

1996
TOP CAMP
LOG

DUCK

Grasshopper

1996

TOP CAMP LOG BOOK



Monday 8th July

OXFORD UNIVERSITY
CAVE CLUB
LIBRARY

There is no longer 2 inches of snow at top camp. It's still too damp to pitch the top camp tent but the stash has been collected, and almost all its contents survived; water has been collected from the stream in the valley (the remains of yesterday's storms & snow); and radio contact was established with Pauline at base camp, on the first attempt. It's now 5.15pm and everyone else has set off for base camp - and pancakes!

John & Anita.

Thursday 11th July

Finally found Torca del Vasco, the photo was far more useful than the co-ordinates. The entrance is now gained on a bearing of 338° from the cairn we've just built on the peak knoll on the true left of top camp.

Alex & I (Michael) decided not to wait around for anyone to turn up & took a bag full of rope down to the cave & intending to ring the first 3 pitches. 1st pitch is 30m down besides a snow cone, then through a bit of a rift to the 2nd pitch (18m).

The top of this pitch has some terrible rock, and it took some time to put down 4 bolts in, there are 9 bolts from the previous Spanish exploration but they didn't look that attractive to use. Climb down then 3 bolts across a traverse and a final bolt at the top of the 7m 3rd pitch. Before we decided we had had enough and came out for dinner.

(2)

12th July 1996.

Thick Blue clay at 200 000 ft in all directions. Beautiful. 2nd dip left for Tdel V, Andy writhing with many new ~~gear~~ gear: you could almost see Andy rubbing his hands in the background... Pitchhead a bit chorny, but it looks a fine entrance

• Note - the spring in Vega Aliseda is running, if slowly.

• Today's GPS estimate of Top camp (frangole).

UTM System.

0342018

7 satchets

4788209.

Plus.

12th July

E12

Alex & Nobby

Rigged the first pitch and the climb which was as loose and muddy as ever. The climb opens out over a rift which we descended down a couple of short drops. The rift then goes round a right corner which was blocked by the bits which had fallen down the climb. We started kicking these through a hole in the floor but Alex dislodged a large chunk of the wall which is now blocking the way on.

12 July

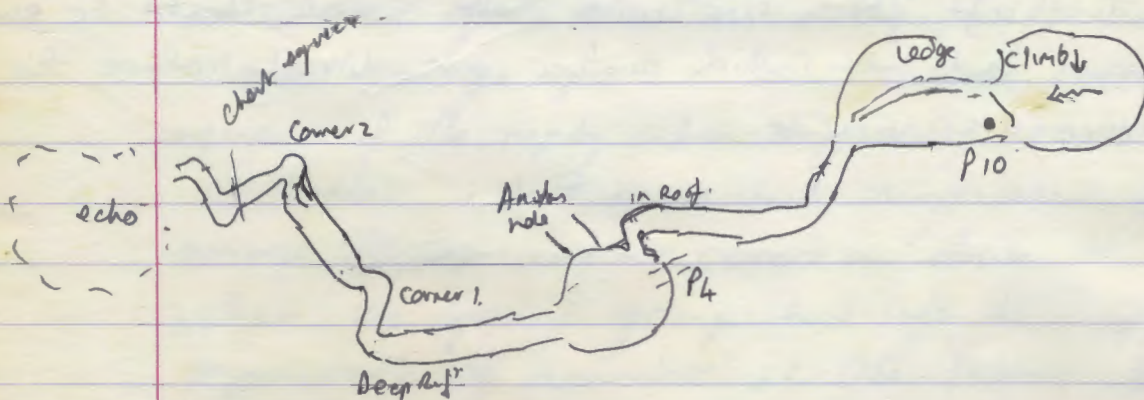
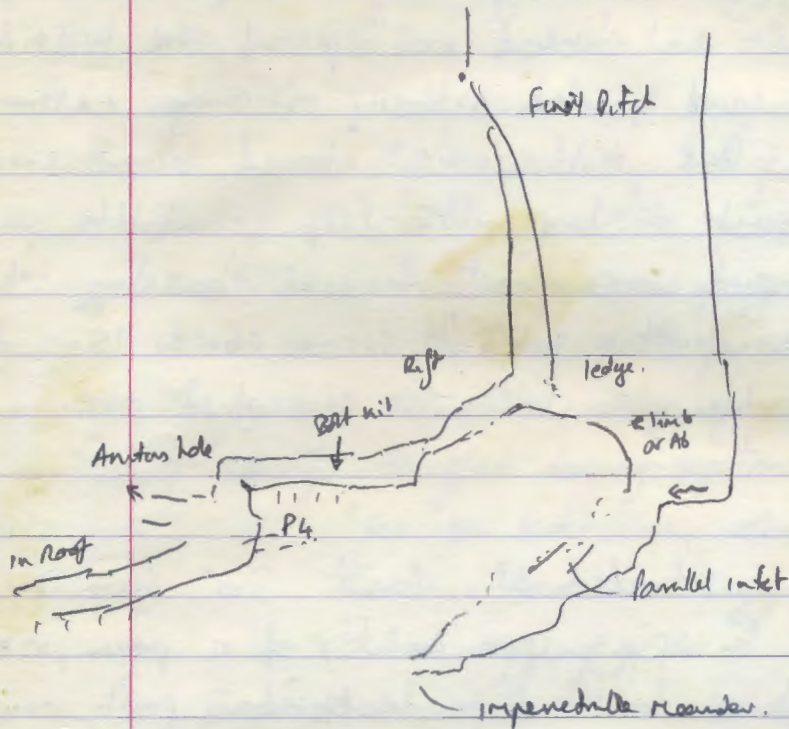
Torca del Vasco

Pauline, Michael, Andy

We rigged on down the next 4 pitches. I managed 2 Y-hangs which I found very satisfying. Team 2 arrived as I was debated the soundness of a 12-year old Posiferno bolt, then Michael headed out with all the remaining rigging gear while I put in a new bolt. Using Andy as an amplifier we managed to curtail the exit of the rigging^{gear} from the cave - now 3 pitches up. ~~the~~ Michael and I met halfway and then I took it down to ~~the~~ Jason. Their aim would be a bit stuffed without the gear! ~~When~~ It hadn't occurred

to them to bring an extra rope, just in case there is a new pitch at the bottom. by now I expect they've rigged to the bottom by now and I wonder what they've found...

Tim's ~~Grade 1~~
of end of Tide v.



- 1) head along rift at roof level.
- or 2) hammer down near 2nd corner.

(4)

Michael, Anita

13 July

Shaft bashing on the
other side of Vega de Aliseda

Having seen off Alex & Olly into the unknown depths of T de V, Michael & I climbed on top of the hillside opposite Top Camp and started exploring morning eastwards. Found many holes but most were choked about 5-10m down. We covered quite a large area (top & middle part of the hillside) and were about to call it a day when Michael spotted a drafting hole. It seems about 15m deep and worth checking out with the aid of a rope.

How to get there?

The entrance is situated at about 20° from Top Camp, to the right of a spiky rock on top of a peak, visible from here. Go down to the Vega de Aliseda path, continue for another 20m from the cairn at the start of the climb and there is another cairn at which you turn right. Follow the valley going NW and climb on top of "peak" to the left. There is a cairn there which should be quite obvious and from which another one, directly above the cave entrance, is visible.

12th July, Torva del vaso - wave 2 or, "Rigging a Spanish cave in day"

Jason, Anita and Tim followed team 1 into TdV in the afternoon with the aim of finishing rigging to the bottom of the known cave and, who knows, beyond... we met Pamire bottoming the 7th pitch, yet another beautifully belated shaft, Andy shivering in his beacon-line shiny new gear, and Michael about to head out with a punnik bag of rigging gear. It's a nasty scratchy bit of rock that enters onto the head of the 7th, just the place for wires, hangers, mantles, and other essential pieces of gear for rigging caves to get stuck on uninteresting little pieces of rock ready for hammering. Anyway, Pamire slipped through, conspicuously short of things to get hung up on.

"see you later then, she said"

"Can I have the rigging gear?" I queried

"What rigging gear? Didn't you bring your own?"

Jason and Anita were clearly thinking the same thing.

"No, Michael said he'd bring it. Where's Michael?"

By this time, Michael was out of earshot somewhere on the 5th pitch. Andy, who was halfway up the 6th, ~~as a result~~ offered to act as relay station and passed shouted messages up. "Oh Bellocos!" was the essence of the reply when it finally arrived.

How, I don't know, but sufficient gear finally arrived ~~later~~ and we roared on down to see just what the Spanish group had left as "apparently unyieldable ~~if~~ recorder" at the bottom. ~~2~~ The 50m 8th pitch is lovely, then a ~~10m~~ 10m whuffle rigged on a 20m rope. The last. No more rope. Why didn't we bring any more rope? Well you wouldn't would you? Go pushing in a cave with your rope, after all. There might be nothing round the next corner.

(6)

The three of us agreed. The English translation of "impenetrable meander" is "impenetrable meander" Harkney draught. Shame.

But half way down the 9th, Anita had ~~passed~~ poked into a high level rift, and Jason was soon back onto it rearing a lipous. Soon we were at another pitch - a lipous we had? But a rope we certainly didn't. "Oh bellorens!" The spare rope was still in Muctos's tackle bag. Well, you wouldn't leave a spare rope with the jinking fear would you - there might be nothing round the next corner.

But Jason is a cunning soul, and soon he was stretching the end of the 20m rope on the last pitch to try a ~~to~~ make stuff alright. Just reached - no problems. Anita looked up a high level window, whilst Jason and I squeezed and hammered our way round a series of sparkling rift corners. After I fumbled my thumb for a rock spine and delivered a nice hammer blow, we decided to leave it with a parallel corner ahead, a draught, and an echo. Alex and Oly are down there now - ----

Tiss

Bread

Chenizo / Salami.

Edge Spanner a One Sharp - T-bag - ductor
chocolate.

Rice.

Veg / eggs.

13/7/96

(17)

- 11.00pm Alex, Oli overdue for callout from Torca del Vasco
- 11.00pm Tim, Jason leave with:
1st wave medical kit and 1st wave rescue kit
Anita goes to cave entrance
- 11.15pm Pauline goes to top of hill to look for lights
2nd wave begin to prepare caving gear
- 11.20pm Word from Anita to Pauline that Alex is slow (!) - no other problems reported
- 11.25pm Pauline goes up the hill again.
- 11.40pm Pauline reports 4 lights returning from cave
2nd wave stand down
- 11.50pm All returned. Rescue stand down

14th July 1996. 9am Radio call worked fine. Gas bottle + Rigging tape ordered. Michael excited at news that TdeV is going and not through the squizzes. The hillides are ~~still~~ echoing with the sound of the juvenis mountain club - 20 of them.

GPS - Bare time... 1st 2nd
 Today's Top Camp Reading in UTM 0341979 - 0342021
 4783243 - 4788231
 6 satellites. Altitude estimate 1385m 1835 - 1865.

(8)

Estimated coordinates for Caves E

Direct reading on 13/7/96

C3 — 0342635
4797846

Direct reading on 13/7/96

C4 — 0342607
4788093

Direct reading on 13/7/96

Quintern — 0342892
4788728

~~1/8~~

Estimated Buntia for Quintern, using Woodcock's bearings
calculated from surface survey to 1/8

1/8 — 0342608
4789256

To be brought from base camp (14/7/96)

- 20m ropes
- toilet paper

13 July

CH

Pauline and Andy.

Well, I had a bit of a battle, whether rigging this cave was for the good of the expedition and would further the aim of understanding the C9 drainage or whether it was becoming a personal project, ~~because~~ ^{because} I had been ~~wanting~~ wanting to rig this cave since last year when I reached the bottom of the 2nd pitch. ~~The~~ The pitches are nice, ~~as~~ there is a draft, and I could hear water. By 6pm the battle was resolved, I was changed and Tim and Jason were watching us go down the entrance.

I had a bad rigging day. I just couldn't work it out, but we got to the bottom in 2 hours. The big pitch was very scary and I ~~think~~ ~~found~~ felt very strong out. [A day later, it turns out that the bolts I put in were bang on, but 37m of nothing is a bit of a buzz].

So we got to the bottom of the big pitch. While Andy was coming down, I checked out the rift ~~where~~ where the water goes, but that was no good. Then I climbed up to the ledge and looked along the rift. Andy had the ladder which Proc U says is needed for the final pitch, so I looked for a route that needed no rigging, passing over a hole in floor. Andy caught up while I was moving rocks from the continuation of the rift. I eased myself through fortunately not onto a pitch. A bit further on there was a 6m drop. I couldn't be sure that it didn't connect with the bottom of ~~there~~ the ~~the~~ ladder pitch because we didn't have the time to find out, but my feeling was that we were much further on ~~in~~ in the rift than ~~the~~ ~~had~~ had been reached before. We rushed out, to a brilliant sunset. "I think we've found the way on" I said, back at camp, but it got overshadowed by the rescue callout that had just been breached Pauline

Space, the final frontier
here's life Jim, &
don't we know it

(10)

14th July Tim, Pauline, Andy - C4

Quick thanks to Alex for going on a bit of an epic and hence to base camp as I was contemplating going down then. Fortunately I stayed and had my best caving trip yet. The 1st trip with Pauline to C4 was a bit frustrating, just as the way on was found we had to head out so I was keen to get back. My vision of straight down the cave to the new pitch didn't quite happen as Tim's re-rigging of the cave seemed to take longer than the original rig in (and made the cave more challenging to get out of), but I did pick up some good rigging tips. Finally at the bottom and off into the rift to catch up with the others, SR that off and $\frac{1}{2}$ way through the tight section there a definite burning smell, quickly wiggle through releasing a flaming carbide hose to wave around the rift. It never quite recovered leaving me with the nagging doubt through the rest of the trip as to whether my head was on fire. 1st new pitch rigged with great excitement down to the 2nd pretty much straight away and you could see the cave was really opening up. Pauline rigged, Tim piced and I smouldered gently and soon we were ^{going} ~~down~~ again. I got the chance to head off first - it's a major buzz being the first person ever to walk there, followed the sound of dripping water and found another pitch down into another big chamber, magic! While Tim rigged me and Pauline had a poke around to try and find a bypass to the pitch, no way through on the main boulder chocked floor but Pauline got down into a rift in the floor which soon opened out over the same chamber beneath. Followed the passage around and ^{looked} up a climb, both stopped fairly soon; major inlets seemed to be coming in from the roof. Down the 3rd new pitch and