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Mt Hypipamee crater measured and explored by divers who bust its myths



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DIVERS exploring the Mt Hypipamee crater near Herberton have debunked two "facts" about The Crater - it is not as deep as previously thought and there is no evidence of a tunnel linking it to the nearby Barron River.

Mt Hypipamee was formed when a gas explosion blasted half a million tonnes of basalt into the air leaving a crater 60m wide with sheer walls going down 60m to the water.

A 1959 survey claimed the water was 81m deep.

Signs and a map at the site also show an underwater tunnel heading down and towards the Barron River.

However, a group of nine divers from around Australia and from all walks of life, who spent this week exploring the crater to carry out scientific tests for the Museum of Australia, have proved both those claims to be false.

They included brothers Joel and Samuel Vermey, both electricians from Cairns.

Richard Harris, a 46-year-old anaesthetist and diving medicine specialist from Adelaide, said the maximum depth they had found was 75m.

As for the tunnel, he said visibility was only 2.5m so they could not be 100 per cent sure but: "After a careful search at the bottom we could find no evidence of a tunnel going anywhere."

"Certainly there does not appear to be any major side passageways."

He said the group had thought it would be exciting to explore what might have been Australia's deepest underwater cave, a title currently held by a cave at Mt Gambier, South Australia.

"It is a bit disappointing that the site has not been as deep or offered the opportunity for further exploration that we had hoped but it is also good to be able to debunk the myth of the size of the crater and correct the information on the ... map and signage," Dr Harris said.

In addition to mapping the crater above and below water, the divers did a biodiversity study looking at invertebrate life and a water chemistry analysis looking at temperature, acidity, oxygen levels and salinity.

Samples will be sent to the Museum of Australia for analysis.

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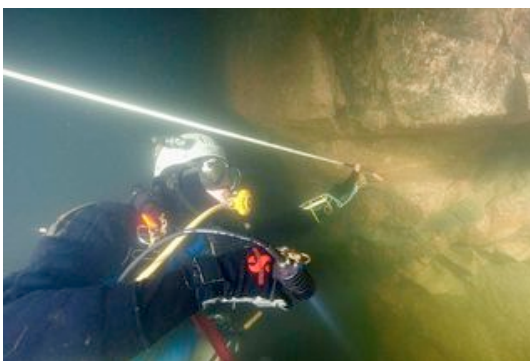
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Fact-finding mission: Samuel Vermey floats in the duckweed on the surface of The Crater. Pictures: Liz Rogers



Craig Challen descends into The Crater.



Joel Vermey measures the radius of The Crater at 20m.



Cyclone Yasi - the aftermath

Cyclone Yasi's carnage - view



Cyclone Yasi decimates

Cyclone Yasi destroys Tully

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