



Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team

Newsletter - New Year 2021

Welcome to the New Year 2021 edition of the newsletter. Well what a truly exceptional year 2020 has been. As I sat down and put together my first Newsletter at the start of last year who could have predicted what was to come? All of us will have been affected by the pandemic in some shape or form. The Team was no exception and has had to respond rapidly, and effectively, as the situation changed. Hopefully 2021 will prove to be a much better year.



Last Team exercise of the year - Rescuing Santa's elf

Team Leader's message

Steve Owers (Team Leader)

On behalf of the Team can I wish all of you and your families a very Happy New Year.

The last 9 months have probably been the most challenging for the Team in its 52-year history. Because of the work, commitment, understanding and patients shown by everyone in the Team we have been able to maintain our core services, and more importantly kept everyone safe. Undoubtedly there will be more challenges next year, but I am confident we will overcome them, and let's hope by the summer we can all meet up to celebrate somehow.

AGM - 2020

This year's AGM was a wholly different affair with the whole meeting being conducted virtually. Dave Thompson was welcomed as our new President. Dave was one of the new members of the Team after its founding in 1968, and was Team Leader from the late 70s until the late 90s.



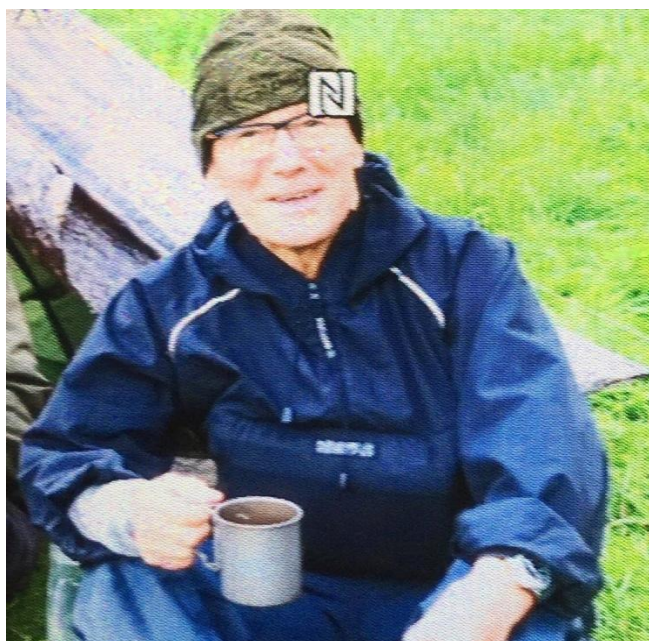
Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team

An Interesting Job

Pete Bell (Deputy Team Leader)

Incident at Tan Hill – an interesting job (newsletter article)

We were called to assist Swaledale Mountain Rescue Team (SMRT) in a search for an elderly gentleman called Harry Harvey. Harry was an experienced walker who with his friend planned to walk from the Tan Hill Inn to a wild camp near Gunnerside in Swaledale.



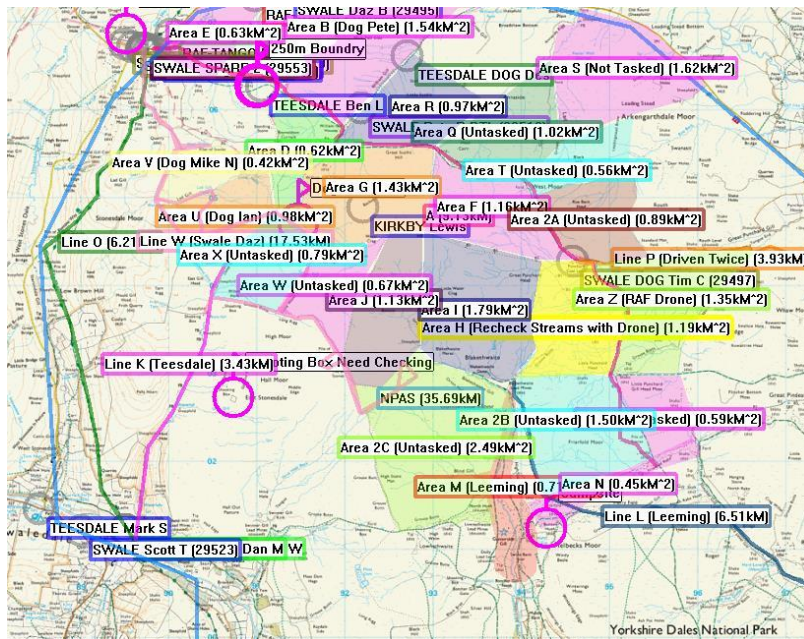
The pair set off but split up, Harry's friend reached the wild campsite and raised the alarm when Harry did not turn up.

SMRT had been called out and searched during the night the proposed route to the wild camp and several alternatives with no success. They then asked us and RAF Leeming Mountain Rescue Team for assistance, for searching on the following day.

The day of the 7th September dawned, and we arrived to meet RAF Leeming to set up the search parameters and management of a huge tract of wild moorland. We had around 40 mountain rescue team members and seven air scenting search dogs. This huge area was split into search sectors for the MR search teams and search dogs. Additionally we requested NPAS (National Police Air Support) to overfly areas, but the weather was poor and only a limited search could be achieved.



Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team



Screen shot of the search planning map

The 7th September ended with no sightings of Harry and plans were made to continue on the 8th. The 8th September arrived and the two TWSMRT search managers met the RAF Leeming team leader to continue the search of the huge area identified. We had called in more assets from Cleveland MRT and NoT and NNP MRT for a total of fifty MR searchers and nine air scenting dogs, including three from Lakes teams, and two drones equipped with high power optical and Infra-red system.



The scene at Tan Hill Inn

The search continued and at around 11 o'clock we received news that Harry had been picked up by a wild-life photographer who saw him waving beside the road near Keld, she recognized him from social media publicity.



Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team

Harry was brought to Tan Hill and checked by Swaledale's doctor. he was fit and well, apart from a minor head injury that he had treated himself.

Speaking later Harry told the media "I just got separated by getting caught in a really heavy hailstorm, a howling gale of wind."

"By the time I got my kit on it was getting really dark, so I missed what I would say was a turning. I had a plan B straight away, find somewhere safe to camp, put my tent up, keep warm, and that was it."

"The biggest problem I had was getting to Tynemouth from Keld, because I only had £21.05 in my pocket."

Mr Harvey said he had "three good nights wild camping".

Fortunately Mr Harvey was well equipped, otherwise the outcome may have been significantly different.

We would like to thank the Tan Hill Inn for their hospitality during the search, including the cups of tea and coffee, chips, and access to their buildings. All of which helped immensely. The local gamekeepers were immense with help from their local knowledge and use of their 6-wheel drive Argocats to put out and recover search teams.

This was a huge logistical operation involving a total of about 70 mountain rescue personnel, from five teams, Yorkshire Police, NPAS, Search dogs England, and local gamekeepers, which fortunately ended well.

Be prepared for Winter

Scott Bisset (Press & PR Lead)



Many people say that we don't get proper winters anymore. Well we don't have to go back very far to find proof to the contrary. We had plenty of snow in 2009 and again in 2010, and who will ever forget the 'Beast from the East' in 2018.



Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team

The following story is an extract from a report by the Team Leader of Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue team following a major event in 1990.

It began snowing on the 7th of December, within an hour a steadily strengthening wind and rapidly falling temperatures meant that snow was accumulating and drifting. Buses to take school children home were called early and commuters headed home.

Around 9pm the Chief Inspector of Barnard Castle Police contacted the team and asked if they could send a small group to Weardale as it was understood that a number of vehicles had become stuck on the moor between Stanhope and Edmundbyers. The police were becoming stretched with numerous weather-related incidents across the county.

Several motorists were rescued and taken down to Stanhope with reports of another vehicle off the road further on. As the rescuers battled through blowing snow, the noise of the wind seemed to take on a howling sound!

At the highest point of the road, the team found a 4x4 with a small livestock trailer attached which had left the road, the driver was fine, but said he couldn't abandon his vehicle as in the trailer was a pack of whining Beagles! They had been heading home to the kennels further up the dale. He finally agreed to be rescued only after being assured that the dogs would be recovered at first light. By 2am all the drivers were safely down in the village. Meanwhile Barnard Castle police were growing concerned about drivers being stranded on the A66. A temporary 'road closed' sign had been put on the road near Scotch Corner, but it was thought that some motorists had driven around it! Later, permanent 'snow gates' would be installed - an addition still serving their purpose today and first suggested by Mountain Rescue.

A police car had been dispatched with the PC taking a supply of thermos flasks to warm up any stranded drivers but had not been heard from since. A group of 4 MR volunteers set off along the A66 on skis with others following behind on foot. Nothing was found for a while until they spotted a small truck with its engine running. The driver said he had been there since the previous evening and had been running his engine on and off in order to keep warm. He later appeared on national TV saying he was greatly relieved to see a policeman on skis! Of course, this was no policeman, but a heroic Mountain Rescue volunteer. Further on more and more vehicles were discovered, their passengers cold but unharmed. This had now been labeled 'a major incident' and more resources were called for. Snow ploughs, JCB's and even a snow cat all headed to the area. The good people of Bowes opened the village hall and prepared hot drinks and food for the evacuees while further along the road, the A66 Hotel opened its doors. By this time at least 30 vehicles had been discovered, with around 40 occupants, one car contained an elderly lady who said she was unable to walk to safety, so a farm tractor was acquired, and she was wrapped in a Mountain Rescue cas bag and sat in the rear loader of the tractor! Realising that they could no longer manage to walk all the people to either Bowes or the Hotel, whichever was closer, and with more trapped vehicles ahead, an RAF Sea King helicopter was called to assist. It gave a huge boost to rescuers to see the huge yellow aircraft overhead. MR team members had gathered people into groups and the helicopter began ferrying them to safety, following telegraph poles as a visual aid. Three groups had been evacuated when a message came from the RAF crew, the helicopter had had to make an emergency landing when the pilot became disorientated in a complete 'white out', somehow managing to land near a farm. Fortunately, shortly afterwards, the team on foot met with the Snowcat and were able to evacuate the remaining drivers to the hotel. Apparently, there were over 80 people in the hotel that night. Rescued and rescuers alike were very grateful to the owner, Mr. Ash, who ensured they were all fed.



Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team

At first light a second Sea King with engineers onboard arrived to check out the 'downed' aircraft. Thankfully there was nothing wrong with it bar a flat battery which was restarted using the farmers tractor!

The team went on to deal with a number of other incidents during the day including battling through snow drifts to remove a makeshift coffin from a house which held the body of a relative who had died the previous day. Such is the versatility and resourcefulness of the Teesdale and Weardale Search and Mountain Rescue team.

So, proper winters don't happen anymore... are you sure?



Winter conditions in the late 90s

With thanks to former **Team Leader Alan Best** for the original report and photograph

Equipment repairs and replacement

Eric Gilhooley (Equipment Officer)

One of the most important items we use when dealing with casualties is a vacuum mattress. This is very similar to a thin inflatable mattress, but it is filled with polystyrene beads. When in use a casualty is placed on it, the mattress is wrapped around them and the air is sucked out of the mattress. This turns the mattress into a rigid body splint which protects the whole body of the casualty.

Unfortunately the makers of the vacuum mattress made that bag that contains the mattress just large enough to hold a very carefully rolled mattress. This is not easy to do when packing away after a call-out. As a result the zips on the bags are often put under strain and weakened over a period of years. In the last two years we have had the zips on two vacuum mattress bags break. The zips are heavy duty and at least 1.5 metres long, running around three sides of one panel of a bag. Having the zips replaced professionally is very expensive, probably in excess of £100 per bag. A couple of years ago I had a short zip (about 30cm long) on a rucksack replaced and this cost almost as much as a new rucksack! Fortunately for us, Mrs. Pauline Little the mother of John, one of our team's Deputy Leaders, has very



Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team

kindly taken the bags and replaced the zips herself. The bags have been back in service for a while now and such is the quality of the repairs that I cannot tell which bags have been repaired and which one has the original zip.

Purchasing bespoke bags can be very expensive. Making do without such bags can reduce our expenses but it can also result in key items of kit being lost or damaged. During the last year Linda, the wife of our Team Leader Steve Owers, has very helpfully designed and made a number of bags to contain items of equipment such as avalanche probes and climbing harnesses.

We are very grateful to both ladies for giving their time, providing the materials and using their skills to support the work of the team.

Team Callouts (September – December)

15.48 29/08/2020	The Team were contacted by the Fire Service with reports of a lady who had got into difficulty in the River Wear rescuing her dog. The team sent 1 team member to scene to assist with locating the person and assess if a full callout was needed. The lady was pulled out of the water by the fire service and was walked to the nearest emergency vehicle by our team member.
20.00 07/09/2020	Team called by ambulance service to use SARLOC system to help a casualty identify their position. Team stood down when ambulance service located casualty.
23.00 07/09/2020	The Team were contacted by Durham police around 11pm to assist with the search of a missing person from the Trimdon area. Unfortunately the missing person was not located, and the Team stood down at 03:30. Two search dogs and 10 team members were deployed.
09.00 07/09/2020	The Team were contacted by Swaledale MRT to assist with a search for a missing 82-year-old hiker in the Tan Hill Inn area. Unfortunately the male hasn't been located and the search is continuing tomorrow.
09.00 08/09/2020	The Team deployed to continue the search for a missing hiker in the Tan Hill area. Thankfully the missing hiker was located safe and well shortly before 12:00.
12.00 22/09/2020	Team called to rescue an injured male from the bottom of a steep embankment near the Weardale Railway, Witton-Le-Wear. Entire operation took about an hour and half and involved 8 Team Members
09.00 23/09/2020	Team continued search in Barningham area for missing despondent male.



Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team

23.10 27/09/2020	The Team were called out by Durham Police late this evening to assist with the search for a vulnerable missing person. As the Team were about to deploy to the area, the missing person was located by the police safe and well.
17.30 30/09/2020	Team called to search for elderly missing male with dementia in Cotherstone area. Team stood down while deploying when the missing male approached a property in a cold and wet state.
22.20 07/10/2020	The Team were called out by CDDFRS to assist with a search for a potential person who fell into the River Wear, Durham City. Alongside all emergency services, the Team searched the along the riverbank with a search dog. Nothing was found and the Team stood down shortly after 1am.
13.30 11/10/2020	The Team were called by the North East Ambulance Service at about 13.30 requesting our assistance with the extraction of a lady who injured her ankle whilst walking in the woodland above High Force waterfall. The first Team members were on scene very quickly and looked after the patient until the NEAS staff arrived. The Team managed to gain access to the patient location from the top quarry road and using our bell stretcher and wheel we extracted her to the road where she then made her own way to hospital (family member).
15.30 04/11/2020	The Team were called out at about 15:30 to search for a despondent male whose car had been found at Allensford near Consett. The Team were working with Police on the ground and police helicopter to locate the missing person. Fortunately he was found by the police stuck in some mud in an area of dense woodland. The police pulled the male out of the deep mud and got him to a track where Team members assisted in handing him over to the ambulance service.
13.00 08/11/2020	We were called out at around lunchtime by the North East Ambulance Service to an injured mountain biker on the K-line route in Hamsterley forest. Nearby Team members were on scene quickly and the injured man was treated and packaged by the ambulance crew and Team members. He was then loaded onto the Bell stretcher and with the help of the Teams stretcher wheel was rolled down the remainder of K-line mountain bike track to the waiting ambulance.
20.00 09/11/2020	Limited callout tonight to assist the Police to locate 3 mountain bikers missing in Hamsterley Forest. Found safe and well and walked out of the forest.
12.00 28/11/2020	The Fire Service contacted the Team to assist with the search for a person likely to be in the water. As the Team were preparing, the police located the person, and the Team were stood down.
14.30 28/11/2020	The Team have been contacted by FRS with reports of a capsized canoe. Police, fire, ambulance in attendance. Fire service reports fire damage on canoe. Local fisherman says no one has passed him. The Team were stood down 30 minutes after the initial call.



Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team

14.30 29/11/2020	The Team were called to assist in extensive searches for missing 54-year-old female in a depressed state who had left her home near Woodland village just after daybreak. The missing lady's mobile phone was found by members of the public and the Team searched a large area of farmland and Hamsterley Forest around Blacking Hole. The search stood down at about 11pm and was in the process of restarting on Monday morning when the missing lady turned up safe and well of her own accord.
16.22 28/12/2020	The team were called out this afternoon by NEAS to assist with a casualty who slipped down a steep embankment whilst out walking. The team assessed and treated the casualty before extracting him to the visitor centre in Hamsterley Forest.
09.00 30/12/2020	We were contacted by NEAS this afternoon to assist with a male who had slipped, fracturing his ankle. The team quickly deployed and working alongside HART, extracted the patient to a nearby ambulance.
09.00 30/12/2020	We were contacted by Durham Police to stand by for a potential search for a missing child near Derwent. Thankfully, the child was located safe and well and the team were not required to assist.

To date the Team have dealt with 58 callouts this year

Lonely Goats, Cats, Dogs and Chocolate!

Claire and Jeanette

I consider myself really lucky to live in a little Hamlet in beautiful Teesdale with my rescue cat Fabian. However, living with just a cat (even though he is adorable) and working from home sitting through endless Teams meetings, missing my great work colleagues and other mates can get a bit tough! My car sticker speaks volumes!





Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team

So, I was a bit curious when my friend, Jeanette, she's a proper mad cat lady she has 6 of them, she sent me a clipping from the Mountain Rescue magazine about being a Dogsbody.



Fabian wasn't at all impressed, and tried hard to sabotage my map reading, but Jeanette and I decided that we fancied a go.

We both love the outdoors; we are pretty resilient and the Search and Rescue Dogs Association and Teesdale and Weardale Search and Mountain Rescue Team do a great job.

Jeanette got in touch with Dog Des - who is actually a bloke with a dog!

And so, on a pretty squally, wet Saturday morning in November - wearing lots of warm clothes-we went on our first Dogsbodies experience on the fell side close to Eggleston.

We got a really warm welcome from the Dog handlers and a short introduction from Dog Karen (woman with a dog) who is currently training TSD Gus.

We were issued a bit of important kit (radio and bivvy bag) and very important kit (chocolate and doughnuts) before we were "hidden" behind rocks and in a sinkhole for SD Tarn and Dog Mike (another bloke with a dog) to search for us.



Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team



The views were immense...2000 acres of sky, buzzards circling overhead, the noise of the wind, the rain and the perfect rainbows, a truly mindful experience!

I wasn't laid snug in my bivvy bag very long, enjoying being in my little cave, enjoying the peace and quiet and taking in my beautiful surroundings, when I heard the jingle of bells outside my cave and a wonderful black and white Collie dog popped his head over the top, sniffing the air, before barking and bounding off to "tell" his handler he had made a find.

At this point I still had to lay still and quiet until Karen appeared and Gus was "rewarded" with his unique special toy.

Once we'd given Gus his well-deserved praise and hugs for being such a clever boy, I settled myself back in and waited to be found by the next search dog.



Again, it wasn't long before I hear the jingle jangle of another bell and a very loud bark, and the gorgeous Tarn appeared - she went back only to return with her handler, Dog Mike! The dogs "tell" their handler that have found a person and cleverly guide the handler to the find.

Each dog has a particular way of being rewarded so I played ball with her and gave her a big hug for finding me so quickly!

Jeanette and I thoroughly enjoyed our experience as dogsbodies, so we volunteered to go again the following Tuesday after dark!



Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team

We thought the daylight experience was pretty good but it's nothing compared to the night experience. We met (socially distanced of course) the other hardy seasoned dogsbodies- Louis, Graham, Dave and Shirley who were very helpful in sharing kit information based on years of experience!

The team made us feel very safe, comfortable, issued us with our radio and essential chocolate, and popped us into our 'hiding' positions. Once I'd settled into my sleeping bag and bivvy, I looked up and into a sky full of stars! Absolutely beautiful!



If my daytime 'cave' experience was great, the night-time dogsbodying was amazing! As the handlers and dogs started searching, it was exciting to see the sweep of head lamps on the other side of the burn working their way, methodically, towards the 'bodies' and the distinctive bark of Gus and Tarn indicating to Karen or Mike that they had made a find.



Lying safely and quietly in the dark was exhilarating and a really special experience, and possibly my favourite time to be dogsbodying!



Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team



Being comfortable is really important so here's an idea of some of the kit we take on dogsbody experiences. Plenty of options of gloves, hats and a balaclava. A flask with a hot drink, down jacket and an old pair of ski pants. An insulated roll mat, a tarpaulin pocket with a few tent pegs, a head torch, a military style bivy bag, a radio, an emergency whistle, midge net and insect repellent and lots of chocolate! Cavendish the cat doesn't come but he loves to be involved. We also have a large rucksack each to carry our kit in.

Being a Dogsbody is fun and rewarding and both the handlers and dogs are really appreciative of the time dogsbodies give to help keep them at the very top of their game.

We had a little socially distanced sharing of mince pies and cinnamon swirls late in December, all part of the fun and camaraderie of being a dogsbody!

Here we have Dog Des, Dog Karen and Dog Mike getting into the Christmas Spirit- Mike did wear his Christmas T - Shirt but thankfully didn't join in the singing!



So, if anyone is reading this and is tempted to give dogs bodying a go then two ladies who are actually mad about cats would say "absolutely, give it go!"



Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team



Claire and Jeanette (right)

Getting ready for assessment

Jamie Siddle



Practicing night navigation. The four trainees have split into two groups and have been trading routes (grid refs) on the moors as challenges. Sharnberry / Eggleston Common - lots of interesting features. All socially distanced and on access land. Here is a picture of Jeanette getting her route planned to a spot height (tricky on these moors in the daytime, but she got it) before I took us to a disused sheepfold - how do OS know sheep don't use it?



Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team

Archive Photographs

Alan Best



Setting up Teesdale relay (1980s)



January exercise 1985 & coming in from the snow (Greg's Hut)



Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team



Team on exercise in late 90s

Fundraising

A big thank you to everyone that donates money to the Team - without you we would not be able to operate.

Recently an envelope was hand delivered to the Base. Inside was a Christmas card saying, 'Hope you all have a callout free Christmas and enjoy it'. Inside the card was a large sum of money in £10 notes. A wonderful and truly appreciated gesture.

A truly remarkable effort was made by one of our supporters today, Gregg Stevens, who, in July started the couch to 5km in 16 weeks. In November he completed his first ever marathon. He has raised in excess of £1700 for the Team.



Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team



Gregg completed the run from Rowley to Howden Le Wear in 6:59:01 - well done and thank you to you and your family for your support.



Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team

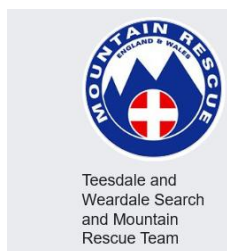
Follow the Team on Facebook

Facebook is a very good vehicle to spread the name of the Team, and to keep in touch. After a recent search carried out by the Team, Team Leader, Steve Owers, made the following comment on the Team's message board.

'Some of you may have noticed that as a result of the incident at Hamsterley we had £470 donated on our Facebook page by 32 donators.

This money has not just been donated because we went out and searched for the missing lady. There are many and various reasons why individuals donated. These probably include: supporting us for the search we carried out on Sunday; our interaction on the day with family; friends and locals who were so keen to help us search; the professionalism we showed on the day; work done by our Press Lead, and Facebook Lead; support from Durham Police on their Facebook posts; the reputation the Team has built up over the years; wanting to support their local MR Team.

Well done to all of you whether you were involved on Sunday or not, you will have played your part at some time.'



Associate Members

Thank you for your continued support of the Team.

Please feel free to contact me with suggestions regarding the newsletter, or possible events for the coming year.

Chris Roberts (Support Team Lead)
chris.roberts@twsmrt.org.uk