



TEESDALE AND WEARDALE SEARCH AND MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM

NEWSLETTER – OCTOBER 2015



Search for:
Teesdale and Weardale Search and Mountain Rescue Team

The Team would like to say a huge thank you to the Black Lion, Wolsingham for their continued support of the Team. They have recently made a donation of £1150 for which we are very grateful.

Please find below dates of the remaining street collections this year. If you can help at either of them we would be most grateful.

Durham: Saturday 28th November

Darlington: Saturday 12th December (although this date is yet to be confirmed so I will send out an email nearer to the time to confirm).

Emergency workers and mental health – Time to Change campaign (Izzy De Santis)

Mental health problems are common - but nearly nine out of ten people who experience them say they face stigma and discrimination as a result. This can be even worse than the symptoms themselves. Time to Change is England's biggest programme to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination.

We know that 1 in 4 people in the UK will experience a mental health problem in any given year. But independent research shows that an estimated quarter of a million who work and volunteer in the emergency services are more at risk of experiencing a mental health problem than the general population, but are less likely to get support.

The Blue Light Programme is a major new programme of mental health support being developed by Mind for emergency services staff and volunteers from police, fire, ambulance and search and rescue services across England.

Early in 2015 Time to Change and Mind asked if there was anyone available from each of four emergency services, Mountain Rescue, Police, Ambulance and Fire Service and who had experience of mental health issues if they would be willing to share their experiences on film to be part of a campaign to challenge stigma and encourage others in these services who need it to get support. I had suffered from severe mental ill health for a number of years and the team had always been supportive and always recognised my abilities as a team member and didn't judge. This was an important and integral part of my recovery and because of this I felt it was really important to share my experience and therefore volunteered for the campaign. The link below shows one of the films that was made with help from some other team members too. I would encourage anyone who may be struggling to take that step and seek support and please don't give up until you get the support you need.

Search and rescue team members Izzy and David talk about the importance of an open culture in the workplace and how it can truly benefit someone experiencing a mental health problem. Copy and paste this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ms_EMEB-4dw&index=4&list=PLW8cG1kJhcveipWvnBaw8S5FQfO6OkIca



TEESDALE AND WEARDALE SEARCH AND MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM

Favourite Walk – Slit wood, Westgate in Weardale (Scott Bissett)

Park in the layby on the main road nr telephone box at GR 906 381 and take the path through 'the weeds' next to the chapel or take the T junction signposted Rookhope and park in front of the large building, known as the Band Hall, (now flats) at GR 907 383.

Walk between the large building and the white house to its left. Pass the cottage with the rounded wall on your left, folk lore has it that some of this stone was taken from the ruins of Westgate castle which was situated approx.100mtrs S.W. and was the base for the prince bishop's hunting ground.

This cottage was also my childhood home. Pass through the gate and head towards Mill house, to the rear of the house and partially hidden by conifers is the old wheel pit where the water wheel was housed.

Once through the gate the walk really starts with beautiful waterfalls on your left.100m further on there is another set of smaller falls and a small flat area known locally as the favourite place, for obvious reasons. A little further on cross the first wooden bridge and once over, find another picnic spot on the right with large table rock. Carry on and another bridge takes you across the stream again, this is Middlehope burn. Carrying on along the path look out for hazelnuts (ready in Sept) you will soon come to another gate, which, once through opens out into what is known as the mine workings. The walls on your right are remains of bousteads, where mined ore would have been deposited. Around the corner and a series of arches cover the river and remnants of mining industry can be seen. Once a hive of industry but now a tranquil place to take a break. On the left a concrete slab now covers what was a huge open shaft when I was young, and behind it a large wheel pit where a large water wheel would have driven machinery. On your right there was probably another wheel and a crushing plant.

You now have several options:

- (1) retrace your steps.
- (2) take the track up to your right which will take you through ancient spoil heaps and onto the road where upon turning right will take you back to Westgate with a beautiful viewing point before descending 'Peat hill'.
- (3) carry on forward and enjoy more scenery, passing more old mine workings, including a washing floor, settling ponds and finally an old arched mine entrance at GR 905 398 with crystal clear water running from it. This is Whites level, one of the longest and richest lead mines in the area. A couple of hundred metres further on (watch out for boggy area) a track goes up to the right, this meets another track, again take a right and this will bring you onto the road above the exit point of option 2. Take time to have a look at the quarry opposite as this is a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

HOWEVER..before taking any of these options you MUST take the grassy track from the mine workings up to the left. After a short but steep climb you will come to Slit dam, a man-made reservoir to feed the wheels of industry below. This is my favourite place in the world! Sit on the edge of the dam and take in the views of the workings below, the landscape above and over towards Swinhope and further up the dale to Chapel fell.

A stunning place where I have spent many hours and hope to spend many more!

A timely reminder that the days are now shorter and to check that your kit is ready for winter. Have you packed a head torch and spare batteries in case you're caught out after dark? Do you have a spare/extra warm layer of clothing in your bag? If you haven't already, it's time to put the hat and gloves in as well!



TEESDALE AND WEARDALE SEARCH AND MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM

An Iceland summer (David Bartles-Smith)

Over the past four years Izzy and I have lead over 20 youth expeditions to mountain, jungle, desert and river environments. This has included UK, South African and Australian schools with multiple trips to Iceland, Croatia and Morocco and also Namibia, South Africa, Botswana, Malawi, Swaziland, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and Borneo. Lots of unique challenges on the way but at the end of the day it all comes down to experience, good leadership and risk management skills. Our involvement over the years with TWSMRT has contributed significantly to this and there is often not much difference between leading a group of teenagers through dense jungle and being part of a search group on Cross Fell at night! I guess we should all reflect upon volunteering with TWSMRT and think about our learning experiences and how valuable they can be, not just to yourself but others as well.

Summer 2015 was busy. After an expedition to Croatia, rafting, kayaking and trekking with an additional needs group, Izzy and I lead a primary school expedition to Iceland. This was a first for our business and what a treat it was. The highlight being an ascent of Brennisteinsalda. This is a volcano in the south central highlands around landmannalagar. Spring and summer have been very cold in Iceland and the late snows still lay up to 3m deep. Our expedition camp was in a magnificent setting and just a few hundred metres from lovely hot bathing springs, and it was great for the children to meet up with trekkers from all over the world.



A quick turnaround in the UK and I was back out to northern Iceland for 4 weeks as Chief Leader for a British Exploring Society Expedition. We were to be self-sufficient for 24 days in the interior just north of the Askja volcano. I had a team of 18 staff to manage. This comprised of leaders, a base camp manager and two Doctors. There were over 40 young people taking part split into 4 expedition groups. The objectives were split across three phases. A mountain expedition, a river and waterfall expedition and a volcano expedition on the Askja massif. I also had a landrover with big wheels! To this we added satellite phones, GPS and rescue kit.

My first task was to lead a small team on a three day recce to review risk assessments and find out what conditions were like high up. Full winter conditions met us (there had yet to be a thaw of the winter snow pack above 1000m)and even back at base camp fresh snow was falling. We did though find a route that would be Ok and over the next three weeks all the teams achieved their objectives, with reasonably OK weather, although a three day stretch tent bound in high winds and rain and 3c was mind numbing!



TEESDALE AND WEARDALE SEARCH AND MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM



Some interesting facts: wide rivers are easy to drive through, narrow rivers are deep. We nicknamed one innocuous looking river 'cheeky river' as in the middle we found a trench! We saw a kayaker go over a 20 m waterfall and reappear! He was Swedish, apparently well known. A 15 km drive following a so called 'route' across a lava field can take 5 hours. The temperature of the river at our base camp was 1c. Met a French team who were carrying a barrel of red wine. I had to instigate two searches. We had one case of hypothermia (dealt with in field), two broken hands and two broken teeth. This required four evacuations to Akureyri hospital. A plane crashed nearby. Met an Austrian who had a roll of bin bags as his waterproofs! Watched an Arctic fox creep into a tent.



Our rest and relaxation phase took us to the Austari Jokulsa river and a bizarre encounter with a community of Nepali rafting guides lead by Anup. Add in an Irish Canadian, a Kenyan and a sprinkling of crazy Icelanders and the scene was set. We camped outside their hut and spent three days there. See youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wd9GrwohaxA> The best secret was how the rafts were extracted from the gorge! You will have to go there to see it!

Once the teams were on the way back to Reykjavik we counted out over 100 unused 24 hour ration packs. I then arranged to meet up with a friend, Ragnar (ICESAR) and these packs are now ready to go with ICESAR's overseas earthquake search team.

Back home but you still can't beat our own landscape and roll on the winter exercises in the high Pennines. Next stops for us; Izzy is leading her fifth expedition into the Atlas mountains of Morocco and I am leading a group across the mountains of Madagascar.



TEESDALE AND WEARDALE SEARCH AND MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM

On 8th August the Team gratefully received a cheque from Evenwood Road Runners who have raised a fantastic £4190 for us!

A total of 40 relay runners completed the coast to coast (144 miles!) route in 23 hours. The funds will go towards replacing the Teams ageing control vehicle (photographed below).

Many thanks to all of the runners from all of Teesdale and Weardale Search and Mountain Rescue Team.





TEESDALE AND WEARDALE SEARCH AND MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM

TEAM CALL OUTS JUL - OCT 2015



09.00 18/09/2015	The Team were asked to support the continuing large scale North Pennine search in the Crosby Ravenstone area for a missing female with Alzheimers who had taken her dog for a walk two days early and not been seen since. A body and the missing dog (who was unhurt) were found by the Team near the M6 - just over 4km from her home.
02.00 12/09/2015	Call to assist Penrith MRT to search for missing male hiker on Cross Fell who had got lost. Team stood down when Penrith found the walker.
18.00 03/08/2015	Team called to search for a pair of poorly equipped paddlers, paddling on the river Tees from Croft near Darlington. The missing persons were reported as 2 hours overdue. The Team were stood down whilst assembling when the missing paddlers turned up safe and well.
10.00 17/07/2015	Continuation of the search for Darren Lawler. Focused on the Carrs nature reserve and the area East of the main rail line adjacent to the Thrislington works. Search was with canoes, Water technicians and land searchers, In very difficult conditions. Unfortunately nothing was found.