

Daren Cilau to Ogof Cnwc 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. Turn left, then take the second grassy gully between spoil heaps heading towards the cliffs (the one with rocks in it), to reach the cave entrance at the foot of the cliff face.

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.

Daren Entrance to Epocalypse Way – The entrance series is a little over 500 metres long, and is a mixture of crawling, thutching, stooping, and occasionally some walking. The junction boxes on the fixed phone line are a guide to progress through the entrance series – there are 8 to the end. The passage starts as a flat-out crawl, usually wet, and after the first bend, the height of the passage increases. After a couple more bends, The Vice (a sideways thutch for several metres) is soon reached, and shortly beyond this are a couple of short canals. Two inlets are passed, both on the right. Second Inlet is at a small chamber (box 5), after which the going becomes easier until the final obstacle, the Calcite Squeezes are reached.

Emerging into a larger passage, turn left then climb into the second oxbow on the left to reach a breakdown passage which leads up between boulders into the Old Rift Passage. Going left leads to a dry crystal pool and formations, while right is the route to Old Main Chamber. The way on is straight across to a flat-out crawl (with junction box 9 at the start), leading to a downward choke. The final drop lands on the top of a calcited ramp of boulders at the start of Jigsaw Passage. From here on, please keep to the taped route. Jigsaw is mainly walking but about half way along is a short squeeze, The Wriggle. Towards the end of Jigsaw is a taped junction, with Misfit Passage on the right hand side. Keep left here, then up over boulders to enter Big Chamber Nowhere Near The Entrance, where the log book is located. Ascend the boulder pile behind the log book then take the crawl through boulders on the left (straight ahead leads to the Loop Route, Eglwys Passage, and Man in the Roof). After a few metres crawling the passage suddenly enlarges into Epocalypse Way.

Epocalypse Way to Busman's Holiday – Keep to the left side of the passage, climbing up and over two areas of fallen slabs. Soon the White Company and other formations are seen on the left. Further along, the entrance to Urchin Oxbow is reached on the left. Climb up into Urchin Oxbow to see the delicate formations, but please do not use it as a through route. Continuing along Epocalypse Way is easy going until a small stream is crossed at The Kitchen; here the water flowing in on the left is clean enough for drinking and a cup should be nearby. Continuing up the slope beyond, Far Epocalypse (the route to Epocalypse Chokes) is to the right, but go straight ahead and down a hole to emerge after a few metres at the start of Antler Passage.

This starts as easy walking passage, passing the other end of Urchin Oxbow on the left. A climb over an obstruction leads to The Antlers. A sharp left-hand bend with a heavily calcited rift on the right

marks the closest point to Ogof Craig a Ffynnon. Shortly afterwards a 6m chain ladder leads up to a traverse followed by a squeeze between stal. The next climb up is equipped with a 4m ladder against the right hand wall (Man in the Roof enters from a high-level rift on the left here, with a handline to facilitate exit.) Almost immediately after this ladder comes another ladder, this time 2 metres down. Cross a large slab then climb down using the knotted rope and footplate in situ.

The next section of Antler Passage contains 3 boulder obstacles, and the route is over the top in each case. Look out for a short handline in a cleft at the second of these. After these climbs a small stream is encountered. Walk in the stream rather than across the mud banks on the right. After heavy rain, the water level can rise to a depth of a metre or so. Boulder obstacles continue for the rest of Antler Passage. Most are climbed over, but in two places a crawl on the left leads to a climb up through boulders. The final 'obstacle' is a long boulder, equipped with footplates and a chain on the left side making for an easy traverse. The passage widens into a chamber, ending with an undercut on the right hand side that looks like the way on. Instead, look for a crawl slightly to the left at the far end (this is hidden from view and not obvious until close by). Follow this up through boulders, then past a wet choke with dark cobbles, keeping this on your left. After another short crawl you emerge in a chamber. Scramble up the slope to another chain ladder. Climb this and bear right at the top to emerge in Busman's Holiday.

Busman's to Ogof Cnwc – Turn left over the boulders, then keep initially to the right of the large Busman's passage and thereafter just follow the obvious route. After several small climbs and a narrower section, keep straight ahead across a boulder-floored chamber. Shortly after, a crawl is reached. Starting low, it increases to hands and knees to emerge in large passage again. On the left you pass two ends of an oxbow, both taped off, the first at roof level, and the second at the end of a stooping section. Soon after this, a long slope descends to the left, while a taped route can be seen in the distance at the upper level. Ignore that, and descend the slope, then climb back up the other side to regain the main passage. Take the taped route to the left, through a well decorated area and a larger chamber – Price's Prophecy.

Turn sharp left at a taped junction, where there is a sign indicating the route out via Ogof Cnwc. Follow this side passage, ending in a short crawl which emerges through the side of a scaffolded shaft. The original route at the base of the shaft is usually sumped. From the top of the shaft, drop down a ramp and along a crawl which may be wet in places. This emerges in a small chamber. Climb up on the right to reach a crawl over puddles, then drop into a roomier section for the last few metres to the gated entrance. A key is not required to 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 3 - Nov 2022)

