

MARCH 2010



TWSMRT Newsletter

Message from the top table

We are in the final few weeks of what is proving to be the coldest and snowiest winter for many years. The number of call outs have also been at record levels and not just due to the weather. The response from all Team members has been fantastic and we have benefited from media coverage placing us firmly in the public gaze. This busy time has also brought us recognition from other emergency services and nationally Mountain Rescue is finding a new political platform. The Team has shown its resilience once again and are now looking ahead to exciting opportunities in the coming year. We have a strong looking group of new recruits joining and all the key operational threads of the Team are well led and well resourced. Any challenge the Team faces is likely to come from more mundane subjects such as finance and we must remember our other duty to ensure we are buoyant and able to take these opportunities as they arise...
so the message is **fundraising - fundraising - fundraising !!**

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Profile: Mr Chris Scott

Full Name: Christopher Scott - there is a G in the middle but that is for family use only!
Age: Over 69
Area of Responsibility within the team: Team book-keeper
Years in the Team: since foundation in 1968
School Nickname: Scotty
Which cartoon Superhero would you be : Desperate Dan (sign of age, I'm afraid)
Lives how many miles from the Rescue Centre: 15
Lives at: Tudhoe
Lives With: Wife, Kathleen
Current Occupation : Retired
At School what job did you want to have when you were older: Team book- keeper
Water Baby or Land Lover: Definitely Land
Sports car or 4x4: Both
Cinema or DVD: Neither, theatre for preference
Dogs Or Cats: Both, provided they are someone else's!
Sweet or Sour: Is the correct answer: Pork?
Biggest / Best outdoor Achievement: Lyke Wake Walk
Best outdoor food / snack tip: Cheese and jam sandwiches
What Mountain / Walking boots are you currently wearing: Slippers
Best website you know of that should be shared: err., is this a fishing question?

*Without a Team – there
is no Team!*

Fundraising Events

Saturday 24th July 2010 'Cannonball' - Fancy Dress/ Fundraising Challenge. See website for more details

“C” List to “A” List by Chris Toward

Ever since I was born there has been a mountain rescue presence in my life - both of my parents were Team members, my father is still an influential member of TWSMRT and of its partnering body SARDA. At 16 I joined the TWSMRT youth team and for the next 2 years I learnt basic mountain rescue related skills. From the youth team the natural progression was to apply to become a full member of the Team via the C-list.

Roughly a month after my application I was invited to an open evening at the Team's base to familiarise myself with the other new recruits. About a fortnight later I had to complete my initial hill assessment - checking that I had basic navigation skills, the required fitness and the ability to work as a member of a search group. This was done on the side of Mickle Fell which at the time was covered in a thick layer of snow making it a tough physical challenge.

For the next 12 months I attended Team training fortnightly on Wednesday evenings and the monthly Sunday exercises. From these training exercises I gained knowledge and experience of the key mountain rescue skills. We covered radio protocol, first aid/casualty care, rope work, winter skills, navigation, setting up of equipment, the use of gasses, search skills, water awareness etc. Also during this 12 month period I attended many of the Team's social events and fundraising events.

Finally after the 12 months I was ready to do my navigation test. I had to navigate my way, with an assessor, to different points on a fell side, each point became harder and harder to navigate to, pushing my map and compass skills to their limits. I passed the test and was really pleased to gain A-list status after all the hard work that had been put in over the year.

Looking back, the whole 12 months seemed to go very fast. I learnt vast amounts and gained lots of experience on the fell. The highlight of the 12 months had to be the weekend I spent with the Team in the Cairngorms furthering my knowledge of winter skills. I look forward to working with the Team in the years to come.

Team Leader to take up Paragliding?

Recent foolish aspirations to take up paragliding, after a tandem flight in the Alps last summer, were completely blown away during a recent afternoon walk up Skiddaw. I was on my way down and listening in to Keswick MRT who were on a job in Borrowdale. A climber had fallen on Falcon Crag and shortly after being winched aboard the Sea King, news came across the radio that a paraglider had crashed on Skiddaw!. I radioed Keswick MRT Base to advise I was in that area and would start searching. They asked me to switch radio channels to 62A

as the Sea King was being diverted to my area. I peered down the slope from where I was and after a brief search, literally only 100m away, found was the casualty and a couple of his colleagues. He was face down and fully conscious, but in a lot of pain. I radioed the location and my initial survey suspected spinal and a bad break of the femur and tib and fib of the same leg. The Sea King was now overhead and landed some 300m away. The winchman attended and took medic lead. The Sea King radioed that they had to leave to get the severely injured climber on board to hospital and so I was tasked to get all the kit we needed off the helicopter.

By now the usual throng of walkers up there had vanished so it was hard work hauling all the kit myself! Back with the casualty the winchman had completed his survey and the main priority was stabilising the leg. The leg above the knee resembled a bag of jelly and the tib/fib break had also broken the skin. The leg was twisted and severely shortened. We log rolled him onto his back, with some difficulty on the slope, and then applied a traction splint. I took the initial tension on the leg as we rolled him, and we had some difficulty dealing with the lower leg break as this was compromising our main priority on the femur. However we seemed to manage, but by now the entonox (A medical gas) had been almost sucked dry in between the screams ! We got him into a vacuum mat and secured on the stretcher ready for airlift. There was no way that I was ever going to take up this paragliding flying lark now !!

Winter Skills Training Weekend by Marc Tomlinson

On the weekend of the 19th February, 10 Team members went up to Scotland for their annual Winter Skills Training weekend.

Our instructor for the weekend was Bill Batson and after meeting him early on the Friday morning the group set off for the hill. We were fortunate to have managed to arrange a lift on the early morning Cairngorm train with the staff, saving us the long walk in to the top of the ski slopes. The weather wasn't great – but exactly what you would expect from Scotland. After a quick chat we split into groups and headed off through the freezing mist for the top of Cairngorm. We spent some time practicing avalanche assessment pits at the top of Stob Coire an t-Sneachda – a vital skill that should be mastered by all who intend on spending time in the winter hills.

With lunch time approaching we headed off to dig some snow holes and stuff our faces with whatever high carb goodies we had in our bags – always a highlight of any day out.

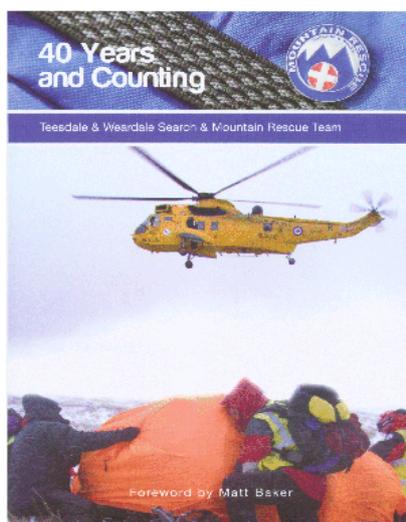
After assessing our earlier avalanche pits the group decided (probably too cautiously) not to head down the goat track and so went back to the famous (or so they told me) 1141 spot height at the top of Choire Chais. From just a little farther down the ridge we could practice our winter belay techniques. We all tried out various anchors – there was the usual T-axe, snow bollard, deadman and a new one on me – the snow shovel anchor, with not a frozen mars bar in sight.

On the Saturday one group went for a walk across the tops while others spent the day climbing, or playing/training in the shallow gullies. The weather had changed drastically since Friday, with not a cloud in the sky and some members wishing they'd brought their sun cream. Everyone had great fun! We finished off the day with a meal and some ale at the local inn and were joined by a friend of the instructor. He'd actually tried to join us the previous night but after much confusion he spent the night in his car – brrrr ... chilly.

Sunday was our final day of training and was designed to bring together the general winter skills we'd learned, and now practiced, with winter rescue techniques. The exercise was conducted very near to one of the lower car parks at the ski centre as no one was looking forward dragging the 4 ton Thomas stretcher, along with the crag gear, to the top Cairngorm. The 'rescue' involved a multi pitched lower (with a very brave Mark strapped to the stretcher) over varying ground – from vertical rock at the top to easy snow slopes at the bottom. It was a great exercise which highlighted the need to adapt our techniques to the changing risks involved in such a lower. I actually missed the end of the lower as one Team mate had got sick of me by this point and buried me in the snow. Fortunately, Bill's dog, Glen found me before hypothermia set in!

Although, obviously, the main reason for this trip is to help our members gain training and experience for the severe winter condition we are likely to face on our high fells – I think everyone would agree that it is great fun. We are already looking forward to next years session.

Book Launch



Our new book detailing the 40 Year history of the Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team is now available. Foreword by Matt Baker of the BBC program Country File. For just £9.99 + £1.90 P&P. see www.twsmr.org.uk for a list of suppliers or to buy online

Call Outs

2025 28/02/2010	Team callout	Team members assist police to search & recover a stranded motorist who was stuck in the snow. Team members used 4 X 4 vehicles to access the motorist and recovery down to Stanhope.
0700 28/02/2010	Team callout	07.00 hrs Call out to search for missing female near Darlington. SARDA dog deployed along with 3 search groups, Search of farmland - nothing found. Team re commenced planned exercise back up on the snowbound fells.
1225 24/02/2010	Team callout	12.15 hrs Call out to search for missing female in the Chester-le-Street area. Team search groups including SARDA dogs, Canoe group and swiftwater technicians deployed. More details to follow.
1620 15/02/2010	Team callout	Team put on standby for missing male from Darlington area. Missing person returned home some hours later.
1357 14/02/2010	Team callout	Requested by Ambulance Service to assist with evacuation of an injured dog walker from Hamsterley Forest. Met with NEAS ambulance and escorted it from the icy tracks within the forest back to main roads.
2145 07/02/2010	Team callout	21.45 hrs Call out search from missing vulnerable female in the Stanhope area. Team about to start search in cold and wet snow when she was located safe and well. Stood down.
1205 07/02/2010	Team callout	The Team was requested to stand-by for a possible search for a vulnerable male missing overnight from the Lanchester area. The missing person was found by the Police before the Team deployed.
2030 01/02/2010	Team callout	20.30 hrs Call out to rescue female snowbound on Swinhope Head road in Weardale. Police helicopter turned back due to fresh snowfall. Team member reached driver and took her back to the valley. Driver unfamiliar with area had been following the SAT NAV, which directed her over one of the highest roads in the UK. This road which climbs past the ski area remains completely snowbound and has been so since 16th December 2009!
0035 28/01/2010	Team callout	00.35 hrs Call out to search for male missing on the Waskerley Way near Rowley. Body found by Team SARDA dog SAM and recovered by Team members.
0930 12/01/2010	Team callout	Teesdale & Weardale Search and Mountain Rescue Team were called into a major search for a fisherman missing on the North East coast of County Durham. Team Leader Dave Bartles-Smith said "The fisherman is believed to have been fishing near Blackhall Rocks in County Durham. Fifteen mountain rescue personnel from Teesdale and Weardale and the Cleveland mountain rescue team are working with the Coastguard, police and an RAF Sea King helicopter to locate the gentleman". No trace of the missing person was found on the shore line, cliffs or nearby farm and woodland.
1100 10/01/2010	Team callout	Call by Cumbria Police to rescue a total of 5 adults from 3 vehicles who had become snow bound on the Middleton to Brough road, having ignored the road closed signs. Kirby Stephen MRT together with TWSMRT battled through very strong winds and deep drifting snow to the stranded vehicles and recovered the occupants to Middleton in Teesdale.
1800 10/01/2010	Team callout	Further access support given to snowbound farm near Stanhope - team members carrying provisions across the fell.
1800 10/01/2010	Team callout	Night-time rescue of snowbound motorist ongoing near Stanhope. Please heed road closure signs and be aware that on high level routes blowing snow will very quickly reduce visibility to zero and block the road completely.

2330 09/01/2010	Team callout	The team was called to look for a private ambulance broken down in snow drifts with 3 people on board between Middleton in Teesdale and Alston. One team member drove the B6277 in company with a Durham Police Landrover. Found the broken down vehicle and transported the 3 occupants to Darlington Memorial Hospital.
09/01/2010	Team callout	Called by Police to access a remote farm snowbound since before Christmas on the fells above Stanhope and requesting help. Team members walked through chest deep snow to deliver basic essentials.
1300 09/01/2010	Team callout	Search in the Tow Law area. Search of fields and moorland following RTA and concern that occupants were injured and had walked off into snowbound fields and fell. Nothing found - stood down
800 06/01/2010	Team callout	Team called to assist the Ambulance Service based at Bishop Auckland & Consett with 4x4 vehicles and Advanced Casualty Care due to the large amount of snow in County Durham. Cover lasted 7 days.
2055 31/12/2009	Team callout	20:55hrs A car was found abandoned in a country lane, reports of a male leaving the scene in severe weather conditions. After initial Police enquiries, concerns for the Mispers well being. Immediate search of the area carried out, misper was located lost and cold 8 miles from his abandoned car by a Police officer on his way home after initiating this callout.
1330 31/12/2009	Team callout	Search continued for missing man from Chester-Le-Street in the Flass Vale area of Durham City based on new information from the police. Nothing found.
0125 31/12/2009	Team callout	0135hrs Request from Cumbria Constabulary for the team to assist in the rescue recovery of two people stranded on the Middleton to Brough road. Three team members were tasked to drive the road in the teams' specialist land rover to recover the motorists. Both people were recovered safe and well the incident concluded around 0500hrs.
1800 30/12/2009	Team callout	Team member En route to Brough snow incident came across several vehicles snowed in on Consett to Stanhope road. Dug / dragged out a number of vehicles and utilised tractors and snow ploughs to make way back to Consett end of road. Escorted all vehicles back in convoy (10 in total, approx 20 people).
1750 30/12/2009	Team callout	Just before 6pm the team carried out a joint operation with Kirby Stephen Mountain Rescue Team and an RAF Helicopter from Boulmer in Northumberland to rescue stranded motorists from the Middleton in Teesdale to Brough road. 6 people were airlifted from cars stuck in snow by helicopter and taken to Middleton and Kirby Stephen. Dave Bartles-Smith (Team Leader) said "we would like to remind motorists that we have some of the highest roads in England in County Durham. These roads can become impassable very quickly if the wind blows snow across them. Can we ask motorists who may use these roads to consider the conditions before they set out and to carry warm clothes, food and a shovel. The team were called to a search in Chester-le-Street for a 50 year old man. John Little team controller said "the police were concerned for the gentleman's welfare. We had 19 mountain rescue volunteers searching the non urban areas to the north of Chester-le Street until it got dark. The search was then suspended while the police make more inquires".
1132 30/12/2009	Team callout	Team requested to search for a missing dog walker in the Croxdale Area. Missing person turned up safe and well as Team commenced their search.
2000 19/12/2009	Team callout	Team called to assist stranded drivers in Craghead due to heavy snow.
2030 19/12/2009	Team callout	Team called to assist incident on A19. Team stood down en route.
2015 19/11/2009	Team callout Team callout	Callout to assist 62 year old diabetic walking dog caught in snow Team placed on Standby for 24 hours by Cumbria Police due to the high flood water in the region. Team stayed on standby until 2100hrs (19/11/09) and then called to assist Keswick MRT in the town of Keswick. Team assisted with a number of incidents in and around Keswick. Swaledale MRT and KSSMRT also in attendance.

1700 18/11/2009	Team callout	Team member assisted at the scene of an RTC on A690 Durham. One male driver stabilised using Mountain Rescue Casualty Care techniques prior to the arrival of emergency Service.
1800 03/11/2009	Team callout	18.00 hrs request by Police to assist in search for a male in the Chilton area of Co Durham. Search of farmland and deployment of 3 SARDA dogs. Nothing found and Team stood down at 23.30 hrs.
16/10/2009	Team callout	19.45 hrs request by Police to assist in search for elderly male missing from home in Ferryhill. Search of urban areas, farmland and woodland. 18 Team members and two SARDA dogs searched until 05.00 hrs the next day. Assisted by RAF Seaking from RAF Boulmer. Nothing found. Search to be continued by Swaledale MRT and North of Tyne MRT
0835 26/09/2009	Team callout	08.35 call out to attend rescue of male injured in quarry near Stanhope in Weardale. Air ambulance and Police helicopter also on scene. Casualty evacuated as Team arrive on scene.
2010 19/09/2009	Team callout	Call from Police to assist in search for a 10 year old missing from home. Missing person returned home prior to team been mobilised.
2110 09/09/2009	Team callout	21.20 call to rescue a female who was lying injured at the foot of a crag alongside the river wear in Stanhope. Fire and Ambulance Service also attended. Casualty recovered by Team using stretcher and ropes, and then handed casualty over to Ambulance Service.
1300 06/09/2009	Team callout	13.00 Team whilst en route to previous incident came across a cyclist with possible serious leg injuries. Team members assisted on scene for an hour prior to the casualty being evacuated by air ambulance.
1215 06/09/2009	Team callout	12.15 hrs Team requested to rescue a dog that had fallen down a cave shaft near Mickle Fell. Dog rescued from tight shaft by the Team.
2300 31/08/2009	Team callout	Called by police after a report of a stabbing in woods near Chester-le-street. Two search dogs deployed but stood down after a couple of hours when nothing found and no report of anyone missing.

Note from the Editor.

Can you assist with the next publication? Please send all articles, stories from your travels, places not to be missed and upcoming events to: stephenmarrs@twsmrt.org.uk