

What Does an Extreme Medicine Lecturer Do in His Spare Time?

Submitted by: Across the Divide

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Mark Hannaford is an Honorary Senior Lecturer on the University of Exeter's Extreme Medicine Masters course (<http://www.exeter.ac.uk/postgraduate/taught/medicine/extrememedicinemsc/>) and the founder of Across the Divide (<https://www.acrossthedivide.com/>), a logistics company specialising in event management and expeditions. But what does an extreme medicine lecturer do in his spare time?

Mark, who grew up in Plymouth and Tavistock and now lives in Beer, East Devon, has recently returned from the Syrian border, where he was the Logistics & Security Team Lead of a convoy taking paediatric medical supplies to hand over to Syrian aid workers.

Dr Rola Hallam, founder of the NGO CanDo, was prompted by the destruction of the last children's hospital in Aleppo, and wanted to use the skills and experience of the UK's extreme medicine community to deliver a children's hospital to Syria.

"Public support was absolutely remarkable. The campaign had targeted raising £90,000 and we've now raised £229,000, which we can use to fund further convoys.

"We took supplies for a children's hospital in the back of a lorry and drove from the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, London to the Syrian border where we handed the equipment to local partners.

"We were hit by severe blizzards on the Turkish border, and it reminded us that many displaced Syrians are having to live in this extreme weather without housing or adequate medical care.

"The government has its hands tied, but individuals working together can make a real difference on the ground in Syria."

Mark is the founder of Across the Divide, which provides logistical support to expeditions and fundraising events such as the BBC Children in Need Rickshaw Challenge with Matt Baker, and World Extreme Medicine (<http://www.extrememedicineexpo.com/>) which trains doctors to work in austere environments, whether that be on expeditions to Everest or the poles, or in disaster response efforts across the globe and who count NASA, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and the Royal College of Surgeons as some of their many partners.

The People's Convoy was conceived and planned by Dr Rola Hallam of newly-founded NGO CanDo (<http://www.candoaction.org/>). The organising committee includes charity Doctors Under Fire (<http://www.doctorsunderfire.org/>), which was launched recently by Dr David Nott, Saleyha Ahsan, Hamish de Bretton Gordon and Toby Cadman, and the Syria Campaign. Other organisations that partnered CanDo and Doctors Under Fire include Physicians for Human Rights, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and the Independent Doctors Association based in Turkey. Across the Divide was chosen as the logistics partner for the convoy.

The war in Syria, which has now been raging for five years and is estimated to have claimed the lives of around half a million civilians, has been described by the United Nations as the 'greatest humanitarian

crisis of our era'. Of particular concern to the global humanitarian community is the apparent targeting of hospitals and medical practitioners.

Across Syria, doctors and nurses are working to save lives using rudimentary equipment, working in unsuitable locations such as caves, living rooms and storage rooms and working for days without rest. However, without access to medicine and equipment, the bravery of Syria's medical workers is not enough to treat many people with basic medical needs.

The convoy of heavy goods vehicles drove over 2,600 miles passing through France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, before crossing Turkey and reaching Turkey's border with Syria.

You can donate to future convoys here: <https://act.thesyriacampaign.org/donate/peoples-convoy/>

Mark's Biography

My Early Career

"This love of travel began my journey towards World Extreme Medicine. I started working as an assistant field geologist in Australia, and after realising I had no strong passion for chemistry I moved to Operation Raleigh, which is now known as Raleigh International. As the Project Manager for the Tanami Desert Crossing in Northern Australia, I provided leadership for a group of international volunteers. We carried out scientific data collection during a study stretching from the Tanami Desert, across the Northern Territories and to the coastal shoreline of the Gulf of Carpentaria.

"Operation Drake was launched in 1978 by HRH Prince Charles and Colonel John Blashford-Snell and had scientific exploration and community service as its aims. Raleigh International continues to inspire young people to change the world and I was certainly one of them. It was around this time I also organised my first properly sponsored fundraising event with support from McAlpine and Sainsbury's. We took a group of keen cyclists and fundraising volunteers from London to Land's End, then to John O'Groats and back to London.

"During expeditions, I feel that organisers have a moral obligation to supply medics and make reasonable provisions for worst case scenarios. In the 1980s many doctors and medics working in the wilderness and on expeditions were volunteers and not provided the professional setup protect their professional liability.. In some cases, they had received minimal training for tackling problems in extreme environments. This approach could have lacked cohesiveness and left medical professionals and expedition members exposed both medically and professionally."

Across the Divide

"In April 1997, I founded Across the Divide. We began with safety in mind and were the first company to introduce salaried medical staff on all of our international events. This is supported by rigorous risk assessments and comprehensive event safety procedures to ensure the wellbeing of the entire team. The corporate and community events we run help change the lives of individuals. We help plan and manage both

UK and overseas events and expeditions.

“Since we started out, we have run hundreds of events and have facilitated the raising of over £92million for charitable and socially worthwhile causes, supported by my old school friend and entrepreneur David Weil. I’m looking forward to reaching £100million in the next three years.

“Across the Divide has provided medical support for CBS TV’s Survivor Series and helped Helen Skelton run and kayak for Comic Relief. We’ve helped Ben Fogle and James Cracknell ride from Edinburgh to London. Even Sir David Attenborough has reached out for our expert support. We have helped the BBC’s Children in Need Rickshaw Challenge team to raise more than £14million over the past five years. We are working with them again this year and have planned and organise the Countryfile Rambles for Children in Need.”

World Extreme Medicine

“In 2002 we introduced World Extreme Medicine as a training provider of expedition, wilderness and remote medicine courses for medical professionals. It was around a Campfire in Namibia we coined the phrase ‘World Extreme Medicine’ as an umbrella term for all practices of medicine outside of a clinical environment.

“We run courses in the UK and also in a number of carefully-selected locations around the world, including the Everest base camp. World Extreme Medicine provides quality training for medics who want to work in remote environments. Our courses are suitable for expedition doctors, paramedics, nurses and individuals providing medical cover in inhospitable locations. The courses enable participants to become valuable medical practitioners in a range of environments.

“Through this we have created the World Extreme Medicine Conference and Expo. Since 2012 we have brought together healthcare professionals across four disciplines: disaster and humanitarian medicine, extreme, expedition and space medicine, human endurance and sports medicine plus prehospital medicine. At the Conference and Expo these professionals showcase and share the latest developments in extreme environment healthcare and educate others in what they can do differently.

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Interviews with Mark Hannaford and are available on request.

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About Across the Divide:

Across the Divide was established in 1997 in response to a growing need for professionally organised charity treks and corporate challenges. Over the past two decades, it has operated on most of the

world's continents, working with organisations both large and small to raise over £92m.

Partnered with its sister company 'World Extreme Medicine,' it has helped Ben Fogle & James Cracknell ride from Edinburgh to London, the BBC Children in Need Rickshaw Challenge team to raise more than £14m over the past six years, provided medical support for CBS's Survivor Series and helped Helen Skelton run and kayak for Comic Relief.