

# 1984

1<sup>st</sup> January Fisherstreet Pot, Doolin Townland  
Solo

First of the year. Although the Aille River was high, two feet of airspace present; told Doll of return in five hours; she mentioned a fella had been asking for me this morning. Into Fisherstreet, stopped at Poulacronaun, pulled a few more boulders out, managed another half metre. Stream a little high, no issues exiting the entrance bedding. Passing the farm Marie and Mihal insisted on a new year's hot whiskey. Walked to O'Connor's; toasted self at the fire; force fed hot whiskies by Doll, to keep out the cold. The driver encountered at Boulder Pot walked in; his demeanour, friendly? Sat himself down, enquiring of caving; what was it made people go into poutaloons? Enthusiastically described delights seen underground, he appeared genuinely interested.....? Don't expect further issues.

4<sup>th</sup> January Lung Tonic Pot  
Solo

Spent the evening clearing flood debris, and five buckets.

11<sup>th</sup> January Lung Tonic Pot  
Solo

Some shale holds its form well; difficult to hack through; good draught, four buckets.

18<sup>th</sup> January Lung Tonic Pot  
Solo

Two freezing hours, five buckets.

1<sup>st</sup> February Lung Tonic Pot  
Solo

Surprisingly eight buckets, from off the left side of the passage.

11<sup>th</sup> February Bull Pot, Yorkshire

Jonathon Burgess, Martin Bishop, Ian Parsons, John Compton  
IP rang, JB planned a trip, inviting MB and PC. An excellent trip, one issue, the strap on IP's hand jammer broke. It's a dam long way to the dig site, JB wanted to assess. The only way to dig this site is by overnighing, maximising the man hours, lessening time lost getting there; suggested a team of six, rotating as three man shifts.

12<sup>th</sup> February Alum Pot, Yorkshire

Martin Bishop, Ian Parsons, Jonathon Burgess, John Compton  
SRT trip on the main pitch: cannot get excited about hanging around on a rope. Pleasant enough trip in very good company.

14<sup>th</sup> February Lung Tonic Pot  
Solo

A sharpened spade easily trims the edge of the passage; six buckets.

24<sup>th</sup> February Mexican Embassy, 8 Halkin St, London  
Solo

Greeted by the Ambassadors' secretary; requested permission for proposed expedition. After a polite meeting, explaining the aims of the trip and desire to involve locals, both officials disinterested; reluctant to grant permission without further details. Stating that

to arrange such difficult permissions would be mucho expense. Told return with amended application. Need a patron to add weight to the application; left with the impression permission will be in some way under the counter, expensive; final cost in cash to dignitaries unknown.

26<sup>th</sup> February Heathrow

Solo

Met with Andrew Coupland; an owner of the “Flying Tigers”, the world’s largest air cargo company. An amiable man, delightfully unperturbed at moving one tonne of equipment to Mexico. Thirty personnel, in one go, was the issue. An average of six seats are in each aircraft, facilitating global movement of staff. If the expedition could assemble over two weeks, then all could be transported free. As staff were moving constantly, expedition personnel could only access the spare seats, which might mean some of the team waiting several days at an airport, at worst a week. However, AC pointed out the R.A.F. flew from Brize Norton direct to Belize twice a week, supplying the UK’s military base. Squadron Leader James Jewel, Station Commander, may be able to assist.

29<sup>th</sup> February R.A.F. Brize Norton, Oxford

Squadron Leader James Jewel

Solo

Cordial meeting with JJ who listened patiently to expedition aims; explaining, on receipt of a UK ATA Carnet form, countersigned by HM Custom’s, an aircraft would easily carry all men and equipment, as well as its routine load in one trip. Crossing into Mexico may be an issue; bandits operating along the border often known to ransom captives. Escort to the border is easily arranged, beyond, the Team were on their own. Arranging passage with official Mexican authorities was important. Yet, based on his personal experience, such arrangements also require payment to local, as he put it “representatives”.

7<sup>th</sup> March Lung Tonic Pot

Nigel Burns

Fifteen buckets of spoil; useful having assistance.

9<sup>th</sup> March Mexico Meeting, Castle Green Pub, Bristol

Of the twenty-six showing interest, three were absent; discussion focused on “getting there and back”. Many understandably unhappy about the unrest along the border. Of equal concern, potential delays waiting for a flight. One alternative, take normal flights to the Yucatan and hire vehicles; prices varied; none cheap enough for most assembled. Another choice, fly to the States, hire trucks in Texas, driving from there. In response to the plea, none offered assist research alternatives. A little frustrated, announced it was time others became involved. From the poor reception and lack of drive, suspect little of this group. Will wait, and see what happens: many talk a great trip.

14<sup>th</sup> March Lamb Leer

Mark Lumley, Steve Milner, Frizz? Martin Becket, Jim Smart

JS and MB played at SRT practise, others to the end of Beaumont’s drive.

31<sup>st</sup> March Wookey Hole

James Cobbett, Martin Bishop

Chamber 3 to 9:1 via Loop extension; JC’s acceleration reduced visibility to somewhere south of zero. Caught him up in 9:1, JC returned via Loop Extension.

4<sup>th</sup> April UK Home Office

Reply to enquiries; Jonathon Farrell wrote advising not to use the Mexican - Belize border without prior arrangements with both Mexican and Belize authorities.

7<sup>th</sup> April Langcliffe, Yorkshire

Andrew? John Compton, Ian Parsons, Martin Bishop, Jonathon Burgess  
Wednesday night, contacted by JB offering a trip; good weather promised the weekend; phoned MB who, as ever, game for anything. Picked up MB at his place, 4.30am. MB fast asleep by Bristol. Kettlewell 9am: superb breakfast. Others arrived 10am. Political issue over the booking; IP sorted it with a simple fuck off and get a life. A serious amount of crawling; recognized the obvious need for settled weather along this section. Reached a chamber beyond which IP says is too dodgy to follow with the present size of stream; the route consisting of crawls. Where a minor rise would have consequences. A slow trip out, delighted the team were also feeling the effects of the trip. The early start, long drive and cold water gradually taking a toll. That, and the superb eleven-hour trip; managed to get to a bar and stay awake for two tasty pints.

8<sup>th</sup> April Dove Mine, Yorkshire

Martin Bishop, Jonathon Burgess, John Compton  
Weary, but fancied another trip; a short one would facilitate MB, rough after a late-night whiskey session in the hut with Ian Parsons. JB asked if interested in old mines? Headed north to a farm, permission swiftly granted. Very nice wander around two superb, partly flooded, lead workings; very nice endeavours.

13<sup>th</sup> April Ireland via The Highbury Vaults, Bristol.

Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

MM appeared at the Vaults much later than planned: early attendees well pissed. MM had the car serviced, to avoid issues during the trip. Yet it acted up en-route to Bristol. Approaching Fishguard, needed push it up the steeper hills. On the quay it wouldn't start: pushed it onto the ferry. Arrived Rosslare, pushed it off. Phuffed with it throughout the week, eventually found the points had not been secured correctly during the service.

14<sup>th</sup> April Roadside, Lisdoonvarna

Jim Smart, Neil Scanlon, Steve Emery

The plan, Poulmagollum through trip; passing Lisdoonvarna, 09:50; JS needed baccy, stopped at the Roadside. After ten minutes waiting in the motor entered to find JS with pint, drooling over the new Swedish barmaid, Brigitte. Joined him for a swift pint. Many, many, later, Steve Milner, Jim Bakewell, Martin Price, wandered in after doing Doolin River Cave; the session moved to O'Connor's; late night.

15<sup>th</sup> April Cave of the Wild Horses, Kilcorney Townland

Jim Smart, Martin Becket, Jim Bakewell, JS, Steve Milner

Trip to the new extensions, discovered by Pete Glanville last year. An excellent find; the vertical fluting quite superb, so very similar to that in Wookey 20.

16<sup>th</sup> April Faunarooska, Faunarooska Townland

Mark Lumley, Jim Bakewell

The original plan was to do Pollballiny with JS, SM and MM. But, had a serious attack of the shits. So, JS solo'd the trip, over five hours. Later, recovered; did Faunarooska: Jim Shannon's had been told one of the pots had been traversed to passage beyond: had a look, neither pot has.

17<sup>th</sup> April Pollapooka, Ballyelly Townland

Mike McDonald, Jim Bakewell, Steve Milner

Morning, rain. A trip to investigate its potential: well worth the digging session, the place screams potential. Pulled out boulders attempting to locate the stream route. Returning along the boreen observed potential for cave along this side of the mountain: something, maybe a mile, of little enough known between Pollapooka and Faunarooska. Found new S.R.T setup much better; thanks to SM's advice. Up the pitch in ten minutes. MM had minor leg loop issues, even so, also up quickly.

17<sup>th</sup> April Pollantobar, NEW FIND, Ballyelly Townland

Mike McDonald, Jim Bakewell, Steve Milner

Afternoon: By the time all emerged from Pollapooka the weather had settled; cast about for new cave. SM noticed a large stream resurging from a recent slump in a small hollow. SM, in dry grots, paused where the large stream emerged from a duck; called PC, in torn wetsuit, to push on. A long duck entered a beautifully decorated rift. Old coins and items scattered along the stream bed. On surface MM and SM followed the shouted comments. Reached a projection in the crawl, obstructing progress; beyond, wide open: need a lump hammer. Up top MM found a Holy Well; its votive offerings deposited around the ledges. Delighted at the find, into the bar, surprized at Tony Boycott's UBSS pal seeming quite put out about this "easy" find and of Pete Glanville's discovery in Kilcorney 1, last year. UBSS are surveying PG's discovery; Jim Smart believes in order to stake some sort claim. A superb session, lasting to the small hours.

18<sup>th</sup> April Poulmagollum, Caherbullog Townland

Jim Bakewell, Mike McDonald, Jim Smart, Steve Milner

Water levels high: made a lot of rain last night. Plan, attempt reach main junction, at least. An aquatic trip, exiting against a strong current: great fun.

19<sup>th</sup> April Finavarra Peninsula – Silver Mine, Fanore – S4

Jim Bakewell, Martin Price

An archaeological trip, focused on the Martello Tower; managed climb the piece of tatty rope hanging from the doorway, its end reached, standing on MP's shoulders. Accessed the roof via a mural staircase; cannons still in place, minus their carriages. All interior timber flooring and room dividers long decayed. Examined Gleninagh Castle; a very well-preserved tower house. Had another look around the silver mine, Fanore. Also, a look at S4; again, concerned at the obvious devastation wreaked across the flat landscape by south-westerly storms. Spent an hour attempting get a better idea where to dig; none of the boys interested in digging.

20<sup>th</sup> April Monivea, Galway

Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

Jack Coleman's book, describes the area, a limestone plateau. After an extensive drive around, peering over hedgerows. Nothing cave like seen; depressions, sinks or streams. No karst limestone pavement or outcrops. A place of pasture. Needs a closer inspection.

21<sup>st</sup> April Connemara

Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

Travelled across Connemara to scale Mwelrea; one of the twelve bens. A three-hour walk ascended a trackless, broad glacial valley, rewarded with the superb view of the northern march of The Burren; stunning weather. Back in Doolin, Steve Emery, Neil Scallon, with

23<sup>rd</sup> April Pollantobar, New Extension, Ballyelly Townland

Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

The plan today was to push on and survey the new cave; Tony Boycott kindly loaned his survey tape and photo stat of the area. SM and PC surveyed, while MM dug downstream from the depression toward Pollapooka I. At the projection, applied the lump hammer, breaking off the wide, thin single flake. On the surface MM followed the laughter below, finding another entrance, hidden among the heather; thrusting his head down waved madly to the lads. Crawled further upstream, to where the stream issues from beneath a large block of limestone, on this block is lain coursed stonework; constructed to form the well cavity. The Holy Well is recorded as Toberanahircallough: 900ft OD, off the six-inch maps. Surveying completed as Phil Romford ambled past; the others had arrived. Stuart McManus, Jarratt, Barry Wilton et al. another fine evening.

24<sup>th</sup> April Pollomega, Ballynahown Townland

Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

A while since the last visit; eventually found the entrance, the area has undergone some changes to improve drainage and clear encroaching bushes; hence difficulty finding it. After a good way in, needed exit with the shits, yet again. Closely followed by MM, also ill. Is it all the drink, MM's cooking or the dead calf inside the entrance? SM continued for a while then surfaced. All to Fanore for a good wash off in a bitter cold sea.

25<sup>th</sup> April Fergus River Cave, Roughan Townland

Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

The flood channel becoming overgrown. Still rough from yesterday, sat in the chamber, with rumbling guts, while the others went on. MM reappeared also feeling crook. Walked to Poul-na-boe to check the resurgence. Several small holes noted that need probing.

26<sup>th</sup> April Poulmagrai, Crumlin Townland

Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

A cracking trip; slimline SM managed to squeeze into the aven near the traverse; the bugger. To the sump and out.

27<sup>th</sup> April Caher Valley Cave, Fanore More Townland

Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

A small, high-level remnant, of possible archaeological interest. Crossed the river and walked to the summit of Doughbranneen, +1000ft, via Caherdoonfergus +600ft. Orchids everywhere. Also, though not as common, saw a deep blue flower growing in the lee of the prevailing wind; really beautiful. Walk often interrupted by severe attack of the shits. Back in the bar Doll O'Conner advised Port and Brandy, to combat stomach cramps and associated issues. Tried the remedy, result, so pissed couldn't care or stand.

2<sup>nd</sup> May Lung Tonic Pot

Solo

Removed more of the roof; eight buckets.

4<sup>th</sup> May Mexican Embassy

Solo

Returned with more detailed expedition plan. Met with different secretaries, more robust in their demands. The expedition may take place up on depositing a ten-thousand-pound bond. Underwriting the expedition, against possible claims or damages, deposited at the Mexican Embassy at least one month before departure; to be returned six months after

its arrival in the UK. Couldn't help but burst out laughing; from the offended looks, am sure the response knackered the application.

Business manic.

23<sup>rd</sup> May Lung Tonic Pot  
Solo

Four hours; eleven buckets; shagged out.

25<sup>th</sup> May Wookey Hole  
Martin Bishop

Uneventful trip to Wookey 22: visibility a metre. MB set out new ring positions on his chest harness. With elastic cord about waist and shoulders, holds it in line with the torso. Tried it from 22 to 9:2, and through to 3, then back to 9:2: it sits really well; impressed.

6<sup>th</sup> June Swildons Hole  
Steve Milner, Keynsham Exploration Group

The long round trip; enjoyed one of the most hysterical trips, ever; K.E.G are refreshingly anarchic. A real good bunch of individuals.

16<sup>th</sup> June Lost Johns, Yorkshire  
Martin Bishop, John Evans, John Compton, Ian Parsons

A cracking trip; the short legs really don't enjoy traverses; a superb place though. Serious PU during which IP spoke of diving Far Waters. Asking for help; planned for, likely July.

17<sup>th</sup> June Short Drop Cave - Gavel Pot, Yorkshire  
Martin Bishop, John Evans, John Compton

Another superb choice by JC; a cracking streamway. Having such pals to suggest trips is pure delight; a trip to this cave would never have actually spring to mind.

19<sup>th</sup> June Lung Tonic Pot  
Solo

Pestered by flies; found a very dead fox in the ditch; dry conditions, six buckets.

30<sup>th</sup> June Swildons Hole  
Solo

8lb of lead to II; replacing the missing. Continued to IV, exited Blue Pencil. The lines in II and III show signs of wear; no junctions to any of the Bells: uneventful exit.

July undated (4<sup>th</sup>?) Swildons Hole  
Pete Williams, Terry Smith

To sump III; their first, each a little anxious, quickly overcome. Replaced line.

July undated (12<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup>?) Lascaux II, Font de Gaume, Rouffignac,  
Pauline Cronin

An excellent ten-day trip; taking in La Rochelle, Nantes, and Les Eyzies; the show caves overwhelming. Ran out of cash, visited Credit Agricole requesting access account in the UK, told return tomorrow. Yves, manager, said that Lloyd's bank would/could not help. Explaining, though officially Credit Agricole could not help, he saw a genuine problem.

Kindly offering his own cash to solve returning to the UK: a really nice human: could be Irish. Back in the UK, immediately sent Yves a bank draft and thank you card.

8<sup>th</sup> August Lung Tonic Pot

Solo

Damp conditions; five buckets removed.

August undated (9<sup>th</sup>?) Desolation Row, Swildons Hole

Martin Bishop

Morning start to XII to check the other lines; IV and V replaced with old climbing rope; line through VI in fair condition, as is IX. Ladder is in fair condition; rope replaced.

15<sup>th</sup> August Lung Tonic Pot

Solo

Shale and clay formation continues; five buckets.

23<sup>rd</sup> August Porth-Yr-Ogof

Martin Bishop

To check beyond sump 10; surfaced after ten metres in an air bell. MB arrived and dived into 10.2. After a tug on the line, followed. Surfaced in another small air bell. Led again, ran out of line after forty metres; securing line to weight lodged under boulders. Drove to The Pegasus Hut, Derbyshire, no one about. To the Eagle; met George Cooper, went for a Chinese; early night for the trip tomorrow.

24<sup>th</sup> August Giants, Derbyshire

Martin Bishop

Early start to East Canal: water levels low; a cracking trip. Drove to Yorkshire, reached the Craven mid evening; no sign of the others until almost closing; went easy on the drink in the Crown; bed before midnight.

25<sup>th</sup> August Gaping Gill, Far Waters, Yorkshire

Jonathon Burgess, Martin Bishop, Ian Parsons, John Compton

Sherpa'd to Far Waters, supporting JB and IP. Early start for the long carry. Found the bottles had been taken to main chamber yesterday. Picked up kit and plodded on. As the boys dressed, assisted them. The plan; after departure, wait ten minutes, just in case help required; then go and play for an hour. Returned on the hour found IP just back; JB had continued in poor visibility; arrived after eighty minutes; passage still going. Slow trip to Bar Pot. Surfaced 3am; kipped in the van; up at 8am. Left MB back in Radstock, 3pm. Three trips, three areas, three days; cracking. All are enthusiastic, positive companions.

29<sup>th</sup> August Lung Tonic Pot

Solo

The small trickle makes life drier, but the place stinks; six buckets.

1<sup>st</sup> September Porth-Yr-Ogof

Martin Bishop

Tied on the line in sump 10, continued another twenty metres to an air bell, after five minutes MB arrived; checked kit. Minor leak on his 1<sup>st</sup> stage: led off. After ten minutes returned, the way blocked with boulders. Dived to confirm findings; recovered all lines.

No trips: business very busy.

4<sup>th</sup> October Singing River Mine

Ken James

Another trip to this superb mine, as KJ notes, it's ripe for photography.

27<sup>th</sup> October Swildons Hole

Ken James, Martin Bishop

Long Round trip, minor route-finding issues, all memory based. Though MB blamed the CO<sub>2</sub>: almost missed the bar.

31<sup>st</sup> October Lung Tonic Pot

Ken James

Installed temporary shoring to the upper, loose area of entrance. Cut more shale away; the space is too small to timber and dig, need enlarge area. Two buckets.

10<sup>th</sup> November Swildons Hole

Colin Williams

Clare Chambers rang, asking to take Colin down Swildons; pleasant trip to sump II. Up Valentine's Landing, completing the round trip. CW delighted with himself.

17<sup>th</sup> November Rhino Rift

Ian Parsons, John Kelly, Geoff Pickering

A fun trip, owing to JK unused to ladder; though grand on SRT: all to the bottom.

18<sup>th</sup> November Lung Tonic Pot

Ian Parsons, John Kelly, Geoff Pickering

Another two hours cutting shale, made awkward by the high stream, the boys liked the idea, initially; after an hour took off swiftly for t'North.

20<sup>th</sup> November Lung Tonic Pot

Solo

The place deluged; stream high; flooded; no digging.

21<sup>st</sup> November Lung Tonic Pot

Solo

A pool had backed up? Kitted up and slid in. Pulled out six fertilizer bags full of domestic rubbish. Will need a rake to drag out the other crap. No buckets.

22<sup>nd</sup> November Eastwater

Ken James

A pleasant round trip: The Hunters surprizingly busy.

1<sup>st</sup> December Disappointment Pot, Yorkshire

Tim Gould, "Hermann"? Mike McDonald

Bristol Poly divided into three groups to, Disappointment, Long Kin and Tatham Wife. Dropped at Clapham; walked the rest. Pleasant trip; first time for "Hermann". Out into darkness; a cold walk back. In the bar concern arose for the boys doing Long Kin; their eventual arrival due to problems passing a knot.



2<sup>nd</sup> December Valley Entrance, Yorkshire  
“Hermann”? Mike McDonald, Geoff Pickering, John Compton  
Lower Swinto, Philosophers Crawl into Toyland; having GP give names to the places was a bonus. Other groups encountered, exiting; a wait at the ladder.

5<sup>th</sup> December Lung Tonic Pot  
Solo

Brought three, one metre drain rods, and scraper. Spent a chill two hours pulling out an assortment of domestic debris, small and large bags. Though stream was quite high; two buckets removed. A long, late session; shagged out.

19<sup>th</sup> December Pouldubh, Blakesmountain, Townland  
Solo

Arrived Doolin mid-afternoon: rain from Rosslare to the Shannon, sunshine arrived on crossing into Clare. Called into Doll, to avoid a bollocking later on. Over pints, found no takers for a trip. Walking to middle entrance, noted the ground sodden; the stream clearly heard from the track. No chance going downstream; the crawl impassable. Went upstream in a strong current to where there was very little airspace. Exit swift, swept out by the current. Reflected on how flooding affects the terminal choke dig. By compacting sand and gravels, settlement by inundation and if a gap present, scouring? At Pouldubh south, the surface waterfall was spectacular; entrance passage taking a six-inch stream. At first junction, water welly deep. At the bend, upstream the cascade, experienced issues standing. The cascade thunderous; enchanting. From the edge of the cascade pool, could see the stream tumbling down the climb from Middle entrance. Out to the cold and dark. Called to the Roadside for a pint, stayed for a session.

20<sup>th</sup> December Boulder Pot, Cahermacnaghtan Townland  
Solo

Scrounged a metal spike from Michael Crowe, to belay the ladder; spike easily pushed its three-foot length into boggy ground, requiring little effort. Found the previously stacked spoil slumped into the dig area. Restacked the loose debris, this time facing it with large rocks; quite a stream running; soaked in minutes.

21<sup>st</sup> December Boulder Pot, Cahermacnaghtan Townland  
Solo

Continued in wet conditions using the short nail bar; useful in the confined space. Two hours digging before desperately cold; exited for a mug of tea. Another two hours until frozen; will return tomorrow. Available room to dump spoil will become an issue: dark holed tools, tea kit and stove.

22<sup>nd</sup> December Boulder Pot, Cahermacnaghtan Townland  
Solo

Moved the ladder to avoid issues collapsing the lip of the pot; Doll forcibly provided a huge flask of hot water; able to enjoy tea breaks in the rain without delay of firing up the petrol stove. Reaching the point where extra hands would be useful. Serious rainfall this afternoon, river outside O'Connor's very high.

23<sup>rd</sup> December Boulder Pot, Cahermacnaghtan Townland  
Solo

Still raining; raining all night. Found the dig flooded, spoil packed against the wall not visible. Either it's collapsed or the water that deep? Packed, left kit with Martin Droney.

Ian Parsons had rung O'Connor's; left message; John Compton is in St. Mary's hospital; will cancel return to Doolin. Christmas in Dublin, then change ferry and head for Leeds; likely will New Year on Mendip.

26<sup>th</sup> December Dublin Underground, Lord Edward Bar, Dublin  
Colum Hines, Paul Fitzsimmons, Pauline Cronin and lots of Pauline's Ballet colleagues. Introduced to CH by Paul Fitzsimmons. He explained, most of the Liffey's tributaries have been built over as the city has developed. Employed as an engineer by Dublin city, CH is happy to try arrange access during an inspection. Excellent.

28<sup>th</sup> December Pudsey, Leeds  
John Compton  
Found Evelyn at home; John still in St. Mary's. Originally suffering a burst appendix, he had an infection, causing setbacks. Though much better, only family were permitted. Arrived St. Mary's, told reception was JC's step-brother. Had travelled all the way from Bristol. JC shocked and delighted. Had two hours of fun before JC's mother and Evelyn arrived; a very nice family. Nurse informing JC should be back home by the New Year.

31<sup>st</sup> December St. Cuthbert's Swallet  
Stuart MacManus, Jarratt  
Working trip to sump II, to increase the height of the second dam and clean the first dam's pipe. Recent fun, little sleep and dodgy lamp, caused fatigue and light issues. However, New Year's Heave was well attended and survived.