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S.S. Yongala Dive Report

On Easter Friday, a group of divers travelled to Alva Beach to dive the wreck of the SS Yongala. From NQUEC we had Simon, Joanne, Ian, Robyn, Gary, Ray, Yvonne, Mark C, Tony, and Mark.

I think it's fair to say that everyone was pretty keen for a dive, given the poor weather at the start of the year, and we were also particularly keen to see the effect of T.C. Yasi on the wreck.

When we saw the beach we were presented with a comforting sight of almost glassed-out water, and it didn't take us long to get to the site.



A happy little diver!

There was a slight surface current for the first dive, but this didn't

seem to extend beyond mid-water, and conditions on the wreck were quite good, although visibility was reduced at around 5m.



Olive Sea Snake

We descended on the bow and the first noticeable change is the new orientation of the wreck. The ship now lies with its starboard side in greater contact with the sea floor, meaning the angle the deck makes to the floor is now closer to 90 degrees, rather than the previous 45 degrees. Our dive leader told us this has resulted in a greater amount of exposed cargo sitting on the sand.

The low visibility slowed our dive down, and we probably covered less ground, but we took more in. We had been told the soft corals had been removed from large areas of the wreck, and this is most evident

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at the stern, where a row of eight port holes has been exposed, as well as hinged doors, and big sections of plate metal from the ship's outer hull.



Exposed hull near stern on port side

Another noticeable change is the vast lengths of plumbing which can now be easily seen below almost the entire length of the deck. Much more of the interior of the wreck is visible now from the outside, making torches well worth using.

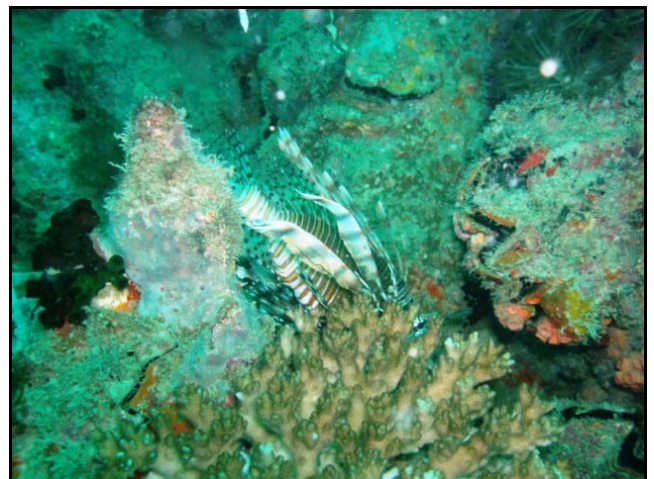
Inside one opening Joanne and I found several large Flowery Cod, some huge Coral Trout, and two very impressive Barramundi Cod. I was also surprised to see Anemone Fish, Lion Fish, and Banded Sea Snakes which I have not seen on previous dives.



Flowery Cod sitting just inside the deck

We found several turtles on the first dive, including a really old looking one covered in barnacles that came up for air as we began our ascent.

After a surface interval, we descended again and this time found the surface current had eased. Joanne and I spent some time at the bow, and found the anchor to be clearly visible. Most divers spent some time here looking for the name Yongala, and Gary found chain links wrapped throughout the anchor winch well.



Lion Fish hiding behind soft coral

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Turtle - and who's in the background?

Underneath the bow we found the gigantic head of a really big QLD Grouper pointing out away from the wreck. I tried to get closer to take a photo, but this proved difficult; the fish snapped its jaws shut which made a loud noise and scared away the surrounding fish and divers!

As we moved towards the stern, Joanne found a 2m Guitar Shark. The low visibility made it difficult to see, but the multiple dorsal fins gave it away.

We couldn't see the usual big schools of fish hanging just off the wreck like the Chevron Barracuda, Paddle Tail, and Sea Perch, but we did spot some Queenfish, Turrum, Rainbow Runners, and some truly massive GTs.

We took a bit of a gamble on the weather over Easter, which traditionally isn't known to be favourable for diving, but we were lucky to get almost flat seas and a sunny day. For a few of us, this was our first dive in a while. The good conditions made it easy to become comfortable in the water again, and it was good to see a few NQUEC divers having fun out on and under the water!

Simon Penprase



Turtle following us up the ascent line