

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL CYNGOR OGEFEYDD CYMREIG

Affiliated to the British Caving Association

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Snailbeach Village Hall 17th March 2019

Present

Martyn Farr (MF) Chairman	*	CDG
Allan Richardson (AR) Secretary	*	SWCC
Dave Tyson (DT)	*	UCET
Roy Fellows (RF) Legal/Insurance	*	CMT
Stuart France (SF) Access/Conservation	*	CSS
Steve Holding (SH)	*	SMT
Richard Hill (RH) Training Officer	*	Gagendor
Margaret Richardson (MLR)		SWCC
Nick De-Gare Pitt (NP) Webmaster & Newsletter	*	Brynmawr CC
Mike Moore (MM)		SCMC
Jamie Larke (JL)	*	Gwent CC
Kieran Ashman (KA)		"
Darren Postians (DP)		"
Sue Mabbett (SM)	*	Morgannwg
Idris Williams (IW)	*	Shropshire Scouts
Neil Maine (NM)	*	MCG
Rachel Smith (RS)		CSS
Mary Rogers (MR)	*	Garimpeiros

* Club representatives. The meeting was quorate with 13 out of 50 member clubs present.

1. Chairperson's Opening Remarks

The Chairman welcomed everyone to a new venue, whilst Snailbeach is in Shropshire and is not part of Wales, the Shropshire Cave and Mine Society (SCMC) have been involved with Cambrian Caving Council since its inception. The Chairman thanked our hosts SCMC for making underground trips and tours of the mine site available over the weekend.

2. Apologies for Absence

AR

Apologies for absence were received from Vince Allkins (Equipment & Techniques, John Hine (WMS), Martin Laverty (CCC Registry), Dan Thorne (SMWCRT), Parys Underground Group, BEC

3a. Minutes of the 2018 AGM

MF opened discussion on the minutes of the 2018 AGM.

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Steve Holding pointed out that he was the SMT rep not SCMC.
Reports, it needs to be clear that they are published on the website

The Minutes were voted on and accepted as an accurate record, subject to the above correction. Prop AR 2nd SH , passed

3b. Matters arising from 2018 minutes

None

4. Applications for Membership

None

5. Officers Reports

The Chairman's report was read out, the rest having been published on the website, to be taken as read with questions to the officers as necessary. As a reminder to all, these reports are available for download from the CCC website ahead of each AGM, and will not be sent out separately to CCC members.

5.a Chairman's Report

MF

I thank all members of the Committee for their sterling efforts over the past year, and it has to be said I think Council, of necessity is becoming ever more professional. Well I have been Chairman now since 2014 and it never ceases to amaze how complex the world of caving has become. The bodies that we have to correspond and work with are all in flux. Major changes are afoot within NRW (Natural Resources Wales) and who could possibly have imagined the council having "differences of opinion" with of all people CADW.

The unrest at Ogof Draenen: While there are such fundamental differences in philosophy to access and conservation, the situation will undoubtedly roll on for some time. We all agree that damage to a national monument is totally unacceptable but the Council's belief and position is clear: we see no threats to or from a multiple entrance cave. We continue to strive for cavers generally and to enhance the sport of caving at every opportunity. Caver numbers have declined significantly over the past decades and the Council is pleased to see the enthusiastic approach to revitalising and encouraging new blood as evidenced by Cavefest 2019.

Everywhere one looks there are issues that require reflection and attention. The Cambrian Caving Council has been in existence for 50 years; its role is as important, as ever. It's doing a great job.

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Martyn Farr March 2019

5.b Secretary's Report

CCC Secretary's report to the 2019 AGM

The year has seen the on-going saga of Ogof Draenen and Twll Du take several new twists and turns. Due to the unwillingness on the part of Cadw to engage with us to agree a community settlement, as recommended by the Gwent Police, we had to withdraw from negotiations in May 2018 with regret after our offer to fund a gated caver entrance, also providing access for bats at all times, was turned down by Cadw: it seemed they only wanting our support for concreting it up completely. This went ahead during October 2018 despite a bat professional providing Cadw with a report showing that bats were recorded using the Twll Du entrance in September.

The consequence was a Police investigation, but the CPS has decided recently that insufficient evidence exists to show that a roost existed in that part of the cave. So the case has been dropped.

Other than this, it has been fairly quiet year with the usual general enquiries on a range of subjects and meetings to attend.

I am willing to stand for a further year as Secretary.

R. Allan Richardson
Secretary

5.c Treasurer's Report

MT
Treasurers Report (Year ending 31/12/2018).

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Cambrian Caving Council Accounts Year Ended 31st December 2018

Income & Expenditure Account

Income

Subscriptions	£10.00	
Bank Interest	£0.00	
Keys	£0.00	
BCA Grant	£0.00	
Barclays Compensation	£0.00	
Sports Wales Grant	£500.00	
Sports Wales Grant (Safety)	£0.00	
Donations	£0.00	
Total Income		£510.00

Expenditure

Travel & Accommodation	£0.00	
Equipment & Techniques	£218.40	
Training Events	£0.00	
Room Hire	£0.00	
Print, Postage & Stationery	£25.93	
Insurance	£0.00	
Conservation & Access	£395.05	
Total Expenditure		£639.38

Excess of Income over Expenditure **-£129.38**

Balance Sheet

Bank Account (NS&I) - (Transferred to current A/C)	£0.00	
Unpresented Cheques	£0.00	
Barclays Current Account	£5,394.98	£5,394.98
Reserves at 31st December 2017	£5,524.36	
Less : Expenditure over Income	-£129.38	
		£5,394.98

..... **Mat Terry (Treasurer)** **Date:**

Honorary Scrutineer's Report

I have examined the above Income & Expenditure Account for the Year ended 31st December 2017 and the balance sheet as at that date. In my opinion they are in accordance with the Council's accounting records and explanations provided.

..... **Date:**

The end of year accounts show a decrease in funds of £129.38 However we

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have received a £588.00 grant from the BCA for 2018 which has been paid in 2019.

1. The deposits for the SRT Training have covered the cost of the training with a surplus of £18.90 which is held by R. Hill. This could be put towards the next SRT Workshop. **R. Hill reported to the meeting that an excess was not correct, the surplus was used to cover the expenses of the Instructors.**

2. The funds held by the Council stand at £5394.98 as at 01/01/2019.

3. Due to work and family commitments I will no longer be able to continue as Treasurer.

I would propose that the accounts be accepted.

Mat Terry
(Treasurer CCC)

5.d Access and Conservation officers report

SF

CCC CONSERVATION & ACCESS OFFICER'S REPORT FOR MARCH 2018 TO FEBRUARY 2019

WELSH GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENTS

Minister for the Environment, Hannah Blythyn, published the results of last year's Welsh Government (WG) public consultation on Sustainable Management of Natural Resources. She said that "there were strong but differing views on how best to reform access legislation. We therefore believe that now is not the right time for substantive reform".

The Minister went on to say "We will continue to facilitate further discussions through established groups such as the National Access Forum [for Wales]". The problem there is that NAFW is carefully managed by NRW to act only as an information exchange and not to develop policy or provide the government with advice. With John Watkins, the senior civil servant in charge of the consultation, moving to other work, the prospect of statutory land access reform in Wales along the Scottish lines in our generation is virtually non-existent.

NATIONAL ACCESS FORUM WALES

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NRW runs three meetings per year of the National Access Forum for Wales (NAFW). These usually take place in Bangor in March, Builth Wells in July, and in Cardiff in November.

The Bangor forum was poorly attended being disrupted by snow. I was unable to get there, but I did attend the other two meetings. All outdoors sports governing bodies are represented plus a wide spectrum of business and political interests ranging from Welsh Water, NHS, YHA, National Trust, Farmers Union for Wales, county councils, and others.

I delivered a half-hour presentation to the November forum about caving, obviously covering the cave access subject for such an audience, and the potential tension between access and conservation. My format was just to talk over a series of full-screen photographs rather than customary PowerPoint techniques. Making things visual seemed to work well, gaining positive feedback even from landowner interests like the Countryside Alliance and the CLA. The NAFW chairman and NRW Board Member, Howard Davies, seemed impressed with the measures we take to protect the underground environment saying "From what I've seen today, there isn't any problem with conservation and caving". One wonders if Howard might previously have been led to believe that there was one.

NRW

After several attempts, I did obtain a meeting with Christina Byrne and Graham Motley in April to discuss caving issues as NRW perceives them and support their organization can give. This appears to be a diminishing resource as the organization is being re-structured from April 2019 and its staff are uncertain about their future roles.

That exercise is now nearing completion. An organogram of NRW's entire new staffing structure has been circulating internally with every post shown as a number and a salary grade but not with any names attached. Staff letters assigning names to numbers have been delivered and it remains to be seen if there are posts for all existing staff.

NRW did not send anyone to the December meeting of the OFD cave management committee which, like the Mynydd Llangattock one, is an NRW committee chaired by them. The October MLCMAC meeting did take place as normal, but its next meeting due in May 2019 is being brought forward to March so that the usual NRW staff can participate.

Uncertainty remains as to what role NRW is able or willing to take in managing cave access and providing funding for caving projects like cave gates in the future. It certainly seems to be the end of the "warden system" where the caving members of their committees are appointed by NRW under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 rather than being elected by the caving community. There is a some misunderstanding here as that Act only refers to

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Wardens as advisors to the general public in the context of public rights of way such as public footpaths, and then the wardens are appointed by local authorities. Possibly NRW's real concerns are avoiding creation of an employer-employee relationship for wardens, as honoraria or expenses payments have been made in the past giving rise to tax questions, health and safety compliance, pensions, employment rights, and other employer liabilities.

The new NRW is to be divided into three sections for Internal Services such as IT and finance, Operations such as forestry and flood defence, and Permitting such as licence issue and land management agreements. Leisure activities seem to be an Operation, but we understand the future scope for leisure support is limited, focusing on honey pots such as Coed-y-Brenin and Newborough which get hundreds of thousands of visitors per year.

CAVEFEST 2018

The March 2018 CCC AGM voted to support Cavefest which duly took place on a rather wet August bank holiday weekend at Llangattock. I have provided a fresh endorsement saying "CCC supports the Cavefest initiative by Gwent Caving Club and we're delighted that Cavefest is coming back to Wales from 23rd – 26th August 2019 at Crickhowell. This next Cavefest weekend is going to be a great opportunity for people in different clubs and for independent cavers to join in with a huge choice of underground trips and socially afterwards at the camp site. Passing on know-how, creating opportunities for caving, and demonstrating safe and responsible practice while having a good time next summer is all incredibly useful."

More details of their 2019 event are at the <http://www.cavefestuk.co.uk> website. **CCC NEWSLETTER**

Our newsletter has appeared three times rather than four in the current CCC year, in May and October 2018 and February 2019. Two of these issues are 6 pages long rather than usual 4 pages so the annual page count remains the same. It is available to all as a download, plus some hardcopies made available at caving club cottages and to hand out at various meetings to present caving in an attractive and professional way to third parties, and to highlight some of the issues being tackled by CCC. I have contributed some whole- page articles to this, along with smaller pieces of news.

Nick De-Gare Pitt has spent a lot of time on the council's media presence which is not obvious when a finished newsletter or new website piece pops up, so I would like to thank him for his support since effective communications are incredibly important to our work.

CAVE ACCESS LTD

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The CAL directors remain the same people: Dave Tyson, Roy Fellows and myself. Last year I did invite interest from anyone wishing to become a director after criticism that this not-for-profit access facilitation company was undemocratic. There were no takers.

The only issue this year has been discontent by some sections of the Cwmpenmachno community about the conduct of visits to the Rhiwbach mine. There is no formal parking provision nearby but there are pull-offs well outside the village at the foot of the large surface quarry. This is private land but the owner seems to tolerate considerate parking. Another upcoming issue is harvesting of the pine forest through which the access footpath (a public right of way) passes to the mine top entrance, and the NRW forest that engulfs the lower adit entrance. I have had an electronic caver counter in there since July 2018 and the first three months showed a total of 129 hours in which activity was logged. Not all these groups will do through trips, though most do that as there are many days with just one hour logged. So the number of groups is likely between 65 and 130 say, which equates to one group per day, or thereabouts, on average. Of course there are a few days when nobody goes in there during the summer, but this is a small minority. So seeing a minibus or "Go Below" company vehicle at the quarry must be a near daily occurrence for the villagers. I will collect the autumn and winter data when I am next in the area and remove the equipment.

We have made no progress with the Draethen Lead Mines. NRW will simply not respond to emails or other approaches. The next step might need to involve an Assembly Member to ask questions, although now is not the best time in view of NRW's internal reorganization.

A465 DUALLING OF THE CLYDACH GORGE

I held a private meeting with Jeff Mapps, Costain's public relations officer in April 2018 about the project's timetable and its effects on cave access.

Ogof Nant Rhin and Pont Gam have had further brief closures in 2018 when explosives were in use to create the upper split carriageway section. There is new parking available next to the new footbridge above Blackrock village. Anyone who has not worked out how to return from the river to the old road after doing a through trip should contact me. Ogof Capel and Gelynnen are now closed for a long period while the middle section near the former Drum & Monkey pub is built. The old subway by the former pub has been turned into a bat sanctuary and the new route will eventually be via the Blackrock footbridge. The informal parking for OCAF access in a minor quarry next to the limekilns will be retained.

OGOF GOFAN AND CASTLEMARTIN RANGE WEST

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The present access arrangements continue unaltered. For Ogof Gofan, access requests should be made well in advance to me and I will clear it with the National Park and MOD. Generally it will always be granted provided no live firing is taking place on the date requested and no other group has booked the cave. A PDF permit is issued by email.

For Range West, access is only to go prospecting for new coastal caves, not to enter or dig them. This permission, granted for a year or so at a time, is obtained by attending one of the range access meetings – the dates on the CCC website and February 2019 newsletter.

I took Richard Brooks, Defence Infrastructure Organisation's principal officer worldwide for conservation, into Ogof Gofan on a midweek trip in August. Richard was keen to see the cave and conservation efforts himself, and was impressed with everything there. He is effectively the landowner and the most senior supporter of our cave access agreement.

This was followed up the following day by a visit with Dyfed Archaeology Trust's Charlie Enright who is on a Cadw contract. Our aim was not to enter the cave, but more to walk the whole coastal strip from Green Bridge to St Govan's Chapel looking at archaeological sites or potential ones. Charlie has since been taken on a visit to the small caves near Carreg Cennen Castle by Martin Laverty and Phil Knight for the same research purpose.

I attended the annual MOD Access & Recreation Meeting in October. This is attended by stakeholders rather than sport visitors, so included NRW, defence staff, the national park, county council, and so on. I gave a presentation there, similar in style to my NAFW one already described, but shorter and focused on Ogof Gofan. This was well received, in part because people were able to see the pretty places they cannot get into themselves.

Inspired by the BBC's Hidden Wales series with Will Millard, I have contributed Ogof Gofan material to Wales Online at their request. Their author has produced an inspirational piece that highlights the unique nature of the cave, conservation and access system:

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/amazing-and-huge-hidden-cave-15833091>

I have placed high resolution air temperature loggers in the cave for a year, set to record hourly. These results are looking interesting so as to determine if the draught in the 5m deep dig in the final chamber comes from the sea or from further inland. Clearly, the large chamber did not form by solution of solid rock. All those blocks all over the floor are there because they fell off the roof into an existing space, implying there was an earlier cave at a lower level. Or have I misunderstood something? The equipment will be removed in March 2019 and temperature data scrutinized for correlations suggesting new passages.

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BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY - LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

I am a member of BBNPA LAF until 2020, but this is in a personal capacity, as per all the other public members. I feel it is important that caving gets a voice at National Park Authority level, given that most of the big caves in Wales are within the Brecon Beacons.

I have attended all the LAF meetings this year. In addition, I attended an outdoor meeting of the LAF to consider a forestry creation project on Common Land which is also CROW Access Land. This has potentially serious implications for loss of public access as-of-right because one side of the Bryn Arw hill will get covered with new trees. Such development activity on commons is subject to very strict controls and scrutiny.

The landowner here though appears willing to create routes through and around the new plantation, and not to plant trees in positions where they interfere with panoramic views. I concurred with the other LAF members at site meeting, and later in committee, that the project should be given approval as it creates economic activity and it is ecological and the NPA staff will safeguard the public access in the process.

OGOF DRAENEN

Allan Richardson and I tried to influence Cadw during 2018 about the future of the Twll Du entrance. By May, our discussions had reached the point where Cadw were only interested in getting CCC on side so that the whole caving community was seen to endorse their plan to pour concrete into a cave entrance. We wanted it managed instead in a consensual way for the protection of the monument, wildlife, leisure activities, science and safety. The CCC executive decided to withdraw from talks with Cadw as we could not become associated with concreting cave entrances. Allan sent them a formal letter to that effect in May and from that date onward we heard nothing more from Cadw until the week of October 1st when their concreting operation was carried out.

I put some caver counters into Ogof Draenen during 2018 to evidence what use was being made of the additional entrances including Twll Du in case imaginative claims were made. I am relieved to say that no real cavers used the Twll Du entrance following Cadw's non-use request in late 2017 although someone entered through Twll Du in the late morning of 1st October (and they left via Twll Du too) for the purpose it seems of removing ladders, ropes, hangers and even nuts from fixings before any concrete was poured.

Usage of Drws Cefn is very low (1 visit in 6 months) and the Nunnery (10 visits in 6 months). These numbers exclude my visits to maintain the counters. PDCMG's general meeting in November thought these footfall measurements

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were very useful and should continue in conjunction with their access officer and be expanded to monitor the original way entrance too. One visit in January 2019 suggests camping beyond Snowball and once again there are many fungal spots from Lucky 13 onwards suggesting spilt powdered food.

Cadw paid for a surface bat survey of Twll Du which was conducted in secret. Requests for their report were refused by both Cadw and NRW. Eventually Cadw released a redacted version. This showed three emergence/entry surface bat surveys done between mid-April and early-May, and then no more measurements over the summer until 30th September when another check was done prior to the concreting works in the following week. All four of their 90-minute surface surveys failed to find bats using Twll Du. No attempt was made to look inside the cave for actual roosting bats or secondary evidence like bat droppings.

Dr Peter Smith, PDCMG's ecology officer, and I did a bat survey for 2 hours from dusk on 11th September and we found bats of various species using the entrance in one direction only which implied roosting inside it. A professionally-produced bat report was hastily sent to Cadw and the landowning company directors soon after cavers reported seeing contractors' equipment on site to indicate that the cave concreting project was imminent.

After discussion with Peter, I informed Gwent Police's wildlife team and asked them to attend the construction site to intervene before any concrete was used. Peter and I were at the site on 4th October to witness concrete being mixed and barrowed but no police came along. Peter called 999 and a uniformed officer then attended but he lacked the specialist wildlife law knowledge to have the confidence to intervene. The Gwent Police wildlife crime team started a specialist investigation during the following week. Various people were interviewed and a police file was sent to the Crown Prosecution Service at the start of December 2018. The CPS subsequently decided in February 2019 that no case would be brought as they were unable to say beyond reasonable doubt whether there is a roost present at that particular part of the cave and a defence would exist that numerous appropriate steps were taken to mitigate against species disturbance.

What can we draw from this? Clearly, there is no doubt at all that a few bats were seen using this cave entrance by us whilst the other group had no success with finding them. So some interesting points arise:

- 1) How many observations of how many bats does it take to declare a bat roost exists?
- 2) Protected species are ipso facto rare things and so observation attempts can have a low probability of success, especially when done in borderline months. Is it logical that successful bat observations can be invalidated by unsuccessful experiments when seeing a bat fly past is partly a matter of luck?

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3) When a roost is defined in law as a “resting place”, how can a roost ever be proven unless surveys are designed to discover resting bats rather than bats in flight as is normal practice. Is it logical that not looking for stationary bats means no roost can be proven, and without a proven roost no obstruction of access can be proven?

4) Lacking sufficient evidence later on can arise from narrow experimental design earlier on. So should licensing bodies like NRW approve methods statements before any research begins on which a licensing decision of theirs will ultimately depend to ensure it has a sufficient evidence base? At present NRW decides between a licence application being granted or refused if one is submitted but not whether one is needed in the first place.

I attended the PDCMG biannual meetings in 2018. The second PDCMG meeting decided that their executive should call an EGM to re-visit the 2009 decision about the Drws Cefn entrance in particular and the “single entrance policy” in general because their member clubs might have changed their views in the past decade. PDCMG is tasked to complete an outstanding action to write to CCC about our interest and involvement in Ogof Draenen. Allan Richardson has received a draft of it and I leave it to him to report on this.

LOOKING BACK AND FORWARD

I am willing to stand again in this role again, but I would like anyone interested in taking over to get in touch so as to work together for a smooth transition. Really the job does need someone living in Wales able to travel mid-week to national and regional meetings, or to have direct discussions with people who work in public bodies. They also need to devote some time to thinking, creative writing, talking in public, and responding to emails etc.

Stuart France, CCC Conservation and Access Officer. 3rd March 2019.

Stuart France, CCC Conservation and Access Officer

Stuart’s updates on his report at the meeting

The upcoming Welsh Government Consultation, there will be a minister present and he requested ideas for questions which could be put to the minister.

Dave Tyson suggested that one query for the minister would be the problem of Bats and access in N. Wales, though this may change with NRW reorganisation. Stuart reported that the observed numbers of Bats in S. Wales appeared to be increasing.

The NRW reorganisation has been delayed. There is confusion over the reserves, cave access etc.

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BCA, there is the prospect of some changes, with Matt Ewles to stand as Secretary, Gary Douthwaite to stand as Website Officer. Andrew Hinde was now the Chairman of CNCC

Stuart made a plea for news to be sent to the Newsletter Editor, sooner rather than later.

Ogof Carno, there is the possibility of access being restored, there appears to be some confusion at Welsh Water as to whether or not cavers have access.

Stuart reported on a letter of complaint from PDCMG re CCC interference in PDCMG affairs, a consensual letter was sent in reply, the final paragraph of which said that it was time to draw a line under the past, work together and move forward.

Stuart asked that anyone who was interested in taking over his role to get in contact as he had now been in the job for 5 years and felt that it was time for someone else to take on the role.

The Chairman thanked Stuart for the amount of effort he has put in over the last year.

5.e Training Officers Report

RH

2019 Cambrian Caving Council Training Officer Report

CCC Training Officer Report 2018-2019

There has been a lot of discussion at BCA level regarding the composition of the Training Committee and what other committees it has links to. Historically the local cave leader and cave instructor award schemes were administered by the Training Committee. A couple of years ago the award scheme was separated out and these are now administered by the Qualifications Management Committee. The Training Officer sits on the QMC as a link between the two committees. The composition is of the Training Officer, regional council's training officers, a voluntary sector rep (scouts), Association of caving Instructor rep

and co-opted people. This composition is in the process of being ratified by BCA Exec but both committees are working well and there has been an increase in training events across all the regions. The Training officer has been encouraging more events and has been present at several. I am not sure exactly how this will affect our region. Historically we have had a budget for training in the Cambrian region that has operated independently of the rest of Britain. The training committee is trying to open up training events to all BCA members so that may mean that an event run in Wales is open to all that in turn means that those events receive funding from BCA, that in turn means that CCC may have money to spend on different things such as access or conservation.

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We have just run a SRT workshop at Llangorse Climbing Wall with 17 cavers from 4 different clubs with 5 instructors running the day. There is another event organised for November at the same venue and we already have one person booked on.

It would be nice to see other training requests such as geology, fauna and conservation in the area. I am happy to stand as Training Officer again.

Richard Hill March 2019

At the meeting Richard Hill reported that the issue of Data Base funding in Stuart's report had been resolved.

5.f Equipment and Techniques Officers Report

VA

CCC E&T report.

Equipment and Techniques Officer 2019 Report

A very quiet year, E&T wise. However resin bonded anchors continue to dominate what few discussions that have taken place. BCA E&T council have been looking at a Bolt Products twisted shaft anchor replacement. The climbing Technology straight shaft with a tang may be suitable. Especially taking into account possible removal.

Council are also carrying out investigations regarding possible resin shrinkage which may explain why there is a significant number of reported loose anchors, especially in the Yorkshire dales. Council are investigating an alternative epoxy resin. The CCC has agreed to let the DCA have approx. 40 BP hangers from our stock as they are short but I haven't yet heard any more on this.

I am happy to stand again if elected.

I'd like to thank my fellow officers for their help and support throughout the year. Vince Allkins.

Cambrian Caving Council

Equipment and Techniques Officer

14th March 2019.

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5.g Legal and Insurance Officers Report

RF

I have nothing at all to report. No inquiries or anything.

5.h Cambrian Cave Registry

Cave Registrar Report March 2019

The Registry continues to expand with some 80 more sites added in the year. Most of these are not new but have been added from references found in old caving club journals which had escaped previous attention (the Croydon, Cwmbran, Hereford, and Isca clubs, in particular - I have not been able to locate any Brynmawr journals). Only from Pembrokeshire have new sites been reported to me by my, regrettably few, correspondents.

My attention has been drawn to some of the access data being (often long) out of date (including organisations, names and phone numbers which are unlikely to correct any longer). I do not consider the Registry should cover access to this level of detail, so plan to remove it. I would suggest that the access pages on the CCC website might be revamped to cover, and even improve on, this.

I finally got around to seeking out an old, hard copy of the Registry deposited on a shelf in Earth Sciences library reached via a labyrinth of corridors hidden behind the public display spaces in the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff. A brief view confirmed that most of what is online for caves (including the access notes mentioned above) originated from it verbatim. However, I found that there were many entries devoted to mines which have not been used.

I am happy to offer to continue in this role, including adding data on mines from the old CCR in Cardiff (where still relevant), but would be happier if I were to hear from users more often...

Martin Laverty

Cambrian Caving Council Cave Registrar March 2019

5.i Website

Webmaster AGM Report 2018-19

This has been my first year as webmaster, again it has been a busy year, the CCC website has seen an increase in hits because of the Thai cave rescue and the events around Twll Du.

The website did have some issues in July 2018 as the site's disk space became full, BCA web services increased the disk space to 1.5gb and this resolved the issue, we are currently using just over 600mb of the disk space.

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My intention is to launch a new webpage so for this year all I have done is update the page where I can and have made some tweaks by adding a calendar, thumb nails for the newsletters to make the page look more appealing, updated the page as and when required with news and events. I would like to raise concerns over the security of the site, I think the committee should consider finding a more secure site to host both the webpage and email services as we appear to have been directly targeted with malicious emails during the last 12 months, there has also been an issue with our ability to send emails via servers with enhanced security as they think the email is junk, I think we should seriously consider having more control over the site and using a modern service provider which will future proof us. As I have stated in my newsletter editors report ideally I would like to cover one role going forward so I can focus my efforts more, I am happy to continue as webmaster as I would like to complete the work on a new website, also if anyone else would like to put themselves forward for the role and the committee selects them I will ensure the handover is completed promptly to ensure continuity.

Nick De-Gare Pitt CCC Webmaster

5.j Newsletter Editor

Newsletter Editor's AGM Report 2018-19

This has been my first year as newsletter editor and it has been quite a busy year with the events that unfolded around Twll Du, these events probably took up the most page space for the newsletters produced in the last 12 months.

I have published 3 quite lengthy newsletters since March 2018 and there were some delays on my part but they were also down to constantly changing developments around Twll Du.

Looking back at previous editors reports they had similar issues to me, this being the lack of articles to publish and relying on a few individuals for articles. Without articles informative newsletters will be hard to put together so I would urge individuals and clubs to send in information for the forthcoming newsletters.

I'd like to thank everyone who has contacted me with articles and information to share over the last year, please continue the good work and keep them coming.

I was also selected to cover as the CCC webmaster and ideally I would like to only cover one role so if anyone is keen to take over the role as editor I will be

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happy to pass the baton over and to assist if necessary as covering both roles is not enabling me to give the focus each role deserves.

Nick De-Gare Pitt
CCC Newsletter Editor

6. Other Cambrian Representative Reports

6.a FODCCAG

MFB

No report.

6.b Welsh Mines Society

No report

6.c NWCRO

No report

6.d SMWCRT

Dan Thorne, not present but submitted the following report.

SMWCRT Report for 2018

2018 saw SMWCRT involved in 6 incidents, a decrease on last year.

Date Location Details

21/02/18 Porth yr Ogor Trapped - A youngster from Plas Pencelli Outdoor Education Centre had become trapped by his knee in an enlarged limestone joint. Staff had attempted to release him for approximately 2 hours before the Team were called. He was warmed, given some Entonox and lubrication was applied to the knee. His weight was lifted off his leg and the knee eased out. He walked out of the cave with assistance. 14 members were involved.

10/03/18 Agen Allwedd Overdue – Group of 4 males and 1 female were undertaking a Outer Circle trip. However on the return journey 1 member was unable to negotiate a squeeze in the Coal Cellar. The whole party had to return the long way round so they were overdue. The party exited the cave as the first SMWCRT members arrived at Whitewalls. 22 members were involved or on standby.

04/07/18

&

05/07/18

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Assist BCRC for Thailand

Rescue

Communications equipment (Cave Link and France Phone) were transported to Heathrow from Penwyllt. It included resourcing in order to transport personnel quickly to Heathrow to meet flight deadlines.

6 members were involved.

07/07/18 Assist BCRC for Thailand

Rescue

Diving masks were collected from Cardiff and driven to Heathrow by a Team member for transport to Thailand by Thai Airways. A police escort was provided in order to meet the deadline for the flight departure. 5 members were involved.

07/08/18 Dog fallen into a ravine -

Pistyll Rhaeadr

Call came directly from Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service. about a dog reported to be 30ft down a steep gully on a narrow ledge with a further 100ft below of possible fall height in the region of the Pistyll Rhaeadr waterfall. Two local Wardens were available and made their way to the scene, North East Wales Search And Rescue Team (NEWSAR) were also contacted as the call out was in their area. The location was several hours from their nearest support at the point of contact and it was agreed they would be on standby should we need their support. A request for equipment was made to Midlands Cave Rescue Organisation (MCRO) and two of their members and a further joint Team member were called to assist. Once on site a quick assessment of the options for a rescue were carried out and a rope and rescuer were lowered to the dog's location. The dog (a large working collie) was packaged up in a 'dumpy' bag & hauled to safety. 3 SMWCRT and 2 MCRO members involved.

16/09/18

&

18/09/18

Black Mountain Sheep at bottom of shaft in shake hole – On the first date the weather was too atrocious (thick fog and rain) and the sheep couldn't be seen or heard. On the second date the weather had slightly improved, the shake hole could be located and the sheep found. It was hauled to safety, checked over by 2 Team members who are sheep farmers, fed & released away from the shake hole.

Once again there have been several requests for members of the Team to attend events or

give a talk. There have been frequent communications from BCRC, MREW and other organisations with whom we have links. The Thailand rescue generated huge numbers of

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phone calls and email requests from media sources which were fielded to BCRC by those members who received them.

6.e OFD

No Report

6.f DYOCAP

No report

6.g PDCMG

No report.

6.h MLCMAC

No report

6.i Cave Fest

Jamie Larke reported at the meeting.

The Cave Fest organisers thanked CCC for its support over the last year and were pleased to report that the event was building up nicely. They were encouraging local involvement in the events with other facilities on offer, e.g. Climbing Towers.

Leadership was becoming an issue, more cave leaders were needed, with a possibility of 200/300 attendees at the next event.

There followed a brief discussion on Grants, awarding bodies and their requirements.

7. BCA Matters

SF

BRITISH CAVING ASSOCIATION

I attended BCA council meetings in April and October 2018 at Alvechurch and their AGM in June in the Forest of Dean. I also had a liaison meeting with the then BCA chairman Andy Eavis just prior. Allan Richardson has attended the January 2019 council meeting.

The 2017 BCA AGM voted near unanimously to delete the “respecting landowner’s wishes” phrase from its constitution. This went to a ballot of BCA members to be ratified, with 82% of club and individual cavers who voted

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endorsing the change. The relevant clause has now been re-cast as “4.6. Where caving bodies have control of access delegated to them by the owners, such access should be obtained and granted as freely as possible for all responsible cavers, within the terms of those agreements. When obliged to make new agreements, the appropriate body should endeavour to ensure that this freedom is maintained or improved”.

At the January 2018 BCA Council meeting, the Council adopted a policy statement that “The British Caving Association holds the opinion that the CRoW Act already permits access for recreational caving”. This policy was discussed and voted on at the AGM and endorsed near unanimously.

BCA has left its Legal Officer role unfilled after Bob Mehew’s recent resignation. Robin Weare has handed over as acting treasurer to Howard Jones and the post is up for election in June. Andy Eavis has retired and been replaced as chairman by Les Williams. Jane Allen has resigned as convenor of the Publications and Information committee and been replaced by Les Williams until the next AGM. Robin Weare has become acting secretary following the retirement of Nick Williams. Matt Ewles, the present secretary of CNCC, has announced his intention on ukCaving to stand for BCA secretary aiming to bring about more fundamental changes to the organisation's methods and direction of travel.

BCA’s CROW Working Group is now headed up by David Rose although Tim Allen is still very much involved. I accompanied the group to a meeting in Manchester on a November Monday at the British Mountaineering Council’s HQ to discuss common ground and mutual assistance potential with senior BMC staff. The BCA group is now focusing more on England than Wales, given that outdoors access is a devolved public policy matter.

I have lost track of what is happening to training. There have been threats of resignations, possibly actual resignations, the software company supposed to be contracted by BCA to provide an online trainee management system went bust - but without any BCA money being lost, and continuing confusion and conflict between the sport caver and caving instructor/leader training arms of BCA’s training machine – as seen from my perspective.

The BCA website is still very unattractive and confusing to navigate. The BCA website still does not direct new inquiries from potential recruits to the NewToCaving website. Their email services that we rely on suffered outages and repudiation by some commercial ISPs for reasons of security concerns. Their FTP system did not work for me. Our webmaster Nick De-Gare Pitt has more to say on this in his report for discussion at the AGM.

8. Election of Officers

Chairman	Martyn Farr	Prop AR 2 nd SF	elected
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Secretary	Allan Richardson	Prop MF 2 nd SF	elected
Treasurer	Mary Rogers	Prop MF 2 nd MLR	elected
Conservation elected	Stuart France	Prop MF 2 nd RF	
Training	Richard Hill	Prop SM 2 nd IW	elected
Equipment	Vince Allkins	Prop SF 2 nd RH	elected
Legal & Insurance	Roy Fellows	Prop AR 2 nd NM	elected
Registry	Martin Laverty	Prop MR 2 nd NP	elected
Website	Nick de Gare Pitt	Prop AR 2 nd SF	elected
Newsletter Editor	“	Prop MF 2 nd SF	elected

Guest Editors for the Newsletter are Jamie Larke, Nick de Gare Pitt & Stuart France

9 Any Other Business

a) Ratification of the proposal that Ogof Capel control is passed from CCC to MLCMAC, this is already in progress. Party size will be increased to 4 including leader.

Prop SM 2nd AR passed

b) Mary Rogers attended the 25th November 2018 meeting of the PDCMG. She felt that the meeting was positive in its outlook. A proposal was passed at the above meeting to convene an EGM in January or February 2019, to re-open the 2009 decision against adopting the Drws Cefn cave entrance for access into Ogof Draenen. MR noted this action has not been carried out. SM said the responsibility for organising the EGM lay with Chris Seal not herself.

10 Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed to hold next year's AGM in North Wales on the 15/3/2020 at 1300, at a venue to be decided upon.