

Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Association

ANOTHER RECORD YEAR FOR RESCUE TEAM



For the third year running the Grassington based Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Association has again dealt with a record number of rescues across Wharfedale, Littondale and Nidderdale as well as parts of Airedale.

Last year the 70 volunteers dealt with a remarkable 50 incidents beating the previous year's record of 44. Both years had in addition seven incidents where members were called out but then stood down before leaving their headquarters. Last year was the seventh year out of the last eight when records were broken and the team expect this trend to continue

Surface Controller Phill Nelson from Skyreholme said that the call-outs were spread across a wide range of incidents rather than any significant growth in a specific type. "In fact, we had some very pleasing reductions, dealing with fatalities had reached an average of six a year for some time yet in 2013 this was reduced to two and last year to one. Searching for vulnerable people missing from the community was down to six call-outs having reached a record 14 in 2013 and this year was the second year in succession when the team was spared a Christmas Day rescue much to the relief of our families"

The record call-outs involved 1514 manhours from the team, a significant reduction from the 1915 manhours of the previous year yet dealing with considerably more rescues. Phill attributed this to a number of factors but mainly the use of advanced technology "We strive to use the best available technology in our work and these new life saving aids are always on the top of our wish list We raised funds for a state of the art control vehicle and we now also have technology that can help locate missing people as well as instantly pinpointing and if need be rerouting individual members out searching on the fells. In addition we now have a most efficient mobile phone text system to call out members, we simply key information onto a proforma and members can immediately inform us whether they are available, how long it will take them to arrive as well as providing other valuable information for the rescue planning"



As well as highly trained members with high tech equipment the team currently has two search and rescue dogs who in the right circumstances play a vital role in the search for missing people. Adds Phill "the dogs and the members who own and train them are truly amazing, we are so fortunate to have them working alongside us and in all weathers"

The majority of rescues involved people with injuries or who are reported missing. Being taken ill on the fells has been a regular situation to search and deal with ranging from cardiac arrests and seizures to heat exhaustion and asthma attacks The youngest victim was

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an eight year old boy who had head and neck injuries having slipped on rocks at Brimham Rocks and the oldest a 79 year old man suffering from chest pains on the Pennine Way near Cowling. One major caving rescue required 28 members and a total of 100 man hours at Goyden Pot in Nidderdale to bring a female caver with a suspected broken femur to the surface and onward to an awaiting ambulance. The team also provided cave diving specialists to an incident in Llangollen in North Wales where an injured cave diver was trapped by flooding in a disused mine system. One member together with diving equipment was collected by RAF helicopter and flown to the scene with three other members travelling by road. Sadly the caver's body was discovered some 300 metres from the entrance.

The ever increasing demands on the team will result in more and more costs, currently running at £40,000 a year, and this is without any major single expenditure. High level



training and equipment maintenance add to the enormous commitment by the members and it is estimated that this side of their work accounts for a further 5,000 manhours readily given by the volunteers every year. The team envisage even higher levels of call outs in years to come especially following the huge interest in the Dales from the Tour de France and other Welcome to Yorkshire initiatives.

The team's own inaugural Wharfedale Three Peaks Challenge last June was a great success and helped bring in much needed funds. This year's event is to take place on Saturday 27 June. Phill and the team aim to build on last year's triumph " It was a brilliant day with an amazing 419 participants taking part on one of the three routes. The

feedback clearly showed how much they had enjoyed the challenge and the fraternity with many already pledging a return this year. The team turned out in large numbers to control the course and it was also a great experience being able to mix and engage with the public in a non emergency situation to explain our work and chat about safety precautions when out enjoying the Dales"

Major and additional fundraising efforts will be needed this year for the refurbishment and extension of the association's headquarters to provide much needed extra space for equipment storage and training facilities.

To donate to the team or for further information visit www.uwfra.org.uk