

Aberdeen & St. John Mountain Rescue Association **NEWSLETTER**



SPRING 2014



The Team train every Thursday night and one weekend in three, but on top of that they are involved in call outs, take part in events and give talks. Here is just a taster of some of the other things that have kept them busy over the past year...

April 2013

Search for two missing persons near Loch Avon.

May 2013

Search for missing person on Glas Maol.

June 2013

Two AMRT teams take part in the Highland Cross. One team wins the MR category for the fifth year running.

Team members gave talks to the following groups:

Ellon Primary School /
Springvale Private School /
Mannofield Scouts / Inch Scouts /
Inverurie Round Table /
St Machar Academy /
Aberdeen Advance Motorists /
Inch Cubs / Bucksburn WRI

July 2013

Mike Dennison and his wife Kate ride tandem from Lands End to John O'Groats to raise money to provide an electric trike for local teenager Shaun Cairns who suffers from Cerebral Palsy.

October 2013

Search for two missing persons on the plateau of Cairn Toul and Devil's Point.

November 2013

Search for a missing child near Fyvie.

Team members have attended courses covering

Avalanche Basics / Search Management and Digital Mapping /
Avalanche Rescue Management

January 2014

Team members take part in the Strathpuffer 24.

January 2014

Marshalling at the Skimo Scotland, Glenshee.

January 2014

Retrieve fallen walker on Ben MacDui.

February 2014

Search for two lost walkers on Mount Keen.

February 2014

Recover injured walker and Mountain Biker from Bennachie.

Roland Jones and one of our SARDA dogs Coby have given talks to the following groups throughout the year:

Feb: Rayne WRI

March: Aboyne Academy

April: Inch Museum & Inverurie After School Club

Oct: Meldrum and Bourtie Church Guild

Nov: Logie Durno WRI & Skene WRI

Dec: Cluny WRI

Check out the Team's website at www.amrt.org.uk for ongoing updates and follow us on



Chairperson's Report

I am writing this article following a trip to the Austrian Tyrol, where we enjoyed a week of skiing in spring like conditions, not what we had expected for the first week of February. Whilst away I kept up to date with snow conditions here in Scotland, of which there was a significant amount, and of course what the Team were involved with in regard to various call outs.

This year the Team celebrates its 50th year. Things have changed massively over the last 50 years with regards to; technology, equipment, vehicles and also the number of people frequenting the hills. However the constant has been the Team and their ability and desire to make themselves available to help anyone who requires assistance either in the mountains or the surrounding area of Deeside and Donside. The amount of commitment the members of the Team show in the pursuit of safety on the hills is second to none. Despite them all leading very busy lives, with work, family and various sporting pursuits, they still find the time to train regularly and be available for callouts when the alarm is raised.

Over the past 50 years there have been a range of different Team members, all of whom have their own story to tell of their time with Aberdeen

Mountain Rescue Team. My abiding observation of anyone who has previously been in the Team or is currently a member, is the Team spirit and their ability to put others before themselves.

We have a number of plans on the table in order to celebrate the Team's 50th anniversary and the Association members are busy compiling a range of events which will pay a respectable tribute to the dedication and steadfastness of the Team members, both past and present. We hope that you will be able to support us in our endeavours by joining us on Saturday 7th June for our annual sponsored walk. It would be good to get as many of you as possible to participate and help raise funds in order to support the Team. More details of the walk can be found later on in this newsletter. We are also planning a ceilidh and exhibition day in Aberdeen along with other events. Please keep up to date by following us on Facebook or by checking the Team's website at www.amrt.org.uk.

I would like to thank everyone who has supported us over the year, who you will see mentioned in this newsletter. Apart from a small grant from the Scottish Government, we rely totally on fundraising and donations to help support the Team, which costs approximately £35,000 per year to remain operational.

I would also like to take this opportunity, as ever, to thank not only the Team members themselves, but also their families who provide support in the background. Also the Association committee, who although not able to become a Team member for one reason or another, are instrumental in keeping the Team running and give their time freely in order to do this.

We are very lucky to have access to such a wonderful playground. However, please remember to be careful and take the appropriate precautions for the conditions which you will encounter.

Stay safe, but enjoy as well.



Dawn MacKinnon

*Chair
Aberdeen & St. John Mountain Rescue Association*

Sponsored Walk 2013

Once again, our annual Sponsored Walk was held on the lovely Invercauld Estate near Braemar. Our thanks go to Factor, Simon Blackett, who always seems pleased to see us! The day was cool and overcast with just one shower of rain which didn't appear to dampen the enthusiasm of our wonderful supporters.

From the starting point at the marquee beside the former estate office, identified by rather smart AMRT banners for the first time, roughly 150 walkers made their way along the driveway of Invercauld Estate before taking to the track leading up Gleann an t-Slugain and the col between the waters of the Quoich and the Gairn.

The route then turned NE to follow the Gairn down to the bottom of the Bealach Dearg before turning south onto a path leading to the Culardoch track. This was a steep wee pull over a shortish distance! On reaching the track, some folk took the opportunity to ascend Culardoch (at 900m, so very nearly a Munro) and then it was downhill virtually the whole way for the homeward journey. At the last moment, the route deviated around Craig Leek onto a delightful grassy path in order to avoid the tarmac of the main driveway.

Everyone returned safely to the marquee where refreshments and fine pieces (courtesy of Alan Duffus at the Rhynie Bakery) were available.

A number of companies contributed to the success of the walk. At the Finish checkpoint, we were able to present every walker with a vacuum flask courtesy of **Shell**, a Buff courtesy of **Craigdon** and shortbread from the **Sinclairs of Rhynie Bakery**. Other spot prizes were also available from **Braemar Mountain Sports, Cotswold Outdoor and Hilltrek, Aboyne**.

First Bus - provided discounted coaches & **Peter Vardy Land Rover** - loaned a Land Rover.

Thanks also to **Invercauld Estate** for welcoming us back and **AMRT** for marshalling the route with their typical good humour and sweeties! And lastly, thanks to everyone who took part in raising c.£15k for MR funds. We couldn't keep the Team running without your support.

Leaders in the various categories were:-

Over 18 yrs -	Bill Cardno	£1,065
14 - 18 yrs -	Alec Corser	£96
Up to 14 yrs -	Nil	
Best Team -	Pterodactyls	£825



Sponsored Walk – Saturday 7th June 2014

This year sees an all new venue and route for our annual sponsored walk which will provide walkers with a unique opportunity to undertake an “end to end” walk of approximately 23km across some of the finest mountain and hill scenery in mid Deeside.

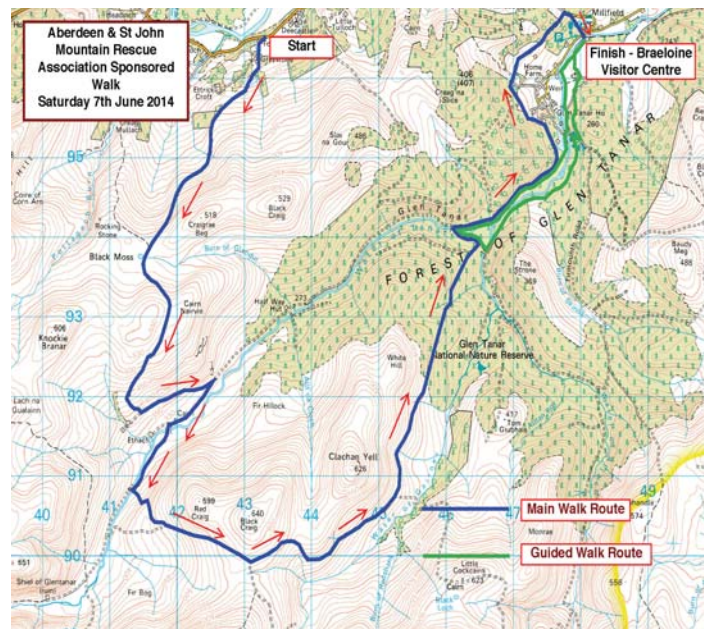
The walk will start off from the South Deeside Road just beyond Deecastle, approximately 2.5km west of the bridge at Dinnet. The route will then take walkers up on to the Eastern shoulder of Knockie Bramar, past the small lochan at Black Moss before dropping down into Glen Tanar where it will join the main Glen Tanar track following it westwards up the glen towards the Shiel of Glen Tanar. At this point the route crosses the Water of Tanar and follows the Mounth road for a short distance before branching off eastwards on the footpath which will take walkers up past Red Craig, Black Craig and then on towards Clachan Yell. Although there is significant climbing in this section of the walk, walkers will be rewarded with fantastic views south to Mount Keen and north across a large section of mid Deeside.

The route then heads northeast following the track down around the south side of Clachan Yell and into the Nature Reserve in the heart of Glen Tanar. Many walkers will no doubt have experienced the delights of the Glen Tanar pinewoods and this section of the walk will provide ample opportunity for wildlife spotting.

The final section of the walk will cross the Water of Tanar and then on up and around the west side of Home Farm before dropping down to the Visitor Centre at Braeloin. Where walkers will be able to enjoy a cup of tea and some fine cakes before boarding the buses for the journey home.

Although Glen Tanar is much visited by folk from Aberdeen and beyond, the opportunity to traverse such a beautiful part of mid Deeside will, we believe, make this walk something of a classic and we hope that you will join us on Saturday the 7th of June for what we are sure will be a great day out.

Much of this years walk takes place within the boundary of Glen Tanar Estate and we are grateful to the Estate for their support and assistance in the planning and organisation of the walk. In conjunction with the Estate's Ranger Service we will also be offering a shorter guided walk of approximately 10km, however numbers for this will be limited to approximately twenty walkers.



Finally walkers are reminded that although much of the main walk route is on well defined tracks there are some sections where underfoot conditions demand the wearing of walking boots. Walkers should also ensure that they have adequate and appropriate clothing for what is a day out in the mountains.

The sponsored walk is our main fundraising event and we really do appreciate the support we get from walkers and the sponsor money which is raised by them.

For entry forms visit www.amrt.org.uk or email: walk@amrt.org.uk.

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Highland Cross 2013

The Highland Cross is a 50-mile duathlon (20 miles on foot, 30 miles on bike) traversing the

spectacular Scottish Highlands from West Coast to East Coast, from Kintail through Glen Affric and Strathglass to Beaulieu. Dreamt up over 30 years ago, it was originally aimed solely at emergency services, and invitations for teams of 3 were sent to Ambulance, Police, Prison and Fire Services; the Army, Navy and Air Forces as well as medical sources and mountain rescue teams.

Due to the distances involved and the fact that it takes place in mid-June, it was originally called the "Midsummer Madathon".

So when I was approached by fellow team members looking for another competitor for their team in late April last year, I was a bit concerned, to say the least. I'm a keen runner and enjoy long distance events, but I had never in my life been on a road bike before.

My whole cycling experience is limited to my daily 15 minute commute to work using an old mountain bike. I'm still not sure how they managed to convince me...

Anyway, eventually I agreed to take part, and was

then told I was in the allegedly faster of the two teams, and that we had to ensure we won the trophy for the fastest Mountain Rescue Team. This had been accomplished by AMRT over the past four years, and the pressure was on to win it again this year.



Neil Gauld was kind enough to lend me one of his road bikes: a super lightweight, presumably super expensive racer, which I took out for a couple of training spins.

When the big day arrived, we met the evening before in Inverness Youth Hostel, dropped off the bikes and change-over kit with the organisers, and tried to store energy through carbo-loading (we all ate a lot of pasta that night...). Early the next morning, we drove to the finish line in Beaulieu and got on the buses which would take us across Scotland to the starting point in Kintail.

I thoroughly enjoyed the initial 20-mile run, which took us through the spectacular scenery of Glen Affric, in a mixture of sunshine and light drizzles of rain. I arrived at the change-over point above Loch Beinn a'Mheadoin in a good time, and thought "That's not too bad, nearly half way, now there's only the cycling left. I can actually sit down now!"

This proved to be a sore and agonising false assumption... As soon as I started cycling, my tired calves started to cramp up, preventing any fast cycling. The only consolation was that all other competitors around me seemed to suffer from the same symptoms. The other mistake I made was the decision to leave my waterproof jacket and my

gloves at the change-over point. When I had arrived there, I was steaming hot, and the weather looked rather benign. However, as soon as I had started cycling, the heavens opened and a very cold downpour drenched me. Water was running in streams over the roads, and we went through them in big splashes. My hands became so cold that I was struggling to operate the gear shifter. In short, I was very miserable, and regretted to have agreed to take part in the first place. I had to grit my teeth and pedal on, seeing that there was no real alternative.

When the next cyclists caught up with me, I managed to stick with them, and in a mad dash for the finish line even got away from them. Crossing the line, shivering from wet, cold and exhaustion, I was very happy for it to be over.

A hot shower and the warm meals provided by the organisers worked wonders, and I enjoyed watching the prize-giving ceremony and sharing stories about the race with my team mates. We even managed to win the Mountain Rescue Trophy again.

Someone else will have to take my place this year though!

Thilo Rahn
AMRT



Operations Manager Report 2013

Scott Stevens



2014 sees the Team reach its 50th Birthday. This significant achievement is made all the more special by the fact that we are all volunteers. Over the past 50 years there has been a steady stream of individuals that have willingly given their time to be involved in Mountain Rescue. We must also recognise the support that those individuals receive from their loved ones, our Association and

all those who have helped raise funds keeping us operational.

"Things have changed"

Mike Riddell stepped down as Team leader in early 2013 and the Team were faced with the reality that there was no one person who was eligible or who wanted to take on the Team leader's role in its current form. The Team discussed possibilities and explored alternative management structures. After "some" debate the new structure was

proposed, voted for and accepted by the Team. The new structure comprises of 3 Hill Leads, an Operations Manager and a Training Officer. The previous model had consisted of a Team Leader, 2 Deputies and the Training Officer. We discovered that some team members were willing and able to do parts of the team leader role but not all of it. It is certainly credit to past Team Leaders and their ability to cope with the demands that go with being involved in team management. The new structure saw the Team entering new territory. A large proportion of the Team had only ever known the old structure. For the newer team members it was perhaps less of a culture shock. The important thing to bear in mind was that we were all keen to ensure that the Team remained operationally ready, regardless of how we manage ourselves. Ultimately those who find themselves requiring assistance on the hill are not really too concerned how the Team is structured, their concern is that we are on the way.

"Blood Brothers"

For a variety of reasons we were also experiencing a change in Team demographics. When I first became involved with the Team, the old and bold were in the majority and there was a lack of new recruits. From a selfish point of view this was great as it allowed me to tap into their experience. However we have seen that majority become a minority, as we now have a good measure of new blood in the Team. This has had several impacts on the Team, not to mention seeing some new energy and enthusiasm being injected into some of our more mature members.

One of the causes of the change has been a very

successful recruitment drive and much of that has driven by word of mouth. We currently have a team of 27 operationally fit and available volunteers with several others either in a position to support the Team or being assessed for suitability to join the call out list. We also have a waiting list of potential candidates with some very impressive outdoor CVs. Not all recruits will go on to join the Team, but we have streamlined our selection process which is of benefit to both us and the individuals concerned.

In our recruits we are on the lookout for those who are physically and mentally able to cope with the potential demands of a rescue situation, but we are also looking for the right personalities. Team members come with a variety of strengths and weaknesses which we get to know during our training sessions. This allows us to focus on areas for improvement and understand capabilities.

"It's all good"

Post Team management elections, we got down to business. Training is and always will play an extremely important part in maintaining our readiness to deploy. We had the bones of a good training programme laid out for us which we tweaked here and there as we saw fit. In some areas we went back to basics and this was partly due to our recent batch of recruits. We recognised the need for everyone to be on the same song sheet and we were acutely aware that Team protocols could be in the heads of a select few. Some of our newer members come with experience out with a mountain rescue context and we as a Team must ensure we are up to date. To that end we have Team members who attend various MRCofS

training courses throughout the year. We also ensure that we are aligned with our neighbours Braemar MRT as much as possible. The importance of following Team protocol cannot be stressed enough; when we are tired and out in the dark we need to be able to repeat those protocols like second nature.

Congratulations must go to Flynn (and Brian of course) who qualified in 2013 to be our 2nd SAR dog. Well done to the both of you. Flynn has certainly adopted all of us and it's not unusual to have a large wet nose shoved in your direction for a play or some attention. Coby, our other SAR dog is putting up with this new kid on the block, most of the time.

In terms of callouts 2013 had started busily enough and was followed by a relatively quiet year. 2014 however has got off to a very busy start.

The guys and girl all keep themselves busy out with Team time and we have seen them enter many outdoor events around the North East and Scotland often with great results. Even as I write this, we have two Teams entered into the Strathpuffer 24. (We won the MRT race) Team members continue to give safety talks at Schools, youth groups and businesses around the north east. This does help generate some much needed donations but more importantly we hope that by spreading the word that it will help keep folks safe on the hill.

"All day and all of the night"

On to the 27th of October, Monday night post training weekend and I was out walking the dog with our newborn

son, legs feeling a bit tired when I received a notification text from one of the hill leaders about two missing walkers.

What follows after such a text is a routine that will be well rehearsed to Mountain Rescuers across the land. Get home (safely), grab kit, put baby down, sort flask, "where's my dry kit?", realise there's no bread for sandwiches, "where's the dog?" shout to wife "did you eat my hill chocolate?" get changed and back out the door. This all has to be done as quickly as possible whilst not waking up my other son. For us it's then RV at the team base and (in this instance) relocate to the Braemar rescue centre for further tasking.

Often during such callouts we may not get very far as those nice RAF chaps in their helicopter will locate the missing walkers or they will just turn up themselves. I kept thinking this was one of those nights, pretty much until I was sat in that helicopter with those nice RAF chaps heading towards to the Cairn Toul plateau.

The weather was pretty miserable and the pilot wasn't sure how far he could get us and our stretcher in, thankfully with engines straining he got us to where we wanted before heading in for the night. What followed was an overnight search in very testing conditions. The missing persons, two German walkers were located at first light.

We had a rough idea where they were during the night, but dangerous conditions prevented the Teams reaching them. The now located pair were evacuated by helicopter which thankfully extracted us as well. The call out was a great result on two fronts; one was that the missing persons had been located safe and well.

Secondly it was the first real test of the Team since the changes had been introduced. Aberdeen Mountain Rescue Team had responded professionally and in strength to the call out.

"Future's So Bright I Gotta Wear Shades"

2014 looks to be a busy year for us with training, callouts, sponsored walk, fund raising events, the "Gathering" and our 50th anniversary.

We plan to have various events throughout the year to celebrate our anniversary which we aim to advertise through local and national media. Oh and there is the matter of organising a wee party too.

I would like to thank our Association for their ongoing support, the public for their support and fund raising which all goes towards us remaining kitted out and operationally prepared. I would also like to make a special thank you to the partners and families for the love and support of their own "mountain rescuer", this I believe is essential to the well being of our Team members.

I should also take this moment to thank the Team itself for turning out week after week for the training, callouts and all the other jobs that need doing to keep us going. Without your dedication and enthusiasm, it just wouldn't work.

I am very proud to be writing this as an active member of the Team. The Team has a fantastic history and there is no doubt about our future as we move forward in what will certainly be interesting times.

Juggling Mountain Rescue, Family and Working in Africa



I need to introduce myself first, I am Mike Law, I have been a member of Aberdeen Mountain Rescue team since 2009, I have taken on the position of Bothy Officer looking after both Spittal and Derry posts.

I work a 28/28 rotation in Nigeria, West Africa which is stark contrast to living in Scotland. At work I experience temperature exceeding 35°C, almost the other end of the spectrum from that experienced during a callout in the winter in the Cairngorms.

I work with a lot of people from different cultures and countries on a daily basis, this I feel does translate to being a member of the team and how to interact in a close challenging environment. It does give me the freedom when I am at home to enjoy the Cairngorms in lots of ways.

I enjoy mostly getting out on my mountain bike discovering new Glens and bothies seeing the old ruins of Crofts where people worked and lived in this harsh environment.

My family are very supportive of my involvement in Mountain rescue. Tansy my wife is a keen hill goer herself although does like to venture a lot further than the Cairngorms in her pursuit of Munro Bagging.

I couldn't be a member of the team without her full support, with giving up my limited time at home already to training weekends and any courses I have to attend to keep my training up to date.

She is always full of encouragement, although she laughed a lot at the sheer panic and madness that occurred on my first callout. My running around the house trying to make sure I had everything I could possibly need and more and then forgetting to make sandwiches which she duly handed to me with a hot flask as away I went.

My eldest son Jonas has been out on my adventures mountain biking around the Cairngorms and enjoys the challenge of getting up to the tops. Archie my youngest only 3yrs, is a team landrover fan he likes nothing more than getting to drive about in any of the Team vehicles. As a family we all enjoy the outdoors and it is a big part of our lives both socially with friends and as individuals.

Being a member of the Team has been a great adventure right from the start when I first joined, the local knowledge I had from growing up in Ballater and using the local area stood me in good stead. I have met many good people, both in and out-with the direct members of the team.

It is probably the most important part of being a

member of the team getting to know each other and how we all gel together and react in the harsh conditions of a callout.

I work hard at keeping my training up to date as this is a large part of today's mountain rescue with both techniques and technology continually changing. The move at the moment from forces to private helicopter support is both exciting and challenging and needs to be embraced by both old and new members as we get to know the new crews and interact together.

This year I have avalanche search training booked over in Glencoe and hope to take on a couple of team challenges as this is a good way to get to know other teams that compete also.

I will continue to commit my time to being a part of this essential service we provide to all users of the Cairngorms. It is very important that we are there to help those that get into difficulty so that they can enjoy whatever they do knowing that we are only a call away to provide help and assistance.

Mike Law
AMRT

The Nick Jack Spirit Award

This year's Nick Jack Spirit Award went to Dave Lawrence. Dawn MacKinnon presented the award to Dave on behalf of Helen Jack, Nick's widow.



Dave is our long standing Equipment Officer and puts in a massive amount of hours in the background to ensure our equipment is in good order and serviceable. He also spends much of his free time researching and looking for ways to improve what we actually carry and use on the hill, all this on top of the normal Team commitments.

However the main reason that Dave received the award this year was his amazing recovery to fitness. In 2011 Dave became seriously unwell. So unwell, that he required two life saving operations. It was an extremely tough and worrying time for his wife, two boys, family and friends. Thankfully Dave is somewhat of a fighter and responded well to his hospital treatment. Dave was discharged from hospital and started the journey of physical rehabilitation. As a team we were keen to see him recover; whether he would return to us as a fully operational team member, only time would tell. We were very conscious that he and his family had been through an extremely tough time and we would support him however we could. Dave himself knew that although he wanted to get back to fitness as quickly as possible, he had to "ca canny" and not overdo things which I'm sure caused him no end of frustration. As a testament to Dave's character he went about his recovery quietly and resolutely, never complaining or moaning about his lot. Even during this period he was able to act as radio relay on Carn a Mhaim during a full-on winter call out for a missing person. A difficult enough task at full fitness let alone when you are recovering from serious illness.

We are delighted to see Dave back at full strength with the Team, he is truly a worthy winner of the Nick Jack award in 2013.



Treasurer's Report

2013 Financial Year

As I write this, the annual accounts for 2013 are not yet finalised but I do know we have spent much more than our income! The Association's main income and expenditure was as follows:-

Income

Scottish Govt Grant	£9k
Investment income	£6k
Donations/Bequests	£11k
Sponsored Walk	£15k
Gift Aid reclaimed	£4k

Total **£45k**

Expenditure

Team subsidy	£12k
Waterproofs & Gear	£30k
HQ expenses	£3k
Vehicle expenses	£2k
Vehicle insurance	£1k
Miscellaneous	£7k

£55k

The deficit for the year amounted to c.£10k but this was in line with expectations given that we were going to be replacing waterproofs (at nearly £13k!) and personal gear during the year. In August last year, we moved our Vehicle insurance to a group scheme organised by the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland which dramatically reduced our insurance costs from c.£1,000 per vehicle to £400 per vehicle.

We have recently placed an order for a new Land Rover to replace the '04 Reg vehicle and we should take delivery around May. If anyone is interested in buying the existing vehicle, please get in touch.

Land Rover are to be discontinuing the current model of Land Rover Defender in 2015 and, as a result of this, it is likely that we will place an order this time next year to replace the '05-Reg vehicle so we will be hoping for a successful Sponsored Walk in June!

No two years of expenditure are identical and for a number of years now, we have been quoting a figure of £30k per annum to fund AMRT. In reality, this has crept up and is now more in the region of £40k pa, especially when new vehicles have to be factored in to the equation.

Mountain Rescue in Scotland is the main beneficiary of funding from the Order of St John with whom AMRT has been associated for many, many years. Indeed, the Team occupied garage premises behind St John's Hospital, now Albyn Hospital. When the Order disposed of the hospital in the late '90s, they very kindly built a new base for the team at Westhill. The Order has provided bases for a number of Scottish teams and also supplied Land Rovers to all teams.

Malcolm Lamont
Honorary Treasurer

Bums on saddles..

Its 7.15 on a winters evening and we're rattling at speed up the Glen Tanar track. It's a track I know well, as I've cycled up and down it more times than I can remember. We're responding to a call out to assist two walkers stranded and disorientated near the summit of Mount Keen. It's a crystal clear night, we know roughly where they are and weather conditions are good. As call-outs go, this should be a straightforward job.

We stop at the footbridge near the head of the glen. A 'hasty party' is despatched up the hill to assess the situation, and the rest of the Team settle in for the inevitable wait. With a 'cuppa' in hand, I find myself reflecting on the last time I was in Glen Tanar, and a few events that have happened since.....

The last time I was here was to scope out some routes suitable for Electric bicycles. For my day job I work for Sustrans, the sustainable transport charity best known for developing the National Cycle Network. For the last 12 months I've been working on a pilot project, promoting the use of Electric 'power assisted' bicycles around the National Parks. This Scottish Government funded project is aimed at promoting low carbon behaviour through the rental of E-bikes to Park visitors, as an environmentally friendly alternative to cars.

It's fair to say that most people in the UK struggle with the concept of an E-bike, seeing it as 'cheating'. Our European neighbours however, have a very different

view. They see E-bikes as a cheap, healthy alternative to using a car, with over 600,000 E-bikes being sold in Germany alone last year. But will they take off in the UK? At the start of the project I admit I was a bit of a cynic, and promoting the use of E-bikes has definitely been a hard sell! However, for a large segment of society, riding a conventional bike is simply not an option. For reasons of fitness, confidence or ability, they've been unable to participate in the current wave of cycling 'euphoria', and this is one area where E-bikes can make a real difference.

In July last year, my wife Kate and I set off to cycle from Land's End to John O'Groats on our tandem. This was a long held ambition, and we were motivated to make it a reality after learning of the plight of a young local lad with Cerebral Palsy. Recent operations had left him unable to ride his bike, and so we set off to raise the money to buy him an Electric Trike. Our LEJOG route was roughly 1,200 miles in length, so we needed to raise £1 per mile!

Our 'LEJOG' tandem ride was a fantastic experience, and a great success. I doubt there have been many occasions when you could cycle from one end of the UK to the other without being drenched by rain or battered by a headwind, but in July 2013 our challenges were avoiding sunburn, dehydration, and molten tarmac on the roads! We completed the ride in two weeks, and thanks to generous sponsorship and E-bike technology, there's one happy young lad for whom riding a bike has once again become a reality. Having watched him race about on his E-trike, it's hard not to

become an advocate, and there's little doubt in my mind that E-bikes will be an everyday sight on Britain's roads and cycle paths.

There's a strong culture of cycling within AMRT, and it's a good way of maintaining the necessary levels of fitness for hill and Mountain Rescue activities. Road bikes have been the traditional 'bike of choice' for team members, and mountain biking is becoming increasingly popular with the newer team members. Whatever your preference, the Cairngorms and surrounding glens offer an outstanding venue for cycling, and if E-bikes allow more people to share in this experience, then I'm all for them.....and let's face it, some of us may be a little closer to E-bike ownership than we care to admit!

Mike Dennison
AMRT



Strathpuffer 24

What is all this stuff for? Why on earth would a Mountain Rescue Team Hill Leader need wellies?! Why are we getting worked up about the size of the gazebo. It's just a few hours pedalling around in a forest!

As a non biker the Strathpuffer (24 hour endurance mountain bike race held in January near Strathpeffer) always seemed like a strange way to spend a weekend. The objective, a rider or team of riders, is required to complete as many laps of a course in 24 hours as possible, with only one team rider out at any one time. Sounds dull to repeat the same course 20 to 30 times and if you are after the pain there are more attractive ways of punishing yourself. That is a rather clinical way of thinking of the event but a non cyclist could arrive at this opinion, and I did.

As with everything AMRT do there was a bumpy start to our journey. For two teams of 4 people competing and 2 support crew there was a lot of faffing for 10 people used to working with each other. We got going, by leaving Damon's house wide

open to the world and with confusion about who would collect passes, whose car could park in the official space and who could claim the holy turf required for team area to guarantee success. Feeling a bit like one of the spare wheels and with more camera gear than these guys think exists I listen to stories of events past and locations along the circuit as the old hands with a good few "puffers" under their belt attempt to windup and unhinge the newbies. All this over traditional puffer rolls in Christies. I fill the gap by doing some candid work and laughing where it seems appropriate.

Arrival at the event, setup and the following night followed suite with the arrival of the last member of the newbies the old hands increased the windup rate as everyone enjoyed a little 12 yr old lubricant. "All that matters is that you've got lights, your dibber and a bell to let people know you are passing".

Race day...time...beginning. Still not sure what's going on and with zero experience of photographing mountain bikers I slung a cheap

camera over my shoulder grabbed a monopod and umbrella and went to do what I was taught to do in these situations, look for a good angle, make the shot unique and brand it with feelings. Technical results are not important the feeling is key, a lot of amateur photographers forget this and create very passable photographs as a result. The objective; Capture the start where the guys ride out in a big group and learn the course, find key spots, work angles to come back later with "the secret weapons" of nifty fifty and the fast fish. There was no starting horn, countdown, gun. People just cheer as guys ride past. This is easy I'm thinking, photos from this will be a dawdle.

Working the course in reverse the first thing that strikes you is with the 100 or so teams at the event everyone is happily cheering anyone. The first rider comes down the final hill and is gone in seconds, he completes in less than 40 mins and I miss the shot. More riders appear and they all look the same, what were my team wearing!!? Why don't we have team colours?

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*Pic 1 from L – R:
Ian Herd, Gary Drummond, Damon Powell.
Roland Jones, Graham Thomson
Pic 2 Damon Powell
Pic 3 Pit stop
Pic 4 Stuart Gillan
Pic 5 Roland Jones*

All images taken by and copyright Robert Reglinski using a Nikon D800, a Nikon D200 and a Nikon F3, lenses Nikkor 16 mm f/2.8, Nikkor 50 mm f/1.2 and Nikkor 24 - 200 f/2.8. Limited post processing.

They are moving faster than I expected and the other photographers have no manners. Shot no.1 of our guys is ruined by a photographer in a luminescent vest in the foreground who wasn't there when I set up. With the light dying, I head for the trees and the flats where less spectators will annoy me and the riders will be moving slower.

In the trees life is balanced, my gear can deal with the light, the broolly keeps me dry and the pace of the riders slows. Shot no.2 of our guys rushes past me at lightning speed but I've got the rhythm now and I begin to see the guys, learn their habits and estimate their pace. By this time the old hands are breaking away from the newbies and the first 16gb of data disappears. The rain starts, slow at first but persistent, most of the riders are in great spirits but already less than a quarter of the way into the event faces show the signs of failed training promises and ego. Not our teams however, constantly happy and producing what I would learn later to be consistently high results.

Night falls and it's here where you begin to see not only the challenge but the attraction of suffering with comrades in arms. Although our two teams are competing we remain a group from a larger team, parts are cleaned, food is shared and real advice is given. As the night engulfs the race I head back into

the trees, armed with the real deal camera, my tripod and an off camera flash. This proved unpopular with the now rather tired riders, few had visibly cracked and many bikes were displaying real use. All the riders are using great lights which allowed me to play with trails and silhouettes. A few good captures and with the small hours approaching I return to base, make tea, chat and crash.

Officially it's morning however the light says it's night. This is an important time for a photographer, with a good eye and understanding of the technical aspects one can draw out real images of the event taking its toll. Both the old hands and newbies are doing doubles (2 laps before swapping) and the faces are starting to tell tales.

"Stuart did a 1:10, but that's because he ripped a tyre and had to run the last bit, "if Graham pulls a 0:45 then Roland is going out again" "it's going to be okay unless someone falls off". As the light builds I spend more time with our teams rather than the event, capturing arrivals and departures from the transition point, bike cleaning and general camaraderie.

When the signal is given and the race draws into its final hour the event slows. The other photographers

appear to immortalise the glory but have missed the real story. Hundreds of riders, including eight from my team(s) have pulled an enormous feat of endurance and are laughing and smiling. It's not heroic, it's survival and team dynamics. The old hands retain their title in the mountain rescue category and the newbies follow a close second. They say that this is the last puffer for the old hands, and the official team name (the Flying Hellfish - named after Grandpa Simpsons WW2 regiment) passes over to the newbies. We shall see, I reckon when the cuts have healed and the bikes fixed the chat on Thursday nights and in the bothy will be about the next puffer tactics. As with any serious sport, it's hard to let go. One thing is clear, it's not the pedalling around in a forest on a cold January night, its riding with friends through the highs and the lows.

The Flying Hellfish completed 29 laps in 24.25 hours, a total distance of 300 km and elevation gain of 6000 m The newbies completed 27 laps in 24.39 hours, a total distance of 280 km and elevation gain of 5600 m I took 2005 images equating to 125GB of memory (more storage space than NASA used to get to the moon) and drank 6 cups of tea.

Robert Reglinski
AMRT

Saying Goodbye...

Last year saw two of our long standing Team members hanging up their Mountain Rescue boots. George and Tony were both presented with gifts by former Team Leader, Mario DiMaio and although they are no longer in the Team, they keep the contact with others who are.

We wish them all the best.



Mike Rust Retires from the Team following 36 years service

On Saturday 3rd of August present and former members of Aberdeen MRT and Association gathered in the Cow Shed restaurant in Banchory to celebrate Mike Rust's retirement from the Team following 36 years of dedicated service. It was an exceptional and emotional occasion with delightful food and first class service from the Cow Shed staff. The evening was interspersed with speeches from Russell Stevenson (friend and Team colleague), Scott Stevens (AMRT Ops Manager) and Mario Di Maio (former Team Leader). Apologies for those who couldn't attend were conveyed by Tony McMahon (friend and former AMRT member).

The highlight of the evening was Mike's 'thank-you-all' performance, during which he recalled some of the memorable AMRT stories and presented those who took part in them with a fine bottle of Scotch.

Mike himself received a photo album and a caricature drawing summing up all those "life changing" years, as he put it. Although Mike has decided to hang up his MRT boots, he promised to stay in touch and has indeed agreed to become a member of the Association committee. That's good news to all of us in AMRT (especially the younger ones), as we all need our role models.

Mike is always a welcome sight on the sponsored walk with his box of sweets.



More than just Team Members!

It costs a lot of money to run a mountain rescue team. We have over 30 operational members who all need kitted out in the best that money can buy due to the extreme conditions we operate in. I've been meaning to complete a challenge to raise money for the team for a while now. After reading about one man's obsession with the Bob Graham Round (Feet in the Clouds) I decided to undertake my own mountain running challenge in the local area; that is to 'run' every munro within the AMRT catchment (excepting Mount Keen) in a single outing. Run being in inverted commas as I could well be crawling by then end!

That is a distance of roughly 100 miles and an ascent of nearly 10,000m, taking in 29 Munros, and as an absolute estimate 36 hours continuous movement. I nearly choked on my cornflakes when I added it all up.

Such an onerous challenge necessitates rigorous and dedicated training, therefore I have set the challenge for June 2015.

This enables me time to prepare mentally, physically and emotionally for such an undertaking, properly know my route as many hours will be run in the half night of June, raise the target of £1000 and stir up enough support from the mountain rescue and hill running community to allow for success.

Training began a couple of months ago, and fitting it in between Mountain Rescue training, Army Reserve training, a nursing degree and a social life, is and will continue to be difficult, however, I remain confident about the challenge ahead. Although I must admit spirits waver when running on Ben MacDui at 3am in the howling wind and rain... (all necessary training I tell myself).

It is my intention to make updates via the website and Team Facebook page with details of training runs and races, food trials, fundraising updates etc. Donations can currently be made via <http://www.justgiving.com/Aberdeen-Mountain-Rescue-Team>.

Thanks to all for continued support of Aberdeen Mountain Rescue.

Claire Ellis
AMRT



Photo Gallery



Photos by kind permission, from top left in clockwise direction: Callum More / "Roland & Coby being presented with a cheque from New Deer School" / Callum More / Stuart Warrender / Robert Reglinski

Just Giving

We have established a Just Giving page for the walk, so if you would like to use it as a means to obtain sponsorship, please log onto this link: www.justgiving.com/aberdeenmountainrescue/raisemoney This is a specialised page where you can build online fundraising pages to raise money for the walk.

If anyone would like to send a one-off donation to the Association, you can do this by logging on to :
www.justgiving.com/aberdeenmountainrescue/donate

We would like to thank everyone who supports the Association and the Team by sponsoring walkers or by donating to our charity.



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