

Press Release:

Date: Monday 10th July

Penrith Show charity of the year saved members lives

Penrith Agricultural Society chose the Great North Air Ambulance (GNAAS) as their charity of the year – something that will be celebrated for good reason at the forthcoming Penrith Show on 15th July. Three members of the Penrith Show committee are very thankful for the vital service provided by GNAAS.

Two of our committee had farming accidents, and for another, the air ambulance was a life saver for his young daughter. Les Armstrong, John Lambert, and Richard Gardiner each have a story to tell – and all with positive outcomes.

The GNAAS team has been invited to the show and will be giving advice on how to deal with emergencies whilst waiting for emergency services to arrive.

In advance of the show, the three recipients of GNAAS care visited the Langwathby HQ on a tractor to see the team and learn more about their work.

John Lambert's story:

Melmerby farmer John Lambert broke his pelvic bone in a quad bike accident in 2017. He spent one month in hospital in Carlisle. When the helicopter arrived, the team gave him 10ml of morphine and 10mg of ketamine before transferring him to the helicopter for the short ride to the Cumberland Infirmary. Raising funds in appreciation, John's great nieces and nephews raised money in a sponsored activity event which included 10 miles on horseback, running or cycling along the east fellside. Together they raised over £3000.

Les Armstrong's story:

A key figure in Cumbrian farming circles is Les Armstrong who farms at Blunderfield. It was nine years ago (2014) when Les had his farm accident. He was working with a telehandler when it crushed his upper leg. The air ambulance was immediately despatched, bringing the emergency medical services to the farm with speed. Les Armstrong said: "Whilst my injury was not life threatening in the end, it would have been so much worse if I had burst an artery.

"It's important to remember that when you look at the pressures the NHS is under and funding in rural areas, the speed at which the GNAAS helicopter and rapid response team can get to an incident is critical – especially where often isolated farms can take ambulances a long time to get to an accident."

Andy Mawson, GNAAS Director of Operations said: "When an emergency call comes through for a farm accident, we are automatically deployed because it is likely to be something serious, and usually a crush or penetration injury. It's about getting the team on site as quickly as possible – we basically bring the hospital to the patient. Our onboard team is usually made up of a pilot, a specialist pre-hospital doctor and a critical care paramedic.

The Gardiner's story:

Richard Gardiner – one of the show's Chief Cattle Stewards, and his wife Helen, are very grateful for the swift action from GNAAS when their four-month-old daughter Grace was critically ill. She had a blockage in her intestines and was rushed to Cumberland Infirmary. She needed surgery at the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle, but the land ambulance was not able to take her as she would not have survived the journey. Fortunately for the Gardiners, GNAAS had just landed with a patient. Paramedic Lee Salmon was aware of the family's plight and the team agreed to fly Grace to the RVI.

Grace went immediately into surgery and spent two weeks in HDU and is now a healthy teenager. Richard said: "We owe GNAAS Grace's life, and we will be forever grateful. Nominating GNAAS seemed the most natural way to say thank you and when you realise there are two other close connections to the show who are indebted, they were an obvious first choice for our charity of the year."

Fiona Kidd, Chair of Penrith Show, said: “The work done by the Great North Air Ambulance Service is especially important in rural areas, where it may take a long time for a road ambulance or specialist doctors to arrive. And with so many of our members living and working in rural, agricultural environments, the need for an air ambulance is even more vital.

“It was quite a unique occasion to have three recipients of GNAAS care all at the Langwathby HQ at the same time. We took along a tractor and hoped to have it sat next to a helicopter, but it was away with work, so we got to look at one of the rapid response vehicles and talk to the team. They were all very interested in how big and complex the tractor appeared to be – which, when they go to work in a helicopter, seemed strange. They each had a turn driving and we have to say Laura Duffy, the HEMS doctor was most proficient.

“It was a very humbling experience to see Les, John, and Grace all fit, well, and able to say thank you to the team as a collective. We look forward to welcoming them to the show and helping them raise awareness and funds.”

Mieke Tennant, GNAAS Community Fundraiser said: “We are very grateful that the Penrith Show has chosen GNAAS as their charity of the year. We are 100% charity funded and it currently costs £7.7m per year to keep the service operational, so we can help people like John, Les and Grace. We’re looking forward to being at the show and really appreciate the opportunity to raise awareness of the work that we do, as well as raise much needed funds.”

For information about the show visit the [website](#), for live updates visit www.facebook.com/Penrithshow or email secretary@penrithshow.co.uk

GNAAS website: <https://www.greatnorthairambulance.co.uk/>

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Pictured: Andy Mawson – Director of Operations, Laura Duffy - HEMS doctor, Mike Sproat Paramedic (beard) with the Penrith Show team. And with those that were rescued by GNAAS; Les Armstrong and John Lambert. Grace Gardiner with paramedic rapid response vehicle.

For more pictures or info contact tracey@marketsense.net or call 07799 640 290

