



St George Scuba Club Newsletter

Anniversary Dinner

20 February 2016

Photos by Ian Roffey



The club anniversary dinner this year was held at Rocksalt Italian Bar and Restaurant in Jannali. There were 24 members in attendance and fine dining was had by all. The club as usual sponsored a number of bottles of wine, both red and white.

Thanks go to Ian Roffey for organising.



The President Brought a Banana

(AKA the great Katz-size adventure!)

6 March 2016

By Keith Williams, Bill Rowland and Natasha Naude

Here's a tale of the sea, told in three parts. The skipper, it appears, went down with the vessel, and shall say no more on the matter. *Disclaimer:* none of these versions of events are to be used as evidence in any pending insurance claims!

Part 1: Keith Williams

On Sunday 6 March 2016, myself and a few dive buddies had the unfortunate experience of meeting the volunteers of Westpac Helicopter rescue.

We were out for a boat dive on Ken's boat Katz. Me and Bill Rowland went in first, and on our return to the surface Ken and Nat went in. While they were in we noticed a fair bit of water in the bilge, so we pumped it out. On the return of Ken and Nat, they got on board and started to de-kit. I helped Nat with her gear and then turned on the power and the bilge again then went to raise the steps and place the splash board in place, it was at this point I noticed we were taking on water over the rear. As I said, "we need weight forward", we were hit by three waves in quick succession. This tipped the weight issues against us and the boat started to roll. Nat had gone forward on my warning but now this had placed her within the cabin area, somewhere you don't want to be while capsizing! Even though it happened so quickly it was in slow motion to us!! On hitting the water, we all did the head count, with Nat coming up last due to her being partly in the cabin area. Relief shown by all!!

Now the issue of getting rescued. I climbed onto the bow area of the upturned boat and waved at a distant boat. Luck being on our side, the boat came quite quickly. They were fishing and recovered their gear and moved in close, then (to my shock!) got their phones out and took photos!! (At least one had called rescue). I heard them shout rescue will be here in three min and sure enough we had a heli on site within 10min of us going into the water. Nat was winched first, followed by Ken, while myself and Bill waited till the second run but did some tidying of the boat area as bits of kit and ropes were starting to come loose and float off.

On the second helicopter run, Bill went first and I went last after getting a jet ski to pick up some of our gear and patrol for any more. A police boat arrived just before I got winched and they started to fish gear out of the water!

We later heard the boat had gone down with all our main gear still inside.

I have learnt a number of things from this:

- As we all know, when shit happens, it happens fast. It might appear to be in slow motion but in reality it's fast.
- When you think the year couldn't get any worse it does!!
- The systems the rescue teams have in place are second to none! Less than 20min from hitting

the water to having us winched and clear. Two ambos waiting as we landed and then the police to take us to where our cars were parked. Fantastic.

- Last but not least, we are all members of a social dive club, this includes retired members that can dive Mon through Fri. Salvage dives were arranged the next day and again the following weekend by members to recover equipment. Despite having my fingers crossed, the boat wasn't found.

Australia has the attitude of mate-ship, I see this on a daily basis in the army with my brotherhood. I am proud to say it rolls over to the civilian community as well. Thanks to everyone involved. Words are never enough. The main thing is, we all got out safely and live to dive another day, if we have gear!! Safe diving.

Part 2: Bill Rowland

Someone made the comment that it happened instantly in slow motion. I think that captures it perfectly. There was no time for a Mayday call, or even to grab any safety gear. All of us were in the water and all 4 did a headcount. Thank God Tash made it out from the inner reaches of the cabin as well...

We spent a bit of time in the water, hanging onto the hull. A passing boat was flagged who called Marine Rescue. I think Michael helped with translation of the message too.

The sobering thing was that, despite the waves that did us in, the weather really was not bad and we could safely pass the time hanging onto the hull of the upturned, anchored boat. If it was 2m+ seas and howling wind and rain etc etc, then being in the water, with no lifejackets, probably unable to stay attached to the hull could easily have resulted in a less positive ending.

The rescue chopper (apparently out on an exercise already, near Bare Island) came in minutes and swooped down. One fellow was lowered, grabbed Tash, and up she went. The SMB she was holding was abandoned. Straight back down for Ken. His tanks and BCD were also discarded and up he went and the chopper disappeared. That's ok... Keith and I were never the good looking two of the crew...

There was a pair on a Jetski nearby, who were summoned back and they held the SMB and Ken's BCD and tanks. They then went on a search and rescue mission for any other items and collected several, including Ken's sharkskin and the shade cloth for the back deck of Katz. Lose the boat - keep the shade cloth...

The chopper returned and I was whisked up. The rescuer was professional and thorough (even looked at me underwater before we were hauled up to check I wasn't caught in ropes or the like). The downdraft was powerful. Simple clear instructions were given not to reach up as we approached the chopper. I did see the skid approaching above me and wondered how that would work, but they stopped / rotated / lifted / secured / lowered and I was in. Plonked in a chair and buckled in and down he went for Keith. Rinse and repeat... Once we were both on board, there were simple clear questions: are you ok ? (although I grimaced at the thumbs up signal for that.) How many divers? They then told us "1 minute" and back we headed. Once we landed "2 minutes to stop the engine" and out we went.

Everything was redundant. A 2nd chopper arrived (in case the first had problems). The ambulance was called as standard practice (so 2 arrived). It was a well oiled, well trained, thorough machine. God bless them.

To be honest, my initial thought was the chopper rescue was overkill. I guess I was expecting a Marine Rescue/ Water Police boat and we'd swim to that. I asked if it was standard practice to send a chopper for that scenario and was told it was. In fact the last incident they attended in that area had 3 people in the water face down. One was successfully resuscitated. My initial thinking was wrong!

Once we were 'free', the service continued. They organised police transport for us, and connected Ken with the Water Police. They even provided telephone and tea/coffee etc (apologising they'd run out of snacks). We couldn't have encountered a nicer group of folks. A carton of beer was delivered back to their base later that day, amidst cries of 'oh no need you shouldn't have'. Curiously in this modern age, I had no idea what Jasmine's phone number was... I had to phone my folks in Brisbane using the same number they've had since my childhood and pass on the message we were ok.

One hears of this service in the background. It was so reassuring to experience it first hand, and see how well it operates (let alone, pluck us out of the briny). Thanks to the entire rescue team (and to Westpac for sponsoring them).

Part 3: Natasha Naude

I had hoped to embellish this story with photos taken by our rescuers, of us with the chopper and in the paddy wagon, but despite a few emails to Westpac Rescue Chopper, the photos have sadly not been passed on. You'll need to rely on our colourful tale and visualize it all yourself. Or watch the news footage here: <https://youtu.be/rqyt-F27w68>

The conditions were lovely at Big Saigon – a dive site not far from Whale Watch off Kurnell. There was no current or surge, but a rolling swell coming in that evidently increased over the course of our diving. Ken and I dived after seeing Bill and Keith break the surface and spent a leisurely 40 minutes seeing not a great deal apart from nice topography and a few of the regular MCs from the area. An uneventful but pleasant dive. Up to that point!

When we surfaced the swell had risen and the boat was rocking much more significantly than it had been earlier. I got on deck before Ken and Keith helped me out of my gear and tied it in. The back corner of the boat where the ladder is was pointing into the oncoming swell and quite a bit of water was coming over the stern and sloshing forward. The boat rocked wildly from side to side and Bill, Keith and I moved around to redistribute weight and get more balance, but quite a bit of water had come on board. Keith said more weight needed in the front so I moved behind the seats into the canopy/cabin area and the dive tubs were pulled forward out of Ken's way. As he got onto the boat off the ladder a set of three waves in rapid succession rolled over the stern and into the boat, so that it swamped the port side. With the water pushing me backwards into the cabin area and the dive tubs blocking my exit between the seats, and my feet scrabbling in the sloshing water I could get out and onto the higher starboard side of the boat to assist in counter balancing the additional water.

It really did feel like slow motion up until that moment, and then we all realized we had reached the point of no return and she was rolling over. I couldn't move out of the cabin area so looked to my right (I was facing the stern, on the port side) and saw the gap in the canopy frame beside the seat. I dived

through that gap, feeling my hips get a little snagged on the way out and thinking for just a split second that I was stuck, but then I wriggled free and head for the surface. I had to swim away from the boat, as it was capsizing above me and just as I thought I was out of breath I broke the surface. It was such a relief.

When I realized we were all safe my first reaction was just disbelief. I asked Ken whether our second dive for the day was called off. Our second, joint reaction, was “what the F just happened?” My third reaction was annoyance that I had actually baked a bloody cake – something I never do – and now it was sunk.

All safety gear was in the boat. No time to radio or grab EPIRB/emergency locator beacon. Ken still had BCD and regs but no one had fins or masks or snorkels or any of the useful stuff for staying afloat and breathing. I had my surface marker buoy (safety sausage) in my wetsuit pocket – for the first time ever! I usually clip it to my BCD. I manually inflated it and started waving it above my head while Keith was waving his arms from atop the hull. I used the sausage as my flotation device while the others stayed with the boat.

The fisherman who first turned up called Marine Rescue. Michael McFadyen heard the call go through from where he had finished diving the Tugгарah, and says the information the fishos gave was very scant and the Marine Rescue boat went to a different location. Michael called and gave additional information, but Marine Rescue went to another incident (according to an email I received from them), and didn't help us in ours.

While we were waiting for Marine Rescue, a couple of guys on a jet ski came over and helpfully collected some of our gear and offered to take it back to the boat ramp. They and the fishos stayed around while we waited for help, and all offered to take some of us on board, but we were fine bobbing in the water. No one was hurt.

Shortly thereafter the Westpac Rescue Chopper came to the scene and promptly sent a dude down the line to rescue us. They told us they still hadn't received a call from Marine Rescue and had just spotted us while going past on a training exercise. I think we made their morning!! Especially because we were all alive and well. That's always a plus.

Our rescue man came to me first, pulled my safety sausage from my grasp, put a harness around my back and off I went. He was asking if I was hurt, and to be honest I hadn't been hurt until I was rescued. My side and back muscles felt very sore during the lift and have only come right in the last few days. It is quite a big deal on your body to go from completely buoyant to hanging your entire wet body weight on a sling under your shoulder blades! I don't recommend it. The chopper also stayed bloody high up – well above the cliffs at maybe 50-60m or so (certainly seemed that high –check the footage!), so that also was freaky. The technique for swinging your backwards into the chopper so you land lightly on your knees and get pulled in is seamless and easy. Very well done. Ken came up next and we were whisked away to land, then they returned for the other guys.

Two ambulances turned up but the extent of their check up was: you guys OK? Yes. Great – we want to look at the choppers! And off they went. We used the phone at the station and reached various partners, and then were carried back to the boat ramp all four of us in the back of a police paddy wagon,

because we were all in our wetsuits! Very funny experience for 2 ex coppers I tell you. Another type of transportation I seriously don't recommend.

By the time we got back to the boat ramp channel 9 news was already there waiting. The Westpac Rescue dudes were all wearing go pro cameras on their heads and they told us they had a hotline with Channel 9 and asked us if we gave permission for them to give over the footage if they wanted it for a story. We said yes, expecting it not to happen. Slow news day apparently. We were all interviewed and said our piece and the resulting 2 min story aired on Sunday night's news on channels 9 and 7.

Water police were also there with the items recovered from around the boat – including my water logged chocolate cake. Another item found was the EPIRB – which should have gone off when it made contact with the water. However, the carry bag it was in was sealed tightly and as effective as a dry bag, so the beacon itself didn't trigger. Something boat owners might want to be aware of – if your EPIRB is meant to go off when it hits water, make sure it can hit the water if you do!

While waiting for our loved ones to turn up with car keys so we could make it home, either Bill or Keith said "SO, who brought a banana on the boat?". Ummmm, turns out I did! So apparently I am the one responsible for the incident. To make matters worse, before we headed out for our dive, I may have said something to the effect of "What could possibly go wrong"? Well. Now we know.

Postscripts to this tale are that two salvage attempts were tried and many accessories and items were found. My dry box containing phone and keys, my (open) dry bag and wallet, fins, some tanks, my reel and other assorted pieces were retrieved by wonderful club members. Sadly Katz is still unaccounted for, and three sets of tanks/BCD/Regs remain with her.

Bill and I both have home contents insurance with AAMI, list our scuba gear as specified portable goods, and for a mere excess of \$100 we have both already been paid our insurance money. Yay AAMI. I will pick up new replacement gear this Saturday. We have all been interviewed by Club Marine about the incident, and Ken awaits further news about his own insurance claim for Katz and related accessories. Sadly, NRMA have not covered Keith. They suck.

My lessons from this?

1. when things go a bit pear-shaped, move out from under the canopy
2. don't take bananas on boats
3. don't tempt fate by saying careless things like "what could possibly go wrong?"
4. check your insurance policies and remember to keep it up to date when you get new or replace existing dive gear
5. we've got an awesome bunch of people in our Club, who are incredibly generous with their time and belongings. I've received some very generous offers of replacement gear which I have declined due to being compensated by my insurance. But huge thanks goes out all the same.

My heartfelt thoughts to Ken, and Shalene, on the loss of Katz. It's a real shame and I wish I could have done more on the day to turn things around to a better outcome. I am so thankful we all emerged unscathed. It's an adventure I am sure we could all have happily lived without.

I promise never to bring a banana on a boat again, even if they are a perfectly nutritious and convenient snack.

The Search for Katz

12 March 2016

By Bill Rowland

Photos by Ken Ridley and Daryl Brett

On Saturday March 12th a flotilla of 4 dive boats (Kraken, Graffiti, Le Scat, and Yes Dear Too) and one Salvage recovery barge (Munchies Afloat) headed out to Cape Baily to search for Katz. This was the 2nd search and recovery expedition, after Michael organised Le Scat & Graffiti to go out the day after the sinking, which had already recovered some items.

Kraken departed from RMYC and the conditions were beautiful. No wind, calm seas - we were feeling lucky. As we headed out past Salmon Haul Bay the swell picked up a bit, but as we approached the southern end of Cape Baily we headed into some fog / mist which got thicker and thicker and eventually swallowed us. Dave put on his navigation lights as a result, and the crew started looking for the Marie Celeste... The subsequent photos, whilst beautiful, don't fully convey the eerie feeling of being enveloped.



Katz had overturned, whilst at anchor, but it seems the Water Police had cut the anchor when trying to right the boat and or tow her. Apparently, it had not been moved far, if at all, before it started to sink (and current on the day, was minimal). The original dive site (in around 20m depth) seemed like a good place to start the search. Yes Dear Too had moored at the site and the crew had dived from there.



Some time was spent using the 3D and side-scan radar on Kraken of the surrounding area, and several 'possibilities' were identified. The three other boats moored off the dive site, spaced 50-100m apart. Surface conditions were quite sloppy.

Daryl, in his very smartly detailed boat that usually sells Ice Creams on the weekend, cruised around looking for any flotsam. He also answered anyone who

asked for an ice cream (and it seemed that EVERYONE did ask...), that sadly the freezers were turned off today.



From Kraken, Dave, Bill & Jasmine headed in first. There was no current, but visibility was very poor : 3 or 4 metres. We spread out to be 3 abreast to cover more territory, and headed North East. A shadow loomed large right in front of us... We couldn't be that lucky could we? As we got close enough to be able to identify it (ie within half a metre...), we saw a boat shaped rock... Damn.

We continued North East, until we got

to about 35m depth and low NDL, and turned around. On the return trip, Jasmine found a tank that had rolled into a hole. We did another quick search in a more easterly direction, but nothing else was found. We must be close... On a day with good visibility, I'm sure it will be found.

Dave carried the tank up to the surface and then Phillip and John Prior jumped in. They recovered the 10 lb lead weight from Katz's drop line. Unfortunately it was not connected to the drop line any more, which would have led us to the vessel.



A hat and the dive flag were also recovered by other divers. As the dive flag was being transferred from one boat to another however, it made a leap for freedom and returned to the depths. Perhaps it knows where Katz is located.

Corey very kindly swam over to our boat and returned my T shirt that had been recovered earlier in the day. As Corey handed over the aged and slightly disheveled item, to its aged and disheveled owner, a

sigh was heard... I could be wrong, but I translated that as Jasmine expressing happiness that another item had been recovered and enthusiasm for me to wear the somewhat daggy shirt as often as I wanted, and especially when I was in her company. I could be wrong though.

With all divers back on the boat, we headed back for Morning Tea and as soon as we left the cliffs of Cape Baily and got to the open waters of Bate Bay, the slop disappeared and it was a calm trip back.

Thanks to all who headed out for the search - much appreciated.

Some of the items recovered on the previous Monday



Torres Strait - MV Kalinda—Part 2

13—21 December 2015

By Peter Flockart

Photos by Peter Flockart

Day four saw us anchored near the site of the RMS Quetta which sank in 1890 with the loss of 133 people.

The Quetta was a steel steamship of 3481 tons. Built Dumbarton, Scotland, 1881.

Dimensions 380 ft. x 40.3ft x 29ft. Owned by the British, India Steam Navigation Company. Captain Alfred Sanders. She was enroute from Brisbane to London when she struck a needle of uncharted coral rising from fifteen fathoms to within a few feet of the surface in Mount Adolphus Channel, Torres Strait, 28 February 1890. One hundred and thirty-three lives lost; 158 survivors but few of these were women and children; two young girls were only female survivors. Fifty-six of the total sixty-five steerage passengers were lost. Within less than five minutes of striking the rock she was gone.



Today the 116m long vessel lies in 25m of water starboard side up and only 11m under the waters that claimed her 125yrs ago. A buoy was placed on the midships davits and a line strung back to the Kalinda. For the next 2 days we would undertake 6 dives on the wreck. All these dives produced wonderful stories, views & excellent footage shot by the divers.

The dives began at by leaving the Kalinda & surface swimming to the buoy with divers either going forward to the bow – where on one dive, some were treated to a small manta ray coming in and playing in the bubbles - to inspect the huge hole that caused the vessel to sink or aft to the largely intact stern. The more intrepid souls swam into the engine room and then via numerous passage ways to the bow. With most of the top decks clear of debris and the vessel lying on its side it is an easy swim along the vertical decks to view the huge corals and fish life that call the Quetta home. There are several large schools of snapper, bream and smaller fish. Amongst these schools live the



large Queensland cod who like the smaller fish are unafraid of divers. It is possible to closely approach these large fish for some interesting photos. Two dives are required to cover the outside of the wreck with many more needed to explore the maze of passages & life that reside within.



Perhaps the best dive of the 2 days was the one we did just on dusk on the second day. All 12 divers plus 2 crew swam over & descended the line to the bottom before splitting up. The last divers who returned to the Kalinda after 70 minutes underwater were greeted by a blood red Torres Strait sunset and the welcoming smell of dinner. This dive had enabled some of us to get up close & personal with the cod, find fantastic nudibranchs and discover areas that still need to be

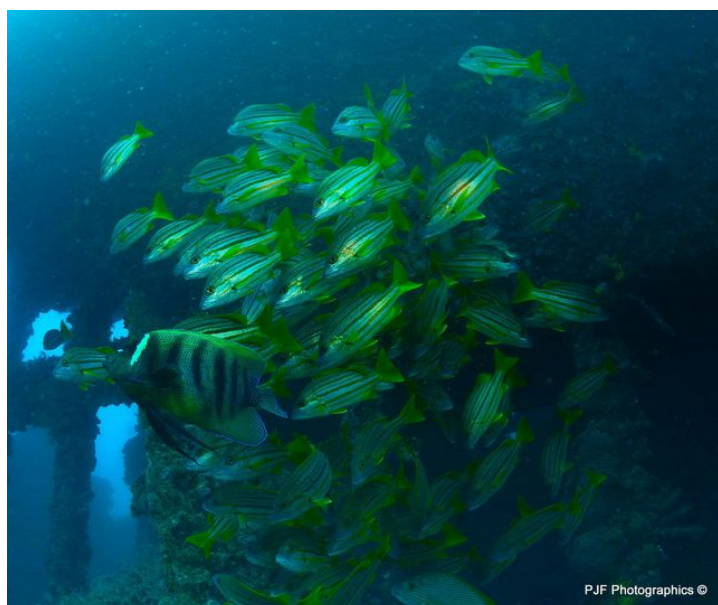
explored on future trips.

Once underway dinner was served and tales told as we steamed south to the wreck of HMAS Warrnambool (6)

This wreck is a Bathurst Class minesweeper that was built at Mort's Dock in Sydney. Surviving the war she joined the 20th Minesweeping Flotilla clearing mines between Townsville & Cape York that had been laid by HMAS Bungaree.

On the afternoon of 13 September 1947 off Cape Grenville she was conducting operations with HMAS Swan. The latter dislodged a mine with her sweep wire which drifted into the path of HMAS Warrnambool striking the ship just under the bow. 45 minutes later she lay on the bottom in 29m of water on her starboard side. There 3 initial casualties & a fourth was to die from injuries several days later.

Today she is covered in a large profusion of coral trees and schools of fish. Visibility is often not the best & when we dived her on 18th December it ranged from between 3 & 10m. Also wobetide the diver



who fins too hard as this leaves a large cloud of silt. It is possible to enter the engine room via the hole blown in her side by salvage divers and look out through the glass panes of the engine room skylight. On swimming forward you can look at the intact 4" deck gun - mechanism & shield. Limited of penetration of the lower deck is possible but not recommended. We did 2 dives here with a very short Surface Interval.

From here we steamed for most of the afternoon and all night to our next site which was a reef known as 13-121 which was a series of



bommies lying in 20m on a flat sandy bottom. This is a site with lots of macro life and invited the diver to have a long easy bottom time.

Our second dive was on Joan's Reef just 3 hrs south. This is a lagoon with a channel marker and a steep wall dropping away to 35m. Water temp in the lagoon was 32 degrees and inhabited by a dugong. The walls were composed of large boulders covered by fans of every size, ascidians, sponges and a variety of flatworms, nudibranchs and large schools of fish.

Later this afternoon we went ashore on Flinders Is to look at the hand paintings in some

caves & to walk on terra firma for a few hours.

After leaving Flinders Is we steamed overnight to Pixie Pinnacle. I had dived here in 1993 on an Undersea Explorer trip. As usual it did not disappoint. The pinnacle is 6m in diameter and rises to within 2m of the surface from the depths. Large schools of fish of every description were seen along with several small reef sharks who came to look. The walls abounded with a myriad of life both small and medium sized. We saw 15 different types of nudibranchs amongst us as well as a few flatworms, the cook of Kalinda saw the most as she had the best eyesight.

There was an afternoon dive on Steve's Bommie which turned out to be a bit of a disappointment with the Bommie being almost bare except for a small patch of Gorgonia. Divers returning to the boat had to swim through a huge rainstorm which continued all night, stopping just as we arrived in Cairns the next morning at 6am.

After breakfast we unloaded the vessel and ordered Taxis to take us & our luggage to the house of one the divers who lives in Cairns. We were able to leave our bags here before going into town for a couple of hours of touristy stuff.

At 12am we hailed a cab for the trip back to collect our bags & then out to the airport for a 4pm flight home. Arriving in Sydney at 8pm to cold and rain.



DIVING IN MARCH

Poem by Maxine Hayden

Ronna (Ron and Donna) ran away and the sun came out to play
The sky was brilliant blue but the water looked like poo.
Le Scat was told to scat but Katz capsized too
Tash swam out the door and the chopper pulled up four.
We dived and searched and looked but Ken's boat wasn't where it hooked.
Ghost Pipefish swam amok, in every crevice they were tucked.
At Jibbon we rafted up and drank coffee from a cup
Some Easter buns were shared, no happy conversation spared.
Lots of diving done in March but the summer never lasts.
If you don't remember the above, where the hell have you been, Love?
If April fool is you, then there's something you can do...
Don a wetsuit and some fins, off the transom jump right in.

Go get wet



Dive Club Calendar

April 2016

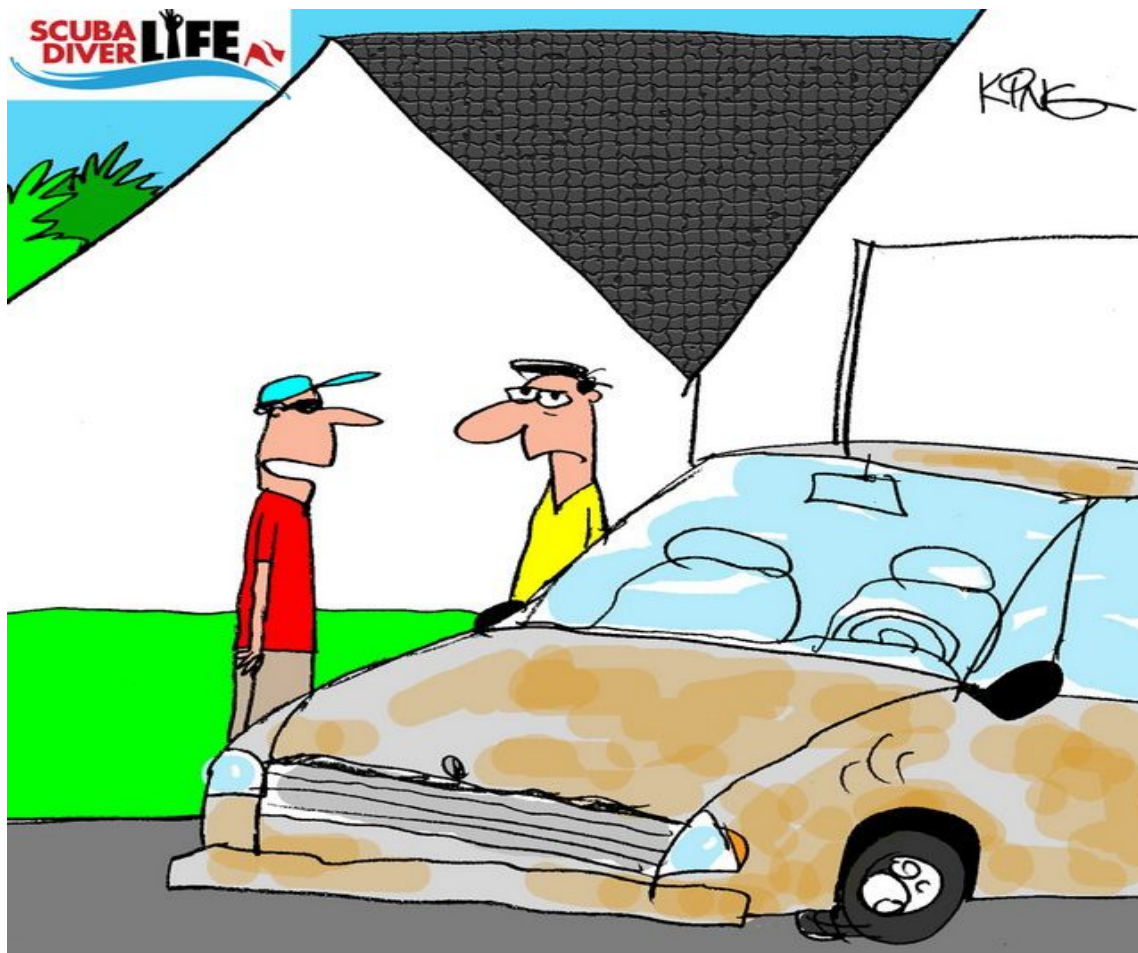
Date	Description	Location	Organiser
2 April	Boat Dive	Pizza Reef	Tricia Henry
3 April	Boat Dive	M&K Reef	Natasha Naude
9 April	Deep Wreck	TBA	Peter Flockart
9 April	Shore Dive	Voodoo	Roger Lee
10 April	Shore Dive	The Leap	Roger Lee
16 April	Boat Dive	Marley Reef	Eda di Camillo
17 April	Boat Dive	Pistol Crack	Bill Rowland
20 April	Club Meeting	Rowers on Cook	Natasha Naude
23 April	Boat Dive	The Balcony	Shelley Brueseker
25 April	Anzac Day Shore Dive & BBQ	Bare Island	Natasha Naude
30 April	Boat Dive	Marys Reef	Phil Short

May 2016

Date	Description	Location	Organiser
1 May	Shore Dive/BBQ Evening	Clifton Gardens	Natasha Naude
7 May	Boat Dive	M&K Reef	Nancy Scoleri
7 May	Restaurant Night	TBA	Ray Moulang
14 May	Boat Dive	Wedding Cake Island	Bill Rowland
15 May	Shore Dive	Shark Point	Caroline Corcoran
18 May	Club Meeting	Rowers on Cook	Natasha Naude
20-22 May	Boys Weekend	Port Stephens	Ray Moulang
28 May	Deep Dive	The Wanderers	Dave Casburn
29 May	Shore Dive	The Leap	Paul Pacey

Thursday Night Dives – every week – email sent out early in the week advising location and time

Regular Shore Dives – advice is via email or facebook



“My dive club is looking for a rusted out wreck to explore. Can we borrow your car?”

Your Committee

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