

2003

2003

1<sup>st</sup> January Urchins Cave  
Solo

Used two ladders. Northerly sea wash significant, expected worse inside the cave. Not so, beyond the initial section water fairly stable. No wetsuit available, for warmth or buoyancy. Used a gallon plastic container as a float, hand torch and snorkel; the dozens of submerged creatures colours rainbow like. Cracking.

4<sup>th</sup> January Lough Bunny  
Solo, later Nick Geh

Another attempt to locate the reported holes in the bottom of this Lough. Started seventy metres north of the slipway, swam to the other side; return dive made ten metres further north. NG arrived as packing the Landrover. To his place in Gort, for tea and medals.

5<sup>th</sup> January S4  
Solo

Surprized at the amount of flotsam and jetsam scattered across a wide area. Most Mid-Atlantic storms coming from the west/southwest. Interesting noises from below the dig; soft sounds; gurgling, like air bells breaking. Appearing from just north of the dig site. Removed loose cobbles piling them inland to avoid dealing with them again.

Business manic

22<sup>nd</sup> February Nitrox Course, PDMHS Hut, Derbyshire.  
Alan Steans, Paul Antony, Malcolm Scothon, Frank Richardson, Dave Eastwick, Martin Bishop, Andy Walchester.

As part of the Pegasus Club Nottingham Dive Training program, arranged, "Introduction to Nitrox" course. Students given no quarter; exam procedures rigorously applied. Best result 82% least 78%. Each student awarded a pass, test papers returned for registration to Dave Crockford, Technical Diving International.

Illegible entries.

9<sup>th</sup> April Lost Gus O'Connor

9<sup>th</sup> April Bristol  
09:00. Sean O'Conner rang informing of the death of Gus; funeral the 11<sup>th</sup> April. Rang Barry Sudell and Cheg Chester informing was departing Bristol tonight. Both welcome to a lift if arriving Bristol, 9pm. Both arrived; headed for the ferry.

11<sup>th</sup> April Gus O'Conner's funeral, Doolin,  
Barry Sudell, Cheg Chester  
Two days of drink and dance. Ran CC about to look at properties for sale, suggested he buy near Doolin; west Clare property may be cheaper but is bad land and far from anywhere, not to mention the caving.

14<sup>th</sup> April Descent  
Chris Howes rang, Jarratt suggested contact PC for obituary of Gus. Written and sent.

Illegible entries.

3<sup>rd</sup> May Orchard Mine, Winster, Derbyshire

Pete Forster, Paul Thompson, Nigel Burns, Cheg Chester, Dave Gough, x 2?

Set up at this location, within the village; PF and PC operated the winch and comm's while the others explored.

Illegible entries.

31<sup>st</sup> May

Lost Ferdinand Petzl

14<sup>th</sup> June Aerial survey of Gort Dive sites.

DH piloted the helicopter; PC had created a flight plan, taking in known and suspected inaccessible areas of interest. At the least minute MF insisted taking the seat. There was then a rush to deploy men to Poulbehan and Polloughabo to identify these locations by waving something to the aircraft. DH seen passing overhead, but unsure if either site seen.. On landing, MF's reward for shagging up this carefully laid plan was a bucket and a mop, presented mutely by an unhappy helicopter owner. So, MF could clean his vomit, spread fanlike along the fuselage; quite the most superb fuck up, which fortunately recorded an image of Lough Aughrim, one site in an important area of interest.

15<sup>th</sup> June Polloughabo

Steve Marsh, Phil Dotchon, Dig Hastilow Martyn Farr

Site pushed downstream to 400 metres.

17<sup>th</sup> June Gort

MF developed back issues after visiting local chiropractor; its bad, he's in serious pain.

18<sup>th</sup> June Lady's Buttery

Dig Hastilow

Divided two sevens and two valves between the two divers, each used a single to reach the perched sump. Arrived sump I, having busted a fin strap struggling against today's strong outflow. In the airbell handed all dive kit over to DH. Kitted, helped him up the climb into the perched pool the far side, a large cascade pouring over the climb. DH dived away, looked around; took some refuge/shelter in a tiny rift, least showered by the thousands of drops pouring from the whole roof. Mused on the difficulties of free diving out. In the unlikely event DH didn't return.

DH returned after pushing a further fifty metres in all but zero visibility and fierce current. Shared out the single kit. In the huge pool that led to Sump I found the line had broken and washed away downstream. Delayed exiting, whilst searching for the actual sump opening, in the large, low, wide pool chamber experienced shite visibility. Outside, DH delighted. Site is going, with great potential.

19<sup>th</sup> June Cong, Co. Galway

Abandoned expedition; MF in permanent agony; packed kit not needed by the others into the van; laid out MF on the prepared, flat surface in the back. Plan, to take the Ferry out of Dun Laoghaire, drive down through Wales. This means losing the golden opportunity as Bosun aboard the replica "Matthew", sailing Cork to La Rochelle: a never to be repeated voyage. Dam.

2003

20<sup>th</sup> June Parnell Rd, Dublin.

Martyn Farr

En-route to the morning ferry stopped overnight at the house in Harolds Cross, Dublin; MF in constant agony, made up a bed downstairs for him.

21<sup>st</sup> June Dublin - Abergavenny Hospital

Got the early ferry, no issues; MF packed level in the back of the van, illegally left there during the voyage: to move him a real circus potentially exacerbating the injury. Drove convoluted route down through mid-Wales, noting one speed camera van at the very last moment. Delivered MF to Abergavenny A&E. After a cursory assessment, Doctor told him, go home and rest. Contemplated, fleetingly, returning to Cong, then Cork. Bugger.



Lough Aughrim, Pilot Dig Hastilow

Photo M Farr.

View northwest. Lough Aughrim; depth between 11m and 13m, dependent on water table.

Illegible entries.

20<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> October Fethiye, Turkey

Martyn Farr

Further to the forthcoming book; dived for six days, photographing numerous sea caves reported. Many just eroded areas beneath limestone cliffs; an exercise in short overhead environment penetration. Somewhat uninspiring.

30<sup>th</sup> October Bristol Royal Infirmary

First of two Tunnel Carpel operations, to either hand; right one to begin with. In response to could both be done simultaneously. Consultant replied, if conducted you would not be able to wipe your arse....? He was right, the pain indeed excruciating. Just as well took his advice; left in in a while, maybe three to six months.

Wrist very sore, unable to tolerate pressure in any direction: immeasurable frustration.

December (5<sup>th</sup>?) Lady Blues Underwater Fantasy

Martin Bishop, Ian Parsons

MB spoke with Ian Watson who believed of its potential. However the unstable nature of the boulder choke, between sump III and IV, remains suspect. Arrived Thursday night for a long weekend, and avoid the Strensham section of the M5. Carrying kit to the river, IP slipped and hurt his ankle, but chose to dive. Agreed to meet beyond sump I. IP dived first, installing a line; the first section broken. MB dived next. PC dived sump II laying a 4mm line, following another section of damaged line. Team reassembled; MB led through sump III. Assessing the choke, its quite clear regular flooding does not allow sediments to accumulate, and in part, stabilize the many ill-supported rocks. Have never, quite seen such an unstable choke, one slab seeming float without support. This status is likely to remain so unless shaken up; bang; kill or cure? IP managed without complaint, noted he had some discomfort from the right hand. Asked later about joining the CDG, IP replied not really interested. Preferring do his own thing; fair enough.

December (6<sup>th</sup>?) Birkwith Cave

Martin Bishop, Ian Parsons Geoff Pickering,

Kindly arranged by GP; IP's ankle offering some discomfort, allowed park at Birkwith farm. Never been in the place; again GP wanting a photo trip, assisting GP has allowed visits to caves, broadly unthought of as a trip. A wet trip, the suggested use of a wetsuit a fine idea, if only as buoyancy for the swimming. The plan, exit Coppy Gill cave; spent an hour digging out flood debris before emerging. Stopped at the YSS, a cracking night in the Helwith Bridge.

December (7<sup>th</sup>?) Calf Hole to Browgill Cave

Martin Bishop, Geoff Pickering, Sean Charles.

Went for an early start. Unfortunately IP's ankle prevented play; might have something to do with his leaping around last night, pissed. Thanks once again to GP for organizing another trip. Good bit of time spent photographing the entrance shaft; a short cave, but photography involved a six hour trip. Finishing up when SC's teeth were dancing like castanets. Left the team and sped south, MB actually working on Monday; there's a first! Ordered a Chinese, sculled a few pints, enjoyed the takeaway at his place.

Illegible entries.

19<sup>th</sup> December S4  
Solo

A mistake. Began to clear the large cobbles from the area more central to the rift. After half an hour, experienced pains in the right wrist/forearm; twat. Too much heaving too soon? Made little effect on storm fill. Into McGann's for a warm up and pints. Invited to Mark Flynn's party after the bar, superb dancing.

20<sup>th</sup> December Gort Lowlands  
Solo

With the hand as it is, returned to recorded more of the sites in the Gort area to offer it some rest, but be productive. Though many recorded already. Searched for sites reported by locals. Some of little potential.

21<sup>st</sup> December Doolin River Cave  
John Fitzgerald, Paul O'Brien

Chance encounter in the bar last night; JF and PO'B visiting from Wicklow. Rigged Fisherstreet, left their motor there, drove to the farm. Pleasant chat with Maire and Mihal over tea. Sent the two ahead to better remember the route; three hours of fun. Minor wrist issues climbing the ladder, otherwise ok. They had heard the wonder that is McHugh's Bar; ran them over for a fine night of music.

23<sup>rd</sup> December Lough Aughrim  
Cheg Chester, Aileen Chester

Northern wind: bitter cold. Parked on the famine road; carry about 600m. Changed in sub-zero conditions. Lough surface substantially increased from winter water levels. Swam the surface for two hundred metres; surreally passing over a barb wire fence; arrived over the pot. Deployed a shot line from a 20l container. In excellent visibility; more than ten metres, descended; noting the edge of the pot had a broad radius, the pot oval shaped, as suggested by MF's aerial photo. Reached a silt covered bottom at -14.5m; which is perfectly level, suggesting a regular flow issuing through the soft silt, allowing any disturbance to settle evenly over the entire floor. Searched the walls found nothing of note, other than the vertical walls disappearing below the silt base. An aquifer lay somewhere beneath. It is worth investigating other loughs hereabouts. Surfaced to a freezing world; CC and AC found sheltering from the force 6 winds; chilled. Both took some kit and swiftly departed to the truck. Swiftly change in a crippling easterly wind. Into Nick's place for tea and medals then to Dublin for the Christmas.

27<sup>th</sup> December Poulnamongach - Mermaids Hole  
Solo

Sea conditions favourable. Michael Gearin kindly assisted with the carry, pressing for news of any lobsters. Dropped down through Hell, dived out Poulnamongach; visibility poor. Searched the cliff for twenty minutes, eventually found Mermaids entrance. Deployed a line off Ken James's line reel; found main line at thirty metres inside. Beautiful, large lobster up on a ledge to the right. Visibility very clear. Continued mid passage; have judge the tide correctly, nice. Considered available gas in the two tens; at the junction decided visit the chamber, Quiet Waters. Uneventful exit.

29<sup>th</sup> December Poulnamongach - Mermaids Hole  
Solo

Sea like a mirror. No Michael Guerin. Planning to visit Pirates Paradise. Used a chest mounted seven and two tens. Uneventful trip to junction. Secured the seven to the line.

2003

An age since last here. In the rift chambers much silt still present; an area obviously less washed by the sea. Nice to feel the trip more consuming, though more than a little nostalgic, some interest is there. But long dives, were never really that interesting. More demanding, consuming solving the than the logistics to achieve putting a man out there.

31<sup>st</sup> December    Urchin's Cave

Solo

Last of the Year. Took advantage of continued sea conditions. Hoped to do a swim through. Used a climbing nut for a belay, hung a ladder. The expanse of cave walls offering a wonderful array of sea life; very nice. Swam along the canal to the south end; no air space available beyond this point. Lingered. So many beautiful colours erupt when illuminated. Below two hours; exited to an increasing wind. Into O'Connor's for a swift one, on to McGann's then McDermott's home around 5am. Cracking night.