



# *Sea Braggin'*

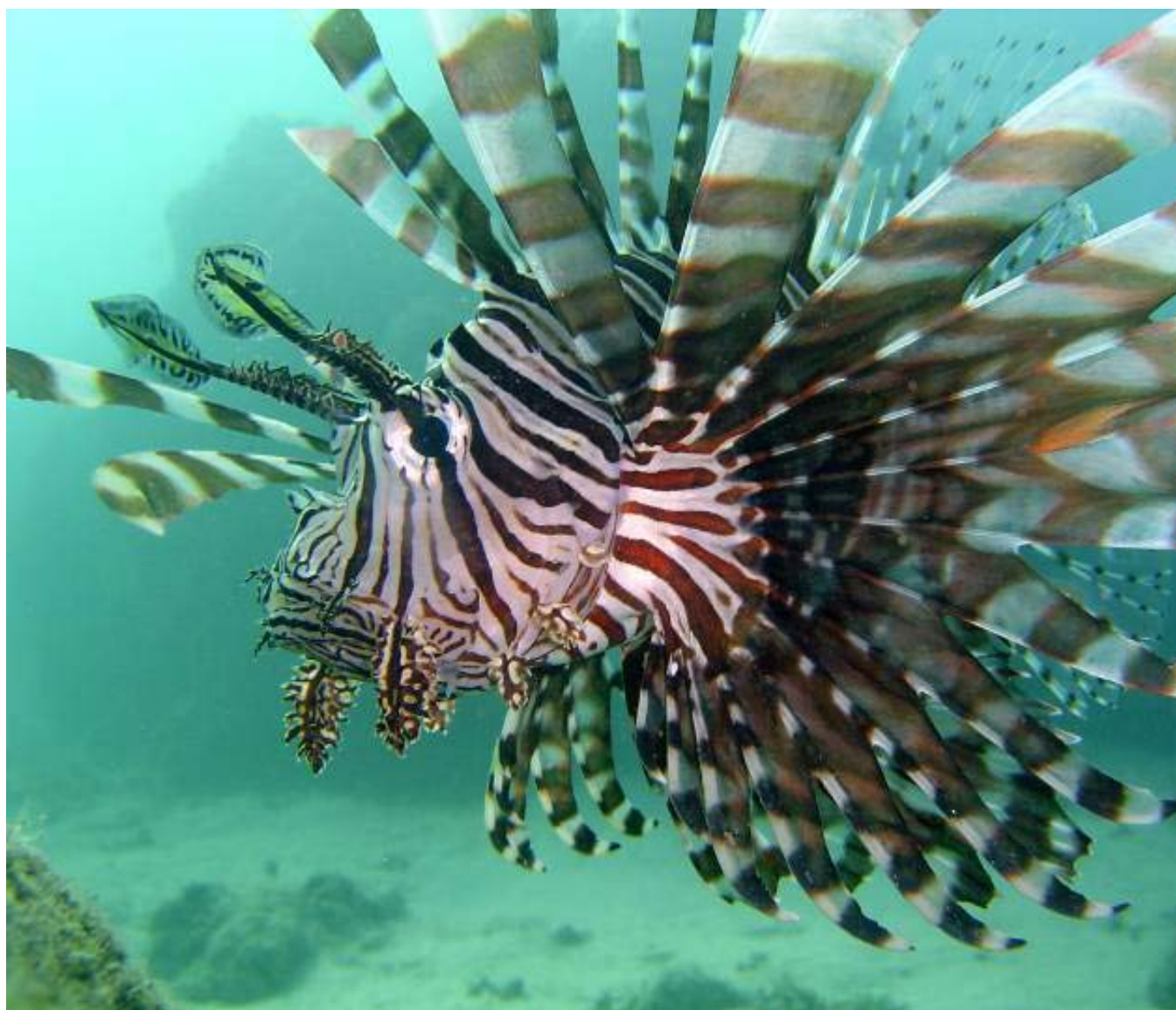
**MONTHLY NEWSLETTER**

**- OCTOBER 2009 - Edited by Ray Moulang -**

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Included in this issue are Dive Reports from Brian Byrnes, Ray Moulang, Ron Walsh, Nancy Scoleri, Paul Pacey, Mike Scotland and Peter Trayhurn.

**A big thank you goes to them.**



**Lion Fish Picture by Paul Pacey**

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Visit our web page at: <http://www.stgeorgescubaclub.org.au/>

# **WHATS HAPPENING IN YOUR CLUB?**

## **WHATS COMING UP SOON?**

<b><u>WHEN</u></b>	<b><u>WHAT AND WHERE</u></b>	<b><u>CONTACT</u></b>
Friday 2nd to 5 <sup>th</sup> October	Dive trip to Eden / Merimbula	Dave Burns
Saturday 3 <sup>rd</sup> October	Deep Dive from Yowie Bay	Les Caterson
Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup> October	Club Boat Dive to Marley Point	Mark Ridsdale
Wednesday 7 <sup>th</sup> October	Club boat Dive from Yowie Bay	Les Caterson
Friday 9 <sup>th</sup> October	Club Trip to Papua New Guinea	Paul Pacey
Saturday 10 <sup>th</sup> October	Double Boat Dive from Botany Bay / Sydney Harbour	Ray Moulang
Wednesday 14 <sup>th</sup> October	Club boat Dive from Yowie Bay	Les Caterson
Saturday 17 <sup>th</sup> October	Deep Dive from Rose Bay	Peter Flockart
Wednesday 21st October	Club boat Dive from Yowie Bay	Les Caterson
Wednesday 21 <sup>st</sup> October	Club Meeting at Rowers on Cooks River Club for 8pm start	Jason Coombs
Saturday 24th October	Club Boat Dive from Yowie Bay	Les Caterson
Saturday 24 <sup>th</sup> October	Four Wheel Drive Weekend Stockton Beach	Ray Moulang
Tuesday 27 <sup>th</sup> October	Dive Planning Night for 2010 at Rowers on Cooks River Club for 7.30pm start	Jason Coombs
Wednesday 28 <sup>th</sup> October	Club boat Dive from Yowie Bay	Les Caterson
Saturday 31st October	Club Boat Dive from Yowie Bay	Les Caterson

\*\*\* Dive Week Trip North Solitary Islands. Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> to Friday 20<sup>th</sup> November \*\*\*  
From Wooli. Contact Mark Ridsdale. Waiting List Applies.

## Club Dive Weekend to South West Rocks.

From Friday 20<sup>th</sup> November to Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2009.

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

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

12 days leaving about mid March 2010.

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

Airfares look to be around \$1200 return.

NEED to confirm numbers to lock in the deal.

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

Deposits etc will be payable in August - September.

Limited spots -- Cheers - Mark Ridsdale.



## 2010 Scuba Club - Calendar Setting Night

With 2009 rapidly passing us by its time to start thinking about diving in 2010!  
On Tuesday 27th October 2009 we will be setting the 2010 calendar for the club.

It will start at 7:30pm at St George Rowing Club and the club will provide food.

This is your opportunity to get the trip, dive or other activity you have always wanted to do included for 2010.

The club only exists because of the contributions of members. I encourage you to get involved by arranging at least one activity for next year. This is your chance to make a contribution to the clubs ongoing success.

If you are not able to attend please contact one of the committee members with the details of your planned activity.

Jason Coombs Club President.

A call for anyone interested in our Four Wheel Drive weekend to Stockton Beach on 24<sup>th</sup> October.



This one was a beauty.

Just ask Jessica.

Prior to this we will be diving the drift from the seaward side of Swansea Bridge in with the tide about 1.2 k's then onto the beach for lunch and later for campfire tea and sing-a-long fire and camping the night in the dunes.

On Sunday we go do more up and down hills then back home.

The dive start is meeting at 9am at the RSL car park for entry.

There are a number of passenger spaces available so you don't need to own a 4wd. Also some are coming up just for the dive.



More info contact Ray Moulang

On [rayscases@aol.com](mailto:rayscases@aol.com)

Michael coming down a hill.



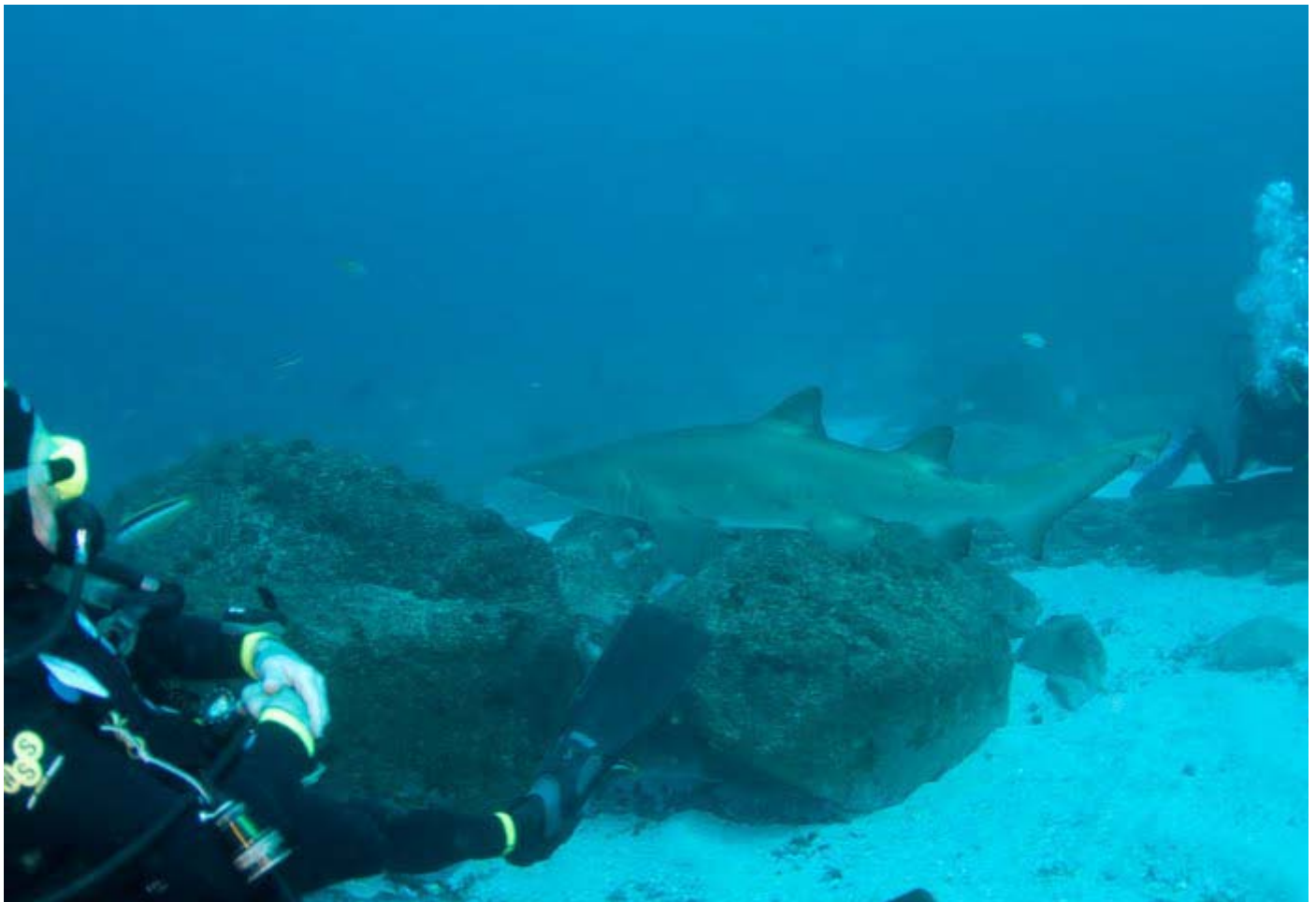
# **Recent Club Happenings**

## **September Trip to Forster - by Brian Byrnes**

Sleek. Effortlessly graceful. Quietly menacing.

The Grey Nurse sharks were endlessly patrolling the sandy laneways by Big Seal Rocks, seemingly oblivious to the divers looking on.

This was the reason we had come - to fin with the famous sharks of Forster.



It was the first dive of the first day, and the visibility was very good, at about 20 metres.

Once on the bottom, about 20 metres down, we soon saw our first sharks.



It was hard to tell exactly how many there were, since they kept disappearing in to green gloom.

But there were at least six, including one big, and, according to Mike Scotland, heavily pregnant female. And it wasn't just sharks down there. We also saw a large Loggerhead Turtle and one or two mid-sized bull rays.

A memorable dive.

Back on the surface we seemed to be surrounded by migrating whales - including some whose tails came to the surface fairly close to the boat and the whales weren't the only entertainment on the surface.



### **Pearl Perch**



A number of times we had dolphins arc out of the water near the boat as we motored along.

The current at Big Seal Rocks had been quite strong, and for our second dive John, the skipper, took us to Sawtooth Reef, which was more sheltered.

This was a shallower reef, harbouring rich kelp and sponge gardens.



We saw one very large Ornate Wobbegong hiding under a ledge here, surrounded by halo of oblivious fish. I doubt it goes hungry.

There were lots of sting rays, some large crayfish, lots of fish including sea pike, and one small loggerhead turtle that swam slowly by.

That night we didn't have to worry about what to eat, since Action Divers generously put on a BBQ for us.

The next day, Sunday, the weather had deteriorated.

There was a significant swell, and the water was murkier.

The first dive was at The Pinnacles at a depth of about 35 metres, where we had visibility of about 10.





At this site there seemed to be Ornate Wobbegongs just about everywhere we went. There were also several Port Jackson Sharks, with their permanent, clownish frowns, and a dense school of big Red Morwong with a Black Cod in their midst.



### **Coral Banded Shrimp**



Back on the surface the swell was slowly building, and our next dive was at Latitude Reef.

This was another place of swaying kelp and colourful sponge.

There was a really rich community living on the rocks here, and, with a bit better viz, it would be a playground for anyone with a macro lens.



But beware, as there seemed to wobbegongs everywhere - mostly of the Ornate variety, but fans of the Spotted would not have been disappointed.

We also had a swirling ball of schooling catfish, a big, friendly Blue Groper and a dense cloud of Ladder-finned Pomfrets just waiting to be swum through.

Many thanks to Paul Pacey for organising the trip.

The others who joined him were Mark Ridsdale, Shaun Reynolds, Sharon Donoghue, Eric Brace, Renee Brace, Ray Moulang, Janine Jenkins, Rob Mapstone and John Conolly.

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### **- Club Double Boat Dive – Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> September, 2002**

#### **- By Ray Moulang -**

This was a dive that was meant to happen on the preceding weekend but due to attendances at the Foster dive trip and other commitments it was put back one week. It was also changed to Port Hacking instead of Port Botany.

We arrived to a busy lot of divers all readying their gear just before 8am. The wind was low from the west but expected to come up later. Clear enough skies. Seas were meant to be less than a metre. It looked good. Downunder and Scram2 were both going out of Botany Bay but due to lack of numbers, Downunder stayed at home and its crew went onto LeScat and Seaspray, so we decided to join the mob and do our dives near them.

Note now Scram2 has its name attached at last.

On Scram2 were Greg and Shelley, Andrew and RayM. LeScat had six and Seaspray I think had 5.



We pulled up at Barrens Hut and secured the anchor. Down went Greg, Shelley and Ray with Andrew being boat boy with sinus troubles. Viz on the way down was about 2 to 3 metres (plenty of suspended stuff in the water).

When we hit the bottom we checked the anchor and straight away saw about 20 Tassie Trumpeters grouping near the bottom, we were lucky to have anchored adjacent to the cave. The viz was probably between 5 to 10 metres. We looked around the reef and ended back at the cave. Inside and out there were plenty of Port Jackson Sharks about a metre long lying around.

We did run into a lot of other divers from the other boats on the bottom and a welcoming wave was given and received. All too soon we ascended after about 35 minutes. Max depth was 26.6mt. Water temp was 16 with 40 minute total bottom time. We up anchored and headed in to Jibbon Beach for a cupper and some Apple Pie and bread pull-aparts. After about an hour and a half we headed back out to Pizza Reef. This time we had it all to our selves. We flicked the gear lines over the side and noticed a bit of current from the north.

Over we went again and checked the anchor into a nice groove. We started to look around the reef only to find the current pushing us off the reef if we went up at all off the bottom.

There were a few fish around. Mowies etc. The Current got stronger and after about 20 minutes we called it off and headed back to the anchor. Total bottom time was 31 minutes at max 24.6mt depth. Water temp was about 15 degrees. When we reached the surface we found the wind had also risen to about 20 knots from the North-East making a fair bit of wind chop and making it uncomfortable.

We headed back into port and what was noticeable was the increase in boating traffic now with the days getting hotter.

We had a good time including a couple of dives and back just after 1pm.

Thanks to Greg, Shelley and Andrew.

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## **Bass Point Shellharbour – 20 September 2009 - By Ron Walsh -**

The forecast was fantastic. Flat seas and a nice sunny day.

Meet time was 9:30am at "The Gutter" car park, which is located out at the end of Bass Point reserve.



I was the first to arrive, followed by Ian Roffey (who did a tour of Shellharbour after missing the turnoff), Deb, Bob, Gary, Nancy and Jason. I had already received a phone call from Greg and Shelley advising they were having a lazy Sunday and would not make the first dive but would make lunch.

After a dive brief we kitted up and did the splash at the gutter. Greg and Shelly arrived just prior to entry but advised they were having a day off from diving.



There was a little bit of swell but as it was from the south the gutter was nice and protected. Dive plan was to swim out the gutter and head almost due north around 150m to the sponge gardens at 20m depth. The visibility was very poor – around 4-5m – with the water very green. We all stuck as a group, trusted the compass, and got to the sponge garden with minimal trouble. After a bit of an explore, finding various nudibranchs and sponges, we trusted compasses again and returned to the gutter. On the way back we

found a weedy dragon with a shortened tail and a free swimming moray.

After exiting and packing the dive gear away we lazed in the sun, had coffee and cake, and enjoyed a BBQ lunch, kindly provided by the club.

Following lunch Gary, Nancy, Jason and Ron did a second dive under the gravel loader, cheered on by Greg and Shelley. As the name suggests it is a long jetty use to load gravel onto small ships.



Although the bottom is reasonably barren with a reasonable amount of dropped debris the pylons are covered in growth and there are normally numerous large schools of fish.





We entered at the boat ramp, dodging the many sea urchins and scuba-ed over to the loader. Visibility was similar to the first dive, but we were still able to see a large school of mado, several large puffer fish, a rock flathead, a small school of yellowtail, and several cuttlefish.

The pylons themselves are covered in various sponges and ascidians which is a contrast to the bottom.

After exiting at the boat ramp – being careful to avoid the sea urchins – we packed up and headed back to Sydney.

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## Diving on the Great Barrier Reef

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of August 2009, Gary and I started our dive trip to Cairns with one thing in mind: we were looking forward to four days off diving on the Great Barrier Reef.

Our journey started by catching an early flight to Cairns.

On our arrival, the temperature was already 28 degrees and the humidity was quite high. We made our way to town, had a quick look around before heading off to the dive shop. After filling the required paperwork, we jumped in the minibus which will drop us at our vessel, the 30 metres long “Taka”.



We were welcomed by the trip director “Hiro” who gave us a short briefing on the rules of the boat and assigned us our cabin number.

Not long after we boarded the boat, the captain started the engines and here we were heading out off Cairns and making our way to our first dive site: the Cod Hole about 150 kilometres out of Cairns.

The first evening on the boat was mostly spent organising the dive gear for the next day and socialising with the other enthusiastic divers.

At 6h30am the following day, one of the crew member nicely woke us up with his “melodious” song and after a quick breakfast, it was time for the first dive briefing. First morning on the reef was magnificent: blue sunny sky and clear deep blue sea. Looking overboard, I could distinguished the sand and coral reefs underneath. This was the promise of an amazing day of diving. The first dive was at the **Cod Hole** where we saw lots of colourful tropical fish, coral trouts, sea cucumbers, blue sea stars and the famous giant potato cods. Massive schools of



sweetlips were also swimming along the reefs. The coral formations were impressive and their different colours made it an interesting dive site.

After a short surface break, it was time to jump back in the water for the **Cod feed**. Everyone knelt on the white sand in a big circle around the dive instructor who had small fishes in a plastic bucket. One giant potato cod was present waiting patiently to be fed. The dive instructor took one piece of fish and gave it to the cod who nicely swallowed it. The cod had to be quick because red basses were around trying to grab any piece of fish they could. The instructor repeated the feed in front of every diver, the cod comfortably following and eating the food given. When my turn came, the cod stood just few centimetres in front of me and I was able to see the inside of its mouth and the fish disappearing in it. I was so thrilled!

The third dive of the day was at **Pixie's Pinnacle**, a massive “coral mountain” that rises from 30 metres to around 3 metres to the surface. After dropping to the bottom, we began swimming around it in a slow clockwise spiral up to the top of the pinnacle. Nudibranchs and flatworms were everywhere; we spotted a number

of Morose Tambja, Atkinson's Okenia, Elizabeth's Chromodoris and Bullock's Hypselodoris to name a few. We also saw a couple of banded pipefish, three lionfish hovering together and some pink anemone fish playing in the anemones. The fish life was amazing from small colourful fish such as damsels to larger reef fish. The visibility there was fantastic and it was a magic dive!

To conclude our first day of diving, we did a night dive at Challenger Bay. This



was one of the most frustrating night dives I have ever done! Let me explain. Once we got to the bottom, giant trevallies started following us around. These fish have learnt to use the light of our dive torches to find little fish that they can eat. Therefore, every time we pointed at a coral reef and they could spot something moving, a school of giant trevallies would storm pass us to attack it. In some cases, they would charge head first into the coral to break

in and reach the fish who was trying to hide behind it.

It becomes a very annoying dive as the only thing we could see was giant trevallies swimming around us and attacking any living thing!

I also felt bad that I was responsible for the slaughter of so many small fish that night!

However, I think I was one of the few not to enjoy it as the other divers found it quite exciting!

The second day of diving was scheduled to be at **Osprey Reef** in the Coral Sea. This reef is the most northerly Coral Sea reef, being 350 kilometres away from Cairns. Therefore, the boat was powering most of the night to get there.

One part of the trip got quite rough due to the open ocean crossing and people on board started feeling seasickness. Gary was fine but though I had taken sea sickness medicines I did "lose" my diner overboard!

The first dive of the morning was a wall dive at **North Horn**. The wall rises from a depth of 1,000 metres to just below the water surface.





There were white tip reef sharks swimming around as well as potato cods and pelagic fish such as trevally and barracuda.

The second dive of the day was at the same site and included a “**Shark feed**”. After everyone was seated on the wall, a wheelie bin containing the shark feed (tuna heads) was dropped down a line. The big school of sharks was already circling around it, knowing that their lunch was coming! As soon as the lid was opened, the attack began. The sharks were frenetically biting and pulling on the tuna heads. Everyone was trying to get its share so there was an impressive chaos of sharks circling around the food. A potato cod also joined the party and swallowed a tuna head in one mouth full, leaving no scrap to the sharks.

The shark feed was the highlight of the Osprey Reef dive trip!

The last two dives of the day were at **Halfway Wall** and the **Entrance**. At these sites, we found a number of caverns, tunnels and canyons covered in pretty soft corals, huge gorgonians and nice feather stars. We also found more reef fish, puffer fish, lionfish, anemone fish, colourful nudibranchs, and of course more sharks!



The following day, we were back on the Great Barrier Reef. The first dive site was the **Clam Gardens**. As the name suggest, giant clams are scattered throughout the coral. We found at least a dozen of them with varying colour: purple, blue, green and orange.



Some of the clams grow up to 2 metres in length and can take over 150 years to reach that size so it was quite humbling to see these creatures.

Looking closely at the bommies, we also found nudibranchs, flatworms and anemones with various colourful fish. This was a great first dive for the day.



The second dive was even more spectacular as we explored **Steve's Bommie**. There were many little critters around such as molluscs, nudibranchs, crustaceans and banded pipefish. We also observed two red flame file shells, a well disguised scorpion leaf fish, a stonefish and a family of clownfish.

The bommie is covered with big varieties of soft and hard corals,

Christmas tree worms, gorgonians fans and sponges.

The variety of life is most stunning and produced a very colourful picture! The visibility on this dive was at least 35 metres and made the all experience even more spectacular.

The third dive of that day, **Two and Two-Third**, was another great site in which we could explore the wonders of the Great Barrier Reef. This site is teeming with the diverse range of fish life and both hard and soft corals.



We also spotted four phyllidiella nudibranchs, few flatworms and a group of glass shrimps living in an anemone. The highlight of the dive was the discovery of a blue-spotted stingray lying under some corals formation.

The last dive of the day was a night dive at the **Beer Gardens**. This was a wonderful night dive where we found many parrotfish sleeping in their

protective bubble, few moray eels hunting for food and a medium size green turtle that was swimming around probably looking for a quiet spot to go to sleep. Some lobsters, hermit crabs and small shrimps were also hiding in the rocks and the corals.

Finally, our last day of diving had arrived, far too quickly unfortunately! We did two dives on a site called "Troppo's" on Norman reef. Once more, the visibility was incredible and the water temperature a nice 25 degrees Celsius. The reef had beautiful coral gardens, nice swim throughs and prolific fish life. Angelfish, surgeonfish, hawkfish, triggerfish, parrotfish, barramundis and batfish were all present.

We discovered a reindeer wrasse, more clams, scallops and two flounders hiding on the sandy bottom. We also found a yellow and black minor notodoris nudibranch, a bi-lined flatworm and many more anemones and anemone's fish.

We did fourteen dives on this trip and were amazed by the beauty of the Great Barrier Reef. It was a wonderful, exciting and indeed memorable experience to dive the Great Barrier Reef. It is a dive adventure not to be missed!

- By Nancy Scoleri -

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Picture from The Daily Telegraph.



## **Bicheno and Eagle Hawk Neck Tasmania Scuba Club Trip --** **by Peter Trayhurn -**

Michael, Kelly, Ray, Cherie, Phil G and I went to Tassie a few months ago. On a sunny, wild and windy day we dived the SS Norde and then Cathedral Cave. Michael has a great article about its sinking on his website. The stunning coastline where the SS Norde rests is certainly not peaceful. She is surrounded by really majestic and rugged cliffs. I would rate the boat trip down and seeing this part of our coastline as equally enjoyable and memorable as the wreck dive itself. The seas were up and wind was biting.



Some of less rugged of our little group put on our hoods and diving masks for the ride back up the coast to Cathedral Cave. The spray actually caused mild pain, who says I am not a sensitive guy.

The SS Norde dive was sensational and wild. The dive felt like it was over before it started for me, my dive buddy, an instructor (not from our club ) was almost out of air after 12 minutes and looked at me with puppy dog eyes.



Which said don't leave me alone to go up the anchor in this strong current and rough seas. I noticed Michael and Kelly swimming off to the Bow and I considered joining up with them, but then went up the anchor with the puppy. It was not great to be back on the boat first, and I love being the last one



back on the boat. However while anchored over the Norde we saw about 40 large birds hammering a school of salmon, these good sized Salmon also could fly. They were flying out of the water just like the birds chasing them in the strong winds and moderate seas.



And for wreck diving lesson 101, don't jump off the boat in a strong current, drop to 15 meters and then swim like a dickhead to get to the anchor rope. You will probably use 100 bar in the first 5 minutes which just what my buddy did. All while I am doing zen meditation on the anchor line like a leaf in the storm. The bud also did not show me his gage till he was really low at the end of the dive. This little story is told because getting onto the SS Norde is like a 1 in 4 odds dive. You need many things to occur in your favour to get there, when you finally do the last thing you need is simple mistakes detracting from the experience. Don't trust instructors, that was my mistake. So I learned a couple things.

We explored up close and personal the Needle at Cape Hauy on the water, which was especially rewarding given that Phil Goodman and I walked out to it the day before.

This is a long tough day trip and was a real adventure in the wild winds.



The Cathedral Cave dive was just as interesting as the Norde, our guide Mick is great guy but a bit soft as he wears a dry suit, twins and yellow fins. We really played follow the leader and did a lot of swimming through tunnels.

We all made it through some very tight spots and I was nervous having our entire group behind my behind in these very tight tunnels. Some walls were covered in life and some were barren.







The feature for me was the great vis and varied topology and the maze like nature of this dive site.

If you see some of the diver photos I can see them saying "Thank god you did not get stuck" .

I was worried because they all had diving knives and they could not turn around. And this was just one day from our Tassie adventure.

Thanks Kelly for arranging the trip and to Bruce and Mick the operators who are our kind of operators.

We met Bruce in Bicheno and his first words to me was "what's your name boofhead", but that another story.....



## **The Gastronomic delights of our Vanuatu Dive Trip and some other things too... By Paul Pacey.**

Dive trips are about more things than just diving, hence this report on our recent jolly to Vanuatu. At all times we reminded ourselves of the Bram Harris dive trip mantra "Well, if I'm not diving and I'm not sleeping, then I MUST be eating".

Warning, any resemblance between the truth and this story is co-incidental - Paul.

### **Monday 10<sup>th</sup> August:**

This was our first night in Port Vila and, since we arrived in the dark, we were unable to get our bearings accurately (we didn't know where the heck we were). So we settled for dining in at our hotel, The Melanesian, where we enjoyed Pizza and our first introduction to the local beer called Tusker.

Michael.M is right, Tusker is great beer and we quickly established it as one of our favourite Vanuatu things.

The Melanesian Hotel is a pretty basic motley kind of place but it's clean and has a nice courtyard area around the pool where you can dine. They put on a brilliant buffet breakfast and it was hard to get the guys to go diving when there was so much else on offer.



### **Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> August:**

We decided to eat out tonight because we could. After our morning dives we had time to walk around the Vila township a bit which is quite a pleasant thing to do.

In particular we were looking for a restaurant on the waterfront with a nice atmosphere.

We chose The Waterfront restaurant which is at the southern end of the town centre. We were not disappointed.

The first thing we noticed is that we'd have to pay the bill tonight as they had two huge guard dogs wandering around the restaurant and there's no way we'd be able to outrun them after we'd eaten.

The dogs were very well behaved though and are obviously well fed as they didn't "work the tables".

The food here is excellent; the atmosphere is great and the service friendly and attentive.

Ray took a liking to a beer glass that had the Tusker logo printed on it. Now, any normal man would have just slipped the glass into his wife's handbag – but John wasn't going to be associated with this crime. So Ray had to use his charm on the waitress – he's an operator, isn't he Cherie? Ray got his Tusker glass and we had a good laugh along the way.

### **Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> August**

After diving today we set out on the Great Vila Lobster hunt as we'd decided that tonight was "Lobster Night". John wasn't interested but he was outvoted 3 to 1.

The problem was, as we found, Lobster is out of season and only one restaurant had lobster and they had one lobster. However it was suggested to us by the people at the Chill Restaurant that the Coconut Crab was much better than lobster. When we asked them why, they said "because we have coconut crabs". We could not argue with their logic so we decided that Chill was the go for tonight and so began the Great Vila Coconut Crab Massacre.

Chill is an upstairs waterfront restaurant overlooking the beautiful harbour. The view is somewhat spoiled by having to look at some of the saddest looking boats you're likely to see anywhere. Even If these things were dive wrecks you wouldn't go near them!

John decided not to order the CC and ordered a cucumber sandwich or something.

As you may be aware, eating a crab is not a fast process.

In fact it's one of life's simple pleasures and should be taken at a leisurely pace. We noticed that after about an hour of eating John, who had finished his cucumber sandwich 50 minutes ago, had fallen asleep on the table and the snoring was making it hard to concentrate on the crabs.

Heaven knows how they got the table cloth and napkins clean – you know how cucumber stains!





## **The Great Vila Coconut Crab Massacre**

The crab was so delicious Dave spent the rest of the trip romancing about how he could breed them in captivity then sell them to the restaurant trade and make millions. Thus the idea of the Coconut Crab Ranch (CCR) was born. The idea of the CCR began to take on its own life as our trip progressed and the ideas on how it would work became more and more bizarre. Dave had the brilliant idea of placing garden plots of Garlic and Chilli inside the Crab Corrals – this would save having to make a sauce to go with your CC as you would be able to buy a Chilli CC, a Garlic CC or the Coconut Crab Classic! To get the Coconut Crabs to market would require a round-up and this would be done by Crabboys riding seahorses. I think I should stop here as I don't want to give away too many of Dave's great ideas for his CCR.

### **Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> August**

After flying from Port Vila to Santo we were taken to our Santo Accommodation which was at the Beachfront Resort. Again as we arrived after dark we decided to dine in.

As luck would have it, it was Thursday night and they had a special pizza night. This was cheating a bit as we didn't actually do a night dive.

The Beachfront Resort is a nice place to stay and they have been and are still doing a lot of work on the place. It's a little out of town (20 min walk) but we never walked it as there are zillions of buzz-boxes (tiny Japanese cars with taxi signs stuck on the roof) and you never have to wait or walk for long before one (usually 3) turn up. The guy who sold all the taxi signs must have cleaned up nicely.

The outlook from the restaurant deck at Beachfront Resort is across nice lawns to the waters of the Second Channel. In the afternoon you can enjoy a Tusker and watch the local kids play soccer on the lawn.



**View from Beachfront Resort**

One day we hopped into a buzz-box and, once inside, we noticed that the car had been fitted with a huge doof-doof stereo system. All was going well until Ray, foolishly, asked the driver if it worked. My ears didn't return to normal for hours. Ray obviously got right into the Reggae thing and ended up buying the CD off the driver.

The manager at Beachfront Resort is Dave Cross – he is/was a diver and all round interesting guy to talk to. He knows a lot of the history and natural beauty of the area.

## **Friday 14<sup>th</sup> August**

Tonight we decided to eat at the Ocean King as we heard that they had Lobster.

We also found that Ocean King is the de-facto Aquamarine Dive staff dining room as they were all in attendance.

After his experience at the Great Vila CCM (Coconut Crab Massacre) John brought along a jumbo cross-word book, a Rubik Cube, and some marbles to entertain himself whilst we finished our Lobster.

Nevertheless, he was fast asleep at the table before the rest of us gave up extracting every last milligram of lobster meat from those delicious crustaceans. We even survived an earth tremor tonight while here at tea.

I think we were last to leave – again.

## **Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> August**

Tonight we dined at the Deco Stop Hotel.

The Deco Stop is perched high on the hill overlooking Luganville and the Second Channel. The outdoor dining and deck area has the most sensational views and ambiance imaginable. If you're going to Santo, this is the place to stay – if you can get in (we couldn't). Mind you, the outlook from the Beachfront resort is definitely NOT shabby!



The food at Deco Stop is great with a good variety of food on the menu and reasonably priced wine. Michael.M is correct when he says that the Santo Beef is fantastic – it really is very, very good.



Coolidge Mural at the Deco Stop Hotel



John at Dessert

### Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> August

We dined at Ocean King again tonight. The lobsters were safe tonight with a variety of non-crustacean foods being devoured.

### Monday 17<sup>th</sup> August

Tonight we headed out of town to Coral Quays for dinner. Excellent dining and the outlook from the balcony would be great during the day. They also have beautiful gardens around the pool area where you can also dine. I had the Poulet Fish and it was delicious.

Coral Quays is a bit out of town, to the North, and since it's kind of at the end of the road we could not get a taxi back but it's only a 20 minute walk – which we really needed after what we'd eaten.

### Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> August

Every day after our morning dive we had lunch at the Le Jardin Des Saveurs. This is a little oasis slap-bang in the middle of town. It's run by a French couple and the setting, the food and the service are superb.





Tonight we were to enjoy the chef's signature dish Poulet Fish en Feuillitee.

Which is Poulet Fish wrapped in puff pastry and baked. We've had Poulet Fish a few times so far and it is delicious.

From my schoolboy French lessons I seem to recall that poulet translates to chicken. Which would seem to indicate that the fish tastes pretty bland, however, nothing could be further from the truth as the Poulet Fish is delicious and has a similar texture and taste to our local red snapper – very nice indeed.

In fact all four plates had been licked clean before we left – after the compulsory desserts were demolished, of course.



John & Paul at Le Jardin



John & our favourite waitress - Nelly

Let me say here that, whilst John may not be keen on shellfish, you would not want to let him near your prize dessert collection! Notice the size of the dessert in front of John in the above photograph. This is called a “floating island” but is really a heart attack waiting for a place to happen.

### **Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> August**

Today we did our night dive with the Flashlight Fish in the forward holds of the Coolidge. So, whilst it's not Thursday night, tradition has it that we needed pizza. And so it was to be with pizza on the deck at the Beachfront Resort washed down with a Tusker or two YUM!



Pizza after night dive



Local kids

## Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> August

Tonight we again went to the Deco Stop Hotel. A couple of the guys are talking about moving into the Deco Stop permanently!

Unfortunately, we arrived a little too late to enjoy the sunset.

The general store in Santo is a classic – you can buy anything and everything. Some of the stuff was really weird and we had to ask what it was because we've never seen such things. Such as wooden scales to weigh your bags of copra – I bet you don't have one of these in your garage!

Another thing we loved about Vanuatu is that everyone smiles and says hello – they seem to be the happiest and friendliest of people – they are World treasures. This is just as well too as even little kids can be seen wandering around with big smiles and even bigger machetes!

On our last day we hired a 10 seater bus owned by Stephen and he took us on a tour along the coast to Champagne Beach. We stopped along the way to look at some of the streams which are incredibly beautiful. The whole island seems to be made of limestone and the streams have that tell-tale blue colour. This coupled with the water clarity and the white sand on the bottom of the streams makes you just want to jump in. There are many “blue holes” so visit and swim in on the island. Watch out though, the water is beautiful to look at but it’s surprisingly cool.



Blue Pools



Champagne Beach

We also saw WWII buildings, trenches, fortifications and abandoned vehicles.

Champagne Beach is a beautiful part of the world and, whilst it's not far from Luganville, the road makes it seem a long way. The NZ Government is paying to seal the road to Champagne Beach and a huge amount of work was in progress when we were there. I'm not sure if this will be good for Champagne Beach as I think that major resorts will appear once the road is sealed.

Stephen comes from the area just north of Champagne Beach and took us to one of the local villages so we could see how they lived. Their housing is surprisingly well made and it's clever how they use the locally available materials to produce high quality buildings. Their kitchen facilities are what we would call bush camping without the gas stoves.





They grow much of their own food and eat a mainly vegetarian diet. I was surprised to hear that they rarely eat fish. We also went through Stephens own village which has a mixture of traditional and modern buildings. I think Stephen was showing off his nice shiny van and his business enterprise and good on him too. I have Stephens contact number so; if you know anyone going to Santo they should give Stephen a call as he runs a great service for a very reasonable price.



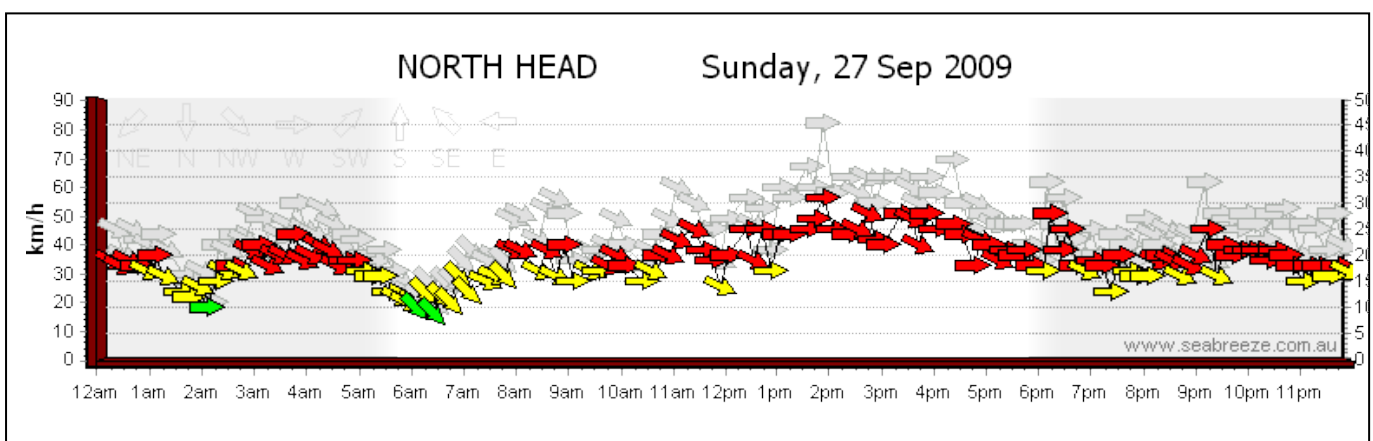
Dave cooking copra



Village hut

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From Seabreeze .com.au, Wind and Wave Height predictions.



The reason again for Club Boat dives being cancelled.

Note wind gusts up to 45 knots W at 2pm but only 30 knots NW at 9am.

Imagine this..... Is this to be included in our dive calendar?



A competitor crosses the Start/Finish line during the Northern Ireland Bog Snorkeling Championships in Peatlands Park, Dungannon, County Tyrone July 26, 2009.

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***Breathless wait to dive through 120m cave, From SMH.***

**ARJUN RAMACHANDRAN - August 3, 2009.**

An Australian daredevil has been forced to wait for a small "window" of calm conditions before he can make a world-first freedive attempt through a 120-metre underwater cave with just one breath.

Mike Wells, 39, was to swim through Fish Rock Cave - Australia's longest ocean cave - near Port Macquarie, last Sunday, but had to delay due to poor conditions.

Mr. Wells would not reveal how far he has swum in preparations - that's something he wants to hide from competitors in a freediving competition in Egypt this year. Freediving is the art of diving without oxygen tanks.

But he can swim at least three minutes without taking a breath, which is the time it will take him to get through Fish Rock Cave.

But there are few similarities between a swimming pool and Fish Rock Cave, a long pitch-black chamber with "doglegs", "chimneys" and "corners", infested with sharks and other marine life.

"This is a pretty unique situation - it's pitch black and like a labyrinth down there in the cave," Mr. Wells said. "In breath-hold terms it's possible - I can hold my breath for up to seven minutes, but that's just lying face down in a pool."

"When you bring in the movement, the stress, the cold water, the navigating ... it becomes a lot harder." Mr. Wells is doing the dive to raise money for the Australian Marine Conservation Society and to draw attention to the "amazing" marine life at the Fish Rock site.

"I don't want to make enemies [with fishermen] but pretty much every grey nurse shark in that site has some jewellery hanging out of them, a fish hook in the mouths or ropes around their tails." He will do the dive in regular diving gear - a wetsuit, mask, fins. But he won't have an oxygen tank, and his fins are a metre long. Having entered the water, Mr. Wells's first challenge will be to contain his heart rate to conserve oxygen.

A few short dives to 20 metres depth will "get the mammalian dive reflex going, which puts the body into oxygen conservation mode", he said.

"Then I'll take a final big breath, fill my lungs and it's as simple as doing a duck dive and swim down to 26 metres [to the cave entrance]."

The first urge to breathe will come as soon as halfway through the 30-second descent.

"You get rising CO<sub>2</sub> levels and that urge to breathe - you have thoughts in your head where you go: 'Ok, this is stupid and insane.'"

"You have to think positive all the time and say: 'I can't let the demons of the deep get inside my head.' " The reward for persistence is the "magical" marine life - which includes grey nurse sharks - filling the entrance of the 1.5 x three-metre entrance to the cave.

"The sharks are no threat to me other than being an obstacle," Mr. Wells said. "Going through the entrance is great, the fish part like a silver curtain - it's magical."

After swimming through the entrance, gliding up a narrow chimney, and twisting around a dog leg and around a corner, Mr. Wells will be past "the point of no return". The only way out will be to swim on 80 metres to the end of the cave and then rise 14 metres to the surface. "At this stage I'd be feeling a burning in the legs and fatigue, because I'm operating anaerobically," he said.

"But I'll also be able to see the light at the end of the tunnel, which is a positive."

A safety team of up to six scuba divers will be with Mr. Wells the entire time to give him oxygen should he need it. They'll also have torches with them, lighting up the marine life in the cave. "It's just pitch black and there's lobsters, turtles and fish ... it's fantastic, outrageously fantastic."

"They are just down there doing their thing, and to see them without the noise of a cylinder will be quite bizarre." After swimming to the end of the tunnel, Mr. Wells will focus on a smooth ascent and break the surface of the water.



"When you take the first breath it's very sweet and very euphoric," he said.

The key to success are his years of diving experience, both scuba and free, he said. Mr. Wells has been scuba diving since the 1980s, works in the diving equipment industry and, over the years, had increased the amount of time spent underwater and the depths he can tolerate. His family were supportive of his efforts, he said. His son Jeremy would be one of the scuba safety team members, he said. "You really need flat ocean conditions - when there's a swell, the surge inside the cave is like a river," he said. He expects to have just a 24- to 48-hour window, most likely next week, when conditions will be right. In the meantime he will continue with preparations for the audacious cave swim by swimming as far as he can underwater in an Olympic swimming pool without taking a breath.

To donate to the AMCS fund being collected in honour of Mr. Wells's dive, visit [www.amcs.org.au](http://www.amcs.org.au).

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A report from last weeks club night dive on 23rd Sept. Wed Night.  
From Mike Scotland.

Last week's dive was excellent. Gary and I got a chance to do a 93 minute dive to 8.3 metres on the "lake" off Oak Park, (completely protected from the wind).



We saw heaps of excellent sea life including 2 types of Bubble shells, purple lined Nembrotha, both kinds of adult PJ's, lotsa prawns, lined dumpling Squid. However, no baby PJ's. They should be there this week.

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## **Lucky John. By RayM.**

About 2 years or so ago, I dived off SeaJohn with John B. to the wreck of the Duckenfield off Narrabeen. John and I dived together and on the dive we were anchored a little way off the boiler, so John gets out his mini come- back line and proceeds to tie it to the boiler and sends up a float. This would enable a closer GPS mark for the next time. Well we got the mark ok but the line snagged and we couldn't retrieve the reel and it broke off. We were not to do a second dive here either. We'll get it next time he says, and off we go.

Anyway the next time happened to be just a couple of weeks ago when we did the double dive from Rose bay. Once again SeaJohn was out and we wanted to do the wreck again. Andrew and I anchored and dived after Eric and Sharron were back on the deco.

The viz was very ordinary at only about 3mt.

Anyway Andrew spots this line on the boiler and follows it and here it was, Johns come-back reel. Barnacles and all.

Just shows how many people have dived this wreck in the last couple of years.

John now can have his precious reel back.



## ***Regular events***

### **THURSDAY NIGHT DIVES**

We have had some record turnouts for the night dives.

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

Contact Michael if interested.

## ***Other Dives***

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

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

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

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**Please send items for the Newsletter to me as you do them during the month with a deadline of 25th of the month.**