



GLOUCESTERSHIRE CAVE RESCUE GROUP

NEWSLETTER

Issue 12, December 2016

GCRG Depot, Littledean Hill, Cinderford, Glos, GL14 2TT

Phone – 01594 827999

SARCALL Response Number – 07537415551

Please ensure all SARCALL messages are responded to

Editors note:

A big thankyou to everyone who helped to provide the articles and photos included in this edition of the N/L. Without your support and input GCRG would literally not have a newsletter.

If you have any comments about the content/layout etc of the newsletter (or ideas to improve it etc) then please get in touch as we need to make this as good as we can.

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2016/17 DATES FOR THE DIARY

Warden's Training Evening: A session will be planned once the new trailer has been delivered

Dig-out team meeting: None planned so far

4 December 2016: Training Day at the depot

(will cover stretcher-handling, z-rigs, France phone, Cave Link and possibly First Aid)

4th May 2017: GCRG AGM

17th-19th June 2017: BCRC Conference @ Penwyllt, South Wales

20th-21st Sept 2017: Emergency Services Show @ the NEC

In an effort to stop clashes with various special days and bank holidays, the Committee has taken the decision to alter our training days as a trial for one year. The dates for 2017 will be (all Sundays): 12th March, 11th June, 10th September and 10th December.

Pete Turier (GCRG Secretary)

MEMBERS OF THE GCRG COMMITTEE

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SARCALL INFORMATION

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.

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

Useful phone numbers

GCRG Depot	01594 827999	
GCRG Wardens	Mobile	Home
David Appleing	07804 300598	01242 581385
John Berry	07979 791083	01594 822823
Kevin Brockway	07970 033345	01453 511100
Andrew Clark	07707 992510 07411 207149	01600 716970
Maurice Febry		01242 242160

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**

Dave Hardwick	07780 676341	01454 299035
Martin Holloway		
Greg Jones	07974 008519	01594 827334
Paul Taylor	07803 539945	01452 505673
David Tuffley	07799 617934	01594 824343
Peter Turier	07462 181899	01452 539199
Colin Vickery	07548 240124	01684 293202

(Versionv3, May 2014)

Changes to your details? Email **info@gcrg.org.uk**

GCRG'S NEW MOBILE CONTROL ROOM

For some years now, the GCRG Committee has considered the question of how to provide a 'ready to go' control facility as soon as we arrive at an incident site. During that time we looked at an extra vehicle (too expensive to run) and using a trailer / caravan of some sort. Once we decided that a trailer would be the best way to go, we started looking. We've looked at second-hand units, ex-utility units and also applied for grants to buy a new one. Unfortunately the retail price of new units was out of reach and they hold their value so well that second hand they fetch just as much as when new. None of these came to fruition for various reasons and impatience was starting to grow that nothing was happening.

A chance conversation with a supplier at work revealed the fact that they are a major purchaser of the make of trailer we were looking for; Ifor Williams (IW). Several phone calls resulted in a deal that was too good to turn down. A combination of the purchasing power of Worcester Hire Centre (WHC), trade prices from IW and a very generous £500 donation from Worcester Hire Centre meant that we could have a new trailer for the price of an aged secondhand unit. The Committee agreed that this was too good a chance to miss and the purchase was made.

After a few weeks the trailer was delivered to WHC and the Committee agreed that the front two panels of the trailer would be kept for the branding of any company who helped with the project. James from WHC got their sign-writer to place their logo before delivery to us.

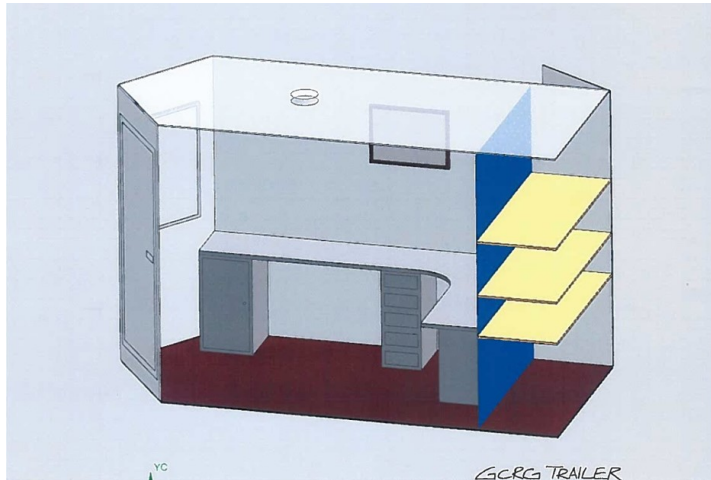


Once we obtained insurance and the GCRG garage was in a fit state to park the trailer, Paul and I collected the trailer from WHC at Tewkesbury, promising to return for a formal handover once it was fitted out. (I've just had to apologise to James at WHC as this has taken much longer than we first thought it would!)

Moving on some months, after some intricate financial negotiations to see if we could, even now, get a grant for the trailer (unfortunately not), we are starting to make progress. Another supplier from work, Bott Ltd, has agreed to vinyl wrap the trailer and renew / update the livery on the Land Rover FOC, giving us the option of having photos etc on the sides of the trailer to promote GCRG. We've experimented with several versions and now finally come up with something we like that has good enough resolution to be blown up to the size needed.

After further discussions with Bott Ltd, it was decided that this project really needed a professional fit-out due to the technical complexity of electrics in a mobile unit (and we all have enough to do already).

After the Emergency Services Show, Paul, Trevor and I went on to Bott Ltd, in Ashby de la Zouch, where we tapped their technical knowledge of vehicle conversions on how best to make use of the limited space in the trailer. After a lot of discussion on usage and suggestions from Bott, we have a final layout which Trevor has kindly drawn up for this article in anticipation of the final drawings from Bott Ltd.



The rear section is to be used as storage for enough kit to cope with most incidents and the shelves have been tailored specifically for that equipment. The front section will be the control room with two workstations complete with 240v & USB power, plus computer monitor for the Surface Controller showing SARCall and the electronic T-card system, whiteboard, manual T-Card board, facility for all of our radio and underground comms systems and all in an environment where water doesn't fall on your head and nothing blows away! It will also be equipped so that it's self-powered for the first hour after arrival on site, giving operators the chance to get everything up and running without having to connect a generator.

So that's an overall view of what's going on, with the fit-out planned for early in the new year. We are also planning driver training for those that need to transport and deploy the trailer.

The image below shows the design that has been produced (using photos from Nicky Bayley and Paul Taylor) to go on the trailer and help promote what GCRG is all about.



Pete Turier (GCRG Secretary)

RECEIVING SARCALL MESSAGES

The SARCALL callout SMS messages are sent to both mobile and home numbers.

Home Phones

For land-line numbers a text to voice translation is applied and a spoken version of the SMS message should be received on home phones. It is known that the voice translation is not perfect and there is the potential for such messages to be difficult to understand. If such a message is received, which you think may be from GCRG, but cannot be understood, please check your mobile phone.

There is also a default blackout period set for texts to home phone numbers. This means that during this period messages are not forwarded to the home number but are stored up and delivered when the blackout period ends. This period is approximately 10pm to 8am. Team members are asked to ensure that there isn't a blackout period for texts set on their home number by initially calling the BT SMS text control line, 0800 587 5252 and removing any curfew period - this service is generally controlled via BT irrespective of your home phone supplier. If by default your phone does not forward its own number when dialling (no caller line id) you will need to ensure this is sent when removing the curfew by entering the appropriate code before dialling the BT SMS text control. The ability of texts to be received via your home phone line and the removal of the blackout period can be simply checked by sending a text from any mobile phone to your home number (The text which comes through may give you an additional number to ring to change the blackout period depending upon your phone line supplier). This blackout/curfew is easy to change and is usually updated within 20 minutes, thus in the event of a callout you can reset it before you leave home to avoid further texts disturbing other residents. It can then be removed again upon your return.

Mobiles

Any callout SMS text message will be identified as coming from GCRGSARCALL and will give brief details of the incident and contact details for the originating Warden.

When replying to these texts YOU MUST use the phone on which the callout text was received. This phone number is recorded on the SARCALL system as belonging to a particular individual, sending texts from other phones may result in them being ignored. Similarly, the correct format of message must be used, incorrectly formatted messages will also be ignored. This system is fully automated and the wardens will only see "valid" messages. No feedback on the success or failure of a response text is sent to team members. Response SMS text messages must be sent to 07537 415551. NOTE this IS NOT the number from which the original SARCALL alert text is sent (Recommendation is to store this in your phone contacts for easy future reference).

However it is known that mobile coverage is far from 100% in certain areas so if people are unable to reply this way please contact the originating warden directly, using the number given in the SARCALL SMS message, or from the list.

The automated SMS response system is the preferred way for people to respond as it effectively frees up the wardens phone line and should also reduce the frustration of team members trying to get through to them when there might be 40 people all calling the same number.

SMS Responses are also visible to all wardens giving them a dynamic picture of the total and individual team member's availability, as well as the actions that they are taking.

Use the message area of the reply wisely (no swearing, jokes or comments on the location or casualty etc), these texts are likely to be handed over to any post-incident investigation. People can send multiple texts (only the most recent will be displayed) - especially useful if their availability changes. If people are picking up other members of the team or particular equipment en-route then mentioning this in the message area of the text is a good idea.

Keeping information up to date

Obviously it is vital that GCRG has up to date phone information for all members, so if a person changes phone numbers they need to let GCRG know at once.

Additionally, within SARCALL there is the ability to mark members as temporarily unavailable and thus stop callout texts being sent to them. Therefore, if your availability to be called out changes for any reason please let GCRG know.

ONGOING WORK AT THE DEPOT

Before Steve Tomalin unfortunately died I had discussed with him his thoughts and ideas regarding an expansion to the Training Wall and the possible provision of somewhere that the GCRG equipment could be washed and dried. Following on from his death and the subsequent grand auction of his equipment it was decided that it would be good to implement those ideas and make them into a reality by using the money raised. This would be something that he would have been very proud of.

As will all of the projects that are undertaken at the GCRG Depot there are never any major drawings or plans and very much done from the most basic of sketches. To be honest this has worked very well for us and there seemed no real reason to change so with a basic concept in mind work got underway back in December of last year (2015).

Firstly the front of the 3-bay garage was clad over using the same materials as had been used for the main building . When this was undertaken some years back enough had been purchased to allow for the front of the 3-bay to be covered in. However originally when work started it was only the intention to go 2/3rds of the way across but it soon became obvious that the only course of action was to go all the way across. This was done and the end result was definitely worth the additional time to undertake it and the cost. There is some work left to do with the fitting of additional edge profiles and to finish off the guttering but our outward appearance has changed dramatically.

Once this was completed work got underway internally with the construction of some concrete block pillars around the steel support columns and a further pillar that would form the support for the new timber bridge that now spans from the existing platform.

The next stage of the work then moved to the construction of a concrete block building at the rear of the second bay of the garage and this was to be split into two sections. Kit washing and kit drying but not just be for those purposes but also to form part of the expansion of the training facility. The walls have been constructed from hollow concrete blocks that have all been backfilled with concrete and the roof joists are of sufficient size to be able to carry an 18mm ply covering allowing the upper level to be a fully load-bearing and functional area. This has been designed to be large enough to allow the half-size GCRG Larkin Frame to be used on it. The final section of the rear wall has yet to be completed but is planned for the next phase.

Internally within the space it has been split into the two sections, drainage provided within the floor, Insulation and plywood applied to all of the walls and ceiling, a sink and water heater installed along with all the necessary traps, water pipes, valves and trunking for the electrics. In addition, the whole of the floor has been tiled along with the area in the washing area above and below the sink unit. A washing machine has been provided by Martin Lloyd (thanks very) and this is to be installed in the washing area and will save people (primarily Nicky) having to take things like the fibre-pile bags home to wash.



An industrial size de-humidifier has been installed in the drying area.

Hopefully by the time you read this report the remaining work on the lower area will have been completed and the plan is to have this operational for the GCRG training exercise planned to be held at the GCRG Depot on December 4th 2016.

This has been a major project over the last 12 months and we are very grateful to those who have attended the working sessions to help with the clearing of debris and moving various storage racks and also to Gareth Jones, John Cliffe and Paul Taylor who have been working away very hard on the major construction work. Please come along on Dec 4th and see the end results.

Paul Taylor (GCRG Chairman)

GCRG CALLOUTS & REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE (since the last 'May 2016' newsletter)

Tetbury, Saturday 14th May 2016

Early in the evening, GCRG was called out to assist Glos Fire & Rescue with rescue of a 58yr old female who had fallen 15m down a well in the back garden of a house in Tetbury.

Pete Turier liaised with GFRS (Jon French) and was informed that the GFRS were low on assets and asked for the assistance of GCRG.

Martin Holloway, who lives a short distance from the incident, went down to take a look and during this time it was decided that the lady was unfortunately deceased (face down in the water).

Soon after this, and before we initiated a full team callout, Martin and the GFRS Commander on site decided that they were adequately equipped for the task, and although he was happy for us to respond, we took the decision to stand down.

It was, however, good that GFRS in their time of initial need thought to call us out early on in the incident and it all helps with practice using SARCall etc

Thanks to those who responded.

Pete Turier (GCRG Secretary)

CAVE LINK UPDATE

GCRG has had its four Cave Link units now for almost 18 months and although we have fortunately not had to deploy them in anger they have not been sat idle at the GCRG depot.

Extensive testing at a variety of cave and mine locations both within our own area (and further afield) has been undertaken and the results have been very good and to be completely honest, way beyond what we thought we would achieve. Tests at Wetsink for example have not only established surface locations that provide extensive coverage of the cave passages but also resulted in an underground unit-to-unit result over a distance of 500m which was very good.

At Otter Hole, a single surface location on the racecourse has not only provided links to both the Rescue Dump and the Camp but also the both of these locations underground were in contact with one another and when combined with the fixed phone line, around 75% of the cave has been covered. Next year (2017) we hope to expand this when we get a Cave Link taken down to Tunnels Junction.

At Miss Grace's Lane cave, again, one surface location very near to the cave entrance has enabled coverage of the whole of the cave to be achieved as well as all of the units deployed underground being in contact with one another. Due to very wet conditions when tests were carried out at Cowshill Cave the surface unit was actually operated from within a vehicle on the surface with a 250m offset from the unit operating from Golden Anniversary Chamber.

Good results have also been achieved from Old Ham, Old Bow & Clearwell Caves. Westbury Brook iron mine is a site that is also on the list. A single test has been carried out from Chernobyl Chamber in Big Sink as on the day it was too wet to proceed further into the system. The most recent cave site to be tested was Redhouse Lane Swallet cave. Previous tests have been dogged with problems due to blocked passages and route-finding problems. However on October 2nd a very successful series of tests were carried out from three underground locations to one surface location. With the final test from the end of Westway back to the surface providing a result that gave an offset of 475m and a vertical range of 30m and when applied to the rest of the cave strongly suggesting that the whole cave can be covered from one surface location.

Going further afield help has been provided for tests in Agen Allwedd where very good results have been achieved and also on Mendip where during a combined exercise a 800m unit-to-unit result was obtained across and through the Burrington Combe Valley.

More recently, a demonstration of Cave Link was provided to two HSE Mines Inspectors (see separate report) and following this Paul's presentation has also been provided to them so that they can further discuss the possibility of Cave Link being used in some of the working mines around the country.

It is accepted that with Cave Link only providing a text message that a true conversation is not possible. However by limiting what can be said and done there is strong indications that the information that is being transmitted is going to be more precise and thought about.

If you are planning a trip into the more remote parts of any of the caves or mines in the GCRG area please let us know as we would be more than happy to provide you with a Cave Link unit to take along and test out and in doing so help to expand the general knowledge of where cave link can be located both on the surface and underground.

Paul Taylor (GCRG Chairman)

TRAINING DAY AT THE DOWARD PANCAKE MINES

4 September 2016

It is a while since the GCRG held a training exercise at the Doward Pancake mines (don't ask me why they are called this). The area makes for a very good training location as it has a great variety of both surface and underground locations all within easy reach of one another yet still providing some good challenges.

Following a trip by Nicky, Andy Clark, Dave Appleing & Paul (and a follow-up visit by Gareth Jones and Paul to test out a suitable spot for the Larkin Frame) a number of scenarios for the day were determined but these were left flexible. This allowed for flexibility on the day, depending on numbers attending.

Surface Control and the General Meeting Point were established at the end of the Forestry Track that leads to the mines. Once this was set up and the T Card system up and running (Kevin Brockway dealing with this) numbers dictated the need to reduce the activities down so that each group had sufficient numbers to run efficiently. Use of the Larkin Frame and stretcher loading and handling (with the use of both the SAR radios and cave Link) incorporated into them.

Two Sessions were held throughout the day on both with the surface control aspect ensuring that a full record of personnel movement and equipment allocation was recorded on the T Card board. Both Cave Link and the SAR comms worked very well. On a personal note I think having the sessions longer and less of them was very productive as it gives more time for those taking part to get more out of the session rather than a shorter more rushed session.

At the end of the day a good De-Brief session was held.

Thanks to everyone who turned up and supported the event and also thanks to those who ran the various sessions.

Paul Taylor (GCRG Chairman)

TRAINING SESSION AT THE DOWARD

4 September 2016

Stretcher Packing

Earlier this year we had a practice at Old Ham at which it became apparent that some people were unfamiliar with the stretchers that we currently have in GCRG.

To address this, we decided to hold a session at the Doward that just focused on our newest stretchers and how they were able to interact with each other.

GCRG have 3 stretchers that can be used, a full Brecon stretcher, a Short Slix and an older type Brecon stretcher. The older Brecon stretcher is the one we have tended to use for training purposes, leaving the other 2 packed and ready to go in the stores.

The principle of the stretchers is very similar, the main difference being that the spine board is built into the short slix rather than being a separate piece.

Short Slix Stretcher:

This stretcher has an articulated lower section which enables it to be manoeuvred through constricted passageways more easily than the full stretcher. The spine board is built into the stretcher. There is a blanket packed with the stretcher which can be used allowing the lower section of the stretcher to be removed if necessary.

Bag Contents:

Stretcher (Fixed Spine Board)
Neck Collar
Cas Blanket
Incontinence Pads
Goggles
Balaclava
Foam Padding
Velcro Strapping
Full Body Harness
Haul Slings
Header Rope



Main Brecon Stretcher and the Training Stretcher:

Note: When deploying this stretcher underground you also need to take a cas. bag. These bags are clipped together in the stores as a reminder that they need to go together.

Bag Contents:

Stretcher
Spine Board
Neck Collar
Thermarest
Full Body Harness
Goggles
Balaclava
Haul Slings
Foam Padding Velcro Strapping
Header Rope



The two stretchers can also be combined for cases where a cave has some constrictions but also longer sections of carrying. If the casualty is packed into the Short Slix, they can then be placed directly into the Brecon Stretcher for easier carrying in larger sections. The Slix Stretcher is connected into the Main the same way as you would connect the Spine Board by the webbing straps and buckles.

Some tips for packing a casualty into any of the stretchers are:

- * Think before you move the casualty - It's often better to move the stretcher to the casualty than the casualty to the stretcher.
- * If space around the casualty is restricted, consider putting just the spine board on before moving them if a spinal injury is suspected.
- * Remove casualty's helmet.
- * Don't forget to position the lumbar pad to suit the casualty.
- * Get everything in place and make sure everyone knows what is happening and what the commands are. The person at the head calls the shots.
- * Nothing goes between the casualty and the spine board - cas bags, thermarest etc all go between the spine board and the stretcher.
- * Use the header rope to pull the stretcher below the casualty.
- * If there are any vertical hauls then ideally the casualty should be placed into the GCRG full body harness. If this is likely to cause further injury to the casualty then use common sense or seek further ad-

- * Use the foam padding and the strapping to make the casualty comfortable and to protect injuries. Use some under the knees.
- * Tighten the foot straps as much as possible - ask the casualty to bend their knees to tighten further. If one leg is injured - use 1 footloop.
- * Tighten the spine board straps first - then the stretcher straps and tuck away all loose ends.
- * Give the casualty goggles to wear.
- * Arms in - arms out ? It's up to the casualty - whichever they are most comfortable with.

Nicky Bayley (Equipment Officer)

VISIT BY HSE MINES INSPECTORS TO THE GCRG DEPOT

21 September 2016

There are two as far as we are aware unique factors about GCRG that are not applicable to other Cave Rescue Teams within the UK.

Firstly the group's PRIMARY CALLING AUTHORITY is the Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (other teams may have Fire Services as secondary Calling Authorities) and also the GCRG has a provision as agreed by the HSE Mines Inspectorate, to provide a rescue response to the working Coal Mines within the Forest of Dean. The latter does not preclude the involvement of the other emergency services but forms part of the overall plan and response but also follows very strict guidelines and limitations where the presence of an expired atmosphere is suspected or present.

As part of the HSE Mines Inspectorate Role, both the Senior Mines Inspector for the UK, Bob Leeming and a second inspector, Cliff Seymour, visited the Forest of Dean on 21st and 22nd September to undertake a series of mine inspections. This was undertaken in conjunction with the Deputy Gaveler, Daniel Howell.

Daniel contacted the GCRG Chairman at 0830 on the wednesday morning to ask if it would be possible for the two inspectors and himself to visit the GCRG depot later that day. Fortunately Paul was planning to be on-site that day to carry out some work on the new drying room, so was more than pleased to say yes. Paul had met Bob before as he was the Inspector for the mine project at Emmer Green, Reading, where Paul and his team had installed a series of steel ladders to allow access into the underground chalk mine from the grounds of the 89th Reading Scouts HQ.

Arriving at the GCRG Depot at 1300 and once introductions had been made, Paul took all on a tour of the depot explaining what work had been undertaken over the years to transform the buildings, showed off the new work and the enhanced training facility and gave details of the proposed fitting out of the trailer and its roll in enhancing the response of the group to a call - out. Then it was back into the main building for both a verbal and practical demonstration of both Cave Link and the SAR-CALL callout system. All were very impressed by everything they saw and heard about with particular interest in Cave Link and its potential usage within some of the working mines within the UK.

They eventually left at 1530, 30 minutes late for their next inspection but very pleased with the visit and the time spent.

Plans were set for a further visit when they next carry out inspections within the area. Cliff is also going to be added to the Mines Group SARCALL listing so that when this is activated for a Forest-related test or incident he will be kept informed. This is all good in building relationships and understandings.

Paul Taylor (GCRG Chairman)

LARKIN FRAME

For the final part of the 3-year government grant to MREW and the BCRC, for the provision of equipment, following discussions between the MREW and BCRC, it was agreed to use the BCRC share to purchase nine Larkin Frame units to go out to those Cave Rescue teams that requested one.

For anyone who has not seen or used a Larkin Frame, they are manufactured in Australia from a very high grade and very accurate aluminium tube which, with the addition of various connecting pieces, allows it to be assembled to form two triangular frames, with a connecting tube that pivots around two base-plates.



The purpose of the frame is to provide a high level belay point for a pair of pulleys out over the edge of a crag, or as can be seen in the example shown being used by the GCRG, to provide a hauling point over the top of the entrance shaft to Miss Grace's Lane cave where no natural anchor points exist. The group have in the past used a tripod but this had to be positioned on the lower ground level and as a result of this a good proportion of the height advantage is then lost. The Tripod is of steel construction and is very heavy to load onto the group's landrover but also once on site, requires a number of people to move it into place. Pulleys and ropes need to be attached before it is erected as its height makes this difficult afterwards without splaying one of the legs. Considerable care is also required when using a tripod to ensure that the load exerted when hauling is transferred downwards and not sideways causing the tripod to tip over.

In this exercise the Larkin Frame has been positioned to the right of the shaft on a raised section of ground. Prior to hauling the casualty, tests were carried out to ensure correct positioning so that when pivoted over the shaft the pulleys were located directly over the shaft. This forward position is maintained by a rope secured to the right hand end of the top tube and adjusted for position using a Petzl Rig from a suitable belay point (*in this example, a sling around a tree*).



Two additional hauling ropes are set up using Z-Rigs and again, with Petzl Rigs. These pass through the lower part of the frame via two large pulleys (*photo 0641*) and then go up and over a further double pulley located at the left-hand end of the top tube and then down (in this instance) a 31m shaft (*photo 0648*) where they are both secured to the stretcher. Due to the restricted diameter of the shaft, the stretcher has in this instance, to be hauled vertically orientated with a 'Barrow Boy' (Advanced First Aider) accompanying the stretcher during the ascent. For additional security, the base-plates have been pinned to the ground using 300mm long pins. In a larger shaft or open hole, the stretcher can be brought up horizontally orientated.

Once the stretcher and casualty reach the top of the shaft, the Larkin Frame is gently tilted backwards. This brings the stretcher out of the shaft (*photo Stretcher Out*) and well-away from the shaft where the stretcher and casualty are lowered to the floor (*photo 0652*). An operation that is not possible when using a tripod. which would require a greater level of handling and care to ensure that it (the tripod) does not tip over at this point.

Although not the first time the group had used the Larkin Frame it was the first time at this particular cave site and it proved to be extremely successful. In due course it will also be tested out at a number of other cave and mine sites where similar shortages of high-level anchor points cause a problem to the hauling teams.



Our thanks go to the BCRC Equipment Officer and all who were involved within MREW in the negotiations for the grant. This is a fantastic piece of equipment that the group is very pleased to have available as part of its response.

Paul Taylor (GCRG Chairman)

BCRC NICOLA PHONE 3

What it is and the latest news (as of October 2016)

Following on from the death of Nicola Dollimore in the Gouffre Berger in 1996 a fund and project was established to produce a new Cave Communications System which subsequently became known as the Nicola System or System Nicola depending on which side of the water you are from.

Over the years there has been Nicola 1 and Nicola 2 each having slight variations on the previous systems and one to another. Following the provision of a significant legacy to the British Cave Rescue Council (Subsequently topped up with donations from Hidden Earth and the sale of the 'Berger' book) which was given with the provision to develop a new generation of cave radios and this led to the start of the Nicola 3 Project.

I am not intending to go through all of the various stages of development that have taken place as this would take many pages. However what I will say is that during my time as the Treasurer of the BCRC I raised on numerous occasions my concerns regarding the suitability and lack of testing of the equipment and made various suggestions regarding how I felt the final equipment should be provided to the cave rescue teams and the number of sets. Unfortunately all of this fell on deaf ears. Those who attended the BCRC Conference in 2015 will have witnessed a demonstration of the equipment and in the words of others "It fell very short on performance".

Despite my concerns a decision was taken to proceed with the manufacture of the equipment and also to supplement this with further expenditure from the BCRC funds. A decision I might add that as Treasurer I was not consulted on and around September 4th 2015 I was contacted by the Chairman of the BCRC and informed that I had to agree to the additional expenditure. This I did not agree with and resigned from the post of BCRC Treasurer immediately.

At the BCRC AGM in May 2016 a proposal was put to the cave rescue teams to proceed with manufacture. Unfortunately I was not able to attend although we were represented at the meeting by Emma Porter (who is a member of both GCRG and MCRO). However prior to the meeting the GCRG committee instructed Emma to vote against any proposal to proceed with the Nicola project. I also understand that there may have been one other team who voted against but despite this the manufacture of the units was agreed and also for four units per team to be supplied.

We now fast forward to July 2016 and two dates were set up for teams to collect their allocation of units. One to be up North and the other on Mendip. GCRG were not able to attend this event but as Priddy Folk Festival was taking place a few weeks later and we knew that GCRG people would be attending this arrangements were made for the GCRG units to be collected then as this saved a special journey.

Prior to collection of the units an email was circulated from the BCRC to teams indicating that a major problem had been discovered with the units in that the rate of discharge on the internal batteries was vastly in excess of what had been predicted and also that it transpired that the batteries were in fact not fully charged prior to being fitted in the units. This had resulted in some batteries reaching the critical voltage level and shutting down and with the distinct possibility that they may not recover. This did not bode well for the GCRG units that were still in transit.

The GCRG units finally made their way to the GCRG Comms Officer who immediately removed all of the batteries. They could not be charged as no charger was supplied with the units nor had we agreed to purchase one.

With the distribution of the units completed to all teams across the UK a series of reports then began to be circulated expressing serious concerns about the general construction, the type of unprotected lithium cells that had been used in the units and general observations. To be honest these are all very concerning and the BCRC officers have been made aware of this.

Presently the GCRG units are at the GCRG depot with their batteries removed as we currently do not have any antennas for them (the provision for antennas was that teams would use the ones off their Hey Phones). As GCRG does not have any Hey Phones I am not sure what we were supposed to do; neither do we have a suitable charger so we have not been able to even undertake any basic testing.

At this point in time the committee have decided not to implement any expenditure on these units until the BCRC makes a decision on what is going to happen to rectify all of the concerns that have been raised. When this comes about a decision will then be taken on what we as a group will do.

GCRG currently has four fully operational Cave Link units that are providing outstanding results across our cave & mine sites and this is supplemented with our France Phones so we don't actually need to put the Nicola phones into service.

The GCRG Committee will keep you informed.

Paul Taylor (GCRG Chairman)

AN INTRODUCTION TO GCRG FIRST RESPONSE KITS

Background

The last rescue in Old Ham highlighted some areas for improvement concerning the initial response to a call out. Fire and Rescue teams were first on site, joined gradually by GCRG team members.

The normal protocol has been to wait until the landrover gets to site so that equipment and comms can be deployed with the first teams to go underground but on this occasion there was no-one available locally to load the equipment and bring the vehicle to Clearwell. This resulted in a prolonged delay on site with lots of team members changed and ready on site but no landrover.

Proposal

Following a de-brief, it was decided to trial some "First Reponse Kits" The idea being that certain team members keep a kit at home and in the event of a callout we have the means to send in a small group with limited resources to assess the situation and get word back to the surface swiftly.

As we all know, a short delay initially on a cave rescue does not have huge consequences but in certain situations such as an overdue party, we can send in a team to do a quick sweep and get information back to base relatively quickly or if we have an injured casualty we can initiate some care before the main equipment and first aid kits arrive. This gives us a head start whilst waiting for the rest of the gear to turn up.

Of course deployment of these kits will depend very much on the circumstances, but it was agreed that we should give them a try. Initially 3 kits have been put together and they are held by 3 advanced First Aiders. In the longer term should they prove successful we are aiming for another 3 kits.

The Kits are currently held by: Nicky Bayley (Yorkley) Kevin Brockway (Stroud) and Martin Sweeney (Chepstow)

What's in the Kits?

Comforts:

Thermarest seats, buff head scarves, 4-man Bothy bag, space blanket, stove, gas, pan, cups, lighter, water, soup, chocolate.

First Aid:

Gloves, paracetamol, aspirin, sam splint, quickclot gauze, triangular bandages, saline pods, dressings, resuscitation face shield

Misc:

10m rope, duct tape, Stanley knife, 3 krabs, waterproof notepad, pencil, cleaning cloth, plastic bag.

(see photo on next page)

GCRG AND SARA WORKING TOGETHER

9 July & 18 September 2016

GCRG hosted a Larkin Frame training day with Bill Batson and Paul Witheridge from Lyon Work and Rescue. This was organised by the BCRC. A number of GCRG members, and members from other cave rescue groups from around the country attended. This included members who came from as far away as Devon and Scotland.

With the ever increasing closer working ties and training between GCRG and Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA), SARA were invited to book places for their team members. This they took up with a number of their members joining us for the training day. During the training session discussions were held about how SARA could use the Larkin Frame in their rescues at Wintour's Leap in the Wye Valley.

On a sunny 18th of September, Paul Taylor and I joined a number of members of SARA at Wintour's Leap with the GCRG Larkin frame to enable the SARA team to test their plan for extracting a casualty from a known spot at the top of the cliff. This position they believed was suitable for extracting most of the casualties that they deal with in this area. On arrival SARA set up and rigged the Frame under the instruction of the guys who attended the course and with the assistance of myself, whilst Paul was behind the camera lens taking pictures for their records.



For the SARA team to get the full experience of the frame I volunteered (questionable) to be the rescuer on the line to be lowered down the cliff face. Whilst they were carrying out various hauls and lowers giving them the experience and practice of how the Larkin Frame works and how to use the 2 haul lines in unison without jerking the casualty and rescuer; I was left dangling in the sunshine enjoying the magnificent views of the cliffs and river, even looking over to Otter Hole with a smug look of joy being warm and dry.

After they hauled me up they practiced with one of their guys handling a stretcher as they would during a real rescue; this worked really well. We were all satisfied that the Larkin Frame would work well here for their specific rescues. I think the SARA team, Paul and myself learnt a lot from this exercise and feel more of the same or similar training would be beneficial to both teams. We anticipate planning some more in the New Year.

Kev Brockway (Assistant GCRG Training Officer and Warden)

2016 EMERGENCY SERVICES SHOW

or “kids in a sweet shop”

Dawn on Thursday 22nd September saw Paul Taylor, Trevor Perkins and myself depart Gloucester for the Emergency Services Show at the NEC. Meeting horrible traffic as soon as we hit the M42, I suggested a leisurely breakfast at Beckett's Farm Shop just off J3 of the M42 (well worth knowing about if you're up that way). It worked because all of the traffic had disappeared when we emerged, suitably sated.

Despite the best efforts of the NEC traffic wombles, we managed to park in a sensible place right next to the bus stop and were then treated to a very amusing commentary from our lady bus driver! Needless to say, some of the insignia emblazoned professionals on the bus didn't crack their faces, but I thought she was hilarious.

On entering Hall 5, new and much enlarged for this year, this monster took my eye:



It's a new Police and Fire Mobile Control Room for Northamptonshire (does anything ever happen there?) and cost £750k. I thought it would make a nice motorhome!

Mr Taylor found a couple of toys to play with:

a GyroCopter built for SkyWatch and a water jet that cuts through 5mm steel plate. I could find a few uses for that but the accompanying truck might be a bit obvious!

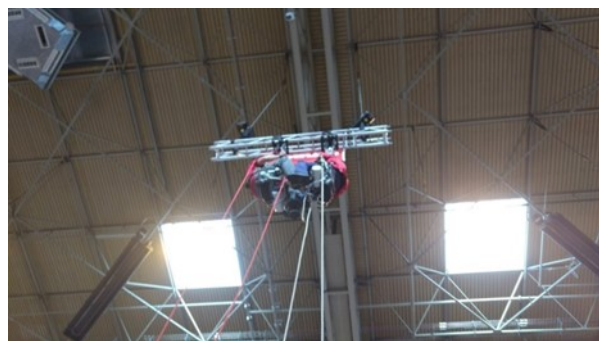




We found this nice old Austin ambulance. It makes me feel old because I can remember when Gloucester City ran these from the long-gone Eastern Avenue Station. I can't remember the Police using the 'whispering' LE Velocette parked next to it but I'm told they loved them because they were so quiet they could sneak up on people.

This is a battery- powered motorised bosun's chair which was getting a lot of attention. Mr Taylor decided, in the end, that he had to visit the roof-space of the NEC on it and it was very impressive. Just strap yourself in, move the lever and away you go.

Could be really useful for elderly cavers! *[speak for yourself Pete, Ed]*



One last thing we encountered was a bariatric manikin, used by the Fire & Rescue Services to practice moving the larger members of our community. It weighs 42 stone and could be a useful addition to Ruth, our current practice dummy!

Pete Turier (GCRG Secretary)

GCRG 50th ANNIVERSARY PUBLICATION

Unfortunately due to a delay it has not been possible to have this completed before the end of 2016 as had been hoped. It will however be finished & distributed by the end of 2017 (at the latest) to all who attended the 50th celebration in 2015.

The publication will aim to accurately reflect GCRG over the last 50 years but this can only be achieved using photos, information, anecdotes and records etc that are made available for use. So, please contact the Editor, Chairman or Secretary if you think you may have anything (newspaper cuttings, photos, slides, misc items, stories/anecdotes etc) which ought to be included in this special publication & which would be enjoyed by its readers.

This is GCRG's chance to compile and record for current and future members of the team (and posterity) the last 50 years of history of the group and the great changes it has made since 1965. It will also act as a valuable tool to help promote GCRG in general.

Jon Maisey (Newsletter & 50th Publication Editor)

AT THE END OF EVERY EXERCISE

After each underground training exercise all of the equipment used (whether on the surface or underground) must be washed, cleaned, checked and put away for use another time.

A big thanks to everyone who volunteers their time to stay behind afterwards at the depot to do this thankless but very vital role ... something that more of us could probably do to help out with.



AND FINALLY!

*A confused-looking Mike Clayton at a recent exercise appears to be thinking something, but what?
Anyone care to provide a suitable caption or two :-) ?*

