

Moravian Women's Association - Home and Overseas Paper – March 2013

Patterdale Mountain Rescue

17 February 2013 - Boy Falls From Ridge: Location: Swirral Edge

Patterdale Mountain Rescue Team were called to attend a boy who had fallen from Swirral Edge, Helvellyn. The boy, a 10 year old from Preston, was climbing down the ridge with his father, when he slipped on a steep snow slope and fell approximately 50m.

The Great North Air Ambulance dropped its doctor and paramedic on the ridge and ferried team members with kit up to their location. Personnel then descended to the casualty site and secured and assessed the boy before placing him in a vacuum mattress. He was conscious but was treated for suspected pelvic and possible head injuries.

A Sea King helicopter from RAF Boulmer was scrambled when the incident was reported. When it arrived on scene, it winched the casualty together with his father and a doctor into the aircraft before flying them to the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle.

Its all in a day's work for the Patterdale Mountain Rescue. The Mountain Rescue Team is made up entirely of volunteers and is available and on call for 24 hours a day, every day of the year. They have a wide variety of "day jobs" including a local GP and Minister of religion, and are very proud of the voluntary tradition of their mountain search and rescue service.

History

The Patterdale Mountain Rescue Team was founded in 1964 by Dr James Ogilvie, Patterdale's local doctor. A man of vision and action, he was an experienced climber and mountaineer and his efforts established a Team, which has now developed into one of the busiest in the Lake District. A Supporters' Club was established in 1998.

Team members all have mountaineering skills, first aid qualifications and local knowledge and many have expertise in specialist mountain casualty care, advanced first aid, emergency off- and on-road driving and water rescue. The Team has between 20 and 30 active members as well as a number of probationers under training at any one time. They are all volunteers, available for call outs and also donating significant time to training, communications and fundraising.

Their base

The Team used to operate from a converted barn provided by the Patterdale Hotel. This was adapted to changing needs over the years, but due to limited facilities had restricted the development of the Team and the service it offered

A new centre has been built costing in the region of £345,000. It is sited in the heart of Patterdale, has facilities to provide the highest standard of on-site medical care, a dedicated quiet area for friends or family of the casualty, a control room with the latest communications technology, security for vehicles and equipment, an indoor training area and facilities to educate school groups and the general public in the ways of mountain rescue.

Team Equipment

The Team maintains three Land Rover Ambulances fitted with radios for mountain and helicopter communication and a range of specialist equipment, packed and ready to go as soon as needed.

They also have a Rescue Boat, to evacuate casualties across Ullswater or to carry team personnel more directly to casualty sites on the eastern shore of the lake. The Team work and train regularly with the Coastguard team on the lake and at Maryport, our nearest lifeboat station.

The Team works closely with the RAF Helicopter crews and the Great North Air Ambulance to evacuate casualties efficiently, to gain access to remote areas and to cover ground quickly in a search situation. Members take part in regular training with the crews in order to maintain competence in the various aspects of winching, flying and communicating with aircraft.

Medical equipment

A casualty's blood pressure, temperature, pulse and blood oxygen level can now be monitored on the fell and even transferred from the rescue site to hospital medical staff. The equipment to do this is expensive but vital to the survival of some casualties, especially those suffering from exposure, head injuries or breathing difficulties.

They also carry a defibrillator, oxygen, entonox and a variety of splints, dressings and medicines. A number of members regularly undergo training in Advanced Emergency Care, so that the insertion and maintenance of drips and a wide variety of drugs can be administered on the fell, even if a doctor is not present.

Training and skills

All these requirements and the variety of equipment available means that Team members constantly have to maintain, update and develop their knowledge and skills. The Team runs a regular training programme, and exercises are held at the Base and out on the mountains. Joint exercises with the Coastguard team and with the Air Ambulance are a regular feature and team members have also invested in Alpine training to ensure that winter mountaineering skills are developed..

Sir Chris Bonnington CBE, their Patron says *“It does not matter how experienced or careful you are, one tiny mistake and you can find that you need rescuing and your life is in the hands of the rescue team.”*

This year, the MWA has given £500 to this very worthwhile charity.

Naomi Hancock

