

## Goatchurch Cave, Burrington.

BY N. C. COOPER, M.B.

Although Goatchurch cave is probably one of the most frequently visited caves in Mendip, and has been explored during a long period by many people, there seems to be no account of its wanderings, and no plan which can in any way be called accurate. During the last eighteen months a systematic survey has been attempted by a small party, and some result arrived at.

The entrance passage goes straight inwards in a S.E. direction, and terminates in a small chamber just after passing a stalagmite boss at the end of the iron railings. There are two chief passages off this main passage, and both are on the left. The first is about three-quarters of the way down, and is known as the Badger hole; the second is a steep passage leading off at an obtuse angle between the boss of stalagmite and the end of the iron railings. This opening passes downwards very steeply, and is a fine specimen of a water worn passage. Its sides are smooth and beautifully rounded, somewhat reminding one of the Hampstead tube subways. A couple of pot-holes are passed, and the route turns sharply to the left. Here another long passage is found running parallel to the entrance passage. At this point the floor has been excavated, and Professor Boyd Dawkins in doing so discovered a molar of bear where Mr. Beard of Banwell found a tusk of mammoth.<sup>1</sup>

There are various small rifts in the rocks on the left, and at the end another small chamber, called the Dining chamber. To the left, passages go off, and the arrangement of them defies description. These constitute the Maze, a series of passages at various levels among huge fallen boulders. Straight ahead is a steep stalagmite bank, the end of which was found to be very near the

---

<sup>1</sup> Boyd Dawkins, *Cave Hunting*. P. 33.

surface, and underneath the original entrance. It is possible from here to listen to people outside knocking on the ground. An endeavour has been made to enter the cave from this point, but although a small cave has been found containing some good examples of erratic stalactites, the passage on does not yet seem to be practicable. On the left of the Dining chamber two passages lead off, the further of the two, the Coal Shute, leading over a stalagmite cascade into a large boulder-strewn chamber, with a sloping roof formed by a huge span of limestone bedding-plane. The boulders on the floor have evidently peeled off this plane and fallen. The nearer passage descends and turns sharply to the right, and the explorer gropes his way clinging to a terraced slope of rock from which, on the left, passages lead to the boulder chamber just described. At the end of this terraced slope is the entrance to another boulder chamber, a lofty space with a boulder strewn floor. Amongst the boulders at the far end of this, two passages lead out of the floor; the further of the two passing down a steep slope, over huge stones to the largest boulder chamber, the Water Chamber, the nearer passing into the same chamber by means of a narrow, steep rift, with very uncomfortably jagged walls, due to protruding fossils, which have resisted the water action. From the first passage a small chamber opens out to the right, and contains a series of stalagmite waterfalls, one below the other; this is called the Grotto.

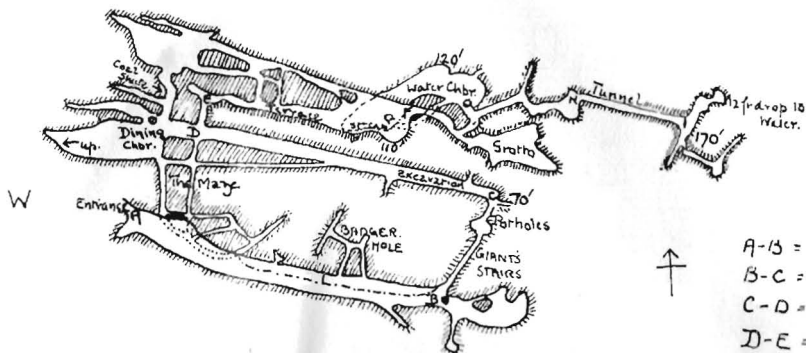
The Water Chamber is strewn with huge boulders, and various passages lead from it. To the left a muddy slope leads upwards, and the stream, encountered here for the first time since entering, flows down it on the left. Immediately downwards a passage leads to a blind end, and on the right a series of passages can be found leading round the boulders. Near where we entered this chamber, and on the right, a passage descends quite steeply over boulders, and ends in a tunnel, just large enough to wriggle through, for some forty feet. This obstacle is known by various names—Tunnel, Rabbit hole, Drain pipe, etc, and leads to where one may turn to the right or the left. To the left there is a narrow passage ending in a twelve foot drop to water. To the right are seen some good curtain formations, and a second passage to the left. Beyond this point, which is 170 feet below the entrance, we have not penetrated.

From our plan, the cave seems to be a series of four or five water-worn passages running along the bedding plane of the limestone, parallel to each other, but at lower depths, and connected by other water-worn passages, making their way through the joints. Possibly the stream has entered the cave at successively lower levels as the valley outside has deepened. In fact it seems impossible that a mammoth's tusk could enter and reach the bottom of the Giant's Stairs through the present entrance, and our theory is that it gained entrance by being washed in where the second passage comes near the surface, and that a water-way led on at one time from the pot-holes where the first and second passages meet at the foot of the Giant's Stairs. The slope of both passages is towards this point, and, from the plan, and section, this passage may have led into the top of the Grotto before being silted up.

No evidence of human habitation has been found.

---

# GOATCOURCH CAVE.



PLAN.

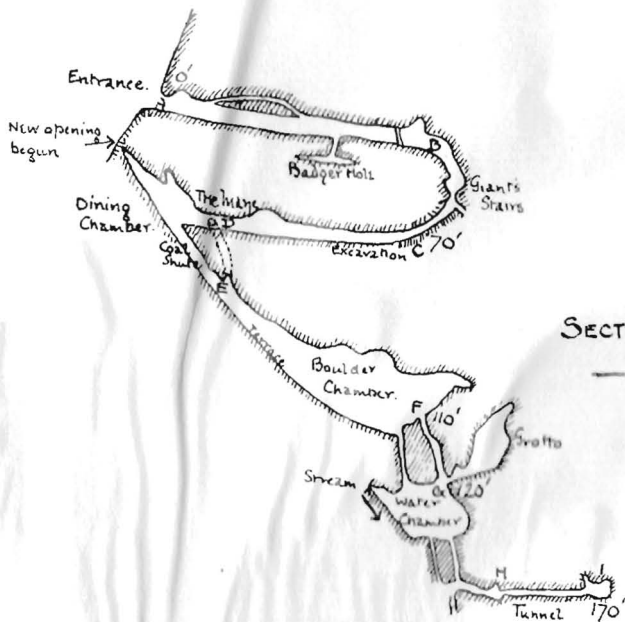


PLATE I.