

WILLIAM PENGELLY CAVE STUDIES TRUST LIMITED



NEWSLETTER

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MATIENZO '88

Saturday 23 July 1988 saw Bob and Julie Cawthorne crossing to Roscoff preparing for a non-stop overnight drive to call at Matienzo, summer expedition home of the Manchester University Speleological Society and, in recent years, many other clubs.

Cousin Peter was looking for a caving trip on the Tuesday. There was a bank holiday in Santander, so he did not have to go back to work. We elected to go to Cueva de Agua. He wished to review the area around the prehistoric site. This seemed an excellent idea so off we went. The water level was - interesting not at its usual placid level. The cascade was certainly tested for ease of return before both of us were on the downstream side! It is an impressive passage and even after four or five visits I am still quite happy to go back again. Eventually we were in the deep water. Peter was not happy, and spent a lot of the time going from hand to hand along the wall.

At the end we inspected all around the prehistoric 'altar'. Peter had found etchings in other caves and was wondering if there would be fresh evidence here. There wasn't. We had a good inspect of all the nooks and crannies, found some nice formations, lots of snail shells and small rodent bones, but no other traces of human activity. A pity. Then came the return. Not as difficult as we had feared, however, suitably sporting on the cascades.

Thursday July 28 July Alasdair Neill arrived having taken the Plymouth - Santander ferry.

Ali Bob and Julie then decided to go down Agua for a couple of hours. This was a photo trip in the first section of this huge river passage - it even contained cloud layers in the entrance chamber. We met a party from the Haymarket Caving Club (Newcastle) who had found a high level extension (before the first cascade). We photographed away merrily for a pleasant hour. Ali being clever and technical, and Bob being wildly optimistic with a tiny camera with a built in flash.

On Friday some from the Derbyshire Caving Club had arrived. A mixed party of Bob, Ali, Toby, Juan Corrin and Baz Davies went to visit Cueva de los Emboscados (87). The entrance is kept blocked with small stones and plastic sheeting to keep goats out. Once this is removed a 2m crawl pops out into a big passage behind a line of stals. A slope of soft gour pools leads down into the huge main passage, sandy floored, 12m wide and up to 30m high. After a short distance it ends at a strongly draughting choke.

Bob and Baz dug the right hand side and Toby and myself a passage on the left which crossed the other and turned into the choke. Toby pushed through a squeeze and passed a boulder behind which no easy way on could be made. I dug a passage behind this which may head up into a void above, followed by Toby, but the mud walls began trundling so we left it to settle. I then had a

look at a number of side passages on the west wall further back, extending 30m or so to sand chokes. These have not been surveyed. They contained many bones including those of a small rodent. A number of ancient etchings of a deer can be seen (now very faint) on the left hand wall. Toby and Baz attempted a number of other passages and climbs.

Saturday 30 July saw a visit to **"Toad in the Hole"** cave no 258. You may notice that this is not a Spanish name, so it does not need translation! A party of Bob, Baz, Arthur, Ali and Pedro set off to investigate another draughting choke. This cave is on the northern slopes of the head of the Vega valley. A trudge up the hill in very hot sunshine with excellent scenery led us to the entrance a sizeable shakehole with attached oak tree. A handline descent of the entrance shakehole leads to a short pitch, the top being tight and awkward. Bob's ribs protested bitterly at this treatment, and to get through the pullover had to come off, the carbide lamp igniting this in the process. Ever had protesting ribs and a burning pullover in a tight squeeze? you don't chuckle.

Once in the passage leads down a short section into the side of a big passage. A low section leads to more big stumping stuff with fine formations. Soon we came to a 10m bolt climb with a fixed rope. We hoisted up a ladder and Baz placed a new bolt, as the existing one was a bit dodgy. Beyond a well decorated passage crosses several sandy

bridges and passes a small side passage (which leads to a pitch and a chamber etc). Soon a 15m pitch is reached. As only the bottom 5m is vertical we used a ladder tied to the bottom of a handline. The head of the pitch had amazing twisty helictites all over the place.

From the bottom of the pitch more big passage leads to a flat-out uphill squeeze into a chamber choked to the left and right. The left draughts strongly and had previously been pushed down into a chamber. However, the draught seems to come mainly from above, so Baz and Toby pushed up here. The boulders were huge, and well jammed, possibly calcified area in addition to leaving the digger right in the target area. Ali had a bit of a dig at the other well-calcified end with only a trace of a draught. I then had a look at the passage behind the pitch - with superb helictites, but eventually choked, some big avens above, which probably connect to the passage between the pitches.

The next day Juan and Bob were out in the sunshine as Salford Phil, Dave and a couple of others were going down Toad in the Hole with the Molephones. We were to be at various points on the surface between 4pm and 5pm. We left them as they disappeared with several hours to kill. Firstly we started to make our way diagonally towards the valley/tree line up valley from Toad. As we came up to the tree line we came across a small hole in a limestone cliff. Juan consulted his map. It was not new. This was

Cueva de Calleja Rebollo. This was a Civil War refuge. The entrance which required stooping and dropping down through a two - three foot drop led into a large chamber wide with a flattish roof. Light came in from a shaft which was lucky really as the sole equipment we had was a tiny hand torch.

It took perhaps an hour to circle the chamber and generally inspect what was to be seen. There were various relics. An obvious cooking area had many rusted out tins, broken wine bottles and a huge pile of lamb bones. We even found remains of leather boots and a gas-mask! There were a few pretties, a few pools, but no obvious way on. Eventually we made our way out and on to the surface rendezvous point.

Here we found a hole with an enormous cold breeze coming out of it. It was very severely blocked by a boulder. Juan announced that we must number and mark the spot. This was due to the fact that often entrances were in such close proximity that confusions arose.

"Why, sometimes there are entrances only one or two metres apart - and here's the next one!!!" With this he moved one metre up and two metres sideways and there was an open shaft. A stone showed that it was not very deep. The entrance was designated number 685 - yes there are 685 entrances in the Matienzo caving region. We set the Molephones up but to no avail. Not a squeak. We tried various positions, moved around, tested at various intervals - nothing. Eventually we packed up and left. It turned out

that the underground party had missed their way and arrived late, and their Molephone had not worked...

In the evening we went to Bar Thomas for a meal. It was Bob and Julie's 7th wedding anniversary. Ali and Arthur won the eating competition, by a substantial margin.

Tuesday 2nd. A party of Nick, Lenny, Howard, Bob and Ali went to the area around 685. On the Monday Juan had put a ladder down the shaft at 685 but it was blocked. They also found a shaft opposite (690). Lenny and Howard dug at the bottom of 690 and Bob attacked the rock blocking 685. After nearly an hour the rock had a very severe headache and fell to pieces. The hole led to a 4m pitch and a choke, still draughting mightily.

Ali and Bob found a number of small holes including 691 - a small draughting hole - some digging done: 692 a 5m shaft in a scree c 30m wide, undescended: 693 a 10m shaft, undescended, draughting, opens out below.

After finishing digging at 685 and 690 we went on down the valley to the entrance to Arenal. We had a good look at the side entrances. The right hand side closes down almost immediately. The left hand side goes in a fair way and draughts but also ends in the choke. It might prove easier digging.

That night we were treated to an excellent electrical storm followed

by 12 hours of heavy rain, flooding many people out. (Others saw the same storm in the Picos!)

Wednesday 3rd August. Not much was done - most people were drying out as best they could. Bob, Ali, Lenny Colin, Baz, Jill & Arthur returned to Cueva de los Emboscados. More time was spent unsuccessfully digging, as the choke proved to be still mobile. A little time was spent inspecting side passages again and taking photographs. Bob then departed as he and Julie were leaving that evening.

Ali had many more successful caving trips over the next few weeks.

Meanwhile, 300 or so miles to the west, Bob and Julie had resumed the search for the painted caves of Mondonedo. This time we found Mondonedo - but it was shut! We could not even buy a sandwich! What was worse their Spanish was incomprehensible! Even the phrase book did not help, they did not even refer to Galicia (the province) but called it Gallego. On the final night in the camp site bar we were assured by the locals that the Painted cave of Mondonedo exists.....

Bob Cawthorne & Alistair Neill

(Abridged from PCG Journal 104)

PROSPECTIVE NEW MEMBERS

Congratulations to Clive & Wendy Tonkins on recruitment of Kaley Amanda and to Bob & Julie Cawthorne for Lloyd William - all doing fine.

DEVON CAVE EXCAVATION

During late September and the first half of October 1989 a group, under the direction of Alison Roberts from the British Museum in London, took up residence at the Trust's Centre in Buckfastleigh in order to carry out a multidisciplinary archaeological and palaeontological evaluation of a south Devon cave site. Their work unearthed some new finds allowing a reinterpretation of the site. It is hoped that the results of this work will be published in this newsletter and in *Studies in Speleology*.

David Jean

APPEAL FOR INFORMATION

Jo Darlington is researching caves in the islands of Trinidad and Tobago and would like to hear from anyone else who has done so or anyone who can give her bibliographic references. The references can be from scientific or popular publications. Jo would also like to hear from anyone who has knowledge of underground fauna found in the local caves. Please write to her direct as follows:-

Jo Darlington
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St Augustine
TRINIDAD

HAVE YOU BOOKED FOR THE AGM AND
ANNUAL DINNER - SEE PAGE 18