

1985

1st January Thrupe Lane
Martin Bishop, Ben Cowley, Ian Parsons, Geoff Pickering
Escorted the northern visitors to TL. BC, deteriorating by the minute, failing to emerge from the motor. Cracking trip to the bottom of Atlas; IP has SRT off to a fine art.

6th January Lost Derek Crossland

January undated Lost George Cooper

9th January Lung Tonic Pot
Solo
Used the drain rods to drag out more debris; fitted a mesh grill to reduce this happening again. Two hours is pretty much the upper limit to work in the stream.

17th January Lung Tonic Pot
Solo
Mesh grill works well. No digging, stream volume too great.

21st January Charterhouse Cave
Jim Whitehead, Terry Smith, Pete Williams
Deep snow; eventually found the entrance, among the drifts; a pleasant trip; no issue with squeezes, a cracking find for Alison. Met Jarratt; the wedding's set for 27th April.

24th January Lung Tonic Pot
Solo
Some snow drifts still hanging on, stream high; no digging; bugger.

27th January Ubley Warren Pot
Terry Smith, Pete Williams, Jim Whitehead, Pete?
Pikes chamber; removed spoil possibly produced by Al Mills: JW unhappy about heavy snow continuing to fall, fearing unable to return to Bristol. No issues encountered.

31st January Lung Tonic Pot
Solo
Cleared grill; dug an hour before frozen, two buckets.

2nd February Swildons Hole
Martin Bishop
Replaced line in sump IX. Met Cheg, Aileen and young Katherine in the Hunter's.

7th February Lung Tonic Pot
Solo
Very wet and cold conditions; three buckets.

9th February Pate Hole, Yorkshire

Ian Parsons, Geoff Pickering

Weather had been stable, plenty of snow; so, change of plan. A place which demands respect; IP explained it can resurge following heavy rain. A good trip, but noted the others constantly alert, monitoring stream level.

11th February Wookey Hole

Martin Bishop

An early start, taking advantage of the excellent visibility; commenced re-examining the roof to the Slot. Took turns ascended off the main line while the other maintained the integrity of the fixed belay; nothing found. In the Hunters met Mark Lumley, furious the recent BEC Berger Training Meet was a clusterfuck. Determined to be in a capable team, intends looking among the participating clubs. Related, on both Berger trips, fortunate to bottom on each occasion. Offered the opportunity solely due to the leaders sidelining the less committed to achieve the expeditions aim, bottom the place. ML also very unhappy at the poor organization, and many of the individual's skill levels.

15th February Wookey Hole

Martin Bishop

More prospecting the roof of main passage for potential leads; nothing of note, as yet. The use of a large screwgate karabiner, securing search line to main line, increases peace of mind as the visibility fails.

20th February Wookey Hole

Martin Bishop

Third trip searching the roof: time consuming, as passage surprisingly wide in places. Evening trips provide a nicer alternative to weekends; when others may be present. Optimum visibility maintained throughout. A dam fine trip

28th February Wookey Hole

Martin Bishop

Visibility still good, recommenced search of the roof upstream of the Slot; nothing new of note; MB reported finding superb scalloping.

5th March Wookey Hole

Martin Bishop

Visibility down on last week. Suggested to MB, check the shallow route; visibility poor. Several gaps checked; nothing of real note: need return to complete this area.

13th March Lung Tonic Pot

Solo

Decent sized stream made life difficult; cleared leaf debris from mesh, three buckets.

16th March LADS Dinner, Bristol

A cracking, hilarious event, which for most started earlier in the day at the Old Castle Green; various bars visited en-route to the dinner in Clifton; miles away.

20th March Lung Tonic Pot

Solo

Smaller stream; cleared debris from the mesh, it works well; four buckets.

27th March Lung Tonic Pot
Solo

A tough session; blue with the cold, managed ninety minutes; three buckets.

5th April Mitchelstown Cave – Poulanian
Mike McDonald, Mark Lumley, Steve Milner

Morning: Mitchelstown Cave, after a nice lunch with owner Jackie English, enjoyed another superb wander around the cave, an excellent place.

Afternoon: Poulanian. SM took photos whilst some pushed on to the sump; gravels along the approach had accumulated since dived, 1974? ML noted the sound of running water from a small calcited hole; potential bypass? Bristol Poly arrived mid evening.

6th April Poulmagollum, Caherbullog Townland
Mike McDonald, Mark Lumley, Steve Milner

The plan, do as much cave distance as possible. In Gunman's entrance, through Muddy Links, up Branch Passage Gallery to where the junction of east and west passages heralds long crawls along the stream in either direction. Headed downstream, down the pitch, onto Main Junction; to Cotter's Gallery; Gallery Passage and along the Canyon; turned at the Gours: a superb six-hour trip. ML totals 7.5 kilometres in 6hrs.

7th April Knockaunsmountain - Doolin River Cave, Doolin Townland
Mike McDonald, Mark Lumley, Steve Milner

Pollballiny trip abandoned due to heavy rain showers throughout the night and early morn. From the Balliny depression walked the west side of Knockaunsmountain, finding several sinks; hitherto unrecorded. One in which ML found a section of unroofed canyon, and later, a superb sink near Theresa McMahan's house, Ballynahown. Rain eased; did an exchange through Doolin River Cave. Went to the farm on the Drover's track, asking did he mind if we dug a hole where the sink sank; no work away; delighted.

8th April Poulmagrinn, Ballynahown Townland
Mike McDonald, Mark Lumley, Steve Milner

Planned to do Pollballiny, the unsettled weather decided otherwise; again. Started to dig the sink noted by ML, within two hours exposed an oval pothole with fluted sides. As all the team had huge smirks, ML called it Poulmagrinn. At the end of a five-hour session, the shaft was -6m. Below, through loose boulders, another 5m of depth can be seen. Had the most superb session in O'Connor's.

9th April Poulmagrinn, Ballynahown Townland
Mike McDonald, Mark Lumley, Steve Milner

A trip to Fergus River Cave also delayed owing to unsettled weather. Headed for the dig; eight hours digging, the shaft now -10m: installed a bolt. During digging two farmers arrived, sat and watched, enquiring what was going on. Explained to one of the farmers, Gus Curtin, had spoken to the farmer, pointing to the farm, who'd given permission to dig. GC asked, what exactly passed? Related had siad, would you mind if the team dug open the sink? The reply was, none at all. GC pointed out that why would he indeed, as he doesn't own the land. The shocked silence was broken as GC and pal erupted with laughter; a great relief, particularly when he disappeared suggesting I'll go get youse a sledge hammer. Appeared after half an hour, with sledge, spade and crow bar. Gus is a pure gentleman; further explaining the huge stream that sinks here, as does another hole just behind his cabin. Returned to O'Connor's for the most monumental session.

10th April Poulnagrinn, Ballynahown Townland

Mark Lumley, Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

Still laughing, stabilized the topmost area, which was trying to slump. While ML and SM drove to the festival site to collect more timber supports. MM and PC managed to insert corrugated iron sheets and supports to stem the collapse. Less water, so breathing issues when digging reduced. Deepened the shaft to -12m. At shift change ML wandered over to a small hole three metres away, in the same depression, dropping stones in gaps among the boulders, believing they fell a distance. Questioning his judgement, ML asked PC to double check. A stone cast, rattled away followed by a decent boom, appearing far below present position (-15m?). Attention diverted to this spot, which draughts strongly. Frenetic activity created a steep, boulder slope. Suspended ML from a lifeline, wrapped around a small Hazel tree, secured by PC. Much wroggling with crowbar led to a low rumble, the boulder cone slumping. 6:30pm "Yorkshire Jim" arrived, quite upset. Two groups of two had gone down Cullaun II to exchange the round trip, one now overdue; Graham Bazley and Ruben? MM went to help; the others to follow if the situation were serious. Explained the round trip is straight forward, except near the cascades. Arriving, MM found Ruben surfaced; in good shape. What happened was GB had sped off leaving Ruben behind; who, lost, being his first trip in this cave, correctly sat down, to await GB's return. Surfacing, GB realized Ruben was missing and went back to look for him. Jim Bakewell wisely took the initiative seeking assistance.

11th April Poulnagrinn, Ballynahown Townland

Mark Lumley, Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

Too wet to dig in the shaft, so started attacking the adjacent, potential new way in; dug out the collapsed funnel bit by bit, the worst boulders tied and swung into mid-air and hauled sideways. After several hours it became obvious three boulders were too big to lift without a pulley system; unavailable at present. Attention turned to a very small hole in the depression, after much stabilizing of visible hanging death, SM found he could drop stones through a narrow rift, these fell six metres. After several hours stabilizing the area and floor, avoiding looking at the roof, access gained to the top of a rift. It did indeed drop five metres into a chamber, through another rift. The passage roof and floor are horrendously loose. Straws drawn as to who should enter, SM lost. Accompany SM for moral support. From the new chamber a too tight, vertical rift led down. The place is very unstable; to put it mildly.

12th April Poulnagrinn, Ballynahown Townland

Mark Lumley, Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

Back digging Poulnagrinn 1, managing a further -2m of depth before stuck for surface space to park spoil. Revisited the dodgy pot, a too tight rift descends for 4m, the section below is blocked with boulders. Far below a stream is heard. The first shaft taking a significant stream, far, far larger than Swildon's. Abandoned the dig this visit to prospect adjacent sites. SM, ML & Ruben? relocated "Red Barn Cave", checked on last year by ML, along the line of depressions the "L.A.D.S." are investigating, it warrants concerted effort. Two hundred metres further from the road a stream meanders down a shallow valley to sink among several small depressions. This appears to be B8d, no evidence of any digging; the way on appears more or less open; permission required.

13th April Poulnagrai - Pollnagarsuin, Knockaunsmountain Townland

Mark Lumley, Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

A dirty day: strong wind, heavy rain showers. Investigated the sinks previously noted on the western side of Knockaunsmountain, working south along the drover's road. Initially

reopening a possible, old way to Poulmagrai, which may have been previously reached from below. Another new hole was opened which led to the top of a tight ten metre pot. Moved south some four hundred metres to where ML found canyon below a small hole. Progress by crawling in the large stream, with howling inward draught. After twenty metres nice decorations blocked the way. Digging beneath, ML pushed to awkward "S" bends. After ten minutes struggling, this was passed only to more decorations blocking the route. Again, a route dug beneath. Beyond the next corner, passage height increased, but width narrows. Projections regularly hinder progress. Forty odd metres of passage; the area has potential.

14th April Pollnagarsúin Knockaunsmountain Townland

Mark Lumley, Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

Departing midday: up very early to push Pollnagarsúin. All descended, at the first "S" bend neither MM or PC could squeeze past. At ML's limit SM slid through easily, without issue. SM finally stopped by a very tight "S" bend which can be dug under next time. Too little time left today. Though ML used a hammer, progress was slow; SM managing push the passage to sixty metres: ML frustrated at Slimline SM.

23rd April Lung Tonic Pot

Solo

Small stream; need widen the crawl to lessen effort used digging forward; three buckets.

27th April Priddy

Tony and Jane Jarratt's Wedding

Arrived at Toe's cottage 9am, with Mac, Marilyn and Pauline: Toe had just returned from a trip down Swildon's. Heart starters of Poteen, Whiskey and Champagne shared out, as a tree was planted in the back garden. Then came the wedding, then the breakfast at the Miners. Lots of fun and laughter. As the meal finished up many became lost, misplaced; attempting guess where they were or where they were going; nobody had any clue as to driving arrangements. Jenni Sandicott, in a very happy state of mind, organized lifts for the unconscious and legless: a very fine woman. She guided a dancing Pauline, into the car along, with a comatose Jarratt; the motor left. Reassembled at the cottage, for more fun, song and dance. A search for missing guests found several dead in the shed; Jarratt and Pauline found unconscious in bed; left them recover. Celebrations recommenced as the unconscious revived and well-wishers appeared. Moved to the Hunters; dancing and singing until the wee hours. A very fine wedding.

1st May Lung Tonic Pot

Solo

Enlarging crawl from the very start; eight buckets.

8th May Lung Tonic Pot

Solo

Continued enlarging crawl; eight buckets.

11th May Black Hole, Swildons Hole

Steve Milner

Lost boots, offered others. On the traverse, found feet too loose in the boots; abandoned traverse; SM continued. After an hour of SM at a dig, went to sump II. Size thirteen boots are a disaster on size ten feet.

15th May Black Hole, Swildons Hole

Martin Bishop

Returned to MB's dig; two hours digging well compacted fill. Traverse not an issue in own boots.

20th May

Demise of OCL.

Whom I, for one won't miss or mourn

3rd June Wookey Hole

Rob Parker asked support for a push on Wookey sometime, July/August. Needing gear in 24 a week before the event. Agreed, providing not required to deal with any TV people.

8th June Meregill, Yorkshire

Steve Milner, Cressida? George? Carol?

A steady trip where Carol soon had enough of cold-water; being a socialist, made sure everyone got their fair share of her thoughts.

10th – 23rd June Wookey Hole

Solo

Eight dives ferrying kit to 24, the push estimated as 1st July. Large capacity batteries for filming and lighting, particularly awkward; big, heavy and awkward.

7th July Wookey Push

RP rang; -68m: am delighted. Pete Scones bust a leg, yet got himself to 9:2, a tough task. Asked assist recovering kit; seemingly quite a bit of it left there. Promised will do so over the next few weeks, as business is manic: as accurately predicted by Mike Thompson.

10th July Compton Martin Ochre Mine - Lung Tonic Pot

Solo

Afternoon trip, much of the place intact; unfortunately, vandalism slowly taking place, likely local kids.

Evening, two hours at the dig; surprized at the size of stream; four buckets.

16th July Wookey Hole

Solo

Evening trip to 24, retrieving kit left after RP's push. Took in two tackle sacs; surprized at the volume of kit left. Slow trip back to 9:2. Poor visibility; troublesome weight. Left message on RP's answerphone of status; may need three or four more dives.

18th July Wookey Hole

Solo

Late arrival, 7pm: steady trip to 24. Filled bin liner with various bits rubbish lying about; found a small bag of dead batteries. Packed two tackle sacs and fitted the Chesterfield; the mud-covered bottle found by chance. RP mentioned Ian Rolland and Julian Walker planning to dive the evening of the 19th. Explained if so, the remaining kit would make an easy single dive, divided among the three.

19th July Wookey Hole
Solo

9pm. No sign of others. Left note of departure time in 9:2. Took three kit bags, filled with remaining lighting batteries, wet sleeping bags and other items. Half-filled another bin liner with assorted crap, bags etc.; total weight, heavy. No sign of the others. Began to ferry each tackle bag to 22, tough Task. Tried carry two bags to 9:2, had desperate issues with buoyancy. Had to leave one in the bottom of 22; unable to operate with the two. All kit to 9:2 by 5am. Kit in van, ready to head back, 6.20am. Left answerphone message with RP; all visible kit now removed. Breakfast; went to work.

20th July Cotswold Rd

Called to RP's place 8pm, dropped off the pile of kit. Long chat; RP very sorry the others hadn't appeared. No problem, explained am happy to help any project. Invited to join his next project. Unfortunately, filming involved; explained dislike, declining the kind offer.

29th July Swildons Hole XII

Solo

Took a 28cft. Uneventful trip, other than a surprising number of people about so early in the day, (9am). In sump V found the line bust, located ends, secured together with waist length. VII needed a little digging to clear the snug bit. Visibility superb in IX. Kept high to maintain return clarity; reached XII. Ladder deteriorating. Seemingly remote, it's a wonderful place. Met two unknown divers at sump II, neither returned the greeting; both perhaps a little preoccupied?

4th August

Lost Don Whillans.

4th August Swildons Hole, O.C.L's Birthday & RESCUE

Cast of hundreds

A change of venue, as the cave threatened flood following the heavy rain. A fine PU between Wessex and the Hunters, then a callout. A female, tired and cold below the 20. Water high, monitored at the entrance, being barely below the manhole. Descended with Jarratt, Martin Grass and Ray Mansfield. Forming a hauling party; Toni swiftly lifted up. Her spirits also rising, though weak from cold; in too large a wet suit. Swiftly ushered to the surface: back to the party.

Undated August (6th – 20th?) Corfu, Greece

Pauline M Cronin

PMC arranged a surprise two-week trip, booking a hotel near Barbati Beach; divided the holiday between beach and caves. Expected reply from Greek Cavers, never came; wrote too close to departure: twat! Managed to get cave information from the local bar; owner Vasilis, offered guide to Klimatia Cave; a large open shaft; hand line in situ. Descended to a huge refuse dump: swiftly exited the stench. Minus Vasilis, located Kaminaki Cave, another large entrance with old looking pottery; walked and scrambled to fifty metres depth; nothing too exciting, more refuse. Visited a small cavity in the hill above the road, it appears adapted into a shelter, perhaps a Shepard Hut? Vasilis mentioned a big cave, high in the mountains, but unable to guide; other sites were visited, many used to dump domestic rubbish. Most of the caves are short and filthy, but of archaeological interest.

4th September Lung Tonic Pot
Solo
Continued widening the crawl; four buckets.

7th September P8, Derbyshire
Martin Bishop
Learnt from Teapot (Derek Stables) of a dig beyond sump III; convinced MB it was worth a look. A choked rift, on a sharp bend; spent two hours digging the compacted fill; clay and cobbles. An impracticable dig, if pursued from Bristol.

8th September Holme Bank Chert Mine, Derbyshire
Martin Bishop
Not the place to enthuse too much about: OK as a place to sort kit, otherwise a boring dive site. Much like the Silica Mines, Glyn Neath. The dry stuff, an interesting study of modern mining techniques.

4th October Swildons Hole
Solo
A weekend of fun and celebration; decided visit Sump II, as a birthday treat. Exiting, found a good airspace at the duck above Valentines Landing; slid through, continued. Reached the Troubles; plenty of airspace. At the mud sump, it too had lots of airspace: delighted. Dropped to the streamway; heading out: met a group descending the Twenty. Chatted with them until told ascend. At the top asked how many in the party; replied solo. Instructed of the folly of solo caving; he meant well, bless 'im. Into the Hunters for a lunchtime, birthday pint: a nice start to the weekend; several old divers already about.

4th October 50 years of diving at Wookey Hole
100+ attendees, during which Pete Eckford and Ken James and self, asked to explain the Kirby Morgan Bandmask sump rescue kit to Alan Rodgers, who constructed the very first sump rescue kit; a superb three-barrel evening; supplied one to prolong the fun. Lots of pals present, met CDG dive trainers John Parker and Alan Mills; delighted.

5th October Wookey Hole – BEC 50th Dinner
Martin Bishop
9am; trip from 3 to 20, for the sheer fun of it: visibility terrible. Afternoon pints, a swift shower at MB's then to a superb pissup; the dinner a fine affair. Supplied another barrel.

6th October Wookey Hole
Martin Bishop
After drink last night, a plan proposed, to dive from resurgence to 22. Arrived 11am. MB led off laying line in one metre visibility: changed at the boat. Each carried 3 x 7s. A little cumbersome in the low sections. Reached chamber 3, tied to 9:1 line. MB took the lead; at the "Bear Pit", changed places. Took the snug Coase's Loop route to 9:2, awkward with bulky kit, much phaffing. To 22; air consumption good, considering delays manoeuvring kit in the snug parts. Have an idea on securing bottles. Returned the shallow route and Coases Loop Extension, nice finish to the weekend. Cracking Chinese in Wells.

9th October Lung Tonic Pot
Solo
More widening of the crawl; continuing to create a domed roof; four buckets.

23rd October Lung Tonic Pot
Solo
More work on roof; five buckets.

30th October Lung Tonic Pot
Solo
Widening from the entrance, still; believe the nature of this streamway may continue further than imagined. Repeating work is frustrating. Seven buckets.

6th November Lung Tonic Pot
Solo
Place awash, large stream; managed an hour and three buckets.

13th November Lung Tonic Pot
Solo
Steady, wet work; three buckets.

20th November Lung Tonic Pot
Solo
Stream too great to work in; abandoned trip.

27th November Lung Tonic Pot
Solo
Stream reduced to two inches deep; four buckets.

30th November Juniper Gulf, Yorkshire
Mark Lumley, Mike McDonald, Steve Milner
Another sodding traverse: bold step, my arse. Others stepped across, effortlessly; left standing on the tiny stance. Stride could not reach the other side; seriously annoyed. Composed self, leapt from stance over the drop, landing on the bulbous ledge the far side. Scampered off, caught up with them at the final pitch, to loud congratulations. Waited for another party to ascend main pitch; took an age; nice trip.

1st December Rift Pot, Yorkshire
Mark Lumley, Mike McDonald, Steve Milner
A lot of deep snow about: to the bottom, SM remained at the top of the final pitch. A lot of water on the fifty-metre pitch; a wet ascent. Indebted to SM for advice passing the belay arrangement under and around the overhang. MM's form of rigging, far too short, causing everyone issues changing over. Foggy at surface, visibly fifty metres. Found gate, swiftly downhill to the motor. MM's sense of direction uncanny, unerring. At the car MM swiftly stripped, rolling around in the drifts; if it's not snow, it's wild garlic; mad sod.

3rd December Lung Tonic Pot
Solo
Pissing down; three inches of stream, continued to shape passage roof; three buckets. Blue with the cold.

10th December Lung Tonic Pot
Solo
Large stream, again; three buckets.

20th December Fergus River Cave, Roughan Townland
Solo

Arrived direct from the ferry, early afternoon; a swift run. The plan: attempt locate the route of the draught. Throughout passage deployed smoke pellets. Used a torch, noting the rising smoke favoured an area near No Mercy Inlet; travelling high in the main passage; more work needed. Superb evening in O'Connor's: great music and dance.

21st December Cave of the Wild Horses, Kilcorney Td
Solo

Asked by Mark Lumley and Steve Milner to check Kilcorney 2. Stopped at the Davorens to ask permission; Mrs Davoren insisted stop for lunch. An interesting site; told used during the War of Independence. Upon discovery by Crown forces, operations moved across the valley to a lesser-known cave. K2 under observation throughout. As described by ML, a crawl over ancient fill; this site just needs a team to dig it. Stopped in the Roadside for pints; dropped Skippy off at McGann's.

22nd December Doolin River Cave, Doolin Td. – Poulacronaun, Glasha Beg, Townland
John Brown

Rigged Fisherstreet Pot: in St. Catherines, stream level normal: swiftly to the Smithy. Assessed the choke stability, quite loose in places. Pulled out more boulders managed to open almost two metres. Ever the superb cave, exited Fisherstreet; never tiring of this cave's majesty.

23rd December Vigo Cave, Nooan Townland
Solo

En-route to Dublin; visited to assess potential. Once a huge passage, now filled with glacial deposits; if ever a dig would benefit from a railway, it's this place. Easy to see how previous diggers were overwhelmed at the magnitude of this project.

30th December West End, Eastwater

Mark Lumley, Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

To Rift Chamber extensions, MM fell ill, exited. The sump, a pool; potential climb exists via a snug rift. SM, ML & PC to Regent Street and West End: surprized at the number of decorations damaged by the passage of "experienced cavers": somewhat disappointed. So much for talk of controlling access to preserve the cave.

31st December Ogof Craig-y-Fynnon, Wales

Martin Grass, Jim Smart, Mark Lumley, Jeff Hill

High flow, freezing water, JS, in dry grotts, unsurprisingly backed out at the long second duck. Jeff Hill allowed the team the privilege to enter Helictite Passage; stunning. In the fifth boulder choke JH conveyed his surprize at the sound of a large stream beneath. A dam fine trip to the very end of the cave, on which to end the year: exited to a blizzard. JS found in the Bar: back to the Hunters for a cracking New Year's Heave session.