



The Tragedy of the Two Shepherds

On the 17th of November 1962 two shepherds, Jock Scott and Willie Middlemas, were making their way home from Rothbury Mart in a blizzard. They dropped their friend, Willie Bulloch off at Castle Hill Farm. They attempted to make the last few miles of the journey to Ewarty Shank by tractor. At that time the road from Alnham to Ewarty Shank was just a track. There was no phone at the remote farmhouse.

Two days later Willie Bulloch was out tending his flock when Mrs Scott asked him when she should expect Jock home. Willie raised the alarm and the RAF, Police, shepherds and local farm workers were all involved in the search for the missing men. Later that day they found the tractor under a snow drift at High Knowes. Jocks body was found a short distance away. The snow was so thick on the ground it was not until the following day they found Willie's body about 100m from where they had found Jock. They had died less than half a mile from home.

The tragedy left a hole in the families of the shepherds and in the local community, but it also prompted the creation of the Northumberland National Park Mountain Rescue Team. The team is made of volunteers who are always on standby to help people stranded in the hills. The team use the latest equipment and technology as well as dogs to find missing persons. They co-ordinate rescues with the Ambulance Service, Police and Coastguard when necessary. They are trained to rescue injured people from the difficult terrain in all weathers.

In 2007, exactly 45 years after the event, a cairn was raised at High Knowes to remember the two shepherds caught in the storm that night. The local community and the Northumberland National Park Mountain Rescue team worked together to erect the cairn.