

New Cave Discoveries in Ireland Interim Report

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The 1951 and 1952 trips of the Society were made to the townland of Cullaun, near Lisdoonvarna, Co. Clare, on the southern end of Poulacapple Hill, where a series of new cave systems were discovered.* They have been numbered from N.W. to S.E. and have all been provisionally named after the townland of Cullaun, but detailed survey may show some of the entrances to be in neighbouring townlands.

In 1951 entry was made to Cullaun I and it was hoped that a complete exploration and survey would be made of this in 1952. So many discoveries were made on the later trip that this work was not completed. It is the aim of this report to give a brief overall description of the systems found and their chief characteristics.

Cullaun Zero. When Cullaun I was first explored it was thought that the large tributary found in the cave would be the stream from the valley to the N.W. where numerous openings exist. Fluorescein placed in the stream at one of these openings did not appear in Cullaun I, and it is therefore assumed that a parallel system to Cullaun I runs down this valley probably emerging at the Killeany rising. A possibly passable entrance has been located but no exploration has yet been made.

Cullaun I, called Pollcullaun in a preliminary note,^{1, 2} and also known as the "Teenagers" cave. This system, as mentioned, was entered in 1951 and the main passage has now been explored for 1300 yards. The end has not yet been reached and progress is becoming harder. The general direction of the cave is at first S.S.W. and later S.W., which, if maintained, would take its water to the Killeany rising. There are fine formations in places and a number of unexplored side passages. The main stream entering from the N. after 331 yards does not come, as originally supposed, from the valley to the N. but is almost certainly the one to be found going underground higher up in a branch of the Cullaun I valley.

Cullaun II, named the "Bloody Guts" cave. The valley to the S.E. of Cullaun I contains many openings and entrance was soon gained in 1952 to quite a large system. The main passage ends at a 15 ft. deep sump in a rift-type passage at 1261 yards from the entrance used, although the cave is traceable for some hundreds of yards further to the N. up to where the stream first goes underground. There is a 20-ft. vertical just before the sump. One branch passage 420 yards long has been named

the "Year Passage" which goes back in a loop to the surface to another entrance near the first. The cave possesses many fine formations getting its name from one of the more spectacular and highly coloured ones; its general direction is S. to S.S.W., possibly running to the risings E. of Lisdoonvarna.

Cullaun III. The next parallel valley to the S.E. of Cullaun II also contains several openings, one of which has been partly covered by the farmer who has, at some time, lost a cow there; entrance should not be made here but by a nearby tree. Somewhat over 2000 yards (estimated) of main passage have been explored of which the first 1000 yards are hard and one has to go sideways due to the narrow rift and often crawl in the water beneath formations. After about 900 yards there are three independently meandering passages one above the other, only one of which has been explored. This suddenly joins a main drain type of passage down which going is very easy. After a further 500 yards it is necessary to crawl under a large slab of rock, after which the passage was paced for 600 yards with still no end in sight. Flood marks are visible in the first 1000 yards on the bedding plane roof which is about 15 ft. high. Several passable tributaries join the system in its earlier parts.

Cullaun IV. In the next valley to the S.E. from Cullaun III entrance was gained to a stream passage which was followed for 200 yards where it ended in a low bedding plane sump; by comparison with Cullauns I and II nearby it is suggested that this may well be a tributary to another system to which entry might be gained lower down the valley below where a tributary valley comes in from the E.

So far there is nothing to indicate that any of the systems unite in the explored portions, Cullaun I and presumably Cullaun Zero appear to head for the Killeany rising, Cullaun II and presumably III and IV appear to go in the direction of the other risings east of Lisdoonvarna. The systems are all of the typical "drain" type with scalloped U- or T-shaped sections and bedding plane roofs. They seem to have more and finer formations than many of the other local caves. Surveys were made of Cullaun II (The Bloody Guts Cave) and of most of the explored parts of Cullaun I (The Teenagers Cave).

A further trip will be made to the district next season and it is hoped that these systems will be fully explored and surveyed and further discoveries made.

REFERENCES

- ¹ Cave Research Group, *News Letter*, 1952, No. 39, May-June, p. 5.
² *Cave Science*, 1952, Vol. III, No. 20, p. 172.

* Map reference O.S. Ireland, Clare V S.W.