

# **Minutes of the Caving Wales Annual General Meeting Held at Craig y Nos Hibbert Room on the 16 March 2025 at 1300h in person and by Zoom**

## **1. ATTENDANCE**

Stuart France, Adrian Fawcett, Sue Mabbett, Oliver Burrows, Vince Allkins, Martin Laverty, Roy Fellows, Mary Rogers, John Hine, Mark Tringham, Richard Hill, Nick de Gare Pitt.

## **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

John Sheehy, Allan Richardson, Mike Moore.

## **3. CHAIR'S WELCOME**

Adrian welcomed everyone to the meeting.

## **4. MINUTES OF THE 2024 AGM**

There were no matters arising from the 2024 minutes not otherwise covered by the agenda. Changing the use of the word 'Chairman' to 'Chair' was requested. The motion to accept these minutes was proposed by Vince Allkins and seconded by Martin Laverty. This passed nem con with three abstentions.

## **5. APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP**

None received.

## **6. OFFICERS REPORTS**

### **6.1 Chair - Adrian Fawcett**

As Chair, I find there is little for me to add that is not already covered by the other officers' reports. I thank them for their diligence and hard work over the past year.

While caving continues in much the same way as it has done for many years, under the surface things have been getting more difficult, not least our relationship with National Resources Wales, which seems to have become less cooperative and more confrontational.

Going forwards, we do need to find a way to re-engage pragmatically with NRW, where negotiated access agreements are seen as mutually beneficial, and responsibility for the underground environment can largely be delegated to the caving community.

### **6.2 Secretary - Allan Richardson**

A quiet year again with nothing other than routine matters to report. I have attended most of the BCA meetings to represent Caving Wales. I am willing to stand again.

## 6.3 Treasurer - Mary Rogers

### Ogofau Cymru / Caving Wales Treasurer's Report for the year ending 31st December 2024

The Ogofau Cymru / Caving Wales audited accounts for 2024 show a deficit of £1,195.07 reducing the OC/CW bank balance as of 31 December 2024 to £5,203.61.

The deficit is generally attributable to an increase in spending on fixed aids in various underground locations, improving access to Ogot Tardiadd Pwll Du and the agreed reimbursement to FoDCCAG towards the purchase of land around Wet Sink. Most of these, excluding the latter, we should be able to claim back from BCA, thus restoring our bank balance.

Many thanks again to Richard and John for their great help, and Ian Adams for efficient auditing.

Ogofau Cymru/ Caving Wales  
(formerly Cambrian Caving Council)  
Accounts  
Year Ended 31 December 2024

#### Income and Expenditure Account

	2024		2023	
	£	£	£	£
<b><u>Income</u></b>				
BCA Grant	425.88		529.79	
Training Events	1,200.00		1,920.00	
Compensation (Barclays)	60.00		0.00	
Keys	60.00		50.00	
<b>Total Income</b>		<u>1,745.88</u>		<u>2,499.79</u>
<b><u>Expenditure</u></b>				
Training Events	1,248.40		1,878.60	
Equipment and Techniques	784.83		266.37	
Conservation and Access	571.59		142.33	
FoDCCAG	281.00		0.00	
Print, Postage and Stationery	55.13		17.18	
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<u>2,940.95</u>		<u>2,304.48</u>
<b>Net Income (Expenditure) for the Year</b>		<u>(1,195.07)</u>		<u>195.31</u>

#### Balance Sheet

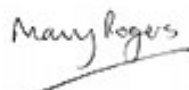
Barclays Current Account	5,203.61		6,398.68	
		<u>5,203.61</u>		<u>6,398.68</u>
Reserves at 31st December 2024 and 2023	6,398.68		6,203.37	
Net Income (Expenditure) for the Year	(1,195.07)		195.31	
<b>Total Reserves</b>		<u>5,203.61</u>		<u>6,398.68</u>

(Signed) Mary Rogers      Treasurer      Date : 06-02-2025

#### Honorary Scrutineer's Report

The above accounts of Ogofau Cymru / Caving Wales showing a net expenditure of £1,195.07 and capital of £5,203.61 have been prepared by us from the books, records, information and explanations provided to us by the above and we certify that the same is in accordance therewith

(Signed) Ian L Adams FFA FFTA AIAB (For Abacus Accountants)      Date: 10-02-2025



13 February 2025

## **6.4 Conservation and Access Officer - Stuart France**

### CAVING WALES / OGOFA CYMRU CONSTITUTION

The 2024 AGM passed constitutional changes to modernize the former Cambrian Caving Council so as to reflect its wider contemporary roles and offering to cavers in the present era including the change of name to Caving Wales / Ogofa Cymru (CW/OC) which is cast in the modern style of 'Sport Country' or 'Chwaraeon Gwlad' which also helps my role when contacts now more readily understand that CW is a sport representative body rather than some kind of forum or caving club.

### COVID

The problem is still widespread but in less dangerous forms than previously. The recent variants are descendants from Omicron (2021) with symptoms including a cough, congestion, runny nose, diarrhoea, fever or chills, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell, skin rashes and immune system reactions. Self-isolation remains its usual management with caving activities not much impacted.

### NATURAL RESOURCES WALES

There has been limited contact with NRW over the past year. NRW continues to email agendas and supporting documents to me concerning its National Access Forum for Wales (NAFW) meetings which relate to operation of the CRoW Act and other statutory access. I read them but there is nothing relevant to caving because NRW claims that the right-to-roam does not apply to caving, and NAFW is all about recreation as of right. In respect of caving, NRW has and continues to act contrary to all three aims of its national forum, which are:

1. To help improve the quality and extent of access to the countryside and coast of Wales, and extend the opportunities for enjoyment and responsible outdoor recreation to all, with regard to environmental sustainability and education and the context of the climate and nature emergencies (when NRW along with WG opposed statutory caving access in Court)
2. To work together as a stakeholder network, fostering understanding, and sharing information and good practice; to support the realisation of benefits of outdoor recreation and access in Wales (when NRW revoked the mine access scheme after 7 successful years)
3. To support NRW in its aim of more people participating in, and benefitting from, outdoor recreation more often (when NRW is trying to reduce or remove opportunities to go caving)

We have to discuss NAFW at this AGM because NRW has now threatened twice, in writing, to throw Caving Wales out of this forum for non-attendance. Personally, I am not prepared to waste any more of my weekday time and travel to attend NAFWs, but anyone else willing is welcome to attend this.

NRW treats caving as an indoors hobby because cave passages by definition tend to be enclosed. However, the Court of Appeal panel of three senior judges in the 'Dartmoor Camping' Judicial Review brought by the Open Spaces Society <http://www.oss.org.uk> unanimously ruled that being enclosed inside a tent, or being asleep inside a tent or indeed anywhere else, is still 'open-air recreation' when it is part of a recreational experience conducted outside of the built environment. The judges were critical of those taking turns of phrase used by legislation too literally and disregarding their generality.

The plaintiff is appealing this result to the Supreme Court where, if the CA judgment is upheld in the coming months or years, then drawing the obvious analogy between being enclosed by a tent and by a cave in the context of recreation invalidates NRW's narrative and shows the lengths to which people or organisations on a personal or corporate mission will stretch semantics to misrepresent what is generally understood and was intended by primary legislation. The camping case also confirms the BCA's Judicial Review had good prospects – but it lacked sufficient finance and confidence to see it through compared to OSS whose status, legal experience and contacts have been built up in the past 160 years.

NRW is joining up the Mynydd Llangattock and the Mynydd Llangynidr SSSIs and adding extra areas near Merthyr to create a 'Mega-SSSI'. A consultation amongst interested parties is underway but a source in the Bannau Brecheiniog (former Brecon Beacons) National Park has said this is "already a done deal". NRW has used PDCMG as its conduit for disseminating its consultation documents to the caving community despite this group not having any locus for the original or enlarged SSSI. I have provided a link to a zip file containing all of that material on the ukCaving forum. In these you will find that cave discovery and caving in general is to be placed under stricter controls.

Negotiations with NRW to create a new mine explorer scheme faltered in July 2024 since when NRW has not replied to correspondence from Cave Access Ltd (CAL) which operated the old access scheme which NRW summarily revoked in 2022. July coincided with the announcement of ~250 staff redundancies in NRW by the end of September, plus closure or scaling back of recreational facilities. Further bad news for this troubled organisation is a £19M interim tax demand from HMRC concerning irregularities in its payroll. The tax owed by NRW has been paid through a Welsh Government loan.

NRW is also involved in Ogof Tarddiad Pwll Du, or to be more precise use of the permissive path to its entrance, as explained below. This follows the disclosure to NRW of the Ogof Draenen connection during February 2024, and in turn to the wider caving community and PDCMG later last year.

#### BRITISH CAVING ASSOCIATION

BCA has a number of new council members at its AGM last summer including chair, secretary and treasurer. It is still too early to see strategic results arising from the leadership changes, but operational improvements have been quick and plain to see, like updating their website content and the wider use of web technology, and more clarity about regional council spending including C&A.

#### UNESCO GEOPARK

I have attended all but one of the management group meetings for the Fforest Fawr Geopark which operates under the auspices of the Bannau Brycheiniog (former Brecon Beacons) National Park Authority. There have been more than the usual number of meetings in 2024 because of the need to renew its charter. This has been successful giving another four years of UNESCO support. Its original land area is roughly the entire NPA west of a line from Merthyr to Brecon which includes OFD and DYO etc. An application is in development to expand its official area by almost 10%, i.e. the limit that UNESCO allows as a 'one-off'. The aim is to attach some of the adjoining former coalfield areas between the A465 and the southern boundary line of the national park.

The raison d'être of a Geopark is more cultural than geological which reflects UNESCO's purpose. So although many people involved in our one are geology professionals, or with personal interests like myself, the local authorities are also stakeholders too who see the Geopark as a means of bringing visitors and thus income into their areas and fostering a stronger 'sense of place' within communities.

#### MLCMAC

Caving at Mynydd Llangattock continues to be observed by the MLCMAC advisory committee. This group has been given support by CW since NRW decided to stop hosting it. Its purpose had been to advise NRW as the legal Occupier of the Craig-y-Cilau national nature reserve under a lease from the Beaufort Estate which delegated control of the caves to NRW's predecessor body. The lease expired over 20 years ago according to my sources and NRW finds itself unable to renew it. Therefore control of the caves reverted back to the Beaufort Estate long ago. NRW has no role here other than as the statutory conservation body whose domain in that regard is the whole of Wales.

The Chair of CW and I have met with the land agents leaving them with the task of setting out how the estate now wishes to manage the caves and what information and advice they may need from cavers to assist them. The estate is aware that CW is not managing the caves nor directing the MLCMAC which remains free to make its own recommendations and find new members from cavers able and willing to volunteer time or ideas. The role of CW is providing MLCMAC with access to BCA and other funds, internet, banking and other services enabling it to continue without NRW running it.

We still await written proposals from the estate but in the meanwhile it is clear they are content with the status quo under which the former permit system has been dropped in favour of some practical adjustments to the inherited cave access rules and cave key distribution system. The informal access permission is that the estate welcomes bona fide amateur cavers for 'responsible' caving activities on its land. Responsible in this context means not damaging cave formations or causing disturbance to roosting bats, and not altering cave entrances or interfering with the local wildlife.

For the full set of NRW consultative SSSI documents see: <https://linetop.co.uk/CW/NewSSSI.zip>

#### OFD

SWCC is continuing with its post-covid system for cavers to apply in advance for a code to open a key safe to obtain a cave key on a particular date. This has been working well. See SWCC's website.

#### DYO

The £5 per visit charge system for cavers towards conservation and access also seems to be working well too. The system depends on the goodwill of the cave owners and nominated cave leaders taking in groups of BCA-insured cavers (or the equivalent) that request access.

The online telemetry project replaced the cave electronics in the past summer following a flooding incident in 2023. Sadly, the new equipment did not last long either as Storm Bert in September seems to have damaged it due to a lightning strike inducing high voltage on the cave rescue phone line that forwarded 15-minute data to an internet connection in the show cave premises. The winter weather has prevented entry to the cave, but it is hoped to repair this during 2025 and make it more storm-proof. A sample of what the PC and mobile phone apps should look like is available at <https://linetop.co.uk/dyo> where 1-hourly and 4-hourly charts track cave river level and local rainfall versus the low point in the roof where the Cascades join Lake 2 where caver entry or exit becomes impossible during floods. The show cave company has kindly offered use of its new WiFi and wired Ethernet connections which are expected to become available during 2025.

#### FoDCCAG

Last year saw some amazing announcements and presentations about extensive cave discoveries in the Forest and the completion of the land purchase around Wet Sink by a new limited company (FoDCCAG Ltd) on behalf of the conservation-access group. The modest asking price and legal costs and conservation materials have largely been grant aided by the BCA Cave Conservation Emergency Fund mainly due to the efforts of Jenny Potts, plus additional contributions from BCA and CW.

The access arrangements for non-FoDCCAG clubs are to apply in advance for a key which is collected on the day from an agreed place. CW sees this system as unnecessarily restrictive and unequal towards other clubs' members. We requested evidence that the group is constitutionally founded, holds bona fide AGMs, elections and so forth, which are necessary to be a BCA and CW group member, thus giving them access to BCA insurance. Nothing has been forthcoming.

#### OGOF DRAENEN

PDCMG has put its plans to become a limited company on hold following the announcement of a connection with Ogof Tarddiad Pwll Du last May. The one-entrance one-landowner locked-entrance concept ended long ago with various alternative unlocked entrances located on public access land. The novelty of OTPD is having a different landowner who has welcomed bona fide amateur cavers generally as his guests to use a permitted path to reach the unlocked OTPD entrance for 'responsible' caving activities, i.e. the usual approach taken by small farmers and larger estates. By contrast the PDCMG 'trustees' have acquired management rights from their landowner via a written contract. Converting an informal trust into a limited company would promote them to a new level of 'occupier'.

The open entrances at Drws Cefn and the Nunnery remain in use. These are both on Urban Common land to which a statutory right of public access exists for taking 'air and exercise'. Neither are SSSIs or Scheduled Monuments. NRW does not dispute that going caving is air and exercise, which is the term used by Section 193 of the Law of Property Act 1925 permitting recreation, but NRW then argues that the

word 'land' as applied to 'air and exercise' excludes caves which is beyond comprehension considering how broadly 'land' is defined in 3-D terms by Section 205 of the very same Act.

There is a voluntary logbook at the OTPD entrance for safety reasons to narrow the search should a group be reported as missing and to obtain some statistics on footfall should advice ever be needed.

NRW has engaged with the new landowner by writing a strong letter last June. This letter noted that CW would be receiving a letter too advising it on "appropriate actions ... to ensure [legal] compliance". Our new landowner has since written to me saying he is still content for caver access to continue along the permissive path route to reach the caves for responsible caving activities.

NRW did write to CW last November. Amongst other matters that email rehearsed NRW's complaint and said matters they discussed with the landowner are now closed. NRW then alleged that a written agreement exists between the landowner and CW whereby CW manages the land on an equal basis with the actual landowner, making CW into another Occupier of this land. We believe CW obtained this incorrect impression from PDCMG. Since SSSI controls operate at the landowner level, turning CW into a Joint Occupier would be a necessary first step in future enforcement action, or threat of it, in effect equating us with the real landowner in terms of legal liability and duties.

CW wrote to NRW in December to correct their misunderstanding of the situation and re-state that all we have done is obtain a welcome for bona fide cavers as his visitors to use the permitted path to go caving. The legal definition of an Occupier was created by case law in the 1960s. In summary, it is someone who has sufficient control over land to become liable to persons being on that land in the context of the Occupiers' Liability Act 1957. Occupier normally means such as a tenant farmer or tenant pub landlord where land rights and duties etc have been conveyed to a third party via a property deed.

The second step is to find something over which to conflict with the confected occupier. NRW is trying to make a case that caver access along the woodland path should be restricted because the SSSI Citation for the woodland as a whole mentions Brittle Bladder Fern. The other two plant species it mentions are Ash trees and a flower that does not grow in woodland. None of these are rare or endangered being well distributed across the entire northern hemisphere, including in my garden. In fact all paths in this little visited private woodland were made by sheep and badgers who are still the most common 'visitors'. The woodland paths have existed at least since before the 1980s, being seen in their present form by myself and other cavers during that decade. I have told NRW that if they make a decision to disregard the legal definition of Occupier to suit some anti-caving narrative which is not founded on genuinely necessary conservation measures then it will likely result in Judicial Review.

Given the legal context, NRW's current disposition and its course of conduct, I have the support of our executive to limit interaction with NRW concerning the above. The last meeting of the MLCMAC also voted unanimously not to have NRW staff present at its committee meetings for the time being.

#### OGOF GOFAN / CASTLEMARTIN RANGE WEST

Light but steady visits to this small but spectacular cave have continued over the past year with good feedback from visiting groups. Arrange visits to Ogof Gofan through me please and I will request the firing range management to issue you with a PDF permit giving you exclusive access to the cave for up to four people for one day. Allow 2 weeks notice for setting this up please if you can. You can see what dates are definitely not available for public access due to live firing exercises on the Range at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/castlemartin-firing-notice--2/>

Also call the Range's answerphone on 01646 662367 on the day before your visit to confirm the footpath to the cave will be open and that the firing schedule has not changed at the last moment.

A different system applies for access to Range West to explore for new caves. You need to attend a briefing meeting at the range and in person to get onto their annual permission list which enables you to acquire a day badge on the date of your visit from the guard room subject to various T&Cs. The dates for the 2025 briefing meetings are on the CW website.

I attended the recreational users' AGM held at Castlemartin Range once again. This is a key event to strengthen relations with landowner personnel and interested parties like the PCNPA and their local Ranger. All concerned reported being very happy with the present cave access arrangements.

#### GOING FORWARD

I am willing to stand again but as I have been in this job for 10 years perhaps someone else should consider taking over the role or some aspects of it. I am willing to provide support and advice. As well as the obvious conservation and access provision remit implied by the job-title, it does mean attending real meetings across Wales, meeting people to build constructive relationships, keeping abreast of developments in the caving and wider world, staying on top of email and being responsive to cavers.

Sadly, I have also to say that commercial experience and a grip on all relevant legislation has become a necessity in dealing with increasingly imaginative opposition to going caving itself or the facilitation of caving. The standard tactic of central government organisations now is to stretch legal semantics beyond all reason to build a legislative framework around an unstated control and limitation agenda.

In contrast, my experience of landowners has been consistently good, and we are fortunate to have such generous and supportive private hosts, for which I sincerely thank them all.

#### DISCUSSION:

Reflecting the Chair's comments on seeking better relations with NRW, Sue Mabbett volunteered to attend their NAFW meetings for 2025 while Stuart would remain as an email contact. She was co-opted as a non-executive representative to NAFW to attend its next three meetings during 2025/26.

### **6.5 Training Officer - Richard Hill**

Training events continue to be well supported for SRT and Geology walks. This spring we are charging a small fee for the Geology walks, because BBNPA are charging us, and still we are getting cavers signing up. The next set of SRT workshops will see a small increase in price just because Llangorse climbing centre have increased their admission fees.

Unfortunately NRW refused a permit for us to run a Bat Walk this winter and I have struggled to find someone willing to run a photography workshop.

I will endeavour to remedy this and try and organise one for later in the year and maybe see if there is interest in a surveying workshop.

I am willing to stand again but also happy if someone else wants to take over.

### **6.6 Equipment and Techniques Officer - Vince Allkins**

Another year dominated by resin-bonded anchors. I have been acting as resin-bonded anchor coordinator, trainer and assessor. We currently have seven approved installers, however all but one live in the south of our region. I intend to address this in the coming year with more training and induction sessions for new installers.

We have recovered some of the missing Bolt Products (BP) twisted shaft anchors issued over 10 years ago which we may now use where needed. The whereabouts of the remaining missing anchors in this North Wales batch remains uncertain and the executive will need to discuss this matter. May I remind everyone that the BCA resin bonded anchor installation scheme must only be carried out by approved installers to conform and comply with the insurance-backed element of this scheme.

Recently we successfully extracted two previous issue of DMM resin bonded anchors. One of these was reported loose on the top of the pitch at Pant Mawr pot. We managed to do this without a hydraulic or

mechanical extractor although there were some drill bit breakages. We intend to carry out the same extraction process on BP twisted shaft anchors at a surface quarry. Our thanks to the South Wales Caving Club for permission and support in this important project. Caving Wales is now installing the IC anchor but will continue with limited stocks of the BP twisted shaft anchor where appropriate.

There has been new resin bonded anchor installations in the following caves. See Caving Wales website for the rigging guides.

- Ogof Ffynnon Ddu: multiple pitches, ongoing installations.
- Wills Hole
- Porth Yr Ogof
- Pwll Dwfn: an alternative pitch
- Bridge cave: traverse anchors and a drilled thread hole over the 'bridge'. The scaffolding and choke were also checked.

There is a suggestion of a test bed to be established in a non-limestone location with a view to installing resin bonded anchors under the BCA scheme for possible anchor installations in metal mines in the Caving Wales region. An ongoing process, also to be discussed by the executive.

Caving Wales has financially assisted with funding for fixed aids in the south of the region with continuing requests to do so. All member clubs are reminded that they too may make similar requests.

## **6.7 Cave Registrar - Martin Laverty**

I have made one major addition to the Registry this year: a compilation of all the data I could find on water tracing in relation to the karst. The list of tests is at:

[http://www.caving.wales/registry/hydrology/hyd\\_list.php](http://www.caving.wales/registry/hydrology/hyd_list.php)

Tests can also be viewed from links on relevant individual sites, or as shown on the map by going to Map overlays > Wales > Geomorphology > Hydrology. The data is surely incomplete: additions and corrections will be welcome.

Although around 50 new sites have been logged, almost all come from the review of hydrological literature for the addition noted above. There have been almost no new discoveries or explorations reported this year apart from the connection of Ogof Tarddiad Pwll Du to Ogof Draenen.

The combined and extended Llangatwg and Llangynidr SSSIs – named Mynyddoedd Llangynidr a Llangatwg, Cefn yr Ystrad a Chomin Merthyr (clearly no room for any English name, mandatory or not) – now appears on Data Map Wales, as reflected on <http://caving.wales/registry/CCRM.htm> by going to Map overlays > Wales > Conservation. This new designation covers somewhere around 50 sites.

The Registry, in various forms, will be sixty years old in November and has had at least seven Registrars, sometimes with additional regional assistants. I have now been Registrar for over a decade and am happy to continue but would welcome discussion with anyone who might have ideas for improving, or even aspire to take over, this resource.

## **6.8 Publicity and Information Officer - John Sheehy**

I have made a number of routine changes to the website throughout the year to publicise training courses, geological walks and other newsworthy events. A number of corrections were made to the email forwarders for member clubs and committee members.

The pages for the Mynydd Llangatwg Cave Management / Advisory Committee (MLCMAC) have been expanded to host the new and updated cave access rules for Ogof Craig a Ffynnon, Agen Allwedd and Ogof Capel. The topos page has also been updated to incorporate more guides for OFD and has been expanded to include guides for Tunnel Cave, Pwll Dwfn and also Adrian Fawcett's topo guide. I am happy to continue in these roles in 2025.



		<p>Helicopter to Hospital in Cardiff.</p> <p>33 TM deployed          20 on Standby</p>
22 <sup>nd</sup> & 23 <sup>rd</sup> 03/2024	Nant Y Moel Mountainside	<p>A Spaniel named Benni had fallen into a rift whilst out on a walk. The rift was small, and required widening using Dewalt Drill with chisel bit. The dog was extracted at 08:45 and the Team were off site by 9:30. Team RV with Fire Service at 05:00 so total time on site 4 1/2 hrs.</p> <p>7 TM deployed          13 on Standby</p>
21/07/2024	Pen y Cymoedd Windfarm, Aberdare	<p>The Landrover was deployed to a hillside near Aberdare. A dog named Bryn had fallen down a rift. Using a tripod, a Team Member abseiled down to get a lead onto Bryn the dog. A second Team Member then went down, fitted a harness and brought the dog to the surface.</p> <p>8 TM deployed          4 on Standby</p>
31/08/2024	Daren Cilau	<p>Two brothers were overdue on a trip in Daren Cilau. On contacting their Mother who made the callout, they had just exited the Cave. Team stood down. One of the shortest callouts – 13 minutes.</p> <p>1 TM deployed          2 on Standby</p>
13/10/2024	Cwmystwyth Mine	<p>Rescuers were called to an incident at the Cwmystwyth Mines area. The person was cold and wet and in danger of hypothermia being unable to climb down to exit the mine. Team members reached the casualty and after rigging a rope and encouraging the casualty, they were able to lower them to the floor. Casualty walked out, accompanied by Team members. Good EE coverage at the entrance is a new development.</p> <p>7 TM deployed          4 on Standby</p>
29/12/2024	Agen Allwedd	<p>Incident transferred via SARCALL from LONGMRT, to whom it had been assigned in error by DPP.</p> <p>3 male cavers attempting Grand Circle round trip had not exited by their callout time.</p> <p>While preliminary investigations were taking place, and before any Team members had been deployed, new information came through that the cavers had now safely exited the cave. They had been unable to find their way through Biza Passage, the suspicion being that the passage was sumped as a result of a severe flood event that had occurred a few weeks previously ('Storm Bert'). They were forced to return via Southern Stream Passage, hence becoming overdue.</p> <p>0 TM deployed          0 on Standby</p>

## **7.5 GCRG**

## **7.6 OFDCAG – Allan Richardson, Secretary**

OFDCAG continues to meet twice a year with occasional NRW input. Over the last year positive discussions between OFDCAG and SWCC have seen the exit at Lows Chain in OFD1 made safer with the installation of metal steps and a number of popular SRT routes have been improved by the installation of resin anchors under the BCA Resin Anchor Scheme. This is an ongoing programme with more sites being considered on the grounds of conservation. All the above works have the approval of the NRW.

## **7.7 DYOCAP – Tony Baker, Chair and Wardens' Secretary**

The Dan-yr-Ogof Cave Advisory Panel continues to manage caver access beyond the showcave, to the satisfaction of both the showcave management and the caving community. The past year has seen a welcome influx of Warden permit applications from young, enthusiastic cavers and these continue to do more than their share of escorting visiting cavers into the cave. In September 2024 a successful rescue practice was held in DYO by SMWCRT and lessons learned from that, especially in regard to underground communication, will be useful in the future.

## **7.8 PDCMG**

## **7.9 CMT**

## **7.10 MLCMAC**

## **7.11 Ogof Marros**

## **7.12 GSS**

### **Club Report of Gloucester Speleological Society (GSS) to Caving Wales AGM, March 2025**

GSS have been working hard this year and delivered on some interesting speleological projects in our home county of Gloucestershire. The long-running re-survey and science project in Wet Sink-Slaughter Stream Cave that was started in late 2018 has produced some end results with not only a detailed spatial position for the system passageways but speleogenetic information too. These both have allowed focussed digging opportunities to be pursued, which have been well publicised in Descent magazine and at the Hidden Earth (HE) Conference. The completed re-survey was published at HE and received best survey prize.

Through two seasons at nearby Redhouse Lane Swallet (the cave is inaccessible ~6 months of the year due to flooding of the Entrance Series) GSS has led a re-survey and digging project that resulted in over 4km of new finds, that are still ongoing. The realisation of a master Symonds Yat Cave System seems likely before long which will join together the above two caves and others nearby to create a very fine and scientifically important 22km+ long cave system.

GSS is also close to publishing a historical and archaeological account of the Windrush stone mines that are located between Cheltenham and Burford in the Cotswolds in the eastern part of Gloucestershire. At long last an integrated survey plan of these mines has been finalised and this shows them to be around 4.2km long. GSS work in opening up these mines, conserving them and researching into them started in 1990's and is still continuing.

Our club has continued it's long association with caving in Wales with many recreational trips, in the Llangattock and Draenen area in particular. We are constituent members of CW, CSCC, WCMS and NAMHO and participate as much as possible in the activities of those associations. GSS is one of the three constituent clubs that make up FoDCCAG and we participate fully on it's committee and in it's activities and these help improve conservation and access arrangements for all bona-fide UK cavers who want to cave in the Forest of Dean. Like many UK caving clubs at present we are low on younger active members and we would welcome any prospective newcomers to get in touch via [info@gloucester-speleo.org](mailto:info@gloucester-speleo.org) and take part in what is proving to be an exciting phase for our club.

Regards, Mark Tringham (GSS Chair)

## **8. BCA Matters**

The meeting noted that a younger executive is now in control.

## **9. Election of Officers**

No posts were contested so the incumbents were re-elected en bloc without a vote, as follows:

Chair	Adrian Fawcett
Secretary	Allan Richardson
Treasurer	Mary Rogers
C&A	Stuart France
E&T	Vince Allkins
Training	Richard Hill
Recreational Mines Exploration Officer	Roy Fellows
Cave Registrar	Martin Laverty
P&I	John Sheehy

## **10. AOB**

Mark Tringham (GSS) mentioned interest in the fresh water resurgences near Stackpole, Pembrokeshire, as of interest. Getting in touch with Paul Culyer (NRW's approachable local manager) was suggested so as to set up some sort of joint project might help to build a better relationship with NRW too.

John Hine (FoDCCAG) mentioned a historic letter that he has regarding FoD access that would be of wider interest.

## **11. Date and Location of next Caving Wales AGM**

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2026 was chosen, with the location and time to be decided later. It was agreed that moving the AGM around different parts of Wales should continue. There was a preference for it being held other than in Snowdonia next time, with Mid-Wales mentioned as a possibility.

A preference was also expressed for the hybrid format of physical meeting with Zoom option to continue. It was noted that the online aspect had performed better this year than in 2024 when it was first tried. On both occasions our host venues provided fast internet access, while IT equipment and access to Zoom was provided by Stuart, so good connectivity remains key in the choice of future venues.