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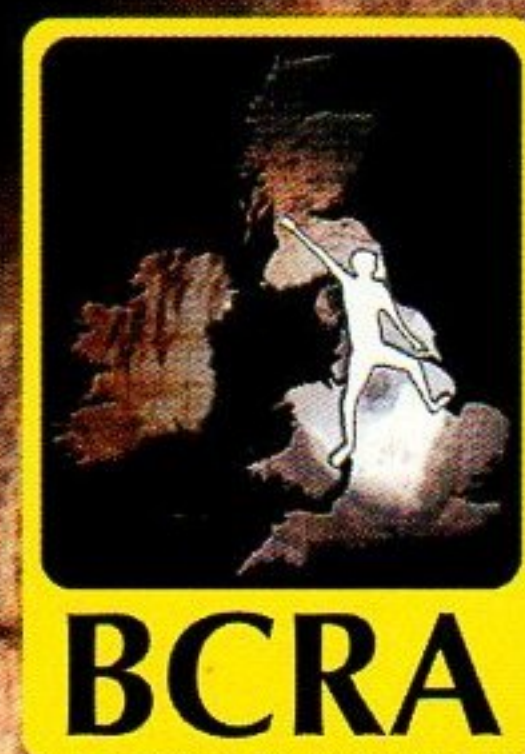
Finding the Caves

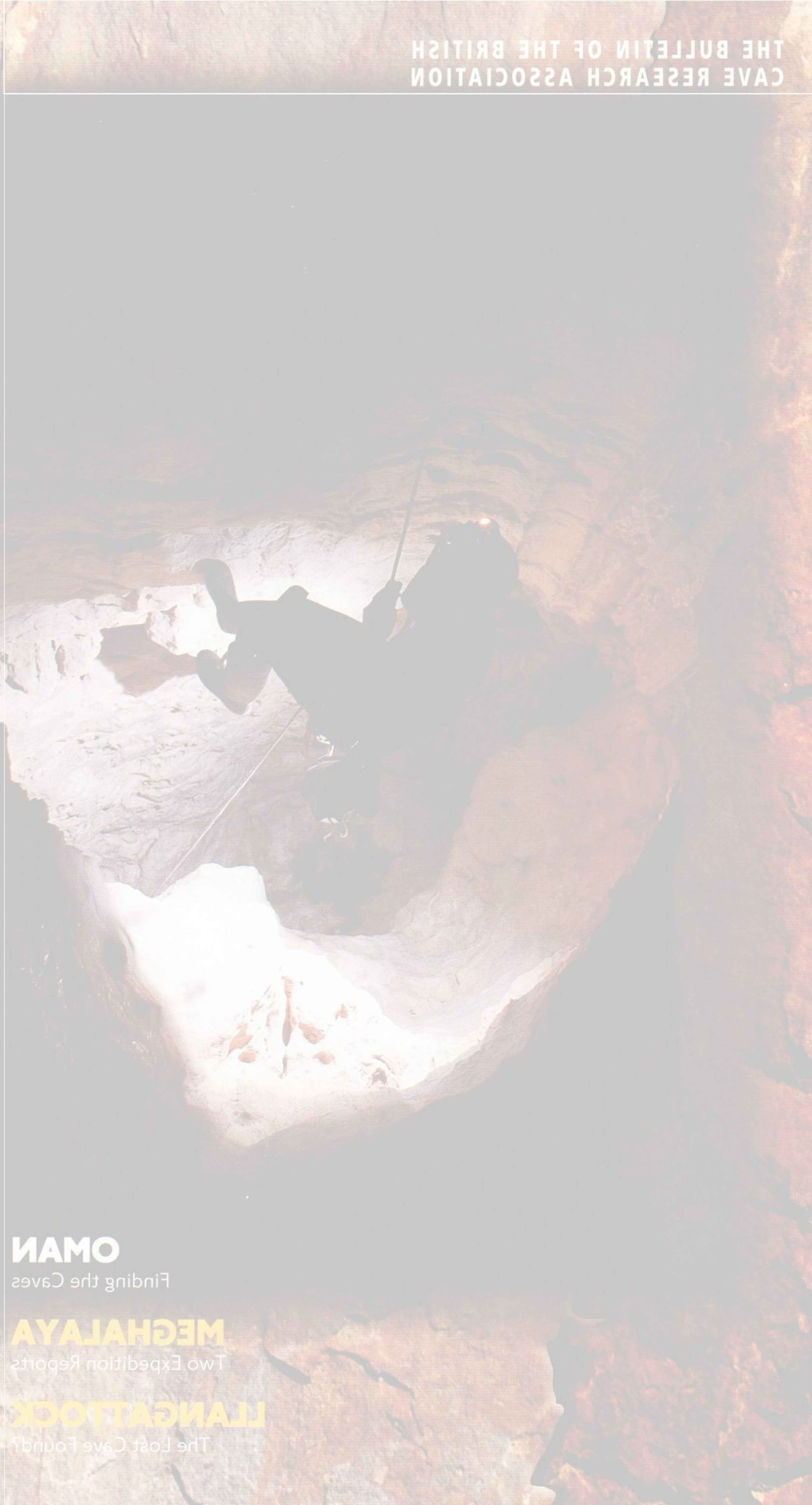
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Two Expedition Reports

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Cave Research

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1999 Matienzo

1999 was the 29th year of British caving expeditions to Matienzo and, as well as surveying over 4km of new passages, a number of significant and exciting leads were left. At Easter about 800m of new passage was surveyed and in the summer, about 3.2km was newly explored. Forty people took part in the explorations along with a small team of Catalans. Over 120 sites were visited. During the Easter period Covachos de Peña Jorao at Camargo was extended to over 8.5km.

Diving in Cueva Molino at Bustablado failed to extend the depth or length beyond last year's limit due to a number of problems including poor visibility and technical difficulties. Passages around 600ptas Passage in Cueva Vallina were extended by some 80m. The length of Cueva Vallina is now about 26,200m.

Much activity occurred over and around the South Vega System and its imminent link with Cueva Vallina. At Hammered Hole the entrance was enlarged and the shaft re-explored. A possible passage opposite the shaft entrance was bolted to but was blind. In site 1332, Cueva de Juan Lombrero, further explorations lengthened the cave to nearly 1km with the depth ending at 142m, apparently just above the upward explorations in Breakdown Chamber in Reñada. In Vaccination Pot pitches were pushed down beyond last year's end to a section of passage at about 500m altitude with three digs. The nearby Torca del Zorro was re-explored and surveyed to a depth of 55m. Above and

to the west of Vallina, close to Sima Cueto, lies Sima de la Garma de los Trillos (VT62). This hole, explored in the 80s by the Catalans, is 1.3km long and 340m deep, ending at the same altitude as the lower levels in Vallina. Exploratory trips in the summer have shown the site to have potential and plans are in hand to push the system at Easter. Nearby is Cueva Contrabandistas, a cave that has a good draught and echo that encourages digging.

During 1998 in Cueva Arenal, the draughting rift was enlarged and pushed for a few metres to where it was possible to see that the draughting route appeared to be blocked with boulders. During the summer further passage enlargement reached the boulders that then had to be propped up and held together with expanding polyurethane foam. A generator and jack hammer combination was also used to knock through a wall to eventually reach the Foam Dome, a chamber with draughts and low level passages that we hope to push further during 2000. ➤



Andy Pringle in the Millennium Chamber at the base of shaft 1411



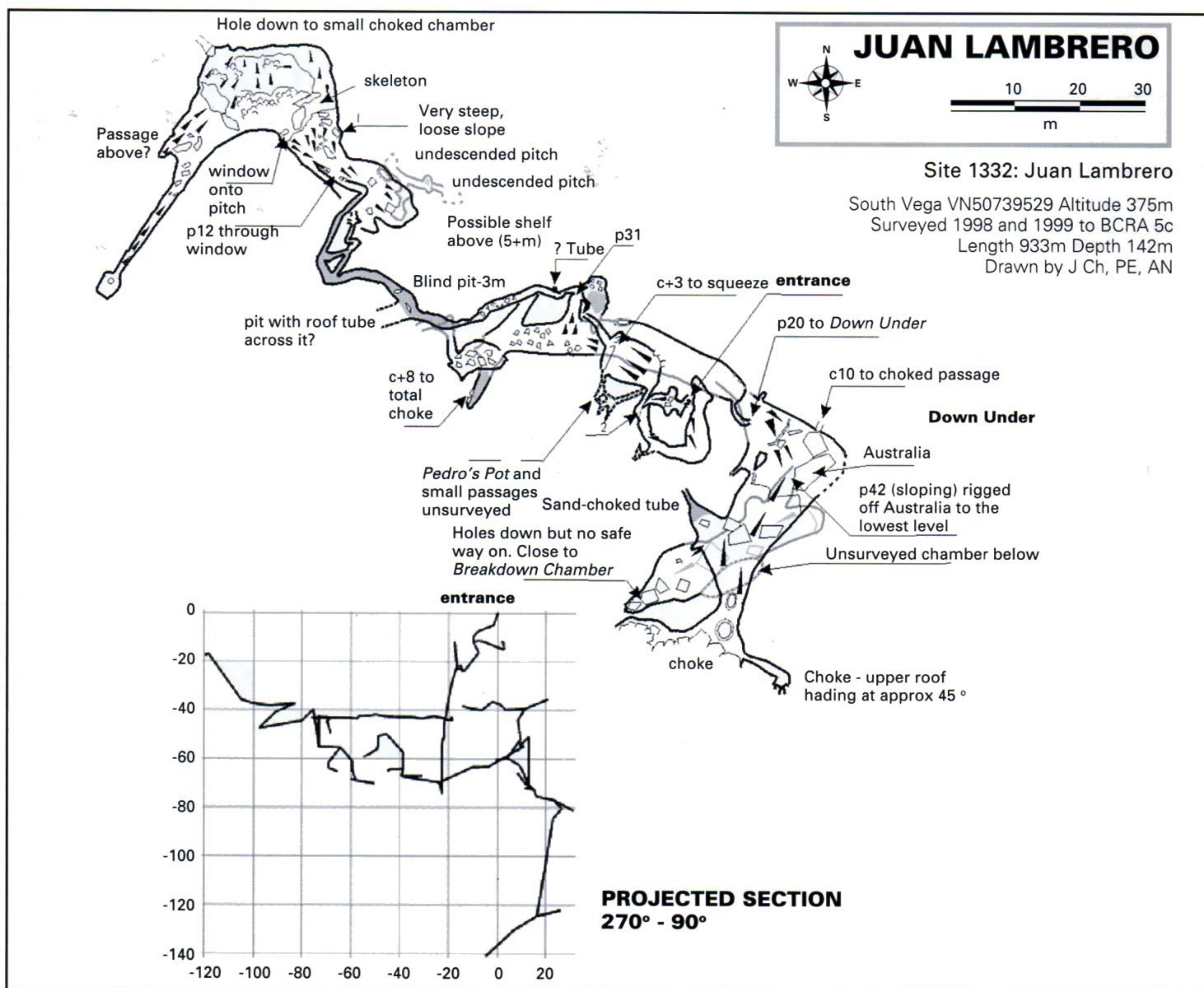
Formations in Cueva de Cerro Chico

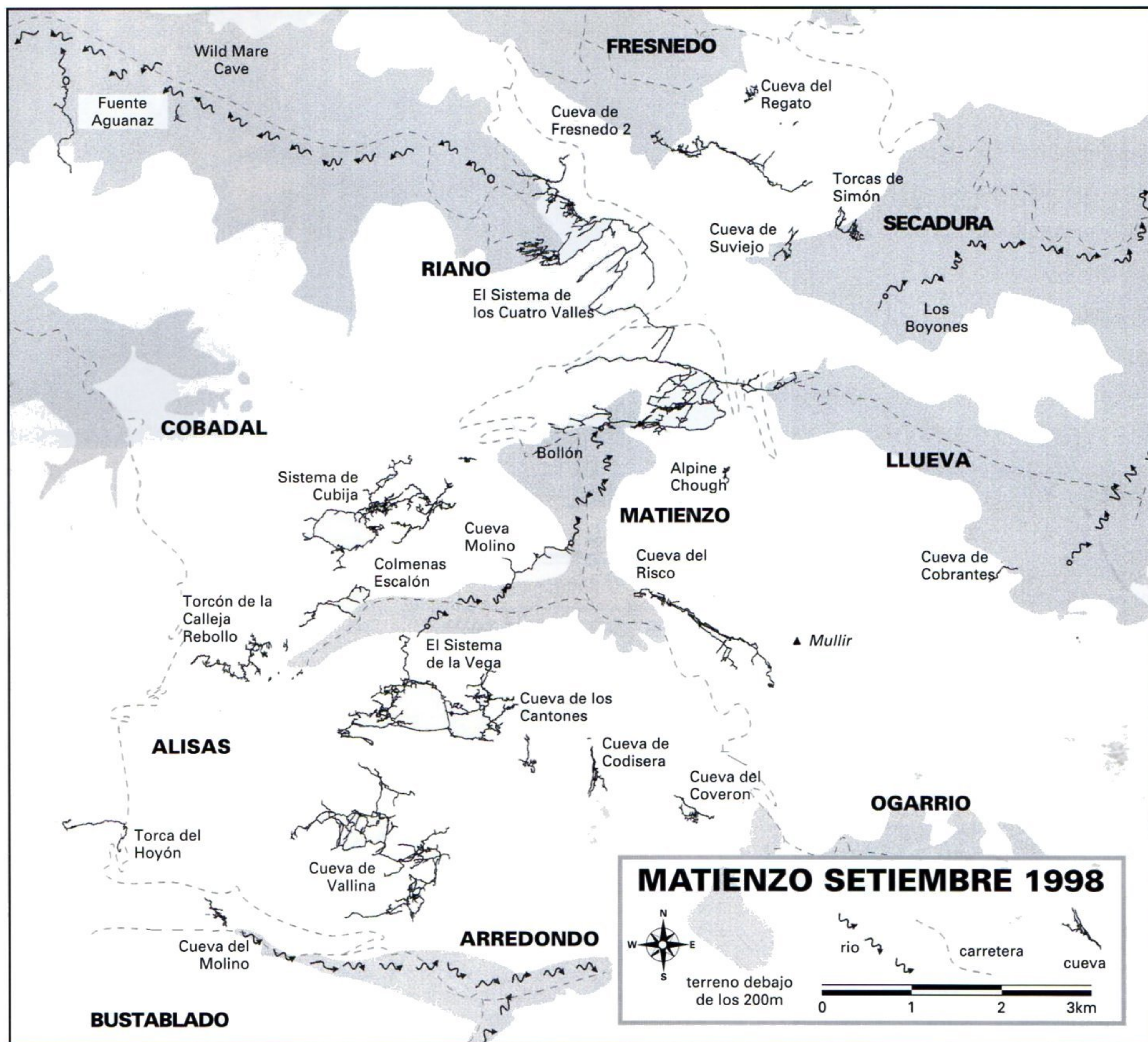
This article summarises the activities around Matienzo: a much more detailed account, with photos and surveys is available on the Matienzo Caves web site at www.lancs.ac.uk/staff/gyaaq/page1.htm.
(In the Caves section of the site there is now an area map with all the sites marked and linking to the relevant descriptions).

➤ To the east of the South Vega System, Cueva Lammas (site 1325) proved to be an interesting pot with potential. Located just above the TV mast track and draughting in, the cave was left in 1998 at a draughting dig some 40m down. This year the cave was pushed into a narrow 'Quaking Pot'-type section and ended at a continuing tight crawl over sandstone at a depth of 77m and altitude of 300m.

Some systematic searching for leads was carried out at Toad in the Hole. Pitches around Baz's Chamber were explored; at First Return a bold step entered the Second Coming where the draught was lost in high rifts after 95m. The large Fossil Chamber was surveyed, revealing two avens at least 100m high, and pitches were descended in Two Owls Passage.

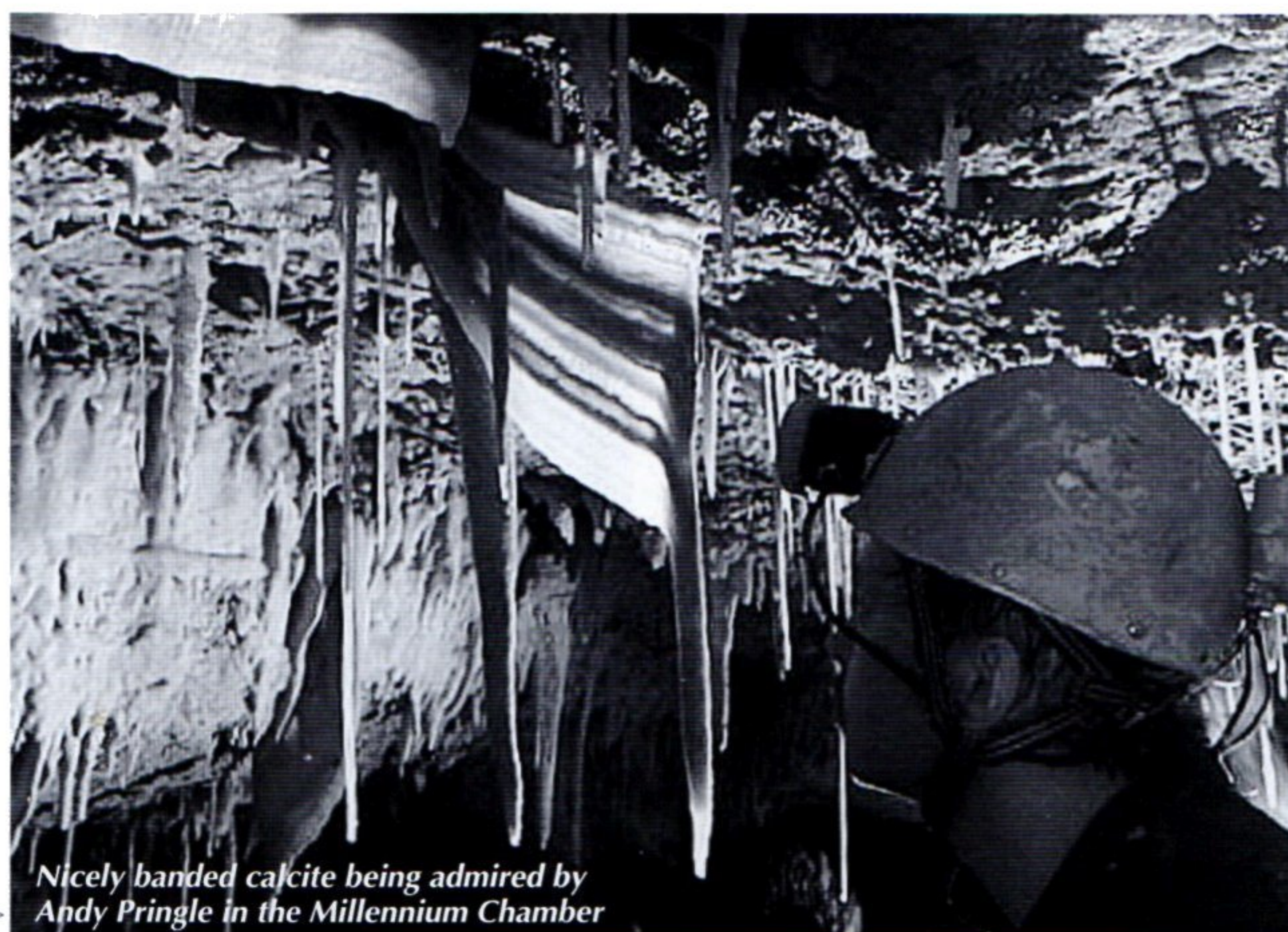
In Rascavieja, Spanish archaeologists are revealing human bones in the first chamber while above, a set of shafts were explored including 1411 that was descended 48m to a well decorated chamber. At the eastern edge of El Naso, the low-level Cueva de los Tizones was dug up into a high-level route that regained a substantial section of streamway but also continues wide open as a traverse with protection needed. Tizones now has a length of 542m.





In the Four Valleys System a number of passages were newly explored and surveyed in Cueva Carcavueso at both Easter and summer. Opposite Straw Passage over 500m was surveyed in Parallel Sausages. One hundred metres of passage was surveyed near Andy Quin's Foot that heads back to the upstream Llueva sump. Molephones were used to check the survey but problems were encountered in a thunderstorm. Scaling was carried out around Rhinoceros Passage. Explorations were also carried out in small holes in the jungle above Cueva Riaño. The length of the Four Valleys System is now 42,316m.

The Western Series of Carcavueso follows the east-west trend of many major passages. In Cueva Bollón (Volvo), only a few metres west of these passages, divers continued to push the cave passing through three sumps to a passage heading west upstream. The streamway was not pushed, but a boulder slope rising south out of the limestone was followed past an unexplored draughting pitch. The passage ended about ➤



Nicely banded calcite being admired by Andy Pringle in the Millennium Chamber

➤ 20m below the surface very close to the dig at Boil in the Bag. Other draughting digs near Volvo include site 200 that was enlarged with Catalan assistance (and is still a viable prospect) and site 1452, just above the new drainage gutter, and ending at an enticing excavation. The prospects for the Volvo area have taken a leap forwards and all sites mentioned, plus 415, 715 and 1392 (Candy's Dig), are good propositions. A link to the North Vega System seems less remote.

With the extensions in Volvo and Arenal, and with the use of modern digging technologies, the Year 2000 looks to have excellent prospects for new connections and leads.

The total number of sites documented around the Matienzo depression has risen by 105 and is now 1454 with over 211.7km of explored cave passage. A substantial grant was received from the Sports Council and David Hood Award. Thanks must go to these bodies, the Spanish authorities who grant permission to cave and the villagers of Matienzo who welcome us back many times a year.

Juan Corrin

Recent References

Matienzo '98 in Caves & Caving 83, Spring 1999

Matienzo '97 in Caves & Caving 79, Spring 1998

Matienzo '96 in Caves & Caving 75, Spring 1997

Website:

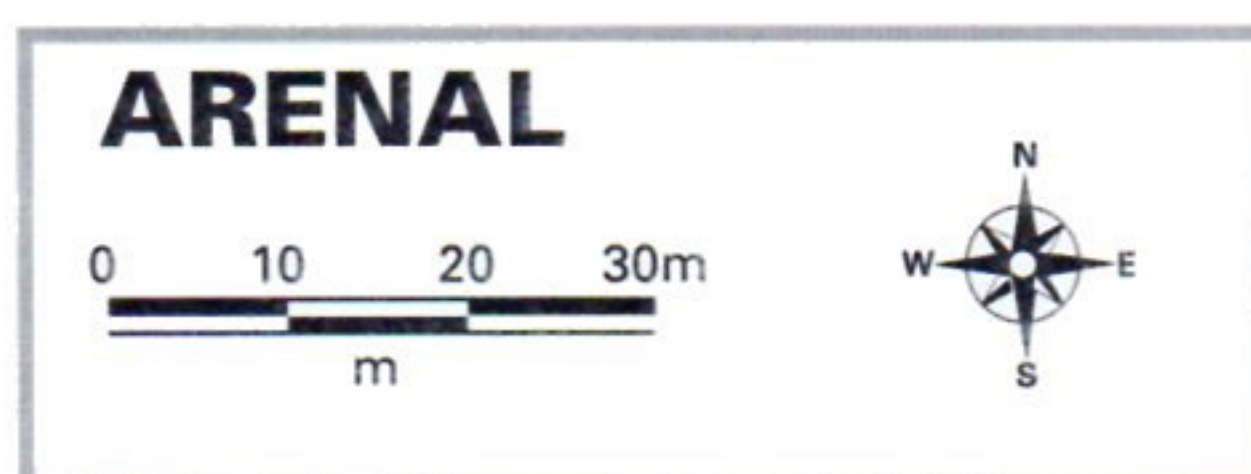
www.lancs.ac.uk/staff/gyaaq/page1.htm



Andy Pringle in the Millennium Chamber at the base of shaft 1411



Andy Quin with the stal bosses in site 1411



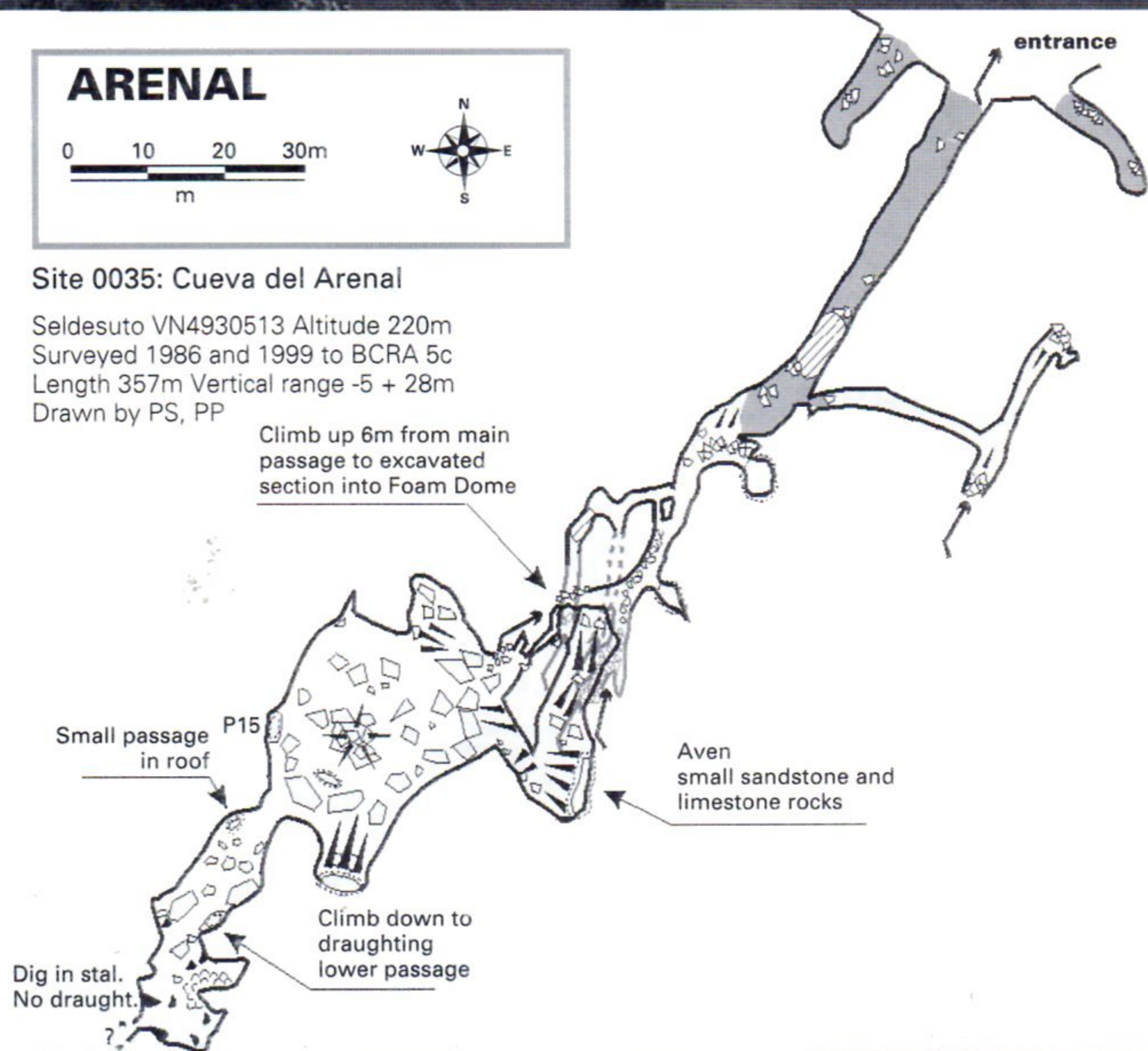
Site 0035: Cueva del Arenal

Seldesuto VN4930513 Altitude 220m

Surveyed 1986 and 1999 to BCRA 5c

Length 357m Vertical range -5 + 28m

Drawn by PS, PP



Andy Quin with the stal bosses in site 1411

