

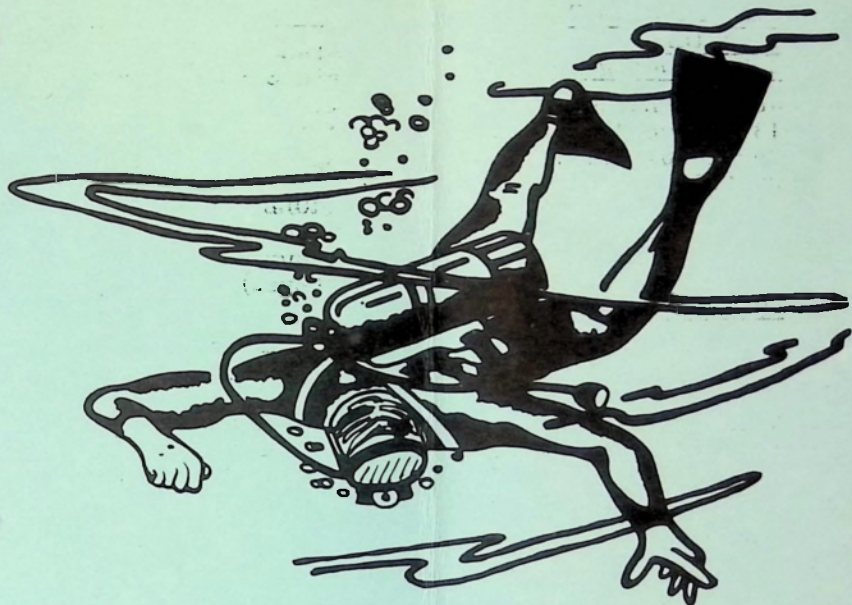
# FATHOMS

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## SAFETY IN DIVING

JULY '81 50c



# V S A G

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

JULY 1981

F A T H O M S

(Official Journal of the Victorian Sub-Aqua Group)  
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CLUB MEETING

The next meeting of the Victorian Sub-Aqua Group will be held on Wednesday 15th July, at 8 pm at the Collingwood Football Club, Lulie Street, Abbotsford. Bar facilities are available to VSAG members prior to and after the General Meeting and meals are served from 6 pm until about 9 pm. A list of VSAG members will be provided to the Football Club thereby eliminating the requirement to sign the Visitors Book at the entrance. VISITORS WELCOME!

EDITORIAL

My plea for assistance in the form of news articles for "Fathoms" was answered with great enthusiasm and hopefully should make interesting reading. This edition has something for everyone, even the children can enjoy Capt. E. Blighton's story. We venture into the South Pacific with our club famous roving reporter who was recently sipping coconut juice and beating the tepid waters of the Solomon's into a frenzy.

Now that our regular column "Tips Tit-Bits" has bitten the dust a new journalist has emerged to add a bit of spice and controversy for our readers. I hastily point out that the views expressed in "Broadside" or "Periscope" are totally one man's view as he sees diving in the 80's and those views may not necessarily be shared by V.S.A.G Committee members or the editor. It is time we had some new blood in the journalist department. I must point out that the first edition of "Broadside" will now not appear until August issue as the mail strike has it trapped, so a hand delivered substitute article called "Periscope" now appears. I can assure you the journalese is the same!

A reminder that July 15th General Meeting is to begin at 8pm sharp to allow our guest speaker, Reg Lipson, plenty of time to present his lecture. You are all requested to please be punctual to give our President a chance to move the meeting along quickly.

Our dive report this month has been prepared by Geoff Birtles whose modesty is cleverly disguised by the nom-de-plume Geoff (Cray) Birtles, I am sure you will find it also to be good reading.

In a recent technical bulletin distributed to dive shops from Luxfer (USA) Limited, America's only diving cylinder manufacturer, some startling news has come to light. Because of two recent serious cases of diving cylinders exploding, investigations are

under way. Both were aluminium cylinders and both had previously been coated with baked enamel. Whilst this must have produced a very pleasing finish to the cylinders, it has been found that the exposure of aluminium cylinders to excessive heat processes results in some reduction in the strength of the metal. Therefore, as soon as the bottles were filled the metal failed, resulting in an explosion; whether the divers are now in orbit is not known! This news has led to a decision by some dive shops in Melbourne to refuse to fill any aluminium tanks which have other than the manufacturers paint on them. If the tank has been repainted and since hydrostatically tested successfully there shouldn't be any problem. So no heat curing paint jobs for aluminium cylinders or for that matter, hand painting either unless the tank's integrity is hydrostatically proven afterwards.

--- EDITOR ---

#### COMMITTEE NEWS:

Meeting held at Marce and John Goulding's house on 24th June, 1981

- (i) Dive Calendar discussion and booking made Lance Stevens' boat for Rotomahana dive.
- (ii) Decision to purchase a sextant was made, to enable more accurate arrival at wreck sites possible in future.
- (iii) Still many members have not paid annual subs now due. Names will appear in next Fathoms issue.
- (iv) A few social activities will soon be arranged by Bob Scott and Tony Tipping.
- (v) New cave diving will commence soon, names to be given to Terry Brooks.

\* Next meeting of the committee to be held on 22/7/81 at Neil Garland's home, 7/319 Dandenong Road, Prahran at 8 pm

DIVE CALENDAR

<u>DATE:</u>	<u>LOCATION:</u>	<u>TIME:</u>	<u>DIVE CAPT:</u>	<u>NOTES:</u>
July 12	Nepean Wall	8.30am	P. Reynolds 789 1092	Sorrento Ramp

This dive will be an exploratory dive by experienced club members only. A second live will follow for all divers.

July 15 General Meeting at Collingwood Football Club at 8 pm.

July 26	Flinders Reef Dive	9.30am	G. Birtles 846 1983	
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Aug. 9	Rotomahana Wreck	11.30am	J. Goulding 89 6634	Barwon Heads Jetty
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A booking has been made for Lance Stevens' fishing boat so get your name on John's list now. DON'T MISS OUT.

Aug. 15	Ski Trip to Mt. Buller		P. Reynolds is Snow Captain - 789 1092	
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Aug. 23	Wreck Dive	9.30am	B. Truscott 783 9095	Sorrento Boat Ramp
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Aug. 30	Channel Run	10.30am	B. Scott 367 2261	Sorrento Boat Ramp
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Deep Water channel run between the heads and the Ramsden wreck.

PERISCOPE

With the demise of "Tips Tit-Bits" its time to raise the periscope and cast an eye around for the juicy tit-bits that haven't been making "Fathoms" lately.

The current (at time of writing) Australia Post strike is pretty aggravating. Particularly to "us journalists" who like nothing better than to see

## PERISCOPE

our pontifications in print (J.G. knows what I mean). Having spent some considerable time reporting a recent Refuge trip and having a controversial "go" at SDFV by way of injecting a little interest into Fathoms, your writer was shattered to find both articles stuck in the post. Private enterprise and self-employed members would like to have this kind of power - but then they're probably too rational and reasonable for this kind of blackmail.

At this stage you will gather "Periscope" does not share "Tip's" political views!

Whilst on the subject of J.G. (similar ring to "J.R." - hasn't it) Periscope would like to take this opportunity to shatter John's "nice guy" image. He pulled an animal act on our last club outing that will make "Sears" weep with envy. Nicky (of the fairer sex) hanging over the side of his boat for two and a half hours - holding onto the depth sounder transducer! Can you picture a green blend of hypothermia and sea-sickness?

It 's early days yet but "Periscope" wishes to nominate Barry "Bazza" Truscott for "Clubman of the Year"! In spite of a severe case of the flu and inability to dive, he unselfishly brought his boat to the club Finnacle dive so that members (and visitors) would not be disappointed by a shortage of boats. We should mention that this was to Barry's financial cost - car and boat petrol costs were substantially in excess of contributions.

"Communication" is very "in" on recent VSAG dives. Barry, Geoff and Big Mick are all sporting 27 MHz marine radios and the air waves reverberating with "Cb's", "Breaks" and "Back"! It was fascinating to watch Lynchy on the last dive. Couldn't tear his eyes and ears off the C.B. Eventually Geoff could not tear the microphone off Lynchy - Break!

Watching Brian dive is an experience (one that you will only have about once a year). Says he does it just to check out his equipment! Periscope agrees with the need for regular checks on antique gear but suggests that they be conducted in a dive shop rather than at 120 feet!

Having "bombed" on the Pinnacles (like 3 hours without a "Ping" - and no thanks to a passing fisherman, for whom we have retrieved the odd cray pot in the past), it was off to Kilcunda for a cray bash (well - "cray tease!"). We anchored behind the surfies (this is water utilization at its best) and went hunting. Let's correct that - "underwater surfing"! At one stage Big Mick saw Geoff (of low profile fame) doing a straight leg somersault with the kelp ripping out his regulator! But then Scotty had it all under control - hanging onto the anchor. That is, until a seal started rushing him! The score - 4 "kittens" who lived for another day. Or until they fall prey to a commercial fishing pot. Checked the size of some restaurant crays lately?

And now for the scoop of the month. We hear that 20lb crays were "strolling on the ledges" over the Queen's Birthday weekend. A "killer crew" of John Goulding, Des Williams and Terry Brooks descended on them in 150ft visibility. (Geoff, Bazza and Mick were busy "surviving" an approach to Rabbit Island). Periscope would not wish to embarrass any particular member so we won't name the guy who had 7 tries for a zero catch. We hear Des and Terry had no better luck!

"Up the posties".

#### FLOTSAM AND JETSAM

From what we hear our newsletter "Fathoms" is being revitalised with some new literary blood. According to our spies there will be so much heavy stuff in the July issue that we nearly didn't write this 89th

## FLOTSAM AND JETSAM

edition of F and J. Still, we must be optimistic that some will find a moments light relief in this column and if necessary can console ourselves that even Harold Robbins drops from the best 10 sellers occasionally.

For a start therè's a new column called BOMESIDE or BACKSIDE or something just as exhilarating written by me old mate "Turtles". Now I'm not a bloke to criticise another's efforts, and I have commented elsewhere about his provess underwater in pursuit of the 10 pound cray. But! a guy that has to paint his name on his boat so that he can remember which one is his, has got to be a bit short of the spongy stuff between the ears.

Then we hear that our representative from the Commonwealth Censors office is planning a very controversial and provocative column. However due to his sense of duty towar ds keeping the minds of the people free from filth, he has scrubbed out most of the article.

It was interesting that the Club received a letter of congratulations about Fathoms and a donation towards its cost. Perhaps now they will ask for a refund!.

As winter takes a grip on us its encouraging to see the good roll up at some of the dives.

The scheduled Pinnacles dive on 21st June, was a perfect day. Smooth seas, clear water, but where the hell was the Pinnacle? For two hours we searched, running up and down on the old marks used bef ore - but nothing. First John G. blamed the haze for obscuring one of the marks - but his final excuse took some beating. Quote - "It must have bloody well collapsed in the recent earthquake".....



As an alternative we dived near Kilcunda, and I think all were disappointed about the Pinnacles .... "But thens is da breaks lads".

On the long weekend Terry, John and Des discovered a fantastic new cray spot, however none claiming to be great hunters missed, all the big ones.

The planned night dive in June was called off because of dirty water.

The long weckend also provided the opportunity to plan a return to Refuge Cove. Barry, Mick Jeackle and Geoff launched their boats from Port Welshpool on the Saturday only to find very rough seas.

Another attempt was made on the Sunday and after a rather bumpy trip the group finally reached Refuge Cove. Eager for a dive our intrepid explorers dropped over the side into the murkiest water seen since El Presidente was frightened by a jelly fish while diving at Ulladulla!

Over the next 3 months we can expect some pretty cold diving conditions. A good idea, to help keep warm is wear a parka over your wetsuit when travelling in the boat and a tee shirt and socks under your wet suit. You don't have to be in the water to feel the effect of cold. If all this fails find someone warm!

Signed MIKE RAFONE

(Your friendly disc jockey)

### REFUGE COVE

Following VSAG's successful visit to Refuge Cove last January, a group of us decided to re-visit this protected side of the "prom" over the Queen's Birthday weckend, using our own boats.

## REFUGE COVE

What originally started as a small venture soon blossomed into a major expedition with four boats and 12-15 divers. Needless to say when it actually came to the crunch (i.e. wives permission, weather, organisation, prior commitments and other oft used excuses) we were left with 3 boats - Bazza Truscott's Geoff Birtle's and Mick Jeacle's and 6 divers including Bob Scott, Pat Reynolds and Mick Jackiw. Young Reece Birtles (9) came along to look after his Dad. (Reece has now logged more dives in the last two months than most of our membership have accomplished in the past 12 months!)

The weather was looking good i.e. until the Friday forecast of Easterly winds - the one thats a no- no! We met at 8am on the Saturday at Port Welshpool and every thing looked good. Little wind and glassy water(should have packed the water ski). With knowing smiles and condescending thoughts of the poor souls back home we launched boats and set off.

Mick Jeacle was elected (because of his extensive experience) to lead the way through the channels and soon displayed his complete ignorance of channel buoy colour coding - you keep the red ones on the right going out - as we all found out the hard way! Having lost complete confidence in our leader he was deposed and Bazza Truscott took over the lead (Geoff B. kept his usual low profile).

Our armchair ride was starting to get a little bumpy and the horizon wasn't showing too much promise (like breakers!) but the consensus on the CB was that we could handle it(shortly after this we were too busy hanging on to even use the CB!). We were following Reg Truscotts tried and true course of hugging the shoreline intending to keep Rabbit Island on the left. We now know why Reg only ventures forth in good seas - this is the most treacherous path you can

set in any kind of wind (now fairly strong), particularly an easterly!

The water is particularly shallow with a number of sandbars that create big swells and frightening surf. Our speed was down to about 10mph and our eyes as big as saucers. The swells were probably about 18-20ft but they seemed like 30ft. We pressed on, on the basis that we'd be "home free" if we could just clear this bad patch (but the resolve was weakening).

At this stage Big Mick thought he should enquire after the health of his crew. "You're not frightened are you Scotty?", to which Scotty responded "N-n-n-o, just petrified!"

The action was getting hotter and I voiced some doubt as to whether it was wise to proceed - like if it was this hard getting out, how were we going to get back! (I had a new boat to think of). Reece urged me on with a cry of "I'm alright Dad - its fun". He soon shut up when I offered him the wheel. Little Mick said nothing as usual - I think his beard hid the fear.

When we tried heading into the sea - not a terrific experience - balancing on top of 20ft swell and then dropping into the trough! But it got worse, they started to break around us and I'd had enough. Just as I swung the wheel a "boomer" broke right over the side of Bazza's boat as he commenced his turn. A gre at spectacle but a frighteningly damp one! We needed no further encouragement and commenced the hairy trip back to port.

On reaching calm water again we came across a big ugly blue aluminium diesel heading outwards. It bore very official FAUI instructor decals and was fully manned by "ming blue" lycra wetsuits.

## REFUGE COVE

They responded to our weather report by saying "We'll be right, she's self draining". (made us feel like right fools, it did!)

On reaching the ramp Bazza said "I'll wait here all day for those b--s if I have to. If they don't turn back we'll start again." We were with him to a man! Twenty minutes later we relaxed as they nosed into harbour. It seems the old Haines' managed to go quite a bit further. They didn't take too kindly to our not so well meaning enquiries and smoked off in a huff!

At this stage we had a day to kill and happened across the highlight of the trip. A tubby local with a friendly face and bushy red beard - Ginger Dean. A man after Big Mick's own heart - hates a beer and a yarn, but can be persuaded!

Ginge mans the local Coastguard and gippsland safety (whatever) 27 MHz base station. A real CB freak (back!). He looks and sounds like an out of condition 30 years old but is in fact a very in condition 50+ year old with a real love of life and the microphone (Go!), like he has numerous sets in the home (including one beside the bed) boat and car (Back!), call VH3 ADW any time (Channel 1) and he or his lady are there (Go!).

Ginge directed us around the town by CB, monitored our trip the next day and welcomed us back at the pier. We even chatted to him from Refuge Cove. His response to our enquiry (from Refuge) about high water details was a classic. "Well I haven't got that info on hand but you'll have a better idea than me - like you're there and you'll see when its up - Go!". A terrific guy - doing a great job and very comforting to know he's on channel

when the seas up. Look him up when your in the area  
- just call Ginger D. VH3 ADN on Channel 1 - Back!

After a great night popping cans and swapping lies with Ginge we tried again the next day. This time we followed local advice and stuck to the deep water channel passing around the back of Rabbit Island. A much longer trip, still rough with the odd big swell but much safer. We made it in 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  hours.

Unfortunately the seas were really too rough to consider diving anywhere but the protected bays close by. Having made camp we set off (not so enthusiastically). A dive was essential - we needed the food!

What a non event. I knew I'd bottomed out at 50ft when my face mask hit the bottom (true it was pitch black under the boat). Mick and I finally met up on the rope when we were about 6 inches apart. Things improved slightly (2-3ft visibility) when we swam over to shore and worked along the edges - but hopeless.

Scotty earned a new nickname - Flash! On reaching the 30ft mark his head started swivelling, hand signals flying and Scotty heading upwards - bottom time nil, dive duration 60 seconds! Big Mick said he'd hate to see him on a night dive! Scotty's comment, "This is no good to me!".

Pat Reynolds took all this from the boat whilst kitting up. Suddenly he found himself to be seasick and unable to dive! Bazza pressed on without him but we'd all had it after 20 minutes and packed it in without one fish or cray - sausages again!

That night we had the unique experience of seeing something only previously seen in TV westerns - Bazza in long johns. Dead set - long woolly underwear from neck to ankles! Poor Marie!

REFUGE COVE

At one stage we heard Big Mick scrounging in the dark at about 3am. We later found he was looking for some rope to tie around the neck of Scotty's sleeping bag!

Following another night of can popping and more lies around the fire, we set off for home in moderate seas and arrived at Port Welshpool within the hour in time for a counter lunch and the traditional VSAG custom of personality awards.

MANHATTAN AWARD

For the tallest story - to Bob Scott. Claims he does "it" every night.

CREDIBILITY AWARD

For honesty - to Bazza Truscott. Who admits he doesn't do "it" every night.

GANNETT AWARD

For sheer gluttony - to Pat Reynolds. Breakfast consisted of 8 weetbix, 4 eggs and  $\frac{1}{2}$ lb of bacon, followed by crumpets and coffee.

CLUBMAN AWARD

To Mick Jeacle. A new member who has fitted into the "hardcore" VSAG mould so quickly its frightening! Shows all the early promise of "Tips" and loves an ale.

AN OSCAR

For acting brilliance - to Geoff Birtles. Who on gouging a large hunk out of his boat commented, "Well, you've got to expect these things". (Particularly when the helpers don't want to get wet).

CARNEGIE AWARD

For organisation. Shared by Rocco Birtles and Mick Jackiv who somehow managed to get Geoff to cook every meal for them!

Terrible diving but good fun and a real lesson on boat handling. We later found that the Wilson's From lighthouse can be phoned direct for sea conditions. It was glassy on the other side and we hear 100ft visibility with 20lb crays walking in the open. Next time we spend the 20 cents first. Incidentally we were the only boats to make Refuge and many tried on the weekend. Typical VSAG courage and determination (on par with our modesty).

GEOFF (CRAY) BIRTLES

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JULY 15TH GENERAL MEETING

hear

REG LIPSON

and see

For yourself that diving in Port Phillip is an interesting experience. Reg will talk about some of the most commonly encountered marine life. Our meeting will start at 8pm SHARP, so be on time to help us make the business part of the evening pass smoothly.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Super Seven (plus2) at Somers  
(A Children's Adventure Story)

The group of divers and friends began arriving at Somers during the afternoon hoping for fun and adventure in the coming days.

"Oh!" squealed young Tony on seeing the murky waters at Flinders Pier. "You should have an adventurous night dive here". "Not bloody likely!" chorused Neil, Des and Terry as they contemplated the prospect of crawling through soup-like water. An early barbeque at Somers although not exactly an exciting adventure won out.

That night fortified with chops, sausages, hamburgers and cool-aid (well it is a children's story!), they planned the next days adventures. John was arriving with a boat and as he, Des and Terry dived, Tony and Marie would explore the country-side at Flinders armed with clubs and little white balls.

At ten o'clock, John and Marie duly arrived. John was served with a number of libel suits relating to the June issue of Flotsam and Jetsam and the group set out.

While Tony and Marie bravely hacked their way through fierce undergrowth seeking birdies, the three brave divers launched their boat and headed across to Phillip Island. "Let's dive the Speke" exclaimed John doing his best to forget about the upcoming Litigation. The anchor was dropped and Terry, first to the bottom fixed it securely so as their boat would not drift. Being stranded in the wilds of Phillip Island would be a harrowing experience.

After ten minutes or so the brave three divers had found only some brass which was fixed fast to the wreck so they surfaced and weighed anchor. "Let's hunt the dreaded crayfish," cried one, so they



weighed anchor and headed further up the coast.

When they re-entered the water they found a veritable wonderland of crayfish, ledges, crayfish, abalone, fish and crayfish. Being conservation minded they took only a small number of abalone. "Drat!" said one as he clambered aboard with his goody bag, "perhaps we should have taken one of the chaps, they were such big blighters". "Don't worry," said another "it's such a good spot we can sell maps to Geoff Birtles and Co., and make a good profit!"

Later that afternoon the group re-assembled at Somers. The divers had enjoyed glass smooth waters and found a "hot" cray spot. Hauling the boat out, though strenuous, provided amusement as someone else was demonstrating an amphibious Ford Falcon nearby. "Dashed cunning device," mused Des. "Silly bugger," declared John "Must get a photo," cried Terry.

Tony and Marie had had a rewarding day also. In fact Tony could not stop chattering about his fine time.

Des, John and Marie soon left but the dwindling group was reinforced by Paul and Leslie who decided that night that they would explore a large strange building at Flinders which had a pale blue light emblazoned with CUB at its door. "Perhaps we shall meet some fellow adventurers," exclaimed one of them. As Paul, Terry, Sally and Leslie ventured forth what adventures would they experience? Read next month's exciting chapter!

CAPTAIN E. BLIGHTON

SDF-V DINNER DANCE

11th September

Moonee Valley Racecourse

Cost \$22 per head all inclusive

(VSAG member needed to arrange our tickets etc.)

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CAVE DIVING SEMINAR

7th November

North Melbourne Football Club

Cost \$15 per head with dinner

\$10 per head without dinner

Speakers include: Ian Lewis, Peter Stace,  
Reg Lipson, Russell Kitt,  
and Barry Herd

(Plus excellent films)

\*See John Goulding for tickets

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SDF-V RAFFLE RESULT

(Drawn 15/6/81)

1st Prize No:06436 - Mr G. Shannon

2nd Prize No:03877 - Mr T. McKelvey

FISHING LIMITATIONS

Please Note: The taking of female crayfish is prohibited from June 1st - October 31st inclusive.

The closed season for male crayfish is the month of October.

Size Limits:

## CRAYFISH

Male 110mm - along carapace

Female 105mm - along carapace

## ABALONE

Greenlip Abalone - 13cm minimum size

Blacklip Abalone	- East of Tarwin Meadows	12 cm
	- Tarwin Meadows to Cape Schank	11 cm
	- Cape Schank to Cape Otway	11.5cm
	- Port Phillip Bay	10 cm
	- West of Cape Otway	12 cm

Abalone is measured at its greatest width.

## SCALLOPS

No minimum size applies in Victorian waters.

SOLOMON ISLANDS DIVING

Mention the Solomons to a veteran of the Pacific War and he'll tell you of the battle for Guadalcanal - the battle that stemmed the tide of the Japanese invasion of the Pacific, and which formed the cornerstone of the allied campaign to push the previously invincible Nipponese borders back to their homeland.

Mention them to a diver and he'll probably think, as I did, of white sands, palm fringed beaches, warm water and 200 visibility. And if he is the macho (Birtles?) type he probably thinks of 20 ft tiger sharks or of dusky maidens dressed in nothing but a grass skirt welcoming him back from the dive with a rum and coconut.

Well, like all good myths, some of it is always true and hopefully this report will tell enough "truth" so that VSAG members can make the right decision as to whether or not the Solomons offer something them. Certainly many ships were sunk during the war, but many of them lie in 1000ft of water and the others have been scavenged by the salvage johnnies. So while a trip to the Solomons can make a good dive holiday, I don't think it's the place for the VSAG trip next year.

The Solomon islands lie about 1500 miles N.E. of Brisbane, east of Papua New Guinea, they are the second group of islands from P.M.G. (with New Britain the first), with Vanuatu (New Hebrides) and New Caledonia to the south, all of which enclose the Coral Sea. The main town is Honiara, on the island of Guadalcanal. There are half a dozen large islands in the group and a great many small ones, spread over a hundred thousand square miles of ocean. Honiara is just a sleepy South Pacific port of no great charm but from there you can fly Sol Air to the more remote islands, which are supposed to be very beautiful, but very remote!

The trouble is that the country recently became independent and making lots of money from copra, fish and other exports - the government is not interested in promoting the tourist industry. So diving facilities, for instance, only exist in Honiara and it would need some major organisation to be able to dive the remote parts of the islands (anyone got a 60 ft boat?)

I was in Honiara recently for a two week trip led by Alan Jarrett, who has a dive shop in northern N.S. . He runs several trips a year there and because he does know the local scene anyone contemplating a trip should probably book on one of his trips. But, don't forget two dives a day for 13 days! The local scene is a bit disorganised and not really set up for the lone diver so you really have to go with a group and suffer all its disadvantages, like wasting your valuable diving time while the rest of the group gets itself together. Alan treats the trip as a private holiday too, so he doesn't exactly bust his gut being the efficient tour leader.

We stayed at the Mandana Hotel, a very pleasant place to stay, right on the water's edge next to the yacht club. The main block of rooms face the sea with a 15 yard coral debris/sand beach and you look out onto the white sailed yachts, with other islands in the distance across Ironbottom Sound - so called for the number of ships sunk there in depths up to 3000 ft.

The rooms have private facilities and a well stocked fridge, which is really everything you need. The hotel has a great open air bar area where you can watch the sun go down over a beer or three. That's certainly a bit plus over Truk! The food is good, if a little unexciting and there is always the Guadalcanal Club where for \$3 a week you can become a temporary member and get a good steak for \$3,50. Honiara also has two excellent chinese restaurants, so there's enough variety to last 2 weeks.

## SOLOMON ISLANDS DIVING

On the diving side, we dived nine sites during the trip, including a few new ones some of us tried on spec. as we were bored diving the same old spots. Really there are only five wrecks worth diving at present, although the owner of the local salvage diving business, who provided us with air, is going to sink 150 ft cargo boat he's scrapped to provide another dive. Not the same as a War wreck though!

The five good sites are all accessible from the beach though you need transport to get there. Alan organises a truck to take everyone, but with all the stuffing around, including the "manana time" of the locals, you only get in one dive a day this way. So it's best to hire a car for your stay so you can do your own thing once you know where the wrecks are.

The five wrecks near Honiara are as follows:

The Ruanui - a cargo ship lying 40 yards off the beach about 6 miles from the hotel. Bow in 20 ft of water, stern at 130 ft. It lies upright with all the holds empty and the forward half badly damaged. Couldn't find the crew's quarters.

Submarine - Near Tamea village, a pleasant resort of thatched cottages about 30 miles from Honiara is a submarine in 70 ft of water outside the fringing coral reef. A very nice dive although the salvage divers have pretty well blown it apart. It makes a good day trip though, as you can sit in the bar/restaurant for a few hours after the dive.

B17 Flying Fortress - Near Vilu about 10 miles from Honiara, is a B17 in about 40 ft of water. The nose part of the fuselage and the wings are intact, and you can get right inside the cockpit, the bombardiers section and the top gunners' turret.

Bonigi 1 - about 4 miles out of Honiara. Bow in 15 ft of water just off the shore, stern in 180 ft. Another empty cargo ship which has been pretty well blown up around the engine-room by salvage divers. A really fabulous dive though, full of interest at all depths. The dive I made to the sand at the stern will live forever in my top 10!

Bonigi 2 -  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile from Bonigi 1. A smaller ship, partially out of the water, with the stern in 80 ft. Extensively blown apart so there are no really recognisable features like crews quarters or the bridge.

There are certainly other divable wrecks in the Solomons, but the problem is getting to them. On the island of G 120 in the western Solomons, is a Japanese wreck in about 120 ft untouched by salvage divers. And at Tulagi across Ironbottom Sound from Honiara, is a tanker in 180 ft of water. Both of these are supposed to be excellent dives but it would be hard to arrange to dive on them without a boat which had a compressor on board.

Visibility on the dives I did was a bit disappointing by tropical paradise standards, it averaged 50 to 80 ft. This may get better later on in the year, as there are quite a few rivers on Guadalcanal and the rainy season had just ended so a lot of silt could have been in the water which isn't always there.

The wrecks are generally well provide with fish, although the coral life was not as good as Truk. In fact coral reef is just not a feature of this stretch of the island. Only at Tambea village at the extreme west of Guadalcanal, was there any pronounced coral reef, as the other wreck sites had mainly a 45 degree sand slope disappearing into the depths with bommies and a bit of other coral growth towards the top. Again the Western Solomons (in particular the island of Gizo) is supposed to have an abundance of reefs and clear water.

## SOLOMON ISLANDS DIVING

On the non-diving side, Honiara offers some shopping the best is for native carvings and shell ornaments, but very little to do apart from the delights of the hotel bar. The rest of the island is interesting, so if you hired a car you could drive to various native villages, see the W.W. II museum at Vilu and visit various W.W. II sites of interest. The Vilu museum is particularly interesting with half a dozen crashed fighter planes, Japanese field artillery and a tank or two.

So, in summary, if you want to go somewhere warm to dive, like diving wrecks but don't want to spend every minute underwater, go to the Solomons.

But if you want to lie on beautiful tropical beaches, have lots of sun and fun - go to the Club Med!  
And if you want to dive, dive, dive, then come on the next VSAG trip about April!

By I. Tinerant

(The Diving Swaggie!)



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