

**MSG11**

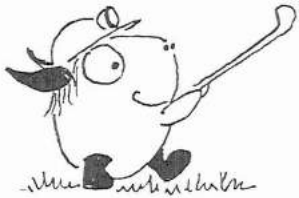
# THE ELEVENTH JOURNAL OF THE MOLDYWARPS SPELEOLOGICAL GROUP

October 1987

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## EDITORIAL



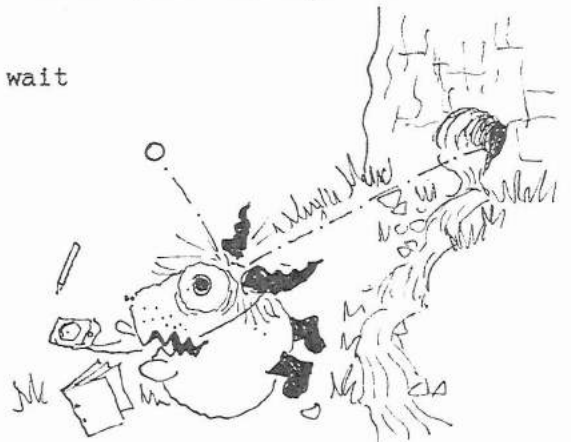
The first Moldywarp journal appeared in December 1967, fourteen months after the inception of the Group; we did about 50 copies and it had a blue card cover with a drawing of a caving ladder on it: the gestetner ink ran, smudged or faded out on most pages. I don't know if any copies survive, I haven't got one. Nine more followed - December 68, Jan 70, May 71, June 72, Easter 73, Dec 74, Aug 76 (No.8, the fat one), early 78 and late 79. The editor has promised No.11 on several occasions since then but.... Warping has not ceased but it has become a more sporadic activity; people have moved or turned to polishing cars and clipping privet hedges, wetsuits have grown mouldy on garage shelves and untended cells have refused to take charge. Despite all this, the Group still exists and members still occasionally wander little-known limestone outcrops in the Northern Dales and other off-the-beaten-track areas. A backlog of unpublished surveys has built up....so at last, spurred on by the 21st birthday dinner, here is No.11. I've acquired a word processor, which helps - nevertheless in the end production has been a more-or-less single-handed scramble, so there are plenty of typographic errors if you want to find them (look for the crawl over tumble; in the last lot of *Northern Caves* proofs there was a 'squeeze under a large clock' but they wouldn't let us leave it in).

There's a lot to be thankful for in twenty one years of caving without a serious accident or a rescue (despite some epic close shaves); the tangible end result is I suppose a large number of surveys, mostly of previously-unexplored caves; some of the caves are of the sort where a survey and description render it unlikely that they will ever be explored again.... This journal contains an index to all MSG surveys, which is really a resumé of the Group's activity. We were fortunate to 'discover' the Northern Dales at a time before their limestone had been properly looked at, at least by cavers with wetsuits, and to stumble upon (without a great deal of work) a few major finds; Smeltmill, the Ayleburn Extension, Windegg and Devis Hole Mine Caverns and Cliff Force, besides 'summer holiday' discoveries such as the Skye Caves and the County Waterford finds chronicled in these pages. All happy memories. We've had a lot of help and co-operation from caving clubs (the MSG have never really been a club as such, more a loose fellowship of like-minded individuals) and cavers such as Jack Myers who inspired us at the beginning, Martin Davies and the YURT who taught us how to survey, Dave Carlisle and the Earby Mines Research Group who put us onto the Swaledale mine caves, the late Roger Sutcliffe and the Gritstone Club (who could out-moldywarp the moldywarps in their own Northern Dales patch west of Mallerstang, as witness their 1986 Journal 6!), the Grampian Speleo Group and many others.

Looking back at previous issues, it seems customary for an editorial to hint at exciting work still in progress. Well, we've just surveyed a quarter-mile long system in West Allendale....

I hope you find the following pages worth the long wait

Pete Ryder



The Angel's Drainpipe, Stenkrith Park, Kirkby Stephen.

The Devil's Grinding Mill, a relatively short, sporting, and at times impressively wet cave by the River Eden in Stenkrith Park (a mile south of Kirkby Stephen) has doubtless been known to local people for many years, but has only received relatively recent notice in the caving press (Descent 25, Sept-Oct. 1975 and MSG J1.8 1976) In August 1975 MSG members explored the smaller but equally wet and sporting Millrace Cave on the opposite side of the Eden (see J1.8). The most interesting feature of these caves is that they are not formed in limestone but in Brockram, a Permian breccia consisting of limestone fragments set in a sandstone matrix. At Stenkrith the Eden cuts a short but impressive gorge deep into this rock, spanned by both road and railway bridges.

When the Devil's Grinding Mill and Millrace Cave were surveyed in 1975 a search of the gorge failed to reveal any further enterable caves more than a few metres long. However in June 1982 Roger Cooper of MSG, having a break from his normal pastime of visiting slip rifts, called in at Stenkrith and noted an active rising with two cave entrances a short distance downstream of the lower entrance of the Grinding Mill, which had obviously been overlooked by the surveyors.

On 25th June Roger returned with Pete Ryder, who was coaxed into his wetsuit (despite being utterly exhausted after a high speed tourist trip around a terrifyingly extensive phreatic network system near Cross Fell, a recent Gritstone Club find) and crawled into the drier of the two entrances. This proved to be a pleasant little cave 15m or so long, ending where a stream entered from a sump and flowed off down an impassably narrow rift to a nearby rising. The wet entrance was then prospected - a sideways shuffle down into rapidly deepening water, ending after 6m in a constriction formed by thin rock ledges just above water level. The lone explorer returned to the surface, vowing to return with a hammer; wider passage could be glimpsed beyond, and there was a distant rumble of flowing water. Back on the surface, the resurging stream was followed to where it sank in fissures in its bed, and the dry bed ran on to end in a narrow slot. This was deemed too tight for normal mortals, but not too tight for a lamb which could be heard piteously bleating below. Motivated by the glory of sheep rescue PFR dug his way into a hole in the riverbank nearby which seemed to be trending in the direction of the entombed animal, and struggled about 10m along a tight and narrow crawl before exhaustion finally forced a retreat. Roger meanwhile found the farmer who owned the lamb, and he was left organising a rescue attempt as the weary cavers embarked on the long drive back to Sheffield.

On 24th July, following a fruitless morning at Mousegill, an MSG party returned to Stenkrith - Alison Buchanan, Rich Gibson and PFR. The ledges forming the constriction were subjected to a little treatment with the lump hammer, and Alison was induced to attempt the aqueous squeeze thus opened up. She slid through with ease, to be followed by the remainder of the party - the squeeze was neither as tight or as wet as it had looked as if it were going to be. There followed one of those explorations which fall to one's lot all too infrequently - a winding rift with deep water which meandered on and on past various branches, and then developed into a free-flowing streamway. A pleasant crawl in the stream led to a chamber where the water cascaded down over rock shelves. A dry side rift here opened up



into a larger cavity where we could stand for the first time, amidst big fallen blocks festooned with flood debris. Down another passage dim daylight could be glimpsed through a flood debris choke. With very little work PFR was able to thrust his head out, to see the Eden flowing past and two teenage girls sitting on a boulder a few feet away - despite a polite greeting, they fled.

With a few minutes excavation, exit was possible, and the party emerged to find themselves in what was shown on the 1975 survey as a choked sink, a few yards upstream from the sinks for the Grinding Mill. Water sinking here in 1975 had been dye-tested to the little rising beside the Grinding Mill's Lower Entrance, not the resurgence by which we had entered the system - the hydrology of Stenkrith Park was obviously quite complicated!

Richard was not feeling well, so he was left sitting in the sunshine whilst Alison and PFR re-entered the cave to start surveying. When the streamway was reached, they turned upstream into unexplored passage. After about 60m of easy crawling, survey was abandoned and simple exploration resumed. Alternating crawls and sections where a semblance of walking was possible led on to where the stream came crashing down an splendid 2m waterfall, easily climbed into a tubular crawl. Passing a point where daylight streamed in through as tiny slot, the passage changed character to a bedding crawl. It was getting late, so a retreat was called and the party went home satisfied with an estimated 300m of new (or at any rate unrecorded) cave.

On Saturday 5th August we were back, with two sets of survey gear. Tom Megahy and Geoff Tryon surveyed the downstream passage through to the rising, whilst Rich Gibson and PFR continued survey upstream, past the previous limit of exploration. The bedding crawl proved to be short, with easier hands-and-knees going beyond to a small complex of dry passages and chambers. Daylight was sighted once more, and another flood debris choke, demolished with ease from within, allowed exit onto the river bank, where sun-bathing tourists reacted with surprise but not panic.

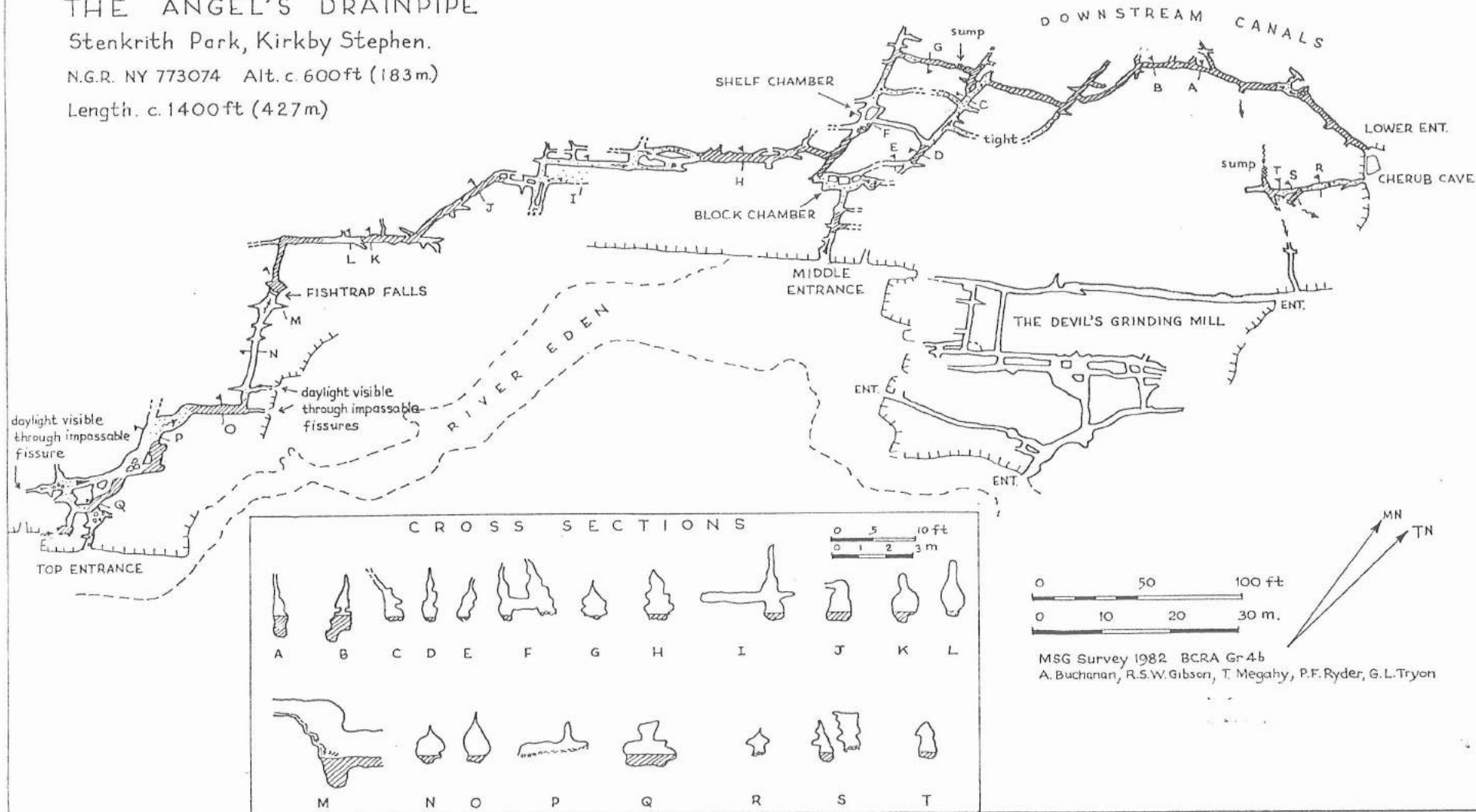
We now had what was certainly the longest cave in Stenkrith Park, with Lower, Middle and Upper Entrances - a splendid through trip. Side passages still needed looking at, and several interesting hydrological problems invited some justifiable use of our elderly packs of fluorescein. On August 28th Messrs Gibson, Megahy and Ryder returned, suitably equipped. The previous few days had been wet, and the Eden was quite high, a sizeable stream rushing into the Middle Entrance. Most of this water turned off down a narrow rift at Block Chamber, 12m in, and the main upstream pasage was found be be issuing little more water than previously. PFR crawled on downstream, in a stream sufficient to hasten his journey but which did not seem unduly dangerous. However, a few metres ahead, a real problem was met. At a 'T' junction with a slightly larger rift, a much more powerful flow was met rushing in from the right - the water from Block Chamber rejoining the main route. Further progress downstream would havebeen suicidal - 1m of fast flowing water in a 1.2m high rift. Turning round was only accomplished with great difficulty, clinging for grim death onto the walls, and a slow retreat to Shelf Chamber was made.

# THE ANGEL'S DRAINPIPE

Stenkrith Park, Kirkby Stephen.

N.G.R. NY 773074 Alt. c. 600ft (183m.)

Length. c. 1400ft (427m.)



The day was not wasted, as the increased number of active sinks and risings in the Park gave scope for dye testing, and a surface survey was carried out. On September 18th Rich Gibson and PFR, with the river low again, finished the underground survey without incident.

Total length of cave surveyed is c.425 m (1400ft), almost twice that of the Devil's Grinding Mill. The new system obviously required a name. Traditionally all too many innocent and healthy caves have been ascribed to the Powers of Darkness, so to redress the balance the cave was dubbed 'The Angel's Drainpipe' - 'Drainpipe' as it is a long linear streamway thoroughly flushed by frequent floods. It is obviously over-optimistic to think of the whole system as a new exploration, as the Middle and Upper Entrances were only closed by ephemeral chokes of flood debris, and when open would doubtless been investigated by locals. Since the exploration and survey Chris Robinson, a non-club caver from Barnard Castle, has told MSG members that he recalls exploring parts of the Drainpipe system some years ago. The Lower Entrance however did seem 'untrogged'.

#### Description of the Cave

Entering the system via the Top Entrance, the underground stream is met almost immediately flowing from low beddings, fed by sinks a few metres away in the riverbank. Following the stream one keeps right past two branch passages on the left, which unite in a silty chamber where a narrow rift rises up to where faint daylight can be glimpsed from the field above. Downstream the passage becomes an easy bedding crawl festooned with flood debris, then soon opens to a 1m diameter tube, turning sharp left where daylight enters from an impassable slot straight ahead. Another 60' of easy crawl leads to the head of Fish Trap Falls, cascading 2m down into a waist-deep pool in which frustrated fish which have bravely finned their way up the cave are often met. Small cavers may actually walk (with difficulty) along the next section of passage for c.40m to a crawl through an oxbow followed by two sharp bends. The walls hereabouts are rather sharp, so wetsuits and boilersuits suffer. Several small side passages in this area, some oxbows and some flood inlets from the riverbank, all close down or are shingled up within a few yards. Further crawling leads to a wallow through a shallow canal to a 'T' junction with a rift. To the right rises into Block Chamber, whilst to the left a short grovel in the stream debouches into Shelf Chamber.

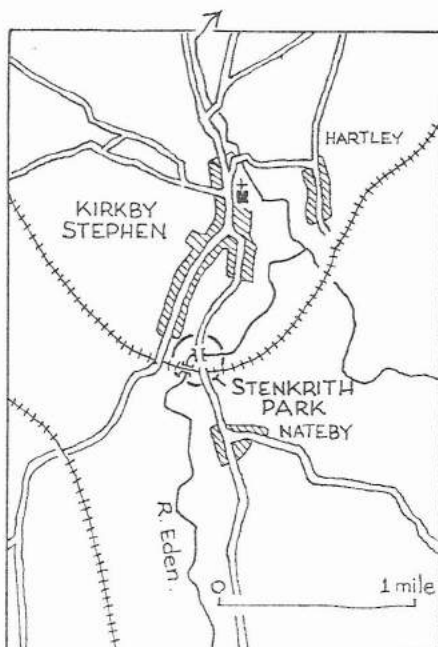
From Block Chamber 12m of easy crawl leads out to daylight at the Middle Entrance, passing two tight branches on the left. The twin rifts at the far end of the chamber both become very narrow; that on the left offers an alternative route (for thin cavers) to the downstream passages. The easier route is to follow the stream from Shelf Chamber down a crawl to a junction with a larger hading rift passage (where PFR was almost swept away). Right here is the narrow link to Block Chamber, left 12m of pleasant passage ending in a sharp turn right and the commencement of the Downstream Canals. Before this bend two passages lead off left; the survey shows both to be links with a roomy crawl which runs off 'straight ahead' in Shelf Chamber. This on occasions takes part of the stream. Neither link is known to have been negotiated - the first is a constricted gravelly crawl whilst the second would involve a short sump or duck.

The Downstream Canals are generally a sideways walk through water about chest deep, passing a few narrow side rifts which cannot be followed far. The first branch on the right becomes a constricted dry crawl and may be another oxbow linking back to the dry passages further upstream - for the very slim only! Further on, after an entertaining little obstacle formed by ledges just above the water level, there are one or two impassably narrow and waterlogged rifts to the right which are the presumed exits of the cave stream in low flow conditions, taking it to the small rising cave beside the Lower Entrance of the Grinding Mill. A scramble over a gravel bank in a wider section of rift which scarcely merits the name chamber leads to the last section of canal. In summer low water conditions this feels markedly colder than the water in the remainder of the cave, proving it to be a static backwater.

Faint green daylight may now be glimpsed ahead, and after a final watery thrutch the explorer wriggles over a large fallen block to return to the surface after around 300m of varied if never over-roomy going.

The Angel's Drainpipe is a relatively simple cave in plan. Apart from the small complex of chambers around the Top Entrance and the network of parallel rifts into which the streamway briefly divides around Shelf and Block Chambers, the cave is basically a single passage with occasional oxbows and small branch passages which soon become too small to follow. Virtually the whole plan is controlled by three joints, on  $44^\circ$ ,  $327^\circ$  and less frequently  $c.190^\circ$ . The same pattern is seen in the Devil's Grinding Mill and Millrace Cave.

The passages are generally of a rift form, tapering upwards, but a more tube-like cross section is evident in a few places, notably above Fish Trap Falls. Bedding plane development is seen in the short section of stream passage 18m from the Top Entrance and again on one side of the streamway 75m further downstream. How much these cross sections reflect conventional phreatic and vadose phases of development is uncertain - the problems of the genesis and development of caves in brockram were touched on in the J1.8 article. Collapse development is only seen in Block Chamber, formed by blockfall between two parallel rifts.



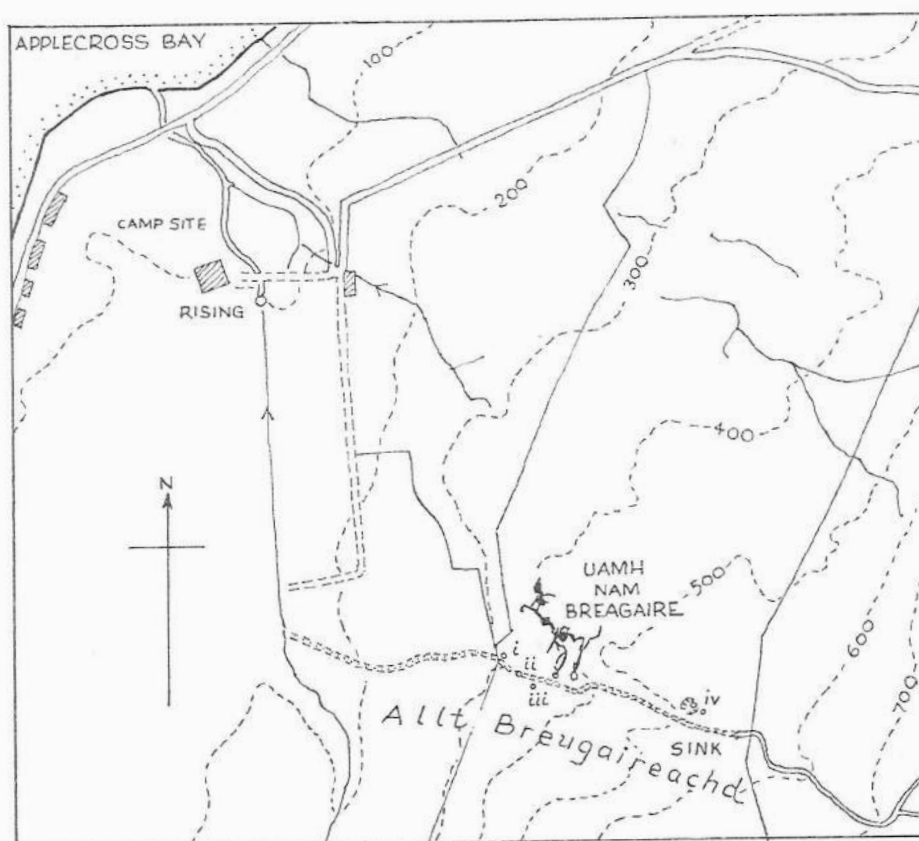
Sketch Map showing  
Location of  
Stenkrith Park



# UAMH NAM BREAGAIRE, APPLECROSS, ROSS-SHIRE

The usual MSG penchant for visiting interesting caves in unlikely and remote areas led a few Group members to a week's holiday in Applecross in early June 1982. A lengthy cave system here, developed in Jurassic limestones, had been initially explored eight years previously; an account, together with a rough survey, had been published by the Grampian Speleo. Group (1). Exploration had been dogged by access problems and controversy which also extended to the name of the system- 'Uamh nam Breagaire' (Cave of the Liar or Deceiver) is here used, as the cave is associated with the stream Allt Breugaireachd (presumably so called on account of its disappearance underground in dry weather). The name 'Uamh na Cnaimh-Geille' (Cave of the Jaw Bone) has also been used.

The intent of the group was to carry out a high-grade survey of the system and hopefully to push on into new passages. In the former aim we were only partly successful (due to reasons related below), in the latter even less so. However, enough work was carried out to be worth chronicling, and the area certainly deserves further attention.



UAMH NAM BREAGAIRE AREA. SKETCH MAP

0 500m  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile

### The Area

The Allt Breugaireachd, in wet weather when it is a real stream and flows on the surface in an undeceptive stream-like manner, runs east from the irregular lochan-studded upland of Meall Loch an Fheoir (c.300m O.D.) to join the Allt na Larach from further south, the combined waters flowing north for a further 700m to fall into Applecross Bay just north of the hotel and cottages on the coastal road. On the stream, about 30m above the bay, is the Mains of Applecross farm and campsite.

Immediately above the farm, and doubtless the reason for its site, is quite a sizeable rising from the foot of a stone wall (no solid rock is exposed in the immediate vicinity and entry appears unlikely). This is presumed to be the rising for the stream associated with the cave system.

Above this point, in the summer the stream bed is virtually dry. Following the valley south for about 500m a stony gully, initially wooded, rises steeply up to the east - this is the Allt Breugaireachd. Following it up, exposed limestone is soon met, and above the deer fence at around 100m O.D. interesting features such as solutionally-enlarged joints appear in the stream bed. One obvious flood sink here was cleared of boulders to allow access to a tiny chamber. Larger passage could be glimpsed through a low bedding but a few hammer blows led to the fall of a large roof slab and frightened us back to the surface; the sink may connect with a wet-weather inlet in the known cave.

The valley soon narrows to a gorge-like section in which the two entrances to the main cave are situated, both on the left (north) bank. The lower entrance is a small but inviting tube beneath an overhang, whilst the upper is a bouldery crater on a cliff-foot shelf well above stream level amongst a tangle of wild cotoneaster (probably *Rockspray*, *C. Microphyllus*).

In normal conditions the stream sinks in its bouldery bed to enter the cave just inside the Upper Entrance. On our visit it was very dry and the water was sinking 200m further up, just below a second fence. This point is c.700m from and 150m above the rising. Just before the sink, up the valley side on the north are a large shakehole and Poll Raineach (Fern Hole), each with a short length of passage but with little apparent prospect of dropping to the active waterways beneath (2).

### The Cave

Faulting, the dip of the strata and the Broadford Beds' rapid alternation between rubbly shales and massive limestones combine to give Uamh nam Breagaire a unique character which is both fascinating and forbidding. In places impressive, in places spectacularly well decorated, in places claustrophobic and in places disturbingly loose, it is a cave for the committed only. At over 500m long it is one of Scotland's major caves, and yet the explored passages extend less than a quarter of the horizontal distance to the rising and drop less than half the vertical distance. The dry weather route of the stream from sinks to rising is as yet unentered underground.

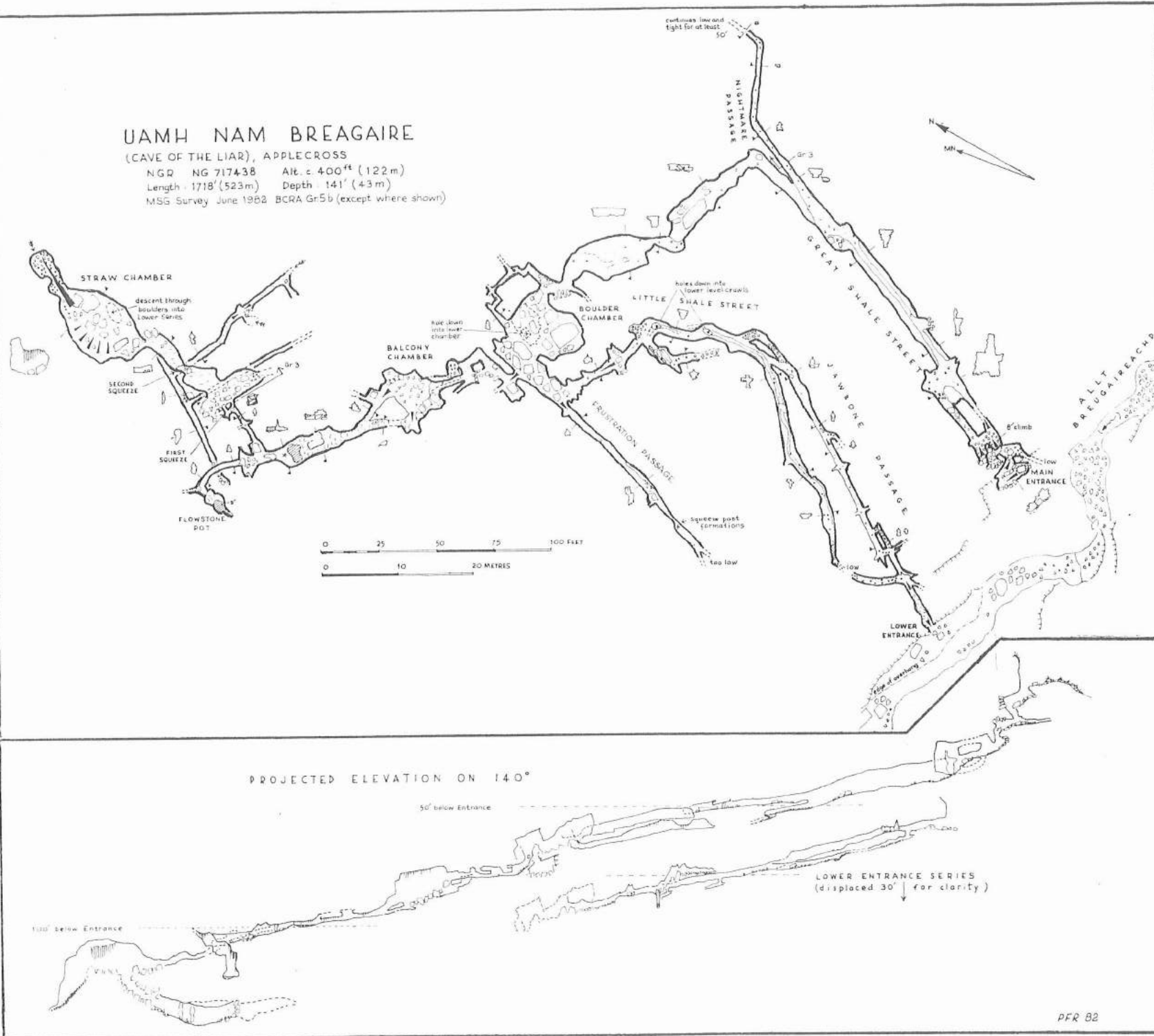
# UAMH NAM BREAGAIR

(CAVE OF THE LIAR), APPLECROSS

NGR NG 717438 Alt. c. 400<sup>ft</sup> (122 m)

Length 1718' (523 m) Depth 141' (43 m)

MSG Survey June 1982 BCRA Gr5b (except where shown)



### From the Main Entrance to Boulder Chamber

The upper or main entrance is a scramble down through big boulders into a small chamber where an impassably small 'upstream' passage (dry on our visit) heads back towards the streambed sinks. A 2.4m climb down in a rift gives access to another chamber with two parallel rifts going on, of which only the l. is passable. Thrutching round a boulder in this rift leads into quite a spacious cavern where the two rifts re-unite; downstream is an easy passage, Great Shale Street, of quite distinctive form. The flat roof is formed by a massive limestone bed but the passage beneath is cut in calcareous shales, the cross section narrowing by many small steps and shelves to a floor-level trench. At first sight the appearance is almost that of an artificial mine level.

About 40m from the entrance Great Shale Street subdivides by splitting into upper and lower levels; the floor trench goes on, bearing r., as a low tube which takes the stream in wet weather. Richard Gibson pushes this for 30m. In cross section a low triangle, the passage descends gradually over a pebbly floor; this unremittingly claustrophobic conduit was dubbed Nightmare Passage by its explorer. No definite end was reached, the current limit being as much psychological as physical.

Returning to the more commodious upper route, a square-section hands-and-knees crawl continues to a l. bend where the roof lowers and one must crawl amongst some large fallen slabs. Some still dangle alarmingly from the roof, and care is necessary. A 5m wide 1.2m high bedding chamber of very regular rectangular section follows, slanting down to a short crawl which soon opens into the impressive gloom of Boulder Chamber, a tilted cavity about 10.5m square, its floor a tumble of huge fallen slabs. Two small passages in the r. wall hereabouts link via a constricted and tortuous oxbow, whilst a hole in the floor drops into a lower blind chamber. Clambering up over boulders beyond, the roof steps up into a cross rift, and three routes diverge.

A little manhole between the boulders and the far (west) wall of the cavern is the way on into the deeper sections of the cave. Turning left however brings one to a junction; left again is a low passage heading back up-dip towards the Lower Entrance, whilst straight ahead is Frustration Passage, about 27m of rift of varying height, ending where it divides and becomes too low just after a tight squeeze past formations - this point is about 30m from the Allt Breugaireachd gorge.

### Below Boulder Chamber

The manhole drops into a short series of low crawls through a little bouldery complex, suddenly emerging on a ledge overlooking another large cavity - Balcony Chamber. Here speleothems, in the form of straw stalactites, first make their appearance. An easy climb down the l. wall soon gains the floor. On down-dip the passage lowers to a crawl amidst columns and straws and the cave scenery becomes both attractive and vulnerable. The crawl ends in a flat-out grovel through a pool in a well-decorated bedding (care!) and a step down in the floor to a little chamber, and another junction. Straight ahead a few metres of well-scalloped rift swing l. to the head of Flowstone Pot, amidst spectacular calcite flows and



stalactites. There is no need to make the 3m descent (not easy without tackle) as the Pot is blind, only a tiny rift dropping away from the bottom.

Flowstone Pot is probably the end of the cave - and quite a worthwhile end - for larger cavers, and for those of a nervous disposition. Others will return to the right branch at the last junction and an unpleasantly constricted 8 m crawl ending in a tiny chamber. Straight ahead a miniscule eyehole affords a glimpse of empty gloom beyond. Grovelling down to the l. wall of the chamber a roof rift is encountered; contorting one's body up into this, the same gloom can be seen, and reached with difficulty, through a narrow slot.

Here an explanation of the curtailment of the gr.5 survey at this point can perhaps be inserted in an otherwise impersonal topographic account of the cave. This section of the system was first visited by the writer and a smaller member of the team. Much to his surprise the former managed to pass the squeeze, whilst the latter failed. Grade 5 solo survey presents problems, and the next squeeze looked grim, so a general retreat was reluctantly embarked upon. The first squeeze however proved a different proposition in the reverse direction.....after some time, the smaller member departed to round up a rescue posse from the campsite. The abandoned lead surveyor was left with a Mars Bar and a guttering carbide lamp considering the prospect of hammer and chisel work upon the constriction. Close inspection of the area around the squeeze rendered this prospect somewhat disturbing; the roof was a great slab of limestone in the process of peeling away from the bedding above, and apparently supported by very little. This observation provided the motivation for a second attempt at the constriction (this time unaided by 'push your right knee behind your left elbow'-type advice from without). The attempt was successful, and a thankful rescuee met the rescuers just inside the entrance.

Two slimmer members of the party (Richard and John Carver) did manage to 'bottom' the cave next day, but unfortunately neither could read the battered and scratched elderly Suunto compass, so a grade 3 survey (using John's handheld Silva) had to be resorted to.

#### The Far Reaches

The first bouldery chamber beyond the squeeze has two apparent exits. To the r. is a lowering crawl, choked within a few yards. To the l. the passage drops away downhill to a second squeeze, again forbiddingly tight but this time 'instantaneous'. A rising bedding cave then bears l. through boulders before opening into the spacious Straw Chamber. Here are the most spectacular formations in Uamh nam Breagaire and perhaps the finest in Scotland - a forest of 2m straws, and calcite cascades.

The floor of Straw Chamber is another ruckle of great fallen blocks. To the r. is a crater from which a cautious spiral descent through boulder chaos regains solid ground in the narrow passages of the Lower Series. The main passage runs for c.21m more or less beneath the line of the approach passage and squeezes 9m above, ending in a boulder choke; this may be another old inlet from the surface stream. There are two branches on the l., each about 20m long. The first has two draughting leads which require

digging, the second is very tight. Both head back up-dip, and either might possibly be the end of Nightmare Passage.

The real 'end' of Uamh nam Breagaire is reached by traversing along the l. side of Straw Chamber, past the straw forest, and then descending a steep rubble slope to a draughting choke at floor level. This is only a metre or two above the deepest point reached in the Lower Series, but unlike them it is trending down-dip towards the rising. Although the distance from the entrance is not great in a physical sense, this is a remote spot in one of Britain's most remote cave systems. Were it not so, a little more labour might already have been expended in forcing a way on into whatever lies beyond.

### The Lower Entrance Series

The Lower Entrance provides an alternative route into the system at Boulder Chamber, of similar length to the main route. It is rather crawler, but has less loose stuff. The passage commences as a narrow tapering rift and continues in similar vein for 40m as Jawbone Passage, generally a crawl but never really tight. 8m in there is a low level crawl down to the l. which becomes too low after a few bodylengths. Jawbone Passage eventually emerges at a junction, with an oxbow off to the r. Turning l. here one enters an 'upstream' passage with a gradually-shallowing vadose trench to a choked bedding after c.30m. Survey shows that this runs back parallel to Jawbone Passage and ends close to the choked low-level crawl just inside the entrance.

Continuing downstream the passage, Little Shale Street, is very much a smaller-scale version of that in the Main Entrance series, an easy crawl with a floor trench that drops into a separate lower passage. The dry high level continues 8m to a second pit in the floor (dropping to constricted tubes) and then another junction is reached. On the l. is a strange oddment of passage with a climb up boulders past a slot on the r. which drops into a pool - presumably another part of the low-level complex hereabouts, all of which appears very constricted. Above the slot a shattered passage curves round to choke close to the side of Little Shale Street.

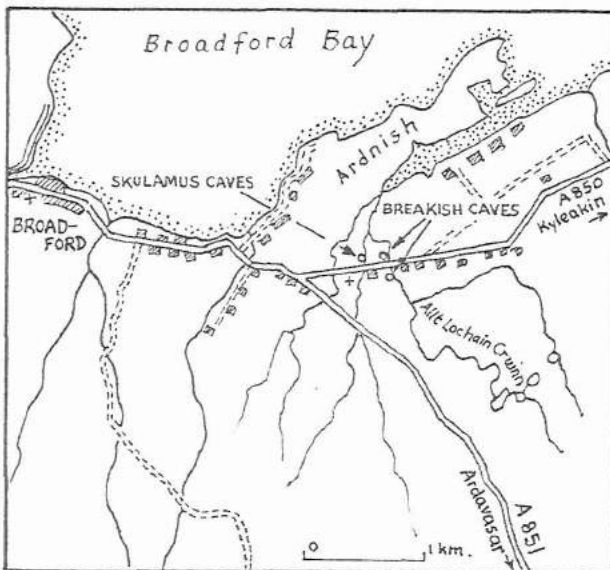
Back at the junction, a short crawl over boulders and then a slope down soon emerges in the south end of Boulder Chamber, at the junction with Frustration Passage.

Surveyed length of Uamh nam Breagaire is currently 523m (1718') and the depth 43m (141')

### BREAKISH CAVES, ISLE OF SKYE

The discovery of Breakish Caves - or rather, why they waited so long to be discovered - is rather a complicated story, and best related briefly.

On the 1971 MSG visit to Skye, the alluring inscription 'cave' was noted on the O.S. 1":1 mile map, just north of the main Kyleakin to Broadford road at NG 669229. A visit was made, and sure enough, just below the road an obvious cave entrance opened on the west side of a small stream. Skulamus Cave, 21m long, was more fully explored in 1975, and the nearby Skulamus Cave 2, 14.5m long, explored and surveyed in 1978.



It was not until 1981 that Ivan Young of the Grampian Speleo Group pointed out to us that we had never found the cave labelled on the O.S. map at all - our Skulamus Caves were in fact in the next stream valley to the west, 200m from the cave on the map. In fact there were two parallel streams here, each with an open cave entrance on its west bank just below the road. GSG had noted the entrance on the eastern stream but assumed that this was MSG's Skulamus Cave (which we had published with the eastern cave's NGR) and never went in.

On June 5th 1982 MSG members returned to Skye again and Pete Ryder, en route to the cottage we had booked to stay in at Kilmarie, stopped to check out the eastern cave. A brief underground foray in surface gear revealed that here was quite a complex little system which promised to be more extensive than the short and unattractive Skulamus Cave. A walk upstream, beneath the road bridge and up an attractive limestone gorge, located a promising-looking bedding over 100m away to the south.

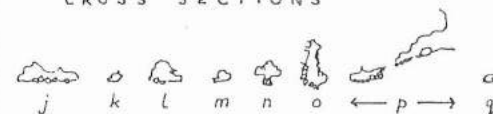
On Monday 7th June a six-strong team arrived at the 'new' cave to explore, push, survey and generally deal with the system. The cave contained quite a maze of small passages, and one quite roomy bedding chamber with some formations, but after a couple of hours all possible leads had been pushed, photographeable features photographed, and 82m of passage surveyed. Richard the Ferret, after grovelling through a tight crawl to emerge from a second entrance in the stream bank, decided he had exhausted the possibilities of the system and wandered off upstream to look at the 'promising bedding' noted two days before.

As the survey team emerged back into daylight, they were greeted by a returning Richard in exultant mood - he had dug through the bedding into a stream passage of comfortable dimensions "at least 200 ft (61m) long". The good news had already been imparted to Tom Megahey. As the surveyors arrived at the bedding entrance, grunts and groans from within advertised

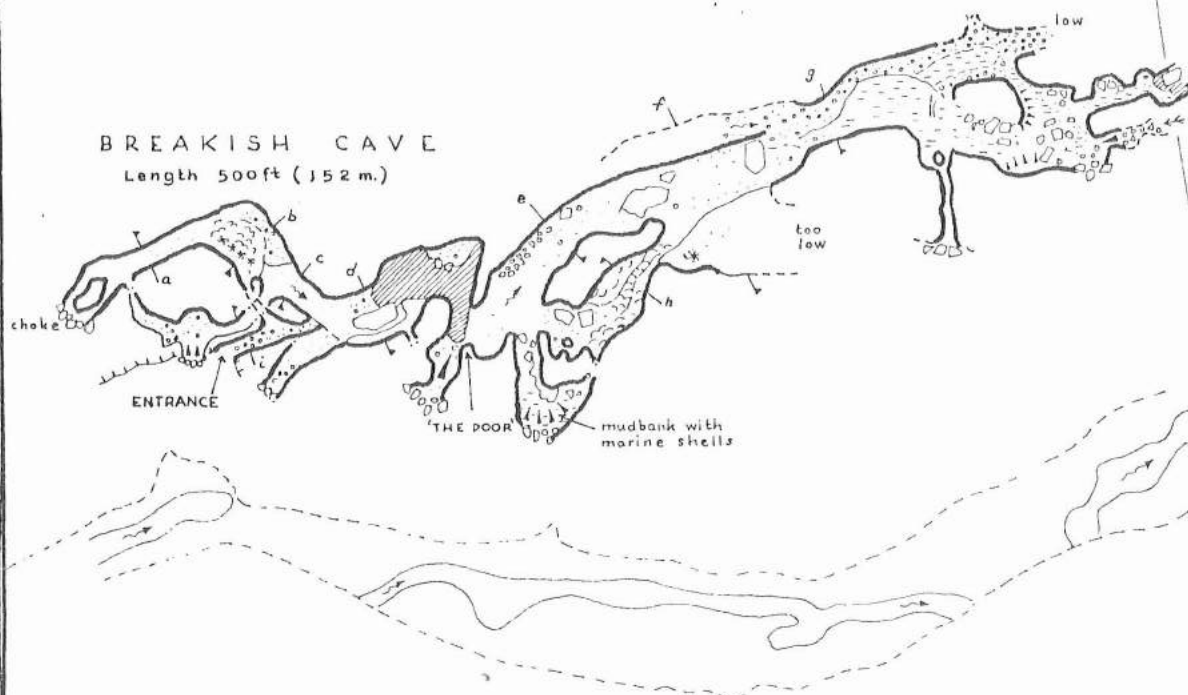
# BREAKISH CAVE, CROSS SECTIONS



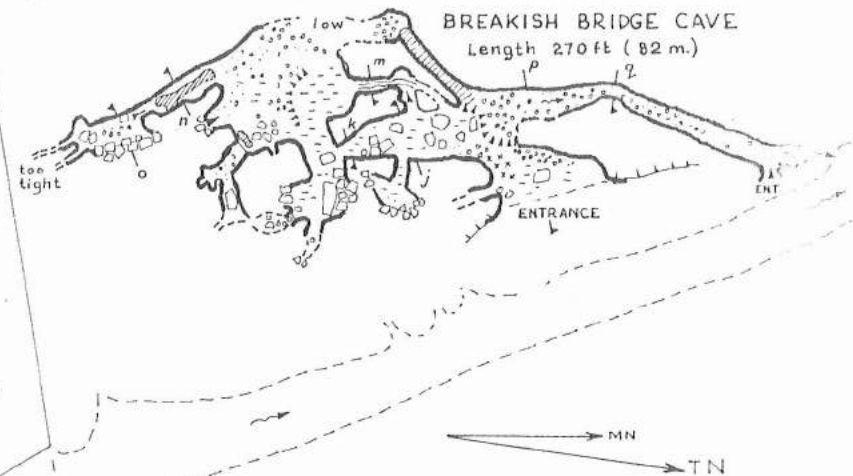
# BREAKISH BRIDGE CAVE CROSS SECTIONS



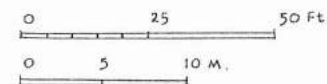
# BREAKISH CAVE Length 500ft (152 m.)



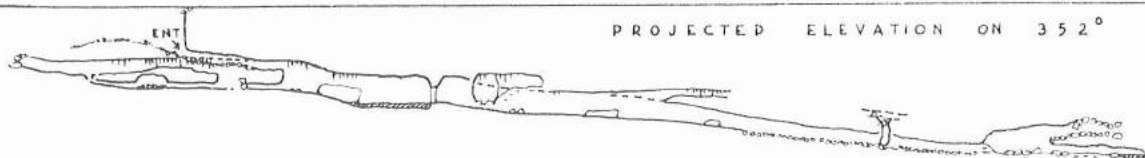
# BREAKISH BRIDGE CAVE Length 270ft (82 m.)



# BREAKISH CAVES ISLE OF SKYE NGR NG 671229 Alt. c. 50ft (15m.) MSG Survey 7-6-82 BCRA Gr. 5b.



PROJECTED ELEVATION ON 352°





the fact that he was not finding Richard's dug-out crawl to be of comfortable dimensions.

A little digging eased the squeeze, although the final thrutch from which one emerges at roof level into the 1.5m high streamway remains an amusing obstacle. Richard had not exaggerated - 152m of passage in all were surveyed in the new cave, which was full of interesting features and very well decorated in parts. Several happy hours were spent surveying and taking photos.

The stream beside which the caves are located, the Allt Lochann Cruinn, appears to divide the townships of Skulamus and Breakish - the sign on the bridge has one name on each side. The 'new' caves, although actually on the Skulamus side of the bridge, were dubbed Breakish Cave (the longer upstream system) and Breakish Bridge Cave. The first is certainly a new exploration; Breakish Bridge Cave is obviously well known to local children, although some of its passages (e.g. the tight crawl to the Lower Entrance) may not have been traversed previously.

#### Breakish Bridge Cave. Description.

The main entrance is a 1.2m high arch about 6m west of the stream, dropping into a vestibule strewn with domestic rubbish (mostly old ironmongery) and a short crawl through into a 1.2m high chamber from which no less than five passages lead off.

On the r. is a slope down into a pebbly crawl, becoming tight, which continues for 18m to the Lower Entrance, a slot emerging beside the surface stream. In wet weather this is obviously an active streamway, taking a flow from the 'straight ahead' passage, a wet crawl 7.5m long to a low bedding which could probably be pushed, with a little digging, to link with the downstream crawl from the Main Chamber.

Turning l. one enters a 3.5m wide 1m high chamber with smaller tubes to r. and l. The latter runs for 2.4m to a small chamber ending in a boulder choke. The r. hand tube is a crawl turning l. into the Main Chamber, which can also be reached by a short crawl at the far end of the first chamber, which breaks out into a roomy passages leading to boulder chokes on the l. and the Main Chamber on the r.

The Main Chamber is a bedding cavity roughly 7.5m square in plan, ranging in height from 1m to 1.5m, with some attractive stalactites near the north-west corner. The stream crosses this corner of the chamber, flowing into a low bedding on the r. which soon becomes impassable. The upstream route is an attractive crawl through a pool and up into a small 2m high chamber with boulder ruckle forming the l. wall and impassable fissures straight ahead.

Back in the Main Chamber, a small passage to the south of the stream inlet also heads west but closes in after a squeeze over a boulder.

### Breakish Cave. Description.

The entrance bedding, initially 1.5m wide and 0.5m high, descends gently to a short squeeze ending in a 1m drop to the floor of the stream passage.

The downstream passage is here 1.5m high and 3m wide, passing a large fallen block to a pool where the passage bends r. and then l. to 'The Door', a rectangular opening where the stream has cut through a mineral vein. On the upstream side of the vein is a short side passage on the r. to a boulder choke.

Beyond 'The Door' the main passage slopes downhill over a polished rock floor, and two more side passages enter on the r. -the first is a 5.5m crawl to a small chamber with a clay bank that contains many marine shells. Although 'fresh' in appearance these must be of considerable age as the cave is now 15m above sea level. The second side passage is the upper end of a long oxbow which is packed with good formations, and thus not a recommended route.

The downstream passage remains 2.5 - 3m wide, but the roof gradually lowers. Where the long ox-bow re-enters, there is a floor level bedding on the l. and another at roof level on the r. Another 15m of steadily-lowering crawl leads to a junction. The main cobbly bedding bears l. but on the r. is a narrow rift pushed by Richard for 6m to where it communicated with an impassable high-level bedding which probably joins up with that seen further upstream. To the l. of the rift is a descending sandy crawl. The main bedding, still lowering, continues for a few metres to another junction where a branch on the r. leads through to a small chamber also reached by the sandy crawl. Beyond this junction the bedding soon becomes too low. From the small chamber a third passage descends into a pool with a large dropped block - a definite impassé. Back in the chamber again a hole on the r. leads into a boulder ruckle with a view along a draughting crawl which might be passage with strong nerves and a little digging. The survey shows that this might link up with a similar ruckly area in Breakish Bridge Cave about 15m away. Linking the two caves would give a single system over 250m long, but the effort might be attended by too much risk to make it worthwhile.

At the downstream end of Breakish Cave traffic can be heard passing overhead, on the main coast road. Flood debris in the low passages in this area suggests that the cave might not be a place to visit in wet weather.

Returning upstream to the point at which the entrance crawl breaks into the stream passage, the upstream passages are interesting but of no great length. After 5m of 1.5m square passage with good formations, the floor suddenly steps up and the passage widens to a bedding full of columns and gours. This was passed, with extreme care, by one members of the party, to enter a metre-square passage ending after 8m in boulder chokes which the survey shows to be very close to the surface. Just before the step in the floor an 0.3m high floor-level bedding goes off on the l., bending r. before opening after 6m into a little chamber 0.7m high, with a boulder slope on the l. which again must be very close to the surface stream bank. The bedding crawl goes on for 5m to end in an impassable slot opening

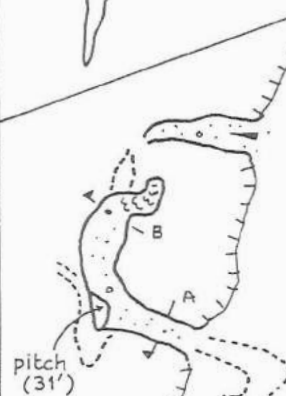
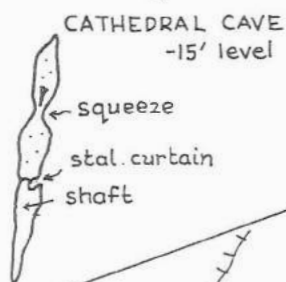
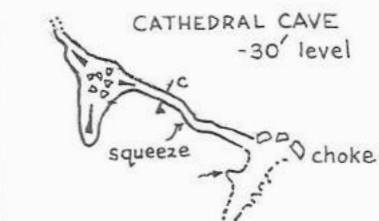
# BRASGYLL CAVES

Bont-newydd, Clwyd, North Wales

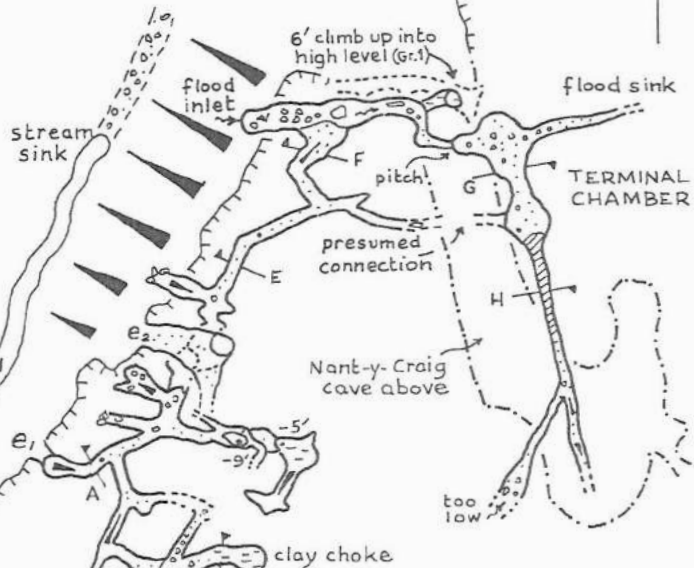
NGR SJ 006.713

Alt. c. 400'

M N

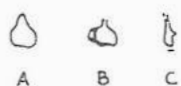


CATHEDRAL CAVE  
length 80ft  
depth 33 ft.



## CROSS SECTIONS

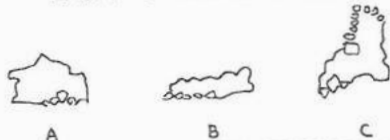
### CATHEDRAL CAVE



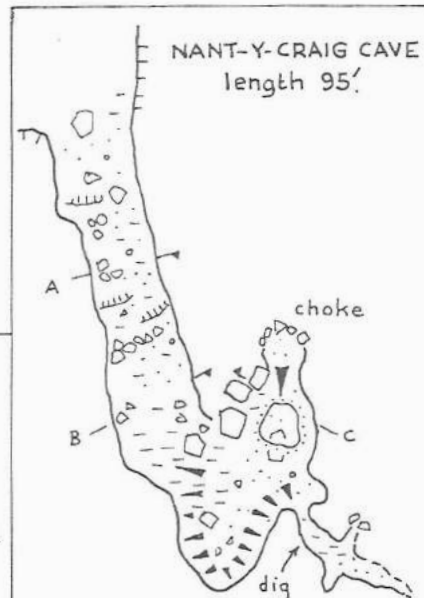
### JOCK'S POT



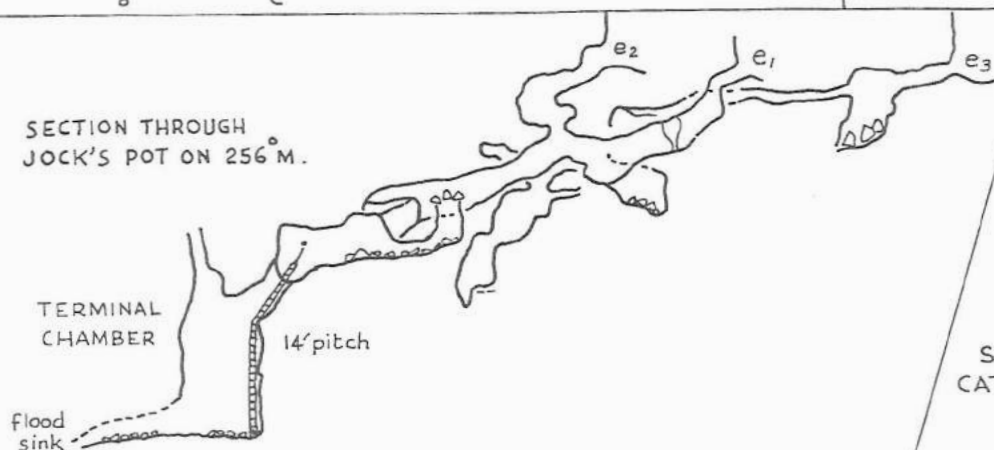
### NANT-Y-CRAIG CAVE



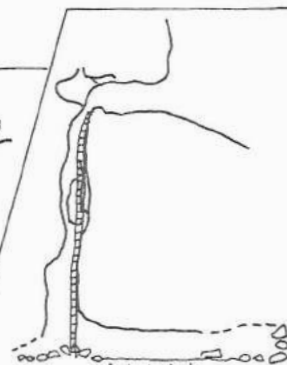
MSG SURVEY 23 8 80  
BCRA Gr.4-5b.  
SCALE (all drawings)  
0 25 50 Ft.



## SECTION THROUGH JOCK'S POT ON 256 M.



## SECTION THROUGH CATHEDRAL CAVE ON 90°



upwards into the floor of the passage between the decorated bedding and the final upstream chokes.

Visitors to the cave should take great care to avoid damaging the formations, which although not as spectacular as those in the Allt na Pairte Cave make the upstream sections of the streamway very photogenic. Like the Allt na Pairte system, Breakish Caves are formed in Jurassic limestone, whereas the majority of the caves of Skye are in the Cambrian Durness Limestone.

From Scotland to Wales.....

#### Brasgyll caves, Bont-newydd, Clwyd

Until a few years ago most of the known caves in North Wales were situated in the limestone outcrops towards the coast, between Rhyl and Llandudno. None of these caves was more than a few hundred feet long. Much larger systems have now been found by the North Wales Cave Club and others in the limestones a little further south and east. In 1980 Moldywarps' attention was attracted to Brasgyll Caves, in the first area, on the dual grounds that no proper published account or survey of them could be found, and that Cath Millar had friends who would put us up nearby. We didn't find any significant extensions but had a pleasant day of pottering and surveying... . There are three caves in the Brasgyll gorge: Jock's Pot is the longest, at 122m long and 14.5m deep, with three entrances, pleasant clean-washed tubular passages and a 4.5m pitch (rather tight at the top) into the lofty Terminal Chamber. Two young lads who live nearby came underground with us, and squeezed through the very tight sandy link between entrance 3 and the main cave - this had probably not been passed before, so we called it 'Simon and Oswin's Connection' after them. Above the Terminal Chamber but apparently unconnected with it is Nant-y-Craig Cave, dry and roomy, and 29m long. Across the gorge is Cathedral Cave with a 9m ladder pitch alongside a stal curtain, to a tight crawl and loose ruckle; total passage length is only 24m. One gets the impression that there must be more passage waiting to be found in Brasgyll.....

.....and from Wales to Ireland

## IRELAND 1981

A very small group of moldywarps visited County Kerry for the second time in September 1981; despite small numbers (John Carver and Pete Ryder did most of the caving, with some assistance from Elaine Ryder and Jayne Elliot) some useful work was achieved - without knowing it we came within a hairsbreadth of making a very major find indeed! Our first week was spent at Killarney, looking at caves on the Muckross peninsula as well as walking in Macgillycuddy's Reeks and visiting local antiquities. A second week was spent at Ardfer, NW of Tralee, investigating a separate limestone area which has since provided quite a number of cave finds.

### Killarney Area: The Muckross Peninsula

On a previous visit to the peninsula in September 1979 a few small caves had been explored and the potential for many more noted (MSG 10 35-7). Subsequent to that visit an intriguing reference in a local leaflet describing the 'Mossy Woods Nature Trail' was noted, referring to an underground water flow through the peninsula from one lake to the other, the direction of which was dependant on the prevalent wind.

This suggested that quite a lengthy cave system might await discovery. However, when the site described in the leaflet as showing this flow was located it proved to be a pool beside the path, in which some ebb and flow was apparent, but no more than the normal wave movement on Muckross Lake, not visible from this point but only 25m away to the south beyond a thin limestone ridge, the base of which was honeycombed with passages at lake level. There was absolutely no evidence of there ever being a flow 'inland' from this point; a small stream from the peninsula marshlands in fact flows south into the lake through the cave system, which was named:

### Kilbeg Bay Caves

A passage-by-passage description of this complex cave would be tedious. Most of the system consists of roomy galleries with waist-deep water, with dim daylight visible almost everywhere from the numerous entrances on both sides of the ridge. At east and west ends of the system were smaller more crawly passages, marking quite definite limits to the cave development. The largest chamber, at the foot of a boulder slope from the main 'inland' entrance, is quite impressive and extends the whole width of the ridge. Total surveyed passage length came to 366m (1200'). As noted on our previous visit quite complex 'shoreline' caves are found along much of the south side of the peninsula, Kilbeg Bay Caves being no more than an unusually well developed example, its development perhaps aided by a small flow of water from the north.

The lake level, and with it the water level in the caves, seems to vary considerably. During our week at Killarney, which contained some quite heavy rain following a long dry spell, the lake level rose around 0.6m.



This might mean that much of the cave is sumped off during the winter months,

### Marsh Edge Caves

From the nature trail alongside the 'inland' entrances to the Kilbeg Bay system, the edge of the limestone ridge can be followed to both east and west. To the west, c.100m from the main caves, an obvious entrance was found dropping into a wet passage in which the water feels noticeably colder than in the Kilbeg Bay system, i.e. this is presumably 'inland' drainage rather than the warmer lake water, although actual differences in level must be slight. About 20m of small passage were explored (see sketch plan) before the way on became very small and nasty, although perhaps still passable. The limestone edge beyond this point was not looked at.

Walking east from the nature trail, several features of interest were noted as the edge of the limestone knoll swings NE and becomes a cliff 10-20m high. The stream which flows through Kilbeg Bay Caves appears to be fed in part by drainage from a marshy area and in part from a pair of risings. One of these was from a low cave, tight and unpleasant looking. Near the second an open hole dropped into a similarly constricted passage, perhaps too tight.

Continuing NE, several small holes were passed at the foot of the crag - the first few were not fully investigated, but further along it was obvious that negotiable passages were running into the knoll, and PFR grovelled underground to explore a series of wet and crawly passages generally paralleling the cliff face, with a whole series of entrances (through which Jayne, who had wisely remained on the surface, was able to follow his subterranean progress). The system extended as far as the north end of the knoll, to within a few metres of the tarmac road, where some drier hands-and-knees passage turned back south again to a low wet section looping back to form a 'round trip' at one of the entrances previously passed.

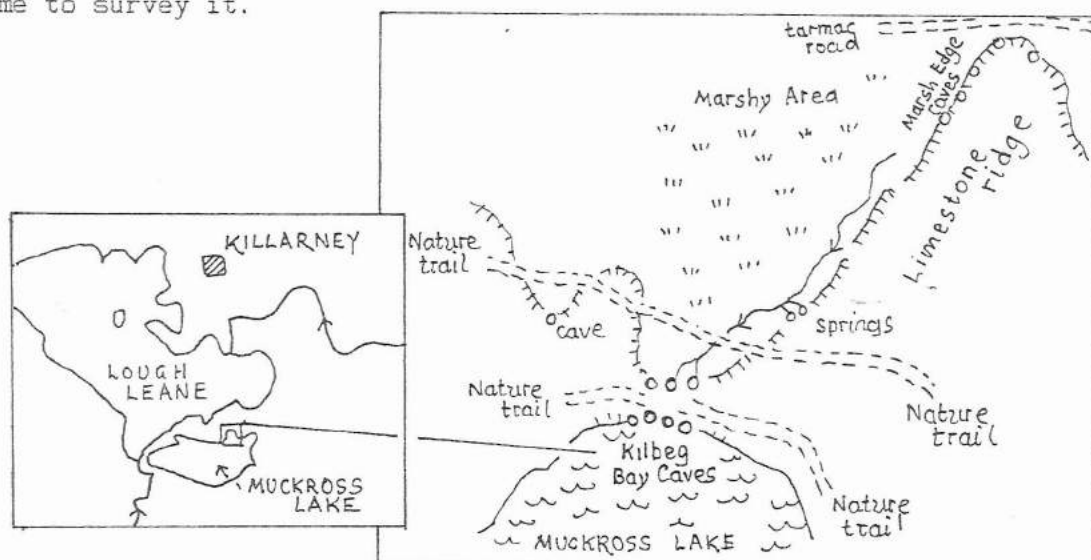
The cave is of a type here termed for convenience a 'knoll side cave'; these seem to be common on the peninsula. They appear to be formed by water flowing along the edge of the marshland areas which lie between the wooded knolls and ridges of limestone. A thorough survey would doubtless reveal many more such caves, although their nature would probably be rather uninspiring.

### The Crag Cave System, Castleisland

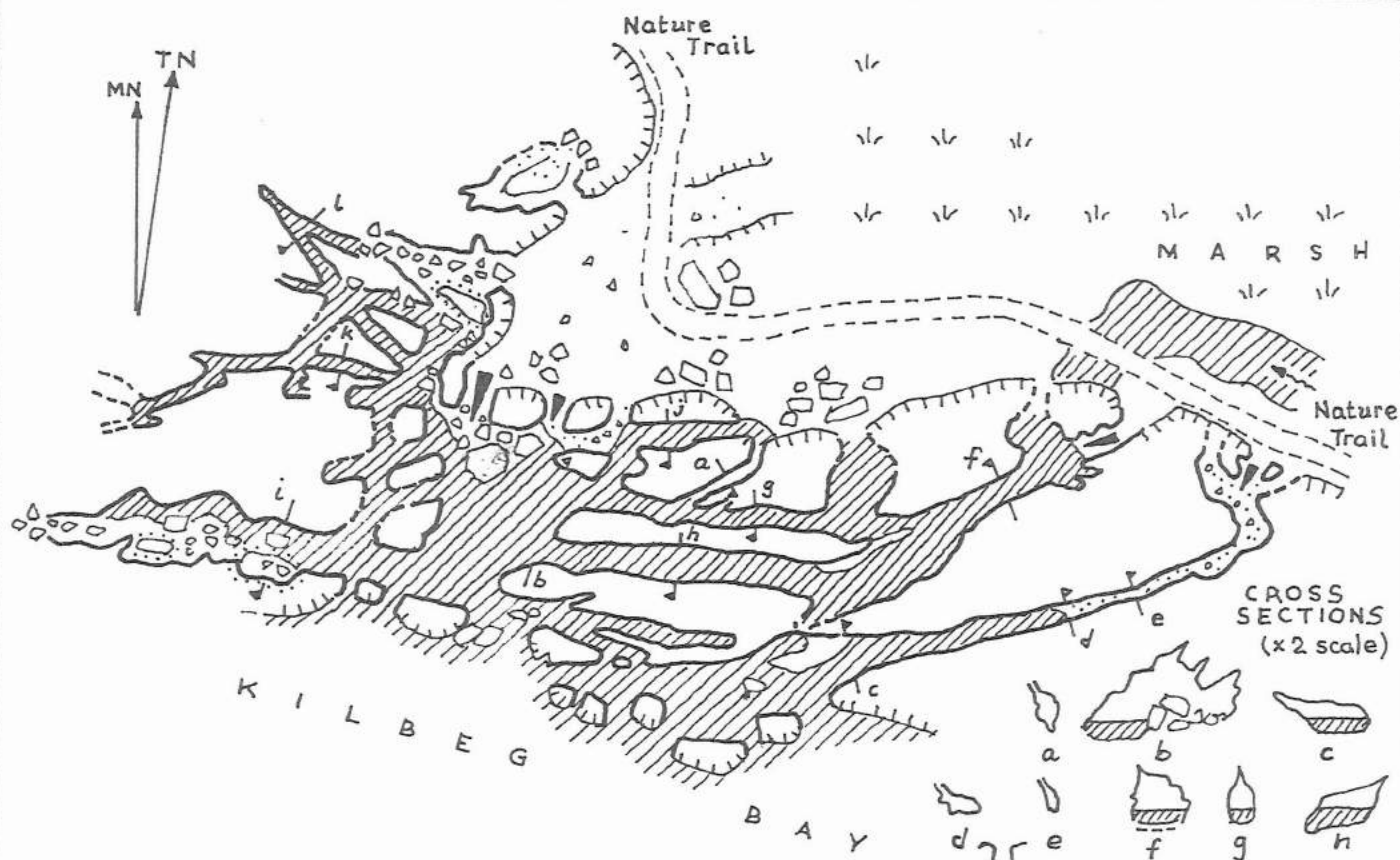
References in Coleman's 'Caves of Irfeland' led us to the Crag House area, NE of Castleisland and to an obvious open cave in a roadside quarry. This was obviously a system of some importance: local enquiry suggested that it had been partly explored but that 'outside cavers' had not visited it. 602m (2000') of passage were then explored and surveyed in the main system and then a choke dug (from the surface) to give us access to a previously

untrogged lower section of the same streamway, 256m (850') long. What we did not know was that John Gunn and other cavers had 'found' and surveyed the main system only two months before. John has published his account and survey in the Irish Naturalists Journal 20, 1982; prior to hearing of this the MSG survey appeared in 'Caves & Caving' 15, 1982. Morals can be drawn from all this - even detailed 'local enquiry' may not be all that reliable in Ireland.... The two surveys correlated remarkably well, which must be some consolation for both sets of surveyors. In 1983 Martin Farr dived the terminal sump of the main cave to find a very major extension with fine formations, the sump being soon bypassed by a short dig, and in 1985 John Gunn engineered an underground route between the main cave and the MSG's lower cave, which has also now been connected with the rising after some digging to lower water levels; by 1985 the length of the Crag System stood at 3810m (12500') making it the eighth longest in Ireland. Accounts and surveys of the progressing exploration of Crag Cave and other finds in the area (the Vale of Tralee karst) have appeared in 'Caves & Caving' and it is unnecessary to further chronicle them here.

For the MSG record, the 'lower cave' is now known as 'J.K.'s Cave', the name we had initially given to the whole system after talking with locals, 'J.K.' being a former landowner. We also found and explored what is now termed 'Crag Quarry Cave' (Caves & Caving 17, Aug. 1982, p.28) but did not have time to survey it.



Sketch Maps (not to scale) showing location of Kilbeg Bay  
and Marsh Edge Caves on the Muckross Peninsula

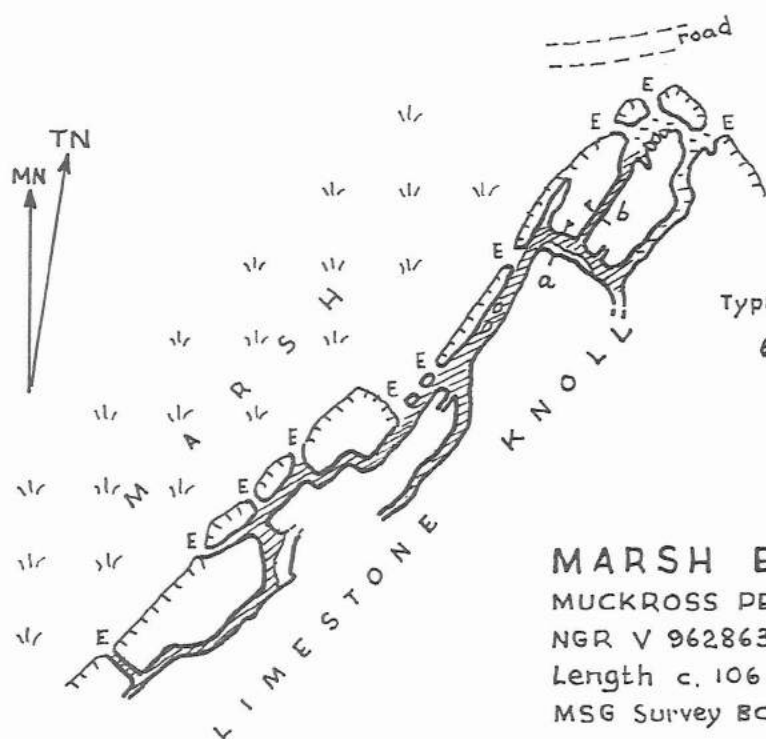


## KILBEG BAY CAVES

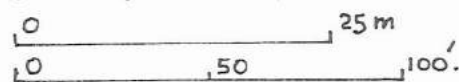
MUCKROSS PENINSULA, KILLARNEY

NGR V 960 861 Alt. 67' O.D.

Length 366 m (1200') MSG Survey BCRA Gr 4b 14/16-9-81.



SCALE (both surveys)



Typical Cross Sections  
(x2 scale)



## MARSH EDGE CAVES

MUCKROSS PENINSULA, KILLARNEY

NGR V 962863 Alt. c. 80' O.D.

Length c. 106 m (350')

MSG Survey BCRA Gr.2 (surface Gr.4) 14-9-81

## IRELAND 1983

### The Dungarvan-Cappoquin Area, County Waterford

The existence of natural caves in this relatively low-lying limestone area has been known for many years; a number are listed by Coleman (1). This account and others referenced therein concentrate on the archaeological interest of the sites, and are somewhat lacking in detail as regards the extent and morphology of the caves themselves.

The area was visited by a small MSG group in September 1983, at the suggestion of Gareth Jones. The party stayed at a cottage in Cappoquin. Despite some difficulties in locating cave entrances, several systems were explored and surveyed. Most of the underground work was carried out by Franceen Brown, Richard Gibson, Jon Stamp and Pete Ryder.

### The Ballynacourty Area

Enquiring at the Old Mill, we were directed to several local cave entrances. Ballynacourty Quarry Cave (X 195954) was located 4.5m up in one corner of a disused quarry about 400m east of the Old Mill. Running water is said to be audible here after heavy rain. The cave is a short length of ancient heavily-infilled phreatic tunnel ending in chokes; it was surveyed and proved to be 130' (39.5m) long.

Tip Cave (X 197953) in a cliff face on the south side of a lane c.230m east of the quarry, proved to be an initially roomy passage leading to a boulder collapse around tree roots; a crawl on the left was pushed to a choke. Length 14m. A stream sink on the north side of the lane nearby looked thoroughly choked, as did a second (that of the mill stream) south of the Old Mill. In the next field to the west of this another stream entered Killeeshal Swallet (X 192953); an entrance 2.5m wide by 1.2m high looked promising but the stream was soon lost in the floor and the bouldery crawl beyond choked 15m in. A few metres to the east Richard dug open a low entrance and explored 12m of small passage to a choke.

A more interesting cave was shown to us at Ooanagaloor (Coolanav) (X190951), strangely sited in a dense bramble thicket on a hilltop. Inside the thicket, itself quite a formidable obstacle, is a spectacular pit. Cautious descent of a steep slope littered with bones and animal remains leads down to the level floor of a flat-roofed chamber 30m across and 10m high. On the left is a rift passage ending in a choke after c.30m, and on the right a tiny stream flows into a constriction which we bypassed by a short dig to rejoin the stream in a chamber with an 8m aven; the stream promptly disappeared into an impassable slot. Big passages obviously exist here somewhere, but the problem is how to enter them. The best possibility may be down through the boulder choke which floors the 30m long rift.

### The Whitechurch Area

The remainder of our week in Waterford was occupied by a pair of very interesting caves in the grounds of the Whitechurch House Hotel. In a fenced clump of trees to the right of the hotel drive is another Ooanagaloor, with a rather similar gloomy pit-like entrance to its nearby namesake. In the

woods further to the right we found two further open pits dropping into Brothers' Cave, which has a third entrance in an overgrown quarry over the boundary wall to the south. Grid. ref for both systems is X156954

### Brothers' Cave

A fairly lengthy account of the discovery, exploration and excavation of Brothers' Cave (which takes its name from the two sons of Lieut-Colonel Forsayeth, who first found it) has been published (2) but unfortunately without any plans or illustrations whatsoever.

The cave consists of two distinct sections. The two pits in the wood and the broad gallery from the quarry entrance all unite in a large and complex chamber with much evidence of the Forsayeths' archaeological excavations in the form of packwalls etc. From this chamber two routes lead into a lower-level series of rifts and small passages. There are some good but 'old' formations in the passage from the smaller of the two pits, which is climbable with the aid of a handline. Total surveyed length was 225m (739ft). Not all this passage would have been accessible prior to the archaeological diggings in the first decade of this century; both pit entrances were completely sealed prior to this work.

### Ooanagoloor

This proved the most interesting 'find' of our expedition. The Lieut-Colonel's work here seems to have been confined to the twilight zone of the great chamber into which the entrance collapse drops. Several passages lead off from this, some narrow rifts which trend towards the lower series of Brothers' Cave. Forsayeth proved a smoke connection here and the unexplored gap is only about 10m, but the passages which might provide the connection are small and badly shattered.

The most significant passage trends east from the entrance chamber and is a multi-level phreatic development, the different levels uniting in a broad bedding passage which seemed to get too low after about 20m. Richard managed to squeeze over a boulder in a narrow rift passage on the left here, and the remainder of the party soon saw his lamp ahead through the 'too low' section - this was only a couple of metres long, and a little entrencher work saw us all through.

The virgin cave beyond possessed many interesting features. Complexes of low and small passages (a little digging was necessary in a couple of places) and quite roomy chambers alternate, with some dramatic displays of formations. Occasional pits in the floor drop about 8m to pools which we assumed were at local saturation level. Virtually everywhere the clay fill is deep and undisturbed; a great number of bones lie on the fill or are buried in it (as we found when we had to skim off a few cm in order to pass constrictions); a few samples were retrieved and proved to be skulls of pig and cat, with one sawn cow bone pointing to human occupation at some period.

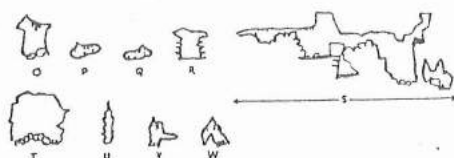
After the second decorated chamber a rather obscure hole drops into an attractive bedding crawl which, after another chamber with phreatic roof



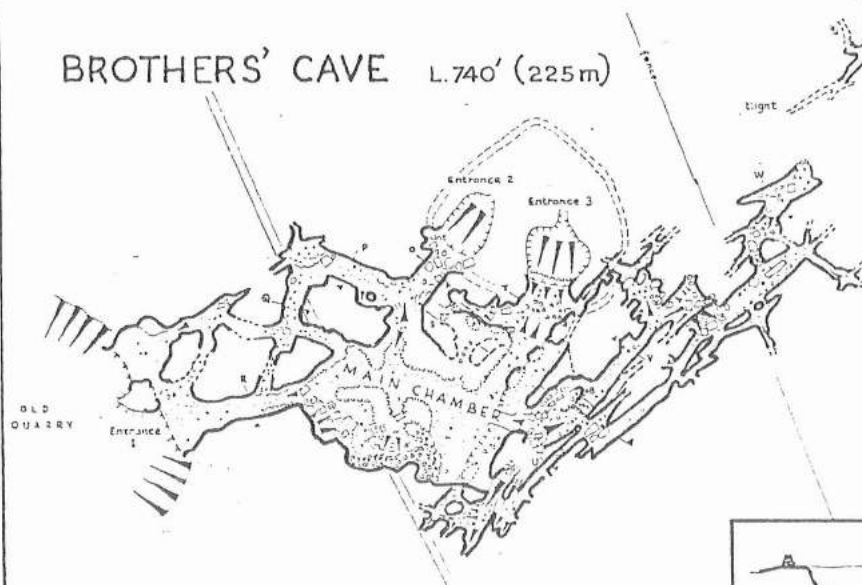
PROJECTED SECTION OF BROTHERS' CAVE



CROSS SECTIONS



BROTHERS' CAVE L. 740' (225m)



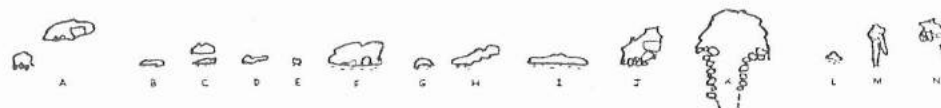
CAVES AT WHITECHURCH HOUSE  
CO. WATERFORD, EIRE NGR X156954  
MSG SURVEY BCRA Gr. 4-5b SEPT. 1983

HOTEL DRIVE

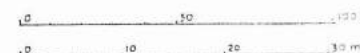
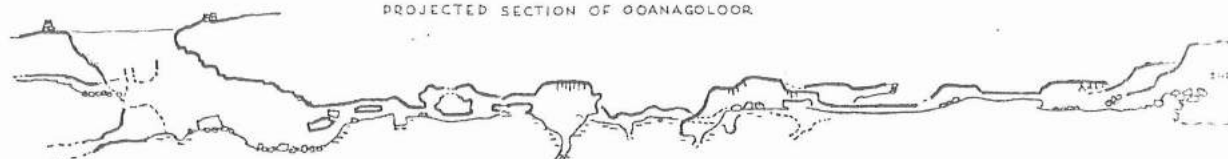


OONAGOLOOR L. 1,050' (320m) D. 40' (12m)

CROSS SECTIONS



PROJECTED SECTION OF OONAGOLOOR



pendants and a stalagmite flow, finally emerges into a larger cavern 2-3m high with a cracked mud floor and tree roots dangling from the roof. Two routes to the r. communicate with a second and larger chamber with a floor of angular debris and a general air of instability. This is only the antechamber to a far more alarming scene; a crawl up a scree slope leads out onto a balcony overlooking a great gloomy void, Sheol. Huge slabs are peeling from a shattered roof whilst the floor is riven by a chasm edged by walls of tottering boulder ruckle; a scent of freshly-broken limestone hung on the air. The only possible way forward was along a ledge against the l. wall. Richard sallied forther but soon returned white and shaking - he had looked back and realised what he was walking over! PFR set out and part of the boulder 'floor' shifted a few cm beneath him. A discreet and quiet retreat was made.

Thus far, Ooanagolloor has provided 320m (1000ft) of passage. The void of Sheol - estimated dimensions at least 30m long, 10m wide and 12m high - is comparable in scale with the Entrance Chamber. The collapse which produced the present access to the cave took place at some fairly remote date, and all now seems stable in its vicinity; Sheol seems to be on the verge of a similar event. The reason for this, or at least a factor accelerating natural geological processes, became clear during the next week as the survey was plotted. The final chambers trend beneath the hotel drive (hence the dangling tree roots; the previous passages are beneath open pasture, but trees line the drive). Sheol itself seems to underlie the hotel forecourt, or even the building itself; it is difficult to see how the chamber roof can be more than 5m beneath the surface.

The management of the hotel, perhaps understandably, have not deigned to reply to our letters (sent along with a copy of the survey) informing them of this situation. However, the sudden appearance of a very large hole indeed beneath the wheels of a delivery lorry or coach seems an uncomfortably imminent possibility if not a probability.

Ooanagolloor (Whitechurch) thus deserves further attention in at least three ways. A more thorough exploration and perhaps an accurate re-survey (we had problems with the Suunto compass steaming up and it had to be read 'over the top' on occasions) might help persuade the hotel owner to take steps to avert a possible calamity. From both archaeological and palaeontological points of view the deposits in the system seem to be of great interest, and demand inspection and sampling by properly-qualified persons.

The second week of the 1983 expedition-cum-holiday was spent at Ballyvaughan in County Clare. It rained continually so tripping round ancient monuments took precedence over underground activity; all of the latter we could manage was being tourists in the Ailwee Cave and a brief trip by Richard and PFR into Cullaun 1.

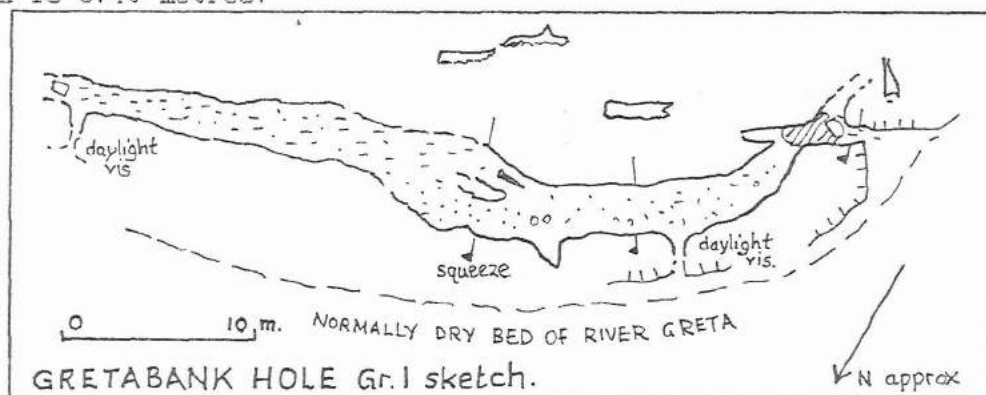
#### References

- (1) J.C.Coleman, Caves of Ireland (1965) 71-73
- (2) R.W.Forsayeth, 'The Brothers' Cave', Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland LXI (1931) 179-201

## Northern Dales Limestone Oddments

### A New Cave near God's Bridge

Interest in the God's Bridge area was reawakened in May 1986 when various sinks for the presumed-but-yet-undiscovered Lower River Cave were probed. Following the dry section of riverbed below the lower sinks, a small hole was noted in a cliff on the south, alongside and about a metre above the riverbed (NY 965128). After a little digging one could wriggle in through a pool into a bedding passage 1.2 metres wide and 0.3 metres high, running roughly parallel with the riverbank. 15 metres in was a little cross-joint 'chamber' big enough to two to sit up in; beyond the bedding split into two, which obviously re-united beyond a very low section. On a second visit Tim Elliot managed to squeeze through this into an easier 0.5 metre high crawl, which however soon ended in a silt bank with a big fallen block visible beyond. Faint daylight from a side fissure shows that this point is still close to the cliff; flood debris indicates that in wet weather the cave probably serves as a subterranean ox-bow to the surface Greta. It was at first hoped that it might lead into the underground course of the river but this now seems unlikely. Suggested name Gretabank Hole; total explored length is c.40 metres.



On another trip in October, after several dry weeks, PFR and Leigh Blanks had a look at the upstream end of the River Cave, in hopes of a non-diving route through sump i. This was not to be; from the final chamber of the 'old' cave a 10m rift led to an interesting round-the-corner duck, with only minimal airspace, into a rift chamber with chest-deep water. After another 10m this closed to another duck and a definite sump, the underwater route being 0.6 metre below the surface.

### Clints Caves, Ireshopeburn, Weardale

Re-reading the article about John Hawkes' water-tracing experiments here (MSG J1.7) it was decided there was potential for some new cave, so Rich Gibson and Peter Ryder revisited the site on 2.6.86. Cave 1 seemed to have the most potential; most of the stream comes in from a low bedding on the left in the terminal 'chamber', whilst a smaller stream comes in at the end of the chamber from a passage Rich pushed 6m to a possible dig. Meanwhile PFR dug into a tube on the right of the chamber and gained a dry tube accessible for 10m to where the floor rose up and digging would be necessary; there seems to be larger passage visible ahead here. Half way

back to the entrance there is a dry bedding going off left (looking upstream) which might link with the main stream inlet in the chamber: Rich pushed this for 15m but again digging would be necessary in a low and awkward passage. So the total length of the cave must be close to 90m now, with potential for at least as much again. Looking for the sinks for this cave, anew yhole was uncovered in the S bank of Cutthroat Syke 150m upstream of the cave. A scalloped rift twists for 5m to a 5m climb down into a chamber; despite a good draught, the only ways on were an impassable floor level bedding and a couple of tiny inlets - nevertheless the hole merits the name 'Clints Cave 4'. Clints Cave 3, in the east bank of Grooves Cleugh above the waterfall, was looked at as well. This is about 15m long and 6m deep: a rift drops to a 'T'-junction with a rift passage, too tight to the right and closing to nothing after 6m to the left.

#### Dry Burn Caves, near Alston.

On 18.6.85 Rich Gibson, Franceen and Peter Ryder had a look at the long dry gorge where Dry Burn goes underground in the Scar Limestone. Two 'new' holes were found. The first is a resurgence cave on the E side of the stream at the commencement of the second of the two sections of limestone gorge above the road. This is a body-sized wet tube which Rich pushed for about 9m, to where a little waterfall could be heard ahead but the passage was becoming even lower. Quite probably no one had bothered to worm their way up this cave before, and quite possibly no one will bother to do so again. Grid Ref is about NY 723418. The second hole found was a sink close to the road to the east of the Burn at NY 724422: under a slab was an open rift into a chamber with several choked rifts off. 3m deep, 6m long.

#### Simsholm Well, Knarsdale, near Slaggyford

In summer 1985 (no one remembered to write up the log) a foray was made to the Great Limestone outcrop in Knarsdale on the west side of the South Tyne valley. A promising-looking rising was found at Simsholm Well (NY 672528). Lowering the water level of the resurgence pool exposed an inviting tubular crawl, somewhat damp. We didn't have caving gear with us so Rich Gibson essayed an exploration in a state of nature, aided by verbal encouragement from the saner members of the party. Sadly, despite this heroic effort the cave ended in a collapse from the surface, with tree roots in it, round the first corner 8m in..... We also had a dig at Ash Well (NY 670531) which looks very promising at first sight, but big blocks of limestone have fallen here and entry would required a more determined effort.

## SPELEO-ODDMENTS IN NORTHUMBERLAND AND DURHAM

### Gritstone Rifts in Northumberland

Northumberland is a big county; much of the country north of the Tyne is composed of the same cyclothem Carboniferous strata seen in the Northern Pennine Dales, but limestones are thinner and less well exposed; so far the only limestone cave of any size is the system at Ward's Hill Quarry near Rothbury (MSG J1.9, pp.17 & 18). Perusal of local histories, climbing guides etc. reveals a few 'caves' in sandstone and grit outcrops; a few of these have been investigated within the last two or three years:

#### Cateran Hole NU 1023 2367.

A narrow 40-yard long fissure 'on the north side of Cateran Hill' referred to in Tomlinson's Guide to Northumberland (c.1890) p.501. A foray by PFR in April 1985 failed to locate this - the north side of Cateran Hill was the gentlest of heathery slopes with no crags or escarpments in sight. However, next year the new edition of the O.S. 1:10,000 map was seen, with the Hole marked where Tomlinson stated. By pacing on a compass bearing it was found: in a small 'shakehole' in almost-level moorland a flight of stone steps lead down into a walking-size rift with an artificial shelf cut into the r. wall for the first 10m. Height varies from 2 to 3m as the rubble floor gently descends until at 30m from the entrance soft mud is met. 8m further on the boulder roof drops and one must crawl in the mud, into a final little chamber beyond which is a total choke. Length c.45m, depth about 6m.

The oddest thing about Cateran Hole is its mode of formation. Underground it looks like a conventional slip rift, but on the surface the slope is only slight. Archaeologically the place is interesting as well; how old are the steps, the traces of a fitted door and the cut shelf? Did it house an illicit still?

For those wishing to visit the cave, it lies exactly 1 km from the North Charlton to Chillingham road at Quarry House. Head south from the road keeping, in retrospect, the tall radio aerial beyond the house just inside the edge of the wood beside the farm. The entrance crater lies at the crest of a slight rise.

#### Cateran Rift NU 102 232

On the initial search for Cateran Hole an obvious slip trench was found 120m south-west of the cairn on Cateran Hill, just above a gritstone scar. An obvious hole in this drops to a tight slot; the chamber visible through this was reached by a thrutch down through boulders from the trench bottom a few metres away. Total length about 15m; another tight entrance nearby.

#### High Cove, Grasslees Burn NY 953958

On the west side of the Grasslees Burn is a major slip area; the O.S. map shows two features running parallel to the contours, High and Low Coves. High Cove marks the head of the slip, which extends down to the valley

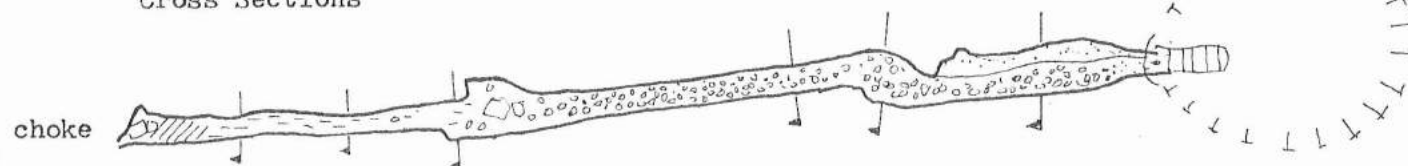


# CATERAN HOLE

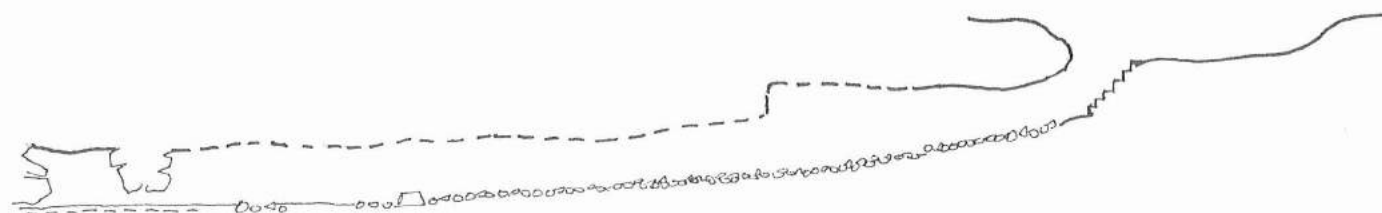
Cateran Hill, Parish of Chatton, Northumberland  
N.G.R. NU 1023 2367 Alt. c.847 metres O.D.  
Length c.45 m (150 ft) Depth c.7 m (20 ft)  
Gr 2/3 sketch survey PFR 30.9.86



Cross Sections



Plan



Longitudinal Section on 90° M

Approximate Scale

0 10 metres

PFR.

floor. Low Cove is shallower and grassier, and looks as if it may have opened then closed up again when High Cove formed.

At its south end High Cove consists of two parallel rifts with vertical sides up to 10m high. Further north it becomes more complex, dividing into narrower zig-zag rifts with open shafts and boulder bridges, all rather overgrown. A treacherous spot for the unwary. Four caves were explored; there are doubtless more.

(1) On N side of ravine at first break in cliff from S end. Low triangular hole into small chamber dropping into a rather larger chamber running S to choke. Length 9m.

(2) At foot of same rock face 9m to the N. Two obvious entrances, the lower into a roomy 12m passage to a choke; the shorter (6m) upper passage has a manhole in its floor into that below.

(3) In the 'rock labyrinth' towards the N end of High Cove, 10m N of the northern of the two obvious trees. Climbable open shaft, scramble over boulders to pool and impassable rift on left. 6m long and deep.

(4) A few yards NE of (3). Two entrances 6m apart connect in the same bouldery chamber. 9m long, 6m deep.

#### Huel Crag Rifts, High Rochester NY 829995

Another one found through a reference in the climbing guide to a crag 'offering some underground climbing'. Approached by an easy 10 minute walk from Hillock Farm. The three rifts explored all lie within a huge slipped block below the main crag; to the north the crag develops into a more conventional gritstone edge.

Descending from the cliff-top path into the large gully between crag and block, the gully can be followed south until a roofless rift on the right (west) provides a way through the block. In the roofless rift is one of several points of access to cave 3, a 30m complex of intersecting fissures tilted at different angles and rarely far from daylight. Heading north from the lower end of the roofless rift and past another entrance to cave 3, an obvious entrance is found; this is cave 1, a tall rift 16m long providing a straightforward through trip to an exit at the N end of the slipped block. A few metres from its exit, round the corner to the east, is the low entrance to the 28m-long cave 2; a crawl opens into a surprisingly roomy passage 3m high by 2m wide, continuing 10m to where it divides into three - a climb up on the left to an exit into the gully above, and two routes on the right into small chambers with muddy pools on the floor, ending in boulder ruckle.

Other rifts doubtless exist in the vicinity. A few metres south-west of the main entrance to cave 1 is a gully up which one can scramble onto the top of the main slipped block. In its south wall is a small cave entrance leading into a deep and narrow rift which was not descended.

The Nine Year Aud Hole, Hulne Park NU 156 146

In the Duke of Northumberland's Hulne Park (public access at weekends, on foot only), beside Cave Drive to the south of the spectacular C18 Gothick Brizlee Tower. A mass of gritstone has slipped and tilted on a short scarp slope, thus producing the cave. The main entrance is very large and obvious; picturesque appeal is added to by the stone figure of a bearded friar and a recumbent broken statue. The roomy entrance contracts to a scramble through boulders before one emerges to daylight again from a smaller hole. Length 12 m.

Thomas Wedderburn's Hole NU 0770 0996

Another cave that has appeared on recent large-scale O.S. maps. In Thrunton Wood, on a steep north-facing scarp. A recently-created footpath runs right past the entrance which is signed. Wedderburn was a notorious mosstrooper who was run to earth and killed here. Simply a series of holes formed by a mass of gritstone slipping down the scarp face - a 6m 'through trip' from the signed entrance opens into a gully with two parallel cavelets going on at the far side, each exiting onto the hillside after another 6m or so.

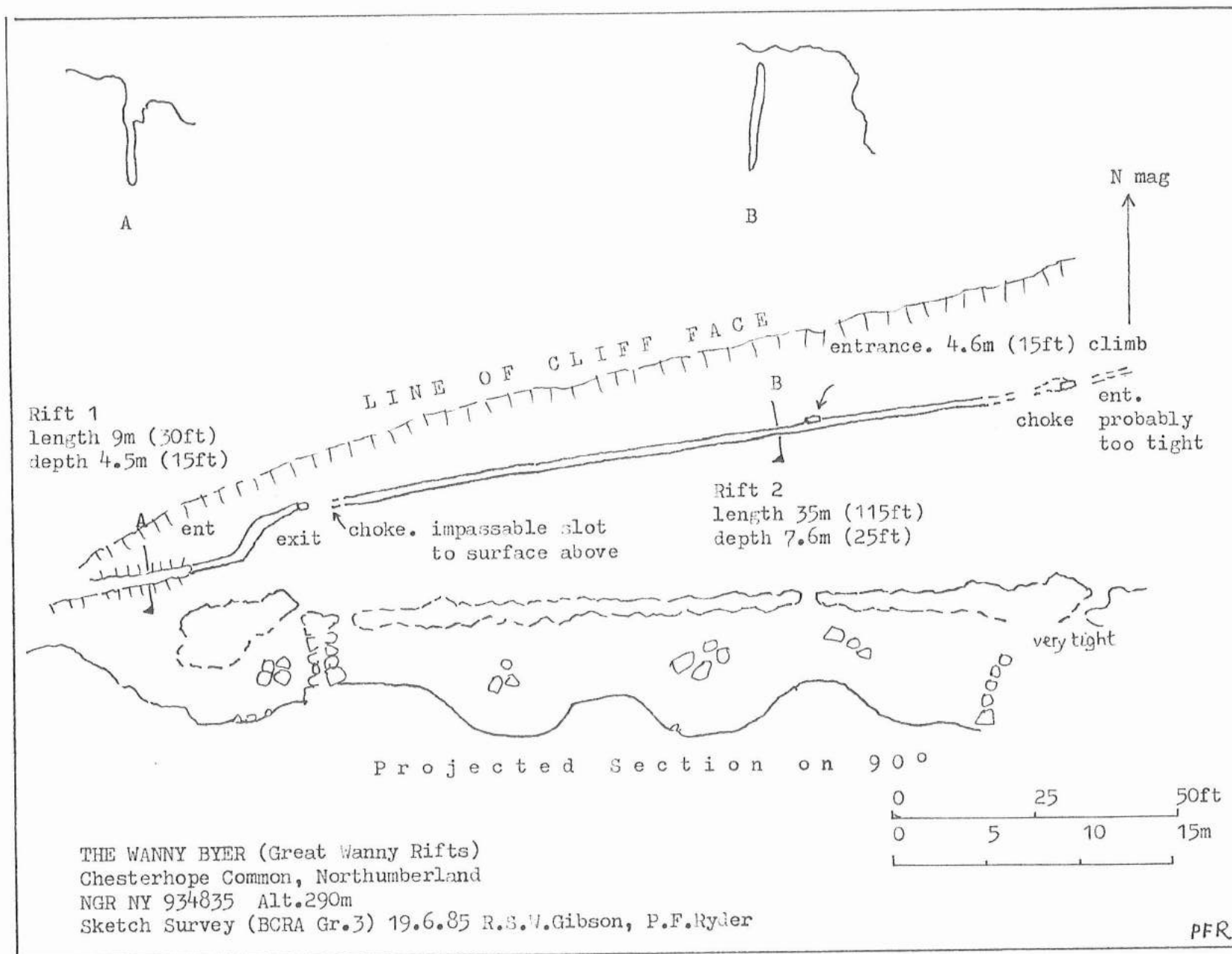
The Wanny Byer NY 934835

'Northumberland. A Rock Climbing Guide' (ed. N.E.Haighon, Northumbrian Mountaineering Club 1979, p.47): 'The Great Wanny Fault which lies behind the crag-line a few hundred yards to the east of the main crag provides a quantity of subterranean climbing but many of the entries have been blocked'.

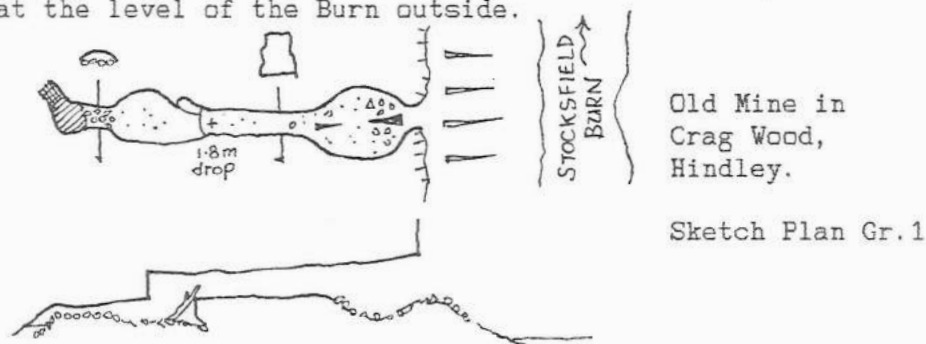
The 'fault' is an obvious slip rift just behind the gritstone escarpment, from which it diverges as one moves east. A few yards from the point at which the rift breaks out on the cliff face is an open rift entrance from which a narrow passage leads to a choke below a climb to a tight exit-length 10m. Another 30m beyond this 'exit' removal of a boulder revealed an open hole; a tightish chimney dropped 5m to a tightish rift running westwards back to the first choke and eastwards to another boulder blockage. The roof is largely boulders which have been placed to seal the rift at the surface; once it must have been an open fissure and thus quite hazardous to animals etc. Length 35m, depth 7.5m. Further east again removal of another boulder disclosed a very narrow rift (0.25m) not entered; surface indications of the rift die out in a series of little hollows.

An Old Mine in Crag Wood, Hindley.

Reputed to be a secret tunnel to Bywell Castle, 2km to the north, this is an artificial tunnel in thinly-bedded sandstone on the west bank of the Stocksfield Burn about 300m north-east of Hindley Hall, at around NZ 054597. An obvious portal at the foot of a gully near the north end of a line of cliff leads into a roughly-circular chamber 2m high and 3m across. Beyond the floor rises into a regular square-cut passage 10m long to a vertical 1.8m drop. Below this is a low chamber, narrowing to a crawl over tumble to a pool - the only continuation appears to be a low passage underwater, but access is restricted by rubble. Total length 20m. No sign



of either coal seams or mineralisation. The final 'sump' seems to be more or less at the level of the Burn outside.



### Two Magnesian Limestone Caves in County Durham

Two small caves in very similar topographic situations, close to the A 181 about 10 km SE of Durham.

#### Dene House Cave. NZ 347393

A very conspicuous entrance at the head of a dry valley running south; Dene House Farm is on the east side of the valley, just north of the village of Cassop. Just above the entrance is a trig. point at 193m O.D. The cave entrance is about 4m wide and 2m high; inside a roomy chamber, housing an animals' feeding rack, extends back for about 10m before suddenly closing to a tiny bedding which closes down after a bodylength.

#### Thornley Hall Cave. NZ 362383.

1.5km further SE, at the head of a gully overlooking another southward-trending dry valley, is the much smaller entrance to a 5m long hands-and-knees crawl. This is locally said to have been an escape tunnel from Thornley Hall (held by a Catholic family in the 17th century, so an escape tunnel might have been useful), and to have been explored earlier this century to a roof fall 'near the Hall garden wall' (about 30m away from the entrance). The cave seems totally blind, so the stories must be apocryphal.

#### Hownsgill Caves. Consett, County Durham NZ 097489

Hownsgill 'Caves' are in fact a semi-subterranean sandstone quarry, found by following the footpath which runs from the A692 up the valley beneath the impressive disused Hownsgill Viaduct and taking the track which starts to ascend the east side of the valley immediately beyond; after 150m a quarry is found on the left of the track. There are two spacious (c.8m square) galleries running parallel to the quarry face, divided by a series of rock pillars, and with numerous entrances. There have been a few minor roof falls, but one can easily walk through in semi-daylight from one end to the other, a distance of about 50m. There are graffiti everywhere, but otherwise a fairly impressive place. Visited 1.6.86 by Rich & Fran Gibson, with Peter & junior Ryders.



### OLD ASH MINE AND THE EXPLORATION OF OLD ASH CAVERN, DERBYSHIRE

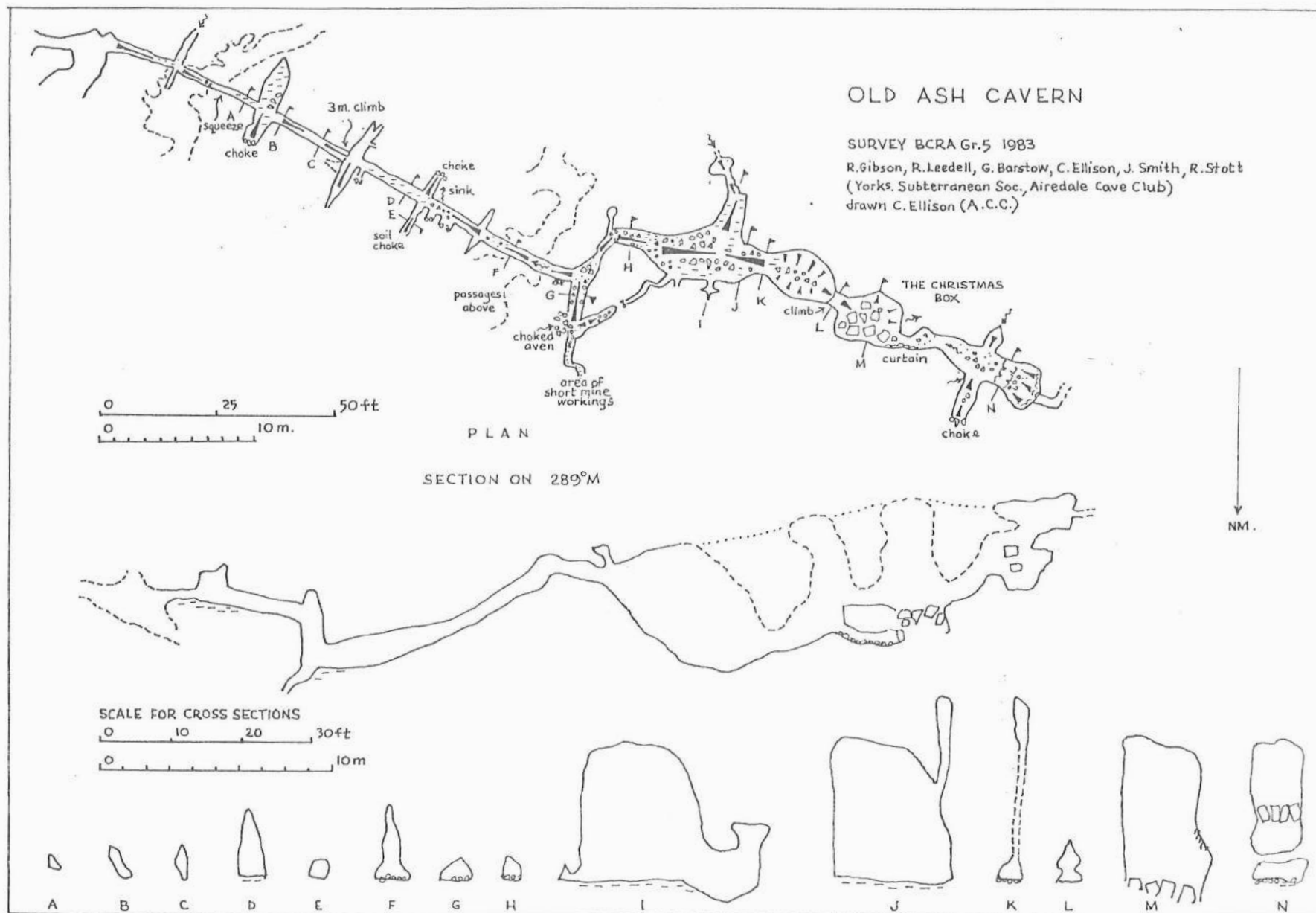
The steep-sided dry valley of Northern Dale, 3 km west of Matlock, winds its way down the southern flank of Wensley Dale (not to be confused with the Yorkshire Wensleydale!) midway between the villages of Wensley and Snitterton. The lower section of Northern Dale is wooded and gorge-like, widening midway up the side of the main valley before dividing into two shallower declivities and reaching the crest of what is in effect a steep dip slope just below Brightgate Farm.

The area contains both natural caves and a vast number of old lead mines: Brightgate Cave (SD 265599), investigated and surveyed by MSG in 1978 (1) is unusual in being one of the few cave systems in the area virtually untouched by the miners. The broad mid-section of Northern Dale is riddled with mine shafts, and is a place to tread warily if one wishes to avoid an inadvertent descent into the bowels of the earth. Some of the shallower shafts here give access to Tearsall Pipe Caverns II, a complex of mined and natural passages. Lower down, as the craggy lower section of the valley commences, there are open cave-like entrances on both sides; on the east are the several portals of Lords and Ladies Mine, several hundred feet of part-mined part-natural passages providing a through trip enlivened midway by an easy duck through a pool. Opposite on the west side of the valley is a grassy crater containing the entrance to the more extensive Old Ash Mine, with which this account is concerned.

A simplified survey of Old Ash Mine, produced by the Metalliferous Mines Research Group, has appeared in print (2) but we have been unable to trace any published description other than a brief note by Nash (3). MSG interest in the area began with the work in Brightgate Cave already referred to; as this proceeded Lords and Ladies Mine was visited on several occasions but Old Ash Mine was not seriously looked at until 12th April 1982 when Pete Ryder, Geoff Tryon and Dennis Underwood made a brief inspection - the log comments "worth returning to, although survey would be quite a task". A narrow natural rift was noted, "which a thin person might be able to pass", dropping away downhill from the lowest point in the system, about 30m in from the entrance.



On 26th November the same year the requisite thin person, Richard Gibson, duly thrutched his way down the narrow rift into a small chamber where a



trickle of water splashed down from a joint on the left and trickled away down a narrowing rift ahead. Pete Ryder struggled through to the chamber, but the next few feet of passage - a slightly-wider higher level, above a narrowing rift - were strictly for Gibsons. Clawing away mud from a false floor, Richard squeezed along to emerge into a roomier passage and Old Ash Cavern was discovered - or rediscovered, as the old miners had been in, but apparently no-one else, at least for a century or two.

The solo explorer emerged from the squeeze into a roomy cross rift, pinching out to the left and choked to the right. Straight ahead the line of the entrance passage continued as a narrow crawl to a 3m climb down into another cross rift with a choked sump beneath the point of entry. The main passage continued uphill, becoming more tube-like in section, and after choked cross rifts on either side led to a junction. To the right a small stream emerged from a choked aven ewith some short mined passages beyond, while to the left (passing an ancient barrel and a wooden spade) a steep slope descended into a roomy cavern 3m wide and 8m high. Another small stream, sinking in the floor, cascaded down from a narrow rift reached by a short climb, while a rather larger stream descended from a boulder slope leading up into another chamber. The obvious way on, a tube in the floor, soon choked, but scaling a short wall a tall rift was entered, with multi-coloured calcite flows glistening on its walls. This well-decorated section, dubbed 'The Christmas Box' ended where the phreatic tube disappeared into a solid choke.

Total length of passage found, virtually all unmodified natural cave, was around 120m (400'). The system was surveyed some weeks later by Richard and friends from the Yorkshire Speleo. Soc and Airedale Cave Club. Despite digging attempts, none of the side passages could be followed for more than a few metres. There are one or two points, now thoroughly choked, at which 't'owd man' could have entered the natural cave; it is highly unlikely that he used the present way in! This squeeze, only passable by the small and determined, imposes its own access regulations and should help protect the mining relics and calcite formations. It was initially hoped that one of a multitude of likely-looking dig sites in the main mine complex might provide a roomier access to the Cavern Series, but survey shows that this is unlikely, without a great deal of effort.

#### Old Ash Mine

The entrance to the Old Ash system is initially a hands-and-knees crawl, rapidly opening into a walking-sized passage which promptly divides into a maze of tunnels. This complexity is more apparent than real, as all side passages either end within a few metres or oxbow back to rejoin the main route. The simplest way through is to head downhill through a series of low but wide chambers. About 30m from the entrance the passage closes to a brief flat crawl opening onto a junction. Straight ahead is the route into the Cavern Series, for the small and determined; ordinary mortals turn right and ascend a rock and rubble slope through another little complex of mined cavities, up into a rather larger chamber. Another short flat-out grovel, under the left wall, emerges into roomier passage again. Turning left here leads to a choke in the floor (sited above the squeeze into the Cavern Series), a rise which can be climbed with care to a short series of passages including a flooded shaft, and a mined tunnel with knee-deep water

ending in a forehead. Turning right on hands-and-knees through a muddy pool leads to higher passage lined with packwalls of deads. A crawl to the left here leads into a short series of natural bedding passages; the main passages were probably like this before the miners enlarged them.

Continuing along the walking-size gallery, the route to Bridge Cavern goes off on the right midway along the walled section. The walled part ends where the roof lowers to another junction. Right here is the Kneebreaker Link, a route to Bridge Cavern which does not require tackle. Straight on an easy crawl gains height to quite a roomy cavern with a rise (climbable?) on the right and a loop of high-level passage up a short climb on the left. Straight on ends in a muddy crater in the floor (one possible site for a dig into the Cavern Series, but not an easy prospect) and choked beddings up to the left.

#### Bridge Cavern

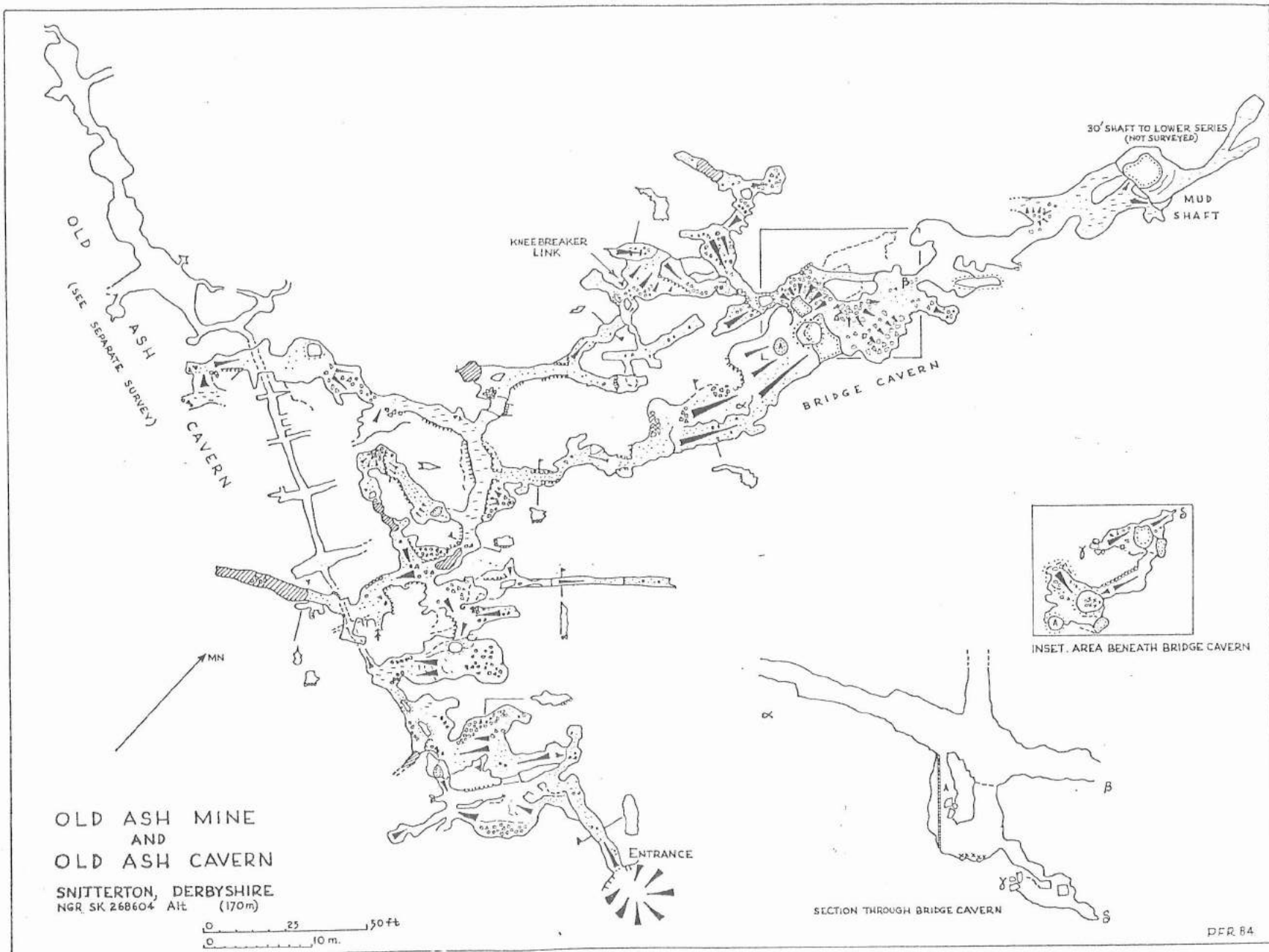
The 'old' route to Bridge Cavern commences as an ascending sandy crawl with a good draught; this soon levels off and then starts to descend, gaining size as a wide slanting bedding. The gradient steepens until one cautiously slithers down onto a ledge overlooking quite an impressive void, Bridge Cavern. A lifeline is highly desirable for the next section, an exposed (but easy) shuffle round the top of a shaft which pierces the rock slope descending to the 'bridge', and the crossing of the 'bridge' itself; this is in fact a narrow arete between two gaping pits, with blackness overhead as a great shaft soars up towards the surface 40m above. The shaft top is covered by timbers; descent might well be feasible.

The shaft in the rock slope is an 11m ladder pitch into a chamber into which the two pits flanking the 'bridge' also drop. This is the end of the descent for sundry artefacts, including part of an elderly motorcycle, thrown down the shaft from the surface. Beyond the debris a descending passage leads to a crawl and a 3m climb down to a chamber with a rift which rises to a massive choke and drops to a dead end.

Gingerly traversing across the 'bridge', terra firma is regained in a roomy chamber, another natural cavity modified by the mines. The main route ahead is through 30m or so of varied passage leading to a second enlarged natural chamber at the head of the Mud Shaft. Just before this is reached the passage, at this point a bedding-like crawl, splits into three. The two left hand routes debouche onto a vertical wall but the right hand, with care, takes one to a muddy ledge overlooking the shaft. The ledge is the only part of the chamber floor where one can stand or sit; the remainder is a steep funnel dropping to the vertical part of the shaft. A bolt belay beside the ledge allows a ladder decent of 12m onto a steep slope, giving access to a further 100m or so of mined passages (not surveyed), the deepest part of the Old Ash system.

#### Kneebreaker Link

A more interesting route to Bridge Cavern was opened up on an evening trip early in 1983 when Pete Ryder, exploring a side passage from Bridge Cavern, established a vocal communication with Tom Megahey and Dave Tuckett who were in what was thought to be a completely different series of passages. A





few minutes diggging cleared a route through miners' deads and the link was made.

From the main route already described, turning right at the junction beyond the 'old' Bridge Cavern passage leads into a mined passage terminating in a forehead; a few metres before this a natural bedding drops away to the left. A short crawl here leads to a junction; right is a narrow rift to a short series of blind passages and straight ahead is a phreatic tube with an awkward up-and-over squeeze round a left hand bend. On the evening that the link was forged Tom and Dave passed this constriction on their way towards Bridge Cavern but Pete Ryder, travelling in the opposite direction, became wedged by the knees and threatened to become a fixture. Escape only came after reversing for a bodylength and digging through deads on the right to provide an easier way out; the inward route is now to turn left at the junction and then right again, from which a short crawl opens into a larger slanting chamber. Dropping down over some boulders leads to a junction with a roomy mined passage where turning right under a high rise brings one out into a corner of Bridge Cavern. A steep rubble slope drops away into one of the pits flanking the 'bridge' but this can be passed by carefully crawling along the left wall.

The survey obviates the need for a decription of every nook and cranny in the system - and there are many! Devotees of such places will doubtless be able to dig their way into further sections of passage or scale their way into higher levels. Both survey and account might have been more extensive if more surveyors and explorers could have been coaxed into spending more manhours in the place.

R.S.W.Gibson & P.F.Ryder

(1) Ryder, P.F. 1979 Brightgate Cave, Snitterton, Derbyshire, Trans.Brit.Cave Res. Assoc. Vol.6 no.1, 1-4.

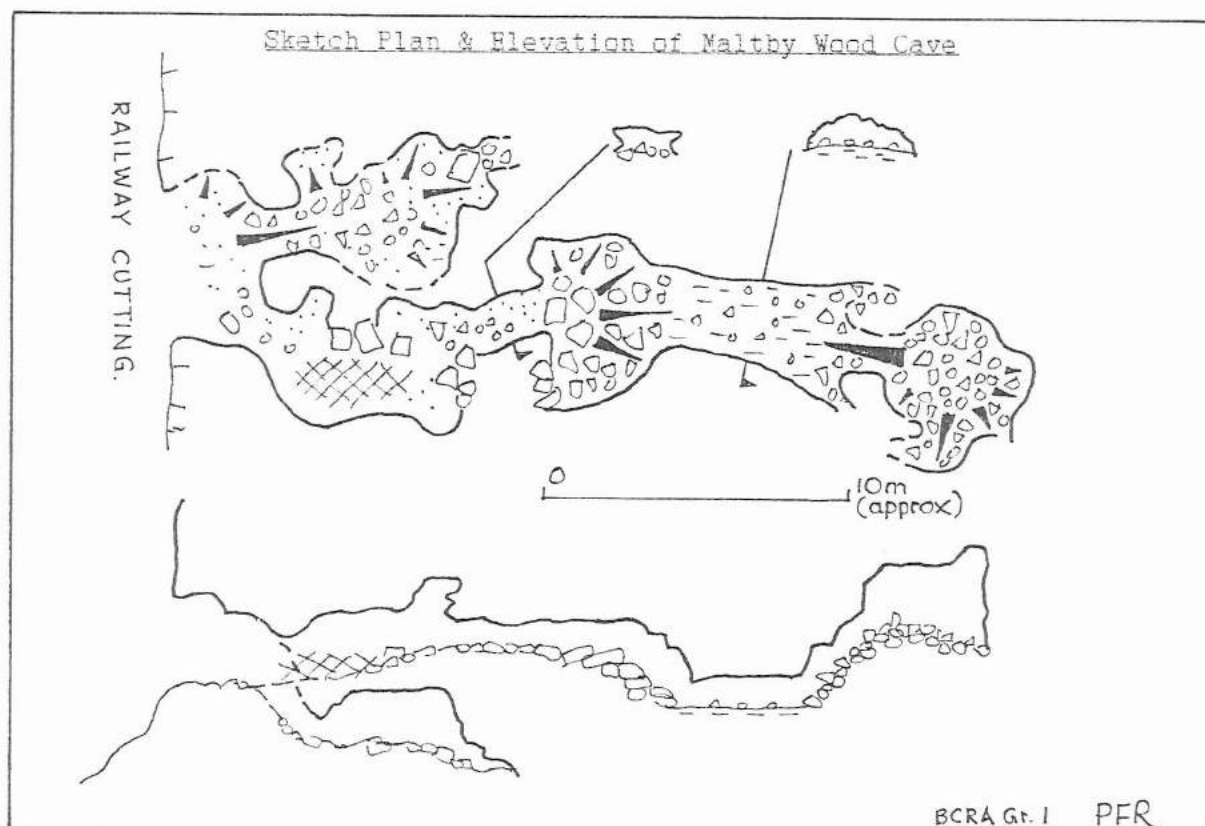
(2) Ford, T.D. 1977 Limestones and Caves of the Peak District, 428. Geo-Books, Geo-Abstracts Ltd., Norwich.

(3) Nash, D. 1957.. Jug Holes and the nature of the Matlock Mines, Trans. Cave Res. Group. Vol.V no.1, 22.

### Maltby Wood Cave

Herne Hill Caves at Maltby suggest that phreatic caves are not uncommon in the South Yorkshire Magnesian Limestone. However, despite trying to follow up rumours of 'big' caves known only to local children ("are there any CAVES round here sonny?" - "yerwhat mister?") we've only come across one more. This lies in Maltby Wood 1.5km east of Herne Hill, and was stumbled across by Pete Ryder whilst he was engaged in surveying archaeological sites in the Wood, in early 1982. To find it follow a track running south from the A631 Maltby to Tickhill road at SK 547920 for 300m to a bridge over a mineral line (active, at any rate in 1982 when there was a train every hour or so). At the far end of the bridge on the l. side one can scramble down to the cutting floor. Proceed about 30m eastwards to find the obvious entrance in the N wall of the cutting.

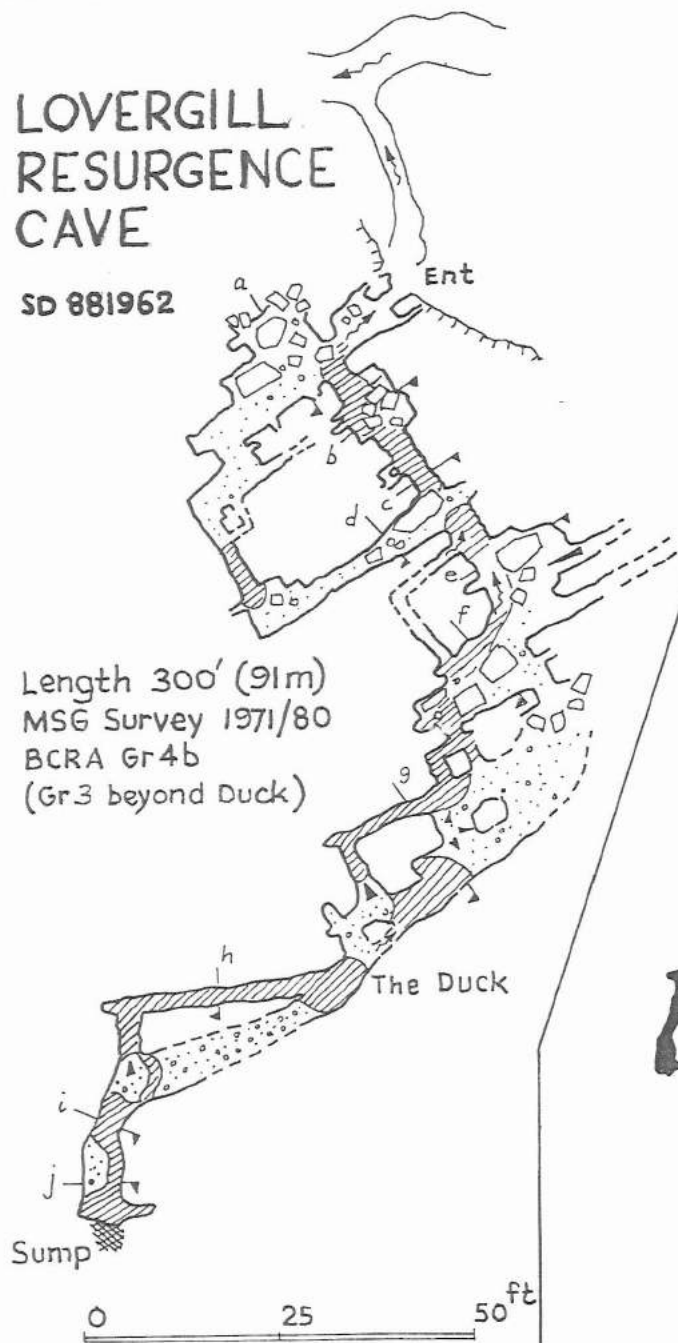
The cave as explored so far is the product of two assaults by Geoff Tryon and PFR on successive evening trips (23rd and 24th April). The entrance was found to soon close down to a boulder ruckle, containing, as well as boulders, broken glass, animal bones and an old rusty gin trap. Back in the entrance arch, a dig on the left opened up a thrutch downslope and under a bedding into a surprisingly roomy chamber 8m long and 4m wide, with dropped blocks at the far end obstructing access to an apparent way on. On the second visit these were attacked but the way on closed down after 1.5m. The boulder ruckle straight on from the entrance was then assaulted, and a crawl opened into a bouldery chamber beyond which a slope dropped to a clay-floored crawl 3m wide and 1m high. Thoughts of unlimited progress into the bowels of the Mag Lime were dashed after only 6m when a collapse was reached: crawling up a steep rubble slope led into a 5m diameter chamber, 2.5m high in the centre. There was no obvious way on from here, but a draught appeared to be blowing in through the loose rubble round the perimeter. The draught may come from a big shakehole on the surface near this point (not surveyed). The total length of the cave is about 40m.



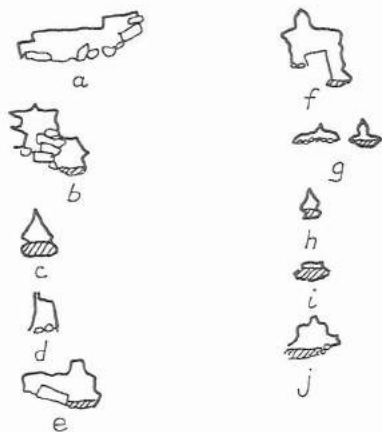
# LOVERGILL RESURGENCE CAVE

SD 881962

Length 300' (91m)  
MSG Survey 1971/80  
BCRA Gr4b  
(Gr3 beyond Duck)

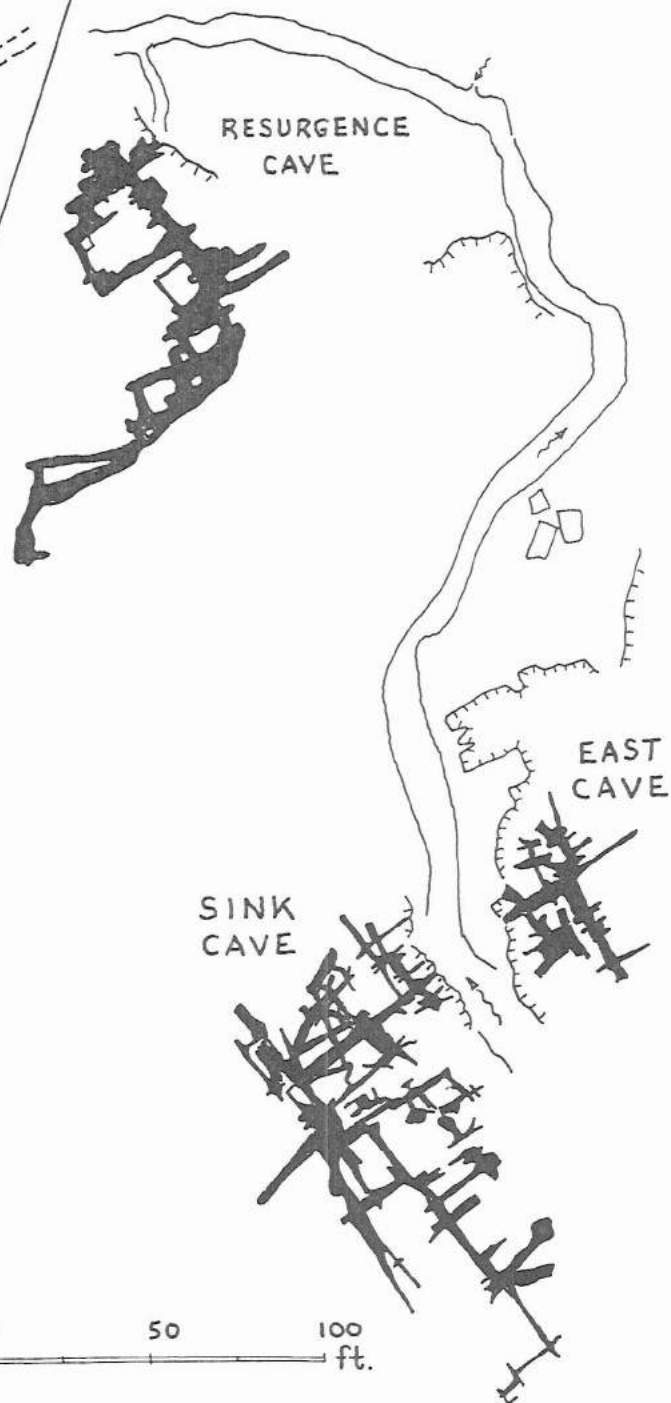


## CROSS SECTIONS



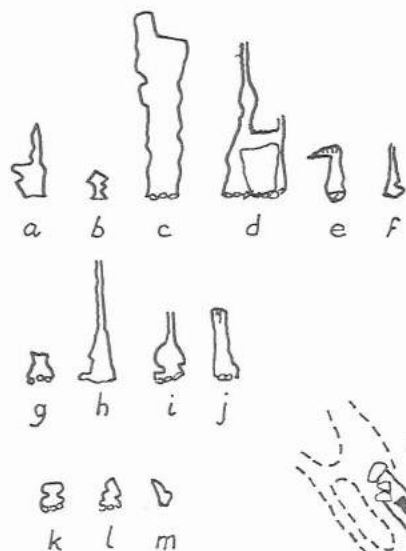
# LOVERGILL CAVES

Buttertubs Pass,  
Swaledale



# LOVERGILL CAVES

BUTTERTUBS PASS AREA



SINK CAVE

EAST CAVE

ENT

ENT

0 feet 50

Nm ↑ ↑ t

30' climb

10' climb

15' climb

15' pitch

STRAW RIFT

SOUTH EAST RIFT



CLIFFHANGER CHAMBER

TERROR FIRMA

BEARPIT SERIES

A: 30' scale up  
B: 15' climb up  
C: 15' pitch down

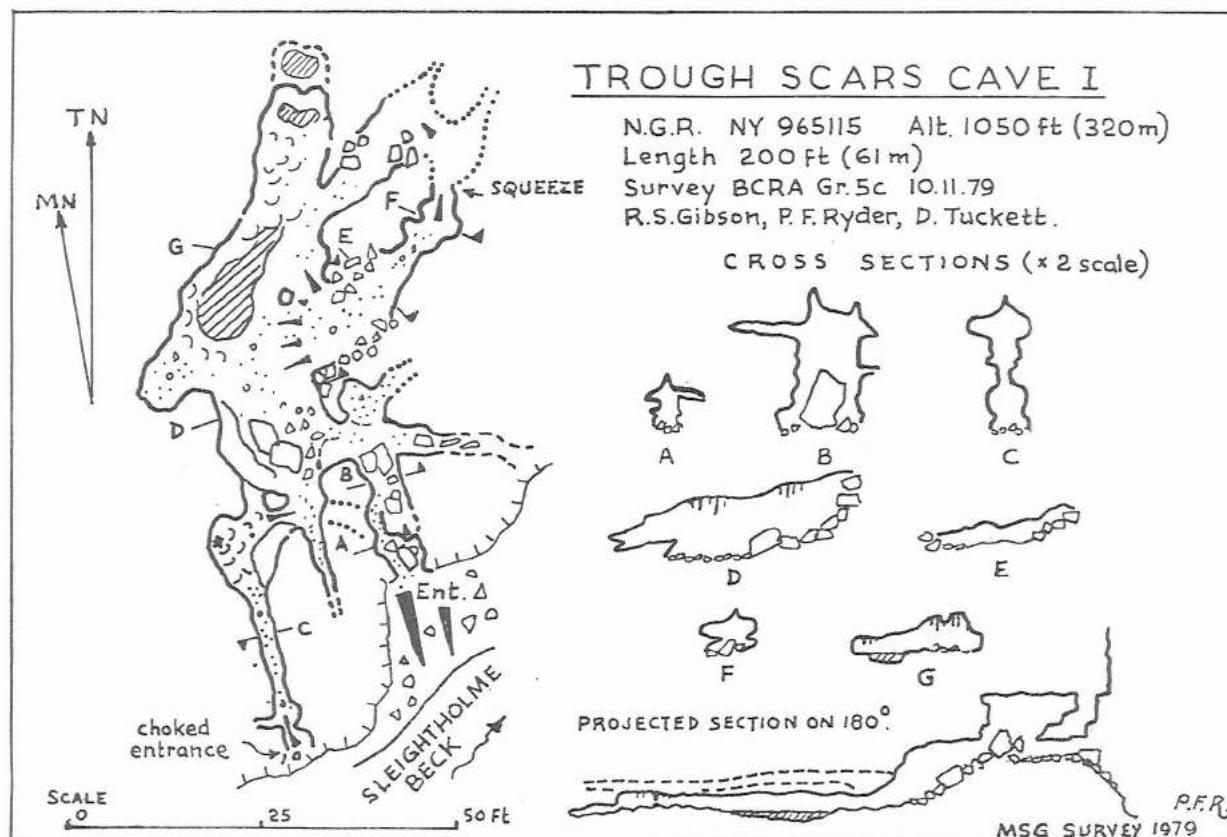
SD 882961 Alt 1700'  
BCRA Grade 5b  
PFR/AC

### LOVERGILL CAVES

Three caves in Lovergill, a tributary of Cliff Beck S of Thwaite in Swaledale, had been poked at and surveyed by MSG members in 1971 (J1.5, 7-8). Interest in the area revived in 1978, when the Sink Cave (the longest of the three) yielded about 65m more passage, mainly due to Arthur Champion's ability to bolt up walls. None of the small extensions showed any real likelihood of either closing the gap between Sink and Resurgence Caves or, more optimistically, providing a fossil route into high levels of the Cliff Force system. These explorations have been chronicled by Arthur (Craven Pothole Club J1.Vol.6 no.2 1980, 64-66). Lovergill Resurgence Cave was described in the J1.5 article but the survey was never published; no one had been back through the duck there to survey John Cooper's solo extension of 15.9.71. Over nine years elapsed before anyone did. On 4th October 1980 Bill Rigden and Robin Sermon braved the icy water to survey 20m of crawl to a definite sump: it is very difficult to correlate their survey with John Cooper's original account of around 60m of passage with two chambers. Do two upstream passages lead off from the low and aqueous bedding around the duck? Perhaps one day we'll get back and find out. The survey printed here is that according to Rigden and Sermon.

### TROUGH SCARS CAVES

The small caves in the limestone gorge of Trough Scars (Gretadale), on Sleitholme Beck 4km SW of Bowes, have attracted sporadic MSG attention since the earliest days of the Group. A grade 2 survey of the main cave appeared in one of the long-defunct 'Reports' which preceded the Group's first Journal. On 10th November 1979 the cave was surveyed to BCRA Gr.5 by Rich Gibson, Pete Ryder and Dave Tuckett. A few metres of new passage were gained by the usual process of pushing Rich down tight holes, but there doesn't seem any obvious prospect of major extensions. The area around the entrance is a bit shaky and should be treated with care!





## M. S. G. SURVEYS

The following is an index of all the surveys, made by MSG except where stated, that have appeared in MSG journals 2 - 10, and of MSG surveys which have appeared in other publications (references to which are listed at the end of the index). Most of the journals are now out of print, but copies of the surveys can be obtained (at a price! but only to cover costs) from Graham Stevens, 4 Kingston Ave, Green Lane, Acklam, Middlesbrough, Cleveland, or Peter Ryder, 1 Ford Terrace, Broomhaugh, Northumberland. The figures given, column by column, are grid reference of cave, surveyed length in feet, the date of survey, the BCRA grade of the survey, and the journal in which the survey appeared. References are only given to the latest and most complete version of each individual survey.

## The Northern Dales

Wensleydale

Cotterdale House Cave	SD 831956	230	1974	4b	MSG7
Fossdale Beck Cave	SD 864956	1250	1972	4-5b	MSG6
(West Aven extension		70	1976	4	MSG8)
Grange Gill Cave	SD 924913	120	1973	2-4b	MSG6
Hearne Beck Cave	SD 851948	400	1976	4c	MSG9
Keldheads Cave	SE 076916	2000	1974	4-5b/c	MSG7
Maze Holes	SD 899915	150	1972	5b	MSG6
Rowantree Scar Cave	SE 023928	30	1979	3	MSG10

Swaledale

Aygyll Cave	NY 887003	220	1975	4b	MSG8
Blind Gill Hole	NY 935019	92	1968	5b	MSG3
Blind Gill Level	NY 935018		1971	4	MSG5
Cliff Beck Head	SD 874963	440	1971	4-5b	MSG7
(including the Buttertubs)					
Cliff Force Cave	SD 875960	5070	1977	4-5b	MSG9&CPC6
Damocles Hole	NZ 010048	120	1969	5b	MSG3
Devis Hole Mine Cave	SE 052961	5300	1973	4b	MSG7&BCRA2
Devis, Occidental Series		1600	1974-5	4c	BCRA2
(Devis, mine workings		6107	1973	4b	BCRA2)
East Gill Cave 1	NY 897020	500	1978	4c	MSG10
East Gill Cave 2 & 3	NY 897020	520	1975	4-5b	MSG8
East Gill Cave 6	NY 897019	40	1978	4b	MSG10
East Gill Pot	NY 898006	d.96	1978	5b	MSG10
Eweleap West Cave	NY 939024	170	1971	3-5b	MSG5
(including Foxglove Pot)					
Friarfold Hush Cave	NY 943014	75	1969	4c	MSG3
Grainy Gill Cave	SD 871971	230	1978	4-5b	MSG10
Great Sleddale Pot	SD 827988	d.82	1970	5c	MSG4
Hard Level Gill Caves	NY 968007	700	1970	4-5c	MSG3
Horrocks Cross Cave	NZ 009041	50	1969	3b	MSG3

(cont....)

Horse Level Cave	NY 990071	175	1971	4c	MSG8
Kisdon Cave	NY 899012	750	1970	4-5c/d	MSG4
Long Scar Caves.	SD 82-990	125	1975	3b	MSG8
Lovergill Resurgence C.	SD 881962	300	1971-80	4b	MSG11
Lovergill Sink Cave	SD 882961	800	1971-80	5b	CPC6a &MSG11
New Level Cave	NY 992074	435	1970	4b	MSG4
Richmond Copper Mine	NZ 164006	4030	1975	4c	MSG8
Rowantree Mea Cave	SD 866978	188	1978	5b	MSG10
Scatter Scar Cave	NZ 020032	110	1969	3b	MSG3
Silver Birch Pot	NY 959035	90	1969	4b	MSG3
Swaleside Cave	NY 895011	150	1978	4b	MSG10
Swinnergill Caves	NY 911014	685	1973	5b	MSG7
Whitcliffe Scar Caves	NZ 131020	475	1974	5b	MSG8
Windegg Mine Caverns	NZ 012052	3750	1971	4c	MSG5&BCRA2
(as separate sheet accompanying journal)					
Windegg extensions		430	1976	4c	MSG8

#### Gretadale

Eller Beck Head	NY 993103	650	1971	4b	MSG5
God's Bridge River Cave	NY 957127	1900	1968	3-5	MSG2
Hazel Bush Hill Hole	NY 990103	260	1968	4b	MSG2
Trough Scars Cave 1	NY 965115	200	1979	5b	MSG11

#### Teesdale

Cruckle Pot	NY 856203	60	1968	5b	MSG2
Flushiemere Mine	NY 909318	9000	1978	2-3b	MSG9
(including Bropery Gill Level)					
Hell Hole (mine)	NZ 163167	260	1968	3	MSG2
Jack Scar Cave	NY 949273	450	1971	4b	MSG5
Moking Hurth & Pot	NY 868311	1800	1970	3-4	MSG4
(includes Durham Cave Club survey of Moking Hurth)					
Newberry Scar Pots	NY 938301	110	1975	3-4b	MSG8
Scar End Cave	NY 937304	70	1976	4c	MSG8
Stonygill Head Cave	NY 932267	75	1970	3b	MSG4
Yad Moss Cave	NY 793358	620	1975	4b	MSG8

#### Vale of Eden

Angels' Drainpipe	NY 773074	1400	1982	4b	MSG11
Cross Pot	NY 818177	300	1974	2-3b	MSG7
Fells End Pot	NY 008040	d.125	1970	3b	MSG4
Jingling Sike Cave	SD 787966	1000	1979	4b	MSG10
Lunehead Mine Caverns	NY 846205	2475	1976	4-5c	MSG8
(includes mineworkings totalling 10400)					
Mousegill Cave	NY 853119	400	1981-2	4	MSG11
Scroggy Bank Cave	NY 856131	60	1968	5	MSG2
Silverband Pot	NY 704322	700	1977	4-5b	MSG9
Silver Jubilee Pot	NY 710316	250	1977	5b	MSG9
(cont.....)					

(cont....)

Smeltmill Beck Cave	NY 848146	6000	1973	4-5c	MSG7
(MSG/YURT survey, also produced at larger scale as separate sheet)					
Stenkrith Caves	NY 773076	1090	1975	4-5b	MSG8
(covers Devil's Grinding Mill and Millrace Cave)					
Swindalehead Cave	NY 816188	400	1968	4	MSG2
Windmore End Cave	NY 828165	630	1971	4b	MSG5

Weardale

Bollihope Burn Cave 2	NY 979349	55	1975	4	MSG8
(Durham University Speleo. Assocn. survey)					
Crawleyside Cave	NY 992398	100	1975	3-5	MSG8
Dene Quarry Cave	NY 988411	120	1979	2-3	MSG10
Elph Cleugh Cave	NY 889342	800	1973	4b	MSG6
Harehope Quarry Cave	NZ 036362	350			MSG3
(Durham Cave Club survey)					
Jacob's Well Cave	NZ 035361	1000	1969	4	MSG3
Lynkirk Cave	NZ 006392	360	1969	4c	MSG3
Sowan Burn Cave	NY 998380	300	1968	4	MSG2
(Cross Rift Series only)					
Swinhopeburn Cave	NY 887342	70	1972	3	MSG6
Swinhopeburn Pot	NY 888343	70	1976	5b	MSG8

Alston Area

Ayleburn Mine Cave	NY 724497	4800	1969	5	unpub MSG3 line
(Gutgrinder Inlet		425	1977	3-4b	MSG9
Ayleburn Caves & Pot	NY 730499	945	1977	4-5b	MSG9
(Ayleburn Pot is O.U.C.C./U.L.S.A. survey)					
Clargillside Caves	NY 772367	150	1975	3b	MSG8
Elpha Green Caves	NY 846486	770	1971	4b	MSG5
Hudgill Burn Mine Cavern		960			MSG9
(copy of old mine plan)					
Hunter's Hole	NY 659415	120	1969	4c	MSG3
Little Gill Hole	NY 779391	100	1969	2-4c	MSG3
Priorsdale Cave	NY 779411	1020	1971	3-5b	MSG5
Rabbitsskull Cave	NY 778392	65	1969	3c	MSG3
Tutman's Hole	NY 680460	1000	1975	4b	MSG8
(D.U.S.A. survey of D.U.S.A. extension)					

Northumberland (North of the Tyne)

Cateran Hole	NU 102237	120	1986	3b	MSG11
The Wanny Byre	NY 934835	150	1986	3b	MSG11
Ward's Hill Quarry Caves	NU 079965	350	1977	4c	MSG9

North York Moors

Aislaby Jet Mine	NZ 850087	460	1971	4b	MSG8
Ampleforth Cave	SE 593791	25	1975	5b	BCRA3
Antofts Windypit	SE 582829	825	1981	4-5b	CS9
Ashberry Windypit	SE 570850	1050	1972	3-5b	MSG6
Birk Bank Fissures	SE 555868	140	1981	5b	WP44
Blood Windypit	SE 566799	200	1972	3-4	MSG6
Boltby Quarry Caves	SE 507863	185	1976		C&H
Bucklands Windypit	SE 588828	1200	1981	4-5b	CS9
The Elephant Hole	NZ 575117	530	1974	5b	MSG7
(Whinstone Mine nr. Great Ayton)					
Fadmoor Caves	SE 897647	155	1971	4b	MSG5
Gowerdale Windypits	SE 518889	290	1975	5b-c	BCRA3
Kettleness Alum Mines	NZ 832160	360	1975	5b-c	MSG8
Kirkdale Cave	SE 677860	570	1972	4b	MSG6
Lease Rigg Whinst. Mine	NZ 812046	2270	1975	5c	MSG8
Monk's Wood Cave	SE 597791	110	1975	5b-c	BCRA3
Motts Hole	SE 520889	230	1975	5c	BCRA3
Noddle End Windypit	SE 526886	575	1975	5c	BCRA3
Sil Howe Whinstone Mine	NZ 841028	11000	1974	4b	MSG7
Slip Gill Windypit	SE 575836	560	1981	5b	CS9
Whitestone Cliff Foot Cs.	SE 507836	255	1975	4-5b	BCRA3

Magnesian Limestone

Bluebell Wood Cave	NZ 266258	130	1970	4b	MSG4
(Newton Aycliffe, Co. Durham)					
Creswell Caves	SK 53-74-	1900	1973	4-5b	MSG7
(Derbyshire/Nottinghamshire border near Worksop)					
Herne Hill Cave	SK 533922	550	1979	5b	MSG10
Herne Hill Cave II	SK 533922	210	1980	5c	C&C11
(Maltby, South Yorkshire)					
Nearcliff Wood Rift	SK 527795	240	1974	3b	MSG7
(Conisbrough, South Yorkshire)					
Pleasley Vale Railway	SK 520649	300	1979	5b	MSG10
Cutting Pot (Mansfield, Notts)					
Ryhope Caves	NZ 400537	240	1972	4b	MSG6
(Sunderland, County Durham)					

Derbyshire

Brightgate Cave	SK 265599	1080	1978	5c	BCRA6
Old Ash Mine	SK 268604		1982-3	5b	MSG11
Old Ash Cavern		400	1983	5	MSG11
(MSG/YSS/ACC survey)					

Isle of Portland

Sandy Hole	SY 680712	1320	1981	4-5b	CS10
West Cliff Rifts	SY 679712	680	1983	4-5c	C&C22
(both MSG/WCC)					

Miscellaneous Areas

Fairy Holes, Saddleworth	SE 015047 150	1975	5b	MSG8
Diggle Wigglespit,	SE 017076 150	1975	3-5b	MSG8
Saddleworth				

References

CPC6a: A.Champion, 'A Back Door to Cliff Force Cave?' in Journal of the Craven Pothole Club Vol.6 No.2 (1980) 64-66.

CPC6b: S & P. Gough, 'Cliff Force Cave, Spar Shop Series' and P.F.Ryder 'Cliff Force Cave' in Journal of the Craven Pothole Club Vol.6 No.3 (1981) 131-134

BCRA2: P.F.Ryder, 'Phreatic Network Caves in Swaledale, Yorkshire', Trans. British Cave Research Asscn. Vol.2 No.4 (Dec.1975) 177-192

BCRA3: R.G.Cooper, P.F.Ryder & K.R.Solman, 'The North Yorkshire Windypits: a review' Trans. British Cave Research Asscn. Vol.3 No.2 (July 1976) 77-94

BCRA6: P.F.Ryder, 'Brightgate Cave, Snitterton, Derbyshire', Trans. British Cave Research Asscn Vol.6 No.1 (April 1979), 2.

C&H: R.G.Cooper & R.A.Halliwell: 'A relict karst feature in the Hambleton Hills, North Yorkshire' Proc.Yorks Geol.Soc.

C&C11: P.F.Ryder, 'Herne Hill Cave II, Maltby' (Northern News), Caves & Caving11 (Feb.1981), 6 & 26

C&C22: 'Fissures at Westcliffe, Isle of Portland', Caves & Caving22 (Nov.1983) 22-23.

CS9: R.G.Cooper. P.F.Ryder & K.R.Solman, 'The Windypits in Duncombe Park, Helmsley, North Yorkshire', Cave ScienceVol.9 No.1 (Feb.1982) 1-14

CS10: N.Graham & P.F.Ryder, 'Sandy Hole, Isle of Portland', Cave Science Vol.10 No.3 (Sept.1983) 172.

WP44. R.G.Cooper, 'Birk Bank Fissures, Caydale, North Yorkshire', William Pengelly Cave Studies Trust Newsletter44 (July 1984), 1-3



## SURVEYS IN SCOTLAND, WALES AND IRELAND

## Isle of Skye

Allt nan Leac Valley

Beinn an Dubhaich Cave	NG 589184	570	1978	5b-c	MSG10
Uamh Bocsa Leitranahaghin	587184	57	1978	3	MSG10
Camas Malag Caves	NG 584187	600+230	1979	4-5b	MSG10
Uamh Cinn Ghlinn	NG 601182	1230	1976	3-5c	MSG8
Claon Uamh	NG 598183	130	1971	5b	MSG5
Uamh Craobh Sheileach	NG 594184	70	1971	3	
Mud Slide Cave	NG 587184	82	1978	4b	
Uamh Sgeinne	NG 587184	350	1978	5b	MSG5
Water Slide Cave	NG 587184	44	1978	3b	MSG10

Coille Gaireallach

Uamh an Ard Achadh	NG 594197	1050	1973	5c	BCRA
Uamh Gloine Bhriste	NG 597198	100	1975	4b	MSG8
CG 17/18	NG 605195	80	1980	2-3	GSGB
CG 19/20	NG 605195	90	1980	2-3	GSGB
CG 25-27	NG 606195	85	1975	3	
Uamh an Cos Mointeachail	NG 609197	75	1975	2	MSG8
High Pasture Pot 2	NG 595196	35	1975	2	MSG8
Ivybush Resurgence Cave	NG 601198	60	1980	4b	GSGB
Lower Parnassus Cave	NG 606195	130	1982	3-4b	GSGB
Parnassus Cave	NG 606195	200	1975	3	BCRA
Uamh a'Phuill	NG 613021	75	1975	2-3	MSG8
Uamh Sgoilte	NG 601198	85	1973	2	BCRA
Uamh T-Shelf	NG 605196	80	1980	2-3	BCRA
Uamh an T'Sill	NG 602197	200	1973	4b	BCRA
Twisted Cave	NG 599196	30	1973	3	

Kilchrist Area

Kilchrist Caves	NG 614202	102+30	1976	5b	MSG8
Kilchrist Manse Cave	NG 616200	25	1976	2	MSG8

Other Areas

Allt na Pairte Cave	NG 626175	580	1978	4c	MSG10
(with Resurgence		70			
and Wildcat Cave		70)			
Breakish Cave	NG 671229	500	1982	5b	MSG11
Breakish Bridge Cave	NG 671229	270	1982	5b	MSG11
Frustration Hole	NG 635213	80	1980	4b	GSGB
(Ben Suardal)					
Skulamus Caves	NG 669229	70+48	1980	2-4b	GSGB
Vampire Cave	NG 583212	80	1978	4b	MSG10

Other Parts of Scotland

Uamh nam Breagaire	NG 717438	1718	1982	3-5b	MSG11
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## North Wales

Brasgyll Caves	SJ 006713 575	1980	4-5b	MSG11
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## Caves in Ireland

County KerryCastleisland

Crag House Cave System	2850	1981	4-5b	C&C15
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Kenmare Area

Cleady Cave	V 942724	400	1979	4-5b	MSG10
Finnihy River Cave	V 904707	220	1979	4-5b	MSG10
Tubbrid Caves	c.V 886702		1979	4-5b	MSG10
Tubbrid 1		60			
Tubbrid 2		40			
Dunkerron 1		90			
Walled Cave		110			
Confluence Cave		500			
(includes Shaky Hole		65)			
Skylight Cave		210			
Waterpump Cave		600			

(and area survey showing relative locations of caves)

Killarnay Area

Kilbeg Bay Caves	V 960861	1200	1981	4b	MSG11
Marsh Edge Caves	V 962863	350	1981	2	MSG11
Prospect Cave	V 958861	120	1979	3b	MSG10
Signpost Cave	V 962864	115	1979	5b	MSG10

County Waterford

Ballynacourty Quarry C.	X 195954	130	5b	1983	MSG11
Brothers Cave	X 156954	740	5b	1983	MSG11
Coanagoloor	X 156954	1050	5b	1983	MSG11

References

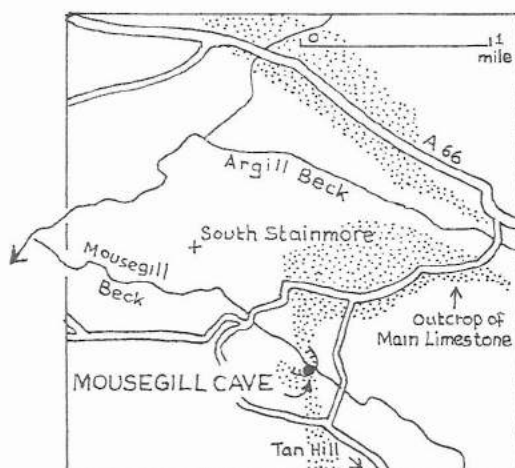
BCRA: P.F.Ryder, 'The Caves of the Beinn an Dubhaich Area, Isle of Skye', Trans. British Cave Research Assocn. Vol.1 no.2 (April 1974) p.101-124.

C&C15: P.F.Ryder 'Crag Cave' in Caves & Caving No.15 (Feb.1982)

GSGB: P.F.Ryder, 'MSG Expedition to the Isle of Skye, May 1980', Grampian Speleo Group Bulletin Vol.3 no.1 (Sep.1980), p.10-16

### MOUSEGILL CAVE, WEST STAINMORE.

Mousegill Beck is a feeder of the River Belah which drains the fells to the south of the west end of the Stainmore pass, flowing north-west to join Argill Beck below the hamlet of South Stainmore. The minor moorland road which runs from the main A66 southwards over the fells to Swaledale (via the Tan Hill Inn) crosses Mousegill at Mousegill Bridge, about 2.5km from the main road.



Below the bridge, the Beck flows along a narrow little valley with limestone appearing in its sides, before dropping over a waterfall into a wider and deeper ravine with some fine cliff scenery. The base of the Main Limestone is marked by a rising from the foot of the cliff on the south of the gorge, below which the stream cuts a steep course through lower beds to pass beneath Mousegill Low Bridge near the former Barras Station.

When first visited by Pete Ryder in the mid 1960's, the stream was found to be sinking in its bed at the base of the Main Limestone Gorge (subsequent investigation has shown that it sinks into old mine workings; where the water goes is uncertain). The rising just

above the sink, at NY 853119, was dismissed as unimportant, as part of the surface stream was sinking only a few metres away and it was thought that the underground course of the water was only a few metres long. The rising was admittedly from a low cave, just about enterable, but this was left 'for another day' when new caves 10m in length were worth the effort of getting changed for!

### The Exploration

Another day came, at last, on Saturday 28th August 1981. A large party of moldywarps, repulsed (as usual) by Swindale Pots, were returning south. It was a pleasant afternoon, and as we hadn't managed any discoveries at Swindale, we thought we might as well claim our 10m cave at Mousegill.

At first it looked as if we were to be denied even that. Despite the fact that the stream was this time found sinking in its bed as soon as it flowed onto the limestone, not far below the road (thus making a longer system a possibility), the rising cave closed to nothing two bodylengths in. Just round the corner was an obvious alcove in the cliff foot, containing what Pete had remembered as a blind pool.

The pool was still there, but was not blind. By crawling into it, one could see a low and gloomy canal passage leading off one corner. Richard Gibson and Pete Collins plunged into the icy water, and with much splashing and joyful exclamations soon passed out of earshot. Mousegill Cave had been found, with hardly any effort at all.

Pete Ryder contemplated the low canal. He didn't have a wet suit on, a good excuse for discretion, and so retreated slowly up the gorge to tell the rest of the party the good news. As he scrambled up the dry waterfall he heard voices, not on the surface but from beneath his feet, an interesting phenomenon. Shouting established contact with the explorers underground, and heaving boulders from a narrow rift half way up the fall revealed a narrow rift with Richard at the bottom. The rift was both narrow and jagged, but aided by lump hammering from above Richard extruded himself into the daylight. Pete Collins, at his heels, made a valiant attempt to exit but couldn't quite make it, so retreated the way he had come back to the entrance.

A considerable length of new cave was obviously on the cards now, and by the next morning an assault force had been marshalled. The Gibson/Collins duo, aided by Alison Buchanan, were the exploratory spearhead, followed up by Geoff Tryon and Pete Ryder surveying. The spearhead reached the base of the Upper Entrance shaft and were soon thrutching around in constricted dry passages beyond. The surveyors worked their way up to where the main stream entered from a boulder choke. Here Pete Ryder found an oxbow tube obstructed by chert ledges, which looked as if it might bypass the choke. In the unaccustomed role of 'pusher', and with the aid of the hammer, he quarried his way through into a thoroughly appetising passage, the Grand Canal, 1.2m high and 2m wide. Alas, the easy going was short-lived, as the passage divided into narrow rifts. Richard was summoned, and made 6m of progress into one, but no easy way on was apparent. The sink, we realised, was still 2-300m away.

The third trip to the cave was on the evening of 13th November, by Graham Stevens (enticed out of retirement) and Pete Ryder. Thankfully the weather was mild and water levels low for the time of year - even so, the stream was flowing over the waterfall to sink only briefly in the floor of the gorge. The entrance canal was distinctly aqueous. Graham pushed another constricted passage off the Grand Canal, but reached a constriction he didn't fancy, whilst Pete attempted to find the dry passages beyond the Upper Entrance; so much water was crashing down here from the stream bed above that he was forced to retreat. Further winter trips were thought inadvisable.

On Saturday 24th July 1982, in dry and clement weather, Richard, Alisomn and Pete Ryder returned again. Once more the stream was sinking well above the main gorge. The constricted high level series beyond the Upper Entrance was relocated, and surveyed, but proved to end in a definite impassé. Sadly the cave was vacated.

Thus the exploration rested for four years, until one day in September 1986 when Richard brought his friend Keith Bentham (Eldon Pothole Club) to show Keith how exciting caves outside Derbyshire could be. The constriction in the tight side passage off the Grand Canal, which Graham hadn't fancied in 1981, in fact proved to be to Richard's taste (although Keith had to be left on the entrance side of it) and rejoined the streamway; about 20m of passage were explored to a constriction that needed digging. One 1987 attempt to pass this has been thwarted by unsettled weather; at the time of writing this a new assault is planned for the very near future....

### Description of the Cave

Mousegill Cave is quite a typical Northern Dales stream cave, developing as a subterranean oxbow to a surface beck. The passages show the usual phreatic origin and vadose modification, and are generally fairly small.

The actual rising, as already mentioned, is impenetrable after 4m, the water flowing through tiny rifts from the pool just inside the entrance to the cave proper.

The cave entrance is a crawl over a boulder (with rather shattered rock above - care!) into a little chamber, where one must slide into 0.6m of cold water. The canal which follows, 'Wet Whiskers Wallow', becomes a near-duck if water is flowing into the Upper Entrance. After 6m a sharp turn l. and a short flat-out crawl lead through into easier going, a hands-and-knees crawl in shallow water which rounds several bends. 27m from the entrance a 3-way junction is reached - a rising rift on the l. here ends in boulders close to the surface stream bed, and a narrow passage on the r. leads to a tube which doubles back on itself to end in constricted tubes close to the choke on the main streamway,

From the junction, the stream passage continues through a short sideways crawl (Near Squeak) into a larger section where some collapse is apparent, with several inlets from the nearby stream bed in the l. wall. On the r. the stream cascades down from a choke, but straight ahead is an obvious way on. This immediately divides; on the l. is an opening into a quite sizeable chamber (by Mousegill standards - one can almost stand up!) and straight on is a hole into a tube running at right angles. This is most easily reached by turning l. towards the chamber and then doubling back.

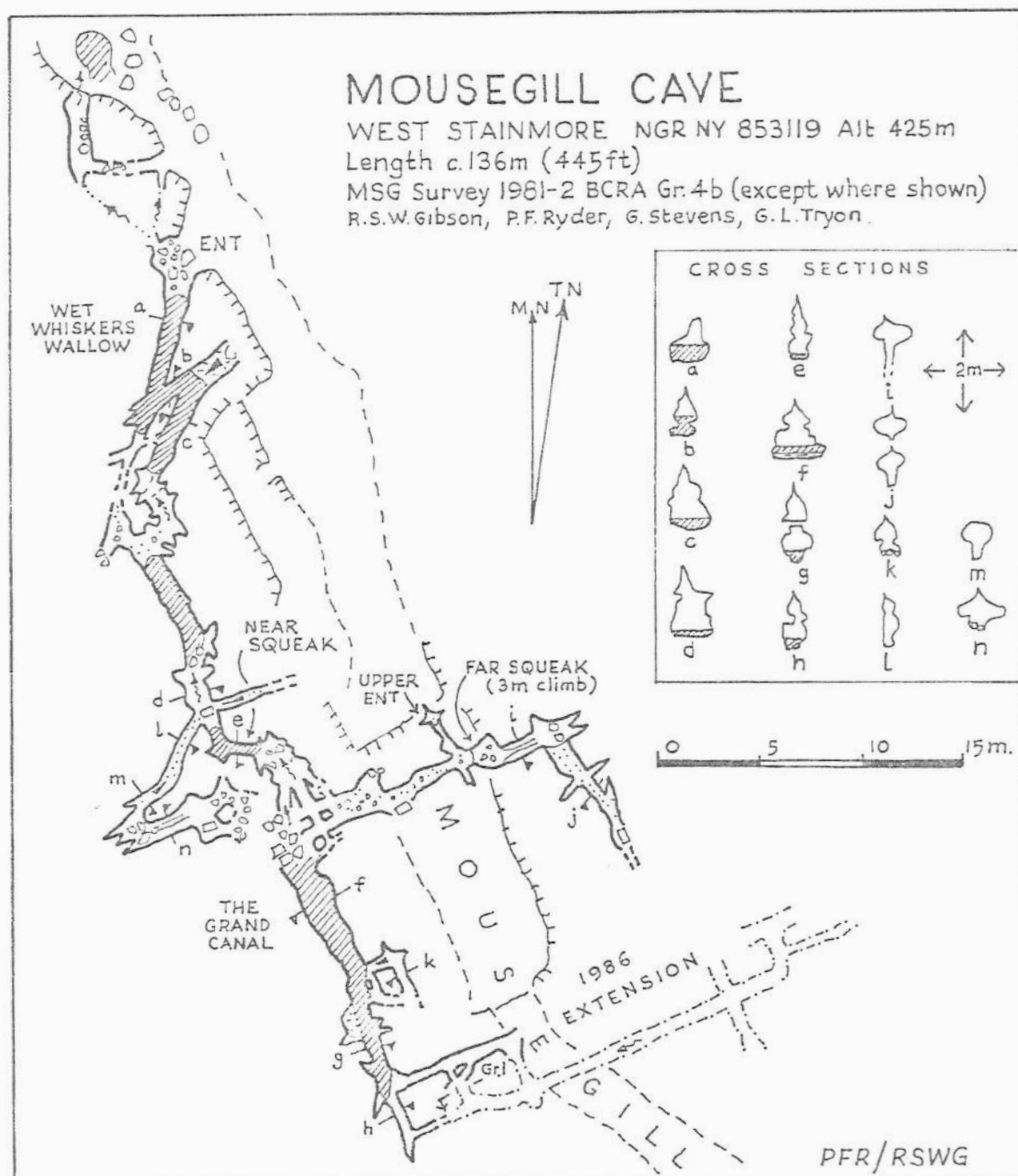
This tube, not over tight, bypasses the boulder choke and opens onto the Grand Canal, 10.5m of easy crawl suddenly narrowing to a rift which ends after 6m in an impossibly sharp turn l. Before this is a narrow side passage on the l., leading to a tight squeeze on the r. into the 1986 Extension. This rejoins the streamway beyond the impassable bend. Upstream is about 20m of easy crawl, with some small side passages, to a dogleg l. where some excavation is required; negotiable passage can be glimpsed beyond. The extension has not been surveyed yet.

Returning to the chamber where one can almost stand up, a floor-level squeeze opens into a 3m high rift which after 4m ends in another floor-level thrutch into a cross joint. On the l. is a short rift to dim daylight at the foot of the Upper Entrance shaft, a 5m climb-cum-squeeze for the very slim only. The main way on is a rather constricted 3m climb up (Far Squeak) into a tiny chamber and a continuing elliptical tube with a narrow but deep floor rift. This drops into a little bouldery cavity with just enough room to turn round, and then continues to the r. for 2.5m to a 'sit-up' chamber (if it deserves that term) from which two tubes continue, both on the same joint. The lower one becomes too tight almost at once; the upper, reached by climbing up 1m, can be squeezed along for 4m to a big fallen block which effectively fills the passage. The tube can be glimpsed continuing beyond, but no access seems possible.



Whether this little dry series, 3m in level above the main stream passage, is an old route of the Mousegill water (perhaps re-uniting with the active passage further in) or a separate inlet remains a mystery. The obvious multi-phase development seen in the final bit of passage is intriguing. Persons of larger-than-average build will need a very keen interest in cave geomorphology to make a visit worthwhile.

Surveyed length of Mousegill Cave currently stands at 116m (380ft); with the unsurveyed 1986 Extension the total passage length must be around 136m (445ft).



## T A I L P I E C E

A survey carried out a few years ago by (I think) *Descent* magazine showed that the average caver only caved for two years, and that the cause of his demise was the influence of a woman.... Without being chauvinist or sexist, it must be admitted that there is some weight of evidence to back up this statement. Those who fall victim to such a fate can take comfort in that they are far from being alone; the inevitable can be accepted gracefully. There are a number of organisations willing to assist those who find this transition difficult: we here reproduce a letter from one of the best known, written to a caver on the threshold of matrimonial commitment.

Exwarp Self-Help Agency  
St Norbert's Buildings,  
Clapham-sub-Mendip

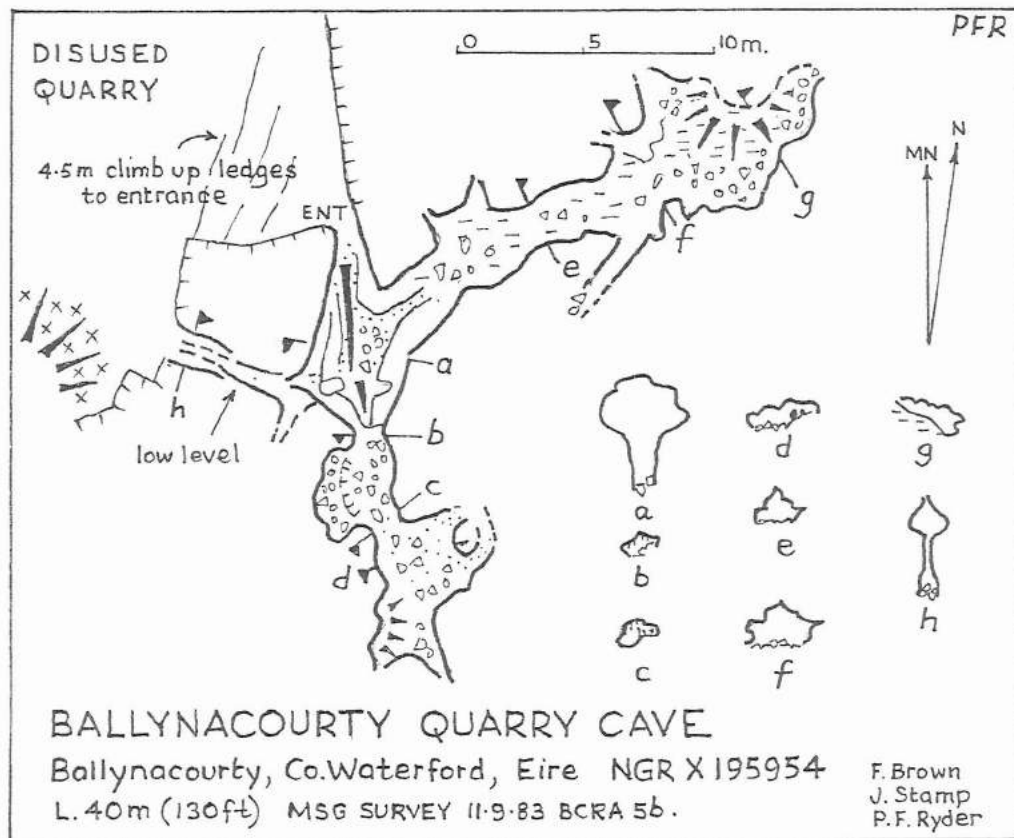
Dear .....

As you will recall, we have corresponded with you in the past, encouraging your attempts to give up the unpleasant and anti-social subterranean habits to which, as you freely admit, you have been prone for some years. However, we can now write to congratulate you (even though you may no longer require our professional services); you have of your own volition taken what most of our clients find to be the final step in freeing yourself from your complaint. We applaud your strength, strength to sublimate your basic speleological instincts to something altogether nobler and higher. Do not think of what you have lost, the fellowship of muddied and neoprened oafs and of the undiscovered caverns left for the next generation. You can now look to new challenges; hands that clung to electron ladders or wielded crowbars and trowels can now try their skill at embroidery and indoor basket weaving, pent-up energies can be released in manly sports such as scrabble and carpet bowls, and fading muscles can be re-exercised in assembling *AVF* bookshelves and putting washing on lines.

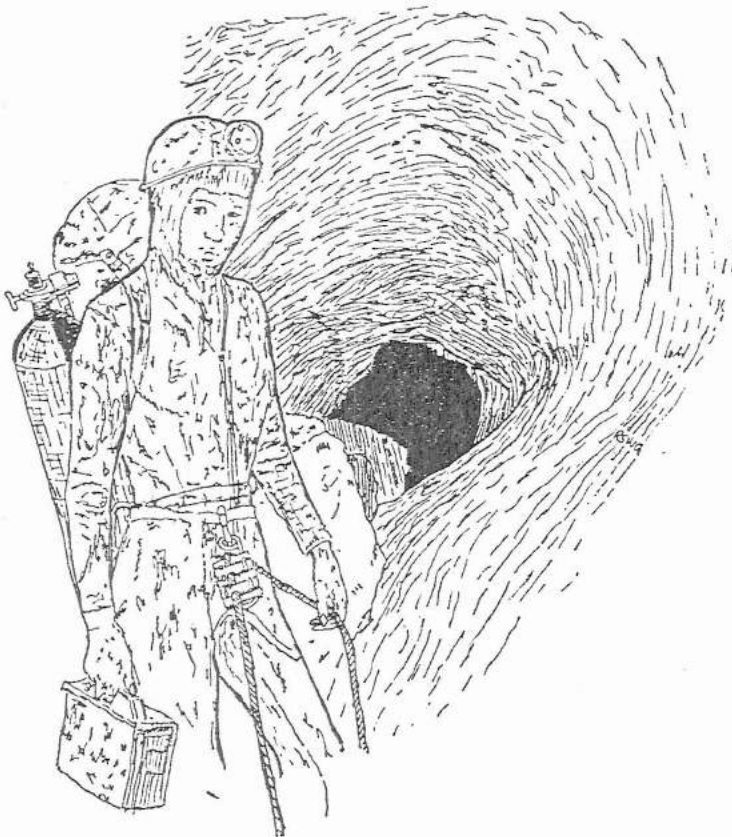
You can still polish your carbide lamp - then hang it on the drawing room wall (when visitors enquire about it, you have the chance to verbally enunciate your renouncement; it helps); the entrenching tool will come in useful turning over the flower bed before you plant the nasturtiums; your helmet, inverted, will serve to catch the drips from that leak in the garage roof, or could even fulfil a valuable function under the bed; the wet suit will come into its own when you dress up as a porpoise for Algernon and Beatrice's annual fancy dress party. Nothing, either of the skills you wrested from the bowels of Britain's limestone uplands, nor of the equipment you used, need be wasted in your brave new domestic life.

And in conclusion may we offer you one more thought which may shine for you like a beacon in the coming days; you can now look forward to a venerable white-haired old age when you relax in your favourite armchair, children and grandchildren gambolling around your feet. You can tell *them* tales of the caverns measureless to man which you explored, the thousands of feet of fill you dug from choked shafts, the Hard Level Gill Master Cave, the appalling boulder chokes you wriggled through, and how you used to dive sumps on your motorbike. *They* might believe you...

Yours surfficially,  
P.R. Awelom.  
P.R. Awelom (Manager)



for description see p.19



Thanks to Napper  
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this journal would  
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