

The WAY OUT

Winter 2021

Issue 12

The Newsletter of South & Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team



The Big OFD Rescue

November 6th—8th 2021 saw one of the biggest cave rescues the UK has ever seen, so big in fact that we had to call on members from 9 other cave rescue teams from across the UK to support us in the 54 hour epic to bring George Linnane safely to the surface.

At 14:10 on the Saturday we were called out to George, who sustained incapacitating injuries to his leg, ribs and jaw following a fall in the Upper Smithy area of OFD.

It soon became clear that this was going to be a substantial rescue and the process of providing medical care and slowly transporting him through the cave to Top Entrance began.

This is what we as a Team have trained for; the rescue practices, first aid courses, equipment inspection, fundraising, and all the meetings that go on in the background. All so that when the call comes, we are ready to respond.

While we achieved an undeniably good outcome, this rescue stretched us to the limit, with our stores emptied of almost all equipment and additional rescuers required to enable us to continue the process 24hrs a day.

Months of work are now required to replace damaged and missing equipment claimed by this incident. Members of the Executive Committee have worked tirelessly to bring us back to a rescue ready state, manage media interest and ensure that we, and other teams, learn from our experiences.

Post incident debriefs and reviews have been taking place and a summary these and our action plans will be shared next year once the process is complete.

On behalf of the team, would like to thank everyone involved for their contribution to the successful rescue. It was absolutely brilliant to see the team come together in this way to produce a successful outcome, not just within SMWCRT, but also working together so professionally with our colleagues from the other rescue teams throughout the UK.

Every single person played their part, whether that be the medical teams, riggers, comms teams, stretcher parties, control staff, equipment management, press management, catering, kit cleaning... the list goes on and on.

The coverage in the media has been overwhelmingly positive, and has shed Cave Rescue and the wider caving community in a really good light. This is testament to the professionalism and hard work of everyone involved.

So thank you all.

Tom Foord (SMWCRT Chair)

2021 Rescues:

01/01/2021, 10 rescuers, 1 hour
Dog Rescue.
Llainbanal, Preseli Mountains.

1-4/03/2021, 28 rescuers, 33 hours
Dog Rescue x2.
Odyn Fach, North of Merthyr.

08/04/2021, 9 rescuers, 1 hour
Foal Rescue. Bedlinog.

09/05/2021, 5 rescuers, 2 hours
Cars unattended overnight.
Keepers Pond, Ogof Draenen.

03/07/2021, 9 rescuers, 2 hours
Overdue party, ankle injury.
OFD (Cwm Dwr to Top).

23/07/2021, 6 rescuers, 2 hours
Ankle injury.
Porth yr Ogof Resurgence.

05/09/2021, 31 rescuers, 9 hours
Two injured in Pendulum
Passage rock fall. OFD.

18-19/09/2021, 21 rescuers, 24 hours
Search for missing person.
Machynlleth area mines.

6-8/11/2021, 280 rescuers, 54 hours
Stretcher carry from Cwm Dwr to
Top Entrance.
Upper Smithy, OFD.

2022 Dates:

16/01/2022 SMWCRT AGM

Fundraising

There were significant costs incurred during this rescue, from medical supplies and equipment loss, to feeding the masses of volunteers.

With a quick online fundraising campaign through Facebook, we managed to make the most of the media coverage and raise over £15,000 in just 1 week.

This more than covers the costs from this rescue and creates a timely top up for our vehicle replacement fund.

Fundraiser has ended

£15,387 of £15,000 raised 

A big thanks go to all of you who shared the campaign or set up for own fundraisers—it made a huge difference.

This money is incredibly welcome, but we still need to keep raising funds for the continued running costs faced by the team.

Did you know you can set up your own Facebook Fundraiser any time using this link? <https://www.facebook.com/fund/smwcr/>

A Record of Thanks

Following the incident, SMWCRT received a great many notes of thanks and congratulations which we would like to share with you:

Now that things are settling down and George is being treated, very successfully apparently, I just wanted to pass on my extreme gratitude for saving George.

I never realised how strong the bond was between cavers, but to have 300 people converge to rescue my son shows how strong these ties are.

Once again I cannot thank you enough.

John Linnane (George's father)

To all members of the South and Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team, a big thank you for your heroic efforts that saved the life of our member. We know that teams from across the country came together to deliver this outcome in an amazing demonstration of the power of teamwork.

On behalf of the members of the South Wales Caving Club,

Fred Levett (SWCC President)
Gary Vaughan (SWCC Chairman)

Heartfelt thanks to all the team members who abandoned their plans and travelled to Penwyllt to assist with this rescue.

Please extend my gratitude to all concerned.

Peter Dennis (Chair of British Cave Rescue Council and Rescuer)

Congratulations to all involved rescuers who contributed to the success.

Successful missions always have something of a fairy tale about them: and they lived happily...

In this sense, above all, good rest to the rescued caver.

Kurt Dennstedt (Secretary General of European Cave Rescue Association)

Please pass on my awe in what you have all achieved in the past few days. You have had an epic rescue and one that will no doubt be recalled for many years to come. What a fantastic outcome. Well done to all of you.

Rob Powell (Team Leader, Brecon Mountain Rescue Team)

A huge thank you to the 250 people from across the UK who came to the rescue.

Your extraordinary effort, bravery and tenacity over the last three days has been commendable.

Boris Johnson (Prime Minister) (via Twitter)

Just wanted to pass on our thanks and congratulations to you and your team for their efforts in recent rescue seen on news - well done and thank you from us all here at Ystradgynlais Sports Centre

We are proud that we can house your team for their training.

Thanks Craig (Ystradgynlais Sports Centre)

Just wanted to say on a personal level, I was supremely impressed with the efforts of the surface control team, for managing the logistics of such a huge rescue. Ensuring that each of us got our rest (even if we wanted to keep going until we dropped), swapping teams in and out at the right moments. Especially while coping with so little sleep yourselves, and with comms being limited in some areas.

From our perspective, it all went so smoothly. Really impressed.

Tarquin Wilton –Jones (Team Member)

We followed this amazing rescue, a huge congratulations to you and all the team for such a well coordinated and successful operation with a good outcome, I hope the rescuee recovers well from his injuries. You must all be exhausted, hope you can get a well deserved rest.

Professor Paul Roderick

Please pass on our best wishes to the caver who fell and sustained multiple injuries, everyone is hoping for a full recovery and he gets back into the fantastic but challenging environment. Thanks also to the masses of volunteers who made it possible.

I have just been watching breakfast TV and thought the live interview was very good and really got the messages across well about the Cave Rescue family of volunteers. I hope it brings in some well earned fundraising support for BCRC, highlighting the word of the volunteers.

Richard Warren (Lake District Search And Mountain Rescue Association)

Just wanted to say that, like many others, I was enthralled by the rescue taking place this weekend and hugely impressed by the way the press were handled. The Club, CRO organizations and cavers in general came across as very professional and not at all crazy as they are so often characterized.

Your media folks did a fantastic job in feeding just the right amount of information to the press in just the right way. I was particularly impressed by how the caver's identity was shielded and the entire event came across as being well under control and not at all sensationalized. Very professional!

For me the rescue made me look at my diaries of the time we were exploring as far as the Crevasse and Shambles area via the Cwmdwr entrance when I mused on what would happen if we had an accident when we were so far from base and no one else knew where we were! Had an accident happened to any of us at that time, I doubt the outcome would have been comparable.

Anyway, I just wanted to offer congratulations to all involved!

Paddy O'Reilly (Caver)

Tooting Broadway in SW London (from where I write) is about as far from the Welsh caving system at Ogof Ffynnon Ddu as it's possible to be but I found myself surprisingly moved by the heroic and selfless efforts of your rescue service personnel when I read of that front-page rescue in the papers yesterday and today. So much so that I felt impelled to express it formally.

I used to go caving in Yorkshire in my youth but can honestly say that at the age of 70 those days are well and truly behind me. However reading (and watching pictures) of your team in action filled me with utter admiration for their selflessness, their bravery and their total dedication to that most laudable of human endeavours; caring for one's fellow human being in an hour of need.

So from one ordinary member of the public please accept my unreserved appreciation for the *extraordinary* qualities of your team and of the sterling work they do. I am sure I am not alone in expressing such admiration.

Trevor Barnes (Member of the public)

I, like the rest of the country, are in awe of your recent cave rescue mission. Congratulations on such an amazing feat and positive outcome. It is great to see you and other cave rescue teams get the attention you deserve for this and other work you do.

Rachel Boon (Science Museum)

We at Hereford Caving Club would like to congratulate The South & Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team on how you worked together with the other CRT's across the UK to bring this recent rescue to a successful end.

Barry Hill (Secretary Hereford Caving Club)

The feedback from within the caving community and the media has been nothing but positive. What a phenomenal effort, organisation and outcome.

Especially noteworthy is how the different teams gelled and pulled together, and for a number of entirely voluntary groups to achieve this in those circumstances with the eyes of the media on us is outstanding. Well done all around.

Charles Bailey (DCRO member, and SMWCRT Associate Member)

I wanted to say congratulations on a job well done - both the rescue of George Linnane and your piece on BBC Radio Wales. I hope that the coverage will generate lots of interest and funds for South & Mid Wales Cave Rescue. Please extend our thanks and congratulations to the Team.

Rebecca Watkins & Diane Briere de l'Isle Engelhardt (Moondance Foundation)