

# Tech Dive NZ

## Newsletter February 2011

www.techdivenz.com, info@techdivenz.com

### WELCOME TO OUR MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the February issue of the TDNZ newsletter, which comes to you right in the middle of a frantic period of diving. During the last 10 days we've been to the Lermontov, run an advanced wreck class and a cavern class and for the next 10 days we are back in the south island again, this time exploring Blue Creek. But we're not complaining - this is the life - we wouldn't have it any other way.

But January hasn't been totally awesome - 3 tropical storms on the trot, the last being Cyclone Wilma, ruined our plans for a club evening at Goat Island, curtailed our diving at Matai Bay and stopped our Volkner Rocks trip. Oh well - life can't be perfect all the time. Fingers crossed the storms are now all over.

Since the last newsletter we've also had some very positive feedback on our new format, with several people commenting on the landscape layout. As usual the silent majority remained silent, but those of you who did reply we thank you for your feedback - please keep sending it in.

Another activity from the last month was Jamie's cave and cavern talk at Dive Shack on Dominion Road. This talk comes at a time of sudden interest in cave diving amongst the

non-diving general public, created by the upcoming release of Sanctum. Inspired by a true cave diving story the film follows the exploits of an elite cave diving team as they battle the worst ravages nature can throw at them, whilst trying to escape from a flooded cave system.

However, the point of this newsletter is not to publicise a major Hollywood film (I wish we had their advertising budget) but to point out that whilst the action scenes in the film are a little over the top the scenery is all real. Yes caves are truly beautiful places and if you want to see for yourself please go and see this movie. And we promise - none of Jamie's cave diving courses are nearly as scary as the movie, no matter what past students say...



### LOCATION HIGHLIGHTING A GREAT NZ DIVE SITE



A comfortable 4 ½ hour drive from Auckland, at the end of the Karikari peninsular, Matai Bay is an incredibly tranquil place. The bay is a shallow horseshoe with no rips, only a handful of rustic baches, golden sand and clear water. It is in fact exactly how I imagine a "real Kiwi beach" if there is such a thing. With the nearest large town (Kaitaia) over 40km away and plenty of other beaches further south to trap most of the tourists Matai Bay remains quiet and undisturbed. If you ever need to escape the madness of Auckland this place is perfect.

However, as well as beach tourists getting trapped further south it seems like the majority of divers also get trapped. Admittedly when you drive up from Auckland you have

to pass Goat Island and the entire Hauraki Gulf, followed by Tutukaka and the Poor Knights and finally the Bay of Islands - but trust me it is worth the extra effort.

The diving outfit we always use up here is AtoZ, owned by Andre Kunz, hence the name of the dive school. He has a small rib, perfect for 6 divers and accommodation just above the dive school. And if you think that is convenient there is also a winery half-way between the dive school and the launch site.

The diving itself is classic northland diving, warm clear water, sub-tropical fish and lots of colour. Our favourite dive sites are the pinnacle in the middle of the bay, Demoiselle Arch and another pinnacle called Moki Playground. There are even a couple of excellent sea caves which the more adventurous divers will enjoy exploring.

As for the winery, well it has one of the best views in NZ - looking due north up towards 90 mile beach and Cape Reinga. The wine's not too bad either.



# Tech Dive NZ

## Newsletter February 2011

www.techdivenz.com, info@techdivenz.com

### DIVING

TRIP OF THE MONTH



#### Mikhail Lermontov February 5-8th

Enter the Promenade Deck and locate the entrance to the forward foyer. Drop straight down to the spiral staircase and follow the twisted banister through the collapsed area down to the Restaurant Deck. Head aft and squeeze through two narrow doorways, then enter the Leningrad Restaurant. Locate the semi-circular glass partition and head immediately up to the forward port corner of the restaurant. Turn towards the bow, squeeze down and in through the staff entry to the kitchens, over the mounds of silt, past the scullery, past the cold galley, diagonally down and tie off close to the bakery. Phew, a little over half-way there. Drop straight down for 4 or 5 metres and locate the next horizontal passage leading towards the bow. Now all I have to do is cruise along this passage to the double doors above my head, twist around and up and I should be in the

foyer area immediately below the Crew's Mess. Then if the doors are open I can get into the mess area and start my explorations.

At this point I wake up. It's 3am in the morning and I am dreaming about the Lermontov deck plans which I've looked at so many times I've memorised them. My heart is pumping; I am sweating. The dive I'm planning is something I've been wanting to do for ages, and yet now that it's only a few days to go I'm questioning my motivation. Do I really want to travel along over 50m of very twisting and silty passage, full of unstable bits of wreckage waiting to drop on top of me? And having got all the way in I also need to exit – how much will I be able to see on the way out? I remember the story of another diver who also wanted to visit the Crew's Mess; she had a bulk head door collapse behind her, cutting her line and



almost completely blocking the exit route. Why why why why why am I doing this? At 3am in the morning everything always seems worse than it really is. I turn my pillow over to the dry side and try to fall asleep again.

Two days later and Mel and I are descending for our second dive of the trip – ready to tackle the Crew's Mess. The visibility is dreadful, between 1 and 2m on the outside of the ship. But we have a cunning plan.....

60 minutes later and we surface with huge smiles. We've spent over 25 minutes actually inside the Crew's Mess, enjoying the far better preserved features that are characteristic of rarely visited areas. We even saw a completely intact wall clock; the time frozen at 5.43, exactly as it has remained for nearly 25 years. The dive has been fantastic, nothing like the sweaty nightmare of two

days previously. Our cunning plan has worked. However, it's OUR cunning plan so I'm not telling; but if you have the skills the Crew's Mess is well worth visiting.

The rest of this trip report is already live on the TDNZ website, we hope you like it.  
<http://www.techdivenz.com/pdfs/trips/lermie050211.pdf>

The Mikhail Lermontov is definitely one of our favourite dive sites, with challenges suitable for everyone - newbie wreck divers right through to hard core explorers. In fact we like it so much we've already booked our next trip: October 14-17th.

October is definitely the best month for visibility, so if you're unfamiliar with the wreck this is the best time to start to learn your way around.



# Tech Dive NZ

## Newsletter February 2011

www.techdivenz.com, info@techdivenz.com

### DIVING

WHAT'S COMING UP

**Blue Creek Cave Exploration - Motueka**  
February 18th - 26th



Where else in the world, except for caves, can you genuinely claim to be 'exploring'? This trip is only open to those with cave diving qualifications, as the dive site is deep, cold, dark and very challenging. However, the visibility is spectacular, 30m+, so this is a must do dive for all NZ cave divers. Contact Jamie directly for details of our next trip.

**OZTeK - Sydney**  
March 12th - 13th

Australasia's premier technical diving show, with speakers from around the globe. We are the only NZ distributor of tickets; silver (1 day) passes NZ\$180; gold (2 day) passes NZ\$310.

**Matai Bay - Northland**  
March 26th - 27th

The most chilled out diving in NZ. Jamie will be running a cavern course for those people interested, otherwise just come along for the warm sea water and cold white wine.

**Orewa Fun Run**  
April 17th

Half a dozen of us have already signed up for this event. Join us and do either the 5, 10 or 20km run.

**GUE Fundamentals**  
April 22-25th [Easter]

Learn how to back-kick, how to hover and why many of the world's dive ninjas all wear the same equipment configuration. This class is the gateway to all GUE training and an excellent starting point for would-be techies.



**Cave & Cavern diving: Poor Knights**  
April 29th - May 1st



Join us for a 3 day live-aboard to explore the hidden interior of these iconic islands. Enjoy the challenge and beauty of Taravana, Crystal and many other caves. During this trip you can also do the TDI Cavern course, TDI Introductory Cave Diver course, or both as a combo. Please note, over half the places on this trip have already been taken, contact us ASAP if you want to join us.

**Mikhail Lermontov**  
October 14-17th

This is NZ's biggest and most totally awesome wreck dive! It has 12 decks, lots of artifacts and areas to explore and it's all located in a max. depth of only 37m - perfect. Having done 4 trips in the last year we've now learned how to access some of the wrecks best kept secrets - but they will remain a secret unless you come on this trip.

### Other events

With so much going on we can't include it all in this newsletter, so we suggest you check out the website for the complete list of activities. And to encourage you to take the time to look:

July: Truk Lagoon

May - Sept: 10 x 10 x 10 Dive Challenge

Sept: Mexico cave diving

Events still to be scheduled:

Lake Taupo and Waikato River drift dive

Halcyon Treasure Hunt

Cage diving with Mako sharks

Cave 2 in Mexico

### SAFE DIVING EVERYONE



# Tech Dive NZ

## Newsletter February 2011

www.techdivenz.com, info@techdivenz.com

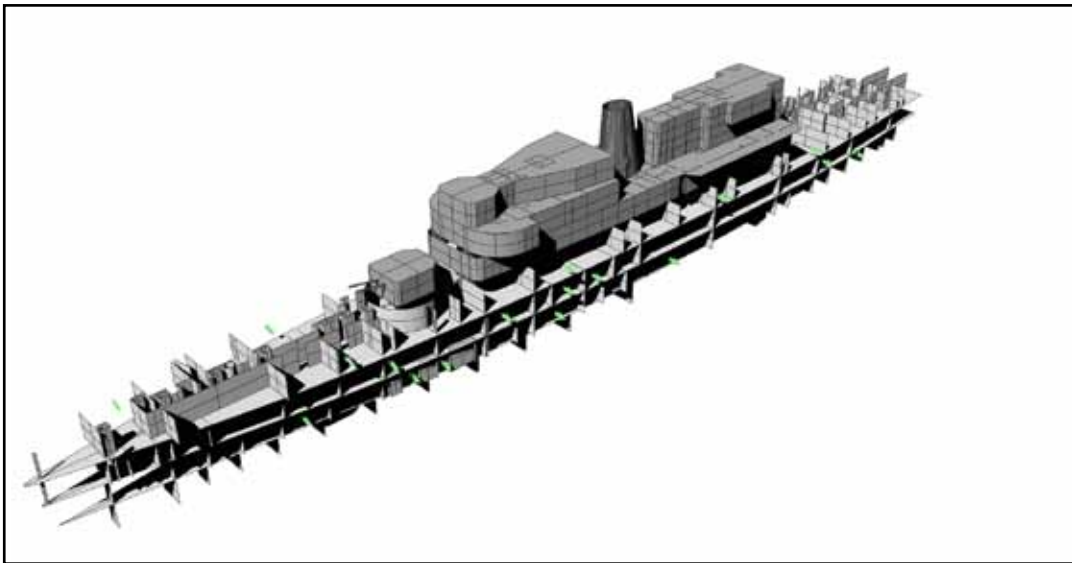
### PROJECTS

HMNZS WAIKATO MAPPING

Since our big survey day last month Christian and Mike have been hard at work, or as Christian described it in an email 'having a nerd fest, powered by beer and pizza'. So just to prove they are actually achieving things we thought we'd show you some of the work in progress. The picture below shows the entire wreck as it would have been before the bow broke off. According to Christian once all the changes to the internal structure have been completed it is relatively simple to break off the bow, add in the 45 degree list and a snady bottom. Even simulating different visibility is possible.

Of course unless you have a photographic memory this still doesn't help much when you are diving. Therefore one of the other ideas the team has suggested is individual deck layouts showing suggested dives. To go with this the team has been thinking about photos and/or plans which show the hatchways between different decks.

However, it's sometimes better to ask the wider audience for ideas: What would you like to see? What type of plans would be of most use to you, either for studying prior to the dive or once actually underwater? Email us with any ideas you have and hopefully the team can incorporate them into the ongoing project.



### DIVE CLUB

LATEST NEWS AND FUTURE EVENTS

It was a case of third time lucky this month. Our first planned evening event was canned due to high winds, then our second one as well - bah humbug - but on 1st Feb a group of us did manage to get-together for an evening dive at Lake Pupuke. If the lake ever gets blown out we know we're in trouble!

As for our next club evening, well with so much diving happening we've decided to stay indoors and try to dry off a little bit. So on Thursday 3rd March we're planning on meeting up at the Horse and Trap in Mount Eden. It has a great atmosphere, good food and is central for most people. We'll be there from 6pm onwards.

We're also looking for suggestions for club evenings this year. A couple of people have asked about a meal out 'somewhere nice', and there is talk of paintballing or go-karting. We will of course be going diving and visiting a bar or two, but if anyone has a rip roaring idea then please send it in. (Maybe a group trip to see Sanctum?)

And finally a horror story from the UK, which will send shudders down the spines of all club organisers everywhere.

A small town badminton club wasn't able to meet in it's usual club hall location one month due to renovations, so the club secretary generously volunteered to host the event at his home. To make the event a little different he arranged for a fondue evening -but disaster struck. One of the guests placed the still burning fondue set too close to some curtains after the meal. To cut a long story short the whole house burned down. BUT - the worst bit of it all - the organiser is being sued by two of the guests for failing to properly explain where all the emergency exits were located and the Health and Safety Executive (like OSH in NZ) are investigating potential negligency claims.

So think again about that house warming party you were planning....



# Tech Dive NZ

## Newsletter February 2011

www.techdivenz.com, info@techdivenz.com

### 10 x 10 x 10

WINTER DIVING CHALLENGE

**We are looking for 10 adventurous divers to take up our winter diving challenge.**

Between May and September we have arranged 10 days where we will be specifically targeting 10 of the most exciting and challenging dives at the Poor Knights Islands. Pit your skills against the whims of the weather gods and the best sub-tropical diving in the world.

The first diver to complete all 10 diving challenges\* wins a free weekend of diving with OceanBlue. And EVERY diver who completes 6 challenges gets a half-price weekend with OceanBlue.

\*or the most completed challenges at the end of the period

#### **What have you got to lose?**

Join us for all or just a couple of the diving weekends aboard Mazurka, knowing you will be sailing out specifically to dive the best spots.\* On each weekend you have the opportunity to do up to 7 dives, you will get great food and have great company. And after only 6 successful challenges you get even more diving for free. In fact the only thing you can lose is this opportunity, if you sign up too late and all the places have gone!

\*Weather dependant

#### **The Challenges**

##### **Twelve-Fathom Reef**

This rarely dived reef on the west side of the Poor Knights rises to a maximum 22m before dropping off into the depths. You need good buoyancy and a keen eye for sharks.

##### **Phil's Pins**

This collection of pinnacles is another rarely dived site on the east side of the island. The pinnacles start deep and go deeper still – you have been warned!

##### **The Mermaid of Taravana**

Taravana is the longest underwater cave at the Poor Knights. To reach the Mermaid you will need to plan carefully and not be afraid of the dark.

##### **Fresh-water zone in Crystal Cave**

This cave is also known as Scary Cave and with good reason. To reach the fresh water you will need to pass the restriction 100m in from the entrance.

##### **The Chimney at Fraggie Rock**

Follow the wall and look for the darkness. This chimney starts at 30m and drops vertically down to the sand at 38m. You can't hang around at this depth.

##### **The Window on Landing Bay Pinnacle**

Prepare yourself for a spectacular view as you exit the window onto the sheer rock face dropping to 45m+.

##### **Drift dive: Wild Beast Point - Northern Arch**

Take it easy and go with the flow, just look out for the wild beasties. This is a classic dive at the northern tip of the islands.

##### **Circumnavigate: Sugarloaf or Scary Deep**

Maintain your depth and keep an eye on your compass as you enjoy spectacular drop-off at the far south of the island chain.

##### **The air chamber at Red Baron Cracks**

It is not easy to navigate the labyrinth of cracks collectively known as Red Baron Caves. Can you find your way to the enclosed air chamber at the very back?

##### **East or West**

How good are your navigation skills? Can you find more than 1 dive site on the same dive or will it take you several dives to complete this challenge? To pass the eastern challenge you need to find Mine Shaft, Matt's Crack and Air-Bubble Cave; to go west you must visit El Torito, Shark-fin and Big-Eye.



#### **Details**

Our belief is that anyone who enjoys their diving will want to do at least 4-6 days diving in a five month period, especially with such a great selection of dive sites on offer. And unless disaster strikes this should be comfortably enough time to earn a half-priced weekend, maybe even a free weekend if you work hard.

We also think by giving you plenty of time to prepare and train for this challenge that all of the dive sites are possible. Of course we're not making it easy – but then anything good takes a bit of effort.

As the challenge progresses we will give regular updates in the TDNZ newsletter so everyone will know how our 10 divers are doing. And the divers will know who is out in front in the race to do all 10 sites first and claim the free weekend.

All the diving will be done from Mazurka (OceanBlue) and Kev and the crew will be giving plenty of help and advice to ensure you successfully dive each site.

#### **HOW TO ENTER**

**If you want to join in this challenge please send us an email. [info@techdivenz.com](mailto:info@techdivenz.com) Remember only the first 10 people to contact us get the chance to win a free weekend!**

# Tech Dive NZ

## Newsletter February 2011

www.techdivenz.com, info@techdivenz.com

### PROFILE

CLUB MEMBER OF THE MONTH

In this section we profile one of our dive club regulars, find out a little more about them and see if they have any recommendations for us. This month we profile:

#### MIKE SMITH



Profession/job? Civil Engineer

When did you start diving? Early 2007

What qualifications do you have? PADI Assistant Instructor and Master Scuba Diver, various specialties and TDI Intro to Tech.

How many dives have you done? 187 (with about 50 of these on the HMNZS Waikato)

Favourite NZ dive site? No clear winner - the Poor Knights, the Aldermans or the HMNZS Waikato.

Which course would you most recommend? Really enjoyed the Divemaster and Assistant Instructor courses.

What do you love most about diving? The relaxation of it, and marvelling at the incredible diversity of creation that only divers get to see. Also enjoy the unique buddy relationship - relying on another person and in turn being reliable (hopefully) for a safe and enjoyable dive.

What do you do when you are not diving? Work too much, a bit of DIY, infrequent tramping, tinkering with project cars

What is the next course you plan to do? GUE Fundamentals

What is the next dive trip you plan to do? Probably the HMNZS Waikato - again.

Any other information we should know about you? Wife, 2 offspring, dog, flabby gut, old, bald spot, old, bloody nice guy, old, .....???

### DIVE FACTS

DID YOU KNOW?

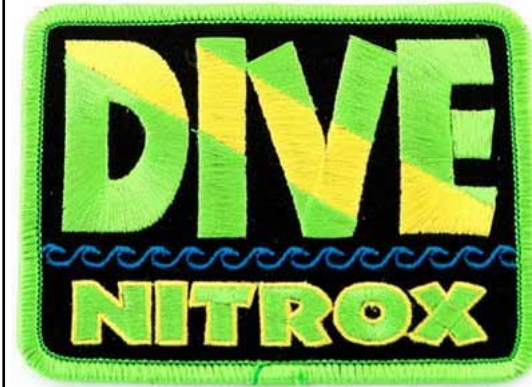
Mixed gas diving or diving on a gas other than air is a much older concept than you might think. In fact as early as 1879 a closed-circuit oxygen rebreather had been developed as a way of avoiding nitrogen and the associated problems of decompression illness.

In 1919 helium and oxygen was first patented as a breathing gas and by 1925 the US Bureau of Mines was doing experiments with helium decompression. In 1937 the first successful heliox dive was conducted.

In 1943 enriched air nitrox was first suggested as a way of reducing the possibility of decompression illness and by 1959 the US Navy published it's first nitrox diving tables. In 1962 commercial heliox diving began and in 1970 NOAA (The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) launched its EANx program.

OK so much for the history lesson, but it is what happened next which is most interesting.

In the mid 1980's two new training agencies start up, IAND and ANDI, both offering nitrox training. Everything is looking good.



And then suddenly the diving world goes mad for 5 years. In 1991 DEMA bans nitrox training providers from its show. In 1992 the British Sub-Aqua club prohibits its members from using nitrox and in 1993 Skin Diver magazine publishes 3 articles stating nitrox is unsuitable for recreational divers. WHY???

Eventually in 1995 BSAC and PADI both adopt nitrox and set up training programs.

So where are we at in NZ? I hate to say it but the cruise ship captain's joke of NZ being several hours ahead but 10 years behind still holds true. Hopefully we'll catch up soon and all the dive shops and charter boats will offer nitrox as standard.

