

Spring 2021

GREAT NORTH NEWS





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Facing the future

Reaching more patients
with your support

**Charity funded,
world-class
critical care.**

    /GNAirAmbulance

Registered Charity No. 1092204

Getting up to speed

The past year has seen a disruption to everyday life that has affected us all. It has presented such significant challenges to our charity that at times we've had to battle hard just to keep going each day.

Yet despite all the restrictions, the funding issues and the changing clinical landscape, **we haven't missed one day's work throughout the pandemic.** It's been a struggle, but we've adapted, and rather than just treading water have attempted to make improvements to our service for the benefit of the public.

The biggest immediate change was the introduction of a next generation air ambulance to the fleet. The Guardian of the North II started work last summer and became an immediate hit with the crew thanks to its elite performance.

This was a change that was initiated before the effects of COVID were felt. But others took shape in the very jaws of the crisis.

We moved our critical care teams from Teesside International Airport to our new headquarters near Eaglescliffe. The facility brings many immediate benefits, but crucially during these uncertain times it provides us with a stable home.

Overleaf you can read about the second new aircraft which was secured and which will start work this spring. We expect both new aircraft will serve the region for at least fifteen years.

The old aircraft were around thirty years old and were becoming obsolete. The new ones bring significant upgrades in power and versatility which will mean patients now get a better service than ever before.

We also tested the use of a jet suit to deliver care in the Lake District. We knew it would generate some excitement, but we couldn't have predicted the international attention it would bring. As we spoke to media outlets from around the globe, one of the recurring themes that we kept hearing was how refreshing it was to hear about something so adventurous and positive at a time when coronavirus dominated the global news cycle.

This does not mean we are turning our back on the here and the now. We've been busy throughout the pandemic. We know our supporters have been affected. We've heard their stories and at times we've come face to face with the worst effects of this awful virus. It's left a mark. **But it's only hardened our resolve to make the best of each day, to keep driving forward, to grow, to improve and to make you proud to be a supporter of the Great North Air Ambulance Service.**

Thank you.


Andy Mawson
Director of Operations



Always improving

In spite of the difficulties of the past twelve months, the charity has continued to improve its service. Here are just a few reasons we can be hopeful for the year ahead.

Flying in

This spring we will welcome the latest addition to our fleet. Following in the flight path of the Guardian of the North II helicopter, which started work last summer, the new aircraft will join the fleet once it has finished its refit.

The two aircraft are expected to service the charity for more than 15 years and bring instant improvements in power and versatility as well as improved internal configuration which gives our team better access to both patient and kit when working in the cabin.

We were able to secure the aircraft at a competitive price but will be paying them off over the next ten years. This is why we need the continued help of our supporters – the repayments on the aircraft alone amount to £40k a month.

To help Fund our Fleet visit: gna.as/fund-our-fleet



Jet suit

Also this spring, we plan to undertake the next phase in our exploratory jet suit paramedic project. We hope to demonstrate how jet suit technology, developed by UK-based Gravity Industries, can be used to deliver care to remote and inaccessible locations. We think it could help us reach up to 20 additional patients a week in the Lake District.

Our initial testing in late summer 2020 was a success and we hope the next stage will demonstrate how this concept could become a reality.



24/7 Response

Thanks to supporters who backed the 24/7 Appeal, we have been able to initiate the trial of an overnight service using our rapid response car in Cumbria.

The rapid response car carries a doctor and paramedic and has all the same drugs and equipment as we carry on the aircraft.

The team are making a real difference out there thanks to you.

COVID got in the way of a full 24/7 rollout across the North East but this remains part of our plans for the future and we will update you on this in due course.



A paramedic's progress

Senior paramedic and operations manager Gordon Ingram's career has taken him all over the world. Here, he reflects on the changes he has seen at GNAAS since first starting at the charity in 2008.

"When I first started we were based at Teesside Airport, in a small room in the corner of an old hangar. It was that basic, I remember the excitement when we got a portable toilet."

"On scene, the procedures we carried out weren't as advanced back then. It was a much smaller team and there wasn't the full doctor and paramedic capability that we have now. We really made a difference, but we've come such a long way since then."



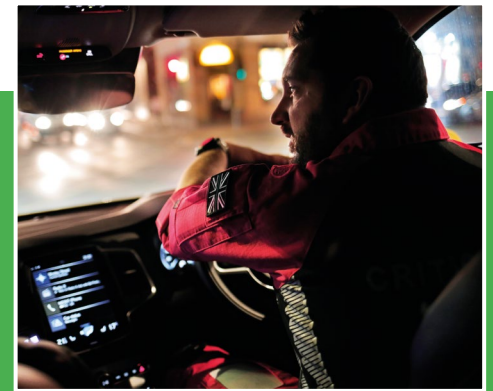
"I left in 2010 to take up a training role in Hereford, working with ex-military personnel as well as doctors and paramedics."

I also worked as a remote area paramedic and my work took me to Afghanistan, Iraq and Algeria, among other places, working for both the United Nations and on television and film sets."



"I returned to the charity in 2017. There had been a phenomenal change. To see what the critical care team were doing and the medical procedures that they were routinely delivering across the North was quite simply awe-inspiring. I was just excited to be a part of that."

"I was heavily involved in the move from our old base to our new site at Progress House, near Eaglescliffe. It was such a big moment for the charity, it was a privilege to be a part of it."



"Progress House gives us the home we've needed for so long. Everyone has the space to carry out their jobs, the education facilities we have will take our training to the next level, and the conferencing facilities will open up our organisation to the outside world."

"We've experienced so much progress in recent years. Our patients are feeling the benefits of this every day. We're just hugely grateful to our supporters for enabling our development and hope they stick with us for what's coming next."



“Permanent paralysis was the prognosis. I said ‘I will beat this, and I will recover’.”

**– crash survivor
Neil Mutch**



Neil Mutch, 57, from Berwick, was told he would never walk again after suffering devastating injuries in a car crash while returning from a cycling challenge in The Cheviots, Northumberland.

He said: “After the event had finished, I racked my bike onto my car and rang my wife Sharon to say I was heading home and would be around 30 minutes and she said she would put the curry on – that was the last thing I remember.

“The accident happened on the A1 bypass just 400m from my turn off.”



“When I woke up in hospital, Sharon was over me and all I could hear her saying was ‘please promise me you will fight’.”

Our critical care team worked with North East Ambulance Service crews in battling to save Neil before flying him to the Royal Victoria Infirmary (RVI) in Newcastle.

Neil said: **“When I woke up in hospital, Sharon was over me and all I could hear her saying was ‘please promise me you will fight’.**

“I had broken the C1 and C2 vertebrae in my neck as well as internal decapitation which is also known as the ‘hangman’s fracture’ and is fatal in 80% of people.

“I also had eight broken ribs, fractured sternum, fractured cheek and collar bone, a punctured lung and a bleed on the brain.”



After spending two weeks in the RVI intensive care unit, Neil was transferred to James Cook University Hospital’s spinal unit, and then the turning point came when he was able to move his finger for the first time.

He said: **“When my finger moved, I thought I will actually get better and will be able to walk again.”**

Neil was in hospital from July until late September and when he was finally discharged, hospital staff came off their lunch breaks to see him leave.

He said: **“I took seven steps out of the hospital doors in my frame after being told I would never walk again. It was incredible. My outlook on life since has been to keep fighting and never give up.”**



“Bart meant everything to me, he really was my best friend – I called him my real-life unicorn”



Francesca Kennedy said her beloved horse Bart ‘saved her life’ following a collision with a car which resulted in him being put down and her being airlifted by our team.

The 20-year-old from Penrith was on a hack with her friend when they were involved in a collision with a vehicle near Clifton in December last year.

Two years ago, Francesca bought the 11-year-old Irish sports horse named Bart and since that day, the pair had been inseparable.



She said: “I moved to Cumbria from Lancashire to be beside Bart, and I had seen him twice a day since. He was such a character and he was so special to me.”

Francesca knew instantly that Bart had been hurt in the accident.

She said: “It happened so quick. I had rolled over the bonnet and was on the floor and as I turned over, I could see he was bleeding.

“He was wailing and screaming and as I tried to stand up, I realised my leg was numb, then the pain set in so I couldn’t get to him.”

Within 20 minutes of the incident happening, both GNAAS and a specialist vet team were by the sides of the pair alongside ambulance service teams.



She said: “The vets put Bart under sedation and took him to a field nearby to give him the best chance, but he just couldn’t get back up, so they decided he had to be put down.”

Francesca was flown to James Cook University Hospital to continue treatment of her multiple injuries.

She added: “Bart saved my life and I am so glad I got to say goodnight to him the day after I was released from hospital.”

Francesca has since gone on to recover and has undertaken a fundraising drive to support GNAAS for their role in her rescue.

At the time of writing she had raised nearly £3,000.



How a hot dog gave us hope

With everything that's been going on, our fundraising has taken a big hit. Our fundraising team and the army of volunteers who support us have simply not been allowed to get out and do what they do best.

But that does not mean we've been sitting about feeling sorry for ourselves. Because you can't possibly feel sorry for yourself when a 13-year-old boy gets in touch to say he's walking Roseberry Topping dressed as a hotdog to raise money for the charity, can you?

And Leo "the hotdog" Armstrong was not alone. As our traditional fundraising calendar continues to be severely disrupted, so our supporters keep getting in touch to let us know what crazy ways they have devised to plug the gap.

"There's no challenge too crazy, you really can do anything," said Angela, our challenge events organiser.

"Whatever you would like to do, we want it to be something that makes you feel proud and we want you to tell us about it."

Angela's waiting for your call...



Karl Cleet's 24-hour gaming marathon

Karl Cleet was only 19 when he required GNAAS after he was crushed between two cars near his family home in Eaglescliffe.

To commemorate five years since the incident he did a 24-hour gaming marathon and **raised £310.**

If you're in need of some inspiration, here are just some of the incredible people who supported us in recent months...



Midtown Milkhouse's book exchange

The family who run the Midtown Milkhouse in Caldbeck set up a book exchange inside a phone box they own and placed a collection tin for GNAAS inside.



Leo Armstrong's hot dog challenge

13-year-old Leo Armstrong from Middlesbrough dressed up as a hot dog and walked up and down Roseberry Topping 13 times in 12 hours and **raised nearly £1,685.**



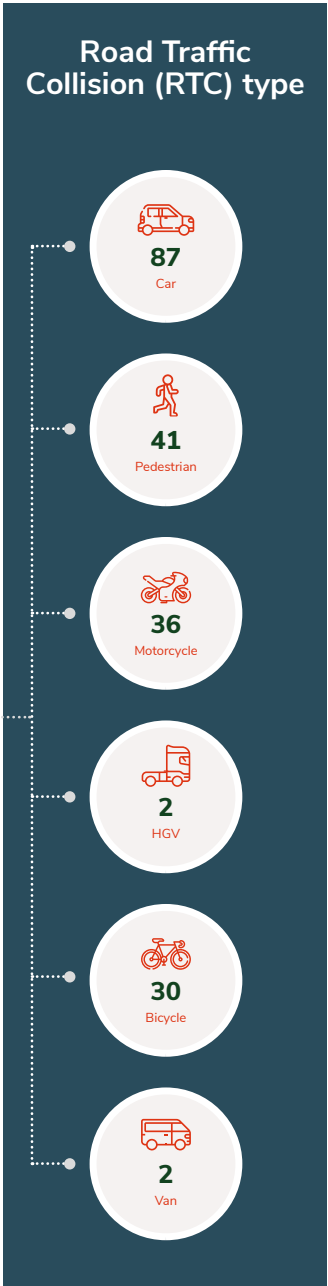
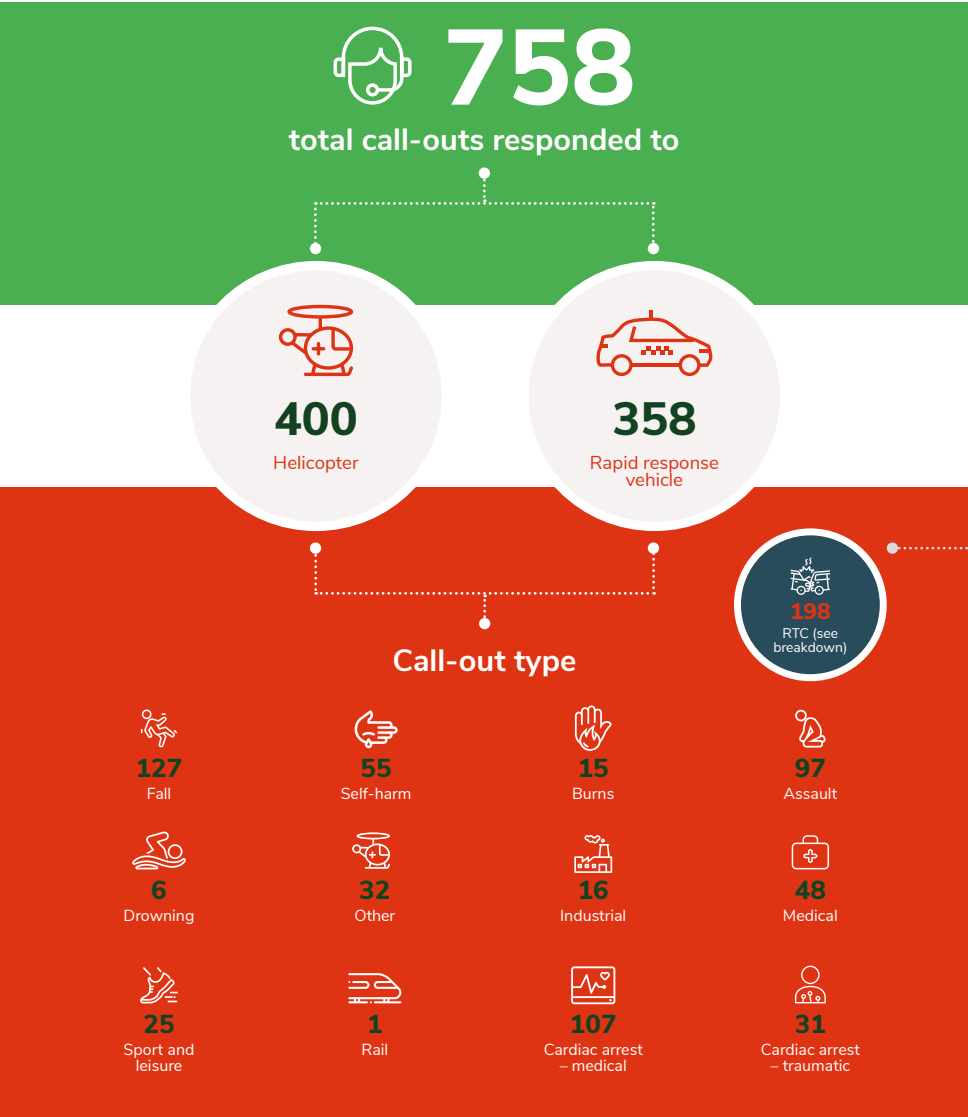
Alnwick RFC's 1960 challenge

To celebrate their 60th birthday Alnwick RFC took part in physical activities based around the number 1960, such as completing 1960 miles by either walking, running, swimming or cycling. In total they **raised £1,500.**

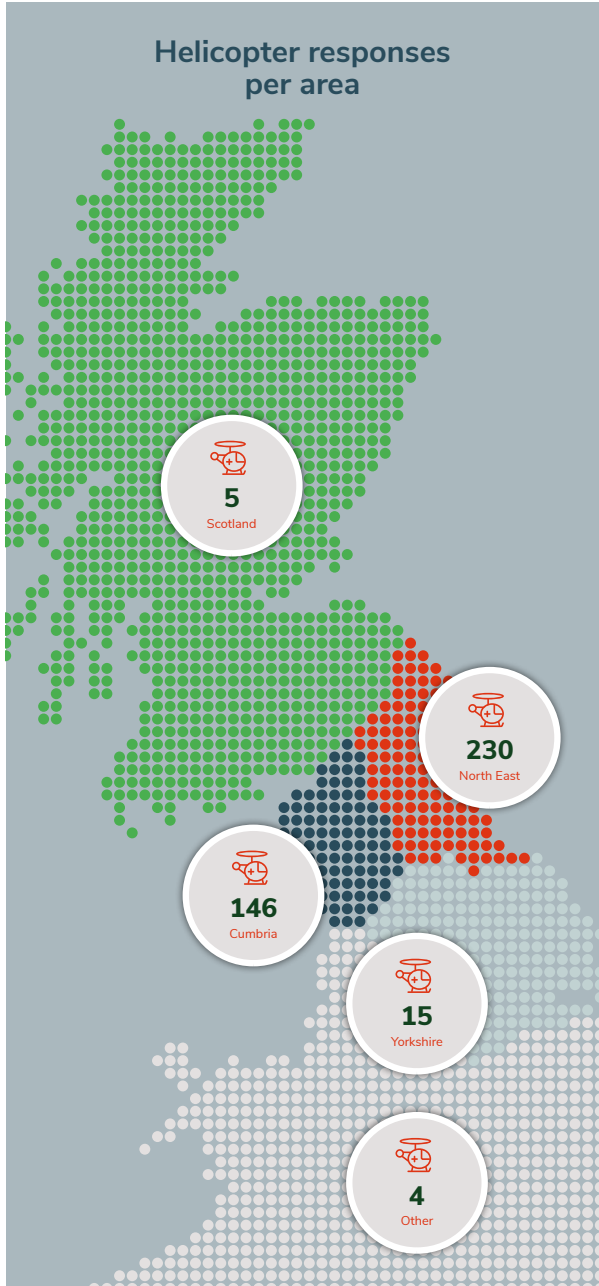


What we've been up to...

The following data shows how we were kept busy in the six months to December 31, 2020.



Data taken from six months to December 31, 2020



**This edition of our newsletter is dedicated
to Doreen and Alan Watson.**



In their lifetime together they pledged to help
GNAAS when they were no longer around.

Alan died over 15 years ago, and when
Doreen died last year, £60,000 was
donated from their estate to our charity.



**We never got to say thanks to them in their lifetime,
but we will be forever grateful.**

Last year we received £2.7m from gifts in supporters' Wills.
This money saved lives across the region.

Contact us:

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