

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL *CYNGOR OGOFEYDD CYMREIG*

Affiliated to the British Caving Association

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at GCRG Depot
March th

Present

Bernie Woodley	Chairman	SWCC
Mike McCombe	Secretary	Newbury & District CC
Brendan Marris	Cave Registrar	
Elsie Little	Conservation Officer	
Maurice Febry		Gloucester SS
Robin Weare	Treasurer	Hades CC
Ben Lovett		Morgannwg CC
Tony Wilson		Shropshire Mining Club & Scouts
Dave Linton		Welsh Mines Society
John Hine		FoDCCAG
Sue Mabbett	Training Officer	
Owen Clarke	Legal & Insurance Officer	Cwmbran CC
Fleur Loveridge		PDCMG
Pete Talling		
Greg Jones		RFDCC
Stuart France		Chelsea SS
Tim Barter		Westminster SG
Martin Laverty		Grwp Ogofeydd Garimpieros
Linda Wilson		UBSS
Tim Guilford		OUCC
Chris Gibbs		

Chairman's opening remarks

The Chairman welcomed everybody to the meeting and thanked GCRG for their hospitality in hosting the meeting

Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Shropshire Scouts Caving Team, Cadley Hill Caving Club, Heather Simpson (NWCRO), Paul Taylor (GCRG), Barry Hill, Andy Lewington

Minutes of the 2009 Annual General Meeting

It was pointed out that the permit system refers to Forestry Commission sites only. With this amendment a motion to accept the minutes was proposed by Elsie Little, seconded by Robin Weare and unanimously agreed.

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CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL *CYNGOR OGOFEYDD CYMREIG*

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Matters Arising from the minutes of the Annual General Meeting

There were no matters arising.

Constitution Changes

Mike McCombe explained each of the individual changes circulated with the minutes (see attached). Robin Weare also pointed out a number of additional changes, mostly typographical, that had been missed in previous updates:

- In para 3.2 “caving an mining” should be “caving and mining”
- in 8.1 remove change bar
- In 8.6 (b) delete “associate”
- in 8.6 (h) replace “auditor” with “scrutineer”

All of the proposed changes were agreed unanimously (motion proposed by John Hine, seconded by Stuart France).

Applications for Membership

The Secretary reported that the following BCA member clubs had applied for membership:

Adit Now
Combined Services Caving Association
Gloucestershire Bat Group
Great Orme Exploration Society
Gwynedd Bat Group
Lost World Caving Club
Wirral Caving Group

In the absence of any objections, all of the above were formally accepted as members. It was also agreed that Cardiff University CC would be re admitted as members once they had renewed their BCA membership

Membership applications, with cheques for £12 and copies of their constitutions had also been received from the following (who are not members of BCA):

Grwp Ogofeydd Garimpeiros (GOG)
Morgannwg Caving Club

Mike McCombe asked the GOG representative whether GOG would unreservedly support all of the “Guiding Principles” set out in the Cambrian Constitution ad, in particular, 4.2 which states that “Landowners and tenants... have the right to grant or withhold access”. Stuart France, for GOG, stated that they would but did not believe that the landowner’s right to deny access could be applied to Open Access land. Several of the other attendees strongly disagreed with this view, including Elsie Little (Conservation & Access Officer) and Linda Wilson (a professional property lawyer). Lively discussion ensued, at the end of which the Chairman

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CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL *CYNGOR OGOFEYDD CYMREIG*

Affiliated to the British Caving Association

asked Stuart France again whether GOG support clause 4.2 of the constitution. Stuart replied that they do. A motion to admit GOG was proposed by Greg Jones and seconded by Robin Weare. This was accepted by a majority of six votes to four.

A motion to admit Morgannwg CC proposed by Tim Guilford and seconded by Linda Wilson was agreed unanimously.

. Officers' Reports

a Chairman's Report

[See written report below]

During the last year I have attended several meetings on behalf of the Cambrian Caving Council with the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and the Countryside Council for Wales in relation to management plans and to ensure that the interests of cavers were included.

Last year the Sports Council for Wales commissioned an on line survey for all the national governing bodies for sport in Wales to ask them how the SCW was performing. The Secretary, Treasurer and myself all took part in this and I was given the chance to follow up my comments in a recorded interview with the market research team. Although the workload for the Secretary and Treasurer required by the SCW to enable us to claim our grants has reduced, it still remains disproportionately high. I managed to get this message across to the researchers along with the fact that we are all volunteers, which caused some astonishment. I sincerely hope that this helps to produce a further reduction in our officer's workload.

I share our Treasurer's concerns regarding the level of our reserves and if I am re elected I will ask the new committee to discuss an increase of the amount of training we offer, to include subjects such as surveying, geology, photography for example, as well as the popular SRT courses.

I would also like to see us becoming more proactive in the promotion of our sport. We need more and younger people to begin cave exploration and to take our places in the future. I envisage a series of public lectures with a power point display to show people what they are missing. Hopefully this will encourage people to try our sport. If any of those people are over 18, they can be given a list of clubs from which to choose but I do realise that there is a problem with caving clubs accepting under 18's. I do not believe the problem is insurmountable. There are commercial outdoor providers that can cater for the under 18's and some of them are conscientious enough to offer a caving weekend at cost for enthusiastic youngsters. I would ask the new committee to consider a grant for part of the cost in order to give the encouragement that could make the difference for someone not currently earning a wage to start the sport. There is a further problem of course, once the under 18 has completed his or her basic cave training come experience, what do they do then? It is unrealistic to expect them to wait until they are 18 to join a club or to continue to pay commercial rates to continue their new sport. I will therefore ask the committee to consider this problem and try to find a mechanism to deal with it.

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Finally, I would like to thank the present committee for all of their work undertaken over this last year.

Bernie Woodley. March 2010.

b Secretary's Report

[See written report below]

Work with BCA to try to resolve issues with membership administration are at last starting to bear fruit with the likelihood that the 2010 BCA membership renewal cycle will collect the statistics that we need. There remain substantial delays in the process and it was recognised that if need be to know with any certainty who our members are at the time of our AGM, we would have to take more ownership ourselves and implement a membership renewal process of our own, even if most clubs don't have to pay a subscription.

Despite promises from SCW (now "Sport Wales") that the effort needed to complete the Self-Assurance documentation would be largely a one-off, the 2009 forms required most of the data to be input as though from scratch. We successfully argued that the admin required was disproportionate to the size of our grant and can now answer "not applicable" to most of the questions. We also now have a formal exemption from the increasingly stringent "Anti doping" regime being applied by *UK Sport* to all National Governing Bodies.

Membership numbers continue to grow as more BCA member-clubs with an interest in Wales and the Forest of Dean realise that they can join at no cost.

DYOCAC Rep's Report

2009 has been a relatively quiet year for caving at Dan yr Ogof. Another exceptionally wet summer has resulted in fewer cavers visiting the system and the great majority of trips being done by a few individuals. Warden permits expired at the end of June 2009 and most wardens renewed (this is free of charge). Currently, there are 73 wardens.

The Entrapment Camp in Wigmore Hall is now complete and a fund set up through the generosity of the showcave company to keep it maintained. Hopefully, it will never need to be used!

Progress is now being made on the Management Plan as CCW adopt the format used by Natural England, allowing the same methodology to be used across all underground SSSIs throughout England and Wales. An initiative to extend the DYO National Nature Reserve to cover the whole system is making slow progress, mostly due to resource limitations in CCW.

Mike McCombe
February, 2010

c Treasurer's Report

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CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL *CYNGOR OGOFEYDD CYMREIG*

Affiliated to the British Caving Association

[See written report below]

At the time of the last AGM the accounts were presented as being subject to scrutiny. That process was completed within a few days and the accounts were then submitted to SCW and to the BCA finance committee thus clearing the way for payment of the second instalment of the SCW grant and the expenditure reclaim from BCA in respect of 2008.

I reported last year that the BCA finance committee had agreed a document which sought to formalise procedures for the funding of Regional Councils. This was subsequently approved at the annual general meeting of the BCA with the major benefit to caving in our region that it has allowed us to fund and reclaim administrative expenses incurred by our access controlling bodies.

The Sports Council for Wales has continued its support with a £600 grant for 2010 but they have quite pointedly reminded me of the condition that it must be spent.

It is from this funding that the £2,000 for the Cave Rescue teams and the financial assistance for expeditions flows and it comes only after a huge commitment in time and effort by our officers

We are on a four year cycle and we currently have about £1000 more reserves than we should under this agreement. It is my view that for this support to continue we must reduce our reserves to the agreed amount by the end of this year and, if reappointed as Treasurer, I will be seeking to ensure that is done. The result will be a financial deficit of around £1,000 in 2010 and will reduce the reserves to the target £4,500 plus inflation.

The accounts for the year ended 31st December 2009 are attached. They show a surplus of £90.52 and that reserves increased to £5,576.52. Expenditure included £83.80 for the cost of Pwll Ddu Cave Management Group meetings. I anticipate that this will be recoverable from the BCA under the new funding arrangements and have made provision accordingly. In earlier years funding these meetings would have fallen to Pwll Ddu.

Other expenditure in the year, also recoverable through the funding arrangement with BCA, paid for the materials used to stabilise the collapsed boulder chokes in Bridge Cave and Wet Sink and contributed to the gate at Drwys Cefn.

Using the SCW grant we were able to contribute to First Aid training in North Wales and in South Wales.

Robin Weare
February 2010

Expanding on the need for CCC to spend all of its grant funding, Robin asked member clubs to contact him with proposals for useful training and development activities that CCC might fund.

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CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL *CYNGOR OGOFEYDD CYMREIG*

Affiliated to the British Caving Association

d Conservation & Access Officer's Report

This has been an extremely busy year for negotiation on a wide range of fronts and for feelers to be put out for likely changes. Consequently I am more grateful than ever for the many individuals who have given their time and energy to assist.

Miners and cavers continue to cement their closer mutual support and interchange of ideas. Both groups are small in real numbers and it is helpful to be sure we share problems and thoughts for the future external negotiations. Recent approaches from the Welsh Mountaineering fraternity resulted in a joint confirmation of our readiness to work together over access problems that may be looming especially in quarry areas in N and Mid Wales.

The matter of Access to the Coast has now been resolved. Sadly we in Wales do not enjoy quite the same liberal settlement as in the rest of the country because the Welsh Assembly is not bound to enact the "access strip" as in England. In Wales we remain with only the concept of a round the coast footpath which is clearly not so satisfactory. It is to be hoped that repeated requests may in time mean the footpath widens to a strip!

The one positive change the coastal access bill has meant is that the derelict buildings in the strip, many of which are to do with old mines, now enjoy a different status as regards the liability of the landowner for persons entering them or being near them. They are regarded as natural features were in the CROW Act. We will continue to pressurise for change so that owners of the CROW Land may in time enjoy reduced liability for constructions on their land.

Now that Access to the Coast has been settled the matter of Inland Waters is under consideration. Some work has already been done but the main push is just commencing and is indeed on the agenda for the NAFW meeting later this week. Quite clearly this may impact on caving and we should also bear in mind that the matter of how waterways on Access Land are treated also bears on how we as cave explorers act. We are not permitted to interfere with them without the proper permissions

You will be no doubt pleased to hear that negotiations at the BCA level with the National Trust centrally have resulted in them being able to support that our current BCA insurance cover is adequate and to advise their regions of this. Now we are able to confirm that the Forestry Commission and the NT are happy with it and use this to support negotiations where landowners may be unduly worried by the culture of suing liberally. Coupled with the case law that now demonstrates the courts do seem to recognise the individual's responsibility for himself when he goes into wild places the likelihood of a successful law suit is reduced.

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CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL *CYNGOR OGOFYDD CYMREIG*

Affiliated to the British Caving Association

However, please do not become complacent..... there is still a duty of care that every person owes to everyone else and if you are more "expert" in a field your liability is the greater!

Matters nearer to home in particular are:

The code for use of vulnerable gorge sites has been confirmed. This causes no concern for casual visitors who should continue to be aware of where they plant their feet and to watch for the welfare of the lichen etc. The Outdoor Pursuit Centres seem to be able to work within its remit.

A meeting is to take place very soon with the Pembrokeshire National Park and the military about access to caves on the ranges at Castlemartin and the rest of Pembrokeshire. We hope to work out a proper access system for the caves that can protect their archaeological and geological importance and yet allow for visits.

The dualling of the Heads of the Valley road from Trefil and on through the Gorge is imminent and projected to be implemented by 2013. As of yet we do not know which route was determined upon. There are vulnerable caves throughout and we will need to make a unified and informed report to whichever firm wins the tender. I would heartily recommend that any individuals or clubs that are contacted remember that this is a majorly important matter and that unity will be necessary. Brynmawr were contacted by one contractor and immediately passed the contact to CCC for action. Thanks Brynmawr!

A system of checking on the condition of cave SSSIs was developed many years ago in negotiations with the then NCA, BCRA and English Nature. The system has been up and running round England. Some areas have been more vociferous about it than others but in Wales we lacked the documentation to be able to proceed until now. Work has been done in the Swansea Valley area and this may well be used to assist with the production of proper up to date Management Plans. More news on this later in the year!

Last but not least I come to the matter of Ogof Draenen.

Over 12 months ago actions took place at the second entrance that were unacceptable. It is on private land and was sealed with the blessing of the owner. The matter was stopped and I understand apologies for the conduct were made.

As the CCC Conservation Officer I had hoped that was the end of the matter, especially when the somewhat dormant Management Committee developed a fresh energy under the direction of a new secretary who has abundant energy for the job and the excuse that there was no means of communication ceased to be valid.

Hope has since died!

The opening of a third entrance has been widely documented and discussed.

Whatever the reasons are for it and I have listened to the arguments of the diggers and the Management Committee with great care I wish to say 3 things as the CCC Conservation Officer...

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CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL *CYNGOR OGOFEYDD CYMREIG*

Affiliated to the British Caving Association

Digging on any land without the consent of the owner is not to be condoned. Even on CROW Access Land There is no intrinsic right to access the underground environment. It may only be done with permission. CCC feel very strongly about this and that is why we paid straight away for the gate so that the entrance would be secure and neither the diggers nor the Management Committee had full possession of it while negotiations continued and the way forward decided.

Having listened with care to the conservation arguments on both sides I believe both to have merit and that the judgement of Solomon would be needed to accurately decide between them. It saddens me to hear only one set of arguments having a considered hearing.

Given that the wishes of the owner are paramount and CCC will do its utmost to ensure they are followed we would like to remind the Management Committee that it is their duty to safeguard the interests of the owner and to bear in mind as they do this that the rule of law in the country only survives by the consent of the population. Cave access codes are not so strongly safeguarded and common consent is vital to maintenance of proper order.

Perhaps it is appropriate to say that at the last Conservation & Access Group Meeting of BCA we decided that we would follow an initiative that aimed to educate cavers as to proper behaviours rather than to update existing literature.

Elsie Little
th March 2010

e Training Officer's Report

[See written report below]

In the last year I have failed to organise a promised SRT course. 'CCC' training events have been in form supporting other caver training including First Aid for Cave Rescuers. The reason for lack of course is time related with my other volunteer activities taking over (Guide District commissioner) my spare time. I am therefore not be willing to take on Training Officer (or any other role) on the Cambrian Caving Council committee next year.

In recompense for not organising event in last 12 months a course is now organised for 20 / 21 March weekend. My thanks to Richard Hill who has taken on organising the instructors for this course. At time of writing this report I have received cheques from 6 cavers wishing to take part in the SRT course with promises of 4 more cheques with those making bookings via e mail.

Sue Mabbett
Training Officer

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CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL *CYNGOR OGOFEYDD CYMREIG*

Affiliated to the British Caving Association

f Equipment Officer's Report

No Report was available and the Equipment Officer was unable to be present due to illness.

g Legal & Insurance Officer's Report

The Legal and Insurance Officer reported that no issues had arisen during the course of the year.

h Cave Registrar's Report

[See written report below]

The Cambrian cave registry has been transformed from a paper record to electronic database by Gary Evans and then had an online interface built by David Cooke. This has been a significant milestone in the development of the registry.

At handover the Cave Registry held approximately 1300 records that can be viewed online, with a separate registry for mines with 680 records in, this currently not viewable online.

I have identified approximately 500 additional cave records which are currently being worked into the database. As part of the addition of the new records I am currently adding extra fields to make compatible with GIS and online mapping such as Google Maps and Open Source mapping from Ordnance Survey. This will allow us to display output from the registry in online maps which will help develop the registry further.

From a separate project I have photos of 450 entrances which have been indexed to be included into the database. I plan for these to be viewable online with the cave records.

During the course of the year we were requested to our database of caves to the British Geological Survey for RIGS (Regionally Important Geological Sites) which has been completed. In return for this information the BGS will send back a data set of the 10,000 mines in Wales that they have on record.

An additional request for the Cave Registry information has also been made from the Biodiversity Information Service for Powys and Brecon Beacons National Park. This information will be provided shortly from the expanded database.

During the course of the year I have received a good deal of help and information from Tony Donovan and Gary Evans to whom I am very grateful, and would propose to build in an online feedback facility for people to propose revisions and additions to the registry.

The extended Cave Registry dataset can be viewed as a Google Earth document from the following link.

www.ogof.org.uk/Cambrian_Cave_Registry.kmz

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Affiliated to the British Caving Association

Next steps for Cave Registry

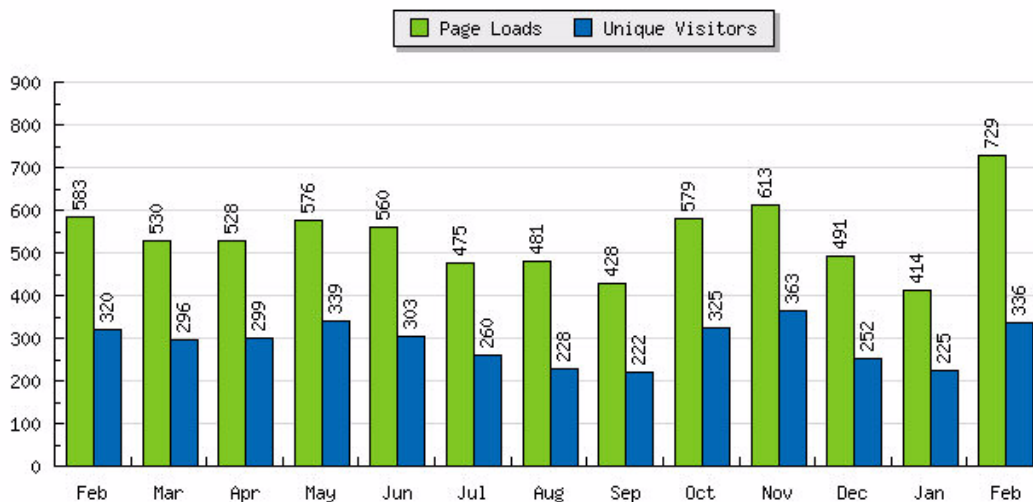
- Load the 500 additional entries into the online database
- Make the 450 cave site photos from ogof.org available from the online search
- Modify the results page to display location map and photo
- Incorporate online feedback facility for people to propose revisions and additions
- Produce site map to open the records to search engines
- Produce reporting on visitors and usage

Brendan Marris – Cave Registrar
27th February 2010

i Webmaster's Report

[See written report below]

The CCC Website has been running fine throughout the last 12 months with no downtime reported; it has been regularly updated with Newsletters from Robin plus other updates as I receive them. As you can see from the graphs below, we are receiving a good number of visitors throughout the year, so people are making use of the information available there.

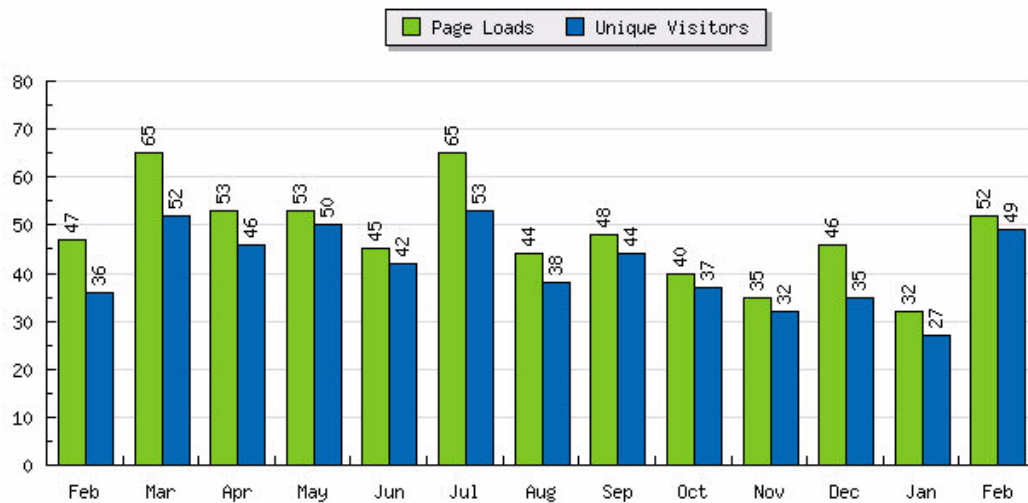


Cambrian Caving Council Website statistics from Feb 2009 – Feb 2010.

These statistics below are for the Caveliflife section of our website, but they are not a true representation of the visitors, as I am only able to record the visitors that visited directly from the CCC website and not anyone who has gone there direct, but these statistics do show that people are looking at the Caveliflife website.

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL *CYNGOR OGOFEYDD CYMREIG*

Affiliated to the British Caving Association



Cambrian Caving Council Cavellife statistics from Feb 2009 – Feb 2010.

I am willing to continue as Webmaster for the CCC website for another year unless anyone else wants to take it on.

Barry Hill.

It was pointed out that that the website refers to the CCC Library. As the library was disposed of some time ago, it was agreed to ask the webmaster to delete all references to it.

j Newsletter Editor's Report
[See written report below]

Newsletter Editor's Report

Newsletters have appeared quarterly as planned although the publication dates have been slightly flexible to allow the inclusion of reports on events scheduled within a day or so of the month end. All are circulated to our member clubs and are then made available to download from the CCC website.

As in prior years on several occasions during the year notes on those matters which arise between newsletters have been circulated to our member clubs.

Robin Weare

Ogof Fynnon Ddu Cave Management Committee Representative's Report

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The Committee meets twice a year in June and December. Once again my holiday commitments kept me from the June meeting and I can say now that they will do so again in 2010. I did attend the December meeting.

The draft of an updated handbook has been discussed and it is hoped that it will be finalised for publication during 2010.

A draft of the new cave management plan has been circulated and adapted for a pilot project in OFD 1. A similar pilot for the OFD Top Entrance area is in the course of preparation and the plan is also being looked at in terms of the overall cave management.

Work on the new survey continues.

A new permit secretary has been appointed. Contact details are on the SWCC website.

Robin Weare

Other Cambrian Representatives' Reports

a Welsh Mines Society Report

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

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

There have been reports in *Descent* that the floor 2 adit 'smoke flue' has again collapsed. This is not the case and the route continues to be available as an alternative/emergency exit.

In old vein chamber 8 east a block of slate appears to be peeling away from the pillar directly over the steps between floor A and floor C. Unfortunately, these steps are on part of the 'round trip' through the quarry and are well used by visitors to the quarry. The Friends of Cwmorthin recommend that people do not pass through this chamber.

Negotiations continue between the 'Friends of Cwmorthin' land landowners and other parties concerning access and continuing works to ensure stability of entrances etc.

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.

There have been significant ground movements on the side of Votty pit below the Maenofferen mills area. Large cracks have opened in and around the road leading to the mills. The floor of Cooke's level (Maenofferen floor B) collapsed into Votty chambers in places and there have been subsequent falls inby on Cooke's which have now closed the western reaches of this level

Braich Goch slate quarry SH748078

Underground slate workings, part of which is in use as the 'King Arthur's Labyrinth' underground tourist attraction near Corris. The workings connect with the Gaerwen underground slate quarry and contain many interesting artefacts including a timbered incline down a tip and an air (ex - steam) winch.

This is now in use as a commercial visitor attraction (providing guided underground historical mine tours) by Corris Mine Explorers (<http://www.corrismineexplorers.co.uk/>). The operator has cleared litter and non-historical graffiti from the quarry and preserved artefacts from damage. Supervised access has been granted to recreational groups on occasion.

Gwynfynydd gold mine SH736282

Gold mine, provides interesting underground trip with many artefacts from various phases of operation in situ.

The planning application (NP5/60/6J) to build a holiday complex on the plus demolition of most of the existing mine buildings and landscaping of surface industrial features has been withdrawn by the developer. The application (NP5/60/6H) for a two storey side extension to Ty Mawr (the mine manager's house) and change of its use from dwelling to two holiday units has been refused.

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CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL *CYNGOR OGOFEYDD CYMREIG*

Affiliated to the British Caving Association

The existing mine buildings are now much degraded due to vandalism.

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.

The entrance to the level which connects with the Olwyn Goch shaft (which is the main access point to the explorable section of the Milwr Tunnel and associated mines) has been plugged with concrete and backfilled with hardcore by the Grosvenor Caving Club. GCC, who control access for recreational purposes, continue in negotiations with United Utilities and are hopeful of re-establishing authorised access, but their recent action apparently follows unauthorised access by a group that had forced entry.

b FoDCCAG

[See written report below]

We have renewed our access agreement with the Forestry Commission and still hold our annual meeting with them. The permit system is generally running OK.

We are working on an access protocol for bat workers (in conjunction with the Forestry Commission and Natural England) and also a draft access protocol for the Scout Association has been submitted to the Forestry Commission for approval and issue.

Bat counting for this winter is ongoing with local cavers being actively involved.

Access to part of the Devil's Chapel SSSI has been withdrawn by the landowner. This is now in the hands of Natural England and Forestry Commission.

M J Febry
th March 2010

h NWCRO

[See written report below]

At the September 2008 NWCRO AGM, a new committee was pressed into service by previous committee members, some of whom had valiantly been holding two posts to keep the organisation going. Paul Whybro stayed on as Chairman to support the new committee. In 2009 two more members joined the committee.

Around the same time, team-member Simon Lowe of the popular aditnow website provided us with a lovely new website. <http://www.northwalescro.org.uk>

Equipment records from our stores have been improved and centralised and with the help of a substantial Sports Safety Grant the equipment most in need of replacement was purchased.

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CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL *CYNGOR OGOFEYDD CYMREIG*

Affiliated to the British Caving Association

The training programme has been expanded and record keeping has been improved. Increasing the number of members qualified for First Aid is of ongoing interest.

We have recently joined the WorldText SMS system which is widely used in North Wales Mountain Rescue and this is expected to facilitate future call-outs.

There were only 2 incidents in 2009, one assisting in a search for a missing elderly gentleman on the Great Orme; and the other a dog rescue from a mineshaft, where we were put on standby, but the dog was rescued unharmed by the Fire Service and local MRT.

Several new members have joined the team, some from seeing the training events on the CCC website.

NWCRO

The meeting recognised the efforts of the new NWCRO committee to revitalise the team and congratulated them on the progress they have made.

8j WBCRT

[See written report below]

There have been 6 incidents for WBCRT in 2009.

5 of these were underground and one was Road traffic accident on the way to a rescue practice, attended by team Doctor and 3 Advanced First Aiders.

There were three lost or overdue callouts for parties in OFDII, OFDI to Cwm Dwr and Daren Cilau to Prices Dig trips.

A party had a lucky escape in the OFD streamway when they were caught in flooding, the team's search plan worked well and the cavers were found close to Maypole Inlet.

The second flooding incident was for Ogof Craig a Ffynnon, 4 cavers had been trapped by flooding, the alarm was raised by a member of the party who exited earlier, the rest of the group were found after the water had subsided.

There were no underground medical incidents in 2009.

The team took responsibility for the Gwent area in summer 2009 and the final paperwork in relation to the dissolution of GCRT should be finished soon.

There is a proposal to change the team's name at the AGM to "South and Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team", this is to reflect the area covered.

WBCRT has run major practices this year including a visit by the RAF helicopter at the end of September. All these practices have been very successful and well attended; the training officer will provide further details. The annual fundraising event on the August Bank Holiday weekend was a success and an additional auction was held at Whitewalls to sell unwanted Gwent kit.

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The WBCRT executive has been busy behind the scenes this year. A lot of work has been put in creating a first response kit store at Whitewalls and preparing plans for rescue in the new Eastern area. A handbook was sent out to all members of the call out list to encourage further development of the team.

Next year there are plans for joint practices with both Gloucester Cave Rescue Group and North Wales Cave Rescue Team.

I am willing to stand as Secretary again next year unless anyone else would like to!

Clare Dallimore

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WBCRT Callouts 2009

Date	Cave / Mine	Type	Team members	Duration (hours)	Notes
22/2/09	OFD II	Overdue	15	1.5	4F, 1M, On trip to top waterfall, 3 novices became very tired on the return, well looked after by the 2 leaders and met by search team.
6/6/09	OFD	Trapped, flooding	25	5	3M, 2F, Trapped by flooding in streamway near Maypole inlet, well equipped and sat on ledge for 6 hours until rescued after they became overdue.
11/7/09	Surface	Road traffic accident	8	1	1M, 2 team members were first responders at an RTA on the way to a rescue practice, the Landrover was diverted and the casualty was stabilised and warmed until the ambulance arrived
20/9/09	OFD I to Cwm Dwr	Overdue & lost	36	1	3M, 1F, Overdue on a OFD I to Cwm Dwr through trip, search team stood down before entering cave.
21/11/09	Craig a Ffynnon	Trapped, flooding	12	5	2M, 2F, Callout was initiated by a member of the party who left early, the rescue team waited until floodwater subsided and found trapped party.
18/12/09	Daren Cilau	Lost	20 + 9	10	3F, 1M, Lost on Daren to Prices through trip, no survey & no one knew route. Located by search teams who entered cave from either end.

BCA Matters

Mike McCombe reported that the main issue of significance to Cambrian, instructions for the use of Porth yr Ogof had been satisfactorily resolved.

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Election of Officers

With the exception of the post of Training Officer, for which there was no candidate, all of the other officers were re-elected unanimously by show of hands. The post of Training Officer will be filled by the Committee if a suitable candidate emerges.

Any other business

Ogof Draenen & Drws Cefn

The Chairman asked the Secretary to read out the e-mail received from the Landowners, reproduced below:

Mike

Will you please provide the contents of this email to the members of the CCC at the AGM on Sunday 7th March as a statement from the landowners on which Ogof Draenen is located.

We have provided a sufficiently long period of time for the caving community as a whole to come to an agreement regarding the latest entrance since it came to our attention last year. It is becoming clearer that it is unlikely that an agreement between the two parties will be achieved before the deadline set by us of the 31st March 2010. We subsequently commenced researching the comments on the caving forums and individual websites to allow us to try and obtain an informed view.

It is from this research we found out about the AGM and felt that a statement from the landowners should be made, especially as it is the governing body of caving in Wales and one of your guiding principles is that the owners of property containing caves have the right to grant or withhold access.

We wish to make it absolutely clear that this latest entrance was opened and extended without our knowledge or permission and whilst it is on open access land the only rights it provides to cavers and others is the right to go on foot onto access land.

Open access land has additional responsibilities for the landowner including the minimisation of risk to the public and other users. The closeness to a scheduled ancient monument, the entrance area being highly visible from a well used footpath and a possible affect on the local bat population have been major concerns from the start of being aware of this latest entrance.

The increased activity in this area has already created noticeable and

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documented damage to a supporting wall of the Hills Tramroad, the previously mentioned scheduled ancient monument. As some of you are aware myself and Stuart Reid of CCW visited the site yesterday and further indications of access through additional parts of the supporting wall are already present.

The wider caving community has benefitted from over ten years of free access to Ogof Draenen as a result of the license between us and the PDCMG with regard to the management of access to, and conservation of the cave system for the benefit of current and future generations of cavers. On this latter point, whilst being not specialists in this area we find it hard to understand any conservation benefits in having an additional entrance with a probable increase in the number of cavers and the decrease in length to virgin areas of the cave system.

The license was drawn up to coincide with the landowners wishes for the above and our intention of having only one agreement between the caving community for any and all entrances to any caving systems on our land.

The PDCMG from its earliest days has included members from a wide range of caving clubs with an interest in Ogof Draenen. Recent EGM minutes indicate that the consensus view is that this new entrance should be immediately shut. We had however supported, perhaps mistakenly in hindsight, continuing discussions to take place to allow the caving community to produce an acceptable solution following the opening of this latest entrance.

We do continue to support the PDCMG and in conjunction with the recent supportive statements from the CCC and BCA do not intend revoke or change the current license with the PDCMG.

However if no agreement is obtained which ensures that no future attempts to reopen or add additional entrances to the one agreed and which is also acceptable to us, then it is our intention to close all entrances to the Ogof Draenen system from the beginning of April. The Ogof Draenen cave system has been evolving for millennia and if this generation of cavers cannot agree between themselves then it may be best for it to return to its previous state for a future generation.

Peter Jones

Brian Lewis

Pwlldu Conservation Limited

The Chairman then gave Stuart France and Fleur Loveridge six minutes each to speak on behalf of the diggers and PDCMG respectively. Fleur had also provided some written handouts which had been distributed to attendees and are attached as an appendix to these minutes.

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The Chairman then opened the issue for comment from the other attendees.

Mike McCombe expressed his disappointment that PDCMG had adopted a totally rigid single entrance policy that would not be supported by large numbers, possibly a majority, of perfectly reasonable grassroots cavers and that by appearing intransigent they were fuelling support for those intent on digging an entrance without the landowners' permission. He urged them to re think their approach to be more inclusive of the range of opinions held by reasonable cavers.

Linda Wilson urged CCC to give more support to the landowners. Elsie Little expressed concern that recent events at Ogof Draenen might alarm other landowners and cause problems elsewhere.

Robin Weare, whilst recognising the need to support PDCMG in its role, expressed his utter frustration at the group's poor performance in managing the cave during the past ten years or more. He also expressed his distaste that adherents of both sides should have seen fit to conduct their dispute through a public forum.

Owen Clarke said that he had had experience in dispute resolution and offered his services as a mediator.

After a prolonged and often lively discussion of the issues, it was unanimously agreed that CCC fully supports the position expressed by the landowners and supports the aims and objectives of PDCMG.

The Chairman will write to the landowners and PDCMG.

Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that a meeting in North Wales is overdue. The date was set as 6th March 2011, with time and location to be decided.

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Appendix A

PDCMG PowerPoint Presentation

(Handed out but not presented at AGM)

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Slide 1

What is the PDCMG?

- Pwll Du Cave Management Group
- Is the Licence holder for the Ogor Draenen
- Comprises:
 -
 - A neutral Chairman
 - 4 Executive Officers
 - A number of special co
- 3 Trustees (signatures to the Licence)

Slide 2

Member Clubs

- Bristol Exploration Club
- Brynmawr CC
- Cardiff UCC
- Chelsea SS
- Croydon CC
- Cwmbran CC
- Draenen Diggers
- Gagendor
- Morgannwg CC
- Orpheus CC
- Oxford UCC
- South Wales CC
- Wessex CC
- Westminster SG
- University of Bristol SS

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Slide 3

How does the PDCMG make decisions?

- Each club representative has one vote
- Executive Officers may also vote
 - If also club rep, they only have one vote
- In the case of a tied vote, the Chairman votes

- PDCMG meetings, business, constitution,

Slide 4

Entrance Policy

- Conservation priorities led to single entrance
- Request in 2009 to reconsider policy on entrances
- PDCMG initiated wide consultation
 - Responses via Member Club views, personal and non scientists, letters to Descent, Forum discussions
 - Majority expressed preference for single entrance
 - Consultation report attached
- PDCMG voted (10 for, 1 against, 1 abstention) to:
 -
 -

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Slide 5

Drws Cefn (Back Door Cave)

- Brought to PDCMG attention in October 2009
- Opened by GOG without landowner consent
- <15m offset from Wessex Series in OD
- *Approx*
- Tested against conservation policy in meeting in December 2009 (including Impact Document)
- PDCMG voted (7 for, 5 against) for:
 - “no access to Ogof Draenen through Drws Cefn”

Slide 6

Landowner Concerns

- Lack of permission
- Lack of respect
- Attitude of diggers when encountered on land
- Damage to CADW ancient monument
- Increased liability risk with CROW land
- Visibility from World Heritage site promoted

- Initially unwilling to publish concerns

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Slide 7

Threat to Ogof Draenen Access

- Landowner ultimatum results from
 -
 -
- Attempt to explain landowner position to DC
- Threats were issued should DC be closed
- Landowner has now clarified his position in

Slide 8

CCC Support

- In 2009 both the CCC and BCA pledge their support to the PDCMG and its procedures
- Now specific support for the landowner's
 -
 -
- Therefore help maintain access to OD

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Slide 9

Attachments

- Consultation Report
- Landowner's correspondence
- CCC and BCA support

- Copies of Impact Document available here for

fragile and important sites close to DC entrance