



# FIELD OF DREAMS

▲ The participants assembled in the central arena.



Images have been provided courtesy of John Hancock

▲ Instructors and participants on the day.



▲ Aerial rescue demonstration.

**IT WAS EARLIER THIS YEAR, IN APRIL, THAT CHRIS WYATT, OWNER OF CTS FORESTRY AND ARBORICULTURE, KEPT MISQUOTING TO HIS FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE ANDY FIELDING, OF GREEN LEAF TREE SERVICES, A LINE FROM THE 1989 FILM FIELD OF DREAMS: "BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME". HERE, ANDY TELLS THE STORY OF WHAT HAPPENED SUBSEQUENTLY.**

**I**n the film, the character played by Kevin Costner ploughs up his Iowa field and builds a baseball park and, in true cinematic fashion, some ghostly baseball players show up to fulfil his dream.

Chris, a.k.a. Kevin Costner, also had a dream. After 20 years of industry practice he wanted to make climbing arborists more aware of the dangers they face each and every day in the trees.

Slowly, this idea grew into a vision of staging an event that if he 'built it', people would come, just like in the film.

Six months and countless hours of planning later the baseball park became The Big Rescue Event 2018 - the field was in rural Warwickshire and the players were 100 tree

climbers.

Early in the planning process, we decided that the event would be used for two purposes. First and foremost, it was to give climbers the opportunity to update their tree rescue skills, as many confessed they had never performed a rescue - actual or practice - since doing their aerial rescue ticket. As an industry, it seems we are just too busy to even pause and reflect on what's going to happen if something goes badly wrong one day.

If a climber falls or is seriously injured whilst in a tree, perhaps the only way that person might survive is if help arrives quickly. The second purpose of the event was therefore to raise money for the local Air Ambulance Service. We set a limit of 100 climbers to keep the ratio of instructors to

climbers at a safe and manageable level. By charging each climber to attend, we had our first target of raising £5,000. That goal was reached a month before the event when the one hundredth climber donated £50 through the JustGiving page.

Nigel Fletcher, director at Fletcher Stewart, commented, "The team at Stein loved the idea of the Big Rescue event from the start. Whilst the various competitions and other events across the industry encourage the sharing of knowledge and diversifying of skills, it was refreshing to hear of an event that sought solely to promote safe working practice under more typical 'work' conditions. The fact that the event would also be raising money for the Air Ambulance Service was a huge plus as it's a worthy cause that people, particularly within the arb industry, can get on board with. To help support the event we offered to donate a quick draw device for each attendee, together with raffle prizes, and clothing and helmets for the assessors. We constantly strive to develop products to fulfil industry requirements so the opportunity to be a key sponsor of the event was fantastic - and we'd do it again once Chris and his team have had

the chance to wind down from all their hard work and preparations!!"

So, on a cool autumn morning in September, the sun rose on that Warwickshire field and we waited to see if they would come.

Twelve NPTC assessors, who gave their time and expertise for free, were briefed on the purpose, goals and running order of the event. The reception marquee was set up,

registration papers and pens at the ready. Then, just after 8 o'clock, a slow trickle of climbing arborists appeared from the direction of the car park. At first, in ones and twos, but shortly afterwards, a flood of bodies poured onto the field to register.

When Mark Cattell, director of Dovetail Tree Services Limited, was asked why they had sent a large team to the event, he said,

The instructors and organising team. (Left to right: Matt George, John Bevan, Rob Malcolmson, Andy Fletcher, Phil Rees, Chris Wyatt, Matt Brooker, Chris Cooper-Abbs, Andy Fielding, Graham Dawdrey, Richard Gutteridge, Joel Clements, Ash Wilde, D. Vickers.)



Presenting the cheque to the Air Ambulance Service. Left to right: Stacey Randall (WNAA), Chris Wyatt (CTS Forestry), Andy Fielding (Green Leaf Tree Services), Lee Bunting (WNAA). [Source theairambulanceservice.org.uk]



Practice rescue by a group of participants.



Chris Wyatt.

"We were fully supportive from the off; it is easy to miss these crucial opportunities to keep our skills up-to-date and in line with current best practice. We pledged to send all our climbing arborists to the event."

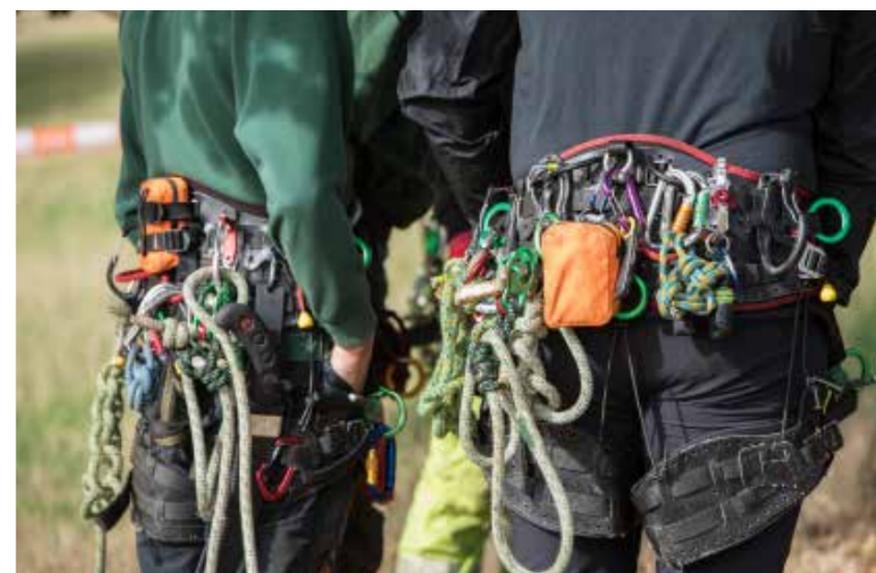
Once registered, the mass of climbers checked their gear, chatted to old friends and made use of the catering units who helped the event by donating a percentage of their takings.

By 10 o'clock, following a safety and schedule briefing, the arena emptied as the one hundred climbers split into six groups. Half of the groups headed for the nearby oak trees and participated in broadleaf tree rescues during the morning session. The other half walked through the Capability Brown landscape of the 18th century country mansion of Compton Verney and up the hill to the spiking poles.

One of the assessors, Chris Cooper-Abbs,

described the format of their session. "Tasked with pole rescue in particular, our session was divided into four main areas. Initially looking at safe access and egress on a pole, group discussion and demonstration took place to help provide solutions as to how an individual could ensure both the distance and any consequence of a fall could be minimised. Working in pairs, delegates used the opportunity to practise three different types of rescue demonstrated by the instructors. Working with an array of equipment, group members interacted to discuss the various merits of selecting different items when creating false and basal anchors, lowering systems and how to incorporate additional friction into a rescuer's system when required."

During the lunch break Paul Mullins, one of the air ambulance medics, gave a ten-minute talk on how we, at the scene of an



One-to-one rescue instruction.



The event attracted the media with the local press coming out to take pictures and to get some facts on the day's activities. The local BBC radio station also arrived and broadcast two live interviews with the organisers and with Lee Bunting, the fundraising coordinator from the Air Ambulance Service.

Once the rescue sessions were over, the climbers again converged on the central arena for what was dubbed the 'Big Raffle Event'. To raise even more money for the Air Ambulance Service, Chris tirelessly rang, chased, harassed and cajoled as many as possible of the suppliers and manufacturers of arborist equipment, begging them for raffle prizes. The response from our industry was overwhelming, with companies and individuals donating more than a hundred raffle prizes in total. There were so many prizes that we feared the raffle would become the longest session of the day. In the end, the numbers were drawn and prizes handed out in just under an hour. The top prize, donated by Hans Fairley of Andreas Stihl Limited, was the MSA 161T top-handle chainsaw complete with battery and charger.

The final amount of money raised for the Air Ambulance Service was a staggering £10,837.24. Each time the air ambulance is



Practice rescue by two of the participants.

accident, can prepare the ground and the casualty in advance of their arrival. The first and foremost priority is to help the patient. Stop any bleeding, maintain an open airway and if the casualty is not breathing, breathe for them. When calling the emergency services, give an accurate location in the form of a six-figure grid reference and try to identify a landing site. This could be a field, school playing field or any open area of land. Clear any loose items or debris away from the designated landing site and, when the helicopter arrives, identify yourself by holding both arms straight up in the air. Once the ambulance has landed do not approach it until given a clear signal to do so. When alighted, guide the medic to the casualty. Ideally provide some details on the casualty such as name, address, date of birth and any medication they may be on. Include also their blood group and any medical conditions and allergies.

Paul then opened up the talk to the assembled climbers and it was encouraging to hear the number of questions that came back from an interested audience. Paul was

shocked to learn that attending a basic first-aid at work course was not compulsory for people working in our industry. Having first-aid knowledge could be the difference between a casualty surviving or not. Perhaps this is something the arboricultural industry needs to think long and hard about, just maybe not too long! Again, Mark Cattell commented, "Dovetail Training now offers an emergency first-aid course with scenario-based trauma training for both its staff and externally. As a company, we are committed to putting all our staff through refresher training every six months to allow individuals to maintain and improve skills to current best practice and guidance as they develop."

The following afternoon session was a repeat of the morning with the groups that had done broadleaf rescue swapping to pole rescue and vice versa.



The air ambulance.

[Source theairambulanceservice.org.uk]

launched it costs on average £1,700. Our contribution equates to just six flights but more importantly every penny raised has potentially saved the lives of six people. In terms of someone's life that is a massive amount so a big thank you to everyone that donated and contributed to raising this sum.

Chris Wyatt wrapped up the day with a vote of thanks to all that came and for making his dream a reality.

The purpose of the event was simply to encourage best practice, work safe and look after each other.

Finally, despite raising all this money for the Air Ambulance Service, let's hope we never have to use it.