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Tuesday 17th August

Arrived here just after 7pm last night to find the others just leaving. Considering I'd done a detour from the Maria Rosa to base camp to fetch Suncream (!), petrol & wine, I had the distinct feel of a wasted journey. Set about collecting water from the dizzle (we now have an extra carabiner) & made supper. Big mistake. Adding asparagus soup to spaghetti gave a totally inedible result. I'd have been better off with bread & tuna. To be offered a large mug of Cola Cao laced with Spanish whisky from a fancy bottle (not single malt), which, I think, kept me awake somewhat.

SNI cloudy this morning. Others due up ca lunchtime. Trying to decide whether to wait for them or to do a carry down.

W.

We can't really shift bushes until the weather improves. Richard's gear is still at 41/9.

Rich D: "Don't touch that, it's William's personal Sausage".

William: "I'm not sure if I want that one to go in."

Wednesday 18th August

Met a German trapper called Christoph about 3pm yesterday, just as I was about to go down & gave him some tea. Did carry down, meeting the others on Sod I, then had a beer & a localillo in the Maria Rosa & came back up empty. Clag all the way both ways. Nice cleared at sunset, while we worked for Cabeza Coua.

Aurora this morning full of high lumps, Steve & Richard going to do 10/9 photo & detackle on ~~Widder~~ (via 41/9 to pick up Richard's carrying gear) & Simon & William going shaft - basing starting at 41/9. 100 yards after we'd left the Xitu path, I realised just how thick the mist had become & that I wasn't sure about the best way on. Heeded back to the Xitu path where we met Christoph walking down. Quick decision - decided I wasn't confident in finding 41/9 in the mist & that I also wasn't confident we'd walk ^{up} out of it either, given how wet it was. Decided to return to camp, where I drink a cup of tea in case it cleared.

Felt a bit dryer, so walked up Cabeza del Goro to see if it was clear at the top - it wasn't. Came down, drank tea & ate peanuts while the mist got thicker & darker, feeling halfway between wings & sunny. I wonder how the others are getting on?

W.

Thursday 19th August

Pozo de Jeyu Photograph & Dig
Steve, William

Woke up dull & late to find the weather still claggy but not actually raining like yesterday, so Richard & Simon went to finish detaching 10/19 while Steve & I set off for Pozo del Jeyu, which I assumed to be the rigged hole in the valley of Dry Bones. Steve took photo of me at the entrance in my shorts & jersey, then went down on a stop, emerging to say the entrance was tight & he'd put the stop on a cow's tail. I carried on getting changed until I heard a rumble of moving rocks to be followed not long afterwards by a rather white faced Steve who asserted in no uncertain terms that he wasn't going back down again. I poked my nose in the entrance - it didn't look much tighter but I also decided that it wasn't worth risking a serious accident for the sake of whatever digging you may (or may not) be at the bottom. So we pulled the rope up & left.

T

② If you do a dig, please stabilize the entrance properly before you ask other people to go down. A warning note in the log isn't sufficient.

W.

This cave is very loose. Several cubic feet of one of the walls became dislodged while I was down there when, at most, all I'd done was brush against it with one of my feet. It seems to be that the entrance should have either been gardened or stabilised. It isn't enough to merely have notes in the log book saying

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'Don't touch' when people can and will brush against things unintentionally.

Didn't take any shots within the cave as it was too small and way too loose anyway. Got various shots of the entrance and derigged it, which was enough. Everything should be derigged by the end of today.

Steve.

Wednesday 18/8/99

10/9 Photo + de-ig

I am now very familiar with the entrance of 10/9, having spent four hours there waiting for Richard. He'd left me there on the way to collect his gear from 41/9, proceeding to get lost in the dense drag instead. Eventually he arrived, via the bottom of Sod 4 and Aris (!).

Quick entry as far as the rift at the base of the ^{2nd} pitch. I take various shots of Richard in the rift. He then goes through to pull the rope up the 20m pitch, only to find that it's tied off lower down. I pass his SRT gear to him through the rift and he then disappears for at least an hour.

When he reappears, he announces that he has found at least four more rigged pitches below the 20m pitch. WHY ISN'T THIS WRITTEN UP? He'd pulled the rope up the bottom two pitches before deciding to come back up.

I take a few sponsorship shots of Richard eating a Thornton's fudge bar (which will almost certainly look very posed indeed) and we exit, as it was by now getting late.

This cave will require another trip to complete the derigging.

Steve.

Thursday 19 Aug On the point of setting out for 4/9 (after our break with Jerry) when the weather closes in totally & it starts raining. This is the second time in two days it's done this. Very frustrating.

W.

Thursday 19 August 10/9 proper de-rigg

This time it was Richard and myself to de-rigg 10/9 completely. After Rich and Steve's attempted trip yesterday. A walk up in the clag. Clag that seems to ^{have} been here all week. Change on the surface and down the entrance series. Through the rifts and on to the shaft series. I really like this cave. The squeezes are enjoyable and the cave's great! Chained the first lot of rope and out we went. Back through the squeezes. (I like the "lev, lynn shaped hole").

"I really like this cave" Simon

"So do I. Let's push it next year." Rich D

Richard: "William, I think you've filled Steve's hole"

Richard "how many points do you get on your licence. if drinking while drunk?"

Thursday 19/8/99 'Sesh' at Ario

A brave attempt to drink the entire stockpile of alcohol at Ario (unsuccessful) was undertaken to celebrate the completion of derigging. It fused it down outside.

An increasingly drunken game of Black Maria resulted in the above quotes, amongst others.

Pass the wine, vicar.

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Friday 20th

Rich & Si go shaftbashing (Area 9).

Found a fuck-off huge great open shaft. No marks. Our 30m rope was nowhere near long enough. Stones rattle for $\approx 10-12$ secs! However, we found some bolts (at the bottom of our pitch)! I'm pretty certain that this is tras La Jayada. (300m deep, last looked at in 1986). Oh well.

Also found 6/9 (what we were looking for originally). Rigged the 5m pitch, and Simon went down to the rift where we found an obvious ~~big~~ boulder blocking progress. After some huffing and puffing, the boulder was pulled out (using tapes looped around it). The resulting squeeze was tested by Simon, who thought he could get through, but wasn't sure about getting back! The rift is very tight and goes out of sight round a corner to the left. Unfortunately we ran out of time and decided not to push further. This cave may well go, and should definitely receive some attention next year (Si & Myself are very keen!) It would be worth clearing some of the rubble at the bottom of the pitch (use a spoil tray that can be hauled out by someone above). Si reckons that the pitch is actually a climb and would be best down-prussiked in and self-lined out. "Like, totally outrageous dude!"

p.s. the snow mentioned in the shaftbashing guide has now disappeared.

Summary:

Found 6/9 ⊗

Found Tras La Jajada first ⊗ !!

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We are currently awaiting the return of William & Steve from 41/9

Friday 20th August

William & Steve Phipps

Shaft-boring Area 9

Set off for 41/9 with Steve, heading up ^{into clay} Gustukou. After a few minutes, we recognised the entrance to 10/9 & carried on traversing round Gustukou as I had done with Richard a few days ago. 41/9 proved to be just above the clay & we reached near after 45 mins. A quick bolt by Steve & I was down the pitch. This led to ~~the~~ a rubble floor, the remains of a snow plug & 2 small cracks which immediately stopped. Shifted a few rocks at the foot of the rope to reveal a (just) too tight squeeze leading to a body sized cavity. ~~At~~ Might have been it had I not seen it's worth it. Steve then suggested looking a bit further down the hill without gear as the time was moving on. We quickly located 37/9 (N.B. This shows the value of the tags) & Steve went round the corner - where it choked. Nevertheless, Steve's first sunshine & first pushing this expedition (and last!).

A suggestion: A ^{Small} Cairn round this area would be a good idea to look at leads. There's a fair amount of flat grass & you could get snow from 37/9 without gear.

Walked down back into the clay, reaching camp about 5:15.

Summary: 41/9 ⊗

37/9 ⊗

} Full details in shaft boring guide.

W.

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Saturday 21st August

Striking Aio Camp.

Perfect weather - no cloud at any level!

H Steve says "Having had carrying weather for the shaft backing we now have shaft backing weather for the carrying".

W.

"I have a platypus, pocket Dragon, and a Donkey's Dick"
(Simon)

Take two bottles into the shower?
What shower?
I just Smell 'n' Go! - Steve

Walked back to Lagos today via Belbin to check it out. It's a large village with lots of houses and people, and one solar-powered spring. Presumably if ICONA want us to camp there, they will communicate with the locals first(?) ~~The road looks like the~~ ~~road~~ The van could easily reach the village on the road, but we would need permission. Not far out of the village, towards the lakes, is ~~an~~ a very good camping spot, next to a spring. I'd feel better camping here than in Belbin itself.

Rich D

p.s. Someone (maybe me) should write to Huan José asking about the camping problems and enquiring about the possibility of us using Bar Entre Lagos. Also say that if we are at Belbin, we need to be able to drive on the track.