

PLYMOUTH CAVING GROUP

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MATIENZO '93

The expedition to Matienzo in Northern Spain organised by Manchester University Speleological Society was this year attended by PCG members Bob, Julie and Lloyd Cawthorne, Keith Jackson and Alasdair Neill. Also present were Rob, Simon, Vince and Dave from Plymouth University. We took the ferry from Portsmouth to Cherbourg, picking up Neil Pacey (Red Rose) at Portsmouth. The drive down through France and Spain took about 16 hours, arriving at the bar at 11pm on the 27th of July. On the way down Si's car was stopped by the French police, obviously looking for illegal substances, but they gave up the idea of a thorough search on coming across smeggy caving gear!

July 28th.

We drove to Ramales to stock up on food, plus 75kg of carbide for the expedition. Then a quick trip into Cueva de los Emboscados (87) to take photos and poke at the strongly drafting terminal choke. A short entrance crawl leads to a large fossil remnant passage, with some engravings of deer. The short Cueva Vacina (97) nearby was also seen. Afterwards a trip to Cueva del Agua (59) as far as the ramp was made. Rob, Simon, Dave, Keith, Ali, Vince and Simeon.

July 29th.

We drove up to a long track around the east side of the mountain Muella, from which a walk (about 1 1/2 hours with tackle) leads to a promising area near the summit of Mullir, where we had spent a few days in 1989. Vince at least was feeling the effects of the German's Bar the night before; we refrained from calling any of the finds 'Chunder Pot'. The object was to push two caves, 617 (explored to -134m in 1989), and 758, which had not been descended.

Ali descended the first (33m) pitch of 617, near the bottom of which a window leads off into a previously undescended shaft. Placing a bolt, a pitch of about 8m landed on a loose boulder slope, dropping to a passage on a marl bed and a slot in the floor. A very strong draft issued from the continuing passage, which however needed some digging as it was very low, so was left for another day.

Keith and Dave explored 758. An entrance pitch of 20m, rigged using a tree as a rebelay, dropped to a tight squeeze straight onto the next pitch of 12m. At the bottom was the skeleton of what may be a wild cat. An awkward drop led to the next pitch, with a possible way on over the top, but time was running out to explore these. The last two pitches are formed on a hading fracture line.

Whilst these caves were being explored a thunder storm broke out on the surface, several lightening strikes being very close to Rob (who remained on the surface), and the reverberations being pretty frightening underground.

July 30th.

Returning to Mullir, this time in wind and rain, Rob and Ali returned to 617 (now named Torca del Trueno). The crawl was dug out with a bolting hammer to reach a ledge in the entrance pitch of M-25 Sima Levantada, a cave explored by Spanish cavers to -250m. The new passage was then surveyed.

Dave and Keith explored the next pitch in 758 (now Torca del Gato Montes), 23m deep, with a further pitch following, much too tight at the top to explore. Ways higher up the shaft were noted, one going into a boulder chamber, another not reached as it would entail swinging out under "hanging death".

Ali and Keith then surveyed 758.

July 30th.

A trip to Cubio de Cubija (243), a short cave until the previous day when it was connected to Torca de Regaton to give the System de Cubio y Regaton. Regaton was discovered in 1992, and although not yet connected, appears to be close to Mostajo. Ali, Pedro and Grovel entered having arranged to meet up later with Paul Stacey, Pete Eagen, Andy Pringle, Steve O and others. A route along a small streamway, now taking only a trickle but obviously very flood prone judging by the debris on the roof, led to a short pitch into the old "final" chamber. We soon found the way on, a tight squeeze under a very dubious boulder. Having located the way on through a maze of small tubes, we returned to meet the second party. We then spent about an hour and a half trundling boulders to eventually succeed in making a safe route around the dodgy boulder. Continuing downstream, a low canal (later siphoned to make it more comfortable) is followed immediately by a squeeze which is interesting in that it brings you head first onto the next 5m pitch. Immediately after is an 8m wet pitch dropping into the big stuff in Regaton. The route, although rather tortuous, is a lot better than the old entrance - about 120m of loose pitches. Regaton is now about 7km long.

Grovel having gone out and the others just taking photos, Pedro and Ali went to look at the inlet passage up the sandy ramp. Beyond we followed up a meandering sandy canyon passage, somewhat like bits in OFD, which had been explored previously to a stal choke. Climbing up over this, a traverse along the top of the canyon commenced fairly straightforward, but some became "interesting" where one has to move across a gaping hole at a junction. From here left led a short distance to an eyehole connecting into bigger passage (lump hammer and ladder required). To the right the roof tube continued to a further junction, beyond which Pedro traversed along an open rift to find it ending at an aven. We need to return to drop back down the rift.

415 Keith, Dave and Vince. Had a look for the fancy helictites which had been videoed by Juan a few days before. The cave was rigged on ladders down a number of pitches. Unfortunately we missed the way to the pretties; re-emerged after about 1 1/2 hours intending to look at the survey next time.

August 1st.

Toad in the Hole (258) (now renamed Torcon de la Calleja Rebollo). Vince, Dave, Ali, Rich, Bartrop and Angie (TSG). We rigged as far as the pitch down into the junction to Misty Series. This involves a constricted 4m entrance pitch, big passages with a ladder pitch up and one back down, more big passage with fine helictites, then a low crawl called chocolate slice. Bigger passage, passing a rope traverse, ends at the 12m pitch to Misty Series. We then followed a dry streamway up into Misty Series (going downstream would lead to the inner parts of the cave). Passing some avens, the end is reached at a big aven, where a strongly drafting crawl had been noted on a previous trip. The crawl led to a dig which was soon passed to a constriction with a rift visible beyond. This was soon enlarged, the rift leading to about 50m of pleasant sandy crawling passage. This ended at another sandy dig, opened up as far as a slab blocking the way on.

August 2nd.

Toad in the Hole. Keith, Ali, Rob, Dave, Andy Pringle. The dig left yesterday was soon passed, leading into a damp, unstable boulder choke with the draft coming from above. Several ways on were investigated, all tight, but the area was not pushed to conclusion. On the way out, just after the big aven, Dave found a drafting slot which was dug to another aven, probably climbable.

August 3rd.

Ali, Richard and Keith on Mullir to derig 617 and 758. Rich traversed over the top of the final pitch in 758 to a dig followed by a blind pitch of about 8m. Also located three new shafts - not explored. A bit of a slog back down with all the tackle!

August 4th.

Cueva de los Tres Ninos (565). Rob, Ali, Vince, Dave, Keith, (and Si, but he didn't make it to the entrance). A slog up to the entrance, which leads to a pleasant canyon passage. A climb over a stal blockage and a steep handline descent leads into a very large passage - which unfortunately soon chokes in either direction. We had taken a lot of tackle to look at some holes in the floor - but the only one we found proved to be 8m deep and free-climbable! Oh well.

August 5th.

Cueva - Cubio de la Renada (48). Two groups - Bob Cawthorne, Dave, Rob, Keith and Ali, followed by Jane Chilton, Grovel, Sarah and Andy Pringle. Mainly stomping passage with the odd crawl, climbs up and down, and muddy bits. We headed to the end of stuffed monk Gallery and looked at various side passages. Nothing new but some fine formations. An excellent trip.

August 6th.

Cueva del Agua (59). Simon and Vince - a photo trip.

Simas del Picon (75). Ali and Keith went to survey this cave because it was close to Regaton. It was first explored by Spanish cavers, and there had only been one

previous recorded visit by the British. A short walk behind Cubija led to the entrance, a large 15m deep shaft; there is also another higher entrance. This dropped into a very impressive passage, 15 to 20 metres wide in places. Various small side passages were explored, mostly new. A large passage down to the left leads to a slot into a chamber with a small stream. The way on passes over the top, and mostly consists of up and down over huge boulder piles - very confusing in such a large passage. A route was found into a new chamber, with a strongly drafting crawl leading on which requires digging, also some avens which we didn't have time to investigate. Beyond a very high passage ends at a pitch which we didn't have tackle for. The main passage terminated at a stal choke. After we had left this choke was passed to give another 682m of passage.

August 7th-8th.

We drove back through France, stopping overnight at the camp site at Lacave used on a previous trip to the Dordogne area. We also had a look in the entrance to Gouffre de Reveillon - reputedly the second biggest entrance in France.

The discoveries made at Matienzo this year were as follows:

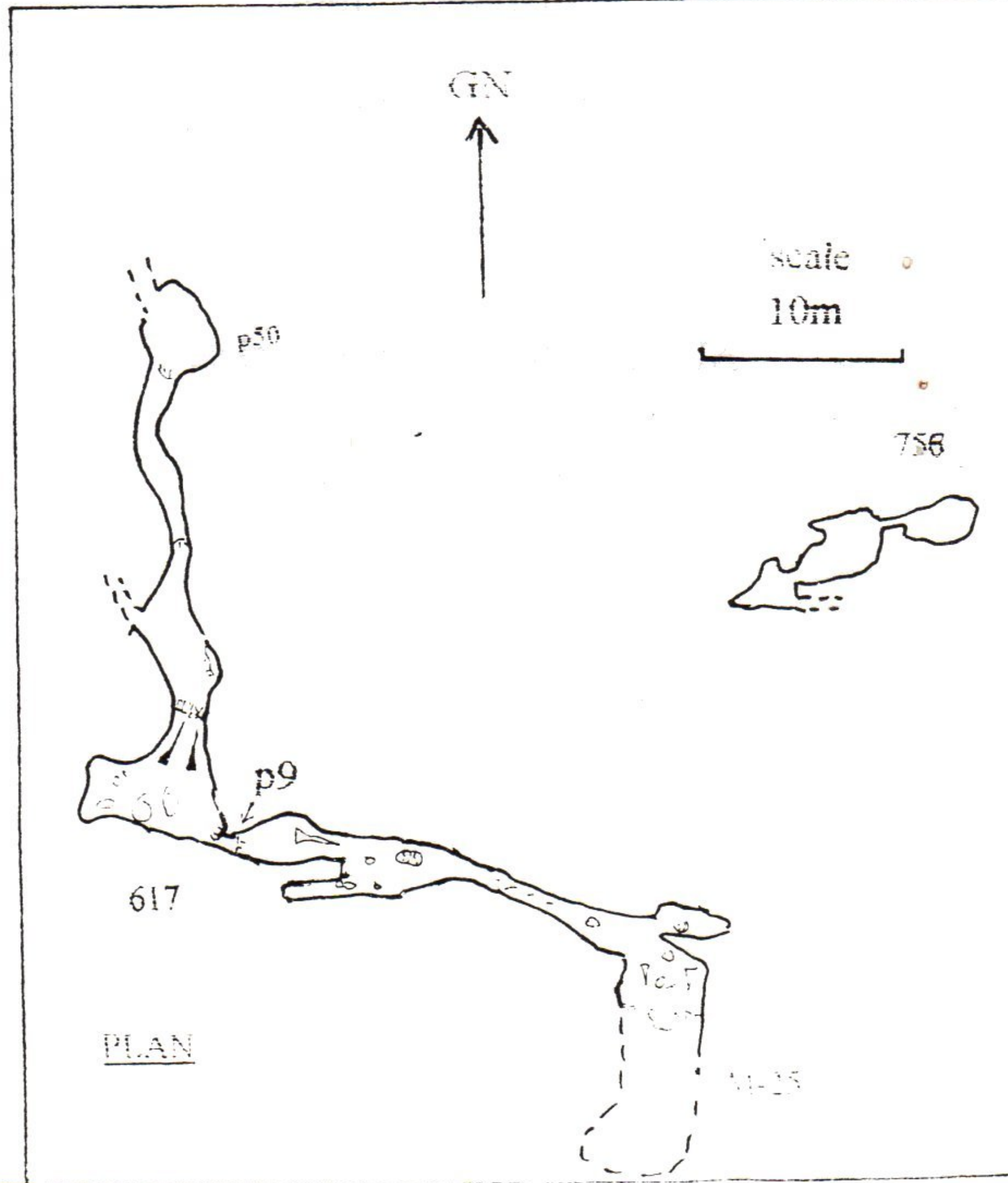
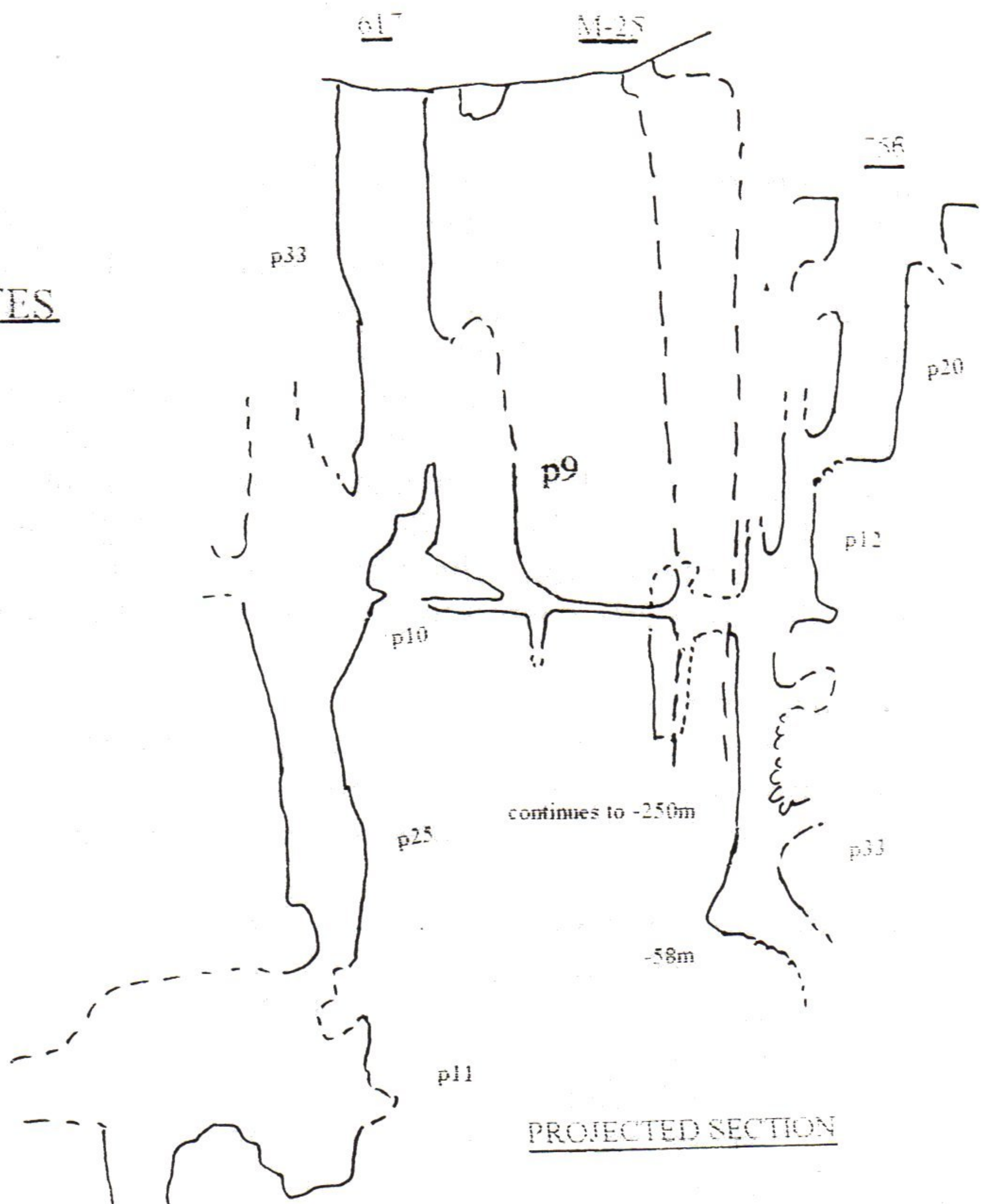
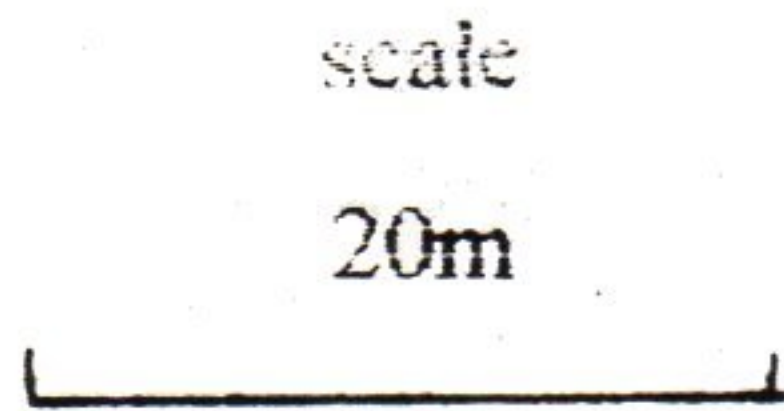
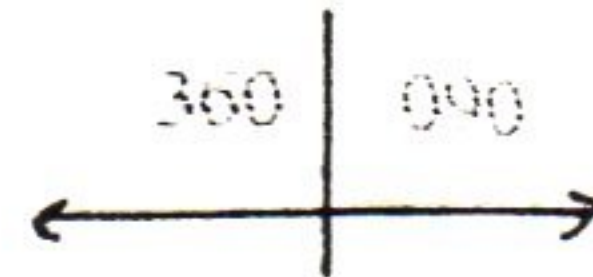
Cubio-Regaton	3805m
Picon	682m
Fresnedo II	644m
South Vega System	431m
Oyo Verde	177m
Jane's Cave	143m
Gato Montes	86m
415	79m
718	72m
Torca del Trueno	61m
Toad	42m
Tras la Coteria	38m
TOTAL	6395m.

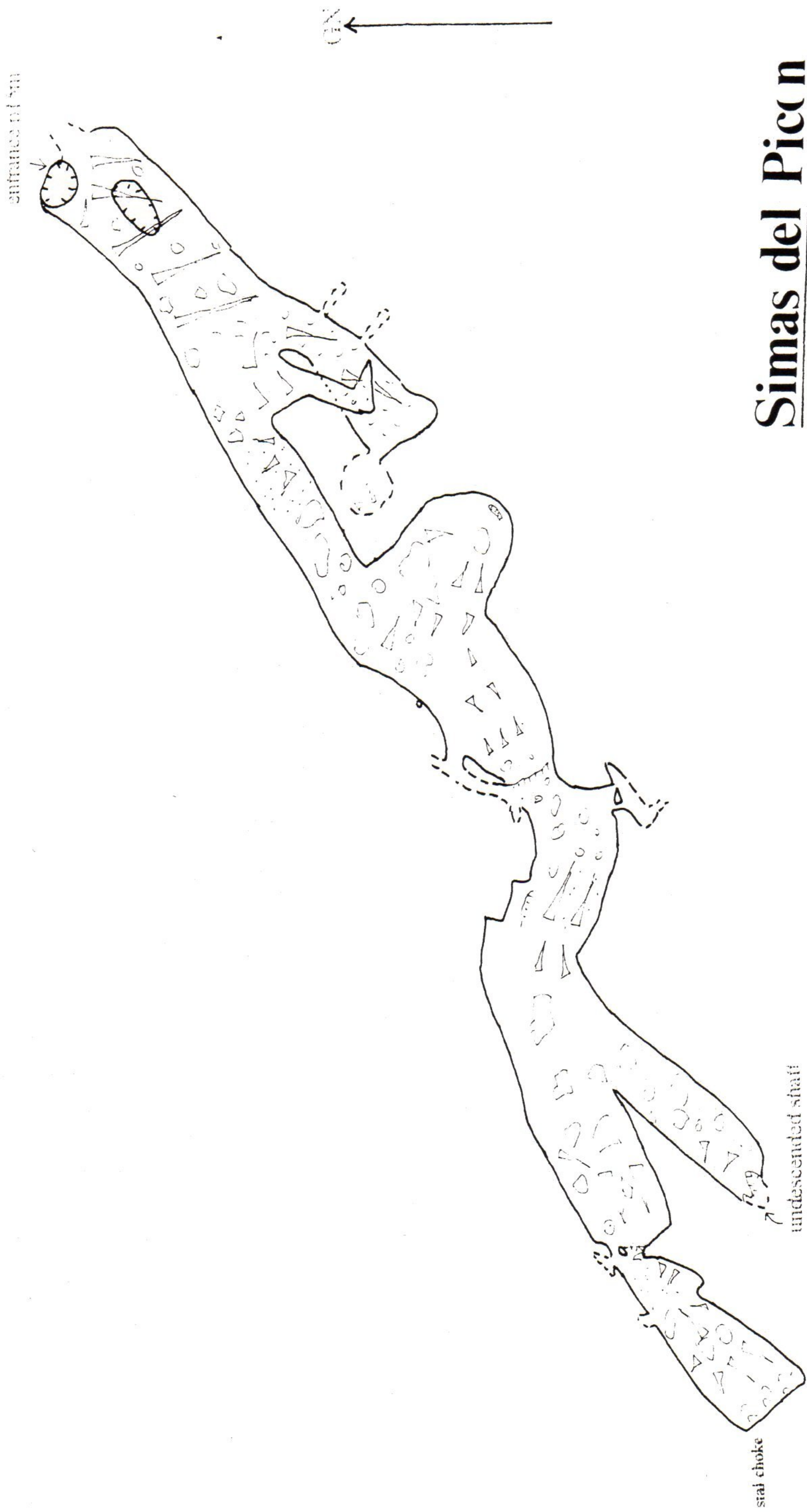
Alasdair Neill, Keith Jackson.

617 TORCA DEL TRUENO

M-25 SIMA LEVANTADA

758 TORCA DEL GATO MONTES





Simas del Picón

75

Pinaso

scale

50 m

