

Autumn  
2025

# OCTOPRESS

## Wellington Underwater Club Newsletter

### Topics

- Introducing your committee
- Upcoming Club dives
- Elsdon Pipe dive site

### Octopress needs YOU!

Please email photos/stories/underwater updates/ planned trips/memorable dive sites to [judyormandy@hotmail.com](mailto:judyormandy@hotmail.com) or [alison-grant@xtra.co.nz](mailto:alison-grant@xtra.co.nz) for us to share in the club newsletter.

Welcome to the July edition of Octopress, the Wellington Underwater Club newsletter. In this update, we'll introduce the 2025 - 2026 committee members, Peter will describe his favourite Wellington dive site and we'll share some more photos.

### Upcoming Events

#### Club dives

**Tuesday 22 July 6pm Night dive with Peter:** Make the most of our shorter winter days and see what critters appear once the sun disappears.

**Saturday 26 July: Meet 10am Dive Wellington.**

For both dives the site will be confirmed on the day, weather dependent. If you're keen email [Wellington.underwater@gmail.com](mailto:Wellington.underwater@gmail.com) and Peter will let you know the dive sites. They'll also be announced on the wellington underwater club member forum Facebook page.

#### Photo Competition

**Theme: "Dazzling".**

**Closes Aug 31 2025**

**Send your entries (maximum 3) to [wellington.underwater@gmail.com](mailto:wellington.underwater@gmail.com) with a brief description of the image.**

**Prize: tank fill at a local Wellington dive shop**

### My favourite Wellington shore dive: Elsdon Pipe at Houghton Bay

Peter Hodge

Elsdon Pipe is one of Wellington's best kept shore diving secrets. It has deep channels, steep pinnacles, lots of fish, and varied terrain. Dive there and you'll probably have the place to yourself, as not many know about the site, and the dive shops don't take students there.

The Pipe is on a rocky promontory on the west of Houghton Bay in the Taputeranga Marine Reserve. It takes its name from an old wastewater pipe which runs out to the point. You can park your car opposite 132 The Esplanade. There are three ways of diving the site: along the Houghton Bay reef, in the cove to the west of the point, and at the tip of the point.

The Houghton Bay reef is the easiest to access - walk along the shore, get into the water at a small pebble beach and swim out through a narrow channel. Navigation is straightforward - swim east to the reef edge, then south through the reef, then back north, and finally west to return to the entry/exit point. There are multiple routes through the reef. If you get lost, head east to the edge of the reef and the sand, then follow the edge back north. The cove is best dived near high water as it involves scrambling over the reef platform and into the access channel. You can dive this channel as it runs a fair way out underwater.

The point is trickier to get to. Back in the day you could walk along the pipe but now much of the concrete sheath around the pipe has eroded so you have to watch your footing. I haven't dived this for a while, but from memory you can, at high tide, step into a plunge pool to start the dive.

Maximum depth is 16 metres or so. The Pipe is not for beginners because of the rocky access and the need for good navigation skills. It's best dived in good visibility (8-10 metres plus) as this is when the reef's splendour reveals itself.



Elsdon Pipe dive site

Crimson Jelly

# Introducing Your Committee

## President: Alison Grant

1. *Where did you learn to dive?* With Dive! Tutukaka in late 2020. I needed a week to myself after finishing work as an on call midwife after 10 years, and I decided to go and learn to dive just to make sure I didn't sleep the week away! Poor Knights Islands were an incredible place to complete my OW dives; Mary's Wall, Trevor's Rock, Middle Arch and Cave Bay
2. *Favourite dive site of all time?* Ooh, tough one. I absolutely love Poor Knights and would happily dive there forever. Maomao Arch is like three sites in one; the fish life in the arch itself is gorgeous, but then there's still the steep encrusted walls of the cave to explore and the sunlit kelp reef of the bay for an idyllic safety stop. It's just magic.
3. *Favourite local dive site?* Local as in Wellington city - it's a toss-up between the Ōwhiro shipwrecks, Butterfish Rock at Breaker Bay, or Rocky Bay.
4. *Dive destination you aspire to?* All of them - I am such a baby diver in terms of dive travel, so almost everywhere is still on the list. But cave certification has become (most unexpectedly) my long-term goal, so let's say the denotes of Mexico.

## Secretary: Peter Hodge

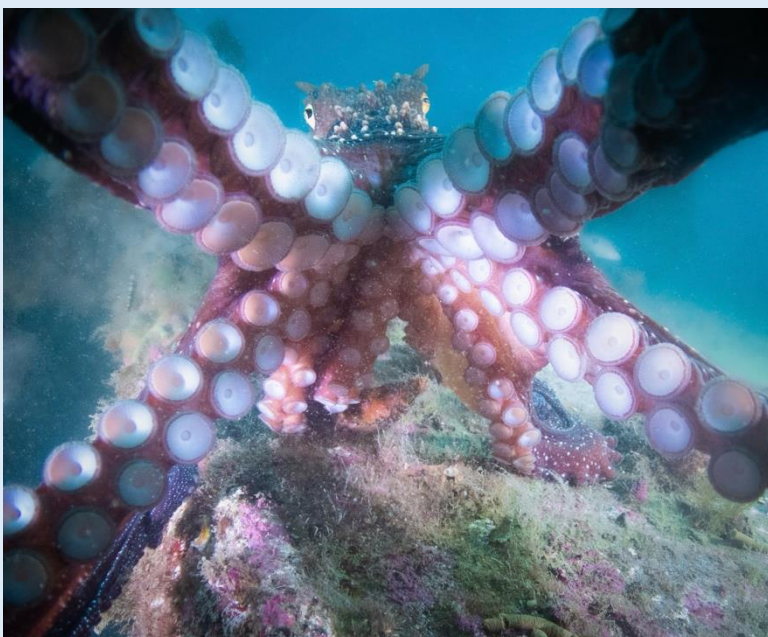
1. *Where did you learn to dive?* Island Bay, in March 1998: I vividly recall my first dive after certification at what's now the snorkel trail. We had absolutely no idea but somehow managed to fumble through it.
2. *Favourite dive site of all time?* Outer reef at Atauro Island, East Timor, in October 2024. A drift dive along the reef wall with great people, beautiful corals, myriad fish and a shark disappearing into the mystery of the deep ocean.
3. *Favourite local dive site?* Owhiro Bay shipwrecks. This site has a great mix of wrecks, history, wildlife, navigation challenges, shallow diving and easy shore access. Each dive is interesting and different.
4. *Dive destination you aspire to?* Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands. I'd love to dive the battleships of the German High Seas fleet, scuttled there at the end of World War One.

## Treasurer: Geoff Andrews

- Where did you learn to dive?* With Tim Walsh at Island Bay Divers back in 2018. It was kind of by accident, I was going to Hawai'i and I thought wouldn't it be cool to dive with Manta Ray's? It turns out I struggled with my skills, so I landed up snorkelling with them. Completed my training post trip in Wellington, in the harbour, in winter and thought this isn't the warm gin clear waters of Hawai'i with exotic wildlife but it is still fun...
2. *Favourite dive site of all time?* That is like asking which child would you sell for medical research. I have had fun and seen a lot of amazing things in many places around the world. The place that has the most impact for me would be the MS Mikhail Lermontov wreck in Port Gore, just across the strait. It is often cold and murky but there is a lot of wreck to dive on. Brent McFadden is a great instructor and host, the guests he get are all mad about their diving.
  3. *Favourite local dive site?* Which child didn't I sell for medical research? Mermaid's kitchen across the road from Dive Wellington on a good day, is great you can see many interesting critters and so many swim throughs. And it is so convenient with getting a cylinder (or two) filled pre or post dive.
  4. *Dive destination you aspire to?* Chuuk Lagoon and Palau are at the top of my very extensive (and expensive) wish list.

## Octopress: Judy Ormandy

- Where did you learn to dive?* I did my medical elective in Santo Vanuatu in 2001. It turned out there was a 'big shipwreck' nearby (the Coolidge) and the thing to do in your spare time was to learn to dive.
2. *Favourite dive site of all time?* This would probably be Darwin's Arch (back in the days when it was still an arch) in the Galapagos. The currents were ripping and the schooling hammerheads were incredible.
  3. *Favourite local dive site?* Mermaid's kitchen, opposite Dive Wellington, remains a firm favourite. No matter how many times I dive this site I still manage to get lost in the channels and swim throughs. The luminescent anemones, curious wheke and numerous nudibranchs at this site make it always a highlight.
  4. *Dive destination you aspire to?* This is a list that just keeps getting longer and more expensive.. However, St Helena, Spitsbergen and the Norwegian fjords are currently on the list.



Wheke on the Lermontov

Soft corals  
Atauro Island, Timor-Leste

