

# IMPERIAL COLLEGE CAVING CLUB



## NEWSLETTER

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is lost.

Holding the camera steady for the timed exposure is easy with a tripod, but what if you haven't dragged one through those squeezes? Holding a camera steady by hand for more than  $\frac{1}{30}$  th of a second isn't worth trying. Often it is possible to support the camera on a rock, against a wall, or with a lump of mud!

Cave photography can add an extra interest to many trips; it can even make the Mendips more exciting. You might not make 'Caves & Caving' but you'll have something to show your Mum apart from a muddy furry suit!

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"Take Nothing but Photographs  
Leave Nothing but Footprints"



(From *My Daddy was a Caver*)

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## CAVERNAS DEL PERÚ

by Clive Orrock

Geological maps of Peru agree on few points but all show the country to have enormous areas of karst amongst which must be some of the highest in the world. Much of the country is unmapped and the fact that Peru's deepest cave is just 407m deep is probably a reflection of lack of caving activity rather than any dearth of cave systems. At present there seems to be no active Peruvian cavers and few foreign expeditions have visited the country.

In 1965 G. Rosell produced a long inventory of the caves in Peru based largely on various reports of locals and travellers over the last 200 years (1). Most sites mentioned are of archaeological, rather than

speleological interest and it is difficult to distinguish rock shelters from true caves. However, many of the reports indicate that the caves were not explored very far because of the darkness or because of local fears that there is no oxygen in caves.

One of the major caves mentioned by Rosell is La Cueva de Huagapo, an impressive 20x10m cave entrance and a big local tourist attraction being situated near La Oroya. This was partially explored by a Peruvian team in 1969, and this appears to be the only Peruvian caving trip (2). The cave was finally explored to a sump in 1972 by a Polish expedition and in the same year by a team from Imperial College, who explored and surveyed it to a passage length of 1,698m (3). Behind Huagapo cave is a deep gorge, Quebrada de Ushto, in the floor of which is La Sima de Milpo, a narrow (usually partially blocked) rift entrance. The entrance series was entered by the Polish expedition and later bottomed by Imperial College at a depth of 407m which made it the deepest cave in South America - this record still standing today.

The area was next visited in 1976 by a French expedition who passed the final 2m sump in Huagapo and another immediately afterwards of 8m and thereby extended the cave to 1,780m (4). The water flowing out of Huagapo is thought to be that which sinks in Milpo 3km away, but the vertical distance separating the caves is only 7m so the possibility of extending the depth of Milpo or connecting the caves is slight, unless a fossil, high level connection were to be found.

The 1972 Imperial College expedition also reconnoitred the area around Tingo Maria. They entered La Cueva de las Lechusas, Peru's nearest approximation to a show cave, whose large entrance allows light and rich Peruvian tourists to penetrate about half the caves 250m length. The cave is also inhabited by the rare guácharo bird, and the resulting guano floor is alive with cockroaches, millipedes and other nasties.

An expedition from Southampton University in 1982 visited the area around Huagapo and then moved on the Tingo Maria (5). About 100m from La Cueva de las Lechusas they dived a resurgence estimated as flowing at about one cumec. The sump was about 2m long and led through a deep water chamber to an unpleasant duck with limited airspace. The cave was not pushed further than this point, about 20m from the entrance, but the considerable flow, coldness of the water and wide underwater passage surely indicates some good caving somewhere behind, but maybe only for cave divers. Locals think that the nearby Lechusas cave leads to a large underground river, and that this resurgence water comes from a large river sink several kilometers away, but all this is only speculation.

Fig 1. Sketch map of Perú.

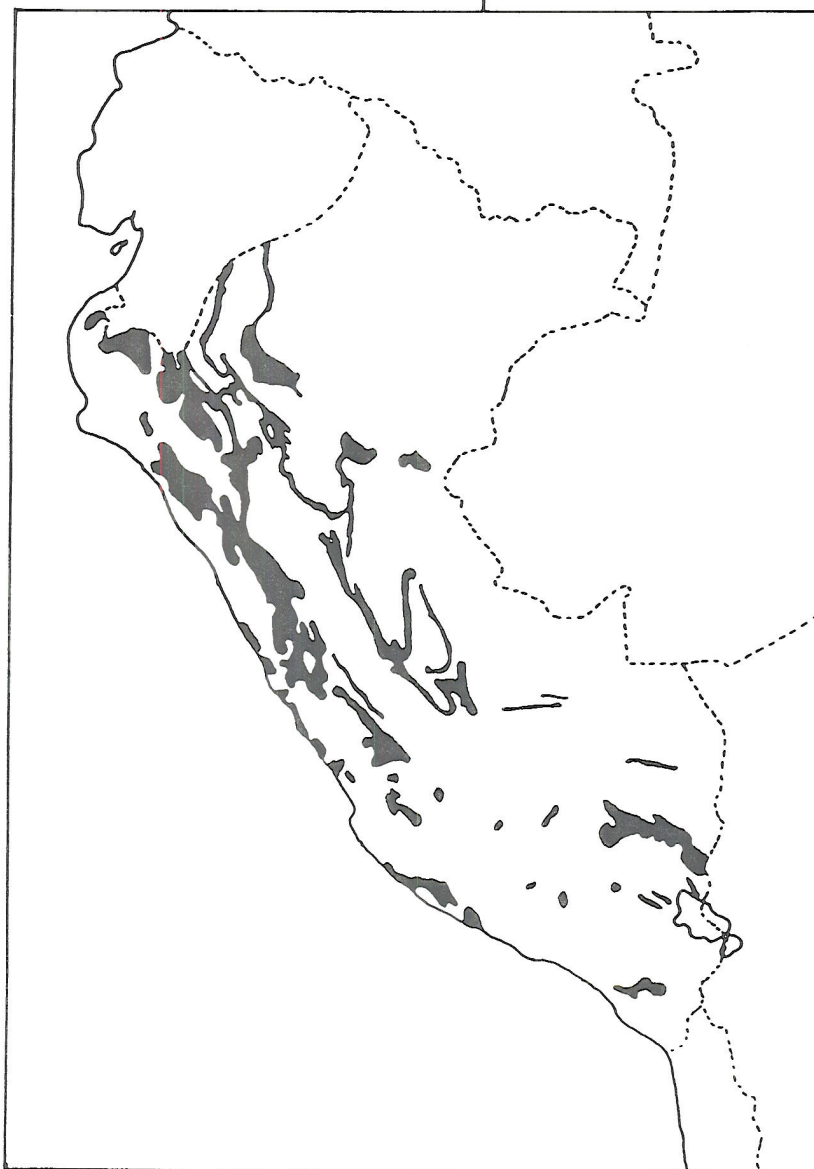
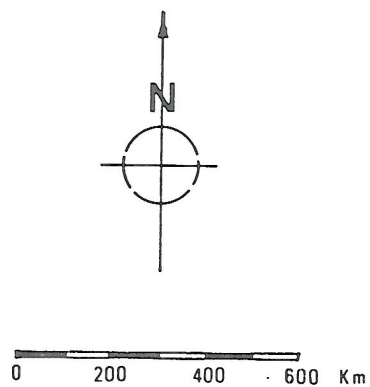


Fig 2.

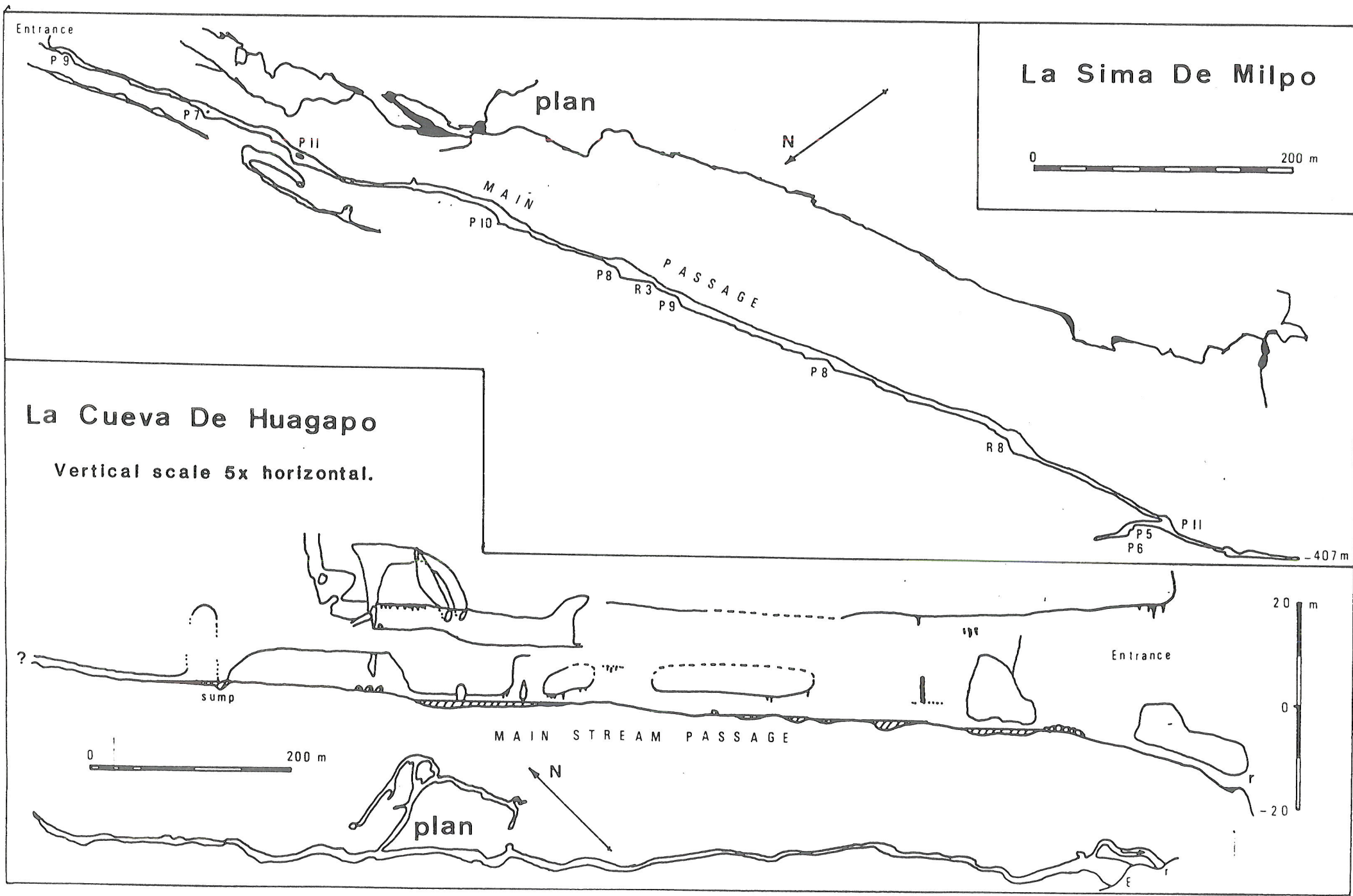
Approximate distribution  
of Peruvian karst.

From:

Atlas Historico, Geografico y  
de Paisajes Peruanos. (1969)

Instituto Nacional de  
Planificación, Lima, Perú.





Several other significant caves were explored in the area and there are probably many more awaiting discovery, but the heat and dense jungle do not make for easy exploration. In addition the caves are often inhabited by vampire bats and always contain guano, exploration being likened to wading thigh-deep through a bat infested septic tank!

Apart from an Italian expedition who found a few small caves near Nasca in 1979 (6) there have been no other significant expeditions to the country, and we have to return to Rosell's book for further information. As well as the caves of Huagapo and Lechusas, Rosell notes two other caves of particular interest:-

- (1) La Grunta de Huarari in the neighbourhood of Livitaca. The cave was visited by Antonio Raimondi, a famous Italian geographer, who in the nineteenth century explored much of Peru and noted many of its caves. He thought Huarari a beautiful work of nature; "the entrance", he said, "is fairly low and once inside large stalactites hang down forcing one to proceed bent double. The cave then widens out and divides into two branches. The gallery on the right appears to go on, but becomes narrow ...."
- (2) La Grunta de Uscopisco which lies about 50km NW of Cajamarca. This oilbird cave was briefly investigated by the explorer Humboldt, in 1802, when he penetrated through three chambers, but because of shortage of time left the continuing cave unexplored. The cave was next visited in 1868 by Raimondi. After the third chamber he continued down a short pitch, the bottom of which is crossed by a small stream. This chamber is about 40m wide by 10m high. Raimondi followed the stream past large boulders along a steeply inclined floor until it cascaded down a second pitch about 7-8m deep. He noted in his diary that the underground stream could be more than 5km long, but it is not recorded what made him suspect this.

Rosell mentions other caves in the Cajamarca region and Southampton University report being shown maps of the limestone uplands irrigated by numerous rivers sinking into the karst. Clearly this area has potential and definitely warrants a closer look. Thus it is to this area that an expedition is being mounted for two months in the coming summer. It is of course essentially a reconnaissance expedition, but it is to be hoped we'll get some good caving in as well.

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After writing the above I was lent a book by Tony Jarratt (B.E.C.) - "Cuevas Exoticas" published in 1983 by one Juan Ullastre of the Club Muntanyec Barcelones in Spain, who in 1973 appears to have visited the areas near La Oroya, Tingo Maria and Cajamarca when he explored the river cave of Uscopisco. The text is in Spanish and I do not as yet know the exact extent of his explorations but it does appear that the Uscopisco cave is quite interesting. Although this particular cave is now partially explored the area as a whole is still largely untouched and promising.

Clive Orrock.

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# "IT LOOKS A BIT DESPERATE"

by Harry Lock

The following is a short guide for the bewildered fresher to some of the words and phrases used by I.C.C.C. cavers, and it explains some of their hidden meanings.

Before any caving begins, consultation of the relevant guidebook may describe a particular section of passage as:

having "a fair degree of exposure" = 400' drop if you miss your footing  
being "rather steep" = an overhang  
or as "interesting" = scary

If a stream passage is described as "sporting", then you should really beware (= only a lunatic with a life-jacket would attempt this) and a "sporting wet chimney" = you will drown.