

# The WAY OUT

The Newsletter of the  
*West Brecon Cave Rescue Team*

EDITION SIX, OCTOBER 1999

Welcome to Edition Six of The Way Out, West Brecon Cave Rescue Team's channel of news and information. This edition follows a long time after the last one, but as I have explained previously the team has abandoned the idea of producing this to a regular schedule, preferring instead to publish only when the amount of material justifies the cost. Several different contributors have written for this edition, so I shall leave you in their capable hands...

*Tony Baker, Editor.*

## TEAM NEWS

### WBCRT Annual General Meeting 1999

This was held on Sunday 27th June, 1999 at the Copper Beech Inn, Abercraf. Several executive posts changed hands this year and the entire list is given below:

#### Wardens

Kevin Davies	Treasurer & SWCC Rescue Officer
John Lister	(Also Mid-Wales Warden)
Gary Evans	Fundraising Manager & Joint Vehicle Manager
Annie Foster	
Pete Dobson	Communications Officer
Bob Radcliffe	
Sue Mabbett	
Toby Dryden	Training Officer & Joint Vehicle Manager

#### Other

Rhys Williams	Chairman
Verena Zimmer	Secretary
Claire Garman	First Aid Officer
Brian Jopling	Equipment Development Officer
Ali Garman	Equipment Officer & Call-Out List Co-ordinator
Kevin Munn	Ordinary Member
Malcolm Tanner	Ordinary Member
Martyn Farr	Cave Diver Rescue Co-ordinator
Hazel Forbes	Mid-Wales Warden
Tom Price	Mid-Wales Warden
Clive Edwards	Mid-Wales Warden

One other notable decision to come out of the AGM was a date change for future AGMs. It was agreed to hold the next and all following AGMs on the Sunday of the third weekend in January. This brings us into line with our sister team Gwent CRT and the umbrella that covers both, South Wales Cave Rescue Organisation (SWCRO). Consequently, the next AGM will be held on Sunday 16th January 2000 at 9.30am at The Copper Beech Inn, Abercraf. At this meeting the elections will take place for an executive to sit for the next 12 months. Please attend if you are able and even stand for the executive!

Finally a word of thanks must go out to the retiring Chairman, Gary Evans for his sterling work in steering and motivating us all in the last couple of years. A tough act to follow.

*Rhys Williams, Chairman WBCRT.*

### SWCRO Annual General Meeting 1999

The AGM of the South Wales Cave Rescue Organisation took place on the 27th February, 1999. As the SWCRO is the umbrella organisation to which the West Brecon Cave Rescue Team and the Gwent Cave Rescue Team belong, the eight members of the SWCRO Executive Committee are drawn from the two operational teams.

The elected representatives for the year 1999/2000 were:

Phil Jayne	Chairman (GCRT)
John Jones	Secretary (GCRT)
Brian Bowell	Treasurer (WBCRT)
Claire Garman	Exec. Officer (WBCRT)
Kevin Munn	Exec. Officer (WBCRT)
Gary Evans	Exec. Officer (WBCRT)
Malcolm Reid	Exec. Officer (GCRT)
Chris Brady	Exec. Officer (GCRT)

A change to the SWCRO constitution was agreed at the AGM which re-aligned the membership of SWCRO to that of the two member operational teams. This allows the SWCRO to better represent the teams and also solved issues of quorum at AGMs and confusion over membership.

*Gary Evans*

### Search Routes within Ogof Ffynnon Ddu, and Practice on 26th June 1999.

The background to the search routes for Ogof Ffynnon Ddu lies in the dim and distant past, long before I had any involvement with the rescue team. Basically, a method was worked out by Pete Dobson, Bob Radcliffe and others to locate a missing party attempting through trips within the cave system. If the party do not know the cave well or have left a particularly vague route on their ticket, they could be anywhere. So the search begins: three teams of two (or three) enter via Cwm Dwr. Beyond the boulder choke and into Big Shacks three commonly used routes diverge. Each pair takes one of these routes, calling up side passages as they go. The three routes all pass through the complicated junction chamber of The Smithy and then again split up to take three routes to The Confluence. If the missing party has not been located at this stage then the pairs exit the cave by other entrances. One via Ogof Ffynnon Ddu I, one via the main stream and Maypole Inlet and the other pair via the Marble Showers high-level traverse route. A fourth pair to check the mainstream between Maypole Inlet and Top Waterfall also enter via Top Entrance. There are various points at which a missing party can be headed off by the searchers in this way.

The assumption is that within a couple of hours a missing party can be said not to be in the mainstream, the place where they are at most risk of hypothermia, this assuming that they don't drop back into the stream from some obscure place after the searchers have passed. With the trade routes cleared a more intensive search of the higher level complexes can be organised, including sending a team to The Crevasse. If there is no equipment left here it is a fairly safe bet that the missing party are not in Ogof Ffynnon Ddu III.

A practice was held on 20th February 1999 to use the search routine. Following this, it was felt that the three routes to The Confluence were not well known so work was required on these. Personally, I knew the one route that I regularly use well and was aware of others but could not be expected to follow them straight off without a highlighted survey at the very least. So it was decided to put together some guides for the three routes. Brian Bowell, Pete Dobson and Gary Evans worked on these and included a couple of photos, a description and the highlighted survey.

The route cards were to be trialled on a practice on 26th June 1999. It also seemed like a good opportunity to do some work with communications at the same time. The practice had two main aims with an option on a third;

#### *Aim 1: Route cards*

To complete a search of the three routes from Big Shacks to The Confluence by means of the trial route cards. The cards to be evaluated and timings recorded for the search.

#### *Aim 2: Communications 1*

To use the Ogofone to establish communications between key sites in Cwm Dwr/Ogof Ffynnon Ddu II such as Big Shacks I, The Smithy and The Confluence.

#### *Aim 3: Communications 2*

To attempt to use the Ogofone whilst on the move, time permitting.

#### *Route Card Exercise:*

The cards were found overall to be very good, with some details and corrections to be attended to. In general, the photos were deemed not as useful as expected, but survey and description vital. Some links between the text and survey would add a lot. Some practical points were also raised: the size of the cards used was far too large, for example. Perhaps a survey and description on different cards could be used. There were questions as to the route from the entrance to the Cwm Dwr boulder choke. The description was included but the survey for this part was not. However it could be said that if a caver does not know this part of the cave, then they probably should not be leading the through trip search anyway.

#### *Communications Exercise:*

Following a little bit of training and testing of equipment the underground Ogofone teams ventured into the cave just after 11:00am.. One pair with the WBCRT Ogofone to Smithy and one pair with the (kindly loaned) Gwent CRT Ogofone to The Confluence. Communication with The Smithy was next to hopeless, with no sense made of what little speech was heard. Communication with The Confluence was better, with clear conversations taking place.

The WBCRT Ogofone was clearly in a bad state of repair, it is probably in excess of fifteen years old and very tired indeed. It was later resolved to remove it from service with the development of a new system by the British Cave Rescue Council (BCRC) well on the way. In fact the team have sponsored the development of this by way of a substantial donation. In the meantime we still have the "earth return" Francephones which work extremely well but do require the laying of a single wire. Several other things were noted on the Ogofone front, firstly that the instructions with the WBCRT and Gwent CRT set were different and secondly that both were incorrect!

Altogether then a useful exercise, in all 18 team members attended, with 12 going underground. Plenty of lessons were learnt. Watch out for the improved route cards and if you would like to have a go with the route cards or have any comments then let us know.

*Rhys Williams*

#### **Rescues This Year**

The following is a summary of the incidents that WBCRT have responded to since the start of 1999.

20th February Cwm Dwr to Ogof Ffynnon Ddu I  
Overdue party, route finding problems - met rescue team on way out of cave.

27th March Ogof Ffynnon Ddu II  
Overdue party, exhausted caver - self rescue and was assisted by team from Top Entrance

27th March Ogof Ffynnon Ddu I  
Ankle injury, twisted ankle - self rescue. First aid treatment given by team on return to headquarters.

6th April Cwm Dwr to Ogof Ffynnon Ddu II  
Overdue party, met rescue team on way out of cave.

18th May Ogof Ffynnon Ddu I  
Overdue party, cave divers and film crew running late - met rescue team on way out.

31st May Dan-yr-Ogof  
Overdue party, trip took longer than anticipated. Met rescue team on way out of cave.

13th July Mid-Wales  
Calf trapped in Pot Hole. Team attended and removed calf safely from hole.

18th August Aeroplane Hole, Penwyllt  
Lamb trapped in tight rift. Team attended and removed lamb after three hours' work.

*Gary Evans*

#### **The Bolt Traverse Again**

Clark Friend stated in The Way Out 4 that taking a stretcher along the Bolt Traverse in Ffynnon Ddu I had not been done before. Maybe not by those taking part in January '98, but it certainly has been tackled successfully using a different method on The Great International Rescue Practice. I ask the reader to cast their mind back to the legendary week that was Rescon '92.

The tail end of Hurricane Charlie had passed through on the Wednesday night, blasting Penwyllt with even more rain than usual, the Ceilidh turned into a mud stomp (but did we care?) and it continued to rain on the Thursday. On Friday the streamway was continuing in its state of flood, so the rescue practice involving cavers from around the world had to be undertaken high and dry.

"Go" was Lowes Passage, from whence we extracted volunteers (?) to the high-level passages. Time was pressing, so we performed miracle cures on the first casualties and moved rapidly back to the Bolt Traverse. I cannot recall for sure if we did the sloping wire - I think not - so we moved onto the ledge at the foot of the ladder. The nature of the cave was such that we were strung out, but trying to see what was going on.

Paul Flynn from Ireland somehow found his way into the Neil-Robertson stretcher balanced on the big boulder, and was strapped down. Six slings were fixed to the stretcher, two each at the head, middle and feet. As I recall, the ones in the middle and at the feet were adjusted to create an equilateral triangle with the stretcher, but the ones at the head were left a little longer, but not by design. A haul rope was taken out along the traverse in front, and a lifeline for the casualty was paid out behind, clipping that into the traverse line as we went.

Now, dear reader, picture two macho Italians who do not speak English out in front to do the hauling, me from the south east at the stretcher head, Ashley Shaw from New Zealand in the middle and Jopo bringing up the rear in full Brummie. And Paul in the stretcher faking confidence in our abilities to get him alive to the other end. He was fed out over the abyss (did he get a look down first? - he could certainly hear the roar of the water!) and the karabiner joining the two slings at the head was clipped onto the wire. As he was moved along, the other two sets of slings were similarly attached. The slight overhang of the wall meant that the stretcher hung more or less horizontally. It now became apparent that the front slings were slack compared to the latter sets. This had the disconcerting effect of a head-down attitude to the stretcher, meaning that Paul slowly slid tight into the helmet mounted on the stretcher, which proved uncomfortable for him. I tried to hold him up level, but this was very tiring and awkward, particularly as I had to move along myself and swap the head krab over at every bolt. Thus we slid the stretcher along the wire, moving each hanging krab round each bolt in turn.

The method seemed to work reasonably well, and with more attention to detail would prove to be easier than we made it. I was only wearing a belt, not a full harness, and this proved to be quite painful by the time we got to the end. Communication with the Italians was resolved in the true British way of just shouting louder. (I learnt early in the week that "SILENCIO!" was quite useful.) Yes, there will always be a bit of a problem of communication along the wire, but with alert people acting as relays, we could get by without the natural *fortissimo* players. Control of the ropes was relatively easy: as one was taken in the other was paid out for the full length of the traverse. I don't recall the exact method of clipping the casualty's lifeline to the wire or bolts, but that would need some care. The number of people on the wire would have been four on one span as a maximum, well within the capabilities of the bolts and wire, but well worth assessing before doing this sort of thing in any cave.

Another method, another occasion. I think it would repay a visit to try it out again, with less pressure on time and international relations.

*Graham Christian*

### Which Kit?

One of the aspects of search and rescue in cave rescue that often confuses members of the Team is which type of search kit needs to be used in which situation. Basically, there are three types of kit in operation with WBCRT and these are: dry search kits (we have 12 of these); streamway (wet) search kits (there are four of these) and first aid kits (three of these). These kits are intended to be used as follows:

#### 1. Dry Search Kits

These are for use in searches where the search area is one of dry passage only. For example, most of Ogof Ffynnon Ddu II Top Entrance and passages this side of the streamway would be

searched with these kits. The relatively large number of these kits allows many search teams to be deployed if there is sufficient manpower. The kits contain basic first aid equipment and the most basic rewarming items.

#### 2. Streamway Search Kits

The wet kit is for use when a streamway is being searched or for when an area is being searched which may follow on from a long streamway or wet section. The four kits allow the OFD stream search pattern to be used, with each of the four search teams carrying one of the kits. These kits contain the same first aid equipment as the dry kits plus additional rewarming devices, such as a more robust bivvi bag, small stove, hot drinks and balaclava, etc.

#### 3. First Aid Kits

These kits are comprehensive first aid kits intended to be used only by trained advanced first aiders, paramedics or doctors. They should not be deployed until such time as an injury is known to have occurred. This ensures that a kit or kits is not sent out on a search and cannot then be recovered quickly for use in assisting a casualty that has been found by a different search team. The reason why we have more than one first aid kit is in case of multiple injury, multiple incident and/or prolonged evacuation of a casualty. Note that there are currently nearly 40 people trained as advanced first aiders in WBCRT with around another 30 trained to basic level. Finally, a first aid kit will only normally be issued by a Warden or Executive Officer.

Although all this makes good common sense, it is surprising how often the wrong kit has been selected initially in practices and incidents, resulting in a delay whilst the mistake is corrected. If you would like to know more or actually take a look at the contents of the kits, please don't hesitate to speak to me or the Equipment Officer, Ali Garman.

*Gary Evans*

### Future Training

Hi everyone, this is your new training officer, Toby Dryden. First of all I would like to thank Brian Bowell for all the hard work and commitment he has put in over the years as Training Officer.

I would like to find out what you want over the coming year, (a Ferrari or beach hut in the sun is not an option). Over the years it has been the WBCRT committee that has decided what programme should run, but I would like to find out what sort of training you would like. SRT rescue, boulder chokes, first aid, comms, surface navigation; you tell me. If I go ahead with something and nobody turns up the answer may be "I've done that ten years ago, so I don't need to do it again". So you decide. Do we have Saturday, Sunday, midweek in winter or not? Also tell me if Wednesday is OK or would you like it changed to Friday night or any other, of course it's no good making the suggestion and then not turning up.

People have said in the past that rescue is elitist, so they don't want to know, others have commented on it being SWCC and have said "I'm not going there". If by elitist you mean people are willing to put themselves out, learn the techniques and learn how to work with other people then yes, I suppose it is. However, it's no good having a group of good hard cavers dashing into the cave not knowing how to look after the patient or how to use the gear. Yes most of you are excellent cavers, but you didn't dash into a cave with your SRT gear, put it on and off you went. You had to be taught how to use it first. The same applies to rescue. We have had

people come along in the past three years who have taught us new techniques, these same sessions aren't one-way, we need your input to help us improve so please come.

As for many team members and the venue often being SWCC, yep you're right, most of it is. If it wasn't for SWCC, the WBCRT would probably not exist. Or if it did, it would probably take twice as long to organise things and I can think of at least two people who would be dead by now, one with a burst spleen the other a hypothermic caver in the streamway. SWCC is the largest club in south Wales with large premises, they have a big pool of people to call on, which we rely on. They kindly allow us to store our equipment and we have the full run of the club when there are big rescues. What we want are people who are willing to put themselves out to help others. You need to know that if you were the one to have an accident in the far reaches of a cave, then people would move heaven and earth to get you to safety. O.K., you can say "Why should I get involved, we haven't had a big rescue for years". It will happen, maybe in the far reaches of Draenan or Dan-yr-Ogof, or some cave that has not been found yet, so support your local rescue team, whether it is WBCRT or Gwent CRT. REMEMBER IT COULD BE YOU (OR ME). So do come along to our rescue practices - see you there. *Toby Dryden*

## THE NATIONAL SCENE

### News from the BCRC

The WBCRT Advanced First Aid course is - justifiably - receiving accolades from all over. Every meeting I attend seems to mention the course. It is really great to see such hard work recognised and be the subject of a wish to emulate. Great stuff, a real feather in the WBCRT cap.

#### *Cave Radios*

The troglophone is happening! Suffice to say that the selection of the type of device to be adopted caused some problems within the BCRC. However egos were ignored and the Hey design was chosen. A field meeting in March, attended by Graham Christian, Chris Grimmer and myself for SWCRO, tested several types over Speedwell Cavern and clear speech was possible over approx. 450m. The French system worked well but it will be using surface mount technology, be more expensive and not expected to reach pre-production prototype until next year.

Most cave radios work on the same basic principle and the Hey design was chosen because it is the closest to being ready to produce and the BCRC could have a direct input into the final package (we were actually told by one designer that the BCRC would have no input into his design and that he knew what we wanted - and we are paying!). The Hey design differs from the Ogofone in that it uses both linear and loop antennae. The linear antenna gives ground (earth) return and the loop the magnetic bi-directional as in the Ogofone, the Hey giving a wider degree of flexibility and range. The aim is that the surface team lays out a linear antenna at a suitable location (pre-determined by testing) and the underground party either deploys a similar antenna or the loop as required. For searching the loop would be used and the increase in efficiency of the design will allow a much greater reception/transmission bubble. When the target is found the underground team may deploy the linear antenna if it is going to be a long job or move with the casualty using the loop. So for example we should be able to pre-select surface sites that would allow the underground teams to communicate over large areas of the cave without the surface team having to move position, we

should also be able to cover deep sites like Dan-yr-Ogof.

A small team representing most CROs has reached agreement on the basic spec. of the radio:

- \* Selectable loudspeaker and PTT microphone/earpiece.
- \* External batteries
- \* Auto transmit beep at 30 sec. intervals. (Basically a "comfort" feature so that both teams know your unit is working - the same as with the Ogofone.)
- \* Push button continuous tone
- \* On/off/volume switch
- \* LED on/off indicator
- \* A barrier box to allow the switches etc. to be separated from the electronics for cave proofing.

Part of the concept is that teams will be able to choose how to fund a unit. They should be able to buy a complete working set or parts (for example printed circuit boards) and finish off themselves. The SWCRO has allocated £500 and the CRO £250 to the development cost (I believe other CROs have also donated) to speed things along. John Hey is producing the first trial unit now and we expect trials before the autumn. The design will become public knowledge and the intention is to try for grant funding to help defray costs to CROs.

### *BCRC Constitution*

The BCRC constitution amendments are continuing apace and should reach charity status in 2000

### News from the Mountain Rescue Council

#### *Radios*

Two new high band frequencies have been allocated. The frequencies have not yet been divulged but we may be able to use the high band sets that Sam acquired some time ago.

#### *Third Party Insurance*

As you should know all team members are covered for third party liability claims by a policy taken out by the MRC. This covers all but professional medics who should have their own cover via work. It has been stated that they are also covered provided they do not go beyond the first aid training provided by teams. I would treat this with some circumspection. We are all covered for operational matters, but it is not a licence to drop bollocks!

Unfortunately a MRC member organisation took it upon themselves to ask the insurers direct what would be the position if one of their members injected morphia into a vein on the wrist of a casualty. The insurers responded by questioning the training which would allow such a fundamental and gross error by a first aider and deciding to re-cost our medical liability cover. The net result has been a refusal to renew the cover at present until they have re-evaluated. The 1998/1999 cover has been extended but the MRC may have to pay a increased premium, which will have to come from scarce resources. The MRC has made an impassioned plea for members to address such questions via the Council. The sub committees can find the information by the best method without jeopardising the status quo.

Another insurance item was raised. It's a long story but one or two of the MRC regional bodies want the police, Home Office or someone else to increase the death or injury insurance cover for team members. I have very strong views on this. I believe that anyone who wants high insurance cover should seek their own, and if their participation is subject to this being provided then they

should not be part of a voluntary rescue organisation. I am part of the team because I want to be. I enjoy being part of a team and I think I am of some use. I also enjoy rescues and rescue practices. The buzz from getting it right and the sense of commitment and belonging that is apparent, I find very satisfying. The very fact that we do it unpaid by choice allows us much greater freedom to control our methods and equipment than any statutory body. We are not subject to the Health and Safety at Work regulations by exclusion.

I am afraid that there are those who think that they are indispensable and strive to give the impression that they HAVE to undertake these dirty, arduous and sometimes dangerous tasks. It was pointed out by the police representative that a constable has no more cover than we do at present. The police federation have organised an extended cover for officers at an average cost of £19 each per month. Pete Cardy has a saying: "People are like a bucket of water. Take them out of the lake and you can't see the hole they left behind" 'Nuff said.

#### *Little Dragons*

As most of you know I produce the Little Dragon for the MRC who issue them to teams. The same organisation who questioned the insurers also produced a report which trashed the LD and the principle of airway insulation. This report was widely circulated by the organisation and caused a great deal of confusion and concern. It put the wind up me as it stated that harm could be done using the LD.

I was very relieved at the outcome of a joint medical and equipment subcommittees meeting which totally exonerated the LD and the improvements I have made. It was also stated that a conservative estimate of 2000 hours use had not resulted in any instance of complications or danger to a casualty.

The MRC has issued a statement that they approve the LD and recommend its use for the treatment of hypothermia in the field and again pleaded for organisations to go through the proper channels if they have a query. The MRC ordered another 15 units, six to be allocated to cave rescue teams.

On a final note the delegate who had been tasked to bring the report to the attention of the MRC, after circulation, stated that as a newcomer to the Internet he had typed in "mountain hypothermia" on a search engine. A site he reached was the Alpine School of Medicine in Chamonix ([http://perso.wanadoo.fr/dmtmcham/dmtm\\_uk.htm](http://perso.wanadoo.fr/dmtmcham/dmtm_uk.htm)) In the page on hypothermia they state that the only realistic treatment for hypothermia in the field is airway insulation, and show a picture of the Little Dragon, which they use. They are regarded as a world authority on the treatment of mountain hypothermia.

#### *MRC Constitution*

The AGM approved the new constitution which re-affirms the status of the BCRC within the MRC as a associate member organisation - as they are within the BCRC.

#### *Blues and Twos*

There are no national guidelines as to the use/abuse of blue lights and two-tones by voluntary organisations. Each police authority will make its own decision. Some feel that it is illegal for non-statutory bodies to have them fitted. The ACPO is getting a bit twitchy so the advice from the MRC is to use them WITH THE UTMOST CARE.

- \* They do not generate a zone of invincibility and police driving instruction states that users have to be more careful because of unpredictable actions of those trying to get out of your way - or simply having the shit scared out of themselves by injudicious use !
- \* Never use them offroad.
- \* Never use them to "jump" lights.
- \* If you commit any road traffic offence whilst driving our ambulance YOU are responsible and you will find no excuse of circumstance, the same as any police, fire or ambulance driver.
- \* In cave rescue it is highly unlikely that you will need them to arrive two minutes quicker.
- \* The only use may be when transporting a seriously injured casualty and the controller should have organised a fully kitted and skilled and trained unit for road transport.

#### *Equipment Development*

We have been working on replacing the figure-of-eights with GriGris following the work the CRO have done. I have asked for info from other CROs and so far the results have all been positive. It is intended that a surface practice is held so we can all try them out. Figure-of eights have served their purpose and the GriGri has a lot more uses, and has been shown to hold a rescue load better than a figure-of-eight, which will stop a rescue load when your hand and arm have been pulled in to provide enough friction.

The Bridgend MRT have tried a GriGri in a snatch rescue (plucking a casualty from mid-rope). We really ought to practice snatch rescues which are more than simply the domain of self-rescue SRT.

*Jopo*

#### **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

##### **SWSARA Annual Rescue Practice - October 9-10th 1999**

SWSARA is the South Wales Search & Rescue Association. It represents our local mountain, cave and search dog rescue teams nationally on the Mountain Rescue Committee. South Wales Cave Rescue Organisation (SWCRO) represents the West Brecon and Gwent teams on SWSARA. Each year SWSARA holds a large practice event involving all the teams, and hosted by one of them; this year it is the turn of SWCRO. A small group: Toby Dryden, Adrian Fawcett, John Jones, Jopo, Kevin Munn and myself are planning the event.

We are organising a practice to represent a major mountain/cave rescue incident. It must occupy and stretch five mountain rescue teams, a search dogs team and, hopefully, two cave rescue teams. Perhaps our biggest concern is volunteers from the cave rescue teams to play a variety of roles in the event. We will need to put groups of walkers and casualties on the hill to simulate parties in need of help. The casualties will be made up to look like exhausted, broken or distressed people. We will also need our advanced first aiders and assessors to assess the rescue teams' good practice. SWSARA uses a form of peer assessment to observe and report on the performance of teams in the field. There will be other jobs as well, depending on the exact nature of the exercise.

If we are to make this a success we will need the help of as many West Brecon and Gwent team members as possible. I estimate that at least 25-30 people will be needed to provide the teams with a worthwhile exercise, and that's without a cave rescue component

to the event. So, please, we need members to commit themselves now to supporting the event, a vague intention to help out " if I'm around on the weekend" will make it hard for us to assign jobs and prepare.

At Penwyllt and Dragon Caving Gear there are recruiting posters, these outline what's happening on the weekend. Please add your name and a contact phone number if you are happy to help. If you have a particular skill; first aid, mountain navigation, rope work etc. please indicate that as well. You could also talk to Toby Dryden or Adrian Fawcett about how you can help. But remember, it really needs to be a firm commitment.

At present Toby Dryden and Adrian Fawcett are recruiting-officers, Kevin Munn is organising communications and myself, Jopo and John Jones are writing the exercise. At some time over the summer we will need a get together of all those involved to turn our cunning plan into an exciting weekend for us all. Please join in.

*Brian Bowell.*

## MIDWEEK NEWS

### 'Twas in the Deep Midwinter - the Wednesday Evening Workshops

The team ran its fourth recent season of mid-week workshops over the last winter and spring. I have been asked to sum them up and describe some of the more memorable ones.

The programme featured topics run in previous seasons and some new ones. We also extended the workshops into the spring and ran 22 sessions. 34 members managed to come along during the six month period, the average turnout was seven. Rhys Williams and Alan Braybrooke were the most regular attendees. We learned that first-aid topics are less of an attraction than more general practical skills events. This is most likely because we have such a good first aid course and so many team members have qualified.

The format on a Wednesday settled down to members arriving after the start time, complaining about the cold and wanting a hot drink. Work went on till about 9.30 and then the real enthusiasts adjourned to the Copper Beech for a plenary session. Most of the sessions involved practical exercises and one or two even involved going caving. Two of the workshops stick in my mind as being particularly instructional, besides having a common thread.

Early in December we ran a session on the use of our various radio and other comms systems. These are a vital aspect of rescue and it is important that we can all use them. Apart from the mechanics of setting them up and getting them working, it is important to ensure that messages are clear and understood. A common means of learning these things is to pass on the instructions for a task via the radio or telephone. It can be made more difficult by using two independent systems such as the France phones and VHF radios. When the task is also unfamiliar the difficulty is compounded.

When we have done these Chinese Whisper exercises before, it has been to get the Little Dragon up and running. But this year we tried something new; set up a Z-Rig using GriGris. Most of us had never seen a GriGri, so the task was interesting to say the least. We concluded that:

- \* The task needs careful analysing and breaking down into small chunks.
- \* There is a need to confirm understanding at each stage.

- \* Complex messages need breaking down into smaller bites.

Jopo ran a couple of sessions on some of the new rope and hauling methods being used by other rescue teams. Pitch hauling, the way we do it, needs quite a few cavers and could be hazardous if it went wrong. At present the hauling rope and casualty lifeline are belayed through figures-of-eight, each managed by a team member. If there were to be a failure it is unlikely that the belay would hold (unless the belayer's arm were threaded through the figure-of-eight!) Other teams are using the Petzl GriGri to replace the figure-of-eight. This is a device made specifically for belaying and is very popular with outdoor pursuits centres etc. It seems very straightforward to set up and use. It is also simple to unload it and recover from difficulties.

The use of ropes, pulleys and GriGris to set up hauling systems with an increased mechanical advantage was also discussed and demonstrated. These systems seem effective and need less people to work them. The cave rescue teams in Yorkshire use them as standard now. We all concluded that there needs to be a team practice with these newer systems and hardware in the near future.

The season was a success, certainly my daughter enjoyed herself. Highlights for her were: making the tea, and Matt Rees helping her to micro-navigate over the OFD reserve. No doubt there will be a programme next winter. So get your suggestions for topics and formats to Toby Dryden.

*Brian Bowell.*

### Editor's Note

My thanks to all those who have taken the time and effort to write for this edition of *The Way Out*. Special mention must go to Gary Evans who, as usual, assembled most of the material, harangued contributors and then passed the finished work to the printers and arranged the distribution!

If you have information or an opinion to pass on, an event to advertise or a comment to make, please let me know. Your feedback on anything you've read in this or previous editions of *The Way Out* would be especially welcome. Material can be sent by post to me at:

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

or faxed to me via the offices of *Classic and Sports Car* magazine. Please note that the magazine's fax number has recently changed; it is now:

**0208-267-5318**

Anything sent by fax must be very clearly marked with my name; I'm not often in the office and we get a lot of faxes so it is easy for mine to go astray! Sorry but I'm not on e-mail at the moment.

When submitting material, please bear in mind what I mentioned earlier; *The Way Out* is now an occasional publication that only goes out when enough material has been collated and, cavers being cavers, this never happens quickly. So don't be disappointed if you have to wait a while to see your work in print!

*Tony Baker*