

1976

17th January Stoke Lane

Pete Eckford, Ken James

To check the state of the lines; sump II was OK; the exit its normal snug size. The entry to sump IV silted, yet again; where does it come from? Spent a lot of time digging out the pool, PE got in six feet, PC then took a turn, then KJ, who managed to enlarge the gap over the top of the silt so much that what was next disturbed was easily washed away downstream. PE had the most air left so went through to V.

21st January Rickford Rising

Solo

Discreetly told by Alan Mills it would be worth having a dig in this spring, but avoid the locals at all costs. Arrived after dark dumped off the kit and parked the motor near the old toll house; walked back. Using Martin Bishops Seba found quite a flow issuing; visibility crystal clear. Wriggled down a minor slope to around three feet deep, about eight feet in, to two right angle bends, left and right both tight. Noted lighter stream debris danced above the central area. Focused on this area; the downhill slope into the excavation causing its own issues. Awkward digging; head down arms dragging back the gravels. Checked bottle contents, did another three shifts, a good amount of debris cleared out, frustrating watching gravels fall in from the sides, likely a long job: scattered the pile to avoid detection from passers by.

28th January Rickford Rising

Solo

Parked in a gate toward Ubley; arrived well after dark. Using Sulo's 22cft managed to clear much more sediment, five shifts, removing quite an amount, the sides gradually being cleared of the loose stuff; scattering the spoil heard a motor slow and stop some fifty yards past, toward Rickford which reversed; heard talking. Hid by the drain whilst the area was illuminated with torchlight; heard the comment "Leonard said he saw a light". As the talking faded waited for half an hour then moved up slope, through the trees, then back up valley. Got to the motor, threw in the kit and put a coat on over the wetsuit, just about to drive away when a Police car pulled up asking had I seen anyone in the area and what exactly was I doing here. Negative to the first question and having issues with the motor; after long meaningful looks they drove off.

29th January Rickford Rising

Solo

Drove past the rising checking for observers; parked outside the Plume of Feathers having earlier hidden the dive kit up valley. Placed red cellophane over the headset: using Bishop's Seba and Reece-Evan's tadpole managed eleven sessions lowering the stream bed some six inches approaching the bend. The passage ahead appears to be getting larger; wishful thinking?

31st January Rickford Rising

Solo

Drove past the resurgence to check if safe to drop off the dive kit; saw two characters at the hedge, one had a torch the other a dog. Drove up the road toward Ubley and parked at the gate, walked back through the woods, hid in a bush watching the watchers get cold, stamp their feet and smoke fags, waited for two hours, 10pm they left; temperature bitter cold. Went back and carried the kit to the cave, drove over to the Plume, parked and

waited. Walked over around 12pm; using the pyrene bottle dropped the streambed closer the entrance to reduce slope angle a little more, the hollow created fills swiftly from that washed from in front; intend to leave it a couple of weeks until the next session.

7th February Exeter University Dinner

Many Pegasus and Mendip folk attending

Impressed by their predecessor's reputation for superb annual dinners the extant members of the E.U.S.S. arranged a revival of these momentous events; news spread. Mendip attendees and members of Pegasus and Eldon assembled in Bristol on the Friday night enjoying the local bars. Saturday morn, the convoy headed to Exeter picking up others from Mendip; into the Mitre to enjoy pints prior to the do at the Great Western Hotel: the meal was an expensive fish and chips, when chastened about the food cost and service the manager became upset and asked the hundred odd guests to leave; left the dining hall and migrated into the hotel bar.

11th February Rickford Rising

Solo

11pm dropped off kit at the gate and drove over to park at the Plume, waited an hour then walked over. Lost an O ring from the tadpole; fitted replacement. Managed four sessions; the slope angle reduced a little more, making digging at its base a little less awkward though not by much; continued scattering spoil into the stream to avoid an obvious spoil pile; heard a car slow down, then continue on. While changing realized three people were walking on the opposite side of the road toward Ubley; talking in low voices, showing no light. One left the group and joined a previously unnoticed fourth in the dark of the hedge some fifty yards away. Crept over to the drain, lay down and covered self with leaf mould; waited. Together they ran over shouting "come out". Sweeping the area with their torches none looked down at the drain below; watched all four head off in the direction of Rickford.

13th February Rickford Rising

Solo

9pm. Drove past the site noting two men in the headlights looking into the woods above the resurgence; imagined they were speaking to someone out of sight near the entrance, on approaching they looked up and began to walk slowly toward Rickford. Abandoned dive, believe that someone is waiting in the wood.

18th February Rickford Rising

Solo

11pm, raining hard. Using MB's Seba bottle, stripped down equipment to the bare minimum, so all would fit into a rucksack. Parked opposite Rock of Ages; walked over to the site. Managed to do four sessions exposing more of what may be the top of a passage, or gap? From where a good amount of the stream seems to issue. The idea is forming this may be a shaft? Exited without incident, packed rucksack, walked back to the motor.

20th March Silica Mines

Martin Bishop, John Reece Evans

MB used a back mounted 80 while JRE used 2 x chesterfields, PC 2 pyrene fire extinguishers. First time using two pyrene bottles, being heavy decided no need for any lead. PC dived first gliding down to around fifty feet, turned left and sank like a stone. Difficulty returning, (crawling), back to base; such bottles are useless mid water without some form of buoyancy aid.

21st March Little Neath River Cave

Martin Bishop John Reece Evans

In through Bridge Cave and in to New World Series, a short first time for JRE; an uneventful trip

15th April Parry's Mountain

Nigel Burns

Dropped Pauline at the Holyhead ferry, and then made for Parry's Mountain. Camped near the Cornish engine house, explored the remains until dark, a fantastic place.

16th April Parry's Mountain

Nigel Burns

Took a closer look at shafts on the far side of the opencast, previously noted though not visited, many of these small shafts around the perimeter are choked between two and six metres down. The quality of the ginging suggests these to be works dug down through the natural overburden, another reason may be as spoil was dumped their existing shaft collars were increased in height to avoid debris falling into them. A couple of very short adits were found and explored to blockages.

17th April Parry's Mountain

Nigel Burns

Another visit down the incline, using an electron ladder for the short, but desperate climb, the longer, (30ft?), wooden ladder was chanced once again down into the chamber, and still held together; reflecting on the work involved making these steps, which are submerged, suggest this is likely an access way, or maybe an emergency exit.

18th April Gwynffynedd Mine

Nigel Burns

More surface work, noting the winding house and other associated building remains.

26th April Rickford Rising

Solo

11pm; carried kit from Rock of Ages. Managed four sessions dragging debris out; brought a narrow garden rake, cut down to a foot wide, to reach into the narrow area. Used with success though its handle needs shortening further.

27th April Rickford Rising

Solo

Midnight, walked over with kit from the Combe. Entered to find the channel refilled with spoil; commenced clearing the debris. Used shortened rake length to great effect. Recent rainfall didn't seem heavy enough to cause such movement of the debris; does this mean the end of the choke is close by?

28th April Rickford Rising

Solo

1am: continued clearing debris, several large cobbles were exposed and removed. These lumps were dragged outside and covered with leaf mould. Found a boulder, 18 inches diameter; used a drag sheet to surround and pull it upslope; buried it in leaf mould.

12th May Sally's Rift, (aka Sally in the Woods)

Chris Batstone, John Widley

A curious cave in Bath Stone, large vertical joints, rifts, apparently called a "Gull Cave".

5th June Ilam Risings

Martin Bishop

MB had arranged permissions with the Ranger, and blagged four chesterfields from the Somerset Section. PC dived first to find the steep sided cone choked, surfaced and agreed with MB to begin digging it out now; dug until the bottle was at 10ats. MB dived with a single bottle, dug and exposed the top edge of the bedding.

6th June Ilam Risings

Martin Bishop

Returned early; MB the more driven; PC dived clearing the remaining debris to enter the bedding. Surfaced to report success; whilst MB kitted up, PC ran out fifty feet of line through the constricted bedding; left reel jammed among boulders. MB then ran out a further hundred foot of line until commonsense took over; returned to settle nerves. PC dived again on single kit, running out another sixty feet to a well choked, boulder strewn area. A brief search found no obvious route through the boulders; a good bit of digging would be needed to engineer a path; delightedly returned to surface. Discussed options, MB made a second dive; further right, moved several boulders creating a gap, wriggling through entered a space, not the larger area as thought, but an alcove. Reflecting on the site in the Stags, both agreed it an awful place, daunting but with potential.

4th July St Cuthberts Swallet

Roger Sabido John Dukes, Andy Sparrow, Ken James

A trip around various locations; Kanchenjunga, September series etc.....

10th July St Cuthberts Swallet

John Dukes, Graham Wilton-Jones, Spadge?

A curious trip, the man "Spadge" bitterly complaining that GWJ didn't know his way about; the constant whining became tiresome; departed with JD to the Bar.

18th July Swildons Hole

John Dukes, Phil Rust, Charlie Watkins, Helen? Sandra? and Claire Chambers

Dry route/s then to Barnes Loop; the boys deal with their women's many demands

26th July Grotte de Labouiche

Dave, (Grotty), Gill, Big Al and Sue Harrison, Pete, (RA), and Jane Webb, Jarratt, Mark Tringham, Liz and Fish

Nice tourist trip by boat, pretty and big: Lord, spare us Liz's middle class fairy stories.

27th July Gouffre Raymonde

Dave Benson, George Cooper

The French agreed to show us about even though they had restricted access to some of the Brit's earlier in the week, as they pursue connecting the place to the Felix Trombe.

29th July Grotte du Pene Blanque

Dave Benson, George Cooper, Dave Blake

Took over rigging following the mutiny, final pitch is a superb two hundred feet; GC cut his hand, PC used electrical tape to close off a deep wound.

7th August Swildons Hole
Pegasus and Mendipites

Much lunchtime drink was taken so plans became fluid most revellers encountered wandering among the dark, swirling pastures between the entrance and sump two.

28th August Lost Derek Tringham, Spain

28th August Gower

Dave Edwards, Jim Smart, Nigel Burns

Dug at several sinks down the Bishopston valley, no real success but lots of potential

29th August Meander Cave

Dave Edwards, Jim Smart, Nigel Burns

Found by Nigel Burns exactly where a cave should be in this dry river meander. Dived the upstream sump; hand held bottle and base fed line; it's tight, with little potential.

1st September Rickford Rising

Solo

11pm. No visit since April; had barely pulled up to drop off kit when the driver of a car coming from Ubley stopped demanding what I was doing? Replied "issues with the engine"; and could he help? Ten minutes later the Police arrived, expecting a visit had bonnet up and oily hands; dive kit hidden beneath the plumbing kit. Pleading for their help to sort the "issue" in order to get home for work the next day, they became bored saying it was my problem and left; informing the complainant they had better things to do. Now alone, left the side lights on, waited an hour then walked over and commenced digging. At 01:25 a Police car passed, heading toward Ubley. Managed another two sessions before hearing voices; hid up against the drain as torch beams were directed toward the entrance; after ten minutes they left: had chanced enough: home by 4am.

6th September Rickford Rising

Solo

12pm: Left the motor at the Plume. Backing out with a pile of spoil suddenly illuminated by torchlight from the Police; taken to Weston nick. Interviewed by a very pleasant duty Sergeant, who asked why PC was standing there dripping water on his clean floor and wearing a wetsuit. The arresting officer didn't quite know what the precise issue was other than he had been instructed by a local official, then present to arrest the defendant for interfering with a public water source, and trespass. When directed PC explained his consuming passion to search for new cave, which in this case meant lying in cold water in diving equipment dragging heavy rocks out from a small, narrow tube. At this point the Sergeant commented that surely the individual before him was actually improving the water flow by removing the debris blocking its outlet? Joyfully, the complainant began demanding the Sergeant confine the defendant in a cell for the night, "to teach him a lesson". Clearly the Sergeant took issue with such behaviour; after a moment's silence the Sergeant told PC to get out of his sight sharpish, and don't do it again. PC asked if he could get a lift back to Rickford. Smiling the sergeant replied don't push your luck: returned to Weston the next day to pick up the dive kit.

11th September Disappointment Pot

Eric Blake, Martin Bishop

The delight of having a place rigged. This meant a swift trip through to main chamber, and a pleasant meandering route to eventually exit Bar Pot: superb: no kit to carry; a nice day and superb night. Bought the BPC boys drink in the Marton Arms as thanks.

12th September Gaping Gill

Martin Bishop

MB suggested abseil in and prussik out; the entire episode took eighty minutes, well shagged out, SRT technique much better, freehanging the Gibbs worked well; great fun.

22nd September Wookey Hole

Martin Bishop

An evening dive from resurgence to the slot to experience a range of dive conditions: more importantly depth. Using a loaned Fenzy buoyancy aid found it cumbersome and awkward to use, inflation control not too precise; unimpressed.

29th September Wookey Hole

Martin Bishop

MB suggested twenty; this time repositioned the lead and tanks for more comfort. MB is patient like Alan Mills. Got to the slot and passed beneath, began to adjust buoyancy, inflated the Fenzy jacket, misjudged amount, lost control, bounced up the roof toward 20. Regained control in zero visibility; returned to 9:2; 9:2 - 9:1 and out. Sat home stripping down the inflator assembly, found the spring had lost some of its tension; cleaned the unit and stretched out the spring; need replace spring.

3rd October Wookey Hole

Martin Bishop, Alan Mills

MB "borrowed" 2 x chesterfields from the CDG, (O.C.L.); using these and the Fenzy had much more ability to manoeuvre and float mid water; a much better, stable arrangement. Inflator assembly worked OK, but requires care in use; new spring ordered from Peter's.

6th October Wookey Hole

Martin Bishop, Alan Mills

Using borrowed kit dived three minutes apart, all arrived in 20; a much simpler, straight forward dive with less kit issues occupying the diver; many thanks to both the boys. Dissimilar sized bottles consume so much energy and attention, when they shouldn't.

30th October Penyghent Pot

Alan Harrison, Eric Blake, Geoff Bingham Andrew Sutton, Martin Bishop

Following a session in the Crown, took advantage of a group from Manchester who had booked a trip with EB, but were no shows: nice one Eric. A steady trip in wet conditions; shown lifelining done through a Clog figure of 8, clever use of kit, good control.

6th November Keld Head

Martin Bishop

MB arranged permissions via Steve Thorpe. MB and PC both wanted to experience greater distances; agreed to turn their dive at precisely forty minutes. Diving three minutes apart all kit worked well, control of buoyancy vastly improved; kept to the main line which was in good condition; passed junctions. Both surfaced within minutes of

each other; never seeing each other during the entire trip; a superb dive; followed by a cracking night in the Craven Heifer.

8th November Rickford Rising

Solo

2am: dropped off kit behind the gate; parked at the Plume. Used Sulo's 22cft; continued removing small debris, and two large rocks. Scattered the smaller stuff and covered the rocks with leaf litter. Gave up at 4am having lost all feeling in limbs; have re-exposed the top of a bedding; focused on lowered the approach.

15th November Rickford Rising

Solo

1am: high flow; using a tadpole found the very top of the bedding still just visible, focused again on deepening the channel out to the surface before starting on the loose gravels in the bedding. Steady work cleared a couple of inches which were, as usual replenished from beyond, is it an undercut? Left at 4am.

23rd November Rickford Rising

Solo

1am: parked at the Rock of Ages. Used Bishop's Seba bottle; after several goes felt the rake scrapping along something solid, flat-ish; bed rock? Nothing visible only felt; if this is really so, the water issues from a bedding some eight inches high; bugger.

25th November

Rickford Rising

Solo

2am: parked at the Plume. Cleared the accumulated gravel, the potential bedrock is a large rock. Worked away clearing around it; the canvas bucket works so well. After rain lighter gravel particles are washed up through the gap below by the increased current.

1st December Rickford Rising

Solo

2am: Parked at the Rock of Ages. Found a good amount of gravel slumped in from the side joints, yet again, cleared same. Exposed the right side of the boulder; it feels big; check air, half left, continued downward, spent remainder of air clearing up the slope.

7th December Rickford Rising

Solo

2am: the boulder is a large one; continued to clear the right side to where its lower radius was felt to retreat under it; its bottom? Began clearing the left side; awkward as there is less room between it and the wall; another boulder? Longest dive here yet, breathed down to the last few ats, exited to torrential rain.

9th December Rickford Rising

Solo

2am: concerned about the effects of the recent heavy rain. Current issuing high; a struggle to get in and stay in; lighter gravels were felt on the face: worst visibility ever. Jammed in position, filled the canvas bucket and surfaced; repeated procedure. Much effort needed to remain submerged, used up the air too quickly, having only removing only a few buckets.

13th December Rickford Rising
Solo

2am: managed to clear the gravels down the left side of the boulder, continued to lower the front of the boulder, and reduce the slope gradient a little more. Not quite sure how to bring the boulder upslope to the surface. Once outside will need camouflage, not a problem will hide it in plain sight after applying yogurt, mud and leaf mould.

17th December Pollballiny
Solo

Arrived midday, met Jack Garrihy at the garage who was off to Fanore, but offered drop PC at Faunarooska cross. Much growth in the area, mistook the entrance. After an age in the stream, in dry grotts, PC tried to convince himself that it would be more pleasant at the fireside in O'Conner's. Reached the duck no air space was visible; by now quite cold, headed out; a good bit of damage to right knee. Severely scolded by Doll on discovering PC had gone caving before notifying her of his arrival.

18th December Coolagh River Cave
Solo

Medium stream, a swift trip to the sump passing swathes of foam over twenty feet up the walls, deep section an issue carrying the kit. Secured the line to a lead weight jammed in the boulders. Using Sulo's 22c/ft bottle moved over boulders and lost the one foot visibility; headed south-ish and found the solid "west wall", encountered a mud bank, forced against the western wall, continued on, stopped by boulders, moved left again into another area of soft silt; zero visibility, lost all light from the Oldham cell. Moving forward felt the floor rise, moved left again, felt small gap ahead near the roof, pressed hand into silt to elbow depth feeling a firm sub-surface. Moved left to another silt bank; moved further left to more silt banks; no visual of gauges or compass for sometime; cautiously returned to base. The place feels like a broad, low chamber with substantial mud banks. A repeat of the 1974 April dive; nothing new noted; need a new approach.

19th December Kilcorney Cave of the Wild Horses
Solo

Hitched to the Kilcorney crossroads asked the way at the first farm heading west in the valley, owned by Michael Davoren, who gave precise directions. Easily located the place; big cliff face, dark hole, opposite the ruins of a ruined church. With directions from Tony Boycott, (C.D.G, U.B.S.S), swiftly found the pitch, but couldn't belay the ladder anywhere near the pot, tether far too short. Spent the rest of the trip grovelling about the place; surprized to encounter another pitch at least as deep as the first; eventually found a crack about fifteen foot back from the main pot that might just take a very thin bladed piton; need obtain a selection of belay lengths.

20th December Pollapooka
Solo

Delighted to locate the cave after wandering about the mountain for a couple of hours; carrying the kit was becoming an effort. Thanks to James, a farmer who guided PC to the entrance, with dire warnings of venturing below. Useful belays are nonexistent; managed to jam a cobble in a gryke, securing a wire belay. Much of the exposed rock is fractured; glacial damage? From the pot came a roar; abseiled the lifeline: almost immediately a big waterfall enters from the north-ish direction, the noise deafening. At about 100 foot a boulder strewn floor covers the entire base; it's an impressive shaft. Arriving at the bottom realized the ladder hadn't quite reached the floor, tried to stop but slid past the

end, stopping just out of reach; decided to worry about that later. The cascade disappears into the floor the moment it lands offering no clue as to which direction the stream flows away; scrabbled around the bottom of this big shaft; nothing obvious suggesting a passage, just lots of well washed boulders, and one very dead calf. Estimated the ladder eight feet above the floor; made prussik loops from the waist length; reached the ladder exhausted; slow, steady climb up this cracking shaft; used the Gibbs as a self lifeline.

21st December Poulacapple
Solo

Returned to this sink near the 900ft summit; another look confirmed the difficulties of digging solo among such big boulders: checked the other sink, thirty feet to the north.

22nd December Black Head
Solo

In the bar local surfer, Noel Walsh, spoke of cave entrances near Black Head lighthouse; twelve miles north of Doolin. Arrived there midday as NW had estimated low water would be about this time. Some small holes found in the vicinity of the lighthouse near the road. Climbed down the limestone benches to sea level; eventually found a small sea eroded cleft, almost below the lighthouse, facing south-ish; prospected further south where the limestone terraces fade becoming an extensive storm beach.

27th December St. Catherine's – Fisherstreet Pot
Solo

Martin Droney and Noel Stringer fancied the trip when discussed last night with Noel Shannon. Rigged Fisherstreet, and waited, after an hour set off alone. Called to the farm for permission; delayed by breakfast. Water levels normal but recent evidence of flooding included one very dead sheep jammed in the bedding, managed to squeeze past the deceased; the whiff something awful; deposited the breakfast into the stream. Enjoyed a very wet trip; had a look for Echo passage without success, was not looking in the right area; the air space to the pot almost flooded.

28th December Poulmagrai
Solo

Rain had stopped; got a lift to Ballynalacken Castle and walked the rest of the way. Had borrowed a powerful torch from Noel Walsh; planning to search the roof. Nothing of note found before the batteries gave up. Found the stream had increased in the crawls, which made for an aquatic exit. Outside heavy rain had returned, decided not to change into dry clothes for the walk back to Doolin. Did get a lift from Gus Curtin on his tractor to the Church; walked the rest. Doll insisted PC took a long hot soak in a long hot bath; sat before the fire and fed hot whiskeys, to keep out the chills. Very few people around; enjoyed a superb evening of music and dance. Depart for Bristol tomorrow.