

Matienzo Caves Project

Planning meeting prior to Summer 2014 Expedition Dalesbridge Saturday 7 June 2014

Notes of Meeting

Part I - Expedition

1. **Welcome** - Phil welcomed everyone to the meeting and JJ checked all was ok.

About 20 people were present.

Apologies from: Dan Hibbert; Nigel Dibben; Paul Dold; Simon Cornhill; Diane Arthurs; Jen and Brendan Sloan; Paul Fretwell.

2. **Easter Expedition** – Juan was pleased with the way the new arrangements worked at Easter.

Phil outlined the change in the expedition area but explained that we had good contact with the two groups (Colindres and ??) who now have all of Voto and Riotuerto respectively. They are happy for us to continue our work in the caves we have already started to explore. For new sites we will need to contact them. Phil Goodwin arranged to meet the G E Pistruellos group who have Riotuerto. They are small in number and not very experienced in pushing and surveying and were happy with us continuing our work in our old area – it seems likely they may ask us to help them or come with us to share knowledge and experiences.

Phil outlined some of the main work that had been carried out that is detailed in the Easter report on the website. The main activity had been digging out 3916 (back entrance (we hope) to Vaca) over 10 trips, looking at new and known sites in our new area, of particular note being Riocueva a 3k system that was partly surveyed by Juan and Pedro (750+m) and looks likely to have prospect for new passage; Cueva Lolo with 300m to a sump at the end that looks likely to be short and shallow. The other main discovery was in Llueva with over 500m of good high level passage found via a climb near the entrance to the Big Bang Burger Bar by Dan and Chris Hibberts and Bob Toogood – prospects for more passage exists with a passage seen on the far side of a pitch. Other key sites needing work in the summer were Washing Machine hole (needs two thin people to push) and Duck Pond Dig – where the dig went to some passage and chambers with the way on likely to be through a big boulder choke. There was no draught at Easter so with many possible ways through it was left to the summer when hopefully a good draught will indicate the best option.

3. **Expedition Equipment officer's report**

Steve – the expedition had sufficient rope with Dan donating 120m of rope so none needed to be purchased this year. Juan thanked Dan for

the donation. There are sufficient hangers and bolts.

In particular:

- a. 40 hangers and maillons
- b. 61 loose maillons
- c. 41 8mm hangers
- d. 65 para bolts and wedges

Jim Lister has agreed to look after the diving gear. The diving gear was examined and the very old small bottles that seemed to originate from fire service were deemed unsafe and will be scrapped. Three good bottles were brought back for testing. (Note Phil has two 7l cylinders in Matienzo that can be used as needed). The compressor was also brought back and will be overhauled by Jim and this will mean it will be available for divers to use and avoid them having to bring their own out in future. A Dive log will be introduced for the summer.

The main need for new gear is ladders (3 were brought back for salvage) and Steve will arrange a ladder making week-end to build back stocks.

Harry asked about belays – there seems to be sufficient but Steve will arrange to make some more as needed.

Three Bosch laser rangefinders were purchased and these are available for use but, as the battery compartment is not waterproof, tape has been applied. You may need to check and replace the tape prior to a trip.

MUSC asked about tape slings, as there seemed to be only a few. Steve agreed to look at this and purchase some for the summer.

4. Expedition Treasurer's report

Susie has posted the Easter account details on the Google Group and a set of accounts for the Matienzo Caves Project (i.e. including the expedition) has also now been posted.

The fee arrangements were explained with a maximum of £35 for over 25yr olds and £25 for under 25 year olds – there is no reduction for OAPs etc. But this is offset by the fees now lasting for the year so if you make more than one trip only one fee is due. The period will run for the full calendar year, i.e. January to end of December. The daily rate is still in force (£3.50 per day) for those on short trips of less than 10 days

These fees and also camping fees are now payable by bank transfer on-line (contact Susie for details) – it is still possible to pay in Euros in Matienzo if preferred.

Susie explained she has updated the file with emergency contact details etc. This will be in the bar and, if details have changed, members were asked to update their record when out in Matienzo.

Lank asked about the camping fees paid to Pablo - they seemed low.

Susie explained there were only 3 camping this Easter – seems many are put off by the normal wet weather, but this year the weather was good for the campers with almost no rain at all!

Harry asked about the cost of ladders and how they would be paid for. It was explained that the total of money in the Matienzo Caves Project was available for equipment as needed including ladders, replacement computers (when needed) and some has been allocated for Nicola 3s (up to a £1000) for three ends. However, with the delay in these being

produced we may go down other routes. For example, Ron Taylor is working on a design that may be a good option. For summer 2014 three "molephones" on loan from Bob Mackin will be out in Matienzo for our use. Susie will post accounts after the Summer Expedition.

5. People planning to go in the summer and when (website etc). A spreadsheet is on the Google group and people going in the summer were asked to put their names on it or, if having problems, send details to Phil or Juan who will enter the details. If anybody is worried about putting on their full names, it was suggested to use a "shorthand" – in any event to let Susie know when you are coming so that she is aware and will share this information with Phil. The main expedition dates are the last week in July and the first two in August – but due to limitations on holidays some work will be carried out either side of this.

6. Primary arrangements and objectives for summer and who will take on these? The following possible objectives were looked at and people/groups identified who will take the lead in working on them this summer. Some were postponed; can't do all this year; need to be focused.

- a. Torca la Vaca (2889) and back door dig 3916 – Paul Dold will organise with Juan/Phil.
- b. Cueva de Carcavuez (81) re-survey and push – Footleg with help from Steve and Ali.
- c. Route into Cueva Hoyuca (107) via Carcavuez – look to see if easy route is possible – Footleg (in liaison with Terry).
- d. Torca Mostajo – MUSC continue from last year's work.
- e. Cueva Vallina II – push (tight section needs work) – Ali and Phil.
- f. Duck Pond Dig (3215) – John Southworth.
- g. Washing Machine Hole (3420) (needs small people) – Phil Parker
- h. Simas del Picón - MUSC continue from last year's work.
- i. Torca de Peña Encaramada (3380) to Wild Mare Cave – try to connect – postpone – may look at with Pete E and Ali in Oct?
- j. Cueva Hoyuca (107) via Giant Panda Entrance (2691) to push – Si & Di?
- k. Cueva Llueva (114) – push new passages found at Easter – Dan and Chris but probably not in summer.
- l. Cubio de la Reñada (48) – resurvey. Also push far end (Reñada III) – resurvey – Carolina and Phil. Far end likely to be left either for another year or if MUSC or DCC at loose end (leads dry up) could divert to here. Probably unlikely in 2014.
- m. Sumidero de Cobadal (site 1930) – push and blast choke – Phil (needs work - either this summer or a priority for 2015)
- n. Riocueva (4042) / Torca de los Caños – survey and push – Juan and James.
- o. Cueva de Fresnedo 2 – push – James if he can get a group to help – Tom and DCC?
- p. Fuente Aguanaz – push – postpone to 2015.

- q. Torca del Regaton (0892) – far end check out dive sites and push - postpone to Easter 2015.
- r. Torca de Lastrilla (0427) – open up and drop new pitches – Steve and Phil (only one trip is needed, unless it then goes!)
- s. Cueva de Lolo (3991) – dive (likely to be short) – depends on diver availability.
- t. Continue to explore caves in new area to north and northwest – all - there are a number of known old Spanish sites still to be located and looked at. Lank asked about their location as on the web no grid reference is given apart from the ones we have found. We have the journals for the sites and some idea of the locations, but it is clear that other groups are not as free with data as the Matienzo Caves Project is.
- u. Etc etc - two more sites were suggested for this summer – Where the Fox Hat which, although outside our area in Voto, is available as it is one of our existing caves and Regato which was previously only partly in our area and will be worth a better look.

7. Conferences and papers to give as we have two conferences and both are on same week-end!

- a. **BCRA** – need person or persons to present a paper and help to produce it with the help of Phil and Juan – will decide depending on what is found in the summer – but a good option would be MUSC and an input from Di and Si re the Maze cave
- b. **Cantabrian Conference on caves in Alto Ason** – paper to be presented on South Vega and Vallina area – Phil will write with input of material from Juan and translation via Peter or Carol – a paper in joint names will be presented and published.

Part II – Matienzo Caves Project

8. Surveying course(s): Practical cave surveying, data processing, drawing up. Offers to organise?

It was explained that the attempt to set one up prior to Easter failed due to lack of attendees. It was agreed the best option now was to run one during the summer expedition. Carolina agreed to be lead organiser on this if others would give the technical input. This was agreed and to “kill two birds with one stone” the work would be done in Reñada as this needs re-surveying and access is easy if a little muddy. Juan volunteered to help.

9. Structure of the Matienzo Caves Project

Juan read out the paper reproduced at Annex I below.

The issue of having only one signature was raised by JS. It was pointed out by Juan that having two does not solve the issue if, as often happens, some blank cheques are signed for the second person

to use. Most transactions were cash transactions. Lank said it was wrong to suggest there was something wrong going on. Phil said that the key thing was that all spending was accounted for and the combined accounts that have and will be produced show all income and expenditure.

There followed a general discussion with Bill Sherrington pointing out that the Matienzo Caves Project was like an enterprise and allowed the expedition to work in a way that he much appreciated. Lank likened the Matienzo Caves Project to a Charity in the way it was run. And there was general support for the work Juan had and is doing with Jim Davis thanking Juan for this.

The thread on the Google Group was briefly discussed but it was generally agreed we now need to move on as agreed above.

10. AOB

Andy Quin reported on the PhD project that had been going on at Cueva de Asiul. This had produced the best paleo climate stal data in Europe for the past 14k yrs and had put Matienzo “on the map”. A new PhD project will start this year with the aim of finding a stal that can take the climate record back some 40-50k yrs.

*Phil & Hilary Papard
12/6/2014*

Annex I

Matienzo Caves Project

I'll just be re-iterating what is on the web site in a slightly different way and addressing some of the misunderstandings that have cropped up in recent weeks.

What has gone on in Matienzo and back in Britain has always been a project in all but name for decades. The project parts have always been the expeditions, the archives and, for the last 20 or so years, the web site. The project finances have always been part of this and they cover all aspects of the Project. Income (then and now) comes mainly from cavers. They donate to the Project (not just the expedition) so that tackle, archive materials, IT equipment, etc can be bought and used for the benefit of Matienzo speleology – again, not just the expedition. Matienzo cavers also provide expertise: exploring caves, producing surveys, photos etc. They can do this on the permit which allows original exploration, digging, etc and they have access to all the paper and digital archives including the web site and the private logbook search.

Obviously, the project would stop if cavers weren't involved in all aspects – cavers' contributions, advice and suggestions are vital.

Such a large project – now over 4000 sites with hundreds of people over the years - requires administration.

Up to the end of 2013 the Matienzo Caves Project was administered almost totally by me: expedition organisation, tackle, finances, website (involving editing photos, videos, writing

descriptions, producing the final version of nearly all the surveys, the online maps, etc), with help from Penny collecting money from cavers. Obviously, at expedition time, a number of cave leaders suggested and organised trips and digs, but the admin side was virtually a one-man effort. Everyone was quite content to let me get on with it – and I was happy with this, if occasionally over-worked!

Over the last few years, cavers have begun to take on more responsibility to improve the output from the Project. I can highlight Ali Neill for caves like Espada and Vallina, Pete Smith for Risco and Footleg for the 4 Valleys System resurvey. These people and others have grasped a system, coordinated the survey and resurveying, and drawn up the final version, producing a pdf for the web site, conference talks, Matienzo conference stand, etc. Science aspects have also grown. Two recent examples are the paleo-climate studies being carried out in Cueva Asiul by Lancaster University and the *Matienzo Karst Entomology Project*, run by Tom Thomson.

Over recent years, it became clear to me that, as the Project grew, I had to give something up. I retired from coordinating / running the expeditions after Easter 2013, giving a year's notice. I said at the time that I had no intention of letting the whole setup founder.

The subsequent meetings proved interesting, as the only people who came forward to carry out substantial jobs were Phil, Steve and Sue. (This is not to say that help offered from other volunteers is not important. Jim Lister has taken up the Diving Coordinator role (including fettling the compressor); my son-in-law has written useful help sheets for *Data Entry and Processing*.)

It became apparent quite quickly that, despite various explanatory documents I'd written (or perhaps because of?), nobody wanted to take on oversight of the whole project or take on the considerable role of web site manager (which involves an intimate knowledge of the Matienzo caves to integrate new information with old, after checking) and the paper and computer archives which, in addition, requires physical storage. The later meetings (quite rightly) concentrated on expedition objectives.

I then produced a document detailing what had been going on for years but now calling it the "Matienzo Caves Project" and showing the new responsibilities. This was published online having been tweaked then agreed by Pete Smith, Phil, Sue and Steve – and this is where we are today.

So, for somebody to say that I'd recently created a new position and then made myself treasurer of it is complete nonsense!

What has changed?

1. Instead of just me organising / coordinating / running the whole project, there are now three people who have this responsibility: Phil (Expedition Coordinator), Pete (Spanish liaison) and me. (As part of this, Phil is giving a talk at a Spanish caving conference about the Matienzo caves to the south. In the past it might have been me or Pete.)
2. Phil organises / coordinates / runs the expeditions, from asking for the Permit through to writing the required expedition reports (at least for the web site, Cultura and Ghar Parau with, possibly, others for Speleology, Descent, Hidden Earth, etc). He chairs meetings to agree expedition objectives. During the expedition, he makes

suggestions to cavers and groups, using the list of objectives in the first instance. He ensures that the log book is written up and photos and videos are uploaded in the “office” and systematically renamed. He supervises survey data entry and conversion to Survex, ensuring that the surveyors have the printouts for them to draw up the cave. He checks new GPS coordinates including altitudes by entering sites on the computer map and analyses the logbook entries to facilitate report writing.

3. I ensure that Phil has the IT and archive resources to carry out the smooth running of the expedition. Part of this involves putting software onto 2 laptops along with a subset of the computer archives, eg survey data and local web site. This is all updated just before a new expedition. Data collected during an expedition (photos, surveys, etc) is uploaded by me back to the main Matienzo desktop machine to work on.
4. Sue is now Expeditions Treasurer. This involves collecting money from Matienzo cavers, banking it as necessary, keeping records of all income and expenditure transactions and, after each expedition, producing a sheet showing monies received and spent, with cash in hand and money at the bank.
5. Steve is now Expedition Tackle Master. This involves buying caving tackle and accepting tackle donations, ensuring proper labelling and cleaning, supervising a “tackle out and in” system and carrying out a tackle audit at the end of each expedition. It also involves setting up the tackle store at the beginning of each expedition with tackle kept more permanently elsewhere, ensuring that the equipment is properly cleaned after each expedition then putting all the equipment back into permanent storage.

What hasn't changed?

Nothing else has altered, although some working practices have changed.

1. For example, I now use Phil's expedition logbook analysis sheets to help update the card index and computer database which in turn allows me to systematically update the web site descriptions and a number of other web site resources.
2. Then there is the goodwill from people who oil the wheels of the expedition and project. Just to mention a few: Steve often arranges accommodation for groups staying at La Taberna; Phil's Snappers and organising molephones; our downstairs space storing personal caving gear for a dozen people – bringing in income for the Project; Dan donating large amounts of rope; others bringing digging equipment; Footleg writing the Google Maps facility for the web site; Nigel paying for the matienzo.org.uk domain; Carolina translating documents; Pete Smith housing the caving tackle outside of main expedition times; many cavers risking expensive camera gear underground, etc, etc.
3. All the tackle and equipment bought or donated belongs to the Matienzo Caves Project. Individual expeditions will see the need for new rope, ladders, maillons, etc and buy them using donations, but the gear doesn't belong to any one expedition – items are a whole-Project resource.

4. Another example of what hasn't altered is the Project finances. Expedition income and expenditure has always been part of the overall Project finances administered by me. Sue administers the expedition cash and bank account then produces accounts for the expedition which are then incorporated into the Project accounts. (At Easter, Sue also produced a more user-friendly sheet outlining income and expenditure for the whole Project). Everything is on the web site for people to look at.
5. What also hasn't changed is the willingness of the administrators - now Phil, Pete and me for the Project, with Sue and Steve in the Expeditions - to run the Project to benefit Matienzo speleology and to listen to advice and suggestions. (We will, of course, also continue to vigorously refute any ill-informed or offensive comments made in public.)

Which obviously leads straight into "questions".

Juan Corrin
7/6/2014