

The WAY OUT

Spring 2021

Issue 13

The Newsletter of South & Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team



A busy start to the year...

It's been a very busy start to 2022 with 4 call outs in quick succession. This, on top of three months of increased workload following the big rescue in November, means we are a little behind in our reporting of incidents to our members.

So here in one handy newsletter are the highlights of the last few months.

Pontcymmer Dog Rescue: 6th January

SMWCRT Wardens received an email, passed on from the MREW website, from the owner of a dog that had gone into a hole above Pontcymmer and not returned to the surface.

A SMWCRT Warden made contact and discussed the situation. The dog, Bert, had gone into a hole at approximately 14:00 on Monday 3rd whilst out on a walk with her son. The dog was wearing a tracker collar and they had located it to approximately 5 metres underground in what was thought to be an old drift mine.

From the discussion some local children had been helping to dig for the dog the previous day. It was agreed that SMWCRT would attend the next morning with a small team to see if we could help.



06/01/2022: A team of three met at Pontcymmer at 09:00 with the owner and her son. When SMWCRT members arrived at the site, an area of old mining workings near a stream, it was obvious that a fair amount of rock had been moved the previous day. The rockface was shattered sandstone boulders loosely held together by mud.

The Team deployed the pole camera to investigate the holes but couldn't see any sign of the dog. At this time the Fell and Moorland Working Terrier Club Rescue Group arrived. Some of their local members had been up there the previous day and they had come with tools and a quad bike with a trailer.

The Fell and Moorland team commenced digging and SMWCRT decided that both approaches were not compatible. So SMWCRT made the decision to stand down. As SMWCRT began to leave the site, the dog appeared at the surface, seemingly flushed out by the digging just above where it had been located.

SMWCRT team members returned to their vehicles at approximately 12:00 and the incident was closed.

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2022 Dates:

March 10th—Evening training session

May 14th—Rescue Practice (Black Mountain)

June 18th-19th—Advanced 1st Aid Course

July 2nd-3rd—Advanced 1st Aid Assessment

July 9th—Rescue training skills

Sept 4th—Rescue training skills

Oct 1st—Rescue Practice (East, not Llangattock)

Dec 3rd—Rescue Practice (OFD)

Daren Cilau: 8th January

SMWCRT were contacted by Dyfed Powys Police via SARCALL. Two inexperienced cavers visiting Daren Cilau attempted a through trip from the main entrance to Ogof Cnwc but failed to find their way in the area of Busman's Holiday. They returned to the main entrance but became tired and cold and were moving very slowly.

Their Callout time was midnight, but SMWCRT weren't called until 08:39 the next morning. This was due to the Police only having been contacted a short time before SWMCRT were called.

Additionally, the trip that was described by the caller was different to the one undertaken and we were led to believe that they were only going a relatively short distance beyond the entrance crawl. This meant that our response was not the same as we would have made for a party on a through trip, though fortunately, it worked out well in this instance.

The missing cavers were found in the entrance series and were both very tired. One was mildly hypothermic and took some time to rewarm on return to base. Their clothing was not suitable for the trip undertaken.

31 SMWCRT members were deployed and another 7 were on standby.



Ogof Clogwyn: 9th January

A SARCALL callout was received from Gwent Police at 12:46 alerting the Team to a caver with a dislocated hip in Ogof Clogwyn. One of the SMWCRT Wardens was near the cave, so quickly attended, whilst a targeted callout took place. Longtown MRT were also called as we quickly established that the caver was near the entrance.

The casualty was at the entrance of the cave, having sustained a dislocated hip whilst climbing into the cave entrance. He was stabilised by his colleagues, a group of medical professionals, and attended to by a WAST Paramedic who administered pain relief.

Longtown MRT, along with SMWCRT members and the Fire Service, then carried the casualty up to the road and a waiting ambulance at 17:17.

7 SMWCRT Members were deployed with 5 in support or on standby.



Tonypandy Dog Rescue: 18th - 20th January

Around 4pm on the evening of the 18th the Team were called out to assist South Wales Fire and Rescue service with a dog rescue above Tonypandy. The weather was poor, it was dark but a small local team, including some who were already at SWCC went to investigate.

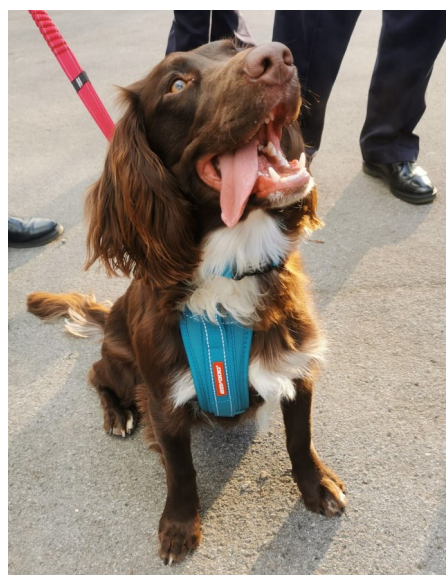
They met up with the Fire and Rescue team and were escorted up some mountain tracks to within easy reach of the dog's location. Reggie a 'sprocker spaniel' was seen to disappear down a slip rift that afternoon. This very narrow (10inch wide) rift was around 18ft deep to where Reggie was.



The team quickly deployed the 'drain camera' system and confirmed Reggie was alive and well – but after many hours of trying it was still not possible to reach him with any of the dog catching implements. Surface overlay was removed to expose the rift in more detail and the team with help from others began removing the first few layers of rock. Around 10.30pm the team on the hill called it an evening, after dropping food and water down the rift they retreated to warm up, but with a plan to return the following afternoon, with further after-work reinforcements.

Further rock removal kit was taken to site and utilised, along with the team's Quad Pod. But despite best efforts Reggie was still not within reach. By this time the rescue had attracted good local media attention and there were plenty of locals on scene willing and keen to help out – including some from a local professional Drain Rod Company 'Drain Force Ltd'. Around 23:00 the Team on the hill that evening once again had to call it a day, with a Wardens' call in the morning to discuss what more could be done.

Just before that call, the news emerged on Facebook that Reggie had been successfully rescued later on that night / morning by those connected to the drain rod company. A great outcome for Reggie and a rescue that attracted a good deal of local media interest.



Rescue Practice Outcomes: Ogof Cnwc 2nd October

Back in October the team undertook a training exercise in Ogof Cnwc to investigate a number of different factors that affect the success of a cave rescue in Daren Cilau, something that was then almost implemented in January. A full copy of this report has been sent to you with this newsletter.



An short overview of the practice outcomes is as follows:

Is it possible to bring a casualty in a Short Slix Stretcher out of the cave from Price's Prophecy? - Yes, but only if some rock is removed from a tight corner beforehand.

A test of Digital Control at Whitewalls - This worked well for a first outing.

Comms testing (a Cave-Link test from Ogof Cnwc and a test of digital radios) - The Cave-Links worked well, as did the new portable aerals for the digital radios.

Further trials of the new 'Garman' Underground Shelter - Very successful, it warmed up well with 2 people inside, then cooled off with just the casualty. Also provided a screened area for casualty privacy.

Stretcher protection plan - A survey has been annotated with obstacles requiring passage modification or rigging to allow a stretcher to be moved through the cave to the Cnwc entrance. This will be used by Controllers in the event of a rescue here.

Rescuer protection plan - A survey has been annotated highlighting obstacles that may require additional fixed aids in the event of a rescue in this section of cave. As with the Stretcher protection plan, most of the climbs are 15-20m, so our ropes of 30m or 50m would need to be cut down to size on a rescue.

Review Outcomes: OFD Rescue 6th-8th November

The final "Team Report" for SMWCRT members from the OFD Rescue on 6th to 8th November last year is still outstanding, but your patience will be rewarded.

We have compiled a vast amount of information gathered from the various debriefs, emails, meetings and conversations at both a Team and national level. It has been an enormous challenge to be able to summarise all of this and share with you the key learning that we will be taking from the incident.

Once we have it completed, a Newsletter will be produced focussing on a report and key learning from that Rescue.

