

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL CYNGOR OGEFEYDD CYMREIG

Affiliated to the British Caving Association

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Gloucester Cave Rescue Group HQ March 12th 2017

Present

Martyn Farr (MF)	Chairman	*	Cave Diving Group
Dave Tyson (DT)	Secretary/Newsletter	*	Wirral Caving Group
Ian Adams (IA)			United Cavers Exploration Team
Robin Jones (RJ)		*	United Cavers Exploration Team
Roy Fellows (RF)	Legal/Insurance	*	Cambrian Mines Trust
Stuart France (SF)	Access/Conservation	*	Chelsea Speleological Society
Steve Holding (SH)		*	Shropshire Caving & Mining Club
Matt Terry (MT)	Treasurer	*	Grwp Ogofeydd Garimperios
Martin Laverty (ML)	Cave Registry	*	Grwp Ogofeydd Garimperios
Barry Hill (BH)	Webmaster	*	Hereford Caving Club
Richard Hill (RH)	Training Officer	*	Gagendor Caving Club
Vince Alkins (VA)	Equipment & Techniques	*	South Wales Caving Club
John Hine (JH)		*	RFDCC
Joe Duxbury (JD)		*	Gloucester Speleological Society
Neil Culross (NC)		*	Welsh Mines Society
Dave Glover (DG)		*	Morgannwg Caving Club
Adrian Fawcett (AF)		*	Chelsea Speleological Society
Jenny Lawrence (JL)		*	Hades Caving Club
Chris Gibbs (CG)		*	Cwmbran Caving Club
Chris Crowley (CC)		*	Croyden Caving Club

* Club representatives. The meeting was quorate with 17 out of 51 member clubs present.

1. Chairperson's Opening Remarks

Welcome everyone. It's my first time at this venue and I think it's essential that we move the meeting around the regions and certainly the Forest of Dean is very accessible to cavers from the whole length and breadth of Britain. The meetings offer a chance to see new faces, have real communication and certainly, if nothing else, foster our relationship with the mining bodies in this area. I think it would be useful if we could go around the table and people say who they are and who they represent.

2. Apologies for Absence

DT apologies for absence were received from Mary Albury (WCMS), Mike Moore (SCMC), Alistair Garman (Morgannwg), Jan Karvik (RFDCC), Paul Taylor (GCRG), Peter Cloughton (Observer), David Hardwick (Hades)

3a. Minutes of the 2016 AGM

MF opened discussion on the minutes of the 2016 AGM. **DT** noted he had spare copies of these if people need to refer to them. **MF** asked about for comments on the accuracy on the minutes. **JH** noted that his absence apology was noted later on in the document, but wasn't in 'apologies for absence'. **RF** noted later in the meeting that the spelling of Cwmystwyth was wrong in the 'chairperson's opening remarks'. **DT** agreed to correct the final copy.

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3b. Matters arising from 2015 minutes

DG (representing Morgannwg) I haven't attended this meeting before, and we didn't send a representative last year, but I have been asked to query the report from the Access & Conservation officer as people who pay attention to these things were not aware that that post existed in the Cambrian Caving Council. **DT** noted that technically the post was 'Conservation Officer' and this is what appears in the constitution, however previous incumbents like Bernie Woodley and Elsie Little had used that title. Historically the conservation officer has always been responsible for access. **SF** noted that conservation and access go together and Ogor Govan was a case in point where a nervous landowner has taken 2-3 years to come up with a permanent access agreement and he had regular meeting with the landowners staff to organise archaeological visits etc. Looking back to Elsie's and Bernie's period as access officers, with the little Neath caves there have been ups and downs in relationships with the landowner and also conservation problems like pollution incidents. There is a tension between conservation and access and if we are not careful then access may allow conservation to be undermined, so when making access provision care must be taken to consider the impact on conservation and the BCA has published 'minimal impact caving guidelines' to help crystallise this. **VA** is this something we can address at this meeting and ratify that Stuart wants to be known as access and conservation officer? **DT** this could be changed in the constitution and while this meeting is quorate such amendments need to be advertised in advance and so would have to be left till next year. **SF** it probably just needs the meeting to recognise that conservation and access go together and myself and my predecessors have adopted that strategy. **IA** in the interim the committee could mandate the conservation officer to do access pending a change to the constitution.

DT reported that the problem with a hole in the Alyn Gorge had been resolved with NRW and a grille had been fitted with a modified 'Derbyshire key' arrangement.

DT asked if everyone was happy with the minutes, subject to the minor edits. There were no dissenters and so they were accepted unanimously as a true record.

4. Applications for Membership

DT reported that he had received an application from Gwent Caving Club and they were meant to be sending a representative to this meeting. No-one had appeared so far and so it was decided to deal with the application later. **MF** stated he had talked to them and their club was probably the fastest growing of the new clubs in the south and they had a strong interest in mining as well as caving. They were meant to be down in Mendip over Easter. They were very active and organised several caving trips each week.

5. Officers Reports

5.a Chairman's Report

MF 2016 had been another challenging year, change seems to be taking place at an ever increasing pace. We are all passionate about our interest in the underground world and we must keep abreast with developments to ensure our spectacular world is enhanced and not stifled. Access is above all is a priority and the debate surrounding CROW rumbles on – everyone has a view and 2016 was a bumpy road. Having attended meetings instigated, for example, by ABIS (Association of British and Irish Show caves) it is apparent that the access issue remains as raw as ever and we need to consider very carefully our path ahead. That aside, we can see in the following reports that excellent progress has been achieved in all aspects of underground activity in 2016. The newsletter, despite being only a quarterly publication, is a highly creditable production essential in an age where more than ever we need to stand up for our sport. The cave registry continues to move forward and Martin Laverty's work deserves a mention. I believe the committee has acquitted itself well, no-one has put in more work behind the scenes than the access and conservation officer. I would also like to thank Ian Adams who stood down as treasurer for his sterling work.

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5.b Secretary's Report

DT I have put a copy of my report on the web. There is nothing really controversial. We have had some successes – we managed to persuade NRW that having a fairly open access to the Alyn Gorge 'hole' is sensible. I have been in contact with the North Wales Wildlife Trust who are trying to buy the Minera quarry off Tarmac however they don't want to discuss any issues about access until the sale has been completed. A few cavers attended at a meeting to discuss the quarry and came away with mixed views. Bats may be more of a problem in the future in dictating access, but nothing has been resolved yet. There are a few quarry walls with bolted areas for climbing which might also cause bird nesting issues and it might be worthwhile working with the BMC on any access issues. **SF** mentioned he had attended a recent National Access Forum for Wales meeting and it was the first one where he saw observers rather than just the committee members. One of the attendees was the chair of the Wrexham Local Area Forum (LAF's are statutory committees, one per county council or national park. were established as part of CROW act) and he was very interested in Minera quarry as its part of his patch. It probably would be worthwhile making contact with him. In general it would be good to have representation on some of the LAF's, although it is may not be straightforward as some councils and national parks choose the membership directly.

5.c Treasurer's Report

MT (copy of the treasurers report and scrutinised accounts are on the web) I took over as treasurer from Ian Adams around September. I can report we have a small surplus for the year. There were a couple of expenditure claims which I couldn't get in before the end of the year and so the surplus now stands at £60.62. The current balance is £5529.26 and the accounts been signed off by the scrutineer.

DT proposed the accounts be accepted. **IA** seconded the motion. There were no objections and the accounts were unanimously accepted by the meeting.

5.d Access and Conservation officers report

SF I am just going to pick up on a few topics in the report. The first deals with the Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales. Lesley Griffiths, cabinet secretary for Environment & Rural Affairs (AM for Wrexham) states "Wales needs a better and fairer approach to public access for outdoor recreation which is less burdensome to administer, provides for the wide range of activities people want to participate in, with sensible safeguards for land management activities. I intend to develop proposals for consultation on how the current laws could be improved. Following a broad-based review of the legislative framework for access and outdoor recreation the Welsh Government undertook a consultation in 2015 on improving opportunities to access the outdoors for responsible recreation. The consultation paper examined the current legislative framework for access to the outdoors and encouraged discussion on a sliding scale of the potential options including making improvements and removing some of the restrictions in place under current access legislation, extending the definition of access land to include other areas and implementing a new legislative framework"

It is possible that the review will lead to new legislation and possibly a change in the law so that, for example, Wales could follow Scotland in allowing freer access while England is stuck with the CROW act. I should point out that Bob Mehew from the BCA who also attended the national forum meeting came away with the opposite view and thought Wales would not change the law.

In answer to a question regarding a scope for Wales to change the law, Stuart reported that the Government of Wales Act devolved the countryside and recreation completely to Wales. It was unlikely that the CROW act would be replaced wholesale, but rather extra bits "bolted on" using a statutory order or similar. There may be interest, for example, in providing a more democratic process for members of Local Access Forums.

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National Resources Wales seem to be trying to come up with strategies for measuring how good Wales is at managing its natural resources, not just for recreation, but in the broadest possible sense. They promulgated a document "A summary of the state of Natural Resources report, an assessment of the sustainable management of Natural Resources" at the November National Access Forum. They are looking at sustainable recreation, tourism and energy etc. and are trying to develop mathematical models to measure how successful they are in managing the resources in the most responsible and productive way. Numbers of mountain bikers and car park occupancy are typical statistics which might be gathered as part of the strategy which aims to get a quantitative view of use rather than rely on the older qualitative views.

JL What is the view on the use of motorised vehicles on forestry and other land? **SF** Well they're not allowed to, its against the law and so they are against it. There is a representative on the National Access forum from the 4x4 brigade and the FC does allow events on its land on certain weekends, but these are strictly controlled to avoid danger to other users. **JH** Basically it's against Forestry bye-laws. **JL** I am just aware that there is a lot of motorcycle activity and it does conflict with riders and a walkers on bridleways. **SF** Motor bikes and other vehicle are also outlawed by the CRoW act.

There followed a general discussion on monitoring cavers numbers, **SF** reported that the only counters he has installed at present were in Ogor Govan to monitor the agreement with the landowner,

SF went on to talk about the judicial review of NRW's interpretation of the law. There are two laws to consider: the CRoW act and the law of property act 1925. The latter deals with common land in 'urban' areas such as the valleys, Merthyr Tydfil, Brecon etc. A key difference between the two pieces of legislation is that the CRoW act talks of 'open-air recreation' whereas the 1925 talks of 'air and exercise' and this subtle difference has considerable repercussions. A challenge by DEFRA against the 1925 act in 1998 to prevent horse-riding on urban commons failed in the high court. NRW's position is that the term 'open-air recreation' is highly specific and caving is excluded as there are physical confines, although they have admitted that descending a pothole while daylight is visible would be a grey area since it could be seen to be climbing, which is permitted under CRoW. They have decided that open-air extends as far as the daylight penetrates, but there is no legal basis for this. I independently consulted two barristers who were of the opinion that CRoW does apply to caving, but this would have to be tested in the courts. Looking back at the parliamentary debates over the CRoW act it is clear that they wanted the term 'open-air recreation' to be broad ranging in the same way as the legislators who drew up the 1925 act and the term was deliberately left vague to encompass as many sports as possible. So I am of the opinion if a case did go to the high court then we would be very unlucky to lose. Regardless, NRW doesn't want a court case as in the case of bat access at Pwll Du they deemed the application had been withdrawn and so there were no grounds to proceed with a judicial review and so the idea that open-air recreation include caving couldn't be tested.

SF Taking the recent ministers announcement there seems to be little point pursuing the CRoW access campaign in Wales because if they are going to change the law then we will be arguing for something which will become historic. If the ministers proposals to broad the access definition are to be enacted then we should just let it happen. As I noted earlier this will then put England at a disadvantage compared to Scotland and Wales. There have been two FOI requests and a one legal discover process because of the judicial review; the first FOI request I asked for in August 2015 concerned Ogor Draenan and PDCMG, the second FOI was issued by David Rose in November 2016 for the same material. One thing which is clear is the NRW do not want the CRoW act to apply to caving, they are not on the side of better access and are prepared to throw considerable resource at it to prevent that happening, There are over 40 people involved in the discussions regarding Ogor Draenan, the CRoW act and Dwrs Cefn.

DG I represent Morgannwg and there is concern that the apparently litigious nature is putting peoples backs up at NRW and this might impinge in other areas – as you note there are a large number of people you have been in contact with at NRW. The concern which has been raised is that you personally or CCC shouldn't be seen to be an irritant.

SF I think that is a very good point and at the last National Access Forum I asked the BCA to attend and

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support me. Bob Mehew attended as Tim Allen and Andy Eavis were abroad. The BCA shared the fears that it had become rather personal, but wanted to make it clear what I had been doing personally with the support of the CCC was to explore as far as the law would allow caving to take place was something which got national backing from the referendum and was BCA policy. The BCA's statement was basically that they are the national body for caving and CCC is a member region and the BCA has a policy of pursuing a CRoW access campaign for recognition of the law. CCC is the regional body for Wales and it's doing the same thing and that the BCA endorses it. I have only been dealing with a small number of people in NRW, most of the 40 people on the list I have never met and still have to find out who they are. **IA** Can I just add that last year at the AGM, CCC voted and agreed we would not be involved with the access arrangements at Draenan and anything happening there was with you and not CCC, so the points you are raising shouldn't be directed at the CCC. **DG** Indeed, they are not directed at the CCC. I am sorry to say they are directed at Stuart in effect insofar as its impossible to separate himself into two separate bodies.

SF it is abundantly clear in the NRW emails that they do not see this as a CCC issue and put it down entirely to me. I have dealt with NRW over a long period and it is clear that NRW staff themselves are split on the issue or at least find it incomprehensible. I have a good working relationship with many of them and they know its not a personal battle against NRW and I am just asking for recognition of access rights for caving. It was very helpful that the BCA attended the last meeting and we have been asked to make a 15 minute presentation at a future local access forum on caving and we need good publicity and self promotion material. This is a chance to spread the word to other sports bodies in Wales, Countryside Landowners Association, National Trust etc. about what we do, why its good and why we should be allowed to more of because we are so responsible. Another meeting has been offered between the BCA, CCC and NRW to explore the CRoW act and our belief that it applies. I think NRW will avoid any decisions which could lead to any litigation, but the whole issue of access also depends on what the Welsh Government decides in the next three years. I would like to see the CRoW act to recognise caving and the existing statutory safeguards to be used. NRW already uses section 26 to protect high value sites such as Cwm Dwr and could use bye-laws to protect other sites.

RF The forestry land and mines in the CAL agreement was signed by the Welsh Government (WG) and not NRW and that means the land belongs to WG rather than NRW and that may have a bearing on this discussion. **SF** All forestry land is dedicated as access land, but the forestry bye-laws still applied. In the case of Dinas the mineral owner has other rights and these override the forestry bye-laws, however the general public still have to respect them. To clarify, all the land in the CAL agreement is owned by WG except the Rheidol site which is owned by NRW. CAL signed two separate agreements with the respective bodies.

DT I have had a criticism directed at CAL regarding the Draethen Lead mines as some groups made unofficial visits to the mines and CAL's intervention had raised the access profile. The mine was put on the original list by John Hine for Elsie Little and CAL have tried to get official access for all. There was no access and anyone visiting unofficially breached forestry bye-laws and could be prosecuted as happened in North Wales over the Penmachno mine. **DG** But nobody 'did' us!

DT That may be the case but what we were trying to achieve was a level playing field where anyone can have access – we have managed that at all the other sites. In the past covert trips into the North Wales mine took place and people kept a low profile, **DG** noted that they had encountered officialdom and a blind eye was turned. **SF** You are running a risk as the forestry bye-laws are not theoretical and as noted above an outdoor pursuits instructor was prosecuted. The problem with the Draethen mines is the large number of greater horseshoe bats which use it and this is probably why NRW are loathe to come to any agreement despite evidence that the bats only use it as a winter roost. We still hope eventually to reach some kind of agreement. **DG** noted that privateers wouldn't be bothered with the CAL agreement anyway. **SF** noted that NRW would be worried about them and maybe thought that there may be more issues if the CAL agreement became public knowledge with more of the fringe element venturing it, but he had caver counters in the mines in the past and hadn't seen large numbers of visitors. The counters showed that the pattern of visits were generally short trips, maybe bat groups. NRW has got a genuine concern over greater horseshoe bats but at the same time it is not being sensible by refusing to respond to correspondence.

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CC mentioned some friction on Pant Mawr between a digger and cave diver over a large scaffolded hole. **SF** noted he had walked around the area but had not ventured in any. The topic of digs prompted a general discussion including the old digs mentioned at DY0 at the last AGM. **SF** noted that he had recent email from the national park asking what CCC had done regarding advice for diggers and he was able to point them at the January 2016 newsletter article and the minutes of the AGM which said it was down to clubs to police this and not CCC. There was an inconclusive discussion of historical permits issued by Elsie Little from SWCC who had some agreement with the Cnewr estate.

SF Ogof Carno negotiations has not seen any progress and nothing will happen because of the health and safety concerns. Previous access was clearly down to local agreement with Welsh Water staff and there was no formal agreed access. Attempts to open negotiation on access have hit a brick wall and any access will require a dig on the hill to create a new access point.

SF Ogof Gofan and Castlemartin - There is an article in MOD Sanctuary magazine and we hope to get a permanent access agreement in place. I am taking some archaeologists down to check there is no possibility of cavers disturbing old deposits and hopefully after that we will get a long term agreement.

SF NRW are funding some scaffolding, rope and conservation tape to remedial work on the chokes in Craig a Ffynnon.

MF Thank you Stuart, that's a phenomenal amount of work and we all very appreciative.

5.e Training Officers Report

RH The main thing is that the BCA training committee has changed its composition over the last year so that it is purely dealing with recreational cavers now and I have emailed every club in CCC that grants are there for any training and if you want training contact me or the BCA training committee. **SH** At the last BCA committee meeting I felt it was clear as mud as to whether it had changed or not. **RH** So the training committee definitely has changed, what was the MCP is now the QMC (Qualifications Management Committee) and that hasn't been officially ratified yet. **DT** I have had some very positive feedback from the training sessions in North Wales. **RH** there are two more sessions this year; the Llangorse on in April and another in North Wales in autumn,

5.f Equipment and Techniques Officers Report

VA Another reasonably quiet year on the E & T front. Just want to make it clear that I am not the fixed aids officer,. The E & T committee have been again dealing with anchor issues and been aware of equipment recalls and concerns of durability and wear rates of items for rope ascent. We are currently revising the advice on anchor inspection for cavers, but the details are not yet finalised. Once the wording been agreed that the advice will be widely distributed together with a reminder of details of how cavers in the region can request anchor replacement under the BCA scheme.

There was a general discussion on bolt types and the need to be able to replace them easily to aid conservation, Bolting in Slate was also discussed with a note that expansion bolts were unsatisfactory due to powdering of the slate. Stuart asked about the anchors in Bryneglwys slate mine – it was thought these were placed by Gethin Thomas and were not part of the BCA scheme.

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5.g Legal and Insurance Officers Report

RF I have not had any enquiries this year and have just had some discussions with Bob Mehew

5.h Cambrian Cave Registry

ML I haven't got anything to add to my written report, it's been a quiet year, no major discoveries that I am aware of. Just a few additions of references which I have found or have been pointed out to me. A couple of changes to the map interface and that's about it.

5.i Website

BH The website is still getting a reasonable number of page hits/month. The most popular pages are the latest news, cave access and the newsletters. I haven't had any reported downtime so everything seems to be working OK.

5.j Newsletter Editor

DT noted that he had very little stuff for the next newsletter and asked for people to provide news and articles as the cupboard was currently bare. **SF** suggested an article on the WG ministers comments and **RF** suggested the proposed work at Craig y Dinas would also form an article. **JL** mentioned that an obituary hadn't appeared about Elsie Little. **DT** remarked that there articles in Descent and the SWCC newsletter, but no-one who knew her well had volunteered to write one article for the CCC newsletter.

6. Other Cambrian Representative Reports

6.a FODCCAG

JH reported that they had got their annual permit signed for this year. I have copies here of the original permit in 1966 which only allowed access to RFDCC, but our new permit allows any BCA members. The permit system working well and easily done via the internet. Robin Hood is still closed for access but we may have permission to winch that for NAMHO.

6.b Welsh Mines Society

NC I don't have much to report. John stepped down as chair at the Hallfest last year, passing it to me and we also have a new newsletter editor as well. Everything seems to be going OK.

6.c NWCRO

No report

6.d SMWCRT

VA gave a brief update. Its been a quiet year, there was a medical issue in DYO which we worked with a hazardous area response team. This was good as we could see how their kit could interact with our kit. We may see these people a bit more on rescues. Most of the other incidents have been lost or overdue. We are hosting a rescue conference in June with more details being released in due course.

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6.e OFD

No Report

6.f DYOCAP

No report

6.g PDCMG

No report.

7. BCA Matters

DT I have asked by Bob Mehew to bring the subject of the BCA constitutional changes. There is detailed information on the BCA website. The first change is to alter the wording on the rights of landowners to match the change made to the CCC constitution two years ago. Tim Allen has suggested removing that section altogether and I guess this will be discussed at the council meeting in two weeks time. There are several other changes proposed including permitting proxy voting and allowing the BCA to ballot electronically rather than suffer the expense of a postal ballot. The important thing is people should take an interest in the AGM and also take the effort to vote when the ballot forms drop through their letterbox.

SH Can I raise something which was raised at BCA regarding mines. The mines inspectorate (MI) seem to have become more active in the last year or so. NAMHO has guidelines for exploring abandoned mines and these are being updated. One of the mines inspectorate has agreed to help us. MI have visited several show mines and they have closed access to one mine and also visited another mine which people were opening up to look at artefacts. It is clear that the inspectorate scan websites looking for minerals for sale and try to determine where they have come from. If it is clear that minerals are coming out of a mine then they think they should be involved as this is now a working mine. Tourist mines are being visited and some requests for changes (e.g. 4 hourly safety inspections) have been requested. It is clear that there may be more changes in this area and there have been changes in the mining regulations so that the mine operator is the responsible entity.

8. Election of Officers

DT asked if Martyn was happy to continue to stand as chairperson and he affirmed. No-one else offered to take over the post and so Martyn was unopposed and carries on. The secretary noted he was stepping down from the post at the end of the meeting and Rob Jones offered to take over responsibility. **JH** proposed, **DT** seconded and there being no other candidates Rob Jones was elected unopposed. The rest of the existing officers were happy to continue in their respective posts and as there were no alternative candidates proposed they remain in their posts. **DT** noted that he would be happy to carry on as newsletter editor provided he got a bit more support in the way of articles.

9 Any Other Business

DT regarding the application of Gwent Caving Club to join the CCC, this is generally a formality as they just need to put CCC as their regional council on the BCA application form. Martyn has had a phone conversation with them and they are very active. **JH** noted they had been to the Forest of Dean. They were accepted as members without further discussion.

There was some discussion about a missing ore truck from Aberdare level No. 1 (more correctly No. 4 or the

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Nicholas Griggs level) near Pontypool. Several people had seen it in place a few weeks ago but Gwent reported it missing recently. It appeared to have been dragged out with scratch marks left in the ground.

RF Cwmystwyth safety work phase 1 has been completed – a sagging stull which threatened the skipway has been reinforced so it no longer is a problem. The reworking blends into to the existing surroundings and ensures that access to other important areas will be maintained. The second phase of work to remove the second plastic tube and replace it with a steel roadway will happen later this year. The steelwork has been fabricated and awaiting delivery to the site.

David James's project to re-open the Hen Barc adit in South Cwmystwyth has started and the entrance cutting has been cleared out. Because of the SSSI status this work has had to be done by hand. The next phase will be done by cut and cover in short sections where its collapsed.

Fron Goch - access to the engine shaft has been restored, it's not walking passage, there is a bit of scramble up, but a lot better than it was. The 14 fathom level which was accessed by fixed ladder last year has an ongoing dig which may well allow access beyond engine shaft. If the above water sections of the mine were accessible then it is potentially one of the largest mines in the country.

Natural Amenities Limited has been looking at getting the original abandonment plans for Craig Y Dinas and digitizing them to put on-line. These will be of great help for divers as the current water level matches that on the abandonment plans. I have been looking at improving access to the mine and have circulated a leaflet with details of a suggested walkway. Currently the short route in involves a steep scramble which is would be unsuitable for taking heavy loads like dive cylinders. A possibility is to put a pedestrian walkway in along the route of the original 2' tramway. An on-site meeting a couple of weeks ago with mine explorer society, Brecon Beacons national park, CADW seemed positive, but NRW didn't send a representative. The area is an SSSI and have a meeting scheduled with the NRW area manager to discuss the proposal. If I can get approval then I will organise a meeting of the stakeholders to look at funding.

SF One thing the committee needs to consider is how to get rid of CCC members clubs if they have been naughty or if they haven't been seen for years. The more clubs we accumulate then the higher the quorum needed for an AGM. **DT** if CCC member clubs leave the BCA and don't opt to be associate members then they do drop off the list. **SH** part of the problem is the BCA's who need to look the wider issue of club membership; as it stands any club can decide which regional council it wants to represent it.

There was a short discussion on council rates on caving cottages where most seem to avoid high rates but Swindon is classed as a holiday cottage and pays a significant sum. SWCC has a rescue post which helps their status. **SF** suggested looking at what the BMC do as they have a lot of club huts and more experience.

10 Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed to hold next year's AGM on Sunday 11th March 2018 at 12.00 noon at a location in South Wales to be decided – possibly Penderyn Community Hall.

The meeting finished at 15.15

**Cambrian Caving Council
Accounts
Year Ended 31st December 2016**

Income & Expenditure Account

Income

Subscriptions	£22.00	
BCA Grant	£275.14	
Sports Wales Grant	£500.00	
Donations	£281.90	
Total Income		£1,079.04

Expenditure

Travel & Accommodation	£34.50	
Equipment & Techniques	£20.50	
Training Events	£294.05	
Room Hire	£40.00	
Print, Postage & Stationery	£291.78	
Insurance	£50.00	
Conservation & Access	£183.34	
Total Expenditure		£914.17

Excess of Income over Expenditure **£164.87**

Balance Sheet

Barclays Current Account	£5,633.51	£5,633.51
Reserves at 31st December 2015	£5,468.64	
Less : Expenditure over Income	£164.87	
		£5,633.51


..... **Mat Terry (Treasurer)**

Date : 30/01/2017

Honorary Scrutineer's Report

I have examined the above Income & Expenditure Account for the Year ended 31st December 2016 and the balance sheet as at that date. In my opinion they are in accordance with the Council's accounting records and explanations provided.


..... **Bob Sheppard (Honorary Scrutineer)**

Date : 14/02/2017

Cambrian Caving Council AGM 2017

Secretary's Report

The council were awarded £500 by Sport Wales (SW) and continue to be recognised as the representative body for the sport of caving in 2016/2017. Since Sport Wales has changed its 'year end' to April we only find out if the application has been successful after the AGM. An application has been submitted for this coming year and I hope it will continue to be successful as it provides money for training and also some safety work in underground sites. Recently Sport Wales have been reviewing how their member clubs operate as they are concerned about the governance issues and to this end have issued some guidance documents which CCC need to review and incorporate into the standing orders for committee members. I don't think these are particularly onerous and they mainly deal with codes of conduct and conflicts of interest which we already abide by. The matter will need to be discussed by the committee to make sure the guidelines are acceptable and it shouldn't have any impact on the CCC constitution.

While on the subject of Sport Wales I should mention that the issue of child/vulnerable persons protection will be a topic in the next year. As you will be aware the issue of child abuse in the football world has been widely reported and SW clearly wants to make sure the same problems do not surface elsewhere. CCC follows the child protection guidelines provided by the BCA and I have mentioned the need to review these at a recent BCA council and Bob Mehew said he will look at this. With regard to child/vulnerable person protection in CCC member clubs, I have reported to SW that most clubs require children to be supervised by a parent or guardian whilst underground and most club huts adopt the same rule or refuse to allow children to stay overnight. The bigger clubs, like SWCC, who regularly have children overnight have a child protection officer to ensure safe working practices.

Most clubs provide underground training for new members and this is generally done on an 'ad hoc' basis with the new members joining a trip with experienced leaders who can supervise and impart knowledge on safe techniques, hazards and conservation. Generally children will be accompanied by their parent or guardian, however as their skill and experience grows they may want to go on trips unaccompanied. Clubs need to be aware that in this case they need to collectively take responsibility for protection and if any club member thinks something untoward is happening then it needs to be investigated. Commercial training organisations will have the correct certifications in place.

I have attended the quarterly BCA council meetings in my role as representative of a Regional Caving Council and can report that a considerable amount of time has been taken up discussing the changes in the BCA constitution required so that they can campaign for CroW access. Another postal ballot will take place later this year and I implore everyone to try and attend the BCA AGM in June where the motions to put on the ballot form will be discussed again. Conservation has also been a hot topic and Andrew Hinde has produced some documents which are freely available on the CCC website and elsewhere.

I had promised to try and deal with changes to the CCC constitution to allow BCA DIMS (Directly Insured members) to have a say in the running of CCC rather than leave it entirely to the clubs. DCA do this by having a vote in 'house of clubs' and another in the 'house of members including DIMS' with both needed to pass resolutions. This is the method adopted by the BCA and is a bit unwieldy and I would like something simpler. However since I am stepping down after three years in the post I will leave that to my successor to grasp that particular nettle.

Cave Access Limited has had a fairly busy year and the agreement with NRW and WG has been renewed for 2017. The number of people registering and the number of trips is a bit down on the 2015 figures – this was expected as we knew there would be an initial surge of interest in the first year. We managed to add Hafna Mine to the portfolio, but sadly, must report that negotiations with NRW over access to Draethen Lead Mines have stalled. Despite our efforts to keep up communication channels open they have stonewalled us with regard to the issue of bats and have ignored a report from a bat expert that would have allowed access in the summer months. We are at a loss as to how to move forward and so have voluntarily removed the site from the portfolio. **There is no official access to Draethen Mines under the CAL agreement.** We do know that some clubs and individuals have ventured in and we cannot condone this. We know that the mine will be visited regardless of any NRW pronouncement and feel that they are missing the point that under the CAL regime there is some control and bat disturbance is likely to be reduced.

Dave Tyson

Cambrian Caving Council - Treasurers Report (year ending 31/12/2016).

The end of year accounts show an increase in funds of £164.87.

1. There were two claims for the year, £79.25 and £25.00, which I was unable to process in time for the end of year accounts. This would reduce the increase in funds for the year to £60.62.
2. The deposits for the SRT training have been accounted for as donations.
3. The funds held by the council stand at £5529.26 as of 18/01/2017.

I would propose that the accounts be accepted.

Mat Terry
(Treasurer CCC)

Conservation & Access Officer's Report for March 2016 – February 2017

WELSH GOVERNMENT / NATURAL RESOURCES WALES

Changes to outdoor recreation law in Wales are at the planning stage. In a recent written statement on the government website about the 2015 countryside access green paper consultation, Lesley Griffiths AM, Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, said that "Wales needs a better and fairer approach to public access for outdoor recreation ... for the wide range of activities that people want to participate in ... with sensible safeguards for land management". She concluded that "... I believe it is necessary to consider how the laws in this area could be reformed."

See <http://gov.wales/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2017/accesstooutdoors/?lang=en#>

CCC was asked to join outdoors water recreational users in their campaign called Waters of Wales (WOW). We discussed their proposition at our 2016 AGM and decided against it because WOW's starting position is that the CROW Act 2000 clearly excludes water-based activities. Schedule 2(1)(b) prohibits using 'vessels' and sailboards, while 2(1)(i) prohibits bathing. Caving's predicament is caused simply by NRW's perversely narrow interpretation of the phrase *open-air recreation* used in Section 2(1) of the Act. NRW is excluding caving as a matter of opinion rather than by any prohibition listed in Schedule 2. But all normal people, politicians and outdoor recreation professionals included, know perfectly well that *open-air* refers to all the physical activities carried on outside of buildings in a natural environment.

So why are NRW (and CCW before them) and Natural England adopting this stance? We think it must be for conservation principles, expediency and cost saving. From a quango perspective, it is simpler and cheaper to say that no legal right to go caving exists than to admit it does exist but then have to schedule caves of major interest to apply some access controls. Section 26 of the CROW Act provides for restricting access for conservation reasons. However, NRW has snookered itself because it cannot use S.26 to restrict an access right which NRW simultaneously claims does not exist. Byelaws could also be created to restrict access on National Nature Reserves, such as OFD, but again it would cost NRW money and occupy staff time on extensive consultations with all the stakeholders. Section 26 restrictions on access and byelaws would have to pitched at the least restrictive level practical to achieve the desired conservation outcome – a limitation which may not appeal to NRW.

There is also some prejudice against caving. To give a few examples, during my Ogof Gofan talks, NRW's geologist for the area said in front of landowner staff that "caves are really too important to let cavers into them" as he opposed my access proposal. NRW staff in other meetings have referred to caves as "our caves", and in internal correspondence they implicitly question our legitimacy by putting words like "caving" and "cavers" inside quotes as if to imply that these are disagreeable.

In response to letters in 2016 from myself to NRW about the lesser known Law of Property Act 1925 which created a public right to take *air and exercise* on urban commons, NRW claims that caving is *not a normal form of air and exercise*, that caving would not have been imagined by Parliament back in 1925, and so caving rights on urban commons were thus not intended to be created, either then or now.

NRW further claims that this air and exercise right in the 1925 Act is only to land or surface features which commoners also enjoy rights to for their agricultural or

business purposes. This is nonsense because Section 193 is entirely about public rights inside commons boundaries, not what activities commoners may carry out.

JUDICIAL REVIEW (JR) OF NRW'S INTERPRETATION OF THE LAW

Every civil legal action needs someone to complain about something some other party actually did or failed to do. The British legal system thus requires two opposing sides competing to win, and the loser risks paying all the legal costs. The system is not investigative, so it is not possible simply to ask the Courts to rule on a question of principle in an abstract way. A JR therefore must be based on a real situation in which one party offends another party in some way. In the case of public bodies, like NRW, a JR case usually arises from a legal decision they have made being contested, such as in a planning application or a licensing case.

The alleged wrong in our case was that NRW had not properly considered public access when determining a bat conservation licence application which sought their permission to erect a thick re-inforced concrete wall in Drws Cefn to prevent access by cavers into Ogof Draenen, the land being CROW Access Land and urban common.

NRW's primary defence was that no decision had been taken, therefore nothing had happened that the Court could review. NRW said they had *withdrawn* the licence application rather than *decided* it. This is splitting hairs over semantics. It is baffling that the recipient of a licence application can somehow withdraw it when withdrawal is an action available only to the party submitting the application. Indeed, NRW's internal emails between staff members have mainly used the word *reject* rather than *withdraw* which implies a decision had been made. However, in NRW's letter to the unsuccessful bat licence applicant they did use the words "we are withdrawing".

NRW's second line of defence (to be used if the Court first decided that withdrawing a licence application was the same as deciding to reject it) was that caving is not an open-air recreation, and hence the CROW Act does not apply, so there was no need for NRW to consider any public right of access into caves at Drws Cefn or elsewhere.

Dinah Rose QC's professional opinion is that the CROW Act does apply to caving. This was supported by a second QC, specialising in environmental law, and another barrister, that I also consulted to check it out. But we were unsure how the Court would react to NRW's primary defence concerning the semantics of the words withdraw, decide, reject etc. It could have become a costly lexical semantics game that never got as far as challenging NRW on the right to go caving on Access Land.

NRW will not release its own legal advice on how to defend itself and giving the odds of NRW winning by saying such a disclosure is not in the public interest. But if NRW's case was strong and their chance of winning high, then why not release this information to dissuade future legal challenges, or let a case go ahead but only on the question of principle – which is whether the CROW Act encompasses caving?

It is my view that NRW will continue to avoid making any challengeable decisions in respect of caving, or dress up decisions as non-decisions so as to avoid legal action, and they are paralyzed to the extent that they remain in fear of litigation.

Now that the Welsh Government has committed itself to recreational access reform, the best way forward has to be a political campaign for recognition of existing legal rights to go caving. This may need the term 'open-air' clarifying to

include caves beyond any doubt, which is the approach taken by the equivalent Act in Scotland.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOI) REQUESTS

The FOI request that I submitted to NRW in August 2015 yielded a host of useful insights into NRW thinking and processes, plus the detailed methods statement concerning the licence to build a concrete wall in Drws Cefn to stop cavers entering. This is available at www.walesunderground.co.uk/drwscefnmethodstatement.pdf

As a result of exploring a JR concerning the handling of that licence application, I have been handed a lot more background information by NRW as part of the normal exchange of letters and materials prior to commencing legal action.

I issued a FOI request to Natural England in 2016 trying to clarify their position on Commons law and caving by arguing that their Countryside Code leaflet, or its online equivalent, failed to explain to the public sufficiently and accurately about the extent of their access rights under CROW (an alleged breach of Section 20 of the CROW Act which would be amenable to judicial review) and also access under the 1925 Act.

Natural England side-stepped the 1925 Act question by not explaining their position on it in their reply. But interestingly it has emerged that their Magic Map web tool supports a coloured layer to show that land to which the public enjoys pre-existing access rights. Magic Map refers to this as 'Section 15 Land', which puts it in CROW Act terms. This extra recreational access land, of course, is the urban common land specified by the 1925 Act. So to this extent NE is ahead of NRW who were unaware of the recreational access implications of the 1925 Act until I wrote to them about it.

Finally, David Rose, the well-known caver and journalist working for the Mail On Sunday newspaper, put in a FOI request in November 2016 to NRW requesting everything they had, including internal emails, concerning Ogof Draenen and Drws Cefn for the 12 months previous. This has produced a wealth of new materials, including that NRW has upwards of 40 staff participating in internal discussions by email whose aim seems to be stopping CROW caving access from being recognized.

It is all very well for the Minister, Lesley Griffiths AM, to talk now about changing the law in Wales to permit more public recreational access, coupled to some appropriate safeguards, but NRW seems institutionally prejudiced against caving. This will need to be overcome otherwise we may see yet more flirting with semantics by NRW to obstruct new legal rights to go caving on land where there are already undisputed rights to go walking or rock climbing, for example.

BCA

After a great deal of discussion during the past year, BCA has published a new Minimal Impact Caving Guidelines leaflet, available as a download at british-caving.org.uk/wiki3/lib/exe/fetch.php?media=conservation_access:micg.pdf

Internal discussions about writing a new bat conservation guide for cavers have not produced a consensus, so the BCA's publications have not changed. Their current documents and external links can be obtained with a search at: www.google.co.uk/?gws_rd=ssl#q=bat+conservation+site:british-caving.org.uk&*>

The BCA has become mired in a constitutional challenge following their June 2016 AGM where it was argued that their CROW access campaign was unconstitutional and could not be continued. Tim Allen, their CROW development officer, was told to work instead on improving landowner relations in the coming year. Proposals have emerged to change the BCA constitution at the next AGM, and these can be found at british-caving.org.uk/wiki3/doku.php?id=news_events:jan17 It is expected that BCA will settle upon recommended constitutional changes at their Council meeting – on March 25th at 10.30am in The Red Lion at Alvechurch – which anyone may attend.

CCC NEWSLETTER

The newsletter has appeared four times in the past year, available as a download, with some hard copies 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 www.cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk/newsletters.html for the downloads.

I have published a guide to SSSI law and caves, plus how to use Magic Map to enable a search for NRW's official SSSI documents in the January 2017 newsletter.

CAVE ACCESS LTD (CAL)

The CAL directors (Dave Tyson, Roy Fellows and myself) have renewed the access agreement for 2017 with NRW for the one site they own, and with Ministers for the other forestry sites which are owned by the Crown. These contain old mines which can now be entered for recreation purposes. A new site has been added for 2017 which is the Hafna Lead Mine near Llanrwst. Details at www.caveaccess.co.uk

We have recently dropped the Draethen Lead Mines from our sites list due to local NRW staff being totally uncommunicative. Several mine visits have been made by myself, Peter Smith and John Stevens to do bat research and start a mine survey. I also deployed some caver counters which showed hardly anyone is making visits. These resulted in reports and a partial survey being sent to NRW, to which we have received no response whatever. We did find over sixty Greater Horseshoe bats hibernating in the mine, but we can see no reason why cavers cannot visit during the summer months. It is a pity that NRW is not even willing to discuss the matter.

A465 DUALLING OF THE CLYDACH GORGE

There is now extensive road building work at the top of the Clydach Gorge with access to Ogof Pont Gam and Ogof Nant Rhin expected to close from March-June 2017 for building the upper split carriageway. There has been a sewage leak pollution incident in February 2017, reported at dev.chelseaspelaeo.org/news.htm

Access to Ogof Capel and surrounding caves will likely close in the autumn, from July to October 2017, for construction of the lower split carriageway.

OGOF CARNO ACCESS

I submitted an attractive and detailed proposal to Welsh Water presenting the history of the cave's discovery via the water supply adit, its geology, hydrology,

etc, which can be downloaded from
www.linnetop.co.uk/caveaccess/carno/accessproposal.pdf

Unfortunately, after due consideration, the company has decided not to allow access for health and safety reasons. They further claim that there never has been any officially sanctioned access into the adit at any time, and as a result of 'unauthorised' access that some cavers were marooned and had to take refuge whilst an unplanned discharge from the Carno reservoir took place. They have not replied to my request for further information on this incident, nor commented on their own correspondence with Brynmawr Caving Club members which clearly shows that access had been agreed, at least at local level, during the discovery era of the 1980-90s. This can be downloaded at
www.linnetop.co.uk/caveaccess/carno/correspondence.pdf

I happen to have dealt with WW in a business context, and they proved to be the most H&S conscious client on our books. So I feel there is little chance of them changing their minds about allowing caving. Future access into Ogof Carno will have to rely on a second entrance being discovered on land under different ownership.

LLYGAD LLWCHWR 2

Cavers making a visit into the cave last autumn discovered deliberate damage to stalactites, some of these being large thick formations in taped-off areas or totally out of reach. Some broken pieces were lined up as if ready for repair. This incident is not that dissimilar from the Hunters Lodge Cave damage in Mendip last spring.

CCC has decided not to encourage publicity and not to carry out any repairs in the short term in order not to gratify those responsible with attention. We hope they will use this time instead to reflect upon the mindless damage they have inflicted.

GREENBRIDGE CAVE / OGOF MARROS

The access agreement for Greenbridge Cave whereby CCC distributes the keys for cavers has worked well during the past year with no issues arising.

Anyone wanting to see the recent discoveries in nearby Ogof Marros should contact SWCC as this cave is locked and gated with a leadership system in place.

TWLL CLOGFAEN

The tenant farmer here raised questions about caver access but has been reassured after being shown the CCC emails with NRW that confirmed the access agreement.

OGO FOFAN AND CASTLEMARTIN RANGE WEST

Another bat and visitor research project by Peter Smith and myself has been running for the past year. We have also taken the National Park Ranger and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation's senior access adviser on a summer visit into the cave. DIO is the MOD's land management agency. There is electronic equipment still in the cave now so please do not disturb it. Caving visits can continue as normal while the research project continues. Book visits through my CCC email address.

The landowner has set out their strategy and approach to managing caving access and their experiences in an article in the government Sanctuary magazine for 2016. This is a thick colour annual volume of 100+ pages. The article concerning Ogof Gofan can be downloaded at dev.chelseaspelaeo.org/info/Sanctuary45.pdf

A visit to the cave by staff from Dyfed Archaeology Trust and the National Museum of Wales will be made during March 2017. This is the next step in the landowner's process to create a permanent cave access agreement with sufficient safeguards.

LITTLE NEATH RIVER CAVE AND GORGE AREA

I have taken my data loggers out of LNRC, and am not aware of any further diesel pollution incidents in the past 12 months, the last one being in November 2015.

REGIONAL CAVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

The notes below focus on news and developments rather than their routine tasks.

MLCMAC has obtained funding from NRW to strengthen the scaffolding in the first boulder choke of Ogof Craig-a-Ffynnon (OCAF), plus new conservation taping and static rope. MLCMAC is also considering how to improve the crossing of the glutinous muddy channel after the second boulder choke to reduce mud spreading further afield. The lifeline on the pitch to the OCAF second boulder choke and the hand line on High Traverse in Agen Allwedd will also be renewed via these funds. Some other infrastructure repairs and new ladders in Daren Cilau were completed last summer and funded through CCC/BCA.

MLCMAC and CCC have received complaints about some local cavers crossing tapes in OCAF and causing conservation issues. This was passed to NRW to deal with as they claim to be the landowner's agent here and are also the statutory conservation body for this SSSI. The cave advisory committee is no more than that, and CCC does not have any mandate or processes to take action against cavers or clubs.

I have been advised recently that the gates on OCAF, Ogof Capel, and Ogof Cnwc are not in accord with the Bat Workers Handbook specification for bat access slot sizes. This matter needs to be discussed at the next MLCMAC meeting this summer.

PDCMG is trying to allow cave instructor training to take place in Ogof Draenen, although their June meeting was inquorate when this matter was discussed. However, the landowner has raised queries about H&S law that would apply to commercial as distinct from amateur activities in the cave. The scaffolding inside the main entrance has been refurbished and a brick pillar constructed under a suspect roof block. The November meeting was also told that little progress has been made with licensing the closure of Drws Cefn to cavers, this time by installing a padlocked scaffolding bar put across a narrow section of passage. Details of this project are at www.walesunderground.co.uk/drwscefnbarrier.pdf

OFDCMC and SWCC are developing plans to allow easier mid-week access to OFD. This is likely to be via a keypad giving access to the Penwyllt changing rooms where cave keys and a logbook would be available. Instructor training access was also discussed at the last committee meeting, but a decision was taken not to allow it.

LOOKING BACK AND FORWARD

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

Stuart France
February 2017

CCC Training Officer Report 2017

As Training officer I attend BCA Training Committee as well as helping to organise/run training workshops for Cambrian affiliated clubs. There has been a big change with the training committee over the last year and now it has nothing to do with the BCA cave leader awards. Its sole responsibility is to recreational cavers. The BCA training officer is now dealing with the BCA cave leader awards and a separate recreational training officer is to be appointed but this has not happened yet. There are grants available through CCC and through BCA Training Committee for clubs to organise their own training. The SWCC ran a successful surveying course this year and have applied for a grant to help cover the costs for this. CCC put on a SRT workshop in North Wales last September and have two planned for the coming year; 22nd April at Langorse in South Wales and 24th Sept at Plas y Brenin in North Wales.

I am happy to stand as training officer again unless anyone else is keen to take over.

Rich Hill

Equipment and Techniques officers Report 2017

Another reasonably quiet year on the E & T front. BCA E&T committee have again been dealing with anchor issues, been aware of equipment recalls and the concerns of durability and wear rates of items of rope ascent equipment.

We are currently revising the advise on anchor inspection for cavers and as yet these details are not quite finalised. Once the wording has been agreed this advise will be widely distributed together with a reminder on details on how cavers in the region can request anchor placements under the BCA scheme.

A number of regions, including Cambrian, have been continuing anchor testing on twisted shaft anchors of both the existing BP (Bolt Products) 8 and a new 6 mm diameter anchor of the same design. Concerns regarding conservation issues at the end of life of these anchors are being considered. Extraction without damaging the rock and the possibility of reusing the existing (undamaged?) hole are being investigated. Whilst I'm pleased that removal of these anchors is not easy we need to consider the future. Anyone is more than welcome to get involved with this and any future test programs. I'm currently testing at Penwyllt "Party quarry".

With conservation and replacement concerns E&T are investigating alternative designs to the BP twisted shaft replacement. Although there has been approval of the IC anchor, the manufacturer is currently unable to meet demands and only the CNCC region has the benefit of these anchors. However they do meet the criteria regarding BCA requirements, require a smaller diameter hole and can be extracted without damaging the rock.

I have only had requests for anchor placements in OFD at the Columns pitch and for the "step across" on the route to the Northern Lights in OFD2. A reminder of the availability of the placement scheme in the region will be forthcoming.

Cambrian Caving Council currently has 5 approved BCA anchor installers distributed throughout the region.

I'm happy to continue as the Cambrian Caving Council E&T Officer if elected to do so

Vince Allkins

CCC E&T officer

CCC Cave Registrar's Report for 2017 AGM

The Cambrian Cave Register has had a quiet year, with 9 'new' entries in 2016. However, there have already been 28 additions in 2017, prompted largely by a correspondent pointing out a reference to lots of sites in Pembrokeshire, which led to finding a few more old references.

There were a couple of enquiries about individual sites, but the major request was from Prof. John Gunn for information on the number, and length, of (karst) caves in Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for comparison with figures he wrote up in 1989. He used this in a presentation on cave conservation in the UK at Eurospeleo in August. These are some figures I came up with (the precision of which is highly suspect!): (figure in brackets from Gunn, 1989)

Region	No. of caves	No. of caves in SSSI	Percentage caves in SSSI	Total Length (km)	Total length in SSSI (km)
North Wales	199 (44)	87 (6)	44 (13.6)	16.18 (9.88)	12.34 (3.48)
South Wales	745 (148)	490 (30)	66 (17.9)	314.35 (159.48)	200.67 (138.80)

I also gave calculated figures for caves referred to in the karst interest section of the Geological Conservation Review (GCR) which was intended to identify sites which should become SSSI's for their cave and karst, rather than geological or biological, value. This more closely represents what John classed as SSSIs in 1989, but little action resulted from this in Wales, so the numbers are quite different:

Region	No. of caves	Caves in GCR	Percentage caves in GCR	Total length (km)	Total length in GCR (km)
North Wales	199 (44)	5	3	16.18 (9.88)	8.35
South Wales	745 (148)	35	5	314.35 (159.48)	240.07

As I wrote in the January newsletter, discussion initiated on the UKCaving.com web forum led to me developing prototype (JSON) data feeds for use in 'mashups' - web pages incorporating live data from one or more different sources. The initiator quickly produced some maps which suggested to me further modifications to the content and working existing Registry maps.

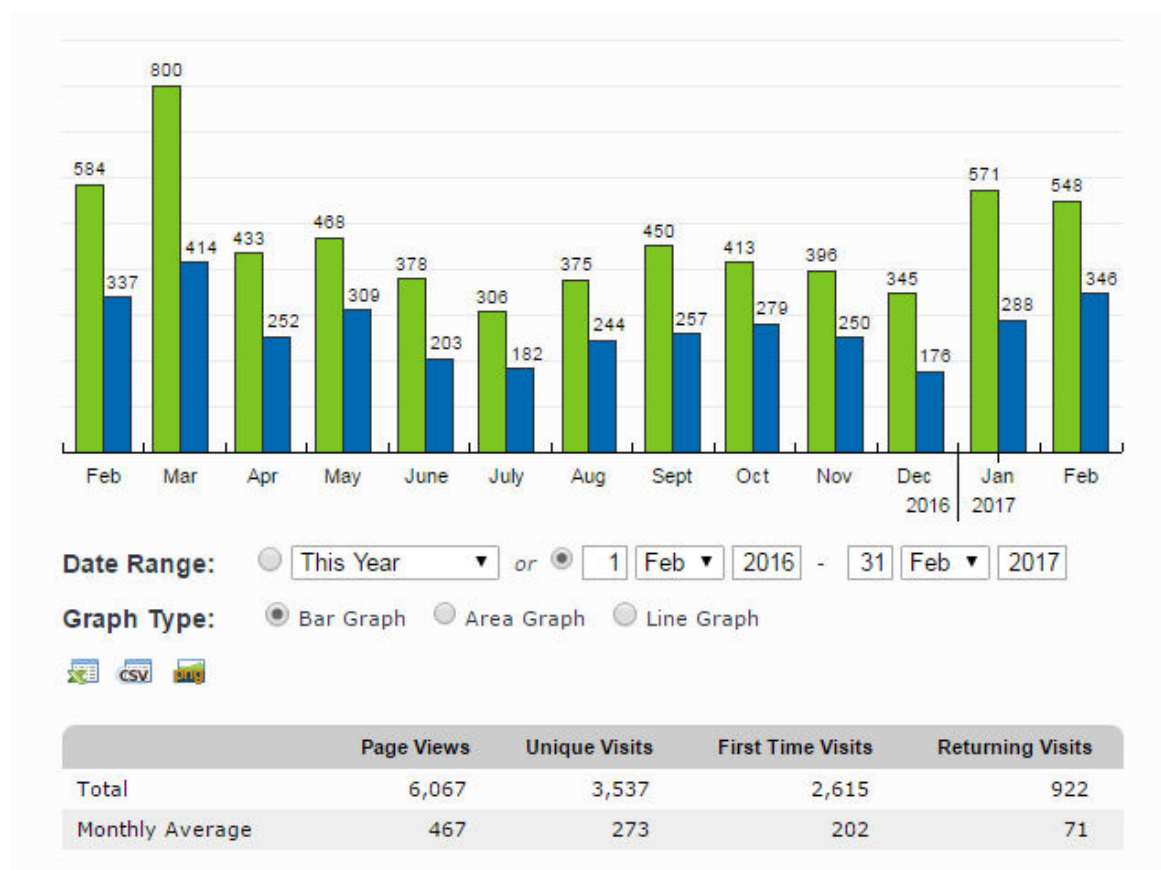
Soon after the JSON interface became available (on request) an academic archaeologist asked for access to the data so as to analyse whether there was any correlation between caves and archaeological finds - we await any developments...

There has been no correspondence relating to the Cambrian Mine Register.

Martin Laverty *Cambrian Cave Registrar*

CCC Webmasters report.

Our website is still well used with a average of 467 page loads per month, the most popular page by far is the Latest News page followed by Cave Access and Newsletters. There has been no reported downtime during the last year.



Barry Hill (CCC Webmaster)

8th March 2017

Craig y Dinas, skeleton proposal for improving access to Upper Silica Mine. Natural Amenities Ltd. January 2017

The Upper Dinas Silica mine is a popular venue for explorers and is frequently used by divers who have the task of transporting heavy equipment up to the mine. The existing route is the path to the north (left facing the Dinas Rock) of the car park and involves a very steep ascent followed by a descent to the entrance of the mine.

The original mine road is to the south of the car park and follows the Afon Sychryd as far as a concrete hard standing area just below a waterfall where it ends. When the mine was working there was an incline ramp leading up to a continuation of the road adjacent with the top of the waterfall. This structure became unsafe and was demolished in the 1980s.

I feel that any attempt to reinstate this would seriously impact the natural beauty of the waterfall.

There is also a ledge high up on the rock face now blocked off for safety. This possibly provided an alternative pedestrian access at a time when the incline ramp was in use as a hopper.

This proposal is for a fabricated steel pedestrian walkway to be fitted and also the upper route to the mine be made good where required by the use of gabions or in other suitable manner.

This would provide an easy route to the mine requiring only 50 feet ascent. Such a system has been used elsewhere and below is a photograph of such a structure at Carrs Tourist Mine, Nenthead, Cumbria.



The picture below shows the position of the existing ledge.



There are additional advantages to the project in that the proposed walkway would be a fantastic viewing area as well as providing an interesting circular walk whereby following the new route and using the existing route to return to the north of the car park would be a less strenuous route ideal for the less bodily able. It would also allow easy transport of materials to the mine for any necessary safety work or maintenance. Map below shows existing paths and position of proposed walkway at point no 3.

