



# THE DUDDON AND FURNESS MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM

Affiliated to The Lake District Search & Mountain Rescue Association and Mountain Rescue, England and Wales  
Registered Charity 1173246

**President:** Peter Jackson MBE **Vice President:** David Hughes



## Supporters' Newsletter – January 2024

**Call-out Numbers.** The number of call-outs has risen steadily since the amalgamation of the Furness and Millom teams in 2002. Pre-2010 it was an annual average of 25; 2010–15 increased to 31; 2016–2020 to 40; 2021–23 to 52. The 2023 total of full-team callouts was 67. However, this ignores additional stand-bys and occasions where elements of the team are deployed, which in 2023 brought the total calls to the team to 84. These additional calls usually require members to cease their normal activity and prepare to deploy. The commitment of members also extends to spouses/partners who have to cope with sudden departures, meals abandoned and doubt over returns and the resumption of normal life. (Except that for team members this is normal life!)

Perhaps due to the above, MR (England & Wales) decided that the recognition of service and commitment certificates at the 25, 40 and 50-year points missed the enormous service given by members who failed to meet these points, and 10 and 20-year certificates have been added retrospectively. Some of the resultant plethora of awards were presented at the Christmas Social, held this year at the Newfield Inn in the Duddon Valley. A fitting location as the pub has supported the team and the public over many years, including as the most fruitful holder of a team collecting box, by a significant margin, and as a regular donor of event parking fees. Our thanks to the Newfield.

Of special note at the above event was the presentation of a 50-year certificate to Stephe Cove, chairman for many years and still part of our successful fundraising group as a Level 3 (non-operational) member. On that point, I moved to Level 3 this year after a more modest 20 years of service at the age of 75, but also continue as Fundraising Officer. (Stephe 5th from left with beard, me 1st left.)



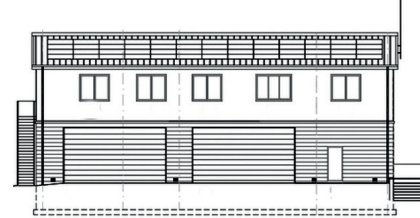
**The Permanent Base.** As the only team in the Lake District not to have a permanent home, we currently operate out of 2 unheated rental units but have over the last few years been raising funds for a permanent and modern base. While planning permission has been granted, land secured and £775,000 raised, rising costs since before COVID-19 have left a funding shortfall of £150,000 for the main build. Several funders have been approached but the need for a wider campaign remains. A 2024 build is planned.

Increasing call-out numbers leave the team needing a permanent base suitable for storing and drying kit, training and with facilities for team members and occasionally relatives of casualties to wait for deployment or recovery.

The team covers the area of SW Cumbria from Ravenglass in an arc round to Cartmel. Two thirds is in the new unitary authority of Westmorland & Furness and a third, to the west of the river Duddon, in Cumberland. Half of normal full-team call-outs are working jointly with our neighbour, Wasdale MRT (the busiest team in the Lake District this year), or occasionally with other teams.

During the freak snow event of early December, a family took shelter at the base, having abandoned their car, but the children had to wait in the toilet, the only available warm room, where the medical packs are stored to maintain gases at about 15°C.

The planned base will be a game-changer in terms of our ability to support the local community by enhancing our operational capability, including the ability to host multi-agency incidents, and to host youth training events. Our very presence as a free search and rescue service enables outdoor organisations and the general public to venture onto the hills with the assurance that should things go wrong help is at hand.





## 2023 Call-outs

Rather than give a catalogue of incidents, many of which are standard rescues of walkers – often with ankle injuries – I will describe a few of the more significant ones.

### Notable Call-outs

- An overnight and next day winter search for a walker lost on Scafell Pike. A multi-team search involving 9 teams. The casualty alerted a distant group as teams were told to return to base as light faded. When found, he had lost consciousness due to hypothermia and was extremely lucky to survive. He had been navigating using a failing smart phone and also failed to remain where his original location was recorded – which could have been fatal.
- Roxy, our newly trained search dog, made his first find of some grateful walkers who had strayed into the area of Lingcove Beck and were benighted looking for Langdale.
- Another overnight search for walkers on Scafell resulted in a find at 10.30 the following morning in Calf Cove. Luckily it happened in May so they were able to be walked off with minimum discomfort.
- Three multi-call-out joint days with Wasdale MRT dealing with overlapping incidents: a carry-off from Great Gable, and a casualty with hypothermia and other medical conditions on Lingmell; A carry-off from Scafell Pike and a couple stuck on Wastwater Screes, who were rescued by boat; and a carry-off from Lingmell, an ankle injury up towards Hollow Stones and a nearby asthma case – all at the same time.
- A successful offer to Glen Coe MRT by our team leader with a drone and newly produced software to help in a 5-week search for a missing walker. The body was found very quickly based on targeted intelligence from previous searches and a drone adaptation to always search at 90° to the ground (ie looking sideways onto steep crags).
- After a couple of years of inaction our Swift Water Rescue

Team were deployed to search for a suicide victim and separately to recover a canoeist trapped under water by trees. Both regrettably were fatalities.

- Another drone find. This time in our area, for a missing walker. A night search using illumination and heat.
- A call to assist 2 climbers who appeared to be trapped in Piers Gill but which turned out to be a mother and teenage son with no mountain experience or equipment who had been there for 36 hours, 115m down into the gorge. The front cover of MR Magazine showed the Coast Guard helicopter picking up the recovered casualties on a one-wheel-grounded hover.

### Notable Injuries dealt with

- Cardiac arrest – 2 occasions.
- Dislocated shoulder – 2 occasions. Almost impossible to re-set on the hill and requiring a stretcher carry in the sitting position with maximum analgesia.
- A tension pneumothorax – a climber fallen in the Lickle Valley whose life may have been saved by a volunteer surgeon as part of a heli-med crew who was able to release the tension (an increasing amount of air trapped in the cavity around the lung).
- Multiple injuries to a walker who had fallen near Goat's Hawse – a joint operation with Coniston MRT.

### Community Support

There were several examples where we helped people, who might donate at a fundraising collection but say that they are unlikely to need our assistance as they no longer go onto the fells:

- 2 evacuations of casualties – one from the bedroom at an isolated farmhouse and another from a village when ambulances were unable to reach the properties.
- Several incidents of vehicles stuck in snow, including an ambulance and police car.
- Check on multiple care-worker clients with no power and snow preventing normal visits.
- A fall from a 3-foot-high stile – a common and underestimated risk.
- Rescue of an injured runner on Hard Knott on an orienteering event.

### Finally

Our warm thanks to all those who support us in a variety of ways.

The team remains in a strong position, fully manned, well trained and with exceptionally, and often commented upon, high morale.

