

1986

6th January Wookey Hole

Martin Bishop

Management asked MB to clean the lights in chambers three and one; MB rang to say visibility is superb and had permission from Barney to dive further. Priddy 8am. Wookey 9am. Lights sorted by 10:15. Took turns laying line from chamber one; agreeing not surface until 22: taking turns to lead. One of the most stunning dives experienced here; visibility supremely clear. MB led from 20, able to see him forty odd metres ahead! Avoided all air surfaces; returned the shallow route checking for potential leads. Exited resurgence in good visibility. A superb dive; took four sevens apiece; left spare two in 22.

11th January Swildons Hole - Longwood – RESCUE

Martin Bishop, Charlie Watkins

A cracking trip; the short round, Troubles a little high. Returning to Bishop's, told go to Longwood, for a bad one. On arrival; the mood sombre; a young lad killed from a falling boulder. Reported to control; placed in a surface hauling team. A real tragedy; the effects clearly visible on many present.

4th February Lung Tonic Pot

Solo

The mesh, a grand idea; catching assorted debris. Easy to clear. Unsure if a shadow; could be a junction or main passage getting bigger; unsure. Two hours; three buckets.

9th February Stoke Lane – Swildons

Mike McDonald

Stoke entrance submerged; headed to Swildons. High water too: free dived, checking the line through III; higher water in IV suggested reduced airspace in V: exited Blue Pencil.

15th February Stoke Lane

Solo

Alan Mills described sump II as becoming snug; a lazy diver recently reporting issues getting through the top part into III. Used Sulo's 22cft: dug at the base, destabilizing the slope. Loose gravel poured into the hollow created; spoil dragged back to the sump pool. Left the bucket, full of gravel, out of the main flow, above the pool on the left.

16th February Stoke Lane

Solo

None enthused in the bar last night; if only Pete Eckford or Ken James were about: did another shift. Arrived to find no sign of the hollow left yesterday. Cleared, again, the first two metres, before moving forward. Found exit into II snug; but not that bad; easily dug clear the upper area. Left spoil against the wall on the left of the passage out the main flow. Back to Stoke I, cleared more, creating a deep hollow for gravel to slump into.

Business doing very well; too well, having to work some long days.

26th February Lung Tonic Pot

Solo

Stream flow high, only managed an hour before frozen; three buckets. Imagination believes the shadow ahead to be a junction, but nowhere near as big as first imagined.

27th February Northwest Stream Passage Inlet, Swildons Hole
Steve Milner, Nipper Harris, Mark Lumley, Tim Gould
Lifelined Nipper up this horrendously loose aven, unable to insert any protection. NH, reached the top, +30m, found no way on. TG regularly showered with debris attempting watch NH's progress.

2nd March County Pot, Yorkshire
Mike McDonald, Martin Grass, Chris Smart
A pleasant trip; visiting various places: some nice sections of decorated streamway.

4th March Ubley Hill Pot
Steve Milner, Tim Gould, Mark Lumley
Photography for TG, SM: SM's camera had issues; the place has promise.

12th March Lung Tonic Pot
Solo
Stream flow high, frozen; two hours, five buckets.

14th March Stoke Lane
Solo
Afternoon trip: used Sulo's 22c/ft and Bishop's Seba, swiftly to sump II; the entrance pool benefiting from recent excavations; though curiously not by much. Arrived sump IV found the line buried in silt; located same, Some wear to the line, near the elbow, as ever. Tied a parallel line, around the elbow, in case primary broke. In V found the bypass had also become choked, not by much; swiftly cleared. Sump VI also partially choked, cleared swiftly. Line, buried most of its length, visibility zero. Minor issue finding and passing the squeeze; emerged in VII to the sound of high-pressure air; displaced "A" clamp on the 22cft: replaced O ring. At sump VII began to clear silt and gravel in the pool, a little low on air, made a slow exit.

19th March Lung Tonic Pot
Solo
Good sized stream; wet conditions, three buckets.

23rd March Lost Dave Anderson, to Rowten Pot

29th March Poulmagrinn, Ballynahown Townland
Mark Lumley, Mike McDonald, Steve Milner
Delighted being back; found main shaft taking a torrent, so changed to the adjacent dig, with its stability issues. Exposed a small rift; cast stone fell a further 10metres. As the session ended managed avoid the massive collapse of the surrounding boulders. The general feeling is, it's a go-er; the problem, how to access it? Excavated a channel around the original shaft to divert the stream; ML found the main pot, -10m; filled a little since last year. Perhaps another 3m to reach the area below? Visited by cavers employed at the Kilshanny Caving Centre; asking specifically for ML: is he a wanted man...?

30th March Poulmagrinn Ballynahown Td – Doolin River Cave, Doolin Td

Mark Lumley, Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

Appalled to hear from Gus O'Conner that Gus Curtin is upset, regarding the state the dig was left in last year. Strange, dry-stone walls were specifically erected to protect farm stock. Concerned at distressing GC, the dig opened yesterday was filled in. After a chat with the neighbour, Tom McMahon, returned to Poulmagrinn 1, MM did the first shift dropping the floor eighteen inches through silt and gravels, ML took over, exposing cobbles, which when disturbed collapsed six feet exposing a narrow, wet passage. ML screamed out that an hour of clearing the debris should gain entry. ML surfaced a lovely hue of blue; well into the first stages of hypothermia. Finishing for the day called to Theresa McMahon to update; she replied carry on, as Gus (78), was in hospital having fallen off a ladder whilst painting the gable of the Ritz Hotel. Spoke to Gus O'Conner; bought a bottle of Paddy as a present; GC confirmed as returning home sometime this week: a little less stressed.

Doolin River Cave,

Mark Lumley, Tim Gould

7pm. Took TG on a through trip. Scampering along caught up with voices, encountered Arthur Millet and several Wessex, enjoying the place. Fisherstreet airspace a healthy three feet. Crazy session until the early hours

31st March Poulmagrinn, Ballynahown Townland

Mark Lumley, Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

Happy to proceed, focused on clearing the opening; dropped the shaft to forty-six feet exposing a horizontal passage heading toward the predicted position of cave. Clearing the spoil is taking much longer than initially expected; room to work in being the issue.

1st April Poulmagrinn, Ballynahown Townland

Mark Lumley, Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

Cleared the remaining spoil, found the passage narrows suddenly to six inches wide; in solid rock. The strong inward draught significant: the sound of the distant stream more so. This passage is some ten foot above the adjacent site depth: bugger; for the moment.

2nd April Cullaun V, (C5b entrance), Cahermaan Townland

Mike McDonald,

Had decided to have a day off; got the fidgets by eleven so headed to Cullaun V. The beddings very wet. Into Red Carpet series for a look about, the large area of breakdown warrants closer inspection, a pool there could be a sump. Cracking night, delighted that others have arrived in the last few days, but particularly nice seeing James Smart appear.

3rd April Pollnagarsuin, Blakesmountain Td – Coolagh River Cave,

Mark Lumley, Mike McDonald, Steve Milner, Arthur Millet

Returned to site; SM got around the next bend, which normal people couldn't, to be stopped at a serious bend and tighter restriction. Surveyed area with MM. Left for CRC; AM and ML perched in the roof box, on top MM's car.

4th April Poulsallagh, Ballyryan Td – Carran, Fahee South Td

Mark Lumley, Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

Prospecting along the coast at Poulsallagh, digging opened a passage heading north from the shaft entrance of Poulsallagh, (cave), this was followed, curving slowly west, heading to the upper area of the cliff face; the passage constricted due to cobbles driven in by the

Hand-drawn site plan of a 2200m long road. The road is oriented vertically, with a dashed line indicating its center. Key features and measurements include:

- Top Section:** A horizontal road branch labeled "Av. 8m wide. Green Rd" extends to the right, ending at a building labeled "Pollnagarssuin". The distance is 19m at a bearing of 120° .
- Left Side:** A vertical road branch labeled "Base Line" extends to the left, with a distance of 2200m.
- Right Side:** A vertical road branch extends to the right, with a distance of 2200m. A "Conc. Enclosure" is marked on this side.
- Internal Features:**
 - A point labeled "Bush Depression" is located 50m from the road at a bearing of 130° .
 - An "Open Canyon (Skeleton)" is located 64.6m from the road at a bearing of 170° .
 - A point labeled "WAS" is located 89.3m from the road at a bearing of 197° .
 - A point labeled "Ballynabun" is located 19.5m from the road at a bearing of 163° .
- Other Markings:** A "180m to" arrow points to the left, and a "10" is marked near the bottom right.

5th April Pollapooka, Ballyelly Townland

Dug where today the large stream was sinking: a fine indicator among the vast sloping boulder strewn floor. Hand balling the cobbles and boulders was a swift process as the enormous cascade soaked and chilled the diggers; only by hard work could the team keep warm. Managed to remove some three tonnes of clean rock; lowering the area up against the wall some two metres, exposing the top of a narrow joint, in which sucked a draught. Frustratingly, debris continued to appear with the large stream; after five freezing hours called it a day. Out into rain; heavy showers predicted tonight and tomorrow. All fairly shagged out, good session.

Mark Lumley, Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

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7th April Pollapooka, Ballyelly Td

Mark Lumley, Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

Returned; the cone excavated has become steep, too steep to remain remotely stable. Work required, prevent collapse of the slope whilst some poor sod is busy in the bottom. Began grading the cone into a gentler slope, beginning two metres back from its existing top edge, quite a task; not insurmountable. Another two tonnes moved, hand to hand back up the slope; a good system, if enough men.

8th April Moonmilk Cave - Gus Curtin's Cave, Ballynahown Td

Mark Lumley, Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

Informed last night Gus Curtin released from hospital; took a bottle of Paddy around to him. The meeting warm; GC delighted to see us. He explained other cavers, without asking, had taken stones off the walls, protecting the farm beasts, to climb down. He directed no fault whatsoever to the L.A.D.S; showing the team a sink behind his cabin, which takes a large stream in wet weather, without any sign of backing up. Apparently, an overflow, when upstream sinks become overwhelmed. Delighted on his return to health, most pleasant nature and warmth. Headed to Moonmilk Cave; a place needing closer examination. Met Noel Walsh and Paddy Padraic Michael in the bar, introduced them to the team; a cracking night, finished up at Noel's place.

9th April Fergus River Cave, Roughan Td

Mark Lumley, Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

Steady trip in, uncharacteristically SM had concerns in Gurgle Chamber, so accompanied him out. ML and MM continued but unable to find the way through the vast, low sand caverns. Surprised to see Batty arrive with Mary Lang, Mary King, Pauline and Peggy Faulknan; a fine session. The women dancing like demons; driving the old fellas crazy.

10th April Carran depression – Northeast Burren

Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

11am. Mark cycled to Miltown Malbay via all points of the compass. Others went to see the affects of recent heavy rainfall. The lake in Carran depression had fallen significantly, as had the pools formed among the fields. Skirted the northeast foothills stopping in at Aillwee Show Cave for a chat with Nicky Johnson; headed back having arranged take some locals through Doolin River Cave.

Doolin River Cave

Noel Stringer, Martin O'Connell, Steve Milner

7pm: A very pleasant trip introducing NS and MO'C to the underworld; beside themselves with delight as the trip unfolded. Not phased in any way; pure naturals, such trips are needed. These young farmers will one day own land, which may have caves. An idea of the delight cavers enjoy may help them gain an understanding, why people cave. Into O'Conner's 10pm, a busy night, a great session; the girls mad for dance.

11th April Doolin Green Holes, Ballaghahline Td

Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

A dive to assess similarities with "Milner's Brown Holes": limited air supplies meant each diver restricted to a ten-minute dive. Afterwards each agreed the similarities are close. Mark ill, down with a serious dose of the shits; really, really bad.

12th April Poulballyelly – Souterrain – O'Donaghues

Mark Lumley, Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

The caving trip went awry; in the Balliny depression showed the sites found previously; found others, all worth digging. Looked at the souterrain on the boreen down to Fanore; a small cavity covered with flagstones. SM suggested visiting O'Donaghues; none argued. Enjoyed an afternoon of drink, laughter and many games of pool. Brian Judd appeared; talk turned to digging. BJ mentioned Dr. Nobel may be available, for those awkward to get at places. In O'Conner's stole Sean away from behind the counter to a session, which became a serious affair, finishing at O'Looney's Disco, an evening, dancing, laughter and drink. Steer clear of pints of Port and Brandy, ("Neringee Berbers"); back by dawn.

26th April

Chernobyl Nuclear Plant, just exploded.

29th April GB

Steve Milner, Tim Gould, Mark Lumley

An evening trip to dig near Bertie's Pot; visited White Passage, exiting Devil's Elbow.

8th May Swildons

James Cobbett, Martin Bishop

James about for a few days; declaring an urge to visit Swildons II. Pleasant mid-week trip; not a sinner about. Nice pints in a quiet Hunters.

May undated (15th) Some Mendip Caves Closed.

Landowners had a meeting in the Hunters in response to unilateral implementation of S.S.S.I.'s across Mendip. And lack of explanation by the government, (Mr. Black), as to the Responsibilities and Rights of Farmers to refuse access across their land if they wish to. With immediate effect Farmers closed access over land to Mendip Caves including Hunters Hole, Swildons, Nine Barrows and Sludge pit. St Cuthberts closed by the BEC in support of the farmer's cause.

June undated (7th?) Bonsal Level Fawr, Cwmystwyth

Mike McDonald, Nigel Burns

Into the upper area of the mine; high unstable stopes, great fun; many features remain.

June undated (8th?) Taylor's Level, Cwmystwyth

Mike McDonald, Nigel Burns

Delighted to find the level still open, someone (Simon Hughes?) has recently cleared the portal creating a small opening. Water level as ever normal, high; bone crackingly cold. Found an almost, intact widow maker, close to the end of the main passage, superb.

20th June L.A.D.S DINNER, Bellapass Italian restaurant, Bristol

Arthur Millet, guest speaker; eighteen in attendance: an hour-long speech punctuated with AM eating a vase of flowers and drinking a flask of Poteen; party'd back at Milner's 'til dawn. Spoke to Mark Lumley about Lung Tonic Pot; intending offer it to Jarratt.

22nd June Otter Hole

John Kelly, Martin Bishop, Ian Parsons, John Compton

JK kindly arranged the trip. A fine idea to wear a boiler suit over kit to keep the worst of the shite at bay; protecting the inner cave. Decorations stunning; can see the “artistic” connection with the Berger. Cracking trip, thanks entirely due to JK for the trip.

July undated (5th?) Grange Rigg

Martin Bishop, John Kelly, Ian Parsons, John Compton

Delay locating the entrance; this minor issue was nothing compared to the effort needed below. Descending a series of short, snug pitches prompted MB to declare “The descent into Hell is easy; when assisted by gravity”. Manoeuvres needed to return up the narrow pitches and crawl, were truly desperate. The place so bleeding tight; in some rifts had to strip; and that barely enough; without a foot loop regularly lowered, most would still be down there. So easy to descend, an absolute sod to get back up: won’t be returning there too soon. Shagged out, entirely; after only a couple of fine pints: fell asleep in the bar.

July undated (19th?) Birks Fell Cave

John Kelly, Martin Bishop, Ian Parsons, John Compton, Geoff Pickering

IP wanted to photograph “The Great Gallery”. Laden with kit, had a slow, steady trip in. Surprised at how long it took: (1970s?) a Pegasus trip was cut short due to flash flooding. JK and JC continued, while others assisted IP, setting up flash positions: the place is big. Others reappeared after two hours: IP very happy with the efforts.

Illegible entries.

August undated (2nd?) Dub Cote

Martin Bishop, Geoff Pickering

Guided by GP, passed sumps I and II without issues, to the Windtunnel, a cracking, if muddy place. Followed the others, in and out, experienced total black out. Pleasant wander along this resurgence cave; obvious the place floods entirely. Used two sevens and a four litre. Outside found GP’s car window broken; nothing seemingly taken.

Illegible entries.

2nd Sept Peak Cavern

Ian Parsons

Treasury Sump: straightforward carry, rewarded with shite visibility, fumbled through and back, not too inspiring, in such conditions. IP experienced issues with his Scubapro. Offered propose and MB second IP to the CDG, he declined.

September undated (13th?) P8

Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

Great fun trip in wet conditions. Stopped in Buxton, drank with the Eldon in the Eagle.

September undated (14th?) Treack Cliff Cavern; show cave

Mike McDonald, Steve Milner

Treack Cliff was suggested and visited; a place with very little wow factor.

Illegible entries

27th September MRO 50th Jubilee, Coronation St. Cheddar.

Dozens

Partnered Martin Bishop, abseiling Coronation Street; a fine evening followed. Spoke at length to Jarratt of Lung Tonic Pot; explained the slow progress, time and effort needed digging solo. That other projects were pressing, with better returns for the solo explorer; offered Toe the project, he delightedly accepted.



Photo Steve Milner

Martin Bishop & PC, Coronation St.

Illegible entries

5th October Wookey Hole

Martin Bishop

Another lamp cleaning visit; once completed took the shallow route to 20 returning the deep route, visibility good. Bob Drake content with private access arrangement with the management.

14th October Pollduagh, Cloonnahaha Td
Solo

Used two sevens and Ken James line reel to explore this huge resurgence; no plans to travel too far; high flow and cold conditions meant thirds reached around -23m. Effort to progress kept the diver warm-ish. A big place: a swift, uneventful exit.



Ticket No. 22

15th October Poulmagrai
Martin Droney

Steady trip in wet conditions; MD had minor issues descending the end of the traverse. More so getting back up; deployed waist length as a foot loop, problem solved. Invited MD to visit Pollballiny tomorrow, reply; "I'm washing my hair". Quiet in the bar, just a few musicians and cracking music.

16th October Pollballiny, Balliny South Td
Solo

Had spoken to Jim Smart, wanted to investigate the boulder ruckle, his description didn't ring with the memory. Thick knee pads today, bliss. Reached the "Duck"; no usable airspace; returned to the bar.

17th October S4 and S3 Ballyryan Td
Solo

Arrived to follow the receding tide. Got to water level, began to follow the cliff base south from Poulsallagh Bay; nothing obvious. Ideally need know to what level the sea actually drops to. Moved inland to the open rift and began to dig just south of centre; boulders well compacted; all big. Much flotsam and jetsam over a wide area suggests storm surges easily travel the 1/4 mile from the southern shore on a broad front.

22nd October GB Rescue

Stopping at Mac's, alerted of a rescue. Placed in a team of six, with Martin Bishop, Jeremy Henley + four, John, Alan? John Ham informed the casualty was mobile. Heading out slowly under his own steam. Stood to as the casualty approached; while he had a rest the team moved through the crawl to support him over the next section. Exited to hailstones accompanied with loud bangs, dramatic lightening display. Missed the bar.

1st November St Cuthbert's Swallet

Mike McDonald

Pipe blocked, spent time removing crap; delayed cleaning Stal pitch until next time.

8th November Sell Gill, Yorkshire

John Compton, Ian Parsons, Geoff Pickering

Pleasant trip, with a constant eye on the weather; at some point it was decided enough; made a steady exit enjoying the place. Party'd with the Happy Wanderers, a fine bunch.

9th November Gordale Scar, Yorkshire

John Compton, Ian Parsons, Geoff Pickering, John Kelly

IP showed his excellent climbing skills. PC's reach, much shorter; seconding him is just like following Bishop; needing the occasional leap of faith. Rain stopped play.

14th November Union Baths

Mike McDonald

Request from MM for CDG training; 1st visit; initial impression, MM need apply patience.

18th November St Cuthbert's Swallet

Mike McDonald

Asked by MM to help him clean the area around Stal Pitch; obliged.

21st November Union Baths

Mike McDonald

2nd visit: Bob Drake forgot the adaptors; dressed MM in own kit. Directed MM lay line and kit dump; tasks completed with surprising ease: MM is a swift learner, too swift?

28th November Union Baths

Mike McDonald

3rd visit: introduced technical explanations of equipment, function and assembly; practical tasks conducted with minor errors; some fumbling. Submerged, acrobatics performed without obvious disorientation. Sudden mask removal also handled without incident. Line laying and following, conducted with repeated sudden mask removal, coped without issue. Blacked out mask and line laying; lost line procedures conducted with confidence. Explanations regarding attention to detail and care of life support systems; well taken.

29th November Reopening of Mendip Caves

After prolonged discussions with farmers and landowners, following poorly explained, and seemingly unilateral implementation of SSSI regulations by the government. The Landowners and farmers finally received confirmation of their rights. Principally the right to refuse admittance to their land without need of explanation, which amounts to little or no change on the entire affair. Further to the most recent meeting, landowners unanimously lifted the ban, opening land and caves. Initial negotiations were conducted

between the unpleasant Mr Black, SSSI, (Government representative,) and Tim Large, the then Conservation and Access Officer. TL's personal circumstances made continued involvement untenable, as go between of Government and Landowners. Negotiations were taken over by PC at the request of the CSCC committee, also requested to take on the post of CSCC Conservation and Access officer. After several forthright meetings with Mr Black, silly issues, on Black's part were brought to a conclusion. Whereby the rights of Landowners and Farmers were clearly set out in a circulated document, explaining rights of controlling of access across land surrounding caves of an S.S.S.I designation.

Commoned CSCC Locks; a Mendip key

Following acceptance of the C&A post, unilaterally replaced all CSCC controlled cave padlocks with locks operated by a single, common key. One single key to access all caves under CSCC administration. Opinion being, if the primary reason presented over the years for locking a Mendip cave is that landowners are concerned for the safety of the public, then fine. On that basis, access should therefore be for all member Clubs and not restricted to Mendip Clubs. Each CSCC member club has a right to hold a key and upon their request will receive one. Cavers will respond to a responsibility bestowed, as equal custodians of caves. This should engender a wider involvement in conservation. On its promulgation, several Wessex and two BEC members approached; incensed. Voicing concerns which, when argued through, were simply based on what they saw as a loss of control. That night the Hunters Jim Hanwell and others laughingly observed the Poacher had turned Gamekeeper.

30th November Eastwater Cavern – Swildons Hole

Steve Milner, Mark Lumley, Phil Romford, Stuart MacManus, Jarratt

First trip after the closure; aim, to assess stability of the entrance boulder ruckle. Some movement had been previously reported. Cautiously moving through the ruckle noted it as serious, in places. Gaps backpacked with stonework to stabilize boulders adjacent the solid walls; further shoring required. On to Jarratt's digs, one among some very dodgy boulders. To Swildons to enjoy more of the day; unsurprized to find the place busy.

5th December Union Baths

Mike McDonald

4th visit: directed MM repeat all last week's procedures, proficiently. Much more blacked out mask tasking, swimming upside down, buddy sharing and blind line laying; MM is doing well; not phased in the swimming pool environment: cautioned overconfidence. MM need build fluency of equipment assembly and maintenance. Explained the need to be constantly aware of bottle pressures. In order to assess their contents at any given pressure and how to mentally calculate them. Introduced decompression principles.

12th December Somerset AGM

Mike McDonald

Short and sweet AGM; Bob Drake, a refreshing change; with an attitude similar to The Pegasus: egos and politics avoided like the plague.

28th December Snowdonia

Steve Milner, Chris & Karen Smart, Mike McDonald

Dropped Pauline at the Holyhead Ferry for Dun Laoghaire, 1am: eventually found the cottage around 3am. Difficult locating it among a deep, snow-covered landscape.