

Poll Kilmoon East, County Clare, Ireland

By

P. A. STANDING

(O.S. 6 in. to 1 mile, Clare, sheet 8)

Entrance: E. 32.2 in., N. 23.1 in.
Townland, Kilmoon East.

Total length 750 ft.
Tackle required: none.

About $\frac{1}{2}$ mile south-west of the swallet of Cahercloggaun West-1, (E14a) a very small stream is found sinking at the shale edge. To the north of the head of this stream another larger one drains S.W. and used to sink in an inlier of limestone at the head of a shallow, flat-bottomed valley running south, south-west, to the ruins of Kilmoon church. The local name for the valley is a geomorphologically correct one "the Old Dry Valley". At its head the stream has been put into a conduit which discharges into the swallet just described. Neither this swallet nor the old sinking place can be entered, but the water could run to supply the resurgence found in Cahercloggaun West-1 (Nicholson and Hanna, 1965, p. 297).

A hundred yards or so further down the dry valley there is a small re-entrant of limestone into the shale. Three small streams sink here. The most westerly one is the only swallet that is penetratable. This is Poll Kilmoon East. The site had been known for some years. In 1959 Mike Boon of the Shepton Mallet Caving Club first explored the cave for an estimated distance of 420 ft. He called it Poll Ballynahown, though it is not in that townland, and published a short account (Boon 1960). The U.B.S.S. surveyed the cave in 1966, extended its known length to 750 ft. and renamed it after the townland in which it lies.

There are two small entrances situated a few yards from the point where the surface stream disappears. Both lead vertically, 9 ft. down, into a rift chamber 18 ft. long running east-west. A small stream enters from the eastern end. A low crawl leads out of the chamber to the south. The stream does not follow this crawl but takes a lower course, and rejoins the negotiable passage after 30 ft. From here onwards the cave consists of a single scalloped meandering passage, which maintains a gentle gradient and predominantly southern course. It is never possible to stand upright after the entrance chamber and turning points are few.

The first part of the Stream Passage begins where the stream rejoins the route. 80 ft. from the entrance there is a squeeze past a stalagmite flow on the left. Here the passage is 2-3 ft. high and 2-4 ft. wide. N-S calcite veins are frequently visible. One has been partly dissolved to form a small rift 2-4 in. wide in the roof. The meanders of the passage below are independent of its direction. At 180 ft. the stream disappears down an impenetrable bedding plane on the left, east.

The upper main part of the passage, now roughly square in section, continues as before showing that the loss of the stream is a comparatively recent development. The passage dimensions do not alter and there are numerous pools, though there was little or

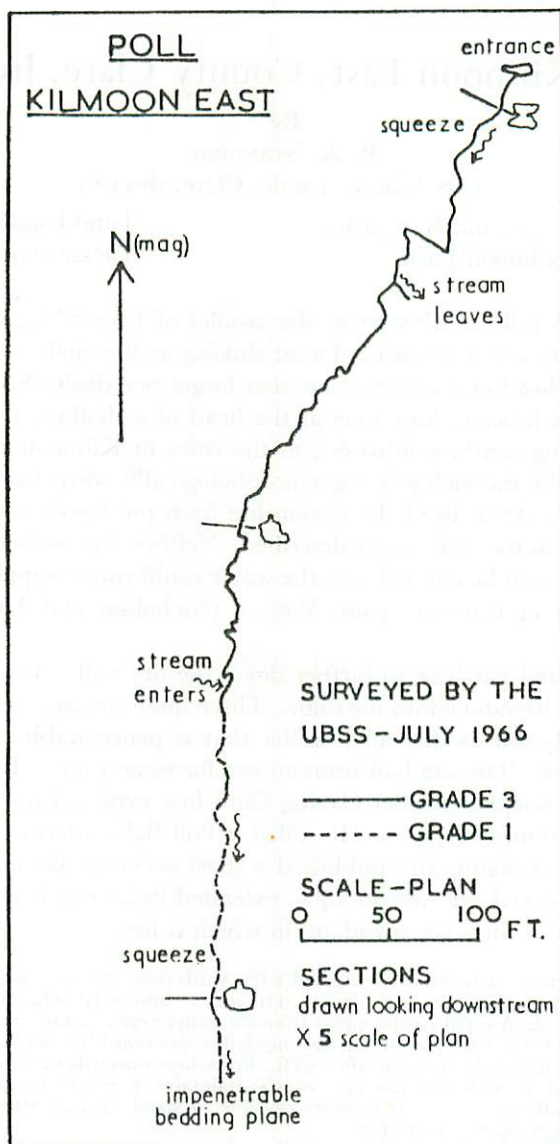


Fig. 76.

no running water under the low flow conditions when the cave was examined. These pools and the vicious meanders sustain a maschoistic interest. After another 200 ft. there is a change in direction to almost south. 500 ft. from the entrance another small

stream enters from a tube 2 ft. up the right wall. 15 ft. beyond this a major flowstone mass forms a constriction which marked the end of the part explored by Boon. This constriction was widened in 1966 by U.B.S.S. and the cave extended another 250 ft.

The stream passage is a little larger than the preceding part but has the same general form. After 180 ft. there is an extremely tight squeeze past a flowstone protrusion. Then follows 50 ft. of canal with water over 6 in. deep and at 250 ft. from here the passage degenerates into an impassable bedding plane.

The origin of the streams in the cave needs further explanation. The surface stream sinks only a few yards from the entrance but a fluorescein test showed that it entered the cave explored at 500 ft. and is thus only seen in the last part of the cave. The origin of the stream in the first part of the cave is uncertain but it may be presumed to come from one or both of the other two swallets. Under the dry conditions existing when the cave was explored both streams were very small. There was no evidence of recent flooding though some flood debris was seen to be calcited in at roof level.

The gradient of the cave is gentle throughout so that the cave roof is not likely to be more than 30-40 ft. below the surface. The course of the cave keeps it under the dry valley. It is not known where the waters resurge, probably at St. Brendan's Well entering that system along the inaccessible part between Owenterbolea and Upper St. Brendan's. The cave streams cannot contribute to the resurgence seen in Cahercloggaun West-1 unless the cave makes an abrupt change of direction from S.S.W. to E.S.E. and such a change is inherently unlikely as there is a very low dip to the south.

REFERENCES

- BOON, M., 1960, "Ireland, 1959". *Shepton Mallet C.C. Occasional Paper No. 1*, 23.
NICHOLSON, F. H., and HANNA, F. K., 1965, "Poll-Cahercloggaun West-1". *Proc.* 10 (3), 290-298.