



P.O. Box 453 Hurstville South 2221 NSW

visit our web page at...<http://www.ozemail.com.au/~diving/stgeorge/stgeorge.htm>

November 2002

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year



Coming Up

Sunday 8th. December 2002.

Xmas Picnic at Kurnell

High tide will be at noon so we will be able to do The Leap to The Steps or The Steps to The Monument.

Lunch will be provided by the club so please let me know how many of you will be in attendance as I will have to order enough food

for us all. Would hate anyone to go hungry.

The usual meeting time will be 9.00a.m. for the diving, with lunch served at approx. 12 noon.

Bring along your own plate, knife, fork and drinkies.

Let's make this a Christmas picnic to remember.

Ring me on 9520 9421.

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Sunday 15th. December 2002.

Boat Dive at Bondi Wall.

Meet at Rose Bay at 8.30.a.m.

Michael McFadyen is organising this dive so give him a call on 9558 8181.

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HMAS HOBART

The Club has a trip planned to Adelaide early in 2003 to dive the wreck of the HMAS Hobart which was scuttled there on Melbourne Club Day.

The plan is to leave Sydney on the afternoon of Friday 14 or very early on Saturday 15 February. Qantas has cheap flights for about \$226 return. The aim is to do 6 or 8 dives on the ship, with perhaps a dive on the Rapid Bay Jetty to see leafy sea dragons. It is expected that we would return on about Tuesday 18 or Wednesday 19 February (travel times can suit each person)

The total cost is expected to be about \$900, including accommodation, airfares (if needed - see later), dives, tanks, weights, lunch and breakfasts, a winery tour and transfers

from Adelaide and return. Some people plan to use frequent flyer points so making the trip cheaper. Phil Rose is organising the trip and you can contact him for more information on 9543 0748. Already four people have expressed an intention to do the trip.

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XMAS DIVING

If you are interested in diving between Christmas and the New Year, Michael McFadyen is planning some boat dives on Le Scat. Phone Michael on 9558 8181 if you are interested.

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Last Month

Sat. 9th. - Sunday 10th. Nov. 2002.

Scan Social Jervis Bay.

Les and I arrived at Huskisson at 10.30 a.m. Friday morning and sorted out the booking arrangements with management till 12 noon. then set up camp.

It was a very hot day so were looking forward to a nice quite afternoon with a swim then go to the pub and have dinner.

Everyone started to arrive from 12.00 noon till the last one rolled in at 11.30p.m. All in all St.George had 19 divers and 6 non divers attend.

Up early Saturday morning and the two boats ("Sea John" and "Le Scat") were off to the dive spots with their full crews.

Alas "Sea John" had to return to shore early as two of the divers took ill.

Glenn was looking like death warmed up but Ray managed to come good and dived on Sunday.

Meanwhile on board "Le Scat" things were going divingly with two to three boat loads of people telling what marvelous dives they had.

Saturday night the big B.B.Q. was held and we managed to give everyone a good meal.Steak, sausages and salad.

Sunday and it was into more of the same thing. After lunch we packed up and headed home.

Another great S.C.A.N weekend.

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**Sat.16th.- Sun. 17th. Nov.
4x4 Drive and Dive.**

This report is given in two episodes. First Carol and Rob Mapstone on the great dive then visitors Carol and Bob to fill us in on the rest of the fun.

Day 1. Saturday morning at Swansea Bridge

Reporters on the scene – Carol & Rob Mapstone

In the wee small hours of Saturday morning, the assembled gang – Elly & Les, Michael & Sheila, Heinz & Mark, Raelene & Mark, Robyn & Chicka, Bob & Carol, Robbie & Carol and Tim & Jeannine (who are our newest members and came along for the dive but not for the camping/4WD part of the weekend), made their way up to Swansea for the first leg of the Stockton Beach camping/diving weekend. On the way – (after stopping to



meet with Tim & Jeannine who hadn't dived at the site before and were so looking forward to it on our recommendation), we managed to get some diesel for 85c a litre – a bargain (that piece of info was for the 4WD enthusiasts). We met at Swansea bridge at 9am, and closely observed the locals for signs of impending diving action – the locals are easy to spot, so casual about the whole thing. Just to sidetrack – has anyone been to the bottle shop at Swansea?? It is absolutely huge – I thought it was part of the supermarket until I realised the bottle shop WAS the supermarket. This could be why the locals are so relaxed.....

Anyway, as these fine fellows and lassies were observed getting into the water, we followed suit. Mark (Raelene's other half) decided he wouldn't dive as the visibility didn't look too good. The rest of us scoffed and laughed at him for being such a wooze, hadn't we all got up early just to get there on time – hadn't people come just for this dive? Oh such folly!

We slipped and slid our way down the ramp and belly flopped in to the warm (20oC), green water. Yes folks, green water – maybe it would get better nearer the bridge, round the pylons? – it didn't. Visibility was anything from 1- 2 metres, there were still lots of fish about, but you just couldn't make out what type. After about 20 minutes of dodging square looking, long tentacled jellyfish and just missing being splattered by a local lad on a scooter, we decided to call it quits and attempted to find our way back to the ramp. Like most people on the day,



we missed it but the tide was still slack so we had no problems getting back to shore. We were first up – although I think it was only that the others couldn't find their way back either, and we listened and laughed as each of the groups surfaced from the

dive with tales of wonderment. Robyn was especially eloquent – amazing how many different ways you can describe this sport we all love called diving. Well after that, we quickly changed and stowed our gear away as the rain started to fall. At this point, I re-visited the bottle shop.

After coffee and wedges, we said goodbye to Tim & Jeannine and made our way to Stockton Beach.

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What a great week end, it could have been the Simpson Desert.

A big thankyou to Les and Elly and the gang for welcoming us along.

We all met at Swansea Bridge 9am Saturday morning for the big dive, Elly, Charlie, Mark, Bob and I all waited on shore, while Les, Robyn, Tim, Jeannine, Sheila, Michael, Mark, Raelene, and Heinz discovered the big fish or whatever else they could find.

Everyone surfaced ok “very murky” was the reply. Anyway another dive under our belts.

Proceeded onto Tommy Town to purchase our vehicle permits, went to the wrong place, had to go back. After collecting our permits, followed in convoy to the entrance to the beach, let our tyres down, had lunch then our leaders Les and Elly led all of us onto the dunes. Up and down we went across the sandy desert, great fun!

Onto the hard sand and along to the ship wreck, back onto the dunes up and down like a roller coaster, excellent fun!

At the bottom of one huge dune we lost sight of Robyn and



Charlie, they were having a domestic, Robyn refused to drive anymore, Charlie had not let the tyres down enough, didn't listen to Robyn, because she is always right. Onward and upward we continued until our gallant leader Les had to show us how easy it is to get out of a bog- “get out the snatch strap” away we go sand covering the bonnet no problem Raelene and Mark to the rescue, well done.

After much exploring we found a nice little camping spot and set up camp. Bob and Charlie only took an hour to put up our tent, no problem. We had to catch up on the drinking.

Hold on, what's that up in the sky? is it a bird? A plane? No! it's a naked man streaking across the top of the dunes sun tanned, blonde hair and could not make out the rest (who had the binoculars?) A long night around the camp fire, great entertainment, Les love your playing it sent me to sleep.

Sore heads in the morning, packed up after breaky, off we went to Anna Bay. Pumped our tyres and headed back to Sydney, the others continued onto Nelson Bay for coffee. The end of a great week end.

Not mentioning any names, someone in a Discovery discovered he had diff locks (don't need them anyway).

A big thankyou to Les and Elly once again for including us

and Robyn and Charlie for letting us share their tent.

Will Heinz ever let us borrow anything again? Thankyou Heinz, you are a legend.

We are practicing on our own tent now.

Cheers, Carole and Bob Devaurno.

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COOLIDGE CELEBRATIONS by Michael McFadyen

On 21 October 2002, 13 members of St George Scuba Club left Sydney bound for the 60th Anniversary celebrations of the sinking of the SS President Coolidge.

On board the Air Vanuatu flight were members Graeme Lehman, Jo Edney, Mark Ridsdale, Barbara Sweetman, Carol



and Robby Mapstone, Heinz Bendinger, Paul Wilson, Danielle Sullivan, Chiaki Ajioka and Michael McFadyen as well as new members Jeannine and Tim Jenkins.

Shortly after arriving at Port Vila, we were soon on our way to Espiritu Santo on two separate planes. This was because Vanair's large Dash 8 aircraft was in Australia being repaired. This was also to impact our return flight to Vila the next week.

Upon arrival in a very wet Santo, we were bussed to Deco Stop Lodge. We were welcomed by Margaret and Russell Donovan, owners of the resort. They were especially happy to see a some of us who had been there a few times before. It was dinner time and after settling into our rooms we were soon having a few drinks and dinner. Some of us even went for a swim in the pool, especially nice after a long day's travel and in the humid conditions. Apart from this rain, we had almost perfect weather for the rest of the time on Santo. Barry from Aquamarine arrived later in the evening and we organised diving for the next day.

The next morning we were on our way to dive the Coolidge. We had 14 dives planned for the coming week, all of which were shore dives. Of the 13 on the trip, all but Robby, Carol, Paul, Danielle, Jeannine and Tim had dived the ship before. Arriving at the Aquamarine gearing up site, we found Mayumi Green, co-owner of Aquamarine there as well. Many of us know Mayumi from previous visits and after hellos, hugs and kisses we split up into a number of groups which we remained in for the majority of the coming days and soon we were on our way down to the wreck.

It is three years since I had last dived the ship and as I approached the bow the memories of that last trip came back. I was sure that this was going to be a good trip. After the first dive, the first-timers were ecstatic about their experiences. The others were not far behind in their comments.

Over the coming week we dived parts of the ship like the Front Holds, Medical Supply Hold, Engine Room, Swimming Pool, Soda Fountain, Beauty Shop, Continental Lounge as well as all the usual spots. The major change since my last visit was that the First Class Smoking Lounge, former home of the Lady and the Unicorn, has almost totally collapsed and is virtually

inaccessible. As many members would recall, the Lady fell off the wall above the fireplace on Australia Day 2000. After some restoration, the ceramic figurine was placed back in the wreck, luckily not where she came from originally. The smoking lounge collapsed in 2001 so had it been still there or returned to that location, the figurine would have almost certainly been destroyed. The Lady is now in the First Class Dining Room, at a depth of about 36 to 38 metres (much shallower than the previous 45 metres) and is now upright instead of on its side as had been the case.

On Thursday night most of the group goes for a night dive on the Coolidge. All reported an excellent dive, with heaps of flashlight fish lighting up the wreck. On another day, all but Jo, Graeme, Mark, Barbara and I dive Million Dollar Point. We have dived there before, some of us a couple of times, so we get dropped off at the Coolidge and do a dive there by ourselves. Around this time, Kevin Green comes back from his ship skippering job and dives with us for the rest of the time. During our time in Santo, the water was a constantly warm 25°C and visibility about 15 to 20 metres.

The Deco Stop was again a great place to stay. It has the best views of any of the accommodation in Santo, as well as the best layout and gardens. The food is also excellent, with an uprated menu offering three choices for entree, main meal and dessert. For most of the first week we had the place pretty much to ourselves but in the second week a group from the Sydney Dive Academy was also there.

On Friday 25 October 2002, a presentation on the Coolidge was given at the Deco Stop Lodge. I was invited to speak on the history of the ship and its owners right up until it arrived off Santo. After me, David Cross from Pro Dive Santo spoke on the sinking and rescue and he was followed by Kevin Green from Aquamarine who showed slides of the ship (both before during and after the sinking) and spoke about the diving on the wreck. After this a fantastic barbecue was enjoyed by all. This event was attended by quite a few of the visiting divers as well as many residents of Santo.

Saturday 26 October 2002, the actual 60th Anniversary of the sinking, saw all of us as well as all the divers in Santo diving the wreck. It was quite an amazing thought as you floated through the wreck that exactly 60 years ago the passengers were hastily evacuating the sinking ship.

At 1pm at the memorial to Elwood Ewart (one of the two to



die when the ship sank), a ceremony was held. The memorial had been spruced up during the past few days especially for the ceremony. The ceremony consisted of the singing of hymns by a local church choir as well as prayers by a local Pastor to remember not only the two people lost when the ship sank, but to the three divers who have since died on the wreck. We were

very interested in the pastor's prayers thanking God for sinking the ship in Santo! Virtually all the visiting divers appeared to attend this ceremony, as well as all the local dive operators, their staff and a large number of locals.

After the ceremony, the second dive of the day was held. During this dive, Alan Power took Steve Parisi, one of the survivors of the sinking for a dive to the bow. Steve had travelled from Massachusetts in the USA for the anniversary. Well into his 80s, Steve did his fifth dive on the wreck, his only dives outside his dive course. Accompanying them were the winners of a raffle held leading up to the anniversary.

That night, a dinner dance was held at the Santo Hotel. Again, most of the divers and dive operators and staff together with a large number of locals attended. This was a seafood buffet, well catered for with a huge spread of seafood, including at least half crayfish a person. I don't think anyone could possibly have gone hungry. After the food, there was a quick talk by Steve Parisi and then the band started playing. Soon the dance floor was cleared of tables and the dancing started. This continued until the small hours of the morning. There was much mingling of groups during the night and everyone seemed to have a good time.



Sunday 27 October 2002 saw the last event held. This was a talk by Steve Parisi out at the Bougainville Resort. We did not attend this but by all accounts, it was very successful as well.

The next day was our last day's diving. After the diving, we are invited down to Aquamarine's Shop where we have a few home brewed beers and are presented with our Coolidge diving certificates. After this, Kevin and most of the Aquamarine staff take us to the Totale (Turtle) Kava nakamal. Here most have a few kavas, some for the first time. This is quite an entertaining part of the trip, as anyone who has tried kava will attest.

Eventually, we all end up back at Deco Stop, although a few detour via another nakamal. Even though I only ordered an entree, I cannot even eat all of it. Such is the power of kava!

The next day, Tuesday 29 October saw us all go off on tours of the island. Chiaki, Paul and Danielle went on a tour to some of the war sites, to Golden Beach and one of the Blue Holes. The rest of us went to Champagne Beach via one of the Blue Holes and returned via another one. All reported that they had an excellent day.

That night, a couple of people (led by Robby) go up to the nakamal and get some takeaway kava. I am not joking! Well, not only was there this kava, Aquamarine had also brought some along as they were having dinner at Deco Stop as one of their staff, Yuka, was returning to Australia the next morning. Some unnamed members of our group had six or seven shells of kava that night. See what a taste did to them!

As I indicated at the start of this article, we had another problem with the flight back to Vila. Originally meant to leave at 8.30 am, Vanair told us that we had to go at 12.30 pm instead. This downside of this was that we did not get to spend

any time in Vila but the upside was that we did not have to get up real early to make the plane. However, we were still not really certain that we were going to be on this plane, as over the preceding days, Vanair had phoned five or six times. On one occasion, they asked whether Mr P Short, Ms S Baldock, Mr A Thimm, Ms B Thomas and some others would be okay to fly on the early flight. Well, I tried to explain that not only would they not be on that flight and not only were they not in Santo, they were not even in Vanuatu, having cancelled out of the trip many months ago. Still, all the paperwork showed them flying and even on our flight, I noticed that the pilot had a list that include Phil, Sheila, Andreas, Bev and the others names on it! Who knows, the 8.30 am plane might have been empty! On return to Australia, I found out that Vanair had changed their computer booking system about a month before and it looks like all the old information came across into the new one, even the cancelled passengers.

Anyway, without any problems we booked onto the Air Vanuatu flight back to Sydney and arrived home on time. I am sure that everyone enjoyed themselves and everyone got on very well. Thanks to all who travelled.

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The YONGALA by Robyn Hewitt.

In October I went to the Whitsundays with Chicka, for just over a week, to visit with the family and to celebrate our grand daughters 4th birthday. During this time I slipped away for 3 days to dive the Yongala, a passenger ship that sank during a cyclone in 1911.

'Diving Dreams' was the dive organisation with their boat operating out of Townsville. We boarded at 8.00pm and departed around 10.00pm. Bruce and Felice Thompson, my travelling companions, and I were the only experienced divers on board, all the other passengers were either doing their Open Water or their Advanced Open Water Courses. Bruce has a very noteworthy background in navy clearance diving rising to the rank of Lieutenant Commander. The other divers were a wonderful young group, the majority being back packers.

We travelled all night anchoring around 4.00am in the morning. I know because I was in the downstairs back cabin adjoining the engine room and I heard every pounding noise of the engine. Bruce and Felice, I might add, slept soundly in their very comfortable double cabin upstairs.

Day 1

Dive 1: Felix Reef- The Swim Through - 24.5m

I was very fortunate buddying up for all my dives with the boat captain who was also an instructor. The site boasted great bommies scattered over the sand and just covered with hard and soft corals. The bat fish cleaning station was the highlight of this dive for me.

Dive 2: Helix Reef- High Voltage - 23m

Very appropriate name - the current can be very strong. Something new here for me, a huge school of Job fish. (Have you heard of this one?)

Dive 3: Night dive on Helix Reef - 11m

This was quite disappointing with little life apart from the divers who looked spectacular with torches blazing.

Day 2

Dive 1 and Dive 2: Wheeler Reef - The Moorings 29.6m and Student Bombie 22.8

Away from the bomies at 29m we had several white tip reef sharks and pelagics enjoying the current. Heaps of fish everywhere and excellent viz.

Day 3

Dives 1 & 2: The Yongala at last. 29m

The whole wreck is absolutely covered with hard and soft corals. She lies on her starboard side, in tack, from the deck down. Two masts lie out on the sand. Under the stern were fish too numerous to count. We made our way along the deck looking into the wreck where possible but without penetrating. I was so tempted but it is now off limits and my buddy was very much aware of my movements. The fish life on the wreck was incredible! Under the bow we had a huge Queensland Groper and a bull ray. On the bow I was shown the house pipe (anchor chain comes out from here) and then the brass letters A and O from the ships name. I could certainly dive the wreck again one day.

We finally arrived back in port about 7.00pm. I was most grateful to the crew for the way they looked after me with my back problems. They organised that my tank was always placed on the back diving deck where I could sit down, slip on my BC and then just slide into the water. Again when I returned from each dive there was always someone there to take my tank and weight belt before I left the water. Just great!

General News

A dive report from Sheila Baldock who went from Botany Bay with John Beddie in 'Sea John'. They had a dive with the sharks!!!! Port Jackson but no Grey nurse....

then we went in behind Henrys head for coffee, then decided to have a dive there. Was nice, viz about 4-5mtr. but saw a moray, two weedy seadragons, various nudibranchs, pygmy leatherjacket. A mosaic leatherjacket sitting flat against a sponge going with the flow.

Going down the anchor would have made a good shot, was a jelly fish with a small fish swimming in between it. Looked good, then we saw a jelly fish, but had long stingers tangled up in it.

Oh and on the way up to the sharks was a humpback whale...ended up coming so close to the boat we saw its face...was great.

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Hope you all enjoy the pictures from the Vanuatu trip which Mark Risdale has e/mailed me.

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The raffle this month was won by our esteemed president Steve Shaw with Glenn Townsend taking the second prize.

Les gave out the raffle tickets for the Christmas raffle at the meeting and for the people not in attendance here are your tickets.

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The raffle will be drawn at the December meeting so please return the stubs and monies and unsold tickets on this night if not before. Thank You.

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Enclosed is

1. 2003 Calendar.
2. Current address list.
3. Current e/mail list.

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Steve and Sue Shaw are now driving their way across the Simpson Desert and will be back for the Christmas picnic. Have a good time folks.

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Next meeting to be held 18th. December 2002.

St. George Rowing Club Levy Street Arncliffe.

Meeting to commence at 8.00p.m.

Don't forget folks if you would like to join us earlier at the Bistro we would love to see you.

Elly



HMAS HOBART MEDIA ALERT DIVING STILL TWO WEEKS AWAY

THE EX HMAS HOBART WILL NOT BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC FOR DIVING FOR ABOUT TWO WEEKS.

Despite the fact that some media have already been down to the site yesterday and managed to get underwater footage, this was in conjunction with project managers and the SA Police dive clearance team, who were running checks on the site all day Wednesday

Once the site is cleared by experts in the next day or so, moorings need to be installed for divers and this could take several days.

Following the moorings being installed, the six dive companies registered to dive the site will undertake a series of dives over the next week to ensure they are completely familiar with all aspects of the ship, diving opportunities and safety measures.

Once open for diving, recreational divers who do not want to visit the site with the registered dive companies, will be able to use their own boat to dive. They will need to purchase a permit at Marina St Vincent, enabling them to access the site and then use one of the moorings allocated to recreational divers.

CONTACT: For further media information contact Michelle Edgar on (08) 8463 4649 or 0417 843 398, or Lainie Barnes on (08) 8463 4583 or 0427 408 588.