



TEESDALE AND WEARDALE SEARCH AND MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS NEWSLETTER – MARCH 2014

Call Out – Tow Law

Team were called out Sunday 16th February to search for a middle aged man in the Tow Law area of County Durham. The man had not been seen since Friday evening and the Police were concerned for his welfare. Deputy Team Leader Adam Hearn said:

"We concentrated our search on wooded areas to the South West of Tow Law. Because of the nature of the terrain we initially covered the area with one of our mountain rescue search dogs with his handler followed up by other Team members. After about an hour of searching the dog indicated to the handler and took her into a steep sided gorge where she located the missing man. Due to the location we called out our crag team to assist in the recovery of the casualty. As he was suffering from severe hypothermia we called in the Great North Air Ambulance who transported him to hospital. In all we had 12 mountain rescue personnel and of course Sam the dog at the incident."



Christmas Collection – Durham

Great day at the street collection in Durham City on 14th December. We managed to raise just over £1700. Big thank you to all that helped out and donated. Thanks also to our friends at Cotswold Durham for the use of their facilities.





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Crag Training

As a Mountain Rescue Team one of the calls that can be made on us is to carry out rescues on Steep Ground, Rock Faces and Craggs. Although all the team have basic training to carry out this type of rescue, members can elect to undertake additional training in this field. These team members would take the lead in a rescue of this sort.

The main requirement in carrying out 'Crag' style rescues is the ability to rig a safe rope system, which will be used in the rescue. As with any rescue situation the Team's aim is to carry out the rescue safely and ensuring we don't make the situation worse. To achieve this any rope system we put in place will have a minimum safety factor TEN, with regard to any load we may be required to raise or lower. We also ensure that we always have TWO systems a 'Main' and a 'Safety' so that should one fail, we will always have a backup.

In achieving the safety factors we require in a rescue it is easy to use vast amount of equipment and making over complicated systems. This can result in the rescue being delayed, as the more equipment used can require a longer time to get it to the site it is required at. Also the more complicated the system the longer it takes to set it up.

The January crag training was based around making a simple safe system, using the minimum of equipment, but still achieving a safety levels we require.

Swiftwater Rescue Technicians Training

Water is the most dynamic rescue environment the Team works in. There are numerous water environments within the Team area. These include the River Wear and the River Tees which are two of the fastest raising rivers in the country.

All the Team are trained in 'Bank Side Searching' this is the searching of water features from the bank side, while this can be fairly successful, there are often occasions when to have someone enter the water to achieve a complete search or accomplish a rescue. We also need a 'rescue capability' with regard to those carrying out the bank side search; as often the bankside is not a safe environment and there is a possibility of someone carrying out such a search ending in the water.

This capability is achieved by Swiftwater Rescue Technicians (SRT), they are all trained and equipped to enable them to safely enter the water and carry out rescues if required. As a final resort all SRT's are trained to self-rescue.

February's training took place when the rivers were very high. At our normal training location at Abbey Falls on the Tees the river was at least ten feet above the normal high at this location. Here we examined the river identifying additional hazards created by the higher water levels and devising how we would cope with them. We then relocated to the mouth of the River Lune where we carried out a search and recovery exercise based on a capsized canoeist scenario. We then moved further up the river where we carried out a safe crossing of the river, in the water, to the far bank and back.



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December Exercise

The background to this exercise was that a Mr. S Claus had been out with two 'elf and safety staff had been out test driving his sleigh in preparation for his home delivery on the night of the 24th -25th December. He had failed to return home and had last been seen approaching the ridge line between Weardale and Teesdale in the area of Harnisha Hill.

The team were called out to rendezvous at the Watershed on the Stanhope to Eggleston road where 'Control' was established. A brief training session was then undertaken, close to Control, introducing the 'C' list and refreshing the 'A' list to some different search techniques. Search teams formed and deployed on a search pattern determined by 'Control' to look for Mr. Claus and his Elves.

The search party which was working west along the watershed, made the first 'casualty find' when they located one of the elves. The information gained from this Elf was passed to control and used to update the tasking of the other search groups. This resulted in the locating of the second Elf and Mr. Claus. The teams then switched over to the Rescue mode, allowing the three casualties to be recovered.

The search allowed the techniques practiced at the beginning of the exercise to be used in real conditions. The exercise also tested the Teams radio procedures; requiring the use of team members as relay stations to allow a radio net to be created; keeping the 'Casualty sites' in touch with 'Control'.





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January Exercise

Sharnbury Gill Area was the location for January Exercise. The exercise scenario was based around a Gamekeeper have failed to have returned from his work in the area.

The exercise started with the locating of the Gamekeepers car. At this location 'Control' was established and four search teams deployed following a search pattern formulated by 'Control'. As the search was taking place; more information was received with regard to the tasking the Gamekeeper had been carrying out. This was relayed by Control to the Search groups and allowed the searches being carried out to be slightly modified.

As a result of this a 'Casualty Find' was made. This resulted in it being established that the Gamekeeper had been working with a colleague, who was still missing. Based on the information gained from the game keeper, the two search teams in the area where this second persons had last been seen were directed to search for him, while the other two teams were detailed to provide initial medical care to the Gamekeeper, who was injured, and recover him to the road head where he could be evacuated to hospital.

While the recovery of the first Gamekeeper was accomplished, his outstanding colleague was located by one of the other search teams. He was also injured. The finding team together with the remaining search team, then proceeded to treat this casualty and complete his recovery to a location from where he could be transported by road to Hospital.

The exercised allowed the teams to practise their search and control techniques as well as Casualty Care and evacuation.

February Exercise

The February Exercise was due to take place in the area of Doctor's Gate but had to be cancelled at the last minute when the Team was requested to assist Swaledale MRT with a search for a missing person in their area. They had already carried out initial searches for the missing person during the night, and the searches where to continue into the day. I glad to report that the search ended successfully when the missing person was located safe and well.

The ability for the local Mountain Rescue Teams to be able call on the support of other teams in the north East is achieved under the umbrella of the North East Search Rescue Association (N.E.S.R.A.). The members are Teesdale & Weardale Search and Mountain Rescue Team, Swaledale MRT, Northumberland National Parks MRT, North of Tyne MRT, Cleveland MRT and Scarborough and Ryedale MRT.

The association allows a Team to seek assistance from the other Teams in the association with searches in their area; especially when they cover an extensive area or are prolonged.

As well as the above incident, we have been requested to provide assist a couple of times in the last couple of months. One was to assist with Water Resources (Canoe and Swift River Technicians (SRT)) with regard to a missing lady in Catton in the Allendale area. The other was with regard to a man missing in the Chopwell area of Gateshead.



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TEAM CALL OUTS

**DEC 2013
to
MAR 2014**



09.00 02/03/2014	No details
07.00 16/02/2014	No details
15.05 14/02/2014	Team called out to assist motorist stuck in snow near Swinhope ski area in Weardale.
09.00 09/02/2014	Search for missing man in Tow Law area
18.45 07/02/2014	Team requested to assist in search for missing 8 year old child in Consett area. Child found by a member of the public as the Team assembled.
08.00 05/02/2014	Team assisted North of Tyne MRT in search for missing male at Blackhall Mill on the Durham/Northumberland border.
11.30 14/01/2014	Team asked to help in river search for missing 26 year old male from Consett area. Team stood down while assembling as missing person returned home on his own.
10.40 27/12/2013	No details
09.30 22/12/2013	Team assisted North of Tyne/Northumberland National Park Search Teams with water searches as part of a large scale search for missing 63 year female. This included searching the TWSMRT Canoe Team searching the East Allen River and the Team's Swift Water Technicians checking out culverts and tributaries.
18.30 22/12/2013	The team were called to assist car with 4 people stuck in snow on Cowshill to Allenheads road. Stood down en route when car was pulled out by passing motorist.
13.30 19/12/2013	Team searched for male missing from home in Burnhope area. 10 team members and 2 search dogs. Nothing found.