



January 2013

Contact Us: Wellington.Underwater@gmail.com

Greetings

We hope everyone's New Year started well, and especially that you are getting good diving. A number of WUC members had some exciting experiences so far this summer – read on.



We have an interesting year ahead. Your committee is planning all sorts of things, including local dives, GUE training, pool sessions, dive trips both near and far plus of course our regular get-togethers on Club nights (note, this is always the last Tuesday of the month). Keep your eyes on the Newsletter and website for upcoming events.

NZUA AGM. One future event you need to keep in mind is the AGM of the NZ Underwater Association, to be held in Wellington over the weekend 29 -30 June. In addition to the AGM, there will be other activities and these will be available for WUC members to participate in. Plans are being made right now, and we are expecting to have a mix of diving and topside activities (such as talks by a marine expert) that showcase Wellington. There will also be a NZUA photo competition, and winners will be announced at the dinner.

Feedback showed that Wellington's big attraction for divers from elsewhere is the Taputeranga Marine Reserve, and the F69 too. Aren't we lucky to have a marine reserve right on our doorstep?



**Next Club Meeting this
Tuesday 29th at the
Thistle Inn, 6.30 pm**

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**Advanced Trip to
Kapiti (date tbc)**

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Register your interested
limited to 4 divers

**PADI Open Water
Course**

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You know someone who is keen to learn how to Suba Dive? Let us know – we will be running the next Open Water Course soon.

**Wanted: Your summer
stories and photos**

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How was your diving this summer? We love to hear what adventures you were up to over the summer break. Send us a few words and or photos for the next newsletter by 23rd Feb.

Upcoming Activities

Upcoming club meetings

Thistle Inn, 6.30 pm

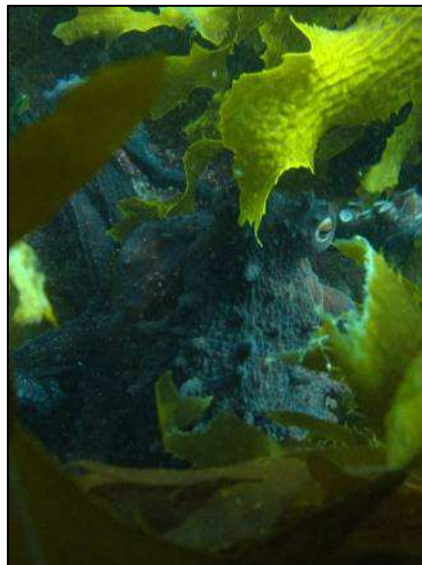
- 29 Jan - this coming Tuesday
- 26 Feb – Tuesday, as usual

Diving - February

- 9 Feb (Sat) Club shore dive
- 23 Feb (Sat) Kilbirnie Pool (4-6 pm)

Diving - March

- 10 Mar (Sun) GUE Skills Practise



Dive trips 2013 – register your interest

- Advanced Kapiti dive, tbc
- Local Boat Dive, tbc
- 24-27th September, **Cave dive trip to Poor Knights**: cave diving for those trained, and training for those interested, 6 spots only

... and any other weekday or weekend club members want to go out, just let us know a few days ahead so we can spread the word and find you some dive buddies. You can also join us on one of our club meetings and if you have friends interested in diving just bring them along.

Activities that may interest you

Tech Dive Weekend in Taupo – dates tbc

Based in Taupo, this weekend will bring together Tech Instructors and keen technical divers from around NZ, to share ideas, enjoy a few dives, build links and hopefully inspire some adventures around the country. The weekend will be broad and cover as many aspects of NZ tech diving as possible: cave diving, wreck diving, deep trimix diving, open circuit and rebreather diving, equipment and more.

There will be lectures and presentations from a variety of speakers, skills workshops and an opportunity to pick the brains of leading tech divers about the latest kit, dive techniques and dive sites.

Instructors from both New Zealand and Australia are being organised as well as several charter operators and equipment wholesalers. Jamie Obern will do at least one lecture and a skills workshop, plus organising a few cheeky dives - maybe even a Waikato River stealth dive.....

This is a good opportunity for a catch up and to get totally up to date with the most extreme dives from around the world in the last year or two.

A few WUC members have already expressed interest. Drop us an email if you are keen to attend so we can get an idea of numbers and keep your updated –

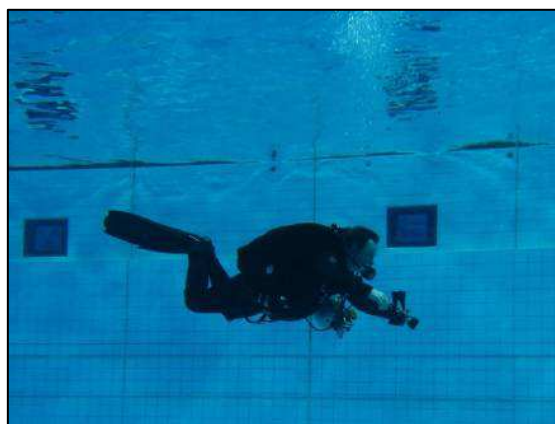
wellington.underwater@gmail.com

Experiencing Marine Reserves (EMR)

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Nicole had a message from the EMR programme that it was again up and running, for 2013. They are always interested in more volunteers.

To find out what it's about, contact the club or see: www.emr.org.nz



Our Wellington Coast and Harbour - Photo Collection

Together with the Friends of the Hutt River we are collecting photographs (topside and underwater) that indicate evidence of pollution or a healthy environment of Wellington's Coast and Harbour and the influence of the Hutt River on the harbour bed.

Have a look through your photo collection and keep your eyes out on your next dives. We'll be posting more details soon.

The Big Dive Weekend – 24 and 25 November 2012

It was a big weekend because we had a good number of WUC members participate in two well organised community events – the annual Educate to Eliminate harbour cleanup dive on Saturday 24 Nov and, over both the Saturday and Sunday, the 24 hour dive organised by Dive & Ski HQ (www.diveski.co.nz) which made money for the Wellington Volunteer Coastguard.

The Wharf Clean-up – Educate to Eliminate

For the annual Educate to Eliminate clean-up, about 40 Wellington volunteers turned out to raise marine awareness through a clean-up beneath Taranaki Wharf. Mayor Celia Wade-Brown joined seven other divers, four of whom were WUC members to retrieve cans, plastic, polystyrene and several shopping carts. Another group clambered over the rocks beneath the wharf and kayakers transported the rubbish from the collectors to sorters on the wharf. The sorters carefully picked through the debris to separate out any marine creatures which were then placed in tanks and later taken to the aquarium at Island Bay. It was great seeing the public, especially children, quite captivated by the creatures swimming around then tanks. At the end, the divers had a hose down, courtesy of the local fire brigade.



This event has run for the past four years and occurs about the same time each year. One of the main purposes is to profile marine conservation and awareness. Among the main organizers for the event were Stephen Journee and Rochelle Finlay of the Dive Guys (www.thediveguys.co.nz).

The Big Dive Weekend cont'd

The 24 hour dive at Scorching Bay

On 24 Nov last year, Dive and Ski HQ set up camp on the grassy surrounds of Scorching Bay, and together with 108 individual divers completed 48 dives in relays of buddy pairs for a continuous 24 hours. This was from the middle of Saturday through to Sunday, so there was plenty of opportunity to do daytime, twilight and night dives.



Wellington Underwater Club was well represented, with 13 Club members logging 20 dives for a total of over 26 hours under water.

Pete Humphris and Rob Wilson did the longest dive of 243 minutes (with twin tank plus sling) followed by Geoff Stevens with 188 minutes.

All divers were asked to find sponsors. WUC's fundraising contributed over \$1,000 to the total of \$3,000 raised in support of the Volunteer Coastguard. A good effort by everyone involved.

The Volunteer Coastguard is a significant part of the maritime scene in Wellington. It's important to us as a dive community that they continue to do their work so WUC committee has decided to provide additional sponsorship support.

24 HOUR DIVE IMPRESSIONS

Photo-collage courtesy of Nicole

An adventure on Matiu/Somes Island – 5 and 6 January 2013

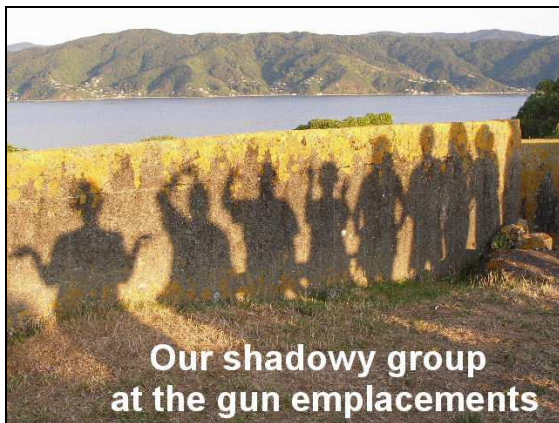
Not many people realise what a gem we have on our doorstep – Matiu/Somes Island in the middle of Wellington Harbour. Four WUC members joined a group of 15 divers who went to the island over the weekend 5 and 6 January to do a clean-up around the wharves there. Claire from Dive and Ski HQ was the organiser.

The island has a colourful Maori and European history, commencing 1000 years ago when Kupe, according to legend, named the island Matiu. Maori occupied Matiu for generations. More recently, in European time, it has served as a detention centre, a quarantine station for people and animals and a military defence position. The original lighthouse (now replaced by an automated one) was built in 1866, the first harbour light in the country.

Most importantly, Matiu/Somes is now a predator-free Department of Conservation scientific and historical reserve, thanks to the work of many local organisations. The island is home to many reintroduced birds such as the kakariki (red-crowned parakeet) and toutouwai (North Island robin). There are also seabirds including the variable oystercatcher, southern black-backed gull and spotted shag, not forgetting the korora (little blue penguin).

Along with the birds are hundreds of species of invertebrates, including the Cook Strait giant weta (which can grow to the size of your hand) and the Wellington tree weta. Added to this are skinks, geckos and tuatara.

A walk around the island's extensive track systems allowed us to enjoy this menagerie. At days end, a 10 minute hike up to the old gun emplacements on the highest point had us being dive-bombed by gulls. They were protecting their young and unhatched eggs, not that we did anything to threaten them.



Later we did a night patrol with lights, spotting for the plentiful weta, and the less easily seen tuatara. It's a rare opportunity to see a tuatara in the wild.

To keep the island predator-free and ensure we did not bring unwanted pests onto the island, as with all visitors on arrival we were shepherded into a small hut on the wharf and our gear was thoroughly inspected. That was accompanied by a briefing which emphasised the importance of keeping the island predator-free.

An adventure on Matiu/Somes Island cont'd

We did two dives around the wharves, finding lots of bottles (both recent and quite old), tyres, bits of debris and even a boat's wheel. Off the main wharf, we found an historical winch on the seabed. It had

been captured in photographs of the wharf in the 1940s, and had later fallen into the harbour. Maybe a retrieval project for another time.



The wharf, site of the clean-up, also showing the inspection hut

The bottom was pretty much like anywhere else in the harbour, but had some interesting marine life. At least one octopus crawled out of a collected bottle and there were stargazers and some scallops.

There are several places to stay on the island, if you book ahead. We stayed in Education House, which accommodated all of us. The Saturday ended with a barbeque. The dive stories of course became more embellished as the night went on.

The island can only host 300 people a day. This is important to note for a busy day. On the day we went across, some people waiting for the ferry at Days Bay were turned away as they hadn't booked.

It was a great weekend, helped by the weather which was perfect (not a usual descriptor for Wellington weather). I feel quite privileged to have such a place so close at hand.

WUC Christmas Get Together – 9 December

It was a lovely sunny day with a mild breeze blowing when we met at the Chocolate Fish Café for Christmas lunch. There was a decent turn out with some people coming along after a dip with their dive gear in the Kilbirnie Pool and others coming from other less exciting pastimes to get together for a chin wag and to get into the festive season.

It was also one of the last social functions for El Presidente Alan before being exiled to the outer reaches of Auckland (Waiuku). We all hope he survives the punishment and manages to escape from time to time back to Wellington for a bit of diving or socialising. While Alan will be moving to Auckland for work reasons, he remains the club president through until the end of August.

The food was up to the usual Chocolate Fish BBQ standard and was masticated and despatched speedily to keep the disruption to the talking to a minimum.

A good afternoon out was had by all who attended.

Cavern and Cave training in the Poor Knights

By Franz

Five of us ventured up to the Poor Knights for courses with Jamie Obern from Tech Dive NZ: a Cavern course followed by an Intro to Cave course and some pleasure diving. The Poor Knights is a stunning location for these courses and for those of us who hadn't been there before it was a real delight. Diving to and from the cave entrances as well as non-training evening dives lets you enjoy the life outside the caves as well.

It was the caves that were the major attraction though. With a different cave on almost every dive, venturing in was always exciting and always with new challenges, and on one dive even a couple of bronze whalers emerging from the dark as we left daylight behind. During our exits we could appreciate the subdued lighting from outside increasingly illuminating the beautiful cave structures and schools of fish in silhouette.

The ambience of each cave was fantastic, however we weren't simply there to enjoy the mood. Jamie was always at hand to teach us a lesson, whether in the galley of the Mazurka or in the caves. If we let the guideline go slack it was sure to get wrapped around someone's tank, our primary lights would turn off, our backup torches would mysteriously disappear and few dives ended without at least one person simulating out of gas and needing help.

So what did we learn? Well, topics you might expect like dive planning, gas management, laying lines, finding lost lines (blindfolded), communication... but in dealing with compounding problems the resulting clouds of silt highlighted the need for good buoyancy,

trim and teamwork! Sound familiar? Jamie recommends the GUE Fundamentals course before Intro to Cave.

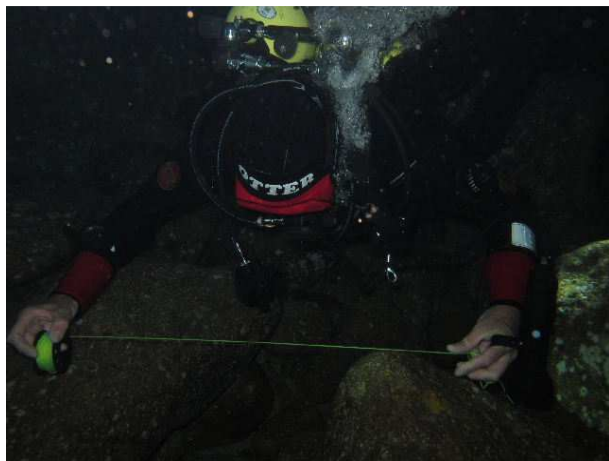
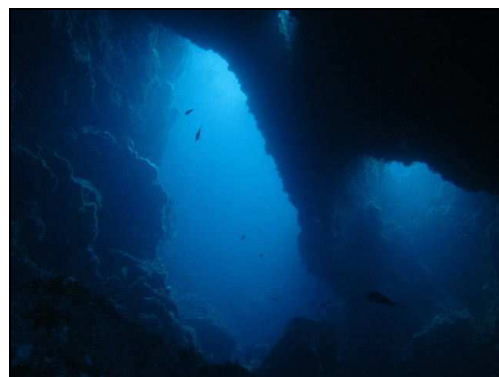
These are some of the most fun dive courses I've done, with loads to learn, lots to look at and plenty of surprises! See www.techdivenz.com for more information.

By Sophie

The trip was wonderfully well organised by Kevin at Ocean Blue, with food fit for kings and queens. It was a welcome break from diving, exercises, and theory galore. Jamie was his

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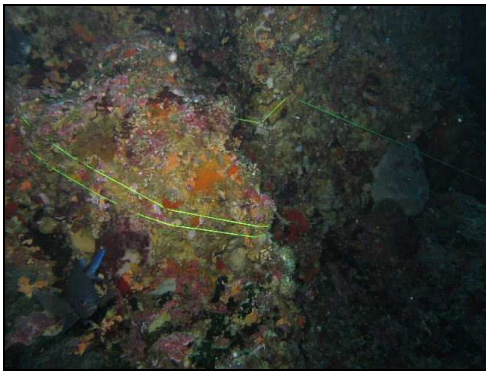


Cavern and Cave training in the Poor Knights cont'd

usual self, always a smile on his face, although a sarcastic one at times. We provided him with plenty of stories to tell future students.

The course was excellent, and the pleasure diving... a pleasure. It was fun exploring some less-dived sites while knowing the others were sweating it at the back of caves doing all sorts of exercises. Sometimes we could join them and check out their progress, in open caverns such as Shark Fin. A nice safe way to get a taste of cavern diving.

We're in the process of organising another such trip for end of September. There will be cavern and cave course available, as well as cavern and cave diving for those already qualified, or pleasure diving in some fabulous sites. Let us know if you're interested, the trip is strictly limited to 6 people, including 4 max per course.



A win for sharks – shark finning ban endorsed by European Parliament

Conservation groups are celebrating the European Parliament's vote recently to close loopholes in the European Union ban on shark finning, the culmination of six years of campaigning and debate, with significant help from the international dive community.

Members of the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly in favor of the European Commission's proposal to impose a prohibition on removing shark fins at sea, closing loopholes in the current regulations.

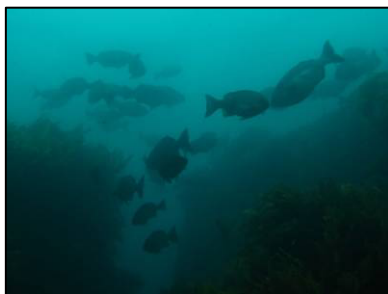
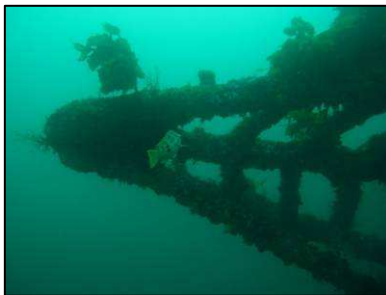
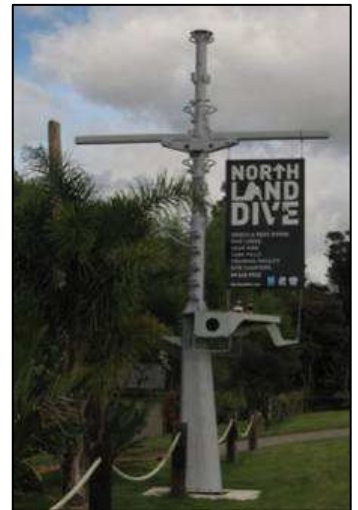
<http://www.projectaware.org/update/stronger-shark-finning-ban-endorsed-european-parliament>

Summer in the Bay of Islands – Diving with Northland Dive by Nicole

Looking for a real Kiwi summer experience - camping, diving and warm temperatures - I pitched my tent at the 'Cowshed' and joined likeminded divers from Auckland, a family from Palmi/Wellington and tourists from Canada and Europe. After a warm welcome from Julia and Shane we started catching up on what has changed and what is still the same. I am convinced time goes by slower in this part of the country and I couldn't believe I haven't been diving up there for nearly 1½ years.

The Western Underwater Club had members coming and going throughout the Xmas and New Years break and a few were keen to dive the Rainbow Warrior. So the dive plan for the next day was quickly set and I got a spot on the boat with Julia and the (other) WUC members.

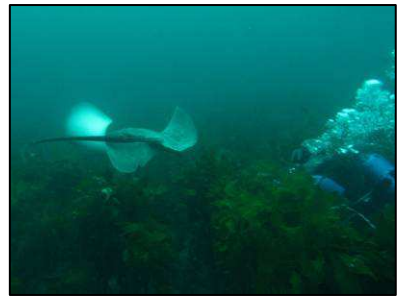
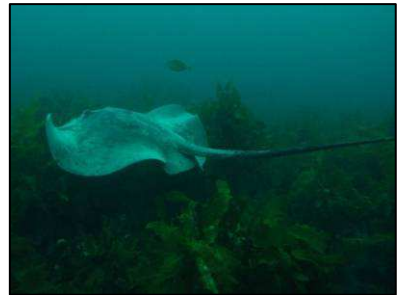
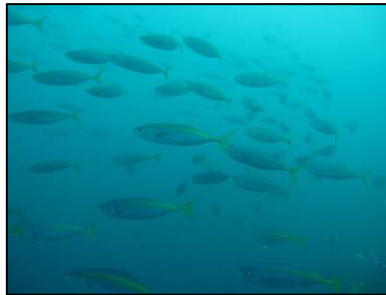
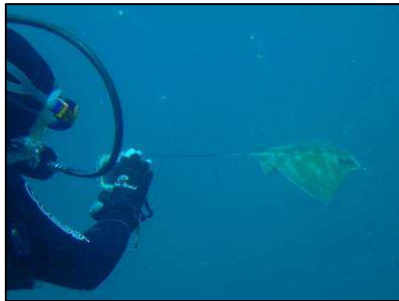
The visibility on the wreck was good and beside the overall impression of the wreck we could watch the amazing fish and invertebrate life. Little snapper were hanging out on the outside of the wreck. Large schools of big eyes and huge sized koherus were on the inside and the hull and the A frame covered in sponges, other encrusting life and colourful jewel anemones. Beside this we got a good overall impression of the wreck itself.



This time of the year demoiselles are guarding their nests and the oblique swimming tripe fins were hovering in and just above the kelp in numbers I haven't seen before.

Still impressed from the first dive we went around the corner to dive the True Love Reef. The current was pumping over the reef and we tried to hide in between boulders and channels rewarded with an eagle ray and a few yellow morays and schooling fish while coming up on the anchor line. One of the buddy pairs went for a drift dive towards home and spotted two giant boarfish on the way.

Forecast for the next day wasn't as good and a few of the Auckland divers decided to have a land day. Viz and temperature were still better than on an average Wellington shore dive and I was keen to check out the other side of the Cape. The area just in front of the channel between the peninsula and Waiwiri Island had everything to offer for a good day's diving. A long tail stingray was cruising past all the buddy teams watched (I watched it three times).



Summer in the Bay of Islands – Diving with Northland Dive cont'd

Second dive site was closer to Bland Bay and a classic reef dive with dense kelp forest and lots of reef fish hiding underneath in the cracks and included a puffer fish and lots of goat fish over the sandy patches.

The next two days were good for a dive at the Canterbury followed by a reef dive close by.

My buddy was leading the dive along the passageway on deck two entering at the helicopter landing patch and out at the gun bay. We had a good look at a dishwasher and the operations room. Next day we started on deck three and went past the top of the engine room back and up to deck two and also had a good look at the bridge.

Warm and cold water just started to mix. In some of the places we could see the swirling effects of mixing and we could feel the sharp change in temperature and my computer logged the dives between 16°C and 21 °C. We saw an incredible amount of salp in the water on our reef dives and the very close passing eagle ray and another puffer fish were other highlights beside the jumping sunfish. One of the dive sites less dived is Albert Channel Reef as it needs to be dived on slack high tide. Just as we were slowing down Shane spotted a little hammerhead shark and soon after we had dolphins passing by. It's a great terrain with long and deep channels and lots to look out for.

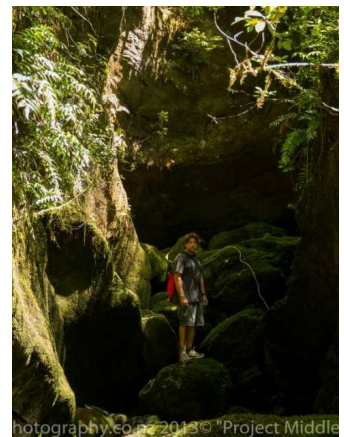
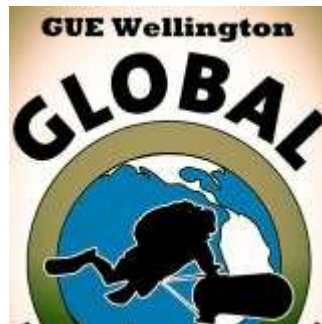
Diving on Nitrox on most of the dives extended the bottom times considerably and also made the dive days more pleasant feeling less tired. There is so much to do and look at after the dives and during the days on land. Eel feeding, glow worm walks and a tour around the farm to check up on the cows and the brown teals and all the great beaches and scenic and historic walks in the area - everything you need for a real Kiwi summer.



Blue Creek Expedition Updates

Check out the GUE Wellington Facebook page for the latest updates and pictures from the team around Jamie Obern and TechDive NZ.

www.facebook.com/GueWellington



Many of the photos in this newsletter are courtesy of Rob Wilson, one of our club members and professional photographer. Check out Rob's facebook page or www.frontlinephotography.co.nz