



TEESDALE AND WEARDALE SEARCH AND MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM

NEWSLETTER – APRIL 18

Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team 50th Anniversary

The 23rd March saw the 50th Anniversary of a tragedy that led to the formation of what is now Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team. To commemorate this event we held a service in St Johns Church in Shildon for family and friends of the 2 young men who died and members of the Team. This was followed by the unveiling of a commemorative plaque at our Durham Base.

What follows is the address given by Steve Owers our Team Leader during the service

Thank you all for coming here today to this Service of Commemoration and Thanksgiving for the lives of Kenneth Brown and David Vaughan, two Shildon lads, as well as to help us celebrate the 50th anniversary of the formation of Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team.

For many years we in the Team have been aware of the basic facts behind the tragedy that unfolded on 23rd March 1968 but it was not until I started to research the incident a few months ago when all the facts became clearer.

I would like to share with you the story of that day mainly to highlight the bravery and kindness shown by many of the group and the subsequent outcome.

All of the information is taken from accounts in local newspapers in the days after the event and recollections from 50 years ago from some of those involved, some of who are here today and a report from the warden at Outward Bound Mountain School, Ullswater. While I have taken every care in trying to establish what happened my apologies if any of the facts are incorrect.

On Saturday 23rd March 1968, 50 years ago yesterday, a mixed group of 22 young people from St Johns Youth Club, Shildon, set off to walk from Dufton in Cumbria to Middleton in Teesdale across the High Pennines

The weather on that day was not good with 2" of rain recorded leading to extensive flooding in Cumbria and the NE of England.

After about three hours of walking and having passed High Cup Nick a large glaciated valley, the party found they were unable to cross Maize Beck due to the amount of water flowing. They decided continue on the south bank in order to cross the River Tees at a bridge below High Force, many miles downstream.

After about another mile of walking over very rough ground they came to Swarth Beck, a smaller tributary of Maize Beck. They found it to be running very fast from the heavy rain and melting snow. They decided to form a human chain in order to cross led by Kenneth Brown 23, the unofficial leader of the group. After getting about a quarter of the way across Kenneth decided they needed to turn back. At this point 4 of the party were swept downstream. Two managed to clamber out almost



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Immediately but Kenneth and the assistant curate at the time Vincent Ashwin, were swept towards Maize Beck. Vincent was carried 200 to 300yds downstream and managed to scramble to the bank. Sadly Kenneth was unable to get out of the water and was swept into Maize Beck.

In worsening conditions the remainder of the party abandoned the attempt to cross the swollen stream and turned back towards Dufton to reach safety. It was decided that the fastest walkers should go on ahead to get help from Bow Hall Farm which they had past early in the walk.

Everyone was cold, wet and exhausted. The main party helped each other as best they could to keep going often supporting both physically and mentally those who were finding it too much.

As the group made its way back to Dufton one member of the party, David Vaughan 18 started to lag behind. Three other young men stopped with him and they all became detached from the main group. They assisted David as much as they could.

The fast party made their way back to Bow Hall Fm to raise the alarm. Most of the party made it back by mid-afternoon but the 4 young men remained unaccounted for. Mr Dargue the farmer rang the local police and they in turn contacted the Outward Bound Mountain School at Ullswater to ask for help with a search. The search was coordinated by Squadron Leader Davies, warden of the centre at the time. It took him and a team of instructors over an hour and a half to get to the farm from Ullswater because of extensive flooding in the area, a journey which would normally take forty five minutes.

The 4 young men still on the hill carried David some considerable distance until they could go no further. Unable to find adequate shelter they laid a raincoat on the ground and put rucksack round him and huddled together to try and keep him and themselves warm. Sadly sometime during the night David died of hypothermia.

Unsure of a location for the 4 missing men two search teams from Outward Bound searched above and below High Cup Nick in appalling weather conditions. Near Maize Beck they had great difficulty keeping their feet because of the high winds and visibility was less than 10 yds. The teams returned to the farm just before midnight to rest. During the night plans were made to recommence the search at first light with assistance from Mountain Rescue Teams from Penrith, Patterdale, Langdale, Kendal, R.A.F. Leeming and the army from WARCOP. The W.R.V.S were also involved in a support role as was the recently disbanded Civil Defence Team.

Before first light on Sunday search groups were sent to search beyond High Cup Nick and extended the search on fells to the North. Just before 8 am a group from Outward Bound found three young men in a sheepfold near Peeping Hill. All three were exhausted and suffering from hypothermia. Squadron Leader Davies said "it was amazing they were still alive." They told the rescuers that at dawn they had staggered back across the watershed and collapsed in the sheepfold where they were found.

The body of David was found later that day by members of Penrith Mountain Rescue team.



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The body of Kenneth was found in the River Tees on the Sunday by a helicopter from R.A.F. Acklington.

Loosing 2 young people was of course a tragedy but this could have been much worse was it not for the courage and camaraderie shown by many in the group. Those that helped to get the 3 young men out of the water, those who set of for help, those who supported those in the group who were struggling and especially the 3 lads Edgar Hullatt, Bob Scarlet and Trevor Maddison who tried so hard to get David off the fell

As a result of this incident a meeting was held at the High Force Hotel in June 1968 and the Upper Teesdale & Weardale Fell Rescue Association was founded in Sept 1968 the forerunner of Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team. Since that time the Team has attended hundreds of incidents and undoubtedly save many lives.

We will never know if Kenneth and David had survived if the UTWFRA would have been formed. There deaths were undoubtedly the catalyst to its formation and I would like to think that they are looking down on us today happy that so many people remember them and their tragic deaths has led to the saving of many subsequent lives.



Goodbyes (Des Lee)

When I heard that Jim Thompson and Paul Allison were leaving the team, I was gutted. I know we all move on at some point but losing two top guys was a blow to me personally, and to the team. They both joined the team on the 22nd February 2007 with Tony High and Dave Wigham, which is some crew. During their 11 years with the team they have covered numerous callouts, attended fundraising and training events, contributing a huge amount of their time to the team.

During Jim's time in the team he has been a Casualty Carer, Swift Water Technician, taught map reading to the C team as well as being the Treasurer, who we affectionately called Mr. Scrooge. If you tried to buy something for the team and you did not advise him or failed to get a VAT receipt, you got told off. I have been there and got that T shirt! During his time as our Treasurer his



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commitment and diligence ensured our accounts were managed effectively and efficiently, ensuring the healthy finances for the team. I don't think some people realise how much time the Treasurer's role takes up. Even a relatively simple job of looking after the collection boxes, meant that Jim collected the majority of them from all over Durham, then counted contents, deposited the monies in the bank, recorded information, then sent out thank you letters. To save on stamps he would fit in dropping letters off when we did an exercise or a walk. All this was just one small part of his role, then it gets more complex with claiming VAT back on team purchases and I could go on and on. I am sure we would all like to thank him for doing a thankless job brilliantly and all wish him good luck on his mammoth walk (detailed further down the newsletter). Wishing you all the best & happy walking Jim.

During Paul's time in the team he has been a Casualty Carer, Swift Water Technician (reluctant water baby!), Technical Rescue trainer and Search Group Leader. When I was on my hill test some nine years ago I was lucky to join the group Paul was in. Since then he has always guided me and kept me on the right path, although yes I do get lost now and then! If you were lucky enough to be part of one of Paul's groups you were given specific instruction at the start of a search, and advised that you start searching as soon as you leave the control vehicle area, and also you can't search and talk at the same time. In Paul you would have found a very hard working, self-motivated guy, always striving to improve things, well respected, very experienced, and who was totally committed to the team and supporting team members. Then there were his training sessions which you needed to have attended to appreciate the content. They were always informative, straight and at the same time, funny (usually non-PC). They did not even change when we had visit from the High Sherriff of County Durham, who took it all in her stride and enjoyed his session. I would like to say massive thanks for all your help & support Paul. I've learned so much from you along the way. I love the food you make but still don't like your taste in music!

We all join the team for different reason and we all know we don't get paid but take joy from helping others. However, this ethos, the standards and commitment both these guys showed deserve a special mention. I would like to thank them both for their commitment to the team and people of County Durham..... You will be both be missed.

PS. They don't make characters like you any moregood luck and best wishes for the future whatever you may do.

An Epic Walk

Jim Thompson who is leaving the team (as above), is embarking on a huge fundraising feat for the MS Trust.

Jim is setting off on Friday 18th May to walk from Lizard Point (most southerly point on mainland Britain), to Dunnet Head (most northerly), via Lands End to John O'Groats. He will not only be passing through England and Scotland but also Wales where he will be following Offa's Dyke which roughly follows the border between England and Wales.

The walk is anticipated to take until Thursday 30th August, it will be unsupported and will be covering over 1300 miles. Jim is also funding the walk himself so every penny raised will be solely for the MS Trust.

We obviously wish Jim all the luck in the world on his adventure, and hope he enjoys every minute, including the blisters and aches and pains!



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If you would like to sponsor Jim, he is using Virgin Money Giving. The web address is as follows:

<https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/fundraiser-display/showROFundraiserPage?userUrl=JamesThompson59&pageUrl=1>

(If, for some reason, the link doesn't work, please do drop me an email and I will send it to you via email).

Misty

It is with sad news that we announce the loss of a team member, Search Dog Misty (August 2003 - February 2018).

Dog Handler Des took Misty home at the age of 7 weeks, her parents were from Dartmoor, her father was a Search Dog operational in the Dartmoor Mountain Rescue Team, whilst her mother belonged to a Vicar. Misty was to be Des's third SARDA dog.

Misty was a long haired tri coloured Border Collie, with a slightly shorter tail as a puppy litter mate had chewed it off before she came home with Des. Misty's training started the day she came home with Des, passing all her assessments becoming operational in January 2006. Retiring from operational duties in April 2015.

During her working life it is estimated that Misty undertook 135 call out's finding 5 missing people. Her find's include an elderly gentile landowner on the high moors above Kirkby Stephen, whom had gone out alone to inspect his land and not returned. When Misty found him he had already spend one night out on the Moor. Misty also searched semi rural area's including finding an unconscious despondent female. Who later was so grateful and thankful, that she allowed the BBC to film a pilot documentary of her troubled story leading up to the find. This pilot lead to the primetime BBC one 'Missing' series.

Misty was a one man dog affectionately known as the 'land shark', in human speak she would not suffer fools. She was born to work, this was when she was the happiest and most calm. She will be sadly missed by her four other canine family and owners.





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Quad Station Opening (John Little)

I'm sure most people have already heard that HRH Prince Charles officially opened the UK's first Quad Station in Barnard Castle on behalf of the Fire, Police, Ambulance and Mountain Rescue Services. What you may not have appreciated is just how much time he spent talking to members of the team both thanking us as volunteers, and learning more about some of the less obvious aspects of our work including a discussion about search management with Deputy Team Leader (DTL) Pete in the new control vehicle and the uses of the canoe team with DTL John. His Royal Highness helped make everyone feel very at ease, indeed, one of the four legged team members was seen to be so relaxed that he even had a lean against the royal leg! Since the day also involved a fair bit of standing around it also turned out to be a good opportunity for all the Team members who attended to find out a bit more about what our Police, Fire and Ambulance colleagues do.



Mountain Rescue Volunteers Rescue a Volunteer (Pete Bell)

It is unusual that Mountain Rescue teams meet those who they have rescued, after the event. On the 21st January, Teesdale and Weardale Search and Mountain Rescue Team (TWSMRT) were on a training exercise in Weardale, when we received a call for assistance from the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS).

The call was for a gentleman who had collapsed on the Pennine Way, south of Cronkley Farm, and due to the weather and winter conditions the ambulance personnel couldn't get to the patient. We ended our exercise and dispatched one of our Landrovers with four team members, which included two with casualty care experience, while the rest of the team were recalled from the exercise, and sent to the incident.

After a demanding drive due to the weather conditions from Weardale to Teesdale, we left our vehicle and walked to Cronkley Farm and the Pennine Way. We found Mr. Charlton and his companions, south of the farm on the Pennine Way. They had done a superb job of keeping him as warm as possible, especially as the conditions would have rapidly led to him becoming hypothermic, without the care given. He was assessed by one of the team casualty carers, and evacuated by stretcher to the waiting road ambulance.



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Mr. Charlton is lead volunteer at Darlington Memorial Hospital's, Friends of the Hospital, and wanted to meet some of the team, who were involved in his rescue. Pete Bell Deputy Team Leader said "having been involved in Mr Charlton's rescue it was good to meet him again and see he is fit and well. This was an excellent example of Mountain Rescue working with our partner agencies including HART and the Ambulance service paramedics and staff".

Picture shows left to right:

Mrs Joy McCulloch (one of Mr Charlton's walking companion's and a volunteer with The Friends of the Hospital), Mr Alan Charlton and Pete Bell (TWSMRT).



The Team....and the Beast from the East, a Personal View (Pete Bell)

The weather had got progressively worse as the cold air mass from the East tightened its grip on the County and the snow was rapidly lying.

I was doing the shopping with my wife when the 'sarcall' message from ambulance control came through asking for a patient to be taken Barnard Castle to James Cook University Hospital (JCUH) oncology unit for chemotherapy. After rushing through the shopping, I got home, changed into my Mountain Rescue medical and winter kit and set off for The Emergency Services Centre at Barnard Castle to meet Adam, pick up Mobile 1 and get the patient. Both Adam and I are Mountain Rescue casualty carers with extended skills.

On our way to JCUH it became increasing obvious that the Beast was having a major impact on the road network and the Ambulance service's vehicles.

We delivered our patient to JCUH, then were tasked by ambulance control to an emergency 999 call in the East of County Durham, for a lady who had been found poorly in bed by her son. With Adam driving we set off on blue lights and sirens as road conditions and visibility were poor, and the blues



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allowed us to be seen by other road users, but fortunately there wasn't much traffic as the Police warnings not to travel unless absolutely essential had been heeded.

We were met at the address by the lady's son who gave us an initial brief as he had made the 999 call. After my initial assessment, it was clear the lady was hypoglycemic with dangerously low blood glucose levels and also a possible chest infection. A treatment plan was implemented, and the lady's blood glucose level was raised to a satisfactory level without using invasive means. We then transported the lady to North Tees University Hospital and handed her over to A&E.

We were then tasked to JCUH for the patient we had dropped off for chemo, to return him back to his home address in Barnard Castle.

The weather was still deteriorating, and the team leader decided that a night shift would be necessary to assist the ambulance service and Police and both Landrovers were utilised. I was based at Barnard Castle in Mobile 1 with Mike driving and Anne who is a team casualty carer.

It wasn't long before the first job arrived in, an emergency call to Western edge of County Durham near the reservoirs in Teesdale, for a patient who had a tooth extraction that wouldn't stop bleeding. To say the drive was difficult was an understatement, snowing heavily, coupled with blowing and drifting snow, sometimes zero visibility needing us to stop to see the road, a post code that was inaccurate, but we got there, I couldn't fully stop the bleeding, so we took the patient to Darlington Memorial Hospital (DMH). Conditions were the same on the journey to DMH, on arrival we handed the patient over to A&E, and we were offered a welcome coffee by the staff.

Back on the road again, we were tasked to a village in East Cleveland for an elderly male who had fallen and was still on the floor in a nursing home. Same driving conditions but with some steep banks to negotiate. The patient was assessed and while he did not appear to have any life threatening injuries, he did need hospital treatment and further assessment.

More driving in horrendous conditions and we arrived at JCUH A&E. The booking in was interesting as Mountain rescue didn't fit the receptionist's 'normal' categories on her system, but she took it all in her stride and everything was sorted, and we were offered coffee in the staff rest room, after the handover to A&E staff.

Back to Barnard Castle and then the drive home to bed.

Second night shift was crewing Mobile 2 at Durham base, with Rich, a casualty carer with extended skills and Mike driving. Weather conditions were as the previous night, and our first job was to an emergency 999 for an elderly lady who had fallen in the Durham area. We arrived and assessed the lady, who had a very complex medical history and transported her to the University Hospital of North Durham (UHND). Again, Handover was interesting but dealt with, with good humour by all parties.

Next job was another emergency 999 call for an elderly gentleman with breathing difficulties. The assessment showed the patient was poorly and with a potentially serious chest infection and high temperature. This patient was too poorly to transport in our vehicle and we asked ambulance control for a backup ambulance to transport the patient. When it arrived, we handed the patient and his details to the paramedic, and returned to base.



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After a welcome break at the 24hr McDonalds in Durham, we were asked to drive to Teesdale to recover a 4x4 driver from the Middleton in Teesdale/Brough road. Our control rang him and told him we were on our way and asked him to put his hazard lights on. We also rang him and asked him to send his location to us to display in Google earth, technology works! We arrived to find him stuck in a deep snow drift. Normally we won't recover the vehicle unless there is a life-threatening situation, but in this case the vehicle was in the middle of the road and would have prevented the snow plough(s) getting past, so we decided to winch it out of the drift and clear the road for the ploughs. The vehicle was recovered and the driver was escorted to a point where he was safe.

We told ambulance control we were clear and were returning to Durham.

It wasn't long before ambulance control radio went off to task us to near Barnard Castle for a lady with chest pains, the ambulance tasked had radioed to say road conditions were too bad to reach the patient. As we were travelling, ambulance control stood us down as the road crew had got through by travelling behind a snow plough. As we were close we went anyway to see if we could be any help in moving the patient to the ambulance. The lady was transferred to the ambulance and we returned to Durham to end our shift.

It goes without saying that we were only a small proportion of the effort put in by the team. The team dealt with over 40 callouts from Wednesday to Sunday during the weather window and over 85% of the team were involved.

I have to say thanks to all the ambulance and hospital staff we met, despite dealing with red Mountain Rescue jackets as opposed to the normal green they are used to, we were dealt with, with courtesy, friendliness, professionalism and at times humour all of which was good.

This also applied of the Ambulance (NEAS) control room, who were patient, listened to us, and helped when needed. Thanks to you all.....





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TEAM CALL OUTS DEC 17 - MAR 18



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| 13.30 18/03/2018 | The team were called to assist NEAS with carrying a walker with a broken leg across farmland to the ambulance. 8 team members assisted with the evacuation. |
| 17.00 02/03/2018 | Team called to assist an off duty Northumbrian police officer who's personal vehicle had got stuck in the snow. Vehicle winched to safety. |
| 09.00 02/03/2018 | Team involved in a major rescue effort to locate and evacuate a lorry driver who had followed his satnav across a high Pennine route between Middleton in Teesdale and Alston. His lorry had become stuck 48 hours earlier and there was increasing concern for his well being. The rescue included helicopters, snow blowers with the driver finally being reached by a local farmer using a tracked quad bike. |
| 07.00 01/03/2018 | Team continue to work with both the North East Ambulance Service, Durham Police and others providing first aid at Road Traffic Accidents, treating and transporting emergencies to hospital and transferring dialysis patients from remote home to major hospitals for treatment. |
| 09.00 01/03/2018 | Team called in the early hours to search for missing female in the West Pelton area. Missing person vulnerable because of extreme temperatures. Fortunately the missing female was located at a friends house before the Team deployed |
| 09.00 28/02/2018 | Team called to assist NEAS from lunch time due to adverse weather conditions. All 3 vehicles treating casualties and ferrying patients to and from hospitals. |
| 17.00 10/02/2018 | Team put on standby to assist with the evacuation of an injured walker in Castle Eden Dene. Team stood down when assistance not required. |



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| 17.15 28/01/2018 | Search for a male missing from his home address in Darlington. As we were searching he was found out of the search area in a city by the Police. |
| 09.00 22/01/2018 | Team called to continue search for missing male in Easington area. A body was found on the beach by family members while Cleveland and Teesdale Teams were briefing prior to commencing their search of the beach. |
| 22.00 21/01/2018 | Team called late in the evening to assist with search for missing 60 year old male in Easington Colliery area. The team searched for a number of hours into the early hours of the following morning covering Hawthorne Dene, while the Coastguard searched the coastal area and the coastguard helicopter covered the open ground and coastal fringe in the vicinity. |
| 14.00 21/01/2018 | Elderly gentleman who hiking part of the Pennine way with his companions, felt unwell with reduced level of consciousness. His companions rang the ambulance service, who due to the remote location and winter conditions called out the team. The gentleman was located, assessed by the team casualty carers and evacuated to a road ambulance. |
| 22.30 11/01/2018 | Team called to search for despondent female whose last know position was her home address in Seaham. Team was just about to start searching the urban fringes around her home when she turned up at a police station in Newcastle. |
| 07.30 30/12/2017 | Search for a lady missing from her address in Peterlee. Search initially centered around her home address. The search was moved to the South Hetton area as further information was received. The lady was found cold and wet, in one of the designated search areas but otherwise uninjured, in an area adjacent to woodland. She was assessed by team medics and warmed up. |