

'Heroes in hi-vis' – railway workers save 81-year-old blackberry picker

October 8, 2021



Two railway workers have been hailed as heroes after saving an 81-year-old man who became stranded while picking blackberries for his wife in the Peak District.

Manchester-based trackworkers Colin Phillips and Rolando Navarro were working on a set of points last Thursday (September 30) at Peak Forest in Derbyshire when they heard cries for help and an arm waving in the grass.

There they found local man Denis who'd been out foraging but had slipped and fallen down an embankment when the weather took a turn for the worse.

He was exhausted, wet and cold after being alone for around 20 minutes, unable to get back up on his feet in the muddy conditions.

Colin and Rolando immediately raised the alarm and paramedics accompanied by the Buxton Mountain Rescue Team raced to find them.

Although very cold, Denis narrowly avoided becoming hypothermic thanks to the fast actions of the Network Rail workers.

Denis was brought down on a stretcher and checked over by a paramedic at home in the warm before being given a clean bill of health.

A week on from the drama, Denis and his wife Janet say they can't thank those enough who were involved in the dramatic rescue.

Denis said: "I shall be forever grateful to Colin and Rolando for the help they gave me. They both stopped with me until the mountain rescue came and kept me chatting to me to keep my spirits up. I got a telling off from Janet, she told me not to go down there as she knew how bad my legs were and I just slipped and couldn't right myself. It's a good job somebody was there to help and I'm grateful it was them as they really looked after me."

To express their thanks, the couple, who've been married for 60 years and celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary in August, sent biscuits and chocolates to the railway workers.

Colin Phillips, Network Rail principal technical officer, said: "Well this certainly isn't a day at work I'll forget in a hurry! When the mountain rescue turned up with around 20 people with all the gear it was pretty impressive watching them work and get Denis to safety.

"The paramedics said his body temperature was a couple of degrees above hypothermia so had we not found him it might have been a different story I'd be telling. I'm just so glad that we were able to help get Denis back to Janet, unfortunately without any blackberries, but safe and well!"

Rolando Navarro, Network Rail senior technical officer, said: "Denis could have been there for quite a while as this is a remote area but luckily, we were doing a special inspection and it's a just coincidence that we were there just when he needed our help.

"I stayed with him until the mountain rescue teams arrived and we kept him chatting and he soon perked up. We feel good that we helped somebody in distress, and we would do the same thing again, and hope that if we were in that position, someone would do the same for us too."

Denis and Janet have also made a donation to the Buxton Mountain Rescue Team to thank them for their help.

For more information on Buxton Mountain Rescue visit: <https://www.buxtonmountainrescue.org.uk/>

Photo and video credit: Network Rail