

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER July 2008

Editorial

The big event since the last newsletter has been the appearance online of the Cambrian Cave Registry. This is the result of a massive effort from our registrar over a very long period and will prove to be a major resource to cavers everywhere. Well done Gary and special thanks to Cookie for his technical help.

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

Cambrian Caving Council General Meeting

A reminder that our next General Meeting will be held at the GCRG Depot in Cinderford on Sunday 14th September starting at 10.30am.

Underground Wales - Cambrian Cave Registry A Database of the Caves of Wales

Version 1 – July 2008 of this database is now on-line. [Click here](#)

Background

The Cambrian Cave Registry was developed extensively during the 1970's and 1980's, but then fell into a state of neglect for some time. After a few false starts, a concentrated effort began in 2004 to transfer the existing hard copy Registry to an Access Database. This turned out to be extremely time consuming as almost none of the old pages were able to be scanned and OCR'd due to their poor condition, meaning that almost all the 1200 entries had to be done by hand. In addition to the existing Registry data, a considerable number of new and additional sites were added from guidebooks and other cave data research projects. The steps taken by the current Registrar were to:

1. Enter every single entry from the original registry, updating and converting to metric as he went along. Also checking and entering the altitudes, areas, map numbers and counties.
2. Add in a considerable amount of data that wasn't in the Registry (which seemed to stop in the mid 80's)

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3. Completely transfer the data from the Black Mountain and Penwyllt cave site research projects.
4. Add a significant number of sites as basic details only - more data will need to be added later

Status in July 2008

The data for the Eastern area (Morlais to Abergavenny) was very sparse in the original Registry, whereas West Wales, Ystradfellte and Black Mountain were very detailed. There is still more work to do - particularly for North Wales and in filling in the gaps in the descriptions. We have all the information to do this, but have had to draw the line somewhere to get this Version 1 out.

There needs to be careful attention made to the bibliography, which needs updating and further research, especially in crediting information fully.

A further release (Version 2) may be ready by September/October, followed next year by the addition of Welsh Mines.

So there is more to do, but we have a good start - everything we had, plus at least the same amount again.

Updates and Changes

Please remember that this Version 1 is in no way a complete record of all Speleological sites in Wales. It has been released to ensure that all existing Registry information was available plus everything that could be added in the time available. There is an absolute intention to continue to add, update and complete the database over the next 12 months.

If you have any suggested additions, changes or have spotted any errors, then please contact the Cambrian Cave Registrar, Gary Evans at registrar@CambrianCavingCouncil.org.uk

We would also greatly appreciate any information you have regarding new sites in order to ensure that the Registry remains up to date on an ongoing basis.

We are grateful to Martyn Farr for permission to use the name Underground Wales. Martyn's book of the same name can be found at <http://www.farrworld.co.uk/acatalog/books.html>

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Little Neath Pollution

It would appear that the pollution in Little Neath River cave has cleared, although the Conservation Officer would like to be informed if any caver notices a return of this pollution in Little Neath or the caves further down stream.

New Craig a Ffynnon and Agen Allwedd Access Secretary

The new permit secretary for Agen Allwedd and Craig a Ffynnon is Malcolm Reid (39 Railway Terrace, Blaina, Gwent NP 3 3BU)

To facilitate permit applications, there are now downloadable forms on the MLCMAC website at: <http://www.mlcmac.talktalk.net/llangtwg.htm>

Personal Decontamination Aid at Otter Hole

The promised shower at the bathtub didn't happen but we do now have a hose pipe fitted by that well known plumbing team, Karvik & Stott. The following report came from Jan Karvik at the end of June:

The new hose at the old Otter Hole bath was installed by Chris Stott and myself late last week. A 50m reel 25mm water pipe and fittings was purchased, and laid up the stream above the bath, to an old manhole structure that the stream flows into an then out over the top of. We drilled into the side of the manhole and inserted the pipe, fixing a length of hose to the lower end adjacent to the bath.

The new facility was a smash hit with the BPC on Saturday, proving to be an invaluable asset in the decontaminating process. The pressure is equal to that of a typical domestic supply, and under normal conditions still leaves ample flow into the old bath. In very dry conditions it may be that the flow into the bath may suffer a little, but as the hose is the more efficient tool for rapid mud removal, this may be considered a worthy sacrifice.

Wardens should ensure that after groups have finished washing off, the hose is laid out in the stream bed, in the down stream direction.

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Cwmystwyth mines

Graham Levins, Hon. Sec. of the Welsh Mines Preservation Trust, at the recent annual Ceredigion Mines Group meeting, gave an update on developments between the Crown's Mineral Agents and the Welsh Mines Preservation Trust with regard to the future management of Cwmystwyth mine site. The Crown Agents were unwilling to enter into any negotiations; their only response to offer to sell the mine, the mineral rights and the grazing rights to the Trust for £1.

Following consideration the Trust Directors came to the conclusion that they could not afford to take the mine on. The cost of making the site safe, insuring the Trust against any liabilities arising from the site and those who might visit it exceeded what a small charity could undertake and would affect the ability of the Trust to continue with other projects in Wales, both from a financial and a manpower point of view.

The Trust's recent request for a further meeting has been declined. The only way forward that would be considered by the Crown's Agent was if a Trust could be formed to purchase and maintain the site. Discussions are continuing to consider the possibility whether a Trust could be formed by the local community, the mining history and exploration movement or official bodies in Wales.

The issue of underground access at Cwmystwyth was raised. An individual within the Mining History Community suggested that setting up a company limited by guarantee to buy Cwmystwyth should be investigated further. He would personally investigate further the options of setting up a company limited by guarantee with regard to buying Cwmystwyth.

That individual has indicated preparedness to proceed on this matter and is now negotiating directly with the representatives of the Crown Estate with regard to the purchase of the land.

The major issue relates to the Crown Estates last offer of a reduced area of land that excluded the archeologically important area of Copa Hill and the working in the area of Nant-yr-Onnen

Subject to agreement being reached on this and some other minor matters, there is optimism that the transfer of land will proceed.

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Mynnydd Llangattock

The MLCMAC web pages (now at <http://www.mlcmac.talktalk.net/llangtwg.htm>) have been overhauled and are now frames based to make them easier to navigate.

Remedial work on fixed aids in Ogof Craig-a-Ffynnon has been completed, the lock changed and subsequent modifications made to make access to the padlock from the outside of the cave easier. According to the log book, trips into the cave were 30 in 2006, 30 in 2007 and 20 so far in 2008.

Caver numbers in Daren Cilau have increased for each of the last 5 years to 204 in 2006 and 228 in 2007 (comparable to the levels in the late 1990s, prior to the foot and mouth shutdown).

In Eglwys Faen caver counter data collection is ongoing. The days of the week with most frequent visits are Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, suggesting a continuing high level of use by commercially-led groups. Most trips take place between midday and 3 p.m.

The report on the first 25 radon monitors in Agen Allwedd has been received by CCW. It shows radioactivity levels from an average of 6260 Bqm⁻³ in the Entrance Series to 16290 Bqm⁻³ at Northwest Junction. Further tests are ongoing to measure activity levels at different times of year.

The Agen Allwedd bat count in Jan 2008 was 391, compared with 373 in 2007. Both took place during a period of relatively mild weather.

Dan yr Ogof

It is reported that the slope up to Mud Hall from Boulder Chamber has suffered extreme erosion in the last few months.

There are three or four large rocks at the top whose stability is questionable. Use of the hand line requires prudence if rocks are not to be dislodged. TAKE CARE.

The boulder step that was half way up has disappeared and a large protruding rock at the top is now being exposed and seems to be held up by not a lot. The hand line has a tendency to pull/ push sideways on this rock.

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Funding Available for Grass-Roots Sport in Wales

The Millennium Stadium Charitable Trust has announced its next round of funding and is welcoming applications from governing bodies and sports clubs throughout Wales.

The Trust, which was created through a unique arrangement between the Millennium Commission and the Millennium Stadium in 2001, receives a levy from tickets sold at public events.

Its grant scheme offers funding of between £2,000 and £20,000 on a local, regional or national basis for not for profit groups and charities. Grants are awarded to support projects that make a difference to the lives of people working and living in Wales.

Of the £2.2 million allocated by the Trust, £594,000 has been awarded to sport related projects in Wales, with the remainder allocated to projects associated with the arts, the environment and the community.

The Trust is particularly keen to support disadvantaged groups working in Torfaen, Monmouthshire, Denbighshire, Wrexham and Pembrokeshire.

Interested applicants are asked to contact the Trust office for further information and an application pack. The next deadline will be in the autumn of 2008. For further information please visit www.millenniumstadiumtrust.co.uk or telephone Deborah Anthony, Trust Officer on Tel: 029 2049 4963.

Access to Devon Caves

We've been asked to spread the news that the new DCUC access officer is Roger King e-mail: rogerstuartking@dsl.pipex.com

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Kelloggs Active Living Fund

This fund gives small grants to projects and activities that directly lead to people taking part in sustained physical activity. The aim of the fund is to help remove the "barriers" which stop people being active. Most health and exercise professionals agree that children "learn" their physical activity habits mostly from their parents. The Kellogg's Active Living Fund is very keen to fund activities that enable adults and children to exercise together.

Applications can be considered for projects engaging with young people up to 25 years of age. However priority will be given to applications requesting support for family units - children and adults undertaking physical activity together. The maximum grant request that will be considered is £1,000. The fund is open to organisations based in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

An online application system has been set up which has guidance giving more detail about the scheme

<http://www.kelloggs.co.uk/company/corporateresponsibility/activelivingfund/form/default.aspx>

The Active Living Community Fund is being administered by The Community Foundation for Greater Manchester. All correspondence will be with The Community Foundation.

For any queries in relation to this scheme or if you would like help or support in completing your application form please contact Louise Daly by phone 0161 214 0940 or by email kelloggs@communityfoundation.co.uk

UWIC Sports Massage Clinic

Cavers in the Cardiff area may be interested to know that the UWIC Sports Massage clinic based in NIAC (National Indoor Athletics Centre) behind the Cyncoed campus is open to all from 10am to 9pm on a Tuesday and Thursday.

The cost is £11 for UWIC staff/NUS students & U18 and £16 for everyone else, with a 'Buy One Get One Free' session available.

For bookings and enquiries contact NIAC reception on 029 2041 6777

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Adventure Activities Licensing Authority Safety Alert Number 1 – Mine Exploration, Gas Hazards Issued: 24 July 2008

Background

On 17 July 2008, an adult caver became unconscious, apparently due to a lack of oxygen, soon after entering a disused coal mine shaft. Despite prompt efforts by his companion on the surface and the rescue services, he died in hospital three days later.

This alert has been issued to remind adventure activity providers who offer mine exploration of the gas hazards that may be present in old workings. Others who participate in mine exploration may find this information useful.

Gas Hazards

Old mine workings are poorly ventilated and may well contain atmospheres that are very low in oxygen. This is most likely in unventilated blind ends, shafts and other dipping workings. Variations in atmospheric pressure can affect any natural ventilation and the distribution of gasses in the workings. Oxygen deficient air can kill very quickly after entry and, if not immediately fatal, can impair the victim's judgment and physical ability to escape this hazard.

The risk of encountering oxygen deficient air is particularly high in old coal mine workings since oxygen reacts with coal to reduce the oxygen and increase the carbon dioxide content of the air. A similar effect can occur in some other mines, notably those that worked ironstone.

In coal mines, there is also the risk of methane; producing flammable and potentially explosive atmospheres.

Other Hazards

There are also the more obvious hazards of unstable ground, hidden voids and shafts as well as flooding. Coal measures strata is unlikely to remain stable without support for long after the mine's abandonment.

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Action by Activity Providers

In accordance with advice from the Coal Authority and HSE's Mines Inspectorate activity providers should not be taking groups into old coal mine workings as they are inherently too dangerous.

Where other abandoned mines are used, providers should review their risk assessments to ensure that gas hazards are considered. Where appropriate, providers may need to make use of portable gas monitoring equipment. The users need to be trained in its correct use and the monitors need to be calibrated and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Useful References

Coal Authority – deals with surface hazards arising from past coal mining activities such as open mine entries or ground collapse. 24 hour emergency number – 01623 646 333. Web - www.coal.gov.uk .

Mines Rescue Service Limited – can provide training on testing for gas in mines.

Providers should direct enquiries about this alert to their AALS inspector.

Diary

August 23 rd	Vercors 2008 (Lans en Vercors)
August 25 th	OFD Columns Open Day
September 14 th	Cambrian Caving Council General Meeting
September 21 st	NWCRO All day practice event.
September 26 th	Hidden Earth (Otley, West Yorkshire)
October 4 th	SWSARA & WBCRT Joint Practice
November 1 st	WBCRT Cave Diver Search
December 7 th	GCRG Cave Rescue practice