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FATHOMS

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VSAG

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

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COVER STORY

This brilliant photograph was taken by Kieth Jensen in May 1983 when diving the U.S. Destroyer Y.P. 284 off Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands. The divers from bottom to top are Alex Talay, Geoff Birtles and Steve Gardiner (dive guide). Reg Thomas' dive boat can be seen on the surface. The ship lies in 120 ft. of water and was sunk on Sunday 25th October 1942 when attacked by 3 Japanese Destroyers (Akatsuki, Ikazuchi and Shiratsuyu). TECHNICAL DETAILS: Kieth used a Nikonos 3 with a 15 m/m lens. The photo was taken using natural light and Fujichrome 100 A.S.A. film.

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The Victorian Sub-Aqua Group was founded in 1954 and has continued as a strong and active diving club since that time. It is incorporated as a non profit company and has no commercial affiliation with any organisation.

VSAG is committed to the preservation of independant diving freedom. It believes that divers must take a responsible attitude toward the protection and preservation of the marine environment but as a general rule is opposed to legislative measures that place prohibitive limitations and restrictions on diving activities.

Local diving is organised on a bi-monthly basis, generally out of participating member's boats. This is supported by weekend camps, charters to more remote locations and annual overseas trips. The club has a considerable investment in diving equipment.

Regular functions provide an opportunity for members, friends and families to socialise. Each month VSAG meets at North Melbourne Football Club where bar facilities are available prior to and after the General Meetings. Visitors are very welcome - smart casual wear essential.

FATHOMS

Official journal of the Victorian Sub—Aqua Group

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Next general meeting:

Wednesday, December 19th 1985 8.00pm
North Melbourne Football Club
Fogarty Street, North Melbourne

Next committee meeting:

Tuesday, February 26th, 1985 8.00pm
Pat Reynolds Home,
14 Nurla Court, Frankston

EDITORIAL

Well, this is the last issue of Fathoms for 1984. Certainly an eventful year once again for V.S.A.G. Our members have once again been in the forefront diving at most of our usual locations such as Tidal River, Refuge Cove, Port Campbell, Philip Island, Queenscliff, Flinders, Sorento etc.

Some have made longer journeys to the Barrier Reef, Jervis Bay, Eden, Mt. Gambier and even further to more exotic locations - Taviuni Fiji, Honiara and Gizo in the Solomons and to Luganville on the island of Espirito Santo, Vanuatu and jetsetters Nicki and Don Abell dived in Caribbean waters. Now 1985 is nearly upon us, one wonders and dreams of other locations to be visited, Truk, Red Sea, Maldives! Who knows?

Our past month has certainly been busy clubwise, with our Tennis Party and V.S.A.G. Mile, General Meeting with visitors from S.D.F. of V., Stuart Boden and Neil McKenzie, and our wreck artifact display and finally our Queenscliff weekend, all which are reported on fully in this edition, and our next month appears even more hectic.

The club compressor has had a heart transplant, a new Honda motor has been fitted. Pat Reynolds spent quite a few hours setting the unit up, and at the recent weekend away it was pleasing to see how well and how quietly it ran.

It would seem that V.S.A.G. has some celebrities in its midst - firstly Brian Lynch who won the Ti-Tree Triathalon recently, this puts Brian in contention to win a Datsun car should he gain points in future Triathalons. Tony Tipping was a guest speaker at Dive '84 and his topic was 'Wrecks I have Known'. Well, we all know Tony - he is never at a loss for words, not only did he speak well, but continued to talk well into other speakers' allotted time and the M.C. really had a task winding him up. Des Williams has now seen the fruition of four years research and work with the publication of his book about the Coramba: Well done fellas.




Our new caps have arrived, just in time for summer and certainly look very smart, another winner. Thanks must go to Geoff Birtles for this effort.

Tip's Tit Bits has emerged, the editor had to promise not to add or delete anything to gain the writer's confidence. I feel that Tony has lost a little of the punch that he packed in years past, perhaps the next issue may be a little more spicy.

We have received an influx of new members and visitors at our recent events, new blood, new ideas, new plans can be infused into V.S.A.G. by these people. Sure, not all might be winners, but if we get only one or two that are able to put in, we can keep V.S.A.G. strong and healthy. So put the welcome mat out and try to keep them happy to dive with us.

Well, no more Fathoms until February 85, but keep your dive calendar handy and hope to see you all at some dives.

Keith Jensen



FLOTSAM & JETSAM

It really does not seem twelve months ago since we were last getting ready for Christmas and the annual V.S.A.G. summer trip.

Last year it was Jervis Bay. This year Eden will play host to the Club and there are plenty of great attractions at Eden. This once sleepy fishing village has a unique place in history. For it was here at Eden that a stranger than fiction relationship between man and killer whale developed and lasted almost a hundred years.

Whaling first began at Twofold Bay in 1828. In 1832 the Imlay brothers gave the fledgling industry a real boost and established the town of Eden.

During the 1840's Benjamin Boyd a wealthy London stockbroker was so impressed with the area and the opportunities to be gained from whaling and the rich grazing land, that he established another town; "Boydton". A few relics of Boydton still remain, including the now restored "Seahorse Inn", the old church and Boyds Tower.

However the piece of history that I elude to began in the 1850's with the Davidson family who were to feature prominently in the whaling industry until the 1930's.

The whaling at Eden was shore-based, and each season when the Baleen whales would migrate along the coast, the whalers would put out to sea in small open rowing boats to chase them down. But each year the whalers were assisted by a group of killer whales (Orca) who would arrive at Twofold Bay about a week before the first migratory whales. These killers would muster around the South Head of Twofold Bay and each day as the whalers would head out so too would the killer whales. There were occasions when the killer whales would swim into the little harbour at Eden and flap their dorsal fins to herald the movement of whales along the coast.

The killers would herd up the whales and drive them towards the whalers' boats. The killers were ferocious attackers and would often

kill the whales thus saving the men the bother. Then there were occasions when the killers would thrust themselves on top of the whales and block their breathing vent in an attempt to suffocate the whales.

Naturally with such bloody slaughter going on, sharks were quickly attracted and several whalers were lost to shark attack over the years. George Davidson himself was thrown out of his boat, and the killer whale "Tom" came in and swam alongside him for quite a distance until he was picked up by another boat.

Without this strange relationship and the co-operation which existed between man and beast, the whaling industry of Eden would not have been nearly as efficient as it was.

The whaling industry languished about 1910 and when it all but ceased in 1925 the killer whales gradually stopped returning to Twofold Bay. The familiar sights of "Jackson", "Hooky", "Humpy", "Typee" and the most famous of all "Tom" were seen no more at South Head. The old whalers died, and the character of the town began to change.

Then on the 17th September, 1930 some 4 or 5 years since the last killer whale left Eden, "Tom" the leader of the pack swam into the Bay in the early pre-dawn hours and died peacefully at Snug Cove.

We will never know why for 80 years "Tom" and the other killers allowed this incredible relationship with man.

We will never know what brought "Tom" back to Eden to die.

The world may never again experience such a relationship.

For those of you going to Eden, you can capture some of the feeling.

I thoroughly recommend a visit to the museum and listen to the old curator Bert Egan (if he's still going) talk about this wonderful era.

Then there are visits to be made to Boydtown and the old church, and of course Boyd's s Tower on South Head.

For true historians, there is a magnificent book called the 'Killers of Eden' written by Tom Mead which is a true account of the history of whaling at Eden.

As I come to the finish of this article, I suppose you wonder why is Flotsam & Jetsam going all out on this serious stuff and not crapping on about the tennis party and other V.S.A.G. doings.

Well, Eden has been a special place in my life for 30 years. As a small boy I sat on the knee of an old man. His white stubble beard and thinning hair were evidence of his advanced years, yet I remember his eyes as being bright and clear like the sun's dazzle on the sea. For more than an hour this old man told me about the brutal savagery of whaling and how, from the murderous deeds which man had rendered upon the whales, came a glorious relationship of man and beast working together. As he talked of the sea, and men, and whales and killers his eyes grew misty as he remembered and I learned. It was a rare moment in the life of a boy . . . a precious moment to learn from one of the last of the great whalers.

On behalf of all the authors of Flotsam and Jetsam, let me wish you a happy and safe Christmas and all the best for the New Year. *

REFUGE

JANUARY LONG WEEKEND

COVE

WILSONS PROMONTORY DIVE SAFARI

The annual charter trip aboard the good ship Mirrabooka is on again over the Australia Day Weekend - January 26th - 28th.

There are only a few spots left and for an all inclusive weekend's diving with most of the luxuries of home, \$75 is great value.

Deposit of \$25.00 per head is required by the Dec. Gen. Meeting to be given to John Goulding. Balance of payment in cash is required prior to departure on the morning of Saturday 26th January.

The rendezvous will be Foster Hotel before 10 pm on Friday night.

Please contact John Goulding on - Home:890 6634 Bus: 341 3543

The following people should send money* to John Goulding to secure their bookings. D. Catherall, T. Tipping, J. Turner, C. Llewelyn, M. Synon, G. Brown, A. Howarth, A. Finnegan, M. Taliana, P. Tipping, P. Sier.

* Make cheques payable to J. Goulding.

13 Birdwood Street,
Box Hill South Vic. 3128

TENNIS PARTY - VSAG MILE

by Des Williams

Our annual social day in November never fails to produce an enjoyable time for everyone.

First it is tennis singles and doubles - this year the weather was mostly overcast with the occasional shower, but we continued to play on and enjoy ourselves.

Then back to Tony and Paul Tipping's house at Somers where we prepared for the V.S.A.G. handicap mile. As usual, it was run in fine style with Peter Jensen winning the mens' section and Samantha Truscott leading the girls home. Well done Sam and Peter. We may have to have a strong word with our official handicapper next year as they both seem to have plenty of go to repeat last year's result. The enclosed pictures accompanying this article will explain for those who missed another very enjoyable day.

As we settled down to a cold lager, the sizzle of chops and squawk of kids, we knew that another day of friendly competition was drawing to a close.

The afternoon proved to be rather sunny and as everyone lazed around, a great deal of sunshine was absorbed.

Thanks to the Tipping families once again for a good day - our 13th annual tennis party. *

V.S.A.G. HANDICAP MILE 1984

13TH CONSECUTIVE
V.S.A.G. MILE RACE

Photographs by Des Williams



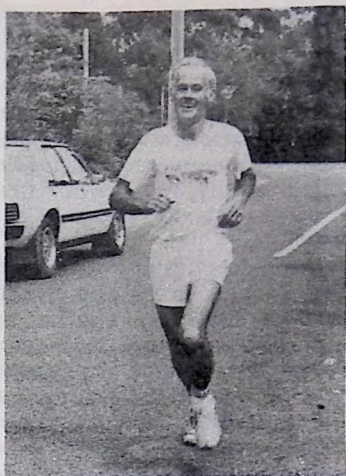
SAMANTHA TRUSCOTT LEADS HOME LADIES SECTION



PETER
JENSEN WINS
THE V.S.A.G.
MILE FROM
DOUG
CATHERALL.



TONY TIPPING LOOKS PLEASED TO SEE THE FINISH LINE.



BARRY TRUSCOTT FINISHES IN SMOOTH STYLE.



IGOR CHERNICHOV LOOKS RELAXED AFTER HIS RUN.



BARRY CONGRATULATES BRIAN LYNCH ON HIS TRIATHLON WIN.

DIVE REPORT - QUEENSCLIFF WEEKEND

by Keith Jensen

Well, there was certainly a few starters for the event, 20 divers in all, with several late applicants having to be told that there was no room on boats. Early arrivals were John Lawler who arrived at 9.00 am on the Friday, Jeacle family, Mastrowicz family, Paul Crellin, Keith and Peter Jensen all arrived about 12.00 midday.

After procuring supplies from the licensed grocer it was decided that a dive be organised, weather was overcast and threatening to rain. Spectacular reef the venue and just by a fluke slack water encountered (40 min. early). Big M and Paul were team 1 with Andy and John team 2. Keith & Peter looking after the boat. John & Andy were first back to the boat. Andy had taken a nice cray - about 6 lb., but Big M & Paul had no luck. Paul had sighted a large cray but failed to bag it. Mick said "he stuffed it up".

Peter & I dived just off Shortlands Bluff, we descended and almost immediately came on an interesting ledge, on checking it out found a plate in the sand, bearing the inscription Pacific & Orient Navigation Co. We looked around for the buoy line as it had dragged free from where I had placed it. We surfaced and saw the boat about two hundred metres away but were unable to make them hear us.

We drifted along for about 40 minutes right into the rip area. The buoy and line finally got sucked down and the boat crew realised that something was amiss. The search was on, all eyes peeled. Paul (eagle eye) Crellin sighted us and it was two very relieved divers who were fished out by an anxious boat crew.

Back to the camp for the evening's activities. Alex Talay who had a six birth van all to himself invited all to join him for a few social drinks. Don and Nicki Abell joined in with Champagne, nothing as demeaning as beer. After a few glasses even Nicki was relating jokes. But the event of the evening was Alex's recitation with facial expressions of an anecdote from Penthouse Forum.

Next morning still dull and overcast and with many divers suffering the effects of the evening prior. Only enough divers to fill 3 boats. Another bash at Spectacular Reef and having to pull divers out as large ships hove into sight. A few crays were liberated with a couple in the 7 to 8 lb mark.

The afternoon dive saw 4 boats full of divers off to visit the fourth and newly found submarine. Mick Jeacle quickly lined up the marks after a couple of tries. (Good work Mick). Divers threw gear on in record time and descended. At 110' to 130' time is only short & soon divers were reporting all the good things about this new dive. Our fifth boat and crew had opted for another cray bash and Don Abell picked up the biggest cray for the whole trip, but boat captain Ian Scholes' eyes widened when we related what we had seen on the newest sub.

The weather improved dramatically and we all enjoyed a barbecue back at the caravan park, most enjoyable with old and new members swapping anecdotes. At 11.30 we adjourned to Alex's wombat burrow to kick on but by about 1.00 am lights were out.

Sunday morning, brilliant sunshine, a promise of a great day. Max Synon rattled our van door at 7 am having made an early start and rearing to go. Divers bustling about vacating their vans & getting ready to dive, brief consultation by the boat captains at the camp and the venues decided upon. A later arrival by another boat captain who had decided that caravans were not his style and had stayed in a more desirable location, remonstrated that he had not been consulted about the day's activities and unless things were changed he would think about withdrawing his boat. In a fit of pique, would not accept the decision made, and left with his boat. Definitely not the actions of a true clubman.

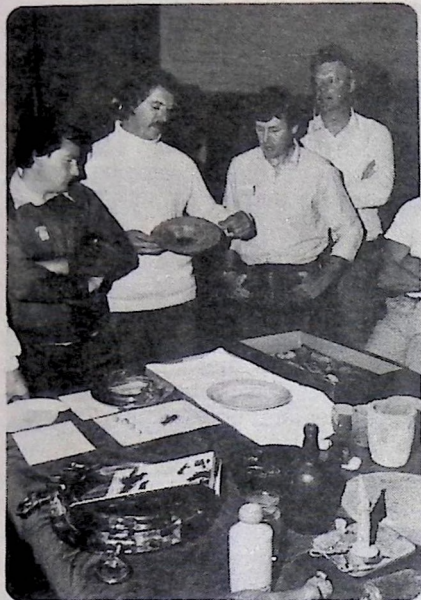
After re-arranging the allocation of boat crews we headed off & out through the rip to dive one of the subs. Out on the marks of the newest and to that date, most secret sub was a familiar blue Haines Hunter. "Stuff it" said Big M "lets join in" and 4 more VSAG boats joined in. Boats seemed to appear like magic & even clones in a large boat with Western Divers emblazoned on the side, churned about in the near vicinity of surfacing divers.

The scene on the sub was chaotic with clone divers hanging off our shot line and dragging it away from the location. They soon got the message after one was pulled away with a sharp tug on the hair of it's head. The interior was completely silted out, not at all like the serene wreck we dived the previous afternoon, that had lain undisturbed for over 50 years.

The afternoon's dive was a more leisurely affair with drifts around Queenscliff and once again fierce currents pulling buoys down and causing problems for those observing on the surface, but no dramas on this occasion. Soon it was back to the boat ramp and it was a lot of weary dived-out divers who wended their way homeward after a hectic few days diving. *

TREASURED MOMENTOS FROM THE DEEP

photographs by Paul Tipping





RELIC DISPLAY BY VSAG'ers

by Des Williams

What a first rate idea of Alex Talay's it was to have a display of relics recovered by V.S.A.G. members over the years. At our general meeting on Wednesday 21st November, several members displayed items they have recovered from various shipwreck sites over the last 20 years.

All items were in excellent condition and have obviously been treated with great care over the years.

We often hear stories of how items recovered by divers from wrecks are allowed to rot away and are ultimately lost forever, so it was interesting to note that a great amount of time had been devoted to preserving the items we saw at the November meeting.

I, for one, thoroughly enjoyed the meeting and congratulate the members who took time to present their treasures to the meeting. We heard a short story about each of the items and various questions were answered. Maybe we can do it again some day and involve different members of our group.

If you missed the November meeting you missed a good one! S.D.F.V. administrators Stuart Boden and Neil McKenzie were present to explain what the S.D.F.V. have been up to over the past year and what they have planned for the future. Members asked several questions of the delegation and I believe every one will agree that things certainly look a lot better on the S.D.F.V. front than they did a few years ago.

V.S.A.G. must not forget that only by supporting the S.D.F.V. where possible and giving input via our delegates will we see just what S.D.F.V. can do for the non-commercial diving community. *

TIP'S TIT-BITS

Well, after two and a half years of reading Flotsam & Jetsam's gradual demise along with some pretty heavy nudging from our new Fathoms editor (ever had Keith Jensen lean on you?) I thought it was about time to give you some cold hard facts about V.S.A.G. Actually, I shouldn't rubbish F & J too much, because it certainly has stood the test of time - about 12 years! I recently thought it had died the slow death it seemed to be heading towards but suddenly re-appeared again recently, perhaps for its final encore. "Tip's Tit-Bits" will not be it's former regular self, but I have guaranteed the editor about three for the year.

Now that Alex Talay & Geoff Birtles are busy working part-time for the Oxford Dictionary I don't suppose we'll be seeing them on as many dives in future. You see Geoff was editor of Fathoms and Alex printer when the new cover was produced a few months ago featuring Keith's picture of divers on a line and the sub heading "INDEPENDANT" Diving Freedom. I can't wait for their other IMPORTANT AMENDMENTS to the new Oxford!

The recent Tennis Party & V.S.A.G. mile was once again very well attended. Alex dominated the tennis with wins in both the singles and the doubles with partner Cathy Jensen. The Big M, an automatic pre-match unbackable favorite with the bookies was crook and unable to play - he really did look a sad and miserable sight especially during the presentation of the prizes. But let us not take the shine off Alex's double, the only disappointing part being that after a dozen stobbies he was unable to start in the mile. Peter Jensen re-wrote the record books here by becoming the first person to win this event twice - next year as one of the handicappers, I can promise it will be very difficult for Peter to score a hat-trick. Other runners to make it a very tight finish were Doug-Doug, Sam Truscott and Bill Hayes (the back marker).

Highlight of the Tennis day was the performance of our old mate Don Abell. Now Don's really kicked on within V.S.A.G. since he came along about 5 years ago as a quiet and serene young accountant with an attractive young wife Nikki. In those five years Don has become more active each year and now holds the illustrious position of Secretary with an obvious eye on the top job within the next couple of years. Unfortunately he blew it - during a heated political debate with factional forces of the Club's caucus, Don became so confused that he

went down for the count, hitting the turf with table, chair and the remains of a bottle of 1979 Caversham's Estate Cabernet Sauvignon smearing his Pierre Cardin shirt and Voluntary Helpers Shop white sand shoes. Only excuse offered was that it was the grog talking; but that's not all! Nikki has banished Don to the spare bedroom of their solid brick upper middle class home and refuses to do his washing and cooking. So there, not only have Don's aspirations within V.S.A.G. hit the pits but his clothes are now being sent to the panel beaters!

I recently attended a seminar called Dive 84 presented and hosted by Russell Kitt of Southern Cross Divers. This was not in competition to Oceans 84 but one can't help seeing similarities. The idea was to have a series of lectures that seemed to relate more to Australian Diving or local conditions rather than the emphasis on expensive Big Name imports. This year Russell advertised Dive 84 only within his Southern Cross Club but if he intends putting it on every year, it could prove to be a hit with several other clubs. The idea of listening to entertaining local talent, the likes of Reg Lipson, Tony Newly and Neville Coleman impressed me far more than some of the expensive imports I've heard elsewhere!

Like everyone else I'm looking forward to the holidays - Tip's Tit-Bits wishes you all a happy and safe Christmas '84 and don't forget the real meaning of Christmas - it's Marie Truscott's and her twin sister's birthday! See you all on the Mirrabooka! *

CHEAP SCUBA TANKS

Dick Whitacker of Melbourne Dive Services, Bell Street, Heidelberg has a limited number of 63 and 88 cubic feet tanks available.

CHEAPEST PRICE IN MELBOURNE

Available till current stock is sold

"HAILSTORM OVER TRUK LAGOON"

Keith Jensen

On 17th and 18th February, 1944 the American naval taskforce attacked Truk Island. At dawn on the 17th February waves of carrier launched planes, attacked "Truk", known as "Gibraltar of the Pacific", thought to be a base for the Japanese combined and fourth fleets. The base in reality was found to be poorly defended, and a fleet of merchant ships and a few warships sank to the floor of the Truk Lagoon.

In the early seventies divers began to visit Truk and details of fantastic shipwrecks, complete with cargoes that were able to be reached by sport divers. National Geographic in May of 1976 produced a superb article on Truk by Al Giddings and Sylvia Earle. My imagination was fired up and in May 1979 I too was fortunate enough to be able to dive the fabulous wrecks of Truk. V.S.A.G. organised a group and they too made the foray to far flung Micronesia and dived the wrecks of Truk.

Ever since that visit, whenever divers join together for a convivial ale or two, the wrecks of Truk are mentioned and our minds waft away to have a Claytons dive in the Amagasan Fuyikawa or perhaps the i-169 submarine. A new book has now become available, "Hailstorm over Truk" by Klaus P. Lindermann published by Marwzen Asia.

Mr. Lindermann succumbed to the magic of diving Truk's shipwrecks, journeying many times to the location and in between times delving through Allied and Japanese archives for further information. He obtained and verified information by talking to Kimiuo Aisek, proprietor of the Blue Lagoon Dive Shop, who as a youth witnessed Operation Hailstorm.

Information crammed into 370 pages is truly amazing, complete in all details from official Japanese and American reports. Action reports from the carriers Enterprise, Yorktown, Essex, Intrepid, Cabot, Bunker Hill, and Cowpens each strike, patrol and mission with departure and return times, strength and what was encountered brings the reader into the realms of the battle.

Planes involved in the Truk operation are given a complete chapter detailing all relevant details and features and are illustrated with black and white photographs. All the participating warships in the operation

Good communication means keeping in touch with all boats all day either by radio or visual/verbal contact.

Good planning firstly requires a plan. Secondly, it requires contingency planning (adverse weather conditions, crowded boats etc.) Finally it requires implementation of the plan.

If all of this seems a bit too much work, I have resurrected VSAG's "Dive Procedures and Duties of Dive Captain". It is reprinted below. Time, personalities and I guess familiarity/over-confidence have eroded club adherence to its requirements today. Certainly much of it is an overkill. But - much of it is good and perhaps its airing will prompt many of us to give just a little bit more thought to our role and performance as DCs.

VICTORIAN SUB AQUA GROUP - DIVE PROCEDURES AND DUTIES OF DIVE CAPTAIN

1. Plan dive - weather conditions, currents, tides, distances to travel, times in and out of water. Set depth. Any particular dangers.
2. Full equipment check before dive, including medical certificates.
3. Dive buddies to be allocated and boat complement agreed upon.
4. Briefing before dive - outline of probable dive procedure, area and establish dive order.
5. Written check in and out of water.
6. Back up diver to be dive captain's buddy.
7. Dive captain to compile written report after dive to go into club records.
8. When more than one boat, deputy dive captain to be appointed.
9. Boats to be moored to anchored buoys where possible, rather than fixed anchors.
10. Dive captain to make sure buddies check out each other's equipment.
11. Dive capt. to check capacity of boats for particular day & conditions.
12. Where there are more divers than spaces in boats, Dive Captain will allocate spaces, having regard to who contacted him prior to dive and who turns up on time.
13. Dive captain to be identified in some manner.