



SEA BRAGGIN'

St George Scuba Club Newsletter

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Yongala and GBR - Ian Roffey, Mike Scotland, Tricia Henry & Mark Ridsdale

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YONGALA AND GBR

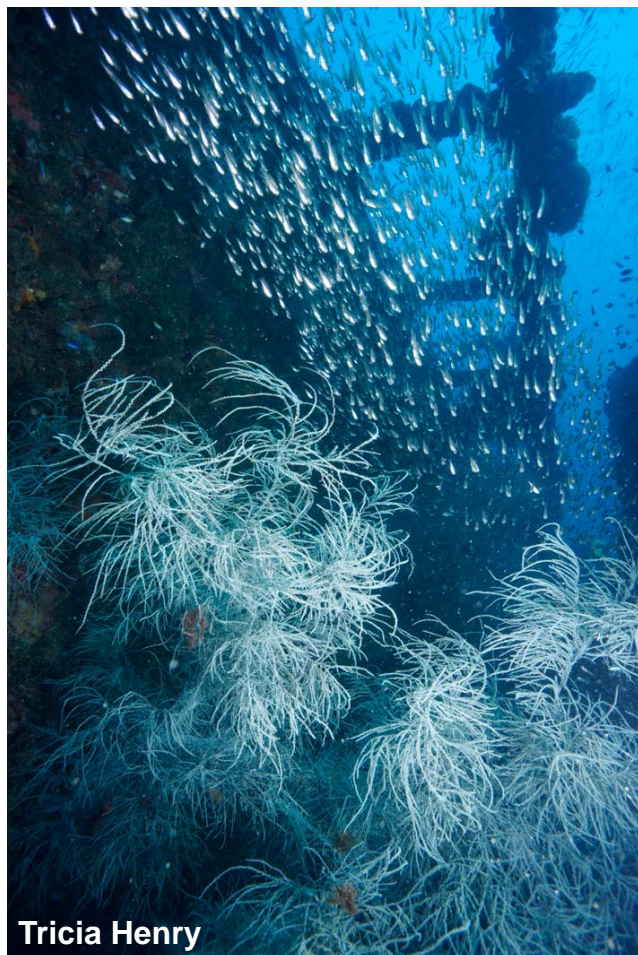
November 2013

10 November 2013

We arrived in Townsville in the early afternoon - eleven of us on the same Jetstar flight, a couple of hours late. The others were already in Townsville. We had our first look at Kalinda as we dumped our bags and headed to Monsoon's Bar for the rest of the day. There were seventeen St George members in all and we had all gathered at Monsoon's by the early evening. Beers and meals all around. We headed back to Kalinda at around 8pm for cabin allocations, stowed our gear and had a general briefing by Dave Stewart our skipper and met the rest of the crew. We cast off at 10:20 pm, and we headed out to sea.

11 November 2013

After an overnight sail, we moored in the early hours of the morning. We woke up to a turtle, 40nm off shore. We could just make out the Queensland Coast in the far distance. Our day's diving was going to be the wreck of the Yongala, which sank in a storm in 1903 and only discovered in the 1950's. It's a historic wreck and one of the top 10 wreck dives in the world according to Dave at the dive brief. He's not far wrong, it is an excellent dive wreck.



Tricia Henry



On my first dive with Phil we dived the length of the wreck. There was amazing fish life, clouds of fry and all sorts of fish along the whole line of the wreck. Giant trevally and barracuda just off the side.

The Yongola is lying on its side. The dive line took us down to the top deck and we swam along to the stern, around underneath and back along the hull side. There are a tremendous variety of colourful soft corals and gorgonian fans covering most of the wreck.

On the second dive I went in to the superstructure, technically not a penetration dive as the superstructure is quite open. It's not a large space, but quite open with lots of larger fish living inside. Lots of red harp coral. Down the stern the closest we got to a hull penetration was peering inside the aft cabin to see an old bathtub still in place. Rumour has it that if you try to enter this section of the wreck the English lady ghost will tell you to leave.

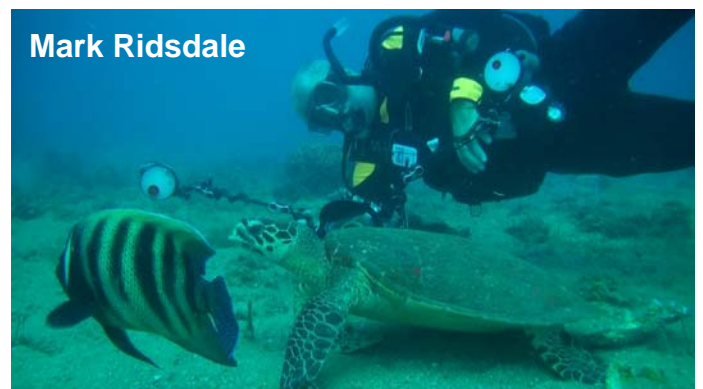
On the third dive the current had started. It was hand over hand across the mooring line to get to the wreck. Only seven divers made it across to the wreck. On the way down we saw two giant bull rays just floating above the wreck in the current. Then we had to go hand over hand down the side of the wreck to the bow, into the pressure wave at the apex. That was amazing as Phil, Clint and I just watched the big fish feeding right in front of us. We went down under the bow to a massive school of snapper, which just watched us, from about a metre away. Fish life was incredible, very dense in such a small area. On the way back up the side of the wreck we passed Tricia, Bob and James coming down. We saw a giant Queensland grouper about 5 metres off the wreck. It was huge - about the size of a small car, just hanging there in the fading light. Once again we went hand over hand in current that was by now nearly 4-5knots, back to the boat. Once back on board we cancelled any night dives, and headed off to our next destination.

Mark Ridsdale:

Having endured a rolling night on the high seas (the top bunks aren't fun at all) we arrived at the Yongala. Mike Scotland and I teamed up and dropped down the stern buoy and then onto the starboard side sand bottom to be greeted by a white coloured sea-snake which disappeared quickly once Mike decided to take happy snaps. Then there was a turtle and a 6-banded Angelfish – some great shots were taken. We then proceeded to the aft port side – the underneath of the stern was jam-packed with large sweetlips and giant trevally moved in and out, upsetting the smaller fishes daily routine. Then a large eagle ray arrived at the cleaning station and put on a real show until some overly eager happy snappers thought they would have a race with the ray, which was never to be seen again.

Up on the top deck we were treated to a parade of fish of endless varieties and large (2+ metre) shovel-nosed rays cruised along the starboard rail back and forth. All this was happening with GTs creating mayhem and other varieties of pelagics – tunas and mackerels joining in.

The Yongala - what an eco-system - just a fantastic spectacle.





Tricia Henry:

After two great dives on the Yongala with little of the current that the Yongala is renowned for, our anticipation was high for dive number 3. No such luck – a very strong current had arrived, and out of 17 divers, only 7 got to the bottom!!! However, once we had dragged ourselves along the line that led to the mooring line and then down line to the wreck, we found that we could find shelter under the bow on the sand at 28 metres. Here we just relaxed with a large school of painted sweetlips and watched the fish life go past – large barracuda, bull rays, potato cod, kingfish, rainbow runners, black trevally, queenfish, mackerel and tuna to name a few. Definitely a dive to remember!!!

12 November 2013

We anchored in the early hours of the morning, so most of us had a good night's sleep. Our first dive was Shell reef on one side. It is basically a horseshoe reef. We did two dives on one side then moved to the other side to explore further. Lots of coral fish around. Skipper Dave and engineer Sam (he who fixes the heads) went spear fishing and caught some nice parrot fish and a decent sized sweet lips which were barbecued for dinner.

Mike Scotland:

On day one, we dived the Yongala in conditions that were close to ideal. We had the sort of dive that makes the Yongala a world rated dive. Clear water, calm seas and some current. Mark Ridsdale and I encountered a curious Eagle Ray on the Stern. We both filmed a tame Green Turtle and a sea snake along with a Six Banded Angelfish, which made a photogenic trio.

On the wreck itself at 16 metres, a large Shovel Nose Shark Ray patrolled back and forth several times as if it owned the wreck.

On our third dive of the day, everyone except three of us aborted the dive because of the very powerful current. Simon, Shane and I fought our way to the wreck by pulling ourselves down the mooring line. Once on the wreck, moving about was futile and we could see the air contents in our tanks rocketing downwards. So it was lock in with the reef hooks and watch the most amazing spectacle of marine life. A huge Spotted Ray hovered less than a metre above our heads for ages. Trevally and Cod positioned themselves in the current which was too strong even for them to be out in the open. I spotted a school of the very beautiful Mackerel Tuna that skimmed by us a few times. Unfortunately the night dive was called off and we set off for a safe anchorage.



13 November 2013

We were now on the outer reef, 85nm from our starting point, to explore reefs that even Dave hasn't dived before. In the morning we dived Pollock's Pinnacles, Castor reef, then Jaguar reef. The reefs are deceiving from the surface, as all

you can see are what look like the tops of bommies from the boat. When you get under water they're massive structures of huge coral with valleys in between, from about 28m on the bottom right up to just a couple of meters below the surface. There's not a lot of fish life about. Although lots of coral looks dead, there is also lots of evidence of regrowth. We saw eggs inside the coral polyps waiting to be expelled on the spawning event that could be in the next week or so.

We were on the lee side of the outer reef, the sea was flat, with a slight breeze.





Great diving conditions. Just three nautical miles inside the edge of the outer reef, which is the edge of the continental shelf. There weren't many reefs around. We could see waves breaking either side of us, but they don't extend very far. We were hoping that the wind would drop off so that we could get outside into the deep water.

I went for my first night dive on Jaguar reef. A new set of batteries makes all the difference to my torch. Phil is not into night diving so I buddied up with Ray and Bob. In my excitement I left my dive computer behind. I found the most fun was wiping a torch light across walls of coral looking for the telltale glow of some red eyes. This way I found a lobster underneath some brain coral and loads of shrimp.

On our deco stop at the bottom of the boat we turned off our torches and just watched the reef by the flood lights from the boat. It illuminated the side of the reef in an eerie light. Back on board we had just enough time for a quick shower before a BBQ dinner and some cheap red wine. At \$10 a bottle it was just drinkable and got better as the trip got longer.

Mike Scotland:

First dive was at Pollock's reef, 60nm east of the Yongala on the outer reef. The water had that inviting sapphire blue colour of the Coral Sea. We dived on a pinnacle, which was like an aquarium. The fish life was prolific here and the corals were very healthy. Mark and I did a spiral dive around the pinnacle twice. It was a wonderful coral garden filled with colourful fish in clear blue water.

Next we dived Castor reef. It had acres of Caulerpa, a green sea weed and rich coral gardens. Two Giant Trevally swam in to check us out.

Our night dive included an Epauvette shark, and corals out feeding like a garden of flowers. We could see the coral eggs ready to pop. Next week would be coral spawning time.

The last night dive of the trip was at Anzac Reef. Once again, the current was so strong in the late afternoon dive that everyone decided to abort the night dive except for three divers: you guessed it - Shane, Simon and me. The current suddenly died ten minutes into the dive. It turned out to be the equal best dive of the trip, along with the Yongala. We saw Lobsters, Slipper Lobsters, a Pygmy Wobbegong, two huge reef crabs, Flatworms and a coral garden so colourful, I thought Simon had slipped some LSD into my cup of tea.

This year's Kalinda trip was excellent. The

Mike Scotland



Mike Scotland



Mark Ridsdale by Mike Scotland



banter and camaraderie on board never stopped and everyone had a really great time. Thanks to Ian for organising the trip. This trip was my 40th dive trip to the Great Barrier Reef.

There are 12 pictures on my website from this year and 12 from last year.

www.mikescotlandscuba.com

Go to the Barrier Reef section and scroll across to the Townsville tab.

14 November 2013

Yesterday there was supposed to be a drift dive. We were split into two groups, the photographers and the non photographers, eight divers in each. But the drift dive didn't happen so this morning we were trying again on the edge of the reef on Lion's reef. It was planned to head 30m down and to go with the current. About half the photographers didn't want to take their cameras, but also didn't want to stay in the photographer's group. (Just goes to show how popular photographers are!) So I had the task of rounding up a group of eight to be ready to jump in the current with military precision.

Lion reef is another small reef on the outer edge of the Great Barrier Reef. It's basically a large rectangular bommie, along side another reef, creating a deep 30m channel between them. With military precision the first group jumped over board and then down into the current. Go, go, go. I'm in the second group with Phil, Caroline, James and Mark. With two minutes to go our dive master, Kimberly jumps over board. We had to go back and get her. So much for military precision. Once we were all over board we went down into the trench and the current. The water was gin clear and we were rocketing along at 4 knots, maybe. There were a couple of grey tip reef sharks hanging in the current with us and a few other pelagic fish as well. We soon got to the end of the bommie and had to swim cross current to get up onto the top of the bommie to finish the dive. It was a strong current, so we only spent a few mins on the bommie, before

doing a blue water flying deco stop at five metres. I got to practise my blue water SMB deployment, which was a bit limp on the surface, but at least it worked.

Next we headed over to a lagoon called Jupiter reef. The water here was dead flat as the lagoon is once again part of the outer reef. On the way over the fishing lines were put out and a couple of mackerel make it to the larder.

Once again the water was gin clear and there was hardly any current. Phil and I headed off the starboard side of Kalinda, to the edge of the reef on the bottom at 23m and stopped to just look out into the blue over the white sandy bottom that slopes away. After a few minutes a grey tip reef shark passed by, followed by what looked like mackerel. It seems to be a bit of a highway for sharks and pelagic fish.

Next we headed up into the reef. There's a lot of dead coral around, from cyclone Yarsi. Parts look like a rubble pit, but there is evidence that the coral is re-growing. There are swim throughs and crevices through the reef.

We got to another reef edge above the sand. Once again we stopped and waited and so a school of mackerel swam by then around us, along with a couple of trevally. There were lots of schools of reef fish all around. Then we headed back to Kalinda.

The diving is really well organised. Once we got to a site, Dave would give us a very detailed briefing and



Simon Hoad by Mike Scotland



then we would dive. We'd come back, our cylinders were filled and when we were ready we would dive again. The dive deck is large enough and the entry is down a dive ladder on the side of the boat. This works really well.

In the afternoon the boat had hardly moved as the water was so calm. This time Phil and I were joined by Clint, as we explored the port side of the boat, up into the shallow part of the lagoon. There is lots of stag horn coral, which has been devastated by the cyclone. It looks like an elephant's graveyard to me, but in amongst it you can see the coral coming back to life. Despite the devastation we saw large schools of sweet lips and other fish, so the reef is reviving. We also saw a turtle and lots of giant clams scattered around the area.

It's hard to believe we're 85nm offshore as the sea is so calm. At six pm there were just a few gentle breaks over the lagoons edge. Time for a night dive or do I crack a beer and watch the sun go down?

15 November 2013

We woke up to a dead flat sea, with hardly any wind. So we headed out to do another current dive outside of Viper reef. This is the edge of the continental shelf - we can't get any further out than this. It was another drift dive, with the same groups as before. There were no problems getting organised as we're all keen. As we jumped into the water, gathered the group together and then headed down, we could see the bottom, at least 40 metres below. Here the reef is a wall all the way to the bottom. Actually it's not really the bottom. It's just a sandy ledge of the continental shelf. In reality the sandy bottom slopes away and just

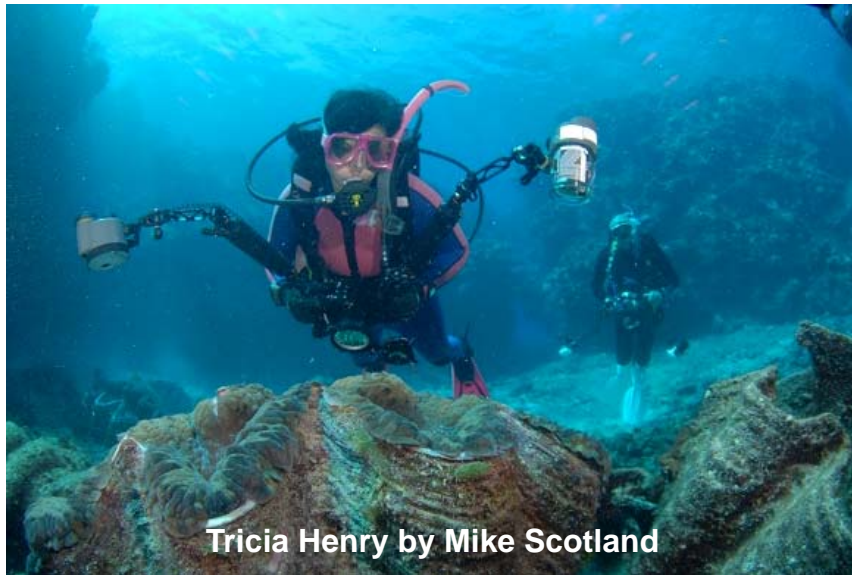
keeps going down. Looking at the wall I saw a turtle in a crevice, but I couldn't help swimming away from the wall at around 30m and just staring out. The sand line is still another 10 or 20 m below, but there is more to see staying above it than touching bottom.

The dive was like flying above a landscape. Looking back to the wall I saw the occasional reef sharks cruising below the edge of the wall above me. But I spent more time looking out and down at the ocean bottom beneath me. The viz was probably 40m-50m and the sand full of features. I wonder what lurks out there? I think James had the same idea, just hanging in the open water. It was surreal.

Eventually we had to ascend to around 15m and we spent the rest of the dive closer to the wall, looking in all the nooks and crannies. Lots of reef

fish around. We finished the dive on top of the wall in about 5m then headed back to the boat.

Viper reef was our furthest point out, so we needed to do a quick turnaround for our second dive, to start heading back. Inside Viper reef there's a huge bommie, where Dave anchored Kalinda at the apex



near the end into the current. Phil and I descended to the apex then went down to 25m just off the bottom. Hanging there for a while the mackerel came in to have a look. Drifting down the current at the side of the bommie there were lots of reef fish around. All types of species. This was certainly the most prolific site we'd visited so far. Every now and then the mackerel would come back to take a look and swim around us, followed by some barracudas. The top of the bommie is in about 10m and there are lots of



crevices to explore as we made our way over the top to the side where Kalinda is anchored, and finished the dive.

We were now heading back, with only four more dives to go. On the way Dave hooked two 20kgs yellowfin tuna, providing excitement for the trip. During most of our trips the lines are out and have caught quite a few mackerel.

Next stop is Anzac reef and we do observe a minute of silence at the dive brief. The reef is an inner reef and consists of a system of bommies interconnected by reef and rubble.

Phil and I headed down the side of the reef and started swimming in and out of the bommies. There are a series of swim throughs and valleys with vertical walls covered with gorgonian fans. Lots of reef fish here, all sort of schools of unicorn fish and surgeon fish. We see plenty of pelagic fish, as mackerel and trevally swim past the reef's edge. Also on the edge we see a pair of grey whaler sharks circling. Then they circled closer and closer, definitely checking us out, before moving away.

Throughout the dive we saw a number of white tipped reef sharks swimming in and out of the reef. Towards the end of the dive we headed up to a bommie and did a safety stop at 10m, then up to 5m for another safety stop in the water, swimming to maintain position. Then on the surface it was obvious we couldn't swim back to the boat as the current had come up. A long line was put out from the back of the boat and we managed to haul ourselves back, hand over hand. We stayed for the night dive but there were only three divers, Mick, Simon and Shane.

That night we gorged ourselves on sashimi. Two huge plates came out and we ate as much as we wanted and there was plenty left over. Later on we had BBQ mackerel so we were absolutely stuffed with seafood, and a not bad \$10 bottle of sauvignon blanc. Wine is only \$10 a bottle on Kalinda and there are a choice of drinkable reds and white. By now they're all quite drinkable!

16 November 2013

We're heading back and it was an overnight sail till about midnight to the edge of Grub reef, about 65nm from Townsville. Just after day break at about 5:20am Dave manoeuvred Kalinda into the reef system close to Area 51, which is a reef within a reef. At the reef briefing Dave tells us about the confirmed UFO sightings over the Great Barrier Reef, and of course he's seen one.

Area 51 is a clearing inside the reef, named after the movie Cocoon, where the alien eggs are in the ocean. Here the alien eggs are giant clams.



Caroline Corcoran by Mike Scotland

Kalinda is anchored in 25m of water on the sand. Just after 6pm we were in the water and Phil and I approached the reef edge at about 18m and swam through the first gap to an area of sand with a number of giant clams. There are lots of swim throughs around so we keep going in the same direction and come out to Area 51 in about 8m. Here there are dozens of giant clams all over this sandy clearing in the reef. The clams are both alive and dead and some buried in sand. Most of the clams are huge, we didn't see a range of sizes for some reason. I don't know their growth cycle and wonder where the small and medium sized clams



are, that would eventually be fully grown. We swam in and out of various swim throughs and saw clams here and there, but not the same concentration. Eventually we made it out to the edge of the reef and started swimming back towards the boat. On the way back we saw more reef fish including a hump back wrasse and more pelagic fish. Closer to the boat we saw 3 white tip sharks taking turns at eating the fish carcass from the night before. The water was pretty clear, so we just sat on the top of a reef outcrop and watched for a while, before heading up.

It was an early morning dive, so there were bacon and egg rolls waiting for us back in deck. Our last dive was back to the same place. This time Phil and I did it in reverse. It was just as good the second time round, but knowing it was our last dive I think we appreciated it more. We saw a lot more divers and everyone was posing for underwater photos. At the end Phil found a large brain coral standing on it's own so he stood on it posing with his arms stretched out. On the anchor line doing our safety stop Steve spotted a big fish coming out of the shadows below us. It was a large Queensland grouper. Steve went down and got some photos of it, as it just lazily swam back into the shadows as if to say goodbye, thanks for diving.

Ian Roffey

PHILIPPINES - Puerto Galera 22 - 30 Mar 2014

\$2115.00 for 8 nights including overnight stay in Manila.

**There are some options - Nitrox, Unlimited diving - have a look!
Add \$934 for an additional 5 nights in Anilao.**

Prices include two boat dives per day and unlimited shore dives, as well as all meals.

Great price and a great experience.

This is peak timing so a deposit is required as soon as possible to secure the trip. Deposit is \$500 with the \$900 balance payable as soon as funds are available.

**Contact Mark Ridsdale
0419243717 msrconsulting@aol.com**



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Optional Upgrades:

- * Family Room: Double/Twin Share please add \$40 pp
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- Unlimited diving is based on *Schedule Daytime dives* there are at least four scheduled dives a day, usual times are 8am, 10:30am, 1:30pm and 4pm. Night dives are extra.

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Please add \$ 934 per person

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- Accommodation at El Pinoy Resort - Anilao - Standard Room Twin/Double
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- 2 boat dives / day / person, Service of the dive master, Weight and weight belt, Tanks, air and Boat
- Unlimited shore dive from 8 am to 5 pm no dive master

*** To Upgrade to Deluxe Room please add \$85pp ***

*** To Upgrade to Villa please add \$155pp ***

Not included: PHP200 marine park fee per person per day

Price does not include: Travel insurance, meals (unless specified), personal expenses, excess baggage charges, Marine Park Fees, departure/terminal fees in Philippines

Booking conditions apply. Prices subject to change at any time without notice.

\$1400 Deposit required to secure a spot!

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SEA BRAGGIN' HEROES AND ZEROS

Here is a segment I would like to initiate called "Heroes and Zeros". It is an arena where you may publicly thank your hero for being so wonderful or name and shame your zero. (All politely tongue in cheek of course. Not meant to be nasty, just a bit of fun.)

In the Desperate Divers, if you turned up to a dive but forgot a vital piece of equipment, you were imposed a fine where you had to buy a beer for everyone else who was on that dive on the day. I once turned up to Voo Doo with less than half a tank of air so I copped a beer fine to the other three divers. If anyone tells you I was once half tanked, it's true!

So in that spirit of mateship, here are my heroes:

To my favourite skippers Michael McFadyen and Ray Moulang, thank you for coming and picking me up from Bundeena wharf on our boat dives. This saves me a long 45-50 minute drive through the National Park and is very much appreciated. I thank you, you are my heroes.

To my good mate and long time buddy Ken Ridley, thank you for the good times, the bad jokes and the air fills, without which I couldn't breathe. You are my hero.

To Eddy Ivers, for repairing my torches often and for your photographic advice. You are my hero.

And now to my zeros, I have only one:

To Glen Freeland, for upstaging my wanky gadget with an even better wanky gadget. You turned up with an awesome, portable, self powered cappuccino maker which outclassed my ugg boot for a beer stubby... and you didn't even make me a coffee. You are my zero. But just quietly I was very impressed. Where do you buy them? I want one!

I hope that others may come forward and praise people who deserve it. Maybe someone saved you from missing a dive by loaning you a piece of gear that you left behind or paid your national park fee when you left your wallet at home. If you have a hero then this is the place to thank them.

Maxine Hayden

South West Rocks Fri 27 June – Sun 29 June 2014

A weekend trip up to South West Rocks - we have dived heaps with these guys and they are the best.

Here is the deal:

- 2 night / 4 dive package including 2 nights divers lodge accommodation
- continental breakfast
- four boat dives (double boat dive each day)
- use of tanks, weights and Nitrox
- Shared room/bunk accommodation \$320 per person
- Private/twin share accommodation \$360 per person
- Full equipment hire with dive package additional \$60

Please email me back if you are interested. Just getting numbers interested at present.

Contact Ray Moulang
rayscases@aol.com



NIGHT DIVES

As most members would be aware, every Thursday night we plan a night dive. We have been doing this now for over 10 years. The numbers who attend probably average about 8 or so, but we have had as many as 16 on dives.

In November we were lucky and had no bad weather to stop dives going ahead. On 7 November we dived Bare Island Deep Wall. There were 8 members on this dive. It was flat as, so we went off the western point to the south-west to the wall. Even though it was just after low tide, the viz was at least 10 metres out there. We saw one Red Indianfish on RIF Reef and two more on 15 Metre Reef. There were lots of small squid, opera house nudis and purple dragons. Someone saw a pygmy pipehorse. It was a bit dirtier back at about 13 metres and then clean again. It was a very good dive, with warm water at almost 20C.

The next Thursday we again dived Bare Island Deep Wall. We headed off the same way but as it was very dirty at the wall we did not go south as we normally do. I saw three Firefish, lots of small squid, a huge Flounder and lots of opera house nudis. We all ended up separated at about 13 metres on the way back due to the poor visibility. We would have been better off not diving.

For three weeks in a row we dived Bare Island Deep Wall, doing it again on 21 November. As per the previous two weeks there were 8 divers. I could not find the pygmy pipehorse that I saw the day before. There were lots of Dwarf Firefish, at least 5. I found another Red Indianfish near where we saw one on





the Wednesday and then another at 13 metres. There were lots of nudis again, including a type I do not think I have seen before. It was very dirty when we got in and above 6 metres on the way back, but elsewhere nice. This was a good dive.

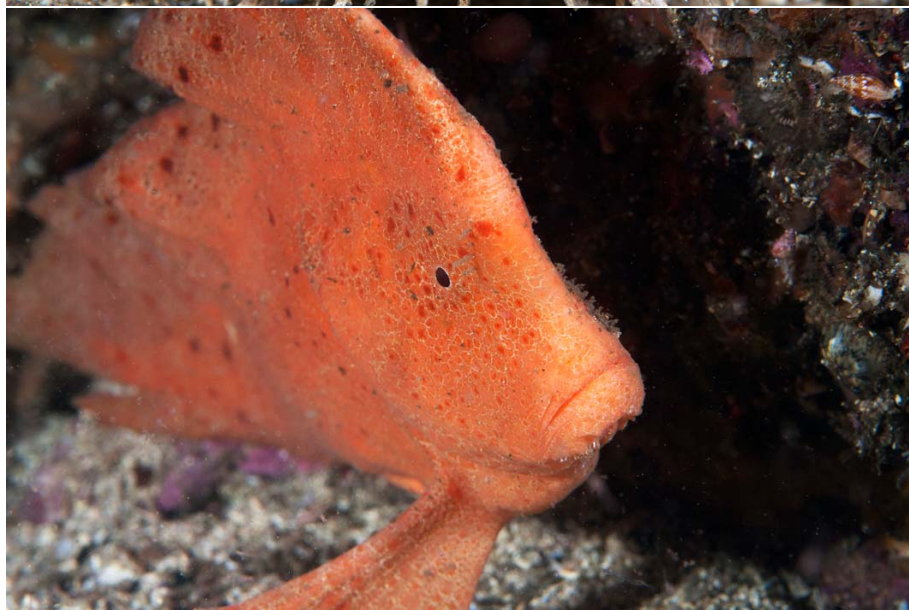
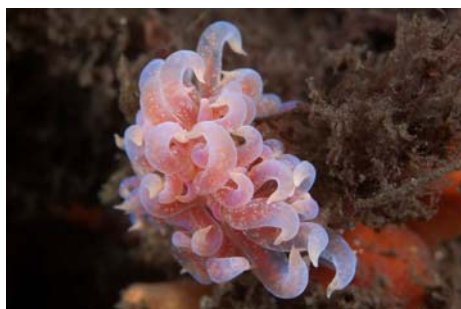
After all our dives, we generally have pizza at one of the places that we know are good. I send out an email each week with details of where the dive will be held. Come along and have a great dive!

Michael McFadyen's Scuba Diving

www.michaelmcfadyenscuba.info

Michael McFadyen

Photos Ron Walsh





MADEIRA ISLAND

September 2013

I'm afraid many people don't even know where this island is located. It's a Portuguese territory in Atlantic, just beside the west coast of North West Africa and less than 300km from Casablanca. It's a big island which has several cities and national parks.

Apart from the main island, there are also another two associated islands. The more famous one is called Porto Santo. It takes around one and half hour flight to get there from the nation's capital - Lisbon. They have a decent international airport and receive flights from most European main cities. The Madeira airport has once been regarded as one of the most dangerous airports in the world until it extended its runway for another kilometre one or two decades ago.

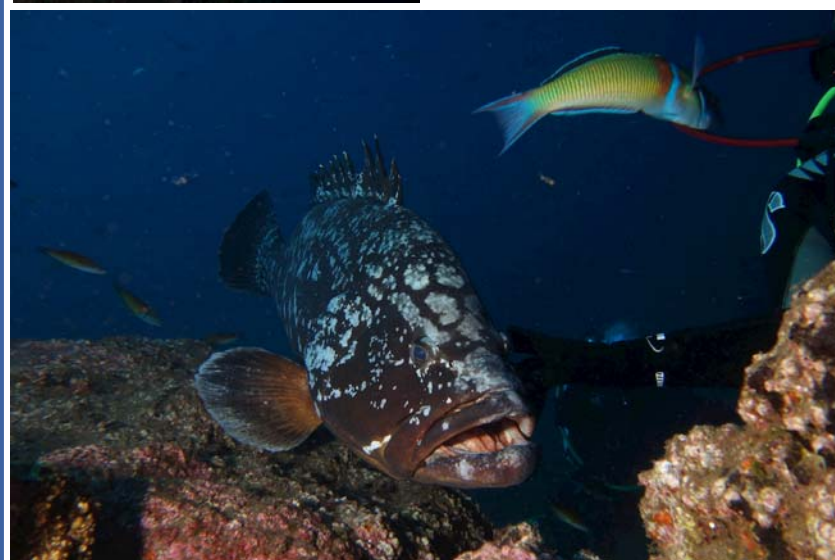


Anyway, the diving here was fantastic. It has no coral at all, as you can imagine for most of the islands in north Atlantic. However, it has big boulders, rock formations and some interesting tunnels along the rocky shore. One of the most famous underwater national parks is just right at the South East corner (if I am not wrong) and its name is Garajau National Park.

We dived there in late September and the water was just crystal clear. On the jetty you can see the bottom at least 10 m depth and when you reach the dive sites it's around 25-30m and you can almost see the bottom. How amazing it is! The water is similar to Sydney's summer conditions, 21-22 degrees at this season. Very strong current though.

The dive shop owner said it's normal in this season, but this is the best season to dive as the sea can be very big in winter. When we jumped in, we had to hold onto the rail or rope on the side of the boat otherwise we would definitely have drifted away in the strong current. The current was still strong at depths of 20-25m, but relatively better than on the surface.

One of the super stars here is the Giant Grouper. I don't know the exact name of it but it's similar to the one that Australian divers can find in the Great Barrier Reef. It was just huge, at least one metre long and 15cm - 20 cm wide (as you can see in the photo). They were really cute and friendly. People can touch and interact with them and it was like playing with dogs. Very friendly.



There are many other kinds of fishes and the fish life here was prolific. If you look closely, you can find small critters just behind or under the rocks, such as shrimps, eels and spider crabs etc. The second dive was at Arena, another dive site just not far away from the Garajau. It was also very good, with heaps of fishes but no Giant Groupers.



The current got stronger in the afternoon and sometimes we had to move along by holding the rocks! There were several interesting swim-throughs and arches to explore.

There are around 5 to 6 diving operation on this island and they all provide English speaking services. If you stay in the capital of the island (Funchal city), you have to organise the dive shop to pick you up. We used Madeira Dive Centre and they provided free pick up and drop off from our accommodation in Funchal, which was very good as taxis could be very expensive on the island. A one way ride can cost you 30EUR via taxi. The dive centre was good and all their hire gear was new and well maintained. They did very detailed briefing in different languages (depends on where the divers are from).

All in all, we had great dives and it is worth a try if you haven't dived in the Atlantic before. There are many other dive spots available, including wrecks and Porto Santo day tours. Send them an email if you have any queries.

Tong Zheng





MONTAGUE ISLAND

October Long Weekend 2013

On the October long weekend, Caroline Corcoran, Steve Boyd, Dave Burns, Lisa Hall and myself made the annual journey down to Montague Island on the South Coast to dive with the seals.

The trip down was hell with most of us taking 6.5 or 7 hours to get there due to road works south of Sydney. As we couldn't get off work early, Lisa and I left Bundeeena at 5pm and after sitting in two lanes of standstill traffic, limped into Kiama for dinner at about 8pm. The rest of the trip was no easier and we finally arrived at 11.30pm just after Caroline and Steve. Dave decided to ditch the traffic and return home and turned up the next day.

Our luck changed for the better on the boat ride out to the island when the skipper had to stop the engines to avoid hitting a humpback whale feeding in the upright position with its head out of the water just 15m in front of the boat. The whale's throat pleats were clearly expanded and we could hear the water being squeezed through its baleen as it sieved its food. We continued our voyage and saw more humpbacks surfacing in the distance. Mutton birds were in abundance and then the seals came into view dotting the surface here and there and duck diving alongside us.

On our first dive we entered the water to find the top 2-3 metres full of (Lion's Mane?) jellyfish with very long tentacles. We quickly dropped down below the stingers to find the water a bone-numbing 14 degrees. We tried to forget the temperature by playing with the seals, who were as cheeky as ever. We saw several large Bull Rays swimming around with the seals, as well as a couple of Port Jacksons. Then I spotted a large turtle laying on the rocky bottom. At first he seemed oblivious to us. He then turned to look at me before taking off effortlessly in the opposite direction.

With Lisa shivering uncontrollably, we headed back to the boat for some hot soup and bread rolls. On the second dive Lisa decided to stay behind so I joined Caroline and Steve. We swam around to the amphitheatre and watched as the seals rushed up to us barking and grunting before darting off at the last possible moment, leaving us in their wake. Again we saw the Bull Rays swimming through the seals and also saw two Fiddler Rays down on the sand below the kelp. A couple of Blue Groupers joined us for a while and then we spotted a large PJ cohabiting with a Wobbegong under a large boulder. We had to ascend with our hands over our faces to avoid the many hundreds of jellyfish near the surface.

After returning back to shore, Lisa and I made the obligatory drive south to visit the town of Tilba. Or was it Tilba Tilba? Or it could have been Central Tilba. Why are there so many Tilbas?? Here we sampled cheese and ate lunch washed down by a cold brew at the historic pub before browsing the many tourist shops. Late in the afternoon we drank cappuccinos and ate homemade pecan pie at one of the cafes before returning to Narooma. The rest of the group had spent the afternoon exploring the area or had taken a walk.

That evening we went to a local Italian restaurant for dinner and we could hear music from the Blues Festival which was being held in Narooma on the same weekend. After a short taxi ride home it was off to bed for an early start in the morning.

Sunday morning dawned and after a quick breakfast we headed off to the wharf where a strategic parking spot meant your car would be spared from pelican poo. We donned our life jackets for the bar crossing then settled in for the half hour trip across to the island. Again we spotted whales on the journey out and once in the water we could clearly hear their whale song. Today there were many more seals in the water and they seemed friendlier. I remember this happening last year when the third day was by far the best of the weekend.

We spent most of the dive in the shallows being dive bombed by the seals and also by birds who were swimming down deep below the surface with the seals chasing them. It was hilarious to watch as all hell would break loose from the surface and feathers, fur and fins would approach you at breakneck speed leaving you ducking for cover before



they all chased themselves away again. Some of the birds were cheeky enough to peck at our cameras and equipment.

Our second dive was much the same but a shorter duration due to the extreme cold. As we made our way back to the boat along the bottom, I looked out into the deep and noticed a long thin strap floating up from a crevice about 5m away. I swam over to it to find it guarded by two sea urchins. After carefully pulling it free, I discovered a near new Go Pro camera!! Top score!! The jellyfish were again abundant but today they seemed to be at all depths of the water, not just at the top. I got stung on both my wrists and my face as I surfaced.

On deck, I asked if anyone had lost anything. No one had. Later at our accommodation, another group of divers staying there returned from their days' diving and I asked them if they had lost any equipment. A lady asked if I had found a camera as a diver from another group had lost one yesterday. After a few calls to the other charter company, we located the owner. Twenty minutes later he knocked on my motel door and was reunited with his 6 month old camera and his footage of the seals. Some happy snaps were taken and I scored a case of beer for my troubles. A good ending to some lovely diving.

Caroline decided to leave that afternoon to avoid the holiday traffic the next day and made a very wise decision. Dave was heading south to Melbourne on Monday night leaving the rest of us to return to Sydney in a bumper to bumper nightmare. We had been on the road for some time and travelled about 100km when Lisa turned to me and said "Mum did you get my wetsuits off the clothesline out the back?"

A huge thank you to Caroline for organising the trip and to Dave for picking up the wetsuits, thereby saving my daughter from grievous bodily harm!

Maxine Hayden

WOOLI

Anemone Bay and Fish Soup

Here we are at Wooli and unfortunately it's a non-dive day due to strong southerly winds. Yesterday we dived Anemone Bay, then Fish Soup.

On the first dive I went down the mooring line and during the descent had turned on my strobes and camera, and as soon as I reached the bottom I swam round a large boulder and came face to face with two grey nurse sharks at very close range. Using a wide-angle lens I was within centimetres of each shark and took two grab shots without checking any camera settings. I was as startled as the sharks were, and the encounter lasted mere seconds before they sped off. The second head-on photo was before he bumped into the camera, and as can be seen it is not the greatest quality photo, or all in focus, but the subject matter makes up for it. He had a large stainless steel hook in his mouth with a long metal trace hanging off it. Very sad.

Ian Hittman





PALAU LIVE ABOARD DIVING

August 2013

In August, I was fortunate to go to Palau for a week on board Ocean Hunter 3. This is an ex Australian research vessel which is over 30 metres long.

I did 27 dives during the week in the main areas of diving. My favorite dives



were Buoy Number 6 and a night dive on Ngemelus reef on the big wall.

Buoy number 6 was a submarine chaser. It was sunk in Operation Desecrate in March 1944 in the East Shipping channel. It is covered with soft coral and all sorts of growth. It is a fantastic close up photo dive and also a wonderful wide-angle dive.

I saw cuttlefish, Crocodile fish, Long Nose Hawk Fish and lobsters on this wreck.

The night diving was excellent in Palau. The corals are healthy and support wonderful fish life. We saw sleeping Parrotfish, Angel Fish, Saron shrimp, Horrid Elbow crabs and plenty of other great stuff.

Saies tunnel was a very spectacular cave dive rivaling Blue Hole for magnificent underwater scenery.

Blue Corner turned on its shark dive magic. The highlight for me was a Grey Reef shark trying to eat a Wahoo. The Wahoo just managed to avoid being eaten before the shark gave up the chase.

I did another six dives as day diving from Fish N Fins in Koror, the main town.

I dived with Fish N Fins, which is the original dive shop in Palau. It is also the cheapest. I have not seen the dive boats at Sam's Tours but I

would be very sure that the dive boats are more comfortable at Fish N Fins. The owner Navot is a legendary diver who has been inducted into the diving Hall of Fame. He is also a Naval architect and has the boats built to his



specifications for divers. The design of his boats incorporates many of the best features of dive boat safety and comfort.

We dived other wrecks on this trip including the Depth charge wreck, the Iro, the Chuyo Maru and Jake's Seaplane. I also dived Peleliu, the scene of one of the most brutal battles of WWII, during which 12,000 soldiers died. There were 50 calibre bullet clips on the sea floor as well as machine gun rounds between coral heads. We actually dived Green beach where hundreds of US soldiers died during the beach landing.



I was impressed by the Jellyfish Lake. It had amazing sponges and anemones and the strange marine life was out of this world.

We also did Chandelier cave and found Mandarin fish. Palau is a great dive location but it does take a day and a half to get there so it is worth going for longer. A two-week trip will give you nine or ten days diving, with 4 to 5 days of travelling and a safety day.

Please note, I have a story on Palau for those who are interested in appearing in Dive Log in December, and another story in Depth magazine on Palau located at http://www.depthmagazine.net/Magazines/Nov_Dec_2013/

Mike Scotland

SHIPROCK SHORE DIVE

Sunday 17 November 2013

Divers: Kelly, Michael, Ken, Donna, Ron, Eddie, Tong (and friend), Paul

Not a great day weather-wise, with a howling southerly wind and drizzly rain.

Eddie and I decided to get there early and have coffee on the pool deck but the crummy weather didn't make it a fantastic experience.

It was good to put a wetsuit on to warm up and the water was warmer than the air temperature.



We were pleasantly surprised with the viz when we discovered it was about 8 metres.

Spotted during the dive were a Port Jackson shark, a couple of Wobbies, Opera House Nudi's, Hermit crabs and all the usual suspects.

I was rather pleased to find a Conspicuous Polycera nudibranch near the Pineapple Fish grotto.

A pleasant dive despite the weather and we followed up with CACA at the D'Lish cafe.

Thanks to Ron and Eddie for supplying the attached photographs.

Paul Pacey





SEA BRAGGIN'

MINMI TRENCH AND WHALE WATCH PLATFORM

23 November 2013

What was looking like a day for sleeping in turned out to be one the best days in weeks. The seas flattened out, the wind dropped and the visibility, despite the low tide, was exceptional. Leo and Rudy both pulled out on Friday, which left just Max and myself. We loaded up early and headed to Minmi Trench. After setting the anchor, the drop line we geared up, and saw the other 3 boats heading out to M & K Reef.

While on the bottom in 15° water we heard a couple of other boats pull up. Along the trench in 15m visibility Max found a Seahorse hanging on a Tulip (did I mention the water was cold?!) Out of the trench and around the wall we found a Cuttlefish, but by now it was so cold we turned around and headed back to the anchor.

On the surface we noticed both Dave and Phil were anchored, we gave them the thumbs up and a heads up on the cold water and headed to Henry Head for a cuppa. Michael dived M & K, and he also said it was a great dive.

Our second dive took us over to the Whale Watch Platform, our usual anchoring spot was a bit surge so I decided to head to the rock fall. We anchored and headed down, the visibility was about 10m and the temperature was a touch warmer at 16°. Some nice swim throughs and a Cuttlefish. Another excellent dive.

Wayne Heming

MINMI WALL

23 November 2013

This dive was set down to do either Minmi Trench or the Whale Watch Platform. All week the weather was doubtful up to and including Friday Night, when it poured. I thought, here we go again another weekend with four full boats and crook weather and disappointed divers.

Well the boat owners to their credit said let's go anyway - ***** the weather. Well they were right and Saturday morning was bright and sunny with a light SE wind and slight chop. There were a few divers who pulled out at the last minute due to the inclement weather and in doing so missed a great dive.

After loading most of the boats at Hole in the Wall ramp at Sylvania we set off across Botany Bay. We had decided if it was ok to go out to K&M/M&K reef, which lies on the 25m depth line off the old Prince Henry hospital site. Three boats – Le Scat, DownUnder and Argonaut all anchored but due to the perceived current going all the way to the bottom the crews on DownUnder and Argonaut up anchored and went inside to dive Minmi Wall. Here we met Wayne Hemming who had decided





previously this was the best place to dive.

On anchoring and rolling in we wondered if it would have been better to stay at the other site. The reason for this was that for the first 6m of the dive the water temperature was a balmy 18 degrees, but after this it slowly dropped to around 14.7 degrees on the bottom at 25m, so just a tad chilly. Especially if you didn't have gloves!

We left the anchor and reeled out to the wall before heading west. Apart from the usual marine suspects we saw the following: a banjo ray, a horned shark which liked a scratch between the eyes, a weedy sea dragon, lots of blue dragon nudis – *P. ianthania* – plus a small marigold nudibranch – *Neodoris* sp. There was not much in way of fish. As I reeled back after about 35 minutes I was fortunate to find my first pygmy pipe horse. Later Kelly told us at morning tea that she had found 3 out on their dive as well as a couple of blue devil fish.

We were pleased to ascend to our deco stop and the relative warmth of 18 degree water. Once we were on board and had all the lines and anchor pulled in we headed for Congwong Bay for morning tea and well earned cup of hot coffee or soup plus nibbles. Once again thanks to all the boat owners for their time and providing their craft.

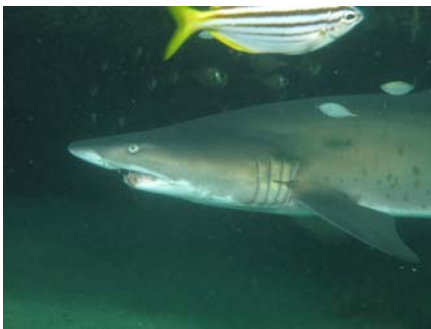
Peter Flockart

MAGIC POINT

16 November 2013



Another club boat dive and yet again the weather prediction was not good. 3 Boats began in the planning stage, and one boat dived. Yes, you guessed it, Yes Dear Too. With Leo, Corey and Rudy we braved the elements and headed to Magic Point. The Seas were a little sloppy, but not very big, and the wind was gusting to about 15kph, which made quite a comfortable trip out to Magic Point. We arrived and anchored in my usual spot, dropped the deco line and we could see almost 10m to the hanging weight. Once in the water it was obvious the visibility was around 10m. We headed over to the cave and found 6 GNS swimming around. It was quite nice to be here early before ProDive dropped 20 divers on the cave.



A nice Blue Devil was hanging around the eastern end of the cave and a large school of Catfish were hovering in front of the cave. We ventured further east and then south to the second cave, sighting a few Wobbegongs along the way, with a large one sitting in the hole. (For those who haven't seen the hole, it's a large hole through the rocks about 20m to the east of the cave, and almost always a Wobbegong resides in it). The second cave only had 1 GNS and it disappeared as soon as we arrived, but there were 2 Cuttlefish in the cave. We headed back to the main cave and up the anchor line.



After an hour surface interval in Long Bay we headed south along the coastline looking for a spot to dive. The seas were getting a little more sloppy, and the wind was now gusting to 20kph. M & K reef and Pistol Crack were quite sloppy so we headed to the Whale Watch Platform as it was a little more protected. We did the normal dive south to the caves, east and around through the grotto and north and west to the overhangs. Quite a lot of Bullseyes around but with only 3m visibility it wasn't nice. After about 35 mins we headed back to the anchor. The usual Nudibranchs, Sea Stars and an Octopus were seen.

Wayne Heming



WHAT'S COMING UP?

WHEN	WHAT/ WHERE	CONTACT	WHEN	WHAT/ WHERE	CONTACT
Sat 14 Dec	Boat Dive Blue Fish Point	Peter Flockart pjflockart@speednet.com.au	Wed 18 Dec	Club Meeting Rowers on Cook Club	Gary Perkins perkinsdive@gmail.com
Sat 4 Jan	Boat Dive Whale Watch Platform	Caroline Corcoran carolinecorcoran@yahoo.com	Sat 11 Jan	Boat Dive Mary's Reef	Shelley Brueseker shellsb@bigpond.net.au
Wed 15 Jan	Club Meeting Rowers on Cook Club	Gary Perkins perkinsdive@gmail.com	Sun 19 Jan	Shore Dive The Leap	Jason Coombs j.coombs@unsw.edu.au
Sun 26 Jan	Australia Day Shore Dive & BBQ Kurnell	Peter Flockart/Gary Perkins pjflockart@speednet.com.au perkinsdive@gmail.com	Sat 1 Feb	Carl Martin Memorial Dive & BBQ	Kelly McFadyen kelly@michaelmcfadyenscuba.info

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