



GLOUCESTERSHIRE CAVE RESCUE GROUP



May 2010 NEWSLETTER

It's been quite a few years since there last was a GCRG Newsletter and hopefully the members will find this to be of use. The newsletter will probably be published 2-3 times per year and will aim to keep the GCRG members up-to-date with who's who within the GCRG organisation, what training is coming up, write-ups of previous exercises and anything else that is likely to be of interest.

Please contact the Chairman or Secretary if there's anything you think should be included in the newsletter and has been left out.

Important Phone Numbers

GCRG Depot – 01594 827999

Dates for your diary

GCRG AGM – Thursday 6th May 2010 at the GCRG Depot.

Cave & Mountain Rescue Awareness Day – Mon 3rd May, GCRG display stand at Beechenhurst

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
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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)
	Phil Schwarz 01594 563292 (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

Sunday 6th June 2010 – Wetsink

09:00 at the depot.

Will consist of a stretcher carry/evacuation from Dryslade back to Cross Stream & the pitches/choke (depending on numbers)

Saturday 4th or Sunday 5th September 2010

To be confirmed – A joint exercise with the Midland & Shropshire rescue teams, based at Snailbeach Mine, Shropshire.

Depot News

All previous work still ongoing

Previous Practice Events

GCRG Practice at Whittington Stone Mine

[Copies of this have also been submitted for publication in GSS/RFDC newsletters]

7th June 2009

Whittington Stone Mine is located in a small village on the Andoversford side of Cheltenham just off the A40 that funny enough and completely coincidentally, is called Whittington.

The area of responsibility attributed to the Gloucestershire Cave Rescue Group (GCRG) includes the Cotswolds and in doing so includes the stone mines that are located within that area.

During a discussion at a GCRG committee meeting regarding future exercises, it became quite apparent that it had been quite considerable time since the group had undertaken an exercise on the Cotswolds and Whittington stone mine was put forward as a suitable location. In fact the last time that GCRG was active at this location was a goodly number of years back [20th Nov 1994, Ed] when it was called out to undertake the retrieval of a member of Hereford Caving Club who had unfortunately suffered a fatal heart attack in the mine. This event fortunately went very well.

Having decided that the group would like to make use of the site for an exercise there were a number of points that needed to be clarified before the matter could proceed further. Not least of which was to get the approval of the farmer on whose land the mine was located. Contact was made with Maurice Febry not only the local GCRG Warden but also someone who knew a lot about the mine and was also in regular contact with the farmer.

Maurice reported back that all was well with the farmer and he was quite happy for things to progress. As I had never been to the mine before, a site visit was undertaken prior to the event.

The mine had during its working life had a number of entrances along the hillside in which it lies. However over the years since its closure these had been filled in. A new entrance was excavated a number of years back to regain access to the mine.

I do not intend to go into the history of this or the mine as this is best left to those with a greater knowledge of both aspects than myself, the mine is however split into two main sections: The old workings & the new workings and it were the former that GCRG were interested in at this stage.

Maurice gave the GCRG group a good tour around and we identified a suitable location for our intended casualty to be located.

The exercise was set to take place on Sunday June 7th 2009 and arrangements had been made with Greg Jones to collect the GCRG landrover from the depot and drive it over.

On the Sunday Morning I set off early from Gloucester to ensure that I was onsite prior to the arrival of our pre-arranged casualty. As I drove over in absolutely torrential rain I was contemplating cancelling the event as I thought the prospects of anybody turning up was slight. Fortunately soon after I arrived at the farm the conditions started to improve and even a rainbow appeared in the sky.

Soon a steady trickle of others started to arrive and a call on the radio to the landrover confirmed that Greg was well on his way with the vehicle and equipment so we could get on with our plans. The first being to get our casualty into the mine and located at the desired spot. Steve Tomalin undertook this part and while this was going on, underground and surface OgoF phone parties were despatched.

Until the communications side was sorted, Mike Clayton from the MCRO ran a surface-based session dealing with splinting, placing the casualty in the brand new casualty bag (which had been supplied by the Mountain Rescue) and then combining all of this with a stretcher loading exercise. Although this is very much more likely to be carried out underground, these surface sessions provide a much improved viewing for those undertaking the tasks.

Once a confirmation was received from the surface comms party that a link had been established, those left packed all the gear away and were then split into two underground search teams. With each having their own advanced First Aider to deal with the casualty.

The old workings had been sub split into two sections and it was into these that the two teams were despatched. The mine is not a vast complex of workings and it was not long before information was relayed back to the control based at the GCRG landrover that the

casualty had been located by the second team and was being treated by the advanced First Aider. The stretcher and casualty bag were taken to the casualty's location and the exercise practiced on the surface re enacted.

Once in the stretcher both teams combined to provide the carrying party for the trip back to the surface. Although the distance is not long the terrain varies from easy walking down the driveages to sections where passing the stretcher from one person to the next over a series of boulders was the only suitable way to move the stretcher.

From the gate coming into the mine the constructed entrance is like a narrow corridor and is not wide enough for the stretcher to be carried. It was necessary for a number of people to position themselves in the corridor and allow the stretcher to be moved over their legs to the gateway and back out to the surface. Once everybody was out it was back to the landrover for the debrief.

Although the support from the Forest area for the event was very poor, the input of a good number from the MCRO along with Gloucester and Cheltenham areas resulted in a good number of people attending and enabling the exercise to run very well.

From the casualty's side it had been her first trip on a stretcher and she said that she had initially had some trepidation but once on the move had found considerable confidence in the people who were carrying her and had been nice and warm in the bag.

Our aging Ogof phone continues to perform reasonably well and the general consensus was that everybody had enjoyed the day and more importantly learnt something, especially Greg and Dave Appleing, who both now know that the GCRG Khyam shelter is erected with the poles attached to the fabric and more importantly with the poles on the outside! It was also good to see a number of new members attending and getting involved.

From the GCRG side we have certainly increased our knowledge of this site, both underground and on the surface and given some new equipment a first test which proved very successful. The success of the event at Whittington has prompted the GCRG to run some further exercises at sites on the Cotswolds over the next few years. So please support GCRG, the committee can't do it all on their own. Remember one day you might need their assistance.

The normal dates for the GCRG training exercise are the first Sunday in March, June, September & December and if you are not on the GCRG callout list and would like to attend the training sessions that is not a problem. Details of the events normally appear in the GSS Newsheets throughout the year. Alternatively contact either the GCRG Hon Secretary Pete Turier via secretary@gcrg.org.uk or the Hon Chairman Paul Taylor via chairman@gcrg.org.uk.

During the exercise both on the surface and underground I carried out quite a bit of filming making use of my recently purchased Head Cam camera. When I have edited this I will bring the results along to one of our socials for people to see.

Paul Taylor (GCRG Chairman)

GCRG Goes Further Afield

Paul Taylor & Emma Porter

Quite a few years the back the BCRC (British Cave Rescue Council) in conjunction with ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) split the whole of the UK up so that all police force areas were covered by at least one Cave Rescue Team that could be called upon to deal with a Mine or Cave Rescue incident within their areas.

So for GCRG this expanded our area of responsibility from Gloucestershire and just over the River Wye into parts of Gwent (Otter Hole & The Doward) along with our existing support rolls to the then Gwent, South Wales and MRO teams to include Hereford & Worcestershire where we took on the primary roll and the West Midlands and Warwickshire

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in a supporting roll. The most significant primary responsibility addition was that of the three counties of Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire who all come under the Thames Valley Constabulary. The latter county extending beyond Reading and almost to the outer fringes of London.

Coming from the other direction, the area covered by the SECRO (South East Cave Rescue Organisation) was also extended to cover the same area around Reading so that there was a crossover of Resources.

These changes led to a quadrupling of our area and over the years we have held a few practice exercises on the Cotswolds (the most recent of which being at Whittington Stone Mine) where although we have ventured a small way into this larger area we have not gone any further.

For some time the GCRG Committee have been discussing our area of responsibility and you may well ask the question why include Reading there can't be any mines up there? You would of course be wrong in thinking that as there are in fact a number of known mines within the Reading area and from our recent visit and the subsequent discussions we held there could well be many more lurking under the surface undiscovered.

Two specific known sites presently exist both of which lie very close to one another in the area of Reading known as Emmer Green and in fact one of the mines takes this as its name and the other is known as Hanover Mine and it was the latter of the two that was going to be the subject of our exercise.

From the GCRG Committee discussions that were mentioned earlier this led to Pete Turier making some enquires via the internet and this showed that the SECRO had in fact already held an exercise at the mine a few years back. Pete also contacted the Thames Valley Police and they said that their response to an incident at the mines would be "we would send our Diving team".

To be honest although I had never visited either of the mines the information that already existed showed that both sites were accessed by vertical pitches in excess of 18m and I am not sure what the Divers would do when they got there.

This prompted me to raise the matter at last years BCRC AGM when I knew that the SECRO would be present and in addition a representative from ACPO would also be in attendance. Graham Christian from SECRO confirmed that they had held an exercise at the site and this had proved to be very successful and the rep from ACOP was most concerned with the comment relating to the response by Thames Valley police.

From discussions held that day and a subsequent meeting with Graham we set the ball rolling to undertake a joint GCRG / SECRO Exercise within one or both of the mines. We can now fast forward to Sunday March 7th 2010 and report on the exercise that transpired from those discussions.

Six GCRG members travelled up to Reading on the Saturday evening and after a few beers in a local pub returned to the luxury of the 89th Reading Scout troop's HQ to spend the night. This had been arranged with one of the scout leaders and it also transpired that he also held the key to one of the mines that was in fact located in the grounds of the scout hut. This was not going to be the one that we were going down but we arranged to visit it after the exercise.

Sunday morning came around all too early and although nice and bright it was certainly cold. A meeting point had been arranged for a car park not far from the scout hut and at just after 1030hrs those at the hut received a call to say that there were now a good few on site.

In total the attendance was 27 people and this was split almost 50-50 between the two groups. Clark Friend is recorded on both teams list so he was the one who was going to be split down the middle. After a few introductions the proceedings were handed over to Graham Christian from SECRO who outlined the days proposed scenario and Geoff Beal

who gave a brief description of the Chalk Mine, some of the history of the mine, its rediscovery and the exploration that has taken place in recent years.

The original plan had been to use the car park as the base but as we had the keys to the scout hut it was felt that this would be a more appropriate location to work from. Graham had brought quite a large amount of equipment from the SECRO Store and we in turn had brought a similar amount from the GCRG Store.

With both groups using very similar equipment it was decided that the best approach would be to make use of both sets of equipment in a "Mix and Match" way.

GCRG would provide the tripod and rigging while SECRO would deal with the surface control "T Card" board, comms and stretcher. Also team members were split up so that both the underground and surface teams were made up of a combination from each team.

The mine that was the subject of the exercise is called Hanover Mine and its entrance is located in the grounds of an old people's home a short walk from the scout hut. All that shows its location on the surface being a small heavy duty steel lid and a short section of U shaped steel tube approximately 1.25m high. The latter forming the belay point for life-lining the underground party down the 55ft fixed ladder.

Once approximately 50% of the group had gone underground those of us left on the surface started to prepare our side of the exercise. Due to the nature of the underlying chalk and clays, problems have been experienced in the past using the standard wire lateral aerials so Graham had decided that they would try out two loop antennas similar in fact to the ones that GCRG uses for its Ogo phone.

This proved very successful and a good clear comms link was established from the surface down into the mine. The section of pipe that was used for the belay for the life-lining was much too low to act as a belay for the hauling of the stretcher so both teams had pre-empted this by bringing along their tripods. The GCRG one was used as it was already assembled.

One of our new "Rigging Plates" was attached to the eye below the tripod top and this provided space between the two large pulleys and two hauling ropes. The belay points for these were two rather conveniently placed trees and they were set up with "Z Rigs". However as this set up was going to produce a sideways pull on the tripod two additional ropes were attached to the top of the tripod to stop it being pulled over, one to a tree and the second to a ground anchor from the SECRO kit. In addition, all of the legs of the tripod were tied together so that they could not spread. A third rope was provided down the shaft to act as the "Barrow Boys" line.

Where it is possible to do so, we have tried to bring the stretcher up pitches in a semi horizontal orientation however the small diameter of the shaft in this case was not going to allow for this so it would have to be vertical. Although we had established a comms link to underground for any communications required regarding the pitch hauling, it is nice to be able to speak directly from the pitch head to the bottom rather than having to go through a third party. This was of course possible by shouting up and down the shaft but is not always ideal. We had taken with us two of the small yellow hand-held radios and these proved extremely successful in providing an excellent clear link between the two locations.

With the stretcher attached and manoeuvred into a vertical position full hauling was commenced. With plenty of room on the surface it was possible to get a good long pull on the rope before having to stop and reposition the gear ready for the next haul. Initially the haul was a bit on the quick side but once this had been regulated the stretcher and casualty came up very easily. (I understand that Mike Clayton who acted as Barrow Boy had to revert to self-lining and climbing the ladder rather than trying to prussik up as even at the reduced speed he could not keep up). The small diameter of the shaft meant that Mike had to stay below the stretcher at all times so was not able to do much to keep the stretcher away from the shaft sides. Looking down from the top the surface party could see that the casualty was getting very close to the wall of the shaft. This was as the result of two factors:

1. The shaft was not vertical

2. The natural resting position of the stretcher is slightly out of vertical with the casualty's head forward of the position of the foot end.

The tripod had been positioned in a location relative to the shaft to account for these two factors but was on its limit. To further assist with this the two hauling ropes were placed in a karabiner attached to the steel pipe and this helped pull the stretcher away from the side of the shaft. Once the stretcher and the casualties head were clear of the shaft it was removed.

The ideal situation when hauling is to have the belays as high as possible to allow for the stretcher to completely clear the top of the pitch but with a tripod in use to provide the hauling point then a limited high point is determined by the height of the tripod and how tight it is possible to keep the rigging point. The GCRG Tripod is of a reasonable height and by using our rigging plate we had kept the pulleys as high as possible. In the end when the stretcher was as high as it could go there was approximately 300mm still in the shaft. With two people lifting and then some co-ordinated releasing of the two hauling ropes the stretcher and casualty were brought clear of the shaft and lowered down to the ground. (Fortunately for those on the surface, Steve Tomalin and Mike Clayton had noticed that the SECRO stretcher had a different attachment system for the ropes than ours and instead of the hauling mallions as we have there were two short slings attached to the top of the stretcher. They removed these and attached the hauling ropes directly into the attachment holes. Had the rope been attached to these then the distance between the top of the stretcher and the knots would have been at least another 300-450mm which would have made the job at the top a lot more difficult and would have required the use of an additional rope from the foot of the stretcher up and over a third pulley to lift the stretcher). With the haul completed the underground party came back to the surface and then those left on the surface went down for a look around. Then it was back to the scout hut for a de-brief.

Our casualty for the exercise had never been one before and said that he had enjoyed the experience but was glad it was only an exercise and encouraged everybody to do it once as it certainly makes you not want to do it for real. The two teams had worked well together and enjoyed the exercise. We should have put a bit more thought into establishing an Underground Controller before sending people underground but this had been resolved. It was nice to see a new site and different surroundings and to meet and work with people that we would not normally meet within the Forest of Dean or in a supporting roll to the WBCRT. I was very pleased with the day and the support given by the members of both the GCRG and SECRO.

With the next BCRC AGM due in April we will now be able to report a vastly improved picture as far as the Reading Mines are concerned and already a discussion with the Thames Valley Police by Pete has seen a positive improvement in their knowledge of what is both available and we hope their response to an incident.

Footnote.

Due to the lateness in the day when we finished a trip down the Emmer Green Mine was not undertaken. However I have managed to arrange for this to take place on Sunday September 12th 2010. The entrance to this mine is a 20m shaft which we will rig for both SRT & Ladder descents. The mine is not normally available to be entered so this is an opportunity to go and have a look around. If you wish to go please let me know in advance so that I can get you on the list. Meeting time will be 1030hrs at the scout hut and I can supply directions. Please remember to bring your **Insurance Card with you on the day. NO CARD = NO TRIP. This will be strictly adhered to.** I am also hoping to arrange for the Hanover Mine to be opened up as well for those who would like to look at that one as well.

For anybody who would like to make a bit more of the weekend arrangements have been made for camping in the grounds of the scout hut or sleeping in side. Cycling and walking are on the cards. There is a very nice pub just down the road from the scout hut. A donation to the scouts for use of the site would be in order.

Paul Taylor (GCRG Chairman)

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