

# CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER January 2012

## Editorial

In the last few years Cambrian Caving Council has, with financial help from Sports Council Wales, provided or supported training opportunities for cavers in the areas of First Aid, Surveying and SRT as well as supporting introductory trips for those new to our sport.

This year we're spreading our wings a little further and will be holding what may well be the first ever Cambrian Caving Conference.

Training remains the theme and the conference programme is aimed at experienced cavers who are keen to expand their areas of interest into what are perhaps the less strenuous aspects of the sport and cavers who have taken up the sport more recently and would like to know a little more about the underground world; how to conserve it and how to explore it in safety. That, of course, means everyone. Please come.

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

## Mini Traxion Warning

Petzl has recently issued a product experience document warning of the danger of using the mini traxion as a belay device. The full details are set out in P07-PE-01A which can be downloaded from their website.

## Cambrian Caving Conference

Advance notice of the conference which will be held at Penderyn Community Centre on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2012. Full details will appear in the next newsletter but we can already say that this will be a whole day conference and, as you'd expect, we're hoping it will be of interest to everyone. We have a fine group of interesting speakers and the sessions will cover Photography, Geology, Cave Life, Surveying, Conservation and Emergencies.

The theme is basic training and we certainly don't want to blind anyone with science. Our intention is that these introductory level talks will provide an opportunity for sport cavers to extend their knowledge of the underground environment, keep it and themselves a little safer, and increase their understanding of technical matters.

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## **Cambrian Caving Council AGM**

Our 2012 AGM will be held at Penderyn Community Centre on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2012 starting at 10am.

## **Caves of North Wales**

A much needed and well informed site on the Caves of North Wales has recently appeared and more and more information has been added since. This has already become a superb resource for anyone interested in the area with good location maps, histories, surveys, photographs and descriptions of every cave I've ever heard of in the area (plus a whole lot more that I knew nothing about). Don't visit North Wales without first visiting [the site](#).

## **New OFD1 & Cwm Dwr survey**

SWCC has announced that, after many man-hours on the part of Brian Clipstone, the Dobson brothers and others, an all-new super-detailed survey of OFD1 and Cwm Dwr is now available to buy from Penwyllt. They also plan to stock laminated portions of popular sections of the survey, for you to take underground with you.

My copy of the new survey cost £5 and I can confirm that it's pretty good. A huge well done to all concerned.

## **Welsh Mines Society Newsletter**

The Autumn 2011 newsletter, as usual full of interest, is now available for download from the WMS website.

## **Weather and its Effect on Caves: a Guide for Cavers**

This new BCA publication is available for download from the [link](#) on the BCA website. You'll find a specific application of the principles described there in another recent publication "The Hydrology of Goyden Pot and Manchester Hole" which has a separate downloadable link on the same page.

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## Caver visits to Cambrian Caves

In 2011 there were 117 trips by 431 cavers into **Agen Allwedd** which is a substantial increase on recent years (there were 96 trips and 314 cavers in 2010). In compiling those numbers I didn't include the "naked" trip to the log book by 3 people.

These extra cavers may well have moved from **Ogof Draenen** which was only visited by 65 parties in 2011. I don't have caver numbers for part of the year but I estimate a total of about 230 caver visits. There were 104 parties and 343 caver trips in 2010.

There were 110 trips to **Dan yr Ogof** and an estimated 440 cavers. (90 parties, 360 cavers).

There is some overlap in the log books for Ogof Cnwc and Daren Cilau but after making appropriate adjustments there seem to have been 44 visits to **Ogof Cnwc** by 117 people and **Daren Cilau** had 237 visitors in 83 parties.

**Ogof Craig a Ffynnon** had 197 visitors in 62 parties

**Otter Hole** is open only in the summer months and operates a strict leader only system of pre booked trips. Three pre booked trips were cancelled by the group at short notice but for once none were cancelled by the weather. There were 30 successful trips and 134 people compared with 171 visitors in 33 parties during 2010.

The **Ogof Ffynnon Ddu** system as a whole was visited by 2,989 people in 824 parties.

**Cwmdwr** attracted 277 cavers in 76 parties; there were 178 trips to **OFD I** and 667 people and 2,045 visitors to **top entrance** in 570 parties.

There are motion detecting caver counters in some of our caves and comparison of data suggests that about 10% of trips are unrecorded. Ignoring that, the league table by trips is:

1. OFD top entrance	570
2. OFD 1	178
3. Agen Allwedd	117
4. Dan yr Ogof	110
5. Daren Cilau	83
6. Cwmdwr	76
7. Ogof Draenen	65
8. Ogof Craig a Ffynnon	62
9. Ogof Cnwc	44
10. Otter Hole	30

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There were quite a lot of solo trips into Daren on camping weekends and that is reflected by the drop from 5 to =7 when the caver visit data is used:

1. OFD top entrance	2,045
2. OFD 1	667
3. Agen Allwedd	431
4. Dan yr Ogof	440
5. Cwmdwr	277
6. Ogof Draenen	230
=7. Ogof Craig a Ffynnon	197
=7. Daren Cilau	197
9. Otter Hole	134
10. Ogof Cnwc	117

## **BCA Handbook 2012**

The updated BCA handbook is now available for download from the link on the [BCA website](#)

## **Phytophthora present at Pont ar Daff**

Phytophthora, which is fungus like organism that causes disease in a range of plants, has been discovered in the forest plantation at Pont ar Daff on the A470 at the foot of the Beacons. The disease can affect trees and dwarf shrub such as heather and bilberry. For further details and information about reducing the risk of spreading this disease read [this document](#) on the Defra website.

## **Welsh Mines Society**

The proceedings of the 2nd Welsh Mines Society Conference, 'Towards a Better Understanding' (a quote from founder Member, the late David Ewart Bick) are now available for sale at £10 each. Copies may be collected at the Cambrian AGM or by post at £1.50 extra, available from [mole@grottage.fsworld.co.uk](mailto:mole@grottage.fsworld.co.uk)

Details of the twice yearly field meets are to be found on [www.welshmines.org](http://www.welshmines.org) .

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## **Noxon Park**

Due to unusual weather conditions this year, water levels about 3 months ago were lower than 35 years ago. Since then the levels dropped surprisingly low, possibly lower than any caver alive has seen before. There have in the last few months been a couple of diving trips in there - we have seen diving lines that perhaps have never seen water before, as I believe they have only just been put in. Hopefully, due to depth constraints in water, the divers have been even lower than before. We look forward to seeing the surveys they have drawn up.

A surface watercourse re-instatement project started in the mid 70's may be partially responsible for this, by preventing water from entering the iron measures. It is my intention to carry on with this most of the summer, to perhaps enable the lowering of levels even more.

Please note that Noxon Park is on Forestry Commission land and access is managed on their behalf by FoDCCAG - permits are issued by the Permit Secretary, Dave Tuffley [permits@fodccag.co.uk](mailto:permits@fodccag.co.uk)

John Hine (Mole)  
Hon Secretary, FoDCCAG

## **GCRG Depot**

Three or four weekends of work over the last few months have started what will no doubt end up as a complete transformation of the depot although it must be said that at the moment the place looks to be a complete shambles.

Tons of accumulated junk have moved to the tip, ceilings have been replaced, walls removed and replaced and there has been good progress towards a new kitchen and a new toilet/shower room. The big advantage already observed is in the temperature and to quote Paul Taylor the GCRG Chairman

“Gone is that feeling that it is warmer outside the building than inside and now we will not have to sit there for meetings wrapped up in full “arctic weather gear”. At the moment we do not have any heating running and it is much warmer than it used to be.”

The target date for the official opening is May 2012.

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## **Pwll Du CMG Meeting**

The minutes of the biennial general meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2011 are available on the [PDCMG website](#).

## **BCA Try Caving Website**

One of our member clubs couldn't work out how to register a club or how to make the enquiry form work. Neither could I so I contacted the BCA whose Youth & Development Officer tells me that any club wishing to be added should e-mail their request to [youth@british-caving.org.uk](mailto:youth@british-caving.org.uk) giving their name, club and e-mail address. He will add them to the site and e-mail them the access details. They can then log in and enter their own club details.

I understand that the [site](#) generates quite a few enquiries so if you're a club looking for new members this could be a good resource for you.

## **Possible Surveying Course Oct/Nov**

We're thinking of organising another surveying course later this year. It will be on the lines of the hugely oversubscribed course we ran in 2010 and will cover the use of DistoX and Therion. Anyone likely to be interested should let Mike McCombe know [e-mail](#).

## **Otter Hole**

The calendar for 2012 is now full. All available dates have been allocated.

## **BCRA Publications Stock Clearance**

A reminder (I've mentioned this previously) that Volume 27 and earlier issues of **Cave & Karst Science** are now *free of charge* as are all its predecessor publications (Cave Science, Transactions, etc). Also, all issues of **Caves & Caving** up to number 92 (2002) are now free of charge. Other BCRA publications are also either free or available at a substantial discount. See the order form at [caves.org.uk/payments/bca/forms/P1.html](http://caves.org.uk/payments/bca/forms/P1.html)

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## Access to Ogof Ffynnon Ddu I

OFD 1 no longer needs a leader. The access rules are:

1. **Entry to Ogof Ffynnon Ddu 1 is by Permit from SWCC** which can be applied for by any member of a bone-fide Caving Club. If as a Caving Club or visiting group, you already hold a Permit for Ogof Ffynnon Ddu 2 and Cwm Dwr, then you will not have to apply for a further permit to enter Ogof Ffynnon Ddu 1.
2. **Party size:** Parties shall be limited to a maximum of **six persons**.
3. **A trip-ticket** which indicates the name of each person entering the Cave, along with the intended route, must be completed and placed on the Destination Board in the SWCC HQ. Parties are required to make other arrangements for call-out if leaving the cave after 5.00pm on Sundays or if SWCC HQ is closed.
4. **Safety:** All cavers should be responsible for their own safety and carry the correct equipment for their intended trip. They should also be aware of the conditions relating to the use of any fixed equipment "fixed aids" within the Cave. This information is displayed in the SWCC HQ.
5. **River levels:** The underground river can rapidly become impassable, and parties should avoid it when water levels are high or when heavy rain is forecast. If you are in any doubt as to the water levels then please avoid entering the streamway.
6. **The Escape Route** is quite exposed and all cavers should satisfy themselves that they possess the necessary equipment and skill to negotiate the route before committing to it.
7. **Permits** are issued for recreational and scientific caving only. Special activities including camping, digging, the use of explosives, dye tracing and other invasive research projects require special permission via the committee of The South Wales Caving Club. **Commercial trips are not permitted.**
8. **Conservation tapes** must not be crossed or moved, under any circumstances.
9. **Lighting:** ONLY electric lighting is to be used. Carbide MUST NOT be taken into the Cave.
10. **The entrance gate** must be shut after your party passes through. All OFD gates can be opened from the inside without a key.

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11. **Litter and conservation:** OFD 1 is a 'non-smoking' cave. No litter whatsoever is to be left either inside or outside the Cave. No cairns are to be built inside or outside the Cave. Please be aware of cave conservation throughout your trip. Formations, installations, apparatus and equipment found in the Cave must not be damaged. If accidental damage occurs this should be reported as soon as possible.

12. **Cwm Dwr and OFDII/III:** Access to the rest of the Ogof Ffynnon Ddu system (CWM Dwr or OFD II / III) requires a separate CCW Permit. If you do not have a CCW permit, access beyond the divers pitch is strictly forbidden.

13. Failure to observe these conditions may result in any future application for a permit being refused and for any issued permits to be withdrawn.

14. **Access Routes.** Cavers must **no longer** approach the cave via the yard and garden at Y Grithig. Please use the following routes: **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 500m 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 further down the hill:** Walk down the lane parallel to the river, keep going past Y Grithig and take the footpath on your right (taking care to shut the gate - there are sometimes horses in here). Follow the path up (~ 100m) 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.

## Diary

Feb 16 <sup>th</sup>	NWCRO Training Session	Plas y Brenin
Feb 24 <sup>th</sup>	MLCMAC Meeting	Abergavenny
March 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Otter Hole Leaders Meeting	The George, St. Briavels
March 4 <sup>th</sup>	GCRG Rescue Practice	A Cotswold Stone Mine TBA
March 11 <sup>th</sup>	Cambrian Caving Council AGM	Penderyn Community Centre
March 22 <sup>nd</sup>	FoDCCAG AGM	GCRG Depot, Cinderford
April 8 <sup>th</sup>	Columns Open Day	OFD
May 3 <sup>rd</sup>	GCRG AGM	GCRG Depot, Cinderford
May 6 <sup>th</sup>	Columns Open Day	OFD
May 26 <sup>th</sup>	Cambrian Caving Conference	Penderyn Community Centre
June 9 <sup>th</sup>	British Caving Association AGM	Alvechurch

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## **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](#)