

Cave Diving at BlueTongue - Saturday

BY KEIR VAUGHAN-TAYLOR

Participants: Roo O'Loughlin, Rita Mallison, Philip Maynard, Keir Vaughan-Taylor

We hoped to find a connection to the river section trending from the Lethe dive sections. This has been the forth dive in BlueTongue.

As usual we transported dive gear in containerised packs through the passages and rockpiles of the BlueTongue Pitch where we changed into wetsuits and assembled our dive kit. Roo and Rita are new to caving but did extremely well and Phil and I give special thanks for their efforts.

Previously a difficult squeeze was passed into a new section with smooth limestone wall rising through an aven surfacing in a small surface lake. The surface chamber looks onto a breakdown rock pile with a small inhospitable hole at the top of a slippery slope.

Any possible way on was lower in the aven. This trip we passed the squeeze with better visibility available. The cave structure beyond the squeeze is more like a cylindrical well but splaying out as you move upwards. A horizontal passage was apparent half way up the aven however attempting to navigate this passage proved impossible. A spare guide reel lost on a previous trip was recovered in this tunnel. We surfaced again in the airspace and made one last circuit looking for possible onward routes but none were found.

Returning to the BlueTongue Pitch we re-packed the dive gear. We then proceeded to inspect the Missing Link area again hoping to locate the missing section of river that cannot be far away. Some small avens were noted but nothing really found that might connect to the large water body somewhere not far away.

Cooks Cavern in the Missing Link area displays evidence of recent flooding to almost to the roof.

In this stage of the cave's geological development it is apparent that there is a restriction such as might be caused by rockfall perhaps downstream from BlueTongue Lake. The observed passage in BlueTongue Lake is insufficient for a person and may represent the restriction. We have experienced flooding at the BlueTongue Pitch. There may be a higher level not yet found where pooled water eventually escapes. Nevertheless the water reaches almost to the roof in Cooks.

We entered the cave about 10:45 and exited at 5:30.