CAVE NOTES: SOUTHERN AND WESTERN IRELAND

by

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ABSTRACT

Details are given of new discoveries and previously unnoticed older sources for caves in the areas covered by the Society's two books *Caves of Mid-West Ireland* (Mullan, 2019) *and Caves of southern Ireland* (Mullan, 2022).

INTRODUCTION

This paper lists all the information on caves in the areas covered by the Society's two books *Caves of Mid-West Ireland* (Mullan, 2019) *and Caves of southern Ireland* (Mullan, 2022). This includes both new exploration and older source material, previously not known to us. One particular new resource which has been exploited by the Clare Caving Club, is the trove of previously unpublished Geological Survey of Ireland field maps now available online at https://secure.dcenr.gov.ie/goldmine/index.html. This includes the geological maps of the Burren drawn in the 1970s and 80s by the late Conor Macdermot, detailed examination of which has yielded many previously unknown - to cavers - cave entrances.

In Co. Cork several sites, including two previously unknown caves, have been explored in co-operation with archaeologists. In Co. Galway, two dive sites have been investigated. Other caves have been investigated in Co. Mayo and Co. Waterford.

Since the publication of the two books, the information in them has been continually refined, especially in the correction of grid references and cave lengths, the most common sources of typographical errors in these books. For the latest information, see the GIS map at https://qgiscloud.com/Graham/Irish_Caves_Project/.

Co. CLARE

AGHALINNY NORTH FLOOD SPRING Length 0 m

ITM 517680 710486 Alt: 100m

On the hillside above Gleninagh a significant rising can be seen following heavy rain. This area of the hillside appears to have much breakdown rock which is heavily overgrown. The rising has not been entered.

CAHER RIVER UPPER RISINGS Length: 0 m

ITM: 516734 703760

The Caher River first rises from two separate points on the same bedding plane and flows away to the northeast. The combined stream sinks and rises several more times over the course of the next 2 km until finally remaining permanently on the surface.

Td: Lisheeneagh Altitude: 170 m

Td: Aghalinny North

DEELIN BEG LOWER

Length: 5 m ITM: 527233 702205 Alt: 133m

This cave is found further down the shallow meandering valley from Pollmacdiarmada Four. A narrow meandering canyon passage with a loose roof and eroded flowstone is blocked by collapse after 5 m.

FLOOD SINK

Length: 0 m ITM: 527817 700849

After heavy rain a stream crosses the road at ITM: 527491 700543 and then flows across a couple of fields to sink in a grassy depression.

McGANN'S CAVE	
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Length: 8 m ITM: 528550 697655

Located at the foot of a low east facing ridge on the side of a shallow north-south gully. A low, boulder floored, canyon leads to a total blockage.

NOUGHAVAL POT Depth: 2 m Length: 0 m ITM: 522462 697320

A water trough is located on an obvious N-S joint, behind the trough a 2m deep pothole can be free climbed to a solid floor where flowing water can be heard. The floor level is probably the top of the Ballyelly limestone member.

POLL AN NOUGHAVAL Td: Noughaval Length: 0.5 m Altitude: 135 m ITM: 522657 694349

A cave entrance is located on a low scarp beside a silica vein exposure, a tiny passage can be seen extending to the north. The scarp probably represents the Lissylisheen limestone member, the cave having formed at its contact with the Ballyelly limestone member below.

POLL GRAINNEOG	Td: Clooncoose
Alternative name: Hedgehog H	ole
Length: 0 m	Altitude: 70 m
ITM: 528825 694637	
This is a large collapse doline,	about 20 m in diameter and 15 m depth. The walls are

overhanging in places and the floor is covered with boulders. No cave passage has been found.

POLLMACDIARMADA ONE

Length: 15 m

ITM: 524290 700970

An 8 m wide and 2 m high entrance is located on the east side of a short gorge leading down to a depression. The wide west-facing entrance leads to a 4 m deep rock shelter with a low crawl leading to the north for 5 m to a rock wall. The entrance has been walled off and there is a small cairn structure under the shelter so the site may have archaeological significance.

Td: Rannagh East Altitude: 129m

Td: Tullycommon Altitude 150 m

Td: Deelin Beg Altitude: 133m

Td: Noughaval Altitude: 138m

Td: Ballymihill

Altitude: 168 m

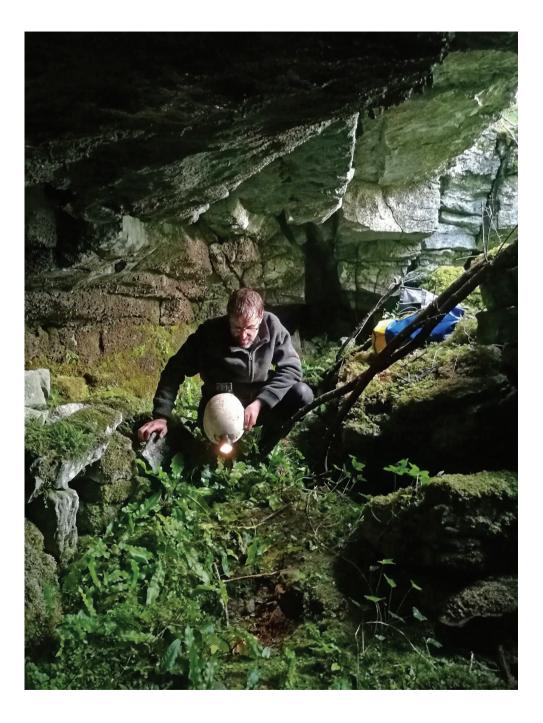


Figure I. Colin Bunce inspecting the cairn in Pollmacdiarmada One. Photograph © Tim O'Connell.

POLLMACDIARMADA TWO

Length: 6 m

ITM: 524130 700830

The entrance is in a low east facing cliff near the floor of a depression. A short crawl leads to a low chamber, 2 m wide, 4 m long and 1.5 m high, from which a squeeze leads to a narrow aven

POLLMACDIARMADA THREE

Length: 6 m ITM: 523475 701305

A partially blocked entrance on the east side of an overgrown dry valley leads to a meandering canyon 1 m high and 0.5 m wide. This is almost completely filled with sediment after 6 m and appears to be in use by badgers!

POLLMACDIARMADA FOUR

Length: 3 m

ITM: 527201 702176

The cave entrance is at head of shallow valley. A 10 m wide arched entrance filled to within 0.5 m of the roof with collapse material and soil slopes down steeply to a very low arch inside with evidence of badgers.

SHANNON'S SINK

Length: 5 m ITM: 527105 701813

Water flows from a small turlough centred at ITM 527125 701705 and sinks just before the road. This site was dug by Clare Caving Club, circa 2013. It is very loose but with a large clear calcite vein. On 14th July 2020 more water was sinking here than was emerging at Shannon's spring.

SHANNON'S SPRING

Length: 0m

ITM: 527138 702247

A stream rises very close to the east side of the road, flows underneath it and then sinks again.

S3

Length 0 m ITM: 508404 701462

From the south-west corner of Pollsallagh bay follow a dominant bedding plane surface downslope for c.200 m until close to sea level, keeping to the sea side of a storm beach. There is a small, shallow 'bay' before the coastline turns to the south-east, with rounded boulders partly covering the resurgence point. The water emerges from a bedding plane with nearby jointing predominantly oriented North-South. This location is approx. 200 m further south along the coast than the previously described location and almost due west of S4.

At the spring equinox tide in 2023 (0.1 m O.D.) the resurgence was between 0.5 - 1 m above tide level. There was a good wave swell but the resurgence was easily accessible. On 6th April access was just possible with a 0.6 m tide.

Td: Poulnabrone Altitude: 164 m

Td: Glensleade Altitude: 168 m

Td: Deelin Beg

Altitude: 135m

Td: Deelin Beg Altitude: 137 m

Td: Deelin Beg

Altitude: 118m

Td: Ballyran Altitude 1 m A positive dye trace was confirmed from the Polldonough sink to both S3 and S4 in 2023.

WILLOW SINK

Length: 0 m ITM 513050 703831

The Balliny depression has been described in various publications (Lloyd and Self 1982, Mullan 1995) including the two points on the depression floor where water sinks – Wet Sink and Ferny Sink. On a recent visit a third, unrecorded shakehole was noted on the depression floor close to the west wall. It is 8 m long, 3 m wide and 4 m deep with a vertical rock wall on the NW side and a willow tree growing in it.

It is curious that this obvious feature it has not been noted before and the possibility arises that it is a relatively recent development possibly caused by movement in the loose boulder choke at the end of the Poll Balliny cave almost directly below the depression.

Co. CORK

BALLYVOIRISHEEN SINK

GSI No: 1707SEK008 Length: 5 m ITM: 597726 574721

The stream sink has been pushed for 5 m. Further exploration will require digging through boulders, preferably in low water. This is the main sink feeding Dower Bridge Rising.

DOWER BRIDGE RISING

GSI No: 1707SEK009; 1707SEK010 Length: 100 m+ Depth: 8.5 m Alt ITM: 597094 573014

From the left hand rift shown on the plan survey (Mullan, 2022 p. 92) the passage quickly descends to a depth of 8.5 m, the deepest point of the cave. The floor of the cave is very silty. The passage is followed past a junction, presumed to be from the right hand rift. Continuing north, the passage eventually surfaces in the 1st airbell. Directly north of this, the 2nd airbell is reached through a short slot. The way on from here is a hole in the floor on the right-hand side. The passage descends to a 3 m square chamber with the way on being through boulders to the 3rd airbell. This is the largest of the three but has no dry land.

From the 3rd airbell, the route continues in a northerly direction, dropping back down to a depth of 5 m. Here the passage narrows. The restriction is tightest on the right-hand going in, roomier on the left and with a silt floor. From here the old line passes through silt banks. A further 10 m of line has been laid from here; the passage still continues, low and silty but open. The strong flow felt at the entrance has been lost by this point.

In 1996, a successful dye-trace to this rising was made from a swallow hole described as being about 2.2 km to the north-west which the worker named Carrignashinney Sink. This is probably Mogeely Cave (Mullan, 2022). Travel time was approximately three days. (Gately and Wright, 2002). Ballyvoirisheen Sink was also successfully traced to Dower Rising in 1979. Travel time was 82 hours (Gately and Wright, q.v.).

Td: Ballyvoirisheen

Td: Knockaunsmountain

Altitude 220 m

Altitude: 15 m

Td: Dower

Altitude 9 m

Depth: 4 m

KILCOLMAN CASTLE CAVE GSI No: 1411SEK002 Length: 45 m

ITM: 557926 611472

Depth 2 m

Td: Kilcolman Middle

Td: Castlepook South

Altitude: 98 m

Kilcolman Castle Cave was excavated in 2022/3 by the archaeological team investigating the nearby Mammoth Cave. However, as with the early 20th century dig mentioned by Grove-White (1911) no archaeological finds were made. The cave floor seems to be covered in poorly-sorted fluvioglacial sediments which were probably emplaced in in late-glacial times.

In preparation for this work, the cave was mapped by the Cork Speleologocal Group and found to be slightly longer than previously recorded. This survey is presented here (Figure 2).

MAMMOTH CAVE

Alternative names: Doneraile Cave; Castlepook Cave; Uaimh Chaisleán an Phúca SMR No: CO017-026 GSI No: 1411SEK002 Length:1100 m Depth: 10 m Altitude: 90 m ITM: 561446 610429

Since mid 2021, members of the Cork Speleological Group have been exploring and mapping this cave. Archaeological work has also been conducted in the cave over this time. As part of this exploration, many new passages and chambers have been discovered that have now been mapped. Below is a description of the newly discovered parts of the cave, starting from the entrance. The provisional survey is shown in Figure 4.

After passing the Entrance Gallery and heading towards Hyaena Hall shortly after entering the chamber, there is a narrow sloping entrance on the left (East) side leading to a passage. This passage widens and after a few metres a point where a low side passage branches off is reached to the left in a northerly direction. This side passage is a hands and knees crawl over sand and clay. After a few metres, the side passage splits into two smaller passages. Straight ahead ends with a steep slope made of clay and stones, while the right branch leads to a small chamber with sparse stalactite decorations.

Returning to the main passage and continuing in an east/southeast direction, another branch leads to the left. This is a short passage that is several metres in height. The main passage descends and continues as a hands and knees crawl. A further low branch appears on the right. This is a tight and low part of this section. A 3 m climb reaches a fairly large but very low breakdown chamber. Passing through this chamber towards the west, a narrow passage is encountered that, after a few metres of crawling, leads to the southern end of Hyaena Hall. While moving through this part of the cave, it is important to remain vigilant and cautious as there is much rock breakdown.

A further addition to the system has been made from the Blue (or 'Fairy') Hall. In the northern part of the chamber the far left passage has been dug out and now leads upwards to a Y junction with a sandy floor. To the right, the passage ends after a few metres in a small chamber with no significant decorative features. To the left, a narrow passage may be entered which, halfway along its length, has a small pit that leads to a lower level and a passage of approximately 12 m long with interesting stalactite and flowstone formations. Continuing across the pit, the higher passage curves round to return to the Blue Hall, roughly in the centre. However, before re-entering the Hall, a branch to the right leads into a chamber that is 1.2 m high and quite spacious.

Towards the southern end of the Blue Hall, a low, narrow passage branches off to the west. After a crawl of about 6 m, a large collapse chamber is reached with steep muddy and boulder slopes. From the further reaches of this chamber, additional passages lead deeper into the cave. The extreme left passage leads to the northwestern edge of the Hall of the Agonies. Continuing clockwise, a long and very narrow passage may be entered whose walls are practically covered with flowstone throughout its entire length. Towards its end, this passage narrows further and is bordered by very beautiful curtains. Halfway along this passage, a T-junction heading north (to the right) is encountered; this is another low crawling passage. On entry, almost immediately a very narrow and tight rift titled "Move or Breath" has to be negotiated. Here, a rich deposit of bones covered with a layer of flowstone were discovered. The bones were removed by the archaeologists for further study. Continuing along the crawl, a small chamber marks the beginning of another new section of this area of the cave. Heading west from this chamber is an inaccessibly small opening in the floor to a lower passage. This is passed to enter a spacious passage measuring 2 m in height and 1.2 m in width and a length of nearly 12 m. Before reaching the end, a turn to the right enters the next chamber where a shallow pit is encountered. Further exploration here will require digging. From this chamber the passage again links to the start of this section through a narrow and very tight rift. This section features some very beautiful stalactite and flowstone formations.

The next section requires returning to the Hall of the Agonies and heading towards the Double Gallery. Before reaching the end of Double Gallery a low passage on the right heads west. Following this passage for a few metres, another right turn to the north through a crawl connects back to the Hall of the Agonies at its southwestern edge.

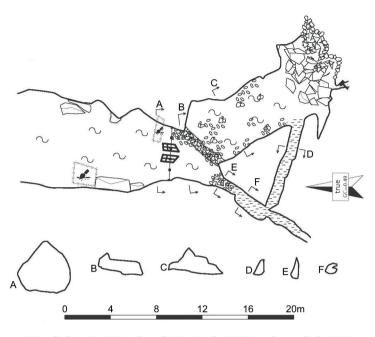
Surveying of the central part of the cave has not yet been completed, being shown on the survey here as 'presumed'. There is a labyrinth of narrow, high rifts and crevices in the area between the Third Gallery, Fairy Land, and The Abyss. It is connected to the west with rifts extending from Elephant Hall. The Third and Fourth Galleries have also been connected to the southern end of Hyaena Hall.

Moving now to the "New Section" of the cave. By squeezing through the Ruckle Passage, a slide down a tube enters the north end of Farrell's Chamber. Then, through Column Crawl another new section is entered. Veering right after exiting Column Crawl is a junction. Continuing straight ahead leads to Dillon's Cross, while going to the right leads to another chamber. Continuing on, a high rift connects back to Dillon's Cross.

From the junction at the end of Column Crawl, another narrow, tall rift that runs south parallel to Farrell's Chamber can be entered. This passage has not been fully surveyed yet but has been named "Czarna Katedra" (Black Cathedral). Based on preliminary measurements, it extends for at least 50 m. The floor and most of the walls are covered in mud with little stalactite or flowstone decoration in this area. Leads for possible further exploration by digging in this part of the cave have been identified.

From Dillon's Cross, an ascent through a narrow rift to the High Level Gallery can be made. Here, heading east leads to Shakey Bridge Chamber, which now connects back to Orchard Road in the south and Jamboreen in the east. In the lower part of Danger Rift leads for further exploration have been identified.

The last new section of the cave is in the area of Sand Cavern, Tibia Passage, Lower Bone Passage, and Upper Bone Passage. It is in this area that the thigh bone of a juvenile mammoth was discovered in 1974 and it was subject to archaeological investigation in 2022. There are still a number of leads to follow in this area. Upper Bone Passage and Liberation Rift await further surveying. Excavation work is ongoing in Lower Bone Passage, and appears promising. Tibia Passage has been connected by excavation to Lower Bone Passage.



KILCOLMAN CASTLE CAVE, Co. CORK

ITM: 557926 611472 Length: 45m Depth: 2m Surveyed by: Stanislaw Drapala, Monika Jur, 2023 Drawn by: Daniel Drozd, 2023 Grade: UISv16-4-F © Cork Speleological Group, 2023

Figure 2. Survey of Kilcolman Castle Cave.

Co. GALWAY

AUCLOGGEEN SPRING

GSI No: 1423SEK012 Length: 20 m ITM 535934 738574

Depth: 27 m

Td: Gortroe Altitude: 13 m

Aucloggeen Spring is the main rising of the Cregg River. Some of the water feeding the spring has been traced from Ballyglunin Cave, situated some 10 km to the northeast. And about 18 m higher. (Drew and Daly, 1993). The water rises in the centre of the pool, which was seemingly once much larger, prior to land reclamation. A shaft descends vertically. At a depth of 5 m the diver is in a 2 m wide north-south rift which widens to about 4 m lower down. The rift may be descended vertically to -20 m and then down a rocky slope following the right hand, east, wall to -27 m where the passage levels out. A rift to the east leads towards siltbanks and

the flow is lost. To the west the main flow comes from beyond a rock pile This was passed to another silty passage similar to that on the east side. The flow comes from a small gap in the floor underneath a pile of rocks. This would need to be dug out for further progress to be made. This would be both difficult and dangerous owing to the strength of the flow and the presence of a large boulder above the dig site.

The GSI reports two caves quite close to the line of the dye trace. The first (GSI No: IE_GSI_Karst_40K_2242 at ITM 539742 738765 is likely to be a souterrain situated in the western half of a ringfort some 30 m northwest of the grid reference (Alcock, *et al*, 1999). The second (GSI No: IE_GSI_Karst_40K_1316, at ITM 544363 740076 is also likely to be a reference to a souterrain situated in a small ringfort situated a few metres northeast of the given grid reference. It is unlikely that either of these sites have any karst significance.



Figure 3. Kilcolman Castle Cave, Co. Cork, before excavation in 2022. Photo: © Stanislaw Drapala

LETTERA SPRING

GSI No: 1425NEK036 Length: 80 m ITM: 559503 762144

Depth: 3.5 m

Td: Lettera

Altitude 70 m

This substantial rising was the subject of dye tracing in the 1990s but had not been investigated with a view to exploration before 2023. The water flows rapidly out of a wide rift

about 2 m below the limestone pavement. This quickly narrows until the passage is about 0.5m wide with large chert nodules. At 15 m the passage widens again and a junction is reached. To the right the cave continues south with high flow in tight conditions. After 45 m the flow is lost and the diver surfaces in a rift airbell about 5 m long oriented north-south. Back at the junction, the left-hand branch leads in a northerly direction with noticeably clearer water and less flow than the southern branch. This passage quickly becomes very low with an extremely silty bottom. After 20 m the diver stopped due to the silty conditions with the passage continuing.

Succesful traces have been carried out from three sinks around Glennamaddy, about 3.5 km to the east and another some 2 km to the north east (Drew and Daly, 1993; Moe and Smietanka, 2011). The site was heavily polluted with septic tank overflows at one time, which may explain a previous lack of enthusiasm for diving here.

Co. MAYO

BEN CREGGAN POTHOLES 1-4 Length: 0 m ITM: 487423 766845

Four pothole entrances have been noted, though not explored at the time of writing, on the east ridge of Ben Creggan, aligned along the ridge crest. They appear to be either slip features, that is gulls, or bedrock fissures possible enlarged by freeze-thaw action. The bedrock in the area consists of Middle Ordovician sandstones and conglomerates so their formation is unlikely to be karstic (Jones, 2023).

Co. TIPPERARY

Td: Carrigataha

Altitude: 38 m

ROARING WELL No. 1. GSI No: 2011SWK005 Length: 825 m ITM: 606483 619732

Contrary to the report quoted in Mullan 2022, the passage is not blocked at the end of Sump 1. The rest of the cave may be reached by crawling over boulders.

Co. WATERFORD

POLL NA **b**PÍOBAIRÍ

Alternative names: White Well Cave; Piper's Hole Length: 3 m Altitude: 10 m ITM: 612908 582962

The cave is a large opening in the side of a cliff where the bedding dips at roughly 45° and the beds are delaminating. At the bottom of the hole is a very clear pool which seems to be at least 3 m deep and to have a possible continuation to the right.

Td: Glendavock Altitude: 350 m

Td: Ballyheeny

CAPPAGH QUARRY CAVE No. 2 Length: 60 m+ ITM: 617546 594765

Td: Kilgreaney Altitude: 8 m

Cappagh quarry located South of Waterford near Dungarvan is the location of a previously known cave, Cappagh Quarry Cave. The quarry is substantially abandoned but is worked periodically. Upon entering the main entrance of the quarry, the previously known cave is located on the far right hand wall. Its description can be found in Mullan (2022, p 190).

The newly discovered cave, Cappagh Quarry Cave no.2, is located on the far left hand wall which is the central part of the southern boundary of the quarry. The entrance is a substantial opening at the base of the quarry wall which has been recently worked. The entrance is reached by scrambling over the rock field left from the quarry works. This impressive entrance is approximately 10 m in width and up to 2 m in height.

The entrance leads into a rubble chamber resulting from extensive roof collapse most likely as a result of the quarry blasting of the wall. Once inside the cave, the main chamber is approximately 50 m long and about 20 m wide, whose height reaching up to 4 m in some places. The floor is covered with large stones and various sized boulders covered with flowstone that have to be scrambled over to progress. At the back of the chamber evidence of a dry stream bed can be made out meandering around the back wall. The stream passage itself is impassably small beyond the western limits of the chamber. Inside the chamber, in portions not affected by the blasting, are extensive stalactite, stalagmite and straw formations which add to the overall charm of this large chamber. The chamber has a second entrance which has been substantially blocked by bulldozing quarry spoil against this entrance. This spoil now has rough vegetation growing which hides this cave opening from the outside.

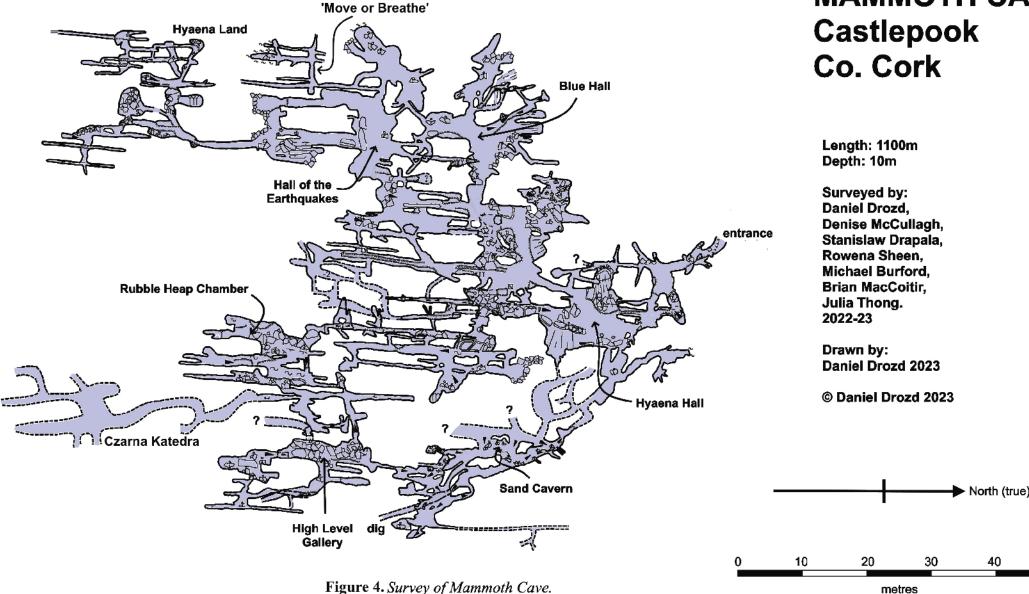
On the southeastern end of the chamber, which descends to a height of about 1 m and narrows, constricting into a passage that extends deeper into the cave. There are many decorative elements here. This is the current extent of exploration. It is possible that further exploration will regain the dry stream bed and reveal further cave passage beyond the large chamber. The dimensions given above are estimates as the cave has not yet been surveyed.

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