

Yeah, yeah, yeah, nah 10 x 10 x10; trip Report: 6th & 7th August 2011

Christian Stimson



When we lived in the UK I would sometimes come home along the seafront and see guys fishing off the wall. They would be out in all weathers and at all hours, it seemed like madness. I often wondered how grim their home lives must be to make huddling under an umbrella at nearly midnight, with a Northerly gale blowing rain horizontally seem like the good option! But as I set out for Tuts, looking forward to some great diving on my second 10x10x10 challenge, I understood what those fishermen had worked out. Although SwellMap was showing 2m seas from the East and a building breeze from the North West, and although I foresaw a night in

a rolling anchorage with snoring, farting shipmates, when I compared it to staying home with my 4-week old son it was a great option for a goodnight's sleep.

Friday night on board was no problem in the marina at Tuts. I met up with Chris B and new buddy Ralph, we had a couple of beers at Schnappa's and toddled off to bed at about 10pm. The skies were clear and the breeze gentle as I watered the garden at 3am – it was looking good!

The rest of the group, John, Mel, Kent and Kev rocked up at 7:30am and after a coffee and muffin we headed out. The swell was less than 1m, the wind about 10knots and the skies were clearing – still all looking good. An hour and half later we anchored, with our stern in towards the cliff face opposite Scary Cave. The plan was for John, Mel, Chris and myself to head into the cave, while Kent and Ralph had a look around the entrance and played with their cameras. John fresh from his Tec 1 course wanted to 'do things by the book' and so as team leader I ran through GUE EDGE, ensuring Chris B the only non GUE diver was OK with all we discussed.

Mel described the cave for us, highlighting a good secondary tie-off location as 'the tree in the entrance' at 15m or so, and noting a restriction just before the largest part of the cave. We discussed team positions, roles and the turn pressures we'd work to, and if gas allowed we'd consider going past the restriction into the chamber at the back. As we descended Chris was having problems equalising so we re-configured the team - John buddied with me as I made the primary tie-off and Mel stayed shallow with Chris.

We made a leisurely progress as I laid the line on the way in, making a couple of easy tie-offs on rocks on the floor and then running out of tie offs as we hit sandy bottom and smooth walls! The cave takes a bend to the right, and soon we were at the restriction. A team talk had me showing within 10bar of my turn pressure and I figured it was insufficient to get 4 divers through the restriction, have a quick look and turn around and exit without incident. The conclusion was I would turn with John, handing the reel to Mel to discuss further with Chris – both of whom had plenty of gas as they'd not been hanging at 15m while I fuffed with the reel at the start. In the end they decided against it as Chris's sinuses were still not 100%. We exited in good shape and Mel

led us around a nice boulder garden before heading back to the boat. Scary Cave – yeah! 6th dive site of the 10x10x10 ticked off for me and John – one day’s free diving in the bag!

Dive 2 was The Window at Landing Bay Pinnacle, opposite Taravana Cave. Surprisingly, Chris, John and I did not succumb to the usual ‘overhead fever’ and head underground (gold stars please, or at least a pat on the head!) opting to go for points on the board. Mel did succumb and took Ralph for a tour around The Taravana Loop – diving the small side tunnel and into the main tunnel before heading out to join us on the Pinnacle.

Despite having a comprehensive brief that the Window was at about 40m off to the left of the anchor, having found the anchor and checked it wasn’t fouled, we somehow headed to the right....! And had a lovely dive, over some rocky ledges with sandy terraces in between them, dropping all the way down to 40m. As we tootled round the pinnacle’s base counter-clockwise the 5-mins of no deco sign came up, so we lifted to 35m, then 30m and cruised through a massive school of Two Spot Demoiselles, with a couple of Kingies just lurking round the edges. Coming up to 25m we saw the big slab of rock, laid over at 45degrees making the swim through that is The Window..... maybe next time! We lifted all the way back into the sunlight and hung at 6m on the top of the pinnacle before heading back on board. So a slightly muted ‘yeah’, but Mel very generously granted it ‘done’ status for the 10x10x10 leader board!



South Harbour was our destination for the night, and with a building sea Kevin did a splendid job of parking us in a calm spot, opposite Blue Mao Mao Arch. Kent and Ralph went for a dusk/night dive in the arch while the rest of us drank beer and moaned about how advancing years make a bunk more appealing than a night dive! Kevin’s Moroccan Lamb and couscous for dinner was just superb, washed down with a lovely drop of Merlot – you’d be forgiven for thinking you were in civilized company, until we started replaying Monty Python’s best one liners.....

Come the morning, I was woken by the sound of wind whistling in the rigging and the anchor snatching on the windlass.... Hmmm, this sounded ominous! Going topsides, I listened to the forecast - ‘Colville three-zero knots to three-five knots, rising to three-five knots to four-zero knots....’ However, Kevin’s parking had us sitting quite comfortably in the lee and flat water and with Fraggie Rock just 50m off our stern it was the obvious pre-breakfast dive site. Chris and I kitted up first and splashed just after 8:00am (gotta love that for a live aboard!). We found the chimney at 24m without too much difficulty, and dropped in. I led the way down into the main chamber at 35m or so, signalling to Chris with my light all was clear for him to follow. As he dropped in he was a little bemused by my hand signals, not realising that mild narcosis had me playing shadow puppets on the wall, with my can light and right hand making moray eel-type shapes!

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Recognising my judgement might be blurred at nearly 40m, I decided to swim up and over the big chock-stone at the exit, rather than wriggle under it. It looked do'able from this side, but I wasn't sure what lay beyond! From the other side it was clearly OK to squeeze through, so Chris and I headed back under, and reversed our route back through the chamber and up the chimney. Exiting at 24m we headed over to Blue Mao Mao Arch following the 14m contour, and passed Mel et al as they headed to the chimney.

I'd not done the Arch before, and although it's only a 14m max depth I really enjoyed swimming in from the Western side and seeing the sunlight streaming through from the East, giving a Cathedral-like feel to the vertical walls. While not chock-full of fish there were still plenty about, and Chris and I had a very pleasant cruise, meeting Kent who was taking photos at the far end. Since part of this trip was funded by my 90 year old Granny-in-Law, who sent me a few dollars for my birthday with specific instructions to spend it on diving, I asked Kent to snap a pic of me thanking her. Fraggie Rock and Blue Mao Mao before breakfast – yeah!

Back on the boat we had poached eggs on toast with bacon, and hot mugs of coffee to fend off the wind chill, but what to do next? An aft deck committee meeting decided that with the deteriorating weather another dive would be both short lived and not at a primo site, with the added consideration that the later we left the worse the weather would be on the trip home. So with the question posed “what's the max depth at Schnappa Rock?” we headed home. Fourth dive... nah!

It was a little rock and roll on the way home, but getting alongside and having lunch on the dive deck before a beer at Schnappa's meant we were all home at a sensible time. Thanks to Mel and Kev for a great weekend, and to Kent for making my Granny-in-Law very happy! I look forward to claiming my free day's diving along with John, and with 7 dive sites on the board we only need 3 more for a full set. (I was quite excited about having done 8 sites, until Jamie pointed out I couldn't count Fraggie Rock twice – bummer, he spots everything.)

