



GLOUCESTERSHIRE CAVE RESCUE GROUP



AUGUST 2011 NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the second GCRG newsletter for 2011. Hopefully this will prove to be a useful regular publication to be kept you informed of what GCRG has been up to & a notice of forthcoming training news.

Any newsletter can only be as good as the information printed within it and any articles for inclusion or general comments would be most welcome - contact the Chairman or Secretary.

Important Phone Numbers

GCRG Depot – 01594 827999

Dates for your diary

3rd/4th September 2011

* Combined exercise at Snailbeach Lead Mine (Shropshire)

4th December 2011

* Exercise at Wetsink

March 2012

* Exercise at a Cotswold stone mine

Committee Members

Chairman Paul W Taylor chairman@gcrg.org.uk 01452 505673 (H) 07803 539945 (M)	Secretary Peter Turier secretary@gcrg.org.uk 01452 539199 (H) 07879 903921 (M)	Treasurer Liz Maisey treasurer@gcrg.org.uk 01666 504647 (H)
Communications Officer Craig Cameron comms@gcrg.org.uk 01594 834481 (H)	Information Officer Gareth Jones info@gcrg.org.uk 01452 532014 (H) 07982 455650 (M)	Training Officer Andy Harp training@gcrg.org.uk 01594 840481 (H)

Equipment Officer Nicky Bayley equipment@gcrg.org.uk 01594 840481 (H) 07790 664278 (M)		
Ordinary Member Jon Maisey jon.maisey@btinternet.com 01666 504647 (H)	Ordinary Member Dave Appleing Dappleing@aol.com 01242 581385 (H)	Ordinary Member Steve Tomalin smtspeleo@virginmedia.com 01452 883189 (H) 07867 772341 (M)

Callout Wardens

Cheltenham / Tewkesbury / North Cotswolds	Maurice Febry 01242 242160 (H)	Dave Appleing 01242 581385 (H)
Bristol / Chepstow	John Elliott 01594 543881 (H)	John Hutchinson 01291 626376 (H)
Forest of Dean	John Berry 01594 822823(H)	Cliff Seymour 01594 832717 (H)
	Dave Tuffley 01594 824343 (H)	Andy Clark 01600 716970 (H)
Gloucester	Steve Tomalin 01452 883189 (H)	Paul Taylor 01452 505673 (H)
	Pete Turier 01452 539199 (H)	
Out of County	George Price 01531 821743 (H)	

Forthcoming Training

See the also "Dates for your diary"

Snailbeach Lead Mine – Joint Training Exercise

3rd & 4th September 2011

Last year, Midlands CRO organised a very successful joint training weekend with GCRG plus representatives from NWCRO & SECRO also attended. The weekend consisted of a rescue practice in Huglith Mine and a day of lectures and mini-training sessions covering working with helicopters safely, bad air underground, self-locking hauling systems, sleep deprivation and the effect on a cave rescue, equipment inspection, cave radios and SAR radio frequency allocation, surface search software, rescue from crown holes and use of the mine cam.

This year, we are holding a similar MCRO/GCRG training weekend event and are inviting representatives from North Wales CRO, S&M Wales CRT, Devon CRO, Mendip CR, South East CRO and Derbyshire CRO. We will be holding the training event on Saturday 3 and Sunday 4 September 2011.

We are planning an underground exercise in Snailbeach Lead Mine on the Saturday. There are several pitches so if you have SRT kit please bring it, although there will be plenty of non-SRT tasks as well. We are organising a programme of lectures and mini-training sessions for the Sunday in Snailbeach village hall and any offers of cave rescue-related lectures or mini-training sessions would be very welcome. Camping will be available on the Friday and Saturday nights close to Snailbeach exclusively for us.

Full information is below but it would be really helpful if you could tell me by 28 August 2011:

- a) if you will be attending, and if so, on what days, or both**
- b) if you are camping and what nights (camping is available Friday and Saturday)**
- c) if you are intending to eat at the pub on Saturday (so we can give the pub some warning)**

Saturday - underground rescue exercise

This will take place at the very interesting, multi-level Snailbeach Lead Mine, in Snailbeach. There will be a task for everyone, whether you are involved on the surface or go underground. If you are intending to go underground, please bring your furry suit, oversuit plus SRT kit. The mine is easily accessed by Perkins Level for a couple of hundred metres (although you will need wellies to keep dry), before the first pitch is reached.

Everybody is asked to meet at Snailbeach Village Hall, Snailbeach, Shropshire (SJ374022). The practice will start at 9.30 am but it is assumed that like a real rescue, most will arrive over the next 90 minutes or so.

We are hoping that a pair of the new Nicola 3 radios will be available to test at the underground practice.

Sunday - training presentations/workshops

On Sunday, we will be running a series of training presentations and workshops at Snailbeach Village Hall, Snailbeach. The programme is currently being finalised but we hope to include a general BCRC/MREW update by Bill Whitehouse; use of gas detectors; introduction to law for cave rescuers; a practical demonstration of the use of the mine cam; SARCALL; an update on cave rescue technologies including the Nicola 3 radios. The meeting time will be 10am to start at 10:30am. There will be tea and coffee available but we would ask that you please bring a mug. You will also need to bring lunch, as there are few facilities in Snailbeach.

Camping

The campsite is available on the Friday night as well as the Saturday night. The campsite is on land owned by Brook House but is a short distance away. Brook House is at SO356988. There is a new track from the road to Brook House. The actual camping area is at the intersection of two tracks at SO354989 and can be identified by the Red Toilet Block - this can be accessed direct from the road. Brook House and the campsite are at Pennerley which is on the minor road that goes through Snailbeach and Stiperstones - turn off the A488 at Ploxgreen or near Gravels. We will ensure that there are signs to the camping saying "MCRO" (in the dark it is not the easiest place to find). The cost of camping is £5 per tent per night (for up to 2).

Please do not pay at the farm - the money will be collected by Paulina Biela & myself. We will need to camp neatly as the campsite is not huge but it will be for our exclusive use.

The Pub

The pub is the Stiperstones Inn at SJ363004 (Postcode SY50LZ), which is walking distance from the campsite. Web: www.stiperstonesinn.co.uk. Food is available up until 9.00 pm on Friday and Saturday. A bar has been allocated to us for the Saturday night. Beer is reasonably priced and main meals are in the £7.00 bracket. Menu on the web site.

If you need any more information, please contact me. If you get lost travelling to the venue, my mobile is 07985 212037 (I will call back if driving). I will aim to be at the campsite about 6.30-7pm on the Friday night.

Hope to see you in Shropshire!

Emma Porter
MCRO/GCRG

For further details contact:

Emma Porter [MCRO Training Co-ordinator], 90emma@tiscali.co.uk

4th December 2011

Exercise planned for Wetsink, in the area of the streamway and the pitch.

March 2012

Following on from the Whittington and Windrush practices, it is proposed that this month the exercise is located in another Cotswold stone mine, site to be confirmed.

RESCUE CALLOUTS INVOLVING GCRG

Saturday 16th April 2011

West Mercia Police Incident Number 152N160411. Biblins / Doward

Somewhere between 15:00 & 15:30 on Saturday April 16th 2011 I received a call at home on my mobile phone from West Mercia Police. (We could obtain the exact time on this from the West Mercia Police Incident Log)

At first the caller said she had dialled the wrong number as she wanted Longtown Mountain Rescue. I asked what for and she said that there was a Cave Rescue Incident in the Forest of Dean in the Symonds Yat Area. I informed her that in fact she had contacted the right person as I was the Chairman of GCRG and this fell in our area of responsibility.

We then discussed the incident and she explained that a mobile phone call had been made by a female indicating that there were two females in the party and the other person had sustained a broken leg and that there had been reference made to a "Bat Sanctuary"/Cave in the Monmouth/Symonds Yat Area. The Police and Fire & Rescue had already undertaken a surface search but had not gone

underground and she requested a response by cave rescue to undertake the underground searches. I obtained an Incident Number from her as 152N160411 and then commenced the call out of GCRG members.

I contacted GCRG Warden Dave Tuffley who took on the call-out of the Forest area. I was not able to contact Cliff Seymour; I contacted GCRG Warden Dave Appleing who took on the call-out of the Cheltenham area; I was not able to contact Maurice Febry; I contacted GCRG Warden John Elliott who took on the Call-out of the Chepstow Area; I phoned the GCRG Hon Secretary, left a message & phoned Trevor Perkins and arranged for him to attend. All the above would then precede to the RV Point which was to be the Biblins camp site.

I received a call from Jo Clarke & Gareth Jones as they had received a call from Sally Harvey as she had in turn received a call from the warden at the Biblins camp site requesting information on how to contact/call-out the Cave Rescue. Sally had passed on the relevant information and I presume this was then passed to the police? (I have subsequently spoken to the Warden and have delivered a copy of the GCRG Wardens information. We also need to check the information held by West Mercia Police)

On route to collect Gareth I received a call from the GCRG Hon Secretary. I outlined the details as I knew them at the time and asked him to contact GFRS control to get an incident number and advise GFRS that we were responding to this incident. I collected Gareth and then we set off for the GCRG depot to collect the Landrover & equipment. However we received a call from Nicky Bayley to say that she was already at the depot and would sort out the gear. Between the three of us we confirmed what equipment should be taken and arranged to meet her at Kerne Bridge as Nicky was not 100 % sure of the route down to the Biblins. At Kerne Bridge Gareth joined Nicky in the Landrover and we proceeded to the Biblins. By the time we arrived GCRG personnel had already been deployed to search the Doward (Pancake Mines).

At the Biblins an incident control was being managed by the Fire & Rescue (Hereford & Worcester) and GCRG members were co-ordinating with them. Our control system "T Card Board" was set up and a log started.

Two further GCRG groups were despatched to check the Lady Park Wood Mine area and to check all the sites from the KC Level back to Lords Wood No 16. Both teams were issued with GCRG radios. The second team were not 100% sure of the route to KC so checked from Lords Wood No 16 back towards the KC Level but did not locate it. Subsequently a third party was despatched to check this out. Contact was maintained at all times via the radios with the teams and they reported that nobody had been located. Liaison was maintained with the FRS control at all times to ensure that both they and we knew what was happening to ensure full "cross referencing" of team information.

At approximately 17:30 (it may well have been later) Longtown Mountain Rescue Team (LMRT) arrived on site and set up their incident control. Our control vehicle and the FRS control vehicle were then moved together so as to reduce the distances between all.

Mike Jones of LMRT took on the roll of co-ordinator and in consultation with the Police Pulsar a search area was agreed. Due to the limited availability of daylight this was kept quite small and close to the Biblins/Doward area. All the various teams involved were tasked to the search area.

A group of 7 GCRG personnel were despatched to check the caves at the Seven

Sisters Rocks and just beyond; the team leader was Steve Tomalin. All teams were back at the control location just as it started to get dark. Nothing was located by any of the search teams. At this time the Police stood all the teams down and indicated that Police enquires would continue during the night and a decision would be taken in the morning as to the next course of action. All GCRG personnel had left the Biblins by 21:00 and the Landrover returned by Nicky to the GCRG depot.

The GCRG Response to the incident site was 21, LMRT 18, FRS 8-10, Police 8-10 + Helicopter.

Observations

1. The initial 999 Call was very poor and vague and was received at 13:22.
2. Gloucester Fire and Rescue (Coleford Cliff Rescue) undertook a search of the cliffs at Symonds Yat (East) but did not search the caves.
3. Further surface searches were undertaken by the Police and the FRS on the west side of the River Wye.
4. We were not contacted until approximately 15:00–15:30.
5. The GCRG Response was good.
6. There was excellent liaison between all of the teams involved.
7. Radio comms worked very well. Both GCRG and LMRT were using their own team working channels with good reception from all locations and no cross interference. (I discussed with Mike Jones from LMRT that it would be good for both teams to programme their radios with the other teams respective team working channels. I have exchanged contact details with Mike. We need to discuss this with Craig).
8. I think we should send a copy of our Wardens list/Contact details to LMRT as there is a likelihood of further combined work in the future.
9. From the information provided at the time I think everything was done that could have been done.
10. The pre-printed sections of the OS Maps that we had in our Doward search plan proved to be very useful and we need to re-stock the folder.
11. Had a casualty been located in one of the caves or mines our initial equipment stock would have been sufficient to deal with this.
12. Our small scale "Brew Kit" again proved to be very useful and needs to be re-stocked.

Following overnight enquires by the Police and a further search by the Police Helicopter no trace was found or any reports of a missing person made. It was concluded that it was a hoax call. For GCRG it proved to be an excellent Training Exercise and thanks are sent out to all who attended.

Paul W Taylor
[Hon Chairman GCRG]

PREVIOUS PRACTICE EVENTS

BAN-Y-GOR

5th June 2011

"Victimised in Ban-y-Gor"

Not perhaps the best way to experience this Forest classic cave, but being the "victim" often falls to the smaller members of the Group when a rescue practice in some of the more challenging places is planned. I had been in this position a couple of times before in quite restrictive passages, so I knew what I was letting myself in for.

The plan was to attempt to evacuate a casualty from just beyond a squeeze known as The Stopper using the new Slix50 stretcher. However, once in the cave, we struggled to get the stretcher through while it was still in the tackle bag, and had to have a re-think.

The Stopper is a tight rift about 3m long which narrows almost like an egg-timer shape. It has been the site of 2 previous rescues when people have slipped down into the narrowest part, and become wedged. The potential for getting the stretcher and casualty stuck, and also the fact that there was no room to get the stretcher out of the bag let alone strap a victim into it helped to make the sensible decision to begin the extraction from the entrance side of The Stopper.

In the event of having to bring a casualty through in a stretcher, I dare say that some modification of the cave at several points would have to be considered.

Those of you who have been into Ban-y-Gor will no doubt appreciate the difficulties involved in a stretcher carry through the tight and unrelentingly awkward passages, even from this short distance into the cave. From my point of view, the carry went exceedingly well. There was only really one section where I felt a little squished, and this was mainly due to a krab on my belay belt getting jammed.

The short slix stretcher allowed me to push with my feet, the person at the foot of the stretcher providing a shoulder for footholds, (apologies to anyone who got kicked) I also had a small headlamp on which enabled me to see the roof and the walls in the constricted sections so I could protect my face. This isn't usually a problem, but made a big difference in this case. A big thanks to those people who worked hard clearing all the loose rocks at the entrance too, which made me feel a lot safer.

Being in the Slix50 stretcher did make a big difference as I had my feet and arms free to help make progress, although I'm not sure how much the casualty would actually be able to help if they were seriously injured. It did make me think about the hard work for both the casualty and the rescue team in the Otter Hole rescue some years ago. A sobering thought.

Volunteering to be the "victim" in these practices is something that everyone ought to experience at least once. It certainly makes you more aware of the issues from the casualty's point of view.

FUNDRAISING

A DIFFERENT WAY TO FUND RAISE?

At the base of a small cliff on the west bank of the River Wye, below Chepstow racecourse, is the entrance to a cave that is known as "Otter Hole".

This was first entered by caver Dave "Sparky" Parker in the early part of the 1970's when he visited the site accompanied by two local men George Gardiner & Cyril Fitzpatrick.

Although these two were not cavers, their interest in the site as a "cold store" due to the strong draught that emerged was very helpful for their "out-of-hours activities" down on the banks of the River Wye. (I will leave it to your imagination as to what this entailed but the River Wye is well known for its Sal--n).

Gaining a few metres of cave passage, Dave was also very impressed by the draught and little did he know what was going to unfold or that he would be back 40 years later involved in a project that would raise a large sum of money for the Gloucestershire Cave Rescue Group (GCRG).

The whole story of the work that followed from that initial visit is too long to tell in this limited report. However, by 1974 Dave had been joined by other cavers/diggers and the first major discovery of 300m of cave passage was made and this ended at a point that became known as "the Tidal Sump". (*Quite literally as the level of the river rose with the tide this section of the cave filled with water and sealed the entry or exit from the cave depending on which side of the sump you were at the time*).

Further discoveries followed and the cave length rose to 4km. Not only making it the longest cave in the Forest of Dean caving area at the time but its vast collection of stalagmites and stalactites were unparalleled in any other cave within the UK. Unequaled in quantity to this day and this has made it a Mecca for cavers from within the UK and around the world.

By 1984 when Dave made his last trip into the cave for a number of personnel reasons he had not visited the area of the cave where the vast proportion of these formations were located and to be honest it seemed very unlikely that he ever would.

Fast Forward to September 2009 and a meeting between Dave and his long standing caving friend Paul Taylor and Dave suddenly came out with the question " ***What do you think about a trip for me into Otter Hole to see the formations. You know I have never seen them?***"

To be honest this was something that Paul had wanted to do with Dave for many years and he was only too pleased to sort it out. However, this was not some thing that the two could undertake on their own. *At this point it is worth noting that any trip into Otter Hole is a serious undertaking; mud, water, the tidal sump and many hours of caving. It is not something to be taken lightly. Add to this that Dave would be over 73 years old by the time the trip could take place. This was going to be a significant event.*

Fast Forward again to Saturday May 22nd 2010 and the caving team of nine put together by Paul met at 08:00 in the Wynd Cliff forestry car park just outside the village of St Arvans; Dave and Paul already having taken part in a live phone interview to BBC Radio Gloucester en route to the meet.

Fortunately in the months preceeding the trip Paul had realised that this event would not only be of interest to the media but that it should also be recorded on film. It was not something that was going to be repeated every weekend.

So with formalities over and gear checked the party headed into the cave armed with a total of six cameras and a vast array of sound & lighting equipment. It was 09:30 when Dave entered himself. Added to all the filming gear were supplies of food, spare clothes, first aid kit and a small shelter and of course everyone's personal items. Fortunately only the food was required but contingency plans need to be made just in case an accident occurred.

Various sections of the cave including the famous "Tidal Sump" were filmed en-route and then the party reached the point that had been Dave's limit of past exploration and he set off up a rather narrow and tortuous section of cave passage that links the lower streamway section of the cave to the upper series where the bulk of the formations are located.

Once in this upper series the passage size increases significantly and the formations abound in all shapes sizes and colours. At times Dave was very quiet; contained in his own thoughts. Reaching the Hall of Thirty (so named as it contains 30 large stalactites and stalagmites) the film crew filmed from a distance leaving Dave to savour on his own the first sight for him of this magnificent collection.

Although the cave extends well beyond this point containing many more formations, Dave had achieved a major goal and he decided that it was time to start the long haul back to the entrance.

At 22:00, twelve and a half hours since he had entered the cave, Dave re-emerged into a blaze of film lights and greetings from an assembled group of his friends. Once all the rest of the party were out of the cave a bottle of champagne was opened and Dave's success toasted. Then it was back up the hill to the car park and a meeting with another old caving friend, Paul Hayward before heading back to Gloucester for a curry and more celebrations eventually retiring to bed at 03:30. Five hours later, Dave & Paul were up watching the "Rushes" from the previous days filming. Not a bad effort for a 73 year old.

Fast Forward again to October 11th 2010 and after many hundreds of hours of editing work and the "World Premier" of the new Otter Hole film was to be shown in the Palace Cinema Cinderford. Stretch limos, red carpet, champagne reception, film crew, paparazzi all the works.

Dave and the team were joined by 160 fellow cavers and members of his family and the general public for the first showing of the film to anybody other than Paul who somewhat nervously welcomed everybody and introduced the film. The applause and shouts of support at the end gave a good indication that it had been well received and as the evening was to be raising money for the GCRG a second film showing the group members in action was also shown. For everybody it was an evening that will be remembered for ever and of course it could not pass off without another curry. A second showing of the film took place in November when a further 80 people came to see it.

Due to the generosity of the cinema owners, Andrew Lougher and Karen Buckley, themselves both cavers and members of the GCRG, the proceeds from the ticket sales were given to GCRG and this raised almost £1000.00.

Back in 2003 a major rescue took place in Otter Hole when a female caver who was in the cave as part of a filming party, slipped around 1.5m and sustained a suspected fractured pelvis. The insuring rescue & recovery of her back to the surface involved 140 rescuers from not only the GCRG but the then West Brecon Cave Rescue Team WBCRT (now the South & Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team) Midland Cave Rescue Organisation, Severn Auxiliary Rescue Association the Police, Fire and Rescue and an Air Ambulance and lasted 24 hours.

Much of that journey back to the surface involved a "Semi Articulated Stretcher" provided by the WBCRT and manufactured by Jopling Rescue Equipment and since then has been on the wish list of the GCRG Equipment Officer.

With this injection of money into the funds it was decided it should be used to grant that wish and purchase a new SLIX 50 Stretcher. Added to this was a chance discussion during a car journey to attend the MREW November 2010 meeting and a subsequent discussion with the MREW Equipment Officer that resulted in a 50% grant from the MREW towards the cost of the new stretcher.

The Committee and membership of GCRG are very grateful for this support as this has enabled them to put a larger sum of money into their other project to replace their ageing underground communications equipment with the latest generation of "France Phones". So, not only a happy Equipment Officer but a happy Communications Officer as well.

The film has gone on to finish third in a Film Festival held in Napoli Italy and it is also available on DVD if you would like to experience the trip without the mud (Contact paultaylor@redhousefod.co.uk for details).

The GCRG would like to send their sincere thanks to everybody who attended the film nights.

Andy and Karen at the Palace Cinema.

The Underground Team: - Steve Tomalin, Gareth Jones, John Elliott, Mike Clayton, Jo Clarke, Jill Brunsdon.

Video Camera Operators: - Nicky Bayley, Gary Cullen & Paul Taylor.

The Surface Team :- Glenys Elliott, Ian Standing, Di Standing, Daniel Jones, Rose Taylor, Paul Hayward and of course not withstanding Dave "Sparky" Parker for all his efforts and hard work. As without him none of it would have been possible.

Paul Taylor
Chairman GCRG

SARCALL SMS System For Call – Out Moving GCRG Forward

In May of 2010 I attended the MREW general and sub-group meetings held at the Lancashire Police HQ. I have reported previously on this meeting. Attending the Communications sub-group meeting I was given my first introduction to the SARCALL SMS system. I had heard a little bit about it before but not seen it in action so to speak. It came about as one of the other people attending the meeting asked the question about what were teams doing if anything with SMS text messaging. I was able to report that from the GCRG side of things our calling authority, Gloucester Fire and Rescue Service were using a form of SMS text messaging to contact a limited number of our Wardens (To be precise this was only 4). Others reported similar situations.

It was at this point that John Whiteley of the Devon CRO started to talk about SARCALL and gave a demonstration of the speed at which an a message could be sent out. I have to say that I was most impressed and felt that this was certainly something that GCRG should be looking into.

Moving on to later in the year and I attended the Emergency Services show at Stoneleigh Park, Coventry, to help out on the BCRC Stand. During this time there was a lot of discussion about SARCALL. John Whiteley was also in attendance and during the evening in the hotel he gave both Bill Whitehouse (Chairman BCRC and DCRO Member) and myself a full demonstration of the system.

I was even more impressed actually being able to see how the system worked in both a picture form on the computer and also practically when he sent out a test message. Back home I relayed the information to various members of the committee and a number of wardens and arranged for a presentation/demonstration of the system to be given by Jon Whiteley at SARA Beachley. This was also attended by members of the Avon and Somerset Cliff Rescue Team and Mendip Cave Rescue, GCRG and SARA. Everybody thought that it was very good and took the ideas away for discussion.

The system was developed in North Wales by John Hulse who is a member of the Ogwen Valley MRT in response to a problem that the teams in the area were having whereby they were being tasked for the wrong area. There are nine teams in North Wales and this was causing quite a few problems. North Wales Police took the system on board and have been using it for 2 years and both they and the teams have not looked back.

SMS text messaging is not new nor is the process of sending messages to a number of people. However the difference with this system is that it allows for a much greater amount of information to be passed on when an email is included and those using it have control over the information that is within the system. In addition to that it was developed with RESCUE as the primary driving force behind it. It can be used at both TEAM LEVEL and at the CALLING AUTHORITY LEVEL. It has to be said that it will not completely replace the making of phone calls and talking to individuals but it does have the ability to pass on "BULK INFORMATION" to a lot of people in a relatively short period of time.

Mendip Cave Rescue were experiencing similar problems to the teams in North Wales with the incidents being allocated to the wrong resource and following on from the original demo at SARA decided that they would like to progress things

further and try and get their Calling Authority, Avon & Somerset Police, to adopt the system.

A presentation was set up and delivered by Jon Whitely and this proved to be well worth while as the Police Officers present decided there and then that they liked it and wanted to move forward with it. SARCALL went live for them on July 1st and a few days prior to that Jon came up to Gloucestershire and gave a presentation to representatives from the Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service. This again proved to be very productive and in fact by the time you have read this article the system will have been live with them from August 15th. In fact those of you who received the various messages on your phones during the evening of August 7th and the morning of the 8th will have realised that something different was going on.

I have to say that it was not our intention to pre-empt the "Go Live Date" but when the opportunity to run the system presented itself it was a "Golden Opportunity" that could not be missed and to be honest the knowledge and experience that we have gained is vast.

So how does it all work and how does it affect you?

I don't need to explain how the text message gets to your phone as I am sure you all understand that what you need to know is what happens to get things going. For simplicity we will use the scenario of a caver coming out of a cave/mine to report an incident.

From the 999 call which initially will go to the Police there will then be a transfer of information over to GFRS control (At this stage we will not get bogged down with the various routes that 999 calls can take from mobiles and landlines). Within Gloucestershire, the Police, Fire and Ambulance controls are situated in the same building so the transfer should not be long. In the GFRS control room all the computer screens have had a SARCALL ICON added. When a controller receives the request for a Cave Rescue requirement they click on the icon and this takes them directly to the LOGIN PAGE. Once they have logged in the system is up and running (Note the system is entirely based on the web so any computer can get access. There is NO Software to be loaded. This has been one of the main selling features of the system).

The Controller types into a preformatted box the SMS Message with the information that they wish to pass on. Date, time and whom it is from is not required as this is automatically added. As this box is limited to 130 characters any additional information can be sent via a second box which goes out as an email. (Recipients know they have received an email as well as the SMS due to the automatic inclusion of a bracketed @ at the end of the SMS. The next stage is to send the message and this is completed via a click on a box marked send. This then sends out the message to all of the GCRG wardens mobile and landline numbers. (The email option is not operational for us at the present time but will be very shortly).

The normal time delay from sending to receiving is 6-8 seconds. (I will come back to why some of you did not get some of the messages until after 08:00 on Monday morning, later).

On receipt of the message by the Wardens they respond accordingly (Which will be very likely be a phone call back into the GFRS control to confirm that it has been received and action is being taken). Once a GCRG Warden has the information and taken the job on they can then carry out a similar task to the

Controller using a very similar set up and send a message to the rest of the Wardens to say "I have the info, I am dealing with the job, await further information". The nature of the incident will then determine the action to be taken. So if we look at the incident at Daren Cilau, the request was to put the GCRG team on standby.

The message that went out was worded accordingly, firstly to all of the Wardens and then to all of the team members (it could have been sent to just the Forest and Chepstow members or just the Gloucester/Cheltenham/Cotswold members depending on the location of the incident). In this case, two messages typed, two buttons pressed and approximately 200 SMS messages went out. Total time for me to undertake that on my own was 6 minutes and the vast majority of you knew what was going on. Even with the four phones that I have available to me sat in my office I could not have completed that task in that time. Yes I appreciate that for those of you just with landlines, you have not received a message. The results are not perfect but we are working on that. For mobiles it is just like receiving a normal SMS message but it is prefixed with GCRG so this lets you know straight away who it is from.

Only the GCRG Wardens are able to contact you, the team members. The GFRS Controllers can only contact the Wardens, so we have control over what happens. As an incident rolls on then further messages can be sent out to keep people informed.

A good example would be if you had received a message to say for instance say "Attend incident site at the Biblins, Cave Rescue please attend asap" and it was then found to be a false alarm, a simple follow up message giving an abort and return to home would save quite a bit of time and effort. Ok it will not stop everybody but if it saves the majority it is worthwhile.

There are many other aspects that the system offers and although not complex they are best explained at a training session rather than a vast typed description here.

In conclusion.

An apology to everybody for dropping you in at the deep end with the messages regarding Daren Cilau. A very big thanks to all who responded and have reported back to me on the night and since. It has all been very productive. This is an excellent system that is going to result in a vast improvement in the GCRG Call Out procedures and the information we are able to get out to you. Yes we still have a lot to learn and yes I did make a mistake with the phone number I sent out on Sunday night.

The system is available on any computer that has internet access or to any Smart phone. This means that the wardens are not reliant on being at their home computer to activate the system (in fact the stand down message sent out on the Monday morning was sent by me from a computer in Cardiff).

If you change your mobile phone, home phone number or email it is essential that you pass the information on ***info@gcrg.org.uk***. If you have any queries or questions please ask either via the above or ***chairman@gcrg.org.uk***.

The reason some of you got the messages on Monday morning is down to BT and not the SARCALL System. There is a "blackout period" on some home phones which bars incoming SMS messages during the period from around 22:30 to 08:00. The system stored them up and delivered them once the blackout period

had passed. This applies even if you have your phone with another company other than BT. The only way to remove it is to phone **08005875252**. I would ask that you all check your phones. If you got all the messages on time then you are ok, but if you got some at around 08:00 on Monday then I would ask you to get the blackout taken off so that all of the SARCALL messages get through as we do not know when we might have to send them out.

As the system is developed further information will be sent out to you.

Paul Taylor
Chairman GCRG