

1978

8th January Box Mines

Jim Smart, Nigel Burns

To the "Working Face" via "Cathedral" through "Back Door", the place is now watched by unfriendly locals. Parking nearby is becoming an issue, proclaiming cavers presence.

14th January Efyfyn Hole, Gower

Nigel Burns, Jim Smart

Near Broad Pool dug two sinks; the first abandoned after several hours as a no go. The second, Efyfyn Hole is a much different prospect; excavated the sink to four feet deep, and three feet diameter. It takes the entire stream without backing up. It is a narrow rift in solid rock, beyond a short section it appears to widen.

15th January Efyfyn Hole, Bishopston valley & Brandy Cove

Nigel Burns

Another dose of digging, the prospect of a swift breakthrough low; wandered about to locate more cave or mine features; dig sites noted, no other evidence of mining nearby.

11th February Peak Cavern

Vic Holland, Dave Benson

Planned as a long trip, taking in as much as possible, DB's memory appeared faulty, perhaps all that drink last night; after a pleasant three hours into the Sun, Buxton.

12th February Water Icicle Mine

Vic Holland, Bill McGuinness

For want of a trip this was the suggestion option; a constructive two hours digging before spending twice that in the Bull, Monyash.

18th March Pennine Way

A month before departure a friend earnestly sought to accompany PC, who foolishly agreed. Arriving at Edale on the last train; slept by side of path.

19th March Pennine Way

Woken at 5am by rain; cloud over much of Kinder and Bleaklow; going was slow across the groughs; soft underfoot. Rain eased a little, cloud still down. Arrived Marsden after losing route over Bleaklow in dense fog; managed to find hostel, knackered and wet.

20th March Pennine Way

Weather overcast, turning cold, threatening snow. Dressed in wet kit and set off toward Todmorden. Dull grey sky, caught on open moorland by blizzard, total white out, lost sight of pal some one hundred yards behind, went back to assist, visibility fell to zero; sheltered behind a small boulder while snow accumulated. After almost half an hour the wind died, cloud passed and the sun broke through. Found the pal some quarter of a mile away, limping badly; refused inspection of his foot until tonight. Got across the M62 footbridge and set up camp. Attended to his feet, which were suffering from new boot syndrome; heels and balls raw. There is no chance he'll make Kirk Yetholm let alone Hebden Bridge; bugger.

21st March Pennine Way

Took the friends pack to alleviate the weight on his feet; got him to the White House Café on the Halifax Road where he decided to abandon the trip; asking PC accompany him back to Bristol; reluctantly agreed. From the train departing Manchester Piccadilly the weather appeared to improve over the peaks; shit.

This trip had been planned for over two years; three weeks of holiday carefully accrued along with being granted the rarity of unpaid leave. PC is so angry allowing himself persuaded to be accompanied at all, and that he should have expected problems as so often has been the case in the past. For an “experienced” person to buy a new pair boots a fucking week before such an undertaking, (and say nothing of the fact), was, at the very least irresponsible; either way its put paid to the trip; for now.

26th March Brendon Hill Iron Mines;

Nigel Burns

Set up camp near Raleigh’s Cross searched for and enjoyed the Incline and associated remains; went to locate Gupworthy “New Mine” level, unsuccessfully, before dark fell.

27th March Brendon Hill Iron Mines

Nigel Burns

Found the entrance to Gupworthy Level; it has a curious stone built dam and wooden sluice paddle, in good condition. Climbed over into deep water followed this to a huge flooded chamber; a collapsed shaft from surface enters on the right, also a curious “toothed” wooden spoke wheel suspended in a steel bracket from the roof. The water filling the chamber is deep; NB suggests a bus inner tube to float across the lake.

28th March Brendon Hill Iron Mines

Nigel Burns

Continued to search the area, located several other collapsed adits; and railway route.

2nd April Gupworthy New Mine Level

Nigel Burns

Using goon suits bobbed along the level until water depth lessened. Entered the main chamber and inflated the bus wheel inner tube. Made several trips around the huge chamber walls to locate any side passages, none found. Holding a torch below water it was thought that a passage headed off on the left of the chamber looking in from the adit. Weighted line deployed suggests the water averaged twenty five feet deep. A shadow or maybe a passage is present about ten feet above water level.

3rd April Bearland Wood Mine, Brendon Hills

Nigel Burns

Located Bearland mine level; blocked.

29th April Cwm Elan, Cwm Mawr, Graig Goch mines

Nigel Burns

Fantastic setting high above the lake, a lot of stuff in place, the pump rods cut off at the top of the shaft, neatly with a big saw. Found the adit into Cwm Mawr followed it to a collapse. At Graig Goch remains cover a wide area and down to the river. At Cwm Elan similar circumstances, lots of remains; one blocked adit located doesn’t go far.

30th April Fairchance Mine, Esgair, Mwyn
Nigel Burns

A fine example of mining; rail lines in situ, emerging from beneath a cart track, which follows the lower slope around the mountain. Not a long adit but in excellent condition; an adjacent building appears the remains of the Smithy; tools intact. Esgair Mwyn; George Hall's mine, has recently closed, much stuff about the shaft; adit locked.

1st May Nantymwyn
Nigel Burns

The long walk up the valley is worth it, a superb area of early and later mining remains; deep adit needs more serious digging to allow it to drain.

6th May Tor Hole
Nigel Burns

An exploration of the area noting several short, choked shafts.

7th May Shipham
Jim Smart, Nigel Burns

JS had learnt of two mine shafts uncovered by a digger. 1 x 40 feet deep, 1 x 20 feet deep; each have short passages at the bottom: nice examples of circa 19thC mines.

12th May Wookey Hole
Alan Mills, Martin Bishop

Chamber 3 to 9:1. Coases loop extension to 9:2. Visibility poor AM decided it would be a good experience for PC to lay a separate line from 9:1 to 9:2, and survey back. In poor visibility much time was lost locating the bedding. Noting his contents gauge PC was relieved to bump into the existing line and follow it to 9:2. Then made a steady return to chamber 9:1. AM and MB surfaced without their line reel requesting PC take a bottle and go retrieved it. Found the reel at the slot, AM is a tough trainer, but a fine bloke.

20th May Eaker Hill
Nigel Burns

Much evidence of mine shafts recorded as open, but most not very deep.

10th June Eaker Hill
Nigel Burns

All Eights finally found and photographed; encountered rude gamekeeper demanding ID and club, told him we were both Wessex; he warned he would check and complain; gosh!

16th June Glaslyn
Nigel Burns

This superb camp site is along a desperately rough track, through a deep ford, to the gravel beach surrounding the lake. A truly wonderful place to sleep out, crystal clear skies, watched dozens of meteorites; bliss

17th June Moel Fadian – Carfartha - Dyfngwm
Nigel Burns

Circumnavigated Glas Llyn and descended the steep stream valley to locate the level; a short mine level: a difficult place to have worked. Being close to the lake perhaps the ore produced was transported up to the shore, then across the lake to where other mines ore was being processed i.e. Dylife. After a long climb down the steep stream gulley did not

locate the Moel Fadian mine. From camp walked over to Carfartha Mine, only the engine shaft and wheel pit remaining. Walked on to Castle Rock finding a flooded shaft and open adit at the beginning of the leat toward Dyfngwm Mine Followed the leat and came across two other levels one very short, the other drops almost immediately twenty feet into the top of a very deep shaft with adjacent balance bob pit and associated pumping rods. There are many remains about the here surface too; large metal kibble, crushers and other machinery. The open, main adit contains deep water: searched around the top area, many other mining features noted.

18th June Moel Fadian - Dylife,
Nigel Burns

Returned to locate Moel Fadian, found it a further sixty feet below yesterday's point of return; a seriously awkward approach, no obvious method or route of moving ore up to lake level. Though a short level it is in a cracking yet difficult location for a miner to win ore. Broke camp to meet Dave Bick and his tour of the Dylife mine area Too many were present to get anywhere near so explored the area and main adit; adjacent the road. Big pump rods were found as well as two other adits; this place is stunning and enormous.

24th June OFD, through trip
Eric Howell, Bob Stallard, Dave Blake

Arrived at the SWCC mid-morning, booked for the one night, only to be told by an overweight rude character "we're full", when asked to check the name and register told, I'm too busy; what a prick. Waited outside in the sun for the others; the Gauleiter's attitude immediately changed when EH arrived. Unfortunately our guide for the day was this same rude git. From the start of the trip our leader a "tough guy" whined about everything; too nice to go underground, his back was stiff, his knees were sore, his arse was large.... In the end EH went ahead and led the way, this excuse for a guide gradually lagged behind. Even though the pace was steady; after waiting for a half hour at Top Entrance for him to appear he emerged complaining bitterly our group hadn't waited for him, which went against established caving protocol. At the hut, after he had caught his breath and drinking tea, his description of the trip to those assembled was totally fabricated, unbelievable. How we were inexperienced and overestimated our abilities; listening in the kitchen PC entered the sitting room pouring a milk bottle of cold water into his crutch whilst delivering a firm opinion on his fairy stories; those SWCC present appeared delighted at this comeuppance: left and stopped the night in Ystradfellte.

2nd July Dartmouth
Visited the museum to see Thomas Newcomens fire engine; delightful engineering.

8th July Ystrad Einion Mine
Nigel Burns

Simon Hughes told of this mine, and its wonderful contents. Along a short level to an underground water wheel, it's gearing and associated machinery stand mute. Once fed by a launder from an upper passage; visible but for the moment inaccessible. Outside the dense foliage prevented locating the upper level; superb.

28th July Glaslyn Mine
Jim Smart, Sandy? Nigel Burns

Walked up Afon Dulas ravine to Glaslyn Mine; each impressed with location. Previously PC mused on a practicable method of transporting the Moel Fadian ore from the far side of the lake to the only known track in the area. Considering that small boats may have

been used had brought along the dive kit. Dived the area closest the campsite track and found two parallel lines of wooden stakes protruding vertically from the lake bed by some eighteen inches. Several pieces of iron were also found, and left in situ. This may have been a form of jetty on which the mineral ore was deposited from the boats for transportation via the track to the main road. Fifty yards from the beach the water depth is 10 - 12 feet. This begs the question what other features lay between the possible jetty and the main road to Dylife, and the bottom of the lake; a boat?

29th July Dylife – Pencerig Mine

Jim Smart, Sandy? Nigel Burns

Returned to look again in Dylife adit, after an impromptu lunch time session in the Star drove on to Pencerig mine. Enjoyed the remains and features; a nice cut level.

1st August Picos de Europa

Eric Blake, Martin Bishop

As secretary of the Cave Diving Group, MB was informed of a joint trip of French, Spanish Polish and Italian cavers. MB rang PC and told him they were going. With all the kit, including dive gear, loaded into MB's Landrover, (Betsy), it was just as well only three were going. Three long days later arrived, eventually located the others by asking around. The altitude is around 2000 metres; the landscape barren, moonscape like. The camp already held something like forty cavers so took the initiative and drove the back down to the village to collect fresh water to restock the camp for the next few days. The time taken travelling meant we could only count on at most a week of exploration so decided to explore every day without taking a break; we can rest at home. Others adopted three days in the mountains and one day off, in the village. The following six days were spent among a fine bunch of lads; our area was around +2200 metres, adjacent to an area covered by six French lads, so overnighted with them twice, before moving further west away from them. On several occasions caught sight of other teams camp fires; the only reference of distance in the dark. Our choice of ladder was initially frowned upon by the expedition leader/s, though as we managed to explore several holes/shafts a day no further comment was made: our small group were pulling their weight; MB made our deepest find of one hundred and fifty feet, but a blind pot; as indeed were many of the shafts dropped. The return journey to the UK went well, no problems with the aged Landrover, (a 1949, 80" wheelbase), stopped in Bayeux for drink, food and culture. A superb trip, a nice bunch; warmly invited to return next year.

26th August Gaping Gill – Bar Pot

Eric Blake,

Abseiled in via Gaping Gill, swiftly to Mud Hall, back to main chamber and on to Sand Chamber, southeast passage and out Bar Pot; long trip, great fun.

27th August Keld Head

Martin Bishop

Borrowed 4 x eighty foot bottles off Bristol Sea Divers befriended in Peter's, Bristol; for a decent exploration. PC led, MB five minutes behind. After an hour cold became an issue, turned and headed out; within fifty odd feet encountered MB who signalled OK and took the lead out. Buoyancy was good, weight well positioned, no back strain; superb trip.

28th August White Scar Cave

Martin Bishop, Rob Stallard, Eric Howell

Invited to visit the Battlefield; the public filled the place over the Bank Holiday; no matter, a superb trip; good man Rob.

16th September Gwaith Goch Mine

Nigel Burns

Yet another superb mine, surface remains include wheel pit and crushing house foundations; worth checking further along the river bank both up and downstream.

17th September Goginan Mine

Nigel Burns

Not much underground passage available other than the incline which descends to a flooded level. The adjacent Goginan Arm's is a fine bar; the owner also repairs watches; curiously, not bothered about keeping Time in the bar.

25th September Compton Martin Ochre Mine

Nigel Burns, Andy Porter

Another nice trip to this superb mine; fortunately not known to too many, as yet.

6th October Caegynon Mine

Nigel Burns, Shaun Edwards & Andy Porter

Simon Hughes had given NB & PC the door key so crashed at the blacksmith shop. The adit is out back; had another look admiring the hand winch and extent of the stope.

7th October Bwlch Glas

Nigel Burns, Shaun Edwards & Andy Porter

The youngsters had no issues climbing down either shaft; a little awed by the 100 footer climbing up the centre of the huge chamber. Spent a lot of time around the main adit and the underground cages; an unusual feature in Welsh metal mines; NB took many photos.

8th October Ystrad Einion

Nigel Burns, Shaun Edwards & Andy Porter

This is another site that will one day suffer from the features within. Explored most of the accessible passages: NB taking many photos of the wheel and gearing. A passage some twenty five feet up the main shaft has rails and the launder feeding the water wheel projecting from it; inaccessible.

11th October Spluga Della Preta

Robert Stallard, Mick O'Loughlin, Eric Thompson,

Another opportunity via Martin Bishop as C.D.G secretary; MB had received an invite to assemble a group, maximum of eight, to join an international group who had booked the cave for two months. The aims were to search for openings above the shafts, and also push the bottom. Though MB was unable to go he'd accepted the offer on our behalf. On arrival issues arose; politics present yet again. Some problem regarding qualifications, fortunately PC had his CDG membership card issued by Colin Priddle; this appeased the grumpy Bulgarian, (leader?). The Italians and Bulgarians had already rigged most of the place for SRT, which caused some concern as UK and Irish skills were quite basic: told the first pitch is well over 300ft. Not sure of what was required PC pressed for a chance to descend; another few days lost with politics meant time was becoming really short. It seems the original proposal, which was granted permission by the Italian authorities had

changed significantly, so much so the Bulgarian, who represented the local Italian government, had become upset. After a talk with the Bulgarian explaining our situation, and showing the invite, Leon finally translated we could descend, lots of smiles and drinking of lethal spirits; the four were to carry to the top of the third pitch two sacks each of scientific equipment along with personal kit. To then ascend to the top of the second pitch and prospect from there returning to the surface after a maximum of three days; with these conditions in mind, the plan became to be lightweight; left almost all kit behind in the tents except a change of dry clothing, water bottles and energy bars. Got to the top of the third pitch dropped off the equipment and quickly returned to the base of the second; a series of smaller pitches. Very tired by now, found a dry area and wrapped ourselves up in MO'L's large, plastic sheet for a doze; nice and cosy but dampened by condensation. Back at the top of the second pitch traversed across and began to probe a very shattered area, after a lot of effort and two doze breaks ascended back to surface; only a short ascending shaft of 200ft was recorded with nothing of note horizontally developed off it; climbed in turn by ET, MO'L and PC. Informed this was the only trip available as the scientists had arrived to set up their equipment; our group returned to the UK. An enjoyable experience, which by necessity improved SRT kit layout; it's a big, dark place of soaring avens and wide, big pitches; only reached -850ft, but all the same a superb trip.

28th October Wookey Hole

Martin Bishop, Martin Grass

Nursing a damaged leg muscle PC dropped MB's dive kit at the cave; their plan is to assess various sites in 20 for the impending radio location.

2nd December Swildons Hole

Al Steans, Alan Harrison, Richard and Jenny Gough, Stuart Lindsay, Dennis Crow, Trevor Roberts, Martin Butterworth, Bill McGuiness

On a trip to Sump II had the arse bored off us by one Stuart Lindsay, B.E.C; left him with the others to do the round trip in reverse. Great night of fun, song and drink

3rd December Eastwater Swallet

Dennis Crow, Al Steans, Martin Butterworth

A swift upper round trip before the Club, PCN, returned to Nottingham.

17th December Toomullin Mine

Solo

A significant fall had taken place blocking the main adit. Spent three hours digging the top left corner without any success; the shale overburden friable. Spoke to Jack Garrihy about other entrances, he mentioned three; No. 1, No. 2 and No 5. Adits one and two are close together and now closed, No. 5 is somewhere upstream. No.2 adit was apparently back filled some years ago, with the recent loss of No. 1; really need to find No. 5.

18th December Poulmagollum

Solo

The resurging river had reached the level of the lower rail of the field gate next to the road bridge; this was very high. The waterfall from Upper Poulmagollum was enormous and deafening. Unable to enter the main streamway by passing beneath the waterfall cascading from the upper cave: its weight too great. Into Gunman's through the Muddy Links, into high water conditions flowing down Branch Passage Gallery; abseiled down the pitch; left the rope, just in case. From main junction the stream was enormous, tried

to get downstream but the area was a huge pool; a very difficult trip back up the main streamway climbed up into Gunman's; a truly amazing spectacle.

19th December Fisherstreet collapses - Pollballiny

Solo

Noel O'Connor had arranged, mid morning, to show PC land near Doonmacelim castle, behind Fisherstreet, where several areas had recently subsided. The soil is sand with a thin, tough grass covering. Of the three collapses the largest depression is almost eight feet deep, conical with steep, (70°), unstable sides. The depth of sand to the northwest is said in places to be thirty feet, as in the past significant collapses had testified to such depth. One such collapse repeatedly opens near Killilagh Church as a deep narrow shaft. NO'C then kindly dropped PC off at Faunarooska cross: raining. Swiftly found Pollballiny entrance as the rain began, abandoned the trip an hour in as the stream had increased to a level suggesting there was no chance of getting through the duck.

20th December Hole near Coolagh Resurgence

Solo

Borrowed a crow bar from Paddy Sharry, (ex Toomullin miner), and set to work on the boulders, lowered the area about a yard, and squeezed in dropping down into a tiny chamber, knee deep water salt water: the place is tidal. No obvious way on. Had fun getting out, built a pile of rock to access the squeeze. This area has a lot of debris about.

21st December Toomullin Mine

Solo

Last night in O'Connor's Tommy Tierney spoke of his father who worked at the mine; he promised to show an alternate adit entrance; (No. 5?). Early afternoon, true to his word, TT showed PC a small, partly choked opening upstream of No.1 adit, adjacent a large concrete post. Quickly enlarged the entrance; inside was a wider gently sloping passage, and crystal clear water; well worth diving.

31st December Cuckoo Cleeves

Jim Smart, Nigel Burns

Encountered a lot of deep snow above Farringdon Gurney: unimpeded arrived for the last trip of the year. Swift trip to the terminal rift; into the Hunters for the evening, delighted to meet with Pete Eckford, and many others for that matter; cracking do.