

Teesdale and Weardale Search and Rescue Team Newsletter March 2006



Roundup of Team activities: The Bishop Auckland Street collection raised almost £400. Thank you to everyone who supported us. A special thank you to the Associate Members who formed the bulk of our collectors. Our next street collection is in **Darlington on April 1st** 10.00 – 16.00 – A list, C list, Associate members, friends etc. are all very welcome - Please let John know 0191 377 2383 or webmaster@twstrt.org if you are able to assist. The Stanhope collection will be on the 24th June 2006 – again help will be required.

Post-exercise reports

The December exercise helped the Training Officer identify some priority areas for training. January's exercise was an individual navigation walk while February involved stretcher racing and using the snake belay.

Membership We are very pleased to welcome Colin Bearpark, Trevor Burton, Tom Keenan, Danny King, Andrew Maddison, John O'Doherty, Simon Stewart, and Paul Young onto the A list. Peter and Fiona Lovatt have moved on to the C list due to change in job and expanding family

Recruitment The recruitment evening in February produced about 15 applications. Most of these applicants will have a hill test later this month and start training with the Team properly in April. Provisional dates for the 2007 recruitment are now on the website.

Recent Call outs

3/3/06 Search for missing female in the coastal area near Peterlee. Coastguard search teams and police helicopter also involved. Two SARDA dogs and search teams deployed. The weather was very cold. Search stood down after 4 hours. Nothing found. Missing woman turned up safe outside of search area early the following morning.

11/1/06 - Stand by for missing male in the Darlington area.

9/1/06 - Search for missing elderly gentleman who had gone off on a daily walk of about 0.5 miles. Search developed as more sightings came in. Search suspended in the small hours. Continuation as a NESRA shout the following morning. Missing person found wandering in Sedgfield as NESRA Teams started to assemble.

9/1/06 - Search for elderly gentleman missing from home since previous day. Initial search started 30 minutes before night fall and principle corridors were searched. Search was to resume next morning but missing person was identified in hospital having been collected off the street in an unconscious state at 13.00.

3/1/06 - A 37 year old woman had been missing for several days. The Team was asked to look for her after she was seen by canoeists near the river Tees in Barnard Castle. The Team search dog and the police helicopter were deployed. The missing woman turned up at a friend's house shortly after the Team's search commenced.

17/12/05 - A seriously damaged crashed car was found by the police on a rural road but no casualty had been found. Initial police searches for the 29 year old driver were negative. Police found missing man near his home shortly after the Team's search had commenced.

Constitution: The subgroup set up to review the Team constitution and structure have put together the following summary for wider consideration:

At the start of the Year each Committee member would propose a budget for the year along with identifying funding for any new proposals. Progress on these proposals would be reviewed at every committee meeting and a full report made at the AGM.

The radio officer post would be removed. There would be only one member's rep and one group leader required to attend and vote at each committee meeting. All team members are welcome at any meeting.

Members will only be co-opted for a specific task and are non-voting. Socials will be the responsibility of the member's rep. Fundraising will be separated such that the secretary will organise street permits, while the IT officer will oversee the collection tins via an automated reminder system. Grant applications will be coordinated by the Team leader or a deputy.

A suggested new name for the Team is: **Teesdale and Weardale Search and Mountain Rescue Team** with strap line - 'Search and rescue throughout County Durham'.

A list and C list will be reviewed over any 12 month period and a Team member not training for a period of 3 months will be contacted and potentially moved down a list.

Team members will be expected to attend 5 exercises and least 5 Wednesday nights each year.

A more detailed summary will shortly be available in the Member's Area of the website.

Personal Contact Details Team members are asked to double check on the website that their contact details are correct before March 19th. Team members are recommended to print themselves a new contact list (from the Member's Area of the website) after the 1st of April when the new C list members have been added. Any Team member who wants to replace their photo should also supply a replacement before March 19th. Photos of anyone else involved with the Team such as Vice Presidents or those who support us at Street Collections are also most welcome.

Base: A big thank you to Ebac for responding to our request and supplying the Team with a brand new dehumidifier.

After cleaning the Team base for a number of years Joanne Fell now has too many other commitments. The Team are very grateful for all her hard work. Anyone interested in helping clean the base on a regular basis should speak to the Team Leader.

After a discussion the committee decided that **only SARDA dogs and SARDA trainee dogs should be in the base during Team training.**

Dennis Marrs has done a great job at improving the equipment storage racks in the garage – thanks again Dennis. Anyone interested in helping redecorate the base should contact Stephen or Dennis Marrs. A painting session is planned for Saturday 25th May.

IT: The Member's Area of the Website now includes a full logbook. Team members should try to keep their log up-to-date. Assessors should also make sure these are as up-to-date as possible. Current standard operating procedures are now available in the Member's Area of the website. Broadband is up and running at the base. Team members with limited personal access are encouraged to use the Team facilities and seek assistance if required. The old Team computer is now for sale to a good home.

Fundraising

Sea and Mud – provisionally the 15th -18th June – More details on the Team Website very shortly (have a look on the How to Support Us page). The challenge will involve cycling from Tyne Mouth to Whitehaven via Kielder Forest.

Danny King and friends are participating in the Great North Run on behalf of the Team – please speak to Danny to sponsor his run (unless he catches you first!)

The Team needs some additional fundraising activities to meet all of our financial commitments and desires – anyone able to help should speak to any member of the committee or email fundraising@twsrc.org. A Wish List will be on the website shortly to help focus fundraising plans. Also if anyone can think of any suitable location for more Team collection tins then please contact John Little.

Sunday Program

Time & Date	Activity	RV
09.00, 19/03/06	Search Exercise	High Force
09.00, 23/04/06	Orienteering / vehicles	Hamsterley NZ091 312
09.00, 21/5/06	Crag training basic and advanced	High Force
09.00, 18/6/06	Water awareness	Kingsway NY9452 55
18-19/11/06	Night exercise	Cow Green Car Park

Team members are reminded that they are expected to attend 6 exercises during the year. Anyone wishing to discuss a reduction in this requirement because of weekend or shift work, etc. must contact the Training Officer before - No contact, No exemption.

Special Event: The Team is now organising a formal meal and lecture by Alan Hinks on 1st July 2006 (Grand Ball plans have been postponed for the present). More details of the event in the next news letter – or contact karenfisher@twsrc.org.

Date	Event	Location	Start
08/03/06	Line Search, Search boundaries, GPS, Search Management	Base	1900 for 1930
19/03/06	Search exercise including canoe group	HF Car Park	0900
22/03/06	Personal Crag Skills, IT systems, Base systems	Base	1900 for 1930
02/04/06	Driver off road training	Base	0900
05/04/06	Personal Crag Skills, Casualty Care, Team SOPs	Base	1900 for 1930
19/04/06	Orienteering theory, Equipment stowage	Base	1900 for 1930
22/04/06	New C List induction day	Base	0900
23/04/06	Orienteering and driving skills	Hamsterley	0900
30/04/06	Group Leader Training Day	Kingsway Centre	1000
03/05/06	Intro to crag for non-crag people	Mickleton Quarry	1900
10/05/06	Crag training	Mickleton Quarry	1900
17/05/06	Individual log book assessments	Base	1900 for 1930
21/05/06	Crag work for all	High Force	0900

Associate membership will run on an annual basis from next year. This will make the Associate Members Representative's role much easier and more efficient.

Transport: Adam is organising a group to look into best practice for all aspects of driving within the Team – if you have a particular skill in this area please speak to him.

Anthony is taking forward improvements on the Team Landrover including upgrading the suspension. The Team is going to purchase a heavy duty trailer for occasionally used equipment which is too heavy or bulky to stay on the vehicles.

Dogs: The Team welcomed three new canine members earlier this year. Misty (owned by Des Toward), Holly (owned by Paul Fell) and Bracken (owned by Lee Ferry) have become graded search dogs following an intensive assessment weekend in the Lake District.

All of the search dog handlers are volunteers with the Team. In order to train a search dog the handlers and the dogs join the Search and Rescue Dog Association (SARDA). This is a national body which sets very high standards for its dogs and handlers to reach before they are allowed to search alongside mountain rescue teams.

The three dogs, all around two years old have been in training with their handlers for between 12 and 18 months. This training begins with basic obedience followed by games of hide and seek. During this time all of the dogs undergo a “stock test” to ensure they would not be interested in sheep or other farm animals while out searching. The hide and seek games develop into finding a person and then returning to the handler to indicate their success. This builds up from a 30 second game to a 1-2 hour search in all weather and at any time of the day or night. The difference between mountain rescue search dogs and other search dogs is that mountain dogs search for a human air scent where other dogs tend to track an individual's scent along the ground.

Des Toward has been involved with SARDA for many years and Misty is his third graded dog. “Everyone thinks that it would be easy to train another dog but Misty has probably been my biggest challenge, every dog is different. These are the first dogs Paul and Lee have trained and they have done tremendously well to get their dogs up to this standard in such a short length of time. My main advantage is that I know how to search with a dog where they have had to learn this skill from scratch.”

Lee Ferry said “The assessment last weekend at Derwent Water in the Lake District was one of the most difficult and stressful things I have done in my life. We did six assessments over 3 days each lasting up to 1½ hours. None of us slept well on the nights between the assessments”.

Paul Fell, echoing the sentiments of all three handlers, was keen to emphasise the help they had been given. “While we are out training with the dogs our families are the ones that suffer. Without their support these dogs would not be available to search for missing people. We also owe a great deal of thanks to the people known as “bodies” who come out and lie hidden on a wet moor for hours on end in order for our dogs to find them during training exercises. It can't be much fun but they keep coming back for more”.

The three handlers have all shown tremendous dedication to get to this standard. To put it in perspective, there were only 4 graded search dogs available from Mountain Rescue Teams to cover the North East from the Scottish border to Yorkshire. Due to the efforts of Des, Lee and Paul and their dogs the Teesdale Team now has 50% of the search dogs available in the region. Search dogs have proved their worth on numerous occasions over the years and often found missing persons not only on the fells but in the semi-urban areas surrounding our towns and villages. They will be a great asset not only to our Team but to all the rescue teams in the North East and beyond.