

Ogof Cnwc to Daren Cilau Through Trip

Location: From Whitewalls, head towards the road then take the right-hand concrete track uphill past the neighbouring properties. Staying on the left, continue upwards on the grassy track to meet a flat path. Ignore this and continue straight on over a tiny stream and up a vague track through bracken to reach a flat grassy tramroad following the line of the cliffs. Head left here, passing Daren Cilau (located down the second grassy gully on the right) and stay on the tramroad past Ogof Pen Eryr at the far end of the Daren Cilau Quarry. Continue roughly 600m beyond this to find the Ogof Cnwc entrance behind a large grassy spoil heap. The triangular entrance is at the base of the cliffs and not visible from the path.

The locked gate is just inside the entrance (key available from Whitewalls), the gate can be opened from the inside without a key.

Tackle: The fixed ladders have all been rigged with in-situ double life-lines, so bring some karabiners if you plan to use them. There are a number of fixed aids along this route, please inspect before using when possible.

Ogof Cnwc to Antler Passage – After a few metres, the low entrance passage reaches a small chamber which contains the signing in book. Beyond here it continues as a crawl, normally containing a few puddles, to emerge in the roof of Calcite Chamber. A 2m climb down the flowstone leads to a rift passage on the left. Follow this, taking a tube on the right. This passage continues mostly as a crawl, often wet in part, to a ramp leading up to a scaffolded shaft. Descend the shaft, looking out for a hole on the right and crawl for a few metres to emerge in a walking size passage. In very dry weather, a sump at the base of the shaft can be followed to emerge in the floor at the start of the walking passage. After 50m this enters Price's Prophecy, a large decorated chamber, where a taped route is followed to reach a junction with the main Busman's Holiday path.

To the left, some 200m of passages end in various digs, but the way on is to the right along a taped path past formations. After a couple of decorated chambers, water can be heard. Do not take the taped route to the left, but instead head down over boulders to the right. Re-ascend to regain the main passage, ignoring the taped passage to the left. Continue along this walking size passage, and where it lowers to stooping size a taped off oxbow ahead forces you left. A short way beyond the other end of the oxbow (a taped-off loose climb) a slope up on the left enters a crawl. The crawl is mainly hands and knees but lowers towards the end before becoming walking-sized again. Head directly across the next chamber to a climb up through boulders, then back down the other side. A larger fault controlled section of passage is entered. Initially keeping close to the right hand wall, follow the obvious route. Ascend a ramp with purple shale either side, ignoring the high level passage on the left. Immediately after crossing some boulders, look for the way on hidden behind them next to the right hand wall. If this is missed, the passage ends abruptly after 15m. Climbing down through the boulders a chain ladder is soon reached. In the chamber at the base a slope leads steeply down. Keep to the left, entering a crawl with a loose wet choke on the right. Drop down a hole through boulders and crawl for a few metres to emerge into Antler Passage.

Antler Passage to Big Chamber Nowhere Near the Entrance – This large rift passage contains numerous boulder obstacles forcing frequent changes in level and is not described in detail. At the start, one boulder traverse is fitted with steel plates and a chain. In a couple of places it is necessary to drop down through holes rather than continue at high level, so look out for these. The first is on the left, and further on there is one on the right. About half way along Antler Passage, a small

stream is followed in a muddy channel. In very wet weather, the water can back up here to a depth of a metre or so.

Beyond this are another 3 boulder obstacles before several climbs with fixed aids are encountered. The first is an upwards climb equipped with a knotted handline. One metal plate is provided to aid the climb up; alternatively it is possible to thrutch up the rift. This is immediately followed by a short ladder climb up (2m), and shortly afterwards comes a ladder climb down (4m). A tall narrow rift on the right is Man in The Roof, which has a handline to assist exit.

Continuing along Antler Passage, a climb up leads to a squeeze through stal. There are 2 holes that it is possible to squeeze through here, and you'll want to take the higher one. This is followed by a short, unprotected traverse to the final ladder climb down (5m). Alight on the ledge rather than attempting to continue to the very bottom.

After a 90 degree bend to the right and some easy walking, The Antlers (the formations from which the passage takes its name) are reached. Next, one end of Urchin Oxbow is passed on the right. To protect the formations from further damage, please do not use this passage as a through route, and visit the Urchins from the other end of the oxbow instead.

A small climb on the left or short crawl at a lower level leads into the large and impressive Epocalypse Passage. Up the boulder slope to the left is the route to the Epocalypse Chokes. Keep straight ahead and descend to The Kitchen, where a small stream is crossed. The water flowing in from the right here is safe to drink, and there's a cup here for that purpose. Follow the taped route over mud banks, and keep right where it splits. Almost immediately, a roped climb into the other end of Urchin Oxbow is reached, where you should definitely take the time to visit the Urchin formations. Continuing along Epocalypse Way, look out for a route between boulders on the right to reach the impressive group of formations called the "White Company". Continue to follow the taped route, which traverses two areas of large fallen slabs where it is necessary to climb up and back down. A short stoop/crawl then leads into Big Chamber Nowhere Near the Entrance.

Big Chamber to Daren Entrance – Go down to the right where you will find the signing in book for Daren Cilau. (There is no need to enter your trip details here if you already put them in the Ogof Cnwc book.) Directly opposite, boulders are crossed to enter Jigsaw Passage with its small stream. Misfit Passage is passed on the left and Jigsaw Passage continues to the right passing through a number of puddles. Please keep to the taped route. Half way along this generally large passage a constriction (The Wriggle) is passed. The start of the entrance series telephone line is reached where a slope of calcited boulders leads to a climb up through a choke. This is the 1984 breakthrough choke and emerges in the Old Rift Passage. (Heading left here will take you to Old Main Chamber, while going right soon reaches a large dry gour pool which is worth a short diversion.) Straight across and down into the undercut leads to the entrance passage. A blockage is bypassed by a short oxbow. The entrance series and its small stream enters shortly afterwards on the right (box 8). Almost immediately the wet calcite squeezes are reached. Beyond these, the going is easier as far as Second Inlet (box 5). The passage is mostly smaller from here on, with a mixture of crawling, stooping and sideways thrutching, and several shallow canals. Eventually the sideways squeeze "The Vice" is reached, from where it is only 80m to the final flat-out crawl and exit.

Spotted an error in this route description or want to leave feedback?
Contact the Webmaster (see contacts page on CSS website <https://chelseaspelaeo.org>)

(Version 2 - Oct 2022)