

Holocene age (less than 10,000 years) while Aillwee cave probably attained its present form 350,000 years ago.

The final section examines the mature lowland karst of the Gort-Kinvara lowlands; a vast area with a maximum altitude of only 30 m but with a complex hydrology. Comments such as “a major water-filled karst conduit up to 25 m. in diameter” and “mean flow rates of 10,000 litres per second” should be of interest to cave divers who have only started to explore this area.

Overall this booklet provides an excellent concise description of the Burren’s landscape both above and below ground and for the first time draws together research from the last thirty years. In each section specified locations including grid references are given where the best examples of features can be seen. The photographs, maps and diagrams throughout are excellent (with the possible exception of the cover photograph that is printed backwards!). Other minor negative comments are the lack of any reference to man’s influence on the surface features though this may be due to lack of space. I would also consider the price high at £8.95 for a 50-page A5 booklet. Even so it would be a worthy addition to the bookshelf of anyone with more than just a sporting interest in the caves of the Burren.

Colin Bunce

*Exploring the Limestone Landscapes of the Burren and the Gort Lowlands: A guide for walkers cyclists & motorists.* by Mike Simms. 2001. burrenkarst.com. Belfast. SB. 64pp. Price £5.99

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The guide, published by Mike Simms under his own imprint, starts with a substantial introductory section, which gives a comprehensive overview of the geology and geomorphology of both the surface and underground features of the Burren and the Gort Lowlands. The introduction is detailed but can be easily understood by someone who is new to the area and to the subject covered in the guide. Technical terms are highlighted in colour and explained in an index. The author has also cross-referenced locations mentioned here with where they appear in the excursions.

The seven excursions are designed to be followed either on foot or by cycle. There are brief notes which point out whether each route is suitable for walking or cycling, or by car. Parking spaces are also indicated. However, in only one case is an indication given of how long the trip might take.

The first four excursions cover the part of the area best known to cavers, the Western Burren where the active stream caves are found. Between them they cover all the classic features of an active karst landscape. In general the excursions are clearly described, both by type and by location. On a minor note, I was surprised to see he mentions the concrete tank and cattle trough which point visitors to the entrance to Poulmagree (Stop C8), but makes no reference to the old water pump that actually straddles it. However, as this cave entrance was a late replacement for that of Poll Ballynahown when the author was informed at proof stage by the reviewer that this had been backfilled and was no longer easily visible, it may be that there was only a limited space available for a change to be made. (Sorry for complicating life, Mike!)

Excursions E and F cover the High Burren. The shale was stripped from this area much earlier than from the Western Burren and so it has had a much longer history of karstification. This is reflected in the much greater degree of reorganisation from a surface drainage system into a series of large closed depressions and virtually wholly underground drainage. There are also far fewer known caves, though two, the Cave of the Wild Horses at Kilcorney and the Aillwee show cave are included as stopping points. The latter has the longest entry of

any stop on any route; justified, I am sure, by the fact that this is the only cave in the area that can be descended by the casual visitor and not by any attempt to influence the purchasing policy of the management! Unfortunately, the book appeared just too soon to include the latest dating information which shows this cave to be over 1,000,000 years old (the current limit of calcite dating by U/Th methods).

The final excursion covers the Gort Lowlands. This area will be less familiar to cavers and at first sight is somewhat flat and featureless, “a monotonous expanse of low ground” in the author’s own words. He is right, however, to include it here as it is an excellent example of a mature karst and an interesting contrast to the neighbouring Burren. It does, however, cover a much larger area than any of the previous excursions and a car or, at the very least, a cycle is necessary to complete the tour in one day. Mike is right to recommend the visitor centre at Coole, which gives an excellent account of the workings of turloughs and underground drainage systems.

A word must be said about the production values of this book. It is well printed on good quality paper and the photographs are extremely well reproduced throughout. Including the front and back covers there are 30 colour photos and only one in black and white. The photographs are both well-taken and well-produced and provide an excellent illustration of the text. Colour is used throughout the text for emphasis and where technical terms are used. These are also explained in an index at the back of the book. The diagrams, cross-referenced with the text, also make good use of colour and are clear and well presented.

This guide will be of interest both to cavers and to other visitors to the area and at £5.99 represents good value for money. An excellent publication that gives its author great credit.

Linda Wilson

*Sediments in Caves.* by Trevor D. Ford. 2001. B.C.R.A. Cave Studies Series. No. 9. SB. 32 pp. Price £2.50. ISBN 0 900265 23 X

When I started caving as school-kid back in the mists of time, cave sediments were the bane of my mother’s life as I got back home after a caving trip and traipsed mud into the house. As I got older I realised that cave sediments were something to be dug out the way in search of caverns measureless to man, something I have yet to find, although I suspect the only way to achieve this is to take opiates. It was only after some years caving and many happy muddy hours spent digging down Cooper’s Hole and GB that I began to comprehend that actually cave sediments could be quite interesting in their own right. OK, I admit that this is probably due to my growing interest in geology at the time, but nonetheless, they have a story to tell. As Trevor points out in the book, caves sit in the landscape, trapping sediments over time, often preserving evidence of past cultures, faunas and landscapes long since eroded to oblivion on the surface. Furthermore, they can be dated and put into a chronological context.

So it was I received Trevor Ford’s latest opus on Cave Sediments, the most recent addition to the British Cave Research Association ‘Cave Studies’ series, an excellent set of short guides on various aspects of caves and karst aimed at the interested caver who wants to learn more about the caves they visit. As someone who has probably been caving for more years than the combined age of all the active UBSS student members put together, and a retired geologist to boot, Trevor Ford has an excellent pedigree for writing this guide. The book starts out with an introduction to the nature of cave sediments, discusses their sources and how they got to where they were deposited. All types of sediments are covered including more unusual