

and just within the shale boundary, is a shallow, unroofed, short length of canyon passage with a small stream. The direction of flow is approximately south-east for the few feet that can be explored. Similar exposures can be seen further east with varying trends of passages, but they all tend towards the head of the Long Gallery Passage of Pollnagollum (Coleman and Dunnington, 1944). Presumably they are all tributaries, too small to enter, to that passage.

The main interest of these facts is in the drainage pattern presented. From Pollballiny the drainage is south to the Coolagh River Cave. Further north is Faunarooska, which, in its first part at least, takes a general west-north-west direction. Pollapooka, from its position and depth, probably also drains to the north-west, as its bottom is far below the upper reaches of Pollnagollum. Pollapooka must mark the extreme limit of the north-west drainage as all the streams nearby appear to run towards Pollnagollum. The north-west drainage area of Slieve Elva is thus of very limited extent compared with the southerly drainage of the rest.

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Poulnagree.—This cave lies on the north-west side of Knockauns Mountains at the junction of the shales and the limestone. The entrance, over loose stones, leads into a small chamber with a strong smell of decaying animal matter. Leading off this in a westerly direction is a rift about 4 ft. high with steep slip-off slopes, too narrow to enter; beneath is a bedding plane enlargement, which could just be entered after breaking off a flake of rock, and which had a wet muddy floor along which we had to wriggle. (Fig. 27.) After about 15 ft. there is a 15-ft. double pot, which can be climbed without a rope; the belay rock is at its head. There is just room for four people and their ladders at its foot. The ladder is then passed through a tight squeeze, so tight that a climber returning needs to be pulled through it. A life-line is essential. The squeeze leads to a 30-ft. ladder pitch, which is an enlargement of the east-west rift. It has no notable features.

The only way on from this pothole is through a very tight rift to the west, which after a few yards abruptly enters another pothole, estimated by stone dropping to be 80-100 ft. deep. We went no further. Laddering of this pitch would prove difficult because of the narrowness of the approach and because there is no natural belay point.

Across the road north-west of Poulnagree, near a concrete bath, is a cave entrance in the bare limestone. This is a steep rift in the 196° direction, which is floored by large and small loosely packed boulders. After about 25 yards the rift narrows to about 1½ ft. just over a pitch of about 30 ft. To descend this it would be necessary to go over a pile of unstable boulders, and any attempt to do so would probably bring them all down. The rift can only lead into Poulnagree and so did not seem worth pursuing.

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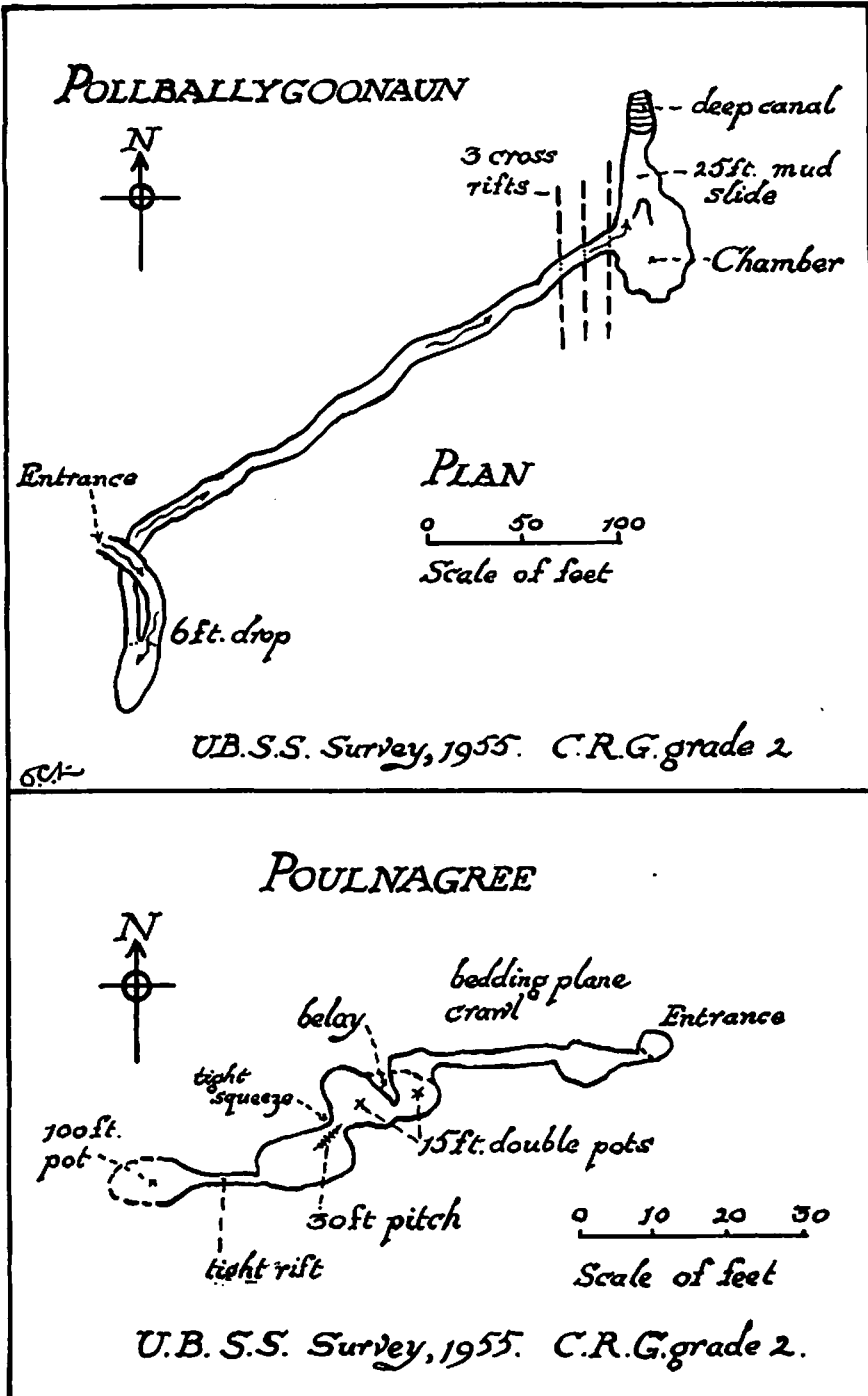


Fig. 27.