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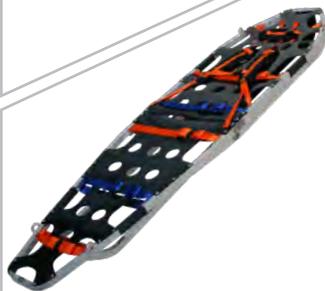


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All Adverts are independent of the OMRT but please show them support.  
As far as we know the information in this booklet is correct.  
The contents of the articles do not necessarily reflect the team views.

Designed by *Jamie Beard* of SAR Products Ltd.

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## Message from the Editor

It was late December 2013 when Mick phoned me and asked if I would take up the editing of a 50th Anniversary booklet for the team. I reluctantly said yes and started asking a number of team members, past and present, if they would write something about how they came to join the team, their time and experiences. It took far longer than I expected but for those who replied, this is their story.



Dave Allport  
in the Costa Blanca Mountains

My own involvement with mountain rescue started in 1962 at Eskdale Outward Bound school in the Lakes and then the 4 Inns rescue in 1964. It was the latter that resulted in the formation of the Peak District Mountain Rescue Organisation and the Oldham Team. I eventually joined Oldham in the Easter of 1971. Since then I have been very lucky because I turned what was an interest into a career and later into a business. Over the years this has been the pattern for a number of team members.

During 2014 groups of team members spent many hours planning four major events to mark our 50th Anniversary: a school's logo competition; a sponsored abseil; an open day and a special dinner. All four were very successful and a credit to the organisers.

For the members the highlight was our anniversary dinner. This was marred by the untimely death of J. D. (Jim M Duffy), the key organiser. For the group picking up the pieces and sorting through the paper work was, I am sure, especially hard but they did an excellent job and a great time was had by all. Apart from the speeches, hearing the old stories delivered whilst leaning on the bar was a unique opportunity to get some of them direct from the horse's mouth.

Before you read further I think I should explain briefly what a Mountain Rescue Team is, for those who might be wondering why there is a mountain rescue team in Oldham, of all places.

Essentially it is a group of volunteers who are prepared to help people in difficulties in remote or wild places. The key word is 'Team' and the members are an extended family of people who train, work (and play) together as unpaid professionals. Mainly on our moors or mountains of course but sometimes in inner city areas too. It may be an interest or even a hobby but they work at times and in conditions when most normal people are trying to get off the hill or are fast asleep in a warm bed. After a call-out they have to return to their normal

jobs. Employers only get a thank you for allowing them to go but some are even prepared to pay their wages. Others and any who are self employed have to make up any time and money lost.

As you read through these pages you will notice that there have been considerable developments in all aspects of mountain rescue. We have moved from using private cars to specially prepared vehicles. Rescue and medical equipment has advanced steadily, something we expect to continue. To have been part of the ongoing development of the team over my forty three years has been a real joy and something I will always remember.

In the early days a call out was a phone call or, for those that did not have one getting knocked up by the Police. Call-outs were made by the team leader in a pyramid cascade so no individual was stuck on the phone whilst trying to get ready. Eventually we used three call-out officers. My wife Dorene, Val Littlewood and Lorraine Broadbent the then team leaders wife. If it was at night they had been awakened by the call and the noise we made getting ready. With luck they might just make up a flask for their respective partner as Dorene did for me. Today call outs come from the emergency services via SARCALL. Using the modern miracles of mobile phones, pagers and the internet. Detailed information is quickly distributed to everyone and team members can easily reply with their availability.

Fundraising has always been important and we are especially grateful to those individuals, organisations and companies who have supported us over the years. We owe a special thank you to those who have taken advertising space within this publication. Please try and support them whenever you can.

I offer a special thank you to all those who came up with their really great stories and for the time and effort they have put into the preparing them. I would also like to say that the people asked were largely chosen at random so don't feel slighted if you weren't approached.

Whilst every effort has been taken to ensure accuracy, much depended on long and shaky memories. Any views expressed may not necessarily be the current views or the policies of the team.

The final thanks go to Pete Hyde for checking all the articles, suggestions, some changes and photographs, Barry Pelmore for finding all the advertisers, this will help pay for the printing, to Jo-Anne, our Treasurers wife for the final read and grammatical corrections. (no one got 10 out of 10) and finally to SAR Products Ltd for allowing Jamie Beard the time to create the book's layout, design and artwork.

Thank you for reading our stories and for your donation.

Dave Allport.

## 50th Anniversary - Who do you see

Who do you see, mate, who do you see,  
At the 50th reunion, as as you look over at me?  
An old man at times, with no tact and some say not very wise,  
With predictable habits and very keen eyes.

Will you listen to my stories, of epics untold,  
of fifty pound rucksacks and incredible cold,  
Does an element of truth seem difficult to find,  
Does the need to be elsewhere, come seriously to mind.

Is that what you're thinking? Is that what you see?  
Then open your eyes mate, you're not looking at me,  
If you only look closer, you'll be able to see,  
A glimpse of a life, that once used to be.

A team novice in my twenties, with wings on my feet,  
A new world of rescue, and friendships to greet,  
Stretchers and descenders, were to become my passion,  
Our clothing, I recall, was never in fashion.

New fears and responsibilities there are aplenty,  
From novice to secretary and then to deputy,  
The thrill of the Rescue, and the comradeship found,  
Are a cocktail of intoxication, easy to down.

So now I am older, and nature is cruel,  
The knees, they crumble, strength and speed depart,  
But now and again, this battered heart swells,  
I remember the joy, I remember the pain,  
With all the team members at the 50th Dinner and Open Day bash,  
I was living it, all over again.

I think of those MR years, all passed so fast,  
And I accept, the best things in life do not last,  
But I was a player, on the mountains and valleys of life,  
Who designed and developed, and got it right once or twice,  
So look over mate, look closer and see,  
Not just an old man,  
See Me.

## The Team Past and Present

### The Past:



Date: 19??



Date: 1969

The pictures show the team on standby at the back of the Clarence Hotel and the team in Greenfield on exercises up Chew valley.

### The Present:



Full Team for 50th Anniversary  
(A few missing due to holidays)



# Meet The Team

## Team Leaders:

Alan Holt - 1964-65, Ian Barrell - 1965-67 Charlie Blades - 1967-69,  
 Bob Tait - 1969-70, Peter Hyde - 1970-72 Dan Roberts - 1972-74,  
 David Broadbent - 1974-86, Jim Duffy - 1986-92 Mick Nield - 1992-Present

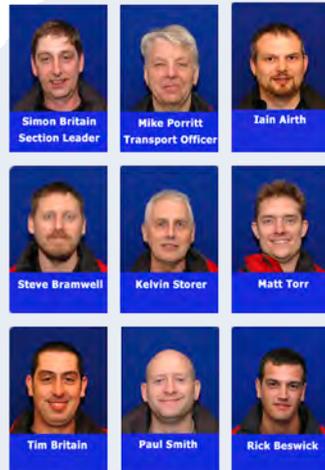
## The Current Team



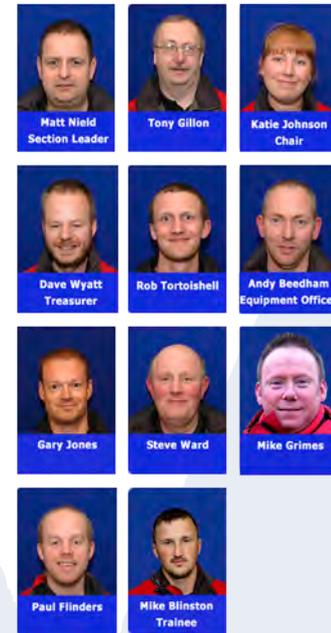
## Section 1



## Section 2



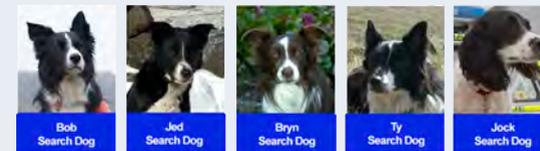
## Section 3



## Section 4



## Search Dogs



## Lake District Section



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## A Brief History: Peter Hyde

Travel to Greenfield, Saddleworth and park your car at Dove Stone Reservoir. Take a stroll along the track past the southern edge of the reservoir and follow it in a south easterly direction as it climbs the left side of Chew Valley until you reach Chew Reservoir which, when completed in 1912, was the highest reservoir in England. From there follow the track along the southern edge of the reservoir and then south east again until you are standing on top of Laddow Rocks. You are now at the spot where, in 1928, the aftermath of a severe climbing accident triggered events which led to the formation of the Mountain Rescue Committee and the UK's voluntary mountain rescue service.



Initially the committee provided the equipment that served as a self help system. Rescue equipment cached in strategic locations called Mountain Rescue Posts was available for anyone to help injured people in remote areas. In Greenfield a mountain rescue post was located at Ashway Gap House and later at the briefing centre at the Dove Stone car park when the house was demolished. There are no longer any mountain rescue posts. After the Second World War mountain rescue teams started to form in areas where rescues were frequently carried out by local people. Today, under the umbrella of Mountain Rescue England and Wales there are forty-eight mountain and cave rescue teams. Similar organisations provide the service in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Fatal incidents in 1963 and 1964 led to the formation of the Peak District Mountain Rescue Organisation with the aim of creating teams to provide a search and rescue service in the Peak District National Park. Oldham was one of the teams. Originally formed within the Scout Association it is now an independent charity and a company limited by guarantee. The team covers rescues in our local part of the Peak District as well as the rural and urban areas of Greater Manchester. The team is available to work with other teams in their area and occasionally travels further afield. In October 2012 the team travelled to Wales to help with the search for April Jones.

The team works in partnership with Greater Manchester Police, North West Ambulance Service and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service. Besides obvious mountain rescue activities, the team is available as a back up during severe weather, major incident or where our specialist skills and equipment may be of value.

The team is very well equipped with a fleet of four vehicles: two four by four ambulances, an ambulance/control vehicle and a minibus. Over the years, the team has been in a unique position in being able to work alongside

## A Brief History: Peter Hyde

manufacturers developing modern equipment and techniques which allow challenging rescues to be attempted efficiently with minimum risk to rescuers, casualties and the equipment. 'The Oldham Weekend' has been an annual event for 27 years which aims to give other search and rescue organisations the opportunity to try our techniques, share experiences and contribute towards continuous improvement.

The vehicles carry a comprehensive range of modern rescue and medical equipment but it is our fifty team members who form the most important resource. Their enthusiasm, time and money are selflessly given for the benefit of others.

Our search dogs are invaluable when the team is searching for missing people because they are able to cover large areas of ground speedily and efficiently. They are frequently called to assist with searches in other areas.

All organisations have to go through challenges, experience the highs and lows, and, sometimes the fun that life throws at them. Over the last 50 years there have been plenty of each. We don't have detailed records of incidents before 1992 because they were lost in a fire at our HQ - one of those lows. Since then the team has attended over 800 incidents and in the last seven years alone has assisted over 700 people.

The work undertaken by the team is potentially hazardous and, whilst we have had an excellent safety record spanning over 50 years, the identification of potential risks and looking at how we might manage them is an important part of our management group's responsibility. The team has a documented safety policy that is available to all team members.

When the phone rings or the pager goes off at the start of an incident everyone feels that anxious few minutes wondering what the next few hours will bring. Twenty-five years ago the team were in Scotland helping to recover the debris from Pan Am flight 103 blown up over Lockerbie a job on such a huge scale and impact that it will be remembered through history. Sometimes outcomes are not what everyone hoped for and the team comes up against the personal grief of the casualties family and friends. On the other hand the greatest reward is the relief and obvious gratitude shown by the individuals who are assisted and returned to their families. In recent winters, snow and ice has give the emergency services many additional problems, particularly for the ambulance service with difficulties reaching isolated patients. For the police it is with road closures and people trapped in cars on lonely moorland roads. During the winter of 2009/10 the team worked round the clock for four weeks and were dubbed the 'Angels of the Snows'.

The highs? It has to be the banter and camaraderie that inevitably manifests itself within a group of people who are sharing the discomfort of a cold wet and windy trudge over local moorland or somewhere less obvious like the local park.

Fund raising in the current financial climate is uncertain. Nationally, the public donates 98% of the funds needed by the mountain rescue teams that serve the UK. Recently the remaining 2% has come from government sources. The Oldham team therefore relies heavily on public donations to meet its running expenses and needs in the region of £30,000 each year. It comes from a wide range of activities, from collecting tins in local pubs and shops to unsolicited donation and bequests. The 'Friends of Oldham Mountain Rescue Team' are a small group of individuals and companies who are interested in supporting the work we do with a modest subscription rather than spending a wet and windy night on Saddleworth Moor. The team owes a huge debt of gratitude to all the organisations who support our work through various forms of sponsorship.



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# Letters from our Patrons

From Mercia Millhench:  
Sent - December 2014

Just a line, or two, to tell you why I have supported Oldham Mountain Rescue for the last 20 years.

From our sad loss, we realised how important your team was and what danger you all put yourselves through, to assist the endangered and lost.

We hope that the future holds many years ahead for the team. Brilliant for the first half century, there must be thousands of "thank you's" from all the hearts and lives that you touch during the day to day rescues etc. All the team really deserve them, we agree totally.

Wishing all, the team a very happy Christmas and New Year, a year of health and kindness.

Yours Sincerely,

One of your proud Patrons,

Mercia.



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## From our 'Matron', Derek Keegan

Plums are the new Hill Food!

First things first, Christmas 2014, is just around the corner, I'd love to have the money or wherewithal to buy the new version of the Mercedes 220 CDI Estate. It is a sensational drive and gorgeous to look at. Over here in Ireland this is Help the Aged week so if any of you Oldham Mountain Rescue chaps want to assist this particular old aged pensioner and support your ageing Matron, sorry Patron, and you happen to win the lotto I will accept sterling even though I live in Euro land. So that's the dreaming and the delusion out of the way. No, I'd better be a bit sensible. Where did I put that glass of wine?



Derek Keegan  
in the Costa Blanca Mountains

Now your team is 50 years young, can you just imagine the technology that will be there over the next 50 years. Folks will still be wandering around Saddleworth and Dovestones and they will still need rescuing - maybe a bit more about the technology later. As many of you know, Dave Allport (DA) Dr Andy and another Dave from Northern Ireland, and myself, are now climbing mountains, some of them big awkward bitches in the Calpe area of the Costa Blanca, on a regular basis; twice maybe even three times a year. On the most recent trip, last month, I followed DA across the Ferrer Ridge. Now let me tell you, I have climbed some ridges in my time: Crib Goch in Wales; hundreds of times; the Cullin ridge on Skye and many others, but this was the first time I had to ask myself, what the hell am I doing at my age, following this older gentleman, over this particular route? Let me explain, that what we were on was one and a half meters wide, probably a 500 feet vertical drop to our left and to the right was just fresh air. This definitely, was no place for horse drawn caravans. Anyway, I followed my leader and he got us down safe, into a little Spanish bar. The bill for four bottles of Carlsberg, two brandies, and one coca cola came to ten Euro. Taking advantage of the moment, he asked me to put pen to paper for this publication. I was still recovering from the route, so naturally enough I agreed. Keep it short, he said, you tend to wander around in circles when you're writing, just like Billy Connolly on stage trying to finish one of his stories

I first met your team, by invite of course from DA in 1983, a long time ago. In those far off days, I was a Deputy Team Leader with An Oige Mountain Rescue Team, for those of you who don't speak the Gaelic, that's the Irish Youth Hostel Association MRT. We were over in, what was then, the Troll Safety Equipment factory, in Spring Street Uppermill. I can't remember all the details but I had previously met Dave at Bangor University North Wales at what was only the

second MR Conference run by the Mountain Rescue Council (MRC). Naturally enough they showed us all the wonderful rescue kit they were manufacturing at the time. The following year, ten of us broke away from An Oige, and formed Dublin Wicklow MRT (DWMRT) and like Oldham, we have just celebrated our 30th.

I do recall returning back to Troll in 1988 working with Bill Vinton, Eddie Perry and others. This once again, was with DWMRT members, and being told of the advances and opportunities, that were possible at the time due to the introduction of the mobile phone industry, it took me another three years to be convinced before I became the Troll distributor for the island of Ireland in 1991. We are now almost in the year 2015, and I continue to draw on the professionalism, support and guidance of DA which has helped me build my business over almost 25 years based on Dave's and Dr Andy's original and combined designs and systems. Even if he does bring me over dodgy ridges at times. As mentioned earlier, I first became involved with some of your team members in 1983. Allow me to fill you in, with regards to how ice axes, wet socks, and soggy Vibram soled boots, became part of my everyday life and eventually developed into 48 years of involvement in Mountain Rescue.

In 1948 I was two years of age and an only child. After the unexpected death of my mother my father sold up the family home and brought me back to live with his mother, his seven sisters, his two brothers, and the family dog called Rinty - named after Rinty Monaghan a famous boxer of that era I was told. That was eleven of us in a small house with four very small bedrooms, one rusty bath, one toilet and no fixed wash hand basin. We shared a plastic one and, you know, we all managed as you have to. Christmas was really magic, I grew up thinking that it was normal to get three bikes, four train sets, and two Meccano kits. At least we could join all the train tracks together, and run the train from room to room. The adults seemed to be on the floor just as much as I was playing with the trains or was it the Christmas drink. When Easter came along, living with all this lot and the only child in the house I was up to my arse in Easter Eggs. I was five years of age, I was beginning to get old.

In 1966, at the age of 20 years I ran away to see the world. After all, would you have stayed in that house? I joined the RAF thinking they would send me to Singapore, Hong Kong, Sharjah, Bahrain, Cyprus, or even Gibraltar ...! The Air Force sent me to, wait for it, Holyhead. And that was the beginning of what I now refer to as my 'world family of mountain rescue friends'. Each Wednesday and every week-end I would watch this group of lads, some younger, some older, drive off station in their bright and shiny Land Rovers and Bedford three ton trucks - my life was about to change. After a three week trial period I was given a second hand and leaky red Ventile anorak, ah yes-but it had a mountain rescue badge on the sleeve; I was now an MR Team Novice, with wings on my feet. So being given the privilege to write a few words I congratulate you all on the first 50 years and as I reflect on the past remember the recent words of one of my own team members when he said, "You're a knackered old man, and not Peter Pan any more". Mountain Rescue in those early days, involved lots of sweat, helped along with a little Whirlwind helicopter fuel. Of course, I was only a fresh faced



youth with a feeling of being involved in a growing national association. My only concerns, were to avoid being thrown into the nearest river or being run over the hills the following day by my team leader for getting the rest of my hill party lost on the hill. No GPS in those days, just bog standard map and compass work. Innocent days indeed when the only transferable disease I was aware of, was the foot and mouth epidemic of 1967.

Your team was founded in 1964, two years before I went into the RAF. The landlord in the Cross Keys was Arthur Lees but I'm not sure if he was related to the Brewery family. It was the year the Beatles had a number one hits with 'I Want to Hold your Hand' and 'She Loves You'. For all you older members on the team you will remember the lovely Elizabeth Taylor; she divorced Eddie Fisher and married Richard Burton just ten days later. For all you motor enthusiasts, in particular Barry, the ford Mustang was introduced. I can see Barry and Steph in one of these, open top and Barry with the white flowing silk scarf.

In recent years, I have been honoured by your team management with Honorary Patronage and I have attended your cliff rescue seminars for the past twenty years. I'm a slow learner but I'm beginning to get the hang of it now. Working with you in the quarry on Saddleworth Moor I noticed at one time there was a radio communications problem. Many different stories have been attributed to various people, concerning mountain rescue radio transmissions but perhaps, the best one I can remember concerns a long period of inactivity during a call-out. Those sitting at base were surprised when the radio crackled into life. "I'm bored" said a voice. The team leader who was at base at the time got to the microphone before anyone else knocking over a kettle of boiling water on the way. "Station calling base, identify yourself" - after a long pause, the reply came, "I'm not that bored".

I have watched your team advance in terms of rescue and medical skills. Your desire for progress, has been driven by enthusiasm and manifested itself in both internal and external training courses for your troops. I have recently attended one of your 'away from base' week-end programmes in Holyhead and was absolutely delighted to see that wives, partners, children, and dogs came along. I have seen you referred to as 'local heroes' I would rather see you referred to as 'Unpaid Professionals' with all the responsibilities that this entails. However, one thing I am sure has never changed in 50 years, the main qualities of your members has always been their teamwork, discipline and fitness. Attributes built by the sharing of adventures and epics, mars bars, beer, and, very sadly at times, your tragedies. In recent years, your team has lost loved ones and colleagues. I was particularly close to Jim Duffy who, on several occasions, spent time in Ireland with me. We laughed and drank beer together and he even came on one of my training courses in the north west of Ireland only to sustain a badly twisted ankle having just come back from one of his Himalayan trips. Keep in mind, what I have always said about all our MR members who have passed on; to us they are 'Still on the Hill'

In my opening words I questioned what will our MR technology be over the next 50 years? Hospital doctors will be able to see and talk to the casualty site by

video link, give specific advice on treatment and approved drug therapy for our team medics. We will be able to receive real time updating from rescue base via systems built into our helmets and Oldham MRT search drones will fly ahead to locate the casualty. The SAR Anti-Gravity stretcher will allow you to push the casualty down the hill without any back strain. DA is working on that one.

It has been a pleasure to write a few words for your publication and as we approach the new year, I wish you and all the team, especially your families, who over the years, have been disturbed at all hours of the day or night, waited and worried, a very happy, peaceful and safe new year.

So, now I am almost finished and Dave will be pleased I only mentioned the word 'so' once. Talk to him about it but order your beer first - it may take a minute or two. As regards the title above, about the 'Plums' when we were away climbing, DA recently introduced me to the Plum fruit at breakfast. The Spanish ones are the size of apples and are absolutely magic on the hill I now carry them all the time. I have just found where I put down my glass of wine. Bye for now.

Derek.



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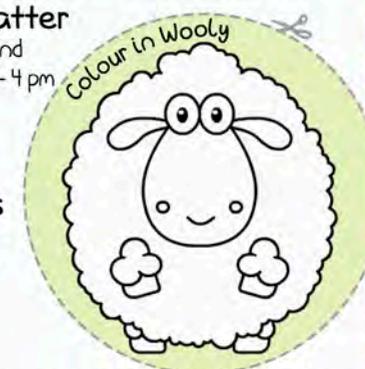
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## In the Beginning: Dave Allport

Oldham Mountain Rescue Team was formed in September 1964 and, like many other teams, it was due to one accident too many and the loss of three young lives.

In April 1964 the annual Four Inns Walk took place over the northern Peak District, taking in: the Isle of Skye Inn (site of), Snake Inn, Boars Head Inn and the Cat and Fiddle Inn over a distance of approximately 50 miles. This was held and run by the Derbyshire Rover Scouts and was open to all other Rover Scouts around the country. The sad deaths of three Rover Scouts on the 1964 event was a key reason for the formation of the Peak District Mountain Rescue organisation and the rescue teams based around the Peak District.



I got involved with this particular event little realising that fate would eventually see me getting involved with mountain rescue. I was working nights at the time and was due to start my first shift of the week on the evening of Monday 16th March 1964. On the weekend 14 -15 some of us from the rom the Seminole Rover Crew in Higher Blackley had been taking part in this walk along with members of the 199 Rover Crew, our neighbouring group. The Seminoles never took anything seriously and made everything fun but the four 199's were always out to win. They turned in a fast time of 11 hrs 7 mins. On the other hand, the Seminoles, wearing long johns with a Union Flag on the flap, bowler hats and carrying briefcases with their food duly won the prized 'Galvanised Bucket' for coming in last with an excellent time of around 24 hours which included a bus ride around Black Hill and Kinder Scout. The bus was chosen because weather conditions had deteriorated with zero visibility and rain turning to snow making their clothing unsuitable to continue.

Unfortunately they did not know about the drama unfolding on Bleaklow above Alport Dale. The Birmingham University 'A' team had descended unintentionally and well off the correct route to Grains-in-the-Water at the head of Alport Dale. At this point one of their team suffered a broken leg and suffering from exhaustion was unable to continue. One person stayed with the casualty and the other set off for help down Alport Dale. It was a long way to Alport Farm and the weather was now extremely bad. We were told that the farmer found the lad outside his farm gate and he had died of exposure. Several hours passed before rescuers could set off as they were already dealing with a casualty at Torside. At this time, the RAF were the only mountain rescue team and all the other rescuers were made up of police and volunteers, mainly Rover Scouts. They set off in darkness to find the remaining two members of the team. It seemed probable that, after the first casualty did not return, the one with the injured lad decided to

try and retrace their route. It was now dark and thick with snow and he could not cope with the conditions and died of exhaustion and hypothermia. When the first of the rescue teams started up Alport they found found the injured lad and he also had died of exposure and they took him down.

At 7.00am on the Monday three scouts (one my mate) from the 199 Rover came round to my home and asked if I would take part in the search for a missing scout. (Two of the three eventually became my brothers-in-laws). We duly arrived at Doctors Gate on the Snake Pass at around 8-30am and with three policemen, set off across the shoulder of Black Hill to get to the head of Alport Dale and search the drifts on the way down. The RAF team came up Alport and was searching from the top over to Doctors Gate and within about an hour we heard that they had found the casualty who, as expected, had probably died the same way as his friends. The RAF carried him down the Dale past us and we were instructed to return to Doctors Gate.

Thanks were exchanged for the help and we went to the first pub we could find at the bottom of the Snake. As last orders were rung for the afternoon closure at 3.00pm, we were 'locked in' as the landlord appreciated what we had done. I missed my shift that night, but work did not mind even though they stopped my pay.

After this event the rules were changed and you had to be dressed correctly for the hill including wearing boots and be in teams of four. The walk still goes on every March. Later that year the Oldham Rover Crew, who were also in attendance in the search, decided to start the Oldham Rover Mountain Rescue Team and seven years later I joined.

Early Mountain Rescue Team members came from all walks of life but usually belonged to a club or organisation with members interested in the great outdoors, whether walking or rambling, climbing, mountaineering or caving. From these beginnings you had a group of like-minded people that could work together as a team and trust in others that they partnered with. The tragic accident in the Four Inns race was the final accident for the start of the Peak District Mountain Rescue Organisation (PDMRO) and the Oldham Rover Mountain Rescue Team (now just Oldham Mountain Rescue Team).

The other major event that had sewn the seed was the 1963 avalanche in Wilderness Gully, Chew Valley. This was the first known avalanche to have caused death in the UK. This avalanche from what I have been told, started the East Lancashire Fell Rescue Team, the first Oldham based team, but it never really got off the ground. It was given some gear by Oldham council, one piece being a fold up stretcher that was later passed on to our newly formed team ORMRT.

So others understood the seriousness of the 1963 avalanche, Alan Waterhouse an Ex Team member and Director of Troll Safety Equipment Ltd was present and on the rescue when at that time he worked for the waterboard. The following is his memory of those two days.

# In the Beginning: Alan Waterhouse

On Sunday 20th January 1963 there had been blizzard conditions all night and deep-lying drifting snow. I was at the Waterman's house at Ashway Gap when a phone call at 1pm from Chew House told us of an avalanche in Wilderness Gully in Chew Valley and two climbers were buried in the snow. The police and ambulance had been sent for. Frank Whitehead and I walked over to the old Scout hut to wait for the ambulance. Eight climbers were there sheltering from the blizzard and could not believe there had been an avalanche but were eventually convinced when the ambulance arrived with two canvas and wood stretchers and a set of oxygen cylinders in a square box weighing about 30lb.



Chew House 1920: Saddleworth Museum Archives



Wilderness gully in Winter

We all set off up to Wilderness Gully. The ambulance men had no bad weather gear so the trek up was very challenging and took over an hour. At the base of the gully the avalanche snow was 40 feet wide and 15 to 20 feet deep. The only equipment we had between us was 10 ice axes to probe the snow. We walked the ambulance men up to Chew House as conditions were so bad and brought back four shovels to the site. Whilst at Chew House we phoned Uppermill police to request more equipment but there was none available. At about 4pm a party of police cadets arrived but with little further equipment. Digging and probing went on until police called off the search at 12.30am Monday as there was no hope of finding the climbers alive. We all went down to Greenfield Paper Mill where hot drinks and food was provided for all the rescuers. Later that morning we all went back to the site with more help from police, some air cadets and more climbers. The bodies were recovered mid-morning on Monday and carried down.

A lack of avalanche knowledge and very little equipment severely hampered the rescue.

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## How The Team Was Formed

The following is from a meeting held between Ian Barrell and Dave Riley on 7 January 2014. Ian was the District Rover Scout Leader at the time and this is his recollection of the period during which the Oldham District Rover Crew formed the Rescue Team.

It was in 1957 that the first 4 Inns Walk was organised by 51st. Derby St Lukes (California) Rover Scout Crew when approximately 30 rovers set out in groups to walk 50 miles of the difficult terrain that the peak district could provide. The route started in Holmfirth and visited 4 pubs: the Isle of Skye, Snake Inn, the Nags Head and finished at the Cat and Fiddle near Buxton. The event grew year by year and by 1964 80 teams of three took part.

The 1964 Four Inns Walk was held during the weekend of 14 - 15 March. On the Saturday of the walk 3 competitors lost their way due to atrocious weather conditions. A public appeal was put out over the media asking for volunteers to help with the search for the missing people, all were assumed to be Rover Scouts.

Ian Wright, who was a member of the Oldham Rover Crew contacted as many members of the Crew he could (most people did not have telephones and so some knocking on doors would have taken place). A collective decision was taken that the Crew could muster a search party. This party assembled at Oldham's Baden Powell (BP) Centre on the Sunday morning and set off for Glossop police station.

The search party was made up of the following Rovers: Ian Barrell, Ian Wright, Alan Holt, Graham Wallis, Simon Platt, Peter Waite, a friend of Peter Waite, Charlie Blades and John Hyland, plus three to five other Rovers whose names are not to hand. The Crew then helped all day Sunday in the search but were unsuccessful in their efforts.

On the following Thursday, 19th March, the Rover Crew held their weekly meeting at the BP Centre. At this meeting the previous Sunday's events were discussed and Ian Wright (who had some connection with the disbanded East Lancashire Mountain Rescue Team run by one Ted Bennett) proposed that the Crew should form a mountain rescue team.

This was voted on and the proposal passed and The Oldham Rover Mountain Rescue Team was formed.

Additional notes not sent out: A 'fold up stretcher was received from the disbanded East Lancashire Mountain Rescue Team. Oldham Council through Bob Watt (youth organiser for Oldham Council) donated the first Thomas stretcher. The first call out was to help look for a missing waterman in Calder Valley. A training day was held with Glossop MRT run by Ray Davis. Rover Scouts were disbanded in 1968 by the Scout Association.

Rover Scouts: David Jackson (secretary); Julian Smith (?); Bob Felton; Richard Taylor; Stuart Chadderton (now in South Africa).



# Seeds of Change

By Dave Allport

From the beginning the Oldham Mountain Rescue Team used old Civil Defence systems of rope rescue along with some alpine methods picked up from books mixed and developed around the stretchers and descenders of the time. These systems were mainly lowering with many ropes and being reliant on the grip and reliability of the top operator. The systems themselves were not a problem, the main problems were keeping all ropes moving at the same rate so there was no imbalance and maintaining radio comms with the rescuers on the sharp end. In other words control and reliability.

As you can see from these early photographs there were no harnesses and what classed as a harness was a length of hemp or nylon washing line wrapped around your waist a few times. If you were being lowered you could use a triple bowline and adjust it so you had leg and waist loops to make a simple sit harness. As you might expect, it wasn't comfortable. The other thing noticeable is the lack of helmets and working on the crag with a cigarette in the mouth. (check shirt).



Vertical lower with control at the top.



Horizontal with the control at the bottom and looping through karabiners on the crag top.



Horizontal lower with control at the top and two barrow boys wearing rope harnesses.



A single rope Tragesitz lower using the special harness that links to a full body harness the rescuer is wearing.



Tragesitz using two-rope lowering and the triple bowline as a harness.

From these early days of rescue the team moved on with more modern equipment and although the techniques were similar they were more refined with the new gear and ropes as you can see in the following photos. However there was still a desire to get more freedom.



A horizontal lower on Indian's Head controlled from the top using the Thomas stretcher and a large sling so that we could get the casualty in easily. (1974)



Horizontal lower using two barrow boys - but in this case girls. (1984)

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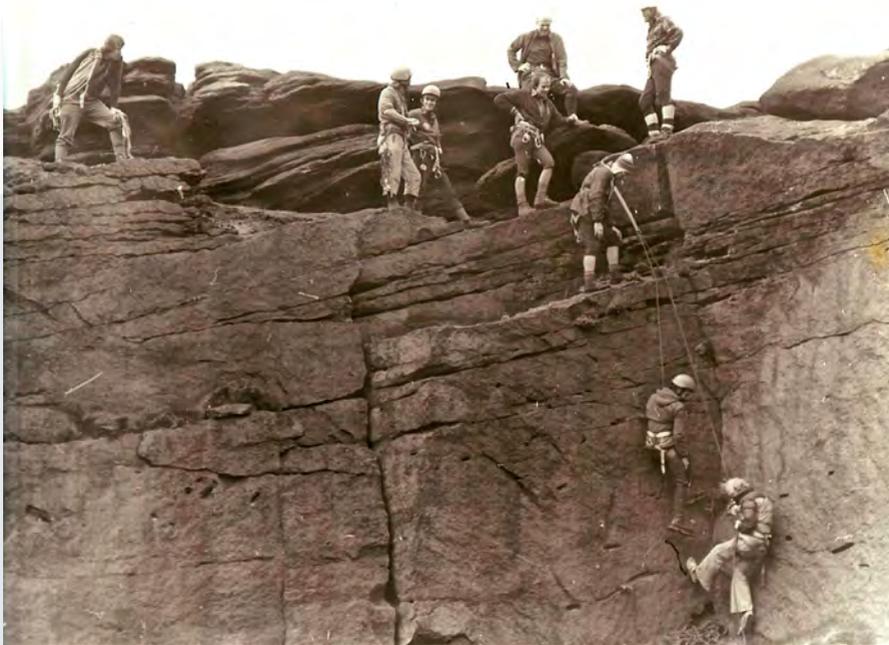
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In the summer of 1979 Paul Seddon, a team member and Director of Troll Products (a leading manufacturer of sports climbing equipment), was asked by the Scottish Forestry Commission if there was a way to rescue a tree-surgeon hanging from his own rope from a tree. Paul came up with an idea and on the next OMRT training session in Upperwood Quarry he tried it out with help from me as the casualty. We tried a number of ways, but they all used a system of counterbalance which used your weight against that of the casualty. Both people were linked together with the controlling descender device on the rescuer, Paul. The device had been designed by a friend of his, Keith Lewis, for caving and called, appropriately, 'The Lewis'. It was the very first auto-lock that could be used for twin ropes because cavers sometimes wished to retrieve the rope after descending when doing through trips in cave systems.



Paul was the rescuer (without helmet & flares), I was the Casualty with helmet, Deputy Team leader Bill Birch and above him Dave Broadbent TL (both no helmets). They had thick skulls in those days or they thought they did.

This system triggered an idea. The end of two ropes were tied to each end of a stretcher and one of these devices was also connected at the stretcher, with the rope passing from the stretcher up through a karabiner at the top belay point and the tail end passing back to the stretcher and threaded through the Lewis descender device. Doing this would produce the same system, but now two men could lower the stretcher and control the descent rate actually from the stretcher rather than being lowered with the control at the top. After a couple of tries it was found that the moving rope going both up and down over the edge at the same time was causing more gravel and bits to fall on the stretcher operators and the casualty.

I went away and came up with an idea of anchoring the rope to the top and having the Lewis descender on the stretcher and the operating barrow boys connected to each descender by means of a short sling. There would be no moving rope and the descent was controlled at the stretcher and not from the top - reducing the system to two operatives rather than four. The system was tried and it was like a comedy act on the crag face.

Bill Seville and John Gardner volunteered to have a go at being the barrow boys (Rescuers) and Alan Smith, the First Aider, helped with the casualty's loading onto the stretcher. You can see from the photo John was struggling with the release handle with his gloves. Once the control was worked out all seemed to go well until we decided to put a casualty on the stretcher.

The volunteer casualty was Roger Kennedy (who later joined the Mid-Pennine Rangers). At this point we had already started to use a Haltrac (a mini pulley system from Halfords that was normally used for lifting car engines) for loading casualties.

The venue was under the overhang in Upperwood Quarry. All was going well until J. G. stood on the corners of the stretcher trying to try to pull Roger along to his end because the hauling system was attached to the the head end ropes. He needed something to hold on to and grabbed the rope behind him. Unfortunately he grabbed the handle of the Lewis descender and did a triple pike somersault off the stretcher and only came to a stop when he released the Lewis descender with the stretcher at around 45°. Unfortunately there is no photograph of this. Roger was shouting about something but he was determined he was no longer being



the casualty. Meanwhile John was trying to work out what had happened whilst Bill and Alan couldn't stop laughing. When it all settled down they all turned to me and said my idea sucked; but I pointed out that the idea was good but the equipment needed altering so that a panic grab action would not activate the descender.



Both photos show the the horizontal lower using the old Sunderland stretcher, the Lewis descender and Haltrac.

All this was around the same time that I was asked at Troll if there was a rescue device that could be controlled by the evacuee off an oil rig into the sea. I suggested the Lewis descender but was told it had to be able to be pre-set at a descent rate because the evacuee may have burnt or badly injured hands.

My idea for a solution needed a prototype so I made the first one from balsa wood to see if it functioned correctly. Suitably encouraged, I made the very first 'ALLP' in our new extension bedroom using only a hacksaw, a file and a drill (the room was still an empty shell). The Allp was operated using a 6mm spanner. I showed it to Andy Taylor and made the first test descent off the roof rack of his Land Rover. It worked so Andy and I decided to make the first proper trial Allp's in his garage - he had a lathe and all the other tools we needed.



The very first ALLP



Second made at Andy's



The third prior to production



The final Production ALLP



How it looks today and still going strong.



Horizontal lower using the pro ALLP tech.



Cableway using the latest Alpine stretcher and controlling it using the pro ALLP tech.

The rest of this story about the Allp and the new design Alphin Stretcher is taken up in the :RESTECH section put together by Dave Knight, our Training Officer, and written by Dr. Andy Taylor our team Doctor. Dave is the author of Restech and spent many months of hard work putting it together, What follows is an introduction text to the RESTECH systems and how that came about




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Photography by Peter & Sara of Pixies in the Cellar -)

# Rope Rescue Techniques

## David Knight: OMRT Training Officer

The techniques were developed by the Oldham Mountain Rescue Team during the late 1970s and early 1980s. The catalyst; a desire to improve casualty care and comfort during crag/cliff evacuation, remove some of the problems associated with top lowered techniques and multiple moving ropes. The principle was simple enough, but at the time the equipment required to perform a safe, smooth, self-controlled descent of a fixed rope with a full rescue load was not available. Not only were the new techniques developed but also the equipment necessary too. Approximately fifteen years have passed since I first attempted to document the rope rescue techniques as used by Oldham Mountain Rescue Team. At the time I was very much aware that I was doing so by standing upon the shoulders of others. The majority of the original 'Restech' guide which first appeared in 1997 was an anthology attempting to record the expertise and knowledge held within the team. Many of the original contributors of source material are unknown, not having recorded their authorship, nevertheless, a debt of gratitude is owed for their unselfish efforts.

There has been a major re-write of the guide, so how much has changed? It is reasonable to state that very little is new in the world of rope and rope rescue techniques. Archimedes has been credited with the first recorded use of a pulley system with historic maritime influences probably accounting for many developments over the centuries now adapted to other purposes. Perhaps the last connection is very apt. It is generally accepted that a major influence upon the Oldham Team's decision to run the weekend crag rescue seminar was a direct result of team members participating in a similar course, which for many years, was held at Holyhead, Anglesey, by H.M Coastguard MRT83. (The course is sadly no longer available)

What has changed is the quality of the equipment available to rescue teams. The development of a variety of new and improved devices has allowed existing systems to be refined and to operate more efficiently. In some instances techniques tried previously and found to be impracticable due to the limitations of the equipment available at that time have now become feasible.

The Oldham team is fortunate to not only have members with active and inquisitive minds to seek out improvements, but also the engineering skills to bring these to fruition.



**Rescue from Wilderness Gully .....!**

# Technical Developments

## Dr Andy Taylor

### The Alphin Stretcher:

There was a feeling in Mountain Rescue in the 1970s that a new stretcher was required to supplement the Thomas and MacInnes models, even though the latter was designed to split for portage and the former had been adapted by several teams to split into halves. Bell in the Lakes developed a steel split-able stretcher and Sutherland in the Peak District designed a simpler structure. (The Sutherland stretcher, was basically a Thomas copy / development, produced locally in Saddleworth when the Thomas went out of manufacture, very few of these stretchers were made).



At this time Dave Allport, an engineer and member of the Oldham Mountain Rescue Team, was struck by the problems associated with moorland searches - namely that fixed-unit stretchers were so heavy as to be left in 'gear-dumps' during searches and called in only when the casualty was located (with consequent time delay), and that the split stretchers currently available were both heavy and awkward. More importantly, occasions had occurred where the two halves of the split stretcher became separated during the search or trek to the casualty location, resulting in unwarranted delay in evacuation. The concept of a single unit, folding for portage, and light enough for carrying on a search was born.

Lightness of weight was essential for prolonged searching. This resulted in dispensing with the large rectangular outline in favour of an outline restricted to the shape of the casualty.

Stiffness of structure was equally important, and a sturdy hinge was required. Dave came up with preliminary drawings but could find no-one interested in advancing the design or considering production of a prototype.

The Sutherland was being developed by a local firm who, in their words, were inundated at the time by young hopefuls with designs.

Dave Allport discussed this with myself, with an interest in engineering and a lathe and welding plant in my garage. Between us we decided to make a prototype, bought the material and cut and welded the first Alphin bed in 1983.

The concept of folding, not bed to bed but underside to underside, allowed the use of inter folding skis to reduce the fold depth to a similar depth to that of the open stretcher. The length was set at 6'6" (198 cm) to cope with increasing casualty height, and the shape was as economical in material as possible. This naturally led to a casualty-shaped (or coffin-shaped) outline.

The integrity of the structure was not impaired by the fold-ability, and the whole was subjected to stress analysis by my father, a retired air frame designer at AVRO/Hawker Siddeley, and it passed easily. It was a feature of the stretcher that the handles were removable as this reduced the carrying weight if required, and if astray were not the serious problem that a missing half stretcher presented.

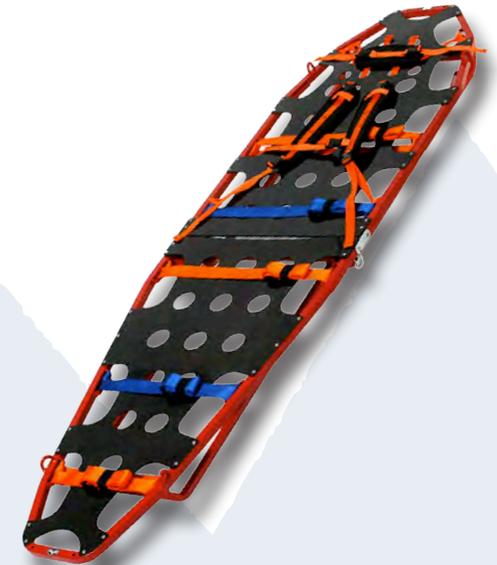
Attached folding handles were considered and rejected, and fixed, projecting handles were considered to be a hindrance in back packing.

The original bed was a wire mesh but proved difficult to anchor without the usual ridge at the fold-line and was replaced by a polycarbonate sheet. This raised many an eyebrow but confounded all criticism except blind conservatism.

The total weight of the stretcher was less than one half of any of the existing stretchers. The casualty fixation straps included a chest harness which doubled as the back-packing carrying straps, which with the low unit weight allowed the stretcher to be carried as a pack frame along with personal gear and permitted climbing and abseiling whilst carrying a whole stretcher. The frame shape had no protruding corners or handles to catch in overhangs, trees, etc.

Ironically it was the development of the horizontal evacuation system that led to the belief that the Alphin is a 'good crag stretcher' and few accept that it started life as a moorland search tool. Not only was it designed for minimum weight and maximum portability, but its reduced width and inboard skis permit easier path following. With handles fitted it permits carrying by from two to ten men, although the Oldham team's preferred crew is seven men. In this mode, one man carries at the front, two (or more if you wish) side men on each side, but two at the back, which avoids the problems that the single back man always has with any stretcher that of poor visibility. Even extended handles do not fully obviate this problem for a single back man.

The helicopter winching straps can be used crisscrossed between the handles and laid over the shoulders to provide a very comfortable carry at the handle ends especially when the track forces a two man carry. An eight foot sling (or purpose made carrying straps) 'larks-footed' onto the frame for each side man allows him to reduce the strain on the carrying arm and to cope with very uneven



ground by passing the sling over the shoulders into the other hand. The RAF expressed an interest in the Alphin and in 1986 requested that the hinge mechanism be 'tucked away' to allow the winch man to use it solo, by tipping the stretcher sideways and rolling the casualty onto the bed. This led to the design of the Alphin Lite, which is very similar but met the RAF requirements, and was presented without handles or the back protecting skid pan. This model was supplied to Westland helicopters and was chosen by several Fire Brigades.

A number of users commented that the casualty felt somehow exposed during a carry. This was surprisingly not a problem during a rock-face lower. The problem was identified as being due to a lack of perceived supporting material surrounding the casualty, in comparison to the sensation on the bed of a stretcher which is two feet wide from top to toe. The lowering straps in a rock lower provided the enclosed feeling which gives comfort, but these are not there in the stretcher carry. This was addressed in 1989 by altering the bed of the Lite version to give a third model - the basket version, where the bed was not flat across the frame, but attached to the inside of the frame and down on to the skis in the fashion of the Stokes' litter.

Another feeling of instability came surprisingly from the very stiffness of the bed considered by all as necessary for adequate care of a spinal injury and superior to the support given by wire mesh. As in a high narrow vehicle such as an old Land-Rover, any rotation in the long axis causes a sideways movement of anything which is above the axis of rotation. This is perceived by the casualty as instability when the stretcher rolls slightly during carrying - a feeling of teetering on the top of something. This was addressed by a simple suggestion in 1989 from Dr. Peter Curry from the Peak District- the handles were cranked so this put the axis of rotation above the casualty, converting any sensation of rotation into a comfortable 'swinging below' sensation and was well received.

It was later found that it is possible to ski with the Alphin stretcher, foot end first down the slope. The rescue skier attaches a short rope to the foot end of the stretcher. When the skier pulls forward, this lifts the foot end out of the snow and the casualty's weight is



then mainly on the aluminium sheet or 'pan' between the head end skis. The stretcher slides easily on this on all types of snow.

If the skier slows, the foot end of the stretcher loses its lift and the foot end skis dig in progressively into the snow. If the skier stops, the foot end handle rest digs firmly in as an anchor. A forward pull on the short rope restarts the descent with little effort.

The Alphin stretcher in RAF SAR evacuations presents the winch man of the Sea King helicopter with the least possible obstruction to swinging the stretcher in to the aircraft after winching up.

In 2003 a redesign of the Alphin was produced by Dave who now has his own company called SAR Products and this is the ALPINE Stretcher range. With this comes the latest change in 2005, the stretcher is now made from high grade alloy making it much lighter and easier to operate and carry. The team now have these stretchers on all their vehicles.



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## Technical Developments

### Dr Andy Taylor

The ALLP Descender:

Entirely separately, and about the same time, Dave had considered the problems associated with horizontal stretcher lowers. These were carried out by at least four lowering ropes passing through belay devices - usually figures-of-eight, one rope attached to each end of the stretcher and to each of the barrow-boys. Dave was worried by multiple moving ropes above the casualty and everyone knew the problems of controlling multiple ropes by radio or shouting from the stretcher up to the belayer. Weather conditions and human misunderstanding combine to render communications poor and the stretcher lower loses much if not all of its advantage of smooth casualty care.



Dave advanced the idea of an auto-locking lowering device in the hands of each barrow-boy, allowing each to abseil down a fixed rope, with the stretcher attached to each barrow-boy's lowering device. Dave explained this system to Pete Wetherall of RAF Valley MRT at the Lancaster MR Conference in 1982. The RAF gave a demonstration of a barrow-boy controlled descent at the Bangor Conference the next year, using lever operated Lewis descenders and two fixed ropes. Even with extended control handles on these devices, the descent was jerky and stretcher control difficult leaving the conference delegates unimpressed.

Dave and I concentrated on developing an idea of his to make a descent device with progressive control and during early 1983 the first Allp descenders were hand made in Andy's garage. Control of this device ranges from dead stop to very low friction, under the control of a large winged screw.

At all times, tension on the tail of the main rope through the Allp will control descent, exactly as in the figure-of-eight, but with much less effort and fine control.

Further development of the idea led to the cableway system where one barrow-boy can go with the casualty and control the speed of the lower. The stretcher straps are rigged 'single point' as for helicopter winching and the stretcher and barrow boy, with his Allp attached to a pulley on a cable-way rope. This provides the only cableway evacuation system to offer casualty care during the descent and control of the descent from the casualty location.

Because the stretcher hangs from the barrow-boy's system, when the ground is reached, the barrow-boy can escape from the system, leaving the stretcher attached to the belay ropes, to be lowered gently by the Allp, or pulled away extremely smoothly from the bottom of the crag to a safer treatment location.

The Allp descender can also be used as an ascent device in combination with one other ascender. The Allp is kept attached to the harness and the other ascender is placed on the rope above the Allp, with a long foot loop. This means that the ascent can be turned into an abseil and vice versa without changing device. Both devices and the techniques developed by the Oldham team have been demonstrated around the world by Dave when he was at Troll Safety Equipment. The techniques of controlling descent at the casualty/barrow-boy point are still used today by the majority of technical rescue teams in both MR and industrial applications although various competitors have jumped on the bandwagon to promote their gear. The original Allp has been modified to the pro ALLP tech and an additional lever-controlled descender has been added to our range, it is smaller, called the A-B and allows the user better control over certain descent and rescue techniques.

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# OMRT at High Altitude

## Denzil Broadhurst

In 1992 the team doctor, Dr Andy Taylor, had picked up on a small article in a doctor's magazine about an expedition to Nepal. The organisers were looking for trekkers to take part in research projects related to high altitude medical problems. A number of team members expressed an interest, and started to take part in various planning meetings for the 1994 British Mount Everest Medical Expedition (BMEME).

As well as planning meetings there were also publicity events to try and raise funds to sponsor the research. These included an abseil by Alison Hargreaves (who was later to summit Everest in 1995 without supplementary oxygen) and Dr Charles Clarke (Consultant Neurosurgeon and skilled mountaineer) down the outside glass face of the atrium of the Lloyd's building in London with the then leader of the Labour Party and keen walker, John Smith involved. The setup of the ropework and safety was run by members of OMRT. There was also a weekend at the ski area of Aonach Mor near Fort William demonstrating aspects of the research projects to the national press. Over this weekend, two of the team members were also involved in the rescue of a casualty from the nearby climbing area in support of Lochaber Mountain Rescue Team. Our local Dove Stone area was used for a team building weekend for members of the expedition with various challenges run by members of OMRT.



A total of seventy-three members of the expedition made it to Everest base camp, including 5 members of OMRT. Two of the expedition climbing team made it to the summit of Everest, and the OMRT members climbed a number of the trekking peaks (6,000m+) in the area. The team members were also involved in three evacuations in the Everest area, one of which involved carrying a hospital type stretcher at shoulder height down steep footpaths with some of the Sherpas. A great deal of research was done both while trekking as well as major projects run at the base camp. The first official amateur radio station was run from base camp by Dr Andy Taylor, with contacts as far as South Africa and Finland.



A huge amount of knowledge was gained in running high altitude expeditions and research projects and to use this knowledge the membership of BMEME decided to form two new organisations – Medex (a club which could organise the trips) and Medical Expeditions (a charity which would run the research projects). This pair of organisations has since run high altitude research expeditions to the Kangchenjunga north base camp (1998), Chamlang base camp (2003), Dhaulagiri Hidden Valley camp (2008) and the next is in planning for the Manaslu region in 2015 with four members of OMRT expecting to take part. Members of OMRT have been involved in all of the expeditions, taking on such roles as Base Camp manager – co-ordinating the transport of all research equipment to the base camp and Power System manager – designing, constructing and operating the electrical power system for base camp to run the research equipment.

Medex/Medical Expeditions have run a number of Altitude Medicine/Diploma in Mountain Medicine courses for doctors at Plas y Brenin, and OMRT have run workshop sessions on improvised splinting, improvised stretchers and rope rescue at some of the courses. During one of the early courses a few of the team joined the Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue Organisation for a rescue on Tryfan, being flown by the RAF onto the north ridge in very windy conditions.

On the 1998 expedition two members of OMRT summited Ramtang (6,500m), an expedition peak close to Kangchenjunga, and on the 2003 expedition two OMRT members were driven off Mera Peak by thunderstorms, lightning and heavy snow having reached over 6,000m. On the 2008 expedition two members (and one ex-member) of OMRT reached the summit of Dhampus peak at 6,012m.

Although many of the trekkers on these expeditions had medical backgrounds, there were also some who had none. Two OMRT members (Denzil Broadhurst & Chris Smith) took on the task of translating the jargon of the research projects to something more readily understandable by the general public, so that they would know what they were letting themselves in for as guinea pigs. This in turn led to these two people (though Chris was now a member of the Derby team – having moved out of the Oldham area) being proposed in 2006 to edit a small booklet for non-medical trekkers about how to keep healthy at altitude. With input from over 20 doctors with experience of high altitude, this was published after 12 months work as 'Travel at High Altitude' in 2007 with its official launch at the World Congress on Wilderness and High Altitude Medicine held in Aviemore, and made electronically downloadable from the Medex website ([www.medex.org.uk](http://www.medex.org.uk)). This has created interest among doctors with backgrounds in high altitude climbing from all over the world, resulting in it being translated into 12 additional languages, including Mandarin and Nepali, with additional translations in progress.



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## Change of the Yellow Bird

The team has seen a few changes of helicopter in the last 50 years but we will soon be saying our farewells to the RAF search and rescue service. We will certainly miss the RAF SAR crews. They have been great to work with, helpful in both rescues and training. They even invited rescue teams to Christmas party nights at their base in Leconfield near Beverly, North Yorkshire. In the early days we stayed the night sleeping in their mess, but at later events we had to have a sober driver to bring us home. OMRT always had a good natured banter with the crews and over the years got to know some of them personally.



RAF 202 Squadron 'E' Flight, Search and Rescue, reformed at Leconfield in 1964 and were equipped with Westland Whirlwind helicopters. The Whirlwind was relatively small; a tiny cabin, just a six foot cube, no seats, with the pilot and navigator sitting above the front edge. To get in they had to lift their seats and climb up into their cabin. On one of our training sessions the winch-man said "If it goes to worm (meaning crash), you will have to exit through the navigator's seat". He told us not to worry about getting through because the navigator and pilot would already have gone. What do they say about a captain and his sinking ship? The Alphin stretcher made its maiden flight in a Whirlwind. In 1978 the Squadron re-equipped with Sea Kings until they were sent to join the Falklands Conflict in 1981. They operated with the Westland Wessex during their absence.



Westland Whirlwind

The Wessex was a great machine and could be worked in pretty tight corners. Over the years the team have worked with them a lot and got to know the crews really well. When we were planning the first Oldham Rescue Weekend we invited the RAF to take part. We didn't realise they had a fuel allocation for training each month and the first OMRT weekend was to be held at the end of April. Hugh Pearce, their senior pilot contacted us to say they could not attend but he had been in contact with RAF Valley in Anglesey and their helicopter would come over and do the training with us. It all went well and the RAF crew couldn't believe how well organised we were, transporting teams around the different rescue scenarios. At about 3:00pm they had to go because there was snow coming, they were running low on fuel and had to refuel at Manchester Airport on their way back. They told Hugh about their visit and he promptly asked us to change the date for the next weekend to the beginning of the month so they could attend. That's why the Oldham Weekend is always the first Bank Holiday weekend in May.



The Wessex on the 1st OMRT Weekend.

Hugh was also the pilot that attended when we had a full Peak District exercise on Clough Edge above Torside Clough, Bleaklow. Hugh must have been impressed with our technical rope rescue off a crag because when I got up at the de-brief to say how the lift went he interrupted to say we were the best team and had everything prepared for a quick, smooth lift off. Then the organiser, a Senior Peak Park Ranger and ex RAF Mountain Rescue team leader, stood up to say he had never seen such a slick, smooth rescue and if any of the other teams need to know how to do it they should attend at the Oldham Weekend. As you may have guessed that did not go down too well with the rest of the teams. But, hey, that's life. We then got team sweat shirts made with OMRT Pride of the Peak printed on them.

When the Sea Kings returned to SAR duties we were lucky enough to get one for an exercise off Raven Stones and Birchin Clough. The sea king was big and had a massive down draft so we had to be far more careful when working under it preparing a casualty for a lift. Over the years we have had many exercises and rescues with the Sea King. There's a good chance we have had one of its last appearances too. We had two rescues in August 2014; one on Laddow rocks for a fallen climber and the following weekend at the top of Ashway for a fallen walker.



Sea King Lift Laddow Rocks  
Aug 2014

On the last incident both Air Ambulance and a Sea King attended. On both these incidents they were lifting the latest version of the Alphin, SAR's Alpine MR Lite made from high grade Alloy.

The search and rescue helicopters we have worked with over the years are changing again from military to civilian. The new aircraft will be operated by Bristows Helicopters on contract to HM Government.

Mountain Rescue England and Wales Committee (MREW) have been involved in planning how the change over will take place. Complications and problems are inevitable because there has to be a change from military rules to Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) rules and no one seems to have the full picture. At least that's how it seems at the sharp end.

Before long our rescues will be with the Sikorsky S92, bigger, faster and more powerful than the Sea King. All mountain rescue teams need introductory training which has finally started. The training is designed to make the teams aware of all the safety issues needed when working with these machines. Bristows already operate search and rescue helicopters for the Coast Guard so we should expect the transfer to go smoothly.



Sea King & Air Ambulance, Ashway Aug. 2014



Sikorsky S92

Best wishes to

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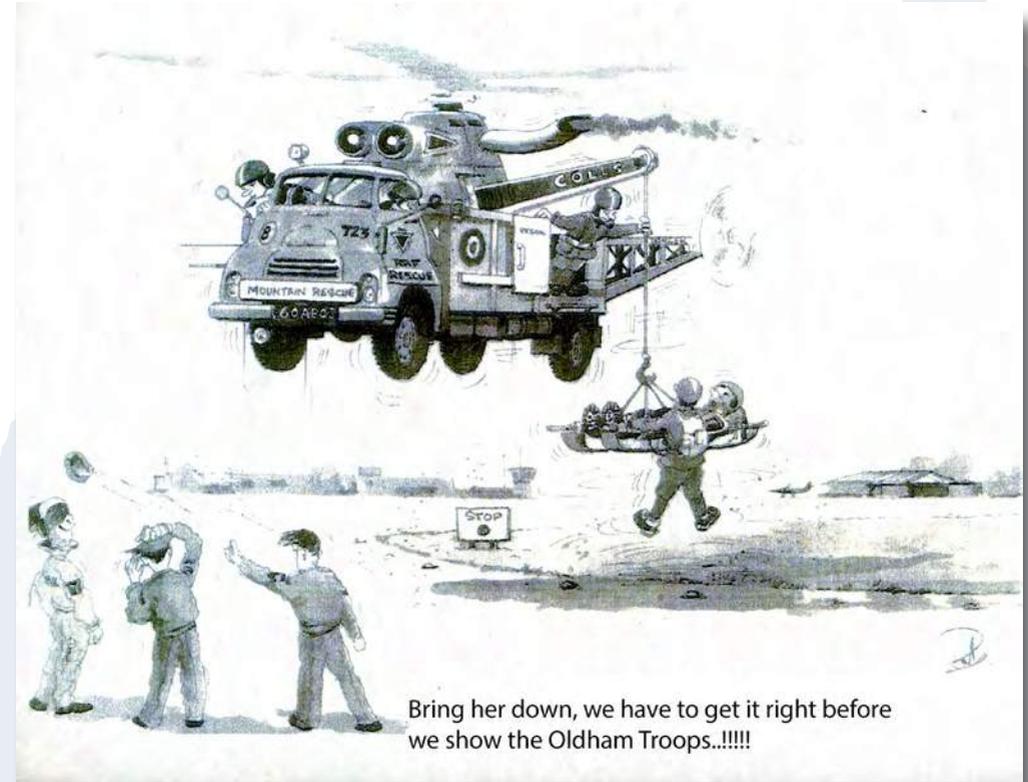
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## Air Ambulance

There are a number of air ambulance aircraft based around the region that can operate in our area. The North West Air Ambulance has three Eurocopter EC135s and the Yorkshire Air Ambulance two MD902 Explorers.

Travelling at up to 160mph these specially modified aircraft can take medical expertise and equipment to casualties who need urgent care. They are especially useful when the patient is in a remote location not easily accessed by a normal land ambulance. Whilst they have to work in a very busy air space they are immune to congestion on the roads. The decision to send an air ambulance to an incident is made by staff in the ambulance control room. The helicopter crews, two medics and a pilot have to navigate to the incident and find a suitable place to land. In mountains or moorland that can be challenging. Mountain rescue teams often co-operate with the crews and may be responsible for getting the casualty to the aircraft when they cannot land close by or are inaccessible.

The BBC television program 'Helicopter Heroes' often features mountain rescue teams working with the Yorkshire Air Ambulance crew. One of their paramedics is a member of a mountain rescue team and an ex Oldham team member.



A NWAA Helicopter at Dove Stone



A NWAA Helicopter on Alderman



YAA Helicopter in Daisy Nook

The air ambulances also operate as charities and need public support too. The aircraft are leased which helps to minimise the cost of ownership but they are still very expensive to run. Helicopters are complex machines which need to be maintained to very high standards with regular servicing. It costs approximately £10,000 per day to keep each aircraft operational.

# Police Helicopters

Greater Manchester Police formed the Air Support Unit (ASU) in December 1989 and operated with G-MPA, a Eurocopter AS355F (Twin Squirrel). That was replaced by G-MPS a McDonnell Douglas MD 902 in 2001 and served for seven years. It was replaced by the current machine another McDonnell Douglas MD 902 Explorer - registration G-MPX in 2008.



Since 2012 the helicopters operated by the forty-three police forces in England and Wales have been transferring to the National Police Air Service (NPAS). The transfer should be complete by 2015. The service for the whole country is operated from the Police Despatch and Flight Monitoring Centre based at Dudley Hill Bradford.

The aircraft based at City Airport Manchester (formerly Barton Airfield) is still the MD 902 G-GMPX. The 'India 99' callsign is no longer used and it is now 'NPAS 21' The aircraft has a top speed of 170mph and amongst the high-tech equipment it carries are the TV, low light and thermal imaging cameras often used in searches for missing people. It has seats for four and can be rigged to carry a stretcher to assist ambulance and mountain rescue services.



G-MPA



G-MPS at Barton July 2005



G-GMPX at Chew Mount May 2012



G-MPX with a casualty and team doctor on board May 2012



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# Bandages to ECG Machines

By: Dr Andy Taylor

From the outset Mountain Rescue teams have lugged first aid equipment up the hills to their casualties. Initially things were pretty basic: blankets, hot water bottles, flasks, the standby for all problems, the triangular bandage, a few plasters and some heavy, antiquated splints to allow us to match the requirements of the commonplace first aid standards. Since the 1940s Mountain Rescue Team members have been allowed to use morphine - a unique situation across the whole world, but no other pain relief was considered suitable.



Triangular Bandage



Thomas Splint

Inevitably, all aspects of mountain rescue have become more sophisticated. Advances in technology and materials lead to more sophisticated equipment. Stretcher designs have improved greatly, most importantly, becoming lighter. Casualty bags to keep the casualty warm and keep out the elements have benefited from new materials like Fiberpile linings and lightweight, resilient, waterproof outer fabrics. Splints have been through generations of invention, through inflatable to vacuum, using Velcro® fastenings, Fastex® buckles and nylon tape fixings. Traction splints can be a life-saver when the femur is fractured and they have evolved from original heavy steel Thomas splint through generations of ever-lighter inventions, to the current almost 'shirt-pocket device'!



Kendrick Splint



Vacuum Splints

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Pulse Oximeter



Blood Glucose Monitor



Aural Thermometer



Blood Pressur Monitor



Hand held ECG

The extended training of our members allows them to deliver better diagnosis and treatment to the casualty. They can consider and administer a wide range of treatments for pain, allergy, asthma and a host of other conditions where early intervention can be life-saving. This is a credit to the hard work put into the design of the syllabus and the training of our members.

## Search & Rescue Dog Association

### What does it take to become a Search & Rescue Dog Association (SARDA) Dog Handler By: Steven Ward (Wardy)

First you must be a member of a mountain rescue team. Indeed, SARDA England contacts your team asking for verification of membership and ability. Second, have the backing of your family, the time to give to training and, ultimately, work the dog. Training and working your dog puts a strain on relationships be it personal or professional. Third, lots of commitment to see the job through to completion. There are plenty more more things needed but you get the gist.

SARDA England trains handlers, who then train their own dogs. More than once we have wanted to keep the dog and shoot the handler, myself included - figuratively speaking of course.

Nationally we have a course every month. This involves trainees, graded dog handlers, and the bodies - people prepared to go out and lie around for the dogs to find. There may be over sixty people involved and its not easy finding digs for that lot.

As a trainee you would be wise to attend most of them. Once graded you have to attend a minimum of seven days on the National courses. This is in addition to dog training locally at least once a week and is also on top of your normal team training. It usually takes two years of intensive training to get your dog onto the callout list.

I will not go into detail but you must have a dog that likes to play and is interested in people. Senior dog handlers will help you train your dog and you. Along the way you will have had to pass stage tests to prepare you for the final assessment about two years on. This takes place in the Lake District in winter conditions. To pass you must successfully search and clear five fell sides in an allotted minimum time of 2 hrs 20mins. You are given one area in a morning and another in the afternoon. Hidden in those areas are the volunteer would-be-casualties. These dedicated and, dare I say, slightly barmy people are an essential part of the assessment. They hide out in usually abysmal weather for hours on end - very special people in my book. After five areas have been cleared, with no major mishaps you will have a graded dog. The joy and relief is palpable but now the real job begins. You are immediately put on the SARDA callout list and many a dog team has passed their assessment, driven home and whilst basking in the praise of family and friends find they are called out immediately. No pressure then!

Search dogs work with all teams, not just their own which makes the work load far greater. So back to the bit about being committed and having the backing of your family. They too will share in your callouts. Woken at some unearthly hour, dog barking with excitement, phone ringing several times with changing RV's and details.

Carol (she who must be obeyed) has been known to get up, prepare my snap box and flask then, literally, throw me out so she can get back to sleep!

This paints a bit of a negative picture but the plus side is the satisfaction of working your dog. For me there is nothing finer than me, my dog and a hill to search. The only time this feeling is surpassed is when, on the rare occasion, the casualty is in your area and you 'find'. All that training was worth while, a life saved or indeed closure for a grieving family. Beware, being a search dog handler is addictive and you, almost certainly, will attempt to grade more than one dog.

One thing Wardy has not mentioned, the handlers and their families spend thousands of pounds over the time the dog is being trained and working. This includes travel, overnight stays, clothing, food and insurance for both them and their dogs, along with a hell of a lot of commitment. D. A.



Mick & Bob



Wardy with Ty & Bryn



Andy & Jock



Tony and Jed named after John Edwards



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## The Teams HQ: The Cross Keys

By: Dave Allport

I joined the team in 1971 and all I remember was that we met as a group at the Cross Keys on a Tuesday night. Team meetings were held in different places on the first Tuesday of each month and the formal meetings were held at Barn Street Police Station in their conference room on the top floor and afterwards we went for a beer in their social club.

We met for exercises outside the Clarence Hotel in Greenfield once a fortnight and from there we went to different areas, mainly Dovestone.



The Clarence Greenfield

I soon learnt that if you needed to know what was going on in the next week or two you had to go up to the Keys to find out. I turned up on an exercise one week to find I was the only one there. The next time I saw anyone I asked what had gone on and was told by our Deputy Team Leader that they changed what had been planned and if I had been at the Keys I would have known. The days of phoning around are gone, pagers and now SARCALL for passing information were not even a twinkle in the eyes of our technical wizards.

Harold Nield was landlord at this time and we were just one of the groups that used the Keys as their central meeting place. Unfortunately, Harold in his wisdom decided to put a pool table and juke box in the back room to get more custom but it had the opposite effect and the team decided it would meet at the Star Inn at Scouthead and a number of other locals departed. We still used the Keys for small gatherings but meetings were held at the Star. After about twelve months Harold took out the pool table and juke box and we were welcomed back to the Keys.

In 1978 Phil and Pat Kay took over the Keys and they were very interested to bring in all sorts of groups to use the pub and were extremely enthusiastic about all that went on with the Team. Ever since I had known the team they had their family Boxing Day walk and living in Wardle near Rochdale there was a 14 mile journey, so we never attended it until we moved over to Uppermill in 1980. Phil and Pat were involved with a lot of new events that brought the groups in the pub closer together. As a Team we used to be invited to the Saddleworth Outdoor Pursuits Association's (SOPA) Christmas party meal and this became a joint 'do' for both organisations.

In 1974 Saddleworth Round Table started to run a Beer Walk to raise money for charity. It started and finished at the Keys and in the first year we entered a team dressed up as the Naked Civil Servant. Not completely naked, our dress code was underpants, collar and tie, bowler hat and broly. This carried on as

an annual event for team funds and we dressed up as many things including Scotsmen 'Hi Jimmy', and as the SAS 'Who Cares Who Wins', we won that year. As the Ghost Busters we had all our kids dressed as little ghosts and the Land Rover blasting out the theme tune. When the start and finish was moved down to Churchill playing fields due to numbers we still ended up back at the Keys -drunk!

The Bedford Ambulance we had as the team vehicle was kept in the shell of George Dew's coach house, on the left as you start up the Isle of Skye road (A635). Although we had storage at Uppermill Police station in one of the cells, the main gear was kept on the first floor of the coach house. From the door to the storage area, which was just a pile of gear on the floor, there were no floor boards, so your climbing technique on the morning after a night on the loopy juice was to traverse the beam next to the wall to get to the stock. You then threw it down to the lads on the ground and then reverse traversed back to the door. There was never any thought of ladders because we were mountain men and women - or woman, as there was only one in the team then.

After a year or so we had to move the gear and we had bought our first long wheelbase Land Rover. We managed to find garage space in the old carriage house at the old people's home in Delph. This was well separated from the main home and was a great old building. We thought it would have made a good HQ but it did not have a bar, which the Keys did, and we only had it until they decided to convert and extend the home.

We eventually changed from fortnightly to monthly exercises and our main meetings were on the first Tuesday of the month in the back room of the Keys. We were now getting more organised but we still had our gear in an Uppermill Police Station cell and a room to the side of the entrance so we did not have to go down to the cell every time.

It was around this time that Dave (Smiler) Broadbent, Peter (Hyde) and myself were looking around for a more permanent storage area and garage. I was Secretary and it was muted that we should look around and see if we could find anything. There was an old Council garage, on what is now the doctor's car park in Uppermill, and I approached the Council to ask about it. They told me it was being taken over by the surgery so it wasn't an option. In December 1985, Saddleworth Runners held their first Christmas Fun Run, starting and finishing at the Keys. They invited OMRT to the event but I was the only participant from the team. Afterwards they had the traditional Pat's meat and potato pie and peas served in the bottom of the barn. Looking up at the low ceiling I asked Pat what was up in the loft. and Pat said it was their dumping ground and took me round to have a look. I was struck by the size - it was a room, not a loft and immediately said it would make a great HQ for the team. Pat, without any thought whatsoever, said we could have it but they would need to check with the brewery. I contacted Smiler to give him the news. Talks between the brewery, Phil, Pat and ourselves in early 1986 led to the agreement that we could use the barn and still do.

The brewery decided to renew the wall around the car park and lay tarmac. The car park was only compacted soil with a big tree root sticking up about 15cm that you had to drive over with caution. Phil and Pat held some bonfire parties with the fires built over the stump to gradually burn it down. Tarmac eventually levelled it off. One day Phil rang me at work to ask how high the Land Rover was, asking why, he said the builders had been given instructions to take the stone beam out of the barn entrance to make it high enough for the Land Rover. I said we did not ask for the garage part, just the room but Phil said they seemed to think it was all the top section so we should say nothing and get the measurements. I went up to Stoneswood, where the Land Rover was garaged, to get the measurement to the top of the blue light and shot up to the Keys. I arrived to find the big stone lintel out and everyone waiting for the measurement to put the beam in. I phoned Smiler to let him know that they had given us all the top section of the barn including the garage. By October 1986 we were decorating the inside with paneling, putting in a mezzanine floor for storing ropes and a communications desk. The loft above the garage was used by Phil and Pat for their storage and we agreed with Phil to put some shelves at the back end of the garage for his crisps and canned beer. He could access this through the small door at the back that went into the downstairs function room.



Cross Key's - Team HQ

This wonderful donation by J.W. Lees gave the Team had a permanent home where we could meet, garage our vehicle and keep all our equipment. Having the convenience of a pub close to hand for a few beers when the work is done is a big plus. Over the years many other visiting rescue teams have said that our HQ is great especially having it right next door to the pub.

The great partnership we enjoyed between Phil and Pat enabled the team to flourish. If we ever returned late from a call out or exercise Pat would be there with a brew and a snack. In return we would help with things around the pub as best we could. When we had finished the panelling in the HQ Phil asked if we could do the ceiling of the downstairs room so he could put more events on such as folk nights and jazz.

On the 25th September 1990 we had a fire caused by a faulty radio charger. There was a lot of heat and smoke damage and all our gear had to be scrapped. This left us with nothing, so we had to scrape around and borrow gear from other teams to keep us operational. In the following weeks the team gelled together, we cleaned and stripped the beams and boards then re-painted the panels and lacquered the beams. It was like new again. A working committee sent out begging letters for funds to replace our gear and within no time at all

this was replaced. We decided a grand re-opening was needed. On the 20th October 1991 David Wilmot Esq. Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police did the honours and all the Directors of JW Lees attended the event. The Chief Constable was only expected to stay for about half an hour but ended up staying for the rest of the afternoon. When he did leave he made a passing comment to Jim Duffy (then Team Leader) that he would be in touch as he had noted a few things that he could help with. Following on from this the co-operation between the team and GMP became even closer, including the offer of driver training and vehicle servicing.

In 1998, after twenty years, Phil and Pat moved to look after another pub and in their place came new tenants Dougie and Alison. This was a worrying time for the team as we didn't know whether the arrangements with the brewery would change. They didn't and I have since found out that whoever takes on the pub their lease states that they cannot change the use of our HQ. Following Dougie and Alison came Donna closely followed by Wayne and Wendy who only stayed for three years. The next tenants were Angie and Billy along with Tracey and Phil. Angie held the license and wanted to concentrate on meals whilst Tracey ran the bar. The new management really helped the team in fundraising and wanted to help in any way they could. We decided to try an OMRT open day in the car park of the Keys for the public and our own families. It was well received. After 18 months Tracey and Phil left to run the Swan in Delph and then twelve months later Angie and Billy left to work for another consortium and run the Diggle Hotel.

It was the Tuesday after the Oldham Weekend in 2013 that Dave and Craig took over the Keys and they have been good to the Team in many ways including raising money from events. Their modern ideas have breathed new life to the place without damaging the 'olde worlde' feel of the pub. About eighteen months prior to them taking over the team decided to rent a garage for the vehicles and to use as a store. This has since grown and a lot of the training is held there. Team Meetings and other training are still held at the Keys. When the training is being held at the garage, team Members have a pint and chat at another pub closer to the garage, which is a shame after all that the Keys and J.W. Lees have done for us, but times and minds change as we all do.

Our latest triumph, and one that the Cross Keys helped with, was our 50th Anniversary open day on at the playing field in Uppermill. There were lots of visitors because the annual Saddleworth Show was also drawing people into the village. Once again the Cross Keys helped by donating all the takings from a hog roast - kindly provided at a reduced price by Albion Farm and a bar which went down well with the dads (and one or two mums).

Although the anniversary event only involved the Keys in a small way, there were other companies and organisations that donated time and equipment so that the team could put on a good show. The main ones were Allied Scaffolding who erected the tower for the Zip Wire, SAR who donated the harnesses and rider pulleys, Oldham Council Leisure Services who ran the climbing wall, Just Northwest Banners for the signs and stickers and the people who brought their old vehicles similar to the types we used in the early days of the team.

