

At the lowest part of the restaurant inside the lava cave is a particularly sensitive site where very rare blind albino crabs live in an underground pool.

Cueva Los Verdes was opened in 1964 and is a show cave built inside the lava cave. The show cave has an underground concert hall and the usual guided tours.

If you follow the path of the lava cave west towards Montana Corona, on Google Earth, from these two sites you will see several holes where the lava cave is open to the surface again. The hole near the bend in the road about 1.25 km northwest of Cueva Los Verdes is easily accessible and provides entrances to the lava cave in both directions. We followed the section that leads east towards the show cave. The entrance is very large about 20m in diameter and is popular with climbers, offering some challenging climbs on solid rock. Most of the exposed rock on Lanzarote is far from stable and not suitable for climbing.

The lava cave continues for about one kilometre before you reach a fenced off research site that prevents further progress towards the show cave. The cave is a single tube that varies in size from 10-20m. Although the cave is easy to explore with only a couple of easy climbs, it is very hot and contains a lot of unpleasant white volcanic ash dust, which is difficult to walk on and a pair of walking poles proved very useful! After an hour exploring the eastern cave we did not have enough time or energy to explore the western cave, which should provide a through trip to the next entrance.

Charlie Bird

Matienzo—50 Years of Speleology

The first British caving expedition to the Matienzo depression was led by Lank Mills in 1970. Forty years later it therefore seemed appropriate to commemorate that anniversary. However, as Spanish exploration of the area had begun some ten years before the British expeditions, it was decided to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Speleology in Matienzo in 2010.

Expeditions have been held every year since 1970, and currently they involve intense periods of exploration at Easter and in the summer, with smaller-scale visits throughout the year. As well as the hundreds



The Derbyshire Fluffies entertaining the crowd outside the Bar de German on the Sunday afternoon.

Mary Rooney

of British cavers who have taken part over the years, cavers from Spain, Denmark, Slovakia, Sweden, Holland and Italy have shared the exploration of several large systems and many smaller ones: the Matienzo web-site (www.matienzo.org.uk) now lists over 3400 sites of speleological interest. The longest systems in the area are the **Four Valleys System** (54km), **Cueva Vallina** (31.7km) and the **South Vega System** (31.6km).

The anniversary celebrations began on June 12th with a one-day event at the Dalesbridge Centre in the Yorkshire Dales, which kindly offered a discounted rate. It was attended by over 100 people who were able to view a display of cave photos and surveys, and listen to lectures on the cave systems, the history of how the expeditions began, the geomorphology and archaeology of the Matienzo depression and cave-diving in the area. There was a tortilla competition, and the day finished with a "stomp" and a raffle to raise funds for the anniversary celebrations.

The events continued in Matienzo on August 7th and 8th. The main centre for these was a hired marquee, where the display of photos

and surveys was installed. The weekend included a full programme of activities, which were attended by about 80 Brits, an estimated 250 locals and a small number of the original Spanish cavers in Matienzo in the 1960s. Some of the highlights on the Saturday were children's games and activities including a Tyrolean ropeway, a barbecue where the expedition invited the villagers of Matienzo to lunch, a tortilla competition (this time the Brits could not compete with local skills!), a duck race and a tug-of-war between several British and Spanish teams. During a break in the evening dance, speeches were made and Pablo (from Bar de Germán) was presented with a gift in thanks for all the help he and his family have given the expeditions ever since they began.

On Sunday morning, 18 local children were taken on a caving trip in **Cubío de la Reñada**, there was a mid-day dance, and the celebrations ended in the afternoon with a Matienzo versus England football match – which (naturally) was won by Matienzo.



Inside the Marquee—the poster display and entries for the tortilla competition!

Nigel Dibben



The start of the Duck Race on the slow-flowing river that re-surges from the Cueva Cuevona.

Nigel Dibben

Both events, in Yorkshire and Matienzo, were graced by a display by the Fluffies, the Derbyshire Caving Club dancing team!

Memorabilia were produced and sold during the events, including tee-shirts, mugs and car stickers. Above all, a book in English and Spanish was published, edited by Juan Corrin and Peter Smith. *Matienzo 50 Years of Speleology/50 años de la espeleología* with contributions by over 30 authors, and it describes all the caving activity that has taken place in this time, as well as specific chapters on the cave-diving, geology, geomorphology and archaeology in the area. It was published together with an A1-size geological map and a DVD with videos, photographs and additional texts.

This book was joint winner of the 2010 Tratman Award for the best UK caving publication.



The British and Spanish football teams enjoy the moment with 'mine host' - Pablo (4th from right back row). The Brits used to lose when a match was held regularly in the '70s and 80's. This match was no exception.

Nigel Dibben

The William Pengelly Cave Studies Trust has taken an active part in the Matienzo expeditions through the participation of its members, most notably Bob Cawthorne who, together with his wife Julie, was very active in raising funds for the summer event. The Trust also made a donation towards the costs of the anniversary. Its journal *Studies in Speleology* has published papers on some of the scientific work carried out in Matienzo such as a study of the magnetic susceptibility of cave sediments and some of the archaeological finds made in the caves.

The expeditions continue. Important new finds are still being made in the area: **Torca la Vaca** at 13.7km long is one of the biggest recent discoveries. There is little doubt that the beauty of the area and its caves will go on attracting visitors for many years to come.

Pete Smith