

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER April 2008

Editorial

Not exactly a good few months since the last newsletter. Overdue parties in Aggy and DY0, pollution in Little Neath, a dodgy bolt in Pwll Dwfn. There is some good news, though. Major fixed aid improvements in DY0, access reintroduced to Cathedral Cave via the airlock and the prospect of an easier clean up following an Otter trip. Please keep the reports coming..... it really does help.

Observant readers may have noticed the absence of this slot in the last newsletter. That's because I rushed to get it out and forgot to include the note I'd drafted to congratulate Chris & Judith on the 200th edition of Descent. The magazine has nothing to do with CCC of course, but it is based in Wales and I've been discovering lately what a fantastic job they do. Too late now for number 200 but I'm sure everyone will join me in looking forward to those editions yet to come.

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

Pollution warning - Little Neath River Cave and caves lower down the valley

It has been reported that a solvent, probably diesel, has contaminated Little Neath River Cave. There is no sign of such pollution originating at the farms and it is strongly suspected that it comes from 4 wheel drive vehicles in the river.

The result is that the atmosphere in the cave is currently not healthy, nor is diesel good for the skin.

Beware in this cave and those lower down the valley. Direct reports back to the conservation officer would be welcome [e-mail](#) .

The Environment Agency have visited and taken samples from the river but the results are not through yet. The smell has markedly decreased there since the last rain.

A BBNP Warden claims he smelled what may have been diesel on the river at Pont Melin Fach a few weeks ago. That may have been the same incident.

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The local farmers are regularly required to assist drivers on Sarn Helen who have run into trouble at the ford.

A regular caver/diver in the area reports that as of Sunday April 20th there was nothing evident in either Bridge Cave or White Lady, so they seem to have escaped on this occasion unless it just hadn't arrived by then. There is currently no news on Town Drain.

The Cambrian Caving Council recommends that you do not visit the cave until the risks have cleared.

Please consult the latest news section of the CCC website for up-to-date details.

Dan yr Ogof temporary access limitations

Most readers will no doubt be aware of a recent incident where cavers were trapped in DYO by rising floodwaters.

Currently the rescue dump is being increased in capacity and scope so that it will fully cater for any future incident. This process is anticipated to be completed over the next month.

The DYOCAC and the DYO showcave management wish to ensure the safety of wardens and their parties while in the cave.

For the next month IN WET WEATHER ONLY the number of cavers allowed into DYO will be restricted to approximately 8 in any one day. In dry settled weather the access will remain as at present with three parties allowed in.

The showcave staff may remove caver access if the water levels and or the weather conditions warrant it.

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Pwll Dwfn

CCC has received reports that the p-hanger at the top of the last pitch (part of the y-hang) in Pwll Dwfn is loose. This will be looked at as soon as possible, but in the meantime caution should be used.

Please check the latest news section of the CCC website for updates.

Cathedral Cave Access

Due to the installation of a ventilation fan access from Cathedral Cave into the bottom of Tunnel Cave has not been possible for a number of years. During the last year an airlock has been constructed to allow access to and from the showcave without compromising the working of the fan.

With the start of the new showcave season it is now possible for DYOW wardens to obtain keys to the airlock. The access to Tunnel Cave top entrance and the associated maintenance of the fixed aids remains with SWCC.

Access through the airlock will only be available when the showcave is open, keys being obtained from the showcave management. Access will be available to DYOW wardens operating in a very similar way to that used for DYOW.

Cathedral Cave and Tunnel Cave Airlock Access Rules

(NB. Access to Tunnel Cave via Tunnel Top is administered solely by the SWCC. The following rules are for caver access to the Airlock and Cathedral Cave from either direction.)

1. Parties will number up to 5 and enter only in the company of a DYOW warden. For "Health and Safety" reasons the Cave Company will not allow people to cave alone.
2. No access through the airlock is permitted on days when there is a wedding in Cathedral Cave and on any other day there will be a maximum of three trips. In the unlikely event of a party using the airlock to access Cathedral Cave and observing a wedding in progress; the cave party MUST wait until the service is over and the wedding party is exiting the cave before they exit the airlock.

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3. Keys for the airlock and caver's entrance in the main door of Cathedral Cave are to be collected on the day by the DYO warden only, from the showcave Ticket Office during normal opening times and must be returned immediately after the trip. If the office is closed, keys must be returned to the showcave owner's house.
4. All gates and doors are to be locked immediately after use and only one door of the airlock to be open at any time. Failure to follow this rule could lead to loss of access through the airlock and loss of wardenship for the warden.
5. Each caver wishing to enter the cave must give evidence of holding adequate acceptable Public Liability insurance cover to the agent of the Showcave Management or of the Committee (the warden) before going underground. A standard pre-trip form must be completed and placed in the caver's post box at the back of the Ticket Office. After the trip the warden must complete a trip report for the committee.
6. Parties are responsible for their conduct, safety and the provision of equipment necessary to safely complete the trip. The warden should also draw the attention of each member of the party to the conditions of access, particularly those relating to the provision for emergency assistance to be called. (The trip notice board in the SWCC HQ should be used in the first instance.)
7. Only electric lighting is to be used. Carbide must not be taken into the cave.
8. No litter is to be left inside or outside the cave.
9. Parties should respect any directions or instructions issued by the Showcave staff, who have the right to refuse access.
10. Installations, apparatus and equipment should not be interfered with. Accidental damage should be reported immediately on return from the trip. The ventilation fan for the showcave operates automatically and must not be touched.

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Cambrian Caving Council Officers

Following a number of retirements at the annual general meeting held on 9th March 2008 the Cambrian Caving Council officers are now:

Chair Bernie Woodley [e-mail](#)
Secretary Mike McCombe [e-mail](#)
Treasurer Robin Weare [e-mail](#)
Conservation Officer Elsie Little [e-mail](#)
Training Officer Sue Mabbett [e-mail](#)
Assistant Training Officer Richard Hill [e-mail](#)
Equipment Officer Dave Ludlam [e-mail](#)
Assistant Equipment Officer Andy Lewington [e-mail](#)
Legal & Insurance Officer Owen Clarke [e-mail](#)
Registrar Gary Evans [e-mail](#)
Webmaster Barry Hill [e-mail](#)
Newsletter Editor Robin Weare [e-mail](#)

Otter Hole

The new booking system is working well with scheduled trips well up on recent years and only a few slots remaining at the time of writing. The first trips of the year have already taken place and the last weekend of April was set aside for conservation work with a group of leaders hard at work both inside and outside the cave.

It is good to report that the sump opened fully and on time allowing the rescue dump to be replenished and the rope on the black stal replaced. The tangle or ropes through the sump has been sorted out, the rope through the arch has been removed and the rope through the eyehole tightened to aid progress through it for those so inclined.

Brushes were placed at the climb to the extensions to assist parties to clean off when leaving the streamway and various bits of wire, plastic cans, shovels etc brought out.

Surface worksaw the path cleared and a complete refurbishment of the bathtub which is now reported to be in good working order. The provision of a duck is promised and ambitious plans to rig a shower near the bathtub may or may not come to fruition.

A signing in book has been placed at the entrance.

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Dan yr Ogof Fixed Aids

Work has been carried out over the last 18 months to upgrade some of the fixed aids within the cave. In particular new anchors, handlines and a fixed stainless steel ladder have been installed at the Abyss. Over time the rock had become more polished creating a tendency for people to only complete the round trip in one direction to avoid climbing up the Abyss. This led to the buoyancy devices generally being at the wrong end of the Green Canal for most people. The introduction of the ladder should mean that we now have a more even split of groups doing the round trip each way, thus giving a better distribution of buoyancy aids.

The next phase of work will be to replace the chain ladder at the Risings with a new stainless steel version.

Forest of Dean Cave Conservation & Access Group

The following e-mail addresses can now be used to access the various Officers.

chairman@fodccag.co.uk Paul Taylor
secretary@fodccag.co.uk John Hine
treasurer@fodccag.co.uk Tim Gilson
conservation@fodccag.co.uk Maurice Febry
permits@fodccag.co.uk David Tuffley
information@fodccag.co.uk David Appleing
enquiries@fodccag.co.uk John Hine

Diary

May 4 th	OFD Columns open day
May 7 th	GCRT Training session 7.30pm at Whitewalls
May 8 th	GCRG AGM 8.00pm at Cinderford depot
May 17 th	WBCRT Search and Rescue exercise
May 25 th	OFD Columns open day
June 1 st	GCRG Training event at Old Bow Mine, Clearwell
July 19 th	WBCRT/GCRG Mid Wales Mines Rescue Practice