

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

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at
Ysgoldy-Goch Community Hall
March 13th 2016

Present

Martyn Farr (MF)	Chairman	*	Cave Diving Group
Dave Tyson (DT)	Secretary/Newsletter	*	Wirral Caving Group
Mike Leahy (ML)		*	United Cavers Exploration Team
Ian Adams (IA)	Treasurer		United Cavers Exploration Team
Robin Jones (RJ)			United Cavers Exploration Team
Dominic Aves (DA)		*	Deep Dark Dirty Wet Holes Caving Club
Emma Scheck (ES)		*	Wealden Cave & Mine Society
Roy Fellows (RF)	Legal/Insurance	*	Cambrian Mines Trust
David James (DJ)			Cambrian Mines Trust
Hugh Ratzer (HR)			Cambrian Mines Trust
Stuart France (SF)	Access/Conservation	*	Chelsea Speleological Society
Steve Holding (SH)		*	Shropshire Caving & Mining Club
Peter Claughton (PC)			NAMHO (observer)
Matt Terry (MT)		*	Grwp Ogofeydd Garimperos
Bernie Woodley (BW)		*	South Wales Caving Club
Martin Lavery (MLa)	Cave Registry		Grwp Ogofeydd Garimperos
Barry Hill (BH)	Webmaster	*	Hereford Caving Club

* Club representatives. The meeting was quorate with 11 out of 53 member clubs present.

1. Chairperson's Opening Remarks

Welcome to Cwmsytwyth, its good to have a quorate meeting, albeit by a small margin. It's a beautiful part of the world and I would like to thank Roy for suggesting we come over here. It is important that Cambrian Caving Council moves around the regions to get to see different faces.

2. Apologies for Absence

DT apologies for absence were received from Geoff Dommett (Buckfastleigh Caving Group), Judith Calford (Morgannwg), Ali Garman (PDCMG), Fleur Loveridge (PDCMG), Dan Thorne (SMWCRT), Richard Hill (CCC Training Officer), Vince Alkins (CCC Equipment & Techniques Officer) and Lisa Boore (Gagendor)

MF can people to go round the table introducing themselves and who they represent to help match faces to names.

3a. Minutes of the 2015 AGM

SH one item on accuracy: In section 6f, I am described as a former chemist. My employers would probably take a different view! **DT** agreed to strike the word "former".

DT references to Deep Dark Dirty Wet Holes Caving Club missed out "Wet" in couple of places and this would be corrected. Judith Calford asked for it to be noted in the apologies for absence that she represented Morgannwg. **DT** suggested he add affiliations for all the absentees.

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MF proposed the amended minutes be accepted and this was agreed unanimously.

3b. Matters arising from 2015 minutes

DT noted that the committee was meant to be looking at changes to the constitution. One of the problems was dealing with BCA DIM members and he had thought there were going to be changes to the BCA membership scheme which would make the DIM nomination of their regional council clearer. This hasn't happened and it is important to get the right balance between the Clubs and DIMs. The other issue was to separate mines and caves in the constitution mainly with respect to conservation. These topics would be revisited in the coming year.

MF asked for comments. **RF** pointed out the legal position was different between mines and caves as well as the conservation issue. Mines have artefacts which need to be safeguarded and industrial archaeology preserved. The legal position had been outlined in the previous meeting.

DT mentioned that in the last meeting it was noted that GOES seemed to be having some problems. **ML** stated that the Great Orme Exploration Society had been in contact with UCET and asked them to give them a bit of a hand in some areas of exploration. UCET had a fantastic time last year and opened up some new areas. GOES were very open and Mike wanted to paint a better picture than that reflected in the previous minutes. It was noted that Dave Flowers is the best contact for them. There are fewer active members now and SRT skills were limited. A question was asked about publication of finds etc. and **IA** reported that Brian, one of their members, was keen to publish information on discoveries and this would likely be in the in-house journal. **SH** mentioned that GOES had significant agreements over access with the council and it was important that these were taken on if the club was on the verge of collapse. Maybe CCC could be involved sorting out continuity with other clubs.

4. Applications for Membership

DT reported that he had received no requests for membership for this year

5. Officers Reports

5.a Chairman's Report

It has been an interesting year and throughout the UK changes are afoot. The past year has seen significant progress in the initiatives started in 2014: The cave registry is superb and the newsletter has been spectacularly rejuvenated and both are essential in an age where we are trying to gain friends and influence outside bodies. This leads us on to the complex topic of access and conservation – the CRoW situation has some way to go, but across the UK there is a slowly changing mindset moving slowly towards the day when caving will take its rightful place underneath the CRoW umbrella. I would like to thank committee members for their sterling efforts over the past year.

5.b Secretary's Report

I have circulated a paper copy of my report. There is not much to add; we used to apply for the Safety Grant from the Welsh Sports Association on behalf of the two cave rescue teams and then pass the grant on to them. This is how it has been done in the past, but from now on the rescue teams will deal direct with the WSA and this year they have been awarded £1500 each rather than this amount being split between them. The Sport Wales year end has changed and so I have put the paperwork to them for the grant and governing body status, but we will not know the result until mid April. I have yet to submit the draft minutes and accounts, but once this is done we should hear from them in due course

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5.c Treasurer's Report

The accounts are the most exciting part of any meeting and this year it has been very unsurprising. We have spent slightly more than we received, the council tries to recover all of the expenditure through other organisations like the BCA or Sport Wales, and typically there is a very small deficit or surplus. The accounts are in the reports. Graham Mullen of UBSS has scrutinised the accounts from time immemorial and has found them to be in order and has signed them off. The way we receive grants from Sport Wales (**DT** actually Welsh Sports Association) has changed and I will leave that to the secretary to explain. We have not had any claims off any of the acting officers of the Cambrian Caving Council for expenses which help the coffers. We have supported a project at Darren Cilau for the replacement of a lot of ladders on the grounds of safety and we tried to recover some of the money off the BCA, but were unsuccessful. The total cost of the project was £700-800 and we used money awarded to us by Sports Wales to partially cover the cost. Nobody else made a claim on us for other work and so we able to offer all of what we had been given as funding, with the project funding the difference. We are not expecting any big funding demands in the forthcoming period and we still have £5500 in the bank, which is the norm. **IA** proposed the accounts be accepted. The motion was passed unanimously.

5.d Access and Conservation officers report

A paper copy is circulated. It has been a year of consolidation and a bit of fire-fighting. There haven't been any new access agreements, although Dave and I are talking to NRW about new mines to add to the CAL agreement.

The Welsh government had an abortive attempt to consult on reforming access for leisure and the outdoors and it failed due to opposition from landowners and disputes on access to water from anglers and paddlers. In 2015 they put forward a consultation on opportunities for improving access to the countryside for responsible recreation. NRW held a couple of meetings to get the views of stakeholders which were attended by Dave and myself. These were designed to inform NRW so they could prepare their own response to the government about what should be done about outdoor recreation. This was more than just the CRoW act; it covered improvement of footpaths on farmland, stiles, motorised traffic and dogs etc. The government consultation asked about having a system similar to Scotland to allow wider access, but the NRW response to this was unhelpful and it seemed that they have changed their position from that promulgated a couple of years ago. It will be a while before the results of the consultation are made public as there were a lot of 'carbon copy' responses to it that will have to be processed. The outcome doesn't look promising for cavers etc.

On regional issues, there a sensitive situation at Dan Yr Ogof as someone was digging there in 2014 and it ended badly with the NRW asserting SSSI offences and calling the police. This eventually petered out but Ashford Price, the DYO owner, has recently complained about the danger of old surface digs above the great north road area of DYO and raised it with the National Park. Stuart showed some slides of the area, with each of the holes and other hazards highlighted. Many of the digs were very old and there were also several natural holes as well as cliff faces and an old lime kiln. The question is what to do about all this and the view of a meeting convened at the National Park was that many of these were historical and more akin to industrial archaeology and there was likely to be little risk. It was proposed that they would survey a corridor 10m wide either side of the bridleway from DYO to the river and cap any dangerous holes with a welded steel grille. Stuart supported the proposal, they would carry out and pay for the works and CCC would endorse it at the AGM. We would also pass the word around that digging on land needs the landowner's permission and there needs to be a management plan to deal with close down of the dig.

The newsletter continues and is really useful to hand to landowners or for meetings. It gives credibility to have something on paper and it is a lot easier than pointing people at the website when making contacts.

Ogof Carno negotiations are bogged down, I am getting nowhere with the land agent and so are taking a different approach and talked to people in charge of tourism etc. They suggested I go to the PR department

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and raise it at director level to see if some high level support would help. I will to try this approach this year.

There have been some developments in Carmarthenshire where there is a lot of limestone, but not many caves. A recent development has been the discovery of Ogor Marros by SWCC and other cavers and this looks very promising. It sumps off in winter and further work will have to wait for the summer. It has good potential as there is a massive resurgence on the beach.

I went to the range meeting Pembrokeshire to discuss Ogor Govan. The army holds a meeting yearly with sports bodies etc. to discuss access etc. and the landowner has expressed concerns about bats and maybe archaeology. Following formal meeting in Brecon they agreed to fund a bat survey and Peter Smith and I have had a trip down there and found a few bats, but well out of the way of cavers. There will be a couple of further visits which will include landowner's staff and a report will be produced.

The Draethen Lead Mines has also been a problem because of bats. Although the NRW agreement permits access, the NRW South Wales species team would not permit access and a stalemate occurred. Even their senior manager in North Wales couldn't persuade them to allow access. After some effort a compromise has been reached and they have agreed to allow a bat survey and it is hoped access will be permitted in the summer months.

There is a group representing British and Irish show caves, known as ABIS which has written a letter to many caving bodies including the BCA and DCA, but not CCC. They have expressed concerns about digging holes on the mountain and the CRoW act, and they don't want the latter to be deemed to apply to caving as they see it as a possible back door into show caves. Ashford Price has invited the group to DYO for some kind of meeting to discuss the threat they see from CRoW caving to the show cave business. This needs a national response and so it should be left to the BCA.

I have also received a petition to the Welsh Government to establish statutory public rights to land and water for recreational and other purposes. This has come from a group called 'Waters of Wales' and relates to paddling and swimming etc. They have been joined by the Fell runners Association as this is another activity not permitted on CRoW land. Swimming is also not allowed. So this is an unlikely alliance between paddlers and fell runners etc. and we are being asked if we want to join. There is an E-petition on the Welsh Government website and the group has said "it would welcome the Cambrian Caving Council to play a greater part by affiliating to the campaign in order to represent the access needs of cavers". I replied that we would discuss it at the AGM.

Access to OFD is going to be tightened so it may be necessary to show a membership card to get a key and the scheme has been changed so that BCA DIM's can obtain keys. The Mynydd Langattock committee is also permitting DIM access to caves they manage.

A year ago Steve Holding proposed there should be some liaison meetings between PDCMG and CCC to be chaired by Andrew Hinde, if he was willing, to try to reach a better understanding and maybe a compromise with respect to the Drws Cefn entrance to Ogor Draenan. We approved the idea a year ago and the PDCMG approved it at their June meeting. What we didn't know at the time was that in February last year they had already started moves to submit a license application to NRW for an internal concrete wall to block Drws Cefn. The first meeting took place in Andrew Hinde's office towards the end of August and a compromise solution was discussed. A further meeting took place at Hidden Earth in September when the nature of the blockage became clear and the fact that NRW had rejected it. Much of the information was obtained by a freedom of information request to NRW. To be honest we are no nearer reaching a compromise than we were a year ago. I guess there are five options: Back the PDCMG's proposal, not go quite so far and merely condone it, sit on the fence, deprecate it or oppose the proposal. It would be good to be able to draw a line in the sand.

This is the only negative area in my report, relations with other landowners have been very positive and the NRW have been supportive – although they need a bit of prodding.

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MF thank you Stuart, a tremendous year's work

The meeting then considered some motions arising out of the Conservation officers report. The first was to decide what to do about the Waters of Wales request.

SF proposed the following motion:

"We wish the waters of Wales success with their campaign to widen the scope of the future CRoW act, but we feel that caving is sufficiently different from paddling and fell running that we should manage our own campaign separately"

DT seconded and it was passed unanimously. **SF** said he would let them know and recommended the council didn't sign the electronic petition.

With regard to the Ashford Price issue with the holes on land near Dan Yr Ogof, **SF** said that we should endorse the National Parks strategy and treat them as industrial relics. Let the National Park staff survey the area and deal with any issues as it sees fit. We need to re-iterate the need for digs to the permission of the landowner and any conservation consent and digs need to have a strategy to deal with abandonment. He Proposed:

"We endorse the National Parks strategy and provide some interim guidance in the newsletter until something more specific can be written"

This was passed unanimously.

The British and Irish show cave letter wasn't addressed to CCC, but a copy had been passed on from the BCA and **MF** had spoken to Ashford Price. **SF** suggested that the issue was a national one and should be left to the BCA to pursue. This was agreed by the meeting without a vote.

The issue of the PDCMG and Ogof Draenan was discussed. **SF** suggested that the most likely plan was to have a solid metal structure with a grille to allow bats can fly through and this was supported by NRW. It is not clear if the grille would be welded shut or a gate.

Since there was no-one from PDCMG in person it was decided that the meeting should take their report at this point to get their viewpoint. The discussion then continued.

SH stated that he didn't think that a compromise was achievable and the meetings chaired by Andrew were suggested to see if a third party would come down on one side or the other. The two sides seem to be diametrically opposed, but the landowner doesn't want the entrance used and any response should recognise that. **SH** doesn't like the idea of a permanent block, but at this time we should support the view that there is no legitimate access with the hope that things change in the future.

RF was of the opinion that we should wash our hands of it for various reasons related to legal issue of mineral ownership.

There was a very long discussion on the position CCC should adopt with respect to the stance taken by PDCMG... It is clear that there is no easy solution to the problem and a compromise is extremely unlikely. The landowner does not want cavers to use the entrance and given that this is his right as CRoW has not yet been shown to apply to caving then the council has to abide by his wishes.

DT proposed a motion "A guiding principle of Cambrian Caving Council is to promote access to caves and mines. The matter of Drws Cefn was raised and the council agree it has no authority in the matter. We would like to remind access controlling bodies that they should attempt to negotiate the most liberal access terms possible. Any rights held by the landowner or mineral rights owner should be respected"

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An amendment to the motion was proposed to add the following after the first sentence "It cannot therefore condone any reduction in access"

SF proposed, **MT** seconded. Voting 7 for, 4 against.

The revised motion states ""A guiding principle of Cambrian Caving Council is to promote access to caves and mines. It cannot therefore condone any reduction in access. The matter of Drws Cefn was raised and the council agree it has no authority in the matter. We would like to remind access controlling bodies that they should attempt to negotiate the most liberal access terms possible. Any rights held by the landowner or mineral rights owner should be respected"

DT proposed, **ML** seconded. Voting 7 for, 4 against

MF proposed a vote of thanks to Stuart for the huge effort he has put in. This was carried unanimously.

5.e Training Officers Report

There is just a written report

5.f Equipment and Techniques Officers Report

Vince Alkins couldn't attend at the last minute so no report tabled

(Peter Cloughton had to leave at this point, but he passed around a flyer on "The Archaeology of Mining and Quarrying in England" with a note that copies are on the NAMHO website.)

5.g Legal and Insurance Officers Report

I have provided a paper copy of my report. I have helped the Royal Forest of Dean Caving Club with an access agreement and that has been the only query I have received. If anyone has any legal enquiries or needs any help then you have my contact details and please get in touch

5.h Cambrian Cave Registry

I haven't produced a report, but I have written articles for the newsletter which cover everything I have done. I have had a couple of emails with enquiries and some information which I have incorporated in the register like the sinkhole in Afon Ffrwd which appeared to be news, but was actually reported in the Royal Society in 1750's. I've done a few changes I thought were useful and added another layer of maps with LIDAR imaging which gives a good impression of the surface detail. It doesn't cover the whole of Wales, but does cover most of the caving and mining areas of interest and may be of more use to mining historians.

I've done a prototype for a mining register, based on the cave register, with some additional details like whether they are in SSSI's, RIGS, historic monuments etc. My idea is to keep the two registers separate as the audiences are generally different. I circulated the URL for the prototype to the committee, Welsh Mines Society, Peter Cloughton and Cris Ebbs who is very involved in caves and mines in North Wales. This was generally well received, with just one person concerned about making some of the information public. I haven't received any more feedback, but haven't done any more work on it. I hope to continue working on it over the next year and am always open to suggestions as to what should be included or not and any errors or additions, Please feed ideas back to me.

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5.i Website

The website is very well used and tends to be busier around March time when people are downloading the stuff on the AGM. Most popular pages are always the latest news and newsletters. **DT** thanked Barry for his quick response in adding new items to the website.

5.j Newsletter Editor

Not much to report, as long as people send in articles I will have enough material to publish. January's issue was a bumper one as I got quite a lot of material. I have three articles for the April issue and will be mailing out to the clubs asking for articles at the end of this month.

6. Other Cambrian Representative Reports

6.a FODCCAG

No report. As noted before John apologised for his absence.

6.b Welsh Mines Society

No report.

6.c NWCRO

No report

6.d SMWCRT

Dan Thorne sent a report. **SH** noted that they had a good rescue practice at Cwmystwyth. **RF** noted that there was a link on the Cambrian Mines Trust website to the practice.

6.e DYOCAP

No report

6.f PDCMG

Discussed under actions following the Conservation officer report

7. BCA Matters

SH As the NAMHO rep to BCA, I have been asked to raise in NAMHO and it would also be useful here, the issue of pollution and water contamination which is of concern to the BCA insurers. This mainly affects mines and the primary contaminant is ochre. If member clubs are aware of sites where contamination could occur it would be useful to bring it to the attention of the BCA. If the insurers get concerned that this might be a problem then it may increase the insurance premiums paid by the BCA.

8. Election of Officers

The existing officers were happy to continue in their respective posts and as there were no other candidates the current committee was unanimously re-elected by the meeting

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9 Any Other Business

RF Cambrian Mines Trust issues a report every year shortly after our AGM at the end of this month. I should have submitted this, but I will give a short summary:

The first phase of safety work on Cwmystwyth will start on the 10th April with a day of moving materials in preparation for tackling the sagging timberwork above the skipway to Lefel Fawr. Access will remain unaffected, but some areas may be cordoned off and it may be necessary to close the climbing route above the skipway. Progress will be posted on the CMT website and Aditnow. The second phase will occur later on and has been provisionally approved by CADW involves the second crawl through the plastic pipe which will be replaced by a full height steel roadway. This will drain the workings beyond and give a better view of the truck that's there, help access and rescue and also easier movement of material for any further remedial work. The people involved with the hydro electric scheme pulled out. Cwmystwyth South Mine Hen barc phase 2 will be starting with the mucking out of the entrance road and digging subject to NRW agreement.

Bwlch Glas mineral rights are still in Bernard Moore's hands, but it's not affecting access, however we want to make sure access is sustainable in the long term.

Upper Dinas Silica mine has been acquired by Natural Amenities limited and access is unaffected. I have cordoned off and put safety notices regarding an unstable area just inside the entrance where people sometimes congregate. This summer I may want some help to remove tree growth and vegetation above the portal to prevent compromising the integrity of the entrance, CMT has expanded its board of directors; we now include Dr Simon Timberlake of the early mines research group and Simon Lowe of Aditnow.

I expect to restore access to the engine shaft in Frongoch mine later this year and this will probably be a walking height passage rather a low crawl and also install a catwalk over the first flooded stope to avoid the need for wet suits and buoyancy aids, The remedial work to the shaft to deep access in Allt-y-crib (Talybont) mine is finished and access is now open via the CAL agreement. The old rotten timber has been replaced with steel and concrete.

DT I just want to report that there has been a collapse in one of the caves in the Alyn Gorge and Cris Ebbs has liaised with the country park ranger to ensure that the grille to be fitted to protect the public is caver and bat friendly. As the site is an SSSI, NRW are involved and will look at proposals to allow access by any interested caving clubs. Nothing is likely to happen till any bats leave.

SF Cave Access Limited was set up as a separate company to deal with access to mines on NRW and other land and it has had a successful year. Like all things involving NRW it takes a long time to get decisions made and some of the paperwork is behind, but we have decided to renew the agreement with a memorandum of agreement and hopefully when the paperwork gets updated then we may be able to add some new sites. This requires dealing with three separate groups in NRW. We also hope to get resolution of the problems with the Draethen lead mines

Eurospeleo 2016 is happening this summer and some delegates will visit Wales either before or after the conference and this may be an opportunity to make contacts abroad. Several clubs including SWCC and Chelsea will be involved.

10 Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed to hold next year's AGM on Sunday 12th March 2017 at 12.00 noon. John Hine has offered use of the GCRG headquarters.

The meeting finished at 16.00

Cambrian Caving Council
Accounts
Year Ended 31st December 2015

Income & Expenditure Account

Income

Subscriptions	£24.00
BCA Grant	£348.13
Sports Wales Grant	£500.00
Total Income	£872.13

Expenditure

Travel & Accommodation	£160.50
Equipment & Techniques	£40.20
Training Events	£127.50
Room Hire	£65.00
Books	£0.00
Print, Postage & Stationery	£51.80
Insurance	£50.00
Conservation & Access	£500.00
Total Expenditure	£995.00
Excess of Income over Expenditure	-£122.87

Balance Sheet

Barclays Current Account	£5,468.64	£5,468.64
Reserves at 31st December 2014	£5,591.51	
Less : Expenditure over Income	-£122.87	
		£5,468.64


..... Ian Adams (Treasurer)

Date : 19/1/16

Honorary Scrutineer's Report

I have examined the above Income & Expenditure Account for the Year ended 31st December 2015 and the balance sheet as at that date. In my opinion they are in accordance with the Council's accounting records and explanations provided.


..... G J Mullan (Honorary Scrutineer)

Date : 18/1/16

Cambrian Caving Council AGM 2016

Secretary's Report

It has been a bit of a mixed year overall. The council were awarded £500 by Sport Wales and continue to be recognised as the representative body for the sport of caving. An application has been submitted for this coming year, however since the Sport Wales year end is now April, we will not know the result till then.

I started the process of submitting applications to the Welsh Sports Association for the Sports Safety Grant on behalf of the two Welsh Cave Rescue organisations in September/October. Traditionally CCC act as the clearing house for the applications and the grant money was paid to us and then passed on to both CRO's. I had discussions with the new WSA business officer who suggested that for future applications the CRO's could deal direct, but for this year she was happy to use the old scheme and offered £1500 funding to split between NWCRO and SMWCRT. I had just sent off all the paperwork when the WSA had a change of heart and decided they wanted to deal direct with both CRO's this year and as a sweetener offered £1500 to each. In a mad flurry both CRO's rejigged their applications and I guess they have now received their money.

CCC are now out of the safety award loop and so I no longer have a challenge of nagging the teams to get the paperwork to me on time – that falls directly on their shoulders. The WSA Expedition Grants were lost last year in the round of funding cuts and it is unlikely they will be resurrected.

CCC has submitted a response to the Welsh Governments Green Paper on “Improving opportunities to access the outdoors for responsible recreation”. Nothing has been heard so far, there were a lot of responses and these will take a lot of time to process. It is unlikely that any firm proposals will appear for another year or two.

I have attended a couple of meetings with Stuart France and representatives of PDCMG chaired by Andrew Hinde, the BCA Conservation & access officer, to try and come to a compromise regarding access to Draenen via Dwrs Cefn. Sadly these have broken down and it would appear that the landowner and PDCMG want no access via this entrance which is on CRoW land.

I have also attended the BCA council meetings as CCC rep and continue to spend a lot of time managing the Cave Access Limited agreement with National Resources Wales for access to sites on their land.

One action which was outstanding from the last AGM was to look at the CCC Constitution with a view to altering it to deal with caves and mines separately and also investigate representation for DIM's as well as clubs. I haven't made much progress on this, partly as I wanted to see if the BCA were going to streamline the membership system and also because I need to elicit some feedback on mine conservation. If re-elected I hope to be able to look at this in detail and bring proposals before the next AGM which will have wide support.

Dave Tyson

Cambrian Caving Council – Treasurer’s Report (Year ended 31st December 2015)

The accounts for the year reflect a rather atypical year with a small excess of expenditure over income decreasing the funds of the CCC by £122.87. I am not concerned with this as it is a trivial sum and the expenditure was justified (as shown in the accounts).

There are a few points to note;

- 1) The accounts were scrutinised (essentially audited) by Mr Graham Mullen of UBSS (who has also done so in the previous years) and found to be in order.
- 2) None of the CCC officers availed themselves of the opportunity to recover expenses between the last AGM (March 2015) and the year end (31st December 2015).
- 3) The manner in which we receive a grant from “Sports Wales” has changed significantly. No doubt there will be more detail within the Secretaries report, however, thanks to the Secretary’s work with Sports Wales, the grant for the two Cave Rescue organisations has now been doubled and is paid directly to them. The grant to ourselves was reduced by £100 from £600 down to £500. It was expected that we may lose the grant altogether but, again thanks to the Secretary, we have retained a lion’s share.
- 4) We had only one claim on the Council funds over the year for financial assistance for work being undertaken in Daren Cilau. This was made by Mynydd Llangatwg Cave Management / Advisory Committee. The request was for the replacement of various ladders and to address various safety concerns. The total cost of the project was £591.73 and, after discussion, the CCC agreed to award the entirety of the £500 grant we received towards the project (there being no other requests or claims during the year).
- 5) The funds held by the council stand at £5468.64 which represents a healthy state of affairs.

Everything else being as per previous years, I would propose that the accounts be accepted.

Ian Adams
(Treasurer CCC)

CCC Conservation & Access Officer's Report March 2015 to March 2016

WELSH GOVERNMENT

NRW published a five-year plan in 2015 setting out how it intends to provide better access for recreation generally. You can read their public aims which harmonize with emergent Welsh Government (WG) policy for more access and physical activities, well-being etc, at the link below:

<https://naturalresources.wales/media/2686/outdoor-recreation-and-access-enabling-plan.pdf>

The WG minister made a statement in May 2014 about wider opportunity for leisure in the outdoors. Opposition from landowners and disputes over access to water in the main killed it off.

<http://gov.wales/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2014/accessoutdoorrecreation/?lang=en>

WG then had another go when it announced a Green Paper consultation exercise in July 2015 with a subtly different emphasis on improving opportunities to access the outdoors for responsible recreation.

<http://gov.wales/consultations/environmentandcountryside/improving-opportunities-to-access-the-outdoors/?lang=en>

In October 2015 CCC submitted its response to the Access Green Paper questions but there were 6,000+ other responses, many following a template from groups such as cyclists, so the WG is expected to take a long time to process them all.

http://cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk/pdf/greenpaperresponse_Oct2015.pdf

Dave Tyson attended an all-day consultative meeting between NRW and diverse stakeholders in Builth Wells informing NRW's response to the WG consultation. I attended another all-day NRW consultative meeting in Aberystwyth last August with the other sports national bodies, also to inform NRW's own response to the Access Green Paper. However, when NRW's response was published it made no mention of caving or underground exploration; it is couched in general terms and refers to specific sports like climbing in mainly historical contexts. It is bureaucratic and enforcement orientated. Clearly nothing even remotely resembling the Scottish Act is envisaged by NRW. See: <https://naturalresources.wales/media/5627/improving-opportunities-to-access-the-outdoors-for-responsible-recreation-org.pdf>

NATURAL RESOURCES WALES

Besides the WG-related consultations above, I attended two of NRW's three National Access Forum Wales meetings in 2015 which rotate between North/Mid/South Wales where NRW exchanges reports and information with sports governing bodies, other stakeholders such as landowners, Welsh Water, and local authority countryside services. It provides a good platform to make contacts, build relationships and develop ideas and initiatives to improve access and sport facilities.

The NRW/CAL disused mines access agreement is completing its first year. NRW land agents are pleased with the way it has worked out and it will be renewed for another 12 months. We are currently negotiating the addition of some new mine sites.

CCC had a first meeting at Director level with NRW in August, attended by Dave Tyson, Ian Adams and myself. Tim Jones, NRW Operations Director for North Wales, wishes to work towards a pan-Wales Memorandum of Agreement with cavers covering conservation, bats, cave exploration and access generally, in order to set out what each side expects of the other. There is nothing in writing yet but it could help us if there was clear documented national policy that we can refer local NRW officers to rather than having to negotiate everything as a series of special cases.

NRW's latest website remains a work-in-progress. There are still no Access Land nor SSSI mapping tools nor any formal public documentation like SSSI citations and management statements and boundary maps, and there is no timescale to deliver them. It is then somewhat perverse to receive letters from NRW stating that cavers should know the details of their 1000+ individual SSSIs and to react accordingly.

A six-month negotiation concerning Draethen lead mines access has resulted in the setting up of a project led by Peter Smith to look at species issues and recreational access, recommending ways to de-conflict them, if necessary.

A new hole which opened itself this winter in the River Alyn gorge was initially blamed on cavers by NRW. However, NRW now accepts that it was caused by natural subsidence and is looking for ways to engage with cavers to manage the H&S and SSSI issues attached to the site. It looks as if it will be grided with a Derbyshire Bolt type system. NRW with the county council (landowner) will be open to project ideas from cavers once the bat hibernation season ends.

REGIONAL ISSUES

I met with the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA) in December following a letter from Ashford Price at Dan-yr-Ogof Show Caves complaining about old cave digs above the "DYO dry valley" and beyond. Some of these date from before the Long Crawl was passed in 1966 and the people who dug them have since passed away. The NPA takes the view that they can now be regarded in the same way as industrial relics (like the small quarries and lime kilns one sees up on the mountain) and that the impact and risk associated is similar, understood already by visitors, and thus avoidable. See:

<http://www.cambriancavingcouncil.uk/accessdocs/dyoholes.ppt>

The current idea is that the NPA should check a 10m wide area either side of the public bridleway running from DYO as far as the River Giedd to identify any holes that might be a hazard (if any) then fabricate one-piece covers for them and fit these. We are not being asked to finance anything, but we are asked to discuss these abandoned holes to inform the NPA's approach to this recent complaint. We should also consider surface digging at this year's AGM in a more general way to avoid situations like the DYO one being passed by our generation to future ones.

I began writing a Digging Guidance leaflet in the same style as the CCC Newsletter, hoping to include case studies. But this has stalled because of the lack of progress by NRW in providing online resources and the diversion of my time into other more pressing matters that are detailed below.

A465 DUALLING OF THE CLYDACH GORGE

Peter Smith is engaged by Costain as a bat consultant and so he is keeping a careful eye on Ogof Capel and other small caves in the gorge. He is also doing work in the Merthyr Tydfil area since that is another section that remains to be dualled. So far there have been no issues with cave access as a result of the road works. Costain are in the process of constructing a bat tunnel under the A465 at the former Drum and Monkey site. The pub was demolished during the past year. Photos of the ongoing transformation of the pub site are available at:

<http://www.cambriancavingcouncil.uk/accessdocs/drumandmonkey.ppt>

CCC NEWSLETTER

The newsletter has appeared four times in the past year, available as a download, with some hardcopies distributed to caving club cottages in Wales, and for use in various meetings to show what caving is about and demonstrate some of the issues tackled by CCC. It is also a valuable tool for CCC in communication with cavers and clubs. See <http://cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk/newsletters.html>

OGOF CARNO

I have been in contact with Welsh Water at Land Agent level, but this is not working. My correspondence and the issue has simply been ignored. In retrospect, it would be better to contact the company's PR department and at director level to establish a policy of supporting recreation, particularly as 2016 is the WG's Year of Adventure. It would then be more straightforward to get support from local company staff.

GREENBRIDGE CAVE AND CARMARTHENSHIRE

The access agreement has worked well during the past year with no issues arising. Congratulations to the team from SWCC and friends who have opened up a new cave in the same area called Ogof Marros. It is still being explored. Scaffolding work is underway, but cave access is hampered by some sections of the cave sumping.

OGOF GOFAN AND CASTLEMARTIN RANGE WEST

The access agreement for caving in Ogof Gofan on **Range East** has run without any problems during this past year, but please contact me first to obtain authorisation for future visits. Allow a couple of weeks if possible in case anyone involved in this process is not immediately available.

Going to prospect for new caves on **Range West** is a different proposition. You first need to attend a Briefing Session at Castlemartin to get on to the list of approved persons. After that, you simply ask at the gatehouse for a daily badge and follow the procedure explained at the briefing. All 2015 permits expire in May 2016 and the dates of the upcoming Range Briefings are in the January 2016 CCC newsletter. Any permits issued in 2016 should be valid until May 2017.

I attended the annual public Range Meeting in October at Castlemartin army camp, which went well from a caving viewpoint. Since then the landowner (an MOD agency) has developed concerns about its SSSI responsibility. We had an informal meeting at the range, followed by a further meeting in Brecon, to devise a professionally-led project by Peter Smith and myself to report on bat activity and the visitor patterns since not everyone entering the cave is using our access agreement. There is electronic equipment in the cave now (please do not disturb it) and caver visits can continue as normal while the research is undertaken.

LITTLE NEATH RIVER CAVE AND GORGE AREA

I still have some monitoring equipment inside LNRC but I will remove it all when the weather relents and I find the time. There have been no new pollution incidents nor anything untoward in the past 12 months. The large oil drum jammed in the roof at Pwll-y-Rhyd needs checking and ideally removing. For H&S reasons, NRW planned to use a professional waste disposal contractor rather than ask cavers to help them.

REGIONAL CAVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

We are all grateful for the efforts of many others in managing our biggest and best caves. It is a big contribution made on a regular basis by so many people. The notes below focus on changes and developments rather than the routine tasks.

The DYO committee has welcomed some new faces and has had a quiet winter for caving activity due to the record rainfall keeping the cave river levels very high.

The OFD committee is working on a scheme to permit access to BCA direct individual members (DIMs). Following a tightening up of issuing procedures, cavers are asked to take evidence of their club membership when obtaining cave keys from SWCC.

The MLCMAC has also agreed to change its access procedures to accommodate DIMs. New chain ladders funded by CCC have been installed at Eastern Flyover and Frag Street.

The PDCMG supported the Draenen landowner's application to NRW for a 'species conservation licence' submitted in July 2015 to create a vault-like concrete and steel wall within Drws Cefn intended to exclude cavers for 100+ years. According to documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, NRW refused this licence application on the grounds that barring cavers was not a legitimate bat conservation activity, and the applicants had covered up their intentions repeatedly by describing this concrete wall as a grille. Some of the FoIA material obtained can be downloaded at <http://www.walesunderground.co.uk>. A different type of licence application is now understood to be in planning between the landowner, PDCMG and NRW. This is also

for some form of barrier to prevent caver access, with a timescale of 2016. We understand that four options were put to NRW in November: (1) the concrete wall as per the July licence application, (2) the same concrete wall but with ventilation holes, (3) a solid metal frame with an unopenable central grille, (4) a solid metal frame with a central locked gate. Their case to license this new barrier seems to rely on NRW being convinced of "Reasons of Overwhelming Public Interest" (ROPI). So NRW will have to make a formal decision on that, and legal decisions are open to challenge. Thus conservation, projected higher visitor numbers, through-trips, underground wildernesses, and other specious objections to cave access here that have been advanced during the past six years have all gone, and ROPI would seem to be the main or only hope of making a case for cave closure in a future development licence.

Meanwhile, individual cavers have taken the first steps towards a Judicial Review of NRW's interpretation of the CRoW Act 2000 as applied to caving. This is being done in a general way but was prompted by events during 2015 where NRW has acted as if the Act does not apply to caves on Access Land, which is its stated position. The Claimant asserts that the public access rights granted by the Act are broadly cast and apply to visiting caves within CRoW Access Land. The legal process is ongoing.

It is disappointing to report that the discussions voted for at our 2015 AGM between CCC and PDCMG to be chaired by Andrew Hinde, agreed to by PDCMG in June, then begun in August, had to be discontinued in September when the FoIA documents arrived and it became clear that these negotiations had been a total sham from the very outset, as confirmed by the four options presented to NRW during November which ignore the clearly satisfactory alternative of leaving this little-visited cave open.

LOOKING BACK AND FORWARD

It has been another busy year with meetings across Wales, much talking and correspondence, but time too for caving and exploring some mines new to me under the CAL agreement. There are projects to finish, some just beginning, and many interesting developments. I am willing to stand again in this role for a further year.

Stuart France
1 March 2016

CCC Training Officer Report 2015-2016

It has been a very quiet year on the training front. This is mainly due to me losing/changing jobs and starting a new one only two months ago.

As CCC training officer I attend BCA training committee. There are possibly big changes ahead as this committee is/(was) a meeting point for recreational and "professional" cavers. The meetings were generally poorly attended by the recreational cavers and if the proposed split occurs I wonder what the future of this committee will be. The DCA are well represented and get funding to run workshops, the other regions don't often attend and groups such as CDG etc never attend. This won't really affect CCC as our funding is done in a different way.

There have been requests for surveying workshops but for various reasons this has not happened, if anyone knows someone who has got the time to put a workshop on please let me know. It would be great if the CSG could put one on again but I know that the main activists are under a lot of pressure from all regions and caving clubs.

There was a bat walk/talk on the 28th Feb.(not happened at time of writing but it is fully booked)

Apologies for not being at the AGM today but I am happy to stand again, unless someone else would like to take on the role.

Richard Hill

Cambrian Caving Council – Legal & Insurance Officers report

I have only had one inquiry, being from the Royal Forest of Dean Caving Club regarding an access agreement with a landowner who was wanting a written agreement.

I decided that my answer should be fairly comprehensive, and this is the gist of it:

I explained that the situation is somewhat simpler in legal terms for a natural cave than a mine as it is a natural feature and as such would not carry any potential legal liabilities, Statutory Nuisance, or Mines and Quarries Act issues. However, if any kind of material has been extracted and sold from the cave this would alter its legal status to that of a mine.

There is also the question of any statutory designation such as SSSI status, or bat roosting seasonal limitations. And that it would be helpful to the landowner if the club would take on responsibility for ensuring compliance relative to the cave.

I suggested a meeting with the landowner with someone in attendance taking written notes. Basically needing to come from the direction of "what are the landowners wishes, and in what way can they be implemented" and that such matters could include the route to be taken to the cave with a map showing the approved route, parking, noise levels, permitted hours, responsibility for maintaining any path or fence, activities such as digging, and possibly some others. Also the duration of the agreement, is it subject to annual renewal? The agreement would not be transferable and would be in respect of the club only which would be the BCA Access Controlling Body and would provide the landowner with the benefit of the BCA £250,000 indemnity to landowners, with the club taking on the responsibility of dealing with any statutory bodies relative to a designation of the cave, current or future. I explained that it would be of great benefit to the landowner as although there is no potential public liability in respect of a natural cave it does provide a strong degree of assurance, that and the fact that the club is controlling access subject to the agreed terms and in so doing preventing nuisance from unofficial access would be a strong incentive for the landowner to enter into the agreement

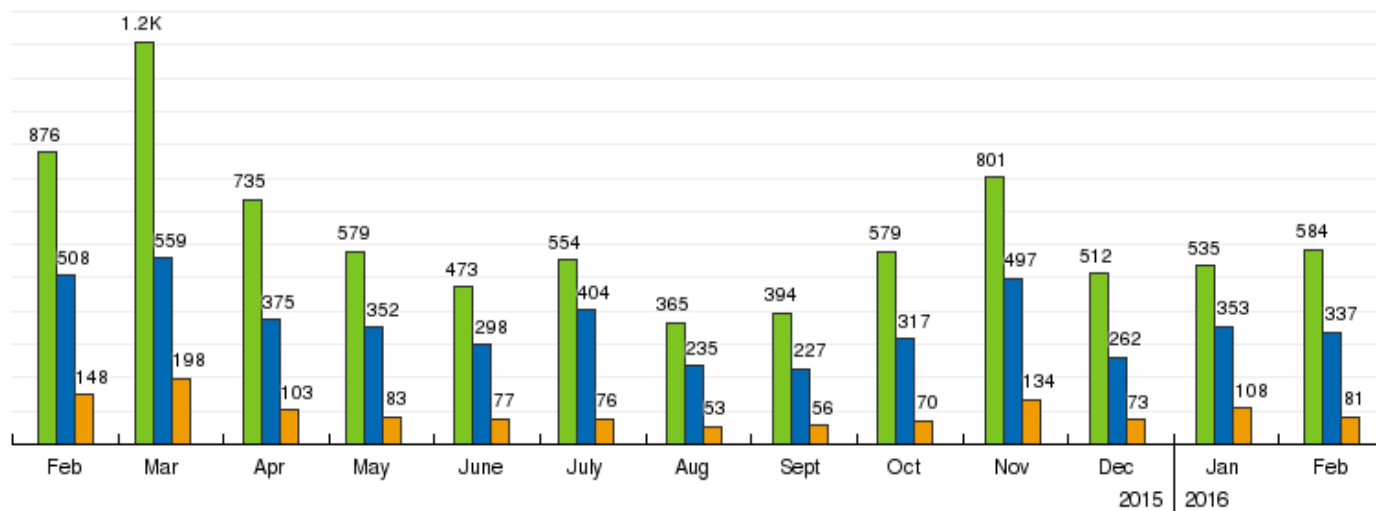
I indicated that I would be happy to draw up an agreement based on notes that submitted to me, and that the agreement will need to have a map attached as stated above showing location of the cave and the approved route which will be a 'permitted path or route' and not in any way be considered a 'right of way'. This would be signed by each party and exchanged and would form a legal contract for its duration.

I suggested a contact with the landowner to arrange the above meeting with the points mentioned forming a provisional agenda, with the landowner or the club adding to this as seen fit.

Roy Fellows

CCC 2016 Webmasters report.

Our website has been keep up to date with the CCC Newsletters as soon as they have been published making for easy access to current and past Newsletters. There has also been a few Cave Access amendments added as they have come into force through the year. Website Visitors has remained constant at approx 500 page loads a month with again the Newsletter Page, Cave Access and Latest News being the most visited pages.



	Page Views	Unique Visits	First Time Visits	Returning Visits
Total	8,196	4,724	3,464	1,260
Monthly Average	631	364	267	97

Returning Visits - Based purely on a cookie, if this person is returning to your website for another visit an hour or more later

First Time Visits - Based purely on a cookie, if this person has no cookie then this is considered their first time at your website.

Unique Visits - Based purely on a cookie, this is the total of the returning visits and first time visits - a total count of visits.

Page Views - The number of times your page has been visited.

Barry Hill (CCC Webmaster)

7th March 2016

Secretary's Report January 2016

This year has seen a rise in callouts, compared to last year, with the Team responding to 5 incidents.

Date	Cave	Details
19/03/15	Ogof Ffynnon Ddu 2	Party of 2 from York University Cave and Pothole Club on OFD Top to Cwmdwr trip, overdue due to tiredness. Found at Cwmdwr boulder choke.
22/03/15	Ogof Draenen	Party of 4 from Cardiff University Caving Club, overdue due to route finding problems.
07/06/15	Ogof Daren Cilau	Party of 2 from Kent University, overdue on overnight trip. Confusion regarding callout time.
12/12/15	Ogof Daren Cilau	Party of 4 from Reading, overdue on through trip due to route finding problems.
13/12/15	Ogof Daren Cilau	Party of 4 from Cardiff University Caving Club, overdue on trip to Frig and Frag due to tiredness.

The committee has redesigned the Team logo, simplifying the design and replacing the previous red cross with a red bordered white cross.

The team has run a number of training events throughout the year including an Advanced First Aid course in April 2015. This was a great opportunity for team members to revalidate their skills and for some new faces to join our list of advanced first aiders. As always, we were assisted by numerous SMWCRT members who helped create a range of scenarios for our candidates. There will not be an Advanced First Aid course next year as the training team are planning to update the content.



Report from the Pwll Ddu Cave Management Group

Please accept my apologies that I am unable to attend the 2016 AGM. However, given developments in the last 12 months I thought it was important to at least send an update.

At the last CCC AGM I agreed to take the idea for a proposed mediation regarding Drws Cefn (by Andrew Hinde of the BCA) back to the PDCMG committee. Due to the illness and ultimate death of my mother it took me a number of months to do so, but the matter was brought to the PDCMG at its June 2015 meeting. It was agreed to proceed with the mediation and Andrew Hinde was contacted, leading to a meeting with Andrew, Charles Bailey, Stuart France, Dave Tyson and myself in August. Andrew had spoken with our landowner so was clear that he (the landowner) wished Drws Cefn to be closed as soon as possible and that his patience was running out. However, recognising that permanent closure could be seen negatively by a proportion of the caving community (both those knowledgeable of the background, and those that would simply read about it) we also needed to consider whether something that is seen as less permanent within the eyes of the caving community could be implemented. We undertook to see what could be done, but would be restricted by the nature of a licence application already submitted for works to be done at Drws Cefn. I took actions to contact NRW to discuss.

Before the mediation team was due to meet again at Hidden Earth in September, the licence application relating to Drws Cefn was rejected by NRW. This is for two reasons. First there had been some miscommunication about the exact solution to be implemented that meant licensing were not assessing the correct concept. But additionally there also seems to have been a change of stance from NRW and ideas which previously were agreed in principle as acceptable are now disputed. In particular it was suggested that we should be applying for a development licence not a conservation licence as previously recommended, and that greater attention needed to be paid to changes in airflow. While frustrating in some respects, this situation actually led to an opportunity to make more significant changes to the proposed works at Drws Cefn and the possibility to accommodate a greater compromise.

A meeting was held between the landowner, NRW and myself in early November 2015 at which revised options for Drws Cefn were discussed. It was proposed that installing a grille at (or in) the entrance, rather than a more permanent blockage would i) get round any concerns about airflow which NRW had with the original licence application and ii) also offer a compromise to the caving community. The grille could then potentially be changed in the future if the landowner changed his mind about access and the PDCMG desire it. This proposed approach was then also agreed by the PDCMG committee at its November meeting. The only amendment being that it would be an "openable grille (although without access, since this was not permitted).

It was also hoped that, in the spirit of the original mediation, this compromise could also be supported by the Cambrian Caving Council, especially since this support would reduce the risk of any subsequent vandalism at the site. However, the day before the November PDCMG meeting a letter was received from solicitors in Cambridge threatening NRW with judicial review relating to caving and the CRoW act if it did anything to prevent access to Drws Cefn. While the action was taken on behalf of individual cavers from the Group Garimpeiros, one of those individuals was Stuart France, the Conservation Officer of the CCC. Following a response from NRW in December which made it clear that they did not consider caving to be covered under CRoW, a further letter was sent by the

firm of solicitors on the 16th February. This subsequent letter was instructed by Stuart France alone and was a pre-action protocol regarding the previously threatened judicial review. Since that date I have received no further correspondence from either party.

Meanwhile, we continue to prepare for a new licence application based on the revised plan to place a grille at Drws Cefn, with the view to completing this work after the bats come out of hibernation later this year.

In other news, I can report that a tentative start has been made on a conservation monitoring programme for Ogof Draenen, using photographs of certain features in selected locations within the cave. Given the extent of the system there will be a need to be very much selected in this respect, but most visited and/or most vulnerable aspects are expected to be selected. It is hoped that in due course the scheme will run along a similar line to the northern cavers monitoring scheme.

Finally some maintenance works are expected to take place on the scaffold shalt in the entrance series, commencing later this month. While not an official fixed aid, it has been reported that there is some deterioration in the timbers within the shaft and it is considered prudent to replace some of these.

Fleur Loveridge, 8th March 2016.