

MUSS JOURNAL 9

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EDITORIAL

The office of the Bury Times on Wednesday 23rd August 1978. The time is 4.10 pm. A motherly receptionist sits behind her desk and smiles as a handsome, bearded, ginger-haired man enters stage R.

Receptionist: Hello.

Juan: Hello. I'm wanting a number of cave surveys printed. Can I see someone from the printing department?

R: Certainly. I'll just get Mr. Parker. (Picks up the phone and dials number). Can I have your name please?

J: Corrin.

R: Mr. Corrin.....Hello?.....Cliff?.....There's a Mr. Corrin down here who wants some printing done. Can you come down?.... O.K.

J. Thanks.

(Steve - a dark-haired man - enters stage R. and smiles.)

S. Mr. Corrin?

J. Yes. Hello.

S. Hello. Now you're wanting some printing done?

J. Yes. It's rather a large order. Cave surveys - probably 200 off each - some A4, some A3 and some A4 on card. About 13 pieces in total.

S. I see.

J. The problem is that I won't be able to get them here until the Tuesday after the Bank Holiday and I'll need the prints by the 6th September. It's rather a rush job, but can you do it?

S. Mmm... I'll just go upstairs and find out.

(A minute later he returns)

Yes, that will be fine. Now what exactly will you be wanting?

J. Well, I don't really know how many copies I'll need - it'll depend on the price. It could be 100, 200, or 150 - so I'll need an estimate for each of these quantities.

S. O.K. I'll prepare an estimate for you. You say that they are cave surveys? They've got printing on?

J. Oh yes. Maps of caves with Letraset and some photographs to show what the cave is like inside.

S. Very good. So the artwork and the Letrasetting have all been done by you?

J. Yes.

S. O.K. Mmm.... You are a member of the union, aren't you?

J. (looking perplexed). No, what union?

S. The graphics union. The men won't print it unless the lettering has been done by union members.

J. (Looks amazed, bewildered, stunned, thoughtful, worried, helpless - looks appealingly towards Receptionist who gives a sick smile - turns to S and splutters)

That's bloody ridiculous!

S. Well I'm afraid that there's nothing I can do about it.

J. But.....But.....

S. I'll just ring the boss - we might be able to get away with you being classified as an artist, seeing that some of the work is drawn and not Letraset. (Picks up phone). Hello. Cliff?..... This gentleman is wanting some maps printed with his own Letraset on them. Can we get away with calling him an artist?..... O.K..... Cheers.

Right, we can do that for you Mr. Corrin.

J. Well, thank you.

Editor: Juan Corrin (R.A.)
Contributors: Nigel Dibben (DCC), David Garner, Paul Gelling, Dave Hanson, Lank Mills, Keith Plum, Pete Smith.
Photography: Juan Corrin, Frank Addis. (With thanks to Lank for the darkroom facilities).

Further copies of this journal may be obtained by writing to:
Manchester University Speleological Society Editor,
The Athletic Union,
The Students Union,
Manchester University,
Oxford Road,
-MANCHESTER.

Matienzo 1978

The Matienzo Saga continues . Nearly three miles (plan length) of new cave were surveyed this year and once again great potential remains for next year. Only half a dozen cavers were in Matienzo at any one time - which compares with the thirty or so in some years! This meant that everyone knew what was happening and was involved. The one problem met with was the one of transport - there being only one vehicle available for some of the time. Nevertheless many happy hours were spent caving and boozing.

The following account starts with a general appraisal and resumé of the new caves found. Each of the major caves is then given a separate article.

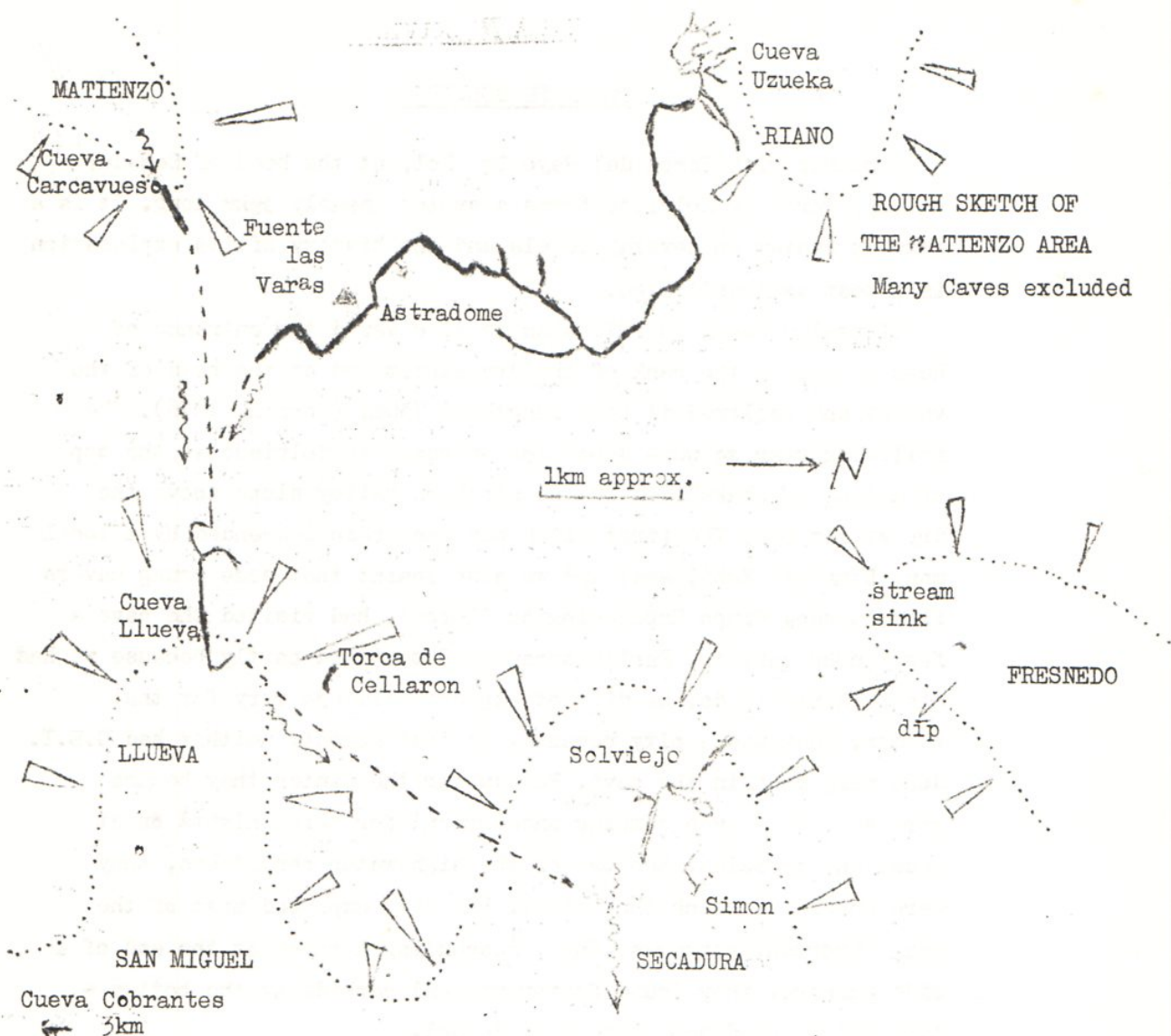
The Four Valley System

The water from Matienzo drains to Secadura via Cueva Llueva. In Riano valley, Cueva Uzueka was dye tested to Cueva Llueva and to Secadura. Hence the Four Valley System is proven but not yet a caving possibility. This year in Carcavueso, scaling was attempted above the sump.* In 1977 the upstream sump was dived in Cueva Llueva as was the downstream sump - both could still be pushed. Also in that year, Lcs Boyonnes (a cave above the resurgence in Secadura) was pushed to a hundred metres through boulders with the draught still there but the way on elusive. The water was met near the end. Also in '77 the end of Uzueka was pushed beyond the '76 limit to where both the massive high level and the grotty streamway choked - although only an hour and a half was spent looking around so a way on could exist. This extension has still to be surveyed as the tape was used as a line through the wide, low airspace section of Duckhams Sump). This year only one main trip was made into Uzueka (to find the height of the Astradome)* because of some poor weather and because of other caves.

It had been thought that Uzueka might enter Cueva Llueva before the upstream sump along a large fault and this year pushing up into the fault in boulders gained over 120ft in height but only 300ft in length - and no Uzueka connection. Dye was placed in Uzueka water and the detector near the upstream sump in Llueva turned green. Therefore Uzueka water and presumably the high level passage must join the system beyond the sump.

To try and find the water downstream of Cueva Llueva, a large cave remnant was entered on the ridge between Llueva valley and

* A separate article is included later.



Secadura - Torca de Cellaron.* Passage here is 50 metres wide with the possibility of going deeper still there. Finally in the last few days of the expedition, a Cave at Fuente las Varas (above Cueva Uzueka) was entered and is still going.*

Other Caves On the other side of Secadura valley from the Matienzo water resurgence, a major cave was entered and we devoted most of our time to this 3.4km system. (Solviejo*).

Some of the water entering the enclosed depression of Matienzo does so via Cueva Renada; numerous shafts were looked at way above the cave including Cueva Abono (101ft deep; 377ft long); Torca de Serruco (approx. 55m deep); and Black Crow Cave*. On the opposite side of the valley, Torca de Mustajo was explored for the first time. Torca de Simon, again in Secadura was bottomed at 223ft - a Yorkshire type pot. The massive Cobrantes was visited*; and the new record of a forty-five bar crawl was achieved by three of our number.

TORCA DE SOLVIEJO

Together with Torca del Rayo De Sol, at the head of Secadura valley, Torca de Solviejo forms a system nearly $3\frac{1}{2}$ km long. It is a complex system on several levels and the history of its exploration is almost as complicated.

It really began in 1976 when we discovered the entrance of Rayo de Sol in the bank of the dry stream bed at the head of the valley and explored it to a length of 730m, (Corrin, 1976). The following year we were shown the entrance to Solviejo at the top of a line of shakeholes on the northern valley slope above the dry stream bed. The first pitch had once been descended by a local man, Demetrio Zubillaga; and we also learnt that some young cavers from Laredo, Grupo Espeleologico 'Torca', had visited the cave a few months earlier. Partly because of that and partly because we had other things to do, we did not explore Solviejo very far that summer. That was a pity because, at that moment, neither had G.E.T. done very much in the cave. But during the winter they became more serious - even camping underground for three nights on at least one occasion. Because of the high water conditions, they were unable to reach the bottom, but they explored most of the more important passages. Once, descending a pitch at the end of a side passage, they found footprints and carbide at the bottom - they had dropped back into Rayo de Sol.

Hearing of their discoveries, Solviejo became a top priority for us. During 20 man-trips we were able to complete the exploration, take many photographs, and produce the first survey of the system. Needless to say, we did not need to camp in the cave!

Entrance passage and chamber

A heap of branches are used to cover up the entrance, but once they have been dragged away its comfortable size can be seen - about three metres high and two metres wide (P)*. It has an inblowing draught which compares well with the out-blowing draught noticed at the entrance to Rayo de Sol. Inside, an enlarging passage slopes down for thirty metres to the head of the first pitch, a twenty metre drop from the ledge on the right of the slope. The ladder, free-hanging for the last fifteen metres, ends on a boulder slope in a large chamber. (P) Following your natural instincts down the slope you come to a

* '(P)' indicates that there is a photograph on the survey.

passage floored with large gour pools (P), but the way on ends in a solid wall with some possible climbs above. This passage is developed on the dominant NE-SW joint and fault line - as is most of this cave and Rayo de Sol.

Greasy Slope - Campsite

Instead of going down the boulder slope, the route to the lowest levels of Solviejo starts from the top of this slope. Here there is a narrow hole and awkward climb down to the head of the Greasy Slope pitch. This is about twenty metres deep, but over slippery flowstone, which makes it very boring and irksome. From the bottom a high canyon passage leads through a pool of muddy water, up a couple of climbs and down again into a lofty chamber. (A high level passage from the entrance chamber affords an impressive view down into this chamber (P).)

Going back on itself the going changes as a rift passage is entered. This begins as a crawl but soon becomes quite high and involves traversing in places over holes in the floor. It runs for 150m, passing under the end of the passage down from the entrance chamber, and emerges via a four metre pitch and short climb into a smooth floored chamber. This is where G.E.T. established themselves and their campsite - three tents, several gas bottles, and piles of food and rubbish (P).

On the right at the campsite there is a short passage ending at a couple of avens; and straight ahead another passage also passes beneath two avens before ending quite close to Rayo de Sol. On the left from the campsite you can pass around a blind pot to a slope down to some quite big and well decorated passage (P). This divides, and the right hand passage also finishes quite close to Rayo de Sol - it even contains long tree roots, just as were seen in that part of Rayo de Sol.

Rope Pitch - Final sump

At the foot of the climb down to the campsite chamber, there is a six metre rope pitch into another rift passage which runs beneath the first one - shown in an offset on the survey. It is better developed than the first rift and averages two metres high and wide. There is an obvious junction with a passage heading away in the opposite direction (Chocolate Crunch Passage). On the left there are two high avens and then the passage comes to the head of the Pool Pitch.

This is an impressive circular shaft with water falling in from

above on the opposite side. It is twenty metres deep and descends to the pool which spreads across the floor of the shaft. However there is only a small passage leading out. The stream falls down a cascade and another wet pitch, which can be avoided by using a parallel dry shaft. This is another twenty metres and below this the cave ends immediately in a miserable and final sump. This is at a level of 111.6m below the entrance.

Across the top of the cascade there is a short series of abandoned rift passage, again mostly on the NE-SW line.

Chocolate Crunch Series

This begins as a phreatic half tube about two metres high and gradually develops into the keyhole form of tube and canyon. After nearly 200m there is a junction with an abandoned passage which has a floor of dry, crunchy and chocolate-coloured mud which gave the whole passage its name. 'Downstream' you come to some low and filthy crawls, while 'upstream' you pass some stalagmite bosses to reach the top of a fading rift pitch. A bolt had been fixed to the top of this and, assured that this was where G.E.T. had dropped back into Rayo de Sol we did not trouble to go down. Our survey shows it to be very close to Rayo de Sol.

Brain Cell Hall

Back at the head of the boulder slope in the entrance chamber, on the left of the hole to the greasy slope, there is a slithery calcite slope up to a large abandoned passage (P). There are some large stalagmites ahead and a scramble up and over boulders brings you to the top of a wide and deep black hole. In fact the shaft does not need to be laddered because, continuing into Quick Trip Passage, there is a route between the boulders back to the base of the drop. From here you can go round to a 180m long passage, again on the NE-SW line. This contains some good formations and three shafts. None of these were descended as presumably they go down to the avens in the passages off the campsite.

Back beneath the shaft in Brain Cell Hall, you can carry on down some bouldery and muddy slopes to meet the stream, here in its upstream section before its high cascade into the Pool Pitch. Unfortunately downstream it disappears under the boulders and upstream a flowstone barrier soon halts progress.

Quick Trip Passage

Passing round to the left of the hole in Brain



1



2



3



4



5



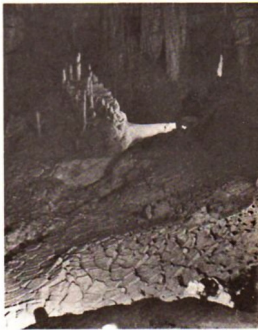
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7



8



9



10



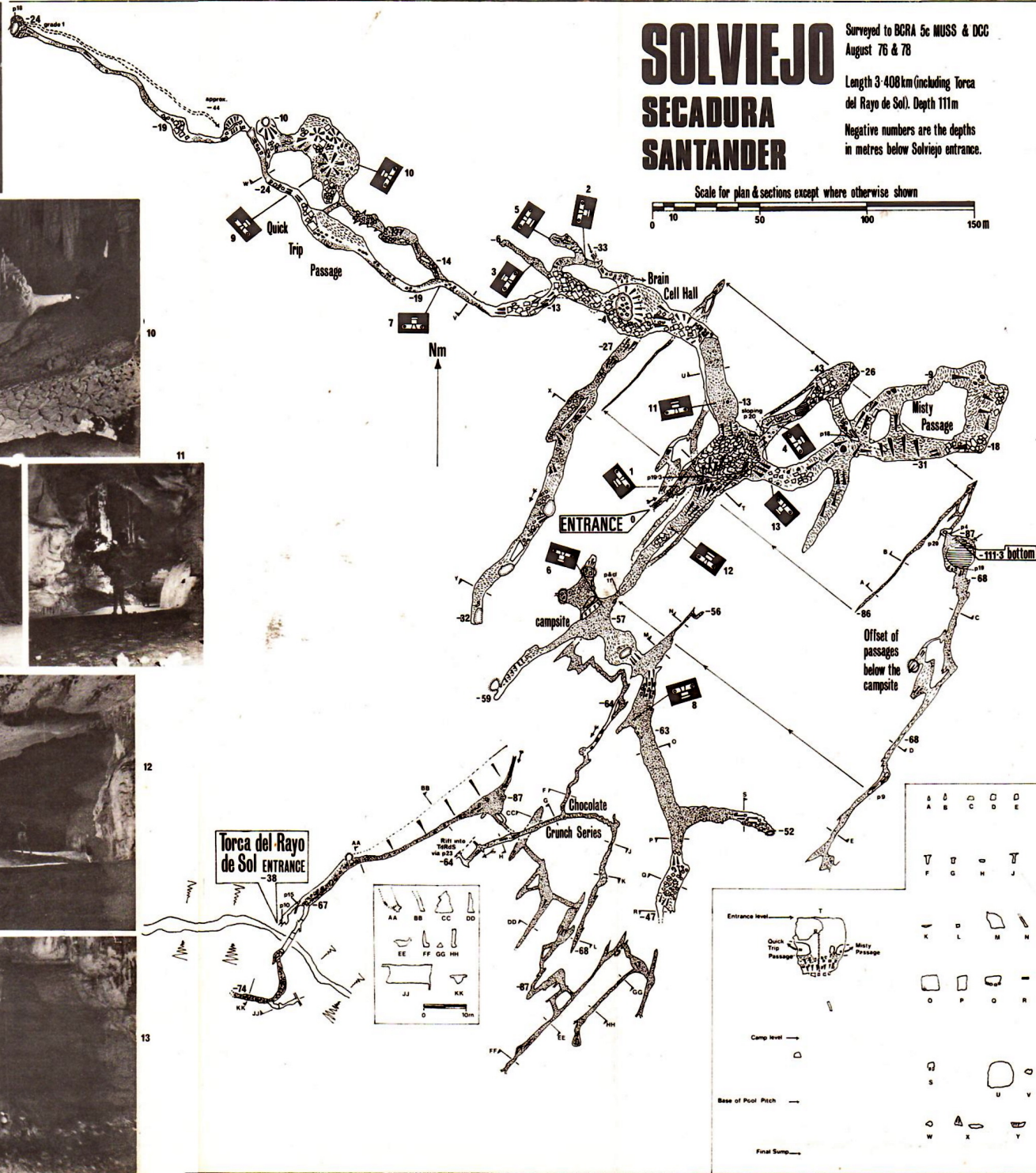
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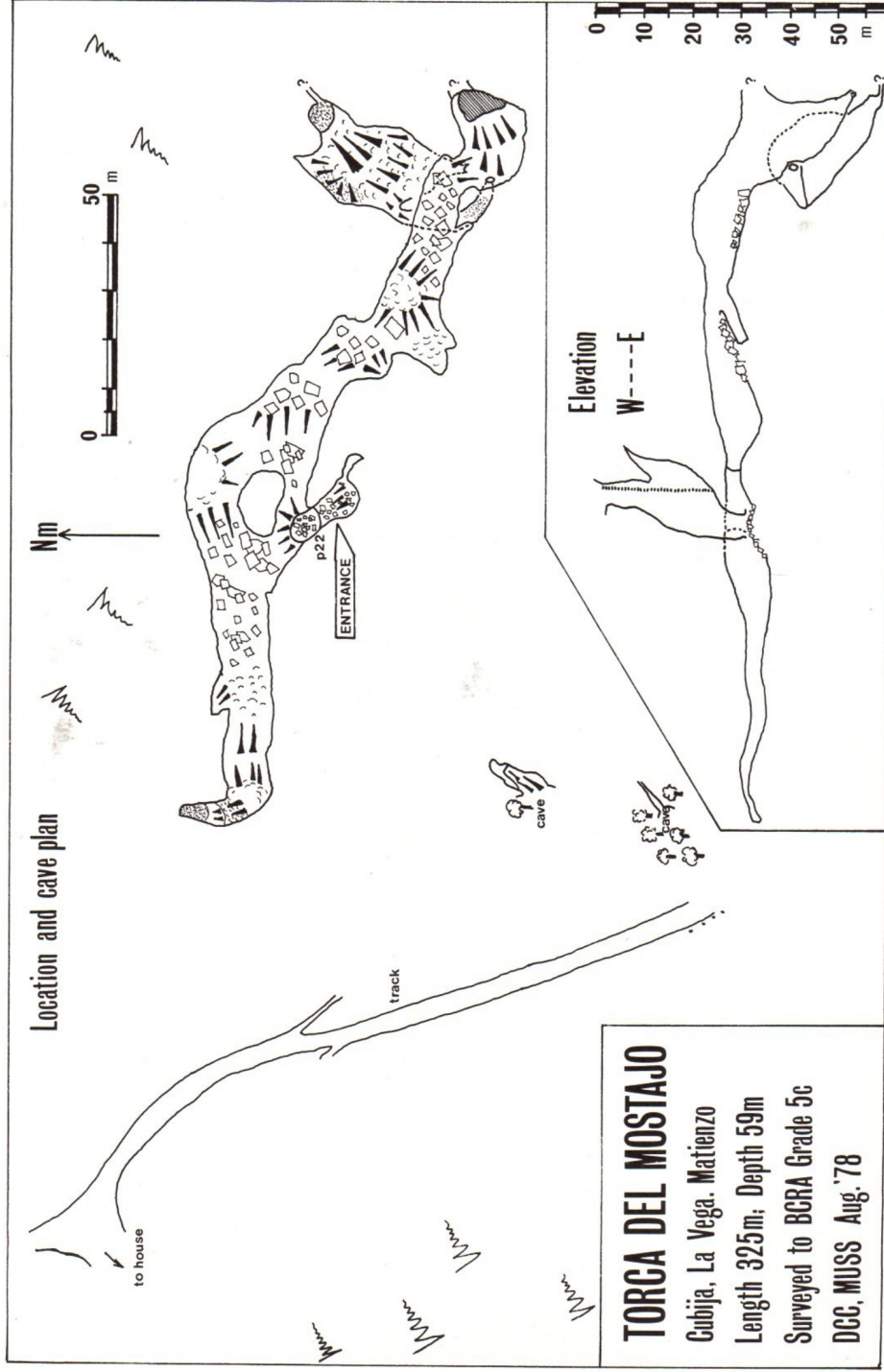
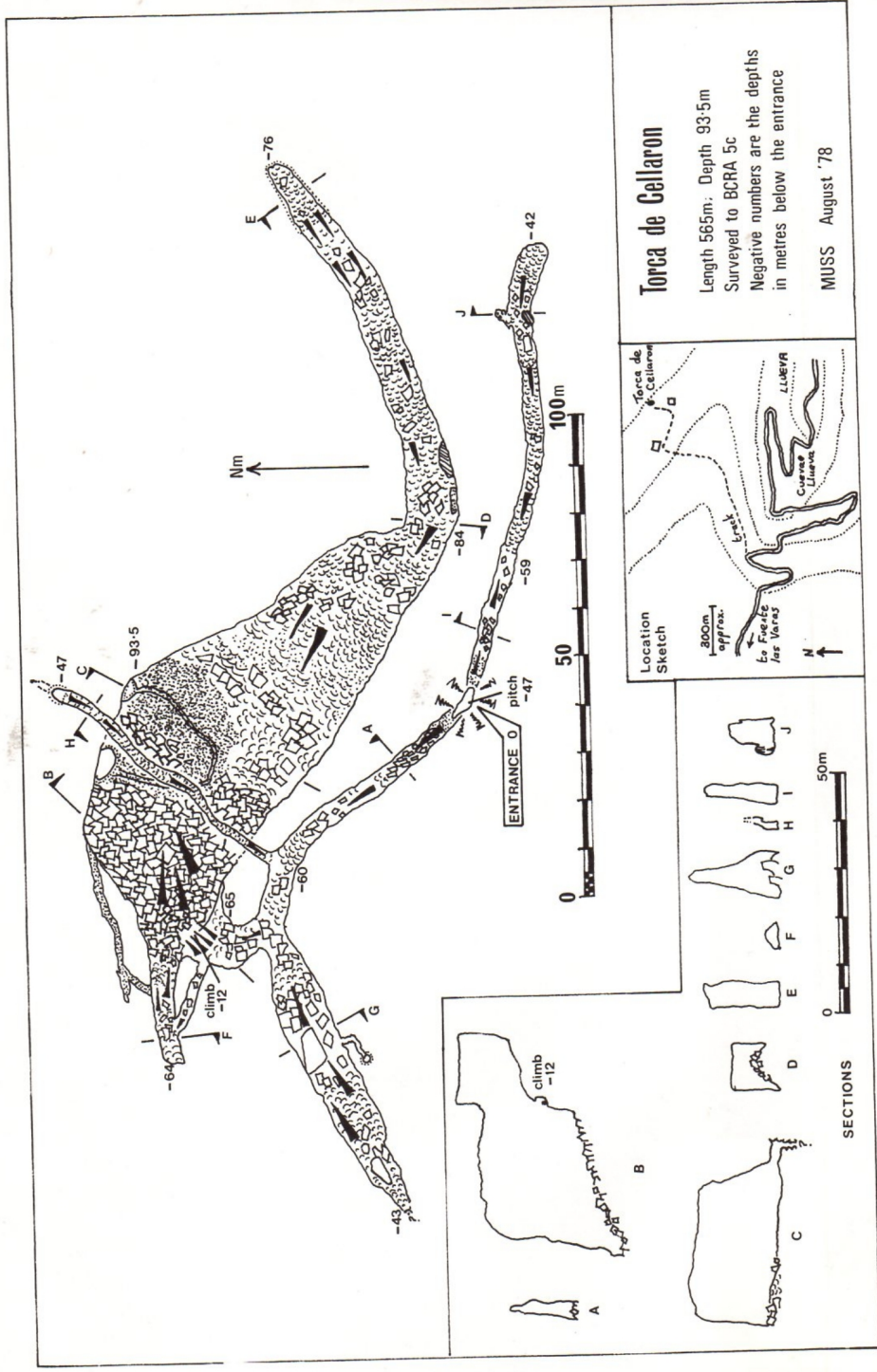


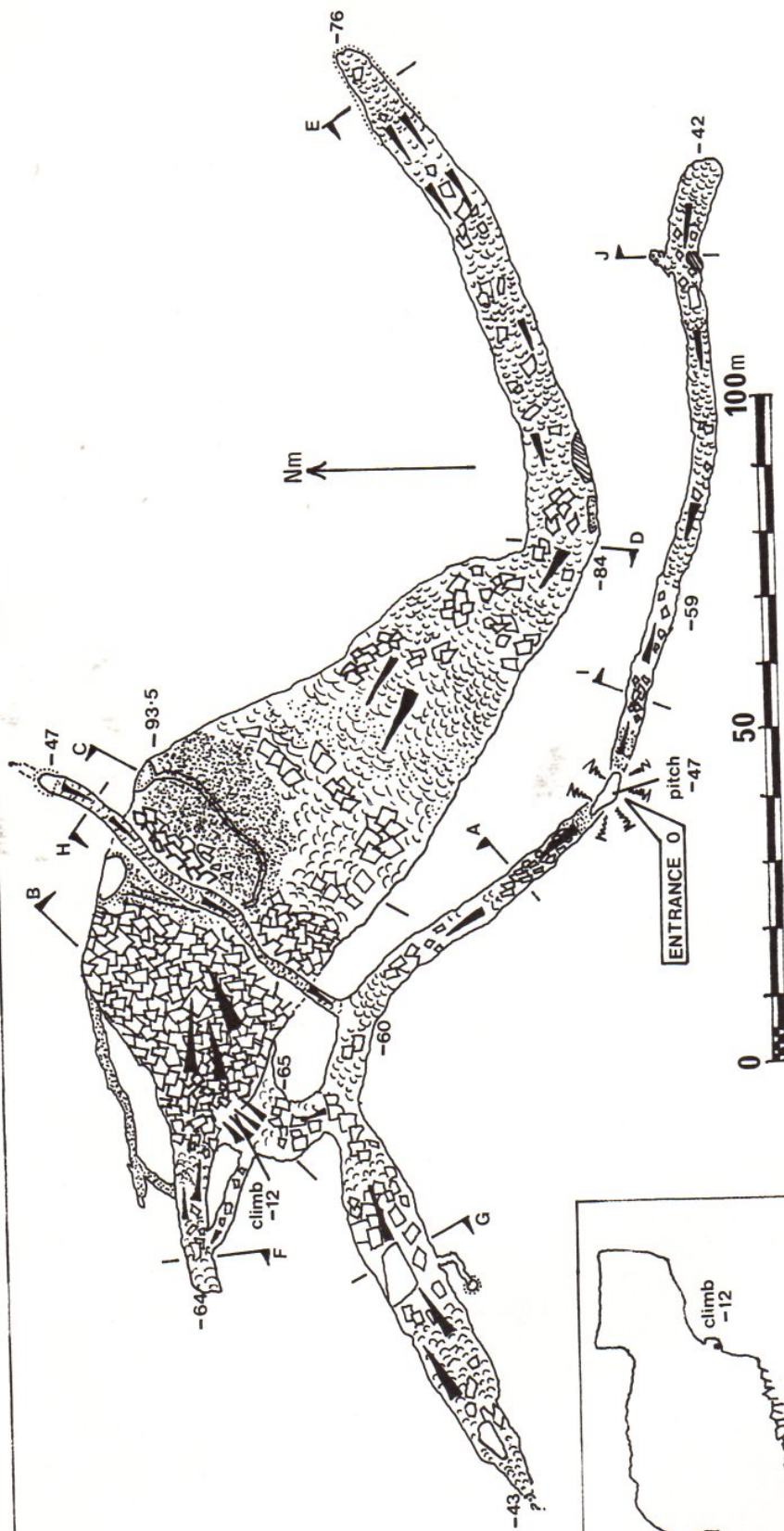
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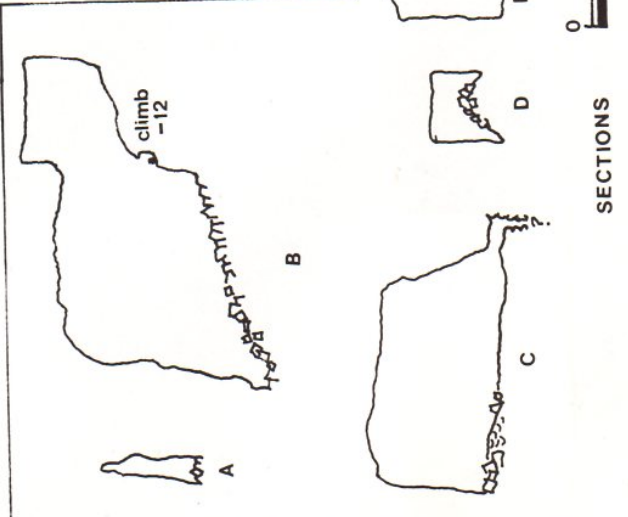
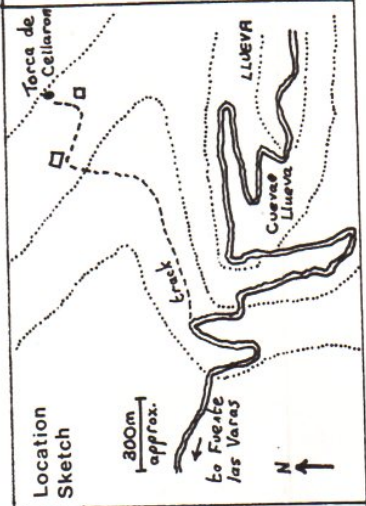




Torca de Cellaron

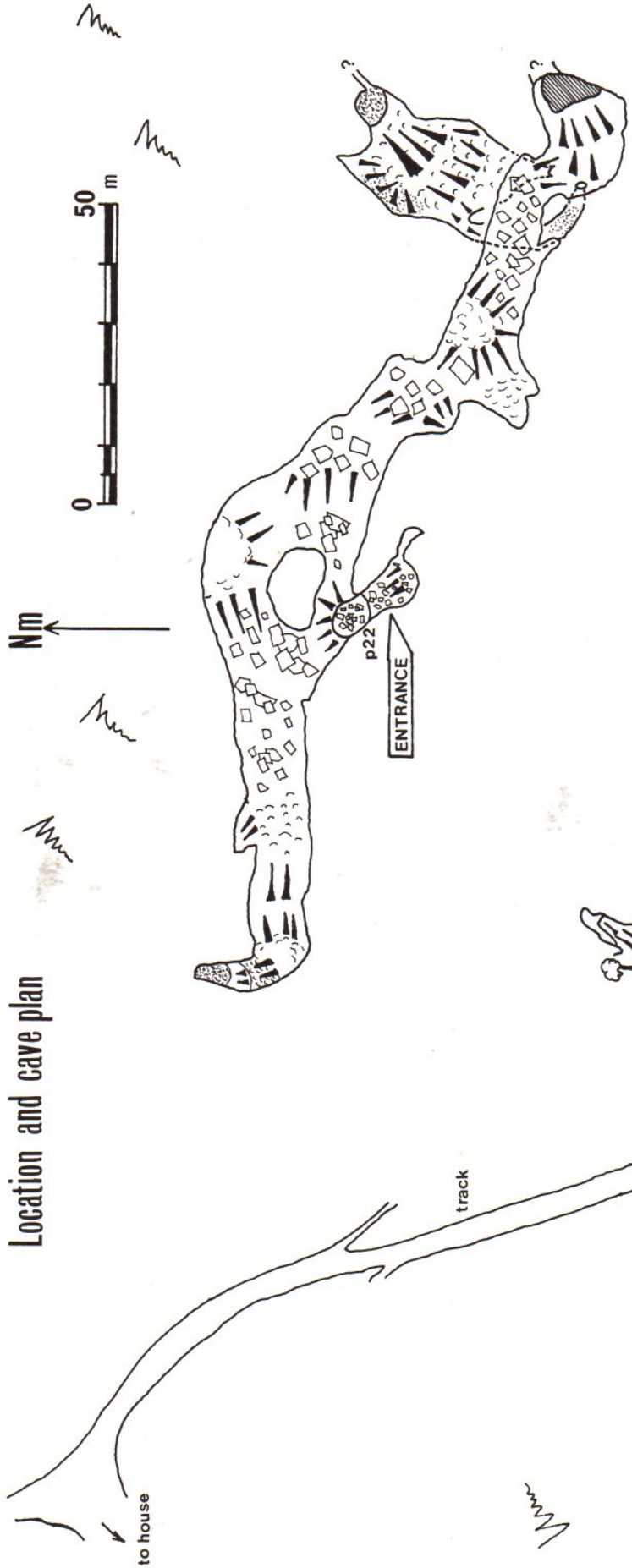
Length 565m; Depth 93.5m
 Surveyed to BCRA 5c
 Negative numbers are the depths
 in metres below the entrance

MUSS August '78



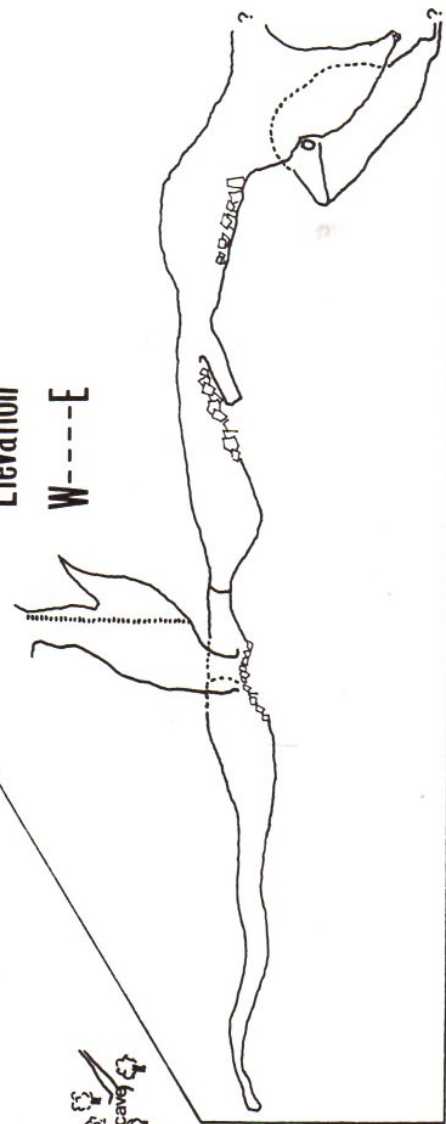
SECTIONS

Location and cave plan



Elevation
W-----E

0 10 20 30 40 50 m



TORCA DEL MOSTAJAJO

Cubija, La Vega. Matienzo
 Length 325m; Depth 59m
 Surveyed to BCRA Grade 5c
 DCC, MUSS Aug. '78

Cell Hall you scramble over more boulders to find facing you a one metre thick and fifteen metres wide slab of rock spanning the roof of the passage. Down the middle of the slab there is a crack which is now a few centimetres wide, and the slab is starting to drop away from the rest of the roof - a rare view of breakdown as it is about to happen. Trusting that the moment has not yet come, you scamper beneath the slab and you can continue round to the right into one grotto with rather nice stal (P) and helictites (P) and another with stal only (P).

However just underneath the slab there is a climb down boulders into the start of Quick Trip Passage. At the foot of the climb there is a route back to the base of the shaft already mentioned. Ahead there is a four metre wide meandering passage with a sloping sandy floor. On one of the bends there is a slope up to the right which goes into a large chamber tall stalagmite bosses and (P) cracked mud floor. On the other side of this chamber a short passage leads to a large aven.

However, continuing in the main passage, you can reach a grotto where again on the right another minaret passage can lead you back into the same side chamber and aven (P). The main passage goes on past the grotto to an aven with flowstone and small gour pools. Beyond this it passes through an area of boulders and by some excellent stal curtains to the head of an eighteen metre pitch. As the passage is heading almost directly up valley we hoped that it would take us under the surface watershed with the valley of Fresno, but instead the pitch descended to a small stream passage. This could be followed downstream a short way, but the flow was slight and so is probably only a tributary to the main stream.

Misty Passage

Back in the entrance chamber, on the right of the hole down to the greasy slope, there is a greasy flowstone climb up to a high level passage with some good formations. On the right there is a side passage with a floor of dry gour pools and ahead the passage slopes down to the head of twin pitches. The one on the left is eighteen metres and at the bottom you can climb up to a second pitch which drops into the canyon which follows on from the greasy slope pitch. This was the route used by the G.E.T. but, although it avoids the horrible greasy slope, it involves two pitches instead of one.

Instead of descending the pitches you can climb a calcite, boulder and sand slope to a well decorated grotto. On our first

trip there, it really was misty - probably due to moisture and breathing of people below in the canyon all gathering in the roof, one of the highest points reached in the cave (-9m). Beyond the grotto there is a flowstone slope down and the large old passage begins to loop round, with another couple of slopes down to the foot of the second of the twin pitches, opposite the 18m pitch already mentioned.

Solviejo, like its near neighbour Torca de Simon, is different to the other caves in the Matienzo area in that you meet a stream well above resurgence level (thirty -three metres below the entrance at its highest point). This must be due to some unusual geological conditions such as a sandstone bed or the direction of the dip. In fact the stream is an immature invasion of a much older system. But this too is unusual in that the largest passages are found on different levels, apparently unconnected yet neither forming two of three distinct levels. For example there is a large passage leading to Brain Cell Hall at -13m and that to the left of the campsite at -63m. Presumably these differences are due to the same geological conditions, whatever they may be.

The present final sump cannot be very far from base level, and it is thought that it resurges at a spring used as a water supply for the village of Secadura. In 1977 Stuart Davey made a preliminary dive in a small cave near to this resurgence, finding some deep and large phreatic passages but without encountering airspace.

Pete Smith

Reference: Corrin J.S. Torca del Rayo de Sol, MUSS Journal No. 8.

Torca de Cellaron

(The survey to this pot is on the back of the Solviejo survey.)

Two years ago, J.C. Fernandez had been strolling with Pete over the ridge between Secadura and Llueva valleys and had pointed out a group of trees and murmured the magic words, "Es un torca!", Pete was not that easily seduced and it was only this year that we had a look at this torca.

The car was driven along a dirt track and through a field to within three hundred metres of the entrance and Frank, Pete, Penny and Juan took seven ladders across. Boulders and then four ladders were sent down after some difficulty due to the lianas and brambles getting everywhere. Juan descended to find no sign of the

floor; two more ladders were added - and there was still no sign of the floor. In fact the ladder seemed to disappear to a point - a bottomless pitch! So Pete descended next after putting on the last ladder and lengthening the belay. He reached the floor at -155ft; the bottomless illusion was created by the sides of the shaft gradually sloping in lower down. Juan then joined him with surveying gear.

At the bottom of the pitch a mouldering heap of dead animals and vegetation disappears down in opposite directions along a twenty high and five metre wide rift. To the east the floor of the rift starts to rise and after a hundred metres it chokes. To the west it was much more interesting.

After gingerly stepping down past the dead things, a steeply descending calcite slope is encountered which gradually levels to a veranda looking out into a massive passage - more of this later. To the right, thirty metres before the veranda, a one metre wide rift with greasy calcite floor rises for a height of forty-five feet to a point where holes can be seen in the roof. These are probably within reach. To the left a large passage ascends over boulders and greasy calcite to a choke with a possible high continuation.

To leave the veranda and venture forth into the blackness below, a tricky overhanging climb down is necessary for about twelve metres (or so we thought on the way in.) This leaves you standing on a slope of boulders disappearing down into the gloom. At the bottom of this slope, a small stream cut in mud entering from an aven meanders across the floor and sinks into a hole surrounded by calcite. (This fifteen foot pitch was not descended due to lack of tackle and the probability that it is calcited up at the bottom. But this water must enter the Matienzo water hundreds of feet below and so needs looking at.) The passage at this point is a measured fifty metres wide and a guessed twenty-five metres high. The stream sink is at the deepest point reached in the cave (-93.5m; -304ft). Continuing beyond here the grandeur becomes slightly less, swings to the left and ascends with boulders & calcite floor until 150 metres from the stream it ends in a high calcited blockage with no sign of passage at the top.

The cave was surveyed out from here and right of the awkward climb a short, again steeply ascending, passage soon choked. On the left of this a 15m long passage by-passed the tricky ascent... although this was not found until we had reached the veranda. All in all, a rather pleasant 4 hours caving - $\frac{1}{2}$ km of big and very old remnant found, explored and surveyed.

J.S. Corrin

TORCA DE MUSTAJO (survey is to be found on
the reverse of Solviejo.)

Mustajo was found by Nigel and Dave while on an abortive expedition to locate Simas del Picon in the Cubija valley. During a walk over the ridge to the south of the valley, a dark entrance could be seen near the road and further up the hill some bushes in a break in the limestone bedding suggested another cave. The lower cave turned out to be a remnant with some rotten formations and used as a barn. Near to it (down the valley in some trees) was found another piece of phreatic tube with some mushrooms growing in it.

The upper cave, known as Mustajo by the locals, can be seen as a patch of shrubs and trees diagonally uphill from the farm which is more or less the limit that Bedford vans can drive up the track.

The entrance is a fine pitch dropping twenty-two metres in daylight, partly against the rock and partly free, onto a bouldery slope. A short climb (rope necessary) down what looks at first as another massive shaft leads to a further boulder slope that runs into the cave proper. From the entrance, the cave consists of a large dry passage, about seven metres square running from left (west) to right (east), parallel with the valley outside. To the left leads after a short way (25m) to a stal slope and then a muddy end chamber. In the other direction the cave descends gently over large boulders and coral-like stal floors to a drop down over loose floor material for which a rope or short ladder is useful. Continuing down a steep slope leads to a large chamber ending in a pool. Halfway down to the pool are a couple of routes through to another similar chamber. The bottom of this second chamber has no pool (at the time of exploration; it may have in wet weather) but a low crawl at the very bottom in sharp loose boulders could continue. There is a slight draught at this point. Other potential extensions are above the two chambers at the end where climbing or maypoling may yield some results. Furthermore, there is quite a possibility of more similar caves in the same sort of location which careful scanning of the hillside may show up.

Overall length of the cave is 325m and the depth is 59m.

Nigel Dibben.

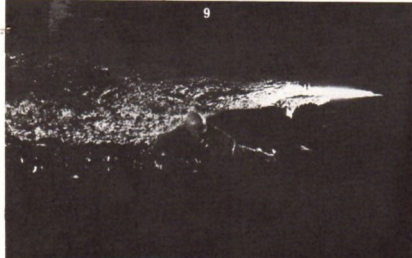
".....got back to Germans Bar to find Los Punk Drunks had arrived - kidneys shivered in eager anticipation!"



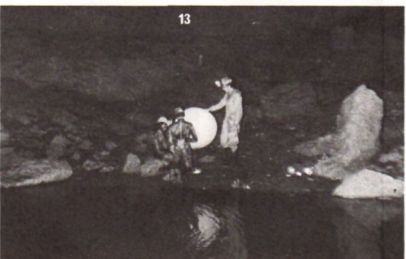
THE TIGHT ENTRANCE OF CUEVA UZUEKA (1) LEADS INTO A MAZE OF RIFTS WHICH END AT A TIGHT SQUEEZE (2) INTO THE SANDY-FLOORED QUADRAPHENIA (3,4,5,6). AFTER 600m OF STROLLING, PIGS TROTTER CHAMBER IS REACHED (7,8).....



..... AND SOON LEFT VIA A PEBBLE STREWN CRAWL (9) WHICH DEGENERATES INTO A MUDDY AND LOW BENDING PLANE. A FEW SQUEEZES BETWEEN SMALL PHREATIC CHAMBERS AND THEN INTO THE GORILLA WALK (10) - A STOOPING PASSAGE WITH DEEP WATER FOR ABOUT 1km. NEAR STAMPS (11) IS THEN REACHED AND THIS FAIRLY LARGE PASSAGE CONTINUES FOR 500m TO THE BORING 220m OF CROSSOVER CRAWL. THEN INTO THE BIG STUFF - THROUGH LAS PLAYAS, B ROAD AND AFTER 1km, THE INSIGNIFICANT ENTRANCE TO THE ASTRADOME ON THE LEFT OF THE STREAM. VOICES RESONATE AS THE AVEN IS APPROACHED AND, WALKING INTO THE BASE OF IT, SHOUTS OF AMAZEMENT ECHO FOR 5 SECONDS.



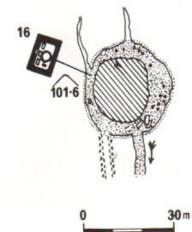
A TEAM OF FIVE CARRIED IN A HELIUM BOTTLE WITH WEATHER BALLOON, NYLON STRING AND PHOTOGEAR, AND SPENT A JOYFUL HOUR AND A HALF PHOTOGRAPHING AND PINKING THE HEIGHT OF THIS MAGNIFICENT FEATURE. (12,13). TEN MINUTES WERE THEN SPENT IMITATING DONALD DUCK WITH THE GAS FROM THE PUNCTURED BALLOON. THE BALLOON REACHED A HEIGHT OF 101.6m BUT THE AVEN COULD BE HIGHER AS THE BALLOON RECEIVED A MORTAL INJURY (PROBABLY FROM A STAL)



THE ASTRADOME

Height 101.6m; Diameter 30m.

THE PHOTOGRAPH OF THE ASTRADOME WAS TAKEN ON ILFORD HP5 FILM (400 ASA) WITH THE SHUTTER LEFT OPEN FOR A MINUTE AT F2.8 AT LEAST 6 REFS FLASH BULBS WERE FIRED DURING THIS PERIOD. MULTIPLE IMAGES OF THE BALLOON CAN BE SEEN PART WAY UP THE AVEN.

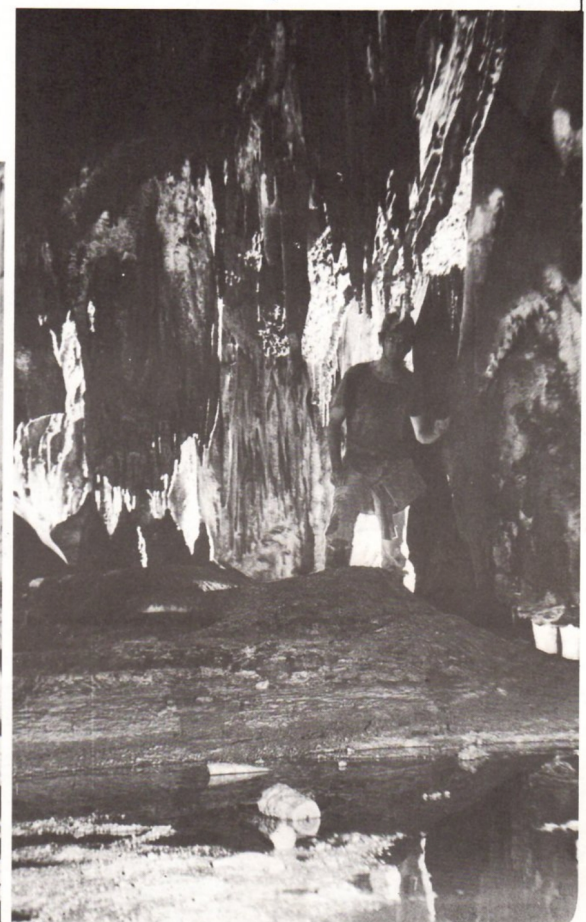
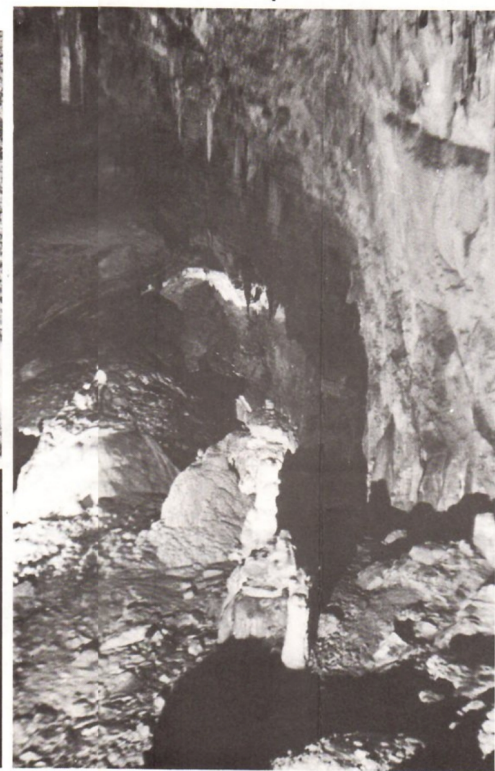
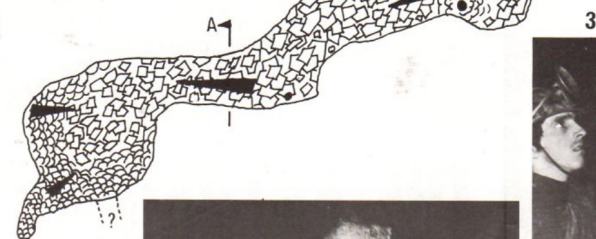
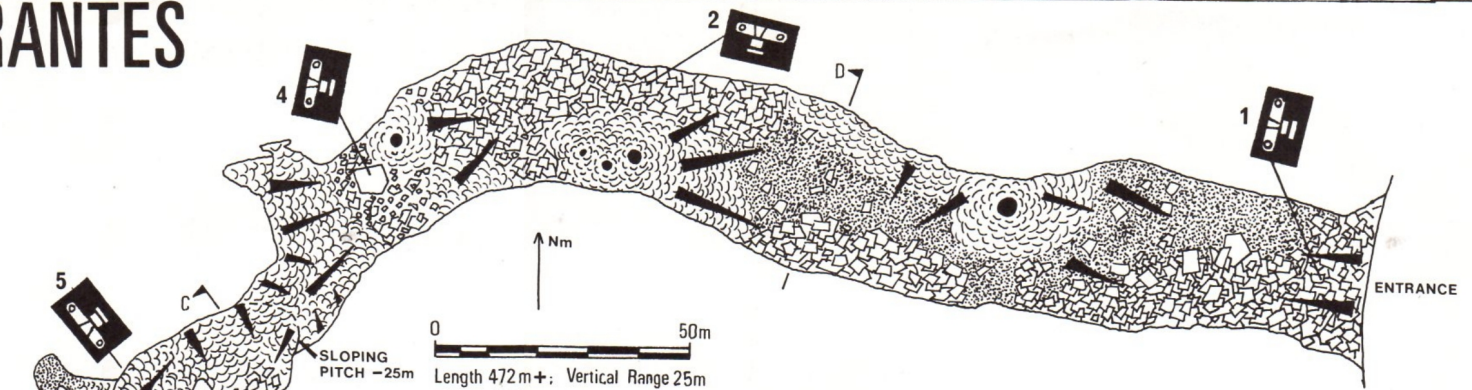
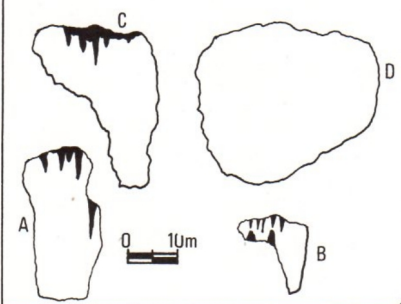


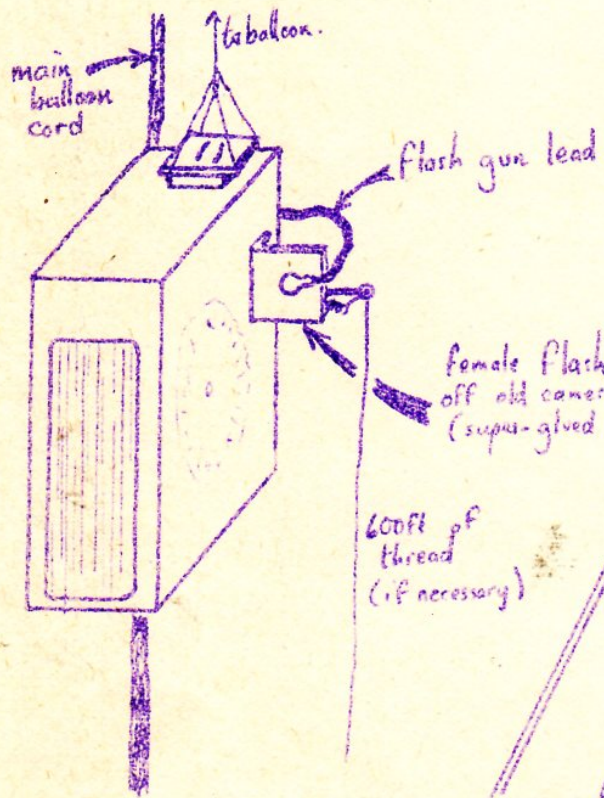
CUEVA DE COBRANTES

SAN MIGUEL DE ARAS
SANTANDER

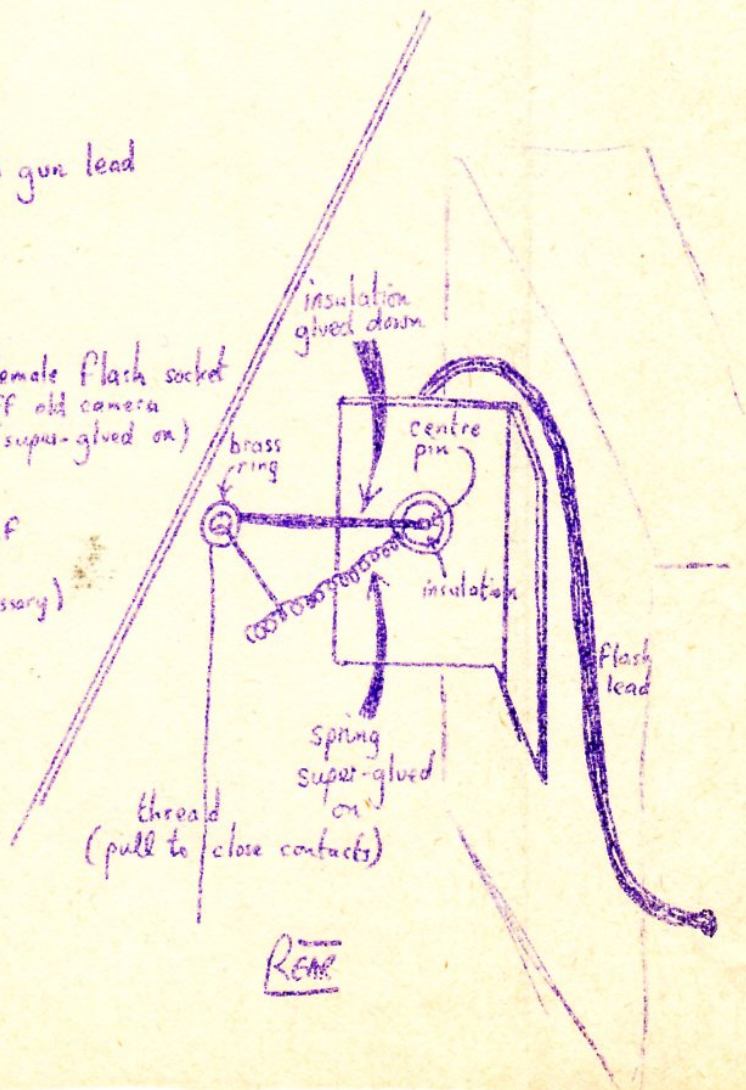
BCRA 5c
MUSS August '78

Sections





FRONT



REAR

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THE ASTRADOME, CUEVA UZUEKA

Eversince this circular, hundred foot diameter aven was found in 1975, the question of its height has often been argued about over a few pints. But now the height has been found and its lure and attraction are the lesser for it - like a virgin who has finally been taken. Sorry!

Two years ago, three weather balloons were generously given to us by Philips Patents of Bury, but it was not until this year that helium could be obtained. The firm gave us the gas free and the bottle on free loan - but there was forty pounds to pay if the bottle was not returned. So we had the gear - but why stop at measuring the height? Why not photograph it? Why not let the balloon carry up a flashgun?

School physics lessons can be pretty dull but one principle remembered was that the amount of upthrust is equal to the weight of the fluid displaced. It was calculated that $\frac{1}{2}\text{m}^3$ of helium would be able to lift four hundred grams. The balloon itself weighed 200g and so that left 200g for the flashgun and cord. The flashgun weighed 100g so about 90g net upthrust was left. There is a small waterfall down the middle of the astrodome but we reckoned that a wet balloon would rise - and it did!

The following sketch shows the electronic flashgun that was rigged up to put on the balloon. The idea is to keep the battery switch on and to tug on the thread every twenty feet or so as the balloon rises up - producing a superbly lit photograph with a built in scale as the image of the balloon decreases in size as it ascends.

But things that work perfectly on the surface rarely do so underground. In this case, even though the whole contraption was covered with a plastic bag, the thread was too damp and the capacitor in the gun never had the necessary juice to charge up.

Luckily Frank had a LUSS relay which he attached to a bulb gun on the balloon and this was fired (from an electronic on the ground) when the balloon was about 80 metres up. Unfortunately the black and white photograph did not turn out very well and so could not appear here. (The details of the ordinary one that does appear are on the Astradome sheet.)

After all of this playing around, finding the height was a doddle - even though Salford Phil nearly got flattened by a large lump of something falling into the pool six feet away from him.

The balloon got to a height of 101.6m (allowing for Phils height) and stayed at that level while he moved around the pool trying to ferret it into any extensions. The balloon rebelled by bursting and drifting slowly back down where the five of us - hungry for kicks - inhaled the gas and freaked-out; voice-wise, that is. (Footnote: See Fuente las Varas Cave for the possibility of a top entrance).

J.S.Corrin

CUEVA DE COBRANTES (Survey on the reverse of the Astradome.)

Cueva Cobrantes has been known since at least the Magdalanian Period; varicus worked flints of this age have been found in the cave and a few engravings on the wall indicate that they reached about 250m in - the limit to which daylight reaches.

One glance at the survey shows it to be a most impressive Place. It is situated at the head of the San Miguel valley about 200ft above the valley bottom and is probably a resurgence cave of great age. The present resurgence is Nacimiento which has been dived into $\frac{1}{2}$ km of well decorated passage ending a small sump. Although the cave of Cobrantes was well known by the Spaniards, no full survey has been made. The museum in Santander asked us to do a survey and we wanted to see if there was the possibility of extending this cave with great potential.

The entrance is only seen when you have actually climbed up a very steep field and standing on the right of the entrance a very definite cold draught can be felt. The opening is about 120ft wide and 15ft high. (The photograph on the survey - which looks out of the entrance - only shows part of it; the blackness on the left is the right hand edge of a haystack.

The passage slopes down over muddy boulders for thirty metres and levels out on the left. It is then possible to stay on the level for another 100m by meandering along until the passage swings to the left. Near the end of this section are some rather fine formations (P)*, and a huge rock from the top of which the photograph locking back along the passage was taken. After it turns to the left, the passage ascends steeply over calcite. The climb is made slightly easier by the steps cut into the greasy surface. At the top (21m above the floor) superb stalactites hang over the head of a 25m pitch which

* (P) indicates a photograph on the survey.

is over sloping calcite for the lower half.

The obvious way on at the bottom of the pitch is under an arch into two grottos with good formations - brown, black, grey and white(P). The main way on is to climb up to the left as you come out of the grottos. Again the calcite is slippery with steps hacked in it to make the 70ft ascent easier. More shorts climbs, both up and down, eventually bring you to a slope down over boulders. It is at this point that the cave looks as if it is really going to go somewhere, but inevitably an upwards calcite slope is reached at the top of which is a thirty foot high calcited vertical wall. There seems to be a passage going off at the top. Around this area are numerous 'Kilroy was here' marks in Spanish with one date of 1941. There is some rumour that the space above has been scaled to, but there were no marks on the walls to substantiate this. A cave of these dimensions can't just finish at a blank wall, and so further work will have to be done.

The cave is heading off towards Matienzo under 4km of mountains, which have hardly been touched by the Spaniards or the English. In this range is the Hoyo de Yusa, which is a depression 1km x $\frac{1}{2}$ km and 200m deep. The limestone over the cave rises to a height of about 700m.

J.S. Corrin

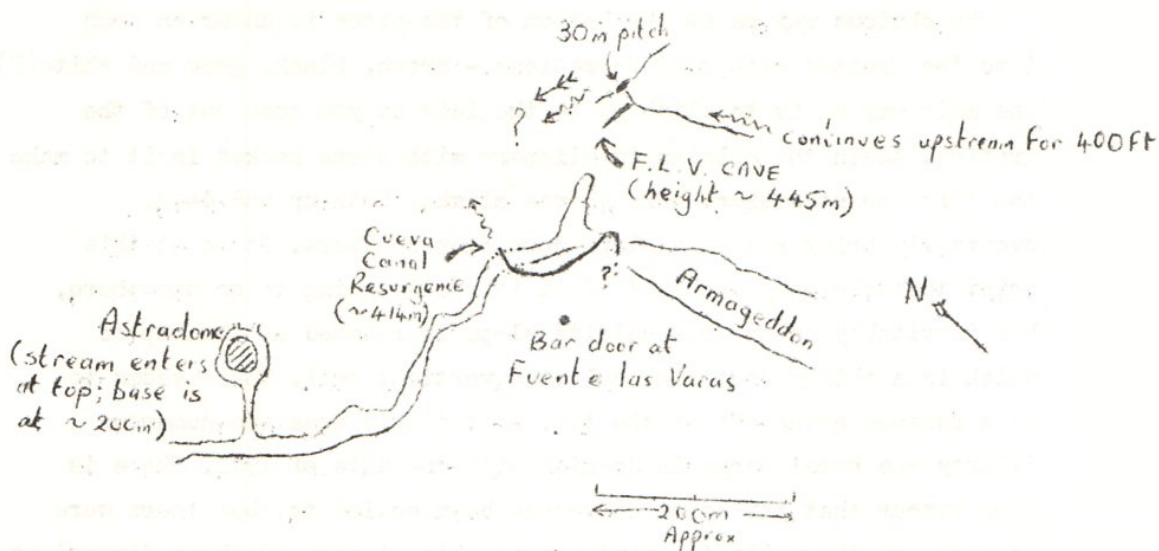
FUENTE LAS VARAS CAVE

The entrance is situated at the end of a drainage ditch 200m from Fuente las Varas bar and 1ft away from the road which runs to Riano. Frank, Dave G. and Dave H. had explored the entrance steep and upstream crawl for about 400ft. Downstream looked as if it would need hammering.

With this aim in mind, Phil Berry and myself ambled up one afternoon. The narrow 4ft high passage didn't look promising but a small ledge near the roof was forced by shovelling earth and boulders away by hand. After two or three attempts Paul squeezed round a dog-leg bend and after a further two metres of thrutching in the roof and a second bend, a wider section of passage was reached with relief. A diagonal thrutch down popped out into a washed out shale band which then dropped away to the head of a pitch.

We returned the next day with ladders and a 4ft eucalyptus pole for a belay. The pitch turned out to be 90ft landing in a high sandy floored rift. Upstream narrowed down but a bedding at the other end of the rift carrying the stream and the draught now needs pushing. It is heading straight for the Astradome but could be the upstream end of Cueva Canal. (See sketch map over page).

P. Gelling



SKETCH (prepared from Grade 5 and grade 2 data) OF FUENTE LAS VARAS CAVE IN RELATION TO THE ASTRADOME IN UZUEKA AND CUEVA CANAL RESURGEME.

CARCAVUESO 1978

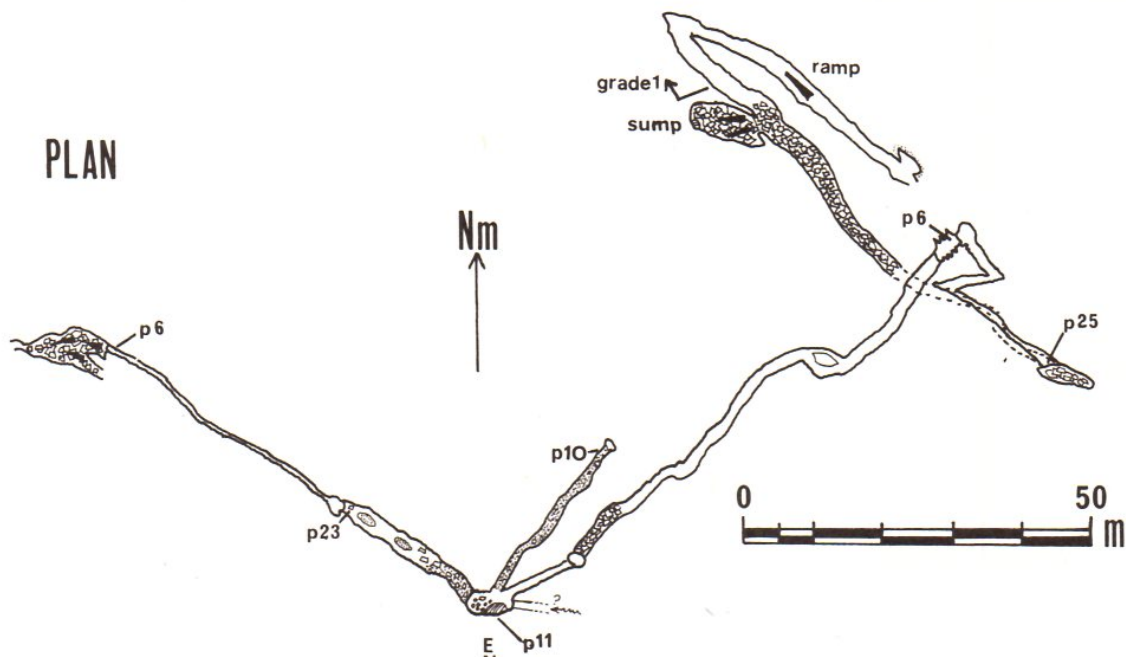
In 1977, Bob Emmot and Phil Pappard dived in the sump hoping for a link with Cueva Lluvea. Unfortunately no way cn was found between the large and unstable blocks in the sump. However the divers had noticed that the rift above the sump might go with the aid of a maypole.

This year Tony Williams, Dave Howard, Dave Garner and Phil very gently hauled the poles through the chokes in the cave and fitted it together at the sump lake. Aguaphile Phil placed a bolt for a foot loop at a spot where he thought the maypole could be erected. Around this area there was no ledge above or under the water surface where poles or people could be placed. The mapole was then pulled across the lake on a 1"10 and the task of raising the pole drom horizontal to a vertical position (while in the water) was attempted. Several hours and many attempt later the decision to leave it until manana was welcomed.

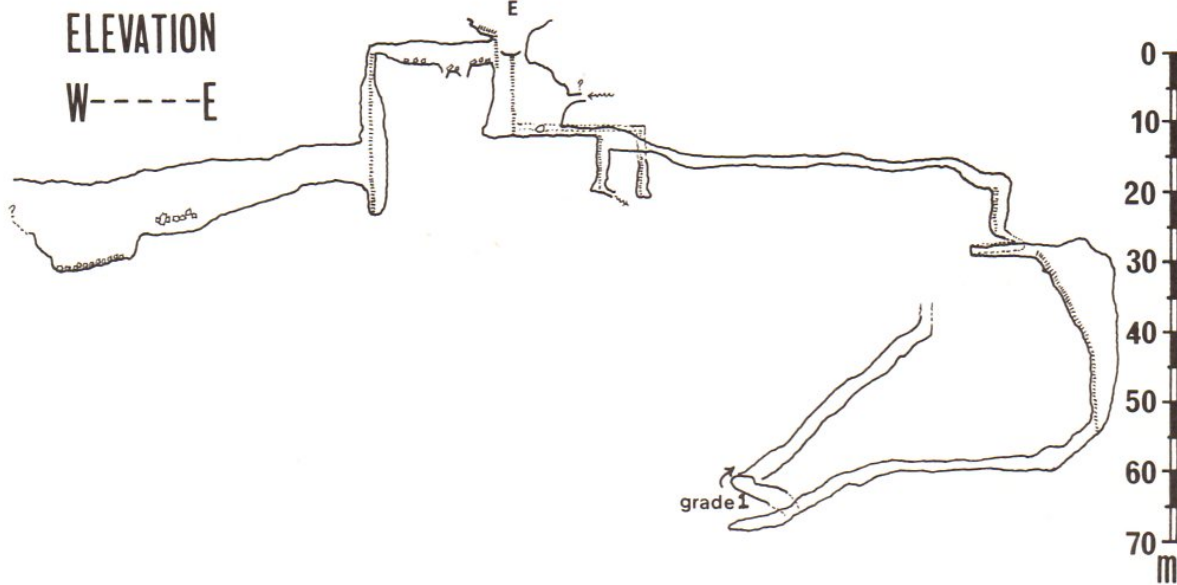
The next day, the same team arrived back at the sump lake and managed to erect the pole fairly easily with 2 steadying lines. Phil then climbed the twenty feet of ladder above the water and after a slippery and difficult take-off and a further six feet of free climbing, entered a passage. It was followed for twenty feet but progress was prevented by boulders from a roof fall . Blackness could be seen up above.

It is thought that given a similar task in the dales, progress

PLAN



ELEVATION W-----E



Entrance pitch

SIMON

Secadura, Santander.

Length approx. 330m

Depth 69m

Surveyed to BCRA 5c

MUSS & PCC August '78

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would have been made, but with all of these open caves and shafts in the Matienzo area this dig will have to wait its turn!

The removal of the maypole from the cave proved to be easier than anticipated and interested persons wishing to have another bash at the passage over the sump should be encouraged by the fact that in only two places, the entrance and the top of the choke, do the longest sections of the maypole need careful manoeuvring.

D. Garner

TORCA DE SIMON

Members of the DCC first noticed this shaft two years ago and, on Nigel Dibbens return to Matienzo, he went back to descend the first pitch. As he left for Italy, he said that he wanted to see the survey completed when we met again in England. He may now regret this remark as the tape he lent us snapped during the course of the survey.

The shaft is on the northern side of the Secadura valley, over 100m above the entrance to Cueva Elegante, and to the east of Solviejo. A stream comes in part way down the shaft from a passage to the right of where the ladder hangs. The water is used to supply a nearby barn, but we did not climb up to explore the upstream passage. At the base of the 11m entrance pitch the water pours over a cascade and falls down a blind 10m pitch.

However, across the top of this pitch you can enter an abandoned vadose passage which runs for 75m to a small climb and a pitch of 6m. At the bottom of this there is a smaller passage developed along zig-zagging joints to the head of another pitch. This slopes down for the first 10m and then drops vertically for the next 15m. Below the way on runs underneath the previous joint-passage and ends in a drop down to a tiny static sump pool - 69m below the entrance. Across the top of this drop a hading rift passage ascends to an aven from where there is a voice connection with the top of the big pitch.

Two other passages lead off from the entrance shaft. First, in the base of the shaft, a short section of low, dry passage ends in a blind 10m shaft. Second, a high level passage can be pendulumed into from the surface, and this comes to a fine 23m pitch followed by 40m of tight vadose passage to a 6m pitch and then almost immediately to another 12ft pitch as yet undescended.

Simon is only remarkable for its Yorkshire-type proportions and

nature. Like Solviejo it contains a stream high above resurgence level, although this cannot be followed down very far. It has however been proven to resurge at Cueva Churro (Elegante) by a dye test once carried out by the plumber in Secadura.

P. Smith

CAVE OF THE BLACK CROWS

We came across the impressive entrance slit to this cave when hunger forced a party of 'on the tops' prospectors back towards camp from the valley above Comediate. We had noted the entrance some years before but had been busy in other directions and it had been forgotten. Quite near to it, several strongly draughting pitches had been descended and either the draught was lost or came from narrow, calcited rifts. It was decided that Black Crow, because of its position relative to Comediate and to these shafts, would be interesting.

So a party was mustered and toiled up the hill to the entrance. This is an impressively scalloped, phreatically enlarged rift, approximately 10m high by 2m wide sloping steeply downwards. Rocks thrown down indicated a possible depth of thirty metres so Phil was tied on the end of a rope and given the necessary ladder. He traversed off down into the narrowing fissure gradually moving away from the sunbathing masses.

After twenty metres he came to the first really vertical climb of 10m which dropped from a 'window' into a parallel rift to the left. The entrance rift continued upwards but could not be climbed easily and so was left although there was the hint of a continuation at high level.

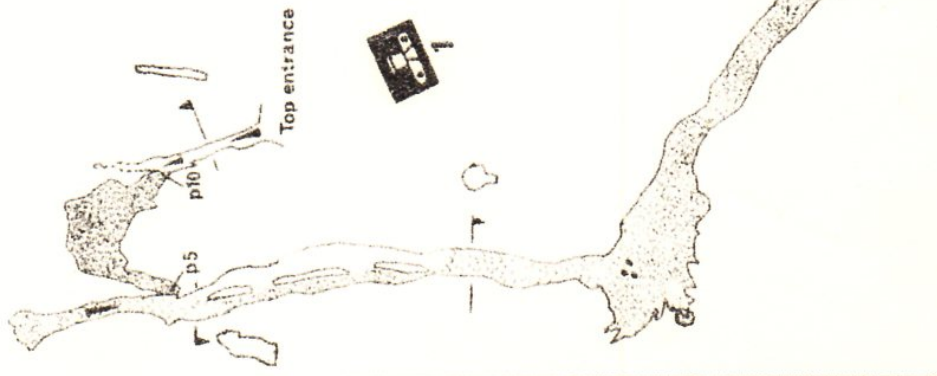
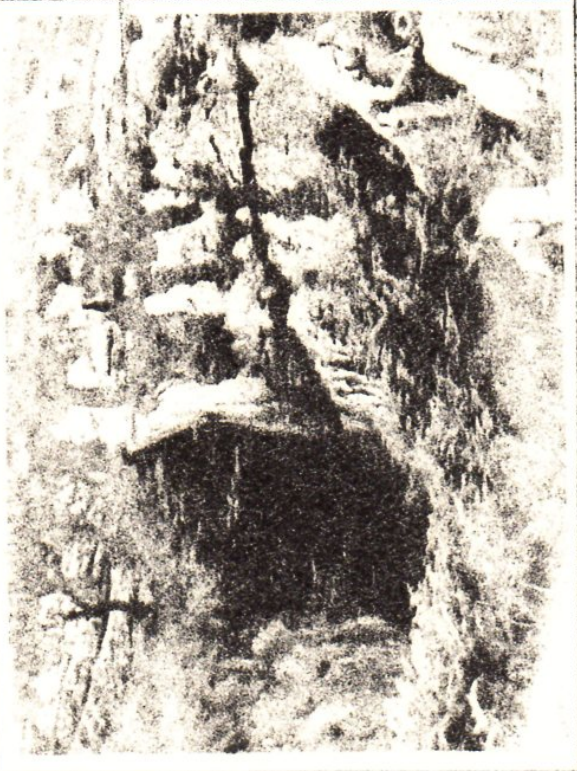
Down the pitch, Phil looked around for some time in a fairly roomy chamber before locating the draught at floor level. A few minutes later after some digging, it was possible to squeeze through and stand up at the top of a further short pitch. It was just too dangerous to free climb so he returned to the surface for more tackle and reinforcements. These were quickly forthcoming as it now appeared that glory was a possibility and a party of four were soon rigging the second pitch. While this was being done, a greasy calcite climb was pursued on the right for 40m until it split into a low chamber with many roof pendants touching the floor. By squirming about in these it was possible to locate a draught which was blowing from a crack behind an immovable boulder. As it

Black Crow Cave

La Vega, Matienzo

Length approx. 320m

BCRA 5c. MUSS Aug. '77



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appeared that the passage was heading back towards the surface, it was left.

Back at the second pitch the remainder of the party had descended and had headed off in a fine walking passage with good formations coming down from the roof 15m above. There were several levels possible here but they united in a chamber with a soft sandy floor and several impressive stal. It took some time to find the way on from here as there were many phreatic pockets and solution hollows looked in. It was found eventually up a continuation of the rift. Once up, the passage became wider and lower although easy walking was still possible. The floor was now pebbles and sand and there were indications of wet weather flow towards the explorers. Fifty metres further on, around several bends and over a loamy sand floor, the passage appeared to end in a 15m diameter chamber. A small stream trickled down one wall and this was covered in excellent calcite formations which were mirrored in a deep pool covering part of the floor.

As this appeared to be the end most of the party went off looking for further glory or take photographs, leaving the two surveyors to finish their job. When the noise of the others had faded away, the two surveyors were left in silence and, as the last bearing was being taken, one of them noticed a faint rushing sound. Its source was soon located at floor level where a draught was emerging from under an incredibly scalloped wall. The survey was then abandoned and both people set-to to enlarge the hole. Half an hour later it was possible to get a head into the hole and, rather surprisingly, daylight was visible - admittedly some considerable distance away, but undeniably daylight.

With this to spur them on, the sand and earth blockage was soon dug out and they squeezed into a largish chamber into which daylight streamed from a small opening high up on the other side. It took rather a dodgy traverse behind stals on the left wall to reach the entrance, but the surveyors eventually emerged to look out over La Vega. Looking back up the hill the rucksacks and other equipment could be seen at the higher entrance.

The cave has obviously taken a considerable flow of water at some time and probably had some connection with Comediante / Torca de la Cabana / Renada caves. As it is now in isolation and long since abandoned its significance in the development of the integrated cave system on this side of the valley is problematical.

L.D.J.Mills

THE FIFTY BAR CRAWL

For the last two years, Pete and John have been attempting to break the fifty bar limit. This physical and psychological barrier was hardly touched in 1976 with only 25 bars visited. In 1977, a slightly better attempt with 36 bars entered. The rules are simple - one glass of vino tinto in each bar. Pete had been in training in Spain for the last year so the pair were fit and ready to reach the magic 50. Their landrover-driving chauffeuse for the trip tells the tale....

We chugged up the hill and arrived at the Calender Bar at Fuente las Varas where my companions (later to become passengers) and I went in - 2 tintos, 12 pesetas - and out. Next stop the Idiots Bar. I stayed in the vehicle and, as anticipated, they were back within a minute. There was no time to waste; it was already 2.45pm.

Down the other side of the hill to Solorzano. This was more like it - 4 bars within a few paces of each other, the Cheap Veg Bar, 2 others and then into the Cowboy Bar. I was guilty of delaying here as I had my first drink of the day - a coffee.

Off then to Secadura, stopping at the pleasant little Shop Bar on the way and also visiting the Wembley Stadium Bar (contains an enormous table football machine). Here we bought 3 tuna steaks from a white van that pulled up outside with the intention of getting them cooked later that day in one of the bars. Then to the Plumbers Bar - chat to the plumber; a sticky bun each and the obligatory 2 tintos and off to the 3 bars in Badames - a Spanish friend paced us in these.

We were soon back on the road and heading towards Ampuerro. We stopped at Marron at the Argument Bar. We spent about 15 minutes here - at least $14\frac{1}{2}$ of these were spent arguing with the owners who justified charging 10 pesetas a glass by the fact that they were flooded during the winter. There was also a long debate about the size of the glasses which they claimed held a lot more than the 5 peseta glass. However, any attempt by the drinkers to test this theory was soon stopped by their snatching away the smaller glasses that were within reach.

Twelve bars later we had 'done' Ampuerro and had reached Ramales. There are 14 bars here but only 4 of them were visited by us. Pete only managed two of them because he went off to buy some sweets and crayons - but that's another story!

The Boxers Bar was the next one and this where we had our fish. Then onto Valle - Church Bar, Shop Bar, Football Bar, Rich Mans Bar and the Top Bar. We met another old friend in the Rich Mans Bar.

He speaks excellent English and we seem to meet him on every bar crawl. He's quite used to it by now and always enquires how many we're up to. We were having an interesting conversation in English - that is he and I were, but my two amigos were rambling on in Spanish, not realising that he was speaking in there own language.

Lastras with the Tabacalera and the Fly Catchers Bar; Ogarrio and Bar Tomas and then down the hill into Riba. I'd given up accompanying them into the bar at this stage as I could hear everything they said from the landrover. Five bars later and we were on our way back to Matienzo.

Surprisingly there were only two bars open here. First, The Snows. The double doors swing open and in they burst. It was difficult to get out of here with only one tinto and I think that they both had several bought for them. There was lots of clinging onto people and the bar, back-slapping, singing etc., etc. I had to employ the aid of 5 locals to carry them into the back of the landrover.

Finally back home to Germans Bar . It had been rather peaceful here before we arrived.

The next day saw the count up. Only 46 bars! The record breaking attempt will have to be next year. Anyone who wishes to act as a driver in 1979, , please contact me.

Linda Carr

AUSTRIAN EXPEDITION 1978

After my trip down the Grotte di Monte Cucco in '77, I decided that I'd had enough of going to Italy and that it was time to look for pastures new. Steve Foster had been to Austria in '77 with Plymouth Caving Group and said that the area had great potential. Steve was given the Salzburger Höhlenbuch Vol. 2 by Walter Klappacher at the Sheffield Congress. We studied the book carefully and came to the conclusion that the area around the Lamprechtsofen had great potential.

The Lamprechtsofen (Lampo for short) at +960m is the highest cave in the world. There are numerous entrances on the mountain above the Lampo - three of them, the Rothöhle, Wieserloch and Riesenbogel-schact are shown on the cross section. These three are the deepest known caves above the Lampo although the last one looks the obvious choice for a way into the Lampo - this one is recorded as choking at -205m. The Rothöhle sumps at -250m, so this left the Wieserloch.

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