



GLOUCESTERSHIRE CAVE RESCUE GROUP



NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2015

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

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

Greg Jones	07974 008519	01594 827334
Paul Taylor	07803 539945	01452 505673
David Tuffley	07799 617934	01594 824343
Peter Turier	07462-181899	01452 539199

(Versionv3, May 2014)

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

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Apologies for not publishing this edition of the newsletter any earlier (the last one was in June 2014).

Unfortunately the GCRG newsletter (just like the 'normal' caving-club ones) do not write themselves & cannot be produced if no-one is prepared to help provide articles or information for inclusion.

However, a very grateful thanks to everyone who provided articles or photos etc for this edition.

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FORTHCOMING 2015 TRAINING EXERCISES

1st March – Wigpool

26th Feb – Wardens Training Evening

OTHER DATES FOR THE DIARY

20th January 2015

SWERA meeting (Hunter's Inn, Priddy)

22nd January 2015

GCRG committee meeting (at the depot)

7th May 2015

GCRG AGM

12th- 14th June 2015

BCRC Conference (Hosted in the Forest of Dean by GCRG & MCRO)

23rd-24th September 2015

Emergency Services Show, NEC

15th November 2015

GCRG day at the Sue Ryder hospice, Leckhampton, Cheltenham

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) 07462 181899 (M)	Treasurer Liz Maisey treasurer@gcrg.org.uk 01666 504647 (H)
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Equipment Officer Nicky Bayley / equipment@gcrg.org.uk 07790 664278 (M) 01291 445716 (W)	Medical Advisor Andy Harp andy@palmcons.co.uk 07501 307391 (M)	

Ordinary Member [Newsletter Editor] Jon Maisey jon.maisey@btinternet.com 01666 504647 (H)	Ordinary Member [50th Anniv Publication] Dave Appleing Dappleing@aol.com 01242 581385 (H) 01242 669413 (W)	Ordinary Member [Driver records co-ord]
Ordinary Member Kevin Brockway ozonekev@btinternet.com 01453 511100 (H) 07970 033345 (M)	Ordinary Member Rachel Brown brownrm@btinternet.com 01453 511100 (H)	Ordinary Member John Holden

CALLOUT WARDENS

Cheltenham / Tewkesbury / North Cotswolds	Maurice Febry 01242 242160 (H) Colin Vickery 01684 293202 (H) 07548 240124 (M)	Dave Appleing 01242 581385 (H) 07804 300598 (M) 01242 669413 (W) 01242 669348 (W)
Bristol / Chepstow	Kevin Brockway 01453 511100 (H) 07970 033345 (M) 01454 382133 (W) 01454 382100 x2133 (W)	
Forest of Dean	John Berry 01594 822823(H) 07979 791083 (M) Greg Jones 01594 827334 (H) 07974 008519 (M) Dave Tuffley 01594 824343 (H) 07799 617934 (M) 01452 711852 (W)	Andy Clark 01600 716970 (H) 07707 992510 (M) 07411 207149 (M) 01594 811303 (W)
Gloucester	Pete Turier 01452 539199 (H) 07462 181899 (M) 07789 903921 (W)	Paul Taylor 01452 505673 (H) 07803 539945 (M)

PREVIOUS TRAINING EVENTS

1st June 2014

Dean Field Studies Centre

The Summer 'Round-Robin' training event for 2014 was held at The Dean Field Studies Centre (DFSC).

5 different workshops were put on:

- Abseiling from the Climbing Tower on Petzl Rigs to get used to their operation
- Stretcher Hauling on the Ropes Course
- Stretcher loading and transportation in the Tunnels System
- Radios and Communication
- Setting up Command & Control & related bits



It was a well-attended event with lots happening. One 'seasoned' team member commented he "had learnt more in one day than at several other training days combined"!

Something similar is likely to be organised for the BCRC Conference 20-21 June 2015 at DFSC.





Writeup report provided by Ian Healey

7th September 2014

'Clearwell Caves' area (Old Ham)

No details or write-up was available from this exercise

Any volunteers to write-up future training events and therefore help to keep a invaluable record of training for GCRG?

6th December 2014

Ogof Draenen (joint exercise with SMWCRT)

A number of GCRG members attended this joint training event (no further info available)

GCRG MERCHANDISE

GCRG Mugs

Nicky has been making more of the excellent GCRG mugs & will make more if required at £10 each ... contact Nicky (via equipment@gcrg.org.uk) to place your order.



GCRG Badges

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 or Kev 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 also £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 Kev Brockway or Paul Taylor.

2015 – 50th ANNIVERSARY OF GCRG

GCRG was officially formed in May 1965 and in 2015 the group will be organising some an official celebration (in collaboration with the BCRC conference due to be held in the Forest of Dean in June 2015) and a publication will be produced to go with it.

If you have any ideas or suggestions how the group ought to celebrate this milestone anniversary, then please contact any of the committee members.

In regard to the publication, Dave Appleing is collating information (photos/newspaper cuttings/anecdotes etc) for the official publication & would be grateful for anything that can be sent his way; There's only now a few months to go before June 2015.

OTHER GCRG/CAVE RESCUE RELATED EVENTS

THE EMERGENCY SERVICES SHOW

24th-25th September 2014

On Wednesday 24th September myself, Kevin, Gareth and Paul attended the Emergency Services Show. The Emergency Services Show is a two day annual event that takes place at the NEC in Birmingham.

There were over 420 exhibitors to see at the show with some fantastic products and new kit on display. The exhibitors were quite varied, displaying kit that ranged from the larger pieces of equipment such as emergency vehicles used for fire-fighting at airports, tracked vehicles, 4 x 4s, motorcycles, and bicycles used by the St Johns Ambulance Service; to smaller equipment such as defibrillators, clothing and food and drink products. The exhibitors themselves included private companies, the emergency services, and voluntary organisations including cave rescue. There were lots of free samples on offer including mugs, karabiners, boil-in-the-bag meals, pens, sweets and tins of mints. And of course free hot drinks supplied by Drinkmaster.

In addition to lots of new kit to look at, there were companies and organisations on hand to demonstrate new products. In addition there were workshops, seminars, and live rescue demonstrations. This included a live demonstration of how vehicles, including articulated trucks, are recovered following a collision. The demonstrations showed how the emergency services and suppliers can work together. Other activities to do included the Fire and Rescue Services confined spaces training and a competition on throwing a safety line. There were a number of free seminars available, although we did not have time to attend these.

And all of this was for free; including the car parking. This is the second time we have attended and certainly will be going again next year.





Next year's show takes place on Wednesday 23 September 2015, 09:00 - 17:30 and Thursday 24 September 2015, 09:00 - 16:00 within Halls 17 and 18 and outside area at the NEC Birmingham.

For more information about next year's show, including a list of exhibitors and to pre-register, go to: <http://www.emergencyuk.com/>

Write-up by Rachel Brown and Photos by Paul Taylor

SUE RYDER WORKING DAY

16th November 2014

As you are all aware, Steve Tomalin spent the last few weeks of his life at the Sue Ryder Hospice in Leckhampton, Cheltenham.

The care that he was given by the staff was absolutely fantastic. I was lucky enough to be one of the few to be able to visit him during this time on a number of occasions. He did not want too many people to see him in a poor state of health.

On one visit with Emma Porter we found that Steve was very weak and tired and he had family visitors so we did not stay very long. We both knew that the inevitable was not far off. I have to say, and I am sure Emma felt the same, very low as we walked back down the stairs to the reception area. Here we had a chat with the lady receptionist and she suggested a walk in the gardens before we set off home.

Leaving by a rear door we made our way to the end of the lawn and sat down on the steps and just chatted about our memories of Steve and how lucky we both felt to have been one of his friends. This helped us quite considerably. There were tears shed from both of us. Moving-on around the garden and then across into the woods, we just took a very slow amble along, taking-in the surroundings. To

say who came up with the idea would be difficult to say as I think we were both thinking along the same lines; It would be nice to come back and undertake some volunteer work later in the year as a thank you for the care that was being given to Steve.

July 20th came and I received the call that although I did not want, I knew would come, and this confirmed that Steve had died around midday. I had been in the Forest that day and it took me quite a few hours to make the journey back to Gloucester. Again many tears were shed that day and emotions shared with many people.

Steve's funeral was set for Monday August 4th a day that I will never forget as it was my 60th Birthday. On the previous day 30 of my family and friends had joined Rose and myself on the Dean Forest Railway for a trip on the train and a meal to celebrate my birthday. This was a fantastic day and a trip I would recommend to anybody but it was one that was tinged with a little sadness as Steve had been set to be one of my guests. He was however not forgotten as we toasted his memory with a glass of champagne on Lydney Station platform before joining the dining train.

For those who were able to attend the funeral it was a wonderful event and I know one that Steve would have been very proud of. All the red jackets looked superb. Soon afterwards I discussed with Emma about our thoughts for a 'Working Day' and we decided that we would open this up to anybody from both GCRG and MCRO who would like to attend. However, firstly we needed to know, if what we were proposing, was practical as far as the Sue Ryder hospice was concerned. I made a trip back to the hospice and again saw the same lady on reception and she gave me the contact details of the man who was Head of Support Services (Steve Kirkwood). I contacted him by email and we then spoke on the phone.

Outlining our proposal he said he would be more than happy to arrange a date and that working sessions were held on a Wednesday during the day. I explained that this would be rather difficult for the vast majority of us due to our day-jobs and would it be possible to arrange something for a weekend with a preference for a Sunday. Understanding our situation, he said that as long as we did not mind waiting a few months until November, this could be arranged. We set a tentative date for the 16th and circulated the details. Quite a few responded and we felt that it would be a viable event. Being away for the whole of October in Canada and California I could not do any more about it till I returned. I contacted Steve to confirm that all was well and soon afterwards was contacted by the PR lady at the Sue Ryder as they wanted to issue a press release before the event. We also re-circulated the information around the GCRG, MCRO and GSS members. I was not 100% sure how many were going to turn up but felt that if we were at least a dozen that would be quite acceptable. No matter what date we set there would always be somebody that it would not fit in with.

On the Saturday during the day I was with Emma and Mike Clayton at an MREW meeting in Preston and we followed this with a BCRC officers meeting so my trip back down to Gloucester gave quite a late finish to the day. Next morning when I set off for Leckhampton it was raining but fortunately not for long and by the time I arrived at the Sue Ryder it had stopped and already a number of cave rescue people were on site along with some of the regular volunteer staff. Introductions were made and it was great to put a face to various names. Once we had a reasonable number of people Steve asked us to go with him to the Chapel, which was next to reception, as this was to be our base for the day and also he had laid on tea and coffee for people. He then gave an introduction, asked everybody to

sign in and fill out emergency contact details and then told us what we were going to be doing. The hospice has just over 14 acres of land of which 9 acres is woodland and we were to be going to the far end of it to undertake clearing. So once we were kitted out with helmets, gloves, loppers and saws we made our way through the woods; Much further than Emma and myself had been on our walk back in mid-July.

At the far end, our task was explained (by Rob and John from the hospice volunteer staff); Clear the brambles and undergrowth and make piles ready for burning later, along with cutting down all the unwanted trees. To say we were in our element is an understatement! Chainsaws were started and armed with loppers and hand saws work got underway.

Two teams were established, one at the bottom of the slope and one at the top. Those with hedging skills made use of the longer lengths of cut branches to strengthen the boundary fence to keep out unwanted dogs, while the two teams slowly moved closer together.

At lunchtime some had to leave but not before photos were taken for an article in the Gloucestershire Echo (*see the scanned newspaper article*) and for our own publications (*see reproduced below*). Others arrived after lunch to continue the work in the afternoon.



All-in-all we had a total of 29 people take part in the day which to be honest was way beyond the expectations of both Emma and myself and we would both like to extend a big thanks to everybody. Knowing that we were onsite, Steve's Sister Lisa, her partner Stuart and Steve's dad, Len came over to see everybody. Due to the rather muddy conditions they limited their walk through the woods but both Emma and myself did go over and meet up with them and we brought back to everybody their special thanks for people's efforts.

Such was everyone's enjoyment in the event that even before the end of the day it was suggested that maybe we could arrange another visit for next year (2015). This we have conveyed to the Sue Ryder staff and the reply was "Yes Please we have enjoyed you being here and you have got so much done". So please put Sunday November 15th in your diary for a return in 2015 (more details to follow). After the work was completed and all the tools and equipment returned to the store shed, Steve met back up with everybody in the chapel. Here he thanked people for their efforts and also gave a short insight into the history of the house, when it was taken over by Sue Ryder and also an outline of the work that they do. By making use of volunteers in the gardens and keeping expenditure down to an absolute minimum they are able to devote the maximum amount of income to patient care and equipment. He was able to show people an empty 3 bed ward that has just been refurbished and then took the party upstairs to look at a vacant room in what is called the Tudor Wing.



Stuart, Lisa, Len and Emma

I have to say for me once I got to the top of the stairs the emotions took over and brought back all of the memories of visiting Steve and I had to return to the Chapel.

As it transpired, the room that the party were taken to was the one that Steve had been in for the first part of his stay. When everybody returned I passed on my thanks for all of the work completed and people departed for home knowing that their efforts had been very much appreciated.



As you can see from the attached photographs much was achieved. Hopefully see you all and some newcomers next year. It was a great day.

Paul W Taylor (write-up and photos)

(Chairman GCRG)

Pictures: Eloisa Wildsmith CHew20141116B-001_C



SPRUCE UP: Members of the Gloucestershire Cave Rescue Group helped to transform the grounds of Leckhampton Court Hospice after one of their members, Steve Tomalin, was cared for there

CHew20141116B-003_C

CHew20141116B-005_C

Group says thank you to hospice

MEMBERS of the Gloucestershire Cave Rescue Group have been helping transform the grounds of a hospice in Cheltenham to say thanks for care received by one of their colleagues.

Gloucester caver Steve Tomalin received round-the-clock emotional and physical care at Sue Ryder Leckhampton Court Hospice before he passed away in July.

Now, many of Steve's caving colleagues have reflected on their friendship sitting in the grounds of the historic hospice.

Friend and fellow caver Paul Taylor said: "Staff at Sue Ryder Leckhampton Court Hospice provided incredible care to Steve and were so accommodating when we'd turn up with film footage to show him so that he could keep in touch with his passion for caving."

Steve's family and friends also donated £1,900 to the charity.



CLEAN SWEEP: Deanne Wilkins and Steve Holding



BIG CHOP: Emma Porter

Gloucestershire Echo – Tues 18th November 2014

A CALLOUT IN ETHIOPIA

GCRG members Andy Clark & Robin Weare were in Ethiopia continuing the ongoing exploration of newly discovered caves in the region. This year the team included 4 French cavers as well as Andy, Robin & the Ethiopian caver, Nasir.

We had arrived in Ethiopia a week earlier and had now settled into the exploration of a group of vertical caves near Bedeno. The deepest known caves in Ethiopia were in this area and our hopes were high.....

The Callout

At about 10.30pm on the evening of 25th October Andy, Nasir & Robin were talking in their room in Bedeno when Nasir received a telephone call from the Head of the Department of Culture & Tourism, the man who was ultimately responsible for the issue of our permits.

After a short conversation Nasir told us that we were asked to assist with a situation near Bedesa. It had only recently been reported that two local people had been last seen the previous Sunday and were known to have been in a cave.

Bedeno is about 260km from Bedesa. With much of that on dirt roads the journey would take at least 8 hours.

After a very short discussion we agreed to help and the Minister said he would send a car to transport us. It would arrive as early as possible the next morning.

By the time the conversation was concluded the rest of the party were asleep and we saw no point in disturbing them before morning.

We were fortunate to have a strong and experienced team; Andy & Robin have been members of the Gloucestershire Cave Rescue Group for many years, Bernard is a former President of Spéléo Secours Français and is still an active member of his local team. Antoine & Patou, although less experienced, are also active members of a French rescue team.

After only a short discussion the next morning it was agreed that we would all attend the call out, with Robin, Andy, Bernard & Nasir taking the local vehicle when it arrived. One of our vehicles would return to Harar in order to collect items left there and then follow on. The other would transport Antoine, Patou & Josiane to Bedesa.

The Journey

With breakfast eaten and packing complete we decided to start the journey and after about 30 minutes we met the government vehicle. There was just room for the planned exchange of passengers and we continued at a somewhat faster pace.

After a relatively short time the car shuddered to a halt with a burst tyre – the price of speedy travel on such roads.



The tyre was changed and we were driven a little more cautiously to Kurfa Chela, the next township, where it was repaired after a short delay.



It took a further hour to reach the tarmac road but we then made good progress, stopping for a quick lunch at 2pm (during which Andy was violently ill – probably resulting from his long walk in the sun the previous day). It was during this stop that we were passed by the “slow” vehicle.

We met up again at the junction with the road to Bedesa and continued together, reaching Bedesa in daylight but too late to take any immediate action as local officials were able to tell us that the incident was a further 45 km away. On the local roads this would mean a 2 hour journey – even in daylight.

The Planning

We were taken to a local restaurant and joined by Mr Aliyi Usman, the head of the Woreda¹, and other officials. As is normal with senior officials in Ethiopia, Aliyi spoke good English and was able to give us a proper briefing.

He confirmed that, Bososo, the nearest village to the cave is 45 km from Bedesa and that this would mean a 2 hour drive. The cave itself is a further 1h 30 walk from the village. We established that the two missing people were adult males who had last been seen a week ago. The cave was understood to have 3 “rooms” but little more detail was known save that the missing people were probably in the 3rd “room” or beyond.

We discussed various possibilities, the most likely being bad air, and explained that we would do the best we could to find the missing people but would not endanger ourselves to do so. We discussed equipment and support. Aliyi would attend himself and take personal control in order to ensure maximum co-operation. There was a small hospital in the village and he would arrange for an ambulance to be on hand. He would try to obtain breathing equipment. He told us that he had already informed the press of our involvement so, after Aliyi and I had given a short interview to camera, I telephoned the BCA Secretary to warn him that news of the incident may reach the UK press.

¹ A Woreda is an administrative area equivalent to a local authority in the UK.

The Departure

We had arranged to leave at 06.30 the next morning and we were ready. The ambulance arrived shortly afterwards but it was 08.30 before we actually left.

Aliyi travelled in the same vehicle as me and immediately apologised for the delayed start. Although he had managed to make most of the necessary

arrangements the previous evening he had failed to source breathing apparatus but had now done so. The equipment was to come from Addis Ababa and would be brought to Bososo as soon as possible.

We reached Bososo a little after 10am and were welcomed by the village headman and other local dignitaries with Aliyi translating speeches of welcome and thanks from them and "we are pleased to be able to help and will do our best" from me.

After sorting out equipment and passing our bags to a column of helpers we started the long walk to the cave entrance, on the far side of the valley.

The Rescue Attempt

We arrived at the entrance to Enkuftu Tuftu to be greeted by a 6m pitch with the traditional local access arrangement of a "ladder of branches".

We rigged for SRT after first lowering the GCRG oxygen meter and establishing that there was 18.4% oxygen at the foot of the pitch.



The plan was for me and Antoine to make a preliminary investigation with Nasir accompanying us but waiting at the bottom of the pitch whilst we continued into the cave.

We all three descended to a level area with an open chamber steeply falling away below. We reconfirmed the oxygen level at 18.4% before Antoine & I continued.

When we reached the top of the slope into the second chamber the oxygen had fallen to 17.4% and only a few metres lower we stopped. The air was already causing breathing problems and the meter read 16%.

At the same level on the far side of the chamber was a large boulder from which the ground fell away steeply by probably 5 metres. We decided to cautiously use this boulder to discover how much oxygen would be available to us lower down.

To do this I attached a safety line to Antoine's harness in order to pull him back should it prove to be necessary. He carefully approached the boulder and lowered the oxygen meter. We recovered it and checked the low reading. There was only 12.2% oxygen at that level.

Realising we could go no further and that the two missing people were certainly dead I made a quick survey of the first and second chambers before leaving.



We took with us a bag of gypsum crystals which had been found at the foot of the entrance ladder. Presumably these crystals had been mined by the casualties.

The Aftermath

I walked back with Aliyi and the village headman and was told that the cave was used locally as a site to occasionally mine crystals and mercury. It was not used by Bososo village as there had been previous deaths. Today's casualties were from another village and it was thought that the cave had been safely accessible only a few weeks earlier. The fact that the bag of crystals had been left near the entrance suggested that the change in air quality had been sudden.

We discussed the general belief in the villages that caves contained mercury and our regular sighting of water filled jam jars placed beneath stalactites in other caves.

I was thanked warmly by Aliyi on behalf of himself and the village and I passed this on to the team when we stopped for a break in the shade.

The return was uphill and the heat was taking its toll so I went on ahead and arranged for the ambulance to return to collect the rest of the team; watching from the shade of the health centre as they emerged.



That our efforts had been appreciated was quickly evident and we were provided with food and coffee, told of nearby caves with good air and invited to stay the night to allow us to visit them tomorrow.



Then we were introduced to the goat which was to be our evening meal.....

Article by Robin Weare