of different animal hosts. If given the opportunity, some of them will feed on human blood too. The one most likely to bite humans in Britain is the Sheep tick, *Ixodes ricinus*. Despite its name, the sheep tick will feed from a wide variety of mammals and birds. Bites from other ticks are possible, including from the Hedgehog tick, *Ixodes hexagonus*, and the Fox or Badger tick, *Ixodes canisuga*.

There are four stages to a tick's life-cycle: egg, larva, nymph, and adult. Larvae, nymphs and adults all only feed once in each stage. The whole life cycle lasts around 2 years.

Ticks feed on the blood of other animals. If a larval tick picks up an infection from a small animal such as a vole, when it next feeds as a nymph it can pass the infection to the next animal or human it bites.

They cannot jump or fly, but when ready for a meal will climb a nearby piece of vegetation and wait for a passing animal or human to catch their hooked front legs. This behaviour is known as questing. The tick will not necessarily bite immediately, but will often spend some time finding a suitable site on the skin.

Once a tick has started to feed, its body will become filled with blood. Adult females can swell to many times their original size. As their blood sacs fill they generally become lighter in colour and can reach the size of a small pea, generally grey in colour. Larvae, nymphs and adult males do not swell as much as they feed, so the size of the tick is not a reliable guide to the risk of infection. If undisturbed, a tick will feed for around 5 to 7 days before letting go and dropping off.

The bite is usually painless and most people will only know they have been bitten if they happen to see a feeding tick attached to them.

The risk of infection increases the longer the tick is attached, but can happen at any time during feeding. A Public Health England leaflet for GPs points out that disease transmission can be in less than a day. As tick bites are often unnoticed, it may be difficult to determine how long it has been attached. Any tick bite should be considered as posing a risk of infection.

Adults are most often bitten around the legs. Small children are generally bitten above the waist—check their hairline and scalp.

It may be worth wearing long, light-coloured trousers tucked into long socks as the primary defence against these ticks, no matter how hot the weather. People should be informed of the risk of wearing shorts in tick-infested country. Ticks will be found mostly where there are roe deer or red deer, which in Scotland is on all rough hill country but particularly woodland, including conifer plantation. Sheep also support deer and their pastures are likely to be infested. Bracken is often thought to be a place where many ticks are found but it is no worse than any rough vegetation where deer or sheep are found. The time of year when most ticks are active is April to June, with a smaller peak in September. Check carefully for ticks on your skin after walking in ticky areas.

A bite from an infected tick will produce a slowly spreading red rash around the tick bite over several weeks. This is not the little itchy plook at the bite site of any tick. If you get this symptom, or if you think you have some of the odd flu-like symptoms, see your doctor. There are effective diagnostic tests and the disease is easily cured with routine antibiotic treatment at its early stages.

Remember the typical 'bull's eye' rash doesn't occur in all cases.



## TEESDALE AND WEARDALE SEARCH AND MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM

### Training: 13<sup>th</sup> April.

Making the most of the lighter nights and getting in some practice with the stretchers.



### Training: 17<sup>th</sup> April.

The Team practiced basic rope rescue techniques including the rigging, lowering and raising of a stretcher. We don't always get such good vehicle access or weather!





## TEESDALE AND WEARDALE SEARCH AND MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM

### TWSMRT EXERCISE SUNDAY 20<sup>TH</sup>. MARCH 2016 – STANHOPE BURN.

For most team members a callout starts with a text message giving a rendezvous location. Team exercises start in a similar way, but the text message is usually sent out the previous evening to allow team members whose homes are widely dispersed to arrive in time for the planned start of the exercise. The message sent out for this exercise instructed team members to assemble at the top of Crawleyside Bank on the Stanhope to Edmundbyers road from 8.30.am onwards on Sunday morning.

As team members arrived at the rendezvous they were allocated to search groups, each of which would be led by one of the teams designated group leaders. When the search leader has been briefed (normally by the police in a real call-out), he or she will then brief the group leaders and assign them specific tasks. The group leaders will then brief their group giving out information such as:

- The name (if known) and a description of the missing person(s);
- Their last known location;
- Details of any known medical conditions
- Description of any items which need to be looked for, eg rucksack, mobile phone (on one exercise we were asked to look for a particular type of sweet wrapper as the missing person had a habit of eating them when out in the countryside);

The information given to group leaders was that two gamekeepers had not returned home the previous evening; shots had been heard the previous evening in the area to the west of the Stanhope- Edmundbyers road in the area of Stanhope Burn side of the previous evening and a quad-bike was missing. The team were being requested to search for, and find them.

The search group I was allocated to were given the task of searching the west side of the valley of Stanhope Burn. We were taken in one of the team's Landrovers to the valley bottom in the centre of the search area. With a large area to search the group leader organised us into two groups, one to search up the valley and one to search down the valley. I was in the group searching downwards through the open woodland. Searching was much easier in this type of terrain than in many areas we work in, but each of us had to make frequent detours to look behind tree trunks or large mounds where a casualty might not be visible. It is easy to think 'Oh, there can't be anyone there!' but the thought of the shame of searching an area in which someone is later found tends to help keep your mind focused on the job.

The three of us searching downstream were often widely-spaced and out of sight of each other. Radio communications helped us keep in touch and aware of how we were progressing.

We reached the A689 at Stanhope without finding anyone. The group leader 'radioed' the search leader at the control vehicle to inform them of the progress of our search and request another task. After a short wait the message came that we would be transported higher up the valley of Stanhope Burn to begin searching its upper reaches.

The Landrover picked us up and took us along farm and forest tracks up on to the high moorland where we were instructed to search a wide area down to Stanhope Burn. As it was a clear day and we were on open moorland the three of us separated to a distance of about 100m and walked down to the burn searching as we went. As he reached the burn, the northern-most searcher on our left flank saw a quadbike at the foot of a short steep slope. An unconscious figure was lying beside the quadbike. He announced his find on the radio and the rest of us rushed to him. The group leader immediately took control and instructed us to tend to the casualty, with one person carrying out any medical examination and care and the other assisting as well as making written notes on a casualty care card. The group leader then contacted the search leader to begin to organise support for the medical treatment and evacuation of the casualty.

A group shelter was placed over the casualty and the carers. A primary medical survey of the casualty carried out to try and identify and injuries, particularly those which might be life threatening. The findings were:

- The casualty was unconscious;
- They were bleeding from a head wound;
- They appeared to have a pelvic injury as their only response was to groan when the pelvic area was examined.

When the primary survey was completed the group leader was informed of the findings and asked to radio for specific first aid equipment (bell stretcher, scoop stretcher, vacuum mat, casualty bag, oxygen kit, pelvic splint etc). There was a



## TEESDALE AND WEARDALE SEARCH AND MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM

casualty strap in the group medical kit which each search group carries. This was used to splint the casualty's pelvis to try and stabilise it. Pelvic injuries are now being recognised as seriously life threatening (they can lead to catastrophic internal bleeding) and are given the same priority as potential spinal injury. A dressing was also placed on the head wound.

With the survey and initial treatment of the patient completed all that remained was to keep them warm and monitor their vital signs at regular intervals. While this was happening the search leader was organising the delivery of the necessary medical kit and the personnel needed to carry it to the casualty or what was now designated incident site 1. One important consideration is deciding how to get the team vehicle and kit as close as possible to the casualty to speed up the delivery of kit and evacuation of the casualty

Time seemed to pass very slowly with the regular taking of observations and monitoring of the casualty being a welcome distraction. It was a sunny day and the inside of the group shelter became uncomfortably hot, not the normal experience on an exercise or call-out! When other team members arrived it was possible to get another casualty strap and support the casualty's pelvis more effectively.

When the 'troops' arrived things happened fast. An 'advanced medic' took over the casualty care. The casualty was in a difficult position, lying beside the quadbike, partly leaning on the wheels. It was decided to move him slightly way from the quad bike so that a scoop stretcher could be used to lift him onto a vacuum mat in a Bell stretcher. Four team members moved the casualty as gently as possible and the scoop stretcher was assembled around him. Scoop stretchers are not designed for use on heather covered ground and it was a little tricky fitting it together, but this was a valuable lesson for 'real life' use!

With the casualty placed on the vacuum mat, the mat was shaped around his body and the air evacuated from the mat to form a rigid whole body splint. The vac mat (and casualty) was strapped into the Bell stretcher and the evacuation commenced. The aim is to move the stretcher as smoothly as possible while keeping it level or with the head end slightly elevated. Excessive shaking could exacerbate any injuries. Achieving this can be quite difficult especially where crossing a stream is involved. Unfortunately the stretcher carriers have to stand where their position on the stretcher dictates and for as long as is needed to allow smooth progression of the stretcher over the water. This goes against the normal inclination to step on the shallowest areas and cross as quickly as possible. Often, stretcher carriers have to stand in a pool and feel the icy cold water seep into their boots!

Getting away from the river bank involved pirouetting the stretcher and carriers through 180° to allow the casualty's head to be facing uphill and also reorganising the position of the bearers so the taller ones were at the back and bearers on each side of the stretcher were paired on the basis of similar height. This would help avoid having the stretcher tilted to one side.

Carrying a stretcher is surprisingly hard work. Bell stretchers weigh about 30kg and each team member is usually carrying a pack of at least 15kg weight along with extra medical equipment. On a long carry out some of this kit would have to be 'dumped' and returned for. To help maintain progress the stretcher carriers are normally rotated to give each person an occasional rest. This is not always an easy process so the opportunity was taken to practice the technique. If the ground is relatively smooth the stretcher can be placed on the ground and dragged along. Fortunately after a few hundred yards carrying, the stretcher party reached an area of pasture so the stretcher could be placed on the ground and the 'dragging' technique implemented, giving team members the chance to practise the skill of working together to move the stretcher smoothly.

Hopefully, this description of the 'carry out' shows that casualty evacuation isn't just a case of 'throwing' them onto a stretcher and dashing off to the nearest road. It is a skill which has to be practised to carry it out efficiently and effectively.

After a few hundred yards of dragging, the search controller called an end to that part of the exercise, the casualty miraculously revived and everyone returned to the control vehicle for a 'debrief' and discussion to learn from anything which had worked well, or not so well.

While all of this was going on, other search groups were continuing to search for the second gamekeeper. He was eventually found with a head wound and showing no signs of life. This scenario tested the procedure for dealing with a



## TEESDALE AND WEARDALE SEARCH AND MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM

potential crime scene, where potential evidence needs to be preserved for forensic examination. The casualty is checked for signs of life. If alive, the team member's will work to treat them as in the other part of the exercise. If there are no signs of life the area will be left undisturbed until police support arrives. Part of the 'debrief' included valuable points which had arisen during this part of the exercise.

By 4pm everyone had re-assembled at the original rendezvous, repacked the team vehicles and participated in the 'debrief'. The search leader emphasised the team's gratitude to the volunteer casualties, the land owners who had given their permission for us to use the land and the farmer who had loaned us his quadbike. Without their support this type of exercise would not be possible.

Driving home afterwards we could relax, but also reflect on what we had learnt during the day.

### **Rising to the Challenge**

Extreme sports and personal challenges are an increasingly popular way to fundraise for worthy causes.

Someone said to me the other day that you have to put yourself out of your comfort zone if you want people to sponsor you. We owe a big thank you to an increasing number of supporters who choose to do that either individually or collectively in support of Teesdale and Weardale Mountain Rescue Team.

Already this year two companies in Barnard Castle have been in touch to say that they would like to make us their charity of the year - and that their staff are going to undertake a challenge as part of that. GSC Chartered Surveyors plan to walk the Tees from source to sea in a relay. Hayes Travel staff are going to do a parachute jump. Last year Evenwood Running Club ran coast to coast through the night non stop.

You can follow many of these challenges on our Justgiving page [www.justgiving.com/twsمرت](http://www.justgiving.com/twsمرت) Most recently Richard Slater raised £311 doing the 3 Peaks. Richard Salmon has been in touch to say he is running the Kielder half marathon in October this year, and of course last year at the age of almost 90 years old Dr Margaret Bradshaw completed the Great North Run.

The Great North Run is not on my list of things to try (nor is jumping out of an aeroplane). I've great admiration for people who do those things - especially triathlon - but last year I challenged myself to complete a Via Ferrata in the Dolomites and raised just over £1000 for the team. It was an exhilarating experience - at times demanding, but hugely rewarding - all the more so because I felt I was helping my team mates.

Why not set yourself a challenge and help us to keep fundraising?

*Anne Allen*

*Fundraising Officer*



## TEESDALE AND WEARDALE SEARCH AND MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM

### TEAM CALL OUTS

JAN 16 - APR 16



11.00 15/02/2016	Team called to search for a vulnerable missing 52 year old male last seen at 18.15 the previous evening. The team cleared lots of pockets of woodland within 1km of the missing persons home address. The search stood down shortly before nightfall when the missing person is believed to have made a financial transaction outside the area. The missing male was safely located overnight.
04.00 11/02/2016	Female misper, 67, missing since 4pm previous day near Sacriston. Found out of area while the team was searching woodland areas close to her home.
05/02/2016	Team were called to South Balderdale to assist with the Police recovery of the body of a male on steep ground.
20/01/2016	Team were called to Thornley re a missing elderly male who had been missing for a while. Searches were made during the night. A body was later recovered.