

MATIENZO 2026

The DCC contribution to the expedition

INTRODUCTION

Here we were again, the same four at the same time doing much the same sort of things! The DCC was represented by eight members in total. The four members travelling to Matienzo for three weeks were Nigel, Liz, Bill and Pete (Clewes) and we stayed at the apartments in the centre of Matienzo, a short distance from Bar La Panaderia (The Bakers). Pete O and Allan stayed in another apartment. Emma Key and Bill were on the campsite (I think!) and Steve M was at his home-from-home in saucepan alley.

We arrived on Thursday 23rd July and left on Thursday 13th August.

CAVE WORK AND DIGGING

Apart from just spot-holing, we worked on three sites during the expedition. Site 2101, where we got into new passage last year, was left alone due to lack of caving insurance.

- a) First stop was a new site 5559 at the top of Sel de Suto which Allan had located last year. This was dug down about 4.5m but it was decided it was unlikely to go further.
- b) The same day, we went on to site 2410, not far away, and removed boulders and dug down in one corner of the open cave showing possible potential but not much draught. Two days later we returned and removed several boulders and capped some but the situation remained much as before.
- c) Following Phil P's guidance on sites to check, Pete and Nigel went up to the head of the Llueta valley to check out some sites overlooking Matienzo that required accurate grid references and new photos. We located, photographed and recorded sites 0271, 5379, 5563, 5564 and 5565. The last three had not previously been recorded. On a later visit to the area, we also checked site 5530 which deserves another visit as the depth was about 6m, not 3m as previously recorded.
- d) Next day, we did the same up at Sel de Suto looking for three sites. We found one of these but not the other two. Site 2564 appears to have been "lost" and could not be found on a previous visit either; site 0056 was found and recorded but needs a lot of digging; site 1357 was not found but the existing map reference goes to an area of pillar karst and the shaft could be anywhere in the area – but not where the map reference takes you.
- e) Next day, again, we went to locate and photograph site 4998 which had been found by DCC in 2019. The map reference was wrong so this was corrected and the site where the project had 4998 was redesignated as 5568. Other nearby sites (4999 and 0495) were also corrected. Following this, we started to dig down at 4998 as the site was emitting a very strong draught and is not located over any known cave. In the first day, we recorded a depth of 5.2m. Digging was continued on two more days and on the last visit, Pete managed to get down 5m and Disto'd down a further 7m making the total depth 12.36m. We will return! The entrance was left covered in logs which the farmer, who visited on the first day, seems to accept as suitable.
- f) On 1st August, we joined Andy and Julie to visit Ajo and the headland where there is the natural/sea cave Cueva de Ojorada. This was followed by a walk along the coast and an excellent meal at Arthur's Pizzeria! (Arthur is son of Andy and Julie.)
- g) Nigel and Liz went to León for a couple of days during which stay, Nigel visited Roman gold mines at Médulas.

CAVING TRIPS

Apart from digging, we only had one brief trip purely for pleasure as none of us had managed to get full caving insurance due to age! This was to Cueva de Tiva (0026) yet again to calibrate a Disto and demonstrate a bit of cave surveying.

OTHER TRIPS

For various reasons, we did not spend as much time outside the valley except for Nigel and Liz staying in León for a couple of nights. On one day, Liz, Pete, Bill and Nigel went to visit the salt works at Añana in the Basque country and on another day we had a brief visit to Liérgones where there had been an iron works and cannon factory.

AND ALSO

Pete C went on a few bike rides with some of the other English residents in the valley.

ON THE EXPEDITION FROM DCC

Bill Booth, Pete Clewes, Nigel Dibben, Liz Taylor, Pete O'Neill, Allan Berry, Steve Martin, Emma Key

PHOTOGRAPHS

	
Site 5379 from above	Site 5564 from above: needs another look
	
Site 5565, may be worth another look	Site 0057



Allan emerging from site 5559



The dig at site 2741



Site 2741 looking out



The dig site at 0495, dug years ago by Granville, Steve and others



Site 4998 before digging started



Bill emerging from site 4998



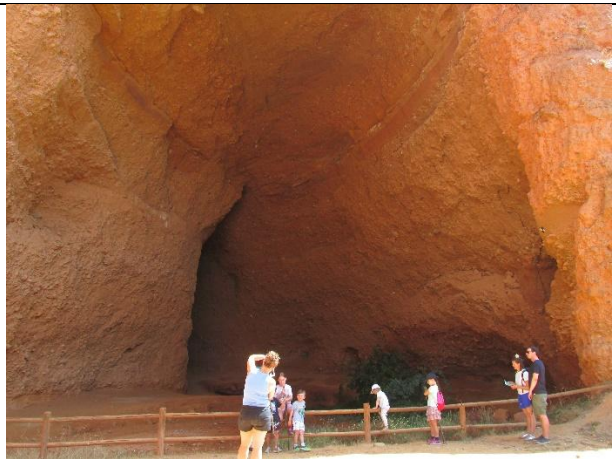
Site 4998 – the draught at the entrance



Looking down the first part of the shaft at 4998



The gold mining site of Las Médulas



One of the mines at Las Médulas



Cueva de Ojorada



Ajo – how to camouflage a shipping container

