

KERRY - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Ballymacelligott Caves
Other names used for site	O'Brennan Caves, Ballymacelligott Cave System
IGH THEME	IGH1 Karst
TOWNLAND(S)	Carrignafeela, Lissouleen, Ballinknock, Kilquane
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Tralee
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	30
ITM CO-ORDINATES	440015E 614285N (Pollatouirt, in centre of system)
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	71
GSi BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO.	21
GIS CODE	KY014

Outline Site Description

The cave system at Ballymacelligott is an excellent, extensive set of cave passages, totalling approximately 1,400 m in length.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The caves are formed within pure bedded Lower Carboniferous (Mississippian, 359–323 million years old) limestone of the Cracoean Reef Member, which crops out in a relatively narrow band to the east of Tralee. Cave development potentially dates to the Palaeogene / Neogene Periods (Tertiary).

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

The Ballymacelligott Caves are the most significant of the numerous caves set in the limestone-floored valley between Tralee and Castleisland, and comprise a major stream passage running parallel to the River Lee, and some chamber offshoots.

The cave system has been surveyed and documented by numerous geologists and cavers in the past, the first as early as the 1950s. The cave contains fine speleothems, mudbank sediments and a variety of passage morphologies.

A short streamlet offshoot of the main River Lee sinks initially into Pouldermot, at the northern end of the cave system. Pouldermot is a large, steep-sided depression and has several entrances into a large cave chamber. A meandering passage extends southwestwards from this chamber and intersects a number of collapse dolines. These dolines, Poulmagroun and Poulclashcannon, with their associated boulder ruckles and blockages, provide other entrances to the cave system.

Further south, Poulatouirt, Poulakeel, Poll a dó, and Pollsalach are shakeholes and / or dolines which provide more entrances to the main, long cave passage. South of Pollsalach the water depth increases in the underground passage, and a 50 m section of the cave system has not been explored. The stream water then wells up from a hole in the stream bed in the garden of a private house, known as the Kilquane Rising, and the stream flows south for a few hundred metres before rejoining the main River Lee.

Site Importance – County Geological Site

The caves are significant as they are the most extensive cave network in the limestones around the 'vale' of Tralee.

Management/promotion issues

Although a visible and known local landmark, the Ballymacelligott Caves are on private land and promotion could only be considered with the co-operation of numerous landowners. Due to the dangers and fragility of the cave environment, underground exploration is not recommended for anyone, except in the company of experienced and equipped cavers.



Speleothems, including stalactites, stalagmites and flowstone, in the depths of Pouldermot. The chamber is just 1m high here.



The streamlet offshoot River Lee sinking into karstified limestone near Pouldermot.



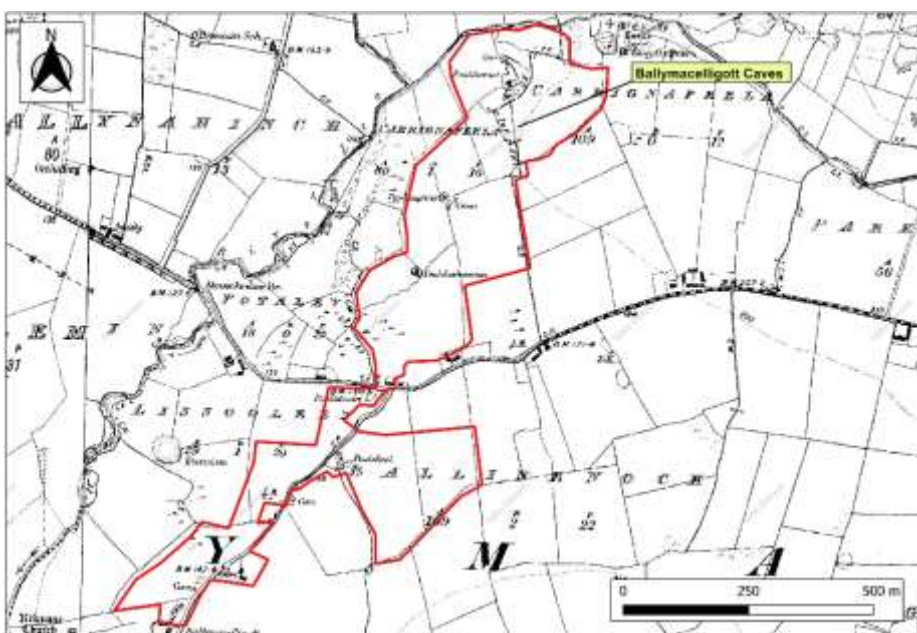
The low entrance to Pouldermot at the northern end of the cave system.

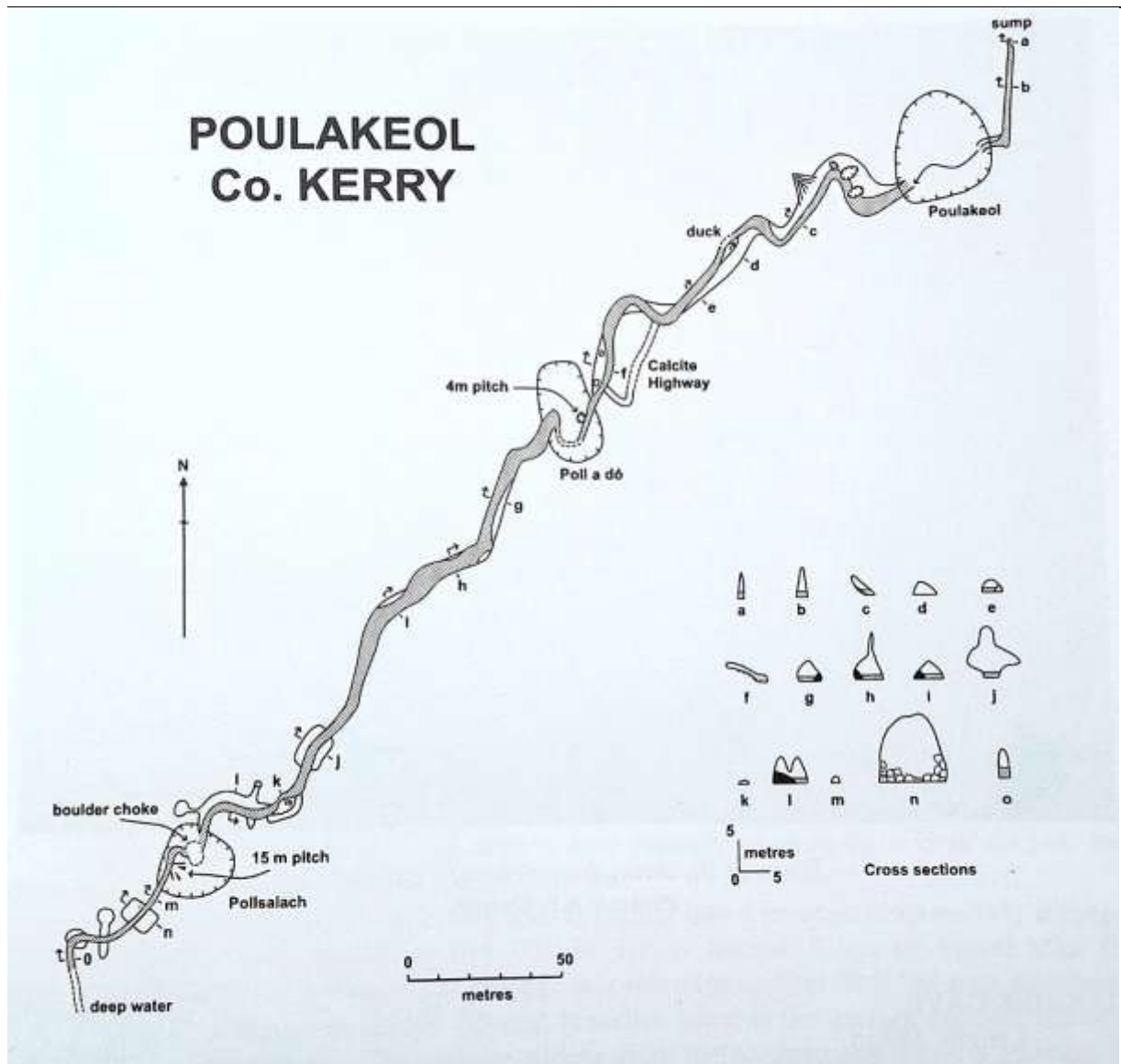


The entrance to the cave system *via* the collapse doline at Pollnagroun.



The Kilquane Rising at the southern end of the caves, in a private garden.





The cave survey of Poulakeol among the Ballymacelligott Caves.