

Combined Clubs Weekend 2009 – Ken Saville, Ocean Divers Plus

For 4 days over the June Long weekend, Tasmania's dive community came together for the biggest event on Tasmania's dive calendar, the 2009 Combined Dive Clubs Weekend. A great weekend of diving and fun events in Tasmania's premier dive destination, Bicheno on Tassie's east coast, and what a success!

Over 120 divers and partners attended the 4 days, from all of Tasmania's dive clubs, TSDC, Ocean Divers, Leven Scuba Club, Tas Uni Scuba club, TSAC, CRABS, East Coast Dive Club and Club Go Dive. Plus a visit from the Victorian club "Bass Strait Aquatic Club" (BSAC)

The weekend was a mix of diving, scheduled events and socialising, this year based around the Bicheno Town Hall, just 100 metres from the nearest dive site!

Tasmania's winter weather this time round wasn't really on our side and as we were setting up on the Friday a few of us on the committee thought our club had done our money we had invested in the weekend when we saw the large easterly swell heading into Bicheno.

But not deterred we continued on... This year due to the generosity of sponsors, we had great prizes for the "Great Gnome Hunt", a new event which will be hard fought for! 6 30 cm high painted gnomes were placed around the various dive sites that could be dived in the conditions. A few for those shore diving, others for those with boats.

Friday night we had the usual meet for a meal at the local pub, and as I said with the conditions I thought we would be eating alone! How wrong was I!!! 50 people turned up for dinner and we had to get a separate room. The committee members were all walking around with smiles as we knew plenty of divers were coming!



Saturday turned out to be a nice day...well to start with! We had the punters register at the hall and the usual welcome, then out came the gear! And what a huge amount of gear there was. Double tanks, Re-breathers, SLR cameras you name it we saw it and off everyone went.

The diving was limited due to the large easterly swell, but that didn't deter the young guys from the Tas Uni club doing a shore dive off the rocks into a 2 metre swell!

3 gnomes were found already in the morning which was some feat, but with the amount of divers it's not surprising!



After the lunch break the "SCUBA Olympics" was to be held. These are a series of fun land based events, but Mother Nature stepped in and dumped 20 mill of rain on us so we did the Golf ball hunt off the Bicheno breakwater instead! Seeing 40-50 divers gearing up in the rain then hunt for numbered golf balls for prizes was very interesting, especially in driving rain!

The Saturday night saw a huge BBQ with the works at town hall, with talks by local photographer John Smith, and the Tas Uni Club.

Sunday conditions had improved quite a bit so boat diving was in order. Bruce from Bicheno Dive Centre did a run out to the Golden Bommies with the BSAC crew, and a great dive was had. Others dived at the many and various sites around the Bicheno area. By Sunday afternoon the final Gnomes were found, and the sun was out so we were able to finish off the SCUBA Olympics. The weekend then came to a great conclusion with a huge spit roast at the hall.

With full tummies the packed hall was treated to a fun trivia night, then an excellent presentation by Tasmania's premier underwater photographer Jon Bryan, with a talk on Tasmania and some of his recent travels to Canada and Antarctica. Jon then judged the weekend's photographic competition. The standard in the various categories was just staggering, what a talented group of photographers presented their pics.



To finish off we had the drawing of the luck door prizes, with our guests from Victoria taking home a wonderful Stormy Seas vest worth over \$500.

The final result to award the annual SCUBA Olympics, with the Hobart based TSDC winning for the first time, over last year's winner Ocean Divers and the Tas Uni Dive Club in third.



Monday the conditions were fantastic and the Governor Island Marine reserve was packed with boats full of divers taking in the fairly good vis, considering the swell a few days before.

The Combined Scuba Clubs weekend was a huge success with everyone impressed by the diving and the company.

The Tasmanian dive scene is small but very active, and the Tasmanian Combined Clubs Weekend, is eagerly awaited each year, as it's a great time to catch up with the various clubs and "Go divin!"

Next year the event will be held again in Bicheno, the TSDC will be taking the reins in 2010.

A big thank you to the organising committee from the Ocean Divers who coordinated an excellent event!

Thanks also to the dive community of Tasmania, especially all the retail outlets that donated prizes. Southern Tas Divers, Go Dive, Bicheno Dive Centre, The Dive Shop, Aqua Scuba, Wynyard Scuba Centre, Island Ocean Charters, Canoe 'n' Surf, Dive-Sight Video, Seal & Sea Adventure Tours, and Bay of Fires Dive.

Special thanks also to Sport Diving magazine for the great support, Beuchat, Atomic, Oceanic, TUSA, Flurohood, Anchor Wetsuits, Stormy Seas, Foamland, CUB and Steff's Wood-yard.

So do yourself a favour and see you next year in beautiful Bicheno!!

