

[October 1964]

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Circular to members. No. 3, October 1964

Ireland

Solution of limestone

This year the stay extended over four weeks, to allow for an intensive investigation into the solution of limestone under varying conditions of precipitation and run off. Nearly two dozen temporary rain gauges were set up. The daily morning round was well over twenty miles to collect water samples and read the rain gauges. Underground also a large number of water samples were collected, and the chemists had to work into the early hours of the morning to get the titrations done. In all about 1500 samples were analysed. In addition to this, Vee notch weirs, for measuring the flow of water accurately, were set up. They were made out of Dexion and polythene, and were very successful. Initial results indicate that a re-assessment of the ages of the caves of N.W. Clare will be necessary. A symposium on the subject will be held later this term.

Exploration

Much time was devoted to checking on doubtful points in previous accounts of certain caves, but even so there are still a number unchecked. There were two outstanding achievements in exploration. Firstly, in Cahir Cloggaun West-1 two twelve hour trips were made, during which 1100 ft. of passage were surveyed and another 4060 ft. of passage discovered and surveyed to grade 2. The cave has three separate ends, each one in a flooded bedding-plane, with the most Southerly one about 200 yards South of the Misdoonvarna-Ballyvaughan road. The cave has very many interesting features, not the least of which is the complexity of the Main Junction area, where the two main tributary streams meet, or the incredibly beautiful formations in one of the upper level passages, Paradise Passage. It is only the introduction of exposure suits which has made exploration of the lower parts of this cave possible.

The second main discovery was in Cullaun 3. The former end was passed in two determined efforts. The first came near to disaster. Beyond the gours at the termination a route was followed for some distance, the going being tolerably easy, and a pot, Surprise Pot, 15 ft. deep, was reached. On the return journey a stalactite barrier (3rd. one from the entrance) was reached and the party were dismayed to find that there was barely 4 inches of air space above the water. It had recently been sumped. Fortunately after waiting awhile the water level dropped, and the party got through.

Now it had not rained very hard when the party had been underground, and at first it was difficult to determine the cause of the flooding. Investigation, however proved that the Forestry people had recently cut a series of trenches, for drainage purposes, around the headwaters of the system, and that these had caused the rapid rise and fall of the water level.

A similar effect is now produced in Cullaun 3 but it is unlikely to cause serious trouble above the First Bedding Plane, though the termination of this is likely to become a temporary sump quite quickly.

In Cullaun 3 the 2nd. Meander Maze in its highest level does not flood, and parties are advised to establish a food dump there for emergencies.

The second attempt was made after a day or so. The pot was reached and it was seen that the previous day's rain had caused it to fill right up. The party traversed round the pot and entered the bedding plane passage at roof level beyond. An unpleasant crawl of about 200 ft. led to a second pot, estimated to be 35ft. deep, which was not attempted. The roof and the approach passage were all coated with fresh mud from the previous days rain. The record states that if anyone is to attempt this last pitch, then an observer must stay at the beginning of the approach passage to give warning of a rise in water level. In all over 900ft. were added to the main cave, and most surveyed to grade 4.

The Coolagh River Cave terminal bedding plane was forced for some way. It gradually turns left, south, and there is a large aven which on this occasion had fresh earth and stones on the bottom, but the hoped for aural connection was not established with the surface. Beyond the aven there is a large pool, which was swum across for 30ft. to where the water comes up to the roof, except in one place where there is a large half tube. It is not known how deep the water was. On the far side of the pool the cave ends in a definite sump with a steep rock wall.

In the Doolin system the survey of the Arran View passage was completed, and a new grotto found in the upper levels above the Great Boulder Fall.

A rising on the North side of Poulacapple called Toberdhu was explored for the first time. It was followed upstream for 80ft. along a low bedding cave. At the end the route is still open but is uncomfortably tight.

The Wild Horse cave at Kilcorny was surveyed. It is a fairly extensive, largely phreatic system, which fills up completely in very wet weather. It has three pitches, two of which are quite sporting. Unfortunately time did not allow the bottommost pitch to be descended.

In Cullaun V parties went right through the shattered zone at the end but once more failed to find "Red Carpet Passage". It has now been conclusively established that the cave does not drain to St. Brendan's, which reminds one of the old verses:

We put a lot of colour into Cullaun Five,
But the waters at St. Brendan's were negative,
And after a week of examining the latter,
Trat began seriously reconsidering the matter.

A survey was made of the passages relating to C5a. Downstream as reported previously, there is a stalagmite barrier. Upstream from C5b a passage (now called "Hunch Backed Horror") was surveyed which comes to within 20ft. of the stalagmite barrier.

Poulnagree and Poll Cragreach were both re-examined for high level passages which ought to have been there and in both cases they were found. In Poulnagree there is a high level passage leaving the second aven 20ft. above floor level. It is the natural continuation of the high oxbow between the two avens and is blocked by stalagmite flows after 23 yards. In Poll Cragreach both the High Level and Gour Level passages continue, but are made impassable after a few yards by stalagmite flows. It should be noted that this cave can easily be entered without tackle, if you go through the right hole in the field.

In Pollnagollum search was made once more for the roof passage, just beyond the end of Gunman's Cave. E.K.T. writes "It is beginning to seem as if this passage is a chimera, as nothing like E.K.T.'s recollection of it has been found".

Poulnagalt ("Galt :: raving mad") is a new cave near the lower end of the Coolagh River Cave. It is nearly 200ft. long. It is a tight winding canyon passage with slight widening at floor level, generally insufficient for human passage.

Cullaun 11, audible connection to the surface has at last been established. The position inside the cave is in the roof traverse above and right of the stream, at the base of the aven over the pitch. The aven would be climbable with a lifeline and running belays. The surface party first became aware of the presence of the underground party at this point by the issue of steam from the hole. They concluded that there were steamers below.

First aid and Rescue Kit

Mendip Rescue has now established a depot of kit at Ballynalacken Castle. It consists of St. John's carrying sheet, ropes for doing it up, hauling ropes (enough for Pollapooka), dressing splints, knife, scissors, dexedrine and glucose. In fact, all the things that we have over here. It will only be available for a genuine rescue, that is, one for which the Garda has been called out. Rescuers will have to provide their own ladders, life lines and men. Anybody using up or damaging material as requested to let

Dr. O.C.Lloyd know, so that replacements may be effected.

Archaeology

Picken's Hole

This was dug by several members and visitors throughout the period from 1st. August till 23rd. August. Much excavation was carried out and finds include human teeth, flints, and teeth from many mammals. One of the more interesting finds was a tooth from a mammoth which had not yet been born. An interim report is in the forthcoming issue of the Proceedings, and a sessional meeting on the subject is listed below.

Yorkshire

B.S.A. Conference

The U.B.S.S. made an unofficial trip to Settle on Sept. 5th. Three of our members were addressing the B.S.A. conference. Dr. E.K. Tratman told us about the Iron Age in Bristol. Dr. D.G.Mead gave the Simpson Memorial lecture on The Solution of Limestone in Caves, and Dr.O.C.Lloyd spent five minutes telling the C.R.O. Symposium why cave rescue was different on Mendip from what it was in the North. The rest of the time was spent caving. The back parts of Clapham Cave were explored, by kind permission of the owner, Bob Jarvis. On Sunday we explored Magnetometer Pot on Fountains Fell, a collectors piece, which the Society would do well visit on one of their Easter meets. Wet suits are advised.

Yorkshire, Easter 1965

It will not be possible to visit Lancaster Hole, as Easter is in April, when the Grouse are nesting. Next time Easter falls in March will be in 1967. While the Council of Northern Caving Clubs have not yet opened bookings for that year, we have reason to believe that the U.B.S.S. will be able to apply successfully for access.

In 1965 it is proposed that we try the through trip of Grange Rigg and Christmas Pot, exchanging parties. We need about 8 people for this. It is said to be a good trip by members of the Shepton who have done it, but rather hair raising in wet weather.

We might also try Magnetometer Pot.

O.C.L..

Sessional Meetings

These will be held, as usual, in the Geography Lecture Theatre on Monday evenings, at 8.15 P.M.

October 12 To be announced.

November 2 "A Visit to Czechoslovakia", The President.

November 23 "Roman Cities of North Tunisia", Mr.B.H.Warmington

October 19 "Picken's Hole" Opening speaker The President
(In the Society Rooms)

December 12-13 Symposium on "The Age of Clare Caves" The meeting will be in a lecture theatre in the Geography Dept. and will commence on Saturday at 2.30 P.M. and continue on Sunday if necessary. Speakers will include

D.Ingle-Smith M.Sc.

F.H.Nicholson B.Sc.

B.B.Perratt B.Sc.

C.High

and also, it is hoped

D.C.Mead Ph.D.

Marjorie Sweeting Ph.D.

Gordon Warrick Ph.D.

January 11 "The Buried Karst of Derbyshire" Dr. Trevor Ford

February 1 "An Account of some Recent Archeological Research in the Bath District" Mr.J.Wedlake F.S.A.

Sessional meetings continued:

March 8 Presidential Address and A.G.M.
"The Great Cave of Niah, Sarawak"

F.K.Hanna
I.J.Standing
Joint Hon. Secretaries.