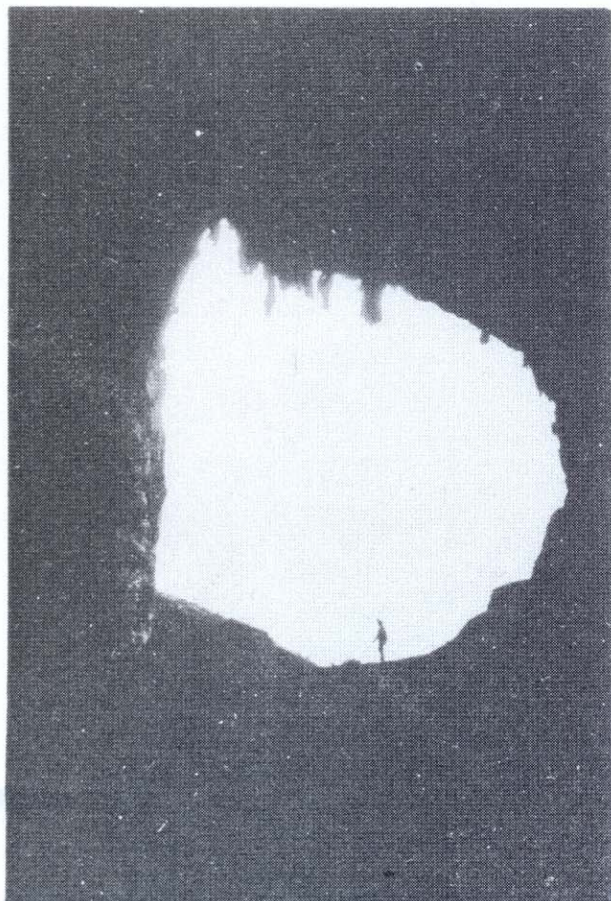


Peru '82

As I stood in a Palcamayo gutter, gasping for breath from the effort of getting my 25kg rucksack off the roof of the bus, I wondered if this really could be called a lightweight expedition. Eleven of us from Southampton had come to the high karst of the Peruvian Andes on a small budget, to work on a selection of projects including some caving and cave ecology.

We ended up carrying much more than was comfortable since we needed enough warm kit to stop us shivering through the night-time temperatures of -10°C but also needed gear to prevent sunstroke during the day and later to enable us to go hacking through the Amazonian jungle.



The dry entrance of la Cueva del Huagapo



Our first campsite was where the resurgence water from La Cueva de Huagapo mixes with the Rio Shaca 3500m (12,000ft) above sea level. This is one of the longest and certainly one of the most impressive cave systems in South America.

When the water is low, as it was in July, the kilometre long trip to the terminal sump takes less than an hour even if you are unacclimatized to the altitude. Some of the trip involves wading chest-deep in icy water but the spectacular formations make it worth the suffering (but I still wish we had taken wet suits). Just up the road, the entrance to the deepest cave in S. America (La Sima de Milpo at just -407m) had collapsed and took a considerable amount of work before enough boulders could be shifted to allow entry.

Since Huagapo and Milpo had been surveyed by the 1972 Imperial College team (Bowser *et al.* 1973, 1974) we concentrated our efforts on poking around in search of other systems. The most interesting one we found was La Gruta de Pacuy Huagen, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours walk west of Palcamayo in the general direction of San Pedro de

Cajas. This was a tortuous system with 571m of passage contrasting dramatically with the 40m high routes in Huagapo. And it was interesting to see the local's suspicion of the place, perhaps associated with pre-Inca activities and burials in the area. Just inside the entrance crawlway were a selection of mammal bones, presumable dinner-time leftovers but perhaps of more



Campsite outside the resurgence of la Cueva del Huagapo at over 3500 m (11700 ft.) above sea level
Alison Denham

sinister origin and, deeper in, pieces of pot were scattered. Beyond two slippery climbs were the bones of what seemed to be a jaguari - a small wild cat which must have been responsible for the feline footprints beside the subterranean river marked on the survey. It is difficult to explain why such an animal would want to go caving. There was no other sign of life inside (and certainly no food



The long tongue of this bat (*Glossophaga soricina*) is designed to cope with its nectar-sipping habits. These are found in caves near Tingo Maria.

Jane Wilson

for a jaguari) except the occasional polydesmid millipede - a disappointment for this biospeleologist.

We spent our time at Palcamayo acclimatising, catching diseases (chickenpox, bronchitis and Montezuma's Revenge), beating the locals at volleyball, eating guinea pig and working on other projects: nutrition of the local children, telecommunications and looking at whether the drug Acetazolamide (Diamox) helps reduce the effects of Acute Mountain Sickness. (It does).

As the end of July arrived we caught a bus (full of onions) north east to Tingo Maria and the hot humidity at 600m above sea level. The

Imperial College report (Bowser *et al.* 1973) suggested that there was a lot to be found in this lowland area so we were pleased for the excuse to give away our Damart Thermawear and move to an altitude where we didn't need to use our sleeping bags.

After a few setbacks we found an idyllic campsite beside the Monzon River, just a kilometre from a well known oilbird cave, La Cueva de los Lechugas. A French expedition to this part of Peru (Orville 1977) said that the resurgence near Lechugas at the base of the Bella Durmiente (Sleeping Beauty) limestone massif was undividable even with scuba gear. So it was immensely pleasing to manage the easy 2m dive into a pretty grotto, decorated by fungus gnats, christened Fungus's Cave.

Inside, the water flowed strongly and was out of my depth (at least 3m). Passage continued for about 10m with a maximum of 4cm airspace, but I could not find a free-divable way further into the resurgence since I was using carbide light and had no mask. But I am sure that the 15m wide resurgence can be penetrated, given more time and appropriate gear.

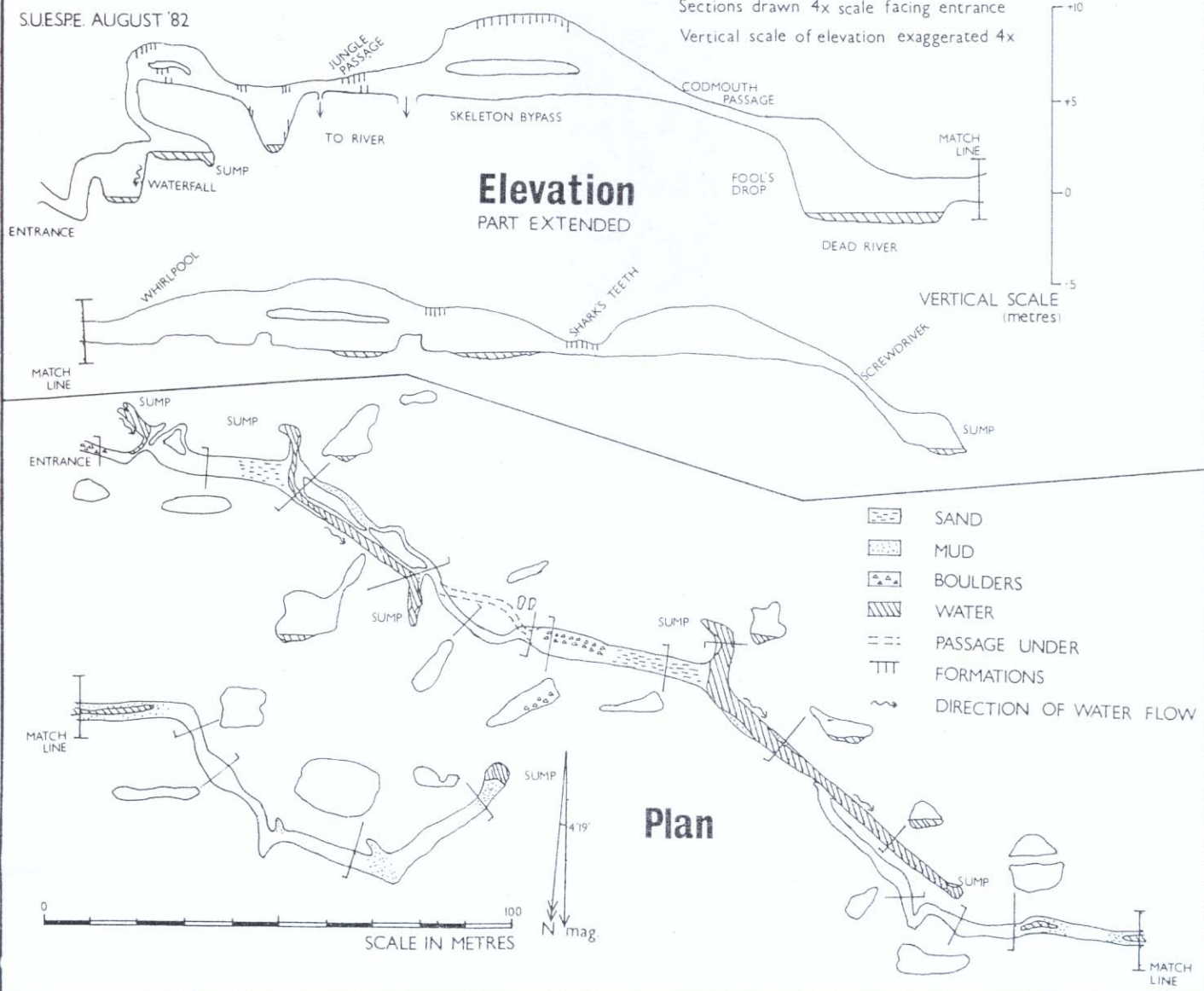
During the rest of the time at Tingo Maria we found a few small caves which were of great biological interest but were all soon choked with calcite that is deposited so rapidly in this region of high rainfall (3174mm annually).

The longest, La Cueva del Nido de Guacamayo (Macaw's Nest Cave) was also the foulest. It housed a large population of frugivorous bats which were responsible for numerous acrid deposits

LA CUEVA DE PACUY HUAGEN

DEPARTMENT OF SAN PEDRO DE CAJAS, PERU

SUESPE, AUGUST '82

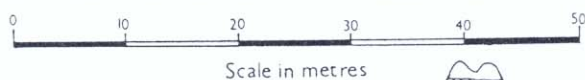


LA CUEVA DEL NIDO DE GUACAMAYO

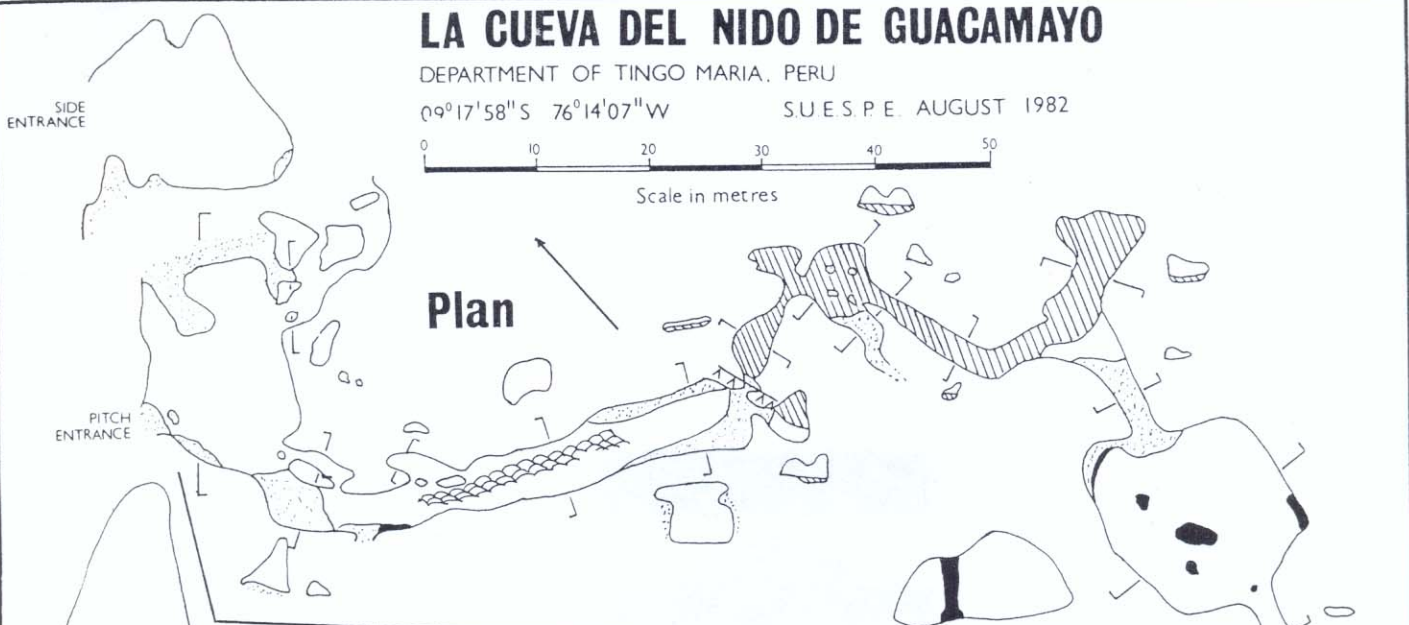
DEPARTMENT OF TINGO MARIA, PERU

09°17'58"S 76°14'07"W

S.U.E.S.P.E. AUGUST 1982

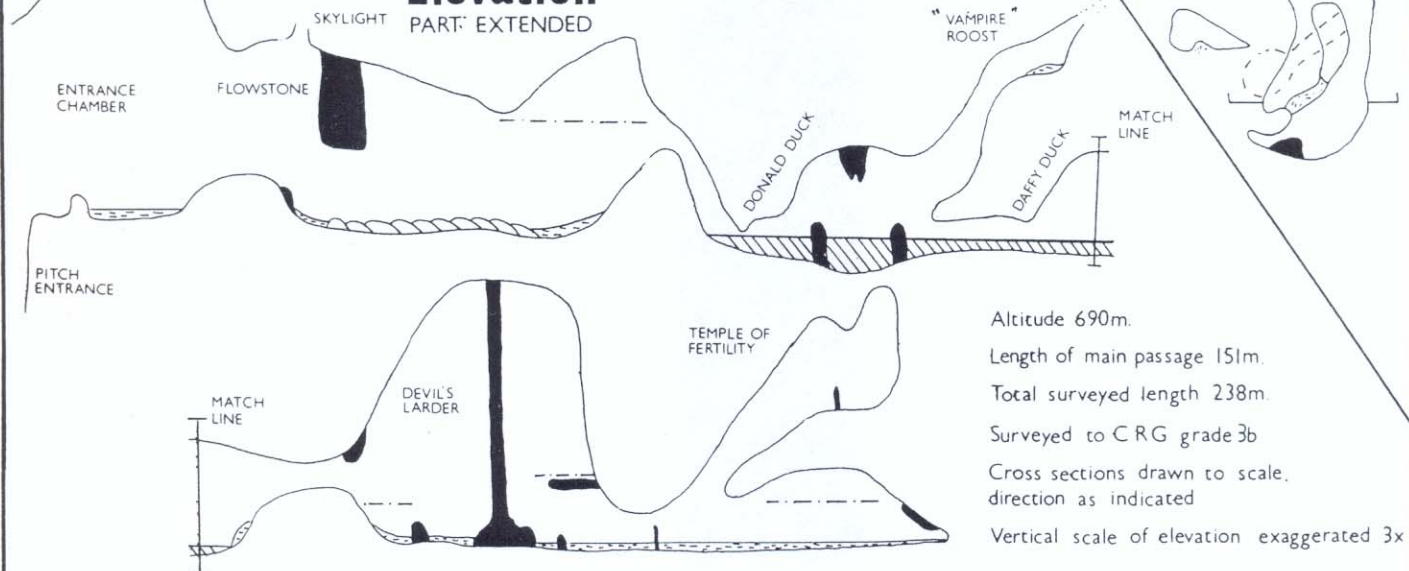


Plan



Elevation

PART: EXTENDED



Altitude 690m.

Length of main passage 151m.

Total surveyed length 238m.

Surveyed to C.R.G. grade 3b

Cross sections drawn to scale, direction as indicated

Vertical scale of elevation exaggerated 3x

strategically placed for the maximum soiling effect.

One of the most interesting sections of the cave was the chamber between the two ducks (Donald and Daffy Ducks). This, with its columns and stone-grey formations coming out of the still water was reminiscent of the crypt of a church but then as we moved around in the thigh deep water, the vista changed. Rafts of bat guano, buoyed up by methane, bubbled up to the surface and large vampire-like bats brushed passed us as we disturbed them. And we noticed the walls were covered in mosquitoes (*Aedes*) and their larvae wriggled around us in the water. We felt as if we were in a bat infested septic-tank!

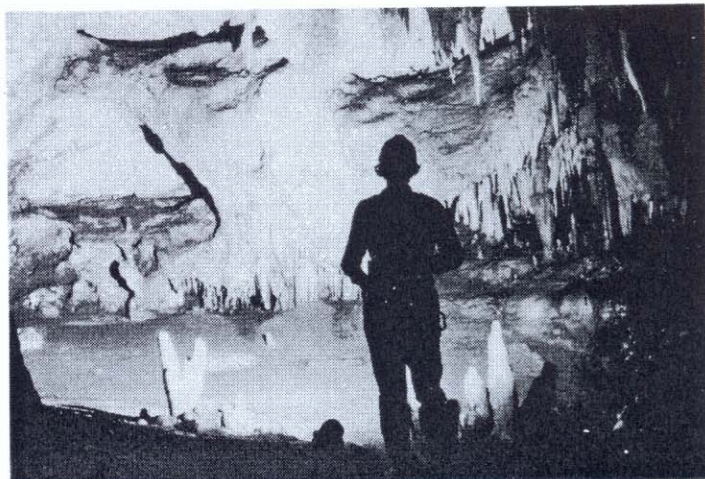
The bats do not go deeper than 'Daffy Duck' so the character of the cave changes

when you emerge from the luke-warm guano soup. The cave opens out into a sterile-looking, mud floored chamber with some very fine formations.

We left Tingo Maria having enjoyed our seven weeks in Peru and with lots of valuable data and specimens but slightly disappointed not to have discovered any major



Steve Gontarek surveying the palm seedlings in the oilbird cave of Boca del Lobo (Wolf's Mouth).
Jane Wilson



Steve Gontarek in Devil's Larder Chamber of la Cueva del Nido de Guacamayo.
Jane Wilson

ave systems. Back in Lima, between visits to various ministries to secure export permits for my specimens, I saw some maps of the karst in the Andes of northern Peru near Cajamarca. Rosell's review (1965) shows Peru with hundreds of caves and I regretted our not getting to the area in the north which was dotted with disappearing rivers.

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Thelma Clinton-Carter and Mr. Eric Gordon of Southampton University for so much help. We thank Roger Bowser and Lloyd Tunbridge of the 1972 Imperial College expedition and Sue Jordan for advice on caving in Peru. The many people and companies that supported us are acknowledged fully in the expedition report. This is available from J. M. Wilson, 81 Tennyson Road, Southampton SO2 1HG for £2. Members of the expedition were Alison Denham, Steve

Gontarek, Nicki Halliday, David Kay (who drew the surveys), Dermot Martin, Mandy Patton, Julian Payne, Ian Stronge, Tony White and Mary Wilson.

Jane M. Wilson

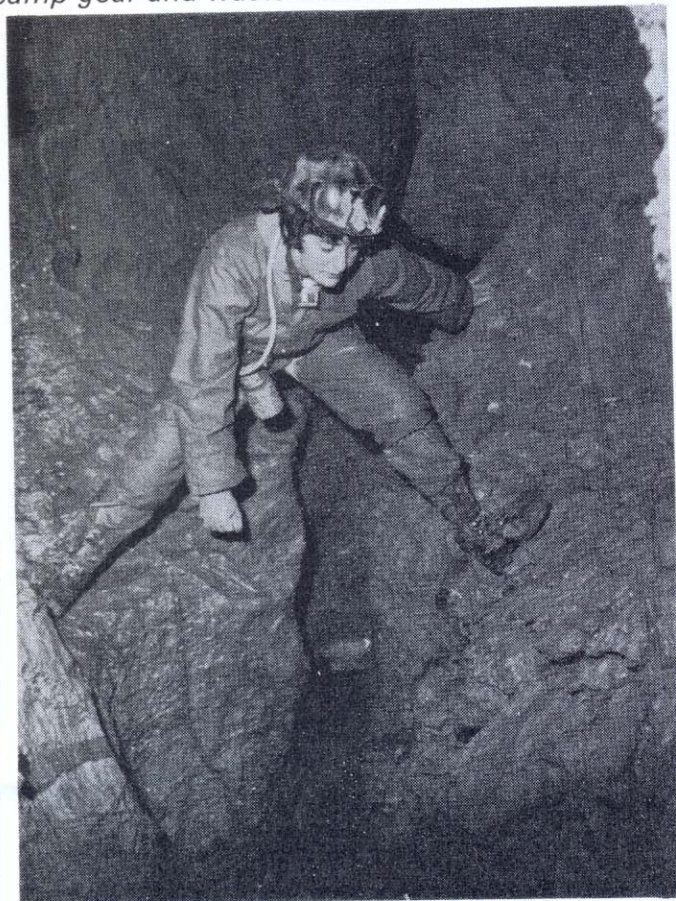
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Orville M. (1977) *Recherches spéléologiques au Pérou. Spelunca* (Paris) No. 3 pp98-102.
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TRESVISO '82 an expedition to the Picos de Europa in N. Spain

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The faint grey appearing over the lip of the rocky depression told us that dawn was on its way. It was time to give up our efforts at detackling the cave. Enough was enough and 56 – the name of the cave – had kept us engrossed all the previous day and the best part of the night. Twenty four heavy tackle bags sat 120 metres below at the bottom of the entrance shaft. The worst part was over, no more sweat and tears dragging the sods through all those tight rift traverses. No more slow, gear-laden prussiking. How on earth, or below earth, we managed to fill 24 bags I'll never know. The system was only just over 800 metres deep. Must have been all the camp gear and waste carbide that filled them up.



Typical rift traverse. This one a favourite known as Short Arses' Dilemma.

56 is the sort of cave system that you don't forget in a hurry. But once you have forgotten it a little, it seems more friendly. A year is just about long enough to persuade yourself that it really was pretty much OK and well worth returning to. Unfortunately it has always been well worth pushing further, but it's never been easy progress.

The entrance series sets the pace for the rest of the cave. The big entrance pitch wakes you up and gets the adrenalin going early, which is probably just as well since the cave continues with climbs, crawls and "interesting" traverses. The "Slasher" is a long section of tight rift with no footholds and no bottom. Just jam your body in between sharp walls and wriggle forwards. Easy without equipment, but with a couple of bags, falling and jamming down the rift, it can also be a slow and painful task.

Gradually it gets better. Very tight rift gives way to slightly less tight rifts and even 50 metres of walking just before the camp site. Solid floors are rare and the camp was placed on one such short section of delightfully flat mud. Looking towards the hammocks, with your backside on the lip of a 60 metre pitch, you could almost feel at home. On the way down we looked enviously at those hammocks knowing full well that it would be many long hours before we returned to their delicious warmth and comfort. We had a good idea of what was to come.

So many pitches and a dozen tight rifts in crumbling rock. Each pitch would be familiar on the return journey, but not quite familiar enough to put in order below the camp. There were plenty of places where you could catch the spray if you hung around too long and one passage where we raised great false hopes. We thought it had sumped, but found only the wet awkward crawl and a way on. We were disappointed, but not for long since beyond was Dripping Blood Passage the pleasantest section of the cave. Unheard of luxury with flat, dry sandy floor, beautiful stalactites and attractive chamber. The site for future camps, conveniently placed at a depth of 650 metres.

It was a good break, but our dreams of easy passage all the way to 1,500 metres, the caves potential, were soon dashed. We were back there in those loose rifts again. We were once again struggling for a good solid section of rock to put a bolt in and had as many as five belay points on some pitches. Rifts went to different places at different levels. We followed one down and gave up at 820 metres, with a tight rift below us and the distant roar of water. It's that distant roaring noise and the thought of cracking 1000 metres that will take me back again in '83 and as the memories fade I can almost feel a sense of affection for the place.

After the detackling some of the Lancaster University team moved across to the eastern massif, the other side of the Picos, to join the Spanish SEI cavers from Madrid in the cave Cembaviaya. A fine cave. No rifts at all and every inch in solid rock. Pitch after pitch led finally down to a 150 metres drop with water cascading down it. Like spiders we crawled across the walls, trying to keep out of the water. At the bottom we explored walking-sized passage, to further pitches and unfortunately a sump at 700 metres depth. Still, the area is wide open and hopefully we will be back there in the future, amongst dazzling white limestone peaks, exploring equally exciting cave systems. *Dave Checkley*