

MATIENZO 8.

This year the Matienzo MUSS expedition was attended by PCG members Andy Bennett, Jane Evans and Alasdair Neill. Other PCG members called in for a while on their way to and from the Picos, and did some caving. We were accompanied on the ferry out by Phil and Lillian Romford, late of BAT Products, on their way to a new home in Portugal; they were to turn up unexpectedly in Matienzo some time later, their car having blown up not far outside Santander!

The ferry arrived in Santander on 1st August, and driving down from the pass of Puerto de Alisas we met Terry Whittaker, Paul Stacey and others who were in search of a back entrance to Valline. This cave, of which more later, was the big discovery of the expedition, with over 12km discovered so far. It had been discovered a week before (23rd July), and has enormous potential, a link with Renada seems likely.

We then carried on to Matienzo and set up camp- on a new site, immediately behind the bar! We then went caving.

CUEVA DE LOS EMBOSCADOS (87). Andy, Jane, Lou (Dutch), Steve, Dave, Rob, Ali. This short but impressive cave is a short walk from the campsite. An entrance crawl leads to some impressive formations and a stal flow down to the floor of the main passage. This large passage ends at a strongly draughting choke. We had a poke at this, and did some climbs—mostly done before. Jane went down a hole in the floor at the foot of the stal bank which leads into some passage, done before again. The scratchings of deer on the wall were pointed out. A number of stone axe heads were found near this cave during the expedition.

CUEVA DEL AGUA (59). Andy, Jane, Ali.

A trip to the bottom. The 1988 extension above the cascades was looked at, up an awkward climb.

Aug 2nd. MUELA. Andy, Jane and Ali.

A trip following up work done in 1988. This part of the mountain has only revealed shallow choked shafts. A long drive along a rough track, and then a steep climb up in the heat. A number of previously located shafts were descended, and some new ones found.

697. A shaft of 9m, 4m crawl at the bottom.

742. Shaft of 10m, to choke. Goat and horse bones.

743. Rift, freeclimable, 2m deep, 6m long.

Crawls, both 6m long, found 6m and 20m to the north.

744. Collapse into chamber 12m by 10m, no way on.

745. Two holes 10m apart. 6m pitch.

746. Draughting choke in bottom of doline. Shaft 8m deep descended on SE side.

696. 2m long squeeze leads to 18m pitch to choke.

654. Entrance opened up, 3m slope leads to 16m pitch to choke.

CUEVA LAS COSAS (84).

We entered the caves and were impressed by the large chamber and formations, 20m or so. We found no ways on so took some photos. Graham, Ashleigh, Rob and Steve.

Aug 3rd. MULLIR. Andy, Ali, Jane and Eliot.

We went to a promising area, little covered, in which Spanish cavers had explored a hole (Sima Levantada) to a depth of -210m. (ref Bolletin Cantabro de Espeleologia No.6 Dec 1985 p.54-5). This cave, marked M-25, is 20m ESE of 617, our aim, a shaft descended in 1986 by Phil Pappard down to a pitch blocked by boulders. We had intended to go back in 1988, but were side-tracked by the re-discovery of Cave of the Wild Horses.

After the awkward walk in, we located a number of new holes:

756. 15m shaft, choked, freeclimable, 5m diameter.

757. Shaft, about 10m, undescended, covered with rocks.

758. Shaft, about 30m+, undescended, looks good, near 617 and M-25.

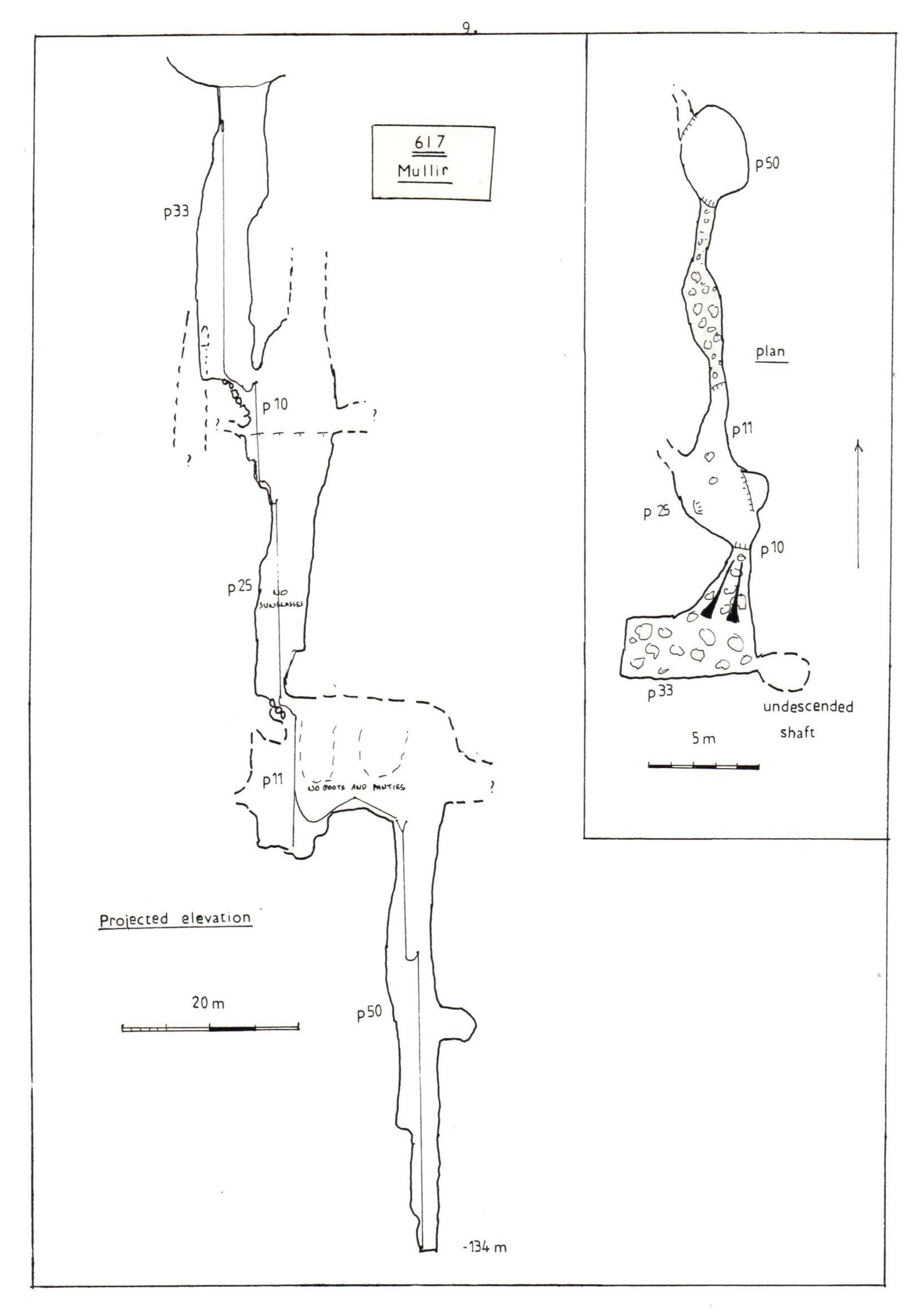
760. 10m shaft, undescended. 3 shafts on rift line nearby.

Andy rigged 617 down to the previous bottom (he placed several bolts, missing those already placed as he was wearing his sunglasses!). He then cleared the boulders, allowing the next pitch (18m, awkward and tight at the top) to be descended to a depth of -90m. This pitch ends in a blind chamber, but a climb up or a swing through a constriction part way up the pitch leads into a rift passage with a good draught, which led to another big pitch.

Aug 4th. MULLIR. Andy, Ali, Jane, Eliot.

The new pitch in 617 was partly descended, but a late start soon forced a retreat. Eliot forgot his boots!

Aug 5th. MULLIR. Andy, Ali, Jane, Eliot.



The 50m pitch was bottomed, giving a depth of 134m, at a shallow muddy pool. The draught was lost; there are a number of possible leads for next year: a passage across the top of the 5th pitch, and traverses on the second pitch, both need bolting. Also a shaft entered by climbing up into a window at the base of the first pitch, undescended.

Some other new holes were found:

759. Shaft, c10m.

761. Cave, unexplored.

762. Shaft, c10m plus, unexplored.

Aug 6th. VALLINE (or Valley Entrance). Juan, Wingnut, Andy, Ali, Gilly, Jane, Andy Hall. A photo trip to Swirl Chamber, two-thirds of the way in. A large entrance chamber leads to the break through, a short dug crawl. Shortly beyond a ladder pitch of about 10m drops into the start of the big passages. Long sections of large passages, small passage, climbs, and ladder pitches of about 10m, 20m, and 8m were covered. The survey had shown a passage from below the last pitch was close to surface; a smoke test the following day was highly successful, enabling a new entrance (Lost Pot) to be easily opened giving rapid progress to the end of the cave for next year.

Photos were taken of the huge Swirl Chamber and other large passages near it, formations, climbs, and pitches.

Aug 7th. TOAD IN THE HOLE (258). Andy, Jane, Ali, Gilly, Eliot. We rigged the cave through the entrance series, along the awkward Chocolate Slice crawl, to the 4th pitch (12m). We had a look at a number of digs and crawls.

Aug 8th. 693. Ali.

Ali found this shaft in August 1988, described as a 10m draughting shaft, undescended. Today he returned and found that a fire had burnt off vegetation revealing a crawl through brambles to a chamber at the foot of the shaft. A number of holes off didn't seem to go anywhere, but then he found a short crawl at the back, leading to a 20cm square window into the top of a shaft, estimated at 50m.

He then joined Juan, Paul Stacey, and others who were waiting for a smoke test from the end of Cocoa series in Toad-hoping for a second new entrance to a cave in two days! Unfortunately this was not to be; only traces of smoke appeared, from 685 (dug by Bob Cawthorne last year), unlike the billowing choking masses which appeared at Lost Pot. A number of other draughting digs were carried out, which might make an easier connection. Ali found and descended a strongly draughting hole down the valley from 685, obviously dug by persons unknown. This tight hole led to an awkward constriction about 10m in. We later found that Pedro was responsible, and there were no Pirates in Matienzo!

Toad. Andy, Jane, Jim Davies, Gilly, Eliot.

The aim of this trip was to push and survey the far reaches of Toad in the Hole, continuing on from the 1988 limit of exploration. The known cave ended at a small rift which emerges in the side of a large sand floored passage. The right hand branch when surveyed turned out to be a rift doubling back above the entrance passage, while the left hand passage after about som ended with a series of small draughting rifts, opening out into a large boulder filled chamber. A small side passage led to a shaft of 40m plus, undescended. The boulder filled chamber ends in a draughting rift, with many unexplored side passages still to be explored. There are many leads here for next year.

Aug 9th. Pedro's Dig (763). Andy, Ali, Jane.
Ali and Andy enlarged the constriction, enabling Andy to pass it, leading to a small chamber with a hole in the floor giving the draught. He managed to block this in attempting to clear some rocks covering the top.

We found another draughting shakehole up the hill to the south and dug it for a while, and also several other holes between this and Arenal.

Aug 10th. TOAD. Andy Hall, Jane, Anne, Ali.

A photo trip. We managed to lose the way in the Lost Series. We covered the cave from there back to the rope traverse, and into the Cocoa Series.

TOAD. Terry, Sam, Steve, Eliot, Gilly.

Looking at side passages either side of the 12m pitch. A 30m descent into a vertical 'pillar and stall' maze, still going, was made.

763. Andy, Jim Davies. The Bosch was used to place bolts to remove boulders from the hole at the end- some just fell apart! Some debris remains to be cleared.

TOAD. Andy, Jim.

The traverse just inside the entrance was crossed to some passage, and the huge chamber reached by a side passage between the second and third pitches was investigated. This area is poorly and incompletely surveyed and needs a further look.

Aug 11th. CUEVA DEL AGUA. Andy, Jane, Ali.

A hangover/still drunk (for the Latter two) trip, following the Donkey Dinner. To the extension over the cascades, half way in. Andy climbed into the extension and up an awkward 5m climb to a sandy chamber. A short dig led him to about 50m of fair sized fossil passage, containing excellent formations. The floor was covered in white snail shells, many calcited in, so he called the discovery Snail Chamber. The sound of the river could be heard through a hole in the floor, but all passages ended at stal chokes. One passage leading into virgin territory is draughting.

An oxbow (unsurveyed) was climbed into on the other side of the river, a short way upsteam of the discovery.

693. Ali and Jane.

The eyehole was enlarged with a lumphammer, untill the head flew off down the pitch!

763. Andy, Rob, Ashleigh. Removed some more debris from the dig.

764.

A hole in the edge of the field below 763 was found by Andy. Andy and Ashleigh explored it, finding 100m or so of mostly crawling passage. A short entrance passage drops into a stream passage, dry at the time but which obviously floods to the roof in normal conditions. This was left still going both up and down stream. It probably takes water from the Toad area, perhaps to Arenal. The entrance is thought to issue water in wet conditions, being an overflow. Andy got very excited, and named it Wet Dream Stream.

Aug 12th. 764. Andy, Ali, Jim Davies, Lank Mills, Rob, Ashleigh. Surveyed the cave. The ends were pushed a short distance, both ending in constrictions. This cave could make an important link and gives new information on the hydrology of the area, but it is horrible and the flood danger is great.

Surface survey. Ali, Ashleigh, Toby and Jane, Terry. To locate 763, 764, and Cueva de Calleja Rebollo (38).

CUEVA DE CALLEJA REBOLLO. Lank, Jim, Ali, Terry, Toby and Jane. This is a large fossil passage 70m long, which was used as a refuge in the Spanish Civil War- of which various relics remain. At the end Jim found a draughting dig, which was pushed into about 30m of rift passage. The cave was surveyed. This cave is probably related to Toad, and is close to the entrance.

693. Andy and Ali.

Ali got down to about 10m in the new pitch, but rigging was very awkward- rock at the top too soft to bolt, and below it was shattered and full of sharp projecting fossils. Several bolts for deviations were managed, but there were still rub points so we decided to return with the Bosch to push it.

TOAD. Jane, Eliot and Gilly. Climbed into and surveyed Dodo Grotto- very pretty, but Toby says he has been there beforebut he didn't survey it. Detackled the inner part of the cave.

RIAÑO AREA. Jimmy Rattery (BPC), Graham Hart, Lynn Beattie, Mike Heard. We were looking for an easier entrance into Uzueka- at present it takes three hours of crawling and climbing to reach Shatter Chamber. We set off about midday and investigated about half a dozen holes- 639, 640, 641, 642 etc.

640 proved to be quite interesting, Jimmy and Mike investigated this T-shaped cave, but the trip was called off after: a) weird noises were heard?? Koala Bears and claw marks were found, and b) the cave didn't appear to go, We spent some time investigating various other holes and scouring the area for draughtimg holes etc., with not much success.

639 proved to be more successful. Jimmy and Lynn investigated the entrance pitch, whilst Mike and I investigated the twin 8m shafts. The rock was very wet and chossy and the pot rifted in all directions mostly ending in mud chokes.

Not a very productive day, but an interesting one and the area definitely has potential.

Aug 13th.

CUEVA DE CARCAVEUSO (81). Jim, Jane, toby and Jane Chilton.

A hangover trip with a difference. Normal? route to Smack Choke, and (without looking at a survey) Stranglewanking Passage. Ended at a ?terminal boulder choke. The link between Uzueka and Llueva is i think a small passage going off to the left hand side, to a small chamber with a draughting calcited choke. We surveyed from here to Smack for accuracy.

CUEVA DEL AGUA. Andy, Ali.

The Snail Chamber was surveyed, and then the rest of the 1988 extension was looked at. We then climbed up the Calcite Ramp, below the cascades—a long way up over amazing multi-coloured flowstone cascades 10m wide, with equally amazing stal, and an exceptionally amazing gour pool, 10m deep, near the top—well worth the awkward climb up!

Aug 14th 693- Ali.

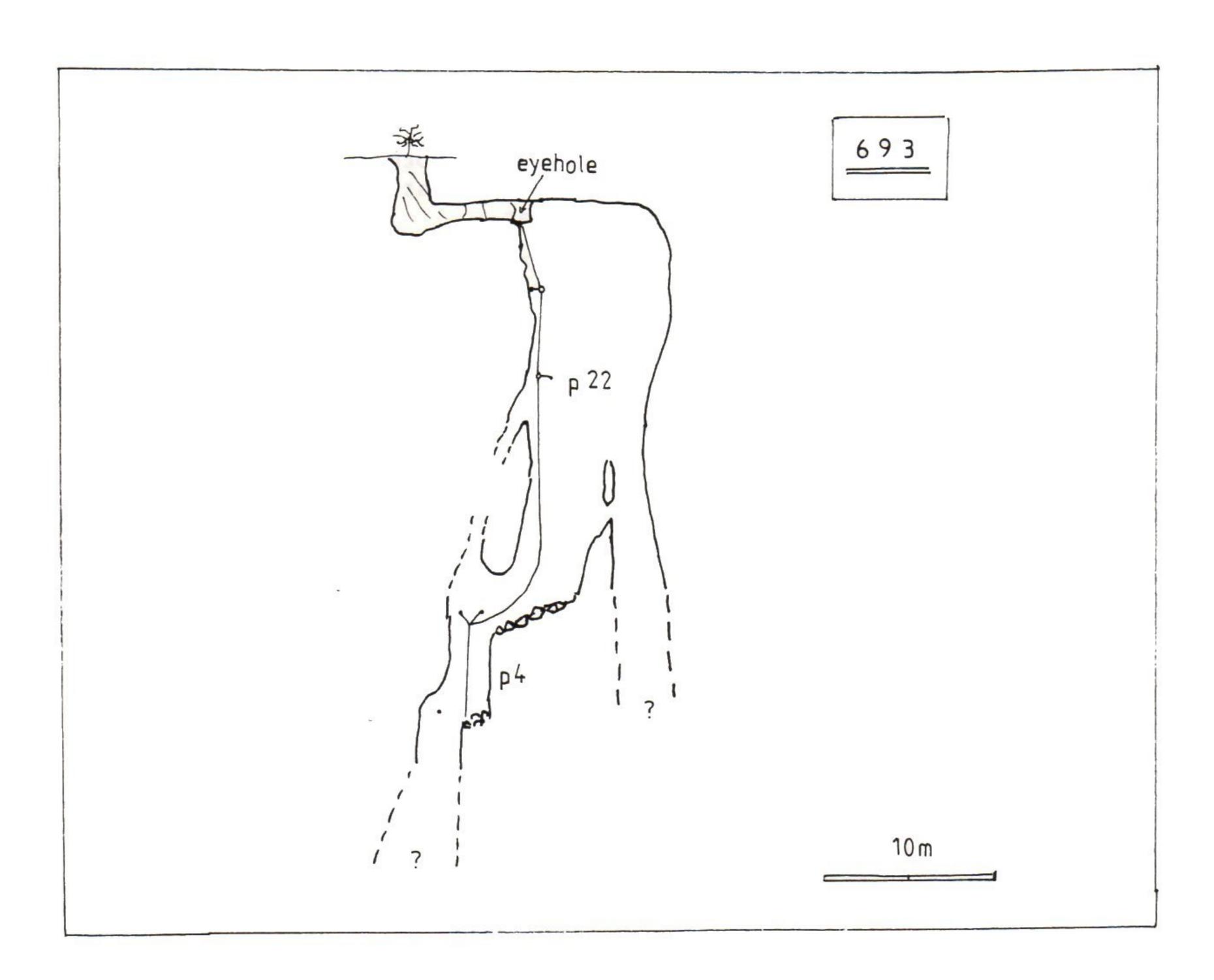
Due to the lack of personel willing to detackle Toad, Ali struggled up the hill with two huge sacks and the Bosch drill to try and get a bit further. The head of a 5-6 second drop at -33 m was reached and a bolt placed, but with a tight loose take-off, this was not descended. The manky rock again made rigging difficult. There is a deepish undescended shaft at the other end of the entrance shaft.

This is over the Lost Series in Toad, which contains some big avens. The depth to the main passage would be -100m.

Ali then joined the others derigging Toad.

TOAD. Andy, Jane, Gilly, Eliot.

Detackled the whole cave, and found about 60m of new passage.



Alasdair Neill, Andy Bennett, Jane Evans, Graham Hart, Ashleigh Phillips.