The WAY OUT

The Newsletter of the
West Brecon Cave Rescue Team

Edition 2, July, 1997

Welcome to the second edition of *The Way Out*, the newsletter of the West Brecon Cave Rescue Team. I'm Tony Baker and I've taken over the editorship from this issue onwards. For those of you who don't know me, I'm an SWCC member of some twelve years' standing and for the last six I've been editing the SWCC Newsletter. Shortly after I announced that I was standing down from that job, Bob Hall and Gary Evans approached me and asked me if I'd do this one, so here I am. Although I live outside the WBCRT area, I'm a regular face at Penwyllt and I've frequently taken part in practices (and the odd real rescue) in my time at SWCC.

The editorial address for *The Way Out* is now:

26 Constable Way, College Green, Camberley, Surrey, GU47 0FE

I'll be happy to receive any contributions for future editions, including comments or suggestions. My telephone number is 01276-609162 and there's an answering machine on that number all the time. Faxes (marked clearly for my attention) can be sent c/o *Classic and Sports Car* on 0181-943-5844. Sorry, I don't have an E-mail address.

It just remains for me to express my thanks to Gary Evans, who not only did such a good job with the first edition of *The Way Out*, but collated most of the material for this one... **Tony Baker**

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

September 6th Rescue Practice
The next WBCRT practice will be held on Saturday September 6th. It will be held in collaboration with the Welsh section of the Cave Diving Group and build upon the successful event held in DYO.

The venue will be Little Neath River Cave and the objective will be the evacuation of a diving casualty from beyond Sump 4. Further details will be circulated nearer the time.

October 11/12 First Aid Course
The first running of the new-style first aid course; see article later in this newsletter titled "First Aid - The New Course".

OTHER NEWS

Progress with the New Initiative
Since Edition One of *The Way Out*, further progress has been made with the new initiatives that were launched at that time. These are summarised as follows :

1. The Questionnaire, Database and Call-Out list
The questionnaires have been coming in steadily and Ali Garman has done an excellent job of programming the database. In the past, we only had a list of names, but now we are able to not only list names, but also cross-reference many aspects such as skills, cave knowledge, travel time, training experience, etc. Once complete and with the data from the questionnaires received entered, the new call-out list can be generated. We envisage that this will be ready by September 1st. The working party for this part of the initiative is Sue Mabbett, Ali Garman and Gary Evans, so if you have any ideas or queries, just contact any of them.

2. The Team Members Handbook and Training Checklist
This handbook, which will be contained in a loose leaf A5 binder, will contain both a WBCRT Team Members' Handbook and a rescue training checklist. The former will provide information about the team and recommendations on equipment and rescue readiness to members. The latter will be a breakdown of the skills involved in cave rescue to enable individuals to decide what training they would like to get involved in. It will give an idea of what there is to know and will hopefully allow each team member to identify their existing skill levels and to decide what they would like to learn in the future.

The framework and collation of ideas stage is complete and the various sections are being written at the moment. It is envisaged that this handbook should be ready during August. The working party for this initiative is Brian Bowell, Brian Jopling, Bob Hall and Gary Evans, so again, if you have ideas or queries, just get in touch.

3. Training
Following on from the training checklist, various types of training sessions will be provided. We will be running mid-week and weekend evening sessions, as well as the usual weekend one day practises. There will be three main types of training.:
a. Skills Training
b. Equipment and Procedure Familiarisation
c. Rescue Practices
A training schedule for 1997/98 will be published with the distribution of the handbook and in Edition Three of *The Way Out*.
Gary Evans

For Sale
The following items are for sale from WBCRT. Contact Gary on 01639 730806 if you are interested in buying any of them.

Ammunition Boxes - 10"L x 7"H x 3.5"W - 12 - £2.50 each
Ammunition Boxes - 11"L x 7"H x 5"W - 6 - £3.50 each
Space Blankets - 16 - £0.50 each
Site Helmets - Unused, no lamp bracket. Conform to BS5240 - 12 - make us an offer
Carbide Generators - old but working - make us an offer.

Additionally, some while ago a bag of bits of "stinkies"was given to SWCC. Members were offered the chance to pull out enough bits to make a complete lamp in return for a donation, but few took up the offer. I still have enough bits for a few lamps left in the bag: see Tony Baker at Penwyllt if you want to rummage in the bag - a donation to rescue, along with a promise not to use the thing in Ogof Ffynnon Ddu, secures the bits for one complete lamp.

Pleeeeeeese fill in your Questionnaire
Completed copies of the WBCRT Call-Out questionnaire issued with Edition One of *The Way Out* have been arriving back in a steady stream and the database and call-out list are well underway. However, there are still quite a number of known cavers who still haven't got round to filling one in. Here are some of the excuses we are getting.

I've lost it
Fine, well here's another one

I forget
Fine, well do it now

I've been too busy
It'll take two minutes

The dog ate it
Yeah ,right...

I thought it was for South Wales people only
We need everyone to fill it in because a big rescue will need rescuers from all over the country to be called out. Also, it means that when you are down on a weekend and there is a rescue, a controller will know what skills people have without having to ask everyone.

I didn't think I had any useful skills
Everyone who is willing to help in any way is needed. Most people have more to offer than they think they do. Also, there are 101 jobs to do on a rescue and the only pre-requisite is a willingness to help.

Rescue is an elitist club
If Rescue was an elitist club, they wouldn't be going to so much trouble to involve people, to ask for help and to keep team members informed with what is going on.

I don't want to be on the call out list
That's fine.

You know what I can do, just put me on the list
We have to have the form completed and signed to enable us to computerise it. This is because of the Data Protection Act and also, we need to be sure that we have everyone's details accurate.

So, although I'm sure there are other creative and slippery excuses, please do complete and return your questionnaire. If you need any help or advice, just contact Gary Evans or Sue Mabbett. If you don't have a form or have lost one, again contact Gary or Sue. Your team needs you. *Do it now.*
Gary Evans

Cycles in Rescue
I don't mean bicycles, but cyclical progressions of events. In WBCRT, we are constantly reviewing and revising both techniques and equipment, but many other things, such as the AGM, keep popping up at regular intervals. Rescue practices are similar, they may be extravagant lengthy procedures or low-key events. Each format has a value.

The midweek practices were first developed (no doubt someone will find an earlier date) in the early 1980s by Bruce Foster. He believed that the big "set" practices often excluded many people who were working at weekends, were "shy", not welcomed at Penwyllt, or simply did not wish to attend a long session. The Friday night rescue practice was launched.

Local people who were not members of large clubs like SWCC and early weekend visitors to the club were able to attend. The simple format of the evening could be enjoyed by a few people, all of whom could have "hands-on" experience of the equipment and techniques to enable them to learn skills in an informal setting where they were not outnumbered by so-called "experts". Skill sessions were limited in time, but often included underground work close to the entrance of OFD1 such as pitch-rigging and stretcher movement in crawls. We also trained with the floating stretcher in the river, much to the annoyance of the water bailiff.

In 1994, I felt that the idea was due for re-introduction and by common consent, the evening chosen was Wednesday. Some club members who were unable to get to the club at weekends attended. Several other people who came to the sessions went on to attend larger practices and some even joined SWCC.

The philosophy remains the same today:
* Anyone who is interested is welcome.
* Groups are intentionally small
* Each session has limited objectives
* Everyone is given the opportunity to learn and improve their skills to their chosen level.

It is good to see enthusiasm continuing to be generated with both new and old faces joining in.
Annie Foster

Footnote: the last group of Wednesday evening practices which were run in autumn & winter 1996/97 went extremely well, with an average of 12 people attending each of the 14 sessions. It is worth pointing out that the sessions are not intended to exclude those living outside South Wales, but to ensure that the local members of the team have the necessary skills to deal with a midweek rescue when there is no-one else around. We intend this year to run a further midweek programme (by popular demand) and also to commence a Saturday evening training programme. These will start in a few months and will tie in with the issue of the members handbook and training checklist.
Gary Evans

First Aid - The New Course
Well-trained first aiders are an important part of any rescue team, and this need has traditionally been catered for in several different ways. Firstly there are many members of the team who hold a basic First Aid Certificate of the type issued by British Red Cross and St. John's Ambulance. The more advanced first aid level has been catered for by the Mountain First Aid (Bangor Scheme) and for many years this training has been provided to the team and SWCC by Bob Hall. Then of course there are the medical professionals who are members of the team; nurses, paramedics and doctors.

For some time, the shortcomings of the Mountain First Aid course had been commented upon, in terms of its lack of relevance to caving and also its ageing content and course materials. In June 1996, it was decided that what was needed was a more modern and more relevant course aimed specifically at cavers and cave rescue. To this end, Gary Evans and Dr. Lisa Williams embarked on what turned out to be something of a marathon journey to produce a new manual, video and course to replace the old one. They were helped

by many people who assisted in developing the ideas for the manual, writing some of the sections, assisting in filming for the video and writing course and assessment materials. Although there are too many to mention, certainly Bob Hall has played a key role in developing the new training course and will, naturally, be one of the trainers.

The new "advanced" First Aid Course will be run for the first time in September to train the trainers and iron out any problems. The first "real" course will take place on 11th/12th October this year. This will then be followed by a number of courses throughout the remainder of 1997 and into 1998. There is already lots of interest in the course from those who hold a lapsed Mountain First Aid Certificate, those who want to upgrade from the Basic Certificate and even some people who have never had formal first aid training.

The course is approved by the British Cave Rescue Council for use nationally if other teams are interested. The intention is to gain national certification for the course from organisations such as St. John's Ambulance. The manual and video will be made available to anyone who is interested, whether they wish to attend the course or not.
Gary Evans

Insurance Update.
In the first edition of *The Way Out* I explained the insurance available for cave rescuers. You may remember that there was a question regarding third-party insurance for professional medical persons. It appeared that they were not covered by the third-party insurance as they were expected to have their own cover.

I raised the question at the Mountain Rescue Council meeting in May and the chairman, Dave Allen FRCS, assured me that this was not the case. Dave went to great length to explain the situation and it is summed up as follows.

ALL members of a cave or mountain rescue team are covered for third party liability claims provided that they:

"Operate within the bounds of the mountain/cave rescue first aid training"

It was explained that going beyond the training would be the individual rescuer's decision only and that they must bear the burden if it went egg-shaped. The same is true for non-medical decisions. Keep the actions within the accepted practice of the team.

Dave went on to explain that case law supported the "Good Samaritan" ethic and that in British law the act of doing the "best one could in the circumstances" was a valid defence, and expert witnesses could be called.

Tony Rich, the MRC and BCRC legal adviser, is writing a legal opinion for publication and we hope it will be ready for the next *The Way Out*. In the meantime be re-assured that unless you do something outside of the first aid training you are covered - so don't play!
Jopo.

REPORTS ON RECENT EVENTS

Sump Rescue Practice, Dan-yr-Ogof, 31/5/97.
Following the successful practice held in September '96 in Dip Sump, OFD, it was decided to try again, also with a live casualty, this time in a completely different kind of sump. We decided to use a sump with poor visibility but of about the same length as previously (120 metres/400 feet). The dive from Lake Zero to Lake One in Dan-yr- Ogof was the choice of venue and so a couple of weeks before the practice I went in to check the line and sump for any potential problems. I was reassured to find the line was in excellent condition (largely due to the skilful line laying of Nick Geh and Pat Cronin during the original exploration) and the visibility was awful (about 6 inches). Perfect!

It had been decided shortly before the actual practice that we were not going to use the stretcher in the sump. This was because the final twenty or so metres on the way out, before surfacing in Lake One, are difficult and manoeuvering the stretcher through this section in zero visibility would have been too dangerous.

We decided to have our casualty imitate paralysis from the waist down and we would find out how easy it would be to literally haul him out with two divers, one at either end.

On the day, great moral support was given by the attending members of WBCRT and a demonstration of the kit and assembly techniques was given by the divers. Following this, the casualty entered the sump to swim to Lake Zero and await rescue while Cyalume light sticks were attached to the line throughout the 20 metre section that concerned us. The two rescue divers then entered the sump intending to be away for three-quarters of an hour or more. Once at the other side, a quick assessment was made and it was decided to attempt the carry by having the casualty face down and taking him feet-first. This would allow the diver at the front to be less gentle whilst dragging and routefinding, leaving the diver at the rear to monitor the casualty's condition by regular face-to-face checks and also it would be easier to be gentle with the casualty at this end. If anything went wrong, the diver casualty would be able to swim free quite easily. Also, if we each couldn't keep a hand on the line we would abort.

To begin with, leaving the surface proved slightly difficult (the divers wore drysuits for variable buoyancy) but after this it went like clockwork. A line junction was passed with relative ease and the casualty was easily monitored by the rear diver, even in the stirred-up silt that we were often ploughing through. Sooner than anyone expected, the first of the light sticks was visible indicating that the ascent in the smaller passage was a few metres away. The casualty was lifted to be vertical (head up) and a slow and controlled effort passed the section and surfaced in Lake One shortly afterwards.

As everything had gone so smoothly, and none of WBCRT were expecting us back for a while, we were on our own. We took the opportunity to go through the first half of the sump again, swapping the role of casualty and then swapping again before coming back out. This enabled all of us to experience being dragged through a sump. A bizarre experience.

As this method had been so successful, we didn't spend any time playing with the full stretcher. We are very keen to get our hands on Jopo's new spinal splint as this may be the ultimate underwater stretcher, hopefully combining the ease of this exercise with the

support of using a stretcher. As soon as is possible we will be having a practice with this and a report will follow.

Observations :
Carrying the casualty face down and backwards is quite straightforward but we *were* using experienced divers. A minor problem was that the tanks (side-mounted) flared out sometimes causing minor snags. It would be very simple to stop this with a "snoopy loop" or something similar. The light sticks were excellent again, not only for showing the route through the murk but for letting divers know that they are at a particular obstacle.

Rescue divers need buoyancy - A drysuit is probably worth taking on a real rescue for comfort, control and safety.

Divers - Clive Pearson, Phil Short, Steve Thomas.

Many thanks to those of WBCRT who took the time out to attend this important practice.
Steve Thomas

Rescue Practice in Dan-yr-Ogof, May 31st - WBCRT View
Cave divers take personal responsibility for their equipment, their lives depend upon it. Rescue team members need to bear this in mind and take careful note of divers' instructions and needs.The equipment they use is not always the same as open-water divers' kit. It is worth team members acquainting themselves with cave diving kit and the reasons why it's different.The control of diving operations must be overseen by the divers.They must be allowed to decide on procedures and equipment.
Brian Bowell

Send Three and Fourpence We Are Going To a Dance: Twyll 95112 - 06.06.97
Usual early Friday evening, about 7 o'clock at Penwyllt: Clipjoint had been there for weeks; a couple of RAF types had been delivered by ageing Wessex helicopter 30m from the back door and were off to eat; CF had arrived earlier and was about to cook; Gary E was around; Harvey L and Tony B had arrived.

Phone call - a car is in a shakehole near Ystradfellte, and the Fire Brigade would like advice before trying to lifting it. Oh, well, something simple then. Gary runs round trying to find Land-Rover keys (thanks BB - where are they?), Clark F blithely says "Do you want any company?"
"Come along by all means," says Gary, so we shovel appropriate gear for a descent into the unknown into the back of the Land-Rover and off down the road to pick up Kevin and Adrian. From further information gained it transpires that it was not a car down the shakehole but a calf! Good job gear is versatile.

Despite the rendezvous point being unmanned, the farm was located with little difficulty, and the Station Officer in charge of the incident briefed us as to what to expect. The vet had been called out at lunch time and on investigation of the situation had expressed the opinion that the calf would not come out and to call the RSPCA. The RSPCA man had then arrived and said get the Fire Brigade. The Fire Brigade sent two appliances, one of which went up the track to the moor. From there the crew then were taken out to inspect the hole. They considered that it was too unstable, with loose and overhanging debris, and so concluded it was unsafe to attempt an entry without further advice, and so they had called for Cave Rescue.

We arrived at the site with the Fire Brigade already having got an impressive array of gear there and deployed for action. The shakehole was basically as we had been briefed, an open hole, some 3 ft wide, in the soil and stones at the bottom of a shakehole, but with one side overhanging by a foot or so. The situation was assessed as requiring a ladder and lifeline for an initial inspection and then see what could be done. We used a tractor (complete with trailer) rather than ground anchors as the belay point for both the ladder and lifeline. Gary went in first and decided that the top was safe enough, keeping away from the overhang, for a descent.

After about two feet the hole narrowed downwards to a constriction and then followed what looked like a wiggly shaft, before beginning to open out into a small chamber. There were odd loose boulders on the side of the shaft, but otherwise, it was straight into bedrock and very solid. The calf, which was quite calm, was stuck in mud which filled the bottom of the shaft. It was decided that an attempt to recover the calf could be made and that a lifting sling would be better than our rope slings as we were concerned about ropes cutting into the animal.

Clark then descended to join Gary and Calf 95112, taking with him the most enormous 8-inch wide sling (Fire Brigade standard) and some rope slings and krabs, with Kevin controlling the surface. Once at the bottom it was clear that to some extent the calf had to be dug out of the mud, as its left foreleg was completely buried and mud was coming up round its belly and was causing some suction. There was a short debate as to how to extricate it through the shaft and the position in which it would be best to lift. It seemed that the only way would be to get it up front feet first, and it was clear that there had to be one person in front guiding the head and one behind to guide it up through the constriction using its back legs, oh, and to be crapped on. The lift was going to require the main haul and two lifelines. However, to be able to do this the calf had first to be rotated through 180° so that it would go cleanly through the constriction. There was some debate as to how much the animal would struggle and so it was deemed wise to tie its legs together. When this plan was described to the Station Officer, he had reservations about a person being below the animal. The brigade's equipment was designed to lift the QE2 and so was deemed by us to be essentially failure-proof given that the loading was a maximum of 3 cwt. The Station Officer accepted that we were happy with the situation and agreed to the lift.

Once partial excavation by hand had taken place we were able to get the sling underneath the calf and to wrap it round sufficiently to enable it to be cleared from the mud. It was then possible to get a sling round its front legs and tie them off and another round its back legs. We had wrapped the sling around the belly and then in a figure-of-eight across its neck in order to support as much of its weight as possible and to produce a lift point immediately behind its head. This, it was hoped, would also help to control the position of the head once the animal had been rotated. The first attempt at extricating the calf, an extension of the initial lift out of the mud, ended in failure because the sling simply rode up over the head. It was then lowered back down and another attempt was made to relocate the sling, but with the same result. A third lift attempt was made after re-tying the sling and with the addition of a rope sling to prevent the lifting sling riding up over the calf's head. This was unsuccessful after about four or five feet as the animal started to choke and had to be lowered back down.

The final lift was made after talking to the farmer and following

his advice that a lift could be accomplished from the front legs. By using two rope slings, one tied onto each foreleg immediately below the wrist using a larksfoot with an extra turn to distribute the pressures as much as possible, a lift was made. This was successful in that the animal could still breathe and all that was required was to adequately control its head. The lifting gear had already been laid out by the Fire Brigade and was, unfortunately very close to the overhang. With the weight of the calf this caused the lifting cable to dig into the soil and once at the top the calf's legs began to dig in as well. At this point the animal was manhandled out of the hole and up the side of the shakehole. This needed the lifting cable to be cleared at the same time and as it was being removed, the relief of the pressure that had been put on the soil caused the overhang to partially collapse, showering Gary in garbage.

Remarkably, the calf was up on its feet very quickly and, although a little wobbly, was walked around before being placed in the trailer. Thanks were given for a job well done by the farmer and Fire Brigade. The gear was recovered from the hole and the complete exercise had been accomplished in about 2½ hours.

Lessons

1. Even with apparently straightforward messages from reliable (Lister, reliable?) people, if they have come via circuitous routes errors may have crept in.
2. WBCRT needs its own animal lifting pack.
3. It might be useful to have a small digging spade permanently in the Land-Rover.
4. Farmers know what they are talking about when it comes to lifting animals. The Fire Brigade were good, but we initially paid too much attention to what they suggested.
5. Take a good look at the layout of equipment already installed. This had been laid out in advance with no understanding of the actual requirements of the lift. In this instance nothing untoward happened, but there was a possibility that something might have gone wrong. The caution of the Station Officer was clearly well-founded.
5. Do not relax until all persons are safe.

Outcomes

1. As this was a successful recovery, the farmer was very appreciative of the efforts made. Locally this has probably done cavers a lot of good.
2. The Fire Brigade were excellent. The Station Officer used WBCRT as the experts in charge and simply provided manpower and equipment to do what we wanted. The teamwork they displayed was faultless from the perception of those underground. The lifts went smoothly, stopped quickly and when a lower was required this was accomplished just as smoothly as the lift. That we achieved something that the vet had thought impossible probably did our reputation no harm with the officers present.

Clark Friend

REPORTS ON NOT-SO-RECENT EVENTS

Reg Pearce, A Rescue from the 1980s

"We're off to do a Cwm Dwr trip tomorrow" says they.
"Do you know your way?" says I.
"No, but we have a survey out of *Caves of South Wales* and we'll give ourselves plenty of time."
"OK, I'll come and check on you tomorrow."
That's how it started. That's how they all start, rescues, with people just going caving.

Come the next day, 5.50pm and I'm up at SWCC and there's more than just the one vehicle, there are three. No ticket on the board but a note in the logbook - "have gone for a jolly in Ffynnon Ddu One, group of 7". It seems that another group had turned up and invited them on an OFD1 trip and they would all be out around 6 to 6.30pm. As I had work to do, I left a note on the windscreen of one of the cars saying that I would be in the Copper and if I had not heard from them by 10.00pm, I would start Rescue proceedings.

I suppose there must have been a group of ten of us at the Copper, everyone dressed up and ready to go down to Pontardawe, to the night club. Paul, the landlord, strides over. "Toby, there's a 'phone call for you." Brilliant, thinks I, they're out, "Hi it's Toby". "We've got a problem" says the voice, "We didn't go into OFD1 and decided to do a through trip. Reg, the leader, has gone down with hypothermia in the Great Oxbow and he was nearly unconscious."
"How long ago did you leave him?" I ask.
"About five hours ago, I got lost coming out."
Bloody hell, I thought, we've got a dead body on our hands. The voice continues, "and there's another problem, when I left the other members in his group, they were very, very cold and wet and had no wet suits and only cotton over-suits."
"O.K., I'll be there in five minutes."

"Right everyone, no night club, we probably have one dead and four in a very bad way, go home and get your gear." Paul agrees to take me to the club and as we are leaving, Bruce Foster is walking in. I stop and explain and we dash off to get things started. When we arrive at the club, there are two very worried-looking cavers, so I take all the details, 'phone the Police and start 'phoning people. First the locals, getting people out of bed with that lovely greeting - "Hi, it's Toby, we have a rescue and you're wanted." (The great thing about cavers, as you find out at two in the morning, is that no matter how obnoxious they pretend to be, there are no questions, they just come and do the job.) Then you start calling people from a wider area - Cardiff, Gwent, Gloucester, Birmingham - "Hi Simon, can you get down here?"
"Yep, I'll leave in five minutes and bring others down with me."
And so on it goes and they all turn up.

The first people to arrive are Dave Bracken, Keith Burgess, Steve Dome and Les Welsh. I send all four down, two to stay with the casualty and two to come out with news. Radio and Land-Rover to Top Entrance and wait. Bob Radcliffe turns up followed by Bruce, and Huw Thomas. People are coming in thick and fast. It's time to brief everyone with what's happening and it's over to Bob. Everyone expects action straight away, but it doesn't work like that, there's a lot of sitting around and Bob explains that we have to wait for a report from underground before we can proceed.

The first runner appears at Top Entrance. "He's in a bad way and we need the stretcher, Les is bringing the rest of the party out." It's time to send in all the prepared cavers. Doctor Jess Corson is sent to the casualty with a couple of fast cavers. People go in with the stretcher and Little Dragon. People go in to carry the casualty up the streamway and others to rig the 90ft pitch. Others go in to rig the traverse and more people to carry. This is going to be a long job. People are laying the communication lines and others are manning the radios. In all, I think we used nearly 100 people.

At about 3am, a message came out that Reg was out of the stretcher and walking so no more people were required, and then

we lost contact. No one else is sent in and no more equipment is sent in. Twenty minutes later, we have the comms back. "How is Reg doing, is he nearly out?" The reply comes back - "No, he's at the bottom of the 90ft pitch." "Good," we say, "it will only take forty minutes to walk him out from there." Then the reply from the cave sounds more urgent. "Brecon Base, the casualty is not, repeat not, walking, but is still in the stretcher." We have been working on incorrect information and it's time to get the ball rolling again.

The press arrive, and Bruce is assigned to deal with them. Then, what's this? A Mountain Rescue Land-Rover appears on its way up the hill. No-one knows anything about it. They park next to our vehicle at Top Entrance and don't get out. We offer them coffee but it's "No thanks." "Who are you and where are you from?" we ask. The door shuts, these people are not friendly.

By mid morning, Reg is brought to the surface. Our Land-Rover will not start. It has a flat battery from standing still all night with the spotlights and radio on. Reg has to travel down with the enemy. Later, it transpires that they had been listening to our radio communications and thought that it would be good publicity for them on the television.

Everyone wants to go home, but there is still tons of gear to clean and put away, just in case it's needed again tomorrow.
Toby Dryden

A Rescue from Pant Mawr Pot
Many years ago, in the early sixties, a young Mike Coburn and two friends discovered caving. After several trips to the Lesser Garth Cave and the nearby iron mines we started looking for bigger and better caves and in the Cardiff library under "Caving" we found them. More specifically we found a map and a grid reference to Pant Mawr Pot. "Wow! Big cave, this is it!" Off to Pant Mawr, from the Ystradfellte side of course, and eventually we found the hole. It went straight down for forty feet or so, clearly we would need a rope. We had all practised climbing hand-over-hand up ropes in school gymnasiums and thought that it would be no problem to slide down and climb back out later. Jumars and SRT techniques were of course still well into the future, but from somewhere we borrowed a great hairy rope and the big adventure was on.

Martin, Brent and myself parked my Mini at the Ystradfellte side again, as we did not want the South Wales Caving Club getting wind of our intentions, as we suspected that they might ban the trip for some reason. It was late afternoon as we slid down the rope, and we intended to spend the whole night exploring this vast cave. It was all that we had hoped for, but somewhat shorter, and returning to the entrance chamber we spent a cold night staring up the rope and willing the patch of sky above to lighten. At last it did and I climbed the rope into a chilly dawn. Then our troubles began: Martin and Brent both attempted the climb but couldn't do it. I pulled up the rope and tied knots in it, then I pulled it up again and tied knots between the knots. Then I lowered another rope and tried to pull them up but by now they were becoming steadily weaker. Due to one of those cave acoustical oddities, while they could barely hear me shouting I could clearly hear them talking and they were making noises about calling out cave rescue. This infuriated me as I thought they weren't really trying so I shouted down the hole, "try a bit harder, or I'll bloody well leave you there!" There was a moment's shocked silence then I heard Martin say to Brent, "he would too, he's like that!" What else could I do? I walked back to the car, combed my hair, drove until I found a 'phone box and rang the SWCC.

It was still early on a Sunday morning and the sleepy voice at the other end didn't seem too impressed when I asked to speak to someone connected with cave rescue.
"Does this concern a rescue?"
"Yes."
"What, now?"
"Yes."
"Oh!"
However, it seems that a visiting club was preparing to leave for Pant Mawr Pot and they were informed of the problem. After a well-deserved tongue-lashing - "ladder pitches must never be done on a rope!" - I slunk back onto the moor in time to see my friends being hauled up a ladder. We profusely thanked the visiting club and promptly scarpered and I didn't approach SWCC again until some five years later when I had moved to Neath, taken up scuba diving, and met Bruce Foster at Neath Sub-Aqua Club...
Mike Coburn

From The Archives : An Incident in Bridge Cave 1952
This incident occurred when a party of ten scouts visited Bridge Cave in August 1952. A boulder fall took place as the party was leaving the cave. Several scouts were trapped and the scoutmaster was trapped by the fall and suffered a broken leg. The majority of the party were on the outward side of the fall and were able to exit the cave and raise the alarm.

The rescue effort involved the Fire Brigade, cavers from the SWCC and miners from collieries around Glyn Nedd. The uninjured scouts were freed about eighteen hours after the rock-fall. This was achieved by the combined efforts of cavers and miners using primitive digging techniques and using timber obtained from local pits. Dr Hudson, a former chairman of the SWCC, squeezed past the fall to the aid of Jim Case, the scoutmaster. He was soon followed by several other cavers including Peter Harvey and Bill Clarke and then by a stretcher. It was then possible to evacuate the injured man.

This incident is interesting for many reasons. It was I believe, the first incident involving significant injury to a caver in South Wales. This had the effect of waking cavers up to the need for an effective cave rescue set-up and to the importance of suitable medical supplies. It is reported that "wireless" sets were used for underground communications. Quite what form these took is not recorded but we might assume them to be "walkie talkies" of some kind. (These might be expected to work over fairly short ranges down an entrance passage.) In any case they were felt to have "saved a great deal of time". Although the operation was quite protracted there is no mention of hypothermia (or "exposure" as it was then called). One press report does mention food and hot water bottles being passed to the trapped men however.

Finally there was a lesson that is still relevant today : the press had a field-day and the SWCC report notes the importance of effective surface control and the need for a press officer.

This incident pales into insignificance compared to another rescue that came to a happy conclusion at much the same time. Late on 24th August, just as the Bridge Cave rescue was in full

swing, Dr Alfred Bogli and three companions escaped from the Hölloch having been trapped by flood for ten days!

Sources: SWCC *Newsletter* No. 3, A selection of press cuttings kindly provided by Tim Gilson of the Glos. CRG.
Bob Hall

Contributor's note: I am very grateful to all those people who have contacted me offering material for this series. I anticipate covering the rescue of David Jenkins from Ogof Ffynnon Ddu in the next edition. I would still like to hear from anyone who was involved.

TECHNIQUES

Stretcher Attachment and the Selection of Belay Points.
We don't do a lot of rescues that involve pitch hauls but, apart perhaps from playing silly buggers in boulder chokes, this is where technique and skill are most vital. An error will at the very least frighten the casualty or could kill them, or anybody below. This short article is a precursor to training modules and is only intended to get the main points across and give food for thought.

The attachment of the main haul and the lifeline is crucial to the safety of the casualty and those standing below the pitch. A fairly obvious statement - so let's make sure that we all understand the basics.

Consider the fundamental requirements:

* The safety of the casualty and rescuers at all times.
* The ability to be able to reverse a haul at any point
* To enable the team to conduct a smooth "stress-free" haul.
* To ensure the least amount of effort and load on all belay components.
* To allow for the "lifeline shuffle" (see below) so that awkward pitch heads can be negotiated with the least amount of effort and the maximum safety for all involved.
* A pitch controller who is familiar with the technique.

It is vital that the team has confidence in the pitch controller, the casualty has no choice.

Team members must also realise that there is always more than one method. It is distressing for the casualty (be they real or practice), to be subjected to arguments amongst the erstwhile rescuers. If you think that the set-up about to be used is dangerous, speak out but do it in a quiet civilised manner, out of earshot of the casualty. If you think it safe but should be done differently - keep quiet until the de-brief and follow instructions. Your turn will come.

The selection, siting and installation of bombproof belays is vital. The load on the belays will always be greater than in normal caving - which is why we only use 12mm bolts and heavy duty hangers. During a recent rescue practice in the Dales a standard twist hanger broke during a haul.

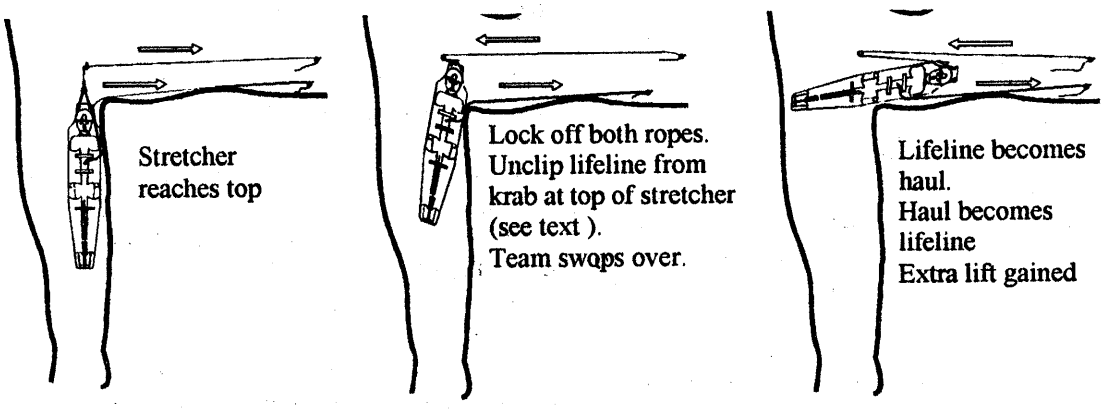
Natural belays are not always well sited and artificial ones are more the norm. Of prime importance is the need to avoid friction. The incident in the Dales was caused by multiple friction points leading to the use of a "Z" rig. This put a heavy load on the belay causing it to fail.

It is vital that the pitch controller thinks the haul through. It is embarrassing to get the stretcher to the head of the pitch only to find that it is impossible to land it safely. Remember that the siting or selection of belays is crucial and a lot of work may be neccesary to achieve a good haul. Usually there is time to pre-rig before the casualty arrives.

In the WBCRT we use 11mm SuperStatic for main haul, lifeline and barrow boy SRT (or ladder lifeline) and that is all you will find in the haul kits. The only dynamic ropes are in the sling kits and are used to construct belay rigs. The choice of SuperStatic was made because the rope is capable of meeting the requirements and subsequently there is no danger of mixing dynamic and static.

The rope is provided in three colours. Blue, red and normal white. Experience has shown that it is much easier to "Haul on Blue" or "Slack on White" than to use the terms "Haul rope" or "Lifeline", especially as the functions may change during the haul (more on this later). By tradition red is the usual main haul, blue the stretcher lifeline and white is used for the barrow boy.

Each stretcher has a main haul attachment and a lifeline attachment point. The roll-up stretcher has a vertical haul point at the head and four points on the main body for horizontal hauls. For vertical



The Lifeline Shuffle

hauls the horizontal haul points are used to attach the lifeline and vice versa for horizontal hauls. On the hard stretcher there are obvious vertical haul points but the horizontal points are a little less obvious. Never attach a karabiner directly to the frame of a hard stretcher as the diameter of the tube is greater than the radius of the krab and will give a three-way load, leading to failure at low loads (it has happened!).

The actual methods of attachment differ with each stretcher and are best demonstrated rather than explained here. Both stretchers however are attached using the same protocol. The main haul is used to provide the lift and the lifeline to provide security. In the event of a main haul failure the lifeline will be subjected to a shock load. If this load is transferred to the casualty then further physical damage may occur, at the very least it will hurt. So when the lifeline is attached it is *never* attached directly to the casualty but always to the stretcher first.

The casualty is then secured by either a separate sling from the lifeline attachment point or by arranging to have the tail of the lifeline do the job. The important part is to prevent a direct shock load. This may sound complicated but is in fact quite simple when you break it down.

If the main haul fails the stretcher could be suspended on its side or even turn upside down. To prevent this the lifeline is passed through a *separate* karabiner at the vertical haul point which will keep the stretcher almost vertical in the event of a failure.This karabiner should not be screwed closed and the lifeline *never* tied in. At the head of the pitch it may be neccesary to remove this link and a screwed tight karabiner or a tie-in can be very difficult to deal with, hanging out over a pitch, and there is simply no need. The function is only to keep the stretcher upright in the event of a failure.

The "Lifeline Shuffle" is a term coined by Bob Hall to describe a very important function at the pitch head.Often the roof will be low, restricting the height of the lift or the belays will be well back causing the ropes to run over the lip. You may be using a pulley above the pitch to create a free hang. Whatever the reason it can be difficult for the reception party to safely land the stretcher. The Lifeline Shuffle is a method of gaining up to a meter of extra lift. To do this the roles of the lifeline and the haul are transposed, another reason why the lifeline is attached to the stretcher-not the casualty. It is really very simple provided that the haul has been thought through and the lines are correctly attached.

<u>The Lifeline Shuffle</u>
When the stretcher is raised as far as it will go the lifeline and haul ropes are locked off.The haul team changes over to the lifeline and the haul rope becomes the lifeline.

The lifeline, which is now the haul rope, is unclipped from the retaining karabiner at the stretcher head, taking care to only unclip the new haul line -not the original haul rope. Because the lifeline (now the haul) was attached at a lower point it can be used to raise the stretcher the extra distance. On a open pitch head it is possible to have the stretcher rise above the lip, making it easy for the reception team to land.

During this manoeuvre it is sometimes neccesary for the new lifeline to be paid out. This is nearly always the case when a pulley is in the system and the paying out should be done with care.

The methods described here have been tried and tested but new ideas are always welcome. There will be practical/technical sessions to practice and explain much more fully. These sessions need only last a couple of hours and will take place on a Saturday evening after you have caved and fed.

It has become obvious that underground technical training only benefits those in the immediate vicinity and much more will be gained by conducting the sessions on the surface.
Jopo.

WBCRT Committee
The new WBCRT committee, as elected at the AGM on 29th June, 1997 is as follows:

Wardens

Kevin Davies	Treasurer
John Lister	(Also Mid-Wales Warden)
Gary Evans	Chairman & Vehicle Manager
Annie Foster	
Bob Saunders	
Pete Dobson	
Bob Radcliffe	
Sue Mabbett	
Brian Bowell	Training Officer

Other

Rhys Williams	Secretary
Claire Hicks	First Aid Officer
Pat Hall	Fundraising Manager
Brian Jopling	Equipment Officer
Kevin Munn	Assistant Equipment Officer
Brian Clipstone	Communications Officer
Ali Garman	Ordinary Member & Call-Out List Co-ordinator
Toby Dryden	Ordinary Member
Bob Hall	SWCC Rescue Officer
Martyn Farr	Cave Diver Rescue Co-Ordinator
Hazel Forbes	Mid Wales Warden
Mark Stanton	Mid Wales Warden
Clive Edwards	Mid Wales Warden

WBCRT Contacts
Contributions to *The Way Out* should be sent to Tony Baker at 26 Constable Way, College Green, Camberley, Surrey GU47 0FE. Tel: 01276-609162 (Although material for the *From the Archives* section can be sent direct to Bob Hall at 33 Haugh Shaw Road, Halifax, West Yorks HX13AH, tel: 01422-343121.)

Completed questionnaires should be sent to Sue Mabbett at 2 Garth Close, Morganstown, Cardiff CF4 8LS. Tel: 01222-844558

Suggestions or queries for the team member's handbook or the training checklist (mentioned on page 1) should be sent to Gary Evans at Poplar Court, Station Road, Caehopkin, Abercraf, Swansea SA9 1TP. Tel: 01639-730806. Gary is also the contact for the items for sale on page 1.

Correspondence on other matters can be sent via Gary Evans or any other member of the WBCRT committee (see above).

Next four issues of *The Way Out:* October 1997, January 1998, April 1998, July 1998.