



# Sea Braggin'

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

*June to December '19*

### TRIPS AWAY

#### Fish Rock.

#### South West Rocks.

**Article & photos by Phil Short.**

An impromptu trip was advertised to South West Rocks commencing 3 June 2019 and saw 7 club members put their hand up for the trip. Unfortunately, the weather didn't co-operate and that week saw the biggest seas and worst weather that Sydney and the entire north coast had seen for some time and our trip was cancelled with no chance of getting to dive.

Another trip was organised to dive on Tuesday 11 and Wednesday 12 June which saw three club members able to attend, Eda Dicamillo, Mike Scotland and Phil Short. We dived with Peter and Kevin from South West Rocks Dive Centre. As usual they looked after us very well.



Surface conditions were excellent on Tuesday. As we arrived at Fish Rock a whale came and played and said hello approximately 10 meters from the boat and there were further sightings of whales throughout the day. The first dive was at the shark gutters at the deep entrance of the cave and then we made our way to the aquarium and then back to the mooring line for a dive time of 58 minutes. The visibility was not the greatest. The water had a blue colour but was very hazy with visibility of only around 5 to 7

metres. Very similar water to that being experienced in Sydney at the same. Our second dive saw us go through the cave from the deep end as is normal. From there we spent some time around the aquarium and then cruised around spotting some more sharks. All the usual suspects were there including lots of lobsters, very active wobbegong sharks, wall covered in cowry shells, a very large turtle. Run time was around the 1 hour mark.



As we finished up diving, we saw the that blue current line was only around 400 metres to the east of Fish Rock, so we were hoping for better water the following day.

On Wednesday we had a nice calm trip to Fish Rock. Our first dive saw us dive the site named Fish and Chips. The visibility was much better and we estimated there were about forty grey nurse sharks in the gutter. Some of them were very large. Run time for this dive was an hour. Our second dive saw us again return to the cave but we agreed to spend more time in the cave taking time to take a good look around. We then spend time in the aquarium which was teeming with fish. A cruisy swim back to the mooring line coming across quite a few grey nurses. This dive also went for just on an hour. Lucky we were all pretty good on air but I didn't have much left in the tank on this one. Mike stayed on for an extra days diving. The weather was excellent for the three days, air temperature a warm 25 degrees and sunny, water temperature 20 degrees.



And FYI, for eating out. Our first night we went to the Seabreeze Hotel. I think we all agreed that whilst ok, it was the worst place we ate. The following night we went to the Riverside Tavern for a very nice meal, they also had a nice fireplace. On the third night we went to the Country Club and shared some Thai dishes between us. Another excellent meal and a bit cheaper than the Riverside Tavern and the pub.

## South West Rocks – Fish Rock

13, 14 & 15 July 19

Water temp: 18-19 deg C

Vis: 15 -20 mtrs

By: Peter & Judy Beaumont

After doing four dives at the South Solitary Island Judy & I departed Coffs Harbour & headed south to the South West Rocks Dive Centre. After settling in to our accommodation we headed off to the local pub bistro for dinner then had an early night in preparation for Saturday's dives.

The next morning, I set up the dive gear, loaded it onto the boat then headed off to the boarding pontoon near the boat ramp.



Saturday's surface conditions were a bit sloppy with a 15- 20k Westerly wind & a 1.5 mtr swell rolling in from the south. With the boat tied off at the mooring we geared up, entered the water & followed the dive guide down & through the cave via the deep entrance, up to the shallow entrance then across the

reef back to the mooring. Along the way we saw lots of grey nurse sharks, wobbegongs, rays, crayfish & blue groupers. For the second dive we stayed at the same mooring & followed the dive guide around to the caves shallow opening, part way into the cave then back out around the reef before returning to the mooring.



With 20-25k Westerly winds on Sunday & Monday & a noticeably larger southerly swell rolling in we dived the more sheltered "Pinnacle" side of Fish Rock. The dives consisted of guidance around to the caves shallow entrance with a swim into the cave to check out the chimney then a relaxing swim back around the reef with a couple of laps of the pinnacle. Overall, I found the six dives very enjoyable & we are looking forward to going back.

## MV Oceania – 10 day trip in PNG to Witu Islands, Kimbe Bay and Father Shoals

Article & photos by Ian Hittman

Recently Mike Scotland and myself did the above trip, leaving from Walindi Plantation on their new boat the MV Oceania, sister ship to MV FeBrina. This is a 25mtr catamaran which takes up to 16 guests in a combination of twin share or queen bed cabins, all with ensuites and large windows to see the views. The boat has been fitted out beautifully in all areas, with a large dive deck, camera bench, lounging and dining areas, with a wheelhouse crammed with the latest electronics and systems. Nitrox is available and all diving is done straight off the rear deck via two stairways and dive ladders, one on each side, and there are separate fresh water rinse bins for cameras, computers, masks and wetsuits, with each diver having their own dive locker in front of their tank. Attach your BCD on arrival and your work is done. The crew do everything else, including washing your gear on departure day. Daily diving is

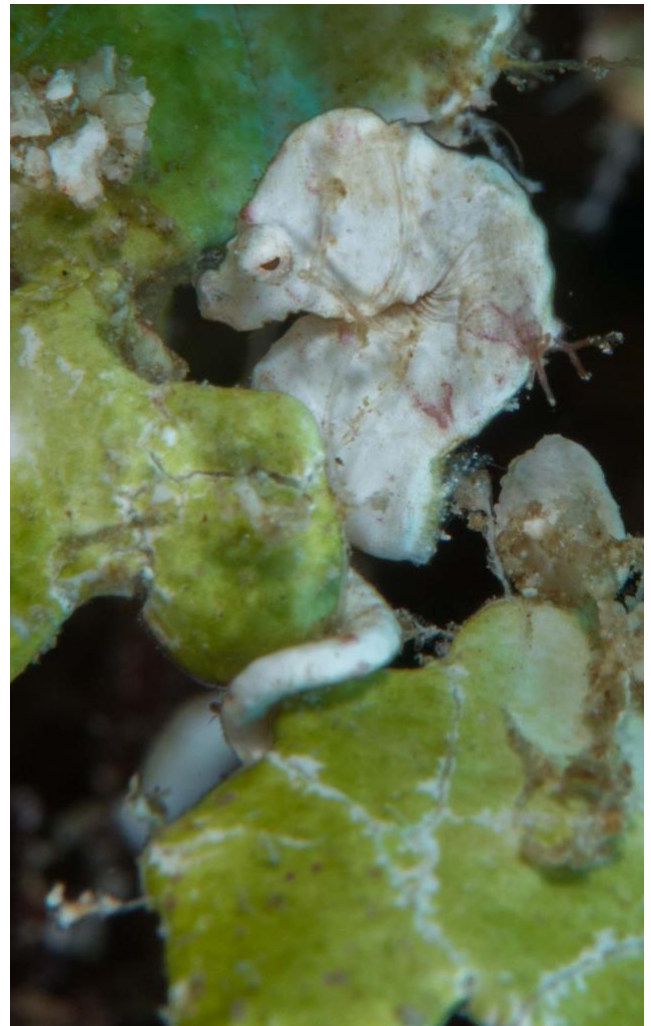


a combination of coral reefs, wall diving and muck diving

Our first dives were in Kimbe Bay (West New Britain Province) as we headed out of the bay towards the Witu Islands, with most distance steaming being done overnight or during surface intervals. There are certainly some spectacular dives in this area, and as both of us had been here several times in the past, we gave the skipper our favourites, and he willingly obliged. Josie's Reef was up early (named after the long-serving divemaster on MV FeBrina) and this is one of the most colourful reefs you could find. There are large fans, soft corals, huge barrel sponges and fields of sea whips. Viz was always 25 to 30 mtrs, with a few dives later in the trip stretching out to 60 mtrs viz. The divemaster lets you know well before the dive, whether to expect macro or wide-angle, or either, to give you time to setup the camera.



After several dives, we missed the night dive to steam out of Kimbe Bay to the Witu Islands, and arrived about midnight at Goru Arches, ready for sunrise. This is a large bommie with a saddle to the next bommie, under which there are two large arches, crammed with fans, soft corals and sponges. It is photography heaven, and I elected to use wide-angle on the first dive, and macro on the second. All reefs have moorings on the bottom, and one of the crew dives on arrival to attach a line from the boat, thus saving damage to the coral. On this particular reef the mooring is in about 10 mtrs depth, and herein lies an interesting story. Many years ago during a visit here by FeBrina, the famous divemaster "Digger" found some tiny (6 – 8 mm) white pygmy sea horses, which were new to science. On a subsequent trip he showed one to Neville Coleman, who obviously must have kept one to present to the museum, and they are now known as Coleman's Pygmy Seahorse. Was Digger upset? I remember when Digger first showed me his discovery (and told me the story) they were on the bommie above the twin arches in green and white weed, but have since been found on the bommie next to the mooring in the same weed.



If you are going to search for something that small it is a lot easier in 10 mtrs than 20 mtrs. Our guide Bale (pr Bali) found one, then another, then I found a couple, and my macro and super macro got a real workout. Because the guides know very little about cameras, they find tiny stuff up under ledges, so you can look for sure, but photography... not a chance. The Witu Islands are basically a volcano leftover with a large crater open on one end to allow boats into the flooded caldera, where a village is located on the side. A trip ashore for our group was greeted with a sing-sing by the women, then later the men did the same, all in ceremonial head gear etc. Very impressive. There is a wooden church (built in 1890 by missionaries) and a small school (primary only) as high school is only on the mainland, where the students live the whole term. If ever you think your own kid's school is doing it tough... then check out St Michaels in the Witu Islands. The crew gave gifts of sporting equipment, which then led to a match between the guests and the locals. Thank goodness they didn't have a football. It was hot.

The Crater is an overnight stop where we do a muck dive straight behind the boat, in the afternoon and then at night. Heaps of good stuff to see. Next day we did a double on the famous Krak-a Fat Reef, and

like everywhere else on this trip, you could spend a week diving each site, and probably not see it all. An overnight steam took us to Father Shoals, which is technically in East New Britain Province, and some more great diving. One of the great dives here is The Arch. The boat anchors on a reef, and once down to the mooring, you go over the edge down to about 20 mtrs where a rope is attached to the wall, and extends off into the gloom. As you follow this rope you go deeper and come to another reef, where there is a spectacular arch filled with colour of all kinds. I asked the divemaster if we could get an early start to photograph before everyone turned up, and bottom time is limited, and bubbles would always be in the background of each photo. While everyone else was still at breakfast, Mike and I geared up and as soon as the engines stopped, we entered the water. It was one of the great dives, and we got the rising sun behind the arch, and all was well. We were on our way back across the rope as we met 10 other divers just arriving at the arch. Love a plan when it all comes together.



One thing we did request to try on this trip was a "blackwater" night dive. We were supposed to hang under the tender (a 10 mtr RIB) as it drifted, with lights below us to attract creatures from the deep, while we took macro photos as we free floated with 1000 mtrs depth below us. Nothing to worry about then. Unfortunately, the divemaster thought we might get into trouble, so they dropped lines below the main boat, which was moored. Only four of us attempted to photograph, but a strong current had come up, and we hung like flags in a wind, as all the creatures flashed past. We couldn't focus, let alone see much, so it was a general waste of time, and besides, it was dinner time when we got out, and I was looking forward to another nice red with my meal. As we approached 30 dives it was time to head back to Kimbe Bay to finish the trip, and even there we did some more great dives.

I am currently negotiating with the skipper of MV Oceania and the Walindi office to do a "whole boat" charter for the club at some time in the future, with

the cost of the boat being equally divided amongst all who wish to go, with no F.O.C.'s. The costs are vastly reduced compared to normal trips. One offer was for the same trip as we did over 10 days, but I also was offered a 10 day trip boarding at Alotau on the mainland of PNG, then diving Milne Bay, the "Black Jack" bomber, and as far west as Tufi or Madang, then a steam across to the south coast of New Britain, where we will dive all the way up north to Rabaul. We decide what we want, but diving will be coral reefs, walls, some muck dives and WW II wrecks. In Rabaul we will leave the boat to overnight in a resort, and spend a day de-gassing while touring the Japanese caves, the submarine pens etc and the volcano research station or the markets, then fly to POM and on to home. I was offered a date in March 2020, but that's probably a bit early for most people to rustle up the money. If you really wanted to splurge, you could continue on the boat back to Walindi and do even more diving. There are various ways to get to and from PNG, especially if you have Qantas or Velocity points up your sleeve to reduce costs.

## Truk Lagoon

Article & photos by Peter Flockart.

In June of this year I again headed over to Truk with Martin Atkins for some more diving. We were going over for 2 weeks with Max Gleeson & Lesley Lineahan joining for the second.

We left Sydney on a bitterly cold winter's day hoping for 2 uneventful flights to Truk Lagoon that day.

Martin & I hoped to do some time on some of my favorites before Max and Lesley arrived to finish off his deeper and & lesser known wrecks video of the lagoon

The flight from Sydney to Port Moresby was uneventful, however the connecting flight to Truk had been cancelled and we and 35 other divers were forced to spend a night in a number of Port Moresby's hotels. The saving grace was that Air Nuigini footed the bill and also gave us vouchers towards our meals.

Sleep that night didn't come easily as we had to be up at 4am to be transported to the airport. The buses were provided by the hotels and when the flight finally left at 7.30am, 35 dopey divers settled down for a nap.

This flight was ok and we arrived to a hot & windy Truk airport. On the way in, we overflew the watery grave of Air Nuigini's other plane which crashed into the lagoon last year with the loss of one person.



After being bused to Blue lagoon, I decided to have a quiet day setting up camera and dive gear for a start on Monday. Martin however put his stuff together and raced out for a brief afternoon dive.

Monday morning saw us head out to the Amargisan Maru for a checkout dive before getting down to the serious stuff.

Over the next week it rained just about every day and was somewhat colder than usual. At least the water was a warm 28 to 30 degrees.

During this time we managed to complete 11 dives on a variety of wrecks, such as Seiko, Hoki, San Francisco, Aikoku, Yubae, Momokawa, and Unkai Maru's. (Maru means ship in Japanese)

The vis on the wrecks wasn't as good as it has been on previous trips which was disappointing but I still managed to get some great shots.

On the day before Max and Lesley arrived we had the opportunity to dive the HMIJN Oite which is only one of two warships in the lagoon. Previous dives on this 63m deep wreck have been spectacular (see image below from 2017) However on descent we both noted to our disappointment that the 4.7" gun and deck house have all collapsed to the floor of the lagoon.



The wreck is slowly disintegrating as one would expect after being underwater for 76 years.

With this behind us we began a new week of diving. Our first dive with the others was the Hokuyu Maru. This is a freighter whose open wheelhouse lies at 50m before dropping to the deck at 54.6m (Telegraph image)

This dive was done on air and 49% nitrox for deco. All deep dives are done using twin 80Cft tanks – 200 bar - either manifold or independents with a hang tank of whatever deco mix you are using. Over the next week we completed the following dives

- Fujisan – one of 3 fleet oilers in the lagoon- and is 51m to the deck
- Seiko Maru a freighter which is 40m to the deck and although intact has a broken deck towards the stern.
- Hoki Maru. This was a renamed captured New Zealand freighter. The bow of this vessel is gone but the stern holds have tractors and bulldozers to look at. The masts and kingposts are covered in corals and sponges and can be dive on their own.
- Taiho is a freighter that was carrying aviation gas and wasn't dived for years until we re-discovered the wreck in 2017 when Max began his search for some of the lesser known wrecks in the lagoon. It lies on its port side with the bow some 80m away from the rest of the hull due to an explosion at the time of sinking.
- The Kansho or Kensho, depending on your pronunciation, is a freighter lying near Dublon Island and at 28m to the deck, is one of the shallower wrecks in the lagoon with a great engine room and deck quarters to explore.
- A purpose sunk fishing boat – similar to the Japanese long liners seen around the islands.
- The San Francisco Maru which, is an iconic wreck in the lagoon, with its 3 tanks on the decks water trucks in the front hold and bow gun. Being full of ammunition she makes an interesting wreck to explore. Her deck is at 52m and the steam roller on the sand is 63m.

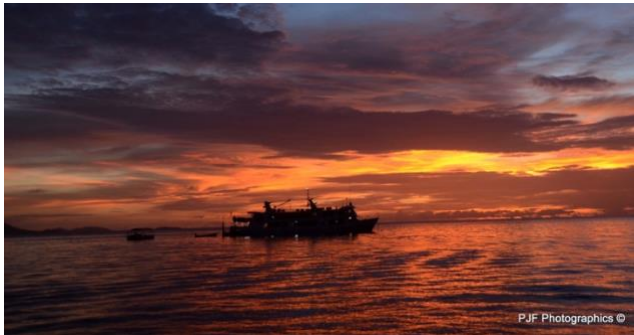


- The Nippo Maru. A water carrier sunk in the channel with a most interesting bridge.
- Lastly, the Katsuragisan Maru. A Japanese inter- Island freighter sunk as a result of sailing into their own minefield. This wreck is the deepest in the lagoon with her decks at 62m and stern at 70m. Often beset by strong currents, as she is near the east passage and is a dive for very experienced divers. Bottom time is limited to 15mins on air with a deco time of 45mins on 50% nitrox. Unfortunately, she too is feeling the ravages

of time. In the 17 dives I have done over the last 5 years the wreck has deteriorated markedly. This a wreck probably best done using Trimix or a rebreather but former is an expensive option in Truk, with a tank costing over \$150 for a fill

These dives over the week enabled Max Gleeson to get the final footage needed to complete his second Truk Video entitled "The Deeper & Lesser known Wrecks of Truk Lagoon".

We were also lucky to get a couple of nights of the stunning sunsets that Truk Lagoon is known to produce.



In all, another great trip with good company.

## ALTITUDE & ICE DIVING COURSE

July 27 – 28<sup>th</sup>

Snowy Mountains

By Bill Rowland

A former member, David Longman, and I embarked on an Altitude and Ice Diving course at Jindabyne and up in the Snowy Mountains. Staying at Adaminaby, to start our acclimatisation at 1000m above sea level, we met the two other members of the group (from Canberra and Tasmania), plus our Instructor (from QLD).

We practiced the new theory – planning repetitive dives at Altitude and I got to dust off planning my dives with tables for the first time in many years.



On Saturday we drove down to Jindabyne and geared up for a shore entry to a very low Lake Jindabyne. There was a lot of interest from onlookers with one young girl concluding that yes we were going diving "so that we could remove plastic from the water". Awwwwhhhh

Visibility was awful, under one metre (compounded by the two divers in front of us madly finning into the silt) but underwater we managed to see ... a tree ! To get near the flooded town would require a boat. Water temp was 7 degrees.



On Sunday we headed up to 3 mile dam (1450m elevation). Having visions of chainsaws cutting holes in ice, I asked how we exited the water (ladder, gear off – fin like mad and do a seal exit, or something else). The answer was we just walk in from the shore and crunch through it. I see – no chainsaws required... the ice would not be thick at all. On arrival that statement turned out to be too true, and there was no ice at all. This "had only happened twice in the last 7 years"

We headed in, in pairs, weighted to hell due to all the thermal protection. The depth reached 9m, and there was a lot of organic matter covering the ground, as well as some white nudi-sized sponges in the silt. There were plenty of yabbie claws and an old Fosters can, too. The ground exploded in a cloud of silt with any wrong movements. In the clear water viz was 5 metres or so. The first dive was a familiarisation dive. The second simulated being under the ice and had us clipped to a 40 metre rope with a signalling protocol for communicating via tugs to and from shore. The 3<sup>rd</sup> dive involved some rescue scenarios and out we leapt to the comparative warmth and dryness of the shore (and a soul-restoring chicken and noodle soup). Water temp was 1 degree.

I am now a certified ice diver, without having ever dived under ice! I'm pleased to have partaken in the adventure, but would not recommend it to others in its current form. With a boat on Lake Jindabyne, and



a large dog-sled, or ski-doo (or helicopter) to get far higher in elevation and ice, it would be much more fun.

Steve Boyd was very helpful with initial advice on cold water diving, thanks Steve. Having now done the dives, my reflections for any other nutters planning cold water diving, are:

- With 3 top undergarments, and 2 bottom ones, I was comfortable (apart from my feet). My goodness the extra garments added to the lead weight required.
- I ended up having a 7mm mitten on my left hand, with a single use latex glove underneath (which really made a difference). The mittens were incredibly buoyant too = yet more lead. The mittens were useless for dexterity (I couldn't even squeeze my nose to equalise), so I ended up with a 5mm 5 finger glove on my right hand.
- It's possible to get simple dry gloves. These are a glove with a latex seal. No rings or fancy gadgets in the drysuit sleeve, just the glove seal sitting on top of the drysuit wrist seal. One member of our team had these (bought from ScubaDoctor in Melbourne). Dive Gear Express also sells them. I worried about wrist "real-estate" and whether there'd be enough space for the glove seal to contact, but for him it all worked well.
- The 7mm skirted hood (yes... more lead) was tight for my large melon even in the biggest available size. I found tucking the skirt in to my drysuit collar made for a very rigid head and neck, that was quite a struggle to move and look around. Perhaps a 3mm skirted hood, with a larger, thicker non-skirted hood on top of that, would be better.



It was my first time to the Snowy Mountains and I thought it was beautiful. Listening to Len Beadell's audio books, about his exploration and road building in Central Australia in the 50's added to the ambience.

## Cocos Keeling Islands & Christmas Island Club Trip.

**A non-divers perspective.**

**By: Vicki Rose**

After months of planning, our adventurous party of 13 met at Perth International airport. The 4 hour flight took us 2750 kms northwest to Cocos Keeling Islands. Made up of 27 coral islands, only 2 of which are inhabited, the islands are a remote haven! Landing on West Island, it was literally just a walk across the road to our accommodation. None of us had been to Cocos before so we were unsure what to expect. In short, Cocos Islands were breathtakingly beautiful and far exceeded our expectations. Everything was in close proximity – the information centre and supermarket were across the road. The pub and other places to eat were all within a short walk. The road (singular) was only about 15km long. All food is flown into Cocos and as a result the food is somewhat expensive. We planned our purchases as a group, enabling salads to be made and shared on our BBQ nights.

Each morning, after the divers disappeared to go play with the fish, the 5 non divers would meet up at a more respectable hour to plan our day. This commenced with a decision about turning left or right along the only road. We had access to a car and delegated most of the driving to Ray.



*Direction Island.*

Taking the advice of locals we made our first full day a trip to Direction Island. *Simply stunning!* Cossies Beach has recently been crowned the Best Beach in Australia and it was easy to see why. The picture-perfect tropical island offered long, sandy beaches where we enjoyed snorkelling with black tip reef sharks and turtles. It's a favourite anchorage spot for round-the-world yachts, many of whom have left memorabilia on the shade shelters. The divers came here each day for their lunch break.

On West Island we explored the swimming and snorkelling options. From Scout Park at the southern end of West Island we were able to wade across the reef at low tide to another small island *Pulu Maraya*.

We loved the shade and ocean access provided by Trannie Beach at the Northern end of the island. The Big Barge Art Centre showcased the work of local artist, Emma, who works with flotsam. At the local school we participated in a cooking lesson. We helped prepare traditional Cocos Malay dishes with guidance of Home Island elders and children who practised their English speaking skills with us. The experience concluded with a delicious shared meal where we all got a good laugh at our culinary efforts. A short, pleasant ferry ride took us across to Home Island where the mostly Malay population live. Easy walking paths led us to Oceania House, once home to the Clunies-Ross family and now privately owned by local residents. Snorkelling at Home Island brought us into close contact with turtles who were celebrating the arrival of Spring.

The boys, Ray & Daniel, ventured out in motorised kayaks to see huge numbers of turtles in the shallow waters. Daniel also mingled with the locals in a team game of Scroungers at the local golf course. The Cocos Keeling Islands golf course is the only course that plays across an international runway.

Day 7 was an "off gas" day for the divers. Using our explorations as a guide, everyone set out to ensure the divers saw the highlights that Cocos Keeling islands have to offer. This included Scout Park, Trannie Beach, Home Island for lunch at a local cafe (we arranged for a local couple to cook for our group) and finished back on West Island with dinner at Maxi's by the Beach.

Day 8 and another 1 hour flight covered the 900km to reach Christmas Island – a mountain peak speck in the middle of the ocean 2600km north-west of Perth. Although it's an Australian Territory, its closest neighbour is actually Java, about 300km away.

The accommodation was not as luxurious as Cocos and was at first a little disappointing. None were purpose built for tourists (our accommodation was originally horse stables). Fortunately we were all close to each other and across the road from the Golden Bosun Tavern. Dinner there was reliably good so we ended up gathering there most evenings.

Chalkboards used by the locals to share information, welcomed Daniel back 10 yrs after his Make-A-Wish trip. The divers were all welcomed by name. We soon discovered that Cocos and Christmas islands, despite being in close proximity, are about as similar as Gilligan's Island and Jurassic Park. Before long we acclimatised to the humidity of Christmas Island and settled back to enjoy this unique place and the friendly hospitality. We had access to more cars here as the island is much larger and mountainous, rising steeply to a plateau dominated by dense rainforest.

The Chinese and Malay residents have made their mark on the island. We enjoyed the food and festivities of the Chinese Moon Festival. Dinner at the

Lucky Ho Restaurant was a fun night out and the Temple at South Point proved to be a great spot to watch the sunset – with wine & cheese of course. Christmas Island is surrounded by a narrow coral reef. There is virtually no coastal shelf and the sea plunges to great depths of 500m+ just offshore. Flying Fish Cove is located at the base of the Settlement area. It's the only port and the only real place where we could go swimming and snorkelling.



*Flying Fish Cove.*

It is home to the Kampong (Malay village) and their supermarkets were a fun adventure in themselves. The Grotto is a mini cave with a mixed sea and fresh water pool. The depth was a little higher than it appeared to those brave enough to scramble down the jagged rocks for a dip. A few red crabs sheltered here in the leaf litter.

The beaches are named after family members of early settlers- Ethel, Lily, Greta and Dolly. Each beach was rocky with varying levels of difficulty to reach. Sometimes we hiked boardwalks to reach them. It was hot, humid but the presence of robber crabs (and many other crab species) kept us entertained. The huge amount of plastic rubbish that washes up on these beaches was shocking. Turtle tracks on the beaches brought disturbing thoughts of turtles trying to make their way through all the trash to nest - truly heart breaking. We collected bags of rubbish off the beaches, just as the locals regularly do, in an effort to help.

Tai Jin House, the original home of the Administrator of the Island, is now a museum telling the story of the Phosphate mining history. It's the phosphate mine that imported its' workforce of Chinese, Malays and Sikhs, who often endured appalling conditions. There are signs of the island's WWII history including a restored gun emplacement used to defend the Cove during the Second World War.

For us, Christmas Island was more about hiking than snorkelling. A local marathon event sparked our joke that Ray should fake his participation by posing as a runner. It proved a popular Facebook post! Lookouts at Margaret Knoll and over the Golf Course offered spectacular views of the rugged coastline. The eco walk and trek to the Dales Waterfall were



opportunities for more wildlife and crab spotting. We spent time with Park Rangers learning about their project releasing blue tailed skinks back into the wild and hand-feeding orphan Booby chicks.



L to R – Janine, Ray, Vicki, Sue and Daniel.

Our 2 week venture was a wonderful escapade, exploring 2 of the most remote diving sites in Australia. It's not always easy to move a group of people around whilst accommodating individual needs and wants and I'm enormously thankful to the whole group for their willingness to participate, cooperate and share the fun.

## LOCAL DIVING

### Big Saigon

June 15<sup>th</sup> 2019

Article by Bill Rowland

Photos by Ray Moulang

MakCat, Katz Too and Yes Dear Too were organised to dive Big Saigon. YD2 dived elsewhere and Aquanaut arrived unexpectedly. Perhaps Cape Baily is becoming NSW's Bermuda Triangle for unexpected boat activity.



Ray Moulang

With 3 boats anchored, Michael, Les, and Kelly entered the water. Bob Hill and I geared up, and poor Bob snapped his fin strap. Ruling out the prospect of him diving in circles, I ended up having a solo dive. With club dives I generally enjoy diving with a buddy or two as more critters are usually spotted, but today I did enjoy diving on my own to stop and look at something for as long as I wanted.



Ray Moulang

While the first group saw a huge cuttle, I only encountered a number of little golf-ball sized ones. They were all calm (none were raising two fingers at me) but each would face towards me and on occasions would have a single wave of light colour across their head and tentacles (trying to engage with me?) before returning to a dark grey colour. Alas, I could not flash back at them.

The boat was perfectly anchored next to the swim through, and in the middle was an Octopus engaged with what I assume was a hermit crab in its shell (but probably not for much longer). A medium sized Eastern Blue lurking in a crack near the anchor completed the dive for me.



Water temp was 19 degrees, viz 8-10m. It was warmer in the water than out. I am going Ice Diving later in the year and a few people had recommended 3 fingered mittens, with a latex glove underneath. I managed to get the latex glove on and get onto the boat without a single inappropriate comment being made (yes... Jasmine has stopped diving until next Summer...). The mitten was warm but needs more effort to have useable dexterity (I couldn't even press the dive computer buttons successfully with it).

Morning tea afterwards was at Dark Bay – a simply gorgeous morning in that secluded spot with perfect conditions (and the hot dog and pork pie didn't hurt either)

Thanks to Michael, Les, Kelly, Ken and Bob for a fun outing, and thanks to Greg for organising it.

## Ex HMAS Adelaide

30 June 2019

Article by Bill Rowland

Photos by Mark Arrowsmith

The club calendar dive on the ex HMAS Adelaide, scheduled for mid July, finally happened on Nov 30th. 3rd or 4th time lucky I think.

A decent Southerly was forecast, but it was worth a try. Dive Imports Australia was warned not to do a last minute cancellation given the distances some folk had to travel, and the call was made to go on Friday night.

On Saturday morning the wind was blowing.... A fishing boat launched and returned 10 minutes later. Our boat arrived and once on the ramp only 1 engine would start, so back up the ramp it went. Eventually all was well, and we headed off into the grey dark sky.

Helen Price, Mark Arrowsmith, Ian Roffey, Dick Fish, Clint Emmett, Hossam Elfarra, and myself jumped in.

There was no current, no surge, and no green soupy water. It was almost as if She was saying sorry for the previous cancellations.

We were moored to the bow, and headed off in 3 groups. After the obligatory "I'm the King of the World" photo with Mark, we headed to the bridge and through the wreck. In 8 and a half years, nature really has claimed it. The fish life was fantastic with huge schools of yellowtail and others, and every spare surface claimed by something.



As we turned around I compared gas with Mark and thought wow he's good. We headed back to the bridge a different way, and as Mark headed up the steps in front of me, the penny dropped... He had a 15L tank! The Captain's bathroom at the edge of the wheelhouse had a wobbie on guard, so we bid our farewell and returned to the bow.



The ascent back up the mooring line was pretty calm even at 6m. Once we surfaced it was a different story, with wind and waves in full swing.

With everyone on board, we headed for home and a shark fin was spotted on the surface. It stayed for a while but didn't like us getting closer and took off. We couldn't prove it wasn't a hammerhead, so that'll do me!

The Captain said conditions were not suitable for a 2nd dive, which didn't meet with any arguments. As we got back to the boat ramp, Pro-dive's boat was just heading out. Better them than us.



It was a true club dive - a spare tank was needed so someone brought that. It didn't fit the (yoke) reg cleanly, so I went in search of a spare - mine was at home.

Do you have a spare reg set? Oh yes, but it's at home.

Do you have a spare reg set? Oh yes, I have 1...2...3... sets, but they're at home.

Dick had brought a pony bottle, and kindly donated the reg for that. Someone else supplied the tool, and a rapid changeover of the other hoses got all divers ready to go.

Others helped launch the boat, and so on. I think the Captain enjoyed having his crew.



Caca was held at The Cove (which was very nice), and the journey home commenced. For once, it was good being a northside club-member!

While we were queuing for coffee, a very bubbly and cheerful traffic warden approached us. She asked if we belonged to that car over there? Nope. She explained that it was illegally parked, but wanted to check the person hadn't just stopped to grab a coffee, before giving it a ticket. Wouldn't happen in Sydney!

## **Club Dinner**

### **Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2019.**

**By Eda Dicamillo**

Just a few pics from our great club dinner at the Big Mexican Rancho – Gymea Bay – Club members arrived from near and far, the food was very good but very large, most of us could not finish the main meal.

A very friendly night with lots of laughs and banter. It was good to see everyone recognised each other out of their wetsuits!!



## MEMBER PROFILES

The next 2 Member Profiles to feature are Mat Peeling and Theo Starr.

### Mat Peeling



- **Name:** Mat Peeling
- **How long have you been a member of SGSC?** 9 years (ish I think)
- **What inspired you to get into scuba Diving?**  
20+ Years ago, I decide to do the mandatory backpacking trip to Oz (I'm from the UK). It was in the plan to head to the Barrier Reef and try some of this scuba diving I'd read so much about, but I didn't want to waste time learning to dive when I got here, so I took the course before I left at a place called Chesil Beach, Dorset, UK. First four dives water temp: 9 degrees, fifth to twenty fifth dives: 27 degrees. I'm proud of myself I didn't give it all up during those first four dives!
- **When did you first get certified?**  
1999 in the UK (See above)
- **How many dives have you logged?**  
Stopped counting at 1500 (At 2009), probably near double that now.
- **Level of certification?**  
Retired PADI MSDT
- **Favourite type of diving?**  
Coming from the south coast of the UK, it has to be wreck diving. There are literally hundreds to choose from. Favourite would be the Valentine Tanks, Swanage, UK. A very unique and unusual experience seeing proper tanks underwater, all connected with ropes and chains (by previous divers) so you don't need your navigation certificate to get around!

- **Favourite dive sites?**  
Blue Corner, Palau. Secret Bay, Anilao. The Hood, Portland Harbour. Valentine Tanks, Swanage. SS Thistlegorm, Egypt. Yongala, QLD.
- **Favourite critters to see?**  
Has to be the octopus, the mimic octopuses (Octopi ?) at Anilao secret bay are an incredible creature to watch.
- **Have you been on any dive holidays?**  
Too many to choose from, Red Sea, Philippines, Palau, California and of course Australia.
- **Oh shit!! Moments?**  
At the end of a tough summer's day in the UK (yes they do happen). I just finished three trips out to the Kyarra wreck (30+ meters and with a blood stream full of nitrogen). Upon returning to the pier, a colleague requested assistance with a rescue course. All I had to do was play dead while the students "Search and Rescued" me. So, lying in 15 meters not moving, the student found me, and proceeded to do an "unresponsive ascent", however they got confused and the first checklist item they did was to remove my weight belt. After a long day in the English channel, I had my dry suit on and the removal of the weight belt pretty much saw me breach the surface with a very rapid ascent. Although it was quick in real time, the ascent seemed to move pretty slow to me as all the way up I was thinking "Oh s%\$t I'm going to explode".
- **Things you've learnt?**  
Bubbles don't always go up, Boats are expensive, Sharks don't bite but fire coral really, really hurts. (I cannot emphasize how much it hurts).
- **Has diving changed your life?**  
Yes, leading a busy office-based life, it has given me the chance to escape the everyday hectic hustle, no phones, no e-mails. It's also given me the opportunity to remove myself from that life for several extended "working" holidays in some truly incredible locations.
- **Does anyone else in your family dive?**  
No, they can't even look at water without being sick, they question what I do on a daily basis.
- **Anything else you'd like to add?**  
As I mentioned, I came to Oz 9 years ago and was lucky enough to "pick" SGSC from a



random selection of dive clubs. The first meeting I dared to go to, all the people made me feel so welcome and I have made lots of lifelong friends, it's a great club, with great people.

## Theo Starr



- **Name:**  
Theo Starr
- **How long have you been a member of SGSC?**  
Just Joined
- **What inspired you to get into scuba Diving?**  
Childhood Thing...
- **When did you first get certified?**  
Oct 1997.
- **How many dives have you logged?**  
1600 and counting.
- **Level of certification?**  
PADI MSDT
- **Favourite type of diving?**  
Any, as long as I am floating around.
- **Favourite dive sites?**  
Ben Buckler – North Bondi.
- **Favourite critters to see?**  
Any... Large and Small
- **Have you been on any dive holidays? (Australia or overseas)**  
Yes.
- **Oh shit!! Moments?**  
Only One... Not turning my valve on fully and hitting 30m

- **Things you've learnt?**  
A lot in general
- **Has diving changed your life?**  
Yes  
**How so?** More aware of my surroundings, level of confidence.
- **Does anyone else in your family dive?**  
No.
- **Anything else you'd like to add?**  
Not Really.

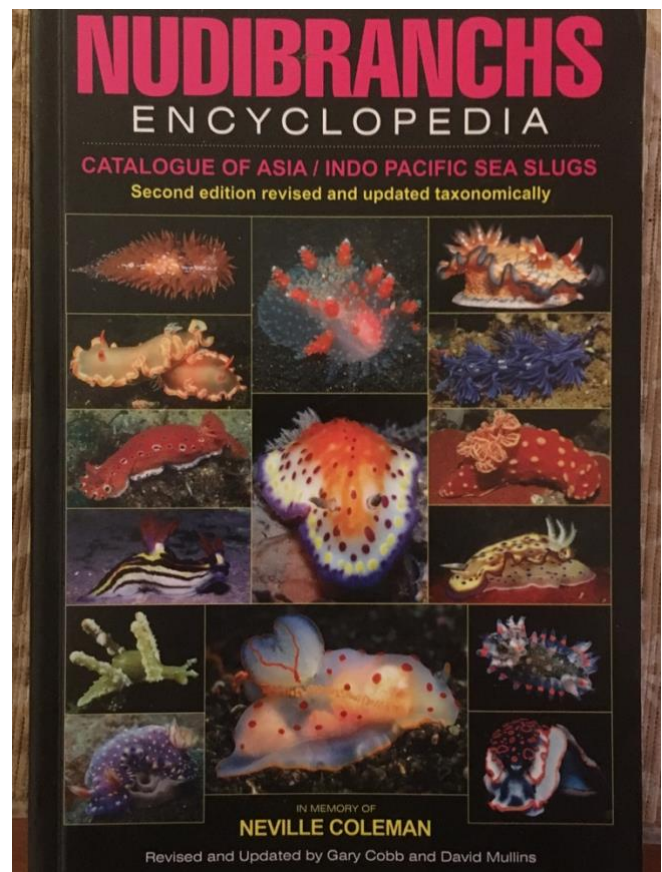
## BOOK BUDDY

Another new edition to 'Sea Braggin' is a section called 'BOOK BUDDY'.

**This is a place where members can send in reviews about any great dive related books they've read or even simply a suggestion of a good book you've read.**

It could be a good novel or a book about sea animals... anything dive related!

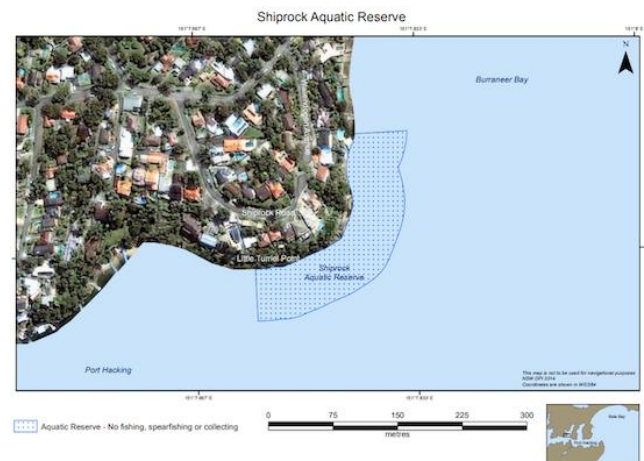
This months book suggestion is one of my own. "Nudibranch Encyclopedia" by Neville Coleman. (Revised & updated by Gary Cobb & David Mullins)



This book aids in the identification of Opisthobranch species found throughout the Indo-Pacific region and is great for divers, reef walkers, students, snorkelers, teachers and anyone interested in the world of Nudibranchs.

There is over 2000 full colour photographs representing 57 families and 1198 species of Nudibranch.

Nudibranch enthusiasts Gary Cobb & David Mullins have worked on this book keeping alive the life's work of an extraordinary underwater explorer and friend, Neville coleman.



## NOTICE BOARD

**This space is for any news or notifications or gear for sale. So feel free to send in anything along those lines!**

### Advice about Shiprock Reserve Boundaries By Bill Rowland

On a recent (wonderful) dive at Shiprock, there were a couple of boats fishing beyond the yellow buoys. What can you do...

When we were on the return leg, I could see a shiny hook and sinker and bait pass Jasmine and me on the outside. Close, but ok. The rig then changed direction and headed straight between the pair of divers in front of us.

Right !... Out came the line cutter and off came the shiny new hook (and I pocketed the shiny new sinker).

After the dive, the captain of the boat near us was (politely) told of the incident and he claimed innocence.

I subsequently learnt at another club post-dive morning tea, that the Aquatic Reserve extends about 80 metres out from shore. Refer map (and scale) below.

Google maps shows the buoys are only around 20 metres out from shore. They indicate they are part of the reserve zone (but not the boundary of the reserve, as I, and the fishermen, had thought)

## Scuba Jokes.

What type of Decompression Illness do very wealthy SCUBA divers get?

Mercedes Bends.

Why do mermaids wear Sea Shells?

B Shells are too small!

\*Here's a handy Buyers Guide by Scuba Doctor.

<https://scubadoctor.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=8bfd1b031b8c01ddf8ccaa126&id=4f02c6191b&e=123b7b2bc7>

\*An article about flash photography.

[http://divemagazine.co.uk/hotshots/8423-flash-photography-harmless-seahorses?awt\\_l=EiBY0&awt\\_m=3lkB.2c8V0gV46Q](http://divemagazine.co.uk/hotshots/8423-flash-photography-harmless-seahorses?awt_l=EiBY0&awt_m=3lkB.2c8V0gV46Q)

## Poetry

By Bram Harris

Bubbles, bubbles, rising and dancing, carrying life to whence it came.

Releasing us to float and fly, exploring worlds, so close, yet unseen.

A nature of rules that are fluid and paradoxical, Inexplicable, wondrous, enchanting, enthralling. When immersed in the realm you cannot survive, Then can you truly live, indeed, even thrive.



## MEMBERS PHOTOS & VIDEOS

I know that there are quite a few keen photographers in the club so, get on board and send me some of your photos or links to video clips to be featured here!



### SGSC CHRISTMAS BBQ 1ST DECEMBER 2019 MONUMENT FLAT, KURNELL.



MANY THANKS TO JANE SCARBROOK AND  
DAVE CASBURN FOR ORGANISING THE DAY.

## REGULAR EVENTS

### Monthly Meetings

The next 2 meetings of the St George Scuba Club will be held on Wednesday 15th January 2020 and Wednesday 19th February 2020 at St. George 16ft Sailing Club, Sanoni Ave, Dolls Point at 8.00 pm. Come along about 7 pm and enjoy a meal at the bistro.

I encourage everyone to come along to the meetings, especially newer members as it is a great way to meet & get to know other members.

### 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 need time to appear as it needs to be authorised by a web site administrator).

## UP AND COMING EVENTS

### Australia Day Shore Dive & BBQ

**Sunday 26 January 2020**

**The Monument Flat, Kurnell.**

Contact: Deb Cook

[deb.akela@optusnet.com.au](mailto:deb.akela@optusnet.com.au)

### Carol Martin Memorial Dive & BBQ

**Sunday 2 February 2020**

**Bare Island, La Perouse.**

Contact: Kelly McFadyen

[mcfa1kel@gmail.com](mailto:mcfa1kel@gmail.com)

### Camping Weekend

**Friday 14th to Monday 17th February 2020**

**Hume Highway, Wee Jasper.**

Contact: Eda di Camillo

[edadicamillo@bigpond.com](mailto:edadicamillo@bigpond.com)

### Club Anniversary Dinner

**Saturday 22nd February 2020**

**Royal Motor Yacht Club, Burraneer Bay.**

Contact: Michael McFadyen

[michael@michaelmcfadyenscuba.info](mailto:michael@michaelmcfadyenscuba.info)

### Girls Weekend Away

**Friday 13th to Sunday 15th March 2020**

**Huskisson, Jervis Bay.**

Contact: Tordis Bulger

[t-bulger@bigpond.com](mailto:t-bulger@bigpond.com)



## CALENDER DIVES

**Saturday 18th January 2020**

Type: Boat Dive  
Location: Yellow Rock  
Contact: Eda di Camillo  
[edadicamillo@bigpond.com](mailto:edadicamillo@bigpond.com)

**Saturday 25th January 2020**

Type: Deep Wreck Dive  
Location: SS Tuggerah  
Contact: Peter Flockart  
[pjfflockart@speednet.com.au](mailto:pjfflockart@speednet.com.au)

**Saturday 8th February 2020**

Type: Boat Dive  
Location: Bypass Reef  
Contact: Peter Flockart  
[pjfflockart@speednet.com.au](mailto:pjfflockart@speednet.com.au)

**Saturday 8th February 2020**

Type: Shore Dive  
Location: Shiprock  
Contact: Eddie Ivers  
[eddieivers@iprimus.com.au](mailto:eddieivers@iprimus.com.au)

**Sunday 9th February 2020**

Type: Boat Dive  
Location: Xanadu  
Contact: Craig Spillane  
[dreamwave@optusnet.com.au](mailto:dreamwave@optusnet.com.au)

**Saturday 22nd February 2020**

Type: Boat Dive  
Location: Big Saigon  
Contact: Peter Flockart  
[pjfflockart@speednet.com.au](mailto:pjfflockart@speednet.com.au)

**Saturday 29th February 2020**

Type: Boat Dive.  
Location: Minmi Trench  
Contact: Bram Harris  
[bram.harris@eml.cc](mailto:bram.harris@eml.cc)

**Saturday 29th February 2020**

Type: Shore Dive  
Location: The Leap.  
Contact: Paul Pacey  
[paul.pacey888@gmail.com](mailto:paul.pacey888@gmail.com)

## The Committee for 2018/19 is:

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