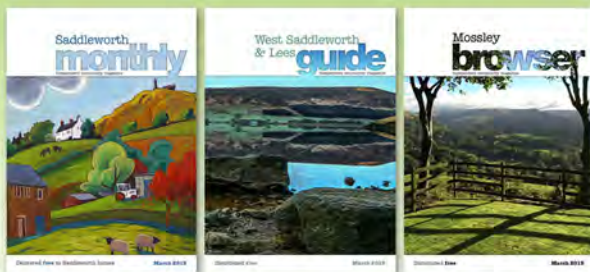


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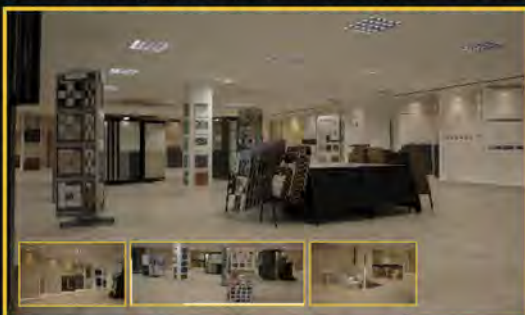
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## Team Members Own Stories

This section is made up of writings from the team members on how they came to join, what their thoughts are and other little stories within their ramblings and there are some ramblings. I would however like to say none have been edited so they are as they stand. I have tried to fit pictures within their stories for something to look at if you get bored reading.

### Mick Nield

Being a member of 22nd Lydgate Venture Scout Unit, it was inevitable that I would join OMRT. Two of the assistant leaders of our unit had been in the Team before heading off to university, both Mark McLean and John Hughes were a big influence in my early days in the outdoors; along with another close friend of theirs, Richard Clohessey. We seemed to spend every waking hour on the crag or in The White Hart.



The first Tuesday of November 1988 was my first encounter with the team, pyrotechnics followed by the monthly team meeting where there was a rollicking from the Team Leader given out to the members for something, although I'm still not sure to this day what it was for.

I'd only been in the Team a couple of months when my first call out came. MR members are often asked "What was your first call out?" and people seem a little gob-smacked when my reply is "Lockerbie". Pan Am flight 103 came down just before Christmas 1988, but as the search area increased over the days and weeks, MR Teams were gradually called in to assist. Oldham, along with all the other Teams from the Peak, was called in early January and asked to assist the North East Teams to search around the Kielder forest area. I was assigned to John Gardiner's section. We had been tasked with a difficult area to search, as in difficult to carve up in to manageable chunks. Me being me, I was putting my two pence in and to my surprise, instead of being told to shut up and get back in line, I was included in the discussion and decision making; over the years to come, I learned that that was John all over.

It's always sad to have someone taken in tragic circumstances. I was away in Australia when I received a phone call from our team doctor Andy in 2004 to let me know that John had taken a fatal fall on a climb in North Wales. John was one of the team's longest serving members, almost thirty years, and still as keen as ever. Speaking as the Team Leader his death was a great loss to the team and anyone that may call upon us for assistance. Speaking as someone who knew John I am proud and honoured to call him a friend, with his calm level head he was always the one you could look to for advice and guidance.

## Team Members Own Stories

By mid 1989 there were about eight trainees, including myself, who were mad keen to be involved at all levels of the team and soon took over the training group under the guidance of Jim, the Team Leader. At this time the Team only met on the first two Tuesdays in the month, along with a Friday evening and one full Sunday at the end of the month. This wasn't enough for us and we soon introduced the spare Tuesdays as 'trainee training'.

It was around this time that Tony Tombs was training his first search dog, Rosie. I often got involved with bodying both locally and on national weekends. When Tony graded in 1991 I acted as his navigator until becoming Team Leader, whereupon Nigel Clegg took on the role. Before becoming Team Leader my intention was to follow Tony and train a search dog but I already had a collie that was about seven years old. I thought I'd wait until my next dog and then start but becoming Team Leader put that idea on the back burner for another twenty years.

I was elected Team Leader in September 1992, which was a little daunting having only been in the Team for three and a half years, but I have to say it's a team effort and with-out the team's support and especially the help received from Peter Hyde, Denzil Broadhurst and Doctor Andy Taylor in those early days it would have been a lot harder.

One of my first incidents as Team Leader was up at Laddow Rocks. The Team was involved in a multi- Team exercise code-named 'Moorland Storm'. We had been requested to meet up with one of the Peak District Controllers, Ted Burton, who gave us the briefing at Crowden. I sent off a speedy party up towards Laddow when after about half an hour a radio message came in saying they had come across a group of walkers and one of them was suffering chest pains and could I confirm it was part of the exercise? I looked at Ted who shrugged his shoulders and said "I don't think it is". That was it, exercise aborted thirty minutes in. Fortunately for me and the casualty, Gary Eaton, a new member out on his first exercise, was a paramedic with Greater Manchester Ambulance Service and he was quickly deployed to the scene where the chap was treated before being carried off the hill.

My first experience of a fatality as Team Leader came in early 1993 when the Team was assisting Woodhead MRT on a fell race at Edale. A call came in for a climbing accident in Lawrencefield. A small group at the race headquarters, including some just back from the Casualty Care First Aid exam, set off to assist members of Buxton and Woodhead. A nine year old boy had fallen off while abseiling and sustained serious head injuries. It seemed likely that a chock in a vertical crack had been given an upward pull as the lad went over the edge. Other climbers had resuscitated him before paramedics and MR members arrived on the scene. He was treated by the paramedics before a speedy stretcher carry back up to the road ahead. I'll never forget that run, four of us running full pelt with the paramedic trying to keep up and all I could hear was the beeping from the monitor. The boy was kept on life support but passed away when it was switched off the following week. That was one of those incidents that will always stay with me.

1997 saw the start of some big steps into the future for the Team. Following a heavy bout of snow in November 1996 which brought not only the trans-Pennine routes, but also Oldham as a whole, to a stand still. The Team was stretched to the point where we needed to bring in other Teams but they were also cut off by the snow. Rossendale MRT was the only one that could get over to assist and by the end of the night over 120 people had received assistance in one form or another.



At the debrief a couple of days later it was decided we needed to look at how the Team was running operationally due to the increasing number, and type, of incidents. From this we decided to look at if we could justify a second Land Rover and if we could afford not only the cost, but its upkeep? The Royal Mail gave the Team a short wheel-based Land Rover and, whilst not fully up to the job, it did allow us to trial it for six months to see how it went with two vehicles. From this the jump was made from one Land Rover to two when a new 110 Defender was purchased. Now, with the increase in requests made to the Team, we are running four vehicles – two identical Land Rover Defenders, a VW Control Vehicle and a Transit mini-bus.



It's inevitable that as we get older we're going to have sadness and grief with the passing of someone close. That's life. It's when they are taken away suddenly that it seems a little harder to deal with. As a team we are a close family and over my twenty-two years as Leader I've seen too many of these moments.

Barry Holt, our longest serving member then of thirty-eight years, passed away from cancer in 2002 and although Barry was one of the original members from 1964 and no longer an active hill member, he still played a vital role on control - mainly supplying me with cigarettes when under the stress of a long search. John Edwards said of him after his death "His loyalty to the Team was total and the manner in which he went about his tasks exemplary; he never sought or asked for thanks; perhaps these are some of the virtues we should all aspire to in the future."



## Team Members Own Stories

John Edwards himself passed away suddenly in 2010. This was a man that if you cut him in half it would say OMRT all the way though. His wit was second to none, never withheld and usually appropriate on any occasion. His funeral was testament to the type of chap he was. Over twenty MR Teams were represented, with police officers saluting the cortege as it passed. He'll be one of those members who's name will be cropping up for years to come. John joined the Team in 1991 and got stuck in from day one. He took over from me as Equipment Officer in 1992 and continued in that role until 2005, when he took on the role of Team Chair which he held until his death.

Dr Emma (Johnson) Grandidge joined the Team at the age of seventeen and was another taken suddenly from us, in 2008. Emma joined the Team in 1993 after being involved with the Guides and The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. After getting in to medical school, we didn't see much of her until she qualified as a doctor and came back with a vengeance. She had a passion for medicine and wanted to pass her knowledge on to whoever she could. Emma had a way with teaching; she captivated her classes, no one would dare take their eye off the ball during one of her lectures, on the off chance that she would pick you to answer a question.

2011 was another big step for the team; we decided that we needed a more purpose-built building to run from. The team has been associated with the Cross Keys from the 1970s and has been based there with vehicle and equipment since 1986, when the then licensees Phil and Pat Kay convinced JW Lees Brewery to let us use the barn rent free. It is still our registered HQ and a small amount of kit and one Land Rover are still stationed there. The majority of the kit is now in Greenfield where we have the space to garage four vehicles but, more importantly, we can check and maintain the kit under cover.



The Team Garage

At the end of 2009 we decided it was time to replace our two Land Rovers, a daunting task as we were looking at a cost in the region of £90,000. That year we had been selected as the receiving charity of the proceeds from the yearly Carol Concert held at Uppermill Civic Centre on the 18th Dec. This was to be the launch of the appeal. That evening Peter gave a five minute presentation on the Team and what we were planning for the following year. It was while all this was going on the snow started for one of the hardest winters in recent times. First call was that same evening for an eight month pregnant lady stuck in her car in snow who'd gone in to labour. That started four weeks of snow related incidents that generated 126 requests for assistance. The jobs ranged from helping ambulance crews get to patients to their home addresses, stranded motorists on the moorland roads, many slips and sledging accidents along with our traditional work on the hills around Oldham. At one point we had the vehicles crewed 24 hrs a day in readiness to assist the community with what ever was needed. Once the snow had gone money for our appeal started to flood in. We could not believe how fortunate we were, by March 2010 we were in such a position we were able to place the order for two Land Rovers and by the following March they were delivered. Two fully fitted out Land Rover Ambulances to our specification not only capable of transporting kit and members to difficult locations but also able to carry a casualty on a stretcher with three members attending. All this was thanks to the community around our operational area.

2015 was to be our 50th year with three events to mark the occasion. First was a sponsored abseil off Oldham Civic Centre in March. The weather was kind and the team's supporters even kinder. The plan was to raise a few pounds to help fund the events for that year mainly the Fun Day in July. Once again the support was fantastic with £14,000 raised, - what a start to the year. Everything was under way in planning for the other events when the unthinkable happened, Phil, one of our members fell 50ft while training. We might train for this but when it's one of your own and you see it happen I have to say it is very hard. The team were fantastic with aid being given to Phil within seconds. Without the assistance from Police control room, the land ambulance crew and Helimed along with the skills of our own members and the hospital staff Phil would not be with us today. Twenty-six broken bones and four operations at last count and four weeks in hospital. He is now back on the call out list although on light duties - it's little short of a miracle.

Not having enough to deal with just a short time after Phil's release from hospital our ex Team Leader Jim Duffy suffered a fatal heart attack. Jim was an active team member and an instrumental part of Phil's rescue. Jim was 17 when he started in MR at Derby MRT before moving to Saddleworth and joining Oldham in 1980. He took over as Team Leader in 1986 and held the position for 6 years. Jim still played an active role in the team and was instrumental along with Dave Allport and Dr Andy Taylor in the development of our Oldham Weekend which aims to showcase the team's equipment and techniques in crag rescue.

## Team Members Own Stories

As if the team hadn't suffered enough only a few weeks later we lost Jacquie Howell our bulletin editor after a long and courageous battle with cancer. Jacquie's first Bulletin was in March 2011 and even though she was fighting her own personal battles she still volunteered to help the team. A selfless and gentle lady who inspired many.

Jean Betteridge, friend and colleague of Jacquie said "When Jacquie volunteered to edit the OMRT Bulletin, wanting to put her writing and design skills to a positive use, she found a team that she loved and wholeheartedly supported until her death this June. Although she said "No climbing up mountains for me", OMRT chimed with her life and values. Her Oldham roots ran deep, born and living almost all her life here. Most of all, her working life was spent in services (Citizens Advice, Manchester Advice, Advice UK) that aided people in difficulties, no matter who they were. At work she combined technical expertise with brilliant people skills; highly organised, she got the job done. She valued OMRT for the very same qualities. She was a great team worker, so she recognised a great team when she saw it. Quietly spoken and unassuming, Jacquie was lovely company, such fun, with her wickedly funny, off beat sense of humour and inspired ideas. She lived the five years of her illness with courage, honesty, fortitude and grace, without self pity".

As they say, life goes on, team has to be maintained and call outs run. We felt the only way we could help with our loss was to press on as Jim & Jacquie would have wanted. We had a fun day to organise along with our final event the 50th Dinner which Jim was in charge of and had done all the planning, fortunately with Jim's meticulous organisation it wasn't too hard to pick up the reins.



Jim being 'Jim'

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# Team Members Own Stories

## Barry Clayton

On a weekend in 1964 several of the Oldham Rover Crew went to Glossop to assist in looking for a team of Scouts who had sadly gone missing during a competition hike called the 'Four Inns Walk' from Holmfirth to Buxton. Sadly the bodies were discovered a few hundred yards from the Snake Road and safety. This led to the formation of the Oldham Rover Mountain Rescue Team later that year.

In the early years there was a mixture of duty, derring do, fun and plain folly about the activities of the team but everyone enjoyed the camaraderie of a common purpose. Ian Barrell and his father provided role models for us to aspire to and we had a variety of re-inventions.

Alan Holt, Ian Wright and Charlie Blades had the team going out on training exercises from Snowdon, via Derbyshire to the Lake District. We climbed up Tryfan and were summoned to help in bringing an injured climber down. We arrived at Keswick and were immediately transferred to Land Rovers to hurry to help bring down a climber who had fallen on his head. The first one lived but sadly the second died on his way to hospital. We helped in sweep searches for a lost girl in fields near Mobberley, Cheshire, another through woods near Ashway Gap, Greenfield and for a water board man in snow at Hebden Bridge. We used to meet socially and enjoy each other's company. On Boxing Day we used to meet at the Cross Keys, walk over 'Pots and Pans' and return for a welcome meat and potato pie lunch. Once we went to North Wales and danced in a line through Colwyn Bay before hiking over the moors. We visited Castleshaw Camp School where the beds were for schoolchildren and too short for 6-foot tall macho men.

On one occasion we were on standby and by this time Alan's then girl-friend, later wife was a member. In her hiking gear she went to the Ladies and someone shouted to stop who they thought to be a fellow. We said it was OK as it was Jo. Of course they thought we meant Joe, much to everyone's amusement. Sometimes when we met, we would wind each other up with competing bravado and several times ended up on the moors at turned midnight having dared and accepted an invitation to go on a night hike.

The Four Inns Walk was held again a few times and we would be on standby. On one occasion, we spent the day in the school room at Edale and had lunch in the Nags Head public house. On another occasion the edges of business and pleasure blurred, we had been stood down from standby at Crowden and were playing darts and having a rewarding drink. Suddenly the organisers realised that a team hadn't arrived at Buxton and summoned all teams to action. People were not thrilled when they smelled beer on our breath but we argued that we had been stood down.

We survived a dressing down and it was decided to adopt a different approach and divide us into rotating teams of six, which would be based weekly outside the Clarence Hotel in Greenfield. Those not involved in the base camp would

take part in training exercises. Unfortunately, this resulted in confusion as people would not be available for their base camp duty, due to its random nature and the team went into a slump. This was despite efforts by the stalwarts to generate enthusiasm such as Christmas gatherings, at one of which the Social organisers put on a bell ringing display using numbered bells. Amusingly members were not quiet in shouting at their number as they rung the bell. Another time we were so successful in selling raffle tickets that we had to go and buy some more prizes.

Eventually, Peter Hyde and I were asked to take over the running of the team and promptly scrapped the standby idea, got rid of the bloated committee and returned to a walking club, available for rescue and standby duties. One of our successful training exercises involved being ferried from Glossop by army truck to the top of Howden reservoir and from there we received instruction to take a patient by stretcher across the moors back to Glossop. We arrived safely but tired and companionship had returned.

Not long after this I met my future wife and set off on a different adventure involving working abroad and never returned to Oldham but never forgot the good times with the ORMRT now OMRT.

I wish those currently involved in a much changed team and purpose all the best for the future.

## Dave (Dan) Roberts

A call out in 1970: I lived on Carr Lane in Greenfield in the early 1970s. One night I was woken up by someone banging on the front door (we had no phone in those days). I opened it to be greeted with driving wind and rain plus a poor policeman in a tall helmet, uniform and cape. "Mr Dan Roberts?" he said, "Rescue call out, Clarence Hotel - as soon as possible". He smiled as he surveyed the weather and I think he was rather pleased his part in the proceedings had now ended.

The team mustered at the hotel and we were instructed to head up Chew Valley towards Crowden. I think we were looking for some lost scouts and I remember being very worried about them on our journey down Crowden Valley that wild night but we were informed all the lads had been found safe by an RAF helicopter, the first time one had ever been used in such a search.



Dan on control in the old Bedford ambulance

## Team Members Own Stories

A muster of all thirteen teams involved was made down at Crowden to check all were present and correct, then we headed back to the Clarence Hotel car park sodden, tired and hungry. The jovial host appeared at the doorway, "What are you doing here at this time in the morning, rescue call was it? You're grand lads, come in for breakfast." he said smiling. Gammon, eggs and steaming hot tea we had, mmm! I'd never tasted better, what a great chap we all thought.

Having warmed up, filled our tumbs, feeling a lot happier with ourselves, we were confronted by our cheeky host who demanded, I think, about £1.50 from each of us. It turned out someone had cancelled a function the day before and he was worried about the food going off. Can't blame a man for wanting to make money though.

An exercise in 1975: In the early 1970s part of the rescue team's mission was to convince the police, fire and ambulance services that we were accomplished climbers on rough terrain and mountains and were capable of search and rescue.

After several meetings with Chief Supt. Leslie Palmer of Oldham Police it was decided we would concoct a dummy incident that only myself, Peter Hyde (I think) and Leslie Palmer were privy to.

The plot was that a van transporting prisoners from Armley to Strangeways prison had crashed and three of them had escaped. One of them had raised the alarm after being separated from the other two. Thus, both police and OMRT needed to be jointly involved. As it happened, at the time, RAF Stafford were training at Ashway Gap and offered their help as well.

We put the callout late evening for all three units to muster at the Clarence Hotel at dawn and we let RAF Stafford Team Leader Paddy in on the secret. With three or four hours to spare it was decided we would get some rest so Paddy and I slept in the cells at Uppermill police station. We were warm and dry, the day was going well for us.

At first light we set up our base in an old quarry above Crowthers Farm on the Bills O Jack road (A635). We were all there: OMRT Ambulance, Champ Support and the police incident vehicle as control. After five hours it was all happening, everyone wondering what these prisoners had done and if they were dangerous. Eventually the OMRT and RAF formed a line out with the policemen (in mags and wellies) and off we went. Twenty minutes later there was the sound of a whistle being blown frantically. We were all eyes wide to see what had been found, "lunchtime" a policeman shouted and we were all ushered back to the quarry to be fed. Oh to be a policeman!

We did find the prisoners that day and by all accounts it was classed as a successful learning exercise.

### Peter Hyde

The idea of joining a mountain rescue team was planted whilst sat in the barber's chair sometime in 1964. Ian Barrell was clipping away and the conversation went around to the great outdoors. Ian asked how I had got on during my service with the Royal Signals at Catterick Garrison. I had a great time especially during free time when army resources were available for sporting and other activities so I took up caving with the Garrison's 'Dales Club'. This led Ian to suggest I might find mountain rescue equally interesting. A later visit to the Oldham Scout HQ at the Baden Powell Centre and I was hooked and became a member of Oldham Rover Mountain Rescue Team.



Mountain rescue at this time was largely a self help system and mountain rescue teams were relatively rare. Formative years in any organisation are always filled with change. Based at the BP centre with equipment stored in various cupboards and only private transport to move it around, ideas for improving things were regularly discussed. Speeding up our response to potential incidents on Sundays in the Chew area were tackled by a standby system. Each weekend a small group with two or three cars, one with a Thomas Stretcher on the roof and a collection of ropes, blankets and first aid kits in the boot would wait outside the Clarence in Greenfield just in case. Very few incidents but people started to notice the team existed.

I became team leader in the early 1970's and thought the team need to tackle some key areas of organisation if it was going to become a serious consideration for the police to call us. Significant progress needed money but trying to fund the team within the scout organisation was difficult. Restricted both by funds and space at the Baden Powell Centre the decision was made to leave the scout organisation, become Oldham Mountain Rescue Team and eventually a registered charity.

A headquarters and somewhere to meet were a priority. Oldham Police were approached and the team became squatters in one of the unused cells at Uppermill Police station. Grim but secure storage for our growing stack of equipment. Meetings were held in the conference room at Oldham Police Station; a popular venue because meetings adjourned to the lounge which had a bar.

Managing call outs was a constant problem. Home telephones were still relatively rare, mobiles unheard of, so call outs were passed down a cascade system which was slow and not 100 percent reliable. In those days Oldham Police Station had its own control room and the police stepped in to help by managing the bulk of the call out. Great at the time but it wasn't destined to last

## Team Members Own Stories

as changes swept through the police service. Even standbys at the Clarence put the team out of touch but the telephone box outside the pub provided a means to contact other members of the team. Using the telephone box for incoming calls wasn't so easy but the Post Office agreed to install a large extension bell above the box to make sure calls wouldn't be missed. It is still there.

Communication on the hill relied on being seen or heard using lights, flares or whistles and shouting. Not very reliable and in bad weather impossible. There was a real need for two way radios but costs were prohibitive. One day a talk to the Men's Society at St Thomas's Church Coppice produced a donation which purchased two second hand radios. They weren't brilliant but it was a start, we could have one on the hill and one in control. Arising out of the contact with the Mens Society one team member's father was an associate of Mr Michael Meacher, at that time the Labour MP for Oldham. At a meeting he organised, Mr Meacher offered to take up our radio problem with the idea that the Home Office should be able to supply suitable equipment. Eventually a few radios were supplied by the police.

Transport relied on private cars for a long time. The first team vehicle in the early 1970's was a retired Bedford ambulance purchased from Oldham Ambulance Station for a nominal sum - pocket money in today's terms. Sorting out insurance and road tax proved to be a challenge but eventually we were allowed to keep the ambulance status with the blue light and two tone air horn. Our first garage, a disused coach house at Hollyville, Greenfield was loaned to us by George Dew, owner of Oldham's major civil engineering company. With a lot of work and a coat of yellow paint it served the team for about 5 years. It was also the target for our first burglary when someone broke into it and stole climbing equipment.

In 1974 a knee injury took me out of the active scene for a while and I took over the treasurers job for the next 34 Years.



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## Team Members Own Stories

### Dr. Andy Taylor

In the Summer of 1975 my wife came home from a visit to Mossley Carnival with our children and asked me, "Did you know there was an Oldham Mountain Rescue Team?" My answer was "No!" but I should have known better... My cousin Richard had been a Rover Scout with Oldham Scouts in 1963-4 and was part of the founding scout group, going out, I think, on the search for the ill-fated Four Inns walkers in 1964.

Having come back to live in Saddleworth in 1974 I was looking for old and new friends to take up old pastimes. I had been training in General Surgery - which meant four years of zero spare time and was looking forward to more leisure time as a new GP, only working 102 hours a week.

The prospect of a local Rescue Team conjured up visions of a ready-made group of walkers and climbers with a purpose. One of the few times in life where I was right! Only later did I learn that at that Mossley Carnival the team had treated a genuine casualty, whom they had splinted, stretchered and placed in their very old, dilapidated, peeling yellow ambulance only to have the back doors of their vehicle fly open as they roared off, depositing the poor fellow behind on the grass! I do believe he was alright after that...

Smart detective work elicited that Oldham Mountain Rescue Team took their First Aid training instruction from the St John Ambulance (SJA), Saddleworth Division - an annual course in the Autumn, held in their rented premises above "Fuzz"'s hairdressing salon on the High Street in Uppermill. SJA welcomed me with open arms as a potential First Aid trainer and so did Dr Tom Sinclair, who was keen for a break from that annual duty.

Come October we started the lectures and I met up with Smiler (David Broadbent, new Team Leader just taken over from Dan Roberts), Big Doug and a few others whose identity escapes me. I was equally welcomed into the Team. A real doctor was a big feather in a Rescue Team's cap in those days. Not like Edale today where there are "more doctors than people" as I have had it said to me!

I was shown the ropes - literally - and the knots (a very special one to hold the Thomas stretcher together but more of that later...) and the kit that 'we' had. My recollection is of Saturdays sitting around the public loos opposite the Clarence and two Sunday exercises a month, with kit stored in the coach house of George Dew's mansion, Hollyville. The vehicle I remember up there was the



Bedford ambulance - a retired and weary ex NHS jalopy whose fibreglass front part was trying to leave the rear part, mainly made of rust, far behind.

We practised crag techniques in Den Lane quarry and at Dovestones, even venturing into the quarry there and frequently on Wimberry rocks, lugging all the gear up Ram's Clough before the "exertions" began! Alternating with crag Sundays were search Sundays - eight hours were spent line-searching over vast tracts of land. I recall hours of 'University Challenge' games with Paul Seddon and others on the subjects of the Hobbit and Lord of the Rings. Fortunately I had read it three times back to back and scored well; we probably walked straight past the casualty nattering about Bilbo and Gandalf, but our search line was straight!

We only had half a dozen radios in the Team back then - and these were on a new dedicated MR frequency (86.3125MHz) hard won for the whole UK by the work of our Team member Sam Fowler and Michael Meacher MP!

I only saw the Austin Champ a few times - it was pretty unreliable and most rendezvous were in members' cars; the few who had a car would collect nearby colleagues for a practice or a shout. Call outs were by phone - the Leader would ring a few members who each had a list of others to ring - usually their wife or Mum would do the ringing whilst they got ready! Some had no phone and were knocked up by a local bobby (we had those back then). Occasionally the first a member knew of a call-out was his 'lift' banging on the door.

That changed dramatically and for ever with the introduction of the pagers. I take credit for starting the ball rolling with Vodafone's paging department (I had one for work), but the real credit goes to Smiler, David Broadbent, the then Team Leader who picked up the desultory negotiations and forged a very hard-won deal with a basement-level price. The only snag was the numbers they needed to agree a price were huge; we expected to struggle, but No! The rest of the Teams in England and Wales signed up in droves - once again Oldham team had massively improved communications for Mountain Rescue nationally. It is also worth remembering that Mountain Rescue in England began in the Oldham Mountain Rescue Team patch - with an accident at Laddow Rocks.

Thirty- nine years are full of memories of countless practices, hundreds of call outs and over thirty "Oldham Weekends", half a dozen trips to Holyhead, one or two film appearances and the odd Scottish trip. Sadly I could make few of the February winter climbing trips - GPs weren't allowed out to play in the 'flu season back then!

I don't remember particular call outs with the clarity of some of my mates - no, it's not age; I never did! But I do envy them their clear recollections of individual shouts.

I particularly remember the avalanches, we had to deal with two at Wilderness and one at Dovestones. Others remember the dates well. I don't. But I do remember arriving at the first Wilderness one to find some Team members



## Team Members Own Stories

digging in the heap of snow at the bottom of the gully - you could see where from miles away, as the snow they were excavating was bright red! Scary! When I got there the casualty was in a sitting position with an ice axe penetrating his buttock. I have always described the difficulties of treating him as similar to treating someone sat on an outside toilet by removing the roof and leaning in - NOT the easiest patient access. He was pulled out, ice axe in place and carried to the road. No helicopter back then... The next one in Wilderness did have a helicopter, but those of us working on him were preparing for a rope evacuation. We had barely got him on to the stretcher when in came this huge noisy shadow with its own down draught blizzard and a piece of string to pull us out. Us? Suddenly I found that I was being winched up with the casualty, because of his condition. I think we left the winch man behind - I am not sure because the man-made blizzard had made my poorly casualty a whole lot worse. I was busy. In fact I was thanking my lucky stars and generous supporters for the pulse oximeter we had recently splashed out on. It kept showing good numbers, when I could hardly communicate with the casualty for the dreadful noise in the belly of the helicopter. We landed at the Royal Oldham Hospital but not at any dedicated rooftop helipad. Dear me, no. On the Oldham Athletic football pitch DURING a match. By this time, and in the quiet of the helicopter shutdown, our casualty Granville had become talkative, even animated but we still ran him to the waiting ambulance like he was on his last breaths; we had an audience of thousands! OK, this was a Latics match - maybe a couple of hundred....

Sadly the Dovestones avalanche produced a fatality. It took place between the two Wilderness ones and did not involve 'proper' climbers. Three teenagers, two twin brothers and the girlfriend of one of them, had decided to ascend a steep snow ramp between Dovestones Rocks and the Quarry, in Wellington boots. They were avalanched off and the boyfriend twin was killed. Oldham Mountain Rescue Team carried the body and escorted the companions after the Police decided they could not attend due to the conditions.

### Vehicles

Despite my love of gadgets and all things mechanical, motor cars especially, I cannot recall in detail the early vehicles of the team.

I remember the Bedford ambulance with its cracking plastic front-end. I remember the Austin Champ being driven wildly about the field which is now the car park at the Cross Keys and I remember some old Land Rovers - the blue one which Roy Cunningham gave to the Team, but whose chassis gave way to the rust caused by years of salting the drive to his factory. This was followed by a white 'van' bodied one into which we put rear seats and windows. Both were 'Series' Land Rovers, beloved of the aficionado but as slow as oxen pulling a plough!

The next V8 Safari that we bought was not much quicker but could drink petrol like it was going out of fashion. The gift of a short wheelbase Land Rover proved that two vehicles were an asset and we sold that to part fund a new diesel vehicle which otherwise matched what we now proudly called 'Oldham One'. Home made roof racks unwittingly weighed more than the permissible 'head-

load' and the gear we carried exceeded the permitted axle weight loadings. We had to modify the vehicles and get the mods agreed by VOSA. Those two vehicles lasted ten and fifteen years. More recently thanks to great community generosity we have two identical Land Rover ambulances, a mobile control vehicle and a minibus personnel carrier.

### Stretchers

When I joined the team the Thomas stretcher was the only model available to use in mountain rescue although the McInnes stretcher was used in Scotland and a new model by Peter Bell was being brought in. The problem with the Thomas was that it could come apart during a crag rescue and special knots had to be used to secure the four corners of the stretcher to the ropes that were being used in the lower.

In a search situation, the Thomas stretcher became a problem as it had to be carried empty by two men across the moor to where the work was needed. One attempt (by another team!) at making the Thomas stretcher into a split version showed a terrifying lack of engineering knowledge of the two halves being held together by pieces of wood and small wing nuts. If that stretcher had been used the casualty would have been in two pieces!

These disadvantages had rankled with Dave Allport and myself although Dave had been much more proactive in coming up with the basics of a design for a stretcher which avoided all these problems. Other people had been thinking similarly, as the Bell stretcher was soon to appear in a split form and at Oldham Mountain Rescue Team's request, Roy Cunningham's design engineer was tasked to come up with a split stretcher. This he did and we still have one of the two Sutherland stretchers ever made. But what this did was to make Roy C unwilling to take on any more stretcher designs to build; he turned Dave's design down nicely but flat. When I saw the early designs I felt they were far too good and revolutionary to be allowed to fail and offered to help with materials and building space ( my garage ). Thus started the Alphin stretcher; we cut and welded the steel of the first eleven before passing the work out to meet rising demand!

At the same time Dave had come up with the basis for a revolutionary descender and I had the lathe to make prototype components. After a few false starts we had a working descender, and we cut the plates, turned the bobbins, cut the threads and assembled the units of the first 92 before passing that work out. I remember the joy that disabled workers at Remploy had, making up the finished product..

The stretcher and descender are a whole story in themselves, with demonstrations, MR Conferences, training Marines and other special forces, and of course the 'Oldham Weekend' which grew on the back of the sort of event that Holyhead Coastguard put on and the revolutionary techniques we had come up with.

## Team Members Own Stories

### PDMRO:

Not long after joining the Team, I attended a PDMRO meeting. There were no medical meetings back then but no matter - the organisation seemed to be run by doctors; indeed so was the Mountain Rescue Council, known to distant regions as the "Manchester Mafia". The Chairman of PDMRO was a doctor - Peter Andrew, later Chairman of the MRC - and he laid on me the burden of organising medical matters and attending the Medical Subcommittee. MRC:

Back at Region I organised regional training and exams for the new syllabus in Casualty Care. When an Incident Controller vacancy arose I was asked to apply for it; I remember Ted Burton being opposed to the idea of a doctor being a Controller since it might cause a dilemma of professional duties - it never has, in over thirty years...

### MRC/MREW:

I felt honoured to be invited to the MRC Medical Sub Committee meetings. The 'old guard' put in desultory attendance and suggestions but Neville Marsden and I were the new blood. We had three tasks: a first aid course, a syllabus to follow and an exam to design (both structure and questions).

We were told that the St John and the Red Cross were both interested in taking our MR version of their syllabus forward as a course and exam but for different reasons negotiations failed with both organisations and it was decided to 'go it alone' as an organisation. This was a brave step and took a lot of research to be sure that there was nothing to prevent this 'UDI - Unilateral Declaration of Independence'. It's still working. No-one ever questioned our authority. We put together the syllabus in one meeting (can you see that happening these days?) and took advice on exam structure. Essays were preferred by the old guard until we suggested that they mark the eight essays that 200 people had each written!

Multiple choice questions were new in education back then, mistrusted and maligned, with no rules about best structure. But what we designed is essentially there today. Yours truly became the printer of questions, then the writer of questions, then the receiver of answered papers and finally - what the heck! - Chief Examiner. For eight years I wrote all the papers (a different paper for each team upon request, not one per year), printed them, posted them, received answered papers, marked them and advised on pass/fail. It's only just occurred to me that I paid all the paper, ink and postage costs; it was never something you thought about. It came with accepting the job. I do chuckle a bit when I see groups taking ages over what a few did in moments.

### Doctors in OMRT

When I joined I was welcomed with open arms. Mountain Rescue had not yet become the 'fastest growing sport in the UK' that it was later to be called. For some reason even climbing doctors were reluctant to join a mountain rescue team. Even one Dave Allan in 1983 turned down my suggestions there were 'too many mountains to climb'.

We practised and trained First Aid as per the St John syllabus but with a lot more background knowledge coming in as essential in our new Syllabus. We called it Casualty Care because it was (and is now more so) much more than roadside First Aid with an ambulance on its way very soon. We had to care for casualties without support, diagnose and manage illnesses potentially for hours on our own AND carry them off to where an ambulance could reach them. There may have been the possibility of a Wessex helicopter, they were unreliable, hard to get hold of and rumoured to be expensive. Team members for decades have done sterling work in what can be a frightening situation, diagnosing trauma and illness accurately and then applying appropriate treatment - scary in the extreme!

From time to time another doctor would show an interest but to a man - or woman - their careers took them away from us before too long. With one stirring exception. Emma Johnson joined us as a student and stayed in touch as she qualified and became an expert in trauma a brilliant teacher and a very valuable asset to the team and the casualties she treated. Very sadly we lost Emma in 2008 but her legacy lives on in memory and in the way we work and train. As changes swept through the police service. Even standbys at the Clarence put the team out of touch but the telephone box outside the pub provided a means to contact other members of the team. Using the telephone box for incoming calls wasn't so easy but the Post Office agreed to install a large extension bell above the box to make sure calls wouldn't be missed. It is still there.



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## Team Members Own Stories

### Justin Parkinson

Having moved back to my roots in the north, following too many years spent in stock-broker belt Surrey, I found myself at a loose end one too many times. My first encounter with the team was getting a quote for some work on a new kitchen from Colin Pierce. Noticing his MR badge got me thinking back to when I climbed at uni and how much I enjoyed it. I'd toyed with the idea of RNLI when I spent 6 months on the south coast, but back in leafy Surrey, there little need for such volunteers. Now that I was back in hilly territory, it seemed the ideal time to get back into climbing and see whether or not I could join the local rescue team, so I asked Colin to tell me about it. I'd had limited exposure to MR, though my brother had just recently looked to join Bowland and Pennine MRT, so I figured if they took him in, I shouldn't have a problem!!



Justin with his G&T  
in a water bottle!

There were a couple of us that joined within about a week or two of each other so we were in the same boat. I likened those early days to being in venture scouts but for bigger kids, and soon realised it was actually a divorcees drinking club, with some climbing and rescue work thrown in for good measure.

The image of the bearded, tweed-wearing, pipe smoking, beer swilling mountain goat was disappearing and in its wake came fell runners and dare I say it Roger, wine drinkers - thankfully there are still sufficient beer drinkers to outnumber him (we'll skim over my penchant for G&T's). But what remained like a backbone through every member past and present was a desire to help people whenever and wherever required, and, importantly, to help each other. You learn pretty quickly that, at some point, you're likely to have to put your life in a fellow team member's hands, to set up a belay if you're going over the edge to a casualty. So you form opinions of trust rapidly.

As everyone does, I remember my first 'body' quite vividly. The chap had been out for a brisk walk, albeit a relatively long one by many people's standards, with a bottle of his favourite drink. He was a big chap, and having been up on the moors for some time, he'd taken on water and was a significant weight to move to the road head. Our team leader always had what (to the outside observer) might have seemed like a perverse desire to make people feel sick or uneasy by encouraging them into seeing their first 'body'. The reality was quite different; it was a well-considered decision to see how people react and then ensure that any support they needed was there from within the team, so the next time, it happened, he knew he didn't need to worry. This would prevail on more than a

few occasions over the next few years.

Not being particularly good at keeping my mouth shut and accepting the norm, I started to peck our Equipment Officer, John Edwards', head. John was a great bloke; brash at times and didn't suffer fools, but with a big heart and a big personality that I warmed to quickly. John involved me and Andy more and more in equipment related stuff (no doubt having had his fill of the red tape, bureaucracy and political manoeuvring of those in search of knighthoods and the like at the MREW top table at the time). I picked up the role of Equipment Officer with Andy's support, and I didn't even try to follow such big feet - though I like to think that I continue John's passion for challenging the bureaucracy and the insanity of some of the decisions.

John had laid some great foundations for the way in which we care for equipment and how we go about getting it. He always had a deal of some sort in the offing and I set about enhancing what he'd started, and I've been fortunate enough to have the team's support (most of the time).

John moved into the role of chairman - which suited him well - but retained the PDMRO Equipment Officer Role just to keep his hand in, as it were. Guiding and steering a rabble of relatively vocal and somewhat opinionated men and the odd women (they'd have to be to put up with us) was an ideal position for John and he did it well, right up until the day we lost him to a heart attack. What astounded me was the way everyone rallied to give John the send-off he deserved. The team's arms have always been long and the way they were wrapped around Mary, Bob and Millie meant that they will always be a part of the team (in fact Bob's recently joined the team which is a great reminder of the man himself).

It's probably this extended family feel that makes Oldham MR Team so different from many others. John's funeral cortege stretched for almost a mile and the lone policeman saluting at the top of shaw hall bank road removed any prospect of a dry eye for most attending the funeral that day. Sadly we had a repeat performance all too soon with the passing of Jim.



The late John Edwards

## Team Members Own Stories

Jim had an even bigger heart than John. He'd taken up the reins of PDMRO Equipment Officer and went about things in a much more diplomatic manner than John, or I, could ever have mustered up. Jim, like John was taken way before his time, and in the same way. So when I was asked whether I'd consider taking the role on, the decision was quite simple – I'm not ready to be number 3!

The team has lost too many people in the 10 years I've been in it, but I take some solace from the fact that when I do go, my own family have got a huge extended family on which they can rely, and who will make sure that they remain part of a great team, long after I'm gone.

Justin Parkinson



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## Team Members Own Stories

### Dave Henderson, (Murdoc)

Well, where do I start? I joined the team in September 1976. I'd been rock climbing for about 18 months after being introduced to it while on an Outward Bound Course from school. My mum worked with Alan Buckley, a team member and she thought that I may be interested in joining the team. At the time, numbers were low in the team. I think volunteers were not allowed to join the team until the age of 17/18. I was just a shy 16 year old. I know, me, shy! All thanks are due to the team because its made me the man I am today. If you don't believe me ask any of the older team members.



Murdoc in action at the OMRT weekend

I went along, or should I say my dad took me. We went along one Sunday and met at the bus stop opposite the Clarence Hotel.

The office for any call out was the phone box outside the Clarence with the bus shelter being our HQ. I think the extension bell is still on the pub wall. I got to know a few of the team members that lived Rochdale way. At the time I lived in Whitworth about 13 miles from Saddleworth. Arrangements were made so that I did not have to get my dad out of bed on a Sunday to take me to Saddleworth. He only had to go as far as Wardle, where Alan Buckley, Geoff Smith, Dave Allport and Roger Kennedy lived. They would then throw me out at Wardle ready for me to get picked up by my dad. Call outs, poor dad had to get out of bed and take me over to Saddleworth and either stay there until completion of the rescue or one of the others would bring me back home.

At 17 I got my first wheels - well, a 50cc moped, but what joy! Riding over to Saddleworth, I could walk faster! Moving on to then driving my dad's car. I've had two vehicles stolen while out with the team. My dad's while on a rescue was later found in Failsworth still with my brand new Pentax camera and £20 in the back pocket of my jeans. Talk about luck, I just wish they had the lottery in those days, I would have bought a ticket. The other car was a brand new Nova GTE, parked below Upperwood. Picture me and Jim Duffy racing up and down the A635 in the team Landy, with gear flying off the roof because the roof rack webbing was not tied down.

The most memorable rescues have to be the two avalanches one at Dovestones Quarry and the other in Wilderness Gully I was talking to Mark Littlewood about the one at Dovestones and he reminded me that when he arrived on scene he was speaking to my brother at the bottom, not having met him, and not knowing I'm an identical twin. He said alright Dave, Andy replied it's my brother. Mark told me later all kinds of thoughts were going through his mind - 'Oh heck' its Dave's brother being rescued. He even went over to Smiler, the team leader at the time

and said it was my brother that was being brought down. Anyway when the truth came out, he didn't get too much stick! I'd forgotten all about this story until we talked about it this May. The other avalanche happened in Wilderness. The team was on exercise that day but the weather was so bad that we cancelled it and a few of us stayed behind just in case. The next thing we knew a bloke came running down to say that two people had been swept down. I, Geoff Smith and Roger Kennedy were first on scene. One person was buried up to his neck and the other off to one side of the gully, this person had his ice axe through his buttock, and the other was buried in a sitting position with a broken pelvis. They still owe us a pint. All other call outs have blended together, such is old age.

Other moments in the team I remember are in 2006 receiving my 30 yrs service award at the tender age of 46. Drunken call outs on various New Years Eve's. How lucky was I never to be the nominated driver. Jim's first exercise with the team on Alderman, having been offered an Eccles cake from him I then went on to pass them around, handing Jim his empty wrapper back. Well what else was I to do, the lad had just come from the Derby team. I shall never forget John Gardner handing round his drinks bottle which was a cleaned and washed out engine oil bottle. I can still taste the oil to this day. Anyway OMRT in my opinion is one of the best teams in the country and I've worked alongside many a team and heard stories from members of others teams about the antics and bickering within their team. OMRT is more than a team, its a family.

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# Team Members Own Stories



## Steve Ward

You don't have to be mad to be a dog handler but it helps. You would think at thirty-nine years old I might have learned a bit of common sense, well I still fell for the pitch hook line and sinker.

Come and "body" for my search dog will you Wardy, you are good with dogs. Twenty years later and I am still 'dogging'. Not the dogging you might be thinking of, but the training of Mountain Rescue Search Dogs. Sadly we can no longer use such an innocent term to describe our training sessions. Courting couples are not safe when the search dogs are out. I can safely say it has been a revelation to a shy retiring type like myself just what happens in our beautiful countryside but more of that later. (If the censor allows.)



Back to the dog training. I very quickly wanted to graduate from being the practice casualty for the search dogs to being a dog handler. There were a few obstacles to negotiate.

1. She who must be obeyed.
2. Family.
3. Work.
4. Cost.
5. Time and commitment.

Three to five on above list were OK. I worked for myself, things were going well and some would say I needed committing in any case. Surprisingly, Carol, she who must be obeyed, was in favour and the kids were just happy to be getting a dog. Little did they know!

My love of working dogs is down to my Uncle Norman, a fully-fledged 'country man' a.k.a poacher. Sunday morning would see us picking up the odd dead rabbit or pheasant or whatever that just happened to fall at our feet courtesy of Bess the lurcher and her partner, a quite vicious ferret. I will not say where, just in case the statute of limitations has not run out.

The team and She who must be obeyed both accepted my application to train a Search Dog. Game on. Now to find a suitable dog.

Ken Sloan a SARDA dog handler arranged with a farmer at Meltham to let me have first pick of a litter his champion sheep dog bitch had just produced. I selected a large bold, playful male puppy that did not seemed phased with the



## Team Members Own Stories

selection process. This involves lots of play and a few loud noises and plenty of observation to see if he had the right temperament. Time would tell.

Dru as he would soon be named was duly enrolled into the Ward household. A big hit with kids but the gaffer was not impressed with some of the inevitable destruction that comes with puppy training. My daughter's socks and shoes were favourite. We always teased her it was because of her smelly feet and still do!

Why use dogs for searching is a question I am asked quite a lot and the simple answer is they are a fast, efficient hunting machine. And in the case of search dogs their prey is a human. Of course, the killing phase has been eliminated, replaced with a play based reward.

The domestic dog is a descendant of the wolf hunting dogs of the past. Some breeds of dog still have that hunting instinct and it is those types we look for. Stamina, speed and a good nose are essential to make the grade. Using all those inbred instincts we only have to teach them to find the casualty, tell us they have found them, and take us to them.

Describing how to train a Search Dog is long process and I can feel your eyes glazing over already. Safe to say my family earned their keep by endlessly running and hiding on family walks nearly every day. Dru was beside himself with excitement every time they ran away whooping and shouting and squeaking a dog toy. We certainly got some funny looks. Two years later and after lot of hard work, Dru and myself graded. Three days of searching on snowy Lake District fells left us in no doubt we were capable of anything the UK climate could throw at us.

Two more dogs later being asked to join me on a dog walk is viewed with a lot of suspicion. My Grandson looks a likely victim for the next dog. The innocence of youth. Hang on, some of you are saying, Wardy declared Ty was his last dog. Well I may have to do a Steve Redgrave on that. He came back for one more Olympic Medal. Well, to coin a phrase, I might just have one more dog left in me.

There is nothing better, more rewarding than being in tune with your dog, working him for the benefit of others. That reward is trebled when your dog is the one that locates the casualty. So knees and She who must be obeyed permitting I might just do it all over again.

A question that is repeatedly asked me is why is a Tyke in Oldham M.R.T. Missionary work I say, you need some culture over here. This is usually said whilst legging it away from my team mates!. Or it could be they are the only ones daft enough to have me in their team.

The truth is simple, after nearly twenty years in another MR team, circumstances led to me needing a change of team. It was imperative to find a team that was appreciative of search dogs and aware of the support a dog team needs. Thankfully that decision was very easy.

I had to look no further than Oldham. They were the only ones to provide funds to help pay a very large vet bill. Bryn was injured whilst on a training course and was no longer operational. This was before a search dog could be insured and a vet bill for several thousands was looming. This investment was soon repaid, when operational once again, Bryn found some people lost on the moors. To this day they continue to provide that support and training that makes me proud to be an Oldham team member.

P.S. Censor has been busy. Ask me when we meet over a pint. You're paying. (I am after all a Tyke)

Editors note:

Last Year 2014 our 50th, Dave Wyatt, our team treasurer ran a short, (fifty miles) section of the 275 miles Pennine Way to raise money for the team. In January 2015 he decided to do the Spine Race which is the full 275 miles, again to raise funds for the team. When you read this just remember the weather at the beginning of January and you will understand that apart from the distance and lack of sleep, the weather was an even bigger factor. Wardy in his usual Yorkshire way of telling a story, wrote a short diary that was sent out to the team, about his few days following Dave, giving him sustenance, support and a bed in his van with the dogs before handing the reins over to Denzil. I was putting this book into some order and thought it should be included. D.A).

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## Team Members Own Stories

Hi motley crew, (Email to Team 10-1-15)

Just got back from supporting Dave on his epic marathon. I am humbled by the sheer effort the competitors are 'putting in'. And "our boy" is reet up there with the best of them. No fuss no drama the guy bangs the miles out like a metronome. Stoic is a word that comes to mind.

I have not spent one iota of the amount of energy Dave has and I am still wrecked. Making tea was never this much bloody hard work, I must be getting on.

Whilst in theory they are competitors, everyone is rooting for one another with support teams helping anyone and everyone. The camaraderie is brilliant. For those thinking of having a go I will inadequately try to give you a flavour of the event from a supporter's perspective.

Location:- Any God forsaken spot en route.

Time:- Some God forsaken hour.

Weather:- God forsaken. (apologies to the devout amongst us)

Peering out into the horizontal sleet I am hoping to see Dave come looming out of the gloom and temporarily into safety. Is everything ready for a quick splash and dash pit stop?

Checklist:

Water pre- boiled and in the flask. Ribena, tea, coffee, all to hand and different at each stop. Grub, location noted to save time. Van tidy, seat empty and prepared for the recipient. Not always needed, getting 'comfy' can cost time!

A faint light fleetingly appears, Is this him? Slowly but surely the light gets closer and closer. I open the van door to an icy blast that threatens rip the door from my grasp. "Hi" I shout hoping it is Dave. "Hi" is the reply, I am still no wiser. Mindful that shining one's torch into someone's face is rude I just wait and see. "Hi Wardy", yep its Dave, "That was interesting" he adds. Master of the understatement is Mr Wyatt. Four hours battling the elements and only interesting! What does it take to warrant something stronger?

Splashed and dashed he once again sets off into the maelstrom. Next RV is three hours away. Back in the Van out come the maps, locate the next RV. Twenty miles by country roads in sleet and snow. And yes, I'm glad, relieved



that's all I have to do. Some time later I bag a prime spot by the ever present Pennine Way finger post. Hopefully this is where Dave will appear next. Water boiled, a more substantial snack prepared and all is ready. We settle into a routine.

Dave once more, to my relief, puts in another appearance. Looking a bit tired this time. "All right" I ask. "Feet a bit sore" is the reply. Another understatement! Mine would be killing.

This is the routine until we reach Horton in Ribblesdale umpteen hours later. Miles ? well you work it out, my brain is mush at the moment. We have a chat and come to a decision .Hawes is not obtainable without sleep. The weather has taken its toll. After stew and dumplings, lashings of tea, courtesy of the Three Peaks Cafe, we prepare to bed down in the van for the night. The night heater is left on. Luxury! Some guys are bivvying down in the woods or on the cafe floor!

Four am, "Bugger!" - overslept but still only just over three hrs kip. Into the cafe and decide to have the porridge with raspberries. Bliss. "Bugger!" again. We could have slept on, race suspended due to bad weather. Eight am and the race is on. Dave's a lot perkier. Sleep, stew, porridge are a winning combination. Next stop Hawes. fifteen miles and it's still raining. Race officials ask if I can drop off a guy they stopped the night before. Duly drop him at the point he was captured thus saving him repeating three miles he had already done. Happy bunny.

Twenty mile dash to Hawes and at least another 6 miles back down a parallel valley, sees me parked on the Cam High Road. An old drovers road. Weather, you guessed it - God forsaken. Cannot open driver's door due to high winds have to exit van by sliding side door. The rain is lashing down. Manage to snatch some kip and awaken to relative silence. Hallelujah, it has stopped raining and wind is backing off a bit. Dogs can have a walk without getting wet through. Dave can get wet but not my Boys! Bloody hell whose this coming? Yep, its Dave. Early. The kip definitely helped. Splash and Dash, the Lad's on fire. Whilst Dave disappears down the Cam High Road I tend to a couple of racers. Topped off water they proceed to Hawes as well.

RV with Denzil in Hawes and transfer everything to OM4. My stint is done. We set off on foot to find the Checkpoint in the village hall. Not long after Dave strides into the hall one hundred miles done. A proper pit stop this time with veg curry and his feet sorted. Tan Hill no problem.

I say my good byes, a little sad not to be part of Team Wyatt but a good night's kip beckons. Have fun Denz I did.

Wardy

PS: Went home via Leeds, dropped off two Challengers saving them a difficult journey home. Donation to OMRT coming.

PPS: OM4 and Denz are now co-opted on to race-organisation. Helping where he can. We explained Dave comes first though. OMRT are legends once again.



## Team Members Own Stories

### Editors Note:

Thanks are due to Matt Torr, Denzil Broadhurst and Andy Hadfield. who backed Dave up after Wardy left. Other team members cheered him on at various crossing points from start to finish and Andy Taylor and Barry Pelmore were there to meet him at the finish, thats after Andy did a pirouette on ice with a score of 8, 7, 7, 8 from the audience. (DA)



Dave at the end of the Spine Race



Andy's Pirouette. Get out of that!



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## Team Members Own Stories

### Mimi Davies

I've been asked to put a few words together regarding why I decided to join OMRT and you know, I sometimes ask myself exactly that same question:

I've asked myself that question during team exercises when the rain is falling horizontally.

I've asked myself that question when I've found out that I've been sitting in sheep pooh while hiding for the dogs during training sessions

I've asked myself that question during meetings at the Head quarters, the garage or the pub listening to conversations that clearly weren't meant for the girls on the team.

I wish I could say that I joined the team because I wanted to give back to the community or to be part of a group of selfless individuals who give up their time and expertise for a greater cause but if I'm truly honest I was doing it for very selfish reasons. I wanted to have a Search and Rescue dog! I wanted to train a dog that could do something extremely worthwhile instead of just winning Blue Ribbons in obedience trials.

It was by chance that a friend of mine told me all about her builder and the puppy he was training with the Search and Rescue Dog Association (SARDA). The next thing I know I'm in the Cross Keys Pub with hubby in tow for moral support, discussing dog training with Mick Neild. After a serious talk regarding what was required to becoming a Mountain Rescue (MR) Dog Handler and the time and sacrifices involved I was even more determined to throw my lot in with this motley crew.

I won't take you through the ups and downs of dog training because there are way too many, or talk about the weird and wonderful people who make up SARDA, as that would be a book of its own but what I will say is that it's opened my eyes to the true character of the Oldham team members. It is like no other team! For the past 5 years every Tuesday and Thursday evening, Sunday mornings and every first Friday and last Sunday of the month has been dedicated to MR or SARDA training. Plus not forgetting long weekends away ten months of the year devoted to SARDA training. You really do get to know people when you spend so much time together sometimes under adverse and stressful situations. However, more often than not it's under friendly and social circumstances that we meet when most of the conversation is banter rather than life changing dialogues.



Mimi getting photo bombed by Ty

I joined the team to get a search and rescue dog, I didn't get that but what I did get is phenomenal friendship. I've learnt skills that I never thought I'd have let alone use under any situations and now I get to share it with one of the team's newest recruits my hubby! The team has truly become my extended family. Thank you all!

### A joke from our Irish Matron

While shopping for holiday clothes, a husband and wife passed a display of swimming costumes. It had been at least ten years and twenty pound's weight, since the wife had considered buying a swimming costume, so she sought her husband's advice.

"What do you think" said the wife, trying on a bikini.

"Should I get the bikini, or an all in one?"

"Better get the bikini", said the husband.

"You'd never get it all in one"

BUPA are still paying for the hospital bills.

### Dave Knight

A question which I am frequently asked is how and why I joined Mountain Rescue. The why is quite simple, the how is far more protracted and perhaps began strangely enough fifty years ago at a time when the Oldham team was in its early foundation. At the age of ten years I first began the long journey to becoming a mountaineer.

It was at this age that I first discovered a large adventure playground at Chew Valley not far from where I lived and, together with peers, a tentative period exploration began. At first our weekly expeditions were restricted to the valley bottom having neither been schooled nor instructed in the ways of the outdoors - very much a case of trial and error, mainly error. It was not long however before the enticements of what appeared to us to be the towering monoliths on the rim of the valley, the crags invited exploration enticed us higher. One by one in turn we would ascend to the seemingly lofty heights





## Team Members Own Stories

and return quickly, not daring to venture beyond the sight of the valley floor. The year was 1964, a wonderful year for winter conditions, not that we knew. It was simply just a source of great excitement. Oblivious to the risks, we continued to explore ever deeper into the moor. The only concession by way of equipment was the donning of a primitive base layer system 'winceyette pyjamas'. This was the winter which claimed the lives of a number of participants in the 'Four Inns' walk in the Peak and I broke my fingers after I fell from the roof of the derelict Waterman's house at Chew Reservoir but that's another story.

We spent perhaps the best part of a year continually seeking new places to explore, building an intimate knowledge of the moor all of which was committed to memory for we had neither map nor compass or the knowledge of how to use them. Unbeknown at the time, this was a skill which would serve both me and Oldham Mountain Rescue Team very well in the future.

It was around this time that perhaps the most single influential occurrence took place. A joint collaboration between my father and the Army and Navy store produced a pair of boots! Until then all of my adventures had been undertaken in my trusty wellingtons. I still recall the joy of wearing that first pair and the feeling of invincibility and the ability to go anywhere or do anything in my boots. (Not strictly true, but to an eleven year old boy it felt like that). The catalyst for this expenditure was an invitation to ascend Snowdon in North Wales with a party from my Scout Group. I had been in Cub Scouts for the best part of four years and had only recently moved up into the Scout Troop. The ascent went without a hitch, on a clear bright day near perfect conditions on Miner's track up Pyg track down. The experience remains so vivid even to this day. I was hooked and my love of the high and wild places of this world firmly rooted into my psyche.

The years passed and my enthusiasm never waned, continually being drawn on by my own curiosity of what lay beyond the next adventure. Leading to ever higher larger mountains or more difficult ascents in the company of a variety of wonderful people to share my adventures with, particularly, my wife Kathryn who, fortunately, also shares my passion for mountaineering.

Mountaineering is wonderful game and I have made many good friends. It is also a dangerous game to play and anyone who plays long enough will encounter its darker side. I am no different. I have lost close friends, been almost suffocated by avalanche, almost frozen to death, battered and bruised from falls to difficult to even contemplate let alone actually being able to walk away from. I have also been very, very lucky, others not so. It is not too difficult a leap of imagination to contemplate the ifs and who would pick up the pieces.

Mountaineering is a progression and, I presume, a similar experience for many. At the beginning it is purely a physical challenge 'A to B' as fast as possible and the more difficult the terrain and conditions the better. You continually chase larger and larger challenges. Then something strange begins to happen unbeknown, the beauty of your surroundings has been seeping into your subconscious all along. The challenge is no longer further or higher, you slow down and take time to appreciate where you are and savour the experience, nowhere more so than, the hills where it all started.

Following thirty years of voluntary service with Scouting I stepped away from the movement and was looking for something else: Mountain Rescue seemed an obvious choice.

To answer the question of 'how to join a mountain rescue team?' the answer is patience and long application to develop the skills necessary to help others.

The 'why' is simple. It is the people, particularly the team members and a love of my local moor.

P.S. I say my local moor but I will let you share!

### Paul Mayall (Tigger)

I joined the team in 2008. Before joining team I was always a very outdoor sort of person, out and about on the hills around us walking and scrambling at weekends or as often as I could. I had seen the team on the hills when I had been out on my travels and decided to find out more about the team to try and gain more skills for myself.

One Tuesday night in January I attended a team meeting, it was equipment night and I was made very welcome. From that day on I haven't really looked back. In my first two years of joining the team I was a trainee. However, after this time I was made a full team member. During the training I learned all kinds of extra skills like the pulley systems, cable-ways, and search techniques. In that time you also go on the call out list learning on the job attributes.

The first call out I went on was a evening job in a park near New Moston, it was a missing person. We arrived at the area we were intending to search and sent a small party out to quickly scan the area where he had last been seen; they found him sat on a bench within 10 minutes. I never actually left OM3, our control van. On the way back to base I was a bit fidgety so I ended up with the nickname 'Tigger' by one of the female team members.

During my time on the team I have experienced many kinds of emotions from joy to sadness and been shocked at some of the sights we have to deal with. One of my worst experiences on a call out was at a farm house up on the hills where the ambulance couldn't get to because of the narrow lanes. A farmer had collapsed and the paramedics were doing CPR on the casualty to keep him alive, trying their very best in the process. Myself and another team member went into the house, my team mate went to relieve one of the paramedics who

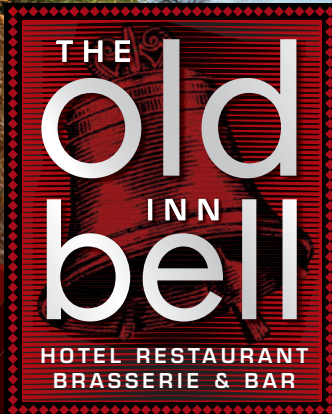




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had been working on him for some time and I went to the aid of the farmer's family. I found it emotionally draining getting to know the patients personally. They had just come back off holiday that morning so they were telling me about the things that they had been doing.

While they were explaining all of this I knew in the back of my mind that he was dead. I found it hard to deal with because it's not something we are trained in comforting the deceased's family, as they are usually at home. However, there is always someone in the team to talk to who will have had similar experiences or who the families can relate to. For example how they coped with the emotional stress. As a member you are always learning on every job we go on, whether it be the joy of finding a lost person or group, to the shock of doing a body recovery. Every job is different.

The best job I have been on was a long hard night on top of Bleaklow in the middle of winter with the temperature down to around minus 15 degrees. A lost walker had been benighted so three teams and four dog handlers had been called out for search. I went out with our dog handler as his navigator. We got dropped off at the top of Snake Pass at around 2100 Hrs and headed up the Pennine way to Bleaklow Stones. It was hard going, we were walking through snow drifts up to our waist. Another search party found the gentleman at midnight suffering with hypothermia half a mile from our position so we headed off to meet them for the carry off. During this period both mine and the dog handler's GPS batteries had failed because of the extreme cold. We were about 5 to 10 minutes away from the casualty site when the call came through on our radios that they were leaving.

We radioed control to tell the party to wait for us and shine the torches into the sky to give us their position. It was decided to carry the man off to the Woodhead pass side of the hill. We started to evacuate him and the going was very hard. We used teams of six men pulling the stretcher along the snow changing teams every ten minutes. After about three quarters of an hour, one of the other team members went down a snow-covered hole damaging his ankle, so a few of us stayed behind to sort him out and we ended up having to carrying him on a stretcher.

Unfortunately, during this time the temperature had dropped even more and the dogs were starting to get cold because they were sat waiting while the casualty was prepared. My hair had frozen and ice was forming on all of my clothing. We eventually got both casualties off the hill by six in the morning. It had been a long hard night but I learned a lot that night about how to cope with the temperature and how much the body can deal with.

As with all kinds of teams we have an enjoyable social life as well involving team mates and their families. We go to Scotland and the Lakes for winter training and also get the families together for camping weekends where it's usually team members and their kids. We go off climbing and walking with them, teaching them basic mountaineering skills which would be important for later life. Another part of being in the mountain rescue team would be that we go to Scouts and



## Team Members Own Stories

Cubs doing talks, showing our equipment, basic hill craft and safety on the hills.

All in all, I love contributing to the team and getting out helping people who need our resources and information. It is a great feeling knowing you have helped someone and saved their life.



Tigger with some of the team, winter training in Scotland

### Simon Briton

It's about twenty two or three years since I joined Oldham Mountain Rescue Team. The reason, well, I had done some walking, they were mentioned and I happened to bump into someone who was in the team. I hadn't heard of them previously but it turned out to be probably the best thing that I have done. After meeting and marrying my wife, Tracey, of course! Both of which has something to do with the man I bumped into.



During these years I have learned and done things I would never have dreamed about. I have seen things you only read about in newspapers, not nice things, sights very few people see. I have laughed and cried but mainly laughed. The happy times far outweigh the sad. How many people can say they have stood between the two pilots of an RAF Sea King helicopter and flown straight down Chew Valley and over Dovestones Reservoir? Who could refuse a ride on a Trent class lifeboat after a joint training session with the Coastguards in Holyhead? There's a lot more to Mountain Rescue than most people think, some even think we get paid! We don't want paying, we do it because we love it. You have to love it or you just wouldn't do it. Helping people, that's what it's all about, putting something back into the outdoor sports. Accidents will always happen and when they do, if we can be there to help, we will.

Mountain Rescue involves training and lots of it. Theory and practical training sessions which cover every conceivable type of rescue and scenario. All of these hopefully, bring about a successful outcome. Over the years, you remember the good times and the bad times. The funny stories that people tell, the call outs that can turn funny because the 'casualty' is cracking jokes even though they're in some discomfort. Dark humour is of course, a strange thing but it works. We knew something wasn't quite right when the helicopter flew low straight over the moor with one of our Casualty Carers still on the end of the winch. It turned out the cable had jammed and the pilot was flying low so the winchman could cut the cable and the Casualty Carer wouldn't have far to fall! It freed itself and all was well. We thought it hilarious but only because everyone was safe and well.

A scary moment I remember was being called out to a moorland fire. I and one of the other lads were tasked to take some hoses up to the top of a track for the fire brigade. We could hear the crackling of the fire in the Land rover and on reaching the top got out to remove the hoses only to discover the fire was just on the other side of the bushes about three feet away and moving in our direction. We scrambled back into the Land Rover pretty sharpish and just drove off to our right and not stopping for the fence that was in the way! A close shave, but nonetheless, funny now.

## Team Members Own Stories

Of course, there are also sad times. These can be body recoveries where somebody has had an accident and not made it or somebody has taken their own life. Either way, it's our job to recover them and help get them back to their loved ones. The worst times though, are when we lose one of our own. It's never easy when someone passes away, that you know, but when that someone is a person you've trained with, done rescues with, searched acres and acres of moorland with, been taught by, been away with, shared experiences with, trusted them with your life, you miss them. All of them!

The man I bumped into was Al Day. I didn't know him then but because of him my life changed forever and for the better. First, I joined Oldham Mountain Rescue Team and twenty odd years on I'm still there and still love it. Secondly, after Al persuaded me to go to a night club, I met Tracey and I'm still there and still love her!

### Another Joke from our Irish Matron

A Mountain Rescue Team were looking for ways to increase attendance and participation at their monthly meetings, which was usually held in a quiet corner of a local watering hole. One of the older members suggested bringing in a hypnotist. The committee agreed and a famous hypnotist was hired for the night, notification sent out, and everyone was pleased.

At the next meeting the pub was packed, team members sat fascinated as the hypnotist withdrew a gold pocket watch on a chain. The hypnotist began chanting .... "Watch the watch .... Watch the watch ..... Watch the watch ...

Team members became mesmerised as the watch swayed back and forth, the lights gleaming off its polished surface. Thirty pairs of eyes followed the swaying watch, until suddenly, the hypnotist's fingers slipped, and the watch fell to the floor .....

"S" said the hypnotist.

The bar had to close for four days, to clean up the floor. The Mountain Rescue Team found a new location for their meetings.

### Barry Pelmore

I moved up to Saddleworth from the South in July 1988 when I bought Running Hill Kennels, not far from the Cross Keys. I was interested in doing some voluntary work and as I had an S2 Land Rover and Army trailer, I was welcomed into the Team in 1989 after another Team Member had left with his Landie. I had no climbing experience, so have always been in a supporting role within the Team.

However, I seemed to have the gift of the gab when it came to hassling people to give us money and was tasked (or tasked myself) with going to Dovestones Reservoir at weekends to rattle collection boxes and to sell all sorts of items from Carnival magazines to key rings. This led to an interest in fund raising, albeit on a small scale, compared to some of the funds raised since then. I now look after the collection boxes which are distributed around fifty local venues and generate over £2,500 per annum. I also help to give presentations to Primary Schools in our area, which are always fun and rewarding experiences. Now that I've retired it's easier to do things when necessary that working members cannot.

Driving has always interested me and I had some super off road excursions with a Land Rover 90 for seven years, many of them with other team members. I'm pleased to say that the DVLA even renewed my licence to drive a minibus!

Being in the Team continues to be a wonderful experience, which is difficult to describe to those outside it. Everyone within the Team will know what I mean and I'm so grateful for being a part of it.





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## Team Members Own Stories

### Phil Beard

Unlike the early days of the Royton A.T.C Mountain Rescue team, by the time I joined the squadron in November 1968 we never had a great number of call outs, maybe half a dozen or so at best per year. We still had the joint exercises with the Royal Air Force and other teams every September - October over Bleaklow and Winter Hill. It was entertaining for us young lads riding around in Air Force Three Tonners and the like. The last call out for the A.T.C. team was late 70's or early 80's, looking for a chap who had bought a bottle of whisky from the Junction Inn at Denshaw and decided to go for a long walk around Piethorne Valley. We were tasked with searching an upper part of the valley on the Nicky Nook to Delager Bay stretch. Unfortunately he was found in a small conduit on the opposite side of the valley some two weeks later by Brian Howarth, a local farmer from Ogden. Shortly after that we found out that there was no more funding or assistance from R.A.F. Stafford and the team was, unfortunately, disbanded.



I then spent a couple of years bouldering and climbing and because I was still a civilian instructor in the A.T.C. I could get my Mountain Leaders summer and winter certificates funded by the M.O.D. So, with them completed I was wondering what to do next with my experiences. I had heard a rumour that Oldham Mountain Rescue Team met at the Cross Keys Inn which was handy as I had been frequenting the Keys since I was too young to drink. This was due to the fact that I had camped in a field at Knowl Farm (owned at the time by Mr Cooper) on many occasions for my Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the Keys was just a short walk away.

I knew a few climbers who frequented the Keys but to the best of my knowledge had never bumped into any of the team. However, I was stood chatting with Paul Seddon at the bar one night (possibly a Wednesday) in late 1986 when I walked Dave Allport who knew Paul from Troll. Dave and myself ended up discussing the team. He mentioned that the next team exercise was on Friday night and if I was interested to meet outside the Commercial in Uppermill at 1930 on that evening.

I duly turned up at the aforementioned time to meet a lot of people I had never met before but seemed quite amiable and got into some friendly banter when a car drew up and stopped in front of the pub. To my surprise, out of the car came a figure I had not seen for maybe fifteen or more years, it was Mark Littlewood.

We had known each other since we were kids as our fathers were best of friends, they were in the same gun club and met twice a week for shooting and beer - in that order I think. You could have knocked us both down with a feather, neither of us realising each others' interest in M.R. Mark was running the exercise that evening and had been involved with O.M.R.T. for quite a few years.

Needless to say it took me only a few seconds to make my mind up to join the team if they would have me and I think I was enrolled as a team member in October 1986. A couple of years later Dave Allport and myself became deputy team leaders.

I left the team in 1991 when Wendy and I went to live and work in America training instructors for the Troll agent in the U.S.A as well as running rescue courses. That lasted for a year and from there we moved to Spain. I worked as a mountain guide in the Picos de Europa as I was co-director of Spantrek with Aidrian Garlick. We ran a holiday company offering guided tours through the Picos mountains in northern Spain. This is an area to which we still return, we have to, it's as simple as that.

We returned to the U.K. in 1994 and we were invited to the team's 30th anniversary dinner at Saddleworth golf club later that year. I was asked by Mick Nield if I would like to return to the team, the rest, as they say, is history.

### This is the final joke from our Irish Matron.

Four married lads from a mountain rescue team are away for a week-end training session. After a few hours on the hill, the following conversation took place:

First lad: "You have no idea what I had to do to get away this week-end. I had to promise my wife that I would paint every room in the house next weekend"

Second lad: "That's nothing. I had to promise my wife that I would build a new decking in the back garden"

Third lad: "You both have it so easy, I had to promise my wife that I would remodel the kitchen for her"

The day rolled by, weather was good, the search exercise was going well, when they realised that the fourth guy had not said a word, so they asked him. "You haven't said anything about what you had to do to be able to get away for the weekend"

Fourth lad: "I just set the alarm clock for 5:30 am. When it went off I leaned over and shut it off, gave my wife a nudge and said, "Week-end on the hill with the team or make love?". She said, "Don't forget your map and compass."



## Team Members Own Stories

### Tony Tombs

Rosie was my first search dog and was originally bought for my daughter when she was born. Colin Pierce and I were in Buckley's kitchen at the Cross Keys after training one evening, when he suggested I trained Rosie for search work. Twenty odd years later and I'm still at it, not with Rosie of course.

I have had four dogs since Rosie but only one other has been successful so far. Not all dogs make the grade for various reasons. Training a dog for Search and Rescue can be very much a roller coaster ride with many highs and lows. After Colin's suggestion I contacted SARDA (now SARDA England) and went along to see what they did. I was so impressed with the dogs and the way they worked my mind was soon made up.



Training the dogs is really rewarding of course but you never lose sight of the serious nature of what you are doing and what the 'end game' is. I was in the process of training Rosie, when in December 1988 the tragedy of flight 103 occurred over Lockerbie. All the dogs in the country were deployed. I couldn't use Rosie as she wasn't qualified, but speaking with fellow handlers, the experience for man and dog was horrendous. Some dogs became quite overloaded with 'finds' and behaved very differently to their usual working patterns. Sadly some dogs became ill due to the aviation fuel and there was more than one eventual fatality.

Rosie finally graded in 1991 and was OMRT's first search dog. We upgraded about two years later in the Lakes along with Ken Sloan, mentor and SARDA stalwart. Ken has always had close links with OMRT and joined us on many a call out. He still remains a member of Woodhead MRT unlike our compatriot Steve Ward. Steve joined us from Woodhead several years ago and currently has two dogs. Both Ken and Steve are great motivators in their own unique ways and both a great support to any up-and-coming handler. Mimi Davies is a team member who illustrates this point. Despite a set back with her first dog Blue, she is a steady and very knowledgeable handler and will be a key asset when she trains another dog. Andy Hadfield has just had his dog Jock accepted for training and I'm sure that with Andy's temperament and physical fitness he will make a fine handler and a sound team with Jock.

The support from your Team is vital when training a dog. OMRT has always, to a man (team member to be pc), supported the notion that dogs are a valuable asset in MR. Mick Nield our Team Leader has, in particular, been a keen

advocate for search dogs and accompanied me as a body on a national SARDA training weekend in Coniston in the early 90's. The hut, which was our accommodation for the weekend, was up a rutted track about a mile from the road head. After modestly increasing the profits of the local watering hole I decided not drive up to the hut. A night in the car seemed, at the time, to be an eminently sound option. The car however was a Fiesta and Mick is six foot - silly! Mick, plus me, plus dog in a Fiesta was doomed. Mick slept outside on the ground with just the beer to keep him warm, oh and an orange plastic survival bag. A good idea, except the rain was relentless. Quick action with a knife through the bottom of the bag prevented it filling to the top and drowning said Team Leader. Even this did not put him off and Mick has now achieved full grade with his own dog Bob, a long held ambition.



Nigel Clegg and I teamed up together for call outs. Nige was my navigator. This is how the search dog set up works. Handler focuses on working the dog, navigator navigates and the team can then report back to control about how much of the area has been covered. It is also safer than working alone when on call outs. We liked urban and semi-rural searches the best. Nige's navigational skills were second to none in these scenarios. It was almost uncanny how search patterns meant hostleries were discovered at lunch times! When Nige became Section Leader, Jo, my wife, took over as navigator which was great, as we became an even more self-contained unit. Search strategies were never the same after that.

Rosie endeared herself to most Team Members, usually by sinking her teeth into them. The only team member she didn't bite was our late friend Barry Holt. He prided himself on being the "unbitten one". Barry would look after Rosie on Control if I needed to do something that didn't involve the dog. Barry must have worked some kind of magic on her as they became good friends.

### The Famous Agecroft Incident.

Oh, that the ground would open up and swallow you! Night search in a country park. Team call out plus dogs. Tasked to search an area with Rosie I put her working jacket on together and a green light stick. Great fun to begin with, especially the more than slightly panicked utterances of a group of youths enjoying beer and wacky baccy, when they saw a strange green apparition levitating among the undergrowth and bushes and looking very much like it was about to gate-crash the party. Things went downhill from there. First I lost 'coms' with control and everyone else for that matter, I had a dud radio battery! No problem really, just carry on working the dog and meet up with the team at some



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point. Then things really went pear shaped; no dog. I was now searching for my search dog! No 'coms' and no dog... I sat down to have a serious head scratch. I felt like the emperor with no clothes except I knew I had no clothes. I was just on the edge of having a good laugh (well, desperation really) when a Bolton Team Member appeared from the undergrowth. "Glad I found you" he said, "We know where your dog is too". A member of the public had taken her to the Police Station thinking she was lost. She had a jacket on with 'SEARCH DOG' emblazoned on it, a light stick and bells; I wonder why they thought she was lost. Remember the youths? Revenge? Hmm I wonder. Anyway we arrived at the Police Station where Rosie had wheedled her way into the affections of the Duty Sergeant. She was lying full length behind the desk with biscuits and water, still with her jacket and light on. Not daft Rosie! She can't have bitten the Sergeant!

Talisker (Tal ) took over from Rosie. Tal was a wedding present from Jo's Mum and Dad and was named after my favourite malt. In fact Tal was 'christened' at the Talisker distillery on Skye in September 1995 with a miniature bottle donated by the distillery. Nige was the 'God Father'. Tal was a strong willed dog which lent itself to being persistent when searching and he scored highly during his assessment.

When finding one body he was really tenacious, relentlessly indicating as I had to climb down blocks of rock and crawl through gorse bushes to get to the body. Tal had a big heart and an eye for the ladies. Well only one really, a German Pointer belonging to a handler from the south west called Paddy Cummins.

Whilst Paddy and I were discussing a search area up in the Lakes, Tal took his opportunity to promote Anglo German relations. My abiding memory of Tal is the resplendent pose he struck following his conquest, lying on his back in the sun lacking only a cigarette. His character is portrayed wonderfully in this cartoon by Sarah Anderson.

Joss and Lass are two of my other dogs who unfortunately did not make progress in their training. Joss found a wonderful home with Dave, Kath, Christian and Danny Knight. In fact he was so well loved and looked after that I think he must have known he would land on his feet if he shirked his schooling! Lass reached the end of the first stage of training but became ill with Addison's disease. As a result she had to cease training but is now doing well on medication.

Jed is the newish kid on the block and although failing his first attempt at grading (my fault not his) I think he will be the best search dog I will have had. Watch this space.

It's a great privilege to work with these animals that in reality have the capacity to save lives and relieve suffering. However, it is important to acknowledge, that a dog and handler can only achieve success in partnership with the 'Dogs Bodies'. Dogs bodies are the crucial link in the training process, they come out in all weathers and conditions in various parts of the country. Every find a dog has, is also a find for the Bodies.



## Team Members Own Stories

I have been involved with Mountain Rescue and Search Dogs for twenty eight years. I have formed the opinion that there is no other Mountain Rescue Team which supports and values the qualities of the search dog quite like Oldham Mountain Rescue Team. In testament to this, we now have a solid foundation of dogs, handlers and bodies which bodes so well for the future.



### Katie Jonson

My heart initially sank when I was asked to write about my time in OMRT; as anyone who knows me will tell you I'm not a fan of talking about myself. But, after pondering this for some time I realised that my story was also someone else's story too – my late, older sister Emma, who was also an OMRT team member and one of the team doctors for many years.



Katie

To understand why we joined MR you need to know our background. As local girls growing up in Uppermill, the surrounding hills were our playground; this instilled a deep love and respect for the moors in both of us.

We were also brought up to always help those that needed help. As children that took the form of raising money for different charities by Carol singing, running second hand stalls, selling our old toys, as well as helping out in a local old peoples home. As we got older we joined the Uppermill Brownies and Guides and completed our Duke of Edinburgh Awards. Being two and a half years older than I, Emma always led the way with this. It was when she was organising a sponsored abseil off Saddleworth Church that she first came into contact with the team, who helped her organise the event.

She very quickly became involved with the team and loved everything that the team stood for – helping others who needed help and not asking for anything in return. Whilst she was still at college she became a team member and her life revolved around studying to get into medical school and OMRT.

My first glimpse of the team came via Emma. I used to be a casualty on a few of their exercises and also used to go up to some of the team socials at the Cross Keys. I remember feeling very much in awe of the 'big scary men with the big beards and funny hair do's'!

Once Emma completed her medical degree she went onto to be one of the team doctors and her love and enthusiasm to learn was infectious and everyone loved to be taught by her. She was a trauma doctor and her skills saved many a casualty's life over the years. We sadly lost her in 2008 and I will be forever indebted to the team and also to key individuals within the team who gave the family and me unwavering support. I always knew that we were a strong tight knit team but it's not until you have to call upon that support do you truly understand what an amazing thing that is.

## Team Members Own Stories

After university in 1999 I joined OMRT as a trainee. It seemed like a natural progression having been involved with the team since I was fifteen and it fitted with my want to help others. Even though I wasn't a stranger I was still petrified when I had to stand up at the team meeting to formally apply as a trainee.

The next couple of years were brutal. Back then a trainee got all the horrible jobs and you had to get your head down and, rightly so, you had to learn from the team members who had all the knowledge and experience. There was no Google back then so you had to genuinely know what you were talking about! There was no 'hand holding' or 'soft soaping' and it wasn't a PC environment – but I loved it! It built back bone and strength of character, two characteristics that I have needed to draw upon many times since in my MR career.



Emma

When I joined, the team was a different animal to what it is today. We didn't have a ton of branded team gear and we all mainly used our own kit, so we did have a tendency of looking like a bit of a rag bag bunch of misfits!

My passion in MR (again, strongly influenced by my late sister) has always been on the medical side and I have held my casualty care certificate since the first year of joining the team. I feel at my most effective when I am hands on with a casualty.

In 2010, following the untimely death of our much beloved Chairman, John Edwards, I took over as Chairwoman of the team. It is a role I take very seriously. OMRT has been a part of my life for over half my life and I count it very much a part of my family. I am fiercely protective of the team and members within it. The team has changed over the years and, even though the jackets have got more co-ordinated and some of the processes have changed, the heart of OMRT still beats as strong as ever and the simple mentality of wanting to help those who are vulnerable is still at the forefront of everything we do.

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## Appreciation

Keeping the team operational depends on two very important things. The first is the selfless dedication given by the members and the second is the financial support given by the public. Funds arrive in wide variety of ways - from individual donations in our collection boxes to fundraising events organised on our behalf by other organisations. The amounts donated varies widely too, varying from modest to staggering. However much or wherever they come from we are really grateful for every last penny. Listing them all here would occupy most of this book so we trust the thanks we offer directly to the people involved are seen as sincere and appreciative.

We regard carrying out the rescues, working with at the emergency services and, for example, looking after travellers in bad winters as normal. Occasionally we are able to repay the communities that support us by undertaking some unusual but, hopefully, valued tasks. Replacing the stepping stones across the river in Uppermill or recovering lorry tyres dumped in a stream on a moorland road are not exactly run-of-the-mill mountain rescue activities but we are equipped and able to tackle them.

Over the years the team has helped the local community in many ways as a thank you for them raising money for us. There are many voluntary organisations that have collected and raised money for us. Possibly the biggest collection boxes has been from Diggle Chippy, I can not name them all but just a few, who are: the Round table, Middleton Massonic, Saddleworth Ladies Fundraising and many of the local junior Schools, however the biggest we have ever had that helped us purchase our latest Land Rovers was from the East Lanc's Mark Masson's. a staggering £40,000.00

Apart from the rescues and helping people and cars trapped in bad winters, as a team we rebuilt the Stepping Stones across the river in (1990) Uppermill and they lasted till one got dislodged again in 2014. We were just about to re-set it when the Parks Department from Oldham came and did it. We have cleared the road side of rubbish, helped with first aid standby at bonfire nights, are always present at the remembrance day service on Pots & Pans and help ferry up individuals that can not make it under their own steam due to health. We have helped in films and a couple of soaps such as Coronation Street and Emmerdale when they needed a rescue team, but we did get a reasonable donation for these and we have been recognised for the following and mentioned in the Lords.



Repairing stepping stones  
Uppermill November 1990

## Awards and Commendations

Royal Humane Society Award 1978  
Commendation Northumberland Police 1989  
Divisional Commanders Award 1999  
Presentation to the Queen 1999  
Meeting the Queen & Prince Philip 1999  
Chief Constable's Commendation 2001  
The Queens Jubilee Medal 2002  
Greater Manchester Ambulance Service 2006  
Pride in Oldham Award Winners 2007  
Goodyear Tyres 'Team of the Year' 2010  
N.W.A.S: Special Commendation 2010  
The Queens Jubilee Medal 2012  
GMP Good work minute award 2012  
Kos Police, Greece, letter of thanks 2013  
Derbyshire Police 50 Years Commendation 2014  
South Yorkshire Police Commendation SARDA Dogs 2014

### QUOTE from Lord Davies of Oldham (Deputy Chief Whip (House of Lords), HM Household; Labour)

"My Lords, the Government do all that they can, as do local authorities that have responsibility in their areas for safety in the surrounding hills and mountains. They do a great deal to bring to the attention of schoolchildren the value of this work and to publicise it in the wider community. From my experience in Oldham, no institution is held in greater respect locally than the Oldham Mountain Rescue Unit."

## Land Owners

An essential part of the team's training regime is the practical experience gained by working on the hills, moors and crags around the area. Freedom to roam the hills was a hard won right for the individual but for groups things are a little different.

Land, with all its flora and fauna, is a very valuable asset that needs careful management for the people who own the land it is a vital source of income. Moorland is fragile and easily damaged by things like overgrazing or fires caused by careless visitors and even tracks created by lots of walkers. As a team we have to treat it with respect and make sure anything we plan to do does not conflict with the landowner's needs. Consequently when we plan an exercise we have to seek permission and accept any conditions they may impose.

The Crowther family have been farming in Saddleworth for many years and the team has enjoyed their support from the outset. We appreciate what they do for us and owe them a great deal.

United Utilities handed over the responsibility for managing the land in the Dovestones area to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). The RSPB is not only about birds, they are looking after all the creatures as well as the moorland and streams they inhabit. Damaged areas are being restored by replanting them with sphagnum moss, bilberry and heather. On one of our exercises team members used their climbing skills to remove rhododendron bushes, a non native species, from the cliffs around Dovestones. Stalybridge Estates also own land in the area and our contact has been with their senior Gamekeeper, Andy Kelly (recently retired), another great supporter.

Over the years we have enjoyed the co-operation of our local landowners and, hopefully, repaid their trust and support by respecting their wishes and helping them out occasionally - reporting problems, watching out for injured sheep or assisting with moorland fires.



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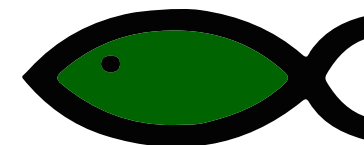
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## Emma Award By Katie Johnson

This has been a very difficult year to choose just one individual who has stood out to receive the Dr Emma Award for outstanding casualty care. I think it's safe to say it's been a tough year and the sad events have meant that more than one person has stood out as being someone worthy of the award. For this reason this year the award goes to the whole team as everyone has banded together to protect each other and I know our Em would be immensely proud of each member of the team.

To give just a few examples of what I'm talking about and I'll apologise in advance for not mentioning everyone (before anyone has a diva stroop!). The day of Phil's accident the things that stood out for me were:

Our Alpha - who was on his mobile and getting the air ambulance called before Phil had hit the deck. I don't believe anyone would have handled that incident better than him.

Jim - who was Mick's calm second in command and I'll always remember his hand on my shoulder saying that he was there and he was organising all the kit.

DA, who had hold of Phil's hand and kept talking to him. DA and TLC are two things I never thought would go together but he was awesome!

Lee - had the arduous task of getting Wendy and keeping strong and calm for her.

All the guys getting kit, closing the road and getting a site for the helicopter.

Mimi and Wardy - who were on the phone to all of us in the days after the event making sure everyone was ok.

Peter and Dave - who had the shitty task of investigating the incident. Everyone who went to visit and take the !!@@!! out of Phil at the hospital in the following weeks.

Phil himself who was still making jokes about the female doctor when he was on his arse at the bottom of the crag.

We also showed our true Oldham team spirit when we were hit with the devastating loss of Jim. The team came together to protect each other as well as Jim's loved ones.

I'm guessing by now you all understand why this year the award is to go to the whole team. We have faced horrific events this year and every individual within the team has been looking out for their fellow team mates.

We might be a bunch of cantankerous old women most of the time but when the proverbial hits the fan we come together as a team. It's the reason why Emma loved this team as much as she did and why this year we should be proud of how we have got through together.



Phil on rescue of girl in the morning



Phil being cared for after the fall



Phil on the first part of his journey back



Phil Dec 2014: Winner of the Twyford's Collar for 'Trying to Fly' and his jacket lovingly repaired after cutting it off in his accident.

# The Upperwood Story

Adapted from the Pat Cooksey song The Sick Note, Gerard Hoffnung's address to the Oxford Union in 1958 and the Dublin and Wicklow 30th Anniversary book by Derek Kegan.

Dear Sir,  
I am writing in response to your request for additional information in section 3 of the Mountain Rescue Accident Report form. I would like to mention that "Poor Planning", and a portion of bad luck, as the cause of my accident, and for a fuller explanation I trust the following details will be sufficient.

On the day of the accident, I was working with some of my team mates in Upperwood Quarry, Saddleworth. As we completed the final rescue scenario, I needed to lower some kit, including some extra ropes, back down the Crag.....? This kit when weighed later, was found to be 150 Kg.

Securing a pulley, at the edge of the cliff, and a rope at ground level, I once again went back up to the top of the Crag, swung the kit out, and secured it with two good knots..? Then I went down, untied the rope, holding it tightly to allow a slow descent of the kit to ground level.

You will note elsewhere in the accident report form, I weigh 65 Kg.

Due to my surprise at being jerked off the ground so suddenly, I momentarily lost my presence of mind, and forgot to let go of the bloody rope.

Needless to say, I proceeded at a great rate of knots up the side of the damn Crag...!

In the vicinity of the Overhang, about half way up, I met the kit, which was now proceeding downwards.....at an equally impressive speed.

This explains the fractured skull, minor abrasions, and broken collarbone on the right side, as mentioned elsewhere in the form.

Slowing only slightly, I continued my rapid ascent, not stopping until the fingers of my left hand, were two knuckles deep..... into the pulley..!

Fortunately by this time I had regained my presence of mind, and was able to hold tightly onto the rope, in spite of the excruciating pain I was beginning to experience.

At approximately the same time however, the kit hit the ground below, and the arse of the bloody rope bags..... burst open, (Not a SAR rope bag). The rope bags, along with Karabiners, Ascenders, Allps and Rockers etc, spilled out. Now devoid of the weight of the rope, and only weighing 15 Kg, shot up again.....like "you know what" off a shovel.

I refer you once again to my own weight....!

As you might imagine, I began a rapid descent, down the side of the Crag, in the vicinity of the first ledge, I met the busted rope bags, 60 karabiners, 4 Ascenders, 2 Rockers, and other crap..... coming up.

This accounts for the six broken ribs on the right side, severe lacerations to my legs and lower body.

Here my luck began to change.... Slightly.

The encounter with the ascending high-speed rope bags, 60 Karabiners, 4 Ascenders, 2 Rockers etc.... seemed to slow me enough to lessen my injuries, when I fell into the pile of un-coiled rope..... And fortunately only three vertebrae were cracked.

I am sorry to report however, as I lay there on the pile of rope, in severe pain, unable to move..... I again lost my composure and presence of mind, and let go of the bloody rope, and I lay there, watching the empty rope bags, 60 Karabiners, 4 Ascenders, 2 Rockers, begin their damn journey back down..... On top of me.

This explains the broken nose, two black eyes .....and cheek bone misalignment.

Yours sincerely.





# In Memoriam

Oldham Mountain Rescue Team wishes to remember the following who have helped our cause in their passing. There are those Ex team members and supporters that have moved away and we have no trace or we have not been notified. If they are missing from the list, we do apologise.

Stephen Earnest Hornsby	1979
John Millhench	1994
Mr Craven	1994
A Tattersall	
Gordon Kay	1995
Clara Flint	1995
Norman Mellor	1996
Miss Marie Toft	1996
Gerald Pointer Shaw	
Freda Crowther	1997
Mr E Cooke - June	1999
Frank Sykes - June	1999
Dave Furness	Team Member
Sam Fowler	Team Member
Roy Cunningham	Team Member
Geoff Smith	Team Member
Search Dog Rosie	1986 - 1999
Edna Stretton	1999
Joan Hough	2000
Joan Hough	2000
Phil Kay Publican Cross Key's	2001
Jean Cunningham	2002
Barry Holt	Team Member
Mr J Farrow	2002
Mr F McOarry	2004
Maurice Hartley	2004
Jamie Barrow	2004
John Gardiner	2004 Team Member
Joan Lowde	2004
A Lawrence	2005
Charles Blades	2005 Team Member
Timothy Hyde	2005
Alan Holt	2006 Team member
Frank Porritt	2006
Joel Cohen	2006
Mr Ron Day	2007
Frank Allsopp	2007
Mr Alan Barlow	2007
Mr G Thompson	2007
Mrs Beryl Clegg	2008
Mrs Mary Burgess	2008
Dr Emma Grandidge	2008 Team Member
Mr Ken Wood	2008

Oliver Dixon	2008
Mr Kevin Gossan	2009
John Edwards	2010 Team Member
Brian Roberts	2010
John Woodcock	2010
Mr John Beverley	2010
Peter Holme	2011
Joyce Darlington	2011
Albert Wood	2011
Ann Candler	2011
Allison Crowther	2011 Land Owner
Ian Hazlehurst	2012
Mr T Walker	2012
Florence Galloway	2012
Mr K Kennedy	2012
Mr P Holme	2012
Mr A Hill	2013
Mr W McCann	2013
Mrs A Howell	2013
Mr R Connell	2013
Mrs. Eva Smethurst	2014
Jim M. Duffy	2014 Team member
Jacquie Howell	2014 Team bulletin editor
Mr Geoffrey Horrocks	2014



## Alone

No panic, no fear, no worry,  
but they will worry later,  
the evening sun has taken on a ghostly hue.  
Safety lies beyond a distance ridge.  
The solitude and haunting isolation of the mountain  
has taken on a different meaning.  
They will start to worry soon.  
Start moving, how?  
The foot a broken thing.  
On hands and knees, across a valley over a ridge and then another.  
Get to the river.  
Soon, night will spread its dark mantle over the land.  
A babbling sound is close.  
Keep moving towards that sound.  
The hours go by, on hands knees through boulder fields and marshland.  
The eyes are heavy, sleep, blessed sleep.  
Close your eyes for a moment.  
Lie back on your marshy bed, close your eyes and sleep.  
A sudden snorting sound, a Stag nearby.  
Time has passed.  
How long?  
Your legs are numb.  
No more sleep for you this night.  
On hands and knees a hundred paces forward through the darkness.  
Rest and then the same again.  
The moon has risen long ago to the East, where a safe haven awaits.  
Sleep is forbidden, no don't even close your eyes.  
Over there, flickering lights on distant cliffs.  
Tired eyes deceived, no, help is there.  
Quickly flash your camera, SOS.  
No response, try again and again.  
No response, they have gone, start moving.  
The lights are back, moving towards you now.  
Use the camera, flash again and again.  
Voices, lights, silhouettes against the moonlit sky, people all around.  
The shivering starts, the pain comes in waves.  
They are trained professionals, they take over.  
Close your eyes and sleep.

By Michael K. Kennedy  
October 09

## Closing Comments

A man the team knows well once told me his thoughts of what type of person joins a Mountain Rescue team and what he said 48 years ago in the RAF is the same as he would give today and I agree.

His words:

'The experienced mountaineer or serious walker, man or woman, who is prepared to get out of their warm bed at three in the morning, in the month of January, and scrape the ice off the inside of the bedroom window to see what the weather is like before pulling on his boots. That's my type of team member. Now this early start is for the younger ones'

Back to me:

In my early days and when Lee my son was 18 months old, his second Christmas, we had a shout at 5:00 am on Christmas Day. I woke Lee so I could see the look in those tired eyes as to what he thought of the garage I had made him. There was no response and the only response I did get was from Dorene and that was "If you're not back by 2:00 pm for Christmas dinner you will be eating it on your own". It's a hard life being a bloke in the MR team and being married with a family.

As the years rolled by, in our team as in many others, team members married, some to each other, and babies are born. They grow into teenagers that we couldn't control because they know better. Some have even joined the team and so the wheel keeps turning.

We have had our losses over the years and these were very hard to take because the team is a family within families and we remember them all at this time. As my esteemed friend would say.

"To us they are still on the hill".





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