

# CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER January 2008

## **Otter Hole Access Procedure**

Since its discovery in 1974, the Royal Forest of Dean Caving Club (RFDC) has controlled access to Otter Hole on behalf of, and at the request of, the landowner. Parties visiting the cave must be accompanied by a warden, partly to minimise the danger of the cave's infamous "tidal sump"; and partly to help protect/conservate the beautiful formations that adorn the further reaches of Otter Hole.

Over the past couple of years RFDC has come in for a bit of stick from some quarters over shortage of information and poor communication with regard to the system for booking a trip. In an effort to address these concerns RFDC have put more information about the booking procedure on their website, together with an online calendar showing which dates are available and, where a date is booked, who has booked it. The website is excellently maintained by Andy Harp and Nicky Bayley, and Nicky has also agreed to take on the role of Otter Hole Secretary; replacing John Hutchinson who has stood down after doing the job for more years than I (and maybe John) can remember. Many thanks are due to John, who is still going to be involved in the management of the cave.

Applications for trips for a maximum of 4 persons should be made to the Otter Hole Secretary:

Email: [otterhole@rfdcc.org.uk](mailto:otterhole@rfdcc.org.uk)

Post: Nicky Bayley, 67 Templeway West, Lydney, Glos. GL15 5JD

Telephone: 01594 840481

Access is available to anyone with third party caving insurance.

More information about Otter Hole can be found on the RFDC website; <http://www.rfdcc.org.uk/> Follow the links to Otter Hole.

Greg Jones, Chairman RFDC

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## NEWSLETTER January 2008

### Bridge Cave

Following a report that Bridge Cave choke has moved it ~~as~~ visited earlier this week by the CCC Equipment officer, Dave Ludlam, who reports

1. It looks like more water is coming down the entrance crawl than usual – look for the new, washed-out, slots just inside the entrance.
2. This, plus very high water, has washed out the base of part of the choke and some of the boulders that you would have crawled over have dropped in to create a void. Flood debris at the lowest and tightest part of the crawl suggests a significant flow of water up to 1 metre deep.
3. Treading carefully, I took some pics and had a careful look under the remaining boulders. At present the remaining large boulders are stable; there has been no visible movement of the choke above crawl level.
4. The new void is big enough to climb down into to access the streamway – this should be avoided to save disturbing the remaining lower part of the choke, but...
5. ...the next flood/high water event may do more reconstruction, so...

### Conclusions

- Things have changed and may (probably will!) continue to do so
- The 'usual' route through the choke looks stable at present
- The area should be carefully assessed each trip (but we do that anyway – don't we?!)
- This area and the streamway may be reacting even more quickly and unpredictably to high water levels with even greater potential to catch out the unaware!
- Remedial work/scaffolding/shuttering may be worth considering but I would like to see what happens after the next couple of floods before going down that road.

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As a precaution I am going to stop using Bridge until I'm convinced that things have settled down or remedial work has taken place.

## **Cambrian AGM**

The Annual General Meeting of the Cambrian Caving Council will be held at Storey Arms Outdoor Education Centre, underneath Pen y Fan, Nr. Libanus at 10:30am on Sun 9<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

### AGENDA

1. Chairperson's Opening Remarks
2. Apologies for Absence
3. Minutes of Sept General Meeting
4. Matters Arising from Mins of Sept General Meeting
5. Constitution & CCC Policy Documents
6. Applications for Membership
  
7. Officer's Reports (Written reports previously circulated by e-mail, where possible)
  - 7a Chairperson
  - 7b Secretary
  - 7c Treasurer
  - 7d Conservation Officer
  - 7e Training Officer
  - 7f Equipment Officer
  - 7g Legal & Insurance Officer
  - 7h Cambrian Cave Registry
  - 7i Website
  
8. Other Cambrian Representative Reports (Written reports previously circulated by e-mail where possible)
  - 8a. OFD Management Committee
  - 8b. Sports Council for Wales and WSA/OPG
  - 8c. BBNP ARAG
  - 8d. FODCCAG
  - 8e Mynydd Llangattock C M C
  - 8f Dan yr Ogof C.A.C
  - 8g Pwll Ddu C.M.G
  - 8h Waterfalls and Safety Advisory Group.
  - 8i Castlemartin Range
  - 8j CCW Wales Access Forum

# CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER January 2008

8k National Access Forum  
8m Newsletter Editor

8l Cave Rescue Organisations

9. CCC Spending on Projects 2008-9
10. BCA Matters
11. Election of Officers
12. AOB
13. Date and Location of CCC General Meeting Sept 2008

If you are able to send a representative for your club please indicate their intention to attend by e-mailing me at:

[secretary@cambridgavingcouncil.org.uk](mailto:secretary@cambridgavingcouncil.org.uk)

There will be lunch available at Storey Arms following the meeting. For catering arrangements to be made please also indicate if you would like to stay for lunch.

## **Rod's Pot/Bath Swallet**

New Bolts are to be placed at Purple Pot (Rods pot) to aid the through trip that can now be done with Bath Swallet.

CSCC have let members know that free-climbing out of Bath Swallet is not to be condoned. The preferred method of doing this through trip is to pre-rig Shower Pot in Bath Swallet first.

There is concern for poorly supported rocks near the area that is free climbed that could result in a serious collapse.

## **Cave Life of Wales**

CCC has supported the cost of setting a Cave Wildlife website. The site, which was created by Andy Lewington, is now live and can be reached via a link on the CCC website.

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## **Parking at Dan yr Ogof**

Cavers are in the fortunate position of being able to park at the Dan-yr-Ogof showcave complex, whether visiting DYO itself or other caves on the Black Mountain (such as Tunnel Cave and Pwll Dwfn), or even digging or prospecting on the hill. However, the complex is not a public car park and the management does not extend the invitation to park to all and sundry. So that cavers' cars can be identified as such (without compromising their security) you are asked to display a 'dragon' logo on the windscreen or dashboard while parked. There are good reasons for this; when the showcave closes at the end of the day unidentified vehicles have to be viewed as belonging to tourists who have for some reason not left the showcave(s), and the police insist that Ashford Price and his staff unlock and search everywhere to be sure. You can imagine how irritating it is to go through this procedure only to find that a car or cars belong to cavers who didn't bother to display a dragon. Even during the showcave close season, Ashford is entitled to know who is parking on his property and so has asked that this simple courtesy be observed all year round. (A recent incident involving unidentified cars on a Monday morning cost him and his staff several hours and numerous phone calls, although they turned out not to be cavers' cars.)

Most DYO Wardens have at some point been issued with a small laminated dragon logo, but if you don't have one then anything that resembles the dragon on the Welsh flag will suffice: download something from the internet, photocopy from a book or whatever. Many more incidents like the one described above may lead to more restrictions and we need to ensure that cavers are 'whiter than white' on this!

## **Sports Council for Wales Safety Grant**

Applications were received from North Wales Cave Rescue Organisation and West Brecon Cave Rescue Team for a share of the safety grant. Gwent Cave Rescue Team had not submitted an application.

There was grant of £2,000 from SCW. NWCRO had applied for £126.12 and WBCRT had applied for > £2000. £126.12 was allocated to NWCRO and the remainder to WBCRT.

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## **Craig a Ffynnon fixed aids**

The Cambrian Caving Council has funded some recent improvements to fixed aids in Ogof Craig-a-Ffynnon to improve their security and usability. The two fixed ladders have been chained / bolted in position, new bolts and handline have been installed on the climb up to 2nd Boulder Choke, and 3 bolts have been placed for ladder and lifeline at the Promised Land pitch.

Cavers are reminded that they should always check the condition of fixed aids before use, and should consider bringing additional equipment sufficient for the needs of their party. Ladder and lifeline is recommended for less competent climbers on the climb up to 2nd Boulder Choke.

## **CCW Installation at Clogwyn**

Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) have installed 3 pairs of eye bolts, some steps and a small gather platform outside Ogof Clogwyn to aid access to this cave.