

The WAY OUT

Spring 2009



The Newsletter of the
West Brecon Cave Rescue Team

Supported by:
The Sports Council For Wales

The Way Out is distributed freely but a donation to the team would be very welcome.

2009 Training

Its been good to see fresh faces turning up to the mid week training, let's keep this up and learn and share knowledge and skills. Training is the place where we can afford to make mistakes and learn from them, so let's get amongst it and do just that.

For more info. on any of the above, or to let WBCRT know you will be attending an event, then feel free to contact the WBCRT Training Officer, Toby Dryden on 07967 144660 or email tobydryden@lineone.net.

For first aid training queries or requests then please contact the WBCRT First Aid Officer, Gary Evans on 07836 748752 or email gary@swcro.fsnet.co.uk

Cave Rescue Scenarios, LNRC & Bridge Cave, Sat 11th July 2009

We will have 3 objectives for the day: to move a casualty through the entrance series of LNRC, to bring a casualty out of Bridge Cave and to work with Cave Rescue Divers undertaking a scenario through the sump.

Cave Rescue, OFD 1½, Sat 10th Oct 2009

Locating and rescuing an injured Caver from OFD 1 ½. This will be run as full rescue practice with a medical scenario and control elements being handled in real time.

Cave Rescue, Gower Caves, Sat 12th Dec 2009

Previously called off due to flooding, a rescue scenario in one of the Gower Caves.

Joint Practice, SWSARA Joint Practice, Sat 20th Feb 2010

The annual rescue practice with South Wales Search and Rescue Association, working closely with the South Wales Mountain Rescue Teams.

Mid Week Training

Wednesday 1st July Surface Navigation

Tuesday 1st September Riggering for Cave Rescue

!GOOD NEWS ALL ROUND!

We had our annual general meeting and several executive posts have changed hands, the entire list of the committee is above. Its great to see new faces and we are hoping for a good 2009. The other good news is that donation income is up on previous years, which is a bonus for WBCRT. This is largely due to the coins thrown into the Coracle Pool in Dan Yr Ogof. Getting the money and making it presentable to our bank required a lot of effort, laughing and ingenuity (the use of snorkels and a concrete mixer!) from many members and we are very grateful to Ashford Price at Dan Yr Ogof for giving us this concession for a year or so, these donations are so valuable!

NEW & Shiny BCRC Badge!!

The badge to the right is the new BCRC badge which will be available as of Wed 6th May 2009 to all team members....

WBCRT Exec for 2009.....

Chairman	Fred Levett	
Secretary	Clare Dallimore	
Treasurer	Spencer Drew	
Training Officer	Toby Dryden	*
Equipment Officer	Vince Allkins	
First Aid Officer	Gary Evans	*
Communications Officer	Gary Mitchell	
Equipment Development Officer	Ali Garman	*
Cave Diver Rescue Co-ordinator	Martyn Farr	
Cave Diving Representative	Andy Harp	
Fundraising Officer	Brian Jopling	*
SWCC Representative	Brian Jopling	*
Warden	Al Braybrooke	*
Warden	John Lister	*
Warden	Jules Carter	*
Ordinary Member	Katy Millie-Humphries	
Ordinary Member	Ian Holmes	
Ordinary Member	Clair Sansom	
Ordinary Member	Peter Hobson	

* refers to the Wardens of WBCRT



Hospital Cave - dive rescue - 1st September 2008

A casualty's point of view

We entered Hospital Cave at around 1330 on 1st September 2008. Entry was made easily over the dam and water levels were well under boot level in the pool. We took the first passage on the left and followed this till it narrowed to a choke, then returned to the entrance. We looked for signs of flooding and there was some foam on the lowered roof, but this was a metre or so above the current flow and put down to previous heavy rainfall, unlike the showers we'd seen that day. The water level showed no sign of change, with a flow about 6" or so deep, so we past through to the rest of the cave via the lowered roof.

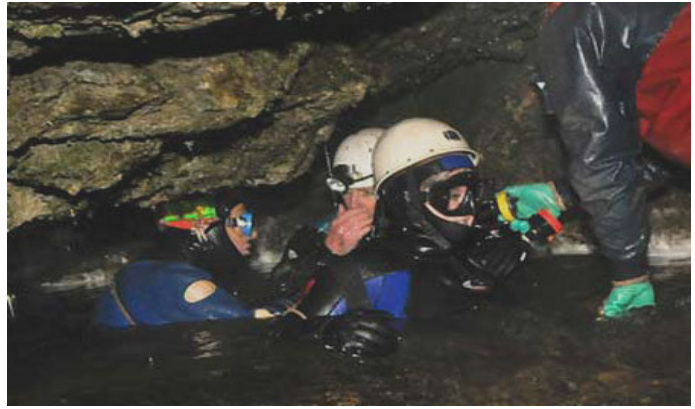
The water flow came from a streamway on the right, from a passage that could be entered if you fancied a wet crawl. To the left the chamber rose and we scrambled over boulders to where it split, one passage continuing right and a climbing leading to a high chamber. We took the right passage and after a fork on the left (which I thought may have linked to the choke at the end of the first passage we explored) we met another streamway flowing down into a body sized streamway, scrambling up to the right over a rocky waterfall we entered the bottom of a large bowl shaped chamber. There was a small passage higher behind us, so we followed the river for a few minutes to its sump, then returned and entered the higher passage. We negotiated a boulder choke and down-climbed a slab into a small chamber, then descended again into the first chamber this side of the low roof, finding that our exit had sumped. We has been this side of the low roof for around 40 minutes, the water flow had not visibly increased but the pool depth had risen by at least a metre leaving no air space, but allowing us to see daylight pass through.

This was at 1430, with our call out arranged for 1530. Not wanting a long wait and a rescue we rushed back to see if we could squeeze the choke at all and bypass the sump, but as we approached this section the calm waterfall we had previously scrambled up was a torrent that seemed to be rising. With no knowledge of how far the river might rise we headed back to the highest point we had found and settled down, both being quite wet and cold. We entered survival bags and sat in the kisu we had, on what turn out later to be quite an uncomfortable rock.

Thinking that if levels dropped, someone from outside would probably come in to find us, so we decided not to leave the shelter again as we were concerned about maintaining body temperature. We could hear both rivers and occasional stones moving, and after 8 hours or so I'm sure I heard a dog barking, or maybe it was just me (barking that is). Round 2200 we thought we had heard some footsteps and so called out a couple of times, but received no answer and so didn't investigate in order to stay warm. 10 minutes after this we heard another noise and shouted again, this time hearing a response from Martin who had not heard us the first time round, perhaps due to his diving hood. In this instance a whistle would have alerted us to his presence quite easily.

We moved our shelter to the sump area to be in closer contact with Martin, and saw that the water level and flow had changed little since my previous check some 5 hours before, although there was significantly more foam. Over the next two hours, till our eventual dive out, the water flow did drop and we saw the pool level recede almost a foot.

The water level by the sump never rose more than a metre above the low roof, as far as we saw, and the other streamway running into the hillside didn't back up and overflow into the chamber between itself and the sump. This left ample room for us to sit it out and at no point were we threatened by the risk of rising water, and the air remained fresh, if not cold, the whole time.



I'd just like to pass on our greatest thanks from myself and Laura to everyone who was involved with the rescue, our assumptions about your efforts outside helped the hours pass easily, and we were rewarded with first class cave diving tuition and more importantly, our safety.

Thank you,

Matt Woodfield

A Few facts

The forecast for the Swansea valley was rain early, clearing up later. This unfortunately was VERY Wrong.

They did the right thing by waiting until the levels fell or the team arrived.

The sump was never less than 4m long throughout the rescue.

From a kit and procedure take, everything went well and no shortages were noted.

It was noted that the cas comforts box had to be weighted as would any other gear in Pelicases, should it have been required.

Le!, Jude, Mick and Marj, and later, Elsie B, Peter Dobson and Quilly manned Penwyllt and kept us supplied with food and drink.

The other members called out were, Jopo, Toby, Vince, Pat, Gary M, Steve Rose and Martyn. Gary Evans was on standby. Martyn decided that no standby diver was required although Steve Thomas had been called earlier but could not be contacted. John Lister took the initial call from the police.

At about 15.00 on Monday there was a torrential storm which flooded DYO carpark and camping fields to the extent that tents were floating. Nobody is aware of the Hospital Cave catchment and it was not known if this caused the sump to close or if the pulse had come through. This was important in as much as the decision to dive them out if they and Martyn were happy and whether it was possible without undue risk.

A job well done. A bigger callout would have been more stood around waiting, wet and getting cold so we are happy we got it right. What is worrying is that this is the 3rd mid-week callout in 2008 - not counting the dogs! If this is a trend then we have to look at our midweek resources.

The police were present throughout and did a great job supporting us. The MR were pretty quick to respond and as soon as the cavers were located, departed after offering any further assistance if required.

SO.....

- 1. Be extremely water/weather aware.**
- 2. Flood Pulses can be massive and unexpected.**
- 3. If trapped get to a "safe" area and wait it out.**
- 4. Be prepared—carry food, first aid and survival gear.**
- 5. Always leave a Call Out with someone.**

Radio News

I'm pleased to inform rescue team members that we have just received our new stock of hand held high-band radios. Four new units and spare batteries were purchased with the assistance of the Sports Safety Grant funding.

For the last year or so the team has been trialling use of the Motorola GP360 hand held high-band radios underground. The results in some of the caves were quite unexpected. Reasonable distances of communication were achieved in caves such as; Tunnel Cave, OFD, Lygad Llwhchr, and Craig y Nos Quarry Cave, etc. Surface to Underground communication was also possible (with the use of the Landrover base station). Trials were also carried out in the mineral mines of Dylife, but the nature of the mines had a very detrimental effect on the communications.

The new Motorola GP366R is a very similar model to the one the team already uses, so there should not be any difficulty with getting to grips with them. They do however have some additional features;

- Small & compact – Ideal for carrying underground
- Fully submersible
- Emergency call button
- Lone worker features
- Group call facility

These new four radios (call signs Dragon 7, 8, 9 & 10) will be the preferred high-band radios to use underground, but as they are fully compatible with the existing GP360's they can also be used above ground in larger search type rescues. They have arrived pre-programmed with all the Mountain Rescue and repeater channels for use in our area.

Want to learn more, about the communication systems the WBCRT has then please join us at any of our rescue practices.

Gary Mitchell
Communications Officer WBCRT



GET SOME LIGHT ON THE SUBJECT

We have an opportunity for members to buy the useful **3w Fusion-X Luxeon** torches at £15.10p each (normally £37.99).

Each torch features
• 3w Fusion-X Luxeon, 19 hours burn time, Tested to 95 metres depth, Aluminium LED housing provides heat dissipation ensuring maximum LED performance, Silicone cover for impact protection, Magnetic on/off switch, Requires 4 x alkaline AA-cell Duracell batteries (supplied)

- Available in black (120 lumens) or red (160 lumens)



SR6 6 LED Torch. £6.10 each

- Tested to 50 Metres depth
- 18+ Hours Burn Time
- Impact Resistant
- Supplied with Batteries
- Comfortable Grip
- Unlike conventional diving torches, the SB6 won't need replacement bulbs
- Magnetic on/off switch
- Supplied with Lanyard



Please contact Clair Sansom via email on mountainstoclimb@yahoo.co.uk with the type of torch you would like and the amount/s and if I have got interest from people regarding the above torches then I will put an order in. I will also be sending an email out soon regarding Keela clothing and Terra Nova Gear.

Treasurers Report for year ending 31 December 2008

WBCRT have once again had an exceptional year. The surplus on the accounts is similar to last years, but that was itself much greater than the average of the previous 10 years, which was approximately £3,000.

We have also benefited from the generosity of several caving clubs, some of whom we have not even had to rescue! We are extremely grateful for the support of our two substantial individual donors.

Fundraising has been a continuation of familiar activities, including the August party and auction. The Guide Dogs event in September was worth £1,000 to us last year, and helping with a film about the 2003 Otter Hole rescue earned the team £450. The year ended with a quiz night in the revived Tafarn Y Garreg, which brought us £102.

We have again been able to take advantage of such grants as are available, although this appears to be declining year by year. One of our grants was received in late December, so the equipment that it is to fund had not been purchased before the year end, flattering the surplus by £1,322. The other grant included £300 to help fund the advanced first aid course.

2008 ends with our finances in very good health and we should be able to comfortably weather such economic turbulence as may be ahead.

Patrick Hall FCCA, Honorary Secretary, 17 Jan 2009

Rescues 2008 — 2009

Jan 08	Missing person search-found before CR search
Feb 08	Dislocated knee in Porth Yr Ogof
Feb 08	Lost ion round trip in Agen Allwedd
Mar 08	Cavers trapped by flood water in Dan Yr Ogof
May 08	Black mountain sheep rescue
June 08	Blaen Cwm dog rescues (x2)
July 08	Dislocated knee in Llygad Llwhchr
Sept 08	Cavers stuck in Hospital Cave by flood water
Sept 08	Broken leg in the Sychrhyd Gorge
Oct 08	Overdue Party
Nov 08	Gelli, Rhondda dog rescue
Dec 08	Lost party in Cwm Dwr
Feb 09	Lost party in OFD

The British Cave Rescue Council

The representative body for UK cave rescue teams. Prior to 1979 the BCRC, first formed in 1967, was not representative of the cave rescue teams in the UK. A meeting was called, inviting all cave rescue teams operating at the time, to decide if the BCRC should be dissolved or re-constituted to better represent cave rescue in the UK. The decision was to re-constitute and a new executive was formed.

All of the 15 UK active cave rescue teams are members, including the Irish and Scottish teams, (devolution is not an issue within the BCRC). Each team has a vote at general meetings and, with the exception of the Chairman who has a casting vote if needed, the officers do not vote at general meetings. There is an AGM in April and the officers have one or two meetings as necessary. Most business is conducted electronically. Initially as the South Wales Cave Rescue Organization and now as the WBCRT there has always been a team member as an officer on the BCRC executive. The prime role of the BCRC is to represent UK cave rescue nationally wherever representation is needed or the executive feels cave rescue should be represented.

Where local issues are concerned teams conduct their own business, with the BCRC as back-up only if requested. The BCRC is not a regulatory body.

The BCRC is an Associate member of the Mountain Rescue of England & Wales with two votes. Cave rescue teams belong to their local MRE&W region – in our case the South Wales Search And Rescue Association (SWSARA). Through our representative we, (and the Gwent CRT), have a voice, and a vote, within SWSARA .

As is always the case most of the work of the BCRC is in the background and concerns national issues such as representation on the United Kingdom Search and Rescue, UKSAR, (www.dft.gov.uk/transportforyou/uksar/uksarorganisations/), a government sponsored body drawing voluntary and statutory search and rescue teams together to address common problems. The BCRC also maintains an active relationship with the Association Of Chief Police Officers, the Fire and Rescue Service and the Health and Safety Executive. Through an active presence the BCRC has been able to raise awareness of what cave rescue is as most outside caving have no idea of what cave rescue teams do, the skill levels attained, how they are organized and funded, or the resources we have available. The BCRC was instrumental in excluding cave and mountain rescue from Health & Safety at Work, Working at Height and Confined Space legislation. It is recognized that the protocols, skill and training within teams is the result of experience and that teams have in place generic risk assessment. Whilst not subject to HSE legislation BCRC teams recognize that there is a duty of care to it's members and that is as great as statutory rescue services bear, but on our terms, not that of some legislator without the slightest understanding of cave rescue and it's unique problems and challenges.

What does the BCRC do for us?

Through membership of the BCRC cave rescue teams have the benefit of third party insurance for team members. As an associate member of the MRE&W teams benefit from some medical and rescue equipment sourced from National Health Service grants but most importantly the BCRC ensures that the interests of cave rescue is not subsumed by other bodies who have no understanding of the complexity of the work we do. There are outside pressures for cave rescue, (and mountain rescue), to 'conform'. Unless we speak at the highest level – with one voice – these pressures may succeed.

You should remember that to some we are seen as upstart amateurs and by others in the same category as the Women's Institute. It is true, I have seen cave rescue on the same list! The freedom we have as a team to develop techniques and protocols to OUR rules suited to OUR area of responsibility is a privilege we must jealously guard. We are small fry as viewed from outside. The BCRC gives us the best chance to remain in control.

Space here precludes mention of the other things that the BCRC does, to see more visit www.bcrc.org

Jopo, BCRC Equipment Officer.

A note from the chairman

Last year we responded to 12 incidents, a busy year. All those who stand ready to help with a rescue are volunteers giving up their own time. It's not just the time spent on active service but the training, maintenance work and running the team. We raise all the funds from donations or grants – not a penny comes direct from national government. So the end result it is about cavers helping cavers and we are proud of that. Cavers see themselves as independent, resilient and determined and so are we – determined to do our best for our friends and colleagues in trouble.

We hope you will consider what you can do to help us. Perhaps join the team or help with fund raising. Encourage your Club to become an Associate and contribute to the running of the team. There are many possibilities. Reading this edition of Way Out will give you a better insight into how we work.

If you are a member already then a big thank you for giving up your time. Rescues are never at a convenient time, in ideal weather or in easy caves. That doesn't matter to us, what matters is the welfare of those in trouble. That will always be our focus.

Fred Levett
Chairman

A note from me.....

I have had a lot of fun collating this issue of Way Out and in the process have gained a better understanding of how the WBCRT works. I still have a long way to go but am getting there. Many thanks to everyone who has helped in any way, either by giving me information of advice or otherwise useful information, it's much appreciated. The WAY OUT if you didn't already know is the WBCRT's news and information newsletter!

This is a newsletter for sharing information and opinions from YOU out there, regarding the team and about caving. So if anyone has any information on anything that has happened on a practice or incident that's provoked a query or reaction in you, or about new equipment, practices or something they would like to see in here, please send it to me. I will be collating for the next edition of WAY OUT after this one has gone out!

Send any articles to:

Clair Sansom, 56 Heol Gleien, Lower Cwmtwrch, Swansea, SA9 2TT. Or email me at mountainstoclimb@yahoo.co.uk

This is my first time editing a newsletter of any kind so I'd like your opinions and also patience.