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FATHOMS



VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

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(Official Journal of the Victorian Sub-Aqua Group)
Box 2526W, G.P.O., Melbourne, 3001.

President

PAT REYNOLDS,
36 Mandowie Street, Glen Waverley. Tel.: 232-5358

Vice President

JUSTIN LIDDY,
Flat 1, 15 Holloway Street,
ORMOND.
Tel.: 58-3811

Treasurer

D. J. McBEAN
25 Driftwood Drive
GLEN WAVERLEY
Tel.: 232-4894

Secretary

JOHN GOULDING,
Flat 6, 40 Osborne Ave.,
GLEN IRIS. 3146
Tel.: 252-883

Newsletter Editor
& Co N. Ed.

BRIAN LYNCH,
Flat 16, 77 Queen's Road,
MELBOURNE, 3004

DAVID CARROLL
WARRION, 3249
Victoria

Committee Members

DAVE MOORE - 277-6395
ADRIAN NEWMAN -
ALAN CUTTS - 877-3287
MARGARET PHILLIPS - 232-9633
IAN COCKERELL - 35-1392
BILL GRAY - 232-7220

CLUB MEETING -

The next meeting of the Victorian Sub-Aqua Group will be held on TUESDAY, 19th FEBRUARY, 1974, at the Victorian Association of Youth Clubs Hall, Gisborne Street, East Melbourne (opposite St. Patrick's Cathedral). The meeting will begin at 8.00 p.m. and will terminate with general business and refreshments. Visitors welcome. Please note that it will not always be possible to use the toilets in the hall. So come prepared.

FOREWORD -

Normally it is very difficult trying to find something different to day at the beginning of each magazine. Not so this time, since our last issue we have begun a new year and had some really good gives already, which means there is plenty of interesting subject matter about.

First of all I think a vote of thanks to Murray and June Richardson who put up with the club at Mortlake over the Christmas recess, and also to Mrs. Carroll who supplied us with a meal on the way back and at a moment's notice too.

Over the Christmas period dives were logged at Warrnambool, Loch Ard gorge, and of course Mt. Gambier. Because of our increasing familiarity with the area, our long weekend venue was changed to Port Campbell, where we finally achieved what will I am sure be our finest dives for a long while to come, two consecutive days diving on the fabled Loch Ard itself, a really story book ending to our first month of diving in 1974.

Now to the magazine itself, as ever its pages are open for you to express yourself freely on any subject that you think will interest club members. Articles to the editors will be greatly appreciated.

So there we are, we have started the year off with a bang, if the enthusiasm visible now continues throughout the year, it will be a memorable one for the club, so now keep the ball rollins.

Editor.

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DIARY OF FORTHCOMING EVENTS -

The following dates are club dive dates, no venues have yet been decided by the committee, but these are the dates and details of locations will be given at the next general meeting.

SUNDAY, 24th FEBRUARY. Bay wreck dive, meet at Sorrento boat ramp.
Time 10 a.m. Dive captain - Dave Moore.

(Note: This time may be amended to coincide with tide tables).

SUNDAY, 10th MARCH.

SUNDAY, 24th MARCH.

SUNDAY, 7th APRIL.

FRIDAY, 12th APRIL. Easter break. Wilson's Promontory. For details, contact John Goulding. Tel.: 252883.

MORTLAKE SUMMER CAMP -

Our Christmas camp this year was situated at Mortlake, deep in Dave Carroll territory somewhere west of Colac, and just this side of the Black Stump. There was a very good attendance for this, our longest communal holiday of the year. With Murray's shearing mansion as the focal point, tents blossomed out all around, and from a distance it looked as if the carnival had hit town.

The weather was reasonably kind to us, although we did return one day to find that the wind had demolished half the tents, but with little or no damage to those concerned. Since we were right in the middle of a farm, those amongst us who fancied the call of the land helped Murray to bale and load hay, and the "volunteers" who helped with the toilet disposal chores gave the rest of us something to laugh about, upwind of course.

Using the farm as our base, trips were made to the coast from Warrnambool, to Moonlight Head, and one night stops were planned to Mt. Gambier. The Loch Ard gorge also figured prominently and once again we combed its length and breadth for souvenirs of the old ship.

The farm itself proved to be a comfortable billet, and Murray's system of running cold and cold water was hard to beat during the hot spells. Murray was often to be heard singing: "If I were a

carpenter", and Barry could be seen showing him just what to do if he were.

A very enjoyable New Year's Eve was had by all, can't wait for that orange passing game to come round again. Our rock group "The Bawling Drones" once again anchored by "Satchmo Goulding", and ably assisted by Terry, Jenny & Dave, alternating on guitars, Keith on bars, and Dave on piano accordian, helped pass the night away tunelessly. We were also lucky enough to have Murray giving one of his rare accordian recitals, as someone said at the time never heard the accordian played like that before.

Anyhow before we realised it the time had passed and it was back to Melbourne, work and a rest. However on the way home Barry's trailer cast a wheel and we all descended upon Dave Carroll's home for lunch and a temporary resting place for the cara-boat. After a tour of Dave's home we all drove sedately home to Melbourne - and now our cast in order of appearance:

Murray, June and family
Barry, Marie and family
Terry, Judy and family
Max, Pat and family
Justin, Denise and family
Keith and Di,

Dave and Pat
John and Paul
Dave and Don
Ian and Jenny
Caroline

and yours truly, Brian Lynch,

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NEW YEAR'S EVE - MORTLAKE 1973-74

Picture if you will flat, rolling country, side stretching away into the distance. Here and there a flicker of light from a far-off farm building. The noises of the night carried softly on a warm summer breeze. Looking westward, one can see a blaze of light issuing from a large, rambling odd building which looks something like a shearing shed. From the sounds emanating from within it looks as though there is some sort of celebration going on. A closer scrutiny of the assorted people cavorting about inside, reveals the truth, sordid and horrifying as it may be

It's the V.S.A.G. ushering in the New Year.

New Year's Eve 1973 had started innocently enough in the morning as our gallant crew staggered around getting ready to face breakfast, a day's diving, or helping cart hay, or all three. After our usual early start of about 10 or 11 a.m. those who were going diving,

did, those who were going sightseeing, did, those who were having breakfast, did, and those helping Murray were

Peace descended on the Chateau Richardson once more until about 3 o'clock when the first cars began to make their way home. The first cars home carried mainly the female members of our little group who promptly disappeared inside, locking and barring the doors behind them.

Around 6 p.m. most of us had made it home with the exception of the hay carters. So we settled down to a light snack and a small ale and discussed those things divers commonly discuss after a day in the water, you know, the world situation, the latest prices on the Stock Market - that sort of thing!!! Never a word about diving??? Finally, John's mate 'Argus' reckoned it was time to head inside and get the evening's festivities underway. This we did and found the reason for the locked doors earlier, the women, bless their little hearts, ably supervised by the various kids around the place, had transformed the old shed with streamers of every color of the rainbow, balloons in every color of the rainbow, and all that was needed was people in every color of the rainbow . . . these we had. Dave Carroll even made a concession to the occasion and put on a clean shirt (the fact it belonged to someone else we won't mention). Even Dave Moore changed his jeans.

And so on into the night with various entertainments devised by the children for the "oldies" to play, one of which involved a parcel with a multitude of notes and wrapping paper which Bazza won (appropriately enough it was his favorite toy); and another involving judicious use of an orange. Enough said. This was followed by community singing in various off-key voices and a rendition of something by old man Lynch. Also starring were Di and Pat in a soft shoe routine called "The Cider Shuffle". Then another little game involving pushing a car of beer away from oneself without touching the floor. This ended in a stalemate as D.J. quietly moved the starting line back 12 inches after his turn!

Then it was time for the V.S.A.C. Band under the direction of "Maestro" Murray to swing into Auld Lang Syne and usher in 1974.

Then, just for a change, we had a beer and said HAPPY NEW YEAR.

JUSTIN LIDDY.

PICCANINNY PROMENADE -

It was a very hot Mortlake Friday, the last one in 1973, as John, Paul, Dave and I set out for South Australia for some good, we hoped, fresh water dives. This was the other half of our programme and we were all eagerly looking forward to our inland diving. We covered the 150 miles to Nelson quite quickly and then shot over the border to commence our tight schedule at Ewans Ponds; the time of our entry into the water was about seven-thirty in the evening.

There were people camped beside the landing stage and the ponds appeared well worn as we snorkelled through the system. Visibility was only reasonable, but the views were interesting, we swam along the weed choked channels, spending our time looking at the luxuriant weed growth, taking photographs, and also adjusting ourselves and our equipment to the buoyant fresh water.

We came out, a little chilled, dressed and had a bite to eat, then took off for Piccaninny. When we arrived there we found that there were divers already encamped beside the pond. This was a disaster as far as we were concerned, because unless we got in first, we would have to wait a while for the water to settle down. So we decided that we would make an early start and hope to beat our rivals to the landing stage. To this end we arose at 4.15 a.m. well Dave and I got up and spent the next hour getting our equipment ready and trying to rouse Johnny and Paul from their car! It was when I was trying to get into a cold damp wet suit at about five o'clock that I began to wonder whether it was going to be worth it. As it turned out it was well worth it. We finally managed to get ourselves all together by first light and tip-toed quietly past our sleeping competition. Once on the landing stage we relaxed and settled down to wait for the sun to rise above the trees.

It was a beautiful calm start to the day and as the light improved we began our preparations. First of all John and Paul set the shot line in the first pool. Then Dave and I swam out with our two spare tanks. We placed one at ten feet on the shot line and then assembling ourselves on the surface eased through the reeds. As we came over the reed bed I had a terrible feeling that I was about to tumble down a sheer cliff face, so clear was the water beneath me. The sides of the limestone pond stretched down and down and down. Dave and I sank easily to 60 feet, where we left our second spare tank; I then went down to examine the bottom. Resting on the bottom and looking upwards, way above me I could see

the water surface and above that the blue sky, a really exhilarating experience. Then it was time to ascend, this we did slowly, examining the sides as we did so, and collecting our tank 'en route' to the outside world once more. We reluctantly left the water and motored back to Mortlake with yet another memorable dive into our memory banks.

BRIAN LYNCH

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CHRISTMAS SKI-TRIPS -

It was decided that Friday, 28th December would be a day of water-skiing at Lake Bolac. Brian, John, Paul and the Cat were off to Mt. Gambier to dive Ewens & Piccaninny Ponds which left just enough skiers for Dave Moore's boat to handle comfortably.

It was a warm, sunny day with a light wind and we were able to find smooth water at the southern end of the Lake. First up was ex-Moonba Masters champion, Justin Liddy, who gave a faultless display of skiing in the boat's wash, without moving left or right of centre. Next up was Denise who tied with Justin as the most improved skier in the club. Then came Keith Stewart who found that long legs are not always an advantage. Terry Smith who always goes well, even though he always complains of a weak back!

Young Debbie quickly mastered the skis, and finished off her display with a spectacular topless finish. Then came Dave Moore and myself who as you know always need a little prompting to get wet. Chris Truscott got up for a short time, and then those two rugged birds, Pat and Diane tried, and tried, and tried and finally tried. But all round an enjoyable day was had by all.

The second ski-day was cooler with more wind with the only difference being my attempted dry starts which finished up being two very wet stops, before I finally made it away, and Max's dry stop, which went something like this. Approach beach at 30 m.p.h. let go rope, slow to 20 m.p.h. When skis stop on dry land, jump off, run for 10 yards, fall to ground using elbows for braking. I must point out that this trick should only be attempted by very rugged divers in full wet suits, preferably with reinforced elbows.

This finished off another good day's skiing, Lake Bolac certainly gave us some thrills and spills in our two trips.

BAZZA

(P.S. How are the elbows Max?)

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CHRISTMAS DIVE AT EDEN -

After our trip to Rockhampton and Yeppoon where we were flooded in for a week - Come to Sunny Queensland they say - 34 inches of rain in 36 hours is "Real Sunny". We finally got out of Queensland and headed for Eden.

Arrived at Eden on 27th December and met up with Rob and Carmel Parker and Robin and Dot Coad. We set up camp with them, cracked a few "grenades" and decided where we would dive the next few days.

We dived around Twofold Bay for a few day's exploring all the spots close to the town. In general the diving is good with plenty of fish and other things to see. The vis was around 30 to 40 feet in the bay.

We ran across quite a few Melbourne divers in Eden - amongst them were the Black Rock boys, the Ringwood mob, as well as a few V.S.A.G. freelancers.

After talking to the Black Rock boys, we decided to go out to Green Cape. Here we had "Deep Clear Water", good for fish, divers and U/W photographers.

We all had a really good time up there, made more enjoyable by the Black Rock boys and their compressors. Thanks fellas.

ADRIAN NEUMANN

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AUSTRALIA DAY WEEKEND -

While holidaying at Mortlake over Christmas, the name "Loch Ard" became a household word. We ranged the cliff tops around the gorge watching the mighty Southern Ocean breakers hurl themselves against the wall of Mutton Bird Island. Somewhere just off the tip of the island under 12 fathoms of boiling white water lay the remains of the famous iron clipper. It seemed to us that the sea would never ease, it guarded its secrets far too well we thought. However, because of the fascination of the fabled old ship, we searched the length and breadth of the gorge for any relics. Barry and Dave taking advantage of a lull in the flogging seas swam outside the gorge and round into the next Bay, and Terry and I inadvertently swam nonchalantly out to sea along the western wall of the gorge until we realised our mistake.

All this intensive action took place at Christmas and because we felt we were becoming bewitched by the magic name 'Loch Ard', we decided to change the location of our Australia Day weekend, and by camping at Port Campbell take early advantage of any good weather. The idea was that we would check the weather at dawn each day and if the conditions were right we would attempt to find the ship, if the weather was against us, we would then choose alternative diving locations along the coast. As it happened, on two days out of our three, conditions were just right.

Our advance guard arrived on Friday evening and unfortunately were unable to take our sites right away, so we slept on the edge of the camping ground. Saturday morning dawned good and sunny, however we were settling into our sites and by lunchtime the north wind had changed conditions and we dived through the gorge once more, much to Keith's delight! The current and surge were strong and we became apprehensive about our chances of ever getting out to sea as the wind crowned the deep troughed waves with white caps. However, we watched the water through Saturday night and Sunday morning brought us a northerly wind and flat seas.

We roused everyone and by eight thirty had Dave's boat across the sand and in the water. Our two sailors, Dave and Barry, then took the boat around to the gorge whilst the rest of us went down by car. We waited on the cliff tops while Dave zipped through the entrance dodging the waves. Barry and I were the first pair into the boat, Dave took us out through the gorge into the rolling swell outside. Paul Beecher who had dived on the wreck on the club's dive, two years earlier, was also in the boat to narrow down the search area.

We dropped the shot on Paul's direction just off the end of Mutton Bird Island.

Then it was time to go, we dropped off simultaneously and arrived at the marker buoy. After checking one another over we descended into the green depths from where the shot line seemed to beckon us down. We touched down at eighty feet onto a sandy bottom, then with Barry holding the shot, we swam in towards the cliff. The rocks loomed up before us like giant steps then there before us was a triangle of twisted metal and the broken deck of a large ship disappearing off to our right. It had taken us about five minutes to find it, at last the elusive Loch Ard was there right in front of us. The water was still, the inert skeleton lay quietly before us. We ascended the shot line and signalled to the boat that we had struck gold. We hurried back down the line, as if we feared that the guardians of the deep had spirited the remains away whilst we had been topside. But no, as the bottom opened up before our masks there she lay, to our eyes a giant mis-array of girders, plates and pipes all softly clad in camouflaging weed, gently moving under the seas caress. We started moving over her slowly trying not to miss any detail. She was propped against a wall of rock, we swam below her sides, across her patchwork decks, down into a cavernous hole in her side along a tunnel of iron, paved with marble and broken glass. Emerging from the darkness of the hole we swam up and across her decks again. She still seemed enormous and there were still other sections of the hull away and beyond us, hidden behind the green shimmering wall of the sea. At least it was time to leave this once proud old lady of the sea and as we prepared to swim up the line Adrian and Rob Parker moved past us to take our places on the Loch Ard. We emerged into the sunlight to find the boat waiting for us, clambering aboard with our mouth pieces removed we started to compare excited notes. We both agreed that the wreck had exceeded our wildest hopes, probably because it lies on the edge of the most inhospitable section of coast in the world. There are only about 50 or 60 days in the year that it is possible even to consider taking a boat close in to the towering cliffs. This means that only boats habitually in the area have any real hope of hitting the right days. Groups going down to try for the wreck are almost always disappointed by the weather, as we ourselves know only too well. So this particular lady lies undisturbed for most of the year.

Anyway back to the story: We planed into the gorge, back to the beach and to excited questions from the rest of the group. The next pair however, were kitted up and so we slid out of the boat and Dave took the boat back out. This ferrying carried on until everyone

diving had finished. To finish off Dave took the boat back into Port Campbell while the rest of us motored happily back to meet him on the beach and hauled the boat up onto the trailer. For my part then I just sat, rested and waited for Monday to have another crack at the fabled old ship, but that is another story.

BRIAN LYNCH
BARRY TRUSCOTT

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CONQUERING THE LOCH ARD -

The long weekend saw us at Port Campbell once more, hopeful as always of diving on the wreck of the Loch Ard. A number of times in the year before we had descended on Port Campbell, much to the consternation of the ranger who has two pet hates and one of them is divers, and each time the nearest we got to diving on the wreck was a snorkel in the gorge. Many of us felt that this was all we would do over the long weekend, but Dave Moore kept telling us, "I'll get you on the Loch Ard".

The wreck is at the tip of Mutton Bird Island and to dive on it you need a boat which can ferry divers from the Gorge out to the island. The problem in doing this is that unless the wind is blowing in a north-easterly direction, the waves pound in and make the mouth of the gorge impenetrable and diving near the island very risky. The weather on the western coast of Victoria can only be described as unpredictable and because of this few divers have ever be able to dive on the wreck.

Luck was with us on the long weekend and the wind swung round to the north-east. Early sunday morning saw the V.S.A.G. awake and moving so that by 8.30 the boat had been launched and the club members had arrived at the Gorge.

As a safety precaution a walkie talkie was installed in the boat so that it could contact the divers on shore should anything go wrong. The walkie talkie on shore was given to Dianne who wasn't diving and she spent half the morning until relieved by Ardri, keeping the boat posted on conditions at the mouth of the Gorge.

The first boat load of divers went out to pinpoint the wreck, luck was really with us - it only took a matter of minutes for Brian and Barry to find it and secure the shot line to it.

Once this was done divers were ferried back and forth from the wreck. Unless you were there it would be impossible to appreciate the excitement and pleasure of the divers. Each diver saw something different and had his own tale to tell of the dive. Perhaps the best tale was told by Peter "Angel" Smith and for the rest of the afternoon back at camp the talk was only of the wreck.

After this dive on the Sunday, plans were made for another dive on the wreck for Monday. Barry had to go home Sunday night and he kindly wished the club a change in weather. Unfortunately, Barry the weather didn't change and the club was able to have another dive on the wreck.

The writer of this article would at this stage like to congratulate Judy Neumann for being the first female from V.S.A.G. to dive on the wreck and for her answer when she was asked if she was going to dive....."Too b----y right".

On Monday thirteen divers dived on the wreck and to prove how calm it was Peter Smith water skied back to Port Campbell.

The question now is will the club ever be able to dive on the wreck again. Some say that the weekend was one in a million, others are now sure they will dive on the wreck again. Whatever the answer all will agree that there are fourteen very happy divers in V.S.A.G. at the moment.

KEITH and DIANNE STEWART

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F L O T S A M and J E T S A M

Can't help but smile at some of these people who leave everything to the last moment and then get into a panic because there's not enough time left to do the thing anyway. Your illustrious reporter is exactly one of those people. For nearly two months the Flotsam & Jetsam phantom has been doemant and only on the eve of deadline is he stirred into moving the deadly pen that will cast doubts and assertions on various members. Really one should follow the principle of never putting off to tomorrow what you can do today because if you do it today and enjoy it, you can do it again tomorrow.

There's certainly been a great deal of activity over the last couple of months and its difficult to know where to start when trying to

re-cap some of the events.

Bill Gray's pool side Christmas Party was again its usual rip roaring success. One has to admire the courage of some of our members who braved the waters, even the deepend, without their wet suits. Adrian and his band of cut-throats made sure that new arrivals were soon initiated into the water. It looked like a mass christening for the heathens. However for all Ade's good intentions I'm happy to report that there wasn't much soul cleansing done.

Many thanks to Bill and Patsy for making their home available for yet another good turn.

What better thing to do on Boxing Day than to get up with the birds (figuratively speaking of course) load up your car with tanks, tents, tucker and tinnies and drive 140 miles to Mortlake. Well, that's what quite a few of us did, so it can't be all that bad. On the outskirts of Mortlake nestled in the lee of a large hill known as Lynch's Lament lies the Richardson Cattle Camp - Western District Branch. The site of about 12 car loads of divers arriving surely made the locals wonder when the floods were coming. To one perturbed local grazier who informed a wet-suited young man that he'd either lost his way or his marbles, our quick thinking member replied, "Ah but Sarb remember Noah and the Ark".

There can be no doubt that the V.S.A.G. is well endowed with skilled craftsmen. Under the guidance of our two building exoerts, Max and Barry; Murray's shearing shed was transformed from a nice country shearing shed in which any Wombat Jack would be proud to click his shears, to something resembling a dude ranch. Barry's principle of the instant wall is ineed a revolutionary step forward in construction engineering.

The majority of diving was done around Loch Ard Gorge with suitable rewards being yielded from the deep. Naturally we refer to delicious abalone steaks, crayfish cocktails and Griffin turnover. Even Terry Smith's dog was treated to a special dish by being allowed to clean Dave "Cat" Carroll's plate, i.e. when the Cat didn't eat (or drink) straight from the can or pan. Now I know why dogs are called dish-lickers.

Talking of pans, when it comes to emptying them, Murray's over-the-shoulder action certainly requires a lot of practice in order to avoid finishing up with "muck on your pluck".