

NORTH WALES ACCESS REPORT 2019

Minera Quarry

The North Wales Caving Club (NWCC) has recently come to an agreement with the North Wales Wildlife Trust (NWWT) over access to the known caves at Minera Quarry near Wrexham. It has taken three years since the trust acquired the quarry for this to happen. This was mainly due to their trustees being extremely concerned about their liability and it took quite a while to build a relationship and answer all their concerns. Howard Jones, the BCA Insurance Manager at the time, was very helpful throughout this period. The licence we have signed has committed NWCC to managing access on behalf of the trust and ensuring that all caving visitors are covered by BCA insurance. Details are still being finalised and will appear on the NWCC web site in due course. Access to the caves is likely to be similar to the arrangements for Dan-yr-Ogof. It must be stressed that, at this point in time, that there is no agreement concerning the quarry itself and no digging is permitted. We hope in time that we can come to some agreement with the trust regarding this, but it will almost certainly require a case by case assessment.

Alyn Valley

A change of ownership for some of the systems has meant renegotiating one of the access agreements in the area. The new owner has agreed, in principle, to continue to allow access, however the existing agreement is showing its age and needs rewriting to meet current legal standards. It is hoped that there will be no physical changes required to any of the entrances, but the new owner is concerned about his children inadvertently gaining access and it may be necessary to secure one of the entrances (OHA). If this is the case it is proposed that a Derbyshire key style mechanism is used, if that is acceptable to the landowner.

Dewi Lloyd

REPORT ON THE CHANGES TO THE MANAGEMENT OF ACCESS TO OGOF FYNNON DDU

During 2019 the NRW, who own the OFD 2 cave system, required that changes be made to the management and access arrangements for caving and any other activities related to the cave. SWCC agreed to take on considerable additional responsibilities to ensure smooth, and continued, access to OFD by the wider caving community. Months of consultation and development culminated in the production of an agreed 'Memorandum of Understanding' between NRW and SWCC supported by a Terms of Reference, and the setting up of an OFD Cave Advisory Group.

SWCC has accepted the duties of access management to all 3 OFD entrances. A permit secretary with a web-based application system allows for both normal caving permits to be issued and applications for any abnormal activities to be identified and then reviewed by the SWCC Committee. Where considered necessary these will be referred to the NRW.

SWCC has also taken the opportunity to review the warden system and wardens are now appointed both from within SWCC and also from other caving clubs.

It is important to note that these changes were initiated by NRW, not SWCC. All of these changes went live on Tuesday 5th November 2019.

For the typical caving group who are applying for a permit to go caving in OFD, very little will seem to have changed. It is hoped that this more caver-centric management will have long-term benefits for the cavers who wish to enter the system and also for the care and conservation of the cave itself.

Paul Meredith (SWCC Chairman)

FoDCCAG REPORT FOR 2019

Since our formation in Jan 1998 we are going from strength to strength with our unique agreement to access Crown minerals, including the limestone, in the Royal Forest of Dean, excluding coal and those Gales (licences) privately owned.

Our (free) annual permit will be signed shortly by the Deputy Gaveller on behalf of Forestry England. Our Management Licence has remained unchanged for some years. A new Dig Registration form has been issued.

With the change of name, new Forestry England / FoDCCAG vehicle badges have been issued to members of FoDCCAG.

All bat counting in the mines is coordinated by FoDCCAG, with the results going to Natural England, & the Deputy Gaveller.

In the autumn, pine martens were introduced to the Forest – what effect these will have on bats has yet to be seen.

A fresh batch of water tracing has recently been undertaken by Paul Taylor.

A recent reported case of inappropriate parking & behaviour by cavers visiting Wetsink, is being investigated.

Permits for visiting FoDCCAG sites are available for BCA members from our Permit Secretary by emailing permits@fodccag.org.uk

John Hine, Hon. Sec. FoDCCAG.

PDCMG

The PDCMG last met in June 2019. At this meeting apologies were given for not progressing with an EGM Proposal on Managing Entrances to Ogof Draenen, due to various major events in personal lives. This meeting affirmed that in out line the proposal for any EGM should not define the number or location of the entrance or entrances but should provide a framework we use in future to assess if PDCMG adopt an entrance or not. To quote the unapproved minutes of June 2019 'Therefore any proposal must be confident of receiving a majority. It was also agreed that the vote should not consider specific entrance or based on current entrances, the proposal should provide a policy with a clear definition of how we consider each entrance. Its location on the surface, location within the cave, as examples.'

A meeting did not occur in November due to a family bereavement stopping any planning / chasing for mutually agreed date, and also no EGM proposal had been progressed. In December I met with the PDCMG member who took on the action of generating an entrance management proposal for an EGM. This proposal is now close to being finalised and we will start to consider dates for an EGM. It was agreed at the last 2 PDCMG meetings that an EGM date should be set at a time which gives all member clubs to consider the proposal before being asked to vote on it. This notice period is expected to be at least 6 weeks. So we are now close, and hopefully PDCMG will have a date for the long planned EGM soon.

Currently the cave continues to be managed following the current constitution and policies.

MLCMAC

NRW effectively 'pulled the plug' on the Mynydd Llangatwg Cave Management and Access Committee, because it was originally set up as an NRW committee, and the cavers were members by virtue of being NRW voluntary wardens - which no longer form part of their organisation. We have not had a meeting with them since March 2019, and they have not proposed any alternative structure.

The caving members of MLCMAC believe it makes sense that they manage access in future. In practical terms, access arrangements and rules would change very little,

although we feel the permit system is largely superfluous. I have not yet managed to get an opportunity to speak to the Duke of Beaufort's agent about any legal considerations, and we can't announce any new structure until it is agreed with him and NRW.

In the meantime, Malcolm Reid is still issuing permits and keys as required, and permanent keys can still be issued to clubs who run regular trips to Ager Allwedd and Craig a Ffynnon. The permit forms and cave access rules have been re-hosted on the Chelsea Spelaeological Society website. This does not imply that MLCMAC will be run by CSS, and we think it is better if there is no alignment with a particular club.

DAN YR OGOF CAVE ADVISORY PANEL

Caver Access to Dan yr Ogof system continues to be welcomed by the Showcave company. The process of application and conditions of entry are clearly outlined on the Dan yr Ogof cavers' website at <http://dyo.org.uk/>. BCA insurance and the company of a conservation warden are required.

Any caver can apply to become a warden. Familiarisation trip records and evidence of full understanding and support for access and conservation in the cave are required to accompany the application.

The Dan yr Ogof Cave Advisory Panel, made up of representatives of the caving community, the Showcave management, the Brecon Beacons National Park and the NRW, will assess the applications and are keen to expand the warden team, who need to be willing to accompany experienced caving groups who are visiting the system.

The DYOCAP produces periodic bulletins which are circulated to wardens and which appear on the website. They include matters covered by the Panel's bi-annual meetings, along with advisory information on any recent events, discoveries and observations in the cave.

SOUTH & MID WALES CAVE RESCUE TEAM REPORT FOR 2019

2019 saw SMWCRT involved in 6 incidents, the same number as last year.

Date	Location	Details
3/2/19 to 5/2/19	Ogof Taf Fechan Morlais	<p>A callout came from the Fire Service, via South Wales Police, to assist with the rescue of a dog that had become trapped in Ogof Taf Fechan near Morlais. The dog had been underground for approximately 24 hours and the Fire Service had been attempting to dig it out. A SARCALL message was sent to the local SMWCRT SARCALL Group to request availability for a small team. A team of small rescuers, diggers and controller were deployed. USAR (Urban Search And Rescue) were onsite with a remote camera to investigate beyond constrictions but were unable to see the dog.</p> <p>Digging continued into the night, ending at around 11pm when it became apparent that enough progress could not be made to find the dog any time soon, and the team were stood down for the night.</p> <p>A team were deployed for a continued effort on Monday 4th Feb. Digging and spoil removal continued following the probable entrance direction of the dog, and the lower entrance that appeared closer to the sound of the dog.</p> <p>There was a good voice connection between both digs and the dog appeared to be in-between the two but still no sight of the dog. In the evening a fresh digging team were deployed with a focus on rock removal to make the dig face more accessible and focus turned to the lower dig, after the top downward dig met a too small phreatic tube. Late that evening efforts were focussed on trying to get some food to the dog despite still not being able to see it. before standing down with the knowledge of an exact location for the dog and a plan for a renewed effort.</p> <p>On Tuesday 5th Feb a new SARCALL message was sent to request more smaller rescuers. Once on site, good progress was made clearing mud and rocks from the passage and mid-afternoon, George the dog was released and reunited with his owner. A good result after approximately 200 person hours of hard work.</p> <p>23 members involved plus 2 on standby</p>
16/2/19	Daren Cilau	<p>SMWCRT were contacted by Dyfed Powys Police, via SARCALL, with a request to attend an incident at Daren Cilau. A female caver had slipped into a rift in the floor around 80 metres into the cave.</p> <p>A call to the Police and then to cavers at Whitewalls established that she had got stuck in 'The Vice' and was now lying in standing water and</p>

		<p>was getting cold. It was also established that two other cavers who had been at Whitewalls had gone into the cave to try to release her.</p> <p>Two Team members who were available at SWCC were dispatched in the SMWCRT Land Rover Ambulance. At the same time, a number of team members based closer to Llangattock were called for assistance.</p> <p>The callout was limited at this stage, as there would not be much room for rescuers in the entrance series and it was felt that it would be worth waiting for initial reports from either those on scene or from the first rescuers to arrive before widening the callout.</p> <p>A caver waiting at the entrance to the cave reported that the casualty had been extricated from The Vice by the on-site cavers and she was making her way out slowly, having hurt her shoulder in being released. As Team members made their way to the cave it was reported that the casualty was out of the cave.</p> <p>Once back at Whitewalls, the casualty was checked over by a SMWCRT Advanced First Aider and the en-route Team members were stood down. 16 members deployed.</p>
18/6/19	Herbert's Quarry	<p>We were contacted by SW police on behalf of a dog owner whose dog had disappeared into a cave.</p> <p>A Warden went over to recce what equipment might be needed the next day and to try and persuade the owners to leave the mountainside. It was a known cave site. The Warden looked down the cave hole, saw the dog and pulled it out. A couple of other people were on standby.</p>
22/6/19	Ogof Ffynnon Ddu 1	<p>A young female caver had become unwell in OFD1. She was given food and drink but did not improve so she was brought out of the cave by the group. The LR was driven down the road to pick her up. There was a small group of Team members on site so she was assessed by two Advanced First Aiders. After a shower and a hot drink she began to recover and was advised to seek medical advice. 5 members involved.</p>
17/7/19	Sychryd Gorge	<p>The casualty (male) fell backwards during a Gorge Walk Activity and was under a waterfall. A SMWCRT Advanced First Aider was nearby with another group and was asked to assist. The Group Leaders for the Gorge activity then both left the scene, leaving the casualty in our care until MR appeared. Cas. Care cards were passed over to MR who stretchered the casualty to the waiting ambulance.</p> <p>Two other SMWCRT members working in the Gorge were available if</p>

		they were needed. The knee dislocation was unable to be reduced due to serious muscle/ligament damage. 1 Team member involved, 2 on standby.
28/9/19	Dylife	One of the Mid Wales Wardens took a call from Mid Wales Fire Service. A hound dog had fallen down a mine shaft Arrangements were made for a small Team to attend in the LR with equipment but as local Team members arrived Aberdovey MRT were extracting the dog. 3 Members deployed and 4 on standby.