

# GLOUCESTERSHIRE CAVE RESCUE GROUP



## NEWSLETTER

**JANUARY 2014**

### **IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS**

**GCRG Depot – 01594 827999**

**SARCALL Response Number – 07537415551**



## Gloucestershire Cave Rescue Group

### **SARCALL Information for Team Members**

When you receive a SARCALL message sent by a GCRG Warden, you should, ideally, respond by SMS text message to indicate your availability.

If you are unable to reply by SMS text message, please contact the originating warden directly, using the number given in the SARCALL message, or see overleaf.

Send your SMS text message to **07537 415551**

The SMS text message **MUST** take one of the 3 formats below:

**SAR ▲ Axx ▲ message** if you are available  
**SAR ▲ Lxx ▲ message** if you have limited availability  
**SAR ▲ N ▲ message** if you are unavailable

Where

▲ = a space

**xx** = time in minutes until you will arrive at meeting point

**message** = relevant additional information, free text

Changes to your details? Email [info@gcrg.org.uk](mailto:info@gcrg.org.uk)

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## FORTHCOMING TRAINING EXERCISES

Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2014 – Miss Grace’s Lane

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2014 – Depot, round-robin training

## OTHER DATES FOR THE DIARY

Thurs 1<sup>st</sup> May 2014 – GCRG AGM, 19:30 at the depot

19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> June 2015 – BCRC Conference (Hosted in the Forest of Dean by GCRG & MCRO)

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

<b>Chairman</b> Paul W Taylor chairman@gcrg.org.uk 01452 505673 (H) 07803 539945 (M)	<b>Secretary</b> Peter Turier secretary@gcrg.org.uk 01452 539199 (H) 07462 181899 (M)	<b>Treasurer</b> Liz Maisey treasurer@gcrg.org.uk 01666 504647 (H)
<b>Communications Officer</b> Craig Cameron comms@gcrg.org.uk 01594 834481 (H)	<b>Information Officer</b> Gareth Jones info@gcrg.org.uk 01452 532014 (H) 07982 455650 (M)	<b>Training Co-ordinator</b> Ian Healey / Dave Appleing training@gcrg.org.uk 01594 811187 (H) Ian 01594 562444 (W) Ian 01242 581385 (H) Dave 01242 669413 (W) Dave

<b>Equipment Officer</b> Nicky Bayley equipment@gcrg.org.uk 07790 664278 (M) 01291 445716 (W)	<b>Medical Advisor</b> Andy Harp andy@palmcons.co.uk 01594 840481 (H)	
<b>Ordinary Member [Newsletter Editor]</b> Jon Maisey jon.maisey@btinternet.com 01666 504647 (H)	<b>Ordinary Member</b> Dave Appleing Dappleing@aol.com 01242 581385 (H)	<b>Ordinary Member [S&amp;MWCRT liaison]</b> Steve Tomalin smtspeleo@virginmedia.com 01452 883189 (H) 07867 772341 (M)
<b>Ordinary Member</b> Kevin Brockway ozonekev@tiscali.co.uk 01179 098153 07970 033345 (M)	<b>Ordinary Member</b> Ian Healey ianandrachrtw@hotmail.com 01594 811187 (H) 07795 325831 (M)	

## CALLOUT WARDENS

<b>Cheltenham / Tewkesbury / North Cotswolds</b>	<b>Maurice Febry</b> 01242 242160 (H)  <b>Colin Vickery</b> 01684 293202 (H) 07548 240124 (M)	<b>Dave Appleing</b> 01242 581385 (H) 07804 300598 (M) 01242 669413 (W) 01242 669348 (W)
<b>Bristol / Chepstow</b>	<b>Kevin Brockway</b> 01179 098153 (H) 07970 033345 (M) 01454 382133 (W) 01454 382100 x2133 (W)	
<b>Forest of Dean</b>	<b>John Berry</b> 01594 822823(H) 07979 791083 (M)  <b>Greg Jones</b> 01594 827334 (H) 07974 008519 (M)  <b>Dave Tuffley</b> 01594 824343 (H) 07799 617934 (M) 01452 711852 (W)	<b>Andy Clark</b> 01600 716970 (H) 07707 992510 (M) 07411 207149 (M) 01594 811370 (W)

<b>Gloucester</b>	<b>Steve Tomalin</b> 01452 883189 (H) 07867 772341 (M)  <b>Pete Turier</b> 01452 539199 (H) 07462 181899 (M) 07789 903921 (W)	<b>Paul Taylor</b> 01452 505673 (H) 07803 539945 (M)
<b>Out of County</b>	<b>George Price</b> 01531 821743 (H) 07989 707585 (M)	

## PREVIOUS TRAINING EVENTS

**3<sup>rd</sup> March 2013**

### Clearwell Caves

Covered a number of topics including:

Anchors (natural, Acro and releaseable slings), Rigging (Petzl rigs & lowering), Stretcher use (loading & carrying), Radios & First Aid.



**Clearwell Caves**

*Photo: Nicky Bayley*

**7<sup>th</sup> December 2013**

**Noxon Park (Twilight Training)**



Starting in the light and finishing in the dark



**Feedback Notes:**

- Useful doing this as a twilight session to explore issues of darkness in terms of organisation and logistics
- Put a card at entrance of mines not to be searched/already fully searched
- In real incident focus likely to be on underground search of main mines first until search needs to be widened to above ground
- Keep someone in search team above ground on comms so that they can be contacted and directed by control
- Haul went well
- Lighting systems at Control were good

**1<sup>st</sup> September 2013**

## **Wetsink**

### Feedback Notes:

- **Location:** The new location for the Surface Control was excellent (Flat, No Cows or Pats) Access and parking good
- Still need to make use of Bicknor Club for the masses who would be waiting / eating and drinking. Facilities for this are way above what we could provide on-site.
- Good having someone at English Bicknor to co-ordinate people when they arrive
- **Timing:** 09:45 far too late to start large exercise.
- It took too long to get first group underground. Met at Bicknor 09:45, not underground until 10:35. 50 minutes wasted. First people on site at Wetsink from Bicknor at 09:55 but long wait to get others to make a team. Less faffing required. Consider staggered start for similar training.
- Planned debrief at Depot didn't work. Team leaders to do debriefs in teams at end of exercise and report back to Training Coordinator
- **Equipment:** Need to track equip. issue such as France phones using T cards already made up.
- Having separate vehicles dealing with the Underground Kit and the Surface Kit worked very well.
- In event of live incident John Berry & Dave Tuffley will get to the Depot and get everything up and running and move the Landrover out and prepare it for loading to save time for when the next people arrive.
- Only GCRG equipment to be used for rigging, not club equip.
- P bolt x2 needed at top of Zuree Aven to keep ropes off ground. Saves messing around with dodgy threads and awkward stemple placements.
- Some members not suitably equipped for vertical caving scenarios. Team Leaders and Surface control to ensure all members deployed have suitable PPE.
- **France Phones** both on the Surface and Underground - gave a much better understanding and made it easier underground. Reception on the surface excellent and the Earthing experiments were well worth while. H'ever we do need to look into trying to overcome the Radio Four Issue. Batteries to be replaced annually.
- Little radios would have been useful on Zuree Aven
- **SARCALL** – good response to message. Those members not generally responding over a period of time to be removed from list.
- **Cake** – thanks for the cake!
- **Kit Wash Down** – Thanks to those who came back to help with this

*Ian Healey*

## GCRG MERCHANDISE

The group has had a quantity of these enamel badges made up for sale to the members (and supporters) at a price of £3 each and with all profits going back to GCRG.

To show your support to the group & fly the flag these can be purchased at any GCRG training event or contact Paul Taylor, Steve Tomalin or Kevin Brockway.



### BCRC Badges

Produced by the same company who supplied the GCRG Badges we now have an additional badge for you to add to your collection.

Like the GCRG badges they are circular but without the lower rectangle containing the GCRG wording they are £3.00 each. By purchasing one you are not only helping the BCRC but also raising some funds for the GCRG. The BCRC has purchased them and passed them onto teams at almost cost price so that they can make some much needed funds.

Contact Steve, Kevin or Paul.

### GCRG Mugs

Nicky Bailey has been putting her pottery skills to good use and in the process produced some very nice GCRG labelled mugs. These are on sale at £10.00 each. Orders can be placed with Nicky via [equipment@gcrg.org.uk](mailto:equipment@gcrg.org.uk) and although a bit late for Christmas I am sure you can make an excuse to give one to a friend in the new year.



## **FUNDRAISING**

### **A very easy way to raise funds for GCRG**

A new way to raise funds for the group has been identified & like "Gift Aid" is very easy to use and creates income for GCRG by simply shopping online.

Just over 8 months ago Jonathan and Liz Maisey made the committee aware of "Easyfundraising" as a method of raising funds for the group from online shopping.

Donations are made by the retailer when an order is placed with them and with almost 3000 retailers registered including many of the "Big Name Stores and Internet Sites" there is plenty to choose from.



For it to work for the group we had to first register the GCRG as a "Cause" within the system and then with this confirmed for those wishing to take part to register themselves and then to nominate GCRG as their respective cause for their donations to go to. Liz was first of the mark and then slowly others have joined in.

To date (16.12.13) this has raised just under £116.00 for GCRG and of course at no cost to those who take part. The money is paid directly into the GCRG Bank Account on a quarterly basis so we don't even have to deal with any cheques. For my own part as part of my work I use Screwfix a great deal for a lot of my supplies and now as much as possible use the easyfundraising site to place my orders via the Internet and then go round to my local branch and collect them. I have also used Argos, Staples & Ebuyer.

The details for registering are given below and I would like to encourage as many of you as possible to get involved and help us to boost the donations even further.

What do you have to do?

- 1 - Go to the website [www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk)
- 2 - Click on '**Find a cause**' and select the cause you wish to support (just search for "Cave Rescue" and you'll find GCRG).
- 3 - **Fill out** the quick form to register your details.
- 4 - Find the retailer you want to shop with.
- 5 - Click to visit the retailer, then shop as you normally would.
- 6 - Your donation will be shown in your easyfundraising account within 30 days.

Liz (GCRG Treasurer) has already tested this out by buying online & it really is quite easy. Also, once you've signed yourself up to the scheme you can see how much money has been raised for the group and by who.

## **GIFT AID**

Every year, GCRG Officers, Committee Members and Reps clock up huge amounts of mileage on GCRG business.

Under HMRC rules, they are allowed to claim expenses on this mileage from the Group at a rate of 45p / mile. However, if they kindly choose to donate these expenses back to the Group, Gift Aid can be claimed on the donation.

During the year, records are kept of all mileage driven and this is entered into the Gift Aid system by Liz, our Treasurer.

Under Gift Aid, the government allow us to reclaim at a rate of approx. 25p/£. The admin takes a bit of work around the AGM each year, with expenses being paid and then donated back, but it all works very well.

Over the last three years, this has resulted in gifts of over £3500 from the Chancellor. I'm sure you'll agree this is well worthwhile.

## TRAINING GUIDES

### DRAFT TRAINING GUIDE FOR USE AT WETSINK

Ian Healey has produced this draft guide following the December 2012 rescue practice held at Wetsink.

The guide is to show how the entrance pitches, Mouse Aven & the bottom pitch can be rigged in the event of a rescue.

#### Wetsink Rescue Rigging Photos for Entrance Pitches:



##### Equipment Needed:

- ❖ 12mm bolt hangers x4 + spanner
- ❖ Main anchor 'sling ropes' x2
- ❖ Hauling ropes x2 (red + blue)
- ❖ Petzl Rigs x2
- ❖ Short sling ropes on gate x2
- ❖ Krabs x 16 incl. HMS x2
- ❖ Jammers x2
- ❖ Pulleys x4
- ❖ Other?



##### Rigging Tips:

- ❖ Releasable short slings on gate x2 to allow stretcher to be pulled securely through gate – see right.
- ❖ No deviations on pitch but 'human deviations' x2 to control ropes + strong barrow boy to direct stretcher free of obstructions
- ❖ Other,,



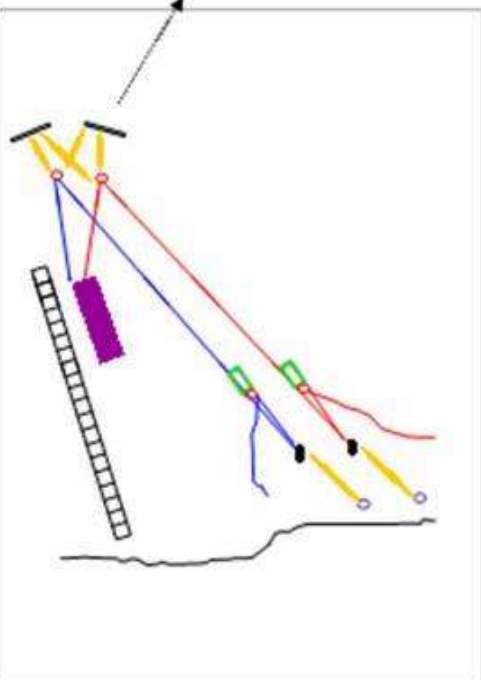
## Wetsink Rescue Rigging Photos for Mouse Aven:



Top anchors. Safety rope needed to rig.

### Equipment Needed:

- ❖ 12mm bolt hangers x4 + spanner
- ❖ Main anchor 'sling ropes' x2
- ❖ Hauling ropes x2 (red + blue)
- ❖ Petzl Rigs x2
- ❖ Short sling ropes on scaff x2
- ❖ Krabs x 18 incl. HMS x2
- ❖ Jammers x2
- ❖ Pulleys x4
- ❖ Safety rope for rigging & barrow boy



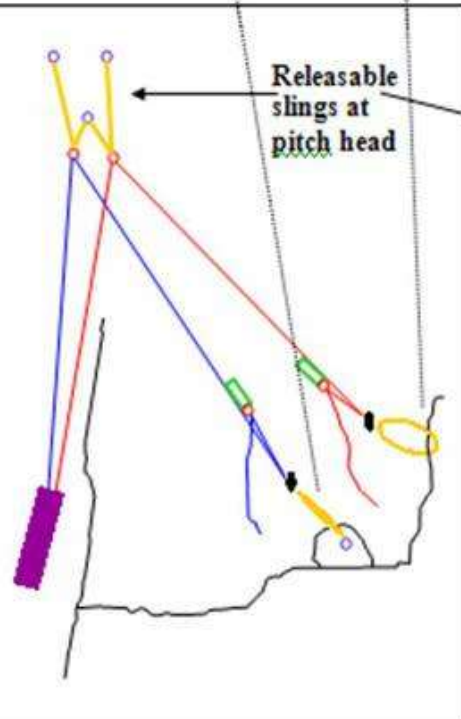
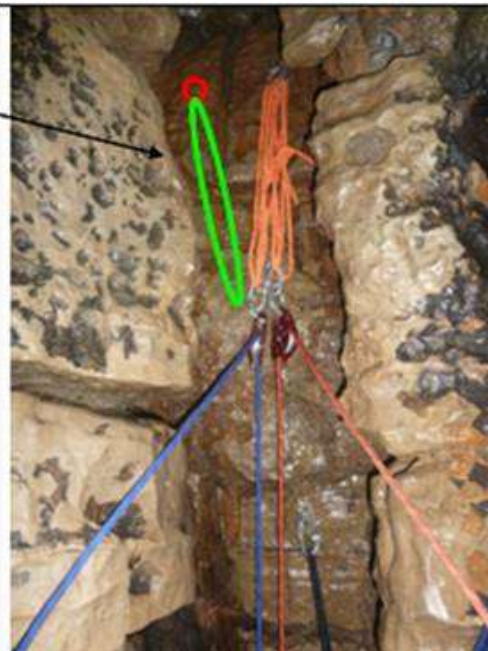
Bottom anchors - 12mm hangers x2  
(2 more bolts required)

### Rigging Tips:


- ❖ Rig traverse safety line to access top anchors
- ❖ Keep people clear of base of pitch while rigging top anchors – risk of rockfall etc.
- ❖ Pitch is 'bottom roped' with haulers and hoist system working from base of pitch attached to bolt anchors up slope from base of ladder.
- ❖ 'Pack' bottom of rift at top of ladder for stretcher

### Wetsink Rescue Rigging Photos for Bottom Pitch:

		<p><b>Equipment Needed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Top anchor 'sling ropes' x2</li> <li>❖ Hauling ropes x2 (red + blue)</li> <li>❖ <u>Petzl Rigs</u> x2</li> <li>❖ Short sling ropes for boulder &amp; thread x2</li> <li>❖ <u>Krabs</u> x 16 incl. HMS x2</li> <li>❖ <u>Jammers</u> x2</li> <li>❖ Pulleys x4</li> <li>❖ Safety rope for rigging &amp; barrow boy</li> </ul>
<p>Anchors back from top of pitch for Z-rigs:</p> <p>Above - boulder with P hanger</p>	<p>Above - Thread</p>	

	
	<p>Pitch Head – 2 P bolts high. ○ 3<sup>rd</sup> P bolt required</p>

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	<p><b>Rigging Tips:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Rig traverse safety line to access top anchors</li> <li>❖ Keep people clear of base of pitch while rigging top anchors etc – risk of rockfall etc.</li> <li>❖ Rig SRT line for barrow boy and to access bottom of pitch – see left. Note natural spike used in Y-Hang.</li> <li>❖ Have releasable slings at pitch head</li> <li>❖ Same team to rig Balcony Pitch</li> </ul>
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## **INCIDENTS INVOLVING GCRG**

### **September 2012 – December 2013**

The purpose of this log is to inform the GCRG members of all incidents that the group has been involved with over the last few months.

This will enable GCRG members (who are not Wardens or hold a position on the Committee) to have a better understanding of all of the incidents which have required some form of GCRG involvement & which may or may not have progressed into a full standby notice or callout.

Although these are brief reports, it is plain to see that the SARCALL system has developed into a very significant and extremely efficient part of the GCRG response to incidents. It is certainly making the job of Wardens much easier.

It is hoped that in future, all callouts of any type that involves GCRG will be recorded here for the membership to see and to act as a an easily viewed record of the group's activities.

#### **6<sup>th</sup> September 2012**

##### **OFD**

##### **Overdue party**

GCRG contacted by SMWCRT to be placed on standby.  
SARCALL used to alert GCRG membership.  
SARCALL response gave good feedback to the GCRG wardens.  
Party exited ok & GCRG stood down.

#### **24<sup>th</sup> October 2012**

##### **Murrells End, Hartpury**

GFRS received a call regarding a builder who had fallen down a well & requested that GCRG attend.

Contact made with Paul initially who was working in Reading with Steve Tomalin.  
SARCALL alert sent out by GFRS.  
Paul responded & then sent a message out to the wardens using SARCALL from his phone.  
Contact made with Jo Clarke who attended the incident & control passed to Dave Appleing.  
Jo informed Paul from the incident site that all was now sorted; Dave informed who used SARCALL to inform the wardens.

The incident did not require a SARCALL to the membership.

#### **8<sup>th</sup> November 2012**

##### **Symonds Yat Rock**

GFRS received a call indicating that a climber had fallen at Symonds Yat. However there was some confusion regarding the location as the word 'cave' had been used.

GFRS contacted Paul Taylor requesting GCRG attendance.  
SARCALL actuated by GFRS.  
Paul responded to the call and as he was already at the depot, took control.  
Wardens advised via SARCALL.  
Paul attended the incident with Cliff Seymour; GFRS Cliff Team dealing with the casualty.  
Paul contacted Gareth Jones who sent out a SARCALL message to the Wardens.  
Paul & Cliff remained on site until the casualty reached the waiting ambulance.

The incident did not require a callout to the membership.

### **24<sup>th</sup> November 2012**

#### ***Wet Sink/Slaughter Stream Cave***

RFDC party in the cave; concerns over their safety due to recent very heavy rain.  
SARCALL used to inform the Wardens of the situation & place the membership on standby.  
SMWCRT Wardens placed on standby.  
Party subsequently exited the cave with no assistance.  
SARCALL used to inform the GCRG members to stand-down.  
SMWCRT Wardens advised accordingly.

### **19<sup>th</sup> December 2013**

#### ***Dog Rescue, Brownhill (Chalford), Stroud***

Paul took an initial call from Jon French GFRS at approximately 12:40 informing of an incident and that GFRS Control would initiate a SARCALL Activation. This came through at 13:43 giving the Incident Ref No. 6685, Incident location and that a Dog was stuck in a cave. Paul made a call back into GFRS Control and confirmed that he would attend the incident. Gareth Jones contacted Paul by phone and took on the SARCALL Management. SARCALL Message sent to the GCRG Wardens to inform them that Paul had taken charge of the incident and was en-route and would report to Gareth from the site.

Paul made his way to the incident arriving at approximately 1330hrs (Some delay on his part due to very limited knowledge of the area). On arrival at Incident Site he made contact with the GFRS and was taken to the location.

Following an initial discussion with the GFRS Paul went underground (Mine Passage). Approximately 15m from the entrance the mine passage hit an ongoing natural rift that was emitting a strong draught. This was quite low and tight but by removing a few rocks forward progress was made and the dog could be heard down below but not seen. Reporting back to the surface / GFRS & the dog owner. Digging would be required from within the cave as any digging down from the surface would result in a collapse and very likely loss of the dog. Ermin Plant were contacted by the dog owner for trench props and also a stock of timber was secured. Paul made contact with Gareth and asked him to make contact with local cavers for information. Chris Bowen contacted Paul and arranged to come to the site. Paul asked Gareth to raise a small team (around 6) to carry out an initial dig; Tony Marden, Chris Bowen, Joe Duxbury, Kevin Brockway, Rachel Brown (to act as liaison). Paul explained to GFRS what his plan was and as soon as the others arrived work commenced. GFRS dealt with the surface control taping off the area (another hole existed near to the entrance) set up lighting and a tarpaulin and also provided digging tools for the work underground.

Due to the low nature of the passage it was decided to enlarge the route forward removing a large quantity of rocks. One of the trench props was used to support the left hand wall as a precaution. Although GFRS personnel came underground this was only in a support role, assisting with the removal of the dig spoil.

An initial dig down at the start into a lower rift proved negative but confirmed that the lower rift continued and was the very likely route that the dog had taken. GFRS were asked to provide a 110v power supply into the cave so that a small electric drill / breaker could be used (Fortunately Paul had one in his vehicle). This was provided and allowed a very large section of rock to be broken up and removed. Approximately 1.5m beyond this a small hole down to the left was now seen and this gave a view into the lower rift. Throughout all of the work the dog could be heard at times but there were long periods of silence. At approximately 18:45 Paul contacted Gareth and requested that a SARCALL Message was sent out to all GCRG Members so that if required we could start preparing teams to be able to continue the digging through the night.

Digging work in the cave continued and Joe Duxbury who was behind Paul got the first glimpse of the dog at approximately 19:20 down in the bottom of the rift. Extremely careful work by Paul resulted in two very large lumps of rock being removed from the top of the downward hole giving an increased view of the dog (Had either one been dropped the outcome would not have been as happy). The dog was active and moving around despite having been in the cave for 5 days by this time. Water was poured down to it and it lapped it up but was not able to climb back up the rift and despite Paul hanging upside down he could not reach the dog. Fortunately the dog was fitted with a harness and a hook was manufactured from a wall tie that was taped to a drainage rod provided by GFRS. Armed with this tool Paul was able to encourage the dog and then hook its harness and haul it up the rift. It was then passed through the chain of diggers and Kevin had the honor of taking it back to the surface and presenting it to a very emotional but very grateful owner. Paul contacted Gareth to inform him of the successful result and a SARCALL message went out at 19:49. Everything was removed from underground and all parties involved left the site by 20:30. The dog was taken immediately to a local vet for a checkup and pronounced fit and well apart from being a little dehydrated.

SARCALL proved its worth in being able to keep people informed of what was going on. Passing the incident over to Gareth was very good as it allowed Paul to move to the incident and get on with things.

Excellent work / relations with the 3 GFRS crews who were involved throughout the incident (They were on Shift Rotation and not all there at the same time). GFRS were very happy to let us get on with our job but also happy to help out as required. The incident did not require an initial full callout as space underground was very limited and so many would have been just stood around on the surface getting cold and wet. But thanks to all who responded to the SARCALL message whether it was to confirm availability or none availability. As said many times the latter is as important as the former. Gareth knew exactly who was available and could then tailor his response accordingly had it been necessary to get further teams to the site. What would we do without Mobile Phones?. This proved invaluable in allowing Paul to keep in contact with Gareth throughout the incident. GCRG has been contacted by the owner to express her sincere thanks to all concerned.

*Paul Taylor*  
*GCRG Chairman*

## **NON-GCRG TRAINING ATTENDED BY MEMBERS**

### **Exercise Selfridge**

*24<sup>th</sup> April 2013*

For a number of years Gloucestershire Cave Rescue Group has been involved with the Gloucestershire Local Resilience Forum (GLRF), holding a place on the Voluntary SAR Group and works in very close relationship with Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue Service (GFRS). GFRS acts as the group's "Calling Authority" and has taken part in a number of joint training exercises. When this latest one was being planned we were invited again to take part and we are very pleased that we did.

On Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2013 a combined team of 15 GCRG & Midlands Cave Rescue Organisation (MCRO) members along with a similar number from Seven Area Rescue Association (SARA) formed part of the total of 400 people who took part in a major search and rescue training exercise set up by the GLRF to test their Emergency Response plan.

Police, Fire & Rescue, Ambulance, Military, Raynet, MVS were all represented at the event which took place at the Cotswold Water Park at South Cerney, Gloucestershire and was based around a mid-air collision between a helicopter and a fixed-wing aircraft resulting in debris from the aircraft, casualties and body parts being spread over a significant area that encompassed both land and water.

The initial response was carried out by the GFRS who very quickly deemed it to be a "major incident" necessitating the need for significant additional resources to be brought in.

As this was only a 1 day event those resources had already been invited but were held at a strategic holding area away from the incident. (This was on the edge of a nearby military airfield and being very open it was not long before our red Cave Rescue jackets were being brought out and put on to combat the cold wind). Once the initial work of the Fire and Rescue teams had been undertaken the secondary support resources were moved into place and the various search teams were brought in as required by the "Incident Command and Control" to carry out the large area searches. This was where GCRG, MCRO and SARA fitted into the plan with the cavers working alongside the SARA land search managers and team leaders, keeping their feet well and truly dry undertaking a search of quite a large area of land around the lakes, while the SARA water-trained members covered both the lake edges and with their boats the lakes themselves. This gave a good opportunity for the honing of inter team skills and communications.

All of the debris and casualties and also the body parts were extremely realistic and a lot of work had been put in before the event to ensure that everybody had a role to play. A Sea King helicopter was also used to bring in some of the HART team members and to carry out searches over the water and the land. With only limited time available and the Command & Control team wishing to ensure that everybody had a chance to take part in the event, the time allocated for the search was limited to the morning so that those who needed to undertake the casualty recovery, treatment, identification & incident investigation could carry out their part of the exercise.

Once stood down from further involvement in the exercise & after a very nice lunch, there was the opportunity to observe all of the other groups in action.



The equipment on site ranged from small 6 wheeled, almost golf-buggy, units through to a Major Incident Control Unit, demountable pods loaded with all manner of rescue equipment and even two Hovercraft.

This was the largest exercise that any of the cave rescue teams had been involved in to date and it showed that when an incident of this magnitude occurs that a "multi-agency response" is the way forward and it was a great opportunity for the teams to show that skills learnt within the cave rescue world can be applied on the surface and we can respond and fit in and work alongside all of the other organisations.

Since the event GCRG, MCRO and SARA have been continuing to build on the event with further joint "Land Search Training" to further enhance their working relationships.

*Paul Taylor*



***Emma Porter from MCRO examines a Crashed Helicopter***

*Photo: Elizabeth Forester*



**GCRG, MCRO & SARA team photo**

*Photo: Paul Taylor*

## **MISCELLANEOUS ARTICLES OF GCRG INTEREST**

### **Ethiopia 2013 & the use of the GCRG gas monitor**

One of GCRG's two RAE Systems QREA 2 gas monitors was taken on this year's expedition to the Oromia district of Ethiopia and was used extensively to monitor the oxygen levels in the 20 caves explored.

Only 2 of these showed any signs of being entered before, these had a reputation amongst the local people for containing high levels of CO<sub>2</sub>, and reports from other expeditions to caves in the surrounding area also mentioned that in some cases exploration stopped due to high CO<sub>2</sub>.

It was decided to use the monitor both to safeguard against the dangers of entering parts of the caves with dangerous CO<sub>2</sub> levels, and also to provide an accurate record of those levels.

Many of the caves explored started as vertical shafts, the deepest being 45m. Before descending, the unit was lowered into the shaft on a rope and watched for the 19.5% alarm to be triggered, if this was the case the minimum low level achieved could be checked when the unit was pulled up to the surface.



On one occasion a surface shaft had an O<sub>2</sub> level of 13.4% at -5m, and 12.5% at the base at -18m, use of the monitor prevented a potentially fatal descent of the shaft.

The monitor was carried into all the caves during exploration, while in some cases the 19.5% O<sub>2</sub> alarm went off within a few meters of the entrance it provided a constant reminder to continually check O<sub>2</sub> levels. It was agreed that exploration would cease at 16% O<sub>2</sub>. Use of the monitor meant that this decision was easy to make with no debate as to continue. At this O<sub>2</sub> level we were breathing heavily, but this could have been confused with the use of face masks to combat the threat of histoplasmosis from fungi on bat guano, combined with cave temperatures in the high 20s. A lighter failed to light at this point.

One internal shaft remains undescended as the O<sub>2</sub> level at the top was 15.9%.

Thanks to GCRG for the loan of the monitor during the expedition, for which a donation to funds has been made.

*Andy Clark*

### **Recent Work at the GCRG Depot**

The refurbishment work at the GCRG depot has been continuing over the last few months with the carpet tiles now having been put down in all of the rooms once the "self-levelling" compound had been put down on the floor and although not

perfectly level the resulting surface is a vast improvement on the extremely poor concrete floor that existed below the old carpet. A new LED floodlight with a PIR has been installed to light up the front door area. This has made a vast improvement.

GCRG has had a computer in the Control Room for a long time and to be honest it has served us very well. However as we all know as time goes by we all demand more and more from these units and GCRG is no exception to this and with the increasing use of SARCALL and Quo Mapping we have found that the old unit was being pushed to well beyond its working capabilities and struggling to say the least. The time had come to move on so a new unit was ordered from ebay at 15:00 on a Sunday afternoon via easyfundraising (raising £2.50 for the group in the process) and delivered to Paul at 10:00 on the Monday morning. It has now been installed in the Control Room and is working very well. No more waiting for things to happen.

A major session was held at the end of November in the loft area to make a start to sort this area out and get all of the boarding down so that those items that need to be stored can be arranged in a more logical fashion. It is not planned to cover all of the loft area with boards due to the large quantity of electric cables that run across the loft space and also the reduced head high. However there will still be plenty of capacity in the half that is being boarded. The work is also giving the opportunity for unwanted items to be thrown out.

A list of jobs that need to be undertaken at the depot has been drawn up so that we can complete the refurbishment and it is hoped that we can get everything completed before the next AGM in May 2014. Details are to be circulated of the jobs and the next round of working days.

## **BCRC Conference 2015**

Soon after GCRG was formed in the mid 60's it hosted the National Cave Rescue Conference (*in Sept 1968 in Cheltenham*) and over the last few years it has been suggested at the BCRC AGM that it was about time that GCRG took up the baton again and ran another event.

The Forest area has not been inactive with events with the first Cavers Fair and of course 4 Forest Caving Symposiums. Despite all of these, to be honest, we could not put things off forever and following a discussion with Emma Porter of the MCRO we came up with a plan, "A joint team event". This was put to the BCRC at the AGM in 2013 and it was formally accepted. Having committed ourselves to hosting the conference in 2015 we next had to find a suitable location at which it could be held. In steps Ian Healey (GCRG Training Officer) but for his day job, Centre Manager at the Dean Field Studies Centre at Parkend in the Forest of Dean. An email from Ian said "if you are looking for a venue for the conference I would be only too pleased to offer DFSC as a venue.

Cutting a long story short the 2015 BCRC Conference is now set to be held there over the weekend 19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> June being jointly organised by GCRG & MCRO.

Although at this point in time the programme is still very vague it looks like it will be very much based around the centre on the Saturday with a series of presentations and practical demonstrations and exercises. Saturday evening is going to be a social event based at Clearwell Caves with a mini beer & cider festival followed on Sunday with a major underground exercise more than likely based around the Noxon Park iron mine complex. We will be looking for a lot of support from the GCRG members so please put the date in your diary and await further information.

### **Emergency Services Show 2013**

For the last few years I have been attending the Emergency Services show to assist with the setting up and manning of the stand run by the British Cave Rescue Council (BCRC). This has been held for many years at the National Agricultural Centre at Stoneleigh, Coventry and I have reported on these in the past. At the show in 2012 part of one of the display halls (a very large marquee structure) failed due to the high winds and everybody including the BCRC people were evacuated for the whole of the afternoon and only allowed back in when the show had closed. So I was not completely surprised when this year I received the request from the BCRC Chairman to help on the stand again to be told that for 2013 the show was to be held at a different venue, the NEC (Birmingham) and also that it would be in September and not October. In fact it was to be in the week before the Hidden Earth Conference. I put my name down again and as Emma Porter and Mike Clayton from the Midland Cave Rescue Organisation were also going to be attending I asked them if it would be ok for me to stay with them for a couple of days.

As previously, Bill Whitehouse would bring all of the display material down with him on the Tuesday and we would meet up and put the stand up. Again as before this would be in an area that had been allocated to other members of the UK Search and Rescue (SAR Group) Coast Guard, Mountain Rescue, Association of Lowland Search & Rescue, RAF Mountain Rescue, RNLI & BCRC.

The NEC for those who have never visited the location it is quite vast and of course it was not just the EMS that was going on so it was essential to follow the correct signs to get to the correct hall & entry point / car park. There was quite a queue and when I reached one of the NEC attendants he asked if I needed to take anything in. When I said only a small sack truck he suggested that rather than wait in the long queue I could just go and park in the main car park and then just walk in a lot quicker.

This I did and let Bill know what was going on and with Heather Simpson coming out to meet me at the barrier I was soon into the hall and at the stand. Having put the display up a few times before it did not take very long and then we set about putting up another display next door which was all about UK SAR. With both of these completed I left and then had a very nice drive over to Mike and Emma's place at Hampton Loade just beyond Kidderminster; later out in the evening for a very nice meal and a few drinks.

Next day Mike drove us all over to the NEC as both he and Emma were going to help on the stand and we were also joined by Toby (BCRC Legal Rep) and Jon Whiteley (BCRC IT Rep). Having a good number of people is very good as it not only spreads the load throughout the day but also gives those on the stand time to be able to go and have a good look around.

The show covers a vast multitude of items from full-sized fire engines all the way down to sticking plasters and includes almost everything rescue-related in-between. It gives a great opportunity to have a good wander around and see what is available and with a very big cheque book it would be very easy to buy a lot of things.

I was able to visit the Peli stand and sort out a new case for my camera which I collected a couple of weeks later and I was also able to visit the Drinkmaster stand (these are the people who supply the capsules that we use at the GCRG depot for the hot drinks) and put in our latest order as well as at the end of the show collecting some free samples.

It was nice to see Kevin Brockway and Rachel Brown from GCRG and also a good number of MCRO and DCRO members over the two days and I would encourage anybody if you have a free day to make the trip up and have a wander around. The organisers provide the stands FoC so it is good for them to see that from within the various organisations that people are attending. The show is going to be at the NEC again in 2014 and although I don't have the exact dates it is as far as I know going to be in September again. As soon as it is confirmed we will circulate the information.



**Manning the BCRC Stand**

*Photo: Paul Taylor*

L-R, Emma Porter, Bill Whitehouse, Paul Taylor, Jon Whiteley, Mike Clayton

The idea behind the UK SAR Group stands is that we are there to wave the flag so to speak and show those visiting the show what the various organisations do and how they fit into the overall rescue plan. Over the two days we had a good steady flow of people visiting the stands and although it is unlikely that they are going to become cavers / rescuers spreading the word and the understanding is well worth while.

This year there were not any problems with the weather so the roof stayed on ok. Numbers did seem to be up on the previous year and this does seem to be the general trend of increasing year on year. Although the past location was ok I think the show has outgrown this and needed to move on and I am already looking forward to the next show.

*Paul Taylor*  
*Chairman GCRG*