



British Cave Rescue Council

The representative body for voluntary underground rescue in the British Isles

Dan Thorne - Chair
Sue Goodhead - Secretary
South and Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team
chair@smwcrct.org; secretary@smwcrct.org

Dr Peter Dennis,
Chairman BCRC,
8 Maesyfelin,
Talybont,
Ceredigion,
SY24 5DZ

chair@caverescue.org.uk

Monday 30 July 2018

Dear Dan; Sue,

Re: Message of gratitude to BCRC cave and mine rescue teams

We are all so very happy and relieved that the bold and risky diving operation spearheaded by British, Irish and Australian cave divers successfully brought the 12 stranded boys and their assistant football coach out of Tham Luang cave and to safety. We celebrate the spirit of international co-operation that contributed to the successful operation, an inspiration, and this unique success story clearly captured the imagination of people across the world. Our colleagues worked closely with supporting cave divers and organisations of many nations who brought together the technical skills necessary to assist the Thai rescue services with the incident. The cave rescue diving part of the operation, Sunday 8 to Tuesday 10 July, was the culmination of careful assessment of the cave conditions and meticulous planning by the cave divers, with full support of the British Cave Rescue Council but was achieved only due to the tremendous support from individual cave rescue teams and the wider British caving community at home.

The BCRC executive wishes to express sincere thanks for the support that your team provided throughout the cave rescue operation in Thailand. Numerous such acts of support were crucial for the BCRC cave rescue divers to undertake their difficult and challenging task. Such acts contributed to the successful outcome of the rescue operation led by the Thai rescue services. BCRC member cave rescue teams across the UK contributed one, often more of the following to the successful cave rescue operation:

- Specialist cave divers, experienced in underwater rescue methods, who travelled to Thailand at short notice and who were directly involved in the rescue operation,
- Additional team members who put themselves in a state of readiness to travel across to Thailand at short notice, to assist in the rescue operation (we also appreciate the frustration such individuals will have experienced having not been 'invited' to do so by the Thai authorities),
- Individuals drove cave divers to Heathrow Airport in time to depart on hastily arranged flights, all at very short notice, during the build-up of cave rescue diver numbers prior to the 8 July start of the rescue operation.
- Similar help was received to urgently acquire and transport essential rescue equipment to Heathrow Airport for the flights arranged for the divers (e.g., Heyphones, CaveLink sets, children's sizes of full face diving masks and other essential rescue equipment),
- Some team members joined the substantial BCRC rescue co-ordination effort at home in the UK, when the range of tasks and demands on time outgrew the capacity of the original team,

- Officers of each team also endured intense pressure from the unprecedented number of global media enquiries received in waves from when Rick, John and Rob first departed to assist and advise the Thai rescue operation until the return of all BCRC rescue personnel on Friday 13 July. Many officers of teams spent considerable time fielding the enquiries or giving radio and television interviews. BCRC attempted to ease this pressure with regular media briefings that gave a central contact e-mail address and in the setting up of a BCRC Facebook page, again assisted by individuals of several cave rescue teams.

All these contributions are hugely appreciated and together the efforts of UK cave rescue teams, Cave Diving Group, technical administrative support from BCA and BCRA (CREG) have all played a part in the success of this rescue operation, tinged as it is with sadness, due to the loss of Saman Gunan, the retired Thai Navy diver.

Now that the divers have completed their task and returned to the UK, the media attention turned to them and has begun to ease, as other events become the focus of attention. This will hopefully allow your team to focus again on scheduled activities and local call-outs. I am aware that some TV channels have awoken to caving and cave rescue in the UK and have approached certain teams to produce short documentaries or current affairs pieces on more general aspects of cave rescue in the UK. This heightened public awareness is welcome and could yield additional goodwill and donations to improve our collective operational capability. Fortuitous, given the backdrop of reduced budgets within the traditional grant-awarding bodies.

The operation represented a less frequently experienced situation, possibly unfamiliar to some officers of member teams, when BCRC receives a request from a foreign government to assist an overseas cave rescue incident. In such circumstances the BCRC assembles an experienced and specialist team and adopts an operational role, as was the case witnessed for Thailand. This is of course in contrast to the usual role of BCRC, to represent the interests of member teams who normally carry out all operational activities. The rescue incident in Tham Luang cave was an extraordinary feat, one of the most audacious cave rescues ever seen and we thank you once more for your vital support.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Dennis'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Dr P. Dennis,
Chairman, BCRC
On behalf of the whole BCRC Executive committee

Registered charity: 1137252