

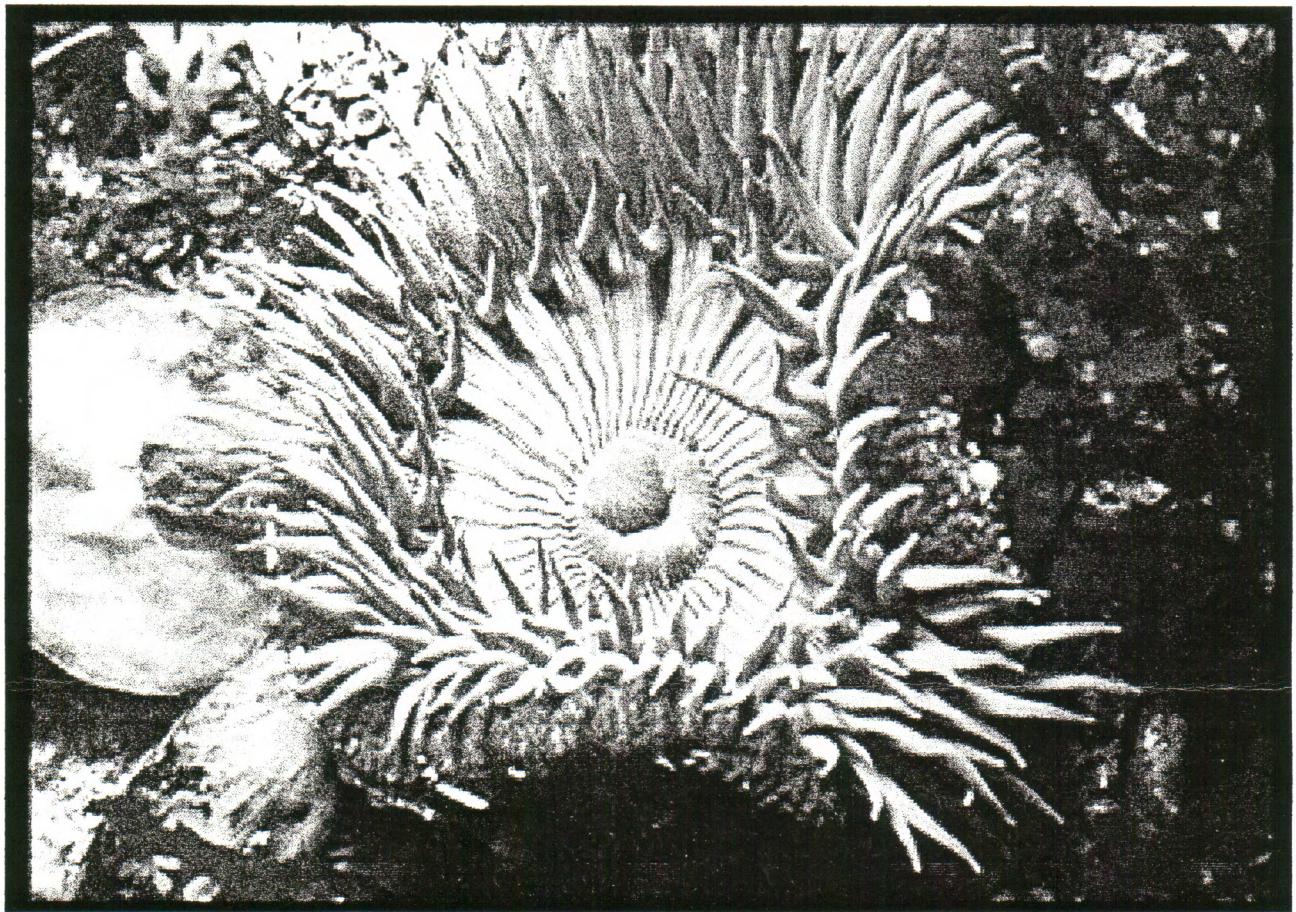
WET RAG

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
SOUTH PACIFIC DIVERS' CLUB (established 1962)



PO Box 823, BANKSTOWN NSW 2200

JULY 1996



Meetings of the Club are normally held at 8 pm on the 3rd Monday of each month in the Emile McDonald Room of the Bankstown Sports Club, Greenfield Street, Bankstown. This month's meeting will be held on Monday, 15th July 1996.

President's Message

Some years ago I bought an underwater camera, and from what I gathered around the traps, to learn to use this thing the best place was S.P.D. and with that in mind I became a member late in '92. At our last club meeting Peter presented the annual "GEORGE ROBERTS" competition. The 40 odd members and guests who were present can now testify I haven't learnt much. Congratulations to B.J. winning the main event, Peter will give you all the winners and there prizes in his report. Rummaging through our old club records some of the most elite of underwater photographers have been members of our club and photography has been one of our main activities.

Rick Latimer was a dominant force behind the Australian Underwater Photographer Of The Year Competition which has kept S.P.D. in the limelight over the years. Many of today's current crop of top photographers have won this competition and have used this as a stepping stone to bigger and better things. Why am I telling you all this?

On receiving the April issue of the "Wet Rag" I received a phone call from Graham Wright a club member and major A.U.P.Y. sponsor (Maritime Container Services) He was deeply sadden to here of Rick's death. Whilst Graham was aware of Rick's illness he was not aware of how serious it was. After a rather frank discussion about their friendship Graham offered on behalf of Maritime Container Services a very generous amount to fund a tribute to Rick.

Our committee were made aware of the offer and since then have had many a discussion on what would be a fitting and finial tribute to a man who gave so much time not only to the club but also to diving in general. Many of us are probably not aware of how highly regarded Rick was within the diving community. To the committee's delight Dive Australia has also made us a generous offer.

Some two weeks ago Noel Taylor phoned me from Cairns and on behalf of Dive Australia offered S.P.D. a 3 metre x 2 metre stand at this years up and coming SCUBA EXPO to do the final tribute. A quick phone around to committee members resulted in all agreeing to accept this offer. Thousands of divers will visit Scuba Expo

and see our stand. Rick was delighted with S.P.D. having a stand at the London Dive Show recently and no doubt, would be tickled pink with this latest venture. What a super way to send off one of diving's favourite sons.

S.P.D. will have on display many of Rick's artifacts, as well as an audio visual on the man, original oil paintings of the Birchgrove Park, one of Rick's favourite wrecks, (courtesy of Peter Fields), plus a few surprises. All details should be finalized by our next club meeting. To ensure that this will be successful we need help from you members as well. We have the "i's" dotted but have not crossed all the "t's" yet. If any of you can spare a few hours during the days or nights that Scuba Expo is open please contact one of the committee or come to our next club meeting, to volunteer a few hours and be part of this exciting event.

Hope to see you all there. Regards LEO B.

Photographic Officer's Report

I would like to thank all those people who took the time and effort to enter the George Roberts Perpetual Trophy (Photographic) Competition. All up I received 11 entries;

Open Section	2
Novice Section	4
Individual Section	3
Video Section	2

These entries were judged by

Peter Flockart (SPD Photographic Officer for 1996)

Neil Vincent (past SPD PO and successful commercial photographer)

Mark Spencer (well known Sydney underwater photographer)

All slides were judged on the basis of Impact, Composition, Technical Aspects, Lighting & Creativity with points out of 10 for each category.

The videos were judged on Narration/Music, Editing, Titling, Camera Work, Technical (merits), Continuity(of video) and Entertainment(Value)with points out of 10 for each category.

On the basis of these criteria the RESULTS OF THE GEORGE ROBERTS COMPETITION for 1996 are shown below:

Open Section:

- 1st John Blaszcak
2nd Merridy Cairn-Duff

Novice Section:

- 1st John Szwecow
2nd Rhonda Blaszcak
3rd Robert Westerdyk
4th Leo Bergagnin (Encouragement Award)

Individual Section:

Best Macro : Adrienne Hill

Best Wide Angle : Scott Leimroth

Best Wildlife : Adrienne Hill

Video :

- 1st Glenn Townsend
2nd Margaret Provan

The next task that I and the photographic sub-committee are turning to is the organising of the Australasian Underwater Photographer of the Year for 1996. All the sponsor letters have been sent and we are busily following them up, in order to make the next presentation night our best yet. For those people interested the competition will open on the 2nd September and close on 22nd November 1996 with the presentation night being on 12th April 1997 at the Bankstown District Sports Club.

Regards, Peter Flockart

PS. I still have film and cameras for sale, so if you're interested in any of these items below, bring your money to the July Meeting:

- 1 Kodak Aquatic Camera :\$ 19.00
7 Rolls Of Ektachrome 100/36 at \$ 8.50 each
or \$ 33.00 for 4 rolls.

DIVE REPORTS

REMEMBER THE DAYS WHEN SEX WAS FUN AND DIVING WAS CONSIDERED DANGEROUS. By Geoff Cook and Denis Robinson

Immediately following the passing of Ric Latimer I had contacted many former members of SPD, none were more interesting to talk to than the SPD club founding President, Mr Denis Robinson. In several phone calls to Denis he restated many of the early SPD clubs' diving exploits, adventures and exploration. The most noteworthy and almost his last dive was an

Australian Record Depth, Air Dive 12 miles off Sydney on the 22 March 1970. Denis wrote an extensive article called THINK DEEP on this record breaking dive which was later published by MAN Magazine and subsequently led to a career change as a journalist. I rewrote the lengthy article but it can be used to make a comparison of the activities of SPC circa 1970 to 1996 and how opinions and some practices have changed, although when reading the article it should be acknowledged that in 1970, these SPD divers, were at the forefront in developing techniques that we now take for granted in cave exploration, decompression and deep diving..

THINK DEEP.

Sunday the 22 March 1970 was a beautiful day with no wind and a dead calm sea. Suspense was in the air. Everyone knew there would be dangers that day but they were there solely because of that. That's why they joined SPD Club. Some would try a deep dive sooner or later anyway and it was better that they do it under the control of the club rather than try it alone. As a general rule, each diver was allowed to exceed his previous dive by 50 feet, give or take a few feet. When, where and with whom they had made their dive was also taken into consideration. Denis spoke to twenty six people on the trawler which was taking them 12 miles off Sydney to the Peaks, outlining the plans for our 2 deep dive programs. They were divided up into small groups, given specific instructions and procedures to follow. Timekeepers were allocated to log all dives and deck hands would do all the manual work. There were dozens of little jobs to do, shot lines, anchor lines, hookahs, hoses, ladders, stand-by divers, safety divers, echo sounder, radios, food and drink, bunks and diving equipment all had to be taken care of....

Sure, they had all learned the theory of diving during basic training courses, but they had joined the SPD Club for the experience no school of diving can teach. What they read in books now seemed far away, unreal, unconnected. They were here to see for themselves, but respecting the deep they would follow these plans without question. Here was an opportunity for them to see a practical demonstration of deep diving and it seemed normal that Denis Robinson and

Richard Taylor should do it.

Ross Miller, the Skipper of the 56 foot trawler, made contact with the small craft in the area in case of an emergency. We were 12 miles out to sea off Sydney at a spot known as the Peaks, which is the top of a mountain rising up to within 245 feet of the surface from a sandy plain. The Peaks is better known though as a game fishing area rather than a dive site. Earlier that morning at this location many other members of the team dived down to 250 feet and were now returning. Names were recorded along side of times and depths. Some had made it to the bottom and had a look around, although a couple didn't quite make it due to the increasing effects of nitrogen narcosis. One Diver, Barry Lines had become dizzy and returned only five feet from the bottom. Barry had been down to 200 feet before with no effect and it would appear that 240 feet had now become his limit.....

The anchor was hauled in by at least ten divers who had completed their dive. Denis Robinson and Richard Taylor were excused from the exertion as it had been found on previous dives that exertion prior to a deep dive increased the effects of narcosis. The other guys in the deep diving team, Ric Latimer and John Sumner, were dozing in the sun, trying not to be concerned with the proceedings. Mental relaxation is most important prior to a deep dive, as it is linked also with early symptoms of narcosis. As the deep team rested the trawler moved further out to sea into deeper water.

Conversations could be heard between the other divers..."How deep do you think they'll go" "Dunno. Both Richard and Robbo know what they are doing" "Robbos been diving longer than anyone in the club can remember." "But he's only been down to 241 feet before. The time he took Joan Riley down and set the woman's record." "That record has since been broken by SPD member Kathy Trout who dived to 300 feet." "The pair of them dive together a lot and Richard's been down 306 feet in Piccaninny Ponds over in South Australia" "Yes but Piccaninny is fresh water!" "That doesn't matter 306 feet is 306 feet." "How come they don't get narco?" "They're no different to anyone else." "There's got to be a limit on how far they can

go." "That's what we're here to find out." Robbo admitted trying to put the conversation out of his mind but ringing like a bell were the words "Only 241" "Longer than anyone can remember" He found it impossible to sleep in the heat but felt if he told them to shut up they label him as a cranky old bastard and shouldn't dive today." (Old...."Perhaps not, he was only 33 years of age.)

A tap on the shoulder bought the divers back to reality, time to gear up. The echo sounder registered 60 fathoms. Rapid calculation equals 360 feet. Checking the air pressure in their tanks read 2500 psi. They were nice and full. Richard Taylor outlined the plan of the dive just to be sure. "We head down the shot rope together and our safety men, Johnnie Sumner and Rick Latimer will follow. They'll bring down the hookah and tie it off at 150 feet. I'll try and get a shot of your depth gauge and a shot of the bottom and then we come back." "Not bad, except don't expect to be taking that second picture because it's only a bounce dive and we won't have time to be playing cameras. In we're coming back as soon as there's any indication of trouble..." "There was no such thing as chicken in our group and such talk is definitely out. For several weeks I had been stressing to Richard not to press on to greater depths than we could handle because if the narco didn't get us the oxygen would.

We knew in experiments done "before our time" that oxygen, the life giving gas to the human body, would become poisonous deeper than 300 feet. Its effect varied from diver to diver and from day to day, just like nitrogen. We also knew that Australian Wally Reynolds had made the record dive to 327 feet some years before, breathing air. He later conducted experiments in breathing mixture gases, which were much safer and allowed divers to descend much deeper. That 'record dive' was nine years ago back in March 1961. To most divers of a few years experience, all of these things were hand me down information. The US Navy had its 'Sealab Underwater Village' and Cousteau had the 'Conshelf'. It was all true, we were not doubting that, but it was all happening overseas. It was better that we go down and then impart this knowledge learned to the others first hand and let them be there and be involved so that they

could learn for themselves.

The hookah with two mouthpieces attached was lowered over the side of the trawler and would be attached at the 150 ft mark in case we ran short of air on the bottom. We knew that we would have to get up to there either on our reserves or with our inflatable life jackets. It was a comfort to know it would be there and that others could get down to us at that depth if we needed them. We hit the water and waited for the cold shock on our spines to pass. Our wet suits were custom fitted and after a few seconds passed they were warm. We hung onto the ladder and relaxed. Two hundred yards away game fishermen were trying to hook records size sharks. White pointers and Makos were their quarry. I looked underneath me and was greeted by the clearest blue water you could imagine. The southerly current was at a standstill. The sea was flat... Dead flat. I had never seen it so flat and we were miles from shore.

Absolute rest was essential before we submerged. We transferred to the rope that led to the shot line up forward. "When you're ready, we are" came the call from Robyn who was setting the time bezels on two watches just as a double check. Looking around her were the faces of twenty faces looking down at us. Most of them we in the 20 to 25 age group. The sun behind them made it hard to see their faces but we knew that they were thinking of what lay ahead of us. After all, most of them had been down to 250 feet that morning so they had some fair ideas. They also knew that if one diver should have to return to the surface for any reason, the others would also return despite their own feelings of the dive. The SPD Club worked as a team with no one shirking their share of the work, such as pulling in that anchor rope while we watched. No one grumbled because they knew why. Teamwork.

Everyone gave the OK. I put the mouthpiece between my teeth and the air tasted nice and cool. Simultaneously, four black suited divers slid below the surface with scarcely a ripple. Our air supply was calculated to give us just enough time to get down and back with decompression but without any delays. The shot line was heavily weighted white nylon line off the side of the trawler and could be seen

disappearing straight down below us. A seemingly endless white line that vanished into a midnight blue void. *(to be continued next issue)*

Blackbeard - the Curse of the 7 Seas - Alive and Well in Terrigal!!

Recently three club members, who shall remain nameless for fear of having to walk the plank, traveled to Norah head to dive Foggies cave after seeing t.v. footage of the site. We dived with C-Breeze Dive and found their service was very friendly and although, due to forces beyond our control, the dive ran exceedingly late we did eventually arrive at the dive site. On arrival we proceeded to sound for the cave and as we were about to drop anchor he appeared - Blackbeard - disguised as a charter operator who shall remain nameless for fear of reprisal our initial reaction was " Oh, another charter boat of happy divers approacheth." No- not happy! Blackbeard (BB) was approaching at full sail(top speed) and shouting that old pirate greeting" Piss off!! Piss off!" We were all in shock. I-had we inadvertently offended his mother? We knew our wet suits were offensively coloured - fluoro purple, yellow, green- but surely that is the norm. Perhaps we had discovered BB's treasure. Was there a hidden chest of gold be found at the back of the cave?? "Don' t worry." said our boat driver "He's always like that. He thinks he owns the dive site and even wants everyone ~ charters and privateers - to ring him, for permission before diving it." He WAS Blackbeard. Surely only a famous scourge of the seas such as he could be so bold as to claim to own a part of the ocean.

We dropped anchor as BB swung into action, donning his gear in double time and dropping a shot line. Oh no. Our driver hurried to don his gear also as BB is notorious for pulling out others anchors. It was a race to see who would get there first and, for the few minutes our man was down, we imagined the scene below, like something from 'Thunderball', knives drawn, a battle raging, hand to hand below the surface.... To our dismay it appeared BB had succeeded as after a few minutes our boat was drifting and our man ascended, alive, to confirm our fears. "No problem" said someone, obviously still not understanding the situation,

"He'll have to let us tie off to his buoy or boat

wont he??" No way! BB stood - like the boy on the burning deck - arms folded, with a scour on his face daring us to approach. We didn't risk it and had to wait 30mins while his divers finished their dive. After retrieving his men he gave us a final fly past in his boat and a one fingered salute as he left for home. At least he left his buoy on the cave - must be going soft in his old age. We dived and only saw one shark and were told he was not adverse to scaring them off and silting out the cave. I looked in the back of the cave but didn't find his treasure. We still had a good dive but wondered...even if BB did have a gripe with our charter operator did he really have to, air his dirty laundry in public. After all, if we had known he dived the site from Terrigal we would have used his services as it is closer to Sydney. After this experience I'd rather drive the extra distance. Who knows what he'd do if you did something wrong on his boat. He probably keel-hauls naughty divers. On returning to Norah Head none of the locals seemed surprised when we told our story. His reputation is just like the original Blackbeard's so - BE WARNED!

(Name and address supplied but withheld to protect the innocent)

DIVE WEEKEND JEVIS BAY

19-20-21 JULY.

Accommodation Address.

42 Currumbene Street Huskison.

Accommodation Cost. 2 Nights for \$22.00
Diving from Club Boats 'Coffee fees' on boats at Captains Rates.....B.Y.O. Sheets and Blankets.
Bookings Essential. Payments made by July Meeting Monday the 15th July. Contact Scott Leimroth or Geoff Cook for Confirmation. (Luxury Bedrooms will be allocated on 1st paid basis.)

I SPY

**"SNOW WHITE AND THE SIX DWARFS
(WITH HELPERS) DO NELSON BAY- 17-19 MAY 1996**

FRIDAY

Treasure: After a pleasant drive with lots of conversation with Go Go, we arrived in Soldier's Point at about 7.30pm.

Grumpy: I had a pleasant drive too.. Just as well I like the sound of my own voice! But I was so excited to meet Treasure and Go Go at the

Caravan Park Office.

Treasure: Don't get grumpy with me. I wasn't the one who shafted you!

Grumpy: The bitch dumped me. I never thought he'd do that to me. All those times we've gone down together and for what?!

Treasure: Anyway no one wants to hear the threesome bickering, (anyway enough with the bitching)."

This is from an article in another clubs Newsletter. We know people often give one another pet names when they get romantic but 'Treasure'? It seems 'Treasure' is the rose between two thorns but we're sure Go-Go doesn't have much go-go left in him after the doctors finished with him recently.

Which infamous, amorous, yuppie PADI instructor with a big nose recently used his 'Italian charm' to chat up a new voluptuous female club member over the phone? Twice! And he was at his girlfriend's place at the time. If he wasn't an instructor already he'd have to earn the title 'Sleazemaster'.

MAGNETOMETER UPDATE ...

On Monday, the 24 June, 1996, an open meeting was held at my house to target shipwrecks of interest which could be located by using the clubs magnetometer. This meeting was used to review the information and debate theories against known facts on hand.

It is clear from the information on hand that we are very close to confirming two wrecksites and are awaiting winter westerlies to operate the Mag in earnest.

Coloured buoys are being prepared and we have 'acquired' 1000 metres of cord for their anchor weights. Any member wanting to commit to the project with further information, resources or an able body just wanting to be involved should contact either Scott or I at meetings or on dives.

See Ya. Barjumpa.

BSAC UPDATE....

Adrienne Hill has written a detailed report on BSAC and it's connections to South Pacific Divers and this will be included with the next newsletter if you would like more details on BSAC contact her or Barry Hallet at Southern Cross Divers on 9969 5072

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The following members are on the committee for the 1996 year.

Position	Name	Home No:	Work No:
President:	Leo Bergagnin	558 2592 Mobile: (041) 951 7285	517 2853
Treasurer:	Barbara Sweetman	550 1712	Pager 430 6285
Secretary:	Carina Gregory	(046) 25 8630	(046)20 1423
Photographic Officer:	Peter Flockart	371 0265 Fax: 374 2688	374 2382
Publicity Officer:	Paul Howlett	746 6720	377 3030
Dive Organizers:	Scott Leimroth Geoff Cook	759 6501 543 5817 Mobile (018) 29 4897	(019) 99 0864 [m] (018) 29 4891
(Nightdives Only)	Michael McFadyen	558 8181 Mobile (015) 27 6556	585 6434
Social Secretaries:	David Bilbow	564 1119	566 4333
Newsletter Editor:	Russell Stoker	799 2663 Mobile (018) 96 3527	217 1739 Fax 217 1484

BOAT OWNERS CONTACT LIST

The following members of the Club are boat owners. They generally go out diving most weekends and often need extra divers to make up numbers. Why not give them a call one day. If you are a boat owner, why not give a non-owner a call (see the membership list distributed regularly) and invite them along with you.

Name	Home No:	Work No:
Sue Armstrong	042 94 2769	697 2248
Martin Atkins (lives in Jervis Bay area)	044 43 4631	042 74 0210
John Beddie	820 4272	046 20 1746
BJ	709 5535	
Peter Booth	529 3818	
Geoff Cook	543 5817	018 29 4891
Bruce Cremonesi	668 8126	645 0286
Martin Kandilas	725 7808	725 7808
Bob May	045 79 1053	

REMEMBER, THE FOLLOWING DIVE CHARTER OPERATORS SUPPORT THE CLUB. YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO UTILISE THEIR SERVICES WHEN DIVING IN THE AREA THEY SERVE.

Max Western, *Sea-tamer II* (Port Hacking area), 567 2658 or 018 28 0791.

Peter Hall (a Club member), Twofold Dive at Eden, 064 96 3384.

Steve Grow and Lee Harvey (Club members), Aquatic Explorers, Cronulla, 527 1518 or 018 55 3858.

If you are going to Jervis Bay (or want to dive there) how about phoning member Martin Atkins who lives in the area. He is always looking for dive buddies. See his numbers above.

**Please ring the dive and social organisers on the Tuesday or Wednesday
before the event to confirm details etc.**

UPCOMING DIVING ACTIVITIES

Contact Numbers: Scott Leimroth 759 6501 [h] (019) 99 0864 [m] and Geoff Cook 543 5817 [h] or (018) 29 4897 [w]

Night dives: Michael McFadyen 585 6434 [w] 558 8181 [h] (015) 27 6556 [m]

19th, 20th and 21st July. JB weekend staying in luxury accommodation at 42 currumbene st Huskisson (the street that the pie shop is in) for only about \$10 - \$15 per night. 2 club boats possibly three. Great diving. Local member Martin Atkins knows all the hot spots.

3rd August - Anniversary of the sinking of the Birchgrove Park. Two survivors of the wreck will be at Atlantis Divers plus numerous boats for big day out.

11th August - Big Big Beef, Burgundy, Blokes and Babes Dive Day and BBQ at Jibbon after. Port Hacking - top reefs and wrecks and raving.

31st August and 1st Sept. North Coast Expedition staying in luxury accommodation diving with club boats if available and C-Breeze Dive on the numerous excellent reefs (Foggies Cave) and wrecks (Advance, Galava, Nerong, Nimbin etc) Don't miss this one as it's only 1 1/2 hrs drive from Sydney so you can come for a dive a day or the whole shebang.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES Contact Numbers: David Bilbow (h) 564 1119 (w) 566 4333

26th July - Club dinner at Albert Restaurant in Norton St Leichhardt. Deposits required at the July meeting

TBA - Interclub trivia night

NEXT CLUB MEETING

Remember, this month's meeting will be held on **Monday 15 July, 1996**, starting at 8 pm SHARP in the Emile McDonald Room of the Bankstown Sports Club.

FUTURE CLUB MEETINGS

Monday 19 August, 16 September and 21 October 1996.

CLUB SPONSORS

The South Pacific Divers' Club is honoured to be sponsored by the following:

Aquatic Explorers, see Steve or Lee at 7 Beach Arcade Cronulla, 527 1518

Beverly's Restaurant at Chippendale, contact Bev on 310 4878

Dive Quest, Mullaway, contact Chris or Gary on (066) 54 1930

Max Western's *Sea-tamer II* charter boat, contact Max on 567 8658 or (018) 28 0791

Selera Restaurant, Level 1, 264 King Street Newtown, 557 5186

Shiprock Dive at Lilli Pilli, contact Leo or Leslie on 526 2664

Southern Cross Divers at The Spit Marina, contact Barry on 9969 5072

South West Rocks Dive Centre, contact Noel or Belinda on (065) 66 6474

Twofold Dive Charters, Eden, contact Peter or Lorna on (064) 96 1778

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Send material to 36 Hanks Street, Ashbury.
Phone: (02) 799 2663 [h] or (018) 963 527 [m].
Deadline for articles is the last day of the month.