

[Toni's 18th July comments reply] ----- Go get it yourself. Paranoia has set in. Jenny never goes to 1515 without toilet paper in her pocket!  
LOHHAKWCL (AAMEF)

A few days ago --- 19th July.

Skull Cave Tony + Jenny.

Skull cave is brilliant and needs pushing, but the squeeze over the ~~last~~ <sup>second(?)</sup> pitch is tight, painful and horrid. We want persuade many sane people to go pushing down there 'til the squeeze is enlarged abit.

Skull cave is 'going' ~~is~~ (potentially) i.e. bits need looking at in at least 4 places:

- i) The rift off to the right at the end of the last pitch. Through a squeeze downwards, then another slight squeeze horizontally. The rift below is drafting wonderfully, but is too tight - needs hammering
- ii) ~~Before~~ Near the head of the last pitch there is another pitch, undescended and slightly to the right. Needs looking at
- iii) There is a 'big space' on the right hand wall of the second pitch which could be investigated
- iv) One other pitch (or latter half of a pitch) is undescended - can't remember quite where.

Jenny

21st July. David Joan Jenny  
Trip to dye trace La Jayada to Botany Bay via 2 dips of melt water.

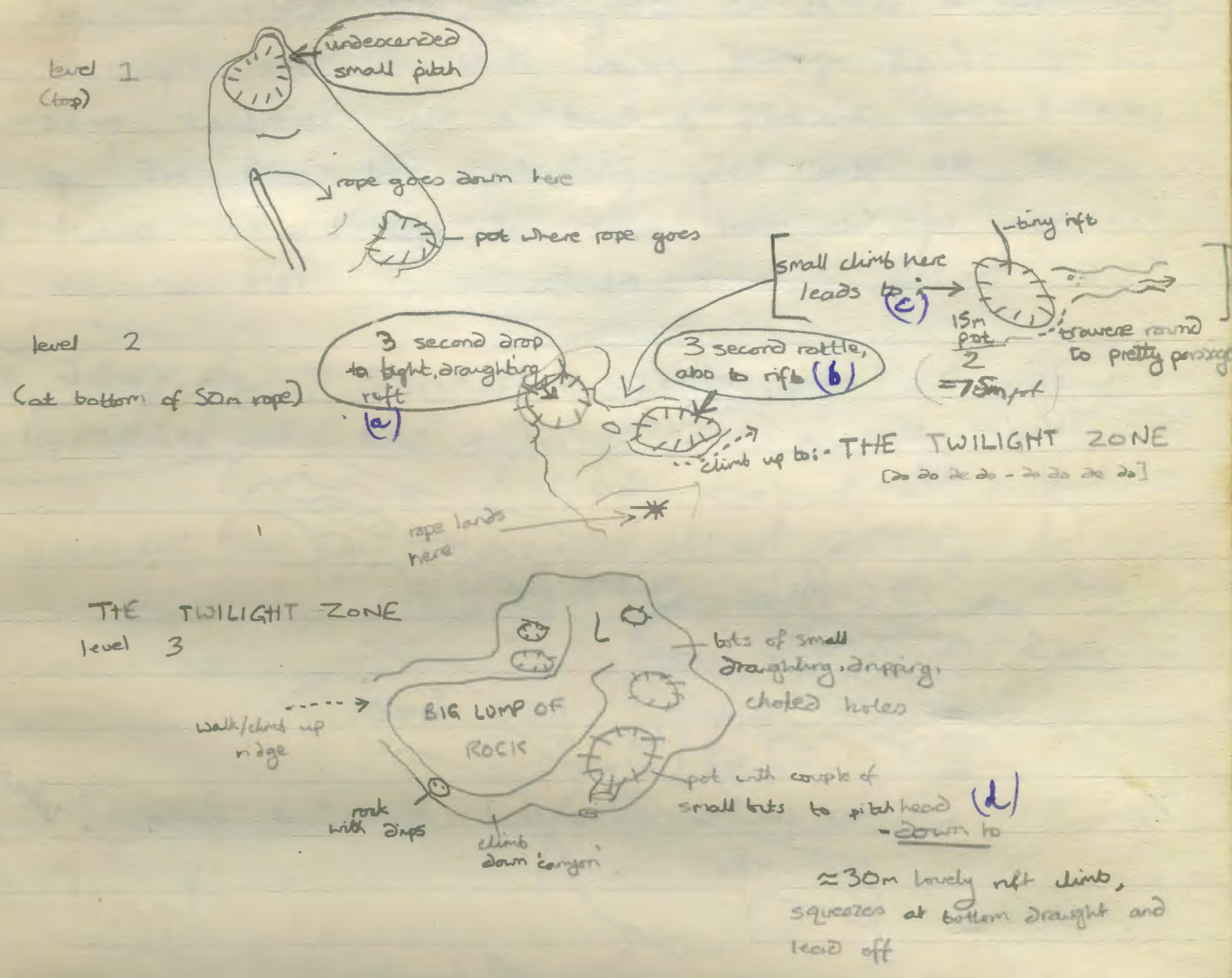
It was in the year '91 that we set out. On the great El Xita

Crows Nest we saw a cavern vast and measureless to man across pleasant mountain meadows + limpid pool. So did we sally forth for that great yawning Maw, 'twere bigger even than the maw of Moby Dick and the mountain it was in as white as the flesh of Moby Dick. We traveled much ~~ag~~ across the seas of limestone, through treacherous ~~parties~~ southern parts where icebergs lay in wait. After some time we hove into sight and there laid (blue) waste<sup>ice</sup> before us, a great hole of hell-like proportions and ~~with~~ ~~in~~ within its very bowels the frozen wastes of Arctic horror, broke only by a dusting of rocks, and a young rebaric lain solid in its belly. Fearful of what monster this be ~~they~~<sup>we</sup> sling a line from one of its teeth and went down to its icy tongue. The monster did not wake, nor did it dribble and ~~they~~<sup>so, we</sup> were unable to leave the precious golden cargo<sup>of flowers</sup> to be washed down into the bowels of the earth. So, sad but unbowed ~~they~~<sup>we</sup> did allow ~~themselves~~ a little of the stores and set off to traverse the mountain round 'til the usual channel hove into view. The Master navigator Jerry brought the crew safely home and celebrations were had. 'Twas sad that the expedition failed though all enjoyed the trip, and brought many trails of fabulous sights and ~~it~~. Smells of the mountain flowers and herbs.

P.S. It's been decided that Ganin is cute, so I tried giving him some flowers.

Skull Grade 1 Survey (pardon writing, can't use thumb)

[from below tight pitch head]



An excellent trip in this really wacky cave. After popping through the tight pitch head the character of the cave changes completely, lots of little pots, limbs & passages leading off. While I went down the original pitch (a) then deripped it, Tony investigated just about all the pots & passages in the chamber, then rigged down (b). None of these went, so we rigged the pitch head (d). As shown on Tony's sketch, this is a fantastic rift, easily freeclimbable both ways. This ends on a boulder floor, with an unlikely Yorkshire style narrow stream passage leading along rift & down. Tony hammered his way through, followed the passage for 15 ft to the sound of big drips beyond a few spikes that need hammering, then had to turn round & hammer his way back out. A minor version of the efl experience last year apparently. Fortunately all the projections

cont. →

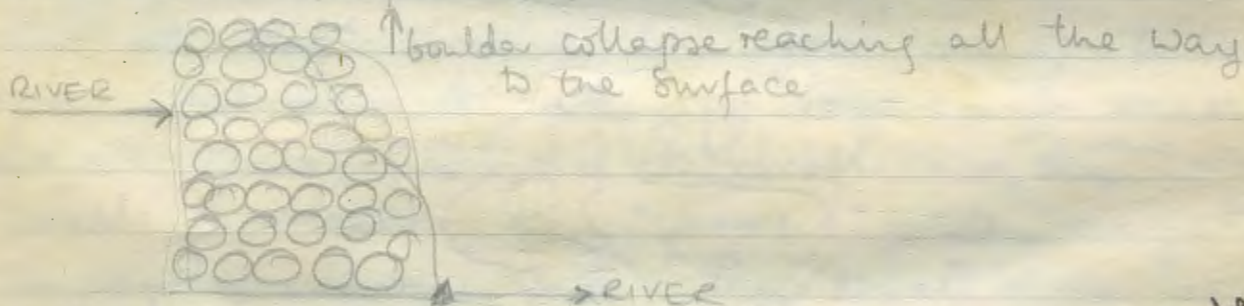
21 July 1991

We have had a thought:

Consider a situation like Just Awesome:



Imagine if the roof collapsed because it was weak due to a fault which (a) caused the chamber and (b) reaches to the surface. Result:



Does this fit the facts observed around Egbert? where's Egbert?

David

Monday 8am.

No sign of the campers due out last night. The plan

- 1) David & Tony to head down gop
- 2) Dave & Richard to follow with emergency medical kit.
- 3) Rest to stand by in a state of readiness

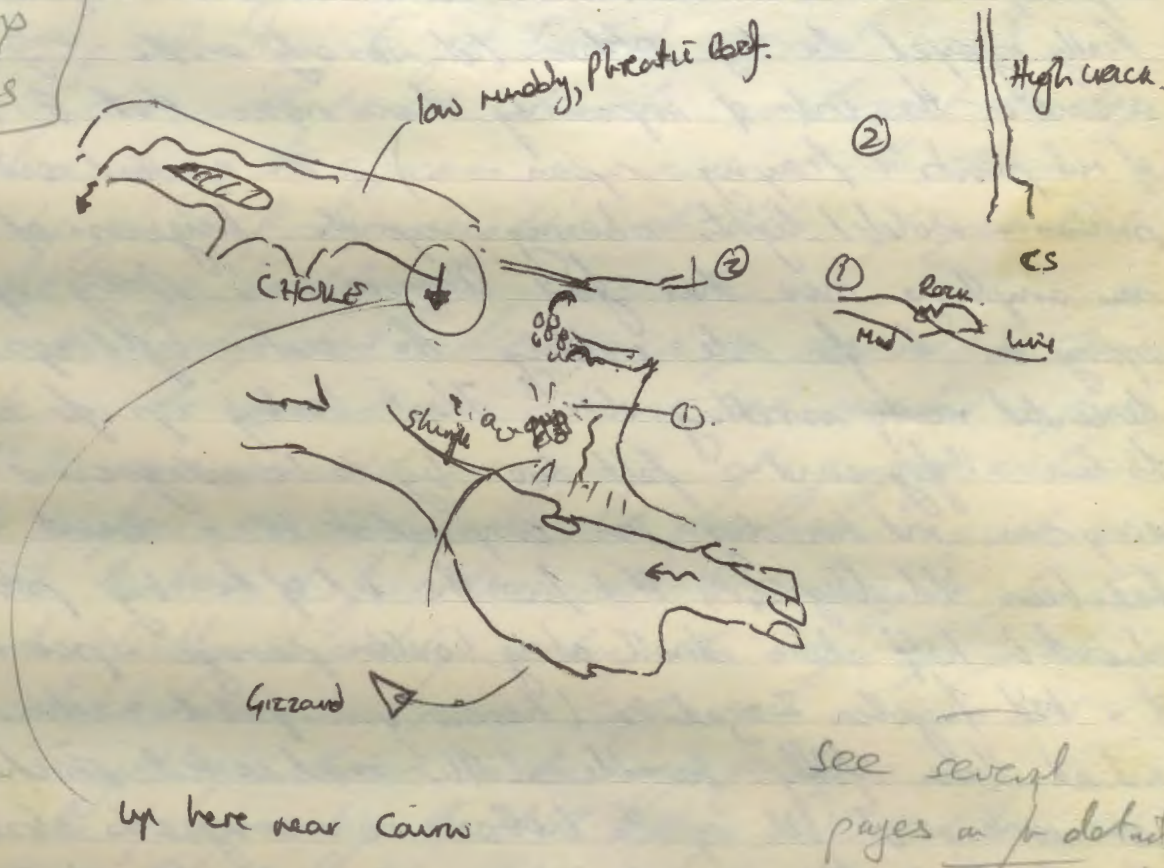
cont...

are small & easily hammered. On the way out I noticed the climb (c) leading to a 7-8 m pit, 5 m wide. We looked the rope down, pulled out some boulders at the bottom but found only a 4 in wide rift taking a stream (few second rattle). Climbing across the top of the pit led to a brilliantly promising passage (with draft). This appeared not to go, but should be checked with a climb up perhaps. Neither of us had watches so we departed. The pitch head is tight.

22nd July

Aha! 10 year after my first trip I am here again!  
Woke up yesterday morning in Tufnell Park, N19, arrived  
at Ario 12 hours later. Flying in to Oviedo is the only  
way to get here - it beats driving through France in an  
ex-Navy Landrover with a bunch of flatulent cavers & miles  
of rope. The Picos look particularly good with all the  
wild flowers out - I hope the caving turns out as good as  
it was in 1981. Richard

3rd Camp  
Finds



See several pages on p details

22/7/91

Mark is now leaving Ario for the last time  
(this year anyway!). I could have gone caving  
today really but didn't really feel motivated  
so decided to go down to Lagoas a day  
early. Hope everyone enjoys the rest of the  
expedition as much as I have so far, and  
also that 53/5 keeps going. Richard

Third Camping Trip Thurs 18/7 - Mon 22/7

Sean, Jim, Steve & Michelle

With all good intentions of rising early to beat the heat we eventually staggered (well & dragged) up to the cave entrance about 2 o'clock, after a quick peek through the eyehole (I think this was intended to give me so much vertigo I wouldn't even notice the pitches.)

A slow trip through the rift - many tactile legs & only three heroes to carry them (one doing the ~~the~~ trunked-ankle-pathetic-female impersonation though in my case it was my left arm I'd fallen on in 53/5 two days before that first decided to brush them not to function properly).

Really enjoyed the big pitches (it was only on the way out bouncing around on the ends of impossibly thin ropes that I really thought of rub points & fraying ropes ---) We spread out nicely on the pitches - isolated lights showing up the hugeness of it all. Can't see anything more than just Aconcagua was! Nothing up out of the spray on the far side watching the water light up as Jim & Sean descended really something else. I kept looking up for stars in the London Underground - felt too big to be underground - and I suppose every man and his dog has compared it to a weird lunar landscape. Had been told (by SGR) that from the end of the big pitches to camp was about a half hour stroll along boulder passage - poor way to describe it & he'd forgotten Zazadska (however you spell it & who named it?) along and at those filthy horrible little mud coated pitches. Left arm not working at all by the bottom so managed to abseil straight into the water as SGR did by saying "mind the rate" and other platitudes.

A long trip - devoured food and crawled into Alpex and sleep at around 4am for my first "night" underground.

Day 2 started at around 1pm - we planned to try to move back to 'normal time' without much success. Loved the streamway but two arms really needed for all those traverses. Denham's ducker got a few (not comradely me) notably Steve, planning to nonchalantly abseil swinging across to the rocks opposite (unlike the companions who inched across with jammers or ropes), who nonchalantly abseiled into the water with an enormous splash, coming up spluttering that

his glove had caught in his descender. - likely story. Again the best way to see the streamway is using other people's lights strung out along the traverses glinting off the water's blue. The pool near Eghert is a lovely place to picnic. The Gizard is not a lovely place - rocks suspended in mud ready to drop upon the unwary. Tom was very heroic hammering in the Gizard. Then he clambered round the right hand shore of the pond (setting up a traverse line) to find lots of muddy passages with potential. By this time, late, we decided to put off more pushing for the morrow. Evidently slow traverse along Pinyonel streamway & bed at 6 am (as you can see we were doing really well trying to get back to normal time)

Day 3 someone else will have to describe as I spent the day in the dark alone trying to appease my arm. The others saved my sanity just after midnight, with tales of potential leads up amongst huge boulders.

Day 4 was another early start - leaving camp around 2.30-ish. Much less water in the cave - the stream had receded a foot or so (contrary to my ~~own~~ wild imaginings of gurgling water creeping up to overflow summita point) and there wasn't quite so much spray at the base of Just Ansovie (still enough for me to stumble around blindly desperately seeking the rope up). We more or less started out in two pairs SGR & MN & TG & SH - the latter pair caught up with us on the big pitches having fumbled around in the spray seeking the drill ~~they~~ DB had hauled down the shaft (unlike me they probably didn't need to look for the rope). I donned the suicide pill taped inside the helmet, at the start of the rift (deciding I would need to use both arms). As it turned out I needed both arms and a few good shores from behind to get through paradise and nearly chopped myself in half summarily over the rope into the pit beyond the squeeze above seventh heaven. Emerged to a sunny Monday morning and staggered back to Ansovie with the speed of a geriatric snail!

- 3<sup>rd</sup> camping trip by SGR

Comment on rigging:

Tight rebelay on big shafts may be in principle safer if a belt goes, but are in practice less safe as they hinder people doing chengovers with no enough (or any) slack. Tired people = slow trip = ~~bad~~ tired people = mis-judgments.

More slack please! (Loose and are 'knot' to give a 'more slack to the appalling tight pit' from "Spitting death") - But this took 1/2 hour!

Now tomorrow as I am very tired & no sleep, two beers at the refugio = absence of brain. Good trip ~~though~~ though! I enjoyed pushing up the ~~top~~ big shaft. If you had suggested that to me 5 years ago I would have blanché, quivered & run away. Old age = absence of fear / common sense centres.

Another ~~to~~ clear night at Arco. No rain for two weeks!

Staw

P.S. - Next expedition - expedition - supplied thermal socks for sleeping a would add vastly to comfort at u/g camp!

William "I prefer shagging the hedgehog" Stead



# 3<sup>rd</sup> Camping Trip Pushes

49  
sorry, I started  
writing this in  
pencil, but it fades,  
so the gas over it is ink!

1<sup>st</sup> Day

We aimed to get back to camp at ~2am  
but got so carried away that we didn't get to  
bed till 6am!

## The Gizzard

We thought (Tim insisted) that this uninspiring passage was Caveat Lead #1. We all went & looked at the squeeze & Tim went past it & moved enough rocks for ordinary humans to get through. The roof & walls looked like the cave equivalent of a loose stool - ~~lots~~ lots of bits stuck together with mud. Tim dug at the end (it does draught), while we all sat and tried not to think of the roof & walls, especially the big rock stack to the roof above our head. We went out & had some food.

We sat around, wondering what to do. Eventually it was decided that as we hadn't actually seen choke Egbert, we had better go look at it to make sure it was where we thought - just round the corner.

I had previously tried to wade across the stream, with a bold cry of "For Speleology!" but when the water got up to my balls I retreated.

Tim focused round the R.U. wall

and we rigged a traverse line.

### "Choke Effect"

We jumbled about a bit, lots of loose small rocks. The R.H. branch of the stream vanished with a roar into a fearsome tiny slot - full in here - you've flushed down the deepest tortoise in the world / Picos. This roar is almost certainly what you can hear at the end of the lizard, so it's doubtful if digging the G. will be much cop.

The L.H. branch of the stream disappears into shingle at the start of a tubular country that chokes after about 30m. Caps are visible under the R.H. wall, and the stream can be heard below, so maybe shifting cobbles here could be productive.

### "The New Bit"

Tim spotted a possible dig <sup>near</sup> the end of the traverse line. This led to a small chamber, with a rift leading off. Tim climbed up this & dropped down into the rift. While I dug at the floor. Tim started snubbling enthusiastically & more & more distantly. Cries of "come back, you soul" were effective, and eventually all ~~so~~ four of us were in new passage, champing at the bit as Michelle fixed her light, did her eyes, adjusted her helmet, etc. (Much exaggerated)