

Ogof Ffynnon Ddu Access and Entry: Conditions, Procedures and Rules

Access Procedures

1. These Access Procedures apply to all parts of and all entrances to Ogof Ffynnon Ddu.
2. The Permit Secretary administers access to Ogof Ffynnon Ddu acting on behalf of the landowners, Natural Resources Wales and the South Wales Caving Club, via the OFD Cave Management Committee. The entire cave is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a large part of it is a National Nature Reserve. Access to the cave is subject to the obligations placed upon the landowners by its special status.
3. Entrances to the cave are gated and permits for entry are obtained from the Permit Secretary by following the procedures set out here. Conservation of the cave and its flora and fauna is a priority and cavers are expected to act responsibly and adhere to the entry conditions and rules.
4. Access is available to members of *bona fide* caving clubs who have read, and are prepared to abide by, the Conditions of Entry and Rules published by the Cave Management Committee. *Bona fide* caving clubs are defined as those affiliated to the British Caving Association or another appropriate national or international body.
5. Applications for permits must be made by an officer of the club and be received by the Permit Secretary at least two weeks prior to the proposed caving trip. Applications may be made either by email to ofdaccess@hotmail.co.uk or by post, in which case a stamped addressed envelope would be appreciated.
6. The maximum permitted party size is 6 people, including the leader, and individual parties must remain separated in the cave. A permit covers a single party of up to 6 people. If more than 6 people from the applying club will be in the cave at the same time then multiple permits must be requested.
7. Permit holders may obtain keys to the cave from SWCC headquarters at weekends or, during the week, from recognised key holders.
8. The Permit Secretary shall have absolute discretion in interpreting these conditions and may refuse a permit, in which case the applicant will be informed of the reason for refusal. The applicant may appeal, in writing, to NRW and SWCC or directly to the secretary of the OFD Cave Management Committee, for consideration at its next meeting.
9. There is a facility for Annual Permits to be issued to clubs that have demonstrated a regular and conscientious interest in Ogof Ffynnon Ddu. Applications for Annual Permits should be made to the Permit Secretary for discussion at the next meeting of the OFD Cave Management Committee. Clubs who have a rapid turnover of members (such as University caving clubs) are not normally granted annual permits.
10. The South Wales Caving Club is normally granted automatically an annual permit for the cave within the NNR, in recognition of its location and special role in relation to the NNR.
11. Access to the Columns area is restricted in the interests of conservation. Parties may visit the Columns only when a NRW Voluntary Cave Warden is present. Wardens will normally be available for visits to the Columns between noon and 3pm on the Sundays of Easter, May Day, Spring and August Bank Holidays, and New Year's Day. These dates should be publicised by the Secretary who also draws up a rota of Wardens. Parties wishing to visit the Columns at these times do not need to make any prior arrangements but should make themselves known to a Warden by 10 am on the day. Parties must ensure that they have their own leaders; Wardens do not act as leaders for visiting parties.
12. The 'Entry Conditions and Rules', below, must accompany all permits issued.

Entry conditions and rules

- a) These Entry Conditions and Rules apply to all parts of and all entrances to Ogof Ffynnon Ddu.
- b) When the SWCC HQ is open, the destination board in cottage no. 8 lobby area must be used. A key-ticket, which includes the name of each person entering the cave, must be completed for rescue purposes. When the SWCC HQ is closed parties must make other arrangements for rescue. Note that the HQ is usually closed by 5pm on Sundays.
- c) For reasons of cave conservation and adequate supervision of less-experienced cavers, the maximum permitted party size is 6 including the leader. Parties must not join up underground and should deliberately maintain separation from other parties.
- d) The leader is responsible for the conduct and safety of the party AND for the provision of the equipment necessary to complete the trip. The leader must draw attention to the conditions relating to the use of any fixed equipment within the cave, which are displayed on the board in SWCC HQ. (A copy of these will be given to mid-week users).
- e) ONLY electric lighting is to be used. Carbide MUST NOT be taken into the cave.
- f) This permit is for ENTRY ONLY. Camping, digging and the use of explosives, dye tracing and other research projects require special permission, for which application is to be made to the OFD Cave Management Committee.
- g) Conservation of the cave is very important and those who enter the cave are responsible for its welfare. Some areas are taped off for conservation reasons. Marker tapes must not be crossed or moved, under any circumstances other than in extreme emergency. Observe all tapes and route markings in the cave. If there is no tape, proceed only if there is a clearly defined path. If in doubt, STOP.
- h) No litter whatsoever is to be left either inside or outside the cave.
- i) Smoking is prohibited throughout the cave.
- j) The gates are to be locked at all times except when entering or leaving the cave.
- k) Cavers enter at their own risk. Many sections of the cave are arduous. For safety reasons, adequate experience and suitable clothing and equipment are required throughout the cave and especially in the further reaches of the cave and in the streamway.
- l) Installations, apparatus and equipment must not be damaged. If accidental damage occurs this should be reported immediately on return via the whiteboard in SWCC cottage no. 8 and by email to the Permit Secretary.
- m) Access to the land surface of the NNR and of much of the remainder of the SSSI is unrestricted but visitors are asked to help protect the wildlife and natural beauty and avoid disturbance to grazing animals.
- n) Failure to observe these conditions may result in the refusal of any future application to the OFD Cave Management Committee for entry to any part of Ogof Ffynnon Ddu.
- o) These Entry Conditions and Rules may be revised from time to time by the OFDCMC.