

1974

5th January Rhino Rift

Andrew Sparrow, Ken James

Played with S.R.T; tried different configuration, hassle up against the face.

19th January Swildons RESCUE

Martin Bishop, Ken James, Chris Hanham, Pete Eckford

Callout to a fall in the Black Hole series; though serious pissed, instructed to return to the Belfry and prepare as diving party: roused at 02:30; the allotted task changed to acting as a hauling party; the group descended cave with equipment, Jim Hanwell as leader. Arrived to find the guy already through the sump; carried kit back out. Prior to deployment was directed to collect equipment from the Shepton, reversing to get around a parked motor backed the Landrover into, and demolished the front of Paul Hadfield's blue Morris 1000, travelling up the Shepton track managed to rip the rear bumper off Black Wal's black Morris Minor as he sped past; such is the effects of strong drink.

20th Jan Ludwell Cavern

Ken James

Dived to search for the elusive passage; yet again, dug further to the left of the sump pool, (looking out of the sump pool).

26th January Pegasus Dinner and Dance: The Wanted Inn, Peak Forest

Richard Gordon, Andy Sparrow, Colin Sage, Pauline McDermott, Batty McDermott, Peggy Faulknan, Jarratt, and eighty odd Pegasus, Eldon, Orpheus and Buxton Speleo's. Jarratt and the Girls eventually arrived at 5 o'clock, from Dublin; serious catching up involved. There followed a riotous evening of laughter, dance, drink and fun.

27th January Thistle Pot

Stuart McManus, Dave Gough, Peter, (RatArse) Webb, Jarratt, Terry Wright, Martin Bishop, Pauline McDermott

The others had gone to the dig to set a charge; walked over to enjoy the noise.

2nd February Ludwell

Martin Bishop, Ken James

Continued to search the sump without success; there is no obvious sign of collapse.

2nd February "The Night of the Griffon"

Five individuals.....

It started in the Hunters; as friends assembled, by chance, and drank, an idea formed. Into the motor, and into the night: intent on acquiring a trophy. As the night wore on several places were visited but deemed not worthy of Elsan Cave Club attention. Around 01:30 the crew found themselves outside the gates of the Burrington estate of Sir John Wills, Lord Lieutenant of Somersetshire, looking up admiringly at the two huge stone Griffons sat on top each gate pillar. One Griffon was obtained and placed into the boot of the car; quite a big statue, with one of its wings sticking out from the boot lid; the other Griffon left on the ground as there was no room for it in the car. Lights heralded the approach of a car; some bright spark suggested "Let it pass" then we'll go, unfortunately it was being driven by Sir John's female driver, with the Lord himself, well pissed, in the passenger seat. Police arrived; all arrested; a night in the cells; released next morning. Weeks passed. Prior to their court appearance the group breakfasted in a café; as one of

the crew vigorously shook the brown sauce bottle its loose top flew off inflicting a long brown stain from collar to waist, to the mournful wail “Me Dad’s best suit” echoing around the café. As the group were about to enter the building, one individual’s mother approached pleading the others take the wrap, leaving her boy with a clean record as her plan was for him to become a solicitor; all agreed he was unconscious in the back of the motor when the offence happened; and not the one who actually toppled both statues. An hour hours later standing in Burnham-on-Sea court, the group, represented by Mike Thompson, were charged with theft, and criminal damage. Much of this event need remain censored owing to numerous hilarious events, i.e. one individual pleaded to do Sir John’s gardening for a month, if he let us off. Meanwhile the axe wielded by the Griffon statue was hidden in the boot of the car; as the Police on duty couldn’t lift it out to take it into the property office requesting the defendants remove it and carry it into the evidence area. The axe was retrieved and next day secured to the grill of PC’s Landrover; the following week a close pal needed to get to work early so borrowed the Landrover; one of the clever Police, who had arrested the group the previous week recognized the axe trophy proudly displayed on the radiator grill so impounded the entire Landrover, and rearresting the driver; the grill and axe were removed; PC later visited the Police station requesting the return of the grill; alas minus trophy. The final outcome of the proceedings was the Magistrate accepted the communal plea of, that old friends who hadn’t seen each other for a while, had let drink cloud their common sense, and the statement “It seemed a good idea at the time”; plainly ignoring Sir John’s legal team’s demand for £300.00 damages. A fine of £10.00 plus £5.00 costs was imposed on the four defendants; the Magistrate’s final comment, “don’t do it again”; at which Martin Bishop and other cavers, in the public gallery clapped and cheered the outcome.

6th February Eastwater
Ken James, Ted Meek

A cracking evening accommodating TM’s desire for a trip to the thirteen pots; two ladder rungs slipped presenting TM with minor issues ascending Dolphin Pitch.

9th February Tan-yr-Ogof Caves
Pauline McDermott,

One of Jarratt’s better digs a fantastic looking site; soft digging; no boulders. Dug for two hours then exited to enjoy the cold day and bright sunshine. PMD is very fit, but then aren’t all ballet dancers? After three hours shifting spoil she asked why dig?

10th February Dinorwic Quarries
Pauline McDermott

Another bitter cold day; the others planned a walk up Tryfan; PC wanted to look for potential remains in the quarries upper workings. Walked up one of the steep inclines eventually reached an upper terrace with huge workings, at the very top a superb winding house. Found a narrow gauge rails, followed, deep joy, a row of seven drams laden with slates awaiting dispatch. Much of the upper workings are in surprisingly good condition, likely due to inaccessibility; many remains and features present.

13th February Flower Pot
Ken James, Martin Bishop

PC had noticed a curious hollow in the field surface, with a small limestone exposure, near a gigantic rhododendron bush. MB and KJ were shown, the three dug an ‘ole exposing the faces of possible solid rock; yippee.

16th February Ludwell Cave

Martin Bishop, Ken James

Yet more searching; set a charge at the rift opposite the pool, a good bit broken away.

17th February Ludwell Cave

Andy Sparrow, Neil Rigiani, Martin Bishop, Ken James

First dives for NR and AS; PC concentrated on KP passage, set another bang, cleared the debris. NR and AS did well; it's a fine sump to train in.

20th February Flower Pot

Martin Bishop, Ted Meek, John Widley, Ken James

Permission to dig obtained by MB; an evening of fun pushing on with the dig, soft soil and a few stones removed. Clubs represented, Bath Caving Group, Cotham Caving Group, Pegasus and Axbridge Caving Group.

24th February Port-yr-Ogof

Andy Sparrow, Neil Rigiani, Martin Bishop, Ken James

More training for AS and NR in the resurgence pool, supported by the others.

27th February Flower Pot

Martin Bishop

Using a garden spade dug out the soft earth between the two masses of rock to a depth of around two feet. Crashed at MB's, talked long into the night of Yugoslavia and Greece; vast countries crying out for exploration; Jim Eyre has enjoyed great success out there. Had previously rang JE who pointed out the issues with permits and permissions; finally summing up with "If you don't have the permissions don't go"; involving delays at the borders and possibly arrested.

2nd March Britannia Copper Mine, Snowdonia

Ken, James, Ted Meek, Jarratt, Pauline McDermott

Jarratt knew of several levels yet to be explored; walked up the Pyg track and back down the Miners track. The levels on the far side of the lake are open but wet, chest deep; could be pushed using wetsuits. A cracking location; walked there, and back in fresh snow.

6th March Swildons Four

Solo

Late arriving; in via the streamway; managed two hours digging; a few more cobbles appeared, surfaced at midnight.

13th March Swildons Four

Solo

Sump one becoming noticeably constricted; another two hours digging, the fill continuing as fine silt, with the occasional cobble

3rd April Manor Farm

Ted Meek, Martin Bishop, Ken James

TD delighted the fixed ladder was in place; got to the terminus and began to dig; TD became exhausted, watching the others work. A great PU in the Hunters

4th April Flower Pot

Ted Meek, Martin Bishop, Ken James, John Widley

Obtained and erected a fence; continued to dig the soft fill. No great depth as yet.

11th April Limerick Junction – Doolin

Patrice Antoine, Nicky?, Martin Bishop, Liz Bishop Ken James, John Widley, Pippa?

Arranged to pick up Pauline McDermott, en-route to Doolin, from Limerick Junction, stopped in nearby Bar; fine drink. Realized the train had arrived half an hour ago; found PMD waiting, patiently. Back to the bar then on to Doolin, arrived 5pm, told by Doll to use the bar through the back area for the duration, as a lot were expected over the Easter period with the good weather. Entered the bar, meet the others; session in Ivy Cottage.

12th April Coolagh River Cave

Martin Bishop, Pete (RatArse) Webb, Jim Shannon, Ken James

JS fancied in North entrance and out South. Steady trip; some hassle route finding, the larger chest folk having issues as to where to descend the rift; MB went back toward the entrance and found the lower way on. Water conditions seemed high; down main passage to the sump and out. Formed a human pyramid to scale the pitch up into Gour Passage; great fun. Black Friday: No bars open, officially, superb session till late, ended the night in Doug's place near the pier; crazy night.

13th April Poulcahermcnaghton

Martin Bishop, Ken James, Martin Droney, Noel Stringer

MD suggested this cave as the weather had been settled; NS led off through a squeeze or two and happily into a reasonable sized canyon, following the stream, MD didn't fancy a duck so meandered out, searching an inlet off the main streamway MB climbed up to an area of very old domestic crap, all followed thinking of exiting another entrance; then the smell hit, something was very dead; left stench in favour of the Bar. Huge queue waiting outside O'Conner's stretching to Maloney's chip shop the other side the bridge.

14th April St Catherine's - Doolin River Cave & Poulsallagh coastal walk

Martin Bishop, Pete (RatArse) Webb, Jim Shannon, Jarratt, Phil Collett

Morning: for some a new cave; a swift through trip; the air space near the pot very large. Surfaced and into Gus's for a lunchtime session. Enjoyed a dive between the pier and Crab Island; a decent current flows here mid spring tide. Depth -40ft in clear conditions; noticed a small opening in bedding; back mounted kit wouldn't allow entry.

Pauline McDermott

Late afternoon: dropped off by MB to walk south from Poulsallagh Bay to Doolin; noted several interesting sites near a big sea cave, (100ft wide 20ft high); a dry stream valley ends at a small cliff; worth closer inspection, most appear long term digs. On a terrace due west, some twenty feet above sea level, maybe 100 yards south of the big sea cave, is a meandering stream channel, which exits from a choked tube, it looks like the sea has ripped away chunks of the coastline exposing this section of cave passage. How much more of the coast has been torn away? Ten yards north is another tube open for at least six yards, no light, so can't describe further. This area appears to have potential.

15th April Coolagh River Cave

Ken James, Martin Bishop, Pete, (RatArse), Webb

The idea was to see what the terminal sump was like. In the low snug Polldonough South entrance bedding; while PC followed the meandering, shallow stream channel MB tried a short cut: some time later a wiser MB joined the others in Double Passage. A handline

was used on the smooth climb down into the main stream. Near the bottom of the streamway is a lofty rift; a possible place to sit out a flood; the climb looks slippery, though with a flood snapping at your heels it would provide great incentive. At the sump MB slid in feeling around with his feet suggesting it might be low and wide. PC also felt around thinking the boulder strewn floor gently sloped away. Back at the surface the small hole near the field wall some seventy yards from the field gate was dug out further; water can be clearly heard beneath the adjacent wall; another party in Doug's place.

16th April Poulmagollum – Poulelva

Ken James, Martin Bishop, RatArse, (Pete Webb), Jim Shannon, Phil Collett, Jarratt, Sean O'Conner,

Goldilocks water conditions; not too high, not too low: just right. Scampered down the streamway to Poulelva, some laddered others tried prussiking using MB's Jumars. In the bar told it was Sean's fist trip; there followed a night of fun, dance and a flood of drink.

17th April Poulanian

Pauline McDermott, Martin Bishop, Ken James

Morning: casualties of the previous evening strewn around the campsite: Doug, the house owner's son, found among the rocks on the foreshore, alive – ish; though his eyes suggested otherwise. PMD fancied accompanying the team underground to see what all the fuss is about, moving through the crawl she barely touching the sides, later emerging remarkably clean. Looked at the sump, it felt constricted; MB suggested PC dived first to clear away any gravel. It has potential. MB had located a small chamber at the bottom of the main chamber; possible dig site? Dived on a base fed line using John Reece Evans tadpole; the first ten feet in zero Vis, felt low bedding to left and right, gravel each side, and in front, forcing the diver to excavate a channel to progress; should return to try again; maybe after a good flood.

Afternoon: Pauline McDermott

Walked north from Doolin up the coast looking for resurgences: found a bay with a length of cave exposed by erosion at the bottom of a forty foot cliff: impressive; full of rotting seaweed. Headed inland and cut the track back to Roadford. Doll insisted we had a meal with her; all set for another liver crippling session.

18th April Coolagh River Cave

Martin Bishop, Patrice Antoine

Aim to dive the terminal sump. Used Sulo's 22cft; the carry of single kit was easy enough shared among the three. Ken James line reel was deployed, tied to a lead weight set among the rocks. The rift appears almost N-S, boulders hampered initial progress so reversed and moved toward the possible centre of the sump. Mud and silt swiftly reduced visibility to zero, moving left felt along the roof, glimpsed compass and turned south. Pushed east by a mud bank obstruction, once past this area it widened slightly, but the floor appeared to rise gently to the right so moved further left encountering another very soft mud bank. Passage maybe, ten feet wide? Waited for visibility to clear hoping to see either the contents gauge, compass and/or line distance markers, during which, feeling ahead, estimated the gap between the roof and the rising mud floor to be a little over a hand span, (12"?). Visibility remained zero so tied a knot in the line to record distance, returned to base, in total darkness; distance travelled some fifty feet in a southerly direction; no depth recorded: another dive definitely required; silt banks a problem.

28th April Flower Pot, Mendip
Martin Bishop, Alan Mills, Ken James
Soft earth continues with occasional small boulders easy enough digging.

1st May Flower Pot, Mendip
Martin Bishop,
Fill getting stiffer, large rock encountered; lifted it out, after a lot of effort.

2nd May Flower Pot
Ted Meek, Martin Bishop, Ken James, John Widley,
In serious rain watched the dig flood; abandoned in favour of the Hunters.

4th May Flower Pot, Mendip
Alan Mills, Martin Bishop
The speed of digging is surprising; sides are stable, solid and secure, depth now almost six feet. Another big boulder; AM obliged, shock wave blew the scaffold board 20 odd feet into the air. Cleared debris, a small hole has appeared.

5th May Flower Pot, Mendip
Alan Mills, Martin Bishop, Pauline McDermott, Chris Hanham
A score of others have arrived, all smelling a find. Removed the remainder of the boulder to enter a rift, from which another tight descending one, (Anniversary Rift), drops possibly 20ft, bit of clearance needed at the top to enter it.

11th May Flower Pot, Mendip
Alan Mills, Martin Bishop
Steady progress, rock chipping and stiff mud, which breaks away easy enough.

12th May Flower Pot, Mendip
Alan Mills, Ted Meek
The left passage wall is beginning to turn away further to the left; requires another pop.

25th May P8
Vic Holland, Mick Myers
With no other suggestions had an amble around the place; bumped into groups of Buxton Speleo's and Orpheus.

26th May Carlswark Cavern
Vic Holland, Mick Myers
The plan was to show PC the full extent of the system, all too often sped through, MM's Ceag failed at the bottom of the ladder, after ten minutes VH's also faltered. Called it quits, went to The Moon to raise moral.

27th May Dr Jackson's
Vic Holland, Mick Myers
VH talked the team into this squalid hole, PC's chest was far too large for Yoga Bend, as was MM's. VH wriggled through declaring how clever he was, soon followed by cries of how stuck he was; we replied how far away he was. VH was offered advice, which went unheeded; exchanged glances and left him to it; waited outside for VH to loose weight.

30th May Flower Pot

Shocked to learn our dig has been surveyed and recently published as a BEC find!

8th June Langstroth Pot – Cave

Steve (Dicky) Dickenson, John (Mouse) Middlemist, Pete Eckford, Ken James, Neil Rigiani, Richard?

KJ took a Seba and dived through the sumps to check both length and air space, PC followed free diving to confirm practicalities. The team successfully descended doing a pull through; PC had issues free diving out with the rope satchel; needing two attempts to pass the sump after the bag strap, on the first attempt, caught around a submerged flake, the sudden stop a surprise. Out into freezing conditions; rewarded with a fine PU.

15th June Swildons Hole

Ken James, Martin Bishop

Desolation Row, MB had the idea to dig one of the avens; the others foolishly supported the idea. Spragged across the rift plans to dig upward to the surface unravelled as the fill here is also solid rock; the walls tapering inward. Uneventful trip out; replaced the rope on the main climb, ladder is deteriorating.

16th June Ludwell Cavern

Ken James, Martin Bishop

Set charge to move one of the areas of large rocks, effect on resurgence significant. Aftermath inconclusive; did shifts for an hour moving the debris, no sign yet of passage.

29th June Flower Pot

Martin Bishop, Pauline McDermott, Chris Hanham, and a host of others

Post bar session; PMD waited patiently watching some arse about while others actually dug; extended the passage from the base of Anniversary Rift, (Liz and Martin Bishop's).

29th June Lamb Leer, RESCUE

Returning to MB's place from Flower Pot; alerted of callout in Lamb Leer. Without a lifeline, BW fell from the ladder when his prosthetic arm detached as he got to the overhang. A young lad was impacted and fell down a slope, receiving head injuries. Many cavers arrived for this rescue: MB and PC prepared the hauling system in the entrance pitch. Wally came out first, walking, which surprised the surface team as reports were he had fallen 60ft. Later, unsettling to many was the sonorous, bubbling breathing which echoed up the shaft; several rescuers in the hauling team were in obvious distress at the sound. Casualty swiftly conveyed to the waiting ambulance.

5th July Yugoslavia

Summoned the courage to pack in the job with DJ Yelling of Keynsham: to pursue the Yugoslavian expedition. After the usual shouting he noted the resolve. PC offered to work out the month but told to get out now, without pay.

11th July Swildons Hole

Solo

Closed down the VI streamway dig; collected all tools; struggled out via St. Paul's.

27th July Keld Head
Martin Bishop

Left the Pegasus at 8am, enjoyed a swift journey to Kingsdale. The plan to experience distance; each used 3 x chesterfields, diving three minutes apart, agreed to turn around on reaching twenty five. During the dive neither diver saw the other until resurfacing; almost 50 minutes of dive time accrued. Over all, the dive was immensely useful; intense cold being an issue; need a good suit, also need understand the junction's encountered. Stopped in the Bradford will drive to Derbyshire tomorrow; great pissup in the New Inn.

28th July Lost John (Shag) Smith

28th July Merlin's Cave, RECOVERY
A host of cavers
Martin Bishop

Arrived at the hut from Keld Head to find a callout in operation; John, (Shag), Smith had entered an undived sump and failed to return. Ken Pearce and Tom Brown recovered him from only twenty feet in. Stunned; Ken James and PC had arranged to start Shag's dive training this very weekend: Shag phoned PC earlier in the week saying he might have to cancel due to work; an immense loss, a really nice bloke.

3rd August Austrian expedition (The Great Yugoslavian Fiasco)!

Martin Bishop, Liz Bishop, Andy Leftley, Paul Hatherly, John Widley, Pippa Able, Ken James, Pauline McDermott

What was supposed to be a one month expedition to Yugoslavia collapsed on account of MB "forgetting" to apply for the all important government permissions; admitted by an embarrassed MB the very evening before departure, when JW and PC had arrived at MB's place in Priddy with the Landrover and trailer laden with expedition food and equipment. An incensed PC stormed off back to Bristol rather than stay and punch MB in the nose. Later, as the rest of the team assembled at MB's place they wondered where PC was. A long phone call by Paul Hatherly eventually calmed PC down; when asked what to do, as Yugoslavia was a none starter, PC noticed an Austrian caving book on the shelf and suggested Austria as an option, as there was no time left and the ferry was booked; so it began. Initially based in Werfen, the expedition knew of several ice caves adjacent the Eisriesenwelt show cave. Fortunately the group was joined by newly wed's Phil and Geraldine Collett. Phil had some info on the area which resulted in stopping at a superb caving club chalet adjacent to Lamprechtshöhle, which offered the finest trips of the entire expedition. The rest of the time in the mountains was spent with KJ, PC and MB climbing various cliffs to check out cave entrances far above, most choked after two hundred feet with ice or glacial fill. The disappointing outcome made PC suggest they return to the UK via Belgium and take in some caving there.

6th August Brouloch

Martin Bishop, Ken James Paul Hatherly, John Widley, Phil Collett, Pauline McDermott
A huge hole in the face of the cliff, some 3000 feet up was targeted. Starting very early ascended the steep grassy slopes to the cliff base; reaching the entrance involved a climb of another 100ft and an exposed horizontal traverse; the huge passage, fifty feet diameter led off. After three hundred feet it choked with glacial fill; survey data mislaid by MB.

8th August Eiskogelhöhle

Martin Bishop, Ken James, Paul Hatherly

A long walk up to the entrance: a superb trip around a stunning cave, crampons and ice axes a necessity; team poorly prepared for such a cave.

10th August Eisriesenwelt

Martin Bishop, Liz Bishop, Andy Leftley, Paul Hatherly, John Widley, Pippa Able, Ken James, Pauline McDermott

Tourist trip to this huge show cave; wooden ladders and gantries, perfect for the task of climbing the massive ice flow; superb.

15th August Lamprechtshöhle

Martin Bishop, Andy Leftley, Paul Hatherly, John Widley, Ken James, Kraus? Wilhelm? Günter?

Stopping at the club's chalet the group were offered trips into this resurgence cave which may one day connect to a pot near the mountain summit. The river passage becomes a series of ascending pitches, at this time rigged with ladder. Ascending with inadequate clothing forced a very cold exit; Austrian cavers are immensely hospitable.

16th August Lamprechtshöhle

Martin Bishop, Andy Leftley, Ken James, Wilhelm?

Early start, few takers, Wilhelm punctual so sped off, the cave is not what you'd called beautiful but appears intricate; over nine hours did a superb trip, taking in as much of the place as possible. Carried in four bags of climbing gear; Wilhelm invited us to return.

18th August Grotte de Nou Maulin, Belgium

Ken James

Visited 27th September 1971; PC wanted to revisit this site en-route home. The main route leads off to the left, a low area; a dry rift sink is to the right inside the main entrance. Removed enough organic debris to wriggle forward for twenty feet this is not as far as previously reached, which also had a little more stream flowing then. Abandoned effort as the passage beyond now has a large tree trunk jammed in it, no room to pass.

25th August Grotte de Fayt

Ken James

A return trip to this fabulous cave with stunning formations, KJ absolutely delighted.

26th August Grotte de Han - sur – Lesse, Belgium

Pauline McDermott, Ken James, John Widley, Pippa, Andy Leftley, Paul Hatherly

Martin Bishop, Liz Bishop

A tourist trip around this show cave, it is an ancient site with superb archaeology found by divers. In the museum PMD finally accepted PC's 28th proposal of marriage.

30th August Ballycorrus Lead Smelting Chimney, Dublin

Jarratt, Peggy Faulknan, Pauline McDermott

Met up with Jarratt and Peggy in Dublin to visit this lead smelting area; at the summit the chimney is the most visible feature of the lead industry. Announced engagement; Jarratt suggests a stag week in O'Connor's; has appeal. Into O'Donaghues; to celebrate; met Luke Kelly and Barney McKenna of the Dubliners; a fine session.

1st September Pouldubh

Jarratt, Jim Shannon, Noel Danagher,

From north entrance to terminal choke, here an expanse of gravel cries out “Dig Me”.
From the small, wide air gap emerges a draught; it has potential.

2nd September Poulmagrai

Solo

Got a lift from Noel Danagher to Faunarooska cross roads. Used Sulo’s third full 22cb/ft and the Titan II; the trip to try and assess the sump’s potential; managed some twenty feet in zero visibility; felt room either side; it’s not quite as small as imagined; felt an alcove, or passage on the right. Left weights and valve in ammo tin for tomorrow.

2nd September Souterrain Crumlin Townland

Solo

From Poulmagrai walked down to the coast, noticed a solitary green and white road sign, (Souterrain). Eventually located it in a rough field; it is a cavity some ten feet long by three feet square, covered with a few big flagstones; surrounding the area are low earthen/stone walls; perhaps an old farm? What is a souterrain, and who built it/them?

3rd September Poulmagrai

Solo

Noel Danagher offered drive PC again, this time to the cave entrance. Carried in Bishops Seba bottle; entered sump with the remainder of Sulo’s 2nd bottle, followed the right hand wall some twenty feet or so before feeling the wall turn away to the right, turned here but seemed to lose the flow. Moved back to the main route to assess situation, stopped and counted, waiting for the visibility to clear; it did, a bit, though not enough, turned right again and followed up the passage into clear-ish vis, the passage, seemed to be getting smaller, no flow, checked contents gauge, low, but the place is shallow; got back to the turn and headed “downstream” for another twenty feet, stopping at around forty feet; returned to the sump pool. Exited on virtually empty; had a fifteen minute break to warm up and dived again, used Bishops Seba: to maintain visibility hurried before the silt cloud. Noted the junction on the right at around thirty feet, carried on for another thirty feet before returning to the sump pool; sump seen to continue, but looks as though it might be getting smaller? Kit recovered and carried back to Doolin.

4th September Doolin River Cave

Martin Droney

An excellent through trip, had a good look around The Smithy: quick change, and into O’Connor’s for the evening session; heard Pakie Russell had passed away.

7th September Rowter Pot

Ken James

A trip planned to include Shag, (John Smith), diving through the sumps: a four hour trip, on surfacing went to the bar to mourn and drink.

8th September Swinsto

Ken James, Eric Blake

A swift through trip to shake off the blues; losing Shag has been felt deeply.

21st September Singing River Mine

Ken James Martin Bishop

A Derbyshire like secure cover on the shaft, nice; cracking trip; the place gives the feeling there should be far more workings. MB wants to dive the pool.

22nd September Singing River Mine

Martin Bishop

Last night in the Hunters beer talk decided “no time like the present”; assembled MB’s kit and returned. Single kit, SEBA bottle and his Snark; after a five minute dive MB surfaced describing a passage with unstable supports; declaring “I need more air”.

29th September Speleo Stomp, Priddy

Cast of thousands.

Having enjoyed many and regular Derbyshire stomps believed Mendip would benefit from such wonderful, fun events; thanks to Martin Bishop for organizing the catering; the First Ever Mendip Speleo Stomp “happened”; a superb do; oddly enough actually received praise for the night of music, dance and fun; need plan another.

30th September Pitten Street Slocker

Solo

Obtained permission to commence digging; went straight there and cleared the foliage.

6th October Sandford Dig

Ted Meek Geoff Marshall, Roger Marsh, Pete? Danny? Tony?

A tourist trip and a tidy up of the place; visitors have left a lot of litter and crap about.

13th October Sandford Dig - Pitten Street Slocker

Ted Meek Geoff Marshall, Roger Marsh, Pete? Danny? Tony?

10:00. the original intent was to dig out the collapsed third shaft to reach the lower chamber where scores of miner’s tallies exist, smoked onto the roof, and perhaps dig further down to access any lower levels. Alas many of those present were not enthused on viewing the collapse; most successfully complained how difficult it was going to be. 14:00. after the lunchtime Hunters, solo to Pitten Street; dug the clay face maintaining the arched shape of the existing passage through the clay overburden; very wet.

19th October Pegasus Hut

The plan was to arrive last night but the motorbike had other ideas. A puncture sent it and the rider onto the hard shoulder of the motorway. Stripped down the wheel; found the inner tube had torn from the valve. Heaved the bike from the ditch and pushed it to the junction. Left the bike with a nice couple at their house; hitched back to Bristol for a new inner tube, and spare. Hitched back mid morning, arrived in rain, reassembled the wheel and set off. Got to the Stags no one about; decided to stop at the Pegasus and drive over to the Orpheus tomorrow morning.

20th October Dive Training; Derbyshire Section

Bob Hetherington, Eric Blake, Geoff Pickering; many others

The plan was to have the training near Matlock. Only six of the ten actually had kit; went further up river. It was decided a better location to swiftly exchange kit among those present so all could get some amount of experience; river depth, in places, an issue.

26th October Eldon Hole

Vic Holland, Bill McGuinness, Martin Bishop

After last night's session stopped at the Eldon hostel; delayed when BM vomited from the motor into the road at the railway arches, causing the Police car behind to interview the vehicle occupants. MB driving, found borderline told to "Watch it". Decided to look for some breakfast, drove back up the high street to find a café: now well past opening time headed into the Sun. Revived after superb fish and chips, set off for Eldon Hole; MB and PC are proud owners of new Gibbs rope walkers, so practiced SRT, while BM and VH sat and watched. Claire Chambers had made harnesses for knee and foot positions. Made two ups and downs of the pitch, the equipment is excellent, though awkward against the rock. MB imported these two sets direct from the USA; 20 quid for one set of three.

27th October Dirlow Rake

Martin Bishop, Bill McGuinness

A circular walk up to and around Hollandtwine Mine for MB to sober up; called into the Eagle en-route home, many Eldon present so a late night, stopped at the Eldon.

3rd November Pitten Street Slocker

John Widley, Pete Eckford, Ken James, Geoff Marshall

Slow work enlarging the small streamway, no sign of anything solid yet.

10th November Pitten Street Slocker

Solo

Increased the width of the passage maintaining the roof curvature, as there is not much substantial thickness above; the streamway appears to be turning toward the lane. Laid a pipe to cover the stream and dump spoil upon it create a dam; digging is very wet.

13th November Pitten Street Slocker

Andy Porter

Started to lower the stream bed to avoid disturbing the water worn arched clay roof. Verbally attacked by a passing bloke; shortly after visited by the landowner who had heard him shouting, said ignore him and carry on.

14th November Pitten Street Slocker

Ken James, John Widley, Geoff Marshall

Checked site after very heavy rain; the entire area flooded to a depth of eighteen inches.

16th November Swildons Hole, RESCUE

Pete Eckford

Returning from climbing the big aven in Desolation Row, encountered Fred Davies and a group of others in II assisting a woman who didn't fancy returning through sump one. FD used our appearance to help her encourage her describing us as her personal dive team who would be either side of her through the short distance. Within minutes of our arrival she was pulled through using dive kit.

18th November Pitten Street Slocker

Solo

Cleared up the area after the flood; continued to dig out the passage floor.

19th November Pitten Street Slocker

Eric Blake, Ken James

Slow progress, whilst digging had another visit from Mr. Grumpy, avoided returning comments, which was difficult as the abuse came thick and fast. The bloke is obviously ill. Finally took issue when Mr. Grumpy struck the Landrover with his walking stick and bust a tail light. Caught him after fifty yards and shook him: returned to dig. The Police, (Jerry Brice), arrived after half an hour; viewed the busted tail light and abandoned walking stick nearby, said best avoid the man who was troubled. Returned to dig, now twelve feet long, and wet going.

23rd November Brendon Hills Iron Mines

Nigel Burns

The plan was to walk the area in search of remains and entrances, spent the remaining daylight walking the railway route, viewing a station and the superb incline.

24th November Brendon Hills Iron Mines

Nigel Burns

Moved further on ticking off various sites, which had been filled in or fenced off. Located an open shaft, some ten degrees off the vertical, NB's turn, managed to descend the fifty foot of ladder to where the shaft wall had collapsed choking the shaft. Unable to descend and investigate further; NB studied the walls, no cladding; he did find an old, working gin trap among the domestic fill. It's likely this choke may collapse and reopen the shaft.

25th November Pitten Street Slocker

Nigel Burns, John Widley, Geoff Marshall

New dam working well; in much drier conditions continued to lower the stream bed.

1st December Pitten Street Slocker

Geoff Marshall

Finished second dam; lined the channel with slates to reduce erosion.

7th December Pitten Street Slocker

Solo

High water so a wet session; managed another two foot in clay and gravel. Approached by landowner who said Mr. Grumpy had contacted the Council who have issued legal proceedings to cease potential undermining of the road. Bang goes a cracking site.

20th December Avoca mines

Solo

9am bus from Stephens Green, Dublin; told by the driver he was returned immediately, as Avoca was the actual terminus for this route and there was so no later bus. Departure from Avoca is 11am. Bugger, no camping or sleeping out kit; took the bus. Kevin, the driver, said he'd look out for PC tomorrow. Climbed up the hillside to inspect the magnificent Cornish Engine House, wandered further uphill to a huge open cut, entered an adit some twenty feet up the face, followed a passage for two hundred feet to where it was stoped to daylight, a dropped stone suggests an awful long way down; possible daylight in the far horizontal distance, or may just be shiny object, or water: a superb place. Tried to sleep tucked in by one of the ore bins: barely out of the wind and rain. Woken at 6:30 by Eugene, or rather his dog; invited back for breakfast with his wife, Saoirse. A knowledgeable guy, both his Grandfather and Father had worked at the mine. Dropped at the bus stop by Saoirse; a cracking place: need tell Jarratt about it.

21st December Poulsallagh

Solo

Dropped by Noel Walsh at Poulsallagh bay; walked south to Doolin, revisiting and recording various features and sites; this area must have some resurgences in it.

22nd December Mullagh Mór

Solo

Told of this big limestone mountain near Corrofin; Noel Walsh dropped PC in the village; got a lift toward Gort by Aoife who pointed out the mountain; its massive beddings clear and pronounced. Dropped off at a track, walked west for about a mile; struck southwest up the mountain's flanks. From the top big lakes seen to the northeast; told later some are, in fact turloughs; seasonal lakes. Whilst no surface evidence of cave, what connects the lakes together beneath?

23rd December Poulawillin

Solo

Hitched a lift off the Postman to the top of Corkscrew, dropped at Noughaval junction; walked the last couple of miles. Eventually found the cave, just west of the Kilcorney road junction; it's a popular place to dump rubbish. A rift heads off requiring acrobatics along the streamway; the water level not too high; a little more could be an issue in the low, wriggly bits. Got to a point in a long crawl where piles of gravels have been created by the stream reducing space; couldn't progress without digging through each of them; it's a long thrutch; pushed on until the novelty wore off and time ran out. Emerged into rain; changed and headed for Dublin; got a lift to Oranmore, another into Athlone then a lift straight to Haddington Road, only five minutes walk to Percy Lane, arrived 7pm; swift change then into Neary's Bar to meet with Pauline's crazy Ballet friends; began to tire, but pressed to go and dance at Annabel's Nightclub; serious late night: great fun.

27th December Fergus River Cave

Solo

Dropped in Kilinaboy by Noel Stringer; had trouble finding the entrance. Called at a farm to ask the way, invited in from the rain for tea; after which the eldest son, Enda was directed to act as guide, taking the road back toward Kilfenora, about a quarter mile. In the broad valley below the entrance a wide stream meanders toward the east from the confluence with a much smaller stream flowing from the west. Entered the cave, but couldn't seem to find the way on. Heading back toward the entrance felt a draught, turned back and followed it. Eventually found a hole in the roof through which the draught howled, enlarged the pile of stones beneath and struggled up. Eventually reached the chamber with "CPC 1960" inscribed; located the way on, down and to the right of the graffiti; a snug crawl with awkward squeezes. Emerged into a vast area of silt banks lost much time searching for a way through: main lamp dimmed, abandoned trip.

28th December Oughtdarra

Solo

Dropped by Jack Garrihy at Poulsallagh Bay; headed northeast out onto the karst. Spent time searching among dense Hazel and Blackthorn thickets then expanded search out onto the broad pavement; no stream sink, active or fossil found. Its magnificently wild, a broad karst landscape; it will need a lot more time to thoroughly search this wilderness.

29th December Cullaun III

Solo

Mistakenly woken at 7am by Doll who believed PC was getting a lift from the Dairy man. No matter; enjoyed the tea and cracking breakfast. Arrived in the general area by 10am spent a lot of time searching for the right entrance; unfortunately no obvious land or reference marks present, no worn track or any clue at all; it seems few cavers ever visit this place. Found several cracks; chose the widest; into a narrow rift, shuffled sideways for an age, occasional crawls in the water broke the tedium, arrived at an area where passage development occurs over several levels. This is a dodgy place to visit during spring or autumn. Underground for quite a while decided to exit; out to a darkening afternoon; temperature well below freezing, kit froze during changing. No cars passing so walked to Lisdoonvarna. In the Roadside Mary found a lift to O'Connor's; reluctantly left the blazing fireside. Severely scolded by Doll who thought, once again, that PC was lying dead somewhere in a cave; and how would she explain that to Pauline?