

# CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL CYNGOR OGEFEYDD CYMREIG

Affiliated to the British Caving Association

## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Betws-y-Coed Memorial Hall 15<sup>th</sup> March 2020

### Present

Martyn Farr (MF)	Chairman	*	CDG
Allan Richardson (AR)	Secretary	*	SWCC
Roy Fellows (RF)	Legal/Insurance	*	CMT
Stuart France (SF)	Access/Conservation	*	CSS
Steve Holding (SH)		*	SMT
Richard Hill (RH)	Training Officer	*	Gagendor
Mary Rogers (MR)		*	Garimpeiros
Gethin Thomas (GT)		*	NWCRO
John Sheehy (JS)		*	Gwent
Vince Allkins (VA)			SWCC
Ian Adams (IA)			UCET
Mike Leahy (ML)		*	UCET
Olly Burrows (OB)		*	PUG
Ron Clays (RC)			PUG

\* Club representatives. The meeting was quorate with 11 out of 50 member Clubs/Organisations present.

### 1. Chairperson's Opening Remarks

The Chairman welcomed everyone to Betws-y-Coed once again, on a wet weekend with the Corona crisis building up. He also thanked the organisers of the Cwmorthin trip the previous day.

### 2. Apologies for Absence

#### AR

Apologies for absence were received from, John Hine (WMS), Martin Laverty (CCC Registry), Dan Thorne (SMWCRT), Steve Holding, PDCMG & DYOCAG

### 3a. Minutes of the 2019 AGM

MF opened a discussion on the minutes of the 2019 AGM.

SH pointed out that SCMC should be SC&MC

The Minutes were voted on and accepted as an accurate record, subject to the above correction. Prop SH, 2<sup>nd</sup> RH, passed nem con

### 3b. Matters arising from 2019 minutes

Request from SF that CMT and MLCMAC should appear in the "reports from other groups" on the Agenda

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## 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 work over the past year. I have been Chairman now since 2014 and last year I commented to the effect that our world was becoming increasingly complex, and it certainly has.

Major changes are afoot within NRW for example, who amazingly among other things have withdrawn from the Mynydd Llangattock and OFD Management committees. The situation at Ogof Draenen quietly rolls on and while we now understand our relationship with CaDW more clearly, it is less certain what will be settled on the subject of multiple entrances to the system, however we are optimistic that some form of settlement will be reached in the near future. The PDCMG are at least talking about the talking.

We continue in the Cambrian to press for cavers interests at every opportunity. As everyone is aware, our numbers have declined significantly over the past decades, and Cave Fest has been a bold initiative to raise the profile of our activities and recruit new younger blood. Cave Fest 2019 held in Crickhowell was a very successful event. Quite what the future holds for this is less certain.

The issue, which has been a priority on our agenda for the past years, has been CRoW and the way in which it impacts on cavers throughout the UK. The breaking news from a meeting a few days ago, is that the BCA has decided to mount a legal challenge to the Welsh Governments stance on CRoW, Stuart will comment on this under his report.

Everywhere we look there are issues that require reflection and attention. The role of the Cambrian Caving Council remains as important as ever. The Corona Virus is obviously going to affect us massively over the coming year or years, it's a matter of watching this space to see what will happen.

Martyn Farr March 2020

### 5.b Secretary's Report

#### Secretary's Report to the 2020 AGM

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It has been a quiet year, mostly answering queries from various organisations and individuals. The main activity has been a long running discussion with Sport Wales about our status. The background is that Sport Wales has been supporting caving in Wales over a period of many years, though recently this has reduced to a small yearly grant to Cambrian Caving Council, for which - up until this year - the only requirements to access this money was to submit our AGM minutes and accounts.

This year it changed, Sport Wales started asking for details of how we are supervising young people in caving, to the extent that they wanted someone from each member club to be Level One Safeguarding qualified, in the following years the level of qualification would be increased. They also wanted the Cambrian Caving Council to 'police' its member clubs concerning their implementation of Sport Wales' new safeguarding policy.

Whilst nobody would condone any abuse of children or vulnerable people, we felt that we were unable to become a supervisory body, as apart from anything else our Constitution does not allow it. Initially it was pointed out to Sport Wales that, as a part of BCA, CCC is also signed up to the BCA Child Protection Policy, which we thought was enough. The BCA's Child Protection Officer was consulted too, and offered, to get involved, but all to no avail.

This difference in views resulted in a number of amicable phone discussions with various Sport Wales officials where I pointed out that we were not like a football club, for example, which would have junior teams with coaches etc. This also cut no ice, and so CCC executive decided that we should disaffiliate from Sport Wales. As I said our discussions were amicable, but we simply did not fit into their "one size fits all" policy. Should our or even their safeguarding position change, the door has been left open for us to get involved again with Sport Wales.

I am willing to stand again for the post of Secretary.

R. Allan Richardson

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## 5.c Treasurer's Report

### Treasurers Report (Year ending 31/12/2019).

Treasurers Report (Year ending 31/12/2019)

Income	£	Expenditure	
BCA Grant 2018 (received in 2019)	588.00	Travel	15.20
BCA Grant 2019	639.38	Training Events	177.95
Total Income	1227.38	Room Hire	65.00
Less Expenditure	-409.69	Conservation & Access	151.54
Surplus for the year	817.69	Total Expenditure	409.69
<b>Balance Sheet</b>		<b>Assets represented by:</b>	
Current account at 31/12/2018	5394.98		
Petty cash at 31/12/2018	0.00	Barclays Current Account	6212.67
Add surplus for the year 2019	817.69	Petty cash at 31/12/2019	0.00
Reserves at 31/12/2019	6212.67	Total	6212.67

Apparently a quiet year caving as no projects requested funding from Cambrian, which seems disappointing but may be a sign of the times. The end of year accounts, show an increase in funds of £817.69 last year. The funds held by the council stand at £6212.67 as at 1/1/2020.

It is probably fortuitous that demands on me have been few due to my limited I.T. skills, which will probably continue. In view of this I would not mind if someone else is interested in taking over my role, but I will be willing to stand again if necessary.

Mary Rogers

MR pointed out that the Cambrian Officers should be claiming for their expenses including phone calls.

MR also pointed out that we are not spending any money and nothing appeared to be happening, BCA has said it will pay for a wide range of things to do with caving.

SF replied that both Derbyshire and Mendip have claimed several thousand pounds each to fund various access issues. SF said that the only expensive thing we claimed for in recent years was the chain ladders in Ogof Draenen. SF went on to say that the door is open for people who want to do projects, which are Conservation or Access related there is money available.

RF thought that we should show a "surplus" as opposed to a "profit". MR and IA were happy with this.

### 5.d Access and Conservation officers report

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## CCC CONSERVATION & ACCESS OFFICER'S REPORT FOR MARCH 2019 TO FEBRUARY 2020

### WELSH GOVERNMENT REFUSES TO DISCUSS CROW CAVING

The Welsh Government's 2017 public consultation on improving recreational access to the outdoors (and many other matters) rekindled their 2015 consultation, which had no outcomes. Cambrian's formal response to the 2017 consultation, with its covering letter, are at: <http://cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk/wg/2017publicconsultation.pdf>  
<http://cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk/wg/consultationresponse.pdf>  
<http://cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk/wg/nrwletter-170910.pdf>

After practically killing it all off in autumn 2018, the Deputy Minister for the Environment, Hannah Blythyn AM, surprised everyone on 4th April 2019 with a Cabinet Statement stating that land access reforms to enhance leisure access in Wales would go ahead after all: <http://cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk/wg/cabinetstatement-190404.pdf>

The access reform plans are being developed by an Access Reform Advisory Group (ARAG) comprising WG and NRW staff, Welsh Local Government Association, Wales Rights of Way Managers Working Group, National Park and AONB representatives. All these people work in public sector bodies. NRW is represented on ARAG, by Jont Bulbeck, their Manager for Recreation, Access, Communities and Strategic Funding who has made his views on "CROW Caving" particularly plain numerous times in meetings I have attended. No sports bodies or landowners or activity providers or educationalists are represented on ARAG. Scant information about progress with the reform programme and ARAG's minutes are available at: <https://gov.wales/access-reform-programme>

After drilling down a couple of levels from this page you will find a summary for the January 2020 meeting where the decision to discard caving was taken:  
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-02/access-reform-programme-steering-group-meeting-january-22.pdf>

I met the Deputy Minister and put questions and our needs to her at the National Access Forum for Wales (NAFW), which she attended in April 2019 coinciding with the Cabinet Statement giving the green light. I followed up with a letter to the Deputy Minister in May 2019 setting out our wishes again. My letter and her reply are at: <http://cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk/wg/ministerletter-190423.pdf>  
<http://cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk/wg/ministerreply-190513.pdf>

The recreational access reform agenda has since been split into three Policy Areas:  
P1) Uncontroversial matters like dog control in the outdoors and throwing litter out of cars  
P2) Reforms that need further work and consultation delegated to three Expert Groups which will report back by the end of 2020 and deliver final recommendations by mid-2021.

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P3) Difficult reforms that may take years to resolve. This concerns only the shared access to rivers and open water which is being discussed by a NAFW sub-group, not any Expert Group.

Policy Area 2 is being handed down to three new Expert Groups to recommend any changes: A1) Widening the usage of Open Access / CRoW Land  
A2) Greater flexibility with the use of public paths on CRoW and non-CRoW land  
A3) Communicating the new access rights and information to the public.

I was told by the WG's lead officer when they presented a progress report at the September 2019 NAFW meeting that cave access would fall into P2 and so it would be discussed by the Expert Group for A1. Therefore I sent in the application form to join EG1, and quite some time went into formulating this, and then I was turned down by WG/ARAG. Here is my EG application, the WG refusal letter - but with an invitation to contribute in a limited way, and my follow up letter to the WG agreeing to participate in EG1 when the topic of caving came up.

<http://cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk/wg/expertgroupapplication.doc>

<http://cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk/wg/wgletter-191218.pdf>

<http://cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk/wg/expertgroupfollowupletter.pdf>

To be fair, only three seats were available on each Expert Group for sports representatives. The chosen few are cycling and horse riding, which have representatives on all three EGs, and in the case of horse riding this is by the same person three times over. The Ramblers are represented only on EG2 and EG3 by different people. BMC (mountaineering) is represented on EG1 only. These sports representatives are supposed to represent sports other than their own, but clearly that is not happening. I do not have any EG minutes and they are not on the WG website. Chosen groups like The Ramblers and BMC do have copies but are unsure if they "are allowed by WG" to disclose them to other sports bodies like ourselves. So I know nothing about the inner workings of the Expert Groups nor what has been discussed or decided.

It appears that NRW got caving pushed off the access reform table at the ARAG meeting on 22nd January 2020. The reason given to me centres on NRW's semantic objection to "CROW Caving" which is simply their own opinion that caving is not an open-air recreation. I was notified of this outcome a month later in a WG letter sent by email at 2pm on 24th February 2020. This was 2 hours after a meeting of the Outdoor Alliance had finished that day. See:

<http://cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk/wg/wgletter-200224.pdf>

As it happens, NRW is represented in the Outdoor Alliance by Alison Roberts, their Specialist Adviser for Responsible Recreation. The hot topic currently on OA is, of course, the WG access reform programme. All those attending its last meeting were sports body representatives.

**NATURAL RESOURCES WALES (NRW)**



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NRW convenes three meetings per year of its National Access Forum for Wales (NAFW).

I attended all of them in 2019. They usually take place in Bangor, Builth Wells and Cardiff in March, July and November respectively but they were shuffled in 2019 also with the first meeting postponed to April to allow the Deputy Minister to attend and announce the WG Access Reform Programme, as noted above, which has since dominated the NAFW meetings. Following the recent WG rejection letter, see WG item above, I decided not to attend the March 2020 NAFW meeting in Bangor and so I welcome our 2020 AGM's views on how to proceed.

NRW's interest in caving, or at least close contact, seems to have ended with an organisational restructure resulting in smaller staff and budgets. OFD cave management, at an executive level, has been handed over to SWCC who have set up a new advisory group in which a few other clubs are represented. Allan Richardson attends these meetings on behalf of CCC.

The Mynydd Llangatock cave management committee is no longer meeting in its usual format which was chaired by NRW staff and took place in their Abergavenny offices. There was only one meeting in 2019 and it was held at Whitewalls where only cavers who had been part of the former MLCMAC were present. A new group is being formed which is independent of NRW. Cavers with an active caving interest in Llangatock who are willing and able to contribute may apply. Potential ways forward are in discussion, hoping to keep things informal. I am a full caving member of this group rather than attending it to represent CCC or any club.

## **CAVE ACCESS LTD**

The CAL directors remain the same people: Dave Tyson, Roy Fellows and myself. It has been a quiet year with no surprise events. We are disappointed that the number of people registering with the CAL scheme to access the WG and NRW mines legally has fallen, as have the trip reports. Registration and filing of reports are done by email. Details are at: <http://caveaccess.co.uk/>

We have made no progress with the Draethen Lead Mines in 2019. NRW will simply not respond to emails or other approaches about approving caver access at their local officer level which is a requirement of the CAL scheme for each mine. I last wrote to them in mid-February and have been assured this time by someone higher up the organisation that I will get a reply.

I can see no valid reason why cavers cannot have seasonal access to the Draethen mines, say from May to October, as this will not harm the hibernating bats that seem so to concern NRW staff locally. In the summer the bats roost at Ruperra Castle nearby.

I am sorry to say that a certain club in South Wales seems to be engaged in a vendetta against another South Wales club. Club X is long-established while Club Y is fairly new. It attracted some of Club X's members, including their chairman. I am

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mentioning this here because Club X made a written complaint to NRW about Club Y visiting the Draethen mines for which, as explained above, there is no access permission in place despite much effort to get it in place.

Club X followed that up with a Freedom of Information Act request to NRW asking NRW to explain what investigation they did into Club Y and any action taken. Club X has also made a series of complaints concerning Club Y to us, to Costain plc, BCA and the local cave rescue team. One of Club X's members posted defamatory material on the ukCaving forum concerning a member of Club Y at the odd time of lunchtime on Christmas Day 2019. Even stranger, this was soon "liked" by another activist in Club X unoccupied with seasonal festivities. The offensive posting, and later the whole thread, were removed by the UKCaving moderators and the author of this material has been barred from making direct forum postings.

Whilst I am not going to condone unauthorised mine access, I worry that the motive of Club X, viewed in the context of their complaint spectrum, may be more to damage Club Y than to protect the natural world. I was also not pleased to find myself criticized too in that Christmas posting (along with the CCC chairman) for joining Club Y which we did in order to provide broader experience and leadership to a relatively new and expanding club. This imbroglio has now reached the point where I feel CCC should write to Club X to request that they cease and desist from commentary on Club Y and its members.

I apologise to my colleagues for including this item within the CAL section, but the link with Draethen lead mines makes it as convenient a place as any to air this unseemly matter.

## **A465 DUALLING OF THE CLYDACH GORGE**

Costain have gone rather quiet of late. All I have heard from Jeff Mapps, their local PR officer, is that "Entrances and access to the caves [in the Clydach Gorge] will be continue to be closed for the foreseeable future. This is to ensure the safety of members of the public as critical work in the immediate vicinity of the caves progresses. I will email to advise in advance of when they are again open for use."

The first weekend closure of 2020 is from 28th February to 2nd March as the rate of progress has fallen away. This road works 'go-slow' follows a legal dispute between Costain and the Welsh Government as to where blame lies for the budget over-run and timescale slippage. It seems to have been settled by Costain paying the bill and the Welsh Government accepting delayed completion, hence the rarity now of expensive weekend, overnight working and traffic- light-managed single lanes in operation on some weekdays which cause long tail-backs.

WG says on its website that the completion date is now end-2020 while a December 2019 press statement by Costain concerning its falling share price and poor progress with various projects suggested mid-2021. So do not expect any of the closed caves to re-open any time soon.



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## **OGOF GOFAN AND CASTLEMARTIN RANGE WEST**

I have kept communications active and relations cordial for another year between CCC and the landowners here (DIO/MOD) plus the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park staff and NRW local staff. The present access scheme where covers apply through me for a one-day permit covering up to four people for the exclusive use of Ogof Gofan is working reasonably well. Please do not abuse this and thus stretch the landowner's goodwill by arranging several back- to-back trips involving multiple groups of 4 different people all on the same day. The cave is small, delicate and vulnerable so the group size limit is there for good reasons.

I would also ask Ogof Gofan visitors to turn up on the actual day that they booked and is shown on their permit, not the weekend before or after if the weather isn't perfect as someone else might have booked it then which would lead to a clash and the potential over-use of the cave.

Anyone wanting to go exploring for new caves on the Range West coastal margin area can attend Range Briefing meetings as listed in our December newsletter. Permits are personal and everyone in any group must have their own. It does not include taking your dog with you or just going onto Range West for beach activities or having a picnic etc. All terms and conditions are explained at the briefing meetings along with the necessity not to touch any old ordnance found on the ground as it might explode and kill you, this being the main part of the ranges used for live firing of anything from bullets to anti-tank weapons.

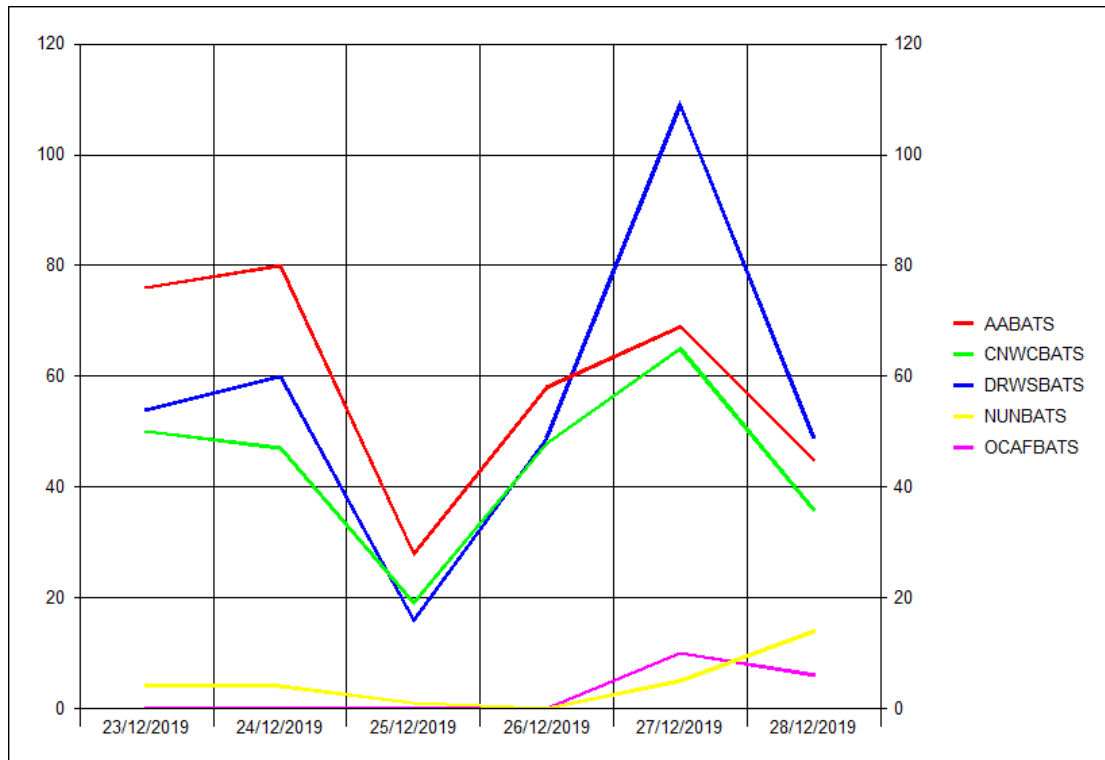
## **OGOF DRAENEN**

The EGM called for at the biannual meeting in November 2018 to review the PDCMG's entrance policy has still not taken place nor is there any date for one. I have heard that some private meetings have taken place between various individuals to try to draft a motion to be debated at such a meeting. Progress can only be described as glacial.

Meanwhile my caver and bat loggers, also agreed in November 2018, have produced interesting data to inform future entrance discussions, particularly when compared to similar experiments being run in parallel at Llangattock. Christmas Day was a bright cold day in the middle of an otherwise damp and mild period. The chart shows that all the bats across all five cave entrances did not fancy the cold Christmas Day weather and so remained inside their respective caves.

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I am willing to stand again in this role again, but as I said a year ago, if there is anyone willing and able to do this job, or even a part of it, then I would be happy to discuss with you. It does require going to some mid-week meetings across Wales and so it suits someone whose job or lifestyle takes them around Wales anyway.

Stuart France

SH asked about the change in Insurance cover, SF replied that BCA member insurance was now Ten Million Pounds.

## 5.e Training Officers Report

### CCC Training Officer Report 2019-2020

This year there have been a lot of conversations at Training Committee level. I have attended more meetings this year than the last 5 put together. There has been no effect on what is happening in Wales so far, but with the change in funding from Sports Wales it is good that we are involved with things at BCA level.

There has been only one SRT workshop this year just because of timings (one the weekend before 2019 CCC AGM and one the weekend after this 2020 AGM). The one that ran in November 2019 was very oversubscribed and we had several CICs and trainee CICs giving their time to run the day at Langorse Wall. South Wales has also

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seen Cave Surveying workshops happening and these have been well supported too. Although I am aware of them, Allan has helped set them up with Cave Surveying Group members.

If anyone has training needs please get in touch. I am happy to stand again.

Thanks  
Rich Hill

## **5.f Equipment and Techniques Officers Report**

It has been a very quiet year regarding Equipment and Techniques issues. There have been no reported problems regarding loose or defective anchors this year. The Columns pitch in OFD has now been bolted with BP twist anchors, but of course this pitch is only accessible on Columns Open Days.

CCC sent 30 of our BP anchors to DCA as their stock levels were low and these were needed for immediate use. We still have enough left here at the moment for routine purposes in Wales.

There continues to be a supply problem for the IC anchors in all but the CNCC area. I am not sure who are approved installers for the IC anchor outside the CNCC area either. There will be an installer course for the BP type of anchor in the Spring of 2020 to train up new approved installers for Wales. This event is planned to be at the South Wales Caving Club in May.

I am happy to continue in the role as the Equipment and Techniques Officer if elected.

Vince Allkins

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## 5.g Legal and Insurance Officers Report

There have been no matters for me to deal with during the past year. I am happy to stand again in this role.

Roy Fellows

## 5.h Cambrian Cave Registry

### Cave Registrar Report March 2020

I am happy to continue as Cave Registrar should no one else be proffered and preferred. My report on the year follows, and I hope you will accept my apologies for my not planning to present it to the AGM in person. I am very willing to correspond with anybody about the report or the Registry in general.

"

I have little to report on for the Cambrian Cave Registry over the past year over what I have contributed to Wales Underground. A number of sites have been added (mainly near the coast), some entries corrected, and one site significantly updated after a delay - which I hope will not set a precedent - of some fifteen years.

There is a new overlay available on the online map, which suggests the outcrop of limestone rather better than the conventional geological maps (it is based on the Parent Material Carbonate Content classification for soils, so represents lithology rather than stratigraphy). I have added more line surveys to the individual site entries over the year, and plan to add these combined as a new layer to the main map. There are also more literature references for sites (the formatting of which is something I plan to tidy up).

I would like to thank those correspondents who alerted me to new sites over the year, or otherwise helped to keep me and the CCR up to date. I am always open to your news and views, and look forward to more...

Martin Laverty

[registrar@cambridgivingcouncil.org.uk](mailto:registrar@cambridgivingcouncil.org.uk)

## 5.i Website

Webmaster AGM Report 2020

Nick also left the post of CCC webmaster. We did not co-opt anyone so I took it on temporarily. The old website had become somewhat dated and it suffered from too many small pieces breaking up the flow. This was no fault of the people maintaining it but more the series of random items they were presented with as updates. So I developed a new modern-looking website which aims to set out CCC's purpose and aims more clearly, plus vital information for cavers and non-caving readers. I have resisted having a News section as this requires fairly intense maintenance and the

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limited choice of material which could be seen as biased. However, a new Events page has been added recently which promotes mainly caving and training events in Wales that are available to all cavers. I will also write up the WG access reform saga as a further new page so as to collect up all the document links into one place.

This present website is built with Xara Web Designer Premium 10. Nobody writes websites these days in raw HTML. To maintain or extend the new CCC website with Xara is fairly easy to do even if you have never heard of Xara. This is not a leading-edge app but it does the job well enough without the need to acquire expert knowledge or invest one's time to become a guru. Anyone interested in our webmaster role can be provided with Xara and given some support and training. Please bear in mind, as with newsletter editor, this is a production job and not a means to rewrite what our executive wishes to communicate to its constituency and beyond.

**Stuart France**

## **5.j Newsletter Editor**

### **Newsletter Editor's AGM Report 2020**

Our newsletter now has a publication schedule where it appears three times per year. In 2019 we had issues in February, July and December. Nick de Gare Pitt did not stand again for the editor role at our March 2019 AGM held in Snailbeach, Shropshire. We decided not to co-opt anyone so I have put together the two subsequent editions. As editors know, it is harder to obtain stories than it is to format them as printed pages, so future contributions about Welsh caving and newsworthy photos sent as Word files and jpg images will be much appreciated.

It would be good if someone took on this newsletter production role as I would prefer to focus on Access and Conservation. Really we need someone to help who is familiar with a publishing package like Microsoft Publisher along with a photo-editing program like Photoshop Elements. Microsoft Word, although vital for preparing the text of articles and circulating drafts, is not up to the job of creating a small and attractive magazine.

I have been criticized in the past by some for publishing 'political articles' but every edition of the CCC newsletter is read by the CCC executive and obtains approval prior to its release. So any potential editor should not think this role provides a platform for any kind of crusade or partisan views as the other CCC executive members will not let that happen.

Stuart France

## **6. Other Cambrian Representative Reports**

### **6.a FODCCAG**



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## **FoDCCAG REPORT TO CCC. AGM. MARCH 2020.**

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, & 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 Wet Sink, is being investigated.

Permits for visiting FoDCCAG sites are available for BCA members from our Permit Secretary: - [permits@fodccag.org.uk](mailto:permits@fodccag.org.uk)

John Hine, Hon. Sec. FoDCCAG.

### **6.b Welsh Mines Society**

No report

### **6.c NWCRO**

#### **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

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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

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**North Wales Cave Rescue Organisation**  
**Tim Achub Ogof Gogledd Cymru**

Registered Charity No. 1052986



**Annual Report for the Cambrian Caving Council's AGM.**

**March 2020**

2019 was a fairly typical year for NWCRO. The primary incident for the year involved assisting a mine explorer to exit the Croesor-Rhosydd through trip. Transport to and from Croesor quarry entrance was provided by the local mountain rescue teams, SSSART and AMRT, in heavy rain and poor visibility and was much appreciated by attending team members.

During 2019 the team also assisted in two missing person searches and in the rescue of two lambs from some disused mineworkings.

NWCRO continues to actively engage with both BCRC and other cave rescue teams as well as the mountain rescue teams within the North Wales area, with team members attending a variety of in-house and external training events.

It is a challenging time for NWCRO with loss of various funding sources and changes in the MREW structure and the team is constantly adapting to these changes to ensure we are able to continue to provide an appropriate cave rescue support.

The NWCRO AGM and surface training day is expected to take place on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> June (venue to be confirmed). Other training events will be advertised once confirmed.

We are always seeking experienced cavers and mine explorers, whether local or active in the area, to join the team. If anyone is interested and would like to know more please contact me on [secretary@northwalescro.org.uk](mailto:secretary@northwalescro.org.uk).

Kat Hawkins  
Secretary  
North Wales Cave Rescue Organisation (NWCRO)

**6.d SMWCRT**

**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	Ogof Taf Fechan	A callout came from the Fire Service, via South Wales Police, to assist with the rescue of a dog that had become trapped in

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5/2/19	Morlais	<p>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</p>

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		<p>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



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		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.

### 6.e OFD

#### **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)

### 6.f DYOCAP

#### **Dan yr Ogof Oconservation Advisory Panel**

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Caver access to the 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 website at [dyo.org.uk](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 application 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.

Jem Rowland

## **6.g 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. I 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. It's 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.

Sue Mabbett

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## **6.h 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 Agen 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.

Adrian Fawcett

## **6.i Cave Fest**

The Crickhowell event held over the August Bank Holiday 2019 weekend was a great success and it was accompanied by hot sunny weather, which had otherwise been in short supply. Originally an initiative of the Gwent Caving Club, the event will return to Mendip in 2020 under new management. Once again it will be supported by CCC, and now too by the BCA.

Stuart France

## **6.h Cambrian Mines Trust (CMT)**

Verbal report given to meeting

CMT successfully hosted NAMHO 2019 in Mid Wales. There were 140 delegates, producing a financial surplus of £2400.

## **Cwymystwyth**

Proper signage has been installed in the last few days, the aim is to increase public awareness. The first of a series of public awareness/information panels has also been installed.

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The next phase is a clean up of the dumped rubbish in the parking area beyond the mill.

Underground there has been a problem with Freemans Adit, due to a surface collapse under a leat, this gave access to the Adit where some interesting artifacts were found. Emergency works have been carried out to install an access hatch and stabilise the collapse have ben carried out.

## **Dinas Silica Mines**

RF to make a site visit soon, he is looking at the possibility of a future NAMHO being held there.

He will also ascertain whether or not the Local Authority has acted re his complaint over access.

## **Artifacts in Mines**

Problem of removal of Artifacts and Fixed Aids from various sites, will be reported on at the next AGM.

Roy Fellows

## **7. BCA Matters**

Allan Richardson and I have shared the pleasure of attending BCA's fascinating council meetings of which there are normally four per year. One of these follows the BCA AGM which moves around the country while the other three are held in the Midlands. In 2019 the BCA AGM was held in the Yorkshire Dales and Allan attended for CCC. This proved a lively affair with motions being passed to scrap the two-house voting system in favour of a simpler and more democratic one-caver-one-vote system. This required the "house of clubs and various other bodies" voting by a majority of over 70% to abolish itself. The first count showed a majority of only 69% but then one "other body" delegate claimed he had misunderstood the motion. It was then re-counted and the 70% threshold was narrowly obtained. Unsurprisingly, the "house of cavers" voted in droves to abolish the "other bodies" house. This then went to a national ballot where it was affirmed: the whole saga is explained in detail on the BCA website.

The BCA AGM also voted for more use of the internet such as online ballots and for BCA officers to be allowed to communicate with BCA members by email. I am serious. This innovation has been blocked by one individual in a key BCA role who refused to provide the membership and email database to the BCA secretary. Council at its October 2019 meeting ordered him to hand it over and he then did not comply. The matter came back to the January 2020 Council meeting in which he was offered the choice of complying, resigning or being removed. As the first two options were

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refused, the result was his dismissal and by a clear majority. It is sad when someone who has put much time and effort into BCA has left because of an unwillingness in some quarters to accept a democratically chosen direction of travel.

Stuart France

## 8. Election of Officers

Chairman	Martyn Farr	Prop SF 2 <sup>nd</sup> VA	elected
Secretary	Allan Richardson	Prop MF 2 <sup>nd</sup> ML	elected
Treasurer	Mary Rogers	Prop AR 2 <sup>nd</sup> RH	elected
Conservation	Stuart France	Prop MF 2 <sup>nd</sup> RF	elected
Training	Richard Hill	Prop VA 2 <sup>nd</sup> SF	elected
Equipment	Vince Allkins	Prop RH 2 <sup>nd</sup> JS	elected
Legal & Insurance	Roy Fellows	Prop SH 2 <sup>nd</sup> OB	elected
Registry	Martin Laverty	Prop MR 2 <sup>nd</sup> IA	elected
Website	Stuart France		
Newsletter Editor	“		

John Sheehy co-opted to assist SF with the Website.

Roy Fellows offered to assist with the newsletter if needed.

## 9 AOB

a)SWCC has discovered a cache of 1:2500 OS maps which probably came from the late Elsie Little, and which originally belonged to the Cambrian Cave Registry, many of these are water damaged. What to do with them as the Registry doesn't want them. Proposal from the Martin Laverty to try and sell them at SWCC and donate any money raised to Rescue, the meeting was happy with this proposal.

**b)Please can all clubs/organisations inform the CCC Secretary of any Secretarial address/email changes.**

## 10 Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed to hold next year's AGM in Mid Wales on the 21/3/2021 at 1300, at a venue to be organised by Cambrian Mines Trust (Roy Fellows)  
CMT to arrange an underground trip on the previous day.