

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL

NEWSLETTER October 2011

Editorial

We all have to congratulate and thank SWCC on their purchase of the land surrounding the entrance to OFD I. By doing so they made a huge commitment which will benefit the entire caving community.

This great news is balanced by the threat to the Clydach Gorge caves when that part of the A465 is dualled. We have an opportunity to influence the detailed planning – as a community we should take full advantage of it.

Robin Weare [e-mail](#)
Newsletter Editor

Access Route to Ogof Draenen

We would like to remind all cavers that they must use the agreed access route to Ogof Draenen as a condition of our access to that cave. Recently some cavers have been spotted exiting the cave and heading around the hillside to cars parked at the area of the old forge at Garndyrrus (off the B4246). The landowner has asked me to remind everyone that they must access the cave only via the specially constructed and marked stile just off the access road to the Pwll Ddu Adventure Centre. Many thanks for your cooperation, this helps to ensure future access for all.

Fleur Loveridge, Secretary, PDCMG.

Bolts in Cambrian Caves

At the end of September Nick Williams, as Convenor of BCA's Equipment & Techniques Committee, issued a statement about some inconsistencies in the supply of the proposed replacement for the DMM Eco-Anchor. Although none of these anchors have yet been installed in any caves, some of the prototype batch has been placed in caves in the Yorkshire Dales. Although testing indicates that these have an acceptable safety margin, and meet both the industrial and mountaineering standards for strength, the Equipment & Techniques Committee have decided that these should be replaced.

Although no Cambrian Region anchors are affected by this, it seems appropriate to reiterate the advice of the Committee that when "using anchors of any type [...] no single point of belay should be relied on for applications where a failure of the belay could result in serious injury or death."

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BCA Subscriptions

Earlier in the year the BCA Insurance Manager consulted member clubs about the desirability of increasing BCA's Third-Party liability cover limit from £2 million to £5 million. A clear majority of the clubs who responded were in favour of this increase. Therefore, BCA Council has agreed to extend the cover to £5million for 2012.

This is likely to come at a cost to BCA of a little under £10k per annum and, as outlined in the consultation, it has been agreed to increase the membership fees to partly offset this additional cost. Therefore, for 2012 all classes of individual membership, except students and Under 18s, will rise by £1.

This means that for 2012 BCA's Individual Membership Rates will be:

Club Individual Members (green cards) –

£17 (caving), £6 (non-caving) or £8 (students& under 18s)

Direct Individual Members or CIM Plus (red cards) –

£32 (caving) or £21(non-caving)

Club Rates remain as 2011 (i.e. somewhere between £20 and £50 depending on the size of the club's membership).

Full details will appear on the BCA website in due course.

Clydach Section of A465 Dualling

This part of the overall project will address the 8 km section of the A465 between Brynmawr and Gilwern. The section presents significant engineering and environmental challenges as the road passes through Clydach Gorge within the Brecon Beacons National Park. The intention is to upgrade from a single three lane carriageway to a dual two lane carriageway using standards that are sympathetic to the landscape surrounding it. Construction is expected to start during 2014.

There is a project [website](#) from which information, including the exhibition brochure and display panels, should be available to download by the time this newsletter is published.

We have been in contact with the principal contractor on this section of the dualling project for some time and are naturally concerned at the potential effect on the caves in the Clydach Gorge.

I circulated an advisory e-mail in advance of the recent local exhibitions and we hope that anyone who managed to attend one of them will contact Elsie Little, our Conservation Officer, with their views. [e-mail](#)

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OFD 1

South Wales Caving Club is pleased to announce that it has recently completed the purchase of around seven acres of land including the entrance to Ogof Ffynnon Ddu I.

At the end of 2010 the club was approached by the Toye family, who have owned the cottage and land at Y Grithig for many years, and they explained that they had reluctantly decided to sell the property. They asked if we were interested in buying a parcel of land to include not just OFD 1 but also Powell's Cave and other sites of speleological interest. A site meeting was held to discuss potential boundaries, and it was clear that this was a one-off opportunity to secure permanent access to, and conservation of, one of the UK's most important caves. However, the sum of money involved represented a significant outlay for a club with limited reserves and it was essential that the club's committee consult with the wider membership before proceeding.

Our members recognized the unique nature of the opportunity and were overwhelmingly in favour of the purchase.

We were fortunate to secure a grant from the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW), amounting to 25% of the purchase price, and SWCC would like to record our thanks for this. A significant proportion of the balance has come from donations from individual SWCC members, and money towards the purchase was raised by a big event at SWCC, the OgofFest, on the 8th/9th October. Photographs of the event are [here](#).

The purchase was completed at the end of July. As far as we are aware this is a 'first' in British caving; we can't think of another club that actually owns a cave entrance.

Our parcel of land has now been fenced, and on 3rd August a ceremony took place at the cave entrance to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the cave's discovery. A plaque in memory of our late President, Peter Harvey, was placed and the Toye family were invited guests.

For the time being, existing rules of access to OFD I continue. The leadership system has served the cave and cavers well for many years. However, cavers must not use the traditional route through the cottage garden to get to the cave.

Tony Baker
SWCC

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OFD 1 Access

I've been asked to emphasize how important it is for cavers to stop using the route through the cottage garden; the new boundary fence has already been damaged by cavers climbing across it and for that reason the information provided in the last newsletter is repeated below: [Editor]

SWCC has negotiated an alternative route to the cave entrance. This is via the footpath (known locally as 'The Pant') which runs alongside the fence of the property (and is visible from the cave entrance).

If you are walking from the SWCC HQ: take the road down the hill, past the houses, and take the footpath signposted on your right (through a gate). There is a bathtub a few metres down. Follow the path for another 150m or so, through a wooden gate, and you will come to the site of a previous gate. Turn left and walk across the dry stone walling (this'll make sense when you're there!) and then cross the wire fence at the point where there is no barbed wire. This brings you out just above the cave entrance; take care as the bank is often slippery.

If you are parking in the usual lay-by: walk down the lane as if going through the garden of Y Grithig, but keep going past the property and take the footpath on your right (taking care to shut the gate - there are sometimes horses in here). Follow the path up to the site of a previous gate and turn right across the dry stone walling, as described above. If you reach the wooden gate you've gone too far.

As ever please take care when crossing fences and keep noise to a minimum, especially if entering or leaving the cave at an anti-social hour. Cavers have always enjoyed good relations with the owners of Y Grithig and their neighbours and we would all wish this to remain the case. Your co-operation is appreciated.

Otter Hole

The 2011 season was very successful with all 26 trips completed and a total of 134 people visiting the cave. A great deal of conservation work was undertaken, mainly retaping and stal cleaning and the co-operation of visitors in this was very much appreciated.

The trip calendar for 2012 is now on-line, and bookings are being taken. Visit the RFDCC [website](#) and follow the Otter Hole links.

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Daren Cilau/Ogof Cnwc Access

There has been no need to gate Daren Cilau due to the technical nature of the route but when Price's Dig was connected to Busman's in Daren, it was decided to gate that entrance due to the vulnerability of the formations in Busman's (although they were well taped) and the on-going engineering work with scaffolding and other excavations. CCW made the gate and it was fitted by CSS. Keys have been made available on request to other clubs on a temporary basis. It has always been possible to exit from Price's Dig (Ogof Cnwc) without a key.

Now that through-trips are more practical, i.e. after bypassing the sump, installing fixed ladders, and other improvements to the route, CSS has begun issuing 'permanent loan' keys to other clubs, for a £10 payment. Until others come up with a list of access rules, they simply ask for the time being that:

- (1) Visitors are properly equipped, and made aware that they enter and explore the caves at their own risk as there is loose rock, steep climbs, slippery surfaces, and so forth. Having a length of belay rope available within the group is recommended.
- (2) Visitors must not use carbide, must keep within the taped routes, and avoid disturbing bats, use common sense, and show respect towards the environment.
- (3) Fill in the logbook by the gate at the Ogof Cnwc entrance.
- (4) Access is for sport caving purposes only - no commercial activities.

Any club wanting a "permanent loan" key should apply to the CSS Secretary, Stuart France e-mail

Pwll Du CMG Meeting

The biennial general meeting is to be held at the Lamb & Fox, Pwll Du on Saturday 19th November at 7.30pm.

The meeting is open to all interested cavers, who may contribute to debate; however, voting rights are restricted to Officers and an individual nominated representative of each member club.

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Under the Blorenge - talk and taster session

The Forgotten Landscapes Partnership, Blaenafon are running a series of 'Landscape Lectures' at Blaenavon World Heritage Centre. These are talks or presentations on the first Tuesday of each month followed by an activity one Saturday soon afterwards with the idea to encourage more people to visit the landscape around Blaenavon and see it from a different perspective through activities. There have been talks on water sports, paragliding, bird watching, and archaeology amongst other things and Hereford Caving Club were invited to give a talk on Caving with a taster soon after. After proposing it to club members we agreed on dates in October.

We titled the talk 'Under the Blorenge' as the focus was on the area around Blaenafon. We opened the talk with images they were familiar with above ground such as the spoil heaps, radio masts and Keeper's Pond before introducing them to a few images of the passages below. This was put into context with a brief overview of the geological layers of the Brecon Beacons and more detail about how limestone is formed, then eroded to form caves. We then showed a map outlining where limestone outcrops were found before focusing on the different cave systems such as Ogof Draenen under the Blorenge; Ogof Craig y Ffynnon and Ogof Capel in the Clydach as well as Agen Allwedd and Daren Cilau in the Llangattock Escarpment as they extend through the mountain almost into the Clydach Gorge. These were introduced in more detail with images from Barry Hill. We also demonstrated some of the clothing and equipment that we use. This was also on display for people to look at afterwards. The main talk was followed by a slide show of more of Barry's images of these caves and those from the wider South Wales area with Barry providing information about each image including how we conserve caves and formations. The finale was a video of a first caving trip filmed by Paul Hartwright. The talk was very well attended and they had to keep finding more chairs to put out, there were about 45 people there plus seven Hereford Caving Club members.

We had arranged a trip into Ogof Clogwyn for the taster session and soon had to make that two trips. Then, we had to arrange an extra trip the following day to accommodate those who booked on the day of the talk. We had taken bookings for 11 places each trip guessing that a few would drop out. Over the three trips we had 22 people attend including four children accompanied by a parent each. On each trip we had 3 or 4 Hereford CC members to lead and talk about the cave. Each trip was slightly different according to abilities and enthusiasm of the participants. Saturday morning turned out to be the parents with offspring and two of the boys were really enthusiastic. I think a couple of people found it harder than they expected but several expressed interest in trying another trip. We have left it with them to make contact in the future.

Hereford Caving Club would like to thank Cambrian Caving Council and Sports Council Wales for supporting us by covering the cost of hiring caving equipment such as suits, lights and helmets.

Pauline Hill (Hereford Caving Club)

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New Nature Reserve at Penwyllt

Brecknock Wildlife Trust has established a new nature reserve, Allt Rhongyr, on Penwyllt hill.

The [website](#) tells us that the reserve offers dramatic views of the Tawe Valley and features a diverse mix of limestone grassland, acidic grassland, natural rocky pavements, steep scree slopes, and woodland and it was once the site of an iron age hillfort. The site is now managed by grazing under an agri-environment scheme.

There is open access for visits on foot. Visitors are requested to keep dogs on a lead to prevent disturbing ground nesting birds and to clean up dog litter.

To get there: Turn off the A4067 half a mile south of Craig y Nos Country Park on the minor road to Penwyllt. Follow this road for 1 mile. Where the road bends to the right and climbs steeply uphill the reserve is on your left.

You can leave your car by the wall in front of the bungalow on the left / in the small layby next to the main entrance gate. Or access the reserve through the bridleway gate just down the road. Alternatively the reserve can be reached from Craig y Nos Country Park by following the bridleway via Rhongyr Uchaf farm.

Quarry Life Award

Heidelberg Cement has launched the "Quarry Life Award", an international competition for students, scientists as applicants and NGO's as partners. The goal is to promote and protect the fauna and the flora of the mining sites through new ideas and projects. Prizes of 1,500 to 30,000 euros will be awarded to the best projects.

Students and researchers are invited to submit a two page project idea by 17th February 2012. The best project proposals in each country will then be selected. You'll find more details about the procedures for project registration and participation on www.quarrylifeaward.be. The main topics are: discover biodiversity in mining sites; biodiversity and rehabilitation; biodiversity and education; biodiversity management during extraction.

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Sport Wales Overseas Expedition Grants

Applications for grants towards the cost of your 2012 expedition must be in by 31st December.

If you are eligible an application is well worth the effort. Cavers have often received a very substantial contribution of up to 50% of the cost of travel, additional equipment and safety equipment.

Successful applications have in the past traditionally come from mountaineering, caving, cave diving, canoeing and paragliding. But the Outdoor Pursuits Group of the Welsh Sports Association is happy to consider applications from other outdoor activities, providing the expedition is ground breaking and likely to enhance the development of that activity. All applications will be considered on merit, and after consultation with the appropriate National Governing Body.

Eligibility

Priority will be given to Welsh based expeditions where the majority of members are Welsh. Only Welsh team members will be eligible for funding and must qualify on the grounds of birth, parentage or be permanently resident in Wales for two or more years.

Amount of Grant

Grant will normally be limited to a contribution of up to 50% towards the estimated cost of travel, U.K and abroad, essential additional equipment and safety equipment.

How to Apply

Applications for grant-aid to support the expedition must be made on the appropriate application form in advance of the proposed expedition date. Applications must be received by 31 December, prior to the financial year (1 April – 31 March) in which the expedition is planned to take place.

Enquiries and applications should be sent to:

Paul Dancey
Welsh Sports Association
Institute of Sport
Sophia Gardens
Cardiff
CF11 9SW
E-mail: paul.dancey@welshsports.org.uk
Tel: 0845 846 0020
Fax: 0845 846 0014

And you can download an application form and the guidelines [here](#)

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Other Expedition Grants

Don't forget that funding for those who don't qualify for SCW grants could be available from the [Ghar Parau Foundation](#).

If you are part of a multinational team then an application to the European Speleological Federation (FSE) might be worthwhile. They give grants of up to 400 euros plus rope, lamps and other equipment supplied by sponsors. Applications must be received 3 months before the expedition starts. An application form which explains the criteria they adopt can be downloaded [here](#).

European Speleo-TV Project

The FSE informs us of the creation of the 1st European Speleological channel: "Speleo-TV". This project, based on professional Web-TV sites, will enable all European cavers to freely show, broadcast, exchange and watch on a specific high quality Speleological channel their underground images, videos and slideshows.

In order to manage this project, the General Assembly has decided to create an FSE workgroup. The Speleo-TV team will be in charge of different tasks such as:

- identifying the most suitable web-TV sites
- design the graphic charter of Speleo-TV
- build a multilingual intuitive architecture
- programme Web-TV pages
- create the videos admission rules
- inform European cavers in a "dynamic" way
- manage the reception of the downloaded images
- put online the images in an esthetic friendly way
- organise events like EuroSpeleo Image'In Festivals
- motivate famous speleologist directors to send their films
- administrate information exchange as a board member
- etc

The Speleo-TV workgroup will be coordinated by a board will work through an FSE mailing-list using the English language.

If you are interested in participating in this FSE European team, please send to speleo-tv@eurospeleo.org :

- Your full data (name, address, telephone)
- The tasks in which you are more interested in.
- Your ideas

Meanwhile, should you have any further question, please use that same email address,

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Mendip Cave Rescue Anniversary Event

MCR is 75 this year and they've issued a general invitation to join them when they celebrate on November 19th.

Details are on their [website](#). It sounds like a good day.

Diary

Nov 19 th	Pwll Du CMG Biennial General Meeting	Lamb & Fox
Nov 19 th	MCR Celebration Day	Priddy
Dec 4 th	GCRG Rescue Practice	Wetsink
Dec 31 st	Closing date for SCW Expedition Grant Applications	
Jan 1 st	Columns Open Day	OFD
Jan 31 st	Closing date for Ghar Parau Grant Applications	

Cambrian Caving Council Officers

Chair Bernie Woodley [e-mail](#)

Secretary Mike McCombe [e-mail](#)

Treasurer Robin Weare [e-mail](#)

Conservation Officer Elsie Little [e-mail](#)

Training Officer currently vacant

Equipment Officer Andy Lewington [e-mail](#)

Legal & Insurance Officer Owen Clarke [e-mail](#)

Registrar Brendan Marris [e-mail](#)

Webmaster Barry Hill [e-mail](#)

Newsletter Editor Robin Weare [e-mail](#)