

Access to Llethryd Swallet Cave to be Reopened from November 1st 2021

Llethryd Swallet Cave in Gower is an impressive and historically popular cave that became inaccessible around 2003, due to catastrophic sediment infill in the entrance series. A team from SWCC has been working for 3 years to regain access to the system and in doing so also found another cave nearby (Barns Cave).

During the dry August of 2021, a low route in Llethryd Swallet was forced past a choked sump under the initial boulder ruckle and over the next month several high-level passages were connected with crawls, leading to a loose descent through another choke (The Grim Reaper) and into the rifts beyond the obstructions. Access to the magnificent Great Hall and Annex was achieved.

The full story of re-entering this huge and well decorated void will be presented elsewhere.

Since the cave blockage in 2003, land ownerships have changed and all previous access arrangements (e.g., in Tim Stratford's book) are now obsolete. Their continued use potentially could destroy new agreed arrangements.

Full updated instructions and a (conditional) permit for Llethryd and Barns caves can be obtained by email. An illustrated instruction sheet showing surface access, routes inside the caves, and current issues will be sent with each permit.

Please use this address for enquiries: llethrydswallet@llethrydbarns.co.uk

Summary information

- Llethryd Swallet can suffer total flooding, sumping the entrance series for extended periods. Passage instability exacerbated by regular violent flooding can add to the excitement. Cavers entering the land and caves do so entirely at their own risk and risk assessment. The caves must not be entered immediately after a period of heavy rain, or when significant rain is forecast. In winter, water backs up from 'terminal' sumps and submerges all access passages for long periods. The issuing of a permit is not a guarantee that access will be physically possible.
- Due to the seriousness of the cave no novice cavers are permitted. Several tight/sinuous sections in the new entrance sections have a 'size limit'. Rescue from flood entrapment or injury would be problematical.
- All cavers are required by the landowners to hold BCA cavers' insurance.
- The caves (within an SSSI) are gated and locked (NRW and Landowner stipulations). A key will be made available on-site on the booked days only for pre-booked, permit holding parties (1 per day). Groups are asked to be considerate others in the caving community by not booking multiple days at this stage in re-opening process. Evening trips will be possible.
- Keys must be returned to the on-site key safe immediately after each trip.
- Access is free. We hope that groups will support and comply with the arrangements making this possible.
- To avoid conflict with other landowners, access must be via the car park at the south end of Green Cwm (Parkmill), walking up the valley and crossing into the Llethryd Barns land at the south end. Detailed instructions will be given.
- There is no right of way to the cave entrances and the agreed paths are only for use by permitted caving groups.

Information supplied by Andy Freem on behalf of the Llethryd Barns landowners.