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 1½ 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.

O. C. Lloyd.

Pollnagollum Ballyshanny.—This is a large pothole in a north-to-south rift, about ¾ 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.

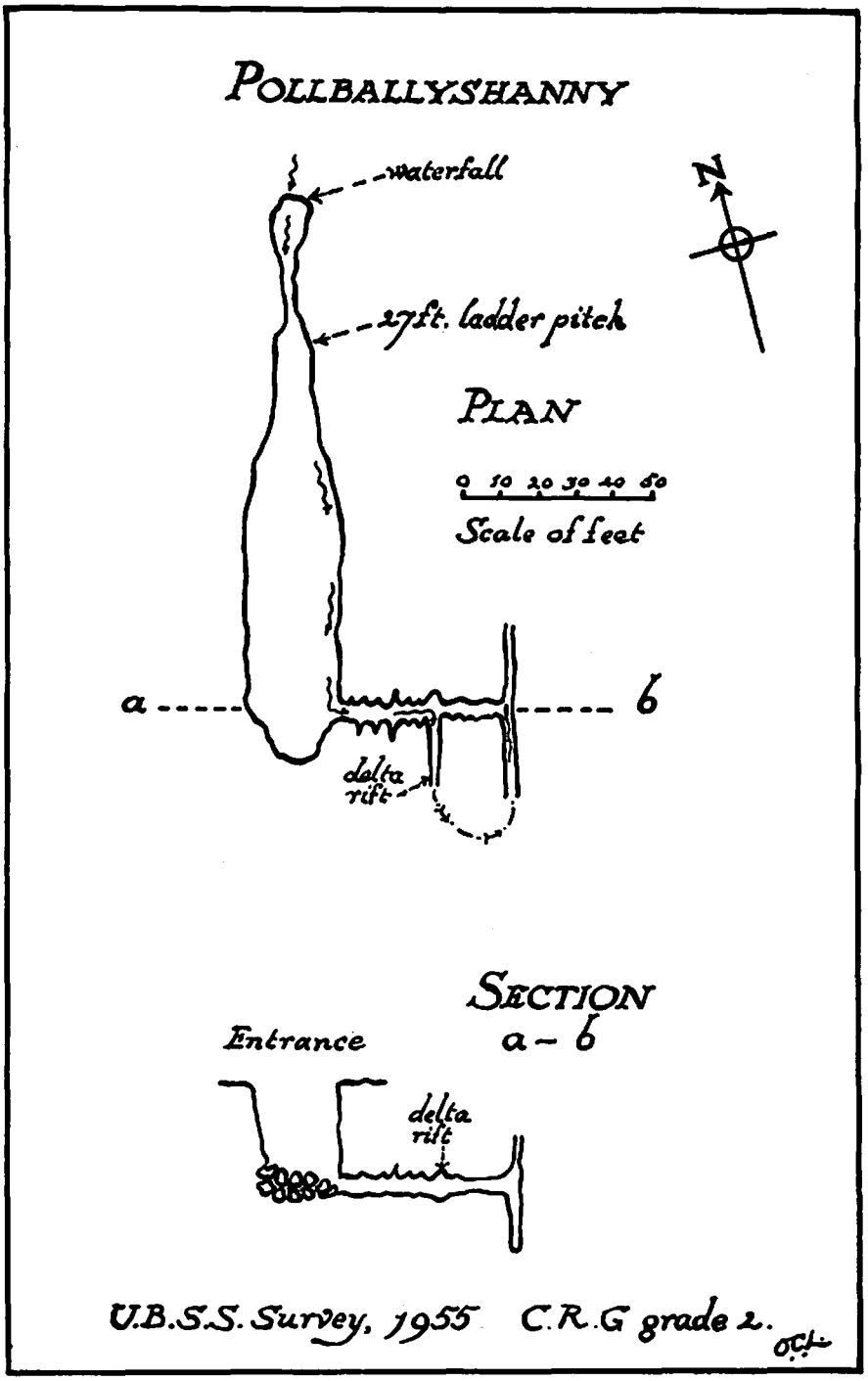
POLLBALLYSHANNY
waterfall
27ft. ladder pitch
N
PLAN
0 10 20 30 40 60
Scale of feet
a
b
delta rift
SECTION
a – b
Entrance
delta rift
U.B.S.S. Survey, 1955 C.R.G grade 2.

Fig. 28.

The entrance seems too large to correspond with the small cave explored but may have been enlarged by waterfall retreat. In the former case there may be a larger undiscovered cave; in the latter, the cave described may be the only one. It would be interesting to see the height to which the water rises in these passages during wet weather as we only observed them under exceptionally dry conditions.

O. C. LLOYD.

Ballymahoney.—Near Ballymurphy House a blind valley slopes gently westward carrying a tongue of limestone into the surrounding shales. There are several tiny impassable sinks in the flat floor of the valley which lies mainly in the townland of Ballymahoney, and at the steep, blind, western end a stream runs down from the north, turns east as it reaches the valley bottom, and sinks to form Ballymahoney Cave (*Plate* 6, *A*, G 5).

The stream disappears over a 3-ft.-high fall into a canyon passage about 6 ft. high. For the first few yards the cave turns back beneath the surface stream and its approximate direction is west. It then turns south and continues in that direction for about 100 yards, to the head of a small pot. The stream leaves the main passage shortly before the pot and is next seen falling down the far side of it. The connecting streamway is too low to follow. It is clear, though, from the abundance of flood debris, that the stream follows the main passage in time of flood.

The pot is about 25 ft. deep and can easily be climbed with the aid of a rope. At the bottom the stream goes off in a southerly direction in a passage about 3 ft. wide by 4 ft. high. This gradually becomes lower, and ends after 50 yards in a 6-ft.-wide bedding plane, which becomes too low to follow, and which is plentifully strewn with stones. There are eels in the surface stream and a small one was seen at the bottom of the cave.

C. A. WATKINS.

Noughaval Swallets and Dry Valleys.—This is the series associated with the shale/limestone junction south of the Lisdoonvarna–Ballyvaughan road southwards to beyond Noughaval. The junction is marked by the usual many minute swallets and a few larger ones. No cave system has been entered along this line but by analogy with Gragan West Cave the drainage is likely to be south close to the shale edge. In the absence of any major rising the drainage is perhaps sectional turning off east along the lines of the dry valleys. If it all continues south, under joint control, it would ultimately, presumably, feed the turlough just south of the area mapped. If so it crosses under the dry valleys, which have sharply defined margins and no glacial fill. Details of these are in the records.

At G 1 a short length of canyon passage about 8 ft. deep and 18 in. wide is partially unroofed. Poulawillin, G 2, is described by Balister below. G 9 is a large swallet and an entry to a cave might be gained here. Its length is likely to be short as 400 yards south is a dry valley, which soon becomes one with an intermittent stream. These swallets and the limestone area to the south and east may repay further investigation.

E. K. TRATMAN.

Poulawillin.—This cave was first described by Bartlett (1938) and its location is shown on *Plate* 6, *A* (G 2). The main swallet near the road is blocked by boulders and rubbish and entry is not possible there. About 50 yards to the west, however, a subsidiary active swallet, hidden by bushes, leads straight into a canyon-type passage about 6 ft. high and 2 ft. wide in its upper part, the lower part being much narrower.