

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL
CYNGOR OGOFEYDD CYMREIG
Affiliated to the British Caving Association

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Pendarren House
March 6th 2011

Present

Bernie Woodley	Chairman	SWCC
Mike McCombe	Secretary	Newbury & District CC
Brendan Marris	Cave Registrar	
Elsie Little	Conservation Officer	
Joe Duxbury		Gloucester SS
Robin Weare	Treasurer	Hades CC
Maurice Febry		FoDCCAG
Andy Lewington	Equipment Officer	
Fleur Loveridge		PDCMG
Pete Tapson		Garimpiros
Stuart France		Chelsea SS
Tim Barter		Westminster SG
Michael Young		Cardiff University Caving Club

There are currently 50 member-club, making the quorum for this meeting 10.

1. Chariman's opening remarks

The Chairman welcomed everybody to the meeting and thanked Andy Lewington and Pendarren House for their hospitality in hosting the meeting

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Shropshire Scouts Caving Team, Cadley Hill Caving Club, Owen Clarke, Heather Simpson (NWCRO), Barry Hill, Paul Taylor and John Hine

3. Minutes of the 2010 Annual General Meeting

The minutes of the 2010 AGM were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting. A unanimous motion to accept them was proposed by Elsie, seconded by Stuart.

There were no matters arising.

4. Applications for Membership

The Secretary reported that the following BCA member-clubs had applied for membership:

Cardiff University Caving Club

He also advised the meeting that Cotham Caving Club, Rhiwbina SS and East Sussex Scouts are no longer members.

5. Officers' Reports

5a Chairman's Report

[See written report below]

This last year has been a sad one for our family of cavers. There has been a spate of criminal activity carried out by a very small number of people who cannot be part of our community. Their irresponsible, anti-social activities have not only jeopardised access to some of our underground sites but have resulted in the closure of a recently discovered cave. It appears that their goal is to restrict underground access for all cavers by antagonising landowners and putting members of the public at risk. We must all be vigilant and make a stand to stop this.

At the same time there has been an outbreak of sometimes near hysterical exchanges of personal views on very public internet forums by people who may be cavers but many do not have the courage to identify themselves and hide behind pseudonyms. I must stress that these forums are public and are viewed by landowners as well as official bodies such as the Countryside Council for Wales, the National Parks and the Welsh Assembly Government. The damage that can be caused by unguarded and heated exchanges between cavers holding polarised views in a location where the public may misread and misunderstand our sport is potentially huge and can cause problems across the whole of the UK and abroad. We should have free speech but we must be responsible, respect other cavers' views and should not hide our identities. Some cavers may have differing views on particular subjects but we must ALL behave in the best interests of our sport. The public have a difficult time understanding our sport as it is. We must not alienate them.

The issues above have also resulted in unnecessary extra work for the elected, unpaid volunteer officers of access administering bodies as well as Cambrian Caving Council officers. Caving, as we know it, would change for the worse if it were not for the dedication and hard work of cavers who can see the greater picture and freely give of their free time and knowledge in the furtherance of our sport. I hope that all cavers are fully aware of and appreciate the sacrifices their fellow cavers make.

I sincerely hope that the next year brings better news for us all and I hope that there are some more cavers out there who will rise to the challenge of putting themselves forward for election into positions where they can help our sport continue and guide us into the future.

Finally, I would like to thank the officers of the Cambrian Caving Council for their work, dedication and support over the last year.

Bernie Woodley.
March 2011

Stuart was concerned about the tone and reference to issues about gates. He was concerned that readers are more likely to be SCW, CCW etc. and that they may gain an unduly negative impression. The Chairman stated that he stood by his words and was supported by Maurice Febry. Elsie agreed with both sides and suggested we be careful about with our choice of words and recognise that with minutes posted on the website, readership may extend beyond our fellow cavers.

5b Secretary's Report

[See written report below]

Many of you will remember that we agreed last year to try and hold the 2011 AGM in North Wales. A lot of work was done (mostly by Stephen Brown) to identify suitable venues, accommodation and potential caving trips. However, the Committee had to conclude that the cost and logistical issues for member-clubs would make it unlikely that we could attract enough delegates to make the meeting quorate. Having to revert, reluctantly, to a South Wales venue for the AGM leaves a serious issue for the Council to find ways of engaging and involving member-clubs in North Wales.

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Membership administration remains an ongoing challenge and I am eternally grateful to the dozen or so club secretaries who respond promptly to my e-mail membership form. I will continue to chase the remainder (majority) to provide the data we need to run CCC and to meet our grant conditions with Sport Wales. It is unfortunate that the BCA renewal process is incomplete at the time of year we need to hold our AGM.

In recent years there seems to be an ever-widening gap between professional caving (instructors, outdoor centres) and the recreational caver. BCA Training Committee has recognised the need for change as not one of the Regional Caving Councils have attended meetings for over a year. We too would benefit from greater engagement in that we need better visibility of professional instructors working in Wales and could also benefit from BCA funding and ideas for training events.

We continue to receive funding from Sport Wales, despite government cuts. Whilst significant from our point of view, we represent a tiny proportion of Sport Wales' overall budget and are, I suspect, too small to yield worthwhile savings! However, with their "Vision" firmly focused on the twin goals of "Sport for Children" and "Competitive Success", Caving is poorly aligned to their strategic direction. We need to be aware that in the long-term, the funding we receive for training, Cave Rescue and overseas expeditions may well disappear.

Mike McCombe
28th February, 2011

5c Treasurer's Report

[See written report below]

The Sports Council for Wales has continued to support us with grants of £600 for training and £2,000 for Cave Rescue. They also directly contribute financial assistance for expeditions.

I am conscious that all of this funding is in peril in these times of financial cutback but I am happy to report that a further £600 training grant has been agreed for 2011.

The accounts for the year ended 31st December 2010 are attached. They show a surplus of £53.42 and reserves increased to £5,629.94.

There is a great deal of mind numbing administration involved in this job but quite the worst thing I have had to do during my period as Treasurer came as I signed the cheque which paid for the replacement of the Ogor Draenen gate. That the expenditure will eventually be recovered from the BCA is no comfort, although the fact that the perpetrator(s) of this outrage against the general caving community will at least contribute in a small way through their subscriptions does help a little. Sadly, I have to report that my invitation to make an anonymous donation to cover the cost was not taken up.

Other expenditure in the year, also recoverable through the funding arrangement with BCA, paid for the materials used for taping and other conservation work in Ogor Draenen and Otter Hole and for the administrative expenses of the access controlling bodies as well as our own.

Using the SCW grant we were able to contribute to First Aid training in North Wales and held SRT and Surveying courses in South Wales.

Robin Weare
February 2011

SCW grant money £600 has now arrived. Ben Lovett wants a large stock of tape to re-tape Draenen. 1000m cost £100. Ben wants £500 worth in the near future.

Stuart raised the issue of Balcony Pitch ladder which ten years after the project had been approved still has not been installed. He asked that no more expenditure should be authorised for Ogor Draenen until the previous projects are completed. The Chairman asked that this be handled under AOB

5d Conservation & Access Officer's Report [See written report below]

As usual I have left my report to the time of the meeting as it concerns a field which is in constant rapid change and I do not wish to put before you information that may be misleading by the time of the meeting it is produced to serve. The next **National Access Forum for Wales** meets on Tuesday coming and it is at that meeting that one can meet with prominent leaders from all access fields to discuss mutual problems and solicit support or ideas. This year, more so than ever, I am extremely grateful to the many of you who carry out the daily underground tasks while I have had more than enough to occupy me in the 'diplomatic' field. The length of this report will tell of the nightmare the year has been!

- 1 The progress as regards the dualling of **the A465 through the Clydach Gorge** has fortunately been slow. The tenders are in but I have not yet been able to ascertain who has won the job, if indeed the tender has been awarded.
It is generally agreed, as we decided here last year that CCC is the best forum to spearhead our response to this as other committees are restricted by their constitutions as to what they can actually say. We are free to make our own considered responses. Wide consultation will be important when the consultation period for the works does actually begin.
- 2 The much publicised threat to **sell off Forestry in England** (Wales was not involved at the time) has been averted by the public outcry that it caused. The main threat to our access would have been in the Forest of Dean where our local reps have built up such a liberal access regime.
The sale consultation document has been withdrawn for the present and there was recognition that the so-called 'heritage forests' should be excluded from the operation does give hope for the future. However, I have to say I am unconvinced, by the government language used, that the problem will not re-appear at a later stage. We must remain vigilant.
We hope the Welsh government will continue in its views against the selling off of public assets but must not forget that a law passed that applies to England can very easily be adopted here.
With this in mind a move to arrange for a British national agreement over access has begun. Already there is one with the National Trust for access to their property and it is hoped to make similar formal agreements with all the major landowning bodies in turn. Our Welsh Forestry Commission Land Agent has already indicated he would very much welcome such an arrangement and will assist in its formulation as appropriate.
- 3 Another, similar threat to access, was the very little publicised move to **sell publically owned NNRs or to hive off the management of them to charities or other organisations**. This currently was to take effect in England, not Wales, but I am lead to believe this plan has also been dropped for the time being.
My CCC concern again was that the legislation required could readily be adopted by Wales but, more so, that history indicates charities have a tendency to become focussed on their own small field of interest to the exclusion of others. My paranoia could foresee many a battle brewing in the future after this long period of calm under the leadership of the CCW and English Nature.
Again, we must be vigilant!
- 4 In Pembrokeshire we continue to try for more liberal access to the **Castlemartin Range** but progress is virtually non-existent. The range is used almost constantly now, reducing our chances. However, we will not give up!
- 5 The Ceredigion Mines Forum continues to thrive and meet annually and to deal with general and site-specific matters with a widely representative membership.
- 6 **Ogof Draenen** continues to be topical.
The difficulties caused to the landowners by the opening of Drws Cefn do seem to have been resolved. The non- usage of that entrance is welcomed by the owner and he spoke with me recently of being happy about that.

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The stolen gate has been replaced and we must thank Pete Cardy for the production of that gate. However, nothing is simple in our world!

While the gate was off for some long time the air currents were changed yet again and it seems **bats** have settled in through both Drws Cefn and the original entrance.

CCW will not permit the blocking of Drws Cefn with only a small hole for bat access without a full licence. No doubt that will be hotly debated by the PDCMG in due course.

The inspection of the original entrance raised a completely different problem.... The door is solid, as are other S.Wales cave doors. This means it may need to be removed for modification to allow the bats to move out in spring!

Either the door will need to be modified to allow for bat in- and e-gress or a private bat entrance constructed nearby! Another topic for the SDCMG.

However, Jon Stephens is anxious that the door be ammended urgently to allow the bats the best chances of survival and he seeks the support of CCC in removing it now. The meeting is asked to consider his request.

7 **Bats and cave gates** deserve further consideration.

CCW are keen that all cave gates should be bat friendly to encourage the creatures to use all caves as well as those they already inhabit. The proposal is that each gate should have an opening 130mm by 450mm to allow for the biggest bats to have access. This should be protected by a cowl.

I have reservations about this being adopted as a rule because of the size of hole and the ability of children to wriggle! Also a hole of such size would allow an arm to reach the locking mechanisms.

We need to be sure in our attitudes that we are fair to bats, to the geological contents of the caves, to the owners who have liabilities and to the humans who wish to access them. Security overall is of vital importance.

8 **White Nose Syndrome** is a matter that we have been keeping an eye on in conjunction with the Bat Conservation Trust. There have been a few alarms but no indication of the disease taking hold over here. The latest thinking is that the virus is present in the old world but that our bats have built up some sort of immunity that the new world bats do not have. However, all cavers are requested to observe the need for cleanliness of equipment and for due care and observation so that we can respond properly and swiftly if the disease does take a hold in our patch!

9 Sadly, I have to report that there was damage done in **Ogof Capel** by an individual whose club has acted to discipline as soon as they were made aware of the situation. We must thank Cwmbran CC for their very positive action in this. It demonstrated the utmost in responsible governance.

The cave was readily available to any caver who requested a key but it was decided after the damage to a very vulnerable environment to set up a leader system to protect the cave. A list of keyholders and leaders has been posted on the web.

10 All will be aware of the sad situation in the **Ysradfellite** area where access to a cave of some considerable beauty and significance has been lost because protocols about dealing with the owner were not followed and the attitude of some cavers that property could be invaded or removed at will.

This was not the only cave where **property (gates) were stolen**. I need not point out that theft is illegal and we do not condone it. We work with the landowners over agreed access and must respect personal freedoms and property.

Clogau Gold Mine has suffered badly from theft of caving/mining gear and it appears the individual mainly concerned has been identified and banned from the site. The stealing of gear can put life at risk as well as access in the future.

Gates are not for decoration and are never put onto a cave without considerable thought. Frequently they are a demand of the owner. Often they are for public safety. Other times they are for conservation purposes.

So long as they open readily I am sure they are beneficial. We, in Wales, have many gates that open to almost any club caver who asks for a key and do not put gates where they are deemed unnecessary. Long may that continue!

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Commercial users of some of our managed caves are denied access unless for exceptional visits with advance permission. I am aware that **not-for-profit providers** are concerned by this. Some feel that a group they have trained for some time are perhaps better equipped to respect the underground environment than many of the novices to whom we do allow access as new members of recognised clubs.

I would ask the meeting to consider what their advice in this respect would be to the various management committees. Should the gates open for them or should they remain locked?

- 11 A request was made to me to ask the army trainers and the OPC's to avoid using the newly opened part of **Llygad Llŵchwr** because of the vulnerability of the cave. This I considered and have done.

What yet remains to be done is to ensure that the landowner of the cave is entirely happy. I am fairly certain that the attitude will be the same as the main cave.... that they will not give formal permission but will not prevent access.

- 12 Other matters that are pending are clarifying just what is going on at Trefil where the access road is frequently locked, in the Clydach Gorge where some caves seem to have ramshackle covers that may need adapting and on the Black Mountain where the BBNP warden has voiced concern about uncovered holes with which cavers may have been involved.

- 13 As a final comment I would request that all consider carefully what they put onto the web. While freedom of speech is to be totally respected I have very strong reservations about the wild comments that are put into the public domain. Often we, as cavers, recognise them to be good natured jovialities or frank exchange of opinion, but outsiders who do read the web do not have the same understanding and see abusive and irresponsible behaviour. Please think at least twice and ask yourself if what you are about to put out on the ether is advisable or desirable.

E.Little... 5th March 2011

John Stevens had asked for support for removing Draenen gate to allow egress of bats ASAP. Maurice Febry supported this view and said that gates have big impact on air currents. Stuart pointed out that originally the cave was a draughting hole, large enough for dogs. Adding a gate cut off draughts and bat counts have dropped to almost zero. Parts of Daren Cilau has been colonised by bats after opening of Price's Dig.

Natural England's paper "Bats Underground" is heavily biased towards bats with statutory requirement to consult about allowing access to all underground sites. Elsie was concerned about the size of aperture recommended. Maurice stated that two species of bats (Greater and Lesser Horseshoe) traditionally lived underground and have to fly in. He also explained that bats tend to hibernate for only a few weeks at a time, leaving the cave to feed outdoors. Fleur reported that PDCMG is in detailed discussion with CCW about both entrances and the impact on bats. It was agreed that these discussions should be brought to an urgent conclusion due to the risk of bats becoming trapped inside the cave at the end of winter.

Stuart was concerned about lack of project management skills applied to PDCMG's work. It was agreed that Elsie would ask for a meeting with the PDCMG Committee.

In view of the alarming effects of White Nose Syndrome on the North American bat population, Stuart highlighted need to clean kit before going abroad and again before coming back.

Elsie asked a question about "not for profit" outdoor centre trips which are currently not permitted by several access bodies. After much discussion, the consensus was to maintain the status quo. Organisations are encouraged to apply on a case by case basis.

5e Training Officer's Report

Despite having no Training Officer, we have for the first time in years managed to spend all of the SCW Training Grant.

5f Equipment Officer's Report [See written report below]

There have been no reports of loose anchors in the last year although a personal check in Poachers Cave identified one anchor as being on the borderline. If this is deemed to be too loose it will be removed, it is not my intention to replace it as there are other suitable anchor points adjacent to it.

All cavers must be aware of their responsibilities regarding use of fixed anchors and other fixed aids – basically it is your responsibility to check these before use, no matter who placed it and whether or not it is subject to regular checks. The anchors placed as part of the BCA scheme were initially checked on a regular cycle but this is now deemed unnecessary, this applies in the other caving regions as well. See the BCA or CCC site for more details regarding the scheme.

The ECO anchors are no longer available and the present anchors being placed are PECO (but look similar).

The Equipment and Techniques Committee (E and T) have discussed options for testing resin bonded anchors in substrates other than limestone. This will be discussed further at the next E and T meeting on 12 March 2011. This has implications for north Wales where I have had some queries on anchors to use in the slate mines. The PECO anchor may be suitable but a test bed needs to be set up first to discover how they perform. If anchors are to be placed in north Wales it makes sense for the CCC to have some registered installer(s) in north Wales rather than me travel up and down. At present CCC has just one registered installer.

Andy Lewington
CCC Equipment Officer
27.2.2011.

5g Legal & Insurance Officer's Report

Nothing to report. I am satisfied that the work carried out by David Judson for BCA is of great value to the Cambrian Caving Council.

Owen Clarke
March 2011

5h Cave Registrar's Report [See written report below]

During the year I have added just under 150 new records into the cave registry mainly from North Wales, giving the registry much better coverage in this region.

There are now has a total of 1924 entries in the cave database.

During the course of the year I have received a good deal of help and information from Tony Donovan and Gary Evans to whom I am very grateful.

I hope to be able to upload the extended data set to the website shortly.

Brendan Marris – Cave Registrar
25th February 2011

5i Webmaster's Report [See written report below]

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The website has been updated with Newsletters, Latest News and Cave Access updates throughout the last year. No downtime of the website has been reported, plus we are still receiving about 500 visits a month, with the Cave Access and Latest News pages being the most popular pages visited.

Since the last AGM, I have removed all references on the website to the library which was disposed of a few years ago. I also updated some of the links to the Members websites, which I will do again soon as I have already spotted at least one club that now has a website.

Again I am willing to continue as Webmaster, but will not stand in the way of anyone else wishing to take on this position.

Barry Hill
28th February 2011

5j Newsletter Editor's Report [See written report below]

Newsletters have appeared quarterly as planned although the publication dates have been slightly flexible to allow the inclusion of reports on events scheduled within a day or so of the month end. All are circulated to our member clubs and are then made available to download from the CCC website.

As in prior years on several occasions during the year notes on those matters which arise between newsletters have been circulated to our member clubs.

As ever, I remain grateful to those who have responded to my requests for material and especially so to those who have provided material without prompting.

Robin Weare
February 2011

6 Other Cambrian Representatives' Reports

6a Welsh Mines Society Report

Due to a clash of dates, no-one from the Welsh Mines Society was able to be present and no report had been received. It was agreed that the Secretary of WMS the opportunity to provide a report for circulation with the minutes. (See Appendix 1).

6b FoDCCAG

[See written report below]

Conservation

Most of the Greater and Lesser Horseshoe bat hibernation sites (SSSI sites) within the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for the Dean were monitored during the winter (but excluding Buckshaft Iron Mine SSSI and Perseverance (not SSSI)). Likewise, four FC tunnels were monitored during the winter. These were Mierystock, Moseley Green, Symonds Yat and Bradley Hill Tunnels.

I have no update on the Bechstein and Barbastelle monitoring project carried out by Glos Bat Group (GBG).

J Hine and myself assisted Peter Homes, Gloucestershire Natural England (NE) in the entrance and underground assessment in the Northern part of Devil's Chapel SSSI site on Mr Miles' land during the summer. Mr Miles still refuses access to anyone.

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White Nose Syndrome (WNS) in bats

A facial fungus infection in bats has been devastating the bat population on the Eastern side of North America. Concern has been expressed in the UK over the possibility of it spreading to Europe. A meeting was held in Birmingham with participants from NE, BCT, BCRA, Subterranea Britannica and BCA (Conservation and Access reps, Elsie and myself) to discuss the problem. Dr John Altringham reported that WNS has been seen in Europe but never in the UK.

The number of bats in Europe with WNS seems to be small and they may have some immunity to it. BCT tabled documents that will be distributed to bat workers in the event that WNS is found in the UK with instructions on what to do. The main thrust of the meeting was to discuss what cavers should do if bats with WNS were found. To this end, Dr John Altringham agreed to draft a letter for publication in Descent. This was done (see latest Descent magazine No. 216) Also, Elsie will be drafting information to be given to caving clubs to be disseminated to club members (this is ongoing). The 2 dead bats recently found in Wigpool Iron Mine have now been analysed and the report back is that it was not WNS.

Access

At the start of the summer the gate to Lord's Wood No. 16 mine was removed to allow general caving access and replaced at the start of the winter. It would seem that the padlocks at Lady Park Mine and Diggers Hole (both part of non-intervention nature reserve) are corroded up and need replacing. I will mention this at my next meeting with NE.

J Hine has made initial contact with Lydney Park Estate with reference to gaining surface access again to the area of the estate for which we have access to the underground sites through our agreement with FC. We are awaiting a response. We have put a different type of padlock on the Oakwood Mill Deep Level Mine Shaft to the one we put on the outcrop entrance. Mine trips will only be led by Pit Deputies J Hine and D Tuffley who have keys. An inventory check has started on all keys held by FODCC&AG. To date, Gloucestershire Cave Rescue Group's keys have been checked out as well as the Deputy Gaveler's keys.

Westbury Brook Iron Mine Gate

A site visit was made by FODCC&AG and our suggested method of repair was outlined to Peter Homes at my December meeting with him. He verbally agreed on the repair but I am awaiting an email response to confirm this. Peter Homes has also contacted me to assist him in monitoring the bats in the northern part of Devil's Chapel SSSI. Apparently, Mr Miles has agreed that Peter Homes plus 2 other people could do the monitoring. J Hine also attended to check for any oxygen depletion due to the deep level connection through to Oakwood Mill Deep Level Iron Mine. This trip took place on Thursday 10 February 2011.

Permits

38 permits were issued in 2010. The majority were for caving clubs followed by divers and the Glos Bat Group. However, one diver has continued to dive in the Royal Forest of Dean without a permit, despite being told on a number of occasions. The Permit Secretary is hopeful that this issue has now been resolved. Also there is a proliferation of diving lines at Noxon Park Iron Mine. The Permit Secretary has made contact with a number of divers to ascertain whether all the lines are required. It would appear that the divers do not know which lines belong to which diver. The local water table rises and falls during the year and when the water level is at its lowest point many diving lines are left high and dry.

Natural England (Gloucestershire Team)

NE have moved (yet again), this time from Cheltenham to Worcester, without informing us of the transfer. I eventually had a meeting with Peter Homes at Worcester and he informed me that he was unsure what the future holds for the Gloucestershire Team or his job. He also reported that both Liza and Stephanie were now on maternity leave for a year and that bats were now a low priority but he would help out where he could.

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BCA Conservation and Access Meetings

There have been no meetings during the last year.

M J Febry, Conservation and Access Officer

Footnote:

A bat check was made at Lady Park Wood Mine sites on Saturday 5 February and both padlocks were OK. I had a brief discussion with Terry Clayton, Lady Park Wood Warden (NE) but will be having a further meeting with him after our meeting with FC on Thursday 10 February to discuss security and padlock issues.

6c NWCRO

[See written report below]

There are two incidents to report for the last year:

1. Missing person search – Asked to check mine workings in the Horseshoe Pass. No one found.
2. A group was reported overdue on the Croesor-Rhosydd Through Trip. The group was ascertained to be safely out by a Controller before the team was called out.

Administratively it has been a busy year since the last CCC AGM. At our 2010 AGM Michael Klimaszewski said that he was stepping down as Training Officer and we were very relieved when he said that he would stay on as Chairman. This year we added a Medical Officer and an IT and Communications Officer too, strengthening the committee to seven.

Dave Linton took over the role of Training and Membership Officer. First Aid training is still an issue as it is hard to get team members on external courses. However, the internal training for 2011 is booked, busy and well under way. Plas y Brenin has been very supportive in providing indoor facilities for training sessions and meetings. NWCRO was invited to a number joint cave rescue training events. S&MWCRT being the first, quickly followed by MCRO and DCRO. These have been very useful and it is good to start getting to know people that we may work with on a major incident. Links with NWMRA (North Wales Mountain Rescue Association) and MREW (Mountain Rescue England and Wales) have been strengthened too and team members have been on NWMRA and MREW training sessions. Details of the 2011 team training programme are accessible on the public section of the team website <http://www.northwalescro.org.uk/>

We have had another year of obsolete equipment replacement, which has involved a major project by our Equipment Officer Dewi Lloyd. Luckily most of the major one-off spend is now done, before Government cuts may affect available grants. NWMRA was particularly supportive and help was also requested from and given by MREW and the Sports Safety Grant via CCC. The major equipment refurbishment phase is nearly complete and we move to a routine checking and maintenance basis, which will be financially much more manageable.

A members' area of the website has been set up and membership, training records and other information published on it for the team with appropriate privacy restrictions. We hope that this will improve communication and access to information for the team.

Heather, the Treasurer did a sponsored zip-wire event in October raising more than £600 towards stretchers and other equipment needed. HMRC has finally paid over our first Gift Aid claims £158.56! Other sponsored events are being discussed.

We were sorry to lose some older, more experienced members from the call-out list this year and are grateful for their years of service. New members keep joining though and their enthusiasm is encouraging.

Heather Simpson
NWCRO

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6d SMWCRT

No report received.

6e GCRG

A brief verbal report was made, noting that there had been no major incidents and that all was well.

6f OFD Management Committee Report

Vandalism has been reported in a seldom visited chamber inside Top Entrance. It consists of the debris from a mud fight on the walls, along with graffiti in mud with names. Photographs have been taken of the graffiti & names but the culprits have not been identified.

Following approval of a formal request broken stal was collected from the Columns area and Upper Arete, also scrapings from cave passage walls in various areas, including Salubrious, Pi Chamber etc. This is for a research project and a report is expected back eventually.

A smell of sulphur had been reported in the corkscrew area, due to possible rock movement. No more reports have been received.

Failure of one of the scaffold poles over a pot in the OFD 1 streamway was noted, this has since been replaced.

There is a possible problem with a loose block above the Elephant turds, which are just after the Brickyard, care is needed in this area

A fence round Cwm Dwr quarry will happen at some stage. Vehicle and pedestrian access will be provided.

A contractor has removed the cover of the old engine house at the top of the incline but some remedial work still needs to be done.

CCW has changed the kissing gates into the reserve into step through stiles.

Visits to the system in the year to October 2010 were

	Parties	People
OFD I	178	630
Cwmdwr	62	233
OFD II	492	1712

Robin Weare

6g Dan yr Ogof Cave Advisory Committee Report

Visits to DYO continue at a steady level, comparable with previous years. Whilst there has been a slight decline in numbers of trip reports, conservation and fixed aids issues seem to continue to be reported and resolved promptly. Fixed aids generally have been refurbished over the past few years, with only the fixed ladder at The Rising remaining to be completed.

CCW have decided not to extend the National Nature Reserve boundary to include the 'wild' cave and its catchment due to lack of resources and the proximity of the OFD NNR across the valley.

Considerable outcry resulted from the erection of black plastic dams on Waun Figen Felen by the National Park Authority without consultation or various legal consents. These were eventually removed following an ultimatum from the Environment Agency. A tender is now being prepared for a hydrological study to support the future conservation and restoration of the bog. Meanwhile, funding constraints are likely to limit work on site to maintaining the status quo for the foreseeable future.

Mike McCombe, 28th February, 2011

6h Mynydd Llangatwg Cave Management / Advisory Committee

Stuart reported that there are no hot issues.

7 BCA Matters

The Secretary reported that there is very little excitement to report from BCA Council meetings – a view confirmed by Bernie and Elsie who also attend.

8 Election of Officers

With the exception of the post of Training Officer, for which there was no candidate, all of the other officers were re-elected unanimously by show of hands. The post of Training Officer will be filled by the Committee if a suitable candidate emerges.

The following officers were elected to serve until the next AGM:-

Chairman – Bernie, proposed by Robin, seconded by Mike
Secretary – Mike, proposed by Stuart, seconded by Andy
Treasurer – Robin proposed by Stuart, seconded by Maurice
Conservation Officer – proposed by Maurice, seconded by Joe
Training Officer – Elsie proposed that the Committee be empowered to co-opt someone. Seconded by Fleur
Equipment Officer – Andy, proposed by Elsie seconded by Robin
Legal & Insurance Officer – Owen Clarke proposed by Elsie seconded by Robin
Webmaster – Barry proposed by Robin seconded by Elsie
Newsletter Editor – Robin reluctantly agreed to continue in post!

9 Any other business

Funding request from Stuart for Daren Cilau ladders – needs three ladders in Antler 3m, 5m & 7m. Currently rigged with “tat” so is an accident waiting to happen. Total cost £600 - £700 with a few stainless steel hangers and some plastic left over. The aim is to complete the project by Summer 2011. Robin noted that we will need BCA approval to spend this amount. It was agreed that this is a “no brainer” so Elsie phoned the BCA Treasurer and gained agreement to proceed, advising other regional council treasurers.

Elsie asked authorisation to buy more conservation tape. To be discussed at Committee meeting.

12 Date of Next Meeting

To be discussed. Possibly not 1st Sunday in March. Possibly same location.

The meeting closed at 12:54

Appendix 1

Welsh Mines Society report to CCC AGM 6th March 2011

This report attempts to summarize access problems associated with research and recreational use of mines and underground slate quarries in north and mid-Wales. Other activities of the Welsh Mines Society (mainly historical research findings) are detailed in the Society's Newsletter which is published in the spring and autumn of each year.

Note that this report should not be considered definitive as in most cases it is based on second-hand and/or inferred information from a wide variety of sources

Dave Linton, Welsh Mines Society

General

In general, there are no formal access arrangements for the majority of mid- and north Wales mines and entry is without the landowner's approval. Notable exceptions to this are Cwmorthin (see below) and the Parys Mountain and Great Orme copper mines (which are controlled by their own local groups with access on a guided party basis).

A number of mines and underground slate quarries are used by outdoor activity centres, some of which have made exclusive access arrangements with the landowner concerned. In the case of the exclusive access cases, with the current exception of Pandora, it is sometimes possible for trips to be arranged through the individual activity centres, who generally provide a leader for such trips. However, such arrangements are very informal and usually depend on personal contacts.

Access issue developments over the last year are discussed below.

Cwmorthin slate quarry SH681459

Extensive underground slate quarry providing underground trips of both sporting and historical interest.

The block of slate in old vein chamber 8 east a block of slate reported in 2010 as peeling away from the pillar directly over the steps between floor A and floor C remains in place. The recommendation by Friends of Cwmorthin that people do not pass through this chamber still obtains. However, 'familiarity breeds contempt' and the route seems to be in regular use.

Vandals made the lock on the lake level adit inoperative in January 2011, trapping a group underground. Fortunately the group in question were away of the alternative exit route through the smoke flue and were able to exit safely.

Maenofferen slate quarry SH708465

Extensive underground and (working) surface slate quarry associated with the Llechwedd working quarry and tourist attraction and the Votty (Foty) and Bowydd quarries. The underground part has many important historical features such as the power inclines and machine-bored tunnels. The quarry was in use until recently and consequently many of the historical remains are in comparatively good condition. It is understood that the mill buildings are listed.

The deterioration of the condition of the surface buildings due to weather and vandalism, and extensive pillaging for scrap continues. A slab wagon was cut up in situ and the axle boxes (marked 'GWR') and other parts stolen. (See WMS Newsletter 63 for pictures.)

Untopping work has commenced at this quarry using explosives to clear overburden. The effect this has had on the deeper underground working is not known.

Milwr Tunnel and associated mines

The Olwyn Goch shaft gives access to the 10 mile drainage tunnel, extensive lead workings and a large underground limestone quarry. The outflow from the tunnel is used (in part) for industrial water supply.

Grosvenor Caving Club, who control access for recreational purposes, continue in negotiations with United Utilities but there is currently no access.

Clogau Gold Mine SH675200

Nineteenth-century gold mine with extensive adit system along lode and open stopes to surface.

Mining operations have resumed at this mine and there is no recreational access. The current leaseholders have intimated that they may be willing to conduct visitors into the mine at some future date.