

Flint Jack's Cave, Cheddar, Somerset

(O.S. 6 in. to 1 mile, Somerset 27 N.W., N.G.R. ST 46355393)

By

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TOPOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

The site is more a rock shelter a few yards wide and deep than a cave. It lies about 50 ft. above the road on the south side a short way east of and above the ambulance and petrol station near the mouth of Cheddar Gorge. It was completely cleared out *c.* 1893 by Mr. Rowland Pavey, whose descendants still own the land. There is no means now of ascertaining how far out beyond the roof line of the shelter the platform originally extended in front, but it was probably several yards, and the slope down to the river must have been not more than the angle of rest of limestone scree, and was probably much less.

The cave was named by Mr. Pavey and is still known as Flint Jack's Cave though occasionally in recent years it has been erroneously referred to as Pavey's Cave. The real Pavey's Cave opens at road level about 50 yards below the entrance to Cox's Cave. Its use has been various including housing an aquarium, but is now closed, 1958. Pavey's Cave is of considerable size and commences as a high rift with, formerly, openings at the top. These have been closed. The cave runs very close to Cox's Cave of which it is obviously really a part, though no way through is open.

Flint Jack's Cave was extraordinarily prolific in flint implements. It also yielded human remains, and two skulls from the cave are described by Professor L. H. Wells (p. 83). No care was taken of the flints, which used to be exhibited at Pavey's Cave in unlocked cases accessible to the public, and implements were freely sold to collectors. The late Mr. Victor Painter who had much to do with the archaeological excavations at Gough's Caves, where he was chief guide, and who arranged most of the museum at those caves, was able to describe to me the collections as he saw them in his youth. He repeatedly asserted that the implements were genuine and did come from Flint Jack's Cave, were patinated in much the same way as those from the Upper Palæolithic levels at Gough's Caves, and were of the same general facies. He could not recall seeing any such items as arrow-heads of the types used in Neolithic and Bronze Age times. Davies (1926) has described some implements from this cave, and these are discussed by Dr. K. P. Oakley (p. 78) in his summary of the evidence regarding the antiquity of the skulls.