

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER October 2012

Editorial - yet another example of Cave Vandalism

The last newsletter contained a report of damage caused by cavers crossing conservation tape in OFD – probably to take photographs. I subsequently noticed fresh footprints amongst the mud formations in the main passage of Agen Allwedd but now an even worse example has now appeared in Aggy



Photos: Barry Hill

A vandal has scrawled this graffiti in the previously pristine sandbanks that had been taped off and preserved for so many years. That this desecration should have happened in a cave with a locked entrance and accessible to cavers is just mind boggling and hugely concerning.

The culprits have not yet been tracked down but someone considered sufficiently responsible to be entrusted with a key was there – whoever that was should be thoroughly ashamed of what happened during the trip.

That this has happened and especially that the photographs were taken by a party which included a couple of overseas visitors is an embarrassment to the entire Welsh caving community.

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

Cambrian/Cave Surveying Group Surveying Course

The BCRA Cave Surveying Group and Cambrian Caving Council will be holding a course at Penwylt on the 24th & 25th November. This will take people through how to survey caves electronically, from the initial note taking to the production of the final survey and computer models. The main tools will be DistoX, PocketTopo and Therion, and how this is best used and organised in a group situation to allow an overall coherent survey to be produced. An overview of alternative tools will be reviewed.

The course was fully booked almost immediately but we are hoping to hold another next year.

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SRT Training in North Wales

There will be a course in the spring, probably using the LLanrwst Wall for an indoor session on the Saturday with outdoor workshops on the Sunday. Full details will appear in the next newsletter.

Dan yr Ogof Centenary Celebrations

The 100th Anniversary party to celebrate the first exploration of the cave by the Morgan brothers took place on Saturday 1st September.

The party was laid on by Ashford Price and the showcave as a gesture of goodwill to the local community and to cavers.

The weather cleared to give a fine dry day and about 300 people including over 100 cavers gathered at Dan Yr Ogof in the evening.

We were joined by a good selection of early explorers including Colin Graham, David Judson and Arthur Champion.

A live band played while people made use of the bar and hog roast that was provided. The evening ended with a spectacular 10 minute firework display lighting up the valley.

It was simply magical; with the full moon making a guest appearance from behind a cloud in the middle of the display.

There is a video of the fireworks [here](#)

EuroSpeleo Magazine

The 1st issue of the FSE's new multilingual online publication "EuroSpeleo Magazine" can be downloaded from http://issuu.com/eurospeleomagazine/docs/esm_1-1-2012

Articles for further issues are welcomed and should be sent to articles@eurospeleo.eu

Submission guidelines are at <http://www.eurospeleo.org/call-appel-articles.pdf>

Clydach Gorge Dualling

The contractors inform us that they expect to complete the work without disrupting access to any of the caves.

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Warning to users of via ferrata sets

The UIAA - International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation is issuing a worldwide warning to users of via ferrata sets to check the websites of manufacturers in order to find out whether the unit they are using is safe.

The warning follows a fatal accident on 5 August 2012 on a via ferrata in the vicinity of Walchsee in Tirol, Austria where a climber fell several meters and both lanyards on the energy-absorbing devices (EAS), also known as klettersteig sets, broke.

The manufacturer of the set carried out an investigation after the accident. The probe found that the lanyard's strength was dramatically affected after intensive use not only because of its specific construction but also due to the material used.

UIAA Safety Commission decisions

A meeting of the Safety Commission took place on 6 September 2012 in Bern, Switzerland, to review the accident because the via ferrata unit involved met safety standards as set out by the UIAA Safety Commission. The meeting was attended by national delegates, representatives of 16 manufacturers and UIAA laboratories in France and the Czech Republic.

As a result of the meeting:

- Users are strongly advised to visit the website of the manufacturer to check if their via ferrata set is safe to use
- A decision was also made to review UIAA 128, the safety standard used to test via ferrata sets. The last review of this standard took place in 2008 when a wet test was added. The goal of the review is to update the existing standard for via ferrata sets that will include fatigue testing.

The companies that attended the UIAA Safety Commission meeting were DMM, Edelrid, Petzl, Skylotec, AustriAlpin, Mammut, Salewa, Climbing Technology, Grivel, Beal, Ocu, Lanex, Singing Rock, Camp Cassin and Simond.

The UIAA Safety Commission is made up national delegates from alpine clubs, manufacturers who submit to the UIAA Safety Standard and UIAA laboratories which conduct safety tests on behalf of the commission. The commission maintains [a database of certified equipment and recalls](#).

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Overseas Expedition Grants

The Welsh Sports Association recognizes that ground breaking overseas expeditions play an important part in the development of outdoor pursuits in Wales, and each year invites organizers of eligible overseas expeditions to apply for grant aid.

Successful applications usually come from mountaineering, caving, cave diving, canoeing, rowing and paragliding expeditions, but the WSA is always willing to consider applications from other outdoor activities, providing the planned expedition is ground breaking and likely to enhance the development of that activity. All applications are considered on merit and must be supported by the appropriate National Governing Body.

Eligibility

Priority will be given to expeditions where the majority of members are Welsh, and only the Welsh team members of the expedition will be eligible for funding. To qualify for funding team members must have been born in Wales, or have permanently lived in Wales for at least two years, or have a parent or grandparent who was born in Wales.

Amount of Grant

Any grant awarded will usually be limited to a maximum of 50% of the estimated cost of travel within the UK and abroad, and a maximum of 50% of the estimated cost of safety equipment and any other essential additional equipment required for the expedition.

How to Apply

Please download an application form using the link below. Completed application forms must be returned to the WSA by the 14 January of the year prior to the financial year in which the expedition is due to depart. For example expeditions taking place between 1st April 2013 - 31st March 2014 must apply by 14 January 2013.

Please send completed applications to:

Welsh Sports Association
Sport Wales National Centre
Sophia Gardens
Cardiff
CF11 9SW

For further information and advice, please contact paul-dancey@welshsports.co.uk.

 [Overseas Expedition Grant Application Form](#) (265k)

 [Overseas Expedition Grant Guidelines](#) (213k)

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NWCRO Fundraising

This is really just for anyone based in North Wales – there is still time to help:

The Daily Post has £25,000 to give away to schools, charities and any non-profit organisations in North Wales through its Wish Foundation.

North Wales Cave Rescue Organisation <http://www.northwalescro.org.uk> is one of the charities taking part.

How does it work? How can I help?

Simply buy the Daily Post and collect the tokens.

It started on Tuesday, October 2 and tokens will be in the paper every day for seven weeks.

Collect your tokens - and then send them in - [e-mail](#) for the address.

The £25,000 will be divided by the number of tokens collected – and the bigger the share of tokens, the bigger the slice of cash the group/charity receives.

Information here: <http://www.dailypost.co.uk/news/wish-2012/>

You can read the article on NWCRO at <http://www.dailypost.co.uk/news/north-wales-news/2012/09/05/cave-rescue-charity-joins-daily-post-wish-list-55578-31768123/>

Seymour's Swallet

The cave has been inaccessible for some time but with financial assistance from Cambrian and labour from the local clubs it has been reopened with the cleared entrance now secured by a concrete ring. Last time I visited (many years ago) the access route was through the farmyard after asking permission. I'm told that the farm buildings have now been sold and the route to the cave changed. If you wish to visit check the latest news section of the Cambrian website or contact RFDCC for details. Please do not use the old route through the farmyard.

Emergency Services Show

BCRC will have a stand at the Emergency Services Show to be held at Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire on 21-22 November. For full details and to register for free entry go [here](#)

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FSE Euro-Speleo Grants

Updated guidance note may be downloaded from the BCA [website](#)

Forest Symposium 2014

This is very early notice of the next event. There have been four previous Forest Symposia – the first was in 1994, then 1996, 2000 & 2005 and each was based upon recent discoveries with the main themes being Wetsink (Slaughter Stream Cave) Redhouse Lane Cave, Big Sink and Miss Grace's Lane Cave.

After a long gap recent new discoveries have led to a decision to hold another in 2014. Provisionally it will be held over the weekend of Friday 20th - Sun 22nd June 2014

It is hoped that the 2014 event will also be held at the English Bicknor Club which has a field that can be used for camping, on site facilities and is very close to the caves.

If the earlier format is followed there will be lectures in the mornings and both underground and surface trips available on both days. Saturday evening has seen a mixture of both social events and film and slide presentations. There will, of course, be an onsite bar with a varied choice of local real ales.

Daren Cilau Radon Monitoring

Those who conducted a radon monitoring exercise in Daren Cilau during the summer had been expecting at least some of the readings to be in line with Aggy, however they were all much lower – around 3000 to 4000 Bq/m³.

At this level it seems that even Daren campers need not be unduly concerned about their radiation exposure.

Funding for this exercise was provided by CCW – if they could be persuaded to find some more money it would be interesting to compare the results of a simultaneous study in Craig -a-Ffynnon, Agen Allwedd and Daren Cilau.

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Casterton Fell Access

Outside our region but many of us visit regularly and the BCA have requested the widest possible distribution of their recent statement. It has general relevance of course and the principles outlined in paragraph 3 (highlighted) apply equally to the Cambrian area:

The Council of Northern Caving Clubs has a long-standing agreement with the landowners of Casterton Fell that gives generous access arrangements to all BCA Member Clubs. Unfortunately on Saturday, 18th August, a day when none of the 5 available permits had been issued, the land agents visited the lane at Bull Pot Farm and to their amazement there were large numbers of cavers turning up and parking and a long procession then going caving on the fell. There are even two clubs with reports of their trips on the internet!

Unfortunately this is becoming a regular occurrence and, despite a number of requests to clubs over the last couple of years to respect the agreement, it seems many are not. Indeed, only 4 permits were issued for the whole of August and 5 have been issued for September. All this comes at a time when the whole access agreement is under review and pirating only serves to make negotiations that bit harder. The immediate result in the case above is that the CNCC Access Officer has been summoned to the Estate Office to explain what is being done to ensure improved compliance among cavers. We can only hope that it does not escalate any further in the longer term.

The various access agreements negotiated by Regions are based on the understanding that they will be respected. If necessary, BCA will take appropriate action against any Member or Members who act against the best interests of British cavers. We would, therefore, request that Clubs adhere to all access agreements, up-to-date details of which are available on the various Regional websites, or from the Regional Conservation & Access Officers.

Permits for Casterton Fell are readily available for any BCA Member Club by contacting Alan Speight by e-mail at: alanmavisspeight@btinternet.com or by post at: 8b, Springfield, Bentham, Lancaster LA2 7BA. Although ideally clubs will arrange their trips well in advance, last-minute permits are sometimes available, so please contact Alan and ask rather than just going caving.

BCA Executive (on behalf of BCA Council)

Forthcoming book on the subterranean biology of Great Britain and Ireland

Lee Knight, Andy Lewington and Graham Proudlove are editing a comprehensive book on the subterranean biology of Great Britain and Ireland. It has Phil Chapman as scientific editor. They aim to produce a full, well illustrated, account of all aspects of subterranean biology at this north-western, glaciated, outpost of Europe. The text has so far been a year in writing and has another year to go. They are currently aiming at publication in 2014 which is the bicentennial of the discovery of Niphargus in Britain.

If you have any ideas about what they should include Graham would be pleased to hear of them [e-mail](#)

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Recreational Caver Training

The minutes of the last meeting of the BCA Training Committee tell us that the BCA Training Officer is to create a recreational cavers training course proposal. They go on to say that he has started formulating this and is working with BCRA SIGs to ensure a joined up approach. *[I smiled when I read that it was suggested that they should avoid calling the modules "training" Ed:]*

Survey Index

The Descent [website](#) now has a searchable survey index – pointing you to the issue which contains the survey you want. It is also possible to search for obituaries and articles (by author) in the same way.

Diary

Nov 21/22	Emergency Services Show	Stoneleigh Park
Nov 22	GCRG Wardens Training	Cinderford
Nov 24/25	Cambrian/CSG Surveying Course	Penwyllt
Nov 30	Wilderness Award application deadline	
Dec 2	GCRG Rescue Practice	Wetsink
Dec 6	GCRG Mines Dig-Out Team Exercise	TBA
Dec 8	NWCRO Training Workshop	Plas y Brenin
Jan 1	Columns Open Day	OFD
Jan 14	Sport Wales Grant application deadline	
Jan 31	Ghar Parau Grant application deadline	

Cambrian Caving Council Officers

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