

Tech Dive NZ

Newsletter May 2011

www.techdivenz.com, info@techdivenz.com

WELCOME TO OUR MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



Welcome to the May edition of our monthly TDNZ newsletter. This month we have a slightly more unusual selection of features, including a Wellington dive site, a trip report based more above than below the water and a new section of classified ads, as requested by a few of you with dive gear you wish to sell. If you're looking for a bargain definitely don't miss that section. And we also have a second trip report, it was just so unusual we had to include it!

This month has seen some very exciting water activities. As well as the two trip reports below, we've also had a couple of deep trimix dives at the Poor Knights, hitting a maximum depth of 78m on a reef behind Ngaio Rock. The reef had a lot of black coral trees, plus plenty of other life and lots of colour. Thank you to Andrew at Global Dive for organising this trip and also to Noel and Glenn on Yukon

charters for some great diving despite very difficult weather conditions.

We've also been busy with some more normal diving as well - a Cowshed trip, a night dive at the lake and a GUE Fundamentals course. We were hoping we could also bring you news from our cave and cavern combo weekend at the end of April, but the recent bout of very unpredictable weather kibosh'd that. We have rescheduled it, so if you couldn't do the first dates check our new ones just in case.

Finally, although we generally avoid promoting dive gear in this newsletter, we couldn't resist showing you the latest Halcyon wing just landed. Pink camo - Awesome! Anyone know any butch techies?



LOCATION HIGHLIGHTING A GREAT NZ DIVE SITE



This month we have chosen a dive site which should be very familiar to our Wellington readers, but possibly totally unknown to everyone else - Mermaids Kitchen.

This is a shore dive off the south coast of Wellington, at Island Bay to be precise. Jamie has dived this site a couple of times, entering the water directly in front of Splash Gordon's. The site is relatively shallow, with a maximum of 10-12m - trust us it is a very long swim out into the straight to get 15m.

There are two awesome things about this site - the topography and the chance of amazing encounters with the wildlife. You can pretty much swim in either direction along the shoreline, but

either way will take you through rock outcrops, small canyons, in and out of the kelp - it feels like a real exploration dive.

As for the life - well on Jamie's first dive here a group of Orcas came up to say hi as he was trying to teach a class - talk about off-putting. The site is also part of the Taputeranga Marine Reserve, created in August 2008, so the fish life is getting better and better each year. Interestingly you will also see plenty of Paua - not a common site elsewhere.

Obviously being opposite a dive shop makes logistics very easy and there is also a big carpark. The only potential problem is the notoriously windy Wellington Weather. The picture below is actually taken from the same place as the first picture and shows what happens when a big southerly storm comes up from the Antarctic - wow. But on a good day the site is wonderful.



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DIVING

TRIP OF THE MONTH

America's Cup - underwater filming May 4th

"We need a diver to help out with some filming of America's Cup Racing. Are you free?" Work is always good, especially when it's interesting, but I was a little confused. Yacht racing happens above the water, why did they need a diver? The answer, whilst simple, wasn't exactly comforting - "We want the cameraman in the water, filming as the boats race over his head. We want you to make sure he doesn't get run down." Hmm, not something my mother would approve of I'm sure.

8am the next morning and I'm at the America's cup base, 101 Halsey Street, Westhaven. I meet the cameraman, Murray, and his assistant for the day, Jacob - known as a data wrangler in modern gobbledegook. Then I meet the Imax crew, the HD film crew, the other stills photographer, the fly on the wall documentary makers, my skipper for the day and about another 10 boat handlers and jet-skiers who are also involved in the days proceedings - plus obviously the 6 boat crews. I fleetingly wonder who is paying for everything - Larry Ellison it seems is very passionate about yacht racing. He needs to be because his accountant must be having a



heart attack.

Watching the boats being prepared and launched is a treat in itself. The hulls get wheeled out of the hanger and the mast is attached with the help of a crane. The main-sail is made of two rigid pieces hinged in the middle - having done a little sailing myself I wonder what happens when they want to stop if the wind gets too strong. I then watch as the same crane then lifts the entire boat into the water. It is a remarkably smooth process, even with something so expensive and so many people involved. Clearly

the teams have done it before many times. Finally by 10.30am we are heading out into the Rangitoto Channel.

The brief we have been given is to film the boat as it races overhead, looking up through the water column. Given all the rain yesterday and an outgoing tide I'm not hopeful we'll be able to see anything. We have to be at a depth a 4m to avoid being hit by the dagger-boards. I'm right - our first attempt is a failure.

We decide instead to film both at the surface and just below, with me staying on the surface just above Murray. With a relatively strong tidal-flow we opt to drift freely, trying to hang onto a fixed buoy with everything else going on is too hard. I have to let Murray know when the boat is approaching and give the skippers something to aim for and more importantly miss. We have a discussion about emergency procedures.

And then we start. I float at the surface and watch as the boats fly toward me at 20+ knots. If I get hit by the dagger board, the rudder or the dolphin strikers it is going to be nasty - but as we do it time and again I marvel at the incredibly delicate control of the skippers. As they charge towards me, one hull flying out of the water, I can see the tiniest of adjustents and suddenly the boat has been and gone in a hum of carbon fibre and a foamy wake. We do a dozen or more passes by both boats

before Murray is happy.

Back on board the main filming boat we review the footage - it looks awesome - everyone is happy. It's a strange moment. We've put ourselves at considerable risk to get this footage. I've literally had my hands full - holding onto our big marker buoy, holding onto Murray, holding my reg in order to blow a stream of bubbles in front of the camera as Murray surfaces and trying to hold Murray down because he was underweighted. And how much of this footage does the film crew expect to use - maybe 5 seconds if we're lucky. It's all part of the opening sequence of a planned America's Cup advert.

But the rest of the day is great. With my underwater work done I get to enjoy a ring-side seat as the boats race all afternoon. It's nice work if you can get it.



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DIVING

TRIP (2) OF THE MONTH

Horahora Power Station May 11th

Just over 100 years ago work started on New Zealand's first hydro-electric power station. Sixty four years ago the station disappeared, submerged by the rising waters which had been dammed for a bigger and more modern hydro-electric station built further down the river. Eighteen months ago a small group of us went searching for this largely forgotten piece of NZ history and although the diving wasn't very successful we knew we had got close. Finally yesterday we got the breakthrough – during 90 minutes underwater, two of us got inside some of the surviving



buildings with a video camera. As the saying goes, good things are worth waiting for – well we've waited and waited and this was definitely good! (For more on the history and details of our first dive attempt see our trip report from 21st October 2009.)

Before I talk in full about the dive I should first explain a little of the logistics. This is not a dive-site you can simply drive up to, jump in and start exploring. Firstly you need a boat, otherwise you'll be exhausted by the walk from the nearest parking spot. (Unless you have willing sherpas.) Then ideally you need someone on the spot everyday to monitor water clarity and call when conditions are good. Next you need divers capable of operating in very low visibility conditions, in an overhead environment, using lines and a video camera and who can take a day out of their schedules at short notice. Finally if you really want an idea of what you are exploring you need a decent side scan sonar. To get all of these pieces in place is a big ask – but with the enthusiasm and motivation of Mike from Karapiro cruises we had everything. As Matt and I drove down through the rain on Wednesday morning we were pretty excited.

Waiting for us when we arrived was Mike and also another smaller boat, skippered by Campbell, which had the good sonar. We dumped our gear and headed off up the river, glad the Auckland rain had not followed us

down. As we approached the site we slowed and watched the sonar in anticipation – if you look at the picture below hopefully you'll get some idea of the buzz we felt.



When you see sonar images like these you know you've hit the jackpot – not only can you see there are buildings down there, but you can see windows, doorways and even where the silt has piled up. Matt and I needed very little encouragement to get into our suits and start exploring.

Diving on a site like this takes a bit of planning in order to remain safe. The buildings are big and the visibility is restricted – an unwary diver could easily swim into a building and not realise until he tried to ascend – not something we wanted to experience.

Therefore the first thing we did was to set up an ascent line. We dropped in with the ascent line and attached it to the first piece of building we could find; whatever happened now we knew we could always ascend from this point. From here we tied in our exploration line and set off down a slope of mixed sand and silt until we hit metal work. Continuing forward we found concrete, followed by a window – bingo. In such restricted visibility it's hard to know whether you are dragging your line into 'line traps', so we tied off wherever possible. We followed along the wall noting several other windows and behind them rooms full of debris washed down the lake over the last 64 years. Eventually we found a room more open than the others – in we went.

I had thought it was dark outside the building, but once inside it was truly dark. Our lights allowed us to pick out features in the gloom and we ducked under and around old power cables and wires, eventually exciting through a window on the other side of the building. We dropped down a level and found several large openings, possibly for vehicles and swam through another room back to the side of the building we started on.

The rest of this report plus additional photos is on our website. Just click through to the trip & course reports section.

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DIVING

WHAT'S COMING UP



Poor Knights Winter Live-aboards May 28-29th

The first of our exciting 10 * 10 * 10 weekends is nearly here. Join us as we head out to tackle the most iconic of the Poor Knights dive sites, including Phil's Pins, Scary Deep and 12-fathom reef, to name just a few. There is no better cure for winter blues than a couple of days on OceanBlue!

GUE Fundamentals

June 2-6th [Queen's Birthday Weekend]

This is THE best class for improving your dive skills, regardless of experience - everyone will benefit from this class. In fact Jamie is so confident he offers a money back guarantee. And to make it as easy as possible the course will run Thursday and Friday evenings, plus all day Saturday, Sunday and Monday - so no need to take time off work.

Cave & Cavern diving: Poor Knights June 10th - 12th

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, this trip was originally supposed to take place at the end of April, but was cancelled due to weather - so over half the places have already been taken, contact us ASAP if you want to join us.



Rotorua Tough Guy Challenge August 6th

Something a little different! Get down and dirty with us in the mud. Challenge yourself to a unique off-road event involving mud, a spiders-web net climb, mud, various man-made obstacles, mud, a barbed wire crawl, mud, a swamp crossing and yet more mud. Everyone will be impressed - really!?.



Lake Taupo & Waikato River Drift June 18-19th

One weekend, three very different dive experiences. The plan for this weekend is firstly to do a couple of dives in Lake Taupo, enjoying the deep shore diving in very clear water; secondly to do a drift dive down the Waikato River during the day; thirdly to do a re-run of one of last years more challenging dives - a night drift dive down the river. Join us for all or just one of the dives and add something very unusual to your log-book.

Mexico - Cenote Diving September 5-9th

Explore some of the world's best and most beautiful caverns and caves and then relax afterwards in the warmth of the Caribbean sunshine. A group of us are heading over to do a mixture of cave classes and pleasure diving and if you don't fancy the caves there is also great reef diving to be had nearby.

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 scheduled events:

Jun 11-12th - Poor Knights Live-aboard
Jun 21st - Mid-winter night dive
Jul 9-10th - Poor Knights Live-aboard
Aug 6-7th - Poor Knights Live-aboard
Sept 24-25th - Poor Knights Live-aboard
Oct 20-24th - GUE Fundamentals
October 30th - Auckland Marathon

Events still to be scheduled:

Halcyon Treasure Hunt
Cage diving with Mako sharks
Riwaka Resurgence
Blue Creek Resurgence

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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:

STEVE BALDWIN



Profession/job? I design electronic things.

When did you start diving? I did my o/w about 1985 I think. I did around 20 dives and fizzled out. I got back into again it around 2000.

How many dives have you done? About 500.

What qualifications do you have? What, all of them ? School Cert..... and some others. Diving wise, NZUA/CMAS 2 star diver, GUE Cave 1, IANTD Trimix and the usual collection of misc plastic cards.

Favourite NZ dive site? I don't really have one. I've had some great dives in mediocre places and some mediocre dives in great places. I've had a lot of fun in Lake Poo but you couldn't list it as a premier dive site.

Which course would you most recommend? I would recommend everyone have a crack at fundies. Pass or fail doesn't matter so much as the change in focus.

What do you love most about diving? I just love being there. I'm just as happy at 3m in Blue Maomao Arch as I am scootering at 65m or being 500m into a cave. Although caves do have there own magic.

What do you do when you are not diving? Mostly work to pay off the diving I've already done. I'm also into hotrods, photography, astronomy, caving and neglecting house maintenance.

What is the next course you plan to take? If anything it would probably be GUE Cave 2

Where is your next planned dive trip? Nothing planned at the moment.

Any other information we should know about you? I can't hear squat in noisy places. So if I don't chat, it's nothing personal.

DIVE CLUB

LATEST NEWS AND FUTURE EVENTS



This month's club evening was held at Mel and Jamie's new house and was a combo of part house-warming and part Blue Creek Expedition talk. There was a good group of about 15 who turned up, some clearly for the food and some to ask Jamie difficult and in-depth questions about cave exploration. Amazingly after a few beers and an entire day getting run down by America's Cup yachts (see the trip report) Jamie was still able to convey his passion for all things dark and underground. The question is has he turned anyone else to the dark side?

As for upcoming club events - please pay attention because we've lots to tell you.

Wed June 1st: This is our next club evening and we are going to return to our old favourite, The Abbey, 510 Great South Road. Those of you who have been involved with the club for a while will know this bar well - we've had many a long and rowdy evening here. We'll be there from 6pm onwards.

Tues June 21st: To celebrate the shortest day of the year, or longest night, we've decided to do a night dive. It will probably be at the lake and there will probably be a BBQ. More details to follow, but put it into your diaries now so you don't forget.

Wed July 6th: For our July club evening we're going to play shoot-em-up laser games in Mt Wellington again - at Megazone. We've run this event a couple of times before and it's been great fun. And just a reminder, the staff team is now unbeaten two years on the trot!

Happy diving everyone!

PS: Let us know if you have any more ideas for future club evenings.



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10 x 10 x 10

WINTER DIVING CHALLENGE

To dive or not to dive, that is the question.

OK, it appears we've confused people with our plans for great quality, great value winter diving - because this really is a no-brainer.

1. We will only be doing unusual and interesting sites.
2. It's discounted from the usual \$220/day to only \$180/day.
3. There is a 1 in 10 chance of winning a free weekend and an almost 100% chance of winning a free day if you try hard enough.



Just in case you've somehow missed the last 3 newsletters here are the main points again:

- a) We have arranged 5 weekends throughout the winter when you can join us for an overnight trip to the Poor Knights Islands onboard Mazurka. (OceanBlue)
- b) On each of these trips we will be specifically targetting the sites listed here - ie. we are trying to ensure we visit the best diving the PKs has to offer.
- c) As an additional incentive we offer anyone and everyone who manages to do 6 of the 10 listed sites whilst diving during this period with us a free days diving aboard Mazurka.
- d) The first person to dive all 10 sites wins a free weekend of diving aboard Mazurka.
- e) On every trip there will be a guide from TDNZ available to show you around or point you in the right direction.
- f) You can join us for 1, 2, 3, 4 or all of these trips - it's your choice.
- g) There are no additional charges to join us on these trips and no charge to enter the competition to win a free day or weekend.
- h) Mazurka is a live-aboard vessel, catering for a maximum of 6 customers. The Saturday evening of each trip will be spent anchored out at the PKs.

The Costs

The cost for two days of diving is \$360, which is discounted from the usual \$220/day. This cost includes your accommodation onboard on Saturday evening; lunch both days, Saturday evening meal and Sunday Breakfast - plus lots of snacks. All your air fills whilst onboard are included and there is the possibility of doing 7 dives during the weekend - which includes a night dive, something you cannot do off the normal day boats.

In terms of value for money this is an awesome deal. Maybe it is because it is such a good deal that everybody is a bit confused. We'll say it again - there are no catches, no hidden costs - just great diving to be done!



The Dives

1. Twelve-Fathom Reef
2. Phil's Pins
3. The Mermaid of Taravana
4. Fresh-water zone in Crystal Cave
5. The Chimney at Fraggie Rock
6. The Window on Landing Bay Pinnacle
7. Drift-dive: Wild Beast Pt:Northern Arch
8. Circumnavigate: Sugarloaf or Scary Deep
9. The air chamber at Red Baron Cracks
10. East or West

We have tried to pick dive sites which show off all the best bits of the Poor Knights, plus highlight a few of the lesser known gems, such as Phil's Pins and 12 Fathom Reef. These are the main sites which helped to rank the Poor Knights as Top 10 in the World.

The Dates

Weekend 1:

Saturday 28th and Sunday 29th May

Weekend 2:

Saturday 11th and Sunday 12th June

Weekend 3:

Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th July

Weekend 4:

Saturday 6th and Sunday 7th August

Weekend 5:

Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th September
(This weekend is also special as we will be celebrating Jamie's 40th Birthday!)

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DIVE FACTS

DID YOU KNOW?

Conshelf, short for Continental Shelf Station, was a series of undersea living and research stations set up by Jacques Cousteau and his team in the 1960s. The original plan was for five of these stations to be submerged to a maximum depth of 300m, however only three were completed.

Conshelf I was the first of these underwater habitats, built in 1962. It was submerged in 10m of water and involved a team of two spending seven days in the habitat.

Conshelf II, built in 1963, was the first major attempt to support men living and working on the sea floor. It housed 6 *oceanauts* living at 10m in a starfish-shaped house for 30 days. The undersea habitat also had two other structures, one a submarine hangar that housed a small two man sub and a smaller "deep cabin" where two *oceanauts* lived at a depth of 30m for a week. The undersea colony was supported with air, water, food and power from the surface. The project was a major step forward in the study of diving physiology and technology, and captured wide public appeal due to its dramatic "Jules Verne" look and feel. A Cousteau-produced feature film about the project received an Academy Award for Best Documentary the following year.



Conshelf III, built in 1965, housed six divers for three weeks at a depth of 100 metres. For this project Cousteau was determined to make the station more self-sufficient, severing most ties with the surface. A mock oil rig was even set up underwater with divers successfully performing several industrial tasks.

Much of the work was funded by the French Petrochemical industry, who, along with Cousteau, hoped such colonies could serve as base stations for the future exploitation of the sea. However, this was not to be as Cousteau later repudiated his support for such exploitation of the sea and put his efforts toward conservation.



CLASSIFIED

WANTED & FOR SALE

Underwater camera and housing for sale. Camera in great condition and housing should be all good with a bit of super-glue. Ref no. 1556

Dry-suit for sale. Zip and boots might need replacing, plus all seals. Dump valve a bit dodgy and inflator broken, otherwise all good. Great deal for right buyer. Ref no. 1003

Female two-piece medium wetsuit for sale. Good condition, only used a few times. Slight smell of urine. Ref no. 1573

5m tinnie with 75hp outboard for sale, good as new. Only 45 minutes running time. Bought for wife - bad idea. Ref no. 995

Young male diver recently arrived from South Island seeks female diver buddy with boat for weekend excursions. Please send picture of boat. Ref no. 1021

Keen but penniless diver seeks perverted sugar-mummy for mutual benefit. Willing to do whatever it takes to get new set of dive gear. Honestly, I look good in a rubber suit. Ref no. 885

Well established dive shop in Misrata for sale, big and loyal customer base. Dive attractions include newly sunk ship-wrecks, with more to follow shortly. Ref no. 1812

Male models wanted for underwater photo shoot. Any race/ethnicity, but should not be prone to shrinkage when cold. Ref no. 986

Male catheters for sale, freshly washed and only used once. Wide selection of brands and styles available. Discounts for prompt payment. References from satisfied clients available on request. Ref no. 884

For sale: Diving photos, most NZ and S. Pacific locations available. Ideal for anecdote or alibi. Ref. no 1156

Just in time for winter: 2 cray hunting gloves, good condition, one 5-finger, one 3-finger. \$15 for the pair. Ref. no. 1002

For sale: Complete set of diving manuals, beginner to advanced. No longer required as husband just qualified as a DM and knows ****ing everything now. Ref no. 782



WANTED:

A tall well-built woman with good reputation, who can cook frogs legs, who appreciates a good fuchsia garden, classical music and talking, without getting too serious. But please only read lines 1, 3 and 5.