

## TDI Introductory Cave Diver Report: 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> June 2011

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Who killed Kenny? I guess the important question is... why was a character from Southpark involved in cave diving? More on this later...

It all started out quite simply, with two people on the course and four people (myself included) just going for the pleasure and excitement of the Great 10 x 10 x 10 Dive Challenge. But somehow it ended up with four on the course and only two doing relaxed dives. How did I end up having my stress management skills pushed to the limit? It was something to do with making me a better diver.....

Leading up to the weekend I was eagerly keeping an eye on the weather websites, but they were getting dirtier and lumpier as the week progressed; it was looking like the trip would be cancelled. However we thought the weather charts might be hinting at better conditions, so we held on until the wee hours of Saturday morning before making a final decision – it was a GO.

With gear quickly stowed on-board, a short briefing followed and then we were off to seek out new life in a galaxy far, far.... Oops, wrong fable. And so we headed out of Tutukaka harbour – at this stage I was still just going diving – but peer pressure is a dreadful thing. The trip out seemed like it was all about Tony (and others) convincing me to stop thinking about work and instead clear my head by doing the course. And like the total pushover, I caved!

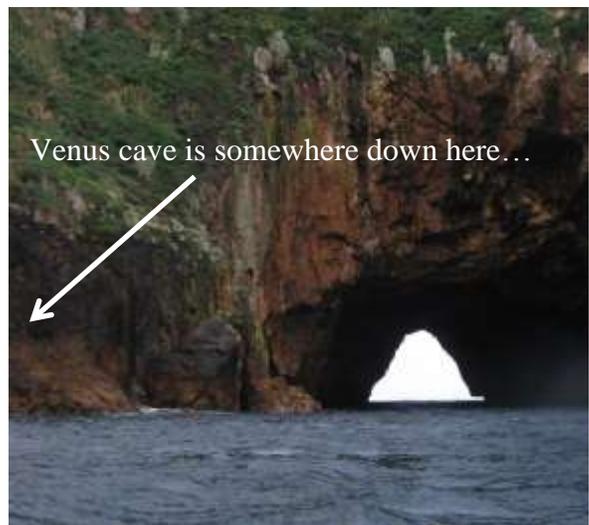
As we neared our destination, there didn't seem much haste to jump ship (perhaps it was the 1.5m swell sending us lurching about the boat) but soon enough there was just Kev left on-board.

### The Dives: Air Bubble Cave

We started out as 2 teams of 2, Pete and Claire as team 1 and Tony and I as team 2. Our mission was to lay lines into the cave, and then on the exit the cave gremlin was going to test our training with some basic skills – simulating valve failures, and out of gas drills on the first pass, then rescue skills with unconscious diver and entanglements on the second pass. By the end I was wondering if I had made the right call. I wondered whether my skill levels were good enough to continue, yet over lunch my fears dissipated as we debriefed the dive and discussed the skills. Before long we were heading back into the water. The swell was not going away so it was a good test of our balance as we geared up again, trying not to fall while pulling on our fins.

### Venus Cave

With two passes inside we again worked as teams of 2, practicing our line laying and going through more challenges. All seemed to be going well with the multiple light failures,



entanglements, out of air drills and a blind exit, but on the second pass a large wall of silt hit us and things got interesting! Thankfully all of us are well experienced in low-visibility diving, so this was not a big issue and we quickly and calmly found the line and exited smoothly – all that is apart from Kenny who had somehow got lost (with a little help and encouragement from the cave gremlin).

#### South Harbour

Next on our list of things to do was a line course, in the darkening waters of South Harbour, where we worked on following the line while testing our ability to adjust buoyancy and depth while blind! This entailed checking the course out first, then following it singly with eyes closed, then as pairs. Unfortunately we developed a sense of urgency and rushed it. I was at the front and quickly discovered that if you go too fast you get turned around at each station and it's very easy to get disoriented. And if that wasn't bad enough we tried it again in a larger group, which meant things become that much more complex.

Once out of the water it was about time for dinner. We were treated to one of Kev's legendary curry dishes and a debrief of the dive, followed by the completion the theory exam.

Onto Sunday and there were still more dive skills to be completed, so after a quick breakfast it was back into

the water at Air Bubble Cave. This morning we were doing lost line drills. Jamie took diver 1 off the line, and then left diver 1 to recover the line whilst blind and hopefully remember which way was OUT of the cave. Whilst this happened diver 2 got to practice their buoyancy and observe the techniques diver 1 employed. Then we switched around, so everyone got to test their skills. We had mixed results, with 3 of us being able to find the line (just), and 1 person (Kenny) missing both the line and the way out. Even once the line was found not everyone was successful in exiting, so it was well noted to always reference where the line is in relation to the exit of the cave.

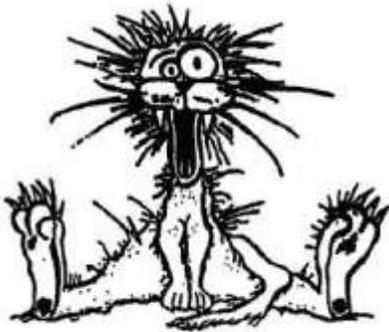


The dream team – but which one is Kenny?

For our final dives, we headed to Taravana Cave – where our mission was to go deep into the cave. None of us had been into Taravana before, so it was also an exploration – working out where the cave went, what it looked like, any tie off points, etc.

Our first attempt was not good. Before we had even gone half way in our team fragmented, which was quickly followed by us reaching our gas limits, so we turned around. At this point the cave gremlin worked his magic again, and all sorts of issues were handed out... Firstly one of the team's valves 'failed' while we were focused on working with the line – no problem, I leaned over and turned it off. We switched positions and headed out, trying to regroup and ensure all team members knew what had happened. Then I was given out of air. I instantly signalled and we went straight into sharing air – with the team member who had the 'valve failure'. Oops. It only occurred to us when the cave gremlin signalled R.I.P what had happened! Realising this we cut the

drill and regrouped. Before long we were back on the boat, debating our magnificent cluster of disasters and lamenting with “Kenny” who was wondering if this trip was really all about killing him. Needless to say some valuable lessons were learned! (If you haven’t worked out who Kenny is, you’ll have to ask one of us)



## "STRESS"

THE CONFUSION CREATED WHEN  
ONE'S MIND OVERRIDES THE  
BODY'S BASIC DESIRE TO CHOKE  
THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS OUT OF  
SOMEBODY WHO DESPERATELY  
NEEDS IT!

For our final dive we headed back into Taravana to reclaim the reel and push deeper into the cave. This time we were given some pointers about the direction of the cave, and so we headed off faster than the previous dive. Reaching our limits again we turned and began the return home. More challenges arose, with lights and valve failures becoming the norm. This time however, we got the communications clearer, at one point even huddling up and redistributing team resources before continuing on. When the reel got dropped we all stopped and while I made reference to the slackened line, Claire shuffled back to find out what was happening. Whilst still not perfect this was definitely a much better dive. Back on the boat we found out we were just 15m short of seeing the mermaid.... That’s now the goal for the next time in Taravana.

To sum it all up, as usual it’s always strangely nice to be challenged both mentally and physically by the team at Techdive. It’s reassuring to know that if the brown stuff hits the fan, it’s not a case of panic stations (OMG we’re all gonna die!!!!), but instead it’s more instinctive how to deal with the problem and calmly end the dive. So it is with thanks to the Techdive team and crew from Oceanblue Adventures, that this group of aspiring cave divers have taken their next step forward.