

# PWLL DU CAVE MANAGEMENT GROUP

## **Minutes of the Annual Meeting held at the Lamb and Fox on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2011 commencing at 7.30pm.**

### **Attendees:**

Mick Day		Chairman
Fleur Loveridge	Oxford UCC/Red Rose CPC	Secretary
Sue Mabbett	South Wales C.C.	Permit Secretary & Club Rep
Ben Lovett	Morgannwg C.C.	Conservation Officer & Club Rep
Chris Seal	Chelsea S.S.	Club Rep
Ali Garman	Draenen Diggers	Club Rep
Tim Barter	Westminster S.G.	Club Rep
Richard Hill	Gagendor	Club Rep
Peter Talling	University of Bristol S. S.	Club Rep
Chris Gibbs	Cwmbran Caving Club	Club Rep
Fraser Stephens	Brynmawr Caving Club	Club Rep
Elsie Little	Cambrian Caving Council	
Bernie Woodley	Cambrian Caving Council	

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies received from Andy Farrant (Geological Recorder), Rhian Kendall (Biological Recorder), Les Williams (Wessex CC), Charles Bailey (Trustee), Chris Densham (Oxford UCC), John Pybus (Survey Officer), Henry Patton & Rich Smith (Aberystwyth CC), Spender Drew (Treasurer), Stuart Reid (CCW).

### **2a. Minutes of the last Meetings (18<sup>th</sup> June 2011)**

The minutes were signed as a true and accurate record by the Chair.

### **2b. Matters arising not covered elsewhere in the Agenda**

There were no matters arising which would not be covered later in the agenda.

### **3. Officers Reports**

#### **a) Secretary**

The Secretary's report is attached with the minutes.

#### **b) Treasurer**

The Treasurer send his apologies, but had provided a report (see attached).

Clubs were reminded that they had previously agreed to provide a further £20 donation to maintain a sensible float of funds (Only UBSS and WSG had contributed so far).

EL suggested that perhaps there should be an "annual membership fee" for the Group. The Treasurer is tasked to make an estimate of average costs and see whether this would be desirable or beneficial.

#### **c) Permit Secretary/Access Officer**

The Permit Secretary's report is as follows:

*“No detailed data as the log sheets are still on their way back from Devon. However, I have a summary since the last meeting. There have been 22 trips recorded. Approximately 4 in June, 4 in July, 2 in August, 5 in September, 3 in October and 4 in November. DSS have commented that the new paper for the log book is great.”*

It was observed that these caver numbers are down compared to recent figures, but that this may be accounted for by a number of the “usual suspects” being busy with other projects.

It was agreed to provide keys for the rescue. One to be kept at CSS and one at SWCC.

It was agreed to accept SWCC’s application for a second key.

d) Conservation Officer

Little activity to report. An inspection has revealed that Drws Cefn is seeing extremely minimal usage.

e) Survey Secretary

Not present, no report.

f) Survey Recorder

Not present, no report

g) Biological Recorder

The Group has received a request to carry out a study of aquatic invertebrate fauna in Ogof Draenen and this was circulated to the meeting (see attached). This had been discussed with between the Geological and Biological Recorders ahead of the meeting and received whole hearted support. All those present agreed that this would be an excellent study and consequently the Group offers it full support.

h) Geological Recorder.

See attached report.

h) Fixed Aids Officer

AG circulated a list of fixed aids (see attached). These have not been inspected yet, but will be in the coming 6 months

EL circulated a draft fixed aids policy for comment. This will require some tweaking so comments are requested. The code of conduct will also require updating to reference to this new document when it is finalised.

A discussion was held regarding inspection frequency and 12 months was suggested as reasonable and in keeping with other equipment inspection schedules, eg by SMWCRT.

There was some discussion over the position with respect to the ECO hangers as these were installed by CCC. After the meeting the following clarification was received from Andy Lewington (CCC Equipment Officer):

*“The P anchors were installed by CCC and were checked over a number of years following installation. With over 5000 anchors installed in the UK it became impossible to expect installers to check them indefinitely. The long term tests that*

*have been done have given us confidence to suggest that routine inspection by installers is no longer required, all cavers using them should make themselves responsible for the decision to use one or not, how to make this decision is on the CCC and BCA websites. The present situation is that they are checked by an installer if a problem is reported (see CCC website and BCA websites for information).”*

It was stressed the purpose of the fixed aids was to conserve the cave and not the people.

The aim is to have final documents and a completed inspection by the next meeting.

#### **4. Election of Officers/Recorders**

NA

#### **5. Other Group Business**

##### a) Agreed access route

See secretary's report

##### b) Drws Cefn

See secretary's report. The Secretary was mandated to contact Andy Lewington as a possible alternative bat worker. Failing that option it was agreed that the process would be taken to professionals.

*Post meeting note: since the meeting we are moving forward on this issue again and hopefully there will be progress to report early in the new year.*

#### **6. Applications for membership**

None received.

#### **7. Applications to become keyholders**

None received.

#### **8. AOB**

None.

**Meetings closed at 8.30pm**

Next meeting in June 2012 at a date to be agreed.

# PWLL DU CAVE MANAGEMENT GROUP.

General Meeting 19<sup>th</sup> November 2011

## *Secretary's Report*

### *Agreed Access Route*

The landowner has asked me to remind everyone that they must access the cave only via the specially constructed and marked stile just off the access road to the Pwll Ddu Adventure Centre. Recently some cavers have been spotted exiting the cave and heading around the hillside to cars parked at the area of the old forge at Garndyrus (off the B4246). Clearly this is not acceptable and Club Reps need to remind their club members about the agreed access route. Many thanks to all for their cooperation, this helps to ensure future access for all.

### *Drws Cefn*

Despite having found two licensed bat workers who have agreed to take our license forward, the process seems to have been delayed again. I am currently trying to get an agreed programme with the bat works so this can finally move forward.

This whole process has proved very frustrating and I wonder whether it may be possible to apply to the BCA conservation emergency fund in order to pay for a consultant to complete the work in a more timely fashion.

In more positive news inspection suggests that the entrance is not being used at present, and with the exception of the reported incident described above, cavers are honoring our access agreement.

## *Treasurer's Report*

The last income and expenditure accounts that I produced that ended 31<sup>st</sup> May 2011 showed that our total bank balance was £251.93. Since then we have had income of £20 from UBSS and £60 from WSG. Fleur Loveridge has kindly donated £223.68 which covers the cost of the Glo-Tape that was purchased last year. The Group's total current balance is £331.93.

As mentioned at the last meeting, it was proposed to ask Member Clubs for further donations towards the forthcoming works, namely the closure of Drws Cefn and Conservation Tape stocks. I proposed a sum of £20 and this was unanimously agreed. I wrongly assumed that the minutes of the meeting, indicating the above that were sent out to the clubs would be a good enough "ask" and a formal "ask" may not be necessary.

Unless I get otherwise informed, I will formally ask for the above donation straight after the minutes of the meeting have been circulated for today's gathering.

I apologise for my absence today but this is unavoidable due to family commitments.

## ***Geological Recorder's Report***

Following the publication of the Cave and Karst Science special issue, Mike Simms and I presented a poster on the development of Ogof Draenen and its implications for landscape development, (based on Mike's paper) at the Climate Change - the Karst Record Conference (KR6) held in Birmingham back in June. In addition, the proposal I submitted to the National Isotope Geoscience Laboratory (NIGL) to get some more of the speleothem samples than Mike and I collected back in 1997 dated was successful. We hope to get the next batch of samples analysed in the New Year. There is the possibility of getting some additional samples dated, so if anyone knows of any speleothems that can be safely and responsibly sampled then please let me know. Samples from the higher level passages are of particular interest. In this regard, it would be good to get a sample from the passage between the Reactor and the War of the Worlds, where there is an 'old' looking stal flow, so if anyone is heading down that way... Other than that, I am not aware of any other work being undertaken in the cave. If anyone has any proposals than I'm more than happy to advise.

Andy Farrant, PDCMG Geological Recorder; Nov 2011.

## ***Study of aquatic invertebrate fauna in Ogof Draenen***

### AIM OF STUDY:

To investigate the aquatic invertebrate fauna present in Ogof Draenen. This includes stygobites (animals that live beneath the surface in groundwater and cannot survive above the ground in surface water), stygophiles (animals that can live in water both in the sub-surface and above ground), and stygoxenes (animals that are accidentally transported into the underground, but cannot breed or survive very long).

### RATIONALE:

Aquatic invertebrate fauna are of central importance in understanding subterranean biodiversity, yet their status in Ogof Draenen is virtually unknown. Informal observations suggest the presence of two stygobitic invertebrates in the main stream and Agent Bloreng ( *Proassellus cavaticus* and *Niphargus fontanus*, Jules Carter, personal communication). Stygobitic fauna have been recorded in many of the caves of South Wales (database of the Hypogean Crustacea Recording Scheme at [www.freshwaterlife.org/hcrs](http://www.freshwaterlife.org/hcrs); the Hazelton database of cave fauna maintained by Graham Proudlove (BCRA biological recorder); Chapman, 1979; Chapman, 1993; Edington, 1977; Jefferson & Chapman, 1979; Jefferson *et al*, 2004; Proudlove *et al*, 2003). However there has been no systematic study of the aquatic invertebrate fauna in a Welsh cave and the distribution of stygobitic species in caves in South Wales and the controls on these distributions are not well understood. Ogof Draenen lies within the known range of four other stygobitic species - *Niphargus aquilex*, *Niphargus fontanus* *Crangonyx subterraneus*, and *Microniphargus leruthi* (discovered for the first time in England in 2010 (Knight & Gledhill, 2010) and in Wales in 2011). It is therefore highly probable that several species of stygobite are present in Ogof Draenen, but the numbers of species, where in the cave they are located, and how frequently they occur is currently unknown. Studies of aquatic invertebrate fauna have yielded interesting results in Swildons Hole on the Mendips (Knight, 2011) and the Peak – Speedwell system in Derbyshire (Gunn *et al*, 2000; Wood *et al*, 2000;

Wood *et al*, 2008), and the interaction between stygobites, stygophiles and stygoxenes is widely believed to be an important aspect of subterranean biology.

The Ogof Draenen cave system incorporates a wide range of aquatic habitats, including stream passages of different size, origin and nature and is therefore likely to provide a good location for studying the aquatic fauna of a Welsh cave. A preliminary survey, to establish some of the places where invertebrate fauna are present will provide important, new information about the distributions and abundance of aquatic species in South Wales caves, and possibly identify the local factors controlling their distributions. The study will provide important data to inform future studies of aquatic invertebrates within Ogof Draenen and other cave systems.

#### EXPERIMENTAL METHODOLOGY:

- 1) Pilot investigation to determine presence of species and to finalise methodology (1-3 trips).
- 2) If appropriate carry out further sampling along the lines of the surveys carried out in Swildons Hole (Knight, 2011) and the Peak-Speedwell system (Gunn *et al.*, 2000).

#### SAMPLING METHODOLOGY:

- Kick sampling in streams within the cave system (involves collection of sediment from active streams in which invertebrates live).
- visual inspection of other habitats likely to harbour aquatic invertebrates.
- Kick sampling of sinking and resurgent streams on the surface (with permission from landowners where necessary).

#### IMPACT ON CAVE:

Sampling will involve removal of sediment and invertebrates. All sampling will be from active streams, so the sediment and invertebrate community affected will regenerate fairly quickly. Unpublished observations by L. Knight following the survey in the subterranean streams of Swildon's (Knight, 2011) have shown rapid recruitment and recovery of the fauna following sampling. Only a very small proportion of sites where aquatic invertebrates may live will be sampled, therefore most of the cave will be undisturbed.

#### PERSONNEL:

Lee Knight:

- 19 years professional experience in aquatic invertebrate and macrophyte ecology.
- UK expert on taxonomy of subterranean Malacostraca Crustacea species. Has published several peer-reviewed papers on the topic in various journals (including Cave and Karst Science).
- Founder and maintainer of the UK Hypogean Crustacea Recording Scheme and database of records ([www.freshwaterlife.org/hcrs](http://www.freshwaterlife.org/hcrs)) [a freely available online data base of all species of stygobitic Malacostraca crustacean found in the subterranean waters of Britain and Ireland]
- Instrumental in the addition of the endemic stygobitic crustacean *Niphargus glenniei* to the British list of Biodiversity Action species.
- Has carried out on average 3 caving trips a year in Ogof Draenen since 1995.

Lou Maurice:

- Hydrogeologist at British Geological Survey with 3 years of experience of sampling groundwater fauna from boreholes.
- Very familiar with Ogof Draenen

Tim Guilford:

- Professor of animal behaviour, Oxford University.
- Very familiar with Ogof Draenen

## REFERENCES

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## Fixed Aids Schedule - Draft

Ogof Draenen Fixed Aids										Last Inspection		
Pwll Du Cave Management Group												
19/11/2011												
No.	Location	Identification	Specification	Installed PPE	By	Installation Date	Inspection Due	Comments	Date	By	Comments	
1	Climb near Cairn Junc.	1st backup Eco hanger furthest from pitch head	DMM Eco hanger	Yes	CCC	??	ASAP	Rope tied directly into Eco hanger				
2		2nd middle Eco hanger - pitch head approach	DMM Eco hanger	Yes	CCC	??	ASAP					
3		MR for 2nd Eco hanger	10mm Long Open MR	Yes	AG & J.C	24/04/2010	ASAP					
4		3rd main hang Eco hanger	DMM Eco hanger	Yes	CCC	??	ASAP					
5		MR for 3rd Eco hanger	10mm Long Open MR	Yes	AG & J.C	24/04/2010	ASAP					
6		Traverse and knotted handline	11mm Edelrid Superstatic	Yes	AG & J.C	24/04/2010	ASAP					
7	Indiana Highway Traverse	1st Eco hanger from Indian Highway end	DMM Eco hanger	Yes	CCC	??	ASAP	Rope tied directly into Eco hanger				
8		2nd Eco hanger from Indian Highway end	DMM Eco hanger	Yes	CCC	??	ASAP					
9		MR for 2nd Eco hanger	10mm Long Open MR	Yes	AG & J.C	24/04/2010	ASAP					
10		3rd Eco hanger from Indian Highway end	DMM Eco hanger	Yes	CCC	??	ASAP					
11		MR for 3rd Eco hanger	10mm Long Open MR	Yes	AG & J.C	24/04/2010	ASAP					
12		4th Eco hanger from Indian Highway end	DMM Eco hanger	Yes	CCC	??	ASAP	Rope tied directly into Eco hanger				
13		Traverse line	11mm Edelrid Superstatic	Yes	AG & J.C	24/04/2010	ASAP					
14	Balcony Pitch Flexible Ladder	Left hand Eco hanger	DMM Eco hanger	Yes	CCC	??	ASAP					
15		MR for Left Eco hanger	10mm Long Open MR	Yes	AG & MS	22/05/2011						
16		Right hand Eco hanger	DMM Eco hanger	Yes	CCC	??	ASAP					
17		MR for Right Eco hanger	10mm Delta MR	Yes	AG & MS	22/05/2011	22/06/2012	I'm not absolutely certain of which MR was used where, so this spreadsheet will have to be updated following the 1st inspection				
18		MR for Left of ladder	10mm Long Open MR	No	AG & MS	22/05/2011	22/06/2012					
19		MR for Right of ladder	10mm Long Open MR	No	AG & MS	22/05/2011	22/06/2012					
20		MR linking the two tops of the ladder	10mm Long Open MR	No	AG & MS	22/05/2011	22/06/2012					
21		MR for lifeline	12mm Long Open MR	Yes	AG & MS	22/05/2011	22/06/2012	Linked directly to Eco hanger				
22		Looped ladder lifeline	11mm Edelrid Superstatic	Yes	AG & MS	24/04/2010	ASAP	Runs through 12mm MR				
23		Flexible Stainless Steel Ladder	Daren style ladder	No	AG & MS	22/05/2011	22/06/2012	The ladder should be inspected but the lifeline is the PPE				
24		Chain for rigging ladder	10mm Zinc Plated chain	??	AG & MS	22/05/2011	22/06/2012					



## ***Fixed Aids Policy - Draft***

PDCMG ..... **Fixed Aid Policy**..... DRAFT (November 2011)

There will be a Fixed Aids Officer appointed whose role will be to co-ordinate the installation, checking and repair of all fixed aids that are approved by the PDCMG.

It is to be understood by all users of the cave that the PDCMG accepts no responsibility for these fixed aids but installs and maintains them in the interests of cave conservation They will be installed by persons deemed fit to do so by the Committee but that this may not be an engineer.

Also the checking of their condition will be only by non-intrusive means (ie close visible inspection).

Consequently, it is a condition of their usage that each person entering the cave understands that he/she individually bears the responsibility to check the aid before use and determine for him/herself if it is fit for purpose. Each will also be expected to report back to the PDCMG any causes for concern with the condition of the cave fitments.

The checking of each fixed aid will be carried out at 6 monthly intervals and the Officer will keep a record of these checks.

The Officer will advise of any changes deemed necessary to the fitments and will also arrange for warning to be sent to cave-users if there is any known cause for concern (by use of the caving web sites, the popular cave press and club e-mail contacts).

Only the listed approved fixed aids fall under the control of the PDCMG. Cavers are to be advised they should not use any others found in the cave as their provenance and age will be unknown.

Cavers are requested not to leave their own aids in the cave where others may find and use them and may expect them to fall into the inspection regime of PDCMG.

### **Approved Fixed Aids....**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

### **Advice to Cavers.**

Approved Fixed Aids in the cave are inspected regularly but you are advised that the PDCMG accepts no responsibility for their usage.

It is the responsibility of each caver to inspect each fitment before using it and to decide for himself whether it is fit for purpose or not.

It is recommended strongly that you avoid using any other fitments found in the cave as their provenance and age are unknown.

It is also requested strongly that you do not leave in situ any aids you have installed yourself and that you report any concerns you may have about the Fixed Aids in the cave to the PDCMG.