

Caves of the Bristol District.

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The object of this paper is to place on record by means of brief notes the position of the numerous caves in and round Bristol. The majority of these caves are small, and a number are of no great importance.

For purposes of reference the caves are numbered consecutively on the accompanying map, and for still greater convenience can be divided into three groups.

Group I. Caves numbered 1—8, and situated in Leigh Woods, on the left bank of the River Avon.

Group II. Caves, numbered 9—16, on the right bank of the River Avon.

Group III. Caves numbered 17—20. This group includes all caves not included in groups I and II.

GROUP I.

Cave 1. This is a small cave which opens at the foot of a small outcrop of conglomerate, and lies some 50–70 feet above the level of the Avon at the mouth of the "Spar" valley, and on its Northern bank. The floor might repay excavation, and it is hoped that a trial will be made here.

Cave 2. This is a small cave lying in the Northern side of the valley parallel to, and immediately North of Nightingale Valley. The entrance is inconspicuous, and is readily overlooked by anyone passing only a few feet away. A waterworn rift leads out of the little chamber, but is choked a few feet farther on. This cave is in limestone.

Cave 3. This is a typical rift cave opening into the limestone cliff on the South side of the same valley as No. 2. It is approximately 75 yards from the head of the valley at a spot where the cliffs are roughly 100 feet high. The cave consists of two waterworn rifts lying vertically above one another; both of them end a short way in, the roof, descending steeply to meet the almost horizontal floor, in the case of the upper one 20 feet, and in the case of the lower 30 feet from the mouth.

Cave 4. This one is also in the same valley, as the last two, and lies some 150 yards nearer the Avon, and on the South side of the valley. It consists of two openings on a fairly wide ledge some 15 feet from the top of the high cliff, which here forms this side of the valley; one opening leads into a small chamber, while the other is choked a few feet in. The latter might repay excavation.

Cave 5. The top of this cave is only a few feet under the road, where it runs alongside the Southern edge of Nightingale Valley, at a point roughly 150 yards from the mouth of the valley. It consists of a small chamber with a passage running on into the hill; this passage is 20 feet long, and is choked at the end. Excavation of the floor might prove to be a profitable undertaking, especially as both this cave and Number 4 are in close proximity to Burwalls and Stokeleigh Camps respectively.

Cave 6. This cave consists of a waterworn passage running under the floor of the most Northerly of the quarries in Leigh Woods.

Cave 7. This is a small opening on the level of the railway to Portishead at a spot some 15 yards South of the Suspension Bridge.

Cave 8. This is also known as Burwalls Cave, and I am indebted to Mr. G. A. Wills for permission to visit and survey it. Like number 1 it is formed entirely in conglomerate, and is in addition by far the largest in this group. It consists of a fairly large chamber with two passages running on into the hill. The choked termination of these passages must lie very close to the underlying limestone. It is probable that the stream which formed the cave is the one which now emerges vertically below it in the bed of the Avon. A trial excavation of the floor might yield results.

GROUP II. All the caves in this group are formed in limestone.

Cave 9. This one as well as the next two are in the Observatory Hill. I am indebted to Mr. E. E. Baker for the account of its discovery, which was made while blasting a haulage way from the road into Hotwells Station. The cave consisted originally of an entrance passage 73 feet long ending in a small but beautiful chamber; from the roof of this chamber a passage leads upwards, and is probably connected with another opening in the cliff.

Cave 10. This is better known as the Giants Cave, and lies under the Observatory. It is not now entirely in its original state.

Cave 11. This is about on the same level as the Giants Cave but is further to the North, being just round the bluff of the hill. It consists of a small shelter with a little offshoot passage into the hill. The floor of the outer portion might well repay excavation as it commands an excellent view of the valley leading down to the old ford across the Avon, and it may well have been used in connection with the Clifton camp on the Observatory Hill above.

Cave 12. This one as well as numbers 13 and 14 open on the face of the Avon Range or Great Quarry. It is but a remnant of a much larger cave, and now consists of a fair sized chamber with a passage leading on into the limestone, the entrance to which is always submerged even in times of drought; a second passage, now choked, I am informed by a quarryman leads down to a spot under the floor of the quarry. The cave is not easy of access, the last twelve feet being both difficult and dangerous.

Cave 13. The opening of this one lies at the same level above the floor of the quarry as the previous one, and 130 feet to the North. It is fairly easy of access, and consists of a small chamber with two choked passages leading on into the rock.

Cave 14. This one lies at the extreme Northern end of the quarry, about 50 feet from the top of the cliff face, which is here over 200 feet high. The cave can only be reached by a descent from above as the rock is absolutely sheer; the entrance is narrow but expands a short way in. At a distance of thirty feet from the entrance the cave takes a sharp turn to the South for a further thirty feet, ending in a small grotto, from which a choked passage leads to further depths.

Cave 15. This is a possible cave close to Saint Andrew's well, near the bottom of the Gully. The heavy rains of the last two months has prevented any exploration beyond the artificial entrance to this place.

Cave 16. This again is but the remnant of a cave, and is situated in the Northern extremity of the Sea Walls. I am indebted to the owner, Mr. H. H. Townsend, for permission to excavate in this cave in addition to surveying it. The cave consists

of a "pothole" and a low passage running into the cliff at a slight angle to the face, and in a Northerly direction. The contents of the floor were barren of remains.

GROUP III.

Cave 17. This system of caves has been broken into in no less than three places in Dial Quarry on Barrow Hill. It consists of a series of water passages through the limestone. As a whole the passages follow the dip of the strata, and one series is connected with another by means of vertical passages. All are choked a short way in by recent falls, caused by quarrying operations outside. I am indebted to the Somerset County Council for permission to visit this quarry on various occasions.

Cave 18. This is merely a small opening in the rock close to, and to the North, of the bridge over the River Trym at Coombe Dingle.

Cave 19. The entrance to this cave is a small opening in the floor in the North-Eastern corner of the old quarry on King's Weston Down. A vertical drop of twelve feet lands one on a choke composed of timber and stone. A further drop of the same magnitude in a Northerly direction leads into a small chamber from which a low wide opening leads into a second chamber. This is wide and low, and cuts the bedding planes almost at right angles. A passage running Southwards from the first platform leads after some twenty-five feet to a vertical drop of twenty feet into the third chamber. All the passages leading out of these chambers are choked.

Cave 20. The notes on this cave are taken from Mr. Catcott's account of his exploration of the place in 1775. The cave goes by the name of Pen Park Hole, Pen Park, Westbury. It was discovered while mining for lead, and the first explorations took place in 1669 and 1682. The entrance is now filled in, but ran East and West for 35 feet. The entrance passage sloped very steeply for about 35 feet, and was then followed by a vertical drop of 40 feet into the large main chamber the floor of which also sloped steeply toward the North. This chamber was 200 feet long by 120 feet broad at its widest, with a large pool at the North end; several large passages lead to other chambers, and one of these leads to a second entrance 120 feet to the East of the main one.



LEVARS 3 CO LYD BRISTOL

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