

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL
CYNGOR OGOFEYDD CYMREIG
Affiliated to the British Caving Association

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Penderyn Community Centre
March 11th 2012

Present

Bernie Woodley	Chairman	SWCC
Mike McCombe	Secretary	Newbury & District CC
Brendan Marris	Cave Registrar	
Elsie Little	Conservation Officer	
Joe Duxbury		Gloucester SS
Robin Weare	Treasurer	Hades CC
Paul Taylor		FoDCCAG
Andy Lewington	Equipment Officer	
Richard Hill		Gagendor CC
John Hine		RFDC
Stuart France		Chelsea SS
Barry Hill		Hereford CC
Owen Clarke	Legal & Insurance Officer	Cwmbran CC
Adrian Fawcett		
Chris Gibbs		
Dave Linton		Welsh Mines Society

There are currently 50 member-clubs, making the quorum for this meeting 10. The meeting was thus agreed to be quorate.

1. Chairman's opening remarks

The Chairman welcomed everybody to the meeting

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Maurice Febry, Shropshire Scouts Caving Team, Cadley Hill Caving Club and Morgannwg Caving Club

3. Minutes of the 2011 Annual General Meeting

The minutes of the 2011 AGM were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting. A unanimous motion to accept them was proposed by Stuart seconded by Robin

Dave Linton stated that the Gwydyr Mines Group had claimed that his WMS report was incorrect and that it cast the professional sector in a bad light. This was not intentional and copies of the correspondence had been copied to the Secretary.

4. Applications for Membership

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

Bristol Exploration Club

The meeting unanimously agreed to accept BEC's application.

5. Officers' Reports

5a Chairman's Report

[See written report below]

The sport of caving is stagnating. Overall, the membership of caving and mining clubs is falling and I am concerned that fewer people are joining our ranks. Whilst it could be argued that this means less work for conservationists, the knock-on effects are more profound. Ours is arguably one of the finest sports for the encouragement and honing of teamwork in the face of natural adversity. Caving is one of the few areas of original exploration left to us, the average age of cave diggers is rising, with the opportunities to pass on all the necessary skills to a younger generation becoming more sparse as every year passes. There will be fewer people taking up scientific research into speleological matters, with an indefinable consequential loss to human knowledge.

Why is this happening? Is it because of the increasing sedentary lifestyle of modern youth? Is it due to the ever-increasing cost of living? Is it down to the reluctance of clubs to entertain under 18's because of child protection legislation? Or is it a combination of these and other factors?

There are at least three ways that young people can be introduced to our sport other than through traditional clubs. These are the scouting organisations, school or university groups and the commercial outdoor activity providers. Do we need to increase awareness of the existence of and the benefits of traditional club membership within these groups and then find a way for the clubs to deal safely with minors or should we be more direct and lobby the Welsh Government to introduce more adventurous activity into the school curriculum?

So how worried do we need to be, is there anything more we should be doing to increase interest in caving or do we simply accept that numbers will inevitably shrink and will hopefully stabilise at some future time? I do not know the answer and I welcome debate on this matter.

I have also become aware of the actions of some members of the commercial outdoor activity provider sector who are engaged in talks with a national park to secure exclusive access to some reservoirs without the relevant national governing bodies being invited to participate in the negotiations. Although this does not directly affect our sport, it poses a worrying precedent and is something we need to watch out for. There are mutual benefits for the Cambrian and the commercial sector to work together to promote the sport of caving and to endorse the need for cave conservation.

The way forward is going to be complex and trying but we will succeed if all cavers recognise the need to present a unified approach to the adversities the modern world presents. I am grateful that the Cambrian currently has a strong team of competent and experienced committee members and I thank them all for their continued hard work and perseverance.

Bernie Woodley. March 2012

Stuart noted that this seems rather down-beat. Many clubs continue to grow. A lot are choosing not to join clubs, particularly Mines. Scouts are now only allowed access to mines that have been inspected.

5b Secretary's Report

[See written report below]

The administration of membership information continues to be awkward and error-prone due to the indirect relationship with Clubs. It is hoped that this will become easier in the future as BCA have agreed in principle to allow Regional Councils online access to the relevant data, though the technical means of doing this have yet to be developed.

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As noted in the Treasurer's Report, we continue to receive funding at the same level as before from Sport Wales and the Welsh Sports Association, despite cuts in the Sport Wales budget. This has been possible due to drastic reductions in staffing levels in Sport Wales and has led to continuing simplification of the administrative burden of our relationship with them. However, the need to collect age and gender data from member clubs is set to remain for the foreseeable future and I am, as ever, sincerely grateful to the club secretaries and treasurers who respond promptly with the necessary details.

The Sports Safety Grant provides £2000 each year to be shared between the two Welsh cave rescue teams and the 2011 cycle has just reached completion. The Welsh Sports Association Overseas Expedition Grant regularly contributes several thousand pounds each year to Welsh caving expeditions. The next allocation meeting will be held on 13th April.

Mike McCombe
March 2012

5c Treasurer's Report

[See written report below]

The accounts for the year ended 31st December 2011 are attached. They show a surplus of £49.14 and reserves increased to £5,679.08.

Expenditure in the year, recoverable through the funding arrangement with BCA, paid for the materials used for the ladders in Antler Passage of Daren Cilau, the repair of the Westbury Brook Gate, taping and other conservation work in Ogof Draenen and Otter Hole and for the administrative expenses of the access controlling bodies as well as our own.

The Sports Council for Wales has continued to support us with grants of £600 for training and £2,000 for Cave Rescue. They also directly contribute financial assistance for expeditions.

Using the SCW grants we were able to contribute to the cave rescue teams, first aid training and to the cost of taster sessions held in conjunction with the Landscape Lecture series at Blaenavon World Heritage Centre.

Robin Weare
February 2012

NGB Grant (£600) continues and we will also get grant from BCA. Larger than usual owing from BCA but pre-authorized.

5d Conservation & Access Officer's Report

[See written report below]

Welsh Adventure licensing is to continue. CRoW review coming soon. Changes to mapping the only real change. Not likely to add rights to access underground. Welcome formation of SWOAPG which, with CCC, will provide a large lobbying opportunity. However, the two North Wales groups (Snowdonia Active and Gwydyr Forest) seem to know nothing about each other. It would be most helpful if the two could align their activities.

Draenen landowners currently happy with access situation and that the single entrance regime is working. Please keep an eye open for gypsies stealing metal and notify police.

Rogue element continue to cause problems for Elsie who has to restore relationships.

Heads of the Valleys Road – Clydach Gorge dualling project continues. Nant Rhin and Waterfall Cave are in danger. Ogof Capel is also right in the way of a proposed embankment. We continue to talk to the contractors. Owen raised issue of Pwll y Cwm becoming blocked by material entering the river.

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BBNP meetings revealed work to occur at Herbert's Quarry to highlight archaeological sites with new signs. We have pointed out that highlighting entrances would be undesirable from safety viewpoint.

We have been negotiating with Forestry Commission Wales to achieve overall access agreement. This will give recreational caver free access to all forestry sites. Commercial sector would get access via a permit issued by Cambrian who would hold a pan-Wales licence. FCW are keen to pass this responsibility over to us as the competent national body. BCA insurance will cover landowner and Cambrian.

Several people asked whether this could be extended to a general right of access to underground without landowner liability. Stuart is particularly keen to see this happen on CRoW land and could do this via Statutory Instrument in Wales. Elsie emphasised that this is already part of our objectives.

Blaen Onneu Quarry Pot needs protection as landowner is unhappy.

Stuart proposed a vote of thanks to Elsie, seconded by Dave Linton.

Shale gas exploration issue continues and there is much concern in Europe. As far as the UK is concerned, there is no indication that it might cause a problem.

5e Training Officer's Report

Robin reported that we have supported training events for First Aid (SMWCRT) and a "Try Caving" event run by Hereford CC in conjunction with Blaenavon World Heritage site. We are now planning a caving conference in May, with funding from SW and BCA. Hopefully, we can run a second conference in North Wales later this year. The aim is to introduce people to new underground activities that they haven't tried.

Dave Linton asked if SRT instructors need to be CICs and noted that there are rope access people who could do this. Robin replied that this is probably true for BCA funding and that it may not be essential for CCC, though policy is that it's desirable.

5f Equipment Officer's Report [See written report below]

Resin anchor scheme

The replacement to the DMM Eco anchor proved to have issues with quality control and was later deemed to be unsuitable for use in British caves. Those that were placed will be replaced (none of these were placed in the Cambrian region).

After testing and considering a number of options, a Bolt Products anchor has been chosen as the replacement.

There is likely to be a course for placing such anchors later this year. CCC have one registered resin anchor installer, and have proposed two in the N Wales region.

CCC formally approved the latest version of the IPTD document for the installation of the resin anchors.

There has been a request for anchors in one cave/mine.

Anchors in rock other than limestone

I am working with other members of the E and T committee to produce a policy for the installation of anchors in rock other than limestone.

Fixed Aids

The E and T committee intend to examine the state of fixed aids in UK caves in order to produce a policy to help cavers with safe practice. As part of this process I am in the process of compiling a summary of fixed aids in the Cambrian region.

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Various fixed aids have been installed in the last year in e.g. Darren, Draenen and Dan yr Ogof; I would like to thank those involved in creating and installing these aids on behalf of the caving community.

Drill

The CCC drill has been written off; there is a proposal, to be considered by the E and T committee, whether it can be donated to the SWCRO to auction as part of their fundraising. New one to be ordered.

Andy Lewington 5.3.12.

Mike highlighted that the BCA anchor scheme is not mandatory. Dave Linton reported that there is a program to test anchors in slate.

5g Legal & Insurance Officer's Report

Owen reported that he has not been called upon to do anything for ten years and is grateful to Dave Judson.

5h Cave Registrar's Report

[See written report below]

I now have access to the web server and added tracking to the Cave Registry pages.

In February we have had over 700 page views on the Registry.

40% of page views are through the Cambrian website
40% of page views originate through ogof.org.uk
20% of page views are through search engines or direct

The most notable changes have been to the North Wales entries.

Cris Ebbs has been moving his published material onto web pages. This excellent piece of work is detailed below for anyone who has not seen it. He has been happy for me to update the Registry with the latest details from his site which has seen over 100 records added to the North Wales section of the cave registry.

North Wales Caves – by Cris Ebbs

<https://sites.google.com/site/cavesofnortheastwales/home>

Cave entrance photos for over 800 of the sites in the registry have been uploaded onto the Cambrian servers and will be built into the table of information that is displayed in with each record as it is displayed.

An updated registry export has been passed to David Cooke for uploading.

I would hope in the coming weeks to have access to upload the registry content myself to that the updates to the registry available publicly more quickly.

Brendan Marris
Cambrian Cave Registrar
4th March 2012

Dave Linton asked about mine data. Brendan needs someone with interest and experience on mines.

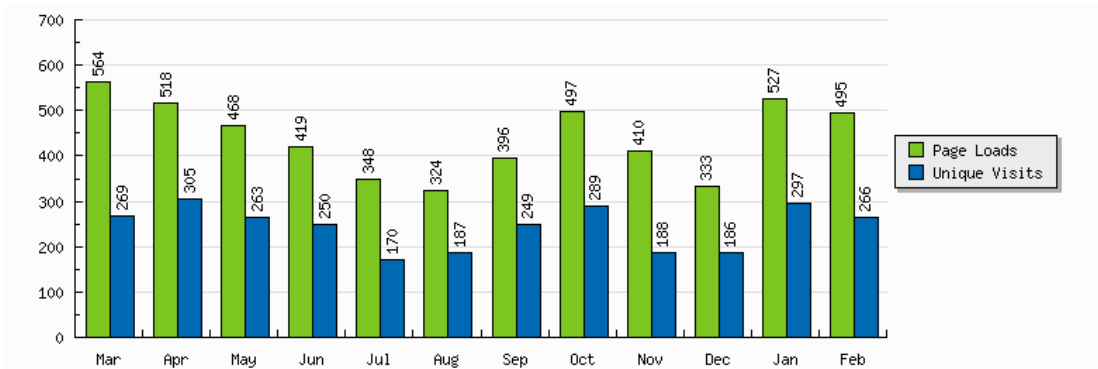
5i Webmaster's Report

[See written report below]

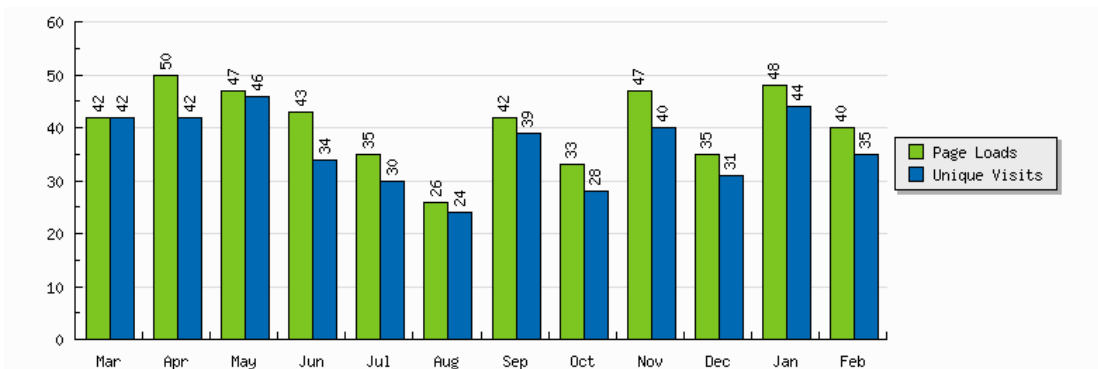
The CCC Website is still attracting approx 500 page loads per month, so it is still being well used with 'Cave Access' and 'Latest News' being the most popular pages. The most popular Google searches that arrive at our website are 'cambrian caving council', 'cambrian cave registry' and 'pwll dwfn'.

No downtime of the website has been reported, and the website has been regularly updated with either latest news or with the latest Newsletter. At some point this year we will be transferring the website from Fasthosts to the BCA's own mini server. Below are the pageloads and visits to the CCC website from March 2011 to February 2012.

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The link to the cave registry, recorded approx 40 hits a month (but this only shows traffic visiting the registry from the CCC website). A lot of visitors will get to it either direct or from other weblinks. Again these are from March 2011 to February 2012.



Again I am willing to continue as Webmaster, but will not stand in the way of anyone else wishing to take on this position.

Barry Hill
28th February 2012

5j Newsletter Editor's Report
[See written report below]

Newsletters have appeared quarterly as planned. All are circulated to our member clubs and are then made available to download from the CCC website. Notes on those matters which arise between newsletters have been circulated to our member clubs.

As ever, I remain grateful to those who have responded to my requests for material and especially so to those who have provided material without prompting.

Robin Weare
February 2012

6 Other Cambrian Representatives' Reports

6a Welsh Mines Society Report

WMS have published conference proceedings.

There was a meeting about the Snowdonia Access on 29th Feb. They agreed a revised constitution and have agreed that they will only continue as long as they have a role. They also changed their name.

Pandora Mine is interesting because the entrance is on one piece of land but runs under farmland where the farmer owns the mineral rights.

Stuart asked about Cwmorthin and was told that combination is freely available to bona-fide visitors. John Hine reported conservation and management plan. WMS were offered ownership of the site for £1 – declined due to potential liabilities.

John Hine

6b FoDCCAG

There is a new Deputy Gaveler in post who has asked for a list of sites. The Bat Count is ongoing. There is a new agreement with Clearwell for access to Wigpool Mine. Paul Taylor reported that access to Old Ham has been withdrawn by the landowner and locks changed to protect their commercial interests. Thanks are due to Cambrian for financial support for work at Westbury Brook. Access arrangements for FoDCCAG remain the same.

Devil's Chapel needs a new access agreement to be negotiated with the land-agent. There is no access to coal mines.

6c NWCRO

No report received.

6d SMWCRT

No report received.

6e GCRG

GCRG participated in snail-beach and did a very successful rescue. They have now undertaken refurbishment of the depot so that it is sometimes warmer inside than out!

6f OFD Management Committee Report

To facilitate research work broken stal was collected from the Columns area and Upper Arete. Scrapings were taken from cave passage walls in various areas, including Salubrious, Pi Chamber etc. A report is expected back eventually.

The loose block above the Elephant Turds in OFD II has been investigated. It is reported that a large block has moved due to a stress fracture. It was decided to follow the recommendation and leave it alone, as it is a natural event.

There are continuing problems with the access road and discharge from the quarry. Meetings have been held with Tarmac and discussions are ongoing.

Fixed aids have all been checked during the year.

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Congratulations are due to the small team of individuals responsible for the completion of the new survey of OFD 1 & Cwmdwr.

Whilst the management committee is responsible only for Cwmdwr and OFD II this does seem to be an appropriate place to also congratulate SWCC on the purchase of the land surrounding the OFD 1 entrance.

Robin Weare
February 2012

6g Dan yr Ogof Cave Advisory Committee Report

Fixed-aid work continues, with the Rising ladder recently having been replaced with a new stainless steel chain ladder. This will shortly be supplemented by a permanently-rigged lifeline.

Survey work in the cave is also ongoing. The main Survex-based dataset is now publicly available via the UK Cave Registry's SVN repository and will soon be supplemented with DistoX data.

This year marks the centenary of the first exploration of the cave by the Morgan brothers and it is hoped to hold a commemorative event later in the year.

Mike McCombe
March 2012

6h Mynydd Llangatwg Cave Management / Advisory Committee

Adrian Fawcett has noted an increase in bat numbers. There is an amount of work to be done in Ogof Craig a Ffynnon, including sections where people haven't followed taping. The first boulder choke is to be re-engineered.

Club keys are now available for Ogof Cnwc for a £10 fee. It was noted that there are surprisingly few visitors. Antler Passage work is now completed. Working with CCW for lease on entrances on Llangatwg Mountain. Opening Cnwc has allowed bats to enter the large parts of the system.

7 BCA Matters

Mike reported that there is rarely much excitement in BCA meetings. The future role of the Training Committee is fast becoming the next major controversy.

Owen raised issue of International Caving Congress in 2016 and that it would take an enormous amount of volunteers. Elsie assured the meeting that this is in hand.

8 Election of Officers

The following officers were elected to serve until the next AGM:-

Chairman – Bernie, proposed by Robin seconded by Andy
Secretary – Mike, proposed by Robin seconded by Brendan
Treasurer – Robin proposed by Dave Linton seconded by Stuart
Conservation Officer – Elsie, proposed by John Hine, seconded by Paul
Training Officer – Rich, proposed Robin, Seconded by Andy
Equipment Officer – Andy, proposed by Robin seconded by Stuart
Legal & Insurance Officer – Owen Clark,e proposed by Robin seconded by Paul
Webmaster – Barry, proposed by Robin seconded by Paul

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Newsletter Editor – Robin, proposed Bernie, sec Dave Linton
Cave Registrar – Brendan, proposed Robin, sec Elsie (Dave Linton to assist)

9 Any other business

Adrian raised BCA rope test project – OCAF 2nd BC and Antler Passage were suggested.

10 Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed to hold next year's AGM at 10am on Sunday 10th March 2013 at the GCRG Depot.

The meeting closed at 12:40