

# CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER October 2013

## **Editorial – new editor**

Croeso! Welcome to the latest edition of the Cambrian Caving Council Newsletter. As you may be aware, I've agreed to take over the editor role for this newsletter. I'm a member of South Wales CC and Royal Forest of Dean CC, so even if you don't know me, you have come across me underground in either of those areas. If you have any news or information you wish to include in future newsletters, please don't be shy – contact me by e-mail using the details at the end of this issue or on the Cambrian CC website - [http://www.cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk/ccc\\_officers.html](http://www.cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk/ccc_officers.html) . The next edition is due out during the month of January 2014, with the aim of producing four every year (in January, April, July & October).

*Rhys Williams, Newsletter Editor, Cambrian CC*

## **Pwll Du Cave Management Group (PDCMG)**

The next PDCMG meeting will be on the 23rd November, 7:30pm, at the Salisbury Community Hall, Merthyr Road in Govilon. Postcode NP7 9PT. Minutes of the previous meeting are available from the PDCMG website <http://www.pdcmg.org.uk> .

## **Expedition Grants**

Expedition Grants from Sport Wales are well worth applying for. Caving expeditions are regularly supported and Cambrian Caving Council is represented on the Overseas Expedition Panel of the Welsh Sports Association's (WSA) Outdoor Pursuits Group which allocates and administers them.

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.

Grants can cover up to 50% of the estimated cost of travel within the UK and abroad, and 50% of the estimated cost of safety equipment and any other essential additional equipment required for the expedition.

As last year the WSA are inviting applications but are unable to guarantee at this stage that the necessary funding will be available. This decision over continuing to fund this scheme will be taken at a later date by the WSA board, when next years WSA funding and programme has been approved.

The deadline for applications for expeditions leaving in the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 is 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2014.

This means that, for example:

# CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER October 2013

*If an expedition is due to depart in July 2014 the application deadline is the 3 March 2014.*

*If an expedition is due to depart in February 2015, the application deadline is still the 3 March 2014.*

*But if an expedition is due to depart in March 2014 the application deadline has already passed and was in fact the 14 January 2013.*

For detailed information and to download the application forms go to  
<http://www.welshsports.org.uk/overseasexpeditiongrants.asp>

## **Update on underground access on Forestry land**

A number of people will know that Elsie Little was working on an access agreement with the Forestry Commission (now Natural Resources Wales {NRW}) to access underground sites throughout Wales on their land and the work was fairly advanced when she was taken from us.

I would like to reassure you that this is a project that is continuing. I have been able to identify and contact the original negotiators from NRW and their solicitors in order to progress this work.

The proposed agreement would come into force in stages and has to be site specific rather than a blanket access for all caves and mines. The first stage will be the basic agreement, accompanied by an initial list of sites for access. This first list will concentrate on slate quarries and metalliferous mines in north and mid Wales. More sites across Wales will be added in further stages subject to the initial arrangements working without hiccups.

I am extremely grateful for the considerable help I have been given from members of the Welsh Mines Society with regard to legal matters and entrance details.

Although there are some details of the draft agreement that NRW and the Cambrian CC cannot see eye to eye on at present, I believe that the differences are surmountable.

I will continue to report on progress as negotiations go on.

*Bernie Woodley, Chair/Conservation Officer, Cambrian CC.*

# CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER October 2013

## **Clydach Gorge dual carriageway**

The Welsh Government has just released the draft orders, relevant plans, public notices and the environmental statement for the proposed dualling of the A465 through the Clydach Gorge. The documents are available from the Welsh Government website and will be on view locally at:-

Brynmawr Foundation School, Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> November from 16:00 to 21:00

Clydach Village Hall, Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> November from 16:00 to 21:00

Old School Community Hall, Gilwern, Friday 15<sup>th</sup> November from 10:00 to 20:00 and Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November from 10:00 to 16:00

In addition, the documents can be viewed at the Old School Community Hall on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 09:30 to 12:30 during the objection period.

Views and observations can be made at the public consultation events above or to the Welsh Government by the 21<sup>st</sup> November.

To ensure that adequate protection for the caves in the gorge has been properly considered and incorporated into the plans for the road building, the Cambrian Caving Council have been engaged in discussions with the proposed contractors from the outset.

We have also recommended some specialist and qualified cavers to the contractors. These cavers have supplied significant information regarding precise positions of cave entrances and passage, geology and hydrology, which has been taken into account and has contributed to the environmental statement and the plans of the contractors.

There is a possibility that unknown voids will be uncovered during the construction phase and we have ensured that there will be cavers standing by to investigate and survey any discoveries, so that appropriate actions can be taken by all parties to safeguard the workers as well as any new cave.

*Bernie Woodley, Chair/Conservation Officer, Cambrian CC.*

## **Report on Cambrian CC SRT workshop**

Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> October saw eight course participants and four Cave Instructor Certificate holders (CICs) gathered at the Llangorse rope centre. The ability ranged from almost total novice to competent club cavers that wanted to know more. The morning was spent refreshing rusty people and the afternoon moved on to more complex manoeuvres including cutting the rope with one trusting instructor hung in

# CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL

## NEWSLETTER October 2013

mid air as the knife was wielded. The day was a success and hopefully we can run more in the future.

*Rich Hill, Training Officer, Cambrian CC*

Feedback from some of the participants:

“Just a thank you E-mail for the SRT Training on Saturday. It was a great day and it was brilliant to refresh the skills; as the skills were rusty, but at the end of the session the skills were improved. The instructors were great, they were friendly, knowledgeable and very approachable. Once again Thank you for organising a brilliant day.”

“I just wanted to say a very big 'Thank you' to the CICs who gave up a day on Saturday to run the SRT training session. They catered very well for the range of abilities/experience and everyone seemed to enjoy the day as well as learning a lot. It's really good to have the chance to practice things in daylight with someone experienced looking on to correct any mistakes! I have attended similar sessions in the past and it was nice to have different CICs to work with and see how someone else approaches a particular situation. I had been feeling pretty rusty on rescue scenarios (which fortunately I have never needed to use underground), but I am now feeling much more confident again!”

### **Otter Hole**

In contrast to 2012, due to the unusually dry conditions this summer, almost all planned trips made it through the tidal sump and into Otter Hole this season without incident. A further development that local cavers may have noticed in this area is that Piercefield Woods (where the entrance is located) were put for sale in recent months. The woods are now apparently under offer. With the guide price having been £750,000 for the 82 hectares, it was probably a little out of the reach of the budget of any caving club!

### **Swansea Valley geological walk**

On the 15th September, despite a lousy weather forecast, 6 of us met at Craig y Nos car park to go on a walk above Dan yr Ogorf to look at the surface geology and try and link that into the features underground. The walk was led by Alan Bowring of Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA) ably assisted by Judith Harvey also of BBNPA.

# CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL

## NEWSLETTER October 2013

We walked up the access path from the car park to the summit of Cribarth in increasing wind, rain and cloud. Several natural geological features were looked at and also some manmade features where man has exploited the rocks and minerals over the years. We then walked round to the dry valley containing Pwll Dwfn and from there to Sinc y giedd where we timed it perfectly to watch the river slowly filling with water and making its way to the sink. After a short lunch stop we walked over to Waun Figen Felen Sink and again watched the stream building slowly up. From there we headed back to the car park for a well earned hot chocolate and a look at various maps and books. Alan is extremely knowledgeable and I certainly learned a lot from him. For much more information have a look at the Brecon Beacons geopark website - <http://www.forestfawrgeopark.org.uk> .

*Rich Hill, Training Officer, Cambrian CC*

### **Forest of Dean Caving Symposium V – change of date and venue**

Word has been received from Paul Taylor that the intended location and date of the fifth Forest of Dean caving symposium has had to be changed. Subject to final confirmations, the event is now hoped to be held at the Dean Field Studies Centre in Parkend on 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> June 2014. The venue should be very good, with space for lectures, camping, indoor accommodation and more. Details to follow when finalised...

### **Daren Cilau clean up**

It is reported by Mark Lumley that progress is being made on this project. There are apparently now 150-200 bags which, together with old BDHs and Daren Drums, have been stacked at Hard Rock, White's Passage, Big Chamber Nowhere Near the Entrance and a few at the entrance crawl. Of which some 50-100 loads have already made it out of the cave. If you're on a trip in Daren, please help out by ferrying some of the bagged rubbish loads towards the entrance. Every little helps! Alternatively make contact with the Daren diggers via their website and see what you can do to help - <http://www.darencilau.co.uk> .

### **Changes at Dan yr Ogof**

There are changes to the way Dan yr Ogof - The National showcaves Centre for Wales - intends to manage, and conserve the caves that extend beyond the showcaves.

# CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL

## NEWSLETTER October 2013

Dan yr Ogof's Chairman, Ashford Price said :-

"I have been at Dan yr Ogof for over forty years, and have always tried to ensure that cavers from all over the world enjoy their visit to one of the finest caves in Europe. The fact that the caves are so well preserved is due to the South Wales Caving club, and also the Dan yr Ogof Cave Advisory Committee that has administered access for cavers for the past 20 years

However, I now want to move on from a committee style approach to caving. I have selected six cavers with various speleological skills to form the Dan yr Ogof Conservation Advisory Panel. (DYOCAP).

This body will also have direct access to the main DYO Board when necessary. The Panel will also have representatives from the Brecon Beacons National Park, and Natural Resources Wales.

The Board of Dan yr Ogof wants this Panel to have full control of both access, and all conservation issues. The DYO Boards aspirations for this panel will lead to long term benefits for the future of this great Welsh cave system.

The Panel's main role will be to consider the best conservation measures for Dan yr Ogof. Conservation will be at the heart of all the decisions the Panel makes. There are within the caves so many amazing formations, and geological features. However, their long term future depends on the Panel getting right the delicate balance between exploration, digging etc., and the need to conserve what we already have. Achieving the above aims will be no easy task, and will need all the innovative skills that the Panel can come up with. However, cave conservation only works when you have the full co operation of the cavers that cave at Dan yr Ogof.

In a nutshell there are no access changes. Cavers in future may be asked to help with conservation measures, and will also be encouraged to come up with conservation ideas.

The long term future for Dan yr Ogof depends on the co-operation of all cavers. If everyone works together future generations of cavers will also be able to marvel at the splendours Dan yr Ogof offers".

Key points:-

- Access arrangements for cavers to remain unchanged.
- Management activity to be focussed on conservation of the cave. Conservation will take precedence over all other considerations.
- The new panel will be hand-picked for their specialist skills and knowledge of the system.
- Panel members will have direct access to the DYO Showcave Board.

Contact: Ashford Price [ashford@showcaves.co.uk](mailto:ashford@showcaves.co.uk) or phone...

Mobile. 07989855313 .

# CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER October 2013

## **NAMHO Conference**

### **Preliminary Notice and Call for Papers. Bangor, Gwynedd - 25–27 July 2014 Mining Technology: technical innovation in the extractive industries**

A two-day programme of lectures examining some of the technologies involved in winning material from the ground, plus surface and underground field visits to relevant mining and quarrying sites in north-west Wales. Over the last four thousand years mining has progressed from antler picks and stone hammers, through the mechanical developments of the medieval period and nineteenth century industrialisation, to the large computer-controlled mining machinery of the present day. Papers are invited on all aspects of the development of technology involved in mining and quarrying including, but not limited to:

- prospecting and geological studies
- mine planning and development
- mining methods, including hand and machine mining, fire setting, use of explosives
- ventilation, pumping and drainage
- ore, waste and workforce transport, including winding and haulage
- communications, control and automation
- underground safety
- mineral processing
- social impacts of technical innovations

Submissions that have relevance to the mines and quarries of north Wales or that focus on the why, how and when of the introduction of particular technologies and the impacts they had are particularly welcomed. Poster contributions are also invited. It is intended that the proceedings will be published as a printed volume.

The conference organiser is Simon Lowe [simon@aditnow.co.uk](mailto:simon@aditnow.co.uk) 01248 671656.  
Submissions of papers should be made to Dave Linton  
[dave.linton@hendrecoed.org.uk](mailto:dave.linton@hendrecoed.org.uk) 01341 280901.

## **Bats and White-nose syndrome**

It has been reported that the fungus known to be causing White-nose syndrome and killing bats in north America has been identified at bat sites in south east England. However, although the fungus, now named *Pseudogymnoascus destructans*, is present, it does not appear to be causing the White-nose syndrome in bats here in the UK.

Scientific work continues and further information on white-nose syndrome can be found on the WNS pages at [http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/about\\_bats-white-nose\\_syndrome-586.html](http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/about_bats-white-nose_syndrome-586.html) .

# CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER October 2013

## Diary

2013

Nov 7	GCRG Wardens Training	Cinderford
Nov 23	PDCMG meeting	Govilon
Dec 7	GCRG Training Day & Social	Noxon Park
Dec 7	S&MWCRT practice	To be confirmed

2014

January 18	S&MWCRT practice	To be confirmed
** June 27-29	Forest of Dean Caving Symposium	Parkend
	** (subject to final confirmation)	
July 25-27	NAMHO Conference	Bangor

## Cambrian Caving Council Officers

**Chair** Bernie Woodley [e-mail](#)  
**Secretary** Mike McCombe [e-mail](#)  
**Treasurer** Robin Weare [e-mail](#)  
**Assistant Secretary** Sue Goodhead [e-mail](#)  
**Conservation Officer** Bernie Woodley [e-mail](#)  
**Training Officer** Richard Hill [e-mail](#)  
**Equipment Officer** Vince Allkins [e-mail](#)  
**Legal & Insurance Officer** Owen Clarke [e-mail](#)  
**Registrar** Brendan Marris [e-mail](#)  
**Webmaster** Barry Hill [e-mail](#)  
**Newsletter Editor** Rhys Williams [e-mail](#)