

1969

1st January Mine shaft

Paul Hyton, Brian Collins, Mike Jay

A hole has opened not far from the Charterhouse Country Club, so went and found it by walking down the lane toward Velvet Bottom, past the C.C.C. In the third or fourth field a circular hole near the far corner of the field had appeared. MJ threaded a rope through the stone wall and tied it around a dead tree branch, to this was tied a 25 foot ladder.

Everyone agreed it a good idea I went down as I was the smallest, and lightest. At the end of the ladder the shaft continued, so had to climb back up while another was brought from the hut. Sent down again and reached the bottom, measured at forty foot. The shaft is stone lined near the top and in solid rock lower down.

18th January Port-yr-Ogof

Ted Meek, Roger Marsh, Stu Reid

A trip exploring the many dry passages, the river caused some concern; used a branch to float through the resurgence.

19th January Agen Allwedd

Ted Meek, Roger Marsh, Roger?

Ted led the trip toward the Cliffs of Dover but had carbide light problems all the way in; his spare torch also had problems, therefore a swift exit.

23rd January Polarammon Pot

Alan Mills, Bob Cross, Mike Jay

Spent a hilarious hour in this confined dig bear the Wessex Hut, AM is convinced of its potential; the lower area is a stuffy place, short on oxygen.

2nd February Sludge Pit

Jim Smart, Roger Marsh, Nigel Burns

The Severn Valley has a dig; Jim said we would help, went down and in the wet conditions, became thoroughly soaked and mired.

5th February Dundry Hill Stone Mines

Nigel Burns

After locating the gulley managed to find the entrance to a mine by a large outcrop of limestone. Though low and sinuous the passages are lined with lots of miner's dead's. Another mine entrance was found, though much smaller in size; the passages here were not so extensive; both mines are around a hundred metres or so in length, though this is estimated.

9th February Dial Quarry Cave, Winford

Solo

Tony Oldham spoke of this cave close to Bristol; cycled out toward Lulsgate airport.

Found the quarry as described by TO, on the A38, up hill from the Star Café, on the left, beyond the road junction to Winford. Hid the bike and quickly climbed the main gate; ripped left hand on the barbed wire. The place appears as being used as a rubbish dump. Eventually found the partly blocked entrance. Inside a small network of passages, some walking size has been severely pounded by blasting in the quarry.

22nd February Pinetree Pot

Alan Mills, Mike Jay, Brian Collins

A trip to assist with an ongoing AM dig; couldn't see much as the rift was full of diggers.

23rd February Stoke Lane Slocker

Alan Mills

Asked to help carry some dive kit; bit surprized to find the need to free dive a sump to get to the actual dive base, didn't like the wriggle into the sump pool, or the awkwardness coming back. Alan kitted up and disappeared saying he'd be back in two hours. Soaking wet the cold set in so took off clothes to wring them out: regularly ran about trying to keep warm. After three freezing hours AM returned give me a pile of kit and told me to hurry off out to get warm.

1st March Lamb Leer

Solo

Paul Hyton turned up at the Axbridge hut with a busted thumb. Rather than abandon the arranged trip and return the key unused, decided to venture down alone. Found a canvas kit bag and packed the ladders and two ropes, Sam Davies kindly loaned four karabiners and his figure of eight descender. Lowering the kit bag down the entrance, about halfway it jammed. Climbed down, released it and completed descent. Set the ladder onto the scaffold and secured the rope. Installed the descender and abseiled down; thrilling. Went to the Cave of Falling Waters returned to the main chamber to enjoy a Mars bar. An uneventful exit, though without lifeline; tied the kit bag to a waist length and dangled it below whilst climbing the entrance pitch: a thoroughly superb trip.

8th March Stoke Lane Slocker

Alan Mills

Asked to carry by AM; Alan had scrounged a wet suit for me but it was a little too big; actually much worse than wet dry grots. Froze severely waiting on his return, once again took his kit and headed off out. Sump one, its awkward entry and exit hold no more fear, just respect. That night Alan bought all the beer; well pissed, great fun.

9th March Stoke Lane Slocker

Alan Mills

Went back to sump two to look for Alan's mask; found it near the mud bank, must have slid below the water surface during packing, rain outside increased stream volume had difficulty getting up the entrance tube against the force of the stream.

23rd March Split Rock Quarry

Alan Mills, Bob Lewis, Greg Pickford, Martin Bishop

Climbed various routes in frosty conditions; taking turns to top rope: shown some interesting methods of belaying, in particular the Italian hitch; it could be used to abseil. Bitter cold, hands frozen, great fun

29th March Lethrid Cave, Gower

Jim Smart, Kevin Wilkins?

We waited an age for the appointed cave key holder to eventually turn up. Though raining the last two days, MW thought it not an issue. It's a foreboding sort of place with lots of flood debris jammed in the roof. The stream depth made for lots of wet crawling.

30th March Tooth Cave, Gower
Jim Smart

Another fine stream cave with potential, though similar to Lethrid; both very floodable caves

4th April Porth-yr-Ogof Severn Valley, Cotham, Axbridge Easter Meet
The previous evenings drinking and bar-b-que in the meadow resulted with a multitude going caving down this river cave throughout the night. Today spent messing about using floats to do through trips.

5th April Pant Mawr Pot
Jim Smart, Stuart MacManus, Ted Meek, Roger Marsh, Stuart Reid, Nigel Burns
A long walk in the rain, an impressive entrance: had a good look about with Jim climbing the waterfall, without success. Got to the New Inn to find it packed for the Easter Meet; lots of pints and singing Owen repeatedly threatened to close early.

6th April Little Neath River Cave
Stuart MacManus, Jim Smart, Ted Meek, Stu Reid, Bob Lewis, Paul, (Smelly), Alan
A very wet round trip stopping in sand chamber to check on the buried rescue dump

7th April Town Drain
Bob Lewis, Mike Jay, Alan Mills
A trip to see this caves potential, a large boulder blocks the way on, bang needed.

20th April Jack Pot Cave, (P8), Derbyshire
Alan Mills
Arrived in AM's van at around midnight, the lateness due to the engine running hot, and the need to stop quite often and refill with water, went to a pub called the Eagle, Buxton. AM seemed to know a lot of the late nighters still drinking so joined in: invited to stay in Buxton somewhere off the high street; place looks like a caving hut. Up very late, so no breakfast, drove straight to JPC. AM wanted to dive today though didn't feel great. Stacked the dive kit near the sump, where AM then vomited, then again, and then wretched again. Abandoned Peak Cavern trip planned for tomorrow to dive here instead. Emerging after a slow exit Alan drove to another caving hut arriving about 18:00 we were offered tea by those in the hut; one of the two stunning women offered us a plate of stew: hospitality! Alan seemed to know many of the cavers here too, though the kit strewn about appeared more climbing than caving. Curiously the atmosphere like the Buxton hut was so very different to that experienced on Mendip. Alan asked to set up our tents outside, and was told it best to use the field. Later they invited us to accompany them to a bar; a bit of a drive, parking in a lorry park opposite the pub. The Three Stags Heads Inn is a small pub, almost from another time period, superb; the owner and his wife a pure delight; another late night: these characters seem quite a tough bunch if their talk is anything to go by, but they are welcoming, which is refreshing. While AM spoke with another about diving in JPC, the others took to closely questioning me about my caving experience and being so young was I diving with AM: it also appears they do a lot of vertical stuff, many are recently back from bottoming the Gouffre Berger.

21st April Jack Pot Cave, (P8), Derbyshire
Alan Mills.
After a cracking night of fun, awoke the next morning in a barn near the pub. Drove back to the hut for a much needed breakfast; offered our thanks, said our goodbyes, and

headed for the dive. Invited by those present to return and stay, any time passing. A swift trip down to sump I, where AM kitted up and dived off, two and a half hours later he returned. The dive was not a success as one sump was choked with gravels etc. through which he tried to dig his way. The chesterfields, (40cft) AM used offer limited air supply to dig so AM turned the trip. He plans to return with 2 x sealion's; giving about an extra 45cubft of air.

26th April Tor Hole Mineshaft

Bob Lewis, Alan Mills Paul (Smelly) Allan

Close to Tor Hole pond: A twenty foot mineshaft found blocked at the bottom, BL believes he can see a way on down through the debris and dead animal remains.

27th April Swildons Hole

Martin Webster, Alan Mills, Ken James

Carried dive kit to sump two, the plan, they are going to dive sump twelve. Asked if I would return to assist carry the kit out. Returned after five hours; waited and waited. Eventually surfaced at 23:50; apparently very little real progress in sump, no pints either. Whilst they changed made some hot whiskies to lift their spirits, from a bottle found in the Belfry, unfortunately no cloves.

10th May Swildons Hole

Ken James, Martin Webster

Carried dive kit to sump I for MW and KJ.

24th May Bar Pot

Bob Lewis, Alan Mills, Paul Alan, Doug McFarlane

Two fantastic pitches drop to near a passage called Hensler's Crawl, through this into Gaping Gill main chamber; and back: cracking trip. In main chamber met a group from Burnley.

25th May Diccan Pot - Long Churn - Alum Pot

Bob Lewis, Alan Mills, Doug McFarlane,

An abseil through trip from Diccan Pot to Alum; arriving in the big entrance met with the others who were practising vertical rope techniques; our entire team laddered out before those on rope emerged.

26th May Birks Fell Cave

Bob Lewis, Alan Mills, Smelly Alan

A swift trip en-route to Bristol, once down the first pitch BL noted rising water level; waiting a minute or so to check, it was rising so hurried out as the place filled.

7th June Lancaster Hole – County Pot

Dave Wilson, Eric Howell, Jim Corbett

A superb through trip led by Eric no idea of the route taken, cracking passages, Eric explained where various other caves entering along our route: he's a good bloke; from the NPC I believe.

8th June Black Shiver

Eric Howell, John Murphy, John Wilson Dave Wilson

An imposing place but well worth a trip; only managed to do two pitches as heavy rain swelled the stream.

21st June Black Hole, Swildons Hole

Ken James

With directions to a dig site from Pete Moody went to the Black Hole area: the £5 ex coal board Oldham from Bryants giving me some trouble. Later found the fault as a dodgy main bulb contact.

22nd June Acid Squeeze, Swildons Hole

Ken James, Pete Eckford Alan Mills

Climbed up to Acid Squeeze and attempted entry, not a hope, Alan thought it worth a try since he'd been there last some time ago. Moved downstream and began to do climbs in the main streamway. Saw from the top of one climb what might be a high level tube about twenty feet away further downstream.

30th June Eastwater Cave

Told that the entrance collapse has been dug open after some two years closed

5th July Swildons Hole

Ken James

Got up the climb to investigate the possible high level tube, turned out to be an alcove, bugger; did another two climbs to finish this area nothing of note found.

6th July GB

Ken James, Pete Eckford, Martin Bishop

After bumping into PE in the Hunters decided a trip was needed. A very pissed trip occurred down through the ladder dig.

12th July Rods Pot

Nigel Burns

Down again to assess it's potential, limited spoil dumping locations and a long term project for several men.

13th July Reads Cavern

Nigel Burns

Zed alley, poking in every little crack and hollow, wriggled among boulders but nothing obvious to follow.

26th July Mandale Mine, Derbyshire

PB Smith, Tony Dulsondo, Dicky Dickenson, Gordon Parkin

A long weekend available, hitched to Derbyshire from Bristol via Stoke-on-Trent, taking almost five hours. Picked up outside Buxton by a PB Smith?, who saw the cap lamp carried on my waist, he spoke of Eldon, TPU, Orpheus, Pegasus, and other caving clubs. Bob Toogood, his passenger, hearing my accent enquired after various cavers the only one I knew being AM; so began a terrific weekend. Both suggested I stop the night with them at the T.P.U hut in Castleton. A crazy night followed in the local bar till well after hours. The following morning invited to join a trip into Mandale Mine, an early lead mine. The workings have huge dressed stone blocks used as lintels to span the main way, a superb trip. TD climbed a pitch about two thirds along the main passage. Eventually he swung back into view having established a secure belay at around thirty feet, from which to climb further.

27th July Odin Mine

PB Smith, Gordon Parkin, John, (Mouse), Middlemist, Tony Dulsondo, Dicky Dickenson
Offered another trip; a series of loose pitches descend through these old mine workings:
not enough men to get to the bottom using lifelines on the pitches so climbed the last
with a safety.

28th July Mam Tor

Solo

Before departing for Bristol walked up Mam Tor, an imposing mass which looms over
Castleton. The old road is wrecked by landslip. Good lifts from Castleton -Leek – Stoke –
Avonmouth.

9th August Bincliffe Mine

PB Smith, Mouse

Once worked on several levels, which broke into some sections of natural cave, PB
wanted to look for dig potential in the cave sections. Back on the surface PB produced
some bent metal rods and wandered around the place dowsing; for what, actually, we're
not quite sure.

10th August Great Masson Mine

PB Smith, John, (Mouse), Middlemist, Tony Dulsondo, Torchy?

A big ancient mine, with workings off everywhere, PB show examples of pre explosive
mining techniques. Superb,

23rd August Peak Cavern

John, (Mouse), Middlemist Tony Dulsondo, PB Smith

A fine trip through into Cascade Chamber; this is a superb cave be nice to do more.

24th August Hillocks Mine

PB Smith, John, (Mouse), Middlemist, John, (Shag), Smith,

A cracking trip down an interesting mine with PB looking for more remains.

30th August Box Mines; Barbeque

Cotham, Axbridge, Severn Valley, and many more underground between dawn and dusk,
and drinks.

6th September Crimbo Swallet, Knotlow Mine

Dave Gill, PB Smith, Tony Dulsondo

DG suggested the recent weather might offer a through trip to Crimbo Swallet,
Fourways, from Knotlow Mine. Entered via a climbing shaft close to the main shaft, the
waterfall soon brought comment about the lower water levels and available air space;
some half way down the cramped coffin level DG realised the water was too high, and the
end would be sumped. Out into heavy rain, ran for the Bull, Monyash, stayed till late.

7th September Gautries Hill Pot

Dave Gill, George Cooper, PB Smith

To assess the potential of this cave by digging at the bottom of a steep scree slope. The
passage/rift is choked by large and small debris, definitely worth a try.

13th September Stoke Lane

Alan Mills

Carrying for Alan to sump two; kept warm by rummaging about in search of a bypass. Found Victoria, the climb up is a bit greasy. A frustrated AM returned from digging in eight. Apparently slow progress and hard work.

14th September Brownes Hole

Alan Mills

AM had an idea to search around this cave near Stoke Lane to investigate a potential lead he had been given; nothing doing after a couple of hours digging, the site spoken of is not a choked passage just a mud filled alcove.

27th September OFD

Alan Mills, Greg Pickford, John Parker, John? David?

Invited on this booked trip; disappointment increased as JP began to argue with Greg for some reason best known to them. A through trip from top entrance; it would have been more fun if the speed was not so fast and there was less bitching! Saw little of the place.

28th September Dan-yr-Ogof

Greg Pickford, Robert Stallard, Charles?

Led by Charles; a member of the S.W.C.C. An excellent guide explaining the relationships of various areas of the cave to surface features

4th October Swildons Hole

Solo

Birthday trip: Had heard so much of the area of the round trip and shatter series so wandered down the streamway, up Trat's Temple and followed the passage to the Mud Sump, spent two hours bailing without any effect. Decided to wander on to get warm and found another pool with a small air space slid through and carried on to find a big rift pitch; perhaps Shatter Pot? Thought it time to exit, made way out to join in the BEC after dinner piss-up; there are some real assholes among some good blokes.

5th October Hunters Hole

Pete Eckford, Ken James

Ladder was eight feet short. Climbed down, no lifeline, dug at a promising site, fun making a pyramid and using a waist length to reach the bottom rung.

18th October Draethan Lead Mine

Jim Smart, Nigel Burns, Stu Reid

The mine is said to be Roman in origin. The method of stacking the deads is so similar to that seen in some Derbyshire mines; what other way is there?

19th October Dolaucothi Mine

Jim Smart, Nigel Burns, Stu Reid

Another Roman lead mine though modern workings have removed a lot of the early evidence, one large adit shows original pick marks, the product of Roman slaves?

26th October Sandford Dig – Pearl Mine

Terry Edwards, Ted Meek, Roger Marsh, Stuart Reid, Nigel Burns, Jarratt, Chris and Richard Clarke + 1 other Axbridge

Dug for a couple of hours until the rope snapped; abandoned the dig and descended the Pearl Mine, superb place, accessed through a car, Austin A30/A35, jammed some way down, laddered through the passenger window and out the drivers door. Pearls amazing: beautiful.

1st November Kennisome Hill Mine, Brendon Hills

Nigel Burns, Stu Reid, Jim Smart,

Wandered around the site admiring the complete Cornish Engine House and associated adjacent remains. The engine shaft is still open to quite a depth. Looked around the valley to locate an adit; no luck as yet.

15th November Dallimores Swallet

Alan Mills

Suggested a look around this small cave to assess dig potential; AM thinks it's a poor choice.

16th November Rookery Farm Swallet

Alan Mills, Ken James

A choked pothole with no clear idea where to dig at its base, lots of scrabbling about.

31st Nov Sludge Pit

Andy? Stu Reid, Ted Meek, Stuart MacManus, Jim Smart, Jarratt, Nigel Burns

Jarratt amused himself putting us through every dam rat hole he could find. So offered some half hearted assistance with the dig here: great trip

6th December Ludwell Cavern

Ken James, Martin Webster

The plan was to investigate the sump, the resurgence is a low tube; the upper entrance leads some ten metres to the sump pool. Both went in via the cave entrance: sat by the pool waiting their return. Apparently there's a big passage that's been explored by Mike Jeanmaire and Colin Priddle. After thirty minutes KJ came out the tight resurgence tube and MW the cave, not having found any such passage. They believe an area of possible collapse may have blocked it.

7th December Cheddar Gorge

Martin Bishop

Climbed at several places near the top end of the gorge looking at elevated openings, all were minor cracks. Took turns to lead; MB has a terrific reach causing PC problems, hence the manic leaping for holds to follow the route. The winter sun very warm out of the shadows: called by some character who stopped his car on the verge, loudly pointing out that all climbing here was banned, who were we and what club were we? MB walked up close and personal pointing out that we were doing no harm, enjoying ourselves, and it would be a good idea if he left sharpish. Continued to climb for another three hours; no sign of hostilities; daps don't grip too well, need a pair like MB's PA's

13th December Eastwater

Ted Meek, Roger Marsh, Stu Reid

A pleasant round trip: in via the twin verts and out by Dolphin Pot. Good fun.

14th December Sandford Dig
Solo

Planned to meet at lunchtime in the Railway, Sandford, as no one appeared carried on up to the dig and began to move rock from the area where scaffolding is to be installed to support the pile beyond. By 15:00 still no one about so continued for another hour. Got down to the road to find my BSA Bantam D7 was gone, stolen; shouldered kit bag and walked down the road to the village finding the bike on its side by the bus shelter with two coppers questioning a spotty youth. On asking for the bike back, questioned as to why the tax was out of date. Coppers helped to twist the forks back into shape so it could be ridden home; expecting a summons or fine.

27th December Swildons Hole RESCUE
Martin Bishop

After climbing at split rock quarry, drove up to Priddy, arrived just as MRO were assembling on the green. Accompanied the second team down; casualty found at the base of the 20': PC used as runner to convey initial update back to surface control.

28th December Swildons Hole

Alan Mills, Martin Webster, Ken James, Brian Woodward, Martin Bishop
Carried for AM and KJ to Sump II, and then left with MB for Northwest Stream passage to look at a dig, spent two hours pulling mud from a choke to access about five metres of passage; MB very happy with the result; potential very good.