

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER April 2011

Editorial

We get a lot more from our BCA subscriptions than most of us imagine. The insurance is obvious but the subscription covers much more than that. Already this year, using money which will ultimately come from BCA, Cambrian has funded the Antler Passage ladder project, taping in Llygad Llychwr 2 and Ogof Draenen and the ongoing conservation work in Otter Hole. There are reports in this newsletter of a rope testing project and of the anchor scheme, both funded by BCA.

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

Llygad Llwchwr 2 Survey

John Stevens has surveyed Llygad Llwchwr 2 and there's an article and a copy of his survey in the latest edition of the CSS newsletter which can be downloaded from the publications page on their [website](#).

The link is to the Welcome page because of the lovely photo of the Courtesan. Why not take a gentle stroll into Aggy to see it for yourself? [Editor]

Llanelly Quarry Pot

It has been reported that a collapse at the entrance has been cleared but that further work is needed to the roof. Please take care.

Agen Allwedd

The old log book was filled during 2010 and removed for analysis. It covered the period from 07/09/2008 to 14/10/2010 and John Stevens reports that out of the 203 trips recorded, 99 only went to Entrance Series, Main Passage, North Wing, or the Aven Series and another 41 went to 2nd Choke or North West Junction,

Of the longer trips there were 12 Grand Circles, 12 Outer Circles, 11 Inner Circles and 18 visits to Iles Inlet.

BCA Rope for fixed aids trial

Of interest to the Management Committees of our larger caves will be the decision at the BCA council meeting in March that BCA should sponsor the provision of suitable rope for placement underground as fixed aids as part of a programme to collect more evidence to support the use of rope as a fixed aid.

Full details are in the [draft minutes](#) and the man to contact is Bob Mehew

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Ogof Daren Cilau – New Ladders Project

The cave has had a second entrance now for many years, but it is little used. This stems partly from the original connection to Prices Dig (Ogof Cnwc) being a U-tube that sumped for most of the year and thus required bailing out. This sump has now been bypassed through the adjacent choke. This dry bypass still requires further stabilisation of boulders in the roof and it needs assessing and due care taking every time it is used. Further work will be done here in due course, but the immediate focus is new ladders.

The Busman's Holiday level joins Daren Cilau level via a 3-4m drop through a boulder choke, which is difficult to climb, and with which the prospect of close contact is not too appealing. This is the first site for a new ladder made of 10mm link steel chain and stainless rungs. At the time of writing, the prototype ladder is hanging at Whitewalls for anyone to take a look. It was also shown at the CCC AGM and it was well received.

Since then CCC has funded a bigger project to install four ladders enabling easier and safer access to the Antlers area of Daren Cilau and beyond. The other sites are further into the cave: a 3m climb up into a corner before Man In The Roof connects, a down climb of 5m into the large passage immediately before MITR, and another climb down of 7m into the start of Antler Passage very close to the actual 'antlers' themselves. From here there is easy and pleasant caving to reach Big Chamber or Epcocalypse Passage. The ultimate source of the funding for this is BCA who are also providing some safety ropes as part of a wider study into caving ropes left underground for long periods.

Stainless bolts and anchors have already been installed, but I am looking for help with carrying in and fixing the ladder sections in the spring and early summer. With help from others this project should be finished by mid-summer and the hope is that the new facilities will stimulate interest, particularly in extending parts of the cave that were ignored after the Time Machine discovery in the 1980s. It also gives a dry route into or out of the system with a couple of good places to get clean water.

The entrance is gated and a key is available from Chelsea Speleological Society, i.e. Whitewalls, but don't just turn up and hope to find someone who can issue keys on demand. Please ask beforehand to be sure. I am hoping before the end of 2011 to be able to issue permanent keys (at a nominal charge to cover direct costs) to other clubs that intend to make a few visits per year. If you are doing a through trip eastwards, then you do not need any key to enter at Daren Cilau or to exit from Ogof Cnwc.

Stuart France
01874 730527

Stuart has given his phone number because he really is looking for help to get the ladders in. They are heavy but the plan is to take them in as sections for assembly on site. Please call him if you are willing and able to help. [Editor]

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Caver visits to Cambrian Caves

Otter Hole is open only in the summer months and operates a strict leader only system of pre booked trips. There were 11 over tide visitor trips and 16 trips between the tides. With warden's conservation trips, filming and the trip which failed to pass the sump the cave had 171 visitors in 33 parties during 2010.

The **Ogof Draenen** log book recorded 104 parties and 343 caver trips in total for 2010. That is 9 caver trips down on last year, so pretty stable.

In **Agen Allwedd** there were 96 trips by 314 cavers (91 trips and 315 cavers).

Dan yr Ogof was a little down with 90 groups in the cave over the year and 360 cavers. (100 parties, 388 cavers)

Although the **Ogof Ffynnon Ddu** system received about the same number of visits as last year the mix was unusual with a comparatively large increase in trips to **OFD I** (up from 135 trips to 178) although caver numbers showed a much smaller increase. The **Cwmdwr** crawl must put visitors off as trips fell to 62 and cavers to only 233. **Top entrance** was visited by 1712 cavers in 492 parties.

OFD III was generally ignored (10 trips in total, including 4 from Top entrance to Smiths Armoury) but there was a 1-3-1 trip recorded. This was the first for a couple of years.

Some log books were filled during 2010 and are proving difficult to track down. I hope to be able to provide an update on the "missing" caves in the next newsletter [Editor]

Dan yr Ogof

CCW have decided not to extend the National Nature Reserve boundary to include the 'wild' cave and its catchment due to lack of resources and the proximity of the OFD NNR across the valley.

Considerable outcry resulted from the erection of black plastic dams on Waun Figen Felen by the National Park Authority without consultation or various legal consents. These were eventually removed following an ultimatum from the Environment Agency. A tender is now being prepared for a hydrological study to support the future conservation and restoration of the bog. Meanwhile, funding constraints are likely to limit work on site to maintaining the status quo for the foreseeable future

Cambrian AGM

The draft minutes are available on our [website](#). The Committee remained unchanged with one vacant post which it is hoped to fill by co-option.

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Mines Access Update

This report attempts to summarize access problems associated with research and recreational use of mines and underground slate quarries in north and mid-Wales. Other activities of the Welsh Mines Society (mainly historical research findings) are detailed in the Society's Newsletter which is published in the spring and autumn of each year.

Note that this report should not be considered definitive as in most cases it is based on second-hand and/or inferred information from a wide variety of sources

Dave Linton, Welsh Mines Society

General

In general, there are no formal access arrangements for the majority of mid- and north Wales mines and entry is without the landowner's approval. Notable exceptions to this are Cwmorthin (see below) and the Parys Mountain and Great Orme copper mines (which are controlled by their own local groups with access on a guided party basis).

A number of mines and underground slate quarries are used by outdoor activity centres, some of which have made exclusive access arrangements with the landowner concerned. In the case of the exclusive access cases, with the current exception of Pandora, it is sometimes possible for trips to be arranged through the individual activity centres, who generally provide a leader for such trips. However, such arrangements are very informal and usually depend on personal contacts.

Access issue developments over the last year are discussed below.

Cwmorthin slate quarry SH681459

Extensive underground slate quarry providing underground trips of both sporting and historical interest.

The block of slate in old vein chamber 8 east a block of slate reported in 2010 as peeling away from the pillar directly over the steps between floor A and floor C remains in place. The recommendation by Friends of Cwmorthin that people do not pass through this chamber still obtains. However, 'familiarity breeds contempt' and the route seems to be in regular use. Vandals made the lock on the lake level adit inoperative in January 2011, trapping a group underground. Fortunately the group in question were away of the alternative exit route through the smoke flue and were able to exit safely.

Clogau Gold Mine SH675200

Nineteenth-century gold mine with extensive adit system along lode and open stopes to surface.

Mining operations have resumed at this mine and there is no recreational access. The current leaseholders have intimated that they may be willing to conduct visitors into the mine at some future date.

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Maenofferen slate quarry SH708465

Extensive underground and (working) surface slate quarry associated with the Llechwedd working quarry and tourist attraction and the Votty (Foty) and Bowydd quarries. The underground part has many important historical features such as the power inclines and machine-bored tunnels. The quarry was in use until recently and consequently many of the historical remains are in comparatively good condition. It is understood that the mill buildings are listed.

The deterioration of the condition of the surface buildings due to weather and vandalism, and extensive pillaging for scrap continues. A slab wagon was cut up in situ and the axle boxes (marked 'GWR') and other parts stolen. (See WMS Newsletter 63 for pictures.)

Untopping work has commenced at this quarry using explosives to clear overburden. The effect this has had on the deeper underground working is not known.

Milwr Tunnel and associated mines

The Olwyn Goch shaft gives access to the 10 mile drainage tunnel, extensive lead workings and a large underground limestone quarry. The outflow from the tunnel is used (in part) for industrial water supply.

Grosvenor Caving Club, who control access for recreational purposes, continue in negotiations with United Utilities but there is currently no access.

Anchors Update

There have been no reports of loose anchors in the last year although a personal check in Poachers Cave identified one anchor as being on the borderline. If this is deemed to be too loose it will be removed, it is not my intention to replace it as there are other suitable anchor points adjacent to it.

All cavers must be aware of their responsibilities regarding use of fixed anchors and other fixed aids – basically it is your responsibility to check these before use, no matter who placed it and whether or not it is subject to regular checks. The anchors placed as part of the BCA scheme were initially checked on a regular cycle but this is now deemed unnecessary, this applies in the other caving regions as well. See the BCA or CCC site for more details regarding the scheme.

The ECO anchors are no longer available and the present anchors being placed are PECO (but look similar).

Andy Lewington, CCC Equipment Officer

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Diary

April 24 th	Columns Open Day	OFD
May 1 st	Columns Open Day	OFD
May 5 th	GCRG Annual General Meeting	Cinderford
May 7 th	SMWCRT Rescue Practice	Ogof Tardiadd Rhymney
May 26 th	FoDCCAG Biennial General Meeting	Cinderford
May 29 th	Columns Open Day	OFD
June 5 th	GCRG Rescue Practice	TBA
June 11 th	BCA Annual General Meeting	Alvechurch
June 11/12 th	WMS Summer Field Meet	Caersws, Powys
June 18 th	SMWCRT Rescue Practice	OFD
June 26 th	NWCRO/Llanberis MRT Rescue Practice	Snowdonia

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