

**July 2019**

**Issue 60**

# WALES UNDERGROUND

## NEWS IN BRIEF

- ◆ **The Agen Allwedd second boulder choke collapsed during June with a loose rock coming out. Other suspect rocks have been removed but care is still needed to pass it.**
- ◆ **There is a new padlock code for the gates at the Rhilwach Slate Mine near Penmachno. Explorers wishing to access any mines managed under the agreement with the Welsh Ministers and NRW should email [permits@caveaccess.co.uk](mailto:permits@caveaccess.co.uk)**
- ◆ **The recent PDCMG summer meeting elected a new committee until 2021. No posts were contested. They need a new geology officer with an interest in the cave. An EGM is in planning for November 2019, ten years after the previous one, to review the policy on multiple entrances. A replacement for their resigned trustee has not been found and the group is now looking into forming a company so as to restructure its access agreement. A new website for the group is in preparation and expected soon.**

Cambrian Caving Council Newsletter

Cylchlythr y Cyngor Ogofa Cymreig

## WELSH GOVERNMENT SAYS YES TO OUTDOOR ACCESS REFORMS

After years of stop-start consultations on land access reforms to expand the opportunities for outdoor recreation in Wales, and then shelving everything yet again last autumn, the Welsh Government Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government, Hannah Blythyn AM, has announced in April that leisure access rights will be extended after all. The scheme was given the green light at the National Access Forum for Wales (NAFW) meeting in Bangor on 4th April 2019. A written statement was released simultaneously on the Welsh Government website at:

<https://gov.wales/written-statement-government-response-taking-forward-wales-sustainable-management-natural-resources>

John Griffiths, the Minister responsible back in 2014, announced a Green Paper which never appeared. Instead there was a consultation whose results the late Carl Sargeant kicked into the long grass for ‘future Welsh Ministers to consider’. In 2017 Leslie Griffiths announced another public consultation. In 2018, when presenting its results, Hannah Blythyn said that ‘now was not the right time for access reforms’. But it seems that 2019 is. The importance of recreation in the Welsh economy coupled to fears of Brexit fall-out have now perhaps sharpened the focus.

The expansion of CROW Access Land is set to include coast and cliffs plus a new category of shared paths for walkers, cyclists and equestrians—which they are all jointly supporting. River interests (paddlers and fishing) have been given 18 months to agree on shared use by consent otherwise a statutory system to manage river spaces may be developed by the government.

Caving is in the unusual situation of not being explicitly excluded by the CROW Act (as horse riding and swimming are) nor by the Law of Property Act which provides for recreation on Urban Commons such as Mynydd Llangattock by any means except a ‘vehicle’ in the broadest sense.

Cambrian was invited to write to the Deputy Minister to set out our position and goals for improved or clearer statutory access to caves, and we have received an encouraging reply. These letters are linked below. The next stage will be for us to set out clearly the benefits of placing caving unambiguously within the scope of future access provisions and to prepare an impact assessment for the Expert Group that will be shaping the Welsh Government’s thinking.

<http://cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk/wg/ministerletter-190423.pdf>

<http://cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk/wg/ministerreply-190513.pdf>

Cambrian gave a general presentation about caving to January’s NAFW meeting where NRW continued to oppose open access for caving. Since the April announcement, NRW has claimed that WG staff support NRW’s interpretation of the law when it is quite clear from the Deputy Minister’s letter that she will not be taking sides in any legal dispute. Caving will now have to develop and present a case for better public access to caves while expecting NRW to oppose it.

## Inside this issue

- |                                       |          |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Castlemartin Range West</b>        | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Glamorgan Heritage Coast Caves</b> | <b>3</b> |
| <b>News from around Wales</b>         | <b>4</b> |
| <b>NAMHO Conference Report</b>        | <b>5</b> |
| <b>BCA enters a new era</b>           | <b>6</b> |

### Photo credits

Graham Christian  
Stuart France  
Martin Laverty  
Mel Davies archive

*Supported by*  
**sportwales**  
*chwaraeoncymru*

## NRW PULLS BACK FROM CAVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

NRW’s direct involvement with large cave management committees is getting uncertain. As a potential leaving gift, NRW has handed its spare Agen Allwedd padlocks and keys to the cave management committee.

A new NRW-SWCC partnership is being drawn up in which NRW will become less directly involved in the routine management of OFD. Generosity has again been the theme with NRW purchasing new OFD gates and spare parts, plus the cost of fitting them. The photo here is a new gate with a safety tether fitted on OFD1.



## Training Events

### Autumn SRT Course

The next CCC SRT workshop is planned for November 16th at the Llangorse Wall LD3 7UH starting 10am and finishing approximately 5pm. Some places are already filled but spaces are still available.



You need to be a BCA member to access this training and preferably a member of a Cambrian club too. BCA is currently reviewing its financial support for courses, but it is likely this event will be run on the same lines as the previous courses which were charged at £10 per person. Book with me.

Richard Hill, CCC Training Officer

## A465 ROAD WORKS

As the A465 Section 2 dualling project enters the final stages of construction, progress continues to be made following a relatively mild winter and good spring.

Key milestones will be reached as we progress through the year, with work continuing on the rock cut and the elevated road section between Brynmawr and the former Drum and Monkey pub, to facilitate a traffic shift later in the year and then the final reconstruction of the new Brynmawr roundabout and the access roads.

A reminder that a number of the caves remain closed for safety reasons. If in doubt please contact me on 01873 833100.

No access on foot or otherwise to reach any of the cave systems or the surrounding land is allowed within any of the road works areas. Please respect the safety closures.

Jeff Mapps, Costain plc

## Coastal Caves Feature – Castlemartin Firing Range West

To explore for new caves on Range West requires a special permit for each visit. This permit is issued by the day at the range gate house to people who have attended one of their briefing sessions to get on to the approved persons list and to become acquainted with health & safety arrangements. Approvals issued during 2019 will be valid until the end of May 2020.



There will be only one more briefing session this year on Thursday 8th August at 18.00h. You need to turn up a bit earlier to get through security. Park next to the two big tanks at the main entrance. There is no live firing in August, so with good weather likely, this is a great opportunity to go prospecting for new caves on any day in this exciting limestone sea cliff area.



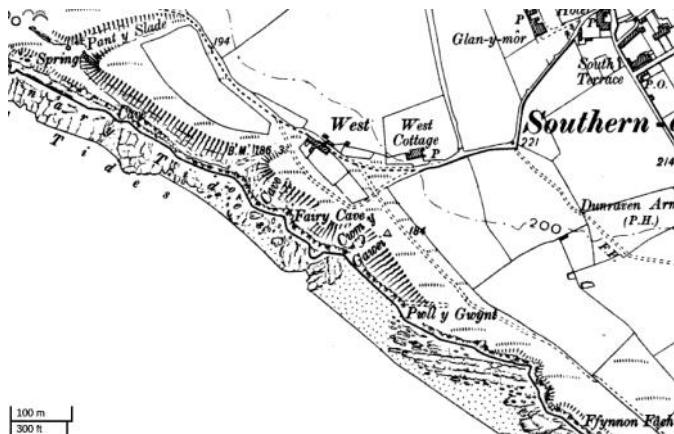
So far few people have taken advantage of the offer of range access on non-firing days, but those who did have looked at the obvious places where caves are marked on the OS map and not gone unrewarded. As is common on the Pembrokeshire Coast, the geology changes rapidly from one bay to the next, not only with the type of rock but also the orientation of beds from horizontal as seen on the right to vertical and angles in between. It is all pristine, deserted, dramatic, beautiful and unforgettable.

Stuart France, CCC Conservation & Access Officer



## Coastal Caves Feature – Glamorgan Heritage Coast Caves

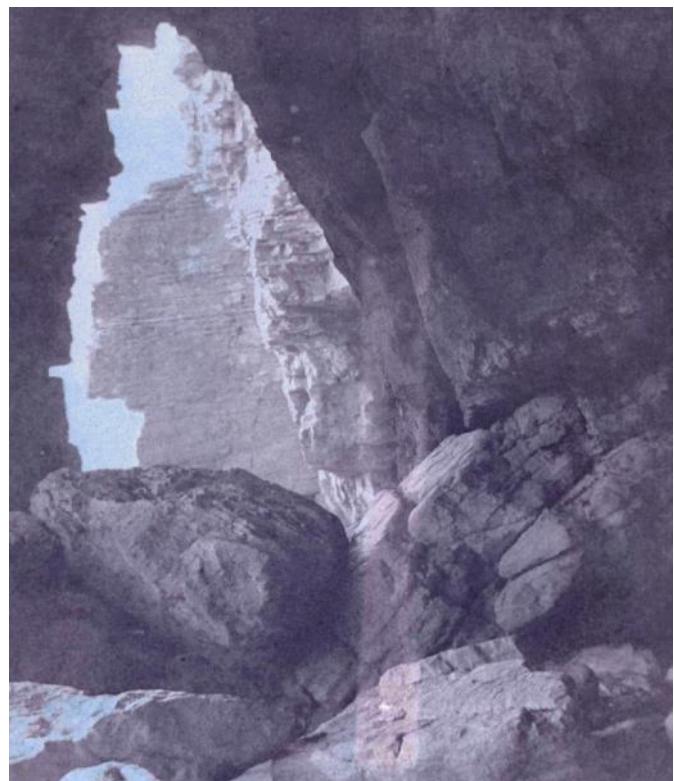
Sea caves are not often seen as being of much interest to cavers but it is odd that the Cambrian Cave Registry has only just noted three large caves, amongst others, between Ogmore-on-Sea and Southerndown. It is odd because these caves, most notably Fairy Cave and Pwll y Gwynt, were among the few caves noted by the travel writers of the first half of the nineteenth century, and even mapped at 6" to the mile by the Ordnance Survey.



Another cave which was the site of the first photograph of a cave entrance taken from inside the cave, "The Great Cave of Dunraiven" by John Dillwyn Llewelyn of Swansea in 1853, had apparently been lost to sea erosion before the mapping took place. The location of the cave has been a source of speculation but the earliest references place it clearly between Fairy Cave and Pwll y Gwynt. In the early 1840's the first Director of the Geological Survey of Great Britain, Henry De la Beche, drew a picture of a lost peninsula with a cave entrance.



Lias resting on Carboniferous Limestone, Dunraven Castle, Glamorganshire



It is captioned as being at Dunraven Castle but is this not "The Cave", punching through a promontory of which only a low stack, known as "The Castle" to climbers, now remains? The position of a cave developed on a fine example of angular unconformity, with "Lias resting on Carboniferous Limestone", matches the photo, and the promontory shown is not Twyn-y-Wych (which is under Dunraven Castle).

In September 1908, Pwll y Gwynt, Smuggler's Cave featured in the papers when two young women set out to explore it but never returned. See:

[https://newspapers.library.wales/  
view/3379109/3379113/94/](https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3379109/3379113/94/)

This, perhaps, shows why these caves are so little known: they are only accessible for a few hours at the lowest of tides.

Martin Laverty, CCC Registrar

## Coastal Caves Feature – Ogef Gofan

Access to Ogef Gofan is still arranged through Cambrian Caving Council. This is a different system to Range West as described in the article on the opposite page. You don't need to attend any meetings. Just contact me by email with some prospective dates and I will put them to the military staff. Provided there is no firing or a booking clash then you will get a PDF permit by email for exclusive cave access for the chosen day for up to four people.

Stuart France, CCC Conservation & Access Officer



## River Alyn sink on the move again

UCET reports significant on-going developments since April:



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zMzFG\\_1jK7k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zMzFG_1jK7k)

## Whitewalls extension

The Chelsea Spelaeological Society's property portfolio has grown with the purchase of the Old Daren Sunday School from the West Midlands Cave Exploration Group. This is the small building on the opposite side of the unsurfaced road outside Whitewalls which is the CSS club cottage.

Members have been rebuilding it during recent months, dismantling the old roof and fitting a new roof during what has proved the wettest June for many years. Further delays arose due to nesting birds. The new roof is now largely in place and these photos show the empty shell and inside room before construction got underway. Whitewalls is available as usual. Bookings are made at <http://chelseaspelaeo.org/bookings.htm>



## New Cambrian website launched

A new website has been developed to present the work and role of the council in a clearer way than ever before. This is necessary given the political exigencies set out on the cover page of this issue. Whilst this website is still a work-in-progress, there is now enough page content to switch over to using it.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Cambrian Caving Council website. It features a blue header with the site name and a navigation menu. Below the header are several images related to caving and mining, with a caption below them. At the bottom of the page is a footer with copyright information.

Representing underground exploration across Wales, The Forest of Dean and The Marches

The Council is the national association for caving in Wales, the Forest of Dean and the Marches for individual cavers, caving clubs and similar organisations. It represents regional and wider caving interests within the United Kingdom through the British Caving Association whilst maintaining its position as an independent body. The Council is recognized and supported by Sport Wales as the representative body for caving in Wales.

The Council also represents mine explorers and mine history organisations. Many cavers share an interest in heritage mines and the industrial archaeology of Wales, and caving is often another interest of mine explorers.

Geology takes no account of national borders. So the Council's area covers parts of England that border on Wales where the rocks found on both sides of the border are effectively parts of the same structural group.

© Cambrian Caving Council 2019

The new site includes material aimed at caver and club audiences too, such as cave access information and the most recent newsletters and meetings minutes. We would welcome contributions of photos from cavers of sites in Wales. These must be capable of adaptation to fit the various page layouts used in the new site. We are looking for someone interested and able to help us maintain this small modern website using simple production tools (Xara, Photoshop Elements, Word).

The screenshot shows the 'Conservation' page of the Cambrian Caving Council website. It features a blue header with the site name and a navigation menu. Below the header are three columns of images and text: 'GEOLOGY', 'WILDLIFE', and 'HERITAGE'. Each column contains a brief description and a small image.

**CaveFest 2019**  
**South Wales**  
**Crickhowell RFC**  
**NP8 1EE**  
**23rd to 26th**  
**August**

*Live Music, Bar,  
onsite Camping ..  
Fun for all the  
Family ,  
• Caving Experience  
• Treasure Hunt  
Plus more ..*

What's on offer? Lots of caving for everyone. Quite simply, one of the best opportunities to experience caving together. From the absolute beginner, to the skilled and seasoned among us. Everyone can come and enjoy the company of cavers alike and relax with friends.

The onsite bar and great atmosphere will ensure that the entertainment available will hit the spot and encourage everyone to get involved. With evening events such as the Mexican fancy dress, fun is assured. Great prizes are on offer for the best dressed. A full list of all our activities, competitions prizes and prices, and all the information about what caves are on offer with detailed descriptions of the caves themselves are available on our website:

<https://www.cavfestuk.co.uk/>

Registration is open and payments can be made direct, so don't delay and get yourself signed up for what is shaping up to be the best event we've created yet. CavfestUK can also be followed on Facebook and Instagram, where fantastic offers, merchandise, news and updates, pictures from past events and additions to our list of activities can be found.

Neil Jackson, CavfestUK Founder / Chairman

**CavfestUK**  
**REGISTER ONLINE now**  
**www.cavfestuk.co.uk**

## NAMHO CONFERENCE REPORT

The NAMHO event was hosted by Cambrian Mines Trust in association with Dr Peter Claughton as the lecture program organiser. It was centred on the village of Llanafan where a campsite was established on a local sports field and two halls hired for the event. The biggest hall, Lisburne Hall, was used to present a lecture program, a Friday evening supper, and a Saturday evening dinner with a bar running on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings. A smaller Church Hall was used for displays.

Cave Access Ltd provided access to mines on land owned by the Welsh Government. A previous event here held in 2013 unfortunately did not include the important sites of Alltycrib (Talybont) and Henfwlch. However, due to the creation of Cave Access Ltd (CAL) and its agreements this was now possible. CAL also exhibited a stand in the Display Hall.

I feel that the term 'NAMHO Conference' is misleading in that it implies just that, but in effect the main activities on offer are led-trips into local mines. Unfortunately, the impression of an indoors bias could cause a lot of cavers to miss out on some important mine exploration opportunities.



This year's event went extremely well, helped by the good weather. A talk given on the Thursday evening for the benefit of local people was well received, and feedback from locals was good regarding the good behaviour of the attendees.

The main sites used for field trips were Cwmystwyth, Fron-goch, Henfwlch and Alltycrib (Talybont). Henfwlch is the site of some recent new discoveries, as featured in the February 2019 issue of this newsletter.

Roy Fellows, NAMHO

## BCA AGM drama marks the dawn of a new era for British Caving

The BCA AGM was held in Horton Village Hall on the 9th June 2019. The main problem with this venue was a lack of parking, and also the fact that the room was only just big enough, as normally the meeting is not that well attended. This AGM attracted around 75 BCA members, a good number of whom were below the age of 40. On the whole it was a well-mannered and orderly meeting, although it was obvious from the start that there were a number of organised groups present with their own agendas.

The people who were elected are listed on the BCA website at <https://british-caving.org.uk/> which has also quickly undergone some polishing and comes fitted with the new BCA logo. Click on About | Contact BCA for the new BCA line-up.

The elections produced no great surprises, although in the case of one candidate, there was some contention over how a person communicated their willingness to stand when they were abroad on expedition at the time. This was sorted out in the meeting with a typical British compromise. Some of the old guard have been replaced by new faces who will hopefully stand BCA in good stead as it moves forward.

I do not intend to detail the wording of proposals that were passed as this information is available on the BCA website in the AGM draft minutes and officers reports. Click on About | Documents | Annual and General Meetings. I must mention one important proposal which passed. This is a new caving insurance, now available, which has been designed by cavers for cavers.

The one area where there was some dissent, was the proposal to change the current “two-house” voting system into a more democratic one-member-one-vote single-house system. This removes the situation where large clubs with hundreds of members get only one vote while a club with only 5 members gets the same, which is patently undemocratic. This means abolishing the club and organisational votes wielded by such as regional caving councils. Surprisingly, this idea was not popular with quite a large Southern-based voting bloc. Why they were against caver democracy is beyond me, but then I am just a humble scribe from the North.

The voting on this proposal was interesting. The vast majority of individual cavers supported it, but the club/organisation vote on the initial count failed by just one vote. There were calls for a recount – which apparently is not allowed. Then one well-known caver admitted that he had forgotten to vote. It was unclear in the subsequent hubbub as to what he would have voted for, so in the event another vote was taken, and this time it passed by one vote. The next stage is that a ballot paper will be sent out to all BCA members and clubs to ratify this AGM decision.

The rest of the meeting was straightforward. We finally escaped after more hours than I care to think about, to a warm sunny day in the Dales.

R. Allan Richardson, Cambrian Caving Council Secretary

Please send news items, short articles, newsworthy photographs (at their original resolution as we will fit them into the page layout) club news and profiles for the next issue by 31st November 2019.



Visit <https://www.british-caving.org.uk>  
Click on News & Events then Newsletters

Latest news and events...  
[british-caving.org.uk](http://british-caving.org.uk)  
[/BritishCavingAssociation](https://facebook.com/BritishCavingAssociation)  
[/britishcaving](https://twitter.com/britishcaving)  
[ukcaving.com](http://ukcaving.com)

12 pages  
Full colour  
National news

## The Cambrian Caving Council

**Chairman** **Martyn Farr**  
[chair@cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk](mailto:chair@cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk)

**Secretary/Newsletter** **Allan Richardson**  
[secretary@cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk](mailto:secretary@cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk)

**Treasurer** **Mary Rogers**  
[treasurer@cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk)

**Access/Conservation** **Stuart France**  
[conservationofficer@cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk](mailto:conservationofficer@cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk)

**Training** **Richard Hill**  
[trainingofficer@cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk](mailto:trainingofficer@cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk)

**Equipment/Fixed Aids** **Vince Allkins**  
[equipmentofficer@cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk](mailto:equipmentofficer@cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk)

**Cave Registrar** **Martin Laverty**  
[registrar@cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk](mailto:registrar@cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk)

**Legal/Insurance** **Roy Fellows**  
[legalandinsurance@cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk](mailto:legalandinsurance@cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk)

**Website / Newsletter**  
[secretary@cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk](mailto:secretary@cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk)