

2001

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1<sup>st</sup> January Toomullin Phosphate Mine

Solo

Bright day. First trip of the year. Petie Tierney mentioned subsidence near the main adit entrance. Checked entrance area, no hollow visible, nor in the field above. The ground around No. 5 level has slid filling the opening dug open by self some time ago. Bumped into John Griffin, who offered permission to wander the area. He related that the ruins of a castle are northeast of the maintenance shed.

2<sup>nd</sup> January Coole, Main River Rising, Gort

Solo

Water level normal; took two tens. Found the line ten metres in. Visibility four metres. Wanted locate downstream Polldeelin connection; a low bedding, the entrance obscure, on the left, among the steep boulder slope at -13m. Delighted to locate it, first attempt; found original line just inside, on the right, followed it for ten metres to when it disappeared beneath domestic refuse. Exited, in poor visibility, clearer water at junction persuaded descent to -30m, to complete the day. Some deco, uneventful wait; called to Nick Geh: not in. Ennistymon school, to fill the bottles. Fine night in McGann's.

3<sup>rd</sup> January Pollduagh, Gort

Solo

Tourist trip and sort out the Diverite jacket layout, where best to fit/reach the tool kit; three tens; slow trip to -32m, low flow conditions; visibility barely a half metre; frozen.

4<sup>th</sup> January Toomullin Phosphate Mine, Doolin

Solo

Cracking sunny, cold day. Pleasant wander around the many surface remains. Recorded mining features by GPSR for paper on the mineral mines of Doolin. Crane machinery located at R08235 x 97113. Similar in design - form to Box Stone Mine cranes. No.1 adit R08200 x 97121. No.3 adit R08378 x 96995 could not get a GPSR signal for No.5 adit.

5<sup>th</sup> January Carnane, Doolin

Solo

Plotted the Gort GPSR recorded sites onto graph paper. It seems Poulnadirk and others are far closer to the conjectured line of main drainage than imagined. Bringing into focus many other sites previously thought of as having less potential, some almost irrelevant.

6<sup>th</sup> January

Lost Theresa McDermott

10<sup>th</sup> January

Theresa McDermott's Funeral, Shangana, Dublin.

Informed, by phone, of unexpected funeral, experienced issues with several clients, not appreciating the sudden death of the Mother-in-Law. In response to their "outrage" to having their normal, annual service deferred a week; cancelled their service contracts, arranged refunds, suggested get someone else.

2<sup>nd</sup> February Swinsto – Valley Entrance

Geoff Pickering, Martin Bishop

Wickedly cold day. Scatter of snow; Drew straws, as to who installed the ladder; lost. Soaked; had a chill trip up to the entrance; frozen. Some cloud. Delighted to be finally

out the wind. Swift, but very wet trip. Exiting assisted three chilled youngsters up the ladder. Bitter cold outside. To the Marton Arms to meet up with Barry Sudell and Rupert Skorupka. Back to BS's place; Spenbrook; cracking night in the Lamb.

3<sup>rd</sup> February Rowten Pot

Geoff Pickering, Martin Bishop, Ian Parsons.

Swift trip into Ingleton. Met IP at the café. GP wanted to photograph the entrance shaft; in spare dry kit hung around lighting the place: two hours in a harness makes for a sore arse. Departed around three, road beginning to disappear beneath a thin film of snow.

10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> February L'Estartit, Spain

Phil Dotchon, Martyn Farr

A long weekend, (five days), trip to this resort as part of MF's forthcoming book; all sites require a boat; MF is no sailor. Over three days of diving with Xaloc Diving, several sea caves photographed; the poor visibility presenting issues: sea conditions unkind to the queasy MF. Deepest -25m, traversing through an arch/passage. Uninspiring conditions.

February undated (17<sup>th</sup>?) Ogof Draenen

Andy Walchester, Alan Steans, Dave Gough, Lee Hollis, Dave Briggs, Tony Bennett

Weather awful, cold and wet. Easy enough trip, the reputation of the entrance passage over played. Issue over key swiftly resolved; delighted wandering around this superb find. Had to stop trip due to some needing return to Nottingham.

Since found the small opening at floor level, where the trip was turned, led into virgin territory; to the then undiscovered Gilwern Passage; bugger, bugger, bugger, bugger.

## **19<sup>th</sup> February FOOT AND MOUTH OUTBREAK.**

20<sup>th</sup> February Wookey Hole, BBC, Blue Peter.

Martyn Farr, Rob Franklin, Simon Thomas

Filming of BBC Blue Peter presenter Simon Thomas training as a cave diver. This, part one of his two part cave dive training; conducted in sump 2. Employed as the diver, responsible for all dive equipment, safety co-ordination and safety diver; RF The camera man. A long day; fourteen hours, rewarded with cheque and a Blue Peter Badge!

During the previous evening briefing meeting, attended by all parties, it was unfortunate the CDG representative could not/would not, acknowledge the BBC's dive Team's extensive experience, working in overhead environments far more complicated than sump II of Wookey Hole. Each professional diver clearly eager to accommodate all the CDG rep's concerns; patiently answering somewhat foolish comments, such as "potential entanglement with the heavy power cables ". Somewhat embarrassing as said cables are heavy, lay on the bottom, and mostly covered with silt. None of the BBC Team entered the water during filming and preparations, only inspecting the proposed short section of dive area; thoroughly discussing the dive plan with all concerned.

MF, RF, PC and ST actually diving at the time. RF filming, swimming backwards, MF on SB's right side, PC in physical contact gripping SB's shoulders with both hands, tight up against his back; for agreed close safety support. Risks reduced to very low level for HSE Inspector, Peter Sinovich. Initially PS's demeanour severe. Upon presentation of the dive team's comprehensive equipment service history and use records for each item of dive gear, on forms designed by PC, PS was impressed and satisfied. Who commented the cave divers present were not the liability he had feared. Relaxing, he was taken aback, when PC asked was he the Peter Sinovich who had dived with Palmer in the Bahamas? He was. After the first run through to acclimatize ST, and all; spoke with PS at length. PS

announcing, he was more than satisfied with the professionalism shown by RM, MF and PC and would propose the equipment service documentation, created by PC, to the HSE, as basic form requirements for further overhead cave diving involving the professional world. Both BBC and Wookey Cave management considered it a very successful outcome conducted in difficult circumstances. Regrettably, all except the CDG representative were delighted with the result.

**23<sup>rd</sup> February FOOT AND MOUTH MOVEMENT BAN, UK**

26<sup>th</sup> February – 3<sup>rd</sup> March Sharm El Sheik, Sinai, Egypt.

Pauline M Cronin, Trevor Wiltshire + nine others

Dives: Temple, Fiddle Garden, White Knights, Middle Garden, Woodhouse Reef (twice), Jackson Reef (twice). PMC's dive club's visit to this area. An excellent package deal, five days diving; seven days in the five-star Hilton hotel. Place for beer and food is the "Pirates Bar", fair priced drink - decent food. PMC has become an accomplished diver; no sign of panic when faced with such issues as strong currents along the reefs. Stunned at PMC's ability to speak Arabic, picked up so swiftly; she is quite an amazing individual.

**28<sup>th</sup> February FOOT AND MOUTH OUTBREAK, Ireland.**

First case found in Northern Ireland; cases now in Monaghan

29<sup>th</sup> March Red Cross HQ, Bedminster Bristol

Solo

Advance first aid course.

1<sup>st</sup> April Current Sate Diving, Kellaway Ave, Bristol

Solo

Oxygen administration Instructor Course conducted by Richard Bull.

7<sup>th</sup> May Current Sate Diving, Kellaway Ave, Bristol

Philip Dotchon, Martyn Farr

Course conducted by Richard Bull; Tri-Mix course: achieved passes.

**11<sup>th</sup> May End of Foot and Mouth, Ireland.**

15<sup>th</sup> May Glencurran Cave

Martin Bishop

MB nursing a twisted knee, after stumbling on the ferry deck. Took a while to relocate the entrance. Pleasant enough wander, the second crawl providing too snug for the chest. Called to the Irish Arms, Ritz hotel bar; finished up at McGann's.

17<sup>th</sup> May Aillwee Cave

Martin Bishop

A days rest seems to have eased MB's knee issue. Bumped into Nicky Johnson offering a trip. NJ has plans to further enlarge the place, asking opinion. Difficult to see what else can be achieved without massive expense; how long would the payback period be? Issues with the waterfall pump demanded NJ's attention; left to own devices. It would allow for a tightly orchestrated facility to pass each other without congestion. Meaning more people in and out per hour.

18<sup>th</sup> May Coolagh River Cave

Martin Bishop

In Polldonough, found something very dead, jammed in the bedding, on the left. A common enough location. Steady trip to the sump, noting handline left on the climb, enabling optional exit via Polldonough South entrance. Passed the canal on tip toe; aged foam some two metres up on a small ledge.

19<sup>th</sup> May Poulballiny

Martin Bishop

Little rain of late. Slow trip. MB still favouring the knee; using PC's coal miner knee pads. Surprized at the size of stream, disappointed at the duck, no usable airspace. Spoke to Frank Hillary, Kilmoon, about recent rainfall, been heavy and regular until a fortnight ago. Since when its eased off. So why the high level?

18<sup>th</sup>–24<sup>th</sup> June Sharm El Sheik, Sinai, Egypt.

Trevor Wiltshire, Pauline Cronin plus her Dive club mates.

PMC announced she'd booked another trip to Egypt; cracking. Not only that had arrange clients appointments accordingly. Hooray! Of the ten sea dives, two had associated caves; Tower and White Knights. Adjacent to Tower, at -16m a rift enters the reef. It can be followed forty metres, where it becomes just too narrow for back mounted kit. White Knights; descending the canyon a number of beddings are located on the right. The largest is close to -12m. A one metre high bedding can be entered for fifteen metres to a junction, from here a route can be seen back to the canyon; this cannot be entered with back mounted kit. Worth returning; storms may affect the sand and open the beddings.

Dives: Middle Garden; Fiddle Garden; White Knights; Jackson's Reef; Woodhouse Reef; Far Gardens; Jackson's Reef; Middle Garden; Tower.

14<sup>th</sup> July

Lost Jack Sheppard

22<sup>nd</sup> July Stock House Shaft

Jim Smart, Nigel Burns, Jarratt

Invited by Jarratt to admire his current dig; TJ wanted to expose what was on the other end of a potential, part exposed kibble handle. While NB took photos and JS offered all encouragement, PC dug a curious, backfilled area. Almost immediately opening up a ten metre long rift to an aven, with some nicely stacked deads. Jarratt thoroughly pissed off.

2<sup>nd</sup> August Bonito, Pantanal, Brazil

Martyn Farr, Phil Dotchon

Departed UK for Sao Paulo; flight to Campo Grande, overnight in Campo Grande; picked up car, headed for Bonito still several hours away. Unable to locate the "Hotel", PC got PD to stop outside a military compound, walked in asking for the Officer in Charge. Used mime and sign language, causing smiles and laughter among all present. The Officer seemed to understand, commanding the troop of twenty well armed men to mount the lorry; he and his men then guided the team along dirt tracks to the hotel. The hotel owner was outside, concerned, until PC warmly shook the Officer's hand; thanking him and his men profusely, waving and shouting thanks, to them as they disappeared into the dust; a very nice, well-armed bunch of boys.

Days later, parked up outside the dive shop, near the square, disappeared diving for several hours with Ismael, shop owner. Returned to find the hire car had a parking ticket; found later that the police officer didn't want to offend the visitors so called out his colleagues and the army to search for the visitors. As the team were not found, being

underground, he was forced, reluctantly, to write out the parking fine. The poor man returned later, apologising profusely. Really nice people; considering the ongoing drug running and gun fights.

5<sup>th</sup> August Mimoso Cave, Bonito, Brazil

Martyn Farr, Phil Dotchon, Ishmael? Gilberto Menezes de Oliveira

Dived to assess borrowed equipment and explore the site; the place is big; needing strict coordination to photograph the place.

8<sup>th</sup> August Ceita Core, Bonito, Brazil

Martyn Farr, Phil Dotchon, Gilberto Menezes de Oliveira

Huge, deep shaft, entered via small tube; vast. On air, none ventured too deep. Its fifteen hundred kilometres to the closest recompression chamber. Experienced right ear issue at -30m, signaled the others, was returning to surface. Have a bad feeling about the ear.

10<sup>th</sup> August Mysterious Lagoon, Bonito, Brazil

Martyn Farr, Phil Dotchon, Gilberto Menezes de Oliveira

A huge deep pool in the bottom of a natural limestone shaft; a Tyrolean transfers the equipment down to dive base, some forty metres lower and some two hundred away. Managed -35m before ear issue returned, others continued to below -40m.

13<sup>th</sup> August Formoso Cave Bonito, Brazil

Martyn Farr, Phil Dotchon, Gilberto Menezes de Oliveira

GMdO is pushing this cave; beyond an elbow, -90m, a kilometre in, the route ascends through a huge boulder ruckle into passage, requiring decompression to ascend the far side to reach new passage. Returning to the elbow GMdO found his scooter flooded. Endured a long swim out using cylinders previously staged; redundancy!! Dived to assist recovery of the cylinders. Had barely gone a hundred metres before the ear issue returned, this time at the relatively shallow depth of -15m; concerning.

14<sup>th</sup> August Farm, Dive Base

Martyn Farr, Phil Dotchon, Gilberto Menezes de Oliveira

While the others slept off the middy meal, enjoyed an unexpected master class with GMdO in gas planning, choice, calculation, usage and mixing. During three wonderful hours absorbed an incredible volume of knowledge: quite superb. A very nice guy.

16<sup>th</sup> August Mimoso Cave, Bonito, Brazil

Martyn Farr, Phil Dotchon, Gilberto Menezes de Oliveira, Ismael?

A large entrance, with a large pool; an awkward carry, to a awkward dive base. GMdO informed toxic gas present in the chamber beyond. Visiting the dark, gloomy place, none removed valves. Returned to around half way, descending near a rib of rock on the right wall, going out. In a large chamber, arrayed in excellent visibility, are dozens of huge Stal cones. Spent time photographing the area; deepest -41m. Curious no ear issue returning to surface; frustrating.

17<sup>th</sup> August Bonito

Martyn Farr, Phil Dotchon, Gilberto Menezes de Oliveira

Another opportunity offered by GMdO, who appeared delighted at the student's attention. Calculated and filled six bottles for his use; checking their contents announced he was happy to have PC as support. Adding, understanding why MF was. Embarrassed.

18<sup>th</sup> August Mimoso Cave, Bonito, Brazil

Martyn Farr, Phil Dotchon, Gilberto Menezes de Oliveira

Returned for more photography, in particular better lighting positions. Spent the entire time around -35m; quite the deco penalty. This cave is on a rough track to Paraguay; a notorious drug route. Stopped by plain clothes Fed's; GMdO, had already advised of such an incident, warning stay in the motor; he'd sort it. After twenty minutes allowed to go. GMdO's concern; the ongoing drug war means Fed's shoot first, without qualms, in case.

19<sup>th</sup> August Mimoso Cave, Bonito, Brazil

Martyn Farr, Phil Dotchon, Gilberto Menezes de Oliveira

Final dive here to complete recording these wonderful formations. Again, no issue with the ear, curious. No sign of any Fed's along the track to Paraguay.

August (21<sup>st</sup>?) Bristol;

Compressed spine; injury caused by an individual's twatish actions, on assisting him!

24<sup>th</sup> August Welsh Back Fitness Centre

John Wells

JW kindly offered use of the new American unit, designed to specifically identify and assist back injury repair. £1500 for twelve sessions; cost waived, JW a nice man. Though muscle strength rebuilt in lower spine area, remain unable to flex sideways, decided kill or cure; increased gym use to five times/week gym plus walking and swimming. Given free, unlimited use of the gym, at any hour, John Wells is a really nice bloke.

Recovering from back injury.

November (7<sup>th</sup>?) Grotta Giusti, Pisa, Tuscany, Italy

Phil Dotchon, Jenny Pinder, Martyn Farr

Flew Bristol – Pisa for five pounds per person, each way. Stayed in the hotel above the thermal spa; the place fierce expensive; MF fucked that up. Offset cost of hotel rooms after JP explained the system waiters use to monitor wine consumption, placing each bottle cork under the centre table display. Had seven, hid four, paid three. The thermal spring wells up from a deep, narrow rift. The patients enjoy the heat and humidity in the approach passage, on rows of recliners.

The plan; photography and exploration. The temperature required divers wear swimming trunks, JP a bikini. Quite surreal in a cave environment. Back giving trouble manoeuvring the heavy 80s to the dive base, PD very kindly helping, once in water, pain receded. Close behind a female's arse, in a red bikini, adds a whole new experience to back flashing a subject. A unique, but dam expensive trip.

November

**FOOT AND MOUTH restrictions, UK, lifted**

1<sup>st</sup> December Current State Diving, Bristol.

Finished Gas Blending Instructor; awarded distinction. Registered TDI Instructor 1828.

6<sup>th</sup> December County Pot – Wretched Rabbit – Stop Pot

Martin Bishop, Ian Parsons, Geoff Pickering

Stopped at the NPC; IP had booked the place. Having argued over through trips, GP and IP had organized three, following MB's suggestion of arriving Thursday night. A superb trip where GP and IP offered superb descriptions, effortlessly gliding through the routes. Cracking, an excellent trip.

7<sup>th</sup> December Lancaster – Fall Pot

Martin Bishop, Ian Parsons, Geoff Pickering

Lazy start, listening to the others arrange rigging the entrance etc. somewhat bewildered at the rig work involved. More tea, whilst IP rigged. GP spent time photographing several areas of pretties; a very nice trip; great fun.

8<sup>th</sup> December Fall Pot – Cow Pot

Martin Bishop, Ian Parsons, Chris Jennings, Geoff Pickering

IP ill, serious attack of the shits. Even so opted to do the trip. Again, GP kindly arranged the rigging etc. The increasing rain caused some concern but, did not become an issue. The third trip around this vast system; still have no real idea of the layout of the place. Thanks to CJ for his effortless navigation.

19<sup>th</sup> December Poulmagollum

Solo

Cold, sunny and dry. Back stiff; needs flexing. Recent walking hasn't helped that much. Free climbed the entrance; at the base of the climb slipped, tumbling down the slope, to just below midway. Lay still, awaiting impact pain to recede. Felt back muscles begin to stiffen, guarding the impact area. Rolled over, crawled back up slope to the base of the climb; ascended in some discomfort. Couldn't sit into the motor, so lay on the ground for an hour, gently stretching, until the cold penetrated the limbs. Went to Noel O'Conner's, had a long hot bath; much better. NO'C has informed Doll, seeking advice; bugger.

20<sup>th</sup> December S4

Solo

Monumental bollocking off Doll O'Conner; decided today's exercise. Further prospecting of the coast from Poulsallagh to Doolin. Found S4 had once again received debris blown in from the southern storm beach. Did an easy hour removing the smaller cobbles; found a pallet so placed it, with the metre long tree trunk over the hole. Resurgence S3, submerged, had not given any thought to calculating the tides. In the corner of the bay, found two small sea eroded cavities. Took note of many single stone wide walled enclosures; these seem more like ancient stock corrals; ringforts more substantial.

21<sup>st</sup> December Doughbranneen mountain, Black Head

Solo

Threatening rain. Slow pace uphill to the ringfort at +600ft. Back aching. Rather than strain it traversing the saddle to the Aghaglinny depression, turned down valley, cut west around the lower slopes. Visited the WWII aircraft navigation aid, 48 ÉIRE, south of Black Head lighthouse, land side of the road's eastern wall. It needs repainting.

22<sup>nd</sup> December Cullaun II

Solo

High water conditions after last night's rain. Good sized cascade at the entrance. Steady trip to the Cascades, opted for the high-level passage to stretch out the back; minor tweaks, here and there. Decided to go to the terminal pitch. Kept a gentle pace. Stream quite high in the rifts; giving the lower back a good stretching. Met a group from Dublin changing in the car park. Headed off to Dublin for the Christmas.

28<sup>th</sup> December S4

Solo

Managed pull out two awkward boulders, around twenty kilos apiece. Increasing size of cavity. Refitted the pallet and tree trunk as cover. A lot of plastic blown in from the sea.

29<sup>th</sup> December Poulmagollum

Solo

Wet conditions, the river at the bridge five inches below the gate. Found UK car parked in the layby. No kit on the entrance. Rigged a handline and short ladder; made a careful descent of the slope. In main entrance to use the meandering passage as exercise for the back. Pleasant trip to main junction. Met a party exiting Branch Passage. Geoff, David, John and Ian, all from Leicester. Explained the route to Poulelva; carried on to the cascade. Changing as the others surfaced. Met them in O'Conner's, a nice bunch. Agreed accompany them through Doolin River Cave.

30<sup>th</sup> December Doolin River Cave

Geoff Edwards, Dave Peterson, Ian Carter, John Grant

Water levels high. Arranged met at Fisherstreet; they arrived as pot was rigged. Left the van, up to St. Catherines in theirs. A young fit bunch; swiftly through the beddings to the main passage. Pointed out places en-route. Spent an hour pulling boulders out the bedding heading toward Poulacronaun. No issues through the duck; swift change and into the bar. A really nice group.

31<sup>st</sup> December Pouldubh North

Geoff Edwards, Dave Peterson, Ian Carter, John Grant

Requested assist with another trip; water level increased. Showed them North entrance. Dropping down the snug climb, found the stream quite high. No issues; enjoyed a steady trip down to the terminal choke. Exited South entrance. Met up in O'Conner's, as the evening took hold they became mesmerized at the music and dance; a cracking night.

December (?)

Lost Frank Jones