



# Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue CIO

Newsletter December 2020



## **Team Chairman Update** - Tim Bird

The current pandemic continues to affect us all at work, home as well as during MR operations, training and support roles. Recent regional lockdowns have again seen us all living under Covid restrictions with no likelihood of a return to pre-covid life for some months to come. The weeks in national lockdown between March and June 2020 saw the Team responding to approximately 5 incidents. However, this period was especially busy with work planning for Covid-19 callouts, training and sourcing PPE.

Many of us will not have had the opportunity of spending much time at Oggie Base during recent months, however thanks to Chris Lloyd, Dave Brown, Jed Stone and the other base supporters who have spent some considerable time during lockdown renovating much of base. Of note is John Heaton's continued weekly work cleaning and sanitising base during the Covid-19 period.

My thanks to Jed Stone for his excellent work as our outgoing Equipment Officer and best wishes in his new role, resuming as an Operational Team Leader.

A new post of Equipment Manager has recently been approved with Sharon Parry taking on this newly adapted role to support the Team.

With great sadness I have to inform you of the death in November 2020 of one of our founding and honorary Team Members, Neil Adam. Neil has 55 years MR service from 1965 to 2020. Combined with his wife Maggie's 51 year's service, they have over 100 years MR service! Neil will be sadly missed by the Team and our love and best wishes go to his wife Maggie, family and friends.

## **IMPORTANT – Please check and update your Membership Details**

EVERY membership fee and donation made by 333 members helps keep OVMRO out on the hills and mountains of the Ogwen Valley rescuing those who are lost or injured. YOUR donations help to pay for all the technical equipment needed by the team on rescues and to provide the personal safety equipment needed by our volunteers to keep them safe while helping others. In short, every donation is vital to the team.

All 333 members who are UK taxpayers are able to designate their membership fees and donations as 'Gift Aid donations'. By doing this, OVMRO is able to claim an additional amount equal to 25% of your donation from the UK Government. For example, for every £20 donated by a 333 member the team can claim another £5 from the Government. It is a very important part of OVMRO's total income each year.

As part of the requirements of the Gift Aid scheme, we need to ensure that all our donor records are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. We have recently updated our Members database to include the latest Gift Aid declaration and to provide members with other Key Facts about the scheme. Please can you all log in to the Members Database and check that your details are correct. For those of you who have previously signed a Gift Aid declaration, please can you confirm that you are happy for your donations to continue to be included in the scheme by clicking on the new declaration on your page of the database.

For those members who haven't previously been able to make a Gift Aid declaration, please read the enclosed Key Facts document and if you are now able to make a declaration then not only can we claim Gift Aid on your current and future donations but also on all your donations during the previous 4 years.

**Even if you are unable to Gift Aid at the current time, it is very important that we have your correct address and contact details. It will be much appreciated if all members could check their details on the Members database as soon as possible.**

<https://membership.ogwen-rescue.org.uk/login>

You will need to use your registered email address and password. There is a facility to reset your password if you have forgotten it! If you are unable to log in to the database or would prefer to contact me direct, then please can you email me at [treasurer@ogwen-rescue.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@ogwen-rescue.org.uk) or return the enclosed Gift Aid Declaration to me at

**OVMRO, Bryn Awel, Brithdir, Dolgellau, Gwynedd LL40 2RR**

Where possible, please quote your 333 membership number on all correspondence.

On behalf of OVMRO, thank you all for your kind donations and your continuing support.

**Cally Palmer** - OVMRO Honorary Treasurer

We are very grateful for donations of stamps which are sent to support the Team.  
Please could supporters ensure that the postage is correct, as we regularly have to pay £1.50 excess postage on packages we receive. This is generally because they are bulkier than a standard letter. Many thanks.

The newsletter relies on contributions from the membership and supporters.

Please think about writing an article or providing a picture.

Please email [heather.beale@ogwen-rescue.org.uk](mailto:heather.beale@ogwen-rescue.org.uk) if would prefer an electronic version of the newsletter in the next copy

Russ Hore - [russ.hore@ogwen-rescue.org.uk](mailto:russ.hore@ogwen-rescue.org.uk) - Editor



Oggie Base has moved around the valley since the inauguration of OVMRO. Originally it was based at Ogwen Cottage when OVMRO was born. First it was based at the rear of the Cottage in an old caravan (£5). Then there was a dedicated room in the main building. As the use of Ogwen Cottage by Birmingham Education Authority increased, the team moved into the old generator shed. By 1977, OVMRO was divorced from Og Cott. and moved to a much smaller stone shed at Idwal Cottage Youth Hostel. In the meantime, the National Trust was being consulted about the use of the old water bailiff's cottage just East of Llyn Ogwen at Bryn Poeth. The previous tenant, Dudley Stevens, had used it as a one man Adventure Training school (and looking at the state of the building, it certainly was an adventure). When applying for planning permission for "change of use" one person put up a very strong objection. As a result an Appeal had to be made to the Welsh Office. This required the services of expensive persons from the legal profession. The appeal was successful and the National Trust used a gang of enthusiastic "job seekers" to put the building into a barely habitable standard.

OVMRO took occupation in 1977 although the track up was only passable with 4x4's. We had use of a small room on the front of the building (a much smaller Ops Room) and a newly constructed lean-to mono pitch shed at the rear. Initially, we had limited access to the Crew Room for emergency use only. There was no heating or hot water. Electricity was unreliable too.

After an incident in 1986 where an informant nearly suffered hypothermia whilst sitting in the Crew Room, it was decided that the building was not fit for purpose. Over the next couple of years team members raised £60K to carry out major works. The building was doubled in size and re-roofed with OVMRO taking occupation once more in December 1989.

Since then OVMRO has invested heavily in the building. After two or three attempts to reconstruct the track over a bog, we finally had permission to lay a reinforced concrete road (costing an extra £7000). We installed new timber doubled glazed windows (£7000). We built a garage for our first Team Land Rover and converted the loft (£40,000).



Circa 1988



We built a second garage (£25,000) and formed parking alongside (£3000). We removed some of the surplus chimney structure within the building (£2500). We installed a new kitchen. Once the National Trust no longer wanted shared use of the building, we increased the size of the Ops Room and formed just one bunk room. Most recently, a carport has been constructed to protect our third Land Rover. And most of you will be familiar with this layout.

During Furlough (for some), a small gang of three has taken advantage of very low usage of Bryn Poeth. In Garage 2, hanging from the rafters are a Neil Robertson stretcher (designed in 1907) though this one is more recent; a Thomas stretcher (designed in 1937) though this one is early 1960's; a Mariner stretcher (designed late 1940's) though this one was bought in 1966; and an Ogwen one design stretcher (designed late 1980's).

Garage 1 loft has been joisted and boarded out. This floor and the eaves have been packed with insulation and lined with plywood. Walls and ceilings have been painted and new LED lights installed. The Drying Room houses a new 18kg capacity washing machine. This is already paying dividends as ropes can be washed giving them increased life.

As I write, there are proposals to adjust the kitchen. The fridge freezer is to go and the microwave oven, which is set above head height on top, is to be brought down to a safer level. A new worktop is to be installed with a new fridge underneath. The ancient freezer in the corridor is to be replaced with a new upright freezer.

And the jewel in the crown is the chimney breast and fireplace in the Crew Room. An oak shelf has been installed above the slate lintel. Above that, the crossed ice axes and hawser laid rope coil have been refurbished. On either side are two polished hardwood "honours" boards listing team members Past and Present in gold lettering.

Bryn Poeth, home of Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue has come a long way. It may not be a purpose built Mountain Rescue Base but we should be proud of our little bothy in the shadow of Tryfan.



Circa 1977



Since taking over as Treasurer in March, I have been amazed to hear the all the stories and achievements of OVMRO from its humble beginnings in 1965 to the present day. OVMRO has continued to be at the forefront of mountain rescue in the UK and the mountain community has been fortunate to benefit from the innovative kills and expertise of its members over the years.

For a bit of Christmas cheer I have put together a short quiz. Cadwch yn ddiogel a pob lwc!

1. There are currently 49 MRTs in England & Wales and 24 in Scotland. **How many of these MRTs are based in Wales?**

2. The Ogwen Valley has long been associated with climbing and mountaineering clubs. Ogwen Cottage was established as a mountaineering school in 1959 by Ron James. Its instructors (and students) were regularly involved in rescuing climbers in the area. The need for a dedicated MRT was formally recognised in 1965 when OVMRO was formed and held its inaugural meeting in March of that year. OVMRO is now based at Bryn Poeth, an old water bailiff's cottage, but had several homes in its early years including a caravan behind Ogwen Cottage and a temporary store in Idwal Cottage, a former quarry manager's cottage and now the oldest Youth Hostel in the UK. **How much did it cost for an overnight stay at Idwal Cottage when it first opened as a Youth Hostel?**

3. OVMRO moved in to Bryn Poeth in 1977. It was VERY cold and during the following years it became clear the building was unfit for purpose and in need of some major renovations. Plans were finally drawn up and agreed with the National Trust, planning permission was granted, funds raised and major works commenced. Bryn Poeth was formally re-opened in 1990 – the building had doubled in size and now benefitted from a new roof, a larger ops room, a crew room, two small bunk rooms, a new kitchen, showers, wash basins and toilets. A new electricity supply and an LPG boiler to heat the water and radiators completed the works. **During the renovations temporary accommodation was provided by a Bedford Signals wagon loaned by North Wales Police. What was the registration number for "Blue Alex"?**

4. In 1994, after members were forced to share the back of a farmer's Landrover with his sheep, OVMRO realised it needed its own dedicated vehicle. Following successful fund raising the team acquired their first Land Rover Defender 110 in 1995. **How much did the team's first Landrover cost?**

5. Manually transporting equipment to a seriously injured casualty and then performing a stretcher carry down steep mountainous terrain has always posed a challenge and many stretchers have been designed over the years for the purpose, including the Thomas Stretcher, the Bell stretcher and the Ferno Titan stretcher as used by the RAF. OVMRO agreed a £400 grant in the 80's for the design of its very own "Oggi stretcher" which consisted of 5 pieces making it easier for team members to carry up on to the hill. **Which former Team Member initiated the design of the Oggi stretcher (which was first marketed in 1989) on the back of a beer-mat ?**

6. OVMRO was the first mountain rescue team to be recognised as a DEFRA Type C Team on the National Water Rescue Asset Register in recognition of the team's expertise in technical water rescue, search operations within a water environment and flood response. **In what year did OVMRO first deploy team members to specifically provide flood support and assist emergency services when floodwaters devastated the entire Conwy Valley?**

7. MRTs often receive calls from people on the hills who have mobile 'phone contact but are unable to confirm their location. There are many apps for smartphones which can identify a phone's location but these must be installed before the user gets lost! In 2009, (now former) OVMRO team member and Chairman Russ Hore innovated a system whereby a text sent to a lost walker's smartphone can be used to interrogate its GPS location. The recipient of the text simply clicks on a link in the text. The MRT who sent the text can then see the caller's location displayed on a digital OS map display. **What is the name of the system which was innovated in 2009 by Russ Hore which is now used by Police and SAR teams worldwide to assist in locating lost people?**

8. In 2012 Prince William was invited to select one of his charities to carry the Olympic Torch in the vicinity of Buckingham Palace as part of the 2012 Summer Olympics torch relay. As the patron of Mountain Rescue England and Wales (MREW), Prince William asked for a MRT member to take on the challenge and the honour fell to one of OVMRO's team. **Which team member was selected to carry the Olympic torch from Buckingham Palace to Hyde Park Corner during the 2012 Summer Olympics torch relay?**

9. Search and Rescue dogs are often called upon to support MRTs searching for missing persons in rural and mountain environments. Dogs and their handlers undergo 2-3 years comprehensive training with dogs being trained as either "air-scenting dogs" or "scent-specific trailing dogs". One of OVMRO's team members retired her search dog in January of this year after 10 years of active service, making her dog the oldest operational SARDA dog in Wales. **What was the name of Wales' oldest operational SARDA dog who retired at the age of 14?**

10. OVMRO has published a bi-lingual calendar for 2021 featuring 12 beautiful photographs reflecting the changing seasons in Snowdonia. Images include Llyn Caseg-Fraith, Dolbadarn, Dyffryn Ogwen, Castell y Gwynt, Llanrwst, Nant Ffrancon, Llyn Dinas and the Ogwen Valley as well as a broken spectre and bluebells on the path to Moel Siabod. **How many animals in total feature in the 2021 calendar?**

The answers will all be provided in the next 333 Newsletter but if you are unable to wait until then, I suggest you beg, borrow or steal a copy of "Risking Life and Limb" (also available in the OVMRO shop)! As a further incentive, and to say thank you for your loyalty throughout this difficult year, 333 members can email their answers to me

[cally.palmer@ogwen-rescue.org.uk](mailto:cally.palmer@ogwen-rescue.org.uk)

for a chance to **win £30** to spend in the OVMRO shop. There will be a random draw from all entries who have the answers correct received by **31<sup>st</sup> January 2021**. Please remember to quote your membership number in your email.



Within any organisation, team or club we get to know our fellows but often only that part of them that we have in common. Neil was a man with coats of many colours, not just the red of Mountain Rescue.

Neil was born in Ruthin, Denbighshire in 1942, the youngest of five siblings and 8 years younger than the fourth. When Neil was about ten years old, he was introduced to Snowdonia by his elder brothers. He was soon scrambling on the crags and cliffs of the Ogwen and Llanberis valleys. His brothers had also introduced Neil to the Boy Scouts and he remained a member until he was 24 years old.

It was at Easter 1963, when Neil was sitting on the A5 roadside wall near Ogwen Falls, enjoying a cup of tea from the brew shack when Ron James of Ogwen Cottage Mountain Rescue Team came looking for climbers to assist with a rescue on the West Face of Tryfan. A person had broken their thigh. And that was the start of a lifetime membership of Mountain Rescue.

Neil was part of a group of regular weekend climbers, who would stay in a barn at Bodesi Farm, just East of Bryn Poeth. Ron James was often needing extra hands to assist with rescues and he would frequently call upon those staying at the Bodesi Barn. When the Ogwen Cottage MRT changed to OVMRO, Neil was very much part of the transformation.

In 1966, Neil left Denbighshire County Council to study at Bangor Normal College. He attended the Dr Ieuan Jones evening lectures on Mountaineering First Aid; his new passion for Casualty Care never left him. He passed his Basic and Advanced exams. Being lighter than his two OVMRO contemporaries, he was usually selected to be lowered to the casualty with the stretcher. He was appointed as a Team Leader in 1969, a post he held until 1997. When he stepped down from this role, he was awarded Honorary membership of OVMRO.

It was through OVMRO that Neil met Maggie. They became engaged at Christmas 1969 in Borrowdale, where Neil was instructing hill walking and rock climbing. They were married in July 1970 and honeymooned on the romantic Isle of Skye—camped amongst fellow Ogwen MR members, but not by choice!

Both being teachers, they enjoyed long Summer holidays so were able to visit the Alps and Himalaya where Neil was able to complete a first ascent in Ladakh.

Although they both taught in Merseyside schools, they had a weekend house in Braichmelyn, Bethesda. They trained and worked with SARDA, then got into Search Management. Meanwhile Neil was assisting the running of OVMRO by assisting the Secretary and Maggie in her role as treasurer.

Neil joined St John Ambulance as a Transport Attendant in 1989. This led him to becoming a trainer for St. John. He went to instruct in Zambia and to act as a first aider in Berlin. For his dedication and hard work, Neil was invested into the Order of St. John at a service in Bangor Cathedral in 2014.

When both Maggie and Neil retired from teaching, they bought a small holding in Mynydd Llandegai. Here they have bred rare breed sheep and Tamworth pigs. Once again, Neil went that bit further and found himself touring the UK as a judge for Rare Breed shows.

In his latter years with OVMRO, Neil would assist with rescues as a driver, delivering troops to the hills and collecting them after long rescues. He was also despatched as a “spotter” helping to identify where the lone flashing torch was sited on the rock face. He was always there, willing to assist.

Neil Adam : Honorary Member, Member for 55 years, Team Leader for 28 years, served as Secretary, Equipment Officer and Editor.

## Neil Adam : “OVMRO through and through”



### **2021 Team Calendar**

The 2021 OVMRO Bi-lingual calendar is available. Containing twelve beautiful photographs reflecting the seasons in Snowdonia which were the winning entries in our annual photography competition. Only £6 each. More details are at

**<https://shop.ogwen-rescue.org.uk/calendar-2021-p-2860.html>**

Orders will be despatched from stock whilst available.