

SS Yongala with *Yongala Dive*

Sunday morning Ray, Yvonne, Joe and I drove from Townsville to Alva Beach, Ayr. We left around 6am which gave us plenty of time to get to the shop by 7:30am. We set up our gear, helped load the boat and listened to the pre dive brief. We were then taken to the beach in a highly modified Land Cruiser “Troopie”.

The 12 Nm trip to the wreck was quite smooth and we were at the site at 9:30am. The wind was fairly mild at around 10kts, but it was obvious from the wakes around the mooring buoys there was a strong surface current.

On the first dive we fought the current and descended the wrecks’ stern mooring line. Visibility was between 5m and 8m. We moved forward along the deck side at 25m. The current on the wreck was more manageable, and you could use the structure to lessen its’ effect in some areas. We found olive sea snakes with their heads buried in small holes, turtles chewing on weed and marine growth and a large Queensland grouper towards the bow. We moved over the deck to the port side at the bow, using the current to bring us back to the stern mooring line.

I found the second dive easier and more enjoyable as I now knew what conditions to expect. We travelled around the wreck in the same direction, this time spending more time over the port side. Here we saw big schools of turrum and golden trevally chasing bait fish. We also found large coral trout sitting on the hull and big maori wrasse swimming in and out of cargo holds to our left.

The weather worsened during the second dive, but we still had a comfortable trip back to Alva Beach. It’s hard to have a bad dive on the Yongala, even with poor conditions there’s still plenty of marine life to look at. I found the low visibility prevents you from seeing things off the wreck and makes you focus on what’s happening on the wreck.

I’m looking forward to diving the Yongala again in a couple of months when the monsoonal low and associated weather has cleared up.