

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETYCIRCULAR TO MEMBERS

(1967, No. 2, October)

IRELAND 1967

The summer trip to Ireland this year was small and successful. Small, because Tratty and many others were in Jamaica, while the tigers were all preparing for their August trip to Czechoslovakia; successful for many reasons, not the least of which was the cohesion resulting from being a small party.

The party of seven consisted of Oliver Lloyd (O.C.L.), Martin Joyce (S.I.J.), "Jeem" Iredale (R.I.I.), Eve Wheeler (E.W.), Steve Trudgill (S.T.), Steve Staines (S.S.) and Diana Penn (D.P.). The first three arrived on July 14th, joining the other four at MacCarthy's Cottage. The latter had already been there three weeks studying geographical projects for dissertations. O.C.L. stayed at Keane's Hotel, which is more comfortable than Ballynacklack Castle. The half-wit up the road from MacCarthy's Cottage was again giving trouble: painting slogans, trying to set fire to the geographers' van, damaging their equipment, throwing stones. So the Garda turned up every night and stayed till dawn to give protection.

The party was concerned with two main projects, which were given to us by Tratty. One was to push E2 and find out where it entered the Poulmagollum System. The other was to find out the source of the water in certain tributary passages in Doolin, and to survey as much of the new passages as we could, which were discovered last year.

Doolin

Briefly, a long tributary or ox-bow was found on 28.7.66 by Dave Savage, Peter Kaye and Carl Holt, starting from the Second Bedding Cave Oxbow (Section P - P' in Lloyd's "Doolin - St. Catherine's Cave" Monograph), passing the 1964 Grotto near the Great Boulder Fall, joining the roof beds of the Great Canyon and then going off in a NE direction for an estimated 1200 ft. Two days later (30.7.66) another oxbow was found by Ian and Peter Standing and Carl Holt, which not only connected K - K' with the Great Oxbow, as predicted, but branched off in a westerly direction, through a well decorated grotto and past a pothole with a remarkable echo ("Echo Pot") for an estimated 800 ft. This passage we did not explore, but the 28.7.66 passage has the characteristics of an oxbow, and we are provisionally calling it the "Long Oxbow".

The Long Oxbow has now been surveyed by our parties for 2,693 ft., which brings it to a point 200 ft. N of the Great Oxbow, beyond which it continues for about 1000 ft. It has been adopted by no less than three tributary streams, one of which leaves it at the Second Bedding Cave Oxbow, the second at the Great Boulder Fall and the third in the middle of the Great Canyon. All of these are now passable, as our party made the connection through the 1964 Grotto to the Great Boulder Fall. The source of the third and largest tributary stream, which occupies most of the Long Oxbow, from the upper end of our survey down to the Great Canyon, where it enters as a heavy shower from the roof, has been proved to be a swallet called D7c.

We didn't survey the Main Inlet Passage to the Aran View Passage, which Dave Savage and Mike Garrett did to Grade 2 in 1965, but we proved by fluorescein that it originated in Swallet D3. The farmer at the cottage there was most interested to hear all about it.

Poulnagollum

The high light of the New Year 1967 trip was the discovery by members of the U.B.S.S. party, that the swallet E2 at the NE tip of Slieve Elva went. It caused Mrs Keane great anxiety and nearly cost them their dinner! The exploration by Peter Standing and others was of 1,100 ft. of thrutchy cave ending in a 20 ft. ladder pitch. It was not known where in Poulnagollum the passage entered; it was at too low a level for the Long or Short Galleries, and since there was no known tributary in Branch Passage Gallery (B.P.G.), Tratty thought it ought to enter B.P.G. West.

What was our surprise, when we colour tested it, to find fluorescein all the way up B.P.G. to Station 85 (five stations short of the confluence of B.P.G. East and West), when it suddenly stopped. The water beyond flowed cleanly over a white layer of moon milk. On the West side the wall had peeled away along a major joint leaving a pool (8 x 1 ft.) at the foot, still coloured green. O.C.L. got into this and found that it led to a sump obstructed by boulders. Search downstream for a high level passage was immediately rewarded, and R.I.L. squeezed along a muddy bedding cave and was halted by a stalagmite flow over the floor. S.H.J., narrower in dimensions, slid through and discovered the tributary passage, with a green stream in the floor, continuing for several hundred feet.

A few days later S.T. and E.W. enlarged the squeeze and we surveyed the passage upstream for 316 ft., after which it became inconveniently small. Eve pushed it for another 650 ft. She turned back when it became a bedding cave 7 ins. high, as she doesn't like getting her ears wet! We were still in the Productid bed. Meanwhile Martin and Jeem were heroically pushing E2 from its origin. At the end of the known passage they descended a 20 ft. wet pitch (belay in floor) and continued along a rather nastier passage, through three boulder ruckles, for another 1000 ft. Altogether three pitches were climbed, totalling 38 ft., but still they hadn't reached the Productid bed. Further exploration of this passage is unlikely to be joyful, but if successful could lead to the longest through trip in Ireland.

This colour test prompted the thought that the only possible surface sources for the water in B.P.G.E. & W. were the swallets 335 (Goat Hole, via Pollapooka) to 342 (Toberacahircallough). However fluorescein into the Goat Hole was not seen the next day in B.P.G. at all, and examination of the streams north of Station 85 showed that they were all depositing calcite or moon milk. This (like Cotter's Gallery and East Passage) is characteristic of streams which have percolated through limestone and do not run off the peat. The peat streams always deposit a layer of brown slime, never moon milk. It is therefore not to be expected that B.P.G. E. or W. have a surface origin.

On our last caving day we all did the through trip from Poll Elva to Poulnagollum. Members will recollect a song written by Cyril Johnson and others, which commemorated the U.B.S.S. discovery of the connection between Poll Elva and Poulnagollum. The last verse ended:

For some went down Pollnagollum  
And some went down Elva's Pot,  
And we shook hands in the middle,  
Thus making six miles the lot.

The South Walians forced the connection with a lot of banger in 1965, and have been trying ever since to persuade me to write another verse to commemorate this. But it just wouldn't come. I knew however of the trouble they got into another day, when they went down Poulnagollum to the very end and found the bedding cave flooded on their return. They made their way rapidly to

Poll Elva and had to wait there in the cold for a long time, until a surface party came and laddered it.

Suddenly the last verse came, and we had the first rendering of it at Main Junction:

When we went down a few years later  
 And came to our six inch squeeze,  
 The South Walians had made it much bigger,  
 So we all slipped through with ease.  
 But we kept an eye on the weather,  
 Which the South Walians surely did not.  
 So we didn't have to beat a hasty retreat  
 And come out of Elva's Pot.

It only remains to be recorded that this verse was well received at the Gwyn Arms.

Oliver C. Lloyd.

#### CZECHOSLOVAKIAN EXPEDITION

In August a party of seven, - Chris Gilmore, Peter Kaye, Dave Savage, Peter Standing and Mick Watson, all from this Society, plus Phil Collett (Imperial College) and John Russem (B.P.C.) visited the South Slovakian Karst, the largest caving area in the C.S.S.R.

The Karst, which is some 1200 miles from Bristol, is situated on the Czech-Hungarian border and part of its 300 sq. kms. is included in Hungary. The expedition was based at Gombasek, a show cave and an important resurgence for the Silica Plateau. Its upstream sump was one of the first to be investigated by our divers, and it was unfortunately typical of the many resurgence sumps we were to see in the next few weeks, closing down very quickly to an impenetrable vertical rift.

Other risings visited were Brzotin, Kocova, and Buzgo, the latter's sump being memorable for the 130 ft. dive straight down which gave D.S. the Czechoslovakian cave diving depth record! Sumps in several swallet caves - Kisfalu, Silica Ice Cave, Brezedna, Fadrica, and Milada were also dived without going.

The expedition then moved on to the Demanova Valley in Northern Slovakia, near Liptovsky Mikulas. Here they were joined by three more members who had been touring in Yugoslavia - Don Thomson and Mike and Sue Norton. Several excursions were made into the Demanova system whose spacious, fast-flowing sumps made a pleasant change from the constricted syphons of Southern Slovakia. Despite several long dives, no air spaces were found. Some of the party climbed the second highest peak in the High Tatras - Rysy (2500m.) - and many visits were made to the Low Tatras.

Three days were spent in the Moravian Karst near Brno, where we had the use of a luxurious caving hut and outstanding hospitality from the local cavers. Some diving was done in the Punkva River system, and it was in this cave that we encountered our first professional diggers. Two men are employed full time to blast along a tested underground watercourse until they find open passage. Judging by the results of the dives they have several years' employment ahead of them!

And so finally to Prague where we spent a pleasant two days. As far as the length of new passage found, the expedition was not a resounding success!! Nevertheless some of us learnt a lot from

from our experiences and returned with happy memories of the country and its people. A small party from the U.S.S.R. will be coming to Britain next year and we look forward to their visit.

P.Standing.

### MANOR FARM

Since the report in the last issue of the circular, a lot of work has gone into the dig without the elusive breakthrough being achieved.

I decided that it would be easier and probably quicker to carry on digging straight down, as there was no prospect of the upper rift entering the cave in less than 20 ft. or so, as water could be heard to run steadily down the passage for ages.

We got a couple of weekends' work in before the traditional Manor Farm week and struck another cross rift at -45 ft. This one was smaller than the upper one but still managed to produce a healthy draught on occasions.

During the week after the exams ( June 5th onwards), the drill was hired again and we continued downwards to a depth of 52 ft. As the rock was getting harder and the rift had petered out, it looked rather as if we were in the wrong place, so we returned to the lower rift and started to blow it out. Unfortunately the University now provides other work for its students after exams so labour was rather short and I was somewhat relieved at the respite when the bit broke on the fifth day. We were then about 4 ft. into the rift.

Fortunately the firm we hire the drill from ( Fred Males) was sympathetic and let us off with 3 days' hire and gave us a new bit, which was exchanged for a longer (19") one.

The longer bit proved more efficient for 'rifting' purposes, although it prolongs the very uncomfortable and noisy business of drilling shot-holes to over an hour! Nevertheless one can make fairly good progress per bang, though due to the longer drilling and fume-clearing times, it was difficult to get more than 4 in per day. Two weekends work in July got us about 12 ft. along the passage.

Having got married , thereby losing a month's work, I got the drill for a day over the Bank Holiday, and with the help of some of the Gathering at the hut, gained a few more feet. Since then Colin High has applied a little science to the problem and has found that if the cave is going down dip, then the lower passage would be expected to cross it in the next few feet. Visual observations in the passage tend to support this.

Unfortunately, at this time of year, the drill is normally unavailable and, on last year's basis, may not become available until Xmas.

Mike Norton.

### LITTLE NEATH RIVER CAVE

A full account of the LNRC is in the current issue of Proc. Since this went to print sump 6 has been dived when D.S. followed the underwater passage for 130 ft. before returning due to lack of air. The passage was roomy but descended to a depth of 50 ft. and was still going down. An inlet tributary on the East side was explored for 400 ft. to a boulder choke and a bypass to sump 5 was also found.

It is intended to radiolocate important points in the cave such as Ubbs Aven and the cave past sump 4.

Eastwater

During the first week in August, the entrance to the boulder ruckle in Eastwater Cavern collapsed, thus closing one of Mendip's better systems and one of the most popular owing to its lack of access restrictions.

A meeting of all the clubs interested in the cave was held at the Hunter's last Sunday (24 th. September) to discuss the problem of reopening the cave. It was generally agreed that it would be impossible to make the original entrance safe, so the alternative of blasting a Manor Farm type shaft through the rock to the top of the Boulder Chamber- an estimated 70 ft. was chosen. The Shepton Mallet Caving Club is in charge of the operation.

PROCEEDINGS

Vol.11(2) will be out by the end of October and contains some important articles on both caving and archaeology. Prof. Tratman's paper on the Priddy Circles and Prog. Barry Cunliffe's Report on the site at Gorsey Bigbury form the archaeological section, while the LNRC is described and Tim Atkinson has contributed a paper on the geomorphology of August-Longwood Swallet.

The survey and account of the LNRC have already been published as a preprint at 5/-. Members will of course be able to read this article in Proceedings but anyone who would like additional copies of the LNRC paper or who thinks he can sell some, is asked to contact the Librarian (P.Standing).

A limited number of separate unfolded surveys are also available at 5/-(2/6 to members).

SESSIONAL MEETINGS

There are the normal number of 6 meetings again this year, of which one is the AGM. They are :

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Dr. K.Pearce - 'Expedition to the Gouffre Berger 1967' | - Monday, 9th October.                      |
| Prof.Mills - 'Pole squatting underground'              | - Monday, 6th November.                     |
| Prof.R.Atkinson - 'Stonehenge' - Facts and Fancies'    | - Monday, 4th. December.                    |
| Dr. R. Savage - 'Fossil Man'                           | - Monday, 5 th. February.                   |
| D.Ingle Smith - ' The Jamaican Expedition 1967'        | - <sup>Jan. 26 1968</sup> date to be fixed. |
| Annual General Meeting                                 | Monday, 4 th. March.                        |

Overleaf is a sketch of the extensions to the LNRC not included in the survey in Proceedings.

Hon. Secretaries:

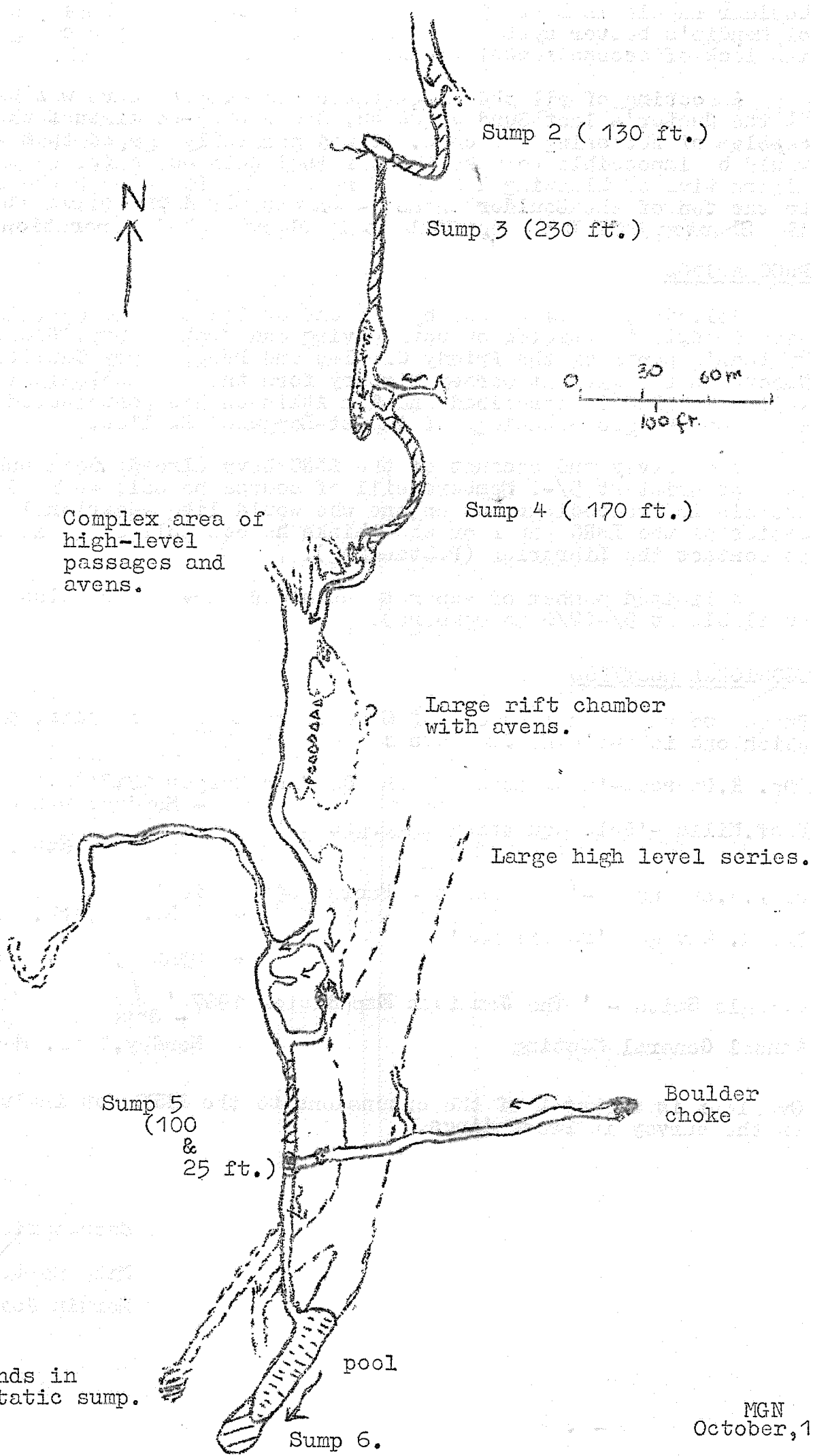
Mike Norton

Martin Joyce.

L.N.R.C. Preliminary sketch based on grade 4 and 2 surveys.

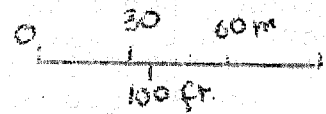
(Copyright UBSS).  
Drawn by DS.

SUMP 2 TO SUMP 6



Sump 2 ( 130 ft.)

Sump 3 (230 ft.)



Complex area of  
high-level  
passages and  
avens.

Sump 4 ( 170 ft.)

Large rift chamber  
with avens.

Large high level series.

Sump 5  
(100  
&  
25 ft.)

Boulder  
choke

ends in  
static sump.

pool

Sump 6.