

"I'd really love to do this afternoon's derigging trip - it's just that I feel I haven't collected enough snow recently" - John

? or 5/8/96

04 De-Rig (The nearly final torture)

Greg & I got up really early & did jobs around camp. After sorting kit out & getting adequate amounts of Mornflakes/flapjack into everybody it had managed to get to the dreadful time of mid-day! Greg & I headed over, closely followed by Alex & Nick Burcham who had turned up just at the right time to be commandeered for the trip. An extremely swift descent was made to Bugger Boggor where I tidied up the brew kit. The others arrived & we started dragging the Paella up Nash Brown. By the time I arrived at the top Nick had started the great Paella Mutiny & had started plaiting the ropes. He only did ~~two~~ them in double strands so he didn't jam it in the phreatic tube & didn't go through as easy as a single strand! Alex went up the monster & I spent time re-plaiting. An 8 strand sausage of 125M of 9mm went through the rift really easy. We eventually got it all up "crowing up" by hauling from the top. Hauling up the monster was by Alex. Communication up & down an 80m large shaft is somewhat echo-y & at one point the prussik rope disappeared! Also, the hauling line was 2m short so you had to jump up & clip a hand jammer on it, plus, every crab that went up the pitch didn't come back down. I got to the top & finished the monster off & was replaced by Nobby at the bottom end. Then was the fun of prussiking over the hauling team at the top of monster Pt 1. Hauling the ropes/bags up the next few pitches was very efficient & almost pleasurable, well, for me anyway, as I was experimenting with pulley/jammer hauling systems. The kit seemed to slip through the breakthrough rift

pretty easily with 5 people dotted along. Greg also managed to retrieve his lost tackle bag which was good 'cos he could then concentrate on de-rigging!

"Space..." was a bit of hard work, 3 people pulling at the top with Nick as human deviation just above the re-belay to prevent crap going down the pitch. After lurching the kit into the bottom of the first pitch Nick started the next mutiny & we all gave up. Jo had bad cramp & was wimping in a corner but got herself up the pitch in a reasonable time. When I set off I thought... "Don't remember this pitch being wet." & sure enough, it was pissing down outside. This was NOT the plan. Another overnight trip down ct, our LAST trip & No surprise, not good.

Return to camp & "Pasta & fishy pasta sauce" by John was VERY welcome (& delicious) when the pasta water had eventually boiled. I was somewhat upset when I couldn't find the lemonade for my Gin & had to suffer Brandy. I eventually learnt that John had put it in the ice so we could have iced G & "T"'s in the lovely morning on exiting the cave. A very nice gesture but not the sort of place you'd look on a wet Picos morning! Anyway, we didn't get the kit completely out of the cave (failure failure) but a pretty splendid effort anyway. Good luck to the rest of the de-riggers. Mark Smith.

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Well, myself & Greg are bugging off today (Wed 7/8). I would like to say a huge thankyou to everyone in the OUC for making us feel welcome & part of the team, this has contributed in a large way to the enjoyment of this visit to the Picos.

The Caving? It's serious, hard work and very rewarding. To this I'd add that both myself & Greg got to the bottom of ct and to the beach, very satisfying and exciting (bloody marvellous actually!) Gristle '96... "more... a legend than reality" !!

Cheers, Mark Smith.

And back to more serious matters ...

Jo ' Yes, we do seem to have spent an inordinate amount of time this expedition discussing our bowel movements '

Andy ' Well, there's no TV ! '

CHIT IS DONE.

10/8/96

The 3 man expedition is now up to a healthy 6, myself, Bill Naylor & Nick Burcham, - now we need to do some caving! About a week to go for a few pushing trips, photos, surveys & derig. No Problem.

Paul M

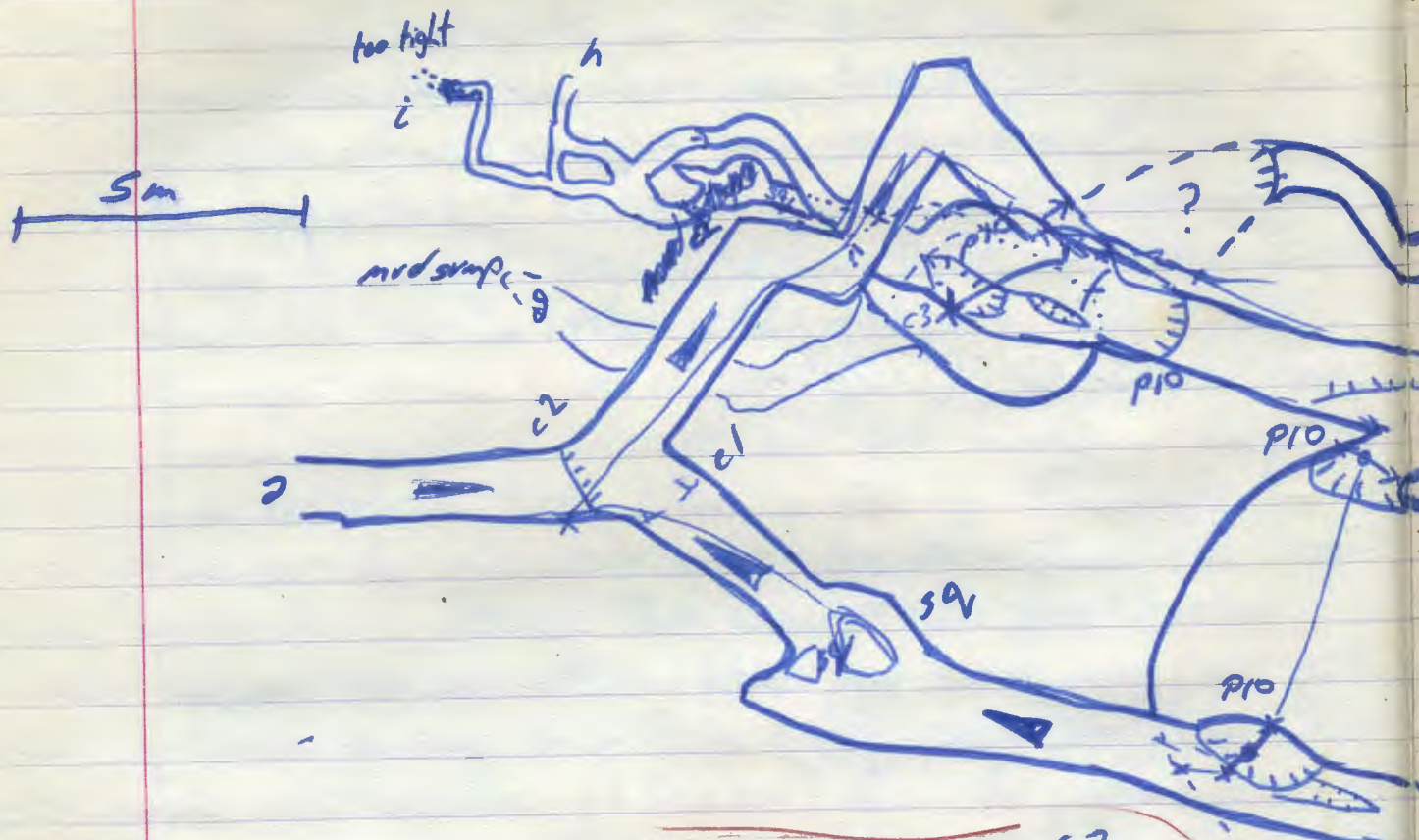
11/8/96

' There must be better places to rape the Japanese than the Welsh valleys' - Nobby
n'est-ce pas, Paul?

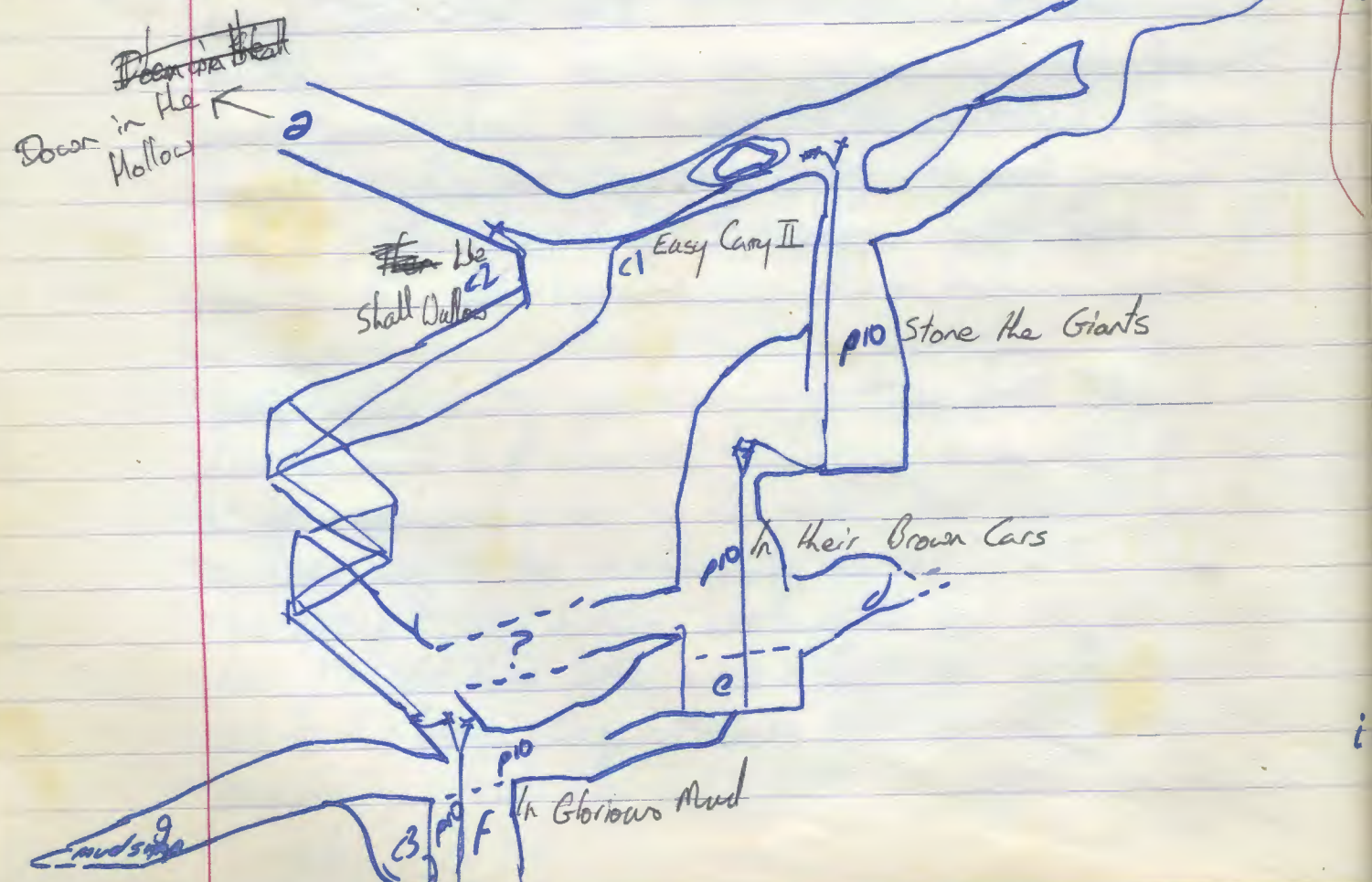
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Smegadrive Series

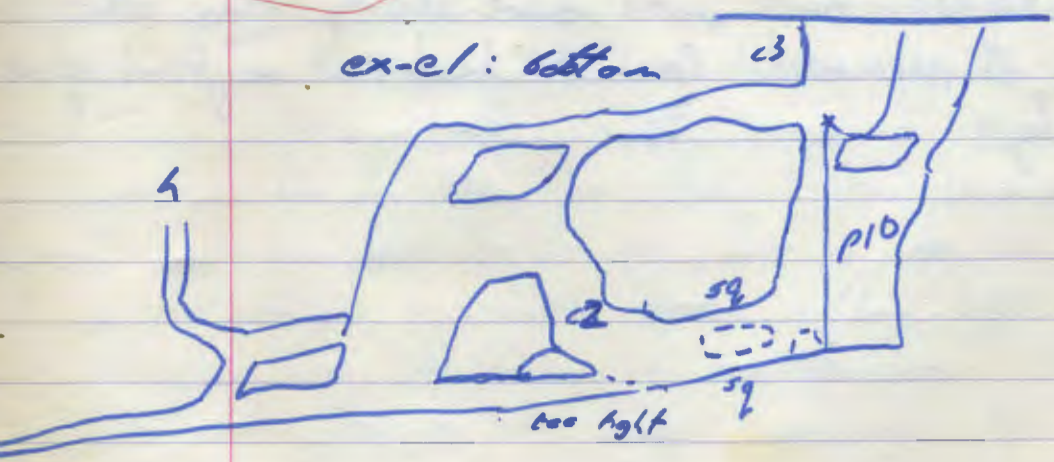
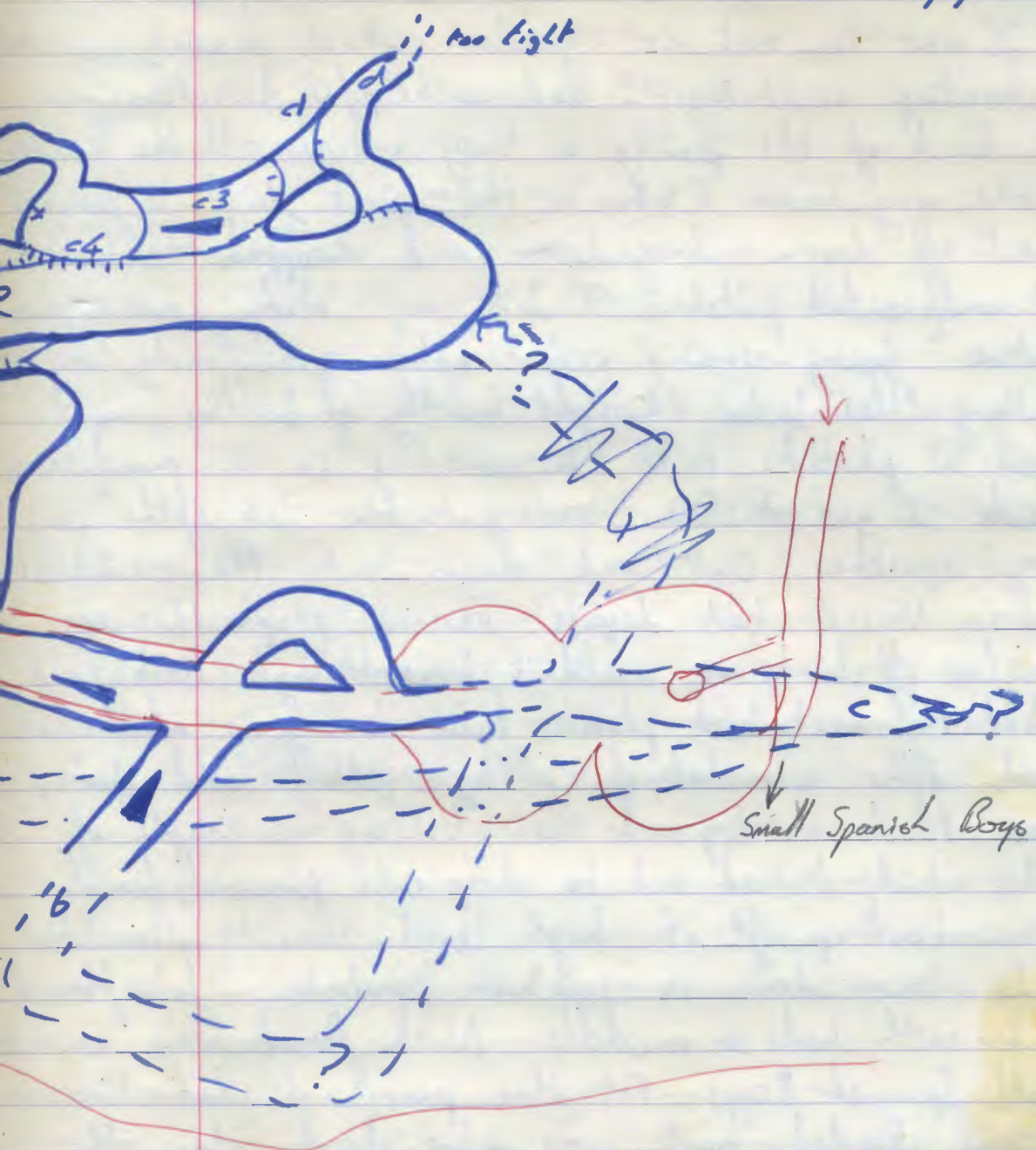
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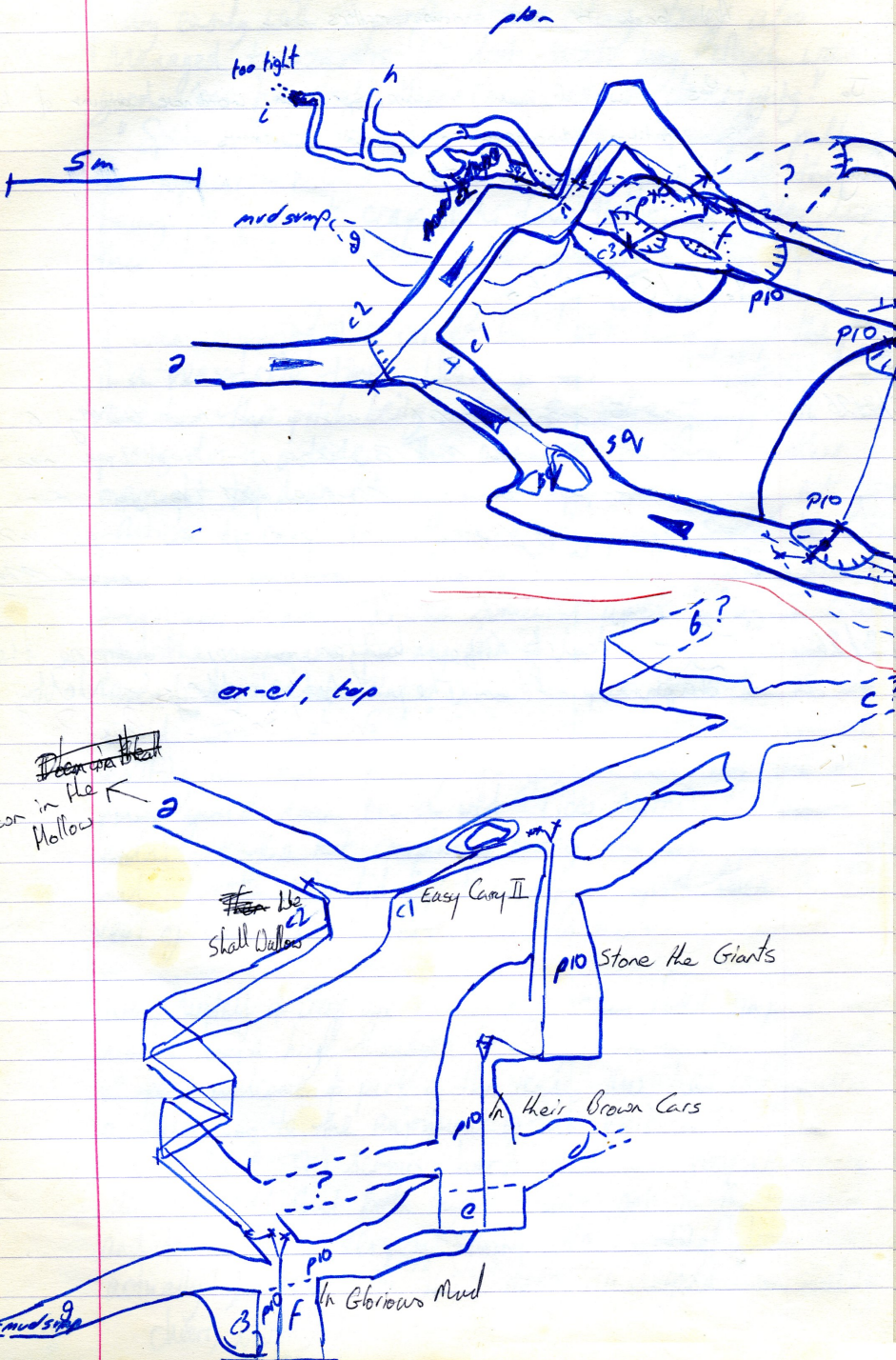
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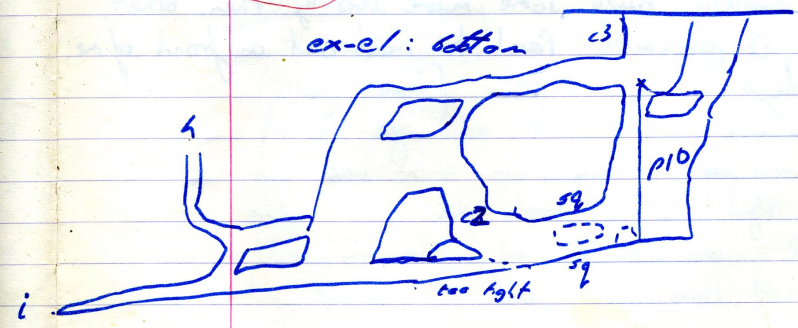
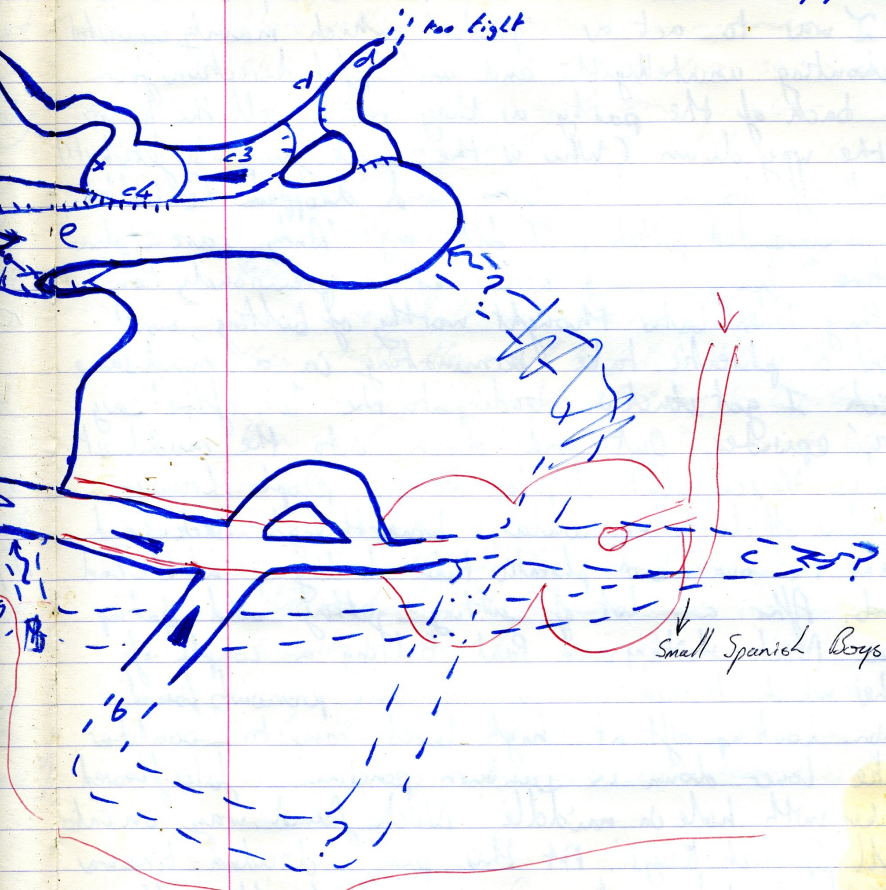
Grade II survey; bottom of pleatic section in
torca del vasco,
as of 11/8/96 trip.



Smegadrive Series



Grade II survey; bottom of pleatitic section in
torco del vasco,
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14/11-15-8 Andy, Nick, Paul TOV

It was both Nick and Paul's trip down TOV so I was to act as 'guide' which mainly consisted of shouting unintelligible and unhelpful directions from the back of the party as they retied all the knots on the way down (Who is the secret flutterby fetishist?) Went off down Imagedore and dropped the bolted but unsecured pitch. I did my 'Andy cave explorer routine' being swung across rather precariously (on something Alex later thought worthy of bolting, oops) to find a phreatic tube terminating in a mud ramp which I got stuck in leading to the 'let of the 'eary carry' episodes. Out and down into the muddiest hole in Vasco but despite various people throwing themselves off climb, we couldn't break through. Back up and look at the next lead phreatic tube leading up at the 2nd climb. After a lot of sitting getting cold get up to see Nick shitting and Paul bolting a couple of pitches which turned out to drop into previously found section. Look up rift at high level came to 'boulder choke lower down is 'sunburn penetration' false floored chamber with hole in middle Nick found way on into 'Small Spanish Boys'. At this point decided time was up and headed out some more slowly than others, fortunately I persuaded Paul to head out in front of me.

- Andy

1/8 - 12/8

Alex me & Nobby descend Torca del V. middle to late afternoon, (that is Alex at about 1.30, me & Nobby some time later), nothing particularly memorable happened on the way down apart from getting my cows tails jammed many a time. We met Alex towards the end of the smegadive series, contemplating a traverse a traverse over to some window, eventually we decided to put a bolt on; I did this, whilst Nobby went off to do some pushing of his own, bolt fixed Alex went off to see what happens, it had been pushed by the previous team, as well it had to be surveyed anyway. Surveying back, we got to where a hard core went off, I went up this whilst Alex went to fetch Nobby. My hand rest went up a muddy slope which led to 2 pitches down I could then see down another pitch into a muddy gloopy place also a rope had been placed up a pitch to a window this led to a ^{some} passage, which turned into a horrible tight rope, through which I could hear the sweet strains of Nobby's screeching; I didn't understand how this connection was possible until I remembered Euclidean geometry doesn't hold underground; Alex had rejoined me, so we called for Nobby then surveyed out until the compass died after which we thought bollocks to that & left, 21 hours in all (according to Alex).

BH Hill

Ab the way on has been found (I think) and the good news is that it bypasses the smegadive series (gloopy stuff). I rigged a short pitch down the big hole from the ledge where Andy's 'wilet' leads into the smegadive stuff, and landed on a mud floor, from where two leads could be seen, and water heard. The higher lead is almost totally choked with mud, but at floor level, 2 body lengths of small tube lead to a chamber, boss entered head first on one's back. From here a small window opens onto an ~~iff~~ ^{apparently} ~~rather~~ ^{rather}

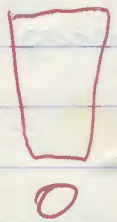
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not - impassable rift, with the sound of a substantial streamway in the bottom. However, I couldn't actually get through the window to confirm that ^{this} was actually the ~~tho~~ streamway. I tried to squeeze through, and failed. I then went back to fetch a hammer, beached some large projections off the walls, tried again, and failed again. Finally I took the top half of my overcoat off and tried again, but by this time I was so knackered that I was almost likely to fail anyway. So I gave up. Take a chisel with you, but try not to drop it, eh? Nobby

Thursday 15th August : Day -9 & counting.

Retour au camp après 2 jours passés sous terre. TPST: 44 hrs. Une première sortie avec Alex et au début Paul pour faire des photos et un peu de topo. Une fois que la topo fut achevée on s'est mis à faire de la première dans «Small Spanish Boys», une série de 5 resauts suivi par 20m de puits. vite terminé avec disparition de l'eau dans un trou avec & dans le sens inverse. Plus de pequenos niños españoles. Retour à «Giant's hole» où Alex est parti vers 1h du matin. Dormi pendant 1h avant reveil par Nobby & Andy. But d'établir une continuation par marteau dans une étroiture vue par Nobby dernièrement. Réussi, mais on s'est trouvé, à mon idée, en aval de «Small Spanish Boys» avec une étroiture encore moins grande, donc impranchable.

en aval. Le chemin Retour est à « Giant's Hole ». Repris le chemin en face de « Nobby's Hole » suivant « Moon Lizard » jusqu'à une bifurcation très intéressante à la queue de celui-ci. Entré dans « Moon Lizard » on retombe très vite sur la rivière qui arrive de l'étroiture de « chez Nobby » par un résaut. De cette salle la rivière fut suivie jusqu'à un résaut exposé qu'on a laissé tombé vite fait. « Moon Lizard » fut repris et après un peu de montée sur pente boueuse on s'est trouvé à la queue: pente très boueuse qu'on a mis du temps à équiper. ~~Et~~ nous voilà, arrivés à notre bifurcation de toute à l'heure. On s'est mis à équiper un résaut de quelques mètres mais on a fini par continuer en escalade. Descente à « It's tundra » et on sentait le siphon très proche. Une fois Nobby décoinçé de son étroiture boueuse, on a reculé de quelques mètres et quelques escalades y compris du toit, on est descendu finalement à « Lennington Spa » le siphon qu'on aimerait croire à -400m. Yes, boys & girls Torca del Casco appears to sump at -400m after much toil and trouble & false leads, dead ends, etc we have found a bottom if you're interested Jimmy!



Rejoins, nous sommes rentrés au camp bivouac où on a pensé à parti se glisser par « Nick's Samba penetration » dans

«Small Spanish Boys» pour faire de la topo. Nous disant que nous n'étions pas de grosses pointures dans ce domaine on ~~est~~ parti pour «chez Nobby» et le début de «Moon Lizard». On a fini par ~~parlant~~ très peu de topo "2 LEGS" et on s'est mis à manger un repas pas terrible avant de partir pour la surface, moi avec mon matos perso du camp bivouac et un blocus de pied qui me paraît cher et les autres avec un fût de pûte de kit plein de corde, de matos à spiter et d'autres merdes y compris M4 SHIT.

All that remains is for Alex and Paul with his ^{bad} shoulder to survey all the way from «Giants Hole» to «Hemington Spa» and «It's Twins». Accomplished surveys as they are they might even decide to start the de-ice after just having surveyed and be rigged «Small Spanish Boys». What a shame Tim's ^{kind} prevents him from helping out "on los peperos niños españoles".

Je vais au patch,

Nico