

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETYCIRCULAR TO MEMBERS

(1968, No.2 April)

IRELAND 1968

In July we were blessed with exceptionally dry and at times very hot weather. The main discovery was a cave between the known end of Poulmagree and Polomega. The enthusiasm of Dan Hasset and others led to the exploration of a creepy crawly cave over 1500 ft. long with a fine pitch at the end, Poll Ballynahown named after the townland. This cave nicely fills the drainage gap between Poulmagree and Poulomega. Good work was done in the Doolin Cave in exploring the passages discovered in 1967. A thousand feet was surveyed here and a further thousand ft. was discovered in the Echo Pot Series. Echo Pot itself proved to be 28ft. deep and led to 130 ft. of passage ending in a sump, dived for 110ft. without success. A total of 2500ft. was surveyed in the series.

Many fluorescein tests planned could not be run because of lack of any water at all at the swallets. Swallet Dlc. was traced, as predicted, into the cave close to the Great Boulder Fall. The Bradford Pothole Club have greatly extended Poulawillin. It first goes south and then west. With ordinary water levels it is doubtful if the first part from the bottom of the double pitch is passable as there is a nasty, long, low, tight crawl in the stream and this part is probably a sump. A party from another University reported that they had got along the Terminal Passage at the bottom of the Coolagh River Cave to the sump and found an aven which they had climbed for 20ft. We did this in 1967 and the aven was climbed almost to the surface, 110ft. measured.

THE GREAT FLOOD - JULY 10th. 1968

As much as 7 inches of rain fell in various parts of Mendip during the 24 hrs. of Wednesday 10th. of July, and the effects on its caves have proved rather startling. More detailed accounts of the flooding have appeared in the Belfry Bulletin and other journals, but as it has affected the Society we have noted the following.

G.B. CAVE:-

The stream overflowed and reached the blockhouse, buckling the outer gate so severely that we have had to remove it. Inside, the entrance crawl has disappeared and it is now possible to walk upright as far as the First Grotto. Here the entrance to the Mud Passage route has been completely buried by flood debris and the present way into the cave is via the Wet Way. The Gorge where the Wet Way enters is a sea of mud, 12-18 ins. deep and very unpleasant ( a new shakehole in front of the blockhouse is probably responsible ). The Bridge is still intact strangely enough, but the floor below it has been scoured to the bedrock so that it is now possible to walk underneath. The 40 foot pitch is a good deal longer than before and in general, the floor of the Gorge is several feet lower than previously. Water must have backed up considerably at the sump since water entered the Ladder Dig Series and has made the boulders there a good deal more unstable. No water entered Bat Passage and it seems to have been sinking around the old break-through point - a possible route to further stream passage.

MANOR FARM:-

Further scenes of woe and destruction. Water was pouring in through the front door of Manor Farm and out through the back windows. It partly filled in the the old swallet hole, tore away the fence around the last dig blocking the shaft with rubble and dead branches, and with final abandon opened up a new hole to the left of the shaft (facing down-valley), about 30ft. in diameter and 50 to 70 feet deep. A survey and more details will appear in the next copy of Proceedings. Surprisingly enough (considering the past history of this dig), this has taken us into the cave. The snag is, of course, that it has been blocked by all the clay and boulders which fell in. A small side-rift, from which a strong draught initially emerged, has led us into an aven packed with unstable boulders of frightening proportions and digging here has become very difficult. A fresh assault may now be made at the clay choke in the main passage.

BURRINGTON COMBE:-

In the Twin Brooks, Burrington, great damage was done. The

detritus fan in both valleys has to be seen to be believed. Stones up to football size were swept down and right out of the Combe. In Velvet Bottom flood waters scoured the valley and finally the embankment of the road at the head gave way and produced a tidal wave. At Lower Farm, gates were swept away and where the joined valleys debouch at Black Rock into Cheddar Gorge the floods were over 6 ft. deep right across the valley. Cheddar Gorge was excavated in places down to bed rock.

### ARCHAEOLOGY

Work has continued at the Hyena Den Wookey Hole but bad weather has severely hampered progress. The next job is the removal of the mass of talus that has fallen in since Boyd Dawkins and Balch did their digging at the cave. About one quarter of this has been removed. On completion there will be a face nearly 20 ft. high of Pleistocene material.

Stokeleigh Camp has proved quite exciting this year. In one sondage the corner of a dry-stone-walled building was found. This fits in well with the evidence for square and rectangular huts in the Iron Age Hill Forts of the Welsh Marches and also for those of wood of the earlier settlement at Glastonbury Lake Village. In another cutting, 'D', two hut floor levels can be distinguished set one above the other but not quite concentrically. Both are of Iron Age date though so far the pottery seems to be similar at both levels. There are indications that the site was first occupied in Iron Age 'A' times. Quite an array of objects besides pottery have been found including iron knives (two types), part of an iron ring-headed pin (Iron Age 'A' type).

### JUBILEE 1969

The Society was founded on March 19th. 1919. The nearest Saturday for the Jubilee meeting is Saturday March 22nd. 1969. Please note this date. The provisional programme includes a lecture by the distinguished archaeologist Miss Kathleen M. Kenyon C.B.E., M.A., D.Lit., F.B.A. who will talk on her 'Excavations at Jerusalem.' This will be followed by a dinner at 1900 for 1930 hrs. to be held in the Senior Common Room, Senate House, Tyndall's Park Road. Dress lounge suits. The guests of honour will be the two founder members who are still members of the Society. There will be very few speeches so as to give ample opportunity for friends to get together and talk. If there is enough support there will be a gentle caving trip on Sunday.

The celebrations will be open to members and their wives or husbands, as the case may be. Former members, where their addresses are known, will be eligible to attend and will be notified in due course. Former members may bring their wives/husbands. Guests other than the official guests will not be allowed.

E.K.T.

### PREHISTORIC SOCIETY

The Bristol meeting held during the week Sept. 1st.-7th. was well attended. The Society played a prominent part in the programme and its work was reviewed in one of the major papers presented to the meeting. Publications of the Society were in demand. The temporary guide (E.K.T.) to the parties visiting Wookey Hole was able to persuade some of the parties to sing in the Third Chamber. The excavations at Stokeleigh Camp were visited by two parties. One of these ended the visit in moonlight.

### PROCEEDINGS

Vol. 11, No. 3 will be available to members shortly. The issue for 1969 will be the Jubilee issue and it is intended to bring it out at the beginning of March. All contributions intended for that issue must be received by the editor not later than Nov. 20th. 1968.

### 'Caves of North West Clare'

A separate notice about this book accompanies the circular.

