

# CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER January 2011

## Editorial

A series of problems caused by the less responsible members of the caving community blighted 2010 and culminated in the loss of access to a newly discovered well decorated cave in our region. 2011 has started with the Forestry sell off and although the Welsh Assembly has pledged to retain forests under public ownership we must hope that caver access in the Forest of Dean is preserved under the new regime.

For all sorts of reasons these are worrying times.

Robin Weare [e-mail](#)  
Newsletter Editor

## Cambrian AGM

The AGM will be held at Pendarren House Outdoor Education Centre (near Crickhowell) on Sunday 6th March, starting at 10am. (The idea of holding the AGM in North Wales h

The minutes of the last AGM are available for download on the CCC website ([http://www.cambrian-caving.co.uk](#)). An agenda for the 2011 AGM mailed to members shortly. It's always useful to know approximate numbers in

I am about to send out membership forms via e mail to all member clubs, as I have done for the last three or four years. The vast majority of our member clubs are also members of BCA and do not need to pay any subscription to CCC. However, the annual membership form makes sure we

tion of the funding we receive from Sport Wales. For the small number of non BCA member clubs, 2011 subscriptions are now due. Cheques for £12 payable to Cambrian Caving Council can be sent to me at Great House Farm, Earlswood, Chepstow.

Mike McCombe  
Secretary, Cambrian Caving Council

## Access beyond Trefil

The road beyond Trefil has been gated and padlocked just beyond the pub and the bus turning circle. The barrier has been observed to be open or locked on occasion – so take care not to be trapped.

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## Ogof Nant Rhin

A party which visited the cave last Thursday reported it to be blocked by a collapse at the sharp corner just beyond the entrance crawl. PLEASE bear this in mind if you're considering a pull through trip. Thursday's group had planned to pull through but, fortunately, changed their minds at the last minute.

## White Nose Update

The October newsletter reported on the temporary closure of Wigpool Iron Mine when a dead bat was found with visible white fungal-type spots/ mould. The bat was removed, tested and found not to have WNS. Access to Wigpool has been restored.

Information on White Nose Syndrome can be found [here](#)

## New Cave Find at Ystradfellte

The knowledge of a well-decorated new find at Ystradfellte has spread rapidly against the landowners' wishes.

Those few responsible cavers using the site with permission were working with the landowners and hoping to carry out proper scientific study and to arrange for a subsequent access agreement.

However, others have entered the site without permission, carried out criminal damage at the entrance, which matter is now in the hands of the police, and interfered with the landowners' privacy and water supply that originates in the cave.

The result is a complete ban on caving at the site and that the cave will be firmly sealed closed.

We thank the landowners for agreeing to do this in a manner that will not damage the cave so that it will be properly protected and we urge all cavers to respect the laws of property.

We only have access to underground sites with a landowners' permission and landowners may be re-assured that the Cambrian Caving Council, British Caving Association and the British Cave Research Association will always work with them in this matter.

Elsie Little ... 4th November 2010  
CCC & BCA Conservation Officer

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## Forestry Sell-Off

*The following letter from FoDCCAG was sent to all members of the House of Lords prior to their consideration of the Public Bodies Bill.*

Clauses 17-19 in the Public Bodies Bill with its reference to the disposal of our national forests is to the vast majority of people in England very disturbing.

These forests are not only the green lung of the country but along with coasts and mountains are amongst the most used areas for recreation that the public can freely use.

The Forest of Dean is one such amenity with thousands of tourists visiting each year to recoup their stressed lives in the freedom that this forest provides.

Here in the Forest of Dean, cave & mine explorers have had an excellent continuous 2-way relationship since the mid 1960's with the Forestry Commission. This started with the Royal Forest of Dean Caving Club, keen on searching for, & exploring caves, & also the abandoned iron mines. About 10 years ago, the Forest of Dean Cave Conservation & Access Group (FoDCCAG) was formed, to negotiate with landowners for the same purposes, including the Forestry Commission, on behalf of **all** cavers / mine explorers, not just local ones. As a result, a unique agreement has been drawn up, approved by FC Head Office in Edinburgh, & has been used in other parts of the country, allowing us access to the Crown minerals. This agreement negates the mine part of the Byelaws extracted below:

### ***The Forestry Commission Byelaws 1982***

*5. No person shall in or on the lands of the Commissioners:-*

*(ii) enter any building, structure or mine unless there is a notice displayed thereon by the Commissioners permitting or implying access thereto;*

The 2 way relationship continues, & always has been free of charge. With the geology of the Forest of Dean being both complex & fairly unique, this makes both the caves & the iron mines fairly unique as well, best seen from underground.

We are concerned that any attempt to alter our status quo, whether by sale or lease, will seriously affect the enjoyment, study & knowledge of our caves & mines.

Cave & mine exploration is a serious recreational activity, all over the country, it's National Governing Body being the British Caving Association, of which we are members.

I sincerely hope our relationship with the Forestry Commission will continue for the next 45 years at least, & would urge you to vote for the amendment to be proposed by Baroness Royall of Blaisdon exempting in perpetuity the once Royal Forest of Dean from any attempt at privatization.

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The provisions of the proposed bill are so basically wrong! If enacted, rational management of the forest lands will be destroyed and cost will assuredly rise through a multi-level jumble of unconnected and uncoordinated bureaucratic entities rather than be contained. What is worse, the damage done may be permanent.

On Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January an impromptu rally took place in the heart of the Forest of Dean and over 3,000 people attended, including quite a lot of cavers. The strength of feeling about the proposals were so strong that all stayed to hear speakers even through a heavy snow storm.

The message from these people came through loudly and clearly and we ask for your help please by voting for an exemption for the Forest of Dean when Baroness Jan Royall of Blaisdon moves an amendment to the relevant clauses in the bill.

**We ask you please to vote for an amendment to clause 17 to give an exemption to the Forest of Dean (together with the contiguous woodlands commonly regarded as part of the Forest of Dean, namely, Highmeadow, Clearwell and Hope Woods) from the power of disposal contained in Clause 17 of the Public Bodies Bill.**

For & on behalf of FoDCCAG, & all cavers,

John W. Hine  
Hon Sec FoDCCAG.

*Since this letter was written the Government has published a consultation document which treats the Forest of Dean as one of the "heritage forests" which will be given to charities to manage. The public forest estates in Wales are under the control of the devolved assembly but still managed by the Forestry Commission. The Welsh Assembly has pledged to maintain Wales's 126,000 hectares under public ownership. [Editor]*

## **Welsh Mines Society Newsletter**

The winter 2010 edition of the WMS Newsletter is available to download from [the WMS website](#)

As well as the normal collection of interesting articles it contains details of the WMS field meets scheduled for 2011.

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## BCRA Cave Science Field Meeting

The **British Cave Research Association** (<http://www.bcra.org.uk>) and the **South Wales Caving Club** (<http://www.swcc.org.uk>) are pleased to invite you to attend a Cave Science Field Meeting that will be held in South Wales on Sunday 6 March 2011, to follow the 22<sup>nd</sup> BCRA Cave Science Symposium at Cardiff University on 5 March. The meeting will be in two parts, and the arrangements will be left somewhat flexible, depending on the wishes of the registered participants.

The **Morning Visit** will be to the show cave parts of **Dan yr Ogof** and **Tunnel (Cathedral) Cave**, with the kind permission of the **National Showcaves Centre for Wales** (<http://www.showcaves.co.uk>), when the caves will be closed to the public. These visits will be led by **Dr. Keith Ball**, previously of the British Geological Survey, who will discuss the limestone structure and geology, speleogenesis and the place of the caves within the local geomorphic setting.

Following lunch, which may be consumed at Penwyllt, the SWCC headquarters, the **Afternoon Visit** will enter the Top Entrance to **Ogof Ffynnon Ddu 2** (and possibly **OFD 1**). These visits will be led by **Dr. Noel Christopher**, previously at Leicester University, and **Andy Kendall**. They will lead a surface walk to consider the surface expressions of the underground geology and discuss the stratigraphy, structure and age of the Big Chamber Near the Entrance in OFD 2 (and possibly of the OFD 1 entrance series) during easy cave visits. Whilst in OFD 2, active cavers may also join a 20-minute trip to discuss the Bedding Chambers. An alternative afternoon walk to see more of the local limestone scenery and the associated industrial archaeology may also be arranged. Following the afternoon visit, the field meeting will conclude with a Q and A discussion over tea at Penwyllt.

Both the morning and afternoon visits will be suitable for adult cavers and non-cavers. Old warm clothing should be worn in all the caves. Boots and helmets will not be necessary in Dan yr Ogof and Tunnel Cave, but good lighting should be carried. Boots, helmets and lights will be required in OFD. The Top Entrance is steeply uphill from Penwyllt. The hiring of helmets and lights may be arranged locally on the day, if requested when registering. A packed lunch should be brought. The charge for this meeting will be £5 on the day, with free entry for BCRA, SWCC and SWGA members. There will be no charge to park at either Dan yr Ogof or Penwyllt. Available bunkhouse accommodation can be booked at Penwyllt via the SWCC website.

Pre-registration for this Field Meeting is essential and should be made to the **meeting secretary, Dr. Trevor Faulkner**, by sending an email to [t.faulkner@bcra.org.uk](mailto:t.faulkner@bcra.org.uk) by **Friday 11 February 2011**, and can be discussed by phone at 01625 531558. A more-detailed timetable and further information, including suggested reading, will be provided by email to those who pre-register. BCRA re-launched cave science field meetings in 2008 and participants have enjoyed six successful events so far. We hope you will come and enjoy this one so that similar activities can be staged in the future.

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## 22nd BCRA Cave Science Symposium

The British Cave Research Association is pleased to confirm that its next one-day annual Cave Science Symposium will be held at Cardiff University ([www.cardiff.ac.uk](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk)) on Saturday 5 March 2011. This will be a **joint meeting hosted by the South Wales Geologists' Association** ([www.swga.org.uk](http://www.swga.org.uk)).

Each year the Symposium covers a wide range of cave science topics, providing much of interest for academic and amateur scientists and for enquiring cavers. Registration will take place at the start of the meeting. A small admission charge will cover refreshments in the morning and afternoon. At the conclusion of the Symposium, we have been invited to tour Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales ([www.museumwales.ac.uk](http://www.museumwales.ac.uk)), which is on the same site. Further information, including directions to the venue and suggestions for lunch, will appear on the BCRA website [www.bcra.org.uk](http://www.bcra.org.uk) in February.

## Otter Hole

The Otter trips for 2011 are now on-line for bookings. The tide times are a bit unfortunate this year, with a lot of the very high tides falling on a weekend, so the number of trips available is rather limited and the list is filling - but there are still open slots.

The big push on conservation work in 2010 saw remarkable results in the cave, and we hope to continue this work in a more organised fashion in the future. A big thank-you to all the groups who have participated in conservation work - the transformation of muddy rock into pristine stal is most satisfying and surprisingly addictive.

Thanks to the dry summer 2010 was a very good year for trips into the cave with only two trips unsuccessful due to the weather. Sadly, four groups cancelled (some with very short notice) but 2 of these spaces were filled by other groups

There were 11 over tide visitor trips and 16 trips between the tides. With warden's conservation trips, filming and the trip which failed to pass the sump the cave had 171 visitors in 33 parties during 2010.

Nicky Bayley  
Otter Hole Meets Secretary

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## Pwll Ddu CMG

The AGM was held at the Lamb and Fox on 20<sup>th</sup> November. Officers' reports and draft minutes are available on the [PDCMG website](#)

## Artificial Caving

BCA have recently been donated 10 sections of Artificial Cave that can be use to promote caving at shows and events around the country.

It will soon be available for use by Member Clubs and organisations, and will be housed in its own convenient trailer.

For bookings and further information about borrowing BCA's cave, contact [Nick Williams](#).

## Caves of the Peak District

This isn't a take over bid just a feeling that the DCA deserve a plug for publishing this superb guide. Copies are available from caving shops or directly from [the DCA](#)

## Diary

|                        |                                  |                    |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| March 5th              | BCRA Cave Science Symposium      | Cardiff University |
| March 6th              | Cambrian Caving Council AGM      | Crickhowell        |
| March 6th              | BCRA Cave Science Field Meet     | Penwyllt           |
| March 22 <sup>nd</sup> | FoDCCAG Biennial General Meeting | Cinderford         |
| April 24 <sup>th</sup> | Columns Open Day                 | OFD                |
| May 1 <sup>st</sup>    | Columns Open Day                 | OFD                |
| May 29 <sup>th</sup>   | Columns Open Day                 | OFD                |

## Cambrian Caving Council Officers

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**Secretary** Mike McCombe [e-mail](#)  
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