

Matienzo Caves Expedition 2020



Torca de la Corcada
Galería a 125m de profundidad

Cave exploration during 2020

This report covers the expedition speleological work in the permit area 17 shown in figure 1 below. This area changed in 2020. It removed Entrambasaguas west of the CA-651 and instead included Ribamontan al Monte south of the A-8 autopista. In addition to this municipality the permit area covers Solorzano, Entrambasaguas east of the CA-651 and Ruesga north of Cruz Usano. The permit also covers work in Cueva Vallina which was proved to link hydrologically with the South Vega system in Matienzo in 2016.

This report covers the period from November 2019 to October 2020. However, the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in the Easter expedition being cancelled in compliance with advice from the Federación. In consideration of the serious Covid-19 situation in the UK and Spain we decided to limit any summer expedition to a small Covid-19 safe format

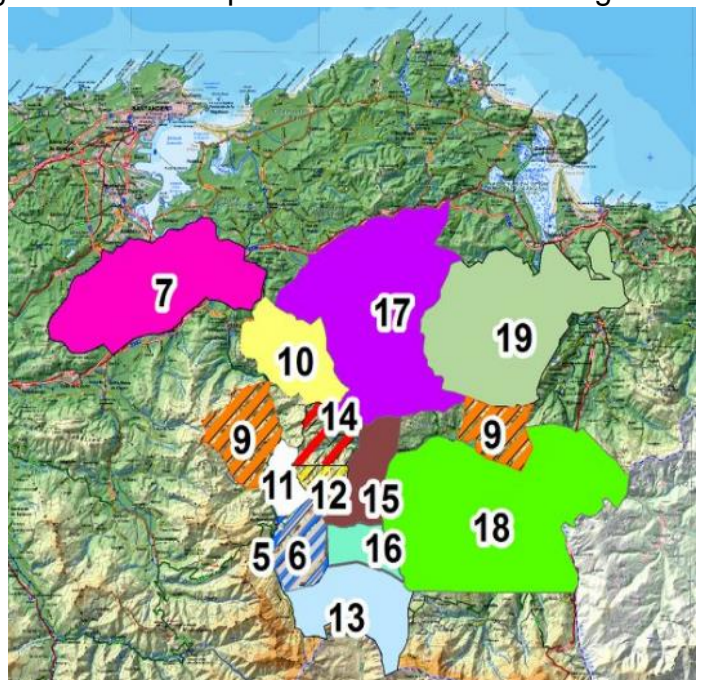


Fig 1
Expedición Británica_área de permiso para el 2020

and to cancel the 60th anniversary celebrations that had been planned. This meant the expected 50+ people from the UK and elsewhere who had planned to attend, mostly postponed or cancelled their travel. In the event of the ten cavers who still planned to travel in the summer, only a few managed to get to Spain in July before the UK Foreign Office changed its advice to “only essential travel” to Spain, coupled with imposed quarantine requirements on the return to the UK. This stopped the rest of the group travelling. One of the most important barriers being the cancellation of insurance cover if not already in Spain, due to the Foreign Office advice (the situation has now changed, and caving insurance can be obtained even if UK Government travel limitations are in force).

Given the small number of cavers able to be in Matienzo this report is much shorter than normal reflecting the limited exploration activity. We hope we are able to resume more normal activity in 2021 if Covid-19 levels and restrictions allow.

In total 52 new sites were identified and just under 300m of cave surveyed including over 100m of large new passage in Torca de la Corcada (site 0780). A number of sites were worked on and pushed with open leads left for exploration when more members and back-up are available in 2021. A significant extension was made in October 2020 in Cueva Vallina II where over 150m of new streamway and fossil passages were found – this find is still to be surveyed.

Scientific Studies

Most scientific work was curtailed by the Covid-19 situation, we hope work on hydrology and the Karst Entomology Project will resume in 2021. A limited amount of work on the project being led by Dr Peter Wynn of Lancaster University looking at nitrate levels over time was carried out with some water and soil samples taken for analysis in the UK.

Work to study the colony of bats in Cueva de las Palomas (4004) continued at Christmas when detectors were setup to record activity. Horseshoe bats were seen flying around the entrance chamber. At the top entrance to Cueva-Cubío de la Reñada both Lesser and Greater Horseshoe bats were seen resting and flying inside the entrance. Due to not being able to travel it was not possible to continue the work at Easter or in the summer, however detectors were recovered. Their content is currently being examined. We hope work on this project will continue next year. The Bat Project is explained in the following web-page where outcomes of the research will be posted - <http://matienzocaves.org.uk/science/Bats/index.htm>

Matienzo Caves - Newly surveyed caves and passages 2020					
Cave	Name	Area	Previous length surveyed (m)	New length (m)	Extra length surveyed (m)
0780	Torca de la Corcada	Seldesuto	307	417	110
4772	La Sima Grande de las Calzadillas	La Calzadillas	0	98	98
0096	Cueva Vecina	La Secada	0	44	44
191	Torca de la Llave	Alisas	0	23	23
193	Shaft	Alisas	0	14	14
5036	Cueva de Covachera	Villanueva	0	9	9
Total New Cave Surveyed					298

Detailed Information on explorations made in 2020

A few sites and finds that were of low significance and were not accurately surveyed are not listed here, but all details are available on our web site (<http://matienzocaves.org.uk>).

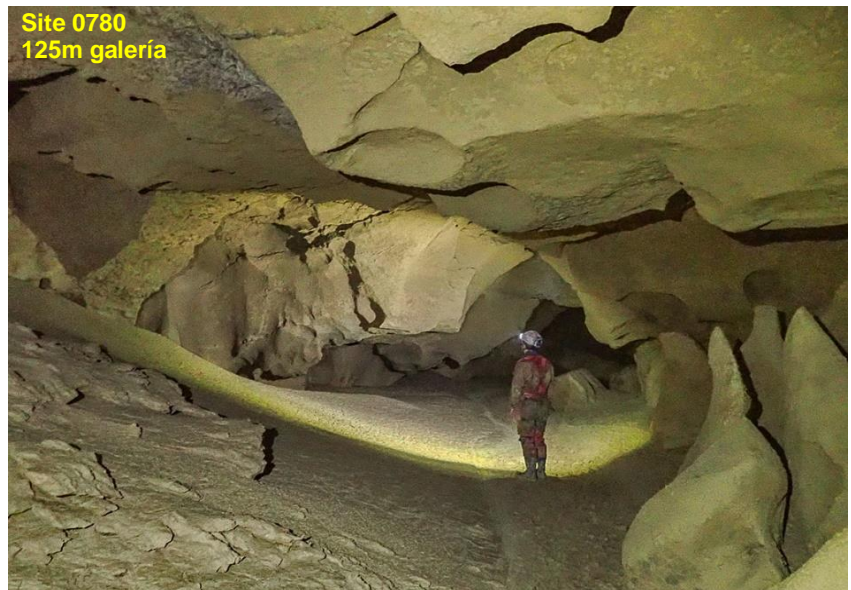
Southern Sector (Vallina, South Vega, Alisas, North Vega, La Colina and Ozana)

In **Cueva Vallina (0733)** two exceptionally long trips were made in October 2020 that pushed and extended the eastern inlet off of New York City Galeria. The team managed to pass the boulder choke to continue upstream to a high waterfall. Before the waterfall, an oxbow meander was climbed for 40m to reach a large fossil chamber, other oxbows were checked out, but they did not go.

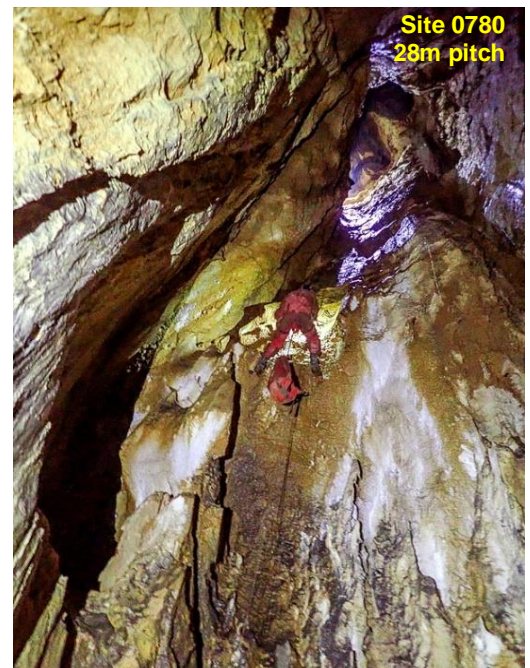
On the second trip the team climbed the waterfall finding it to be 12m high and then pushed upstream finding about 120m of meandering streamway. This significant find is still to be surveyed and pushed further.

Last year at **Seldesuto** the Active Route in Torca de Corcada (0780) was pushed down a 28m drop into a large chamber with a boulder choke. This year this choke was passed through the boulders into a large passage at 265m altitude some 125m below the entrance. This significant extension brings the cave to over 400m in length. Corcada is in a significant area

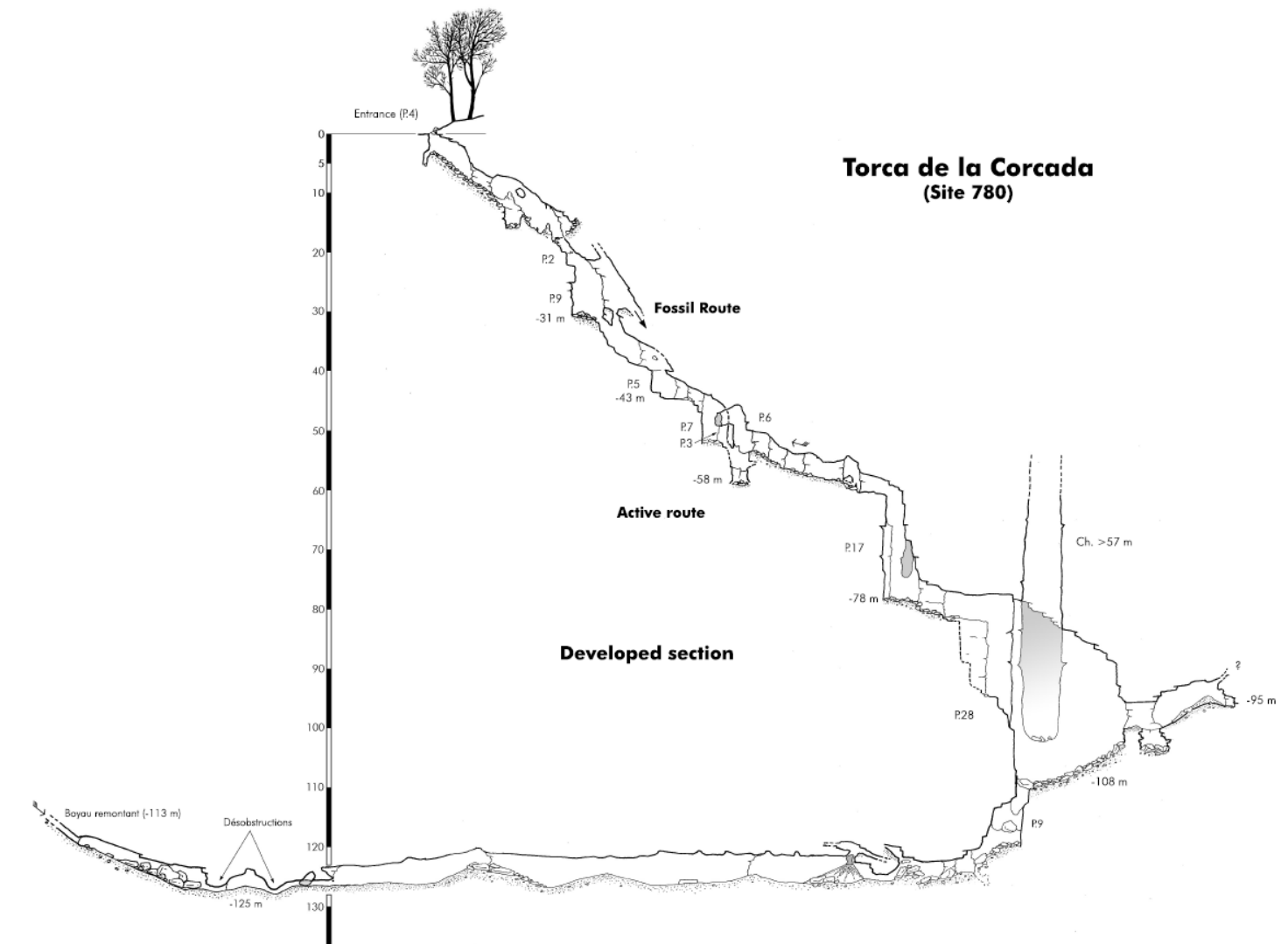
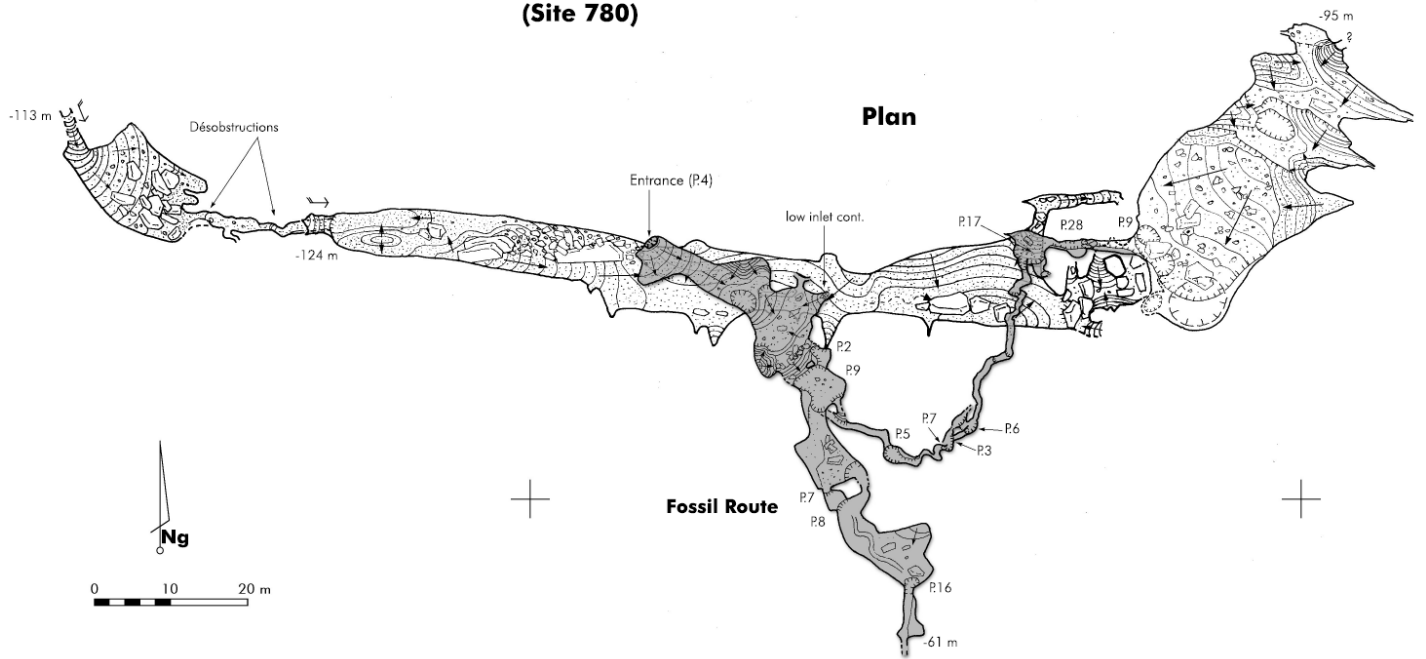
between the current end of Cueva-Cubío de la Reñada and Cueva del Arenal (0035) and their proven feeder streams in Cueva Vallina (0733) and Torca del Hoyón



(0567). The cave is also 250m to the south of Torcón de la Calleja Rebollo (0258). This new gallery is at the same altitude where there is significant development in all the surrounding caves mentioned above.



Torca de la Corcada (Site 780)



In **South Vega**, a lot of mainly surface work was undertaken checking on location of sites that were found and located before we had GPS. Eight new sites were found, of these 5049 was found to be 16m deep to a choked floor, 5050 was 14m deep to a floor with a small rift going on at bottom. Site 5054 was just 3m deep and 6m long and situated above the 30m long cave 1055. Site 1053 was descended 4m to a choked floor with a slightly draughting narrow rift that seems to drop a



few metres further but needs work to gain entry. In site 5052 a slightly draughting bedding cave just above the floor some 4m down needs a further look and excavation. Cave 5009 is a 7m long

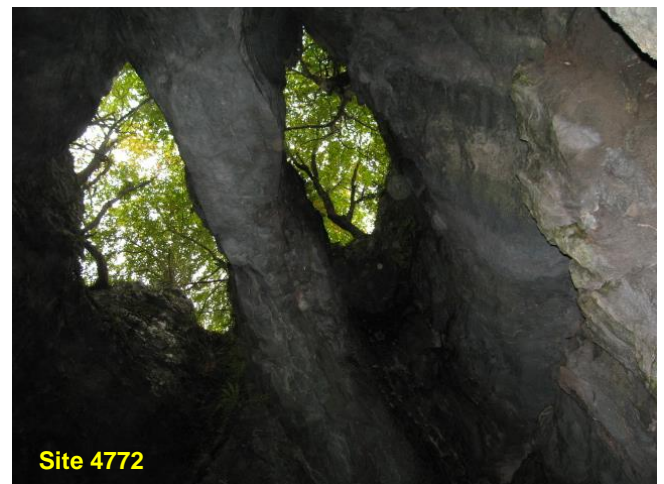
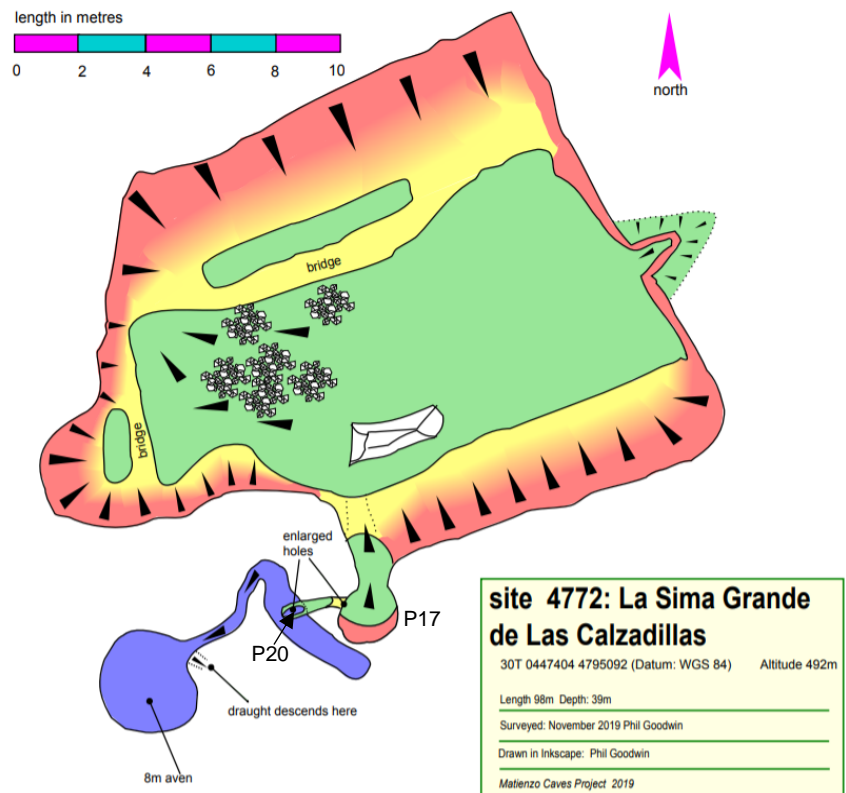
and 4m deep blind cave.



At **Las Calzadillas**, La Sima Grande de Las Calzadillas consists of a large open 20m deep pot with rock bridges to the north, west and south. An excavated crawl below the 17m entrance pitch goes via a small passage to a 20m pitch and climb into a chamber with a choked floor and an aven above. This cave was surveyed, and the plan is shown here.

Just off the main Alisas-Cavada road site a draughting dig (5004) was opened up but it now requires a thin person to negotiate a tight bend.

Several other sites in the Las Calzadillas area were checked for correct locations, and two new sites that require digging were recorded, others including 2862 were choked with low potential.



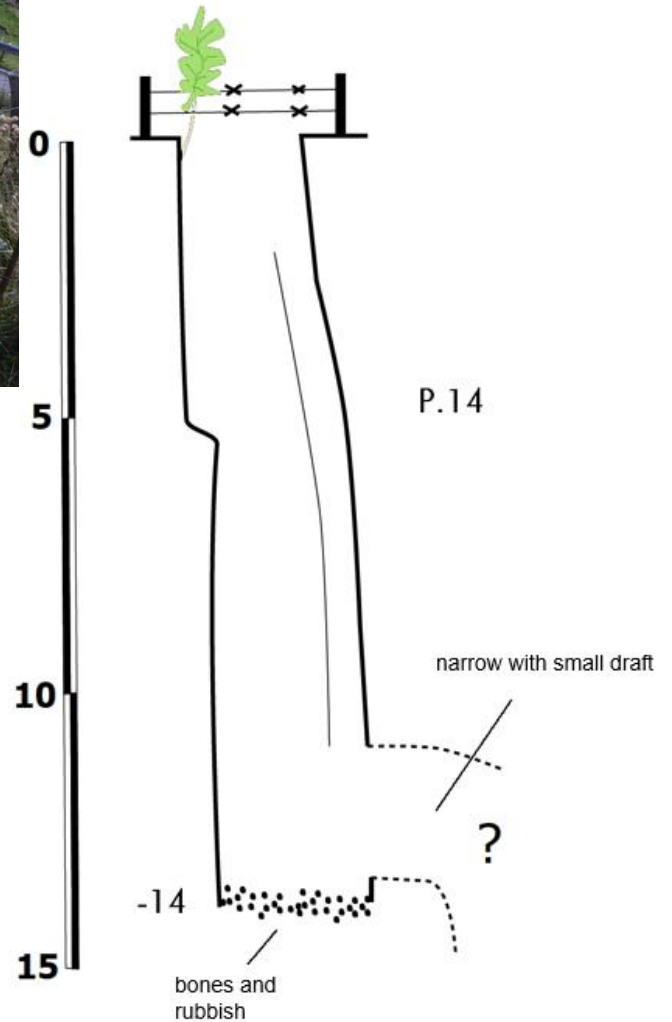
At **Alisas Area** two known shafts, Torca de la Llave (0191) and a nearby shaft (0193), were checked out with our French colleagues for possible extensions, but no easy prospects were found, but site 0193 had a narrow fissure continuing with a slight draft. Both sites were surveyed.



Site 193

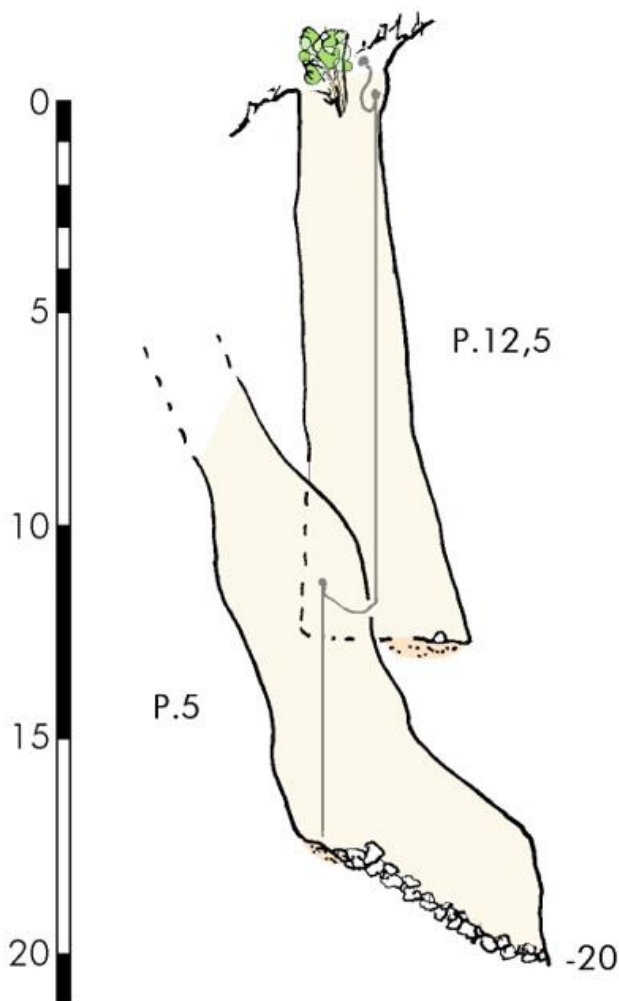
Torca
Magin Ulises
May 2020

n° 193 MCP
n° 2440 SCD



Torca de la Llave

MCP n° 191
SCD n° 2442



G Simonnot, May 2020



Site 191

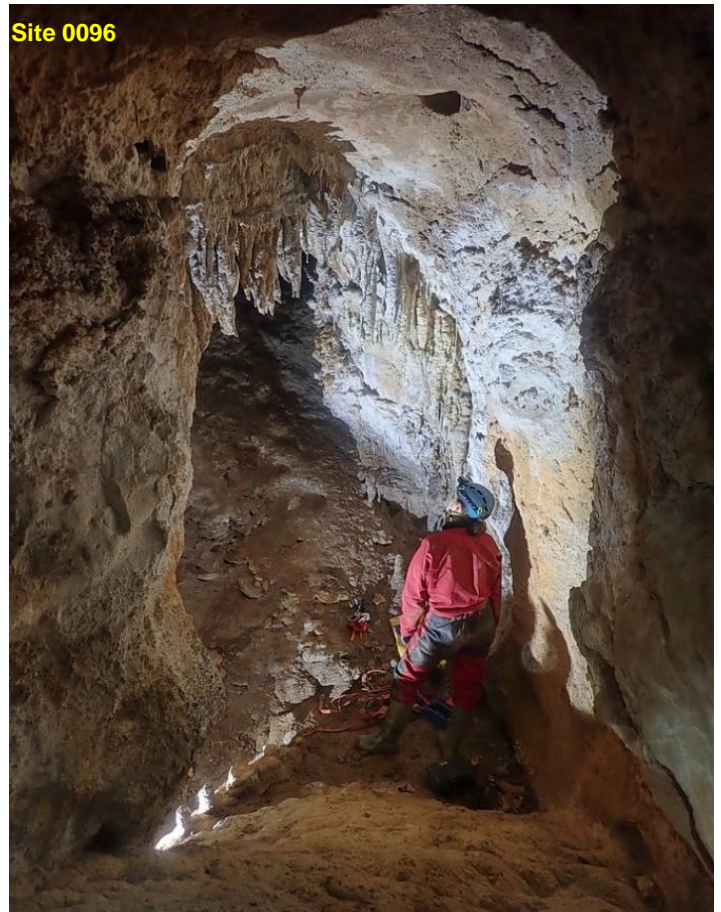
The Northeast Sector and The Four Valleys System

In **La Secada**, Cueva Vecina (0096) was surveyed and checked out for possible



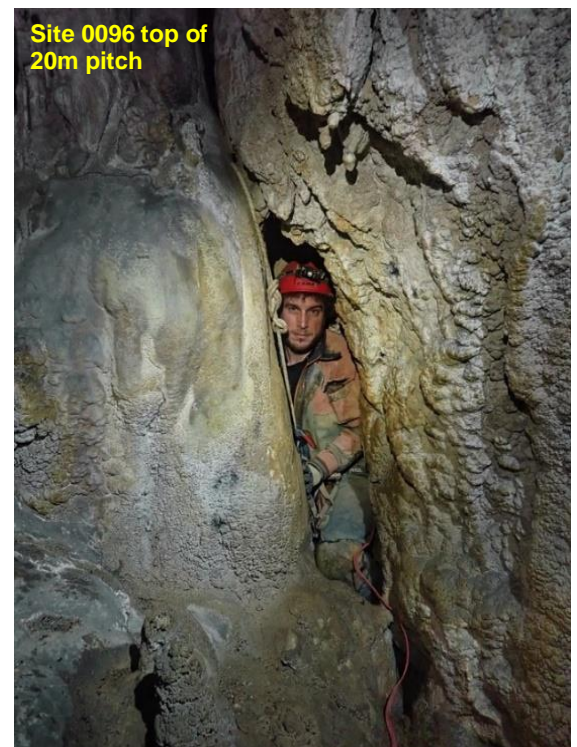
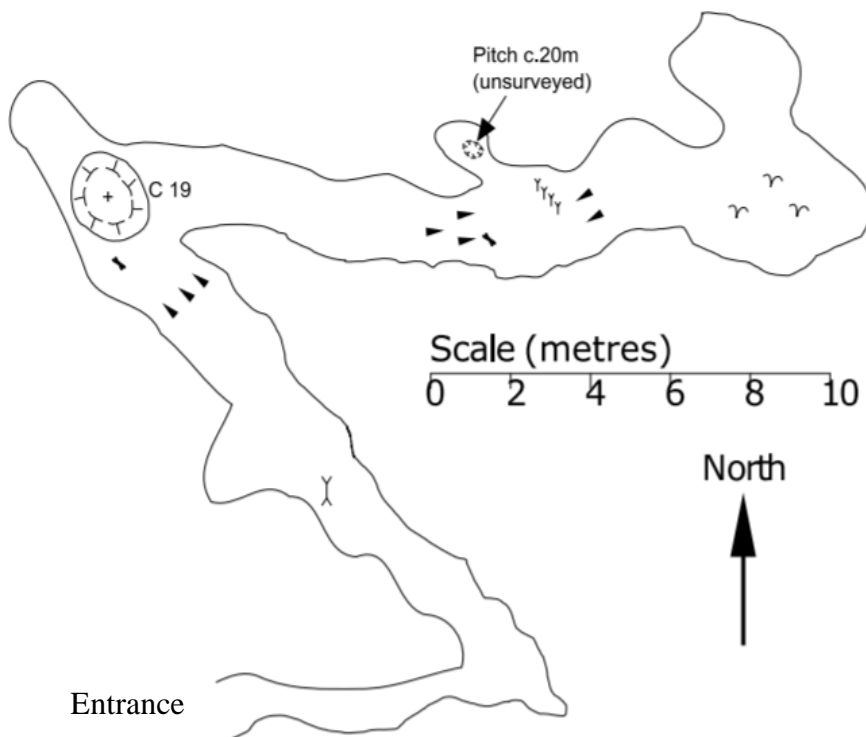
Site 0096 entrance

leads. The tight 20m pitch was found to be choked but does have a draught.



Site 0096

Cueva Vecina 0096	Surveyed 7th January 2020
GR: 30T 452355 4797852	by Chris Scaife, Carolina Smith
Total length: 43.78m	de la Fuente, Peter Smith
Plan length: 41.63m	Disto X 2, Topodroid
Vertical range (excluding pitch): 23.79m	



Site 0096 top of 20m pitch

Site 0252 was extended to a second excavated entrance (4732) in 2018 and dug into a short



walking passage to a very small draughting hole that took water at times. It was clear this hole was below infill of a larger passage.

This infill was dug out over many trips and in February 2020 over four trips it broke out

into a slightly larger section with a draughting deep rift partly blocked by boulders in the floor.

This strongly draughting rift was opened up in the summer but more work is needed on this key site in 2021.

This cave is situated above Rocky Horror in Cueva Hoyuca (0107) and if a connection can be made it could prove to be an easier way into this area of the cave and possible higher level passages we speculate should exist.



Several sites were checked for GPS accuracy and photographed as part of the work to keep the database up to date.

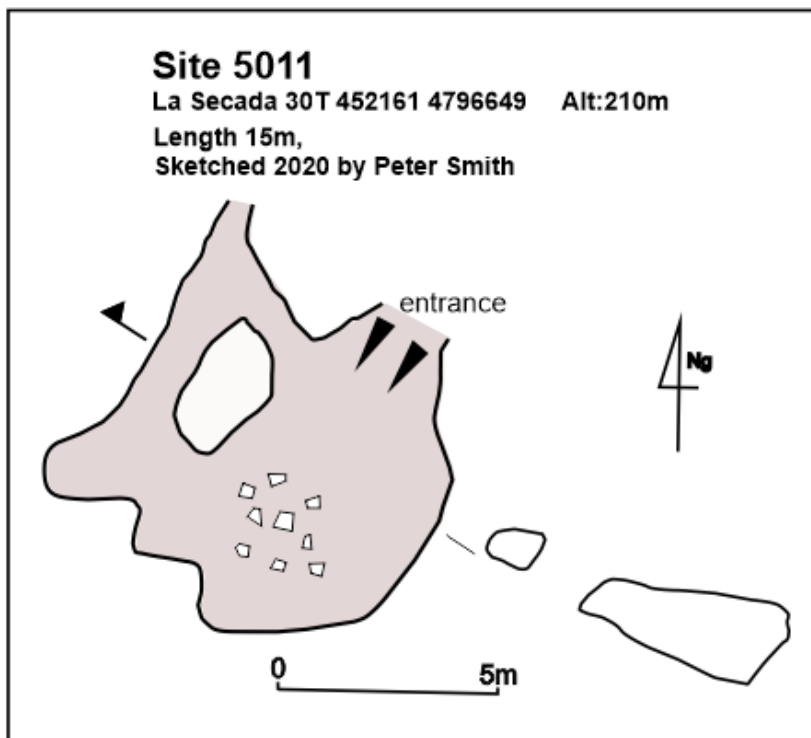
A small shaft 5010 was found and descended 7m to a small, decorated chamber, but with no way on.

A new **site 5045** was found where a tree had fallen down in gales over the winter. It is situated at 225m altitude a little to the east of the La Secada water supply tank. The old cave had developed in hydrothermally altered limestone and is restricted mainly due to stalactite development. There is a good draught and over a number



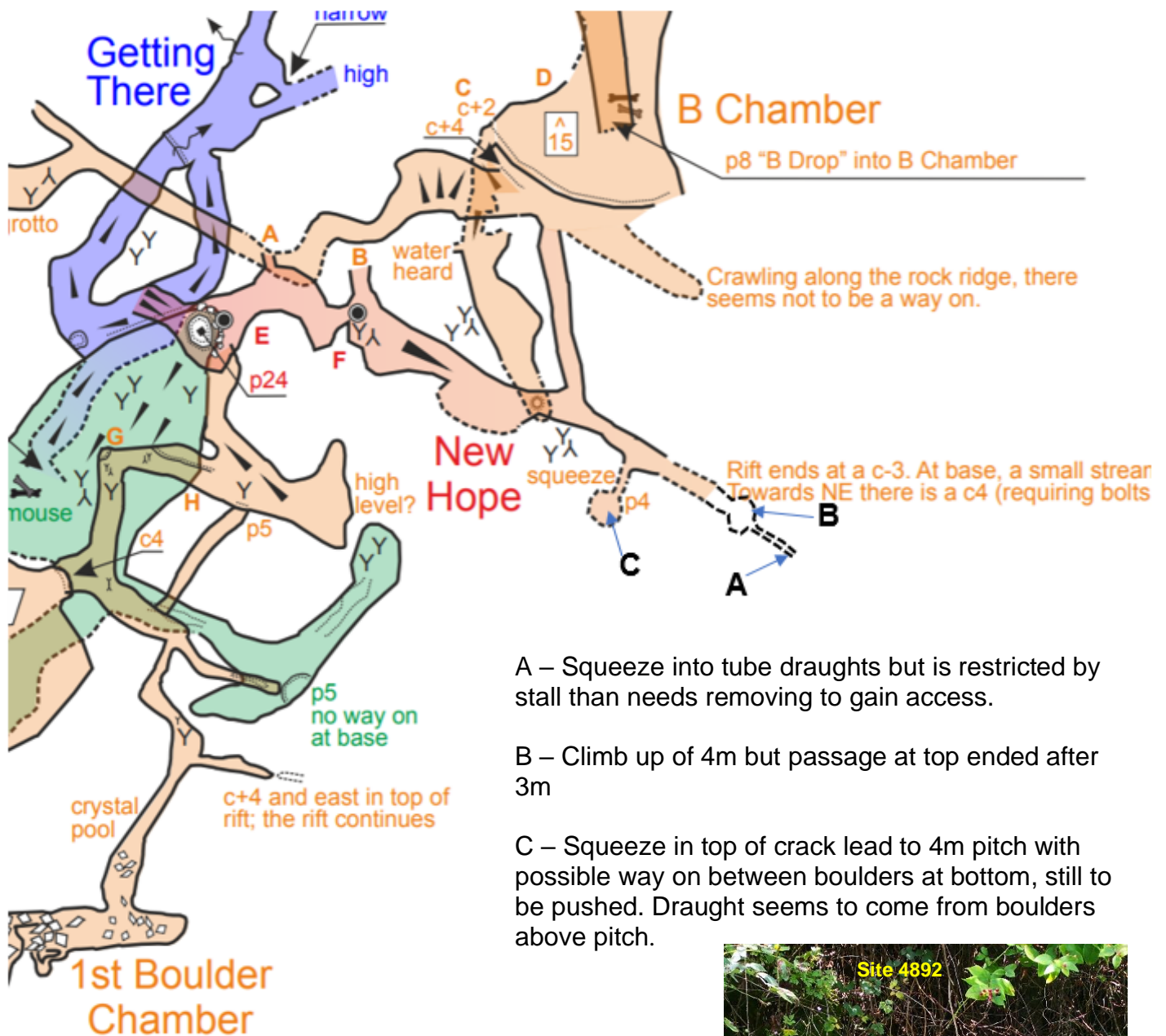
of trips progress was made down and a short way along a rift which requires more work to reach a possible larger area and drop some 5m in front

A small cave **5011** was found on the hill 250m to the north west of La Cuevona. It consists of a stooping size entrance to a chamber about 7m in diameter, with a short crawl at the back.



In **Riaño** the two entrance squeezes in Cueva-Cubío de Llanío ([3234](#)) have been enlarged and above the following 3m drop an eyehole was found that looks down 4 - 5m into "a parallel passage" with "no footprints observed on the floor". This is to be investigated in 2021.

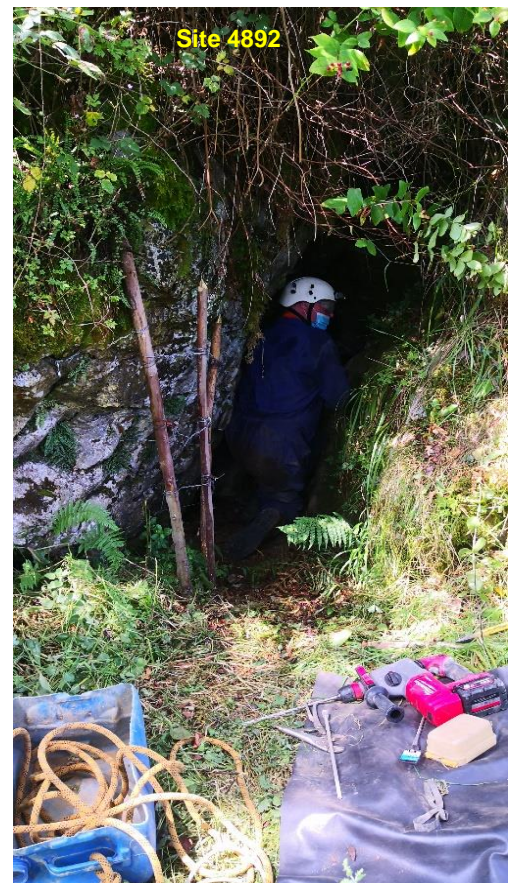
A trip to push "New Hope" at the far SE end of the system did not find any significant passage but identified two leads (A & C on survey) that may be looked at in 2021.



A – Squeeze into tube draughts but is restricted by stall than needs removing to gain access.

B – Climb up of 4m but passage at top ended after 3m

C – Squeeze in top of crack lead to 4m pitch with possible way on between boulders at bottom, still to be pushed. Draught seems to come from boulders above pitch.



The North Area (Solórzano, Hazas de Cesto Area and Ribamontan al Monte)

In **Solórzano**, 4924 was dropped 5m to a narrow route that requires digging. On the ridge up to Monte Llusa, two shafts (5007 and 5008) about 8m deep each were located but not descended. On the east side of Solórzano, site 3950 was found to be a 3m climb down to a complete choke.

In **Hazas de Cesto** the resurgences at El Rincón near the old village washing site were investigated. An opening into a deep pool (4942) behind the built-over resurgence (4893), showed the flow came from tiny fissures. No space to allow diving access into these two

resurgences and also the overflow resurgence 4894 could be identified.

A small cave to the north (4892) was excavated at Christmas and during the summer. This site, according to the farmer, produces copious quantities of water during a flood. Digging opened up a drop of 1.5m. Work is restricted down the drop and to make progress in 2021 we intend to excavate the drop to allow easier digging and removal of spoil.

Ribamontan al Monte

Cierrolinos, situated to the west of Monte Liusa, this area was checked for sites working from the carpark at the end of the long track from Garzón.

Twenty five sites have been identified, due to the Covid-19 problems most have yet to be descended or dug and so await the resumption of normal activity, hopefully in 2021. Of the sites identified three are known caves with some possible archaeological interest that have been recorded by C.A.E.A.P.

Of the rest. site 5019 is a slope 5m into a collapsed chamber; 5025 is a slanting draughting shaft at least 6m deep that needs work to enlarge in order to make progress, 5032 is a low rock shelter about 8m wide situated in the forested area and 5033 is a 5m long cave. Cave 4860 is a slope down into a chamber.



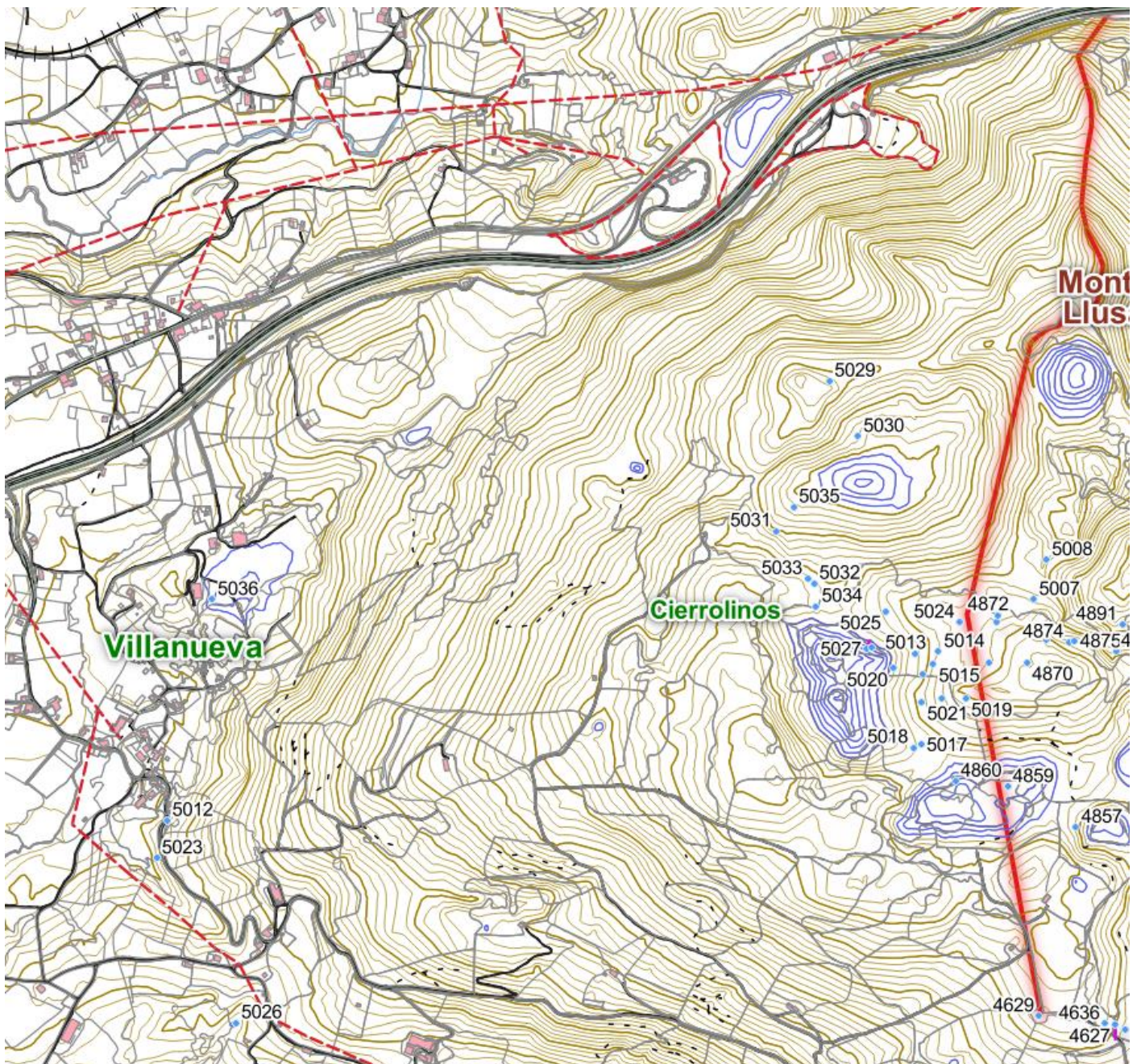
Site 5027 Cueva del Hoyo de la Ribera is a known site with archaeological interest. No easy prospects were found and in view of the significance of the site



no digging took place.

The map below shows the sites so far identified in Ribamontan al Monte. The majority of the sites are in the higher more open areas of the hillside.

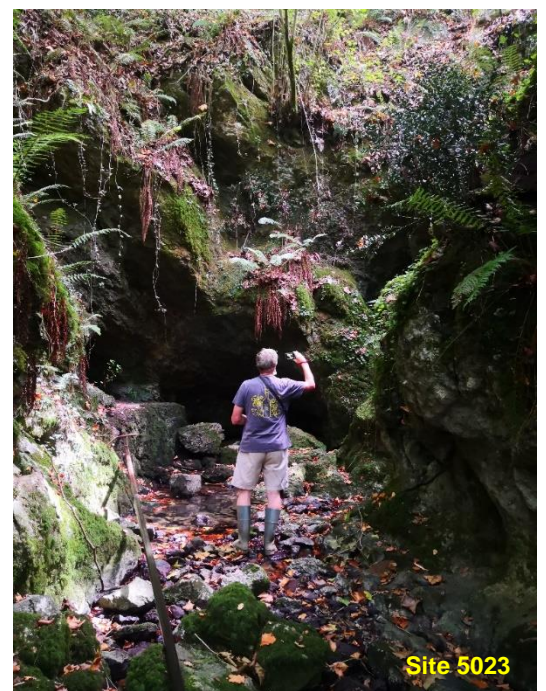
The wooded areas with dense undergrowth have not yet been examined in any detail due the difficult and slow access, other than each side of the few paths through the area.



At **Villanueva** five sites have been located, the most significant is the resurgence Fuente de Villanueva

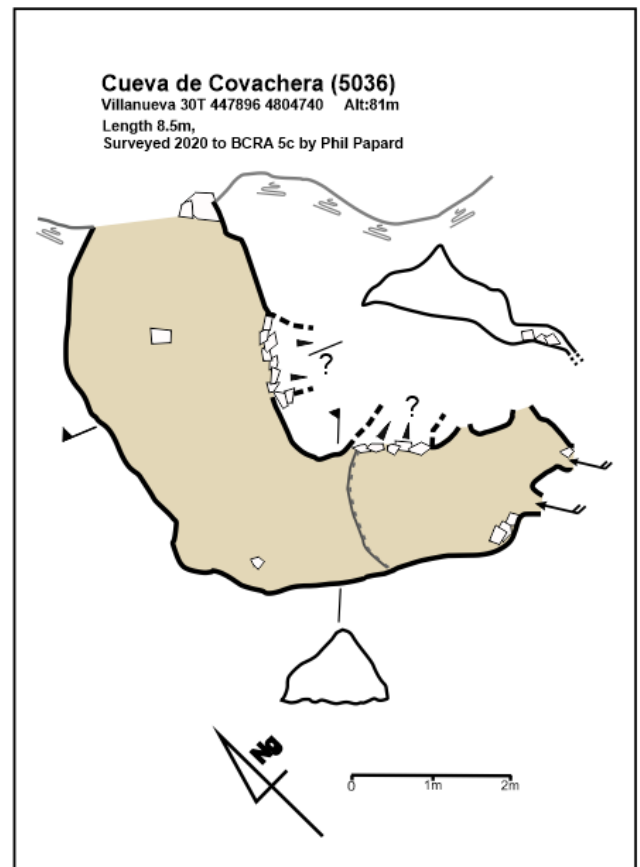


(5023) which is a large entrance to a resurgence cave. The dammed water outlet reaches a canal after 30m. A trip through the water reached a draughting rift. In the summer, the site was dry at the entrance, but further exploration has been left until 2021. A strongly draughting hole (5012) is situated by the road above 5023, and although it



would dig, it is in an area that has been planted as a beauty spot and so cannot be opened up.

To the east of Villanueva is the known site of Cueva de Covachera (5036). This was surveyed and possible draughting digs at the end were noted for further examination in 2021.



The following work was carried out in agreement with the Spanish club G.E. Pistruellos.

Northwest Sector

Near **La Cavada**, an old cold store was investigated (5006) but the draught was coming from very small cracks making it a poor prospect

At **Barrio, la Mina** site 5005 Tractor Tyre Shaft, that was found blocked with a large tyre last year, was cleared and explored down 4m to a choke at the base of a tight squeeze and a choked crawl under boulders.

At **Moncobe**, at the bottom of the Bencano valley a large shakehole was found to be almost completely full of rubbish preventing any exploration.