

R.A.F. 28 Maintenance Unit, Harpur Hill, Buxton photo's

Continuation of Part 1...

Post-war

The Harpur Hill unit continued its work after the war being kept reasonably busy with aviation incidents throughout the 1950s. The team also assisted the police with many civilian incidents and was the only organised search and rescue resource available until the Peak Park Planning Board started to become more actively involved in the mid 1950s.

A memorable incident occurred in March 1959 when the unit was called to its first underground rescue. At 3.30pm on Sunday 22nd Neil Moss and several other experienced cavers had entered Peak Cavern in Castleton to explore a recently discovered shaft some distance beyond the public show cavern. Neil became trapped in a very narrow passage and his companions were unable to free him. The local civilian cave rescue team attempted a recovery but were also unable to make any headway. At 2.00 am on Monday the RAF at Harpur Hill were asked if they could assist. Carbon dioxide poisoning brought on by the use of carbide lamps had caused Moss to lose consciousness soon after becoming trapped. For two days the civilian and RAF teams worked together to free the Oxford undergraduate. Sadly, it was all in vain, and he died where he was trapped. Still the body could not be freed for recovery and the Home Office finally gave permission for it to be sealed in and entombed forever.

For a short time following this incident, and until the unit transferred to RAF Stafford, the Harpur Hill unit maintained a small amount of cave rescue equipment. Derbyshire Cave Rescue Organisation learnt a lot from the rescue in both administrative and technical procedures and the incident probably gave birth to the modern and greatly respected team of today.

The Harpur Hill RAF Maintenance Unit closed in 1959 and the rescue team transferred its base to RAF Stafford from where it continued to serve the Peak District. The unit finally closed in 2005 and the responsibility for its operational area was divided between RAF Valley, Anglesey, and RAF Leeming, North Yorkshire.



Flight Lieutenant David Crichton M.B.E. (flat cap & light jacket) with N.C.O. Flight Sergeant John Thornton B.E.M. (far left with berry)

R.A.F. 28 Maintenance Unit, Harpur Hill, Buxton photo's



R.A.F Harpur Hill, Buxton, Mountain Rescue Team January 1946.



Practicing a rescue technique known as a tragsit.



Practicing lowering a stretcher on steep ground.



Practicing stretcher lowering techniques.

R.A.F. 28 Maintenance Unit, Harpur Hill, Buxton photo's



Nearly down.



R.A.F. 28 Maintenance Unit, Harpur Hill, Buxton photo's



American Army Jeeps?



War time wreckage still visible on Kinder Scout today.