



**Dive Log, MV Plancius**  
**Falklands, South Georgia and Antarctic Peninsula**  
**30<sup>th</sup> November – 18<sup>th</sup> December 2019**



**Dive Team:** Raf Jah, Francisca Jah, David Sutton, Stephanie Sutton, Kevin Posser, Elmar Schanz, Jan Nilsson, Elaine Le Claire, Mark Orland, Thomas Penn, Timothy Morin, Jozef Koppelman, Jeffery Bozanic, Michael Smith, Nicolas Lecomte, Steven Macleod, Godwin Lai, Petra Walker, Gavin Walker, Bastiaan Antonius Vriesema.

**Dive Staff:** Jerry Sutton (Dive Team Leader) Catherine Buckland, Chris Booker & Chloe Marechal

## **Dive 1: AM 2<sup>nd</sup> December, Needle Point, Carcass Island, The Falklands**

**S 51°18'49.55**

**W 60°31'51.40**

After leaving Ushuaia and a gentle crossing of the South Atlantic, the 21 members of the diving group arrived in warm sunshine to the sheltered waters off Carcass Island eager for their first dive of the voyage. Dive Expedition leader Jerry gave a quick briefing then it was all action on the front decks of Plancius where dive gear was checked then stowed in zodiacs before being lowered over the side by Bosun Lauren.

Once the divers had boarded their respective zodiacs, we headed off to a sheltered shallow spot away from the rest of the boat traffic for a “kit check /shakedown dive” to run through drills, check weighting and get to grips with expedition diving operations for the first time.

All went well with divers enjoying 10 degrees water temperature, great visibility, plenty of life in the extensive kelp and even a swim past from some Commerson’s dolphins. One of the divers who shall remain nameless enjoyed it so much he decided to leave a fin behind – perhaps hoping to return one day like the people who leave their boots on “Boot Hill”.....

Fortunately the fin was the only thing left behind that morning and all divers emerged unscathed from their morning dip with enough time left for a quick run ashore to sample the delights of the cakes and tea at the settlement before heading back to the ship for lunch – diving is hungry work after all!



## **Dive 2: PM 2<sup>nd</sup> December, ‘The Neck’, Saunders Island, The Falklands.**

**S 51°18'50.70**

**W 60°31'53.05**

After a hearty lunch whilst underway, 13 divers were still eager for some more Falklands diving so we loaded up the zodiacs and headed away from the rest of the expedition to the West of the “Neck” of Saunders Island.

The dive site here is well protected from the wind and waves and drops gently down from the cliffs on the shore which are home to a great number of seabirds. Beneath the surface, the native kelp beds are also full of life with the divers discovering Octopus, Squat Lobsters, Long Nosed Spider Crabs, Painted Shrimp and numerous Squid eggs hiding amongst the kelp fronds.

The dive looked so inviting that two of the dive staff, Jerry and Chloe both decided to jump in with the divers to have a look for themselves – both surfacing with big smiles and thumbs up – always a good sign!

Once the happy divers were recovered from the water, they were lucky to still have enough time to go ashore and stretch their legs with the rest of the expedition to see the resident populations of Gentoo, Rockhopper and King Penguins. As it was now getting late, it was all too soon time to jump in a zodiac for the trip back to Plancius for a quick re-cap and then dinner, whilst swapping stories of the day's adventures.



### **Dive 3: AM 6<sup>th</sup> December, Tern Island, Salisbury Plain, South Georgia**

**S 54°2'41.499**

**W 37°19'54.38**

This was going to be our first dive in South Georgia, and although people were keen to dive there was also quite a number who wanted to enjoy what this stunning beach had to offer, and with a beach full of life it was easy to see why. So only a couple of boats decided to have a quick dive before joining those on shore.

We headed off to a dive spot known to be good,





kelp and fur seals waited for us with most divers enjoying an encounter with seals in the water. There was lots of life to greet us, with the usual suspects of star fish, a wealth of sponges, kelp limpets, and top shells. Most of the divers though only had eyes for the seals that buzzed around them, showing their agility in the water.

South Georgia lies below the convergence, which marks the biological boundary for 'Antarctica', this also means that the temperatures drop, so this was our divers first experience of true polar cold waters. The temperature was around 3°C, with a lot of divers finding the cold drove them out of the water first!

#### **Dive 4: PM 6<sup>th</sup> December, Prince Olav Harbour, South Georgia**

**S 54°2'41.080**

**W 37°19'54.041**

This afternoon we found a steep side of this natural harbour, with kelp and lots of fur seals surrounding us this looked like a promising dive site.

Twenty divers jumped in to explore this site. They were met with a steepish wall covered in life. The more they looked the more there seemed to be!

The usual cold water suspects of cold water limpets, starfish and anemones were found in abundance on this wall. There was plenty of light down at 15-20m and space to move between the kelp forest. Lots of young nemertean worms of the Hopolonemertea variety were seen by one of the dive guides which was nice to



see a different variety of these worms in South Georgia. After a successful dive for all we cruised the bay's deserted whaling station which was a very atmospheric end to a diving afternoon.

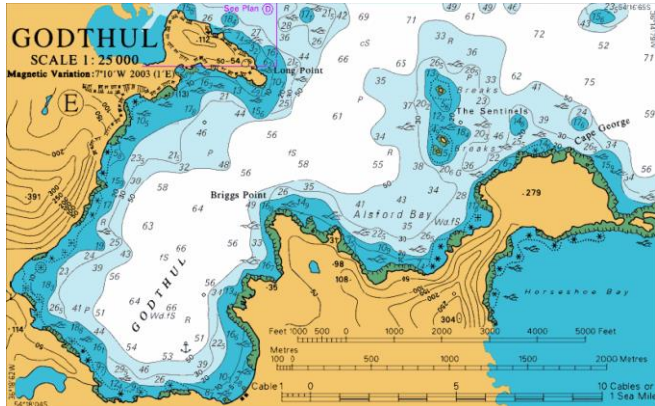
#### **Dive 5: PM 7<sup>th</sup> December, Godthul, South Georgia**

**S 54°17'34.51**

**W 36°17'10.65**

This afternoon's dive was in a stunning setting, the natural harbour had lots of fur seals and a few penguins jumping around. We found a suitable place to drop the divers in and 9 intrepid divers braved the cold again. Unfortunately the underwater visibility was poor, made worse by the slightly overcast afternoon. There were lots of particulates in the water which seem to clear up a little deeper but still wasn't the best we could've hoped for. Jerry

our dive team leader jumped in to have look for himself! A couple of our divers, deciding that the view was better on the surface, snorkelled or 'kelped' with a couple of seals after their dive and were rewarded with some very close encounters with the ever inquisitive fur seals. One very brave diver, whose dry glove had flooded, managed 25 minutes without a glove on in the 2°C water.... proving that divers really are a different breed! After a short dive, we caught up with the rest of the expedition and zodiac cruised round to Cobblers bay to see the new-born fur seal pups and were also joined by some young humpback whales that had joined us in the bay for the ride home.

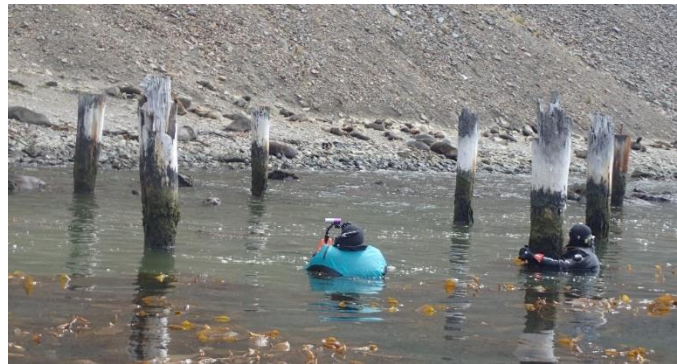


## Dive 6: AM 8<sup>th</sup> December, Ocean Harbour, South Georgia

**S 54°20'9.73**

**W 36°15'54.99**

This morning's dive was an unknown site for the staff, we were hoping for better visibility compared to the previous day but unfortunately with the large ground swell outside of the bay making diving impossible, we were forced to dive inside the bay in the calmer waters. The whole bay was only 10-15m deep and was unfortunately murky for the dive. Our resident scientist (Jeff) still enjoyed collecting some samples, so



there was enough visibility for that! Most of our divers had a relatively short dive and some enjoyed snorkelling at the end trying to see the local seals. This was where Mark and Elaine were treated to a close encounter with a couple of curious elephant seal weaners, certainly a treat! The backdrop of our dive was the picturesque whaling station and the wreck of the Bayard, standing proudly above water.



## **Dive 7: AM 9<sup>th</sup> December, Cooper Island, South Georgia**

**S 54°47'17.16**

**W 35°48'37.26**

The team had dived here a few times before and had enjoyed good dives, so all fingers were crossed that the visibility would improve from the last couple of dives. With a big ground swell pushing in to the bay, we had to head to other side of the channel that we usually dive and find some more shelter. The divers dropped in to around 15m and were treated to a very reasonable 2-3m visibility (Practically



Caribbean compared to the last couple of dives!). A sparse kelp forest made for easier diving at this site, and one of our divers became a snorkeller for this session and enjoyed a mini iceberg and visits from a couple of fur seals whilst the divers explored below. All in all, a great expedition dive session at a previously unexplored site to finish on in South Georgia. Once safely back onboard the Plancius with the sound of the faithful compressor filling cylinders in the background, thoughts now turned to diving in Antarctica and what adventures lie ahead....

## **Dive 8: AM 11<sup>th</sup> December, Shingle Cove, South Orkney Islands**

**S 60°40'26.35**

**W45°32'51.0**

The morning had dawned grey, snowy and quite windy, with a much more Antarctic feel in the air, with the divers maybe feeling a bit reluctant to get in... but as we arrived in Shingle Cove the wind dropped, the skies cleared and the decision to dive some ice was made. This was to be most of our divers first taste of diving icebergs, a very special and magical experience.



A suitable ice berg was selected, although no ice is completely safe the dive team try to pick one that looks a little safer than the rest. This particular ice berg was a very old ice berg, it was very blue and clear meaning it had been compacted at the bottom of the glacier, it also had some earth and sediment stuck in it as well.

After another quick reminder about diving around ice and telling the divers that it was over 100m deep at this point (!) the divers were thrown in. All the divers realised quite how cold it could be around an ice berg and what an incredible experience this was. Every diver arrived on surface with beaming smiles at having achieved diving around an ice berg in Antarctica! After the dive we got the diving team to clamber onto an iceberg. It was at this point that most of the divers had turned into children and were gleefully enjoying being able to stand on an actual ice berg. Photos taken, the divers were reluctantly taken back off the ice to head back to the ship for hot drinks and lunch to warm up. A truly Antarctic diving experience, and one that the group certainly will not forget for a while.

### **Dive 9: AM 13<sup>th</sup> December, Paulet Island, Antarctica**

**S63°34'25.34**

**W 55°48'9.62**

For the mornings dive we tried to look for a steeper wall to be able to see some more life thriving in this cold environment. As we approached our planned dive site the dive team noticed some current opposing the wind direction. The visibility looked good and we dropped our divers in for what looked like it was going to be a drift dive! Just above where we dropped in the divers was some interesting basalt formations, formed when this volcanic island had been active. All of the divers enjoyed a drift dive, with the topography dropping off quite quickly from where they had been dropped in. The visibility was around 4m and lots of life was spotted, including large nudibranchs, starfish, and giant isopods.

Despite having a penguin colony nearby there was no visiting leopard seal just yet, although after witnessing a leopard seal puncture two boats recently, some of the divers might have felt it was perhaps a good thing!



## **Dive 10: PM 13<sup>th</sup> December, Brown Bluff, Antarctica**

**S 63°30'37.68**

**W 56°54'27.01**

A few of the dive team had been here before but had always been blown out by high winds, however this afternoon we were in luck, the sea was calm with barely a breath of wind, the sun was trying to come out and conditions seemed perfect for a dive.

We found two grounded icebergs in fairly shallow water, with a curious adelic penguin on top. Fifteen divers and Jerry our dive team leader kitted up and rolled into the clear water, with visibility of around 6m the divers could see that the iceberg was mostly grounded on a ridge or mound of the sea floor. This ridge then dropped away with some divers exploring down to 16m. They could see the areas where iceberg scour had occurred with some parts of brittle starfish showing the danger for marine life when heavy ice comes along scraping the floor. This scouring action (sometimes referred to as “Darwin’s Lawnmower”) is important for the maintenance of ecological diversity in the shallow sites as no single species can become dominant as there is a constant flux of communities as new areas for colonisation are periodically opened up. Along with the usual invertebrate inhabitants, the divers were able to see swarms of krill around the icebergs – something that is rarely seen on these dive trips so they were exceptionally lucky! Brown Bluff is prone to ice getting pushed in from the Weddell Sea, so to be able to dive this site and see what was underneath was a real treat.



## **Dive 11: PM 14<sup>th</sup> December, Devil Island, Antarctica**

**S 63°47'24.83**

**W 57°18'11.54**

This afternoon's dive was at a new location for most of the dive team and expedition team – yet another first for the expedition! A shallow bay with a hazardous outlying reef was the challenge to find this drop off, it was around 300m off shore. With a bit of looking at the charts and using the depth sounder the dive team found the drop off and duly deployed their divers in to discover this site.

This impressive wall below was covered in life, with reasonable visibility despite some plankton bloom in the first few metres. Once the divers dropped below this layer, they dropped out of it and were able to see the abundance of life that was awaiting them with large sponges and cold water whip corals being reported by some divers.



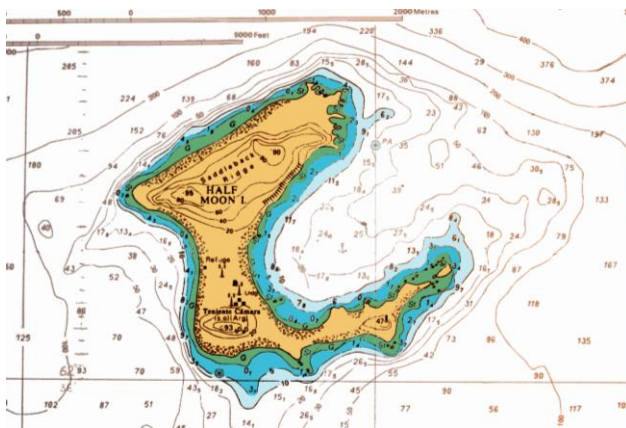
Two snorkelers were taken to the outlying reef and dropped in a very shallow area, it had almost become a walk rather than a snorkel – giving rise to the new sport of “walkelling”! They were able to enjoy some adelic penguins from a very different view point, and one was even bumped by a penguin! The shallow nature of the snorkel site meant that a lot of icebergs had grounded giving some great sculptures for the snorkellers to enjoy.



## Dive 12: AM 15<sup>th</sup> December, Half Moon, Antarctica

S 62°35'32.36

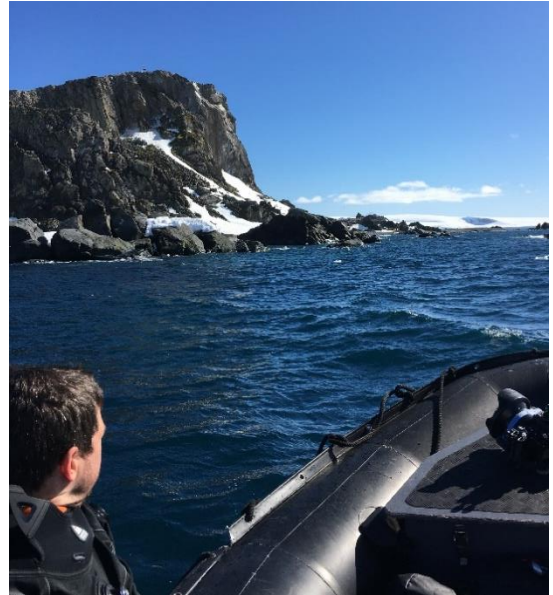
W 59°54'23.00



A known and much enjoyed dive site by the dive team, in the past there have been some good dives here, so fingers were crossed that this site delivered again. Unfortunately no leopard seal turned up today, but instead, the divers were rewarded with the best visibility so far on the trip, and a steep slope covered in life and kelp. The windy conditions on top didn't put off one keen snorkeller who enjoyed seeing the life from the shallows. With the

nearby ice capped Livingston Island the water temperature certainly felt colder but that

added to the icy blue waters allure (or maybe not and divers were dreaming of hot showers!) All enjoyed this site and were then able to head ashore to see the chinstrap penguins.



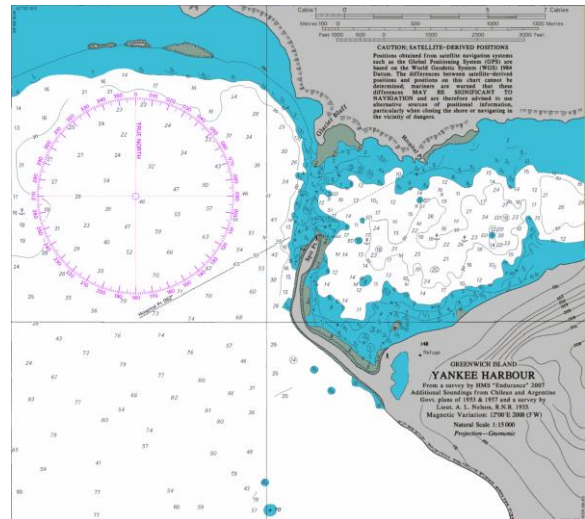
### Dive 13: PM 15<sup>th</sup> December, Yankee Harbour, Antarctica

S 62°31'38.26

W 59°47'33.27

It had to happen - our final dive had arrived, and this was to be on a previously unexplored area, but which promised a steep site with potential for a good amount of life. The nearby glacier was looking like it might cause issues with visibility but thankfully as the divers dropped underneath around 4m the visibility opened up.

With large boulders, silt and sand greeting the divers lots of life including sea urchins were in abundance. It's quite likely that this wall may escape some iceberg scour owing to the direction of the localised prevailing winds and currents, which would lead to some life being able to establish itself. A brilliant final dive for those that chose it, all divers helped to strip down the kit and weight belts ready for our passage home over the Drake.





With special thanks to our deck crew team, who safely lowered and lifted every zodiac full of our precious diving equipment.

Left – right: Giovanni, Ferdie, and Bosun Lauren.



We would like to thank you for choosing Oceanwide and for diving with us on Plancius. We have really enjoyed helping you to experience this amazing and rarely seen underwater world and hope to see you again somewhere in the future.