

Ogof Ffynnon Ddu Cave Advisory Group  
Minutes  
Was held by Zoom on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> Dec 2025  
starting at 1900

Apologies

Moyrah Gall, Jules Carter, Tom Partridge, Si Lowis

Present

Allan Richardson, Tony Baker, Vince Allkins, Andrew McLeod, Jo White, Helen Nightingale, Dave Dobson, Luke Ashton, John Roe, Tomasz Zalewski, Duncan Hornby, Paul Dann, Sarah Garlick, Claire Vivian, Nicola Pearce, Christina Byrne

Chairmans Report

Tony spoke briefly outlining Andy Dobson's contribution to cave conservation and the OFD resurvey

A minutes silence was held in memory of Andrew Dobson.

Appointment of new Wardens

Luke Ashton to be appointed as a Warden, appointed.

Nicola Pearce re-appointed

Correspondence received

University of Leeds Speleological Association (ULSA) wish to be considered for an Annual Permit.

Luke had written to ULSA refusing their request on the grounds that they didn't visit OFD on a regular basis.

There should be a published policy on what the requirements are for an annual permit, this needs clear parameters to be identified. This information is on the club Google Drive, but is not available to other clubs. Permit Secretary to liaise with SWCC Secretary to arrange.

OFDCAG recommends to SWCC Committee that the Permit Secretary has the discretion to award Annual Permits using the guidance as published in his report.

Hon. Secretary's Report

Nothing to report.

## OFD Access Review Group Report

Nothing to report

## Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NRW and SWCC

Nothing to report.

## SWCC Permit Secretary's Report

Annual permit holding clubs can now book keys via the Digital Destination Board app 24/7.

If you would like to use this feature in DDB, please download the app and create an account, then send me your DDB username, name and club.

Permit Secretary to liaise with SWCC Secretary and SWCC comms to enable this to happen.

1. The adoption of the Digital Destination Board application continues to be significant throughout 2025. One issue was found with the application during a recent Android update. The issue was fixed in 1 week by Josh Vaughan.
2. One major access issue was noted during the period involving University of Bristol Speleological Society.
3. Completion of all fields of the key log sheet have improved but all SWCC members and permit holders should be notified to improve their completion of the log sheet. The footfall data provided for conservation purposes relies on the key log sheet being completed correctly. This point is already stressed in bold text to all permit applicants via email. Suggestions to improve the data quality in the key log sheet are welcomed.
4. I have started to write an SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) for the SWCC Permit Secretary role. This document will serve to standardise the role and provide instruction to the next permit secretary.
5. The criteria to be eligible for applying for an annual permit is unclear. I believe the criteria needs clarification in writing on the OFD access and entry procedure document. Currently the criteria mentioned is:

“The Permit Secretary shall, on behalf of SWCC, have absolute discretion in interpreting these conditions and may refuse a permit, in which case the applicant and SWCC Committee will be informed of the reason for refusal. The applicant may appeal in writing to the Committee of SWCC at 1-10, Powell Street, Penwyllt, Pen-y-Cae, Swansea, SA9 1GQ. Annual Permits may be issued to clubs that have demonstrated a regular and conscientious interest in OFD.

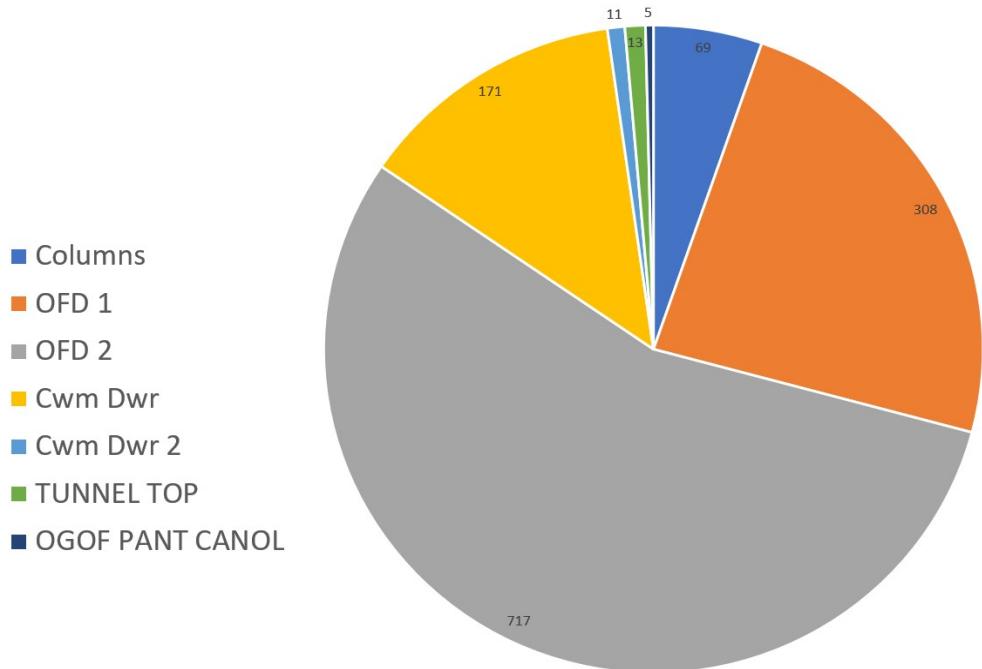
Applications for Annual Permits should be made to The Permit Secretary. Each Annual Permit holding club shall be notified of these Access Procedures. All Leaders, be they permitted by Date Specific Permit or Annual Permit are assumed to have read accepted and understood these guidelines and Access Procedures.”

I propose a number of trips or permits over a number of years be specified to clarify the criteria to caving clubs. University of Leeds Speleo Association have requested an annual permit for example and they have completed 14 trips under 10 permits over 4 dates in the last 3 years.

6. See footfall per entrance below and graphs attached:

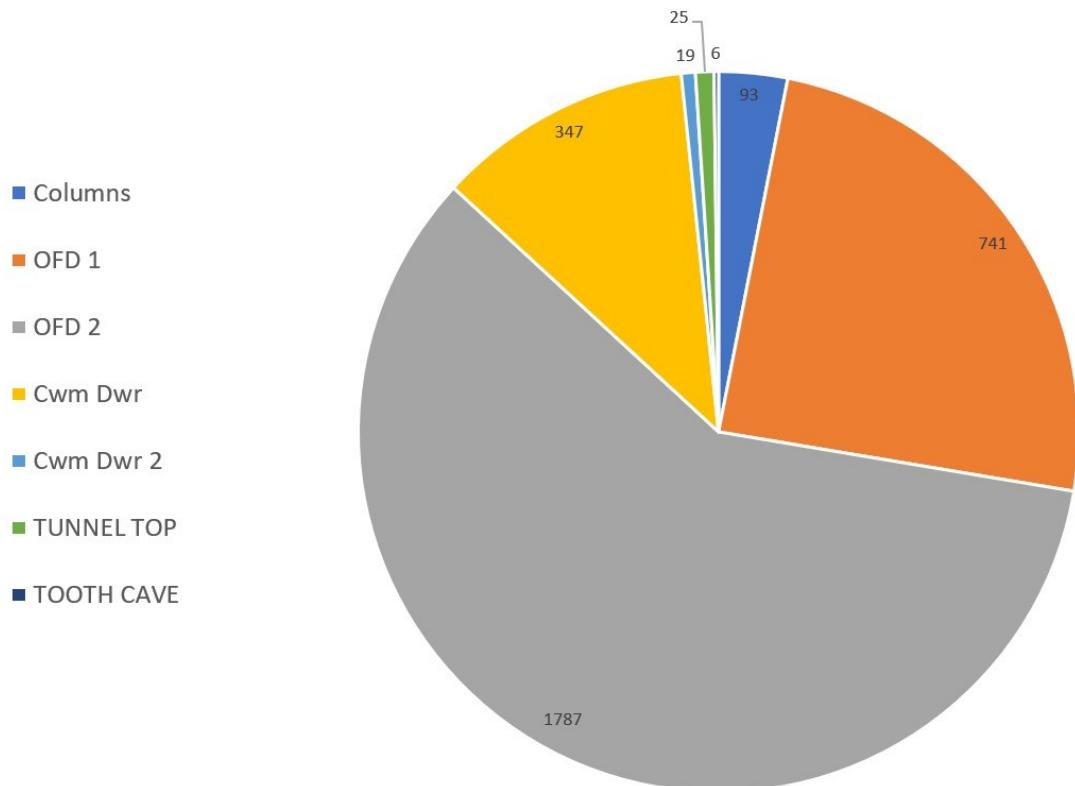
Year	No. of Date Specific Permits (OFD) Issued
2025 (to date)	97
2024	110
2023	55
2022	76

Footfall Per Entrance - 2025 to date



Year	No. of Cavers via All Entrances
2025 (to date)	2987
2024	2952
2023	2927
2022	2847

### Footfall Per Entrance 01/01/2025 - 30/11/2025



The Chairman expressed his thanks on behalf of the OFDCAG for the work that Luke Ashton has put in over the past three years.

The Chairman asked everyone to consider who might be the next Permit Secretary, this is an SWCC appointment.

### Conservation Officers Report

Maintenance of tape in high wear areas inside Top Entrance has taken up most of the time spent on conservation, this involves mainly cleaning and re-alignment of the tape and pins. Some new taping has also occurred around Top in areas that have previously been overlooked.

Due to personal circumstances there was a gap in work over the autumn, thanks must be expressed to Andy for all his help over the years, his presence will be sadly missed.

Thanks are of course due to Brian for his continued assistance.

Dave Dobson  
Dec 2025

## Fixed Aids Officers Report

Fixed Aids work and regular inspections are ongoing.

There has only been one resin anchor installation since the last OFDCAG meeting: four resin anchors at the Letterbox. The chain is due to be replaced with stainless chain from two anchors in due course. Chain, maillons, rings and a new Divers' pitch rope have been purchased and funded by Caving Wales/Ogofa Cymru.

The worn rope on the Divers' pitch has been replaced with the new rope, which can be reversed if it becomes worn at the top end. Chain has been used at the very top to avoid wear of the rope on various rub points.

The bolts on the Fault Aven pull-up are still due for resin anchor installation to replace the old non-stainless anchors. The anchors will then be fitted with stainless chain and rings for the pull-up system. Once this is complete, all recorded rope anchors associated with SWCC Official Fixed Aids will be modern stainless anchors. Some non-stainless anchors may remain e.g. on the Maypole ladder.

The Skyhook (which is not an official SWCC Fixed Aid) will also be fitted with chain and rings and returned to being a pull-up system.

The current state of Fixed Aids inspections can be viewed here:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1xTHpggaffyQXQnrNegbx8XSaMGgHVQo5unqgCxk43OU/edit?usp=sharing>

I have circulated two proposals for resin anchor installations around the Fixed Aids Advisory Group and received no objections. I would like to propose that the OFDCAG recommends these locations for resin anchor installation.

### Proposal 1: Mutiny Junction pitch (p11)

This pitch is an 'up' pitch (indicated on the survey below with a red arrow). It gets less traffic than some other pitches due to its relatively more distant location, but it forms part of a round trip via the Skyhook and the p6, p5 and p11 also shown on the survey below. Currently the route has a mixture of anchor types and is broken into a few short pitches via ledges, but the top of the last rope is on a ledge where a further approximately 6m exposed and loose chimney climb is required. Most of the rock at the top of this chimney climb is shattered and there are no natural anchors, making belaying tricky. The total height of the pitch and climb is probably closer to 20m than 11m.

I believe a new resin anchor route could bypass this chimney by traversing over a chockstone at the head of what would become the pitch, placing anchors in the solid roof of the passage, and allowing a clean drop down where the route would join the current one (with new resin anchors as required). Maintaining this route is important as it is one of two ways into Merthyr Vale, the other being the p6, p5 and p11 mentioned earlier (also currently on fixed ropes) but this route is tight and awkward and not suitable for larger cavers.



### Proposal 2: Labyrinth Pitch (p29)

This pitch currently has spits. It is occasionally used for SRT, and is conveniently close to the entrance. I looked at this pitch (from above) recently and it has spits in a tricky position high on the wall for the first pitch, descending to a wide ledge around 8m down, where a Y-hang from in-situ hangers descends further via a deviation on the second pitch. I have been told that these anchors are now in a poor state, and furthermore with the current rigging there is also the risk of landing on the wrong side of the conservation tape. A new resin anchor could take a more straightforward descent of the first pitch, probably starting with a pair of anchors on the wall leading down a traverse to a Y-hang over the first pitch and then another Y-hang over the second pitch with an anchored (and likely in-situ) deviation to ensure cavers land on the correct side of the conservation tape.



Andrew spoke to support the proposals, highlighting that both of them had safety implications.

Both proposals taken en bloc.

Proposer Andrew McLeod Second Claire Vivian, Passed

Luke reported that all Annual Permit holders were being informed that illicit bolting was not allowed and would result in the refusal of permits.

## Reported Accidents

None

## Rescue Liason Report

Nothing particular to report - Rescue's access to OFD seems to be running fine with no issues and we've just had the annual large rescue practice in the system which was a test of the Cwm Dwr search plan, checking of the rescue bolts, and a check of the 90 rescue pitch out of the main stream in OFD2. We are looking at alternatives to this pitch because it has some issues near the top that make stretcher handling difficult as exemplified in George's rescue but I'll update on this when we have some defined ideas.

## Allocated Columns duties

Wardens list for 2026 to go to Andrew for publication.

## Need more wardens

Wardens are asked to encourage other members of SWCC to become OFD Wardens.

## Cave Management Plan

On going

## Update on safety advice

It has been reported to Vince that there is a loose boulder in the roof of the OFD2 entrance passage, the interim measure is to tape off the left hand side, the boulder is to be investigated.

There has been a report of a possible loose boulder in OFD 1 Boulder choke, Vince to investigate.

## Possible changes to TOR's

Ongoing

## OFDCAG digital interface-update

Columns wardens update for 2026 to Andrew.

## AOB

Chairman wished to record his thanks to Vince for his work in keeping the cave gate locks operational.

Date of next meeting, mid week evening in early summer 2026 tbc

R. Allan Richardson

Hon. Secretary

OFDCAG