

1996

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1st January Doolin River Cave

Martin Bishop

Departing tomorrow, decided on a swift trip; though sunny, water bitter. Pleasant trip, looked in at the Smithy. Poked about, discussed excavating a route through to Doolin Road Sink, aka Poulacronaun. Walking to O'Conner's, picked up by Noel Walsh; MB became the target of a female, keen on him; her cleavage worth laddering; of great depth.

26th January Nenthead

Cheg Chester, Dave Gough, Liam Gough, Nigel Burns, K Wills

Desperate trip after leaving the motorway, deep snow all the way to Overwater. Arrived just before 1am, (27th), no bar; DG and CC managed drive from Nottingham; six hours.

27th January Rampgill and Patterson's Level, Nenthead

Cheg Chester, Dave Gough, Liam Gough, Nigel Burns, K Wills

Ever the superb breakfast in the Crown bar by Hazel: heavy snow last night; discussed options. DG related the journey conditions from Nottingham. Decided on Smallclough; the lunch time session, suggested Rampgill and Patterson's. A nice wander, photos taken by DG, KW and NB. Though a short walk back to the bar; wet clothing swiftly froze solid. Normal excellent meal, drink and many games of pool: a very fine evening.

28th January Nenthead

Cheg Chester, Dave Gough, Liam Gough, Nigel Burns, K Wills

Snow had formed large drifts; spent time digging out the parked motors. Decided depart early; predicted deterioration since Friday, conditions very bad to south of Manchester.



Photo Dave Gough

The cottage next door the Crown; basecamp.

1st – 4th February National Dive Show Ennis, Co. Clare

Martyn Farr

Collected MF and ran for the Ferry. Arrived Doolin 11pm. Into O’Conner’s to finish off the night. Stopped in the cabin. Into Ennis for the Show; MF told he’s talking Sunday morning: bad news, MF oblivious of disco repercussions. Good talks by Bill Stone, Kevin Gurr, John Sinclair; afterwards each offered support for forthcoming expeditions. As expected a riotous night; one female casting her hat at MF, who repeatedly declined her offers: dancing finishing around 5am. MF’s talk, 10am. Advised MF take the piss of himself, a serious talk in his condition wouldn’t work. Mounting the podium, MF appeared dead, from the few hours’ sleep. Well received. A great weekend of fun and information on the finer points of modern rebreathers, equipment, deco and mixed gas; pluses and minuses. Technical data freely, kindly given. MF passed out about 2pm, poured him into the passenger seat; ran for the ferry; delivered him to Llangatlock.

17th February Plynlimon Mine

Cheg Chester, Dave Gough, Pete Forster, Nigel Burns

Visited by NB & PC in the 1970s, the place never fails to impress; little underground access at present but the superb surface remains more than make up for it.

20th February St. Catherine’s - Fisherstreet

Martin Bishop, K Wills, Wayne Dawes

Team agreed to assist refurbish the cabin. Booked Breda Meehan’s cottage, at the bridge. Swift journey; arrived early pm; straight into O’Connor’s, to sort out the thirst. Got Noel O’Connor to transport the team to St Catherine’s, after rigging Fisherstreet Pot. Fresh, dead cow by the fence; nipped back to tell Mihal. Low water, nice trip; WD delighted at the place. Left the pot rigged. In the bar told by Doll to sit; robustly informing the team “you’ll eat here for the duration, no buts”. Delightedly enjoyed roast beef and trimmings.

21st February Fisherstreet – St Catherine’s

Martin Bishop, K Wills, Wayne Dawes

Though weary from renovating the cabin, squeezed in a late evening trip. Pleasant trip upstream, passing Aran View inlet, caught the smell of shite; believe the source McDermott’s. At the squeeze, in the entrance crawl, waited on a group from Dublin to pass. They are down for the Micho Russell music weekend: nice bunch. Enjoyed another fine meal from Doll; her kindness stunning the others. The Dublin group appeared; the night ending in drink and dance.

22nd February Working on the cabin.

23rd February Pouldubh

Martin Bishop, Wayne Dawes

Started 06:00; got a lot done; the flag floor taken up; 4pm to O’Connor’s for a pint, KW to photograph Sean’s kids. Others to Pouldubh North, out South; again: WD delighted. Had a long chat with Jack Garrihy, about the mines; invited to visit the engine shaft, on private land, Monday night.

24th February Working on the cabin.

25th February Poulelva - Poulmagollum

Martin Bishop, K Wills, Wayne Dawes

All interior rendering and flagstone floors complete. Early evening finish, 6pm; abseiled Poulelva: WD had minor issues. At the bridge noted the water levels as reasonable. A very nice trip; exited up the climb to Gunman's Cave. In the bar, presented with free tickets for the Micho weekend paid venues; drink, dance and music everywhere. Peggy Faulknan, (Jarratt's Ex), Pauline Faulknan, Mary King, Mary Lang and many, many others down from Dublin; superb. Finished a late session in Breda Meehan's place.

26th February Working on the cabin - Toomullin Mine

Jack Garrihy

Left the cottage to meet JG, an hour before dark. Guided around the shaft area by JG, so much more detail on the entire operation. Badly need record this local data; it'll be lost.

27th February Kilcorney 1

K Wills, Wayne Dawes

MB appeared to have died sometime in the wee hours, after drinking a half bottle of the finest Connemara poteen PC bought for Jarratt, MB warned, repeatedly, lime cordial would not dilute its impact. Called to Michael Davoren for permission, invited in for tea and a catch up. Down to the lower sections. No sign of standing water. A muddy place: washed the slit off before returning along the gours. WD is gaining confidence climbing ladders. Located MB at a session in McDermott's; a fine time.

28th February Working on the cabin.

29th February Poulmagrai, Toomullin Mine

Martin Bishop, K Wills, Wayne Dawes

The heavy, wet trade work on the cabin, is taking its toll. Plumbing all but done, as are most of the electrics. Lunch in O'Conner's; 5pm. KW suggested caving. Headed to Poulmagrai. A slow trip but reached the sump. WD noting aches where he didn't realize he had muscles; great fun. Into the Irish Arms for heart starters, the Roadside for a taster. Met Jack Garrihy in McGann's, arranged a second trip around the mine; great to have these areas identified. Finished in O'Conner's.

9th March Hagg Gill Pot

John Compton, John Kelly, Geoff Pickering, Martin Bishop

Yet again, thanks to GP for arranging a cracking trip; not so much a pot, more a fine cave. Nice engineered entrance. Delighted at the extensive array of helictites, they go on and on and on. Lengthy trip as GP wanted to photograph; clever positioning meant no sounds of falling decorations; impressed there was no damage. Again, MB excelled at climbing, to reach the final grotto; the place just stunning. Cracking night in the Marton Arms. Later, quietly told by JK he's not well, seemingly awaiting test results, bugger.

22nd March Branch Passage, Poulmagollum

Martin Bishop, K Wills, Wayne Dawes

Returned to complete second fix of the cabin.

Evening; showed the team the splendours of this upstream section of the cave. Water levels a little high, WD had minor issues in the deep-water rift section. Met Jack G, will visit the mine one evening this week

23rd March Working on the cabin

24th March Poulmagollum

Martin Bishop, K Wills, Wayne Dawes

Normal start, 06:00, decided to stop for food at 5pm, then cave. Completed almost all of the wiring and plumbing. Took the team on a round trip; through Muddy Links, Branch Passage to the cascade, down the pitch to Main Junction out main passage. Returned to the cabin to press on with the final bit of rendering, wiring and plumbing. Well shagged; staggered into O'Conner's 9:30pm, Doll delivered yet another wonderful roast spread, during which she was approached by a Dublin guy, demanding of her, how did this group, who just walked in, get a meal this late? She replied, they'd only just finished work. Foolishly "Dublin" loudly berated Doll, who again calmly informed him, the kitchen closed at 9pm. Ignoring this "Dublin" shouted, "if they are eating, why can't he"? Doll again explained the meals were already prepared. Doll then subjected to some very unpleasant comments. At the bar, sat John Meredith, who took issue at this behaviour. Arose, gripped "Dublin" by the rear collar and dragged him outside; after two minutes, JM returned to his bar stool, without comment. No further sign of "Dublin".

25th March Working on the cabin

26th March Doolin River Cave

Martin Bishop, K Wills, Wayne Dawes

Early evening. Rigged Fisherstreet Pot. Walked to Aran View, dug a route through the domestic crap; MB unimpressed. Steady trip through to the main streamway. Cracking night in O'Conner's; ordered the flute from Uilleann Piper, Eugene Lamb.

27th March Working on the cabin

28th March Doolin River Cave

Wayne Dawes

WD is smitten; pressing for another trip in here. Left the others in O'Conner's. Laddered Fisherstreet; air space, three feet. Steady trip, WD enjoying himself immensely. Walking back to Fisherstreet, met with, and given a lift by John Browne. Did not manage to meet with Jack G for the mine trip, dam.

5th April Bonsal Level Fawr, Cwmystwyth

Cheg Chester, Dave Gough, Pete Forster, Nigel Burns

A cracking trip throughout this complex, the timbering of Kings lode, quite superb; the collapses warrant examination; must be much more to find, if published ore returns and age of the workings are anything to go by. To dig here, ideally needs living nearby.

6th April Taylors Level, Cwmystwyth

Cheg Chester, Dave Gough, Pete Forster, Nigel Burns

The entrance was dug to allow entry; in dry grotts, chest deep water bone crackingly cold; long trip exploring every Nook and Cranny.

7th April Copa Hill and many levels, Cwmystwyth

Cheg Chester, Dave Gough, Pete Forster, Nigel Burns

Walked up the Nant-yr-Onnen valley to further investigate early remains. This natural stream valley exposed several veins of mineral. The summit of Copa hill has had a huge, shallow reservoir built holding thousands of gallons of water. From this reservoir, places around the dam were breached allowing the pent up water to cascade down the hillside, scouring the surface soil away to expose ore veins. Aka, "Hushing".

19th – 27th April Cave Diving Expedition to Mallorca
Gareth Hardman, Owen (Foggy), Clarke, Martyn Farr
Bumped into Neil Scallon, Alex and kids at Bristol airport; heading off on holiday, spoke of meeting up, but they have a house rented in the far west of the Island.

Cova Del Pirata, Mallorca

Gareth Hardman

Dived first into a stunning clear sump, after fifteen minutes no way on located in this area of the big sump pool; boulder field debris lay scattered about. GH dived checking an area considered unlikely and found cave passage. After thirty-five metres a squeeze was encountered; to the left offered bypass this narrow slot, low air forced a return to base.

Cova des Coll, Mallorca

Gareth Hardman, Martyn Farr, Owen Clarke

To explore the site and conduct a photographic trip, vis poor, much back scatter.

Cova de sa Gleda, Mallorca,

Xisco, Martyn Farr

Xisco and MF dived to push this site previous pushed significantly by OC, PC dived to the base of the slope, vis reduced to zero by the earlier passage of others, returned to base.

Cova dets Ases, Mallorca

Gareth Hardman, Martyn Farr, Owen Clarke

In preparation for the dive tomorrow carried in the kit today. Xisco showed the team an undived well near Puerto Colom.

Cova dets Ases, Mallorca

Gareth Hardman, Martyn Farr, Owen Clarke

Though a thorough examination of the sumps was conducted nothing found; so, had a photographic trip.

Well near Puerto Colom

Xisco, Gareth Hardman, Martyn Farr, Owen Clarke

Shown by Xisco; GH dived this well, to a couple of confined rifts, its connection to Cova des Coll presently impassable.

Oratorio- Cueva de Saint Martin, Mallorca

Gareth Hardman, Martyn Farr, Owen Clarke

Enroute back to the rented house stopped by Oratorio-Cueva de Saint Marti. Two sumps were located; the first behind the plaque to St. George: appearing a metre wide and half a metre high, the silt suggested zero visibility from the outset. The second sump is at the end of the church area; a passage descends in clear visibility, it is partly obstructed by a stalagmite, its some 0.7m high and three metres wide, around -1.3m its dimensions seem to increase, a good quantity of silt covers the floor: unable to dive, too many visitors.

April (21st?)

Lost Neil Scallon, canyoning in Mallorca.

Illegible entries

3rd May Dublin aerphort
K Will

Flew in to meet inspector to check installation and connect cabin to grid. Presented with hire car cost, which had doubled in 48 hours; sorted dispute by cancelling deal. Crossed concourse to Hertz; hired same motor at half that tried on by Avis. Doolin by 8pm. Into O'Connor's for meal and drink.

4th May Carnaun
K Wills

Visit by electrical inspector to connect to main; unable to do so; the nice inspector explaining the wiring was the wrong, old, colours; red and black. They should be now be brown and blue! Fuck. Ran around, scrounged wire, worked all night, the place rewired by 04:00.

5th May S4
K Wills

Up late, rewiring double checked. Rang inspector, as agreed with him, confirming his return visit tomorrow. Headed to S4, set to dig nearer the south end, again; so much debris is washed in from the winter storms. The place might need a strong manhole.

6th May S4
K Wills

Resumed digging after breakfast in the Dolman café. Slow work. Back to Carnaun to await inspector for around 3pm. Arrived, swift look, signed form; hooray. Inspector casually mentioned, he didn't notice the signs of a temporary connection and missing seal, suggesting illegal use of electricity. Smiling, he waved and departed.

June (8th?) Poulmagrai
Paul McGrath, Conor McGrath

Tony Boycott advised their dig had gone, passing a couple of sumps. In McGann's, the McGrath's offered carry the dive kit; cracking. At the old terminal dig, removed wet suit top to pass the squeeze; emerging the others were shocked by multiple deep lacerations to PC's back from exposed crinoids. Bleeding profusely abandoned trip; to their relief.

10th June Lost John Kelly

10th June S4
Solo

Revisited the site; some storm debris has returned, much of the area dug refilled. Began to excavate the area south of centre; three hours; very little to show for it.

12th June Poulmagillum
Pauline Cronin

A trip to satisfy PMC's desire for a caving trip; low water. Reached main junction, headed to Branch Passage cascade, which was fortunately flowing. Steady trip out; PMC's dance career stands her in good stead; fitness level superb.

14th June Mine? Cappanawalla Mountain
Noel Walsh, Patsy Linnane

Creating a track up the north side of Cappanawalla, PL exposed a small tunnel. Asked NW who would look at it. Arrived 7pm and managed to get the Ford Escort up most of

the rough limestone track. A four-foot square passage slopes gently down. Over the passage's eight metre length the water deepens to a little over a metre. Excavated on a Calcite vein, it appears purposely cut in this manner; at 600ft, elevation, very little water for stock exists, so potentially...it's a cistern. PL explained since opening it he's witnessed, after rain, a substantial inlet flowing into this passage. Which also enters above the passage. Invited for pints in O'Loughlin's; with six in the bar the entire night, a cracking session. PL gave permission for PC to wander Cappanawalla, any time.

16th June S4

Solo

Managed to move a large boulder, by digging around its north side, tipping it into the cavity. Tough going, but no other way to get below it.

20th June S4

Solo

Continued pulling out large cobbles. Lowered the "shaft" half a metre.

26th June

Veronica Geurin murdered

July undated Nottingham

K Wills, Cheg Chester, Dave Gough

Cycled between numerous bars along the city's extensive canal network; delighted with the vast array of numerous forms of industrial archaeology and dozens of fine bars.

Illegible entries

10th August Slaughter Stream Cave

Al Steans, Kay Wills, Andy Walchester, Dave Gough, Barry & Ceily Sudell, Tony Bennett
A cracking trip; split into two groups. Exiting, passed the others going in, drew their attention to the fact the cave might be flooding. Outside heavy rain. Team One went to the bar; AS realized he'd left his clothes in the locked car of Team Two, so dressed in KW's clothes. Several pints later, enter KW, in caving gear, complaining "You're wearing my bloody clothes!" "Yes", says AS; "have a beer, before this place shuts". Coleford was seriously flooded by the sudden cloudburst. Riotous night in Bristol; hilarious.

11th August Browns Folly Mine

Dave Gough, Pete Forster, Nigel Burns, Cheg Chester, Chris Batstone, Geordie Dave, Alan Steams, Andy Walchester

A cracking trip around this superb, Bath Stone Mine; CB the consummate guide.

Illegible entries

14th September Long Rake Derbyshire

Al Steans, Nigel Burns, Cheg Chester, Dave Gough, Pete Forster, Lee Hollis, Dave Briggs
Pleasant tip, with lots of surviving mine features.

27th September Dartmoor NAMHO

Nigel Burns, Cheg Chester

Arrived early evening at Princetown: by way of the gunpowder factory. Superb powder quality testing area showing triple fractures in large boulders drilled with a central shot hole. Set up camp in the area behind the bar. Over a hundred in attendance, crowding

into the bar: 10:20 NB gets in a round. Handing over the money the landlord demands all leave, as its time. NB says there's ten minutes left of drinking up: told fuck off, he's closing. A wonderful sight as the entire clientele rose from their seats as one and left. The following day enjoyed the mining delights of the wider area. Returning to the camp site, located out back of the bar, approached by the landlord asking who wanted to order food for tonight? Landlord seriously bemused, when told his bar was "On Stop", throughout the mining fraternity. NAMHO's beer and food were now being very warmly and politely accommodated down the road in the Prince of Wales.

7th October Faunarooska
Dave Gough, K Wills
Steady trip to the wet pitch, and out.

9th October Mill Sink & Mill Risings
Dave Gough, K Wills
In drizzle, prospected the area above Aillwee mountain; had a poke in Mill Sink, one of the larger such sites in the Burren. Concerned over the landowner's attitude to cavers.

14th October (04:05) Lost The Mother.

26th October Smallclough, Nenthead
Barry & Ceily Sudell, Dave Gough, Pete Forster, Nigel Burns, Cheg Chester, Big John Cooper, Darren Hines and many Nott's Climbers.
Nott's climber weekend, escorted most on multiple trips around Smallclough, including the extensive workings above the rise from Cappleclough.

16th November Placketts Mine, Derbyshire
Barry & Ceily Sudell, Dave Gough, Pete Forster, Nigel Burns, Cheg Chester, Simon?
Darren Hines
Five made the descent, two as surface support; NB taking many photos.

December undated (7th?) Wookey Hole
Andy Walchester, Aaron Smith, Martin Bishop
Training for AS and AW; Chamber 3 to 9:1, both accomplished, each demonstrating a nice balance of caution, drive and enthusiasm.

22nd December Oughtdarra
Solo
Prospected the "Orchard", in Oughtdarra, a natural, south facing amphitheatre, the micro climate ripening fruit and vegetables at least one month earlier than elsewhere in the county. The garden boasts a rich, black soil; even today the garden is cultivated by locals. Perhaps one reason for the establishment of the early ecclesiastical settlement, (12th C?), is the adjacent St. Macdarra's Well. There are a number of collapses in the adjacent fields. Of note are two small, active resurgences and a large fossil resurgence on the eastern side of the area at the base of the limestone cliff. Bumped into PJ Cullinan, who married into the Kelleher's, an old local family.

27th December Kilfenora
Solo
Noted a conical collapse in a field, fifteen metres from the elevated road: east of the village, by some ten minutes: large flat field to the south, at east end of the long straight

section of road toward Kilinaboy. The area presently damp, though not wet. Location suggests the sink may feed Fergus River Cave.

28th December Poulmagralee, River Fergus Sink

Solo

Took boreen east from junction, two kilometres east of Leamaneh Castle. A point where the stream sinks, maybe to appear at Poulaboe, a kilometre or so due east? Knocked at several farms; no one about to ask permission to explore. Will revisit.

29th December Waterfall Sink

Solo

Some two kilometres south from Leamaneh Castle; a large stream sinks in a small, dense copse. The sound of tumbling water enticing. Restricted vision, in dense undergrowth, and optimism, suggest it could be an important sink, though the surrounding landscape quite flat-ish. Requested permission from a farmer; noted him uncertain as to quite what digging meant: couldn't assess if he was the actual landowner; didn't press him: it won't run away. May also drain to Poulaboe.

30th December Poulaloon

Solo

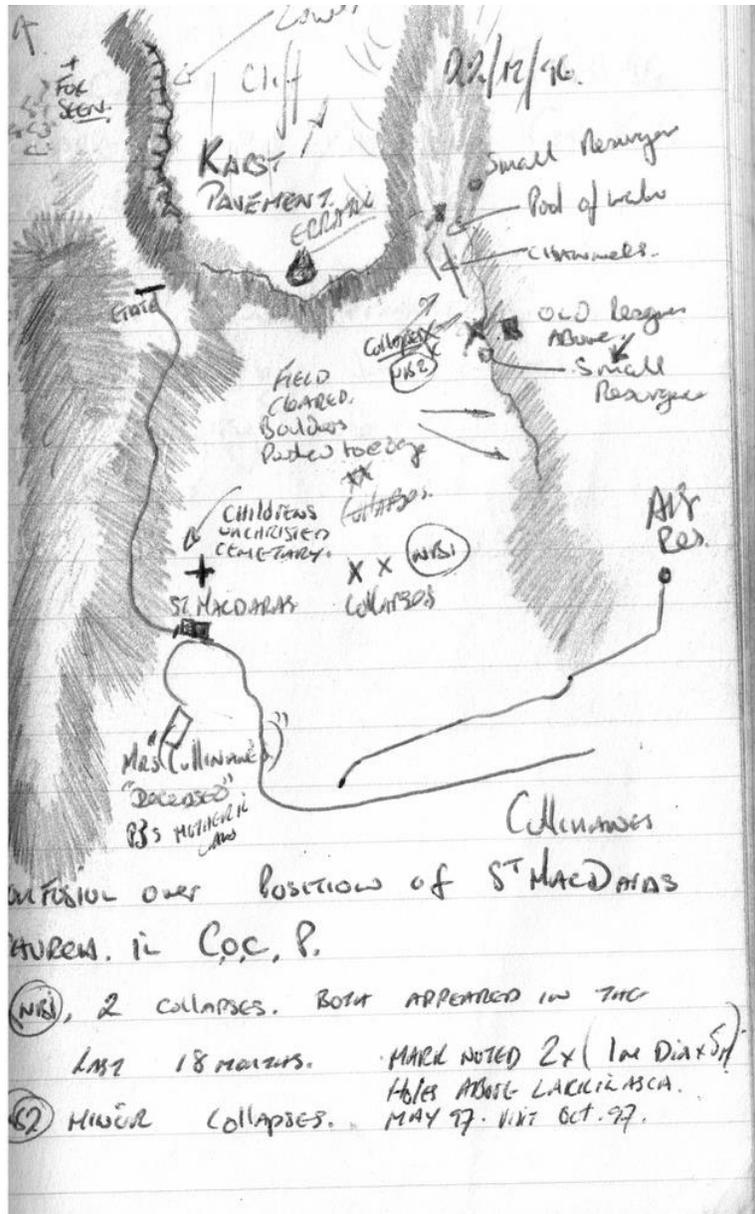
Four hundred metres south of Poulmagralee: a kilometre southwest of Poulaboe: eight hundred metres south-south-east of the waterfall sink. A small stream sinks among a lot of domestic refuse, in an elongated depression, worth a dig if caution exercised among the bio-hazards. None found at farm to ask permission.

31st December Cullaun I and Cullaun II

Solo

The last of the year; usual minor delay finding the entrance clearing, among the forest. A pleasant meander in wet conditions; reached the first climb, near its bottom slipped and turned an ankle. Abandoned trip; before swelling erupted, put both socks onto left foot, squeezing it back into the welly for support. Slow trip out. Driving past Cullaun II car park, waved down by a bloke asking for help. His mates had gone down Cullaun II some three hours previous and were supposed to be out by now. Gave him the mobile phone, told him drive down the road to get coverage; to call Conor McGrath and Ray Murphy, informing them, PC entered at 16:37 to begin search. To also put I.C.R.O. on standby; if no further information the team to activate at 17:40. To then return back here and await the arrival of others.

Entered cave, found them in the beginning of the rift just above the cascades, cold and tired; both well enough though, making their way out. Delayed by missing the way on. Took their tackle sac; hastened out to Colm, to inform RM and CMcG, to stand down I.C.R.O. Went back in to assist further; surfaced after half an hour; the ankle now giving hell. Outside a nervous Bán Garda waited; delighted at the outcome. Cavers and partners are staying at Fernhill: arranged to meet in O'Connor's. Borrowed a bandage to strap up the ankle. Cracking night, music, song but no dance.



Oughtdarra, County Clare