

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER October 2010

Editorial

I make no apology for the fact that much of the content of this newsletter is devoted to one small corner of our region. The fact is that I received many contributions from that corner and very few from anyone else.

The Sports Council for Wales, through the Welsh Sports Association's Outdoor Pursuits Group, offers substantial Grant Aid to support overseas expeditions. Don't miss out - cavers traditionally do very well from this grant – details and a link to the application forms are given within this newsletter.

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

Wigpool Iron Mine Closure - Possible White Nose Syndrome

Two dead bats were found in Wigpool on 13th October; one of them was decomposed, the other was fairly freshly dead and had visible white fungal-type spots/ mould.

Bats do die underground from various causes, and after dying are likely to be attacked, as their droppings are, by a white mould / fungus. Hopefully, this is what has happened in this instance, but it is important that tests are carried out to rule out WNS, which to date has not been identified in Britain.

Until these tests are complete (probably 2-3 weeks) Wigpool Iron Mine is closed to visitors. Until then there will also be temporary restrictions on access to all sites controlled by FoDCCAG.

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

BCA Fees for 2011

At the BCA Council meeting on October 2nd it was agreed that the 2011 fees for membership and insurance should remain as 2010.

Conservation Tape

We have purchased a stock of tape which is held by the Conservation Officer and Treasurer for use within the region. Tape can be collected from the more convenient location but only by prior arrangement with the Conservation Officer.

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Overseas Expedition Grants

The current application season is upon us and applications for grants towards the cost of your 2011 expedition must be in by 31st December.

If you are eligible an application is well worth the effort. Cavers have often received a very substantial contribution of up to 50% of the cost of travel, additional equipment and safety equipment.

Successful applications have in the past traditionally come from mountaineering, caving, cave diving, canoeing and paragliding. But the Outdoor Pursuits Group of the Welsh Sports Association is happy to consider applications from other outdoor activities, providing the expedition is ground breaking and likely to enhance the development of that activity. All applications will be considered on merit, and after consultation with the appropriate National Governing Body.

Eligibility

Priority will be given to Welsh based expeditions where the majority of members are Welsh. Only Welsh team members will be eligible for funding and must qualify on the grounds of birth, parentage or be permanently resident in Wales for two or more years.

Amount of Grant

Grant will normally be limited to a contribution of up to 50% towards the estimated cost of travel, U.K and abroad, essential additional equipment and safety equipment.

How to Apply

Applications for grant-aid to support the expedition must be made on the appropriate application form in advance of the proposed expedition date. Applications must be received by 31 December, prior to the financial year (1 April – 31 March) in which the expedition is planned to take place.

Enquiries and applications should be sent to:

Paul Dancey
Welsh Sports Association
Institute of Sport
Sophia Gardens
Cardiff
CF11 9SW
E-mail: paul.dancey@welshsports.org.uk
Tel: 0845 846 0020
Fax: 0845 846 0014

And you can download an application form and the guidelines [here](#)

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Weil's Disease

With the sad news of the death of Olympic rower Andy Holmes it is timely to remind cavers of the relevance of Weil's disease. What follows is extracted from the BCA leaflet on the subject which can be downloaded [here](#).

The incubation period is 7-13 days

Early symptoms are:

Fever
Muscular aches and pains
Loss of appetite
Vomiting with prostration

Later symptoms may include:

Bruising on the skin
Sore eyes
Nose bleeds
Jaundice

The fever lasts for about five days, and may be followed by significant deterioration.

Welsh Mines Society 2011 field meets

The detailed programmes for the Spring and Summer meets have now been published and may be found on the [WMS website](#).

I've been asked to mention that membership costs only £5 per annum for those who already have insurance.

South and Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team Auction

The auction raised £737 which was very good considering there was little surplus rescue equipment. The original Soup Dragons did the food sundries and £100 was raised. The amber stuff raised £260.

A grand total to rescue of £1,097 plus change!

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Maenofferen Slate Quarry Access

There is even less access to Maenofferen than there was before (and of course there wasn't any before) because of untopping works using explosives in part of the quarry. So, no real change to the access situation there - but it's even more important that people keep out. There will be more information on this in the next WMS Newsletter when it's published next month.

Ogof Draenen

Although I've not been given a firm date I'm told that the installation of the new gate is "imminent".

Devil's Chapel Mine

The Devils Chapel Mine complex lies in woodland adjacent to the Lydney to Bream Road in the Forest of Dean and forms a significant part of the Lydney Park Estate

For a long time a loose verbal access agreement has been in place for members of RFDCC who would call the Estate Gamekeeper to notify the intention to visit the site.

The landowner has now indicated that access to the site is no longer available and although local clubs have asked members to stay away, they have no control over the locals, members of the general public or any other out of area organisation that may wish to disregard the present wishes of the landowner.

The landowners are not part of the current FoDCCAG access agreement and, at the request of the RFDCC committee, FoDCCAG has taken on the role of renegotiating the access to this site. As a preliminary it is hoped to set up an informal meeting with the landowners to discuss the situation.

In the interim period FoDCCAG asks that cavers respect the wishes of the landowners and that they do not visit the mines. Any infringement will do little to help the long term result.

If you have any information that you feel could help with the negotiations then please contact John Hine at secretary@fodccag.co.uk and he will also be able to advise you of the latest situation.

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Car Parking for Craig a Ffynnon

Owing to the unsafe condition of the limekilns, the lay-by formerly used for parking for this cave has been closed. Car parking is possible on the grass verge about 50 metres further up the road, or at the bend in the lane that leads down to the Drum and Monkey Pub (not in the pub car park, please).

Otter Hole Film Premiere

Thanks to the generosity of the owners, Andy Lougher and Karen Buckley, The Palace Cinema, Cinderford in the Forest of Dean played host to over 150 who attended the world premiere of "Otter Hole Cave 40 Years On 1970-2010". The events of the evening were filmed and will form part of the DVD and started with the star Dave "Sparky" Parker, director and editor Paul Taylor and the rest of the team involved arriving in a series of white stretch limousines. The VIP guests included George Gardiner who had shown Dave the cave entrance after they had met in the Piercefield Arms in St Arvans back in the early 1970's.

It was revealed by Paul that the film had only been finished at 6am on the previous Friday after a final mammoth 22.5 hr editing and finishing session. He went on to explain that, with four film cameras and two still cameras, one of which also recorded some video footage, there was a bit of variety of quality but I can testify that this didn't detract from the overall result. Around 500 man hours went into producing the 1 hour film from around 8 hours of footage primarily filmed by Paul Taylor & Nicky Bayley. Additional footage was by Steve Tomalin and Gary Cullen with still shots by Jill Brunsdon and Steve Tomalin.

The evening was a fundraiser for GCRG and, appropriately, the second feature was a film by Nicky Bayley showing the team during a practice in Slaughter Stream Cave (Wet Sink).

Ticket sales and donations raised £750.00 and GCRG Secretary, Pete Turier, announced that with a further donation of £250.00 from the Fortis Insurance Group, it would be possible to purchase a new stretcher – designed to assist with any future evacuation through the tight and awkward Otter entrance series.

Due to popular demand the film is to be shown again on Monday November 15th starting at 19.45hrs at the Palace Cinema Cinderford with tickets costing £5.00 each. Bookings can be made via chairman@gcrg.org.uk or by phoning 01452505673

Paul tells me that the film has been accepted as an entry into a film festival in Naples, Italy which runs during November of this year and is web based - so if you aren't able to see the film at the cinema you could watch it online - and send a donation to GCRG.

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Ogof Llyn Parc

It is reported that vandals glued up the padlock on Pool Park No 5 shaft (the access route to Ogof Llyn Parc) on Esclusham Mountain sometime in the summer - causing considerable delay and inconvenience to a party trying to access the shaft on 14th August. I understand that the lock was on a manhole on a 300' shaft which is probably less than 100 yds from an unfenced road.

Cave Surveying Course 13th/14th November 2010

The course is to be held during the weekend of 13th/14th November at SWCC with Andrew Atkinson, John Stevens and Wookey doing the teaching and I'm delighted to report that it has been hugely oversubscribed. Places were allocated in strict order of receipt.

Rescue from Chartist Cave

SMWCRT were called out by Dyfed-Powys Police at 14.10 on Saturday afternoon, 21st August 2010.

A 32 year old, non caving, male had entered Chartist Cave at about 11.30 for a 'quick look' and as he had not returned by 12.30 his mother walked back to the Llangynydr - Ebbw Vale road, stopped a motorist and called the police.

The guy and his mother had 'googled' Chartist Cave and made finding it their target for the day's walk. Having found it the guy had a quick look in (he had a Petzl head torch and hand lamp) came out and after looking at a couple of other sites decided to have another look in Chartist. This was at 11.30 and after an hour his mother decided to walk back the way they had come towards Ebbw Vale and raise the alarm. The missing person was located about 60m into the cave (with a decent Petzl head torch but no helmet) having got confused and unable to find the way out. He was escorted down from the cave by Team Members and Dyfed-Powys Police and the incident was closed at 16:20.

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Westburybrook Iron Mine Gate

Westburybrook Iron Mine is situated on the Eastern Side of the Forest of Dean at Edge Hills above Mitchledean.

During its working life it produced many thousands of tons of Iron Ore. Once abandoned it remained closed for many years but drew the attention of members of the newly formed Royal Forest of Dean Caving Club in the late 60.s and early 70's who reopened the site and gained access to the extensive workings.

The mine has developed a major bat colony and for that reason is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) - under S. 28 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.

When fears were expressed by cavers some years back that the entrance area was deteriorating to a point where access could be lost the Forestry Commission and English Nature stepped in and funded a major civil engineering project to ensure that this did not happen.

Due to its location adjacent to a major Forestry Track and its significance in respect of the bats the mine has had a gate on it almost since day one and although locked the keys have always been readily available within the local caving clubs. When FoDCCAG was formed they took over the control of access for visiting parties and this has worked extremely well.

After an incident in 2004 when the gate and lock were vandalised the gate was significantly strengthened. It has now been found by a visiting party to have been cut through with the use of an angle grinder.

The matter has been reported to both the Deputy Gaveler and Natural England (previously English Nature) who have asked that the police be called in.

It is likely that the cost of replacing the gate will, as with others in the region, fall on the general caving community. Sadly, this is not an isolated event. The gate at Oakwood Mill Deep Iron Mine has been attacked and two other working mine sites within the Forest of Dean have also been the subject of recent attacks, all of which have been reported to the police.

It is not difficult to gain legitimate access to sites within the Forest of Dean but there seem to be some within the underground exploration world who consider they are beyond the law and their actions do nothing to improve relations.

Access to the site remains available as normal via permits@fodccag.co.uk while the repair work is underway

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Oakwood Mill Deep Iron Mine Access

Oakwood Mill Deep Iron Mine lies just off the Coleford to Lydney road in the village of Bream. Although not as extensive as sites such as Old Ham and Old Bow it still had quite a few workings and was surveyed by the late Roger Solari in the late 60's early 70's. A few years back the mine was re registered as a "Working Mine" under the banner of the Bream Project although no extraction of minerals was undertaken - in fact it was the complete opposite as "In Filling" of a number of the chambers was undertaken as part of a road move/widening project through the village.

In undertaking the work large quantities of timber supports and shuttering were installed and during the period since the work was completed this has all started to rot away very rapidly with the consequence that levels of "Bad Air" are now being experienced and a new set of access rules have been drawn up in conjunction with the Deputy Gaveler.

1. Trips into the mine are only to take place when accompanied by either John Hine or Dave Tuffley. Both are Mine Deputy Trained.
2. Only one or the other is to be in the mine at any one time.
3. Who ever is in the mine must inform the other of their intentions and on exiting the mine confirm they are out.
4. A mine safety lamp and back up detection equipment is to be used at all times.
5. In the event of unacceptable levels of bad air being detected then the party must exit the mine immediately.
6. The main area of concern is at the base of the new shaft and a new lock has been fitted to the access gate.
7. Keys are held by the Deputy Gaveler, John Hine, Dave Tuffley & GCRG. They will not be issued to a Third Party unless they can show they have the relevant skill levels and equipment to undertake a trip on their own.

Cavers have undertaken some work to improve the situation within the mine by removing quite a large quantity of the timber back to the surface but the total amount is quite significant and would be a major project to undertake to remove it all.

Access to the mine has not been denied; if you would like to visit the site please contact Dave Tuffley at permits@fodccaq.co.uk.

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Diary

Nov 15 th	Second showing of "Otter Hole 40 years on"	Palace Cinema, Cinderford
Nov 18 th	NWCRO Training	Plas y Brenin
Nov 20 th	DYOCAC Wardens & General Meeting	Copper Beech, Abercrave
	PDCMG General Meeting	TBC & location TBA
Dec 5 th	GCRG Rescue Practice	TBA
Dec 12 th	SMWCRT Rescue Practice	TBA
Dec 31 st	Overseas Expedition Grant – final date for 2011 grant applications	
Jan 1 st	Columns Open Day	Ogof Fynnon Ddu

Cambrian Caving Council Officers

Chair Bernie Woodley [e-mail](#)
Secretary Mike McCombe [e-mail](#)
Treasurer Robin Weare [e-mail](#)
Conservation Officer Elsie Little [e-mail](#)
Training Officer currently vacant
Equipment Officer Andy Lewington [e-mail](#)
Legal & Insurance Officer Owen Clarke [e-mail](#)
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