

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER January 2013

Editorial

Happily, I've nothing to grumble about for once so I'll mention some of the good news you'll find later and say well done and thank you to the members of RFDCC & GSS who reopened Seymour's Swallet and to the SWCC members who made the effort to reach OFD in appalling weather conditions and sort out that nasty looking problem in the passage just inside Top Entrance on exactly the day they said they would.

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

Cambrian AGM – a reminder

The formal notices will be going out soon. This year the AGM is to be held at the GCRG Depot at Cinderford on Sunday 10th March. Satnav users will need to know that the postcode is GL14 2TT but that will only take you to the approximate area.

Look first at Google Maps where you will find the [GCRG Depot](#) next door to Cinderford Ambulance Station. Enter through a galvanised farm-type gate into a yard area. On the Google map, it's the premises with several caravans parked in an attached quarry area.

Cambrian SRT Training in North Wales

This will be based at [Rhos y Gwaliau](#) near Bala on Saturday 20th April 2013 with outdoor workshops on the Sunday. As this training event is partly funded by SCW we are able to keep the cost to £10.00. To book your place contact our Secretary Mike McCombe [e-mail](#)

Robin Hood Iron Mine

Access has been suspended for the time being due to safety concerns. It is understood that the surface steel plates on top of the shaft are badly corroded.

Little Neath River Cave

It's been reported that on a recent visit to Little Neath just inside the entrance, on the straight section, the way was blocked by a jammed fin of limestone. In appearance it came from within the cave and it is about 1m long by .5m tall and 10cm thick (roughly!). It was moved and laid down so that the party could pass but there is concern that it may move with the next flood and could jam up in a less convenient place e.g. the duck or its' approaches.

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER January 2013

Seymour's Swallet

As reported in the last newsletter this cave has now been reopened but following the separation of ownership of the farm buildings and the land the access route has changed and in particular visitors must not call at Hoarthorn's Farm to ask permission.

The access route is now:

At Edge End on the A4136 Gloucester-Monmouth road, turn into Hoarthorn Road (opposite the Coleford turning) and head down the hill taking the right-hand fork, continuing down the hill. Continue past the farm buildings (Hoarthorn's Barn). Where the tarmac ends follow the track (gates) to the left and continue past the cattle sheds on your right. Follow the track through gates where it turns to the right following the Hoarthorn valley down. Continue through next gate to a junction with another track coming from the right. Park here on the area of hard standing being careful not to block any farm access. There is no parking beyond this point. Continue along the main track following the Hoarthorn valley for approximately 150m, the swallet is within the obvious concrete ring on your right (although obscured from view when on the track). Caution: Although the farm track is fairly well graded it can get muddy during periods of wet weather.

The work was done by members of RFDCC and GSS who cleared the fallen trees and undergrowth and installed the concrete ring to stop further infilling. The materials used were ultimately funded by BCA through Cambrian Caving Council and special thanks are due to the landowner for his continued support.

Temporary Closure of OFD Top Entrance

There were some large blocks on the move in the wall of the entrance passage of Ogof Ffynnon Ddu Top Entrance and while they were made safe, that entrance was closed for 10 days earlier this month. With the stabilization completed the entrance was reopened on 18th January.

South Wales Caving Videos

A new section of the [SWCC website](#) hosts a growing collection of caving videos by club members and I know that armchair cavers will also appreciate a reminder that several of Keith Edwards' videos are hosted on the [South Wales Caves](#) site with the whole lot available on his You Tube [channel](#)

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL

NEWSLETTER January 2013

Local Teams help Tunisian Cave Rescue

During 2009 and 2010, Mike Clayton and Emma Porter were joined by fellow Craven PC member, John Christie on a journey of a lifetime around the Mediterranean, across North Africa, the Middle East and back through Europe with a trusty Land Rover and one motorbike. The expedition encompassed not only an amazing road trip but exploratory caving, going to caving clubs, training, sharing ideas and meeting some wonderful new caving friends.

One of the aims of this journey was to donate cave rescue equipment to some of our existing caving friends in Lebanon, where we had annually caved annually since 2000, often with Dave Appleing. Disaster struck as we were refused entry into Lebanon, distressingly discovering that diesel vehicles were banned unless you were a truck or a bus (!) but after some major changes to the plan, we made it into Lebanon fortunately complete with the cave rescue equipment kindly donated by GCRG and a newly serviced Little Dragon, thanks to Jopo.

On our epic journey, it became apparent how lacking in equipment many of the cavers we met were and how ill-prepared they would be in the unfortunate event of a rescue. One group of incredibly enthusiastic cavers we particularly go to know was based in Tunisia. Tunisia is perhaps more well-known for its beaches and cheap package holidays, but if you can escape out of tourist zone and fight the excessive paperwork bureaucracy, the rolling limestone hills reveal a number of caves. The wonderful hospitality of the country saw four MCRO members heading to Tunisia for Christmas 2011 for a week of caving ... with the parting words that it was their turn to visit the UK next time!

During much of 2011 and 2012, we exchanged many emails and ideas, discussing cave rescue and forming an organisation and the Tunisian cavers received an introductory training week in cave rescue by Bulgarian cavers visiting Tunisia. Then it was our turn.

With letters of invitation sent, interviews at embassies, the visas were granted and Hamda and Meher arrived in the Midlands after a couple of days of sightseeing in London, with the assistance of MCRO member, Firas Fayad.

Thanks to DCRO, GCRG and MCRO, Hamda and Meher received an intensive few days of training and evening training sessions as well covering the management of a cave rescue to rope care and the t-card system. Paul Taylor hosted a visit at the GCRG depot, taking them on a short trip into the entrance series of Wet Sink, discussing pre-rescue preparation by the installation of a number of anchor points for rescue. After a very wet caving trip in P8, DCRO took them around their headquarters, and on the Sunday, MCRO held a rescue practice at Clive Copper Mine. At the end of the practice, we presented Hamda and Meher with a large pile of equipment, with donations from Total Access, DCRO, MCRO and very generously, a stretcher from GCRG along with other equipment. The less said about the hours spent trying to pack it ready for the plane the better ... although it did all get back:

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL

NEWSLETTER January 2013

Dear Emma and Mike

On behalf of the members of the caving association of Zaghouan and at the end of the visit of our two members Meher and Hamda to England, I am glad to express to you my deep acknowledgment for hosting them at home and transporting them, organizing caving and visits to cave rescue headquarters, taking care of them, involving them in the cave rescue exercise... I want also to thank you for the equipment you offered to us, it represents a real opportunity for us to develop our newborn cave rescue team and it is beyond our expectation.

All the Zaghouan team is waiting for you in the spring to make our collaboration more concrete and strengthening more our friendship.

At the end I would ask you to forward my thanks to all the cavers who contributed in the success of the visit of our two members.

Best Regards

Mohammed KHOMSSI

Chairman of the caving association of Zaghouan

Thanks to all of those involved in helping and supporting the start of the fledgling Tunisian Cave Rescue Organisation. Plans are being made to return to Tunisia this year with a GCRG/MCRO team to provide further cave rescue training.

Emma Porter
MCRO Warden and Training Co-ordinator/GCRG team member

Caves and Karst of the Yorkshire Dales

This major new book from BCRA, edited by Tony Waltham and David Lowe, will be published in March 2013 with a cover price of **£25**. There is a special introductory price of **£20** until 30 June 2013. Delivery in the UK is included in this price. [Further Information](#).

To order online, [click here](#) to make a payment of £20 to the **BCRA bookshop** account. You can pay online by credit or debit card

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER January 2013

Enjoying the Outdoors

The latest edition of the Countryside Council for Wales' newsletter can be downloaded [here](#). The newsletter provides information on some of the recreation and access work in which CCW is involved and/or funding.

BCA AGM & Cave Science Event

In a change from previous years the BCA's 2013 Annual General Meeting will take place as part of a weekend of activities based at the Rotary Centre in Castleton. The AGM itself will begin at 10:30am on Sunday 16th June, following a cave-science event arranged in conjunction with BCRA and a party on the Saturday. The cost of the weekend will be relatively low with the intention of breaking even and it is hoped to attract a considerable number of members to attend as much of the weekend as possible, particular those based fairly locally.

Full details are [here](#)

Recent radon measurements in Daren Cilau

Through the CCW, funds were obtained to carry out a reconnaissance study of the radon (^{222}Rn) concentrations in six locations within Daren Cilau. This experiment was carried out during the period 23rd June to 24th July 2012. The maximum value obtained was 4000 Bq m^{-3} and the minimum was 2000 Bq m^{-3} . Given what is known about annual radon variations, where maximum concentrations are expected in August/September and minimum values in January, it is reasonable to assume that the data obtained are close to the maximum.

In comparison with known data from Agen Allwedd (average 10960 Bq m^{-3}), an adjacent system on the Llangattock escarpment broadly similar to Daren Cilau, the radon results are surprising in that the concentrations obtained are much lower than might have been anticipated. Additionally, 2012 having been very wet, led to high water table levels. Rising water levels cause air to be expelled from the cracks and fissures close to the water table as they flood. The radon is driven out of the cracks with the air and enters the non-flooded sections, elevating the concentrations.

Agen Allwedd is a single entrance system subject to radon escaping one way from the interior (high concentration) to the exterior (low). From the Agen Allwedd data there is an indication of a radon concentration gradient as the entrance is approached, due to dilution by fresh air from outside the cave. Daren Cilau has more than one entrance (as with Ogof Ffynnon Ddu and Eglwys Faen) and this may be argued to allow better

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER January 2013

ventilation to occur in different places and so dilute concentrations at intermediate points in the system. There may be places that are presently unknown, where fresh air may access the system. This situation is known in OFD for example. Near the Letter Box, a deep part of that cave system, very low radon concentrations are recorded indicating it is a point at which fresh air is able to access the cave.

Whilst the concentrations obtained are very similar to those found in cave systems like Eglwys Faen (average 4050 Bq m⁻³) and Ogof Ffynnon Ddu (average 3100 Bq m⁻³) they are above action levels and so require assessment. There are implications here that need some thought and might help with exploration of the cave system. These few data can be used to assess the overall radon dose that might be received during an excursion into Daren Cilau. The amount of ionising radiation received by a person may be assessed in two ways. There is a measure of exposure which is a time-integrated function of the radon concentration and is recommended not to exceed 1x10⁶ Bq m⁻³ a year, a value arrived at through BCA negotiations with the Health Protection Agency (HPA). The second method is one which comes in radiation legislation and sets out maximum doses for particular types of person. That for ordinary persons, the group into which cavers fall, is set at an annual dose of 1 milli Seivert (mSv). The first method is simply to multiply a concentration in Bq m⁻³ by the trip duration in hours. The second is to plug a concentration value into a formula recommended by the HPA which calculates a dose directly in mSv.

The dose calculation can be evaluated in two different ways. First, the maximum radon value can be used on the assumption that the actual dose may be lower. Second, the average value of the data set may be used, being taken as a value that represents the system. The maximum value obtained was 4000 Bq m⁻³ (M) and the average of the data is 3250 Bq m⁻³ (A). Therefore, in practice there is little to choose between the two values. The table below sets out doses potentially received on a range of trips of different duration.

Trip (hours)	5	8	12	20	36
Dose (M) mSv	0.08	0.13	0.19	0.31	0.57
Dose (A) mSv	0.06	0.10	0.15	0.26	0.46

It can be seen that for a 36 hour trip in Daren Cilau approximately half of the annual dose is received.

Clark Friend

- Download BCA's publication: [Radon Underground](#) for more information on the subject.

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER January 2013

BCRA Cave Technology Symposium

The 7th BCRA Cave Technology Symposium will be held over the weekend of 20th/21st April 2013 in South Wales. All areas of cave technology – including surveying, data logging, communication, digging, cave detection, photography, lighting and explosives – are within the remit although the subjects covered will depend on the presentations that are offered.

On the Saturday there will be a programme of presentations which will take place in Tretower Village Hall, Powys, Wales, NP8 1RF. Registration starts at 09:00 with the first talk at 09:30. The Sunday is dedicated to practical demonstrations at various underground and surface locations meeting at Whitewalls (Chelsea Spelaeological Society's HQ).

Entry is free to BCRA members and to speakers; for others there is a £5.00 charge, payable on the door, which includes tea and coffee

International Cave Photography Contest

"The Hidden Face of Europe: 50 images about the Underworld" is organised by the Pordenonese Speleological Union as part of the 150th Anniversary of the CAI (Italian Alpine Club) celebrations. Photographers have until the 30th of March 2013 to enter.

A direct link to the information in English is [here](#)

Otter Hole

2012 was looking good at the start of the year, with an unusually high number of the ever popular over-tide trips, however the great British weather struck and by the end of the 2012 season only 2 successful tourist trips had taken place.

There were 8 between-tide trips and 17 over-tide trips planned. Of these, the wardens' trip at the beginning of the season was successful, but then the rains began. 17 trips were cancelled due to the atrocious weather, 5 unsuccessful attempts were made to get in, and only 2 tourist trips made it in.

Let's hope that 2013 brings us a better summer - the booking calendar is now on-line at www.rfdcc.org.uk

Priority bookings have been given to those washed out in 2012 who wanted to try again, and other slots are filling fast.

Nicky Bayley

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER January 2013

Dan yr Ogof

The weather also had an effect on the numbers of visitors to Dan yr Ogof in 2012 with only 46 trips by visiting clubs recorded. There were also 30 trips by the usual suspects (digging and surveying). This compares with a combined total of 110 trips in 2011.

Ogof Fynnon Ddu

The missing DYO visitors appear to have transferred to the other side of the valley with an increase in visits to OFD. In 2012 there were 868 trips by 3,126 people an increase of 42 parties and 137 people from 2011. The mix was quite different though, with OFD I showing a huge increase to 300 parties and 1,118 individuals (from 178 parties and 667 people). OFD II was visited by 503 parties and 1786 people and Cwmdwr by 65 parties and 222 people.

Ogof Draenen

The minutes of the November meeting of the Pwll Ddu Cave Management Group are available on their [website](#)

Visits were a little higher than last year with 77 parties and 272 individuals visiting the cave – although only one party of 2 visited during the whole of August.

EuroSpeleo Image'In Film Festival

The 3rd festival is part of the 8th EuroSpeleo Forum & 50th Anniversary of the FFS to be celebrated in Millau from May 8th to 20th 2013 (see <http://millau2013.ffspeleo.fr>)

Video and slideshow entries need to be in by 20th February and you'll find the entry form [here](#)

NAMHO Conference in Aberystwyth

The next NAMHO conference, is to be based in Aberystwyth from 28th June - 1st July 2013. Full details [here](#)

BCA Newsletter

The latest BCA newsletter can be downloaded [here](#)

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER January 2013

Bowline on the Bight – Warning Statement from BCA

Following recent discussion on the use of the Bowline on the Bight as a Y hang the BCA have issued a warning statement:

BCA's Training and Equipment & Techniques Committees would like to highlight the importance of **ALWAYS clipping a cowstail through BOTH loops of a Bowline on the Bight knot**. Although this has been taught for years by BCA instructors, it appears that many cavers are not aware of the importance.

The problem is that in a fall the knot can slip in such a way that the rope going down the pitch can actually run all the way back through the knot. This means that a caver falling at a pitch head with their cowstail clipped into only ONE of the two loops could potentially plummet all the way to the bottom of the pitch. This cannot happen if they are clipped into BOTH loops.

A useful tip is for the rigger to leave an HMS karabiner clipped between the two loops to make it easier for the rest of the party to clip in and it is always worth remembering that two cowstails are preferable to one.

Two different videos are available to demonstrate the problem:

- 1) [French Caving School](#)
- 2) [Pete Knight CIC](#)

SMWCRT 2013 AGM

It proved to be a battle against the elements but, thanks to a last minute change of venue to the slightly less snowbound Miners Welfare Hall in Abercrave, the South & Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team's AGM did go ahead as planned on 20th January.

You can see the new 2013 Executive Committee [here](#)

Training dates have been set for the year and the outline diary is [here](#).

Most notable is the re-instatement of the monthly midweek meetings to be held on the first Tuesday of the month, alternating between Whitewalls and Penwyllt. The first one will be a working evening in the Whitewalls stores on Tuesday 5th February starting at 19:00.

There is a full report on December's OFD II Labyrinth rescue [here](#)

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER January 2013

EuroSpeleo Forum - Millau

More details have emerged of the 8th EuroSpeleo Forum in Millau-France from May 8th to 20th during which the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the French Federation in 1963 will also be celebrated.

Millau is a city of 25 000 inhabitants situated in the heart of a regional natural reserve. It is surrounded by the "Grands Causses" (huge limestone plateaus) (Larzac, Mejean, Noir, Sauveterre, etc).

This speleological event Millau 2013 is a **free and open congress to all**. **Registration is compulsory** (and free if you register in advance) and will allow the registered cavers to get a piece of the Anniversary cake during the festive evening of May 19th!

For more information, please read the official Millau 2013 circular:

In English : <http://www.millau2013.ffspeleo.fr/pdf/FFS-Millau-2013-EN.pdf>

And check the website www.millau2013.ffspeleo.fr , which is frequently updated.

Around Millau, from May the 8th till May the 20th, 2013, you will be able to:

- Take advantage of rigged caves and canyons, and also sumps in the Grands Causses
- Go to the evening parties free of charge and to the various conferences
- Witness the attempt of world record of Tyrolean on rope (2 km), bigger than the one of Vercors 2008 (1.15 km)
- Visit the free exhibitions and explore the other outdoor aspects of the region where there is hiking for any levels, climbing, via ferrata, mountain bike, hang-glider, paragliding, canoe-kayak on offer in the exceptional landscapes of the Grands Causses.

Fforest Fawr Geopark Festival

The programme for the 2013 is starting to appear on the Geopark [website](#) and already includes several walks in areas of interest to cavers. The Festival is 16 days of walks, talks and other events between Saturday 25th May and Sunday 9th June and is well worth checking out.

CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL NEWSLETTER January 2013

Diary

Mar 3	GCRG Rescue Practice	Clearwell Caves
Mar 10	Cambrian Caving Council AGM	Cinderford
Mar 14	FoDCCAG AGM	Cinderford
Mar 31	Columns Open Day	OFD
Apr 20	BCRA Cave Technology Symposium	Tretower & Whitewalls
May 5	Columns Open Day	OFD
May 8 – 20	Euro Speleo Forum	Millau, France
May 26	Columns Open Day	OFD

Cambrian Caving Council Officers

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