



Sea Braggin'

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

- NOVEMBER 2009 - Edited by Ray Moulang -

Included in this issue are Dive Reports from Michal Mcfadyen, Peter Trayhurn, Carol Martin, Ray Moulang and Donna Cassidy.

A big thank you goes to them.



Seal Pic by Peter Trayhurn - Note right angle bubble trail.

WHATS HAPPENING IN YOUR CLUB? WHATS COMING UP SOON?

November 2009

<u>WHEN</u>	<u>WHAT AND WHERE</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
Sunday 1 st	Club Boat Dive & BBQ Frenchman's Bay at La Perouse	Jason Coombs
Wednesday 4 th	Club boat Dive from Yowie Bay	Les Caterson
Saturday 7 th	Shore Dive - The Leap Kurnell	Paul Pacey
Saturday 7 th	Deep Dive from Yowie Bay	Les Caterson
Sunday 8 th	Shore Dive & BBQ - Shark Point	Carol Martin
Wednesday 11 th	Club boat Dive from Yowie Bay	Les Caterson
Saturday 14 th	Double Boat Dive from Botany Bay / Sydney Harbour	Ray Moulang
Sunday 15 th to 20 th	Nth Solitary Islands - Wooli	Mark Ridsdale
Wednesday 18 th	Club boat Dive from Yowie Bay	Les Caterson
Friday 20 th	South West Rocks Weekend	Ray Moulang
Saturday 21 st	Club boat Dive from Yowie Bay	Les Caterson
Wednesday 25 th	Club boat Dive from Yowie Bay	Les Caterson
Wednesday 25 th	Deferred Club Meeting at Rowers on Cooks River Club for 8pm start	Jason Coombs
Saturday 28 th	Club Boat Dive from Yowie Bay to Wattamolla	Peter Flockart

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

Club Dive Weekend to South West Rocks.

From Friday 20th November to Sunday 22nd 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.




South Pacific Divers (<http://www.southpacificdivers.com>) are Helping Max Gleeson (www.maxgleeson.com) release his new DVD "*Ghost Ships of the Coast Run*" featuring new unseen footage of the NSW shipwrecks of the *Woniora*, *Birchgrove Park* and *Bega*. This is the second in the "Shipwreck Series" of DVD's following "The Tragic Trio" release last year. I am hoping that you can assist us promoting this amongst your Club Members and turning this into somewhat of a diving get-together type social event. South Pacific Divers shall be minimising our normal meeting so that we can all have a good night.




An evening with
MAX GLEESON
PREMIERING HIS NEW DVD
GHOST SHIPS OF THE COAST RUN
Featuring the *Woniora*, *Birchgrove Park* and *Bega*.


Hear the stories of their sinking. See Amazing Underwater footage of the wrecks as they are today as well as historical photos and archival footage.



WHEN - 8pm Monday 16th Nov 2009
WHERE - Bankstown Sports Club - 8 Greenfield Parade, Bankstown NSW.
If driving, there is ample parking available via the Mona Street Entrance



Max Gleeson is recognised as one of Australia's most experienced wreck divers and authorities on NSW shipwrecks. Max is a multi-award winning underwater photographer, his awards include the prestigious Australasian Underwater Photographer of the Year award and the Oztek Underwater Video Award. He is also author of a series of three books about NSW Shipwrecks as well as one on the *Yongala*. *Ghost Ships of the Coast Run* recreates the loss of two "sixty miler" colliers, the *Woniora* and the *Birchgrove Park* and the passenger cargo steamer *Bega*. The stories of their loss are brought to life using historical photos and movie footage of the time. It is the second DVD in the series, following the highly acclaimed "The Tragic Tho". For more info see www.maxgleeson.com



Max Gleeson has long been a supporter of local Sydney Dive Clubs and this is both a chance to have a get together as a social evening for local divers and to help pay Max back for the many nights he has given talks to each of our dive clubs.

If you could assist by advertising this evening at your next club meeting, in your newsletters and your forums while additionally encouraging your member to attend as this is a excellent chance to have a get together of local active divers coming up to Christmas and catch up with what we have all been doing.

What: Release of the new DVD "*Ghost Ships of the Coast Run*" **Free Admission**

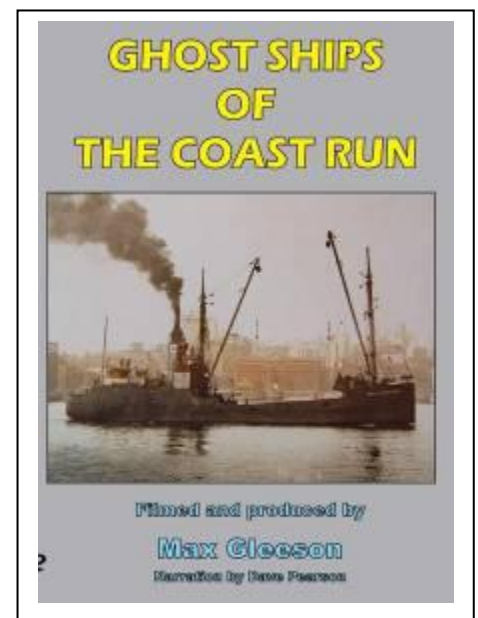
When: Monday 16th November 2009 at 8 pm

Where: The Bankstown Sports Club - 8 Greenfield Parade, Bankstown NSW (Meals are available in the club either Italian fine dining, up market pizza, Chinese or the bistro

I personally thank you in advance for your help, and hope to see you and your club members at the launch.

Regards Geoff Cook

President
South Pacific Divers Club.



SOLOMON ISLANDS TRIP – SEPTEMBER 2009

BY MICHAEL MCFADYEN

17 September - At the crack of dawn (well, actually before it), Kelly and I left home for Sydney Airport. We arrived at the Virgin Blue Domestic Terminal to find Phil Goodman already there. As we on a ticket from Sydney to Honiara, we could book our bags right through to Honiara via a special book-in desk.

Soon Nick Windle and Jessica McInnes arrived and were booking in. However, as Nick did not have a return ticket from Sydney (he was off to East Timor via Darwin when we returned), he could only book his bag through to Brisbane and would need to find his bag and then book it in at the Brisbane International Terminal.

Our flight was on time and we quickly caught the train to the International Terminal. Guess, what, Nick beat us! We had been taking our time, with people having a rest stop and he had got ahead of us. As usual, Brisbane was a pain to go through, with most of us having to pull all our things out of our hand-luggage. Why is it stuff that passes through Sydney without a problem suddenly needs to be examined by hand in Brisbane? Anyway, we made the tight connection and soon we were on our way to the Solomons.

Peter Flockart was already over there, having left two weeks earlier. The plane was about 70% full so we had room to move around. Phil bought us a beer on the plane, a metal bottle of Crown Lager. Very strange! We arrived on time and were met at the airport by Neil Yates. Neil owns and runs Dive Tulagi and used to work for St George Underwater Centre.

Neil took us to the Point Cruz Yacht Club where he parks his boat in Honiara. We had a beer (or two) and then loaded all our gear on his aluminium Orca boat for the 42 kilometres trip across to Tulagi. We had good run across, taking just over one hour to get there. Peter was waiting at the wharf and he certainly looked like he had gone native with his attire of a lap-lap and shirt.

The accommodation here was at Vanita Motel and is very basic, with shared facilities for most rooms. Kelly and I had a double room with its own shower and toilet. You should not think we had anything luxurious, it was very basic indeed. You get used to cold showers over here after a few minutes!

There is only one place to eat here, at the accommodation. Breakfast was included in the accommodation but meals were extra. Each meal was a buffet type meal. Lunch every day was almost the same as was dinner. In fact, dinner was like lunch nearly every day. You soon get sick of chicken winglets, sausages/frankfurts, rice, taro/sweet potato and fruit.

There was very little imagination used in the menu and it was very poor value at \$31 for dinner. That been said, the food was sufficient in quantity and not inedible; just we got sick of the same thing over and over again. Breakfast was not too bad, fruit, toast and the best pikelets I have had for a long time.

The first night saw us having a beer and discussing with Peter his dives over the past weeks and talking to Neil about the plan for the coming week. The standard was set the first night; we were all in bed early.

18 September – We had a relaxed start of 8:30 am at the dive shop (right next door). We had to set up our gear as Phil, Nick and I were using twins and Kelly and Jessica single tanks with slings. There was a little problem when the first set up that I put together was lacking sufficient air and then when they were filled, I discovered my regulators would not fit over the valve! New tanks were soon found and swapped and we were off on our way to the first dive. This was on the wreck of HMNZS *Moa*. The *Moa* was a New Zealand frigate/minesweeper that was sunk by Japanese aircraft on 7 April 1943. Today it lies at just over 40 metres so it was a good first dive. Visibility was not too bad till a silt monster hit the deck. It was not too good after that. The wreck has a nice large prop, depth charge racks and depth charges at the stern and a large bow gun.

The pattern for a day's diving here was back to the dive shop. We only unloaded the gear that needed to be refilled. A quick shower and wash of wetsuits and we were back to the motel to relax for four or five hours. There would be a couple of other people diving with us over the coming week, but mostly it was just the six of us. Today we went for a short walk and discovered that there is an ATM up the road where we can get some cash. We also went to a local shop to purchase some chips and peanuts etc for beer o'clock.

Our second dive was at 2:30 pm, the time it was for most days.

This time we headed off to do the Kanawishi H6K Mavis flying boat.

This is one of about 13 or so sunk by the Americans on the first day of the Guadalcanal campaign on 7 August 1942. These are located about 2 kilometres away off Tanambogo Island. The one we dived on is just over 30 metres deep. It is almost fully intact, with three of the four engines visible. It was a good second dive and you can really explore it fully.



After the dive we washed all our gear and after a shower, it was beer o'clock. A nice cold SolBrew was just the thing to wind down as we wrote up log books and down loaded cameras. Again, an early night (most nights we were in bed by 8:30 pm).



19 September - Today we are diving the USS *Kanawha*. This is a huge 14,500 ton 137 metre long oil tanker. It was also sunk on 7 April 1943 by Japanese aircraft. It is fully intact except for damage to the bridge some salvage work on the props and engine room. For this dive we are doing the bow. Jessica, Kelly and I dropped over the front and looked at the damage it suffered when she hit the bottom.

We also looked at the AA guns, dropped into the forecastle and went to the bridge for a quick look. Maximum depth was about 50 metres and we probably averaged a little under 43 metres.

A bottom time of 21 minutes meant about 26 minutes ascent and decompression.



The afternoon dive was on the bow of the USS *Minneapolis*. This is located up the bay a bit next to what were obviously WWII ship repair yards.

The bow was cut off the ship and left here after it was badly damaged and a new false bow welded on.

As well as the bow, there is a lot of junk, included a landing barge, small boats, huge steel buoys and 44 gallon drums.

A good shallower dive. Both these dives were less than 1.25 kilometres from the dive shop.

20 September – The first dive today is again the USS *Kanawha*. We are diving the stern which is a little deeper overall. After heading off in the wrong direction initially, we head back to the stern and then drop over and look at the prop shafts and rudder before ascending to the deck. Here there are three large guns as well as two AA guns. After Kelly and Jessica ascend, Nick, Phil and I drop into the engine room and go out through the salvage hole on the port side. We reach 55 metres on this dive, averaging almost 50 metres. For a bottom time of 19 minutes it took 35 minutes to clear deco. A really great dive. I should add that for all the dives we spent considerably longer decompressing than our computers indicated. It is a long way to the nearest chamber in Townsville!

The second dive today is Twin Tunnels. This is a site with two shafts that drop from the top of the reef in about 15 metres to about 40 metres where they exit onto the side of the reef. The wind is really up this afternoon and it is a rough trip out to this site. Not only that, there is a strong current. As I swim to the mooring, I realise that I am not really going to make it as the extra drag from the twins and camera is slowing me down. I decide to drop to the edge of the reef which I can see below me. Once here I can much more easily make my way to the bottom of the mooring. I then notice that Kelly is not ahead of me as I had thought, but coming down with only one fin on her foot and the other in her hand. It appears I am in trouble! Turns out her fin strap came off and she decided to go down with only one rather than attempt to fix and drift away.

We head down the shafts and exit out the side. We decide to go back to the top and just hang around the mooring as it is way too strong a current to go to the far edge as planned. Not a great dive as it turns out.

21 September – The plan is to dive the USS *Aaron Ward* this morning. Neil has gone back to Honiara last night and will not be back till later in the morning so one of the other divers, Geoffrey from Victoria, is running the boat.

He runs his own charter boat at Portsea and comes up every year and stays for a period, helping out. However, upon arriving at the site we cannot find the mooring. It appears that the current has pulled it down. We go back to the USS *Kanawha* for a third dive.

We again dive the bow. This time we enter one of the front hatches. This has some huge rope reels and coils of rope. We also look at the bridge in more detail as well as a little of the amidships area.



In the afternoon Neil decides to dive the *Aaron Ward*. However, Kelly and I decide that we do not want to do a reverse profile (60+ metres after 55 metres) and two dives over 55 metres in the one day. The rest to the *Aaron Ward* while Kelly and I do a shore dive in front of the dive shop. Some nice fish, a bit of junk and a relaxing dive. Highlight was a small school of razor fish which swim vertically with their heads down.



22 September – An early 7 am start to minimise the current on the *Aaron Ward*. We find the mooring today and it is not too bad when we enter the water. The sight of a complete four gun destroyer is a fantastically thrilling moment as you near the bottom. Visibility over the coming days is between 25 and 30 metres. This dive was to the amidships area. Here there are the torpedo launcher, funnels (one collapsed) and the two rear guns, two Bofor guns and more. You do not get much time on the bottom. The plan was 14 minutes but on each of our dives, Kelly and I did about 15.5 minutes. With a maximum depth ranging from between 62 and 70 metres, you have a bit of decompression to do. I tended to clear about 58 minutes whereas Kelly's computer was about 66 minutes.

We also used a 50% oxygen mix while on deco as a safety margin.

There was a bit of a current after the dive and once we were all on the deco bars, we were released to drift along.

Our second dive today was another shore dive out the front. This time Peter came with us. There was a lot more junk along here. Again, interesting.

23 September – Once again a 7 am start and off to the *Aaron Ward*. Kelly and I do the bow. Two more huge guns, some AA guns and the collapsed bridge are the highlights. Today we are tied up to Brain Bailey's yacht. Brian was the first to dive the wreck and he helped find it. After the dive we have a chat to him and when we are back in Honiara, we spend a couple of hours one night listening to his tales of salvage and discovery. More about this later.



In the afternoon we did a second dive on the HMNZS *Moa*. We did a similar dive to the first one, but this time we spent time looking at specific things like the depth charge racks and the bow. Kelly and Jessica decide to do a Cher and I get a photo of them on the bow gun barrel.

24 September – Again, 7 am so it must be the USS *Aaron Ward*. This dive Kelly and I decide to go to the stern. As soon as we see the wreck we drop towards the rear funnel and go past the guns to the props. I take a couple of photos here, not the best

but at 71 metres, what do you expect! I forget to take a photo of the stern itself (must have been really narked) but I remember to take shots of the depth charge racks and the chairs that are visible where the hull has now split open. We head back to the mooring via the port side and the guns and torpedo tubes. A really great and exciting dive.

In the afternoon we do the *Kanawha* again. I figure that as we have about six hours surface interval it is not too bad to do two dives over 50 metres. This time we are diving the stern. We go forward to the amidships guns and then head back to the stern to have a look at the name of the ship. We had forgotten to look for this on our first dive here. The name is in raised letters and spells K A A W H A. The letter N has fallen off and is presumably on the bottom somewhere. We also enter the engine room and have another quick look.

Today is Nick's birthday and Kelly has arranged for a cake to be backed for after dinner. Dinner tonight is the one nice dinner that was almost worth the cost. The food was cooked in a more traditional method and was quite tasty. After dinner, the bar and kitchen staff bring out the cake and sing Happy Birthday to Nick. Some music is put on and the staff take turns in dancing with Nick. Then one staff member in particular seems taken with Nick as she dances with him the most. This is the latest night of the trip, we even make it to 10 pm!



25 September – Our last dive here is on the USS *Aaron Ward* again. Kelly and I decide to again dive the bow. We specifically want to look in a hatch on the deck at the bow where there are some beds. I also swim along the port side and take photos from the bow to the rear funnel. I later stitch the photos together to make a panorama (see my web site).

A really good dive to finish our Tulagi section of the trip.

We are not leaving till 3 pm so we have a bit of time to dry our gear. We head off just after 3 pm after saying goodbye to Peter who has two more days here. It is obvious we will have a rough trip back as the wind is really up. Within five minutes we are all totally drenched. The trip takes over 90 minutes compared to the normal 70 minutes. When we get to the yacht club we drag all our bags ashore and decide we need some beers to brighten us up. After this we are driven by Neil to the King Solomon Hotel. This is centrally located and not too bad a hotel, although when we go to book it they appear totally unorganised and do not seem to have a record of our booking (as we notice for most guests). Then, when we try to go up to our rooms, the inclinorator that carries us and our bags refuses to come down to the lobby. After a lot of attention by staff, it finally works. A hot shower is a welcome change after the wet crossing.

We decide to go back to the yacht club for dinner. Here we have our best meals of the trip, nice pasta and pizza dishes as well as fish and chips. We have a few beers and speak to people off Brian Bailey's yacht. We make plans to meet up with him tomorrow night.

Since booking in, I have been trying to contact the dive operator. However, all I get on his mobile is an engaged signal and his shop has an out of order message. This is a worry.

26 September – Since 7 am I have been trying to ring the dive operator with the same result as last night. I have still heard nothing from him by 8:15 am so I decide to ring Jerry Witkowski, owner of Dive Adventures back in Sydney. He does not answer his mobile but rings me back a minute later.

He tries to contact the operator and has the same problem I have. He then contacts another operator and arranges for him to take over our diving. It turns out we cannot dive with him today as he does not have enough tanks available as most are already out being used. We make arrangements to dive Sunday and Monday. This is okay as it gives us a day off. We do some sightseeing around town, have morning tea at a great place called Lime Lounge and catch a bus out to the dive operator. This also happens to be where the original dive operator is based. There is someone there but I cannot be bothered going in to see them as I know I will only get angry. We speak to the owner of the shop we are now diving with and firm up the arrangements.

Kelly and I spend the rest of the day around the pool and having lunch. That night we head back to the yacht club. Here we end up speaking to Brian for about two hours. What a fascinating person! He told me so much information so that I could update my web site about the wrecks in the Solomons. He really needs to write all his memories down as it would make a great read. We finally have dinner and it is as good as last night.

27 September – We have a late start at 9:30 and are soon at the site of *Hirokawa Maru*, better known as Bonegi 1. This is a Japanese transport that beached itself in November 1942 so that it could land supplies on Guadalcanal for their troops. Today it is totally underwater, with the bow broken up. However, from near the engine to the stern it is fairly well intact. We go down to the propeller shaft at 52 metres. The prop was removed by Brian in 1968. The rear holds are mostly empty but there are some things to see. It is quite an interesting dive. The shallows have brilliant fish and coral life. This is as good a dive as I remember from when I dived it back in 1992 (with current members Les Caterson, Robyn Hewitt and John Fowden). Visibility was about 20 metres.

The second dive is *Kinugawa Maru*, better known as Bonegi 2. This is only 880 metres away. This is less intact and shallower but still a nice dive. The wreck lies at 45 degrees on port side at the stern but almost upright shallower. In the shallows the engine sticks out of the water. The stern deck is very broken up and the prop is also missing. The visibility on this dive was not great, probably 7 to 10 metres.

We again head to the yacht club for drinks. Peter has arrived over from Tulagi so we have a beer with him and Neil (and Neil's wife Yolandi). We decide to have dinner at a nearby Chinese and Peter later joins us. This was a bit of a hit and miss meal. The two beef dishes and fried rice were good, the chicken and prawn average but the pork was crap. It had a fishlike taste! At least it was cheap.

28 September – Our last day of diving. We had tried to talk Peter into coming diving but he has decided he has had enough after 44 dives. We are off a little earlier today and this time we head to Ruinu Beach to dive the *Kyusyu Maru*. This is another very nice wreck. It extends down to about 45 metres and has twin prop shafts. Again, both props have been salvaged. There is quite a lot to see in the rear compartments and holds and you can still see the engines. Like the other dives, the fishlife is prolific and the coral and gorgonians fantastic. Our second dive is on the *Hirokawa Maru* again. This time we only go to just over 30 metres into the upper parts of the rear holds.

For our last night, we head to the yacht club again. It really is a relaxing place to have a drink and combined with cheap and good food, the right place to spend our evenings.

29 September – Our last day.

After packing up and putting our bags in Peter's room, we go for a walk and have morning tea in our favourite haunt, the Lime Lounge.

This must be a gold mine; it is packed every time we go there with Australian and New Zealand Police and Army as well as expatriates.

At noon Neil collects us and transfers us to the airport. We book in and a few minutes late, we leave for Brisbane. Jessica has a lot of wooden artefacts to get checked so we leave her behind as we head over to the domestic terminal.

As it turns out, our plane is late so she makes it (after again getting the third degree by security). Kelly and I get a lift home from Margaret Goodman.

This was a really good diving holiday, with the best wreck diving you will do outside Chuuk Lagoon. Well worth doing.

- Another Tassie Trip Highlight by Peter Trayhurn -

Michael, Kelly, Phil G, Ray, Cherie and I did a couple of days double dives and a single night dive in chilly and windy Bicheno. Les and Ellie visited. Les dived with us one day in his shortie I think.



A picture is worth a thousand words so that it for the story except to say I loved Diving Bicheno and cannot wait to go back. Bruce the operator invited me out on a fishing trawler that catches salmon.

Apparently when the nets are full this time of year Orca's come and buzz the fishing nets.

He had a couple of other video/photographer enthusiast to come along and being a little out of the ordinary really appealed to my mild sense of adventure.

However Tassy being Tassie the seas came up and the adventure was postponed. I still have the occasional dream of photographing orcas in big schools of salmon in Tassie's cool clear blue waters.



My only worry that they had only 3 shark shields and I got the short straw. Needless to say I had planned to swim very very close to Bruce.

We lost one days diving due to weather and found an oyster lease that sold sumptuous oysters by the bag, I got about 8 dozen and sold a few at cost to my friends.

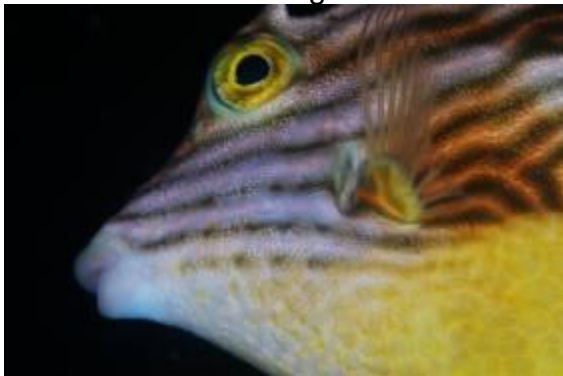
The only negative of Bicheno was the oyster tragedy.

Where a couple of dozen disappeared from the fridge apparently accidentally thrown out. Believing in the integrity of my diving buddies I suspect it was a local burglar.

But it's strange he left thousands of dollars of camera gear and only took my oysters. A reward was offered but proved fruitless.

Some of my favourite photos capturing our Bicheno adventure are on www.petertrayhurn.com have a look at the Tassie Gallery and click on a couple of pictures and give the keywords a try. Ray and I catered for one night's dinner and as usual we blew the budget and had a roast dinner that never seemed to end.

If fact we were still enjoying the leftovers in Eagle Hawke for lunch many days later. The food, scenery and diving in tassie are spectacular. Besides the great diving and Bruce's peculiar sense of humour my favourite memory was haggling for 4 big breakfasts for \$50 with a couple of cappuccinos each morning. As I paid up front I would just walk in and the stunning waitress would give me a big smile and say " I know what you want!" The haggling seemed to bother Phil, but I think he was jealous of the amazing service I was receiving.



Dive Trip on Mermaid II from Bali – Komodo. 10-17 October 2009

By Carol Martin

I had said a fond farewell to family and friends in Scotland and was soon on my way to meet Johnnie in Nusa Dua, Bali via a few days spent sight-seeing in Hong Kong. John had travelled up from Melbourne a few days before hand and sure enough when I got there on the Friday afternoon, he was poolside with a cold beer. Caught up with all the gossip then headed out for first night in Bali - think I was still a bit jet lagged as I promptly fell asleep at the dinner table and no I wasn't drinking.....

We were met by the dive team the next day and transferred to the boat (Mermaid II) which was going to be home for the next 7 day. We left Bali that day and started to steam our way overnight through the island groups on our way to Komodo.

The boat, crew and facilities were superb. There were 8 twin deluxe cabins all with en-suite on the main deck and one economy downstairs – we went deluxe. Dive deck, party/chill out deck with shade, sundeck out the front for the lizards, TV/video room and of course dining room where we had the best meals from our Thai chef. Not to mention the espresso machine (yes Pete, an espresso machine) which was well utilised. We steamed overnight through flat seas and all ready to start our diving the next day. Rather than put everyone in together, they divided us into 4 groups of either 4 or 5 people depending on either who you were with or for our group, experienced/number of dives done. There were 17 divers (meant to be 18) in total. So the diving system worked out well. It was a mixed bunch of divers, group of 10 from Spain, 3 from Poland, 1 Russian, 2 of us Aussies and one guy from Scotland. There were meant to be 2 Scots but one of them only had 5 months left on his passport so they wouldn't let him out of Singapore, you need 6 months minimum – lesson to us all. He missed the whole trip and had travelled all that way from Aberdeen to have to turn back around again.

All diving was done from the 2 zodiacs and who went in first was shared so the same group wasn't always getting to the site first. 60 minute cap on the diving as we were travelling so much and the good thing is that most of the dives were quite shallow. I didn't go deeper than 28 metres the whole trip. So, what can I say about the diving?

Day 1: Dives 1 & 2 Angel & Pangang Reef

This was our "introduction/check out" dives. Easy entry from the zodiacs to the dive site and down to the reef. Good viz for both dives and warm – about 28 degrees. All the usual tropical's in the shallows and large schools of fusiliers swimming about being followed closely by some big trevally. Blue and yellow ribbon eels, large coral banded sea snake which took to Johns fins, nudibranch city and I saw my first ever orang-utan crab amongst the soft coral and yes it looks just like one. Brilliant first few dives.

Dives 3 & 4 (night). Satonga Island & Reef

This was a lagoon dive so viz was a bit less but had the most wonderful array of critters. Orange frog fish, leafys, every kind of nudibranch, critters that I have never heard of or seen before... Dive 4 was the night dive which would rank up there as one of the best I have done. Juvenile bat fish, crinoids everywhere walking about and the biggest display of basket stars with lots of small critters in them. Had to be quick as they start to close up when you put your torch on them. White & black tip reef sharks on the prowl and lots of crabs running from the octopus. Good thing is that the fish here haven't yet learnt how to use the diver's torches for hunting. Meant I could do my night dive without being followed by a pack of trevally and sea bass grabbing anything that I looked at! Great first day of diving.

Day 2: Sangeng Volcanic Island

3 dives on this island, first at the lighthouse which was a muck dive on the black volcanic sand. Lots of black coral trees, sea pens and anemones on the sand with yet more frogfish, common and striped pipefish, turtles, loads of nudibranchs and leafy scorpion fish. Next 2 dives were on the same island but on the other side where the hot rocks are (it's an active volcano). Quite strange to see the bubbles coming up through the sand which is very warm to touch. Here we saw nudis' which are endemic to this area and also ornate pipefish. Amazing amount of coral trees of every colour and to top it off, a pygmy sea horse and its baby! They reckon it's only about 2 weeks old and tiny – magnifying glasses were out for that one. More orang-utan crabs, ghost pipefish and white tips.

Moved to Gili Banta Bay for our night dive – and they did put you in at night, no dusk dives. Cat sharks, marble rays and the 2 biggest moray eels I have ever seen. Girth on them was huge. Looked like that one from the movie "The Deep" and yes I'm sure you all remember Jacqueline Bissett. Brown ghost pipefish, lots of squid, cuttlefish and a tiny wee octopus. Yet more basket stars.

Day 3. Lau Lavriti Island: Crystal Rock.

Dive 1. Time for the big stuff. Negative entry from the zodiacs as starting to dive with the currents. Not too much current this time but still lots of big stuff around, schools of jack, good few tuna and lots of trevally. We saw 4 blue fin trevally rounding up a moray eel that just wouldn't stay in its hiding space but kept coming out and moving in the open (protecting young??) but not sure what the outcome was as we had to go. Dolphins on the surface – brilliant.

Dive 2 & 3 Tako Taka Castle Rock Dive

1st dive saw very little current so not many fish at the point, few trevally, white tips and sweetlips but what a difference a few hours and some current makes! 2nd dive saw us in a strong current which we had to go against for a short distance to get to the point. Hooked on with the trusty reef hooks and watched the show. Fish city with schools of fish zooming about with the usual sharks cruising in the background. Massive school of fusiliers which would come whooshing past you followed closely by trevally and tuna on the chase. Came right amongst us and didn't seem fazed by us at all. Noise was amazing, sounded like a train going past you. As we were only at 20 metres we got to stay for quite a while before slowly making our way up. The top of the rock is in 5 metres and this was the safety stop so you could still watch the show below.

Night dive at Pink Beach on Komodo Island

Finally got to Komodo Island. 4th dive of the day and feeling a bit tired but not missing any of these dives. No current so easy diving. Huge coral trees with good variety of colour, small striped pipefish, lots of small yellow sea cucumbers which look like and are the same size as a nudibranch, fire urchins with critters on them. Lovely wall of soft corals and crinoids. Yet another great dive.

Day 4 Komodo Island

Had early breakfast then went onto Komodo Island National Park to see the dragons. They are fearsome creatures and we had to have the big briefing by the island guides on the dos and don'ts. We had 2 guides who carried very large forked sticks with them, one at the front and the other at the back of the group making sure we kept together – one of the don'ts was not to go off by yourself. Part of the walk was named after a German tourist who did just that and they

never found him again...only his specs. Also a local child had been killed by one in the village about a year ago so they take their safety seriously. Of course we didn't see one on the walk but when we got back to the visitors centre there was 2 of them under the buildings and they are huge! The guides don't let you get too close to the dragons especially as one had attacked a ranger recently and he proudly showed us his battle scars. The dragons are venomous as well as carrying a mouthful of bacteria so the bite doesn't kill you but the venom/infection does if not treated. After a few hours on land we went back to the safety of the sea and diving

Dives 1 & 2 Cannibal Rock Komodo Island

Different theories as to why it's called this. Some say it's because of the amount of nudibranchs who are cannibals; some say it's because of the dragons who are also cannibals. So take your pick. Pinnacle dive which we mostly kept to the one side of because of the current. Lots and lots of nudis', 2 small lacy scorpion fish, one green and the other a lovely shade of pink. Mantis shrimp – 2 different types, lionfish including pygmy lionfish and juveniles. Yet more pygmy seahorses. Lots of schooling fish near the surface circling us watched closely by an even bigger school of barracuda. Great dive. We were moored quite close to shore and in the surface interval we had 4 dragons on the beach, 2 of them males and fighting – probably over some female.... Monkeys and deer also on the beach watching the show.

Dive 3. Night Dive at Torpedo Alley

Shallow muck dive named after the number of Torpedo (electric) rays that are there. Yet another excellent night dive and this time saw a rare zebra crab within the fire urchin and another nudibranch that is endemic to this part of the island only. Lots of tiny crabs, sea spiders and hairy shrimp. This was to be our last night dive of the trip so we made the most of it and went a bit over time but they weren't that bothered as we only had a short distance to move to for the night.

Day 5 South Komodo Island Manta Alley (3 dives)

Manta Alley as the name suggests is a large cleaning station (3 distinct stations) for these gorgeous creatures. 2 large mantas were directly below us as soon as we entered the water and almost landed on top of them. Big currents and when we got to the first station, we had about 20 Mantas swimming about us all in the shallows so the reef hook got well used once again. They were coming so close and swimming over the top of us you could almost touch them. We were only meant to do one dive at this spot and then move on south but once we got back on board, everyone including the guides all decided to stay for the next 2 dives as it was just excellent - could it get better??? Well yes it did. 2nd dive very similar to the first but the current was even stronger for the third and last dive there. We used our hooks again but this time with no air in the BC and had to keep low to the ground and basically hang on for dear life.

All the time watching the mantas lining up in the current making it look so easy. I was watching the largest manta at the front of the queue when it started to come across towards me. It ended up hovering less than a metre above me, eyeballing me and probably trying to work out what I was (must admit I was probably looking very strange holding on with one hand and keeping my mask in place with the other while gritting my teeth firmly so I didn't lose my regs!!) It moved off and the next one in line took its place and did the exact same thing, came over and gave me the once over. We were all lined up in row, just like the mantas and only in about 10 metres so nice long dive and believe me we weren't moving anywhere or letting go.

Finally had to though and we went for very quick journey to the end of the reef where the current spat us out thankfully not downwards... They unfortunately have them here but this time it just took us round the corner and as if by magic just stopped.

We were all wired like you wouldn't believe by the end of the dive and you can imagine what the noise was like as 17 excited divers and 4 guides all tried to say what it was like - just wonderful...

Travelled overnight making our way back to Bali and our last day of diving

Day 6 Dive 1 Sumbana Island

Sumbana Surprise

Called surprise reef as they often get sun fish and occasional Whale shark coming though. Not this time though, now wouldn't that have been just perfect?

This was muck diving at its best. Black volcanic sand, grass sea beds and a small reef. We all just scattered as soon as we got to the site as it was now a challenge to see who could find what. So many ornate pipefish, white, brown and black amongst the crinoids and a few of them were pregnant, you could see their bellies gyrating and wriggling. Small yellow seahorse, wasp fish, green robust pipefish, boxer, clear and glass shrimp. Yet more nudibranchs and the smallest little crabs at the end tips of the sea grass. Thought at first they were just end bits of fluff/weed until you looked closely. Definitely need lenses put in my mask.....

Dive 2 Angel Reef

Last and final dive and we had returned to where we started. Water was clear and the same fusiliers and trevally were having their ongoing game of hide and seek – with not very nice consequences for the fusiliers. Spent time just pottering about and enjoying the final dive

and then finally one thing that had eluded us the last time we dived this site. A pygmy sea horse called "*Denise's pygmy*" which is even tinier than the usual one. Apparently there had been about 4 on the fan last week but we could only see the one, and that was hard enough.

So last dive and wonderful way to end the diving and the trip.

Spent the rest of that day relaxing, watching videos of the trip and making our way overnight travelling back to port. Had a massage from the Thai masseur on board (did I mention her??) and lovely final dinner – the food was first class with Thai and western food put on for each meal. We passed by the active volcano on Sangeang island and because it was night you could see the lava and fireworks display from the top. Quite magical.

Arrived back in Sanur the next morning, had breakfast on board then said our farewells to everyone. Some people were going straight to the airport; John and I were off to Seminyak where we were staying in a villa with another friend for a few days R&R after all the hard work of diving. Lots of spas, beauticians and pool side cocktails. Dragged ourselves out in the evenings for some of the best food I have ever had – Bali has got itself some posh nosh establishments. And the boys went shopping!!

So, brilliant dive trip - 20 dives in all and I would say that taking everything into consideration, the boat, crew, weather, seas, viz, macro life, variety of weird things and the experience with the mantas..... It is the best dive trip I have ever done (so far). Big statement to make but it really was quite magical.

The manager Kay (north shore girl) who I had done all the booking through and met at the beginning and end of the trip has said she will give us a club discount for any future trips. I would also consider combining a 5 day stay at Tulamben, famous for its shore and muck diving following this trip with maybe a few days R&R (at a spa resort) in between to off gas a bit. They can also organise this for us with same discount. I will get all the details and present the cost/package when available. Bali itself is as cheap as ever for eating out etc.

Now it's back to reality for me after having the most amazing 6 months off and I still can't believe its drawing to an end. Achieved lots of personal goals with seeing the standing statues on Easter Island, doing the 4 day Inca Trek and seeing Machu Pichu at dawn, travelled up the Amazon, stayed at a jungle lodge with howler monkeys screaming through the night and chased by wild pigs during the day. Visited and stayed at the salt flats of Bolivia, was amazed by the Iguazu falls and danced in the streets of Rio (also went on a motorbike ride through a Favela in Rio but that's another story). Sailed on the Star ferry from Kowloon over to Hong Kong Island visiting the peak by cable car and finally dived the red sea and got up close and personal with some big sharks. And of course got to spend some invaluable time with my family and friends back in Scotland.

Having said all that, it is lovely to be back home in Australia and yes, I am looking forward to seeing you all again and having my first dive no doubt somewhere off/in the Port Hacking.

Sorry don't have any photos to accompany this article but I do have a video of the trip which I will bring along to a dive meeting for those interested in having a look.

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- The Great Stockton Beach Dune Weekend - 24 / 25th October,09 - Pictures by Donna Cassidy -

Well it was planned ahead for our normal dive and sand, but we as a group decided against the dive part as tides were not suitable.

We had four trusty vehicles with 11 hardy souls and one puppy.

Present were Heinz, Mark, Michael, Kelly, Vito, Craig, Ron, Donna, Eda, Andrew, Sonya and Ray.



*** - Some of the mob - ***

It was arranged to meet for coffee next to the Swansea Bridge then proceed to the beach.

We hit the sand just before lunch which worked well as usual and we had lunch at the wreck of the Signa.

Then some had the thought to see how far south we could go.

This we did then we saw the signs saying we really shouldn't be in that area.

Oops. All was good.

We then did ups and downs and made our way about another 15 klms north to locate our spot in the dunes for our campsite.

The weather was beautiful with a bit of wind and clear skies. The sand seemed softer than previously encountered and we only rarely had any trouble.

No one got bogged bad enough to get pulled out so we didn't try hard enough.



One again it was proven how we are a club that enjoys its tucker as for tea out came the camp ovens and in go lovely beef, chicken and the usual Garlic prawns thanks Donna.



And it would be remiss of me not to give a special notice to the seafood mix-up by Mark.

Just ask Eda, it was better than soup. We made it easy with chicken on stick onto bread rolls.

Added to this was a fantastic damper or two cooked to perfection.

For a small fire place we all did really good and the coals were again well used as we sat around the campfire and used them as bum warmers under our chairs.

They really worked good at keeping legs and other bits warm. Thankfully Heinz wasn't using them when his chair decided not to co operate any more and descended with fatigue to sand level. Just as a few of us were turning in, out came the guitar and Ron etc sang along for a couple of hours.

When Sunday dawned it was a great day, weather wise again. Breakfast gone, some went down to the waters edge, then we packed up and cleaned up etc. We left the sand looking like we hadn't been there.



We went into the hills again and had a small lunch then found our way to the south exit and off home. Just as we were leaving the sand it started to spit.

Then on the way home the rain was torrential.

It's all in the timing and we had it spot on.

Thanks to all those who attended for getting in and helping others and ensuring everyone had a great weekend.

Thanks to Donna for the pictures.

By Ray Moulang.

Site to have a look at:..

***** <http://www.pixcetera.com.au/pixceterau/maldives-underwater-cabinet/69366> *****



Imperial Hitchhiker by Brian Byrnes.

Recent Club Happenings

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 take 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.