



# Sea Braggin'

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

January 2008

## Solitary Islands Trip

23<sup>rd</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> September 2007

By Jason Coombs

Back to Dive at Mullaway on what is fast becoming an annual pilgrimage, 12 of us headed up the coast Rox and I, Phil Rose, Mark Ridsdale, Dave Burns, Dave Casburn, Nick Windle, Ray Moulang, Heinz, Mike Scotland and Graham Poole.

On the Saturday Rox and I had driven to Byron Bay and got a couple of dives in on the Sunday. We arrived in Mullaway late on Sunday. Dinner was at the local RSL as members progressively arrived after the long drive from Sydney.

On the first day our boat comprising Rox and I, Dave B, Phil and Ray headed for North Solitary and Anemone Bay. Rox and I had had a classic dive here 2 years earlier so we were looking forward to it.

The visibility was about 15 metres and we saw several large grey nurse sharks, a turtle and a couple of kingfish. We also found an excellent flatworm (nudibranch without horns) and other macro life among the anemones.

Our second dive of the day was at Fish Soup (at North Rock). It is well known for the big jewfish that congregate there. And while we didn't see those there was excellent fish life including black cod, sweetlips, goat fish, tarwhine, pomfrets and kingfish.

Dave Burns was angling for a special mention by the newsletter editor by first knocking the gear bin over and my mask to the bottom of the ocean. As he was still coming up from his dive Phil Rose retrieved it for me.

Dave followed this up by illustrating for the other boat how big the grey nurse shark he had seen was. As he stretched out his arms he gave me a backhander to the face just about knocking me into the water as well.



## New Name and Format!

After a lot of thought I decided to give our no name newsletter a title.

Having gone over all the diving puns I could I came up with Sea Braggin' ("sea dragon" – if you haven't made the link) which is also a reference to the name of the club i.e. St George and the Dragon.

The original St George Scuba club logo (above) which Michael scanned for the website looks more like a kangaroo with a triangle on its tail than a dragon. There have been a number of logos over the years – see the website for pictures.

And why the bubbles – well just because I can.

Happy New Year and thank you to everyone who has, and continue to, contribute to the newsletter.

The next day we dive at North Solitary Is. doing the Elbow Cave and The Boulders. The visibility had improved to 20-25 metres, a good sign for the rest of the week. The life was prolific again and we saw wobbies, grey nurse sharks, turtles etc.

15 metres and rising all the way to the surface. It was mesmerising.



**A couple of flatworms**



**Schooling jewfish at the Mackerel Run**

With the great conditions the day before almost everyone decided to dive a 5th day. Our boat headed for North West where we did the E Gutters and Surgeon reef. At the later we saw a blue devil fish and a numb ray. I hadn't realised either of them got this far north.

With the southerly coming up a bit we headed for South West Solitary on the third day. Our boat did dives at West Mooring and Crazy Maze the latter being a series of gullies and sand patches running between a series of bommies. This dive left a lasting impression with the suns rays and bright white sand were brilliant in the 15-20metre vis.

Day 4 and we headed back to North Solitary with flat conditions and blue water. We weren't disappointed as had 30metre plus vis on both dives. It was so good we dived the same site twice – Mackerel Run. It was just the huge grey nurse sharks, turtles, black cod, kingfish and wobbies but we also found a huge school of jewfish. I've never seen anyone move as fast underwater as Ray as soon as he saw them. I'm sure his stomach was rumbling.

Another highlight of this day was an incredible school of hundreds of silver trevally starting at



**Dave Burns in the fantastic visibility**

With the weather blowing out trip after trip this year it was great to get a consistent run and also some fantastic vis and conditions.

Thanks for organising this trip again Mark. Mark is organising it again in March this year with the possibility of manta rays – see upcoming events.

**Yongala****October 2007****By John Connolly**

I had looked forward to this dive for a long time. Talk in the Diving Fraternity creates a great expectation for this dive and it did not disappoint.

The boat trip out from Alva beach is only 30 minutes and there are mooring buoys above the stern, middle and bow of the wreck. Maritime Parks strictly control access and even a medium strength wind will cause a cancellation of any diving. Anchoring by private boats is strictly forbidden.

We tied up on the stern buoy.

Dive 1 - A fierce current gave good reason to heed the instruction to descend holding on to the mooring rope. Even near the bottom, it was a long tiring swim to the bow and more than half of our air was used reaching it.

The first thing you see after entry into the water is giant Trevally, dozens of them that stay under the dive boat - why, nobody knows - they are not fed - but they always instantly turn up. As you descend in the 25m visibility, very pleasant 25C temperature water, many other fish swim up towards you in an ever changing kaleidoscope of school fish.

The sea life is prolific. Two 1m turtles swam past as we went down. Olive sea snakes were everywhere. At one point, I watched two 2m long sea snakes descending only metres away in front of me when I became aware of another ascending right between my legs ! It passed cm in front of my mask ! Do they bleach as they get bigger and older ? These were more a cream color than olive. They were certainly big - 2m+ and thicker than my arm.

The marine growth on the Yongala is more than on any wreck I have ever seen. It really has the lot and it supports a huge variety of marine life. And passing by were black and white tipped reef sharks, schools of Spanish Mackerel, Skipjack Tuna, Yellowfin Tuna, Barracouda and a few others that I did not recognise. In and beside the hull were all the typical tropical fish, batfish, a moon wrasse, and many others, some unknown to me.

Entry inside the hull has not been permitted since the 70's. We were told one or two of the letters of Yongala's name on the port bow are visible but we didn't see them. Nor are the

supposed human skeletons in the forward hatch. That may have once been the case but the marine plant growth is so abundant that you would assume any remains have been well and truly overgrown.

Maximum depth on this 39 minute dive was 27.4 m and that was on the sand at the bow. With the current, the return to the ascent line was easy. Indeed you had to face into the current and swim slowly to prevent going past everything too quickly.

## Tank Testing

There will be a tank testing run in late February.

Please contact Heinz Bendinger for more details.

Dive 2 - One hour later and the current had stopped ! Bliss !

We descended for a much more relaxed dive. By this time the big boat from Townsville (3 hour trip) had moored on the bow buoy and there were about 60 divers in the water. The Yongala is 108m long though, so it did not seem crowded. It was more of the same fish on the wreck but there were not the passing gamefish schools evident on the first dive. We saw one large (3m) shark (?) in a hull. It looked like a cream colored small basking shark - very big and a very wide flat head - but no one knew what it was. Maybe it was a big faded Wobbegong - do they go that far North.

Maximum depth for this dive was 23.5m and we had 40 minutes in the water. We were nowhere near deco but the 200 bar fills in Aluminum tanks ensure most don't dive longer.

The quick trip back had a slow exit from the water. The tide had gone out and a bar prevented access to the beach, so we all went overboard and waded/swam 100m to the beach. Eventually ropes were attached to the diveboat and pulled up on the beach. Took over an hour to get out of the water.

"Yongala Dive" lodge is quite adequate and has a large International clientele. On my trip I was the only Aussie of 10 divers from 6 countries. Diving Backpackers make this their stop when going from Cairns to the Whitsundays. One warning though - Alva has no food shop or cafes

and a drive of 18km in to Ayr is necessary for either. There is also a good camping ground with inexpensive on-site accommodation.

I would like to have done a second day's diving but after a record 10 days non-stop diving, repairs had to be done to the beach-launching boat trailer. I should be grateful though, as the rest of our St. George group who had booked the Yongala for their return trip from Undersea Explorer missed out due to strong winds.

Maybe we will all have to go back again !

## Photos from the 2007 Christmas Party!

The divers were out in force with 26 taking the plunge. Unfortunately the conditions didn't match their enthusiasm with 1-2 metre vis reported.



Over 50 members were there for the party. Thanks to Phil Rose and family for organising the food.



### Osborn Shoals 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2007 By Michael McFadyen

We had two boats for this dive, Le Scat with Les, Michael, Kelly, John P, Peter F and Eddie and Ian's No Name Boat with Ian, Bram, Dave B, Mark R and Mike S. The day before things did not look promising as the weather was bad. However, Sunday turned out nice to start with. We headed out and found that there was little wind but a medium sized south-east swell.

The water looked a bit dirty as we anchored but once in it was not too bad. This could not be said about the water temperature, it was cold, 14C on most peoples' computers. Kelly and I went east and then south and came across Ian, Bram and Mike and then Peter and John. We kept following the edge and soon I heard a funny clicking noise. A few minutes later I found the source of the noise, a reel being used by Dave and Mark, they had come across the top of the reef rather than follow the edge.

Kel and I turned around here and headed back past the boat. I did not have a hood on so was now quite cold. We went a bit past the boat and up to the reef top and found an extraordinary amount of fishlife, yellowtail, silver sweep and seapike as well as pomfrets.

We went back to the anchor and I was happy to ascend early (for me). Upon ascending the weather had deteriorated a lot and the swell was much larger and the wind turned to the south.

After the dive we went to near Darkes Bay and had our usual feast.

A good but cold dive.

## REGULAR EVENTS

### Monthly Meetings

The next meeting of the St George Scuba Club will be held on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2008 at the St. George Rowing Club, 1 Levey Street Wooli Creek at 8.00 pm. Come along about 7 pm and enjoy a meal at the bistro.

The November meeting will include the judging of the photo competition held recently at Bare Island. To see some of the photos go to the club website photo gallery.

### Thursday Night Dives

Some of the Night Dives in January will be a little further a field to take advantage of the expected less traffic and later starting time. Dives will be at places like Clifton Gardens, Shark Point and maybe even Balmoral.

If you do not currently get the email each week advising the location of the dive, please email [michael@michaelmcfadyenscuba.info](mailto:michael@michaelmcfadyenscuba.info) and advise that you would like to be added to the list.

Please make sure that you let Michael McFadyen know if you are coming in case the weather means we need to move or cancel the dive.

### 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).

## UP AND COMING EVENTS

### Shore Dive – The Leap 12<sup>th</sup> January 2008

If you are interested in this please contact Paul Pacey Ph. 9527 2501.

### Deep Wreck Boat Dive – Annie Miller 19<sup>th</sup> January 2008

This will be leaving from Rose Bay for either the Annie Miller or one of the Long Reef Wrecks.

The dives are on Mendarie Diver run by Yves Moulard. It is booked for 8 to 10 divers & cost will be between \$ 50 & \$55 depending on the site.

So if you are keen on your deep wrecks (40 to 50m) why not come along & sample diving on the North side of Sydney. The wrecks are off Long Reef & form part of the artificial reef that was started back in the 1970's.

Taking names now so if you want to come get in quickly. If you have any queries please contact Peter Flockart Ph. 9371 0265.

### Night Boat Dive – Port Hacking 19<sup>th</sup> January 2008

The dive will be on Saturday 19 January 2008 out of Port Hacking. Sunset is 8:09 pm so we will meet at about 7 pm at Yowie Bay boat ramp.

Once we have geared up, we will motor out and select our dive site based on the conditions. We will wait till dark before diving. After the dive, we will go back to Ian Gowan's wharf for supper.

This dive is being organised by John Beddie. We have at least 3 boats available with spots for 15 divers. Contact John Beddie by phone or email (check your member list) if you are interested.

### Shore Dive – The Leap 26<sup>th</sup> January 2008

If you are interested in this please contact Paul Pacey Ph. 9527 2501.

# Australia Day

**Shore Dive and BBQ – The Leap**  
**28<sup>th</sup> January 2008**

If you are interested in this please contact Paul Pacey Ph. 9527 2501.



(Photo: by Michael McFadyen)

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual St George Photo Competition

For all those member divers with a camera bent the second St George Scuba Club photo competition will be held on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2008 at Bare Island.

There will be three categories:- macro, wide angle and diver. Photographers will be able to submit up to 3 photos in each category. Manipulation of photos will be limited to cropping, despotting and colour balancing.

Photos are to be submitted by Friday 15 February 2008. The competition will be judged at the February Club meeting.

For further details of the day and the competition please contact Ron Walsh 0409 225 683.

## Ocean Trek Liveaboard

This is scheduled for February 8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup>. It has been booked for 8 – 10 people. The cost of \$400 includes:

- 2 nights accommodation (linen supplied)
- 6 dives & Air Fills
- 2 x Breakfast
- 2 x Lunch
- 1 x Dinner (Saturday night)
- BYO alcohol

Deposits of \$200 are required 6 weeks prior to the date of the trip (ie 31/12/07)

Places are limited so get in fast for what is always a good weekend of diving & socialising on beautiful Jervis Bay. Any queries please contact Peter Flockart Ph. 9371 0265.

## Shore Dive – The Leap

**10<sup>th</sup> February 2008**

If you are interested in this please contact Paul Pacey Ph. 9527 2501.

## Mullaway / Solitary Is. Trip

Mullaway is on again - this time it is Manta Season.

The last trip in October was fabulous with 40+ metres visibility - just beautiful blue water and stacks of fish. That will be hard to repeat however normal conditions are usually 20+ metres and hopefully the elusive mantas will be around to play with.

The cost is \$495.00 which includes accommodation, 8 boat dives, all air and brekky things to nibble on not to mention the gourmet lunch!?! Accommodation will once again be at the Cottages and at the dive centre. The Club BBQ to be held on the Monday night at the Cottages. Special requests are an option.

There are still spaces available but be quick. Please advise by return email if you would like to join this adventure.

\$50.00 will secure your spot. Contact Mark Ridsdale Ph. 0419 243717.

## Easter Trip - Jervis Bay

Hurry as spots are filling fast. Book in now for 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2008 Easter Away Trip to Jervis Bay. The agenda weather permitting will be to do as many outside caves as possible.

Nine spots only with Sea John and Scram2 confirmed. Accommodation is \$100 for the four nights. A house next to the water at Sanctuary Point. To book pay \$50 deposit to Mark and notify Ray Moulang Ph. 4620 5210.

### St George Scuba Club Annual Ladies Week-end Away

The Ladies trip is on again this year, for the week-end of April 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>. High tide will be 7:16 am and 8:02 am, which is perfect for shore diving at Port Stephens.

East's Holiday Park at Soldiers Point (same place as last year) have come to the party, with pool side Cabins



and a late (3:30 pm) check-out.

Have a look at [www.eastholidayparks.com.au](http://www.eastholidayparks.com.au) for more information. East's are also next to the Bowling Club, which will be the location for our Saturday night feast.

Accommodation cost will be \$90 for the week-end, possibly less depending on numbers. Diving will be at Halifax Park, Fly Point or The Pipeline, at high tide plus a possible drift or night dive.

All of our Ladies week-ends have been great trips away, with good diving and lots of laughs.



Halifax Park Dive Site

So, to book your spot kindly deposit \$50 the St George Club account (BSB 062028 Acc 00800455) and contact me on 0410 599 186 or [kelly@michaelmcfadyenscuba.info](mailto:kelly@michaelmcfadyenscuba.info)

## Undersea Explorer Away Trip

Robbie Mapstone is organising another trip to the Great Barrier Reef and Osprey Reef on the liveaboard *Undersea Explorer*. There is an article on this web site and are lots of photos from previous trips in the Photo Gallery if you would like to see what the diving is like.

The dive trip starts on Saturday 10 May 2008 at Port Douglas and goes for 6 days, coming back to Port Douglas on Thursday 16 May. You will get the chance to do about 22 dives. You will need to stay in Port Douglas till at least the Friday afternoon before flying home.

The cost will about \$1728 (depends on numbers and discount) plus some costs on board (fuel levy, marine parks fee and any drinks you buy). This includes all food and dives.

You will need to organise your own flights to and from Cairns (there are Qantas and Virgin Blue flights about 10:30 am from Sydney) and should be able to get for about \$160 each way.

Six people are already confirmed for the trip.

If you are interested, contact Robbie Mapstone now by phoning him.

If you want to see more about the diving and previous trips, go to [Michael McFadyen's Scuba Diving Web Site](#) and look up the Queensland section of the Australian pages.

## Palau Trip – Oct / Nov 2008

Dave Casburn is organising this trip. Please contact him for details ph. 0405 186 184.

### OTHER NEWS

## Sydney Tides January 2008

Day	High	Low	High	Low	High
TUE 1	3:39 AM EST / 1.27 m	9:48 AM EST / 0.66 m	3:28 PM EST / 1.14 m	9:43 PM EST / 0.50 m	
Wed 2	4:30 AM EST / 1.34 m	10:59 AM EST / 0.64 m	4:31 PM EST / 1.07 m	10:29 PM EST / 0.52 m	
Thu 3	5:21 AM EST / 1.39 m	12:01 PM EST / 0.58 m	5:33 PM EST / 1.04 m	11:18 PM EST / 0.53 m	
Fri 4	6:08 AM EST / 1.45 m	12:54 PM EST / 0.51 m	6:30 PM EST / 1.04 m		
Sat 5		12:07 AM EST / 0.51 m	6:52 AM EST / 1.50 m	1:42 PM EST / 0.42 m	7:23 PM EST / 1.06 m
Sun 6		12:55 AM EST / 0.47 m	7:36 AM EST / 1.55 m	2:24 PM EST / 0.34 m	8:10 PM EST / 1.10 m
Mon 7		1:40 AM EST / 0.43 m	8:17 AM EST / 1.60 m	3:03 PM EST / 0.27 m	8:52 PM EST / 1.13 m
Tue 8		2:23 AM EST / 0.39 m	8:57 AM EST / 1.63 m	3:40 PM EST / 0.22 m	9:32 PM EST / 1.16 m
Wed 9		3:04 AM EST / 0.36 m	9:35 AM EST / 1.66 m	4:17 PM EST / 0.19 m	10:11 PM EST / 1.19 m
Thu 10		3:43 AM EST / 0.35 m	10:12 AM EST / 1.67 m	4:54 PM EST / 0.18 m	10:50 PM EST / 1.21 m
Fri 11		4:22 AM EST / 0.36 m	10:49 AM EST / 1.66 m	5:31 PM EST / 0.18 m	11:30 PM EST / 1.24 m
Sat 12		5:04 AM EST / 0.38 m	11:28 AM EST / 1.63 m	6:08 PM EST / 0.20 m	
Sun 13	12:12 AM EST / 1.27 m	5:51 AM EST / 0.41 m	12:10 PM EST / 1.56 m	6:47 PM EST / 0.24 m	
Mon 14	12:58 AM EST / 1.31 m	6:44 AM EST / 0.45 m	12:55 PM EST / 1.47 m	7:28 PM EST / 0.28 m	
Tue 15	1:47 AM EST / 1.35 m	7:46 AM EST / 0.49 m	1:48 PM EST / 1.35 m	8:14 PM EST / 0.34 m	
Wed 16	2:44 AM EST / 1.40 m	9:01 AM EST / 0.50 m	2:54 PM EST / 1.22 m	9:07 PM EST / 0.39 m	
Thu 17	3:49 AM EST / 1.45 m	10:26 AM EST / 0.47 m	4:15 PM EST / 1.12 m	10:11 PM EST / 0.43 m	
Fri 18	4:57 AM EST / 1.53 m	11:48 AM EST / 0.38 m	5:38 PM EST / 1.08 m	11:18 PM EST / 0.43 m	
Sat 19	6:01 AM EST / 1.61 m	12:58 PM EST / 0.27 m	6:50 PM EST / 1.08 m		
Sun 20		12:22 AM EST / 0.40 m	7:01 AM EST / 1.70 m	1:58 PM EST / 0.17 m	7:52 PM EST / 1.12 m
Mon 21		1:23 AM EST / 0.35 m	7:57 AM EST / 1.76 m	2:49 PM EST / 0.10 m	8:45 PM EST / 1.17 m
Tue 22		2:18 AM EST / 0.30 m	8:49 AM EST / 1.79 m	3:35 PM EST / 0.07 m	9:32 PM EST / 1.22 m
Wed 23		3:08 AM EST / 0.26 m	9:36 AM EST / 1.79 m	4:18 PM EST / 0.07 m	10:15 PM EST / 1.27 m
Thu 24		3:55 AM EST / 0.26 m	10:20 AM EST / 1.75 m	4:58 PM EST / 0.11 m	10:58 PM EST / 1.30 m
Fri 25		4:41 AM EST / 0.30 m	11:02 AM EST / 1.67 m	5:35 PM EST / 0.18 m	11:39 PM EST / 1.33 m
Sat 26		5:27 AM EST / 0.36 m	11:42 AM EST / 1.57 m	6:11 PM EST / 0.25 m	
Sun 27	12:20 AM EST / 1.34 m	6:13 AM EST / 0.44 m	12:20 PM EST / 1.45 m	6:44 PM EST / 0.33 m	
Mon 28	1:01 AM EST / 1.35 m	7:01 AM EST / 0.52 m	12:59 PM EST / 1.32 m	7:17 PM EST / 0.41 m	
Tue 29	1:44 AM EST / 1.34 m	7:54 AM EST / 0.59 m	1:40 PM EST / 1.20 m	7:51 PM EST / 0.48 m	
Wed 30	2:31 AM EST / 1.33 m	8:56 AM EST / 0.64 m	2:30 PM EST / 1.09 m	8:31 PM EST / 0.55 m	
Thu 31	3:26 AM EST / 1.33 m	10:11 AM EST / 0.64 m	3:39 PM EST / 1.01 m	9:25 PM EST / 0.59 m	

### The Committee for 2007 – 2008 is:

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**Please send items for the Newsletter to me by the 28th of the month**