

DR THEO WESTON ON LOCAL EMERGENCY SERVICES

Dr Theo Weston gave an excellent illustrated talk today with 70 members participating, a record number for our monthly Zoom meetings. His subject was local emergency services, embracing BEEP, Mountain Rescue and the air ambulances, particularly the GNAAS. We heard that between 30, 000 and 40, 000 people are seriously injured in Britain each year, many of whom die as a consequence of inadequate or delayed treatment, so the role of such services is vital in helping more to survive and even to make a good recovery.

Dr Weston's father, Peter, was, along with Dr Hugh Barr, instrumental in establishing BEEP (which stood for Birbeck Emergency Equipment for Patients) some 50 years ago with 6 doctors volunteering to provide medical care in their spare time. Its role is diverse from emergency treatment to offering safer driving courses to school students. Whilst it originally functioned in the Eden valley, its scope has since increased to virtually the whole of Cumbria served by a team of 15 doctors and a group of paramedics. Team work is very much the style of their operations and their new title is 'Bringing Enhanced Emergency Practice to Patients'.

75% of their call-outs are to road traffic accidents with quite a variety of others, including a number of serious farm accidents each year. The BEEP team works in tandem with the Mountain Rescue, air ambulance services, RAF Sea King, Coastguard Sea and Rescue and Blood Bike teams. Dr Weston included case studies to illustrate their wide scope of rescues, including examples drawn from local fell-walking and climbing incidents. Giving an anaesthetic to a patient on the Scafell Pike massif is quite an achievement and Theo deserves particular praise for this success! Such technical skills and procedures that can be used on the fells or at the roadside are now very complex and the speed of arriving at the scene of the accident can do so much to save lives and may enable patients to make a full recovery. These services are also called upon in times of other sorts of larger-scale emergencies. Dr Weston has been involved in the emergency care required at the scenes of the Shap jet crash of 1999, the Grayrigg train derailment, the local floods of 2015, the Keswick school bus crash, and the shootings by Derrick Bird in West Cumbria in 2010.

Altogether, it was both impressive and heartening to consider how far the local BEEP and other services have expanded and progressed over the years since their foundation. Many interesting questions followed Dr Weston's presentation which sparked wider consideration about the financing of such voluntary services and the possibility of first aid training becoming part of the school curriculum. In conclusion, we heard of the rewards such service brings to participants such as Dr Weston who described the work as being challenging, satisfying and hugely rewarding through making a potentially massive difference to people's lives. The audience gave a great round of applause for a most fascinating talk offering such an insight into the vital work of our local emergency medical services.



Fund raising, Christmas 2020. Dr. Theo Weston is on the left



More members of the local team