

# Missing elderly man found in mud of Medway Creek

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William Arthur Jones (centre) was found and rescued Saturday, after an 18.5 hour search by police, fire and volunteer officials.  
Photo by Ross McDermott, LondonTopic.ca

The search for an 84-year-old London man who suffered from Alzheimer's disease has ended with a successful rescue, and the man being found safely positioned on a muddy flood plain of Medway Creek, early Saturday afternoon (April 26).

William Arthur Jones, 84, went missing from a northeast London nursing home at around 2 p.m., Friday (April 25), and after an extensive 18.5 hour search by members of London police, the London Fire Department, and citizen volunteers, the man was found at 12:22 p.m. Saturday, lying in a muddy area of Medway Creek near the 5th hole of the Sunningdale Golf and Country Club, just southeast of the Wonderland Road and Sunningdale Road intersection.

Rescuers searched frantically for Jones, who police said could have been suffering from dementia and the early stages of Alzheimer's disease,

and as no sign of the elderly man was found overnight, and the morning hours raced towards mid-day, concerns for his safety were growing.

Sgt. Jeff Addley, with the London police Public Order Unit, whose ground search and rescue component headed up the search efforts, said the man was found in good shape, "surprisingly warm and surprisingly sheltered. When our searches found him he was quite talkative and he carried on conversations with them – he's in very good shape for an 84-year-old man who spent a night in the woods."

The St. John's Ambulance Search and Rescue squad extricated the elderly man known affectionately by friends as Art, from behind a stump in a once flooded area of Medway Creek. Jones was loaded into an ambulance and transported to hospital to be checked out.

Addley said Jones had wandered off, and followed a pattern that research has shown is common among persons missing in wooded or wilderness areas.

"Research has shown that a missing person who is wandering in the wilderness will come to a boundary (such as Medway Creek) like that and follow it. This fellow was in a place that had been flooded recently because it was quite muddy – and as well, it appears as though he didn't have the energy to move any further and just sat himself down. He sat in the same place long enough that there is quite an indented pattern where his body had lain," Addley said, adding, "If he was camping in the woods and looking for a place to survive he couldn't have found a better spot."

While the place where Jones had remained throughout the evening was a lucky break for the elderly man, finding his location was not by chance, despite the fact it was in a location where, for searchers, he was difficult to spot, Addley said.

The members of the London police, ground search and rescue component, which operated throughout the night and into the day in two-man search teams, are specifically trained and required to research protocols and case histories regarding missing persons, and particularly those suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

"We developed a plan based on research on missing persons across North America, in regards to what we might expect with missing persons in relation to Alzheimer's," Addley explained.

"It's very rewarding to know that this is one of those cases where that knowledge helped," he said.



London Fire and Rescue arrives on the scene on Sunningdale Road just southeast of Wonderland Road. Photo by Ross McDermott, LondonTopic.ca



An ambulance arrives to transport the 84-year-old man to hospital. Photo by Ross McDermott, LondonTopic.ca



Members of London Fire and Rescue head off to the fifth hole, along with one of the many golfers who continued to play through. Photo by Ross McDermott, LondonTopic.ca



St. John's Ambulance heads to the scene to help extract the man from the muddy banks of Medway Creek.  
Photo by Ross McDermott, LondonTopic.ca