

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER July 2012

Dan yr Ogof Centenary

To celebrate 100 years of caving at Dan Yr Ogof, the showcave is laying on an event on Saturday 1st September. This will include live music, a bar and a hog roast. The evening will close with a spectacular fireworks display.

On the Saturday night the following events:-

7.00 PM. Free visit for locals to see caves.

For guests who do not want to visit the caves there will be a disco. Any wardens who could offer tours to the locals around the showcaves would be greatly appreciated.

8.30 PM. Music Tribute group.

9.15 PM. Disco and Hog Roast.

9.45 PM. Music Tribute Group.

10.45 PM. Spectacular Firework display with music.

11.00 PM. Finish.

The annual Wardens' meeting will be held on Sunday morning - time and location will be advised shortly.

Wardens and cavers with connections to Dan Yr Ogof are invited to the party.

Ashford and the showcaves are kindly laying on this event. There will be a limit on the numbers that can be catered for and so you will need to reserve your places by contacting Brendan Marris [e-mail](#) to confirm your attendance. Catering and health and safety will need to be planned well ahead of the event so Brendan asks that you confirm early – places are limited.

Camping will be available on site at the DYO campsite for anyone wanting to - again please let Brendan know so this can be arranged for you.

BCA Handlines in Llangattock caves

Two handlines marked BCA-G and BGA-H have been installed in Llangattock caves as part of the BCA rope testing programme. Please do not remove or substantially alter the rigging of these ropes. One is in Antler Passage in Daren Cilau; the other is on the climb before the 2nd Boulder Choke in Craig-a-Ffynnon.

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Another example of Cave Vandalism?

During this last year I have encountered a succession of inexplicable incidents where conservation tape has been deliberately crossed by cavers in OFD for no apparent purpose. These acts have caused avoidable damage to formations and sediment banks/deposits, some of which I cannot repair. It was not until I recently had a trip with some cave photographers that an explanation for the damage was immediately apparent to them.

When I pointed out the sites where this damage has happened, it was obvious to the photographers that another caver had stood beyond the conservation tape "there" in order to get a better than usual photograph from a different viewpoint or that by putting a remote flash "over there" it would be possible to get a particular effect.

In each area of damage, it appears that the most likely explanation is that the conservation tape had been deliberately crossed by aspiring cave photographers, purely to obtain a photograph for their own purposes and obviously believing that conservation measures are for other cavers and do not apply to themselves.

This is an extremely selfish viewpoint and is causing actual damage to our caves. I would like to hear from anyone else who has experienced the same problem in other caves or has a better explanation.

I have already asked for help from a professional photographer and the BCRA to find ways to educate the perpetrators and any other help or ideas would be most welcome.

Bernie Woodley. SWCC Conservation Officer.

Big Sink Cave – Symonds Yat

A recent examination of the entrance gate at Big Sink Cave revealed that the lock and chain had been forcibly removed and the grill had sustained some damage from a large rock that was sitting close by.

The matter has been reported to the Deputy Gaveller and the Forestry Commission and the local Beat Foresters have been advised to keep an eye out for anybody acting suspiciously in the area.

Access to any of the caves and mines in the Forest of Dean is easy to arrange whether they are looked after by FoDCCAG or by private individuals. All it takes is a single email to permits@fodccag.co.uk and you will be sorted out.

Radon Underground

The BCA's new publication can be downloaded [here](#)

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Cambrian Conference

The day that almost 50 cavers gathered at Penderyn for the Cambrian Conference may eventually prove to have been the sunniest Saturday of 2012.

In a way that was a shame, as the sun streaming through the skylight of the conference hall sometimes made it difficult to see the visual aids.

The main objective of the conference was to develop interest in the caving environment and enhance associated technical skills but the opportunity to open with a thought provoking session from Gary Evans on the topic of caving emergencies couldn't be missed. Gary's talk resulted in a few changes to the content of my own safety kit and quite a lot of subsequent discussion.

Andy Lewington introduced us to the multitude of life forms with which we share the cave environment with some quite brilliant photographs of underground monsters and Bernie Woodley's talk about cave conservation came to life when he discussed and demonstrated the techniques he used to repair OFD's Trident formation a few years ago.

I've found that the advent of digital photography has allowed even the likes of me to take the occasional half decent underground snap. After the lunch break Brendan Marris showed us a series of photographs which demonstrated the effect of different lighting whilst explaining the (often quite simple) techniques used to achieve those effects.

Next on was John Stevens and his introduction to cave surveying covered the use of note book, compass, clino and tape measure as well as the digital aids now in common use.

In the closing session Alan Bowring took us from the formation of South Wales somewhere in the southern hemisphere umpteen million years ago to the geology of the Brecon Beacons of today with particular emphasis on the limestone areas and the Fforest Fawr Geopark.

For those fortunate enough to get places Brendan Marris and Andy Lewington hosted Sunday underground workshops on Cave Photography and Cave Life. Each of these sessions took their talks on to the next stage. I can report with some relief that the "monsters" in Andy's photographs are actually pretty small.

All in all it was a stimulating and thought provoking weekend. Thanks are due to all concerned in the running of the event, especially those who put in so much time and effort to prepare their talks. We were particularly grateful for the offer of funding from the BCA which allowed the conference planning to go ahead. In the event we were able to release those funds as funding from Sports Council Wales and a nominal charge of £5 for the weekend was sufficient to cover costs.

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GCRG Diamond Jubilee Medal Presentation

Local dignitaries awarded Diamond Jubilee Medals to 50 members of Gloucester Cave Rescue Group at a ceremony on 14th June 2012.

The ceremony was attended by nearly 100 people and the location was appropriately below ground – in the vast “barbeque churn” chamber in the upper levels of Clearwell Caves. The chamber had been specially lit and decorated for the occasion and was equipped with a display of rescue equipment and the presentation was preceded by a showing of Nicky Bayley’s introduction to cave rescue video.

GCRG are grateful to the management of Clearwell Caves for the use of this superb location and to Chris Howes for permission to reproduce group photographs which will be made available to those present on the night.

Other photos of the event can be seen on the [GCRG website](#)

Bat Monitoring Report

The National Bat Monitoring Programme Annual Report for 2011 has just been published and is available [online](#). The report pages present the latest bat species population trends from this long running programme, which is a partnership between BCT, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Countryside Council for Wales and Defra.

At present sufficient data are collected by the programme to produce population trends for 11 of the UK's 17 resident bat species. In 2011, five of these species showed statistically significant increases in at least one survey, while the remaining species are considered to have more stable trends. The survey data includes:

- * General information on the species including distribution and abundance, and legal and conservation status
- * Information on the surveys that provide data for that species
- * Graphs showing the trends calculated from each survey
- * The population trends for the UK and information at country or regional level where data are available.

BCA Handbook

The 2013 Handbook is now available to download [here](#)

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Millau 2013

An event to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the FFS is being combined with the 8th Eurospeleo Forum and held in Millau from 8th to 20th May 2013. The website is [here](#) and has an English language version. There will be a whole host of pre rigged caves in the Grands-Causse region and the preliminary plans tell me that the whole thing will be pretty good and well worth attending.

Brno 2013

To stay with the theme it looks as if we'll have another good event to look forward to in 2013. The 16th International Congress of Speleology will run from 21st to 28th July on the edge of the largest and the most important karst area in the Czech Republic. There will be pre and post congress excursions and field camps in the Czech Republic, Austria, Hungary, Germany, Rumania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Ukraine and Poland.

Registration starts on 1st August and discounts are available to early bookers. The website is [here](#) and you've just got to be impressed that it's available as a Welsh language version.

Ogof Craig-a-Ffynnon

The fixed aids on the climb before 2nd Boulder Choke have been upgraded. Metal steps have been installed on the exposed upper section.

BCA AGM

The draft minutes of the 2012 AGM and the subsequent Council Meeting are [here](#)

DYO CAC Website

Check out the slides taken by the late Alan Coase in the mid 1960s as well as the more recent photographs in the Gallery.

A digital copy of the Gerard Platten journal which details some of the early explorations in DYO is also available to view. The website is [here](#)

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Access Changes in the Forest of Dean

Wigpool Iron Mine

All of the entrances to the Wigpool Iron Mine have now been fitted with new locks supplied by the mine owners Clearwell Caves.

This work was carried out by FoDCCAG on their behalf and is part of an ongoing process to transfer the administration of access to this mine to FoDCCAG.

A formal access agreement is near to ratification and future access is to be through the normal FoDCCAG route via Dave Tuffley at permits@fodccag.co.uk

Devils Chapel Mine

Many parts and entrances to this mine lie on the land owned by the Lydney Park Estate and, although for many years RFDC had a limited access agreement with them, this was revoked as the estate was concerned over insurance issues.

FoDCCAG were asked to take on the negotiations on behalf of all cavers and are pleased to report that agreement has been reached with the estate for renewed access to the mine. There will be a strict limit of 12 trips per year and access can be arranged by e-mailing permits@fodccag.co.uk

Old Ham, Old Bow & Lamsquay Iron Mines

New locks have been fitted to all of the various entrances relating to this complex of mines that fall under the ownership of Clearwell Caves.

While this was being undertaken access was denied to all cavers but is now open again.

Persons wishing to visit the mines are advised to make contact with Jonathan Wright at Clearwell Caves to arrange the collection of a key.

PUBLIC Rights of Way (PROW) used for Access to Caves

The BCA have issued an advisory note highlighting what is seen as a very small risk that some PROW (mostly Public Footpaths and/or Public Bridleways) that are commonly used by cavers to gain access to caves, or perhaps the most convenient access to caves, might be lost if local action by those in the know is not taken. It is suggested that Regional Councils should check public records to see if access to any of their caves might be in jeopardy. Cambrian will be doing this – but any caver who has specific concerns about a specific cave should contact Elsie Little, our Conservation and Access Officer [e-mail](mailto:).

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Diary

Aug 26 th	Columns open day	OFD
Aug 31 st	Ghar Parau Application deadline	
Sept 1 st	DYO centenary party	Dan yr Ogof
Sept 21/23 rd	Hidden Earth	Burnley
Sept 21/23 rd	Welsh Mines Society Autumn Meet	Forest of Dean

Cambrian Caving Council Officers

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