

SPRING 2024

SCAA NEWS

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A RECORD-BREAKING YEAR

Our busiest year yet – even more demand for our life-saving service in 2023

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PERTH BASE

Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance
The Control Tower, Perth Airport
Scone, Perthshire PH2 6PL

ABERDEEN BASE

Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance
Hangar 2B, Farburn Terrace
Dyce, Aberdeen AB21 7DT

GENERAL ENQUIRIES

0300 123 1111
enquiries@scaa.org.uk
scaa.org.uk

YOUR STORY

communications@scaa.org.uk
07778 779 888

If SCAA was there for you
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communication in confidence.

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or "SCAA".

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THANK YOU.

WELCOME TO SCAA NEWS

Hello everyone,

Welcome to the latest edition of SCAA News which takes a look at some of the amazing life-saving work the charity is able to carry out in your name and the many ways you can support our vital service.

We're fast approaching our busiest time of year when demand on our crews is at its peak. As the great outdoors beckon and our roads become busier, SCAA's rapid responses and delivery of paramedic and doctor-led teams are not just desirable – they're critical.

And, with this increased workload, your support has never been more important.

Every time our helicopters take to the air to attend those seriously ill or injured – it's thanks to you.

Every time our Rapid Response Vehicles race to the scene of a nearby emergency – it's thanks to you.

Every time SCAA saves a life – it's thanks to you.

Your generous donations are what keep our rotors running 365 days a year and we hope you'll be with us every step of the way as we fly into our 12th year of operations.

Read here about young Harris's horrendous trauma to learn the impact of your support. And Martha's story also highlights the vital role SCAA plays in saving, supporting and improving lives throughout Scotland.

Read also of the increasing numbers of patients suffering heart attacks and strokes where SCAA's rapid response often proves a life-saver.

And join us in saying farewell to a SCAA stalwart, Captain Russell Myles – our first-ever pilot who retires this spring after 11 years flying help and hope to communities from our Perth base.

You might want to consider the many ways you can help SCAA be there for those most in need.

Sign up for one of our sponsored challenges and fun events, stage a fundraiser in your community or join our growing army of volunteers who work on our behalf across the whole of Scotland.

However you choose to be there for us, it helps SCAA be there for everyone.

Thank you all, on behalf of the thousands of lives you have touched.

Warm regards,

David Craig

David Craig
Chief Executive



FOREVER GRATEFUL AFTER FREAK ACCIDENT

She was the last person 80-year-old Bill would ever have wanted to hurt. But in a freak accident, he lost control of his automatic car and ploughed into his wife Martha (78) as she stood nearby.

The impact threw her into the air before she fell and rolled several times onto the tarmac, severely injured.

As neighbours rushed to help, the car smashed on through two gardens before coming to rest.

Martha remembers nothing of the accident, but Bill recalls the horror of the crash and the part Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance (SCAA) played in the race against time to get Martha from Peterhead to critical care at Aberdeen's Major Trauma Centre.

"She was obviously very badly injured," said Bill, "with blood pouring from a head wound and damage to her body and face. She was highly agitated and difficult to control and the road ambulance crew which arrived said she needed to be calmed down."

A Trauma Team then arrived – effectively bringing the A+E department to the accident scene – and they decided to call in an air ambulance.

SCAA scrambled from Aberdeen and landed at a nearby sports ground.

"After sedation, Martha was taken to the helicopter and she was in ARI less than 15 minutes later," said Bill. "That speed, stability of aircraft and the expert level of service helped save Martha untold trauma."

Martha was kept in an induced coma at the hospital's high dependency unit for two days. She had suffered three fractures to her pelvis; a fractured spine, cheek and nose; bruising on the lungs and two separate bleeds on the brain.

"Getting expert medical help to her so quickly and getting her into the hospital in a matter of minutes was undoubtedly a key factor in supporting



Martha's life," said Bill. "They've ensured she's with us today and that's a blessing we can never repay."

Almost a year on, Martha has made a remarkable recovery and she's helping Bill put the trauma of their darkest day behind them.

"We just want to help SCAA where we can," she said. "It's the most wonderful service and we're happy to try and raise some support for them among friends and business contacts. SCAA helps keep families together and that's a wonderful service for those who fear they may lose loved ones when illness or accident strikes."

Martha and Bill travelled to SCAA's Aberdeen airbase in March to meet the crew who attended her that day and thank them all personally.

"We can never thank them enough for being there for me and showing such care," said Martha. "Although I don't remember anything of the incident and the aftermath, I know I was in the best hands possible and that is hugely comforting."

A SURGE IN STROKE AND CARDIAC EMERGENCIES IN 2023

Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance (SCAA) took to the air a record number of times in 2023 as demand on the life-saving service continues to grow.

The charity's two helicopter air ambulances – based at Perth and Aberdeen – took to the air 718 times in response to serious illness and injury throughout Scotland, marking a 3% increase on the previous year.

In addition to providing vital air support, SCAA deployed paramedics a further 230 times using their Rapid Response Vehicles to attend incidents close to their bases.



While trauma emergencies continue to dominate the workload, last year's statistics revealed a sharp increase in stroke-related emergencies.

Compared to 2022, the number of responses to such emergencies rose by a significant 63% – a surge that SCAA paramedics believe results partly from targeted campaigns and increased public awareness of the life-threatening condition.

SCAA Helimed 79 paramedic Keir Lynch highlighted a recent major public health campaign in stroke recognition, which included a hard-hitting TV advert.

“This showed the public in graphic detail how to recognise when someone is suffering a stroke,” he said. “It showed in relatable terms what happens to someone in this situation and why fast action is critical.”

With more people now able to identify what is happening to their friend, colleague or loved one, the 999 system passes that information on to their responders – including SCAA's Perth and Aberdeen-based crews.

“Speedy responses to stroke patients are vital,” explained Keir. “They are time-critical emergencies and that’s where air ambulances come into their own – especially in remote and rural locations.”

Strokes can afflict people anywhere at any time and SCAA is regularly called to fly fast, professional medical care to all corners of the country and out to Scotland's many island communities. And the sooner a stroke is detected, the better the outcome and recovery can be.



“With strokes, it really is a case of every second counts, so we are well aware our response can make a real difference to the survival or level of recovery of our patient,” added Keir. “If the alarm is raised quickly and we can get there as fast as possible, patients’ chances are greatly enhanced.”

Throughout 2023, SCAA was called to 62 stroke emergencies. While that represented a marked increase on previous years and mirrored a rise in calls involving all Scottish Ambulance Service responses nationwide, SCAA also recorded an increase in cardiac-related missions.

As with strokes, these time-critical emergencies rely on rapid responders such as SCAA to give patients the best possible chance of survival and recovery.

“SCAA is deployed because we bring what is known as a 3RU response,” explained Keir.

“This is a clinician who is trained to manage a cardiac arrest situation and ensure all the procedures are carried out as well as providing clinical leadership and delivery of the automated CPR device – plus speedy airlift to the nearest cardiac centre.”

Bystander CPR and rural-based public defibrillators have played a key part in sustaining and saving lives in remote areas and, again, public recognition of the symptoms of heart attacks has increased through campaigns and education.

“SCAA can get there quickly and get a patient airlifted to hospital in the fastest possible time,” said Keir, “but the more educated the public is in that initial procedure can help enormously.”

SCAA responded by both helicopter and their Rapid Response Vehicles to 200 cardiac-related emergencies in 2023 – an increase of 9% on the previous year.



CAPTAIN MYLES RETIRES AFTER 11 YEARS OF SERVICE

When SCAA pilot Captain Russell (Russ) Myles closes the hangar doors at the end of the day on 29 May, he will be ending a chapter in his life that has seen him fly 11 years of life-saving missions with the charity.

For the following day, Russ turns 60 and his days of being able to fly single-pilot public transport such as SCAA come to an end.

“There will be mixed emotions that day,” explained the affable Irishman. “I was brought into SCAA right from the beginning and have seen the charity grow to deliver an amazing life-saving service for the whole of Scotland.

“I’ll be really sad to leave it all behind. My years with SCAA have been among the best of my flying career.”

That flying career began as a dream when Russ used to watch helicopters flying over his home as a boy and vowed that was the life for him.



Captain Myles and the original SCAA crew in 2013

Russ came to SCAA with a wealth of fixed wing and rotary flying behind him – both military and civilian – and used every ounce of that experience to help create a unique operation for Scotland – the country’s first charity-funded air ambulance.

In his time with SCAA, Russ has been at the controls for over 1,200 missions, flying to every corner of Scotland and its many islands, as well as across the Border.

“Scotland is just the best place to fly,” he said, “and I’m privileged that my work with SCAA has allowed me to experience it all.”

“Of course, Scotland can be as brutal as she is beautiful and sometimes our flights can be taxing and exhausting.

“You can take off in sunshine and land in a snowstorm. The challenges posed by the weather and landscape of Scotland mean our pilots have to be at the top of their game and constantly vigilant – but that’s real flying and what we all sign up for.”

Russ’s knowledge and experience of the many weather and landscape vagaries proves vital as time after time he has pulled off the most daunting missions to help save the lives of patients.

Always operating within safety limitations, he has made the skies above Scotland his second home and each glen, mountain, loch and coastline is as familiar to him as his own backyard, enabling him to work out the safest, fastest and most effective routes in and out of incident scenes and onwards to receiving hospitals.



While he can’t afford to think too much about each patient, Russ does feel a modest sense of satisfaction, however, in knowing that his skills have helped to save and improve countless lives.

“I know that they’re relying on us to reach them and get them to the help they need,” he said, “and it’s rewarding to think that I have been able to do some good along the way.”

Russ’s flying experience with SCAA is different each time and sometimes up to four or five lengthy emergency flights in a day can leave him mentally and physically exhausted.

On a busy 12-hour shift, Russ can record up to six hours piloting the air ambulance.

“But I’ll miss it – I’ll miss it all,” he admits. “We’re a small, close-knit team here at SCAA and I’ll miss the camaraderie and the banter.”

Russ has enough anecdotes from his time with SCAA to fill a book but highlights landing on an ornamental chessboard and a beach as the tide was fast approaching as memorable touchdowns. And he was once used as a ‘mobile drip stand’ while paramedic crew treated a patient.

In addition to his ‘day job’, Russ is also a well-respected Line Training Captain with Babcock, a committee member of the Scottish Aero Club, and a keen private flyer with his own Piper Cub and his two-seater RV6 touring aircraft.

His career with SCAA also netted him the Air Ambulance UK Pilot of the Year Award 2023, recognising and rewarding him as being the best in the business.

And it is his crew at Helimed 76 who will miss their mate the most.

“He’s a legend,” said SCAA paramedic Rich Garside. “He’s so experienced and that shows in his quiet confidence, calm reassurance and outstanding ability. He’s a safe pair of hands and he will be missed – sorely missed.”



Captain Russ holding his Air Ambulance UK Pilot of the Year 2023 Award

TEEN RESCUED AFTER MOTOCROSS CRASH

Keeping up with faster riders proved a costly decision for 13-year-old Harris as he powered his motocross bike into the air over a jump on the remote Pennan track in North-East Scotland.

As he took the jump something went wrong – he shot up the embankment and was sent flying 10 metres through the air before crashing hard onto the ground.

As the teenager hurtled through the air he realised he was in big trouble and excruciating pain seared through his left leg when he landed.

“The pain in my leg was horrendous,” he explained. “There was no blood, but things didn’t look right. I just knew I had to get help as my bike and I were hidden behind the barrier of tyres. I pulled myself up on one arm and waved with the other. No one would have heard me shouting for help.”

A passing biker spotted Harris waving from behind the tyres. Luckily, he knew one of the other riders that day was a former paramedic with Scotland’s Charity Air Ambulance (SCAA) and quickly got him to the scene, where he immediately assessed Harris’s condition and called 999 requesting air support.

Meanwhile, Harris’s panic-stricken dad Stewart was standing at another part of the track waiting for him and began running round the track to his crash site, realising that something was wrong as his son hadn’t come past him in a while.

“I just hoped he had broken down at the side, but my gut was telling me my boy was in trouble. I was filled with dread as I approached the scene,” he said.

Stewart was quickly reassured that help was on the way and that Harris was in safe hands.



An injured Harris is secured into the aircraft

“Harris was in a lot of pain, thankfully, it was just a matter of minutes before SCAA appeared and landed nearby. What a sense of relief when you see that helicopter coming in. It somehow gives you comfort that everything will be alright.”

Harris’s recollection of his horrendous accident remains sketchy, but he does recall the professional and caring paramedics who attended and all those who helped get him into the helicopter and quickly to hospital, including a Scottish Ambulance Service road crew who had walked in to the site and were also so professional in delivering his care.

“SCAA was great,” he said. “They gave me a SCAA teddy which was cute – my mates are joking that it’s my first motocross trophy!”

Harris’s mum Heather, a nurse, drove to the hospital as her son was airlifted comfortably and quickly to specialist care.

“Stewart and paramedics at the scene reassured me over the phone that Harris had no bleeding and no head injury,” she said, “and urged me to head straight to the hospital to meet the helicopter as it came in.

“I went with Harris into Accident and Emergency where it was confirmed that he had snapped his thigh bone – full displaced fracture mid shaft femur – and miraculously no other injuries, not even a scratch! The staff said it was lucky he was wearing his proper motocross gear or his injuries would have been worse.”

Harris was operated on two days later to insert a titanium rod from his hip to his knee. After a year with this strengthening support, the rod was removed and the young biker is now undergoing physio to regain full strength of his left leg. And he can’t wait to get back on the bike competing again.



Harris in hospital after his accident

During his convalescence, Harris’s parents posted a Just Giving appeal, raising more than £1,200 for SCAA. And the family hopes to stage future fundraisers to support the charity that made such a difference to their son’s trauma when disaster struck.

“We can’t thank them enough,” said Stewart. “To see them in action and know my son was in their care was extremely reassuring.”



Harris meeting the crew

“They made all the difference that day. The country roads and track to the Pennan course are twisty and rough – Harris would have had a very difficult journey by land ambulance. They would have had to stretch and carry him for a considerable distance to get to the road ambulance, then face a lengthy drive.

“Accidents happen and when you live and work in a remote area it’s good to know that SCAA has your back.”

Harris adds his thanks to his rescuers that day.

“I was just trying to keep up with the big boys,” he said. “I had a new, larger bike that I was still getting used to and took the jump too fast trying to keep up with those in front. I’m just so grateful to SCAA – and everyone else – who helped me through that day.”

THERE FOR ALL OF SCOTLAND
TASKING MAP



2023 MISSION STATS

CALL OUTS: 948

HELICOPTER: 718

RAPID RESPONSE VEHICLE: 230

AIRLIFTED PATIENTS: 334

FLYING HOURS: 722:40

NAUTICAL MILES FLOWN: 82,384

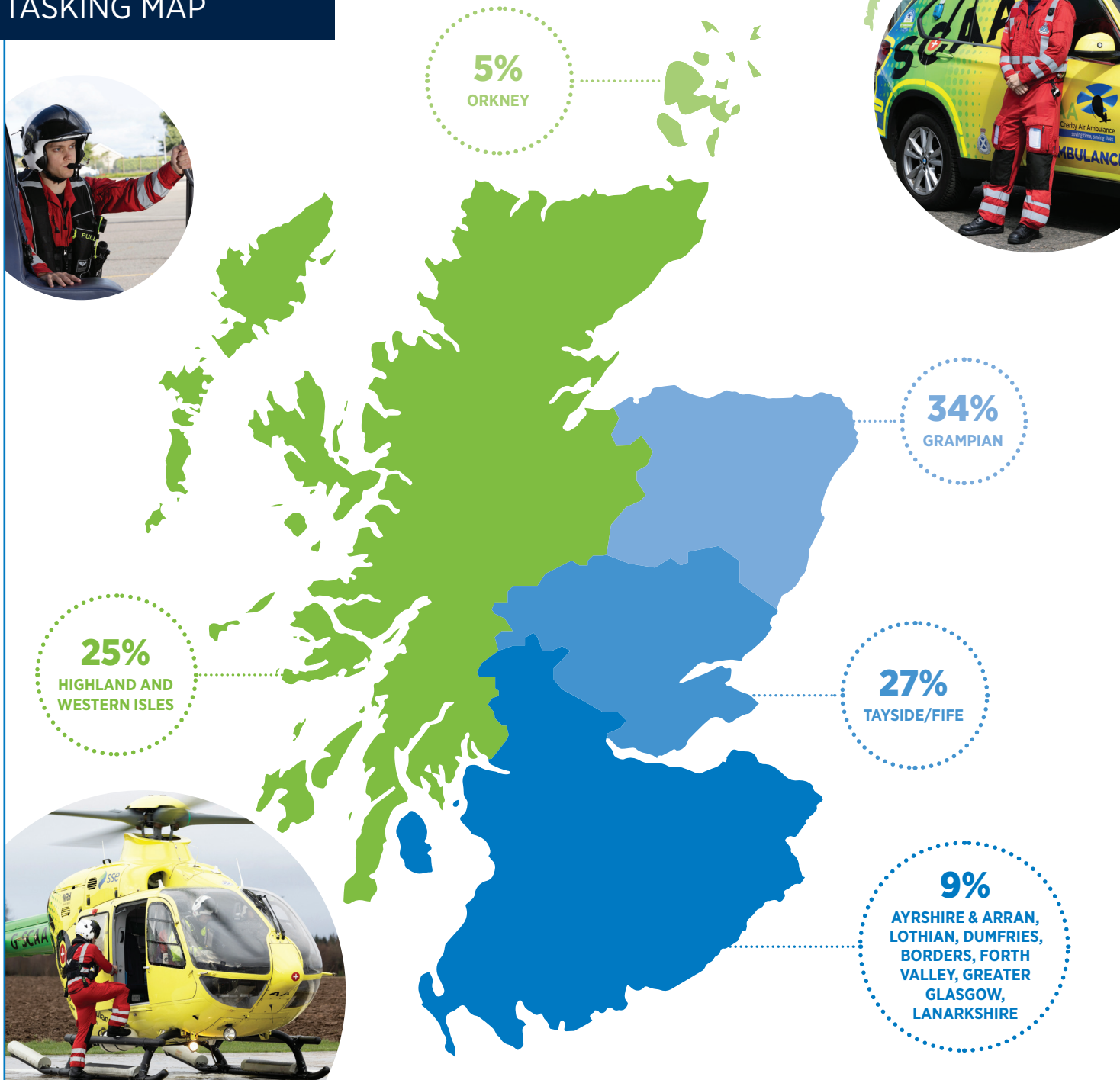
TRAUMA-RELATED CALL OUTS: 35%

CARDIAC-RELATED CALL OUTS: 21%

RETRIEVALS AND TRANSFERS: 16%

MEDICAL: 21%

STROKE: 7%



JOIN US!



Challenge yourself this year with an exciting fundraising event in aid of SCAA.

If you're looking for an unforgettable experience to challenge yourself and raise vital support for our life-saving air ambulance crews, there are lots of events you can get involved in! From walking and cycling to skydiving and zip sliding, there's something for everyone!



For more information on any of these events, go to www.scaa.social/events or scan the QR code

EVENTS 2024

- | | |
|---|---|
| 25 May: Aberdeen Tower Abseil | 18 August: Scottish Half Marathon & 10k |
| 25-26 May: Edinburgh Marathon Festival | 24 August: Ride The North |
| 2 June: Aberdeen Kiltwalk | 8-13 September: Zip Slide the Clyde |
| 9 June: Mhor 84 Half Marathon & 10K | 15 September: Edinburgh Kiltwalk |
| 16 June: Forth Rail Bridge Abseil | 22 September: Men and Women's 10k Edinburgh |
| 18 June: Men and Women's 10k Glasgow | Various dates available throughout the year: Skydiving |
| 11 August: Dundee Kiltwalk | |

BREW FOR THE CREW



Host a Brew For The Crew event in your workplace or with friends this spring in support of SCAA.

SCAA relies totally on charitable donations and holding a Brew For The Crew event could make the difference between life and death for someone in desperate need of an air ambulance, when speed and urgent care are critical to their chance of survival.

To get your own Brew For The Crew fundraising pack go to www.scaa.org.uk/brew-for-the-crew or scan this QR code



THANK YOU!

Thank you for continuing to support Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance. Whether you donate, volunteer or play our lottery – we couldn't keep flying and saving lives without you.

If SCAA was there for you when you needed help, we'd love to hear your story. Email communications@scaa.org.uk or call **07778 779 888** in confidence.

OTHER WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT SCAA:

- Enter a fundraising event or organise your own
- Become a SCAA Volunteer
- Become a corporate partner
- Make a one-off or regular donation
- Play our weekly lottery
- Leave a gift to SCAA in your Will



YOU CAN HELP SAVE LIVES BY DONATING TO SCAA HERE:

- Online at www.scaa.org.uk
- By phone on **0300 123 1111**
- By post to:
Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance, The Control Tower, Perth Airport, Scone, Perthshire PH2 6PL

(Please make cheques payable to "Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance" or "SCAA".)



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