

The Columns

The area of Ogof Ffynnon Ddu known as "The Columns" is gated for conservation reasons at the request of Natural Resources Wales, and is only accessible when accompanied by a Warden.

The Columns are opened on five occasions through the year: on the Sunday preceding the Bank Holiday Monday for all Bank Holidays with the exception of New Year's Day. On this Bank Holiday the gate will be opened on whichever day New Year falls.

To visit the Columns, which are open between noon and 15.00 on each open day, the party leader must inform either of the relevant Wardens or leave a message at SWCC HQ (tel 01639 730163) before 10.00am of the proposed day of entry.

There are two entrances to The Columns, either or both of which may be used. The upper entrance involves a 50ft abseil and SRT kit is required. This is now rigged with P-hangers that have replaced the old system - see QR code for the pitch topo. The party must be competent to rig the pitch and provide their own equipment, rope and rigging gear. The protocol is that the party inform the Wardens they would like to use the upper entrance and one Warden will accompany the party. The leader (or competent party rigger) will then rig the pitch with the Warden then going down second. The rest of the party will then descend.

Generally, it is accepted that a party may wish to take any one of the several routes out towards The Columns. A time to arrive is decided between the leader and the Wardens. This is to ensure that not all wanting to visit arrive at one time.

Note that it is **NOT** the job of the Wardens to lead the parties to The Columns, only to meet them at the appropriate gate by the prior arrangements. Presently, October 2017, the Wardens are:

New Year: Bob Radcliffe and Claire Vivian

Easter: Dave Dobson and Vince Alkins

Mayday: Clark Friend and Chris Grimmatt

Spring: Brian Clipstone and Allan Richardson

August: Andy Dobson and Harvey Lomas

The usual NRW permit requirements for entry to OFD must be met. For further details contact the OFD Permit Secretary: Ofdaccess@hotmail.co.uk (presently Gary Vaughan)