

January 2016

Issue 48

# WALES UNDERGROUND

Cambrian Caving Council Newsletter

Cylchlythyr y Cyngor Ogofeydd Cymreig

## NEWS IN BRIEF

- Fracking licences have been issued for the whole of the Forest of Dean. It is not yet clear which companies have applied and their intentions.
- The two Welsh Cave Rescue Organisations have both been awarded grants of £1,500 from the Welsh Sports Association.
- Natural Resources Wales' written comments about the Welsh Government's Access Green Paper can be read at: <https://naturalresources.wales/media/5627/Improving-opportunities-to-access-the-outdoors-for-responsible-recreation-org.pdf>
- Flood pulse monitoring has been underway in the OFD1 streamway since August 2015. The data logger results will be put online shortly and a live web data feed is planned.
- A renewed planning application has been received regarding land above Otter Hole and there are concerns that this could cause pollution in the internationally recognised site. The CCC, FoDCCAG and BCA are opposed to the development.

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## Photo credits

Olly Burrows  
Stuart France  
Antonla Freem  
Duncan Hornby  
Phil Knight  
Bill Whyte

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chwaraeoncyfmsu

## Ogof Marros - A New Cave System in West Wales

A team of cavers from SWCC have been digging at a new site in West Wales near Pendine, Carmarthenshire, over the past year and have gained access to what may be a major cave system which is to be known as Ogof Marros. Local caver Phil Knight spotted a potential entrance and with friends Storm Morris, Fred Cook and Emily Ivens, started digging after receiving permission from the landowner. The team has expanded over several months to a team of ten people.

By the end of May 2015 progress reached a flat-out bedding space subsequently named "Fred's Despair". It was finally passed by small-person team of Antonia Freem and Claire Vivian who managed to negotiate the 90-degree bend at the end of the squeeze and explore the chamber and passage beyond.

The blockage at the end of the squeeze was removed later to allow others to continue the exploration, but it is still too thin for Fred.

Following a draught through boulders led to a 2.5m climb down to a choke and a possible way on. The choke proved rather unstable and various routes were tried to find a safe way on. Eventually scaffolding was added after some near misses and the final result was called "Sciatica Shaft" named after the back problems caused by its construction.

Several attempts were made to push towards the sound of water, but it was not until July 2015 that the team gained access to a stream within boulders and glimpsed some stalactites through an unstable gap. It took a lot of effort to remove the various collapses, including some arduous work with plug and feathers while lying in the streamway,

*Continued on Page 3*

## Parys Underground Group on TV!

Parys Underground Group has hosted an ITV film crew making a segment of a new show, called "It's not Rocket Science" and presented by Ben Miller, author of a book of the same name. The theme was extremophiles – organisms that survive in extreme environments - such as bacteria which gain their energy through oxidation of sulphur present in the rock and produce snotites. They thrive in the dark, highly acid environment found in the mine, where the pH can be as low as 2.5 and nothing else can survive.

The crew spent 11 hours on Parys Mountain, of which some 7 hours was spent underground, with several members of PUG acting as guides, porters and assisting those not familiar with the underground environment. How much transmission time this will produce remains to be seen!

The show is part of a series which is to be broadcast at peak viewing time on ITV1 in late February and March 2016, aiming to show aspects of science in a popular and entertaining way.

Olly Burrows



Sorting kit on the surface



The crew underground

## Training Events

### Bat Walk and Talk

Meet in Daren Cilau car park 10am Sunday 28th February 2016. Walk to Eglwys Faen and then spend about two hours in the cave looking for and identifying bats with Peter Smith before returning to car park. Dry caving gear and lighting is needed. Only 8 places available so it is essential to book via me.

*Richard Hill, CCC Training Officer*

## CCC AGM 2016

The CCC 2016 AGM will take place at noon on Sunday 13th March at the Community Hall, Ysgoldy-Goch near Cwmystwyth, SY23 4AB. The OS grid reference is SN77077395.

There is only very limited parking at the hall itself, but there is plenty of parking in the Hafod Forest car park 300 yards along the road.



Ysgoldy-Goch Community Hall

## 2016 DIARY

**March 13th, noon**  
CCC AGM, Ysgoldy-Goch

**March 27th**  
Columns Open Day, OFD2

**May 22nd**  
CRO Challenge Fund-Raising Event, Yorkshire.

**June 5th**  
BCA AGM, Priddy

**June 17-19th**  
NAMHO, Dublin

**August 13-20th**  
EuroSpeleo 2016 Conference, Dalesbridge Centre, Yorkshire

## Castlemartin Range Access 2016

To explore for new caves on Range West requires a permit for each visit. This is issued for the day by the range gate house to people who have attended one of the official Briefing Sessions to get on to the approved persons list and be acquainted with local arrangements. Approvals issued in 2015 expire on 28 May 2016. The Briefing Sessions are for all sports users, last an hour, and are held inside the Castlemartin Army Camp. Park by the big tanks outside the main gate and do not arrive late or you will not be admitted to the meeting.

25/2/16	Thursday	18.00	27/2/16	Saturday	10.00
17/3/16	Thursday	18.00	25/3/16	Friday	10.00
21/4/16	Thursday	18.00	30/4/16	Saturday	10.00
26/5/26	Thursday	18.00	28/5/16	Saturday	10.00

The above system does not apply to Ogor Gofan. This is on Range East, and you only need to apply through CCC by email. The National Park Ranger then issues you with the access permit while CCC issues a rules and guidance document to you. Please allow a couple of weeks notice in case any of the people involved in the permit process are away.

A cave bat study, funded by the landowner, is running during 2016 so avoid touching any equipment seen in any of the caves. There are also outline plans to do some more cave archaeology during the summer of 2016 just in case the 1960s digs missed anything.

For both range areas, be aware that there is going to be a lot more use of the firing range by the military in 2016 than has been the norm. It is essential therefore to check before you travel that access is still possible on your chosen date. Daily updates on 01646 662367.

*Stuart France, CCC Access & Conservation Officer*



Tony Donovan near a large deep blowhole



Fantastic fossils on Range West

## Cave Access Ltd - Mines Agreement is due for Renewal

The agreement signed by Cave Access Limited to allow cavers and mine-explorers access to sites on Welsh Government and National Resources Wales land will come up for renewal in early March. We hope that this agreement can be renewed easily and we would like to include some additional sites then, in the North, Mid-Wales and South Wales.

A total of 68 people registered for access in 2015 and there were 27 trips reported. The most popular venues were Rhiwbach Slate Mine and Parc Lead Mine in the Gwydyr forest.

**Users of the agreement are reminded that registration runs on a yearly basis and so it will be necessary to renew permits for the forthcoming year.**

Just send an email with your name, BCA number and club name (or use 'BCA' if a DIM) to:

[permits@caveaccess.co.uk](mailto:permits@caveaccess.co.uk)

and we will take care of the paperwork.

*Dave Tyson, CAL Director*

## Ogof Marros - A New Cave System in West Wales continued from Page 1

but the far side was finally reached on 23rd October when again, the small-person team of Antonia and Claire pushed through and explored the newly named "Wildest Dreams Passage".

Andy Freem, Duncan Hornby and Phil Knight took over exploration and discovered a large stream passage and a 3m climb down to where the water could be seen flowing into the distance. Subsequently Phil and Ash Pursglove found this passage was blocked after about 20m by another choke. More work had revealed another pretty grotto, about 25m crawling size passage, a pretty crystal pool and several inlets.

Phil and Ash also spotted a resident trout, dubbed "Jimmy", in the main streamway and a couple more have been since been found.

The team's efforts have so far resulted in 300-400m of new passageway. In liaison with the landowner, access is at present restricted to allow for safety work, exploration, scientific work and surveying led by fellow digger Michael Perryman to take place. The cave has proved to be inaccessible in the high water levels present during the winter.

The contact for the digging team is:

[ogofmarros@email.com](mailto:ogofmarros@email.com)

*Ogof Marros Digging Team*



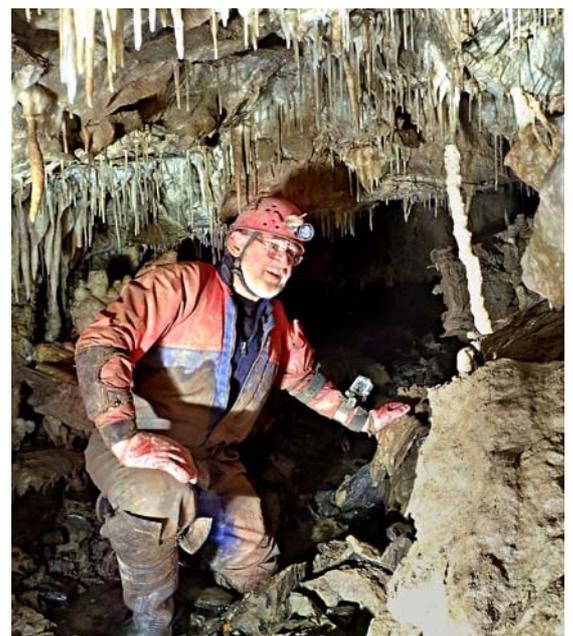
Claire exiting the bedding plane crawl "Fred's Despair"



Antonia & Claire at the initial upstream limits of exploration



Phil and Andy in the large stream passage



Andy admiring "The Twiglet"

## Welsh LIDAR dataset now available

Natural Resources Wales has given free access to its LIDAR (land surface altitude) data from November 2015:

<http://naturalresources.wales/lidar>

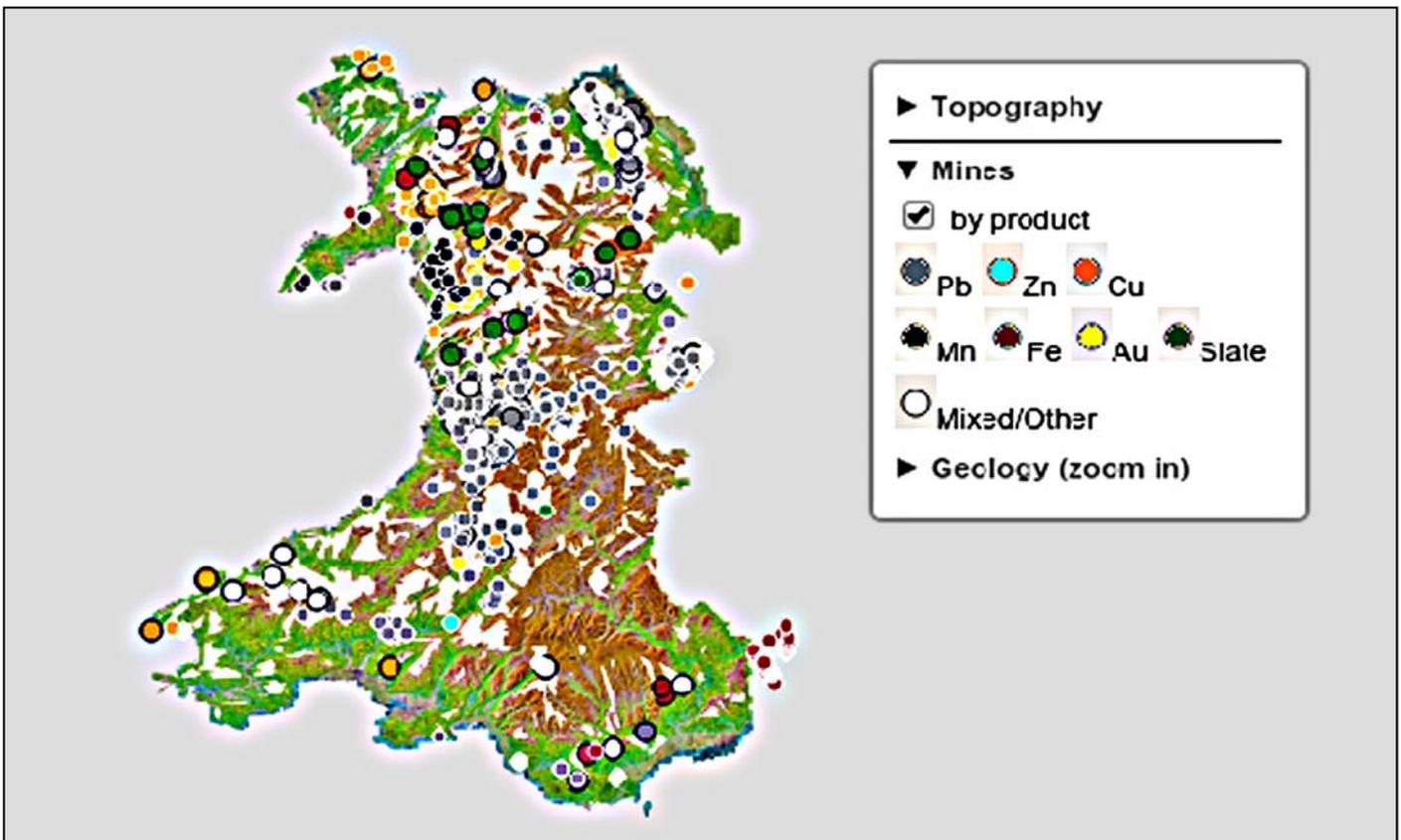
The 2m resolution data, presented as shaded relief, has now been incorporated as a base layer in the Cambrian Cave Registry map. Coverage is not complete, but does cover a lot of our karst areas and does a fine job of showing up dolines (not to mention quarries).

Bearing in mind the strong representation of mining-interest organisations within CCC, a start has been made on creating

a similar resource to the Cambrian Cave Registry to cover sites of interest to (non-coal) mine explorers and historians in Wales, Shropshire and the Forest of Dean. It is envisaged that historic sites without any remaining underground access will be recorded as well as those still explorable. Any proposals for type and level of detail to include, information on authoritative sites to link out to, or other considerations will be welcome at:

[registrar@cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk](mailto:registrar@cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk)

*Martin Laverty, CCC Cave Registrar*



Prototype LIDAR map of Wales overlaid by sites of mining interest

## The Caves of North Wales Website

Cris Ebbs has relocated his excellent 'Caves of North Wales' website to allow for expansion. He had also changed the navigation bar and added a few updates including some small caves in Anglesey. This is an excellent resource for cavers who are interested in visiting underground sites in North Wales and it also contains a lot of archaeological information and some surveys.

The new website can be visited at:

<https://sites.google.com/site/cavesofnorthwales/>

Cris also has a sister site dealing with some of the lead mines in Flintshire and nearby areas at:

<https://sites.google.com/site/flintshireleadmining/Home>

## Recent Explorations in Cystanog Lead Mine

Cystanog is a former lead mine near Carmarthen comprising a handful of shafts and adits on both sides of the Pen Nant hill. It was worked in the late 1800s to the early 1900s and produced around 2,700 tons of Galena and some Barytes.

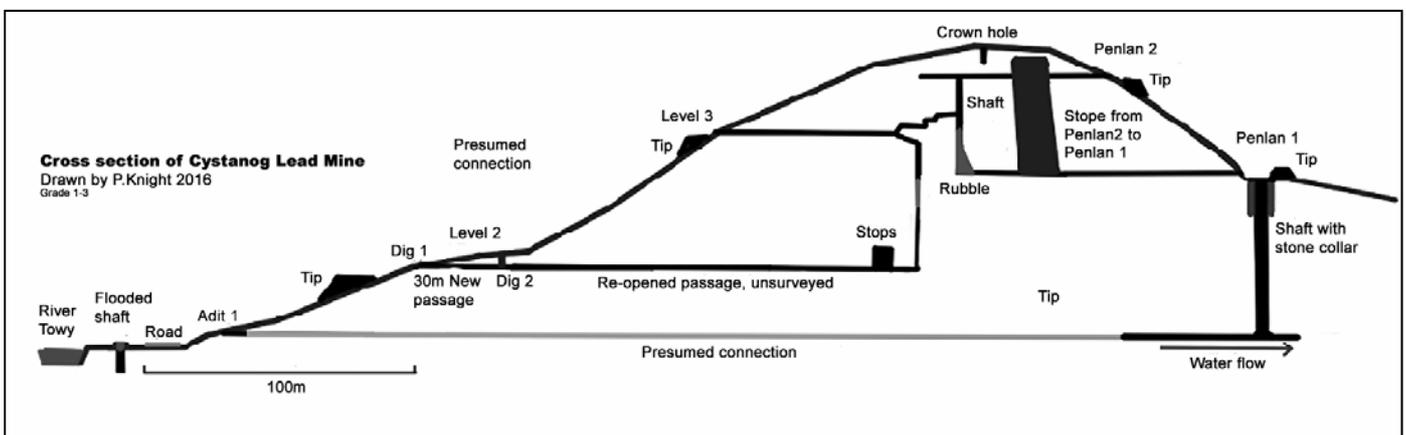
The Carmarthen Lead Mining Syndicate drove several levels into the hill from both the north and south sides. On the North side the deep adit (No.1) was continued for a distance of 570 yards from its entrance, and two further adits were driven into the vein higher up the hill. The lower one of these (No.2) started 100 yards south of the road and extended 400 yards along the lode while the upper (No.3) level was only driven a distance of some 65 yards.

On the south side two other levels were dug: Penlan No.1 of length of 120 yards, and Penlan No.2 of length 80 yards. These were disjoint when compared to the levels on the North side and a shaft was sunk between them and that connected to adit No.3. Subsequently a deep shaft was sunk from near Penlan No.1 and a cross-cut intersected with the deep adit. The vein was followed at this level in both the north and south direction for some 110 yards.

The road side level is well known and many know of the other levels on both sides of the hill where a through-trip from Penlan 2 to Cystanog 3 is possible if one is prepared to traverse a 20m deep stope and then descend a 5m shaft.

For the more adventurous, a trip to Penlan 1 can be made by roping down the stope in Penlan 2 past the very old rotting timbers. Most are aware of the backfilled entrances to Cystanog 1 by the road side house and Cystanog 2 up the hill past the old spoil heap. A few years ago one could enter Cystanog 3 further up the hill and, after walking in 70 metres of passage, descend a shaft composed of a pile of deads held back by timber. This led to Cystanog 2. However, the shaft has now fallen in.

Ten years ago I detected a draught near the surface near Cystanog 2, and a few years ago made a couple of half-hearted attempts at digging there. 2015 saw a mostly solitary dig being undertaken



to locate the portal to Cystanog 2. Help was supplied by Fred Cook, Emily Ivens and Bill Whyte on several occasions, but mostly I found myself there digging alone on the odd Sunday afternoon.

I selected the middle of an in-filled depression and began to dig. A few false

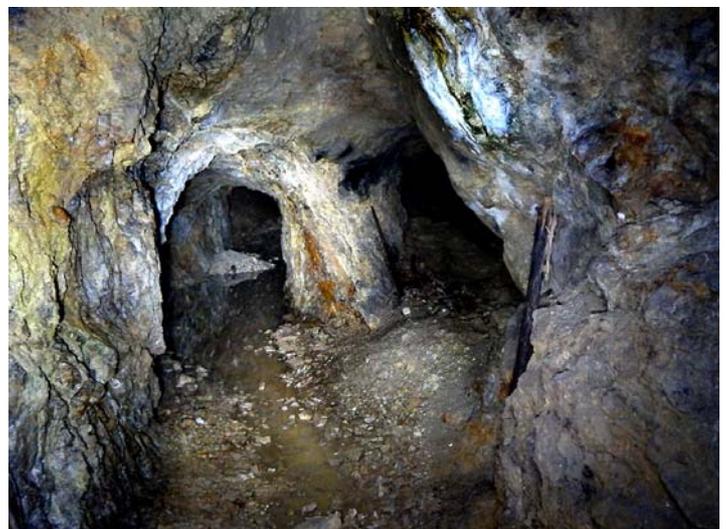
leads were chased and it was getting harder to get anyone to come and help dig. One summer day, all on my own, digging away I chased the edge of the rock below my feet. I was about to give up going down when I decided as a last ditch effort to go sideways.

I dug away at the base of a six foot high wall of dirt with my pitchfork, chasing the rock face to the east and there it was; my prongs broke through the soil to a gust of wind, dust and chunky rock, the kind you would use to block an adit.

*Continued overleaf*



Phil exploring Cystanog Level 2



More tunnels in Cystanog Level 2

*Continued from Page 5*

Several sessions were undertaken before entry was possible. Bill, Emily and Fred accompanied me. Fred utilized his proportions to widen the entrance slope and in we went. Bill went off to photograph what we had found. A small candle in a roof grotto, a shovel with a now rusty handle and metal bar. No clog prints or such as it turns out the passage is prone to flooding.

The end of the passage proved our fears, an in-filled air shaft blocked our way, but showed promise with a howling draught. We continued to dig, shoring up one side as we went, with many incidents of deep rumblings from above. Eventually, after much digging we had opened up the blockage and went through.

The passage continued for 40 metres or so until it reached another blockage.

It was here that we found modern foot-prints. A small shaft in the roof showed a timber floor, and it was at this point that I realised where I was. The rubble used to be a wall of deads connecting Cystanog 2 with Cystanog 3, and ultimately Penlan 1 and 2. The work continues, but as of 2016 the air shaft dig has succumbed to gravel ingress and is sadly blocked again.

*Phil Knight*



Old tools found on entry to the level



Remains of a candle perched on a ledge

## Draethen Lead Mines Access

These mines are listed in the Cave Access Limited agreement but we have had difficulty in setting up a site access protocol with NRW. Their concern is that it may be a significant location for Greater Horseshoe bats. But CAL has recently persuaded NRW to consent to a bat research project led by Peter Smith which has started in January 2016 when bats were indeed seen in the mine, so the concerns of disturbance are well-founded. We are carrying out a BCRA Grade 5 survey of the mines which will assist the bat research by positioning them accurately.

So for the time being there is no underground explorer access here, but we hope to get a summer season access system into place for when these bats will go elsewhere.

## Bryneglwys Slate Quarry - Abergynolwyn

A guide with photos for this interesting site is now available on [caveaccess.co.uk](http://caveaccess.co.uk) for underground visitors. There are various potential SRT through-trips with a total vertical drop of about 125 metres over a distance approaching 1km from end to end.

It is hoped to offer visits to this mine on Saturday March 12th just ahead of the CCC AGM. Contact me for more details.

*Stuart France, CAL Director*

Please send news items, short articles, club profiles and newsworthy photographs (at their original resolution as we will fit them to the page) for the next issue to Dave Tyson by 31st March 2016

## The Cambrian Caving Council

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