



Dan Yr Ogof Cave Advisory Committee - Wardens' Newsletter 2008

Welcome to the 2008 Wardens' Newsletter.

As we approach the new season we have put together some information that we hope you will find useful in planning your visits to the caves. In particular I am sure that you will be delighted to hear that from 15th March you are able to gain access to Tunnel Cave via the airlock in Cathedral Cave.

Please refer to the DYOCAC website for the latest information

www.dyo.org.uk

Cathedral Cave Access

Due to the installation of a ventilation fan access from Cathedral Cave into the bottom of Tunnel Cave has not been possible for a number of years. During the last year an airlock has been constructed to allow access to and from the showcave without compromising the working of the fan.

With the start of the new showcave season it will now be possible for DYO wardens to obtain keys to the airlock. The access to Tunnel Cave top entrance and the associated maintenance of the fixed aids remains with SWCC.

Access through the airlock will only be possible when the showcave is open, keys being obtained from the showcave management. Access will be available to DYO wardens operating in a very similar way to that used for DYO.

Cathedral Cave and Tunnel Cave Airlock Access Rules

(NB. Access to Tunnel Cave via Tunnel Top is administered solely by the SWCC. The following rules are for caver access to the Airlock and Cathedral Cave from either direction.)

1 Parties will number up to 5 and enter only in the company of a DYO warden. For "Health and Safety" reasons the Cave Company will not allow people to cave alone.

Airlock Access Rules

2 No access through the airlock is permitted on days when there is a wedding in Cathedral Cave and on any other day there will be a maximum of three trips. In the unlikely event of a party using the airlock to access Cathedral Cave and observing a wedding in progress; the cave party MUST wait until the service is over and the wedding party is exiting the cave before they exit the airlock.

3 Keys for the airlock and caver's entrance in the main door of Cathedral Cave are to be collected on the day by the DYO warden only, from the showcave Ticket Office during normal opening times and must be returned immediately after the trip. If the office is closed, keys must be returned to the showcave owner's house.

4 All gates and doors are to be locked immediately after use and only one door of the airlock to be open at any time. Failure to follow this rule could lead to loss of access through the airlock and loss of wardenship for the warden.

5 Each caver wishing to enter the cave must give evidence of holding adequate acceptable Public Liability insurance cover to the agent of the Showcave Management or of the Committee (the warden) before going underground. A standard pre-trip form must be completed and placed in the caver's post box at the back of the Ticket Office. After the trip the warden must complete a trip report for the committee.

6 Parties are responsible for their conduct, safety and the provision of equipment necessary to safely complete the trip. The warden should also draw the attention of each member of the party to the conditions of access, particularly those relating to the provision for emergency assistance to be called. (The trip notice board in the SWCC HQ should be used in the first instance.)

7 Only electric lighting is to be used. Carbide must not be taken into the cave.

8 No litter is to be left inside or outside the cave.

Airlock Access Rules

9 Parties should respect any directions or instructions issued by the Showcave staff, who have the right to refuse access.

10 Installations, apparatus and equipment should not be interfered with. Accidental damage should be reported immediately on return from the trip. The ventilation fan for the showcave operates automatically and must not be touched.

Fixed aids

Work has been carried out over the last 18 months to upgrade some of the fixed aids within the cave. In particular new anchors, handlines and a fixed stainless steel ladder have been installed at the Abyss. Over time the rock had become more polished creating a tendency for people to only complete the round trip in one direction to avoid climbing up the Abyss. This resulted in the buoyancy devices generally being at the wrong end of the Green Canal for most people. The introduction of the ladder means that we now have a more even split of groups doing the round trip each way, thus giving a better distribution of buoyancy aids.

As a matter of courtesy if you go through the Green Canal please ensure that there are at least a couple of buoyancy devices left at each end to ensure the safety of groups that follow you.

The next phase of work will be to replace the chain ladder at The Rising with a new stainless steel version.

Cave management plan

Elsie Little is working with Clark Friend on compiling a cave management plan for this important SSSI.

If you are a keen photographer and can spare a little time on your trips into the cave to provide Elsie with some pictures, please contact her to obtain locations and features that she needs photographing.

elsie@abercrave18.fsnet.co.uk



Digging in DYO

Digging forms a cornerstone of cave exploration and reasonable projects within the cave are encouraged. To balance the impact of digging with the preservation and conservation of the cave environment we have reviewed the digging policy and added recommendations on materials introduced into the cave. We wish to avoid the introduction of organic materials such as wood into the cave that then decay and introduce alien flora into the environment.

The updated digging policy is detailed here for your reference. If you do undertake any digging activity please log your dig in confidence with secretary@dyo.org.uk

1 Digging is the tool of exploration which in turn furnishes the impetus to sporting caving and research. Consequently, the Committee encourages reasonable exploratory projects.

2 The caves are within an SSSI and an National Nature Reserve and therefore covered by legislation that precludes work of a damaging nature. All exploratory activities should be effected with this in mind. Any digging which aims to create an additional entrance is deemed to be damaging and will not be approved.

3 The Committee understands that explorers may make preliminary investigations into a potential site on the spur of the moment. It is expected, however, that they will inform the Committee, through the secretary, of the wish to extend the dig into something more serious. This information will be held in confidence and the dig not interfered with by the Committee, but will enable the owner/s to consider their statutory obligations and to offer advice if appropriate.

4 Diggers must take every care not to damage the cave in their zeal but should ensure that the relocation of debris is such that waterways are not obstructed or polluted, formations damaged, fauna interfered with or mud and sand deposits that may hold research potential spoiled.

5 Organic materials should not be introduced to the caves. All shoring must be constructed using scaffolding and steel mesh or equivalents.

Digging in DYO

6 Special permission must be obtained before engaging in camping, dye tracing, research projects, major digging and use of explosives, when all necessary statutory licences must be shown. The Showcave Management has the final say on whether permission can be given for explosive use.

7 The progress of the explorations, should they become significant, should be documented and photographed. Reports should be lodged with the Committee every 3 months.

8 Digs should at all times be left as safe as is practicable. If a dig is abandoned or to be left for a period the Committee should be informed, the dig left safe and all tools be removed.

Post trip reports

All wardens completing trips in the cave should complete a trip report for the committee. This is an important communication tool to feed back any issues that are spotted with fixed aids, conservation tapes or unusual events in the cave (such as water discolouration).

To make the return of the form easier an online form is now provided on the DYO website to make this process quick and easy to complete

www.dyo.org.uk/TripReport.htm

Parking at DYO

We have provided at the bottom of the page a dragon for display in your car when parking at DYO.

Please display a dragon in cars parked on the DYO carpark at all times both in and out of season.

Displaying the dragon identifies it as a cavers' car thus allowing the showcave staff to close down the caves quickly at the end of the day.

DYO Cavers' Entrance Keys

The cavers' gate in the showcave entrance has proved popular with wardens since its installation. If you require a key for entrance or exit outside the showcave opening times they are available on production of your pre trip form from any of the following contacts.

Pete Cardy	01639 730162
Eric Inson	01639 730922
Paul Quill	07790 520146
Liam Kealy	01639 730035
Elsie Little	01639 730331

If you cannot arrange through any of the above you can contact the DYO showcave management 01639 730693

Care of keys

When being entrusted with the keys it is your duty to return them to the keyholder as soon as possible after the trip. If you have to post them back please use recorded delivery as loss of keys to the showcave will mean the lock has to be changed, possibly at your cost.





THE ROLE OF THE DAN YR OGOF CONSERVATION WARDEN

Some queries have come my way regarding the role of DYO Conservation Wardens. I have attempted to answer them in the following tract.

Dan yr Ogof Conservation Wardens are responsible for the conservation of the caves forming the Dan yr Ogof National Nature Reserve and the caves of the Mynydd Ddu SSSI emanating from the showcave site. It should be appreciated that you are not leaders but one of you will accompany each and every trip within the caves to protect the system against any inadvertent damage in addition to noting and reporting any changes.

Wardens caving with colleagues will usually have a definite plan of action and will act accordingly to the known capabilities of the group.

However, the situation is different when accompanying guest groups. If you are asked to lead the trip, you can of course do so but you must then be alert to the individual capabilities of the party and try not to lead them through any part of the cave which may be a particularly favourite and difficult climb/crawl/squeeze for you but beyond the ability of one or more of your party. It is usually better to let the party find their own way through the cave at their own pace, with a little gentle prodding at the appropriate times to keep them on course and out of delicate areas.

Should any warden wish to refresh their memory of any part of the system, please contact the DYOACAC Secretary, who will arrange this for you.

Bernie Woodley

Showcave opening dates

To assist in planning your trips, the showcave will be open from 15th March through to 31st October.

Please refer to the Dan Yr Ogof showcave website for full details.

www.dan-yr-ogof-showcaves.co.uk



Ashford Price presents Eric Inson with his award

The annual Dan Yr Ogof Cave Advisory Committee wardens meeting was held at the Gwyn Arms on Saturday 17th November. During the evening awards were presented to thank those very special cavers that have made an outstanding contribution to caving activities at DYO over many years. The awards were presented by Ashford Price on behalf of the Dan Yr Ogof Showcaves Ltd.

The awards were for long term contribution and it would perhaps be five years or so before any additional awards would be made.

Eileen Davies - the award collected by her sister Sally as she is now living in Cyprus. For the courage to be the first to conquer the Long Crawl. Everyone since the 1930's knew it was there, but she had the determination to keep crawling in to the unknown until the end was found, and the extension to DYO proved. (If she had run in to difficulties there would have been tremendous problems in those days in rescuing her.)

David Judson - for spending seven years pulling together the survey for DYO. This involved countless trips, and weekends, dedicated to this one single task. It is doubtful in this age that one person would have the time to do such a body of work again. This survey is still today the "bible" for the cave. Also, for being one of the first to climb the Far North Avens.

Eric Inson - One of the finest cavers and climbers of his generation. Climbed many of the major climbs in the cave. i.e. He was the first up Dali's Delight. Also, for his lifetime dedication in leading other cavers around Dan Yr Ogof, and spreading his enthusiasm for the cave, and caving. In over 40 years he has never been known to refuse to take in another caving club, or visiting foreign cavers around DYO.

Also mentioned were four others, who sadly are no longer with us, for their special connection with DYO. Bill Little, Alan Coase, Bruce Foster, and Clive Jones.