

# PENRITH MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM

## Annual Newsletter

Feb 2016

2015 proved to be another busy year for the Penrith Team. We ended the year on 60 call outs which were made up of the usual searches, injuries and ambulance assists. However, there were significant jobs in 2015 which stretched not only our team but also that of several teams within the region and further afield. Unsurprisingly one was the recent floods and to find out more read our Team Leaders report below. Also find out how the Friends Of Penrith MRT have managed to raise over £5000 for the team in their first year, and what the changes in the Search and Rescue helicopter service has meant for us.

### 2015 FLOODS

BY MIKE HILL  
PMRT TEAM LEADER

In December we were greeted by the full impact of storm Desmond. Members of the team were involved in rescues throughout the County in areas including Keswick, Eamont Bridge, Langwathby, Appleby and Carlisle. Having witnessed the flooding of Carlisle in 2005 I was shocked to see it happen again with water levels even deeper than those of the previous flood. We were also kept busy by Storm Eva when we were deployed to York, and also placed on standby during Storm Frank to assist Southern Scotland.

The equipment and training that teams have received over the past 5 years in swift water rescue techniques proved to be invaluable during this very difficult period. We can now focus on refining and adding to our supply of water rescue equipment. The immediate associated specialist water needs are; to add to the number of dry suits and to obtain a medium sized boat/raft for flood training.

I would like to thank everyone involved for their professionalism whilst dealing with such a major event. Once again Mountain Rescue proved itself as an asset that the County would struggle without.

I would also like to thank the 'Friends of Penrith MRT' group. Their assistance during the floods supplying food and drink to Penrith personnel and other teams was hugely appreciated. Thanks to all in the Friends Of group and keep up the great work



### FRIENDS OF PENRITH MRT CELEBRATE THEIR 1<sup>ST</sup> BIRTHDAY

BY LAURA NIGHTINGALE  
FRIENDS OF PMRT

The Friends of Penrith Mountain Rescue have had a busy and successful first year since the group was set up in November 2015. We now have around 15 members and are looking for more people to join us in 2016.

Our aims in the beginning were to support the team, raise their profile locally and assist with fundraising. Thanks to the support of members and local businesses we are now well on the way with this, and hope to do more next year.

Events so far have included....

- Two 'pop up cafes' at Nan Bield pass and Mardale head car park, selling refreshments to passing walkers and cyclists
- Cake and craft stalls at Penrith train station, plus a community bookshelf there which has proved popular with travellers (we need a good supply of paper back fiction to keep this stocked, please get in touch if you can help with this)
- Fortnightly Thursday evening Quiz at the Moo bar. We are always looking for people interested in joining our team
- Penrith food festival, Winter Droving, Tour of Britain, and collections with the team

Friends have also helped the team as casualties in training, and more recently supported them by providing food and drink overnight during their flood rescue work.

Through our combined efforts we have raised over £5,000 towards our target of £45,000 for a new vehicle for the team. This has been made possible thanks to the generous support of local businesses. We would like to thank Virgin Trains at Penrith station, Booths, Sainsburys, M&S, Morrisons, the Lakes and Dales Co Op, Cranstons, Maggie's Bakery, the Crafty Baker, Bells of Lazonby and Staffield Farm Meats. We are looking to develop further links with local companies this year. Please contact us if you may be able to support us in this.

We have a series of events planned for 2016, and hope to raise even more money, particularly as the team needs a new base. If you would be interested in helping us to help the team we are always keen to welcome new members.

### GET INVOLVED

Find out more about the Friends of Penrith Mountain Rescue Team by:

- Visiting our new website at: [friends.penrithmrt.org.uk](http://friends.penrithmrt.org.uk)
  - Contacting us at: [friends@pmrt.org.uk](mailto:friends@pmrt.org.uk)
- Or
- Joining us for a drink at the Penrith Moo bar on the third Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm.



## A NEW ERA FOR SEARCH AND RESCUE HELICOPTERS

BY JOE FINN  
PMRT TRAINING OFFICER



Over the past year, in the skies above the UK, the venerable Search and Rescue Westland Sea King helicopters of the RAF and Royal Navy have gradually become replaced with a new kind of beast; the sleeker, more powerful, more technologically advanced Sikorsky S-92.

This has been only one, visible, aspect of the UK government's SAR-H programme, which has involved the decommissioning of military Search and Rescue operations and the replacement of this service with a privatised one managed by Bristow helicopters. This has initially involved the S-92 and will also soon be followed by the smaller Augusta Westland AW189.

Behind the occasional airborne novelty in the sky lies a huge, complex and detailed programme of change, which is being very carefully managed at a range of different levels; from 'head shed' strategy and finance, to MRT team members, leadership and training officers on the ground. Penrith Mountain Rescue Team have been adapting to these new challenges in a number of different ways, each of them involving close communication with the Lake District Search and Mountain Rescue Association reps, Bristow helicopter crews, careful consideration of our own training and operational experiences, and the experiences of other teams.

Our equipment has had to be reviewed. New operational and training guidelines have meant the required wearing of helmets and both eye and ear protection. Gloves are also required. Consideration of Personal Protective Equipment has, for the safety of team members, impelled this. Other team equipment which has required reviewing, in

communication with the relevant agencies, has also included our stretchers. Simple questions about the viability and aircraft accessibility of dozens of different types of stretchers used by myriad teams across the UK have had to be answered.

Team procedures when in contact with helicopters have been reviewed. The new aircraft presents many new challenges, perhaps the most serious of which is downdraft received from the main rotors. The S-92 is a very powerful aircraft and the blade configuration is such that more air is forced in a vertical manner, under the aircraft than that outgoing stalwart of rescue that we have become accustomed to – the Sea King. Thus, we have been fine tuning how we prepare the landing site, await, winch, approach and debus from the aircraft in a tighter more efficient formation that improves safety and communication. We have had a number of practices at these new procedures with both the Sea King and S-92, and will continue to look to improve and sharpen over the coming months as we learn more.

Training and experience will be crucial over the coming year as the transition moves to completion. Aircrew training allocation time and MR teams' training time will have to blend efficiently for the best outcomes in the best venues in order to properly support all concerned. Individuals and teams will not only have to keep on top of new, scaled, on-line training, but still demonstrate the extra time and manpower commitment that has added to the challenge of the past year.

At Penrith MRT we plough on, excited with what these changes will bring, and pleased with the promise of being supported by aircraft which have the potential to deliver an even more capable service for the most important people in the chain of search and rescue events; the casualties themselves.



## TEAM AREA AND RESPONSIBILITIES

PMRT covers the largest geographical area of any of the Lake District Mountain Rescue Teams, taking in 965 sq miles. The area stretches from the Scottish Border to the depths of Haweswater and from the Northumberland border to the Solway Firth, including the towns of Carlisle, Penrith and Brampton.



Our population at risk is therefore varied – farmers, tourists, walkers, and unlucky locals caught in bad weather or suffering from ill health. The team is also on call to assist other Lake District and National teams as required. Additionally the Police can, and do, request our resources and expertise in searches and emergency situations such as floods and major transport incidents. As such team members are on call 24/7 with the aim that response is as prompt as possible.

PMRT is a registered charity and like all Mountain Rescue teams in England and Wales relies entirely on donations, bequests and the generosity of the public to fund their running costs.

For all enquiries please contact us via our website at [www.penrithmrt.org.uk](http://www.penrithmrt.org.uk) or through our Facebook page

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