



NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 453 Hurstville South 2221 NSW

November 2006

Port Stephens Trip – Labour weekend By Brian Byrnes

Jason, Rox, Mike, Kelly and I made to Nelson bay on Friday in time for a high-tide shore dive at Fly Point. (Heinz missed it by that much.) Fly Point is a magical place that bursts with life. We didn't swim very far - we didn't have to. Just covering a small area was fascinating.

Every time we looked up, we saw fish - bream, morwongs, rockcod, leather jackets, hawk fish, and many more. Looking more carefully, we saw the moray eels, the pineapple fish, and the carefully hidden wobbegongs. Looking closer again, there was the rich, local collection of nifty nudibranchs. And all of this was embedded in a wild array of gaudy sponges and ascidians.



That night, the rest of the team arrived – David Burns, Paul & Angela and Peter Trayhurn. We were staying at the luxury bunkhouse provided by ProDive, conveniently opposite the local RSL - very much the happening place.

On Saturday they took us out to the SS Oakland - home to a couple of blind sharks. After that, we dove Government Wharf. Here, there were literally dozens of Port Jackson sharks lying around, sometimes piled on top of each other.

On the Sunday the boat took us to North Rock and Shark Gutters for some murky diving. At Shark Gutters, we were anchored not far from a boat called "Team Spearit". But despite the local

team and the bad viz, some people did actually see a Grey Nurse Shark. There were also some colourful sea-stars.



After lunch that day we did the Pipeline shore dive at high tide. As part of the dive, we first hunted among the fishing lines of the breakwater, searching for an Anglerfish that was reputed to be hiding there.



No luck. But after that, we did find a mating pair of the over-dressed Red-Gilled Nembrotha, which helped make up for it.

On the last day, we again visited the blind sharks at the SS Oakland, and after that was a visit to the stars of the trip - the legendary Donut Nembrothas of Cabbage Tree Island. They were exactly where they were supposed to be, and looked just as improbable as their pictures.



PRESIDENTS REPORT And Introduction

2006/2007 will be another exciting year for the St George Scuba Club with many Diving and Social activities being planned locally, intrastate and overseas.

Due to the great efforts of the previous Committee my new position as President has been made a pleasure. I am joined on the New Committee by:

Phil Rose as Vice President - who has been a member of the club since 1978 and is our previous Vice President.

Elly Caterson as Secretary - a Life Member and "Queen of the Sea".

Mark Ridsdale as Treasurer - a keen yachty with a lovely catamaran "Reality".

Eddie Ivers as Assistant Secretary/Treasurer - who is known for diving with anyone and everyone.

Jason Coombs as Newsletter Editor - returns as Editor for another year and is passionate about the underwater environment and sea life.

Our Club is in great shape, our bank account has a healthy surplus, with funds earmarked for increased member benefits. Benefits include group discounts on overseas trips and week-ends away, access to dive from member boats, free BBQs on trips away, Christmas lunch, cheap cylinder testing, equipment at wholesale prices, SCAN membership, access to the club website, free Newsletter, subsidised T-shirts, Stickers and coolers for new members.

This year we will also be subsidising the SCAN events with members benefiting from free boat dives from member boats and free air fills on the week-end away. We are also looking to include subsidised "dive n dine" days or chicken and champagne breakfasts, in our upcoming calendar planning. As a member you definitely get a good bang for your \$25 bucks!

Our new website is up and running. Thanks to Michael McFadyen, members and visitors can go to www.stgeorgescuba.org.au and find out what dive activities are coming up and view photos and articles. We encourage members to add photos and articles to the site.

If you have any suggestions on the running of the club, please contact a committee member.

Happy Diving, Kelly

Long time member Mike Scotland celebrated 30 years diving recently!

In the club history Michael McFadyen recently put up on the website he records the following:

"On 10 to 11 February 1979 17 people attended a dive weekend at Jervis Bay (4 dives cost \$14 using a trawler). Phil Rose and Mike Scotland attended this weekend. Mike is a long time member of the Club (as of 2006) but does not appear to have been a member then. Mike was Phil's teacher at this time."

And here's a shot of Mike at Jervis Bay again this year!



You may remember from a recent newsletter Mike was looking for partners in his compressor. I understand a number of members have already invested in his latest venture!

More from the Port Stephens Trip By Roxanne Fea

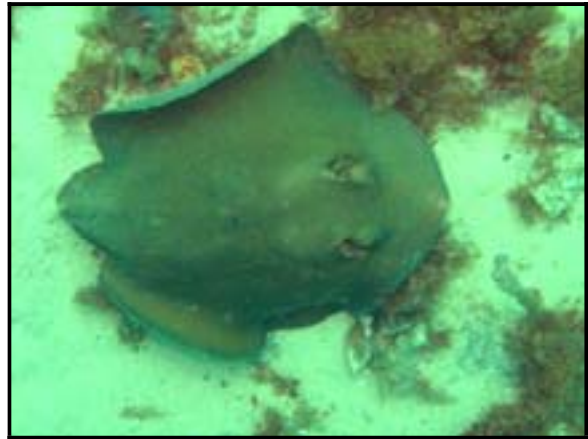
J and I hadn't been on a diving holiday for months so we were looking forward to this trip. We had already checked out the Pro Dive accommodation and were impressed with the scope and size of the place, and as we hadn't done a lot of the offshore dives before we were doubly looking forward to the boat dives.

We both played hooky and headed up to Port Stephens on the Friday, to meet Kellie, Michael and Brian for an afternoon dive at Fly Point. I always love this dive site, but maybe for Brian's inaugural experience it delivered something special...again.

Brian's covered his dives elsewhere in this edition but for me highlights included an amazing minute arthropod on a "finger sponge" (the Australian Museum would not be impressed but I'm not good with non-fish species). Because of their small size, ability to camouflage themselves and their extreme shyness I rarely see sea spiders so it was great to see one on this dive. They can be fierce little critters though; they are boldly carnivorous and eat whatever comes by to survive...



Dropping down a series of sponge-covered ledges, we also spotted at least three massive crayfish exoskeletons; one stylishly positioned on a huge sponge, a stingaree missing its sting and thereby its identity??, a yellow-cheek angelfish and a large number of curious bream, luderick and pike. The benefits to these animals from living in an Aquatic Reserve are always obvious when you dive Halifax Park and Fly Point.



Joined by Heinz, Paul W, Angela, Peter Treyhurn and Dave Burns we dined at the adjacent RSL on Friday night, which was pretty pleasant apart from the ear splitting broadcast of a meat raffle happening in the neighbouring bar. And just to prove that Port Stephens can also be a bit edgy, the local teens decided to rumble outside the dive lodge early on Saturday morning much to delight of those sleeping at the front of the house...

On Saturday we headed out beyond Nelson Bay to dive the SS Oakland and Government Wharf (Fingal Head).

The highlight from me was the Oakland; a coal ship – or collier – that sank in 1903 with the loss of 11 lives, just north of Cabbage Tree Island (see Michael's web-page). The water was dirty and green but it cleared to at least 6 metres at the wreck 27m down. I loved the way the intact bow first emerged from the gloom, and also how many nurseries the wreck seemed to support, including sweeps, estuary catfish and blindsharks. We also found a portly pleurobranch and the fattest 'sweet' ceratosoma I have ever seen!



On Saturday the southerly swell grew bigger so Pro Dive took us to relative shelter at North Rock off Broughton Island. Our camera 'died' on Friday night so we resigned ourselves to discovering amazing new things on the remaining dives – and of course we were right.

Jase and I were the first in at North Rock and descended through a series of gullies out to a scattering of kelp-covered boulders, on which were sheltering a group of pyconogonids or sea spiders (in this case red/yellow which seemed to be feeding off the eggs of some type of nudibranch; I haven't got an image so I've copied this from www.underwater.com.au photo courtesy of Rhonda Kay). Cool.

From there we went deeper to sponge gardens reminiscent of Shark Point in Sydney, where we found a huge 2m short-tailed stingray, and then drifting along the sheer wall of the island we exposed two banded cleaner shrimp nestling amongst a sea urchin.



The second dive was at the Shark Gutters, a labyrinth of narrow canyons off Broughton, which proved to be an interesting exercise in navigation and site recognition.

This location is a favourite for the grey nurse, but on this day with limited viz and surge conditions we spent most of the 40 minutes underwater spotting the bubbles of other divers in the next canyon, and trying not to bump into grey nurse sharks exiting the gutter that we entered.

Pete, Dave, Kellie, Michael, Jase and I decided to do the Pipeline once the dive boat returned, as I'd heard so much about this site and we still had plenty of time & air to spare.

This was supposed to be one of the best little-critter dives in NSW and we especially keen to dive it as one of the DM's on the boat told us about a resident anglerfish in a old craypot just

off the marina. We all clambered down into the water off the car park but the anglerfish had re-located on that day.

However I can report that this is a great macro dive site...we encountered several decorator crabs hiding in sponges, a flamboyant red/black/yellow polycera nudibranch family, a lined nembrotha nudibranch, a variety of other nudibranchs, and a huge range of fiddler, shovelnose and smaller rays.

On the Monday, the weather had abated enough so that we could return to the Oakland. This time we were surrounded by a huge school of yellowtail scad and red morwong, and the nursery of juvenile catfish were still to be seen everywhere around the wreck.



The last dive of the trip was at West Cabbage Tree Island, where Pro Dive took us to find the fabled donut nembrotha, one of "the rarest nudibranchs in the Pacific Region" [Dave Harasti]. Found in an only few locations in NSW, this is one of the most striking and huge nudi's that J and I have come across. With its inimitable pink and green mantle, we'd only seen one in a dive the previous year so we weren't 100% certain we'd have the same luck this time.

How wrong we were! Within 5 minutes of entering the water, Dave Burns found the first specimen feeding on its favourite purple ascidian sponge, and within 20 minutes we'd found at least a dozen. To top this dive off, we also found a tiny juvenile Port Jackson shark and a stationary shovelnose ray as well.

A great weekend.

Swansea Channel Drift - Monday 2 October by Michael McFadyen

On the way back from the Nelson Bay weekend, Kelly Jandik, Peter Trayhurn, Dave Burns and I decide to stop off at Swansea and do a drift dive. High tide at the bridge is about 6 pm so at 3 pm the tide will be incoming.

We enter the water in front of the RSL and straight away are swept away. We swim out a little so that we go through the centre of the bridge. There is a huge amount of fishlife here, large bream, luderick and silver drummer. We come out the other side of the bridge and start swimming back towards the southern shore. Around here is the last time we see Dave as he gets a bit ahead of us.

Along we go. At first, the bottom is fairly flat but after a while the depth drops to over 15 metres. Soon we come the first "dune". The depth comes up dramatically and we have to dig our hands into the sand to try and slow down a bit as our computers are beeping at us indicating we are ascending too quick.

We encountered quite a few more dunes and on the other side the water sometimes eddies a bit requiring us to swim to get back into the current.

All along the wall we see lots of fish, mostly bream and luderick. There are bottles everywhere, lots of them from the 1950s. Also, plenty of broken China, it is hard to figure out why this is here.

After 28 minutes we come to a small "bay" which I know is just before the boat ramp where we want to exit. However, the water is flowing in the opposite direction here and we surface to see exactly where we are and how we can get back in the current. A short swim out and we are back in the current and a few minutes later we come out on the ramp.

It has taken us 32 minutes to travel the 1.5 kilometres. This is certainly an exciting dive, well worth doing a few times.

SS Tuggerah - 7 October by Michael McFadyen

On Le Scat were Les Caterson, Peter Trayhurn, Laurie Klippel, Eddie Ivers and myself as we headed out of Port Hacking on this fine morning. It was a quick trip down to the wreck and as we approached the wreck site we spotted two seals hanging around the back of the boat. We hooked in first go.

As this was only Peter's second dive on the Tuggerah, he came with Les and I. We descended and found that the anchor was perfectly located right next to the Boiler. Visibility was at least 10 metres on the bottom.

We headed towards the prop and straight away saw a very large wobbegong. I swam under the prop and found another large wobbegong tangled in the remains of the net under the rudder. I grabbed the netting and tried to see if it was totally trapped. The wobbie swam off and tangled a bit more in the net. Peter gave me the thumbs down, indicating that he thought the shark was going to die.



Peter went up to look at the prop and then I saw it. A seal. It swam right down and looked at me and then swam off. I shouted to Les and Peter but they did not hear me. It came back and I got a photo but still Les and Peter had not

seen it. Then I got their attention. The seal came back another two times and I got another photo. Fantastic! This is the third seal I have seen on the bottom on the Tuggerah.

We swim up into the Engine Room and I take a photo of the tools which are on the back wall. I had never seen these till about 2005 and even Max Gleeson who has dived the wreck hundreds of times did not know they were there till I told him.

We went back in front of the Boiler and after a few minutes Les indicated that he was going to ascend. Peter and I headed to the Bow. We see a few large bailer shells laying eggs as we come back to the main part of the wreck. We ascend and while doing decompression, Peter spots one of the seals off in the distance.

Laurie and Eddie go down as we get to six metres and I have to reattach Laurie's drysuit power inflator which has somehow come loose. They also had a good dive.

Currajong Wreck Dive in Sydney Harbour by Ray Moulang.

We had planned to do the Colours aboard SeaJohn with LeScat and crews as a club dive on Sunday 15th October, 2006. Unfortunately due to sloppy conditions we couldn't do the Colours, so a decision was made to do the Red Indian drop-off inside North Head near Quarantine Bay. Aboard SeaJohn was John Beddie, Andrew Moulang, Heinz, Peter Trayhurn and Myself.

We had a nice dive and collected some anchors left stuck in rocks by some boaties, then it was off to morning tea with Michael and crew at Watson's Bay. Following this I suggested to John to see if we could do the Currajong. Peter was a willing volunteer to go on the dive with me and away we went.

We took advantage on this day of the overcast conditions, sloppy swell and a big southerly change which in turn caused only moderate boat traffic on the harbour to be able to do this dive easier. Andrew dropped a weight down next to the wreck as we saw it on the sounder. The plan was to go down the line onto the wreck then got to shore. We went down the line and on the bottom was sand and no wreck. The line and boat had drifted.

Scuba Clubs' Association of NSW Meeting

Michael McFadyen attended the October quarterly meeting. Lots of things were discussed, including the following. Decisions were made on the SCAN Sydney Dive Day (see elsewhere in newsletter) and the SCAN Weekend. The Weekend will be held in Nelson Bay on the second weekend in March 2007 (Fri 9 to Sun 11 March).

Other matters were the upcoming meeting with the Minister for Primary Industries about the diver tax, Swansea Bridge work by RTA (resolved to endorse work as proposed by RTA), HMAS Canberra sinking (resolved to support it coming to NSW but not to support any group at this stage - Note: Federal Govt has since decided Victoria is getting it), the proposed banning of anchoring off Narrabeen Beach (this is likely to be modified to enable anchoring on the wrecks and The Wall).

Ok. We started a search pattern going South then West. Following our West heading 15 minutes into the dive at about 26 metres we came up on a ridge of shells and looked up and there was the bow. Fantastic. What a sight. We swam along the Port side at sand level towards the stern.

Christmas Raffle

Tickets are now on sale for the Christmas Raffle at \$2 per ticket. Three prize's of lovely large hams, will be drawn at the Club's Christmas Party on the 3rd December.

If you have sold all of your tickets and would like some more, please contact Mark Ridsdale.

Not much fish life to speak of. We passed the point just before half way where contact was made by the other ship causing this one to sink. The side was opened up all the way from top to bottom. We went under the stern and looked at the big rudder but we couldn't see any props.

We proceeded along the starboard side towards the bow and raised our level to go along level with the deck and saw some machinery etc. We looked into some holes from on top of the deck all the time being aware that we were in the shipping channel and not allowing ourselves to go any higher.

The vis was about 5mt which allowed us to see a fair bit. We were approaching deco about 30 minutes into the dive, so we just went from the bow down onto the sand and followed our preset compasses forward towards the shore. All worked out perfectly and we soon were in about 5 metres of water and surfaced next to SeaJohn with a bottom time of 39 minutes.

Thanks to Peter for buddying up and doing this excellent dive and thanks to John for waiting for us. Well worth doing, a fantastic intact wreck.

REGULAR EVENTS

Monthly Meetings

The next meeting of the St George Scuba Club will be held on 15th November 2006 at the St. George Rowing Club, 1 Levey Street Wooli Creek at 8.00 pm. Come along about 7 pm and enjoy a meal at the bistro.

Calender Planning Night

The Calender Planning Night will held at St George Rowers Club at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 22nd November.

Boat owners and members interested in organising some events are encouraged to come along.

If you have a suggestion on an event but can not make it on the night, please contact Kelly Jandik.

Thursday Night Dives

These continue to be very popular, with at least six divers every week. Recent dives have included an exploration dive at The Monuments (very good) and a drift dive from Oak Park to Bass and Flinders.

If you are not on the email list for these dives, email Michael McFadyen and he will notify you every week about the week's dive location. The Club web site also has up to date information about the dive.

Note that Mike Scotland will be organising the dive on 9 November when Michael is away on the Undersea Explorer.

FREE TO A GOOD HOME!

I have a Nikon 5 camera with accessories (except strobe) it did suffer from a bit of moisture but not flooding.

Does anyone want it?

Please contact Graham Poole Ph. 9644 5286.

UP AND COMING EVENTS

Boat Diving – Ulladulla 11th – 12th November 2006

3 spots vacant. Cost approx. \$165 for 4 dives and 2 nights accommodation.

Further inquiries to Philip Rose on ph.9543 0748

Shore/Drift Dive – Swansea Bridge 19th November 2006

If you are interested in this dive please call Dave Burns on Ph. 9531 4403.

SCAN Day Boat Diving – Botany Bay 26th November 2006

Location: Frenchman's Bay (around the corner from Bare Island) see map below.



Time: Earlier the better

Diving: Local diving by club boats for a nominal donation

Food: Provided for but bring own drink, desserts, cups and utensils (Ray, fingers not allowed.)

Air: Nearest Dive Shop is Sydney Dive Academy at Matraville, just up Bunnerong Road at Matraville shopping centre.

A reminder email will be sent about 10 days before actual day itself.

If you want more info please contact:

David.Burns@energy.com.au

Xmas picnic

**To be held at Kurnell (inscription point)
Sunday 3rd. December 2006.**

**Divers to meet at 8.30 a.m. Non divers to
gather from 11.am**

**We will be serving all your Xmas goodies
example ham chicken and a variety of
salads.**

**Please bring your own knife, fork, plate,
drinks and nibblies.**

**Let me know if you are coming so I can
cater for the correct amount of food.**

**Ring Elly on 9520 9421 or e/mail
lescat2@bigpond.net.au**

Boat Dive – Wattamolla 10th December 2006

If you are interested in this dive please call Les
Caterson on Ph. 9520 9421.

Shellharbour – Boat Diving 2nd – 4th February 2007

Shellharbour is only just over an hour from
Sydney and has really great diving. We are
planning a weekend there starting Friday 2
February and ending Sunday 4 February.

Accommodation will be in cabins at the Warilla
Bowling Club (\$50 each person including
Saturday BBQ) and we will use Club boats (four
available).

Contact Michael McFadyen
(michael@michaelfadyenscuba.info) if you
are interested. Now full but taking names for
reserve list.

OTHER NEWS

2006 - An Ocean Odyssey Friday 17 November 2006

After an absence of a few years, DIVE Log and
Sportdiving are putting on another night of noted
underwater adventurers.

The night will be held at the Clancy Auditorium,
University of NSW, on Friday 17 November
2006. Guest speakers will include Jean-Michel
Cousteau, Phil Nuytten, Ron and Valerie Taylor
and Bob Halstead.

From experience, all of these speakers are quite
interesting and worth hearing. Cost of tickets is

\$16.50. As well, there are some trips to PNG to
be won as door prizes.

Michael McFadyen is putting together a group of
St George Scuba Club members to attend. If
you are interested, please email Michael by 6
August and give him your money at the next
opportunity so he can purchase sufficient tickets.
Michael can be emailed at
michael@michaelfadyenscuba.info.

If you have any questions about the site, or want
to become an administrator, please contact
Michael McFadyen using the Webmaster email
address.

WARSHIPS TO BE SUNK OFF VICTORIA AND NEW SOUTH WALES

I am pleased to announce I have selected
Victoria to be gifted the former Royal
Australian Navy Guided Missile Frigate
HMAS Canberra for sinking as a dive
wreck. Victoria was the successful bidder
for HMAS Canberra following her
decommissioning in November last year.

The Howard Government will contribute up
to \$2.8 million in funding toward the costs
of sinking.

The Victorian Government has advised me
the preferred location for the ex-HMAS
Canberra is south of Barwon Heads on the
Bellarine Peninsula.

I would especially like to thank my
colleague, Mr Stewart McArthur MP, for his
strong support and advocacy on behalf of
his local community.

The ex-HMAS Canberra sailed nearly
800,000 miles serving Australia, and saw
active service in the Persian Gulf and
conducted operations in areas as diverse as
the Southern Ocean and the Solomon
Islands, east of Africa and south of Russia.
The ship is 138 metres long, and when in
commission displaced 4100 tonnes and had
a crew of 210 including helicopter aircrew
and maintainers.

New South Wales also stands to benefit, despite having been the unsuccessful bidder on this occasion for HMAS Canberra. The New South Wales Government will be offered first right to bid for HMAS Adelaide when she is decommissioned in late 2007. HMAS Adelaide is a ship of the same class as the ex-HMAS Canberra.

I am confident the NSW Government will be able to make an at least convincing bid for the second ship. The NSW Government has indicated the preferred location for a dive site as the NSW Central Coast.

My colleagues, Mr Jim Lloyd MP and Mr Ken Ticehurst MP, have been tireless and strong supporters of the Central Coast community. With their continued advocacy I am confident I will be in a position to gift the HMAS Adelaide to the NSW Government.

Tourism projects that have previously used former RAN warships to establish dive wrecks have reported annual revenues ranging from \$2.4 million to \$23 million flowing into local communities.

**The Hon. Dr Brendan Nelson,
Minister for Defence**

Editors note: The NSW Government have previously committed the Frigate to Terrigal on the Central Coast.



HMAS Adelaide Statistics:

Launched:	21 June 1978
Commissioned:	15 November 1980
Displacement:	4,100 tonnes
Length:	138.1 metres
Beam:	14.3 metres
Armament:	76mm rapid fire gun, Harpoon anti-ship missiles, Standard surface to air missiles, Phalanx Mk15 close-in weapon system, 2 triple anti-submarine torpedo tubes for Mk 46 torpedoes
Main Machinery:	Two General Electric LM2500 gas turbines geared to one controllable pitch propeller
Speed:	More than 30 knots
Ship's Company:	Approximately 210

The Committee for 2006 – 2007 is:

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Please send items for the Newsletter to me by the 28th of the month J.Coombs@unsw.edu.au.