

WINTER 2022

# SCAA NEWS

LOOK WHAT WE  
HAVE ACHIEVED  
THANKS TO  
YOUR AMAZING  
SUPPORT

## INSIDE:

### **EUAN'S STORY**

Hear from a farmer who will be forever grateful to SCAA.

### **A VITAL LIFELINE**

Discover our essential care for Scotland's island communities.



## A FARMER'S GRATITUDE

2-3

## A LIFELINE FOR OUR ISLAND COMMUNITIES

4-5

## A DECADE OF FESTIVE SERVICE

6-7

## CHRISTMAS WITH THE CREW

8-9

## THERE FOR ALL OF SCOTLAND

10

## VOLUNTEER WITH US

11

## CONTACT US

12

### 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

media@scaa.org.uk  
07778 779 888

If SCAA was there for you when you needed help, we'd love to hear your story. Please contact us and we will treat your communication in confidence.

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See further details on page 11.

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YOUR SUPPORT REALLY MATTERS.

TO HELP SCAA, SCAN THIS QR CODE OR DONATE AT THE DETAILS ABOVE. THANK YOU.

# WELCOME TO SCAA NEWS

Hello everyone.

Hopefully you like our new-look newsletter - SCAA News.

We're thrilled to be able to share some of what we achieve - thanks to your amazing support - and to give you a look inside the charity and the people who make it the vital life-saving service that Scotland relies on.

You'll read about patients whose lives we have saved or improved, learn of the vital lifeline we provide to our island communities, take a look back over the past nine festive periods with our longest-serving crew members and enjoy some fun with the crew of Helimed 79 as they prepare for Christmas.

As we approach winter, our crews stand ready to respond to serious illness and injury wherever we're needed in Scotland and your support continues to be hugely appreciated to fund those flights.

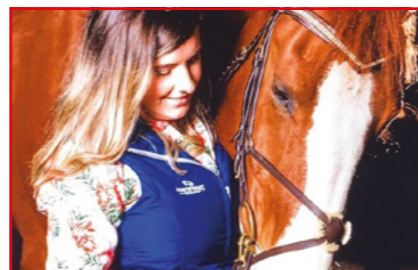
Have a safe and happy Christmas and, from everyone here at SCAA, thank you.

David Craig  
Chief Executive



**RICHARD**  
Helicopter crash

"There's little doubt that their quick actions at the scene saved my foot and I owe them a great deal."



**BRONTE**  
Horse riding accident

"I don't take their vital role in my care and recovery for granted for a single moment."



**BRANDON**  
Motorcycle accident

"They got me out of an almost totally inaccessible location and made sure I got to specialist surgical care in the fastest possible time."



**FIONA**  
Hillwalking accident

"They were fantastic. So professional and so kind. SCAA is a vital service - it's a lifeline for everyone in Scotland."

# A FARMER'S GRATITUDE

When farmer Euan Baird and his cousin were administering routine medicine to young calves, an anxious mother decided she didn't want to be separated from her youngster - a move that would almost prove fatal for the 52-year-old farmer.

As the 800kg cow crushed against Euan in a funnelled metal barred handling area in a desperate bid to reach her calf, he felt the bones snap in his pelvis amid excruciating pain.

"I knew straight away that something was seriously wrong - I could feel that something had snapped inside me," he said. "I roared and the cow pulled back. If she'd pressed on, she would have rolled me over and crushed me to death - I had nowhere to go."

Luckily the cow pulling back allowed Euan and his cousin to escape the handling area and call an ambulance.

"My wife and cousin got me into a chair but the pain was getting even worse and I felt I was going to pass out," recalled Euan. "I was frightened - I didn't know how badly injured I was or what the outcome would be. It's a terrifying situation and I was near total collapse with the agonising pain."

Then I heard a helicopter approaching and as it circled overhead I knew it was an air ambulance - Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance goes over here all the time so it's a familiar sight.

I've never been so relieved to see it."

SCAA landed in a field beside the farm and paramedics were quickly assessing Euan's injuries and administering welcome pain relief.

"They were amazing - so professional and caring," said Euan. "I was so glad to be in their hands and so relieved. I dared to think I would survive



this and come through it OK thanks to their help.

They came to my aid so quickly and then flew me to hospital in just minutes. I don't want to think what that journey would have been like in a road ambulance - I would have felt every bump in the road."

X-rays and cat scans revealed that Euan had snapped his pelvis front and rear, severing it from the spine. Complex surgery followed to stabilise the bone while pins and plates were inserted to graft the pelvic structure back together.

"I'm out of action for a while as far as farming goes but doctors expect me to make a full recovery in time," said Euan following a two-week stay in hospital.

"I was in the wrong place at the wrong time that day and I paid the penalty," he said, "but it could have been a lot worse and I owe a huge debt of gratitude to SCAA for coming to my aid so quickly. It's an incredible charity and I'll be forever grateful."

**I don't want to think what could have happened if they hadn't been there."**



# A LIFELINE FOR OUR ISLAND COMMUNITIES

Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance has long been acknowledged as a vital lifeline for Scotland's island communities, but the past year has seen a record number of call outs to assist those ill and injured far from mainland hospital care.



More than 22% of all aircraft taskings throughout the year were to attend island communities, taking our crews from Orkney to Islay and Benbecula to Arran on their life-saving and life-supporting missions.

Twenty-two different islands welcomed SCAA in its busiest-ever year for island support. Helimed 76 Clinical Paramedic Team Leader John Pritchard explained that increased use of air ambulances across the island communities helped clinical teams on the islands provide a level of care, that those living on the mainland have easier access to.

"Populations and visitor numbers on many of our islands are increasing - particularly over the summer months," he said, "and accidents and illnesses happen in these remote areas just as they do on the mainland."



We provide a true lifeline for these communities - offering a quality of care and rapid access to specialist hospital care that is always of benefit and often life-saving.

SCAA also provides a vital support service to our critical care teams, allowing them to retrieve more patients from our island and remote community hospitals and transport them to appropriate mainland hospital care," said John. "This covers illness, injury, surgery and transplant patients who would otherwise face long and arduous road and ferry journeys.

In every situation, we bring either a paramedic or critical care team to the islands, supporting the clinical staff on site, be it GP, nurse or paramedic led."

SCAA's most frequent island destination throughout 2021/2022 was Orkney (33 times), followed by Arran (26) and Mull (19). Crews were also tasked to attend patients on Bute, Benbecula, Papa Westray, Colonsay, Gigha, Iona, Coll, Lewis, Tiree, Great Cumbrae, Islay,

**"Helicopter evacuation is often the only viable option for patients in need of urgent hospital care in Glasgow."**

**Dr Martin Beastall**

Lismore, Skye, Eigg, Jura, Sanday, Eday and Flotta.

Dr Charlie Siderfin, a GP on Westray, summed up what the helicopter air ambulance service means to him and colleagues everywhere.

"As a GP working on an outer island of Orkney, the helicopter air ambulance is quite literally a lifeline service," he said. "When dealing with critically unwell patients, either because of illness or trauma, early evacuation to hospital can have a significant impact on patient outcomes."



The GPs, Advanced Practitioners, Nurses and voluntary emergency services in our remote island communities are trained in the provision of emergency care, but evacuation to hospital for definitive care is often essential," he stressed.

"I always feel a deep gratitude to the helicopter crew when they arrive to transport unwell patients to Kirkwall or Aberdeen, not infrequently in the dark or in poor weather. This gratitude is shared by our island communities who are very aware of the essential service the air ambulance provides in our times of need."

Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance provides the Scottish Ambulance Service with additional resource that helps them provide us with rapid evacuation when we require it," said Dr Siderfin, "and we thank them so much."



Reflecting on the busy summer of 2021, Dr Martin Beastall of the

Jura Medical Practice praised the support SCAA offers to Jura and similar islands.

"SCAA provides an invaluable lifeline service to the population of the Isle of Jura," he said. "Helicopter evacuation is often the only viable option for patients in need of urgent hospital care in Glasgow."

Jura Medical Practice and its patients are immensely grateful to the pilots and crew of SCAA and to those who provide financial support to keep the service going."



# A DECADE OF FESTIVE SERVICE

As SCAA approaches its tenth Christmas in service, two of the charity's original crew, still serving, look back on some festive memories.

**Helimed 76 Clinical Paramedic Team Leader John Pritchard and Senior Pilot Captain Russell Myles helped set up SCAA's original operations base at Perth Airport in 2013, and remember well the charity's first festive season just seven months later.**

"Where SCAA is today is like night and day compared to the operation we had then," said John. "We were still a fairly unknown charity proving itself in the field and gradually building up public support and funding.

**Our first Christmas Day saw us flying to Highland Perthshire to a man suffering a stroke. The family was so appreciative and so apologetic for ruining our Christmas. It was really humbling as they were having one of the darkest times of their lives and yet were genuinely concerned for us.**

Christmas Day is just another shift when you work in emergency services," explained John, "but each festive season at SCAA, we try to create a bit of a Christmas atmosphere with our work 'family'."

"Interestingly, the first Christmas Day shift I did for SCAA saw us fly to Rothesay and my last Christmas Day shift in 2021 took us back to Rothesay for another emergency," said Russell.

"I remember having to land in a turnip field one Christmas to reach a patient and trudging mud into someone's house," recalled John. "Luckily they were very understanding and hugely grateful to see us."

"The winter brought its own set of challenges with weather pushing our original Bolkow aircraft capabilities



and flying being restricted to daylight hours only," explained Russell.

**"I remember once having to drop the paramedics at an emergency on the hillside at West Lomond and head back to base without them as darkness fell. They got a lift from a Navy Sea King."**

Upgrades right across the charity and advances in technology, clinical practices and equipment have resulted in a rapid-response, life-saving service light years ahead of the 2013 operation - all made possible by the growing awareness and support of the Scottish public.

"We now have two more advanced helicopters at bases in Perth and Aberdeen and a workload that sees us respond to around 900 call outs each year," said John.

**"We now have more capability including flying in the dark," said Russell, "and a raft of other improvements on the old Bolkow in our current EC 135 aircraft."**

**As winter draws on, it's comforting to know it has an efficient heating system as well."**

Russell looks to the public to help him through some of the coldest winter weather, however.

"The heating only works when the engine is running, so I'm often left waiting by the aircraft in the cold while the paramedics are tending to a patient elsewhere," he said. "I was once brought a bacon roll and a cup of tea by an engineer whose house we landed next to which was great.

So if anyone sees a cold lonely SCAA pilot standing by his aircraft this winter, a warm cuppa would be most appreciated!"

"People are really kind at Christmastime," said John. "They hand in biscuits and sweets to the bases for the crews, and festive messages from them touch our hearts and really lift the team.

There's always been a nice atmosphere around SCAA at Christmas. From the very first year we have decorated the base with trees and lights and set out the Christmas cards people send us.

We're away from our family on Christmas Day for 12-14 hours so we bring Christmas to the base with the team making a special meal, with crackers and Secret Santa presents."

Over the years, that special meal has varied from a South African BBQ courtesy of the duty pilot's wife, a feast handed in by a local restaurant and a Chinese carry out (following a late return from a mission).

"We've learned over the years to ensure we start Christmas Day with a hearty full Scottish breakfast," said John, "just in case we don't get time for anything else later."

"It's nice to make things as traditional as possible for the crew's Christmas," added Russell, although the experienced pilot conceded that sprouts weren't the best foodstuff for a crew sharing a small space in the helicopter!

**SCAA has never missed a Christmas Day. Even the weather has not prevented the charity delivering its life-saving service where and when required on December 25 - just as it does every other day of the year.**



# CHRISTMAS WITH THE CREW

Our crew at Helimed 79 in Aberdeen are all looking forward to Christmas this year. Find out what makes this time of year so special for each of them.



## Paramedic Grace

"I love spending Christmas with all the family. My boyfriend and I go round visiting everyone on Christmas Day and we have to have something to eat at every house!

Christmas Eve is all about wrapping presents - I love doing that. I love dressing the tree too and it's got to be a real one.

It's great fun doing Christmas stockings for each other, and our two Labrador dogs, Pepper and Ollie, each get a stocking full of goodies as well.

**Sprouts? Don't like them at all! No thank you!"**

## Pilot Pete

"It's always special to have snow on Christmas Day but I'm working at SCAA this year, so hopefully it will be glorious sunshine and bright blue skies in case we get a shout.

Our daughter is 11 so, realistically, this is probably the last time we can hope to have that special Christmas magic that kids generate.

I'm a modern man so do my fair share of the present shopping and wrapping - but it's not my favourite job. I do enjoy the tree and the open fire and the special atmosphere of Christmas, which I'll catch up on on the evening of December 25 at the end of my shift.

**Sprouts? I can take them or leave them but prefer them jazzed up with some bacon."**

## Paramedic Suzi

"I love Christmas. It's all about family for us - we try to gather at Mum's in Scotland and family arrives from down south and the States every year which is great. It's our once-a-year get-together, so it's really special.

My little ones are aged four and one, so it's a special time of year for them. It's great to relive the magic of Christmas through kiddie's eyes.

I hate wrapping presents and have to do the boys' once they are in bed on Christmas Eve. I even have to use different wrapping paper so that they don't associate it with presents we're giving to other people - that way they are convinced they're from Santa.

**Sprouts? Absolutely love them! I eat them all year round."**

## Pilot John

"Christmas is a great time. Real Christmas tree, good food, mulled wine, time with friends, a few sing-songs and a round of pre-Christmas drinks parties. I was on duty last year and made a Christmas curry for the crew, while others did starter and pud. There's nothing worse than a sandwich on Christmas Day if you're working, so we do something that can be reheated if we get called out.

And there's always some kind person that pops in with chocolate goodies to the base - we're all chocoholics at Christmas! Last year Secret Santa got me 'Make Me Taller Pots' which you put under your feet to boost your height. They did increase my height, but are now used as plant pots!

If Secret Santa reads this - a dozen golf balls would be nice this year!

**Sprouts? I'm not a fan. Not exactly your go-to snack are they?"**

## Paramedic Chriss

"I love the whole Christmas atmosphere. By the time it gets to Christmas Day, however, I'm driven insane by the same old Christmas tunes blaring out everywhere.

One of my favourite things is a yule log - the chocolate kind! Our base engineer, Will, introduced me to them and they're addictive. He'll be bringing them in for the crew as soon as they hit the shelves, which is great!

The crew's Secret Santa is fun. Last year I got a plastic sledge which my 11-year-old and I had great fun with throughout the winter.

**Sprouts? Can't stand them."**



## Paramedic Claire

"I enjoy the whole atmosphere around Christmas. It's a special time of year with family and friends - even if you're working.

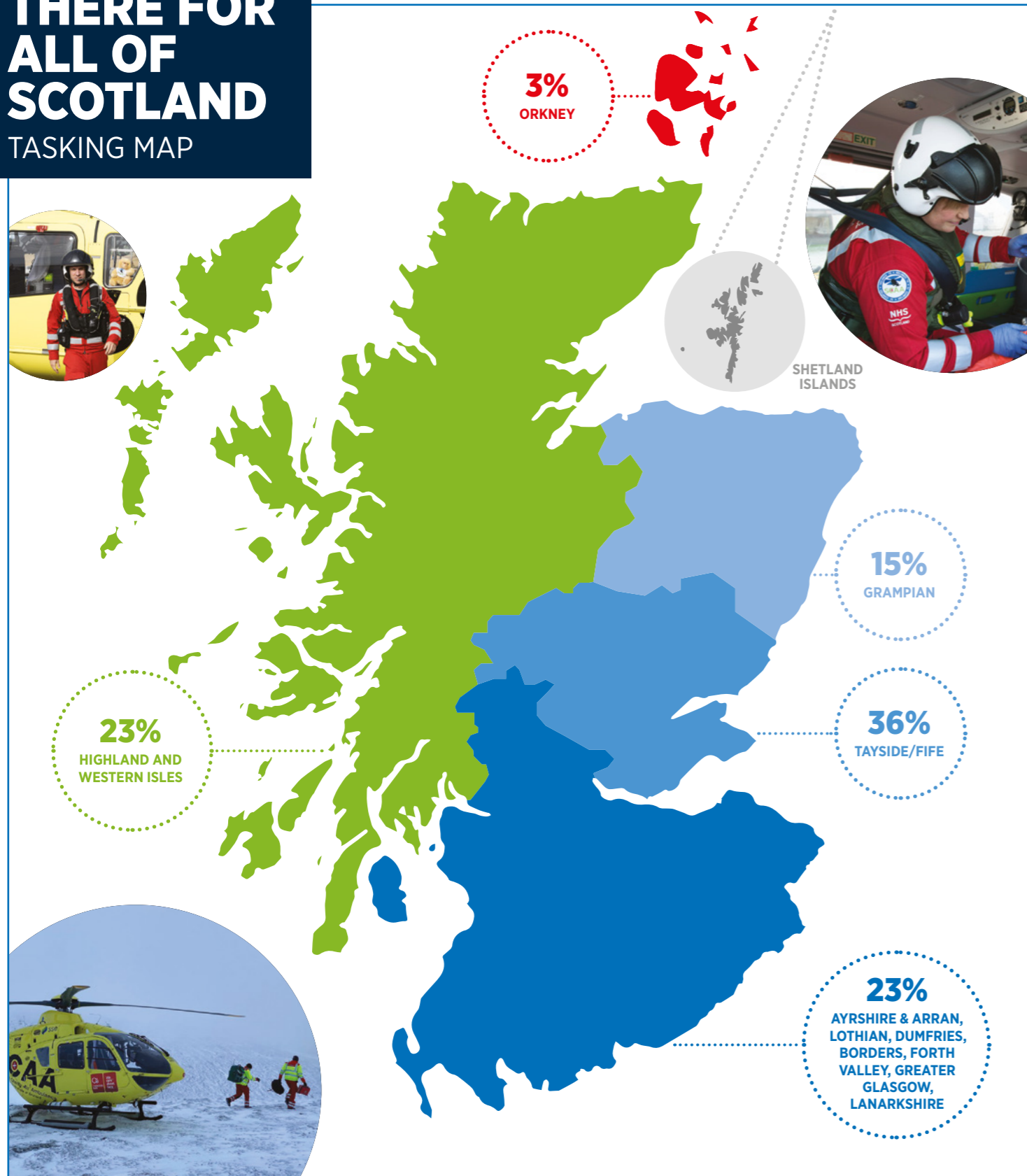
The one thing I don't enjoy is Christmas shopping but I love to give presents and be with people when they open them.

We're fairly traditional but have had an 'alternative' Christmas tree in the shape of a full-size motorcycle, dressed in lights and baubles in the corner of the room a couple of times!

Christmas music is great - the more upbeat the better. I'll dance to anything! And I like all the traditional Christmas food - and lots of it!

**Sprouts? Delicious! I'd happily eat them every day."**

**THERE FOR ALL OF SCOTLAND**  
TASKING MAP



**SINCE LAUNCH** (MAY 2013 TO OCTOBER 2022)

**CALL OUTS: 4,335**  
**HELICOPTER: 3,465**  
**RAPID RESPONSE VEHICLE: 870**  
**FLYING HOURS: 3,418**

**NAUTICAL MILES FLOWN: 389,747 (ABOUT 18 TIMES AROUND THE EARTH!)**  
**TRAUMA-RELATED CALL OUTS: 50%**  
**CARDIAC-RELATED CALL OUTS: 16%**  
**RETRIEVALS AND TRANSFERS: 18%**

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- 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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- Leave a gift to SCAA in your will



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