

Speaker Biographies

David Jones

David has over 35 years experience with Mountain Rescue in the United Kingdom and was awarded the Queen's Golden Jubilee medal in 2002 and the Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012.

David did 15 years as a Search & Rescue Dogs Association (SARDA) Dog Handler/Instructor/Assessor. He has been involved in the training of Search Dogs for countries including USA, Japan, Russia, Croatia, Hong Kong, Turkey, Spain, Switzerland, Malaysia, and more recently in Jamaica and Oman.

He has also spent the past 21 years working with the Croatian Mountain Rescue Service including introducing Search & Rescue Dogs and Search Management to their service.

David has been involved in humanitarian work in countries including Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo and Mozambique

He is a Qualified Submerged Water Search Dog Handler, Cadaver Search Dog Handler and a Certified NASDU Trainer Instructor as well as a National Training Inspectorate Trainer Instructor.

Over the years he has been the lead course assessor for Submerged Body Detection course for Guardia Civil in Spain; acted as a Technical Advisor for the current Saddleworth Moor search and between 2008 and 2011 he took part in human remains/cadaver search for the Commission for the Disappeared (Ireland).

In 2010 and 2011 David was the Lead Instructor for both Disaster search dogs for the Malaysian Fire Brigade and the lead Instructor on the Helicopter familiarisation course with the Malaysian Search & Rescue Service.

Since 2014 David has been involved in training students on the NASDU affiliated Cadaver Detection and Submerged Victim Detection Dog and Handler course.

Gavin Roberts

Gavin has been involved in training specialist search dogs since 2003 and in 2006 he was one of the first civilians in Wales to qualify as a Human Remains/Cadaver detection dog handler.

Gavin's operational experience includes working on Human Remains/Cadaver Search in the Nottinghamshire / Lincolnshire / Leicester in 2007. In 2008 he was tasked along with his dog Gelert on a Human Remains/Cadaver Search in Northern France. He has also been involved in missing person searches in North Wales and La Palma (Spain) and he was also involved in human Remains/Cadaver Search for the Commission for the Disappeared (Ireland) between 2008 and 2011 Gavin has also worked alongside David Jones on the Saddleworth Human Remains/Cadaver Search.

As a result of his achievements and experiences in this work he was invited in 2009 to be a key speaker at the International Commission for Alpine Rescue Dog Handlers Conference in Croatia.

Gavin's training experience has included being the dog section leader at Global Rescue Services from 2006 - 2011, Sharing his experience and training with the Croatian Mountain Rescue Association in 2007, Supporting and assisting in the training of Water Search Dogs and handlers for Sarbot UK in Trent Lock, Nottinghamshire in 2013, instructor for UK-K9 including providing training for Jamaican Defence Force in 2015.

Gavin has been a NASDU affiliated trainer since 2014.

Dr. Michael BEN Alexander

Ben Alexander began dog training in 1972 with his parents GSD's for confirmation, obedience and later schutzhund. Ben continued training dogs for a variety of venues over the 50+ years, settling with search and rescue dogs in 2000 and has dedicated his life to furthering the science behind the dogs since 2010.

Ben has a MS degree in Animal Behavior from Texas A&M University. His studies were on search dog performance. His PhD is in Forensic Soil Science where he looked at soil components under decomposing bodies and cadaver dog capabilities. Two published papers are available on request.

Ben has trained 5 K9's to certification and is currently training 2 new partners, 1 for historic/pre-contact and one for HRD. Ben has been a lead evaluator for NASAR for HRD. He has certified dogs with national organizations: NNDDA, NAPWDA, NASAR and TASK. His current partner Rip has located historic grave sites 150 - 250 years old and pre-contact graves 2500 years old and older.

Ben began teaching at seminars in 2010 after being encouraged to do so by his own mentors Shirley Hammond, Cheryl Kennedy, Ann Christensen and others. In 2013, through his PhD research at the forensic anthropology center at Texas state (FACTS), he began a pilot seminar program which developed into the robust K9 training program that now exists at Texas State. Ben is the FACTS K9 training coordinator. While he still continues to do seminars and certifications across the country, he has focused his efforts on providing one of the best learning environments in the United States for cadaver dog teams at FACTS. However, he is always available for consultation and strongly believes in the service cadaver dog teams provide to their community.

Tiffanie Turner

Tiffanie Turner has over 40 years of experience working with behavior modification. She has used learning theory and behavior modification to train horses, cats, dogs, pigs and chickens. Honing her skills at observation and understanding the scent detection dog, she has successfully selected and trained several HRD dogs for wilderness and urban search and recovery missions, as well as trained dogs for conservation work to detect invasive or endangered species of plants and animals.

She obtained her degree from Texas A&M University, College of Biomedical Science where she now works imaging hoof stock and teaching 4th year vet students techniques in safety and imaging.

Tiffanie began her SAR career with a border collie mix named "Fanta" who would go on to be recognized as the National Association for Search and Rescue's K9 of the year in 2010 for her outstanding work on multiple recoveries and incredible working ability. She has trained and certified dogs for national certifications in wilderness

HRD with: NNDDA, NASAR, NAPWDA and currently fields a FEMA disaster Live find K9 "Croc-it" and has retired her FEMA HRD disaster K9 "Fetchit". Tiffanie participated in the recovery efforts for hurricane Ike and the Memorial Day floods of 2015, California wildfires as well as many missing person searches. With her outstanding patience and commitment to the dog's success she has helped many handlers and canines overcome hurdles and improve their partnership and overall performance.

Tiffanie has taught HRD classes at seminars from AZ to NY and has aided many handlers in starting their HRD dogs on odor as well as challenged the advanced K9 teams and improved overall performance with her insight and troubleshooting abilities. Tiffanie's experience and dedication has help make the Forensic Anthropology Center at Texas State University HRD K9 seminars an amazingly successful seminar since the start of 2013.

Alistair (Al) Read

Alistair (Al) has been involved with mountain rescue since 1981 and took on one of the team leader roles for Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue Organisation (OVMRO) in 1999. He has been a team and regional training officer for North Wales Mountain Rescue Association and was the National Training Officer for Mountain Rescue England and Wales (MREW) between 2012-2023. He represented MREW at the International Commission for Alpine Rescue (ICAR) between 2014-2023.

He is a swiftwater, flood rescue, search management and rope rescue instructor and has developed and delivered training courses across a range of search and rescue disciplines. He has been delivering training professionally since 2007 and delivered training in different countries around the world.

He is an original contributing author to the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Flood Rescue Concept of Operations (2010) and is a national DEFRA Flood Rescue Tactical Advisor and is the Vice Chair of the All-Wales Inland Water and Flood Rescue Group. He helped to author the UK Lost and Missing Persons Search Framework (LAMPS-F), as well as sitting on the US National Fire Protection Agency Standard 1670 (Standard on Operations and Training for Technical Search and Rescue Incidents) until 2018.

In 2010, Al received a Royal Humane Society Testimonial on Vellum for his participation in a night rescue of two paddlers from the Afon Conwy during which he was badly injured and recently received the Distinguished Service Award for Services to Mountain Rescue in 2023 and the Police Search Governance Board Lifetime Achievement Award (2023).

Alun Newsome

Dr. Alun Newsome is a senior search and rescue professional with operational, academic, and advisory experience across complex, multi-agency environments. An experienced and considered expert in the coordination of maritime and remote terrain search, Alun's work bridges frontline operations with applied research and education. His teaching and research interests include search system design, terrain domain frameworks, and the integration of detection technologies—spanning search dogs, aerial assets, and digital mapping platforms. Alun's contributions support the development of operational doctrine and capability assurance, both in the UK and internationally. He is committed to improving the credibility, defensibility, and effectiveness of search through a structured and evidence-informed approach.

Neil McDonagh

Neil is the Director at Triple R Rescue, a division of RRR Consulting Ltd, where he leverages his background in Search and Rescue, professional diving, and front-line medical care to deliver industry-leading safety solutions across the UK. With a career spanning scuba diving, search and rescue, and logistics, Neil is certified as a FREC Medic and IOSH-qualified Senior Leader in Logistics, renowned for his expertise in both high-risk environments across the world.

Under Neil's leadership, Triple R provides advanced first aid training, event medical and safety services, water safety, and search and recovery support from major event organisers to film and TV production crews. Neil is committed to making lifesaving skills accessible to everyone, emphasising integrity and collaboration in every project. His hands-on approach ensure that clients receive tailored, reliable and compliant services - whether it's a bespoke training course, a rescue or recovery operation, or a comprehensive risk assessment.

Driven by a passion for continuous improvement and community impact, Neil personally oversees customer support and maintains strong, long-term relationships with partners such as *UK K9 Training for Excellence*. With plans to expand Triple R Rescue's reach into overseas markets, Neil strives to improve the standard, professionalism, and trust in the search, rescue, and recovery sectors.