



Sea Braggin'

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

- *DECEMBER 2009* - Edited by Ray Moulang -

Included in this issue are Dive Reports from Nancy Scoleri, Mark Ridsdale, Michele Eason and Paul Pacey. A big thank you goes to them.



Nancy with Baby PJ.
Taken by Gary.

WHATS HAPPENING **IN YOUR CLUB?** **WHATS COMING UP SOON?**

December 2009

<u>WHEN</u>	<u>WHAT AND WHERE</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
Wednesday 2nd	Club boat Dive from Yowie Bay	Les Caterson 9520 9421
Saturday 5 th	Deep Dive from Yowie Bay	Les Caterson 9520 9421
Sunday 6 th	Shore Dive & Christmas Party	Dave Burns 9531 4403
Wednesday 9 th	Club boat Dive from Yowie Bay	Les Caterson 9520 9421
Saturday 12 th	Double Boat Dive Botany Bay New Ramp Foreshore Drive	Ray Moulang 0403437974
Sunday 13 th	Shore Dive and BBQ Oak Park	Carol Martin 0414556516
Wednesday 16 th	Club boat Dive from Yowie Bay	Les Caterson 9520 9421
Saturday 19 th	Club boat Dive from Terrigal	Kelly McFadyen 9545 5596
Saturday 19 th	Club boat Dive from Yowie Bay	Les Caterson 9520 9421
Wednesday 23rd	Club boat Dive from Yowie Bay	Les Caterson 9520 9421

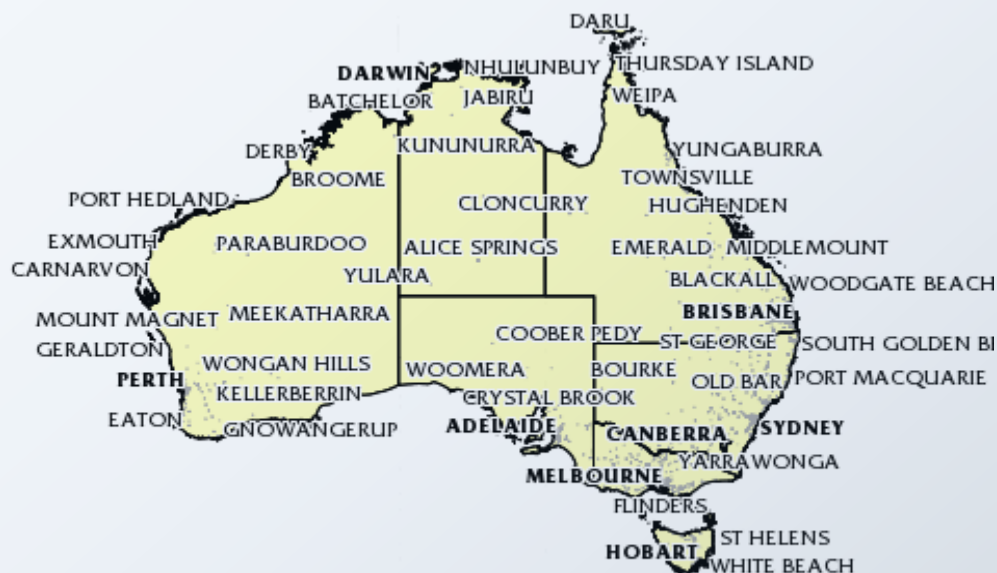
Club Dive Weekend to South West Rocks.

From Friday 20th November to Sunday 22nd November, 2009.

Trip Booked out with 24 divers. Names taken for stand-by list now. RayM.

Unfortunately the weather was up and this weekend was cancelled by the Dive Shop. The deposit is being returned and will be made available back to club members.

You can ask Mark to hold or move this for deposit to another trip instead of refund if you want.



Australia Day Dive & BBQ – 26th January

The tide is outgoing, so the dive is planned for Inscription Point.

Meet at the steps at 8:30am to dive by 9:00am.

A BBQ lunch will be supplied by the Club,

starting at 12:00 pm at Michael and Kelly's place at Kirrawee. BYO drinks.

Please RSVP for catering purposes by email to kelly@michaelmcfadyenscuba.info

Annual Ladies Week-end Away



The Ladies trip is on again this year, for the week-end of Friday 26th February to Sunday 28th February.

High tide will be 7:52 am and 8:44 am for diving at Halifax Park, Fly Point or The Pipeline.

East's Holiday Park at Soldiers Point have come to the party again this year, with pool side Cabins and a late (3:30 pm) check-out.

Have a look at www.eastholidayparks.com.au for more information. Accommodation cost will be \$85 - \$100 for the week-end, depending on numbers.

The location of our Saturday night feast is yet to be determined, however there is some interest in going to the same Thai restaurant as last year.

All of our Ladies week-ends have been great trips away, with good diving and lots of laughs. So, to book your spot kindly deposit \$50 the St George Club account (BSB 062028 Acc 00800455) and contact Kelly on 0410 599 186 or kelly@michaelmcfadyenscuba.info

See what's on next Year.

The 2010 Club Scuba Calendar is now available from the web site.

Divers,

To all those wishing to attend this years Christmas Party at Kurnell on Sunday 6th of December, please reply via either of the following -

SMS TEXT: 0407 418 579

email: sanfranciscomaru@yahoo.com.au

Mr Trayhurn will be assisting, so contact me only.

Final numbers are to be in by December 1st 2009.

Any queries please call me and I am looking for a couple of divers

that day to lead the shores dives, the tides are as below:

Breakfast will provided, however this year the tides are virtually on top of

lunch time, but I am sure we can work something out.

Do not contact me at work as I am leaving Zetland to work elsewhere,

Please use the two contacts above

and as always if you do not respond you will not be catered for.



Palau Trip Organised by Dave Casburn.

15 Days /14 Nights Ex. Cairns \$2765 Ultimate Wreck & Reef

Diving Expedition 15 Days /14 Nights Ex. Cairns \$2765 Ultimate Wreck & Reef - Diving Expedition - 21 October - 05 November 2010 –

TOUR COST INCLUDES: .

Return flights Cairns to Palau - (flying with Continental Airlines) - Day Use of room at Ohana Bay View in Guam

. Return airport transfers in Guam

. 13 Nights Twin Share Acc. West Plaza Hotel - Palau

. 12 boat dives (6 days of 2 dives/ day) incl. tanks, weights, belts, dive guide services, lunch and refreshments on diving days - Nitrox for nitrox certified divers

. Snorkel Jellyfish Lake during diving surface interval

. Return Airport Transfers in Palau

. Day Use of room at Ohana Bay View in Guam

. Australian departure and applicable airline taxes (\$240.00 and subject to change)

Optional Upgrade - Extra 10 boat dives - \$685

See Dave for more info and to book.

Philippines -- Manta Rays - Whale Sharks - and a Volcano



12 days leaving about mid March 2010.

17 Dives + 2 days of snorkelling with the whale sharks (this is high season with a 98% strike rate), all accommodation and breakfast and dinners for 6 nights whilst on Ticao Island, transfers from airports ----- \$1400.00!!!! - How cheap + wait for it -- yes a full day trek up an active volcano -- just to let off a little steam..

Airfares look to be around \$1200 return.

NEED to confirm numbers to lock in the deal.

Expect to pay say \$500.00 - \$700.00 deposit using frequent flyers for airfares or about \$1300.00 deposit for all inclusive.

Deposits etc will be payable in August - September.

Limited spots -- Cheers - Mark Ridsdale.

Bass and Flinders Night Dive

On the Thursday 22nd of October, a night dive was organised at Bass and Flinders in order to dive with the juvenile Port Jackson Sharks which had been seen there on the week-end. Ten or so divers were present and we all geared up and jumped in the water at around 7:30 pm, just before night fall.

After swimming a few metres out, we found the juveniles sharks on the sandy bottom at around 3.5 – 4 m deep. We were quite excited to have found them; they were so small and so cute!

Most of them were around 25 cm to 30 cm long and they were already showing the distinctive Port Jackson patterns: they had the black markings flowing along their body, the black band running the length of their face and over the eyes as well as the triangular shape pattern on the sides.



Their head was flat with small crests above their eyes; they had very tiny mouths and tiny nostrils. They were quite active, swimming along the bottom.

Some of them were feeding; we could see the cloud of silt coming out of the gill slits when they were blowing the sand out.

As we moved along the sand, it was hard not to step on one of them. They were everywhere; we could distinguish the shadow of others at the limit of the light of our torch.

Apart from the juvenile's sharks, we saw few stingrays and two octopuses, one hiding in a tyre and the other one just standing on the sandy bottom. As we made our way back along the reef, we saw few nudibranchs and three dumpling squid that were camera shy and kept hiding in the sand.

- Nancy Scoleri -

- Photos taken by Gary Perkins –



North Solitary Islands and Pimpernel Rock

15th - 21st November 2009.

By: Mark Ridsdale



Background.

The North Solitary Islands are located about 12 klms east of Wooli which was easily reached within 30 minutes.

Pimpernel Rock was about 30 klms nor-nor east of Wooli – about a 70 minute trip.

The North Solitary Islands provide a sub-tropical fish environment mixed with the colder water pelagics.

Typically the ‘best’ aquarium fish midst the largest anemone beds in the southern hemisphere coupled with ravines and gutters which are home to the larger pelagics, turtles, large bull rays, mantas and sharks.

Pimpernel Rock – wow – this is awesome. A dyke of three pinnacles rising from the sea bed 46 metres down to within 8 metres of the surface. The main pinnacle is characterized by a huge arch that runs east –west supplemented by a smaller arch off the main arch. This area was home to the large groper, QLD and Potato Cod and grey nurse sharks.



The top area of the main pinnacle and the eastern pinnacle were covered in the sub-tropical anemones and aquarium fish, nudgies, eels etc whilst the open water between the pinnacles was a moving display of large Kingfish (4 – 5 footers) and equally sized Jewfish.

There were literally hundreds of fish schooling together in front of you and these fish didn't seem to care how close they got to us – some passing within feet. It is truly a spectacle. Clearly Pimpernel and the North Solitary Islands would have to be the best diving in NSW and would rank solidly in the top 10 dive spots in Australia.



The Adventure.

Twenty three members trekked their way to Wooli for what was to be a great week of diving.

Due to the cancellation of the SW Rocks weekend a number of the Wooli team stayed on to Saturday as well as, four other club members joining for the Friday and Saturday dives at Wooli.

This my first trip to Wooli, so I was pleasantly surprised by the upmarket accommodation available at the dive shop and the other rented property.

Surpassing this was the standard of the dive boats. Wooli Dive had commissioned in the last 12 months a brand new 'Cat' named "The Craken" which cruised at 17 knots with a compliment of 15 divers – this twin-hull had enormous deck space, 3 entry points and a well designed exit ladder at the rear – just a magnificent dive boat that handled all weather conditions with ease.

The other dive boat was the 36 foot Stebar jet boat.

This boat was clearly a great boat to dive from as well only overshadowed by the space and performance of 'The Craken'.



Sunday Night had the entire 23 divers assembled at the Woolli Bowling Club at 7.00pm for drinks and a Chinese meal. The standard was great and quantity served more than adequate.

The scene was set for what was to be a great week of sunshine and great diving.

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday had both boats heading towards the North Solitary Islands to dive the Bubble Cave, Elbow cave, Mackerel Run, Anemone Bay, Shark Gutters and the Boulders area on the eastern side of the island.

There were 9 divers aboard the 36 ft Stebar jet boat and 14 divers aboard “the Craken”. The latter affectionately referred to as ‘rent-a-crowd’.

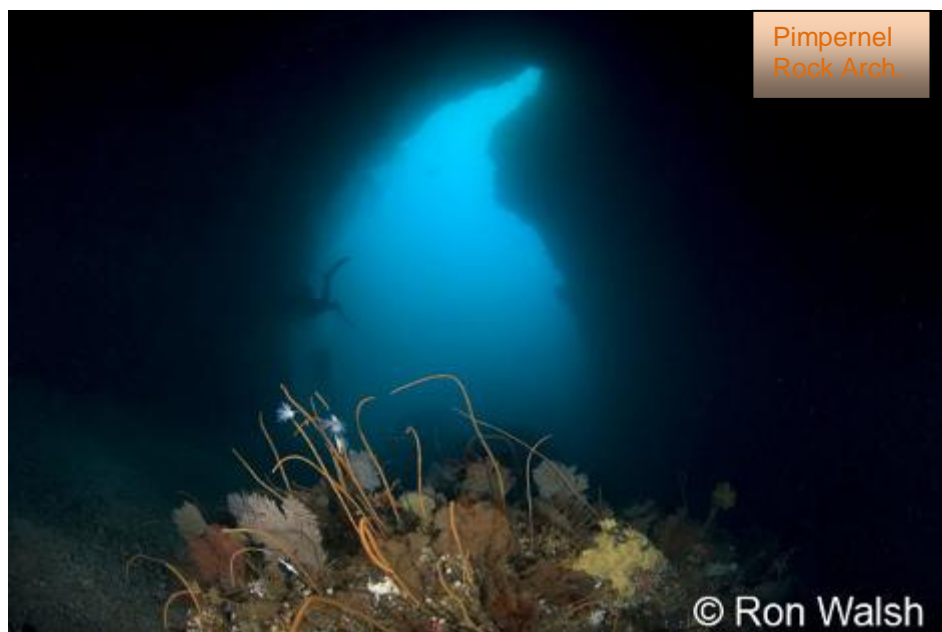
This wasn’t noticeable initially whilst we dived separate sites – however Pimpernel with 23 divers in at once was noticeable.

Thursday had both boats head towards Pimpernel which turned out to be just a fantastic experience with a double dive completed despite the protests of the various dive computers.

The visibility was consistently 18 – 20 metres, temperature 21 -23 degrees and all systems go!

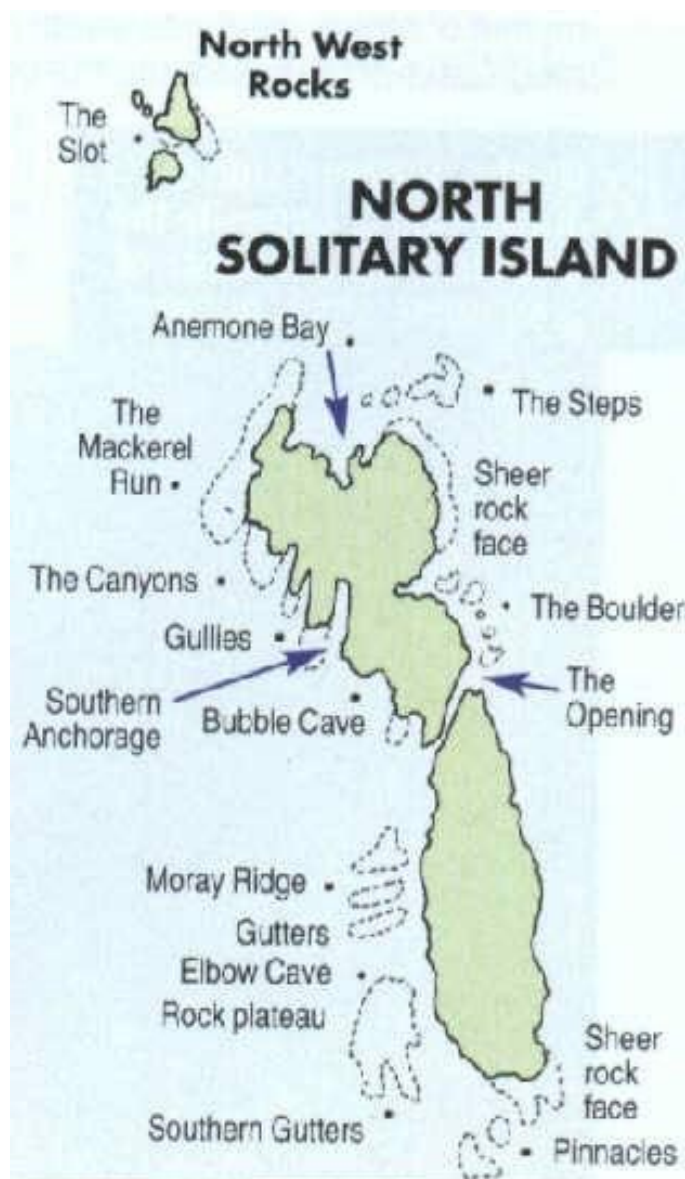


Those with cameras hopefully recorded the spectacle of hundreds of large Jewfish and Kingfish schooling together – as well as, the larger cod and grey nurse cruising the lower depths.



Friday had 15 divers aboard “The Craken” head towards Pimpernel for a possible dive. And what a dive it was – better clarity and still the hundreds of schooling Jewfish and Kingfish – a replica of previous days but we knew where to concentrate our attention to maximize the spectacle – we weren’t disappointed. The second dive we headed to North Solitary and dived “Fish Soup”.

This dive is renowned for its large schools of ocean going fish all congregating in the one area.



Large schools of bream, snapper, morwong, jewfish – all intermingled with large cod, sweet lip, nannygai etc. and swim throughs.

Saturday had 8 divers head out to North Solitary.

Weather conditions kept us in the lee of the island, so a dive in the Bubble Cave area was the 1st dive.

The 2nd dive was a one-way swim from the Bubble Cave to the Elbow Cave.

Navigation skills were put to the test as we travelled down the island, under the boat on the Elbow Cave mooring, past the sink holes into some very deep gutters – it was at this stage I knew that I had blown the tour and overshot the Elbow cave by some 200 metres - fortunately the boat fetched us and that ended a magnificent week of diving.

The other great spectacle of the week were the meals – catering for 23 hungry soles. A big thank you to Michael McFadyen for organizing the whole scotch fillets – 4 in total – the club BBQ is becoming an event in itself. David Casburn was put to the sword merrily cooking every steak based on individual preference – and this done not on gas or electric BBQ but on a wood fired iron hotplate. Gary Perkins was enlisted as Chief Stoker and the outcome was perfect – thanks guys.

Big thanks to Paul (I'll have another Red) Pacey, Michael (you bought too much meat) McFadyen and Dick (did I cook enough) Fish and of course myself for the curry and seafood nights. The Curry night was very popular – just ask John Prior who went downstairs for a moment and alas ---all gone!!

Thanks also to Debbie Cook and Roxy Fea for their creative talents with the salads.

THANKS TO EVERYONE FOR THEIR COMPANY – JUST AWESOME.

Pictures by Jason and Ron.



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Decompression Sickness 2009

Decompression Sickness, Hole in the Heart, Diving Again.

On *Sunday 12th July 2009* I completed the two required dives to gain my deep diving qualification.

I was happy with my two dives and enjoyed the day out on the water.

I completed the dives with extended safety stops and well within decompression time limits. Both dives were to 36m with a 2-hour surface interval. The water was extremely cold at only 13 degrees, I was only diving in a wetsuit & hooded vest. Approximately four hours after surfacing from my second dive, I began to feel extremely tired and nauseous, I thought it was simply from the dives or I must have eaten something on the boat.

Shortly after I had an aching pain in my left elbow, once again I assumed it was nothing and thought that I had lifted a tank awkwardly and this caused the pain in my elbow.

Approximately fifteen minutes later my left hand began to feel numb.

I new something was wrong.

At this stage my husband and I were preparing to go to our local Medical Centre. However prior to leaving we completed a Diver's Neurological Exam, we were then alerted to a couple of the symptoms that I had.

My husband called the Diver's Alert Network, they asked several questions and determined that I had numerous symptoms of Decompression Sickness. They advised that I needed to present to the Hyperbaric Chamber.

This was luckily only 30 minutes away. I presented to emergency, they laid me down and placed me on 100% oxygen. I was not allowed to stand or move and this was when it became apparent to me that this was serious. I underwent further tests, and my dive computer was also evaluated for additional information with the Hyperbaric Doctors. I then entered the chamber, for my initial 5-hour treatment.

We left the hospital Monday morning at 1am, I was feeling better, however was still suffering from some of the symptoms. I returned to the hospital for the next three days to complete my treatment plan, each session in the chamber two hours in duration. The doctors who reviewed my dives explained that nothing unusual had caused the "bends" and suggested that I undergo a Toe Exam (Transoesophageal Echocardiography) to determine if I had a hole in my heart. This involved first a simple ultrasound of my heart, then a doppler ultrasound to see if any dye passed through the chambers in my heart.

This was negative.

I was then required to have a camera pass down my oesophagus to view my heart from a different angle. I was given a numbing spray for my throat and a drug so I was drowsy but could still perform simple tasks.

I underwent this test and the outcome was positive. I have a hole in my heart! It was explained to me that 30% of the population have a hole in the heart and you can live an ordinary life with this condition however you should not dive if you are found to have this condition. What happens now, I want to dive again?

The doctors explained that I would not be permitted to dive with this condition.

My risks of suffering decompression sickness were now dramatically increased. If I was to continue diving I could suffer an extreme case and possibly have lesions on my brain, or become a paraplegic. How could this happen to me?

I was grateful that the reason I suffered the bends was now known, but I could not accept that I would never dive again! Confident and positive with the procedure. He asked if I suffered from headaches and tiredness, which I answered yes. He explained that these symptoms can also be related to the condition. Dr Allan made me feel extremely comfortable and confident and explained that I was lucky to find that I had a hole in my heart as most people never now or pass away at a young age from a sudden stroke.

It was decided that I was to have the PFO Closure completed on Wednesday 23rd September at Prince of Wales Hospital.

Finally I had my answers, I was finally going to have the procedure and would be diving again really soon.

We arrived at the hospital at 7.30am ready for the PFO Closure. I was taken through and questioned on my medical history, had an initial ECG, and was cannulated for the procedure. I was becoming more and more nervous finally it was my turn. I was taken through to what looked like an operating theatre with big computer screens and x-ray machines.

The nurses reassured me and gave me a drug so I was drowsy but could still perform simple tasks, this was not enough and I was given a second dose.

The next I new I was laying in a recovery area having my vital signs taken. The PFO closure procedure took 15 minutes in total.

I was given a local anaesthetic in my groin and they insert a wireworm through the vein directly into the heart. A small metal device is then passed through the vein to the heart and is placed over the hole.

The position of the device is checked and the procedure is completed. I now have a very small scar in my groin. I was then required to stay at the hospital for a couple of hours, 1 hour laying down, 1 hour sitting up and having something to eat. I was then directed to have an ultrasound to ensure the device was in place and everything was working.

I was then given a script for medication, which is to be taken for a six-month period after the surgery. I was then permitted to head home.

I was so glad to be home and only with minor pain in my groin at the incision site. I was told to take it easy for a couple of days and I could resume normal activities again in one week.

I am now back to normally activities, I am waiting for a 3-month ECG to ensure the device is in the correct position, and the tissue of the chamber walls has grown over the device. Once this has been confirmed I will be provided with a Dive Medical clearing me to dive again.

This should be early December 2009.

I would recommend any diver who discovers they have a hole in their heart to have the procedure, not only will I be diving again this year, but I no longer suffer headaches and believe that I now have more energy.

This ordeal has given me a new excitement to jump back in the water and really enjoy the sport.

I would like to ensure that others are aware that this condition and it does not mean you can no longer dive.

Michele Eason

Picture Page by
- Brian Byrnes -



Trip report – Kabaira PNG October 2009-10-26

Paul Pacey

I thought the trip was off to a good start when I boarded my flight to Cairns. I boarded late and was pleasantly surprised to find that I was surrounded by empty seats. Then the Rugby team turned up (after they were dragged out of the bar) – it turned out to be a long flight!

I had to overnight in Cairns and had booked at the Figtree Lodge. This is a nice place to stay but I was disappointed to find that the place has been sold to a health care company and, by the time you read this, it will be full of sick people. Mind you, when we normally stay there, it could be said that it is also full of sick people. We will have to find a new place to stay when in transit through Cairns.

My flight from Cairns to Port Moresby was delayed by 90 minutes – by now, I'm starting to wonder about this trip! I figured I'd now miss my onward connection to Rabaul as I was going to be so late. But, not to worry, that flight was also a bit late, so no problem!

Stephen Woolcott the owner of Kabaira drive picked me up at the airport and we headed to their little patch of Paradise which is about 45 minutes drive away from the Rabaul airport (which is really in Kokopo).

It was dark when we arrived but I very quickly realised that, as Eddie Ivers said, I'm gonna like this place! As many of our club members are already aware, the owners and the staff of Kabaira are the most wonderful people that you would wish to meet. The location is beautiful and the whole setting very relaxing. And this is even before you go diving! One thing I should point out though is that, if you prefer spa resorts, marble tiled bathrooms and a wine list with your dinner – you'll be in the wrong place!

Hmmm, this is supposed to be a dive report, I better get on with it...

The deal is with Kabaira is that you do two boat dives each morning and you can dive the excellent "Home Reef" pretty much to your hearts content in the afternoon.

Sunday 11th October:

The first dive day so we jumped into the small Banana boat (now fitted with a 140HP 4-stroke Suzuki outboard) and headed for George's Wreck which is about a 40 minute run away. It was actually a 50 minute run as we played with a pod of at least 50 spinner dolphins along the way. As we approached the dive site we could see the massive ash cloud spewing from the Mount Tavurvur volcano rising high in the sky over Rabaul.

I forgot to mention, not only was I the only club member on the trip but I was also the only person staying at the resort (for the first couple of days). So here we are zooming along with Lloyd, Vinavel and little ol' me in the boat and Stephen was

driving the Hilux around to the wreck site too. So I'm thinking that this is a bit over the top as we now have 3 people taking just me for a dive. I guess they've heard about my diving? However, as soon as we dropped into the water I felt guilty no more – these guys were having more fun than I was. They would have gone for the dive whether I was there or not.

The wreck is a great dive with well over 25m viz, lots of fish and an easy penetration of the cargo holds, upper decks and the wheel house. Unfortunately, the engine room is full of silt and it is not really possible or safe to enter. The boiler is massive and I found a very interesting Nudibranch on it which I have yet to identify. The stern is in 55m and makes a great silhouette photo (not so great with my camera though). The propeller, if it's still there, is not visible as it's buried in the bottom. Unfortunately the forecastle area of the ship has recently collapsed and it's a bit tricky to enter this area now. The hull is encrusted with a lot of growth including anemones, gorgonians, coral, echinoderms and heaps of other colourful stuff that I haven't a clue how to identify.



From the wreck you can do your safety stop on the excellent reef just above the bow. This reef has a myriad of critters awaiting discovery, especially Nudibranchs and Flatworms. Dive time was 80 minutes because Stephen and Lloyd refused to get out of the water until they had to.

After an excellent morning tea provided by the KKK (Kabaira Kitchen Krew – Helen and Linda) we fired up the Suzy and headed to the Submarine Base for a bit of serious wall diving. The submarine base is really interesting for a number of



reasons. The base itself was built right up against a vertical limestone cliff over 50 metres high. At the base of the cliff there are 4 tunnels driven into the cliff face which were used to shelter people at the base during air raids and also to store provisions transported in on the Submarines to resupply Rabaul.

The shore outside the tunnels is only 5 metres wide and then the vertical wall plunges down to over 200 metres deep – amazing stuff. There's a gun emplacement and tunnels at the top of the cliffs and looking down on the submarine base from the top of the cliffs is an amazing sight. The whole idea was that, if a submarine was attacked at the base they could just close the hatch and drop below the water out of sight.

However, the water is so clear that I reckon that the aircraft would still been able to see them unless they went down at least 100 metres.

The wall is done as a drift dive and it's a really excellent dive. Looking down into the blue abyss is really relaxing and the wall itself is covered in creatures to find and try to photograph.

Monday 12th October:

First dive was to be Horseshoe Reef (I wonder what the locals called it before they saw a horseshoe?). This is an easy 20 minute run from the resort and is a drift dive along the sheer wall of the reef.

This reef has lots of caves and crevices as you go along and plenty of colourful fish cruising around.

I haven't seen any big fish yet – just lots a colourful ones.

The second dive was to Lighthouse Reef which is close by to Horseshoe Reef. We'd seen a turtle surface on the way to the reef and we had no sooner dropped into the water when another one swam past. Once again, a brilliant dive.

That afternoon, Lloyd and I decided to work over the House Reef a bit. Both Eddie and Michael had told me that the House Reef was "pretty good".



They were not kidding. If this reef was in Botany Bay you would not be able to get near it for the crowds of divers.

The viz was not as good as we've been getting on the boat dives but at 25 metres I'm pretty darn happy.

The lettuce and plate coral here is awesome and down around 25 metres there are large barrel sponges everywhere.

The reef area is huge and over the next few days I will spend many hours exploring and admiring it.

After a really lazy 90 minute diver we returned to the resort for beer o'clock.

Two other divers had just arrived. Terry Smith works at Scuba Warehouse and Laurie is on of his mates.

So we'd now be diving a threesome (except I kept losing them – bloody photographer types!).

Tuesday 13th October: Dive one was at East Point. The top of the reef is in 10 metres and is covered in all sorts of coral formations. The reef slopes down to about 15 metres then plunges down a steep wall to well over 40 metres. The reef is just covered with colour. There are again heaps of anemones and their resident clownfish. A small school of small chevron barracuda swam around us for a while as we went about our business. There were also runners and trumpeters about. This was the fishiest reef so far. When we started the dive there was just a mild current but as we approached the northern side of the reef the current was hooting along and signalled the end of the dive which lasted about 45 minutes.



The second dive was to Tom's Reef (There's a Dick and a Harry reef too). This time the viz is over 30 metres and no current. The reef top is covered in fine coral and many anemones. The clownfish up here are surprisingly aggressive and sneaky - I've been bitten a few times now. There are lots of Tiger Cowries on this reef as well as many other pretty shells too.

For the afternoon Dive Terry and I headed out for a shore dive on Home reef. We're getting better as buddies – this time it took me about 15 minutes to lose him. I don't think I'm getting sick of Home Reef yet as I clocked up a dive time of just over 2 hours this afternoon. I'm going to call this Tiger Reef as I managed to find a tiger pipefish and heaps of tiger cowries.



Wednesday 14th October:

The first dive of the day is to the wrecks which have been scuttled offshore from the Kalua Lodge resort. These wrecks have been scuttled for divers (I guess) and some of them are more a pile of debris than wrecks.

Whilst the wrecks have been stripped before they were scuttled they still make a great dive as there are all sorts of growth on them and critters hiding in all the nooks and crannies.

We attacked the deepest wreck which is a large fishing trawler.

The bow is over 30 metres and the stern is at about 20 metres.

The engine is missing but the huge propeller and rudder are still intact.

The bridge is really cramped but well worth a look.



From the stern of the trawler you follow a rope up the reef, past some artillery shell cases, then up to a huge barge sitting on top of the reef. There's not much to see on the barge and it doesn't have a lot of growth on it. Maybe they used better quality paint than the other wrecks?



Leaving the barge we pass piles of debris and finally reach the last wreck (I think) which is a small freighter. This wreck is lying on her port side and is a great dive with easy penetration and lots and lots of critters to be found. The engine room is full of equipment and the propeller and rudder are still in place. Underneath the stern I found a few stone fish and a couple of friendly

Morays. There was a school of large trevally cruising around inside the forward hold. The forward hold also has a lot of large clams and these are really pretty when they are open. At one stage when I was outside the hull a small Manta cruised past – very tidy.

Thursday 15th October:

The first dive today was back to Georges Wreck.

The second dive was on Midway Reef which was another excellent dive with all the usual suspects sighted.

Another afternoon dive on Home Reef was called for and a pleasant time was had for 90 minutes. I managed to video a free-swimming echinoderm which was very entertaining (no Dave, I did NOT cast it adrift). Strangely though, the Home Reef turtle was not seen today.

I've got these tiger pipe fish sorted –
I even managed to take a photo with
two of the little fella's in the same
frame!



Friday 16th October:

This morning we dived two of the reefs off the north-west cape of Ataliklikum Bay (I'm not making this up). As usual this was brilliant diving with clear water, minimal current and a really colourful reef. I could do this for weeks but I was reminded this morning that this is my last day of diving – why is life so cruel?

I passed up the afternoon Home Reef dive today as Stephen was taking me for a night dive on Home Reef.

Whilst diving Home Reef in daylight is fantastic, it's even better at night.

We hadn't even gotten into the water when Stephen spotted a cute little eel swimming across the boat ramp. From there it got better and better.

I thought there were a lot of tiger cowries during the day – the reef is infested with them at night. We also found a plate coral totally covered in *Polycera Faeroensis* nudibranchs – I was too embarrassed to photograph what they were up to.

Saturday 17th October.

This was my non-diving day as I depart tomorrow and Stephen has arranged for Lloyd to take me on a tour of Kokopo and Rabaul.

Terry and Laurie thought this sounded good so they skipped diving and came along too.

We went the long way to Kokopo and it was very interesting to see the villages along the road with the locals going about their daily life.

The first real stop was at the Rabaul (Bita Paka) War Cemetery which is actually near Kokopo.



This is a beautifully maintained memorial to the fallen of many countries in both the first and second world wars. It's quite sad to walk among so many graves of

people that lost their lives at such a young age and it certainly makes you think of the futility of war itself.

The next stop was the East New Britain historical and cultural museum. This is currently being renovated but is still a “must do” to see the many items still on display.



There is a large collection of sea shells on display. There is also a large collection of military equipment in one of the buildings and an extensive collection of mostly Japanese military hardware such as aircraft, tanks, guns, torpedos, bombs and shells scattered around the grounds.



The next stop is “The Landing Barges”. This is weird; the Japanese dug an enormous tunnel (the whole of the Rabaul area is riddled with tunnels) which is large enough to store 5 motorised landing craft which are still in the tunnel. These barges are huge and are mounted on trailers with railway wheels and there once was a track running all the way down the hill to the harbour which is over 500 metres away. The trailers must have been made from wood as they rotted away long ago but the barges are made from steel and you can still wander around inside them.

We also stopped off to look at some other tunnels around the area but we forgot to bring our torches (D’Oh!) so we could not explore them as much as we would have like to. Some of the tunnels have staircases carved into them and some tunnels, we’re told, had complete hospitals and power generators underground.

When driving around Rabaul you cannot help but notice that what is left of the town has been dug out from under 3 metres of ash as this is the height of the “footpath” above the road in many places. The northern end of Rabaul looks like a moonscape as there’s almost nothing growing and the smell of the sulphur from the volcano attacks you nasal passages constantly.



On the hill overlooking Simpson Harbour is the volcanology observatory and research institute (handy place to have it!) and the view from the lookout across Simpson Harbour to Tavurvur volcano is spectacular. From here the destruction caused to the town is easy to assess. The next place to visit is the Submarine Base (from the land side). We met the local landowner who quickly despatched two of his villagers to guide us firstly to the gun emplacement and tunnels in the cliffs above the submarine base then to the Submarine base itself. We were not able to fully investigate the tunnels at the base of the cliffs as the locals didn't have their dive torches with them either! Next time, for sure... The next stop was the Rabaul Hotel. Amazingly this building has survived the volcano and is still in business. When you walk in, one of the staff follows you around sweeping the ash from your footsteps as you walk along. The reason that the hotel (and the churches) survived was that they were well built and had steeply pitched roofs



allowing the ash to slide off before the weight got to the point of collapsing the buildings. This did not happen to most of the other building and the houses which were all crushed by ash. We then went to the New Guinea Club which has an excellent display of the life in and history of the Rabaul area and is well worth seeing. Alongside the New Guinea Club is a heavily fortified concrete bunker where Admiral Yamamoto reportedly stayed before his fatal flight to Bougainville during which American aircraft shot down his plane and killed Yamamoto. Yamamoto was the commander of the Imperial Japanese Navy and has been blamed for perpetrating the attack on Pearl Harbour.

Unfortunately, whilst the bunker is open, rain has washed volcanic ash into the bunker and there only about a metre of space between the mud and the ceiling – not so good for tourists. We next went down to the harbour close to the volcano where a creek has cut down through the fallen ash. Walking down the creek you can see houses poking out of the ash – they have been completely buried.

At one place there's a boat poking out of the bank and a little further down you can see the side of a small passenger van in the creek wall – bizarre. The weathering patterns in the ash hills are quite pretty in an eerie kind of way.

Another thing that amazed me was that I didn't see a shark during the whole trip – which was a bit strange I thought. This was a fantastic trip and I want to thank The Woolcott's and their staff for making it so enjoyable and memorable.

Even though I went on this trip by myself, it was still a club trip and I'm looking forward to getting my \$10 from Mark! **Cheers, Paul Pacey**

Recent Club Happenings

Regular events

THURSDAY NIGHT DIVES

We have had some record turnouts for the night dives.

Most of the dives have been very good, with nice visibility and good fish life.

Contact Michael if interested.

Other Dives

Many other dives are advised in the news section of the Club's web site.

If you are interested in a dive, have a look at the news section a few days before a weekend and you may find others already planning a dive.

You can also place your own news item there (but remember it may take time to appear as it needs to be authorised by a web site administrator).

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Please send items for the Newsletter to me *as you do them during the month.*