

**Report on dive weekend at Orpheus Island Research Station. August 21- 23
by Dave**

It was a beautiful Friday morning at Taylors Beach when the 8 NQUEC members boarded the JCU transfer vessel, we had 4 people new to the island Amanda, Derek, John and Tony the old hands Yvonne, Narrell, Lissane and I (not sure if I can be called an old hand only my second visit).

Friday 21st

The crossing was uneventful and we were soon disembarking and getting our kit organized, once the usual induction was out of the way we quickly organized our first dive of the weekend, which was a shore dive from the point, Lachlan and Louise who were caretaker managers while we were there were most accommodating in transporting the dive gear to the point. 6 divers in total took to the water we were a little late in getting in the water due to an idiot (me) having a weight belt malfunction but once we were in the dive proved to be a most enjoyable one averaging about 8 or 9metres in depth and 6 or 7 in visibility, with a good variety of coral and fish life in the 4 or 5metre area as we were returning to shore.

We had a hasty lunch and were then allocated our jobs with some people attempting to monopolize the less strenuous jobs and unfortunately failing to do so we know who I am talking about Derek don't we?

Our allocated tasks included weeding and coral road repair, the ladies were given the task of weeding which some people would consider as a suitable task for women folk! My self due to my acute sense of self preservation would never voice this opinion. (Well not with in earshot of the girls anyway) and they went off with much purpose and enthusiasm to tackle this challenge.

Lachlan then turned his attention to the guys and noticed that there were quite a few tanks to be filled in the dive area and being the good judge of character he is he chose John and myself to take on this technical challenge, Derek and Tony being two strapping young lads were then handed shovels and rakes patted on their backs and transported the location for the road repairs with our kind words of encouragement ringing in their ears! I would like to be able to report what response we got but there may be ladies and children reading this report so I must refrain from doing so?

Once John and myself got the majority of tanks filled John left me to finish the last few remaining tanks and went to help the road crew, it was just after this that several ladies from NQUEC walked by and upon seeing what I was doing passed several derogatory comments which I believed were uncalled for, as after all I was only doing what was asked of me. I will not say who the main offender was with regard to these unsavory comments, but the last time she was on the island she managed to wangle her self on to an Island cruise to Palm Island!! Say no more.

Being the conscientious guy that I am as soon as I finished the last of the tanks I set of at a great pace to help my comrades in their toil, I had visions of that great movie Cool Hand Luke with the road crew working at great speed to tar the road only to find what can best be described as a bunch of guys impersonating a council crew! With Tony himself being part of the Council, leaning on the shovel like a true professional. I offered to help and several shovels were offered with kind words of encouragement? I was disappointed to find that the work was almost complete and I was only able to help in the repair to one pot hole before work was called to a halt and we returned to our accommodation, for a well earned shower and lovely evening meal where the bull dust and wine flowed in equal amounts.

Saturday 22nd

Morning in paradise.

Most of us woke rested and refreshed ready for our morning boat dive off Cascade Gardens near the resort. The weather was a little overcast but still lovely, 5 of us set of for our mornings dive with John, Tony and my self diving and Derek and Amanda soaking up the UV's in the boat.

We tied up to the two marker Buoy's not far from the island resort and commenced our dive. The dive averaged about 12metres or so with visibility about 5metres. We had what can be described as a meandering dive where we swam across rubble bottom and encountered the occasional Bommie with intermittent fish and coral life. The dive lasted about 50-55 minutes with all three of us surfacing near the resort and about 200metres from the boat it was while we waited for the boat that we commented on how cool the dive was which was strange as the computers showed water temp as 23 degrees and the water was the same temp the day before and it was a comfortable dive.

We returned to the Station filled our tanks like good divers, and Yvonne joined us for a quick snorkel around the fringing mangroves which proved to be a little disappointing due to lack of wildlife.

After a well deserved lunch we all has a group tackled the weeding and with the added impetus of the guys the area that we were allocated soon became weed less, with Lachlan once again being the good judge of character he gave us an early mark.

Two hardy lads who were gluttons for punishment made what one person said was a rash decision to walk the track to the other side of the Island. Tony and My self were the gluttons and we made good time and managed to do the trip in about 1 and a half hours with a 20 minute rest on the beach on the seaward side of the Island, I thoroughly enjoyed the walk Tony was a little less enthusiastic but I think he enjoyed it all the same.

Yvonne had a stroke of genius and suggested a quick morning dive on the Sunday and she and John organized it with Lachlan to have our gear taken to the point early on Sunday.

A civilized meal and with some of us refraining from drinking so much of the wine this time we had a great evening.

Sunday 23rd

Good to be alive.

We all woke bright and early and 4 of us geared up and set off for the point for an early morning shore dive with John diving with Tony and Yvonne and my self as the other buddies the dive was only planned to last 35- 40 minutes as we needed to return to help with the clean up. Yvonne and I descended on to a beautiful coral bommie in about 4 metres of water right on top of a very large Barramundi Cod which set the scene for the rest of the dive as we gently drifted with the marginal current and encountered lots of fish and beautiful coral we returned to the shore to find that John and Tony were unable to dive as Tony had picked up a tank which only had 30 bar in it so they waited around for us, which was a shame as I think the Sunday dive was a great dive so close to shore. We then as a group conducted the clean up and I for one wistfully departed the island looking forward to my next stay there.

And all joking apart, our efforts were well appreciated by the staff at the station and it has been said that we are welcome any time we can get a group together and there is an opening. Also John should receive a mention for his negotiating skill in enquiring about chartering the JCU tender to transport us to Pelorus Island in future saving club members quite a bit of money in transport costs.

Foot note.

No I did not fill the dud tank that Tony picked up it was already in the rack.

And Simon I am endeavouring to find the garment as suggested by you in your email so do not be surprised when I present it to you!