

Poor Knights - 10 * 10 * 10 - trip Report: 28th & 29th May 2011

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Ten by Ten by Ten – a marketing idea which Kev and I conjured up whilst enjoying the sun between dives back in December. The rationale – a way to encourage people to continue diving during the winter. The plan – to organise 10 days of diving, focussing on 10 specific dive sites and offering 10 people the chance to win a free weekend of diving. It all sounded good in theory, but as summer turned to autumn and our first weekend drew near, I have to admit to wondering if it was such a good idea. However, as usual people left it to the last minute to commit and suddenly we had a full trip. Now the standard way to write the rest of this trip report is to go through each of the dives in turn, but I'm not going to. Instead I want to focus on a few of the highlights of what turned out to be a hugely successful start to our grand idea.



Stingray at 12 Fathom Reef (Kev's photo)

The first thing I'd like to say is 'yah-boo-sucks' to the few people out there who say "I've done the Knights." Really? I've been diving there regularly for over four years and up until this trip had done over 300 dives at more than 40 separately identifiable dive sites. [Yes I still log all my dives!] Clearly I'm still a long way from doing all the sites, but I have definitely done all the most popular ones. And so for me to do 3 new sites during the course of a single weekend is unusual. More importantly one of those sites – 12 Fathom Reef – was spectacular, the best fish dive I've ever done at the Knights, ever. For 25 minutes I was surrounded by clouds of fish – two-spot demoiselle, pink maomao, sweep, yellow-tails, trevally, kingfish, blue maomao and more. Mel and I floated just above the reef and it felt like we were in an aquarium. It was awesome. This is a dive-site I will be agitating to go back to time and time again.



Lots and lots of fish – 12 Fathom Reef (Photo by Kev)

The other two sites which were both new to me were Phil's Pins and Scary Deep (where I saw a bronzy), both quite exposed and potentially very deep sites requiring good weather and competent divers. Luckily we had both and therefore had excellent dives on these sites as well. If you then add in the Chimney at Fraggie Rock and the Mermaid in Taravana Cave and you have a double whammy – 5 highly enjoyable dives and also 5 dives ticked off our list of 10. Which means the divers who completed these dives now only have to do 1 more dive site to claim a free day of diving. Pretty cool. And if one of them completes the remaining 5 sites before anyone else then they win a free weekend. Suddenly our Ten by Ten by Ten idea is looking pretty hot!

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Another highlight for me was taking our new scooters out for a proper blast around. The first site we chose to use the scooters was Fraggie Rock/South Harbour. Here you have a large reasonably shallow area with several dive sites in close proximity – Fraggie Rock, Blue Maomao and Magic Wall being the most popular. With a scooter you can easily visit them all during a single dive. (How the other 4 divers managed to get lost on Fraggie Rock and end up at Blue Maomao we're not sure.) We also took the scooters into and through the chimney – our first attempt at more confined spaces – and it was great. The second site we chose for scootering was Taravana Cave. Big, open, heavy sand floor, simple navigation

– a good combination. We zoomed in and out several times and even had the time to properly examine the shallowest part of the cave at 12m where Jamie found a very intriguing crack oozing fresh water – definitely navigable in side-mount. Next trip maybe.

One of the more memorable features of the trip for Christian was something I've come to take for granted after many trips, but really it is quite unusual. How often do you get to sleep on a boat inside a cave? We spent Saturday night in Rikoriko cave, as it was the most sheltered spot given the wind direction. Kev (the skipper) is not a big fan as he moans about the mosquitos (not really that bad) but if you've never slept out at the Knight's it is quite a spectacular first night. The only problem is you tend to sleep in a little later on Sunday morning as the sunrise doesn't wake you up.

Probably the most amusing event of the weekend was John jumping in, fully kitted with double tanks, mask, hood, gloves, computer – just no fins.... The least amusing was poor Mal tweaking an old knee injury as he bent down to examine the scooters. It was bad enough to curtail his diving for the rest of the trip – we hope it gets better soon Mal.

Finally a quick reminder to those of you who may still be wavering about whether to join us or not.

We have 1 trip per month from now until September. On each trip we are targeting 10 specific sites (see below) and all that will stop us is bad weather. You can join us for just one of these trips, or two or three or all of them. If you manage to complete 6 of the 10 sites you win a free day's diving at the PK's, courtesy of OceanBlue. Based on last weekend I reckon you should all be able to claim a free days diving after just two weekend trips – not a bad return for your efforts. **BUT** now that we've shown how good these trips can be they are filling fast. If you love your diving then I suggest you sign up asap – otherwise you'll have to wait until next year.





The dive sites:

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.