



WET RAG

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
SOUTH PACIFIC DIVERS' CLUB (established 1962)
DECEMBER 1999

IF NOT DELIVERED WITHIN 7 DAYS
PLEASE RETURN TO
SPDC
PO BOX 823,
BANKSTOWN NSW 2200

Meetings of the Club are normally held at 8pm on the 3rd Monday of each month in the Emile McDonald Room of the Bankstown Sports Club, Greenfield Parade, Bankstown. This month's meeting will be held on **Monday 20th December 1999**

Presidents Message

First of all I would like to wish everyone a fun-filled Festive season and a happy New Year. Maybe some of you are considering a new years Resolution Either to drop a habit or to take one up, perhaps that holiday that has been put on hold for so long will at last come your way. Whatever you may wish for I hope it will come true.

I am happy to report that the last Club social meet at Frenchmans bay was a successful day with diving, good food and a relaxed atmosphere. lucky for us the dark clouds that threatened to spoil the day early that morning, gave way to a sunny afternoon. The only drawback was very ordinary visibility underwater, but we can't have it all.

On behalf of the club I would like to thank all members and their families who came along, with special thanks to those who gave a helping hand shifting all the bits and pieces and especially the members who brought their boats along for the club to use. If you were one of the unlucky members who were unable to attend, do not despair as more such days are yet to come in the near future.

For now, one last word : December 1999 will NOT be the end of the world.

Have a good one ,

Bernie

On a sadder note, we have had two resignations within our committee at the last meeting, Our Dive organisers have resigned. I would like to sincerely thank both Jackie and Leo for the work they have done for the club over the last few months in their position. We must now nominate and elect a new dive organiser. This position in our club is Very important and unfortunately the people in it have not been supported very well. So I ask Two things of our members, Firstly if you feel you or somebody you know within the club is suitable for this thankless role please don't be afraid to nominate. Secondly, once the position has been filled ALL members are encouraged to Support them in their role.

Photographic officers report

The third and final round of the George Roberts comp is over and we will be announcing the monthly winners and the overall winner at the December meeting. We had nine entrants this time with some excellent slides submitted. Make sure you come along and check them out.

I'd like to thank again our sponsors who donated prizes for the competition and remind members to support them when they can. People like Chris at DiveQuest Mulloway, Ron Hunter at Forster and Noel & Belinda at South West Rocks not only back the club but also have great diving and service. So keep them in mind when you want a weekend away.

We are privileged to have one of our members, Peter Norris showing a couple of movies at the next meeting. For those of you that don't know Peter, he's won a truckload of local and overseas awards for filmmaking and we'll get to see a sample of his handy work.

If you can't get to the last meeting of the year I hope you have a safe chrissy, get lots of diving done and don't drink too much!!

Cheers,

Glen

For Sale:

Year 2000 Calendars \$20.00

Featuring 13 photos from Peter Flockart

All photos printed on glossy paper and wire bound.

To get your hands on one of these calendars see Peter at the December meeting or phone him on 9371 0265 to place your order.

Surviving Scuba

Peter Norris

I've been fortunate enough over the last 12 years to have dived many, varied underwater locations around the world. I try to do 60+ dives a year to keep my diving skills up, as I am **claustrophobic!** (I can't stand enclosed spaces). You can't imagine the fear I used to regularly face each time I donned a facemask. I overcame this mortal fear during a rescue course in 1989.

Our macho instructor was determined to produce the highest skilled rescue divers possible (A far cry from today's standards). To say he pushed us to our limits was an understatement. Our surface tows were across Gordons Bay swapping buddies on the return leg. For our unconscious diver tow he chose a very choppy Longreef site. (Each major skill was done at different sites from J.B. to The Entrance!)

It was my turn to tow the unconscious diver for 100 meters (trying not to drown her in the ½ meter wind chop.). Though my buddy was a slim female (size 8) I became totally and literally exhausted. My worst fears were about to come true, I was going to drown. I couldn't suck enough air (irregular breathing), I was 50 meters from shore (another early fear) and I couldn't swim anywhere (no energy). I decided to sink to the bottom (5m) and recover. I made hasty signals "in trouble" "ascending" as the chemicals in my brain activate the panic button. As I slowly settled on the bottom (I hoped I didn't land on a wobbygong.) calm came over me, I forced myself to breathe long and slow. The surge was sickening but that was the least of my worries. After 15 min I felt great and rejoined my classmates on the surface.

On ten other occasions I have reached and gone past the panic situation. Most situations were over-exertion with two out of air situations (faulty gauges!) on each occasion I regained control by relaxing and thinking my way out of the situation (e.g. Current etc.) I'll never forget that first experience on my rescue course. It taught me so much. Having ¼ tank of air left on the end of all boat dives is another valuable lesson I've learnt from witnessing other divers dilemmas.

I'm still claustrophobic, toilets lifts etc. but never underwater, it's a mind over matter situation.

Chicken and Champaign day Frenchmans Bay La Perouse

Duane Langley

Well to all those that missed the Xmas gathering at Frenchmans Bay, La Perouse on Sunday the 28th Nov, bad luck. I believe that the count was 26 or 27 plus Hau's little one. While we are on the matter of little ones, it appears that the Treasurer will go to any lengths to get a respite from her duties, even if it takes some 9 months to come to fruition. Congratulations from all of us that didn't know.

What started out as looking to be a hellish day weather wise, in fact turned into a glorious afternoon with a light breeze and sunshine to bask in.

Ben and his Dad (John) discovered that Kurnell was in fact a wee distance from the venue. So as penance for directing his Dad to the wrong place, Ben was obliged to be dragged across Botany Bay on a rope. Now Ben was quite successful at this feat until his Dad decided to have a chat with some of our divers in another boat. Very hard to ski when forward motion ceases. Also, who is responsible for tying the metal bit to the rope bit? Bugger!

Everybody who wanted to dive had their wish granted and a big thanks go to the boat owners who made this possible. We had 4 vessels available. A big thank-you to Martin, Loi, Peter Lord (Joined SPD on the day) and John.

Talking of joining SPD, it was also great to have Stephanie and her Dad also Join SPD as a family unit on the day. This new membership is especially great as Stephanie's Father lives in Bathurst and hopefully the Wet-Rag will keep his diving fire alight whilst he is so far from the sea.

I have to admit that one starts to feel old when young lads, such as Martin's David wears you out kicking a soccer ball about.

It was good to see that the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol vessel Cape Banks paid a call to our area. They were unable to come ashore and join us for a coldie due to their duties, but they popped over to show their colours and to let us know that they were out and about and thinking of us.

Glen obviously felt a little DeJaVu driving Loi's boat for the divers and was as eager as hell to drive it home alone across the Bay. Having a little play were we?

A very big thank-you to all those who put in the effort to make this a successful day and a very special thank-you to Bernie and Evelyn. It is without doubt that the success of the day is attributed in a large way to the effort these two put in. So, to the boat owners, Thank-you and to Bernie and Evelyn, a very BIG Thank-you, from those of us that just enjoyed the congenial, convivial day.

Merry Christmas to all.

South Pacific Divers
Australasian Underwater Photographer of
the Year
Tom Byron

Back in 1969 a small group of South Pacific Divers committee members led by Tom Byron decided to hold an underwater photographic competition. The decision was also taken that the competition would be held once a year and open to all underwater photographers living in Australia. There were to be two classes. One for 6x6 (2 1/4 square format) and the other for 35mm format. The committee also decided that an array of prizes for winners and place getters of both categories would be most appropriate and a cash prize of \$75.00 for the overall winner.

It was thought when the club gains more experience at running photographic competitions, other categories could be included. The first event called the New South Wales Underwater Photograph of the Year Competition was held in the summer of 1971. Overall winner that year was Glen Millott, a member of the club.

I left South Pacific Divers Club after the competition to pursue pressing business interests and for the next nine years the club did not hold another single photographic event of any consequence. Then in 1979 at a committee meeting it was decided that South Pacific Divers should stage an annual underwater photographic contest that Australia divers had not seen before. The competition would be open to all divers residing in this country and there would be three categories, Open, Novice and Honourable Mention.

After judging was completed with the first competition Bob Smith emerged as winner of the Open Category whilst Peter Gouldian won the Novice Section and Terry Mansfield took out the Honourable Mention prize.

From 1980 the clubs annual photographic competition went from strength to strength, each year better than the one before. Of the eighteen contests held from 1980 to 1998 many well-known names have appeared as winners, Bob Halstead won his in 1983. The late Pat Manly was the first to win twice but

not in a row, once in 1982 and the other in 1985. Andy Belcher also took out the title twice, once in 1987 and the other eight years later in 1995. Garry Bell was the first and so far the only person to win the title three times in a row, 1990, 1991 and 1992. Michael Cufer also won the title twice once in 1993 and again in 1994. The first woman to win the Open Category section was Katie Scotland in 1981. Toward the end of the 1980s the photo comp was open to underwater photographers residing outside Australia. This move placed the Australasian Underwater Photographer of the Year on the world map as being one of the most prestigious photographic competition in this part of the globe.

Next Australasian Underwater Photographer of the Year will be held in 2000 on Saturday 4th November and promises to be the best yet. There will be a new category. The Prestigious Masters Award. The night will be held at Bankstown Sports Club and prizes will be at an all time high. Master of Ceremonies is popular speaker Reg Lipson from Melbourne. Tickets will come on sale in the second quarter of next year. Judges for the forthcoming competition are award winning underwater photographers Tom Byron, Martin Kandlis and Mark Welsh.

Further information leading up to November 2000 concerning prizes, sponsors and any other data will only be available through Sportdiving Magazine and Dive Log Australia. Sponsors to date for the SOUTH PACIFIC DIVERS ANNUAL UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR AWARDS.

*Sea New Guinea *T D Preece *Mike Ball
Dive Expeditions *Bicheno Dive
*Diving Solutions *Undersea Explorer
*Scuba Wharehouse *Aqua Sea Products
*Cape Byron Imports *Aquanaut (Aqualung)
*Taka Dive *Aqua Sports (Yagoona)
*MV Indulgence (Jervis Bay) *Poraday *MV
Ocean Trek (Jervis Bay)

As additional sponsors become available they will also be listed.

Jervis Bay Aboard "MV Indulgence" *Peter Foster*

Upon arriving late on Friday night it became apparent only five divers were going to turn up, what a bonus we all would have a cabin. Peter Flockart even had a bunk for his camera equipment this would mean not tripping over it in the main lounge. If you have ever seen his equipment you will know what I mean. Our last two divers joined us early on Saturday morning after leaving Sydney at the crack of dawn we only had ANNIE left to come now and she had the food. After a week of very mixed weather we wondered what kind of weekend was in store for us. I had prepared for the worst, how WRONG was I. The sun was shining the seas dead flat as our noble skipper ADRIAN [I KNOW MARTY AND DAVID AND ITS P.N.G. NEXT] headed for boat harbour and breakfast. As we had planned for a weekend of power packed action an early breakfast was demanded, 11-30 or so will be just fine thanks ANNIE. After a fine breakfast it was time to go diving ADRIAN [I KNOW MARTY AND DAVID AND ITS P.N.G. NEXT] headed for a site know as the BUBBLE CAVE a ten-minute run or so, WRONG. It took over one hour to reach the dive site about five minutes out of boat habour we were to encounter the first of three major problems, KILLER FAIRY PENGUINS. We stopped to watch the antics of these monsters for about ten minutes or so we are here to dive not to watch marine creatures came the cry. We left the penguins and ran straight into problem number two KILLER SEALS. A pair of these monsters lay siege to our boat and forced us to watch them play until the cry of we are here to dive not to watch marine creatures lets go. Then came problem number three, there she blows was the cry a Humpback Whale and her calf was spotted. Our crew now had to face a moment of truth do we whale watch or do we dive we went whale watching. The cries of we are here to dive not to watch marine creatures was again heard so we took our leave and wondered what next? As our skipper now headed towards the Bubble Cave five very happy divers began to get ready once the anchor was down Adrian [I KNOW MARTY AND DAVID AND ITS P.N.G. NEXT] gave the time honoured dive briefing. There's the stern pi?? Off we did and what a dive it was. The cave is in about 26 M. of water unlike shiprock two or three divers can enter at one time a large school of butterfly perch hovered at the caves entrance morays poked their heads out from cracks in the rocks reef fish of all types made this reef hum with life. The fixed life here was great sponges of all sorts littered the bottom seafans swayed in the slight current this was a great dive spot.

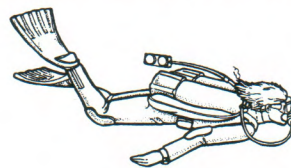
A second dive was planned for the docks even after eighteen years of diving I still rate this spot as one of my personal all time favourites. Today was to be no different fish city and very clean but no sign of the Grey Nurse Sharks this time oh well you cant have it all or can you? The fixed life here has to be seen to be believed gorgonians, honey-comb sponges, yellow barrel sponges, sea tulips and bryozoan corals were all there for the to enjoy and explorer. Now came lunch it's a hard life doing this you know but we would do our very best. The third and last dive of the day was at a spot called Boat harbour wall this reef runs east west in about 15M. Tthe fixed life here was brilliant the entire reef seemed to be covered

and as for the fish life well it was the best I have seen in long time. The highlight of this dive was to be the sight of a giant sunfish being cleaned its size was about eight feet from tip to tip the divers that were lucky enough to see this denizen of the deep were blown away. Also seen on this dive were Red Indian fish what a great end to our first day. The days diving was over now came tea and as we settled down after tea some nameless person placed a bottle of CHIVAS REGAL on the table just in time for the after dinner party to start lets not forget the great bottle of red wine. As you may have guessed a night was out of the question. A group of very happy divers crawled into bed this night.

After breakfast we headed to a spot on the far eastern side of the docks the seas were still flat but the **cloud** cover had moved in. After reaching the bottom you only had a 10M. swim over a sandy bottom to reach the reefs edge. Adrian [I KNOW MARTY AND DAVID AND ITS P.N.G. NEXT] always took great care to avoid dropping the anchor on living reef when ever he could. Now you had a choice to go east or west I went east the bottom here held all the things that make this place special small caves, swimthourghs, overhangs[or should it be hangovers] and fish every where you looked. In one of these caves I found two giant Australian Cuttlefish I just settled down for the light show which is always good to watch. Leaving the cuttlefish I headed towards yet one more smallish cave in about 15M. or so. In here I found a pair of Blue Devil fish when approached these fish will normally withdraw to the darkness at the back of the cave but not this pair of film stars !where is a camera holding a diver when you need it. I now started to head back to the anchor upon reaching the anchor I choose to swim to the West for about ten minutes or so well what more could I hope to see fish milled around every place you looked. A large Blue Groper came around hoping for a free feed but most of my interest was held by a pair of Weedy Sea-dragons hiding in the kelp. After a few short minutes it was time to head back as I crossed the sand I was almost run over by a huge ray racing away from the coast at full speed a fishing trace trailed from its mouth this was the low point of the trip for myself. After a deco stop when by the way you could see the bottom which allowed you to watch a reef at work it was time to leave the water after yet one more great dive.

Our last dive of the trip was to be back at Boat harbour wall the only thing missing from Saturday was the Sunfish this was to be a short dive well we still had to eat lunch you know. Diving Jervis Bay is a must do trip for divers of all levels and tastes and the live on boards in my opinion are the best way to go I can only say roll on the JANURAY Australia Day long weekend the trip is from 21/01/2000 until 26/01/2000 you can book for the entire trip or just part of it. We plan to spend one day in the deep water out off the shelf using the shark cage this will depend on the weather and will incur a small extra cost. The cost is \$270 for the weekend and \$110 a day for the rest of the trip. I hope to see a few more club members coming on club dive events in the future.

My thanks go to ANNIE for the way she looks after her guests and Adrian [I KNOW MARTY AND DAVID AND ITS P.N.G. NEXT] for the great service as always. Last but not least thanks must go to Peter Flockart for taking the time to book the trip.



RVCP NEWS

Hello once again from your Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol,

It was great to see that you were all enjoying a great time on the beach at Fenchmans Bay on Sunday the 28th. I and the rest of the crew apologise for not getting ashore to meet you guys, but due to our commitments we were required to be a ready response team. The other reason and a lot more plausible is that we have an extremely heavy anchor and no anchor winch on the Cape Banks and the skipper of the day was not keen on dropping it unnecessarily.

I would like to bring to all you boat owner's attention that the NSW Waterways are clamping down on the safety equipment rules. Therefore if you are out on your boat, take this as a friendly reminder to double-check all your necessary equipment before setting off. Also please ensure that you have your boating license with you whilst you are in control of a vessel. Be assured, that if you are checked and found to be deficient in these areas you most likely will receive an infringement notice.

Most of you people in the dive industry will undoubtedly be old salts, so if you are pulled over for a spot check, don't take it personally, because both you and us know that the waterways at times are full of irresponsible unskilled and couldn't give a damn boaties. By the Waterways jumping on these people they are doing you and us all, a favour.

Remember folks, if you have family members or friends that are planning to obtain their boat license, send them to us. The small amount of money we make per person is returned directly into the running of the services we provide to you free of charge.

Our new Waveney vessel from England has landed and is in Sydney harbour at present and should soon be seen on Botany Bay. Should any of your members or friends like to come out with the Coastal Patrol for the day to see who and what we are, we would be glad to have you. All you have to do is contact the base telephone number, which is 95677113 and this number will divert to the divisional commander for Botany Bay should there be no one in the radio room at the time. We are always in need of crew and it is a great way to meet new people and get some boating skills to boot.

Just a friendly reminder that as the month of Xmas cheer is here, the alcohol limit for boat drivers is the same as driving a car and remember the Waterways can test your breath 2 miles of shore if they feel the need.

We at the RVCP wish all the members of SPD a very Merry Xmas and pray that the only time we meet is to wave as we pass you on the water whilst you are having a great time.

RVCP Member

Sue.

MISTY VALLEY

Tom Byron

I would like to tell you about an unusual location called Misty Valley. No, it is not situated in a National Park somewhere nor is it a bushwalking destination. In fact, this location is placed in the Solitary Islands Marine Park and runs along side the south eastern end of North West Solitary Island, offshore from Mullaway, about half an hour's drive by car north of Coffs Harbour.

I have just spent two glorious weeks filming dive locations for a new compact disk soon to be released with my divers guide books of Northern and Southern New South Wales as well as Jervis Bay. The new CD will give a diver a wonderful opportunity to assess a particular dive site by not only reading about the location but will also be able to see colour stills and video. By combining both types of media on the CD along with update site information and new dive location drawings plus the book, will make the job of choosing a location and planning a diving weekend or holiday along the New South Wales coast a whole lot easier.

We had excellent sea conditions during the fortnight except for one or two days when winds became a little boisterous with gusts above forty knots. However, the most unusual part of filming during the two weeks was at Misty Valley. The dive site is an experience few should miss. It's not jammed packed with fish life nor is it covered with colourful sub-tropical growth. In fact, there is very little growth and many bare boulders along the valley floor. The one thing that makes this site so different from others is the unusual wave movements that pound the sea surface above.

Imagine ages ago when oceans of the South Pacific were different than today, when islands were being formed from well below the surface and slowly rose above the warm waters. Around one such island, the ever-violent ocean bed began steadily to subside forming an unusual underwater seascape that over time settled into position on the eastern side of what is now known as North West Solitary Island.

Picture in your mind if you may a scenic underwater valley alive with fish, a valley that

has on one side steep broken walls sloping back toward North West Solitary Island forming part of its eastern boundary. Whilst on the other a continuous steep fortress like rock structure with two narrow trenches spaced some distance apart leading eastward into deeper waters. This section of reef is exposed to the relentless pounding of the South Pacific Ocean, the very thing that makes the dive site so different from others.

The only safe way to approach the dive site is not from the ocean, but at the southern end of the island. The beginning of Misty Valley is similar to swimming into a giant open underwater funnel, it then narrows into a spasmodic sandy trench like valley that's almost restricted in parts by giant stark boulders. Other sections along the floor are wide enough to support two or three divers abreast.

As you enter you are confronted with a slight current running southward however, this poses few problems and many large rocks offer protection against the surge. Fish are everywhere, behind boulders, under ledges and in open water. As one progresses the pounding waves can be plainly heard crashing upon the reef above. To experience the extraordinary scenery that Misty Valley displays one has to swim to an area that exhibits a phenomenon only visible at this dive site.

The location is situated about two thirds of the way along the valley at a small area that is somewhat like a flat open arena surrounded by underwater boulders. At the surface, it's like a protected pond enclosed by an exposed reef.

Over eons of time the uncovered reef above has been carved and shaped by wind, rain and waves to a point where it sends ocean swells high into the air crashing upon the still water surface of the pond. Creating an unusual undersea motion as hundreds of liters of ocean shatter the calm waters above as it cascades across the surface. It's like a dark threatening fast moving storm cloud ready to release millions of liters upon the earth. As the

turbulent waters pass overhead zillions of tiny white air bubbles slowly descend and engulf you in a cloak of thick mist, at this point its impossible to see anything. You dare not move until the underwater fog lifts slowly above your head back toward the surface.

Just when you think it is safe to move another wave thunders in from above and the same phenomena happens again. To savour the moment of crashing waves and thick ocean mist one must stay a while, perhaps ten minutes, its something you will never forget. Then between heavily falling waves slowly drag yourself out of this underwater washing machine to a point where the valley floor offers some protection from the never-ending turbulence. The swim back is then easy and free of wave movements and the ever-present undersea mist.

If you intend to visit the Coffs Harbour area or perhaps driving through then its worthwhile to spend a days diving at Mullaway with Dive Quest, but make sure that Chris Connell or one of his skippers takes you to Misty Valley, believe me its worth the effort. On the other hand, if seas are flat and calm then Misty Valley will cease to display its fascination for something different underwater.

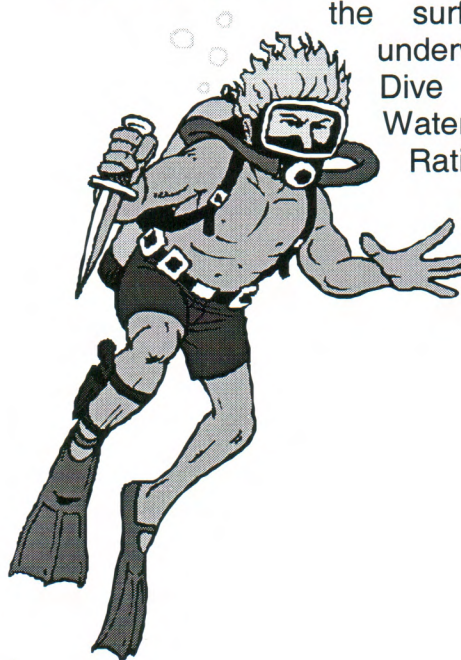
Rating:

Outstanding Features: Waves motions above the surface and thick underwater mist.

Dive Rating: Open Water.

Rating: 9 out of 10.

Depth: Between 5 and 7 meters.



Coolooli 17th Oct 1999

Peter Foster

To follow on From Peter Flockharts dive report in the October minutes, this wreck laying on the ocean floor at Long Reef has been a long time favorite of mine. This wreck forms part of an artificial reef that was started back in 1976 with the sinking of the 88m ferry the "Dee Why" and finished with the 50m dredge "Coolooli" in August of 1980. I first dived this wreck in about 1984 and was awe-struck by the brilliant colours of the jewel anemones which seemed to cling to all the handrails of this once dirty old bucket dredge. If you had dived the Arch in Jervis Bay in the early 80's you will know well the intense colours that were present then.

The wreck lies on its side in about 50m or so and divers can enter different parts of the vessel for some good penetration style of diving. As the diver settles on the top of this wreck looking down over the flat bottom of her hull presents quite a sight as you start gliding down through the old super-structure and come to some of the many swim-throughs this wreck presents. Parts of the hull are now starting to rust through and in time should allow access to some of the previously undived sections of the wreck. Extreme care must be taken when entering this wreck, or any other wreck for that matter, as divers have died on some of the Long Reef wrecks in the past. As you enter this wreck via the smoke stack you should be able to see a plaque remembering a diver who died here a few years ago. As with all the deep wrecks, the diver needs to build up his or her experience levels and club dives are a perfect way to do this, but only if you come on the dive. Whoever takes on the job of dive organiser deserves a lot more support than was given to Jackie and Leo.

The "Coolooli" is in my personal opinion the best wreck dive on Long Reef. The other wrecks worth a look are the "Bellubera" ferry, the "Meggol" tanker and the tugboat "Himma". In diving these wrecks you can build up to diving the deeper wrecks which lay off the NSW coast, like the "Birchgrove Park", "Galava", "Advance" and the "Nerong" to name but a few. You could also head on down

to Seal Rocks and dive the "Satara" and "Catherton", these wrecks will excite even the most hardened diver.

So when the new dive organiser asks you, the members, what type of diving you wish to do, tell them. Don't sit back and say nothing then complain afterwards. I guess what I am trying to say is, support your committee, by supporting the efforts these people make for our club. It's all too easy to sit back and throw stones.

Some of the more shallow wrecks can be dived without any extra huge outlay on equipment, wrecks like the "Bombo", "Centurian", "Oakland", "Valient" and even the "Lady Darling".

Two more wrecks which club divers visit on a pretty regular basis with Max Weston are the "Undola" and the "Tuggerah". So enjoy your diving whatever your tastes are and please support your club committee and go diving.



World's greatest fish dive?

Peter Norris

I've heard and read many stories of the "SS Yongala" over the years. The difficulty of getting to Townsville (cost) was always a restricting factor. Frequently flyer points solved the airfare factor. I've always been a value for money traveller not a bargain hunter.

October, I have been told and know from experience is the best time to dive the S/W Pacific. Next was the choice of dive operator, no choice here Mike Ball is the best, I went with two trips to make sure of diving on the "SS Yongala". One in seven trips is cancelled due to bad weather. I met a Sydney diver who had missed out on five occasions!

The first trip involved a 4 day/ 3-night 10-dive package. Two dives on Glow Reef and 2 dives on the Helix Reef. Day One saw all the novice divers (18 out of 22) get their buoyancy right. There were only two Aussies among the twenty-two divers/passengers. These reefs are patch reefs that almost break the surface, lots of walls and gorgonians on Helix Reef, not much life on the walls of Glow but lots of swim-through and sharks, viz was 20m.

Mike Balls crew use these reefs to make sure divers have good buoyancy for the last six dives. Our next days' diving was at Wheeler Reef. This we were told was as close as the Great Barrier Reef gets re. visibility, coral and marine life, to the Coral Sea. We were not to be disappointed, we did three day and one night dive here. The viz in the morning dives was in excess of 30m. I had not seen viz as good as this. The bommies are medium too small in size, with outstanding coral growth. Both reef and pelagic fish are in abundance. The night dive here was disappointing except for "Elvis", a 6-foot giant barracuda that hangs out under boats. He had the best set of dentures I have ever seen, though I hadn't planned on shooting movie footage here, I did, I just couldn't help myself!

Day Three "SS Yongala": Our first dive on the wreck was just after dawn. A ½ meter swell was running with a slight current across the wreck. As my buddy and I descended the wreck was visible at 3 meters. The starboard gunwale is in 15 meters. Soon all of the bow and 1/3 of the wreck was visible. No description or pictures of the wreck I have seen prepared me for the growth and fish life.

The "Yongala" is an entire eco system with nothing but sand surrounding the wreck for

many kilometers. First dive was basically a swim around the wreck. I still managed to shoot a 2 min 20 sec roll of super-8 movie film. Over the seven remaining dives I shot another six rolls. Viz was around 20 meters, on our 2nd dive the current picked up, no cameras- hand over hand to the marker buoy then hanging on for dear life as we descended to the wreck. All the time the current was picking up and changing direction, it started at 90 degrees to the wreck went to about 15 deg. then reversed! During this time the pelagics went on a feeding frenzy. Viz dropped to about 10 meters, trevalley and giant trevally buzzed the shoals of bait-fish while the sixty-strong school of batfish fed on the small animals in the water column. All too soon our time was up. Bull sharks circled the wreck while nurse sharks rested on the wreck. I had a Dutch buddy on this trip, he was adventurous, a good buddy but most of all he had a camera.

On the second trip I did all my dives on the "Yongala" solo, I had gone prepared with a pony bottle. Mike Ball dive expeditions had no problem with this as I had demonstrated my diving skills over the previous 10 dives.

This trip gave us even better viz, up to 25 meters on one dive. I took lots of growth, swim-past and silhouette shots. I swam around along and under the bow and stern. The marine life is so used to divers that close-up photos are easy even with twin 250watt movie lights! I used the currents to cover the wreck and slow down my pans and tilts. Making a documentary of this wreck was both easier and harder than I had expected. Easier because the subject matter was everywhere, harder because the currents made leaving the wreck for long shots and pans under the bow difficult. Particularly when I push a 38kg camera rig through the water.

Summing up, the "SS Yongala" is the best fish wreck dive I've done. The "SS Thistle Gorm" in the Red Sea is a close second, while the "President Coolidge" is big and the "Fujikawa" is pretty and intact.. Mike Ball's "Watersport" crew were the most professional dive operation I've experienced. The only sour note was my u/w still camera jammed and I don't have a still shot of the wreck, good news is the movie footage is good and very colourful. I didn't film all it's residents this time, so I guess I'll just have to go back!

Peter will be showing some of his movies at the next Sth Pac Meeting Monday 20th December

COMMITTEE MEMBERS the following members are on the committee for the 1999-year.

Position	Name	Home No:	Work No:
President:	Bernd Kraul	96069731	9792 4333
Treasurer:	Lin Lah	9318 0142	0418 648265
Secretary:	Louise Wilson	9261 2929	
Photographic Officer:	Glen Percy Email: aquasports@compuserve.com		97082826 0414 275179
Dive Organisers:	POSITION VACANT		
Social Organiser:	Scott Eggington		
Equipment Officer:	Glen Percy (Aquasports) Email: aquasports@compuserve.com		9708 2826
Newsletter editor/ Publicity officer:	Darren Wright (Whitey) Email: whitey@nextcentury.com.au		Mob. 0418 253 786

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.

Name	Home No:	Work No:
Sue Armstrong	02 44 437 606	9385 2248
Martin Atkins (lives in Jervis Bay area)	044 43 4631	042 74 0210
Martin Kandilas	0145 400 403	

If you are a boat owner and would like to be added to this list contact the committee.

The Club Phone number is 0411 343 200 it will be taken to all Club Dives so if you are running late or unable to make it please call so as we can make the required arrangements and get diving.

CLUB SPONSORS Remember to support the Club Sponsors:
The South Pacific Divers' Club is honoured to be sponsored by the following

Name	Contact:	Phone No:
Aquatic Explorers	Steve or Lee at 3/82-84 Captain Cook Drive, Caringbah	9531 1518
Aqua Sports	Glen Percy at 430 Hume Highway Yagoona	9708 2826
Beverley's Restaurant	Peter or Bev at 1 – 9 Meagher St Chippendale	9310 4878
Dive Quest	Chris or Gary at Mullaway	066 54 1930
Sea Tamer II Charter	Max Weston	9524 1818 or 0418 280 791
Shiprock Dive	Leo or Lesley at Lilli Pilli	9526 2664
Southern Cross Divers	Barry at The Spit Marina	9969 5072
Southern Cross Divers	Costa at Stanmore	9568 1517
South West Rocks Dive	Noel or Belinda	02 6566 6474
Twofold Dive Charters	Peter or Lorna at Eden	02 6496 3384

CLUB GEAR

The Club has a variety of gear for the use of Members. This includes The Magnetometer, Two sets of Oxygen equipment, 2 BBQ's, a Marine Radio and more. Inquiries should be directed to the Equipment officer.

UPCOMING DIVING ACTIVITIES

Contact Numbers: Club Phone 0411 343 200

26 Jan 2000 (Australia Day) Those of us unable to go to JB With Peter Foster aboard Indulgence. Kurnell Unlimited diving. Meet 8am at the Monument Car Park
Lunch will be provided @ \$5 per person BYO Drinks .. Contact Bernie for details.

6 Feb 2000 Club Dive day at Terrigal Details to be confirmed.

Any further activities you would like to have organised contact Bernie or our new Dive organiser.

Meetings of the Club are normally held at 8 pm on the 3rd Monday of each month in the Bankstown Sports Club, Greenfield Street, Bankstown. This month's meeting will be held on **Monday, 20th December 1999.**

Deadline for articles is the last day of the month.

Wet Rag, the South Pacific Divers' Club Newsletter, is published by South Pacific Divers' Club. Edited by Whitey.



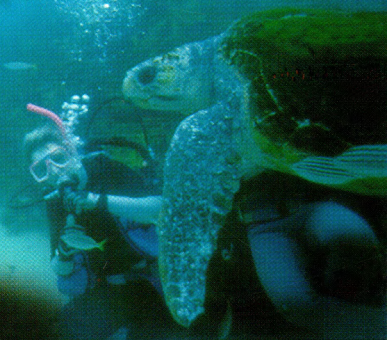
Send material for the Wet Rag to the Committee c/o club PO Box as on front cover.

Underwater Adventures



D
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FORSTER
SEAL ROCKS



FISHERMANS WHARF DIVE CENTRE FORSTER

Wharf Street, Forster, N.S.W. 2428
(on the water opposite Forster Post Office)

Phone/Fax: (02) 6554 7478





A WELCOME TO DIVERS

Hi! We've been diving, teaching people to dive and showing divers our area for over 15 years. We invite you to come and join us exploring one of the world's greatest dive locations.

Warm blue water, shipwrecks, myriad fish life, sponges, corals and for the more adventurous we have guaranteed awesome shark diving to make your visit one to remember - make us your next dive destination.

RONNIE and SHANE HUNTER

OUR FACILITIES WILL MAKE YOUR DIVE TRIP MORE ENJOYABLE

On Water Location - Step off the Wharf Onto Our Boat!

The convenience of gearing up on our wharf, then stepping onto the dive boat moored right at the back door is the envy of many dive operators around the world. After an exhilarating dive experience you can wash your gear on the wharf, then enjoy a cup of coffee on our deck while you relate dive stories and relive great moments.

Equipment and service

We hire, service and sell SCUBAPRO DIVE EQUIPMENT because "deep down you want the best".



Dive School

As one of Australia's most respected and professional Dive Schools, we offer personalised tuition, quality and experience without compromise.

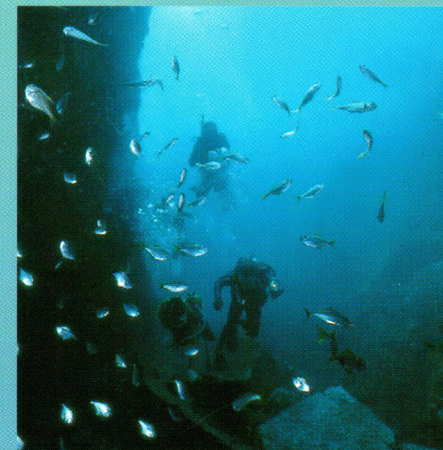
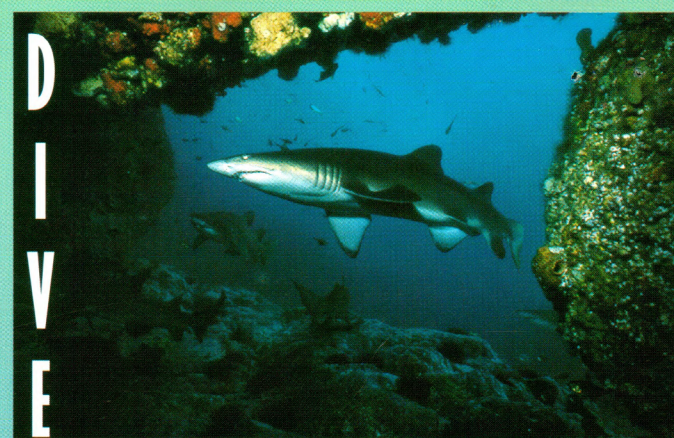


THE BEST DIVE BOAT ON THE NSW COAST

"M.V. SCUBAPRO"

10.6 metres of super stable catamaran. Purpose built, twin engined, fast, toilet &

hot shower, 4 exits, 2 boarding ladders, tank racks, satellite navigation, underwater viewing windows, plenty of room and heaps of comfort. "M.V. SCUBAPRO" and her experienced crew provide the ultimate dive platform for your underwater adventure.



MAKE YOUR DIVE TRIP MORE COMFORTABLE AT THE BLUE WATER DIVERS LODGE

Our Blue Water Divers Lodge (at 20 Short St, Forster) is a comfortable 5 bedroom house with 3 bunk rooms and 2 double rooms. Accommodating 20 persons, the facilities include a BBQ area, fully equipped eat-in kitchen, lounge, television, video, C.D. player, sunroom. Light breakfasts, linen and bedding are included in our packages.

Stay for one night, a weekend, a week or more, after a great days diving relax around the BBQ, swap dive stories, a fun way to complete a wonderful day of excitement.

Our Flexible Package Deals

Diving Only

If you're visiting Forster and want to do a dive or two during your stay, we can offer diving to suit all levels of experience. From gentle eight metre dives with our resident 'tame' loggerhead turtle "Agro", to adrenalin charged deep dives or awesome shark dives. We have everything to make your stay something special.

Dive & Lodge Packages

Our tailored accommodation and dive packages are designed to make your dive holiday hassle free. Stay with other divers as a group, close to dive centre and all the town attractions. Non diving friends and partners are most welcome to stay at the lodge.

PACKAGES INCLUDE 2 NIGHTS - 4 Dives
 3 NIGHTS - 6 Dives

Best Value Package
MID WEEK SPECIAL
5 Nights - 5 Days - 9 Boat Dives
Bed & Breakfast
all inclusive



Meet new Friends and Relax. Become part of our Dive Team



ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW FORSTER - A COASTAL PARADISE

A coastal paradise which boasts superb beaches, picturesque lake estuarine system, great restaurants and freindly natives.

Some of our Dive Sites

Forster: (2 of 17 sites)

"The Pinnacle" (24- 40m) Rated in the top 10 dive sites in the world. When The Pinnacle "goes off" it's the dive you'll always remember. The only dive in the world where you will see big fish being eaten by big sharks on a regular basis.

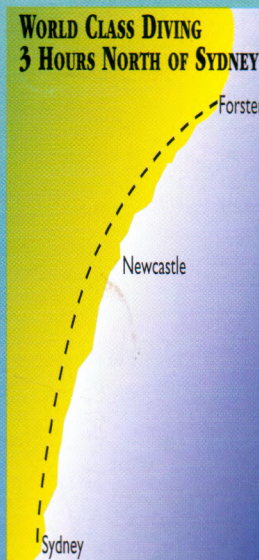
"Spot A" (10- 21m) Forster's most popular dive site. cuddle large tame Blue Groper, Butterfly Cod, Turtles and fish life abound here. A dive you'll never tire of.

Seal Rocks: (23 Dive sites, here's a few)

"Jimmy's Caves" (10-36m) A labrynth of underwater caves. This is the favourite of many divers.

"The Caverns" (8-20m) Packed with up to 40 grey nurse sharks, one of the most amazing dives you'll ever experience.

"S.S. Satara" (42m) & **"S.S. Catterthun"** (55m plus) 2 of Australia's great wreck dives; for experienced deep divers only.



Getting Here

3 hours easy drive from Sydney, 2 hours north of Newcastle.

20 minutes south of Taree
Rail and coach transfers daily
G. Lakes Coaches 1800 043263

What To Bring

All your personal dive gear, 'c' card, camera, towels, a sense of adventure and desire for fun.

The Weather

Temperate climate & great diving all year 'round. No cyclones, no monsoons.

The Water

Normally warm blue water up to 25°C. The occassional cold, gin clear current, down to 15°C for that exhilarating dive.

BOOK NOW WITH