

1995

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7th January Ogof Draenen

Cheg Chester, Dave Gough, Nigel Burns, Barry Sudell, Ceily Sudell

Met at the Little Chef; Heads of the valley road. Flooding evident throughout Wales. After reaching the bar near the cave, abandoned the trip as streams were running high. Headed to Big Pit for a taste of culture; closed. Delayed returning to Bristol as the Bridge was closed; went to a bar in Chepstow. Grub, further fun in the Swan with Two Necks, Bristol, a cracking session.

17th January

Lost Kayo Yuri, to the Kobe earthquake.

Dr. Kayo Yuri disappeared from the face of the Earth, during the Kobe earthquake. Police believe she was lost down a fissure which opened on the road she used driving to work at the hospital. Yuri was a pal; trained by self in Wookey and Japan 1993.

11th February Willington Stone Mine, Forest of Dean

Barry and Ceily Sudell, Nigel Burns, Cheg Chester, Dave Gough

Arrived with NB Friday afternoon; spoke to landlord, set up camp on the lawn outside the bar. Others arrived later; next morning NB's shoes had vanished? After complaining to Landlord, they suddenly reappeared? A bar stool in the Miner's was where Big John Cooper took up residence, until he heard of the Ore Pool bar, a little up the road. The mine workings reminiscent of Box; a fine trip. Joined BJC for drink, food, fun and the curious toilet facilities; upstairs behind a curtain, next to the landlords kitchen sink?? Only intact WC in the bar; male and female toilets sustained smashed urinal bowls, WC pans and extensive blood trails covering wall and floor. Must have been some party.

12th February Birch Hill Iron Mine, Bixslade Coal Drift, Forest of Dean

Barry and Ceily Sudell, Nigel Burns, Cheg Chester, Dave Gough

NB had researched these mines, superb examples of the range of mining enterprises throughout the Forest.

21st February Valgonera, Majorca

Nick Geh, Martyn Farr

A tourist dive trip in a superb system: many photographs taken.

23rd February Font des Verger, Majorca

Ian Williams, Martyn Farr

A long slog following the ancient Mozarabic paved path to +600m, to this rare spring, previously explored by Owen Clark and IW, (WS CDG). The plan; MF to dive with IW. The journey to this high-altitude spring, meant only two sets of kit were taken, the weight shared among the group. Upon arrival approached and asked by MF to please, accompany him, owing to IW's recently observed, erratic behaviour. Agreed, though required each to dive on single kit through sumps I and II. At sump III, IW to resume his previous exploratory dive. But, IW invited MF dive first. The understanding was, MF would dive and return, then, and only then, could IW dive. MF kitted now with both sets, looked and whispered, "keep him out the fucking water", and left; timed his departure. Without any kit to return to the surface, sat awaiting MF's return, perched on the edge of the short climb down to the pool, obstructing IW entering. After four minutes, without a

word, IW began to move his kit to the edge of the climb. Engaged IW in conversation, asked details of the sump and possible connections. IW replied in staccato comments, appearing preoccupied; distracted. Conversationally reminded IW, he was to wait here, as agreed, for MF's return. With IW's kit now in position, IW sat a little distant from the pool. Asked IW further of his dive plan and the potential this place has, silence. Asked again, IW ignored the question, and began to slowly kit up. By now thoroughly sick and tired of treating this individual with kid gloves, fired ten fucks into him concerning safety and agreed dive protocol. Bollocking taken in sullen silence; IW stood up, left kit and went to sit in the far end of the chamber: sitting in silence for the duration. MF returned; with little explanation, rolling eyes and an exchange of glances, made for a swift exit; IW followed at some distance. The sort of trip guaranteed to build character.



Photo Martyn Farr

Valgonera; Nick Geh

25th February Cova des Asses, Majorca

Nick Geh, Martyn Farr

Several dive sites examined within this abandoned show cave. Dived to check potential. Superbly decorated place. Found the sump and passage leading to the sea.

26th February Cova des Asses, Majorca

Nick Geh, Martyn Farr

Returned to complete the through dive, following the rugged coast around to the right, to the beach. Lost a fin among the compacted sea weed in the tumbling surf.

March undated Pegasus Hut

Cheg Chester, Dave Gough

Carried out maintenance tasks around the hut; later conducting SRT practise.

2nd – 5th April Gort Lowland flood survey, County Galway.

Nick Geh

Explained to NG the recent, sustained flooding in Galway and Clare. Wanted record the impact on dive sites and adjacent areas. The plan: drive Bristol to Gort observe the water table, travel the area, record water levels. Viewed on a six-inch map the flood level closely followed the 50ft contour; research will continue. Several temporary roadways of gravel constructed around flooded areas. Visited the Fergus River valley, resurgence was significant and the flood plain inundated; no recent scouring noted in the dry channel below the entrance. The Carran depression flooded to above the lowest dry wall, which was barely visible. Conversing with national radio, a Carran local described the water level as just below their first-floor window.

Water level observations/measurements.

Coole Cave	Water level just below field entrance.
Polldeelin	Flooded to ground surface level, twelve tonnes of sand deposited around the entrance.
Main Rising	The natural, shallow valley filled, twice, flooding the adjacent church to a depth of 0.45m. The result of backing up from Tommy Murray's Sink.
Polldeelin depression	Two metre depth of water, within the closed depression.
Polldeelin	Two metre depth of water, visible mushroom from east side.
Pumping station	Flooded to base of fence.
Blackwater sink	River level normal, deep trench cut into bank.
Pollduagh	River covering weir, 0.3m deep.
Tommy Murray's	Flooded the lowest part of the approach track to the farm; a depth above the sink of 13m.
Poulawee	Maximum noted flood level was +3m, today 2m.
Poulbehan	Maximum noted flood level was +5m today down 2m.
Pollaloughabo	Maximum noted flood level was +5m today down 2m.
Scailp	Maximum noted flood level was +5m today down 2m.
Caherglassaun Lough	Eastern Road surface flood to +2m.
Poulnadirik	Unable to visit.

All measurements taken to visible flood level marks, from extant water levels.

15th April Cowclose Mine

Pete Forster, Alan (Fat Al) Steele, Nigel Burns, Cheg Chester, Dave Gough, Revisited the dig to provide a short cut to the further reaches; potentially shortening a trip to the far side by at least an hour; an attractive prospect when carrying kit. Coffin level backfilled and subjected to later silting; two hours of awkward digging, but good progress. Another project down this immense system; many thanks to PF and FatAl.

16th April Cowclose Mine, Dive

Cheg Chester, Nigel Burns, Paul Thompson, Dave Gough

This flooded section of mine passage, is located at the end of 800ft of coffin level, which runs from the base of Founder Shaft; average dimensions, some 5ft high /16 inches wide. A collapse dug by CC and NB, exposed a now empty, open rise, ascending ten metres; as yet unclimbed. In the narrow coffin level tried dress in dive kit before squeezing through the recent dug connection into deep water beyond; chose to use single kit. Squeezed through the connection; unable to turn around, continued on for some forty feet to where the narrow coffin level turns right, only here was it possible to turn around. Returned to collect dive kit, passed through the squeeze by CC. Encouraged??? by PT's last-minute remark "Remember Neil Moss". CC in support, headed off. Arrived at dive base; a larger (wider), area in bad, fractured ground. From here the flooded section continued as a low passage. Its roof a foot below water level. Oxygen content low; both panting. Swiftly kitted and dived on a base fed line; the passage less than $\frac{3}{4}$ metre high and a metre wide. After some five metres of total darkness, (no lamp loom), a gravel slope grated against the chest, moving forward felt the roof press against the back. Head broke surface in a small cavity, barely a metre in diameter. A metre above, a coffin level continued, though choked; sloping debris ran from the level, creating the underwater, squeeze, which suggested the presence of an obscured shaft. Above the pool a vertical area rose; unable to estimate height as unable to turn head to see: potentially a shaft; though feel it's more a cavity to correct the mistake in levels, connecting this flooded passage and the slightly higher, visible coffin level. Not wanting to back up the entire sump length, attempted turn in the cavity, needing to remove the fins, after an age manged this simple task. To achieve the manoeuvre, requiring repeatedly submerging the head, without a valve. More desperate phaffing about got both fins back on. The shape of the cavity did not permit an accurate appraisal of the ascending shaft/cavity, possible it is blocked some little way up, but not far. This area is curious, the dive was made along what felt to be a "horizontal", rectangular passage: from here the coffin level runs downhill toward the Founder shaft. The lowest point, the junction, where the coffin level turns sharp right, by the forefield; the water must percolate away hereabouts or this section would sump entirely. Back at base found CC panting heavily, the area seriously depleted of oxygen. Agreed CC should take some kit and depart, smartish; would follow as soon as possible. The "larger" dive base area swiftly meets the coffin level, (five feet high - sixteen inches wide); hurrying after Cheg, inadvertently created a sequence of bow waves, that shot away down the coffin level toward the lowering roof and decreasing air space, which at that time, CC was negotiating. Unfortunately, the sixteen inch wide, six-inch high air space CC was wriggling along suddenly disappeared, replaced by water, submerging CC with a sequence of waves. Far behind, made aware of CC's desperate circumstance by faint shouts between gurgling's; CC was in serious trouble. Halted to give time for CC to pass through the long, snug section. Squeezed back through the dig, kit was packed and sent away to the shaft. Men and kit swiftly winched, the hundred metres to surface. Straight into the Duke of York for a cracking evening of fun and drink.

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11th May Wookey Hole, 60 Years of Diving celebrations
Over a hundred CDG

The assembly wonderful, the dinner superb, the speeches entertaining, its indeed an honour to be among such people and have contributed to exploration. Nick Geh had the brilliant idea of getting every diver to autograph a copy of The Darkness Beckons; clever.

12th May Wookey Hole
Martin Bishop

Aim: redesign and rebuild lights made by MB. Plan to apply pressure to units slowly; began in Chamber 3: MB dived first. Surfaced in 9:1 before moving to 20; at the Slot secured both lamps to the line. Had a two-hour wander in 20, looking at digs whilst MB assessed climbs. Opened both units in the car park; bone dry. Delighted, have designed charging through the headset, no need to open or disturb the tube seals too often.

15th May Dunmore Cave, Kilkenny
Solo

Decided worth a visit; a delightful under-developed show cave: enchanting. Two elderly cars parked up. Wandered over to the small building, asked about a tour. Spoke to Aoife who had been caving when at Cork Uni, and knew Sean O'Ce. Told, work away. A very pleasant two hours; joined after a while by Aoife who explained the Viking massacre. The steeply descending passage huge; a much under publicized cave; an excellent place.

16th May Doolin River Cave - Alert
Solo

Rigged Fisherstreet; began walking to St. Catherine's, Noel O'Connor, offered a lift. Told him of wanting to buy a place for the mother and father so they could return home to Ireland, and eventually self. Delayed by Mihal and Maire, insisting on taking tea, cáca and a catchup. Water levels fairly low. To the Poulacronaun inlet, spent a cautious three hours pulling out rocks; ideally need Cheg's cheating sticks. Heard voices; seemingly one of two groups from a Dublin University who were doing an exchange; this one heading to St. Catherine's. Realizing the solo trip, their leader voiced disapproval of solitary caving. Scampered away from his diatribe. Found Fisherstreet poorly rigged for SRT; the rope, passing over the edge, had wrapped around the ladder. Recovered ladder, untangled the rope. On the road approached by two of the same college group, asking after the group coming from St. Catherine's. Replied, had not seen them, but had spoken to the others, who were exiting St. Catherine's.

In the bar, 9pm, Doll asked assistance for Enda, one of the boys seen earlier, concerned of the group's ability to ascend the pot. The other group, led by the complainer, had exited St. Catherine's and returned to their cottage, taking the transport. The overdue group had been delayed locating St. Catherine's entrance. Waiting at the pot Enda heard the group arrive below, shouting out they were having difficulty with the SRT; he left seeking help. Of the group of six Enda explained he knew only one who could use SRT well.

Asked Noel O'Conner to take Enda to their cottage, inform their leader of the situation, requesting he return with the others; as those below may need help to ascend, change and warm up.

Went to Fisherstreet; deployed the ladder, descended to assess situation. Informed them of the process. Asked Emma to remain until last to help the others tying knots and to hold the ladder for them. Ascended, without a line; swiftly brought up the chilled, tired group to surface; taking just under twenty five minutes. Still no sign of the leader, their pals or the transport. NO'C returned with Enda and very kindly waited to give further assistance, if needed. Emma on surface at 21:43; still no sign of their pals. Took them to

O'Conner's, Doll provided them tea and sandwiches in the bar. While the group warmed, went to the river to wash off the tackle. Returning after twenty minutes, found them still waiting for the leader. Squeezed them into the truck and drove them to their cottage. Walking in found their leader enjoying a hot meal...? Said nothing; raised voices began. Left them argue it out, from the venom being spat, it should be a lively evening. Back in the bar; bumped into K Wills and Rob Wallington. A fine night, superb music and dance.

17th May Pouldubh
K Wills,

Another cracking day, water levels very low. The cascade from Pouldubh North all but non-existent. Cobbles lethally greasy. Down to the terminal choke; no sign of the old dig. Met Noel O'Conner who had four houses to look at; none that appealing. Enroute from Kilinaboy dropped into Linnane's, Kilfenora: an enjoyable late night - early morning.

18th May Pollduagh, Gort
K Wills,

Had a new harness arrangement made by Bishop; wanted to try it out. Flow rate low. Seemingly no rain these three weeks. Asked Mick for permission; offered tea. A chill enough hour's dive in poor visibility, almost half a metre? Arriving Doolin, went with Noel O'Conner to a cabin, north side of Knocknalarabana. Appears a wreck; but much is superficial, not too much work needed to bring it to a decent standard. The owner Lizzy Scales, widow of Padraic, is in Liscannor nursing home. Very interested; its close enough to Doolin but far enough from crowds in the busy season: screams peace and quiet. The views of Sliabh Eilbhe, Galway Bay, The Islands and Connemara, enchanting.

19th May Faunarooska
K Wills

KW and son Robert; stopping at the Spencers. Nice trip in fair weather; little stream. To the Wet Pitch, normal slow journey out. Drove over to Moymore to apprise the old school house; for sale by the Catholic church: interested.

20th May S3, S4
Solo

Parked at the bay; searched again for the inter-tidal resurgence S3. No good; did not get the tide right, guessing need return in about three hours. S4; pulled out several boulders. Some success, but long term, the issue is, tempests drive debris across the low-lying landscape from the south-west, the shallow angle of bedrock allows it race over the pavement, some landing into the open rift of S4. Can now understand the reason for the wide selection of boulders within and the volume of flotsam and jetsam. This site must access the passage feeding S3; there has to be passage below. Walking back to the motor encountered a sizeable tree, sixteen inches diameter and twenty feet long, blown in over five hundred metres from the southern shoreline, the windward shore.

21st May Cullaun II
K Wills,

Weather stunning, Willie Scales believes it's been five weeks without rain, precise time period differs from one to another; either way the farmers are worried. Never seen water levels quite so low; very dry trip to Pool Chamber; depth barely covered the knees.

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20th June Fergus River Cave
K Wills

The water level low, farmers talk of the driest summer in living memory. Realized it a good time to revisit FRC. Called into the Killeen's for permission. Long delay chatting as had not seen them in a while. Tony now occupied with politics. Told, return for dinner. KW had fun negotiating the "Nick", into the crawl. Could just make out the far distant sounds of water near Gurgle chamber. Water level, sump I, did not seem much different, if at all. Noel O'Conner arranged appointment with John Casey, auctioneer, tomorrow evening, to discuss purchase of the cottage; comes with half an acre of land.

21st June Doolin River Cave
K Wills

In through Fisherstreet; aim to find Echo Pot; on this occasion the paper survey kept dry; water low conditions; wicked smell present. Eventually found the route up to the fossil sump. Decorations here, wonderful. The pitch to the actual sump, will need a bolt, no natural belays present. Dropped KW at O'Connor's, went to meet John Casey who'd been told to "look after the purchaser". Therefore, he would include two acres in the price; offered 18,000 Punt; accepted. Told a delighted Doll and Gus, also Jim Shannon that he's the purchase solicitor; JS delighted. Celebrations lasted long into the night.

22nd June S4
K Wills

A tough two hours in blazing sun; candidates for heat stroke. The path of flotsam and jetsam and cobbles clearly visible from the southern shoreline. More have heard of the cottage purchase; a serious evening of music and dance: crazy party at Noel Walsh's.

23rd June Cullaun V
K Wills

Another place worth checking during this dry period. Searched again where the stream from Cahermnaughton supposedly enters the beddings. No obvious evidence indicating an inlet. Believe the beddings extend further back than imagined and choked, or hidden with/by cobbles. Potentially camouflaging any incoming stream, if indeed it enters here. To the bar. Mad party later at Martin Droney's.

Illegible entries

6th July Chinese restaurant, Nottingham: Cheg's 50th
Martin and Sue Bishop, Barry and Ceily Sudell, K Wills, Pauline Cronin, Katherine Chester, Gerry Chester, Mary nee Chester, Dave Gough
Surprise appearance at CC's party; CC actually shocked at the turnout: an evening of fun.

8th July Pegasus Hut: Cheg's 50th Bar-B-que
Martin and Sue Bishop, Barry and Ceily Sudell, K Wills, Pauline Cronin, Katherine Chester, Dave Gough. Bug Al & Sue, Mac Big John, Nigel Burns, Mr & Mrs Young, Terry & Barbara Wright, Liam Gough, Emily Gough
A fine day, fantastic sunny weather, great mates; an excellent, lengthy party!

July undated Informed, Cheg taken into hospital; unknown reason.

July undated Delighted the health scare, is old scar tissue; relieved; feared cancer. Got a one-metre-long, orange, veterinary glove from Marilyn McManus. Sent it to CC, still in

the hospital. With the sentiment written along it, "Now you know how Sooty feels". Nurses in hysterics, insisting pinning the glove to the wall of the ward.

August undated (2nd?) Doolin

Solo

Presence required, flew to Dublin, hire car to Doolin. Met Jim Shannon to sort out purchase details, check maps, sign documents. Stopped at O'Connor's.

August undated (3rd?) Poulmagollum

Solo

Squeezed in a trip. Low water conditions. In main entrance down to main junction and up to the Branch Passage cascade. Dropped kit back at Martin Droney's, into the hire car, sped off to Dublin airport.

Illegible entries

6th Sept Polldeelin collapse, upstream

Nick Geh

During the April visit water flow seen mushrooming from the east side of the collapse. In low water, dived under east cliff into alcove, zero vis, felt way to -6.5m found letter box, squeezed though into area of loose sand; just a cavity. Recovered line to surface. After two hours to allow vis to settle NG dived the west side; sloping sand bank to -14.5m; in poor visibility pushed to 75m, near boulder pile.

7th Sept Polldeelin collapse, upstream

Nick Geh

Tied on reel at NG's limit; 75m. Shite visibility, worse than yesterday. After four metres entered a blind alcove, retraced route around base of boulder slope. Turned onto 090°, ascended to locate roof, found at -7m, headed east, encountered better visibility. Though silt from roof reduced vis to zero. Moved forward, the passage narrowing to a metre wide at -6m. Slowly negotiated a route among boulders. Visibility still zero, moved forward a further two metres feeling the passage dimensions continue; secured reel. After a two hour wait NG dived to the line reel, after another eight metres, passed the boulder ruckle to a larger area/passage. Line reel secured forty metres beyond boulder ruckle.

September undated Pegasus Hut

Barry & Ceily Sudell, Dave Gough, Cheg Chester, K Wills.

Successfully erected sheep fencing for Harry Young, who later commented "A very nice Job boys, it's a shame its upside down".

4th October Swildons Hole

Solo

Birthday trip; arriving at Valentines Landing, once again drawn to do the Round Trip. Found the first duck with plenty of air space, as indeed the next, so too the Troubles. Very pleasant lunchtime with Jackie and Roger.

7th October BEC 60th Bath and West Showground

Martin Bishop

Both in dinner suits; the dinner, normal fare. Meeting with old pal's; pure delight.

21st October Rampgill, Nenthead

Nigel Burns, Barry and Ceily Sudell, Dave Gough, Cheg Chester, Big John Cooper, Darren Hines

Nott's Climbers weekend, CC acting as guide; providing a seven-hour wander about the place, several places examined for potential digging.

22nd October Cappleclough High Level

Nigel Burns, Barry and Ceily Sudell, Dave Gough, Cheg Chester

The concrete steps leading down to a lower level offer an insight to the vast design and construction of the extensive re-use of the precious water from Perry's Dam. Used and reused, time and time again, throughout the system below and above the mountainside. Finally sent down Brewery Shaft to drive, among other machinery, the Pelton wheel generator system and create compressed air, discharging the exit deep adit in Alston. So much more to the areas industrial history than at first appears; a cracking place to study.

Illegible entries

22nd December Doolin River Cave

Cheg Chester, Dave Gough, Martin Bishop, Nigel Burns.

Water conditions normal; rigged Fisherstreet, with MB. All through St. Catherines. A little wet; as ever the streamway magnificent: swift change and straight into O'Connor's. Jim Shannon came in, confirming ownership, property title transferred 3pm, today. A very fine session followed.

24th December Pouldubh North

Dave Gough, Martin Bishop

A late, wet afternoon trip, in North entrance out South, stream quite high.

27th December S4

Martin Bishop

Took MB along, spent a bone chilling, windswept two hours taking out more storm driven debris. Superb party in Noel Walsh's place.

31st December Coolagh River Cave

Martin Bishop

Last of the year, swiftly to the sump; flood foam two metres up the wall along the canal: swimming required. The volume of the stream deafening. Remembered the lead weights left long ago, found them where left, on a ledge in Polldonough North passage, decided leave them there. Brilliant trip. New year in O'Connor's, then on to Susan's; a late night.