

## CAVE NOTES, COUNTY CLARE AND COUNTY GALWAY, IRELAND

by

A. BOYCOTT and L. J. WILSON

## INTRODUCTION

Since the publication of *Caves of County Clare* by the Society (Self, 1981), there have been a number of discoveries in the area covered by the book; in the Western Burren these are mostly extensions to known caves. Exploration in the Kilcorney region of the High Burren has produced several new sites and also a major extension to the Cave of the Wild Horses. In the Gort Lowlands of County Galway a number of small caves have been found in the vicinity of Quinn's Cave near Moy, south west of Kinvarra. Following the extension of Pollduagh Cave by diving, sites in this area are now described, although they were not included in *Caves of County Clare*. Also some errors in the book have been noted and corrected.

Sites already described in *Caves of County Clare* are identified by name and number, followed by the relevant chapter of the book in brackets. The caves are listed in chapter order and alphabetically by name. The grid references refer to the distance in centimetres east and north from the south-west corner of the relevant 1:10560 series maps. New sites are listed with alternative names and towland (Td), also length, depth and altitude where appropriate.

The prefix 'K', not previously used in *Caves of County Clare*, has been applied to both old and new sites in the area of the Kilcorney Depression.

## THE CAVES

## POLLCAN (The Doolin Valley) Td Doolin

Alternative name: Crooked Hole

Grid Ref: Clare 8, E 7.8, N 21.2 cm

Length 10 m Depth 5 m

85 metres east of the local spring in Fisherstreet at the shale-limestone boundary there is a 3 m diameter depression in the Cronagort stream. This site was dug by the Mendip Caving Group in 1976 (Jones, 1976).

An entrance squeeze leads to the head of a 4 m pitch in a north-south rift. The passage at the bottom of the pitch is choked with gravel. The rift can be followed south for 4 m, but also ends in a gravel choke. The entrance has been refilled with boulders.

## FAUNAROOSKA CAVE (North-West Slieve Elva)

A2

Grid Ref: Clare 4, E 72.9, N 36.0 cm

There are two sumps in this cave, one in the main stream at the foot of the wet pitch, and the other a static sump below the dry pitch; both of these have been dived (Boycott, 1982).

The wet pitch sump is a narrow rift, the water flows into a small eyehole in the left wall, which has been passed (Farr, 1983b) to a parallel rift with unusable airspace, but the passage becomes too tight to follow further.

The dry pitch sump is 2 m high with a layer of moonmilk on the floor. After 6 m the roof meets the mud floor.

## POLLBALLINY (North-West Slieve Elva)

B1a

Grid Ref: Clare 4, E 71.0, N 33.7 cm

A point in the stream bed 30 m upstream from the first pitch has been radiolocated (Lloyd and Self, 1982). This point is 33.3 m below the surface, and here the cave passage is

10 m high. The passage roof continues in the same bed to the end of the cave. The radio-location point is within 5 m of that predicted by the 1974 survey (Cassely, 1977).

**POLLDUBH (North-West Slieve Elva)**

B3a

Grid Ref: Clare 4, E 66.6, N 23.4 cm

At the downstream end of the cave, the stream disappears to the left into a small passage, which can be followed for 25 m between shale banks. The main passage continues as a bedding cave crawl over cobbles; a small canyon passage on the left side of the bedding cave can be followed as a low crawl until the passage drops into a small pool. Here the stream reappears from the left. The bedding cave continues downstream to a junction with inlet passages joining from the right and ahead. The stream sinks in the floor. A crawl up over fallen blocks to the left leads down to the continuation of the stream, but this passage soon chokes with shale debris. The furthest point reached is about 100 m from the resurgence at B4 (Irish Diaries, Easter 1983).

**B11 (Poulnagun) (The Coolagh River Valley)**

Grid Ref: Clare 8, E 46.9, N 55.9 cm

The upstream sump has been dived for 60 m (Stanton, 1983). The first 20 m is hazardous because of loose chert nodules. At the furthest point reached, the flow comes out of a tight descending slot choked with cobbles.

**B 14 (The Coolagh River Valley)**

Grid Ref: Clare 8, E 42.8, N 55.6 cm

Length 15 m Depth 15 m Altitude 126 m

The swallet has been dug (Irish Diaries, October 1981). A 9 m pitch in a very narrow rift leads to boulders, and a further climb of 5 m ends in a mud choke.

**CREGG LODGE SWALLET (The Coolagh River Valley)**

A6

Alternative name: Pollcregg

Grid Ref: Clare 8, E 31.4, N 52.7 cm

The low bedding cave at the stream sink has been extended by Aston University Speleological Society (Joyce 1981 & 1982) for about 15 m. A small canyon passage was entered but soon becomes too tight to follow. The landowner is not prepared to allow further digging.

**POULNAGOLLUM (Eastern Slieve Elva)**

E7

Grid Ref: Clare 4, E 91.5, N 27.7 cm

The flowstone constriction at the end of Sump Canyon has been passed at roof level. After a 30 m traverse the passage floor can be rejoined. The silt floor gradually rises to meet the roof over the next 20 m.

About 100 m from the end of Sump Canyon is a dry tributary, with delicate flowstone on the walls. This passage becomes too narrow after 15 m. Also Gour Tunnel has been followed for 40 m to a small chamber and a constricted sump (Irish Diaries, July 1981).

One of the constricted tubes in the left wall of East Tunnel has been followed for about 600 m, probably in an easterly direction (Irish Diaries, 1979 & Walford, 1982).

**CULLAUN ZERO-TWO (Western Poulacapple)**

C0-2

Grid Ref: Clare 5, E 18.0, N 29.0 cm

Approximately 400 m north of the Cullaun 0-1 depression is a shallow valley running to the southwest from the shale out onto the limestone. The most extensive cave is in a small tributary valley, and is located furthest upstream; it consists of a tight meandering stream canyon which can be followed for 20 m to a constriction. (Phillips, J. & Drew, D. P., pers. comm.)

A series of tiny sinks with associated caves which all terminate in similar constrictions can be found, mainly on the left hand side of the valley, and in the floor of the tributary valley.

## CROAGH SOUTH CAVE (Eastern Poulacapple)

G1

Alternative name: Poll Croagh South

Grid Ref: Clare 5, E 33.3, N 6.9 cm

A shallow depression 30 m downstream from the stream sink G1 was dug extensively and the cave entered from this point. The entrance has been refilled with boulders at the request of the farmer, and though it can be reopened easily it should always be resealed.

A 5 m deep narrow excavated rift leads to a muddy horizontal squeeze at the head of a 5 m deep canyon which does not appear to carry the stream from the main sink. Progress is easy for 10 m, but the passage then narrows. After 25 m the passage becomes 1 m high and 35 cm wide, and has not been followed to a definite conclusion.

At the point where the passage narrows, a very tight 3 m climb into the roof enters a high level oxbow, this may be followed both upstream back into the entrance passage and downstream for 20 m in a tight rift. (Phillips, J. & Drew, D. P., 1981, pers. comm.)

## CULLAUN FIVE (Southern Poulacapple)

C5

Grid Ref: Clare 5, E 22.6, N 4.3 cm

The stream route upstream of CSb entrance across to Hunched Back Horror, known as the Fluorescein Link, was described in *Caves of County Clare* (Self 1981, p. 152) as a passable crawling passage. However, this has since been found to be blocked by organic debris (Irish Diaries, Easter 1983).

The sump at the end of Red Carpet Passage has been known to dry out during periods of drought. Two routes have been followed, one a clean crawling passage, the other a crawl between mudbanks. Neither has been pushed to a definite conclusion (Boycott 1982, Irish Diaries 1979).

## TOBERDHU (North Western Burren)

Grid Ref: Clare 5, E 13.4, N 50.2 cm

Length 0 m

The description given in *Caves of County Clare* (Self 1981, p. 167) is incorrect. This is a small seepage resurgence by the road (Irish Diaries, Easter 1983).

## TOBERLONAUN (North Western Burren)

Grid Ref: Clare 5, E 13.8, N 51.0 cm Td Derrynavahagh

Length 0 m

A substantial resurgence 120 m north of Toberdhu. The water comes out of an impenetrable bedding plane at the foot of a small cliff (Irish Diaries, Easter 1983).

## AILLWEE CAVE (North Central Burren)

Grid Ref: Clare 5, E 68.3, N 39.6 cm

5 m beyond the railing at the end of the section of the cave open to the public, there is an aven on the right hand side of the passage. An awkward climb of 15 m leads to an ascending rift, this has been followed for about 100 m horizontally and 50 m vertically to a boulder ruckle (Judd, B., 1982, pers. comm.).

## KILCORNEY ZERO (South Central Burren)

K0

Grid Ref: Clare 9, E 58.2, N 47.8 cm Td. Kilcorney

Length not known Altitude 115 m

A short distance to the east of the Cave of the Wild Horses, a large entrance high in the cliff face has not as yet been entered. Two nearby entrances, K0a and K0b both choke with sediment after 10 m. K0a is to the east of K0b (Lumley, 1982).

## THE CAVE OF THE WILD HORSES (South Central Burren)

K1

Grid Ref: Clare 9, E 57.7, N 47.7 cm

Length 865 m Depth 58 m



Major extensions have been made in this cave. Gour Passage was found to be passable and followed to an 8 m pitch down a flowstone cascade (Boycott, Mullan & Wilson, 1983). From here the passage is now known as Lower Gour Passage and can be followed for 130 m to a point where a small stream sinks into an impenetrable hole. About 35 m before this point there is a static sump on the left of the passage. In dry weather this becomes a duck, and a further 10 m of passage can be entered but then chokes (Farr, 1983b).

The way on lies 10 m before the stream sink, on the right of the passage. A large inlet in this area was dug and a small mud-choked chamber entered (Farr, 1983b). A wet crawl of approximately 20 m leads to a 2 m drop into a larger, very muddy passage known as Frog Passage, which chokes to the left in mud and boulders, but continues to the right for 80 m to a mud sump (Boycott, Mullan & Wilson, 1983). This was dived but proved to be impassable (Farr, 1983b).

In the Lower Main Series area, immediately below the 5 m pitch, a muddy climb on the left into a steeply ascending passage leads to a chamber with three ways on. Two of these end after 20 m (Boycott, Mullan & Wilson, 1983). The third required artificial aid to enter, and leads into a series of high rift passages, small muddy chambers and boulder climbs. This eventually joins the other extensions near the head of the 2 m climb down into Frog Passage. The connection with Lower Main Series was originally made from this point (Farr, 1983b and Irish Diaries, Summer 1983).

#### KILCORNEY TWO (South Central Burren)

K2

Grid Ref: Clare 9, E 57.4, N 47.5 cm

This cave has been dug by Bristol Polytechnic Caving Club to a total length of 40 m (Lumley, 1982).

Two small holes in the cliff face to the south of K2 both draught strongly and have an aural connection with K2: K2a was dug out for 2 m to a T-junction and K2b was pushed for 10 m.

#### KILCORNEY THREE (South Central Burren)

K3

Grid Ref: Clare 9, E 56.9, N 47.5 cm

K3 is a tight passage sloping upwards for 8 m to a boulder choke. 50 m to the west of K3 another small hole in the cliff, K3a, is 2 m long (Lumley, 1982).

#### MOSQUITO HOLE (South Central Burren)

K3b

Grid Ref: Clare 9, E 55.8, N 48.4 cm Td Kilcorney

Depth 10 m Altitude 130 m

A depression in an obvious east-west line of weakness on the plateau above K3 contains a small hole. This was dug out to a 9 m pitch into a choked chamber (Lumley, 1982).

#### BADGER HOLE (South Eastern Burren)

Grid Ref: Clare 10, E 30.3, N 13.8 cm

Td. Teeskagh

Length 10 m Altitude 120 m

A strongly draughting hole at the base of the main line of cliffs has been explored for 10 m. The passage continues but badgers are present. (Ecock, K., 1981, pers. comm.)

#### GLENCURRAN CAVE (South Eastern Burren)

Grid Ref: Clare 10, E 14.0, N 20.8 cm

The grit crawl has not been extended by digging. The 100 m extension reported in 'Caves of County Clare (Self, 1981, p. 188) is incorrect (Drew, 1983).

#### TULLYCOMMON CAVE (South Eastern Burren)

Grid Ref: Clare 10, E 28.0, N 28.5 cm

Td. Tullycommon

Length 10 m Altitude 150 m

The entrance is near the base of the cliff at the north east end of the main Caher-commaun valley, 10 m above the valley floor, and 10 m north of a large tufaceous spring. A low phreatic passage with a roof tube can be followed for 10 m to a cobble choke. The passage can be seen to continue beyond the choke (Ecock, K. & Drew, D. P., 1982, pers. comm.).

#### FERGUS RIVER CAVE (Fergus River and Coroffin area)

Grid Ref: Clare 16, E 86.4, N 42.7 cm

The area at the end of the cave beyond Sump 2 has been re-explored (Farr, 1983b), and 300 m of passage leading to a third sump entered. Beyond Sump 2 is a steep muddy boulder slope leading to a roomy passage which was followed for 60 m to an area of breakdown. Here there are three ways on, all low crawls. The right hand passage has been followed for 150 m to a 10 m high rift. The centre crawl has not been re-explored. The left hand passage is a crawl for 10 m and then enlarges to a passage 10 m wide and 2 m high. After 80 m Sump 3 is reached. This has been dived, in large passage for 80 m, and is still going.

#### POULNABOE (Fergus River and Coroffin area)

Grid Ref: Clare 16, E 78.3, N 37.8 cm

Length about 100 m

Poul naboe is the presumed rising for the sink of the Fergus River 880 m to the west. The most westerly spring has been entered under low water conditions through a series of enlarged joints behind the spring. The main route leads south over a deep pool into a network of crawls and rifts with a floor of gravel, mud and occasionally very deep water. The cave could be pushed further in settled weather, but is usually wholly flooded. (Phillips, J. & Drew, D. P., 1982, pers. comm.)

#### BLACKWATER OXBOW CAVE (Kinvarra-Gort Lowlands)

Grid Ref: Galway 128, E 91.0, N 57.7 cm

Td Prospect

Length 35 m Altitude 24 m

Blackwater, 2 km south of Gort, is a 200 m long unroofed segment of the underground river Cannahowna. About halfway along this ravine there is a pile of boulders where, under low flow conditions, the water flow is much reduced. A hole on the right of the stream, which takes most of the flow, can be followed along a canyon passage 2.5 m tall by 1 m wide with water 1.5 m deep (Irish Diaries, Easter 1982). A sump is reached after 35 m, through which the glow of daylight can be seen. The water rejoins the unroofed river.

#### BLACKWATER RESURGENCE CAVE (Kinvarra-Gort Lowlands)

Grid Ref: Galway 128, E 91.2, N 56.7 cm

Td. Prospect

Length 10 m Altitude 27 m

At Blackwater Rising, upstream from Blackwater Oxbow Cave, a dry cave leads off 3 m above water level. From a small decorated chamber a tube leads south and then east for 10 m to a mud choke. Another small tube, choked after 3 m is located 10 m downstream (Irish Diaries, Easter 1982).

Blackwater Rising itself is a sump from which the Beagh River rises. At the Beagh River Sink (Grid Ref: Galway 129, E 2.2, N 58.2 cm) which is 300 m east of Blackwater Rising, a substantial river disappears into a choke of tree trunks. The nearby Devil's Punch Bowl (Grid Ref: Galway 129, E 1.2, N 59.7 cm) is a static pool in a deep depression, partially filled with rubbish.

#### COOLE CAVE (Kinvarra-Gort Lowlands)

Grid Ref: Galway 122, E 87.0, N 48.5 cm

The grid reference given in Caves of County Clare (Self 1981, p. 207) is incorrect.

The sump at the south end of Main Gallery has been dived (Farr, 1983b). It continues south for 30 m to an airbell. Here the sump is blocked, and a 5 m climb leads to a 2 m diameter phreatic tube. After 40 m a 5 m pitch back to the water surface is reached. This sump has not been explored.

## 226 CAVE NOTES, COUNTY CLARE AND COUNTY GALWAY, IRELAND

### JOHN QUINN'S CAVE (Kinvarra-Gort Lowlands)

Alternative name: Poll John Quinn

Td. Carrowkilleen

Grid Ref: Galway 113, E 2.9, N 11.8 cm

Length 10 m      Altitude 15 m

The cave lies adjacent to the southern side of a large drystone wall. A short passage descends to a chamber with a short high level passage leading off (Cronin, 1983a).

### POLLACRAB (Kinvarra-Gort Lowlands)

Alternative name: Pollinaff

Td. Moy

Grid Ref: Galway 112, E 91.8, N 11.2 cm

Altitude 20 m

A large steep sided conical depression about 20 m deep and 30 m wide has not been fully explored because of the dense undergrowth (Cronin, 1983a).

### POLLALEEN (Kinvarra-Gort Lowlands)

Grid Ref: Galway 123, E 24.4, N 59.1 cm

Td. Newhall

Length 0 m      Altitude 15 m

Pollaleen is the rising of a tributary stream 700 m north-east of Pollanoween. The sump is choked with mud and boulders, as is a subsidiary resurgence 20 m downstream. E. A. Martel visited the area in 1895 and noted the site as a sink (Martel 1897, cited by Coleman 1965).

### POLLANOWEEN (Kinvarra-Gort Lowlands)

Grid Ref: Galway 123, E 19.2, N 54.7 cm

Td. Newhall

Length 0 m      Altitude 15 m

Pollanoween is the sink of the Boleyneendorrish River. A large stream sinks into a boulder choke (Coleman 1965, Irish Diaries Easter 1982).

### POLLBEHAN (Kinvarra-Gort Lowlands)

Alternative name: Pollbeaghy

Td. Carrowkilleen

Grid Ref: Galway 113, E 3.9, N 12.0 cm

Depth 15 m      Altitude 20 m

A large depression 20 m in diameter with a small spring entering from the side, lies in a small, walled pasture (Cronin 1983a b & c). A deep pool fills the bottom of the depression, and has been dived to a depth of 4 m. A way on can be seen, but has not been followed.

### POLL BLIATH GAIRDIN (Kinvarra-Gort Lowlands)

Grid Ref: Galway 113, E 3.9, N 12.1 cm

Td. Carrowkilleen

Length 23 m      Altitude 11 m

The cave entrance lies on the northern side of the Pollbehan depression, 6 m above water level (Cronin 1983a). Inside the small entrance, several passages can be followed. The cave is well decorated with small stalactites and moonmilk, and appears to have been formed partly by movement of this part of the depression.

### POLLDEELIN (Kinvarra-Gort Lowlands)

Grid Ref: Galway 122, E 88.8, N 49.3 cm

The grid reference given in *Caves of County Clare* (Self 1981, p. 210) is incorrect.

### POLLDUAGH CAVE (Kinvarra-Gort Lowlands)

Grid Ref: Galway 128, E 83.6, N 58.8 cm

Length 275 m

The grid reference given in *Caves of County Clare* (Self, 1981, p. 210) is incorrect, as is the quoted length of accessible river cave. Pollduagh cave is the rising for the Canna-



howna River; the sump begins 30 m into the cave, and descends steadily to a depth of 30 m (Farr, 1983a). After 100 m of diving the sump levels out and continues at this depth to the present limit of 245 m. The sump trends southeast for the first 100 m and then turns east.

A subsidiary resurgence on the left bank of the stream near the entrance, which takes much of the flow, has been dived for 30 m to an airbell. The sump is a bedding cave 2 m wide by 1 m high and probably connects with the main stream before the start of the main upstream sump (Boycott, 1982).

There are two potholes between here and Blackwater Sink (Grid Ref: Galway 128, E 90.7, N 58.4 cm), which are probably connected with the same system. The Ladle (Grid Ref: Galway 128, E 89.5, N 58.4 cm), 130 m west of Blackwater Sink, is 10 m deep with static water at its base. The Churn (Grid Ref: Galway 128, E 87.2, N 58.2 cm), 330 m east of Pollduagh has flowing water at its base. Both sites are mentioned in Coleman (1965). The Churn has recently been dived (Farr, 1983b). The sump immediately descends to 33 m depth and has been followed downstream for 155 m at this depth. The farthest point reached is estimated to be 90 m from the farthest point reached in Pollduagh. The upstream passage has not been explored.

#### POLL E PUTHE KITTLEON (Kinvarra-Gort Lowlands)

Grid Ref: Galway 113, E 2.5, N 9.7 cm

Td. Carrowkilleen

Length 35 m    Depth 17 m    Altitude 30 m

The cave entrance is located in scrub on the edge of the limestone pavement. A large passage descends steeply to a very unstable boulder slope; beneath this the passage can be seen to continue and a small stream can be heard. To the right a low arch is blocked by gravel (Cronin, 1983a).

#### POLLNAPASTY (Kinvarra-Gort Lowlands)

Grid Ref: Galway 122, E 52.0, N 57.0 cm

The grid reference given in Caves of County Clare (Self 1981, p. 211) is incorrect.

#### QUINN'S CAVE (Kinvarra-Gort Lowlands)

Grid Ref: Galway 122, E 91.2, N 12.1 cm

The grid reference given in Caves of County Clare (Self 1981, p. 211) is incorrect.

A pool lies at the base of a 10 m cliff. At the northern end of the pool an inclined bedding cave can be followed underwater for 20 m until a junction is reached. At this point a strong current is encountered. The bedding cave continues ahead through a boulder constriction. To the right are two potholes at least 10 m deep (Cronin 1983a & b).

The water in the pool is brackish and rises and falls with the tide. The site is 3 km from the nearest coast at Kinvarra.

#### SKELPNAHOOEY CAVE (Kinvarra-Gort Lowlands)

Grid Ref: Galway 113, E 15.1, N 8.8 cm

Both the name 'Skelpnadoey' and the grid reference quoted in Caves of County Clare (Self 1981, p. 211) are incorrect.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to the following people for information and help with this paper: Pat Cronin, Dave Drew, Martyn Farr, Steve Joyce, Mark Lumley, Graham Mullan, Charlie Self and Julian Walford.

The Society would be grateful for any further information on cave sites in the relevant area, as it is intended to publish further articles of this nature at regular intervals.

## REFERENCES

- BOYCOTT, A. 1982 *Cave Diving Group Newsletter*, No. 64, 25.
- BOYCOTT, A., 1983 Cave of the Wild Horses, the 1983 Extensions. *Proc. Univ. Bristol Spelaeol. Soc.*, **16** (3), 215-220.
- MULLAN, G. J. and WILSON, L. J.
- CASSELY, I. A. 1977 Pollballiny; The 1974 Extension. *Proc. Univ. Bristol Spelaeol. Soc.*, **14** (3), 269.
- COLEMAN, J. C. 1965 *The Caves of Ireland*, Anvil Books, Tralee, Co. Kerry, p. 43.
- CRONIN, P. C. 1983 *British Caver*, **88**, 12-20.
- CRONIN, P. C. 1983b *Cave Diving Group Newsletter*, No. 67, 19.
- CRONIN, P. C. 1983c *Cave Diving Group Newsletter*, No. 68, 27.
- DREW, D. P. 1983 Pers. Comm.
- FARR, M. J. 1983 *Cave Diving Group Newsletter*, No. 68, 27.
- FARR, M. J. 1983b Pers. Comm.
- IRISH DIARIES 1979- Unpublished manuscript in Univ. Bristol Spelaeol. Soc. Library.
- 1983
- JONES, B. 1976 *Mendip Caving Group Journal*, No. 6, 12.
- JOYCE, S. 1981 *Cerberus Spelaeological Society Journal*, **11** (5), 199.
- JOYCE, S. 1982 *Cerberus Spelaeol. Society Journal*, **12** (6), 224.
- LLOYD, O. C. 1982 The Balliny Depression, Co. Clare, *Proc. Univ. Bristol Spelaeol. Soc.* **16** (2), 123.
- and SELF, C. A.
- LUMLEY, M. 1982 *Cerberus Spelaeological Society Journal*, **12** (6), 220.
- SELF, C. A. (Editor) 1981 *Caves of County Clare*, University of Bristol Spelaeological Society.
- STANTON, R. W. 1983 *Cave Diving Group Newsletter*, No. 66, 34.
- WALFORD, J. D. 1982 Pers. Comm.