



Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team

Newsletter - New Year 2022

Welcome to the New Year 2022 edition of the newsletter. Last year I started the New Year newsletter with; 'well what a truly exceptional year 2020 has been'. 2021 seems to have been a bit of a re-run. More of us will now have been affected by the pandemic in some shape or form, and I do hope that you have all managed to cope with the undoubted challenges. Once again, The Team has had its own challenges and has had to respond rapidly, and effectively, as the situation changed. Let's all keep our fingers crossed for 2022.

Chris Roberts

Team Leader's message

Steve Owers (Team Leader)

Can I wish all of our Associate Members a Happy 2022. 2021 has again been challenging for the Team because of COVID. Our procedures have been based around maintaining core service, Search and Rescue in County Durham and Darlington and keeping our Team members as safe as possible. This has meant us having to restrict training and admin activities at times, and wearing PPE whenever we cannot maintain social distancing. Throughout all of this Team members have remained positive and got on with the job. Thank you for your support, take care and hopefully we will be in a much better position this time next year.

Storm Arwen

Steve Owers (Team Leader)



Storm Arwen at the end of November saw the Team committed for 5 days on a variety of incidents. In the early hours of the Saturday morning the Team was asked to assist a group of young people stuck in their vehicle in snow above Westgate in Weardale. Two team members walked almost a mile in very difficult conditions to check to see that they were ok. It was decided the safest option was to leave them in the vehicle and get a snow plough to clear the road.

Later that day we assisted an elderly gentleman who needed to be transferred to hospital from a remote farm in Teesdale. At the same time we were involved in the evacuation of stranded motorists from the A66. On Saturday night we were asked by the police if we could check out a lorry driver who had been reported stuck in deep snow some hours earlier on the remote Langdon Beck to Alston road. 2 Team members in one of our 4x4 vehicles assisted by a local authority digger managed to locate the vehicle but the driver had managed to walk to safety. Some of the snow drifts were higher than our vehicle.



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On the following Wednesday and Thursday we were asked to assist in welfare checks of the 400 properties in Upper Weardale and Teesdale who had been without power for 5 days. 2 of our vehicles visited a number of remote properties that required a 4x4 vehicle to access. On the Friday the military was brought into assist and we used our local knowledge to prepare welfare visit routes for them.



A week later we were delighted to receive an early Christmas present in the form of Christmas hampers. The hampers were donated by the Gray family from Dunston, Kirsty, Dan, and 8-year-old Riley whose idea it was.

Team members felt that some of the elderly residents who were stoically making the best of not having any power were more deserving of a hamper than us. We asked the Gray family if they would split the hamper, which they kindly agreed to, and actually brought us 4. The hampers were distributed after our December exercise.



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A66 Incident 27th November 2021

Pete Bell (Deputy Team Leader)

The weather had turned, with heavy snow and high wind in the area.

A gentleman in the Teesdale area near Bowlees had been trapped in his remote house for two days and his neighbours were concerned enough to call the Police, who in turn rang our duty controller who mobilised the callout.



Mobile 2 was dispatched from Durham, and I picked up Mobile1 from Barnard Castle together with a local team member. As we were heading to meet Mobile2 another radio call came in from the Duty controller.

The A66 had been closed at the snow gates at Bowes (County Durham) and Brough (Cumbria), and there were a number of vehicles trapped in this section, which included HGVs, private cars and vans, some of which had apparently been there for over 24 hours.

The A66 road is administrated by Highways England. There is a major incident plan for eventualities on this road and this had been triggered. This plan is a multi-agency response, and we are one of the agencies in the plan, hence the call.

I was diverted from the original call to attend the A66 incident, while Mobile2 continued to it.

The Duty controller activated a number of team members who have 4x4 vehicles and Graham Gill of Deepdale 4x4, who is our off-road driving trainer and a good friend of the Team, to assist with the A66 incident.

I arrived at the snow gates at Bowes, met the Highways Agency, explained what we were going to do, and started driving the snow covered A66. I had a been briefed by a team member who had arrived before me and was a few miles ahead. The road was blocked with HGVs and recovery vehicles going West, and the East bound was undrivable with numerous vehicles stranded either at the side of the road or in laybys.



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For events such as this a dedicated radio channel is deployed for all services. I spoke to Durham Police for information, and the name of the Traffic Officer who was tasked to the incident.

A HMCG-SAR helicopter and a fixed wing aircraft from NPAS (National Police Air Support) had been requested by Durham Police to give an overview of the incident.

We checked the welfare of the many vehicles that we stuck, including a campervan that had been stuck for over 20 hours. One of the occupants had some medical conditions and was advised that she would be better in a place of safety, however she declined, even with some added persuasion from the Durham Police Traffic officer.

One of the HGVs had an electrical fault that stopped his engine and his cab heating. He was very cold, so we evacuated him, and handed him over to the Police who arranged an overnight stay for him.



We continued checking vehicles until the carriage ways were cleared by the snow plough / gritters, and the Police were able to drive the full section to meet with their Cumbria Police colleagues.

All in all the incident lasted four hours and we checked in the region of 20 vehicles and occupants.

At this point we were stood down.



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Team Callouts (September – December 2021)

| Date | Description |
|---------------------|--|
| 09.00 03/12/2021 | 2 team members attended St John's Chapel to assist the military with property location info and local knowledge. This was the 3rd day running the Team completed welfare visits in upper Teesdale and Weardale. |
| 09.00 02/12/2021 | For a second day four team members worked in in two team vehicles to assist with property location info and local knowledge and complete welfare visits in upper Teesdale and Weardale |
| 09.00 01/12/2021 | Four team members worked in in two team vehicles to assist with property location info and local knowledge and complete welfare visits in upper Teesdale and Weardale |
| 12.31 29/11/2021 | Team were called on Monday lunchtime to a walker who had fallen and injured his leg in deep snow to the south of Blanchland. 11 team members were en-route to the incident when we were informed that the casualty had been recovered by Great North air ambulance |
| 04.00 28/11/2021 | Team called to assist a Landover stuck snow on the Durham-North Yorkshire border. After some investigation the request was passed onto North Yorkshire Police and TWSMRT stood down. |
| 18.40 27/11/2021 | Requested by police to check a couple of snow bound vehicles above Langdon Beck. Vehicles found and police updated. |
| 14.00 27/11/2021 | Team called to evacuate a vulnerable elderly male who lives in a remote farmhouse which had lost power due to storm Arwen. The Team prepared to sledge the casualty out but fortunately managed to drive all the way to the farm making for a much simpler evacuation. |
| 14.00 27/11/2021 | Team called to assist with evacuating motorists stranded and benighted on the A66 due to snow and high winds. Trained drivers ferried drivers off the Pennines down to safety. |



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| 02.00 27/11/2021 | Team called during storm Arwen to a vehicle stuck in snow in the high Pennines above Westgate. Two team members walked through the storm to the vehicle to check the trapped motorists. Due to the conditions, it was considered safest to leave the casualties in the vehicle and await first light. With first light a tractor arrived and the vehicle plus passengers were escorted off the hill. |
| 00.00 27/11/2021 | Team called to help a number of drivers stranded due to Storm Arwen. |
| 15.00 25/11/2021 | The Team were called at 15:15 to search for a vulnerable male whose car had been found in the Gainford area. The Team found a body next to a stream not far from the car location. |
| 15.50 19/10/2021 | Team called to rescue female with leg injury near Frosterley. Team stood down while assembling since assistance no longer required. |
| 14.00 18/10/2021 | Request by police to assist with their enquiries. |
| 08.00 03/10/2021 | The team were called by Durham Police at 8am to assist with the extrication of a male who had fallen 50ft into a difficult to access area. |
| 00.00 26/09/2021 | The Team were called around midnight by the police to search for a missing male in Consett area. Two Team search dogs and 5 Team members searched dense woodland for about 5 hours before standing down to await further fact checking by the police. |
| 16.00 23/09/2021 | Team called to support a NEAS first responder treating a Covid19 patient. |
| 19.00 21/09/2021 | The Team called to locate three overdue mine explorers in Teesdale. The Team called Swaledale CRT and COMRU to assist underground and after a number of hours a small rescue party managed to access the bottom of the mine and evacuate the three overdue cavers cold but otherwise uninjured. |
| 10.00 16/09/2021 | Team called to assist the Northumbria MR Teams in their ongoing search for an elderly missing female in the Jarrow area. |
| 22.00 06/09/2021 | Team called by police to assist in search for missing female from Pelton area. The Team were stood down while the search was still at the planning stages when the missing lady was found. |
| 17.00 06/09/2021 | Team called to assist a lady who had slipped and injured her leg on a track above Burnhope Reservoir. Six team members and two team vehicles attended to package up the casualty and transport them off the hill down to St John's Chapel where she was handed over to NEAS. |
| 02.00 04/09/2021 | Assisting the police with a search consultation for a vulnerable missing person |

In 2021 The Team responded to 64 callouts - a new record !



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The Team respond to a callout to search for a missing person. This was an opportunity for some of our new members to assist in a search.

Taking to The Skies for The Team

Gemma Siddle (Support Team Member)

On 5th September I arrived at Brighton Airfield bright and early. This was to be my third attempt at undertaking a wing walk on a 1940's Boeing Stearman biplane whilst it undertook an acrobatic display. The first time, in July, it was cancelled due to thunderstorms and in August strong winds meant the plane couldn't do the stunts I had promised my sponsors it would do - you can't do half a job when you're being sponsored!





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This day, however, the air was still and the sky a cold but bright blue peppered with just a few low-lying wispy clouds. The bright orange biplane sat on the airfield waiting for me and my adventure to begin! Mike, the reassuring pilot dutifully dressed in a retro leather bomber jacket, and his team took me through the safety briefing, passed me some goggles and taught me how to scramble up the plane to the top wing, via the lower wing and cockpit, without damaging it. One doesn't want to put a foot through the fabric wing or snap the wooden framework of an 80-year-old plane!

The GoPro was fixed, I was strapped on, gave the thumbs up to Mike, and the amazing retro engine fired up taking us gently across the airfield to the runway. We lined up, the engines fired to full power and, following my Top Gun-esque signal we powered down the runway into the bright blue sky leaving behind a tell-tale stream of smoke. We climbed and climbed; the view was stunning. I was flying in the open air and it was exhilarating. We turned and corkscrewed, dipped into loops, run and braked, and dived for the next 15 minutes. I'll never forget the adrenaline and that feeling of being one with such an amazing piece of engineering. It was terrifying, and beautiful, and exhilarating, and like nothing else I've done before. I've skydived, bungee-jumped, trekked the Andes, and swam with piranhas in the Amazon but nothing was like this exquisite experience.



Mike landed us safely and, after being unstrapped and scrambling carefully off, I ran over to my husband and 6-year-old daughter who promptly asked, 'Mummy, how old do you have to be to do this?' then started counting the years to her 18th birthday! I was exhilarated, although my hair did resemble Cruella de Vil and I had epic ring marks around my eyes from the goggles, and even better knowing that through this experience I had raised £7,500 for TWSMRT.



My husband, Jamie, is a hill member of the Team having been inspired to join after we moved to Eggleston a few years ago. He qualified at the start of Covid and since then I've seen the amazing work the Team does together. It takes dedication, camaraderie and a lot of pulling together to undertake the work you all do – but it is life-changing and life-saving work - and the least I can do is a sponsored challenge to support your work.



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If anyone wants to consider following in my footsteps for the wing walk, I simply booked my challenge through Wingwalk Buzz (www.wingwalk.buzz); their team and organisation was amazing. I then set-up my JustGiving page and I was away!

Fundraising

Holly Story (Fund raising Officer)

The final few months of 2021 were quite busy for the fundraising team. We held two street collections. The first in Darlington unfortunately coincided with Storm Arwen. After a rather cold windy morning the collection had to be halted to allow team members to attend multiple callouts as a result of the bad weather.



Durham was a much better day and we raised over £1,000 for the Team. Many thanks to everyone who helped on both days; we are very grateful for your time and effort.

In November the Weardale and District Motor Club held their annual charity trial. On this occasion the Teesdale and Weardale Search and Mountain Rescue Team was their chosen charity. A trial in this sense of the word is where specialist 'trials motorcycles' go places no motorcycle should go and do things which look completely impossible! Riders compete against each other to achieve the lowest score. Points are gained every time a rider 'dabs', or puts their foot down.

On a cold November morning, over one hundred competitors turned up above St. John's Chapel, to brave the elements and test man and machine against some of nature's toughest



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terrain. It was quite a spectacle seeing all the riders queuing to ride up a stream and over some very large rocks.



The competitors ranged in age from a 12-year-old girl to guys in their 60's and all had paid an entry fee, this would be the basis for the donation once club expenses had been deducted. On the day, one of our team members attended and collected nearly £60 in collection buckets, but the final donation from the motor club was a magnificent £900!

The Team would like to send their sincere thanks to the Weardale and District Motor Club, the organisers, competitors and all the volunteers who helped make the event a success.

The Team have also been shortlisted for a Lakes and Dales Co-op Community Connect Award.



This award is for community groups and projects that benefit the local community around Lakes and Dales Co-op stores. Every time a Co-op member makes a purchase in store, they will receive a community connect vote. The project with the most votes will be put forwards for the top award of £5,000 in the Spring. Voting is open now and closes on the 18th April. If you are shopping in a Lakes and Dales Store in the New Year, please consider using your vote to support the Team.



Thank you also to everyone who has fundraised for the Team over the year.



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Thanks to our supporters



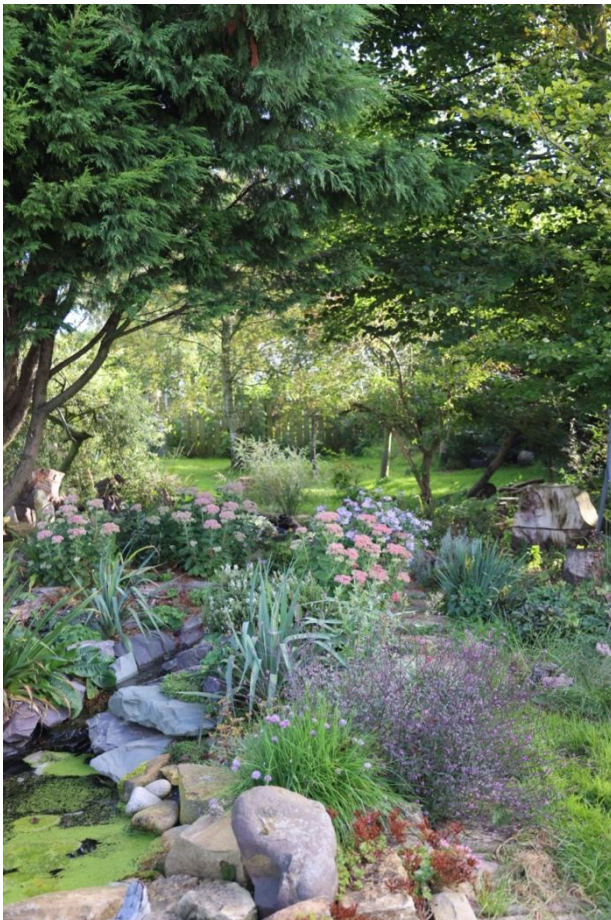
Sarah Furneaux | General Manager | London www.giveacar.co.uk

A cheque on behalf of the Teesdale Search and Mountain Rescue Team for £145.60 was received from Giveacar, following the donation of a car by Keith Stoker. This was brilliant news and very gratefully received.

Forthcoming Events

Could you eat cake to support TWSMRT?

John Little, Team member for over 20 years and Deputy Team Leader, is opening his large family garden along with two of his neighbours in Old Quarrington on **Sunday 26th June 2022 (11:00 – 16:00)** to raise funds for the Team through the National Garden Scheme (NGS).



The NGS organises open garden events throughout the country where private gardens like John's open to the public and the proceeds go to a number of nursing and caring charities such as MacMillan's Nurses. Entry to all three gardens is £6 per adult (children and dogs are free). Like last year proceeds from drinks and the wide range of homemade cakes are going to support TWSMRT, so the more cake gets eaten the more money the Rescue Team gets! The three beautiful gardens are all very distinct. The Stables is a large family garden full of hidden surprises and extensive views. The main garden is about an acre including gravel garden, vegetable patch, orchard, play area, lawn and woodland gardens. There is a further four acres to explore which include wildlife ponds, woodlands, meadows, hens, ducks and alpacas. Number 13 has been developed over 20yrs with many small garden rooms including a rose garden, a white garden, a small link garden which contains ferns, viburnum, birch trees and a Cercidiphyllum Japonicum. There is a pond, and herbaceous beds which contain perennials and grasses. Many roses can be

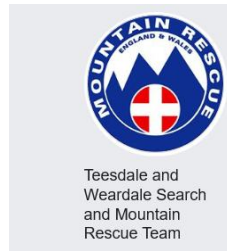


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seen throughout the garden and a greenhouse devoted to a large Brown Turkey fig. The main garden at Rose Cottage is planted with wildlife friendly flowers, has slate paths and a pond that attracts 2 species of newts. To the rear there is a Mediterranean area and a woodland garden with stream beyond.

Full details can be found on the NGS website: <https://ngs.org.uk/> and will also be advertised on Facebook in the run up to the event.

Follow the Team on Facebook



Associate Members

Thank you for your continued support of the Team.

I do hope that this year we might be able to organise an event at our Durham Base to welcome our Associate Members for a look round.

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

Chris Roberts
chris.roberts@twsmrt.org.uk