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"Hello?"

"Hello. This is Roger."

"Roger who?"

"Roger Bowser," he said. "I'm speaking from London."

But cavers don't phone across the Atlantic, unless they are broke. "Do you want to go caving in Peru?" he continued. And so started our connection with the Imperial College Karst Research Expedition to the Peruvian Andes.

Six months later my wife and I were in Peru. The three week bus ride from Caracas to Lima, with Tich, Monica, two kids, several goats, chickens and assorted other passengers is another story .....

Our first camp was set up in July 1972 on a 14,000 foot limestone plateau on the Puccara Ranch near Morococha. In the area we found no caves and almost no karst features. A few shakeholes and some limestone pavement were found, and two digs were started; both ended up about 10 feet deep. However, one purpose of the Expedition's program was to make a geological map of the area, so we stayed there for several weeks while the geologists completed the map. The rest of us made occasional forays to climb nearby peaks and to explore the surrounding area for caves.

#### Lechuza Cave

One such trip was to Tingo Maria, a 24 hour bus ride from our camp, dropping 13000 feet into the Amazon basin. Lechuza cave (Spanish for owl - but see on) is located about 10 km from Tingo Maria up the Manzon River valley. We only explored and mapped the cave (Bowser, 1973) to the end of the main chamber due to lack of time and equipment. The explored cave consists of a passage about 100 feet wide and 60 feet high, extending back for 1000 feet. A large stream resurges 100 feet below the entrance of the main cave, but the resurgence could not be entered, nor was the stream seen in the upper cave. In early August the stream discharge was 30 cusecs. The locals did not know of any sinks in the region, but said that the cave was 14 km long and came out at the other side of the mountain.

The main distinction of the cave was the large number of birds (steatornis) which live in the cave. These are large nocturnal birds, who suffer from insomnia - especially when disturbed by cavers. In the cave the birds make an incredible screeching noise. They fly around the heads of interlopers, as well they might, for the locals used to come into the cave in the nesting season to collect the chicks. They used the chicks' layer of fat for cooking.

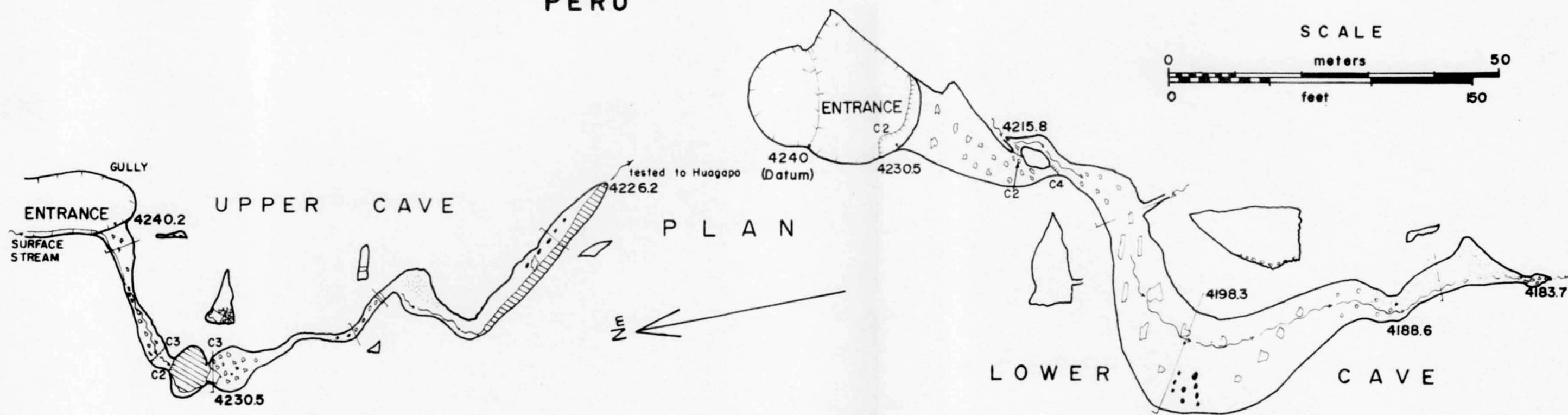
The floor of the cave is a heaving mass of guano, containing hand-sized

- 4197.7 Elevation in meters a.m.s.l.
- ∕C2 Climb with height in meters
- ⊙ Sand or mud
- ⊙ Gravel
- ⊙ Boulders
- ⊙ Formations
- ~ Stream

**ANTA-COCHA CAVE**  
DEPARTMENT OF TARMA  
PERU

Notes

- 1) Datum elevation 4240 ± 20 meters a.m.s.l. (by altimeter)
- 2) Total horizontal length, Upper Cave 107.7 m.  
Lower Cave 126.6 m.
- 3) Depth, Lower Cave 46.8 m.
- 4) Water in Upper Cave traced to Huagapo Cave (elevation 3570m)
- 5) Surveyed with Suunto's to C.R.G. grade 4d
- 6) Sections drawn to scale looking out of cave



cockroaches, six inch millipedes, spiders and other pleasant insects, who live off the table droppings of the birds. After taking a few photos and surveying the cave we shook off several passengers and left tropical caves for the next party.

Arriving back in camp (in the snow) we climbed Puri-Puri, a 17000 foot peak, and then moved our base camp to an area near Palcamayo in the district of Tarma. We camped at about 11,000 feet (balmy after our previous camp) within sight of Huagapo Cave (Rosell, 1965). This is a well known resurgence cave. Living in a house opposite the cave was Modesto Castro, who was the official guide to the cave. We got to know and to like Modesto very much and he accompanied us on several cave trips in the area.

#### Huagapo Cave

On the first day in camp we decided to look at Huagapo Cave. The entrance has been dug out by the government and is now an arch fifty feet wide and high, situated 100 feet above the valley floor. For the first few feet we dropped down into the stream-way and continued along stepping-stones in the foot-deep water. A short climb, a scramble over some rocks and some more stepping stones brought us to a twenty foot climb. This climb led to the upper series, as the stream beyond emerges from a duck. Modesto, who was accompanying us on this trip, climbed up and put down a rope which some of us even used, as the climb was not trivial. The high level series continued for two hundred feet to a short overhanging pitch, which we laddered, back down to the streamway. Just beyond the ladder the stream becomes waist deep, and this was as far as Modesto had been with a few tough tourists. We plodded on, with the passage about 50 feet high and ten feet wide, through water up to our waist, and in places out of our depth. The streamway gained very little height, with only occasional small waterfalls and rapids. We passed some pretty sections, crawlways through water, and a side passage, and, after an hour or so, came to the final sump. Earlier that year a Polish party had reached the sump (the first team to reach the end of the cave), although they did not survey or finish exploring the cave.

The sump pool was about 10 feet in diameter and the water emerged from a passage about a foot below the surface and about 3 feet in diameter. The sump was almost a mile from the entrance, the passage running along the strike. On the way out we looked at the side passage, a 1000 foot long virgin inlet containing some pretty formations and an aven. As we were already wet we also looked at the streamway below the high level series near the entrance, which was a 200 foot canal containing a couple of ducks. We emerged after four hours having found the cave extremely sporting and enjoyable. On several later trips all passages were fully explored.

and surveyed and an attempt was made to get through the sump. The gravel and stones on the downstream side of the sump were dug out to lower the water level about 18 inches. However, the water passage was found to continue downwards and in spite of diving a few feet into the sump we could not get through. This would be a good sump to dive with scuba gear as the water is known to come from a cave ten km away and 900 m higher in elevation.

### Sima de Milpo

Modesto told us of another cave in the hills nearby called the Sima de Milpo. Later, two of us went up to see this cave with Modesto, taking with us only three ladders and a rope. The cave is along a deep gorge running behind Huagapo Cave, and is a two mile walk involving a climb of about 1300 feet from our camp. A small stream flowing off the hills runs into a small crack near the cave. The cave entrance is very unimposing, being only an 18 inch square crawlway at the bottom of a six foot rift. The cave soon opens out and a traverse leads to the first pitch of about 20 feet. The cave continues as a crawlway which opens up at the second pitch. We called this the Polish Pitch as it was the limit of exploration of the Polish Party, which had descended in May of 1972. Below the second pitch the cave is a walking passage continuing on down past several sporting climbs and two pitches to the 4-way chamber. I followed the stream which soon led to the high-level sump. A passage entered just above the sump which I followed for a short distance. Although small it was continuing upwards and is a promising lead that we didn't follow.

Meanwhile Lloyd had explored the other passage leading downwards (see map) which after a number of small climbs led to the third pitch. Modesto climbed down the pitch a few feet to an overhanging part where, as we had no more tackle, he had to turn back. We dubbed this Modesto's Pitch as it was to be the deepest point reached in the cave by our faithful guide. We hurriedly returned to tell the team of this sporting and promising cave.

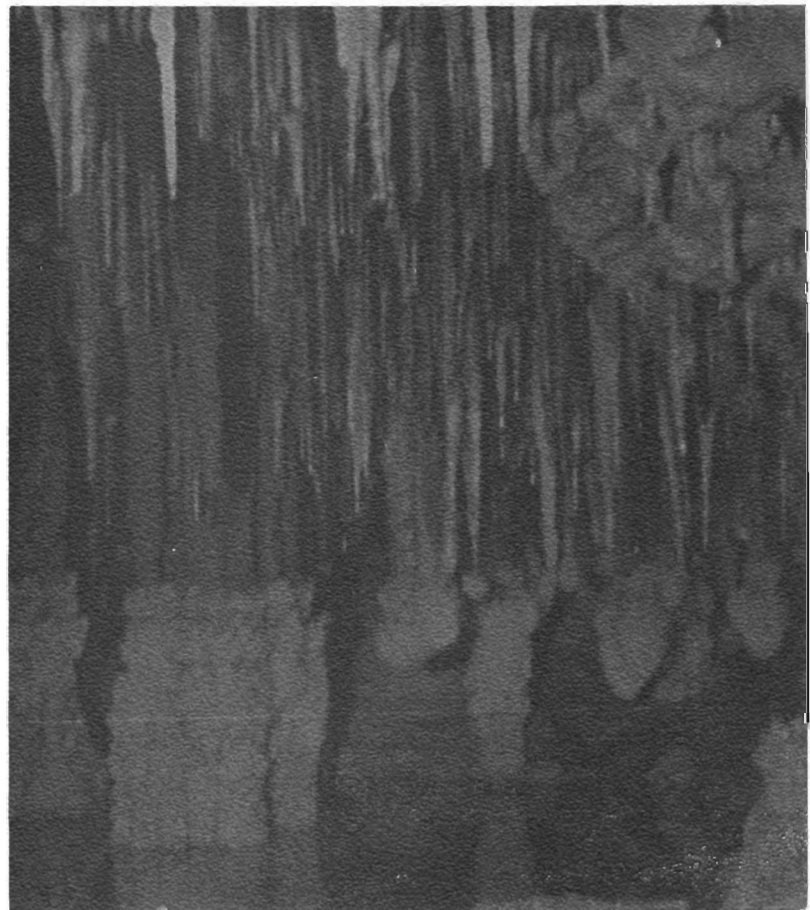
Two days later the entire party of 5 returned to the cave with 14 ladders and several ropes. Modesto unfortunately could not come with us as he had to plant his crop of potatoes. We soon reached Modesto's Pitch and continued on down a fine streamway past many pitches and climbs. Sima de Milpo is one of the most sporting caves I have been in, with clean washed walls and a small stream trickling down the many climbs.

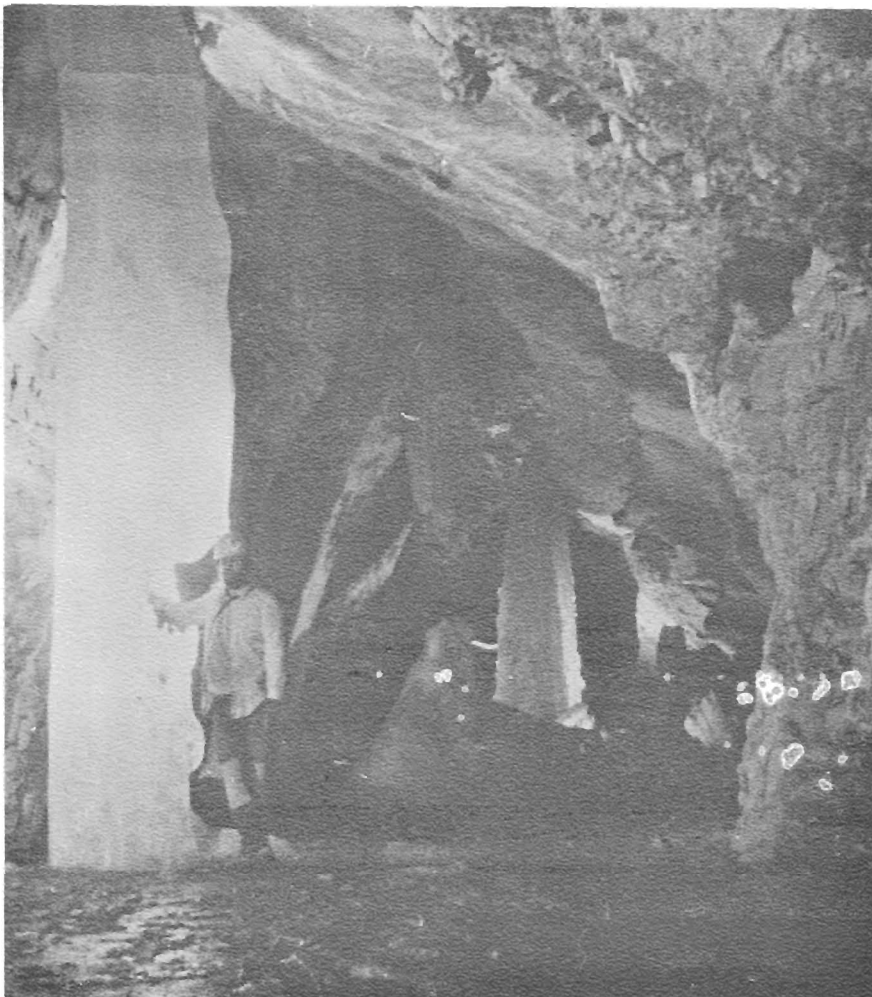
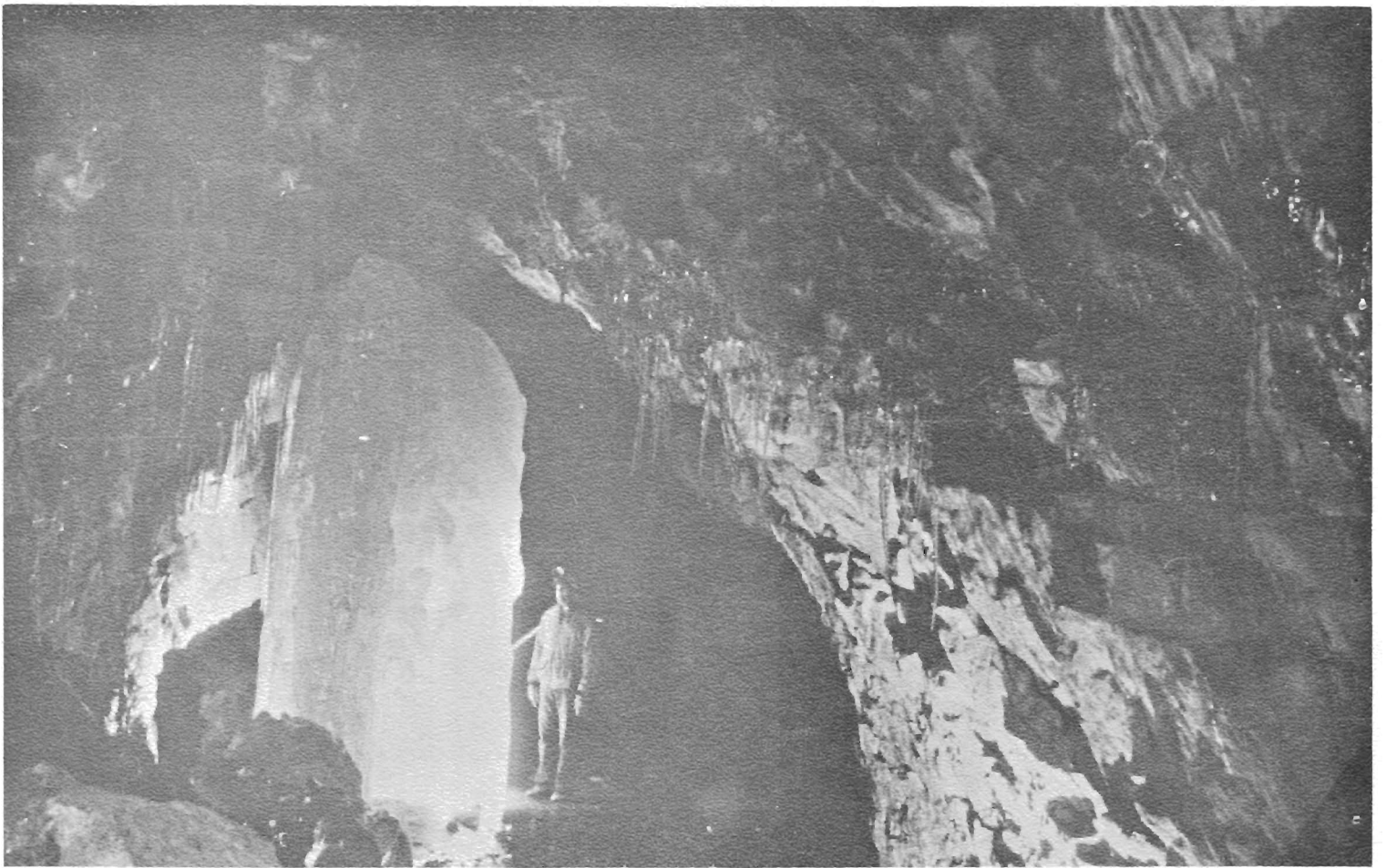
We soon reached Rimstone Chamber, which has a large boulder floor at the foot of the ladder. The obvious passage to the northwest leads past some attractive rimstone pools to two pitches and then on to an earth blockage. There is evidence of leaves and surface soil at the end of this passage although this part of the cave is





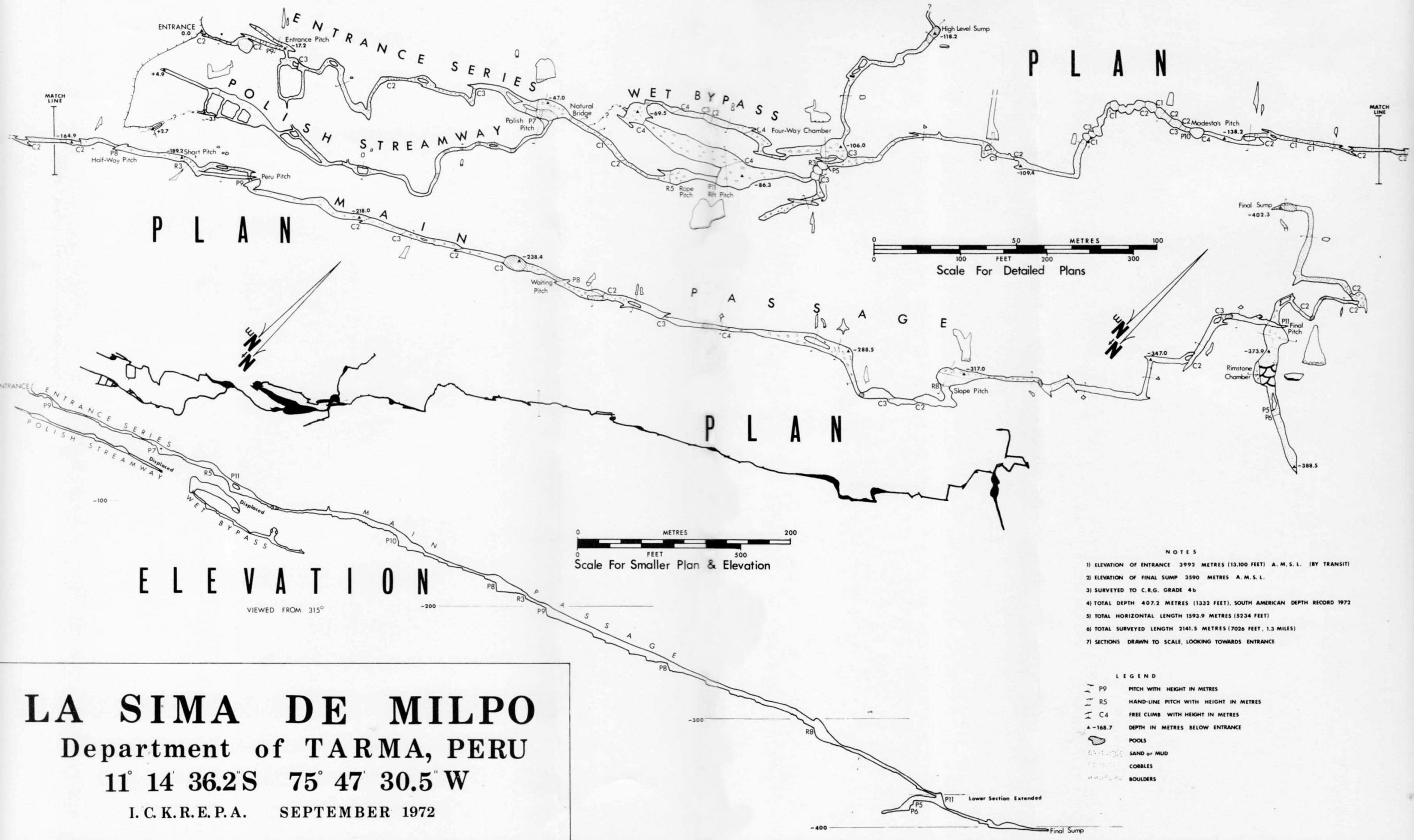
Iluagapo Cave, Peru.  
Left: The streamway near the entrance.  
Top: Formations in the streamway.  
Bottom: Grotto in the new passage.  
(Photos by J. Coward)





Canyon Creek Ice Cave, Alberta.  
(Photo by Ian Drummond)





# LA SIMA DE MILPO

Department of TARMA, PERU

11° 14' 36.2" S 75° 47' 30.5" W

I. C. K. R. E. P. A. SEPTEMBER 1972

- NOTES**
- 1) ELEVATION OF ENTRANCE 3992 METRES (13,100 FEET) A. M. S. L. (BY TRANSIT)
  - 2) ELEVATION OF FINAL SUMP 3590 METRES A. M. S. L.
  - 3) SURVEYED TO C. R. G. GRADE 4b
  - 4) TOTAL DEPTH 407.2 METRES (1332 FEET), SOUTH AMERICAN DEPTH RECORD 1972
  - 5) TOTAL HORIZONTAL LENGTH 1593.9 METRES (5234 FEET)
  - 6) TOTAL SURVEYED LENGTH 2141.5 METRES (7026 FEET, 1.3 MILES)
  - 7) SECTIONS DRAWN TO SCALE, LOOKING TOWARDS ENTRANCE

- LEGEND**
- P9 PITCH WITH HEIGHT IN METRES
  - R5 HAND-LINE PITCH WITH HEIGHT IN METRES
  - C4 FREE CLIMB WITH HEIGHT IN METRES
  - A -168.7 DEPTH IN METRES BELOW ENTRANCE
  - POOLS
  - SAND or MUD
  - COBBLES
  - BOULDERS



over 1500 feet (450 m) below the surface.

We surveyed back to Rimstone Chamber and then saw a passage leading off from the foot of the ladder. This was followed and led to the final sump which was later found to be the deepest point of the cave (1335 feet, 402 m). This sump is about a mile from the Huagapo final sump but only a few feet higher in elevation. While three of the party surveyed, the other two looked at all the side leads, photographed the cave and carried out the spare tackle. The surveyors reached the Half-way Pitch before giving up to get out of the cave at night after an enjoyable 12-hour trip. Two later surveying and photographic trips completed the cave, although during the second of these the stream was higher, which prevented our exploring the passage beyond the high level sump.

#### Other Caves

Various other trips were made to nearby limestone areas, and we found that the local Peruvians were very helpful in showing us promising caves. Five other caves were found, explored and surveyed, all several hundred feet long. We were told of several other caves nearby, but did not have time to look at them. Anta-Cocha Caves shown in this article had great promise as they were two thousand feet above Huagapo Cave to which they drained and both carried a stream. However, after a couple of hundred feet both pinched out in impassable sumps.

#### Conclusions

This area in Peru shows great promise for more caves. The Peruvians are very helpful and friendly, and will go out of their way to show cavers interesting caves. Several other sinks are known in the area; if they could be followed they would be deeper than San Agustín in Mexico (2009 feet deep), and have more potential than even Yorkshire Pot, in Canada. If you want a good holiday where you can find some caves - go to Peru.

All the cave maps and descriptions will be published in the report of the Expedition (Bowser, R., 1973) which should be available in the summer of 1973.

#### References

- BOWSER, R., 1973 Report of Imperial College Karst Research Expedition to the Peruvian Andes. (in preparation) Available from J. Coward at McMaster.
- ROSELL, C.G., 1965 Cavernas, Grutas y Cuevas Del Peru. Lima (Caves of Peru) In Spanish. A description of known caves in Peru- mainly archaeological. Available from Ed Taylor, 139 Main Entrance Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15228 and elsewhere.

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M.U.C.C.C.