

Matienzo Expedition '91

The 1991 Matienzo expedition was attended by PCG members Bob, Julie and Lloyd Cawthorne, Graham Linsay, Jeremy Masters and Alasdair Weill.

Graham, Jeremy and Alasdair took the Poole to Cherbourg ferry on the 6th, then taking 14 hours to drive down through France and Spain. They arrived at 3.30 am, just after the bar had shut - typical - about the normal kicking out time. The campsite was the same one used since 1989, immediately behind German's Bar - wonderful! The drinking sessions this year seemed to last longer than ever - until 3, 4, 5 or later in the morning.

Aug 7th.

693. Graham, Alasdair, Jeremy.

Alasdair found this shaft in 1988, and it was descended in 1989 to a depth of 33m, where an undescended pitch was reached. The nature of the rock, an alternation of soft marl and limestone full of razor sharp fossils, made rigging rather difficult. This could provide a new way into Toad in the Hole, which involves a long trip to reach the end at present. There are some big avens in Toad at a depth of 100m below the entrance of 693. This time, using Graham's Hilti cordless drill, we were quickly able to rig the undescended pitch, 15 metres deep. This was in a hading rift, which was followed to an aven. This is probably under a shaft going off the first pitch, which has not been descended. A low passage half full of water continued, which we started to dig but gave up for lack of tools. This probably takes a small stream in wet weather. The other way from the pitch, Graham climbed up about 10 metres to a boulder choke. The total depth of the cave is now about 50 metres.

Aug 8th.

Toad in the Hole. (258). Graham, Jeremy, Alasdair.

The purpose of this trip was to look at some holes partly descended by Talking Terry in 1989. These were located between the rope traverse at the end of the Chocolate Slice and the 4th pitch. After a quick look around the impressive entrance series, we carried on down Chocolate Slice (a dug out sandy crawl, tight in places), and located a number of holes. One of which, 18.5 metres SE of survey station 25 was descended. A fine pitch of 8.4 metres ended with a very tight tube which was descended for a further 5.3 metres. A good draught was present, and stones fell another 5 or 10 metres, but the continuation is very tight. Crossing the top of this pitch an aven was found, which Graham climbed for 10 or 20 metres, it continuing higher.

It turned out later that the hole descended by Terry was further in beyond a hading rift chamber which was climbed in 1989.

On the way out we went off to have a look at a large chamber near the entrance. This is reached by a passage on the right between the 2nd and 3rd pitches, which leads to a higher ladder pitch down of about 20m. The left hand of the two passages off at the bottom leads to the chamber, which is enormous. It is very well decorated, with a mass of straws and helectites.

Aug 9th.

Horse Through Pot (875). Lank Mills, Graham, Jeremy, Alasdair. This promising looking shaft had previously been found by Lank. It lies in a very promising position, between Cueva del Arenal and Cueva - Cubio de la Renada, and lies above the Bedtime Series - the far upstream end of Renada. On the same day a Molephone location was carried out in part of Renada, which proved to be in the valley just below 875. A strongly draughting dig dubbed Three Fat Men was found near there.

Lank took us up to the shaft, which proved to be immediately blocked with boulders at the top - a fact he had forgotten. Immediately below it however obviously opened out into a large shaft with a good echo. A "rabbit hole" found a little further down the hill later proved to open into the same shaft. We managed to pull out a few small rocks, but several larger ones required different tactics. One was dislodged by hauling with a rope; it fell down the shaft taking the rope with it - luckily everyone let go on time! The biggest rocks were dislodged by throwing boulders at them from higher up the mountain side!!

After a little gardening, — the hole entrance was just a hole through large boulders — bolts were quickly placed using Graham's drill, to give a free hang down a fine shaft about 8m across. At the bottom this opened out into a large chamber, with a floor of rocks with a number of animal skeletons. Going west a low section was passed to enter a passage which choked totally after 30 metres. This is probably approaching surface. To the NW another large descending passage also did not go far. To the east a stal stope led up to a choke where there are a number of possible ways on, all draughting out quite well. An aven on the right was climbed by Graham and Jeremy, with no ways off. Although of no great extent (length 153 metres), this cave consists of large passage which is probably worth pushing. It also contains many excellent formations, much of the roof being a forest of straws.

Aug 10th.

Cueva Del Arenal (35). Alasdair, J.J. (Northern Caving Club), Snablet (BEC) Arenal is a large entrance emitting a howling draught, leading into an area of hillside with no known cave. Unfortunately it ends at a choke, which many have tried to pass with no success. It is thought it might "go" very easily with the right technique. We had a look at the choke and did some digging at a number of spots, and Snablet climbed an aven to about 15m - but it didn't go. J.J. found one promising muddy crawl which "went" - only to go back into known passage.

Cueva Del Agua (59). J.J., Snablet, Alasdair.

A tourist trip to the start of the last series of lakes, and up the ramp which is very impressive.

Cueva De Los Emboscados (87). Graham and Jeremy. Cueva Vecina (96). Graham and Jeremy. Courist Trip to these caves.

That evening a Fiesta was held to celebrate the 21st birthday of the Matienzo expeditions, and to thank the locals for their hospitality and help. This was held on the Passabolo pitch-near the bar, and was attended by about 200 people, members of the expedition and locals. Large amounts of food and wine were followed by presentations and speeches. A bar was provided, and a Spanish band was laid on which eventually led to some

rather crazy dancing. When they finished many returned to the bar, and when finally thrown out of there carry outs were taken to the barbeque fire. The last revellers were seen trying to test the strength of the stage roof some time around 7am! The Cawthornes were discovered asleep somewhere, not having quite made it home - and they had to drive back through France the next evening!

Aug 11th. Mot alot was done (suprise, suprise). Graham and Jeremy went off to the Picos.

Monte Bajo area. Alasdair.

A number of new caves were found.

A cave 3m to a 3m aven.

A low unexplored cave, 50m SE of 150.

Two shafts. 5-10m deep, 30m SE of 139, a bar needed to get in.

A small cave 30m east of these.

A shaft about 10m deep - not descended. 40m NE of 145.

A cave 180m SSE of 151, a large passage with several entrances about 20m long. Only a knackered Petzl for light - needs checking out with a decent light.

Aug 12th.

878. Alasdair, Pete the Feet, Jim. Helen, and Samuel Davies.
This was an entrance found previously 40m SSE of La Cuvia (86), at the top of an obvious gulley visable from the bar.

A handline descent of about 5m led into a chamber containing numerous cow bones and carcasses. In one corner the remains of a fireplace was found, possible very ancient. As stal blockage was opened up to enter a passage containing the skeleton of a dog. This ended at a draughting choke, which was dug for a while. This was left and the cave was surveyed, in order to see if it was likely to connect to La Cuvia. On plotting the survey this proved to be unlikely; the cave draughts inwards so the dig is worth continuing. This cave was 30m long.

The party then split up to look at a number of other nearby sites, which didn't go.

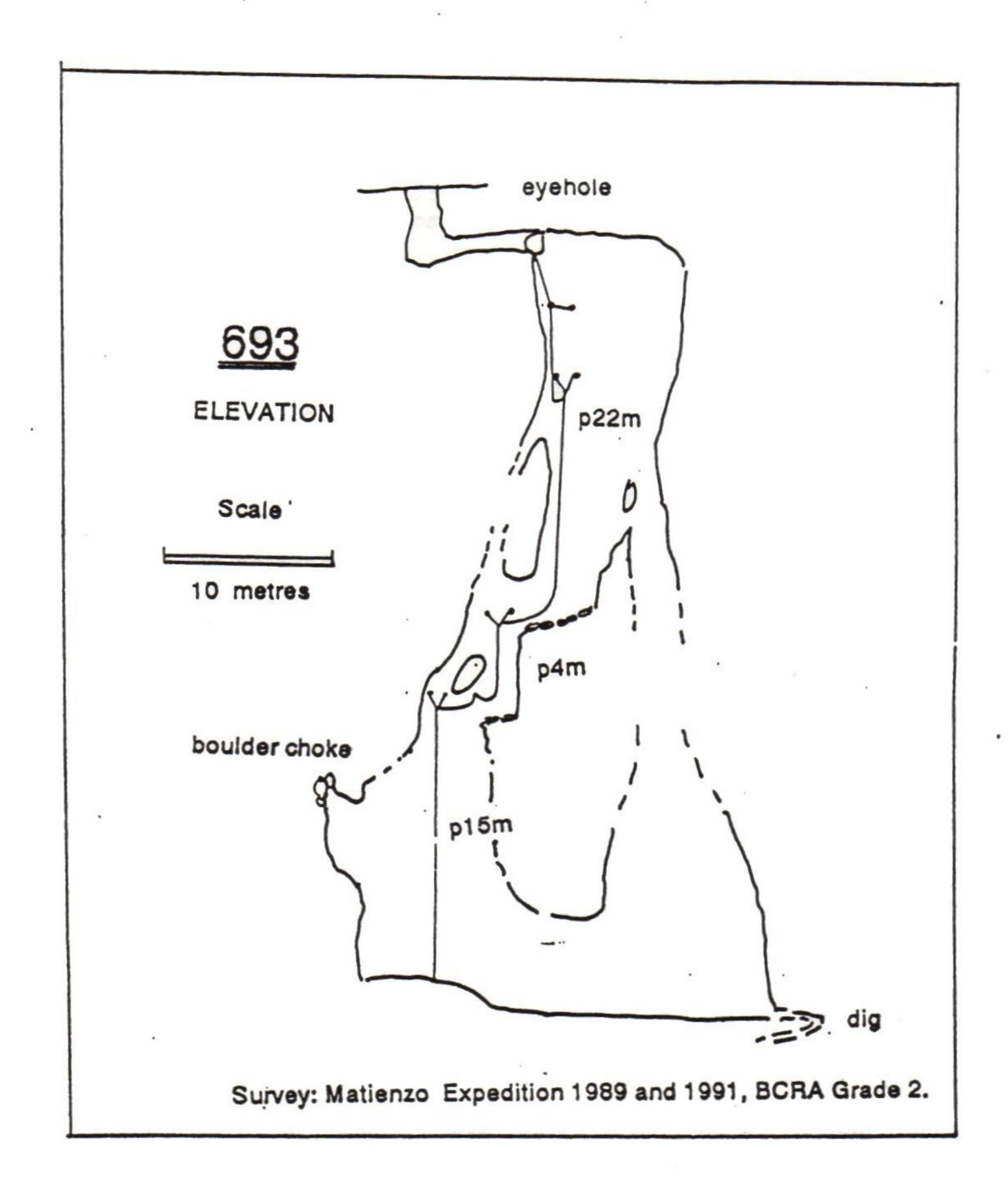
Cueva De Los Tres Ninos (565). Patrick, Pete Eagan, Alasdair, Jim.
This cave had previously consisted of a strongly draughting passage ending at a stal choke. This had been opened up some days before to give some very large passage, although so far of no great length. It lies further down the hillside from 878, to the west of the obvious gully. The cave is named after the three Davies children.

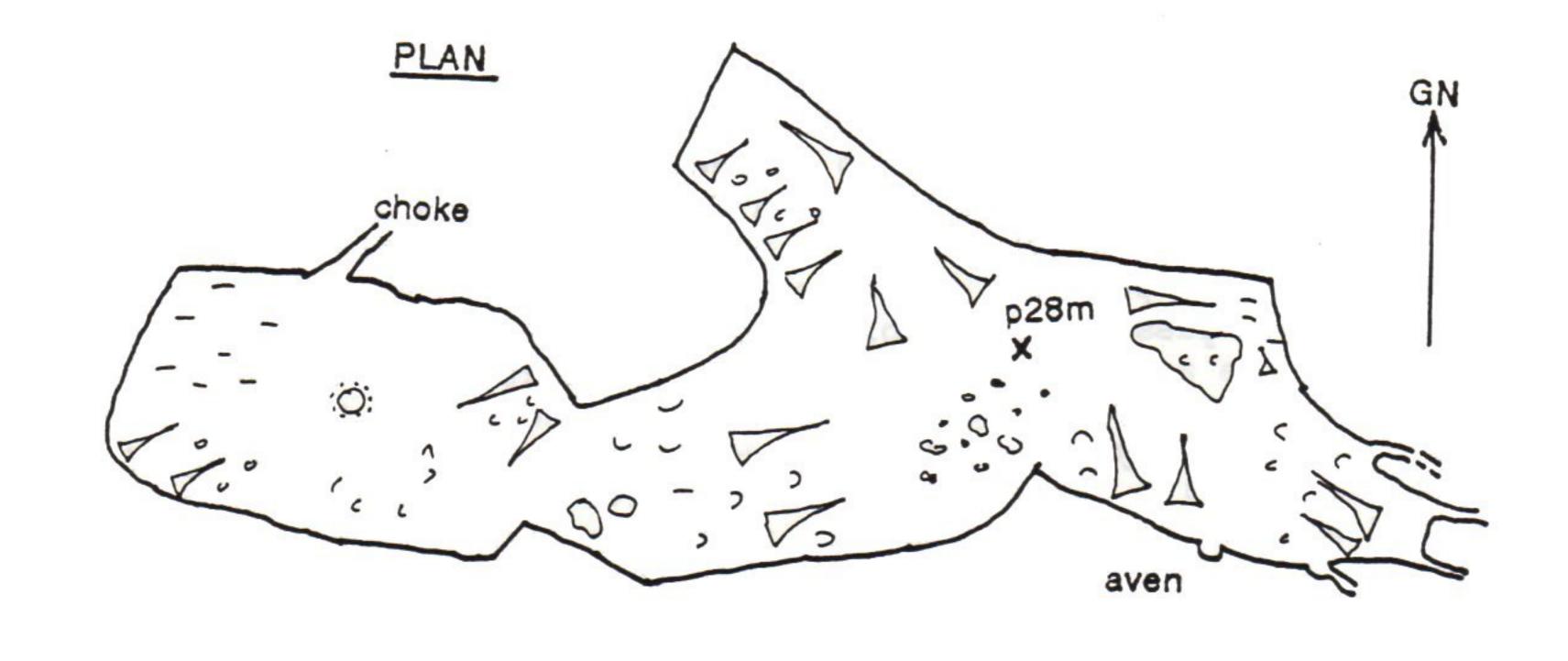
The entrance consists of a dry canyon passage, somewhat reminiscent of Yorkshire. Just inside the entrance some pottery and bones had been found, which were investigated by archaeologists a few days before, and proved to be a Bronze Age burial urn. This is followed to the breakthrough - to a climb through a stal blockage into some bigger high level passage (which doesn't go), then a drop back down to the continuation of the entrance passage. Shortly after a steep descent is reached, which even with the handline proves awkward on the return. This opens into the large main passage - unfortunately ending in chokes not far in either direction. It is up to 75m square, largely with an awkward boulder floor, but in places with good mud floors which should be avoided. A side passage was followed to

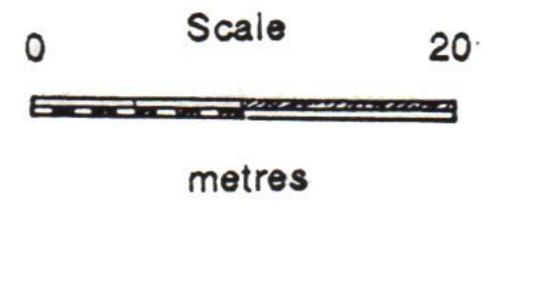
pitches down, up, and back down in a series of parallel rifts with a good draught. A hole in the floor was opened up enough for Pete to descend and reach further parallel rifts, leading back to the second rift high in the roof, and with leads to push. The hole down is rather dodgy however. We then exited, detackling on the way down.

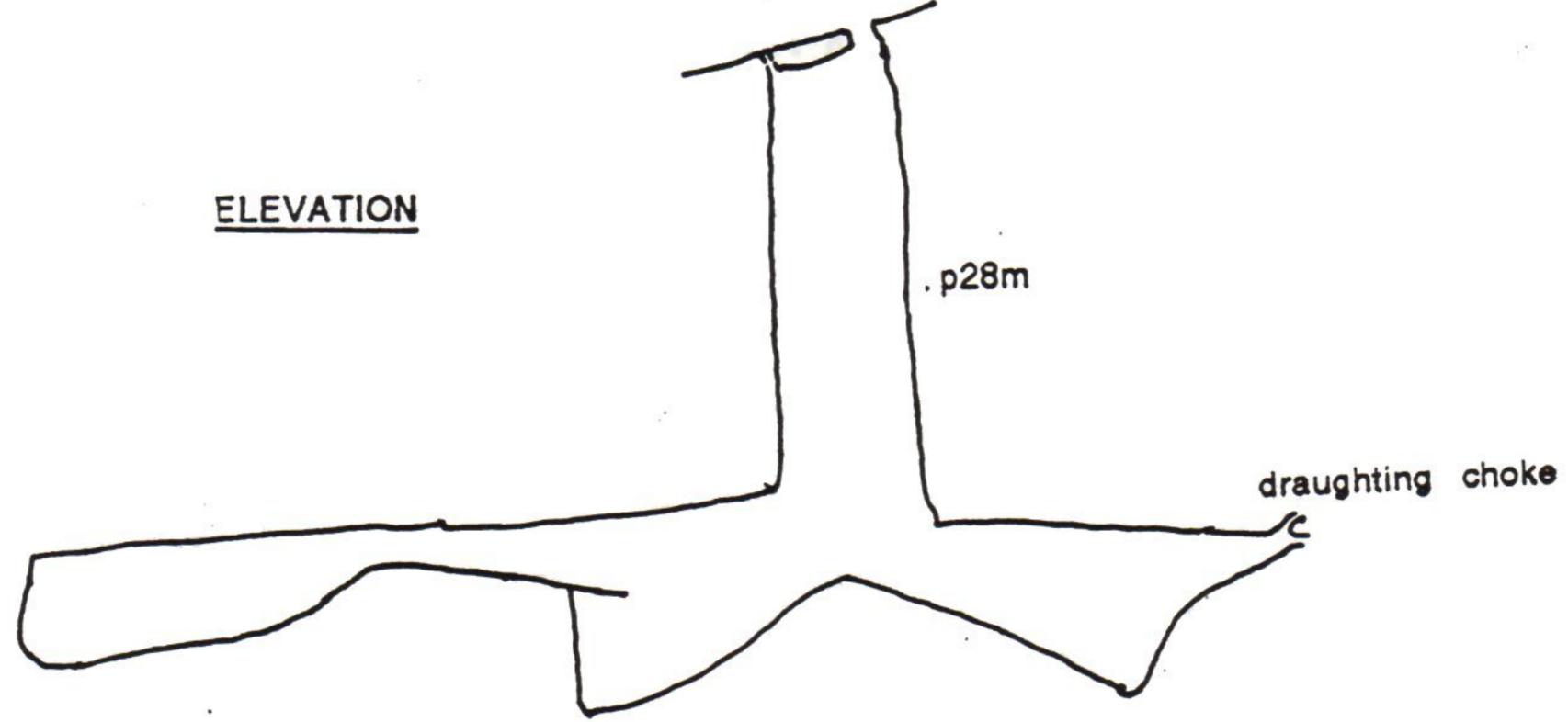
Aug 13th.

We drove back to Cherbourg, dropping Jeremy off at Bordeaux to catch a train for Chamonix.









875 HORSE TROUGH POT

Survey: Matienzo Expedition 1991, BCRA Grade 5c.