

Around Matienzo in summer 2014

The DCC turned out in strength in Matienzo with this being the first visit for a number of members. We were joined by a couple of UCET members. The campsite team was Nigel and Liz, Tom, Purdie and Lauren, Joel and Charlotte, Doug Thompson (UCET) and Robin Jones (UCET). In addition, there were Steve Martin, Bill Booth, Pete Clewes and Pete O'Neil living elsewhere in the valley. This account is the work with which the author was involved or has some knowledge.

Riocueva (4042: 30T 443253 4805544)

This cave has recently come into the permit area as it was extended further north. Although previously explored by the Spanish, it was felt necessary to survey the cave in the course of which it was extended further. The leadership was generally provided by Ali Neill. Nigel visited the cave twice, on the first time with Ali, James Carlisle and Steve and on the second time with Ali, Sam (GSG), Purdie and Lauren. On the first trip, we pushed and surveyed upstream in a low streamway through two ducks, the second of which was only passed by James and then was pushed and explored by a later visit. On the second visit, we were working above the stream downstream from the shaft entrance. A squeeze was pushed by Lauren but with no further prospect and we then surveyed and photographed. Purdie, Lauren and Sam also followed the passage downstream for a distance. Although a 'known' cave, it was clear that there is still more to be found.

Cueva-Cubío de la Reñada (0048: 30T 450348 4795561)

This trip was the first by most of the campsite team on arriving in the valley and was intended to be an introduction to Matienzo caves for the six who had not been there before. In the end, Doug did not come due to ill-health. We went in as far as Stuffed Monk and took a number of photos then returned out to the bar.

Torca La Vaca (2889: 30T 448258 4801193)

One of the projects for the year was to try to make a back entrance to Vaca so as to make exploration far easier. To support this, we made a first trip down to the duck to tackle the cave (Nigel, Tom, Purdie, Lauren, Joel, Doug, Robin and Pete C). The trip was relatively quick and we tackled the pitches although it was found that much of the tackle had been left in since the previous year. Photographs were also taken and Joel had a short trip into the sump but as he was due to go back the next day for a long trip, he didn't venture too far.

The next day Tom and Joel went in with Paul Dold to radio through from the possible breakthrough point to the surface dig at BigMat Calf Hole. The location was successful with communication possible by PMR as well as Molefone. The trip lasted until 1 am the next day and sadly we were unable to keep the bar open for them!

BigMat Calf Hole – dig (3916: 30T 448564 4800273)

This dig was seen as a possible back entrance to Torca La Vaca and was dug last year. This year, the dig was attacked on several days including the Molefone day (see above) by various members of the DCC in support of Phil Pappard, Pete Smith, Juan and others. Sadly, no connection was made while we were there even though a second Molefone and smoke session was held (Si and Di). However, on a subsequent trip by Si and Di, they and the digging team on the surface were able to make a connection allowing Si and Di to make the surface – saving several hours of up/down and wet caving.

Sima-Cueva del Risco (0025: 30T 453199 4795845)

Following a recent find by Paul Dold and Paul Fretwell, we (Pete C, Nigel, Tom and Joel) were invited to visit the extension to assist with photography and to take our own pictures. The precise location is not being publicised because of the superb formations. These are fantastically clean and pretty so we stripped off oversuits and boots before going too close to them.

Cueva de Jivero 2 (0017: 30T 453627 4794705)

Small as it is, Jivero 2 is a fun trip and everyone could come along for it. Paul D joined us and helped to photograph and identify some pseudo-spiders on the walls and the European crayfish in the stream. Photos were taken.

Lenny's Cave (3721: 30T 455283 4799449)

We saved a trip to Lenny's Cave for the new expedition members but they declined and went to the beach instead! So it was Nigel, Liz, Bill, Pete C and Pete O'N who headed for Secadura on a warm day armed with capping gear. Some progress was made but the rock in the section that Pete O'N was trying to push was rather too soft for caps. A return is promised.

Cueva del Espino (0489: 30T 454068 4796611)

This cave, better known to us simply as 489 with the extension known as Billy's Vision was extended and explored by the DCC some years ago. Because of the connections between the cave and Roy Hayes who helped dig the extension, we usually try to pay a visit there in remembrance of Roy. This year, Bill, Pete C., Nigel and Liz made the walk up and back. We tried to find the mule track on the way up – without success – but used it for the return journey. (It starts at the crest of a hill on the path at 30 T 455104 4796375, shortly before the second water trough.) On the way up, we also found a recently exposed shaft at 30 T 455181 4796644 but sadly this is now outside our area.

Cueva Hoyuca, (Cueva de Uzueka) (0107: 30T 451816 4799805)

Tom, Purdie, Lauren and Joel went with Si and Di to visit the Astrodome. The Giant Panda entrance was used avoiding Quadruphenia (shame) and much of the Gorilla Walk (hurray). The main objective was the Astrodome which still wows new visitors to the cave. On the way out, there was some confusion after Obvious Junction but the whole group emerged before midnight, ready for the bar.

Coventosa (Arredondo: 30 T 450687 4788489)

The Cueto-Coventosa system is also outside our area but is readily accessible for a walk in trip. Nigel, Bill and Charlotte had a short trip (it turned out to be nearly two hours!) and took a stack of photos. Lighting is not easy because of the large size of the chambers but reasonable pictures were obtained nevertheless. After the trip, we paid our respects to the Casanova bar in Arredondo.

Udias Mine (Rodezas, near Cabezón de la Sal: 30 T 400559 4799838)

As Ali's way of getting a lift to the port, he invited us to join him on a surveying/tourist trip to the zinc mine at Udias. The mine is some distance west of Santander in an area of extensive zinc mining (one mine nearby was for a time the largest zinc mine in Europe). We went up the main mine track to the adit entrance at about 220 m OD. Inside, we followed the main incline down to around -80 m (to be confirmed with Ali) where it ends and the next incline starts. A side passage at (?) -60 m led to a natural aven with stempling higher up in it. From the bottom of the incline, we followed what was possibly a second route of exit through stopes reaching about (?) -30 m before we had to rejoin the main incline. We went up there and

back to the main level before starting up to the middle exits at around +40 m. After doing a bit of surveying, we carried on up following green arrows and the draft eventually emerging at +100 m. From there, it was back down the track to the car, Santander port and then Matienzo.

Other activities

Apart from the caving, digging and mining, there were various walks in the valley including a reconnaissance around the TV mast area and Tom joined the SUSS on some shaft bashing at Puerto de Alisas. We all joined in the expedition dinner in the second week and the campsite team joined Bill and Pete C for a sort of barbecue at the Daughters' apartments. Pablo and Miguel supplied the usual refreshments into the early morning and there were a few bad heads as a result. Some members caught what we thin was a mild infection and others suffered from heat stroke.

Acknowledgments

Without the leadership of Phil, Steve and Juan, the expedition would not get off the ground. Supporting them were Hilary, Susie and Penny and we (the campers) are particularly grateful for the improvements made to the showers and toilets after we had bent Susie's ear a bit. Of course, there are many other people who contribute to the success of the Matienzo venture but it would be unfair to try and name them all in case we miss someone off the list. The DCC contributed money to support the newcomers expedition to Matienzo and it is to be hoped that they will write their own report (or add some paragraphs to this one) to show how the money was spent and how it helped them to make it to Matienzo.

Nigel Dibben
17 August 2014

CALENDAR

Saturday 26 th July		Nigel and Liz arrive
Sunday 27 th	Riocueva	Joel, Doug and Robin arrive
Monday 28 th		Tom and others arrive
Tuesday 29 th	Reñada	
Wednesday 30 th	Cueva de Vaca	
Thursday 31 st	Calf Hole Dig and team into Vaca	
Friday 1 st August	Riocueva and Risco	
Saturday 2 nd	Risco and Jivero 2	'BBQ' at Daughter's
Sunday 3 rd		Pete O'N arrives
Monday 4 th	Calf Hole Dig	
Tuesday 5 th	Coventosa	Expedition dinner
Wednesday 6 th	Udias mine and Uzueka	
Thursday 7 th	Lenny's Cave	Tom and others leave

Friday 8th	489	Joel, Doug and Robin left
Saturday 9 th		
Sunday 10 th		Nigel, Liz, Pete C, Bill and Pete O'N leave