

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL

NEWSLETTER July 2013

Editorial

I've often heard it said that there are, and have been, far too many of my age group involved in the administration of the world of caving. That is, perhaps, inevitable - after all, younger people have other priorities.

It was a huge comfort to observe that at the Annual General Meeting of the BCA a whole clutch of twentysomethings were appointed to the Council. It would be good to see this happening elsewhere. In today's world there is a lot of administration required at club, access group, regional and national levels. It is absolutely true that if more people got involved things would be done better.

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

Vale Elsie Little

You will all have heard by now of the sudden and sad loss of Elsie, our conservation and access officer, on the 14th June. Elsie had been a fundamental part of the Cambrian Caving Council from its early years. She was also the conservation and access officer for the British Caving Association and tirelessly represented cavers and their interests at national level.

Elsie's workload for the Cambrian was prodigious and she had her own inimical style, which worked well in the many, varied and difficult logistical problems that she tackled. She had worked to improve underground access for cavers with private landowners, with national bodies such as The National Trust and was working on an all-Wales access concordat with the Forestry Commission when she was lost to us all. The importance of her work should not be underestimated and she leaves a considerable void, which will be tremendously difficult to fill.

Her presence will be missed by all of the Cambrian Caving Council's officers, by several committees where she represented the Cambrian and by the many cavers that she individually and collectively helped.

Goodbye Elsie and thank you.

Bernie Woodley

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Cavers' Walk from Craig y Nos

As mentioned in the last newsletter we have organised a walk in the Cribarth area on 15th September. It will be led by Alan Bowring of the Fforest Fawr Geopark – which means it will be good and greatly informative.

Date Sunday 15th Sept
Meet time 09:00
Meet place Craig Y Nos car park
Limited to 24 places

There is no charge to attend but as places are limited it would be sensible to advance book by e-mailing our Training Officer, Richard Hill [e-mail](#)

Please bring with you appropriate equipment for a full day on the hills; sturdy footwear, a packed lunch, appropriate clothing for the day and expected weather conditions. A headtorch may be useful but caving equipment will not be needed.

The plan is to do a circular walk from Craig y Nos looking at the geology of the area, speleological sites in the area and how the two interact.

Collapse in Daren Cilau

There has recently been a roof collapse in Acupuncture Passage, at present preventing trips to The Micron and beyond. Work is ongoing to remove the obstruction, but there is concern about the stability of this entire section of passage, which follows a shale band. Please take extra care in this part of the cave.

Collapse in Big Sink

There has been a serious collapse in the crawl leading to the top of shaft 6 in the entrance series. Work to clear the obstruction has started but is proving to be more complex than was at first hoped. Access to the cave will not be possible until the remedial work is completed.

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Rock fall above Ogof Craig-a-Ffynnon

Early this year there was a significant rock fall from the overhanging cliff in front of the cave entrance. There have been a number of rock falls here in previous years, but the cliff is now in a particularly unstable state. There is one very large block overhead that appears to be largely unsupported, and numerous smaller blocks that might fall at any time. Comparing photographs taken at different times, it would seem that some smaller rocks have fallen since the main collapse. There is a large pile of rocks next to but not blocking access to the gate, and it would probably be unwise to try to clear these at present.

Although the cave is not officially closed, clubs with annual permits have been advised not to visit Craig a Ffynnon at the present time, and permits for visiting clubs are not currently being issued.

It is likely that the current situation will continue for some time. The hope is that nature will cause a further major collapse, perhaps after a freeze-thaw cycle next winter. Other options are also being investigated, but funds are not available to hire in the heavy plant that would be needed to remove the unstable cliff face.

Cwmystwyth Mines and Crown Estate

On the 20th May 2013 the Cambrian Mines Trust acquired Cwmystwyth mines from the Crown Estate. The acquisition comprises approximately 138 hectares of land in absolute ownership plus 13 hectares of mineral and sporting rights only.

There is quite a lot to do, with the first priority being to restore underground access in time for this year's NAMHO field meet which the Trust is co-hosting. To this end the plan is to remove small sections of the existing grills to allow entry and then make a temporary patch to make inadvertent entry by livestock or children impossible. Eventually it is hoped to fit proper hatches which can be opened with a spanner as in Derbyshire.

The website of the Cambrian Mines Trust is [here](#)

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New Split level Heads of the Valley Plan

A new design for the dualling of the A465 Heads of the Valleys Road between Gilwern and Brynmawr has just been published.

The earlier scheme which involved putting a section of the new carriageway on stilts in the Clydach Gorge was discarded after concerns were expressed about the possible damage to the caves in the environmentally and ecologically sensitive area.

The current design features a split-level carriageway, similar to that seen on the A470 in the Pontypridd area.

This split-level carriageway scheme means the westbound carriageway will be at the same road level as it is today while the east-bound carriageway will be at a higher level, – similar to the height of where the Drum and Monkey pub is located. The two carriageways will be separated by a substantial retaining wall.

Work is not expected to start until late 2014 and is expected to take three years to complete. Work which started earlier in the year to dual the Brynmawr and Tredegar stretch of the road has affected access to Carno Adit.

The recent consultation and exhibition attracted about 450 people, including many cavers, over the three venues. Further details, including maps, can be seen on the project website [here](#).

Brand New OFD I Survey

For now it is only to be found on the wall of the Long Common Room at Penwyllt but I understand it will eventually be on sale.

The scale is exactly the same as before but you will see much improved detail, many more annotations and it's in colour. The highest passages are coded in red, graduating downwards to purple for the lowest. All water, irrespective of its level is in blue - dark blue for sumps and pale blue for open water. The survey has been printed on PVC rather than conventional poster paper which should be much more durable and damp/beer proof.

The addition of surface features including the cottages, The Stump, the track, station and fence boundaries makes it much easier to relate the orientation of the cave to what goes on above ground.

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Emergency Services Show

This year the show will be at the NEC Birmingham on Wednesday 25 and Thursday 26 September. The organisers hope that the longer daylight hours and improved visitor facilities will make for an even better event than before!

There will be an even bigger outdoor area for exhibits and demonstrations, and all the indoor exhibits will be under one roof, taking up Halls 17 and 18 of the NEC.

Visitor registration is now live - you can [register here](#). Entry to the Show is free as usual and [Emergency Services Times](#) magazine are sponsoring the car parking for visitors so that will also come free.

BCA/BCRA Party Weekend

I have to admit that for me the main attraction was the presence of my Grand-daughter and I'd probably not have attended for the whole weekend had she not been there. I have to say, though, that even had Sophie not been around, I'd have had a very, very good weekend indeed.

A variety of interesting but not too heavy talks, walks and trips were on offer on the Saturday – all hosted by BCRA. I took the opportunity to brush up on my cave archaeology and found myself visiting Peak Cavern and then clinging to the upper edges of Cavedale whilst learning a great deal.

From subsequent conversation I gathered that the other offerings were equally good.

As always with events such as this thanks are due to the several people who put in a huge amount of effort to ensure that it all went smoothly.

With a bar, a band and a hog roast everyone had a great time on Saturday evening and, whilst many went caving, on the Sunday there was a good attendance at the AGM.

It is rumoured that the event will be repeated next year – probably in the Dales. If this happens – attend and make it a club trip, as some did this year. I'm sure you'll enjoy yourselves.

A link to the Draft minutes of the AGM and subsequent Council meeting is [here](#)

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New OFD Permit Secretary

Cwm Dwr and the Top Entrance of OFD are situated in a National Nature Reserve administered by National Resources Wales who require a simple permit system.

Access to Ogof Ffynnon Ddu 1 is also controlled via a permit system.

To obtain a permit, contact Hayley Meredith, the new permit secretary, email [ofdaccess AT hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ofdaccess@hotmai.co.uk)

Daren Cilau Hard Rock Café Clean Up

Over several decades, many people have camped at Hard Rock Cafe. Over this time a mass of personal gear has accumulated at the camp, left there by people who intended to go back but have not. A lot of this consists of now worthless mouldy and rotting clothes and sleeping bags, and the decision was taken to embark on the daunting task of a clean-up.

Mark Lumley is coordinating the operation. He has estimated that there are approximately 300 bags of 'rubbish' that need to come out. Packaging and removal is already underway, and a major removal weekend is planned for November. After the November push the intention is to have two staging posts for bagged rubbish on its way out of the cave:

- Bottom of rope climb into White Passage
- Big Chamber Nowhere Near the Entrance

If you are passing, please feel free to take out a bag or move it to the next staging post.

Cambrian Caving Council is providing funding for rubble sacks and cable ties; for the last part of the journey – through the entrance series – the bags will need to be put into tackle sacks, and any offer of old tackle sacks for this purpose will be gratefully accepted.

Attempts are being made to contact everybody who has kit at Hard Rock Cafe with their name on it and invite them to collect their stuff and take it out. If you have personal gear at camp and have not used it in the last 5 years it may be considered trash or communal and stored/removed accordingly.

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Hidden Earth

The 2013 conference returns to Wales and will be held once more at the Monmouth Leisure Centre from September 27th to 29th. The weekend can be booked on the day or earlier (at a discount) by post or [online](#).

Caving Suit Recall

The following statement was issued on 24th June 2013:

Since the launch of the Lyon caving suit, we have received feedback from a number of users that both the durability and “fit” of the suit falls short of our high quality standards.

On investigation, we have found that the material used in the production of these suits is different to that used in the prototype suit reviewed by Dave Ramsey in Descent magazine 231. After a period of testing and consultation, we have decided that a full recall of this item is necessary

If you own a Lyon caving suit, please return it along with proof of purchase to the retailer you originally purchased it from for a full refund.

We apologise for any inconvenience caused. In the meantime, our product developers are working hard to rectify these two issues for the “Mk. 2” version which will be available in due course. If you have any questions, please email us on: cavingsuit@lyon.co.uk

Lyon Equipment Limited, Unit 3 - 7 Tebay Business Park, Old Tebay, Penrith, Cumbria, CA10 3SS Tel: +44 (0)15396 24040

Minera Caves & Alyn Valley systems

Details of current access arrangements are [here](#)

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Diary

Aug 25	Columns Open Day	OFD
Sept 1	GCRG Training Day	Wetsink
Sept 7 & 8	Welsh Mines Society Field Meet	South Wales
Sept 15	Cave & Geology Walk	Craig y Nos
Sept 25 & 26	Emergency Services Show	NEC Birmingham
Sept 27 to 29	Hidden Earth	Monmouth
Nov 7	GCRG Wardens Training	Cinderford
Dec 7	GCRG Training Day & Social	Noxon Park

Cambrian Caving Council Officers

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Treasurer Robin Weare [e-mail](#)
Conservation Officer Bernie Woodley [e-mail](#)
Training Officer Richard Hill [e-mail](#)
Equipment Officer Vince Allkins [e-mail](#)
Legal & Insurance Officer Owen Clarke [e-mail](#)
Registrar Brendan Marris [e-mail](#)
Webmaster Barry Hill [e-mail](#)
Newsletter Editor Rhys Williams [e-mail](#)

The Cambrian Committee has made a number of appointments to ensure continuity in the period to the next AGM.

In addition to his duties as Chair Bernie Woodley has taken on the role of Conservation Officer. Vince Allkins has joined the Committee as Equipment Officer, Sue Goodhead as Assistant Secretary and Rhys Williams has agreed to edit future editions of the Newsletter.