

1980

2nd January Charterhouse Mines

Nigel Burns

Another search for lead mines north and northwest of the kennels. Found three; three-foot diameter, twenty-five-foot shafts each covered with jammed boulders, all partly choked at the bottom, passages seen heading off; could be enterable after some digging.

26th January Swildons Hole – Garrowpipe Rising

Ken James, John Widley

06:00. climbing downstream the 20, KJ noticed small hole, beyond appears to be a small chamber; an alcove, maybe? Need return, with climbing kit

14:00. dug Garrowpipe for two hours in flow high; very cold; KJ loves the place.

3rd February Swildons Hole RESCUE – Assisted exit

Ray Mansfield,

Descending the Forty, encountered two agitated males relating a woman experiencing difficulty at the bottom of the 20; direct them to surface and call MRO: on arrival found the woman, Joan, at the top; cold and distressed. Calmed her: took her hand to lead her out, RM follow as close support. Immediately noticed she could hardly walk; unable to move. Checking found a krab and 1” tape loop wrapped murder tight around her waist and groin; a sit harness, of sorts. Given permission, attempted remove it; impossible to twist to unclip karabiner; used knife to cut away the tape. Its release was immediate; comfortable and more relaxed J began an unhurried exit. A swift exchange with RM agreed to leave her group to follow. J’s spirits increased with each step. At the Forty encountered a group of eight descending. PC asked for their assistance, directing they form a scrum, tight against the climb, creating human steps, so J could ascend with little effort. In the water chamber met Mike, (Quackers), Duck and party; describing status, insisted J rest before continuing. Joan was handed over to the MRO team, who escorted her to surface. Resumed the round trip with RM. Later on enjoyed the delights of John Dukes wedding do in the Hall; a fine session.

11th February Pouldubh, Blakesmountain Townland

Solo

Noel Walsh kindly provided a lift. Returned to the terminal choke; the area changed, significantly. Gap between roof and gravel appeared smaller. The main stream previously sank in boulders on the left, closer the choke; now sinking five metres upstream; still on the left. Dug forward some three metres; the once useful six-inch air gap, used to pack spoil in, now of little use. All spoil dragged back to the main streamway, dumped on the right of the choke, along the top of the mud bank; out of the main flow. Walked back to Doolin in the cold sunshine. Quiet in the bar; the few locals created a superb session.

12th February Doolin River Cave, Gortaclob Townland

Solo

Early start; in via Fisherstreet to locate Echo sump, without success; the paper survey disintegrated passing the duck. Exited Aran View Inlet; invited take tea and cake with Mrs Linnane; cautiously remarked on the amount of domestic rubbish in the entrance. Robustly informed it was not her or any of her family who dumped it.

13th February Aran View Swallet
Solo

Scrounged a pile of fertilizer bags off Petie Tierney and Gussie Fitzgerald; walked to the cave. Filled bags with assorted, scattered crap from the entrance and along the passage; after four hours successfully sliced open finger on a busted glass jar. Packed twenty-six bags with old tin cans, jam jars etc. Carried all across the field to the Church, stacked on the verge at the car park: Gus O'Connor phoned the Council to come and collect.

14th Silver Mine, Cliffs of Moher
Gus O'Conner

GO'C related a Silver mine once existed near the cliffs, offering show the site. Once there GO'C had difficulty remembering its location. Took the road opposite the goat track down Aillenasharragh, the east side of the high ground and Liscannor road; passed many quarries. After an hour GO'C admitted defeat; departing for his bar. Remained to meet the owner of a cabin; no one home. Wandering the quarries, the geology is alternating sandstone and shale beds; not quite the sort of geology a Silver mine would occur. Saw an Ass and Creel outside the cabin; over tea, Gerard, in his 80s, (though you wouldn't credit it); knew of no local Silver Mine. The closest being in Doolin, another at Fanore. He related drilling shotholes in the Phosphate Mine, Doolin, and how, at a meeting held in Lisdoonvarna, (1947?), Eamon De Valera closed the mine with immediate effect, seven hundred their jobs; as fertilizer much cheaper to import. Lots more tea, cáca, and local history; walked to Doolin in light rain.

15th February Silver Mine, Fanore
Solo

Hitched to Ballynalacken Castle; walked the rest. As the coast road passes high ground, a mile north of Poulsallagh, it levels. As it descends, the mine is below, on the left, on a terrace, maybe ten metres above sea level. The adit entrance, now a grassy hollow, with a small spoil tip nearby; no other visible evidence: disappointing. Walked back to Doolin. Possibly, erosion in the sea cliff exposed an ore vein, hence the mine? Would love to talk to the family in the nearby farm; perhaps their antecedents once worked there?

16th February Poulelva – Poulmagollum, Caherbullog Townland
Solo

Last night made a lot of rain, noticeable at the road bridge. Abseiled in Poulelva, stream level a little high, headed to Cotter's Gallery to see the gours. Exiting found a narrow rift inlet, upstream, left side of the main streamway. Scrabbled up several short climbs; did not push to a conclusion owing to time constraint. Back to the streamway and out main entrance, good flow in the stream, entrance climb a bit greasy. Left Poulelva rigged, SRT kit secured on the rope for tomorrow's trip. Engagement party in the Roadside until late.

17th February Poulmagollum – Poulelva
Solo

Early start, hitched out; more rain last night. Rain: the stream level at the bridge about four feet below the bottom rail of the gate; cascade audible across the field. Upper Poulmagollum cascade truly impressive: the first waterfall adding significantly to stream volume. At main junction, Branch Passage stream augmented main flow. Below main junction the crawls were aquatic; knowing kit and rope left yesterday assured delight of conditions. Emerging into Poulelva encountered a club from Belfast, (Queen's College?), descending. Enquiring their plan, suggested it not a great idea to continue; the crawls, and increasing stream volume not an ideal a place for novices. Eoghan explained among

his party of ten, six were inexperienced; four of whom now at the bottom. Eoghan also explained they had no SRT kit, intending a through trip. Gave Eoghan the kit, suggesting he ascend, explain the situation to the others, sending the kit back down for the next and so on. Directed the chilled group watch Eoghan ascend to see the system. Aoife and Emer ascended, slow and methodical as did John; Noel had minor issues. Eventually surfaced, frozen. Quite the privilege assisting such a good-natured crew: met later in O'Connor's; enjoyed a fine session, finished up in Doug's place.

18th February Doolin River Cave, Gortaclob Townland

Eoghan Driscoll, John Kelly, Emer Cassidy, John O'Connell, Jim Pattison, Noel Dineen, Enda Lynch, Thomas Bennett, Paul Fitzgerald, Aoife O'Malley

Invited last night to join their trip: preparation took them an age, sorting through a huge communal pile of gear. Meantime, went and rigged Fisherstreet, returning, the group were ready. Stream a little high; EL had minor issues passing the squeeze in the entrance passage. Enjoyment and banter increased as they scampered along the noisy, turbulent streamway, suitably impressed at its majesty. Though Fisherstreet airspace was barely eight inches, none had issues passing it or ascending the Pot: a really nice bunch.

19th February Lower Coolagh Valley

Solo

Rained all night; still raining 10am. The river outside O'Conner's swollen. No sign of the small waterfall or associated turbulence. Martin Shannon offered a lift to Lisdoonvarna. Walked to Poulmagun; AKA Poulnaspa. In the huge depression the small spring gushed forth. Headed up valley, unable to get close to the stream, its banks awash. Had hoped to locate sites, no chance; the brown turbulent flow enormous. Pollclabber, a large pool. Pouldonough South submerged as was Pouldonough. The field entrance also full. Rain eased midday; walked to Doolin.

1st March Oxlow Mine - Pegasus Dinner

Martin Bishop, John Kelly

Into East Chamber: JK's torch useful lighting this big place. Imminent PCN dinner and stomp ensured a swift trip.

12th March Charterhouse Mines, Yoxtor

Jim Smart, Nigel Burns

Evening trip to search for more shafts near Yoxtor range, found another one; twenty feet deep. A large pile of stone in its base appears an attempt to fill it. JS believes that many more exist, need to check on the rifle range.

15th March Link Pot – Pippikin, Yorkshire

Pete Eckford, Ken James, John Kelly, John Compton

JC arranged this trip with the Happy Wanderers. No sign of them, departed hoping they'd appear to complete the exchange. Enjoyed the wander; at the exchange, no tackle found dangling from the darkness. Returned to surface, headed to the bar: no sign of them.

16th March

Lost Ian Plant

19th March Cheddar Rising
Martin Bishop

Only two, half full Chesterfields available; Lloyd being awkward yet again: dived in turn. The choke consists of large and small boulders, well rounded, so awkward to grip; used two pulleys and a canvas pouch to drag a dozen to surface. Politics will assuredly creep into this project; as to who and who are not permitted to dig. MB is adamant they won't. As it was, he who initiated the project with Cheddar management: believe otherwise. It is far too accessible for idle, opinionated, armchair diggers to visit.

22nd March Tynings Barrow Swallet
Martin Bishop, Andy Porter

Three hours of tough digging; MB believes it will definitely go; there is an excellent draught, but felt none today.

26th March Wookey Hole and Cheddar Rising
Morning:

Ken James, Martin Bishop, Andy Porter, (Sherpa),

Pleasant trip: Chamber 3 to 9:2. MB tried another version of his buoyancy bag/device. The inflate/deflate valves are a little awkward to operate. MB appeared unable to bend his arm sufficient to reach the vent valve.

Afternoon:

Martin Bishop

Took a single set, dived in turn, this time using a piece of fishing net MB blagged from somewhere. Early evening, in the Hunters, MB was "spoken to" about digging Cheddar without permission of some "Consortium". Informing Bish, they'd approached Cheddar management questioning MB's ability to conduct the dig correctly? Have never seen MB so upset. Galling to witness, again, the attitude of those few who will never contribute an ounce of effort toward a dig: ushered away a seriously pissed off MB to Wells for a curry. Over pints in the Full Moon, observed, as Cheddar had specifically agreed permission with MB, until such was withdrawn by Cheddar management, digging should continue. But perhaps MB could call regularly into the cave office to update them on the progress.

4th April Porth-yr-Ogof

Al Steans, Mick Durdy, Martin Bishop, Trevor, (Greasy Trev), Roberts, Alan (BIG AL) Harrison, Eric Blake, Robert Stallard

In main entrance, split up, exploring as many ratholes as possible; nice Oyster fossils about the place. A tree trunk found in the shallows was deployed as a canoe; sinking under the weight of four sailors, passing through the resurgence: Really do need to learn to swim. Out into warm sunshine; dozed for an hour on the bank: swiftly to Crickhowell. The session started in the Bridge, then the Horseshoes, finishing at the campsite; joined by campers amused at the antics, laughter and singing; continued into the early hours.

5th April Agen Allwedd

Dave Gill, Trevor (Greasy Trev) Roberts, Alan (BIG AL) Harrison, Al Steans, Martin Bishop, Mick Durdy and many more bods making up some six groups.

Assorted PCN, Orpheus, Buxton Speleo's and Eldon all underground: one team went to check if the fourth boulder choke had indeed collapsed: MB, AL, MD & PC to the Cliffs of Dover. Straight into the Horseshoes: another cracking session to the wee small hours.

6th April Dan-yr-Ogof

The living dead

Almost all were ill, dead, or longed to be. At the cave, a horrified SWCC leader watched the staggering mob approach, some who vomited in the car park, continued to wretch during the briefing. A long round trip, of which there is little memory. Once out, into the Beaufort for heart starters, revived, drank in turn between The Horseshoes and The Bridge: a riotous night; great fun: can confirm the river really is very deep in places.

26th April Wookey Hole

Ken James, Andy Porter, (Non-Diver).

Dive from 3 to 20 in fair visibility; returned shallow route and Coase's loop. In chamber 3, O.C.L. approached the waiting AP, asking who he was. AP explained he was carrying for "Stumpy"; confused as to who Stumpy was O.C.L. repeated the question. The team surfaced to a smirking O.C.L. loudly announcing "Stumpy has returned": twat.

3rd May Swildons Hole

Geoff Pickering

GP wanted to photograph sump nine, having been told that first through enjoyed crystal-clear visibility with a green/blue hue. GP spent an age setting up the camera kit, but only managed one photo before losing visibility, and that one didn't develop. Exiting met with Al Harrison, Martin Bishop, John Thorpe and Martin (LS) Butterworth: a great session.

4th May Rhino Rift

Geoff Pickering,

GP wanted repeat a previous trip; enjoyed a pleasant SRT trip. Some gardening required, with resultant noises: a cracking trip to the base of fifth pitch. In the Bar, had a long talk with Jarratt of his chance to work in South Africa. He is unsure, concerned. Finally sold him the idea, after Jim Smart and Stuart MacManus also encouraged this opportunity of a lifetime. Six months paid work, time off, expenses and caves to be found and Colin, (Pope) Priddle was living out there, available as contact, caver and support.

10th May Giants Hole, Derbyshire

John Kelly, John Compton, Derek (Teapot) Stables, Martin Bishop

JK rang; he's working near Derby for a month, and fancied a Giants trip; met up at the Lovers Leap café Saturday morn. A round trip, which JC thoroughly enjoyed; then a fine night in the Eagle: introduced the boys to the Eldon, finishing at the Stags. JK thinks his job may move back to Drogheda in the near future. A cracking session; Fed's raided just after midnight: each driver given a five-minute head start.

13th May Swildons Hole

Ken James

Evening trip; free dived to four, exiting via Blue Pencil, mud sump half full. Nice trip.

21st May Triple Hole, Sandford

Solo

Working in Winscombe, disappeared at lunchtime to visit the old Cotham dig. Climbed down the rift, found the concrete block wall all but destroyed. Laddered the second shaft; found more of the third shaft collar collapsed. A real shame, the chamber below remains inaccessible. Its roof covered with superb, sooted ore tallies. As a mineral vein, to what depth was this mine worked/developed?

24th May Stoke Lane
Ken James, Pete Eckford
Spent time digging out IV sump pool for tomorrow; took turns to keep warm.

25th May Stoke Lane
Pete Eckford, Ken James
Entered sump II as first man; a bolt on the mask frame sheared, so a side glass fell out, flooding it. Causing severe sinus pain; discomfort magnified by the delay digging into III. Having previously cleared the IV pool PE dived first, finding the line bust at the elbow; returned, used KJ's reel to reline. KJ and PE through to V: Profoundly disorientated sat in IV. The exit adding to the blinding frontal lobe sinus pain.

29th May Cave of the Wild Horses, Kilcorney Townland
Solo
Lift off Martin Droney to Kilcorney Church. Rigged ladder and rope; abseiled the pitch, landed in knee deep water; confused. Waded along the passage until the water became chest deep; dead silence, not a sound; delighted to see no sign of water rising from the tell-tales left in the mud coated walls. Am sure Tony Boycott said there was something like a hundred metres or so of dry passage below the pitch; unsure of the water presence didn't continue. Climbed up, recovered kit, hitched back to Doolin.

30th May Pouldubh, Blakesmountain Townland
Solo
Dropped by Noel Walsh at the parking spot. In through south entrance. Small cascade at the eyehole; swiftly to the choke, found the previously dug channel levelled from floods, barely a sign of it. Noticed most of the spoil previously dumped on the right was still there, decided continue using it. Managed some three body lengths; almost reached a left wall. Placed boulders across the trench to protect against erosion; this won't help in high flood. Fresh pine needles on the roof suggest the place floods a long way back upstream.

31st May Pouldubh, Blakesmountain Townland
Solo
Heavy rain throughout the night. Got a lift to Kilmoon off Gussie Fitzgerald; walked the rest: the mid 1970s conifer plantations rapidly obscuring the mountainside. Stream a little higher than yesterday, with increased volume at the cascade. Removed the boulders protecting the excavated channel, dug another two body lengths. Hard work dragging the spoil back; the small hand rake is superb, reducing some of the effort. Had enough after four hours; replaced rocks to preserve trench.

1st June Poulballyelly, Ballyelly Townland
Solo
Told by Noel Walsh of this place; snug passages with pitches; though he hasn't done it. Managed to reach a pitch, but could not cobble together a long enough belay. The place needs bolts; it's a thrutch with tackle sacs. Walked to Lisdoonvarna; warmed up at the Roadside fire, between scoldings of Mary.

2nd June Cave of the Wild Horses, Kilcorney Townland
Solo
Spoke with Jim Shannon of the water at the bottom of the pitch in Kilcorney; as unsure as to its presence or what it means. Explained the field in front the cave entrance flooded often and should be considered a Turlough. Hitched to Kilcorney, spoke to Michael

Davoren, owner. He explained after heavy rain the field can flood, but curiously not each time; the event is unpredictable, as is water depth. In contrast, during periods of settled weather, the field can also flood, but not to any great depth. Entered cave, reached the pitch; dropped obligatory stone, surprized to hear a splash, close to; shone torch, could make out water some twenty feet below. The field surface soft but not wet; need ask Tony Boycott about this place.

3rd June Doolin River Cave

John Brown, Noel Walsh, Martin Droney

Evening through trip arranged by JB, who rigged the pot. Very pleasant trip in great company; a swift trip taking just three hours; MD needs a reliable lamp.

June undated (8th) Ogot Tarddiant Hepste, Ystradfellte

Martin Bishop

Initially a reluctant trip, which turned out a cracker: a few short, shallow sumps in very nice passage. MB assessing the place to dig. Slept out at Porth-yr-Ogot resurgence meadow, after a session starting among the bars of Neath: finishing up at the New Inn.

June undated (9th) Ogot Glan Hepste – Ogot Tram Trucks, Ystradfellte

Martin Bishop

MB is fascinated by this place; supported him: it's not far from Ogot Tarddiant Hepste. A short sump leads to a hundred metre sump, then into an area which becomes smaller, boulders occasionally a hindrance; dug where flow issues from low bedding. It's a good-looking site. Abandoned exiting an alternate route as MB found it choked by flood debris.

21st June Wookey Hole

Ken James

Fair visibility; dived from three to 22 without surfacing. Exiting the same route; cracking trip; minor adjustment to new bottle strap needed, too stiff to release/ease underwater.

22nd June Cheddar Risings

Ken James, Martin Bishop

After moving KJ's stuff in WSM headed to Cheddar: dived in turn to the choke. Majority of flow seems to issue from the left of the slope; previous stacked boulders either side of the slope create overall instability. To avoid such mistakes the entire fill needs clearing, to maintain safe working. Late afternoon the manager arrived, spoke at length with MB, when asked, no question of loss of permissions were being entertained.

24th June "The Little Green Door under the Mountain" (*Rodney Stoke Rising*)

Solo

During lock removal, disturbed by a dog walker: 11:40pm. Had gained entry when voices heard; Feds had arrived. Inside used the tyre lever to jam the door. An animated voice complained of hooligans, describing the missing lock. After some scrabbling at the door, a calmer voice stated; "Sir, you can see, padlock or no, the door is jammed, tight shut". Left door, went to look at the spring. Used a mask, noted low bedding with big boulders. Easy enough removing the boulders, but ideally needs the water level reducing; Bristol Water is unlikely to ever agree to. Listened at the door for ten minutes, emerged; waited in the shadows for another ten. Saw the Feds, parked a hundred yards toward Cheddar, slipped away. If the Feds checked, they'd found a shiny new padlock, with its two keys.

9th July

Lost Ben Dors.

26th July Bwlch mine, Mid Wales

Nigel Burns, Andy Porter

Lots of remains of this once significant enterprise. Adits could not be followed too far before encountering collapses, likely blown in on closure. Found superb underground cages, in good repair. The free hanging ladder pitch into the vast chamber, superb; as the lifeline was too short for doubling made the thirty-metre climb without.

27th July Pwllrhenaid –Ceunant, Mid Wales

Nigel Burns, Andy Porter

Ceunant is a superb example of a Lead mine, seemingly small, but of great character. Much of Pwllrhenaid is lost, but superb ruins and other surface features remain.

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O.C.L has had his revenge; proclaiming in print “PC wishes to be known as Stumpy”.
Twat.

6th August Cuckoo Cleaves

Ken James

To terminal dig; an hour clearing Alan Mills bang spoil; oxygen a bit thin.

11th August Wookey Hole

Martin Bishop, Ken James

After waiting two weeks, Wookey head guide complained to MB he'd repeatedly asked divers, could they clean the lights, declaring his disappointment at the respect and cooperation some divers demonstrate toward him and his colleagues. Had a convivial chat with him, cleaned and re-located the lights as directed by a now, very happy guide. Dived to twenty for MB to assess another climb; planning the logistics, thoughts turned to issues extracting an injured casualty. Particularly if said casualty had facial injuries.

13th August Reads Cavern

Andy Porter, Ken James

Wriggling among the Brown Stewart series encountered an area so loose as to cause serious concern in the rear of the trouser department.

16th August GB; Recovery

Many attending

Formed into a hauling group; instructed to take kit, descend and assist with the recovery of a deceased male; it's thought the casualty sustained a heart attack.

17th August Škocjanske jame, Škocjan Cave, Postojna Cave, and Pekel Jama, Yugoslavia
Pauline Cronin

Twenty-three glorious days between beach, mountains and caves; Jim Eyre insisted use his caving contacts. Just prior to departure received letter saying, we'll meet you on your arrival. At Split airport met by Faris; a big hairy fella who was an escort through security. Dropped at the hotel, Faris soon returned with two enormous pals: drinking took place, followed by a meal in a nearby restaurant. Massive, good-natured row over paying the bill, Tomislav won settling with the equivalent sum of six quid! The start of three cracking weeks: Škocjanske jame, Škocjan Caves, Postojna Cave, and Pekel Jama.

Treated to superb trips by these crazy, warm-hearted Slav's, many of whom have fond memories of JE. Their wives fussed over Pauline while the husband went caving. Thoroughly spoilt by these tough, hospitable people and the superb trips. Bishop will love this place; the beer is good, but the spirits, like bad poteen. Introduced to some interesting climbing projects in two of the caves; sent thank you postcard to JE. Prior to departing left twenty quid behind the bar for these wonderful people.

12th September Wookey Hole - Ludwell
Ken James, Jerry?

09:00. To the Slot, trying Bishop's ongoing invention of a home-made buoyancy aid; it has some merit. Encountered issues operating the vent valve; jammed against the roof could not get the wrist to operate said valve; cut the body strap, sank like a stone, having put on extra to thoroughly test this device; bounced back to 9:2. Dumped surplus lead and device; murky swim back to chamber 3.

14:00. Ludwell; uneventful trip, cleared debris from KP1 entrance and the sump pool.

27th September Postcard from Faris

Postcard from the boys, bitterly complaining of the cash left for drink; Josip, the only casualty, believing Christmas had come early, constantly drank to the health of Irish and English cavers. Likely written during the PU, the handwriting just about readable.

1st October Doolin Sea Caves, Atlantic Ocean
Solo

Westerly wind; near to low tide, dived off the exposed reef; as instructed by Limerick Sub Aqua. Water choppy; sank quickly to avoid surface conditions; visibility two metres. Landed on the edge of a weed covered terrace, followed this west-ish. Within some thirty metres found a rift opening, tied line to kelp roots and entered; experienced surging. Carried swiftly forward to a junction with a western passage; swam north twenty metres. Felt surges entering from the west. On backmounted kit, decided had enough, as during surges the pillar valve knocked off the roof; an uneventful return to surface. Attempted climb out onto the reef, but waves too close together and strong. Took a bearing on the pier, submerged, swam over. Encountered fisherman Michael Guerin and his rust, rotten car; reminisced over tea.

2nd October Doolin Sea Caves – Bakers Hole, possibly in Lough North Townland
Solo

No chance revisiting the cave in the reef; sea conditions rougher than yesterday. Found Michael Guerin, asked of tides and currents; MG agreed answer any questions, on condition any Lobsters seen were reported to him alone. Walked south to locate Bakers Hole, a sea cave and blowhole formed in shale; no success, but a cracking walk before the promised rain arrived. No limestone seen; if the limestone dips to the southwest around 4/5°; at the Cliffs of Moher the limestone should occur twenty metres below sea level, allowing for tidal effects. So, highly likely the vast volume of fallen cliff debris has buried any cave entrances close to the cliff base; but what about further out?

3rd October Poulballyelly, Ballyelly Townland
Solo

Stopped by not having a long enough tether, took a four-pound lump hammer, 1/2 inch star drill and rawlbolts. Also took along eight ladders, knowing nothing of the site. Met Michael, herding cattle, he asked what was the draw of caving? Attempted answer, but waffled, found it difficult to explain. Relied on "I need see what's round the next corner".

Disappear down the entrance pitch with three tackle sacs. The area of the second pot is narrow; awkward swinging a hammer. More effort used to drag kit to the next pitch; previous trip's limit. Drilled hole, opening the baccy tin of bolts, dropped it. Made a mad scramble for them, only caught two, the rest disappeared over the pitch. Found several at the bottom. Needed make two trips along the next crawl to get the kit to the third pitch; installed another bolt. Used another two of the eight ladders; four so far. More crawling to the fourth pitch, bolt fitted; this pitch also used two ladders. At the bottom the stream disappears down a snug rift; the narrow streamway below soon becomes too tight for the chest to fit along; need ask Boycott what's beyond. Raining; took shelter in the roofless cabin; stretched out on the tackle bags, dozed off. Awoke frozen, long after dark; walked toward Doolin, caught a lift near Kilmoon church: scolded by Doll for the late return.

4th October Cave of the Wild Horse, Kilcorney Townland

Solo

Glorious sunny day, Doll insisted on the birthday breakfast before departure, during which Gus O'Conner overheard the plan; offering a lift to Kilcorney, as he was going to Ennis. Dropped at Kilcorney church, GO'C offering return that route, perhaps around 3pm; but no guarantee. Called to Michael Davoren for permissions; invited take tea and cake. MD related of recent, regular showers; doubting accessibility. Enjoyed the tea as MD spoke warmly of the ancient landscape around Kilcorney; departed, reluctantly. At the pitch, dropped stone, no splash, descended. Silty walls suggest regular immersion. When, how swiftly and how often does this place flood and drain? What causes the water table to act so erratically and rise so significantly? Found a small pool but could not see if it continued as a sump? Slid up to neck, feeling around with the feet; unsure it is a sump. A dreary place, everywhere covered with a soft silt. Out into the sun; long goodbyes to MD over more tea; walked toward Lisdoonvarna, taking the opportunity to prospect en-route. Found by GO'C near Poulawillin. Enjoyed a cracking birthday party in O'Connor's; a fine evening of music and dance.

5th October Poulcahermaan, Cahermaan Townland

Solo

Eventually found the entrance, more luck than design; a little beyond the sink, covered over to protect cattle. Entrance, a twenty-foot rift. Beyond, a sinuous passage becomes a crawl. After having to dig through multiple heaps of stream debris had enough; it's worth a closer look though. Ideally with help to dig through the debris.

6th October Pouldubh

Martin Droney, John Brown, Noel Walsh

A trip and a bit of digging. In North entrance, small stream. The boys had enough of digging after an hour. Exited South entrance. Stopped at the Roadside 8pm, left at 4am. Woken by Doll at 9am, asking, aren't you catching the ferry today? Packed kit, got a lift off the Guinness lorry to Ennis; told a lorry was going to Clonmel cider factory this afternoon. Hitched to Rosslare from there; missed another ferry. Asking about found a lorry driver going to Portsmouth. Dropped at Temple Meads.

14th November Swildons Hole

Ken James

Climbing downstream from the 20, KJ reached yet another small alcove; he believes he can see another possible 'ole.

16th November Swildons Hole

Ken James, John Widley

Set off for the little 'ole, ascending stream right, traversed around upstream end and onto a tiny stance. Traversed a little further then, as the next bit needed longer legs, KJ took over. Ascending another metre, KJ spragged into the 'ole; yet another dam alcove.

19th November Sludge Pit

Ken James, John Widley

Three hours digging at Jarratt's dig; he's convinced it's a choked sump.

30th November Ludwell Cavern

Ken James, John Widley, Jerry?

Replaced damaged line from sump pool to KP1 with KJ; found it had been cut with a knife. J and JW watched from the motor.

9th December Pinetree Pot

Solo

Pleasant evening trip in this fascinating place; feels there's much more to be found. The ladder pitch superb.

15th December Stoke Lane

Peter Moorman

Evening trip to Stoke II; PM wanting photograph Victoria: a nice, unhurried trip around the chambers, in very good company; fierce smell of diesel throughout the streamway.

20th December Poulcahermaan, Cahermaan Townland

Solo

Hitched to the track opposite Poulancheoil; returned to dig along the crawl. Some ribs of flood deposit had re-grown a little; after a short distance the passage split: ribs of gravel continue. The crawl is of an awkward height. Encountered ribs where mud is increasing among the gravel; exited after four hours. Walking back along the shale boundary found a gap in the heather, sixty metres west of Poulcahermaan. Dropped obligatory stone, it rattled away for some four metres: it can wait. Set dancing in Vaughan's, Kilfenora; a superb session of dancers and fantastic musicians aged from 8 to 80.

21st December Hole near Poulcahermaan, Cahermaan Townland

Solo

Lift from Jim Shannon; dropped at the track. Cleared rocks, exposing a narrow rift; dug down a metre to a flat stone jammed across the rift. After an hour of wroggling, it fell, off to the side. Wriggled down some two metres into an eighteen-inch wide by three feet high passage; the way obstructed by lumps of limestone and shale. Two hours cleared this choke, three metres on yet another. Returned to the entrance area to restack hastily packed spoil; dragged back rocks from the choke, stuffing them into every available crevice. Repacking the spoil, the original boulder slipped down the entrance, blocking the way out; reaching up, it fell, glancing off the right shoulder, landing on the boots after travelling across the face. Managed to roll it into the narrow vertical joint; an almost perfect fit. Two lesser chokes also cleared. At around forty metres, gravel ridges similar to those in Poulcahermaan were cleared, swept to either side of the passage. After thirty odd metres the passage height reduced to two feet. A flag of limestone obstructing the way on; managed to bury it. Gravel ridges regularly encountered; the passage some

three feet wide: believe the cave trending south-ish? Out into the dark and rain; hitched a lift to Lisdoonvarna off Nicky, driving to the Shamrock, Lahinch, joined him for pints.

22nd December Hole near Poulcahermaan, Cahermaan Townland

Solo

Walked to Doolin church; got a lift from there. Secured tape at entrance and measured the present limit; ninety-seven metres: average bearing 220°. Recovered tape, resumed digging. After twenty metres encountered several large boulders; three hours to clear. The distance to drag and dump large spoil increases; gravel is spread thinly across the floor. Imagined falling water; after ten metres the stream dances over cobbles, hence the chuckling. Another twenty odd metres to another flake: a real struggle burying this in the thin floor sediments. Knackered after nine hours. Hitched to Doolin; enjoyed a fine party in McHugh's; fell asleep returning to O'Connor's.

23rd December Hole near Poulcahermaan, Cahermaan Townland

Solo

Got a lift from Jack Garrihy; dropped off in rain; the scrounged bin liner making a fine rain cape. Deployed tape, measured one hundred and sixty metres to yesterday's limit: cracking. Left tape in situ; worked along the crawl for thirty odd metres. Passage drops two metres into a long, deep pool. Digging in dry grotts, numbing; the eight-metre duck formed by a large bank of silty gravel. Broke it apart, creating a narrow channel, the falling water level bliss: the cold quite painful. Regular ridges hindered swift progress, so difficult to generate much body warmth. Retrieving tape, found it broken from the clip. Sorted break; measured total length as one hundred ninety-three metres; adjusted for the repair. Knackered after eight hours: delighted at the find. Started hitching to Dublin for the Christmas. Picked up outside Kilcolgan, dropped on O'Donaghues doorstep: slept the whole journey. Into O'Donaghues to hydrate and eat; too late; sandwiches gone. Rang Pauline, announced arrival, she suggested meeting up in O'Donaghues, then go for a meal. PMC appeared in half an hour with a dozen of her Corps de Ballet pals, as Barney McKenna and Ronnie Drew belted out another tune. Finished at "Annabel's" nightclub; the bouncer requesting, please remove those boots when performing on the dance floor. A cracking start to Christmas.

29th December Hole near Poulcahermaan

Solo

Walking along the track met John. Passing the time of day, explained the plan, to revisit the new cave; upset, John denied access. Calming him, found cavers of a Dublin College, had left the Poulcahermaan entrance open, not replacing the flagstones covering the entrance, John lost a young calf down it. So, not a happy man; went to his farm, drank tea, ate cáca. John has agreed allow one more trip; but not today, tomorrow.

30th December Hole near Poulcahermaan

Solo

Presented John with a bottle of Paddy as a thank you; a huge gaff, he's a Pioneer; good natured, did not take offence. At the entrance took three hours to remove the boulders cast down the rift. Found a large stream, maybe an overflow from Poulcahermaan? Also found the drained duck a pool once again. Some sediments had reformed, dug through; water level fell swiftly. Passage height gradually decreased to eighteen inches; gravel ribs cleared to either side. Some thirty metres beyond the previous limit, (about 230 metres), the gap between gravel floor and roof reduced to eight inches; dug at the floor, finding bedrock four inches beneath. Managed dig along twenty metres; doing so created much

needed warmth, lost in the canal. Realized this was all that could be done. Exited, built a boulder cover so it will not collapse and choke the rift. Called to the farm to thank John; confirmed the entrance covered. Chanced waxing lyrical of the beauty of his caves and how they drain the land. John smiled, said nice try, but no; he was sorry but he'd rather cavers not visit at all. Will ask in a year or so. Conservatively the cave is two hundred and forty metres, depth about seven metres, give or take: on an average bearing of 220°. The find celebrated by the whole bar: a cracking session.

31st December Cave north of Cullaun V

Solo

Those much-enthused last night, to do a caving trip today had not appeared by midday; hitched to Lisdoonvarna, walked the rest. Decided to follow a lead suggested by Sean O'Ce; of a small sink north of Cullaun V. Spent a while locating it; found a gulley with exposed limestone leading to a sink. Cleared flood debris; finding an entrance. After a hundred metres, crawled through something very dead in the stream; backed up swiftly. The way beyond wide open, the stench horrific. Needs a while before returning. Waiting at the bar, told sharply by Doll, to go shower: the smell was affecting the more sensitive. Nice and shiny, allowed join the New Year session; superb.