

Shorter Accounts of Caves

Pollballygoonaun.—This is an active swallet situated in a shallow valley about three miles south-east of Lisdoonvarna. The stream runs along the 236° bearing and turns south to go underground by some ash trees. The accompanying survey (*Fig. 27*) was done with an army compass, but as many of the distances were judged, no more than a C.R.G. grade 2 accuracy is claimed for it.

A low entrance leads to a rather small bedding plane chamber. The stream then doubles back on itself, but soon swings round in two well-defined bends. This is a canyon passage with a wine-glass cross section. At first one has to keep in the roof, which is very low about half way along. The walls are covered by flowstone in many places. After that one can descend about 12 ft. to the streamway, which meanders through laminated limestone with sharp flakes, undercutting the outer edges of the curves. Where the stream meets three fairly well-defined cross rifts it drops over water-slides, descending about 16 ft. to a muddy chamber 60 ft. high. A hand line is almost essential for the last water-slide (8 ft.).

This chamber is formed in a rift, partly by solution and partly by rock falls. It descends rather steeply (-20°) for 25 ft. over a muddy floor to a canal. A life-line was used from the top and 50 ft. were paid out. This canal is about 50 ft. long and more than 20 ft. deep. It is about $1\frac{1}{2}$ ft. wide at its entrance, widens to about 15 ft. and has a semicircular ending, where there is a sump.

It will be seen that the cave follows the line of the surface valley, but the water flows north-east instead of south-west.

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Pollnagollum Ballyshanny.—This is a large pothole in a north-to-south rift, about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile east of Pollballygoonaun. The water descends at the north end and our ladder pitch was on the east side about 40 ft. downstream from this. We descended 27 ft. on to an irregular boulder and mud floor. The stream follows a bedding plane on the east side of the pot from north to south, with many openings up into daylight, before turning east at a point about 15 ft. short of the south end of the pot. It then follows a slightly winding bedding plane across the joints before turning south into a delta-shaped rift, where it can only be followed for a short distance. (*Fig. 28.*)

The strike passage, however, continues a little further to the east before joining a larger north-south rift, at the bottom of which the now muddied stream is re-encountered. The water flows in a northerly direction but cannot be followed for more than 20 ft. as the rift is too narrow. The easterly strike passage appears to be of phreatic origin and is a tube of horse-shoe section, greatly modified by solution along the north-south joints. Some of these are shown in *Fig. 28*. Calcite veins of the polygonal type follow the joints in places: sometimes they are more and sometimes less soluble than the surrounding limestone walls, variations being found in the same vein.

The delta rift down which the water turns to the south is partly blocked by wood and stones and also, in one awkward place, by a projecting chert shelf. The terminal rift in which the stream flows north is probably mainly of vadose origin; this joint may have been more easily soluble than the others.

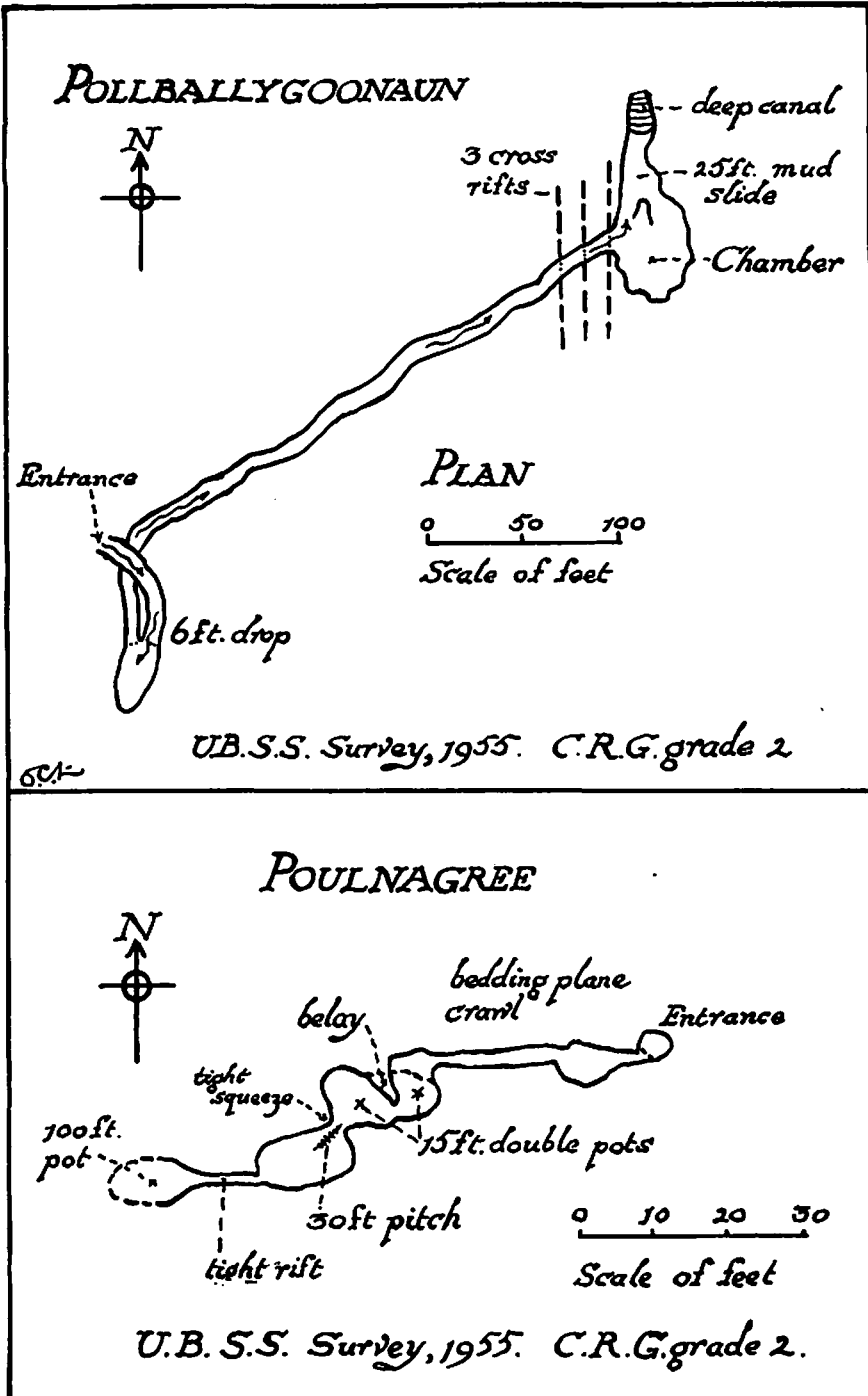


Fig. 27.