

By Simon Penprase

# Vice President's Report

## 2009/2010

---

This past financial year has been really good for our club; the following report is an overview of the events and functions that made the last 12 months such a success. Last year, I performed a promotions capacity for the club, so I'll start off with our fundraising efforts, before reviewing our diving activities.

We've done a lot of fund raising this past year, which started off with our first outing to the sizzling Bunnings arena in January. A big thanks needs to go to Yvonne, Garry and Amanda for putting in all the organising efforts, and also to all the helpers on the day.



**Sizzling up a Bunning's storm!**

Our next fund raiser was the garage sale in May, which had a couple of new additions. This year Garry and I nearly went into business supplying and repairing old lawn mowers, which went like hot cakes both at the sale, and later on through the Townsville Bulletin.

By Simon Penprase

Thanks to everyone who donated items and helped out at the sale; we had lots of fun and sold plenty of treasures, beating last years total by \$55. It was also interesting meeting some of the Mt Louisa locals, such as the man with the bovine horn attachments adorning his push bike, and the intriguing young man wearing the shirt titled "*To women - From god*".

A special thanks needs to go to Jeff for depositing a small anchor off the southern beach at Pelorus Island earlier in the year, and also to Ian for finding the anchor, transporting it to Townsville, and then selling it at the sale!

We also had a homemade mango and tomato chutney tasting table, and I can genuinely say that everyone that sampled the spreads went on to buy a bottle. I have big plans for the next batch, although it will be tomato chutney only this time, as my mango tree has had a meeting with a little chainsaw, and is in recovery mode. So far I have amassed about 100 bottles, and I'm planning on doubling production with a new, much bigger cooking pot!

The first dive of the financial year was a trip to Davies Reef on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July on board Glen Beam's reef boat. Mike and Dave reported a huge amount of fish schooling between a break in the reef wall and Ray, Tony, Geoff and I swam circuits around a really good bombie covered in hard corals and anemones.

On the first week end in August, Mike put in an order for good visibility, whales and great dives aboard the MV Kalinda. We didn't receive our humpbacks (under water at least), but we certainly received ample helpings of good visibility and great dives. There were some very happy customers at the mooring site after dives at Shark Alley, the reef edge and Student Bombie.

By Simon Penprase



**The August MV Kalinda crew**

The next day we entered the water just after dawn for an early dive on the SS Yongala wreck. We were presented with zero current and unusually good visibility; good enough to make even Dave Stewart become quite excited. The usual armada of critters were home, the Queensland Grouper, snakes, Cow-Tail Rays, Barracuda, and even a 2m plus bronze coloured shark with broad shoulders that swam under the ascent line below a very watchful and wide-eyed Gary and Simon.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of August, we were presented a new first aid kit and an oxygen kit from Judy Breeze and Malcolm Marsh, during an Oxygen Provider course run by AUFQ. Malcolm trained nine of our members in the basic provision of oxygen and we used the night to become familiar with our new equipment.

Judy and Malcolm stayed in Townsville that week end, which gave us the opportunity to do a dive on the Yongala wreck on board the Yongala Express. The conditions weren't quite as good as the previous week end, but we did see plenty of Cobia, Moray Eels, turtles and Eagle Rays. This was also the first time I managed to find the bath tub inside the bow near the bollard attached to the diver access point.

Our next club trip was a Pelorus Island week end over the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> of September. Some unusual animals were found along the southern end of the

By Simon Penprase

beach including a Slipper Lobster, a purple octopus, intricate black and white nudibranchs, Long-Toms and a large hard-shelled snail about the size of my hand. Dave also reported having an epic underwater encounter with a man-sized crayfish! For fringing reef, Pelorus never ceases to surprise, in terms of the variety of the marine life and the health of the sites.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of September the club celebrated its 34<sup>th</sup> birthday in true style and flare at Steve and Jane's house. Some of the "Olds-n-Bolds" were present, and we were regaled and amused with stories of past dive trips, mishaps, and personalities. Several dive operators from Townsville and Cairns donated some fantastic prizes, and congratulations to those lucky members who took home a prize. Steve and Jane hosted a great night and Dave did a sterling job organising the catering.



**The club's birthday bonanza!**

I'm not in a position to talk about what the club did in October and November, as I spent two months in Toowoomba for work; however, I can tell you that the wreck of the HMAS Brisbane in Morton Bay is definitely worth a dive, or six! The ship was decommissioned from the RAN and sunk as a fish attracting device for divers in July 2005; and after five years, the site is home to nudibranchs, octopus, Yellow-Tail King Fish, crayfish, turtles and some impressive Queensland Grouper that rival those grouper on the Yongala.

By Simon Penprase

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of December, Glen Beam took a second group of members out on his newly refurbished reef boat. This time we dived on Wheeler Reef at the mooring site and Student Bombie. Brad and I were lucky (or unlucky) to witness two turtles mating, which I can tell you is a very vigorous activity, and involves one of the two participants having their head rammed into the sand!

In the New Year, the club's first dive activity was a Pelorus trip over the Australia Day Long Week End. The weather was not looking good, and our charter had to cancel the trip. A few of us decided to battle the elements anyway, and Garry took us over in his boat. After a rough trip to the island, our first day was pretty good and Garry and I, and Steve and Jane got a couple of nice dives in, both at the southern and northern ends of the beach. The large black coral tree at the southern end of the beach is very impressive, and I'm convinced it has grown significantly over the last few years, although some members have advised me that I may have been suffering nitrogen narcosis!

The following day we were woken by Cyclone Neville battering the club tarp, as he traversed south down the coast. The weather surrounding us was the worst I've ever seen around the Palm Islands, and we learnt that surf can actually hit the inside of Pelorus Island! No diving was done this day; however we did witness a couple of heart-stopping moments when other boats broke free of their anchors and drifted away.

The next day, Garry and I checked his boat's anchor and tried to conduct a little dive on the way back in. We aborted after realising that we both literally could not see our hands in front of our faces!

The weather finally broke for us on our last day, and we were able to get in a couple of small shallow dives at the northern end of the beach. Our trip home was much better, and we were left with the memories of a true "Man-versus-Wild" week end, Bear Grills style!

By Simon Penprase



**Australia Day during Cyclone Neville!**

Our next trip to Pelorus over the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May was an entirely different affair. We had great weather and good dives over three days. Ian undertook his first night dive, and we were lucky enough to find a huge turtle sleeping with three large remoras attached to its shell, and a pair of Arrow Squid that put on a show of colour and texture changes for us.

The next day Ian and I conducted a dive at the base of the R.A.D. mooring after receiving some good advice from Andrew about this site. In 22m of water, we found "Judas", which is a human sized manakin, decked out with a full length wet suit, gloves, face mask, and chained around the legs.

That evening, several divers entered the water for a second night dive with high expectations from the previous night. A couple of divers discovered just how dark the shoreline looks from the water when surfacing a tad too far from the camp site!

Our final day of diving featured Crocodile Fish, Barramundi-Cod and my new favourite underwater past time - anchor retrieval!

I would also like to thank John and Bradley for operating and looking after the compressor during this trip. They kept it running all week end, and even diagnosed and repaired a broken on-off switch.

In June, the club got together at a local dive store for a DVD night, to showcase some of the diving our members have done both locally and overseas. It was great to see such a variety of movies, and to be able to talk

By Simon Penprase

to a couple of divers that have completed technical dives using closed circuit equipment at sites around Townsville that are usually overlooked by divers. Well done Yvonne for organising the night, and thanks to all those members who shared their footage and stories.

The final dive activity for the club during the previous financial year was a second live-aboard trip aboard the MV Kalinda, and we certainly finished with a ripper of a trip! On the first night our skipper decided to head straight to the site of the Yongala wreck, as the weather forecast was very favourable. This turned out to be an excellent decision. The conditions were outstanding; we spent the whole day at the wreck, and we even conducted a Yongala night dive! Diving with a self inflating BCD proved to be interesting, as is crashing into large cow-tail rays in the dark!

We spent our second day at the Wheeler Reef mooring and Student Bombie, and while these sites didn't provide the same level of excitement as the Yongala in near perfect conditions, we all still had very interesting dives on really healthy sites, in excellent visibility. Robyn and I found a Guitar Shark right under the boat, several yellow Trumpet Fish and we even found a Mantis Shrimp. It retreated back into its hole, and when I went in for a better look, I remembered a story Ian had told me about how these angry little critters are able to smash holes in fire buckets and face masks!

Well, that completes a wrap up of the club's activities over the last 12 months. I apologise if I've missed out any activities, but hopefully I've covered the majority of them. Thanks to all the outgoing office bearers and club members for your individual and collective contributions. This financial year has started well, and we have already completed a couple of interesting and memorable dive trips. We have several more trips planned for the rest of the year, so come along, get involved, and let's continue blow bubbles!