

LANCASTER HOLE

To Maracaibo

14th February 2009

People present - Kate Duffus, Daniel Jackson

Weather: ?

After a lengthy 'Where to cave' debate on the forum, Dan and I met at Bernies for the traditional pre match refreshments. We settled on Maracaibo because neither of us had been there before and I had heard it was very pretty (this turned out to be a big understatement).

We set off down Lancaster Hole and proceeded to Oxbow corner via the high level route. Dan regretted wearing thermals under his caving suit and was soon dripping sweat, lovely. Oxbow corner was still where it was last time I caved there and we found it with little difficulty. We abandoned SRT kits and set off following instructions from NTFH. As usual they were extraordinarily accurate.



Having located the obscure crawl out of the streamway, the rest of the route finding was easy. Initially we followed a wiggly rift passage followed by a narrow streamway leading to the Bloody Thigh Rift. This strangely named passage was remarkable for its straightness, traversing it was easy. At the end of the rift we came to the start of the decorated passages, the first of which was the streamway in front of us, completely blocked by straw stalactites, fortunately with an oxbow bypass. In any other cave these formations would have been remarkable, but knowing there was more to come we continued and saved our camera batteries for better things.

The route to Tortuga way involves a bit of a wriggle through muddy passages and a short flat out gritty crawl. At the start, we went to look at a side passage containing a bright white 'organ pipe' formation and a stunning crystal pool. These were the biggest crystals I have ever seen in a cave. We had to stop for the obligatory photography.

The next section of streamway had the most amazing density of formations. It was incredibly difficult to make progress without causing damage. We carefully made our way to the upstream end of the pretty bit and took a look at the flat out crawl in water which was the way on to 'The keel Hauler' another well decorated passage. NTFH says that this bit may need a little excavating. I didn't fancy that so we decided to make do with the formations already seen. On the way downstream we stopped for photos while Dan cursed the intermittent way his camera and flashguns were working.

Getting back to Oxbow corner was quick and easy and we decided to return to Fall Pot via the main drain. Water levels were very low but it was bitterly cold. Guess it is all snow melt. After a quick sight seeing tour to the main sump we scrambled up the Fall Pot boulder choke and were soon out of the cave. Lovely to get out in daylight.

This was a great trip. Not difficult but plenty to see.

Kate Duffus



Photos - Kate Duffus & Dan Jackson

A [Black Rose Caving Club](#) trip report.