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An article by Jesus Aja Barquin in the Cantabrian newspaper 'Diario de Montagnes', dated 10th September 1981

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English potholers and scientists have just proven that Matienzo, in the south east of our region, is an area riddled with caves and potholes. Three hundred and thirteen caves is the outcome achieved by this group of experts after pains-taking studies of the zone. One of these caves stands out; it is over 17km in length and comes out in Riano.

As a result of this scientific labour, the English team (which has been coming to work in Matienzo for several years) has published an extensive volume entirely dedicated to the topography of the Matienzo area, a fact which highlights the geological importance of the finds. One need look no further than the 17km cave discovered during the recent studies, which turns out to be the third longest in our region.

The work of the English scientists is clearly beneficial to our region which can only stand back and observe how a group of foreigners bring the natural beauty of our land to the public's attention.

#### A GROUP OF SPELEOLOGISTS STUDY THE MATIENZO REGION

Just as in previous years, during the present summer about 50 English potholers have again chosen Matienzo as a centre of operations for their investigations of caves and potholes. Their work over several years in this area is beginning to bear fruit and it is now possible to speak of a series of positive results with regard to our knowledge of our underground world.

We must point out straight away that their investigations spring from an initial study carried out by the party of cavers from the 'Seminario Santuola' from Santander who, in 1966, published, under the title 'La depresion cerrada de Matienzo', a thorough account of more than 70 caves and potholes. It is however in recent years, with the arrival of the English potholers, that these operations have begun to pay real dividends culminating at the present moment with the publication titled

'Matienzo', published by the British Cave Research Association, which contains a full study of no less than 313 caves and potholes of this district - a figure we must consider to be of genuine importance. The aforementioned study is divided into four chapters: 'Caves and Speleology', 'Geomorphology', 'Prehistoric Remains' and 'Underground Matienzo'.

Among this summers investigations we must give special mention to those carried out in the 'Uzueka' cave with its dual access via Riano and Llueva which link (1), giving a total of 17km of galleries and passages, all thoroughly surveyed. It turns out to be the third longest in the region. We must also mention the discovery of the Coteron pothole with 200m depth and 4km of galleries, inside which appears an ample supply of water which, from its geographical location, is reckoned to be connected with the river Clarin whose source at the foot of Mount Limon is nearby.

As you can see, all of these discoveries seem on the face of it to have sufficient importance for the knowledge of our past, for the water resources of the region, that we think they should be deserving of greater attention from bodies of experts.

The English potholers do not only limit themselves to the discovery of caves and potholes, they also have a strong community awareness and their integration with the villagers is total. In the midst of this climate of good relations, a football match was organised on the field of 'La Secada' between the youngsters of the village and an English team. The final score was 13-7 to the local side despite the fact that the foreigners put on a good display during the first half which ended with a six goal draw. The magnificent performance by local player Jesus Gonzalez (on military service at Ramales) stands out. He scored 8 out of the 13 goals scored by the home side.

(1. The link at present is proven only by dye testing and smoke. JSC.)

Editorial comment by 'J.E.P.' footnoting the previous article

Genuine Don Quixotes

Our disease seems to be serious and difficult to avoid. The English, the English scientists, have got up to their old tricks again to teach us all a lesson. Matienzo - which belongs to our region by the way - is written about nowadays in a foreign language thanks to its natural features. There exist near Ramales, at Matienzo, 313 caves and potholes and we know nothing of even half of them.

As always we are perpetrators of the work of Cervantes. We are true Don Quixotes, some say it openly and others under their breath. One grows tired of repeating a thousand times that we do not know what we have and that we do not look after what is ours. From the era of the brain-drain (where have Spanish science and scientists been for so many - too many - years?) we have passed into an era where there exists a total disregard, an incredible lethargy concerning anything belonging to us. The foreigners, once again, give us a lesson and teach us the 'A B C' of our idiosyncrasy.

At Matienzo nobody can deny that there is culture enough to spare. There exist caves and potholes which properly studied, could serve to enrich our history and even enhance the beauty of Cantabria. But it had to be the foreigners who discovered the secret. T

They, without shouting about it, on the quiet, have concocted a whole volume on this part of our region, on Matiebzo and its environs.

Three hundred and thirteen caves and potholes are to blame. Three hundred and thirteen discoveries which, however you look at it, were most likely made by inhabitants of our region. But nobody seemed to remember that such beauty, such a find, was ours, belonged to our geography and as such should have been shouted about from the hilltops.

The group of potholers and English scientists who come and stay in Matienzo year after year know full well what they have found there. However much it may grieve us, they have once again shown us to be genuine Don Quixotes.

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(Also published on the same page where 2 surface photographs and one underground scene as well as a photograph of the 'offending' volume, BCRA Transactions 8.2.)