

Rapid Bay Jetty

by Paul Macdonald

Rapid Bay was the first landing point on the South Australian mainland by the Surveyor General, Colonel William Light in September 1836. The town was named after Light's ship, the Rapid.

The original Rapid Bay jetty was completed in 1942 to enable the shipment of limestone that Broken Hill Propriety Ltd (BHP) had commenced mining in the vicinity of the town. The limestone was shipped to BHP's steelworks at Whyalla, Newcastle and Port Kembla where it was used as flux in the production of steel.

The completed jetty built of steel and timber consisted of an approach jetty of 448m length connecting to a T-Head of 198m length. The T-Head consisted of a main deck, 6 dolphins and connecting walkways. The dolphins served as fenders for docking ships and as mooring points for ships being loaded.

Further work was completed in 1949 to enclose the approach piles with concrete collars to guard against Teredo worms that are notorious for boring into wood immersed in sea water. The concrete collars can be still be seen either around the

old timber piles or making home to various marine creatures on the sea bed.

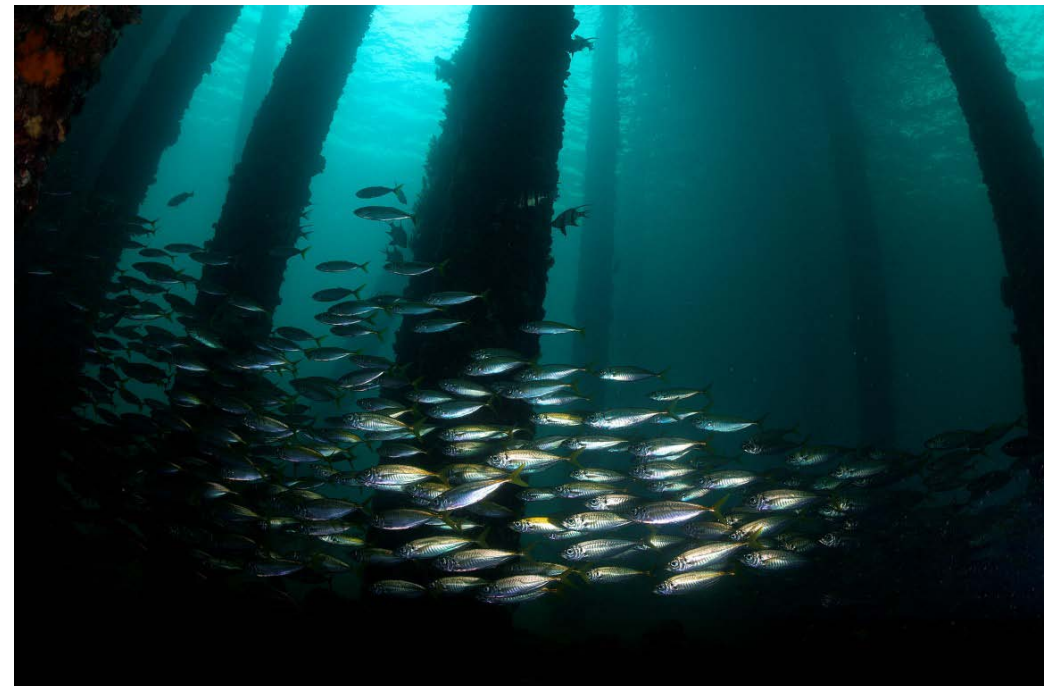
By 1958 the T Head had become unstable due to worm damage and buffeting from docking ships. Reconstruction work was undertaken removing the old wooden piles, inserting new steel piles and lengthening the T Head to 224m.

BHP gifted the jetty to the SA government in 1981 and in 1982 sold the mine to Adelaide Brighton Cement Ltd (ABC) who leased the jetty from the government. ABC shipped limestone to its Birkenhead cement plant until 1988 when the Rapid Bay operation was scaled back and the jetties commercial life ended in 1991.

From this time on the original jetty was poorly maintained and fell into disrepair quite quickly. Initially the T Head was closed to fishermen and divers and then, in January 2005, the jetty was condemned and closed to the public.

The original jetty has now been

Horse mackerel - Nikon D700, Sigma 15mm fisheye, 1.4x t/c, ISO400, f/10, 1/80 sec, Sea & Sea Housing, 2x YS-110 Strobes



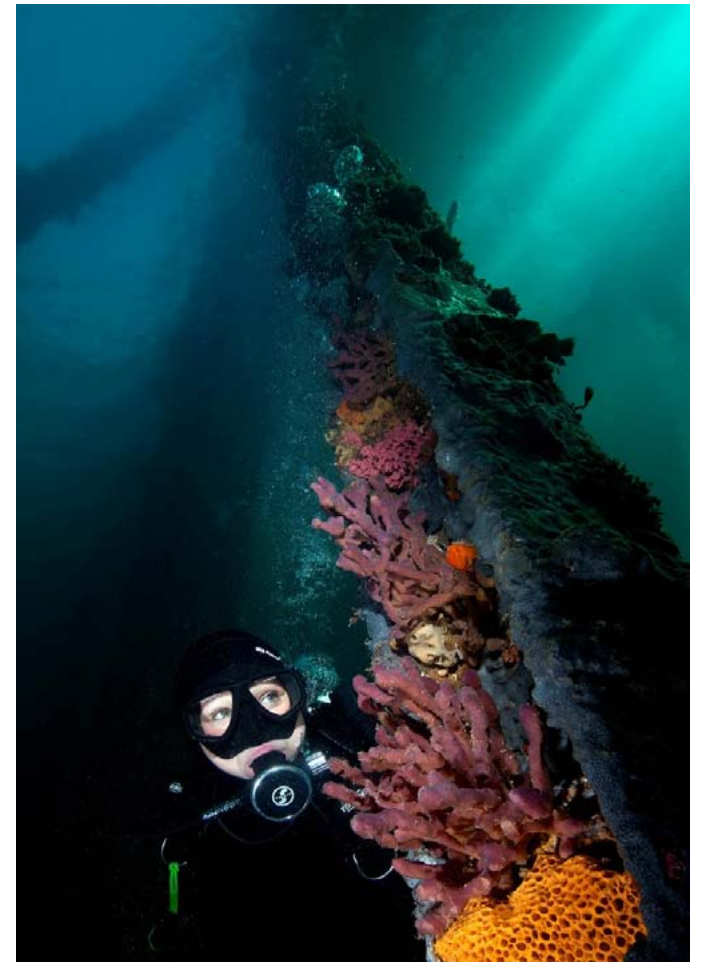


Leafy sea dragon - Nikon D700, Sigma 15mm fisheye, 1.4x t/c, ISO200, f/16, 1/100 sec, Sea & Sea Housing, 2x YS-110 Strobes

Spider crab - Nikon D200, Nikkor 12-24mm at 24mm, ISO100, f/14, 1/60 sec, Sea & Sea Housing, 2x YS-110 Strobes

Orange nudibranch - Nikon D200, Nikkor 105mm, ISO100, f/20, 1/60 sec, Sea & Sea Housing, 2x YS-110 Strobes

Elizabeth - Nikon D700, Nikkor 17-35mm at 17mm, ISO400, f/20, 1/60 sec, Sea & Sea Housing, 2x YS-110 Strobes



left for the sea to claim. Already a short section of the approach has collapsed into the water with the decking on the sea floor and the piles pointing up to the surface.

In response to lobbying by the fishing and diving communities a new and shorter jetty has been built parallel to the existing jetty. Construction of this new jetty was completed in 2009. It is 240m in length and located 50m east of the original BHP jetty. At the seaward end, a staircase and platform has been built to provide an easy entry point for

divers.

The diver's platform at the end of the new jetty is in around 5m of water. As you drop down under the platform there are 2 lines of star droppers, 1 straight across and another on a diagonal in a seaward direction. Both lines take you to the old jetty.

As you swim out towards the T Head the depth drops gradually to 7 meters. At a point just before the kink there is a sharper slope down to 10 metres depth. From this point out to the end and across the

T Head the depth remains constant.

On the whole dive look out for leafy sea dragons. Rapid Bay is a well known habit for leafies and they are often found hiding in the weeds under and around the old and new jetty. If you are lucky you may also find a weedy sea dragon. When you get to the end of the old jetty you will find large schools of trevally, old wives, zebrafish, kingfish and bulls eyes sheltering under the T Head. Snook are also often found sheltering alongside the pylons or debris.



Magpie perch - Nikon D700, Sigma 15mm fisheye, 1.4x t/c, ISO400, f/8, 1/60 sec, Sea & Sea Housing, 2x YS-110 Strobes

There are lots of nudibranchs to be seen on the pylons and debris. The usual SA reef fishes can be seen here including dusky morwong, magpie perch, talma and scaly fin.

Rock ling and harlequin fish are often seen amongst the debris at the T Head. Cuttlefish, blue ring octopus and squid are also regularly sighted under or around the jetty and the odd pipefish in the weed. If you look closely you may even find smooth, prickly and tasselled anglerfish.

An alternative dive is to start from the new jetty and follow the old jetty to the shallows. Here you may find juvenile leafy sea dragons.

Paul Macdonald
www.downunderpix.com

 **downunderpix**



Underwater Photography

- Workshops
- Courses
- Leafy Seadragon Tours
- Trips
- Cameras & Accessories
- Scuba Diving Equipment

www.downunderpix.com

info@downunderpix.com

www.uwpmag.com

ADAM HANLON

WETPIXEL



THE SOURCE
www.wetpixel.com