

The WAY OUT

The Newsletter of the
West Brecon Cave Rescue Team

EDITION FIVE, SEPTEMBER 1998

Welcome to Edition Five of The Way Out, West Brecon Cave Rescue Team's channel of news and information. Lots of stuff going on and stuff you should be aware of, so let's get straight on with it with news of the new...

WBCRT Committee

The new WBCRT as elected at the AGM on 28th June, 1998 is as follows :

Wardens

Kevin Davies	<i>Treasurer & SWCC Rescue Officer</i>
John Lister	<i>(Also Mid-Wales Warden)</i>
Gary Evans	<i>Chairman & Joint Vehicle Manager</i>
Annie Foster	
Pete Dobson	
Bob Radcliffe	
Sue Mabbett	
Brian Bowell	<i>Training Officer</i>

Other

Rhys Williams	<i>Secretary</i>
Claire Hicks	<i>First Aid Officer</i>
Pat Hall	<i>Fundraising Manager</i>
Brian Jopling	<i>Equipment Development Officer</i>
Toby Dryden	<i>Equipment Officer</i>
Kevin Munn	<i>Communications Officer</i>
Ali Garman	<i>Ordinary Member & Call-Out List Co-ordinator</i>
Verena Zimmer	<i>Ordinary Member</i>
Martyn Farr	<i>Cave Diver Rescue Co-ordinator</i>
Hazel Forbes	<i>Mid Wales Warden</i>
Mark Stanton	<i>Mid Wales Warden</i>
Clive Edwards	<i>Mid Wales Warden</i>

Only a small change in personnel this year with Brian Clipstone taking a well-earned rest from many years as Communications Officer and Verena Zimmer joining the committee for the first time. Our thanks to Brian for his ongoing input.

Gary Evans

WBCRT Annual General Meeting, 1998. Secretary's Report.

Incidents
Yet again the team's year since the last AGM has been a quiet one on the incident front. Only five have occurred at the time of writing. These are listed below:

8th/9th August, 1997. Brynman/Black Mountain area:

Missing person search of caves and mines.

31st January, 1998. Pant Mawr moor: Caver lost whilst walking back from Pant Mawr Pot. Eventually made way to road exhausted.

7th February, 1998. Ogof Ffynnon Ddu: Overdue party, found rapidly in Cwm Dwr.

21st March, 1998. Ogof Ffynnon Ddu: Exhausted caver collapsed not far from entrance after through trip.

3rd May, 1998. Ogof Ffynnon Ddu: Dislocated finger. Escorted from cave.

The Black Mountain search saw the team called in to assist the Police and Mountain Rescue teams looking for a missing

local man. The Pant Mawr search again saw us working with the Mountain Rescue team. However, the caver found his way to the road at Henrhyd and was picked up by the Police. The other three incidents were relatively minor ones in Ogof Ffynnon Ddu and injuries were slight.

In addition to these five callouts, nine members of the team assisted the Gwent CRT on 29th March. A caver sustained a fall in Ogof Carno (Carno Adit). A fairly lengthy evacuation followed. However, what could have been an extremely serious incident worked out okay in the end and much was learnt from the experience.

Practices and Training

The team has remained active with its practices again this year. There have been four major events, the first one, in November, involved a "virtual rescue" where controllers were faced with various scenarios and problems to deal with as a rescue developed. At the same time other cavers practised search techniques within Ogof Ffynnon Ddu. In January a technical practice was held at Bolt Traverse in Ogof Ffynnon Ddu I. A stretcher was moved along the traverse by means of successive lowers and hauls. Much was learnt on this exercise, despite bolt and space limitations. April saw Brian Bowell's Black Mountain route cards being put to the test. All cave and dig sites were apparently located successfully. The practice planned in Mid-Wales for 20th June should have taken place by the time of the AGM (28th June).

In addition to these practices, two smaller scale events have been run in conjunction with cave divers active in our area. One was at Little Neath River Cave and others at the silica mines and Ogof Ffynnon Ddu I. Communication and co-operation between the team and the divers have therefore definitely taken a turn for the better!

The midweek practice season was again well-attended this winter with thirteen events being held on Wednesday evenings between November and February.

The first aid training scheme goes on, with forty first aiders now qualified. The accreditation by the Red Cross is nearly complete with only a few modifications needed to the scheme. Thanks must go mainly to Gary Evans for the incredible amounts of time spent on this mammoth project.

(Official British Red Cross Accreditation arrived on 8th September, 1998. Gary)

Other New Initiatives

The Callout Database is now up and running with over one hundred and fifty names included. The database should ensure that we call out the people with the skills we need when we need them. Thanks go out to Ali Garman for his work on this project and also to Sue Mabbett for her persistence in persuading cavers to return their details.

The Way Out, the team's newsletter, continues to be a valuable means of communication for cavers and rescuers. Feedback on this has been very positive. Keep the articles coming.

The team handbook/training log is another initiative being developed by Gary Evans and Brian Bowell which will give cavers as well as the team a better idea of skills on tap and those lacking. Work goes on.

Many parts of the stores have been blitzed over the year, purging ourselves of useless items and rationalising stocks. In this way we have identified areas where money still needs to be spent. For instance, thanks to Les Davies our food and catering supplies have recently been revamped.

Finances

Raising funds was again a priority this year. Reserves were at times dangerously low. A single A4 page for The Way Out no.3 was all we could afford. Pleas in that publication, however prompted many donations and brought the problem to people's attention. We owe a debt of gratitude to SWCC for allowing The Way Out to be distributed along with club circulars. The SWCC bonfire party as well as Pete and B's party have both raised considerable amounts of desperately-needed cash. The resurrected Edward Aslett Race/Walk was organised this year as a sponsored event for Rescue and estimates put the figure raised in excess of £1000. The day was a resounding success. A large lottery grant application is currently being put together, which should give us some longer-term funding, but keep the cash and fundraising ideas coming in.

Thanks again to all who have put in time, effort and money over the past year. You know who you are.

Rhys Williams, Secretary WBCRT.

What's Occurring - Forthcoming Events

The next weekend practice will be on **Saturday November 14th**. Two exercises are planned:

- * For aspiring controllers and others, another of our "War Games". Those present will work through a scenario in accelerated time, whilst all sorts of difficulties are thrown at them. Will our casualties thrive or perish? The outcome is in your hands.

- * John Lister on jacking. John will run a workshop involving participants in using jacks, props, wedges etc. to stabilise collapses and those dodgy passages that beset rescue teams. The recent Mid-Wales practice saw John's skills in action.

Those interested in taking the new WBCRT first aid course might like to know that the next course will be on the weekend of **7/8th November**, with another in early 1999. Contact Gary Evans on 01639-730806 if you are interested. And if you want to learn about first aid but have no previous experience, the team have lined up a "Basic First Aid" course, successful completion of which will qualify you to move on to the WBCRT course. This basic course is spread over two weekends - **28/29 November and 12/13 December**, and you need to attend both. Again, contact Gary Evans if you're interested.

And, for those of us with no social life, the ever popular mid-week workshops will begin around **November**. There will be a mix of demos, workshops, trips underground etc. Gary Evans and Brian Bowell would welcome suggestions from all WBCRT members for activities. Brian is now in South Wales full-time and will take a more active part in the workshops.

Finally, looking further forward to next year, WBCRT will be hosting a major rescue practice involving cave, mountain and

other rescue teams based in South Wales. A small group are currently doing some outline planning, and any suggestions could be made to Toby Dryden, Brian Bowell or Jopo.

Gary Evans

A Brief Background on Mid Wales Rescue Cover and the WBCRT *by Hazel Forbes*

In the 17th Century the Cardiganshire lead zinc field was the largest in the world and therefore we have been left with a legacy of over 7000 holes, shafts and adits. Although less than 1096 of them are accessible today the potential for an incident is considerable. With this in mind the WBCRT arranged a meeting in May 1991 at Aberystwyth to discuss rescue cover in the Mid-Wales area and invitations were extended to all interested parties. During the weekend it was agreed that cover was required and wardens were preliminarily appointed. The present four incumbents are Clive Edwards, Hazel Forbes, John Lister and Mark Stanton.

After discussion at several meetings over the following months it was decided that the Mid-Wales area would be part of the WBCRT so that the existing expertise would be available. Various factors influenced this decision, including the lack of cavers resident in the area. Due to the unstable nature of the mines it was agreed that any call-out is likely to be a major event requiring cavers from all directions, with first line cover from the West Brecon wardens and members.

Three major practices have been held by the WBCRT in the Mid-Wales area (with a fourth on 20th June 1998, see report below) to show the differences between cave and mine rescue. Although equipment was initially provided for the Mid-Wales store from Penwyllt, it was decided that other gear was required, more tailored to the needs of mine rescue. In July 1994 a grant was obtained from the Foundation for Sport and the Arts to set up a Mid-Wales equipment dump. This is now complete. Now that the Mid-Wales area is covered by the WBCRT we must keep up awareness of the on-going need for rescue cover, even though usage of the mines is (thankfully!) low. We must not follow the pattern of the 1960s and '70s when rescue cover was set up only to peter out over subsequent years. It is hoped that there will be no incidents in the mines of Mid-Wales but we need to be prepared should one occur.

The Mid-Wales Rescue Practice - 20th June, 1998

by Brian Bowell

WBCRT's Mid-Wales section recently hosted an excellent practice event in their territory. About 20 team members gathered near Llanidloes and then moved off to a large forested area - Esgair Geulan. This area consists of dense forest and steep gorges, containing a large number of disused lead mines.

A car had been left in the middle of this area and its two occupants had gone caving and not returned. A search had to be organised for the two and, when found, an appropriate evacuation undertaken. The search involved visiting several gorges, locating disused levels and investigating these for signs of life. We were organised into four search parties, each with a leader experienced in mountain navigation and equipped with maps showing some of these sites. The facts that these maps showed precious little else and that their scale was unknown limited their effectiveness.

The terrain was steep, overgrown and in some places hazardous because of scree slopes. The heat, rain and insects all conspired to make the exercise entertaining. Unfortunately

the first search of the area revealed no cavers, so efforts were concentrated on an area that needed a closer look. A fenced-off adit at the base of a gorge was entered and two cavers discovered some 150 metres inside. One was unconscious and buried beneath a rock fall.

Communications and kit were quickly put into the cave, together with a first aider and John Lister to assess the roof fall. One casualty was deeply unconscious and possibly badly injured by the rock fall, the other showed no signs of life. John was able to clear the rock fall from the surviving casualty, but insisted on stabilising the roof with timbers and jacks before any further progress could be made. Another factor to be taken into account was the very real situation of bad air in the narrow space.

Once the roof stabilisation was done the casualty's condition was reassessed, and plans for evacuation formed. First we gently raised the casualty off the ground and then placed a Cocoon back board underneath her. This was not a trivial exercise since possible spinal injuries require the utmost care, the area was very cramped and we had to avoid disturbing the jacks. Next our patient was transferred to the stretcher and parcelled up for evacuation.

The carry out was fairly straightforward, and very little gardening was needed. Hazel, our casualty was soon restored to the surface, but regretfully her caving buddy was less fortunate. A number of useful lessons and observations came out of this exercise. Hazel, John Lister, Clive Edwards and others in Mid-Wales organised an authentic and testing exercise, which we all benefited from. They are to be congratulated and thanked.

Searches

Up-dated maps of the area are needed, large scale with levels and caves marked, and laminated. We need a stock of map cases, pens that write in the wet (mountain rescue use Chinagraph pencils), and compasses. Local knowledge is vital, as is some attempt to collate existing work done to identify sites. Marker tape would be useful to mark sites that have been investigated. Every search party should include a first aider. Whilst calling out during searches in caves is standard practice, it is important not to do so when searching mines as a loud shout could cause a rock fall.

Kit & Communications

The Little Dragon is intrinsically safe in foul air. We have no air quality monitoring equipment. On this occasion we used a nightlight - if it went out, so did we. The Francephone cable reels need modifying - reeling out and in is difficult. The hand-held radios would benefit from shoulder straps or cases (I think we have these already - BB).

Controlling

The "T" card system is invaluable to record and track rescue personnel. As team members are re-allocated to tasks, their movements are simple to note.

But of course this was not the end of the day. Clive had kindly invited us to a barbecue at his house, near Welshpool. Pausing only for a description of the route - "Horseshoes - long straight - right at Trehelig ..." we were off. The weather cleared and the sun came out, as did the beer. Food and drink and tall tales flowed - it was a perfect midsummer's eve, then the kids struck!

The Misses Lister, Foster and Bowell challenged WBCRT to a game of "British Bulldog". Clive's lawn was shortly reduced to looking like the centre of Marseilles during the World Cup, even the moles emigrated. Gary Evans's natural competitiveness showed through as he demonstrated throat punches and holds on sensitive bits of body, what sort of school did he go to? Then Dave Wiltshire, the WBCRT landscape gardener, showed us how to vandalise a flower bed by falling on it. Later on Simon Amatt held us enthralled with an impromptu display of gymnastics. Most of us stayed overnight, either camping or dossing down and in the morning John Lister provided lifesaving bacon sandwiches.

Overall this was a very instructive and productive event, the team worked and co-operated very well. Clive provided hospitality for a great social. Our thanks go to Hazel, John, Clive and his wife.

The Edward Aslett Sponsored Race/Walk 1998

by Rhys Williams, WBCRT Secretary

This year the West Brecon Cave Rescue Team decided to revive the Edward Aslett Memorial Race/Walk. It was to be a desperately-needed fundraising event for the team. The event itself has, until recent years, been an annual event for SWCC. Two years ago I first ran a "friendly" with Stuart France; we were the only two participants in the run from Herbert's Quarry to Penwyllt. The WBCRT agreed to revert to the traditional route: Brecon to Penwyllt. This is about 25km for runners, following the high route via Fan Gyhirych, and 30km for the walkers, who go via Blaen Nedd Isaf.

So it was that on Sunday 3rd May at around 10am the participants assembled at a roundabout on the Brecon bypass. Many were feeling the effects of the previous night's SWCC Ceilidh, an event at which I usually drink so much that I'm incapable of speaking or walking, let alone dancing! For a change I decided to stick to lemonade and donated my saved beer money to rescue. The lack of alcohol definitely made the run a more pleasant experience and allowed me to pull away from my (still slightly sozzled) pacemaker, Martin "Lump" Groves, a couple of miles from home! In the end I was pleasantly surprised to come in first, with a time of 2hrs 23min, as I'd been aiming simply to finish in less than three hours. Other runners soon arrived, followed by walkers later in the afternoon. Overall it was a fantastic day, conditions underfoot were dry and the weather was fine with a gentle breeze to prevent overheating on the (mainly uphill) route.

Later that evening, donated barrels were opened at Penwyllt and the party resumed. The barrels raised some extra cash and the sponsor money collected so far totals around £1000, with an estimated £500 still to come in.

Thanks must go to all thirty runners and walkers for taking part, and also to those who organised the whole thing (particularly Brian Jopling and Gary Evans). If you still have sponsor money outstanding or would like to donate more, please send it on to the Treasurer, Kevin Davies. Thanks and see you next year...?

First Aid Stores Update

by Claire Hicks, WBCRT First Aid Officer

Just in case you are called out on a rescue and need WBCRT stuff I thought I would update you on the changes that have been going on over the last year. Building on the work done by previous first aid officers, the kits have been altered and

tweaked a bit, on the understanding that this is an ongoing process which requires frequent evaluation and modification. The changes have mostly come about because of the new cave rescue first aid course; obvious omissions and subtle changes have been suggested with, I think, great effect. For example, the small plasters have been exchanged for insulating tape and gauze - a touch crude, but great sticking power. The first aid kits are now housed in Peli cases and kept locked (yes, locked) in Top Rescue. I know it is like hearing a stuck record, restricting access, but to conform to the national standards of what is in the kits, it has to be this way. All the wardens have a key, as do all members of the executive committee who hold the new first aid certificate (they need it to feel of some value).

The kits now contain more of everything except Sam splints, tongue depressors, wow dressings (circa WW1), cotton wool, small plasters and space blankets. Items added include a personal survival bag, candle and matches, a tourniquet, cling film (suggestions for use on a postcard, please), a balaclava (so that the first aider cannot be recognised and therefore cannot be sued), accessory cord, light sticks (easier to carry than heavy sticks), plastic work surface (so you don't make a mess on your oversuit) and insulation tape. The cuddly toy was omitted due to its being found in number 8 in poor condition. The quantities of other generally life-saving stuff like gloves, bandages and wound dressings have been increased.

Though I would encourage anyone to use the kits as necessary I must remind you that the contents have been tailored according to the first aid course. You should always do what you can within your ability, training and competence, in accordance with your liability insurance. Sorry if that sounds obvious or condescending but them be the facts.

38 people have now completed the new course, 14 of whom were not previously holders of advanced first aid certificates. Contact Gary Evans for more information about the course.

The first aid kits are not to be confused with the wet and dry search kits, which are precisely that: wet and dry search kits. These are the Peli cases which are not locked up and although they do contain a very basic first aid kit they should simply be used by initial search parties.

It has been relatively easy for me to jump on the wave of enthusiasm created by "the course". Many thanks to all my helpers. Please don't hesitate to offer help, suggestions or criticism for the stores. But not too much criticism, I'm quite sensitive. Happy caving, break a leg!

Langstroth Pot - 2 June 1973

by Ian Wilton-Jones, Training Officer for Gwent Rescue Team

A group of six of us set out to do Langstroth Pot, one dull morning in the summer of 1973. The team consisted of four experienced guys, myself (less experienced but exceedingly fit), and a climber - a complete novice to caving. It was grey and drizzling and so I, the RAF man, gave the local RAF station a buzz, to get a forecast of what was to come. It was a long time ago but I remember something like "the early drizzle will soon clear to a brighter day with light showers dying out". In spite of being well used to wrong forecasts when I was flying, I accepted the optimistic forecast without another thought.

The cave is a normally dry swallet, and we made our way between the entrance pitch and second pitch, negotiating the series of ducks and crawlways without difficulty. "The Slot", a

9-inch rift squeeze, just before the second pitch, proved a nightmare for two of the party and they found themselves unable to proceed any further, so only four of us continued with the trip. Graham, my brother, and Bucket were leading the show, with Bernard - the novice and the only one without a wetsuit - and myself making up the now smaller team.

We negotiated seven of the eight pitches with ladders. Pitch number six, an easy 15-foot scramble down, proved so easy we didn't even bother to rig a handline. Having arrived at the sump, we climbed back up the eighth and seventh pitches and then three of us took the only side passage which was supposed to lead to a fifteen foot straw. We climbed up a 15-foot pot, where the way on was hard to see, with only a give-away dribble of water on the wall guiding us. Now we entered a tight winding rift; so tight that I wriggled up into the roof to see if I could take an easier route.

Suddenly, Graham came past me, below, screaming "get out!". The urgency was obvious but totally inexplicable. I wriggled down as fast as I could and followed. In the space of a few seconds I was engulfed by a huge amount of water. The cave was in flood and I was about to die! I arrived at the pitch to be presented with a plug-hole full of water. Adopting parachute drill, I spanned the pitch with my elbows, hung my feet over the whirlpool, bent my knees, feet together... and let go! I was hoping that, if one foot hit an obstacle, the other would do likewise and, as luck would have it, the landing was uneventful.

We arrived back to find Bernard, our novice, in a highly excited state, his having seen a wall of water burst out of our passage, meet a major wave coming down the main passage and the two unite and disappear off down the cave. We were obviously dead and he had no way of finding his own way out of the place.

Together we forced our way upstream, against the torrent, to arrive at the easy sixth scramble. Here, it had been replaced by a ten foot wide and six foot deep water jet - absolutely impossible to climb without aid. Graham and Bucket were screaming at each other, hands cupped round the other's ear, such was the din made by the maelstrom. They were clearly in disagreement and we were going nowhere fast. While they were arguing, I (and I clearly remember making this stupid decision at the time!) decided to be a hero and chimney up, using opposite walls, into the roof of the cave. I was not the best climber and should have discussed this first; had I fallen, I probably would have been swept away, unnoticed. Fortune smiled and, coupled with very high levels of adrenalin, I achieved the climb before working my way across to a bridge above the pitch.

Once the others saw me, they threw up a line, and we were reunited above the pitch and on our way once more. Working our way upstream into a low, narrow section, with wet-suit grabbing helictites on both walls, the previous trickle along the floor was replaced by a two-foot deep, powerful current, with just enough headroom to keep your mouth out of the water. What if another wave came through? This was not fun!

Having climbed the 40-foot third pitch, Bucket and I hauled Graham up on the lifeline, and through the foaming water-spout at the head of the pitch. We hauled at such a speed that his wetsuit thighs were ripped to shreds - he was climbing with his heels round the back of the ladder in veteran style. It was a

stupid, rash action on our part, to pull him up so quickly - he was going to lose much more heat than we were.

Almost immediately, we arrived at the 40-foot second pitch. Our ladder was completely hidden by the spray and the lifeline had run through so that we only had one end. The first man was going to have to climb the ladder with no lifeline. A rapid, joint decision was made that we would sit it out here - the pitch was too dangerous and, surely, the ducks would be sumps at this time. This was true! Very fortunately, Fred, member number five of the party had decided to wait in his car for us, and idly dozed there, watching a rock in the river... Some time later, he awoke in a heavy rainstorm, realised the rock was no longer visible and that things could be going wrong for us. A trip up the mountainside confirmed that a swollen stream was pouring into the entrance. Two trips inside, at great personal risk, proved that the ducks were becoming dangerous, and then they were sumped. A rescue was necessary.

Meanwhile, we had selected a small ledge, between the two pitches. We weren't going to drown here but the swirling, spray-laden draught could well be our downfall instead. We pooled our resources, with the best item being a single layer space blanket. We sat huddled on the ledge like four brass monkeys, Bucket and myself on the ends, only part-covered by the blanket, and Graham and the non-wet-suited Bernard in the warm(er) zone. Generally we dozed but always kept one person awake, or chatted. Graham and I tried to memorise an old and very long poem by George Formby about "Sam and Noah" when the world flooded - what a choice! Incidentally, the poem ends with Sam drowning!

On the surface, one of the largest rescues since Mossdale was in progress. TWO HUNDRED volunteers commandeered all the shovels and pick-axes in the local hardware store, then set to work digging a two-hundred-metre long channel to divert the entrance stream into a nearby sink. Those who had no tools used their bare hands to dig...

We were startled by a shout at the top of the second pitch; rescue was on its way. The noise had not decreased, but the pitch was now visible. Why? Because the diverted water was now appearing from a side passage and gushing, in increased volume, down the third pitch. Having shared the "goodies" with the rescuers, we slowly made our way out, to be greeted by bright lights, TV cameras and the like, after 16 hours underground. Our temperatures, in Fahrenheit, were 96, 94, 94, and 88 - that was Bernard! - so he was forced to be carried down the mountainside. We were directed to a local outdoor arts college where we were each given a bath, in my case by two delightful young lasses, but the doctor dictated that the water was made 45 Centigrade - this proved seriously hot and caused poor Bernard to faint; it could have been worse!

I understand that this was one of the biggest rescues to be undertaken and my thanks go out to the Cave Rescue team as well as to all those other people who worked on our behalf during that cold and stormy night.

Lessons?

1. Be extremely water/weather aware.
2. A flood pulse can appear as a tidal wave.
3. If trapped, get away from flood-prone areas quickly.
4. Be prepared - always carry rations/survival gear.
5. Make practices a success; one day the rest of the team may be required to save you!!

The British Cave Rescue Council Conference , Clapham , June 1998 (and a few other things).

by Brian Jopling

The conference was very well organised and the venue, Ingleborough Hall, was ideal. It's a pity that I was the only delegate from South Wales. As an organiser of such events I found this very disappointing, especially when you consider the support we have received from other CROs for our conferences. It was especially galling when two members of the WBCRT exec were caving in the Dales and drinking in the New Inn and failed to show.

It was also disappointing when there was a lot to learn and lots of opportunities to share our methods and techniques: remember how Rescon96 helped with the establishment of our new first aid course?

The Saturday was split into modules with small groups moving around. Basically the CRO host explained or demonstrated a technique and the group then offered or demonstrated their ideas or differences. I've been around a while and I learnt a lot, so I'm sure that most of you would have as well. The modules covered callout to hypothermia and it was interesting and informative to exchange information and techniques in a structured manner.

John Frankland was presented with an engraved ship decanter to mark his retirement as BCRC medical advisor for twenty-plus years. This was paid for by a whip-round of CROs and individuals not, as has been rumoured, from BCRC funds.

Sunday was the day for cave communications, further hauling techniques practice and the stretcher race. The communications seminar has led to some real movement towards new cave radios. The problem is the inability of the electronic guys to produce caveproof units. Everything we need is there and hopefully those of us with a mechanical bent can get together to produce usable units. It is interesting to think that the French Nichola system (based I think on the Hey design), is running at -800m in the Berger. Bob Machin's improved transceiver actually talks to the Hey unit and we are hoping to get Bob to repeat his offer to give the BCRC the copyright to the design. Another positive result from the conference.

It is asked; why have a national body? Why bother to support another talking shop? Well, the British Cave Rescue Council is the representative body for cave rescue. Our membership is what gets us recognition from the police, insurance cover, the provision of equipment for first aid and some hardware and most importantly a voice where it counts. I think it is to our shame that we cannot support it, once every two years, to the best of our abilities.

(Note - I too am disappointed that we were unable to support the Conference, but the timing was all wrong for us with a lot happening that month on the WBCRT/SWCRO front, work commitments and first aid training. Also, we did not disseminate the Conference paperwork at all other than a couple of posters. - Gary.)

Jim Davies will be producing a report so I think it is best left to him to cover the conference as a whole. However, I have been asked for an update on insurance and liability so here it is. (Of course if you had really been bothered about insurance and litigation you could have asked questions yourself.)

Insurance

I'm sure that Tony Rich, the BCRC legal advisor, is as fed up as me about answering the same questions but here goes again. There are two types of insurance - third party and personal accident insurance.

Third party insurance is what protects you from claims if you drop a bollock. It is provided to Cave Rescue team members by our (the BCRC) membership of the Mountain Rescue Council. The policy is for £5 million. In the words of Tony Rich it would have to be one hell of a bollock!

More importantly it is a fact that there has never been a successful attempt to sue a cave or mountain rescuer - indeed it has been judged that we do not have a duty of care. A judgement in favour of the Coastguard has established that.

A common question is a rescuer's liability for first aid actions. First aiders, including doctors, nurses and midwives are covered provided they work within the training established by the team. Some professional medics will be covered by their own professional bodies, others will not and they should seek advice.

The presence of expertise or equipment available in other teams, but not available at the time, is not a precedent and judgements have been made to that effect. This also covers techniques so it could not be said for instance that team A uses a Grigri and we use a Figure-8 so we are at fault.

Tony's advice is to forget about liability - get on with the job to the best of your ability. Ask yourself, who are the expert witnesses!

Personal accident insurance is provided by the local Police Authority upon recommendation by the Home Office. It covers all that go to the aid of the police at their request. By arrangement we are also covered for training. At present the sum assured is £115,000 for death and a sliding scale for injury and/or incapacitation. The insurance has been triggered in the past and has paid out.

That's the easy bit. The key phrase is recommendation. We do not have a national police force. Some police authorities have not taken this insurance or have allowed it to lapse, indeed it was recently discovered that it was illegal for police authorities to take out such insurance, a technicality which has been rectified by a recent Order in Parliament. **WE ARE COVERED IN OUR AREA OF OPERATION.** The ACPO is addressing this problem and all police authorities have been asked to partake in a national scheme which will result in lower premiums for them and an increase in the cover for us. It is also possible that the cover will be centrally funded if the police authorities do not agree.

The hopes are high that we will be covered by a policy which covers us in all police areas, by the end of the year. We have the Mountain Rescue Council, the BCRC and in particular Tony Rich to thank for all of the hard work that has gone into finding a solution to this problem. I would like to echo a view, expressed by Tony as the "Mendip approach". If you caved on Saturday for fun without insurance - why be so uptight about helping in a rescue on Sunday unless you are insured? - just a personal observation.

Rescue Fatigue.

Are we doing too much rescue training and having too many meetings?. Of late the WBCRT has gone out of its way to encourage fresh faces and new approaches to rescue. With a few this has been very successful and there has also been an increase in interest and effort by some of us older veterans.

But have we gone a bit too far? In June there were three events; the BCRC conference, the Mid Wales practice and the AGM. Add to this the first aid courses and outside bodies that some of the officers attend, it can become a full time job.

We cannot run without practices and meetings and we must be represented where it counts but surely we can construct the calendar to allow some sport caving to take place as well.

Looking at New Techniques.

At the WBCRT AGM I was elected to the new post of Technical Development Officer. The idea is to improve in a structured way the techniques we use. In the past we have fed ideas in and they have fallen by the wayside or have become accepted practice. One of the problems of doing things this way is that there can be confusion. We don't have the advantage of lots of rescues to iron out problems quickly so a much more sensible way is for small groups of interested or expert members to try out various ideas.

Please put forward your ideas and offer your skills. I will arrange small working groups, (the Wednesday night winter meets would be an ideal format) which will possibly have a group co-ordinator, to work through the technique. If the technique survives we can look at establishing it into our standard practice. An example would be hauling techniques, which have remained the same, in the WBCRT, for at least fifteen years.

Some say don't reinvent the wheel, but you might just invent the maglev.

A Note from the Editor

I deliberately placed Jopo's article at the end of this edition of The Way Out because it raises many talking points and asks questions of you, the reader. So now it's up to you to respond. Read through the points Jopo makes again and then write and tell me what you think; are there too many practices and events? Are they on suitable dates? Why didn't you go to the BCRC Conference? Is there anything else you'd like to know about insurance? Or do you have a suggestion for a new technique, or a change to an existing one? Indeed if there's anything you've read in this or a previous edition, or anything that's happened on a practice or an incident, that provoked a query or a reaction in you, then write and tell me. The Way Out shouldn't just be a mouthpiece for a few members of the WBCRT exec, it should be a forum for an exchange of ideas and opinions from everyone who's involved, in any way, in the team's activities or caving in general.

The address for contributions is:

**The Way Out, 26 Constable Way, College Green,
Camberley, Surrey GU47 0FE. Tel. 01276-609162**

I'm not on e-mail, but you can send me a fax (clearly marked for my attention) to the offices of Classic and Sports Car on 0181-943-5844. I look forward to hearing from you.

Tony Baker, Editor.