

Three Kings Trip.

It was a clear, still morning on the 15th up at Hohura harbour. At 6.00 am, nine of us were eagerly waiting to board the *Wairangi* - except for Nikki the kitten who was most keen to come ashore and kept trying to escape through one of the portholes to investigate the wharf. We had the privilege of having Jan Voot with us (originally salvaged the *Eligamite* with Kelly Tarlton) to show us some good spots and was hereafter dubbed Kermit due to his bright green wetsuit. After almost stepping into the kitty litter several times and carrying aboard what seemed like more beer than dive gear, we set off bound for the three Kings for a week. It was going to take us all day to get there so we settled in for a sunny day on the deck and a few of us managed to demolish a bottle of gin. As we were leaving the top of the North Island, one of the lures trailing out the back of the boat took off at a rate of knots and Shane frantically grabbed the rod, but the line was peeling so fast the spool had nearly run out. A magnificent sight of a marlin jumping out of the water behind us explained the culprit but it soon snapped the line. As we continued to motor on, the marlin continued to jump out of the water every so often in the distance. We arrived at the Kings just as the sun was setting and anchored for the night in a rolling 3m oceanic swell that was coming up from a cyclone further south. I think every plate and cup in the kitchen rattled that night, and it would have been a close competition as to what made the most noise - all the cutlery or the skipper sleeping up there swearing at it. Jan and Derek slept through it all, heavily engaged in a week long snoring competition in the front of the boat.

The next morning we dived the *Eligamite* in 100ft vis and 16 degree water. As we motored off from the dive site a huge school of the biggest trevally I've ever seen was surfacing and feeding. Lines were thrown overboard and dinner was caught. The afternoon dive was one of the highlights of the trip. Diving on a location known as Arch reef, we again had good 100ft vis on several pinnacles filled with fish, and a huge variety of corals below 100ft. Down at 150ft was a couple of tunnels through one of the pinnacles that had large hapuka and grouper. This depth didn't deter 81 year old Mac the deckie who had done a 200ft dive to celebrate his 80th birthday. We all dived this spot two more times so there was plenty to see. We tried some deep water fishing with some success. Large terakihi were constantly caught and Shane in search of something bigger put a mullet head on his hook. At one point three of us had our lines tangled, and after a while to sort it out it appeared that there was something big on the end of Shane's line. What he finally hauled up was a sight to behold - a 70 pound hapuka with its mount around half of a blue cod on the hook. Presumably the mullet was somewhere in the cod.

One of the more memorable dives was a very fast drift dive along a wall face covered in large corals, particularly yellow gorgonians and the red hard coral. As we started to descend, a school of large kingfish buzzed by and we dropped into large numbers of pink maomao. Long cracks went down the face, usually with crayfish and the occasional black spotted grouper. If you wanted to stop and look at something or grab a crayfish, it required gripping onto the wall with force to prevent being ripped away with the current. One of the last dives few of us will forget - very clear water off the top group of islands was a pinnacle surrounded by crayfish at the bottom with a chimney going down one side filled with fish, including a hapuka.

Somehow we managed to get good weather for a whole week and it was time to return to the mainland. On a clam late afternoon we steamed back stopping every few minutes to reel in bonitos. The sea was so still you could see them everywhere feeding on the surface.

Fair wind for wreck divers

TREASURE hunters can't believe their good luck. A retired British navy officer and his wife are publishing an index to the thousands of shipwrecks — from remote antiquity to the present day — around the coasts of Britain, the world's biggest maritime graveyard.

Their Shipwreck Index of the British Isles — believed to be the first detailed register of this sort ever compiled — will pinpoint 100,000 sunken wrecks.

There was the Golden Grape, for example, which sank off Dorset in 1641 taking with it a hoard of gold and Spanish coins.

Nearby townsmen plundered the ship but treasure hunters may yet dig out a few coins left in the seaweed.

Elsewhere, the buttons of King Charles II's coat may await an intrepid scuba diver. His entire wardrobe was lost in a 1649 shipwreck in St Ives.

Just around the coast off Swanage lie fragments of 120 Danish galleys wrecked in a storm in AD 877. The loss of that fleet may have helped King Alfred the Great save his kingdom of Wessex from the Viking Danes.

"We are producing a list of potential salvage targets," says Richard Larn, a former Royal Navy officer, who, with his wife Bridget, has spent 50 years researching shipwrecks.

A first volume of the index covering southwest England records 7000 wrecks. All 10 volumes of the unique archaeological chronicle compiled by the Larns, who are veteran divers, are due to be completed by the turn of the century.

"A great deal of history and human effort went to the bottom of the sea, seemingly lost forever,"

says Larn. "But now there are better diving facilities to reach the depths."

The book is also a reminder that the causes of ship accidents have not changed much over the centuries.

"Despite all our modern materials, training, rules, regulations and ever-safer ships, men continue to lose them by accident, design or neglect," Larn says in his book.

History has tended to neglect the subject of shipwrecks.

From the Dark Ages until almost 1700, the names of wrecked ships and the fate of mariners were of little public concern.

In return for providing armed men, the English monarchy granted landlords the so-called Right of Wreck. What mattered to them was how much gold or coins they could salvage and keep for themselves.

This right was exercised even as late as 1993 when an English lord proved in court his manorial rights over items recovered by divers from an ancient shipwreck.

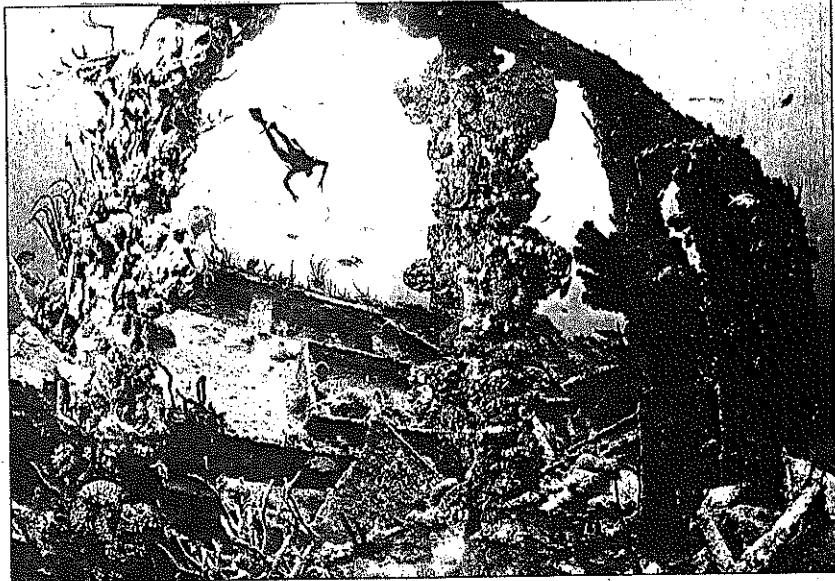
The lucrative right was at the centre of many bitter disputes and appeals between landlords and shipowners.

"As far as a cannon shot" or "as far as a man can ride into the sea and stick a spear in the bottom" were among definitions used to limit the claims.

Some variations were most advantageous. In Sussex, where the tide goes out a very long way, it read "as far as a man can reach on horseback at low water."

The sight of money had even blinded the admirals, who were

later appointed to collect the Crown's share from the wrecks. They often ignored the Crown and seized the wrecks by force.



A diver explores the barnacle-encrusted steel beams of a British mail carrier that sank more than 100 years ago.

It wasn't until 1973 that a new Wrecks Act was introduced making it an offence to dive or fish near the site of a shipwreck.

Any historic, valuable shipwreck or underwater site now receives immediate designation by the Government.

The Larns' index, which gives the nearest possible locations to where the incidents occurred, will prove an invaluable reference for divers, historians, harbour authorities and salvage firms.

Some 120,000 individuals regularly dive on shipwrecks, frequently making valuable or historic finds.

But the book's biggest admirers may be those trying to hit the jackpot under the sea.

"It will also do that, you can't help it," says Larn.

Finding the treasures will not be easy. Waves could have easily carried the wrecks for miles over

the years.

"All we can do is work from historical records," says Larn. "If the captain of the ship said the accident took place one mile from the shore, we relied on that information."

Some locations are actual-

ly on land, for example in a confined area where a great many wrecks have taken place, but no one knows exactly where they are. The book leaves it to the reader to carry out further research.

Other wrecks were identified by luck.

A few years ago the Larns discovered a small chapel in Dorset that had been built to commemorate a shipwreck. After extensive research they were able to locate the ship, from which a team of divers brought up its bell, some china and even photographs. The ship's anchor now decorates the entrance of the chapel.

We spent a day diving off North Cape appreciating the 20 degree blue water. A good number of five pound plus crayfish were caught on one of the dives. That night in a calm anchorage with no more oceanic swell brought on a wicked series of drinking games. Every spirit on the boat was finished and it was a messy sight by the end of the evening. The last day brought a deterioration in the weather and only a few of us were capable of diving. I don't envy the crew cleaning up the boat, after a week everything smelt of fish - especially Nikki the cat who by this stage was covered in fish blood and was badly in need of a bath. It was definitely some of the best diving that I'd ever experienced. maybe next year we'll go again.

Ellen Jensen (EJ)

Notices

For Sale -----

Ford Sierra
Station-wagon Excellent dive wagon.
LPG and towball
Only \$2000 ono
Phone Julie (846-6589) for further details or for more information.

AGM

Well it's been a pretty quiet year for the dive club, it has to be said. However the AGM is around the corner. We hope and expect as many people to attend. As usual a few drinks and food will be provided and we expect the socialising will outdo the short formal bit.

AGM - 43 Western Springs Road (Mike and Julies)
When: 15th October (Wednesday)
Time: 7.00pm
Dress: Whatever the hell you like.

There are also a few trips planned for before and after exams, day, week etc. The AGM is the best place to pick up in trips heading out and to make contacts for the busy diving summer (I hope the %*#@! weather improves by then)

Tanks

We still have a few tanks outstanding from people who have hired them. Reminder : Please return the tanks as soon as physically possible because we have people who want to use them. IF you are one of the people with club tanks please return them and/or call Julie (846-6589) to explain why you can't.

Thanks

Over the two years I have been doing Flotsam, No one has contributed more effort and time to the magazine than EJ. She wrote the excellent article above and has also donated many more articles and photos the previous Flotsam's. Many thanks to you EJ for your help and experience.

Bolt into the blue

Three scuba divers were struck by lightning—while they were 5m underwater.

One of them, a farmer, said yesterday it was like a jolt from an electric fence.

Mr Terry Wooldridge, his daughter Irrirangi Ormandy, of Oamaru, and Mr Steve Bates, of Pahia, received the electric shock when they were diving between Plum Pudding Island and Okahu Island in the Bay of Islands on Friday.

They suffered no ill effects.

Mr Wooldridge, who farms near Kaikohe, said it compared with jolts he had received from electric fences, which indicated the shock was equal to 1500 to 2000 volts.

A weather expert said that such strikes were not as rare as some might think.

The northern forecaster with the Auckland Meteorological Office, Mr Bob McDavitt, said that when lightning hit the water it spread its charge over a wide area but a person in the water would still feel the shock.

There had been a lot of static build-up in the atmosphere last week, causing lightning activity, and more was expected.

Scuba shops warned after faulty tank tragedy

Dive shops have been issued a shuddering warning after a police probe into the death of a young scuba diver.

Police began investigations when scientists pinpointed a corrosion build-up as the reason the 24-year-old was starved of oxygen during his fatal underwater hunt for crayfish.

Inquiries failed to identify who was responsible for the mistake which resulted in 2.4 litres of sea water seeping into the man's dive tank, leading to a fatal chemical reaction producing the build-up in his air regulator.

But yesterday, the man's par-

The parents of Peter Massey, who died while diving with a faulty tank, want others to learn from his death,

reports EUGENE BINGHAM.

enits pleaded with other divers and people hiring and selling dive equipment to learn the lessons the tragedy holds.

"People need to be aware of what happened," said his mother, Dot Massey, of Howick. "We don't want it to happen again."

Mrs Massey and her husband, Bill, wished their son Peter well as he set off diving in the Manukau Harbour with a friend on Decem-

ber 27 last year. They never saw him alive again. His body was found eight days later.

The Auckland coroner, Mate Frankovich, found that Mr Massey suffocated because of a blockage in breathing equipment during his 20-minute underwater mission.

Scientists at the Institute of Environmental Science and Research said the gel-like deposits were the result of corrosion inside the tank caused by the sea water.

Mr Massey had bought the aluminium cylinder from a dive shop about three weeks earlier. It had undergone a full commercial test and was passed.

After their investigations, police issued a series of recommendations, which were adopted by the coroner. They were:

- Turn aluminium dive cylinders upside down before each dive and shake to hear for the sound of water sloshing around.

- If any water is found, do not use the cylinder.

- Make regular visual checks of the inside of tanks and regulator valves to check for corrosion.

- Do not leave empty cylinders where water will be able to enter an open valve.

- Always leave air in a cylinder after each dive and ensure valve is closed.

Following Mr Massey's inquest, the Underwater Association warned all dive shops to ensure that procedures were followed and corrosion was removed.

The association public relations manager, Megan Pye, said regular safety audits of filling and testing stations would continue.

The only wish of the grieving parents of Peter Massey is that other families be saved the trauma they have been through.

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