

## **SOUTH WALES WEEKEND – WSG . OFD & OCAF**

Two days, two classic caves.

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Date : 11<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> March 2011

Present : Duncan Jones, Pete BrookDale, Alex Ritchie, Darren Jarvis, Daniel Jackson, Graham Hillary, Dominick Mennie

Weather : dry on Saturday, dry and warm on Sunday

A weekend in South Wales was needed, due to work and other commitments we missed out towards the end of 2010, a date was decided on and a quick look at accommodation showed our two usual haunts looking fairly busy, so we opted for a change and picked a hut in-between our two planned caves - the WSG hut, Caerllwyn, it was.

The forum saw probably the most replies of any topic as we discussed cave options, food, who was driving, with who and where cars were being left! Finally it all came together and two cars headed south on reasonably quiet motorways, pausing for a bite to eat and drink at KFC in Ross, then stopping at Abergavenny to pick up Dom and his gear. We also decided to pick up some food and drink from the 24hr Tesco in Merthyr (quite handy), the DuncDunc proved useful and with only minimal fuss and head scratching found ourselves at the store.

Goods bought we headed off to the cottage where the others were awaiting our arrival, a quick run around switching things on and getting a brief fire on before the bed claiming began, Alex was hoping to find a spare sleeping bag, luckily for him there was one! Once done a few drinks were consumed and much chattering began (always seems to be the case on a Friday night when we go away..)

### **SATURDAY 12<sup>th</sup> March – OGOF FFYNNON DDU II**

An early start was needed to allow enough time for the half hour drive to Penwyllt and to be able to obtain a key to OFD.

Once obtained we had a relaxed change and pleasant stroll to Top Entrance, once in it didn't take Graham long to decide his FX2 was on it's last legs so a brief light fettle and we were on the way again.

We followed the usual route through to Gnome and Chasm and were soon clambering down the slope to Salubrious (we chose to go down and up rather than up and down as it's easier, well at least we think it is!) Our plan was to take a passage that cuts across to Chasm Passage, however we missed the junction and carried on past Arete Chamber to where a passage on the right connects with top end of Chasm. More easy going to Poached Egg Climb, where we exercised some caution at first due to a note next to the SWCC key cupboard about a loose hold – it didn't seem too bad so we all used it to get across as normal.

As ever with OFD the going was easy and we soon arrived at The Crevasse, I was volunteered to rig the traverse across. We had packed a 40m rope which turns out to be plenty to rig the short handline climb down and to continue it across the traverse, over the boulders and then down the 8m pitch. At the bottom most of us disposed of our SRT kit to make the going lighter.

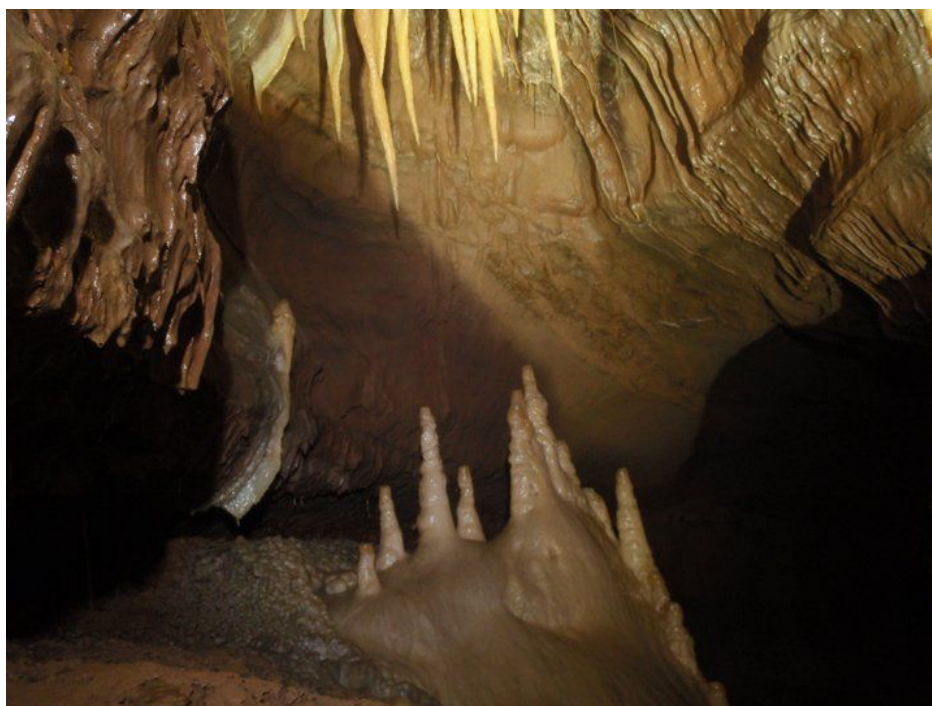
From here the going becomes a little more involved, up and down, a few climbs thrown in,

including one where you can opt to traverse – some traverse with very little to hold or stand on! We opted for the climb, which wasn't as bad as first thought. From here we quickly reached The Shambles, a loose looking pile of rock. The easiest route is not quite the left side where some obvious steps lead up, of course I went far left in the corner which proved a little trickier. Dropping down at the far side, round a corner, up another climb and you are faced with a void.

The Traverses. I could see as I approached the look on some peoples faces, it's clear some people were not in the slightest bit happy about what lay ahead (a 25m drop, with a narrow ledge and broad gap). Dom had a look and retreated, Dan took up the challenge and got across, Dom then had a second go and made it to the boulder bridge. Daz had a look but wasn't happy, Alex took a turn and Dom piped up that he was feeling nervous just watching Alex!! Graham and Pete didn't seem keen either (Pete it has to be said had cracked? Ribs from a fall in Hardrawkin entrance a week or so back) so it was becoming clear that either we were splitting up or heading back. Dan followed the traverses to the end and back where he reported another awkward obstacle at the far end.



Reluctantly we backtracked to the Crevasse, whilst waiting for everyone to get up the pitch we studied the survey and came up with options for side passages and possible alternative ways back (looks easy on paper!) When Graham had derigged the pitch we were ready to go and soon took in detours to Creek Alley, Straw Chamber and a passage heading off from near Straw Chamber. That was followed for a fair length as it went one way, back on itself and bent right and eventually ended at two holes that seemed to go down a fair distance – probably dropping in to Chasm Passage, not wishing to 'drop' in to there and not knowing what (if any) climb was like we backtracked again and picked up the usual route to Poached Egg.



Once back in Chasm a quick visit was made to the big hole before we headed down a small side passage (the one we intended to come out of on the way in!) This leads easily back to Salubrious where upon and exit was started. The white mud formations we saw last time in this passage have been removed, by the cave police we assume.

Out in about 6 hours, not bad for a bit of sight-seeing! Aberdare and Asda was calling as we still needed food for tea. Chilli with rice and naans was decided upon and garlic bread for starter and cheesecake for after. The food was prepared and cooked by Pete with a little assistance from me, Alex however was ordered out of the kitchen owing to his failure to observe something critical last time.



Beer was drunk, music listened to, the horse collar was utilised for a spot of gurning – only three took up the challenge with Dan being crowned winner.

Finally we started to succumb to the mixture of late night Friday, fresh air, exercise, food, warmth and drink, so sleep called, a quieter night was had, probably a combination of the above.

### **SUNDAY 13<sup>th</sup> March – OGOF CRAIG A FFYNNON**

After a more relaxed start we cleaned up the cottage and set off for Brynmawr and Asda, for a breakfast, Dan being the breakfast beast had the biggy, everyone else opted for more suitable portions.

A short drive, parked up and undertook a leisurely change before doing the short stroll to the entrance.

Lock removed and in we go, with some crawling in pleasant surroundings. We were some what surprised to find we weren't alone in the cave, another group was in before us, although we couldn't understand how as there were no cars parked up anywhere.. Hmm, anyway, onwards with the mixed but occasionally fine passage.

Pete with his rib situation loved the squirming through the choke, without such a problem I found it entertaining, in a strange way!

The final section of large passage leads to the fairly sizeable Hall of the Mountain King – a very impressive chamber with some suitably impressive formations. Here we split up, Dan, Alex and Daz having already been this far wanted something extra so followed the crawl onwards to gain further walking passage, here they bumped in to the other two already in the cave. Whilst the other three went further myself, Pete, Dom and Graham all followed a large passage which dwindled down to a crawl, another side passage also dwindled to a crawl after passing some crystal-like formation on the floor.

The exit out was straightforward with one minor detour up the slope above the start of the choke, not much to be seen so onwards and outwards in to a warm day which allowed us to dry our gear waiting for the three musketeers to emerge.



It made a nice change to stay somewhere else, thanks go to the WSG and for some a new cave on Sunday. Saturday may have been a tad disappointing not getting too far towards the end but was still a good and satisfying days caving all the same.

*Duncan Jones*

*Photos – Alex Ritchie*

*A Black Rose Caving Club trip report.*