

PLYMOUTH CAVING GROUP

**NEWSLETTER AND JOURNAL
NUMBER 119**

WINTER 1993/94

Matienzo 1993

We went once more as is our wont to Matienzo this summer to rest in the valley surrounded by limestone mountains, and possibly visit some caves. I had two pleasant visits to Cubio de la Renada (literally lair of the fox) and on the second was very pleased to be successful at route finding. This is a great boost as in the future I will be able to go in and do some straight forward surveying. Many of the early Matienzo survey note books were not kept which is a great pity. All newly surveyed material is entered directly onto a giant data base. (912 caves / 160+ kilometres!) Andy Quin has completed an undergraduate thesis on magnetic sediment alignment. Steve Openshwa is starting work on Stalagmite magnetic measurements.

Much of the expedition passed me by as I felt that some of the squeezes and SRT were a bit too much to take on. However my cousin Peter had organised a guided caving trip to Ojo Guarena which is Spain's longest cave system. A party of 20 from Matienzo were led by a team of five from the Burgos Speleological Society. In five hours we visited 5km of the 94km system. It is impossible to describe the route totally from memory due to the complexity of the system. From the entrance we marched along very large passages to the bottom of a pitch up to the surface. From here along more large passages we went to a phreatic maze, streamway, and a gigantic chamber known as Black Chamber as lights cannot penetrate it. Diverse other routes lead us to a very well decorated section, and cave paintings of various era. These were very good showing several different types from a series of black dots, to 'traditional' pictures of animal outlines, and some strange slogans which may have been modern political slogans, triangles in squares and the like. After some 5 hours we made our way back out into the spectacular scenery, drove around to look at an alternative sink, and then returned to Matienzo.

The French Speleological Society de Dijon camp at La Gandara which is a village just beyond the spectacular Ason Gorge, some 10 miles south of Matienzo. Contact used to be made every year, but with changing generations of cavers this has lapsed. This year however Peter received an invitation to the 'MUSS' to join Dr Pierre Castin's 80th birthday party celebrations one Saturday afternoon. This was a tres jolly affair, with speeches, presents, presentations between the two mayors, and seemingly endless bordeaux, burgundy and chablis. We left after three hours feeling that we had been well feted, leaving most of the French outside under trees with empty wine glasses falling from drunken fingers. After the afternoons drinking we were thirsty so stopped off for a few beers at various hostelryes on the way back to Matienzo.

For the rest the expedition clocked up 6.5km of new caves and was generally very successful

R Cawthorne.