

FATHOMS

Victorian Sub-Aqua Group Newsletter

Price 3s.

November, 1965.



"Come on Light-tail"

".... and they say the Melbourne Cup was close!"

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EDITORIAL

New Season Reminders.

With the coming of warm sunny weather, the winter hibernation of many of our members is concluding, to be replaced, we hope, by a real awakening of the ardent desire to go diving. On this assumption, it appears timely to reiterate a few points on diving safety which because they are "old hat" to most of us, may tend to be overlooked.

Firstly, it is suggested all members re-aquaint themselves with the safety rules laid down by the Group for its members, and printed in the handbook.

A careful check of basic gear, the reducer, demand valve, air line, and tanks, should be made. If the reducer is any way doubtful, or has not been overhauled since last season, don't monkey with it, have it serviced by a qualified man; your life must be worth at least the few bob involved. If your tanks are out of test, then all filling stations with the best interests of diving, your well being, and their business at heart, will not fill them. Don't abuse the operator for refusing to fill them; rather, leave them for testing, remember, the life it could save could be your own.

With all gear cleared for action, acquaint yourself with your diving sites before entering the water, so that you may avoid, or at least be prepared for possible hazards. Where possible, discuss sites with divers who know the area. Club dives, of course, are selected from knowledge of experienced divers, and aim at greatest enjoyment with maximum safety.

Divers contemplating activities below 33 feet should check decompression tables, and ensure they know how to correctly apply them. A well planned dive based on these tables, will avoid the possibility of decompression sickness, with its risks to health and life. Reading through some of the personal accounts of divers who have had the misfortune to suffer from the 'bends' would no doubt make even the most fool-hardy of us have second thoughts on risking it, particularly as recompression chambers at present virtually do not exist in our southern states.

Dives below 33 feet, where decompression tables come into consideration, necessitate the need for an accurate knowledge of depth, and time elapsed at given depths. Reasonable depth gauges are obtainable from all dive shops, but if the diver is not controlled by a surface life-line, he must also have a watch. A word of warning would seem appropriate at this stage regarding diving watches available. Apparently, a section of the watch-making industry can see quick money in the current popular demand for diving and waterproof watches, and there is any amount of cheap "Junk" watches about for sale to the unwary.

If you are in the market for a divers watch, it is a good policy to stick to the known reputable brand names and discuss it with divers who own watches. In buying cheap time-pieces you not only risk wasting your money but if it is unreliable, or packs up under pressure, it could jeopardize your health. There is ample evidence that a lot of these cheaper "diving" watches cannot live up to their maker's claims, so in any purchase carefully check the guarantee, and ensure that the selling agent will back it up - most will not.

As King Neptune might remark, -

"There is always the man
 Who will make a thing a little worse,
 To sell a little cheaper,
 And those who consider price only,
 Are his legitimate prey."

Of equal importance to reliable gear, is the physical fitness of the diver. Diving with an aqualung or skin diving, uses an energy expenditure equivalent to running, and a good rule of thumb to gauge your physical fitness, is that you should be able to run for as long as you intend to dive. The thought behind these comments, is, dive within your physical limits, extending your activities as your fitness increases. Diving beyond your physical ability leads to exhaustion, and it has ascertained that drowning resulting from exhaustion is the most frequent cause of death whilst using an aqualung.

Again, use of common sense will eliminate this risk, and the wearing of a life-jacket, can be a great comfort to swim home on when tired.

STICK TO THE ACCEPTED RULES, AND YOUR DIVING WILL BE
 SAFE AND PLEASANT.

JAN

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OBITUARY

It is with sincere regret that we report the recent death of Norm Drury of Frankston.

Norm, with his wife Dot, was one of the Group's early and enthusiastic divers. This couple only lost regular contacts with other members, when they set up house at Frankston about three years ago. Even so, they attended recent camps to Wilson's Promontory.

On behalf of Norm's many friends in the Group, we extend to his wife and children, sincere sympathy in their bereavment.

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OUTINGS

PAST

PETERBOROUGH. Seven people arrived late Friday night, finding the camping ground without difficulty. Awakenng to a bleak morning, the camping ground was found to be more fiction than fact, being out on the open dunes, without shelter from the gales, and poor facilities. Diving was out, so the party divided - coastal explorers per landrover, and others to look for a place relatively sheltered for a dive. This was found at the pier at Pt. Campbell, where conditions were not too bad and two divers spent an enjoyable hour pier-crawling.

SORRENTO. As the weather was poor, with southerly winds blowing, and no starters, the dive to this locality on the 31st October was cancelled. Instead, four divers went round to Queenscliff, as an alternative, and had an enjoyable crawl under the local. Brian was so loaded he walked back to the beach.

FUTURE

14th NOVEMBER. Woolley's Reef, off Mt. Eliza. Meet at Frankston Marine Centre (near jetty) at 10.a.m. Dive Captain. Pat Reynolds. Phone 232.5328. As this will be a boat trip, life jackets, in WORKING ORDER, must be worn.

28th NOVEMBER. Williamstown, Low water 12.30p.m. Further details at the next meeting.

OUTINGS - UNOFFICIAL. Several club members recently were part of a team made up from member clubs of the S.D.F. to take part in the initial stages of building the artificial reef. This is being done in conjunction with the Ports and Harbours, and the Fisheries and Wildlife Departments. Concrete pipes are being laid in an area about three miles off Mordiallic, on a silty bottom, in 60 feet and it is hoped a fish pupulation will arrive there to take up residence in the 'Flats' provided. The preliminary work consisted of observations of the behaviour of the pipes when lowered (they disappeared into the mud!) and the fauna to be found growing in the situs.

Observations over a lengthy period are envisaged, and it is probable that research minded divers will all be able to take part eventually.

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TRAINING

Training will commence at the Try Boy's pool in the near future. Anyone knowing prospective trainees contact Frank Coustley.

Tests for 'C' Grade for all our newer divers will be held early in the new year, so start practicing, all you new members, and a lot of you old ones, too.

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MEETINGS

The last General Meeting was entertained with a film "Rendezvous on the Reef", dealing with the idyllic life of a husband and wife team, just cruising around the Bahamas, taking movies. But I don't think any one of us present would have swapped flippers and masks for the rather clumsy hard hats!

Next Meeting, will be held at Scots Hall, on 19th Nov-

ember. The speaker will be Alistair Gilmour, of the Fisheries and Wildlife Department, who will speak on their current Westernport Bay survey. Alistair is in charge of this project, and is also a diver. He will illustrate his talk with film and slides. This should be a most interesting lecture, so come along and learn something about a diving locality we all know well.

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DIVERS' DISEASES

As in most sporting activities indulged in by the human male, diving tends to exclude all but the most daring wives and girlfriends - let's face it, diving is NOT a spectator sport!

One irate wife has put pen to paper to identify the various diving types she has encountered. Over the next few months for your guidance, we will include excerpts from her typical categories - don't be too quick to classify your diving buddies - your classification may come up next time!

THE BOATING DIVER. Should be married or be wealthy enough to afford slaves. Spends hours loading diving gear aboard; weeds out "unnecessary junk", consisting of wife's lipstick and children's toys. Diving gear is stored in the galley, and is only needed when wife is making scrambled eggs, He needs help getting in and out of the water, gets deck and cabin wet with diving gear, and requires all the deck space to dry off gear after dives. He punishes the children for wishing aloud that Daddy's bubbles would stop coming up. After trip, wife enters convalescent hospital to recuperate, whilst he tells everyone he had an enjoyable and relaxing time.

DESTITUTE DIVER Goes away to remote spot for weekend with wife and family, and only 10/- in the kitty. Declares loudly to wife not to worry, as they can "live off the land", and he will provide. Unfortunately, southerly blows up, and diving is out. Uses up air in sheltered bays in fruitless search for fish which were shot out years ago. Final desperate crawl under pier produces old 'couts, dropped several days previously from fishing boat. Triumphantly presents to wife, who cooks it, complaining about terrible smell. Diver eats it with great satisfaction, loudly condemning those who refuse to eat good food. On arrival home, spends two days in bed with food poisoning. Blames wife's cooking.

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CHRISTMAS GIFTS

It is advised that at the next General Meeting there will be on display a fine selection of polished Australian gem-stones in settings of bracelets, pendants, tie bars, cuff links, etc. Any member in the market for such articles may find his requirements in this selection, at very reasonable cost.

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SUPPER VOLUNTEERS

Bill Gray, Eric Rae, John Noonan.

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DINNER DANCE

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Don't you want to take her somewhere for that pre-Christmas celebration? A barbecue on the beach after a dive just won't do! Give her a chance to see you in something other than a wet-suit. Come along and join the fun.

Last chance for booking and final payments
at the next meeting.

Tickets 39/6 each. Stamford Hotel, Rowville.
See Brian Heather or ring him at 45.5505.

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AUSTRALIAN CULTURE PEARLS. Recently, 30,000
pearl oysters were sent from Kuri Bay near Broome
to Thursday Island as part of a plan to expand
the pearl culture industry there. The beds on
the north-western Australian coastline are con-
sidered the best host-oysters for culturing the
pearls. The pearls at Kuri Bay are produced
after two years within the oyster, and exceed those
grown in Japan in size. This comparatively new
industry is already returning Australia £2,000,000
annually.

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FOR SALE

TAOE EHT One Nemrod speargun, hardly used.
Doesn't seem to shoot straight.
Apply, Bill Gray.

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COMMITTEE REPORT

The following main points arose from the meeting
held prior to the last general meeting.

Considerable time was spent in discussion of a
tentative program for the projected Moomba
festivities. However, nothing could be final-
ized until a reply is to hand from T.A.A. letting
us know if they are willing to donate us the
major prize of a Diver's Tour to Heron Island.

It was felt by Committee that without this prize it would not be feasible to hold the contest.

Other major business considered, was the bringing up to date of the printed pages in the handbook, listing filling stations, by-laws, club members, committee, officers, etc. This is to be finalized as soon as possible.

It was suggested that a small 'entrance prize' be offered at each meeting, the donation to be about 2/- the prize to take the form of something of use or interest to the diver.

Meeting closed 8.15 p.m. You wouldn't think so, from the above, but we were flat out for two hours!

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SEA SCIENCE SECTION

The sea floor, whether ocean or bay is a never-ending source of wonder to the dedicated diver. In going underwater, we leave the land, the domain of the vertebrates, and enter the world of the invertebrates. In exactly the same manner as those on the land, these marine animals each fulfill a place of their own below water level. This special position in the order of things for each one is termed by biologists, the biological niche, and no two species of animal can occupy the same niche in the same locality - one or the other will lose the competition for food, light, etc, and will be displaced by the stronger species. Thus, with one group living on another, there grows up an interdependence of each species with others for food, light and position. The study of this interaction is the relatively new science of marine ecology.

Formerly, ecology could only be studied on reefs at low tide, and by dredging from boats, and any diver knows the world of difference between specimens

observed in their natural place, and the same when hauled out of the water. With the advent of the aqua-lung, facts can now be gathered at first hand.

In Australia, marine biologists have been remarkably slow in putting the aqua-lung to use in this way. This may be due to the fact that marine biologists are very few in this country, there are few institutions capable, or wealthy enough to support research, in marine sciences, and those qualified research workers who do exist, have seemed to date to be personally reluctant to take advantage of diving techniques.

There is some rising interest in the training of ecologists, and biologists in the Universities, lately, and a flourishing Marine Science Association has been formed on an Australia wide basis. The establishment of an Institute of Oceanography is a future and vital dream.

A new venture in studying local marine ecology was mentioned earlier in the Newsletter - that is, the establishment of an artificial reef in Port Phillip Bay. Over a period of years, regular visits will be carried out by S.D.F. member clubs, who will collect specimens and make progressive estimates of population densities in the area. This work will be based on the very successful pioneer experiments carried out in Japanese waters, and parts of the Californian coastline.

With the placing of a solid substrate in the chosen area, an anchorage for seaweeds and small marine invertebrates will be provided. In turn small fry will be attracted to feed there, and larger fish will move in to feed on the smaller ones. Rock dwellers such as the leather jackets, and parrot-fish should

take up residence within the protecting maze of pipes.

So, here, in our own diving backyard, we will be able to participate in one of Australia's first, and certainly most interesting experiments in producing an eco-system artificially in an area which is presently almost devoid of life.

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