

GLOUCESTERSHIRE CAVE RESCUE GROUP



Newsletter

Issue 13, July 2017



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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2017/18 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

10th Sept 2017: Rescue practice/training (venue to be decided)

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

29 Sept-1st Oct 2017: Hidden Earth (Churchill, Mendip)

6th-8th Oct 2017: SWERA training w/e at DFSC

10th Dec 2017: Rescue practice/training (venue to be decided)

MEMBERS OF THE GCRG 2017-2018 COMMITTEE

Chairman <i>Paul W Taylor</i> chairman@gcrg.org.uk 01452 505673 (H) 07803 539945 (M)	Secretary <i>Peter Turier</i> secretary@gcrg.org.uk 01452 539199 (H) 07462 181899 (M)	Treasurer <i>Liz Maisey</i> treasurer@gcrg.org.uk 01666 504647 (H)
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SARCALL INFORMATION



Gloucestershire

Cave Rescue Group

SARCALL Information for Team Members

When you receive a SARCALL SMS alert sent by a GCRG Warden reply to it to indicate your availability.

If you are unable to reply by SMS text message try using the GCRG specific SARCALL response web page.

Alternatively call the originating warden or the Depot where a message may be left on the answer phone.

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

SAR ▲ Axxx ▲ message if you are available

SAR ▲ Lxxx ▲ message if you have limited availability

SAR ▲ N ▲ message if you are unavailable

Where

▲ = a space

xxx = time in minutes until you will arrive at RV point

message = relevant additional information, free text.

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

David Hardwick	07780 676341	01454 299035
Martin Holloway	07918 900334	01666 504415
Greg Jones	07974 008519	01989 218763
Paul Taylor	07803 539945	01452 505673
Peter Turier	07462 181899	01452 539199
Colin Vickery	07548-240124	01684-293202

(Version 6. Jul 2017)

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

SARCALL ALERTS

SARCALL is the primary tool used by GCRG when initiating a call out. Not only is it the way we notify members of the details of the call out, it is also how you, the members, let the Wardens know if you are available.

It is **EXPECTED THAT ALL MEMBERS WILL RESPOND TO ALL SARCALL ALERTS** - the team need to know both who is and is not available.

SARCALL alert messages are sent by SMS to mobile phones, automatic voice message to land lines and email.

Mobiles

The callout SMS text alert 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 will 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.

The GCRG SARCALL setup has now been configured to allow you to just REPLY to the received alert text (just as you would any other text message).

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 and email.

Members should also check that there is no blackout period set for SMS texts to their home phone numbers. (During this period, messages are stored and delivered only when the period ends). There is a default blackout period of 10pm to 8am. To remove this from your home number call the BT SMS text control line, 0800 587 5252 and remove 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 dialing (no caller line id) you will need to ensure this is sent when removing the curfew by entering the appropriate code before dialing the BT SMS text control.

Email

This will contain the basic information as sent in the SMS but may also contain important additional information on the incident, if the originating warden entered this when initiating the alert.

Members can have multiple email addresses for SARCALL alerts e.g. home, work and mobile. If you would like additional addresses added to your SARCALL profile then please let me know (they will only be used for alerts).

Replying to the Alert

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.

Remember the format of the text message must be one of the following:

SAR Axxx <message>	if you are available
SAR Lxxx <message>	if you have limited availability e.g. morning, or evening.
SAR N <message>	if you are unavailable

Where

xxx = time in minutes it will take you get to the meeting point

<message> = relevant additional information (no swearing, jokes or comments on the location or casualty).

Response texts are placed in the SARCALL incident log and this is visible to other organisations nationally.

Multiple text replies can be sent - only the most recent will be displayed - useful if your 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.

If you cannot reply by text message then there is a SARCALL response web page. For security reasons this web address is not reproduced here but was notified to all members prior to the last practice.

If neither of these methods are available to you then please call the originating warden or the Depot, where a message may be left on the answer phone.

Checking your SARCALL Setup

The ability to receive SMS texts on your home phone can be simply checked by sending an SMS text from any mobile phone to your home number (The message which comes through may give you an additional number to ring to change the blackout period depending upon your phone line supplier).

Confirm that there is no blackout period set for SMS texts to your home phone numbers

A response SMS can be sent at any time and will remain visible to GCRG wardens for 5 days. Email me and I will check it for you. The SARCALL number is 07537 415551 and is best stored in your contacts.

Keeping information up to date:

Obviously it is vital that GCRG has up to date information for all members, so if anything changes please let me know.

Additionally, if your availability to be called out changes for any reason please let me know - members can be marked as temporarily unavailable within SARCALL thus stopping alert texts being sent to them.

*Gareth Jones
(GCRG SARCALL Team Admin)
info@gcrg.org.uk*

GCRG CALLOUTS AND REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE

GCRG MEMBER INVOLVED IN LAND SEARCH

4th April 2017

On Tuesday 4th April, Minchinhampton resident 71 year old Hazel Denham, set out on her daily walk with her dog Bertie. Hazel, who has mild dementia, was last seen at 1.20pm heading towards Minchinhampton Common to walk Bertie. She was reported missing by her husband at 5.17pm after she failed to come home. The assistance of Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA) to help search for Hazel, was requested by the Police.

Myself and other members of GCRG and MCRO, had only attended mandatory Land Search training at SARA Tewkesbury the previous Saturday.

I work in close proximity to Stroud and have extensive knowledge of the Minchinhampton area, having lived in the area most of my life. I took the decision to take my land search kit to work. I checked my diary for the rest of the week and decided to contact John Dutton, Exec Land Search Manager for SARA (via Paul Taylor) to offer my assistance in searching for Hazel. John took me up on my offer and I headed off to the control room at Stroud Police Station where I met up with John and the rest of his team.

After a briefing and a cup of tea, I was deployed as part of a team of 3 to search an area where reports had been received from members of the public of a barking dog that was unusual in this particular area. The training we had practiced the previous weekend came in useful and I was able to respond to the instructions given.

Initially we carried out a "Hasty" search along the road, followed by a more systematic "Efficient" search, as well as searching water margins. Having completed that tasking with nothing found we headed back to the Police Station.

Our second tasking of the day was to search an area of steeply sloping land that was somewhat overgrown with brambles in places and copses of trees, but which had public footpaths crossing through. This area was much more difficult to search given the type of terrain; the walking poles certainly came in useful. I was also glad of my sturdy boots and slightly thicker walking trousers! We searched this area for a number of hours. With nothing found and the light failing we were stood down and made our way back to the Police station for de-brief and food. I indicated to John that I would be available the following day if needed.

When I arrived at the Police Station Friday morning, it was a relief to hear that Hazel and Bertie had been found by a local lady walking her dog. She was alive and in good spirits, although somewhat weak. We were tasked to help carry her to the waiting ambulance. However, despite having been out since Tuesday lunchtime, Hazel was well enough to be able to walk down to the ambulance with the help of police officers and did not need further assistance. We were stood down and returned to the Police Station for de-brief followed by a well-earned ice-cream at Winstones.

I'm glad I was able to help with the search and found the whole experience of working with SARA very interesting and would be more than happy to help out again. The feedback I received was that my assistance was invaluable and much appreciated and I would certainly recommend volunteering to help on the Land Search Team.

What I would say is that it was quite demanding both physically and mentally and the training beforehand is essential to ensure that you are prepared and can work together as part of the team. Furthermore, there was a lot of hanging around whilst we were waiting for tasking from the police.

There is certainly good comradery between the team members and I was made to feel welcome and part of the team; although there was a lot of "mickey taking" regarding cavers!

Rachel Brown
(Assistant to the Chairman)

GCRG CALLOUT—COWSHILL CAVE

3rd May 2017

At approximately 1330 hrs Paul Taylor received a phone call from GFRS to inform him that Glos Police had received a call from the Farmer at Cowshill expressing concerns about a Grey Van Parked near to Cowshill Cave and that it had been there quite a time and he was worried as he knew that the cave at times had "Bad Air Problems".

From the description Paul knew that the van belonged to Jan Karvik and was not overly concerned but requested that GFRS obtained more information before any action was implemented.

Glos Police then phoned Paul and confirmed that the van had been on site for nearly 8 hours at this point in time. Although Paul knew that Jan did on many occasions visit the cave on his own to undertake Digging Preparation Work prior to the general digging team arriving this did seem to be a long time and the potential of him having been overcome. The Police also indicated that they were sending an officer to the site and so this then changed the situation.

Paul made contact with Ian Healey (one of the Cowshill Diggers) and also with the help of Gareth Jones (GCRG Information Officer) obtained the telephone numbers for Matt Rees (another Cowshill Digger). Both were despatched to the site with explicitly instructions not to take any undue risks. GFRS started the SARCALL Incident Log and also sent out a SARCALL Message to the GCRG Wardens to let them know that Paul was dealing with the incident.

At Cowshill Cave Ian and Matt met the Police Officer and informed him of their intentions and proceeded underground. No problems were experienced with Bad Air and they were greeted by a very cheery Jan who was busy beavering away and had decided that as time had gone on he would not bother returning to the surface but just wait till the others arrived for the evening digging session. In fact he thought that Ian and Matt had come in for that. However they explained that no they were "On a Rescue Call Out" and that he was the subject of the Call Out. All three exited and Paul was informed by the Police Officer that all were safe and well.

Paul sent a SARCALL Message to the GCRG Wardens informing them of the outcome and the incident was closed down. As a consequence Paul had to re write his report for the GCRG AGM the following evening to add another incident to the report.

SARCALL made life easy and despatching just a couple of people for an initial investigation proved to be the right course of action. Thanks to all who were involved.

Paul Taylor
(GCRG Chairman)

RESCUE INCIDENTS—but not cave related

During the great many times that I have visited the Forest of Dean I have often marvelled when walking, cycling or driving around the various forest tracks at what I would consider the lack of "preparedness" of many of the people that I have seen on these ventures.

The Forest may not be like the Brecon Beacons or the mountains of North Wales but when it rains the rain is still as wet, when it gets cold it is almost as cold and when it gets dark it is just as dark.

Yet you repeatedly see individuals and groups on a nice day without any wet weather gear, inappropriate footwear and it is extremely unlikely that they would have a torch. There also seems to be an ever growing reliance on the mobile phone to navigate around. I am therefore more than surprised that there are not more calls made to the emergency services and the local rescue teams to search or recover missing or overdue people or parties.

The Forest is, in general, easy walking but with the similarity of the tracks and paths this can easily lead to not only travelling a lot further than was planned or ending up in completely the wrong location.

Recently returning from a surface filming session at Green Moss Pot I drove in the car down the Mailscoth Valley to the river Wye and then up the Whippington Brook valley with a stop off on the way at Old Stone Well resurgence. Travelling on up the valley I passed Whippington Brook Swallet and soon after, a path comes in on the left. Here I saw a man, women & a quite young child. The chap waved me down and on stopping and lowering the window he asked "are we on the right track for the Symonds Yat Rock car park" when I replied "no" he was visibly surprised. He then asked "how far is it?" when I said it would take me 20 minutes to drive there he was even more surprised and shocked. What I presumed to be mother and son were even more shocked. It was around 1800 hrs at the time and would have been dark within an hour. Not wishing to leave them in a difficult position I offered them a lift. Which they gratefully accepted and the man said that's ok you can just drop us on the main road and we will walk the rest. When I explained further that the road from Christchurch to Symonds Yat had no footpaths and was not the place to be walking with a young child in a buggy my insistence that I would take them all the way was very much appreciated.

In reality it probably only took me 15 minutes to make the journey. However, by walking they would have taken a great deal longer and that would have been only if they had gone in the right direction. From where I picked them up they could have easily travelled a lot further in the wrong direction before hitting a main road and civilisation and someone who could then point them in the right direction. Arriving back late at what would have been a locked Car Park (1830 hrs) on that day they would have then had to sort out contacting the Forestry Commission to have the gate opened to allow them to go home. They were extremely grateful and relieved to get back to their car. I think this was just a case of getting lost, fortunately for them I came along and also it did not pour with rain. It could have been very different.

On Saturday 3rd June I went to Big Sink with Joe Duxbury and two members of the Chelsea SS. Soon after we had parked our vehicles and were just starting to get changed, a male and female approached us to say that their friend had fallen over and twisted his ankle and was having difficulty walking, could we help?

I went back along the track with the male towards the Dropper where we found another group of 4 or 5 with one chap who was obviously having trouble walking. His ankle was severely swollen and he also had a very nasty graze on his right knee. He got in the car and I took him to the Symonds Yat Rock car park where he would get a taxi back to where they were staying. He had tripped over in a small pothole in the track. This showed how something quite simple can easily develop into something quite serious. Mobile phone reception is as we know quite poor in places and had his injuries been more serious it could have taken quite a while for his friends to have raised the alarm.

Unfortunately we can't add these to the GCRG statistics.

Paul Taylor
(GCRG Chairman)

SARCALL TRAINING FOR GFRS

GCRG has had SARCALL in operation as our preferred method of callout from both our calling authority (Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue Service GFRS) and internally within the membership of GCRG, for some considerable time. This has proved to be very productive and successful for all concerned. Within all of the Cave & Mountain Rescue teams across the country its use is ever growing. This can only be a good thing.

One aspect of SARCALL that GCRG has wanted to show GFRS Control is what happens at "our end" when they send out a message.

Following on from the debrief after the search incident that we dealt with back in November 2016, a point was raised by Dave Appleing (GCRG Warden) that would it be possible to ask the GFRS Control to send out a second message to the GCRG Wardens to let them know who within the GCRG Wardens was dealing with the job / incident. This action was within the wardens procedure but was often difficult to action due to the pressure of all of the other actions going on. One certainly that Paul Taylor was able to confirm as he dealt with the initial response.

Firstly we had to establish with the SARCALL admin team if this would work. The answer was yes and secondly we had to make this request to the GFRS Control. Paul & Gareth attended a meeting at GFRS control and discussed the proposal with the control room supervisor. She could see no reason why not and in fact actioned it immediately into the standing orders for the GFRS SARCALL usage.

This meeting also gave the opportunity to discuss the idea of some "SARCALL usage training" as well as showing what happens at our end for the GFRS control room staff. Again, this was met with approval and a series of evening visits were set up so that all four of the control room watches would be able to participate.

Each visit consisted of an introduction from both sides followed by a brief explanation of the roll of the GCRG, our area of coverage and a general explanation of how SARCALL came about and how it is used. Next, a callout message was sent out by GFRS to the GCRG Wardens. With some wardens being present, the speed of the system was easily seen. Next, the Wardens responded and then once the job / incident had been allocated, the second SARCALL message was sent out. This was the first time that this had been done and worked perfectly. With the system now up and running we were able to show the controllers how the Wardens then used SARCALL to pass information. This all proved to be very informative and then the next stage was to show them how the Incident Log manager could be used to provide and record information.

All attending, from both GFRS and GCRG, found it extremely informative and productive. On one evening it was noted that we did not have the most up to date telephone number within SARCALL for the response for GFRS Control. This was given and passed onto the SARCALL admin team while at the Control and it was immediately updated. The staff were most impressed.

Following the completion of the training and visits, the 'Double Text' message was implemented into the Standing Orders and the recent rescue incident at Cowshill not only saw the GFRS put this into action but also start and add entries to the incident log.

At the end of the incident Paul spoke with the control room staff and they were extremely complementary regarding the time spent by GCRG with them explaining SARCALL and how it had made their work easier and given them a much greater understanding of the system.

Paul Taylor
(GCRG Chairman)

CAVE LINK—MORE TESTING AT UNDERGROUND LOCATIONS

WESTBURY BROOK

On 27 December 2016, a group assembled at Westbury Brook iron mine with Cave Link for further tests. The underground party consisted of Ladi Broadman and others while on the surface it was Dave Tuffley and Paul Taylor.

Initially on the surface two Cave Link Units were set up and an explanation of the working and practical demonstration were undertaken. Only two of the underground party had seen Cave Link in action before. The underground party entered the mine at approximately 1030 hrs with the aim of being at the First Transmission Point in 2 hrs. A previous test had seen results from Echo Churn (Top) and the Knotted Rope and it was decided not to repeat these locations as this would add additional time to the inbound journey.

On the surface, the recently returned unit was partially re-programmed so that it knew about the other GCRG units and then the surface party set off to the location for the surface unit. For those that know the route to the mine, when you turn off the main road just before the start of the track the road goes off to the left. The surface location was to be 100m down this road and is where the Old Mine Shaft was located. (See attached map) Dave made contact with one of the house owners nearby who informed us that the owner of the land we wished to go on was away so he said that we could enter and that there would be no problems. The Cave Link 08 was set up with the orange wire fully extended and the blue wire run out to around 2/3rds its length. Any extra would have been difficult due to a very steep bank. Earthing Rods were used at both ends. The antenna check gave a good result at 01.0kohm. A general north/south orientation was maintained throughout the tests.

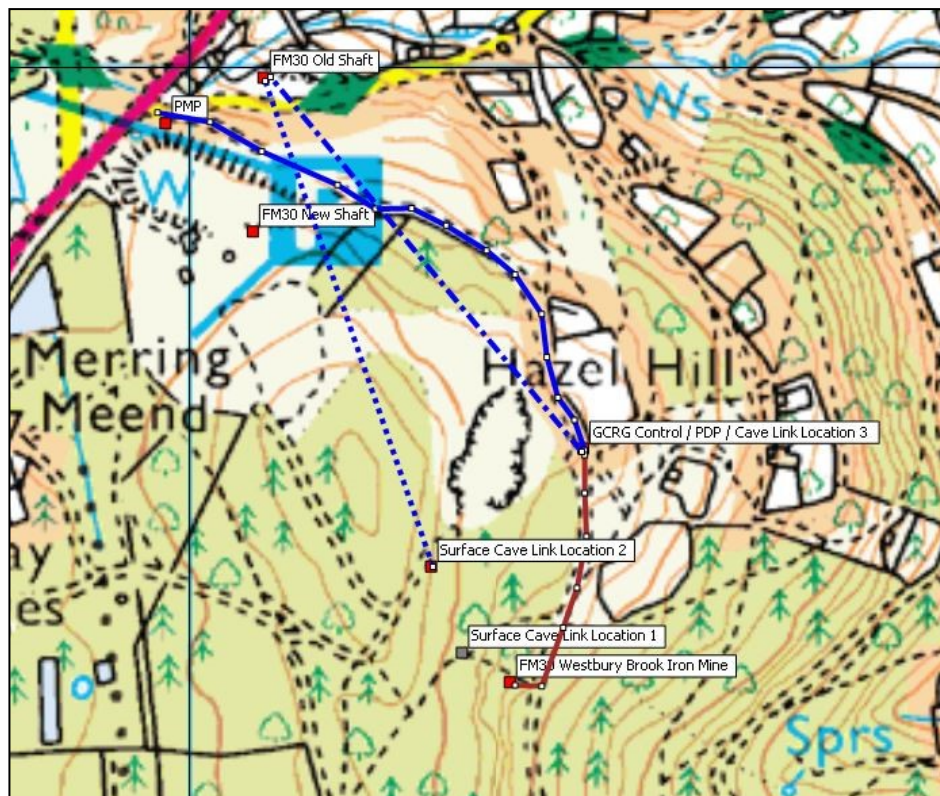
A message was put in the outbox ready and at approximately 1226 a message was received from underground confirming they were at the location very close to the Ladder Pitch. This was an excellent result. An exchange of messages and the underground party set off to visit further parts of the mine. Dave estimated the depth at approximately 130m.

On the surface Dave & Paul returned to the area west of the mine entrance where the previous test to Echo Churn had been conducted. A test message was sent to both the surface unit at the Old Shaft and the underground unit but neither went. The surface unit was moved 100m north and re-established and the message to the underground unit 09 left the outbox, the one to the surface 08 unit did not and was deleted. The horizontal distance was around 425m with the slope distance approximately 450m. To further enhance the test a third Cave Link unit was set up in the area adjacent to where cars are parked for the trip and where GCRG would establish its Surface Control. Initially a message was sent to the second unit 07 in the woods and then a message was sent to the surface unit 08 and then to the underground unit 09, both being successful, although the latter did take a bit of time.

The surface unit in the woods was dismantled after Dave had sent a message back to the surface unit at the cars. Paul then went down to the old shaft location and sent a message to the under-ground unit to confirm the surface was still manned. At approximately 1600 hrs a message was received from the underground party confirming they were back. A request was sent back requesting that they try and contact the surface unit at the cars. This they were able to do. Dave confirmed this to me by radio. The underground unit was packed away. The surface unit was left established until approximately 15 minutes before the underground party returned to the surface just in case.

Findings / Conclusions

Please view the attached map. Blue Dotted Line indicates a Surface to Underground link & the blue dash dot indicates a confirmed two-way exchange between surface and underground.



Blue Dotted Line indicates a Surface to Underground link & the blue dash dot indicates a confirmed two-way exchange between surface and underground.

Firstly, this was an excellent test/result for Cave Link and all involved have commented on how simple and easy the equipment is to set up and operate from a team who had very little prior experience.

Establishing the link from the Surface Control location was the "icing on the cake" and although tests were not carried out I can see no reason why contact with any part of the mine from the Ladder Pitch back to the entrance would not be possible from this location.

The use of the earthing rods certainly enhances the antenna check results. Tests using one and then two plates at the second surface location showed a reduction in the antenna check quality and the final message using two plates to 09 failed to send.

All of these results were obtained with a moderate antenna check underground.

Good Mobile and Radio coverage was obtained at all surface locations.

When the next party visit the Extension Series it would be good to undertake further tests with Cave Link.

This test further enhanced the knowledge of the use of Cave Link. Gave some fantastic results and build confidence in our ability to deploy Cave Link in almost any situation and get a result. My only hope is that we do not have to undertake this for real. Thanks go to all who were involved as it would not be possible without a Team Effort.

Paul Taylor
(GCRG Chairman)

OTTER HOLE

Back in the early 1980's prior to the filming with Sid Perou in Otter Hole, a fixed cable was laid into the cave from the entrance all the way to the Camp. Its purpose was to provide not only a communications link from underground back to the surface but also to enable an electrical power supply to be fed into the cave to charge both caving and filming light batteries.

The first 350m of the cable was in one continuous length and proved to be quite an interesting challenge for those involved in getting it in. This ran from the entrance to Choke 1 just beyond the tidal sump where a phone point was established. From there, the remainder to the camp was in 100m sections that required to be jointed together. This was carried out by the late Jim Hay. Although over the approximate 1.5km distance there was a considerable voltage drop necessitating over running the generator at the entrance to produce nearly 300 volts. At the camp this reduced to 200 volts but was sufficient to run the chargers and the phone also worked very well.

Over the years that have followed the cable has been split in at least two locations. In the Mendipian Way crawl where only a temporary joint was ever made and at Choke 2 when the ladder pitch was removed a good many years ago. It was decided that efforts would be concentrated on maintaining the section from the Entrance to Choke 1 and then onto the Rescue Dump (that was established just beyond the Traverses) rather than trying to keep the whole length operational. New improved phones were manufactured by Craig Cameron and installed a number of years ago and have worked very well, only requiring that their internal batteries be changed every few years.

With the arrival of Cave Link, Otter Hole was on the list for testing and at the start of the Otter Hole Season in 2016 a very successful series of tests were carried out combined with also testing the fixed phone Line. The Cave Link results were excellent with a very large proportion of the cave covered from one surface location up on the race course near to St Arvans as well as inter-cave links from the wash-off point, start of the extension and the Camp all back to the Rescue Dump. With the fixed phone line a good result was obtained from the entrance to Choke 1 & return but problems were experienced with the phone at the Rescue Dump and it was brought out of the cave for checking. This established that it was fully operational.

Moving forward to the 2017 Otter Hole season and it was suggested at the Otter Hole Wardens meeting that it would be good to test Cave Link again to expand the knowledge and also to test the fixed phone line/phones again.

Under the present situation within the cave with phones at the Entrance and Choke 1, if a rescue party is despatched into the cave and if when they reach the tidal sump they are not able to pass through due to high water conditions, they currently have no way of informing the entrance party or contacting those who may be at Choke 1 or the Rescue Dump; their only option would then be to return to the entrance. Consideration has been given to establishing a phone point on the outward side of the tidal sump. (In fact some years ago a cable was laid back through the sump from Choke 1 but this did not last very long and the container for the phone was flooded on numerous occasions). It was felt that if a phone were to be established then it would be necessary to cut into the cable prior to the tidal sump and make a joint which then had the potential of resulting in a fault. It was suggested that could we use Cave Link to provide the link. If successful (although only providing a link back to the entrance), a party was at either of the two phone locations within the cave would then be in contact with the entrance party who potentially would be in contact with the tidal sump.

Saturday April 8th 2017 was the date set and a good sized party assembled in the car park. Splitting into three underground groups and one surface party. One group was intending to go as far as the Camp to start work on the new water collection pond for the stall cleaning. A second group were going to the tidal sump to try and tension up the rope that passes through the sump and the third party were to take in Cave Link and the phone to go back to the Rescue Dump. The surface party were tasked with path clearing and also running Cave Link and the phone at the entrance. The surface Cave Link unit was set up with the antennas/earthing plates on an East-West orientation with one plate located in the rocky soil below the cliff face adjacent to the entrance and the second plate taken down and placed in the mud on the river bank. The initial antenna check gave a result of **Good** with an Impedance of **1.6 k ohm** the application of 250ml of water around the earthing plate under the rock face resulted in the Impedance being reduced to **0.9 k ohm**. Further water may have resulted in further reductions.



Cave Link—The surface set

The great beauty of Cave Link is that it does not require constant manning once it is set up. A message to the underground unit is prepared and placed in the Outbox and then left. Once the underground unit is established and if in range the message will be transmitted from the surface unit and received by the underground unit. For the surface party this gives an instant confirmation that the underground unit has been set up. When this was completed by the surface party they were then able to sit back and relax in the sunshine (don't let the underground party know this as they thought they were working hard cutting back the branches and brambles).

It was not long before the surface unit gave out its receiving sound that a message had been arrived. This confirmed that the underground unit had been set up with its antennas and plates on North-South orientation, completely different to the surface. With one plate in the sump pool water and the other back along the passage in the mud, this gave an excellent result from the antenna check. The horizontal offset between the two units was approximately 250m.

This was a great result and now means that when a rescue party is despatched into the cave armed with Cave Link, communications can be established even if the tidal sump is closed and it also means that it is now not necessary to look at establishing another fixed phone point within the cave at the tidal sump.



River Wye at low tide, Otter Hole

It had been hoped that a test could also have been carried out to the previously established surface Cave Link location, however on the day this was not undertaken as the racecourse was in use and the idea of being up there playing around with boxes and wires might have resulted in some undue attention or even a security scare. Rachel was not keen on a night in the cells in Chepstow!

Back underground, Kevin Brockway braved the high water levels to pass through the Eye Hole and continued onto Choke I where he tested the phone out. This worked very well back to the entrance and return and he then went onto the Rescue Dump.

Unfortunately here he experienced the same problems as it had been on the previous test a year earlier. He could be heard faintly on the surface but could not hear the surface. However by a series of questions from underground and answering by using the Tone Switch on the surface it was established that he was going to return to Choke 1. Cave Link was used to let Guy Ilott, who had remained on the outward side of the sump, know what was going on. Not only was this Guy's first experience of Cave Link but also his first trip into the cave. He did very well on both fronts. Kevin returned to Choke 1 and made contact again confirming his findings from the Rescue Dump test. Unfortunately this strongly suggests that a fault has developed the cable between Choke 1 and the Rescue Dump and an examination of the cable is now required. This part of the cable is within the area that floods with the tides and the cable may have become damaged over time. Having been in place for around 35 years I don't think we can complain.

Again, Cave Link was used to inform Guy where Kevin was and then before they both left the sump area one final exchange on Cave Link brought a conclusion to a very successful test that has expanded the knowledge for the deployment of Cave Link at Otter Hole.

Cave Link has proved to be an excellent piece of equipment that is so simple to use and operate.



Guy and Kev, glad to be out!

Thanks are extended to Kevin Brockway & Guy Illott underground & Rachel Brown & Paul Taylor (who were sun bathing on the surface!)

Paul Taylor (words)
(GCRG Chairman)

Rachel Brown (photos)
(Assistant to the Chairman)

GCRG AND SARA WORKING TOGETHER

18th September 2016

On the 9th of July 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 (words)
(Assistant Training Officer and Warden)

Paul Taylor (photos)
(GCRG Chairman)

GCRG ON FACEBOOK

GCRG has its own FaceBook page and can be found quite easily by a web search for "Facebook" and "Gloucestershire-Cave-Rescue-Group"

SWERA (South West England Rescue Association)

SWERA is the regional association of Mountain Rescue England and Wales for voluntary search and rescue teams in the near South West of England, comprising Bristol, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Somerset (part) and Wiltshire.

GCRG is a member of SWERA and the GCRG page can be found at the following location:

<http://swera.org.uk/teams/gcrg/>

Together with the other Cave Rescue team of 'Mendip Cave Rescue', GCRG represents the 'underground' element of rescue within the SWERA area.

RECENT WORK AT THE GCRG DEPOT

All of the major internal construction work within the 3-bay garage area has now been completed to provide both a kit washing & drying room complex. This was all put to good use after the last GCRG training day at Bixhead stone mine. I don't think there would be anyone who helped out on the return to the depot who would not say what a fantastic difference it made. Yes, there is still some work to do to provide an external area for the pressure washing of gear but that will come in time. So what else has been achieved?

Our expansion of the facilities at the depot has placed a load on the alarm system and left us under capacity to cover all of our requirements. A new one was needed. Fortunately for GCRG, Paul Taylor was upgrading his system at home and passed on his old unit (when we say old it was only 12 months old and had developed a fault so needed to be replaced). In fact when installed at the GCRG depot and interrogated using a computer the fault was located and alleviated and the system worked fine. Paul, in the meantime, had ordered and installed a new system. GCRG has done alright out of this and now has a much-improved system operating allowing for a much more flexible system that now has a number of smoke alarms and a fire alarm activation incorporated into it as well.

The whole of the wiring of the garage and 3 bay area has been replaced along with the installation of some additional lighting in the training area which will certainly improve things for the SRT GCRG sessions when the nights draw in. This work has incorporated the fitting of a new distribution board and emergency lights. Thanks go to all who did this work and donated some of the items.

Now that the trailer has returned from its trip to be converted into a equipment storage and mobile control room, it required a power supply to keep the internal battery charged. This has been provided and the supply lead set up in such a way that it is NOT REQUIRED to be taken with the trailer when it leaves the depot. An additional lead has been made up and is located within the trailer so that we don't have the situation of the trailer arriving and finding that the lead had been left behind (more about the trailer in a separate article).

The last working day at the depot saw a lot of painting of the blockwork completed and this has transformed the interior of the 3 bay area. There is still some more to do so if you fancy some painting work let the committee know. Greg's trailer was loaded up with all of the scrap steel, copper wire and anything that was felt worth sending to the scrap yard. Many thanks to Greg for allowing this as it generated £68.00 for the group. Many thanks to everyone who came along to help.

In the kitchen a four ring electric hob has been installed to enhance the facilities. The training area has seen a steel ladder installed to provide access to the flat roof area above the drying room. A hatchway has been cut through the wall to enable this to be used for stretcher handling exercises and a steel wire has been installed across the bridge for cows- tails to run on. Further work and usage will see ongoing developments.

Of course, there is always work to be undertaken and our thanks go out to Gareth Jones, John Cliffe & Paul Taylor for their continuing efforts in moving the group forward. Yes, we could look at things and say it's a lot of money being spent and we could have a pretty big sum in the bank but I know what I would rather have, a much improved depot that we can all be proud of and very pleased to visit.

Paul Taylor
(GCRG Chairman)

GCRG MERCHANDISE

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 Jon Maisey or Paul Taylor and they can be delivered to club socials or posted out etc.



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: Jon Maisey or Paul Taylor

GCRG mugs

Like a unique hand-crafted mug to support GCRG?, of so, Nicky has made a batch 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 Head/Neck wear**

The group is looking into placing an order for some GCRG-branded multifunction headwear. The 'headgear' can be worn as a neck tube, bandana or hat etc.

The company providing these is called GIRAFFEUK (www.giraffeuk.com) and advertises in the Mountain Rescue magazine. On their website, other Mountain Rescue branded headwear can be found at '<http://www.giraffeuk.com/club-designs>'.

The design/s that GCRG has in mind are shown here:





Shown here is a GCRG 'tube' that has been produced to show how a GCRG version would look.

The committee has now agreed that these could prove to be a good source of income for the group and will be placing an initial order for 50 red and 50 black of the 'neckwarmers'. Once these have sold then additional orders can be made.

The costs have yet to be decided (it does depend on the size of the order that GCRG places with the company), but probably they will sell in the region of £10-£13 and help to generate some much-needed fundraising for the group.

GCRG CHRISTMAS CARDS

You may well say "aaaarrgh it's too early for these!" (and in some respects you're right) but in the past (many years ago, in the very early days of GCRG) the selling of Christmas cards was a well-come fundraiser for the group.

An idea for a card design (a cave rescue-related cartoon) is currently being discussed by the committee and if it is thought to be acceptable then an order will be placed. As ever, with anything like this, the more that the group can purchase, the cheaper it becomes for the individual items.

Do you have an idea of your own potential Christmas card design? If so, please forward to the Secretary or Chairman.

GCRG T-shirts

If it looks like the cartoon/design proposed for the potential Christmas card could be used also on a GCRG t-shirt (in addition to the embroidered polo shirts etc) then prices will be obtained and put out to the membership in order to gauge potential demand.

GCRG 50th ANNIVERSARY PUBLICATION

It is hoped that this can be completed & distributed by the end of 2017 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. Anything lent for use in the publication will be recorded, copied and gratefully returned.

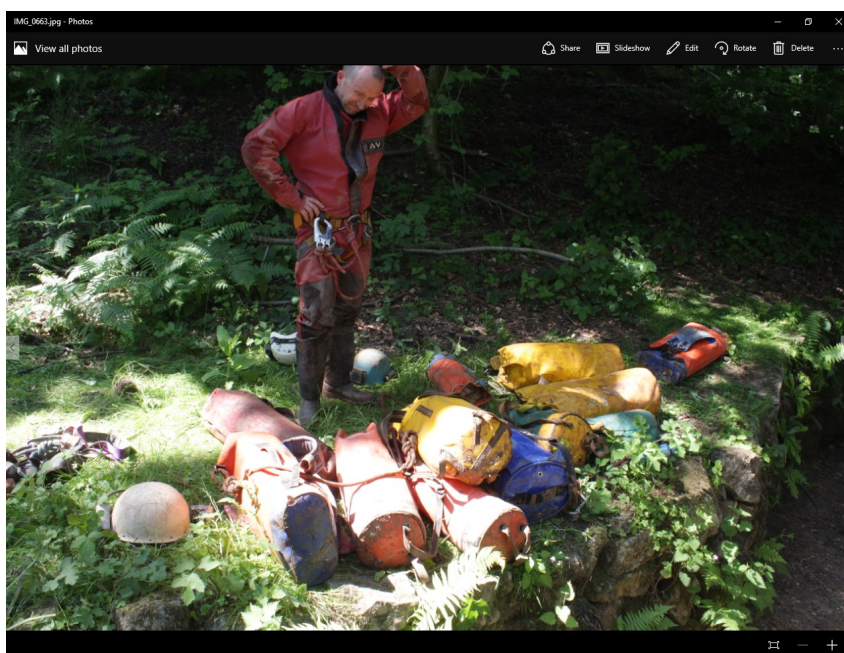
This is GCRG's only chance to compile and record for current and future members of the team (and posterity) the last 50 years of history of the group and the great changes it has made since 1965. It will also act as a valuable tool to help promote GCRG in general.

Jon Maisey

(Newsletter & 50th Publication Editor)

PHOTO CAPTION COMPETITION (December 2016 newsletter)

In the December 2016 newsletter we had a photo of Mike Clayton appearing to be rather puzzled while looking at a pile of tackle bags at a recent practice, but what was he thinking?



From Paul Taylor we had the following contributions:

"I can't for the life of me remember what the BCRC colour code for the tackle sack with the food in is!"

or

"I can't for the life of me remember what the BCRC colour code for the tackle sack with the car keys in is!"