

THE OGWEN VALLEY MOUNTAIN RESCUE ORGANISATION



41st ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2005

Published by the Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue Organisation
Bryn Poeth, Capel Curig, Betws-y-Coed, Conwy LL24 0EU

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Please note that the articles contained in the Annual Report express the views of the individuals and are not necessarily the views of the Team.

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Chairman's Forward

The OVMRO Team year is slowly drawing to a close and with it the 40th birthday anniversary for the Team. It has been a privilege and indeed an honour to be Chairman of the Team during this important landmark in its history. The anniversary has been celebrated by many events organised by a working group within the Team and 333 and thanks are due for their hard work. We began in March '05 with the AGM and the annual dinner where we hosted some of the founding members of the Team as our guests. The year continued with varying social events – a reunion dinner at the Ty'n -Y-Coed (with the compulsory bar room, table top singing with spoons after dinner!).

A further event was the presentation of long service awards to Team members with 25 and 40 years unbroken service to mountain rescue, an almost incomprehensible commitment to the cause of rescuing people in need on the mountains. The award ceremony took place at Bryn Poeth (Oggie Base) with dignitaries and VIP's from many walks of life and professions present.

It was at that time that I started to contemplate the true cost of mountain rescue from, not a fiscal perspective, but a personal one. It is clear that there is no Team member who can contribute to mountain rescue without the full support of their family and indeed his or her friends. Often it is not realised the backup commitment provided by the 'hidden membership', those family and friends who also pay the price of rescues in the form of inconvenience to daily life, disrupted social engagements, sleep deprivation, financial costs, worry about the safety of loved ones ... to name just a few. There is at present no award for such service to mountain rescue (perhaps there should be?), often there is no apparent recognition.

For Team members there is the adrenaline rush of dashing out on rescues, the grateful (mostly) demeanour of those we rescue, the undeniable satisfaction that comes from directly saving life imperilled. There are many reasons for being a Team member and its one that members have chosen. Not so for the family and friends and we really must not forget their role in the scheme of things. No Team member could operate effectively in the Team without the full support that is so often unquestionably given and barely acknowledged.

So with the closing of the year I would like to acknowledge and recognise their role in the essential task we undertake and highlight the importance of their contribution. It is poignant that during the last 12 months (and of course in past years) many Team members have had tragedy and difficulty in family life which has meant that their Team contribution, as it should do, takes a backseat. I would like to take the opportunity to say to those members that when the difficult times arise the Team is always there as a support to you and your family.

The year has been marked also by many changes in the Team all the result of the hard work of those involved. It is almost unfair to name some of the projects since many members undertake a continuous work load in maintaining the running order of the Team or are involved in projects at different times so this year is just a snapshot of such activity. However the building of the extension to base is a fundamental change that starts with the generosity of the public who fund us, right through to the members who worked tirelessly to organise and oversee the build. The reorganisation and maintenance of the website is fundamental to our perception to the public, often it is their only contact with the organisation. This website is our window for the public who can see what we do and even what we have been doing for the past 40 years! It has proved immensely popular with plenty of 'hits' per month

The new radio issue has created a sharp rise in workload for some Team members as well as a communication problem akin to deafness that is being addressed by Team members who are brushing up on their technical skills! We now have in place a Communications Working group who are going to be looking closely at our communication abilities and investigate our problems and hopefully find a solution. Inevitably this will result in further expenditure for the Team but we must move forward as the demands on the Team are increasing both in multitude and technicality.

The Rigging for Rescue project is still ongoing and since it involves fundamental changes to the way the Team operates on rescues has had far reaching consequences. Many, many people have been involved in this from equipment to instruction manual production, training etc. All these new training and technical skills that we are acquiring as Team members mean that we are providing a very high skilled and professional service to members of the public when they need us. The direct result of this for individual Team members is that we are putting more and more of our time into the Team with the higher professional demands that we are trying to meet. What we must always remember is

that we are a voluntary organisation and that we all fit in our commitment to the Team around our work and family lives.

This gradual professional development of our skills and equipment has also had an impact on Team finances. As previously mentioned we are building our long awaited garage extension this year, but that is only one project amongst many others that we want to complete. Many projects are on a 'waiting list' until we have adequate funds to pursue them. It is something I have said time and time again but I cannot stress enough that without the generosity of the public and fundraising events we would not be able to operate as we do.

On a personal note I would like to thank the Team for giving me the privilege of being their Chairman during this landmark year. It has been a tough role, but one which I have taken immense pride in filling and I hope that I have fulfilled what was expected of me, although I am aware that my working life has encroached on the time I have been able to devote to my duties and haven't achieved all I set out to do. As our 40th year closes, it seems that the Team is now well on it's way to being middle aged. The big question is this – will we have a mid-life crisis or will we grow old gracefully? Only time will tell!



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Team Leader Report

Team Operations

The Team has experienced yet another busy year with a broad spectrum of operations ranging from responding to major flooding in the Conwy Valley, a protracted search at Bethesda, people being stuck on the main track up Tryfan, numerous crag-fast climbers and sadly, dealing with fatal incidents.

Mobile phones are now a dominant part of the callout process for incidents. In some cases however, the ready availability of the mobile has resulted in several calls for help that were just unnecessary. In this type of rather spurious incident, the call for help could have been averted by basic application of mountain skills.

More serious incidents require the use of the new Fatal Incident Protocol to secure the scene, gather evidence and ensure that the required information can be provided to the Coroner and the Police. Several Team Members have now been trained by North Wales Police in using these skills and techniques for serious and fatal incidents in the mountains.

Multi-agency operations have been a key feature of numerous larger incidents this year and the Team have worked with Llanberis MRT, South Snowdonia MRT, RAF Valley MRT, SARDA, National Park Wardens, Police Underwater Search Team, Fire Service, Ambulance Service and the helicopters from 22 Sqn RAF Valley, North Wales Police and the Air Ambulance. Of special significance are the increasingly frequent joint operations with the Llanberis Mountain Rescue Team. This form of mutual assistance is very encouraging and will deliver a better quality operation for the casualty. A direct result of this type of joint operation is that all Team Members need to have a good working knowledge of the operational areas of partner MRTs.

The flooding in the Conwy Valley showed the clear benefits of having Team Members with communications embedded in the community. During that flood, the Team was able to be a most mobile and effective asset to the community and other emergency services who did not have the vehicles or local knowledge necessary to operate when main roads are impassable, power is lost etc. Numerous lessons were learnt and these have resulted in improvements to vehicles and training.

We are a public 999 level service and so our casualties and partner agencies have high expectations of our response, which means that we need to work very hard to meet and exceed those expectations. A critical part of this response is the ability to place a significant number of suitably trained and capable Team Members into the front-line of the operation irrespective of the time of day or night. This puts a requirement on team members to continue to make themselves available including the evenings when it is too easy to relax.

Technical Rescue Activities

The continued development of our technical rescue capabilities is very encouraging and these skills have been used numerous times to resolve some more difficult operations. These new methods have now fully superseded the legacy systems and have been successfully applied several times on Grooved Arete and the Idwal Slabs “walk-off”. Although relatively costly to implement, these new evidence-based systems enable us to operate far more safely, consistently and efficiently than offered by the legacy systems. The long-awaited Field Guide is due for release and this will provide an excellent platform to continue the development of these vital techniques.

Training

We continue to enjoy an intake of high quality and very capable new members who will further strengthen our operational capability. There is a critical need to keep bringing new people into the Team to allow the organisation to grow and face new challenges. Over the next 3-4 years, it is likely that there will be a number of team members who will probably move from "in-field operations" towards a support role. This means that we need to step up the recruiting process and make new members very welcome and feel truly valued.

The broad range of operations with which we deal directly influences the type and level of training provided. Frequent, high quality training is provided and we all need to ensure that we have a high level of competency to work safely and efficiently.

Interaction With The Police

Most incidents require the Team to work with the Police and our links are growing stronger and more effective. Invaluable support from the Police Communications Team is helping to address some of the serious radio problems that have been a major problem for well over 15 months. Team Leaders are working with NWMRA and North Wales Police to

refine the callout methods to be used by the NWP Operations Room staff.

Support

For operations to be safe, successful and effective, Team Leaders need the continued support and commitment of the Team Members irrespective of the time of day, type and location of the incident or the weather conditions.

No search or rescue operation would be possible without the continued support, dedication and true professionalism, in the best sense of the word, of the Team members. The ever-present support and patience of our partners, families and the superb fundraising and support 333 Group make our training and operations more effective.

A heartfelt “thank-you” is extended to all those who contribute so much to support and improve the Team.

John Hulse



INCIDENT REPORT

There is a slight increase in incidents over last year, with a total of 55 'Jobs' including standby's. September after being our busiest last year, this year goes to the bottom of the pile together with January, both with only one job recorded. July was our busiest month with 11 call outs, three occurring on the 30th, followed by October with 9.

Again a wide range of ages but with again the over 40's having the highest number of incidents 33% of the total. As I said last year we will have to think about splitting this into a narrower range of ages to fit in with the others.

Tryfan entrapped or shrugged more than any other area. Again the team were on standby to assist the Police, Fire and Ambulance Services during the flooding in the Conwy Valley with three actual recovery jobs - Council workers, Police (off duty) and Electricity Board Workers.

As has been the recent trend the uninjured 'lost, stolen and strayed' made up the majority of the call outs again with the mobile phone being used at times before trying to sort things out. The advantage being that in most cases we can now find current information from the casualties and at times talk them off the hill without having to go out. One or two gave their location as 'in Snowdonia' a little vague.

Incidents in which the major injury was:

	2001	2002	2002	2004	2005
Dead	1	5	5	1	3
Head injuries	8	2	6	6	1
Trunk injury	5	5	1	0	2
Arm injuries	2	0	0	0	8
Leg injuries	13	10	20	10	13
Exhaustion/Exposure	0	0	1 (dog)	0	3
Heart attack (survived)	1	0	0	0	0
Illness	1	0	1	4	0
Lost, stolen, strayed	11	24	30	28	30
Stand-by's	9	3	5	2	3
TOTAL	51	49	69	51	63

The age distribution of those assisted was as follows: %

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Under 16	6.5	14	3.2	9.9	4.2
16 - 20	12.9	9.9	12.8	14.9	8.4
21 - 25	16.1	15.6	7.4	7.5	9.8
26 - 30	9.6	2.8	9.6	11	14
31 - 35	4.8	2.8	11.7	11	12.6
36 - 40	13	7	11.7	8.6	7
Over 40	24.1	36.6	38.3	17.4	33
Not Recorded	13	11.3	5.3	19.7	11

As with previous years most of the 'Not recorded' had been airlifted to hospital.

Incidents where we have worked with other teams or agencies:

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
C Flight 22 Sqn	29	22	33	23	24
RAF MRT	3	0	5	2	3
SARDA (W)	2	0	5	3	3
Llanberis MRT	4	6	5	1	3
National Park	5	1	4	2	3
Aberglaslyn MRT	0	0	3	0	0
Police Helicopter	2	1	3	1	2
Air Ambulance				2	1
South Snowdonia MRT					1

Another year of excitement, boredom, frustration, lulls and busy periods which keep most of the Team on their feet and willing to continue their commitment to the team and our 'Clients' (possibly the more politically correct term than Casualties) but on the hill I suspect that they will still be Casualties to most of us.

Neil Adam

Incident Narrative

JANUARY

- 7th Incidents to support North Wales Police/North Wales Ambulance Service
- Trefriw No injuries. Flooding at Trefriw – Stranded council workers.
 - B5106, Trefriw MANWEB engineer trapped on van roof. Mild hypothermia
 - Maenan No injuries Off duty PC stranded.
 - One Vehicle was based in Llanrwst with rescue kit until 8th Jan. Total of 11 hours assisting. Local Team members on standby for further incidents until flood risk diminished on 8th.

FEBRUARY

13th 1315 hrs 1hr15min Aber Falls area
Reports of flares seen in the area. Reports from off duty PC in Penmon. Party of two sent to investigate. Arcing from National Grid cables to trees. It was so wet there was no risk of fires. Police also on road head car park and along path.
3 Team members involved.

19th 1716 hrs 6 hours Milestone Butress, Tryfan No injuries.
A group of 8 started up Tryfan but turned back due to icy conditions. When they came to the top of a cliff four tried to climb down the cliff only to get stuck while the others walked round the cliff. They were at the bottom of Ivy chimney. They were hauled to the top of the cliff and walked out. Some simple map reading skills would have avoided the incident. They promised to acquire these skills.
23 Team members involved.

MARCH

5th 1342 hrs 2 hours Pinnacle Rocks, Capel Curig Female 17 yrs
Fracture lower leg.
Slipped and pendulumed during descent of rocks.
16 Team members involved.

6th 1720 hrs 3 hours Devils Kitchen Male 29
Fracture lower leg.
Fell on the second pitch of The Screen. Evacuated by 22 Sqn.
20 Team members and 22 Sqn involved.

9th 1810 hrs 2 hours Gribbin Ridge No injuries, benighted.
They caught a bus from Bangor and set off over the Glyders at 1200hrs. After Glyder Fawr decided they were late due to deep snow and decided to go down the Gribbin. They got over the difficult section when it got dark and as they had no torch, compass or whistle they used their mobile phone to call for help. They got through to the Coast Guard and asked for help. They transferred the request and parties were sent to fetch them but were beaten to the couple by 22 Sqn.
13 Team members and 22 Sqn involved.

12th 1335 hrs 2.5 hours Cwm Lloer Male 30 yrs Fractured ankle
The party was ascending Carnedd Dafydd from Lloer and stopped below an area of deep snow. He left the group to continue up then lost his footing and slid down

fracturing his ankle. Team attended and with the severity of the fracture helicopter assistance was requested for the evacuation.
14 Team members involved.

27th 2215 hrs 8 hours Grooved Arete, East Face Tryfan
2 males, 1 female all 27 yrs. No injuries.
They left the road at 0830 hrs but did not reach the start of the climb until 1200 hrs. With one rope and three climbers they were slow and did not reach the crux until just before dark at 1900 hrs. They tried the Knights move and failed so decided to abseil off. 2 short abseils later they were stuck, not helped by only having two torches between them. Only one phone worked and that ran out of credit. They were raised 50 m to safe ground and walked off.
16 Team members involved.

27th 2200 hrs 3.5 hours Search of area of Pendyffryn Caravan Park, Sychnant Pass
Flashing lights were reported and the Team was sent to investigate. Nothing was found and the search was called off at 0105 (28th)
6 Team members involved.

APRIL

17th 1310 hrs 8.9 hours Tryfan near summit Male 58 yrs Fatality
A group of six friends met to climb Tryfan. They were starting the descent of South Ridge when he fell about 20 – 25 m and landing wedged in rocks. The others raised the alarm over a mobile phone and sent 2 down to the road. The helicopter failed to reach the scene due to cloud and snow.
28 Team members involved, 11 Llanberis team, 11 RAF Valley MRT and 22 Sqn.

20th 1300 hrs 4.3 hours Tryfan, South end of Heather Terrace Male 52 yrs. Fractured right malleolus.
He was carrying full camping kit and having camped in the Ogwen Valley was going up Heather Terrace, over the Glyders to Nant Peris. He slipped and broke his ankle. He did not have a phone but was found by a group of Joint Services Trainee Instructors and they managed to move him down Heather Terrace. They were met by North Buttress. The Team were just ready to lower him down into Cwm Tryfan when the cloud lifted allowing 22 Sqn to snatch him.
19 Team members, 1 Llanberis and 22 Sqn involved.

24th 0100 hrs 3 hours Afon Wen, Cwm Caseg Male 21 yrs.
A party of two were attempting the 14 peaks. After passing Foel Grach one slipped and twisted his knee. After an hour's attempt to get down on their own they phoned for help. A group were ready to leave Base when 22 Sqn were able to snatch as the cloud had lifted.
7 Team members and 22 Sqn involved.

27th 1340 hrs 3 hours Bwlch Tryfan Female 17 yrs Twisted knee
A school party out walking when she slipped and twisted her knee. The rest of the party was walked off by the teachers while the instructor stayed with the Casualty. 22 Sqn collected both but left their dog on the hill. A hill party going to meet the rest of

the party were diverted to find the dog and bring it down. It was reunited with the rest of the party.

14 Team members and 22 Sqn involved.

MAY

1st 1802 hrs 4 hours Nor Nor Gully Tryfan Female 33 yrs

No injuries.

They were trying to ascend Tryfan when they became disorientated (not helped by the fact that they had left the map & compass in the car). They thought they had passed the summit and thought they were descending in the region of the south summit but were descending into nor Nor Gully and as with many before were stuck at the Chock Stone. Lowered off and escorted off the hill

15 Team members involved.

3rd 1540 hrs 1 hour 100m west of Little Tryfan Male 61 yrs Ankle injury.

Slipped on wet grass while descending.

12 Team members involved.

14th 1235 hrs 2.1 hours Summit of Moel Siabod Male 42 yrs Fatality

The casualty had walked to the summit trig point and complained about being unwell then had what was described as a fit and had problems breathing. The party started CPR and sent for help. The casualty was airlifted to Ysbyty Gwynedd. The rest of the party were escorted off the hill.

18 Team members involved.

25th 0050 hrs 3.8 hours Conwy Mountain Quarries

A young lad had been walking on the northern side of Conwy Mountain and had come across the remains of a tent with a noticeable smell. On returning home at 2230 he contacted the Police who requested support for their Fatal Incident Protocol. Investigation showed it was the remains of two tents covered with rubble from the collapsed building. Rotting nappies were inside. No further action taken.

8 Team members involved.

JUNE

3rd 1030 hrs 33.5 hours (over 5 days) Ogwen Bank Caravan Park, Bethesda Male 17 yrs Fatality

He walked out of the bar at the Park away from his family with the stated intention of walking home to Llandudno to go on the computer. The Police requested assistance in searching nearby roads and the river bank. This was done on 3rd, 4th, and 7th. Nothing found. The Team were stood down. He was found later on a beach near Caernarfon.

33 Team members involved.

4th 2330 hrs 4 hours Carnedd Dafydd 5 Males (37,41,35, 31 & ?)

No injuries.

On a charity walk over the 14 Peaks. Became lost and confused due to lack of navigation skills. Were redirected and walked down.

3 Team members involved.

11th 1730 hrs 3.25 hours West Face of Tryfan Male 8 yrs, Female 28 yrs
No injuries
Lost due to inexperience of leader. Poor equipment.
8 Team members involved.

26th 0500 hrs 2 hours Lower section of Llyn Anafon track, Aber
5 males (43,49,18 + 2 others) No injuries.
Well equipped group who were near the end of their 14 Peaks Walk and had taken
24 hours to get to the Aber area. When they were about 2 km. from the car park, one
of the party was totally exhausted and complaining about his legs seizing up. Two of
the party came down and phoned the Police. The Team arrived at the high Aber car
ark as the remaining three were just arriving down, tired but well.
11 Team members involved.

30th 1228 hrs 4 hours North Ridge Tryfan Male 30 yrs Ankle
injury
An adult with a group of children slipped and fell about 10 m. He landed heavily on
his ankle. Unable to walk he stayed and phoned 999 while the rest of the party
continued over Tryfan. Two members attended the scene with a stretcher party
moving up when 22 Sqn were able to winch and evacuate to hospital.
11 Team members involved.

JULY

3rd 0100 hrs 5 hours Near Drum Male 52 yrs Exhaustion
The party had started the 14 peaks on Snowdon at daybreak on the 2nd July. Heavy
rain and blustery winds had slowed them down. The casualty was found in a bivy
bag and was warm beside the track up to Drum. He was retrieved by Land Rover.
6 Team members involved.

3rd 1650 hrs 3 hours Upper Eastern Traverse, Tryfan Female 41 yrs
Panic Attack
A party of four were descending Tryfan via North Ridge and Eastern Traverse when
one became scared and had a couple of panic attacks. Team members went up and
roped the group up North Gully and down via Western Gully and the grasslands.
14 Team members involved.

9th 1542 hrs 1 hour Belle Vue Bastion, Tryfan Male 42 yrs
Head injury, leader fall.
The leader fell on the first pitch about 6 m. and then fell another 6 m gaining a head
injury (no helmet worn). He managed to belay himself. Others on the climb raised
the alarm. The cloud lifted and allowed 22 Sqn to extract him using a double stop.
19 Team members involved.

15th 1227 hrs 2.45 hours North Ridge, Tryfan Female
Fractured lower left Arm
A party of two were ascending the North Ridge when she slipped and fractured her
arm. Airlifted by 22Sqn to hospital.
9 Team members involved.

15th 1630 hrs 2.5 hours Atlantic Slabs, Nant Ffrancon Male 61

Leg injury.

They were descending from Atlantic Slabs when he slipped on steep ground.

10 Team members involved.

16th 1600 hrs 2.1 hours Y Gully, Tryfan 2 Males 23 & 56 yrs

No injuries.

Father and son had reached North Tower and decided to descend via the West Face, ending up in Y Gully. They reached the vertical step and could not continue or retreat back up the gully so called for help. It was the 40th Anniversary Celebrations at Base and 22 Sqn were in attendance. They went over and with assistance from RAF MR Valley who were in the area winched the pair aboard and returned to the celebrations.

4 Team members, 5 Valley MR and 22 Sqn involved.

22nd 1451 hrs 4.1 hours Dolgarrog Gorge Male 46 yrs Injured ankle and foot.

A guided party were scrambling in Dolgarrog Gorge when a member of the party slipped and damaged his ankle. He was treated and evacuated to the Ambulance while the guide led the rest of the party out of the gorge.

10 Team members involved.

26th 1320 hrs 3.3 hours Cwm Idwal Female 25 yrs Injured lower right leg.

A group of foreign tourists on a bus tour of Britain and Ireland stopped at Ogwen for a walk round the Nature Trail at Idwal. The lady slipped while crossing a stream and was given treatment and carried down to the car park.

12 Team members involved.

30th 10 24 hrs 3.1 hours North Ridge, Tryfan Male 26 yrs

Injured arm, abrasions on lumbar region.

He slipped while scrambling up the North Ridge. He was given no treatment until the team arrived. He was treated and assisted to walk down.

17 Team members, 1 Llanberis MRT involved.

30th 1740 hrs 3.3 hours Gwydyr Forest Male

The team were called to assist the Ambulance Authority who had reached the casualty but could not evacuate him to their Ambulance. The casualty was a Mountain Biker on the Forestry trails. The Paramedic from the Air Ambulance was brought back to base to be reunited with the Helicopter.

7 Team members involved.

31st 1330 hrs 1.5 hours Glyder Fawr Summit Female 47yrs, Male 12 yrs No injuries.

They went up onto the Glyders via Bwlch Tryfan and were lost in the cloud after passing the Castle of the Winds and could not find the summit of Glyder Fawr. They tried to descend and got stuck in a steep gully. They called for help but while waiting for the Team to arrive the cloud lifted and they managed to make their way to Llyn y Cwn where they met a National Park Warden who escorted them down.

20 Team members involved.

AUGUST

7th Little Tryfan Male

Fell 7m while scrambling. Deep lacerations and lower back pain 22 Sqn evacuated to Hospital.

20th 1215 hrs 1 hour Llyn y Cwn Male Injury to lower leg

A police man taking part in the 'Police 7s'. Evacuated by 22 Sqn direct to Ysbyty Gwynedd.

9 Team members involved.

23rd 1820 hrs 1.40 hours Tryfan, Grooved Arête, (by the haven) 2 Males

No injuries.

They had little experience of outdoor multi pitch routes and became stuck in the haven unable to do the Knights move or abseil into North Gully. They were winched by 22 Sqn and returned to Oggie Base.

13 Team members involved.

23rd 2000 hrs 2.5 hours Upper Slopes Glyder Fawr M 35 M34 + one

No injuries

The party went up the Devils Kitchen Path after midday and reached the summit of Glyder Fawr and went on the Castle of the Winds but could not find the summit of Glyder Fach or Bristly Ridge and so retreated back to Glyder Fawr. They thought the ground was too steep. One managed to descend and went to the youth hostel to phone for help after an exciting ride to Llyn Idwal by 22 Sqn (who could get no further) the party were found after dark and were escorted down. They had one very small torch with them. One admitted having an anxiety attack, being on medication but was happy to follow the leading torch light down the mountain.

13 Team members and 4 SARDA.

29th 1700 hrs 0.5 hours Cwm Idwal Male 25 yrs

Bruising and lacerations to lower arm

Slipped while crossing the river. A party of the Team were in the area and treated the injury and advised him to attend A & E.

5 Team members involved.

30th 2340 hrs 2.9 hours South of Dwygyfylchi 2 Females, 25 and 14

yrs No injuries.

The two girls had left home to walk to Rowen as part of their training for a forthcoming expedition. They were still out as it got dark and they were having difficulty finding the path. They phoned one of their father's who called the Police. After an unsuccessful search with PCs, a Police dog and helicopter the Team was called in. The girls were located by the Team. They had encountered difficulties due to streams, barbed wire fences and high stone walls.

9 Team members, 5 SARDA and 22 Sqn.

SEPTEMBER

12th 1445 hrs 2 hours Heather Terrace, Tryfan Female 58 yrs

Fractured wrist

They were walking up to Heather Terrace when she fell damaging her wrist trying to break the fall. The Ambulance Service was called who on arrival at the roadside decided to call the Team.

10 Team members involved with a further 7 on standby.

OCTOBER

7th 2200 hrs 13 hours Glyder Fach Male and female, both 38 yrs
Aggravation of previous pelvic injury.

A stumble aggravated an old injury giving severe pain. This stopped the pair at 1830 hrs but they did not call for assistance until much later. Firstly they did not know where they were on the Glyders and were also wet and cold. From discussions with them it was thought that they were near Glyder Fach. The Team Doctor advised managing the pain at the site and evacuating in day light. Two teams went to locate them. Analgesia was administered and they bedded down for the night. At first light a party of Ogwen and RAF MRT with stretcher evacuated her to the roadside near Pen y Gwryd. She was then transferred to the Ambulance Service.

22 Team members and 10 RAF MRT.

15th 1245 hrs 1.75 hours Gribbin Ridge, Glyder Fawr Male 19 yrs
Lacerations to head and penetrating wound to leg (8 stitches needed)

The group of 6 were ascending the Gribbin when he fell. Although in pain, they decided to attempt to walk him off. He was met by Team members who treated him and gave him a lift to Ysbyty Gwynedd for treatment.

4 Team members involved.

20th 1843 hrs 1 hour Milestone Buttress area, Tryfan 2 Males, 43 & 14 yrs
No injuries.

They were descending with no torches and strayed off the path into a boulder field. They were picked out with lights from the road about 500 meters above the road and 3 meters from the path. The comment was 'They were like a pair of frozen rabbits'. They were escorted back to the road.

11 Team members involved.

22nd 2100hrs 11 hours Grooved Arete, Tryfan 2 Males, 34 & 39 yrs
No injuries.

A party of eight were climbing routes on the East Face. The two on Grooved Arete lost the route and were stuck. The others tried to assist but could not. They were stuck on a small ledge with room for one to stand and the other to sit. Once located they were hauled up to the summit ridge and walked off the mountain. A long night.

9 Team members involved.

22nd 2028hrs 5.5 hours Pen yr Ole Wen 2 Males 55 yrs & not recorded
No injuries

They had been caught out by darkness on their descent and with only one small torch they became lost. They were located from the road and decided to walk down with advice given from the road side. It took 5 hours to talk them down what would have been a 1 hour walk in daylight. They were firmly convinced on the need for good torches and batteries while walking.

9 Team members involved.

28th 1739 hrs 1.2 hours Moel Siabod Male 41 yrs No injuries

Set off to walk on Siabod at 11.00hrs going up the East Ridge and to return via the quarries. He lost his map on the summit and then became lost on the South side of the mountain. He had no torch.

9 Team members plus South Snowdonia MRT involved.

29th 1457 hrs 2.75 hours South of Foel Grach Female 49 yrs Injury to wrist

Party of five adults walking from Carnedd Llewellyn to Foel Grach when she slipped on wet rocks. After phoning for assistance they continued walking towards Drum where they were picked up by Land Rover.

14 Team members involved.

NOVEMBER

5th 2019 hrs 6 hours Idwal Slabs 2 Males 44 & 51 yrs

Early stages of hypothermia.

They climbed Hope on the Slabs and failed to find the walk off. They ended up abseiling into a difficult location and were unable to move. They were found and lowered off. The weather conditions were cold with heavy rain and strong winds.

13 Team members involved.

12th 1410 hrs 1.5 hours Moel Siabod Male 27 yrs Fractured Ankle

The party were descending from the summit when he slipped on wet grass. The team were on their way up when he was located by 22 Sqn and evacuated to Ysbyty Gwynedd.

13 Team members involved.

12th 2000hrs 5 hours Idwal Slabs Male 35 yrs, Female 26 yrs

No injuries.

They failed to climb an easy route in the Gribbin Facet so decided to try a harder route on the Idwal Slabs and completed it as darkness fell. With one small headtorch they tried to get off the cliff but absailed into trouble. Finally they phoned for help. It was a technical evacuation to extract them and walk them back to the road.

17 Team members involved.

16th 1840 hrs 1 hour East Face, Tryfan

Lightsd were reported as seen on the East Face Tryfan. 22 Sqn did a sweep of the face and saw nothing Nothing seen from Base . Stand by only.

2 Team members involved.

20th 1831 hrs 8 hours Grooved Arete, Tryfan 2 Females both 21yrs

No injuries.

They were descending from the climb when their abseil rope became stuck. It became dark and they had no torches. The team approach was via Green Gully and then lowered them 90m down the crag to Heather Terrace and walked them off. The night was a clear moonlit one but freezing.

15 Team members involved.

26th 1320 hrs 4.5 hours Eastern Traverse, East Face Tryfan

Male 41 yrs, Female 30yrs No Injury, cragfast.
Some snow and ice. They were going up the North Ridge when they got stuck on the steep wall south of North Gully just below the summit. Team members went up the North Ridge and extracted them and in the gathering gloom went up the ridge and down Western Gully.
9 Team members involved.

DECEMBER

21st 2030 hrs 7.3 hours Bastow Gully area, Tryfan 2 Males 28,22 yrs
No injuries.

They left the road late and tried to go up North Ridge. When they lost the path they tried to get down the East Face, got into a gully and after a 10 m abseil were stuck and called for help. Two parties spent time finding them and brought them back up to the Ridge and walking them off.

14 Team members involved.

28th 1536 hrs 1.9 hours Carneddau, south end Female 52 yrs
Fractured lower arm.

The call came from the Ambulance Service and they had been told that the incident was on Pen yr Ole Wen. 22 Sqn were asked to assist. Talking to the group of three on their mobile it became clear that they were on the top of the Lligwy road. 22 Sqn were cancelled and the Landrover was sent up the road to retrieve them. She had slipped somewhere on the Carneddau and broken her arm. Her husband and a friend splinted the arm, put it in a sling and she spent 1.5 hours walking down to reach the lake and road. A brave effort.

9 Team members involved.



Equipment Officers Report

The team's operational equipment (medical and transportation aside) can be broken down into seven areas. These are Technical Rescue Equipment, Ropes, Personal Issue Kit, Lighting, Stretchers, Swift-water Rescue Kit and Radios. In the past few years all these areas have seen or are to see major modifications and change. The biggest of these has come in the area of Ropes, Technical Rescue and Personal Kit due to the introduction of "Rigging for Rescue" methods.

It is now five years since the team first looked at the possibility of introducing "Rigging for Rescue" methods into our rescue systems. The beauty of "Rigging for Rescue" developed in Canada during the 1980s and 1990s was that it presents a simple approach to the many problems technical rescue creates and at the same time it is a method which through rigorous testing has been proved to be safe and trustworthy. There were question marks at the time as to whether the methods were really applicable to us, as the Rockies present somewhat different rescue problems to the mountains of North Wales. However, since then not only have more than half of the team undergone full basic training but the equipment the team uses has undergone extensive modification. On the equipment side the majority of the task fell to my predecessor, the current Chairman and it is a credit to his tenure that this work has largely been completed. This year has proved a question of tying up loose ends, chasing down items that never arrived and getting team members issued with all the supplementary Personal Issue Kit. In addition, through training and a number of technical rescues we had to undertake on Tryfan and in Idwal during the autumn, the team has had the opportunity to test the methods in real scenarios. This has gone very well and it has been exciting to witness the acceptance by the team of both the methods and the equipment used. Though minor modifications will be necessary as a whole "Rigging for Rescue" methodology and practise will be here to stay.

Another area of our equipment that had undergone extensive modification was lighting and this was the first full year the new lighting (mainly new handheld torches) could be tested in all conditions. So far the lighting has proved reliable and versatile justifying the money invested in it. Also during 2005 we acquired one new Bell Stretcher and had our old one reconditioned. This makes us less dependent on the Ogwen Stretcher, which has been in frontline use for a number of decades and is currently undergoing reconditioning.

With these major changes now largely complete this year we are looking to make investment in upgrading our Swift-water capabilities. Swift-water Rescue Equipment is an important aspect of rescue capability as both the Llugwy and Conwy are within our boundaries and popular with canoeists. The team is set to acquire three new wet suits to our current three, canyoning rope and additional throwlines. This will allow the team to be less dependent on individuals who have their own swiftwater kit but may not be available for callout.

Finally, as was announced in the last report we have now switched from “low band” to “high band” frequency radios. While this was necessary due to factors beyond our control the change has proved problematical due to the steep mountainous area we operate within. Unlike low band we have experienced poor to non-existent reception in some areas. As a result a lot of work is being done by team members to find solutions to the problem. At present we are aiming to set up a radio “dial up” link via the Llandonna mast on Anglesey shortly and a further one in the Conwy valley in the medium term. However, it should be noted that while this may improve things further modifications maybe required to both the radios themselves and the masts on our vehicles to comprehensively overcome this problem.

Matt Sutton
Equipment Officer



TREASURERS REPORT 2005

For my sins, it seems I start my second stint as Treasurer. I am glad to report that the team is in a reasonably healthy financial state, but we must never be complacent and must continue to work hard fund raising as our financial needs continue to increase year on year.

This year has been particularly expensive but we have also been very fortunate to have received a significant increase in donations, thus we have ended the year without raiding our reserves. However, the garage extension is now under way and we will have to dig deep into the reserves in the very near future - hence the need for a major fund raising drive. Dave Worrall, our Fund Raiser, has had a great idea to invite people to "buy a brick or slate" for the garage, the suggested donation is £5 minimum so please contribute if you can. Names will be recorded in a book and for larger donations we may be able to arrange a plaque.

All the different areas of team expenditure have been very frugal over the year and our major excess expenditure this year was a legacy from the previous year when a significant range of new ropes, karabinas etc. were ordered for 'rigging for rescue'.

We continue to have communication problems and have already earmarked £8,000 for repeater transmitters to improve our communications, this also requires dedicated telephone lines and other future expenditure. Despite this, we are still low on radios but this may have to wait for further technical developments. Other major expenditure next year will be an all singing and dancing computer with good mapping facilities for searches. I wish to commend the IT Group for the work they have done over the year especially in setting up an "on line" donation system through the website, this has already paid for itself in donations received since it was set up a few months ago.

Another innovation has been to organise a "gift aid" option to donations etc. Much of the work has required going back through records to the year 2000 as we may be able to claim gift aid on donations dating from that period. We hope to receive the money from the Inland Revenue during next year. This could be a useful source of revenue in the future. Many 333 members will have had a telephone call from Mick Parsons (often known as Santa Claus!) requesting that their subscriptions and other donations should be gift aided - all that is required is that you say yes and confirm that you pay tax, we then do all the rest. It is interesting that sponsored events also qualify for gift aid but regrettably business donations do not. Please think 'gift aid' when fund raising. More information available from the Treasurer.

I have already mentioned 333 members but would like to give particular thanks to those who have helped with extra fund raising events. It is gratifying to report that this year the 333 Support Group has raised over £11,000. This is a major proportion of our income - "well done".

When talking of income, it is always a sad duty to refer to income received in memory of those who did not make it. There is a list of names at the end of this paragraph but I hope I will be forgiven if I mention 2 people in particular - Mrs. Ann Ellis was a friend and benefactor to the team over many years - I think even before

my time and I have been in the team for about 37 years. She passed away at a ripe old age last year, we will miss her. Richard Elliott sadly died in the Alps but his family and friends at City Residential have been particularly generous to the Team and continue to organise fund raising events for us - thank you.

Thanks also to the families and friends of Bill Malloy, F.C.Thomas, Dave Player, Robert Marshall

I would also like to thank all other people whom we have assisted this year as many gave generously. We are pleased to welcome many as 333 members.

For many years Team members and friends have collected used stamps for the Team. This year we received a very generous donation of a fine stamp collection from Mr Watson of Capel Curig. Many thanks to him and all others who collect them - please continue.

One other point to mention on fund raising. We have over 30 collecting boxes around the area in cafes, pubs, climbing shops etc. These too are a very good source of income but regrettably several boxes were stolen or broken into. This was despite the efforts of Alan Ince and others to secure the boxes. Chris Lloyd wrote an article for the Liverpool Evening Post and we were surprised but pleased to receive a generous donation from a reader to cover our loss - it is reassuring that we have such members of the public who maintain one's faith in society - thank you.

This year we have not been able to make an allocation for any personal team kit, we hope next year that there may be enough funds to allocate some personal kit to team members as I feel they deserve some support. I would like to remind all readers that team members give their time for free and voluntarily for rescues and this includes their personal gear and transport costs.

Bill Dean
Hon Treasurer

<u>INCOME</u>			<u>2005</u>	<u>2004</u>
333 Support Group	Memberships	£9,618.20		
	Merchandising sales	£1,447.42		
		£11,065.62	£11,065.62	£9,568.00
DONATIONS	Clubs	£3,728.37		£9,365.00
	Companies	£842.40		SEE CLUBS
	In memory	£17,730.47		£3,997.00
	Personal	£4,239.78		SEE CLUBS
	Rescues	£2,160.00		SEE 'in memory'
	Others			£102.00
	Team kit contributions			£1,123.00
		£28,701.02	£28,701.02	
COLLECTING BOXES			£2,189.45	£2,306.00
	Annual Dinner income	£866.00		£900.00
	Annual Report income	£532.30		£270.00
	Bank Interest	£2,627.90		£3,484.00
	Refund	£267.67		
	Sale of used stamps	£1,142.00		£173.00
	Team members events	£147.00		SEE other income
	Team Scrans honesty box	£239.49		SEE other income
	Sale of Landrover			£1,530.00
	Other income			£5,250.00
		£5,822.36	£5,822.36	
	<u>TOTAL INCOME</u>		£47,778.45	£38,068.00
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>			<u>2005</u>	<u>2004</u>
	<u>1. Direct charitable expenditure</u>			
BASE EXPENSES	Catering	£523.54		£462.00
	Rent,power,repairs etc.	£3,398.16		£7,218.00
	Insurance	£6,574.58		see rent etc.
	Capitol - digi projector etc.	£2,409.80		
COMMUNICATIONS	Telephone,pagers,sms etc.	£3,182.51		£3,304.00
EQUIPMENT	new, replacement & RforR	£11,004.77		£19,134.00
	First Aid	£4,003.62		see equipment
TRANSPORT		£3,444.62		£4,687.00
	Purchase of Landrover			£28,345.00
	Training & Conference fees	£1,103.75		£5,976.00
	Team Kit allowance			£1,448.00
		£35,645.35	£35,645.35	£70,574.00
	<u>2. Other expenditure</u>			
	Postage & stationary	£691.00		£2,708.00
	Printing	£2,040.00		see postage
	Bank	£30.62		see accountancy
	Accountancy	£293.75		£274.00
	Fund Raising costs	£1,493.19		
	New Garage	£821.57		
	Social : Dinner,BBQ etc	£1,116.68		£1,536.00
	Anniversary commemoration	£2,077.60		
	I.T./Website	£446.51		£509.00
	Sundries	£238.23		£830.00
	Trading activity incl. kit purchased for (& paid for) by team members			
		£9,249.15	£9,249.15	£5,857.00
	<u>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</u>		£44,894.50	

Garage Appeal

After some lengthy negotiations the Team finally got permission to build a garage extension. For some time now we have had to keep one of the Landrovers outside as the current garage was only big enough for one vehicle. As the vehicles have cost is in the region of £35,000, OVMRO felt that it was imperative that a second garage was built. Not just to keep the vehicle under cover but also to keep these valuable assets away from prying eyes.

As the building is owned by the National Trust and as it is also within the Snowdonia National Park, planning permission was never going to be easy. Thanks to the work of Chris Lloyd, Roger Jones and Kevin de Silva, permission was finally obtained and the second stage of gathering quotes for the work could begin.

Local builder Mick Stevens was awarded the contract. Unfortunately for Mick and his team, the start of the build coincided with the onset of some of the worst autumn storms I have seen in the valley. In its early stages the foundations for the garage took on the appearance of a swimming pool rather than a garage and indeed some team members thought it was a white water training pool. I hope Mick gets some better weather soon.

Hopefully then, sometime in the New Year the Team should be able to take the Landrover out of the weather and into a purpose built garage. Obviously, the building of the garage is going to put a serious dent in the Teams finances. For all those who read this newsletter I would like to make the following plea.

Please would you consider a donation towards the breeze blocks or slates that will form the building? We have estimated that it will take 600 breeze blocks (double wall thickness of course) and 600 slates (from the local McAlpine quarry) to form the walls and roof of the new garage. We would be grateful if you would consider purchasing breeze blocks at £5 a piece or slates at £3 a piece. The intention is to record the names of all those who give towards the garage. Each donor will receive a certificate. So if you are able please send a cheque for whatever you wish to purchase to:

OVMRO Garage Appeal, Bryn Poeth, Capel Curig, Betws y Coed
Gwynedd LL24 0EU

We have also enclosed a gift aid form, which if you haven't already filled one in will allow us to claim back tax on your donation.

Transport Officer's Report

As the Organisation is now in its 41st year and the day of relying on members' Rolls Royces, Land Rovers, motorbikes and any other forms of transport are long gone, its time to look to the future – a helicopter maybe – no, back to reality!



The two custom built 130 Land Rovers are now five and two years old, we are looking for a life expectancy of about 10 – 15 years. With the new garage being built, I look forward to both being out of the hostile environment that can prevail at Bryn Poeth.

On the maintenance front, both vehicles are in good order with no major repairs over the last year and none anticipated in the near future.

The running costs remain the biggest yearly expenditure at about £5,000, made up of £2,300 insurance, £2,200 fuel and about £400 for maintenance. Sponsorship of any or part of the above items would be welcomed.

Roger Jones
Transport Officer

Training Officer's Report

This year has seen a busy but productive one for training. The main aim of the year was to build on the 2004 investment in developing Technical Rope Rescue (TRR) skills, but there was also the continuation training for all team members across the broad spectrum of search and rescue skills required to keep a team member effective.

First aid training is laid on twice a year to meet a constitutional requirement for all team members to have a basic knowledge of first aid. The first aid group organise this training and often bring in people from outside the team to help in areas such as de-fibulation training. The training is focused on the equipment that team has as well as providing the basic skills that team members are expected to have.

In February search skills were taught to the newer team members and it is refreshing to see that full team members also attend to update their knowledge on what is needed as a search party member. A practical session is held behind Oggi Base with clues being placed. In general most of them are found but on occasion things are missed, with luck we will find them at the next session!

In early March a Winter Skills trip was organised by the team on behalf of North Wales Mountain Rescue Association. A number of team members attended this and it was run by Tim Bird. Once again the level of training provided on this course was superb, offering team members a good opportunity to update their winter skills and improve their confidence. The training is based over 3 days, with personal winter skills covered one the first day, winter climbing skills on the second and then winter rescue skills on the shorter third day. Plas Y Brenin provides a number of instructors for this weekend and we are grateful for their continued support. The conditions in Scotland were good for training and a successful course was held with many stories coming back.

In late April we ran a Technical Rope Rescue (TRR) Operator's course. The TRR training is broken in to three levels: Operator, Technician and Advanced Technician. The Operator level training aims to provide team members with the knowledge and skills to understand what kit we use for TRR and the ability to conduct a single stage stretcher lower or lift.

The Technician level builds on these skills moving into the area of multi-stage stretcher lowers and pick off systems to rescue cragfast climbers. The Advanced Technician level aims to give Team Members with the

right aptitude the skills to build guideline and Hi-Line systems, as well as being able to advise Team Leaders on the Technical aspects of major rescues and evacuations. The course was well attended by team members, even if the weather did try its best to make it difficult for the training out on the crags.

In May we ran a TRR Technician course that was very beneficial for the team members that attended. The Multi-stage lower training was particularly successful with several major learning points being experienced by those supporting the training. The Pick Off training day held with team members learning skills that would be used for quick rescues where only a smaller number of team members are required because of the lack of incapacitating injuries. The feed back at the end of this course saw a re plan for the Advanced Technicians course with a re-run of the multi-stage lowering day because the training benefit was so great.

The Advanced Technician training weekend in June made use of the craggy ground above the Midland Climbing Club hut, close to the Milestone Butress. The multistage lowering worked well with a heavily loaded stretcher being brought down across difficult ground safely where the two-rope lower was transitioned into a single rope lower.

The Sunday session went back to the same location and a Guideline lower was conducted to compare and contrast the different techniques. In addition to training team members all these sessions have also allowed us to refine the kit that is used for technical rope rescue. This is controlled by the Technical Rescue Working Group who also provide a lot of the training support for the TRR training days.

In November we ran another TRR Operator's course that had a number of people attending from outside the Team. The awful weather on the Saturday meant it was spent in the classroom and garage area of Oggi Base but the Sunday session proved to be very useful on the small crag behind Nant BH. It is overhanging but proved to be an ideal training venue for this level.

A number of TRR consolidation days have also been run – these are exercises rather than training with more time spent on crags doing TRR rather than classroom learning. They are also used as opportunities to train in areas where we often have incidents or problems. A guideline lower was conducted down towards Little Tryfan in order to address the problem of lowering a stretcher from the Northern End of the Heather

Terrace. However, the major TRR exercise of the year was a long lower down Grooved Arete on the East Face of Tryfan. This exercise was carried out in cold conditions with a light snow cover high up and poor visibility but it ran well. Our 200m ropes reached the Heather Terrace with about 30m to spare. There was a general improvement in the confidence of the Team's ability to conduct a major lower on the East Face, with acknowledgement that further long lowers should be practised.

Helicopter training for Team Members has proved very frustrating to achieve this year due to various factors such as weather and real incidents. Russell Hore has continued to help with organising the various attempts to achieve this important training.

September is a particularly busy time of year for training and the planned Fatal Incident training was cancelled to ease the pressure on Team Members who were engaged in First Aid Training and Mountain Rescue England and Wales Search Management training course.

Swift water training was provided to us by Plas Y Brenin with team members attending our own session and one session run by NWMRA. These events do a valuable job in providing an understanding of swift water rescue safety issues for a team member and also helps to build a range of skills that the team requires to operate in this environment. They came in to their own when team members searched part of the Afon Ogwen as a task in the search for a young man.

As you can see we had a very busy training year. It would not happen if I was not supported by team members who help run the training as well as other agencies and organisations that support us.

Thanks are also due to those that turn up for the training – without them it would be much less fun.

Alistair Read
Training Officer

PRESS OFFICER'S REPORT

The Team's name has been kept in the Public Eye through local and regional newspapers, national radio and television. We cannot measure the success of publicity but I am sure it helps towards the raising the £35,000 that we need to operate each year.

The Daily Post regularly reports of the team's call outs and other activities. The year started with OVMRO assisting during the Conwy Valley floods. Good coverage was given to the generous donation made by the staff of Liverpool estate agents, City Residential. The staff had raised the money in memory of their manager who had been killed in the Alps in 2004. Our 40th Anniversary was reported in the Daily Post, North Wales Weekly News and the Bangor & Anglesey Mail.

The news media don't just report bad news. The Daily Post kindly published an article on the theft of a number of our collecting boxes. This was followed by a generous anonymous donation that more than covered our loss. And so The Daily Post was able to publish some good news so that we could thank our donor.

We receive many requests from media companies to participate in aspects of their programmes. One recent request, which we declined, was to take on a complete novice (not only to mountaineering but to work!) and to train them to be a team member within two weeks. Another request was for information on the clothing requirements of our female team members. I think that the researcher thought that the girls still wore billowing dresses like the Victorians. We do try to co-operate with the media where we can. Sometimes team members need some persuasion as in the case of the live transmission for S4C last Autumn. Other times we do not even invite publicity but members of the public elected OVMRO's web site as "web site of the day" on Radio 2's Steve Wright in the afternoon.

As Press Officer, I thank the various media bodies who have given OVMRO good publicity. I also thank team members who have assisted with my requests to report on radio, TV or to the Press.

Chris Lloyd
Press Officer for OVMRO

Ogwen on the Web

<http://www.ogwen-rescue.org.uk/>

Another year has flown by and the web site has moved on apace. We have seen a steady increase in the number of hits on the site which is very satisfying.

	Hits on Site	
Jan 2006	358157	
Dec 2005	537035	
Nov 2005	625834	Featured on Steve Wrights "Web Cam of the Day"
Oct 2005	345390	
Sep 2005	344520	
Aug 2005	309229	
Jul 2005	375765	
Jun 2005	296716	Online Donations goes "Live"
May 2005	264433	
Apr 2005	283353	
Mar 2005	329067	
Feb 2005	322371	

One of the biggest changes to the site has been the addition of the Online Donations facility. This went live in June 2005 and has so far taken just over £1000.

The web cams and weather pages still receive the greatest number of hits by a large margin. The BBC use the pictures and the comments on their site range from as far away as South Africa, Kuala Lumpur, Toronto, Australia, USA, Vilvoorde in the flat Netherlands and many more local sites. The weather page is used by a wide range of people from Paragliders, canoeists to walkers and climbers. The one problem we have with both these facilities is the quality of the 'phone lines to Oggi Base. As we can only get dial up connections at base we suffer from slow updates and dropped lines. We would love to get broadband to base but we are just a bit too far into the wilds for BT.

The incident page has seen the addition of the number of man hours per year. These should be seen as very rough figures and well below the actual hours put in by team members. These figures are taken from the

forms we submit to the Police and only count the number of people on the callout multiplied by the duration of the callout. Much more work is put in behind the scenes to keep the team running i.e. committee, various working groups, and the disruption to team members private lives and their friends & families. As a rough guess we could probably triple these figures.

The diary of events now has the facility for any team member to update it remotely thus relieving me of some of the work. This should make the diary up to date and should serve as the definitive list of events.

I must thank Tim Radford, Pete Douglas and John Carrie who have helped me make the site what it is by adding suggestions, proof reading and providing other information for the site.

Russ Hore
Web Editor

**PETER AND SUE AT
THE CONWY FALLS CAFE AND RESTAURANT
ARE PROUD TO SUPPORT THE
OGWEN VALLEY MOUNTAIN RESCUE
ORGANISATION
AND WISH IT TO BE KNOWN THAT WE WILL
CONTINUE UNASHAMEDLY TO COERCE, CAJOLE
AND GENTLY “PERSUADE” ANY HIKERS, BIKERS,
CLIMBERS, RAMBLERS, PADDLERS AND LOST
LOOKING MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO
“VOLUNTARILY” DROP MONEY INTO OUR
O.V.M.R.O. MONEY BOXES
P.S. WE ALSO DO RIGHT GOOD FOOD AND BREWS**

THE GARAGE

There have been a number of events in our 40th. year and one of them was to build a new garage for the second Land Rover. To some it might seem as if it will have taken 40 years to get from conception to the official opening. However, despite of some typical Ogwen weather, Mick Stevens and his gang are persevering to complete the garage in 2006.

We are indebted to Eddy Rowlands of DMS architects and Geraint Owen of Shepherd Gilmour structural engineers for donating their design expertise early in 2005. The National Trust and Snowdonia National Park granted permission and Building Control at Conwy Council approved the design. Tenders were sent out in the early Autumn. Mick Stevens, a local builder and plumber from Mynydd Llandegai was appointed as the successful contractor.

Before the ink was dry on the contract documents (must have been signed on St.Swithen's Day), the heavens opened. Mick's gang excavated the foundations and soon constructed the Oggi Base water feature (every garden should have one). Comments were made that it could be left and used for river rescue training. Grabbing the only remaining dry days of 2005, the gang managed to get some concrete laid. In between showers the bricklayers have laid the blockwork. With some fair-weather (if possible at this time of year) the structure should be slated with Penrhyn slates (generously donated by MacAlpines) by early March.

Hopefully, when you read this, the garage will be complete. The next challenge is the drive and cattlegrid (subject to funding).

Chris Lloyd
(Instigator for a new garage)

Moral: never make a suggestion if you are not prepared to carry it out yourself!

Casualty Care Report

An obvious fundamental aspect of mountain rescue is to assist the ill and or injured in the hills or inhospitable terrain. There are many other and varied aspects to the rescue operation from the initial assistance request to the 'last one off the hill' that are probably covered elsewhere in this annual report. Each will have undergone prolonged training to develop and improve their effectiveness.

Over recent years there has been a substantial improvement and enhanced effectiveness in pre-hospital care delivered 'on the streets' by paramedics, and the increased prompt attention delivered in the accident and emergency departments. There is no doubt an increased expectation, indeed demand, of the highest standard of service and prompt attention from our medical colleagues. This expectation, not unreasonably, is also expected in our mountains, but at any time, any place, in any conditions.

The slight difference in mountain rescue, on most occasions, is the response time (not quite the eight minutes expected of the paramedic) and also the evacuation time, where the casualty may be in the care of the team's casualty care providers for many hours.

In the ideal world all our responders would be medical doctors, always available and well versed in mountain skills and rescue techniques. In the real world the responsibility of casualty care is delegated to team members who are trained to varying standards, from Basic Life Support level to carrying out treatment involving procedures which utilise specialist equipment. Appropriate training and practice is provided by medical doctors and other agencies.

The commitment required to maintain the highest level of casualty care is intense, in particular for the volunteer who, due to other commitments or not being in the party who locates the casualty, may not attend or treat a casualty for very many months. But he / she will still be expected to perform at the highest level whenever required. It is this organisations' responsibility to ensure that this level of operational attendance by appropriately trained personnel is maintained. Over the last 18 months many team members have also engaged in equally important various other training events and the high level / time consuming 'Rigging for

Rescue' training. The commitment required to encompass all these elements contemporaneously can become daunting.

Such a full calendar, coupled with personal / other commitments, has resulted in a 'resting period' and or the resignation of a number of extended trained members. We foresee a challenging period ahead which the currently smaller casualty care group must enthusiastically address, to maintain the high level of cover which we, on behalf of the casualty, rightly wish to provide.

This year's training has continued at various levels.

- 90% of team members now attend annually our in-house 'basic' level course.
- Six members attained / recertified at the ECMR Advanced Level.
- 90% of team members trained at Basic Life Support and AED (Automated External Defibrillator).
- The Intermediate ECMR Training course was cancelled due to the late withdrawal of candidates. Appropriately trained members will gain / recertify in 2006.
- Extended trained members have gained access to the A & E Department at Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor, where they will gain valuable 'patient contact' experience and enhance our relationship with our receiving hospital. We maintain similar access with the Countess of Chester Hospital.



It is difficult to gauge that training is effective, however a recent positive indicator is the increased use of morphine and other pain relief. This alone is a significant improvement in casualty care.

A practical inter-team training event at extended level was organised with neighbouring teams. The critiques were extremely encouraging, we hope to develop this further in 2006.

Our level of equipment is satisfactory, but we remain alert for any additional or improved kit. A few additions this year was:

- The introduction of Nebulisers, for the treatment of a serious asthma attack.
- Little Dragon - Two supplied by the MRC. This small unit uses the heat producing reaction of soda lime and carbon dioxide to warm the air the casualty inhales. Beneficial for the hypothermic casualty and supplemented with oxygen as necessary.

We are aware that the ever increasing demands placed upon us for the care of the casualty will be delicately balanced between the gold standard of care that is expected and practised in our training and what can actually be achieved in the terrain and environmental conditions that will often prevail during operations.

So, no matter how challenging this next period may be, the standards we have gained thus far must be maintained, obviously for the casualty, but also in the realisation that we are also able to at least look after each other and offer life-sustaining care in an emergency.

As usual we are indebted to the many agencies for the support provided to us in training and during operations, in particular the various departments at the Countess of Chester Hospital, the A & E department at Ysbyty Gwynedd, the crews of 22 Sqdn. RAF Valley and our neighbouring M.R. Teams.

Clive Hughes
Casualty Care

Location of Collection Boxes

Abergwyngregyn, Aber Falls Hotel

Bangor

The Great Arete

Bangor YHA

Students Union

Bethesda

Douglas Arms

GLSW Scout Hut

Idwal Youth Hostel

Ogwen Bank Caravan Park

Betws Y Coed

Conwy Falls Cafe

Pendyffryn Stores

Ultimate Outdoors

Stewart Cunninghams

Snowdon Ranger

The Stables Bar

Pont Y Pair Chippy

Pont Y Pair Hotel

Miners Bridge Inn

Cotswold 'Royal Oak'

Cotswold 'Rock Bottom'

Rose Hill B&B

Maes y Garth B&B

Hawkshead

Blacks

Bryb y Gwent B&B

Swallow Falls Hotel

Spar

Londis

Gwydyr Hotel

Glan Aber Hotel

Waterloo Hotel

Chester, Soldier of Fortune, The Walls, Ellis Brigham, Great Outdoor Shop

Capel Curig

Pinnacle Stores

Joe Brown's

Plas Y Brenin

Cobdens Hotel

Tyn Y Coed

Bryn Glo Cafe

Snowdonia Cafe

Youth Hostel

A5 Services

Conwy Valley

Ty Gwyn, Rowen

Princes Arms, Trefriw

Cafe, Llyn Crafnant

Conwy YHA

Craft Centre Cymru

Pwllanu Farm

Conwy Outdoor shop

Trefriw Wells Spa

Black Cat Service Station

Dyffryn Conwy Leisure Centre, Llanrwst

Llanberis

Caernarfon Airport

Gwynedd Hotel, Llanberis

Vaynol Arms, Pentir

Llandudno

Blacks

Llandudno Junction Leisure Centre

Anglesey

The Panton Arms

HMS Indefatigable

Miscellaneous

High Sports, Shrewsbury

The Griffin Inn, Birmingham

Jacksons of Old Arley, Coventry

Escape 2, Warwick

The Outdoor Shop, Stoney Stratford

Many apologies if you have a Collection Box but your name is not included here - we do appreciate what you do for the Team. Thanks must also go to those who empty the boxes, both Team and 333.



Treble Three The Support Group of the Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue Organisation

I checked my e-mail the other day and there it was, a request for items for the annual report. It seems like only yesterday that I completed my first report, but that was seven years ago. In that time we have seen 333 develop from it's embryonic stage as a means of raising money to help the team literally to survive, to become an integral part of The Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue Organisation.

Each year we find that this report reaches new readers so I make no apologies for reiterating some of the things I have said in the past. In 1997, 333 was set up to help raise funds for the team. The cost of rescue was going up, and at that time for the OVMRO, was estimated to be at £20,000 per annum; without external help an almost unsustainable amount.

That early concept may well have remained were it not for the enthusiasm and dedication of the early members, particularly those on the committee; instead 333 developed to be what I consider the flagship of support groups. These changes reflected the different backgrounds of its members.

Some members are quite happy serving the cause of mountain rescue by making their invaluable annual contributions, some actively participate in collections, standing out in all weathers, rattling tins, and some in addition get involved in the many activities arranged for the benefit of 333 members and the joint activities run for the Team and 333 together. I have taken the liberty of appending below examples of those activities over the past year, which have been open to 333 members. I think you will agree that these activities reflect the close link between 333 and the Team.

So reader, if you are a member, thank you for your essential support; in addition I would ask you to try to encourage your non-member friends to join. To those who are not members, please consider joining, we need your money to enable the Team to continue its valuable work, not only in

rescuing those in trouble on the mountains but also assisting in our expanding role of searching for the vulnerable Alzheimer patient, the lost child or despondent, both in the country and town environment.

If when you read this you think you are too far away from Snowdonia, then consider your local or nearest mountain or lowland search Team; they are all in need of money and all perform a free and vital role to the community.

Finally, my special thanks to the Team, and 333 committee members, for their unstinting support. I believe that 333 will continue to expand its roll and become even more integrated into the Team. It is a fact that if we believe we are working for a team or a support group, the Police or any other organisation, we are wrong; we are working for the lost, missing or injured person. The consequence of that is that every member of 333 or the Team is a vital link in the chain, without which search and rescue could not continue.

333 Activities

New years day 2005 - Set up stall and collection, Betws y Coed

8th January – Turkey and Cobweb Walk

20th February- First Aid Course

4th March - Team training trip to Scotland – open to 333 members

8th May – The Great Oggie Bike Ride and Treasure Hunt

12th June – Summer Madness Walk, Moel Famau area.

25th/26th June – 333 were invited to Mynydd Llandegai Fete

2nd/3rd July – Camping weekend in Yorkshire Dales, included a days caving for those interested.

6th August. A days scrambling in the Llanberis Pass.

I could go on but these examples highlight not only the diversity of the programmes organised for 333 but also the fact that the join between 333 and the Team is now seamless. May the spirit of friendship that has developed continue and may the next twelve months see 333 grow in numbers and stature in the field of Search and Rescue Support

Clive Swombow

The Chairman, 333

Salutation to My Mother

There is a warmth and gentleness which surrounds me as I write these words. It is that warm and gentle affection which you enduringly personified in life and for which I shall be everlastingly grateful. This is a Son's tribute and fond farewell to his most loyal, true and loving mother.

Born in the heartland of industrial Lancashire 88 years ago in a typical northern mill town - Oswald Twistle, Anne Ellis must have in her youth dreamt of better things and, fortunately for my very birth, managed to escape from the prospect of an industrial life. She worked hard then, as she consistently did throughout her life and eventually became a teacher. She was immensely proud of her Lancastrian roots and the working people of the North Country.

In 1947 she took up a teaching post in Llanfair Caereinion, just about as diverse a location as possible from industrial Lancashire, rural, tranquil, a landscape to captivate and enthrall all but the most barren imagination, rural Montgomeryshire, unspoilt and serene. Here she met my father John Ellis, and so came about my family.

They were ideally suited, as I can bear witness through their long lives together. My Mother's love for Montgomeryshire and the warmth of its people has never left her and that is why I have brought her back home to join my father who died in December 1990 aged 75 years.

From Bryntirion Farm, Llanfair with Jonnie and Jinnie Jones, my Mother and Father moved to Meifod where I was born in a tiny house perched on the side of the valley, thence to Welshpool where my Mother taught in the High School. From there my Father moved to Preston to work and my Mother obtained a teaching post in Fullwood High School. Later we moved to the Midlands, to Studley near Redditch, again for the sake of employment and my Mother was employed at Studley High School. Our family was very happy there.

Our final move was to North Wales, again for employment purposes and my mother taught at Llandrillo Technical College and then Rhyl High School until she retired and moved with my Father to Llanbedr-y-Cennin in the Conwy Valley. Despite all these moves we always maintained our close ties with Montgomeryshire.

That is a brief outline of my Mother's working life, so many years encapsulated in so few words. But it is what she was that mattered, not

what she did or where she lived. Her gentle and unselfish attitude to people was inherent in everything she did, wherever she was and with whom.

Her very deep love of nature, of landscapes, of animals and wildlife, the riches of planet earth which she saw as manifestations of God's work. The gifts of discernment and appreciation of all things that really matter in life, an appreciation of the beauty of this world in its natural expression, for friendship and genuine caring for people. These were qualities I admire so much in her and that sense of awe and humility for nature she fortunately nurtured and passed on to me, possibly her greatest gift.

Likewise her love of words, of writing, of poetry, of prayers, many of which she has written herself and they are a living legacy which I shall treasure always, for by reading them I shall remember and be close to her. Her mind had the vivid colours of a rainbow and the diversity of her interests right through to her final years was an inspiration to me.

I have always known that my Mother had a very deep long held Christian belief, not of incense relics and chanting but the simple honest worship of a humble person brought up to lead a Christian life, and that she did. This was made more apparent to me in recent years when she told me of the hymns she sang alone in bed each night before going to sleep and of the very moving prayers I found in recent weeks by her bedside, many self written. I know that God, the Shepherd would look kindly upon her because that is what she devoutly believed.

I only hope that this is a fitting tribute to one who will be so sadly missed, not just now but in the years to come. I salute you and thank you for being as you were, I would have had you no other way. That which you once were is now no more or ever will be. But your memory will live on undiminished by the passing years.

For we are like leaves of a tree
We open as a newborn leaf in Spring
Fresh and green with vitality
Unblemished and innocent
A darker hue we take on next
The working period of our brief domain
Feeding the growth of our host tree
Till in the Autumn our colour fades
But tis gradually our colours change

And little toil we now perform
Until one day a gentle breeze takes us kindly
From the place we know
And carries us peacefully to the ground below
Tis as such that life ends.

There are so many things I could have said but I hope I have selected those that you would have wished me to say.

J Roger Ellis



Carole De Silva

On the 19th September 2005, the Team lost a dear friend and supporter. Carole de Silva had fought hard and long against her illness but sadly she lost the battle. Those team members who knew her will remember an energetic vibrant woman who brought up a family that is unique and fascinating. The stories of the adventures of the de Silva family are legendary, with historical re-enactments and various trips. I would like to remember her for those times when she and Kevin were the centre of a family that was certainly one of the strongest and loving ones I have known.

Amongst many other members, I attended the funeral in Bangor and true to the de Silva family the service was like nothing else I have been to. The instructions were clear, don't wear dark clothing and a colourful lot we all were stood outside. The room was packed with people who knew Carole in all her different roles, from family and friends to work colleagues to Team members. There was no set service, instead Kevin bravely stood at the front and gave a eulogy. All who were there had lumps in their throats as we listened to those words. Few people I know would have had the courage to stand and do what he did, but no doubt Carole would have been proud of him.

With fond memories for a remarkable woman.

“ amusing, artistic, and the well being, of a confident woman, when required to be, to be reckoned with. A very determined woman. A lady of good company, and interest, of undoubted sincerity. A talent, of an artistic bent, an independent mind, and times even “Bolshie” but always a lively lovely person...

....The memory and the light hearted items, of the better life, and happier times of the past, will prevail when you think and recall those good days of your life with Carole.”

Uncle John

40th Anniversary

This year the Team celebrated its 40th year. OVMRO began its life on the 12th March 1965, when the Team held its first meeting. To celebrate, the Team has held a number of events during the course of the year and now these celebrations are coming to a close. It has been an enjoyable time with many people taking part in a variety of celebrations.

We started the process off with the Annual Dinner. This was held at the Maenan Abbey Hotel in the Conwy Valley. Guest speaker was the Team's founding father, Ron James who entertained us with his reminiscences of his time in mountain rescue. It is always a pleasure to hear Ron speak and on this evening he was on great form.

No birthday party would be complete without a cake and at the dinner all present received a slice of OVMRO 40th Anniversary cake. It is entirely possible that Chris Lloyd may still have some pieces left. Balloons and party hats were much in evidence.

On the 11th of June, a Reunion was organised by Dave Jones Pen. This was held at the Ty'n y Coed Hotel. A lot of effort was put in to tracing old Team members and invites were sent out to everyone we believed had an involvement with the Team. The detective work needed was praiseworthy in itself and paid off with the number of people who turned up. In the afternoon at Base there was a steady stream of old Team members and also members of the Og Cott Team who stopped by to reminisce. In the evening at the Ty'n y Coed, the turn out of old members was immensely pleasing and a great time was had by all. Well they think they had a good time but some of them were finding it difficult to remember the next day just how good it had been. I hope that all those who came will keep in touch.

In the summer we held one of the main events for the year. This was the presentation of 25 and 40 year Mountain Rescue England and Wales long service awards. We were blessed with a beautiful day and the chance to hold the ceremony outside. Betty Williams MP and Lord Dafydd Ellis Thomas AM presented the awards to the Team Members. It was a fabulous day and to those who arrived early the unusual spectacle of a kilted bagpiper playing Welsh tunes was something to behold. We had made the assumption that the Ogwen Valley weather would do its usual and poor it down so we had asked the RAF to provide large tents in case we needed to escape the rain. In the end they were used to get

us out of the heat of the day. Speeches were made and the awards were given out.

This was followed by a buffet and a great deal of conversation. It was a day you should not have missed.

We had scheduled in a Stretcher Race and Barbeque for September with invites going out to all the rescue services in the North Wales area. Sadly, it became apparent the closer we came to the date that there were no takers for the race part of the day. Ah well we decided to just have the barbecue instead. This was held in the garage due to the fact that a group from the National Trust were in the main part of Base. True to form the weather for the barbeque was wet and windy but the food produced by Ron, Marjorie, Pete and Pat was first rate and made up for the weather. They produced a great barbeque and thanks to them for the effort.

My notes say that the garage opening was to be held on October but as I write this, the garage is still to be completed. This is no surprise as the weather has been atrocious in the early stages of the build. When we have it finished we will, of course arrange an event to celebrate it, so keep your eyes peeled.

5th November being on Saturday, it was inevitable that we would hold a sort of Bonfire night at Base. However our fireworks were to be the old flares we had accumulated. A large gathering of people attended base and those interested were invited to practice firing off flares. As they were old some worked whilst others didn't. None the less, it was exiting and the pyrotechnics were followed by hot food in base, along with a few beers and wine.

The final event of the year was in December, with the well established minced wine and mulled pies evening (I think that's right?). This is an opportunity for Team members and 333 to show pictures of trips they have been on. For good measure we also had a quiz to fill in the gaps between the speakers and slides. I personally thought the quiz was great but Jo and I put it together. Bill Dean showed us a film of his trip to the Himalayas and Matt Sutton had slides of his ascent of the Old Man of Hoy. A diverse set of pictures but all very interesting.

So a great year for the Team and a fun series of events which brought many together to chat about the Team then, now and in the future. It's the people that make this Team what it is and I hope we can continue to hold these sort of events. Dave Worrall

Now to the case of the wrong Mountain and the guide who disappeared!

Four friends and I went out to the Himalayas in October. After 12 days approach and acclimatization we returned to the Valley and were greeted by the Trek Organizer who congratulated us on a successful summit. We were somewhat stunned by his statement - how could he have known if we had made it or not. He said the Mountain Guide had come down the day before, collected his fee and told him of our successes. However whilst on the mountain the guide had disappeared 2 days earlier and certainly had no knowledge if we had made it or not. Further more, the mountain named Stok Kangri bore no relation to the surrounding valleys and rivers as marked on our map.

We had left the UK 3 weeks earlier, we were 3 old friends from UCW Aberystwyth, John Vose, John Spivey and myself and 2 of John's friends, Geoff was a similar age but Steve was a mere youth 20 years younger. We were all a bit long in the tooth having first met in 1960. Kuwait Airways landed on time in Delhi and we were delighted to see the first sign being held up outside the Airport with our names. It was 3am, Peter was there to take us to a cheap Doss House for a few hours kip. He did say to us several times that it was very cheap and were we sure - sure enough it was very basic but it had sleeping space for all of us a loo and water - where else could we get a room for £4 each(!) and that was for 2 nights and no fleas or bed bugs!

We had 24 hours in Delhi so Peter organised a taxi and driver who took us around the sights of the City the next day and we had 2 very nice meals. He was then back again at 2am of the 2nd night to take us to the domestic airport, all for about £20. Our Destination was Leh in Ladakh deep in the Himalayas in the north west corner of India close to the Tibetan-China border and the disputed region of Kashmir - that was if Geoff could find his flight tickets! A major search failed to find it but the Airline agreed that he was on their list and could fly but only if he paid again. This stimulated a last search and there it was tucked in the bottom of his camera case. The flight gave superb views of the snow covered Himalayas and the approach to Leh was spectacular with the peaks just below and surrounding us on all horizons. A magnificent feast of mountains.

We circled to lose height and pondered which was the mountain we had come to try to climb. As we got lower we saw the entire runway surrounded by soldiers with fixed bayonets. We were in a sensitive part of the World! This is also a very dry place with all the mountains and most of the valley sides uniformly brown or snow covered but Leh was an oasis of green with many rivulets flowing down to the Indus River. Security in the tiny Airport building was strict but once we were outside we were met by Namjil our Trek Organizer. He drove us through the small town to a guest house where we were to stay. John Vose & I had a very nice room on the top floor and I was glad that our hosts insisted on carrying our heavy bags up the stairs because after the first flight of stairs I began to feel light headed and realised that from almost sea level we were suddenly at 14,000 feet! A few days of rest acclimatization and gentle walks would be the order of the day.

That afternoon we walked into the Town for a look around - an interesting place rather ramshackle, rough and ready but charming with a great diversity of people. There was a mixture of cultures, with ethnic groups of Tibet Refugees, Kashmiris, Indians, locals as well as many soldiers. High above the Town was the old Royal Palace - Ladakh still has a Queen and an elected assembly rather like Wales. There was an election whilst we were there and it turned out that the guest house we stayed in belonged to the new Chief Minister and we had breakfast with him every morning! We looked around the Town, had our first glass of apricot juice and even a nice beer. We soon ignored the military presence and felt that there was a "wild west feel" about the place.

Some buildings were in a bad state of repair and others modern, the electric street wiring system was out of this world as was the Post Office - behind a tiny grill behind a wire mesh fence sat a postal clerk. It was unlike any I had seen and it had taken several looks to realise it was the Post Office. A postcard airmail to the UK cost 8R (12p)! and arrived home in a few days. The pavements had incredibly deep curbs and gullies - almost 2 feet deep and occasionally broken slabs or open gullies made deep holes so that you had to look carefully where you were walking.

Day 2 began with a leisurely breakfast of porridge, scrambled egg and toast - later we took a short walk up to the Monastery situated on a ridge above the town, a bit of a puff but good for acclimatization. It was small and dark inside with a lone Monk. We were privileged to arrive as he began his daily chant ritual and it was fascinating to sit and listen as he rang his bell from time to time and poured a liquid from one bottle to a goblet - we were told this was rum, and offering to the gods and of course the monk did not drink it afterwards!!!

Day 3 was planned as a walk to the village higher up the Valley but as we wondered up I noticed a track going up a small local mountain - so we went up - it was excellent for acclimatization even though Geoff had his doubts. This was the day we met our Trek Leader, Tinley. He was to be with us for the next 12 days, a very pleasant young lad.

Day 4 was the start of our Trek. From Leh we were taken by jeep first to Spituk, a large Monastery on a prominent hill by the airstrip with about 30 novice Monks in residence most of whom were kids probably 10 to 14 years old. It is said to hold relics from Tibet and certainly had many rooms with images but almost none of them were the usual benign Buddha most were rather grotesque almost frightening! We then had to cross the Indus River but the bridge was blocked by a small truck - too wide to cross so the contents were being off loaded. We saw some rucsacs and bags and they seemed to be familiar - it soon dawned on us that it was our gear, food and tents for the 12 day trek. Apparently the only other bridge was closed and the new bridge being built had no centre span yet! The lorry backed off and went to get 2 smaller vehicles to carry our gear - meanwhile we crossed and continued to drive on for an hour or so on a very rough track until it came to a very abrupt end.

There we met our horse caravan of 12 horses, 1 foal and 2 very cheerful horsemen. I have rarely seen such care lavished on horses - they were extremely well fed and looked after and the horsemen clearly enjoyed their job. One horse was dedicated to carrying the corn of the others. Sooner than we expected our gear arrived and we

met up with the rest of our party. There were two cooks and a general helper as well as Tinley our trekking guide. As the ponies were loaded we set off with Tinley and walked up the narrow steeply sided gorge ahead of us for about 2 hours. Whilst admiring a huge perched block which seemed to want to fall at any time, he said this was where we would camp and of course the mess tent was set up directly under the boulder (it should be noted that it was only a few days later that the great earthquake struck about 200 miles away but surprisingly we were unaware of it). Had it had struck in this area we could see what vast devastation would have been caused in this valley and the ones we were to later walk through.



The first tent to be erected was the cook's tent and he disappeared inside together with his assistant, 2 gas burners, a wok, frying pan and kettle. They were wonderful cooks - by the time I had pitched my tent and watched the hilarious antics of Tinley and the other helper trying to pitch the other tents, the cook had afternoon tea ready. Little more than an hour later we sat down to dinner - soup followed by 4 different hot dishes, pudding tea and coffee and this was a meal prepared in a hurry. Later in the trip on most days the cook conjured up afternoon tea with a plate of chips (excellent quality) then an evening meal consisting of soup and often 7 different hot dishes and pudding all cooked whilst squatting on the floor with 2 gas rings etc. His only problem was that he never smiled - well I did see a slight grin once, I think!

As you will realise the boulder stayed on its pedestal that night and the next day, as it did every following day, we were woken at 6.30am with "bed tea" followed by a bowl of warm water to wash in, then breakfast of cornflakes, porridge, eggs, toast, jam etc. At 8am we set off walking following the deep gorge for several hours before it opened out where there was a small village and a "Tea tent". As we were out of the trekking season it was unmanned but soon a couple of village girls arrived to sell tea and coke. Then on again for another hour or more until we came to the last house in the valley where the family were engaged in threshing their small crop of barley. Shortly afterwards we stopped in a very nice sunny spot near a bubbling stream for lunch. Tinley took his rucksack off and pulled out a large thermos together with knives, forks and plates and from the thermos 4 different hot dishes - this became the norm for the rest of the trek. We did not keep a count of how many different dishes the cook provided but I reckon his repertoire would be 50 - 60

different dishes - he truly was an amazing chef now gone to Goa to cook in a hotel for the winter.

The horses came past whilst we dined and so later we arrived at camp to find most of the tents erected and afternoon tea ready. Day 5 was to be a strenuous start - we had to cross a pass at over 5000 metres (16,000 feet). It was an easy slog and I was pleased with my pace and acclimatization however some of the others were struggling a little. From the top of the pass there was a very long decent to Skiu - the real start of the Marka Valley Trek. We had had to cross the pass because a landslide had blocked the usual track into the Marka Valley. We camped here for the night and then for the next 3 days we would walk up this huge valley.

Many times it was a deep gorge with towering cliffs above us with occasional wider sections - there were two tiny settlements and a few Monasteries perched on precarious ridges or small peaks above us. There were many Stupas of various types (there are 7 different) and many "Manny" walls all with 1000s of inscribed stones stacked on top of each other, all of which must be passed on the left for good Karma. Then at the end of day 7 we began to climb out of the valley onto more open ground and for the first time our camp site had sunshine - I arrived early and was able to strip off in the river and have a thorough wash which was very pleasant unfortunately by the time the others had arrived the sun had gone behind the cliffs and temperature had dropped so they missed out on their wash.

The next day we continued to a camp site set on a wide valley with the Glaciers of Mount Kang Yatse towering above us. It began to snow and we became concerned if the horses would be able to get over the Pass the next day - let alone would we be able to get to our mountain. However, the snow stopped and was not very deep the next morning. After another strenuous climb to the col at 5000meters we descended a very steep slope into the next valley and camped much lower that night. Geoff was finding the going still quite hard and decided that he would opt out as from here it was only a few hours to a road where he could get back to Leh. One of the cooks accompanied him down to the road head and he took a bus back to Leh to wait for us for the next 4 days

According to the information sheet we now turned into "un chartered territory" walking for 3 days along valleys and over various cols with magnificent views and very pleasant camp sites. On the 2nd day on one of the cols we saw for the first time our goal - Stok Kangri although we could not reconcile it with our position on the map, the rivers, valleys and contours just did not fit however Tinley assured us we were going the right way. It was here, when John arrived he admitted he had a blister - we inspected and sure enough it was the mother and father of all blisters! We patched it up as best we could and he hobbled down to camp that night. He continued to walk for the next morning but eventually relented and one of the horses was prepared and carried him for most of the rest of the trek. Finally, we arrived at a place Tinley said was base camp and did have evidence of past use. It certainly had no match on the map if the mountain was indeed Stok Kangri but we trusted Tinley.

Later that afternoon I took a short walk to the col above camp and was able to assess our prospects for climbing the mountain the next day. Tinley said he had never been up the mountain and so another guide would arrive that evening. I was

not very happy when I met him. He insisted that we should not take crampons or ice axes even though we had a glacier to cross - he also insisted on a 2am start, which I thought was far too early and would make us walk for 4 hours in the dark at the coldest time at altitude. As he insisted we left camp at 2am and he set a horrendous pace. I felt he had some sort of "agenda" but I kept up with him as I decided he was not going to "kill me off" but I was pretty shattered when he stopped at the first col. I had a feeling he wanted to say we were not fit enough to go up so he could call off the climb!

The others struggled up but we resolved to continue and that we would hold him back at a much slower pace for the next section. It was still dark when we got to the glacier and the crossing was not too pleasant with a couple of us slipping and falling on our bottoms! This would not have happened had we had crampons. It was bitterly cold in the dark and the two Johns had fingers and toes that were so cold that they got a nip of frostbite.

By the time dawn broke some of the group were finding it very hard going. I was close behind the guide and Tinley above us. I decided to continue past the guide to Tinley and when I got to him his face lit up and I could read his mind "we've got a fighting chance of getting to the Summit". He and I continued across to the ridge on the left hand side and then slowly but slowly with much heavy deep breathing up the ridge.

From time to time there were tantalizing glimpses of the summit. We continued up and several times there were significant drops to our left but generally the going was reasonably easy and slowly the Summit came closer. The route took us under small cliffs and across the tops of gullies and then the flags on the top were close. Tinley arrived on the Summit just before 8 o'clock and I joined him a few minutes later. We were elated to have made it 6140 metres (20,2..... feet). Although this was clearly not the mountain named as Stok Kangri on our map it was certainly the highest in the area. I took a reading with my GPS to confirm we were over 6,000m.



We had no idea where the others were. After the usual photos we decided it was time to set off down but suddenly heard a voice from below. Steve shouted up "wait for me" and of course we did. We asked about the others and Steve said he did not know where they were but he said the guide had disappeared! Later we set off down and after 10 minutes or so we were delighted to find the two Johns still struggling upwards but sure enough the guide had disappeared. Tinley turned around and accompanied the two Johns back to the Summit.

Later that day we arrived back in camp to the welcome of some good hot food. They said the guide had passed through the camp at 9am!! Much later, on our return to the UK I plotted the readings onto our map and discovered that the mountain named as Stok Kangri on our map was wrong. We had indeed climbed Stok Kangri. The map makers had got it wrong! The next day we returned to Leh to be greeted by Geoff and Namjil, it was a great feeling to have been successful.

After a rest day we flew back to Dehli and then took a taxi to Agra to see the wonderful Taj Mahal. It was a five-hour drive and the Taj was as magnificent as it is purported to be. A most beautiful building so wonderfully proportioned. Even the minarets are built with a 5-degree outward lean to ensure they look vertical when viewed from the entrance gate. Here I left my friends who were to continue site-seeing around India for another week. I caught the train back from Agra to Delhi that evening costing £7 including a 3-course meal, where again I was met at midnight by our taxi man and taken to the airport to fly home. What a wonderful and memorable trip! To be recommended.....!

Bill Dean