



Dan Yr Ogof Cave Advisory Committee - Important flooding update

Recent Flooding in DYO

On the 15th March, two experienced wardens became trapped in the cave by flood water. After an uncomfortable 24 hours waiting for water levels to drop, they were rescued unharmed - but not without the involvement of large numbers of rescuers and extensive media coverage. Although this is the first such event for many years, we'd like to draw wardens' attention to a few points:-

Under certain conditions, the water levels in the cave can react very quickly to rainfall. It doesn't take a major storm to make the cave impassable: "normal" steady rain will cause the lakes to sump after a few hours if the ground is already wet.

Although the water levels can drop quickly once the rain stops, it is not unusual for the lakes to remain sumped for days at a time.

It has also been noted that in recent years the hydrology of the cave has been changing. The showcave staff have noticed that the lakes now rise faster than they have in previous times.

Despite the survival equipment provided in Boulder Chamber, it's quite clear that being trapped there for more than a short period would be very unpleasant and potentially life-threatening.

Apparent trends towards a wetter and more extreme climate suggest that long-duration floods are becoming more common.

Divers were able to pass lakes 2 & 3 whilst the cave was flooded - but the Cascades beyond were completely impassable due to the huge flow of water and potentially lethal stopper-waves. If you become trapped by high water, there is no magic escape route.

When planning trips you should be familiar with the route across the lakes, water levels, recent rainfall and the current weather forecast and should be satisfied that the party have considered the risks associated with the cave.

Weather conditions

To assist you in assessing the weather we have placed a number of useful local weather links on the DYO.org.uk website. The met office website being very useful.

<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk>

If you do not have internet access, you may phone the showcave and they will be happy to give you an update on the current weather status.

Showcave management 01639 730284

Heed the advice of local cavers and showcave staff. If in doubt, come back another day.

Temporary limitation on parties entering the cave in wet weather

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 DYOAC and 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 cavers allowed into DYO will be approximately 8 in any one day. In dry settled weather the number of people allowed in will remain unchanged.

Please check the weather before embarking on a trip, not only for the day of the trip but the preceding days. Always have an alternative trip planned in case the weather is not with you.

Please be aware that the showcave staff have the authority to remove caver access if they feel that water levels and or weather conditions warrant it.

Tunnel Cave is not weather dependant and can be accessed via the showcave under similar access conditions as DYO. Simply ask at the showcave for an airlock key. Access to the gated Tunnel Top entrance is via the SWCC.

Indications of water levels

As you leave the showcave at Bridge Chamber, a walkway with handrails is followed and passes over Lake 1. This location is a very good indicator of water levels, as in favourable conditions the water will be below the concrete footpath. In higher conditions the water overflows the footpath. When the water has reached the middle horizontal bar of the handrail, the lakes will sump quickly if the water continues to rise.

Selecting a suitable party size

Party sizes in DYO are limited to 4 plus the warden for conservation reasons.

When planning trips we advise that you also consider the minimum that you have in your party. If someone were to have an accident or become unwell, would you be able to send someone out to elicit fast assistance and still keep someone with the casualty? A wet immobile caver will lose heat quickly and may rapidly succumb to hypothermia. A casualty in this situation will need someone to stay with them to keep them warm. Too small a party size could mean in this situation waiting for your call out time being reached to trigger a response from the rescue teams. A larger size party would allow for a casualty to be tended while others elicited a fast and targeted response from the rescue team.

Four is often regarded as a good party size.

The American website below contains some very useful information about hypothermia in a caving environment.

http://www.wemsi.org/hypo_1.html

Cascade Aven Extensions

Some of you may be aware of recent discoveries in the Cascade Aven area of the cave. Details will appear in the next edition of Descent. A full biological survey of the area is about to be carried out, and we ask you to not visit this area until this has been completed. We will update you in a future newsletter.