

BCA



# BRITISH CAVING ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER No. 17

I should like to welcome readers to this Newsletter. This is the first produced by our new Editor, Ben Heaney and we are delighted that he has decided to produce it for us.

I should like to pass on my thanks to Mike Clayton for all his hard work over the years producing the old Newsletter.

From talking to Ben I am sure that he will put together some interesting material which you will all enjoy reading.

Damian Weare, the Secretary of the BCA, has produced the latest Handbook for 2014 there is an awful lot of information in that about the British Caving Association which I don't want to repeat here.

What I would like to repeat however, is the sadness that has befallen us with the untimely passing of Elsie Little our Conservation and Access Officer. Elsie was hardworking and a wonderful lady and a good friend. We will miss her immensely.

Finally again, enjoy this Newsletter I look forward to further editions.

*Andy Eavis  
BCA Chairman*

As Andy mentions in his welcoming section above, this newsletter is designed to build on, rather than repeat, the information that is contained in the BCA handbook. What we want to do with the newsletter is to keep all BCA members updated on ongoing projects and bring their attention to change and development in British caving. Therefore if anyone has any information that they feel it is relevant to share in the newsletter, especially

with regard to information concerning access, safety and cave conservation, please to not hesitate to get in touch offering an article. I am greatly looking forward to producing the newsletter and I sincerely hope that everyone will be able to find some information of interest and relevance.

*Ben Heaney  
Newsletter Editor  
[newsletter@british-caving.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@british-caving.org.uk)*

### **Bat White Nose Syndrome**

This is just a reminder, that White Nose Syndrome (WNS) is a fatal disease to bats and is still a real risk to both bats and our caving in the UK. In North America it has decimated populations of bats which seem to succumb during winter. It has now been shown that the fungus *Geomyces destructans*, which causes WNS, can live in cave soil for months, even after bat populations have been wiped out.

It remains very important that everyone visiting caves does everything possible not to introduce this fungus accidentally from caves abroad, either from USA **or** from mainland Europe, where the fungus has also been detected. It is possible that bats in Mainland Europe *may* have some immunity to WNS. The fungus has not been detected here in the UK; if found it is likely to impact significantly on caving activities as well as having a devastating impact on bats.

If entering any cave / mine outside the UK, please ensure that ALL kit, including boots, overalls, gloves, belt, helmet, lights, kit bags and ropes, etc., is carefully washed and cleaned, preferably **prior** to returning to the UK. All kit should also be sprayed with a disinfectant containing a fungicide before further use. Some suitable products are listed on the Bat Conservation Trust's Frequently Asked Questions web page, [www.bats.org.uk](http://www.bats.org.uk).

If anyone sees a suspect bat, dead or alive, with white fungus around the nose or face, in the UK during its hibernation:

- Report urgently details of location to the Bat Conservation Trust and to their Local Bat Group.
- Wash and decontaminate all clothing and kit used prior to **any** further caving.
- Ask your local Caving Club to circulate their members so further visits to that site are postponed until a sample can be taken, and the 'all clear' given.

*David Priddis*  
*Chairman, Gloucestershire Bat Group*

The following articles were brought to the attention of the BCA via a number of regional newsletters. The contribution that the regional newsletters make is, of course, vital in keeping everyone up to date with the current status of caves. We would like to thank the regional newsletters for freely sharing their information with us; a number of the articles below are reproduced unedited.

## Northern Caving

### **CNCC Proposal for use of Leck and Casterton Fells by Commercial Cavers**

There has recently been an agreement reached about the use of two fells for use by commercial caving groups. In order to avoid confusion the full letter produced by the CNCC follows. The Estate managers for Leck and Casterton Fells like the proposal and believe that it is a positive way forward to allow access for commercial groups back onto the Fells.

“CNCC proposal on the use of Leck and Casterton Fells by commercial groups; this proposal will comply with the existing access agreements and will be under the strict control of the CNCC on behalf of the landholders.

Through a constitutional amendment the CNCC can create a new class of membership, Commercial member. The commercial member will pay CNCC a small (£5?) administration fee; this is necessary because the CNCC is run by volunteers and they may object to arranging permits for leaders to make financial gain from.

Using the existing structure within the CNCC, the CNCC will administer the additional commercial permit. The pro-

cedure will be; commercial group requests from the Access Officer a permit and states the intended group use of that permit using the definitions ‘types of commercial caving’ appendix A.

The Access Officer checks the availability of the cave entrance with the relevant CNCC meets secretary, if there is availability the Access Officer issues a permit to the commercial member with an invoice for the amount agreed by the landowners. The commercial member will send the appropriate fee to the CNCC Treasurer who will then arrange (after a defined period) to forward the permit fees to the respective landowners.

The CNCC will agree with the landowners which caves on their land can be used for a defined category of commercial course and the permit will state that the cave can only be used for a specific category of group (see appendix A); for example County Pot categories 3, 5, 6. If a commercial group does not abide by the category then their membership of CNCC is suspended. The landowner will also be able to make a formal complaint to BCA and that award holder could lose their award and their ability to lead groups. In addition to the monthly meets list sent to the Estates, the Access Officer

will send a copy of every commercial permit issued to the respective Estate manager.

*Les Sykes*

*CNCC secretary, CNCC Training Officer,  
CNCC Access Officer*

## **Appendix A**

Classifications of instructed/commercial caving Taken from draft BCA document 'Access & Commercial Caving - Response by BCA Executive to BCA Council'.

Types of Commercial Caving

1. Novice Taster Trips: The vast majority of commercial trips fall under this heading, often involving groups of young people from a wide range of Outdoor Centres and uniformed groups. These trips tend to take place in a fairly small number of caves which are often monitored by the Centres involved and with remedial works undertaken by the leaders in conjunction with landowners. Although in a very small number of the most suitable caves, there can be as many as 10 (or maybe more) of this sort of trip daily, in the vast majority there are none. Any experienced caver will be able to advise on whether your cave is likely to be of interest for commercial novice trips.

2. More Advanced Group Instruction: This will generally involve greater duration or technical difficulty and will be led almost exclusively by more advanced BCA Award Holders. Skills will be developed as an integral part of the instructional input, including

hazard awareness, conservation, cave genesis and practical skills, such as safe and effective rigging. There are far fewer of this sort of trip taking place than type 1.

3. Individual Skills Instruction: Such sessions will be led by our highest Award Holders and usually involve recreational cavers wanting to develop an aspect of their technique to make them safer underground.

4. Guiding: This is a traditional non-professional caving trip, but the cavers concerned may wish to extend their skills to a wider range of caves and/or techniques. This type of trip will be very similar to a non-professional trip but will be expertly led.

5. Workshops for Club Cavers: BCA has a fund to promote the training of club cavers. Much of this takes place above ground, but some necessarily takes place underground. This sort of trip will generally involve experienced club cavers plus a CIC holder.

6. BCA Award Scheme training courses, revalidations and assessments: BCA's Awards Holders are assessed against strict criteria. As part of this, all potential Award Holders attend a Training Please note: what follows is the proposed text, rather than the layout, of the landowner leaflet. Course where they learn about important topics such as effective cave conservation, group management and modern rope work. They then progress to assessment. This is an extremely important part of ensuring we have suitably experienced and qualified instructors in the future."

## Wales

### Greenbridge Cave and Ogof Dydd Byraf

Cambrian Caving Council now controls access to Greenbridge Cave, near Pendine, on behalf of the owner but, because of problems between local persons it is best that anyone who intends to visit the cave rings Bernie Woodley to arrange for a key and to have an update on the current situation. We also have permission to visit Ogof Dydd Byraf, further up the valley but the same proviso about ringing for an update does also apply.

*Conservation & Access Officer*

### Ogof Tardiadd Rhymney

Thanks to Ruth Revell for reporting that her recent visit only got as far as the entrance before she beat a hasty retreat as there were huge rocks coming down from the quarry above. As the party was leaving an even bigger rock fall was heard.

***If you go there – take care.***

It's worth a reminder that during evenings and weekends the access road is gated just beyond the old Severn Valley hut at Trefil.

### Agen Allwedd Gate

On Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> April a group broke into Agen Allwedd by cutting the hasp off the gate. It looked as if a power

tool had been used, and although not the only attempt at a forced entry in recent years, certainly the most determined. It is not thought there was any damage done to the cave itself other than a few chalk marks and some cairns for navigation.

The identity of the group is unknown, although it is suspected that they are not from the local area. Cavers should perhaps be extra vigilant in case these people have plans to visit any other gated caves. The police are investigating the incident.

The gate had to be removed for repairs and has now been refitted but currently there are some problems with it, preventing it from being closed and opened from the inside. Hopefully this will be resolved very shortly, but in the meantime it is even more important than usual to leave call-out arrangements in case you inadvertently get locked in!

*Adrian Fawcett*

*MLCMAC Secretary*

### Pwll Du News

It is with great sadness that I must report recent incidents regarding the lock at Ogof Draenen. Twice in February and once in the build-up to Easter the padlock on the cave gate was removed by persons unknown and replaced with a different lock. In each case the PDCMG were rapidly able to rectify the situation, but not without some wasted trips for some visiting cavers. As there have

been no signs of forced entry it sadly appears that disruption has been instigated by a caver(s) with access to the key. Given the special padlocks used on the cave gate cost £90 each, this means that the PDCMG has entailed additional costs of £270. This will ultimately have to be recouped from caving clubs. Reluctantly, as these costs mounted it was considered appropriate to inform the police of the disruption, which they are currently investigated on behalf of ourselves and the landowner.

In better news the Pwll Du Adventure Centre, which is located above the cave, is now open for business again. Peter and Ann Jones, who live in the adjacent farm and are also landowners for Ogof Draenen, have recently finished renovating the Centre. I had a sneak preview tour as the finishing touches were being put to the modernisation and the facilities look great. The Centre sleeps 24 and is designed to suit large groups or extended families. In the main the Centre will be let for sole use, but last minute bunk by bunk accommodation may also be booked if there is availability. At £17 per person per night the rates are above a normal caving club weekend, but the facilities and situation would suit special events. Further details may be found at <http://www.pwllduadventurecentre.co.uk/>.

*Fleur Loveridge,  
PDCMG Secretary.*

### **Ogof Cnwc**

Stuart France has produced an interesting comparison of the results from the caver counter in Ogof Cnwc with the entries in the log book.

The log book shows 37 trips by a total of 97 cavers in 2012 and 9 of those trips were through trips.

The caver counter also recorded 22 extra parties leaving Cnwc which are assumed to have been through trips from the Daren end.

Unsurprisingly, most of the counter hits occurred between the hours of 10am and 8pm and over 75% of visits were at weekends.

### **Update on access rules at Dan Yr Ogof**

The DY0 showcaves have introduced some change in access conditions at DY0. This covers frequency of trips and includes a 1 year moratorium on digging.

Please see details below from the showcave:-

It is always going to be a difficult task to balance the needs of exploration with conservation of the cave as a whole, but digging causes much more wear and tear than anything else.

The Company has decided to impose the following additional access conditions, and hopes for your support over this matter:-

1. A limit from now on of one trip per week per person, except for work on specific projects agreed by DYOCAC, and wardens leading guest parties organised via the DYOCAC Secretary.
2. There will be a 12-month moratorium on all digging, and any related digging equipment e.g. all heavy equipment including scaffold poles, drills etc., etc., No digging equipment of any kind may be taken into the cave except for use in maintaining approved fixed aids.

During the period of the moratorium, conservation work and surveying will take place.

*Brendan Marris*  
Secretary DYOCMC

## Derbyshire

### Eldon Hill Quarry Access

Pete Mellors has informed us that restoration of access has now been agreed in principle between DCA, Chatsworth Estates, Natural England, and tenant Maurice Gregory. The precise terms are still being negotiated but are expected to be reasonably flexible. Cavers are asked to please continue to stay away till then so as not to jeopardise the outcome. The full agreement terms and start date are due to be posted soon on the DCA website. Thanks are owed meanwhile to Ron Hammond for his excellent survey and the part it has played in getting negotiations started.

### Access to Bakewell Area Mines

Misinformation regarding access has recently appeared on a website relating to underground exploration. Correct information is as given in full in the *Peak District Access & Rigging Guide*. Summarising:

#### Rookery (Ashford Black Marble Mine)

Contact DCA Assistant Access Officer Karen Slatcher with details of your insurance. You will then be sent a card to show at Ibbotson's shop to obtain the key, which you return to them later.

#### Arrocks Mine

The only key is the one at the Peak District Mining Museum.

#### Holme Bank Chert Mine

Permission must be obtained from Mr. Oldfield whose firm is based next to the mine (phone mid-week); you must have valid P.L. insurance cover. Mr. Oldfield makes a request for voluntary donations of up to £2 per head to the charity The Alzheimers Society.

#### Whalf Pipe Shaft lid

The lid on Whalf Pipe shaft is in need of repair as the weld has broken so it cannot be fastened down properly using a spanner. Orpheus C.C. have the welding job in hand and hope to be able restore the lid to working order shortly.

### **Democratic Dig acquires a gate**

Democratic Dig (CoPD p.172) has had to be gated at the request of the local Councillor who was worried about children falling down the entrance. Thanks to DCA for the supply of weld-mesh and to Orpheus C.C. members for the work. A large adjustable spanner can be used to gain entrance.

### **Suicide Cave**

Suicide cave boulder is now moving. There have been a number of warnings about unstable boulders in Suicide Cave. The most recent arrived from Adam Evans at the beginning of April:

“I’m just dropping you a line to let folks know the far pitch at the back of the cave is now showing signs of serious instability. A piece of rock on the right wall just before the Y-hang has been epoxy tell-tailed. It’s has been under observation for a few years and was even looked at by Dave Carlisle the Mines inspector. Whilst on the pitch yesterday both myself and another saw the boulder crack line open, felt the slab move and heard the rock make a “doon” sound as we tapped it with our feet. It’s concerning the epoxy tell-tales don’t seem to give this impression, yet I assure you it’s moving... Should it fall, it’s likely to cause a cascade effect inside the cave as it will land on a suspended boulder choke below.”

### **CO<sub>2</sub> Monitoring for Cavers**

DCA recently issued a document written by Alan Brentnall giving advice

about the choice and use of meters for monitoring levels of CO<sub>2</sub> in caves and mines. It is not suggested that clubs **must** use a meter but, in some circumstances, it may be helpful. If you do use a meter, please send readings to Alan at [gasman@theDCA.org.uk](mailto:gasman@theDCA.org.uk); these readings are being collated in order to draw up a more accurate picture of where and why there are increased levels of CO<sub>2</sub> at some Derbyshire underground sites.

### **Caving Accomodation**

Add to the list of Accommodation for cavers on page 3:9 the following:

#### **Carlswark Cottage (Derbyshire Pennine Club) in Stoney Middleton.**

Contact: Richard Harris Tel. 01565 755613, Em. [dpchut@gmail.com](mailto:dpchut@gmail.com), Website: [www.thedpc.co.uk](http://www.thedpc.co.uk)

**Look out in the next Newsletter for updates regarding other areas. If you would like to supply information for the newsletter on caving in Mendip or the Wye Valley please do not hesitate to get in contact by emailing [newsletter@british-caving.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@british-caving.org.uk)**



## Other News

### Attention - all Caving Clubs

If your club produces a journal...

We would ask you to consider providing an electronic copy of the contents page and to send this for cataloguing to Gina Moseley, [g.moseley@bcra.org.uk](mailto:g.moseley@bcra.org.uk). Gina will compile this into an abstract for Speleo Abstracts, which is an annual compilation of the world's speleological literature, published in Switzerland, by the UIS. About 4,000 titles are included every year, which cover a broad range of subjects.

Gina would like to keep in touch on a more regular basis with UK Caving Clubs. It would be appreciated if club secretaries or librarians could take the time to send her an email introducing yourself so she can put you on her mailing list.

If your club provides accommodation...

Or if there is anything else you would like to advertise to BCA members, please contact [speleology@bcra.org.uk](mailto:speleology@bcra.org.uk) and ask about placing a free advert in the next issue of Speleology, which is due out in December 2013.

### **Speleology**

The most recent issue of Speleology was published in January 2012, and we have been looking at ways to get it back in production. David Gibson has now taken over as editor with Hugh Penney, Nigel Ball and Erin Lynch as commissioning and sub-editors. The next issue is planned for December.

**Disclaimer:**

Please note: The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the formal view of the British Caving Association

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Equality Statement: The BCA will make its services available to all sections of sporting community, there will be no discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, sexual orientation, creed, colour, occupation, religion or political opinion.

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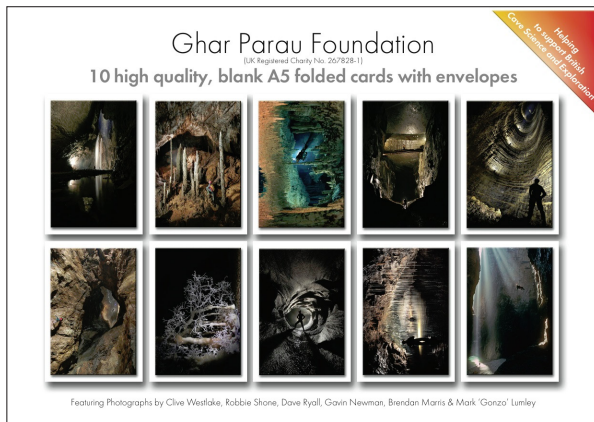
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## The Ghar Parau Foundation needs YOUR help!

### 1) Buy a Set of Cards

To help raise funds that go towards supporting British Cave Science and Exploration, the Ghar Parau Foundation have put together a collection of high-quality cards that feature the work of a number of talented British cave photographers.

The cards are available to buy direct from [sales@gharparau.org.uk](mailto:sales@gharparau.org.uk), or from the major caving shops. 100% of the profits go towards the Ghar Parau Foundation.



### 2) Make a Direct Donation

You can support the work of the Ghar Parau Foundation by making a direct donation. All donations are placed directly into the investment fund and, as such, will directly impact on the amount of grant aid available every year. If you are a UK tax payer, you can also Gift Aid your donation making it a very efficient way to give. See [gharparau.org.uk](http://gharparau.org.uk) for details.

### 3) Make a Gift through your Will

To add a gift to your existing will, you can easily do so by adding a codicil. See [gharparau.org.uk](http://gharparau.org.uk) for details.

The Ghar Parau Foundation is a UK Registered Charity, number 267828-1, which is a subsidiary charity of the British Cave Research Association.