

2009

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1st January Doughbranneen
Pauline Cronin

First trip of the year; late start. From the Cairn, zig-zagged down, taking in the smaller benches to around 850ft. Nothing, other than shallow gulleys; glacial in their origin.

2nd January

Contracted flu; first time ever; bed for three long weeks. Never experienced such before. Nor want to ever, feel like shite, weak.

24th January Doughbranneen Black Head
Solo

From the summit cairn (1041ft), prospected southwest, between the 950 and 900ft contour. Though the entire mountain area has experienced glacial action, found several sites; indications suggest they were once large sinks. Wheezing quite a bit during ascent.

25th January Poulsallagh

15:00. Dropped off at Poulsallagh bay, continued prospecting the coastline. Of the minor sites noted, the top of dry river bed, leading to the storm beach cries out to be dug. Have seen this site years ago, must check, maybe 1974/75?

1st February Doughbranneen

Cold easterlies. Prospected the southeast quadrant from the 950ft contour, minor pieces of remnant found, most filled with debris. Possibly thrown in to prevent stock injuries.

6th February Poulmagraí
Solo

Pleasant, swift trip to the sump. Changed in warm sunlight; walked the area southwest of Poulmagraí, found a number of small depressions. Each of interest, unfortunately the landowner is unwilling for diggers, at present. Cannot seem to locate the sink/depression formed as an undercut; with adjacent "cave tree", noted with K Wills and age ago. Its entrance similar in form to Pollaphuca III. Wandered the area perhaps am too far north?

12th February Conferred, Honourary member of Pegasus Club Nottingham. Delighted.

14th February Doughbranneen
Solo

Prospecting the southeast quadrant between 950 to 900ft; little evidence of cave found.

Frantic preparations for the forthcoming Panamá trip

Issues with wrong material delivered to finish some of the second fix on the house.

2009



Conor McGrath, Dig Hastilow, Pat Cronin, James Cobbett.
Panamá Cave Project, Expedition 2009, Bocas de la Encantada.



Normal jungle conditions; James Cobbett and Dig Hastilow, above Cueva Dos Quebradas.

25th February–25 March; Panama Cave Project Expedition
Conor McGrath, Dig Hastilow, James Cobbett. See report; SUI and Pegasus websites.

28th March Pouldubh

Pete Eckford, Ken James

The lads arrived midnight; drove them to the Rainbow Hostel. Breakfast at McGann's, then to Pouldubh. In through Middle entrance, down to the junction and the old terminal junction; out via Pouldubh South, a cracking, hilarious trip.



Pat, Ken and Peter outside Pouldubh, 28th March Photo Peter Eckford

31st March Doughbranneen

Solo

Returned to search the Northwest quadrant, followed it to 800ft; three tiny openings.

4th April Doughbranneen

Solo

Prospecting the Northwest quadrant, 950 – 900ft; little present. Dropping to 850ft came on a gulley, followed the rough terrain up to another, shallower gulley. This bench leads around to a shallow, dry stream course, that is the gulley which can be clearly seen from the coast road from Gleninagh. A drystone wall follows the gulley. The vegetation looks flattened by water flow; but unsure if just from gales. Searched for source. Water here would likely to sink over a large area, rather than flow along the surface. Back to the Landrover via the cairn; very cold and bright.

5th April Poulbeagnacoillte; Blakes Mountain

Cheg Chester

No further tree felling in the area; strong winds, however, has had an effect. The covering to the dig has not suffered; the plan, construct a more secure cover. After a quick look at Jarratt's Joint, walked downstream. Over three hours examined many interesting features. Three hundred metres below the dig, found a resurgence of note. Issuing from

an open, flooded bedding; (no gps). Continued downstream, found another resurgence, contained within a small weir; an obvious drinking water source. After a further two hundred metres of freezing water and tangles of briars had enough of the terrain, headed into the forest, in the direction of the Landrover; thirty minutes later, in the bar.

4th April Ballyryan, Atlantic Ocean

Solo

Told of a cave entrance, at sea level, just north of Lackglass Cave; could not get a view of the lower area of limestone-sea margin from the limestone bench directly above. Need to view the area from the ocean.

10th April Ballyryan, Atlantic Ocean

Irish Coast Guard lifeboat crew

Arranged to conduct drills and manoeuvres off the coast opposite Lackglass Cave. Sea state allowed for examination of the coast; no cave entrance at sea level. The report seems refer to an undercut, eroded twenty metres in length; of no depth. Low tide 0.2m.

18th April Doughbranneen

Solo

Followed the Northwest quadrant to the 600ft contour, as the search area expands, extra time required. Split the area in two. Prospected the western sector. Nothing: bugger.

19th April Cullaun 5

Solo

The intention, revisit where the Cahermcnaughton stream is supposed to enter, to dig a connection. At the pitch found the bolt gone; need return and install another.

26th April Western Cappanawalla Mountain

Pauline M Cronin

Parked at the end of the track near gate; walked up the new track from the cattle crush at the top of the Rathborney Valley. Raining; steady pace to where the track levels out at about 250 metres. Crossed over the depression to relocate Gleninagh South Cave. Abandoned task in deteriorating conditions; heavy rain and increasing gale force winds.

2nd May Poulmagollum

Dashiel Phillips

Very first caving trip for DP; who thoroughly enjoyed himself. Laddered main entrance. Down to main junction, Branch Passage cascade then down to Poulelva. Exiting up the climb into Gunman's. A nice trip experiencing someone's first impressions of caves.

9th May Cullaun 2

Cheg Chester

Torrential rain the previous night; expected high water. Decided after CC's sojourn, visit Year passage. At the bridge below Poulmagollum resurgence, stream three feet below the field gate; good. At Cullaun car park, noticed a Dublin large motor home; owner and youngster changing to cave. At the entrance, a large cascade; not surprised, after noting the large stream running along the approach path. Looked for the upper end of Year Passage, squeezed into low passages; gave up, believing it wrong. Went downstream to Year Passage junction. Large cascade issuing; stream in main passage, deep. Crawled some two thirds up Year Passage: surprised to meet a six-metre waterfall in what

appeared a small inlet passage. A little concerned of the other party in these conditions; delighted to see their vehicle gone. Cracking trip.

23rd May Burren Challenge Marathon; Safety cover and first aider

Pauline Cronin

Atrocious weather. Pauline and several hundred others took part in the Burren Mountain marathon. Relocated regularly as safety cover. Encountered PMC on two occasions, trotting through the deep mire, in fuckin' awful conditions. Unsurprisingly many abandoned the flooded, muddy course. Many suffering injury; impressed at PMC's achievement in backpack, heavy coat and her gardening boots!

25th May Doughbranneen

Solo

Prospecting the Northeast quadrant; here the surface is much more rounded; unsure, glacial or weathering? Found nothing; this area dropped to the edge of the Aghaglinny depression. Stopped the search at its edge; frustratingly noting, again, the small dark rift, by the hazel bush; eastern cliff face. Returned to the Landrover checking part of the southern the quadrant; nothing. Though can see minor springs issuing from bedding close to the contour forming the edge of the depression.

3rd June Wolves Hole, Pollnadia, Cong, Co. Mayo

Tony Boycott, Jayne Stead

To Cong to direct TB to the cave; water levels seemed high in the lower streamway, got to the sumps. Afterwards crossed the river to the obscure entrance of Pollnadia.

11th June Doughbranneen

Solo

Revisited the north side of the mountain, where it approaches the vertical. It's increasing steepness, does not allow identifying any site from above. Need view the area from the coast road using binoculars.

15th June Lough Bunny

Solo

From the parking spot, swam off on 280 degrees, again to attempt locate the rumoured holes in the lough. Nothing along this bearing to the other side. Moved ten metres north repeated search on same bearing. Arrived ten metres north of the Landrover; nothing.

18th June Poulcahermaan

Solo

Hadn't been since the 1980s. The entrance has little evidence of any recent or regular visits. The forgotten, initial squeeze almost defeated the trip before starting. Forgot the need for a long belay; twat.

21st June Doughbranneen

Mattie Shannon

Shortest Night. In preparation for his Kilimanjaro trip, suggested MS accompany the trip. Walked to summit, 1041ft; experienced cloud just above 700ft, minor issue finding cairn. Abandoned prospecting the northeast side, above the coast road.

25th June Lough Bunny
Solo

Returned to move the search another twenty metres further north, starting at the parking spot. Repeated dive to opposite side and back: nothing. Perhaps should also extend search to the south?

27th June Doughbranneen
Pauline Cronin

Birthday walk for Pauline, who ran to the top! Prospected the western cliff face around 650ft; minor seepages; little else.

30th June Pollduagh
Solo

Using eighties and the trilaminate drysuit. A while since such a dive; followed existing line, reaching -32m. Visibility barely a metre, if that. Turned off the adapted 10w, FX5 lamp to reduce back scatter, used one of the q-lights; better, but not great. Minor deco penalty.

1st July Sold the 110 Landrover defender, bought the Hilux.

4th July Doughbranneen
Solo

Hoped to prospect before arrival of threatening rain; miscalculated. Took shelter in the fort, as the storm engulfed the mountain, descended back to the coast: cloud base 300ft.

13th July Poulacapple to Newtown
Nigel Burns, Cheg Chester

Parked at Poulacapple Pot; the sinking stream quite large. Walked the old track around the mountain down to Newtown, prospecting the deep valley. Back to the Landrover via Corkscrew hill. Surprised at the number of bronze age tombs, near Poulacapple Pot.

15th July Doughbranneen
Solo

Prospected north from the fort along the 600ft contour. Difficult as it steepens; all but vertical in places. Nothing obvious; though obscured by the curve of the mountainside.

24th July Lough Bunny
Solo

Returned to progress underwater prospecting. Dived a further twenty metres north of the parking place, on 280 degrees, reached the other side, commenced return dive ten metres further north. Two areas of tall, spindly looking plants encountered; no fish life seen; the bottom seems a sterile expanse of cream coloured coarse sandy material.

1st August Doughbranneen
Solo

Continued prospecting the 600ft contour from the Fort. Forced uphill, east, due to vertical sections. Nothing of note, as yet.

6th August Poulnafearbui
Ken James, Pete Eckford

To Poulnafearbui, to work out the travel stiffness and enjoy the superb sunny evening. In McGann's until very late.

7th August Lug na Cumar (L89)

Ken James, Pete Eckford

En-route to site, many turloughs have appeared; it has been wet. Ground water levels, after the abnormal July rains, have had a detrimental effect on dive projects. Spoke to Brian Murray for permission to drive to the dive site. Brian said to drive up his field, park then walk the 100 metres to the site, the area is now very soft and boggy. Informed of the proposed motorway along the spine of his hill, commencing next year. KJ dived first to assess; entering the pool was caught by the upwelling current, swept off downstream into a fallen willow tree, becoming stuck among the branches. Assisted KJ back to base. Meanwhile PE dived, noting current coming up the north side of the pot, sweeping across the surface; this is what caught KJ unawares. PE dived, eventually finding the old line, attached new line returned to dive base to discuss situation.

8th August Lug na Cumar – Polluiscebeag

Ken James, Pete Eckford

Lug na Cumar; evidence of increased flow since yesterday; many swirl effects visible at surface. PE opted to dive to recover the reel and also dive Polluiscebeag. Recovering the reel noted main bearing of 165mag. Reeling in, the line broke at a frayed point and coiled back onto PE, fortunately occurring in the main pot. Tried to plumb Polluiscebeag with stone and line; two metres! Without fins PE clambered among the dense accumulated submerged foliage, removing as much as practicable. A narrow rift is visible below, trending toward Pouluiscemore. Prospects reasonable once compacted debris cleared.

9th August Poulelva - Poulmagollum

Ken James, Pete Eckford

Pleasant through trip, high stream flow, the beddings challenging. Into the Roadside for one, then a few, then several. Collected by Pauline around midnight.

10th August Cullaun 2

Ken James, Pete Eckford

Steady trip in high water; terminal cascade impressive. A delightful trip with fine pals.

11th August Lough Bunny

Ken James, Pete Eckford

Trying out new arrangement of buoyancy equipment, using the Dive-rite harness. Each diver swiftly adopted the easy adjust system for mid water buoyancy control. As they would, being the consummate divers they are.

12th August Gleninagh Pier

Barry Sudell, Ken James, Pete Eckford

Team dived adjacent the pier to try out PC's buoyancy system; KJ using a dry suit.

16th August Upper Poulmagollum

Solo

Rigged Pollbinn with ladder secured to a three-foot length of rebar; walked to Upper Poulmagollum pitch. Abseiled in, scampered up the cascades, climbed out.

23rd August Upper Poulmagollum

Solo

Raining. Went in search of E3, after laddering Pollbinn, for an exit. Memory disrupted – faulty? The area appears disturbed, with what looks like an attempt to block it. Dug out a

few boulders and sods of turf. The passage fairly desperate in places; am getting fat? Delighted to reach Pollbinn, unsure the entrance actually was E3.

3rd September Gleninagh Pier

Barry Sudell

Dived for an hour at -6m gliding in excellent vis, many creatures present, weighting good for BS. Both used backpacks, BS tried out the scooter; delighted.

9th September Poulnafearbui

Barry and Ceily Sudell

Smell and noises, suggest that it's presently home to Fox or Badger; will try again later.

13th September Lough Bunny

Barry Sudell

Searched again for these reputed holes in the bottom of this lough. Dived independent; BS on scooter. Repeated process, moving a further ten metres north. Started, sixty metres north of the car park returning to a position some eighty metres north of start point; nothing.

17th September Cullaun 2

Barry Sudell

A trip for BS; reached the water chamber without incident; BS in obvious discomfort from the damaged ankle, particularly when traversing the awkward upper dry passage.

20th September Upper Poulmagollum

Barry Sudell

Rigged off the tree; encountered Robin Sheene and novice, Conor, doing the same trip.

24th September Poulmagollum

Barry Sudell

Main streamway to main junction then upstream to the cascade from Branch Passage
An enjoyable three hour trip, out at 21:30, to a clear night sky. Roadside for a pint.

30th September Formoyle East Cave

Solo

Wandered over to view the place; archaeology in mind. Found it where Tony Boycott described it; defeated by the second squeeze. The area is wonderfully remote.

1st October Cullaun 2

Barry Sudell

Entered a very dry cave, for a change, went down the high-level passage to the chamber. Once down the climb, into the streamway, headed out. Near the waterfall met a party from the outdoor centre; another entering the high-level passage at the cascades.

4th October Cullaun 5

Barry Sudell

Birthday trip; heavy rain. Steady trip to locate passage to other entrance; success. Turned at the beddings being all but sumped. Exited late midday; pints until late in McGann's.

14th October Withyhill – Fernhill Caves, Fairy Cave Quarry: UK.

Withyhill Cave. Mark Lumley, Tony Boycott.

Excavated a trench to assist draining the regular flood water which accumulates and in danger of affecting the decorations. High-jacked by Dave King, Clive North and Alan Gray to experience the wonders of Fernhill and assist the digging; it's quite superb.

Fernhill Cave

Dave King, Clive North and Alan Gray showed and explained the work conducted, an excellent team effort. Back to the dig for a couple of hours; very nice.

4th November Cave near Fanore.

Solo

Noel Walsh relates a cave near the church; again, such places must have been used by early man. The nearby river a rare source of fresh water; chert beds nearby for tooling. Suspect it to be Fanore Cave, but NW's directions don't tally.

6th November Fanore Cave

Solo

Followed NW's directions; cave is, in fact Fanore West Cave. The floor of cow shite seems deeper. Found the crawl, decided against entering it through the puddle of cow piss.

9th November Poulcahermaan

Solo

Returned with a long tether; the squeeze a worse struggle than last time. Reached where the place becomes a crawl in the stream; a team could push this. Remembered the hole previously opened nearby. Searched the area; located a possible site, now covered with heather etc. in amongst, could feel boulders. Called to see if the farmer met years ago is still about, no one around; place looks lived in. Should return and enquire.

18th November Colleen Bawn Caves, Killarney, Co. Kerry

Barry Sudell

Muckross Lake, just before dark, after a visit to Tralee hospital. Assessed reaching the Colleen Bawn Caves. From the layby on the south side of the lake, observed dark holes on opposite bank. Two options; 1) canoe across 900 metres 2) walk in via permissions from Muckross House, the 2k to the general area.

25th November Lost Susan, (Doll), O'Connor

30th November Hole near Poulcahermaan

Solo

Returned to the farm; no one about; left note. Wandered over with length of rebar to probe the site. In better light this site seems too far away from Poulcahermaan. Walked back, called to the farm, no one home.

5th December I.C.R.O practice St. Catherines

Assessed Alex Cronin, no relative, operating the store during rescue practice; weather, shite. Considering the overwhelming demands placed on him he did very well.

12th December Slieve Elba

Solo

Returned to search for the previously noted, filled pothole, overlooking Fanore. Dropped off at Caher valley, took the Drover's Road, at the summit, turned Nor-Norwest toward

the area of “hole”. Weather deteriorated; cloud below 500ft. Descended another terrace; without any luck. Bugger.

13th December Doughbranneen

Solo

Resumed prospecting. Scoured the saddle between Doughbranneen and Aghaglinny. Believe this the approximate area above the cascades. Nothing of note located, before bad weather closed in.

Concentrated on completing outstanding second fix of building work.

31st December Pouldubh/Cullaun 2

Barry Sudell

Last trip of the year; the weather had other ideas. Thick snow fall covered the landscape. Failed to get the Hilux beyond the second last bend on the steep, uphill section of mountain road above Kilmoon; eighteen inches of frozen snow covered the road at this point; reversed the sinuous half mile downhill to Glen Frays place. Headed through equally desperate conditions to Cullaun II; encountering the same barely impenetrable conditions thirty metres off the main road. Headed straight into McGann's; began a superb session lasting far beyond midnight.