

May 2018

Issue 57

# WALES UNDERGROUND

## News In Brief

- **Llanelly Hill Quarry Pot—further rock fall blocked the entrance, In May, members of Brynmawr Caving Club have cleared the debris, please take extra care when entering and exiting the cave.**
- **South Wales Cavefest—Dates have been announced—event will be held in Crickhowell over the weekend of the 24th–27th August 2018.**
- **An 80-year old caver from Mendip has recently done the OFD 2-to-1 cave through trip via the streamway. Congratulations to him on this achievement, and has it set a record?**
- **Management of caver access to Ogor Capel is being transferred by CCC to Mynydd Llangatcock cave management committee.**
- **The CCR Registrar notes that...Although still in development, the Gloucestershire and Wye Valley Registry is now to be found online at <http://www.fodccag.org.uk/registry/index.php>**

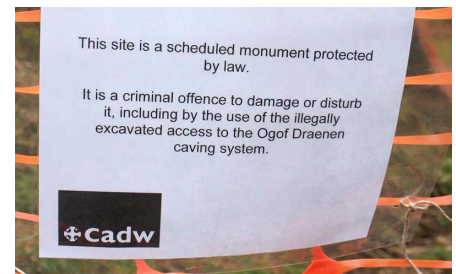
Cambrian Caving Council Newsletter

Cylchlythyr y Cyngor Ogofeydd Cymreig

## National caving organisations quit Twll Du talks

The future of the Twll Du entrance into the 70kms Ogor Draenen cave system remains uncertain. The group created to resolve the issues has met only once, back in January. Spectacular and vertical in nature, this fourth entrance gives strategic access into the eastern half of the longest cave in Wales. Its excavation is not only controversial but also illegal as it lies within a Scheduled Monument in the care of Cadw, the Welsh Government's historic places conservation body. Little was said at the resolution meeting held on January 10th other than both Cadw and the PDCMG cave management group setting out a shared vision that this new entrance should be permanently sealed up. The PDCMG, who also represent the landowner's interest, has made no public comment on the matter since their one-page statement in the December/January issue 259 of Descent magazine.

Descent 260, with Ogor Draenen on four pages, implies that the CCC supports PDCMG's one-entrance policy when it does not. PDCMG's website contains the 2014 open letter from CCC asking for a managed access system for the Drws Cefn (third) entrance, and PDCMG knows this is our preferred outcome for Twll Du too. Descent also said that the BCA was represented at the resolution meeting when it was not. BCA's Council meeting on January 6th was left unaware of the resolution meeting on January 10th, so it did not appoint nor instruct any representative. The subsequent BCA Council on April 14th has affirmed their position by voting unanimously to have nothing to do with Ogor Draenen.



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## Photo credits

Dave Tyson  
Richard Hill  
Stuart France

While illegal actions cannot be condoned, major discoveries cannot be forgotten either, and so the scientific and caving interest in this cave will endure. Ogor Draenen is hugely significant geologically with parts up to 100 million years old, and it covers a vast underground area with a footprint of 4x3kms. The monument, created in 1977 and comprising the 1815 tramway between the Pwll Du quarry and the remains of the Garn Ddyrys forge, attracts contemporary industrial archaeology interest.

The Twll Du entrance has been fenced off to one side of the tramway and Cadw has posted notices prohibiting any use that results in actual damage or disturbance. Cadw have stated many times in direct talks with CCC that cave access here is not a possibility for them. CCC has said that it is willing to stabilise and secure this new entrance so as to facilitate managed access, including doing fieldwork, supplying materials and the finance. CCC envisages a system with keys made available to cavers, similar to Cadw's system in Denbigh town centre whereby the public can borrow keys from nearby shops and the public library to make unsupervised visits without charge to the town's magnificent mediaeval stone walls, including walking along the ramparts of that scheduled monument.

CCC met in May to discuss this impasse and a unanimous decision was taken to stop the discussions with Cadw but to leave open our offer to finance and facilitate the construction of an entrance to provide managed cave access. Twll Du would also make the best emergency evacuation route for a sizeable portion of the Ogor Draenen cave system.

Stuart France, CCC Conservation-Access Officer

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## The re-opening and explorations in Garreg Boeth Lead Mine

South of the hamlet of Hendre, near Mold, are several wooded areas: Big Wood and Garreg Boeth Wood, both of which are littered with shafts from old mine workings. Sadly most of these are run-in or blocked, and though there is a mention of an adit draining towards a stream near Hendre in a Geological Survey special report on mineral resources in North Wales, its location was unknown. While researching a different topic at Hawarden County Records Office, Cris Ebbs noticed a lease for land at Hendre and discovered it included a map which showed the position of a level. This provided the impetus for Mick Murphy and other members of UCET to seek permission to dig in a field close to the main road with the hope of breaking into the 'lost' adit. A 4m shaft was excavated on what was thought to be the line of the adit, however it proved slightly off target, but a short connecting passage through unstable ground gained access to the adit and allowed the mine workings to be explored.

The currently accessible workings are quite extensive, as shown by the map on the right which marks the location of the entrance with the green arrow and the passages in red. There appears to be considerable potential for new discoveries with some more digging. Sadly the original entrance cross passage has collapsed and a new shaft is being dug a few metres away to access the adit directly – this is still a work in progress.

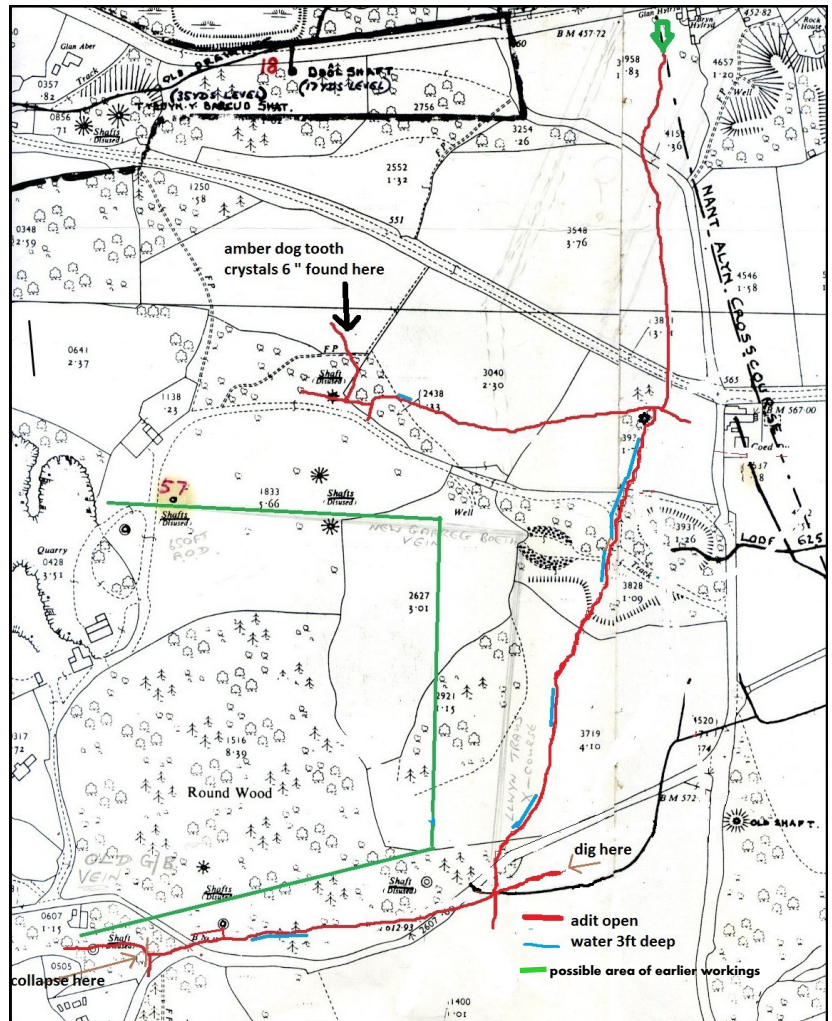
The adit heads almost due south to a junction close to the landowner's farm. The passage is generally walking height with a thick mud floor, the walls contain some crinoid fossils and there are flowstone formations in places. Collapses have occurred where the passage cuts through weaker strata but these do not cause any problems at present. At the junction there are three ways on: to the east there is a flowstone-floored incline which stops abruptly, while to the west and south there are long passages which have pools of 1m deep water and then split further.

The western passage leads to a shaft which is blocked at the surface but extends below the adit level. The far side of this shaft has a short spur continuing west. There are a couple of other side passages before the shaft; the southern one is collapsed, but might be worth digging; the northern one passes through calcite rich strata with dog tooth spar crystals. There is an old powder keg, some wooden planks and a horseshoe off a pony. However there is no sign of any galena, so this was probably an unsuccessful trial which ends abruptly at a rock-face.

The southern passage is accessed via a hole in the floor just to the west of the main adit junction. This leads to a chamber with a shaft and the passages continues south. The shaft, which is not visible on the surface, is filled with rusty metal artefacts which spill in the chamber. Carrying on along the passage, water depths increase and there are some attractive flowstone formations in the roof and on the walls. Under the surface of the water are several 'volcanoes' formed by the water dripping in the calcium rich sediments – it seems that in dry conditions the water evaporates depositing sheets of calcite.

Further on there are flowstone floors and extensive gour pools before a junction is reached.

*(Continued on page 3)*



**Mud floor and formations in main adit**

## The re-opening and explorations in Garreg Boeth Lead Mine (continued from page 2)

The southern and eastern branches are quite short, but the western branch is quite long and to one side are rises which have yet to be explored. The end is a collapse which would need considerable shoring, due to unstable boulders, prior to digging. There is also some potential for digging at the end of the eastern spur, but the passage contains some pretty formations in the roof which are very vulnerable.

The mine is quite draughty so it is likely that there are as yet undiscovered connections, particularly in the far reaches. There is plenty of evidence on the surface for nearby mine workings that may have been connected, but the lack of any plans or documentation makes hard to predict the best areas to dig. The Milwr tunnel passes close by at depth and there are extensive lodes and workings reached from the tunnel which head in the general direction of Garreg Boeth. There is a hint in the one of the Geological Memoirs that a rise might have been dug in the right direction, but it will be down to modern mine explorers to poke around and try to find the connection, if it exists...

Access to the mine is available to suitably insured cavers and mine-explorers—contact UCET for more details.

Dave Tyson, UCET



**'Volcanoes' formed by drying calcium laden water**



**Gour floor in the southern passage**

## CCC AGM Update

The 2018 CCC AGM was held on Sunday 11th March at Tretower Village Hall, at Tretower near Crickhowell.

It was attended by 20 cavers representing some 20 different clubs and organisations, with apologies received from a number of others.

Various training weekends for SRT and Surveying were reported on as having been successful, with other training being planned for the future.

No new major access issues were reported other than the ongoing Twll Du problem, though Maurice Febry reported that Ladywood Mines now requires an access permit from Natural England.

There had been a misunderstanding between the Cambrian Cave Registry and the Forest of Dean/Gloucestershire Registry, and this has been sorted out.

It was noted under the BCA report that there is no Development Officer for caving as a sport in Wales. The CCC Committee needs to look into this: any offers?

Roy Fellows reported on the various developments in a number of mines, the main problem at present is a landowner at Dinas Silica Mines who is causing access issues.

Roy also asked for the caving community to be more involved in NAMHO 2019, which is being hosted by Cambrian Mines Trust at a venue close to Cymystwyth.

The organisers of Cave Fest reported on progress so far and asked for support to hold an event in Wales over the Bank Holiday in August, the meeting was overwhelmingly in support of the event.

The officers elected for 2018-19 are:

- ◆ *Chairman* **Martyn Farr**
- ◆ *Secretary* **Allan Richardson**
- ◆ *Treasurer* **Mat Terry**
- ◆ *Conservation & Access Officer* **Stuart France**
- ◆ *Training Officer* **Richard Hill**
- ◆ *Equipment Officer* **Vince Allkins**
- ◆ *Legal & Insurance Officer* **Roy Fellows**
- ◆ *Cave Registrar* **Martin Laverty**

Co-options

The CCC Committee met after the AGM and co-opted:

- ◆ *Website Editor* **Nick De-Gare Pitt**
- ◆ *Newsletter Editor* **Nick De-Gare Pitt**

The next CCC AGM will be held at Snailbeach Village Hall, Shropshire on the 17th March 2019 at 1300. With thanks to Mike Moore of SCMC for organising this venue.

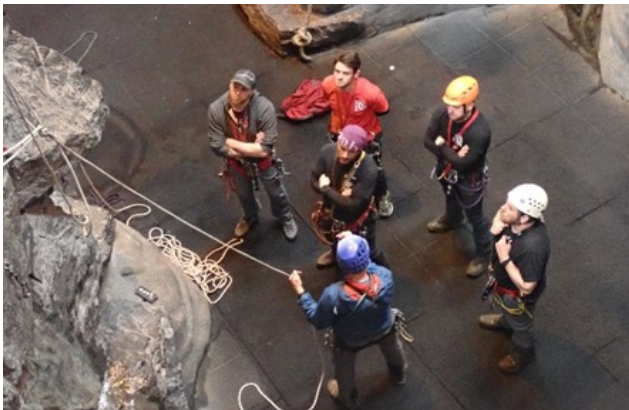
Allan Richardson, CCC Secretary

## Cambrian Caving Council SRT Workshop

This has become a regular and well-attended event in the Cambrian calendar. This time we had 12 participants including 9 from the upcoming and enthusiastic Gwent Caving Club.

All the participants this time were relative novices with no one looking at rigging or rescues. Everyone was keen and willing to learn. Thanks to Dan, Lisa and Jen for giving their time. Below are a few of the comments received from participants and some pictures of the event.

Richard Hill, CCC Training Officer



Trish says:

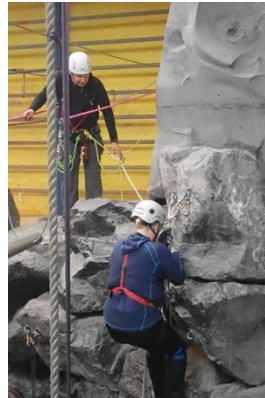
*There are not many sports I know of where you find a number of enthusiastic training instructors who are prepared to freely give up their time to share their skills and experience of SRT with you for 'little more than the cost of the daily entrance fee to Llangorse (Multi Activity) Climbing Centre...!' However, in April 2018, I attended such a workshop hosted by my fellow members of Gagendor Caving Club, a large contingent of Gwent Caving Club members and also several members of the South Wales Caving Club.*

*Being relatively new to SRT along with others in my group I thoroughly enjoyed the challenge of consolidating my knowledge to date, helping others and negotiating more advanced techniques/pitches as the day went on.*



*I would wholeheartedly recommend giving these kind of workshops a go! The opportunity to practice indoors was great although it did take me over half an hour into my drive home to convince myself that I did not still have my foot in the climbing gear when accelerating, which was an experience in itself!*

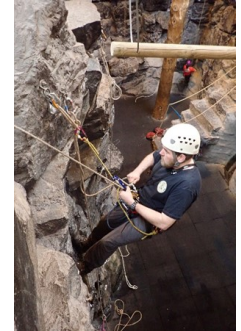
*Thank you for your time and company Richard Hill, Dan Thorne, Lisa Boore and Jennifer Baxter.*



Jamie says;

*Our group consisted of total novices to those of us who had done quite a bit of SRT training in the past. Our instructors worked well with us and gave us much needed confidence in ourselves and our equipment. By the end of the day we were all fully confident and found a new love of SRT.*

*Many thanks to our instructors Richard, Jen, Lisa and Dan for your patience and guidance throughout the day.*



## Cambrian Caving Council Training

If anyone has any specific training requirements in relation to SRT, photography, surveying and bat walks / talks please get in touch with Richard Hill, CCC Training Officer, who will help arrange the training.

Events that are arranged must be open to all CCC members.

## Cambrian Caving Council Newsletter

Please can member clubs and individuals help support us by submitting news stories, information and articles no matter how big or how small. This will ensure future editions of CCC newsletters are as informative as possible, giving all our members an insight as to what is happening across the whole of Wales.

I will be more than happy to assist, if required, so please get in touch. The next newsletter is due in less than 3 months and I would like to ensure the newsletters are something our members can rely on for up-to-date information and informative articles.

Nick De-Gare Pitt, CCC Editor

CCC Newsletter Editor

## Notable Dates:

- ◇ **1st-4th June** - NAMHO conference Parkend, Forest of Dean
- ◇ **10th June** - PDCMG Meeting, Salisbury Hall, Govilon
- ◇ **24th - 27th August** - South Wales Cavefest, Crickhowell

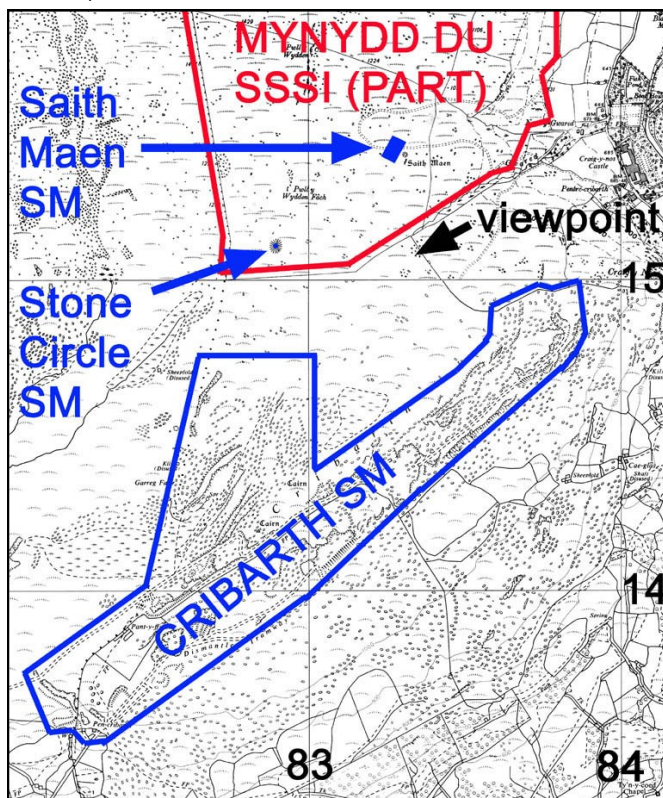
## The Historic Environment and Caving in Wales - Part Two

Part One of this article appeared in the January 2018 Newsletter, Issue 56. CCC's registrar has now prepared an initial list [1] of 80+ caves or mines that are within Scheduled Monuments (SMs). Also listed are three caves whose entrances are not scheduled but some of their passages pass underneath an SM. Ogof Draenen is under five SMs, including Hill's Tramroad at Pwll Du. The SM list contains a further 20+ caves which are outside but very close to SM boundaries which, according to Cadw, extend to the molten core of the planet. The Supreme Court, however, ruled [2] that surface boundary lines extend only as deep as is necessary to encompass all of the implied legal rights which, in the case of historic monument protection, is the zone of artefacts built by humanity and not deeper natural strata.

Monument scheduling may look like a rather arbitrary land-grab (as with SSSIs where, for example, a significant cave like Porth-yr-Ogof is not an SSSI while most of the A465 dualling in the Clydach Gorge is). Visitors to Keepers Pond might notice nothing to distinguish their surroundings from any other boulder-strewn heather moorland, yet there are important remains in the ground here that are not obvious until associated with the extensive SM area shown on the OS map printed in the last CCC newsletter. On the other hand, some well-known archaeological sites like Ogof-yr-Esgryn at Dan-yr-Ogof and many old tramroads across Wales are unscheduled. So the term "monument" cannot be taken to mean just a historic building or a commemorative structure, and nothing can simply be assumed about any location's status from one's first impressions at the site.

One surprised ukCaving forum user noted "I look at Cribarth from my desk at home ... and did not know it was a scheduled monument". This SM, called Cribarth Limestone Quarries and Tramroads, makes an interesting example because the monument boundary appears very geometric (like a plunging aircraft profile) rather than following the edges of the obvious man-made features like its quarries. And despite "Tramroads" in its name, the scheduling does not include the main tramway. Not far away is the equally arbitrary Mynydd Du SSSI boundary which sometimes follows walls, fences and paths in this area rather than natural features like streams. The SSSI covers 67 square kilometres of rough moorland while the monument covers over one square kilometre of a vast and quite variable upland area.

There is no official way to download a decent hill-walking map (OS 1:25,000) with both SM and SSSI areas drawn over it, let alone one



free from copyright. The diagram opposite is an old out-of-copyright 6" OS map with approximate scheduled areas drawn on top of it using Adobe Photoshop. The Cambrian Cave Registrar has developed an online mapping tool [3] which can produce a similar result, and it has the additional capability to superimpose cave and mine locations on to the base OS map.

The tiny blue rectangle north of Cribarth is Saith Maen standing stones and the tiny blue circle south-west of it is a stone circle at the bottom of a large sink hole. Both of these small sites are SMs engulfed by the SSSI area. Photos of them are below.



Cribarth SM boundary, there being no local signage for the SM. Obtaining certainty as to whether an existing or a potential cave site is inside or outside a scheduled area would involve going for a walk in the outdoors with a GPS to discover the actual OS grid reference for the site, then checking it against coloured areas shown by online mapping sites such as Archwilio [4] which will draw monument boundaries over modern OS walking maps.

In summary, getting mapping and site information that covers need currently involves understanding the different strengths and weaknesses of the official online mapping websites. These GIS systems all lack the essential operational capability to drop an arrow on to a typed-in OS grid reference or to convert a map click back into a OS grid reference. None of them yet provides a "one-stop shop" although the Cambrian Cave Registry software comes the closest.

Stuart France, CCC Conservation-Access Officer

### References

- [1] cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk/historic-sites.pdf
- [2] www.supremecourt.uk/cases/docs/uksc-2009-0032-judgment.pdf
- [3] cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk/registry/CCRm.htm
- [4] archwilio.org.uk/her/chi1/arch.html?county=Powys&lang=eng

## PDCMG awarded conservation grant by Cambrian Caving Council

A grant of £250 for cave conservation materials has been awarded to the PDCMG. The group has embarked on a number of cave conservation measures throughout the cave, both in terms of replacing old path marker tapes and building up more documentation. CCC has already supplied conservation materials, such as tape and stainless steel rods to lift the tapes above ground level where appropriate, from its own stocks. The issue of grant money is a new initiative by Cambrian so some rules have been drawn up that will apply to this and to any future grants:

- 1) Project proposals have to be costed and agreed in advance with CCC because its funds in each financial year are limited.
- 2) Grant money has to be spent on materials for use inside the cave for conservation purposes.
- 3) CCC treasurer will reimburse costs upon submission of valid receipts within the agreed grant period, likely to be about six months within a single financial year.

Last Sandwich has become contaminated recently with bulk powdered food spilled, it seems, from the tackle bags of people tooling up a new underground camp in the enormous passages beyond that have a water supply. Hundreds of white fungal dots are scattered along the route and there is one very large patch of fungus looking like fine white candy floss. PDCMG have been informed and they plan to clear this up.

Stuart France, *CCC Conservation-Access Officer*



## A465 Dual Carriageway and Ogof Capel

Costain have revealed a timetable for the re-development of the middle part of the Clydach Gorge trunk road at a recent meeting with CCC. Work has been delayed due to re-positioning a new footbridge to avoid its footings being built directly over the roof of Ogof Capel and a large number of other changes to the original plans that resulted in further public and landowner consultations.

**Major road works will begin in the area of Ogof Capel during July 2018 resulting in loss of access to this cave until the dual carriageway has been built.**



The pedestrian tunnel under the A465 near the former Drum and Monkey pub will be blocked off and become a bat sanctuary. The new footbridge, in the photo above, will become the way to reach the footpaths, the caves and land on the river side of the new road and, for local people, the bus stop for Brynmawr. Currently the footbridge is not in use and it ends at a very steep drop into the gorge, but Costain have assured me that it will be connected to the public rights-of-way network there by the end of the project. Costain's web resources for the Clydach Gorge dualling are at: [twitter.com/A465\\_Section2](https://twitter.com/A465_Section2), [facebook.com/A465Section2](https://facebook.com/A465Section2), [instagram.com/A465\\_Section2](https://instagram.com/A465_Section2), [beta.gov.wales/a465-gilwern-brynmawr](https://beta.gov.wales/a465-gilwern-brynmawr)

Stuart France, *CCC Conservation-Access Officer*

## The Cambrian Caving Council

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Please send news items, short articles and newsworthy photographs for the next issue to the editor by **31st July 2018**