

2015 dawned with the realisation that the usual suspects were reduced to a team of 1 for the exploration, but the support team as usual were able and willing to give it their all to make sure the expedition would have the best chance of success.

The support team consisted of: Xesus Manteca (Teca), Alberto Medina, Hilari Moreno, Rafa Bernardo, Olay Bernardo, Enol Bernardo, Laura Zango, Adrian Gonzalez, Enrique Ballesteros, Pep Pujal, Leopoldo Trabanco (Poli), Roberto Cano, Carlos Garcia (Krilin), Pedro Gonzalez, Borja Rebaque, David Martinez, Javier Monedero, Jorge Lopera, Brian Schofield (Schoff), Dave Ryall
+ others.

Going to the end of the Pozo Azul alone (some 11 km from the entrance) and even just to Tipperary required some serious thought about how to do it in a safe manner with enough back-up options to minimise the chance of an enforced wait in Tipperary or beyond. The first and main consideration was that a 2nd drysuit was needed, this was a must and so a 2nd dry-tube to transport this would be needed. Luckily Otter had supplied me with a Brittanica Telescopic drysuit for the Mexico Huautla Expedition <https://www.facebook.com/CaveDive>
www.cdg-exped.org

This drysuit had socks rather than boots and so fitted into a second smaller dry-tube that I have previously used. The other considerations were extra spares for the KISS rebreather, such as inhale and exhale hoses, O2 delivery spares etc , but as these also fitted in the same drytube as the spare drysuit, they posed no extra hassle. A final consideration was communication from Tipperary to the surface. We had tried over the last 3 years to get communication using various methods but to no avail. This time we managed to get support from Cave Link who have developed a text based communication system. I had used this previously in Sima GESM, Andalucia, Spain and at home in the UK, with various results. This communication would be the main focus for the expedition before any exploration beyond Tipperary was considered. Therefore the plan would be as in the last 2 years. That was, to go to Tipperary for 1 night and install the Cave-Link device, and hopefully communicate with the surface.

Several days of set-up to transport the equipment to Sump 2 was necessary and also to prepare a habitat for use. Once this was done, a stage dive to 2km was carried out to place some OC bail-out cylinders and a back-up scooter. These items proved invaluable later in the trip. I was then in a position to make a trip to Tipperary.

The traverse to Tipperary was done in just over 4 hours. When leaving the water I had a near miss when I tripped and landed heavily on both knees with the full weight of the rebreather, this could easily have cut through the dry-suit (remember spare drysuit !!). The Cave-Link device was set-up quickly and a message placed in the outbox ready for a surface receiver to pick it up. After some hot food, I headed up the climbs to the high level dry passages explored last year, to look at a lead that myself and Rene had spotted. Some serious rock climbing is required to get there. The lead continued as a crawl for a few hundred metres until it ended at a boulder blockage. This was the final easy lead to pursue up here, and the only lead now is a pitch which require ropes, spits and SRT kit. Back at the bivouac the messages had not been sent and thus the surface team had not yet been in range to connect. Early the following morning the Cave-Link device was set to power save mode, so that it would last for several days, and I headed out through Sump 2 travelling fast and light, surfacing in 3.5hours. My support team arrived shortly after and we transported the large Aquazepp down the cascade so that it could be taken outside for re-charging.

The surface team had spent many hours attempting to connect with the underground transmitter in various locations without success. Therefore several days of further work were planned to achieve this goal. A systematic approach was planned, using the mapper data and survey and 2 teams with a Cave-Link device each. A pincer approach was employed, where both teams would eventually meet up by following different valleys up to the top of the hill, where we believed Tipperary was located. Each team had done 4 or 5 locations and moral was declining when Teca's mobile phone rang and the other team said they had managed to send their text messages, which meant a connection with the underground device. We were very pleased and quickly headed to their location. This was almost exactly where the mapper survey showed the cave passages to be, beneath the surface. Although the messages had been sent, it took some time before we received the messages that I had sent from Tipperary some 2 days before, but eventually they came through. And so we were now in a position where the surface support team could communicate directly with Tipperary, GOOD RESULT.....





