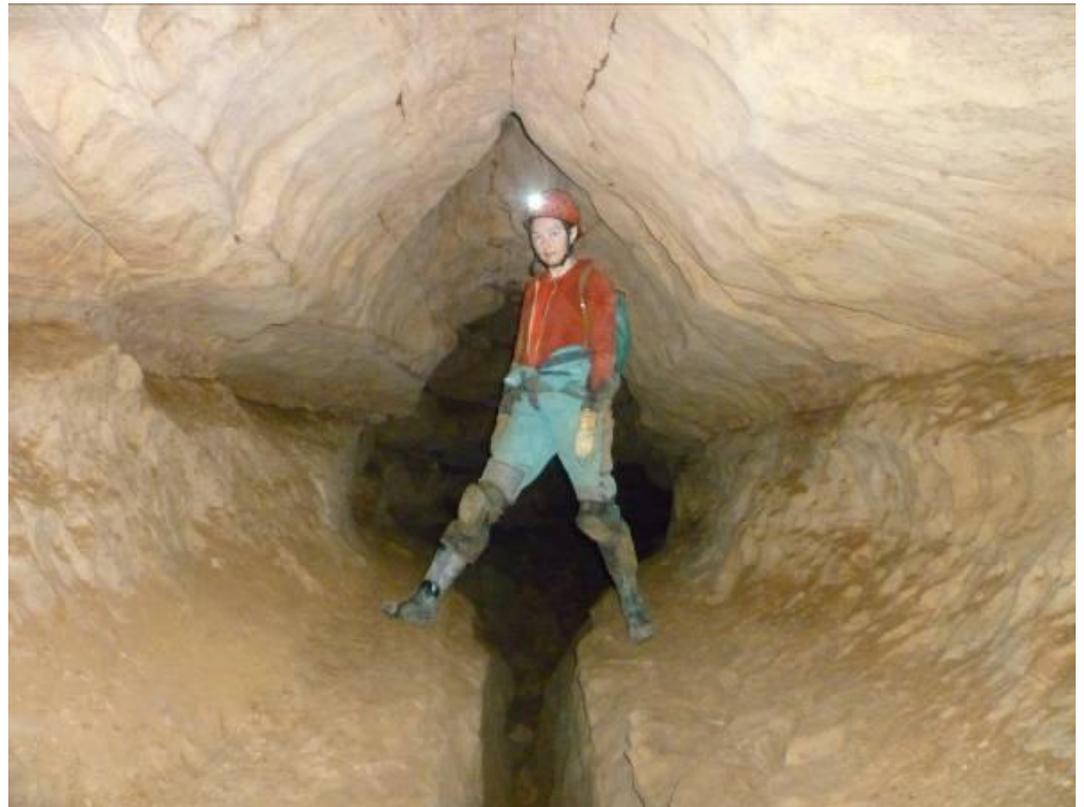




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## Remelt



Full Story on Page 4

**Committee**

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Dave Tuffley  
John Hine

Wet Sink Secretary  
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Otter Hole Secretary  
Nicola Bayley

**Editorial**

Another bumper newsletter with two massive reports. A big thank you to everyone who has contributed and if you'd like to see your name in print why not have a go and write something. It doesn't have to be the world's greatest literature so long as it's vaguely club related.

The time of the AGM is nearly upon us again so

be sure to turn up and have your say in what goes on.

**New Members**

A warm welcome to the following new members

Alan Brown  
Jo Hems  
Serena Jopson  
Chris Crowley



## Diary Dates

07/09/2011	<b>Miss Graces Lane Cave:</b> Meet at 7.45 in MGL. Various trips on offer around one of the Forest's largest and newest cave systems.
12/09/2011	<b>SRT Training:</b> "Single Rope Technique" explained. Never done it? now's your chance to get some expert training from Steve Tomalin. Meet at the cave rescue Depot 7pm.
16/09/2011	<b>Wetsink/Slaughter Stream Cave:</b> A pretty good trip to the end of Kuwait passage with the aim to make vocal / smoke connection to the dig in Fault Chamber in the Remelt series. Please contact Dan for details.
19/09/2011	<b>Committee Meeting:</b> 7.30 at the Rising Sun
24-25/09/2011	<b>Hidden Earth:</b> Catch up with old friends and make new ones at THE Caving Conference, on the doorstep this year in Monmouth. Lots of talking about caving, caving , caving and caves! (and a few beers) <a href="http://www.hidden-earth.org.uk">www.hidden-earth.org.uk</a>
03/10/2011	<b>AGM:</b> Your chance to have a say in the running of the and for club, and volunteer to stand for any post on the committee. 8pm at the Rising Sun
05/10/2011	<b>Old Ham Iron Mine:</b> Meeting at the layby 7.45pm. Suitable for all
10/10/2011	<b>SRT Training:</b> "Single Rope Technique" explained. Never done it? now's your chance to get some expert training from Steve Tomalin. Meet at the cave rescue Depot 7pm.
14-23/10/2011	<b>Nenthead:</b> Spend a week exploring theses mines in Cumbria until the 1st May. Bunkhouse accomodation is £14 per night. Contact Mole for details
15/10/2011	<b>Ogof Draenen:</b> Lots of trip options – who knows where we will get to... Please contact Dan for details.
07/11/2011	<b>Forest Social:</b> Dr Martin Goulding (the countries leading authority and author on wild boars), is coming to give a talk entitled 'Wild Boar - an unplanned reintroduction'. You've no doubt seen them around the forest, time to find out a bit more about them.
09/11/2011	<b>Noxon Park Iron Mine:</b> Suitable for all, meet at 7.45pm
19/11/2011	<b>Llanelly Quarry Pot:</b> Bit of SRT, bit of streamway, bit of squeezing – this cave has it all! Please contact Dan for details.

## Oh No ... Not Remelt Again

Dan and Jan have been digging at the Remelt Plant in Wet Sink for the past eight months and by July had made five trips. On occasions they have persuaded a few other hardy souls to join them, notably Ade Thorpe. The prize is unlikely to be new cave passage but hopefully will be a connection to Kuwait Passage creating what will be one of the finest round trips in the UK. The resulting 6+ hour trip will have something of everything: pitches, climbs, rift traverses, crawls, squeezes, romping streamways and formations. But it's not there yet.

On Wednesday evenings in the pub, following digging sessions at Cab Sav, I had heard Dan and Jan talk about progress in the Remelt Series and thought to myself I'd like to help out one day. I had only previously been as far as the Snow Gardens and was keen to see a bit further on and provide a little sherparing help with their efforts. So when I got an e-mail from Dan titled 'Oh no...not Remelt again!' suggesting a couple of dates, I volunteered my services.

I didn't have use of a car on the day and so asked for a lift and was expecting Jan to turn up in his van. Instead on the appointed Saturday morning I was surprised to see Nicky pull up in her convertible with the roof

down and wearing sunglasses. After cramming my gear into the restricted boot space I dropped into the passenger seat and was sped off. It felt like an exotic trip was already in the offing, but perhaps a trip to the beach on this nice sunny day would have been more in keeping. What was I doing planning to spend the entire day underground? The good weather had already caused one cancellation casualty (no names!) but I had used up lots of brownie points to get an advance free pass out for the day, abandoning a wife and three kids and so wasn't going miss out now.

When we arrived at Joyford Dan and Jan were already there and sorting out scaffold bars and clips. I duly go allotted a shortish bar but with 6 heavy steel clips attached to it that was to be my freight for the next few hours. The scaffold tube had a rope looped through it and it was possible to clip it to my belt with a crab. It seemed to be about the weight of a small poodle but not so soft and comfortable as it swung against my legs. The alternative was to shoulder carry it with the clips digging into my back, again not a great option. Holding it in my hand also worked but was awkward if I then wanted to hold on to something. A combination of all three plus pushing and dragging it were finally used in fairly equal measure according to the type of

passage being negotiated.

Dan had gone ahead to rig the entrance pitches and I followed next, putting on my SRT rig at the entrance and entering at 11:00. When I got to the balcony pitch I discovered Dan had rigged it with a ladder rather than a rope. Not owning ladders I had never been down the cave before using anything other than SRT and had just assumed that was what we would be doing. Joining Dan at the top of the next pitch I took off my redundant SRT gear and got lifelined down the next ladder. I then fielded in a series of scaffold bars before the rest of the team descended.

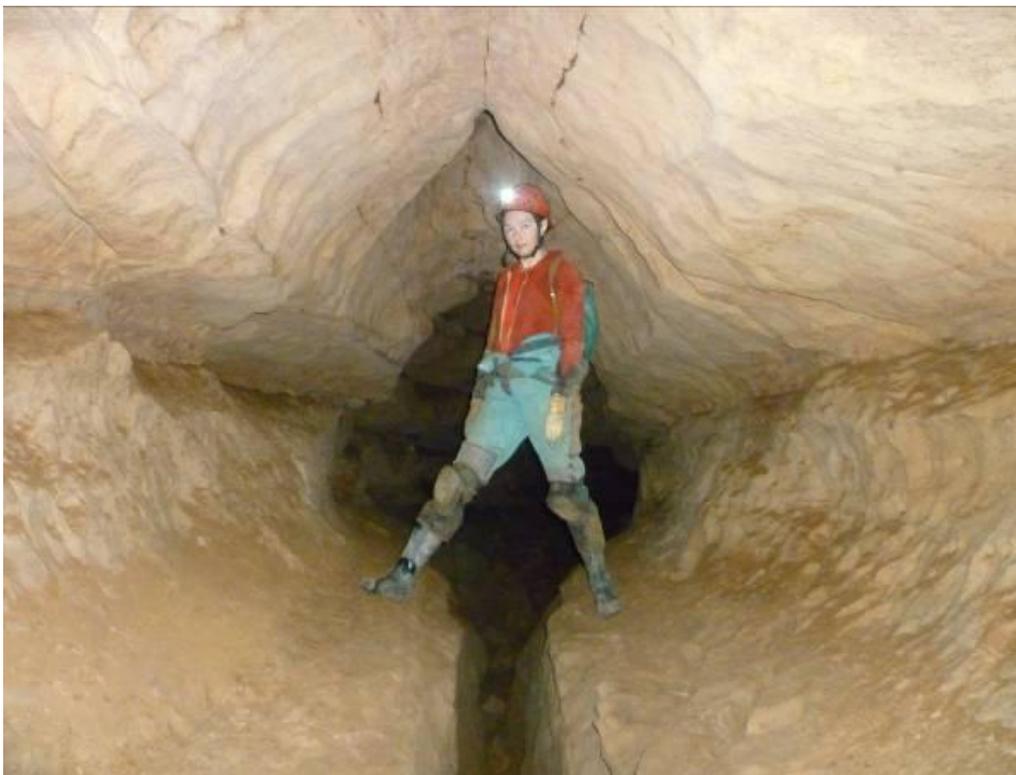
Once they all got to the bottom I was informed that I had shed 2 scaffold clips that were now in someone else's bag. Result! If the others were loose I might be able to lose the weight of them too. Unfortunately they remained stubbornly connected for the next four hours although I did manage to lose one bolt and nut in a crawl later on that was found by Nicky minus the nut.



Jan Descending Main Pitch. Photo IH



Dan Traversing in Rifts. Photo IH



Nicky in passage somewhere near Snow Gardens. Photo IH

The cobble crawl was quickly followed by a dryish Zurree Aven climb. I was wearing my GCRG orange poly cotton oversuit for the first time and it seemed to be a good choice of oversuit for the dry conditions of the trip. Jan on the otherhand was just in a fleece suit and not even bothering with an oversuit. My personal contribution to economy of PPE was having a crap light in the form of an old Headlite with only 6 of the 7 LEDs working which flickered every so often. I blame this for falling over shortly after starting down The Chunnel and landing on my left thigh and bruising it. Well it was partly that and reaching out with my left hand for a non-existent wall that happened instead to be a shadow formed by the high luminosity of Nicky's supercharged Hurricane Lamp. No wonder she wears sunglasses.

We passed the skeleton of the dog and two hours into the cave we reached The Camp and had a rest and drink. I had brought in 1.25 litres of drink in two bottles and had probably already sweated this much out. I would have to ration my fluid intake over the day and knew I would leave the cave dehydrated. I also ate one of my stash of snickers and cereal bars knowing I'd need to keep energy levels up. Presumably the dog, weakened by lack of food and water, had eventually succumbed to hypothermia

in its final resting place some way in from where it had originally entered.

Soon we were on our way again and climbing along the rift and traverses towards the Snow Gardens. Up ahead it sounded like an alpine meadow, with cowbells, as Jan and Dan clanged their different length tubes along creating an interesting tune. My scaffold tube with its four clips attached was less tuneful and Dan likened it to the robotic sound of a Terminator in pursuit.

The Snow Gardens arrived an hour after leaving The Camp and we carefully crawled our way past the delicate crystal pool and it's surrounding dry crusted flakes. Our next obstacle was the thrutch up the chimney out of the Snow Gardens and this was followed by more climbs up and down and traverses along. There were also a few rifty-crawls and a squeeze or two and in one I managed to rip of a knee patch from my new oversuit. It was by now well and truly christened and it no longer felt too shiny.

For a couple of the climbs, that were that extra bit dodgy, we used in-situ ropes to protect ourselves in case of a slip. A serious injury and a resulting rescue this far into the cave did not bear thinking about if you considered the terrain we had already covered. For a

few of the unprotected traverses and climbs it was similarly best not to think about the consequences of falling off. Dan did however remark as to his vulnerability of having a six foot scaffold pole hanging from his belt with one end sticking up just below his bottom. I commented that the coroner's verdict would make interesting reading.

It was while trying to capture Dan's gymnastic and graceful pole dancing climbing moves on photo that my camera died. Actually my wife's camera that I had omitted to mention I was taking caving (as this is banned) died. The zoom, presumably jammed with cave grit, packed up and wouldn't retract even with turning off. Increasingly desperate, furtive attempts later at home with a can of WD40 didn't improve the situation and I had to explain what had happened... "er.. I've been asked to write a trip report for the newsletter and was told I needed photos to illustrate".



Nicky by Snow Gardens. Photo IH



Dan Traversing with Scaffold Pole. Photo IH

After a last roped climb down into Fault Chamber we arrived at the dig site four hours fifteen minutes after entering the cave. While Jan set to work scaffolding with the four poles we had brought in, the other three of us had some more food and drink and started to cool down. In fact I started to get cold after 40 minutes or so in my sweat soaked fleece suit and was now wearing a balaclava and had my oversuit zipped fully up.

To keep us amused Nicky decided to do a smoke/draft test. She had brought in a

special box of smoking sticks that you had to strike like a match. Unfortunately they kept breaking rather than igniting. Dan, keen to get in on the pyrotechnics, helpfully made a bonfire of the pieces and soon had them alight. Soon we had smoke. In fact soon we had lots of smoke. It initially seemed to go upwards into the roof of the chamber. Did this indicate an upward draft or does hot smoking air just rise? Soon the results were obscured as the smoke descended and filled the rest of the chamber. The smoke descended into the mud and rock funnel that

Jan was working in and he coughed up a question as to what was happening up there. Nicky explained about the important speleological drafting survey that was being conducted with double-blind research methodology.



Nicky & Dan's Pyrotechnics. Photo IH

Jan by now had shored up some of the several tons of mud and rocks that was threatening to slide into the dig face and said did anyone want a go at digging. I was keen to volunteer as I was now pretty cold and needed a way to warm up. I carefully climbed down to the electron ladder dangling into the pit and made a careful descent of about fifteen feet to the bottom, passing the newly built and sparse shoring. The bottom of the dig was quite loose dry mud and rocks with gaps between it. A bit of stirring around with a crow bar and it could then be lifted out by hand and put into a bucket that was hauled to the top. After a while the hole I was reaching into was at arm's

length depth and it was not possible to get low enough into it. The bottom of the dig would need widening out as it was rather restrictively pinching in. I began to crowbar away at the side rock wall, which was actually fairly crumbly, in order to widen the working space.

After about 30 to 40 minutes I decide it must be someone else's turn to warm up and I climbed back up. Dan did a digging session followed by Jan and we also took turns hauling or emptying buckets. At 6pm Dan shouted down a time warning to Jan so that he could stop digging and start planning what to do on the next visit. It was decided a two-person trip with some

bolting for a traverse rope at the top and some more digging was probably the best plan. I went down for a last look to see what impact Dan and Jan's digging had had on things. We'd probably hauled up another fifteen or so buckets of spoil but the depth was not much deeper than before but it was a bit wider.

The theory is the dig should break into Kuwait passage, at a high level boulder choke, above the streamway, near 'Calcite Cascade', as labeled on the survey. This is about 100-150m back from the static sump 4. The dig has a draft variously described as vague to strong depending on subjective views and possibly levels of optimism.



Ian and Dan Hauling at Dig Site. Photo NB



Jan at Dig Site. Photo NB



Dan Stacking Dig Spoil in Fault Chamber.

By the time we set off from the dig site it was 6.40pm and Jan had set a call out time of 10:30pm that hadn't been changed even though at the beginning of the day we had been an hour late getting to the cave. It had taken us 4 ¼ hours to get to Fault Chamber and we now had to get out from it in under 4 hours. No worries. For the way back we were much lighter laden – no scaffold poles, less food and drink.

Soon we were once again climbing up and down, traversing and crawling. I was quickly reminded of my bruised left thigh and had to try to favour the right hand side in those rift crawls. I didn't remember there were so many crawls and

squeezes and as I was at the front I wondered at one bit if I had gone the wrong way and so checked with Nicky behind. Sure enough it was the right way and it was just my brain, as usual, blocking out the memory of what we had done and needed to do again. At some of the high traverses with an eight metre drop to the floor below I was again reminded of the seriousness of the trip.

Back at the Snow Gardens I picked up the water bottle I had left there and had quick drink saving the last two mouthfuls for later. I was certainly dehydrated and hadn't needed a wee since before entering the cave eight hours previously. I would normally have drunk

twice as much if I was sat at a desk but then I wouldn't have had to drag it through a cave with me. The drink that is.

Around about 8pm we reached The Camp and had a rest and the last of our drinks. I asked Jan, who had originally explored the Remelt Series with John Elliott in 1998/9, why he had named it The Remelt Plant. He said that at the time he had been working at an Aluminium Works that had a Remelt Plant and he liked the word. It also seemed to fit with the Snow Gardens and other names such as The Heat Exchanger that he used.



L-R: Dan, Jan & Ian at The Camp on the way in. Photo NB

After our stop it was hard to get going again. There was more crawling to be done through The Deserts and my arms were now tiring. One last rest at the end of The Chunnel and then we were descending Zuree Aven once more. With Nicky's light ahead and below me I got a good impression of just how high this is and was able to appreciate it's size much more than on the climb up. It's a fairly easy scramble down but on a couple of steps is worth facing in to climb down backwards.

Following the water we were soon back at the cobble crawl to the pitches. Dan remarked how this is

always the worst bit after a long trip. I certainly agreed, my shoulders were aching and my tired fore arms were a little sore despite elbow pads. Finally we were back at the ladders and I belayed Dan up with a double life-line and then he roped the rest of us up.

After nearly ten hours of caving we finally exited the cave at 9.50pm in time to cancel our call-out but more importantly in time to get to the pub before it closed and undertake some re-hydration. Although we hadn't made huge progress at the dig, some much needed stabilisation work had been done and a good days caving had been had. I

hope I haven't put anyone off joining the queue to go with Jan and Dan on future trips. I'll certainly be back for more sometime and also look forward to the Long Round Trip in the future.

## **RFDCC Caving Trip To Doolin, County Clare, Eire 28 May – 4 June 2011**

Personnel: RFDCC Andy Clark, Pete Spayne, Jan'Budgie Smuggler' Karvik, Ben Church  
ATAC Niki Adlam-Stiles, Mat Adlam Stiles, Andy Elsegood, Lin Hand

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> May En Route

We left Redbrook in Pete's Rover with very little clearance for the back wheels; the car was well and truly wedged with gear – even more so after our food shop at the Pembroke dock Tesco. A smooth crossing was followed by a very easy drive compared to the olden days; the roads have been substantially improved. Doolin was barely recognisable with all the new tourist development – though as soon as we were comfortably ensconced in McGanns with our first Guinness Andy and I felt as though we had never left. The improvised bike rack bodged by Pete and Andy at 10 pm on Friday held out until it was reversed into the tree outside the cottage when we arrived. Our wine selection was thoroughly sampled until the witching hour of 1:45am.

Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> May Doolin Valley  
Aran View – Fisher Street Pot – St. Catherine'sOne

A leisurely start and a big full cooked breakfast led to us not leaving the cottage until midday for a breath of (very) fresh air ambling along Doolin Strand and marvelling at the wonderful limestone pavement and spectacular waves. We were baffled by a bewildering array of signs telling us not to do a wide range of strange things. A ferry returning from the Aran Islands made us glad we were not on it, though a crowd of unsuspecting fools were queuing up to board the vomit comet. Finally we set off to Doolin River Cave. The RFDCC contingent set off down Aran View Swallet whilst the Keyhole crew headed in to St Catherine's Swallet. We managed to ignore all of the instructions to keep right and took 3 left hand ox bows but before long we were enduring the knee punishing long crawl over pointy scalloping to the main stream. Once in the main stream we were soon at the 'Whooo!!' point and Jan was quick to complain about his 'budgie smugglers' lack of insulation. We finally met up with the Keyhole crew at the

start of the St Catherine's entrance – they had had a bit of an epic finding the route on the way in. We headed out without incident, collecting a few 'Doolin Discus' stones en route. We exited after an excellent 4 hour trip and returned to the cottage for copious quantities of tea and a rather fiery Spaghetti Bolognese cooked by Pete.

Monday 30<sup>th</sup> May  
Eastern Slieve Elva  
Poulnagollum – Poulelva through trip

There was an unscheduled early start this morning when Andy started making breakfast – and then realised that it was only 7am! He claimed that "The sun was shining so I thought it must be time to get up; the sun only gets to Sunshade Cottage in Redbrook at 10am". A two pronged exchange trip attack on Poulnagollum – Poulelva was mounted today . Andy joined Niki and Mat, while Andy Elsegood and Lin went off to drive around Galway and be disappointed by the Ailwee show cave. Ben, Jan and Pete started at Poulnagollum and enjoyed an excellent trip through lots of spectacular streamway before prussiking up the glorious 30m pitch of Poulelva, emerging into sunshine and looking down on a rainbow in the waterfall that noisily gushes down the pot. The smell of wild garlic was thick in the air... as well as numerous holly branches being thrown down the pitch by Pete. Both parties got back to the cars within minutes of each other and all agreed it had been an excellent trip: two hours underground, three hours including pitch rigging / SRT. Feeling very pleased with ourselves we rewarded the successful mission with a lovely pint of the blackest beer you have ever seen, brewed by the microbrewery at the Roadside Inn in Lisdoonvarna. Disappointingly expensive food shopping followed. In the afternoon we had a long chat with Mr Kerrin and did most of the settling up of the bill – a very reasonable £73 per head. Later we went for a quick fishing trip off the rocks a few km N of Doolin – we caught nothing but enjoyed being there and drinking

cider. After a splendid meal of roast lamb chops, pork steaks and vegetables (thanks Pete!) we went down to Gus O' Connors, which was disappointingly similar to an Irish bar in New York – it was full of Americans and the fiddle-dee-dee music had no soul. We all thought 'Feckity Feck' and headed for McDermots' where there was a much better band and our 'just a quick couple of pints' turned into four and a good time was had by all.

Tuesday 31st May NW Burren Walk

We decided to give our knees a rest from crawling today and went for an excellent 5 hour / 8 mile walk on the northernmost part of the Burren, taking in the three highest points – all with unpronounceable names. As we started from the farm where we had parked the farmer pronounced that 'When you get to the top you can see down the other side' – sound advice indeed! We were blessed with good weather (in fact we all caught the sun quite a bit) and had splendid views, particularly looking east towards Ballyvaughan. The walk was punctuated with lots of geological and archaeological interest and Ben took a few decent photos. After the walk we were all starving and had excellent seafood chowder and a welcome pint of Guinness at Monk's Fish Bar. After half an hour of fruitless fishing off the pier we headed towards home but stopped off for another fishing session just to the east of Black Head. Ben landed one mackerel and lost another – and Jan caught two impressive sand eels; at least 5cm. On the way back we stopped at a tackle shop in Fanore where the proprietor gave us outstanding service and a fishing lesson, with tide time graphs and casting diagrams. He also sold good '99 ice creams! Andy managed to persuade us all to eat vegetables for supper after a tiny, but delicious fresh fried mackerel starter. In the evening we were all a bit knackered and Jan ended up going on a solo mission to the bright lights of Doolin.

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> June  
S Central Burren Kilcorney  
Cave of The Wild Horses

An excellent trip to Cave of The Wild Horses found us doing some truly sporting caving. We laddered the first 13m pitch and soon found

ourselves questioning whether the way on really could be through a narrow but seemingly bottomless gourd pool. After much debate Andy pushed the passage, managing to avoid getting too wet above the waist. Ben ploughed straight into the passage and soon found himself yelping in breathtakingly cold water up to his neck. Jan gingerly followed and whinged all the way, while Pete took the sensible option and headed back to the comforting warmth of his Rover. Following the 9m pitch at the end of the gourd our next challenge was a tight squeeze – even Andy removed his Krabs to get through. Ben was wary, thanks to a bad year for cracked ribs last year, but managed to exhale enough to slip through. Jan, however, only managed to get his head through and defeated by the 'fatometer', retreated to delve into the infrequently visited muddy nether regions of the cave. It wasn't long before we were debating whether to continue when we were faced by a low crawl in water – but we were very glad that we did push on through 15m of hands and knees crawling in a smooth floored passage with a triangular cross section and water up to your ears; excellent sporty caving. The 2m climb 'Handline advisable' was definitely an understatement; 'Handline essential' thanks to a surplus of greasy mud which filled the end of the cave, the 'Large Frog', which was indeed occupied by a few (rather skinny and inevitably doomed) frogs. We made a speedy exit after about 4 hours underground and managed to rinse the worst of the mud off in a large horse trough before heading off to do a spot of shopping followed by copious mugs of tea. Suitably refreshed Pete, Jan and Ben headed off for a spot of fishing, armed with the local knowledge and some new mackerel feathers. Pete and Ben simultaneously caught decent sized mackerel – must have been a passing shoal – but nothing for the next half hour. Despite not having caught anything himself Jan was appointed as fish chef and produced some very tasty mackerel wraps as a starter. Pete excelled himself as steak chef. The 3 bottles of red wine '1 for each remaining night' were all consumed before heading down to McGanns for a pint, then to McDermots for a few more – and back to McGanns (except for Andy) for a 'demi rapide pour la autoroute' before heading uphill and home to tea and a late chat.

Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> June

Jan Coast Walk Cliffs of Moher – Doolin  
Pete, Andy Ben Green Road Bike Ride

A slow start this morning before popping into Doolin to hire a bike for Ben (7 Euros) from the Rainbow Hostel and dropping Jan off for his coastal walk from Lisconner back to Doolin. We were blessed with good weather and cycled north along lanes, stopping briefly to look at the entrance to Coolagh River Cave. We changed our original plan to follow the green land north and took a sweeping descent down a meandering lane to Fanore, stopping for a moment to watch a dolphin playing close to the shore. We stopped for a lunch of tasty fruitcake on the beach and had a good rest before heading along the coast to meet the northern end of the green lane. We had to push up the first bit of the lane but soon gained the top of the ridge and most of the rest of the ride was excellent downhills, though some were rather bone (and everything else!) rattling for Ben, who had no suspension. In the early evening we went fishing off the rocks at Doolin Strand; a beautiful setting, but fruitless (or should I say fishless!) Jan even went for a quick dip in the harbour. We had a quiet night tonight and did not go to the pub.

Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> June                      Coolagh River Cave

A glorious (almost) cloudless sky encouraged us to visit the very flood prone Coolagh River Cave today. A very sporting trip with lots of variety; top quality caving for just over 2 hours. After caving we went for a round of golf back in Doolin. Before we had left the first tee we were all helpless with laughter, barely able to breathe after watching Andy dig himself out of a bunker. The hilarity continued and included Ben and Andy hitting balls over a fence which they both proved to be electric. Jan proved to be the most skilled player, hitting one birdie and finishing with a score of 83. After a quick pint at the newest pub in Doolin we went fishing at Black Head. A glorious evening – but no fish for us – though a chap 100m away hooked 4 mackerel in one go! Poor old Jan lost his camera and we all had a good look for it but failed to find it. Back at the hut we got packed up and consumed a huge chilli, made with the most expensive mince in the world. A fairly quiet last night sinking a few Guinness in McDermots.

Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> June

It didn't take long to pack up, tidy up and sort out paying TJ Kerrin for the electric. We locked Andy and Petes' bikes up near the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Centre and headed off to look at the shiny things in the Liscannor Stone Centre and then parked the car at Lisconner. Walking along the wave cut platform was superb – lots of crystal clear pools teeming with wildlife and colourful seaweed, spectacular caves, arches and stacks. After a couple of kilometres we scrambled up the cliff and continued along the top of the cliffs back to the visitor centre. Really spectacular, vertigo inducing scenery! Andy and Pete cycled downhill back to the car in five minutes, and we drove to Ennis for lunch looking at the falls before starting the long haul home after an excellent varied holiday.

### Ben Church

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