

OGOF DAREN CILAU and OFD

South Wales weekend.

Date : 15-16th March 2014

Present : Alex Ritchie, Chris, Dan

Weather :

Saturday - Sunny but very windy

Sunday - Bright sunshine, almost T-shirt weather, 18C.

Ogof Daren Cilau

Dan Me and Shaman travelled down to Wales on Friday, to a rather full SWCC hut. Despite no one snoring, all 3 of us had trouble sleeping, was it excitement, or was it the creaky mattresses?

We had breakfast as ASDA (Chris's second breakfast) before heading off to Daren. Yes staying at the SWCC to do Daren was a rather poor choice but oh well.

We entered via the original entrance and Chris being a newbie to Daren wondered what all the fuss was about, the descriptions he read made the entrance series sound a lot worse than it was. Following Dan's lead we headed through a boulder choke and along large passages to the "big chamber no where near the entrance" and signed the book. Dan let me lead so I learned the route. After a bit more big passage (complex area) we then set about tacking the crawling passages between there and the time machine. Route finding now was a doddle people had built handy walls to prevent you going the wrong way, we only made one wrong turn and that ended quickly.

After topping up our water supplies at the water point at the base of the ladder we headed up the annoying thing, life lined from the bottom. I say its annoying as there are spikey bits on it that catch on your over suit and the middle of it... well not sure what was going on there the ladder ends and the next section starts on it's side horizontally. Its that bad, that on the way back Dan fell off, so life lining is essential.

At the top we took a left past the mud figures, which were blindly wandered past without noticing on the way in and onto the first rope climb. After that was an a roped traverse which I would not like to do without cows tails as it consisted of slippery sloping walls. This was followed by some crawling, and then more walking to a second longer rope climb, which thankfully had nice thick rope on it as it was difficult to gain purchase on any ledges lower down. A final easy climb brought us into the time machine. We wandered the wrong way first (right) which ended after about 5 minutes at an epic boulder choke. We gathered this was the wrong way (did I mention we forgot to bring the survey??) before going the correct way into the Massive time machine passage, a passage that reminded me of the show cave's of Mulu, I just hope my photos do it justice!

Boulder hopping was the way forward from here until we eventually got to the end where there was a choice of routes either left or down. We chose the latter and followed the nicely decorated stream way, all still walking height. We only got reminded we were underground when we had to occasionally deal with boulder problems.

At a junction we Passed a service station sign (yes really!) before making a further long but easy trek for 2 thirds of a mile (according to the sign) to Hardrock Café where we enjoyed the lunch we packed, that is if chocolate bars and meat sticks count as lunch. More photo's were taken to prove we got there and after a quick look at the way on we headed out.

We came across a bag just above the rope climbs and realised it was rubbish to be taken out. (There is currently a big project to remove rubbish that has been in Hardrock since the 80s!) Dan being a hero and more importantly bagless, grabbed it to take it to the next dumping area, where we swapped that bag for another bag and I picked up a tube like thing, which me and Chris shared.

So with extra luggage we were starting to feel the trip by the time we got back to the "Big chamber nowhere near the entrance".

As Chris had not seen the antlers we thought we would exit by Prices not realising how much longer that route actually is. The journey to the antlers themselves was quite easy though did have an interesting climb down thrown in. No one but me had been beyond the antlers and as we had no survey we were purely relying on my memory, a worrying prospect!

The first half of the route was quite easy as far as route finding was concerned. However it was not easy passage it had plenty of ladders, a few traverses a interesting rope climb and lots and lots of boulder climbs to get through, far more fun then the original entrance. Once through all that you get to a bit of crawling yippee! Which led to yet another ladder which then led to a boulder choke to nowhere (or so it seems) Thankfully though I remembered the way through (To the right).

It was then a case of hopping back over the boulders and into the confusing large passage beyond. Thankfully despite my sleepy state my dusty memory banks sparked to life and that combined with a light breeze guided me and the group through the correct passages and on into Busman's holiday. This would be considered a large passage if we had not just come from the Time Machine. All that was left now was to find the hidden exit out. Parties before have failed to find it and were forced to backtrack all the way out of the original entrance, not a pleasant prospect after 8 and bit hours caving.

Thankfully this bit was engrained in my head like I kept promising to Dan, though I did initially look in the wrong spot. For future reference its' hidden behind a boulder on the left, follow the tape round a calcited section, about 2 thirds of the way along Busmans.

From here more crawling some of it a little awkward and muddy saw us out of the cave and into a windy night. All that was left was for us to walk to Drenen entrance over half a Km away and then it was up to me to crawl through the wet canal to get Dan's keys. I don't think I ever did get that beer Dan!

Trip time 9 hours.

OFD

To say initially the trip went to plan would be lie...

Lets see first off I slept in by mistake, making it a later start. Then we drove down to the parking spot only to realise we did not know the route so had to drive back to the hut. After getting changed we realised Chris had forgot his helmet so rather then driving back a second time we strapped my backup light to his head and finally I left the key to the entrance in my Jean pocket in the car.

So anyway we eventually got underground at about lunch time, but were not to fussed the weather was glorious so spending sometime in the sun for once was a nice change! We headed downstream first to see the sump. The passage here is in complete contrast to the rest in that its small and has

squeezes. We could not reach the sump due to it being too tight so we followed an interesting tubular passage uphill again, only for us to be dropped back into the water by an awkward 20ft rift climb. I pressed on alone from here, where the passage soon got lower and wetter, I did not bother going to the end but I could see on-going passage. Looking at the survey later, the low bit was likely a small sump that was now a duck due to lack of recent rain. If I had pushed through I would have ended up back in the show cave.

We then wandered upstream taking the obligatory photo's of the deep pools and spent a bit of time climbing up in various places to see where the passage goes. At the point just before the boulder choke we spotted a climbable waterfall, so up we went getting a little soaked. At the top was a traverse that could have been used to bypass the waterfall, oh well. We followed the on-going passage up hill for quite some way, if we found a dead end we found another way. We eventually came across two entertaining climbs which brought us up into a large chamber, which esd a perfect place to end the trip as time was running short. Looking at the survey we had wandered into "Waterfall Series" and the chamber our meanderings took us to was called something like "Pool chamber"?

Trip time 3 hours.

What a fantastic weekend, I hate to say it but I do enjoy the caves in Wales more than here in Yorkshire, they have proper caves unlike our mainly grotty little holes.

Alex Ritchie

A [Black Rose Caving Club trip report.](#)