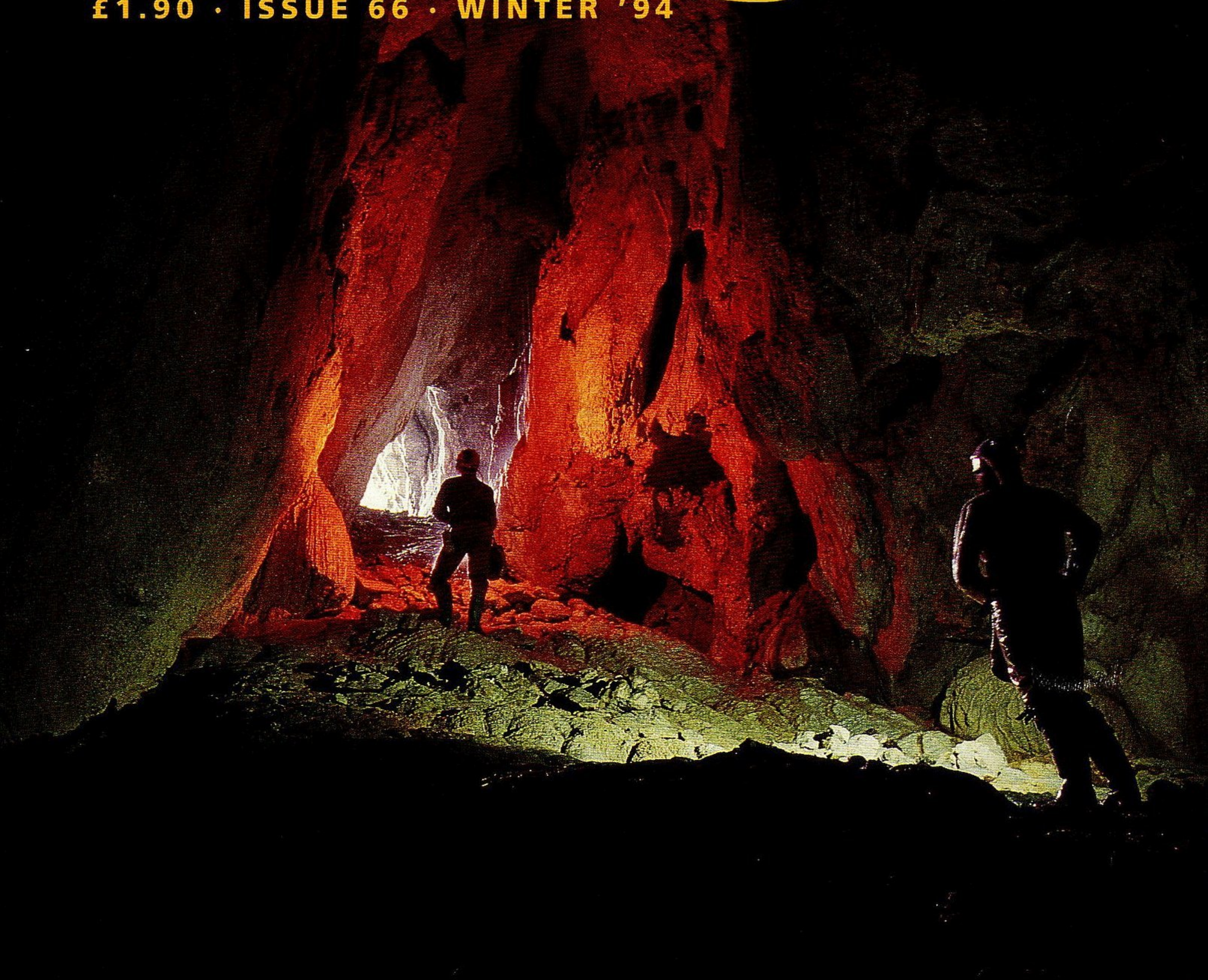


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THE BULLETIN
OF THE BRITISH
CAVE RESEARCH
ASSOCIATION



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Articles, news stories, photos, reviews, surveys, expedition reports
and equipment tests etc are all welcome. The editor is more than
happy to listen to suggestions for articles or just general comments.

COPY DEADLINES

Major articles should be submitted by the 20th of the following
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Short news items can be accepted up to a week after these dates.

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DESIGN AND PRINT

Pagefast Ltd, 4-5 Lansil Way, Caton Road, Lancaster LA1 3QY
Tel: 0524 841010 • Fax: 0524 841578

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FRONT COVER:

**Top entrance to Reñada, Sistema de la Vega,
Matienzo, Spain**

Photo: Hugh St Lawrence



Matienzo '94

The expedition surveyed over 6.3km in our area and, by invitation in joint Spanish/English teams, extensions in Cueva Valline and 2.2km in Peña Jorao. The updated major cave surveys are shown on the area map below.

Four Valley System

During 1993 the main thrust of exploration in the 40.6km long Four Valleys System was up the Astradome, a 30m diameter, 100m high aven, about 4km into the cave. Mark Wright and Tim Allen bolted to within a few metres of the top being thwarted by a band of sandstone.

To overcome the problem this year a 6m pole of aluminium sections was taken in and eventually erected from a bolt above the sandstone into the hole at the top of the aven. Alan Box and Mark entered a chamber with a passage that choked after 10m.

The pole was then pulled up into the small chamber and an attempt was made to erect it to enter a higher passage. This proved difficult with only two people in a pool of deep water and it was decided to leave the climb for a larger team. While returning, Alan fell 100m from a tail of rope at the top of the aven. (An account of the accident and an obituary appears on page 9).

Originally surveyed by the Sección Espeleología del Seminario Sautuola (SESS) in 1964 and extended over the last 30 years by a number of small people through tight squeezes and grovels, Cueva de Bollón (Volvo) was almost becoming a lost cause. Its position and altitude at the northern end of the Matienzo depression almost certainly makes it a part of the Four Valleys System and in wet weather it acts as a resurgence.

Rob Murgatroyd dived in the sump on the western arm using two small bottles and re-emerged 20 minutes later with a large grin and about 50m of passage.

The following day he dived with Toby Chilton but the passage stopped a few metres beyond Rob's previous limit at a second sump. This is thought to be a reasonable prospect which will be explored in the near future. The potential is excellent with the end of the Western Series in Carcavueso lurking 100m or so further into the hill to the north, and virtually virgin limestone to the west, although Regaton lies 1.5km in this direction.

Facing page: Mostajo — The Italian Pitch, site of the connection between Regaton and Mostajo. The survey connection error over about 5km was less than 0.1% — despite the twisted tape!

Cubija System

On August 13, 1985, a pitch at the end of Hedgehog Crawl in Cueva Mostajo was descended 40m by visiting Italian cavers and became too tight. A sketch in the '85 log book shows a boulder with a question mark partway down the pitch. Nine years later, after finds in Cubio-Regaton. Another 400m was surveyed at the end of Hedgehog Crawl.

The combined Cubija System of El Cubio, Torca de Regaton and Torca de Mastajo now has a length of 14.2km. Other caves nearby include Torcón, Picon, Lastrilla and 415; further work should see these linked and a 20km system proved ⁽¹⁾.

A cave which may also eventually link is the Sistema de Colmenas-Escalón. Beneath the Cubija valley, on the north side of La Vega, there are two small resurgences. The eastern cave, Fuente el Escalón was explored to a small sump in 1981. The sump was passed five years later to a tight, miserable but draughting passage with no end in sight.

The other resurgence, with a top and bottom entrance, lies 220m to the south west and was first documented in 1982. The top entrance was dug at boulders in 1986 and at Easter this year the obstacle was passed into a very narrow and wet streamway to another choke.

The first cavers in wetsuits this summer found the wet bit to be dry; the second trip after thunderstorms with cavers in furry suits found the entrance passages to be very wet. The cave eventually revealed its secrets over seven trips although early on, the cave was described as tight, sharp, squitty, knacker, awkward and, worst of all, still going.

Some 500m from the entrance the cave enlarges at a chamber and junction with a fossil canyon. Upstream to the west, a large choke is reached and the passage continues uphill to the southwest as crawls and rifts with inlets, ending at a 40m high aven and a strongly draughting dig in the floor. This point is 400m distant from the phreatic maze near the entrance or Torca de Calleja Rebollo (Toad in the Hole).

The easterly passages passed through an arched window into the Playschool Series to a 25m long run-in on the northern wall. The southern passage from here ended with roots and surface debris near to the cliff face behind the two resurgences.

The passages to the north of the run-in were entered through three hammered squeezes. Mackerel Passage enlarged and split. One small passage twisted downstream with crawls until boot marks and a piece of line was soon tied off in a side rift.

The Escalón link had been made, giving

The discoveries of the 1994 expedition were overshadowed by the tragic loss of Alan Box in La Hoyuca (Cueva Uzueka). Alan had been to Matienzo a number of times. On this occasion he was involved in successfully bolting and maypoling the 100m high Astradome into new passage. He fell to his death at the start of the descent.

By Juan Corrin.

a total length to the system of 2.34km. Potential must be good, although reasonable lengths of decent-sized passage have not yet been entered in the 70m vertical range.

Sistema del Risco

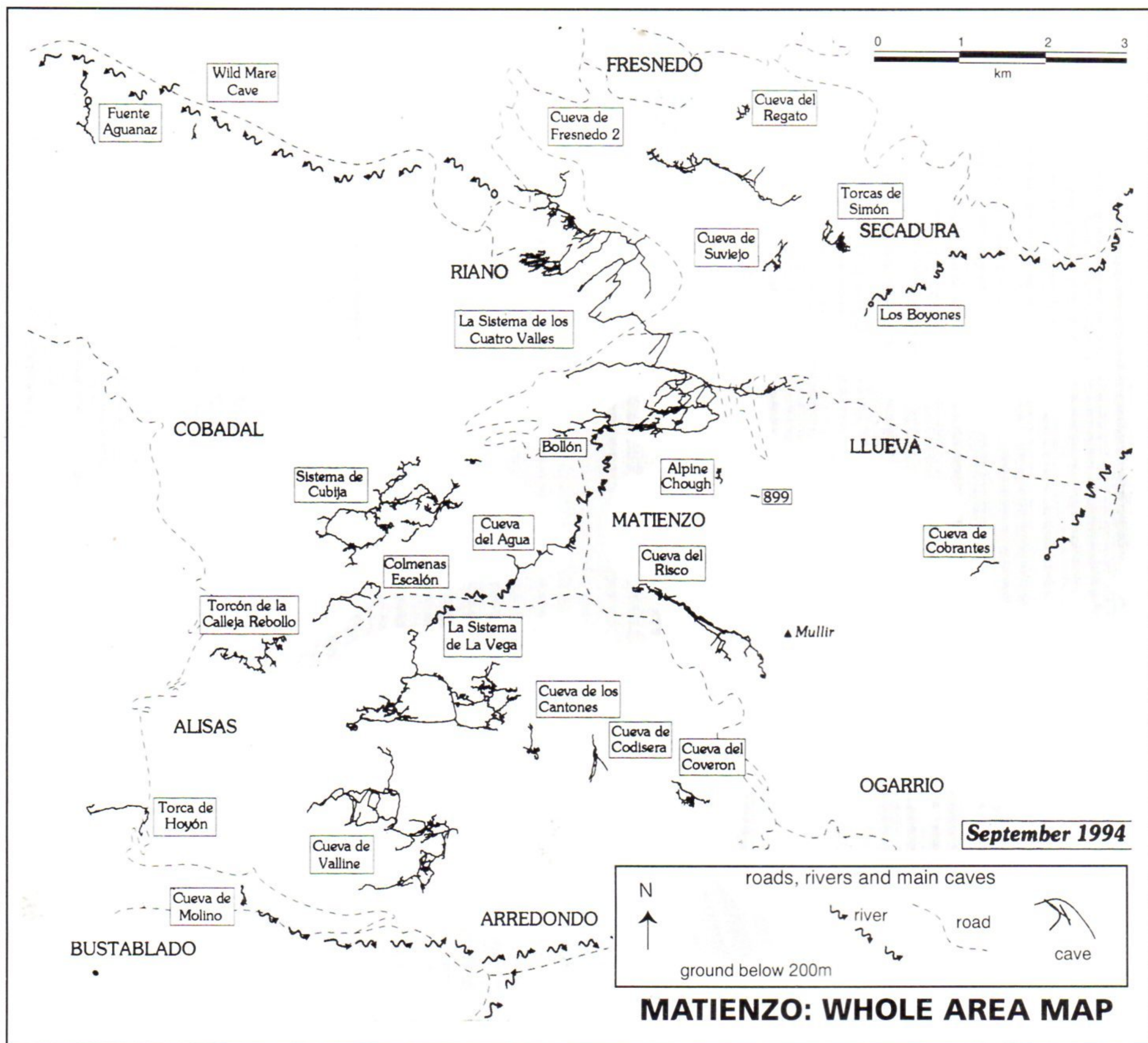
The first visit into the Risco system was in July, 1964 by the SESS. They mapped some 4km of the cave. The British in 1975 and 1982 made significant extensions, bringing the length to 8.3km. The cave is highly linear and, although it lies under the edge of Muela and Mullir, there is no known passage coming in from those hills.

This year a bolt climb and traverse above the chasm at the southern end of the Arco Gallery found cavers ascending through a ➤

MATIENZO '94

Lengths surveyed

Cave	Surveyed 1994	Length (m)
Colmenas-Escalon	2248	2341
Regato	1034	1034
Cubija System	950	14621
Risco	796	9046
Codisera	371	1881
Hoyos	200	200
Picon	175	1441
899	154	154
846	99	99
South Vega System	76	21982
Volvo	67	467
Arturo	56	56
Fresnedo II	40	6801
717	25	25
750	25	25
825	20	20
Total	6336	
<i>With Spaniards in Camargo, Santander</i>		
Peña Jorao	2314	7139



Codisera — The entrance to Cueva de Codisera.

➤ precarious boulder pile into a top level 50 to 60m above the stream. The passages discovered lie beyond and over the Arco Gallery on the same line and contain some impressive crystals and formations.

One formation was described as a 1m high, single-crystal, triangular stalagmite, possibly re-crystallized and certainly rare. At one point a 20m pitch drops into the gallery below. Nearly 800m were surveyed with a possible bolt climb still to go at, although there is still no sign of water or passage from Mullir.

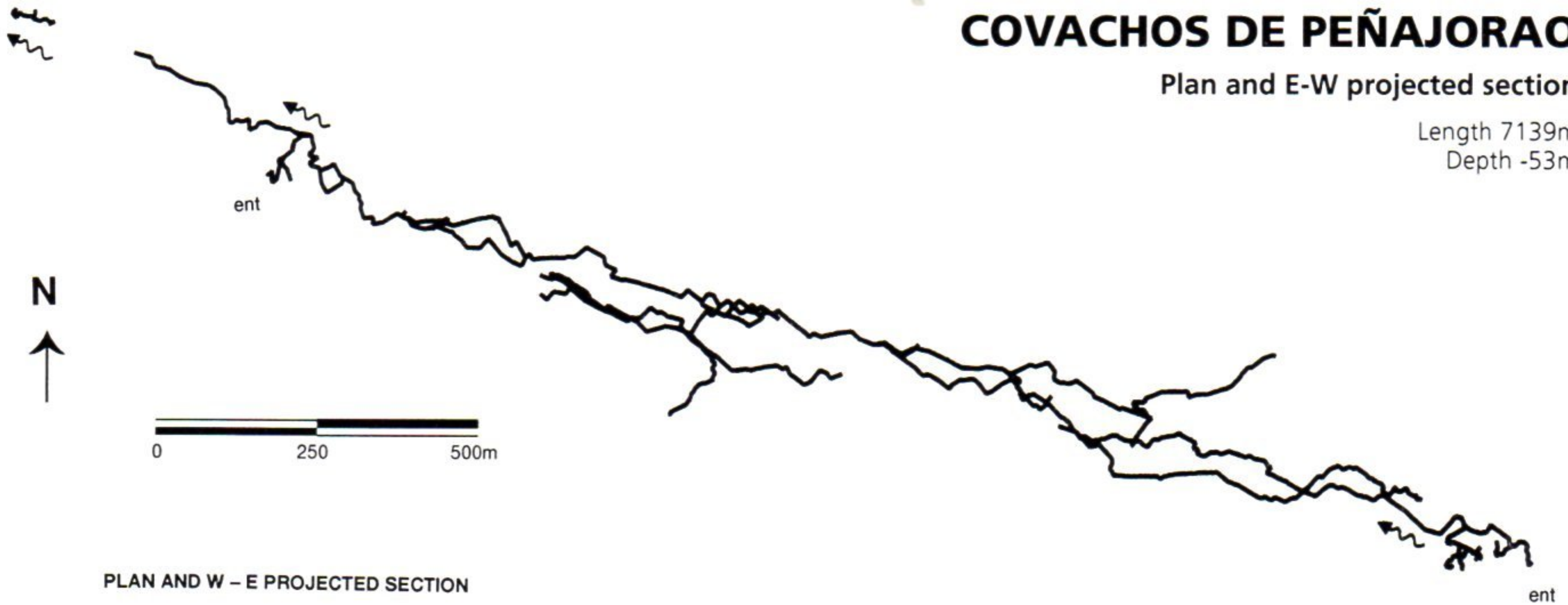
Cueva de Codisera

Codisera starts as a large, high-level vadose passage at the southern end of the depression. The western branch contains a 90m pitch to a streamway and other nearby traverses and holes were causing some confusion. The main pitch was crossed over to the east and a single further shaft descended 90m to floor of boulders with a soak-away. Part way down this pitch a major level was ➤

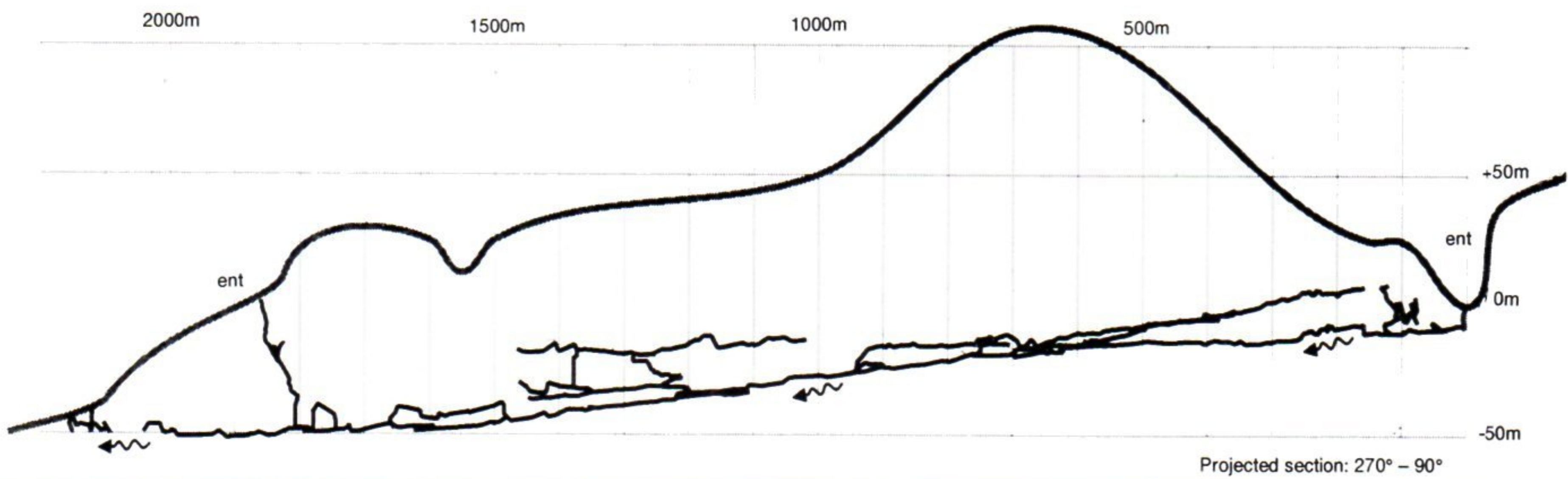
COVACHOS DE PEÑAJORAO

Plan and E-W projected section

Length 7139m
Depth -53m



PLAN AND W - E PROJECTED SECTION



Mostajo — Calcite mound in Dwarf Chamber, Torca de Mostajo.

Peter Eagan

➤ entered to the north but this choked with boulders after 80m.

The continuation on the southern side of the wide shaft was bolted into and 230m of large, new passage entered. Unfortunately this tunnel and the higher level heading south both appear to choke under the head of a large, enclosed valley, near a point molephoned this summer.

GPS

We were fortunate to be loaned a satellite positioning instrument which was quite useful in locating cave entrance on ground with few landmarks. It saved some embarrassment to one person who found that his map reading skills put him 400m from where he should have been.

The system works by picking up signals from satellites. Internal trigonometry then locates the device on the earth's surface and, by using one of the built-in co-ordinate systems, a grid reference is displayed. This has a positional error of about 20m with a good fix where there is no cloud cover and five or more satellites visible. The grid reference given appear to be accurate and reproducible, but the altitudes were highly suspect and tended to drift, sometimes up to 50m!

As well as taking the device to an entrance and storing the coordinates as a way point, grid references can be entered. The GPS will then point the user in the right direction, display the distance, bearing and ETA — all of this being updated every few seconds as the user homes in on the site.

The 1:5000 maps that we are are fairly detailed and most caves can be located quite accurately. Although useful in Matienzo the GPS will be invaluable in locating entrances in less hospitable terrain where maps are likely to be less accurate, especially when used with a digital altimeter.

Peño Jorao

Speleological activities carried out jointly with the Spanish GEIC/R group have occurred in this cave over a number of years. The system lies a short drive from Santander and takes water from a major sink and probably others within an area of archaeological importance.

A green field dig, started at Easter and completed by the Spaniards before we arrived in the summer, re-opened an old sink which was dimly remembered by some of the locals. The first top to bottom entrance through trip was completed this summer in 3½ hours, 90 minutes of which was spent fighting the brambles surrounding the top sink.

Another three trips, tidying up some loose ends at the lower end of the cave, extended it by 2.3km to 7.14km. There are still many leads to go at.

Giles Barker

Giles died in the South Vega System during the 1992 expedition⁽²⁾. At the suggestion of



Alan Box

The intricacies of aven scaling. Mark Wright 90m up the Astradome.

a local councillor the district council placed a plaque at the bottom entrance to the cave. A dedication ceremony with short speeches took place on Sunday, August 14 and was attended by members of this year's expedition and more than 60 villagers, including the Mayor and councillors. In all, well over 100 people were present, a reflection of the esteem in which Giles was held and of the friendships built up between the English and Spanish.

Concussions and thanks

Thanks to the GPF Committee for once again granting financial help, and to Tony Haigh at British Gas for the loan of the GPS system. Five 20m open-reel tapes were given to the expedition by Stanley. They withstood the rigours of Colmenas-Escalón and are still fit for use next time!

The England-Spain football match was resurrected after a number of years. The result was as usual — approximately 12–6 to the Spaniards.

The hospitality, concern and friendship shown by the villagers during the summer was very much appreciated by everyone on the expedition. We must also thank the Spanish cavers who willingly did so much in the recovery operation.

Special thanks must go to the family at Restaurante Case Germán. No longer just a bar, the building is now extended out the back with a posh restaurant. But not so posh that Pablo doesn't mind dirty cavers putting in survey data at all hours.

A set-aside area for all our information, where the data can be processed and surveys drawn up is vital when so much is being found!

Recent references

- 1 Matienzo '93 in *Caves & Caving* 63, Spring 1994.
- 2 Matienzo '92 in *Caves & Caving* 58, Winter 1992.

A brief visit to Some caves in Brazil

By Tony Waltham and
Andy Eavis

Go caving in Brazil? Is there any limestone? Never heard much from there, not even much from South America. Those are the obvious reactions. But then there is that huge book by Lino, packed with photos of Brazilian caves and karst. Clearly Brazil has hidden depths — in more ways than one.

Brazil is a wonderful place to visit. It is an enormous country with half the area and half the population of the South American continent.

It is rich in resources, but remains relatively isolated from the rest of the world by severe trade restrictions which have been the only answer to its recent hyper-inflation. To compensate for this, the people are remarkably innovative and are delightfully laid-back in their attitudes.

The national language of Portuguese also creates something of a communication barrier, and much more is happening in Brazil than many people know about — including in the caves.

The country is an expanse of rolling lowland, forest in the north, semi-arid in the east and richly farmed in the south; there are few high mountains.

Most of the rocks are really ancient basement, but there is some sedimentary cover, including a fair amount of limestone — mostly in the south-eastern part of the country. This is the region sometimes referred to as the Brazilian Highlands, including the high ground on each side of the Rio Sao Francisco.

The earlier cave explorations were south-west of Sao Paulo, where the Ribeira valley houses a number of fine, decorated caves up to 250m deep. They include the Gruta de Case de Pedra where a stream sinks into an entrance whose arch is 173m high. New discoveries are being made in this area, but the potential is limited.

Much more important are the outcrops of the Bambui Limestone. This is a Precambrian limestone, which rests on the basement rocks and is only very gently folded across much of the Brazilian Highlands. Its geology is complicated by lateral variations, but locally it reaches a thickness of over 300m.