

# Caves & Caving

The Bulletin of the British Cave Research Association



B C R A

**Number 18**

**Nov 1982**

**80p**

**BLANK**

**BLANK**





Azpilicueta; 3rd pitch

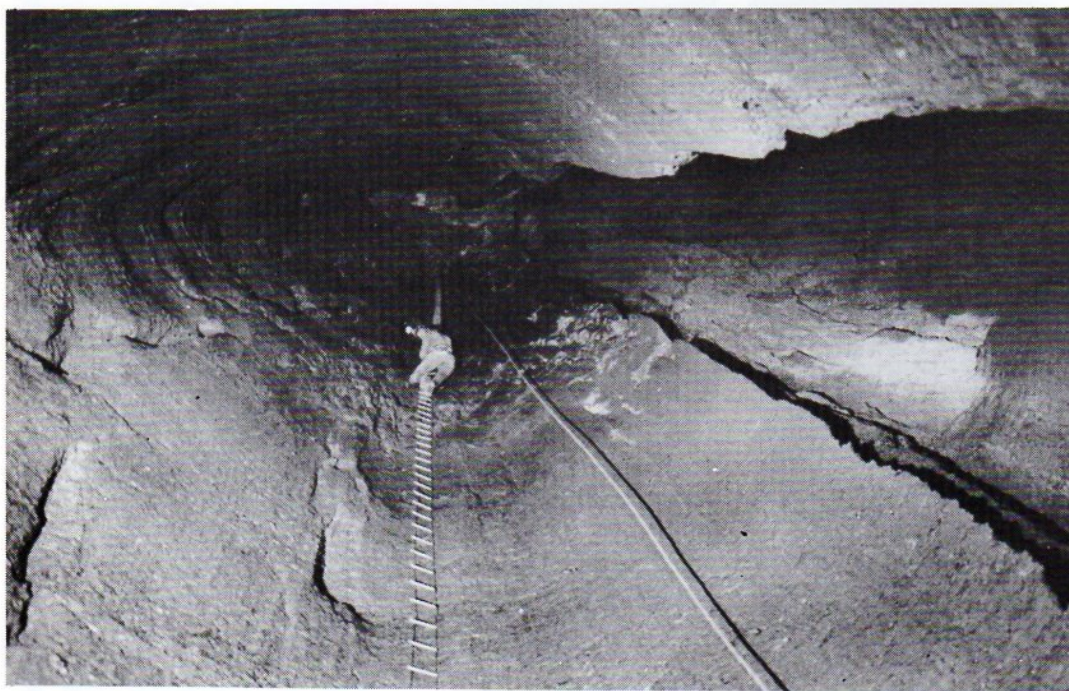
## MATIENZO '82

*Wandering along magnificently stalagmited railway tunnels within easy reach of ever-open bars had long been a way of life in Matienzo. (That's the place in northern Spain where there's a lot of wine and no pitches according to the legends). So much for pipe-dreams; 1981 saw the expedition run out of tackle in the newly discovered Coteron system, with a repeat performance this year – undescended pitches all over the place and even SRT being resorted to.*

Most of the action centred upon the Seldesuto valley at the southwest end of the Matienzo depression. Half way along this valley floor is the resurgence Comediate, behind which lies Cueva Renada discovered in 1973, an impressive 6 km of passage which in places carries the river. (The source is as yet undiscovered). At a higher altitude is the 50m entrance shaft to Coteron with 5 km of surveyed passage, some of which was known to overlap Renada below. Further west along the same hillside is Torca de la Cabana - most of which lies directly over Renada. Cabana was explored in 1974 and then largely forgotten during subsequent years in the rush to explore the 13 km Uzueka system over the northern ridge. At that time this cave was the longest in Matienzo, but its days were already numbered in this respect.

But having all this to go at wasn't enough for "Squirrel" Wood, so he walked even higher up the (very steep) hillside and found a cave which soon became the deepest in the valley at 263m (863ft). Scrambling down bouncing boulders led to a series of pitches 5m, 37m, 5m and 24m into an old stream passage, the only notable horizontal development in the place. This short section was followed by a 14m damp drop and two further pitches of 60m and 39m into what appeared to be an enormous pit full of thrown-away buildings. Two further pitches amongst chaos lead to a point close to valley floor level and to the, as yet undiscovered, Sanatogen Passage in Cueva Renada. However by this time blackness was beckoning in nearby Coteron and the heap of ladders was removed leaving Torca de Azpilicueta (Ath-pilly-kwaiter – it's the name of an extinct and venomous local brew) until 1983.

The transfer of tackle soon paid off with the discovery of a through route between Coteron and Renada via a 70m pitch, thus instantly creating a 13.6 km system with passages still going. On this trip John Thorp, Steve Martin and John Palmer finally made the bar after some interesting route findings. As proof of the connection they produced an old diving flipper abandoned on a ledge several years ago during a Renada pushing trip and amazed the locals by drinking champagne from it. To ease the new desperate tackle shortage, Lank Mills and John Yeadon emerged from retirement and managed to find a by-pass to the only pitch in Renada; they also entered the aforementioned Sanatogen passage which, as



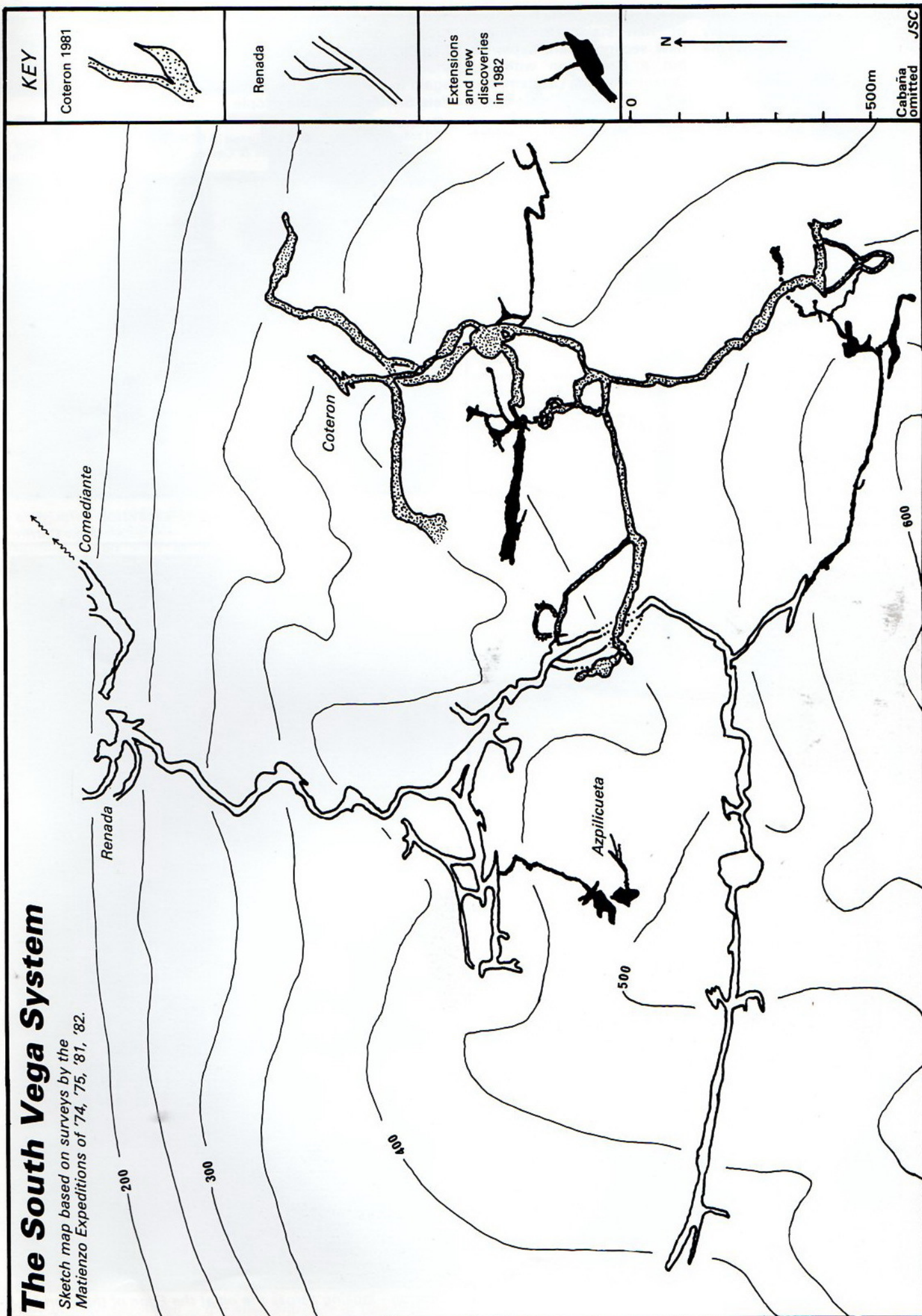
Azpilicueta - the 120 ft. second pitch showing the joint which controls much of the cave.

Juan Corrin



# The South Vega System

Sketch map based on surveys by the Matienzo Expeditions of '74, '75, '81, '82.





well as joining with Azpilicueta, could conceivably join with Renada II beyond the sump.

Attention then centred upon Bootlace Passage and a black tunnel on the wrong side of a pit in Renada. Steve and Phil Papard set off to explore and after some difficult aerobatics came back with tales of a 500m stampede. It should be explained that in Matienzo, the mere discovery of caves is not regarded as proof of anything, you have to survey the things as well – thus it was immediately perceived that Renada was about to join up with Coteron again, which it soon did, creating a 4km underground through-trip. And, of course, leaving lots more to explore some other time.

Meanwhile, in Torca de la Cabana, plenty of effort was going into the re-exploration of the place and in seeking yet another link up in what had now become the local equivalent of the West Kingsdale System. Cabana consists of an open shaft of 27m followed by an irritatingly awkward 38m pitch to a 8m drop and a superb 40m pitch into the usual vast tunnel. The explorer descends through the roof of the main

passage amongst battalions of 10m stalactites. Various new sections were explored, but a connection with the Coteron-Renada System has yet to be found. This was the nearest thing to a disappointment which occurred after the discovery of a total of 7km of new passage, the linking of two major caves and the establishing of new local depth and length records.

As is usual in Matienzo, the weather was indifferent, quite the opposite of the warmth

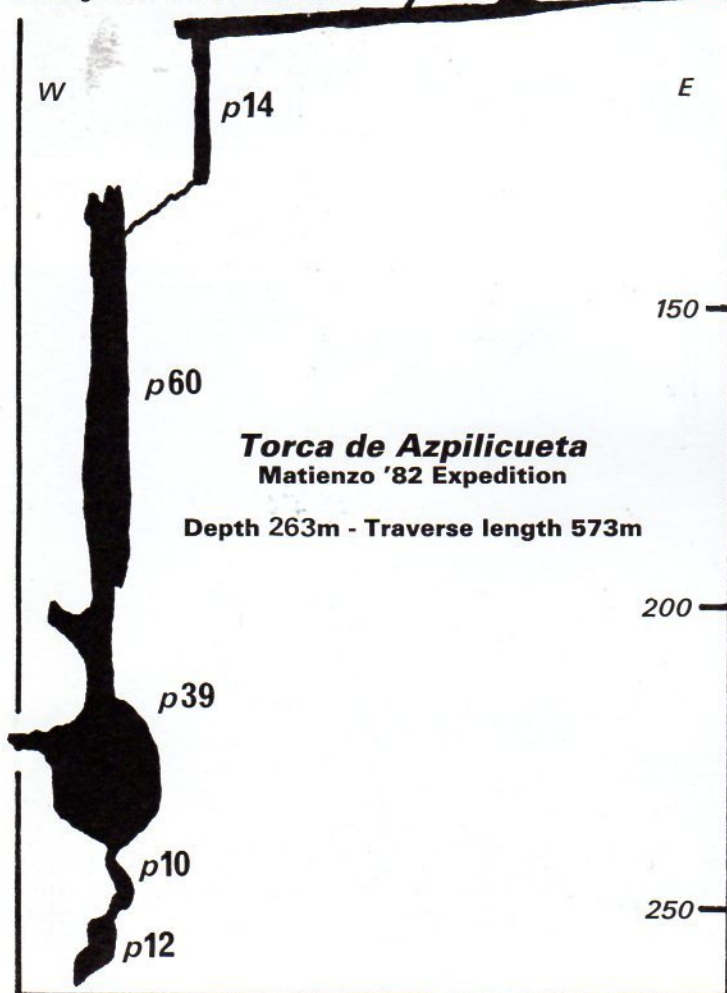
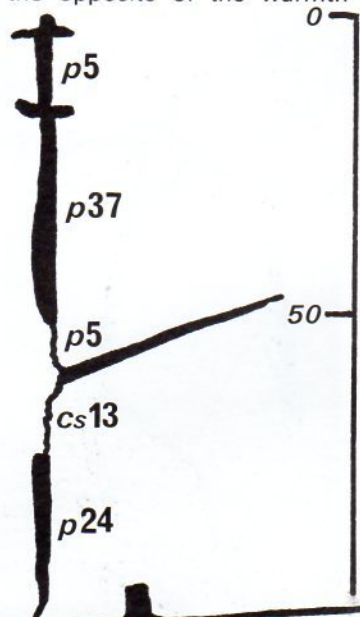
and hospitality extended to the expedition by our many friends amongst the people of the valley. Our thanks once again to our man on the spot, Pete Smith, and to the people

of Matienzo for ensuring that the expedition was a success both socially and speleologically.

*Frank Addis*

#### References:

All references up to 1981 are listed in BCRA transactions No. 8, vol. 2. Additional references: Caves & Caving, No. 14 and MUSS Journal No. 10.



*Azpilicueta - the stream passage re-excavated through a mud infill.*  
*Juan Corrin*



*Coteron - looking across the pit at the Edge of the World.*  
*Juan Corrin*

**BLANK**

**BLANK**